

THE ADVENTURES OF THE LITTLE FIELD MOUSE

Once upon a time, there was a little brown Field Mouse; and one day he was out in the fields to see what he could see. He was running along in the grass, poking his nose into everything and looking with his two eyes all about, when he saw a smooth, shiny acorn, lying in the grass. It was such a fine shiny little acorn that he thought he would take it home with him; so he put out his paw to touch it, but the little acorn rolled away from him. He ran after it, but it kept rolling on, just ahead of him, till it came to a place where a big oak-tree had its roots spread all over the ground. Then it rolled under a big round root.

Little Mr. Field Mouse ran to the root and poked his nose under after the acorn, and there he saw a small round hole in the ground. He slipped through and saw some stairs going down into the earth. The acorn was rolling down, with a soft tapping sound, ahead of him, so down he went too. Down, down, down,

rolled the acorn, and down, down, down, went the Field Mouse, until suddenly he saw a tiny door at the foot of the stairs.

The shiny acorn rolled to the door and struck against it with a tap. Quickly the little door opened and the acorn rolled inside. The Field Mouse hurried as fast as he could down the last stairs, and pushed through just as the door was closing. It shut behind him, and he was in a little room. And there, before him, stood a strange little Red Man! He had a little red cap, and a little red jacket, and odd little red shoes with points at the toes.

"You are my prisoner," he said to the Field Mouse.

"What for?" said the Field Mouse.

"Because you tried to steal my acorn," said the little Red Man.

"It is my acorn," said the Field Mouse; "I found it."

"No, it isn't," said the little Red Man, "I have it; you will never

see it again."

The little Field Mouse looked all about the room as fast as he could, but he could not see any acorn. Then he thought he would go back up the tiny stairs to his own home. But the little door was locked, and the little Red Man had the key. And he said to the poor mouse,-- "You shall be my servant; you shall make my bed and sweep my room and cook my broth."

So the little brown Mouse was the little Red Man's servant, and every day he made the little Red Man's bed and swept the little Red Man's room and cooked the little Red Man's broth. And every day the little Red Man went away through the tiny door, and did not come back till afternoon. But he always locked the door after him, and carried away the key.

At last, one day he was in such a hurry that he turned the key before the door was quite latched, which, of course, didn't lock it at all. He went away without noticing, --he was in such a hurry.

The little Field Mouse knew that his chance had come to run away home. But he didn't want to go without the pretty, shiny acorn. Where it was he didn't know, so he looked everywhere. He opened every little drawer and looked in, but it wasn't in any of the drawers; he peeped on every shelf, but it wasn't on a shelf; he hunted in every closet, but it wasn't in there. Finally, he climbed up on a chair and opened a wee, wee door in the chimney-piece,--and there it was!

He took it quickly in his forepaws, and then he took it in his mouth, and then he ran away. He pushed open the little door; he climbed up, up, up the little stairs; he came out through the hole under the root; he ran and ran through the fields; and at last he came to his own house.

When he was in his own house he set the shiny acorn on the table. I guess he set it down hard, for all at once, with a little snap, it opened!--exactly like a little box.

And what do you think! There was a tiny necklace inside! It was a most beautiful tiny necklace, all made of jewels, and it was just big enough for a lady mouse. So the little Field Mouse gave the tiny necklace to his little Mouse-sister. She thought it was perfectly lovely. And when she wasn't wearing it she kept it in the shiny acorn box.

And the little Red Man never knew what had become of it, because he didn't know where the little Field Mouse lived.