

see it: as near as I may judge, it was about forty feet in length, and about fifteen or sixteen feet broad, and at the time I first looked at it, about nine feet deep; but it was said they dug it near twenty feet deep afterwards, in one part of it, till they could go no deeper for the water; for they had, it seems, dug several large pits before this; for though the plague was long a coming to our parish, yet when it did come, there was no parish, in or about London, where it raged with such violence as in the two parishes of Aldgate and White-chapel.

I say, they had dug several pits in another ground when the distemper begun to spread in our parish, and especially when the dead-carts began to go about, which was not in our parish till the beginning of August. Into these pits they had put perhaps fifty or sixty bodies each; then they made larger holes, wherein they buried all that the cart brought in a week, which by the middle to the end of August, came to from 200 to 400 a week; and they could not well dig them larger, because of the order of the magistrates, confining them to leave no bodies within six feet of the surface; and the water coming on, at about seventeen or eighteen feet, they could not well, I say, put more in one pit; but now, at the beginning of September, the plague raging in a dreadful manner, and the number of burials in our parish increasing to more than was ever buried in any parish about London, of no larger extent, they ordered this dreadful gulf to be dug, for such it was, rather than a pit.

They had supposed this pit would have supplied them for a month or more, when they dug it, and some blamed the churchwardens for suffering such a frightful thing telling them they were making preparations to bury the whole parish, and the like; but time made it appear the churchwardens knew the condition of the parish better than they did; for the pit being finished the 4th of September, I think they began to bury in it the 6th, and by the 20th, which was just two weeks, they had thrown into it 1,114 bodies, when they were obliged to fill it up, the bodies being then come to lie within six feet of the surface. I doubt not but there may be some ancient persons alive in the parish who can justify the fact of this and are able to show even in what part of the churchyard the pit lay better than I can.

A Visit to the Pits.

It was about the 10th of September that my curiosity led, or rather drove, me to go and see this pit again, when there had been near 400 people buried in it; and I was not content to see it in the daytime as I had done before, for then there would have been nothing to have been seen but the loose earth; for all the bodies that were thrown in were immediately covered

with earth, by those they call the buriers, which at other times were called bearers; but I resolved to go in the night and see some of them thrown in.

There was a strict order to prevent people coming to those pits, and that was only to prevent infection; but, after some time, that order was more necessary, for people that were infected, and near their end, and delirious also, would run to those pits, wrapped in blankets or rugs, and throw themselves in, and, as they said, bury themselves: I cannot say that the officers suffered any willingly to lie there: but I have heard, that in a great pit in Finsbury, in the parish of Cripplegate, it lying open then to the fields, for it was not then walled about, some came and threw themselves in, and expired there before they threw any earth upon them; and that when they came to bury others, and found them there, they were quite dead, though not cold.

This may serve a little to describe the dreadful condition of that day, though it is impossible to say anything that is able to give a true idea of it to those who did not see it, other than this: that it was indeed *very, very, very* dreadful, and such as no tongue can express.

I got admittance into the churchyard by being acquainted with the sexton.

A Mourner.

There was nobody, as I could perceive at first, in the churchyard, or going into it, but the buriers, and the fellow that drove the cart, or rather led the horse and cart; but when they came up to the pit, they saw a man go to and again, muffled up in a brown cloak, and making motions with his hands, under his cloak, as if he was in a great agony; and the buriers immediately gathered about him, supposing he was one of those poor delirious, or desperate creatures, that used to pretend, as I have said, to bury themselves: he said nothing as he walked about, but two or three times groaned very deeply and loud, and sighed as he would break his heart.

When the buriers came up to him, they soon found he was neither a person infected and desperate, as I have observed above, or a person distempered in mind, but one oppressed with a dreadful weight of grief indeed, having his wife and several of his children all in the cart that was just come in with him; and followed in an agony and excess of sorrow. He mourned heartily, as it was easy to see, but with a kind of masculine grief that could not give itself vent by tears: and calmly desiring 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 expected 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 than he cried out aloud, unable to contain himself. I could not hear what he said, but he went backwards two or three steps, and fell down in a swoon: the buriers ran to him, and took him up, and in a little while he came to himself.

The Burial.

This was a mournful scene indeed, and affected me almost as much as the rest; but the other was awful and full of terror. The cart had in it sixteen or seventeen bodies; some were wrapped 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 all dead, and were to be huddled together into the common grave of mankind, as we may call it; 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, for coffins were not to be had for the prodigious numbers that fell in such a calamity as this.

Bodies in the Streets.

Innumerable dismal stories we heard every day on this very account: sometimes a man or woman dropt down dead in the very markets; for many people that had the plague upon them knew nothing of it till the inward gangrene had affected their vitals, and they died in a few moments: this caused that many died frequently in that manner in the streets suddenly, without any warning; others perhaps had time to go to the next bulk or stall; or to any door porch, and just sit down and die, as I have said before.

These objects were so frequent in the streets, that when the plague came to be very raging on one side, there was scarce any passing by the streets, but that several dead bodies would be lying here and there upon the ground: on the other hand it is observable, that though at first the people would stop as they went along, and call to the neighbours to come out on such an occasion; yet, afterward, no notice was taken of them; but that, if at any time we found a corpse lying (we would) go cross the way, and not come near it; or if in a narrow lane or passage, go back again and seek some other way to go on the business we were upon; and in those cases the corpse was always left till the officers had notice to come and take them away; or, till night, when the bearers attending the dead-cart would take them up and carry them away. Nor did those undaunted creatures who performed these offices, fail to search their pockets, and sometimes strip off the clothes, if they were well drest, as