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*A Treatise
on the Plague
and Yellow Fever*

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SECTION I.

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Of the Plague in general.—Inquiry into the Antiquity of the Distemper.—Of the Plagues mentioned in the Old Testament.—History of several remarkable Plagues which, at various times, have desolated the world.

AMONG the many diseases which afflict the human race, we find ONE, upon record, so irresistible in its progress, so fatal in its attacks, and so entirely beyond the powers of medicine; that, like the serpent *Python*, the *Leviathan*, or the *Mammoth*, among animals, it has generally been distinguished by names expressive of its destroying nature; not, like other diseases, by any particular appellation derived from its symptoms. In the Hebrew language this distemper is expressed by the word which signifies *perdition*; ¹ in Greek it is called *loimos*, from *luo*, to destroy; in Latin, *pestis*, from *pessundo*, to overthrow; and in English, the *plague*, from the Latin *plaga*, a stroke with a whip; alluding to the common opinion, that it is a scourge from heaven, taking vengeance on mankind for their sins.

Other distempers, called by the general name of *Epidemics*, have at different times infected whole cities, and even overspread extensive regions; but these, though sometimes very fatal, have always been found so much inferior to the distemper of which we treat, that, on a comparison, we may justly say, though epidemics have slain their *thousands*, the true plague has slain its *ten thousands*. In speaking of the destructive ravages of epidemics, we may

count the dead by tens, by hundreds, or by thousands; but in the true plague, always by thousands, by myriads,² or by millions. Procopius, when speaking of a plague which desolated the world in his time, compares the number of the dead to the sand of the sea; and Mr. Gibbon, who attempts to specify, thinks they might amount to an hundred millions;³ and I cannot help being of opinion, that the destruction generally occasioned by violent plagues, amounts to about one half of the population; the reasons for which opinion will be given in the course of this work. In all violent plagues, we hear of the dead being left unburied; of their being cast into pits, &c. But if we wish to make any gross comparison between the destructive power of the true plague, and that of any other violent epidemic, we cannot, perhaps, have a better instance than that which took place at Bassorah (a city on the confines of Persia) in the years 1773 and 1780.⁴ In the former of these years that city was visited by the true plague; and in the latter, by an epidemic remittent fever. The fever was most violent in its kind, and destroyed twenty-five thousand in the city and neighbourhood; but the true plague, no fewer than two hundred and seventy-five thousand in the same place. Supposing the two computations therefore to be equally exact, we must calculate this plague to have been eleven times more deadly than the epidemic. If therefore the ingenious classifiers, in modern times, have brought into alliance the plague with other epidemic diseases, and characterised the former from the latter; we may justly say, that they have fallen into the same error with other naturalists, who characterise the superior from the inferior;

the lion from the cat, not the cat from the lion. As to the remedies applied in these diseases, doubtful in epidemics, they so universally fail in the true plague, that, notwithstanding the improved state of medicine, we may yet say, it stands among diseases, in a great measure, like a giant without any champion to oppose; like a poison without any antidote.

In this unhappy predicament, the breaking out of a plague, in any city or country, proves a most distressing calamity, not only on account of the numbers destroyed by the disease itself, but by reason of the bonds of society being loosed; so that humanity gives way to terror; children are abandoned by their parents, and parents by their children; every thing wears the appearance of ruin and desolation; while, in too many instances, avarice urges on the unprincipled to rapine, or even to murder. Nor are the cruel modes of prevention, sometimes practiced even by the authority of the magistrate, less abhorrent to humanity, than the lawless outrages of the thief or murderer. Instances of all this will appear in the course of the work; the following are so remarkable, that I cannot help inserting them in this place. In the great plague at Marseilles, in 1720, the town being almost deserted, and few choosing to venture into it, “three sea-captains, and some hundreds of sailors, having the courage to enter the city, from the sea-side, found therein a gang of murderers, who made it their business to destroy people seized with the plague, and to plunder their houses. The ringleader of them, named *Rouanne*, a gunsmith, was broken alive upon the wheel, and forty others were hanged. Rouanne owned that he had killed a thousand

persons. There were found, upon one of the murderers, jewels to the value of more than thirty thousand livres.”⁵ During the time of this public calamity, four men, who came from Marseilles to Aix, were shot by order of the parliament, lest they should have brought the infection along with them.⁶ Even this is not equal to what Mr. Howard informs us was practiced in a hamlet of Dalmatia, where, the plague having raged with such violence, that only two or three remained; the neighbouring magistrates ordered these miserable survivors to be shot. At such prices will people buy a precarious, nay, an imaginary, safety. In short, what Mr. Gibbon says of the situation of people in the time of violent earthquakes, will also, in a great measure, hold good in the time of pestilence, or any great public calamity. “Instead of the mutual sympathy which might comfort and assist the distressed, they dreadfully experience the vices and passions which are released from a fear of punishment; the houses are pillaged by intrepid avarice, revenge embraces the moment and selects the victim: while ⁷vengeance frequently overtakes the assassin or ravisher in the consummation of his crimes.”

Whether the world hath been in the same predicament ever since the human race began to multiply, or whether plagues have originated at some remote period, is a question not easily determined. It is certain that, as far as histories go, they give us accounts of plagues; much less frequent indeed in very ancient times than in those which followed; but the compass of historical knowledge is narrow. There are no authentic histories of any nation previous to the termination of those of the Old Testament. Where sacred

history ends, profane history begins. The fabulous period affords many accounts of wars, heroes, giants, and monsters, but scarce any of plagues. Diodorus Siculus indeed makes mention of a plague which happened in Greece, after the flood of Deucalion; and which, he says, was occasioned by the general corruption of vegetables, &c. consequent on the flood. Deucalion's flood is supposed to have been nearly cotemporary with the departure of the Israelites from Egypt; so that, if there is any truth in the relation of Diodorus, it is not improbable that some of the Egyptian plagues might have spread into Greece. We are likewise told of a pestilence at Athens in the time of Theseus;⁸ but all the accounts of these times are so uncertain, and so much involved in fable, that little or no dependence can be placed on any of them.

The first distinct account we have of plagues of any kind, then, is in the book of Exodus, where we are told of many heavy judgments sent upon the Egyptians because of their disobedience. Before this, indeed, we read of plagues sent on the king of Egypt, for having taken Abraham's wife; but as these fell only upon the king and his household, we cannot suppose any thing like a general pestilence to have taken place among the people. In like manner did it happen to Abimelech, king of Gerar, on the same account. All the women belonging to the king's household were rendered barren for a time; but we hear of nothing happening to the nation at large. Again, when Moses and Aaron went in before Pharaoh, they said to him, "Let us go and sacrifice to the Lord our God; lest he fall upon us with the sword, or with *pestilence*." This shews indeed that both Moses and Pharaoh

knew that such a thing as *pestilence* existed, or might exist; but it cannot prove that the disease we now call the plague or pestilence commonly took place among nations in those days as it has done since. Even among the plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians by the hand of Moses and Aaron, we find only two that can be supposed to have any similarity to the disease we now call the *plague*; viz. the *boil*, and the destruction of their first born. The former *may* have been pestilential buboes; the latter also *may* have been the effect of a most malignant pestilence; such as, in the beginning of it, is said frequently to kill suddenly, as by lightning; but whether it was so or not, we cannot now determine.

In the history of Job, who is supposed to have been cotemporary with Moses, we have a case more in point. The boils, with which he was covered, are by Dr. Mead supposed to have been the small pox; though in the true plague the body is sometimes covered with gangrenous pustules, constituting a disease still more dangerous and painful than the small pox; but whatever the disease of Job was, we may reasonably conclude, that in his time there was none similar to it commonly existing among mankind.

After the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, we find frequent mention of a plague as a disease commonly to be met with; but it was always that of leprosy; those destructive plagues, which might be supposed to resemble the disease we now call by that name, being all miraculous. Concerning the prevalence of the leprosy among the Jews, Diodorus says that they “were driven out of Egypt as impious, and hateful to the gods; for their bodies being overspread and infected with the itch and leprosy, (by way

of expiation) they got them together, and, as profane and wicked wretches, expelled them out of their coasts." This he tells us was a reason given to one of the kings of Syria why he should exterminate the Jews. In another place our author gives the following account of the origin of the Jewish nation. "In ancient times there happened a great plague in Egypt, and many ascribed the cause of it to God, who was offended with them. For there being multitudes of strangers of several nations who inhabited there, who used foreign ceremonies, the ancient manner of worship was quite lost and forgotten. Hence the natural inhabitants concluded, that unless the strangers were driven out, they should never be freed from their miseries. Upon which they were all expelled," &c. He then tells us that some of them came into Greece under the conduct of Danaus and Cadmus; but the greater part entered Judea, then quite desert and uninhabited. Their leader "was one *Moses*, a very wise and valiant man," &c.⁹

The allusion, in this last passage of Diodorus, to the plagues of Egypt, mentioned in Exodus, is manifest; and it is equally manifest, that the Egyptians themselves, as well as the sacred historian, owned them to be miraculous. Here, however, let it be remarked, that, though these, and others inflicted on the Israelites, were miraculous, we are not from thence to conclude that they took place without the intervention of natural causes. On the contrary, in speaking of the plagues of Egypt, we are told, that when the locusts came, "the Lord sent a strong *east wind*, all that day and all that night; and when it was morning, the *east wind* brought the locusts." In like manner "the Lord turned a mighty

strong *west wind*, which took away the locusts, and cast them into the Red sea." Again, when the sea itself was divided, "the Lord caused it to go back by a strong *east wind* all that night." The Egyptians were witnesses to this; but, as they did not believe that the powers of nature had any superior, they could never be induced to think that any of the elements would take part in a dispute between two nations, or favour the one more than the other.

In diseases inflicted on the human body, we are assured that the powers of nature were as much employed as in the miracles already mentioned. When it was told David that the child born to him by Bathsheba should die, the infant was seized with a natural distemper, probably a fever, and died the seventh day. When Hezekiah was informed that he should die, he did not, any more than David had done, give himself up to despair; but used, for his recovery, such means as were in his power, viz. prayers to God; from whom, by the constitution of things under the Old Testament, he would receive a direct answer. And it is remarkable, that though the answer was favourable, yet the disease was not removed by any invisible power operating like a charm, but by the use of a remedy. It is plain therefore that this disease was occasioned by one natural power, and removed by another. The boil (for that was the distemper) was brought to maturity by a poultice of figs, and the king recovered.¹⁰ If then the scripture informs us, that even where the Deity himself speaks, he has directed the use of a remedy, much more ought we to be diligent in the use of such as our feeble skill can suggest, in those cases where he leaves us entirely to the exercise of our own judgments.

To sit down supinely, in case of a dangerous distemper, with a notion, that if God wills us to die we certainly shall die, *in any use of natural means*; and if he wills the contrary, that we shall as certainly recover, *in any neglect of them*; is a conduct equally unscriptural and absurd.

In the books of Moses we find the Israelites, in case of disobedience, threatened with the *botch* of Egypt; with terror, consumption, and the *burning ague*. From the name of this last we may reasonably suppose it to have been the same with the remitting fever of the East, which is attended with the most intolerable sensation of burning in the bowels; but whatever the nature of these diseases might have been, they certainly were not very common in the world at that time, or they would not have been threatened as extraordinary judgments. They were not the same with the pestilence; because we find, that after they had been threatened with fever, consumption, and extreme burning, it is added, "I will make the *pestilence* cleave unto thee:" as if it had been said, that the pestilence, which hitherto had appeared only on extraordinary occasions, should then become *endemic*, and never leave them. But, on the whole, the first account we have of any general plague, seems to be that which was inflicted on the Jews on account of the sin of their king in numbering the people. David was nearly cotemporary with the Trojan war; and Homer, in the first book of his Iliad, informs us, that a plague likewise took place in the camp of the Greeks; and that too for the sin of their king in carrying off the daughter of the priest of Apollo, and refusing to restore her at the entreaty of her father.

In comparing the account of the sacred historian with that given by Homer, we cannot help observing a striking similarity between them. Both plagues were inflicted on the people for the sin of their kings; both were miraculous; the one continued three days, the other nine. In both the Deity himself appeared: an angel brandished a drawn sword over Jerusalem; and Homer says, that, from the top of Olympus, Apollo shot his arrows into the Grecian camp. Lastly, both were stopped in a similar manner: David offered sacrifices to the true God; and Agamemnon returned Chryseis, his captive, to her father, the priest of Apollo, by whose prayers and sacrifices the plague was stopped. Hence it seems not impossible, that the story told by Homer, is only that of David, altered as he thought most proper for embellishing his poem; and that this was the first remarkable plague in the world.

In the year 767 B.C. we hear of a universal pestilence; but the imperfect state of history in those early periods affords few accounts that can be depended upon, either concerning that or any thing else.¹¹ Till after the foundation of Rome, indeed, authentic history scarce commences; and it is not till the 279th year of that city, that we hear of its being in any remarkable degree infected with a pestilential disorder.¹² The plague we speak of is said to have taken place about the year 469 B.C. which comes within 38 years of that of Athens in the time of the Peloponnesian war. The near coincidence of these dates, in times so remote, and when chronology was so little settled, tends to excite a suspicion that both arose from the same infection. Of its ravages at Athens we have an excellent account by the

historian Thucydides,¹³ who was an eye witness of what he writes. He says, that according to report it began in Ethiopia, from whence it came down into Egypt, and thence into other countries. It is possible, therefore, that it might reach Italy some time before it came into Greece; for it seems scarce probable, that such a very violent infection could have taken place in Italy without being communicated to the neighbouring countries; whence we may reasonably conclude, that the first plague at Rome, and that of Thucydides, were the same. At Rome, we are informed, it swept away almost all the flower of the youth who were able to bear arms, the greatest part of the tribunes, and both the consuls. The mortality was so great, that no place of sepulture could be found for the dead bodies, but they were thrown promiscuously into the Tiber. In short, so low were the Romans at this time reduced, that the Æqui and Volsci, two Italian nations with whom they were almost always at war, made an immediate attack, in hopes of being easily able to carry the city; but in this they were disappointed. The situation of Athens was truly deplorable; being not only engaged in a foreign war, but crowded with people from the country; numbers dying daily in the streets, and the survivors giving themselves up to all manner of licentiousness.¹⁴

As it seems probable that the same infection desolated both Rome and Athens, so it seems not unlikely that it was a continuance of the same which destroyed the Carthaginian army in Sicily, while carrying on a successful war against Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse. The plague, as we are informed by the Universal History, was common in the

Carthaginian territories, especially those on the continent of Africa; and this pestilence broke out soon after the conclusion of the Peloponnesian war. As it originally came from Africa, it is probable that it had never been quite extinguished there; and the compilers of the Universal History think it probable that the army might have brought the seeds of it along with them into Sicily. But, whatever was the origin, the distemper soon became so malignant, that the living were not sufficient to bury the dead; and those who attended the sick perished in such a manner, that, after some time, few dared to come near them. At first they gave the dead a kind of burial; but in time the number became so great, and the survivors so few and weak, that an hundred and fifty thousand are said to have rotted above ground. "Justin seems to intimate that almost the whole Carthaginian army perished by the plague; and that in a manner all at once, as it were in an instant. Diodorus, however, informs us, that a considerable body of Africans and Iberians survived the dreadful calamity. It is worth observation, that not a single person of those who attended the sick survived." The miserable remains of this army, consisting at first of more than three hundred thousand, were now attacked by their enemies, whom they were no longer able to resist. Their land forces were entirely defeated, and their fleet was burnt: "the Gods themselves, (says Diodorus) when the ships were all in a blaze, and the flames ascending above the masts, seeming to destroy the Carthaginians with lightning from heaven." Forty gallies still remained, and the unfortunate general was now obliged to purchase liberty to return with the few men he had left. But

even these were treacherously attacked by the tyrant's fleet, and several of them sunk. On his arrival at Carthage, he found the whole city not only in mourning, but in despair: "the wretched inhabitants giving full vent to their grief, made the shore ring with their groans and lamentations. In short, a greater scene of horror, except the spot of ground where the Carthaginian army encamped before Syracuse, than Carthage now was, cannot well be conceived." This reception completed the despair of the unhappy general. Clothing himself in mean and sordid attire, he joined with the rest in bewailing their common calamities. After some desperate exclamations against the gods, whom he accused of partiality, "The enemy, said he, may rejoice at our misery, but have no reason to glory in it. The troops we have lost did not fall by their valour, nor did they now oblige those that arrived here to leave Sicily by force. We return victorious over the Syracusians, and are only defeated by the plague. As for the baggage found in our camp, this ought not to be looked upon as the spoils of a conquered enemy, but as moveables which the casual death of their owners has left the Syracusians in possession of." Having then gone on to express his grief for the loss of his army, and declared his intention not to outlive them, he shut himself up in his house, refusing admittance even to his own children, and put an end to his life.¹⁵

Whether the unfortunate remains of this army brought with them the infection to Carthage, and there produced a new scene of desolation, we are not informed; but there seems to have been a very great tendency to pestilential disorders in the Carthaginian armies; for, in the time of the

siege of Syracuse by Marcellus, a plague broke out in the camp of the Carthaginians who had come to assist the Syracusians. From them it passed into the city itself, with so much malignity, that nothing was to be seen but heaps of dead and dying. None durst receive or assist the sick, for fear of being infected by them; and the bodies of the dead were, for the same reason, left unburied, to infect and poison the air with their putridity and corruption. Nothing was heard, night and day, but groans of dying men; and the heaps of dead bodies continually presented mournful objects to the living, who expected every moment the same fate.¹⁶ The infection reached the Roman camp; but we do not hear of its being conveyed, at this time, either to Rome or Carthage. In the time of the contest with Jugurtha, however, a very terrible calamity took place in Africa. "According to Orosius, a great part of Africa was covered with locusts, which destroyed all the produce of the earth, and even devoured dry wood. But, at last, they were all carried by the wind into the sea, out of which being thrown in vast heaps upon the shore, a plague ensued, which swept away an infinite number of animals of all kinds. In Numidia only, perished eight hundred thousand men; and in Africa Propria, two hundred thousand; among the rest, thirty thousand Roman soldiers, quartered in and about Utica for the defence of the last mentioned province. At Utica, in particular, the plague raged with such violence, that fifteen hundred dead bodies were carried out of one gate in a day."¹⁷

From the time that the Romans finished their African wars, till they had accomplished most of their conquests in

Asia, their empire seems to have continued free from this dreadful scourge; but soon after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus, such a violent infection seized on the city, that for some time upwards of twenty thousand are said to have died in it daily.

As the Roman arms were carried still farther to the eastward, and all the countries reduced, to the confines of Persia, the plague seems to have become more common among them. In the time of Marcus Aurelius, a war was undertaken against the Parthians, which was carried on by the Romans with great success, and with no less cruelty; for, though the city of Seleucia opened its gates to the Roman general, he caused the inhabitants, to the number of four hundred thousand, to be massacred. But they soon paid dear for this cruelty, by a dreadful pestilence, which broke out, according to the historian Ammianus Marcellinus, in the very city which they had desolated, and was brought by their army into Italy, from whence it spread throughout the whole empire. Other historians say, that it originated in Ethiopia, from whence it spread into Egypt, and thence into the country of the Parthians. We know not how long the infection continued; only that, some years afterwards, when the emperor was defeated by the Germans, the pestilence still raged to such a degree, that slaves, gladiators, and even the banditti of Dalmatia and Dardania, were enlisted for the defence of the empire. It is certain that great havock must have been made by it, as we find that the barbarians were encouraged to invade the empire on all sides, and could scarcely be repulsed; insomuch that historians

compare this with the most destructive wars the Romans had ever waged.¹⁸

During the time that the empire was overrun by the northern barbarians, the plague frequently made its appearance; which we shall have occasion to notice more particularly in the following section; but in those times the destruction by the sword was so extraordinary, that less mention is made by history of any pestilential disorder. In the time of Justinian, however, about sixty-five years after the final destruction of the western empire, the most violent plague recorded in history took place. Of this we have a particular account by Procopius.¹⁹ “The distemper (says Mr. Gibbon) arose in the neighbourhood of Pelusium, on the confines of Egypt, between the Sarbonian bog and the eastern channel of the Nile. From thence, tracing, as it were, a double path, it spread to the east, over Syria, Persia, and the Indies, and penetrated to the west, along the coast of Africa, and over the continent of Europe. In the spring of the second year, Constantinople, during three or four months, was visited by this pestilence. Such was the corruption of the air, that the pestilence was not checked, nor alleviated, by any difference of seasons. The numbers that perished in this extraordinary mortality have not been recorded; only we find that, during three months, there died at Constantinople five, and at last ten thousand a day. Many cities of the east were left vacant, and, in several districts of Italy, the harvest and vintage withered on the ground. The triple scourge of war, pestilence and famine afflicted the subjects of Justinian; and his reign is disgraced by a visible

decrease of the human species, which has never been repaired, in some of the fairest countries of the globe.”²⁰

This plague broke out in the time of Justinian, in the year 541 or 542 of the christian era; and not only ravaged Constantinople in the time of Justinian, but returned with increased violence during the reigns of many of his successors. In the time of Mauritius we find the Avari, a barbarous nation to the north of the Danube, driven back by the plague after they had crossed that river to invade the Roman territories. The reign of Phocas, successor to Mauritius, was still more unfortunate. “Great numbers were swept off, either by famine or pestilence; the earth refused her fruits in season; the winters were so severe, that the seas were frozen, and the fish destroyed.” Phocas ascended the imperial throne in 603; but in the midst of such confusion as then filled the world, we can scarce expect an accurate account of the time when this most malignant pestilence ceased. We can scarcely suppose it to have lasted two centuries; but, in the reign of Constantine Copronymus, which began in 742, we find the distemper still raging, and the same dreadful phenomena of nature still continuing. The plague, we are now told, broke out in Calabria in Italy; whence it soon spread over Greece, Sicily, the islands in the Ægean sea; and at last reached Constantinople; where it raged for three years together, with such fury, that the living were scarce sufficient to bury the dead. The earthquakes, which accompanied or preceded this pestilence, were such as had never been known in any age. In Syria and Palestine several cities were swallowed up; others, entirely ruined; and some, if we may give credit to

Nicephorus, removed without any considerable damage, six miles and upwards from their former seats. At the same time happened an extraordinary darkness, which lasted from the fourth of August to the first of October, there being little or no distinction, during all that time, between day and night.²¹ During the reign of the same prince, there happened such an extraordinary frost, that, at Constantinople, both seas were frozen for an hundred miles from the shore; the ice being covered with snow twenty cubits deep, and sufficiently strong to bear the heaviest carriages. When the frost broke, mountains of ice and frozen snow, being driven by the wind through the straits, did a great deal of damage to the walls of Constantinople. The month following, several prodigies appeared, or were thought to appear, in the air. At the same time a comet, which the Greeks called *Docites*, because it resembled a beam, was seen for ten days in the east, from whence it moved into the west, and shone there for one and twenty days more. The people were struck with terror and amazement at the sight of the prodigies, and apprehended the last day to be at hand.²² Dreadful earthquakes, strange phenomena in the heavens, inundations, &c. occurred in the year 812, during the reign of Michael Balbus; but no remarkable plague is mentioned by the Greek historians, till the year 1025, when a new train of calamities took place. The plague broke out in Cappadocia, raging with such violence there, as well as in Paphlagonia and Armenia, that the people were forced to abandon their dwellings. A terrible famine followed; after which the earthquakes again commenced with redoubled fury: at Constantinople they

continued forty days together; while people were terrified by a *comet* (probably a large meteor) which passed with a dreadful noise from north to south; the whole horizon appearing to be in a flame.

From these calamities the world, at least that part of it known to the Greek historians, appears to have enjoyed some respite till the year 1346. Indeed we may now say, as in the time of the invasion by the northern barbarians, that the sword, and not the pestilence, was the plague of those times. A most violent and universal pestilence, however, now took place; though, for want of such historians as Thucydides and Procopius, we cannot here give a particular account of it. In general we are told, that it began in the kingdom of Cathay (the northern part of China) from whence it gradually overspread all the countries between that and the western extremity of Asia. Invading, at last, Constantinople, it proceeded from thence to Greece, Italy, France, Africa, Germany, Hungary, Denmark, Britain and Ireland. Thus, it seems to have been as extensive a contagion as ever appeared in the world. It is even probable, that, from the remains of this contagion, Europe hath been but very lately set at liberty; as we hear, not long after, of plagues being very frequent in different parts of that continent. In England it assumed somewhat of a new form towards the end of the fifteenth century; being then known by the name of the English Sweating Sickness. But, except in the greater propensity to sweat, the disease appears not to have differed from the true plague. The sweating sickness first made its appearance in the army of Henry VII, when he landed at Milford in 1483; and that year

invaded London, where it continued only from the 21st of September to the end of October. It returned in 1485, 1506, 1517, 1528 and 1551; since which time it has not been known in Britain. In 1517 it was extremely violent and mortal; sometimes killing the sick in three hours; and so general was the infection, that, in some places, one half of the inhabitants died. In 1528 it also raged with great violence; the sick sometimes dying in four hours. The last attack, in 1551, was also very violent. In 1529 it appeared in Holland and Germany, destroying great numbers of people; but it hath not been observed, at least in any remarkable degree, in those countries since that time. In the course of the 17th century, various parts of Europe have suffered very much from the plague in its usual form. Indeed (for reasons given in the subsequent section) we can scarce suppose the pestilential contagion ever to have ceased entirely. In 1603, London was visited with the plague; and on this occasion the practice of shutting up infected houses was first introduced.²³ In 1656 another plague took place in the same metropolis, but does not appear to have made any violent attack. In Naples it raged that year with great fury; destroying, according to some accounts, fifteen thousand, according to others, twenty thousand, a day. But these accounts the author of the Journal just quoted, with great probability, supposes to have been exaggerated. Others say, that four hundred thousand Neapolitans were destroyed by this infection; so that we must at any rate believe it to have been very violent. In the plague of London in 1665, immense numbers perished; and particular accounts were published of this calamity; of which an

abridgment is given in the Appendix to this work, No. III. Since that time it has not been known in Britain; but other parts of Europe have not been equally fortunate. In the beginning of the eighteenth century it appeared in several parts of the continent; particularly in Copenhagen in the year 1711; where it committed great ravages, as it had done at Dantzic two years before; but in 1720 it appeared at Marseilles in France, where it raged with such fury as to destroy sixty out of the hundred thousand supposed to be the whole population of the place.²⁴ Since that time France hath been free from the distemper; but in Sicily, the dominions of the Ottoman Porte, and places adjacent, it hath been felt very severely. In 1743 it was supposed to have destroyed two thirds of the inhabitants of Messina. A particular account of its ravages was read before the Royal Society of London by Dr. Mead. The following is taken from Dr. Lobb's Treatise on the Plague. "From the beginning of June to the end of July, of forty thousand inhabitants, two thirds perished. The disorders in the city were incredible. All the bakers died, and no bread was baked for many days. The streets were full of dead bodies; at one time from twelve to fifteen thousand remaining in the open air: men, women and children, rich and poor, all together dragged to the church doors. The vaults being full, and the living not sufficient to carry the dead out of the city, they were obliged to put them on funeral piles, and burn them promiscuously. Nothing was more shocking than to see people, far above the common stations, go about begging for a loaf of bread, when they could hardly walk, with their tumours upon them; and few were in a state to help them. All these calamities

did not hinder the most execrable villanies, which were committed every moment; and, though so few survived, the governor was obliged to make several public examples."

In the Turkish dominions, though we have not read of such extraordinary devastations as formerly took place, yet we are assured that the pestilence rages there very frequently. From 1756 to 1762 we have histories of it by Dr. Russel and others, the substance of which accounts is given in the Appendix, No. V. In the time of the great war between the Turks and Russians, it found its way to Moscow, which city it invaded in 1771. M. Savary says, it was brought thither by infected merchandise from the store houses of the Jews; and that it carried off two hundred thousand people. In the sixth volume of the Medical Commentaries, however, we are told that it was brought from the army by two soldiers; both of whom were carried into the military hospital, and both died. The anatomist who dissected their bodies died also. The infection quickly seized the hospital, and thence the whole city. This happening in the beginning of the year, its progress was for some time checked by the cold; but its ravages became greater as the summer advanced. It raged most violently during the months of July, August and September; in which time there were instances of its destroying twelve hundred persons in a day. Twenty-five thousand died in the month of September; in the course of which month scarce one in an hundred of the infected recovered. Only seventy thousand, according to this account, perished by the disease. The year 1773 proved very fatal to Bassorah; where, as formerly mentioned, two hundred and seventy-five thousand perished in the summer

season, through the violence of the distemper.²⁵ But in countries where the plague rages so frequently, and where there are few that make observations with any accuracy, we cannot expect complete histories of every attack made by it; neither would the limits of this Treatise admit of a detail of them, though there were. We know, however, that since the year we speak of, the plague has ravaged Dalmatia, particularly in the year 1784, when it almost desolated the town of Spalatro, destroying three or four thousand of its inhabitants. Though some countries therefore have for a number of years remained free from the attacks of this terrible enemy, yet there are others where it is as it were stored up, and from whence it may, on a proper occasion, break forth as formerly, and once more spread ruin and desolation through the world.

SECTION II.

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Of the Countries where the Plague is supposed to originate.—The Influence of Climate in producing Diseases—And of the Moral Conduct of the Human Race in producing and influencing the same.

IN considering the origin of a calamity so dreadful and so universal, we might reasonably suppose that the fatal spots which gave rise to it would long ago have been marked out and abandoned by the human race altogether. But this is far from being the case. In the accounts already given of various plagues, they are always said to have been imported from country to country, but never to have originated in that of the person who wrote of them. If a plague arose in Greece, we are told it came from Egypt; if in Egypt, it came from Ethiopia; and had we any Ethiopic historians, they would no doubt have told us that it came from the land of the Hottentots, from Terra Australis Incognita, or some other country as far distant as possible from their own. In short, though it has been a most generally received opinion, that plagues are the immediate effects of the displeasure of the Deity on account of the sins of men; yet, except David and Homer (already quoted) we find not one who has had the candour to acknowledge that a plague originated among his countrymen on account of their sins in particular. In former times Egypt and Ethiopia were marked out as the two great sources of the plague; and even as late as the writings of Dr. Mead we find that the same opinion prevailed. The Doctor, who attempts to

explain the causes of the plague, derives it entirely from the filth of the city of Cairo, particularly of the canal that runs through it. But later writers, who have visited and resided in Egypt, assure us that the country is extremely healthy, and that the plague is always brought there from Constantinople. It is true that Dr. Timone, in the Philosophical Transactions, No. 364, tells us, that it appears from daily observation, as well as from history, that the plague comes to Constantinople from Egypt; but the united testimonies of Savary, Volney, Mariti and Russel, who all agree that Egypt receives the infection from Constantinople, must undoubtedly preponderate.

“The pestilence (says M. Savary) is not a native of Egypt. I have collected information from the Egyptians, and foreign physicians who have lived there twenty or thirty years; which all tended to prove the contrary. They have assured me that this epidemic disease was brought thither by the Turks, though it has committed great ravages. I myself saw the caravelles of the Grand Signior, in 1778, unlade, according to custom, the silks of Syria at Damietta. The plague is almost always on board; and they landed, without opposition, their merchandise, and their people who had the plague. It was the month of August; and, as the disease was then over in Egypt, it did not communicate that season. The vessels set sail, and went to poison other places. The summer following, the ships of Constantinople, alike infected, came to the port of Alexandria, where they landed their diseased without injury to the inhabitants. It is an observation of ages, that if, during the months of June, July and August, infected merchandise be brought into Egypt,

the plague expires of itself, and the people have no fears; and if brought at other seasons, and communicated, it then ceases. A proof that it is not a native of Egypt is, that, except in times of great famine, it never breaks out in Grand Cairo, nor the inland towns, but always begins at the seaports on the arrival of Turkish vessels, and travels to the capital; whence it proceeds as far as Syria. Having come to a period in Cairo, and being again introduced by the people of Upper Egypt, it renews with greater fury, and sometimes sweeps off two or three hundred thousand souls; but always stops in the month of June, or those who catch it then are easily cured. Smyrna and Constantinople are now the residence of this most dreadful affliction.”

M. Volney informs us, that the European merchants residing at Alexandria agree in declaring that the disease never proceeds from the internal parts of the country, but always makes its first appearance on the sea-coasts at Alexandria; from thence it passes to Rosetta, from Rosetta to Cairo, and from Cairo to Damietta, and through the rest of the Delta. It is invariably preceded by the arrival of some vessel from Smyrna or Constantinople; and it is observed, that if the plague has been violent during the summer, the danger is greater for the Alexandrians during the following winter.

To the same purpose, the Abbe Mariti says, “The plague does not usually reside in Syria, nor is this the place where it usually begins. It receives this fatal present from Egypt, where its usual seat is Alexandria, Cairo or Damietta. The plague of 1760 came at once from Cairo and Alexandria; to the latter of which it had been brought from Constantinople.