

war." An attempt was made to impose the non-resisting oath upon the whole nation; but it was defeated by a small majority.

The extent of the miseries inflicted by the Plague in London was probably diminished by "The Settlement Act" of 1662.* This was entitled "An Act for the better relief of the Poor." The preamble of the Statute declares the continual increase of the Poor, not only within the cities of London and Westminster, but also through the whole kingdom; but there is little reason to doubt that the main object of the Bill was to thrust out from the parishes of the metropolis, all chargeable persons occupying tenements under the yearly value of ten pounds. By this Act the power of removal was first established—a measure which, however modified, has done as much evil to the labouring population in destroying their habits of self-dependence, as a legal provision for their support, prudently administered, has been a national blessing. The Settlement Act was carried by the metropolitan members, with little resistance from the country members. "The habitual congregating of the vagrant classes in London, and the dread of pestilence likely to be thereby engendered, appear to have overborne or neutralised all other considerations at the time, and hastened the passing of the Act."† The united efforts made by the Londoners to carry this Bill, leave little room to doubt that they acted upon it very promptly and vigilantly; and thus some considerable portion of the indigent population must have been driven forth from London and Westminster, to seek their parishes under the old laws which determined their lawful place of abode. The ten pound rental, either in London or the country, could protect none of the really indigent. It gave a privilege only to the well-to-do artisan or tradesman who had no legal settlement by birth, apprenticeship, or other legal claim. In 1675, in a debate on a Bill for restraint of building near London, one member said that "by the late Act the poor are hunted like foxes out of parishes, and whither must they go but where there are houses?" Another declared that "the Act for the settlement of the poor does, indeed, thrust all people out of the country to London."‡ The intent of the framers of the Act had probably been defeated by the reprisals of the rural magistrates and overseers. The system of hunting the poor went on amidst the perpetual litigation of nearly two centuries; and it is not yet come to an end.

* 14 Car. II. c. 12.

† Sir G. Nicholls: "History of the English Poor Law," vol. i. p. 297.

‡ "Parl. Hist." vol. iv. col. 679.

CHAPTER VIII.

Naval affairs.—Annus Mirabilis.—France joins the Dutch against England.—The sea-fight of four days.—The London Gazette.—Restraints upon the Press.—Ravages of the English fleet on the Dutch Coast.—The Great Fire of London.—Note, on Wren's Plan for rebuilding the City.

THE naval victory of the 3rd of June, 1665, was a fruitless triumph, won at a lavish expenditure of blood. The most loyal of the subordinate administrators of public affairs considered that a great success had been thrown away. Evelyn writes, (June 8th) "Came news of his highness' victory, which indeed might have been a complete one, and at once ended the war, had it been pursued; but the cowardice of some, or treachery, or both, frustrated that." When the Dutch fled from off Lowestoffe to their own shores, the English fleet commenced a pursuit; but in the night the King Charles, the duke of York's ship, slackened sail and brought to. In a Council of War, as Burnet relates upon the authority of the earl of Montague, Admiral Penn affirmed that they must prepare for hotter work in the next engagement; for he well knew the courage of the Dutch was never so high as when they were desperate. The courtiers said that the duke had got honour enough, and why should he venture a second time. His royal highness went to sleep; and in the night Brunkhard, one of his servants, delivered an order to the master of the King Charles to slacken sail, which order purported to be written by the duke. The House of Commons instituted an inquiry; and it was alleged that Brunkhard forged the order. Burnet says, "Lord Montague did believe that the duke was *struck*, seeing the earl of Falmouth, the king's favourite, and two other persons of quality, killed very near him; and that he had no mind to engage again." Some members of the House of Commons thought it a very desirable thing for the nation that the king's brother should incur no more such dangers. The duke remained at home, to contribute his share to the scandals which the Court habitually provoked, whether at Whitehall or at Oxford.

The Plague-year has passed; the "Year of Wonders" is come.

Dryden called his *Annus Mirabilis* "an historical poem." In his preface he says, "I have taken upon me to describe the motives, the beginning, progress, and successes, of a most just and necessary War; in it, the care, management, and prudence of our king; the conduct and valour of a royal admiral, and of two incomparable generals; the invincible courage of our captains and seamen; and three glorious victories, the result of all. After this, I have, in the Fire, the most deplorable, but withal the greatest, argument that can be imagined: the destruction being so swift, so sudden, so vast and miserable, as nothing can parallel in story." The year 1666 is, indeed, an eventful year; and the relation of its miseries, so closely following upon the calamity of the Plague, carries with it the consolation that the spirit of the English people, founded upon their industrious habits and their passion for liberty, has always been able to surmount the greatest political evils, and to acquire, even under the severest dispensations of Providence, the courage and perseverance which convert chastisements into blessings.

At the beginning of 1666, Louis XIV., for objects purely personal, joined the Dutch against England, and declared war. This policy of the French Court had a tendency to make the war with the Hollanders more popular in England. Prince Rupert, who was now a resident in London, and who had a command in the engagement off Lowestoffe, was not regarded with any public confidence; and the king felt it necessary to associate the duke of Albemarle with him in the command of the fleet. On the 8th of May the two Generals were at the Nore with their squadrons. "I sailed to the buoy of the Nore to my Lord-General and Prince Rupert, where was the rendezvous of the most glorious fleet in the world, now preparing to meet the Hollander."* The people of London, dispirited by the ravages of the plague, many outraged by the persecutions against the non-conformists, unable or indisposed to pay the taxes for the war, had little enthusiasm as to its results. The 29th of May came, and Pepys is heavily afflicted at beholding few bonfires on the east-side of Temple-bar. Clarendon says "Monies could neither be collected nor borrowed where the Plague had prevailed, which was over all the City, and over a great part of the country; the collectors durst not go to require it or receive it." † On the 31st a public Fast-day was appointed to pray for the success of the fleet; "but," says Pepys, "it is a pretty

* Evelyn, "Diary," May 8.

† "Life."

thing to consider how little a matter they make of this keeping a Fast, that it was not declared time enough to be read in the churches, the last Sunday; but ordered by proclamation since: I suppose upon some sudden news of the Dutch having come out." The Dutch fleet had come out; and on the 1st of June it was in the Downs, with Monk in sight of their formidable line of fighting vessels. On the 2nd there is a curious spectacle at Greenwich. The king and the duke of York have come down the river in their barge; and they walk to the Park to hear the loud firing of the ships in the Channel. The group of lordly attendants on Greenwich-hill, whispering and pointing as the sullen boom of the guns comes up the Thames;—Charles and James standing apart in puzzled conference, or laughing at some ill-timed jest;—a bowing courtier approaching the royal presence to bring news just arrived at Whitehall,—this is a scene which painting might properly make its own. That distant roar of cannon was not imaginary. Monk and Rupert had separated. It had been believed that the Dutch fleet was not ready for sea; and Monk, with fifty-four sail, had floated calmly from the Nore; when behold, there are eighty Dutch men-at-war at anchor off the North Foreland. The surprise was unaccountable; but it is a proof how rashly naval warfare was conducted when landsmen were the chief commanders. The English courage was too much relied upon; the science and experience which can alone make courage truly efficient were thought subordinate requisites. Monk was a hardy soldier, but a very imperfect naval tactician;—moreover he was now elated and presumptuous. He dashed at the Dutch; fought all day; and at night looked round upon disabled ships. De Witt was in the fleet of Holland; and chain-shot, of which he was held to be the inventor, cut the English rigging to pieces. They fired at our towering sails; we at their high-raised decks. The battle was resumed at the early dawn of the 2nd of June. De Ruyter had received a re-inforcement of sixteen ships during the night. Monk was looking in vain for Rupert to come to his aid. Another day of terrible fight, with losses severe enough on the English side, to have driven to despair a commander less resolute than Monk. Dryden has pictured him at nightfall, standing upon deck, while "the moon shone clear on the becalmed flood," musing on the probable issue of another day, and mournfully preparing for an ocean grave. On the 3rd he burnt some of his disabled ships, and retreated, fighting De Ruyter's rear-guard. The noblest ship of the English navy ran on the

Galloper sand, and was lost. Late on the 3rd, Rupert arrived from St. Helen's; and the battle was renewed with more equality. The poet describes how the anxious prince had heard the cannon long, and drew dire omens of English overmatched.* The historian says, "he had received orders to return from St. Helen's on the first day of the battle; nor was it ever explained why he did not join Albemarle till the evening of the third."† The Diarist divides the blame between the government at home, and the proud prince, whose obstinate self-reliance had produced so many of the royalist disasters in the Civil War; "I to sir G. Carteret, who told me there hath been great bad management in all this; that the king's orders that went on Friday for calling back the prince were sent but by the ordinary post on Wednesday; and come to the prince his hands but on Friday; and then, instead of sailing presently, he stays till four in the evening. And that which is worst of all, the Hampshire, laden with merchants' money, come from the Straits, set out with or but just before the fleet, and was in the Downs by five of the clock yesterday morning; and the prince with his fleet come to Dover but at ten of the clock at night. This is hard to answer, if it be true. This puts great astonishment into the king, and duke, and court, everybody being out of countenance. Home by the 'Change, which is full of people still, and all talk highly of the failure of the prince in not making more haste after his instructions did come, and of our managements here in not giving it sooner and with more care and oftener." The first desire of the court, and the more natural one, was to set forth that there had been a great victory. Newspapers, then, had no peculiar sources of information, to check the tendency of all governments to deceive the people as to the results of their warlike enterprises—a tendency which only makes disappointment more severe when truth comes out, and thus exhibits falsehood not only as a crime but as a fault. The court had now got its "Gazette," which was first published at Oxford on the 7th of November, 1665; and soon after became "The London Gazette." Roger L'Estrange, Esquire, had commenced his "Intelligence published for the satisfaction and information of the People," and his "Newes," in 1663; the one issued on a Monday, the other on a Thursday. What real satisfaction and information the public could derive from these productions may be gathered from the address of their conductor. He was "Surveyor of the Imprimery and Printing Presses;" and he tells his readers

* "Annus Mirabilis," stanza cvi.

† Lingard.

that his sacred majesty has been pleased "to grant and commit the privilege of publishing all intelligence, together with the survey and inspection of the Press, to one and the same person. He candidly informs his subscribers that, "supposing the press in order, the people in their right wits, and news or no news to be the question, a public Mercury should never have my vote." He is of opinion that it makes the multitude "too familiar with the actions and counsels of their superiors, too pragmatical and censorious; and gives them, not only an itch, but a colourable right and licence to be meddling with the government." To keep the multitude in the right course, he thinks "the prudent management of a Gazette may contribute to a very high degree."* This worthy Licenser was preceded in his high endeavours for the reformation of the pragmatical and censorious multitude by the Licensing Act of 1662, by which all books, according to their subjects, were to be licensed by the chancellor, the secretary of state, the bishops, and other great personages. All these authorities, practically, became merged in Roger L'Estrange, Esquire. The number of master printers in London was limited to twenty; no books were allowed to be printed out of London, except at the two Universities and at York; and all unlicensed books were to be seized, and the publisher punished by heavy penalties. The Stationers' Company was made a principal agency for carrying through these despotic regulations. We may well judge, therefore, that the real issue of the four days' fight in the Downs would be explained to the multitude after a fashion which the "prudent management" of the virtuous licenser of the Press, and candid monopolist of all intelligence, would prescribe. When Mr. Pepys entered in cipher in his Diary, "Lord, to see how melancholy the Court is under the thoughts of this last overthrow, for so it is, instead of a victory, so much and so unreasonably expected," it was the duty of Roger L'Estrange to make the ignorant multitude very joyful. Still there were material evidences of the truth. There were no Dutch prizes in the Thames; and when Mr. Evelyn, with all his royalist devotion, went to Sheerness on the 15th of June, he made this record: "Here I beheld the sad spectacle—more than half that gallant bulwark of the kingdom miserably shattered; hardly a vessel entire, but appearing so many wrecks and hulls, so cruelly had the Dutch mangled us." The "sad sight" makes him acknowledge that none knew "for what reason we first engaged in this ungrateful war." There was a partial success when a portion

* See Nichol's "Literary Anecdotes," 1812, vol. iv. p. 36.

of the two fleets met again on the 25th of July, each being refitted. The Dutch were chased to their ports; and Monk and Rupert kept their coasts in alarm. A squadron of boats and fire-ships entered the channel at Schelling; burnt two men-of-war and a hundred and fifty merchantmen; and, to the disgrace of civilised warfare, reduced to ashes the thousand houses of the unfortified town of Brandaris. For this success, a day of Thanksgiving was appointed. It was kept; "though many muttered that it was not wisely done, to provoke the Dutch, by burning their houses, when it was easy for them to do the like by us, on our sea-coasts."* De Witt saw the havoc of Brandaris; and he swore a solemn oath, that till he had obtained revenge, he would never sheathe the sword. He kept his oath. The 'Annus Mirabilis' was at an end before the great Dutch statesman inflicted a terrible retribution. At the close of the year came Dryden, intent upon earning the laureate wreath, and proclaimed the glories of 1666, in magnificent quatrains:—

"Already we have conquered half the war,
And the less dangerous part is left behind:
Our trouble now is but to make them dare,
And not so great to vanquish as to find."†

The story of the Great Fire of London has been related with minuteness by many trustworthy observers. We can place ourselves in the midst of this extraordinary scene, and make ourselves as familiar with its details as if the age of newspapers had arrived, and a host of reporters had been engaged in collecting every striking incident. But it is not in the then published narratives that we find those graphic touches which constitute the chief interest of this event at the present time. Half a century ago the materials for a faithful record of the Great Fire were to be sought in the report of a Committee of the House of Commons, in the State Trials, and in various tracts issued at the period. There are also several striking passages of Baxter's "Life," which relate to the fire. But such notices are meagre compared with the personal records in the two remarkable Diaries which have been rescued from obscurity during our own day. We are with Mr. Pepys in his night-gown at three o'clock in the morning of Sunday, the 2nd of September, looking out of his window in Seething Lane, at the east end of the City, and, thinking the fire far enough off, going to sleep again.

* Baxter, "Life," part iii. p. 16.

† "Annus Mirabilis," cccii.

We accompany him later in the morning to a high place in the Tower, and see the houses near London Bridge on fire. The weather is hot and dry, and a furious east wind is blowing. The active Mr. Pepys takes a boat from the Tower Stairs; and slowly sculling up stream, looks upon the burning houses in the streets near the Thames; distracted people getting their goods on board lighters; and the inhabitants of the houses at the water's edge not leaving till the fire actually reached them. He has time to look at the pigeons—of which the Londoners generally were then as fond as the Spitalfields weavers of our time—hovering about the windows and balconies till they burned their wings and fell down. There is nobody attempting to quench the fire in that high wind. Everything is combustible after the long drought. Human strength seems in vain, and the people give themselves up to despair. The busy Secretary of the Navy reaches Whitehall, and tells his story to the king, and he entreats his majesty to order houses to be pulled down, for nothing less would stop the fire. The king desires Pepys to go to the lord mayor and give him this command. In Cannon-street he encounters the lord mayor, who cries, like a fainting woman, "Lord! what can I do? I am spent. People will not obey me." He had been pulling down houses. He did not want any soldiers. He had been up all night, and must go home and refresh himself. There is no service in the churches, for the people are crowding them with their goods. The worthy Pepys had invited a dinner-party on this Sunday; and so he goes home; and, "we had an extraordinary good dinner, and as merry as at that time we could be." But he and his guests sit not long over their feast. He walks through the streets; and again he takes boat at Paul's Wharf. He now meets the king and the duke of York in their barge. They ordered that houses should be pulled down apace; but the fire came on so fast that little could be done. We get glimpses in this confusion of the domestic habits of the citizens. "The river full of lighters and boats taking in goods; and good goods swimming about in the water; and I observed that hardly one lighter or boat in three that had the goods of a house in, but there was a pair of virginals in it." The severer Puritans had not driven out the old English love of music; the citizens' wives and daughters still had the imperfect spinet upon which Elizabeth and her maids of honour played. That hot September evening is spent by our observer upon the water. Showers of fire-drops are driving in his face. He sees the fiery flakes shooting up

from one burning house, and then dropping upon another five or six houses off, and setting that on flame. The roofs were in many streets only thatched: the walls were mostly timber. Warehouses in Thames-street were stored with pitch, and tar, and oil, and brandy. The night came on; and then Pepys, from a little ale-house on the Bankside, saw the fire grow, and shoot out between churches and houses, "in a most horrid, malicious, bloody flame, not like the fire flame of an ordinary fire." And then, as it grew darker, he saw the fire up the hill in an arch of above a mile long. Then rose the moon shedding a soft light over the doomed city; and amidst the terrible glare and the gentle radiance the whole world of London was awake, gazing upon the conflagration, or labouring to save something from its fury.

We turn to the Diary of Mr. Evelyn—a more elegant writer than Pepys, but scarcely so curious an observer of those minute points that give life to a picture. He has seen the fire from the Bankside on Sunday afternoon; and on Monday he returns to see the whole south part of the city burning. It was now taking hold of the great cathedral, which was surrounded by scaffolds for its repair. "The noise and cracking and thunder of the impetuous flames, the shrieking of women and children, the hurry of people, the fall of towers, houses, and churches, was like a hideous storm; and the air all about so hot and inflamed, that at the last one was not able to approach it, so that they were forced to stand still, and let the flames burn on, which they did, for near two miles in length and one in breadth. The clouds, also, of smoke were dismal, and reached, upon computation, near fifty miles in length. Thus I left it this afternoon burning, a resemblance of Sodom, or the last day."

On Tuesday, the 4th, Evelyn saw that the fire had reached as far as the Inner Temple. "All Fleet-street, the Old Bailey, Ludgate-hill, Warwick-lane, Newgate, Paul's-chain, Watling-street, now flaming, and most of it reduced to ashes; the stones of Paul's flew like grenades, the melting lead running down the streets in a stream, and the very pavements glowing with fiery redness, so as no horse, nor man, was able to tread on them, and the demolition had stopped all the passages, so that no help could be applied; the eastern wind still more impetuously driving the flames forward." On that day the houses near the Tower were blown up; and the same judicious plan was pursued in other places. On the 5th the Court at Whitehall was in unwonted bustle. The king

and his brother had set an excellent example of personal activity; and gentlemen now took charge of particular streets, and directed the means of extinguishing the flames. The people now began to bestir themselves. The civic authorities no longer rejected the advice, which some seamen had given at first, to blow up the houses before the flames reached them, instead of attempting to pull them down. The wind abated. Large gaps were made in the streets. The desolation did not reach beyond the Temple westward, nor beyond Smithfield on the north. On Wednesday, the 5th, the mighty devourer was arrested in his course. Three days and three nights of agony had been passed; but not more than eight lives had been lost. Mr. Pepys at last lies down and sleeps soundly. He has one natural remark: "It is a strange thing to see how long this time did look since Sunday, having been always full of variety of actions, and little sleep, that it looked like a week or more, and I forgot almost the day of the week."

The contemporary accounts of the Fire, such as we find in a sensible pamphlet entitled 'Observations on the Burning of London,'* have little pretension to be picturesque in their details. The more elaborate passages of Evelyn's 'Diary' have been quoted again and again; and, grouped together, they form the best connected narrative of an eye-witness. There is one passage in Baxter's 'Life' which is not so familiar; but which, in its rapid eloquence, is as impressive as Evelyn, and more truly poetical than Dryden's vague sublimities: "It was a sight that might have given any man a lively sense of the vanity of this world, and all the wealth and glory of it, and of the future conflagration of all the world. To see the flames mount up towards heaven, and proceed so furiously without restraint: To see the streets filled with people astonished, that had scarce sense left them to lament their own calamity: To see the fields filled with heaps of goods; and sumptuous buildings, curious rooms, costly furniture, and household stuff, yea, warehouses and furnished shops and libraries, all on a flame, and none durst come near to receive anything: To see the king and nobles ride about the streets, beholding all these desolations, and none could afford the least relief: To see the air, as far as could be beheld, so filled with the smoke, that the sun shone through it with a colour like blood; yea, even when it was setting in the west, it so appeared to them that dwelt on the west side of the city. But the dolefullest sight of all was afterwards, to see

* Reprinted in "Harleian Miscellany."

what a ruinous confused place the city was, by chimnies and steeples only standing in the midst of cellars and heaps of rubbish; so that it was hard to know where the streets had been, and dangerous, of a long time, to pass through the ruins, because of vaults, and fire in them. No man that seeth not such a thing can have a right apprehension of the dreadfulness of it."

Whilst indifferent spectators were gazing on the fire from Bank side, and the high grounds on the south of the Thames, the fields on the north were filled with houseless men, women, and children. "I went," says Evelyn, "towards Islington and Highgate, where one might have seen two hundred thousand people, of all ranks and degrees, dispersed and lying along by their heaps of what they could save from the fire, deploring their loss; and, though ready to perish for hunger and destitution, yet not asking one penny for relief." There were liberal contributions from the king, and the nobility, and the clergy. Collections were made and distributed in alms to the most needy. But the real difficulty must have been to ensure a supply of food, when all the usual channels of interchange were choked up. Proclamations were made for the country people to bring in provisions. Facilities were offered to the people to leave the ruins, by a command that they should be received in all cities and towns to pursue their occupations; and that such reception should entail no eventual burthen on parishes. No doubt it was necessary to strive against the selfishness that vast calamities too often produce in the sufferers and the lookers-on. The country-people for miles around had gazed upon the flames.* There was an immense destruction of books; and their half-burnt leaves were carried by the wind even as far as Windsor. The dense cloud of smoke shut out the bright autumn sun from the harvest-fields, and upon distant roads men travelled in the shade. The extent of the calamity was apparent. Yet it may be doubted if many of the great ones received the visitation in a right spirit. Pepys says, "none of the nobility came out of the country at all,

* The author of this History, talking of the fire of London with a friend, in his 88th year, whose intellect is as bright as his knowledge is extensive, was much impressed by the fact that an event happening two centuries ago may have come to the ear of one now living, with only a single person intervening between himself and an eye-witness. Such a fact ought to lead us not to reject traditional information as unworthy of historical record. Our friend was born in 1769. His aunt, who died at 84 years of age, was accustomed to talk with him about his great-grandfather, who died in 1739, at 93 years of age. That great-grandfather used to describe his impressions of the fire of London, which he saw from a hill at Bishop's Stortford.

to help the king, or comfort him, or prevent commotions at this fire." Some of the insolent courtiers exulted in the destruction: "Now the rebellious city is ruined, the king is absolute, and was never king indeed till now."* One profligate "young commander" of the fleet "made mighty sport of it;" and rejoiced that the corruption of the citizens' wives might be effected at a very reduced cost. †

The Monument erected in commemoration of the Fire has an elaborate Latin inscription, in which it is set forth that the destruction comprised eighty-nine churches, the city-gates, Guildhall, many public structures, hospitals, schools, libraries; a vast number of stately edifices; thirteen thousand two hundred dwelling-houses, four hundred streets. An account, which estimates the houses burnt at twelve thousand, values them at an average rent of 25*l.* a year, and their value, at twelve years' purchase, at £3,600,000. The public buildings destroyed are valued at £1,800,000; the private goods at the same rate. With other items, the total amount of the loss is estimated at £7,335,000. ‡

But the interruption to industry must have involved even a more serious loss of the national capital. We have stated, on the authority of Clarendon, how the Plague had rendered it difficult to collect the revenue. He says of the necessities of the Crown in 1666, "Now this deluge by fire had dissipated the persons, and destroyed the houses, which were liable to the reimbursement of all arrears; and the very stocks were consumed which should carry on and revive the trade." §

The Monument, which was erected on the spot where the fire first broke out, recorded that the burning of this protestant city was begun and carried on by the treachery and malice of a popish faction. The "tall bully" lifted his head and lied in choice Latin for a century and three-quarters; and when the majority of men had grown more truly religious, and did not hold it the duty of one Christian to hate another who differed from him in doctrines and ceremonies, the Corporation of London wisely obliterated the offensive record. In the examinations before the Committee of the House of Commons, there was nothing beyond the most vague babble of the frightened and credulous, except the self-accusation of one Hubert, a French working-silversmith, who maintained that he was the incendiary. He was hanged, much to the disgrace of the administration of justice. "Neither the judges," says Claren-

* Baxter. † Pepys. ‡ "Harleian Miscellany," vol. vii. p. 331. § "Life."

don, "nor any present at the trial, did believe him guilty; but that he was a poor distracted wretch, weary of his life, and chose to part with it this way."

Dryden's stanzas on the Fire thus conclude, with reference to the popular superstition, which had its influence even upon the well-informed:

"The utmost malice of the stars is past,
And two dire comets, which have scourg'd the town,
In their own Plague and Fire have breathed their last,
Or dimly in their sinking sockets frown."

A medal was struck in commemoration of the Plague and Fire. The eye of God is in the centre; one comet is showering down pestilence and another flame. The east wind is driving on the flames. Death in the foreground is encountering an armed horseman. The legend is "*Sic Punit*"—So He punishes.

NOTE ON WREN'S PLAN FOR REBUILDING THE CITY.

Our noble Cathedral of St. Paul's, and many Churches which exhibit the genius of sir Christopher Wren in many graceful and original forms of towers and spires, grew out of the Great Fire. But the occasion was lost for a nobler city to arise, of wide streets, and handsome quays. The old wooden fabrics were replaced by those of brick; but the same narrow thoroughfares were preserved as of old. The owners of property could not be brought to unite in any common plan; and each built his house up again, upon his own spot of ground. The constant labour of succeeding times, and of our own especially, has been to clear away, at enormous cost, what the fire had cleared away in three days and nights. This want of co-operative action was not the result of any ignorance of what required to be done. Wren's labours and wishes are thus recorded: "In order to a proper reformation, Wren, pursuant to the royal command, immediately after the fire, took an exact survey of the whole area and confines of the burning, having traced over with great trouble and hazard the great plain of ashes and ruins; and designed a plan or model of a new city, in which the deformity and inconveniences of the old town were remedied, by the enlarging the streets and lanes, and carrying them as near parallel to one another as might be; avoiding, if compatible with greater conveniences, all acute angles; by seating all the parochial churches conspicuous and insular; by forming the most public places into large piazzas, the centre of six or eight ways; by uniting the halls of the twelve chief companies into one regular square annexed to Guildhall; by making a quay on the whole bank of the river, from Blackfriars to the Tower. . . . The streets to be of three magnitudes; the three principal leading straight through the City, and one or two cross streets, to be at least ninety feet wide; others sixty feet; and lanes about thirty feet, excluding all narrow dark alleys without thoroughfares, and courts. . . . The practicability of this scheme, without loss to any man or infringement of any property, was at that time demonstrated, and all material objections fully weighed and answered. The only, and as it happened insurmountable, difficulty remaining, was the obstinate averseness of great part of the citizens to alter their old properties, and to recede from building their houses again on the old ground and foundations; as also the distrust in many and unwillingness to give up their properties, though for a time only, into the hands of public trustees or commissioners, till they might be dispensed to them again, with more advantage to themselves than otherwise was possible to be effected. . . . The opportunity in a great degree was lost of making the new City the most magnificent, as well as commodious for health and trade, of any upon earth."*

* Wren's "Parentalia," p. 269.