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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STORY OF THE WHITE MOUSE ***

Illustrations other than the frontispiece ("Page 5") were moved to the nearest appropriate paragraph break. The plate captioned "Page 10" was printed facing page 9; "Page 12" and "Page 13" faced their respective pages. Signature numbers (every fourth page) were retained because of their unusual format.

Typographical errors are marked with mouse-hover popups. These spellings are standard for the book:


acrostick, chearful
dervise (*for dervish*), Lybia, Scheich (*for sheikh?*), Visier

The White Mouse
The Envious Man
The Golden Head

Page 5.



THE
STORY
OF THE
WHITE MOUSE.



EMBELLISHED WITH
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A NEW AND CORRECT EDITION.

LONDON:
PRINTED FOR THE BOOKSELLERS.

1816.

THE
STORY
OF THE
WHITE MOUSE.

IN the kingdom of Bonbobbin, which, by the Chinese annals, appears to have flourished twenty thousand years ago, there reigned a prince, endowed with every accomplishment which generally distinguishes the sons of kings. His beauty was brighter than the sun. The sun, to which he was nearly related, would sometimes stop his course, in order to look down and admire him.

His mind was not less perfect than his body; he knew all things without having ever read; philosophers, poets, and historians, submitted their works to his decision; and so penetrating was he, that he could tell the merit of a book by looking on the cover. He made epic poems, tragedies, and pastorals, with surprising facility; song, epigram, or rebus, was all one to him; though, it is observed, he could never finish an acrostick. In short, the fairy who presided at his birth had endowed him with almost every perfection; or, what was just the same, his subjects were ready to acknowledge he possessed them all; and, for his own part, he knew nothing to the contrary. A prince so accomplished, received a name suitable to his merit; and he was called *Bonbenin-bonbobbin-bonbobbinet*, which signifies Enlightener of the Sun.

As he was very powerful, and yet unmarried, all the neighbouring kings earnestly sought his

alliance. Each sent his daughter, dressed out in the most magnificent manner, and with the most sumptuous retinue imaginable, in order to allure the prince; so that, at one time, there were seen at his court, not less than seven hundred foreign princesses, of exquisite sentiment and beauty, each alone sufficient to make seven hundred ordinary men happy.

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Distracted in such a variety, the generous Bonbenin, had he not been obliged by the laws of the empire to make choice of one, would very willingly have married them all, for none understood gallantry better. He spent numberless hours of solicitude, in endeavouring to determine whom he should choose. One lady was possessed of every perfection, but he disliked her eye-brows; another was brighter than the morning-star, but he disapproved her fong-whang; a third did not lay enough of white on her cheek; and a fourth did not sufficiently blacken her nails. At last, after numberless disappointments on the one side and the other, he made choice of the incomparable Nanhoa, queen of the Scarlet Dragons.

The preparations for the royal nuptials, or the envy of the disappointed ladies, needs no description; both the one and the other were as great as they could be. The beautiful princess was conducted, amidst admiring multitudes, to the royal couch, where, after being divested of every encumbering ornament, he came more chearful than the morning; and printing on her lips a burning kiss, the attendants took this as a proper signal to withdraw.

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Perhaps I ought to have mentioned in the beginning, that, among several other qualifications, the prince was fond of collecting and breeding mice, which being an harmless pastime, none of his counsellors thought proper to dissuade him from; he therefore kept a great variety of these pretty little animals in the most beautiful cages, enriched with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls, and other precious stones. Thus he innocently spent four hours each day in contemplating their innocent little pastimes.

But, to proceed, the prince and princess now retired to repose; and though night and secrecy had drawn the curtain, yet delicacy retarded those enjoyments which passion presented to their view. The prince happening to look towards the outside of the bed, perceived one of the most beautiful animals in the world, a white mouse with green eyes, playing about the floor, and performing an hundred pretty tricks. He was already master of blue mice, red mice, and even white mice with yellow eyes; but a white mouse with green eyes, was what he long endeavoured to possess: whereupon, leaping from bed, with the utmost impatience and agility, the youthful prince attempted to seize the little charmer; but it was fled in a moment; for, alas! the mouse was sent by a discontented princess, and was itself a fairy.

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It is impossible to describe the agony of the prince upon this occasion. He sought round and round every part of the room, even the bed where the princess lay was not exempt from the inquiry; he turned the princess on one side and the other, stripped her quite naked, but no mouse was to be found; the princess herself was kind enough to assist, but still to no purpose.

"Alas!" cried the young prince in an agony, "how unhappy am I to be thus disappointed! never sure was so beautiful an animal seen; I would give half my kingdom and my princess to him that would find it." The princess, though not much pleased with the latter part of his offer, endeavoured to comfort him as well as she could; she let him know he had an hundred mice already, which ought to be at least sufficient to satisfy any philosopher like him. Though none of them had green eyes, yet he should learn to thank Heaven that they had eyes. She told him (for she was a profound moralist,) that incurable evils must be borne, and that useless lamentations were vain, and that man was born to misfortunes; she even intreated him to return to bed, and she would endeavour to lull him on her bosom to repose; but still the prince continued inconsolable; and, regarding her with a stern air, for which his family was remarkable, he vowed never to sleep in a royal palace, or indulge himself in the innocent pleasures of matrimony, till he had found the white mouse with green eyes.

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When morning came, he published an edict, offering half his kingdom, and his princess, to that person who should catch and bring him the white mouse with green eyes.

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The edict was scarce published, when all the traps in the kingdom were baited with cheese; numberless mice were taken and destroyed, but still the much-wished-for mouse was not among the number. The privy council were assembled more than once to give their advice; but all their deliberations came to nothing, even though there were two complete vermin-killers, and three professed rat-catchers, of the number. Frequent addresses, as is usual on extraordinary occasions, were sent from all parts of the empire; but, though these promised well, though in them he received an assurance that his faithful subjects would assist in his search with their lives and fortunes, yet, with all their loyalty, they failed, when the time came that the mouse was to be caught.

The prince, therefore, was resolved to go himself in search, determined never to lie two nights in one place, till he had found what he sought for. Thus, quitting his palace without attendants, he

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set out upon his journey, and travelled through many a desert, and crossed many a river, high over hills, and down along vales, still restless, still inquiring wherever he came, but no white mouse was to be found.

As one day, fatigued with his journey, he was shading himself from the heat of the mid-day sun, under the arching branches of a Banana tree, meditating on the object of his pursuit, he perceived an old woman hideously deformed approaching him; by her stoop, and the wrinkles of her visage, she seemed at least five hundred years old; and the spotted toad was not more freckled than was her skin. "Ah! Prince Bonbenin-bonbobbin-bonbobbinet," cried the creature, "what has led you so many thousand miles from your own kingdom? What is it you look for, and what induces you to travel into the kingdom of the Emmets?" The prince, who was excessively complaisant, told her the whole story three times over, for she was hard of hearing. "Well," says the old fairy, for such she was, "I promise to put you in possession of the white mouse with green eyes, and that immediately too, upon one condition." "One condition," replied the prince in a rapture, "name a thousand; I shall undergo them all with pleasure." "Nay," interrupted the old fairy, "I ask but one, and that not very mortifying neither; it is only that you instantly consent to marry me."

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It is impossible to express the prince's confusion at this demand; he loved the mouse, but he detested the bride; he hesitated; he desired time to think upon the proposal. He would have been glad to consult his friends on such an occasion. "Nay, nay," cried the odious fairy, "if you demur, I retract my promise; I do not desire to force my favours on any man. Here, you my attendants, (cried she, stamping with her foot,) let my machine be driven up; Barbacela, queen of Emmets, is not used to contemptuous treatment." She had no sooner spoken than her fiery chariot appeared in the air, drawn by two snails; and she was just going to step in, when the prince reflected that now or never was the time to be in possession of the white mouse; and, quite forgetting his lawful princess Nanhoa, falling on his knees, he implored forgiveness for having rashly rejected so much beauty. This well-timed compliment instantly appeased the angry fairy. She affected an hideous leer of approbation, and taking the young prince by the hand, conducted him to a neighbouring church, where they were married together in a moment. As soon as the ceremony was performed, the prince, who was to the last degree desirous of seeing his favourite mouse, reminded the bride of her promise. "To confess a truth, my prince," cried she, "I myself am that very white mouse you saw on your wedding night in the royal apartment. I now therefore give you your choice, whether you would have me a mouse by day, and a woman by night, or a mouse by night, and a woman by day." Though the prince was an excellent casuist, he was quite at a loss how to determine; but at last thought it most prudent to have recourse to a blue cat, that had followed him from his own dominions, and frequently amused him with its conversation, and assisted him

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with its advice; in fact this cat was no other than the faithful Princess Nanhoa herself, who had shared with him all his hardships in this disguise.

By her instructions he was determined in his choice; and returning to the old fairy, prudently observed, that, as she must have been sensible he had married her only for the sake of what she had, and not for her personal qualifications, he thought it would, for several reasons, be most convenient if she continued a woman by day, and appeared a mouse by night.

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The old fairy was a good deal mortified at her husband's want of gallantry, though she was reluctantly obliged to comply; the day was therefore spent in the most polite amusement, the gentlemen talked, the ladies laughed, and were angry. At last the happy night drew near; the blue cat still stuck by the side of its master, and even followed him to the bridal apartment. Barbacela entered the chamber, wearing a train fifteen yards long, supported by porcupines, and all over beset with jewels, which served to render her more detestable. She was just stepping into bed to the prince, forgetting her promise, when he insisted on seeing her in the shape of a mouse. She had promised, and no fairy can break her word; wherefore, assuming the figure of the most beautiful mouse in the world, she skipped and played about with an infinity of amusement. The prince, in an agony of rapture, was desirous of seeing his pretty play-fellow move a slow dance about the floor to his own singing; he began to sing, and the mouse immediately to perform with the most perfect knowledge of time, and the finest grace, and greatest gravity imaginable; it only began, for Nanhoa, who had long waited for the opportunity, in the shape of a cat, flew upon it instantly without remorse, and eating it up in the hundredth part of a moment, broke the charm, and then resumed her natural figure.

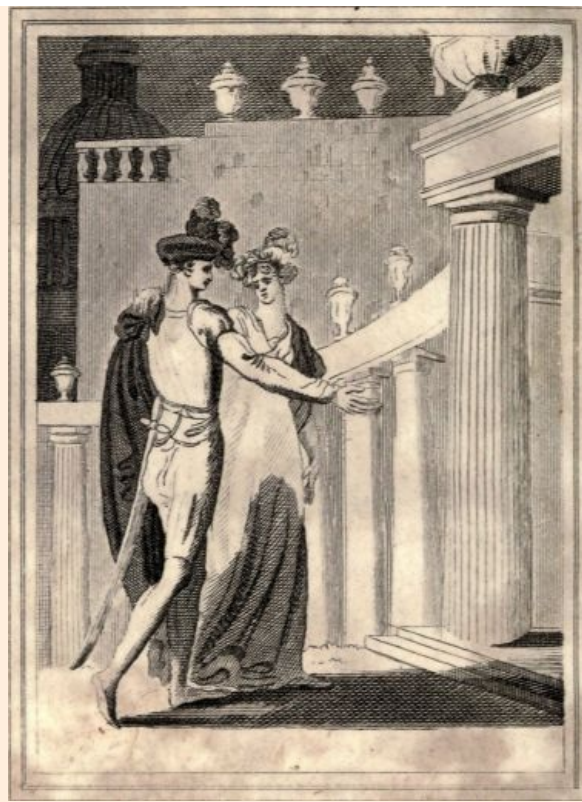
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The prince now found that he had all along been under the power of enchantment; that his passion for the white mouse was entirely fictitious, and not the genuine complexion of his soul; he now saw, that his earnestness after mice was an illiberal amusement, and much more becoming a rat-catcher than a prince. All his meannesses now stared him in the face; he begged the princess's pardon an hundred times. The princess very readily forgave him; and both returning to their palace at Bonbobbin, lived very happily together, and reigned many years, with all that wisdom, which, by the story, they appear to have been possessed of; perfectly convinced by their former adventures, that they who place their affections on trifles at first for amusement, will find these trifles at last become their most serious concern.

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THE
STORY
OF THE
ENVIOUS MAN,
AND
HIM THAT HE ENVIED.

IN a considerable town, two persons dwelt next door to one another; one of them conceived such a violent hatred against the other, that he who was hated resolved to remove his dwelling farther off, being persuaded that their being neighbours was the only cause from whence his animosity did arise; for though he had done him several pieces of service, he found, nevertheless, that his hatred was nothing diminished; therefore he sold his house, with what goods he had left, and retired to the capital city of that kingdom, which was not far distant. He bought a little spot of ground which lay about half a league from the city; he had a house convenient enough, with a fine garden, and a pretty spacious court, wherein was a deep well, which was not in use.

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The honest man, having made this purchase, put on a dervise's or monk's habit, to lead a retired life, and caused several cells to be made in the house, where, in a short time, he established a numerous society of dervises; he came soon to be publicly known by his virtue, through which he acquired the esteem of a great many people, as well of the commonalty, as of the chief of the city. In short, he was extremely honoured and cherished by every one. People came from afar to recommend themselves to his prayers; and all those who came to live with him published what blessings they received through his means.

The great reputation of this honest man having spread to the town from whence he came, it touched the envious man so much to the quick, that he left his house and affairs, with a resolution to go and ruin him. With this intent he went to the new convent of dervises, of which his former neighbour was the head, who received him with all imaginable tokens of friendship. The envious man told him that he was come on purpose to communicate a business of importance to him, which he could not do but in private; and in order that nobody may hear us, let us, says he, take a walk in your court, and seeing night begins to draw on, command your dervises to

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retire to their cells. The head of the dervises did as he required.

When the envious man saw that he was alone with this good man, he began to tell him his errand, walking side by side in the court, until he saw his opportunity; and getting the good man near the brink of the well, he gave him a thrust, and pushed him into it, without any body being witness to so wicked an action. Having done this, he marched off immediately, got out at the gate of the convent, without being known to any one, and came home to his own house, well satisfied with his journey; being fully persuaded that the object of his hatred was no more in this world; but he found himself highly mistaken.

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This old well was inhabited by fairies and genies, which happened very luckily for the relief of the head of the convent; for they received and supported him, and carried him to the bottom, so that he got no hurt. He perceived well enough that there was something extraordinary in his fall, which must otherwise have cost him his life; whereas he neither saw nor felt any thing. But he soon heard a voice, which said, "Do you know what honest man this is to whom we have done this piece of service?" Another voice answered, "No." To which the first replied, "Then I will tell you. This man, out of charity, the greatest that ever was known, left the town he lived in, and has established himself in this place, in hopes to cure one of his neighbours of the envy he had conceived against him; he has acquired such general esteem, that the envious man, not able to endure it, came hither on purpose to ruin him, which he had performed, had it not been for the assistance which we have given this honest man, whose reputation is so great, that the sultan, who keeps his residence in the neighbouring city, was to pay him a visit tomorrow, and to recommend the princess, his daughter, to his prayers."

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Another voice asked, "What need had the princess of the dervise's prayers?" To which the first answered, "You do not know, it seems, that she is possessed by Genie Maimoun, the son of Dimdim, who is fallen in love with her. But I know well how this good head of the dervises may cure her; the thing is very easy, and I will tell it you. He has a black cat in his convent, with a white spot at the end of her tail, about the bigness of a small piece of English money; let him only pull seven hairs out of this white spot, burn them, and smoke the princess's head with the fume, she will not only be presently cured, but be so safely delivered from Maimoun, the son of Dimdim, that he will never dare to come near her a second time."

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The head of the dervises remembered every word of the discourse between the fairies and the genies, who were very silent all the night after. The next morning, by break of day, when he could discern one thing from another, the well being broken down in several places, he saw a hole, by which he crept out with ease.

The other dervises, who had been seeking for him, were rejoiced to see him. He gave them a brief account of the wickedness of that man to whom he had given so kind a reception the day before, and retired to his cell. It was not long till the black cat, of which the fairies and the genies had made mention in their discourses the night before, came to fawn upon her master, as she was accustomed to do: he took her up, and pulled seven hairs out of the white spot that was upon her tail, and laid them aside for his use, when occasion should serve.

The sun was not high, when the sultan, who would leave no means untried that he thought could restore the princess to her perfect health, arrived at the gate of the convent. He commanded his guards to halt, whilst he, with his principal officers, went in. The dervises received him with profound respect.

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The sultan called their head aside, and said, "Good Scheich, it may be, you know already the cause of my coming hither." "Yes, sir," replies he, very gravely, "if I do not mistake it, it is the disease of the princess which procures this honour that I have not deserved." "That is the very thing," replied the sultan. "You will give me new life, if your prayers, as I hope they will, can procure my daughter's health." "Sir," said the good man, "if your majesty will be pleased to let her come hither, I am in hopes, through God's assistance and favour, she shall return in perfect health."

The prince, transported with joy, sent immediately to fetch his daughter, who very soon appeared with a numerous train of ladies and eunuchs, but masked, so that her face was not seen. The chief of the dervises caused a pall to be held over her head, and he had no sooner thrown the seven tufts of hair upon the burning coals, but the genie Maimoun, the son of Dimdim, gave a great cry, without any thing being seen, and left the princess at liberty; upon which she took the veil from off her face, and rose up to see where she was, saying, "Where am I, and who brought me hither?" At these words the sultan, overcome with excess of joy, embraced his daughter, and kissed her eyes; he also kissed the chief of the dervises' hands, and said to his officers, "Tell me your opinion, what reward does he deserve who has thus cured my daughter?" They all cried, "He deserves her in marriage." "That is what I had in my thoughts," said the sultan, "and I make him my son-in-law from this moment." Some time after, the prime visier died, and the sultan

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conferred the place on the dervise. The sultan himself died without heirs-male; upon which the religious orders and the militia gathered together, and the honest man was declared and acknowledged sultan by general consent.

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The honest dervise being mounted on the throne of his father-in-law, as he was one day in the midst of his courtiers upon a march, he espied the envious man among the crowd of people that stood as he passed along, and calling one of his visiers that attended him, whispered him in the ear thus: "Go, bring me that man you see there, but take care you do not frighten him." The visier obeyed; and when the envious man was brought into his presence, the sultan said, "Friend, I am extremely glad to see you." Upon which he called an officer, "Go immediately," says he, "and cause to be paid this man out of my treasury one hundred pieces of gold; let him have also twenty load of the richest merchandise in my store-houses, and a sufficient guard to conduct him to his house." After he had given this charge to the officer, he bid the envious man farewell, and proceeded on his march.

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THE
STORY
OF THE
GOLDEN HEAD.

IT is generally known, that Tom Two-Shoes went to sea when he was a very little boy, and very poor; and that he returned a very great man, and very rich; but no one knows how he acquired so much wealth but himself and a few friends.

After Tom had been at sea some years, he was unfortunately cast away on that part of Africa inhabited by the Hottentots. Here he met with a strange book, which the Hottentots did not understand, and which gave him some account of Prester John's country; and being a lad of great curiosity and resolution, he determined to see it; accordingly he set out on the pursuit, attended by a young lion, which he had tamed, and made so fond of him, that he followed him like a dog, and obeyed all his commands; and indeed it was happy for him that he had such a companion; for, as his road lay through large woods and forests, that were full of wild beasts, and without inhabitants, he must have been soon starved or torn in pieces, had he not been both fed and protected by this noble animal.

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Tom had provided himself with two guns, a sword, and as much powder and ball as he could carry: with these arms, and such a companion, it was mighty easy for him to get food; for the animals in these wild and extensive forests, having never seen the effects of a gun, readily ran from the lion, who hunted on one side, to Tom, who hunted on the other, so that they were either caught by the lion, or shot by his master; and it was pleasant enough, after a hunting-match, and the meat was dressed, to see how cheek by jowl they sat down to dinner.

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When they came to the land of Utopia, he discovered the statue of a man erected on an open plain, which had this inscription on the pedestal: "On May-day in the morning, when the sun rises, I shall have a *Head of Gold*." As it was now the latter end of April, he staid to see this wonderful change; and, in the mean time, inquiring of a poor shepherd what was the reason of the statue being erected there, and with that inscription, he was informed, that it was set up many years ago by an Arabian philosopher, who travelled all the world over in search of a real friend, that he lived with, and was extremely fond of, a great man who inhabited the next mountain; but that on some occasion they quarrelled, and the philosopher, leaving the mountain, retired into the plain, where he erected this statue with his own hands, and soon after died. To this he added, that all the people for many leagues round came there every May morning, expecting to see the stone head turned to gold.

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Tom got up very early on the first of May to behold this amazing change, and when he came near the statue, he saw a number of people, who all ran away from him in the utmost consternation, having never before seen a lion follow a man like a lap-dog. Being thus left alone, he fixed his eyes on the sun, then rising with resplendent majesty, and afterwards turned to the statue, but could see no change in the stone.—"Surely," says he to himself, "there is some mystical meaning in this! This inscription must be an ænigma, the hidden meaning of which I will endeavour to

find; for a philosopher never would expect a stone to be turned to gold." Accordingly he measured the length of the shadow, which the statue gave on the ground by the sun shining on it, and marked that particular part where the head fell; then getting a chopness, a thing like a spade, and digging, he discovered a copper chest, full of gold, with this inscription engraved on the lid of it, "Thy *wit*, oh man! whoever thou art, hath disclosed the ænigma, and discovered the *Golden Head*. Take it and use it: but use it with wisdom; for know, that *Gold*, properly employed, may dispense blessings, and promote the happiness of mortals; but when hoarded up, or misapplied, is but trash, that makes mankind miserable. Remember the unprofitable servant, who hid his *talent* in a napkin; and the profligate son who squandered away his substance, and fed with the swine. As thou hast got the *Golden Head*, observe the *Golden Mean*; be *good*, and be happy."

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This lesson, coming as it were from the dead, struck him with such an awe and reverence for piety and virtue, that before he removed the treasure, he kneeled down, and earnestly and fervently prayed that he might make a prudent, just and proper use of it. He then conveyed the chest away; but how he got it to England is not known. It may not be improper, however, in this place, to give the reader some account of the philosopher who hid this treasure, and took so much pains to find a true and real friend to enjoy it. As Tom had reason to venerate his memory, he was very particular in his inquiry, and had this character of him: That he was a man well acquainted with nature and with trade; that he was pious, friendly, and of a sweet and affable disposition; that he had acquired a fortune by commerce, and having no relation to leave it to, he travelled through Arabia, Persia, India, Lybia, and Utopia, in search of a real friend. In this pursuit he found several, with whom he had exchanged good offices, and who were polite and obliging; but they often flew off for trifles, or as soon as he pretended to be in distress, and requested their assistance, had left him to struggle with his own difficulties. So true is that copy in our books, which says, "Adversity is the touchstone of friendship."

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At last, however, he met in with the Utopian Philosopher, or the Wise Man of the Mountain, as he is called, and thought in him he had found the friend he wanted; for though he had often pretended to be in distress, and abandoned to the frowns of fortune, this man always relieved him, and with such chearfulness and sincerity, that concluding he had found out the only man to whom he ought to open both his purse and his heart, he let him so far into his secrets, as to desire his assistance in hiding a large sum of money, which he wanted to conceal, lest the prince of the country, who was absolute, should, by the advice of his wicked minister, put him to death for his gold. The two philosophers met and hid the money, which the stranger, after some days, went to see, but found it gone. How was he struck to the heart, when he found that his friend, whom he had often tried, and who had relieved him in his distress, could not withstand this temptation, but broke through the sacred bonds of friendship, and turned even a thief for gold which he did not want, as he was already very rich! "Oh!" said he, "what is the heart of man made of? Why am I condemned to live among people who have no sincerity, and barter the most sacred ties of friendship and humanity for the dirt that we tread on? Had I lost my gold, and found a real friend, I should have been happy with the exchange, but now I am most miserable." After some time he wiped off his tears, and being determined not to be so imposed on, he had recourse to cunning and the arts of life. He went to his pretended friend with a chearful countenance, told him he had more gold to hide, and desired him to appoint a time when they might go together and open the earth, to put it into the same pot; the other, in hopes of getting more wealth, appointed the next evening. They went together upon the ground, and found the money they had first placed there, for the artful wretch he so much confided in, had conveyed it again into the pot, in order to obtain more. Our philosopher immediately took the gold, and putting it into his pocket, told the other he had now altered his mind, and should bury it no more, till he found a man more worthy of his confidence. See what people lose by being dishonest!

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Remember this story, and take care whom you trust; but do not be covetous, sordid, and miserable; for the gold we have, is but lent us to do good with. We receive all from the hand of God, and every person in distress hath a just title to a portion of it.

FINIS.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE STORY OF THE WHITE MOUSE ***

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