Daniel Defoe's Journal of the plague year

Defoe Daniel
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Author: Defoe Daniel

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DANIEL Defoe

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JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR
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DANIEL DEFOE

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EDITED
WITH NOTES AND AN INTRODUCTION

BY

GEORGE RICE CARPENTER
PROFESSOR OF RHETORIC AND ENGLISH COMPOSITION IN COLUMBIA COLLEGE

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PREFACE

UNABLE to obtain access to a copy of the exceedingly rare first edition of the "Journal of the Plague Year," I have been forced to content myself with reproducing the common text, frequently, and, it is to be feared, carelessly, reprinted during the present century. No alterations have been made except by the correction of obvious misprints, slight changes (for the sake of clearness and uniformity) in Defoe's erratic punctuation, the omission of a few passages inappropriate for school use, and the rough division of the work into something like chapters. For this last procedure there is no warrant but necessity. No boy of to-day can be expected, undriven, to find his way through the mazes of Defoe's narrative without some such aid. The method of annotation is very simple. I have merely attempted to explain such words, phrases, or allusions as might puzzle a young reader. Defoe's style I have not attempted to correct, but I have frequently indicated the points at which his usage differs from the accepted usage of to-day.

Defoe's original title, "The Journal of the Plague Year," has been restored in this edition. The current title of the work, "The History of the Plague," comes from the second edition, published after Defoe's death, and, to all appearances, without any previous authorization by him of the change in name.

G. R. CARPENTER.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE, August, 1895.
NOTE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The recent publication of a reproduction of the first edition of the "Journal of the Plague Year," as volume nine of Mr. G. A. Aitkin's "Romances and Narratives of Daniel Defoe," enables us to tell precisely what changes were made in later editions, which appeared after Defoe's death. The changes consisted merely, with the exception of a few comparatively unimportant verbal alterations, in the omission of a number of paragraphs, which I take this opportunity of adding to this edition as an appendix. So many of the omitted paragraphs touch on matters of religious opinion or feeling and on civic administration that it is not unfair to suppose that the unknown editor was frequently guided, in cancelling them, by his ideas of propriety.

April, 1896.
INTRODUCTION

I. BIOGRAPHY

The great journalist and novelist, Daniel Defoe, was born in a parish of London frequently referred to in the “Journal of the Plague Year,” that of St. Giles, Cripplegate, in 1659, of a family of Flemish extraction, whose name, Foe, he changed, in middle life, for reasons not easy to understand, to De Foe or Defoe. His father, a butcher by trade and a Dissenter by religion, placed his son, in 1673, at an academy near London, where he was prepared for the ministry under the charge of Charles Morton, afterwards a prominent clergyman at Charlestown, Massachusetts, and vice-president of Harvard College, a man of learning and originality, whose excellent practice it was to drill his pupils, with more than usual care, in the use of their mother-tongue, as well as in the ancient and modern languages. Defoe went into business, not into the ministry, though throughout his life his mind was at various times much interested in religious and ethical questions.

Of the life of no famous writer of his time do we know less that is definite. In 1683 he was what we should call a commission-merchant for hosiery. In 1684 he married. Up to 1692, in which year he became a bankrupt, owing his creditors some seventeen thousand pounds, we know only that he had visited Spain and Portugal, and had made several journeys to Scotland; that he was an active member, sometimes preaching, of a suburban dissenting congregation; that, moved no doubt by patriotic and religious zeal, he took part in the reckless anti-Catholic rebellion headed by the Duke of Monmouth; that, like Steele, his
great contemporary, he was deeply interested in politics and an ardent Whig; and that he was a member of the regiment of volunteers who escorted William III. to Guildhall after the glorious revolution of 1689. In 1694 he held a small post under the government, was a large shareholder in a brick and tile manufactory, and in prosperous circumstances.

From 1697 on, Defoe was the author of occasional political pamphlets, not without their influence on the affairs of the times, and in 1701 he became famous through an exceedingly clever political tract in verse, "The True-born Englishman," defending William III. against his detractors, who called him a foreigner, by developing the very sensible argument that the English race was such a mongrel mixture that it ill behooved it to stickle over slight differences of extraction:

"For Englishmen to boast of generation
   Cancels their knowledge and lampoons the nation;
   A true-born Englishman's a contradiction,
   In speech an irony, in fact a fiction."

All London, at that time all the England to whom an author looked for audience, laughed at Defoe's wit and skill; eighty thousand pirated copies of the poem were sold, besides the authorized editions; and Defoe was in high favor with the King and the Whigs. His pen continued active. A dozen other Whig pamphlets appeared in 1701, and eight in 1702; among the latter was one, "The Shortest Way with the Dissenters," which, now that King William was dead, and the Tories in the ascendant, brought him into serious trouble. The tract was couched in the serious, ironical style which we associate chiefly with Swift, and purported to be the utterance of an extreme Tory and Church of England man, who gravely proposed to solve the seemingly never-ending struggle with the Dissenters by rigorous persecution and complete destruction. "Now let us crucify the thieves," are his closing words; "and