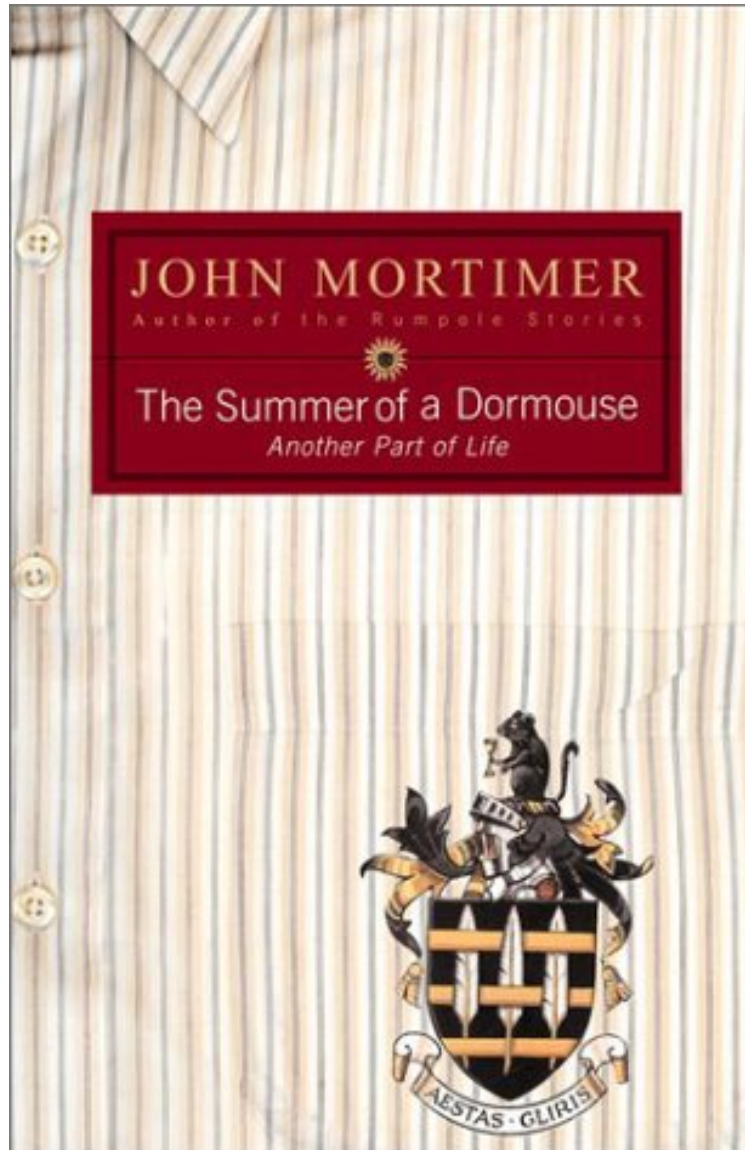


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The Summer of a Dormouse

John Mortimer

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John Mortimer : The Summer of a Dormouse before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Summer of a Dormouse:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. But I still can't put on my socks..By John the ReaderWho could resist the reading recommendation of a friend, or of reading a book with the opening lines of - "The time will come in your life, it will almost certainly come, when the voice of God will thunder at you from a cloud, 'From this day forth thou shall not be able to put on thine own socks'. "!? Oh dear Lord, I heard. John Mortimer - when in his 70s - goes on

to add that he "fortunately living with family" so he can call out for help. As I do when confronted with the same challenge of driving a wavering white foot towards a floppy opening. Sometimes SWMBO sharply informs me to "at least try and do it yourself" so with forehead beaded, cramped toes, huffing and puffing, heart dangerously audible, I put on my boat shoes. I remember a dodge we employed at the navy boot-camp - when no clean socks were left, or all were too holey for parade - of coating our ankles with boot polish, but I fear that my dearly beloved "Keep Calm and Carry On" would not permit this. Nor is the author excused from such wifely strictures, from his own wife Penelope (his second ... both called Penelope) but she was a real care-giver and he admits he needed both her concern and discipline. He was well aware of himself, remarking that he sometimes "looked" at himself and wondered "whatever will I do next"? Well, the answer was pretty much everything he enjoyed ... plays, charitable works, political agitation, travel, films and many, many books. And at 62 a new daughter to "counteract my tendency to pomposity". One day she told him she no longer loved him, "That is sad" said her father. "Sad, yes, but very interesting" was the child's reply, with all the feminine wisdom of three years! Opening this part (Three) of his biography with a quote from Byron "When one subtracts from life infancy (being a vegetable), sleeping, eating and swilling, buttoning and unbuttoning - how much remains of existence? The summer of a dormouse." Mortimer adopted this not only as his title but, when he was Knighted in 1996, as the animal on his coat of arms, and words on the banner ... suitability put into Latin of course. He does not mention if he also chose to become Lord Dormouse. John's father's last words to him - and he admits he knows not if they were long-rehearsed or of spontaneous wit - were "I am always cross when I am dying." I do wish I could remember to say that! You get the impression from the wonderful witty writing in the book - from, of course, the creator of Rumpole of the Bailey - that he too would have been very cross when his time came in 2009, perhaps he chose one line from one of his favorite poets, the Scots makar, Friar William Dunbar "timor mortis conturbat me"? A downright charming book. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. The comedy of old age By Stephen B. Coleman Jr. An old and dying man, Mortimer successfully enlisted his comic muse in order to provide the balm of humor to describe the end of life. May all of us approach our own eventual death with his wisdom and understanding. 1 of 11 people found the following review helpful. More like a door stop By A Customer John Mortimer is a wonderful English author. My husband is a great fan of his work. I read of this book this summer in England and when I returned home I rushed to buy it. My husband hated it! He said he had already read most of the stories in other works. The author also gives his opinion on the wonderful Labor Party in England. His mother should have taught him not to discuss politics in polite society. It is really a dreadful book. Only useful as a door stop on a windy day.

John Mortimer has led an extraordinary life as a playwright, bestselling novelist, and former practicing barrister. In *The Summer of a Dormouse*, the third installment of his autobiography, he describes what it is like to be seventy-seven years of age but to feel like a child. While he suffers from the afflictions that his father had to contend with - asthma, glaucoma - and added some of his own, he continues to live with boundless energy, passion, and humor. *The Summer of a Dormouse* is a warm and charming chronicle of one year in a rich and very full life. When most people his age are in full retirement, John Mortimer is still motoring through life, taking on new projects - working on a film with Zeffirelli in a house in Rome, contriving the renovation of the Royal Court Theatre building, and championing his most passionate cause, prison reform. Whether in the English countryside, the center of London, the heart of Tuscany, or the streets of Morocco, he embraces life and work with enthusiasm and compassion, revealing himself as one of the most astute and generous figures of his generation.

From Publishers Weekly: Mortimer, a retired barrister and creator of Rumpole, retains his high good humor in this third charming autobiographical volume (whose title comes from Byron's *Journals*), even if, as he confesses at the start, he's reached an age when he can no longer put on his socks. ("The situation is, in minor ways, humiliating and comical.") A superb raconteur, the author never forgets that his first duty is to entertain. In a series of short, conversational chapters, which proceed in an artfully haphazard way to cover recent experiences (such as selecting a coat of arms) as well as childhood memories (mainly of his blind father, a judge), he recounts one amusing anecdote after another. These can be racy, as in the priceless transcript of a lurid sex case tried with straight face before the very proper House of Lords. More serious concerns such as prison reform are also in evidence. Mortimer chronicles his involvement in various good causes, from saving London's Royal Court Theatre to finding a suitable statue to top a vacant plinth in Trafalgar Square. A visit to his dying first wife, Penelope, is especially poignant. Travel filmmaking with Franco Zeffirelli in Italy, dealing with panhandlers in New York also receives his humane and humorous attention. By the end, Mortimer makes it clear that, despite his infirmities, he has not lost his zest for life. This is a most civilized and witty book by a most civilized and witty man. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal: Mortimer has done it again. In this latest memoir, following *Clinging to the Wreckage* (1987) and *Murderers and Other Friends* (1996), he gives another engaging account of his prodigious life. A former barrister, he is creator of the ever-popular "Rumpole" fiction series as well as several highly successful stage, radio, and television plays, including the adaptation of *Brideshead Revisited*. Here he writes tenderly about his childhood years in England during

World War I. He vividly describes Tuscany, where he collaborated with Franco Zeffirelli on the screenplay of *Tea with Mussolini*, and summer afternoons spent sitting on the terrace drinking Chianti and discussing opera, while "the air is loud with grasshoppers, lizards dart across the hot paving stones, the landscape is blurred with heat." Whether he's traveling in Morocco or acting as chairman of the Royal Court Theatre in London, Mortimer spares no expense when it comes to telling a good tale. Highly recommended for all public libraries.- Stephanie Maher, Warwick, RI

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Mortimer, a former barrister, a distinguished playwright, and the author of the hugely popular Rumpole series of tales, provides the third installment of his delightful autobiography. Trapped in an increasingly uncooperative body, the 75-year-old author still approaches life and work with an amazingly energetic zeal. Despite an annoying series of physical failings, the spiritually and emotionally youthful Mortimer remains an inveterate traveler and tackles an exhausting array of political and artistic projects, including prison reform, the restoration of the Royal Court Theatre, and a film collaboration with Franco Zeffirelli. Laced with humor and pathos, this breezy, whirlwind account of one jam-packed year serves as one of the final chapters of a full and rich life. Margaret Flanagan

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