Giovanni Sercambi (1348-1424) was an apothecary in the town of Lucca, about sixty kilometers to the west of Florence. He was Lucca’s best known author in the fourteenth century. He wrote a Chronicle of the history of Lucca in which he included ink sketches of important events. The image of plague in Lucca was probably only composed in about 1400 when Sercambi finished the copy of the chronicle on which he had been working since 1368. Arrows were a typical image for plague since like the plague they seem to bypass some and strike others.

An Image of Plague by Giovanni Sercambi

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The plight of the lower and most of the middle classes was even more pitiful to behold. Most of them remained in their houses, either through poverty or in hopes of safety, and fell sick by thousands. Since they received no care and attention, almost all of them died. Many ended their lives in the streets both at night and during the day; and many others who died in their houses were only known to be dead because the neighbours smelled their decaying bodies. Dead bodies filled every corner. Most of them were treated in the same manner by the survivors, who were more concerned to get rid of their rotting bodies than moved by charity towards the dead. With the aid of porters, if they could get them, they carried the bodies out of the houses and laid them at the doors, where every morning quantities of the dead might be seen. They then were laid on biers [coffin stands], or, as these were often lacking, on tables.

Not to pry any further into all the details of the miseries which afflicted [struck] our city, I shall add that the surrounding country was spared nothing of what befell Florence. The villages on a smaller scale were like the city; in the fields and isolated farms the poor wretched peasants and their families were without doctors and any assistance, and perished in the highways, in their fields and houses, night and day, more like beasts than men. Just as the townspeople became dissolute and indifferent to their work and property, so the peasants, when they saw that death was upon them, entirely neglected the future fruits of their past labours both from the earth and from cattle, and thought only of enjoying what they had. Thus it happened that cows, asses, sheep, goats, pigs, fowls and even dogs, those faithful companions of man, left the farms and wandered at their will through the fields, where the wheat crops stood abandoned, unharvested and ungarnered [not gathered]. Many of these animals seemed endowed with reason, for, after they had pastured all day, they returned to the farms for the night of their own free will, without being driven.

Oh, what great palaces, how many fair houses and noble dwellings, once filled with attendants and nobles and ladies, were emptied to the meanest servant! How many famous names and vast possessions and renowned estates were left without an heir! How many gallant men and fair ladies and handsome youths, whom Galen, Hippocrates and Æsculapius themselves would have said were in perfect health, at noon dined with their relatives and friends, and at night supped with their ancestors in the next world.

— Giovanni Boccaccio, The Decameron

Henry Knighton, a 14th-century author, wrote about the effects of the Black Death in England between 1348–1350.

Ox hides fell to a wretched price, namely 12d., and yet a pair of gloves would cost 10d., 12d., or 14d., and a pair of breeches 3s. or 4s. In the mean time the king sent word into every shire [county] that mowers and other workmen should take no more than they had before [the outbreak of the plague], under the penalties laid down in the order, and thereupon made a statute. Nevertheless the workmen were so puffed up and contrary-minded that they did not heed the king's decree, and if anyone wanted to hire them he had to pay what they asked: either his fruit and crops rotted, or he had to give in to the workmen's arrogant and greedy demands.

In the following winter there was such a want of hands, for every kind of work, that people believed that the like shortage had never been known at any time in the past, for cattle and such livestock as a man might have wandered about without a keeper, and there was no one to look after people's possessions. And thus the necessities of life became so dear, that what in previous times was worth 1d. now cost 4d. or 5d.