

## The Country Mouse and the Town Mouse

Once upon a time a country mouse, who had a friend in town, invited him to pay a visit in the country for old acquaintance's sake. After the invitation was accepted, the country mouse, though plain, coarse, and somewhat frugal, opened his heart and pantry to honor his old friend and to show him the proper hospitality. There was not a morsel which he had carefully stored that he did not bring forth out of its larder—peas and barley, cheese parings and nuts—with the hope that the quantity would make up for what he feared was wanting in quality to suit the taste of his elegant guest. In turn, the town mouse condescended to nibble a little here and there in a dainty manner while the host sat munching a blade of barley straw. In their after-dinner chat the town mouse said to the country mouse, "How is it, my good friend, that you can endure this boring and crude life? You live like a toad in a hole. You can't really prefer these solitary rocks and woods to streets teeming with carriages and people. Upon my word of honor, you're wasting your time in such a miserable existence. You must make the most of your life while it lasts. As you know, a mouse does not live forever. So, come with me this very night, and I'll show you all around the town and what life's about."

Overcome by his friend's fine words and polished



manner, the country mouse agreed, and they set out together on their journey to the town. It was late in the evening when they crept stealthily into the city and midnight before they reached the large house, which was the town mouse's residence. There were couches of crimson velvet, ivory carvings, and every thing one could imagine that indicated wealth and luxury. On the table were the remains of a splendid banquet from all the choicest shops ransacked the day before to make sure that the guests, already departed, would be satisfied. It was now the town mouse's turn to play host, and he placed his country friend on a purple cushion, ran back and forth to supply all his needs, and pressed dish upon dish on him and delicacy upon delicacy. Of course, the town mouse tasted each and every course before he ventured to place it before his rustic cousin, as though he were waiting on a king. In turn, the country mouse made himself quite at home and blessed the good fortune that had brought about such a change in his way of life. In the middle of his enjoyment, however, just as he was thinking contemptuously of the poor meals that he had been accustomed to eating, the door suddenly flew open, and a group of revelers, who were returning from a late party, burst into the room. The frightened friends jumped from the table and hid themselves in the very first corner they could reach. No sooner did they dare creep out again than the barking of dogs drove them back with even greater terror than before. Gradually, when things seemed quiet, the country mouse crept out from his hiding place and whispered good-bye to his elegant friend.

"This fine mode of living may be all right for those who like it," he said. "But I'd rather have a crust in peace and safety than all your fine things in the midst of such alarm and terror."