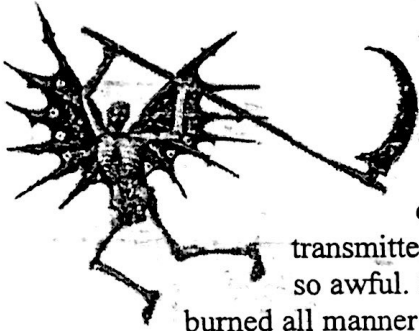


The Black Death

What were the efforts to stop the plague?



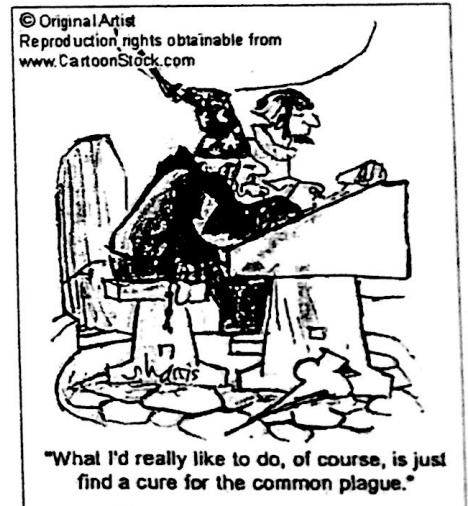
Although the government had medical workers try to prevent the plague, the plague persisted. Most medical workers quit and journeyed away because they feared getting the plague themselves.

horrible situation

"When the government acts to prevent or control a calamity, but the calamity persists, people turn to cures. Many believed that the disease was transmitted upon the air, probably because the smell from the dead and dying was so awful. So, the living turned to scents to ward off the deadly vapors. People burned all manner of incense: juniper, laurel, pine, beech, lemon leaves, rosemary, camphor and sulfur. Others had handkerchiefs dipped in aromatic oils, to cover their faces when going out. Another remedy was the cure of sound. Towns rang church bells to drive the plague away, for the ringing of town bells was done in crises of all kinds. Other towns fired cannons, which was new and made a comfortingly loud ding. There were no ends to talismans, charms, and spells that could be purchased from the local wise woman or apothecary. Many people knew of someone's friend or cousin who had drank elderberry every day, or who had worn a jade necklace, and who had survived the dreaded disease."

There were methods that did work. "Cities were hardest hit and tried to take measures to control an epidemic no one understood. In Milan, to take one of the most successful examples, city officials immediately walled up houses found to have the plague, isolating the healthy in them along with the sick. Venice took sophisticated and stringent quarantine and health measures, including isolating all incoming ships on a separate island. But people died anyway, though fewer in Milan and Venice than in cities that took no such measures. Pope Clement VI, living at Avignon, sat between two large fires to breath pure air. The plague bacillus actually is destroyed by heat, so this was one of the few truly effective measures taken."

"Realizing what a deadly disaster had come to them the people quickly drove the Italians from their city. However, the disease remained, and soon death was every where. Fathers abandoned their sick sons. Lawyers refused to come and make out wills for the dying. Friars and nuns were left to care for the sick, and monasteries and convents were soon deserted, as they were stricken, too. Bodies were left in empty houses, and there was no one to give them a Christian burial."



What were the effects of the Plague?

One of the groups that suffered the most was the Christian church. It lost prestige, spiritual authority, and leadership over the people. How? The church promised cures, treatment, and an explanation for the plague. They said it was God's will, but the reason for this awful punishment was unknown. People



wanted answers, but the priests and bishops didn't have any. The clergy abandoned their Christian duties and fled. People prayed to God and begged for forgiveness. After the plague, ended angry and frustrated villagers started to revolt against the church. The survivors were also enraged at doctors, who didn't cure patients, but said they could.

It affected Europe's population and also its economy. Changes in the size of civilization led to changes in trade, the church, music and art, and many other things.

The Black Death killed off a massive portion of Europe's population. The plague is more effective when it attacks weakened people and Europe at the time was already weakened by exhaustion of the soil due to poor farming, the introduction of more sheep which reduced the land available for corn, and persistent Scottish invasions.

Fleas infected with the Bubonic Plague would jump from rats to travelers, killing millions and infesting the continent with world shaking fear. Normal people were tormented by the threat of death, causing them to change their views on leisure, work, and art. Even children suffered.

Leisure

The Black Death crept slowly into the recreational time of people no matter how much the rich attempted to avoid it or how little time the poor had for recreation. Even the abundant death was used for laughter. Funeral processions were used as jokes. It got to the point where deaths were ignored altogether. Citizens looked for causes and the developmentally delayed, deformed and crazy people outside town were the perfect candidates. Bored? Go toss some stones at the witch and help to stop the plague.



Art

The damage to art is irreparable. As a result of death in the church, written language was almost lost and whole churches were abandoned. Carving was changed. Coffins had pictures of corpses on the lid, usually showing a very flattering likeness of the body inside wearing their best clothes. Some of these dated around 1400 showed bodies with about half of their flesh and shredded garments. A few of the sculptures showed worms and snails munching on the diseased.

Painting was affected too. There are a number of paintings containing people socializing with skeletons. These paintings were made on a powerful person's command, and called "danse macabre". Artists abandoned old ways of painting things idolized by the Christian religion. They were so depressed by the death that surrounded them that they began to paint pictures of sad and dead people.

Children

Partially due to the lack of children's skills to provide for themselves, the children suffered. A common nursery rhyme is proof.

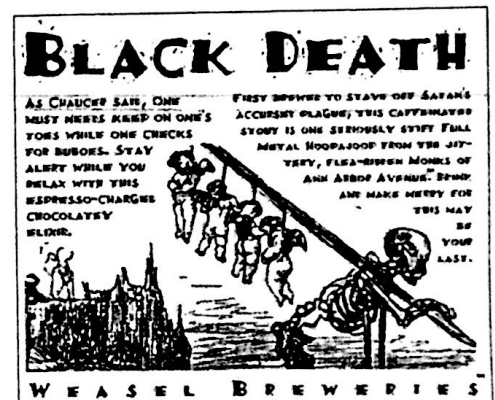
*Ring a-round the rosy
Pocket full of posies
Ashes, ashes!
We all fall down!*

Ring around the rosy: rosary beads give you God's help. A pocket full of posies: used to stop the odor of rotting bodies which was at one point thought to cause the plague, it was also used widely by doctors to protect them from the infected plague patients. Ashes, ashes: the church burned the dead when burying them became too laborious. We all fall down: dead. Not only were the children affected physically, but also mentally. Exposure to public nudity, craziness, and (obviously) abundant death was premature. The decease of family members left the children facing death and pain at an early age. Parents even abandoned their children, leaving them to the streets instead of risking the babies giving them the dreaded "pestilence". Children were especially unlucky if they were female. Baby girls would be left to die because parents would favor male children that could carry on the family name.



Economy

The economy was probably hit the hardest of all the aspects of Europe. The biggest problem was that valuable artisan skills disappeared when large numbers of the working class died. Therefore, those who had skills became even more valuable than the rich people. The society structure began to change giving formally poor laborers more say. The peasants and artisans demanded higher wages. Serfs seeking liberation from tilling their lord's land were told by decree and statue to return to their master's duties. The poor people saw so much death they wanted to enjoy life. Serfs began to leave their land and not engage in the planting of crops. Unattended crops and stray animals died of starvation because of the lack of care. Several domesticated animals began to roam the forest. Farming communities became rare. The lack of sufficient law enforcement personnel promoted lawlessness. People called "Bechini" pillaged homes, murdering and raping people. They dressed in red robes with red masks and only their eyes showed. The horror of the Black Death had taken on a new victim, the economy.



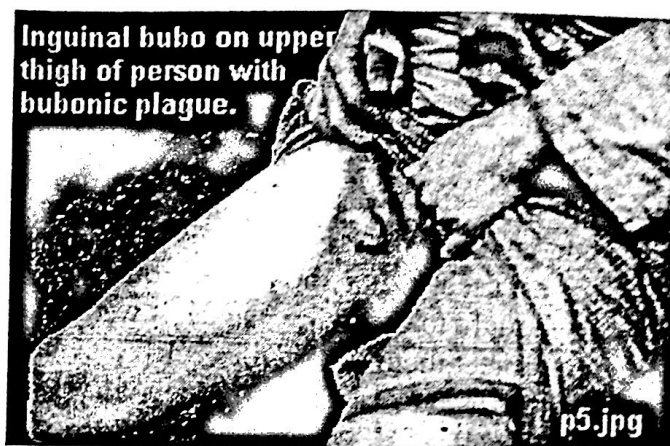
Effect over Time

After the plague had raised the level of leisure, the people kept it up. This was so injuring to the economy that it has been suggested that Europe is just now recovering from the devastation. The population is also a cause of disruption in the economy because small populations mean few taxes, however the economy improved. If the Black Death had an effect on today's economy, it would be that prices aren't as high as they would have been due to the fact that there was a century where the economy made no progress. Art was also a victim of the

Plague because paintings are a lasting record. The art is still an easy thing to find and a good reminder of how the most creative people can panic when there's panic around them. The plague benefited art. Death inspired artists to stray from religious pictorials.

Soon after the last eruption of the Black Death, the views on children changed. Although carrying on the family name was still considered important, the birth rate dropped. Children were considered "not worth the trouble" to raise. It took four hundred years before Europe's population equaled the pre-Black Death figures. The demand for agricultural workers gave survivors a new bargaining power. Workers formerly bound to the land could now travel and command higher wages for their services.

In addition, people left rural areas and migrated to cities for higher wages. The economic structure of land-based wealth shifted. Portable wealth in the form of money, skills and services emerged. Small towns and cities grew while large estates and manors began to collapse. The very social, economic, and political structure of Europe was forever altered. One tiny insect, a flea, toppled feudalism and changed the course of history in Europe.



Directions: Answer the following in complete sentences based on the reading.

- 1) What were three methods that people and cities used to try to stop the spread of the Plague?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
- 2) How were each of the following effected by the Plague?
 - a. The Catholic Church:
 - b. Leisure:
 - c. Art:
 - d. Children:
 - e. The Economy:
- 3) What three effects of the Plague ^{occurred} over time?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.