

M0001922: Reproduction of a woodcut captioned "An earthquake that came before the outbreak of the plague"

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and medicine. Surgery actually treats disease and often cures it; it repairs damage, but only after injury. Surgery struggles hand to hand with the enemy, disease. But this struggle occurs only after the enemy has attacked; for surgery is not preventive. Its benefits are for the individual only. Medicine, by contrast, can do little to repair damage from disease. Except in a few diseases, medicine cannot cure. It can only support the strength and lessen pain for the sufferer and at best it keeps him alive until nature heals him. Medicine confers its greatest benefits in the prevention of



AN EARTHQUAKE

that came before the outbreak of the plague. Disasters of various kinds were formerly supposed to be portents of the plague. Before the plague of Justinian in 543 A. D., the harvest failed and there was an earthquake at Antioch which is said to have killed 25,000 people.

disease; the benefits are for both the individual and the community.

Modern urban civilization is founded on preventive medicine. The great pestilences no longer rage in the more civilized countries, but the fact that they are excluded does not mean that they have died out. Unremitting vigilance and continual activity are necessary if the country is to be kept free from them. If the preventive measures were relaxed the pestilences would quickly return and even the most civilized countries would be ravaged now as they were in the Middle Ages. The rate at which the pestilences would spread, their extent, and the demoralization which would follow