John Bennet, â??The Brewer and the Ratâ?•

Description

JOHN BENNET

â??The BREWER and the RATâ?•

â??Twas on a time a rat did stray
In search of food, and in his way,
By chance he met with sweet regale,
From dregs of Bowleyâ??s new-brewn ale;
But not content with this good fare,
He searchâ??d for something yet more rare:
He searchâ??d, and found, he thought, a prize,
And straitway to his ruin flies.
Descends with ease the dreary vat,
And gladdenâ??d much at this retreat,
Nor thought of danger till too late.
For in the midst of all his joys,
His fears were wakenâ??d at the noise
Of Bowley with attendants twain,
Who for their fresh-fillâ??d vessel came.

The Rat now saw the danger great,
And earnest strove to shun his fate:
Oft round the fatal vat he run,
But by that found himself undone;
Because the efforts made in vain,
His once dear freedom to regain,
Soon drew the injurâ??d Brewer there,
To see the cause of noise so near.
Then did the Rat his error find,
Yet, not to prove the Fates unkind,
When dying to the Brewer spoke,
My discontent deserves this stroke.
Had not I been to prudence blind,
And all to thievery inclinâ??d;
I still had livâ??d in pleasure free,
Nor lost my life with infamy.

The moral bids vain mortals to beware,
Lest they too soon do meet the Ratâ??s just fare;
Bids them not gratify their vicious will,

Which so productive is of future ill. 35

NOTES:

3 *regale* â??A sumptuous mealâ?• (*OED*).

4 *dregs* â??The sediment of liquorsâ?• (*OED*); *Bowleyâ??s new-brewn ale* A reference to a Quaker brewer by the name of Bowley whose business was centered in Cirencester, about 35 miles from Bennetâ??s hometown of Woodstock (Mathias, *The Brewing Industry in England*, p. 299). Bennet also includes a poem titled â??Bowleyâ??s Aleâ?• in this volume (pp. 127-28)

5 *fare* â??Foodâ?• (*OED*).

8 *straitway* â??Immediatelyâ?• (*OED*).

9 *vat* â??A cask, tun, or other vessel used for holding or storing water, beer, or other liquidâ?• (*OED*).

14 *twain* â??In concord withâ?• (*OED*).

25 *Fates* â??In later Greek and Roman mythology, the three goddesses supposed to determine the course of human lifeâ?• (*OED*).

28 *prudence* â??The ability to recognize and follow the most suitable or sensible course of actionâ?• (*OED*).

31 *infamy* â??Evil fame or reputationâ?• (*OED*).

Source: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1774), p. 117-19. [*Google Books*]

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