

of human knowledge. Ignorance produced genera, but science will ever continue to create proper names; and we shall not be afraid of increasing the number whenever we have occasion to delineate different species.

Under the generic name of rat several species of little animals have been comprised and confounded; but we appropriate this name solely to the common rat, which is of a blackish colour, and lives in our houses; they generally inhabit barns and granaries, from whence, when food is scarce they invade our dwellings. The rat is carnivorous, or if the expression may be allowed, an omnivorous animal; he prefers hard substances to soft ones, he gnaws wool, linen, and furniture of all sorts; eats through wood, makes holes and hiding places in walls, ceilings, and behind wainscots, from whence he issues in search of food, and frequently returns with as much as he can drag along, forming, especially when he has young to provide for, a magazine of the whole. The females bring forth several times in the year, though mostly in the summer, and have five or six at a time. They love warmth, and in winter they generally shelter themselves near chimneys, or among hay and straw. In defiance of cats, poison, and traps, these animals multiply so
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