closed at the end of July for cleaning and repairs, and in the slackness of all commerce in London was not reopened till two months later. 2

A resultant tragedy of the Plague I will not pass unnoticed, the dumb victims of the universal death. Ever since London became a city, and the dog became the friend of man, the capital had possessed many dogs—the tradesman’s best protection against thieves when the watchmen were so inefficient. In Plague times none were seen. It was a heritage from Elizabethan Plagues that on the appearance of contagion all dogs and cats should be killed. Popular instinct, on no sure ground, held them in fear as carriers of infection, and they were slaughtered by hundreds and the bodies buried.

A customary payment to the dog-killers was twopence a body. 3 St. Martin’s took for this service a man with the then ominous name of Crumwell, whose repeated charges figure in the accounts. The City, with perhaps unconscious irony, delegated the task of clearing its streets of dogs in the Great Plague to the Common Hunt; it paid for the service £36 10s. 4 and that sum, at twopence per head, represents 4,880 unhappy dogs slain by the public slaughterers in the City alone. May they rest in peace!

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have fled. In the open street a dog-killer follows his calling, licensed to slaughter any dogs that he meets. The canine bodies are carried away by the raker, here seen trundling a wheelbarrow's load of them. Along the street two women searchers approach, bearing white wands in their hands. That is the mark of their office. It warns passersby to keep distant from them, lest infection pass. Bearers are seen conveying in a Sedan chair a Plague patient to the post-house. Fires burning in the street (that was done in September) are correctly placed before every sixth house.

These are the incidents of a typical street scene of London during the Great Plague, repeated at a hundred places and times.

Other drawings illustrate the bearers carrying bodies of Plague victims, both coffined and uncoffined, to a large churchyard outside the city wall, in which several pits have been dug, and also to Plague pits in the fields. Those uncoffined are merely tied by head and feet in coarse shrouds, a common practice, though at the height of the visitation corpses were often delivered over naked. The bearers hold red staves, as a warning to avoid them. An open dead-cart is heaped with coffins, and following is a hooded dead-cart. The flight from London by road and river, the country guards stopping travellers to inspect their certificates of health, a crowd of mourners following a funeral, despite strict prohibition, and finally the return after the Plague—all are pictured in this broadside woodcut.

The stricken months made these officers and appliances of the Plague service sadly familiar. On the appearance of Plague in the out-parishes, the magistrates had first been charged to discover and shut up infected houses. In the City, when Doctors Hodges and Witherley were appointed physicians in the Plague service, two Aldermen were also selected to attend to the care of the infected; the ultimate responsibility in supervision rested, as was to have been expected, with the Alderman of each ward. By that time there were certain superior

1 Hodges' Loomologia, p. 14.
2 All Mayoral Proclamations were addressed to the different Aldermen personally, as being the proper officers to see the orders were carried out.
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parish officers known as "Examiners." ¹ In those "Orders Conceived and Published" upon which Defoe built up his "Journal of the Plague Year," the examiner has importance; he is the first officer mentioned; his duty is clearly set out, "to inquire and learn from time to time what houses in every parish be visited, and what persons be sick, and of what diseases," and where Plague was found to order the constable to shut up the house. That was his office, and the whole of his office. No word of giving relief is there. Defoe's Sadleir himself served as examiner for two months, the term of the "Orders Conceived," and he explains its shortness and the frequent changes made as due to the always present peril of infection.

The discovery of Plague would be, to our ideas, obviously the first and most important measure. Negative evidence is the least satisfactory of evidence, but I have not found that during the Great Plague such an officer was commissioned specifically to search for Plague in the dwellings. I have found much to suggest that there was, in fact, no such officer during the Great Plague, and that, so far as discovery was performed, the duty fell upon the overseers of the poor. There comes into vision here and there a parish official called the "Examiner." The Lord Mayor in July sent orders to the different parishes, "to charge persons convenient for the better attendance and burial of such as are now sick, or may die"—which is not the same thing. These were styled examiners. ² At St. Giles-in-the-Fields, Mr. Mann and Mr. Middlemore were appointed "examiners for the relief of the visited poor." ³—not, it will be noticed, for their discovery. It is in the largest parishes alone, with the rarest exceptions,

¹ In St. Margaret Westminster the first examiners were Joseph Bonner and Christopher Sheene. On August 14th John Eley and James Harper were the examiners. Plague was then so heavy in Westminster that additional examiners were appointed, John Fells and John Grubb, and also Daniel Booker and John Smyth. Not until September 25th do new names appear, when John Harker and Philip Gavell were working with Fells and Grubb. On October 18th William Stanton and Ralph Pancer appear as examiners. The four last named—Fells and Grubb, Stanton and Pancer—were others having by that time disappeared, carried on till the year was out, when expenditure in relief became so small that Mr. Hobman, the churchwarden, thereafter, rendered the account alone (St. Margaret's Plague Accounts).

³ St. Giles Ch'wardens' Accts. 1665.
that this official is met with. In many City parishes the churchwardens and constables continued to perform all duties. Plague commonly became known by the demand for parish relief or the calling in of a doctor, and often by discovery of the searchers of the dead. Nor have I found that the examiners were frequently changed. Save under exceptional circumstances, a change was rare.

In the wide parish of St. Margaret Westminster the examiners undertook the distribution of relief, and they account for money so expended (as at St. Giles-in-the-Fields), duties till then carried out by the churchwardens. They first came into office on July 24th, when Westminster for two months had been infected, and violent Plague raged. Two examiners served from August 14th, and two others from October 12th, till the year was out. There is nothing that shows, nothing to suggest, that they accepted the hazardous task of searching out Plague in its hotbeds. Discovery seems to have been as casual as was notification of death, and largely left to chance.

Defoe’s sadler-examiner, nosing out Plague in 1665 in the interest of public health, is a figure of fiction, invented by him out of the “Orders Conceived and Published.” The examiners of the Great Plague were superior relief officers, a check made advisable by the greatly augmented expenditure distributed.

The searchers’ office has already been explained, and undesirable as were the women chosen to fulfil it, they were not the most undesirable characters whom the hard necessities of a Plague service, filled in emergency, brought into intimate contact with the sick and the dying. In their isolation the imprisoned families fell dependent upon the watchman for every need. Liberty was given him to fetch and carry. He made their purchases at the shops and market stalls remaining open, took messages to the doctor and brought the medicine, and was their one means of communication with the world shut out. When so absent he kept the key of the house, securely locked, in his possession.

1 St. Augustine Vest. Miss., July 13.
2 See also Churchwardens’ Accounts of St. Anne and St. Agnes, St. Martin-in-the-Fields, and others.

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It was duty which none save those driven by want would take. The parishes, anxious as in the selection of women searchers to save their money, first appointed their pensioners to earn the poor wage paid. They had been directed by the Privy Council so to act in any shortage of fit persons for the task, and to any who refused such employment they were to deny further relief. Honest service in the watchman became of first importance both to the afflicted families and to the community, whose guardian against infection he was; and it was seldom given.

What fate befell the shut-up families, the stricken, the dying and the whole all cooped in behind locked doors, a contemporary writer has tersely described—

No drop of water, perhaps, but what comes at the leisure of a drunken or careless halberd bearer at the door; no seasonable provision is theirs as a certainty for their support. Not a friend to come nigh them in their many, many heart and house cares and complexities. They are compelled, though well to lie by to watch upon the death-bed of their dear relation, to see the corpse dragged away before their eyes. Affrighted children stand howling by their side. Thus they are fitted by fainting affliction to receive the impressions of a thousand fearful thoughts, in that long night they have to reckon with before release, as the family, so dismally exposed, sink one after another in the den of this dismal likeness of Hell, contrived by the advice of the English College of Doctors.

He asks how four or five of the most skilful and hardest physicians would expect themselves to fare, shut up together in a poor house as they had advised for others, with none but an ignorant old woman for nurse, having no maintenance beyond what the parish allowed, and the searchers and surgeons who had visited others coming to them; so used till forty days or a month after the last man stricken died? "Do they not think in their consciences that, with all their skill, their carcases would all, or most of them, be carried away in the night-cart?"; Recovery (or death) and forty days thereafter was the term of immurement. Should a second case of Plague occur under the roof, the

1 Privy Col. Reg. 85, fo. 187.
2 Colograph; or a Looking-Glass for London, 1665. I have slightly altered the ill-arranged and punctuated text, in order to make the passage intelligible.
period from that recovery was advanced forty days, and so
on remorselessly, till to those confined there can have
been small prospect of release save by death, which was,
indeed, the common deliverer.

The nurse-keepers were charged with duties that made
their influence stronger than that of the watchmen for
good, and unfortunately also for evil. Their place was in
every locked house. It startles a little to find a first
reference to them as "dirty, ugly, unwholesome bags!"

The most vitriolic passages which during the Great
Plague pen put to paper, the fiercest denunciations of any
individuals, are unhappily given to them. They are
painted as monsters of iniquity. It would be happy to
believe the charges incredible. They are too persistent
and definite to be untrue; and when this character is
allotted to the nurse-keepers by persons so fair minded as
Dr. Nathaniel Hodges and by the Rev. Thomas Vincent—
to name but two—it becomes evident that, in at least a
great number of instances, the one who should have been
the sick man's best friend was in fact his worst enemy. All
things considered, perhaps this is no cause for wonder.
Thoughts of ministering angels, the patient, skilled nurses
who stand by our sick-beds to-day, must be swept out of
mind. They were not these.

In pre-Reformation times the women who tended the
sick were sisters of religion, as largely is the case in Roman
Catholic countries to-day. Sisters they remained; they
had, perhaps, more intuition than knowledge; and the
records of St. Bartholomew's Hospital in Smithfield make
it plain that in Restoration times ability to toil at the
wash-tub and in fashioning and mending the hospital's
linen—tasks which occupied many of their hours—were
considered not secondary to skill in bedside ministation.
It was not until the middle seventeenth century that
women named as nurses first came upon the staff of Bart's,
as helpers to the sisters. The first nurse to be promoted
sister was Margaret Whitaker in 1652, after five years
spent in the hospital.  

The nurse, so called, of the Great Plague, a wholly
illiterate person, had no skill, and in most cases no

1 Hodges, p. 7.
2 Sir Norman Moore's History of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, ii. 764.
accepted employment as nurse-keepers with no better object than to profit by the opportunity to plunder the dwellings, even expediting death where it served their ends.

The Rev. Thomas Vincent declares that the stricken Plague victims were more afraid of the nurse than of the Plague itself.¹

Dr. Hodges in his practice among the sick entered scores of the shut-up houses, and his contact with the nurses, and the horrors that he knew and witnessed so filled his mind that he has no word to say of them save in hot indignation. He tells of nurses who were "struck down from Heaven in the perpetration of their crimes," and particularly of one amongst many who, as she was leaving the house of a family, all dead, laden with her robberies, fell dead under her burden in the streets. He recalls the adventure of a worthy citizen. Suspected to be dying, he was beforehand stripped by his nurse, but being fated to live came a second time into the world naked.

Lest I should be thought to exaggerate, let Dr. Hodges speak for himself. This is testimony by a skilled medical man, to whose high character his own unremitting attentions to the Plague-stricken poor and the good words of his fellows bear witness—

But what greatly contributed to the loss of people thus shut up was the wicked practices of the nurses, for they are not to be mentioned but in the most bitter terms. These wretches, out of greediness to plunder the dead, would strangle their patients, and charge it to the distemper in their throats. Others would secretly convey the pestilential taint from sores of the infected to those who were well. Nothing, indeed, deterred these abandoned miscreants from prosecuting their avaricious purposes by all the methods their wickedness could invent. Although they were without witnesses to accuse them, yet it is not doubted but Divine Vengeance will overtake such wicked barbarities with due punishment. And so many were the artifices of these barbarous wretches, that it is to be hoped posterity will take warning how they trust them again in like cases.²

The writer of "The Shutting Up Infected Houses," a contemporary pamphlet, asserts that "Infection may have

¹ God's Terrible Voice in the City, 1667, p. 80.
² Lexicon, pp. 8, 9.
opinion of the age accepted as sufficient for poor relief, and by what trifling reward men and women were lured to perform perilous services in the Plague time. That is difficult over the gulf of two and a half centuries. London had become a city of the poor; a population still counted by hundreds of thousands, governed by a ruling class and their officers who can have numbered together, of those remaining, but a few hundreds. There was a Poor Law well adapted to grinding down the faces of the helpless, a criminal code and the prisons for any troublesome; and the times condoned, and indeed expected, that the inexorable laws of supply and demand should operate in their crudest form.

Those who paid the poor relief alone were concerned in its levy and distribution. The public spectacle of a person or family dying of starvation was not to be tolerated, but actual starvation being held off, how near to it the recipients of relief came was not a matter which excited much concern. If relief kept the recipient alive, it was all that the steel-like hardness of the age expected. The preponderating masses of labourers and artisans, little cared for and unrepresented, had no part whatever in civil or parochial government.

No charge of especial inhumanity lies against the ruling class at the Restoration. They acted according to the light at that time. The parsimony of the parochial authorities almost defied belief. For those locked and imprisoned in the infected houses and forbidden to go out, or for fear of infecting others to follow their trade and earn a livelihood, a common rate of relief given to adults was sixpence a day for all necessities, two, three, or four children being relieved as the equivalent of one adult. It was perhaps just possible to maintain life on this dole. The allowance was not always so much.

Ordered, that Goodwife Stapleton and her 3 children being shut up in her house should be allowed 5s. a week towards their maintenance during the time of their confinement, beginning June 12. 2

1 "That ye plons infected in this parish with ye Plague be allowed each person 6d [per] diem; And 10s. a week ye nurse and 13d. a day ye warder" (St. Mary-at-Hill Vest. Mins., 1665, Aug. 25). This was when wages for labour in the Plague services had risen.


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The payments made in the Plague service were as little generous. Bearer employed in conveying infected patients to the pest-houses and by night collecting the dead for the pits, most hazardous work, were paid 7s. a week. The watchman outside the infected houses had the same reward. These rates varied by a shilling more or less in the different parishes. The buryers working at the fearsome Plague pits fared a little better, receiving 1s. 6d. a day. By September, men hired for digging the pits for St. Bride's parish had to be tempted by wages of 2s. and 2s. 2d. a day, to which ultimately a free breakfast was added. 3

There was for thousands no alternative to accepting this service but actual starvation, the ordinary channels of employment having dried up. The spectre of starvation stood always before the helpless masses of the poor. That fear it was that enabled the different parishes to give all services in the emergency of the Great Plague at a cost that must seem to ourselves almost ridiculous. It alone explains the trifling expenditure with which the Great Plague was met. The populous parish of St. Clement Danes, having 1,907 deaths that year in the Bills (1,819 attributed to Plague) spent in all £208 15s., this sum including voluntary contributions from its fashionable residents. 4 The far-spreading parish of St. Margaret Westminster (4,710 dead) disbursed £1,714. 5 In the difficulty of filling all the offices, women were occasionally employed as "watchmen" outside the infected houses—

Item, Paid to a poor woman for watching, 3s. 4

The fearful peril to life by Plague was well understood, and there were few so foolish as Theophilus Garencieres, a physician dwelling in Clerkenwell, who had the hardihood to assert: "The Plague is one of the easiest diseases in the world to be cured, if it be taken within four hours or six at most after the first invasion, otherwise and for the most part mortal. If people would only observe this rule, I would undertake, by the grace of the Almighty and without bragging (I believe most men that know me will believe me) to cure nineteen of twenty." 6 That was

1 Ch'wardens' Accts.
2 Ibid.
3 Plague Accts.
4 St. Katherine Cree Ch'wardens' Accts.
5 A Mite Cast into the Treasury, 1666.
written in the early days, and Clerkenwell told another tale. One Stokes, an apothecary, who was equally contemptuous, himself fell a victim of Plague.\footnote{Boghurst, p. 72.}

The theory for the shutting up of houses with the sick and the healthy together was that Plague contagion was so universal that anyone who came near an infected person almost of a certainty took infection himself; if allowed to go free among his fellows he constituted a public danger. Medical opinion upon its advisability was divided. The evil policy had long precedent supporting it, and had, unfortunately, the approval of the College of Physicians. As a body, the magistrates were insistent, and their action was supported by the highest authorities at Court; the Privy Council sent repeated commands to them to enforce the shutting up of infected houses with more, and ever more, rigour. The middle class was doubtful, and unconvinced. The poor, upon whom the chief burden fell, were bitterly hostile to their imprisonment. They could not understand. Ignorant, unthinking, passionate, with that indolent tendency towards rebellion so often found among the poor, they sought by escape and every other possible device to defeat the end aimed at.

In attempting judgment upon the College of Physicians, set aside the medical knowledge of to-day. Necessity, not choice, was the deciding factor. No means were available for segregation beyond the pest-houses, with their ridiculously few beds. It was London's immeasurable misfortune that no man arose strong enough to command that a whole quarter of the town, or an outside village, should be cleared of its inhabitants, isolated, and made a refuge camp for the sick. The Great Plague produced no man of strength and vision.

The magistrates professed to take long views. They held that the welfare of the individual must give place to the welfare of the community. No means served except shutting up the houses for stifling the contagion in its seat; and pressing a simple beyond its just application, they succeeded in persuading many frightened people not yet infected that there was no cruelty in taking off a mortifying limb to save the whole.\footnote{Hodges, p. 10.} What could be of more immediate service than securing those families who were healthy from infection, though hardship thereby fell upon particular persons? It was appealing argument, and that the traditional policy in all past Plagues in England.

Intended to confine the Plague, this practice had two results. It spread the Plague abroad. It brought about on a wholesale scale concealment of Plague and falsification of the Bills of Mortality. A third result—the one that mattered—was that it raised the death-roll in the closed-up houses, enlarging it perhaps by four and five times what need have been had facilities existed for the removal and segregation of the sick, or had the removal from them and their Plague-bearing surroundings of the healthy been permitted and practicable. In human error are few things more tragic.

The inevitable happened. Where Plague broke out in a house, those who could do so promptly fled. Scattering, they took the sources of contamination amongst those who received them. This a writer of the time freely avows—

So dreadful it is to us to be shut up from all comfort and society, from free and wholesome air, from the care of the physician and the divine, from the oversight of friends and relations, and sometimes even from the very necessities and conveniences of Nature, that we run as far in the city and country as our feet can carry us, leaving wives and children to the parishes, empty walls and shops to creditors, scattering the infection along the streets as we go, and shifting it from lodging to lodging with ourselves, till at last we drop in some alley, field or neighbour village, calling the people round about by the suddenness of our fall to stand awhile astonished at our deaths, and then in their own; each man fearful of us frightened from his own house, killing his whole town by surprising them unprepared.

See, see, we infect not our next neighbours, and this sickness spreads not so much in any one place, but we carry it from place to place, running from our home as from our places of torment, and thus the roads are visited, and men travel the same way to the country and to their long home. Thus the contagion hath reached most places round the city, which is now as it were besieged.\footnote{The Shutting Up Infected Houses, 1665, pp. 5, 6.}

A watchman came, the doors were padlocked, and the red cross was marked thereon, when often the inhabitants
had gone. Only a devoted parent, sister or son, or some faithful servant, remained with the sufferer. The ungodly fear of Plague finds illustration in a complaint from Wiltshire, that Mr. Richard Constable, "a gentleman of good and plentiful estate," on Plague appearing in his house at Mildenhall abandoned it with the greater part of his family, "taking no care of the sick people left therein, but leaving them wholly to the charge of their god." 1 None traced the wanderers. It was no one's concern to do so. Each tenement in London's mean alleys, where Plague most violently raged, harboured four or half a dozen families. When a single person became sick, every family in the crowded house must be shut in as constituting a common danger. Flight gave the one hope of life.

Maybe the authorities were cheated. A Plague case was returned by the old woman searcher, bribed for the purpose, as of some innoxious disease, and the corpse buried. The residents went living in the house, which received no disinfection or airing, till two or three others were struck down, and further concealment was futile.

Dr. Hodges, whatever his first opinions, became convinced of the evil of shutting up the sick and the whole together, a practice which he has characterized as "abhorrent to religion and humanity." Although he was the City's medical adviser, his influence was powerless to remove the pressure exerted from the highest quarters. A deplorable evil was that the shutting up of an infected house made the neighbours right and left fly in fear, and sufferers perished for want of help. "I verily believe," he adds, "that many who were lost might have been now alive, had not the tragic mark on the door drove proper assistance from them." 2 Any who, on a mission of mercy, had attended a sick person realized full well the risk they ran of being themselves enclosed, if the fact became known to a magistrate. Few were willingly so daring. 3

Boghurst, the apothecary, who had large experience of Plague, is equally emphatic. "As soon as any house is infected, all the sound people should be had out of it, and not shut up therein to be murdered." 4

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1 Salisbury Corporation MSS.  
2 Leimologia, pp. 9, 11.  
3 Gogoloth, 1665.  
4 Leimographia, p. 90.

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By the Mayor.

To the Alderman of the Ward of

A further note by the Lord Mayor:

Firstly, that no person, whether by word or deed, shall neglect to make his house clean in accordance with the directions of the Mayor and Aldermen.

Secondly, that no person shall refuse to vacate his house when ordered to do so by the Mayor.

Thirdly, that no person shall obstruct the passage of the health officers.

Fourthly, that no person shall sell or give away food that has been in a contaminated house.

Fifthly, that no person shall refuse to submit to examination by the health officers.

Sixthly, that no person shall refuse to comply with the quarantine regulations.

Seventhly, that no person shall refuse to assist in the prevention of the spread of the plague.

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MAYORAL PROCLAMATION DURING THE PLAGUE

[Handwritten text not legible]
treatment was obstinately perverse, hence the vast loss of life. When what was wrong (as modern knowledge has taught us) could be done, wrong was done.

Always there were self-denying men and women, from Church and Dissent alike, ready at humanity's call to enter the Plague-infected houses and bring comfort and relief to the sick and the dying. They gave a very fine example of Christianity in contempt of peril. The Quakers have an honourable place in this work.

There is a letter which throws light upon the sufferings of their little community. It was written to Margaret Fells by Ellis Hoocks, the first Recording Clerk and Registrar, who manfully stuck to his post in London, in November, when the Plague was mostly spent—

Deare M. ff.—My deare love is unto thee and to all thy deare children and family, and Anne Travers deare love is to thee. There she been buried out of our family in a mouths time, and her Child has had the distemper, but is recovered againe. Deare Margaret I have been preserved well, but soe as a brand is pluckt out of the fire, soe has the Lord delivered me. Yf I have often laid downe my head in sorrow and rose as I went to bed, and not slept a wink for the groanings of them yt lay a dying. And every morning I counted it a great mercy that the Lord gave me another day. And I was made a strength and a help to poore Anne, who has also been well hitherto.

They keep us out of our meeting at the bull [Bull and Mouth Tavern] on ye first and fourth days but on ye fifth dayes wee meet within.

Last first day they curyed Ester Bibble and another woman to prison for speaking in the streets, and struck Ester over the face with their halberts. Our meetings are quiet everywhere else.

Friends are generally well, both in prison, in the shipp and at Newgate, and those that are at liberty; and not above 1 a day buried, whereas there used to be 16 or 18 and sometymes 20 a day buried, for several wekes it was soe. These are a list of ye names of ym that died in Newgate and in the shipp, which yet remains where it did... Christo: Dickens: who was the gravemaker for ym was the last yt died.

Deaths falling sixteen to twenty a day, and that for

1 These were Quaker prisoners on board the Black Eagle, lying in the Thames. See p. 217, post.
2 Swarthmore MSS., iv. 121, at Devonshire House, Bishopsgate.
several weeks together, in a community which can hardly have numbered above 4,000 in London, is a terrible proportion. The Quakers had their own burial ground, their grave-maker, their dead-cart—the parish dead-cart upon its rounds would make no distinction of faiths in disposal of its fearsome loads.

The persecutions continued in all that time of calamity. The Friends' meetings, held despite the Plague, were violently scattered. Many arrests resulted; the meeting room at the Bull and Mouth in Aldersgate Street was boarded up by the justices to exclude the Friends, but they assembled in the street. The Quakers undertook the support of their widows and orphans, and once each week assembled for receiving information and dealing with the cases presented. Friends in the country freely contributing to a fund.

In the fearless work of administering relief to families in the shut-up houses are three outstanding figures. On May 18th the City Marshal, breaking into the Friends' meeting at Gracechurch Street, there arrested Alexander Parker and George Whitehead, who were sent to Newgate. They were shortly after released. Whitehead then went into the country on religious service, but news of the sufferings of the Friends in London brought him hastening back, and he and Parker laboured in the capital throughout the period of the contagion. They were joined by Gilbert Latey, the Strand tailor. He had taken country lodgings when the Plague threatened to become virulent, but abandoned all intention of flight.

Latney worked chiefly among his own people in the western out-parishes beyond Temple Bar, taking charitable relief and ministering to the sick and the dying. "Many had running sores upon them," says his biographer, "but still the Lord was with him to preserve him in continued health." 1 He himself became infected in October, and recovered. George Whitehead and Parker had the larger field. The former has told himself that he never left his lodging in Watling Street for meetings without carrying with him his nightcap, not knowing when he might be arrested and clapt into goal. He frequently visited Newgate, the Gatehouse at Westminster, and the White Lion

"mighty merry." Till then the popular resort for the fashionable monde had been Spring Gardens at Charing Cross, most flourishous in King Charles I.'s reign, and there under the trees many an amorous intrigue had been conducted and men played on the bowling green and at the butts—at Charing Cross! London covered but small ground. Now the European War, with its serried ranks of graves counted in millions, each marking a life cut off, has entirely altered our conceptions of massed death. What trifles seem the few tens of thousands of the Great Plague! But we must strive to recover the perspective, and to see in them, as the Londoner of the Restoration saw in them, the losses of a capital the remaining population of which can little have exceeded 850,000 souls.

As Plague settled down upon London, the reaction was at once apparent. London City had been a busy thriving place, the houses jammed into every available corner, with narrow streets insufficient for circulation, and population packed tight, as was customary in every ancient walled town. Its manufacturing business and transport would have been impossible without the Thames. It was the financial capital of the Kingdom; it had the great commerce; its merchant adventurers led in all enterprise; its shops attracted the custom of, and set the fashion for, the world of wealth and fashion. But with these diverse interests London also was the Kingdom's greatest industrial city, and was also that which necessarily we find it somewhat difficult to appreciate—an industrial city without machinery, all the processes of manufacture being slowly and laboriously accomplished by hand. That involved a large preponderance of artisans, craftsmen, unskilled labourers and servants in its population, poorly paid and without employment quickly made destitute. They were not grouped in factories, answering a morning bell, but for the most part toiled at their crafts in the thousands of small houses and yards. They made the helpless masses of the poor when the Plague came, they and their wives and many children and dependents—and when the truth is known, actually not many others.

There was no house that was not full of people, for merchants and tradesmen, whether in big business or small, lived over counting-house or shop, with their families, apprentices, servants, and often journeymen, a numerous community—till the merchants began to fly before the Plague. The breweries in Thames Street, and tanneries, dye-works and others, occupying space, additionally cramped the accommodation for those living within the confines. It was a picturesque city, mostly of gabled houses, timber built with rough-cut walls, the storeys as they rose projecting outward, one beyond another, to give weather protection; the streets narrow and winding; insanitary without a doubt, but even in that respect healthy in contrast with the reeking outskirts.

The Plague altered the whole course of its life. The transformation was made complete when the hurried flight from London had ended—made more quickly than war or famine could have effected it.

In normal times the City's activities had started early. The night-watchman carried his dim horn lantern and called the hours. He had hardly crept home when the street criers were about, offering fish, eggs, milk and cream, and provisions for the morning meal. At six o'clock in summer the City apprentices brought down their shutters with a clatter, and standing at the shop doors made their appeal to the passers-by, "What daye lack; what is't ye lack, ladys?" That cry had resounded through London for many centuries. As the day progressed the streets grew increasingly lively with the presence and cries of itinerant sellers of all kinds, the vendors of small, unconsidered things, too trifling to excite attack by the jealous trade guilds. In Charles I.'s reign, as I have recalled elsewhere, the obstruction caused by baskets and stalls was such that it had been proposed to tax vendors and pedlars with the double purpose of providing the King with revenue and keeping down a nuisance.

From the near villages around London country women brought in their produce. They settled at every street corner post to sell. The handymen moved about, ready to cut wood or cobble shoes, the dealer in "small-cole" carried in a sack upon his back, the barber of "green

1 It was a learned Bachelor of Divinity, one Alexander Codd, who was sentenced to lose his ears and be degraded from the ministry, for giving his opinion of King Charles I. that he was fitter to stand at a Cheapside shop with an apron before him, and say, "What lack ye?" than to govern a kingdom (Ellis's Original Letters, iii. 276).
broomes" for old shoes or kitchen stuff, and a hundred others. No hour passed till nightfall when people in plenty were not about. Little wheeled traffic stirred on the cobble stones, or was there need for it, when the housewife carried her own marketing, tramping along with basket slung across her arm, to visit the meat, fish, fruit, and herb markets, and at these made the more considerable purchases required for the daily fare. City streets were not meant for heavy traffic. The larger loads from the Thames' quays were carried by carts licensed by the Woodmongers' Company, which enjoyed a monopoly of such transit, and the vehicles were severely restricted in number.

The Plague was quickly to extinguish most of these activities. It made every one suspicious—suspicious of intimate friends as of strangers, of resorting to market places, of shops and streets, of goods bought; suspicious even of the very air lest it should bear infection. Self-preservation became every man and woman's consuming interest. Large families were deemed most acceptable to the Almighty. With what pride, on the monument of the City merchant, Sir Richard Hayward, in the tower of St. Alphage London Wall are arrayed the carved and painted figures of his two wives and his sixteen children? There are many like elsewhere. The parent of the large family was the most anxious of men. Infection of one involved the closing in of all, and that was death.

The street cries were no longer heard as the small sellers disappeared, the poorest alleys in which they found lodging being the first to harbour Plague. If any person had entrance to the taverns it was furtively, under the host's suspicious eye. The doors should have been shut. The schools kept enforced vacation that at least hours had brought the clatter of children's feet on the pavements, and their laughter and play. A paralyzing crept over the City. The quacks, offering sure cure for all, were unable to cure themselves, and when Plague had taken many of them and the untruthfulness of their boastful claims to stay the infection were exposed, they, too, faded out of sight. London, noisy at all other times, became strangely quiet, few people caring to linger in the dismal streets as they exchanged news and fears. In horrible contrast with the growing pestilence in the town was the magnificence of the summer, day after day the constant sunshine, the heat, the unchanging blue sky.

Famine London happily was spared. There was that year greater plenty than usual of most produce, the encircling fields and market gardens being planted for a full supply, when with diminished population and absence of the wealthier classes the demand was reduced. The sun ripened an abundant crop in the orchards, fruit being at so low a price that the poor surfeited upon it. Brend was moderately cheap, and no actual shortage occurred, the penny wheaten loaf being of 10 oz. weight from April till June came in. Thenceforward, throughout the dreadful Plague months it remained at 9½ oz. for the penny, never varying till in November the larger 10½ oz. loaf was restored.

London's healthiest area the Bills show to be that within the wall. Less than one-sixth of the Plague mortality occurred in the City within the wall—the area stretching from Ludgate east to the Tower, from the Thames north to Cripplegate, the City which contained Guildhall, the Exchange, the Cathedral, the Companies' halls, the immense preponderance of the churches, all the big trade, most things that mattered. It suffered to but one-third the extent of the Liberties, to but one-third the extent of the out-parishes and Westminster. A City parish, St. John the Evangelist, returned no single case of Plague, and in that respect stands unique; St. Benet Sherehog allowed but one; St. Matthew Friday Street had six. The Plague deaths in the year's epidemic, as given in the Bills of Mortality (much under-stated) totalled:

9,887 within the City wall;
28,886 in the Liberties;
21,420 in the Out-parishes; and
3,403 in Westminster;

making together an acknowledged loss by Plague of 68,596 lives in London.

False deductions have been drawn from these figures.

Look behind them, and you may see a movement that was perhaps the most significant thing in the Great Plague in

The prices of bread as fixed by the Lord Mayor each week are given in the printed Bills of Mortality.
London, and in large measure was responsible for heaping up the huge mortality. In the houses abandoned by merchants and tradesmen a trusted servant was often left in charge, the others being sent adrift; as often the houses were emptied and closed up, all those engaged in carrying on the trade being discharged, and these were condemned in the absence of other employment to sink lower and lower. They had no place of refuge save the poor lodging to be obtained in the town’s outer ring, already badly infected, and in its equaler inviting Plague. From the City within the wall was constant migration to the outskirts and a lessening population; in the Liberties and beyond the ravages of Plague in reducing population were made good by new accessions, a circumstance which goes far to explain its long persistence therein.

The City’s deliberate policy contributed to that end. It was City law, did any resident take in a lodger during the infection, that his house should be shut up, guarded and watched as if it was infected with Plague. The Aldermen, each jealous for the health of his own ward, saw to it that householders did not encourage the peril of poor lodgers; when these migrated to the pest-ridden outskirts his concern ceased. The times were callous. What should the wretched inmate do? He could not follow the example of the rich and fly from the town. He must get in somewhere. Attempts repeatedly made to clear the City of lodgers were ineffectual, as were all such efforts by whoever made, but they did reduce the bulk of the City’s mortality, at the cost of increasing that of the out-parishes.

The Plague’s approach was insidious. The sufferer rarely knew when first the infection was upon him, and not infrequently it happened that the real nature of the sickness was determined only after the Plague had far developed. It was not uncommon for the victim, attaching little importance to a slight indisposition, suddenly to awaken to the dreadful realization that this was the Plague.

Most persons first noticed a chill to creep over them, which produced a cold shivering in a very short space.

An unnatural feeling of horror came, a great fear, accompanied by shaking and trembling, which the

1 "Journal" 46, fo. 61.
2 Thomson’s Leimonomia, p. 52.

physicians have remarked threw the patient into a condition that made him least able to resist the disease. It might pass away in half an hour. It might endure for four or five hours. After the horror came nausea and vomiting, the retching being at times so severe that the patient, wholly exhausted thereby, quickly died. This was the first dependable sign of the Plague’s attack.

Others upon seizure became comatose, and slept as if dosed with an opiate. Many in the midst of their employment, or when talking with friends, would suddenly without reluctance fall into profound sleep, and if not roused, they died. These first symptoms were succeeded by headache, that became so intolerable that many fell early into a frenzy. Bleeding was favoured by few. Boghurst in his practice urged as a first principle “the total avoiding of bleeding, purging and vomiting as most pernicious and destructive, by what means soever secured.” A high fever soon assailed the sufferer. Plague, when greatly virulent, might kill before the fever developed, or any external mark of infection be given, but of those who survived all earlier symptoms none escaped the fever. It put to rest any doubts the doctor may have held. Yet, so many were the variations of the malady, the fever might be low and concealed, though the usual indications of a fever’s accession were apparent.

The medical treatment on attack was by heaped blankets and internal medicines to encourage copious perspiration. The sufferers were rigidly kept in bed, and any who became delirious were tied down. Sleep being feared during “the sweats,” the patients were forcibly kept awake, and if at later stages a little sleep was allowed, they were roused every four hours to take medicine. Blisters were applied, and the parts so treated were not permitted to heal until the malignity of the disease was spent, apparently with the idea that the Plague would escape through that channel. A marvellous assortment of drugs was poured into the patient. Those used by Dr. Hodges were mostly fresh indigenous herbs, and he mentions angelica, rue, veronica, scabius, pinpermel, ivy berries, balm, geranium, juniper berries and many more. He

1 Boghurst’s Leimonographia, p. 34.
2 Ibid., p. 78.
3 Allin to Pryth, Sept. 20.
writes scornfully of the Oriental bezour, powdered unicorn's horn, and powder of toads, which many thought efficacious.

The diet given was light and generous—eggs, strong broths, and good wines where means allowed; but of the usefulness of gold boiled in the broths Hodges has "nothing to say."

None could foretell the recurrence of convulsive and febrile paroxysms. It made the patient's plight worse that he stood in need of close watching by the nurse, and this the ignorant and undesirable women pressed by poverty into the service were not able or willing to give. Hodges declares that violent palpitation of the heart was a significant warning of approaching death; and he even gives the case of a Plague victim, who died quickly thereafter, whose palpitation was so loud that he and others could hear it at some considerable distance.1

The delirium was the cause of the sights and sounds about the town that were so distressing to those compelled to endure them. They made the Plague most horrible. A sharp cry of a man or woman in agony, the scuffle in a room, the throwing open of a window from which plaintive calls or some unintelligible message reverberated down the street, caused the passer-by to shudder and hurry along. He could give no help. A door would suddenly be thrust open, and some poor Plague victim, wild-eyed, emerge. He had broken his bonds by the unnatural strength given by fever, and would run staggering about the streets or market-place, if not confined by force, clothed only in the bed shirt, or even naked. Soon, tired out, he fell down with giddiness, wholly ignorant of his condition or where he was.2 Not uncommonly the effort was the last, and the man expired on the stones. "The Plague," Hodges declared, "seemed to have complicated in its production everything of a poisonous and destroying nature."

It was rarely longer than two or three days after the attack when the visible signs of Plague appeared on the body. The "blains," so-called, were like blisters on the skin, obscurely ringed about. If no worse signs followed, the patients might entertain hope.

"Buboes"—hence the term, bubonic Plague—were

1 Leominster, p. 106.
2 Ibid., p. 96.

They customarily appeared after two to four days' progress of the disease, but might rise without any previous warning of infection. A woman, the only one of her family left alive and thinking herself perfectly well, perceived the pestilential spots on her breast and shortly thereafter died. A young man of good constitution, unexpectedly finding "the tokens" upon him, believed them not to be the genuine marks, he being otherwise in such vigorous health, yet within four hours death confirmed the physician's diagnosis.  

Dr. Hodges mentions as being most strange in his first experience that many persons came out of delirium as soon as "the tokens" appeared, believing that they were in a recovering and hopeful condition. The poor sufferers did not know their fate. He recalls the case of a maid who had no idea that she was attacked by Plague, her pulse being strong and senses perfect, and she complained of no disorder or pain, but on examining her chest he discovered "the tokens" there. Within two or three hours she was dead. "The tokens" sometimes first became visible after death.

The results of a single post-mortem examination of a Plague victim have come down to us. Dr. George Thomson, in his time greatly daring, made it. No need is served by giving here the gruesome details of this piece of morbid anatomy; enough to say that the dissection showed that the Plague produced far-reaching changes in the internal organs, as well as affected the surface of the body by the multitude of blue or black spots containing congealed blood. In fact, no organ was found to be free from changes which suggested that its structure had been materially altered by the poisons circulating through the body. No discovery could be made of any particular organ.

1 Hodges, pp. 49, 50.
2 The most detailed observations of the Plague are by Dr. Nathaniel Hodges in his Laniologia, written in 1668-69, and the Letter to a Person of Quality, dated May 8, 1665, the last being printed in A Collection of Very Valuable and Scarce Pieces, 1720. Dr. Thomson, in Laniotomia, 1665, is woody but much less informing. Bophust may also be read with advantage, Allin only with great caution. Later medical writers upon the Plague in London have been mostly dependent upon these three first-named sources.
3 Dr. Thomson gives a detailed report of the post-mortem examination in his Laniotomia, or the Pest Anatomised, 1665, pp. 69-77, which I have reprinted in Appendix 11.
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so affected that it might be considered as the original seat of the disease, or of infection. What was found pathologists of to-day recognize as the changes associated with any severe toxic infection in which the whole system has been subjected to high fever and intense poisoning for a few hours, or days, if life lasted so long.

As the number of infected houses to be marked grew large, the authorities had resorted to the printing press. A poster was prepared for affixing to the doors, bearing a conspicuous cross over the length and width, and bearing also the familiar words “Lord have mercy upon us!” In the four quarters formed by the limbs of the cross were printed directions for managing the patient, and regulations for the visits of the doctor and for the supply of medicines, food, and water. Printed bills for the purpose had been used as early as Queen Elizabeth’s reign.3

The Goldsmiths’ Company on May 29th had made fitting observance of the anniversary of King Charles II. ’s happy return to his people. The Court of Wardens approved this bill of fare, which has some interest as the detail of a feast of two and a half centuries ago—

Westfalla hams
With pidgeons and chickens boiled
Roast befe, and one piece for breakfast
Lamb pastie
Green geese, three in a dish
Rost capons, two in a dish
Rost chickens
Tarts
Sparagrasse 3

There was no more feasting. The Lord Mayor prohibited all public festivities, entertainments, and assemblies of people, for fear of contagion spreading. Even at the election of Master and Wardens within the several Companies, the year’s great day—that, too, went without the customary banquet.4 The Carpenters’ Company had

1 A contributor to Notes and Queries, 2nd Ser., ii. 108, saw one of these posters in Guildhall some seventy years ago, but on a subsequent visit found that it had disappeared, and it is not in the collections to-day.
2 St. Martin-in-the-Fields parish purchased forty bills on the 10th August, 1665, at a cost of 12s. for posting on the doors of infected houses (Ch’wardens Acoa.).
3 Prideaux, Goldsmiths’ Company, ii. 154.
4 Heath, Grocers’ Company, p. 124.
election in private, "without a sermon, music, or other ceremonies, only a cup of wine and a Naples biscuit." The honours were indeed shorn. No summons went out to any of the Livery or community to assemble in Hall, where on necessary occasion the Master, Wardens, and some few of the assistants alone foregathered to pay the benefactors' gifts and the dues to widows and poor people, this being done with as little concourse as possible. 

An assessment upon the Companies for relief of the poor stricken by the Plague quickly followed. This supplemented the unspent poor-rate, and with receipts from the special pest-rite and voluntary contributions and collections made a sufficient sum with which the first charges in the City were met. There was no demand upon the City Cash until August closed. In the extreme need of money, the Lord Mayor on July 28th issued a Proclamation to the Companies, requiring that each should devote to the relief of its poor members one-third of the sum economized by lapse of the customary dinners and entertainments. The Proclamation made plain how vast already was the distress in London, instancing "the great multitudes of poor persons who, by reason of the infection, have their houses shut up and are restrained from their daily trades and labours whereby to maintain themselves and families by means thereof, and by the bitter cessation of trade do endure great wants and extremities." This but followed precedent, a similar request having been made at the visitation of 1625, in the epidemic of 1603, and earlier in that of 1592.

The Companies had also orders to make search in their records, and the Aldermen in the Ward Books, to ascertain what monies had in 1625 or other year of great sickness been paid towards the relief of the infected. Always the authorities, in their unsupervised efforts to combat the Plague, followed precedent. The reverence of Law and Parliament for precedent was not greater.

2 Guildhall Library MSS. 270.
3 "Journal" 46, fo. 61.
5 Glad, Memorials of Merchant Taylors, p. 151; Early History of Merchant Taylors, ii. 309.
6 Jupp & Pocock, Carpenters' Company, p. 120.
7 "Journal" 46, fo. 61.

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The behaviour of the poor, against which L'Estrange in his newspapers so continually railed, added to their perplexities. It had been remarked at the last visitation in London that "there is a strange opinion here among the poorer sort of people, who hold it a matter of conscience to visit their neighbours in any sickness, yea, though they know it to be the infection." Their habits were ineradicable. They strove in every way to conceal Plague in their midst; they visited houses known to bear infection, careless of the risk to themselves and others; even the red cross of Plague on the door did not keep them out when a watchman could be bribed or persuaded to violate his duty. They had, as have so many of the poorest to-day, that deep-seated love of a display of pomp and extravagance over their dead—the enjoyment of a wake.

Funeral processions, the consorting together of relatives and friends in the house of death, were obvious perils, and had been legislated against. None should follow a corpse to the grave. It was absolutely forbidden.

Lawrence, the Lord Mayor, in mid-July found it necessary to give explicit directions to the Aldermen of every ward—

Whereas several persons who died last week were, from ignorance of the searchers, reported to die of other diseases [than Plague] and great audiences assembled at their burial, which may prove a great cause of spreading the contagion, you are to take more effectual care for preventing all public burials within your ward for the time during the infection, according to former orders on this behalf.

Nothing proved effectual to stop the practice. Long as the Plague lasted there was this attendance of poor mourners, openly defiant. In the worst weeks of September, when authority partially broke down and license prevailed, new and more stringent orders were issued by the magistrates. They could not be enforced. "But Lord," Pepys wrote in his "Diary" on Sept. 3rd, a Sunday, "to consider the madness of the people of the town, who will, because they are forbid, come in crowds along with the dead corpses to see them buried." Three days later

2 Mayoral Proclamation, July 15 (Brit. Mus. Lib. Pearnam 21 n. 5 (84)).
he watched in broad daylight two or three burials from Banks side, "one at the very heels of another, and doubtless all of the Plague, and yet at least forty or fifty people going along with every one of them." The practice carried infection over whole parishes. The folly of it is written large in the Bills of Mortality.

The dead cart carried its loads to the pits after nightfall, till a time came "when the nights, though much lengthened, are grown too short to conceal the burials of those that died the day before." Pitiful calls from the windows of "Pray for us!" to passers-by, none would wish to prevent. The Plague, in some phases, struck down its victims suddenly; they expired in the street; some fell dead at the scales in the market-place, when buying the necessities for supporting life. Parish constables were within call quickly to remove the horrid sight from the public gaze—

Item. Paid for the buryall of a man found dead in the streete ... 4s. 6d.

Item. Paid for the buryall of a boy found dead in the streete ... 4s.

The churchwardens of St. Katherine Cree met these "items" together, and every parish made many like payments. Occasional opportunity came to the parish officers to augment their little stipends—

To John Burge, Const. and ye Beadle for carrying a visited Woman out of ye parish ... 2s. 6d.

Such ghastly work was going on everywhere. "Sick"—"sickness"—"visited"—these were terms in habitual use for the pestilence. No sooner was a Plague victim seen helpless in the street than the beadle or constable's first thought was to hustle him or her out of the parish, that the cost of relief and burial should not fall to its charge. Often the victim, realizing suddenly that the Plague was upon him, was in extreme distress and physical pain. Another, with whom the disease was far advanced, staggered about, raving incoherently—perhaps escaped from the nurse-keeper. No matter. He must be moved,

1 Nover, Aug. 31. 2 Pepys to Lady Castlet, Sept. 4.

Sir W. Rider to Pepys, Aug. 30. 3 St. Margaret's Plague Aetas.
Great Plague a gruesome case from St. Mary Woolchurch Haw, the more inhuman because here the expectant mother was herself Plague-stricken—

- Pd. Gilbert Rigbie for getting a woman out of the parish ready to fall in travail at Mrs Clay’s door and for brooms 1s. 3d.
- Pd. Chirurgeon for Eliza Hog who fell at Mrs Clay’s door and broke her skull 2s. 6d.
- Pd. Edward Phillips for two to look to her and her child while she lived 10s. 0d.
- Pd. to the searchers, to the bearers, to the gravedigger and other conveniences for her burial and her boy afterwards 16s. 0d.
- Pd. the Coroner for his and spent on witnesses £1 1s. 0d.

Who does not feel maliciously glad that in this instance the parish failed to save its money? There are 180 parishes comprised in the Bills of Mortality, and here I have drawn upon the records of but four.

A more grateful task is to lift a familiar incident of the Great Plague out of fiction into the domain of truth. A piper, stupid with drink, fell asleep in a London street. In the morning the dead-cart came along, late about its work as these were. It was nothing uncommon to find some victim struck down by Plague lying stark before the dark doors. The bearers hooked the man into the cart, already piled high with bodies that had been collected, and the cart trundled away to the Plague pit. With the jolting and jars over the cobbled streets, the half-sobered piper awakened, as daybreak brought the first shafts of light into the sky. He raised himself upright, dragged his bagpipes clear, and began madly to play.

Leading the horse and walking by the side, the bearers in the dusk could see little of the movement in the cart. But hearing the uncanny music proceeding out of the load of dead, they bolted in terrible fright, afterwards reporting that they had taken up the Devil in the form of a man.

For nothing has Defoe been so much discredited as for this picturesque story. His assumed disbelief has been condemned as part of his artistry. Critic after critic has fastened upon it as a case where a too lively imagination has descended to mere buffoonery. Yet I find the incident told by Sir John Reresby in his Memoirs, under date in