

RATS LIKE BEER

—But Now They Can't Get Drunk

From a BBC Talk by London's Official Rat-catcher

WILLIAM DALTON, like his ancestors before him, is official rat-catcher of the City of London.

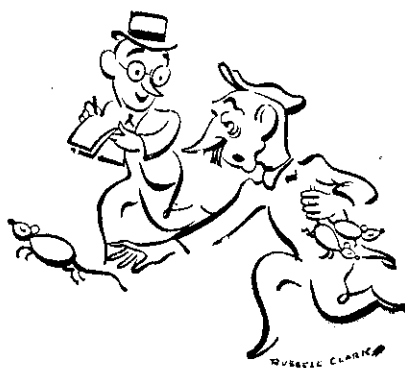
IF my wife was listening to me, she'd say: "Eh, hop it, I've heard enough about rats. Get out of the way," she'd say, "You're holding up the washing." The women of our family, the Daltons of the City of London, are sick and tired of the word rat, sick and tired of it. Last summer, my wife and I had a holiday in Devon, and before we went she said, "Bill," she said, "I hope you don't talk about rats while we're away." I didn't, but it was hard, very hard. You see, he's an artist, really, the rat-catcher is, and his mind's always on his work.

We start this job in our family just about as soon as we can walk. There's three of us in this generation—three brothers—all rat-catchers. When we were kids, we used to go out with dad on Friday nights, after school. Those

were the best nights of the weeks for us, and in that way, we'd done all the ground work long before we were 10 years of age. When we were 14, we were put into a building at night alone to put what we knew into practice. That was the way our father, our grandfather and his father before him had been trained, and it was what we would do with our own sons.

Rats have been in the news lately because they do a terrible lot of damage to stuff we can't afford to lose in wartime. You will understand that I'm playing my part in keeping them down, but here's something I'd like you to know.

And here's one thing—I've always thought it a bad description of an unpleasant human being to call him a rat. Believe me, it's an expression you'll never hear a rat-catcher use. The rat's a gallant fellow, and if you ask me, the rat has a far larger amount of intellect than plenty of people you see about—far larger and more family feeling, too. You sometimes hear of babies left on doorsteps. Now that's a thing a rat would never do. The mother rat will



defend her young against any ferret you like to put down. And there's no one so good at making a nice home as the lady rat.

I was called into a big city hospital once. The price tickets were disappearing from the carcasses of meat in the larder. Well, it was a lady rat all right. We found her in the space under the dynamo which works the refrigerator. There she was with seven little nippers—all tucked into a beautiful nest made of meat tickets and bits of string—over 200 tickets altogether. But what interested me was, that rat had enough intellect when she got into that great clean larder and found she was "expecting," to look around and say: "Well, I'm

(continued on next page)

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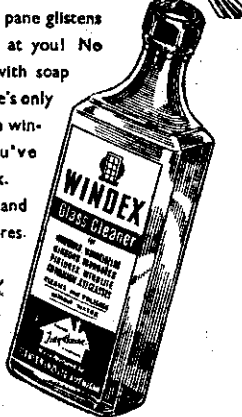


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