

night in the openings of the infected lanes ; and the unsteady light flickered with ghastly effect on house and wall, and the flitting figures of the watchers. By day, the frequent coffins, borne to the grave by but a few bearers, and the frequent smoke that rose outside the place from fires kindled to consume the clothes of the infected, had their sad and startling effect ; a migration, too, of a considerable portion of the fisher population to the caves of the hill, in which they continued to reside till the disease left the place, formed a striking accompaniment of the visitation ; and yet, curiously enough, as the danger seemed to increase, the consternation lessened, and there was much less fear among the people when the disease was actually ravaging the place, than when it was merely stalking within sight around it. We soon became familiar, too, with its direst horrors, and even learned to regard them as comparatively ordinary and commonplace. I had read, about two years before, the passage in Southey's "*Colloquies*" in which Sir Thomas More is made to remark, that modern Englishmen have no guarantee whatever, in these latter times, that their shores shall not be visited, as of old, by devastating plagues. "As touching the pestilence," says Sir Thomas (or rather the poet in his name), "you fancy yourselves secure because the plague has not appeared among you for the last hundred and fifty years,—a portion of time which, long as it may seem, compared with the brief term of mortal existence, is as nothing in the physical history of the globe. The importation of that scourge is as possible now as it was in former times ; and were it once imported, do you suppose it would rage with less violence among the crowded population of your metropolis than it did before the fire ? What," he adds, "if the sweating sickness, emphatically called the English disease, were to show itself again ? Can any cause be assigned why it is not as likely to break out in the nineteenth century as in the fifteenth ?" And, striking as the passage is, I remembered perusing it with that incredulous feeling, natural to men in a quiet time, which leads them to draw so broad a line between the experience of history, if of a comparatively remote age, or of a distant place,