

PROGRAMMANUS



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MOLE END

Joy shall be yours in the morning

The Mole and the Rat are friends. The Mole has stayed the whole summer with the Rat, in his home by the River. One winter day, on their way home after a long day out, the Mole smells the sweet smell of his own home. The Mole and the Rat start looking for it and after a while Mole finds his tunnel. It's very dark down there.

But the Mole strikes a match and by its light they see a small front door with the letters 'Mole End' painted on it. This was the Mole's home.

The Rat and the Mole opened the door and Mole lit a lamp. Mole smiled when he saw his old home. But there was dust everywhere. No-one had been there for a long time. Mole sat down on a chair.

'O Ratty!' he cried, 'Why did I take you to this cold little place, on a night like this, when you might have been in your home at River Bank by this time, warming your toes by the fire!'

The Rat didn't agree. He was running here and there, opening doors, looking in rooms, and lighting lamps everywhere.

'What a perfect little house this is!' he called out. 'So well planned! You have everything you need here! The first thing we want is a good fire; I'll see to that— I always know where to find things. I'll fetch the wood, and you get a duster, Mole and clean things up a bit. To work, old friend!'

The Mole dusted and the Rat made a nice fire.

'Mole, come and warm yourself!' said the Rat.

But Mole was sad again.

'Rat, how about your supper, you poor, cold, hungry, animal? I've nothing to give you— nothing!'

'I saw a sardine-opener in the kitchen', said the Rat 'and everybody knows that means there are sardines somewhere around. Come with me.'

They went looking for something to eat. The result was not so very bad after all, a tin of sardines— a box of biscuits, nearly full— and a sausage.

'There's a nice dinner!' said the Rat.

'No bread!' said the Mole; 'no butter, no——'

'No champagne!' said the Rat, smiling. 'And that reminds me— what's that little door I saw? Your cellar, of course! Just you wait a minute.'



The Rat came back with two bottles of beer.

'This is really the nicest little place I ever was in. You have made it look so home-like, Mole. Tell us all about it.'

While the Rat fetched plates, and knives and forks, the Mole, —shy at first, told his friend how his little home was planned, and how he got one thing from an aunt, and another thing from a shop. The Mole felt better now.

They heard sounds from outside. Sounds of small feet in the gravel and... tiny voices. *'Now, all in a line— the light, hold the lantern up a bit, Tommy— no coughing after I say one, two, three.—*

Where's Bill?—

Here, come on, do, we're all a-waiting——'

'What's happening?' asked the Rat.

'I think it must be the field-mice,' said the Mole. 'They go round singing Christmas carols this time of the year. Every winter they come to me in Mole End. It will be like old times to hear them again.'

'Let's have a look at them!' said the Rat, running to the door.

It was a pretty sight that met their eyes when they opened the door.

There stood eight or ten little field-mice, in the light of a lantern. They moved their little feet to keep them warm. As the door opened, one of the elder ones was just saying, 'Now then, one, two, three!' and their little voices started to sing.

Carol

*Villagers all, this frosty tide,
Let your doors swing open wide,
Though wind may follow, and snow beside,
Yet draw us in by your fire to bide;
Joy shall be yours in the morning!*

*Here we stand in the cold and the sleet,
Blowing fingers and stamping feet,
Come from far away you to greet—
You by the fire and we in the street—
Bidding you joy in the morning!*

The field-mice smiled and were all quiet. But only for a moment. Then the Rat said: 'Very well sung, boys! And now come along in, all of you, and warm yourselves by the fire!'

'Yes, come along, field-mice,' said the Mole. 'This is quite like old times! But!— O, Ratty!'

The Mole had tears in his eyes.

'Rat! We've nothing to give them!'

'You leave all that to me,' said the Rat. 'Here, you with the lantern! Come here. I want to talk to you. Now, tell me, are there any shops open at this hour of the night?'



'Yes, sir,' replied the field-mouse. 'At this time of the year our shops keep open to all sorts of hours.'

'Then listen!' said the Rat. 'You go off at once, and you get me——'

The Rat whispered, and the Mole only heard bits of it, such as— 'Fresh, remember!— only the best— if you can't get it there, try somewhere else— yes, of course, home-made,— well, do the best you can!'

The Rat gave the field-mouse some money and a basket, and the mouse left in a hurry.

The rest of the field-mice sat down by the fire, and Mole asked them about their brothers and sisters, who were too young to go out singing carols. The Rat sat down too, and they all forgot that they had ever been cold in all their lives.

'They act too, these fellows,' the Mole explained to the Rat. 'Last year, the play was about a field-mouse and a pirate. Here, you! You were in it, I remember. Get up and act a bit.'

Mole pointed at one of the field-mice but he was too shy.

Then the door opened, and the field-mouse who had been away shopping came back. There was not more talk of theatre when the food was put on the table.

In a very few minutes supper was ready, and Mole sat down by the table in a sort of dream. The table had been empty. Now it was full of food, and around it he saw his little friends. It was like magic. As they ate, they talked of old times. The Rat took care that each guest had what he wanted. The field-mice left saying: Merry Christmas! Their pockets were stuffed with things to eat, for the small brothers and sisters at home.

When the place was all quiet again, Mole and Rat sat by the fire and talked about everything that had happened this long day. At last the Rat yawned and said: 'Mole, old chap, I'm so sleepy, I'm ready to drop. Is that your bed? I'll take this one. What a perfect little house this is!'

He climbed into his bed. The Mole was happy and tired. But before he closed his eyes he looked at his old room and saw all his old and friendly things. He was thinking exactly what the Rat had tried to tell him. He saw clearly how simple it all was, but clearly, too, how much it all meant to him. He did not want to leave his new life by the river, with all the sun and air. But it was good to think he had this to come back to, this place which was all his own.