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from its travels. The piled-up dead of Constantinople were disposed of by unroofing the towers of the walls, cramming the space thus exposed with corpses, and replacing the roof. Gibbon writes of this less "happy and prosperous" period: "In time the plague's first malignancy was abated and dispersed; the disease alternately languished and revived, but it was not until the end of a calamitous



LONDON DURING THE PLAGUE

A scene from a plague poster. A street in London is shown; the doors of the houses are marked with red crosses to indicate that there is plague among the inmates, and armed guards stand in the street to prevent anyone from coming out. To the left are two searchers, each carrying the staff which indicates her position; their duty is to enter the houses and certify to the cause of death. In the middle is a dog-killer slaughtering every dog he meets; near him is a raker carrying away a wheelbarrow full of dogs. Dogs were believed to carry the plague and thousands of them were killed, but no attention was paid to the rats which were responsible for the epidemic. Before every sixth house a fire is burning in the street to help purify the air.

period of fifty-two years that mankind recovered their health, and the air resumed its pure and salubrious quality." It is evident from this passage that in Gibbon's time the conception of a divine origin of disease was being replaced by that of a cosmic origin and it was thought that diseases arose from miasmas and fetid air. He continues: "No facts have been preserved to sustain an account, or even a conjecture, of the number that perished in this extraordinary