

THE SHREW MOUSE*.

THE shrew mouse seems to form a link in the chain of small animals, and to fill the interval between the rat and the mole, which, though they resemble each other in size, differ greatly in figure, and are very distant species. The shrew is still smaller than the mouse, and has

* The shrew mouse has two cutting teeth in each jaw, pointing forward, a long slender nose, small rounded ears, and five toes on each foot. The eyes are small, and almost hid in the fur; the nose is long and slender, the upper part being longer; the head and upper part of the body are of a brownish red colour, and the belly of a dirty white. The length of the body, from tail to nose, two inches and a half, and that of the tail one inch and a half; *Pennant's Synops. of Quad.* p. 307.

In Greek, *Myas*; in Latin, *Mus araneus*, *Mus cecus*; in Italian, *Paparagno*; in Spanish, *Morgambo*; in German, *Müger*, *Spigewi*, *Zifewi*, *Spizmeus*, *Maselmus*; in Swedish, *Nakkenus*; in Polish, *Keret*; in Silesia, *Bysem-mas*; among the Greeks, *Myfarring*; in Swift, *Mürrer*; in Savoy, *Myfa*, *Myfette*; in French, *La Myfaraigue*, *Myferait*, *Musaraigne*, *Myfet*, *Myfette*, *Sory*, &c.

Mufaraneus; *Gefner. Hist. Quad.* p. 747.

Mus moschias (because, when dried, it smells of musk); *Gefner, Jen. Quad.* p. 116.

Mufaraneus; *Rey, Synops. Quad.* p. 239.

Sorex araneus, cauda mediocri, corpore subius albedo; *Lin.* *Syst.* p. 74.

Mufaraneus, rostro productiore: *Mus venenosus*; *Klein. Quad.* p. 58.

Mufaraneus, rostro rufus, infra albicans; *Briffen. Regem. Alem.* p. 178.

an affinity to the mole, by its long nose; by its eyes, which, though larger than those of the mole, are much concealed, and more minute than those of the mouse; by the number of its toes, having five on each foot; by the tail and legs, especially the hind-legs, which are shorter than those of the mouse; by the ears; and, lastly, by the teeth. This little animal has a strong and peculiar odour, which is very disagreeable to the cats, who pursue and kill, but never eat the shrews. It is probably this bad smell, and the reluctance of the cats, which have given rise to the vulgar prejudice, that the bite of the shrew mouse is venomous, and particularly hurtful to horses. But the shrew is neither venomous, nor is it capable of biting; for the aperture of its mouth is not large enough to take in a duplication of another animal's skin, which is absolutely necessary to the action of biting. The disease of horses, vulgarly ascribed to the bite of the shrew mouse, is a swelling or blotch, and proceeds from an internal cause, which has no relation to a bite. This animal, especially in winter, frequents hay-lofts, stables, barns, and dung-hills. It feeds upon grain, insects, and putrid flesh. In the country, it frequents the woods, and lives upon grain. It conceals itself under moss and the leaves and trunks of trees, and sometimes in the holes abandoned by the mole, or in smaller holes which it digs with its muzzle and claws. The shrew produces an equal number of young, though not so frequently,

frequently, as the mouse. Its cry is also much sharper; but it is not nearly so agile. It is easily taken; because it both sees and runs badly. The colour of the shrew is a mixture of brown and red; but some are ash-coloured, and others nearly black, though all of them are white under the belly. They are very common in Europe; but they seem not to exist in America. The Brazilian animal mentioned by Marcgrave*, under the name of the shrew mouse, which, he says, has two black lists on the back, is larger, and seems to be a different species.

* Marcgravii Hist. Brasil. p. 220.