I selected my subject this evening, after much thought, not because I pretend to any special knowledge of Pepys, but because the theme lends itself to a discursiveness in treatment, desirable, I thought, in addressing an audience so diverse in its interests and taste.

The six volumes of Pepys's Diary, containing over 3,000 closely written pages, commence at January 1, 1660, and cover the succeeding nine and a half years. The author—that curious mixture of man of affairs, virtuoso and busybody—has included in his picturesque narrative more than a little of medical interest, much less, of course, than he tells us of the Court and the Stage, for "sweet Barbara," "pretty, witty Nell," and the rest, had an interest for the susceptible Pepys far beyond that excited by any number of grave and reverend doctors of physic. And I think we cannot but commend his discrimination in taste.

The original manuscript, as everybody knows, is preserved in Magdalen College, Cambridge, and I think that anyone looking over the pages must wonder that it should lie undeciphered until the third decade of the nineteenth century; for although the narrative is written in shorthand, proper nouns are in ordinary script, and pages sprinkled with names like

1 An address delivered at a Social Meeting of The Royal Society of Medicine and printed by kind permission.
Clarenden, Monke and Castlemaine, surely must include something well worth the study. The diary is written not in a private code of Pepys's own contriving, as so many people suppose, but in Thomas Shelton's system of shorthand, one of the several then in vogue. Shelton's system passed through two main stages, the first he called "Short writing," and the later version, that employed by Pepys, he dignified with the Greek name, "Tachygraphy." The first issue in the new model is said to have been entered at Stationers' Hall in 1638, but the earliest copy in the Library of the British Museum is dated 1641. I thought that a simple explanation of this system might interest some who have not studied the subject for themselves, so I prepared this lantern slide (figure 1) which shows a few lines from the first paragraph of the narrative, and have written in the translation. Very briefly letters, both vowels and consonants, are represented by set symbols, and there are also special symbols for common groups of letters, and for common words. Initial vowels are written, as in

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)

FIG. 1.—Four lines from the beginning of the Diary. (After reproduction, the translation was written in, and the whole re-photographed.)

the word "army," where the little angular sign represents "a"; but vowel signs are omitted from the body of words, the occurrence of a vowel being indicated by lifting the pen and leaving a space, the identity of the vowel being shown by the position of the next consonant. The vowel positions are grouped around consonants in the natural sequence, a, e, i, o, u. That of "a" is above the consonant, "u" at the opposite point below it, and the remainder spaced out between, thus: a e i o u. Take the sign for "State," for example, the two symbols combined are s and t respectively; having written these, Pepys lifted his pen, thus showing that a vowel comes next, and then added another t immediately above the first consonant, i.e., in the "a" position. This made "Stat," i.e. "State." If he had placed the second "t" below the st, he would have formed the combination "stut." Terminal vowels, if pronounced, are indicated by a dot in the appropriate vowel position, as in "army" (armi).

In writing down the more intimate details of some of his adventures, Pepys employed a strange jargon of French, Latin, Portuguese and Greek,
and in addition sometimes inserted dumb letters so as to make the text still more difficult to decipher.

In the short time at my disposal it would be impossible to deal comprehensively with Pepys's medical references, for they range over a wide field—a successful experiment of blood transfusion in dogs, a result, he says, which may "be of mighty use to man's health, for the amending of bad blood by borrowing from a better body," a prophecy fulfilled only in our own time; speculations regarding the causes of death in hanging, in connexion with the execution of one, Dillon, a member of an ancient Irish family, who by reason of his high descent enjoyed the privilege of being hanged with a silken rope instead of the hempen one allotted to the commonalty; reflections on his own operation for vesical calculus, when a stone "as large as a tennis ball," says Evelyn, was removed, a pathological relic which the diarist used to carry about in his pocket, and display to his friends. If Samuel Pepys were alive to-day, he would sorely tax his ingenuity in stowing away on his person the like evidences of surgical aggression—his appendix in one pocket, his tonsils in another, a handful of teeth mixed up with his loose money, and, I suppose, his large intestine knotted round his waist.

So this evening I propose to touch on some of Pepys's records of epidemic diseases, not restricting myself to his account, but employing it as a text to be elaborated, and not as a sermon complete in itself.

Realizing the ravages of smallpox in that age we naturally look for some mention of the disease. "Never was such a time of smallpox," says Pepys, in recording outbreaks affecting various notabilities. But in this connection he has most to say of the tragic disfigurement of Frances Stewart, La Belle Stewart, the original of the figure of Britannia on our coinage. This lady, who combined the beauty of a goddess and the intelligence of a child of ten, was the daughter of a doctor of medicine, the Hon. Walter Stewart, son of that Earl of Blantyre who, as a child, shared with the youthful James VI of Scotland the ministrations of the learned and long-winded George Buchanan. Pepys joins in the universal testimony to her charms. Seeing her one day "with her hat cocked and a red plume, with her sweet eye, little Roman nose and excellent taille," he thinks that kissing her would make him the happiest of men! There is no doubt that the lady attracted the errant fancy of the Merry Monarch, but I contend that Pepys's accusations, and the entertaining gossip of the "Grammont Memoirs," do her the grossest injustice. Truly the ladies of King Charles's Court had Hamlet's plague for a dowry, for whatever their manner of life they could not escape calumny. Distracted by the plots centred around her, the poor lady declared her willingness to marry any one of her own station who would free her from the Court. Her kinsman, the Duke of Lennox and Richmond, fated to be the last of his race, came to the rescue, and one stormy evening the pair slipped off from Whitehall to the famous Bear Inn which stood at the Southwark end of London Bridge, the third
house on the left, where a coach was waiting which carried them off to Kent.

In this flight, declared Evelyn, she "hath done as great an act of honour as was ever done by woman." In the end Pepys withdraws his earlier charges, and writes: "It is the noblest romance and example of a brave lady that ever I read in my life." But the libels have had too long a start; Pepys's recantation, the testimony of John Evelyn, and of Bishop Burnet, are alike unheeded, and in the general conception Frances Stewart stands with Barbara Castlemaine, "Madame Cardwell" and the other harpies and termagants of the King's seraglio.

In March of 1668—the year after her marriage—Pepys learns that the poor lady is "mighty full of the small pox," which, he says sententiously, "is the greatest instance of the uncertainty of beauty that could be in this age"; but adds the practical reflection, "but then she hath had the benefit of it to be first married"!

One day, later in the year, he so far forgets the dignity of his office as to go into the King's garden and steal some apples off the trees, and there, walking with the Queen, he sees the Duchess of Richmond, noble of person as ever, but her beauty sorely ravaged by the cruel disease.

There was good reason for the horror and alarm aroused by smallpox in Stuart times. John Evelyn, after describing his own attack, records in a heart-broken outburst the death of his idolized daughter, Mary, "the joy of my life, the ornament of her sex, and of my poor family." Two months later her would-be husband, "Mr. Hussey," also fell a victim to smallpox. Within a few months, a second daughter, Elizabeth, met with the same fate just after her marriage. The next year Evelyn notes the death of Dolben, Archbishop of York, "a corpulent man," and "a learned, wise, stout and most worthy prelate." Lord Falkland, in whose house Mary Evelyn had contracted her fatal infection, later died himself of the same disease. So likewise did "my kinsman," John Evelyn, M.P., "a young and very hopeful gentleman"; and the following year Evelyn notes the death from smallpox of the only son of the Duke of Marlborough while at Cambridge. The fell malady took heavy toll of the reigning family. Soon after the Restoration, Charles II's brother, the Duke of Gloucester, succumbed to smallpox, and the disease carried off his sister, the Princess Royal, later in the year. Their brother, James II, more fortunate in his own person, recovered from a very severe attack, but lost his eldest son and his youngest daughter from the disease. His rival, William III, suffered grievously from the common scourge, for it robbed him first of both parents and then of his wife, Queen Mary, who died of hemorrhagic smallpox in 1694. And it may have been smallpox which six years later carried off another royal Duke of Gloucester,1 the heir-apparent, and thus cleared the Elector of Hanover's path to the English throne.

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I have searched in vain for records of a similar mortality in the Tudor period. Then smallpox was bracketed, and indeed confused, with measles, and seemingly esteemed a childish affection of no great moment. I think that the popular estimate of smallpox at that time is shown by a death-bed confession preserved in one of Stow's "Memoranda," and given to the world by Gairdner the historian. "Master Rychard Allington esquire" learning that his death from smallpox was imminent, summoned to his bedside the Master of the Rolls and four other lawyers on the "XXII of Novembre, 1561, abowte vii of ye clocke at nyght," and there made a death-bed confession of "abominable userie." He commences in a spirit of pained surprise, obviously resentful that he should perish from so trifling an ailment: "Maisters, seinge that I muste nedes die, whiche I assure you I nevar thought wold have cum to passe by this disese, consyderinge it is but ye smalle pockes!" Far different this from the disease that Evelyn in the next century describes as "very mortal." But the greater the change, the more things become the same, and to-day a mild variety of smallpox, suggesting to my mind that of the Tudor epoch, prevails extensively again. It is interesting to speculate if this, in its turn, will revert to its one-time malignancy.

Pepys's earliest notice of a prevailing epidemic is in the summer of 1661, when he states that "a sort of fever" caused widespread sickness in London and the country round about. Amongst those dead of the disorder he mentions Dean Fuller, author of the famous "Worthies of England," who caused Pepys such distress by excluding his family from the roll of the "Worthies," and this in spite of all the information thoughtfully furnished by the diarist. The Dean of St. Paul's is dead too, and "my Lord General Monke is very dangerously ill."

Pepys, quite rightly I believe, connects the epidemic with the unusually warm weather which had lasted right through the autumn and into the winter, so that in the following January Parliament appointed a Fast Day for intercession for more seasonable weather, for the summer had persisted until then, he says, "both as to warmth and every other thing just as if it were the middle of May or June, which do threaten a plague (as all men think) to follow." This extraordinary heat and the circumstances of the Fast Day are recorded also by John Evelyn, a strange reversal of our usual experience of "the English winter ending in July, to recommence in August."

What then was the nature of this strange and unaccustomed fever? Clearly it was not plague or typhus, smallpox or influenza, for with these Pepys and his fellows were but too familiar. From a consideration of Sydenham's account of epidemics at that time, I identify this strange fever as malaria, or, as he calls it, "intermittent fever," and it is only in the light of certain recent observations that we can appreciate the extraordinary accuracy of Sydenham's description of the disease. A study of untreated simple malaria, induced as a curative measure in general paralysis, has
shown that the great majority of these infections run a continued fever at first, and that the intermittent attacks, which were generally regarded as characteristic of malaria from the beginning, only commence later when the relapses occur. Bear this twentieth century observation in mind, and hear what Sydenham wrote nearly three hundred years ago. He says that these intermittent fevers “do not perfectly put on their shapes, for they imitate continued fevers so well that it is hard to distinguish them. But the violence of the constitution being a little quelled (at retuso paulatim constitutionis impetu), and its strength checked, having thrown off the mask (larva abjecta) they then openly appear to be intermittents, either tertians or quartans, as indeed they were really at first. And if this be not carefully observed, we shall be deceived in our prescriptions, much to the prejudice of our patients, while we mistake fevers of this kind, which are of the order of the intermittents, for true and genuine continued fevers.”

This instance, and there are many such, is evidence of the leaven of truth in Chaucer’s lines:

“For out of oldé feldés, as men seith,
Cometh al this newé corn from yeer to yeer;
And out of oldé bokés, in good feith,
Cometh al this newé science that men lere.”

But the most extensive and illuminating of the medical entries are those concerned with the London Plague of 1665. The epidemic, of course, was bubonic plague, and I would remind non-medical members of the audience that this is primarily an ailment of the lower animals, chiefly rats, and that every outbreak of human bubonic plague is merely an accidental and non-essential offshoot of plague amongst animals; further, that the disease is carried from rat to rat, and from rat to man, by infected fleas. Bearing these points in mind, the prevalence of plague in those old times will cause no surprise. The chief residential quarter of London was the City, filthy and congested, its streets and lanes so narrow in parts that the occupants of opposite houses could lean out of their upper windows and shake hands across the roadway. In the liberties and out-parishes squalid slums had grown up, and their menace to the public health had long been manifest. In no less than three proclamations did Queen Elizabeth prohibit under severe penalties further building, one of the stated reasons for the injunction being the danger of plague. James I similarly thundered against the evil. The preamble of an Act of Oliver Cromwell’s Government denounces overbuilding as “very mischievous and inconvenient, a great annoyance and nuisance to the Commonwealth, and a growing evil of late much multiplied and increased.” The various nuisances that the citizens were specifically bidden to abate give us some idea of the horrors of the streets. An Act of the Common Council passed six years after the Plague, in a determined effort to cleanse the City, directs that dead dogs, dead cats, the inwards of beasts, bones of cattle, and the like, must not be thrown into the streets, nor may the gutters any longer be choked with carrion and stinking flesh. Swine are not to be fed in the streets, and
muckheaps are forbidden on private premises, "with more of horrible and awful which even to name"—if not unlawful, would be accounted most indecent. Amongst all this filth, rats, kites and carrion crows held high festival. The rat was not the species common to-day, but the old English black house-rat; they did not burrow but nested in the lath-and-plaster houses, and when they died there of plague their vagrant fleas found ready harbourage on the human inhabitants.

People sometimes imagine that the plague of 1665 was something strange and unwonted, whereas it was merely the last of a long series which had flared up with wearying monotony for the preceding ten centuries. "One time with another," said Sir William Petty, "a plague happeneth in London every twenty years." Already in the seventeenth century there had been three great outbreaks of the disease—1603, 1625 and 1636—and of the sixty-odd years prior to the plague of 1665 there are only three years which are free from the records of plague deaths in London. For several months before the epidemic of 1665, plague had been smouldering in the out-parish of St. Giles-in-the-Fields, around Drury Lane and Long Acre, where in May and June it attained a pitch of virulence unequalled for forty years. By August the City was aflame. Pepys's first notices of the epidemic are in April and May when he mentions the great fear and apprehension in the City, and notes that two or three houses are already shut up, "God preserve us all!" One day in June—the hottest day ever felt in his life—much against his will he visited Drury Lane, where he saw several houses with the dread red cross on the doors, and "'Lord have mercy upon us,' writ up." So alarmed is he that he buys "some roll tobacco to smell and chaw, which took away the apprehension."

On June 10th the City was definitely invaded by plague, "and where should it begin," says Pepys, "but in my good friend and neighbour's Dr. Burnett in Fanchurch Street: which in both points troubles me mightily." Dr. Burnett, Pepys's ordinary medical attendant, was admitted M.D. of Cambridge in 1648, and elected an honorary Fellow of the College of Physicians in the December preceding the Plague.

The plague victim was the doctor's own servant, William Passon, and Burnett at first gained the applause of his neighbours, for when the nature of the infection became evident he shut up his house voluntarily without waiting for any official action, "which," says Pepys, "was very handsome." But Burnett gained little by his public-spiritedness, for evilly-disposed persons seeing something sinister in this unusual haste, put about a rumour of foul play, and this was soon further embelished by the allegation that Dr. Burnett had been arrested and committed to Newgate on charge of murder. The libel gained such currency that on July 14th Burnett posted in the Royal Exchange a "Vindication," which was published also in the Intelligencer of July 18th, and in the Newes of July 20th.1 It is printed
in Wheatley's *Pepysiana*—but with a number of textual errors. The Vindication was as follows: *Whereas some person or persons have maliciously forged and published that abominable falsehood, viz. That I Alexander*

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*Fig. 2.—Burial Register, St. Olave's, Hart Street, first column, June 1664 to July, 1665; second column, July 22 to August 19, 1665. (Photographed by kind permission of the Church authorities.)*

Burnet of St. Gabriel, Fen-Church, London, *Doctor in Physick, did kill my Servant William Passon, and was committed to New-Gate for it; I do by these presents upon the Royal Exchange, London, post him or them for
W. P. MacArthur

Forgery, who have invented and vented that wicked Report: It being declared under the Hand and Seal of Mr. Nathaniel Upton, Master of the Pesthouse, London, who searched the Body of the said William Passon, that

he dyed of the Plague, and had a Pestilential Bubo in his Right Groin, and two Blanes in his Right Thigh.

July 14. 1665.

Alex. Burnet.
M.D.
Some Medical References in Pepys

But on the morning of August 25th Alexander Burnet heeded no longer the slanders of this malicious world, for in his house in Fenchurch Street he himself lay dead of the plague—"poor unfortunate man!" says Pepys. Dr. Burnet, Dr. Glover, M.D. of Aberdeen, Dr. O'Dowd licensed to practice medicine "by my lord's grace of Canterbury," with several other physicians and surgeons, as well as "one Johnson the chemist," died suddenly of plague within twenty-four hours. According to a rumour current at the time, they had all been infected whilst making a post-mortem examination of a plague corpse described as being "full of the tokens."

All this time "the plague is increasing mightily in the city," shut-up houses and red crosses abound everywhere, the church bells continually clanging, and most distressing of all to Pepys is the bell of his own church, St. Olave's, Hart Street, tolling and ringing so often; "a sad noise," he says. The same bell still hangs in the tower; I have rung it myself, and it seemed to me to give out a strangely mournful and depressing note.

I thought the audience might be interested to see reproductions of the burial entries of some of the poor creatures whose passing bell rang so dolorously in Pepys' ears, so by the kind permission of the Church authorities, I have prepared some photographs of their records (figs. 2 and 3). In fairness to the photographer of the Royal Army Medical College, I must point out that these pictures were taken under most difficult conditions, in the vestry of an ancient church, on a dark January day. I would first direct your attention to an entry of July 24th, the first marked with the ominous "P:" "Mary Daughter of William Ramsey on of the Draps: [Drapers'] Almesmen, and ye first reported to dye of ye Plague in this Parish since this visitation, and was buryed in ye new Ch. Y'd." I like the caution that prompted the insertion of "reported," for we notice that the girl's sister, Elizabeth, had been buried on the preceding day! We see, too, that Richard Nauy "was buryed of ye Plague" from William Ramsey's house on the 25th, and William Ramsey himself on August 1st.

Poor little Richard Nauy, pathetically described as "a Fish [Parish] Child," was obviously farmed out with the Ramseys—I hope they were kind to the forlorn little fellow, who was one of three foundlings baptized on May 20th, 1658, and so would be aged about seven.

You will observe that of the four persons buried on August 1—there were only two burials during the whole month of August, 1664—only one, William Ramsey, is marked "P," evidence in support of Defoe's and Pepys' assertion regarding the understatement of plague deaths.1

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1 The average numbers of burials in St. Olave's Church and graveyard in July, August, and September for the five years 1660-64 were 35, 39 and 6, respectively. In 1665 the numbers were: July 13 (4 "plague"), August 32 (20 "plague"), and September 72 (64 "plague"); these figures, of course, are exclusive of the enormous numbers buried in plague-pits and elsewhere.
The next slide shows the sad fate of the Poole family: September 10th "Zachary sonn of Edmund Poole"; September 11th "Henry sonn of Edmund Poole"; September 20th "Elizabeth Da: of Edmund Poole" and "Edward sonn of Edmund Poole"; September 21st "John sonn of Edmund Poole"; and lastly, on September 25th, poor Edmund Poole himself was delivered out of the miseries of this sinful world.

I had the curiosity to search for these children's names in the baptismal register, and find that the eldest, Henry, was baptized on May 10th, 1652, and Elizabeth, the youngest, on June 10th, 1664, and so were aged about thirteen and one year, respectively.

These pages also show that a Hayward family was wiped out in the same way, six of them being buried between September 2nd and September 13th.

While collecting material for my address this evening, I searched the registers of four churches for the entry of Dr. Burnet's burial, but without success. I was most hopeful in the case of his own parish church of St. Gabriel; although it was burned down in the Fire the following year, the registers were saved, but the records during the Plague obviously were very carelessly kept, and the absence of Dr. Burnet's name does not necessarily mean that he was buried elsewhere.

But the morning after writing the doleful note about the passing bell, Pepys cheers up, and is off betimes in his "new coloured silk suit, and coat trimmed with gold buttons, and gold broad lace round my hands, very rich and fine."

All this time he watches anxiously the mounting figures of the Bills of Mortality, and finding that his own parish clerk has falsified the weekly return by omitting one-third of the plague deaths, he is distressed to think that probably such trickery is rife all over London.

The Bills of Mortality, referred to so often in general literature, originally were concerned only with the plague deaths, but from 1592 they were issued weekly by the London Company of Parish Clerks, and gave the deaths from all causes; some of the diagnoses like "Plague" and "Smallpox" are clear and well defined; others like "Rising of the Lights," "Planet-struck" and "Griping in the Guts," leave something to be desired in the matter of exactness. The Bills of Mortality were based on the figures returned to the parish clerks by the searchers, "Ancient Matrons sworn to their Office," whose duty it was to view the bodies of all deceased and ascertain the cause of death.

The three following quotations illustrate the expenditure of parish funds entailed by the activities of the searchers and their co-workers.

"Paid the searchers for viewing the corpse of good-wife Phillips, who dyed of the plague . . . 0—0—6."

The dead woman's husband and children were then isolated in their dwelling for the statutory month, and the entry relative thereto runs:

"Laid out for good-man Phillips and his children, being shut up and visited . . . 0—5—0."
The third quotation explains itself:

"Laid out for Lylla Lewis in 3, Crane Court, being shut up of the plague, and laid out for her, and for the Nurse and burial . . . . 0—18—0."

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**Fig. 4.—Scenes in London during the Plague of 1665.** (From a contemporary print in the Pepysian Collection, reproduced by kind permission of the Master and Fellows of Magdalene College, Cambridge.)

The Plague Order of 1665 directs that the searchers are to be examined by physicians to determine their fitness for their posts.

During the same plague the College of Physicians issued instructions for the use of searchers, setting out the signs to be regarded as diagnostic
of plague, namely, Botches in the neck, armpit and groin, and the presence of Carbuncles, Tokens and Blains. "Botch" was the old name for the inflamed lymphatic glands now known as Buboes, whence "Bubonic" plague. "Carbuncle" was the name applied to gangrenous patches of skin; "Tokens" to haemorrhagic spots in the skin; and "Blains" to blisters. It is very curious that of these four plague signs which from hundreds of independent accounts we know to have been common and usual lesions in plague in old times, only one—the botch or bubo—is universal in bubonic plague to-day, and many persons, familiar with the disease, have never seen carbuncles, tokens or blains.

Pepys accepted the official pronouncements regarding the nature of plague, and no doubt scoffed, like Defoe, at the minority who contended that the disease is due to some "animated Matter" which enters the body and throws off a poison there. Nathaniel Hodges investigated the subject, but the only evidence he found in support of this theory was an account of one plague patient "who in vomiting threw up a strange figured Insect, which appeared very fierce, and even assaulted such as were busie to observe it, whereupon it was crushed by a rude Hand, so that its shape is not very discernible"!

Although the Navy Office was moved to Greenwich about the beginning of September, Pepys was continually in and about London, but time does not permit any reference to his vivid notes. However, I should like to quote from a letter written to Lady Carteret at this time, as his correspondence is less well known than the diary. Pepys says that he has resided in London until the plague deaths reached six thousand a week, till the streets were almost deserted, and little noise heard day or night but tolling of bells; till whole families had been swept away; "till the nights, though much lengthened, are grown too short to conceal the burials of those who died the day before...lastly, till I could find neither meat nor drink safe, the butchers being everywhere visited, my brewer’s house shut up, and my baker with his whole family dead of the plague."

This copy of a print preserved by Pepys himself (fig. 4) shows some of the scenes in London during this awful time. The advent of immigrants from infected areas was always bitterly resented, often opposed by violence, and many towns, like Bath and Guildford, passed enactments excluding them. The uncompromising Scots went further, for a proclamation published in Edinburgh on July 15th, declared that such persons entering Scotland would be punished by confiscation of goods, and death without mercy.

In the fourth scene we notice that the bodies are not covered even with shrouds; perhaps these had been stolen by the dead-cart men, for the inhumanity and knavery of some of them knew no bounds. One, a brute, Buckingham by name, used to give imitations of a wood seller by standing in his cart, and holding up a dead child by the legs, while calling out, "Faggots, faggots, five for sixpence," till the Earl of Craven put an end
to these pleasantry by having him soundly flogged and committed to prison.

Pepys's household returned to London in December. He is much "frighted" at the sight of the graves piled so high in St. Olave's churchyard, and decides to avoid such dangerous neighbourhoods in future. None the less the following Sunday he attends church to hear his fugitive rector's excuse for his flight1, "a very poor and short excuse," he says, "and a bad sermon." Snow had fallen in the night, and the graves in the churchyard were covered, and "so I was the less afraid."

Although plague had died down, the disease did not disappear from London for another fourteen years—deaths from plague being recorded annually until 1679—but there was no further epidemic. With the enforcement of the cleansing orders, a higher standard of general sanitation, and the diminishing number of dwelling-houses which served as sanctuaries for rats and fleas, the survival of plague became increasingly difficult, and when another epidemic had become due it failed to materialize.

The seventeenth century saw the end of plague in Britain; York suffered its final outbreak in 1604; Edinburgh in 1648; Dublin in 1650; Colchester in 1666, and Nottingham in 1667.

It is in keeping with the subject of my address to refer to the last and touching paragraph of the diary, for there Pepys explains that his failing eyes can no longer stand the strain of shorthand, and therefore he must sorrowfully bring his beloved journal to an end; "a course," he says, "which is almost as much as to see myself go into the grave: for which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me."

If any of my audience have based their estimate of Pepys's character either on the more frivolous parts of his journal, or on representations on the stage, I would remind them that he was a conscientious and indefatigable worker, a most efficient public servant, and an honest one, according to the ideas of his age. If they are so unreasonable as to appraise some of his financial transactions by modern standards, I would further remind them that the Crown admittedly owed Pepys £28,000, not a penny of which ever was paid. The judgment of his contemporaries is shown by the honours they bestowed on him: President of the Royal Society, Master of Trinity House, Baron of the Cinque Ports, Member of Parliament; moreover, he was the esteemed friend and correspondent of men like Sir Isaac Newton, John Evelyn and Hans Sloane.

I like to think that the preservation of his eyesight may have been due,

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1 The Rev. Daniel Mills, D.D. He was the first in the parish to fly, deserting his charge like so many of the regular clergy whose behaviour in this respect contrasts very unfavourably with that of the Cromwellian ministers. See the Rev. Thos. Vincent's denunciation of his fugitive brethren in God's Terrible Voice.
in some measure, to the counsel of his doctor friends, for he held the science of medicine in a high regard, unmerited, I fear, in those days of its infancy; a regard indeed far from universal in old times. Those of you who have read the "Paston Letters" may recall a distressing exhibition of distrust in medical science—and medical science at its highest and best!—recorded there. It occurs in the penultimate paragraph of a letter written from Norfolk by Margaret Paston, to her "ryght worshipful husbond, John Paston," "on the Fryday next before Sceynt Bernabye," 1464. Alarmed at the thought of her husband alone in London, she first warns him against the knavish tricks of his political enemies. But then, bethinking her of the most imminent peril that besets his path, she breaks out into this impassioned appeal: "For Goddys sake be war what medesyns ye take of any fysissyans of London; I schal never trust to hem be cause of your fadr and mine onkyl, whoys sowlys God assoyle"!