

CHAP. LXXV.<sup>1</sup>*Memorable occurrents and sad accidents that happened in New England from 1666 to 1682.*

ALL things come alike to all, saith the wise man, and no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them ; yet it is too often seen that men that are but of yesterday, and know nothing, dare adventure to enter into the secret of the Almighty, and will undertake to give an account of his judgments and actions, assigning the reason of this and that sudden and unexpected stroke of death, not considering that our Savior acquits those eighteen on whom the tower of Siloam fell, and the Galileans, whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices, from being guilty of more sin than the rest of the inhabitants in those places. All men stand condemned in Adam, and therefore at all times are obnoxious unto the stroke of death, whenever the writ of execution is issued forth ; nor is the Almighty confined to one and the same harbinger, having always his arrow upon the string to shoot in the darkness and at noon day.

April 5th, 1663, Mr. John Norton, the reverend teacher of the church at Boston, (after Mr. Cotton,) was taken out of this life by a sudden change, which the Quakers imputed to a judgment of God upon him for opposing their doctrine in the country.<sup>2</sup> He was a man of great worth and learning, a ready scribe in the Law of God, one that had the tongue of the learned to speak a word in season to the weary soul, besides an eminent acumen, with which he was endowed in polemical divinity and all controversial points of religion, especially those of the present age.

He was desired by the ministers of New England to draw up an answer, in their names, to the *Sylloge Questionum*, sent over by the Rev. [William] Apollonius, pastor of the church at Middleburg, to the Congregational divines in London, and by them commended to those of New England.

In his answer, besides the satisfaction he gave to those

<sup>1</sup> LXXIV in the MS.—H.

<sup>2</sup> The Quakers remarked, " John Norton, Chief Priest in Boston, by the immediate power of the Lord was smitten, and as he was sinking down by the fireside, being under just judgment, he confessed the hand of the Lord was upon him, and so he died." Hutchinson, i. 205.—H.

of the same persuasion in either Englands, he was highly applauded both for the acumen of his judgment, and candor of his spirit appearing therein, by those of the adverse party, which made Dr. Hornbeck, the learned Professor of Divinity at Leyden, thus to express himself in a tractate of his own, || wherein || he treats of the same controversy: "Non tædet hujus viri nonnulla prolixius describere, propter singulare acumen, quamvis in multis non ei accedimus; in iis et aliis accuratè disputat, et sæpè, ingenuâ suâ confessione, controversiam tollit; quam alii vel faciunt, vel putant superesse, quare nec ita commodè ab iis tractatur."<sup>1</sup> The like testimony is given him by some of our own nation, even of the Episcopal persuasion, both for his modesty and learning, in stating the controversy in difference between himself and them. Nor was he unacquainted with the mysteries of civil policy, where he had been very serviceable to the country of New England, in which he had spent the greatest part of his time and labors: what acceptance soever they found with some persons, his reward is with the Lord, who, to compensate any injury he might receive from men, gave him a speedy discharge from his burden, when it grew too heavy. The dark shadow of envy and obloquy always follows the body of virtue, which himself could never shake off, especially after his last public employment in England with the honored Mr. Bradstreet;<sup>2</sup> soon after which, not too precisely to indigitate the cause of his death, he suddenly was snatched away by an unusual lypothymy, a kind of athanasia, which some have desired, so as not to feel the pains of death, though he were to pass through the gates thereof.

In the year 1665<sup>3</sup> Mr. Atherton, the chief military officer in New England, died suddenly by a fall from his horse, who likewise was called to conflict with the strife of tongues, and the manner of his death also noted as a judgment. Moses and Aaron must be stoned when the mixed multitude in Israel have not their wills; who, by the perverseness of their minds, become the more obdurate in their errors by the solemn strokes of Providence,

|| where ||

<sup>1</sup> Norton's reply to Apollonius, "in pure and elegant Latin," was published at London in 1648.—H.

<sup>2</sup> See page 576.—H.

<sup>3</sup> 1661, Sept. 16th, says his quaint epitaph in Dorchester burying-ground; Boston Records say 17th. The discrepancy is accounted for by the fact that his death occurred in the night, "about one o'clock, A. M." of the 17th. See also Blake's Annals, pp. 21-2.—H.

which, if rightly improved, might lead them to repentance, which is the use thereof.

Much about the same time several persons were struck dead with thunder and lightning in the country. One James Peirce,<sup>1</sup> in Plymouth harbor; Captain Davenport, in the Castle near Boston, was in like manner slain, the window of the Castle being open against him, as he lay upon his bed, but no sign of battering any part of the building. This last happened in July 1665,<sup>2</sup> the former in 1660.

And in the year 1666 three were in like manner suddenly killed<sup>3</sup> in a storm of thunder, whereof one was named John<sup>4</sup> Shirliffe,<sup>5</sup> that had a child in his hands, and was holding his wife in the other, both of whom escaped, when himself was struck dead.

In the year 1664 the country was smitten with a strange blasting and mildew in their wheat, by which, in many places, whole fields were quite consumed; which blasting hath continued more or less most of the following years.

In 1668 a spermaceti whale of fifty-five foot long was cast up in Winter Harbor, near Casco Bay. The like hath happened in other places of the country at several times, when, for want of skill to improve it, much gain hath slipped out of the hands of the finders.

In the spring of the year 1676 some of the magistrates and ministers of New England passing down the harbor in a lesser boat, were overrun by a bigger vessel, that steered just upon them for want of care, whereby most of them were in danger of perishing, yet were all preserved. Soon after which a rude fellow, called Irons, coming aboard a ship that lay in the same harbor before Boston, and entering into discourse about the said accident, replied to the company, that it had been no matter if they had been all drowned; but himself, presently after he left the ship, as he was about to deliver two maids (having none else beside in the boat with him,) aboard another vessel, missing his stroke with the oar, tipt himself over the side of the boat into the channel, and so was irrecoverably lost. The other two shiftless sailors, not

<sup>1</sup> "A young man that belonged to Boston." Davis's Morton, pp. 284-5.—H.

<sup>2</sup> July 15th. Roger Clap was appointed, Aug. 10th, to succeed him in the command of the Castle. See Hutchinson, i. 232; Blake's Annals, p. 23; Clap's Memoirs, p. 32.—H.

<sup>3</sup> At Marshfield.—H.

<sup>4</sup> William, says Morton.—H.

<sup>5</sup> The others, says Morton, were "a woman and a youth."—H.

being able to help themselves or him, yet were safely landed by the tide upon an island near by, so as their lives were thereby preserved. Let men take heed how they pass rash censures upon others, lest unawares they read their own destiny in pronouncing sentence upon their neighbors, and not be too forward, with the men of Miletum, to give an interpretation of the acts of Providence, the beginnings of which we may see, but cannot foresee the issue and intendment thereof.

1676. Three gentlemen and two women passing cross the harbor before Boston, (not above three quarters of a mile in breadth,) in a pleasure boat, by a sudden and very violent flaw of wind were overset in the midst of the channel, and but one man escaped, by his activity in swimming, or keeping fast hold of an oar that Providence put into his hand as a staff to pass over Jordan with, when the boisterous surges thereof began to rage and swell by the violence of the whirlwind. Everlasting arms do oft bear us up, when the waters are ready to overwhelm us, and the stream to go over our soul: let him that found safety never forget the mercy, lest a worse thing fall upon him.

In the same harbor, and within the compass of the same lustre, some merchants and gentlemen going aboard a ship that was then newly arrived, by the firing an half barrel of powder, through the carelessness of the gunner, were, with the hinder part of the ship, suddenly blown up, and divers of them sore wounded thereby, either losing their lives or their limbs, and two or three spoiled of both.

Many that go forth know not that they shall return, and the mariner that is ready to let fall his anchor knows not but it may be that fatal one which shall put an end to the navigation of his life; and many that go forth with earnest expectation, to meet their best friends, are sometimes unexpectedly found of their last enemy before they return. Within the compass of the same year, (which it seems Providence hath marked out as a year to be much observed by the people of New England,) Mr. Timothy Prout, Jun.,<sup>1</sup> master of a ship, having twelve or thirteen seamen in his company, sailing to-

<sup>1</sup> Probably the son of Timothy Prout, a ship-carpenter of Boston.—K.

wards New England, when they had almost fetched Cape Cod, by the violence of the northwest winds springing up suddenly, they were driven back towards the West Indies again, where, by a long continued storm, their vessel was ready to founder under them: all that were able, (being almost famished for want of food,) betook themselves to their long boat, with small store of provision, (besides raw hides ;) in which pitiful and forlorn state they were driven upon the ocean eleven or twelve days, at the end of which they were landed at Hispaniola in so weak a condition that none of them was able to foot it over the sands or to shoulder a musket, yet were, by good Providence, directed to a Frenchman's house, of whom the master had some knowledge before, who relieving them in their distress, gave them opportunity to transport themselves back into their own country. Thus oftentimes, when we have marched almost to the very gates of death, the Almighty saith, return ye children of men: Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men.

Take one instance more of the same date and of the like tragical nature.

One Ephraim How,<sup>1</sup> that used to sail between Boston and New Haven, about the middle of September,<sup>2</sup> 1676, setting forth of Boston with two of his sons, able seamen, a passenger, and surgeon,<sup>3</sup> with a youth, before they had doubled the cape, sc. Cape Cod, they were attacked with a violent storm that almost stranded them amongst the shoals, yet did only strike off the rudder of the vessel; after which they were left to the mere mercy of the waves, which tossed them to and again upon those seas for divers weeks, so as they could get the sight of no shores, but those of death, bordering on the land of eternity.

But the winter fast approaching was ushered in with such violent storms of cold winds, that those who stood to the sail instead of the helm were of necessity to be fastened down with ropes, that they might keep their standing, till at last both the master's sons (himself being most of this time sick in the cabin,) perished with wet and

<sup>1</sup> The son of Lieut. Daniel Howe, of Lynn. See Lewis's History of Lynn, pp. 65-6.—H.      <sup>2</sup> According to Mather "Mr. Ephraim Howe" sailed from New Haven for Boston, Aug. 25, 1676, "in a small Ketch of about seventeen tun; and returning from Boston for New Haven, Sept. 10, contrary winds detain'd him for some time, and then illness and sickness till a month expired," when he renewed his voyage.—H.

<sup>3</sup> Mather says that Howe was accompanied by his "dear friend Mr.

cold. This was their condition till another wind drove them ashore upon a sunken island,<sup>1</sup> a receptacle only for night birds and gulls, by which, with the help of a gun or two happily cast ashore with the vessel, they procured the lengthening out of their own lives awhile by the death of other creatures; but of these four<sup>2</sup> that gat alive upon the island, by the coldness of the place or unwholesomeness of their entertainment, all dropt away but the master, who was now left alone in this solitary condition, yet was supplied with his daily bread, as was Elijah by the ravens, for many months after the winter was over. During all which space sometimes he had nothing to do but meditate and pray in the cave or cell, which at first they prepared for themselves; yet in all this sea of misery the poor man could see so much mercy as to condemn himself for the not acknowledging of it in some solemn way of thanksgiving; for it seems hitherto his devotions had run only in a way of prayer and supplication, omitting the part of thanksgiving; after which considerations he set a day apart with himself for that duty also, within a few days after which God by special providence sent a vessel<sup>3</sup> within keen\* of this forgotten creature, who found means to discover himself by some wafe that he made, and so was he, after nine months restraint or confinement, returned safe to some of his friends, who saw cause to rejoice both for him and with him before the Lord.

There is one more solemn occurrent, within the reach of a lustre of years from the forementioned year of 1676, not less remarkable than any of the former. An English ship sailing from about the Strait's mouth,<sup>4</sup> under the command of a prudent master, (whose name is not now at hand,) but manned with many cruel and hard-hearted miscreants, these quarrelling with the master and some of the officers, turned them all into the long boat with a small quantity of provision, about a hundred leagues to the westward of the Spanish coast. In the meanwhile

Augur." Farmer mentions Nicholas Auger as being "a learned physician of New Haven in 1638;" were they the same persons? See Mather's *Magnalia*, vi. pp. 3-4.—H.

\* Ken, *vivo*.—Ed.

<sup>1</sup> "Near Cape Sables," says Mather.—H.

<sup>2</sup> According to Mather only *three* landed on the island; the "passenger" died "soon after" Howe's sons, i. e. the last of October or first of November. Auger died about March, and the "youth" in April, 1677.—H.

<sup>3</sup> Belonging to Salem, where Howe arrived July 18, 1677.—H.

<sup>4</sup> In the year 1673, says Mather, vi. p. 39.—H.

these villains intended to sail the ship towards New England, where soon after the master, with the rest of the company, all but one, (whose death, by their barbarous usage, made all the actors guilty of murder,) were by special Providence directed not only to follow but to overtake them. His countenance no doubt did not a little appal them, whom he found, some at Rhode Island and some elsewhere, and of whom it might truly be said, that though they had escaped the sea, yet vengeance did not suffer to live long upon the dry land; for at the instance and complaint of the master, they were apprehended by the officers as guilty of many capital crimes and inhuman cruelty, which brought them all under a sentence (at least guilt,) of death, which was inflicted on the ring-leaders,<sup>1</sup> but some of the less culpable were rescued from that sentence, that so justice mixed with clemency might terrify the bold and presumptuous offenders, and encourage such as, being carried with the stream of bad company only, might be looked upon as less culpable in themselves, and lawful authority the more revered by all.

Divers reports have passed up and down the country of several ominous accidents happening within the fore-mentioned time, as of earthquakes in some places, and of several volleys of shot heard in the air in the year 1667, but because many that lived not far off those places, where the sad accidents were supposed to fall out, know nothing thereof, no more notice shall here be taken of the same than a bare hint of the report. But at a place called Kennebunk, at the northeast side of Wells, in the Province of Maine, not far from the river side, a piece of clay ground was thrown up by a mineral vapor, (as is supposed,) over the tops of high oaks that grew between it and the river. The said ground so thrown up fell in the channel of the river, stopping the course thereof, and leaving an hole forty yards square in the place whence it was thrown, in which were found thousands of round pellets of clay, like musket bullets. All the whole town of Wells are witnesses of the truth of this relation; and many others have seen sundry of these clay pellets, which the inhabitants have shewn to their neighbors of other towns. This accident fell out in the year 1670.

<sup>1</sup> The chief of them, says Mather, was "one Forrest."—H.

Much about these times two wicked fellows about Pascataqua River, killing their master for his money, were soon after discovered and condemned for the same, and executed at Boston.—Others have confidently reported also, that they have seen the eruption of a pond of water far up into the woods, and many fish cast up upon the dry land adjoining, supposed to be done by the kindling of some mineral vapors under these hollow channels, running far within the land under ground. All which show the wonderful work of God, that commandeth both the sea and the dry land, that all the inhabitants of the earth should learn to fear before him.

To the forementioned accidents may be added those which follow, most of which happened about Pascataqua, being sad instances of the mischief of intemperance.

April 20, 1658, was observed to be the coldest night in all the year, in which two men going from aboard a ship which lay in Pascataqua River, towards Kittery side, and being so drunk that they were not able to get to the ship again, were found next morning near the shore, one dead by the canoe side, the other so frozen in the canoe that, notwithstanding all means used for his recovery, he rotted away by piecemeal, and so died.

June 5, 1666, one Tucker, a tailor who belonged to the Isles of Shoals, being then at the point in Pascataqua River, was so drunk in the Lecture time, that pulling off his clothes he ran into the water, cursing and swearing, and at last, swimming up and down, he fell with his face upon the flats and so was drowned.

About that time two fishermen, after sermon on the Lord's Day at Portsmouth, going into an house, drank so much rum that, being intoxicated therewith, they fell out of their canoe as they were going down the river, and were both drowned.

In August, 1669, a ship built at Pascataqua by a Bristol merchant, and laden with fish and tobacco, (the master would needs be setting sail out of the river on the Lord's Day,) was split on a rock in the Bay of Fundy the next Tuesday after, where the vessel and goods were all lost, and the men saved by their long boat. This accident was the more remarkable, falling out in fair weather.

In June, 1671, one J. S. having profanely spent the Lord's Day by passing to and from the Great Island to Kittery side, going to the vessel he belonged to at night, was so excessive drunk that he fell over his canoe and was drowned, and his body not found till twelve days after.

December 23, 1671, several fishermen coming from the Isle of Shoals to keep Christmas at Pascataqua, over-set the canoe, wherein they were going ashore, and were all drowned.

January 18, 1671, there was observed much thunder and lightning in a storm of snow.

January 24, the same year, Captain Lockwood's wife going in a canoe with a drunken fellow from the Great Island to Kittery side, were carried away by the tide, and never heard of more.

June 5, 1673, washed linen was frozen stiff the next morning near Pascataqua River.

Anno 1675, one T. Tricks, falling out of his canoe while he was drunk, was drowned.

December 25, 1677, one of J. Hunkins's men, choosing rather to fight than to fish on that day, was struck on the face by one of his fellows, whereof he died that week, the wound not appearing considerable at the first.

April, Anno 1678, one Stevens's daughter, about four years old, taking a bottle of rum from her mother's bed's head, drank about half a pint thereof, upon which she was presently taken speechless, and died at noon.

In July the same year, one Antipas M.<sup>1</sup> being observed to be often overtaken with drink, at the last in that distemper fell out of his canoe and was drowned.

Some time in June, || 1670, || it was observed that, at a great pond<sup>2</sup> in Watertown, all the fish there (many cart loads as was thought,) swam to the shore and died. It was conceived to be the effect of some mineral vapor, that at that time had made an irruption into the water.

In November, 1676, a fire was enkindled at the north end of the town of Boston,<sup>3</sup> (through the carelessness of

|| 1676 ||

<sup>1</sup> Perhaps Antipas Maverick, of Kittery, in 1652.—H.

<sup>2</sup> "What is now called Fresh Pond," says Francis's Watertown, p. 44.—H.

<sup>3</sup> "Nov. 27, about 5 in the morning, at one Wakefield's house, by the Red Lion." Hutchinson, i. 313; Snow's History of Boston, (2d. ed., 8vo. Bost. 1828,) p. 164.—H.

a boy called up to work very early in the morning, who falling asleep, as was said, the candle set the house on fire,) whereby many other houses were consumed, together with the meeting-house at that end of the said town.

Sometime in November, 1677, a great black boar came into the town of Dedham, no man knows from whence, which was eight feet in length. He was shot thirteen times, before he could be killed, and almost the whole town were mustered together, before he could be mastered.

A French vessel, that lay between the Capes to take a vessel that was at Pascataqua, was driven ashore at Cape Anne, twelve of the men drowned, and of eight that escaped, many frozen.

For close of these sad events of Providence may be added the burning of Boston, August 5,<sup>1</sup> 1679, set on fire by some wicked and malicious wretches, as is justly suspected, which hath half ruined the whole Colony, as well as the town; for therein a considerable part of the warehouses, belonging to the chiefest merchants in the town, were suddenly consumed in the flames, and several dwelling houses of good value, to the number of twenty or thirty, whereby that which was many years in gathering was in a few hours scattered and consumed. By another fire also, which happened there in the year 1682, were many principal warehouses burnt down again, whereby God would teach us not to trust in *riches, which take wing* and fly away as a bird toward Heaven, out of the reach of the owners thereof.

#### CHAP. LXXVI.<sup>2</sup>

##### *The success and progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England.*

FORASMUCH as the conversion of the Indians in America was none of the least motives that persuaded many of the inhabitants of New England to transport themselves thither, it will be expected that in this place some account should be given of the effect thereof.

<sup>1</sup> "Aug. 8, about midnight;" it began "at one Gross's house, the sign of the Three Mariners, near the dock." Hutchinson, i. 313; Snow, pp. 165-6.—H.

<sup>2</sup> LXXV in the MS.—H.