

10 — THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON (1666)

It broke out at a baker's shop near London Bridge, on the spot on which the Monument now stands as a remembrance of these raging flames. It spread and spread and burned for six days. The nights were lighter than the days; in the daytime there was an immense cloud of smoke, and in the night-time there was a great tower of fire mounting up into the sky, which lighted the whole country for ten miles round. Showers of hot ashes rose into the air and fell on distant places; flying sparks carried the conflagration to great distances, and kindled it in twenty new spots at a time; church steeples fell down with tremendous crashes; houses crumbled into cinders by the hundred and the thousand. The summer had been intensely hot and dry, the streets were very narrow, and the houses mostly built of wood and plaster. Nothing could stop the tremendous fire, but the want of more houses to burn.

Charles Dickens