DEFOE DANIEL

HISTORY OF THE PLAGUE IN LONDON

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

The father of Daniel Defoe was a butcher in the parish of St. Giles's, Cripplegate, London. In this parish, probably, Daniel Defoe was born in 1661, the year after the restoration of Charles II. The boy's parents wished him to become a dissenting minister, and so intrusted his education to a Mr. Morton who kept an academy for the training of nonconformist divines. How long Defoe staid at this school is not known. He seems to think himself that he staid there long enough to become a good scholar; for he declares that the pupils were "made masters of the English tongue, and more of them excelled in that particular than of any school at that time." If this statement be true, we can only say that the other schools must have been very bad indeed. Defoe never acquired a really good style, and can in no true sense be called a "master of the English tongue."

Nature had gifted Defoe with untiring energy, a keen taste for public affairs, and a special aptitude for chicanery and intrigue. These were not qualities likely to advance him in the ministry, and he wisely refused to adopt that profession. With a young man's love for adventure and a dissenter's hatred for Roman Catholicism, he took part in the Duke of Monmouth's rebellion (1685) against James II. More fortunate than three of his fellow students, who were executed for their share in this affair, Defoe escaped the hue and cry that followed the battle of Sedgemoor, and after some months' concealment set up as a wholesale merchant in Cornhill. When James II. was deposed in 1688, and the Protestant William of Orange elected to the English throne, Defoe hastened to give in his allegiance to the new dynasty. In 1691 he published his first pamphlet, "A New Discovery of an Old Intrigue, a Satire leveled at Treachery and Ambition." This is written in miserable doggerel verse. That Defoe should have mistaken it for poetry, and should have prided himself upon it accordingly, is only a proof of how incompetent an author is to pass judgment upon what is good and what is bad in his own work.

In 1692 Defoe failed in business, probably from too much attention to politics, which were now beginning to engross more and more of his time and thoughts. His political attitude is clearly defined in the title of his next pamphlet, "The Englishman's Choice and True Interest: in the Vigorous Prosecution of the War against France, and serving K. William and Q. Mary, and acknowledging their Right." "K. William" was too astute a manager to neglect a writer who showed the capacity to become a dangerous opponent. Defoe was accordingly given the place of accountant to the commissioners of the glass duty (1694). From this time until William's death (1702), he had no more loyal and active servant than Defoe. Innumerable pamphlets bear tribute to his devotion to the King and his policy, – pamphlets written in an easy, swinging, good-natured style, with little imagination and less passion; pamphlets whose principal arguments are based upon a reasonable self-interest, and for the comprehension of which no more intellectual power is called for than Providence has doled out to the average citizen. Had Defoe lived in the nineteenth century, instead of in the seventeenth, he would have commanded a princely salary as writer for the Sunday newspaper, and as composer of campaign documents and of speeches for members of the House of Representatives.

In 1701 Defoe published his "True-born Englishman," a satire upon the English people for their stupid opposition to the continental policy of the King. This is the only metrical composition of prolific Daniel that has any pretensions to be called a poem. It contains some lines not unworthy to rank with those of Dryden at his second-best. For instance, the opening: —

"Wherever God erects a house of prayer,
The Devil always builds a chapel there;

And 'twill be found upon examination
The latter has the largest congregation."

Or, again, this keen and spirited description of the origin of the English race: —

"These are the heroes that despise the Dutch,
And rail at newcome foreigners so much,
Forgetting that themselves are all derived
From the most scoundrel race that ever lived;
A horrid crowd of rambling thieves and drones,
Who ransacked kingdoms and dispeopled towns:
The Pict and painted Briton, treach'rous Scot
By hunger, theft, and rapine hither brought;
Norwegian pirates, buccaneering Danes,
Whose red-haired offspring everywhere remains:
Who, joined with Norman French, compound the breed
From whence your true-born Englishmen proceed."

Strange to say, the English people were so pleased with this humorous sketch of themselves, that they bought eighty thousand copies of the work. Not often is a truth teller so rewarded.

Not unnaturally elated by the success of this experiment, the next year Defoe came out with his famous "Shortest Way with the Dissenters," a satire upon those furious High Churchmen and Tories, who would devour the dissenters tooth and nail. Unfortunately, the author had overestimated the capacity of the average Tory to see through a stone wall. The irony was mistaken for sincerity, and quoted approvingly by those whom it was intended to satirize. When the truth dawned through the obscuration of the Tories' intellect, they were naturally enraged. They had influence enough to have Defoe arrested, and confined in Newgate for some eighteen months. He was also compelled to stand in the pillory for three days; but it is not true that his ears were cropped, as Pope intimates in his

"Earless on high stood unabashed Defoe."

What are the exact terms Defoe made with the ministry, and on exactly what conditions he was released from Newgate, have not been ascertained. It is certain he never ceased to write, even while in prison, both anonymously and under his own name. For some years, in addition to pamphlet after pamphlet, he published a newspaper which he called the "Review,"[1] in which he generally sided with the moderate Whigs, advocated earnestly the union with Scotland, and gave the English people a vast deal of good advice upon foreign policy and domestic trade. There is no doubt that during this time he was in the secret service of the government. When the Tories displaced the Whigs in 1710, he managed to keep his post, and took his "Review" over to the support of the new masters, justifying his turncoating by a disingenuous plea of preferring country to party. His pamphleteering pen was now as active in the service of the Tory prime minister Harley as it had been in that of the Whig Godolphin. The party of the latter rightly regarded him as a traitor to their cause, and secured an order from the Court of Queen's Bench, directing the attorney-general to prosecute Defoe for certain pamphlets, which they declared were directed against the Hanoverian succession. Before the trial took place, Harley, at whose instigation the pamphlets had been written, secured his henchman a royal pardon.

When the Tories fell from power at the death of Queen Anne (1714), and the Whigs again obtained possession of the government, only one of two courses was open to Defoe: he must either retire permanently from politics, or again change sides. He unhesitatingly chose the latter. But his

[1] At first, a weekly; with the fifth number, a bi-weekly; after the first year, a tri-weekly.

political reputation had now sunk so low, that no party could afford the disgrace of his open support. He was accordingly employed as a literary and political spy, ostensibly opposing the government, worming himself into the confidence of Tory editors and politicians, using his influence as an editorial writer to suppress items obnoxious to the government, and suggesting the timely prosecution of such critics as he could not control. He was able to play this double part for eight years, until his treachery was discovered by one Mist, whose "Journal" Defoe had, in his own words, "disabled and enervated, so as to do no mischief, or give any offense to the government." Mist hastened to disclose Defoe's real character to his fellow newspaper proprietors; and in 1726 we find the good Daniel sorrowfully complaining, "I had not published my project in this pamphlet, could I have got it inserted in any of the journals without feeing the journalists or publishers… I have not only had the mortification to find what I sent rejected, but to lose my originals, not having taken copies of what I wrote."[2] Heavy-footed justice had at last overtaken the arch liar of his age.

Of the two hundred and fifty odd books and pamphlets written by Defoe, it may fairly be said that only two – "Robinson Crusoe" and the "History of the Plague in London" – are read by any but the special students of eighteenth-century literature. The latter will be discussed in another part of this Introduction. Of the former it may be asserted, that it arose naturally out of the circumstances of Defoe's trade as a journalist. So long as the papers would take his articles, nobody of distinction could die without Defoe's rushing out with a biography of him. In these biographies, when facts were scanty, Defoe supplied them from his imagination, attributing to his hero such sentiments as he thought the average Londoner could understand, and describing his appearance with that minute fidelity of which only an eyewitness is supposed to be capable. Long practice in this kind of composition made Defoe an adept in the art of "lying like truth." When, therefore, the actual and extraordinary adventures of Alexander Selkirk came under his notice, nothing was more natural and more profitable for Defoe than to seize upon this material, and work it up, just as he worked up the lives of Jack Sheppard the highwayman, and of Avery the king of the pirates. It is interesting to notice also that the date of publication of "Robinson Crusoe" (1719) corresponds with a time at which Defoe was playing the desperate and dangerous game of a political spy. A single false move might bring him a stab in the dark, or might land him in the hulks for transportation to some tropical island, where he might have abundant need for the exercise of those mental resources that interest us so much in Crusoe. The secret of Defoe's life at this time was known only to himself and to the minister that paid him. He was almost as much alone in London as was Crusoe on his desert island.

The success which Defoe scored in "Robinson Crusoe" he never repeated. His entire lack of artistic conscience is shown by his adding a dull second part to "Robinson Crusoe," and a duller series of serious reflections such as might have passed through Crusoe's mind during his island captivity. Of even the best of Defoe's other novels, – "Moll Flanders," "Roxana," "Captain Singleton," – the writer must confess that his judgment coincides with that of Mr. Leslie Stephen, who finds two thirds of them "deadly dull," and the treatment such as "cannot raise [the story] above a very moderate level."[3]

The closing scenes of Defoe's life were not cheerful. He appears to have lost most of the fortune he acquired from his numerous writings and scarcely less numerous speculations. For the two years immediately preceding his death, he lived in concealment away from his home, though why he fled, and from what danger, is not definitely known. He died in a lodging in Ropemaker's Alley, Moorfields, on April 26, 1731.

The only description we have of Defoe's personal appearance is an advertisement published in 1703, when he was in hiding to avoid arrest for his "Shortest Way with the Dissenters: " —

[2] Preface to his pamphlet entitled Street Robberies.

[3] For a very different estimate, see Saintsbury's Selections from Defoe's Minor Novels.

"He is a middle-aged, spare man, about forty years old, of a brown complexion, and dark-brown colored hair, but wears a wig; a hooked nose, a sharp chin, gray eyes, and a large mole near his mouth."

In the years 1720-21 the plague, which had not visited Western Europe for fifty-five years, broke out with great violence in Marseilles. About fifty thousand people died of the disease in that city, and great alarm was felt in London lest the infection should reach England. Here was a journalistic chance that so experienced a newspaper man as Defoe could not let slip. Accordingly, on the 17th of March, 1722, appeared his "Journal of the Plague Year: Being Observations or Memorials of the most Remarkable Occurrences, as well Publick as Private, which happened in London during the Last Great Visitation in 1665. Written by a Citizen who continued all the while in London. Never made public before." The story is told with such an air of veracity, the little circumstantial details are introduced with such apparent artlessness, the grotesque incidents are described with such animation, (and relish!) the horror borne in upon the mind of the narrator is so apparently genuine, that we can easily understand how almost everybody not in the secret of the authorship believed he had here an authentic "Journal," written by one who had actually beheld the scenes he describes. Indeed, we know that twenty-three years after the "Journal" was published, this impression still prevailed; for Defoe is gravely quoted as an authority in "A Discourse on the Plague; by Richard Mead, Fellow of the College of Physicians and of the Royal Society, and Physician to his Majesty. 9th Edition. London, 1744." Though Defoe, like his admiring critic Mr. Saintsbury, had but small sense of humor, even he must have felt tickled in his grave at this ponderous scientific tribute to his skill in the art of realistic description.

If we inquire further into the secret of Defoe's success in the "History of the Plague," we shall find that it consists largely in his vision, or power of seeing clearly and accurately what he describes, before he attempts to put this description on paper. As Defoe was but four years old at the time of the Great Plague, his personal recollection of its effects must have been of the dimmest; but during the years of childhood (the most imaginative of life) he must often have conversed with persons who had been through the plague, possibly with those who had recovered from it themselves. He must often have visited localities ravaged by the plague, and spared by the Great Fire of 1666; he must often have gazed in childish horror at those awful mounds beneath which hundreds of human bodies lay huddled together, – rich and poor, high and low, scoundrel and saint, – sharing one common bed at last. His retentive memory must have stored away at least the outline of those hideous images, so effectively recombined many years later by means of his powerful though limited imagination.

Defoe had the ability to become a good scholar, and to acquire the elements of a good English style; but it is certain he never did. He never had time, or rather he never took time, preferring invariably quantity to quality. What work of his has survived till to-day is read, not for its style, but in spite of its style. His syntax is loose and unscholarly; his vocabulary is copious, but often inaccurate; many of his sentences ramble on interminably, lacking unity, precision, and balance. Figures of speech he seldom abuses because he seldom uses; his imagination, as noticed before, being extremely limited in range. That Defoe, in spite of these defects, should succeed in interesting us in his "Plague," is a remarkable tribute to his peculiar ability as described in the preceding paragraph.

In the course of the Notes, the editor has indicated such corrections as are necessary to prevent the student from thinking that in reading Defoe he is drinking from a "well of English undefiled." The art of writing an English prose at once scholarly, clear-cut, and vigorous, was well understood by Defoe's great contemporaries, Dryden, Swift, and Congreve; it does not seem to have occurred to Defoe that he could learn anything from their practice. He has his reward. "Robinson Crusoe" may continue to hold the child and the kitchen wench; but the "Essay on Dramatic Poesy," "The Battle of the Books," and "Love for Love," are for the men and women of culture.

The standard Life of Defoe is by William Lee (London, J.C. Hotten, 1869). William Minto, in the "English Men of Letters Series," has an excellent short biography of Defoe. For criticism, the

only good estimate I am acquainted with is by Leslie Stephen, in "Hours in a Library, First Series." The nature of the article on Defoe in the "Britannica" may be indicated by noticing that the writer (Saintsbury) seriously compares Defoe with Carlyle as a descriptive writer. It would be consoling to think that this is intended as a joke.

Those who wish to know more about the plague than Defoe tells them should consult Besant's "London," pp. 376-394 (New York, Harpers). Besant refers to two pamphlets, "The Wonderful Year" and "Vox Civitatis," which he thinks Defoe must have used in writing his book.

HISTORY OF THE PLAGUE IN LONDON

It was about the beginning of September, 1664, that I, among the rest of my neighbors, heard in ordinary discourse that the plague was returned again in Holland; for it had been very violent there, and particularly at Amsterdam and Rotterdam, in the year 1663, whither, they say, it was brought (some said from Italy, others from the Levant) among some goods which were brought home by their Turkey fleet; others said it was brought from Candia; others, from Cyprus. It mattered not from whence it came; but all agreed it was come into Holland again.[4]

We had no such thing as printed newspapers in those days, to spread rumors and reports of things, and to improve them by the invention of men, as I have lived to see practiced since. But such things as those were gathered from the letters of merchants and others who corresponded abroad, and from them was handed about by word of mouth only; so that things did not spread instantly over the whole nation, as they do now. But it seems that the government had a true account of it, and several counsels[5] were held about ways to prevent its coming over; but all was kept very private. Hence it was that this rumor died off again; and people began to forget it, as a thing we were very little concerned in and that we hoped was not true, till the latter end of November or the beginning of December, 1664, when two men, said to be Frenchmen, died of the plague in Longacre, or rather at the upper end of Drury Lane.[6] The family they were in endeavored to conceal it as much as possible; but, as it had gotten some vent in the discourse of the neighborhood, the secretaries of state[7] got knowledge of it. And concerning themselves to inquire about it, in order to be certain of the truth, two physicians and a surgeon were ordered to go to the house, and make inspection. This they did, and finding evident tokens[8] of the sickness upon both the bodies that were dead, they gave their opinions publicly that they died of the plague. Whereupon it was given in to the parish clerk,[9] and he also returned them[10] to the hall; and it was printed in the weekly bill of mortality in the usual manner, thus: —

Plague, 2. Parishes infected, 1.

The people showed a great concern at this, and began to be alarmed all over the town, and the more because in the last week in December, 1664, another man died in the same house and of the same distemper. And then we were easy again for about six weeks, when, none having died with any marks of infection, it was said the distemper was gone; but after that, I think it was about the 12th of February, another died in another house, but in the same parish and in the same manner.

This turned the people's eyes pretty much towards that end of the town; and, the weekly bills showing an increase of burials in St. Giles's Parish more than usual, it began to be suspected that the plague was among the people at that end of the town, and that many had died of it, though they had

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[4] It was popularly believed in London that the plague came from Holland; but the sanitary (or rather unsanitary) conditions of London itself were quite sufficient to account for the plague's originating there. Andrew D. White tells us, that it is difficult to decide to-day between Constantinople and New York as candidates for the distinction of being the dirtiest city in the world.

[5] Incorrectly used for "councils."

[6] In April, 1663, the first Drury Lane Theater had been opened. The present Drury Lane Theater (the fourth) stands on the same site.

[7] The King's ministers. At this time they held office during the pleasure of the Crown, not, as now, during the pleasure of a parliamentary majority.

[8] Gangrene spots (see text, pp. 197, 198).

[9] The local government of London at this time was chiefly in the hands of the vestries of the different parishes. It is only of recent years that the power of these vestries has been seriously curtailed, and transferred to district councils.

[10] The report.

taken care to keep it as much from the knowledge of the public as possible. This possessed the heads of the people very much; and few cared to go through Drury Lane, or the other streets suspected, unless they had extraordinary business that obliged them to it.

This increase of the bills stood thus: the usual number of burials in a week, in the parishes of St. Giles-in-the-Fields and St. Andrew's, Holborn,[11] were[12] from twelve to seventeen or nineteen each, few more or less; but, from the time that the plague first began in St. Giles's Parish, it was observed that the ordinary burials increased in number considerably. For example: —

Dec. 27 to Jan. 3,	St. Giles's	16
	St. Andrew's	17
Jan. 3 to Jan. 10,	St. Giles's	12
	St. Andrew's	25
Jan. 10 to Jan. 17,	St. Giles's	18
	St. Andrew's	18
Jan. 17 to Jan. 24,	St. Giles's	23
	St. Andrew's	16
Jan. 24 to Jan. 31,	St. Giles's	24
	St. Andrew's	15
Jan. 31 to Feb. 7,	St. Giles's	21
	St. Andrew's	23
Feb. 7 to Feb. 14,	St. Giles's	24
	Whereof one of the plague.	

The like increase of the bills was observed in the parishes of St. Bride's, adjoining on one side of Holborn Parish, and in the parish of St. James's, Clerkenwell, adjoining on the other side of Holborn; in both which parishes the usual numbers that died weekly were from four to six or eight, whereas at that time they were increased as follows: —

Dec. 20 to Dec. 27,	St. Bride's	0
	St. James's	8
Dec. 27 to Jan. 3,	St. Bride's	6
	St. James's	9
Jan. 3 to Jan. 10,	St. Bride's	11
	St. James's	7
Jan. 10 to Jan. 17,	St. Bride's	12
	St. James's	9
Jan. 17 to Jan. 24,	St. Bride's	9
	St. James's	15
Jan. 24 to Jan. 31,	St. Bride's	8
	St. James's	12
Jan. 31 to Feb. 7,	St. Bride's	13
	St. James's	5
Feb. 7 to Feb. 14,	St. Bride's	12
	St. James's	6

Besides this, it was observed, with great uneasiness by the people, that the weekly bills in general increased very much during these weeks, although it was at a time of the year when usually the bills are very moderate.

[11] Pronounced Hō´burn.

[12] Was.

The usual number of burials within the bills of mortality for a week was from about two hundred and forty, or thereabouts, to three hundred. The last was esteemed a pretty high bill; but after this we found the bills successively increasing, as follows: —

	Buried.	Increased.
Dec. 20 to Dec. 27	291	0
Dec. 27 to Jan. 3	349	58
Jan. 3 to Jan. 10	394	45
Jan. 10 to Jan. 17	415	21
Jan. 17 to Jan. 24	474	59

This last bill was really frightful, being a higher number than had been known to have been buried in one week since the preceding visitation of 1656.

However, all this went off again; and the weather proving cold, and the frost, which began in December, still continuing very severe, even till near the end of February, attended with sharp though moderate winds, the bills decreased again, and the city grew healthy; and everybody began to look upon the danger as good as over, only that still the burials in St. Giles's continued high. From the beginning of April, especially, they stood at twenty-five each week, till the week from the 18th to the 25th, when there was[13] buried in St. Giles's Parish thirty, whereof two of the plague, and eight of the spotted fever (which was looked upon as the same thing); likewise the number that died of the spotted fever in the whole increased, being eight the week before, and twelve the week above named.

This alarmed us all again; and terrible apprehensions were among the people, especially the weather being now changed and growing warm, and the summer being at hand. However, the next week there seemed to be some hopes again: the bills were low; the number of the dead in all was but 388; there was none of the plague, and but four of the spotted fever.

But the following week it returned again, and the distemper was spread into two or three other parishes, viz., St. Andrew's, Holborn, St. Clement's-Danes; and, to the great affliction of the city, one died within the walls, in the parish of St. Mary-Wool-Church, that is to say, in Bearbinder Lane, near Stocks Market: in all, there were nine of the plague, and six of the spotted fever. It was, however, upon inquiry, found that this Frenchman who died in Bearbinder Lane was one who, having lived in Longacre, near the infected houses, had removed for fear of the distemper, not knowing that he was already infected.

This was the beginning of May, yet the weather was temperate, variable, and cool enough, and people had still some hopes. That which encouraged them was, that the city was healthy. The whole ninety-seven parishes buried but fifty-four, and we began to hope, that, as it was chiefly among the people at that end of the town, it might go no farther; and the rather, because the next week, which was from the 9th of May to the 16th, there died but three, of which not one within the whole city or liberties;[14] and St. Andrew's buried but fifteen, which was very low. It is true, St. Giles's buried two and thirty; but still, as there was but one of the plague, people began to be easy. The whole bill also was very low: for the week before, the bill was but three hundred and forty-seven; and the week above mentioned, but three hundred and forty-three. We continued in these hopes for a few days; but it was but for a few, for the people were no more to be deceived thus. They searched the houses, and found that the plague was really spread every way, and that many died of it every day; so that now all our extenuations[15] abated, and it was no more to be concealed. Nay, it quickly appeared that the infection had spread itself beyond all hopes of abatement; that in the parish of St. Giles's it was gotten

[13] Were.

[14] Outlying districts; so called because they enjoyed certain municipal immunities, or liberties. Until recent years, a portion of Philadelphia was known as the "Northern Liberties."

[15] Attempts to believe the evil lessened.

into several streets, and several families lay all sick together; and accordingly, in the weekly bill for the next week, the thing began to show itself. There was indeed but fourteen set down of the plague, but this was all knavery and collusion; for St. Giles's Parish, they buried forty in all, whereof it was certain most of them died of the plague, though they were set down of other distempers. And though the number of all the burials were[16] not increased above thirty-two, and the whole bill being but three hundred and eighty-five, yet there was[17] fourteen of the spotted fever, as well as fourteen of the plague; and we took it for granted, upon the whole, that there were fifty died that week of the plague.

The next bill was from the 23d of May to the 30th, when the number of the plague was seventeen; but the burials in St. Giles's were fifty-three, a frightful number, of whom they set down but nine of the plague. But on an examination more strictly by the justices of the peace, and at the lord mayor's[18] request, it was found there were twenty more who were really dead of the plague in that parish, but had been set down of the spotted fever, or other distempers, besides others concealed.

But those were trifling things to what followed immediately after. For now the weather set in hot; and from the first week in June, the infection spread in a dreadful manner, and the bills rise[19] high; the articles of the fever, spotted fever, and teeth, began to swell: for all that could conceal their distempers did it to prevent their neighbors shunning and refusing to converse with them, and also to prevent authority shutting up their houses, which, though it was not yet practiced, yet was threatened; and people were extremely terrified at the thoughts of it.

The second week in June, the parish of St. Giles's, where still the weight of the infection lay, buried one hundred and twenty, whereof, though the bills said but sixty-eight of the plague, everybody said there had been a hundred at least, calculating it from the usual number of funerals in that parish as above.

Till this week the city continued free, there having never any died except that one Frenchman, who[20] I mentioned before, within the whole ninety-seven parishes. Now, there died four within the city, – one in Wood Street, one in Fenchurch Street, and two in Crooked Lane. Southwark was entirely free, having not one yet died on that side of the water.

I lived without Aldgate, about midway between Aldgate Church and Whitechapel Bars, on the left hand, or north side, of the street; and as the distemper had not reached to that side of the city, our neighborhood continued very easy. But at the other end of the town their consternation was very great; and the richer sort of people, especially the nobility and gentry from the west part of the city, thronged out of town, with their families and servants, in an unusual manner. And this was more particularly seen in Whitechapel; that is to say, the Broad Street where I lived. Indeed, nothing was to be seen but wagons and carts, with goods, women, servants, children, etc.; coaches filled with people of the better sort, and horsemen attending them, and all hurrying away; then empty wagons and carts appeared, and spare horses with servants, who it was apparent were returning, or sent from the country to fetch more people; besides innumerable numbers of men on horseback, some alone, others with servants, and, generally speaking, all loaded with baggage, and fitted out for traveling, as any one might perceive by their appearance.

This was a very terrible and melancholy thing to see, and as it was a sight which I could not but look on from morning to night (for indeed there was nothing else of moment to be seen), it filled me with very serious thoughts of the misery that was coming upon the city, and the unhappy condition of those that would be left in it.

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[16] Was.

[17] Were.

[18] The chief executive officer of the city of London still bears this title.

[19] One of the many instances in which Defoe mixes his tenses.

[20] Whom. We shall find many more instances of Defoe's misuse of this form, as also of others (see Introduction, p. 15).

This hurry of the people was such for some weeks, that there was no getting at the lord mayor's door without exceeding difficulty; there was such pressing and crowding there to get passes and certificates of health for such as traveled abroad; for, without these, there was no being admitted to pass through the towns upon the road, or to lodge in any inn. Now, as there had none died in the city for all this time, my lord mayor gave certificates of health without any difficulty to all those who lived in the ninety-seven parishes, and to those within the liberties too, for a while.

This hurry, I say, continued some weeks, that is to say, all the months of May and June; and the more because it was rumored that an order of the government was to be issued out, to place turnpikes[21] and barriers on the road to prevent people's traveling; and that the towns on the road would not suffer people from London to pass, for fear of bringing the infection along with them, though neither of these rumors had any foundation but in the imagination, especially at first.

I now began to consider seriously with myself concerning my own case, and how I should dispose of myself; that is to say, whether I should resolve to stay in London, or shut up my house and flee, as many of my neighbors did. I have set this particular down so fully, because I know not but it may be of moment to those who come after me, if they come to be brought to the same distress and to the same manner of making their choice; and therefore I desire this account may pass with them rather for a direction to themselves to act by than a history of my actings, seeing it may not be of one farthing value to them to note what became of me.

I had two important things before me: the one was the carrying on my business and shop, which was considerable, and in which was embarked all my effects in the world; and the other was the preservation of my life in so dismal a calamity as I saw apparently was coming upon the whole city, and which, however great it was, my fears perhaps, as well as other people's, represented to be much greater than it could be.

The first consideration was of great moment to me. My trade was a saddler, and as my dealings were chiefly not by a shop or chance trade, but among the merchants trading to the English colonies in America, so my effects lay very much in the hands of such. I was a single man, it is true; but I had a family of servants, who[22] I kept at my business; had a house, shop, and warehouses filled with goods; and in short to leave them all as things in such a case must be left, that is to say, without any overseer or person fit to be trusted with them, had been to hazard the loss, not only of my trade, but of my goods, and indeed of all I had in the world.

I had an elder brother at the same time in London, and not many years before come over from Portugal; and, advising with him, his answer was in the three words, the same that was given in another case[23] quite different, viz., "Master, save thyself." In a word, he was for my retiring into the country, as he resolved to do himself, with his family; telling me, what he had, it seems, heard abroad, that the best preparation for the plague was to run away from it. As to my argument of losing my trade, my goods, or debts, he quite confuted me: he told me the same thing which I argued for my staying, viz., that I would trust God with my safety and health was the strongest repulse[24] to my pretensions of losing my trade and my goods. "For," says he, "is it not as reasonable that you should trust God with the chance or risk of losing your trade, as that you should stay in so eminent a point of danger, and trust him with your life?"

I could not argue that I was in any strait as to a place where to go, having several friends and relations in Northamptonshire, whence our family first came from; and particularly, I had an only sister in Lincolnshire, very willing to receive and entertain me.

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[21] Used almost in its original sense of a military barrier.

[22] Whom.

[23] See Matt, xxvii. 40; Mark xv. 30; Luke xxiii. 35.

[24] Denial.

My brother, who had already sent his wife and two children into Bedfordshire, and resolved to follow them, pressed my going very earnestly; and I had once resolved to comply with his desires, but at that time could get no horse: for though it is true all the people did not go out of the city of London, yet I may venture to say, that in a manner all the horses did; for there was hardly a horse to be bought or hired in the whole city for some weeks. Once I resolved to travel on foot with one servant, and, as many did, lie at no inn, but carry a soldier's tent with us, and so lie in the fields, the weather being very warm, and no danger from taking cold. I say, as many did, because several did so at last, especially those who had been in the armies, in the war[25] which had not been many years past: and I must needs say, that, speaking of second causes, had most of the people that traveled done so, the plague had not been carried into so many country towns and houses as it was, to the great damage, and indeed to the ruin, of abundance of people.

But then my servant who[26] I had intended to take down with me, deceived me, and being frighted at the increase of the distemper, and not knowing when I should go, he took other measures, and left me: so I was put off for that time. And, one way or other, I always found that to appoint to go away was always crossed by some accident or other, so as to disappoint and put it off again. And this brings in a story which otherwise might be thought a needless digression, viz., about these disappointments being from Heaven.

It came very warmly into my mind one morning, as I was musing on this particular thing, that as nothing attended us without the direction or permission of Divine Power, so these disappointments must have something in them extraordinary, and I ought to consider whether it did not evidently point out, or intimate to me, that it was the will of Heaven I should not go. It immediately followed in my thoughts, that, if it really was from God that I should stay, he was able effectually to preserve me in the midst of all the death and danger that would surround me; and that if I attempted to secure myself by fleeing from my habitation, and acted contrary to these intimations, which I believed to be divine, it was a kind of flying from God, and that he could cause his justice to overtake me when and where he thought fit.[27]

These thoughts quite turned my resolutions again; and when I came to discourse with my brother again, I told him that I inclined to stay and take my lot in that station in which God had placed me; and that it seemed to be made more especially my duty, on the account of what I have said.

My brother, though a very religious man himself, laughed at all I had suggested about its being an intimation from Heaven, and told me several stories of such foolhardy people, as he called them, as I was; that I ought indeed to submit to it as a work of Heaven if I had been any way disabled by distempers or diseases, and that then, not being able to go, I ought to acquiesce in the direction of Him, who, having been my Maker, had an undisputed right of sovereignty in disposing of me; and that then there had been no difficulty to determine which was the call of his providence, and which was not; but that I should take it as an intimation from Heaven that I should not go out of town, only because I could not hire a horse to go, or my fellow was run away that was to attend me, was ridiculous, since at the same time I had my health and limbs, and other servants, and might with ease travel a day or two on foot, and, having a good certificate of being in perfect health, might either hire a horse, or take post on the road, as I thought fit.

Then he proceeded to tell me of the mischievous consequences which attend the presumption of the Turks and Mohammedans in Asia, and in other places where he had been (for my brother, being a merchant, was a few years before, as I have already observed, returned from abroad, coming last from Lisbon); and how, presuming upon their professed predestinating[28] notions, and of every

[25] The civil war between the Royalists and the Parliamentarians, 1642-51.

[26] Whom.

[27] This argument is neatly introduced to account for the narrator's staying in the city at all, when he could easily have escaped.

[28] Explained by the two following phrases.

man's end being predetermined, and unalterably beforehand decreed, they would go unconcerned into infected places, and converse with infected persons, by which means they died at the rate of ten or fifteen thousand a week, whereas the Europeans, or Christian merchants, who kept themselves retired and reserved, generally escaped the contagion.

Upon these arguments my brother changed my resolutions again, and I began to resolve to go, and accordingly made all things ready; for, in short, the infection increased round me, and the bills were risen to almost seven hundred a week, and my brother told me he would venture to stay no longer. I desired him to let me consider of it but till the next day, and I would resolve; and as I had already prepared everything as well as I could, as to my business and who[29] to intrust my affairs with, I had little to do but to resolve.

I went home that evening greatly oppressed in my mind, irresolute, and not knowing what to do. I had set the evening wholly apart to consider seriously about it, and was all alone; for already people had, as it were by a general consent, taken up the custom of not going out of doors after sunset: the reasons I shall have occasion to say more of by and by.

In the retirement of this evening I endeavored to resolve first what was my duty to do, and I stated the arguments with which my brother had pressed me to go into the country, and I set against them the strong impressions which I had on my mind for staying, – the visible call I seemed to have from the particular circumstance of my calling, and the care due from me for the preservation of my effects, which were, as I might say, my estate; also the intimations which I thought I had from Heaven, that to me signified a kind of direction to venture; and it occurred to me, that, if I had what I call a direction to stay, I ought to suppose it contained a promise of being preserved, if I obeyed.

This lay close to me;[30] and my mind seemed more and more encouraged to stay than ever, and supported with a secret satisfaction that I should be kept.[31] Add to this, that turning over the Bible which lay before me, and while my thoughts were more than ordinary serious upon the question, I cried out, "Well, I know not what to do, Lord direct me!" and the like. And at that juncture I happened to stop turning over the book at the Ninety-first Psalm, and, casting my eye on the second verse, I read to the seventh verse exclusive, and after that included the tenth, as follows: "I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress: my God; in him will I trust. Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust: his truth shall be thy shield and buckler. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling," etc.

I scarce need tell the reader that from that moment I resolved that I would stay in the town, and, casting myself entirely upon the goodness and protection of the Almighty, would not seek any other shelter whatever; and that as my times were in his hands,[32] he was as able to keep me in a time of the infection as in a time of health; and if he did not think fit to deliver me, still I was in his hands, and it was meet he should do with me as should seem good to him.

With this resolution I went to bed; and I was further confirmed in it the next day by the woman being taken ill with whom I had intended to intrust my house and all my affairs. But I had a further obligation laid on me on the same side: for the next day I found myself very much out of order also; so that, if I would have gone away, I could not. And I continued ill three or four days, and this entirely

[29] Whom.

[30] "Lay close to me," i.e., was constantly in my mind.

[31] Kept safe from the plague.

[32] "My times are in thy hand" (Ps. xxxi. 15).

determined my stay: so I took my leave of my brother, who went away to Dorking in Surrey,[33] and afterwards fetched around farther into Buckinghamshire or Bedfordshire, to a retreat he had found out there for his family.

It was a very ill time to be sick in; for if any one complained, it was immediately said he had the plague; and though I had, indeed, no symptoms of that distemper, yet, being very ill both in my head and in my stomach, I was not without apprehension that I really was infected. But in about three days I grew better. The third night I rested well, sweated a little, and was much refreshed. The apprehensions of its being the infection went also quite away with my illness, and I went about my business as usual.

These things, however, put off all my thoughts of going into the country; and my brother also being gone, I had no more debate either with him or with myself on that subject.

It was now mid-July; and the plague, which had chiefly raged at the other end of the town, and, as I said before, in the parishes of St. Giles's, St. Andrew's, Holborn, and towards Westminster, began now to come eastward, towards the part where I lived. It was to be observed, indeed, that it did not come straight on towards us; for the city, that is to say within the walls, was indifferent healthy still. Nor was it got then very much over the water into Southwark; for though there died that week twelve hundred and sixty-eight of all distempers, whereof it might be supposed above nine hundred died of the plague, yet there was but twenty-eight in the whole city, within the walls, and but nineteen in Southwark, Lambeth Parish included; whereas in the parishes of St. Giles and St. Martin's-in-the-Fields alone, there died four hundred and twenty-one.

But we perceived the infection kept chiefly in the outparishes, which being very populous and fuller also of poor, the distemper found more to prey upon than in the city, as I shall observe afterwards. We perceived, I say, the distemper to draw our way, viz., by the parishes of Clerkenwell, Cripplegate, Shoreditch, and Bishopsgate; which last two parishes joining to Aldgate, Whitechapel, and Stepney, the infection came at length to spread its utmost rage and violence in those parts, even when it abated at the western parishes where it began.

It was very strange to observe that in this particular week (from the 4th to the 11th of July), when, as I have observed, there died near four hundred of the plague in the two parishes of St. Martin's and St. Giles-in-the-Fields[34] only, there died in the parish of Aldgate but four, in the parish of Whitechapel three, in the parish of Stepney but one.

Likewise in the next week (from the 11th of July to the 18th), when the week's bill was seventeen hundred and sixty-one, yet there died no more of the plague, on the whole Southwark side of the water, than sixteen.

But this face of things soon changed, and it began to thicken in Cripplegate Parish especially, and in Clerkenwell; so that by the second week in August, Cripplegate Parish alone buried eight hundred and eighty-six, and Clerkenwell one hundred and fifty-five. Of the first, eight hundred and fifty might well be reckoned to die of the plague; and of the last, the bill itself said one hundred and forty-five were of the plague.

During the month of July, and while, as I have observed, our part of the town seemed to be spared in comparison of the west part, I went ordinarily about the streets as my business required, and particularly went generally once in a day, or in two days, into the city, to my brother's house, which he had given me charge of, and to see it was safe; and having the key in my pocket, I used to go into the house, and over most of the rooms, to see that all was well. For though it be something wonderful to tell that any should have hearts so hardened, in the midst of such a calamity, as to rob and steal, yet certain it is that all sorts of villainies, and even levities and debaucheries, were then

[33] Dorking is about twenty miles southwest of London.

[34] Rather St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and St. Giles's.

practiced in the town as openly as ever: I will not say quite as frequently, because the number of people were[35] many ways lessened.

But the city itself began now to be visited too, I mean within the walls. But the number of people there were35 indeed extremely lessened by so great a multitude having been gone into the country; and even all this month of July they continued to flee, though not in such multitudes as formerly. In August, indeed, they fled in such a manner, that I began to think there would be really none but magistrates and servants left in the city.

As they fled now out of the city, so I should observe that the court[36] removed early, viz., in the month of June, and went to Oxford, where it pleased God to preserve them; and the distemper did not, as I heard of, so much as touch them; for which I cannot say that I ever saw they showed any great token of thankfulness, and hardly anything of reformation, though they did not want being told that their crying vices might, without breach of charity, be said to have gone far in bringing that terrible judgment upon the whole nation.

The face of London was now, indeed, strangely altered: I mean the whole mass of buildings, city, liberties, suburbs, Westminster, Southwark, and altogether; for as to the particular part called the city, or within the walls, that was not yet much infected. But in the whole, the face of things, I say, was much altered. Sorrow and sadness sat upon every face, and though some part were not yet overwhelmed, yet all looked deeply concerned; and as we saw it apparently coming on, so every one looked on himself and his family as in the utmost danger. Were it possible to represent those times exactly to those that did not see them, and give the reader due ideas of the horror that everywhere presented itself, it must make just impressions upon their minds, and fill them with surprise. London might well be said to be all in tears. The mourners did not go about the streets,[37] indeed; for nobody put on black, or made a formal dress of mourning for their nearest friends: but the voice of mourning was truly heard in the streets. The shrieks of women and children at the windows and doors of their houses, where their nearest relations were perhaps dying, or just dead, were so frequent to be heard as we passed the streets, that it was enough to pierce the stoutest heart in the world to hear them. Tears and lamentations were seen almost in every house, especially in the first part of the visitation; for towards the latter end, men's hearts were hardened, and death was so always before their eyes that they did not so much concern themselves for the loss of their friends, expecting that themselves should be summoned the next hour.

Business led me out sometimes to the other end of the town, even when the sickness was chiefly there. And as the thing was new to me, as well as to everybody else, it was a most surprising thing to see those streets, which were usually so thronged, now grown desolate, and so few people to be seen in them, that if I had been a stranger, and at a loss for my way, I might sometimes have gone the length of a whole street, I mean of the by-streets, and see[38] nobody to direct me, except watchmen set at the doors of such houses as were shut up; of which I shall speak presently.

One day, being at that part of the town on some special business, curiosity led me to observe things more than usually; and indeed I walked a great way where I had no business. I went up Holborn, and there the street was full of people; but they walked in the middle of the great street, neither on one side or[39] other, because, as I suppose, they would not mingle with anybody that came out of houses, or meet with smells and scents from houses, that might be infected.

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[35] Was.

[36] Charles II. and his courtiers. The immunity of Oxford was doubtless due to good drainage and general cleanliness.

[37] Eccl. xii. 5.

[38] Have seen.

[39] Nor. This misuse of "or" for "nor" is frequent with Defoe.

The inns of court were all shut up, nor were very many of the lawyers in the Temple,[40] or Lincoln's Inn, or Gray's Inn, to be seen there. Everybody was at peace, there was no occasion for lawyers; besides, it being in the time of the vacation too, they were generally gone into the country. Whole rows of houses in some places were shut close up, the inhabitants all fled, and only a watchman or two left.

When I speak of rows of houses being shut up, I do not mean shut up by the magistrates, but that great numbers of persons followed the court, by the necessity of their employments, and other dependencies; and as others retired, really frighted with the distemper, it was a mere desolating of some of the streets. But the fright was not yet near so great in the city, abstractedly so called,[41] and particularly because, though they were at first in a most inexpressible consternation, yet, as I have observed that the distemper intermitted often at first, so they were, as it were, alarmed and unalarmed again, and this several times, till it began to be familiar to them; and that even when it appeared violent, yet seeing it did not presently spread into the city, or the east or south parts, the people began to take courage, and to be, as I may say, a little hardened. It is true, a vast many people fled, as I have observed; yet they were chiefly from the west end of the town, and from that we call the heart of the city, that is to say, among the wealthiest of the people, and such persons as were unincumbered with trades and business. But of the rest, the generality staid, and seemed to abide the worst; so that in the place we call the liberties, and in the suburbs, in Southwark, and in the east part, such as Wapping, Ratcliff, Stepney, Rotherhithe, and the like, the people generally staid, except here and there a few wealthy families, who, as above, did not depend upon their business.

It must not be forgot here that the city and suburbs were prodigiously full of people at the time of this visitation, I mean at the time that it began. For though I have lived to see a further increase, and mighty throngs of people settling in London, more than ever; yet we had always a notion that numbers of people which – the wars being over, the armies disbanded, and the royal family and the monarchy being restored – had flocked to London to settle in business, or to depend upon and attend the court for rewards of services, preferments, and the like, was[42] such that the town was computed to have in it above a hundred thousand people more than ever it held before. Nay, some took upon them to say it had twice as many, because all the ruined families of the royal party flocked hither, all the soldiers set up trades here, and abundance of families settled here. Again: the court brought with it a great flux of pride and new fashions; all people were gay and luxurious, and the joy of the restoration had brought a vast many families to London.[43]

But I must go back again to the beginning of this surprising time. While the fears of the people were young, they were increased strangely by several odd accidents, which put altogether, it was really a wonder the whole body of the people did not rise as one man, and abandon their dwellings, leaving the place as a space of ground designed by Heaven for an Aceldama,[44] doomed to be destroyed from the face of the earth, and that all that would be found in it would perish with it. I shall name but a few of these things; but sure they were so many, and so many wizards and cunning people propagating them, that I have often wondered there was any (women especially) left behind.

In the first place, a blazing star or comet appeared for several months before the plague, as there did, the year after, another a little before the fire. The old women, and the phlegmatic hypochondriac[45]

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[40] The four inns of court in London which have the exclusive right of calling to the bar, are the Inner Temple, the Middle Temple, Lincoln's Inn, and Gray's Inn. The Temple is so called because it was once the home of the Knights Templars.

[41] The city proper, i.e., the part within the walls, as distinguished from that without.

[42] Were.

[43] The population of London at this time was probably about half a million. It is now about six millions. (See Macaulay's History, chap. iii.)

[44] Acel´dama, the field of blood (see Matt. xxvii. 8).

[45] Phlegmatic hypochondriac is a contradiction in terms; for "phlegmatic" means "impassive, self-restrained," while "hypochondriac" means "morbidly anxious" (about one's health). Defoe's lack of scholarship was a common jest among his more

part of the other sex (whom I could almost call old women too), remarked, especially afterward, though not till both those judgments were over, that those two comets passed directly over the city, and that so very near the houses that it was plain they imported something peculiar to the city alone; that the comet before the pestilence was of a faint, dull, languid color, and its motion very heavy, solemn, and slow, but that the comet before the fire was bright and sparkling, or, as others said, flaming, and its motion swift and furious; and that, accordingly, one foretold a heavy judgment, slow but severe, terrible, and frightful, as was the plague, but the other foretold a stroke, sudden, swift, and fiery, as was the conflagration. Nay, so particular some people were, that, as they looked upon that comet preceding the fire, they fancied that they not only saw it pass swiftly and fiercely, and could perceive the motion with their eye, but even they heard it; that it made a rushing, mighty noise, fierce and terrible, though at a distance, and but just perceivable.

I saw both these stars, and, I must confess, had had so much of the common notion of such things in my head, that I was apt to look upon them as the forerunners and warnings of God's judgments, and, especially when the plague had followed the first, I yet saw another of the like kind, I could not but say, God had not yet sufficiently scourged the city.

The apprehensions of the people were likewise strangely increased by the error of the times, in which I think the people, from what principle I cannot imagine, were more addicted to prophecies, and astrological conjurations, dreams, and old wives' tales, than ever they were before or since.[46] Whether this unhappy temper was originally raised by the follies of some people who got money by it, that is to say, by printing predictions and prognostications, I know not. But certain it is, books frighted them terribly, such as "Lilly's Almanack,"[47] "Gadbury's Astrological Predictions," "Poor Robin's Almanack,"[48] and the like; also several pretended religious books, – one entitled "Come out of Her, my People, lest ye be Partaker of her Plagues;"[49] another called "Fair Warning;" another, "Britain's Remembrancer;" and many such, – all, or most part of which, foretold directly or covertly the ruin of the city. Nay, some were so enthusiastically bold as to run about the streets with their oral predictions, pretending they were sent to preach to the city; and one in particular, who, like Jonah[50] to Nineveh, cried in the streets, "Yet forty days, and London shall be destroyed." I will not be positive whether he said "yet forty days," or "yet a few days." Another ran about naked, except a pair of drawers about his waist, crying day and night, like a man that Josephus[51] mentions, who cried, "Woe to Jerusalem!" a little before the destruction of that city: so this poor naked creature cried, "Oh, the great and the dreadful God!" and said no more, but repeated those words continually, with a voice and countenance full of horror, a swift pace, and nobody could ever find him to stop, or rest, or take any sustenance, at least that ever I could hear of. I met this poor creature several times in the streets, and would have spoke to him, but he would not enter into speech with me, or any one else, but kept on his dismal cries continually.

These things terrified the people to the last degree, and especially when two or three times, as I have mentioned already, they found one or two in the bills dead of the plague at St. Giles's.

Next to these public things were the dreams of old women; or, I should say, the interpretation of old women upon other people's dreams; and these put abundance of people even out of their wits.

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learned adversaries, such as Swift, and Pope.

[46] It was in this very plague year that Newton formulated his theory of gravitation. Incredible as it may seem, at this same date even such men as Dryden held to a belief in astrology.

[47] William Lilly was the most famous astrologer and almanac maker of the time. In Butler's Hudibras he is satirized under the name of Sidrophel.

[48] Poor Robin's Almanack was first published in 1661 or 1662, and was ascribed to Robert Herrick, the poet.

[49] See Rev. xviii. 4.

[50] Jonah iii. 4.

[51] Flavius Josephus, the author of the History of the Jewish Wars. He is supposed to have died in the last decade of the first century A.D.

Some heard voices warning them to be gone, for that there would be such a plague in London so that the living would not be able to bury the dead; others saw apparitions in the air: and I must be allowed to say of both, I hope without breach of charity, that they heard voices that never spake, and saw sights that never appeared. But the imagination of the people was really turned wayward and possessed; and no wonder if they who were poring continually at the clouds saw shapes and figures, representations and appearances, which had nothing in them but air and vapor. Here they told us they saw a flaming sword held in a hand, coming out of a cloud, with a point hanging directly over the city. There they saw hearses and coffins in the air carrying to be buried. And there again, heaps of dead bodies lying unburied and the like, just as the imagination of the poor terrified people furnished them with matter to work upon.

So hypochondriac fancies represent
Ships, armies, battles in the firmament;
Till steady eyes the exhalations solve,
And all to its first matter, cloud, resolve.

I could fill this account with the strange relations such people give every day of what they have seen; and every one was so positive of their having seen what they pretended to see, that there was no contradicting them, without breach of friendship, or being accounted rude and unmannerly on the one hand, and profane and impenetrable on the other. One time before the plague was begun, otherwise than as I have said in St. Giles's (I think it was in March), seeing a crowd of people in the street, I joined with them to satisfy my curiosity, and found them all staring up into the air to see what a woman told them appeared plain to her, which was an angel clothed in white, with a fiery sword in his hand, waving it or brandishing it over his head. She described every part of the figure to the life, showed them the motion and the form, and the poor people came into it so eagerly and with so much readiness. "Yes, I see it all plainly," says one: "there's the sword as plain as can be." Another saw the angel; one saw his very face, and cried out what a glorious creature he was. One saw one thing, and one another. I looked as earnestly as the rest, but perhaps not with so much willingness to be imposed upon; and I said, indeed, that I could see nothing but a white cloud, bright on one side, by the shining of the sun upon the other part. The woman endeavored to show it me, but could not make me confess that I saw it; which, indeed, if I had, I must have lied. But the woman, turning to me, looked me in the face, and fancied I laughed, in which her imagination deceived her too, for I really did not laugh, but was seriously reflecting how the poor people were terrified by the force of their own imagination. However, she turned to me, called me profane fellow and a scoffer, told me that it was a time of God's anger, and dreadful judgments were approaching, and that despisers such as I should wander and perish.

The people about her seemed disgusted as well as she, and I found there was no persuading them that I did not laugh at them, and that I should be rather mobbed by them than be able to undeceive them. So I left them, and this appearance passed for as real as the blazing star itself.

Another encounter I had in the open day also; and this was in going through a narrow passage from Petty France[52] into Bishopsgate churchyard, by a row of almshouses. There are two churchyards to Bishopsgate Church or Parish. One we go over to pass from the place called Petty France into Bishopsgate Street, coming out just by the church door; the other is on the side of the narrow passage where the almshouses are on the left, and a dwarf wall with a palisade on it on the right hand, and the city wall on the other side more to the right.

In this narrow passage stands a man looking through the palisades into the burying place, and as many people as the narrowness of the place would admit to stop without hindering the passage of

[52] So called because many Frenchmen lived there. In Westminster there was another district with this same name.

others; and he was talking mighty eagerly to them, and pointing, now to one place, then to another, and affirming that he saw a ghost walking upon such a gravestone there. He described the shape, the posture, and the movement of it so exactly, that it was the greatest amazement to him in the world that everybody did not see it as well as he. On a sudden he would cry, "There it is! Now it comes this way!" then, "'Tis turned back!" till at length he persuaded the people into so firm a belief of it, that one fancied he saw it; and thus he came every day, making a strange hubbub, considering it was so narrow a passage, till Bishopsgate clock struck eleven; and then the ghost would seem to start, and, as if he were called away, disappeared on a sudden.

I looked earnestly every way, and at the very moment that this man directed, but could not see the least appearance of anything. But so positive was this poor man that he gave them vapors[53] in abundance, and sent them away trembling and frightened, till at length few people that knew of it cared to go through that passage, and hardly anybody by night on any account whatever.

This ghost, as the poor man affirmed, made signs to the houses and to the ground and to the people, plainly intimating (or else they so understanding it) that abundance of people should come to be buried in that churchyard, as indeed happened. But then he saw such aspects I must acknowledge I never believed, nor could I see anything of it myself, though I looked most earnestly to see it if possible.

Some endeavors were used to suppress the printing of such books as terrified the people, and to frighten the dispersers of them, some of whom were taken up, but nothing done in it, as I am informed; the government being unwilling to exasperate the people, who were, as I may say, all out of their wits already.

Neither can I acquit those ministers that in their sermons rather sunk than lifted up the hearts of their hearers. Many of them, I doubt not, did it for the strengthening the resolution of the people, and especially for quickening them to repentance; but it certainly answered not their end, at least not in proportion to the injury it did another way.

One mischief always introduces another. These terrors and apprehensions of the people led them to a thousand weak, foolish, and wicked things, which they wanted not a sort of people really wicked to encourage them to; and this was running about to fortune tellers, cunning men,[54] and astrologers, to know their fortunes, or, as it is vulgarly expressed, to have their fortunes told them, their nativities[55] calculated, and the like. And this folly presently made the town swarm with a wicked generation of pretenders to magic, to the "black art," as they called it, and I know not what, nay, to a thousand worse dealings with the devil than they were really guilty of. And this trade grew so open and so generally practiced, that it became common to have signs and inscriptions set up at doors, "Here lives a fortune teller," "Here lives an astrologer," "Here you may have your nativity calculated," and the like; and Friar Bacon's brazen head,[56] which was the usual sign of these people's dwellings, was to be seen almost in every street, or else the sign of Mother Shipton,[57] or of Merlin's[58] head, and the like.

With what blind, absurd, and ridiculous stuff these oracles of the devil pleased and satisfied the people, I really know not; but certain it is, that innumerable attendants crowded about their doors every day: and if but a grave fellow in a velvet jacket, a band,[59] and a black cloak, which was the habit

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[53] "Gave them vapors," i.e., put them into a state of nervous excitement.

[54] Soothsayers.

[55] In astrology, the scheme or figure of the heavens at the moment of a person's birth. From this the astrologers pretended to foretell a man's destiny.

[56] Roger Bacon, a Franciscan friar of the thirteenth century, had a knowledge of mechanics and optics far in advance of his age: hence he was commonly regarded as a wizard. The brazen head which he manufactured was supposed to assist him in his necromantic feats; it is so introduced by Greene in his play of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay (1594).

[57] A fortune teller who lived in the reign of Henry VIII., and was famous for her prophecies.

[58] The most celebrated magician of mediæval times (see Spenser's Faërie Queene and Tennyson's Merlin and Vivien).

[59] Linen collar or ruff.

those quack conjurers generally went in, was but seen in the streets, the people would follow them[60] in crowds, and ask them60 questions as they went along.

The case of poor servants was very dismal, as I shall have occasion to mention again by and by; for it was apparent a prodigious number of them would be turned away. And it was so, and of them abundance perished, and particularly those whom these false prophets flattered with hopes that they should be kept in their services, and carried with their masters and mistresses into the country; and had not public charity provided for these poor creatures, whose number was exceeding great (and in all cases of this nature must be so), they would have been in the worst condition of any people in the city.

These things agitated the minds of the common people for many months while the first apprehensions were upon them, and while the plague was not, as I may say, yet broken out. But I must also not forget that the more serious part of the inhabitants behaved after another manner. The government encouraged their devotion, and appointed public prayers, and days of fasting and humiliation, to make public confession of sin, and implore the mercy of God to avert the dreadful judgment which hangs over their heads; and it is not to be expressed with what alacrity the people of all persuasions embraced the occasion, how they flocked to the churches and meetings, and they were all so thronged that there was often no coming near, even to the very doors of the largest churches. Also there were daily prayers appointed morning and evening at several churches, and days of private praying at other places, at all which the people attended, I say, with an uncommon devotion. Several private families, also, as well of one opinion as another, kept family fasts, to which they admitted their near relations only; so that, in a word, those people who were really serious and religious applied themselves in a truly Christian manner to the proper work of repentance and humiliation, as a Christian people ought to do.

Again, the public showed that they would bear their share in these things. The very court, which was then gay and luxurious, put on a face of just concern for the public danger. All the plays and interludes[61] which, after the manner of the French court,[62] had been set up and began to increase among us, were forbid to act;[63] the gaming tables, public dancing rooms, and music houses, which multiplied and began to debauch the manners of the people, were shut up and suppressed; and the jack puddings,[64] merry-andrews,64 puppet shows, ropedancers, and such like doings, which had bewitched the common people, shut their shops, finding indeed no trade, for the minds of the people were agitated with other things, and a kind of sadness and horror at these things sat upon the countenances even of the common people. Death was before their eyes, and everybody began to think of their graves, not of mirth and diversions.

But even these wholesome reflections, which, rightly managed, would have most happily led the people to fall upon their knees, make confession of their sins, and look up to their merciful Savior for pardon, imploring his compassion on them in such a time of their distress, by which we might have been as a second Nineveh, had a quite contrary extreme in the common people, who, ignorant and stupid in their reflections as they were brutishly wicked and thoughtless before, were now led by their fright to extremes of folly, and, as I said before, that they ran to conjurers and witches and all sorts of deceivers, to know what should become of them, who fed their fears and kept them always alarmed and awake, on purpose to delude them and pick their pockets: so they were as mad upon their running after quacks and mountebanks, and every practicing old woman for medicines and remedies, storing

[60] Him.

[61] The interlude was originally a short, humorous play acted in the midst of a morality play to relieve the tedium of that very tedious performance. From the interlude was developed farce; and from farce, comedy.

[62] Charles II. and his courtiers, from their long exile in France, brought back to England with them French fashions in literature and in art.

[63] To be acted.

[64] Buffoons, clowns.

themselves with such multitudes of pills, potions, and preservatives, as they were called, that they not only spent their money, but poisoned themselves beforehand, for fear of the poison of the infection, and prepared their bodies for the plague, instead of preserving them against it. On the other hand, it was incredible, and scarce to be imagined, how the posts of houses and corners of streets were plastered over with doctors' bills, and papers of ignorant fellows quacking and tampering in physic, and inviting people to come to them for remedies, which was generally set off with such flourishes as these; viz., "Infallible preventitive pills against the plague;" "Never-failing preservatives against the infection;" "Sovereign cordials against the corruption of air;" "Exact regulations for the conduct of the body in case of infection;" "Antipestilential pills;" "Incomparable drink against the plague, never found out before;" "An Universal remedy for the plague;" "The Only True plague water;" "The Royal Antidote against all kinds of infection;" and such a number more that I cannot reckon up, and, if I could, would fill a book of themselves to set them down.

Others set up bills to summon people to their lodgings for direction and advice in the case of infection. These had specious titles also, such as these: —

> An eminent High-Dutch physician, newly come over from Holland, where he resided during all the time of the great plague, last year, in Amsterdam, and cured multitudes of people that actually had the plague upon them.
>
> An Italian gentlewoman just arrived from Naples, having a choice secret to prevent infection, which she found out by her great experience, and did wonderful cures with it in the late plague there, wherein there died 20,000 in one day.
>
> An ancient gentlewoman having practiced with great success in the late plague in this city, anno 1636, gives her advice only to the female sex. To be spoken with, etc.
>
> An experienced physician, who has long studied the doctrine of antidotes against all sorts of poison and infection, has, after forty years' practice, arrived at such skill as may, with God's blessing, direct persons how to prevent being touched by any contagious distemper whatsoever. He directs the poor gratis.

I take notice of these by way of specimen. I could give you two or three dozen of the like, and yet have abundance left behind. It is sufficient from these to apprise any one of the humor of those times, and how a set of thieves and pickpockets not only robbed and cheated the poor people of their money, but poisoned their bodies with odious and fatal preparations; some with mercury, and some with other things as bad, perfectly remote from the thing pretended to, and rather hurtful than serviceable to the body in case an infection followed.

I cannot omit a subtlety of one of those quack operators with which he gulled the poor people to crowd about him, but did nothing for them without money. He had, it seems, added to his bills, which he gave out in the streets, this advertisement in capital letters; viz., "He gives advice to the poor for nothing."

Abundance of people came to him accordingly, to whom he made a great many fine speeches, examined them of the state of their health and of the constitution of their bodies, and told them many good things to do, which were of no great moment. But the issue and conclusion of all was, that he had a preparation which, if they took such a quantity of every morning, he would pawn his life that they should never have the plague, no, though they lived in the house with people that were infected. This made the people all resolve to have it, but then the price of that was so much (I think it was half a crown[65]). "But, sir," says one poor woman, "I am a poor almswoman, and am kept by the parish; and your bills say you give the poor your help for nothing." – "Ay, good woman," says the doctor, "so I do, as I published there. I give my advice, but not my physic!" – "Alas, sir," says she, "that is a

[65] About 62½ cents.

snare laid for the poor then, for you give them your advice for nothing; that is to say, you advise them gratis to buy your physic for their money: so does every shopkeeper with his wares." Here the woman began to give him ill words, and stood at his door all that day, telling her tale to all the people that came, till the doctor, finding she turned away his customers, was obliged to call her upstairs again and give her his box of physic for nothing, which perhaps, too, was good for nothing when she had it.

But to return to the people, whose confusions fitted them to be imposed upon by all sorts of pretenders and by every mountebank. There is no doubt but these quacking sort of fellows raised great gains out of the miserable people; for we daily found the crowds that ran after them were infinitely greater, and their doors were more thronged, than those of Dr. Brooks, Dr. Upton, Dr. Hodges, Dr. Berwick, or any, though the most famous men of the time; and I was told that some of them got five pounds[66] a day by their physic.

But there was still another madness beyond all this, which may serve to give an idea of the distracted humor of the poor people at that time, and this was their following a worse sort of deceivers than any of these; for these petty thieves only deluded them to pick their pockets and get their money (in which their wickedness, whatever it was, lay chiefly on the side of the deceiver's deceiving, not upon the deceived); but, in this part I am going to mention, it lay chiefly in the people deceived, or equally in both. And this was in wearing charms, philters,[67] exorcisms,[68] amulets,[69] and I know not what preparations to fortify the body against the plague, as if the plague was not the hand of God, but a kind of a possession of an evil spirit, and it was to be kept off with crossings,[70] signs of the zodiac,[71] papers tied up with so many knots, and certain words or figures written on them, as particularly the word "Abracadabra,"[72] formed in triangle or pyramid; thus, —

A B R A C A D A B R A
A B R A C A D A B R
A B R A C A D A B
A B R A C A D A
A B R A C A D
A B R A C A
A B R A C
A B R A
A B R
A B
A

Others had the Jesuits' mark in a cross: —
I H
S[73]
Others had nothing but this mark; thus, —
+

I might spend a great deal of my time in exclamations against the follies, and indeed the wickednesses of those things, in a time of such danger, in a matter of such consequence as this of a national infection; but my memorandums of these things relate rather to take notice of the fact, and mention only that it was so. How the poor people found the insufficiency of those things, and how many of them were afterwards carried away in the dead carts, and thrown into the common graves of every parish with these hellish charms and trumpery hanging about their necks, remains to be spoken of as we go along.

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[66] About twenty-five dollars; but the purchasing power of money was then seven or eight times what it is now.

[67] Strictly speaking, this word means "love potions."

[68] Exorcism is the act of expelling evil spirits, or the formula used in the act. Defoe's use of the word here is careless and inaccurate.

[69] Bits of metal, parchment, etc., worn as charms.

[70] Making the sign of the cross.

[71] Paper on which were marked the signs of the zodiac, – a superstition from astrology.

[72] A meaningless word used in incantations. Originally the name of a Syrian deity.

[73] Iesus Hominum Salvator ("Jesus, Savior of Men"). The order of the Jesuits was founded by Ignatius de Loyola in 1534.

All this was the effect of the hurry the people were in, after the first notion of the plague being at hand was among them, and which may be said to be from about Michaelmas,[74] 1664, but more particularly after the two men died in St. Giles's, in the beginning of December; and again after another alarm in February, for when the plague evidently spread itself, they soon began to see the folly of trusting to these unperforming creatures who had gulled them of their money; and then their fears worked another way, namely, to amazement and stupidity, not knowing what course to take or what to do, either to help or to relieve themselves; but they ran about from one neighbor's house to another, and even in the streets, from one door to another, with repeated cries of, "Lord, have mercy upon us! What shall we do?"

I am supposing, now, the plague to have begun, as I have said, and that the magistrates began to take the condition of the people into their serious consideration. What they did as to the regulation of the inhabitants, and of infected families, I shall speak to[75] by itself; but as to the affair of health, it is proper to mention here my having seen the foolish humor of the people in running after quacks, mountebanks, wizards, and fortune tellers, which they did, as above, even to madness. The lord mayor, a very sober and religious gentleman, appointed physicians and surgeons for the relief of the poor, I mean the diseased poor, and in particular ordered the College of Physicians[76] to publish directions for cheap remedies for the poor in all the circumstances of the distemper. This, indeed, was one of the most charitable and judicious things that could be done at that time; for this drove the people from haunting the doors of every disperser of bills, and from taking down blindly and without consideration, poison for physic, and death instead of life.

This direction of the physicians was done by a consultation of the whole college; and as it was particularly calculated for the use of the poor, and for cheap medicines, it was made public, so that everybody might see it, and copies were given gratis to all that desired it. But as it is public and to be seen on all occasions, I need not give the reader of this the trouble of it.

It remains to be mentioned now what public measures were taken by the magistrates for the general safety and to prevent the spreading of the distemper when it broke out. I shall have frequent occasion to speak of the prudence of the magistrates, their charity, their vigilance for the poor and for preserving good order, furnishing provisions, and the like, when the plague was increased as it afterwards was. But I am now upon the order and regulations which they published for the government of infected families.

I mentioned above shutting of houses up, and it is needful to say something particularly to that; for this part of the history of the plague is very melancholy. But the most grievous story must be told.

About June, the lord mayor of London, and the court of aldermen, as I have said, began more particularly to concern themselves for the regulation of the city.

The justices of the peace for Middlesex,[77] by direction of the secretary of state, had begun to shut up houses in the parishes of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, St. Martin's, St. Clement's-Danes, etc., and it was with good success; for in several streets where the plague broke out, upon strict guarding the houses that were infected, and taking care to bury those that died as soon as they were known to be dead, the plague ceased in those streets. It was also observed that the plague decreased sooner in those parishes after they had been visited to the full than it did in the parishes of Bishopsgate, Shoreditch, Aldgate, Whitechapel, Stepney, and others; the early care taken in that manner being a great means to the putting a check to it.

This shutting up of the houses was a method first taken, as I understand, in the plague which happened in 1603, at the coming of King James I. to the crown; and the power of shutting people up

[74] The Feast of St. Michael, Sept. 29.

[75] This use of "to" for "of" is frequent with Defoe.

[76] The Royal College of Physicians was founded by Thomas Linacre, physician to Henry VIII. Nearly every London physician of prominence is a member.

[77] The city of London proper lies entirely in the county of Middlesex.

in their own houses was granted by act of Parliament, entitled "An Act for the Charitable Relief and Ordering of Persons Infected with Plague." On which act of Parliament the lord mayor and aldermen of the city of London founded the order they made at this time, and which took place the 1st of July, 1665, when the numbers of infected within the city were but few; the last bill for the ninety-two parishes being but four, and some houses having been shut up in the city, and some people being removed to the pesthouse beyond Bunhill Fields, in the way to Islington. I say by these means, when there died near one thousand a week in the whole, the number in the city was but twenty-eight; and the city was preserved more healthy, in proportion, than any other place all the time of the infection.

These orders of my lord mayor's were published, as I have said, the latter end of June, and took place from the 1st of July, and were as follow: viz., —

ORDERS CONCEIVED AND PUBLISHED BY THE LORD MAYOR AND ALDERMEN OF THE CITY OF LONDON, CONCERNING THE INFECTION OF THE PLAGUE; 1665

Whereas in the reign of our late sovereign King James, of happy memory, an act was made for the charitable relief and ordering of persons infected with the plague; whereby authority was given to justices of the peace, mayors, bailiffs, and other head officers, to appoint within their several limits examiners, searchers, watchmen, keepers, and buriers, for the persons and places infected, and to minister unto them oaths for the performance of their offices; and the same statute did also authorize the giving of their directions as unto them for other present necessity should seem good in their discretions: it is now, upon special consideration, thought very expedient, for preventing and avoiding of infection of sickness (if it shall please Almighty God), that these officers following be appointed, and these orders hereafter duly observed.

Examiners to be appointed to every Parish

First, it is thought requisite, and so ordered, that in every parish there be one, two, or more persons of good sort and credit chosen by the alderman, his deputy, and common council of every ward, by the name of examiners, to continue in that office for the space of two months at least: and if any fit person so appointed shall refuse to undertake the same, the said parties so refusing to be committed to prison until they shall conform themselves accordingly.

The Examiner's Office

That these examiners be sworn by the aldermen to inquire and learn from time to time what houses in every parish be visited, and what persons be sick, and of what diseases, as near as they can inform themselves, and, upon doubt in that case, to command restraint of access until it appear what the disease shall prove; and if they find any person sick of the infection, to give order to the constable that the house be shut up; and, if the constable shall be found remiss and negligent, to give notice thereof to the alderman of the ward.

Watchmen

That to every infected house there be appointed two watchmen, – one for every day, and the other for the night; and that these watchmen have a special care that no person go in or out of such infected houses whereof they have the charge, upon pain of severe punishment. And the said watchmen to do such further offices as the sick house shall need and require; and if the watchman be sent upon any business, to lock up the house and take the key with him; and the watchman by day to attend until ten o'clock at night, and the watchman by night until six in the morning.

Searchers

That there be a special care to appoint women searchers in every parish, such as are of honest reputation and of the best sort as can be got in this kind; and these to be sworn to make due search and true report, to the utmost of their knowledge, whether the persons whose bodies they are appointed to search do die of the infection, or of what other diseases, as near as they can. And that the physicians who shall be appointed for the cure and prevention of the infection do call before them the said searchers, who are or shall be appointed for the several parishes under their respective cares, to the end they may consider whether they be fitly qualified for that employment, and charge them from time to time, as they shall see cause, if they appear defective in their duties.

That no searcher during this time of visitation be permitted to use any public work or employment, or keep a shop or stall, or be employed as a laundress, or in any other common employment whatsoever.

Chirurgeons. [78]

For better assistance of the searchers, forasmuch as there has been heretofore great abuse in misreporting the disease, to the further spreading of the infection, it is therefore ordered that there be chosen and appointed able and discreet chirurgeons besides those that do already belong to the pesthouse, amongst whom the city and liberties to be quartered as they lie most apt and convenient; and every of these to have one quarter for his limit. And the said chirurgeons in every of their limits to join with the searchers for the view of the body, to the end there may be a true report made of the disease.

And further: that the said chirurgeons shall visit and search such like persons as shall either send for them, or be named and directed unto them by the examiners of every parish, and inform themselves of the disease of the said parties.

And forasmuch as the said chirurgeons are to be sequestered from all other cures,[79] and kept only to this disease of the infection, it is ordered that every of the

[78] Literally, "hand workers;" now contracted into "surgeons."

[79] Cares, duties.

said chirurgeons shall have twelvepence a body searched by them, to be paid out of the goods of the party searched, if he be able, or otherwise by the parish.

Nurse Keepers

If any nurse keeper shall remove herself out of any infected house before twenty-eight days after the decease of any person dying of the infection, the house to which the said nurse keeper doth so remove herself shall be shut up until the said twenty-eight days shall be expired.

ORDERS CONCERNING INFECTED HOUSES, AND PERSONS SICK OF THE PLAGUE

Notice to be given of the Sickness

The master of every house, as soon as any one in his house complaineth either of botch, or purple, or swelling in any part of his body, or falleth otherwise dangerously sick without apparent cause of some other disease, shall give notice thereof to the examiner of health, within two hours after the said sign shall appear.

Sequestration of the Sick

As soon as any man shall be found by this examiner, chirurgeon, or searcher, to be sick of the plague, he shall the same night be sequestered in the same house; and in case he be so sequestered, then, though he die not, the house wherein he sickened shall be shut up for a month after the use of the due preservatives taken by the rest.

Airing the Stuff

For sequestration of the goods and stuff of the infection, their bedding and apparel, and hangings of chambers, must be well aired with fire, and such perfumes as are requisite, within the infected house, before they be taken again to use. This to be done by the appointment of the examiner.

Shutting up of the House

If any person shall visit any man known to be infected of the plague, or entereth willingly into any known infected house, being not allowed, the house wherein he inhabiteth shall be shut up for certain days by the examiner's direction.

None to be removed out of Infected Houses, but, etc

Item, That none be removed out of the house where he falleth sick of the infection into any other house in the city (except it be to the pesthouse or a tent, or unto some such house which the owner of the said house holdeth in his own hands, and occupieth by his own servants), and so as security be given to the said parish whither such remove is made, that the attendance and charge about the said visited persons shall be observed and charged in all the particularities before expressed, without any cost of that parish to which any such remove shall happen to be made, and this remove to be done by night. And it shall be lawful to any person that hath two houses to remove either his sound or his infected people to his spare house at his choice, so as, if he send away first his sound, he do not after send thither the sick; nor again unto the sick, the sound; and that the same which he sendeth be for one week at the least shut up, and secluded from company, for the fear of some infection at first not appearing.

Burial of the Dead

That the burial of the dead by this visitation be at most convenient hours, always before sunrising, or after sunsetting, with the privity[80] of the churchwardens, or constable, and not otherwise; and that no neighbors nor friends be suffered to accompany the corpse to church, or to enter the house visited, upon pain of having his house shut up, or be imprisoned.

And that no corpse dying of the infection shall be buried, or remain in any church, in time of common prayer, sermon, or lecture. And that no children be suffered, at time of burial of any corpse, in any church, churchyard, or burying place, to come near the corpse, coffin, or grave; and that all graves shall be at least six feet deep.

And further, all public assemblies at other burials are to be forborne during the continuance of this visitation.

No Infected Stuff to be uttered. [81]

That no clothes, stuff, bedding, or garments, be suffered to be carried or conveyed out of any infected houses, and that the criers and carriers abroad of bedding or old apparel to be sold or pawned be utterly prohibited and restrained, and no brokers of bedding or old apparel be permitted to make any public show, or hang forth on their stalls, shop boards, or windows towards any street, lane, common way, or passage, any old bedding or apparel to be sold, upon pain of imprisonment. And if any broker or other person shall buy any bedding, apparel, or other stuff out of any infected house, within two months after the infection hath been there, his house shall be shut up as infected, and so shall continue shut up twenty days at the least.

[80] Consenting knowledge.

[81] Disposed of to the public, put in circulation.

No Person to be conveyed out of any Infected House

If any person visited[82] do fortune,[83] by negligent looking unto, or by any other means, to come or be conveyed from a place infected to any other place, the parish from whence such party hath come, or been conveyed, upon notice thereof given, shall, at their charge, cause the said party so visited and escaped to be carried and brought back again by night; and the parties in this case offending to be punished at the direction of the alderman of the ward, and the house of the receiver of such visited person to be shut up for twenty days.

Every Visited House to be marked

That every house visited be marked with a red cross of a foot long, in the middle of the door, evident to be seen, and with these usual printed words, that is to say, "Lord have mercy upon us," to be set close over the same cross, there to continue until lawful opening of the same house.

Every Visited House to be watched

That the constables see every house shut up, and to be attended with watchmen, which may keep in, and minister necessaries to them at their own charges, if they be able, or at the common charge if they be unable. The shutting up to be for the space of four weeks after all be whole.

That precise order be taken that the searchers, chirurgeons, keepers, and buriers, are not to pass the streets without holding a red rod or wand of three foot in length in their hands, open and evident to be seen; and are not to go into any other house than into their own, or into that whereunto they are directed or sent for, but to forbear and abstain from company, especially when they have been lately used[84] in any such business or attendance.

Inmates

That where several inmates are in one and the same house, and any person in that house happens to be infected, no other person or family of such house shall be suffered to remove him or themselves without a certificate from the examiners of the health of that parish; or, in default thereof, the house whither she or they remove shall be shut up as is in case of visitation.

[82] That is, by the disease.

[83] Happen.

[84] Engaged.

Hackney Coaches

That care be taken of hackney coachmen, that they may not, as some of them have been observed to do after carrying of infected persons to the pesthouse and other places, be admitted to common use till their coaches be well aired, and have stood unemployed by the space of five or six days after such service.

ORDERS FOR CLEANSING AND KEEPING OF THE STREETS SWEPT

The Streets to be kept Clean

First, it is thought necessary, and so ordered, that every householder do cause the street to be daily prepared before his door, and so to keep it clean swept all the week long.

That Rakers take it from out the Houses

That the sweeping and filth of houses be daily carried away by the rakers, and that the raker shall give notice of his coming by the blowing of a horn, as hitherto hath been done.

Laystalls [85] *to be made far off from the City*

That the laystalls be removed as far as may be out of the city and common passages, and that no nightman or other be suffered to empty a vault into any vault or garden near about the city.

Care to be had of Unwholesome Fish or Flesh, and of Musty Corn

That special care be taken that no stinking fish, or unwholesome flesh, or musty corn, or other corrupt fruits, of what sort soever, be suffered to be sold about the city or any part of the same.

That the brewers and tippling-houses be looked unto for musty and unwholesome casks.

That no hogs, dogs, or cats, or tame pigeons, or conies, be suffered to be kept within any part of the city, or any swine to be or stray in the streets or lanes, but that such swine be impounded by the beadle[86] or any other officer, and the owner punished according to the act of common council; and that the dogs be killed by the dog killers appointed for that purpose.

[85] Heaps of rubbish.

[86] A kind of parish constable.

ORDERS CONCERNING LOOSE PERSONS AND IDLE ASSEMBLIES

Beggars

Forasmuch as nothing is more complained of than the multitude of rogues and wandering beggars that swarm about in every place about the city, being a great cause of the spreading of the infection, and will not be avoided[87] notwithstanding any orders that have been given to the contrary: it is therefore now ordered that such constables, and others whom this matter may any way concern, take special care that no wandering beggars be suffered in the streets of this city, in any fashion or manner whatsoever, upon the penalty provided by law to be duly and severely executed upon them.

Plays

That all plays, bear baitings,[88] games, singing of ballads, buckler play,[89] or such like causes of assemblies of people, be utterly prohibited, and the parties offending severely punished by every alderman in his ward.

Feasting prohibited

That all public feasting, and particularly by the companies[90] of this city, and dinners in taverns, alehouses, and other places of public entertainment, be forborne till further order and allowance, and that the money thereby spared be preserved, and employed for the benefit and relief of the poor visited with the infection.

Tippling-Houses

That disorderly tippling in taverns, alehouses, coffeehouses, and cellars, be severely looked unto as the common sin of the time, and greatest occasion of dispersing the plague. And that no company or person be suffered to remain or come into any tavern, alehouse, or coffeehouse, to drink, after nine of the clock in the evening, according to the ancient law and custom of this city, upon the penalties ordained by law.

And for the better execution of these orders, and such other rules and directions as upon further consideration shall be found needful, it is ordered and enjoined that the aldermen, deputies, and common councilmen shall meet together weekly, once, twice, thrice, or oftener, as cause shall require, at some one general

[87] The writer seems to mean that the beggars are so importunate, there is no avoiding them.

[88] Fights between dogs and bears. This was not declared a criminal offense in England until 1835.

[89] Contests with sword and shield.

[90] The guilds or organizations of tradesmen, such as the goldsmiths, the fishmongers, the merchant tailors.

place accustomed in their respective wards, being clear from infection of the plague, to consult how the said orders may be put in execution, not intending that any dwelling in or near places infected shall come to the said meeting while their coming may be doubtful. And the said aldermen, deputies, and common councilmen, in their several wards, may put in execution any other orders that by them, at their said meetings, shall be conceived and devised for the preservation of his Majesty's subjects from the infection.

Sir John Lawrence,		Lord Mayor.
Sir George Waterman,	}	Sheriffs.
Sir Charles Doe,		

I need not say that these orders extended only to such places as were within the lord mayor's jurisdiction: so it is requisite to observe that the justices of peace within those parishes and places as were called the "hamlets" and "outparts" took the same method. As I remember, the orders for shutting up of houses did not take place so soon on our side, because, as I said before, the plague did not reach to this eastern part of the town at least, nor begin to be violent till the beginning of August. For example, the whole bill from the 11th to the 18th of July was 1,761, yet there died but 71 of the plague in all those parishes we call the Tower Hamlets; and they were as follows: —

Aldgate,	14	The next week was thus:	{	34	To Aug. 1 thus:	{	65
Stepney,	33		{	58		{	76
Whitechapel,	21		{	48		{	79
St. Kath. Tower.1	2		{	4		{	4
Trin. Minories,2	1			1			4
	71			145			228

1. St. Katherine's by the Tower.
2. Trinity (east of the) Minories. The Minories (a street running north from the Tower) was so designated from an abbey of St. Clare nuns called Minoresses. They took their name from that of the Franciscan Order, Fratres Minores, or Lesser Brethren.

It was indeed coming on amain, for the burials that same week were, in the next adjoining parishes, thus: —

St. L.3 Shoreditch	64	The next week prodigiously increased, as	{	84	To Aug. 1 thus:	{	110
St. Bot.4 Bishopsg.	65		{	105		{	116
St. Giles's Cripp1.5	213			431			554
	342			620			780

3. St. Luke's.
4. St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate.
5. St. Giles's, Cripplegate.

This shutting up of houses was at first counted a very cruel and unchristian method, and the poor people so confined made bitter lamentations. Complaints of the severity of it were also daily brought to my lord mayor, of houses causelessly, and some maliciously, shut up. I cannot say but upon inquiry many that complained so loudly were found in a condition to be continued; and others again, inspection being made upon the sick person, and the sickness not appearing infectious, or, if uncertain, yet, on his being content to be carried to the pesthouse, was[91] released.

[91] Were.

As I went along Houndsditch one morning, about eight o'clock, there was a great noise. It is true, indeed, there was not much crowd, because the people were not very free to gather together, or to stay long together when they were there, nor did I stay long there; but the outcry was loud enough to prompt my curiosity, and I called to one, who looked out of a window, and asked what was the matter.

A watchman, it seems, had been employed to keep his post at the door of a house which was infected, or said to be infected, and was shut up. He had been there all night, for two nights together, as he told his story, and the day watchman had been there one day, and was now come to relieve him. All this while no noise had been heard in the house, no light had been seen, they called for nothing, sent him of no errands (which used to be the chief business of the watchmen), neither had they given him any disturbance, as he said, from Monday afternoon, when he heard a great crying and screaming in the house, which, as he supposed, was occasioned by some of the family dying just at that time. It seems the night before, the "dead cart," as it was called, had been stopped there, and a servant maid had been brought down to the door dead; and the "buriers" or "bearers," as they were called, put her into the cart, wrapped only in a green rug, and carried her away.

The watchman had knocked at the door, it seems, when he heard that noise and crying, as above, and nobody answered a great while; but at last one looked out and said with an angry, quick tone, and yet a kind of crying voice, or a voice of one that was crying, "What d'ye want, that you make such a knocking?" He answered, "I am the watchman. How do you do? What is the matter?" The person answered, "What is that to you? Stop the dead cart." This, it seems, was about one o'clock. Soon after, as the fellow said, he stopped the dead cart, and then knocked again, but nobody answered; he continued knocking, and the bellman called out several times, "Bring out your dead;" but nobody answered, till the man that drove the cart, being called to other houses, would stay no longer, and drove away.

The watchman knew not what to make of all this, so he let them alone till the morning man, or "day watchman," as they called him, came to relieve him. Giving him an account of the particulars, they knocked at the door a great while, but nobody answered; and they observed that the window or casement at which the person looked out who had answered before, continued open, being up two pair of stairs.

Upon this, the two men, to satisfy their curiosity, got a long ladder, and one of them went up to the window and looked into the room, where he saw a woman lying dead upon the floor, in a dismal manner, having no clothes on her but her shift.[92] But though he called aloud, and, putting in his long staff, knocked hard on the floor, yet nobody stirred or answered, neither could he hear any noise in the house.

He came down again upon this, and acquainted his fellow, who went up also; and finding it just so, they resolved to acquaint either the lord mayor or some other magistrate of it, but did not offer to go in at the window. The magistrate, it seems, upon the information of the two men, ordered the house to be broke open, a constable and other persons being appointed to be present, that nothing might be plundered; and accordingly it was so done, when nobody was found in the house but that young woman, who having been infected, and past recovery, the rest had left her to die by herself, and every one gone, having found some way to delude the watchman, and to get open the door, or get out at some back door, or over the tops of the houses, so that he knew nothing of it. And as to those cries and shrieks which he heard, it was supposed they were the passionate cries of the family at this bitter parting, which, to be sure, it was to them all, this being the sister to the mistress of the family; the man of the house, his wife, several children and servants, being all gone and fled: whether sick or sound, that I could never learn, nor, indeed, did I make much inquiry after it.

At another house, as I was informed, in the street next within Aldgate, a whole family was shut up and locked in because the maidservant was taken sick. The master of the house had complained by

[92] Chemise.

his friends to the next alderman, and to the lord mayor, and had consented to have the maid carried to the pesthouse, but was refused: so the door was marked with a red cross, a padlock on the outside, as above, and a watchman set to keep the door, according to public order.

After the master of the house found there was no remedy, but that he, his wife, and his children, were locked up with this poor distempered servant, he called to the watchman, and told him he must go then and fetch a nurse for them to attend this poor girl, for that it would be certain death to them all to oblige them to nurse her, and told him plainly that if he would not do this the maid would perish either[93] of the distemper, or be starved for want of food, for he was resolved none of his family should go near her; and she lay in the garret, four story high, where she could not cry out or call to anybody for help.

The watchman consented to that, and went and fetched a nurse as he was appointed, and brought her to them the same evening. During this interval, the master of the house took his opportunity to break a large hole through his shop into a bulk or stall, where formerly a cobbler had sat before or under his shop window; but the tenant, as may be supposed, at such a dismal time as that, was dead or removed, and so he had the key in his own keeping. Having[94] made his way into this stall, which he could not have done if the man had been at the door, the noise he was obliged to make being such as would have alarmed the watchman, – I say, having made his way into this stall, he sat still till the watchman returned with the nurse, and all the next day also; but the night following, having contrived to send the watchman of another trifling errand (which, as I take it, was to an apothecary's for a plaster for the maid, which he was to stay for the making up, or some other such errand that might secure his staying some time), in that time he conveyed himself and all his family out of the house, and left the nurse and the watchman to bury the poor wench, that is, throw her into the cart, and take care of the house.

Not far from the same place they blowed up a watchman with gunpowder, and burned the poor fellow dreadfully; and while he made hideous cries, and nobody would venture to come near to help him, the whole family that were able to stir got out at the windows (one story high), two that were left sick calling out for help. Care was taken to give them nurses to look after them; but the persons fled were never found till, after the plague was abated, they returned. But as nothing could be proved, so nothing could be done to them.

In other cases, some had gardens and walls, or pales,[95] between them and their neighbors, or yards and backhouses; and these, by friendship and entreaties, would get leave to get over those walls or pales, and so go out at their neighbors' doors, or, by giving money to their servants, get them to let them through in the night. So that, in short, the shutting up of houses was in no wise to be depended upon; neither did it answer the end at all, serving more to make the people desperate, and drive them to such extremities as that they would break out at all adventures.

And that which was still worse, those that did thus break out spread the infection farther, by their wandering about with the distemper upon them in their desperate circumstances, than they would otherwise have done; for whoever considers all the particulars in such cases must acknowledge, and cannot doubt, but the severity of those confinements made many people desperate, and made them run out of their houses at all hazards, and with the plague visibly upon them, not knowing either whither to go, or what to do, or indeed what they did. And many that did so were driven to dreadful exigencies and extremities, and perished in the streets or fields for mere want, or dropped down by[96] the raging violence of the fever upon them. Others wandered into the country, and went forward any way, as their desperation guided them, not knowing whither they went or would go, till, faint and

[93] This word is misplaced; it should go before "perish."

[94] Before "having," supply "the master."

[95] Fences.

[96] From.

tired, and not getting any relief, the houses and villages on the road refusing to admit them to lodge, whether infected or no, they have perished by the roadside, or gotten into barns, and died there, none daring to come to them or relieve them, though perhaps not infected, for nobody would believe them.

On the other hand, when the plague at first seized a family, that is to say, when any one body of the family had gone out, and unwarily or otherwise catched[97] the distemper and brought it home, it was certainly known by the family before it was known to the officers, who, as you will see by the order, were appointed to examine into the circumstances of all sick persons, when they heard of their being sick.

In this interval, between their being taken sick and the examiners coming, the master of the house had leisure and liberty to remove himself, or all his family, if he knew whither to go; and many did so. But the great disaster was, that many did thus after they were really infected themselves, and so carried the disease into the houses of those who were so hospitable as to receive them; which, it must be confessed, was very cruel and ungrateful.

I am speaking now of people made desperate by the apprehensions of their being shut up, and their breaking out by stratagem or force, either before or after they were shut up, whose misery was not lessened when they were out, but sadly increased. On the other hand, many who thus got away had retreats to go to, and other houses, where they locked themselves up, and kept hid till the plague was over; and many families, foreseeing the approach of the distemper, laid up stores of provisions sufficient for their whole families, and shut themselves up, and that so entirely, that they were neither seen or heard of till the infection was quite ceased, and then came abroad sound and well. I might recollect several such as these, and give you the particulars of their management; for doubtless it was the most effectual secure step that could be taken for such whose circumstances would not admit them to remove, or who had not retreats abroad proper for the case; for, in being thus shut up, they were as if they had been a hundred miles off. Nor do I remember that any one of those families miscarried.[98] Among these, several Dutch merchants were particularly remarkable, who kept their houses like little garrisons besieged, suffering none to go in or out, or come near them; particularly one in a court in Throckmorton Street, whose house looked into Drapers' Garden.

But I come back to the case of families infected, and shut up by the magistrates. The misery of those families is not to be expressed; and it was generally in such houses that we heard the most dismal shrieks and outcries of the poor people, terrified, and even frightened to death, by the sight of the condition of their dearest relations, and by the terror of being imprisoned as they were.

I remember, and while I am writing this story I think I hear the very sound of it: a certain lady had an only daughter, a young maiden about nineteen years old, and who was possessed of a very considerable fortune. They were only lodgers in the house where they were. The young woman, her mother, and the maid had been abroad on some occasion, I do not remember what, for the house was not shut up; but about two hours after they came home, the young lady complained she was not well; in a quarter of an hour more she vomited, and had a violent pain in her head. "Pray God," says her mother, in a terrible fright, "my child has not the distemper!" The pain in her head increasing, her mother ordered the bed to be warmed, and resolved to put her to bed, and prepared to give her things to sweat, which was the ordinary remedy to be taken when the first apprehensions of the distemper began.

While the bed was airing, the mother undressed the young woman, and just as she was laid down in the bed, she, looking upon her body with a candle, immediately discovered the fatal tokens on the inside of her thighs. Her mother, not being able to contain herself, threw down her candle, and screeched out in such a frightful manner, that it was enough to place horror upon the stoutest heart in the world. Nor was it one scream, or one cry, but, the fright having seized her spirits, she fainted

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[97] This old form for "caught" is used frequently by Defoe.

[98] Came to grief.

first, then recovered, then ran all over the house (up the stairs and down the stairs) like one distracted, and indeed really was distracted, and continued screeching and crying out for several hours, void of all sense, or at least government of her senses, and, as I was told, never came thoroughly to herself again. As to the young maiden, she was a dead corpse from that moment: for the gangrene, which occasions the spots, had spread over her whole body, and she died in less than two hours. But still the mother continued crying out, not knowing anything more of her child, several hours after she was dead. It is so long ago that I am not certain, but I think the mother never recovered, but died in two or three weeks after.

I have by me a story of two brothers and their kinsman, who, being single men, but that had staid[99] in the city too long to get away, and, indeed, not knowing where to go to have any retreat, nor having wherewith to travel far, took a course for their own preservation, which, though in itself at first desperate, yet was so natural that it may be wondered that no more did so at that time. They were but of mean condition, and yet not so very poor as that they could not furnish themselves with some little conveniences, such as might serve to keep life and soul together; and finding the distemper increasing in a terrible manner, they resolved to shift as well as they could, and to be gone.

One of them had been a soldier in the late wars,[100] and before that in the Low Countries;[101] and having been bred to no particular employment but his arms, and besides, being wounded, and not able to work very hard, had for some time been employed at a baker's of sea biscuit, in Wapping.

The brother of this man was a seaman too, but somehow or other had been hurt of[102] one leg, that he could not go to sea, but had worked for his living at a sailmaker's in Wapping or thereabouts, and, being a good husband,[103] had laid up some money, and was the richest of the three.

The third man was a joiner or carpenter by trade, a handy fellow, and he had no wealth but his box or basket of tools, with the help of which he could at any time get his living (such a time as this excepted) wherever he went; and he lived near Shadwell.

They all lived in Stepney Parish, which, as I have said, being the last that was infected, or at least violently, they staid there till they evidently saw the plague was abating at the west part of the town, and coming towards the east, where they lived.

The story of those three men, if the reader will be content to have me give it in their own persons, without taking upon me to either vouch the particulars or answer for any mistakes, I shall give as distinctly as I can, believing the history will be a very good pattern for any poor man to follow in case the like public desolation should happen here. And if there may be no such occasion, (which God of his infinite mercy grant us!) still the story may have its uses so many ways as that it will, I hope, never be said that the relating has been unprofitable.

I say all this previous to the history, having yet, for the present, much more to say before I quit my own part.

I went all the first part of the time freely about the streets, though not so freely as to run myself into apparent danger, except when they dug the great pit in the churchyard of our parish of Aldgate. A terrible pit it was, and I could not resist my curiosity to go and see it. As near as I may judge, it was about forty feet in length, and about fifteen or sixteen feet broad, and at the time I first looked at it about nine feet deep. But it was said they dug it near twenty feet deep afterwards, in one part of it, till they could go no deeper for the water; for they had, it seems, dug several large pits before this; for,

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[99] "Who, being," etc., i.e., who, although single men, had yet staid.

[100] The wars of the Commonwealth or of the Puritan Revolution, 1640-52.

[101] Holland and Belgium.

[102] "Hurt of," a common form of expression used in Defoe's time.

[103] Manager, economist. This meaning of "husband" is obsolete.

though the plague was long a-coming[104] to our parish, yet, when it did come, there was no parish in or about London where it raged with such violence as in the two parishes of Aldgate and Whitechapel.

I say they had dug several pits in another ground when the distemper began to spread in our parish, and especially when the dead carts began to go about, which was not in our parish till the beginning of August. Into these pits they had put perhaps fifty or sixty bodies each; then they made larger holes, wherein they buried all that the cart brought in a week, which, by the middle to the end of August, came to from two hundred to four hundred a week. And they could not well dig them larger, because of the order of the magistrates, confining them to leave no bodies within six feet of the surface; and the water coming on at about seventeen or eighteen feet, they could not well, I say, put more in one pit. But now, at the beginning of September, the plague raging in a dreadful manner, and the number of burials in our parish increasing to more than was[105] ever buried in any parish about London of no larger extent, they ordered this dreadful gulf to be dug, for such it was rather than a pit.

They had supposed this pit would have supplied them for a month or more when they dug it; and some blamed the churchwardens for suffering such a frightful thing, telling them they were making preparations to bury the whole parish, and the like. But time made it appear, the churchwardens knew the condition of the parish better than they did: for, the pit being finished the 4th of September, I think they began to bury in it the 6th, and by the 20th, which was just two weeks, they had thrown into it eleven hundred and fourteen bodies, when they were obliged to fill it up, the bodies being then come to lie within six feet of the surface. I doubt not but there may be some ancient persons alive in the parish who can justify the fact of this, and are able to show even in what place of the churchyard the pit lay, better than I can: the mark of it also was many years to be seen in the churchyard on the surface, lying in length, parallel with the passage which goes by the west wall of the churchyard out of Houndsditch, and turns east again into Whitechapel, coming out near the Three Nuns Inn.

It was about the 10th of September that my curiosity led, or rather drove, me to go and see this pit again, when there had been near four hundred people buried in it. And I was not content to see it in the daytime, as I had done before, – for then there would have been nothing to have been seen but the loose earth, for all the bodies that were thrown in were immediately covered with earth by those they called the "buriers," which at other times were called "bearers," – but I resolved to go in the night, and see some of them thrown in.

There was a strict order to prevent people coming to those pits, and that was only to prevent infection. But after some time that order was more necessary; for people that were infected and near their end, and delirious also, would run to those pits wrapped in blankets, or rugs, and throw themselves in, and, as they said, "bury themselves." I cannot say that the officers suffered any willingly to lie there; but I have heard that in a great pit in Finsbury, in the parish of Cripplegate (it lying open then to the fields, for it was not then walled about), many came and threw themselves in, and expired there, before they threw any earth upon them; and that when they came to bury others, and found them there, they were quite dead, though not cold.

This may serve a little to describe the dreadful condition of that day, though it is impossible to say anything that is able to give a true idea of it to those who did not see it, other than this: that it was indeed very, very, very dreadful, and such as no tongue can express.

I got admittance into the churchyard by being acquainted with the sexton who attended, who, though he did not refuse me at all, yet earnestly persuaded me not to go, telling me very seriously (for he was a good, religious, and sensible man) that it was indeed their business and duty to venture, and to run all hazards, and that in it they might hope to be preserved; but that I had no apparent call to it but my own curiosity, which, he said, he believed I would not pretend was sufficient to justify my running that hazard. I told him I had been pressed in my mind to go, and that perhaps it might be

[104] A participial form of expression very common in Old English, the "a" being a corruption of "in" or "on."

[105] Were.

an instructing sight that might not be without its uses. "Nay," says the good man, "if you will venture upon that score, 'name of God,[106] go in; for, depend upon it, it will be a sermon to you, it may be, the best that ever you heard in your life. It is a speaking sight," says he, "and has a voice with it, and a loud one, to call us all to repentance;" and with that he opened the door, and said, "Go, if you will."

His discourse had shocked my resolution a little, and I stood wavering for a good while; but just at that interval I saw two links[107] come over from the end of the Minories, and heard the bellman, and then appeared a "dead cart," as they called it, coming over the streets: so I could no longer resist my desire of seeing it, and went in. There was nobody, as I could perceive at first, in the churchyard, or going into it, but the buriers, and the fellow that drove the cart, or rather led the horse and cart; but when they came up to the pit, they saw a man go to and again,[108] muffled up in a brown cloak, and making motions with his hands, under his cloak, as if he was[109] in great agony. And the buriers immediately gathered about him, supposing he was one of those poor delirious or desperate creatures that used to pretend, as I have said, to bury themselves. He said nothing as he walked about, but two or three times groaned very deeply and loud, and sighed as[110] he would break his heart.

When the buriers came up to him, they soon found he was neither a person infected and desperate, as I have observed above, or a person distempered in mind, but one oppressed with a dreadful weight of grief indeed, having his wife and several of his children all in the cart that was just come in with him; and he followed in an agony and excess of sorrow. He mourned heartily, as it was easy to see, but with a kind of masculine grief, that could not give itself vent by tears, and, calmly desiring the buriers to let him alone, said he would only see the bodies thrown in, and go away. So they left importuning him; but no sooner was the cart turned round, and the bodies shot into the pit promiscuously, – which was a surprise to him, for he at least expected they would have been decently laid in, though, indeed, he was afterwards convinced that was impracticable, – I say, no sooner did he see the sight, but he cried out aloud, unable to contain himself. I could not hear what he said, but he went backward two or three steps, and fell down in a swoon. The buriers ran to him and took him up, and in a little while he came to himself, and they led him away to the Pye[111] Tavern, over against the end of Houndsditch, where, it seems, the man was known, and where they took care of him. He looked into the pit again as he went away; but the buriers had covered the bodies so immediately with throwing in earth, that, though there was light enough (for there were lanterns,[112] and candles in them, placed all night round the sides of the pit upon the heaps of earth, seven or eight, or perhaps more), yet nothing could be seen.

This was a mournful scene indeed, and affected me almost as much as the rest. But the other was awful, and full of terror: the cart had in it sixteen or seventeen bodies; some were wrapped up in linen sheets, some in rugs, some little other than naked, or so loose that what covering they had fell from them in the shooting out of the cart, and they fell quite naked among the rest; but the matter was not much to them, or the indecency much to any one else, seeing they were all dead, and were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind, as we may call it; for here was no difference made, but poor and rich went together. There was no other way of burials, neither was it possible there should,[113]

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[106] "'Name of God," i.e., in the name of God.

[107] Torches.

[108] "To and again," i.e., to and fro.

[109] Were.

[110] As if.

[111] Magpie.

[112] This word is from the same root as "lamp." The old form "lanthorn" crept in from the custom of making the sides of a lantern of horn.

[113] Supply "be."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.