PART III.

REPORTS, RETROSPECTS, AND SCIENTIFIC INTELLIGENCE.

REPORT

ON THE PLAGUE OF MILAN IN 1630.

Translated and abridged from the Italian of Manzoni.

By M. DONOVAN.

FOR some years previous to the breaking out of the plague in 1630, Italy had been oppressed by a series of misfortunes. Contending armies desolated it, each in their turn; while the state of misrule, caused by a continued war, left the inhabitants unprotected by the laws, and at the mercy of a few individuals whose riches and powerful family connexions enabled them to commit the most lawless acts with impunity; added to these depressing causes, the failure of the crops for three or four successive years had produced a dreadful amount of misery: particularly in Milan, where the people, driven to despair by famine, had risen in a body, and had broken into the bakers' shops, destroying the ovens, and thus increasing the evil.

Towards the December of the preceding year the general misery arrived at its height, especially in the city of Milan, where the peasants came in crowds for relief. At this time the streets of Milan presented a truly wretched spectacle. Besides the usual number of professed beggars, crowds of boys dismissed by shopkeepers, nay, the shopkeepers themselves, dismissed servants, and entire families from the surrounding country, wandered about without clothes, food, or shelter, contending with each other for the alms of the passengers. Famine, desolation, and death, everywhere met the eye. Ripamonti relates the case of a woman whose corpse was found in one of the streets of Milan; her mouth contained a quantity of half-chewed grass with which she had endeavoured to appease the pangs of hunger; and, as he expresses it, her lips still seemed in the act of that maddened effort to sustain life.

The mortality at this period, although great, was for some time unperceived, as the void occasioned by it was constantly filled up by the concourse of people from the districts around.

So passed the winter and the spring, and even at this time the Tribunal of Health continually represented to the Provisional Tribunal the danger of contagion which threatened the city, so crowded with misery, and proposed that the beggars should be collected into various hospitals. During the delay occasioned by the discussion of this proposal, and of the ways and means for carrying it into effect, the number of corpses accumulated daily in the streets, and the general amount of wretchedness increased. Finally, a new expedient was devised in the Provisional Tribunal, as being more easy and expeditious, which was, to collect all the beggars, healthy or otherwise, into one place in the lazaretto, there to be maintained at the public expense; and this proposal was resolved on in direct opposition to the opinion of the Sanità(a), who vainly argued that it would but increase the danger.

The lazaretto of Milan, which still exists much in the same state as then, was a square enclosure outside the city, divided into small rooms, on one story, to the number of 288. This lazaretto, begun in 1489, had been founded by private bequests, and had been since kept up at the public expense. It was built, as its name implies, as a shelter for persons sick of the plague, which, in those times, frequently raged eight times in the course of a century. At the period, however, at which we speak, the lazaretto was only used as a place of storage for confiscated contraband goods.

Immediately after the decision of the Provisional Tribunal, preparations were made for its conversion once more into a lazaretto. The goods were withdrawn, the rooms strewn with straw, stores of provisions laid in, and the beggars invited by public edict to its shelter. But although, during the first few days, a great number flocked to it, after some time it was found that many causes prevented them from voluntarily accepting the asylum.

The Provisional Tribunal were now obliged to resort to force, and officers (*birri*) were sent round the city, with orders to force the beggars to the lazaretto, and to bring those tied who resisted. For each beggar brought to the lazaretto the officer received the sum of ten pence; and this system worked so well that in a short time 10,000 were collected within its walls.

Although excellent regulations existed for the maintenance of order, they were badly carried into effect. For instance, the inmates, to the number of thirty, slept in each small room, some on putrid straw, and some on the bare ground. It had been directed that the bread should be of good quality; but instead of this it is said by the records of the time that it was adulterated with various heavy substances which were not nutritious. To add to the sufferings of these unfortunate persons, thus forced into the lazaretto, there was a scarcity of pure and salubrious water, the only kind with which they were supplied being that of the ditch surrounding the building.

(a) Tribunal of Health.

To these numerous causes of mortality was added a singularly unfavourable season, a long-continued rain being succeeded by an equally long-continued drought. These evils, acting in conjunction with the irritation occasioned by imprisonment, grief for the dead, regret for the absent, and the apprehension and constant spectacle of death, caused such an increase of mortality, that many even at this stage gave the disease the name of pestilence.

The Provisional Tribunal now began to discover the bad effects of their obstinate opposition to the Sanità, and too late endeavoured to repair their error. The doors of the lazaretto were thrown open, the beggars who still continued healthy were allowed to depart, and the sick were conveyed to the hospital of Santa Maria della Stella, where the greater number died.

Meanwhile the harvest began to approach; the beggars from the surrounding districts left Milan, and returned to their respective countries to prepare for reaping; and the good Cardinal Federigo Borromeo, remarkable for his many acts of benevolence during this and the preceding years of distress, caused a giulio^(a) and a reaping-hook to be given to every peasant who presented himself at his residence. With this harvest ended the famine, and the mortality continued to diminish until the end of autumn, when a new scourge brought a renewal of disease.

From various political causes, unnecessary to mention, the Emperor Ferdinand of Germany judged it expedient to send a body of German troops through the Milanese, to undertake the siege of Mantua. As it was a well-known fact, and had been mentioned so far back as a century before by Varchi, that the plague constantly lurked amongst the German soldiers, the Tribunal of the Sanità deputed Dr. Tadino, as he himself relates, to represent to the Governor, Don Gonzalo, the frightful peril which the country would incur if this army were allowed to pass. The answer of the Governor is perhaps, of all his actions, the one most worthy of being recorded; he replied, that he did not know what to do; that the motives which occasioned the movement of the troops were of greater import than obviating the danger represented; that they must do their best to remedy the evil, and trust in Providence.

The two physicians of the Sanità, Tadino and the senator Settala, proposed in the Tribunal, that all persons should be forbidden, under the severest penalties, from buying goods of any kind from the soldiers. But it was impossible to make the President understand the necessity of such a regulation. "He was," says Tadino, "a man of great goodness of heart, but could not believe that the death of so many thousands could be the consequence of commerce with these soldiers or their goods."

The month of September was the time fixed for the departure of the German troops, and accordingly about that time the first detachment of them passed through Milan, on their way to

(a) About six-pence sterling.

Mantua, under the command of Rambaldo de Coltalto. On their approach the chief part of the inhabitants fled to the mountains; a few remained, however, either for the purpose of watching over some sick person, or of keeping within view their valuables, which many had concealed. However, all their stratagems were of no avail, for the soldiers, a most undisciplined body, well versed in acts of rapine, searched every corner of the houses, burned the furniture as wood, and forced its owners by torture to reveal where their treasures were concealed. Matters became worse as each successive squadron arrived. As every available commodity had been already carried away, they revenged themselves on the wretched inhabitants by ill treatment; burned the doors of the houses, and in some cases the houses themselves; and, finally, after a sojourn of twenty days, departed, leaving the villages through which they passed almost uninhabitable.

Throughout the whole stripe of country through which the army had marched, corpses were found, some in the houses and some in the streets. Shortly after, in different parts of the country, persons, nay, even whole families, were taken ill with strange and violent disorders, which carried off many, and presented symptoms unknown to the greater number of the survivors. But the proto-physician, Ludovico Settala, who had seen the disease called the plague of "San Carlo," fifty-three years before, and had been one of the physicians most reputed for its cure, attentively studied the symptoms of the new disease, and on the 20th of October, 1630, reported to the Tribunal of the Sanità, that the plague had undoubtedly broken out in the territory of Chuso. Of this report we know, on the authority of Tadino, that no notice was taken. Similar reports were soon after made from Lecco and Bellano. The Provisional Tribunal now determined to send a commissioner and a physician to visit the places mentioned.

They arrived there; but, according to Tadino's account, seem to have been very careless in their investigations. He says, "they allowed themselves to be persuaded by an old and ignorant barber, that this disease was not plague, but partly the effect of the autumnal exhalations from the marshes, and partly the effect of the sufferings caused by the passing of the German troops." This assurance was reported to the Sanità, and with it they appear to have been contented for some time.

Renewed reports of mortality, however, once more obliged the Sanità to send two delegates to investigate further; one of these was Tadino, and the other an auditor of the tribunal. On their arrival they found that the calamity was no longer doubtful.

The districts of Lecco, Valsassino, and Como, were overrun by it; the villages were obstructed by barriers placed at their entrances; other villages were almost deserted, the inhabitants having fled, and the few who remained endeavoured to protect themselves against contagion by carrying musk, rue, rosemary, or a bottle of vinegar. This fact having been made known to the Sanità by let

they published a bulletin, forbidding all intercourse between the city and the infected places.

Notwithstanding that the Governor (Spinola) had been duly warned of these facts, and that he had expressed great anxiety on the subject, he, on the 18th of November, published a proclamation commanding public rejoicings for the birth of Charles, eldest son of Philip IV., without suspicion or care of the danger which might arise from such a concourse of people at such a time. But can we wonder at the conduct of the Governor, involved as he was in the affairs of the war, when we find that the people, far from taking the necessary precaution against infection, actually felt ill-will to those who asserted that the prevalent disease was the plague, and resented their opinion with incredulous smiles or angry contempt? That such was the case, however, the records of the time assure us.

The same blindness and perversity of opinion pervaded the Senate, the Council of Decurions, and the magistracy. The tribunal of the Sanità was the only exception; they implored, nay, demanded co-operation, but with little effect. Even in this tribunal the precaution was far from being equal to the urgency; for, as Tadino affirms, there were only amongst them two physicians, who, persuaded of the seriousness of the danger, urged them to activity.

Another instance of the carelessness and inertness which marked every action of the government at this critical period was, that the bulletin above mentioned, for the prevention of communication with diseased towns, which had been resolved on the 30th of October, was not published till the 27th of the following month. By this time the plague had already entered Milan. Tadino and Ripamonti disagree as to the date, Tadino making the day of its first appearance the 22nd of October, and Ripamonti one month later. The following circumstances relating to its entrance into Milan are recorded by both.

A soldier entered Milan with a large bundle of clothes bought or robbed from German soldiers, and went to reside at the house of some of his relations in the *borgo* of the *Porta Orientale*. Almost immediately after his arrival he took ill, and was brought to the hospital, where the fatal signs of the disease were discovered under his arm, and on the fourth day he died. The Sanità, immediately after his death, caused his family to be sequestered, and his clothes and the bed in which he had lain to be burned.

The suspicion which had been entertained from the beginning of the nature of his disease, and the precautions used in consequence, prevented its further spread in that place, except in the case of a friar and two servants who had attended him, and who took the disorder in a few days after.

But the soldier had left the seeds of the disease in the house where he had lodged, and it was not long before their growth was fatally evident. The first person attacked was the master of the house, a lute-player named Carlo Colonna. As soon as his illness was known, all the lodgers were, by order of the Sanità, obliged to

enter the lazaretto, where the greater number of them became ill, and in a short time many died, manifestly of the contagion.

From time to time, in different quarters of the city, persons were attacked by the disease, and died; but the rare occurrence of these cases confirmed in the public mind the foolish and injurious conviction that it was not plague which had occasioned their death. Even the physicians added their voices to the general opinion, and were always ready with the name of some common disease to qualify every case of plague which occurred, whatever might have been the symptoms. The fear of the lazaretto prevented these cases from being duly reported to the Sanità. Attacks of the disease were concealed, the grave-diggers were corrupted, and even the lower officers of the Sanità, appointed to inspect the corpses, were bribed to give false evidence.

The tribunal of the Sanità, and especially its two physicians, Tadino and Settala, were the objects of extreme aversion to the people, so much so that they could not appear in the streets without being assailed by abusive language and even stones. It is related of Settala, then nearly eighty years old, that on one occasion, going to visit his patients in a sedan chair, a crowd collected round him, exclaiming that he was at the head of those who were determined to maintain that plague had broken out in the city, and that he had terrified the inhabitants merely for the sake of giving business to the physicians. He saved himself only by taking refuge in the house of a friend, to which by chance he was near; and thus he was rewarded for using his best efforts to save thousands of persons from death. A short time before he had received the title of *Benemerito* for having assisted in the torturing and burning of an unfortunate woman as a witch, whose guilt was presumed because her master suffered from unaccountable pains in the stomach, and because a former master had been strongly attached to her(a).

But towards the end of the month of March, illness and death became very common, especially in the Porta Orientale, accompanied by strange symptoms, as spasms, palpitation, lethargy, delirium, and the fatal livid spots and sores. These deaths, for the most part, took place after a very short and violent sickness, and even sometimes suddenly, without any previous indication of disease.

These physicians who had been opposed to the opinion of plague, being now obliged to give some name to the new disease, found that of pestilent or malignant fever; and even succeeded in persuading the public that the disease was not propagated by contact, an idea which caused great mischief. The magistrates, however, who now for the first time awoke, as from a dream, began to attend to the opinions and proposals of the Sanità; but money sufficient to carry out these intentions was not forthcoming. In the lazaretto, where things were in a state of the greatest confusion, every effort failed to establish a due degree of order till the Sanità and Decurions, not

knowing which way to turn, entreated the Padre Commissario of the province to give them some officers capable of governing. The Commissario proposed as the principal Padre Felice Casati, a man well known for his charity, activity, and kindness; and as his assistant, Padre Michele Pozzobonelli, a man still young, but grave and severe in his habits. They were accepted with pleasure, and formally invested with full authority over the servants and officials of every grade in the lazaretto. From this time the Padre Felice continued indefatigable in his charge, assuaging tumults, comforting the dying, and sympathizing with the afflicted. In the beginning he contracted the disease, but, being cured, he returned to his pious undertaking with renewed ardour.

By degrees, the disease, which had hitherto been chiefly confined to the lower orders, began to spread amongst the better classes; amongst these the physician Settala was attacked, along with his wife, his two sons, and six persons in his service. Settala and one of his sons recovered, but the rest died.

At this stage of the disease it became impossible longer to deny its nature. Those who had till then denied that there was amongst them a germ of evil which might be propagated by natural means, and might commit the most frightful ravages, now endeavoured to find other causes in order to account for the spreading calamity. Unfortunately this was not difficult. At this time a common idea prevailed, not only here but in every part of Europe, that persons were in existence who had conspired to spread the plague by means of contagious poison and magic. Similar absurdities had been believed during the prevalence of many other pestilences, particularly that of half a century before. It happened also, that during the previous year a despatch had arrived from Philip IV. of Spain, warning the Governors that four Frenchmen, suspected of spreading poisonous and pestiferous ointments, had escaped from Madrid, and were supposed to have taken refuge in Milan.

This despatch was communicated by the Governor to the Sanità, but it appears that little notice was taken of the affair. But at the time of which we write, when the plague had broken out and was recognised as such, these circumstances appear to have made a stronger impression on their minds, and to have given rise to a suspicion of an organized plot. Two facts sufficed to convert this suspicion almost into a certainty.

On the evening of the 17th of May some individuals affirmed that they had seen persons engaged in anointing the partition in the cathedral of Milan, which served to divide the places appointed for the two sexes. On hearing of this, the President of the Sanità, with four officials, hastened to the cathedral, and, having inspected the partition, the benches, and the cistern for holy water, declared that they could find no mark to confirm the suspicion of poison, and contented themselves with directing the partition to be well washed, merely in compliance with public opinion. But this was far from

being satisfactory to persons oppressed by a blind terror; and accordingly, during the night, they caused the partition and benches to be carried out of the church.

This circumstance produced a great effect on the multitude, especially the sight of the heap of wood taken from the church, which appeared to them to authenticate the fact of its having been anointed. There still remains in the archives called San Fedele, a letter from the Sanità to the Governor, in which these facts are described.

The following morning a new spectacle met the eyes of the citizens. The doors of the houses and the walls were found streaked, as if by a sponge, with some yellowish, greasy substance. Whether this was a foolish jest or a wicked design to increase the public confusion, the thing is well attested; but it appears more reasonable to believe it the act of a few than the dream of many, especially as it was neither the first nor the last act of the kind. Ripamonti, who often derides and deplores the popular credulity on this subject, asserts that he had seen this plastering (*impiastramento*), and describes it. Also, in the above-mentioned letter, the members of the Sanità relate the circumstance in the same terms, and speak of experiments made on dogs with it, which had no bad effect; and they add that the whole affair seemed to originate rather in a foolish frolic than in a bad design.

In this opinion, however, the public in general did not agree. Some believed that it had been done by command of Don Gonzalo, in revenge for the insults he had received at his departure; some that it was an invention of the Cardinal Richelieu to depopulate Milan, in order to render himself master of it without trouble; and some, for some unknown reason, imagined Wallenstein to be the author of it. Some few there were who conceived it to be a foolish jest, and attributed it to the students.

Many persons were still unconvinced of the existence of the plague in the city; one of their last arguments, which was also used by some physicians, was, that several had recovered, and that, therefore, the disease could not have been plague, as in that case all would have died.—(Tadino).

To remove every doubt, the Sanità adopted an expedient,—a mode of speaking to the eyes,—which the state of the times seemed to require. It had been the custom of the citizens every year, towards Easter, to proceed in vast numbers, on a particular day, to the cemetery of San Gregorio, there to pray for those who had died during the prevalence of a former plague. It happened that, on the day appointed for this ceremony, in the year of which we speak, amongst other victims, a whole family had died. On the same day, at the time of the greatest crowd, amongst carriages and persons on foot and on horseback, the bodies of this family were, by order of the Sanità, conveyed on a cart to the cemetery, stripped so that all might see the fatal marks. A cry of horror was raised everywhere

on the appearance of the cart; the existence of the plague was no longer doubted, and the disease continued from that time to extend its ravages frightfully.

A report now arose that the walls, gates of public edifices, and doors of houses, were visibly anointed. This report gained a ready credence, because, as Verri remarks, it is more in accordance with our nature to attribute misfortunes to human wickedness, which we may revenge, than to recognise them as proceeding from a cause to which we can do no more than resign ourselves. An exquisite poison, instantaneous and most penetrating, were words more than sufficient to explain the violence, and all the most obscure and irregular symptoms of the disease. The poison was supposed to be composed of toads, serpents, and the foam which issued from the lips of persons sick of the plague. When to this was added the idea of magic, every effect became possible, and every difficulty vanished.

Whoever now maintained that the anointing had been a jest, or denied the existence of a plot, was considered to be blind or obstinate, if he did not fall under the suspicion of being one interested in turning public attention from the truth, an accomplice or an anointer, a word now become full of solemn and tremendous meaning. Ripamonti relates two facts on this subject, which he expressly tells us he has chosen, not as the most atrocious in their nature, of those which happened daily, but because he was himself an eye-witness of both.

In the Church of San Antonio, on a solemn day, an old man of more than eighty years of age, after having prayed on his knees for some time, wished to sit down, and before doing so dusted the bench with his cloak. "That old man is anointing the benches," cried some women who had seen the act. The people who were in the church rushed on the old man, caught him by the hair, white as it was, assailed him with kicks and blows, and dragged him out; nor did they cease until they brought him but half alive to the prison and the torture. "I saw him while they dragged him thus," says Ripamonti, "and heard nothing more of him, but I believe that he could not have survived many moments." The other instance, which took place the following day, was equally extraordinary, but not equally fatal. Three young Frenchmen, a scholar, a painter, and a mechanic, who had come to study in Italy, having approached the cathedral, remained for some time examining it attentively. A passenger saw them, and stopping, beckoned to others to approach, who formed a crowd round these persons, whose dress, and manner of wearing the hair, betrayed them to be strangers, and, worse than that, Frenchmen. As if to assure themselves that the material was marble, the young men extended their hands to touch it. This was enough. They were surrounded, put in irons, ill treated, and dragged to prison. By a fortunate chance, the Palace of Justice was not far from the cathedral; and by a still more fortunate chance, they were found innocent and set at liberty.

Meantime the Decurions repeatedly intreated the Cardinal Fede-

VOL. VIII. NO. 15, N. S. Q

rigo, for his consent to a procession in honour of San Carlo, and after much importunity prevailed. We do not find that the Sanità, or any other authority, made any opposition or remonstrance. The only precaution they took was one which, without lessening the danger, indicated fear of it. This was to prescribe stricter rules for the entrance of persons into the city; and in order to secure the execution of them, the gates were kept shut. With a view of excluding infected persons from the procession, the doors of the sequestered houses, which, according to C. G. Cavatio della Somiglia, amounted to 500, were nailed up. On the 11th of June, at dawn, the procession issued from the cathedral, and, passing through all quarters of the city, stopped at every place where, during the preceding plague, a cross had been erected by San Carlo.

But the following day, while a presumptuous and fanatical confidence occupied the minds of many who believed that the procession must have put a stop to the plague, the deaths increased to such a degree, and so suddenly, that there were none who did not acknowledge the procession as the cause of it.

But—wonderful and melancholy strength of a general prejudice!—the greater number attributed the increase of the calamity, not to the collecting together of so many persons for so long a time, not to the infinite multiplication of casual contact, but to the facility which the anointers had found in executing their wicked designs. It was said that, mixed among the crowd, they had infected with their ointments as many as they could. But as this did not appear a cause sufficient to account for a mortality so vast and so diffused; as it was impossible for the most attentive eyes to perceive traces of anointing, or spots of any kind, on the walls or elsewhere; they had recourse to the belief, already received into the common science of Europe, of poisonous powders. It was said that such powders, being scattered along the streets, and particularly in the places where the procession had stopped, had adhered to the skirts of dresses, and especially to the feet, as on that day many had followed the procession barefooted as a penance.

From that day the fury of the contagion continually increased. In a short time there remained scarcely a house uncontaminated by it, and the population of the lazaretto, according to Somiglia, rose from 2000 to 12,000; and later, as almost all agree, to 16,000. On the 4th of July we find, by a letter from the Sanità to the Governor, that the daily mortality exceeded 500, and, if we may believe Tadino, rose during the height of the disease to 3,500. He also affirms that after the plague, the population of Milan, which before had exceeded 250,000, was found reduced to a little more than 64,000.

On the Decurions rested the weight of providing for the public necessity, and remedying what could be remedied in such a disaster. They were every day obliged to substitute and increase public servants of every kind, *monatti*, *apparitori*, and *commissari*. The first were employed in the most painful and dangerous services of the plague, that of taking away the corpses from the houses, the streets,

and the lazaretto; bringing them in carts to the pits, and burying them; leading the sick to the lazaretto, and directing them; and burning or cleansing infected goods. The employment of the *apparitori* was to precede the carts, warning the passengers by the sound of a bell, that they might retire. The *commissari* regulated both under the immediate orders of the Sanità.

It was necessary to keep the lazaretto supplied with physicians, surgeons, medicines, provisions, and all the appliances of sickness; and also to find additional accommodation for the patients who arrived there daily. For this purpose wooden sheds were constructed in the internal space of the lazaretto, as well as a new lazaretto, consisting of sheds surrounded by a wooden partition, capable of containing four thousand persons.

At this time the large pit which had been dug near the lazaretto being filled with corpses, and the number of them remaining unburied in the city increasing daily, the magistrates, after having in vain demanded assistance, were reduced to acknowledge that they did not know how to act. In this extremity the President of the Sanità had recourse to the two good friars who superintended the lazaretto. The Padre Michele pledged himself that at the end of four days no corpses should be found in the city, and that at the end of eight, pits should be dug of size sufficient for the worst that could happen.

Accordingly, in company with another friar, and some persons given him by the Tribunal, he left the city in search of peasants; and partly by the authority of the tribunal, partly by his habit and exhortations, he collected about 200 of them, whom he employed in digging three enormous pits; he then sent monatti from the lazaretto to inter the dead, so that on the day fixed his promise was fulfilled.

Once, the lazaretto remained entirely without physicians; but, by means of great payment and promised honours, a few were procured, though not in proportion to the necessity. Provisions were often on the point of failing; hence it was feared that deaths would occur from hunger; but more than once, in the last extremity, abundant contributions were furnished from the charity of private persons.

In the general confusion and relaxation of all authority, caused by the continuance of the disorder, there were not wanting persons who took advantage of the public distress for their own wicked ends. The monatti and apparitori consisted almost entirely of men over whom the attractions of plunder and licentiousness had more power than the fear of contagion and horror of the employment. Certainly the strictest rules were prescribed to them, and the severest penalties threatened. Their places were assigned to them by their superiors, the commissari, over whom were delegates, chosen from the magistrates and nobles, and armed with authority to provide summarily for every occurrence. But as the number of those who died or left the city daily increased, the monatti and apparitori found themselves almost entirely unrestrained by any superior power; the monatti especially made themselves arbiters of everything. They entered as masters or as enemies into the houses, robbed and ill-

treated the unfortunate persons subjected to their control by sickness; and laid their infected hands on healthy persons, children, parents, husbands, and wives, threatening to drag them to the lazaretto if they were not redeemed with money. On other occasions they set a price on their services, and refused to carry away the putrid corpses unless for so many crowns. It is even asserted by Tadino that the monatti and apparitori purposely let fall infected clothes from the carts, in order to propagate the plague, which had now become a considerable source of revenue to them. Other wretches, feigning themselves monatti, and wearing a bell, the prescriptive distinction of a monatto, fastened to one foot, entered unoccupied houses, or houses occupied only by the dying, and plundered them with impunity. All these things tended to increase and confirm the terror which the anointers inspired. Ripamonti, speaking of this time, says: "The heaps of corpses always before the eyes, always under the feet, made the whole city a kind of dead house." There was something most hideous and frightful in that unrestrained and mutual distrust, which rendered not only neighbours, friends, and guests, suspected, but occasioned even husband and wife, father and son, brother and brother, to live in terror of each other. And—horrible to relate!—even the domestic table was feared as a hiding place of poison."

In the beginning, it was believed that these anointers were only actuated by motives of ambition and covetousness, but as the disease progressed it was asserted that there was an unknown diabolical pleasure in anointing, and an attraction which governed the will. The ravings of the sick, who accused themselves of what they had feared from others, appeared like revelations, and rendered everything credible. It often happened even that plague-patients, in their delirium, performed those actions which they had imagined the anointers to have done, and this had more effect than their words in convincing the multitude.

Amongst the stories to which this anointing mania gave rise, one particularly deserves notice, from the general credence which it obtained.

It is related that a person on a certain day saw a carriage arrive at the square of the cathedral, within which was a great personage, whose countenance was dark and inflamed, his eyes were fiery, his hair erect, and the expression of his countenance threatening. Whilst the first-mentioned person continued looking on attentively, the carriage stopped and the driver invited him to enter it. He complied, and after many turnings descended at the door of a certain palace, which he and the other entered. Here were presented to their view pleasures and horrors, deserts and gardens, caverns and saloons, and in them phantoms seated at council. Finally, they showed him great chests of money, and desired him to take as much as he pleased, with the condition that he should also take a little vessel full of ointment and go about anointing the city. He, however, not consenting to execute this commission, found himself in a

moment in the place from whence he had been taken. This absurd story, which Ripamonti says was not sufficiently derided by any writer of authority, spread through all Italy and beyond it. In Germany a print was made of it, and the archiepiscopal Elector of Magonza wrote to the Cardinal Federigo to inquire if he ought to believe those extraordinary facts which were related of Milan. The answer given was, that they were dreams.

The dreams of the learned, if not of the same nature, were equally disastrous in their effects. The greater number of them believed that they had found both the announcement and the cause of the misfortune, in a comet which had appeared in the year 1628, and in a conjunction of Saturn with Jupiter. Another comet which had appeared in the June of the year of the plague, was taken for a new warning, nay, for a manifest proof of anointing. They searched into books, and were but too successful in finding examples of plague manufactured as they affirmed. Livy, Tacitus, Dion, and even Homer and Ovid, were cited, along with many other ancients who have related or referred to similar facts. They were not wanting also in quotations from authors who had written on poisons, ointments, powders, and magic, and especially from the fatal Delrio, whose "*Disquizioni Magiche*," a collection of all that, up to his time, mankind had dreamt on the subject of magic, gave authority for more than a century to legal, horrible, and uninterrupted sacrifices of life.

Tadino, who had watched the progress of the disease, and who had declared that it was plague, that it was communicated by contact, and that, if precautions were not taken, it would infect the whole country, now seems to have changed his opinion, for we find him, from the same appearances, concluding in favour of poisonous and malignant anointing. He who, in the case of Carlo Colonna, the second who had died of plague in Milan, had noted the delirium as one of the symptoms of the disorder, nevertheless adduced the following alleged facts, in proof of the anointing process and a diabolical plot. He declares that two witnesses affirmed that they had heard from a sick friend that one night some persons had come into his room, and offered him a cure and money if he would anoint the houses in the neighbourhood; and that on his refusal they had gone away, and left behind them a wolf under the bed, and three black cats on it, which remained until day!!! Even the good Cardinal, so superior to the greater number of his contemporaries, seems to have partly credited this ridiculous narrative, though he believed it to be greatly exaggerated. In the Ambrosian Library there is preserved a little work of his, in which are the following words: "It was a common opinion that these ointments were compounded in various places, and that there were different ways of working them, some of which appear true, and some invented." In the same library there remains a letter in which the Chancellor informs the Governor, with great concern, of his having received notice that in a country house belonging to two Milanese gentlemen, poison was compounded in such quantity that forty men were employed at it, assisted by four

Brescian gentlemen, who brought the materials from Venice. He adds, that he had very secretly taken the necessary measures to send there the podestà of Milan and the auditor of the Sanità, with thirty cavalry soldiers; that one of the brothers had been warned in time to conceal the proofs of his crime, but that, nevertheless, the podestà had gone with the soldiers to take informations, and to arrest all who were guilty. This affair appears to have ended in nothing; but in other cases many persons were tried and condemned to the most atrocious punishments for having propagated the plague by means of ointments or powders, or both. The particulars of these trials are to be found in Manzoni's "*Storia della Colonna Infame*."

The plague arrived at its height towards the end of August. It is impossible to describe the wretchedness which reigned throughout Milan at this period. The weather was close, the air heavy, everywhere loaded with an equally dispersed fog, which appeared to obscure the sun without promising rain. The country around was uncultivated and arid; not even a drop of dew refreshed the faded verdure and the withered and languishing leaves. A dead silence reigned through the streets, unbroken, except by the melancholy sound of the bell carried by the apparitori, announcing the approach of the dead cart, heaped full of corpses. In all the squares, and in the principal streets, appeared the frightful machine for torture, in order that the deputies of each quarter might have the means of immediately applying it to every one who appeared deserving of punishment, such as sequestered persons who left their houses, subalterns who did not execute their duty, and similar offenders.

Trade was nearly at an end, and the little which remained was transacted by means of pincers which handed out the required article, while the money was placed in a vessel of vinegar and water.

The quarter of the city called Porta Novo was that which suffered most from the disease. In that neighbourhood such had been the fury of the contagion, and the fetor of the corpses, that the few remaining survivors were forced to leave it. In one street all the doors of the houses were locked, owing to suspicion or terror, except those which were uninhabited or had been broken into. Some were nailed and sealed, to show the presence of the plague there; some were marked with a cross made with charcoal, as a signal to the monatti that there were dead to be carried away. At every step were seen loathsome rags, infected straw or blankets, which had been thrown from the windows; and even corpses either of persons who had died suddenly in the streets, or which had perhaps fallen from the carts, or been thrown from the windows; to such a degree had the continuance and severity of the misfortune hardened the hearts of the survivors. At that time about two-thirds of the population had died; and of those who survived, a great part were sick or had left the city; so that the number of persons who were seen out of doors was reduced almost to nothing. Scarcely one could be met in whom something strange was not to be observed, which gave indication of the fatal and general change. Persons of

the highest rank appeared without mantles, then a most essential part of the dress; priests were to be seen without cassocks, and monks in their doublets. In short, every article of dress was discarded, which, in flying about, might touch anything, or, what was dreaded more than all, give opportunity to the anointers. Beards were allowed to grow, and hair was left entangled, not only from the neglect which springs from long dejection, but on account of suspicion which had fallen on the barbers, one of their number, Giangiacomo Mora, having been condemned as a notorious anointer. Most persons carried sticks in their hands, or even pistols, as a threatening admonition to any who might wish to approach too closely; others had odorous pastilles, or perforated balls of metal or wood, within which was sponge soaked in medicated vinegar, which they constantly applied to their noses. Some wore phials containing quicksilver, hung from their necks, persuaded that it had the virtue of absorbing and retaining every pestilential exhalation. Gentlemen not only went out without their accustomed followers, but were to be seen with baskets on their arms purchasing the necessaries of life. Friends, when they met in the streets, saluted each other from a distance with hasty and silent signs. Persons walking had much to do to avoid the loathsome and lifeless obstacles with which the ground was encumbered. Each endeavoured to walk in the middle of the street, fearing that infected articles or corpses might be thrown from the windows, or dreading the poisonous powders which it was believed were often thrown on the passengers, or the ointments with which they conceived the walls to be anointed.

The lazaretto contained at this time (the end of August) 16,000 patients. The state of the weather before adverted to, which oppressed all nature, added to the sufferings of its wretched inmates. Those already infected suddenly sank under the new oppression, and the last struggles of the dying were more painful. Amidst the misery to be seen throughout the lazaretto, a strange contrast was presented in the room assigned to those infants whose mothers had died of the plague. Some of them were nursed by women who had lost their own children, and some by goats, which, as if inspired with a maternal feeling, attended to their cries, and endeavoured to accommodate themselves to the position of the infant.

The disorder was now at its height, and, after the sudden increase of deaths caused by the state of the weather, an equally sudden decrease, or almost a cessation, took place. It was attributed to a tremendous fall of rain which continued for two or three successive days and nights. After this, almost no deaths occurred in the lazaretto, which, therefore, became useless, except to restore those within its walls to health. A quarantine was ordered when these returned to their houses, and within a week from the beginning of the rain the doors and shops of the city were re-opened, and there remained nothing more of the plague but some lingering traces (*strascio*), which such a scourge always leaves behind it for some time.

MORAL.

Such is the history of this frightful visitation, one of the most terrific on record. Let the world learn from it a lesson against supineness, obstinacy, and want of unanimity in the councils of those who undertake the awful responsibility of protecting a nation from the ravages of famine and pestilence, whether they be governments, legislators, physicians, or political economists.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE RECORDS OF THE CORPORATION OF BARBER SURGEONS
OF DUBLIN.

By WILLIAM D. MOORE, A. B., M. B.

IN endeavouring, on a former occasion(*a*), to trace the origin and history of pharmacy in Ireland, I gave a brief account of some of the ancient charters and records of the body incorporated as the Corporation of Barbers, Barber Surgeons and Barbers, Surgeons, Apothecaries, and Periwig-makers, by the successive grants of Henry VI., Elizabeth, and James II., respectively. These records, as I then mentioned, I had, after much search, found in the possession of Michael Farrell, Esq. Shortly after the publication alluded to Mr. Farrell died, and his son, Mr. Samuel Farrell, very kindly intrusted to me the documents which his father had saved from destruction, in order that I might carry out a suggestion which I had formerly made, that they should be deposited in a public library. The possession of these during the past winter has enabled me to examine them at my leisure, and this examination has fully proved that, while the government of the professions of surgery and pharmacy was legally intrusted to the body I have mentioned (in the case of surgery, until the establishment of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1784, and in that of pharmacy until the incorporation of the apothecaries of Dublin as the Guild of St. Luke, in 1745-6), these professions, at least since the commencement of the eighteenth century, rejected the yoke of a corporation who felt it to be part of their duty to give their deliberate opinion that "three Bob Wiggs and a Tye Wigg taken up from — M'Namara are not merchantable goods," and to order that he should be prosecuted at law "for vending or exposing to sale the same, in order to defraud and cheat the publick"(*b*).

Nevertheless several "chyrurgeons" appear from the Transaction Books to have been from time to time admitted; it is extremely

(*a*) See vol. vi. of the present series of this Journal, p. 64.

(*b*) Transaction Book, 24th November, 1720.