

GRASSHOPPER GREEN

and the

MEADOW-MICE



John Rae

Title: Grasshopper Green And The Meadow-Mice

Author: John Rae

Language: English

Subject: Fiction, Literature, Children's literature

Publisher: World Public Library Association

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Apr - 1935



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GRASSHOPPER **G**REEN
and the
MEADOW-**M**ICE

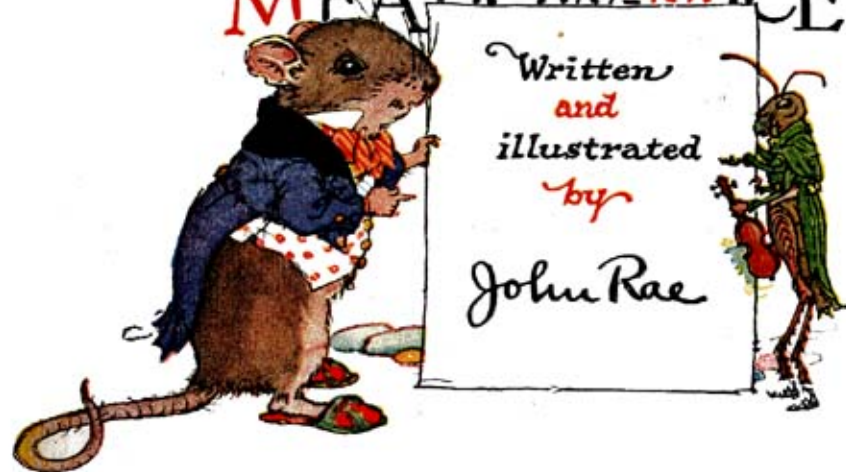
A WORD ABOUT THIS BOOK

THIS IS THE STORY of the grasshopper who fiddled all summer and didn't have any place to go when the cold winter wind began to blow. "No, you can't live in my house this winter," said the hard-hearted ant, but a family of field mice took in Grasshopper Green and gave him gooseberry syrup for his cough and made him very comfortable. Eyes will grow big at the exciting climax of the story, when Grasshopper Green saves the mice children from a big black cat.


This is another one of the Sunny Books, made for the special delight of children by authors and artists who know and love them, and who leave out fear, mischief, and cruelty. The story of Grasshopper Green is full of lively humor and emphasizes the virtues of kindness and generosity without moralizing.

This book is planned for children from six to nine years old. It can be read to children of three and over.

GRASSHOPPER GREEN and the MEADOW MICE



Published by
Algonquin Publishing Company
New York London

his Book is dedicated,
to Grasshoppers,
Meadow-Mice,
Fairies & Children:


especially to
Waltie,
Jackie
&
Robyn



GRASSHOPPER GREEN AND THE MEADOW-MICE

OF COURSE you know the story of "The Grasshopper and the Ant"—how one autumn, when the winds were growing raw and cold and the nights frosty, the poor Grasshopper, who hadn't done anything but fiddle and dance all through the pleasant summer and had nothing laid by for the hard winter, went to the thrifty Ant and asked for a bite to eat and a chance to warm his toes in the chimney corner. And how the tight-fisted Ant refused



The tight-fisted Ant 

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and said to the shivering Grasshopper, "Keep on fiddling and dancing, it may help to keep you warm!"

This always seemed to me *so* cruel.

Now you've probably wondered, just as I used to, whatever finally became of that Grasshopper.

Well, dear old Great-Grandfather Goodheart, who knows all about such things, told me the story one rainy day as we sat by the open fire roasting chestnuts. *I* enjoyed it so much that I'm sure *you* will too.

Now, make yourself comfortable and cozy and listen.

After the sneering Ant had banged the door in his face, Grasshopper Green felt, as you may imagine, miserable, forlorn and friendless.

It was growing dark. He turned up the collar of his threadbare claw-hammer coat and shuffled along over the frozen ground, scarcely noticing where his benumbed feet were taking him.

He tried wrapping himself in a fallen leaf; it was red and looked as though it might be warm. But, alas! it proved to be a very thin covering against the biting, icy wind.

He tried to cheer himself up by playing on his little fiddle, but his fingers were too cold to play lively, cheerful tunes.

At last, feeling too chilled and hungry and discouraged to go any further, he sank down at the foot of an old apple tree. This was some protection at least from the wintry blasts which, by now, were moaning, "Whoo-oooh-whoee-eeeh!"



JOHN RAE

among the bare branches in a very disheartening way.

Poor Grasshopper Green wrapped his leaf cape tightly about him and, in spite of his chattering teeth, finally fell into an uneasy sleep.

He dreamed that he was wandering over an immense field of ice. Suddenly there appeared before him a little red table, upon which was a large yellow bowl of steaming, fragrant broth! Beside the table stood a chair, over the back of which was thrown a thick, fur-lined coat.

Just as he reached for the coat, he heard a terrific howling, and the next moment a gigantic hand had swept past him, snatching away the coat and the soup, and so terrifying Grasshopper Green that he fell over backward—and awoke.

“Well, singe my whiskers, what’s this? What’s this?” he heard a hearty voice exclaiming, and, looking up, was astonished to find himself in the cosy home of a family of Meadow-Mice!

This is how it had happened. When Grasshopper Green sank down exhausted among the roots of the old apple tree, he had not noticed,

in the darkness, that he was leaning against a small door; this was the door of the home of the Meadow-Mouse family, who lived here in a hollow part of the tree, near the roots.

An especially strong gust of wind had blown the door open and tumbled Grasshopper Green into the room.

When he sat up and looked about he was not quite sure, at first, that this was not just a part of his dream.

Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse and their four children, Long-Tail, Sharp-Eyes, Pink-Ears, and Mouseykins, had finished their supper of cornbread and cheese, and Father Meadow-Mouse was telling of two narrow escapes he had had the night before, one from a horned owl and one from Farmer Green's cat, Mouser. He had just

come to the most exciting part of his adventures and all the family were listening with breathless interest, when the door, which had been left unbolted, blew open, as I have told you, and in tumbled poor Grasshopper Green.

Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse helped him over to their most comfortable chair, by the fire, for the poor fellow was so benumbed by the cold that he could hardly even stand alone.

While Grasshopper Green was explaining, in a wheezing voice, interrupted by coughs, how it was that he had burst in on them so rudely, Mother Meadow-Mouse filled a plate with food for him; then, bustling over to a corner cupboard, she got down a little jug of homemade Gooseberry syrup, poured some of it into a pannikin and set this on the fire to heat, saying as she



did so, "There's nothing like warmed Gooseberry syrup to break up a cough."

Father Meadow-Mouse would every now and then blow his nose and exclaim, "Well, singe my whiskers and twist my tail!" just to express his sympathy.

Of course the little Meadow-Mouse children

looked on with the greatest interest. When they saw their mother's treasured Gooseberry juice brought out they all pretended to have coughs, and Mother Meadow-Mouse good-naturedly gave them each a few drops.

When famished Grasshopper Green had eaten all he could—which, of course, seemed like very little to the big, hearty Meadow-Mice—and when he had drunk the delicious Gooseberry juice, he sank back in the comfortable chair with a contented sigh.

Just think how *heavenly* it must have seemed to him, after having been nearly frozen and starved to death, to be sitting cozily by a warm hearth after a good supper! Father Meadow-Mouse was helping Mother Meadow-Mouse to wash the supper dishes, which rattled in a very



homelike way. Long-Tail, Sharp-Eyes, Pink-Ears, and Mouseykins had started droning their lessons for the next day.

“What a *wonderfully* cheerful place this is,” said Grasshopper Green to himself, drowsily. “What beautiful blue furniture—and what a fine red tablecloth—what delightful yellow curtains—and what a good motto hanging over the mantle! ‘Do—unto—others—as—you—would—have — them—do—unto—you.’ ” Then Grasshopper Green went fast asleep in the chair.

Father Meadow-Mouse carried him into the children’s room, where there was an old cradle which was about the right size for him, for you see a grown-up Grasshopper is not much bigger than a baby mouse.

Good Father Meadow-Mouse then covered him up carefully with the very warmest blanket from his own bed.





Part Two

GRASSHOPPER GREEN felt so much better when he awoke in the morning, and a fine sunny morning it was, too, for the storm was over. The kindness of the Meadow-Mice, even more than the food and warmth, had made him feel almost like himself again, and if you've ever been acquainted with Grasshoppers, you know, of course, how sprightly and happy they naturally are.

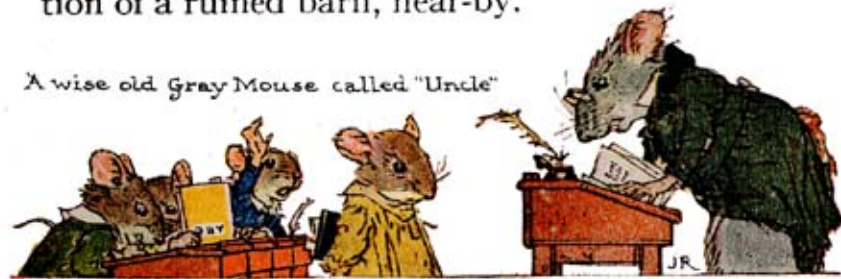
He was still rather weak, however; so Mother Meadow-Mouse, who was a famous nurse, made

him stay in bed and took care of him as if he had been one of her own family.

She put a mustard-seed poultice on his chest, and gave him a little hot corn gruel, and a drop or two of honey every two hours for his hoarseness.

Grasshopper Green improved so rapidly that by the time the young mice got home from school he was well enough to get up. I forgot to tell you that Long-Tail, Sharp-Eyes, Pink-Ears and Mouseykins were taught by a wise old grey mouse whom they called "Uncle." "Uncle" lived in a nice stone house, a hole in the foundation of a ruined barn, near-by.

A wise old Gray Mouse called "Uncle"



They were all very merry that evening at the supper table. Jolly Father Meadow-Mouse told them a rattling good yarn about the adventures of some young water-rats who put to sea in an old pie plate and determined to become pie-rats! (Your mother will explain this little joke.)



After supper, while the youngsters were doing their lessons, Grasshopper Green helped Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse with the dishes. It made him feel very sad to think that he must soon be leaving this pleasant household.

He thanked Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse for all their goodness, and started to say that he ought to be leaving the next morning, as he had nothing with which to pay for his keep, but Father Meadow-Mouse interrupted him.

“You’ll do no such thing,” he exclaimed heartily. “Now you just listen to me. If you want to pay us, you can do it in this way. Give us all dancing lessons, and play us a lively tune on your little fiddle now and then, for every one knows that all Grasshoppers are wonderful dancers and fiddlers.”

This plan, of course, just suited Grasshopper Green. In fact he was so delighted at the prospect of spending the winter with the merry, kind-hearted Meadow-Mice that he made a tremendous leap which carried him clear to the other end of the room. A second leap *almost* landed him in a pan of dish-water!

In the midst of his caperings there was a knock at the door.

It was Mr. and Mrs. White-Mouse, old friends of the Meadow-Mice, who had come to make a friendly call. Grasshopper Green had never seen any White-Mice before, and he thought them very beautiful and aristocratic with their pale complexions, ruby-colored eyes and long pinky tails. (For White-Mice *do* look that way, you know).

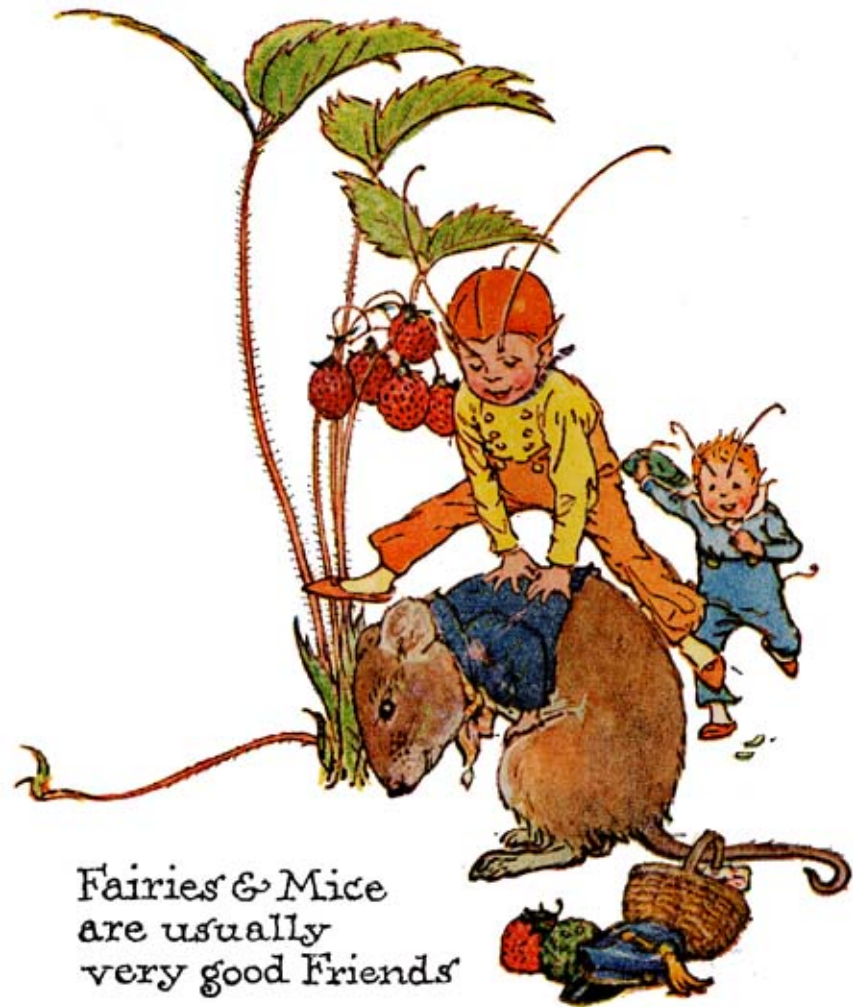
He learned later that they belonged to a little boy living in a near-by farm house.*

Rap, tap, tap!—more guests arrived: three dainty little roadside Fairies with these funny names, Sun-Flower-Seed, Thistle-Whistle, and Ragged Sailor. (Fairies and Mice are usually very good friends; in fact, Great-Grandfather Goodheart says—but I'll tell you about that some other time.)

Grasshopper Green had met Ragged Sailor before. He was quite a musician and carried his tiny golden accordion in the sailor blouse he always wore.

It wasn't long before Grasshopper Green had his tiny fiddle tuned up, and Ragged Sailor got

*This boy didn't keep the White-Mice in a cage but in a fine little house with stairs like a very perfect doll's house. His father helped him make it. These White-Mice were treated so kindly that they never wanted to run away, though now and then they would go to visit friends.



Fairies & Mice
are usually
very good Friends

out his accordion. Then they started to play the liveliest little tunes you ever heard.

The rest of the party pushed the chairs and table back against the wall, to make room for dancing and then—Bless your heart! *What* a good time they all had. I sometimes wish that I were small enough to dance with a Fairy or a Mouse. *Don't you?*

First they played the Pansy Petal Polka—a great favorite with the Fairies; then the Dragon Fly Dance and the Wheatfield Gavotte.*

They danced everything they could think of, from the ridiculous Caterpillar Crawl to the lovely Moon-Moth Minuet, ending up with the Grasshopper Hornpipe. In this dance, the

*This is a very simple but beautiful little dance in which all the dancers stand in a circle and sway like wheat-blades when the gentle west wind passes over the field.

They danced everything they could think of



object was to see which dancer could leap the highest and crack his heels together oftenest before he touched the floor.

Sunflower Seed did this the best of all, for she had a pair of beautiful striped wings, like a butterfly's, which enabled her to stay in the air as long as she pleased.



The Meadow-Mouse Children, who had gone to bed soon after the company came, were awakened by the noise of the Grasshopper Hornpipe, which was the most boisterous of all the dances.

Everybody was in such good humor that the little Meadow-Mice were allowed to stay up and come in, to join the fun.

Dancing so much had made everyone hungry; so Father Meadow-Mouse got the corn popper and they popped, and popped, and popped, and ate, and ate, and ate! I don't dare to tell you how much they ate. Especially the four youngsters. The Fairies, too, seemed very fond of the popcorn.

"It's such a nice change from rose pollen and honeysuckle juice," Thistle-Whistle remarked.

Well, finally, Mr. White-Mouse said, "We must really be going now, for it's getting very late."

"And so must we," said the Fairies, and that pleasant evening came to an end.

This, though, was only one of the many merry gatherings at the home of the Meadow-Mice.

Even when no friends dropped in they had fine cosy evenings.

Sometimes they would all play games, sometimes Father Meadow-Mouse would tell one of his entertaining stories, and sometimes Mrs. Meadow-Mouse would sing while Grasshopper Green accompanied her on his fiddle. Here's the chorus of one of her quaint little songs:



Some like Blue and some like Red,
But I like Yel-low when all is said.
Yes, give me Yel-low, if you please,
For Yel-low is the color of
Corn and Cheese!



Although, during the winter, Grasshopper Green hardly ever dared to go outdoors on account of the cold, which of course is very dangerous to Grasshoppers, he had such happy times with his new friends that the months passed very quickly.



EARLY one Saturday morning—it must have been about the end of February—Father Meadow-Mouse looked out of the window and saw that there had been quite a thaw during the night.

“Mother Meadow-Mouse,” said he, “it is much warmer this morning, and I think the ice that filled up that hole under Farmer Green’s corn-crib must be melted away. Now our larder is nearly empty; so you and I’d better go over there right away and get some corn before the squirrels wake up.”

So Mother Meadow-Mouse put on her little dark blue shawl, and Father Meadow-Mouse put on his little bright red muffler, and, taking two sacks with them, they started off to get the corn.

Grasshopper Green stayed home with the children (the day being Saturday, they didn’t have to go to school), for in spite of the thaw the weather was still too cold for him to safely venture out.



“Now, children,” said Grasshopper Green, “we’ll wash the breakfast dishes, and sweep and dust the room, and make everything spick and span to surprise your Mother and Father when they come back.”

So Long-Tail, Sharp-Eyes, Pink-Ears and Mouseykins all put on funny little blue aprons and fell to work, and in a very short time the dishes were all washed and dried and the room was as neat as a new pin.

When all the work was done, Grasshopper Green got out his fiddle and said that it was time for a dancing lesson.

Oh, how the little Meadow-Mouse Children enjoyed dancing lessons! Of course they couldn’t equal the wonderful twirling leaps of their teacher, Grasshopper Green, but they did very well, and you should have seen how gracefully they waved their tails; and that was something that Grasshopper Green couldn’t do—for the reason, of course, that he hadn’t any tail to wave.

The first part of the lesson was over, and Grasshopper Green was just starting to re-tune his little fiddle, when they heard a creaking sound—as if someone were cautiously trying to push open the front door, which was bolted on the inside.

Long-Tail, who happened to be standing near the little window, peeped out to see who was there, then suddenly jumped back and dived into the corner cupboard, squeaking in a trembly voice, "It's Mouser!"

Now "Mouser" was Farmer Green's big, yellow-eyed, black cat!

Father Meadow-Mouse had once said to Grasshopper Green, "Our home is so far away from the farmhouse and barn and is so well disguised that there is really no danger of that terrible Mouser ever finding it." But here he was at last!



Mouser, no doubt, had heard—perhaps the weasel who lived near-by had told him—that Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse had both gone out that morning, leaving the children alone.

He probably did not know that Grasshopper Green was there with the little Meadow-Mice, though, of course, even if he had, he wouldn't have thought anything of it. And what, indeed, could a little Grasshopper do against a big cat?

There was only one thing he could do, Grasshopper Green decided, and that was to go for help without a moment's delay. Now Grasshopper Green knew that Thistle-Whistle, the Fairy, lived with some rabbits in a rabbit-hole among the briars not far away, and he was sure that Thistle-Whistle, who was quite a powerful



Fairy, could in some way drive off Mouser and rescue the little Meadow-Mice.

So, not even stopping to put on a muffler, he raised the window very quietly and hopped out.

Mouser was intent on trying to open the door by clawing and pushing, and didn't notice the window at all.

Then you should have seen Grasshopper Green's tremendous leaps! You may be sure he went faster than any Grasshopper had ever hopped before. Warmed by his excitement and exertions, he didn't feel the cold a bit.

He soon reached the rabbit-hole. Alas! The Fairy was not there. As Grasshopper Green turned to go, he spied a small chest standing near the door. At the sight of this a brilliant idea immediately popped into his head!

ThistleWhistle lived with some Rabbits

Now listen! In that chest were some tiny black pellets, about the size of mustard seeds.*

Snatching up two or three of the magic seeds, he jumped out of the hole and hopped back to the hollow apple tree even faster than he had come. He got in by way of the little window and immediately swallowed one of the pellets, then wished himself as large as a bull-dog!

It was fortunate for him that he didn't choose any larger size than that, for as it was, his head just bumped the ceiling.

Not more than two seconds after Grasshopper Green had changed his size, Mouser managed to burst open the door!

*Thistle-Whistle and Grasshopper Green had become great friends that winter and the Fairy had told Grasshopper Green about these Magic Pellets; you swallowed one of them and then wished yourself any size you wished to be—as small as a Flea or as big as an Elephant, or any size in between.



What a strange-looking Monster he would be !

At the sight that met his eyes, the Cat was nearly paralyzed with surprise. And no wonder.

Although a Grasshopper is usually a very good natured little fellow he has a really terrifying face, but we don't notice it because he's so small.

Look very closely at one sometime and then try to imagine what a strange looking monster he would be if he were as big as a dog!

Great-Grandfather Goodheart said, when he told me the story, that Mouser never stopped running until he got to the next village, five miles away, and that he shrieked out to every animal he passed on the way that he had seen a dragon!

At any rate, he was never seen about Farmer Green's place again. And that certainly was a great relief to all the Meadow-Mice, I can tell you.

As soon as Mouser had disappeared in the distance, Grasshopper Green swallowed another pellet and wished himself back to his usual size. Then he called to the Meadow-Mouse children to come out of their hiding places and told them the good news. For Long-Tail and Sharp-Eyes had been squeezed in the cupboard and Pink-

Ears and Mouseykins under the bed all this time.

Pretty soon Father and Mother Meadow-Mouse returned with their sacks full of corn.

When they heard that Mouser had been so frightened that he would probably never come back to worry them, you can guess how happy they were and how they capered about.

They sent out invitations right away for a fine big party in honor of Grasshopper Green, who was, of course, the hero of the hour.



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