

A Ladder of Swords

through the foul streets, to drop their horrid burdens into the great pit at Aldgate; the bells of London tolled all day and all night for the passing of human souls. Hundreds of homes, isolated because of a victim of the plague found therein, became ghastly breeding-places of the disease, and then silent, disgusting graves. If a man shivered in fear or staggered from weakness, or for very hunger turned sick, he was marked as a victim, and despite his protests was huddled away with the real victims to die the awful death. From every church, where clergy were left to pray, went up the cry for salvation from "plague, pestilence, and famine." Scores of ships from Holland and from France lay in the Channel, not allowed to touch the shores of England nor permitted to return whence they came. On the very day that news of this reached Jersey came a messenger from the Queen of England for Michel de la Forêt to hasten to her court, for that she had need of him, and need which would bring him honor. Even as the young officer who brought the letter handed it to De la Forêt