

ART. XV.—*Visitations of the Plague in Cumberland and Westmorland.* By HENRY BARNES, M.D., F.R.S.E.

Read at Ambleside, Sept. 4th, 1889.

IN looking over some of the papers which have been read at previous meetings of this Society and published in the Transactions, I find incidental allusion to the prevalence of the plague in several districts of the two counties. In some of the papers, such as those dealing with parish registers, the existence of the plague in particular years has been inferred from the excessive mortality as compared with the usual average. No attempt, however, seems to have been made up to the present to give any general account of the local visitations. In the present paper I propose to review briefly what has been already brought under your consideration, to bring forward some references which have not hitherto been noticed, to record the evidence of each outbreak of the disease, so far as I have been able to obtain it, and in this way to furnish a contribution to the history of the local prevalence of the terrible scourge of the middle ages. I do not profess to give anything like a complete account of the subject. There are many gaps in the evidence which I have been able to accumulate, but I hope by directing attention to them I may be able to elicit from others some important contributions.

At the outset it may be asked, What was the plague? What kind of disease was it? It would be out of place to enter into any medical details. It may be sufficient to remark that among the various nationalities of antiquity and in the middle ages the word plague was used in its collective sense, and included the most various diseases that occurred in an epidemic form, ran an acute course, and showed a heavy mortality. It is in this sense I shall use the word in the present paper. Some of the local visitations,

visitations have no doubt been visitations of true oriental plague, a disease characterised by inflammatory boils and tumours of the glands, such as break out in no other febrile disease. On other occasions it may have been the sweating sickness, as I shall show that there is evidence of this having extended to the Borders. It is probable also that small-pox and typhus formed some of the epidemics and were included under the head of plague. It is, therefore, not possible to say from present records what particular form of disease prevailed in any given epidemic.

The literature of plagues is very extensive, and a fact of some antiquarian interest has come out recently in consequence of a claim put forward on behalf of a library in Boston that it contained as one of its choicest treasures the earliest medical book published in English, viz: *The Birthe of Mankinde*, set forth in English by Thomas Raynalde, Physitian, bearing date 1598. This claim was soon set aside, and among English medical works there are three of an earlier date which treat on epidemic pestilences. Bullein's "Dialogue on the Fever Pestilence" was published in 1564, and has recently been reprinted by the Early English Text Society. Dr. Caius' "Boke or Counseill against the Disease commonly called the Sweate or Sweatyng Sicknesse," was printed in 1552. But more than a century before the date of the American treasure a book was published in London. Its title is "A Passing Gode Lityll Boke, necessarye and behoveful against the Pestilence," published without printer's name or date but attributed to the press of William de Machlinia, in London about 1480. It is a small quarto tract of twelve leaves, and is translated from the Latin tract of Canute (sometimes called Kamintus and Ramicus), Bishop of Aarhus, in Denmark.*

While the chief interest in true plague rests in its widespread diffusion in the middle ages its history can be

* For these and other early works on the Plague see *Reliquiæ Hearnianæ*, vol. II, p. 117. By this author Ramicus is described as a Bishop in Dacia.

traced

traced back with tolerable certainty to the end of the third or the beginning of the second century of the pre-Christian era. Like leprosy, its home seems to have been in Egypt. It was not, however, until the sixth century that authentic records of its prevalence in Europe are to be found.*

It started from Lower Egypt in 542 A.D.† and spread over the whole of the Roman empire "from east to west, and even to the ends of the habitable world." It caused frightful devastation, depopulated towns, turned the country into a desert, and made the habitations of men to become the haunts of wild beasts. It is computed that this pandemic lasted about 60 years. It is not certain whether this was the first introduction of the true plague into Europe, but it is certain that it now got a firm hold and that it kept its dominion for more than a thousand years.

The earliest record of a local pestilence which I have been able to find carries us back to the time when S. Cuthbert visited Carlisle. In the recently published History of the Diocese of Carlisle, by Chancellor Ferguson, p. 42, a description of this visit is given. S. Cuthbert arrived at Carlisle about the time of the battle of Nechtansmere, A.D. 685. He preached on the Sunday after his arrival, and the burden of his discourse was, "Watch and Pray, Watch and Pray," which his hearers misapplied to the expected recurrence of a plague which had recently ravaged the district. A few days afterwards a solitary fugitive announced the result of the battle.

The chronicles of the middle ages contain numerous references to the prevalence of plague, or "*pestis*." In

* After the reading of this paper at Ambleside, Mr. Nanson adduced the great plague at Athens in B.C. 430 and 429 as a contradiction to this statement. This epidemic has given rise to much speculation. A German writer believes it to have been small-pox. Dr. Adams, the learned commentator of Hippocrates, thinks it was glandular plague, but most recent writers seem to agree in thinking it was typhus. The disease broke out during a siege, and there is no mention of glandular swellings in the graphic history of it given by Thucydides, which in most particulars corresponds with the typhus that appeared in later times during the siege of Saragossa.

† Hirsch's Handbook of Geographical and Historical Pathology, vol. I, p. 495.
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that wonderful historical treasury, the Chronicle of Lanercost,* which deals with events which happened between A.D. 1201 and 1346, there are three references to plagues. On the first page, under date A.D. 1201, there is the following entry:—

In the same year in divers parts of the kingdoms there befel a great murrain of mankind and other animals, but most of all of sheep: of such a kind was this death and murrain as never before was seen.

In Hecker's "Epidemics of the Middle Ages," p. 5, it is recorded that as the plague spread it attacked not only men, but animals fell sick and shortly expired if they touched things belonging to the diseased or dead. It is stated that Boccaccio saw two hogs on the rags of a person who had died of the plague, after staggering about for a short time, fall down dead as if they had taken poison. In other places multitudes of dogs, cats, fowls, and other animals fell victims to the disease.

At p. 85 of the Chronicle of Lanercost, there is an account of a "pestis" among cattle which prevailed in the Lothians in 1268. It was called "*Lunggesouth*," and was evidently a lung disease. The passage has often been quoted. The third reference will be found on page 240. It also records a plague among cattle, and seems worthy of being translated and quoted in extenso:—

At that time, A.D. 1319, the plague and murrain among the beasts which had raged for the two preceding years in the South, visited the North, and it attacked both oxen and cattle. And thus did it work that after a slight sickness they would die on a sudden and all together. Few beasts of that kind were left, and so for that year men had to plough with horses. Still men would eat of the beasts which died of the aforesaid sickness, and by the grace of God they felt no harm. At the same time, too, the fish of the sea were found dead on the shore in great numbers, but not a man did eat of them, nor any other animal nor bird. And furthermore in the South of England the

* Printed for the Maitland Club, Edinburgh, 1839.

birds fought with each other most fiercely with one consent, and were found dead in great numbers. All these three wonders seemed to have happened for the punishment of sinners or as an omen of things to come.

This latter prophecy was soon fulfilled. Shortly after this period came the disastrous pestilence known everywhere under the name of the Black Death. It was one of the great events in the world's history; it extended over the whole of the then known world; it reckoned its victims by millions; and in England, some writers say, nine-tenths of the inhabitants were swept away. It has fixed the attention of writers in a high degree, and has been described in its minutest details. The starting point of the pestilence seems to have been in Eastern Asia. It was in Upper India in 1346; in Turkey and Greece in 1347, and from thence in the same year it spread to Italy and France. In 1348 it had devastated the whole of Italy, and in 1349 it had spread nearly all over middle Europe, England, Scotland, and Ireland. Hecker estimates the number of those who perished in Europe at twenty-five millions, or about one-fourth of the then population of our division of the globe. There are no data given for the formation of this opinion, and much diversity of opinion exists as to the mortality of the period.

Until recently it has been impossible to draw any accurate conclusions as to the real death rate during the epidemic. It has remained to an English country parson to let in a glimmer of daylight on this subject. It occurred to Dr. Jessopp, the well-known rector of Scarning, that if the incidence of the Black Death was as fatal as it is represented to have been, there must remain among local records documentary evidence of value from which information regarding the mortality of that terrible year could be obtained, and in the Book of the Institutions of the Clergy of the Diocese of Norwich, and the Court Rolls of some of the Manors of the

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the district, he obtained some striking facts. Going over these documents he summarises his conclusions as follows :—

I see no other conclusion to arrive at but one, namely, that during the year ending March 1350 more than half the population of East Anglia was swept away by the Black Death. If any one should suggest that more than half died, I should not be disposed to quarrel with him.

I have made enquiries as to any documentary evidence of a similar character in these two counties but as yet without any good result. Some interesting facts have been brought out by Dr. Jessopp's enquiries, and it would be of great value if any documentary records of a similar character in Cumberland and Westmorland could be brought to light. There can be little doubt that the two counties shared the same fate as the rest of England, but the local histories contain no reference to the visitation. The following extract, which I take from Guthrie's History of Scotland, vol. III, p. 49, will show that I have good grounds for the belief that the Black Death epidemic visited this district, as the Scottish army on emerging from the forest of Selkirk would more probably enter England by the western route, rather than by the road by Berwick.

The hand of heaven was so severe upon the Scots during the year 1349 and 1350 that they furnish little of historical matter. A most dreadful plague had passed from the Continent of Europe to England, and the Scots wantonly indulged the innate hatred they bore their enemies by enjoying their calamities, and even endeavouring to render them subservient to their revenge. This ferocity, though unjustifiable, was natural to a people so provoked and oppressed, as the Scots had long been by the English ; but it proved fatal at the same time. They had appointed a rendezvous in the forest of Selkirk, to avail themselves of the mortality which was then desolating England. Scarcely had they passed the borders, when they were seized by the pestilence. Five thousand of them dropt down dead, and many were cut off by the enemy who had found means to draw a considerable body to the field. This barbarous invasion furnished Edward with
new

new matter of complaint and his subjects, in their turn, made fresh irruptions into Scotland, where they reinforced their garrisons. The few Scots who returned from the invasion communicated the pestilence to their countrymen (one-third of whom, according to Fordun,* perished). The patient's flesh swelled excessively and he died in two days illness, but the same author tells, That the mortality chiefly affected the middle and lower ranks of the people.

Thirty years later there is evidence that plague was again in Cumberland. It is recorded that in 1380 the Scots, unmindful of their experience during the black death epidemic, made an inroad into Cumberland under the Earl of Douglas. They surprised Penrith at the time of a fair and returned with immense booty, but they suffered severely in consequence, for they introduced into their country the plague contracted in this town. There is no local record of the ravages of this pestilence in Penrith, but most of the local histories which mention the outbreak refer to the severity with which it overtook the invaders. In Pennant's *Tour of Scotland*, quoted by Hutchinson, *History of Cumberland*, vol. I, p. 327, it is said that one-third of the inhabitants of Scotland were swept away. Jefferson, in his *History of Leath Ward*, p. 13, in describing this invasion tells us the Scots passed by Carlisle in the summer of 1380, and laid waste the forest of Inglewood, where, according to Dr. Todd, they seized 4000 cattle. They entered Penrith on a market-day, killed many of the inhabitants, took away much spoil and many prisoners.

They are supposed to have taken away with them also the infection of a pestilence then raging in the neighbourhood, and from which Holinshēd says a third of the inhabitants of Scotland died.

These two reports of a third of the inhabitants of Scotland having died from the plague in this particular year have evidently come from the same source, and as I showed

* I have verified this reference. It will be found in Fordun's *Scotichronicon*, vol. IV, p. 1039. He speaks of the plague visiting Scotland in 1350. The cruelty of it was so great "ut fere tercia pars generis humani naturæ debitum solvere compelleretur."

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when speaking of the Black Death, that the mortality then was estimated at one-third of the people, it seemed to me doubtful that within thirty years another epidemic of a like magnitude should have occurred. This doubt was increased when I found no mention in Fordun of the second pestilence. In looking up the reference in Holinshed, I find that three words have been omitted by those who have mentioned this epidemic, which shows that the statement of the mortality is too sweeping. These three words are "where it came," and probably the pestilence was not so widespread as the Black Death epidemic. Holinshed's* account is as follows (The historie of Scotland, p. 246):—

William Earle of Dowglas came with twentie thousand men to the faire of Pennire within England, and spoiled all the goods found as then in the same faire and so returned with great riches into Scotland; but the Scottishmen smallie rejoiced at this gains, for with such cloth and other wares as they brought awaie with them from the fore-said faire, they drew into the countrie such a violent and sore pestilence that the third part of all the people (where it came) died thereof. This was the third time that the pestilence was knowne to have doone anie great hurt in Scotland, being the yeere after the incarnation 1380.

It appears from another part of Holinshed's Chronicle that this invasion was prompted by feelings of revenge. At p. 428 vol. III, part 1, he says:—

The Scots could not rest in quiet, but in revenge for a ship, which the townsmen of Newcastle and Hull had taken on the sea, knowing them to be pirates, determined to doe what mischief they could unto the English borders: for the losse of that ship griued them because it was esteemed to be verie rich. . . . Entring by the west borders they inuaded and spoiled the countries of Westmerland and Cumberland and comming into the forest of Inglewood they took awaie with them such a number of beasts and cattell that they were reckoned at fourtie thousand heads of one and another. Besides this they cruellie slue all such as they could laie hands upon, and burnt up all

* Holinshed gives account of three invasions of the plague in Scotland. The first was in the 31st year of the reign of Alexander the Third (p. 203); the second was the black death, 1350—so vehement and contagious that it slew nearhand the third part of all the people (p. 242); and the third the epidemic of 1380.

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the townes, villages and houses as they passed: and not content herewith, they stole upon the towne of Penreth, when the faire was kept there, slaieing, taking and chasing awaie the people, and after gathering together all the goods and riches there found, tooke it awaie with them, whereof there was such plentie as might haue satisfied the couetous desire of a most greedie armie.

From the date of this invasion, and to it we owe our knowledge of the existence of the outbreak of plague at this time, until the year 1554 when plague broke out at Penrith and Kendal, I have no local records of any plague visitations. Several such visitations, however, did occur, and, as some of them reached the border district, it may be of use if I briefly refer to those which are best known, in order that those who are interested in such enquiries may be able to fill up the evidence of such local visitations. Holinshed vol. III, part i, p. 704 describes a great pestilence not only in London but in divers parts of the realm in 1479, in which innumerable people died. The sweating sickness, as it was called, was the most notable epidemic during the latter part of fifteenth and the early part of the sixteenth centuries. It was a violent inflammatory fever, and very fatal. Five distinct epidemics of it occurred. It is thus described:—*

For suddenly a deadly burning sweate so assailed their bodies and distempered their blood with a most ardent heat, that scarce one amongst an hundred that sickened did escape with life; for all in manner as soone as the sweat tooke them or within a short time after, yielded the ghost.

This disease broke out immediately after the battle of Bosworth on the 22nd August, 1485, and thinned the ranks of Henry's victorious army, spreading in a few weeks from the distant mountains of Wales to the Metropolis, where two Lord Mayors and six aldermen died in one week.† By the end of the year it had spread over the whole of England and was equally fatal everywhere. The

* Holinshed, vol. iii, p. 482.

† Hecker's Epidemics of the Middle Ages, p. 182.

second visitation took place in 1506. Seven years before, viz: in 1499, there had been a fearful visitation of the plague in London which carried off 30,000 people, and the memory of the sweating sickness of 1485 had become gradually obliterated. Its second appearance does not seem to have been so severe, and was more amenable to treatment. The third visitation began in July, 1517. It lasted full six months and spread from London over the whole of England. Scotland and Ireland, and all places beyond the sea were spared on this occasion. The disease was so rapid and violent in its course that it carried off those who were attacked in two or three hours, so that the first shivering fit was regarded as the commencement of certain death. Many who were in good health at noon were numbered among the dead at evening. Hancock says in his autobiography:—

God plaged thys realme justly for our sinns with three notable plages. The first was the posting swet, that posted from town to town through England, and was named *stope gallant*, for hytt spared none, for ther were dawncyng in the courte at 9 o'clocke that were deadd at 11 o'clocke.

This quaint name is taken from the French, and the epidemic which ravaged France in 1528 was named *trousse gallant*, because it chiefly attacked young men.* At the latter end of May in the year 1528 the sweating sickness again broke out in England and rapidly spread over the whole kingdom. This outbreak brought a scare upon all the nations of Northern Europe scarcely equalled in any other epidemic. Public business was postponed, the courts were closed, and four weeks after the pestilence broke out the festival of St. John was stopped, to the great sorrow of the people. The King left London immediately, and endeavoured to avoid the epidemic by continual travelling. A great many lives were lost in this epidemic, and by some

* In the same grotesque spirit the plague was called the jolly rant at Newcastle. Vide Brand vol. ii, p. 494.

writers

writers it has been called *the great mortality*. The last epidemic of the sweating sickness which occurred in England broke out on the 15th April, 1551, at Shrewsbury. It gradually spread, with stinking mists, all over England as far as the Scottish borders, and terminated on the 30th September. The mists are thus described :—

Which unite in the countrie when it began, was sene flie from towne to towne with such a stinke in mornings and evenings, that men could scarcely abide it.

The deaths throughout the kingdom were very numerous, so that one historian actually calls it a depopulation. The malady attacked all ranks of life and raged with equal violence in the foul huts of the poor and in the palaces of the nobility. The very remarkable observation was made in this year that the sweating sickness uniformly spared foreigners in England, and on the other hand followed the English into foreign countries.

There are no local records of any of these epidemics that have come under my observation, but I think it quite possible that some mention of the last epidemic may turn up in some of the older parish registers. In the Uffcolme registers,* Devon, the *stop gallant* or *hote sickness* is mentioned, and in Loughborough register, county Leicester, is the following entry: The swat called *new acquaintance*, alias *stoupe knave and know thy master*, began 24th June. As the duty of keeping parish registers was not established until September 29, 1538, when a royal injunction was issued by Cromwell, Vicar-General, this last epidemic of the sweating sickness is the only one which is likely to be recorded in parish registers. Subsequent to this period, epidemics of true plague frequently occurred, and important evidence of its local prevalence is found in many of the local registers. Throughout the sixteenth century the

* Parish Registers in England, by Robt. Edward Charles Waters, B.A. (1882), p. 72.

plague

plague was a permanent form of disease on the Continent of Europe, and scarcely a year passed without an epidemic occurring in some country. The Calendar of State Papers, (Domestic) contain hundreds of references to it, but there are few of local interest. There are several entries of antidotes.* Thus M. de Brummen to Sec. Walsingham.

I send you three little cushions of arsenic, to be hung round the neck, and rest about the heart, as preservatives against the plague, for you, madam, and mademoiselle. They have done great good in Italy, France, and Germany.

The first great local epidemic of which we have full record is the one in 1597-98, but from a statement in the Penrith register, which commenced about this period, it appears that the disease was in Penrith and Kendal in 1554. The Hawkshead registers have an entry under date Nov. 18, 1577: A "pestilent sickness" was "brought into the parish" by "one George Barwicke" and 38 of the inhabitants died. (C. & W. A. & A. Trans. vol. IV., p. 35). In the Penrith register there are several entries which appear to have been copied from an earlier register. Among the entries are the following:—

Liber Registerii de Penrith scriptus in anno dni 1599
 Anno regni regine Elizabethæ 41
 Proper nots worth keeping as followethe
 Floden feild was in anno dni 15 . . .
 Comotion in these north parts 1536
 St. George day dyd fall on Good Friday
 Queere Elizabethæ begene her rainge 1558
 Plague was in Penrith and Kendal 1554
 Sollome mose was in the yere
 Rebellion in the North Parts by the two Earls of Northumberland &
 Westmorland & Leonard Dacres in the year of our lord god 1569
 & the 9th day of November

* It was not uncommon at this period to wear amulets containing poisons. They were "hung round the neck and worn upon the breast, and were supposed to have a hidden power and secret virtue to defend the breast from the venom of the pestilence."—See Tracts vol. VIII, S. ii. 22, in Dean and Chapter Library.

A sore plague was in London notinghome Derby & lincolne in the year 1593

A sore plagne in new castle, durrone & Dernton in the yere of our lord god 1597

A sore plague in Richmond Kendal Penreth Carliell Apulbie & other places in Westmorland and Cumberland in the year of our lord god 1598 of this plague ther dyed at Kendal

The above entries are copied from Jefferson's Leath Ward, p. 19. After the last entry he states that there are a few more words, now very indistinct, and the remainder of the page is cut or torn off.

I have not been able to find any further reference to the plague at Penrith and Kendal in 1554. An examination of the Calendar of State papers shows that plague was in many parts of England as well as of the Continent of Europe about this period, but it was not until 1592 that the first of a series of great plagues broke out in London. This series culminated in the terrible pestilence of 1665. In the Dean and Chapter Library at Carlisle there is a volume of tracts* (Tracts, vol. 8, S. ii., 22) on the plague. It contains several pamphlets dealing with the several outbreaks which took place between 1593 and 1665. One of the tracts bears the name of Dr. Thomas Smyth, and it is probable that it was by his directions the tracts were bound together. From one of these pamphlets I gather that in the epidemic of 1592-93, there were in London and liberties 11,503 deaths from plague. In order to obtain correct returns weekly bills of mortality were instituted, and were continued for three years. Their publication was then suspended, but resumed in 1603 when the second great visitation broke out and 30561 deaths were recorded. The third visitation followed in 1625 and numbered 35417

* Bound up with the tracts there are several printed proclamations and order, relating to the plague. There are also some MSS. orders of Quarter Sessions relating to the plague at Durham. Having obtained the permission of the Chapter I have copied these orders and forwarded them to the Newcastle Society of Antiquaries.

victims

victims, and the fourth in 1636 when 10400 persons died. In the great plague of 1665 I find from a tabular statement compiled for the owner of the pamphlets and written in ink, there were about 70000 deaths from the plague.* It may be useful to bear these dates and figures in mind in connection with local visitations.

The first great local epidemic, as before stated, began in 1597-98. It probably reached Cumberland from Newcastle. Lord Hunsdon, writing to Cecil from Berwick, 8 Aug. 1570 says :—The plage is very sorry at Newcastle. 1576, again at Newcastle. The sick poor were sent out of the town and encamped on the waste grounds, 1588-89. Again at Newcastle from May 1588 to 1 January 1589-90, 1727 persons died. Business of the town was at a standstill. In 1587 it raged at Durham. In 1593 plague again at Newcastle. In 1596 plague still in Newcastle. From about the 19th August the deaths gradually increased in numbers, and the people appear to have fallen down and died in the streets, but in the autumn of 1597 it obtained its greatest rampancy so that the Judges adjourned the Assizes from Durham and Northumberland.

Our Transactions contain reference to an unusual mortality at this period at Carlisle, Penrith, Kendal, Gosforth, Crosthwaite, Great Orton, Holme Cultram, and St. Bees, and, in some instances, extracts from parish registers are given to show the extent of the pestilence. It broke out at Penrith on the 22nd September, 1597, and continued

* In connection with these outbreaks it may be of interest to remember that certain trades were supposed to confer an immunity from attack. It is recorded that at Derby it never entered the house of a tanner, tobacconist or shoemaker, and Hearne remarks in his *Reliquiæ Hearnianæ*, vol. II, p. 17, that "in the last great plague at London none that kept tobacconists' shops had the plague. It is certain that smoaking it was looked upon as a most excellent preservative. In so much that even children were obliged to smoak. And I remember, that I heard formerly Tom Rogers, who was yeoman beadle, say, that when he was that year, when the plague raged, a school-boy at Eton, all the boys of that school were obliged to smoak in the school every morning, and that he was never whipped so much in his life as he was one morning for not smoaking."

until

until December 13th, 1598. At that time William Wallis was vicar of Penrith. He notes the beginning of the pestilence in the parish register, as follows :—

1597. 22nd day of September Andrew Hodgson a foreigner was buried. Here begonne the plague (God's punishment in Perith). All those that are noted with the P dyed of the infection, and those noted with F were buried on the fell.

On December 13, 1598, is the entry :—

Here endeth the Visitation.

The foreigner most probably introduced the disease into the district and became the first victim of what must have been a disastrous calamity. At first the disease was confined to a few families, of which the most part, if not all, were swept away in a few days. Here are a few entries of interest :—

1597. The 14th day of October Elizabeth daughter of John Railton buried
 The 24th day John Railton miller buried
 The 1st day of November Mabel the wife of John Railton buried
 The 5th day Elizabeth Railton buried
 The 10th day son of Thomas Hewer buried
 The 12th day Margaret daughter of Thomas Hewer buried
 On the same day Thomas Hewer was buried
 On the 23rd day Catherine daughter of Thomas Hewer buried

On the 27th of May in the following year thirteen burials are entered ; on the 11th of August there were seventeen, and on the 2nd of September twenty-two entries.

There is an interesting record of this great epidemic in an inscription on the wall of the chancel of Penrith Church, and the same inscription is repeated on a modern brass plate. During some recent restorations a portion of the inscription in the chancel has been covered up, but copies of it have been published. It is as follows :—

A.D.

A.D. MDXCVIII.

Ex gravi peste, quod regionibus hisce incubuit, obierunt apud

Penrith 2260

Kendal 2500

Richmond 2200

Carlisle 1196

Posteris

Avertite vos et vivite.—Ezek. xviii., 32.

There is no date to the inscription, and no name to show by whom it was placed there. I notice that in Chancellor Ferguson's History of the Diocese of Carlisle, Penrith Church was rebuilt during last century, and I think that probably the inscription was drawn up at the time of the rebuilding, and the figures taken from an older inscription, which, according to Bishop Nicolson, was on the church in his day. At p. 154 of the Miscellany Accounts of the Diocese of Carlisle, there occurs the following:—

On the outside of the North Wall of the Vestry, in a rude and slovenly Character :

Pestis fuit, A^o. 1598 unde moriebantur apud Kendal
2500, Richmond 2200, Penrith 2266, Karloli 1196.

In this older inscription the order of the places is changed and Penrith is credited with six more deaths. In Gibson's Camden, p. 842 this same inscription is noticed. The author gives a translation of the words, the same figures as Nicolson, speaks of the rude characters of the writing and says the " passage is the more observable and worth our notice, because not to be met withal in our Histories." Much speculation has taken place with regard to the numbers on this inscription. Only 583 deaths are recorded in the Penrith register. The greater number of those who perished during the pestilence were buried in a common trench or grave on the fell; some were buried in the church yard, some in the school-house yard, and some in their own gardens. Whellan (History of Cumberland and Westmorland, p. 596) suggests that the
numbers

numbers on the register represent only those who were buried in the churchyard or school-house yard. Walker, in his History of Penrith, thinks the numbers on the inscription may be taken as the aggregate of other parishes in the neighbourhood, and the same idea is put forward in a footnote published in Hutchinson's History of Cumberland, vol. I, p. 326. The Rev. H. Whitehead, who has devoted much attention to parish registers, has suggested a very reasonable explanation of this difficulty. He believes that the rural deaneries of those names are meant. We know that the disease prevailed very extensively in the neighbouring parishes. The Rev. Thomas Lees, F.S.A., in his account of the Greystoke registers (vol. I, p. 342, of Society's Transactions) says that, under date November 14, 1578:—

The same day was buried Margaret Sle of Hutton John wch child was suspected to dye of the plague.

The average mortality of the parish rose from 45 to 182 in 1597, and of this year the first seventeen days were wanting. At the same period the pestilence was severe at Kirkoswald. Jefferson, in his History of Leath Ward, p. 273, says that in 1597 forty-two persons died of the pestilence, and in 1598 it numbered 583 victims. Through the kindness of Canon Ransome, I have had the opportunity of examining the Kirkoswald register, and I submit that there are no entries to warrant the belief that such an extensive pestilence prevailed. In 159 $\frac{3}{8}$ the number of "buryings" is 12; 159 $\frac{3}{4}$, 14; 159 $\frac{4}{8}$, 7; from May 1595 to February 159 $\frac{6}{8}$ there are ten entries. From February 159 $\frac{6}{8}$ to February 159 $\frac{7}{8}$ there are 51 entries. An examination of these under the several months show the rapid rise of the epidemic. In February there were 4; March, 9; April, 13; May, 3; June, 1; July, 5; August, 1; September, 5; October, 3; November, 5; February, 2; total, 51. In 1598 only four entries occur, the last being in a different handwriting

handwriting from the others. Among the entries is the following :—

William Bowman parish clarke died 7 Nov. 1597.

Canon Ransome informs me that he is not aware of any authority for the statement quoted by Jefferson, and if such a mortality as stated did occur, a very large number must have been buried without funeral rites. The plague visited Appleby also at this time. Nicolson and Burn, (*History of Cumberland and Westmorland*, vol. I, p. 321), say that at this time the fairs and markets had to be removed on account of the infection from Appleby to Gilsaughlin,* and that between August 1st and March 25th there died at Appleby, Scattergate, Colby, and Colby Leathes 128 persons. The Rev. A. Warren informs me that the parish registers of St. Michael's, Appleby, which began in 1582, show a larger number of entries than usual in 1598.† The earlier registers of St. Lawrence are missing, and the oldest only goes back to 1695. At Edenhall about one-fourth of the inhabitants are said to have perished of the pestilence in 1598. Through the courtesy of the vicar, Rev. W. Lovejoy, I have been permitted to examine the Edenhall and Langwathby Registers. The former commences in 1558 and is in fairly good preservation, but the edges of the leaves of that part of the book which refers to the visitations of the plague are destroyed in parts as if eaten by mice. The parish seems to have suffered severely. In the year 159⁶ there are only four entries of burials. In the following year 159⁷, after recording the burials of eight people the following note occurs :—

* At p. 460 of Nicolson & Burn's *History*, in describing the parish of Cliburn, it is stated :—“ Within this parish is a tenement, now belonging to Sir James Lowther, baronet, called Gilshaughlin (from rubbish shoveling down), where the market was held 1598, when the plague raged at Appleby.”

† In his letter Mr. Warren states that in 1699 the mortality was excessive, and that the burials about this period are all certified to be “ in woolen.”

These

These 4 next following dyed of the plaige, Itm vii M'cii Pattrig Rowtlishe was buried wthn Flatts wall neare to his own house being knowne to dye of the plaige.

The death of his wife on the 8th of March; his servant Elizabeth Thompson on the 11th, and his infant son John immediately follow. The first is entered as having been buried "beside her husband near the said place," and the last was buried "beside his father and mother in said place." This seems to have been an isolated outbreak of the disease. No further deaths from it are recorded until the end of the following July, 1598. A baptism is recorded on the 24th March. There was another baptism on April 25, three burials between this date and August, and then at the head of the next page is this entry:—

The 42 next following dyed of the—(word wanting).

The first plague death was on July 29. Some families suffered very severely as shown by the following entries:—

Itm First August one child of Andrew Atkinson of the plaige & was buried in flatts cloose. Itm xv & xvi August Andrew Atkinson wiffe iiii other children dyed of plaige and were buried their Lodge on Edenhall Fell at a place called Shaddowbourgh.

Twenty deaths occurred in August, and eleven in September. Some were buried in the churchyard, others beside or "on the backside of their house, on Penrith Fell, or Flatts cloose." The epidemic lasted until November. The following entry closes the record:—

Examyned and signed by the Viccar & Churchwardens of Edenhall whose names are under written

Churchwardens { John Watson
Wyll^m Pattinson

Per me Will^m Smith vicariu ibidem.

In the latter part of the year there were no deaths, but
one

one wedding and two baptisms. All the entries of deaths are in the same handwriting, and have evidently been entered with great care. The same handwriting continues until 1609, when the death of the vicar is announced as follows :---

Anno D'ni 1609.

The first daye of Maye was Sir Will^m Smith viccar of . . . buried anno D'ni 1609.

He was evidently more precise and methodical about his register than he was about his personal appearance. In Bishop Meye's time a Court of High Commission was held, and we find him among the offenders :—

William Smyth, Curate of Edenhall, presented to wear his hose lowse at the knees.*

There are, doubtless, many parishes from which similar records of this eventful period might be obtained. Those I have given show how widespread was the pestilence. I proceed to give some record of the shifts which were adopted about this period to avoid the infection. Nicholson, in his "Annals of Kendal," in describing Coneybeds, a fort, situated on Hay Fell, says :—

In the time of the plague which desolated the kingdom in 1597-98, provisions were brought to this spot by the country people, and deposited for the inhabitants of Kendal, which was their only intercourse during that destructive period.

At Penrith, also, the usual markets were suspended, and places without the town (now called Meal-Cross, Cross-Green,) were appointed for purchasing the provisions brought by the country people. There still remains a large block of stone called the plague stone.† It is a block of freestone, hollowed in the centre as a trough,

* An account of this Court will be found in the History of the Diocese of Carlisle, by Chancellor Ferguson, p. 127.

† See Walker's History of Penrith.

about

about twelve inches square and ten inches deep, which was intended to hold some disinfecting liquid, most probably vinegar. In this trough the money from the hands of the townspeople was laid, and only when thus disinfected would the farmers receive it in payment for their goods. In Keswick there is a tradition that when the plague raged, as no markets were held for fear of the infection, the people of the dales carried their webs and yarns to a large stone, which is very conspicuous on one of the lower elevations of Armbboth Fell, and there periodically met and did business with the trades. The stone still goes by the name of the "*web stone*."* Mr. J. Fisher Crosthwaite informs me he has heard old people say that when the plague was in Keswick the country people came to "Cuddy Beck," but did not cross the little stream. The money was placed in the water and then taken, and the produce was laid on the ground for the Keswickians to take back.

The "*Chronicle of Perth*" (quoted in McDowall's "*History of Dumfries*," p. 381) says the wheat in 1598 was blasted over all Scotland, and oatmeal was so scarce that it sold for 6s. the peck, "ane great deid among the people" being occasioned by the scarcity. Dumfries also suffered severely from the visitation. The following letter graphically shows the condition of the North country, and is taken from the Calendar of State Papers (p. 347, 1597):—

Jan. 10. Complaint of Dr. William James, Dean of Durham, to Lord (Burghley?) The decay of tillage and dispeopling of villages offends God by spoiling the Church, dishonours the prince, weakens the commonwealth, &c., &c., but it is nowhere so dangerous as in northern parts. The inhabitants' arms were wont to be the strength walls, but now they are open gaps; want and waste have crept into Northumberland, Westmoreland, & Cumberland; many have to come 60 miles from Carlisle to Durham to buy bread, and sometimes for 20 miles there will be no inhabitant. In the bishopric of Durham, 500

* Transactions of Cumbd. & Westmd. Association for advancement of Literature and Science, No. xij. 1887, p. 70.

ploughs

ploughs have decayed in a few years, and corn has to be fetched from Newcastle, whereby the plague is spread in the northern counties; thus the money goes, and the people can neither pay their landlords nor store their ground. By this decay, the Queen loses 500 horsemen, who were bound with their servants to be ready armed at an hour's warning. Also those that remain have to bear the burden of the 500 decayed. Of 8000 acres lately in tillage, now not eight score are tilled; those who sold corn have to buy, and colleges and cathedrals are impoverished, because tenants cannot pay their rents; then whole families are turned out, and poor borough towns are pestered with four or five families under one roof. I beg the setting of these ploughs again, and present this to you in the absence of the Bishop, who tenderly affects this cause.

Under date Jan. 16, Dr. Wm. James writes to Secretary Cecil:—

If corn were not brought in at Newcastle, which now has the plague, thousands would perish for want of bread.

Mr. Lees, in a letter published in Stockdale's "Annals of Cartmel," has the following note:—

The cause of this destructive pestilence is thus described by King, in one of his sermons at York. Remember the Spring was very unkind by means of the abundance of rains; our July hath been like a February, our June even as an April, so that the air must needs be corrupted. God amend it in his mercy and stay the plague of waters.

Except the inscription on the Penrith stone there are no records of the numbers affected with the plague at Carlisle, and none of the local registers go so far back. Jefferson, (*History of Carlisle*, p. 44) says that in 1598 contributions were raised for the diseased poor, which amounted to £209 9s. 10d. According to Gibson's *Camden*, quoted by Hutchinson, *History of Cumberland*, vol. I, p. 326, the plague broke out on October 3. He says no notice was taken of any deaths except those in the city and places quite adjacent. The lesson which the visitation taught was a severe one, and precautions were taken for preventing the city from becoming infected by strangers in
the

the future. Chancellor Ferguson tells me that the Chamberlain Accounts of the City of Carlisle for 1604 contain note of payments for watching the gates to prevent any plague stricken foreigner from entering.

After this great pestilence a quarter of a century elapsed before the next epidemic in the Border district, of which I can find record. Several references to an unusual mortality in 1623 are to be found in previous volumes of our Transactions. The first to call attention to this subject was Mr. Wm. Jackson, who, in examining the Newton Reigny registers, was surprised at the great mortality in 1597 and 1623, and Mr. Lees found from the Greystoke registers that the same years had an excessive mortality. Mr. Lees' idea was that this mortality was only local, caused by a bad harvest in 1622, or a very inclement season in 1623, or perhaps both. At Greystoke the mortality in the latter year was nearly as bad as in the plague year in 1597. Further enquiry has shown, however, that the mortality in this year was very heavy over most parts of Cumberland and Westmorland, and also in the South of Scotland, and the existence of the plague as one of the causes of it is shown from the following extract from McDowall's "History of Dumfries," 2nd Ed. p. 381.

Again the two fell destroyers visited the country in 1623. At midsummer that year, Calderwood tells us, the famine was so sore that many, both in burgh and land died of hunger, numerous poor folks, who flocked into Edinburgh in a vain search for succour, falling down lifeless in the streets of the city. For several months prior to Michaelmas the mortality in Perth was at the rate of ten or twelve deaths per day: some other towns suffered in the same proportion; and Dumfries, perhaps, in a greater degree than any. Fearful must have been the condition of the burgh in that fatal year: many of the people pining for want—many more perishing under the arrows of the pestilence—some suffering from both the famine and the plague.

A tabular statement of the death rate in some of the parishes in the two counties may be of some interest. It
shows

shows how widespread the epidemic was, and how great the death rate was in some small parishes:—

	YEAR	BURIALS	
Gosforth	1596	56	} average about 13
"	1597	116	
Camerton	1615	7	
"	1616	5	
"	1623	92	
Bolton, C.	1623	50	double ordinary years
Edenhall	1622	6	
"	1623	17	
Langwathby	1596	8	
"	1597	17	
"	1598	26	
"	1623	14	
Kirkoswald	1597	10	
"	1598	51	
Kendal	1622	288	
"	1623	762	
"	1624	171	
Greystoke	1597	182	} average under 30
"	1623	163	
Crosthwaite	1597	267	} average about 30
"	1598	84	
"	1623	257	
Newton Reigny	1597	30	} average 8
" "	1623	35	
Saint Bees	1623	145	average 30
Kirkby Lonsdale	1597	82	} average under 50
" "	1598	110	
" "	1623	120	
St. Leonards, Cleator	1598	11	} average 5
" "	1623	28	
Lamplugh	1597	26	average 12
Hawkshead	1597	85	
"	1623	98	
"	1777	12	
"	1752	10	
Millom	1596	22	
"	1597	13	
"	1598	17	

Millom

Millom	1599	28	
"	1622	9	
"	1623	10	
"	1624	12	
Dean	1596	7	
"	1618	4	
"	1623	54	
"	1629	11	
Ravenstonedale*	1578	25	
"	1579	39	
"	1587	29	
"	1588	30	
"	1597	27	
"	1598	16	
"	1623	45	} average 15
"	1624	34	
"	1730	53	average 17

In the West of Cumberland plague seems to have been very prevalent. Dr. Ormrod, of Workington, who has kindly examined the registers at Dean, Lamplugh, and Camerton, for me, sends the following interesting note regarding the latter register:—

The register dates from 1599, is well preserved and the writing such as you would expect from one of Queen Elizabeth's churchmen clear and stylish. A very weak imagination can picture the horrors of that time. The parish seems to have included Flimby (with a chapel) Camerton, Seaton and the hamlet of Ribton. Death seems to have treated all alike from the Curwen who seems to have been the squire (a younger branch of the Workington Curwens) to "ye poore childe and ye poore woman whom no one knoweth,"—whose deaths without a name are recorded. The clerk seems to have lived through it all, for the same scholarly hand records the whole of the dismal tale. The churchyard at Camerton is small now, and it has been enlarged, but it must have been raised in height by the accumulation of human clay, for during the year 1623-4, April to April, 92 bodies were interred.

* In forwarding me the Ravenstonedale statistics, the Rev. R. W. Metcalfe says the mortality was especially high in June, July, and August of 1730, and the epidemic must have been very contagious judging from the frequency of the same family name occurring. There is no mention of this epidemic in any of the local histories I have seen.

In

In	1615	1616	1617	1618	1619	1620
Burials	7	5	10	13	9	12
In	1621	1622	1623	1624	1625	
Burials	9	16	92	7	14	
In	1626	1627	1628	1629	1630	
Burials	2 (can't make out)		1	3	5	

The year 1622 seems to have been a sickly time, but it was not till the summer of 1623 that the death cloud burst in its full fury. In the month of March and April the average was as usual, but it rose with alarming rapidity, attaining its maximum in September.

Mch & Apl	May	June	July	August
4	3	7	12	15
Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jany.
20	16	6	4	2
				3

Two and three deaths were common in a house.
 Gyles Dynningon died with his wife and daughter
 John Pearson died with his wife and daughter
 Henry Allisan lost wife and two daughters
 Geo. Bouch lost wife daughter and reputed daughter
 John Moor lost son and daughter

Antony Yeoward lost wife son brother and I think more besides.
 There was no time for marryings and christenings for few took place that year but the following year they were marrying and giving in marriage as usual, and the number of christenings was very large. To one who knows the district well and can imagine what it was then these bare facts furnish the outline of a ghastly picture—the idle plough—the silent spinning wheel, the melancholy hearth, and the subdued conversation as each enquired of his neighbour who had gone last and wondered who would be next.

Comparing this plague year with the last cholera visitation in 1849, Dr. Ormrod furnishes me with the number of burials in the parishes of St. Michael's and St. John's, Workington, during the following years :--

In	1847	195	burials.
„	1848	151	„
„	1849	276	„
„	1850	126	„

The

The plague of 1623 seems to have been the last epidemic year in the two counties.* A few more instances of its presence are recorded, but it does not seem to have had any great prevalence.

Some instances of the plague are remarkable for the high station of those affected. I am indebted to Mrs. Ware for calling my attention to the fact that two successive Bishops of Carlisle died of the plague: their deaths are recorded in the Dalston registers. Bishop John Meyt who succeeded Bishop Richard Barnes in 1577, died in 1597 from the plague at Rose Castle, at eight o'clock in the morning, and was buried in the Cathedral in the evening of the same day. His successor, Bishop Henry Robinson, who became celebrated for his piety and learning, died of the plague at Rose Castle on the 19th June, 1616, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, and was buried in the Cathedral the same evening about eleven o'clock.† Henry Lord Clifford, writing from Appleby Castle, under date Sep. 10, 1625, to Sec. Conway, states:—

That the plague is in Lord Will. Howard's house. Sir Francis Howard's lady took the infection from a new gown she had from London so as she died the same day she took it.

In the household books of Lord William Howard, of Naworth Castle (published by Surtees Society, p. 227,) occurs this entry:—

Rewards and given to the poor (inter alia) Octob. 5. Given to my Lady for the poor at Sir Francis' Ladye's funeralls iij^{li}.

In a foot note on same page:—

* Great poverty and scarcity prevailed for some years in the North about this period. In 1629 the Justices of the Peace made a representation to the Council on this subject (vide Calendar of State Papers,—Domestic, 1629, p. 450):—"Of late the price of corn is marvellously enhanced in all these northern parts, being much about the prices following,—a quarter of wheat, £4; rye, £3; bigg, 40s.; oats, 20s., after the rate of twelve gallons to the bushel, the ordinary measure of the country. Fear even these prices will be higher, except they be supplied from the south. Pray them to stay the export of corn."

† Jefferson's History of Carlisle, p. 216.

‡ Op. Cit. p. 180.

Margare

Margaret, daughter of John Preston, of the Manor of Furness, Esq., the first wife of Sir Francis Howard. Her death is recorded in Sir Francis' prayer book, in his handwriting, as having taken place on the 7th of September, 1625. The book is preserved at Corby,—(Cf Howard Memorials, of the late Henry Howard, Esq., of Corby p. 81.) She died of the plague, as we learn from a letter by Henry, Lord Clifford, to Secretary Conway, dated Appleby Castle, Sept. 10, 1625 —:“the plague is gotten unto my Lord William Howarde's house, and the first that dyed of it was, Sr Francis Howarde's lady, whoe tooke the infection from a new gowne she had from London, soe as she dyed the same day she tooke it, wherupon they are all dispersed most miserably, with the greatest terror in the worlde, since they had all beene with the lady, and all in danger by that meanes. God knowes it was a most lamentable accident, and worthy of the tenderest pytty, to have all his children and grand-children in this aparant danger, and the lady of Sr William Howarde, the hope of his house (beeinge his heyer), greate with childe.” (S. P. Dom Charles I, vi. 46).

In West Cumberland (Bridekirk Registers, vide Trans. vol. IV, p. 262,) two families seem to have been destroyed by the plague in 1647 and are entered as *peste mortui*, and in a note, p. 279, the destruction by plague of the Bromfield family is recorded as having taken place in 1648. This is the last local entry of the plague I can find. The great Visitation, as it is called, took place in London in 1665, and this was followed by the decline and ultimate cessation of the disease not only in Europe, but in the East generally. It finally disappeared from the English Bills of Mortality in 1679. The ravages, however, of the disease about the time when the English Liturgy was penned in 1547 will show the great significance which would be attached to the following words in the Liturgy :—

From lightning and tempest ; from *plague*, pestilence, and famine ; from battle and murder, and from sudden death, Good Lord, deliver us.

NOTE.—Since the above paper was in type I have had the opportunity, through the courtesy of Dr. Garnett, of examining the topographical catalogue of MSS. and also the catalogue of MS treatises and papers relating to the plague in the British Museum. There does

does not appear to be any matters of direct local bearing but from enquires I made of the courteous keeper of the department, I am inclined to think that valuable and interesting material might possibly be found in the Court rolls of some of the manors in Cumberland and Westmorland, and also in collections of private correspondence. The kind of information which may be expected from the latter source may be gathered from an extract which I quote from the Egerton papers—Camden Society, p. 406.

Letter from Lord Dumfermline, Lord Chancellor of Scotland to the Lord Chancellor of England, dated 30 October, 1606.

“ The estaite of this kingdome in quietnes, obedience, and all other respects, is indeed better (thanks to God) at this present, nor it has been seene in ony leving menns remembrance. The only truble we haiff is this contagious sicknes of peste, whilk is spread marvelouslie in the best townes of this realme. In Edenburgh it has bene continuall this four years, at the present not werie vehement, bot sik as staves the cowmann course of administration off justice, whilk can not be weill exercised in naa other plain. Air and Stirveling ar almost overthrown with the seiknes, within thir twa moneths about twa thousand persones dead in ane of thame. The maist of the people fled, and the townes almoste left desolat. Dundie and Pearthe, otherwayes called St. Jhonstoun, the twa best townes in this kingdome nixt to Edenburgh, wearie wealthie and merchant townes indeed, ar baith also infected within theis twa monthes, and in great truble. Glasgow and many other townes and partes ar in the same distres. God of his mercie remove the same.”

If any of my readers having access to such sources of information as I have indicated will communicate with me, I shall be much obliged.