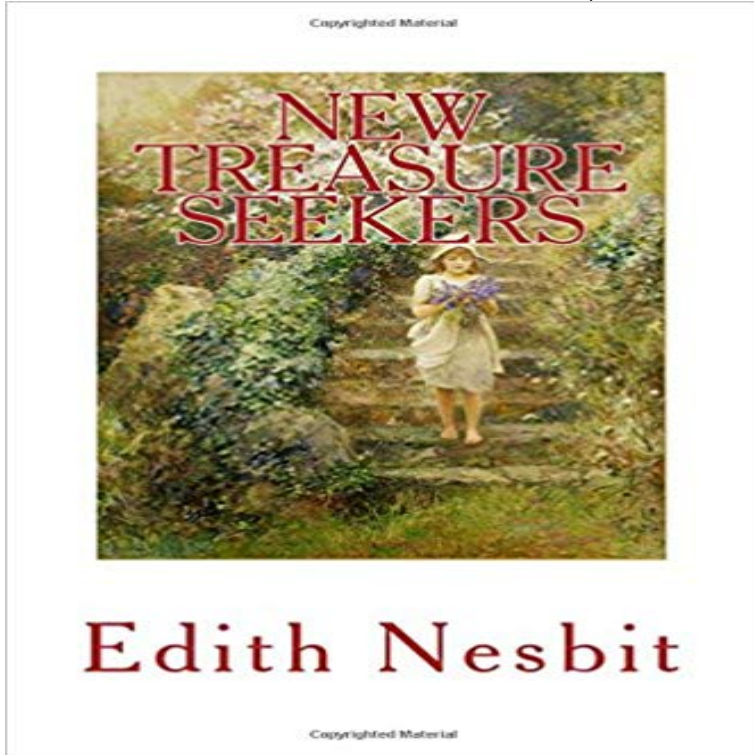


New TREASURE SEEKERS, New Edition: with Authentic Drawings



We Bastables have only two uncles, and neither of them, are our own natural-born relatives. One is a great-uncle, and the other is the uncle from his birth of Albert, who used to live next door to us in the Lewisham Road. When we first got to know him (it was over some baked potatoes, and is quite another story) we called him Albert-next-doors-Uncle, and then Alberts uncle for short. But Alberts uncle and my father joined in taking a jolly house in the country, called the Moat House, and we stayed there for our summer holidays; and it was there, through an accident to a pilgrim with peas in his shoesthats another story toothat we found Alberts uncles long-lost love; and as she was very old indeedtwenty-six next birthdayand he was ever so much older in the vale of years, he had to get married almost directly, and it was fixed for about Christmas-time. And when our holidays came the whole six of us went down to the Moat House with Father and Alberts uncle. We never had a Christmas in the country before. It was simply ripping. And the long-lost loveher name was Miss Ashleigh, but we were allowed to call her Aunt Margaret even before the wedding made it really legal for us to do soshe and her jolly clergyman brother used to come over, and sometimes we went to the Cedars, where they live, and we had games and charades, and hide-and-see, and Devil in the Dark, which is a game girls pretend to like, and very few do really, and crackers and a Christmas-tree for the village children, and everything you can jolly well think of. And all the time, whenever we went to the Cedars, there was all sorts of silly fuss going on about the beastly wedding; boxes coming from London with hats and jackets in, and wedding presentsall glassy and silvery, or else brooches and chainsand clothes sent down from London to choose from. I cant think how a lady can want so many petticoats and boots and things just

because shes going to be married. No man would think of getting twenty-four shirts and twenty-four waistcoats, and so on, just to be married in. Its because theyre going to Rome, I think, Alice said, when we talked it over before the fire in the kitchen the day Mrs. Pettigrew went to see her aunt, and we were allowed to make toffee. You see, in Rome you can only buy Roman clothes, and I think theyre all stupid bright coloursat least I know the sashes are. You stir now, Oswald. My face is all burnt black. Oswald took the spoon, though it was really not his turn by three; but he is one whose nature is so that he cannot make a fuss about little thingsand he knows he can make toffee. Lucky hounds, H.O. said, to be going to Rome. I wish I was. Hounds isnt polite, H.O., dear, Dora said; and H.O. said Well, lucky bargees, then. Its the dream of my life to go to Rome, Noel said. Noel is our poet brother. Just think of what the man says in the Roman Road. I wish theyd take me. They wont, Dicky said. It costs a most awful lot. I heard Father saying so only yesterday. It would only be the fare, Noel answered; and Id go third, or even in a cattle-truck, or a luggage van. And when I got there I could easily earn my own living. Id make ballads and sing them in the streets. The Italians would give me lyresthats the Italian kind of shilling, they spell it with an i. It shows how poetical they are out there, their calling it that. But you couldnt make Italian poetry, H.O. said, staring at Noel with his mouth open.

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