

**An account of the rise, progress, and termination, of the malignant fever, lately prevalent in Philadelphia. Briefly stated from authentic documents.**

### **Contributors**

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Hardie, James, 1758-1826

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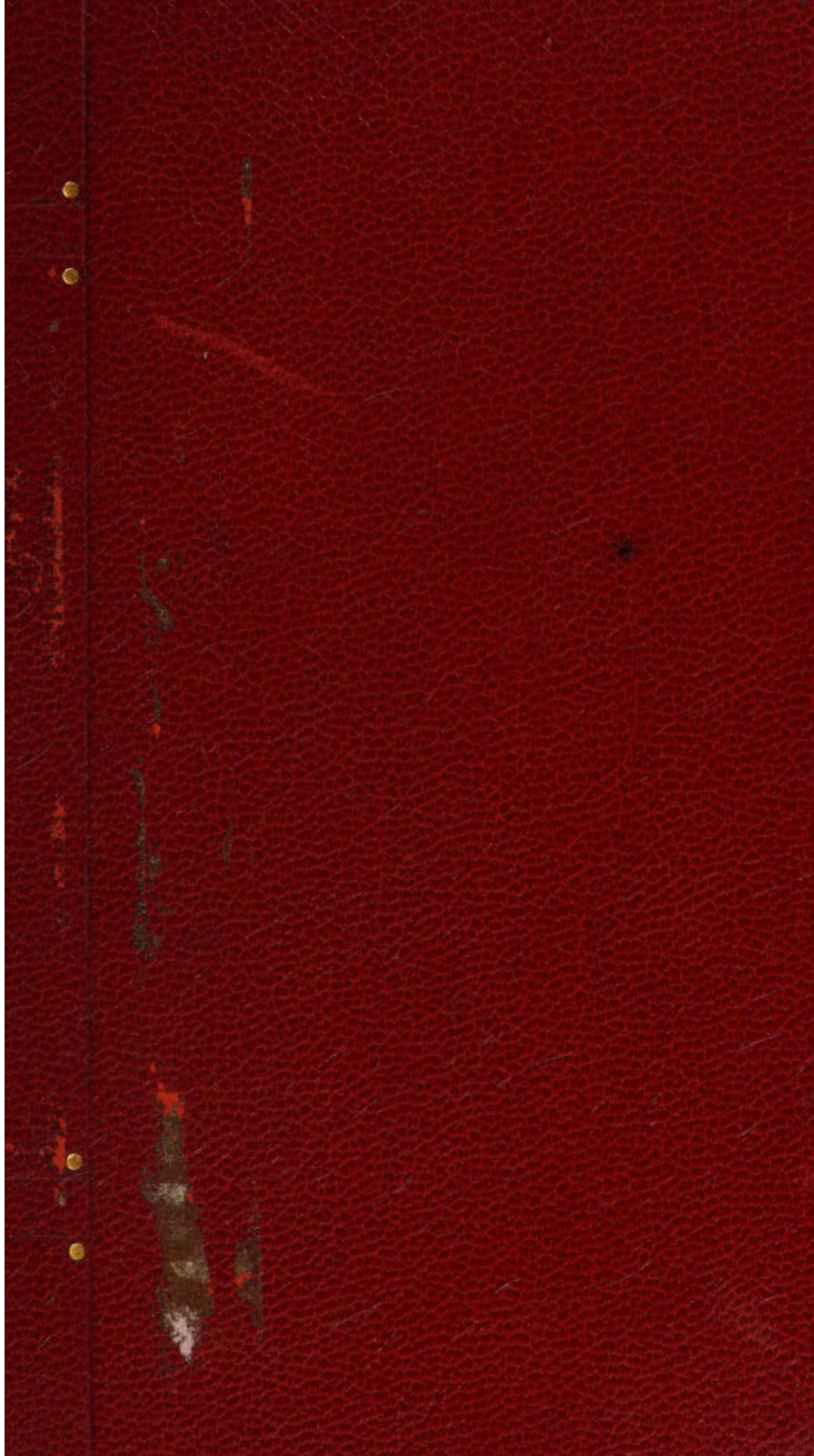
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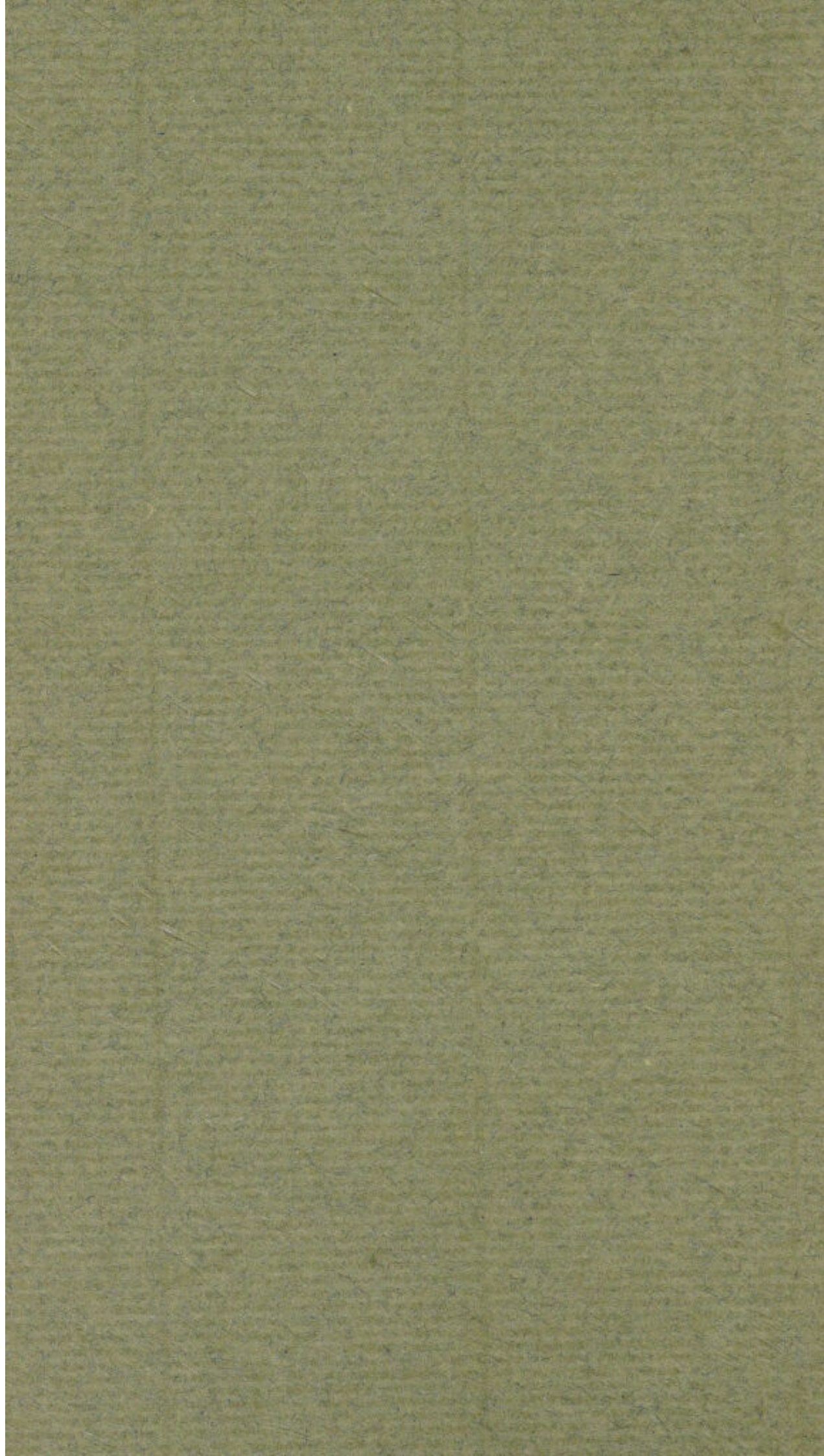












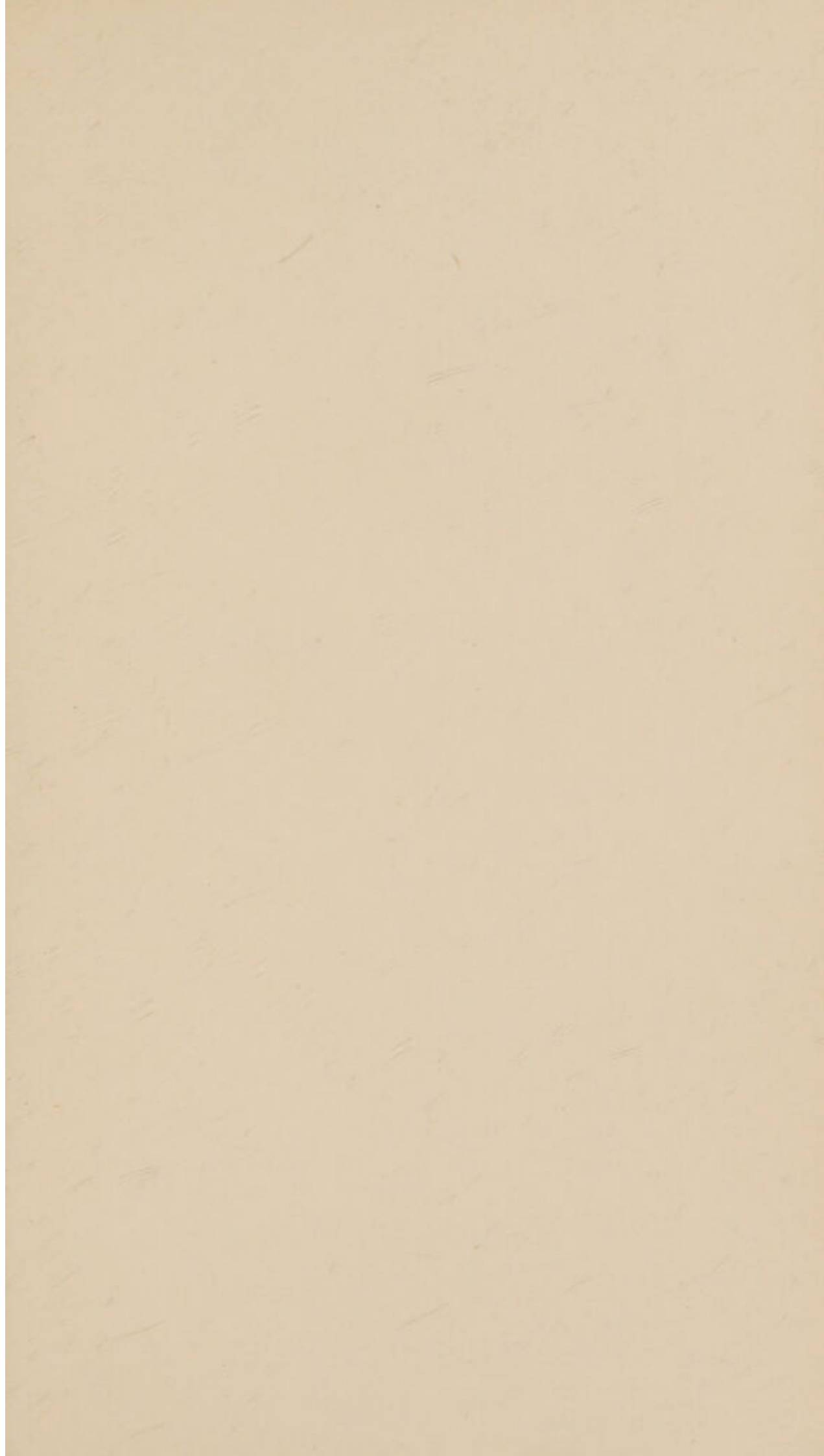






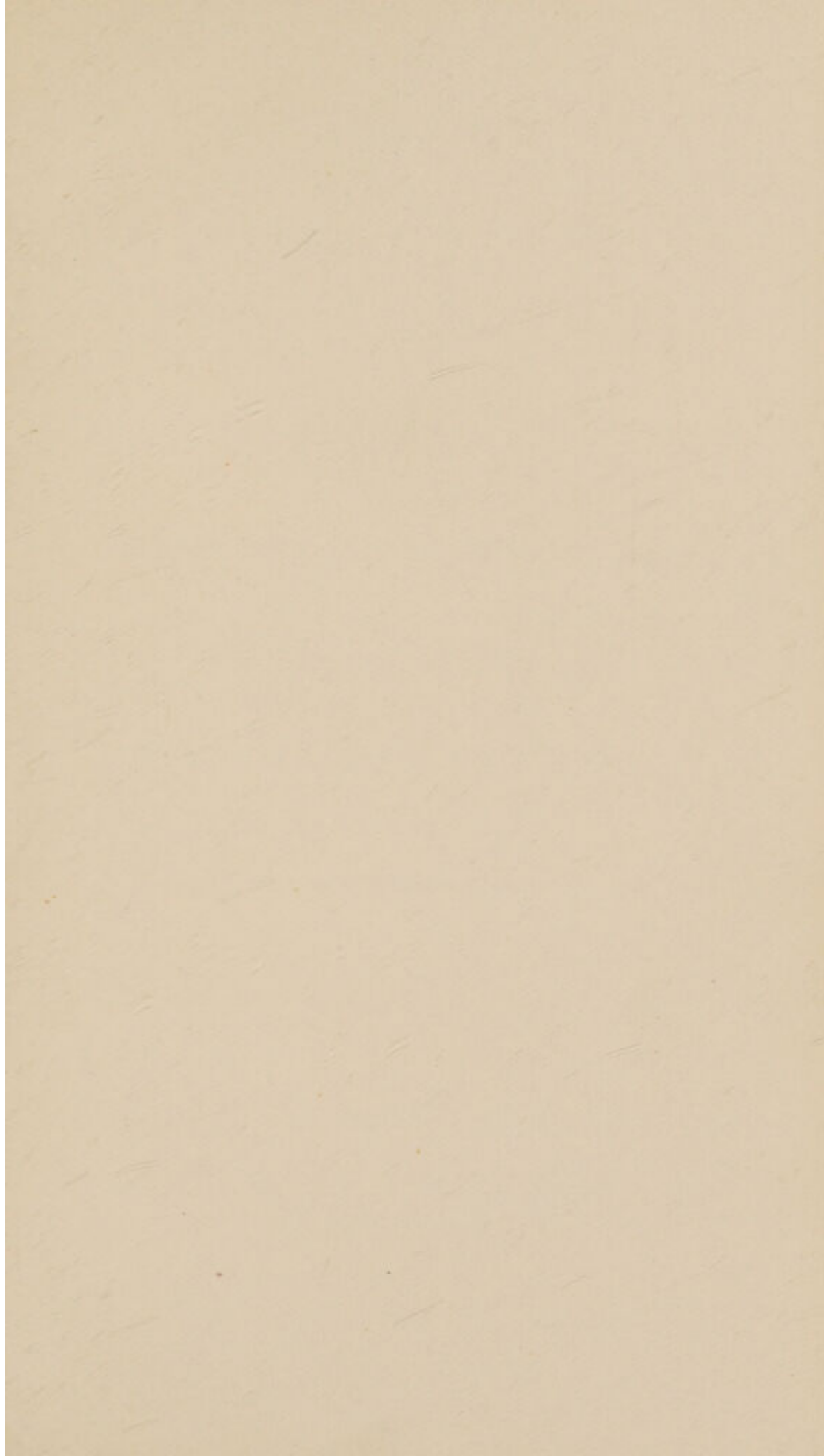




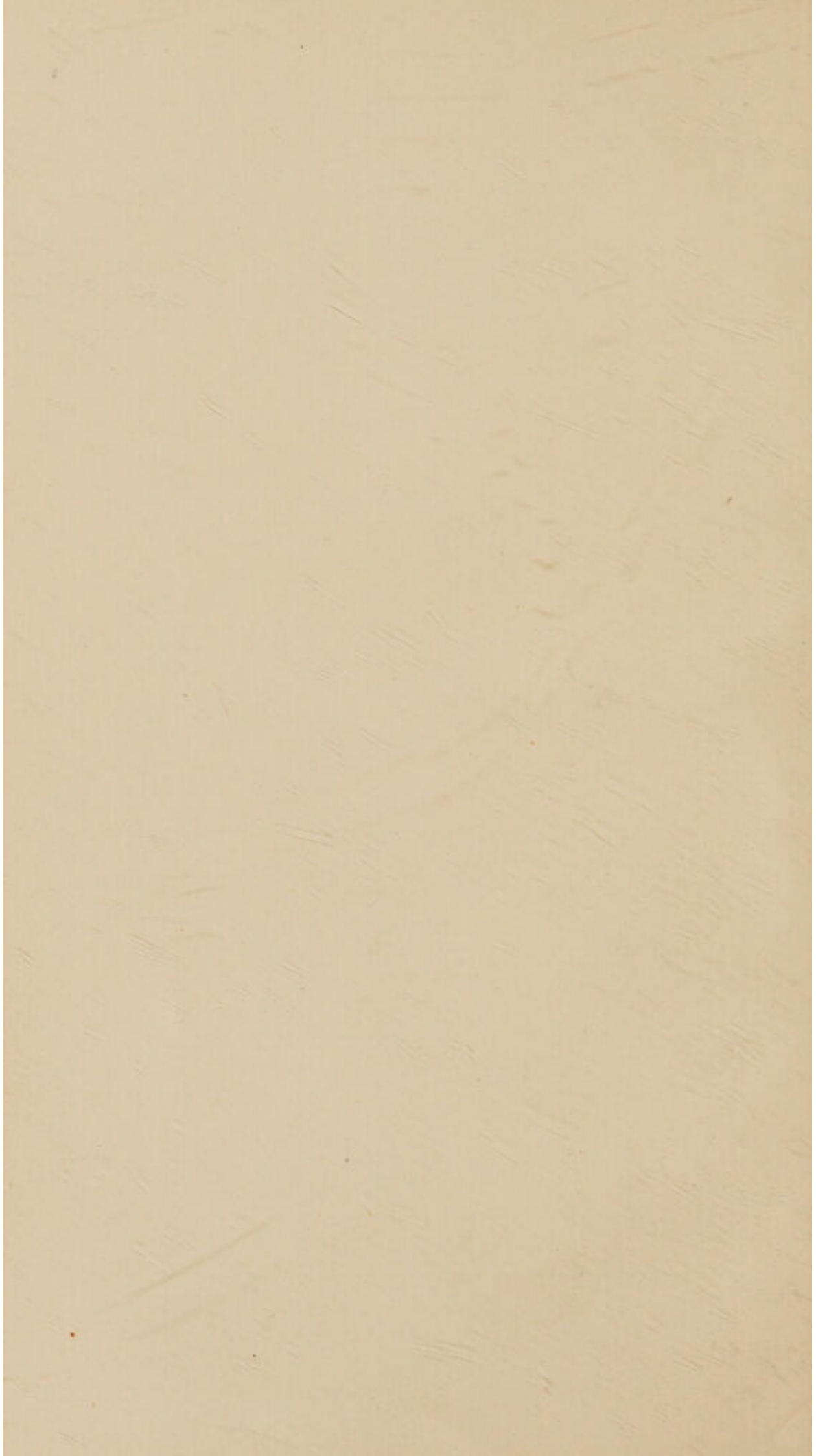












*An* ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
RISE, PROGRESS, AND TERMINATION,  
OF THE  
MALIGNANT FEVER,  
Lately prevalent in Philadelphia.  
BRIEFLY STATED  
*FROM AUTHENTIC DOCUMENTS.*

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P H I L A D E L P H I A:

Printed and sold by Benjamin Johnson, No. 147,  
North side of Market-Street.  
M DCC XCIII.



310 442

# A List of the Burials in the City and Liberties from August 1, to November 9, 1793.

August		September		October		November	
Days	Burials	Days	Burials	Days	Burials	Days	Burials
1	9	1	13	1	77	1	15
2	8	2	18	2	64	2	21
3	9	3	11	3	78	3	13
4	10	4	27	4	58	4	15
5	10	5	20	5	71	5	15
6	3	6	24	6	72	6	11
7	11	7	18	7	86	7	14
8	5	8	42	8	90	8	8
9	12	9	32	9	103	9	6
10	7	10	29	10	92		
11	6	11	27	11	118		118
12	5	12	33	12	111		
13	11	13	33	13	104		
14	6	14	48	14	81		
15	7	15	56	15	80		
16	6	16	67	16	70		
17	7	17	81	17	80		
18	5	18	67	18	59		
19	8	19	61	19	65		
20	8	20	68	20	55		
21	8	21	56	21	59		
22	13	22	77	22	82		
23	10	23	66	23	54		
24	17	24	98	24	39		
25	12	25	87	25	33		
26	17	26	50	26	25		
27	12	27	62	27	13		
28	24	28	51	28	25		
29	22	29	53	29	16		
30	20	30	67	30	17		
31	17			31	22		
325		1442		1999			

The Jews, Baptists, Methodists, Free-Quakers, German part of St. Mary's congregation, are not included in the above daily account of burials.

Protestant Episcopalians,	352	Moravians,	-	-	-	12
Presbyterians	-	Baptists,	-	-	-	60
Roman Catholics,	-	Methodists,	-	-	-	33
Friends,	-	Universalists,	-	-	-	2
Free Quakers,	-	Jews,	-	-	-	2
Lutherans,	-	Kensington	-	-	-	169
Calvinists,	-	Potter's field,	-	-	-	1334
Swedes,	-					





AN ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
MALIGNANT FEVER,

Lately prevalent in Philadelphia.

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**A**T the period when the Malignant Fever made its appearance in Philadelphia, the City, by a series of prosperity in commerce, had grown to a state of opulence not often recorded in the historic page. Her inhabitants indulged themselves in all the gratifications of luxury and dissipation, to be procured in this Western hemisphere. Her streets were crowded by the gay carriages of pleasure, going and returning in every direction; new and elegant buildings were seen rising in every quarter; and her port was thronged with shipping from every trading country in Europe, and both the Indies: like Tyre of old



“ her merchants were princes, and her  
“ traffickers were the honourable of the  
“ earth.” This uncommon flow of prof-  
perity had its too common effect. The ci-  
tizens too generally had forgotten the  
Fountain from whom all their blessings  
flowed; and impiously said or seemed to  
say “ by thy great wisdom and by thy traf-  
“ fic, hast thou encreased thy riches.”

By the unfortunate divisions in St. Domin-  
go, one of the French Islands, many of its in-  
habitants, to avoid the fire and sword of their  
stronger antagonists, had fled from their  
homes, and, about the time the contagion  
took place in Philadelphia, a large number  
of them sought refuge among us. Before  
they had left their own burning and bloody  
shores their hearts had been appalled by  
scenes of the most atrocious cruelty, and by  
the sight of numerous bodies of the slain  
which had remained unburied for many days:  
so that the air must have become too polluted  
for healthful respiration, had they been per-  
mitted to stay. Many of these unfortunate  
refugees came in vessels exceedingly croud-  
ed; as well as poorly provided with the means  
necessary to preserve health: had they even



left their homes in a state of soundness: some of course arrived sickly.

About this time, likewise, the licenced plunderers of the Ocean, belonging to the same nation, brought in their prizes for condemnation and sale. One of these freebooters, belonging to Marseilles in France, (the hot bed of pestilential disease) after a lengthy circuitous cruize, came into our port, and brought with her the *Flora*, a prize ship, both in a sickly condition. H E R E the inhabitants have generally agreed to fix the origin of the late dreadful visitation. And in this opinion they have been confirmed by the report of two accurate observers, Physicians, who had visited the sick in the earliest, and every succeeding stage of the disease. “From all the evidence we have been able to collect,” say they, “the disorder made its first appearance in water street, at Richard Denny’s lodging house, who kept an ordinary frequented by a number of Frenchmen who had lately arrived in some of the suspected vessels.”

“Mrs. Parkinson, who lodged at Mr. Denny’s, took the disease on the third and died on the seventh of August, two French



## 6 AN ACCOUNT OF THE

lads had taken lodgings at Denny's, a few days before the death of Mrs, Parkinson, one of whom was soon after taken ill and died. Immediately after his death, Mr. Denny's daughter says the other one took lodgings higher up the street, and died soon after. Mr. and Mrs. Denny, and two of their next door neighbours, also died of the same fever, about two weeks after the French lads. Among the next succeeding victims were Mrs. Lamaigre and Mr. Miller in the same neighbourhood, and almost every case which occurred for the first two weeks could be traced to the same source."

"From a comparative view of all the preceding circumstances---from the contagious nature of the disease, and from the resemblance of its leading symptoms to those of the yellow fever of the West-Indies, there can be no doubt that the contagion, which gave rise to the disease here, was imported. And from its occurring in that part of water street, in a few days after the *Amelia*, *Sans Culottes*, and *Flora* arrived, there is the strongest presumption, a presumption amounting almost to a certainty, that it was introduced and communicated by some of the crew or passengers, belonging to one or other of the said vessels."



“ That the fever originated from the rotten coffee, as has been suggested, is altogether chimerical.”

“ That the dry and warm state of our atmosphere had no share in the generation of the disease is reduced to a certainty, from the disease being at first confined to a few particular persons, and in that particular part of water street near to the suspected vessels; from its being communicated from those to others, and so on, in succession.”

Such hath been the report of Doctors Currie and Cathrall, men of extensive skill and observation. But this opinion hath been combatted by a physician of very considerable reputation and practice, who hath offered some reasons to the public for dissenting on this occasion, from the above mentioned gentlemen, as well as most others of their profession. He supposes that the contagion was generated from the stench of a Cargo of damaged coffee, which had been landed near the same place where it made its first appearance; on a supposition that vegetable putrefaction might produce such a disease. This gentleman has



deservedly gained much credit by his noble and humane attention to unhappy patients of the contagion, during its most perilous stages; but the majority of his fellow citizens think that he has carried the spirit of discovery too far in tracing its origin.

It is certain that neither the same disease, nor any other similar to it, has ever visited this city at any preceding time since it was founded, but what has been undeniably traced to a foreign source. The city police, perhaps, was never better administered; nor its cleanliness more attended to; and if vegetable putrefaction alone were sufficient to produce so dire a contagion, surely in the lapse of one hundred years it might have happened, and been ascertained beyond a contradiction. The cleanliness of our streets and wharves has been more neglected in former times than lately; they have, also, been more incommoded by putrid vegetable substances; and we have had every diversification of seasons, wet and dry, hot and cold, that could assist in producing such an effect: and as the learned Doctor has not produced sufficient reasons to convince a number of his fellow citizens



of the justness of his opinion in this instance, he must indulge them in believing that the deleterious miasmata was introduced from abroad, and from the sick from on board one of the three vessels before mentioned.

There are some indeed, who go so far as to say that if particular men had done their duty; and had not betrayed more indulgence to French cruizers, than genuine friendship for this city, we should never have had occasion to dispute on so sorrowful a theme.

From whatever fountain we trace this poisoned stream it has destroyed the lives of many thousand citizens and some of the most distinguished worth. Many widows and orphans are left to deplore the loss of husbands and parents: at the acme of its predominance, the universal complexion of the city was like Ezekiel's roll, inscribed from one end to the other with characters of lamentation and woe.

A particular account of the various symptoms of the late malignant fever have been described with great precision and perspicuity by the ingenious Dr. William Currie,



in a piece published in an early stage of the disease. From which the following brief abstract is taken and inserted, for the information of our readers.

“THE patient first complains of weariness and weakness, which, in a few hours, is succeeded by a sense of chillness, and an oppressive dull pain and giddiness in the head, an oppressive weight and stricture about the breast, particularly at the region of the heart, as if the space was too narrow for its pulsations. The breathing is performed with quickness and uneasiness.

These symptoms in most cases, are soon succeeded by a frequent propensity to puke, and this by a quick, full, but soft and irregular pulse; great heat about the head, neck, and breast; the skin generally hot and moist about the neck and forehead, but dry, and but little increase of heat about the feet and legs.

If, to these symptoms we add an extraordinary prostration of strength or sudden debility in the animal functions of the body, we have a perfect description of the fever



under consideration, from the first day of its attack to the third of its progress.

W H E N no amendment takes place by the 3d or 4th day, most of the recited symptoms become more distressing and alarming, with the pulse low and sunk. Frequent vomiting of matter resembling coffee grounds in colour and consistence, generally occurs before the disease terminates, when it proves mortal, together with a cadaverous appearance of the countenance, succeeded by a deep yellow or leaden colour of the skin and nails; the eyes become suffused with blood, and the countenance appears like that of one strangled; but no signs of jaundice appear, either in the urine or feces. In some cases, a profuse discharge of blood from the nose, concludes the catastrophe. A hiccup is a very frequent but not a constant symptom, nor does vomiting always occur. The tongue is seldom very foul or dry, nor does the patient always crave drink. His intellects, though always confused, are seldom so much disordered as to amount to a delirium. Subultus tendinum are very rare

When the disease terminates favourably,



the symptoms generally abate on the third or fourth day, accompanied by a profuse sweat. When it ends fatally, it is generally between the fifth and eighth day, though some have survived the tenth and died afterwards.

The characteristic or leading symptoms of the disease, as has already been observed, are sudden debility in the voluntary powers, oppressive pain, giddiness and sense of fulness and distention in the vessels of the forepart of the head, and an oppressive weight, or an inexpressible sensation of tightness about the heart and lungs, accompanied with excruciating anguish and restlessness."

As soon as the contagion had reached the central streets, it spread itself with dreadful rapidity on all sides. In the course of August there were more than three hundred funerals; towards the close of the month there were twenty buried in a day. During the major part of the time the thermometer stood from 80 to 90 in the afternoons; the sky was mostly fair, and the winds generally westerly. From the 25th. to the



end of the month the weather was cloudy and some rain fell; during these days the mortallity encreased.

In September its malignance increased amazingly: fear impressed the stoutest hearts; the dread of infection increased with the the infection itself. Many people declined visiting their nearest relatives that were sick. The most humane seemed to have forgotten their humanity. The utmost skill in the healing art was employed in vain. Every family seemed to hug itself in a state of seclusion from its nearest neighbour. Indeed in some few sorrowful instances, all the warm "charities of father, son and brother," were palsied by the cold hand of death.

At this crisis, a crisis of inconceivable consternation, many thousands flew into the country, as choice or chance directed; and in our own state they generally met with a sympathetic reception; the farmer opened his hospitable doors to receive the affrighted fugitives, and condoled in their sufferings. A few there were who allowed



their fears to overpower their fellow-feeling, and refused their aid unless paid an extraordinary price. In this month fourteen hundred citizens were added to the list of mortality. The contagion was still progressive; towards the end of it there were from fifty to ninety buried in a day. By the glasses the heat of the atmosphere had abated; the mercury seldom rose above 80. The weather was mostly fair, with a few intervening days of cloud, which promised rain but discharged none. The winds still continued to be westerly. From the 19th to the 23d the air was calm; and during these five days and the day following there were near five hundred persons buried. Throughout the month the heat was generally moderate, and the weather pretty equable; so that the increase of the mortality was owing merely to the enlargement of the circle of infection.

Until the middle of October the mighty destroyer went on with increasing havoc. From the 1st. to the 17th upwards of fourteen hundred fell as victims to the tremendous malady: from the latter day to the 31st. the bills of mortality lessened pretty



gradually. In the whole of this month the dead amounted to near two thousand; a dreadful number! if we consider that at this time upwards of one third of its inhabitants had forsaken the city.

People by this time had experienced the inefficacy of smelling bottles, handkerchiefs dipped in vinegar, camphor bags, pieces of tarred rope, &c. as a prevention; and had very generally laid them aside; trusting rather to the protection of Providence, and a prudent care to avoid the houses of the sick. In the earlier period of the disease these precautions were almost universal; insomuch that the greater part of the people to be seen in the streets, had either one or the other applied to their nostrils. Many placed an extraordinary confidence in the virtue of garlic and chewed it constantly, even to such a degree as to be smelled at several yards distance. Samuel Bengé, who had that dangerous office, the superintendence of the removal of the sick from their houses to Bush-hill, used to take a few Anderson's pills, and a little sweet-oil every evening; whether this was the cause of his



escaping the disease, cannot be ascertained.

The thermometer was very variable, mostly below 80, and above 50 until the 27th, from which day to the end of the month it was always below 50, and one day below 40. The winds generally blew from the N. and N. W. The weather for the greatest part of the time fair. During the five or six last days of this month the virulence of the contagion was greatly abated; but few fresh patients presented themselves----and the funerals were from 12 to 20 per diem.

From the first of November to the seventh, the mortality continued gradually to decrease; on the ninth, the burials in all the grave-yards were reduced to so small a number as six. By this time the fugitive citizens had recovered their spirits sufficiently to venture back to their homes; the streets and the various departments of business began to resume life and activity.

Let us now make a pause; a solemn pause! The visitation has passed over our heads for a time at least. Let us look back on the awful scene; and endeavour to draw



some instruction from it: it is a scene replete with interesting instruction.

A contagious fever hath made dreadful, and in this country unparalleled, ravages in every quarter of the city; few houses indeed have escaped. Universal consternation invaded every mind: the feelings of humanity; the suggestions of duty; the fortitude of man, have all been absorbed by the sense of private danger, and a wish to escape the infectious calamity; every medical aid hath been exerted; and in most cases exerted in vain! The potent malady hath laughed to scorn our wisdom, and our ingenuity. We have been beholden to the poor; to the despised blacks, for nurses to attend the sick; as if Providence were determined to convince us that they are equally the objects of his care, with ourselves.

The long extended train of funeral attendants, heretofore too common, has been exchanged for the solitary hearse; and weeping relatives have been left to mourn in a state of desertion. Let the proud Lord of the crea-



tion view this picture, and it is not the picture of fancy, and ask himself whether he has any reason to boast of his talents, or his virtues. Certainly he has more cause to exclaim with humiliating propriety in his address to Almighty God, "Lord! what is man that thou art mindful of him."

With this humble temper of mind he will be better prepared to receive the benefits of Heaven with gratitude; he can never fail to feel a glow of devotion, when he considers that all human skill had been exhausted in most cases to no good purpose; and the gloom which hung over the city seemed to threaten to unpeople it, the forgiveness and mercy of the MOST HIGH, burst out, like the brightness of the sun through a cloud, with healing virtue. Mercy reassumed the ascendant on the judgment seat; and the raging mortallity ceased. Let us then with one accord lift up our hearts with our hands to God in the Heavens, and pray, that he may animate our minds with a resolution to profit by the late humiliating display of his judgment and his mercy.

One remarkable circumstance and one



that reflects much credit on the neighbouring country people is that our markets were tolerably well supplied with every necessary of life, usually to be found in them; and that at no considerable advance in the price.

Although the predominant feature of the city while the mortality raged at the extreme, was terror and dismay; and altho' most people sought their own safety with too little concern about others; there were found men, who, at the imminent risque of their own lives, stepped forward, at the most trying pinch, to assist those who wanted the choice or the means of flying. In this band of worthies the poor met with friends in the day of distress; and the helpless orphan with a father.

The country seat of William Hamilton at Bush hill being an high and airy situation, and at some distance from the city, was taken and converted into an hospital for the poor, and such as had not conveniencies of being nursed at their own homes. It soon became crouded with patients; and, from a concurrence of causes, in a short time it fell into great disorder. Unprincipled nurses, ne-



glected the sick and consumed in riot the provisions gathered for their comfort. Cleanliness was neglected to such a degree that the chambers became too offensive and dangerous for any but an insensible, or an heroic mind to enter. In this state of disorder and filthiness; it will be naturally supposed, the sick had little chance of recovering: and indeed so few did recover, that the minds of the poor, who to this time had escaped the infection, instead of considering the hospital as a blessing, became terrified with the thoughts of being sent to it, and many, even of the sick, resisted as long they were able, the importunities of their friends to have them taken to inevitable death as it appeared to them to be.

A Committee of citizens (a list of whose names is hereunto annexed) who had undertaken to assist the ordinary and legal guardians of the poor, heard repeated complaints of this alarming evil: but the hazard of attending at the hospital to remove it, as well as prevent the repetition of it when removed, seemed like an immediate sacrifice of the lives of the undertakers. To search into the horrors of this dismal re-



ceptical, where every breath was pestilence and every sight distress, required the humanity and fortitude of a Howard. Such men were found !--- They voluntarily offered themselves.---- Stephen Gerard a native of France, a wealthy merchant of Philadelphia, one of the committee, and Peter Helm, a native of Philadelphia, another member, generously stepped forth and undertook the perilous task. If an ancient Roman, who saved the life of one citizen, at the risk of his own, was crowned with a civic wreath, what rewards do these men deserve ? who were instrumental in saving the lives of many ! They gave up their own to help the helpless--- Thanks be to Heaven ! They were preserved ; and their generous labours were blessed with success. The first worthless nurses were discharged, and new ones introduced ; the rooms were well cleansed, and the sick were properly attended.

The effects of the reformation soon appeared ; the poor no longer considered Bush-hill Lazaretto as the Antichamber of the grave ; but as a humane provision for the necessitous sick. In this dangerous post these



two worthy citizens continued their daily attendance until the disease was extinguished.

Joseph Inskip, (a name dear to all his acquaintance) another member of the committee, very early devoted himself to enquire after those that were sick and to assist them : often did this good man set at their bedside administering comfort. Several he was instrumental in restoring to their friends and families.

Daniel Offley, another respectable citizen and member of the charitable committee, with singular fortitude braved the danger of infection, in discharge of his christian duty ; in visiting the sick & comfortless and affording every assistance in his power.

Jonathan D. Sergeant Esq. Jacob Tomkins, jun. James Wilson and Andrew Adgate, all distinguished themselves by their attention and labours of humanity. These six valuable men are no more !---- They fell victims to the contagion ; They are gone from works to rewards but their memories will ever be respected by all who knew them.



The truly Reverend Henry Helmuth (Pastor of the Lutheran congregation, in this city) claims particular applause. This worthy clergyman, not satisfied to wait for the calls of his people, invited them from the pulpet universally to make free to send for him at all times by day or night. Indeed he consecrated all his time, whilst the disease prevailed to assist and comfort his flock: and the sick among them were so numerous that he had but little time he could call his own.

Many more names could be mentioned, who, to their lasting honour, stepped forth at this trying season, to smoothe the bed of sickness, and to relieve the necessities of the poor. But it would swell this short account beyond the compass intended, to recount the benevolent actions, the unre-mitted attentions and the hazardous exertions of many of our fellow citizens besides the committee, during this dreadful period.

“Ye sons sons of mercy,”  
 “Who touch’d with human woe, redress-  
 ive search’d  
 Into the horrors of the death-bed room ;



Unpitied, and unheard, where mis'ry  
 moan'd ;  
 Where sickness pin'd, where thirst and  
 hunger dwelt,  
 And friendless orphans wept their parents  
 lost,"

It is not in the tribute of praise from  
 your fellow citizens, however justly yours,  
 that you seek your reward: A blessing  
 has been Pronounced on such exertions as  
 yours by the highest of all authorities ;  
 because that you have visited the sick ;  
 fed the hungry ; and cloathed the naked :  
 your charitable offices to your poor fellow  
 creatures are appreciated as if you had  
 done those offices to himself.

So great a mortality among the people  
 consequently left a large number of or-  
 phan children in a very destitute and dis-  
 tressing situation ; some of them without  
 a friend to administer to their wants ; feve-  
 ral of them indeed, were found wandering  
 in the streets, not knowing where to apply  
 for relief. Here again was a large field of  
 labour opened for the benevolent. The chil-  
 dren were to be provided with nurses pro-



visions and other accommodations, which was no small undertaking. The committee however in addition to their former burdens, also undertook this; and procured the Loganian Library which they fitted up, and appropriated to the purpose of an Orphan house. A suitable woman hath been provided as superintendant, with sufficient assistants under her. Every necessary care appears to have been taken and the children mostly healthy and chearful. Many of these have been delivered to their relatives. About two hundred have been introduced into this house of whom about sixty were infants. At present there are nearly fifty in the house and between thirty and forty out with wet nurses. Sixteen only have died.

The accumulating expence of this institution as well as that at Bush-hill, with many others, obliged the committee to negotiate a loan of 1500 dollars with the bank of North America, and this being inadequate to the expence, they borrowed a farther sum of 5000 dollars of the same bank, for which the directors refused to receive any interest. Several liberal contributions have enabled the committee to con-



tinue their parental care and provision for those unfortunate children, as well as to supply a great number of poor with fire wood and other necessaries. From the citizens of Philadelphia in and near German-Town they recieved two thousand dollars; from those in the neighbourhood of Darby, fourteen hundred dollars; from the citizens of New-York, five thousand dollars; from Bucks-county sixteen hundred dollars; from Delaware-county twelve hundred dollars; from Franklin-county five-hundred dollars; fundry necessaries from the inhabitants of Boston, to the amount of twenty five hundred dollars; and a great many other contributions from different places.

Notwithstanding so generous as were the supplies handed us by our friendly countrymen, so great was the terror and dismay with which they were affected at the idea of the fugitive Philadelphians carrying the disorder with them and spreading it in the country, that the great law of self-preservation superseded every other consideration; insomuch that in many places resolutions were entered into, that no per-



tion or goods whatever should be suffered to enter their respective towns, and corporations, unless it could be proved they had been from the city at least twelve days. The inhabitants of the town of Boston, New York, Baltimore, Charleston, and most other sea-ports in the United States, made resolutions similar to the above and obliged all vessels coming from Philadelphia, to ride quarantine for the space of time which they respectively apprehended requisite to ascertain whether there was any thing of the contagion among them. However, to their credit let it be remembered, that they generally procured suitable hospitals, and made ample provision for those who should come from the city, and be taken with the disease.

During this melancholy period, the city in addition to the various other afflictions, lost ten of her most valuable physicians, doctors Hutchinson, Morris, Lynn, Pennington, Dodds, Johnson, Glentworth, Phile, Graham and Green. Most of the others were sick at different times, and those who remained alive and able to go out, were not sufficient in number to answer the



many calls for their assistance, so that many suffered for want of proper advice and many more for want of suitable and attentive nurses. Great hath been the charge devolved on them; great have been their exertions, and much gratitude is due by the citizens universally, to those of the faculty who faithfully braved the danger in performing their duty.

It is remarkable that the French who settled among us, and particularly those from the West-India islands, were in a particular manner preserved from this sickness: some few, however, took it and died.

The black people, likewise, were exempted in a peculiar manner from the contagion. Very few of them were taken, and still fewer died.

Had it not been for the exertions and attentions of some of these despised people, the calamity and distress of the city would have been much aggravated.

Some parts of their conduct may have the appearance of ingratitude to the citizens of



Philadelphia who have been their first and firmest friends, who have always generously and humanely exerted themselves to defend and release them from the oppressive hand of slavery ; yet much may be said in extenuation of their fault.

Though the conduct of some of them, in taking three and four dollars a day ; exacting it with the utmost rigor from starving families, and then not doing their duty, is to be reprobated, and for that of others an excuse is necessary, yet there are some among them whose conduct merits great applause.

Those who are acquainted with human nature, will readily allow that the principle of self preservation, must operate upon the blacks as strongly as upon other people. Now tho' experience has shewn that the former have almost universally escaped the contagion, yet at that time the fact was not absolutely established, and they might rationally be supposed to be possessed of the idea that the circulating report of their being incapable of taking the infection, was but a finisse or stratagem of the whites, to facilitate the attainment of their assistance ; and as they were ignorant of the physical



properties of bodies, and as even we, with all the advantages of education, have not yet been able to develope the cause of their wonderful preservation, the idea, which they may have had of the danger, would very probably prevent many from undertaking so difficult and hazardous an employment. Is it not human nature? Would it not have been almost a phenomenon, had they, educated as they are, acted otherwise.

As the value of labour is generally estimated by the trouble it costs, or the danger which attends it, and the plenty or scarcity of hands that are willing to undertake an employment, the blacks would naturally follow the general principle, and take advantage of the time, to get as much for their labour as they could. I mean not to justify the exaction of exorbitant prices at such a time, but merely to offer a small extenuation of a fault which the negroes were unfortunately guilty of. It should be considered that their education has been such as to keep them in ignorance of the finer feelings of nature, that they have generally been in the habit of being imposed upon, that they are universally poor, and must



possess with others, an ambition of procuring something for future contingencies, that the time afforded tempting opportunities, and that it is too generally the case, that mankind seize with avidity every occasion of profiting.

“ I T appears from authentic documents, that the same kind of fever as the one which has been described in the preceding pages, has been prevalent in Philadelphia at two different periods. The first, A. D. 1740; supposed to have been introduced by means of a quantity of wearing apparel brought in a trunk from Barbadoes, belonging to a gentleman who died of it in that Island.

THE second time of its appearance was A. D. 1762, introduced by a mariner, who arrived sick with it from the Havanna, and communicated it to the family where he lodged; from whence it spread rapidly from house to house as families had intercourse with one another.

ACCORDING to the notes of Dr. Redman, the worthy President of the Philadelphia Col-



lege of physicians, it made its appearance the latter end of August of the year last mentioned. About the 20th or 25th of September, its progress seems to have arrived to its height. From the 27th it gradually declined, so that by the 10th of October, instead of 18 or 20 patients of a day, which Dr. Redman had before attended in it, he had now only two or three.

THE fever at that period was circumscribed between Pine-street northerly, and three or four squares from thence southerly, and extended from Water-street, to Third or Fourth-street westerly. Its first and greatest ravages were about the New Market, which lay near the source of the contagion. The fever as it appeared at that time, is thus described by Dr. Redman in a communication just presented to, and read in the College of Physicians.

“THE patients were generally seized with a sudden and severe pain in the head and eye-balls, which frequently appeared a little inflamed, or had a reddish cast, great pain in the back and limbs, and much dejection of spirits. A sick stomach generally attended, but in various degrees of violence, with fre-



quent vomiting, more or less of green or yellow bile, and was distinguished from the cholera morbus by not having a purging with it. There was also a kind of cardialgia, or burning heat about the scrobiculus cordis, with great oppression; but if I remember right, not much pain like a cholic; nor do I recollect any chill generally preceding the above symptoms--however, it might be with some. The skin was dry with a disagreeable burning heat in it, sensible to the hand of others. The tongue was not very dry at first, but rather moist, and covered with whitish mucus. The pulse was not generally either full or tense, but very quick in the beginning, by which the degree of fever was chiefly designated. Yet in some persons previously very plethoric from high living and other circumstances, some fullness without tension was observed in the pulse in the first stage; after which in many, the pulse became so moderate in every respect, as to be scarcely distinguishable from that of a person in health. Though very restless and often tossing about, or changing position from oppression at the præcordia, I think they were but seldom very delirious; but if the disease continued to increase, and res



the power of medicines, they rather grew comatose, which was a bad symptom, and generally continued till death, unless the black vomiting came on and occasionally roused them. But even those who were comatose, when roused appeared quite sensible, though not capable of preserving a regular connection of ideas on any one subject for any length of time. They soon became yellow in their eyes and skin universally, which became extreme in some before, and in almost all after death: and in those that recovered, it continued during the whole convalescent state, and in some, a great part of the cuticle peeled off.

“ WHEN the disease terminated fatally, it was generally on the 4th, 5th or 6th day; some few later; but after the 7th day, or even sooner if the pulse became much calmer and slower without a Coma, and the patient inclined to a natural easy sleep, though short, with a moist skin and tongue, &c. we were encouraged to hope, and promise much, and generally succeeded in our prognostications, &c.”



Committee for relieving the sick and distressed, appointed by the citizens of Philadelphia, Sept. 14, 1793.

President.

MATTHEW CLARKSON, Mayor.

Secretary.

CALEB LOWNES.

Treasurer.

THOMAS WISTAR.

Managers of the Hospital at Bush-hill.

STEPHEN G'RRARD. PETER HELM.

Orphan Committee.

ISRAEL ISRAEL.

JAMES KERR.

JOHN LETCHWORTH.

J. SHARSWOOD.

Committee of distribution.

ISRAEL ISRAEL.

JAMES KERR.

JOHN HAWORTH.

JACOB WITMAN.

JAMES SWAINE.

J. LETCHWORTH.

MATHEW CAREY.

J. SHARSWOOD.

THOMAS SAVERY.

SAMUEL BENGGE.

Superintendant of the burials of the dead,  
and removals of the Sick.

SAMUEL BENGGE.

Distributor of supplies.

HENRY DEFOREST.

Committee of accounts.

JAMES SHARSWOOD. JOHN CONNELLY.

Committee on the publication of letters.

CALEB LOWNES.

MATHEW CAREY.

Deceased members.

A. ADGATE.

DANIEL OFFLEY.

J. D. SARGEANT.

JOSEPH INSKEEP.



## ASSISTANT COMMITTEE, appointed Oct. 14.

Samuel Coats, Chairman.

John Oldden, Secretary.

## Northern Liberties.

William Peter Spragues,  
 William Gregory,  
 Jacob Witman,  
 James Swain,  
 Joseph Burns,  
 George Forepaugh,  
 Casper Snyder,  
 Peter Smith,

## Vine to Race.

Richard Whitehead,  
 Joseph Kerr,  
 John Ettries.

## Race to Arch.

Thomas Willis,  
 Daniel Dawson,  
 Peter Thompion,  
 Thomas Allibone,  
 Lambert Wilmer.

## Arch to Market.

William Sansom,  
 Justinian Fox,  
 Amos Wickersham.

## Market to Chesnut.

Arthur Howell,  
 Alexander Cochran,  
 Thomas Dobson.

## Chesnut to Walnut.

Jeremiah Paul,  
 James Cummins,  
 Casper W. Morris,  
 Thomas Castiere.

## Walnut to Spruce.

George Rutter,  
 Benjamin W. Morris,  
 Spruce to Pine.

## Samuel Pancoast, jun.

John Woodside,  
 Levy Hollingworth,  
 William Watkins.

## Pine to South.

John Wood,  
 Adam Brittle,  
 William Eckard,  
 Thomas Dicksey,  
 Fergus McElwaine.

## Southwark.

William Innis,  
 Richard Mosely,  
 William Robinson, sen.  
 John Grantham,  
 John Savadge,  
 John Pattison.



A SHORT ACCOUNT  
OF THE  
PLAGUE  
IN LONDON, 1665.

*(Written at that time.)*

AMONGST the many calamities with which the Almighty is pleased to visit the children of men, in order to reduce them to a just sense of their own weakness and entire dependance upon him, there is scarce any that are more productive of true penitent humiliation and of a sight of what is really good and truly evil, than those contagious distempers, which an offended God sometimes suffers to rage amongst the people. In the year 1665 the city of London was sorely visited by the plague. An account of the progress and effects of that visitation was kept by a citizen who remained there during the whole time of the sickness, and appears to have been candid and judicious in his remarks thereon. I trust my readers may, in a short description of that memorable judgment, meet with such lessons of best wisdom, which nothing can so effectually produce, as a close and serious converse with death and the grave. The introduction of this contagion in London was by some goods imported from Holland, which had been brought thither from the Levant. It first broke out in the house where those goods were opened, from whence it spread to other houses. In the first house that was infected there died four persons: A neighbour who went to visit them returning home,



gave the distemper to her family, and died with all her household. The parish officers who were employed about the sick persons, being also infected, the physicians perceived the danger, and, upon narrow inspection, assured, that it was indeed the plague, with all its terrifying particulars, and that it threatened a general infection. The people began now to be alarmed all over the town: the usual number of burials within the bills of mortality for a week were generally about 240 to 300, but from the 17th to the 24th of Jan. the printed bill was 474. However this went off again, and the frost continuing very severe till nearly the end of February, the bills decreased again, and people began to look upon the danger as good as over; but in May the bills greatly increased, and the weather becoming hot, the infection spread again in a dreadful manner.

I lived, says the author, without Aldgate, and as the distemper had not reached to that side of the city, our neighbourhood continued easy; but at the other end of the town the consternation was very great, and the nobility and gentry thronged out of the town with their families in an unusual manner; nothing was to be seen but waggons, carts, and coaches, with goods and people, and horse-men attending them, hurrying away; then empty waggons and carts appeared, who were apparently returning to fetch more people, besides innumerable numbers of people on horse-back, fitted out for travelling. This was a very melancholy prospect; indeed there was nothing else of moment to be seen; it filled my mind with very serious thoughts of the misery that was coming upon the city, and the unhappy condition of those that would be left in it. By the end of July the contagion had spread and increased to a great degree: Sorrow and sadness



fat upon every face; and though some parts were not yet overwhelmed, all looked deeply concerned. London might well be said to be all in tears, the mourners did not go about the streets, for nobody made a formal dress of mourning for their nearest relations, but the voice of mourning was indeed heard in the streets; the shrieks of women and children at the windows and doors of their houses where their dearest relations were dying, were so frequent to be heard as we passed the streets, that it was enough to pierce the stoutest heart in the world. Tears and lamentations were seen almost in every house, especially in the first part of the visitation; for towards the latter end people did not so much concern themselves for the loss of their friends, expecting that themselves should be summoned the next hour.

It was a time of very unhappy breaches amongst us; in matters of religion, divisions and separate opinions prevailed; the church of England was lately restored, and the Presbyterians and other professions had set up their meetings for worship, apart, in which they were frequently disturbed, the government endeavouring to suppress their meetings. But this dreadful visitation reconciled the different parties, and took all manner of prejudice and scruple from the people. But after the sickness was over, that spirit of charity subsided, and things returned to their own channel again. Here we may observe, that a nearer view of death would soon reconcile men of good principles to one another, and that it is chiefly owing to our easy situations in life, and our putting these things far from us, that our breaches are fomented, and that there is so much prejudice and want of Christian charity and union amongst us. A close view and converse with death, or with diseases that threaten death, would scum off the



gall of our temper, remove our animosities, and bring us to see with different eyes. On the other side of the grave we shall all be brethren again.

The inns of court were now all shut up, there was few lawyers to be seen in the city, indeed there was no need of them, for quarrels and divisions about interest had ceased; every body was at peace.

It was also worthy of observation, as well as fruitful of instruction, to observe with what alacrity the people of all persuasions embraced the opportunities they had of attending upon the public worship, and other appointed times of devotion, as humiliations, fastings and public confessions of sins, to implore the mercy of God, and avert the judgment which hung over their heads. The churches were so thronged, that there was often no coming near, no, not to the very door of the largest churches. There was also daily prayers appointed morning and evening, at which the people attended with uncommon devotion.

All plays and interludes which had lately began to increase amongst us, were forbidden; the gaming tables, publick dancing-rooms and musick-houses, which multiplied and began to debauch the manners of the people, were shut up and suppressed, finding indeed no trade, for the minds of the people were generally humbled and agitated with other things, death was before their eyes, and every body began to think of their grave.

The infection still gradually increased till the middle of August, when there died a thousand a day, by account of the weekly bills, though they never gave a full account by many thousands; many of the parish officers were taken sick themselves and died when their account was to be given in. The parish of Stepney alone had with-



in the year one hundred and sixteen sextons, grave-diggers and carriers of the dead, &c. Indeed the work was not of a nature to allow them leisure to take an exact tale of the dead bodies, which were all thrown together in the dark in a pit, to which no man could come near without the utmost peril.

I had says the author, the care of my brother's house which obliged me sometimes to go abroad. In these walks I had dismal scenes before my eyes, as particularly of persons falling dead in the streets, terrible shrieks of women, who in their agonies would throw open their chamber-windows, and cry out in a dismal surprising manner; it is impossible to describe the variety of postures in which the passions of the poor people would express themselves. Passing through Teken House yard, of a sudden a casement violently opened just over my head and a woman gave three frightful shrieks, and then cry'd: *Oh! Death Death Death*, which struck me with horror and chillness in my very blood, there was nobody to be seen in the whole street, neither did any window open, for people now had no curiosity in any case. I went on to pass into Bell-Alley, where there was a greater cry than that; I could hear women and children run skreaming about the rooms like distracted, when a garret window opened, and somebody on the other side asked *What is the matter?* Upon which it was answered, *Oh Lord! my old master has hang-ed himself.* The other asked again, *Is he quite dead?* And the first answered, *Ay ay quite dead and cold.* This Person was a Deputy-Alderman and very rich, But this is but one instance, it is scarce credible what dreadful cases happened in particular families every day. People in the rage of the distemper or in the torment of the swelling, which was indeed intolerable, becoming raving and distract-



ted, oftentimes laid violent hands upon themselves throwing themselves out of the windows, or breaking out of the houses, would dance naked about the streets, not knowing one extacy from another ; others if not prevented, would run directly down the river, and plunge into the water. Some dying of mere grief as a passion, and some of fright and surprise, without having recieved the infection. It often pierced my very soul, to hear the groans and cries of those thus tormented ; but this of the swellings was accounted the most promising particular in the whole infection ; for if these swellings could be brought to break and run, the patient generally recovered. Whereas those who were struck with death at the beginning of the distemper, and had spots come upon them, often went about indifferent easy, till a little before they died, and some till the moment they dropt down ; some would be taken very suddenly sick, and would run to a convenient place, or their own houses if possible, and there sit down, grow faint, and die. The method the magistrates fell into of locking up the doors of the people's houses where they had taken the distemper, setting watchmen there night and day to prevent any going out to spread the infection, looked hard and cruel, as perhaps those who were sound in the family, might have escaped, if they had been removed from the sick ? but the public good seem'd to justify such a conduct, and there was no obtaining the least mitigation by any application to the magistrates. This put the people who thought themselves well, upon many stratigems to get out of their confinements. Going out one morning, I heard a great outcry, which prompting my curiosity, I inquired the cause of a person who looked out of a window. A watchman had been employed to watch at the door of a house, which was infected and shut up, both himself and the day-watchman attended there



a day and two nights, all this while no noise had been heard, nor lights seen in the house, neither had they called for any thing; it seems that two or three days before the dead cart had stopt there, and a servant maid had been brought down to the door, dead, wrapt only in a green rug, which the buriers had put into the cart, and carried away. The next day the watchman heard great crying and screaming in the house, which he supposed was occasioned by some of the family dying just at that time; upon which he knocked at the door a great while, at last one looked out, and said with an angry quick tone, and a voice of one that was crying, *What d'ye want that ye make such a knocking?* He answered: *I am the watchman: how do you do? what is the matter?* The person answered: *What is that to you? Stop the dead cart.* This was about one o'clock; soon after he stopt the dead cart, and then knock'd again, but nobody answered. He continued knocking, and the bellman called several times: *Bring out your dead;* but nobody answered, till the man that drove the cart being called to other houses, would stay no longer, but drove away. In the morning when the day-watchman came in, they knocked at the door a great while, but nobody answering, they got a ladder, and one of them went up to the window, and saw a woman lying dead upon the floor in a dismal manner: but tho' he called aloud and knocked hard on the floor with his staff, nobody stirred or answered.

This they made known to the magistrate, who ordered the house to be broken open, when nobody was found in the house, but that young woman, who having been infected, and past recovery, the rest had left her to die by herself, and were every one gone, having found some way to delude the watchman, and go out. As to those cries and shrieks which he heard, it was supposed, they were the



passionate cries of the family, at the bitter parting, which, to be sure, it was to them all; this being the sister to the mistress of the family. Many more instances might be given, but these may suffice to shew the deep distress of that day. Death did not now hover over every one's head only, but looked into their houses and chambers, and even stared in their very faces; and though there was some stupidity and dulness of mind, yet there was a great deal of just alarm sounded in the inmost soul: many consciences were awakened; many hard hearts melted into tears; many a penitent confession was made of crimes long concealed. People might be heard even in the streets as we passed along calling upon God for mercy, through Jesus Christ, and saying: I have been a thief; I have been an adulterer; I have been a murderer, and the like; and none durst stop to make enquiry into such things, or to administer comfort to the poor creature, who in the anguish both of soul and body thus cried out. Many were the warnings that were then given by dying penitents to others, not to put off and delay their repentance to a day of distress, that such a time of calamity as this, was no time for repentance. I wish, says the author, I could repeat the very sound of those groans and exclamations that I heard from some poor dying creatures, when in the height of their agonies and distress, and that I could make him that reads this hear, as, I imagine, I now hear them, for the sound seems still to ring in my ears.

In the beginning of September the number of burials increasing, the church-wardens of Aldgate parish ordered a large pit to be dug, to hold all the dead which might die in a month, it was about forty feet long and sixteen broad; some blamed the church-wardens for suffering such a frightful gulf to be dug: nevertheless in two weeks they had thrown more than eleven hundred bodies into



it, when they were obliged to fill it up, as the bodies were come within 6 feet of the surface. My curiosity drove me to go and see this pit, when there had been near four hundred people buried in it. I got admittance into the church-yard, by means of the sexton, who was a sensible, religious man. He would have persuaded me not to go saying, *That it was indeed their duty to venture, and in it they might hope to be preserved; but that, as I had no apparent call, he thought, my curiosity could not justify my running that hazard.* I told him, *I had been pressed in my mind to go, and that perhaps it might be an instructing sight.* Nay says the good man, *if you will venture upon that score in the name of God go in; it will be a sermon to you, it may be the best you ever heard in your life.* His discourses had shocked my resolution, and I stood wavering for a good while; but just then I heard the bell-men and the cart, loaded with dead bodies, appearing. I went in. There was nobody, as I could perceive, at first with the cart but the buriers, and the man that led the cart; but when they came to the pit, I saw a man muffled in a cloak who appeared in great agony; the buriers immediately gathered about him, supposing he was one of those poor delirious or desperate creatures, that would sometimes run to the pit, wrapt in blankets, and throw themselves in, and as they said, bury themselves. When the buriers came to him, they soon found he was neither desperate nor distempered in mind, but one oppressed with a dreadful weight of grief, having his wife and several children all in the cart, that was just come in with him, and he followed in agony and excess of sorrow. He calmly desired the buriers to let him alone, said he would only see the bodies thrown in, and go away; so they left importuning him. But no sooner was the cart turned round, and the bodies shot into the pit promiscuously, which was a surprise to him, for he at least expect-



ed, they would have been decently laid in, though indeed he was afterwards convinced that was impracticable, I say, no sooner did he see the sight, but he cryed out aloud, unable to contain himself, and fell down in a swoon; the buriers ran to him, and took him up, and when he came to himself, led him to a place where he was taken care of. He looked into the pit again, as he went away, but the buriers had covered the bodies so immediately with throwing earth, that nothing could be seen. The cart had in it sixteen or seventeen bodies. Some were wrapt up in linen sheets, some in rugs, some little other than naked or so loose, that what covering they had, fell from them, in the shooting out of the cart, and they fell quite naked among the rest; but the matter was not much to them, or the indecency much to any one else, seeing they were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind; for here was no difference made, but poor and rich went together; there was no other way of burials, neither was it possible there should.

*John Hayward*, under-sexton, that is, grave-digger and bearer of the dead, never had the distemper at all, but lived about twenty years after it. His wife was employed to nurse the infected people; yet she herself never was infected. The only preservative he used against the infection, was holding garlick and rue in his mouth, and smoaking tobacco; this I had from his own mouth. His wife's remedy was washing her head in vinegar, and sprinkling her head-clothes so with vinegar, as to keep them always moist; and if the smell of any of those she waited on was more than ordinary offensive, she snuffed vinegar up into her nose, sprinkled her head-clothes and held her handkerchief wetted with vinegar to her mouth.

And here I must not omit mentioning the disposition of the people of that day, with



respect to their charity to the poor, which indeed was very large both in a public and private way. Some pious ladies were so zealous in this good work, and so confident in the protection of Providence in the discharge of this great duty, that they went about themselves distributing alms, and visiting the poor families that were infected, in their very houses, appointing nurses and apothecaries to supply them with what they wanted, thus giving their blessings to the poor in substantial relief, as well as hearty prayers for them. I will not undertake to say, that none of these charitable people were suffered to die of the plague, but this I may say, that I never knew any of them miscarried, which I mention for the encouragement of others in case of like distress, and doubtless, if they *that give to the poor, lend to the Lord, and he will repay it*, those that hazard their lives to give to the poor, and to comfort and assist them in such a misery as this, may hope to be protected therein.

From the middle of August to the middle of September the infection still encreased and spread itself, with an irresistible fury; it was reckoned, that during that time there died no less than sixteen hundred a day, one day with another. It was then that the confusion and terror was inexpressible: the courage of the people appointed to carry away the dead, began to fail them; the vigilance of the magistrates was now put to the utmost trial. At last the violence of the distemper came to such a height that the people sat still, looking at one another, and seemed quite abandoned to despair. In a word, people began to give themselves up to a fear, that there was nothing to be expected but universal desolation.

This despair made people bold and venturous, they were no more shy of one another, as expecting there was now no avoiding the distemper, but that all must go, this brought them to crowd into



the churches, they inquired no more what condition the people who sat near them, were in, but looking upon themselves as so many dead corps, they came to the churches without the least caution and crowded together, as if their lives were of no consequence, compared to the work which they were come about: Indeed their zeal in coming, and the earnestness and affectionate attention they shewed to what they heard, made it manifest what value people would set upon the worship of God, if they thought that every day they attended at the church would be their last. It was in the height of their despair, that it pleased God to stay his hand, and slacken the fury of the contagion, in a manner as surprising as that of its beginning, and which demonstrated it to be his own particular hand above the agency of means; nothing but omnipotent power could have done it; the contagion despised all medicine; death raged in every corner, and had it gone on as it did then, a few weeks more would have cleared the town of all its inhabitants. In that very moment when thirty thousand were dead in three weeks, nay when it was reported three thousand had died in one night, & an hundred thousand more were taken sick, they well might say, *Vain was the help of man*, it pleased God to cause the fury of it to abate, and by his immediate hand to disarm the enemy. It was wonderful! The physicians were surprised, wheresoever they visited, to find their patients better, and in a few days every body was recovering: Nor was this by any medicine found out, or any new method of cure discovered, but it was evidently from the secret invisible hand of him that first sent this disease, as a judgment upon us. Let the philosophers search for reasons in nature to account for it, and labour as much as they will to lessen the debt they owe to their maker; those physicians who had the least share of religion in them were obliged to acknowledge, that it was all supernatural.



















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