

"I do not think"--said Samuel Whiskers, pausing to take a look at Tom Kitten--"I do NOT think it will be a good pudding. It smells sooty."

Anna Maria was about to argue the point, when all at once there began to be other sounds up above--the rasping noise of a saw; and the noise of a little dog, scratching and yelping!

The rats dropped the rolling-pin, and listened attentively.

"We are discovered and interrupted, Anna Maria; let us collect our property,--and other people's,--and depart at once."

"I fear that we shall be obliged to leave this pudding."

"But I am persuaded that the knots would have proved indigestible, whatever you may urge to the contrary."

"Come away at once and help me to tie up some mutton bones in a counterpane," said Anna Maria. "I have got half a smoked ham hidden in the chimney."

So it happened that by the time John Joiner had got the plank up--there was nobody

under the floor except the rolling-pin
and Tom Kitten in a very dirty dumpling!
But there was a strong smell of rats; and
John Joiner spent the rest of the morning
sniffing and whining, and wagging his tail,
and going round and round with his head in
the hole like a gimlet.

Then he nailed the plank down again, and
put his tools in his bag, and came downstairs.
The cat family had quite recovered. They
invited him to stay to dinner.

The dumpling had been peeled off Tom
Kitten, and made separately into a bag pudding,
with currants in it to hide the smuts.

They had been obliged to put Tom Kitten
into a hot bath to get the butter off.

John Joiner smelt the pudding; but he
regretted that he had not time to stay to
dinner, because he had just finished making
a wheel-barrow for Miss Potter, and she
had ordered two hen-coops.

And when I was going to the post late in
the afternoon--I looked up the lane from
the corner, and I saw Mr. Samuel Whiskers
and his wife on the run, with big bundles
on a little wheel-barrow, which looked very

like mine.

They were just turning in at the gate to the barn of Farmer Potatoes.

Samuel Whiskers was puffing and out of breath. Anna Maria was still arguing in shrill tones.

She seemed to know her way, and she seemed to have a quantity of luggage.

I am sure I never gave her leave to borrow my wheel-barrow!

They went into the barn, and hauled their parcels with a bit of string to the top of the haymow.

After that, there were no more rats for a long time at Tabitha Twitchit's.

As for Farmer Potatoes, he has been driven nearly distracted. There are rats, and rats, and rats in his barn! They eat up the chicken food, and steal the oats and bran, and make holes in the meal bags.

And they are all descended from Mr. and Mrs. Samuel Whiskers--children and grand-children and great great grand-children. There is no end to them!

Moppet and Mittens have grown up into very good rat-catchers.

**They go out rat-catching in the village,
and they find plenty of employment. They
charge so much a dozen, and earn their
living very comfortably.**

**They hang up the rats' tails in a row on
the barn door, to show how many they have
caught--dozens and dozens of them.**

**But Tom Kitten has always been afraid
of a rat; he never durst face anything that
is bigger than--**

A Mouse.

THE END

THE TALE OF MR. TOD

**I HAVE made many books about
well-behaved people. Now, for
a change, I am going to make a
story about two disagreeable people,
called Tommy Brock and Mr. Tod.**

Nobody could call Mr. Tod "nice."

**The rabbits could not bear him;
they could smell him half a mile off.**

**He was of a wandering habit and
he had foxey whiskers; they never
knew where he would be next.**

**One day he was living in a stick-
house in the coppice, causing terror**

to the family of old Mr. Benjamin Bouncer. Next day he moved into a pollard willow near the lake, frightening the wild ducks and the water rats.

In winter and early spring he might generally be found in an earth amongst the rocks at the top of Bull Banks, under Oatmeal Crag. He had half a dozen houses, but he was seldom at home.

Tom Kitten sitting in a dirty dumpling while rats, Samuel Whiskers and Anna Maria, scurry away with bundles on a wheelbarrow.

