

The nation was, in the mean time, visited with two of the most dreadful calamities that can afflict a people, pestilence and fire. Near eighty thousand persons had been carried off by the first, in London alone. The city had become a kind of desert; and grass was observed to grow in the middle of Cheapside (c). The plague followed those who fled to the country; and terror and death filled every corner of the kingdom. This scourge was followed by a fire, which consumed fifteen out of the twenty-six wards of the city, consisting of four hundred streets and lanes, thirteen thousand houses, and eighty-nine parish-churches (d). But these misfortunes neither damped the spirits of the people, nor obstructed the measures of Government. Our fleets, though much inferior, fought, and vanquished the enemy. The alliance against us was broken, and an honourable and advantageous peace was obtained.

In the year 1690, the French fleet entered the English channel, appeared before Plymouth, on the 20th of June, drove the combined fleets of England and Holland, from the back of the isle of Wight, engaged and totally defeated them, in a general battle, near Beachy-head.

(c) Baker, p. 637.

(d) Vide Clarendon, Heath, Burnet.