

## Natural History.

### The Mouse Family.

An account of this very common and too well known little animal may seem altogether unnecessary, and it is not intended to give any particular description of either of the species that are the most abundant and familiar in our dwellings, but rather to notice briefly the tribe, completing as it does the Canadian list of the order *Rodentia*, of which all the other families have already come under consideration in previous numbers of the CANADA FARMER. Thus, to take a retrospective glance, we have presented to the reader illustrations and brief descriptions of the Beaver family (*Castoridae*), including the Beaver and the Muskrat, the Porcupines (*Hystriidae*), the Squirrels (*Sciuridae*) and the Woodchuck (*Arctomida*). The Mouse

exclude capture by its wonderful activity. It is said to leap at times over a distance of three or four yards, a most extraordinary feat of agility when the diminutive size of the animal is taken into account. Its long and powerful hind legs, assisted, no doubt, by the tail, are admirably adapted for this peculiar mode of progression. The larger species of this group, the Jerboa, Jumping Hare, and similar creatures, are principally natives of Africa, but are also met with in other parts of the old world.

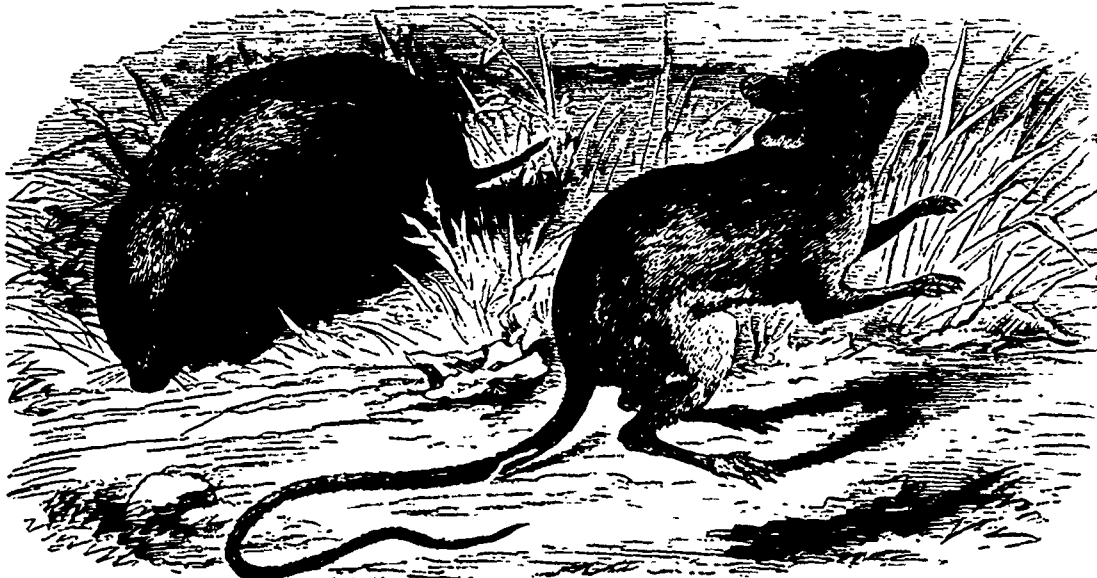
The members of the Mouse family proper (*Murida*) are by far the most numerous of this extensive order. The common brown Rat (*Mus decumanus*), should be allowed precedence, as it is undoubtedly the most powerful of the family. It is not a native of this continent, but was imported with the first ships from Europe. The characteristics of this dreaded pest of the barn and the ware-

and become a pestiferous source of disease and death.

The devices for destroying and capturing rats are innumerable, and their cunning in eluding them is extraordinary. In setting traps for them, care should be taken not to touch the trap with the hand, as the animal's keen sense of smell will detect the human odour and render the rat suspicious. Gloves smeared with oil of anise seed are recommended for handling and baiting the trap. The rat is a very ferocious animal, and when making a combined attack in large numbers becomes a formidable and dangerous opponent even to man.

The mouse (*Mus Musculus*), like its larger cousin, is omnivorous and ubiquitous, almost equally prolific, and only less destructive from its smaller size.

The characters proper to the genus are chiefly the following: The molar teeth, six in the upper and six in the lower jaw, are



family (*Muridae*), and one small intermediate group, the Jerboas (*Jerbellidae*), remain to be noticed.

Of this last branch of the order we have in Canada only one true representative, the elegant and active Deer-mouse (*Meriones Americanus*), called also sometimes the Jumping mouse, a name which is more properly given to another species, *Mus leucopus*, a small mouse with less of the miniature kangaroo in its appearance, and by no means equalling the Deer-mouse in its power of leaping. This beautiful and agile little creature, the Deer-mouse, is represented in the foremost figure of the accompanying illustration. It is of a light brown colour: its total length is about eight inches, of which the tail measures five, the body two, and the head one. It is a hibernating animal, and passes the winter in a torpid state, within some hollow tree or log, or other sheltered cavity, where it usually escapes detection. During the rest of the year, also, though not unfrequently seen, it generally contrives to

house, especially their voracity, destructiveness, and extraordinary fecundity, are everywhere too well known. Wherever they effect a lodgment, they multiply and swarm amazingly. The female produces three broods in a year, each brood consisting of from eight to fourteen young. Their excessive increase is somewhat checked by their extreme voracity, which even extends to cannibalism, for they destroy and devour each other, a maimed or wounded rat being certain to fall a victim to his murderous companions. As a consequence of this propensity, and still further limiting the multiplication of the race, the females are very greatly in the minority. Notwithstanding their destructiveness, they are not without their use in the economy of nature. Their very voracity is turned to valuable account by rendering them efficient scavengers, especially in crowded cities, where large numbers of them occupy the sewers, and do good service by consuming much of the offal and refuse matter that would otherwise accumulate

tuberculated, or marked with conical prominences on the summit, and the tail is naked and longer than the body. These characters distinguish the genus from another very closely allied, the Field Mouse (*Arvicola*), in which the crown of the grinders is flat, the enamel forming angular ridges, and the tail is much shorter than the body, as well as more or less furry.

Of this genus there are many native varieties, but they have not yet been clearly defined. In the "Natural History of New York," a large number are mentioned, but with considerable discrepancy and uncertainty in the nomenclature and classification.

In the Toronto University Museum there are also specimens of several species, but they are not named. The second figure in the illustration represents a common variety of Field Mouse, which is frequently met with in meadows or grain fields, where it is not a little destructive. The Mole, or Water Rat, a species of *Arvicola*, does not seem to be native in Canada.