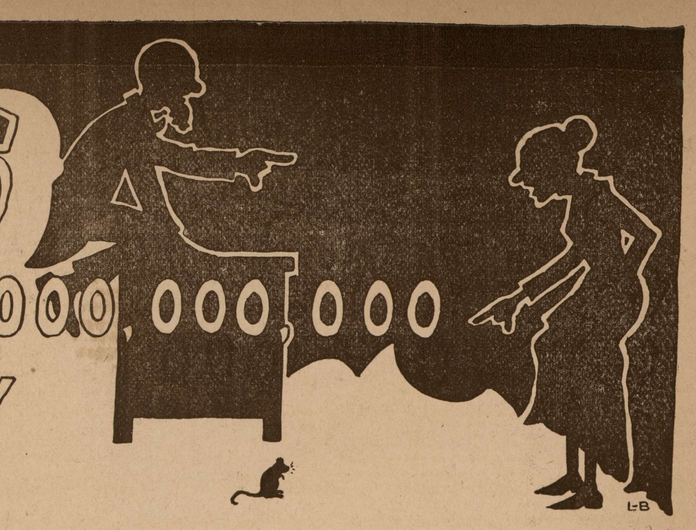
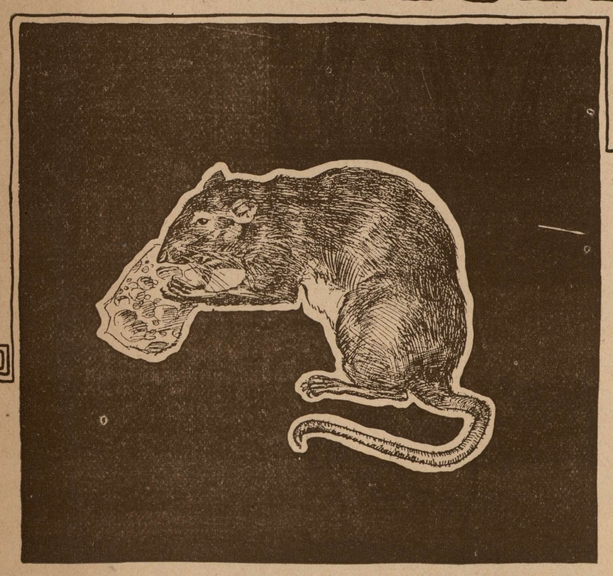
RAVAGES BY RATS

COST NATION $2,000,000,000 ANNUALLY



MOST DESTRUCTIVE ANIMALS IN WORLD—



Lions, tigers, elephants and all other species of the animal kingdom are not as destructive as rats, which are placed as the world's most destructive creatures.

Uncle Sam has gone on record as declaring the rat to be the most destructive animal in the world.

Other animals may be bigger, and the destructiveness of a single individual may be greater that that of one member of the rat family, but this does not interfere with the Government verdict awarding first place to the rat in the matter of damage wrought. Whatever the rat lacks in size he more than makes up in point of numbers.

The declaration that the rat is the most destructive of all animals may seem extravagant, but the students of such subjects bring forth arguments that will convince the most skeptical.

These experts concede that a lion, tiger or wolf may do more harm than a solitary rat, but they concede nothing more. The rat is more plentiful than the larger beasts of prey, and for this reason he and his family have more opportunity to destroy.

In discussing the numerical strength of the rats the Department of Agriculture declares that there are possibly three times as many of these rodents as there are human beings. This excess exists practically throughout the entire world.

The destruction wrought by this vast horde of rats is far greater than that carried on by all the lions, tigers, wolves and other predatory animals on the face of the globe On this point a Government statement says:

"There are insects, of course, that are exceedingly destructive, and these must be taken into consideration in making a case against the rats. Probably the combined ravages of all the injurious insects inflict greater economic loss than do those of rats, but it is a safe statement that no one kind of insect destroys as much. The harm done by any species of insect is usually confined to certain geographic limits, rarely extending over large parts of a continent. The damage done by rats extends over the entire world. Oceans are no barrier to this particular pest."

Those interested in the travels of rats will find opportunity for study along the wharves and streets of Baltimore. The animasl are as much at home on shipboard as on land and some of the local supply receives no little contribution from foreign shores through shipping which comes into Baltimore harbor.

The sight of these alien rats debarking after ocean travel is not at all uncommon at the Baltimore docks. The rodents establish communication with the shore by means of ship hawsers. When the vessel is tied up at the wharf it is a simple matter for the rodents to crawl along the heavy ropes and make their way to the heart of Baltimore. Observation shows that when they have once landed the majority of these foreign invaders stay with us.

In time of bubonic plague prevalence in any of the ports of the world the health authorities of the port of Baltimore enforce rigid rat quarantine, according to Dr. T. L. Richardson, of the United States Public Health Service, stationed at Curtis Bay Quarantine Station. No rats are permitted to come ashore from ships which have touched at infected ports.

The means of exclusion is as simple as it is effective. Funnel-shaped metal guards protect each hawser. These devices make it impossible for the rats to negotiate the passage from ship to shore. Passage from shore to ship is similarly impossible.

On the streets of Baltimore it is by no means uncommon to see rats scurrying from one building to another, especially at night.

"The rat's destructiveness to property and crops is very great" says the Department of Agriculture, "but it is by no means confined to these. The animal menaces human life as well. This rodent is responsible for more deaths among human beings than all the wars of history. Not all the fatal epidemics of the past were bubonic plague, but enough of them have been so identified to show that almost every century of the Christian era has had at least one great epidemic of this scourge which destroyed millions of people.

"The plague called 'black death' devasted Europe for 50 years of the fourteenth century, destroying two-thirds to three-fourths of the population of large territories and one-fourth of all the people on the continent, or about 25,000,000 persons. Since 1896 plague has carried away nearly 9,000,000 persons in India alone. The disease is still entrenched in Asia, Africa, Australia and South America, and cases have occurred in Europe and North America also.

"Through the fleas that infest them, rats are almost wholly responsible for the perpetuation and transmission of bubonic plague, and it has been proved also that rats are active, although not exclusive, agents in spreading pneumonia as well. Only the prompt measures taken by the United States Public Health Service against these animals prevented disastrous epidemics of plague in San Francisco, Seattle and Hawaii in 1909, in Porto Rico in 1912 and in New Orleans in 1914.

"The rat is suspected of being a carrier of infantile paralysis, and there is no doubt that it carries many infectious germs from its haunts of filth, leaving them upon human food during its depredations."

No wonder the United States Government has seen fit to make open declaration of war against the rats as a class! In planning and carrying out this warfare the authorities are battling for human health and economic saving as well. The war is nation-wide and in its successful conduct the Government is enlisting the co-operation of every State, county and municipality.

The "call to arms" is intended to reach every part of the United States, from the congested city to the smallest hamlet and the isolated farm. Reports to Washington officials indicate that the fighting is brisk and effective and that the mortality among the rats is increasingly heavy.

It is a dramatic war. This phase of the conflict is emphasized by the circumstance that the subject has reached the moving-picture film, through one of the activities of the Department of Agriculture.

As a means of enlisting the full strength of the national fighting forces the authorities have prepared and circulated a film entitled "The Modern Pied Piper," which sounds the alarm forcefully. The film is in constant demand and is lending much support to the national crusade of the rat exterminators.

The economic damage caused by rats is appaling. Most of us give it no thought other than to resent the raids of the rodents on our pantries or our fancy shirts. Summed up, however, the loss runs into astounding figures. Through the Biological Survey, the Department of Agriculture has conducted surveys which give results causing the average man to gasp with astonishment and dismay. The research shows that losses due to rats are in al-

(Continued on Back Page)

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