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Broadsheet: "Depiction of a Memorable Incident with Mice," 1675

Unknown Artist



Broadsheet from woodcut: "Depiction of a Memorable Incident with Mice," 1675. (Uknown artist. All rights reserved. Courtesy of the Bavarian State Library.)

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Broadside catalogue , call number: Res/Slg.Faust 66

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The broadsheet tells the curious tale of a horseman who rode across the fields near Brochdorp, a village near

Hannover. He is said to have come across thousands of mice, assembled in “battle formation” and “led” by a big “colonel” rat. On a whim he got off his horse and beat the last mouse in the formation, a big one, to death (A). The other mice immediately turned against him and attacked him. He escaped by quickly climbing onto his horse and riding off (B). He then saw the enraged mice spreading over the fields.

Several times the narrator refers to this incident as an act of God: he starts the depiction with a general remark about godly punishment and its “mysterious ways”—which can include fire and water, as well as “unreasonable” animals and vermin in order to admonish and punish the unrighteous. To back up his interpretation he mentions other incidents where mice have appeared in larger numbers and done considerable damage: in the city of Hameln, at the river Thur, or in Saxony where they damaged the fruit crops. He adds that only God can know the true meaning of the incident and ends with a short poem:

> *Gott hat alles wolgemacht / alles dienet ihm zum guten /*
> *Doch / zu weilen brauchet er / auch die scharffe Straffes-Ruhten /*
> *Laßt ihr Menschen euch die Mäuß / hier zur Lehr und Warnung dienen /*
> *Fürchtet Gott / er möcht (wer weiß?) lassen sich durch Buß versühnen.*

> (Translation:
> God has made everything right / everything serves him for the good /
> But / sometimes he needs / the fierce penalty-rods /
> You people take the mice / here as lesson and as warning /
> Fear God / he might (who knows?) reconcile through penitence.)

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Related links:

- Entire broadsheet, A° 1746
  http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/0010/bsb00100734/images/index.html
- Einblattdrucke der frühen Neuzeit (Collection of early modern broadsheets), Bavarian State Library
  http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/ausgaben/uni_ausgabe.html

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