

But it would take too long if we were to repeat here all the good and wise things which the merchant-moralist offers as counsel for the good of the soul and peaceful living. In his mouth the precepts acquire a greater practical value, inasmuch as they leave the field of abstract ethics to descend to earth and adapt themselves to the needs of daily life. And life in those times was fraught with constant dangers; men had to protect themselves against many more things than at present, and treachery and threats were serious and frequent. The Commune troubled itself but little about the individual safety of its citizens, who had usually to take justice and vengeance into their own hands, much as though lynch-law had already been invented then. The city at that period was of small area, and the houses were huddled together one against the other, consequently there were frequent and terrible fires, on account of which they adopted many precautions useful still to-day:

Keep always ready in thine house twelve large sacks, they are useful for removing thy goods when there is a fire in the neighbourhood, or near thee, or in thine own house. Keep always ready also a hempen rope, long enough to reach from the roof unto the earth, so that thou mayest let thyself down from any window of thine house onto the ground if there should be a fire; but forget not to keep it locked within a chest, in order that neither a servant nor any of thy family may use it without thee or without thy leave. Make it always thy custom to see the lights and the fire in the house extinguished, and be thou always the last to go to bed in thine house, and search the house for lights or fire, and see that the door is securely fastened, and likewise the windows. Search also the cellar and see that the casks are well stopped, and the door and windows fastened, the fire covered, and the lights extinguished; then go thou to bed and sleep as long as thou hast need.

But now let us penetrate a little further into the privacy of that simple life of the fourteenth century:

Beware of going out of thine house at night; but if thou art obliged to go forth, then take with thee a trusty companion, and a large and good light.

If thou goest into any dangerous place, go without tellin any perso where thou art going. In like manner, if thou goest to Siena, say that thou art going to Lucca, and thou wilt be safe from evil persons.