

Grand-Daddy Whiskers, M.D.

Nellie M. Leonard

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER I A MESSAGE FROM THE WOODFOLK

CHAPTER II BACK TO THE LAKE

CHAPTER III GRAND-DADDY BEGINS HIS WORK

CHAPTER IV DOT SQUEAKY'S SUMMER SCHOOL

CHAPTER V A WOODS FIRE

CHAPTER VI DR. WHISKER'S BUSY DAY

CHAPTER VII TWIN TAILS

CHAPTER VIII WIGGLE BORROWS THE AUTOMOBILE

CHAPTER IX AUTUMN LEAVES

CHAPTER X SNOWED IN

ILLUSTRATIONS

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"All aboard for Pond Lily Lake!" he cried gaily

The heavy furniture cart was pulled down the last hill

"Will you walk into my parlor, Dr. Whiskers?"

Dr. Whiskers worked deftly away, setting the broken limb

Webbie Spider raised his paw

They worked bravely with Uncle Squeaky for captain

The little band began to play Silvy's Waltz

Dr. Whiskers twisted and pulled upon the hook

It was long past midnight when tired old Grand-daddy pulled off his boots.

"Fetch that creoline bottle, Silvy," repeated Grand-daddy sternly.

"Hold your breath, now"

They had good fun picking the brown nuts from the soft, silky linings of the burrs.

Sure enough, next morning poor Buster could hardly see out of his eyes.

"And so," explained Uncle Squeaky, "he went on a hop, skip and jump like this"

He folded his paws as Mammy had taught him long ago, tossed his head high and sang merrily.

GRAND-DADDY WHISKERS M.D.

CHAPTER I

A MESSAGE FROM THE WOODFOLK

Nimble-toes Field-mouse trotted briskly along the dark subway and up the steep attic stairway in Mr. Giant's house. He had travelled a long way from his woodland home and it was getting late. The door of the cosy attic where Cousin Graymouse lived was ajar. Nimble-toes paused to get his breath and peep in at the busy, happy family.

Mother Graymouse sat in her rocking-chair singing to little Squealer. Tiny, Teenty and Buster Graymouse were playing upon the floor near by with their cousins, Wink and Wiggle Squeaky. Aunt Squeaky and Uncle Hezekiah were busy around the stove. Grand-daddy and Granny Whiskers sat in the chimney corner waiting patiently for their supper.

From the pantry came Silver Ears Graymouse and Dot Squeaky, bringing food to the table.

"I hope Limpy-toes Graymouse and Scamper Squeaky have not gone away," thought Nimble-toes.

Somebody stole softly up behind him; two paws blindfolded his eyes.

"It is Limpy-toes," he guessed, trying to be brave in that dark, strange place.

"Right you are, Nimble-toes," laughed Limpy-toes. "Scamper and I have been over to the store to get some cheese. I thought you were a burglar, just at first. Push open the door and trot in."

"It is Cousin Nimble-toes!" cried a noisy chorus of little mice.

"It is Nimble-toes Field-Mouse, sure as I'm a mouse!" declared Uncle

Squeaky. "Welcome to our attic, my lad."

[Illustration: Somebody stole softly up behind him, two paws blindfolded his eyes.]

"You must be hungry after your long tramp, Nimble-toes," said Mother Graymouse. "Supper is all ready."

The little mice crowded around their cousin from the Pond Lily Lake country. They all talked at once, squealing excitedly and asking all sorts of questions, until poor Nimble-toes was bewildered.

At last he climbed upon a little red stool and shouted in Uncle Squeaky's ear:

"I've a message for Grand-daddy Whiskers. Please make 'em be still a minute, Uncle Hezekiah."

Uncle Squeaky rapped smartly upon the floor with his cane. At once there was silence.

"Fetch your little stools and sit down to supper, every last mouse of you!" he commanded. "Let your victuals fill your mouths and stop your noise. Nimble-toes has brought a word for Grand-daddy."

In a twinkling they were all seated around the long table. Nimble-toes sat beside Grand-daddy, so he could talk with him easily, for Grand-daddy's left ear had been torn in a trap and he was somewhat deaf.

"Now we are as still as mice," chuckled Grand-daddy. "Speak out, Nimble-toes."

"I have a message from our woodfolk, Grand-daddy," began Nimble-toes. "No one could write a letter, so they told me what to say. I've said it forty-'leven times, lest I forget. The message is from Pa Field-Mouse, Squire Cricket, Sir Spider, Daddy Grasshopper, Mr. Hop Toad, and Mr. Jack Rabbit. They bade me say this:

"Dr. Grand-daddy Whiskers--

"We woodfolk are sometimes sick; we need a doctor. We wish our children to have a teacher. They must learn to read and write. Our wives must learn to cook and sew. We wish to be civilized. We miss Uncle Squeaky's band. Please come to Pond Lily Lake and help us."

"We'll come, all right, Nimble-toes," interrupted Wiggle.

"We'll surely come," promised Wink. "Hurrah for another summer at Pond Lily Lake!"

"Hush! hush!" cried Mother Graymouse.

"You will put your noses in a dark corner instead of eating supper, if you interrupt again," warned Uncle Squeaky, scowling at his excited twins.

"Are there many sick ones?" asked Grand-daddy.

"Squire Cricket has a sore throat, Lady Spider is ailing, and almost everyone is sneezing," replied Nimble-toes.

"They really need you, Grand-daddy," advised Aunt Belindy Squeaky.

"Our kiddies need the country sunshine after being shut up all winter in this attic," added Mother Graymouse.

"Limpy-toes shall help Grand-daddy, I'll be his nurse, and Dot will make a lovely school teacher," planned Silver Ears.

"I'd love to teach the little Spider, Cricket and Grasshopper kiddies," smiled Dot Squeaky.

"Ah, there's lots of goodies down by the Lake!" reminded Buster. "There's strawberries, blueberries, apples, potatoes, sweet corn--let's go right away, Grand-daddy."

Granny Whiskers sat silently rocking while the others chattered eagerly. Grand-daddy watched her as she wiped away a tear and sighed wearily.

"What do you say, Granny? You enjoyed last summer's vacation at the Lake, didn't you?" he asked.

"Ah, Zenas, it was pleasant enough; pleasant enough, to be sure! But I cannot bear to think of leaving our dear attic home. You went away last winter with Hezekiah and Scamper. And what happened? Why, we nearly fretted our hearts out, waiting for your return. Something was always happening at the Lake. Baby Squealer got lost, Wiggle 'most got drowned, Limpy-toes came near burning to death, and the barn burned to the ground. If you listen to me, Zenas Whiskers, you'll tell Pa Field-Mouse and his neighbors that you cannot be their doctor. Let us stay safely in our attic where there is nothing to harm us."

Grand-daddy looked sadly disappointed.

"I always wanted to live in the country and be a doctor, Granny," he sighed.

"Bless my stars, Granny," laughed Uncle Squeaky, "we found Squealer without much fuss; Nimble-toes fished Wiggle out of the pond, and Limpy-toes didn't get even the patch on his trouser's knee scorched. To be sure, the barn did burn down. Lucky we were at the Lake, I'm thinking. Just take a nap, Granny, and forget your notion that this attic is the safest spot in the world. Nimble-toes' coming has stirred up my Gipsy blood. It is summertime again and the country is the place for your Uncle Hezekiah. We'll start for the Lake as soon as we can pack our belongings, Nimble-toes. Let me give you some more pudding."

"I really feel called to go, Granny," argued Grand-daddy earnestly. "Just think of those kiddies who cannot read or write. You can help Betsey and Belindy teach their mothers how to make these delicious puddings and cookies. You can help me brew medicines. Think of those poor kiddies, as sweet and good as our own pretty ones, and they may be having the colic, or the tooth-ache, the whooping-cough or the measles, and never a doctor to dose 'em with peppermint and cure-all salve. I see that you and I are needed at the Lake."

Granny began to look interested.

"I suppose so, Zenas, I suppose so. I know you are a good doctor, a grand doctor, indeed. But it's a big risk to leave our cosy attic home and travel amid dangers."

"We will go, Granny," decided Grand-daddy. "I promise you solemnly that Hezekiah and I will take good care of our big family and bring you all back, safe and sound, before snow flies."

Granny still looked worried.

"Ah well, Zenas, we shall see! Ah yes, we shall see!" she sighed as she sipped her tea.

After supper the little mice had to show Nimble-toes all the wonderful toys that Uncle and Grand-daddy had brought from the city.

Uncle Squeaky began to pull out boxes and bags in which to pack his shirts and neckties.

"Hurrah, Grand-daddy!" he cried. "I'm as excited as the kiddies. Bless my stars, but they are giving Nimble-toes a jolly good time! Pond Lily Lake until snow flies ah, but it's a great country down there!"

"I'm a-thinking if I do much doctoring and we fetch greedy Buster, little Squealer, and those mischievous twinnies of yours home safe and sound, that it will not be all vacation fun between now and snow-time," said Grand-daddy. "Better tuck the kiddies into the blankets early, Hezekiah. We have a busy day ahead of us on the morrow."

CHAPTER II

BACK TO THE LAKE

Their attic home was a bare-looking place by the next evening. All day long the little mice had trotted down the dark subway, carrying their treasures to the entrance near Mr. Giant's back doorstep. Here was hidden the cart which Grand-daddy had made from a stout box and four big spools. It was piled high with furniture, boxes of food and clothing, and all sorts of supplies.

Dot and Silver Ears had rummaged in Mrs. Giant's trunk and chosen pretty pieces of cloth from which they could make dainty summer gowns. Aunt Squeaky and Mother Graymouse had spent the day baking ginger cookies, jelly tarts, and other goodies. Granny Whiskers had helped Grand-daddy make a stout bag and packed it with his precious medicines.

Near their furniture cart stood the wonderful automobile which Limpy-toes had invented and built in the long winter evenings. He had taken the wheels and springs from an old clock in the attic. The whole family was quite proud of Limpy-toes' automobile. Early the next morning, he meant to make a trial trip and take Dr. Grand-daddy to the Lake.

"Please let me ride with you and Grand-daddy, Limpy-toes?" begged Buster.

"Better not, Buster Boy," grinned Uncle Squeaky. "There's a whole load of goodies on our cart. Mammy and Aunt Belindy baked lots of good stuff to eat."

"Mammy will give me some cakes in my pocket. I want to ride in the automobile. Please let me, Limpy?"

"All right," agreed Limpy-toes good-naturedly. "Cousin Nimble-toes may ride also."

Nimble-toes opened his eyes wide.

"Excuse me, if you please, Limpy-toes," he said quickly. "I will help Uncle Squeaky pull the cart. I'm sort of scared of a cart that'll go without pulling or pushing. It may run away with you."

"And it may have to be pushed or pulled," teased Uncle Squeaky.

"It is every bit as good as Mr. Giant's automobile," insisted Buster. "I'm not the leastest bit scared. I know it will go whizzing. Ah, what sport we will have!"

"Grand-daddy will start very early, for he must find a house near his patients. If you wish to ride with Limpy-toes, you must trot off to bed right now, Buster," decided Mother Graymouse. "Aunt Belindy and I are going down cellar to say good-by to Polly Scrabble and her babies."

Next morning, while the Giant family were sound asleep, Grand-daddy, Limpy-toes and Buster tip-toed softly down to the entrance.

"Do not make too much noise cranking your automobile, Limpy-toes," whispered Grand-daddy. "We do not wish to disturb Mr. Giant." Limpy-toes pushed in the key and began to wind the stiff spring.

"See if you can turn it any more, Grand-daddy. Perhaps your paws are stronger than mine."

Grand-daddy gave it several twists. Then Limpy-toes hopped upon the seat and grasped the wheel.

"All aboard for Pond Lily Lake!" he called gaily. Grand-daddy and Buster scrambled in. The automobile made a dash through the chrysanthemum bushes into the driveway. On and on they sped, past the new barn, by the poultry houses and the sweet apple tree. Grand-daddy pulled his cap closer.

"Ah!" cried Buster, "this is fun. But is it running away, Limpy-toes?"

"Oh, no, I am steering it and can stop any minute," answered Limpy-toes.

"A wonderful invention," praised Grand-daddy. "Now if any creature is sick, Dr. Whiskers will be there in a jiffy. Ah! What is the trouble, Limpy-toes?"

The automobile had come to a sudden stop at the edge of Mr. Giant's orchard.

"It has stopped," explained Limpy-toes.

"So I see," chuckled Grand-daddy.

[Illustration: _ "All aboard for Pond Lily Lake!" he called gaily._]

"I'll crank it up." So Limpy-toes pushed in the key and wound, and wound,

and wound. Then they started on again.

"Runs fine," said Grand-daddy.

"Most takes my breath away," gasped Buster. "Say, Limpy-toes, why are we stopping?"

"Run down again, I guess," sighed Limpy-toes.

"Must we stop every few minutes and wear our paws out cranking it up forty-'leven times?" grumbled Grand-daddy.

Again they were off--and again they stopped. This time they were in the middle of Mr. Giant's clover field.

"Sakes alive, Limpy-toes! Suppose I was on my way to see a sick mouse? He'd die maybe, or else be all cured, before I could ever get there."

"Automobiles need lots of twistity," argued Buster. "Mr. Giant has to twist his automobile. I heard Robert Giant say there was twistity in the batteries."

"Why doesn't it go this time?" demanded Grand-daddy.

"The key must have bounced out when we struck that big stone near the ash heap," said Limpy-toes. "I will trot back and find it."

"And I'll take my stout cane and my own strong legs and trot toward the Lake, if you don't mind," decided Grand-daddy. "You and Buster can finish your pleasure trip a little at a time, but I have business to look after and a house to hire before the rest of the family catch up with us."

He started off at a brisk pace. Buster sat on the front seat and nibbled ginger cookies, while Limpy-toes limped back to find the lost key.

By-and-by, Buster's cookies were all eaten, so he strolled off to help Limpy-toes.

"Never mind, Limpy," he said, looking up into his big brother's sad face. "It is a fine automobile, if you do have to twist it often. We can have nice rides around the Lake."

But Limpy-toes would not be comforted.

"I wanted an automobile that would fetch Dr. Grand-daddy to his patients very quickly. I must study until I make better power than this clock spring. Ah, here is the key! We must hurry, or Uncle Squeaky will catch up and laugh to find us by the roadside."

Grand-daddy and Pa Field-Mouse were standing on the bungalow steps talking earnestly together when Limpy-toes drove up.

"A fine automobile, Pa Field-Mouse," said Grand-daddy, waving his paw. "My grandson is a great inventor; he will be famous some day."

"Ah!" cried Buster, "how good our Gray Rock Bungalow looks! See the pretty hemlocks and sweet ferns, Limpy."

"Wait until you see the fine house the neighbors have built for me!"

exclaimed Grand-daddy. "They felt sure that I would come. Silvy would call it Wild Rose Cottage. It is a real bower of roses. Here come our folk, now. Wait and I'll tell you all about it."

The heavy furniture cart was pulled down the last hill and stopped at the door of Gray Rock Bungalow. Grand-daddy held up his paw and hushed the merry chatter of the travellers.

[Illustration: _The heavy furniture cart was pulled down the last hill._]

"Listen!" he cried. "Do not unload my belongings. These kind woodfolk have made me a splendid house right at the center of their village. I want Limpy-toes to be my helper and stay with me. If Dot teaches school, she must come with us, for her scholars live near by. Granny needs Silvy to help with the housework. She and Dot can be together and when I need a nurse, Silvy will be right handy."

"A fine plan," agreed Uncle Squeaky, "only our family at the Gray Rock will be rather small."

"Limpy-toes will fetch us all over in the automobile every evening," smiled Silver Ears. "I shall love to help Granny and be with Dot. May Limpy-toes and I go, Mammy? You will not mind?"

"Surely you may go, dearie," smiled Mother Graymouse bravely. "You will be happiest where you can do the most good, and Granny needs you just now."

"With such a small family, Betsey and I can manage the work nicely," said Aunt Squeaky.

"Ah, it is good to get back to our woodland home!" cried Uncle Squeaky. "Many paws will soon set our rooms in order. Then we will trot over to Wild Rose Cottage and help Dr. Whiskers get his pine-needle beds ready before moon-rise."

CHAPTER III

GRAND-DADDY BEGINS HIS WORK

"Good-morning to you, Grand-daddy!" said Uncle Squeaky cheerily the next morning. "How are all the folk at Wild Rose Cottage?"

"Nicely, Hezekiah, nicely," grinned Dr. Whiskers. "Dot and Silvy are helping Granny make our rooms cosy, and I am going to visit my first patient."

"I want Limpy-toes to go over to Polly-Wog Bridge and help get my boat afloat upon the Lake. I mean to catch some fish and have Belindy fry 'em for dinner."

"Limpy-toes has gone with Nimble-toes to fetch a load of wood. They will soon be at home. It is only a short walk to Sir Spider's house; I shall not need Limpy-toes this morning."

[Illustration: _Will you walk into my parlor Dr. Whiskers?_]]

"Is Sir Spider ill?" asked Uncle Squeaky.

"Lady Spider has been cleaning her parlor. She is overtired and ailing and wishes to see me."

"Hm!" said Uncle Squeaky thoughtfully, "I heard Ruth Giant sing a song one day:

'Will you walk into my parlor,
Said the Spider to the fly.'

"If I remember aright, that fly came to grief in Lady Spider's parlor. Better watch out, Dr. Grand-daddy."

"Don't worry, Hezekiah, and good-day to you, for I must be on my way. I will keep out of Lady Spider's parlor."

Dr. Whiskers rapped upon Sir Spider's door. Lady Spider opened it.

"Will you walk into my parlor, Dr. Whiskers?" she said sweetly, as she held aside the cobweb draperies of her spick-and-span parlor.

Dr. Whiskers wanted to run away. Those were the very words that Uncle Squeaky had recited!

"Ah, well," he decided quickly, "as I am not a fly and have my stout cane in my paw, I'll be a brave doctor mouse and try to cure Lady Spider. Maybe she is not so sly as some folk think."

So he entered her pretty parlor, admiring the beautiful silken draperies.

"I am glad that you have come to our village, Dr. Whiskers," began Lady Spider, sitting beside him on the moss green divan. "We've had a hard time. Sir Spider lost one of his legs a while ago; but would you believe it--a new one has begun to grow! He feels better and is building a bridge across our brook. I'm just worn out with the Spring cleaning and spinning, and the care of my big family. My eyes ache all the time, Dr. Whiskers."

"Ah, yes! Spring fever, I've no doubt. I have been told that you are very busy,--a skillful weaver and splendid housekeeper. But my dear Lady Spider, health is better than silk draperies. I fear you strain your many eyes searching for dust and dirt. When my one pair of eyes get tired, I have a headache; with your many eyes, you must suffer much pain. But cheer up. I will give you some medicine and you will soon feel like a new Spider. Please fetch a glass of water."

Dr. Whiskers took a bottle of dried checker-berries from his bag. He dropped ten of them into the water.

"These red pills are a splendid tonic. Take a sip of the medicine several times each day and your many eyes will stop aching."

"I will follow your directions carefully, Dr. Whiskers," smiled Lady Spider. "Is there really to be a school where my little Webbie, Spinnie, Tony, and Patty can be taught the civilized ways of your learned family?"

"We have just arrived at the Lake and are hardly settled. There will soon

be a school. My grand-daughter, Dot Squeaky, will be the teacher. A sweet young lady mouse she is, if I am her grand-daddy and maybe ought not to boast of her smartness. I must bid you good-day, Lady Spider. I will come in next week and see if you are better."

"A very pleasant call," thought Dr. Whiskers, as he trotted along the country road. "Lady Spider does not seem to be a harmful creature. Hello! Here I am at Squire Cricket's gateway. I must cure his sore throat."

Squire Cricket came to the door. He wore a red flannel around his neck and his voice was hoarse as he greeted Dr. Whiskers.

"Nimble-toes said you needed some medicine," began Dr. Whiskers. "I see you are wearing the red flannel that Granny sent. She believes that red flannel will cure almost anything."

"It's no good," croaked Squire Cricket. "I've worn it ever since Nimble-toes fetched it, and I'm still as hoarse as Grandpa Bull Frog."

"Ah well, if Mistress Cricket will fetch a glass of water, I will fix a gargle that will help you."

He sprinkled some salt into the water which Mistress Cricket brought.

"Now, Squire Cricket, if you will use this mixture, a spoonful every hour, and rub a little cure-all salve under your red flannel at night, we'll soon have your voice as clear as a lark's, and the soreness all gone. How many kiddies shall you send to my grand-daughter's summer school, Mistress Cricket?"

"Our two children, Sammie and Fidelia, must go. I hope Miss Squeaky will teach music. Our children love to fiddle. We all enjoyed Mr. Squeaky's band last summer. It was good news when we heard that you were coming back to the Lake."

Just then, Sammie Cricket hopped excitedly in.

"Oh, Dr. Whiskers, old Daddy Longlegs has had an accident! He wants you to come at once," cried Sammie.

Dr. Whiskers snatched up his bag and rushed across the fields to Daddy Longleg's home.

"I've broken one of my legs, Dr. Whiskers," cried Daddy Longlegs. "Can you mend it for me, or must I limp on a cane the rest of my days?"

"Mend it? Of course I can," laughed Dr. Whiskers. "Let me catch my breath. I hustled some and am puffing considerable. Now then for some splints and a stout string. If you were younger, I'd rub in some cure-all salve and wait for another leg to grow, as Sir Spider's has done. We'll take no chances, however; I'll mend your broken leg."

Dr. Whiskers worked deftly away, setting the broken limb and wrapping it neatly in splints and a white bandage. Now and then he whistled a bit of Mammy's Lullaby, for he was happy in his work.

"It feels 'most as good as new; just a bit stiff," declared Daddy Longlegs. "I don't know how we have managed all these years without a doctor. Welcome to our village, Dr. Whiskers!"

"A beautiful village it is," replied Grand-daddy. "I like to spend my summers near Pond Lily Lake. Now I must say good-day. Don't use that leg for a few days and it will mend all right. No crutches for old Daddy Longlegs this time."

That evening the whole family gathered at Gray Rock Bungalow. Dr. Whiskers had many stories to tell of his first day's practice in the Lake village.

[Illustration: _Dr. Whiskers worked deftly away, setting the broken limb.]_

Uncle Squeaky brought out his fiddle and all the little mice stood around his arm-chair and sang their merry songs.

"Come, Dr. Whiskers," called Granny at last, "we must start home. You have had a busy day and Dot wants Limpy-toes to build her school-room tomorrow. Good-night, folkses. Yes, Limpy-toes, I suppose I can ride in your automobile. But do be careful and not break your old Granny's neck. We must all help Grand-daddy to keep his promise to fetch us all safely to our dear attic home before snow flies."

CHAPTER IV

DOT SQUEAKY'S SUMMER SCHOOL

The spot which Dot chose for her schoolroom was down in a lane behind Wild Rose Cottage.

Uncle Squeaky helped Scamper and Limpy-toes set four strong corner posts and made a roof of green boughs to shelter the kiddies when it rained; but there were no walls to shut out the fresh air and sunshine. There were rows of green mossy seats and a desk in which Dot could keep her books and papers.

Tiny, Teenty and Buster gathered wild flowers to decorate their pretty school-room.

Pete and Dickie Grasshopper stopped on their way home from the Lake.

"May we come to school, Miss Dot?" asked Dickie.

"Surely; any one who wishes to learn to read and write may come. But you must obey your teacher."

"We could not come every day," said Pete.

"I shall not teach every day," smiled Dot. "One day is lesson day; the next is play day."

"I brought this stick for you," said Dickie, presenting Dot a smooth willow stick. "If Bobsey Rabbit or Tony Spider play any tricks, just give 'em a walloping."

"Thank you, Dickie. I will hang it over my desk, but I think I shall not

need to use it."

"She may wallop you, Dickie," laughed Pete as they hopped home.

At last the school-room was finished. Limpy-toes and Buster rode around the village in the automobile and invited the children to come to Miss Squeaky's school. Limpy-toes got quite angry with Grandpa Bull Frog.

"He was ever so impolite, Mammy," he complained. "He said he'd never send his family to a Graymouse school. He said that Uncle Squeaky's band couldn't play as good as the Frog Orchestra, and that Uncle Squeaky didn't know anything about the Lake, if he did make a raft and float around. Ah, Grandpa Bull Frog thinks he is a wonderful fellow!"

Granny Whiskers was interested in the pupils' names which Dot wrote in her school book.

"Pete and Dickie Grasshopper and Sammie Cricket!" she exclaimed. "Why, Dot Squeaky, they are too old to begin school! Baby Wee Field-Mouse and little Squealer won't do a thing but play and squeal."

"I think I can teach them all something, Granny," laughed Dot.

"There's a good many Spider and Grasshopper kiddies," said Silver Ears. "Pete and Dickie have two sisters, Molly and Dolly. Hopsy Toad is a cute little fellow. Topsy Toad must be his twin sister. Webbie, Spinnie, Tony, and Patty Spider! You will have a big school, Cousin Dot."

"Fidelia Cricket is going with Sammie," added Granny. "Ah, I see that Mr. Jack Rabbit is sending his two boys--Bunny and Bobsey. I fear you will have your paws full, Dot."

"If I can manage my two small brothers, I'll not fear the others."

"Tiny and Teenty are great gigglers," said Silver Ears. "It takes Mammy Graymouse to teach them their lessons. If they don't mind, just tell Mammy."

School began upon a lovely summer morning. Dot found many pupils waiting upon the green moss seats.

"What a splendid school! I am proud," she exclaimed as she tossed her pink sun hat upon her desk. "I shall soon teach you some pretty songs, but this morning Fidelia Cricket has promised to fiddle for us."

Fidelia tripped smilingly up to the desk and stood beside Miss Dot while she fiddled a cheery little tune.

Then Dot gave them all some paper and pencils and taught them to write A, B, C. Even Dickie Grasshopper bent over his work, scowling eagerly as he tried to make the pretty letters.

To be sure, little Squealer would squeal every time little Wee pinched him, which was quite often, for Wee loved to hear him squeal.

And Bunny Rabbit had to keep trotting out to his lunch basket to nibble the nice yellow carrot that Mother Rabbit had put in for Bunny and Bobsey's lunch.

"They are only babies after all," excused Dot. "They haven't learned school ways and rules."

"Now we will do something else," said Dot by-and-by. "Put away your pencils and I will teach you some numbers. Listen. One and one are two. Everybody say it."

The noisy chorus was almost deafening as they all shouted, "One and one are two!"

"If I should give Hopsy Toad one piece of candy and Dickie Grasshopper should give him one piece, how many would he have?" asked Dot.

Buster waved both paws.

"Well, Buster, how many?"

"Not any; he'd eat 'em up," said Buster.

"But if he did not eat them?" laughed Dot.

Webbie Spider raised his paw.

"You may tell us, Webbie."

"One and one are two pieces of candy," answered Webbie.

[Illustration: _Webbie Spider raised his paw_.]

"Right. You are a smart scholar, Webbie."

"Then please, Miss Dot, don't give the candies to Hopsy--give 'em to me."

"Now here is a harder problem," went on Dot. "If Bunny Rabbit had two red apples, and I took one away from him, how many red apples would he have?"

"You couldn't do it, Miss Dot!" cried Bunny. "I wouldn't give it to you, so you better not try."

Wiggle Squeaky hopped up excitedly.

"Bunny was saucy. Why don't you get the willow stick, Dot?" he cried.

Bunny turned around and wrinkled his funny pink nose and stuck out his tongue at Wiggle. All the kiddies shouted and laughed.

"Hush! hush!" said Dot sternly. "You must learn not to laugh in school. Wiggle must not meddle. And Bunny--if I had my looking-glass here, so he could see how he looked, I know he wouldn't make such a silly face again. Bunny did not mean to be saucy. He just said what he thought was the truth."

"Now," continued Dot with a smile, "if I had two apples and Bobsey Rabbit took one away from me, how many apples would I have?"

Molly Grasshopper stood up quickly.

"Not any apple, Miss Squeaky!" she cried, "'cause Bunny would grab the other one."

"Now once more; how many are one and one?"

"One and one are two!" they recited in a shrill chorus.

"Right. You all remember very nicely," praised Dot.

So the lessons went merrily on all that long summer day.

"I shall need you to help me, Silvy," said Dot after school when the cousins were strolling together among the wild blossoms. "I have a big class and they are such lively youngsters that it will take some time to tame them. But it is real fun."

"I'll love to come if Doctor Grand-daddy doesn't find any patients for me to nurse," agreed Silver Ears. "Let's ask Limpy-toes to take us over to Gray Rock Bungalow in the automobile tonight. Mammy and Aunt Squeaky will wish to hear about your school."

"I must ask Pa Squeaky to fetch his fiddle and teach the kiddies some new music. Mrs. Cricket wants Sammie and Fidelia to have lessons on their fiddles."

Dot entertained the whole family that evening with her school stories. They laughed heartily over Bunny and Bobsey.

"They must be real baby clowns!" chuckled Uncle Squeaky. "Never mind, Dot, keep at 'em until they all learn their A, B, C's and remember to keep your willow walloping stick handy."

CHAPTER V

A WOODS FIRE

"Mercy on us, Hezekiah! It seems as if I could smell smoke!" cried Aunt Squeaky one hot summer afternoon.

"Now, Belindy, please don't begin sniffing for smoke," grinned Uncle Squeaky. "I haven't heard you mention smoke for quite a spell."

"I can smell smoke, Pa," said Wink.

"So can I," agreed Wiggle.

"Bless my stars, I guess you can!" exclaimed Uncle Squeaky as he went to the door. "Is the whole village afire?" Off he started without even snatching up his cap. The smoke rolled up in great, choking clouds.

"Oh, dearie me!" moaned Granny, "the woods are all afire. We shall all be burned. Why didn't we stay safely in our dear attic home? Oh, dearie me!"

"I hope Wild Rose Cottage and Dot's schoolroom down in Grasshopper Lane will not burn," sighed Aunt Squeaky. "This is a play day, so the kiddies are not in school."

"I'm going to the fire," decided Mother Gray-mouse. "Perhaps I can help. Get some buckets, Limpy-toes. I will call Scamper, Buster, Wink, and Wiggle. We cannot let the village burn up."

Most of the woodfolk were at the fire. Some poured on pails of water from the Lake; other groups stood talking wildly as they watched the leaping flames.

"I wish we had engines and hose-reels like the Giant fire-men used when the barn was on fire," sighed Silver Ears.

Uncle Squeaky ran here, there, and everywhere; filling pails, pouring water, beating burning bushes with Mother Graymouse's best broom, and shouting excited orders to the crowd of scared woodland folk.

The fire crept nearer to Wild Rose Cottage.

"It will be a shame if Dr. Whiskers loses his new house," said Sir Spider.

"He shall not lose it," replied Uncle Squeaky. "I'll set a back fire." He rushed into the house and got a pawful of matches. Then he set fire to the little bushes behind Grand-daddy's house.

"Neighbor Squeaky has gone crazy!" declared Sir Spider to Daddy Grasshopper. But as they watched him beat the burning bushes to a blackened mass, they saw that Uncle Squeaky knew what he was doing.

"Neighbor Squeaky has saved Dr. Whisker's house. That burned patch cannot burn again, Sir Spider," cried Daddy Grasshopper. "Come on. We will make a little fire around Pa Field-Mouse's cottage."

"Pile of Rails Cottage is on fire!" cried Scamper Squeaky as he trotted by. "Come on and help Pa Field-Mouse!"

They rushed to the Field-Mouse's Cottage, but the little cedars which overhung the roof were already a mass of crackling flames. "Nothing more can be saved for Neighbor Field-Mouse. Help me build back fires up yonder and save Neighbor Hop Toad's house."

[Illustration: _They worked bravely with Uncle Squeaky for captain._]

They worked bravely with Uncle Squeaky for captain, and, following his directions, they finally stopped the dreadful fire. Then tired out, they sat under the laurel bushes to rest and talk it over.

"How did the fire start?" asked Uncle Squeaky.

"One of those Skunk kids was trying to smoke a grape-vine cigarette," piped Tony Spider. "I saw him."

"Where did he get matches?" demanded Uncle Squeaky.

"Prob'ly he stole 'em," sputtered Mistress Grasshopper. "I should think Dinah Skunk would wallop those little Skunks forty times a day. They are a mean crowd."

"And poor Debbie Field-Mouse's home is in ruins, all because of little Skunk's cigarette. Sniff! sniff! sniff!" cried Mother Graymouse.

"A Lake full of water and no way to put out a fire," scolded Aunt Squeaky. "I guess likely, Hezekiah, I shall worry some more about smoke. Let me catch a kiddie smoking cigarettes!"

"Poor Debbie! I'm so sorry for you, dearie," moaned Granny Whiskers.

Debby Field-Mouse smiled calmly.

"Ah, Granny, it might be worse. I have lost eight children in an earthquake; I have been caught out in a blizzard and nigh frozen to death. No one is hurt and we saved a few things. Maybe we can build a finer house."

"Right you are, Debby Field-Mouse, and brave, also!" cried Uncle Squeaky admiringly. "We will all lend a paw and you shall have a nice new house right beside my Gray Rock Bungalow. Then you and Betsey and Belindy can be real neighborly. You must stay at our house until your new home is ready. What do you say, neighbors? Shall we begin Pa Field-Mouse's bungalow bright and early tomorrow?"

Sir Spider, Squire Cricket, Mr. Hop Toad, Jack Rabbit, and Daddy Grasshopper nodded approvingly.

"We will all help," they promised.

Debby Field-Mouse looked sadly at the blackened ruins of her old home; then taking Mother Graymouse's arm, she led little Wee to Uncle Squeaky's home. The others went homeward, also, for it was getting late.

"A little music is like medicine to a sad mouse," said Uncle Squeaky after supper. "Pa Field-Mouse seems down-hearted tonight. Trot along, laddies, and put on your band uniforms that Ma Graymouse made last summer. We will give Pa Field-Mouse a band concert."

Grand-daddy nodded his head.

"A grand idea, Hezekiah. Melodious music makes many melancholy mice merry. Ha! ha! That's nearly as good as the jingle Robert Giant used to sing about 'Picker Peter's peppered pickles.'"

Buster Graymouse hopped up and down in delight. He laughed until the tears ran down his fat cheeks.

"What's the trouble, Buster Boy?" asked Grand-daddy. "Did you eat too much supper?"

"No, Grand-daddy, but my little jacket is nearly bursting. Ah, that is too funny! Guess I shall laugh all night."

"I fear you have outgrown your band suit, Buster," said Mother Graymouse. "I shall have to give you less to eat."

"Ah no, Mammy!" cried Buster in alarm. "Please don't starve me. Oh! oh! What Robert Giant really said was:

""Peter picked a pint of pickled pipers.""

"What's pipers, Buster?" asked Tiny.

"I don't know; prob'ly something good to eat. It was one of Robert's funny songs, twinnie. I can make nicer songs myself," bragged Buster.

"All ready for the concert!" shouted Uncle Squeaky.

Wink and Buster found their cornets; Limpy-toes brought his flute, Wiggle his fife, Scamper the alto horn, and Nimble-toes his beloved drum. At a signal from Uncle Squeaky, the little band began to play Silvy's Waltz.

It was late when they had played all the music they could remember. The moonlight cast long shadows over the dewy grass and even the Frog Orchestra was hushed and listening.

[Illustration: _The little band began to play Silvy's Waltz_.]

"Now your Uncle Hezekiah will play a goodnight jig." Uncle Squeaky hopped nimbly up and played such a jolly tune upon his fiddle that they all joined paws and danced in a circle about him.

"Enough! enough, Hezekiah!" panted Grand-daddy at last. "We must rest if we expect to build a bungalow tomorrow. I shall not be Dr. Whiskers, but just a good neighbor mouse tomorrow. I reckon my patients can wait while I have one vacation day. Hurrah for a holiday and a fine new house for Neighbor Field-Mouse! Come, Granny, we're homeward bound. Fetch the automobile, Limpy-toes. I hope the twistity will not give out. Good-night, folkses, goodnight!"

CHAPTER VI

DR. WHISKER'S BUSY DAY

Neighbour Field-Mouse's new bungalow was begun before sunrise next morning. Squire Cricket and Daddy Grasshopper brought their saws, Jack Rabbit and Mr. Hop Toad had shovels, and all the neighbors came with axes, hammers and other tools ready for work.

"Pa Field-Mouse has chosen this spot under the laurel bush," explained Uncle Squeaky. "First we must dig a cellar where he can store his winter's food."

"Don't forget that I want a stone fireplace just like yours, Mr. Squeaky," reminded Debby Field-Mouse. "And a dining-room, also, if you please."

"Ah, yes, Debby! A good living-room, a big pantry--you shall have all the fixings."

They worked busily away. By-and-by, Grand-daddy Whiskers paused to look around.

"It looks pretty fine already," he declared. "I'm having a great vacation day. Plenty of fresh air, sunshine, pine breezes and vigorous exercise make a mouse feel good, Neighbor Field-Mouse. I suppose there will not be much work for old Dr. Whiskers in this healthy country in summertime, because--"

"Dr. Whiskers! Dr. Whiskers!" interrupted Nimble-toes, "this little Skunk says that old Simon Skunk has a dreadful attack of asthma and wants you to come quick."

Down went Grand-daddy's ax, and away he trotted to Gray Rock Bungalow where he had left Granny and his medicine bag.

"Did you say Simon Skunk was ill?" asked Granny in alarm. "Don't you go a step, Zenas. Remember your solemn promise to fetch us all safe and sound to our attic home before snow flies. How will you do it, I want to ask you, Zenas Whiskers, if Simon Skunk harms you?"

"Better keep away from that Skunk tribe," advised Aunt Squeaky.

Even Mother Graymouse, who was usually so brave, looked anxious.

"Everyone says that Simon is ill-natured. He is a giant beside you, Grand-daddy," she said.

Grand-daddy grew impatient. "I was wondering whether I wished to visit Simon, but I'll be blamed, Hezekiah, if I'm going to be bossed by a lot of women mice! A doctor must be brave. I'll risk it. I'm on my way to Skunk Avenue," and away marched Grand-daddy.

Mrs. Dinah Skunk was watching for Dr. Whiskers.

"Oh, hurry!" she cried. "Simon has wheezed all night and can hardly breathe."

"A strange time o' year to have asthma, Simon," grinned Dr. Whiskers. "Wheezes mostly come in cold weather."

"Too much woods smoke," gasped poor Simon.

"Ah, I see! Well, let me rub this grease into your chest. You must take two of these pills every half hour until you stop wheezing."

"Haven't any clock," growled Simon.

"How shall I know when to give him the pills, doctor?" asked Dinah.

Grand-daddy scratched his head. He did not wish to lend his watch.

"It takes half an hour to trot from here to Polly-Wog Bridge and back," he decided. "Send a little Skunk to the bridge and give Simon two pills every time the little Skunk gets home. It will keep that little Skunk out of mischief who set the fire."

"One of my ancestors," went on Dr. Whiskers pleasantly, "a great-great-great-grandfather, was a mouse of the wilds, a regular Indian. He told his children, and the story was repeated until it came down to me, that a hornet's nest smoked in a pipe would cure the worst case of asthma that ever was known."

"Haven't any pipe; no hornet's nest," grumbled Simon.

"Neither have I," chuckled Dr. Whiskers. "I threw mine away after the hired man set the barn afire with a spark from his pipe. I'll try to find a hornet's nest and maybe I can borrow a pipe from Daddy Longlegs. Now

take these pills and start young Skunk to trotting. Good-day to you, Simon. I hope you'll feel better soon.

"I'll have the kiddies hunt for a hornet's nest," planned Grand-daddy.

Buster, Wink, and Wiggle met him by the pond.

"All safe, Grand-daddy?" they cried.

"Sure," grinned Grand-daddy. "They are harmless folk. Have you seen a gray paper balloon dangling from the bushes, kiddies?"

"I have," cried Wink. "Uncle said hornets lived in it and they were real fighters."

"I'll fight 'em, then. I want that nest for medicine. Trot ahead and show it to me."

"Hi! hi! Dr. Whiskers!" came a cry from the Lake.

Grand-daddy ran to the water's edge. There sat Grandpa Bull Frog groaning miserably.

"Hello! a fish hook!" exclaimed Dr. Whiskers. "Let's see if I can extract it."

He took a sharp instrument from his bag.

"I'll be as careful as possible, Grandpa Bull Frog, but it is bound to hurt you considerable," he explained. "Now open your mouth wide."

Dr. Whiskers twisted and pulled upon the hook. At last, out flew the ugly thing.

"How did it happen?" he asked, wrapping the instrument carefully.

"I've been hoarse for years," croaked Grandpa Bull Frog as he wiped away the tears. "Squire Cricket told me that red flannel cured his throat, so when I saw some red flannel dangling from a line right over this log, I grabbed it. I got it easily, and this cruel hook beside. The Giant boy has gone away. I thank you kindly, Dr. Whiskers. Ahem! You might tell Mr. Squeaky that I say his band played very fine music last evening."

"Better leave fish-hooks alone, hereafter, Grandpa Bull Frog," chuckled Dr. Whiskers. "When you need red flannel, hop over to Wild Rose Cottage. Granny fetched a good supply from Mrs. Giant's trunk."

[Illustration: Dr. Whiskers twisted and pulled upon the hook.]

"Grand-daddy!" called Wiggle from the grove. "I have the hornet's nest. Isn't it big? We had a fight with the hornets. I ran away, but Buster and Wink are chuck full of stingers. They want you to come quick. Buster is howling real loud."

Dr. Grand-daddy trotted along the pine-needle path.

"Oh, Grand-daddy, those hornets were full of hot pricklers!" sobbed Buster.

"Wait a bit, kiddies," he called. "I'll mix some mud plasters that will

stop the pain. So the hornets won out, did they?"

"No, sir, they didn't!" cried Wink, doubling his little fists. "We beat 'em, Grand-daddy. We got what we went after. Wiggle rolled their nest home."

"I guess you are right, sonny," grinned Grand-daddy. "I'll soon cure the wounds for my brave soldiers. There, you feel better already. Forward march. I want to get back and work on the new bungalow."

But Grand-daddy had just begun to nail up a pantry shelf, when Mother Graymouse beckoned.

He found Tim Scrabble waiting for him.

"Can you go home with me, Dr. Whiskers?" he asked eagerly. "Jimmie and Johnnie have the whooping cough; Janie ate some candy and it made her tooth ache, and Baby Judy has the croup. Worst of all, Polly went into Mrs. Giant's pantry and it is a wonder she ever got back down cellar. She is all rolled up in sticky fly-paper. And me with four sick babies on my paws!"

"I'll come at once, Tim," agreed Dr. Whiskers. "Limpy-toes and I will soon fix things all right."

He called Limpy-toes to help carry his heavy bag.

"We'll not take the automobile," he decided. "The Giants might hear it chug-chug. If you please, Belindy, let Scamper go over and tell Granny that we will probably be home by midnight. She may wish to return and spend the night with you. Now we're off to help that poor Scrabble family."

It was a long journey and there were many doses to be ordered for the little patients. It took a long time to remove Polly's fly-paper with an alcohol bath. Then cure-all salve must be rubbed in where patches of skin came off. But at last every patient was made comfortable. Tim and Polly thanked them again and again.

"Now for our long homeward tramp, Limpy-toes," sighed Grand-daddy wearily.

It was long past midnight when tired old Grand-daddy pulled off his boots.

"A great vacation day it proved," he yawned. "Bless me, it has been the busiest day I ever lived! And yet, I'm glad that I am a doctor-mouse."

[Illustration: It was long past midnight when tired old Grand-daddy pulled off his boots.]

CHAPTER VII

TWIN TAILS

The woodland folk were all busy making Neighbor Field-Mouse's new house when Dr. Whiskers strolled over next morning.

"Good-morning to you all!" he cried, waving his cap. "I wish to borrow a pipe for Simon Skunk. Have you one to lend him, Daddy Longlegs?"

"None for Simon Skunk," replied Daddy Longlegs, gruffly.

"Neither have I," said Mr. Hop Toad.

"I have no pipe, but I'd not lend one to Simon Skunk if I had a dozen," added Jack Rabbit.

"I am sorry," sighed Dr. Whiskers. "Perhaps Simon Skunk is mean. But suppose we were all kind to him; might it not make him a better neighbor?"

"We know Simon better than you do, Dr. Whiskers," said Daddy Grasshopper.

"I wish you would all try being kind to him," suggested Dr. Whiskers. "I am going to see him now. He was very decent to me."

"Good-morning, Simon!" greeted Dr. Whiskers. "Wheezes all gone?"

"No, but I'm better," replied Simon shortly.

"He's a lot better, Doctor," said Dinah.

"I brought the hornet's nest as I promised, but I couldn't borrow a pipe in the whole village. I will burn some of it in this tin can. You must inhale the smoke."

Simon bent his head over the smoking can. He began to cough and choke.

"Choke me to death, will you?" he spluttered. "A pretty doctor, you are!"

"Patience, Simon," urged Dr. Whiskers gently. "Just a few whiffs more. There now--where are your wheezes? My Indian ancestor knew a thing or two, you see. I must confess that I never tried hornet's nest smoke before. I believe that you will not wheeze again for a long time, Simon. Good-day." Dr. Whiskers bowed politely and hurried away.

Granny, Silver Ears and Dot were visiting at Gray Rock Bungalow. They had brought over some patchwork squares and were making quilts for Debby Field-Mouse.

As it was a play day from school, Dot invited Patty Spider, Topsy Toad, Molly and Dolly Grasshopper, and Fidelia Cricket to visit Tiny and Teenty and help sew the pretty patchwork. Aunt Squeaky had baked them some tiny raisin cakes. They were having a jolly party under the wild grape-vine. Wee and Squealer played in the grape-vine swing. Wink, Wiggle and Buster were over watching their big brothers bring stones for Debby's fireplace.

They sewed for a long time, squealing merrily now and then as they pricked their tiny paws. Teenty borrowed Silvy's scissors to cut some thread. A strange idea popped into her head as she used those sharp, shiny scissors.

"I'm the very onliest one that goes trailing a long tail behind them. Neither Dolly, Molly, Patty, Fidelia, Topsy, nor Tiny wears a long tail. I want to look like my twin sister. Say, Tiny, did it hurt awfully when Buster snipped off your tail?"

"It hurt dreadfully! And it bled and bled. But Limpy-toes cured it," remembered Tiny.

"And now no one can step on your tail. That hurts dreadfully, too. I'm going to cut off my tail."

"Oh, you daresn't, Teenty Graymouse!" they cried in a shrill admiring chorus.

"You watch. Come back here, Tiny; you shall not tell tales to Mammy. One, two, three--snip!" Off flew the long slender end of Teenty's tail.

"Oh! oh! Get Dr. Grand-daddy!" cried Teenty, quite scared by the blood and pain.

Grand-daddy rushed over. All the older mice ran out with their white aprons full of patchwork squares, thimbles and spools of thread.

"Fetch my bottle of creoline and some warm water, Silvy," ordered Dr. Whiskers.

[Illustration: Fetch that creoline bottle, Silvy, repeated Grand-daddy sternly.]

"Now, Zenas, when Tiny's tail was cut, Limpy-toes cured it with water. I don't recollect whether it was hot or cold water, but I'm positive it was just plain water," said Granny.

"Limpy-toes used cold water," said Aunt Squeaky.

"No, it was hot water, Ma," contradicted Dot.

"First he froze me with cold water; then he boiled me in hot water," said Tiny. "I guess I can remember. Mammy put on cobwebs, Wink gave me some candy, and then I got better."

"Fetch that creoline bottle, Silvy," repeated Grand-daddy sternly. "Land o' pity, who is the doctor, anyway?"

"This creoline is worth its weight in gold," went on Dr. Grand-daddy, as he soaked the poor stubby tail. "I got it from Mr. Giant's medicine closet. It takes all the soreness out."

"Better leave a little soreness in, Grand-daddy," said Mother Graymouse. "I am ashamed of you, Teenty Graymouse. Your foolish pride has spoiled the nice party which your little neighbors were enjoying. You might have bled to death. You deserve to be shut in a dark closet or put to bed without any supper."

"Oh, Mammy, Tiny and I have truly twin tails now, like Bunny and Bobsey Rabbit. I think they are splendid," smiled Teenty.

"Want to go for an automobile ride, kiddies?" called Limpy-toes. "I have made another seat and can take seven."

So the seven little patchwork sewers climbed into Limpy-toes' wonderful automobile.

"Be careful of that bandage, Teenty," warned Dr. Grand-daddy. "I don't

want you to bleed any more."

Away they whizzed; along the blue Lakeside, by Polly-Wog Bridge, through the Pine Grove, and up Laurel Lane, only stopping now and then while Limpy-toes twisted up the spring and the kiddies gathered wild flowers.

"Are you all better, Teenty?" whispered Tiny, as they drove home to Gray Rock Bungalow.

"Ah, yes, all better, Tiny," lisped Teenty. "You all said I daresn't cut it. I think it is lovely to wear a short tail. Now you and I are real honest-and-true twinnies again, Tiny."

CHAPTER VIII

WIGGLE BORROWS THE AUTOMOBILE

The midsummer days were full of good times. Uncle Squeaky sometimes took them for a sail upon Pond Lily Lake; they fished from Polly-Wog Bridge and went splashing about in the water dressed in their bathing-suits. Then there were merry parties of berry pickers who spent the day in the shady woods picking blueberries and raspberries for Mother Graymouse and Aunt Squeaky to preserve.

Buster loved the moonlight evenings when Uncle Squeaky's band, looking very fine in the gay uniforms, marched along the Lake shore and played the music which he had written. He was also delighted when they gathered in the fire-glow around Uncle Squeaky's fireplace and nibbled roasted corn, baked potatoes, toasted cheese, and other goodies. He could not decide which was nicer.

Limpy-toes was generous with his automobile. He was busy, for Grand-daddy's practice was growing larger, and as Limpy-toes was studying medicine, he often went along with Grand-daddy. But he found time to give the little mice many jolly rides along the pine-strewn paths and lanes. Sometimes he allowed Wink or Wiggle to steer and they felt very proud indeed.

One beautiful moonlit night when Limpy-toes had gone with Dr. Whiskers to see Mrs. Hop Toad, a wild plan entered Wiggle's mischievous head.

"Let's borrow the automobile without asking Limpy," he whispered to Wink. "It will be sport to run it all our own selves. This is a dandy evening."

"S'pose something breaks?" objected Wink.

"Huh, you can't hurt the old chug-chug! We'll take turns cranking it. Let's ask Pete and Dickie to go with us."

Stealing quietly away while Scamper and Uncle Squeaky were busy, they managed to start off without being seen.

"Come on for a joy ride, Pete, and fetch Dickie," invited Wiggle.

The Grasshopper brothers hopped briskly in and away they whizzed. Down

Grasshopper Lane, through a pine grove, along Skunk Avenue, past the Lake, on and on, only stopping here and there to twist up the spring.

"I'm getting tired of so much twisting," declared Wiggle. "It would be good sport to coast down Crooked Hill."

"Come on!" cried Wink gaily. "Guess we'll not need much twistity there."

"Can you steer straight?" asked Dickie doubtfully.

"Sure I can steer. I wouldn't be afraid in the dark, and this moonlight is as bright as day," bragged Wiggle. "Hold your breath, now."

Crooked Hill was very steep and slippery with pine needles. On either side there were jutting rocks and old pine stumps. At the foot of the hill ran Beaver Brook.

[Illustration: "_Hold your breath, now_."]

Later that evening, Mr. Jack Rabbit was hopping homeward with a bag of carrots and clover leaves slung over his shoulder.

"Hello, what's this?" he cried. "Limpy-toes Graymouse's automobile, sure as I'm a Bunny! Hi, there, Limpy, are you underneath?"

"Ah, please help us, Mr. Rabbit," came a faint cry from under the wrecked automobile. "It is Wink and Wiggle. Fetch Grand-daddy and Pa Squeaky. Go quick!"

Jack Rabbit threw down his bag of carrots and leaped across the fields as though a hound dog was on his track.

It seemed a long time to the four little fellows under the automobile, but it was really surprising how soon Jack Rabbit returned with help.

Limpy-toes and Grand-daddy had medicines and bandages. Scamper and Uncle Squeaky hauled the cart with its four stout spool wheels.

"Bless my stars!" cried Uncle Squeaky, when he had pulled poor battered Wiggle out from under. "One broken paw, a smashed-in nose, and a black eye! Is Wink much damaged, Grand-daddy?"

"Sprained ankle and a banged head," answered Grand-daddy. "Dickie and Pete have only a few scratches. We'll plaster and bandage 'em up and they will finish their joy ride in the cart. Reckon they'll go up hill some slower than they came down."

Poor Limpy-toes stood and looked at his ruined automobile.

"Can you fix it, Limpy-toes?" asked Jack Rabbit.

"Maybe," sighed Limpy-toes, "but it will take all winter. I shall have to haul it home in pieces. Well, I am glad the twinnies aren't killed."

"They ought to be walloped," growled Scamper. "It's a shame, Limpy-toes, that's what it is!"

It was many weeks before Wink and Wiggle were able to leave their

pine-needle beds. Silvy, in her pretty nurse's cap and apron, was kept busy waiting upon her mischievous cousins.

Debby Field-Mouse often ran over from her cottage, which she had named the Cosy Retreat, bringing dainties for the poor bruised twinnies to eat.

Poor Granny Whiskers' nerves were badly shaken.

"Ah, Zenas," she moaned, "take us to our dear attic home before some one is killed. You promised me that we should all go home safe and sound, and there lay those precious twinnies, all bandages and plasters. Ah, dearie me! What will happen next? Poor Debbie's house was burned; Wink and Wiggle are all smashed up. Zenas Whiskers, I say we must pack up and go home tomorrow."

"Ah, Granny," grinned Grand-daddy, "Wink and Wiggle are perfectly safe, but I can't truthfully call 'em sound just yet. I must dose 'em awhile before they will be sound enough to go back to the attic. Pine breezes, fresh air and sunshine, Granny, that's what they need. I'm sure Debby Field-Mouse isn't complaining because Pile of Rails burned. She is as happy as a lark in her Cosy Retreat.

"I am having the time of my life. Never was so important and sought after as I've been since Hezekiah stuck that Dr. Whiskers sign in front of my cottage. Ah, no, Granny, we don't leave Pond Lily Lake until snow flies and I'm hoping that it will be a long time from now."

CHAPTER IX

AUTUMN LEAVES

"I'm going after chestnuts tomorrow, Mammy," said Buster one autumn evening.

"We have had a good frost. I think the burrs have cracked open, Buster," grinned Uncle Squeaky.

"I like to roast chestnuts in the winter," lisped Tiny.

"I like to roast chestnuts," echoed Teenty, "and I like to pop corn."

"Those wild grapes you fetched home made delicious jelly," said Mother Graymouse.

"There are red berries dangling from a prickly bush. Shall I fetch some home, Mammy?"

"Barberries," guessed Granny. "There is no better sauce made. Fetch a basketful, Buster."

"Barberry sauce is full of pegs," complained Grand-daddy. "Grape jelly is my favorite sauce."

"Nimble-toes says there's poison ivy and dogwood around here," said Scamper. "Be careful or you'll get poisoned, Buster."

"Yes," added Limpy-toes, "don't touch any bushes except blueberry, cedar, pine, hemlock, sweet fern, bayberry, or peppermint. Those are all safe and you know 'em well."

"For pity sake, Buster, don't get poisoned!" cried Silver Ears. "We hope to get Wink and Wiggle out of doors tomorrow. I'm not anxious for any more patients. I wonder that you let him roam about the woods, Mammy."

"He never goes alone, Silvy," replied Mother Graymouse, calmly.

"Hopsy Toad, and Webbie Spider are going chestnutting with me," said Buster. "I had a nice walk yesterday with Bunny and Bobsey Rabbit. They took me over to Mr. Giant's strawberry bed. What do you think, Mammy! There are ripe red berries and pretty blossoms, now! On the way home, we saw yellow dandelion blossoms. It isn't summer any more; it is frost-time. Everything seems topsy-turvy!"

"Mercy on us!" cried Aunt Squeaky. "Ripe strawberries when it is 'most snow-time!"

"The Giants are a wise folk," explained Grand-daddy. "They grow plants nowadays that bear fruit most of the time. Prob'ly you could find berries on those vines when they are buried under the snow."

"You take a basket and fetch home some strawberries, right now, Buster Graymouse, and I'll bake a strawberry short cake for supper that'll melt in your mouth," promised Aunt Squeaky.

"Take Tiny and Teenty along and show them how to dig dandelions. We will have a mess of greens for dinner tomorrow," planned Mother Graymouse. "Such treats as we have in the country! I am afraid I shall not wish to go back to our attic very soon, Grand-daddy."

"I am not rushing in that direction, myself, Betsey," chuckled Grand-daddy. "Guess we will stay to supper, Granny, and have some of Belindy's short cake. Dot was invited to tea with Mrs. Rabbit, so there's nobody home at our house."

"Of course you must stay," invited Aunt Squeaky. "Buster will fetch plenty of berries."

They had a jolly tea-party with a delicious strawberry cake for dessert to celebrate the first time that Wink and Wiggle had come to the table since the automobile accident.

The next day, Hopsy and Webbie came to go nutting. They carried bags for the chestnuts. Buster took a basket also, for barberries.

They had good fun picking the brown nuts from the soft, silky linings of the burrs.

"The burrs are prickly and the barberry bushes are prickly," said Hopsy.

"Perhaps they are trying to say 'Touch me not!' But we will pick them just the same," laughed Buster.

"Let's get a bouquet of pretty leaves," said Webbie. "Ma would like some for her parlor."

[Illustration: They had good fun picking the brown nuts from the soft, silky linings of the burrs.]

"There are lovely gold and scarlet leaves on that stone wall," said Buster. "Let's climb and get them."

They were pulling eagerly at the sprays of bright leaves, when along trotted Simon Skunk.

"Hi, there!" he shouted, "leave those leaves alone."

"Don't mind him," said Hopsy. "He is angry because we are getting the pretty leaves."

"Hi! Those leaves are poison," warned Simon again.

"Do you s'pose they are poison?" asked Webbie Spider.

"I don't believe one word that Simon Skunk says," sputtered Buster. "Mr. Giant had a vine like this growing on his piazza. Giants don't plant poison vines."

By-and-by, they arrived at Gray Rock Bungalow laden with bags of chestnuts, plenty of barberries for Granny's sauce, and the pretty autumn leaves twined around their shoulders.

"For the land o' pity!" cried Aunt Squeaky. "Betsey Graymouse, here is Buster with his paws full of poison ivy!"

"Trot out and throw that stuff away at once," commanded Uncle Squeaky. "Only last evening we told you not to touch poison ivy."

"Simon Skunk said that it was poison, but I thought he meant to scare us. I've seen Ruth Giant pick these pretty leaves on her piazza," whimpered Buster.

"The poor kiddie didn't understand, Hezekiah," smiled Mother Graymouse. "Hold up your paw and count the fingers. How many are there, Buster?"

"One, two, three, four, five," counted Buster.

"Yes, and the leaves on Ruth Giant's vine have five fingers. These wild leaves have only three fingers and you must never touch them. You see these berries are waxy white and the berries on Mr. Giant's woodbine were purple. Remember, Buster, unless the leaves have five fingers like your paws, they are poison ivy. Now trot along with Hopsy and Webbie over to Wild Rose Cottage. Tell Grand-daddy all about it and ask him to fix you up."

Dr. Whiskers washed the three scared little patients in salt water.

[Illustration: Sure enough, next morning poor Buster could hardly see out of his eyes.]

"I am afraid you will be some puffed-up youngsters in the morning," he said. "But I guess you will know poison ivy next time."

Sure enough, next morning poor Buster could hardly see out of his eyes.

His face and paws were swelled and puffy and oh, how they itched!

"Simon Skunk meant to be kind to you, Buster, because Grand-daddy had been good to him," said Mother Graymouse.

"Next time I'll mind Simon and leave the old ivy alone, Mammy," promised Buster sadly.

CHAPTER X

SNOWED IN

The autumn days passed swiftly. Yellow, crimson, and russet leaves fluttered to the ground. Early in the mornings the grass was frosted in white.

Granny, Mother Graymouse and Aunt Squeaky were busily preparing for winter. In the cool cave behind their bungalow, were rows of jelly glasses; boxes of tiny red apples from the orchard; plenty of little potatoes which the hired men had left in Mr. Giant's garden, and a bucket of fish which Scamper and Limpy-toes had caught and Uncle Squeaky had salted.

"Ah, it is good to have a plenty!" sighed Granny. "Last winter we wondered how we should get our supply of fruit and vegetables. Now we have 'em all stored up. Surely we shall soon start for our dear attic home."

"It is lovely by the Lake," said Mother Graymouse. "I'd like to see ice on the pond before we go home."

"Why, Betsey Graymouse, we would all freeze!" cried Granny.

"It would be horrid," shivered Aunt Squeaky.

Dot Squeaky closed her summer school when the cool days came, and bade her little pupils good-by until another year.

Limpy-toes worked, whenever Grand-daddy could spare him, upon his broken automobile. He bent and patched and mended it until at last the poor old machine would go once more.

"But it is a worse chug-chug than ever," sighed Limpy-toes. "Some day I will build a better one and lock it away from Wiggle's mischievous paws."

Dr. Whiskers shut up Wild Rose Cottage and they all moved over to Gray Rock until they should leave the Lake. But Mrs. Jack Rabbit got a bad cold; Wee Field-Mouse was ill; Squire Cricket sprained his ankle, and all the little Spiders had the measles.

"I cannot leave all these sick folk, Granny," decided Dr. Whiskers.

"There'll be sick folk all winter, Zenas. Must we stay and freeze to death? We'll get sick, also. You promised to go home before snow-time," sobbed Granny.

"So we will, Granny, so we will. The weather is still mild. Never fear; have I not taken good care of you all?"

Then came a day, when to Granny's great joy, Uncle Squeaky announced that they would begin to pack next morning.

"The ground is hard and smooth. It will be easy to pull our cart. We must start before the heavy rains begin," he planned, "for after that there will be deep, frozen ruts."

That last night by the Lake was a merry one. The Field-Mouse family came to spend the evening. Buster sang his sweetest songs, the kiddies recited verses they had learned at school, and Uncle Squeaky's band played for the last time.

"I'll take our instruments over to Wild Rose Cottage and lock 'em up tomorrow," planned Limpy-toes.

"It doesn't seem possible that we shall be back in our attic tomorrow night," said Dot.

"I thought we'd be there long ago," sighed Granny. "Your Grand-daddy is getting slow in his old age."

"Not slow, Granny, just moderate," corrected Grand-daddy. "Which reminds me of two mice I once knew. One mouse never would hurry. Ah, he was slow! He said he'd get through this world soon enough if he went slowly."

Uncle Squeaky hopped up.

"And so, kiddies," he chuckled, "he went poking along like this. He drawled and he droned and was always an hour behind time. Finally the old sleepy-head laid down and died."

"Just so, Hezekiah," nodded Grand-daddy.

The kiddies laughed at Uncle Squeaky's droll antics.

"You walked like Grandpa Turtle, Uncle," laughed Nimble-toes.

"Well," continue Grand-daddy "the other young mouse thought life was so short that he must move like a whirlwind or his work would not get done."

"And so," explained Uncle Squeaky, "he went on a hop, skip and jump like this. He made dust fly in other folks' eyes, a-hustling and a-bustling about until he hardly knew if he was on his head or his heels."

They all shouted as Uncle Squeaky pranced about the room, his coat tails flying out straight behind him.

"I've always believed in being moderate. Neither too fast nor too slow," finished Grand-daddy.

"Do stop being such a clown, Hezekiah," scolded Aunt Squeaky. "Give us a little more music. We shall not hear our band again all winter."

"We have to be real quiet in the Giant's house. Let's stay here with Pa Field-Mouse where we can do as we choose," grinned Uncle Squeaky.

"We are going home tomorrow, Hezekiah Squeaky," said Granny firmly.

[Illustration: _"And so," explained Uncle Squeaky, "he went on a hop, skip and jump like this."_]]

Tomorrow came.

"What makes it so dark?" wondered Limpy-toes. He lighted a lantern and looked at his watch.

"It is after sun-up, Mammy!" he called. "You don't suppose we are snowed in?"

Uncle Squeaky opened the door. In tumbled a mass of drifted snow.

"Just so, Limpy-toes!" he exclaimed. "Clear up to our roof!"

"We cannot haul our furniture today," said Grand-daddy.

"Snowed in?" wailed Granny. "Ah, whatever will become of us?"

"We will stay right in our cosy bungalow, Granny, until the snow melts," said Uncle Squeaky. "We have plenty of chips and pine cones to keep us warm, and tasty food stored up to eat. We can be comfortable and happy."

"It is a lovely adventure," smiled Dot. "Aren't you glad it snowed, Silvy?"

"Ah, yes," replied Silver Ears, "for now we can stay longer by the Lake. Perhaps Limpy-toes will make us a sled and some skates."

"Don't worry, Granny," said Mother Gray-mouse cheerily. "Grand-daddy and Hezekiah will take care of us. After the storm, they can tramp to the store on the frozen crust and fetch some cheese, matches and sugar. By-and-by, the ground will be bare and they can pull our furniture cart home. Debbie likes winter in the country. I shall enjoy staying a little longer."

There was a scraping sound outside the door.

"Pa Field-Mouse and Nimble-toes have tunnelled under the snow!" exclaimed Aunt Squeaky. "Now we can visit Debby. It is nice to have neighbors in the Cosy Retreat."

"A bad storm, Hezekiah," greeted Pa Field-Mouse. "Guess you'll stay with us a spell longer, Dr. Whiskers."

"Ma sent this thistle-down," said Nimble-toes. "She says it will make warm beds for you."

"Very kind of Debby, I'm sure," said Uncle Squeaky. "We'll be very fine in our downy beds. I will ask Lady Spider to spin us some silk draperies for the windows, Granny. She will do anything we ask. The woodland folk all love Dr. Whiskers. And no wonder. Never a bit of reward has he taken for all the wonderful cures he has made. We'll have a jolly winter, if we must stay. I think it will be grand. Something new in our lives, Granny."

Granny shook her head dolefully.

"Of course the kiddies think it is very fine to be snowed in, but I think the rest of you might have more sense," she scolded. "Come and sit by your old Granny, Buster, and sing your sweet song about our dear attic home."

Buster grinned mischievously.

"I'll sing you a newer one, Granny," he offered sweetly. He folded his paws as Mammy had taught him long ago, tossed his head high and sang merrily:

"Softly all the night long
Fell the snowflakes white;
Jolly little snowflakes,
Such a pretty sight!

"All the pines and hemlocks,
See them bending low;
We are warm and cosy
In our bungalow.

"So we'll play our music,
Sing our songs of cheer;
For we love the snow-time
Best of all the year."

[Illustration: _He folded his paws as Mammy had taught him long ago, tossed his head high and sang merrily._]

"We love our attic home best of all, Buster Graymouse!" sobbed Granny. "And we can't see the pines and hemlocks bending low. We can't see anything. Ah, dearie me! Snowed in, so far away from our home! It is the first time that Grand-daddy Whiskers ever broke a promise to me. It all comes of his being a doctor! Ah, dearie me, what will happen to us before Spring?"

"That is a question for a wise mouse to answer, but I'm hoping that the next happening will be hot griddle cakes for our breakfast," chuckled Dr. Whiskers.

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