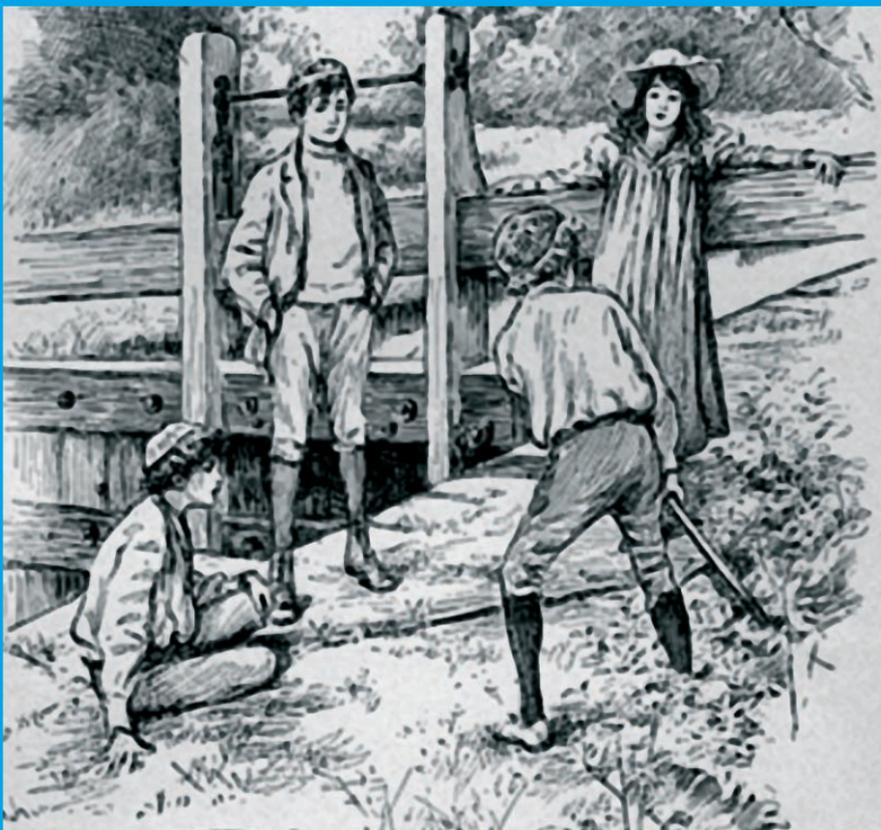


Edith Nesbit  
**THE WOULD-BEGOODS**

Read by **Teresa Gallagher**

JUNIOR  
CLASSICS



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1	Children are like jam...	3:53
2	Their train got in at 12.27.	3:13
3	The next morning when we were having breakfast...	3:44
4	Denny wanted to put paper tails on the guinea-pigs...	3:59
5	When we were sent down into the country...	3:42
6	'New society for being good in'	3:35
7	The next morning Oswald awoke early.	3:33
8	We got the door.	4:17
9	There were soldiers riding down the road...	3:16
10	Then we wrote to my father...	3:05
11	We had just done when the cottage door burst open...	3:13
12	This is what we meant to put on the tombstone...	4:23
13	It was very rough on Dora...	4:11
14	It was on the day we had the pillow fight...	3:48
15	When the sound of wheels came...	3:02
16	As we went up the path...	4:28
17	We all went slowly.	4:38
18	This is the story of one of the most far-reaching...	4:06

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19	Then Oswald walked slowly away with the ball...	4:12
20	But just above Falding Lock...	3:30
21	The first thing was to rouse the unconscious others...	2:41
22	When the men went up after breakfast...	4:18
23	The ones of us who had started the Society...	3:11
24	Oswald said the first thing was to collect...	4:07
25	Then we shut the gate of the paddock...	2:46
26	Alice, Oswald and Dick had had almost enough...	3:31
27	Alas! We came too late.	3:58
28	We made two expeditions...	3:46
29	Then tea-time seemed as if it ought to be near...	4:00
30	When we had made a ridge of stones...	3:38
31	Presently we came to a pond...	4:49
32	It really was not such a bad baby...	3:42
33	We went home at last with our fish...	2:50
34	As soon as Mrs Pettigrew had left the room...	4:02
35	Just before tea-time we all went back to the hut...	4:14
36	It began one morning at breakfast.	4:13

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37	On Tuesday we went down to look at the Roman place...	3:24
38	That night Alice whispered to Oswald...	3:18
39	Presently we were aware that all would soon be over.	3:07
40	They went to the secretary of the Maidstone...	2:50
41	The tramp was very dusty about the feet and legs...	3:36
42	After dinner we went out and sat...	3:11
43	A man and woman were the first...	3:00
44	While this conversation was going on...	4:00
45	The author of these few lines...	3:10
46	So Oswald and Dicky went into the wood...	3:13
47	So on we went...	3:51
48	When we got to Canterbury...	5:13
49	Our holiday was nearly up...	4:27
50	But he sat up in bed and read...	3:41
51	Before we had gone a hundred yards...	3:04
52	We decided that we had better bunk unnoticed.	4:21
53	When he was gone she stood quite still...	3:38

**Total time: 3:17:08**

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## Edith Nesbit

# THE WOULD-BEGOODS

Edith Nesbit, 'the first modern writer for children', was a fascinating character whose popular books sprang partly from her own experience. This is particularly true of *The Story of the Treasure Seekers* and its sequel *The Wouldbegoods*, recorded here. Both recount the adventures of the Bastable family, and capture beautifully the innocence of children, their boundless energy, and their capacity for getting into trouble without even trying.

Born in 1858, Edith Nesbit was the youngest in her family. She had two brothers, a sister and a half-sister, and during her earliest years they all lived in an agricultural college in London which had been started by Edith's grandfather. Edith described this time of her life as an 'Eden': she felt happy and secure.

When Edith was still a little girl, her father died. From then on, the stability of her life changed: the family moved around a lot. She went to various boarding schools, including one at which punishments came thick and fast for all kinds of tiny misdemeanours. It would be unimaginable

today! Her mother told her she would get used to it, even though Edith cried herself to sleep.

But she hadn't been at that school long when it was all change: they were off to the South of France where her mother had found a house. Edith was to be left behind, but she begged to be taken with her mother and sisters. Her brothers, Alfred and Henry, remained at another school in England. To begin with, Edith was placed with a family so that she could learn French. She and the daughter were the same age, and they got on immediately. She had a wonderful time. When her mother moved again to a different area of France, she was sorry to leave her French family.

This almost nomadic lifestyle was to continue, though a highlight was a summer spent in a house suitable for all the family, brothers included, in the south of France. Her first impressions of this environment unmistakably echo the surroundings of The Moat House in *The Wouldbegoods*:

Two great brown gates swung back on their hinges and we passed through them

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into the courtyard of the dearest home of my childhood. The courtyard was square. One side was formed by the house; dairy, coach-house and the chicken-house formed the second side; on the third were stable, cow-house and goat-shed; on the fourth wood-shed, dog-kennel and the great gates by which we had entered.

There were more schools and homes following this, before a happy three years spent at Halstead Hall in Kent, a house rented by her mother for the family:

From a laburnum tree in the corner of the lawn we children slung an improvised hammock, and there I used to read and dream and watch the swaying green gold leaf and blossom.

Here, Alfred and Henry built a raft for the pond, and the children discovered a secret hiding place accessible only by a trap-door in the ceiling of Edith's bedroom – exactly as Oswald does in *The Wouldbegoods*!

The children could also run through a field at the back of the house to a railway line – and there is the seed, planted in Nesbit's memory, that later grew into her popular story *The Railway Children*.

From the age of fourteen to seventeen, Nesbit began to concentrate on writing

poetry and even had some of it published in several magazines. She was to write a lot more poetry over the years, as well as her novels.

The young poet grew into a bright and striking woman, and married a charismatic bank clerk called Hubert Bland. The two moved in intellectual circles and were both socialists. They formed a debating group, which, as it gained more members, became the Fabian Society.

During the 1880s Nesbit was a lecturer and writer on socialism, but as she became a successful children's writer these activities diminished. Her most famous novels include *The Treasure Seekers*, *The Wouldbegoods*, *Five Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, *The Railway Children* and *The Enchanted Castle*.

*The Wouldbegoods* is a sequel to *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*. 'Children are like jam,' it begins, 'all very well in the proper place, but you can't stand them all over the shop – eh, what?' These are the characteristically strident yet harmless words of the Indian uncle, with whom the Bastables now live.

In *The Treasure Seekers* the children got themselves into all kinds of trouble, but for the noble cause of trying 'to restore the

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fallen fortunes of the House of Bastable'. Half a crown here and there, found buried in the garden or located under the floorboards with a diving-rod, was not ultimately enough. But the Indian uncle saved the day, and the children and their father went to live with him in his beautiful big house.

In *The Wouldbegoods*, the summer holidays come round and the children are sent to Albert's uncle's house in the country – along with two other children, Denny and Daisy ('little frightened things, like white mice').

The group has been punished for an

over-enthusiastic attempt at making a jungle – which involved using the Indian uncle's precious stuffed animals and soaking them with a make-shift waterfall – and now the conscience-stricken girls invent a 'Society for being good in'. This is modified to the 'Wouldbegoods', as it is generally recognised that they cannot guarantee their good behaviour, however hard they try. And they are right!

Of course, after many adventures, and a few grown-up lectures along the way, things turn out very happily – for the children and for Albert's uncle.

**Notes by Genevieve Helsby**

## **The music on this recording is taken from the NAXOS catalogue**

**ELGAR** WAND OF YOUTH NURSERY SUITE  
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8.557166

**Music programmed by Sarah Butcher**

Edith Nesbit

# THE WOULD BE GOODS

Read by **Teresa Gallagher**

*The Wouldbegoods*, a sequel to *The Treasure Seekers*, reacquaints us with the six Bastable children: Dora, Oswald, Dicky, Alice, Noël and H.O. Again, the story is told by you-may-not-know-who, and the children find all sorts of ways in which to amuse themselves in the country during the summer holidays. 'Children are like jam,' says the Indian uncle, 'all very well in the proper place, but you can't stand them all over the shop – eh, what?' Well, the children do their best, but they do get themselves into trouble – right from the beginning, when their latest brainwave is to create a jungle in the garden...



**Teresa Gallagher** has performed in many leading roles in both plays and musicals across the country, London's West End and off Broadway. In addition, she is a well-known voice to listeners of BBC Radio Drama. Her work on film includes *The Misadventures of Margaret* and Mike Leigh's *Topsy Turvy*. For Naxos AudioBooks she has recorded the *Biography of Jane Austen* and selections from *The Decameron* by Boccaccio. She has also read *Classic Women's Short Stories*, *Heidi* and *The Treasure Seekers* for Naxos AudioBooks.

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