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978-1-107-63440-4 - The Seuen Deadly Sinnes of London: Drawne in Seuen Seuerall Coaches, Through the Seuen Seuerall Gates of the Citie: Bringing the Plague with them: Opus Septem Dierum

Thomas Dekker

Excerpt

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To the Worshipfull and very worthy
Gentleman Henry Fermor Es-
quire, Clarke of the Peace for the
Countie of Middlesex.

I AM sory (deare Sir) that in a time (so abundant with wit) I shold send vnto you no better fruit then the sins of a City: but they are not common, (for they were neuer gathered till this yeare) and therefore I send them for the Rarity: Yet now I remember my selfe, they are not the Sinnes of a Citie, but onely the picture of them. And a Drollerie (or Dutch peece of Lantskop) may sometimes breed in the beholders eye, as much delectation, as the best and most curious master-peece excellent in that Art. Bookes being sent abroad after they are begotten into the world, as This of mine is, are in the nature of Orphans; But being receiued into a Gardianship (as I make no doubt but this shall) they come into the

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happie state of adopted children. That office must now be yours, and you neede not bee ashamed of it, for Kings haue beene glad to doe them honour, that haue bestowed such a neuer-dying honour vppon them. The benefite you shall receiue, is this, that you see the building vp of a tombe (in your life time) wherein you are sure so to lie, as that you cannot bee forgotten; and you read that very Epitaph that shal stand ouer you, which by no Enuie can bee defaced, nor by any time worne out. I haue made choise of you alone, to bee the onely Patron to these my labours: by which word (onely) I chalenge to my selfe a kinde of Dignitie: for there hath beene a Generation of a sort of strange fellowes (and I thinke the race is not yet eaten out) who when a Booke (of their owne) hath bin borne in the lawfull Matrimonie of Learning, and Industrie, haue basely compeld it either like a bastard, to call a great many father (and to goe vnder all their names) or else (like a common fellow at a Sessions) to put himselfe (as the tearme is) vpon twelue godfathers. In which case (contrarie to all law) the Foreman is most dishonoured. That art of Skeldring I studie not, I stand vpon stronger Bases.

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The current of a mans Reputation, being
diuided into so manie Riuolets must needes
grow weake. If you giue intertainment to
this in your best affection, you will binde
me (one day) to heighten your name,
when by some more worthy Columne
(by me to be erected) I shall con-
secrate that and your selfe to
an euerlasting and sacred
Memorie.

Most affectionately desirous
to be yours :

Tho. Dekker.

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The Induction to the Booke.

I FINDE it written in that Booke where no vntruthes can be read : in that Booke whose leaues shall out-last sheetes of brasse, and whose lynes leade to eternity: yea euen in that Booke that was pend by the best Author of the best wisdome, allowed by a Deity, licensed by the Omnipotent, and published (in all Languages to all Nations) by the greatest, truest, and onely Diuine, thus I find it written, that for Sinne, Angels were throwne out of heauen; for Sinne, the first man that euer was made, was made an outcast: he was driuen out of his liuing that was left vnto him by his Creator: It was a goodlier liuing, than the Inheritance of Princes: he lost Paradice by it (he lost his house of pleasure:) hee lost Eden by it, a Garden, where Winter could neuer haue nipht him with cold, nor Summer haue scorcht him with heate. He had there all

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fruits growing to delight his taste, all flowers flourishing to allure his eye, all Birds singing to content his eare; he had more than he could desire: yet because he desired more than was fit for him, he lost all. For Sinne, all those buildings which that greate Worke-master of the world had in sixe dayes raysed, were swallowed at the first by waters, and shall at last be consumed in fire. How many families hath this Leuiathan deuoured? how many Cities? how many Kingdoms? Let vs awhile leaue Kingdomes, and enter into Cities. Sodom and Gomorrah were burnt to the ground with brimstone that dropt in flakes from heauen: a hot and dreadfull vengeance. Ierusalem hath not a stone left vpon another of her first glorious foundation: a heauy and fearefull downefall. Ierusalem, that was Gods owne dwelling house; the Schoole where those Hebrew Lectures, which he himselfe read, were taught; the very Nursery where the Prince of Heauen was brought vp; that Ierusalem, whose Rulers were Princes, and whose Citizens were like the sonnes of Kings: whose Temples were paued with gold, and whose houses stood like rowes of tall Cedars; that Ierusalem is now a dezert; It is vnhalloved, and vn-

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trodden: no Monument is left to shew it was a Citty, but only the memoriall of the Iewes hard-hartednes, in making away their Sauour: It is now a place for barbarous Turks, and poore despised Grecians; it is rather now (for the abominations committed in it) no place at all.

Let vs hoyst vp more Sayles, and lanch into other Seas, till wee come in ken of our owne Countrey. Antwerp (the eldest daughter of Brabant) hath falne in her pride, the Citties of rich Burgundy in theyr greatnes. Those seunteene Dutch Virgins of Belgia, (that had Kingdomes to theyr dowries, and were worthy to be courted by Nations) are now no more Virgins: the Souldier hath deflowred them, and robd them of theyr Mayden honor: Warre hath still vse of their noble bodyes, and discovereth theyr nakednes like prostituted Strumpets. Famine hath dried vp the fresh bloud in theyr cheekes, whilst the Pestilence digd vp theyr Fields, and turned them into Graues. Neither haue these punishments bin layd vpon them onely; for bloud hath bin also drawne of their very next neighbours. France lyes yet panting vnder the blowes which her owne Children haue giuen her. Thirty yeeres

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together suffred she her bowels to be torne out by those that were bred within them: She was full of Princes, and saw them all lye mangled at her feete: She was full of people, and saw in one night a hundred thousand massacred in her streetes: her Kings were eaten vp by Ciuill warres, and her Subiects by fire and famine. O gallant Monarchy, what hard fate hadst thou, that when none were left to conquer thee, thou shouldst triumph ouer thy selfe! Thou hast Wynes flowing in thy veynes: but thou madest thy selfe druncke with thine owne bloud. The English, the Dutch, and the Spanish, stode aloofe and gaue ayme, whilst thou shotst arrowes vpright, that fell vpon thine owne head, and wounded thee to death. Wouldst thou (and the rest) know the reason, why your bones haue bin bruized with rods of Iron? It was, because you haue risen in Arch-rebellion against the Supremest Soueraigne: You haue bin Traytors to your Lord, the King of heauen and earth, and haue armed your selues to fight against the Holy Land. Can the father of the world measure out his loue so vnequally, that one people (like to a mans yongest child) should be more made of than all the rest, being more

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vnruly than the rest? O London, thou art great in glory, and enuied for thy greatnes: thy Towers, thy Temples, and thy Pinnacles stand vpon thy head like borders of fine gold, thy waters like frindges of siluer hang at the hemmes of thy garments. Thou art the goodliest of thy neighbors, but the prowdest; the welthiest, but the most wanton. Thou hast all things in thee to make thee fairest, and all things in thee to make thee foulest; for thou art attir'de like a Bride, drawing all that looke vpon thee, to be in loue with thee, but there is much harlot in thine eyes. Thou sitst in thy Gates heated with Wines, and in thy Chambers with lust. What miseries haue of late ouertaken thee? yet (like a foole that laughs when hee is putting on fetters) thou hast bin merry in height of thy misfortunes. She (that for almost Qu. Elizabeths death. halfe a hundred of yeeres) of thy Nurse became thy Mother, and layd thee in her bosome, whose head was full of cares for thee, whilst thine slept vpon softer pillowes than downe. She that wore thee alwayes on her brest as the richest lewell in her kingdome, who had continually her eye vpon thee, and her heart with thee: whose chaste hand clothed thy Rulers in

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Scarlet, and thy Inhabitants in roabes of peace: euen she was taken from thee, when thou wert most in feare to lose her: when thou didst tremble (as at an earth-quake) to thinke that bloud should runne in thy Channels, that the Canon should make way through thy Portcullises, and fire rifle thy wealthy houses, then, euen then wert thou left full of teares, and becamst an Orphan. But behold, thou hadst not sat many howres on the banks of King James his Coronation. sorrow, but thou hadst a louing Father that adopted thee to be his owne: thy mourning turnd presently to gladnes, thy terrors into triumphs. Yet, lest this fulnesse of ioy should beget in thee a wantonnes, and to try how wisely thou couldst take vp affliction, Sicknes was sent to breathe her vnwholsome ayres into thy nostrils, so that thou, that wert before the only Gallant and Minion of the world, hadst in a short time more diseases (then a common Harlot hath) hanging vpon thee; thou suddenly becamst the by-talke of neighbors, the scorne and contempt of Nations.

Heere could I make thee weepe thy selfe away into waters, by calling back those sad and dismall houres, wherein

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thou consumedst almost to nothing with shrikes and lamentations, in that *Wonderfull yeere, when these miserable calamities entred in at thy Gates, slaying 30000. and more as thou heldst them in thine armes, but they are fresh in thy memory, and the story of them (but halfe read ouer) would strike so coldly to thy heart, and lay such heauy sorrow vpon mine (Namque animus meminisse horret, luctuque refugit) that I will not be thine and my owne tormentor with the memory of them. How quickly notwithstanding didst thou forget that beating? The wrath of him that smot thee, was no sooner (in meere pittie of thy stripes) appeased, but howrely (again) thou wert in the company of euill doers, euen before thou couldst finde leysure to aske him forgiuenes.

*A Booke so called, written by the Author, describing the horror of the Plague in 1602, when there dyed 30578. of that disease.

Euer since that time hath hee winckt at thy errors, and suffred thee (though now thou art growne old, and lookest very ancient) to goe on still in the follyes of thy youth: he hath ten-fold restor'de thy lost sonnes and daughters, and such sweete, liuely, fresh colours hath hee put vpon thy cheekes, that Kings haue come to behold