

**THE HISTORICAL SOURCES OF DEFOE'S
JOURNAL OF THE PLAGUE YEAR;
ILLUSTRATED BY EXTRACTS FROM THE
ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS IN THE BURNEY
COLLECTION AND MANUSCRIPT ROOM
IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM**

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The historical sources of Defoe's Journal of the plague year; illustrated by extracts from the original documents in the Burney collection and manuscript room in the British Museum by Watson Nicholson

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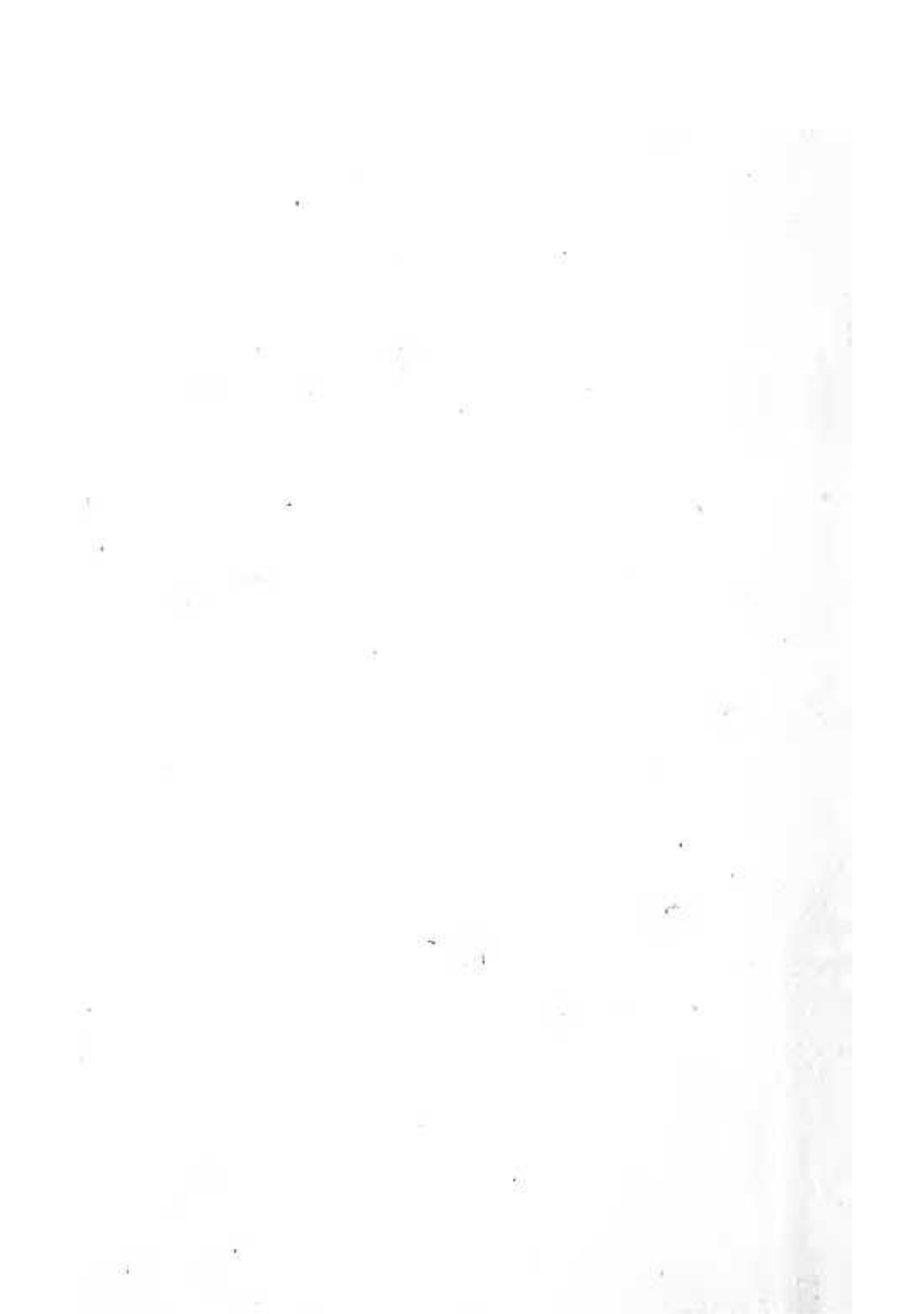
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WATSON NICHOLSON

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Illustrated

BY EXTRACTS FROM THE ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS IN THE BURNEY COLLECTION AND MANUSCRIPT ROOM IN THE BRITISH MUSEUM

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AUTHOR OF

"The Struggle for a Free Stage in London"



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PREFACE

At the outbreak of the Great War, and for some years prior to that world catastrophe, I was working in the British Museum, the Public Record Office, and the Lord Chamberlain's Office in London, pursuing certain investigations pertaining to the history of the English Drama and Stage. Throughout my quest among the documents of the years 1664 and 1665, I was again and again impressed with numerous striking resemblances between contemporaneous details of the Great Plague and Defoe's account in his *Journal of the Plague Year*. With a piqued curiosity I followed these clues until I had amassed overwhelming evidence of the complete authenticity of Defoe's "masterpiece of the imagination." These proofs were then submitted to a few scholars in England and America, and the unanimous and emphatic judgment of these critics was, that I had established beyond cavil the historical character of Defoe's famous *Journal*, hitherto not merely accepted, but acclaimed and declaimed, as fiction. However, to make assurance doubly sure, I pursued the investigation still further, and, in more than two hundred instances (not to mention the scores of statistical figures), recorded in the following pages, traced to their sources statements made by Defoe in the *Journal of the Plague Year*. In most cases the word-for-word originals have been quoted (or cited), and, added to these, equally convincing parallels have multiplied

PREFACE

the proofs that Defoe relied upon facts in compiling his history of the Plague. So great is the mass of contemporaneous evidence leading to the conclusion arrived at in the course of this study that the bulk of the valuable data collected from the printed and unprinted sources has had to be omitted, both from the discussion and from the appendices, although a sufficient number of extracts have been included to establish fully the historical basis of every statement made by Defoe in the *Journal of the Plague Year*. The discovery and significance of the proofs herewith submitted were publicly accredited to me by Professor William Lyon Phelps in the *Bookman* (New York) for November, 1915.

W. N.

"Deer Lodge"
South Haven, Michigan
July 4, 1919.

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