

"Say, Goddess, to what cause we shall at last
Assign this plague, unknown to ages past;
If from the western climes 'twas wafted o'er,
When daring Spaniards left their native shore;
Resolv'd beyond th' Atlantick to descry
Conjectured worlds, or in the search to dye."

More probable is it, he thinks, that the malign influence of the planets, particularly the conjunction of Mars and Saturn, had brought about conditions favorable for the outbreak of the plague which had existed for ages but slumbered at intervals.

"Long since he scatter'd his infernal flame,
And always being had, though not a name."

Our elements are slaves to the "rabble of the sky," and when a planet enters a new course some mighty work of Fate is to be expected. Two hundred years ago, when Mars and Saturn were last in conjunction, an unknown fever raged through the East, and similar plagues were predicted by the astronomers as a result of their recent position in the skies.

The description of the symptoms is very complete and there is no difficulty in recognizing the disease. There is a period of incubation—"the moon four monthly rounds shall steer"—before the appearance of convincing symptoms, and all this time the malady lurks within and grows confirmed. Gradually the victim begins to feel depressed, the roses fade from his cheeks, a leaden hue spreads over his face, and then local sores appear on the genitalia. Fracastor, with a majority of the writers of that date, thought the disease had very often an extra-genital origin. "When night's ungrateful shades arise" then begin the execrable pains in arms, shoulders and legs. Soon foul blotches spread over the skin and pustules form.