

about to take a header into a big river. In it are rocks and rapids; but you know how to swim, and after the first plunge you'll enjoy it, as I did, amazingly."

"Ra—ther," said John.

In the New Forest, where John had spent most of his life at his uncle's place of Verney Boscobel, this uncle, his dead father's only brother, was worshipped as a hero. Indeed he filled so large a space in the boy's imagination, that others were cramped for room. John Verney in India, in Burmah, in Africa (he took continents in his stride), moved colossal. And when uncle and nephew met, behold, the great traveller stood not much taller than John himself! That first moment, the instant shattering of a precious delusion, held anguish. But now, as the train whirled away the silent, thin, little man, he began to expand again. John saw him scaling heights, cutting a path through impenetrable forests, wading across dismal swamps, an ever-moving figure, seeking the hitherto unknowable and irreclaimable, introducing order where chaos reigned supreme, a world-famous pioneer.

How good to think that John Verney was *his* uncle, blood of his blood, his, his, his—for all time!

And, long ago, John, senior, had come to Harrow; had felt what John, junior, felt to the core—the dull, grinding wrench of separation, the sense, not yet to be analysed by a boy, of standing alone upon the edge of a river, indeed, into which he must plunge headlong in a few minutes. Well, Uncle John had taken his