



## THE ADVENTURES OF TOM BOMBADIL

Old Tom Bombadil was a merry fellow;  
bright blue his jacket was and his boots were yellow,  
green were his girdle and his breeches all of leather;  
he wore in his tall hat a swan-wing feather.  
He lived up under Hill, where the Withywindle  
ran from a grassy well down into the dingle.

Old Tom in summertime walked about the meadows  
gathering the buttercups, running after shadows,  
tickling the bumblebees that buzzed among the flowers,  
sitting by the waterside for hours upon hours.

There his beard dangled long down into the water:  
up came Goldberry, the River-woman's daughter;  
pulled Tom's hanging hair. In he went a-wallowing  
under the water-lilies, bubbling and a-swallowing.

So the chase went fiercely on. If you have ever seen a bird chasing a butterfly, and if you can imagine a more than gigantic bird chasing two perfectly insignificant butterflies among white mountains, then you can just begin to imagine the twistings, dodgings, hairbreadth escapes, and the wild zigzag rush of that flight home. More than once, before they got even half way, Roverandom's tail was singed by the dragon's breath.

What was the Man-in-the-Moon doing? Well, he let off a truly magnificent rocket; and after that he said 'Drat that creature!' and also 'Drat those puppies! They will bring on an eclipse before it is due!' And then he went down into the cellars and uncorked a dark, black spell that looked like jellified tar and honey (and smelt like the Fifth of November and cabbage boiling over).

At that very moment the dragon swooped up right above the tower and lifted a huge claw to bat Roverandom – bat him right off into the blank nowhere. But he never did. The Man-in-the-Moon shot the spell up out of a lower window, and hit the dragon splosh on the stomach (where all dragons are peculiarly tender), and knocked him crank-sideways. He lost all his wits, and flew bang into a mountain before he could get his steering right; and it was difficult to say which was most damaged, his nose or the mountain – both were out of shape.

So the two dogs fell in through the top window, and never got back their breath for a week; and the dragon slowly made his lopsided way home, where he rubbed his

nose for months. The next eclipse was a failure, for the dragon was too busy licking his tummy to attend to it. And he never got the black splashes off where the spell hit him. I am afraid they will last for ever. They call him the Mottled Monster now.

