

much as frequently to do considerable damage. In old country-houses, where great quantities of grain are kept, and where neighbouring barns and hay-stacks favour their retreat and their increase, they often become so numerous that the inhabitants are under the necessity of quitting their dwellings, unless they happen to devour each other, and this is no uncommon thing when they are straightened for provisions; for in case of a famine being occasioned by their numbers the strong kill the weak, open their heads, first eat the brains, and then the rest of the body: the next day hostilities are renewed in the same manner, nor do they suspend their havock until the majority are destroyed; and this is the reason why, in a place that has been for some time infested with rats, they seem to disappear of a sudden, and return not for a long time. It is the same with field-mice, whose prodigious increase is checked solely by their cruelties to each other when provisions become scarce. Aristotle attributes their sudden destruction to the effect of rains, but rats are not exposed to the weather, and field-mice know well how to secure themselves from its effects, for their subterraneous habitations are not even moist.

Rats are as lascivious as voracious; they have a kind of yelp in their amours, and when
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