

Cotton Mather (1663–1728)

Cotton Mather probably was the best-known citizen of New England of his day: a popular minister in Boston, author of some 450 works (including a few in French and Spanish), Fellow of the British Royal Society, a theologian and historian who had training as well in medicine and who helped introduce smallpox vaccination to North America. His *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) stood on home bookshelves throughout New England well into the nineteenth century. As Dorothy Z. Baker has recently demonstrated, Mather is a seminal writer in the American Gothic, in that he is a source of material and an object of fascination for a long series of later writers, including Poe, Hawthorne, and even Edith Wharton, who often despised him.

Today Cotton Mather's name is most often connected with the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692, events with which he was only marginally involved. Had his advice to the trial judges been followed, that they not accept "specter" evidence (testimony that an image of an accused witch, not the actual person, had appeared to a victim), the trials would not have become the legal horror that still haunts America's memory. Laws about witchcraft in New England were the most rational in the Christian world, and (unlike in Britain and continental Europe) it was possible for an accused witch to mount a successful legal defense, be acquitted, and even sue for damages. But how to defend against the charge that one's specter has committed a crime? Despite Mather's misgivings about the legal direction of the trials, he notoriously intervened to prevent citizens from stopping the execution of five condemned witches on August 19, 1692 – an event that Hawthorne

savagely retells in "Alice Doan's Appeal." In *Wonders of the Invisible World* (1693), Mather defends the judges and the outcomes of the trials at a time when public opinion was swinging against them. By the time the trials had ended, nineteen men and women, and two dogs, had been executed, and one man pressed to death under stones because he refused to enter a plea. (According to legend, the last words of this man, Giles Corey, were "more weight.")

Martha Carrier and George Burroughs (whom Mather calls only by his initials) were two of the "witches" executed on August 19. The others were John Willard, George Jacobs, Sr., and John Proctor, about whom Arthur Miller would write a play, *The Crucible*, in 1953. Before his hanging, Burroughs led the witnesses in reciting the Lord's Prayer, which in popular belief was impossible for a witch to do. It was this performance that moved spectators to try to stop the execution. Mather rode his horse in front of them and ordered them to obey the law.

As in witchcraft trials everywhere, unpopular members of the community were the first accused. Burroughs was a minister who had lost his congregation in Salem. He was abusive of his first two wives, and apparently intimidated his neighbors with displays of physical strength as well as claims of magical powers. Martha Carrier was quarrelsome and suspected of poisoning her neighbors' cattle. In both trials we see the "afflicted" girls, presumed victims of witchcraft, screaming in pain when confronted with the accused. (In later years several of these girls would recant their testimony.) In both trials specter evidence was used to convict.

The other selection from Mather's writing is a "providence tale" from *Magnalia Christi Americana* (the great deeds of Christ in America). Providence tales were intended as examples of God's protection of his chosen people in New England. This tale, that of Hannah Dustan, is also an Indian captivity narrative, a popular form considered to be an original American genre. Mather constructed his account from Dustan's own transcribed oral testimony. She was from the beginning a controversial figure, and her story

was retold by several later American authors, including Hawthorne and Whittier. Her bloody and profitable vengeance against her Indian captors stands near the beginning of the Gothic of the American wilderness and frontier.

Texts: The trials of Martha Carrier and G[George] B[urrows] are from *The Wonders of the Invisible World: Being an Account of the Tryals of Several Witches Lately Excuted [sic] in New England...* (London: John Dunton, 1693). The Dustan Narrative is from *Magnalia Christi Americana; or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1702).

The Tryal of G. B. at a Court of OYER AND TERMINER, HELD IN SALEM, 1692

GLAD should I have been, if I had never known the Name of this Man; or never had this occasion to mention so much as the first Letters of his Name. But the Government requiring some Account of his Trial to be inserted in this Book, it becomes me with all Obedience to submit unto the Order.

1. This G. B. Was Indicted for Witch-craft, and in the prosecution of the Charge against him, he was Accused by five or six of the Bewitched, as the Author of their Miseries; he was Accused by Eight of the Confessing Witches, as being an head Actor at some of their Hellish Rendezvouzes, and one who had the promise of being a King in Satan's Kingdom, now going to be Erected: He was accused by Nine Persons for extraordinary Lifting, and such feats of Strength as could not be done without a Diabolical Assistance. And for other such things he was Accused, until about thirty Testimonies were brought in against him; nor were these judg'd the half of what might have been considered for his Conviction: However they were enough to fix the Character of a Witch upon him according to the Rules of Reasoning, by the Judicious *Gaule*,¹ in that Case directed.

2. The Court being sensible, that the Testimonies of the Parties Bewitched, use to have a Room among the *Suspitions* or *Presumptions*, brought in against one Indicted for Witchcraft; there were now heard the Testimonies of several Persons, who were most notoriously Bewitched, and every day Tortured by Invisible Hands, and these now all charged the Spectres of G. B. to have a share in their Torments. At the Examination of this G. B. the Bewitched People were grievously harrassed with Preternatural Mischiefs, which could not possibly be Dissembled; and they still ascribed it unto the endeavours of G. B. to Kill them. And now upon the Tryal of one of the Bewitched Persons, testified, that in her Agonies, a little black Hair'd Man came to her, saying his Name was B. and bidding her set her hand to a Book which he shewed unto her; and bragging that he was a *Conjurer*, above the ordinary Rank of Witches; That he often Persecuted her with the

Notes

THE TRYAL OF G. B.

¹ John Gaule, *Select Cases of Conscience Touching Witches and Witchcrafts* (London, 1646).

offer of that Book, saying, *She should be well, and need fear nobody, if she would but Sign it;* But he inflicted cruel Pains and Hurts upon her, because of her denying so to do. The Testimonies of the other Sufferers concurred with these; and it was remarkable that whereas *Biting* was one of the ways which the Witches used for the vexing of the Sufferers; when they cry'd out of *G. B.* Biting them, the print of the Teeth would be seen on the Flesh of the Complainers, and just such a Set of Teeth as *G. B.*'s would then appear upon them, which could be distinguished from those of some other Mens. Others of them testified, That in their Torments, *G. B.* tempted them to go unto a Sacrament, unto which they perceived him with a Sound of Trumpet, Summoning of other Witches, who quickly after the Sound, would come from all Quarters unto the Rendezvouz. One of them falling into a kind of Trance, affirmed, that *G. B.* had carried her away into a very high Mountain, where he shewed her mighty and glorious Kingdoms, and said, *He would give them all to her, if she would write in his Book;* But she told him, *They were none of his to give;* and refused the Motions; enduring of much Misery for that refusal.

It cost the Court a wonderful deal of Trouble, to hear the Testimonies of the Sufferers; for when they were going to give in their Depositions, they would for a long time be taken with Fits, that made them incapable of saying any thing. The Chief Judg asked the Prisoner, who he thought hindered these Witnesses from giving their *Testimonies*? And he answered, *He supposed it was the Devil.* That Honourable Person replied, *How comes the Devil then to be so loath to have any Testimony born against you?* Which cast him into very great Confusion.

3. It has been a frequent thing for the Bewitched People to be entertained with Apparitions of *Ghosts* of Murdered People, at the same time that the *Spectres* of the Witches trouble them. These *Ghosts* do always affright the Beholders more than all the other spectral Representations; and when they exhibit themselves, they cry out, of being Murdered by the Witch-crafts or other Violences of the Persons who are then in Spectre present. It is further considered, that once or twice, these *Apparitions* have been seen by others, at the very same time they have shewn themselves to the Bewitched; and seldom have there been these *Apparitions*, but when something unusual or suspected, have attended the Death of the Party thus Appearing. Some that have been accused by these *Apparitions* accosting of the Bewitched People, who had never heard a word of any such Person ever being in the World, have upon a fair Examination, freely and fully confessed the Murthers of those very Persons, altho' these also did not know how the Apparitions had complained of them. Accordingly several of the Bewitched, had given in their Testimony, that they had been troubled with the Apparitions of two Women, who said, that they were *G. B.*'s two Wives, and that he had been the Death of them; and that the Magistrates must be told of it, before whom if *B.* upon his Tryal denied it, they did not know but that they should appear again in Court. Now, *G. B.* had been Infamous for the Barbarous usage of his two late Wives, all the Country over. Moreover, it was testified, the Spectre of *G. B.* threatning of the Sufferers, told them, he had Killed (besides others) Mrs. *Lawson* and her Daughter *Ann.* And it was noted, that these were the Vertuous Wife and Daughter of one at whom this *G. B.* might have a prejudice for his being serviceable at *Salem Village*, from whence himself had in ill Terms removed some Years before: And that when they dy'd, which was long since, there were some odd Circumstances about them, which made some of the Attendants there suspect something of Witch-craft, tho none Imagined from what Quarter it should come.

Well, *G. B.* being now upon his Tryal, one of the Bewitched Persons was cast into Horror at the Ghost of *B.*'s two Deceased Wives then appearing before him, and crying for *Vengeance* against him. Hereupon several of the Bewitched Persons were successively

called in, who all not knowing what the former had seen and said, concurred in their Horror of the Apparition, which they affirmed that he had before him. But he, tho much appalled, utterly deny'd that he discerned any thing of it; nor was it any part of his *Conviction*.

4. Judicious Writers have assigned it a great place in the *Conviction of Witches, when Persons are Impeached by other notorious Witches, to be as ill as themselves; especially, if the Persons have been much noted for neglecting the Worship of God*. Now, as there might have been Testimonies enough of *G. B's* Antipathy to *Prayer*, and the other Ordinances of God, tho by his Profession, singularly Obliged thereunto; so, there now came in against the Prisoner, the Testimonies of several Persons, who confessed their own having been horrible *Witches*, and ever since their Confessions, had been themselves terribly Tortured by the Devils and other *Witches*, even like the other Sufferers; and therein undergone the Pains of many *Deaths* for their Confessions.

These now testified, that *G. B.* had been at *Witch-meetings* with them; and that he was the Person who had Seduc'd, and Compell'd them into the snares of *Witchcraft*: That he promised them *Fine Cloaths*, for doing it; that he brought *Poppets* to them, and *Thorns* to stick into those *Poppets*, for the Afflicting of other People; and that he exhorted them with the rest of the Crew, to Bewitch all *Salem Village*, but be sure to do it Gradually, if they would prevail in what they did.

When the *Lancashire Witches* were Condemm'd, I don't remember that there was any considerable further Evidence, than that of the Bewitched, and than that of some that confessed. We see so much already against *G. B.* But this being indeed not enough, there were other things to render what had been already produced *credible*.

5. A famous Divine recites this among the *Convictions of a Witch; The Testimony of the party Bewitched, whether Pining or Dying; together with the joint Oaths of sufficient Persons that have seen certain Prodigious Pranks or Feats wrought by the Party Accused*. Now, God had been pleased so to leave this *G. B.* that he had ensnared himself by several Instances, which he had formerly given of a *Preternatural Strength*, and which were now produced against him. He was a very *Puny Man*, yet he had often done things beyond the strength of a *Giant*. A Gun of about seven foot Barrel, and so heavy that strong Men could not steadily hold it out with both hands; there were several Testimonies, given in by Persons of Credit and Honor, that he made nothing of taking up such a Gun behind the Lock, with but one hand, and holding it out like a *Pistol*, at Arms-end. *G. B.* in his *Vindication*, was so foolish as to say, That *an Indian was there, and held it out at the same time*: Whereas none of the Spectators ever saw any such *Indian*; but they supposed, the *Black Man*, (as the *Witches* call the Devil; and they generally say he resembles an *Indian*) might give him that Assistance. There was Evidence likewise brought in, that he made nothing of taking up whole Barrels fill'd with *Molasses* or *Cider*, in very disadvantageous Postures, and Carrying of them through the difficultest Places out of a *Canoo* to the Shore.

Yea, there were two Testimonies, that *G. B.* with only putting the Fore Finger of his Right Hand into the Muzzle of an heavy Gun, a *Fowling-piece* of about six or seven foot Barrel, did lift up the Gun, and hold it out at Arms-end; a Gun which the Deponents thought strong Men could not with both hands lift Up, and hold out at the But-end, as is usual. Indeed, one of these Witnesses was over-perswaded by some Persons, to be out of the way upon *G. B's* Tryal, but he came afterwards with Sorrow for his withdraw, and gave in his Testimony: Nor were either of these Witnesses made use of as Evidences in the Trial.

6. There came in several Testimonies relating to the *Domestick Affairs of G. B.* which had a very hard Aspect upon him; and not only prov'd him a very ill Man; but also confirmed the belief of the Character, which had been already fastned on him.

'Twas testified, that keeping his two Successive Wives in a strange kind of Slavery, he would when he came home from abroad, pretend to tell the Talk which any had with them; That he has brought them to the point of Death, by his harsh Dealings with his Wives, and then made the people about him, to promise that in case Death should happen, they would say nothing of it; That he used all means to make his Wives Write, Sign, Seal, and Swear a Covenant, never to reveal any of his Secrets; That his Wives had privately complained unto the Neighbours about frightful Apparitions of Evil Spirits, with which their House was sometimes infested; and that many such things have been whispered among the Neighbourhood. There were also some other Testimonies relating to the Death of People whereby the Consciences of an Impartial Jury were convinced that G. B. had Bewitched the Persons mentioned in the Complaints. But I am forced to omit several passages, in this, as well as in all the succeeding Tryals, because the Scribes who took notice of them, have not supplied me.

7. One Mr. *Ruck*, Brother-in-Law to this G. B. testified, that G. B. and himself, and his Sister, who was G. B's Wife, going out for two or three Miles to gather Straw-berries, *Ruck* with his Sister, the Wife of G. B. Rode home very Softly, with G. B. on Foot in their Company, G. B. stept aside a little into the Bushes; whereupon they halted and Halloo'd for him. He not answering, they went away homewards, with a quickened pace, without expectation of seeing him in a considerable while; and yet when they were got near home, to their Astonishment, they found him on foot with them, having a Basket of Strawberries. G. B. immediately then fell to Chiding his Wife, on the account of what she had been speaking to her Brother, of him, on the Road: which when they wondred at, he said, *He knew their thoughts*. *Ruck* being startled at that, made some Reply, intimating, that the Devil himself did not know so far; but G. B. answered, *My God makes known your thoughts unto me*. The Prisoner now at the Bar had nothing to answer, unto what was thus witnessed against him, that was worth considering. Only he said, *Ruck, and his Wife left a Man with him, when they left him*. Which *Ruck* now affirm'd to be false; and when the court asked G. B. *What the Man's Name was?* his Countenance was much altered; nor could he say, who 'twas. But the Court began to think, that he then step'd aside, only that by the assistance of the *Black Man*, he might put on his *Invisibility*, and in that *Fascinating Mist*, gratifie his own Jealous Humour, to hear what they said of him. Which trick of rendring themselves *invisible*, our Witches do in their Confessions pretend, that they sometimes are Masters of; and it is the more credible, because there is Demonstration, that they often render many other things utterly *invisible*.

8. *Faltring, faulty, unconstant, and contrary Answers upon judicial and deliberate Examination*, are counted some unlucky Symptoms of Guilt, in all Crimes, especially in Witchcrafts. Now there never was a Prisoner more eminent for them, than G. B. both at his Examination and on his Trial. His *Tergiversations, Contradictions, and Falshoods* were very sensible: he had little to say, but that he had heard some things that he could not prove, Reflecting upon the Reputation of some of the Witnesses. Only he gave in a Paper to the Jury; wherein, altho' he had many times before, granted, not only that there are *Witches*, but also, that the present Sufferings of the Country are the effects of *horrible Witchcrafts*, yet he now goes to evince it, *That there neither are, nor ever were Witches, that having made a Compact with the Devil, can send a Devil to Torment other people at a distance*. This Paper was Transcribed out of *Ady*;² which the Court presently knew, as soon as they heard it. But he said, he had taken none of it out of any Book; for which, his Evasion afterwards, was, That a Gentleman gave him the Discourse in a Manuscript, from whence he Transcribed it.

Notes

² Thomas Ady, *A Candle in the Dark* (London, 1656).

9. The Jury brought him in *guilty*: But when he came to Die, he utterly deni'd the Fact, whereof he had been thus convicted.

The Trial of Martha Carrier, at the COURT OF OYER AND TERMINER, HELD BY ADJOURNMENT AT SALEM, AUGUST 2, 1692

MARTHA CARRIER was Indicted for the bewitching certain Persons, according to the Form usual in such Cases, pleading *Not Guilty*, to her Indictment; there were first brought in a considerable number of the bewitched Persons; who not only made the Court sensible of an horrid Witchcraft committed upon them, but also deposed, That it was *Martha Carrier*, or her Shape, that grievously tormented them, by Biting, Pricking, Pinching and Choaking of them. It was further deposed, That while this *Carrier* was on her Examination, before the Magistrates, the Poor People were so tortured that everyone expected their Death upon the very spot, but that upon the binding of *Carrier* they were eased. Moreover the Look of *Carrier* then laid the Afflicted People for dead; and her Touch, if her Eye at the same time were off them, raised them again: Which Things were also now seen upon her Tryal. And it was testified, That upon the mention of some having their Necks twisted almost round, by the Shape of this *Carrier*, she replied, *Its no matter though their Necks had been twisted quite off*.

II. Before the Tryal of this Prisoner, several of her own children had frankly and fully confessed, not only that they were Witches themselves, but that this their Mother had made them so. This Confession they made with great Shews of Repentance, and with much Demonstration of Truth. They related Place, Time, Occasion; they gave an account of Journeys, Meetings and Mischiefs by them performed, and were very credible in what they said. Nevertheless, this Evidence was not produced against the Prisoner at the Bar, inasmuch as there was other Evidence enough to proceed upon.

III. *Benjamin Abbot* gave his Testimony, That last *March* was a twelvemonth, this *Carrier* was very angry with him, upon laying out some Land, near her Husband's: Her Expressions in this Anger, were, *That she would stick as close to Abbot as the Bark stuck to the Tree; and that he should repent of it afore seven years came to an End, so as Doctor Prescott should never cure him. These Words* were heard by others besides *Abbot* himself; who also heard her say, *She would hold his Nose as close to the grindstone as ever it was held since his Name was Abbot*. Presently after this, he was taken with a Swelling in his Foot, and then with a Pain in his Side, and exceedingly tormented. It bred into a Sore, which was lanced by *Doctor Prescott*, and several Gallons of Corruption ran out of it. For six Weeks it continued very bad, and then another Sore bred in the Groin, which was also lanced by *Doctor Prescott*. Another Sore then bred in his Groin, which was likewise cut, and put him to very great Misery: He was brought unto Death's Door, and so remained until *Carrier* was taken, and carried away by the Constable, from which very Day he began to mend, and so grew better every Day, and is well ever since.

Sarah Abbot also, his Wife, testified, That her Husband was not only all this while Afflicted in his Body, but also that strange extraordinary and unaccountable Calamities befel his Cattel; their Death being such as they could guess at no Natural Reason for.

IV. *Allin Toothaker* testify'd, That *Richard*, the son of *Martha Carrier*, having some difference with him, pull'd him down by the Hair of the Head. When he Rose again,

he was going to strike at *Richard Carrier*; but fell down flat on his Back to the ground, and had not power to stir hand or foot, until he told *Carrier* he yielded; and then he saw the shape of *Martha Carrier*, go off his breast.

This *Toothaker*, had Received a wound in the *Wars*; and he now testify'd, that *Martha Carrier* told him, *He should never be Cured*. Just afore the Apprehending of *Carrier*, he could thrust a knitting Needle into his wound, four inches deep; but presently after her being seized, he was thoroughly healed. He further testify'd, that when *Carrier* and he sometimes were at variance, she would clap her hands at him, and say, *He should get nothing by it*; whereupon he several times lost his Cattle, by strange Deaths, whereof no natural causes could be given.

V. *John Rogger* also testified, That upon the threatenng words of this malicious *Carrier*, his Cattle would be strangely bewitched; as was more particularly then described.

VI. *Samuel Preston* testify'd, that about two years ago, having some difference with *Martha Carrier*, he lost a Cow in a strange Preternatural unusual manner; and about a month after this, the said *Carrier*, having again some difference with him, she told him, *He had lately lost a Cow, and it should not be long before he lost another*; which accordingly came to pass; for he had a thriving and well-kept Cow, which without any known cause quickly fell down and dy'd.

VII. *Phebe Chandler* testify'd, that about a Fortnight before the apprehension of *Martha Carrier*, on a Lords-day while the Psalm was singing in the Church, this *Carrier* then took her by the shoulder and shaking her, asked her, *where she lived*: she made her no Answer, although as *Carrier*, who lived next door to her Fathers House, could not in reason but know who she was.

Quickly after this, as she was at several times crossing the Fields, she heard a voice, that she took to be *Martha Carriers*, and it seem'd as if it was over her head. The voice told her, *she should within two or three days be poisoned*. Accordingly, within such a little time, one half of her right hand, became greatly swollen, and very painful; as also part of her Face: whereof she can give no account how it came. It continued very bad for some dayes, and several times since, she has had a great pain in her breast; and been so seized on her leggs, that she has hardly been able to go. She added, that lately, going well to the House of God, *Richard*, the son of *Martha Carrier*, look'd very earnestly upon her, and immediately her hand, which had formerly been poisoned, as is above-said, began to pain her greatly, and she had a strange Burning at her stomach; but was then struck deaf, so that she could not hear any of the prayer, or singing, till the two or three last words of the Psalm.

VIII. One *Foster*, who confessed her own share in the Witchcraft for which the Prisoner stood indicted, affirm'd, that she had seen the prisoner at some of their *Witch-meetings*, and that it was this *Carrier*, who perswaded her to be a Witch. She confessed, that the Devil carry'd them on a pole, to a *Witch-meeting*; but the pole broke, and she hanging about *Carriers neck*, they both fell down, and she then received an hurt by the Fall, whereof she was not at this very time recovered.

IX. One *Lacy*, who likewise confessed her share in this Witchcraft, now testify'd, that she and the prisoner were once Bodily present at a *Witch-meeting* in *Salem Village*; and that she knew the prisoner to be a Witch, and to have been at a Diabolical sacrament, and that the prisoner was the undoing of her, and her Children, by enticing them into the snare of the Devil.

X. Another *Lacy*, who also confessed her share in this Witchcraft, now testify'd, that the prisoner was at the *Witch-meeting*, in *Salem Village*, where they had Bread and Wine Administred unto them.

XI. In the time of this prisoners Trial, one *Susanna Sheldon*, in open Court had her hands Unaccountably ty'd together with a wheel-band, so fast that without cutting, it could not be loosed: It was done by a *Spectre*; and the Sufferer affirm'd, it was the *Prisoners*.

Memorandum. This rampant Hag, *Martha Carrier*, was the person, of whom the Confessions of the Witches, and of her own children among the rest, agreed, That the Devil had promised her, she should be *Queen of Hell*.

A Notable Exploit; wherein, Dux Faemina Facti¹ [The Narrative of Hannah Dustan]

ON March 15. 1697, the *Salvages* made a Descent upon the Skirts of *Haverhil*, Murdering and Captiving about Thirty-nine Persons, and Burning about half a Dozen Houses. In this Broil, one *Hannah Dustan* having lain-in about a Week,² attended with her Nurse, *Mary Neff*, a Widow, a Body of terrible *Indians* drew near unto the House where she lay, with Designs to carry on their Bloody Devastations. Her Husband hastened from his Employments abroad unto the relief of his Distressed Family; and first bidding *Seven* of his *Eight* Children (which were from *Two* to *Seventeen* Years of Age) to get away as fast as they could unto some Garrison in the Town, he went in to inform his Wife of the horrible Distress come upon them. E'er she could get up, the fierce *Indians* were got so near, that utterly despairing to do her any Service, he ran out after his Children; resolving that on the Horse which he had with him, he would Ride away with *That* which he should in this Extremity find his Affections to pitch most upon, and leave the rest unto the Care of the Divine Providence. He overtook his Children about Forty Rod from his Door; but then such was the *Agony* of his Parental Affections, that he found it impossible for him to distinguish anyone of them from the rest; wherefore he took up a Courageous Resolution to Live and Die with them all. A Party of *Indians* came up with him; and now though they Fired at him, and he Fired at them, yet he Manfully kept at the Reer of his *Little Army* of Unarmed Children, while they Marched off with the Pace of a Child of Five Years Old; until, by the Singular Providence of God, he arrived safe with them all unto a Place of Safety about a Mile or two from his House. But his House must in the mean time have more dismal *Tragedies* acted at it. The *Nurse* trying to escape with the New-born Infant, fell into the Hands of the Formidable *Salvages*; and those furious Tawnies coming into the House, bid poor *Dustan* to rise immediately. Full of Astonishment she did so; and sitting down in the Chimney with an Heart full of most fearful *Expectation*, she saw the raging Dragons rifle all that they could carry away, and set the House on Fire. About Nineteen or Twenty *Indians* now led these away, with about half a Score other *English Captives*; but e'er they had gone many Steps, they dash'd out the Brains of the *Infant* against a Tree; and several of the other *Captives*, as they began to Tire in their sad *Journey*, were Soon sent unto their *Long Home*;³ the *Salvages* would presently Bury their Hatchets in their Brains, and leave their Carcasses on the Ground for Birds and Beasts to Feed upon. However, *Dustan* (with her Nurse) notwithstanding her present Condition, Travelled that Night about a Dozen Miles, and then kept up with their New Masters in a long Travel of an Hundred and Fifty Miles, more or less, within a few Days Ensuing, without any sensible Damage in

Notes

A NOTABLE EXPLOIT

¹ A woman was the leader of the action (approximately).

² That is, she had given birth about a week before.

³ They were killed.

their Health, from the Hardships of their *Travel*, their *Lodging*, their *Diet*, and their many other Difficulties. These Two poor Women were now in the Hands of those whose *Tender Mercies are Cruelties*; but the good God, who hath all *Hearts in his own Hands*, heard the Sighs of these *Prisoners*, and gave them to find unexpected Favour from the *Master* who laid claim unto them. That *Indian Family* consisted of Twelve Persons; Two Stout Men, Three Women, and Seven Children; and for the Shame of many an *English Family*, that has the Character of *Prayerless* upon it, I must now Publish what these poor Women assure me: 'Tis this, in Obedience to the Instructions which the *French* have given them, they would have *Prayers* in their Family no less than Thrice every Day; in the *Morning*, at *Noon*, and in the *Evening*; nor would they ordinarily let their Children *Eat or Sleep* without first saying their *Prayers*.⁴ Indeed these *Idolaters* were like the rest of their whiter Brethren *Persecutors*, and would not endure that these poor Women should retire to their *English Prayers*, if they could hinder them. Nevertheless, the poor Women had nothing but Fervent Prayers to make their Lives Comfortable or Tolerable; and by being daily sent out upon Business, they had Opportunities together and asunder to do like another *Hannah*, in *Pouring out their Souls before the Lord*:⁵ Nor did their praying Friends among our selves forbear to *Pour out* Supplications for them. Now they could not observe it without some Wonder, that their *Indian Master* sometimes when he saw them dejected would say unto them, *What need you Trouble your self? If your God will have you delivered, you shall be so!* And it seems our God would have it so to be. This *Indian Family* was now Travelling with these Two Captive Women, (and an *English Youth* taken from *Worcester* a Year and half before,) unto a *Rendezvouz of Salvages*, which they call a *Town* somewhere beyond *Penacook*; and they still told these poor Women, that when they came to this *Town* they must be Stript, and Scourg'd, and Run the *Gantlet* through the whole Army of *Indians*. They said this was the *Fashion* when the Captives first came to a *Town*; and they derided some of the Faint-hearted *English*, which they said, fainted and swoon'd away under the *Torments* of this Discipline. But on *April 30*, while they were yet, it may be, about an Hundred and Fifty Miles from the *Indian Town*, a little before break of Day, when the whole Crew was in a *Dead Sleep*, (Reader, see if it prove not so!) one of these Women took up a Resolution to imitate the Action of *Jael* upon *Sisera*;⁶ and being where she had not her own *Life* secured by any *Law* unto her, she thought she was not forbidden by any *Law* to take away the *Life* of the *Murderers*, by whom her *Child* had been Butchered. She heartened the *Nurse* and the *Youth* to assist her in this Enterprize; and all furnishing themselves with *Hatchets* for the purpose, they struck such home Blows upon the Heads of their *Sleeping Oppressors*, that e'er they could any of them struggle into any effectual resistance, *at the Feet* of those poor Prisoners, *they bow'd, they fell, they lay down; at their Feet they bowed, they fell; where they bowed, there they fell down Dead*. Only one *Squaw* escaped sorely Wounded from them in the Dark; and one *Boy*, whom they reserved asleep, intending to bring him away with them, suddenly wak'd and Scuttled away from this Desolation. But cutting off the *Scalps* of the *Ten Wretches*, they came off, and received *Fifty Pounds* from the General Assembly of the Province, as a Recompence of their Action; besides which, they received many *Presents of Congratulation* from their more private Friends; but none gave 'em a greater Taste of Bounty than Colonel *Nicholson*, the Governour of *Maryland*, who hearing of their Action, sent 'em a very generous Token of his Favour.

Notes

⁴ These Indians had been converted to Catholicism by the French.

⁵ See 1 Samuel 1: 5.

⁶ See Judges 5.