

**MATHER COTTON, CALEF
ROBERT**

**THE WITCHCRAFT
DELUSION IN NEW
ENGLAND: ITS RISE,
PROGRESS, AND
TERMINATION, (VOL 1
OF 3)**

Robert Calef

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England: Its Rise, Progress,
and Termination, (Vol 1 of 3)**

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Robert Calef

The Witchcraft Delusion in New England: Its Rise, Progress, and Termination, (Vol 1 of 3)

PREFATORY

THE Object in giving to the Public this new Edition of the *Wonders of the Invisible World*, is mainly to preserve an accurate Reprint of that *wonderful* Book. At the same Time it is intended to show that its Author has unjustly been singled out and held up to everlasting Scorn, as though he had been the Instigator of the whole Mischief; that from his high Standing socially he was more prominent than any other Man, and that this occasioned his being especially held responsible is clearly true. His ready Pen also largely contributed to place him in the front Rank of those whom that woeful Delusion led captive; he having written more largely upon the Subject than any other.

The first Edition of the *Wonders of the Invisible World* was published in Boston early in the Year 1693, at which Time *Witches* had begun to grow scarce; in other Words, Prosecutions had nearly ceased, and People were seriously looking about themselves, and anxiously inquiring what they had been about? The serious Inquirers were those (though few in Number) who had from the Beginning had Doubts as to the Reality of Witchcraft. When this Class began to reason, their Strength began to concentrate, and in due Time it put an End to the Horrors which had so strongly tended to the Ruin of the whole Community. Until this Reaction was brought about, no Person was for a Moment safe. Notwithstanding this frightful State of Things was thus brought to a Stand, a large Portion of the People retained all their Faith in the Reality of Witchcraft, and many of them exclaimed in Despair, that "the Kingdom of Satan had prevailed," and that they were a "God-forsaken People." In this latter Class was the Author of the *Wonders of the Invisible World*. He never wavered in his Faith to the very End, because his Conviction that he had espoused the Truth was stronger than any Argument which could be brought against it. Some others of the Ministers, and one or two of the Judges were equally sanguine in their own Righteousness. And yet we find the following cautious Piece of Advice given by "several Ministers to his Excellency and the Honourable Council": – "We judge that in the Prosecution of these, and all such Witchcrafts, there is Need of a very critical and exquisite Caution, lest by too much Credulity for Things received only upon the Devil's Authority, there be a Door opened for a long Train of miserable Consequences, and Satan get an Advantage over us, for we should not be ignorant of his Devices." For all this it is not easy to discover the Practice of any of that "exquisite Caution" in the Proceedings against those accused.

No sooner was the Edition of the *Wonders* printed in Boston, than Copies were sent to London and reprinted there with all Dispatch, as will be seen by the "*Imprimatur*" in the Front of the Work. Mr. Deodat Lawson's "*Brief and True Narrative*" of the same Affair was printed in Boston in 1692, by Benj. Harris, and the next Year in London by John Dunton, in Connection with Dr. Increase Mather's "*Further Account of the Tryals of the New England Witches*." A second (in Fact, it was the third) Edition of Mr. Lawson's Work was issued in London in 1704, which, though he calls it a *second Edition* is quite a different Book from the first Edition. In the first he inserted the Names of the Parties, while in the last, Dashes stand in their Stead. It has two Dedications: one "To the Right Worshipful and truly Honourable, Sir Henry Ashhurst, Barrt. and to His Truly Honourable and Religious Consort, Lady Diana Ashhurst, Barrt: " signed Deodat Lawson. The other is "To the Worshipful and Worthily Honoured *Bartholomew Gidney, John Hathorne, and Jonathan Corwin, Esqrs.* Together with the Reverend *Mr. John Higginson, Pastor, and Mr. Nicholas Noyes* Teacher of the Church of Christ at Salem." Signed Deodat Lavson. It should be mentioned also that Dr.

I. Mather's "*Further Account*," &c., contains Nothing beyond a Reprint of Lawson's Book, (first Edition) except a "Letter" containing "*A further Account of the Tryals of the New England Witches*," sent "*to a Gentleman in London*." This Letter was added at the End of the "*Further Account*." It was probably written by Mr. Mather to John Dunton, his Friend and Publisher, and occupies about three additional Pages.

In this Reprint of the *Wonders* I have followed the second Edition, presuming that to be the most accurate, as the Copy from which it was printed was doubtless furnished by the Author.

Very few Copies of the original Edition are known to be in Existence. I have never owned one, and am indebted to my Friend, George Brinley, Esq., for the Use of his (rather imperfect) Copy. While this Preface was in the Hands of the Printer, my Publisher, Mr. Woodward, has had the rare Fortune to obtain a very good one.

At this Period the Press literally swarmed with Works upon Witchcraft. Dunton printed in rapid Succession all the Works from New England, and other Publishers were equally busy. It would be a Matter of no little Curiosity if some one would collect the Titles of the Works on this Subject, and publish them in Book Form, with, or even without Abstracts of their Contents. In a unique Volume now before me, belonging to Harvard College Library – for the Loan of which I am indebted to the Kindness of Mr. Sibley, the Librarian – there are several Tracts, the Titles of which are quite as singular as any of the Mathers. One or two I will here extract. "The Lancashire Levite Rebuk'd: or, a Vindication of the Dissenters from Popery, Superstition, Ignorance, and Knavery, unjustly Charged on them by Mr. Zachary Taylor in his Book, entitled, "The Surry Impostor." Another runs thus: "The Devil turn'd Casuist or the Cheats of Rome laid open, in the Exorcism of a Despairing Devil, at the House of Thomas Pennington in Orrel in the Parish of Wigan in the County of Lancaster. By Zachary Taylor, M. A. Chaplin to the right reverend Father in God, Nicholas [Strafford] Lord Bishop of Chester, and Rector of Wigan."

Witch Books, as they were called, of the Father Land, must have been common among the People of New England, as will be seen by a Comparison of the Trials of Witches in both Countries. This Comparison shows that the accused in this Country were well acquainted with the ridiculous Nonsense of what had been and was passing at Witch Trials in England. The same Cant and Incoherency are visible at every Step. Insomuch, that the Frivolity, Shallow-mindedness and Falsity were so apparent, that they remind one of the childish Nursery Tales of Youth, and excite the most profound Wonder how they could have ever been viewed as Matter for serious Consideration by any Persons having any Pretensions to common Sense.

The original Records of the Court Proceedings against those accused of Witchcraft were never fully given to the Public, until about two Years ago, Mr. W. Elliot Woodward, of Roxbury, caused a complete Transcript to be made of the whole, and printed them in two Volumes, small Quarto, uniform with this Undertaking. Those, with the present Volumes, will put the Student of New England History in Possession of nearly all the Materials existing upon this deeply interesting, though humiliating, and in some respects, revolting Subject.

INTRODUCTORY

AS a Belief in Witchcraft is not entirely exploded, it may be interesting to examine a few of the early Definitions of it.

One of the earliest Lexicographers, or Expounders of English Words, was Edward Phillips, the Nephew of John Milton. It is said that Phillips made up his Work from Milton's Preparation in the same Line. However that might be, it is quite clear that many of his Definitions have that Clearness and Precision for which Milton is so remarkable. Phillips's third (and I believe his last) Edition of "The New World of Words" was printed in 1671. In that we find Witchcraft thus defined: "A certain evill Art, whereby with the Assistance of the Devil, or evill Spirits, some Wonders may be wrought, which exceed the common Apprehension of Men: It cometh from the Dutch Word *Wiechelen*, that is, to divine, or guesse; it is called in Latin *Veneficium*, in Greek *Pharmaceia*, i.e. the Art of making Poisons."

In 1706, John Kersey published the sixth Edition of Philips's Work, greatly augmented; though the Definition of *Witchcraft* is cut down to a few Words, thus: "The Black Art, whereby with the Assistance of the Devil, or evil Spirits, some Wonders may be wrought, which exceed the common Apprehensions of Men."

Phillips does not define a *Witch*, but he says a "Wizard is a Witch, a cunning Man, one that telleth where things are that were lost. Some think it comes from the Saxon Word *Witega*, i.e. a Prophet."

Kersey defines a Witch, an old Hag, or Woman that deals with Familiar Spirits; and a Wizard "a Sorcerer, or Inchanter; a Cunning Man," &c., as before.

In 1674, Thomas Blount published the fourth Edition of his "Glossographia, or Dictionary of hard Words." He says, "Witch is derived from the Dutch *Witchelen*, or *Wiichelen*, which properly signifies whinnyng and neighing like a Horse; also to foretell or prophecy; and *Wiichelen*, signifies a Soothsayer; for that the Germans (from whom our Ancestors the Saxons usually descended) did principally (as Tacitus tells us) divine and foretel Things to come by the whinnyng and neighing of their Horses; *Hinitus* and *Trenitus* are his Words."

Witchcraft is not defined by Blount himself; while under the Article *Witch*, he extracts from Master William Perkins: "Witchcraft is an Art serving for the working of Wonders by the Assistance of the Devil, so far as God will permit." To make the Definition of Witchcraft still more plain, Mr. Blount extracts thus from an old Author named *Delrio*,¹ who defines Witchcraft to be "An Art, which by the Power of a Contract, entred into with the Devil, some Wonders are wrought, which pass the common Understanding of Men."

As we approach a later Age, Lexicographers are pretty careful in their Definitions of Witchcraft. Bailey, in his folio Dictionary of 1730, says it is "the Art of bewitching, enchanting, divining, &c."

Johnson, though a Believer in Witchcraft, shirks the Definition of it thus: "The Practice of Witches. *Bacon*. Power, more than natural. *Sidney*."

Noah Webster published a Dictionary of the English Language in 1806, in which he says a *Witch* is "a Woman accused of magical Arts, a Hag." Witchcraft, "the Practice of Witches, a Charm." The great Lexicographer must have marvelled at these Definitions in his later Years; if so, he fails to make due Atonement in his incomparable "Unabridged." But the learned Editor of the "Imperial Dictionary,"² Dr. Ogilvie, appears to have taken such Liberty with Dr. Webster's Work as to bring it up to the Standard of the Times, especially in that Class of Words in which *Witchcraft* is prominent.

¹ A Jesuit of Loraine. His Book was a "Magical Disquisition."

² In three Volumes, royal Octavo, Glasgow, 1856-9.

His Definition is so much to the Point, so clear, and so well expressed, that it is, though long, extracted entire: "Witchcraft, the Practice of Witches; Sorcery; Enchantments; Intercourse with the Devil; a supernatural Power, which Persons were formerly supposed to obtain Possession of by entering into Compact with the Devil. Indeed it was fully believed that they gave themselves up to him, Body and Soul, while he engaged that they should want for Nothing and be able to assume whatever Shape they pleased, to visit and torment their Enemies, and accomplish their infernal Purposes. As soon as the Bargain was concluded, the Devil was said to deliver to the Witch an Imp or familiar Spirit, to be ready at call, and to do whatever it was directed. By the Aid of this Imp and the Devil together, the Witch, who was almost always an old Woman, was enabled to transport herself through the Air on a Broom-stick or a Spit, and to transform herself into various Shapes, particularly those of Cats and Hares; to inflict Diseases on whomsoever she pleased, and to punish her Enemies in a Variety of Ways. The Belief of Witchcraft is very ancient. It was universally believed in Europe till the 16th Century, and even maintained its Ground with tolerable Firmness till the Middle of the 17th Century. Vast Numbers of reputed Witches were condemned to be burned every Year, so that in England alone it is computed that no fewer than 30,000 of them suffered at the Stake."

Dr. Ogilvie closes his Definition with one Extract from Shakespeare:

"He hath a Witchcraft
Over the King in's Tongue."

It cannot be denied that the Existence of Witchcraft is as fully taught in the Bible as Slavery. The Light of Science has extinguished the one, while the other yet struggles against Fate.³ To urge the Authority of the Bible, that Slavery is a divine Institution, and therefore should be sustained, is just as reasonable as it would be to urge the Existence of Witches; and were there as many Interests at Stake in keeping alive Witchcraft, it would find as many Advocates, doubtless, as Slavery.

At first, Voices against Witchcraft were faint and few. Such was the Bewilderment of the human Mind in early Ages that Men hardly dared to think in Opposition to the Superstitions of the Multitude. Yet there were always some who doubted the delegated Power of the Devil, though they were not often lavish enough of their own Safety to let their Disbelief be known. Still, there are, no Doubt, some "dark Corners of the Earth" where it would not be entirely safe for one to declare publicly that there is no such Matter as Witchcraft. Nor is this so much to be wondered at, when, at the present Day, and in a Portion of our own Country, a Man cannot speak against Slavery, but at the Peril of his Life. This is no new Aspect growing out of the present Rebellion, but it has been thus many Years.

Few Men dared to speak boldly against the Existence of Witchcraft before the Year 1700. Though they disbelieved in it they were afraid to attack it. They began by endeavouring to show the Insufficiency of the Evidence relied upon in particular Cases. In this Way, Frauds were detected and exposed, and the Eyes of Judges were opened.

Among the early and successful Combatants of Witchcraft in England was Sir Robert Filmer. This Gentleman, though he out-went Machiavel himself in Arguments to uphold Despotism, yet he entered a pretty effectual Demurrer against the Prerogative of the Devil, as attempted to be manifested in the Persons of aged Matrons. Lancashire was distinguished above all other Counties in England in Sir Robert's Time for its Production of Witches; but when his native County, Kent, was scourged by the imaginary Arts of Satan, he thought it Time to make a public Declaration of his Views in Regard to the Nature of the Evidence made Use of for the Conviction of Witches. He therefore prepared a Treatise which he entitled "An Advertisement to the Jury-men of England, touching Witches," printed in 1680, but whether it was ever printed before does not appear from this Impression. In this

³ This Part of this Introduction was written not long before the Southern Rebellion began.

Work he criticises the Productions of some of the prominent Authors in Favor of Witchcraft with much Ability.

To the Assertion that Witches act under a Contract with the Devil, Mr. Filmer observes, "That the Agreement between the Witch and the Devil they call a Covenant, and yet neither of the Parties are any Way bound to perform their Part; and the Devil, without Doubt, notwithstanding all his Craft, hath far the worst Part of the Bargain. The Bargain runs thus in Master Perkins's Work: 'The Witch as a Slave binds herself by Vow to believe in the Devil, and to give him either Body, or Soul, or both, under his Hand-writing, or some Part of his Blood. The Devil promiseth to be ready at his Vassal's Command, to appear in the Likeness of any Creature, to consult and to aid him for the procuring of Pleasure, Honor, Wealth, or Preferment; to go for him, to carry him any whither, and to do any Command.' Whereby we see the Devil is not to have Benefit of his Bargain till the Death of the Witch. In the Meantime, he is to appear always at the Witche's Command, to go for him [or her], to carry him any whither, and to do any Command; which argues the Devil to be the Witche's Slave, and not the Witch the Devil's Slave. And though it be true which Delrio affirmeth, 'That the Devil is at Liberty to perform or break his Compact, for that no Man can compel him to keep his Promise;' yet on the other Side, it is as possible for the Witch to frustrate the Devil's Contract, if he or she have so much Grace as to repent; the which there may be good Cause to do, if the Devil be found not to perform his Promise. Besides, a Witch may many Times require that to be done by the Devil, which God permits not the Devil to do; thus against his Will the Devil may lose his Credit, and give Occasion of Repentance, though he endeavor to the utmost of his Power to bring to pass whatsoever he hath promised; and so fail of the Benefit of his Bargain, though he have the Hand-writing, or some Part of the Blood of the Witch for his Security, or the Solemnity before Witnesses, as Delrio imagineth."

Thus much is given to show in what Manner the Advocates of Witchcraft were combatted, without denying the actual Existence of it. It was as much as could be safely advanced in the seventeenth Century. To have come out boldly, and denied the Thing altogether, would have been to proclaim a Disbelief of the Teachings of the Bible; and this would have defeated the very Object sought to be attained. It has, beyond Question, occurred to all thinking Men in every Age, that Witches and Devils could not have a Being without God's Permission; that if they did or do exist, it is his Pleasure that they should; that, therefore, if God wished to destroy such Miscreants he would do it by making War on them himself, instead of compelling Mankind to fight them blindfolded for all Eternity, or during the World's Existence.

There are few Readers probably who have not heard of a Book upon Witchcraft by a royal Hand – a King of England. James I wrote a Book to which he gave the Title, *Dæmonologie*. To those who have not studied the State of Society in England for a Century or so before the Emigration of our Fathers to New England, and consequently cannot comprehend the Kind and Degree of Knowledge and Intelligence possessed by the People; it will seem incredible how they were bound down by such childish and utterly puerile Stuff as was put forth by James in his Work on Witchcraft. Nursery Tales of a later Day are quite as easily believed to be realities as the Witch Stories of a former Age, and the Allegories of Bunyan are much easier transformed to Realities. That so weak and absurd a Production as the *Dæmonologie* reflects the Understanding and Literature of our Fathers, must be not a little humiliating to their Descendants to the latest Posterity. The *Dæmonologie* was printed at Edinburgh, in Quarto, six Years before James came to the Crown of England, namely, in 1593. His Work corresponded with the Times in which it was written. Here is a Specimen of its Contents: "The Devil teaches Witches how to make Pictures of Wax and Clay, that by the roasting thereof, the Persons that they bear the Name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continual Sickness ... not that any of these Means which he teacheth them (except Poisons, which are composed of Things natural) can of themselves help any to these Turns they are employed in... That Witches can bewitch, and take the Life of Men or Women by roasting of the Pictures [Images] which is very possible to their Master to perform; for although that Instrument of Wax have no Virtue in the Turn

doing, yet may he not very well, by that same Measure that his conjured Slave melts that Wax at the Fire, may he not, I say, at these same Times, subtilly as a Spirit, so weaken and scatter the Spirits of Life of the Patient, as may make him on the one Part for Faintness to sweat out the Humours of his Body; and on the other Part, for the not concurring of these Spirits which cause his Digestion, so debilitate his Stomach, that his Humour radical continually sweating out on the one Part, and no new good Suck being put in the Place thereof for Lack of Digestion on the other, he at last shall vanish away even as his Picture will do at the Fire."

The Reader will hardly desire any more from such a royal Source; but even royal Nonsense may sometimes be Necessary upon historical Points, and we must listen to their incoherent Jargon, however much we hold them in Contempt. It was during the Reign of this King that New England began to be settled, and the Settlers were his Subjects, and with them came the Superstitions common to the People of England.

In James's Book he lays down Rules for determining who were Witches, and great Numbers were executed in Pursuance of those Rules. No sooner was that benighted King seated upon the English Throne, but the following Statute was passed: "If any Person or Persons shall use, practice, or exercise any Invocation, or Conjurament of any evil and wicked Spirit, or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed or reward any evil and wicked Spirit, to or for any Intent and Purpose: or take up any dead Man, Woman or Child, out of his, her or their Grave, or any other Place where the dead Body resteth, or the Skin, Bone or any Part of the dead Person, to be employed or used in any Manner of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Charm, or Inchantment; or shall use, practice or exercise any Witchcraft; or shall use, practice or exercise any Witchcraft, Inchantment, Charm or Sorcery, whereby any Person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined or lamed in his or her Body, or any Part thereof; that then every such Offender or Offenders, their Aiders, Abettors, and Counsellors, being of any the said Offenders duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer Pains of Death as a Felon or Felons."

This Law does not materially differ from that enacted in the fifth Year of Elizabeth; yet there is a Clause in the older one, declaring that, "If any Person shall take upon him by Witchcraft, Inchantment, Charm or Sorcery, to tell or declare in what Place any Treasure of Gold or Silver should or might be found or hid in the Earth, or other secret Places, or where Goods, or Things lost or stolen should be found or be come: Or to the Intent to provoke any Person to unlawful Love, or whereby any Cattle or Goods of any Person shall be destroyed, wasted or impaired; or to destroy or hurt any Person in his, or her Body, though the same be not effected, &c. a Year's Imprisonment, and Pillory, &c. and the second Conviction, Death."

In the early Laws of Massachusetts, adopted in 1641, Witchcraft is thus briefly dealt with: "If any Man or Woman be a Witch (that is hath or consulteth with a familiar Spirit) they shall be put to Death." These Laws were called *The Body of Liberties*, and were drawn up by the famous Minister of Boston, John Cotton. He made them conform to the Bible, and Passages of Scripture stand against each Law in the Margin. Against this is found, Deut. xiii, 6, 10 – xvii, 2, 6. Ex. xxii, 20.

In Plymouth Colony as late as 1671, nearly the same Law was enacted. It differed only by saying, "If any Christian (so called) be a Witch," &c.

If Sir Robert Filmer had seen our Laws, he would, perhaps, have indulged in a few Observations upon them. The Plymouth People seem to have looked a little farther than the learned Minister of Boston, as appears by the Proviso thrown in, that a *Christian* could not be a Witch. Of course the Judges were to determine the Point of Christian or no Christian, assuming that a Christian Judge could not err or be mistaken.

One of the Advocates of Witchcraft having asserted that a Person cannot make the necessary Contract with the Devil to become a Witch, without renouncing God and Baptism, "it will follow," says Filmer, "that none can be Witches but such as have first been Christians. And what shall be said then of all those idolatrous Nations, of Lapland, Finland, and divers Parts of Africa, and many other

heathenish Nations, which Travellers report to be full of Witches? And indeed, what Need or Benefit can the Devil gain by contracting with those Idolators, who are surer his own than any Covenant can make them?"

Witchcraft, as formerly believed in, was the Art of working Wonders or Miracles, and some of its Expounders asserted, that the Power of effecting Wonders does not flow from the Skill of the Witch, but is derived wholly from the Devil, whom the Witch has Command over, by Virtue of a Contract. Whereupon Sir Robert Filmer sensibly remarks, "that the Devil is really the Worker of the Wonder, and the Witch but the Counsellor, Persuader or Commander of it, and only accessory before the Fact, and the Devil only Principal. Now the Difficulty will be, how the Accessory can be duly and lawfully convicted and attainted according as the Statute requires, unless the Devil, who is the Principle, be first convicted, or at least, outlawed; which cannot be, because the Devil can never be lawfully summoned according to the Rules of our Common Law."

In this Manner Witchcraft was successfully assailed, because it was a Species of reasoning that did not directly interfere with the Superstitions and Prejudices of the People. But the March of Mind amongst the Masses was slow, and Trials for Witchcraft continued in England for twenty Years after Sir Robert Filmer wrote.

For one hundred Years, 1580 to 1680, in Germany alone, 1,000 Persons a Year, on an Average, were, upon good Authority, said to have suffered Death for the imaginary Crime of Witchcraft. Executions in that Country began to abate about 1694; the last Execution, being of a poor Nun, in 1749. And it may be remarked in this Connection, that immediately after the miserable James published his Work on Witchcraft, 600 Persons were put to a cruel Death for being Witches.

"Thou shalt not suffer a Witch to live," is a Command, and it was once considered as much to be regarded as any other Command in the Bible. That there were Witches in the World was as plain, and as much to be believed, as that there were Spirits of any Kind whatever. Whoever believed in the Immortality of the Soul, believed in the Immortality of bad Souls as well as good. Soul is another Word for Spirit; hence good Spirits and bad Spirits. Witches were bad Spirits, but whether they originated *in* Mankind, or whether they were sent there to take Possession of the human Body, and to exclude a better Tenant, has not been satisfactorily settled by Psychologists and Metaphysicians. But one Thing seems to be well established, and that is, that quite as many bad Spirits find Habitations in the Sons and Daughters of these Days, as at any former Period. Fortunately it was found out, at length, that destroying the Tenement of a bad Spirit, did not destroy that Spirit. But this was not thought of until Thousands had been put to Death.

It will doubtless be said by many, that if ever there were Witches in the World, there are Witches now. This Point it is not intended to argue. There were always those who denied the Existence of Witches; or, what amounted to the same Thing, they would never allow that there was sufficient Evidence produced to prove that *Craft* against any who were accused of it. Persons who thus question all Court Proceedings, where Witchcraft was attempted to be detected, were regarded as unfit for good Society, and unworthy of its Protection.

Those who were for "ridding the Land" of Witches, thought those who questioned the Legality of their Proceedings, were, at least, Infidels, in the most obnoxious Sense, and they were generally treated as such, and were to be shunned by Society. Thus it fared with Mr. Robert Calef, who, during the Prosecutions and Executions of the People accused in Massachusetts, as will be seen in the Progress of the present Work.

It is scarcely conceivable by even the partially enlightened of the present Age, that only one hundred and fifty Years ago our Ancestors were, in some respects, so slightly removed from Barbarity and heathen Darkness. Superstition will give Way only to mental Culture; but there may be considerable mental Culture, and also much Superstition; for Persons may be educated in many Things when those very Things are founded in Error. Certain Premises are taken for granted, because

no Data exist, or at least insufficient Data, to investigate them and the Foundations on which they rest. This is still the Case, but it was more so in Times past.

Barbarous Nations, as the Aborigines of any Country, are Slaves to the same Kind of Superstition as that which caused the Executions for Witchcraft by the Governments of Old and New England. Even many of those who opposed the Prosecutions for that imaginary Crime, were not free from the same Superstitions with the Advocates of it. They believed in Witchcraft, and only argued the Want of Evidence against it. This gave them a decided Disadvantage, because the Evidence was, in many Cases, apparently so overwhelming; insomuch, that "the learned Baxter" wrote to Dr. Increase Mather, declaring, "The Evidence is so convincing, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee who will not believe it." Hence if there were some Persons who did not believe the strange and unnatural Things alleged to have been performed by Persons charged with Witchcraft they were treated as "obdurate Sadducees," whose Unbelief was only a Pretence. Times have so much changed, that it is not necessary to make the Admissions which the Opposers of Witchcraft formerly made. Then, to deny the Existence of it was precisely the same as to deny that the Bible was a Revelation from God. Therefore, as was before observed, those who opposed the Prosecutions for Witchcraft, labored under a great Disadvantage. The Belief in it being nearly universal, the solitary Individual who dared to stem so popular a Torrent, now looked upon clearly as a Delusion, had nothing to expect on all Hands, but Obloquy, Derision and Contempt.

From all which, Nothing is easier to be discerned than this – wherever Ignorance is the greatest, there Superstition prevails most; that therefore it follows of course, that Ignorance and Superstition are the Parents of Witchcraft.

It never occurred to Believers in Witchcraft, it would seem, that if Witches really existed, a Prosecution against them could no more reach them than it would the Air in a Bubble or the Breath which they breathed; for if they possessed the Power claimed for them, they also had the Power to abandon the Bodies they possessed the Moment it was decided to punish them in such Bodies; and thus disconcert all Attempts to obstruct their Craft.

The Advocates of Witchcraft affirm that it is by Virtue of a League with the Devil that the Witch is enabled to carry on her Operations; and that the Devil, God's great Enemy, is allowed to commission Witches, that they may also counteract his (God's) Purposes by ensnaring Souls, as though the Devil had not Power enough to do the whole Mischief himself; and thus in a sneakingly indirect Way make a Cats-paw of some demented old Woman, or other simple Person.

In the midst of the Proceedings against the People charged with being Witches, and while several Jails were crowded with those unfortunate Persons, a very serious Question arose, which, of itself, was calculated to cause the most violent of the Prosecutors to stay their bloody Hands, and to ask themselves, what they had been doing? and if, after all, there was not a Possibility that they had been guilty of shedding innocent Blood? The Question was a very simple and natural one, namely, Is it not possible for a Witch to appear in the Shape of an innocent Person? As soon as this Question was started, there was quite a Shock in the Community, and the Men accounted the wisest in the Land stood still for a Time, and looked inquiringly upon one another. As long as the afflicted Persons accused only the Poor and Friendless, Nothing appears to have been thought of the Possibility that such Persons could be innocent of the Charges preferred against them. But, when at length, Persons considered of unblemished Lives, standing among the first in the Community, came to be accused, then the Case wore a different Aspect; then it was that the before mentioned important Question came up. This Question divided the People, and from that Division Safety resulted. In this Instance, the common Order of Things was reversed; Safety came from a Division, and not from Union. Hence a new Proverb is derived – In Union there may be Error, while Division may elicit the Truth.

The People, thus brought to a Stand, had a little Time for reflection. This, some improved to the Advantage of themselves, while others improved it for the Advantage of the Public. Some had been so strenuous in their Efforts to convict accused Persons, that it was now very difficult for them,

even to suspend their Efforts without giving their Opponents an immediate Advantage over them; that even though the Judges of the Courts who tried the accused, had been guided mainly by "Mr. Perkins's Rules for the Discovery of Witches," on a careful Inspection of those Rules at this Day, it is difficult to see how Convictions were forced out of them.

Nevertheless, strong Ground having been taken that Witches existed, and Persons reputed Witches having been prosecuted with the utmost Rigor, and unrelenting Perseverance for a long Time, the chief Agents in these bloody Proceedings, firm in their Convictions that they had done righteously, deemed it incumbent upon themselves to keep the People to the same Opinions. This was the Origin of this unfortunate Book, "*The Wonders of the Invisible World*;" the chief Part, or perhaps all of which, was composed while above one hundred poor People in and about Salem and Boston were suffering a wretched imprisonment in the filthy and barbarous Jails of those Days, to which Jails and Prisons of our Days are in Comparison, Palaces. It was doubtless no sooner determined that the Proceedings against the Witches should be given to the World, than the Person was designated who should perform that Service. And from the very opening of that Work it is at once discovered, that it was intended as a "Defence" of what had been already done, as well as to urge a Continuance of those Proceedings, "until the Land was fully purged of the Demons which infested it."

For a long Period, the Publication of Books detailing the Doings and Prosecutions of Witches seems to have extended rather than abridged the Belief in Witchcraft. This may be accounted for in Part from the Consideration that the Teachers of the People were themselves groveling in the Mire of Superstition. A more particular Reference to some of the Works best known somewhat more than two Centuries ago shall here follow.

One Thomas Cooper published in 1617, a Work of this Title, "The Mystery of Witchcraft. Discovering, the Truth, Nature, Occasions, Growth and Power thereof. Together with the Detection and Punishment of the same. As also, the Seuerall Stratagemes of Sathan, ensnaring the poore Soule by this desperate Practize of annoying the Bodie: with the seuerall Vses thereof to the Church of Christ. Very necessary for the redeeming of these atheisticall and secure Times."

This Author dedicated his Work to the "Maior and Corporation of the Ancient Citie of Chester," &c., in which Dedication we find the following, which, throwing some Light on the reverend Dealer in Darkness, is extracted. He commences, "Diuers, and verie weighty haue been the Motiues (right Worshipfull) to induce mee to the Dedication of these my Labors in this kinde vnto your Worships.

"The first is, because my first Calling from the Vniversitie, to employ my Ministrie for the Edification of the Saints, was by the Gouvernors of your famous Citie, to succeed that painefull and profitable Teacher, Maister Harrison, who was thence called by the King's most Excellent Maiestie, to be one of the sixe Teachers to those barren and needfull Places of the Country of Lancashire. And therefore, hauing both kind intertainment among you; and by some of you being furthered to a more settled Pastorall Charge in that Countie, I could not but leave some Memoriall of my Thankfulness vnto you herein.

"Secondly, my free Admission to that Pastorall Charge, together with the singular Providence of God, in directing my Ministrie for the informing and reforming of that ignorant People, who never before enjoyed any constant Ministrie, as also his admirable Protection and Deliuerance of me from vnreasonable Men, that vsed all their Force and Cunning to hinder the Proceedings of the Gospel of Christ."

These Extracts are made because they give a Glimpse of the Life and Character of an Author, second only to King James as a Cultivator of Witchcraft. His Book is a small Duodecimo of 368 Pages, in the Close of which he says, "to the wise and humble Reader, I am not ashamed to acknowledge, that which thou canst not but discern; that I have borrowed most of my Grounds from his Maiesties Dæmonologie, Mr. Perkins, Mr. Gifford, and others." And this truly may be added, "the Blind were led by the Blind," in the fullest Sense of the Maxim. Master Cooper further remarks

upon the Labors of his royal Predecessor and others in these Words, "they have waded before mee heerein, to confirme the Authoritie thereof, against the Atheisme of these evill Dayes: that so each might have the perfect Honour of their owne Paines."⁴

In his second Chapter he says, "it is proued that there haue beene, are, and shall be Witches to the World's End: both by sound Testimony, 1st, from the Word; 2d, from Antiquity; 3d, from pregnant Reasons, and so such Obiections answered, as seeme to contradict this Truth."

This most singularly superstitious Writer says there were good Witches as well as bad ones; that these good Witches are called the *unbinding* ones; because they undo what the bad Witch does, and yet is allowed to do good Offices with the Consent of the Devil.⁵

Good Witches performed wonderful Cures, according to the Belief of those Days. Even Burton⁶ says, "they can effect such Cures, the maine Question is whether it be lawful in a desperate Case, to crave their Help, or ask a Wizard's Advice. 'Tis a common Practice of some Men to go first to a Witch, and then to a Physitian. If one cannot help the other shall." And Paracelsus declared, "that it mattered not whether a sick Person were helped by God or Devil, so that he were eased." Some, however, demurred to this, and affirmed that it was better to die than be cured by a Witch or a Sorcerer.

Further to illustrate the Subject, I shall have Recourse to Mr. Nathan Drake's *Shakespeare, and his Times*. That chief of Expounders of the "Immortal Bard," having had occasion to review the Subject of Witchcraft, and having made so clear and valuable an Analysis of it in his Examination of the Witches of Shakespeare, as is nowhere else to be found, I am, as will be the Readers of this Introduction, I apprehend, fortunate in being able to avail myself of the Labors of that eminent Scholar and able Antiquary.

The Play of Macbeth is founded on a Species of Superstition that, during the Life-time of Shakespeare, prevailed in England and Scotland, in a Degree until then unknown. In the 33d Year of Henry VIII, was enacted a Statute which adjudged all Witchcraft and Sorcery to be Felony without the Benefit of Clergy; but at the Commencement of the Reign of Elizabeth, the Evil seems to have been greatly on the Increase, for Bishop Jewel, preaching before the Queen, in 1558, tells her, "It may please your Grace to understand that Witches and Sorcerers within these few last Years are marvelously increased within your Grace's Realm. Your Grace's Subjects pine away, even unto the Death, their Colour fadeth, their Flesh rotteth, their Speech is benumbed, their Senses are bereft, I pray God they may never practice further then upon the Subject."⁷ How prevalent the Delusion had become, in the Year 1584, we have the most ample Testimony in the ingenious Work of Reginald Scot, entitled "The Discoverie of Witchcraft," which was written as the sensible and humane Author has informed us, "in behalfe of the Poore, the Aged, and the Simple,"⁸ and it reflects singular Discredit on the Age in which it was produced, that a Detection so complete, both with regard to Argument and Fact, should have failed in effecting its Purpose. But the Infatuation had seized all Ranks, with an Influence which rivaled that resulting from an Article of religious Faith, and Scot begins his Work with the Observation, that "the Fables of Witchcraft have taken so fast hold and deepe Root in the Heart of Man, that fewe or none can, now adaies, with Patience indure the Hand and Correction of God. For if any Adversitie, Greefe, Sicknesse, Losse of Children, Corne, Cattell, or Libertie happen unto them; by and by they exclaime uppon Witches; – insomuch as a Clap of Thunder, or a Gale of Wind is no sooner heard, but either they run to ring Bells, or crie out to burne Witches;"⁹ and in his second Chapter, he declares, "I have heard to my greefe some of the Minesterie affirme, that they

⁴ *The Mysterie of Witchcraft*, P. 363.

⁵ *Ibid*, 211.

⁶ *Anatomy of Melancholy*, 221, Edition in Folio, 1651.

⁷ *Styve's Annals*, I, P. 8.

⁸ *Epistle to Sir Roger Manwood*, P. 1.

⁹ *Epistle to Sir Roger Manwood*, Chap. i, Pp. 1 and 2.

have had in their Parish at one Instant xvij or xviii Witches: meaning such as could work Miracles supernaturallie,"¹⁰ a Declaration which, in a subsequent Part of his Book, he more particularly applies, when he informs us, that xvij or xviii were condemned at once at St. Osees in the County of Essex, being a whole Parish, though of no great Quantitie."¹¹

The Mischief, however, was but in Progress, and received a rapid Acceleration from the Publication of the *Dæmonologie* of King James, at Edinburgh, in the Year 1597. The Origin of this very curious Treatise was probably laid in the royal Mind, in Consequence of the supposed Detection of a Conspiracy of 200 Witches with Dr. Fian, "Register to the Devil," at their Head, to bewitch and drown His Majesty, on his Return from Denmark, in 1590. James attended the Examination of these poor Wretches with the most eager Curiosity, and the most willing Credulity; and, when Agnis Tompson confessed, that she, with other Witches, to the Number just mentioned, went altogether by Sea, each one in her Riddle, or Sieve, with Flagons of Wine, making merry and drinking by the Way, to the Kirk of North Berwick, in Lothian, where, when they had landed, they took Hands and danced, singing all with one Voice:

"Commer [Gossip] go ye before, commer goe ye
Gif ye will not go before, commer let me."

And "that Geilis Duncane did go before them, playing said Reel on a Jew's Trump." James sent for Duncane, and listened with Delight to his Performance of the Witches' Reel on the Jews-harp!

On Agnis, however, asserting, that the Devil had met them at the Kirk, His Majesty could not avoid expressing some Doubts; when, taking him aside, she "declared unto him the very Words which had passed between him and his Queen on the first Night of their Marriage, with their Answer each to other; whereat the King wondered greatly, and swore by the living God, that he believed all the Devils in Hell could not have discovered the same."¹²

That the Particulars elicited from the Confessions of these unfortunate Beings, which, it is said, "made the King in a wonderful Admiration," formed the Basis of the *Dæmonologie*, may be therefore readily admitted. It is also to be deplored, that, weak and absurd as this Production now appears to us, its Effect on the Age of its Birth, and a Century afterwards, were extensive and melancholy in the extreme. It contributed, indeed, more than any other Work on the Subject, to rivet the Fetters of Credulity; and scarcely had a twelve month elapsed from its Publication, before its Result was visible in the Destruction in Scotland, of not less than 600 human Beings at once, for this imaginary Crime!¹³

The Succession of James to the Throne of Elizabeth served but to propagate the Contagion; for no sooner had he reached this Country, than his *Dæmonologie* reappeared from an English Press, being printed in London, in 1603, in Quarto, and with a Preface to the Reader, which commences by informing him of the "fearfull abounding at this Time in this Country, of these detestable Slaves of the Devel, the Witches, or Enchanters;"¹⁴ a Declaration which, during the Course of the same Year, was accompanied by a new Statute against Witches, one Clause of which enacts, that, "Any one that shall use, practice, or exercise any Invocation or Conjurament of any evill or wicked Spirit, or consult, covenant with, entertaine or employ, feede or reward, any evill or wicked Spirit, to or for any Intent or Purpose; or take up any dead Man, Woman or Child, out of his, her, or their Grave, or any other Place where the dead Body resteth, or the Skin, Bone, or other Part of any dead Person, to be employed or used in any Manner of Witchcraft, Sorcery, Charme, or Enchantment; or shall use,

¹⁰ Scot, *Discoverie*, Chap. ii, P. 4.

¹¹ *Discourse of Devils and Spirits*, P. 543; annexed to the *Discoverie of Witchcraft*.

¹² See *Gent. Magz.*, XLIX, P. 449; Vol. VII, P. 556.

¹³ Nashe's *Lenten Stuff*, 1599, as quoted by Reed, in his *Shakespeare*, Vol. X, Pp. 5, 11.

¹⁴ King James's *Works*, as published by James, Bishop of Winton, Folio, 1616, P. 91.

practice, or exercise any Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charme, or Sorcery, whereby any Person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted, consumed, pined, or lamed, in his or her Body, or any Part thereof, such Offenders, duly and lawfully convicted and attainted, shall suffer Death."

This Act was not repealed until the Year 1736. (ix Geo. II.)

We cannot wonder if Measures such as those, which stamped the already existing Superstitions with the renewed Authority of the Law, and with the Influence of regal Argument and Authority, should render a Belief in the Existence of Witchcraft almost universal; Fashion and Interest on the one Hand, and Ignorance and Fear on the other, mutually contributing, by concealing and banishing Doubt, to disseminate Error, and preclude Detection.

Who those were who, at this Period, had the Misfortune to be branded with the Appellation of Witches; what Deeds were imputed to them, and what was the Nature of their supposed Compact with the Devil, are Questions which will be most satisfactorily answered in the Words of Reginald Scot, whose Book is not only extremely scarce, but highly curious and entertaining; and two or three Chapters from this copious Treasury of Superstition, with a very few Comments from other Sources, will exhaust this Part of the Subject.

"The Sort of such as are said to be Witches," writes Scot, "are Women which be commonly old, lame, bleare-eied, pale, fowle, and full of Wrinkles; poore, sullen, Superstitious, and Papists; or such as know no Religion; in whose drousie Minds the Divell hath gotten a fine Seat; so as, what Mischeefe, Mischance, Calamitie, or Slaughter is brought to passe, they are easilie persuaded the same is doone by themselves; imprinting in their Minds an earnest and constant Imagination thereof. They are leane and deformed, shewing Melancholie in their Faces, to the Horror of all that see them. They are doting, Scolds, mad, develish, and not much differing from them that are thought to be possessed with Spirits; so firme and stedfast in their Opinions, as whosoever shall onelie have respect to the Constancie of their Words uttered, would easilie beleve they were true indeed.

"These miserable Wretches are so odious unto all their Neighbors, and so feared, as few dare offend them, or denie them anie Thing they aske: whereby they take upon them; yea, and some Times thinke, that they can doo such Things as are beyond the Abilitie of humane Nature. These go from House to House, and from Doore to Doore for a Pot full of Milke, Yest, Drinke, Pottage, or some such Reeefe; without the which they could hardlie live: neither obtaining for their Service and Paines, nor by their Art, nor yet at the Divels Hands (with whome they are said to make a perfect and visible Bargaine) either Beautie, Monie, Promotion, Welth, Worship, Pleasure, Honor, Knowledge, Learning, or any other Benefit whatsoever.

"It falleth out many Times, that neither their Necessities, nor their Expectation is answered or served, in those Places where they beg or borrowe; but ratheir Kindness is by their Neighbors reprov'd. And further, in Tract of Time the Witch weareth odious and tedious to her Neighbors; and they againe are despised and despited of hir; so as sometimes she curseth one, and sometimes another; and that from the Maister of the House, his Wife, Children, Cattell, &c. to the little Pig that lieth in the Stie. Thus in Processe of Time they have all displeas'd hir, and she hath wished evil Luck unto them all; perhaps with Curses and Imprecations made in Forme. Doubtless (at Length) some of hir Neighbors die, or falle sicke; or some of their Children are visited with Diseases that ver them strangelie: as Apoplexies, Epilepsies, Convulsions, hot Fevers, Wormes, &c. Which by ignorant Parents are supposed to be the Vengeance of Witches. Yea and their Opinions and Conceits are confirmed and maintained by unskilfull Physicians: according to the common Saieng; *Inscitiae Pallium Maleficium et Incantatio*, Witchcraft and Inchantment is the Cloke of Ignorance: whereas indeed evill Humors, and not strange Words, Witches, or Spirits are the Causes of such Diseases. Also some of their Cattell perish, either by Disease or Mischance. Then they, upon whom such Adversities fall, weighing the Fame that goeth upon this Woman (hir Words, Displeasure, and Curses meeting so justly with their Misfortune) doo not onlie conceive, but are resolved, that all their Mishaps are brought to passe by hir onelie Means.

"The Witch on the other Side expecting hir Neighbors Mischances, and seeing Things sometimes come to passe according to hir Wishes, Curses, and Incantations (for Bodin himself confesseth, that not above two in a hundred of their Witchings or Wishings take effect) being called before a Justice, by due Examination of the Circumstances is driven to see hir Imprecations and Desires, and hir Neighbors Harmes and Losses to concurre, and as it were to take effect: and so confesseth that she (as a Goddes) hath brought such Things to passe. Wherein, not onelie she, but the Accuser, and also the Justice are fowlie deceived and abused; as being thorough hir Confession and other Circumstances persuaded (to the Injury of Gods Glorie) that she hath doone, or can doo that which is proper onelie to God himselfe.

"Another Sort of Witches there are, which be absolutelie Cooseners: These take upon them, either for Glorie, Fame, or Gaine, to doo any Thing, which God or the Divell can doo: either for fortelling Things to come, bewraieng of Secrets, curing of Maladies, or working of Miracles."¹⁵

To this Chapter from Scot, which we have given entire, may be added the admirable Description of the Abode of a Witch from the Pen of Spenser, who as Warton hath observed, copied from living Objects, and had probably been struck with seeing such a Cottage, in which a Witch was supposed to live:

"There is a gloomy hollow Glen she found
A little Cottage built of Sticks and Reeds
In homely wise, and walled with Sods around;
In which a Witch did dwell, in loathly Weedes.
And wilful Want, all carelesse of her Needes
So choosing solitarie to abide
Far from all Neighbours, that her divilish Deeds
And hellish Arts from People she might hide,
And hurt far off unknowne whomever she enviede."¹⁶

This very striking Picture forever fixed the Character of the Habitation allotted to a Witch; thus in a singularly curious Tract, entitled, "Round about our Coal-Fire," published about the Close of the seventeenth Century, and which details, in a pleasing Manner, the Tradition of the olden Time, as a Source of Christmas Amusement, it is said that "a Witch must be a hagged old Woman, living in a little rotten Cottage, under a Hill, by a Wood-side, and must be frequently spinning at the Door: she must have a black Cat, two or three Broom-sticks, an Imp or two, and two or three diabolical Teats to suckle her Imps."

Of the wonderful Feats which the various Kinds of Witches were supposed capable of performing, Scott has favored us with the following succinct Enumeration. There are three Sorts of Witches he tells us, "one Sort can hurt and not helpe, the second can helpe and not hurt, the third can both helpe and hurt. Among the hurtfull Witches there is one Sort more beastlie than any Kind of Beasts, saving Wolves: for these usually devour and eate young Children and Infants of their owne Kind. These be they that raise Haile, Tempests, and hurtfull Weather; as Lightning, Thunder, &c. These be they that procure Barrenesse in Man, Woman and Beast. These can throwe Children in Waters, as they walk with their Mothers, and not be seene. These can make Horses kicke, till they cast their Riders. These can pass from Place to Place in the Aire invisible. These can so alter the Mind of Judges, that they can have no Power to hurt them. These can procure to themselves and to others, Taciturnitie and Insensibilitie in their Torments. These can bring trembling to the Hands, and strike Terror into the Minds of them that apprehend them. These can manifest unto others, Things hidden

¹⁵ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Vol. I, Chap. 3, Pp. 7-9.

¹⁶ Todd's *Spenser*, iv, 480-1. *Faerie Queene*, B. iii, Cant. 7, Stan. 6.

and lost, and foreshow Things to come; and see them as though they were present. These can alter Men's Minds to inordinate Love or Hate. These can kill whom they list with Lightning and Thunder. These can take away Man's Courage. These can make a Woman miscarrie in Childbirth, and destroe the Child in the Mother's Wombe, without any sensible Means either inwardlie or outwardlie applied. These can with their Looks kill either Man or Beast.

"Others doo write, that they can pull downe the Moone and the Starres. Some write that with wishing they can send Needles into the Livers of their Enemies. Some that they can transferre Corne in the Blade from one Place to another. Some, that they can cure Diseases supernaturallie, flie in the Aire, and danse with Divels. Some write, that they can play the Part of *Succubus*, and contract themselves to *Incubus*. Some saie they can transubstantiate themselves and others, and take the Forms and Shapes of Asses, Woolves, Ferrets, Cowes, Asses, Horses, Hogs, &c. Some say they can keepe Divels and Spirits in the Likenesse of Todes and Cats.

They can raise Spirits (as others affirme), drie up Springs, turn the Course of running Waters, inhibit the same, and staie both Day and Night, changing the one into the other. They can go in and out at Awger Holes, and saile in an Egge Shell, a Cockle or Muscle Shell, through and under the tempestuous Seas. They can bring Soules out of the Graves. They can teare Snakes in Pieces. They can also bring to pass, that Churne as long as you list, your Butter will not come; *especially, if either the Maids have eaten up the Cream; or the Good-wife have sold the Butter before in the Market.*"¹⁷

The only material Accession which the royal James has made to this curious Catalogue of the Deeds of Witchcraft, consists in informing us, that these aged and decrepid Slaves of Satan, "make Picture of Waxe and Clay, that by the roasting thereof, the Persons that they bear the Name of, may be continually melted or dried away by continuall Sicknesse;"¹⁸ and his Mode of explaining how the Devil performs this Marvel, is a notable Instance both of his Ingenuity and his Eloquence. This Deed, he says, "is verie possible to their Master to performe; for although that Instrument of Waxe have no Vertue in that Turne doing, yet may he not very well, even by the same Measure, that his conjured Slaves melt that Waxe at the Fire, may be not, I say, at these same Times, subtly, as a Spirit, so weaken and scatter the Spirits of Life of the Patient, as may make him on the one Part, for Faintnesse, to sweat out the Humour of his Bodie, and on the other Part, for the not Concurrence of these Spirits, which causes his Digestion, so debilitate his stomache that this Humour radicall continually, sweating out on the one Part, and no newe good sucke being put in the Place thereof, for Lacke of Digestion on the other, he at last shall vanish away, even as his Picture will doe at the Fire? And that knavish and cunning Workman, by troubling him onely at sometimes, makes a Proportion, so neere betwixt the working of the one and the other, that both shall end as it were at one Time."¹⁹

It remains to notice the Nature of the Compact or Bargain, which Witches were believed to enter into with their Seducer, and the Species of Homage which they were compelled to pay him; and here again we must have Recourse to Scot, not only as the most compressed, but as the most authentic Detailer of this strange Credulity of his Times. "The Order of their Bargaine or profession," says he, "is double; the one solemne and publike; the other secret and private. That which is called solemne or publike, is where Witches come together at certaine Assemblies, at the Times prefixed, and doo not onelie see the Divell in visible Forme; but confer and talke familiarlie with him. In which Conference the Divell exhortheth them to observe their Fidelitie unto him, promising them long Life and Prosperitie. Then the Witches assembled, commanded a new Disciple (whom they call a Novice) unto him: and if the Divell find that young Witch apt and forward in the Renunciacion of christian Faith, in despising anie of the seven Sacraments, in treading upon Crosses, in spetting at the Time of the Elevation, in breaking their Fast on fasting Daies, and fasting on Sundaies: then the Devill giveth

¹⁷ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Book i, Chap. 4, Pp. 9-11.

¹⁸ James's *Works*, by Winton, P. 116.

¹⁹ James's *Works*, by Winton, P. 117.

foorth his Hand, and the Novice joining Hand in Hand with him, promiseth to observe and keepe all the Divels Commandments.

"This doone, the Divell beginneth to be more bold with hir, telling her plainlie, that all this will not serve his Turne: and therefore requireth Homage at hir Hands: yea he also telleth hir, that she must grant him both hir Bodie and Soule to be tormented in everlasting Fire; which she yeeldeth unto. Then he chargeth hir to procure as manie Men, Women and Children also, as she can, to enter into this Societie. Then he teacheth them to make Ointments of the Bowels and Members of Children, whereby they ride in the Aire, and accomplish all their Desires. So as if there be anie Children unbaptized, or not garded by the Signe of the Crosse, or Orisons; then the Witches may and do catche them from their Mother's Sides in the Night, or out of their Cradles, or otherwise kill them with their Ceremonies; and after Buriall steale them out of their Graves, and seeth them in a Caldron, until their Flesh be made potable. Of the thickest whereof they make Ointments, whereby they ride in the Aire; but the thinner Potion they put into Flaggons, whereof whosoever drinketh, observing certain Ceremonies, immediatelie becometh a Maister or rather a Mistresse in that Practice and Facultie.

"Their Homage with their Oth and Bargaine is received for a certeine Terme of Yeares; sometimes forever. Sometimes it consisteth in the Deniall of the whole Faith, sometimes in Part. And this is doone either by Oth, Protestation of Words, or by Obligation in writing, sometimes sealed with Wax, sometimes signed with Blood, sometimes by kissing the Divel's bare Buttocks.

"You must also understand, that after they have delicatelie banketted with the Divell and the Ladie of the Fairies; and have eaten up a fat Oxe, and emptied a Butt of Malmesie, and a Binne of Bread at some noble Man's House, in the Dead of the Night, nothing is missed of all this in the Morning. For the Ladie *Sibylla*, *Minerva*, or *Diana*, with a golden Rod striketh the Vessel and the Binne, and they are fully replenished againe." After mentioning that the Bullock is restored in the same magical Manner, he states it as an "infallible Rule, that everie Fortnight, or at least everie Month, each Witch must kill one Child at the least for hir Part." He also relates from Bodin, that "at these magicall Assemblies, the Witches never faile to dance, and whiles they sing and danse, everie one hath a broome in hir Hand, and holdeth it up aloft."²⁰

To these Circumstances attending the Meetings of this unhallowed Sisterhood, King James adds, that Satan, in Order that "hee may the more vively counterfeit and scorne God, oft Times makes his Slaves to conveene in those very Places, which are destinate and ordained for the conveening of the Servants of God (I meane by Churches): – further, Witches oft times confesse, not only his conveening in the Church with them, but his occupying of the Pulpit."²¹ For this Piece of Information James seems to have been indebted to the Confessions of Agnis Tompson; but he also relates, that the Devil, as soon as he has induced his Votaries to renounce their God and Baptism, "gives them his Marke upon some secret Place of their Bodie, which remains soare unhealed, whilest his next Meeting with them, and thereafter ever insensible, however it be nipped or pricked by any;" a Seal of Destinction which, he tells us at the Close of his Treatise, is of great Use in detecting them on their Trial, as "the finding of their Marke, and the trying the Insensibleness thereof," was considered as a positive Proof of their Craft. His Majesty, however, proceeds to mention another Mode of ascertaining their Guilt, terminating the Paragraph in a Manner not very flattering to his female Subjects, or very expressive of his own Gallantry. "The other is," he tells us, "their fleeting on the Water: for as in a secret Murther, if the dead Carkase bee at any Time thereafter handled by the Murtherer, it will gush out of Blood, as if the Blood were crying to the Heaven for Revenge of the Murtherer, God having appointed that secret supernaturall Signe, for Triall of that secret unnaturall Crime, so it appears that God hath appointed (for a supernaturall Signe of the monstrous Impietie of Witches) that the Water shall refuse to receive them in her Bosome, that have shaken off them the sacred Water of Baptisme, and wilfully refused

²⁰ *Discoverie of Witchcraft*, Book iii, Chap. 1, 2, Pp. 40-2.

²¹ *Works*, apud Winton, Pp. 112, 113.

the Benefite thereof: No, not so much as their Eyes are able to shed Teares (threaten and torture them as you please) while first they repent (God not permitting them to dissemble their Obstinacie in so horrible a Crime) albeit the Women-kind especially, be able otherways to shed Teares at every light Occasion when they will, yea, although it were dissembling like the Crocodiles."²²

Such are the chief Features of this gross Superstition, as detailed by the Writers of the Period in which it most prevailed in this Country. *Scot* has taken infinite Pains in collecting, from every Writer on the Subject, the *minutiae* of Witchcraft, and his Book is expanded to a thick Quarto, in Consequence of his commenting at large on the Particulars which he had given in his initiatory Chapters, for the Purpose of their complete Refutation and Exposure; a Work of great Labor, and which shows, at every Step, how deeply this Credulity had been impressed on the Subjects of Elizabeth. *James*, on the other Hand, though a Man of considerable Erudition, and, in some respects, of shrewd, good Sense, wrote in Defence of this Folly, and, unfortunately for Truth and Humanity, the Doctrine of the Monarch was preferred to that of the Sage.

Fortunately the Time has arrived when the Belief of a King, or that of any other titled Personage, has very little Effect in fastening upon the World at large any peculiar Opinions he may have formed upon any Subject not within the Province of Reason.

Spiritualists and the Disciples of Mesmer have made the Discovery that Witchcraft is fully explained by one or the other of the Mysteries taught by them. How much Truth there may be in the Assertion I cannot undertake to determine. But from a very limited Acquaintance with Mysteries in general, my Opinion is that the Application of Mesmerism for the Explanation of Witchcraft, would partake very much of the Nature of applying one Absurdity to the Explanation of another.

For the "thousand and one" Examples of Witchcraft practiced by accused Persons in New England, an almost exact Parallel may be found in Cases which had previously occurred in Old England. And, in Proportion to the Number of Inhabitants in the respective Countries, there were as many in New as in Old England who raised their Voices against Prosecutions for the supposed Crime. Hence it is very obvious that mental Darkness was as dense in Old as in New England, at the Time of the Delusions of which we are speaking.

Superstition was then bounded only by the Limits of what was termed Civilization. The Light of Science for the last two hundred Years has considerably relieved Mankind from that deadly Incubus, and it is gratifying to believe that the March of Mind is onward and that a future of pure Light is before the World of Humanity. Like dark Spots on a Planet, some Superstitions seem almost as unaccountable, and their Removal appears about as difficult, so long have we been accustomed to tolerate them.

As late as 1668 it was asserted by an eminent English Writer, a Member of the Royal Society,²³ that "*Atheism* is begun in *Saducism*. And those that dare not bluntly say, *There is NO GOD*, content themselves, (for a fair *Step*, and *Introduction*) to deny there are SPIRITS, or WITCHES. Which Sort of *Infidels*, though they are not ordinary among the *meer vulgar*, yet are they numerous in a little higher Rank of *Understandings*. And those that know anything of the World, know, that most of the looser *Gentry*, and the small Pretenders to *Philosophy* and *Wit*, are generally Deriders of the *Belief* of *Witches*, and *Apparitions*."

Hence there were but two Horns to the Dilemma in which every one found himself – he must believe in Witchcraft and all the other degrading Attendants on that Belief, or he must be viewed and scorned as an Atheist, and as an Unbeliever in everything that was good!

It was difficult for People to distinguish between Miracles and Witchcraft, especially when the most learned Men,²⁴ in Order to make the Miracle of the Ascent of the Saviour appear reasonable,

²² King James's *Works*, *apud* Winton, Pp. 111, 135-6.

²³ Joseph Glanvill, in his *Blow at Modern Saducism*.

²⁴ Spencer's *Discourse concerning Prodigies*, London, 1665.

argued that "He went as far towards Heaven as he could on Foot, even to the Top of Mount Olivet." And when Elijah was to fast forty Days, "that there might be no Waste of miraculous Power, God would have him eat a double Meal before entering upon the Term of fasting!" With such wretched Absurdities were the Minds of People of that Time enslaved. The Superstitions of the Greeks and Romans were not greater. And although there is a steady Progress in intellectual Improvement, and a Time is believed to be approaching when the World will be as free from the Cheats and Impostures of the present Day, as some of the present Day are of those of previous Ages; yet it is in a Measure discouraging, when we see the Thousands ensnared by such transparent Jugglery as that which has peopled the Salt Lake Regions, and drawn other Thousands in our Midst to witness Feats that never did nor never will happen, except in the deluded Brains of those who desire to be thus deluded.

MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR

COTTON Mather was born in Boston, February 12th, 1662-3. In his Youth he was remarkable for his Progress in Knowledge, and soon became extensively known for his varied Acquirements. At the Age of Twelve he entered Harvard College, and graduated in due Course. He was thrice married: 1st, when in his twenty-fourth Year, to Abigail, Daughter of Col. John Phillips, of Charlestown; 2d, to Widow Elizabeth Hubbard, Daughter of Dr. John Clark; and 3d, to Lydia, Widow of Mr. John George, Daughter of the Rev. Samuel Lee, sometime of Bristol in Rhode Island. By the last Wife he had no Children, but by the others he had fifteen, nine of which were by the first.

The Father of Mr. Mather was Dr. Increase Mather, Pastor of the North Church, of Boston, of whom the Biographer of the former remarks, that, "as President of Harvard College, by whose printed composures both Latin and English, and by whose Agency in the Courts of three Monarchs for his afflicted Country, have rendered him universally known."

His Mother was Maria, Daughter of Mr. John Cotton of Boston, a Name as intimately associated with the History of New England as any other. And judging from the Portraits of the Grandsire and Grandson, there was a very strong Resemblance of the one to the other.

Mr. Mather began to preach in 1680, and his first Sermon was delivered in Dorchester, on the 22d of August of that Year. In the following February he was invited to become an Assistant to his Father in the North Church in Boston, which Invitation he accepted. About two Years later he was unanimously chosen Pastor by the same Church, but was not ordained until May, 1684; his Ordination probably being deferred on Account of his Youth; being at the Time of his Ordination but twenty-one Years and three Months old. On that Occasion he received the Right Hand of Fellowship from the venerable Mr. John Eliot, of Roxbury.

At an early Age he began to keep a Diary, and from the Passages we have from it we are convinced that its Entries were dictated by an honest Mind, and that Duplicity and evil Intentions could never find an abiding Place therein; that his sole Aim was Goodness, and a strong Desire to lead a life of Purity, is manifest throughout.

Mr. Mather commenced Author at the Age of 23, and continued his Publications to the Year of his Decease; extending over a Period of about forty-two Years. In that Time he is said by his Biographer to have issued 383 Books; thus averaging about nine each Year. But many of his *Books* would in these Days be called Pamphlets, as they consisted of only a few Pages – a very few indeed containing Pages sufficient to give them the Character of a Book. A List of these 383 Works is given in his Life by his Son, but it is known to be incomplete. The List is very deficient in Respect to the Titles of the Works, also, insomuch that their Contents cannot be determined from them.

There are several Biographies of Dr. Cotton Mather, all drawn mainly from that by his Son, Dr. Samuel Mather. An Abridgment of this was published in England in 1744, in a small 12mo, by David Jennings. Mr. Jennings was instigated to undertake the Abridgment by Dr. Isaac Watts; the latter having consulted with Mr. Mather previously, and obtained his Consent to let his Work appear in an Abridgment. In giving his Consent for the abridged Edition, he thus apologizes for the original Undertaking: "The Life of my Father, as you have it in your Hands, was a youthful Attempt;²⁵ though I now plainly discern my Defects in it, and am sorry to see such a Number of them, yet I can look on it with some Comfort; partly from a Consciousness of my honest Meaning in it, and partly because I find several worthy Persons approve of many Things in it, and have done me the Honour of expressing themselves favourable about it."

The Mode of writing Biography has very much changed since the Life of Dr. Mather was first written. Those written previous to, and at that Period, at least many of them, might be reduced in

²⁵ He was only 23 when the Work was published, which is indeed an Apology for its crude Style of Composition.

Bulk from five to seven-eighths, without omitting anything of Value. This Remark is applicable to other Performances of that Time, and to some in these as well.

It may be justly said of Cotton Mather, that he was one of the most remarkable Men of the Age in which he lived; not only remarkable on one, but on many Accounts; and for none, perhaps, more than for his wonderful Precociousness, or the early Intuitiveness of his Mind. His Memory was likewise very extraordinary. The Acquirement of Knowledge seems to have been with him accomplished almost without Effort; and his Writings show that they were generally drawn from the Storehouse of his Mind, where, from Reading and Observation, they had been from Time to Time deposited. Authors who write from this Source alone are generally diffuse, and wanting in those very essential and minute Particulars, which in these Days constitute so important a Part of every Man's Writings. His Style is very peculiar; and no One who is acquainted with the Writings of "famous Thomas Fuller," can hardly doubt that Cotton Mather attempted to make that Writer's Composition a Model for his own. Still he falls considerably short of Fuller in his Attempts at witty Conceits; in them the latter is always happy, while the former often fails.

His Ability for acquiring Languages has probably been surpassed by but very few, and he is said to have been Master of more Languages than any other Person in New England in his Time. Those, especially the Latin, it must be confessed, he made a most unreasonable Use of, bringing in Passages from them at all Times, as though every Body understood them, as well as himself.

So far as we now remember, Dr. Douglass seems to have been the Author of the Fashion or Practice, so much of late Years in Vogue, of reviling Cotton Mather. It has been carried to such an Extent in some Quarters, that any One who presumes to mention his Name, does it at the Peril of coming in for a Share of Obloquy and Abuse himself. Some not only charge him with committing all Sorts of Errors and Blunders, but they bring against him the more serious Charge of misrepresenting Matters of Fact. Now it would be well for those who bring those Charges to scrutinize their own Works. It may be, if they cannot see anything pedantic, puerile or false in them themselves, others may come in Contact with Errors even worse than those of Stupidity.

It is not to be denied that the Mind of Dr. Mather was singularly constituted; and whoever shall undertake an Analysis of it will find a more difficult Task, we apprehend, than those have found who content themselves with nothing further than vituperative Denunciations upon its Productions. We owe a vast Deal to Cotton Mather; especially for his historical and biographical Works. Were these alone to be struck out of Existence it would make a Void in these Departments of our Literature, that would probably confound any who affect to look upon them with Contempt. Even Dr. Douglass, although he has somewhere asserted, that, to point out all the Errors in the *Magnalia*, would be to copy the whole Book, is nevertheless, much indebted to him for Facts in many Parts of the very Work in which he has made that Statement; hence it would be very bad Logic that would not charge Dr. Douglass with copying Errors into his Work, knowing them to be Errors. It would be very easy for us to point to some Writers of our own Time equally obnoxious to the same plain Kind of Argument. And a late Writer of very good Standing has, with great apparent Deliberation said, that, "it is impossible to deny, that the Reputation of Cotton Mather has declined of late Years." This, of course, was his Belief; but it strikes us as very singular, that that same Author, should, at the same Time, make the largest Book on the Life of a Man, in such a *State of Decline*, that had hitherto appeared! But we are under no Concern for the Reputation of Cotton Mather, even in the Hands of his Enemies, and we have no Intention of setting up a special Defence of him or his Writings. We are willing the latter should pass for exactly what they are worth. All we design to do is to caution those a little who need Caution, and save them, if we may, from having the Windows in their own Houses broken, by the very Missiles they themselves have thrown.

But so far from the *Reputation* of Dr. Mather being in a *Decline*, his Writings have never been so much sought after as at the present Time! So much so that even Reprints of such of them as have been made are at once taken up, and at high Prices. Twenty Years ago, the *Magnalia* did not command

above eight or ten Dollars, while Copies are at present rarely to be had for five Times their former Price. Reference is had to the original Edition, of course. This can hardly be taken as an Indication of a declining Reputation. The Style in all his Works, though peculiar to himself, is nevertheless attractive, and never tedious, although often upon tedious Subjects. In Point of Scholarship, he was not excelled by any in the Country, and would not suffer by a Comparison with the best of his Time in England.

The Charge of excessive Credulity has been brought against Dr. Mather, as though that Trait of Character were peculiar to him alone. There does not appear to be any Justice in singling him out as responsible for all the Credulity in the Country. That he was credulous no One will deny, nor will it be denied that he was surrounded by a credulous Community, the great Majority of which were equally credulous, and he was made to speak for them. Hence he has become conspicuous while others are nearly or quite forgotten. All Men are credulous in some Way and upon certain Things. Belief and Credulity are much the same. The Degree of Evidence required to convert the latter into the former has never been settled; nor can it be until all Minds are of the same Capacity. It requires a large Amount daily of Credulity to enable us to live in the tolerably good Opinion of our Companions in and out of Doors everywhere. Dismiss all of that liberal Sentiment from our Minds and we should be dismissed by the most of our Friends.

In the Reprints of some of the Works of Dr. Mather great Injustice has been done him, while, at the same Time, a Cheat has been put upon the Public. One Instance may be here given. In the Year 1815 there appeared a tolerably neat Edition of the *Christian Philosopher*,²⁶ in a Duodecimo of 324 Pages, printed at Charlestown, for which a Copyright appears to have been taken out. On a cursory Examination we can discover no Ground for copyrighting this Edition, except for making it unlike the Original in one Respect only, namely, Omission of Important Matter. As an Example of the Omissions the following may be taken: "We read of Heaven *giving Snow like Wool*. I have known it *give a Snow of Wool*. In a Town of *New England*, called *Fairfield*, in a bitter snowy Night, there fell a Quantity of Snow, which covered a large frozen Pond, but of such a *woolen* Consistence, that it can be called nothing but *Wool*. I have a Quantity of it, that has been these many Years lying by me."

Now, in the Edition of 1815, this important Passage is entirely omitted! If Dr. Mather was imposed upon by some ignorant and mischievous Wight, that has nothing to do in excusing a Deception on the Part of a Publisher, who contracts to reprint a Work without any Reservation. If an Editor or Publisher thinks to save the Credit of his Author by falsifying his Text, he can only be sure of one Thing, and that is, to bring discredit upon himself.

I must here dismiss the *Christian Philosopher*; but in another Work by our Author, of an earlier Date,²⁷ there is a singular Story of Snow which may be noticed here: "It was credibly affirmed, that in the Winter of the Year 1688, there fell a *Red Snow*, which lay like Blood on a Spot of Ground, not many Miles from Boston; but the Dissolution of it by a Thaw, which within a few Hours melted it, made it not capable of lying under the Contemplation of so many *Witnesses* as it might be worthy of."

As the *Red Snow* did not come under the Doctor's immediate Observation, he has spoken of it with commendable Caution; insomuch that his Character for Credulity is not enhanced by the Relation of the Story. Moreover it is a well known Fact that *Red Snow* is often mentioned by reputable northern Travelers. But we have never heard that it *snowed Wool* at any other Time and Place, except as mentioned above.

In 1692, Dr. Mather published his *Wonders of the Invisible World*. This was the authorized Account of the Witchcraft Cases of that Time. In this he laid himself open to the Charge of Credulity, which, it cannot be denied, has been pretty well sustained ever since.

Many have reproached Dr. Mather, as though he was the Author of that dismal and awful Delusion. This is singularly unjust. He was himself one of the deluded; and this is the only Charge that

²⁶ Octavo, London, 1721. Printed for Emanuel Matthews, at the Bible in Pater-Noster-Row.

²⁷ *Appendix Touching Prodigies to his Convention Sermon of May 23, 1689.*

can lie against him relative to it. All the World then believed in Witchcraft, and People entered into it according to their Temperament and Circumstances. The Delusion was not a Native of New England, but an Exotic from the Father Land; and it had been well if this had been the only one imported thence. Even when Prosecutions had ceased, there was not a Cessation of a Belief in the Reality of Witchcraft; its Progress was stayed from a very different Cause, as is now too well known to be entered into or explained. Even to the present Day there are Thousands who believe in its Reality; and that Belief can only be extirpated by the Progress of genuine Knowledge. Within our Remembrance we could ride from Boston in a single Day, with a very moderate Horse, into a New England Town where the Belief in Witchcraft was very general, and where many an old Horse-shoe could have been seen nailed to half the Bedsteads in the Town to keep away those imaginary Miscreants who came riding through the Air upon Broomsticks, or across the Lots upon the Back of some poor old Woman, who perhaps from some Malady had not left her House for Years. How much short of a Day's Ride by Steam or otherwise it would now be necessary to take to reach a Place where the Belief exists, we shall not undertake, but leave for others to determine.

Cotton Mather was undoubtedly the most prominent Author who wrote on Witchcraft, and in the full Belief of it, in his Time, in this Country; this Circumstance accounts for his being singled out by "one *Robert Calef*," who attacked him with some Success, even then, in his Book which he called *More Wonders of the Invisible World, &c.*, which he published in London, in a quarto Volume, in the Year 1700. In his Book, Calef styles himself "Merchant, of *Boston in New England*." Now in the Absence of Proof to the contrary, it may not be unfair to presume, that Calef issued his Work quite as soon as he dared to, and quite as soon as public Opinion would tolerate a Work which had for its Aim a deadly Blow against a Belief in the imaginary Crime of Witchcraft. For we know that as soon as Calef's Book did appear, some of Dr. Mather's Friends came out with another Work against that Author, from the Title of which alone its Contents can pretty well be judged of. It is *Some few Remarks upon a Scandalous Book written by one Robert Calef*. But this Book and its Authors are alike almost unknown, while Calef occupies a conspicuous Place among the Benefactors of Mankind.

The foreign Correspondence of Dr. Mather was very extensive; "so that," says his Son, "I have known him at one Time to have above *fifty* beyond Sea." Among his Correspondents were many of the most learned and famous Men in Europe; as Sir Richard Blackmore, Mr. Whiston, Dr. Desaguliers, Mr. Pillionere, Dr. Franckius, Wm. Waller, Dr. Chamberlain, Dr. Woodward, Dr. Jurin, Dr. Watts, &c., &c. In a Letter which he wrote in 1743 Dr. Watts says, "he had enjoyed a happy Correspondence with Dr. Cotton Mather, for nearly twenty Years before his Death, as well as with the Rev. Mr. Samuel Mather, his Son, ever since."

In 1710 came out a Book from the Pen of our Author, which he entitled "*Bonifacius: An Essay upon the Good to be devised by those who would answer the great End of Life*." In this Work are many good Maxims and Reflections, but its Popularity has probably been very much enhanced by what Dr. Franklin has said of it. Dr. Mather was well acquainted with Franklin when the latter was a young Man; and when Franklin was an old Man, in the Year 1784, in writing to Samuel Mather, Son of our Subject, he thus alludes to it in his happy Style: "When I was a Boy, I met with a Book entitled, *Essays to do Good*, which I think was written by your Father. It had been so little regarded by a former Possessor, that several Leaves of it were torn out; but the Remainder gave me such a Turn of thinking, as to have an Influence on my Conduct through Life; for I have always set a greater Value on the Character of a *Doer of Good* than on any other Kind of Reputation." In the same Letter is to be found that often told anecdote of an Interview he once had with Dr. Mather. This too, that it may lose nothing at our Hands, we will give in the Author's own Words: "You mention being in your seventy-eighth Year; I am in my seventy-ninth; we are grown old together. It is now more than sixty Years since I left Boston, but I remember well both your Father and Grandfather; having heard them both in the Pulpit, and seen them in their Houses. The last Time I saw your Father was in the Beginning of 1724, when I visited him after my first Trip to Pennsylvania. He received me in his Library, and

on my taking leave showed me a shorter Way out of the House through a narrow Passage, which was crossed by a Beam overhead. We were still talking as I withdrew, he accompanying me behind, and I turning partly towards him, when he said hastily, '*stoop, stoop!*' I did not understand him, till I felt my Head hit against the Beam. He was a Man that never missed any Occasion of giving Instruction, and upon this he said to me, '*You are young, and have the World before you; Stoop as you go through it, and you will miss many hard Thumps,*' This Advice, thus beat into my Head, has frequently been of Use to me; and I often think of it, when I see Pride mortified, and Misfortunes brought upon People by their carrying their Heads too high." This Moral, so essentially good in itself, does not need the high Recommendation of a Franklin, though but for him it would not, probably, have been brought to the Knowledge of every Youth who has learned, or may yet learn to read.

The *Essay to do Good* has passed through many Editions, but how many it would be difficult to determine. It was several Times reprinted in London, once as late as 1807, under the Supervision of the distinguished Dr. George Burder. In this Country its Issue has not been confined to the Press of one Denomination.

It may be too much a Custom for us to dwell on the Errors and Misfortunes of People while living; and to err, on the other Hand, by making their Characters appear too perfect after they have passed away; especially if they have been sufficiently conspicuous in Life to require a written Memorial of them after their Decease. Though Dr. Cotton Mather had Enemies while living, his Memory has been pursued with more Malignity since his Death, than has happened to that of most Men; and, as we conceive, without sufficient Reason, and which could only be warranted by the most undoubted Proofs, that he has purposely led us into Errors, and that he acted falsely on the most important Occasions; and that, finally, he was too bad a Man to make any Acknowledgment of all this, though conscious of it when he took his final Departure with the Messenger of his last Summons.

He had vituperative Enemies in his Lifetime, from some of whom he received abusive anonymous Letters. These Letters he carefully filed, and wrote upon them simply the Word "Libels," which was all the Notice he took of them. It was an invariable Rule with him, that if he was obliged to speak of the evil Ways of People to do so in Humility and Regret, and never in a Manner that could be offensive. In his Diary he speaks of *Pride* as a Sin, "which all are subject unto, and more especially Ministers," and still more especially was it "the besetting Sin of young Ministers." Had he lived in these latter Days that Annoyance might have been less on Account of its Universality.

Mr. Mather's Time was that of long Sermons, and we are told that he usually closed them with the *fourteenth* Division of his Discourses. Besides his Labors on Sundays, he sometimes preached eleven Sermons in one Week besides. He also constantly had Students with him whom he instructed in various Branches of Knowledge.

Of the Part Dr. Mather took in State Affairs, his Biographer says he was not at Liberty to omit an Account, although it was a difficult Section; and that he was "more at a Loss what to do about it than any one in the whole Book." The Author, however, concludes, as he could not omit the Subject, to treat it "in such a general Way as to give no One any Offence." And as it is a *Section* of the Doctor's Life of great Interest, it will here be given entire in the Language of his Biographer, who wrote so near the Time that his Account carries its Readers back to those stirring Scenes of the Revolution of 1688, and furnishes a Picture, life-like, of the every-day Manners of our Fathers on that memorable and novel Event.

The Account follows: "My Country is very sensible that in the Year 1688 (when one of the most wicked Kings was on the British Throne) Andros and his Crew were very violent, illegal and arbitrary in their Proceedings. I need not give any Narrative of their Managements here, because there has been an Account of them already given to the World."²⁸

²⁸ Referring doubtless to *New England Justified*, published by the Author's Grandfather.

"While these roaring Lions and ranging Bears were in the midst of their Ravages; it was in the Month of April when we had News by the Edges concerning a Descent made upon England by the Prince of Orange for the Rescue of the Nations from Slavery and Popery; then a strange Disposition entred into the Body of our People to assert our Liberties against the arbitrary Rulers that were fleecing them. But it was much feared by the more sensible Gentlemen at Boston, that an unruly Company of Soldiers, who had newly deserted the Service in which they had bin employed for the Eastern War, by the gathering of their Friends to them to protect them from the Governor, who, they tho't, intended Nothing but Ruine to them, would make a great Stir, and produce a bloody Revolution. And therefore the principal Gentlemen in Boston met with Mr. Mather to consult what was best to be done; and they all agreed, if possible, that they would extinguish all Essays in our People to an Insurrection; but that, if the country People to the Northward, by any violent Motions push'd on the Matter so far as to make a Revolution unavoidable, then to prevent the shedding of Blood by an ungoverned Multitude, some of the Gentlemen present would appear in the Head of what Action should be done; and a Declaration was prepared accordingly.

"On April 18, the People were so driving and furious, that unheaded they began to seize our public Oppressors: upon which the Gentlemen aforesaid found it necessary to appear that by their Authority among the People the unhappy Tumults might be a little regulated. And thro' the Goodness of God, although the whole Country were now in a most prodigious Ferment and Thousands of exasperated People in Arms were come into Boston, yet there was no Manner of Outrage committed; only the *Public Robbers* that had lorded it over Us were confined. 'Twas then Mr. Mather appeared – He was the Instrument of preventing the Excesses into which the *Wrath of Man* is too ready to run. He came, and like a Nestor or Ulysses reasoned down the Passions of the Populace. Had he lisped a Syllable for it, perhaps the People would, by a sudden Council of War, have try'd, judg'd and hang'd those ill Men who would have treated him otherwise. Nevertheless he set himself both publicly and privately to hinder the Peoples proceeding any further than to reserve the Criminals for the Justice of the English Parliament.

"Now the Persecution which was intended for Mr. Mather was diverted; for on that very Day that he was to be committed to *Half a Year's Imprisonment*,²⁹ those that would have wrong'd him were justly taken into Custody: And yet so generous was he as not only to expose his Name, but even his Life unto the Rage of the Multitude for the saving of some that would have hurt him: Tho' he had no Thanks for his Ingenuity.

"The Spirit which acted him in these Matters is expressed in a Sermon he preached to the Convention of the Colony from 2 Chron. xv, 2. It was printed under the Title of, *The Way to Prosperity*.

"A few Days before this, the Inhabitants of Boston assembling together to chuse Representatives for that Convention, it was apprehended, that the different Persuasions of the People, about the next Steps to be taken for our Settlement, would have produced a Fury near to Bloodshed; and therefore Mr. Mather was desired to be at their Meeting. The Meeting began with dangerous and horrible Paroxysms, which when he saw, he upon it made an affectionate and moving Speech to them, at which many fell into Tears and the whole Body of the People present immediately united in the Methods of Peace Mr. Mather proposed unto them."

From what is here given it is not difficult to decide whether Mr. Mather was for or against Andros and his Government. It is a Pity the Author did not revise his Work in his mature Years, as well for his own Credit as a Writer as for his Father's Honor. It is the poorest of all his Performances.

The Convention before mentioned having ordered a Thanksgiving, for that "It having pleased the God of Heaven to mitigate his many Frowns upon us in the Summer past, with a Mixture of

²⁹ It would seem from this that Mr. Mather had been prosecuted, tried and sentenced to six Months' Imprisonment, but there appears no other Intimation of it.

some very signal Favours, and in the midst of Wrath so far to remember Mercy; That our Indian Enemies have had a Check put upon their Designs of Blood and Spoil, . . . and especially in the happy Accession of Their Majesties our Sovereigns, King William and Queen Mary to the Throne. It was therefore ordered that Thursday the 19th of December, 1689, be kept as a Day of Thanksgiving." This Order was dated Dec. 3d, 1689.

On this Thanksgiving Occasion Dr. Mather delivered one of his most elaborate Sermons, occupying, with a brief Appendix, *sixty-two Pages*, 16mo. In it he refers to the Revolution under various Heads; comparing it to an Earthquake, one having then but recently nearly destroyed Lima. And more terrible Pictures it would be difficult to conceive of, than he has drawn, of what would have been the Condition of New England, had not the Revolution succeeded.

The next great Event in the Life of our Author was the Witchcraft Delusion. As his own Work upon that memorable Chapter in New England's Annals is to be given in Connection with this Biography, any Apology or Remarks upon his Participation in it from the Editor could be of but little Value or Interest, no more will be done here than to extract what his Biographer-Son has favored the World with. That, as will be seen, is apologetical, and is far better told than the Part he took in the Revolution. It is indeed about all that can be said in Extenuation of one thus circumstanced.

"The Summer of the Year 1692, was a very doleful Time unto the whole Country. The Devils, after a most præternatural Manner by the dreadful Judgements of Heaven took a bodily Possession of many People in our Salem, and Places adjacent; where the Houses of the poor People began to be filled with the Cries of Persons tormented by evil Spirits. There seemed to be an execrable Witchcraft in the Foundation of this wondrous Affliction; many Persons of divers Characters being accused, apprehended, prosecuted upon the *Visions* of the afflicted.

"Mr. Mather, for his Part, was always afraid of proceeding to convict and condemn any Person as a *Confederate* with afflicting Dæmons upon so feeble an Evidence as a *spectral Representation*. Accordingly he ever testified against it both publicly and privately, and particularly in his Letter to the Judges, he besought them that they would by no Means admit it; and where a considerable Assembly of Ministers gave in their Advice about the Matter, he not only concurred with the Advice but he drew it up.

"Nevertheless, on the other Side, he saw in most of the Judges a charming Instance of Prudence and Patience; and as he knew their exemplary Piety, so he observed the Agony of Soul with which they sought the Direction of Heaven, above most other of our People who were enchanted into a raging, railing and unreasonable Disposition. For this Cause, tho' Mr. Mather could not allow the Principles some of the Judges had espoused, he could not however but speak honorably of their Persons on all Occasions; and his Compassion upon the Sight of their Difficulties, which Compassion was raised by his Journeys to Salem the chief Seat of these diabolical Vexations, caused him still to go to the Place. And merely for this Reason, some mad People in the Country (from whom one or two credulous Foreigners have dared to publish the abusive Story) under a Fascination of their *Spirits* equal to what our *Energumens* had upon their *Bodies*, reviled Mr. Mather as if he had been the Doer of the hard Things that were done in the Prosecution of the Witchcraft.

"In this evil Time Mr. Mather offered at the Beginning, that if the *possessed People* might be scattered far asunder, he would singly provide for six of them; and he with some others would see whether without more bitter Methods, *Prayer* and *Fasting* would not put an End unto these heavy Trials: But his offer was not accepted.

"However for a great Part of the Summer he did almost every Week spend a Day by himself in the Exercise of a secret Fast before the Lord. On these Days he cried unto God, not only for his own Preservation from the Malice and Power of the evil Angels, but also for a good Issue of the Calamities in which he had permitted the evil Angels to ensnare the miserable Country. He also besought the Lord that he would enable him, prosper, direct, and accept him in publishing such Testimonies for Him as were proper, and would be serviceable unto his Interests on that Occasion.

"And that a right Use might be made of the prodigious Things which had been happening among us, he now composed and published his Book entituled, *The Wonders of the Invisible World*, which was reprinted several Times in London: In the Preface he speaks of, '*the heart-breaking Exercises*', he went thro' in writing it. There was a certain Disbeliever of Witchcraft who wrote against this Book; but as the Man is dead, his Book died long before him.³⁰

"But having spoken eno' of the more publick Witchcraft, I think I will hale in here an Account of a Witchcraft happening in one private Family at Boston, two or three Years before the general one. 'Twas, I think, in the Year 1689, in the Winter, that several Children belonging to a pious Family at the South End of Boston were horribly bewitch'd and possessed.³¹

"Mr. Mather tho't it would be for the Glory of God, if he not only pray'd with as well as for the Children; but also took an Account of the extraordinary Symptoms which attended them, with sufficient Attestations to confound the Sadducism and Atheism of a debauched Age."

An Account of the Case of the Goodwin Family was separately published, and was noticed with Commendation by the "learned and pious Baxter," which has been often referred to as a Proof that other great Men, as well as Mr. Mather, were Believers in Witchcraft.

The Novelty and Singularity of a Thing was no Cause of its Rejection by Mr. Mather, and we next find him advocating Inoculation for the Small-pox; and, according to his Biographer he was the Cause of its Introduction into this Country. But in that, as in many other Things, too much is claimed for him. I have elsewhere given a History of its being put in Practice in Boston.³²

In 1714 Dr. Mather was chosen a Member of the Royal Society of London; upon which Event his Biographer remarks: "The Respect which the Royal Society paid him, did also very much encourage him, and fortify him in his Essays to do Good, while it added to the superior Circumstances in which he was placed above the Contempt of Envious Men."

This last remark will apply to some of our own Times; who, if their Power were equal to their Envy, few besides themselves would be allowed to possess much in the Way of Honors without their Permission. It was probably on this Occasion, that some Individuals circulated the Report that the Doctor was not a Member of the Royal Society. Whereupon a Letter from the Secretary of that Society was produced, in which this Passage occurs: "As for your being chosen a Member of the Royal Society, that has been done, both by the Council and Body of the Society: only the Ceremony of Admission is wanting; which you being beyond Sea, cannot be performed." This having been promulgated, the envious Detractors were silenced in that Age, and it is rather surprising that Ignorance and Malice should attempt to revive it in this. As Mr. Mather never visited England, he of course never attended a Meeting of the Royal Society. But this did not affect his Membership. That this did not affect his Membership may be mentioned as pretty good Evidence, the Fact that some of his Works were soon after published in London, in the best Style of the Day, having appended to his Name in their Title-Pages, "D. D. and Fellow of the Royal Society." Now such an Assumption would have been an Offence of a serious Character, had it been merely an Assumption; and a Rebuke would have gone forth from the Royal Society, and would ever since have been a Matter of Record and Notoriety. But Nothing of the Kind is heard of, plainly because Dr. Mather stood right with the Records of the Royal Society.

Nobody will charge the Rev. Thomas Prince with Insincerity in what he has said of his Colaborers, and HE says, "Dr. Cotton Mather, though born and constantly residing in this remote corner of America, has yet for near these forty Years made so rising and great a Figure in the learned

³⁰ Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World* is the Book asserted to have died *long before its Author*. However that might have been considered 30 Years after the *More Wonders* was printed, it is far from being Dead in this Age. Remarks will be more in Order when we come to *introduce* the Work.

³¹ It is rather surprising that the Author should speak doubtfully of the Case of this Family as to the Time of its Occurrence, when the *Magnalia* was at his Hand, giving Date and Details of the Affair. See that Work, B. vi, Page 71.

³² See *History and Antiquities of Boston*, 561-3.

World, as has attracted to him while alive, the Eyes of many at the furthest Distance; and now deceased, can't but raise a very general Wish to see the Series, and more especially the domestic Part of so distinguished a Life exhibited. His printed Writings so full of Piety and various Erudition, his vast Correspondence, and the continual Reports of Travellers who had conversed with him, had spread his Reputation into other Countries. And when, about fourteen Years ago, I travelled abroad, I could not but admire to what Extent his Fame had reached, and how inquisitive were Gentlemen of Letters to hear and know of the most particular and lively Manner, both of his private Conversation and public Performances among us."

Dr. Colman speaks in the highest Terms of Dr. Mather, in his Funeral Sermon. "His printed Works," he says, "will not convey to Posterity, nor give to Strangers a just Idea of the real Worth and great Learning of the Man." To this and a great deal more equally commendatory, Mr. Prince subscribes in these Words: "Every one who intimately knew the Doctor will readily assent to this Description."

It would be difficult, perhaps, to produce an Example of Industry equal to that of which we are speaking. In one Year, it is said he kept sixty Fasts and twenty vigils, and published fourteen Books – all this besides performing his ministerial Duties; which, in those Days, were Something more than *nominal*. He kept a Diary, which has been extensively used by some of his Biographers, but we have not sought after it, as it is said to be scattered in different Places! How this happened we have not been informed. Notwithstanding he published so many Works, he left nearly as much unpublished in Manuscript; the principal Part of which is entitled, *Biblia Americana*, or *The Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testament Illustrated*. For the Publication of this Work Proposals were issued soon after its Author died, but Nothing further seems to have been done about it. Of the *Biblia Americana*, the Doctor's Son remarks, "That is a Work, the writing of which is enough constantly to employ a Man, unless he be a Miracle of Diligence, the Half of the three Score Years and ten, the Sum of Years allowed to us."

It remains now to mention the Book by which Dr. Mather is best known, and which will make his Name prominent through all coming Time – the Reader's Mind is already in Advance of the Pen – the *MAGNALIA CHRISTI AMERICANA*. This was printed in London, in 1702, in a moderate sized folio Volume, the Aggregate of its Pages being 794. It is chiefly a Collection of what the Author had before printed on historical and biographical Subjects. The Value of its Contents has been variously estimated. Some decrying it below *any* Value, while others pronounce it "the only Classic ever written in America." At the Hazard of incurring the Charge of Stupidity, we are of the decided Opinion that it has a Value between those Extremes. But we have sufficiently expressed our Mind on the Value of the Author's Works before.

Until about the Year 1853 there had been but two Editions of the *Magnalia*. The Work was then stereotyped and issued in two handsome octavo Volumes, by the late Mr. Silas Andrus, extensively known among the Publishers of the Country. This was the third Edition of the Work, and possessed the Advantage of Translations of the Quotations from the dead Languages with which the Work abounds. About two Years later an Edition was issued from the same stereotype Plates, and was accompanied by an Index. This, tho' very incomplete, rendered the Work much more valuable. The Plates we are informed are now in the Hands of Mr. William Gowans of New York, who is preparing to bring out a sumptuous Edition of it with a new and complete Index. About thirty-two Years had elapsed between the second and third Editions, though they were by the same Publisher. The Date of the second was 1820.

Unfortunately, this Edition was printed from a Copy of that in Folio, which had not the Errata, and consequently abounds with all the Errors contained in the original Edition. To those who do not understand the Matter, this printing an Edition of the *Magnalia* without correcting its Errata, may seem to incur for the Publisher severe Reprehension. But the Truth appears to be, that the Copy used in printing the new Edition had not the complete Errata attached to it; and that in Fact, but very few

Copies of the original Edition can be found to which it is attached. Now we account for its Rarity in this Way. Dr. Mather, living in Boston while his Work was printing in London, could make no Corrections while it was passing through the Press; but when he received his Copies afterwards, he found so many Errors that he was induced to print an extra Sheet of Corrections. This extra Sheet may not have been struck off until most of the Copies of the *Magnalia* which had been sent to New England were distributed. Thus we account for the rare Occurrence of Copies of the *Magnalia* containing the Errata; and hence we think the Publisher of the Edition of 1820 should not be too severely censured. That our Solution is correct, we would mention that out of a great many Copies of the folio Edition imported by ourself and others from England, not one of them contained the Errata in Question.

On the last Page of the *Magnalia*, the following are the last three Lines: "Errata. Reader, Carthagenia was of the Mind, that unto those *three Things* which the Ancients held impossible, there should be added this *fourth*, to find a Book printed without *Erratas*. It seems the Hands of *Briareus*, and the Eyes of *Argus* will not prevent them." And the additional Errata of which we have been speaking, the Author thus prefaces: "The *Holy Bible* it self, in some of its Editions, hath been affronted with scandalous Errors of the *Press-work*; and in one of them, they so printed those Words, Psalms cxix, 161, '*Printers have persecuted me,*'" &c.

When the *Magnalia* was published, Dr. Mather's old Schoolmaster, among others, wrote commendatory Poetry upon it, which was, according to the Fashion of the Day, inserted in its introductory Pages. The following brief Specimen by Tompson may not be thought inappropriate to be extracted here:

"Is the bless'd Mather Necromancer turn'd,
To raise his Country's Father's Ashes urn'd?
Elisha's Dust, Life to the Dead imparts;
This Prophet by his more familiar Arts,
Unseals our Hero's Tombs, and gives them Air;
They rise, they walk, they talk, look wondrous fair;
Each of them in an Orb of Light doth shine,
In Liveries of Glory most divine.
When ancient Names I in thy Pages meet,
Like Gems on Aaron's costly Breast-plate set;
Methinks Heaven's open, while great Saints descend,
To wreath the Brows, by which their Acts were penned."

Few Ministers preached a greater Number of Funeral Sermons than Dr. Mather; and when he died his Cotemporaries seemed to have vied with each other in performing the same Office for him. Several of their Sermons were printed. Some of these with their quaint Titles are now before us. Foremost among them appears that of the excellent Mr. Prince; he entitled his, "The Departure of Elijah lamented. – A Sermon occasioned by the great and publick Loss in the *Decease* of the very Reverend and Learned COTTON MATHER, D.D., F.R.S., and Senior Pastor of the *North Church* in Boston. Who left this Life on *Feb. 13th, 1727,8*. The Morning after he finished the LXXV. Year of his Age." From 2 Kings ii, 12, 13. The Imprint of this Sermon is, "Boston in *New England*: Printed for *D. Henchman*, near the Brick Meeting House in Cornhill. MDCCXXVIII."

The running Title of Dr. Colman's Sermon on the same Occasion is "The holy Walk and glorious Translation of blessed *ENOCH*." His Text was Gen. v. 24. It would be difficult to find anything of the Kind, either before or since, which, in our Judgment, is superior to this Discourse of Dr. Colman; but valuable as it is, we cannot introduce Extracts from it here. His Allusion, however,

to the then past and present State of Things connected with his Subject, is so happy that we cannot overlook it.

"Dr. Mather's Brethren in the Ministry here," he says, "are bereaved and weak with him. God has taken their Father as well as his, from their Heads this Day. He was a Pastor in the Town when the eldest of the present Pastors were but Children, and long before most of them were born. They are weak indeed when he that is now speaking to them is the *first* in Years among them, in all respects else the least," &c.

The Rev. Joshua Gee, Colleague with Dr. Mather, also preached a Funeral Sermon on his departed Friend, entitled, "Israel's *Mourning* for Aaron's *Death*." In this Discourse there is the following important Note: "Within a few Months past, we have been called to lament the Deaths of two such aged Servants of the Lord. The Rev. *Mr. Samuel Danforth* of Taunton, who died Nov. 14. And my honored Father-in-law, the Rev. *Mr. Peter Thatcher* of Milton, who died Dec. 17, 1727: while the Days of mourning were scarce over in this Town for my dearly beloved Friend and Brother, the Rev. *Mr. William Waldron*, who died Sept. 11, 1727."

Dr. Mather's Son and Biographer, "Samuel Mather, M. A., and Chaplain at Castle William," also preached a Funeral Sermon on his Father's Death. "The *Departure* and *Character* of Elijah considered and improved," was its running Title. Only about five Years before, the deceased preached a Sermon on the Death of his Father; in the Title-page of which, when printed, instead of the Author's Name we read, "By one who, as a Son with a *FATHER*, served with him in the Gospel."

Dr. Mather died intestate, and the Order of the Judge of Probate for the Distribution of his Estate is as follows: "One third to his Widow, Lydia Mather; two single Shares or fourth Parts to Samuel Mather, Clerk, only surviving Son, and one Share each to the Rest of his Children, viz., Abigail Willard, deceased, Wife of Daniel Willard, also deceased, their Children and legal Representatives, and Hannah Mather, Spinster." Dated, 25th May, 1730.

The Portrait now in Circulation of Dr. Mather was engraved from a beautiful *Mezzotinto*, half Size, with the following Inscription underneath it:

"Cottonus Matherus S. Theologiæ Doctor Regiæ Societatis Londiniensis
Socius, et Ecclesiæ apud Bostonum Nov^æ Anglorum nuper Præpositus.
Ætatis Suæ LXV. MDCCXXVII.
P. Pelham ad vivum pinxit ab Origin Fecit."

Those desiring genealogical Information of the Mather Family, I must refer to the Pedigree printed in Connection with Dr. I. Mather's *Brief History*, &c.

The Wonders of the Invisible World

OBSERVATIONS

As well *Historical as Theological*, upon the NATURE, the

NUMBER, and the OPERATIONS of the

DEVILS

Accompany'd with

I. Some Accounts of the Grievous Molestations, by DÆMONS and WITCHCRAFTS, which have lately annoy'd the Countrey; and the Trials of some eminent *Malefactors* Executed upon occasion thereof: with several Remarkable *Curiosities* therein occurring.

II. Some Counsils, Directing a due Improvement of the terrible things, lately done, by the Unusual & Amazing Range of EVIL SPIRITS, in Our Neighbourhood: & the methods to prevent the *Wrongs* which those *Evil Angels* may intend against all sorts of people among us; especially in Accusations of the Innocent.

III. Some Conjectures upon the great EVENTS, likely to befall, the WORLD in General, and NEW-ENGLAND in Particular; as also upon the Advances of the TIME, when we shall see BETTER DAYES.

IV. A short Narrative of a late Outrage committed by a knot of WITCHES in *Swedeland*, very much Resembling, and so far Explaining, *That* under which our parts of *America* have laboured!

V. THE DEVIL DISCOVERED: In a Brief Discourse upon those TEMPTATIONS, which are the more Ordinary *Devices* of the Wicked One.

By Cotton Mather

Boston Printed, and Sold by Benjamin Harris, 1693

Published by the Special

Command of His EXCELLENCY,

the Governour of the Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New-England

The Wonders of the Invisible World:

Being an Account of the

TRYALS

OF

Several Witches,

Lately Executed in

NEW-ENGLAND:

And of several remarkable Curiosities therein Occurring

Together with,

- I. Observations upon the Nature, the Number, and the Operations of the Devils.
- II. A short Narrative of a late outrage committed by a knot of Witches in *Swede-Land*, very much resembling, and so far explaining, that under which *New-England* has laboured,

III. Some Councils directing a due Improvement of the Terrible things lately done by the unusual and amazing Range of *Evil-Spirits* in *New-England*.

IV. A brief Discourse upon those *Temptations* which are the more ordinary Devices of Satan.

By **COTTON MATHER**

**Published by the Special Command of his EXCELLENCY the
Govenour of the Province of the *Massachusetts-Bay* in *New-England***

**Printed first, at *Boston* in *New-England*; and Reprinted at
London, for *John Dunton*, at the *Raven* in the *Poultry*. 1693**

Imprimatur.

Decmb. 23.

1692.

*Edmund Bohun.*³³

³³ Edmund Bohun was himself a Writer of considerable Note. The Work by which he is best known is probably that entitled *The Character of Queen Elizabeth*, a sizable Octavo, printed in 1693. His Writings are said to be Voluminous, yet but few of them are met with at this Day. One of the first Gazetteers was by him in a thick Octavo, 1688. He does not, however, call it a Gazetteer, but a Geographical Dictionary. His Descriptions compare singularly with those of the same Articles in Works of later Times: as for Example, he says Columbus discovered America in 1499. All the Notice Boston receives at his Hands is at the Close of an Article on Boston in Lincolnshire – "there is another Place in *New England* of the same Name." Under the Head of *New England* he gives it a much larger Notice; calls *New England a Colony*, "and they have built seven great Towns, the Chief of which is Boston, which in 1670, had fifty Sail of Ships belonging to it." He was Author of a Life of Bishop Jewell, and was living in 1700.

THE Author's Defence

TIS, as I remember, the Learned *Scribonius*,³⁴ who reports, that One of his Acquaintance, devoutly making his Prayers on the behalf of a Person molested by *Evil Spirits*, received from those *Evil Spirits* an horrible Blow over the Face: And I may my self expect not few or small Buffetings from Evil Spirits, for the Endeavours wherewith I am now going to encounter them. I am far from Insensible that at this extraordinary Time of the *Devils coming down in great Wrath upon us*, there are too many Tongues and Hearts thereby *set on fire of Hell*; that the various Opinions about the Witchcrafts which of later Time have troubled us, are maintained by some with so much cloudy Fury, as if they could never be sufficiently stated, unless written in the Liquor wherewith Witches use to write their Covenants; and that he who becomes an Author at such a time, had need be *fenced with Iron, and the Staff of a Spear*. The unaccountable Frowardness, Asperity, Untreatableness, and Inconsistency of many Persons, every Day gives a visible Exposition of that passage, *An evil spirit from the Lord came upon Saul*; and Illustration of that Story, *There met him two possessed with Devils, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way*. To send abroad a Book, among such Readers, were a very unadvised thing, if a Man had not such Reasons to give, as I can bring, for such an Undertaking. Briefly, I hope it cannot be said, *They are all so*; No, I hope the Body of this People, are yet in such a Temper, as to be capable of applying their Thoughts, to make a *Right Use* of the stupendous and prodigious Things that are happening among us: And because I was concern'd, when I saw that no abler Hand emitted any Essays to engage the Minds of this People, in such holy, pious, fruitful Improvements, as God would have to be made of his amazing Dispensations now upon us. THEREFORE it is, that One of the Least among the Children of *New-England*, has here done, what is done. None, but *the Father, who sees in secret*, knows the Heart-breaking Exercises, wherewith I have composed what is now [vi] going to be exposed, lest I should in any one thing miss of doing my designed Service for his Glory, and for his People; but I am now somewhat comfortably assured of his favourable acceptance; and, *I will not fear; what can a Satan do unto me!*³⁵

Having performed something of what God required, in labouring to suit his Words unto his Works, at this Day among us, and therewithal handled a Theme that has been sometimes counted not unworthy the Pen, even of a King,³⁶ it will easily be perceived, that some subordinate Ends have been considered in these Endeavours.

I have indeed set myself to countermine the whole PLOT of the Devil, against *New-England*, in every Branch of it, as far as one of my *darkness*

³⁴ The only known Work of "Learned Scribonius" is that entitled *De Compositione Medicamentorum Liber*," the best Edition of which is said to be that of Padua, 1655, in 4to, with Notes by Rhodius. He was of Rome in the Time of Claudius. His Book is a Sort of Repository of Prescriptions, which Prescriptions were of about as much value, in a medical Point of View, as later ones were for determining what Persons were Witches. *Nouveau Dict. Hist. a Lyon*, 1804.

³⁵ This Self Complacency is somewhat surprising, considering this Record was made while above an hundred poor Wretches were lying in the Jails of Boston and Salem!

³⁶ The Author doubtless has Reference to the *Dæmonology* of James I. See [Introduction](#).

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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