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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo  
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm  
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Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka  
Cotton Dostoyevsky Kipling Doyle  
Baum Henry Flaubert Nietzsche Willis  
Leslie Dumas Stockton Vatsyayana Crane  
Burroughs Verne  
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Busch  
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Twain  
Darwin Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato  
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**Salem Witchcraft and Cotton  
Mather A Reply**

Charles Wentworth Upham

# Imprint

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SALEM WITCHCRAFT  
AND  
COTTON MATHER.  
A REPLY.

BY  
CHARLES W. UPHAM,  
*Member of the Massachusetts Historical Society.*

MORRISANIA, N. Y.:

1869.

TO

Henry B. Dawson, Esq.,

PROPRIETOR AND EDITOR

OF

*THE HISTORICAL MAGAZINE,*

THIS REPRINT FROM ITS PAGES  
IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY  
ITS AUTHOR.

Salem, Mass., December 10, 1869.

## PREFATORY NOTE.

The Editors of the *North American Review* would, under the circumstances, I have no reason to doubt, have opened its columns to a reply to the article that has led to the preparation of the following statement. But its length has forbidden my asking such a favor.

All interested in the department of American literature to which the Historical Magazine belongs, must appreciate the ability with which it is conducted, and the laborious and indefatigable zeal of its Editor, in collecting and placing on its pages, beyond the reach of oblivion and loss, the scattered and perishing materials necessary to the elucidation of historical and biographical topics, whether relating to particular localities or the country at large; and it was as gratifying as unexpected to receive the proffer, without limitation, of the use of that publication for this occasion.

The spirited discussion, by earnest scholars, of special questions, although occasionally assuming the aspect of controversy, will be not only tolerated but welcomed by liberal minds. Let champions arise, in all sections of the Republic, to defend their respective rightful claims to share in a common glorious inheritance and to inscribe their several records in our Annals. Feeling the deepest interest in the Historical, Antiquarian, and Genealogical Societies of Massachusetts, and yielding to none in keen sensibility to all that concerns the ancient honors of the Old Bay State and New England, generally, I rejoice to witness the spirit of a commemorative age kindling the public mind, every where, in the Middle, Western and Southern States.

The courtesy extended to me is evidence that while, by a jealous scrutiny and, sometimes, perhaps, a sharp conflict, we are reciprocally imposing checks upon loose exaggerations and overweening pretensions, a comprehensive good feeling predominates over all; truth in its purity is getting eliminated; and characters and occurrences, in all parts of the country, brought under the clear light of justice.

The aid I have received, in the following discussion, from the publications and depositories of historical associations and the con-

tributions of individuals, like Mr. Goodell, Doctor Moore, and others, engaged in procuring from the mother country and preserving all original tracts and documents, whenever found, belonging to our Colonial period, demonstrate the importance of such efforts, whether of Societies or single persons. In this way, our history will stand on a solid foundation, and have the lineaments of complete and exact truth.

Notwithstanding the distance from the place of printing, owing to the faithful and intelligent oversight of the superintendent of the press and the vigilant care of the compositors, but few errors, I trust, will be found, beyond what are merely literal, and every reader will unconsciously, or readily, correct for himself.

C. W. U.

Salem, Massachusetts.



# SALEM WITCHCRAFT AND COTTON MATHER.

## INTRODUCTION.

An article in *The North American Review*, for April, 1869, is mostly devoted to a notice of the work published by me, in 1867, entitled *Salem Witchcraft, with an account of Salem Village, and a history of opinions on witchcraft and kindred subjects*. If the article had contained criticisms, in the usual style, merely affecting the character of that work, in a literary point of view, no other duty would have devolved upon me, than carefully to consider and respectfully heed its suggestions. But it raises questions of an historical nature that seem to demand a response, either acknowledging the correctness of its statements or vindicating my own.

The character of the Periodical in which it appears; the manner in which it was heralded by rumor, long before its publication; its circulation, since, in a separate pamphlet form; and the extent to which, in certain quarters, its assumptions have been endorsed, make a reply imperative.

The subject to which it relates is of acknowledged interest and importance. The Witchcraft Delusion of 1692 has justly arrested a wider notice, and probably always will, than any other occurrence in the early colonial history of this country. It presents phenomena in the realm of our spiritual nature, belonging to that higher department of physiology, known as Psychology, of the greatest moment; and illustrates the operations of the imagination upon the passions and faculties in immediate connection with it, and the perils to which the soul and society are thereby exposed, in a manner more striking, startling and instructive than is elsewhere to be found. For all reasons, truth and justice require of those who venture to explore and portray it, the utmost efforts to elucidate its passages and delineate correctly its actors.

With these views I hail with satisfaction the criticisms that may be offered upon my book, without regard to their personal character or bearing, as continuing and heightening the interest felt in the subject; and avail myself of the opportunity, tendered to me without

solicitation and in a most liberal spirit, by the proprietor of this Magazine, to meet the obligations which historical truth and justice impose.

The principle charge, and it is repeated in innumerable forms through the sixty odd pages of the article in the *North American*, is that I have misrepresented the part borne by Cotton Mather in the proceeding connected with the Witchcraft Delusion and prosecutions, in 1692. Various other complaints are made of inaccuracy and unfairness, particularly in reference to the position of Increase Mather and the course of the Boston Ministers of that period, generally. Although the discussion, to which I now ask attention, may appear, at first view, to relate to questions merely personal, it will be found, I think, to lead to an exploration of the literature and prevalent sentiments, relating to religious and philosophical subjects, of that period; and, also, of an instructive passage in the public history of the Province of Massachusetts Bay.

I now propose to present the subject more fully than was required, or would have been appropriate, in my work on Witchcraft.

## I.

### THE CONNECTION OF THE MATHERS WITH THE SUPERSTITIONS OF THEIR TIME.

In the first place, I venture to say that it can admit of no doubt, that Increase Mather and his son, Cotton Mather, did more than any other persons to aggravate the tendency of that age to the result reached in the Witchcraft Delusion of 1692. The latter, in the beginning of the Sixth Book of the *Magnalia Christi Americana*, refers to an attempt made, about the year 1658, "among some divines of no little figure throughout England and Ireland, for the faithful registering of remarkable providences. But, alas," he says, "it came to nothing that was remarkable. The like holy design," he continues, "was, by the Reverend Increase Mather, proposed among the divines of New England, in the year 1681, [2] at a general meeting of them; who thereupon desired him to begin and publish an Essay; which he did in a little while; but there-withal declared that he did it only as a specimen of a larger volume, in hopes that this work being set on foot, posterity would go on with it." Cotton Mather did go on with it, immediately upon his entrance to the ministry; and by their preaching, publications, correspondence at home and abroad, and the influence of their learning, talents, industry, and zeal in the work, these two men promoted the prevalence of a passion for the marvelous and monstrous, and what was deemed preternatural, infernal, and diabolical, throughout the whole mass of the people, in England as well as America. The public mind became infatuated and, drugged with credulity and superstition, was prepared to receive every impulse of blind fanaticism. The stories, thus collected and put everywhere in circulation, were of a nature to terrify the imagination, fill the mind with horrible apprehensions, degrade the general intelligence and taste, and dethrone the reason. They darken and dishonor the literature of that period. A rehash of them can be found in the Sixth Book of the *Magnalia*. The effects of such publications were naturally developed in widespread delusions and universal credulity. They penetrated the whole body of society, and reached all the inhabitants and families of the land, in the towns and remotest settlements. In this way, the Mathers, particularly the younger, made themselves responsible for the diseased and bewil-

dered state of the public mind, in reference in supernatural and diabolical agencies, which came to a head in the Witchcraft Delusion. I do not say that they were culpable. Undoubtedly they thought they were doing God service. But the influence they exercised, in this direction, remains none the less an historical fact.

Increase Mather applied himself, without delay, to the prosecution of the design he had proposed, by writing to persons in all parts of the country, particularly clergymen, to procure, for publication, as many marvelous stories as could be raked up. In the eighth volume of the Fourth Series of the *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, consisting of *The Mather Papers*, the responses of several of his correspondents may be seen. [Pp. 285, 360, 361, 367, 466, 475, 555, 612.] He pursued this business with an industrious and pertinacious zeal, which nothing could slacken. After the rest of the world had been shocked out of such mischievous nonsense, by the horrid results at Salem, on the fifth of March, 1694, as President of Harvard College, he issued a Circular to "The Reverend Ministers of the Gospel, in the several Churches in New England," signed by himself and seven others, members of the Corporation of that institution, urging it, as the special duty of Ministers of the Gospel, to obtain and preserve knowledge of notable occurrences, described under the general head of "*Remarkables*," and classified as follows:

"The things to be esteemed memorable are, especially, all unusual accidents, in the heaven, or earth, or water; all wonderful deliverances of the distressed; mercies to the godly; judgments to the wicked; and more glorious fulfilments of either the promises or the threatenings, in the Scriptures of truth; with apparitions, possessions, enchantments, and all extraordinary things wherein the existence and agency of the invisible world is more sensibly demonstrated." — *Magnalia Christi Americana*. Edit. London, 1702. Book VI., p. 1.

All communications, in answer to this missive were to be addressed to the "President and Fellows" of Harvard College.

The first article is as follows: "To observe and record the more illustrious discoveries of the Divine Providence, in the government of the world, is a design so holy, so useful, so justly approved, that the too general neglect of it in the Churches of God, is as justly to be lamented." It is important to consider this language in connection

with that used by Cotton Mather, in opening the Sixth Book of the *Magnalia*: "To regard the illustrious displays of that Providence, wherewith our Lord Christ governs the world, is a work than which there is none more needful or useful for a Christian; to record them is a work than which none more proper for a Minister; and perhaps the great Governor of the world will ordinarily do the most notable things for those who are most ready to take a wise notice of what he does. Unaccountable, therefore, and inexcusable, is the sleepiness, even upon the most of good men throughout the world, which indisposes them to observe and, much more, to preserve, the remarkable dispensations of Divine Providence, towards themselves or others. Nevertheless there have been raised up, now and then, those persons, who have rendered themselves worthy of everlasting remembrance, by their wakeful zeal to have the memorable providences of God remembered through all generations."

These passages from the Mathers, father and son, embrace, in their bearings, a period, eleven years before and two years after the Delusion of 1692. They show that the Clergy, generally, were indifferent to the subject, and required to be aroused from "neglect" and "sleepiness," touching the duty of flooding the public mind with stories of "wonders" and "remarkables;" and that the agency of the Mathers, in giving currency, by means of their ministry and influence, to such ideas, was peculiar and pre-eminent. [3] However innocent and excusable their motives may have been, the laws of cause and effect remained unbroken; and the result of their actions are, with truth and justice, attributable to them—not necessarily, I repeat, to impeach their honesty and integrity, but their wisdom, taste, judgment, and common sense. Human responsibility is not to be set aside, nor avoided, merely and wholly by good intent. It involves a solemn and fearful obligation to the use of reason, caution, cool deliberation, circumspection, and a most careful calculation of consequences. Error, if innocent and honest, is not punishable by divine, and ought not to be by human, law. It is covered by the mercy of God, and must not be pursued by the animosity of men. But it is, nevertheless, a thing to be dreaded and to be guarded against, with the utmost vigilance. Throughout the melancholy annals of the Church and the world, it has been the fountain of innumerable woes, spreading baleful influences through society, paralysing the

energies of reason and conscience, dimming, all but extinguishing, the light of religion, convulsing nations, and desolating the earth. It is the duty of historians to trace it to its source; and, by depicting faithfully the causes that have led to it, prevent its recurrence. With these views, I feel bound, distinctly, to state that the impression given to the popular sentiments of the period, to which I am referring, by certain leading minds, led to, was the efficient cause of, and, in this sense, may be said to have originated, the awful superstitions long prevalent in the old world and the new, and reaching a final catastrophe in 1692; and among these leading minds, aggravating and intensifying, by their writings, this most baleful form of the superstition of the age, Increase and Cotton Mather stand most conspicuous.

This opinion was entertained, at the time, by impartial observers. Francis Hutchinson, D.D., "Chaplain in ordinary to his Majesty, and Minister of St. James's Parish, in St. Edmund's Bury," in the life-time of both the Mathers, published, in London, an *Historical Essay concerning Witchcraft*, dedicated to the "Lord Chief-justice of England, the Lord Chief-justice of Common Pleas, and the Lord Chief Baron of Exchequer." In a Chapter on *The Witchcraft in Salem, Boston, and Andover, in New England*, he attributes it, as will be seen in the course of this article, to the influence of the writings of the Mathers.

In the Preface to the London edition of Cotton Mather's *Memorable Providences*, written by Richard Baxter, in 1690, he ascribes this same prominence to the works of the Mathers. While expressing the great value he attached to writings about Witchcraft, and the importance, in his view, of that department of literature which relates stories about diabolical agency, possessions, apparitions, and the like, he says, "Mr. Increase Mather hath already published many such histories of things done in New England; and this great instance published by his son" — that is, the account of the Goodwin children — "cometh with such full convincing evidence, that he must be a very obdurate Sadducee that will not believe it. And his two Sermons, adjoined, are excellently fitted to the subject and this blinded generation, and to the use of us all, that are not past our warfare with Devils." One of the Sermons, which Baxter commends, is on *The Power and Malice of Devils*, and opens with the declaration, that "there is a combination of Devils, which our air is filled withal." the

other is on *Witchcraft*. Both are replete with the most exciting and vehement enforcements of the superstitions of that age, relating to the Devil and his confederates.

My first position, then, in contravention of that taken by the Reviewer in the *North American*, is that, by stimulating the Clergy over the whole country, to collect and circulate all sorts of marvelous and supposed preternatural occurrences, by giving this direction to the preaching and literature of the times, these two active, zealous, learned, and able Divines, Increase and Cotton Mather, considering the influence they naturally were able to exercise, are, particularly the latter, justly chargeable with, and may be said to have brought about, the extraordinary outbreaks of credulous fanaticism, exhibited in the cases of the Goodwin family and of "the afflicted children," at Salem Village. Robert Calef, writing to the Ministers of the country, March 18, 1694, says: "I having had, not only occasion, but renewed provocation, to take a view of the mysterious doctrines, which have of late been so much contested among us, could not meet with any that had spoken more, or more plainly, the sense of those doctrines" [*relating to the Witchcraft*] "than the Reverend Mr. Cotton Mather, but how clearly and consistent, either with himself or the truth, I meddle not now to say, but cannot but suppose his strenuous and zealous asserting his opinions has been one cause of the dismal convulsions, we have here lately fallen into."—*More Wonders of the Invisible World*, by Robert Calef, Merchant of Boston, in New England. Edit. London, 1700, p. 33.

The papers that remain, connected with the Witchcraft Examinations and Trials, at Salem, show the extent to which currency had been given, in the popular mind, to such marvelous and prodigious things as the Mathers had been so long endeavoring to collect and circulate; particularly in the interior, rural settlements. The solemn solitudes of the woods were filled with ghosts, hobgoblins, spectres, evil spirits, and the [4] infernal Prince of them all. Every pathway was infested with their flitting shapes and footprints; and around every hearth-stone, shuddering circles, drawing closer together as the darkness of night thickened and their imaginations became more awed and frightened, listened to tales of diabolical operations: the same effects, in somewhat different forms, pervaded the seaboard settlements and larger towns.

Besides such frightful fancies, other most unhappy influences flowed from the prevalence of the style of literature which the Mathers brought into vogue. Suspicions and accusations of witchcraft were everywhere prevalent; any unusual calamity or misadventure; every instance of real or affected singularity of deportment or behavior—and, in that condition of perverted and distempered public opinion, there would be many such—was attributed to the Devil. Every sufferer who had yielded his mind to what was taught in pulpits or publications, lost sight of the Divine Hand, and could see nothing but devils in his afflictions. Poor John Goodwin, whose trials we are presently to consider, while his children were acting, as the phrase—originating in those days, and still lingering in the lower forms of vulgar speech—has it, "like all possessed," broke forth thus: "I thought of what David said. 2 *Samuel*, xxiv., 14. If he feared so to fall into the hands of men, oh! then to think of the horrors of our condition, to be in the hands of Devils and Witches. Thus, our doleful condition moved us to call to our friends to have pity on us, for God's hand hath touched us. I was ready to say that no one's affliction was like mine. That my little house, that should be a little Bethel for God to dwell in, should be made a den for Devils; that those little Bodies, that should be Temples for the Holy Ghost to dwell in, should be thus harrassed and abused by the Devil and his cursed brood."—*Late Memorable Providences, relating to Witchcraft and Possessions*. By Cotton Mather. Edit. London, 1691.

No wonder that the country was full of the terrors and horrors of diabolical imaginations, when the Devil was kept before the minds of men, by what they constantly read and heard, from their religious teachers! In the Sermons of that day, he was the all-absorbing topic of learning and eloquence. In some of Cotton Mather's, the name, Devil, or its synonyms, is mentioned ten times as often as that of the benign and blessed God.

No wonder that alleged witchcrafts were numerous! Drake, in his *History of Boston*, says there were many cases there, about the year 1688. Only one of them seems to have attracted the kind of notice requisite to preserve it from oblivion—that of the four children of John Goodwin, the eldest, thirteen years of age. The relation of this case, in my book [*Salem Witchcraft*, i., 454-460] was wholly drawn from the *Memorable Providences* and the *Magnalia*.

## II.

### THE GOODWIN CHILDREN. SOME GENERAL REMARKS UPON THE CRITICISMS OF THE NORTH AMERICAN RE- VIEW.

The Reviewer charges me with having wronged Cotton Mather, by representing that he "got up" the whole affair of the Goodwin children. He places the expression within quotation marks, and repeats it, over and over again. In the passage to which he refers—p. 366 of the second volume of my book—I say of Cotton Mather, that he "repeatedly endeavored to get up cases of the kind in Boston. There is some ground for suspicion that he was instrumental in originating the fanaticism in Salem." I am not aware that the expression was used, except in this passage. But, wherever used, it was designed to convey the meaning given to it, by both of our great lexicographers. Worcester defines "to get up, 'to prepare, to make ready—to get up an entertainment;' 'to print and publish, as a book.'" Webster defines it, "to prepare for coming before the public; to bring forward." This is precisely what Mather did, in the case of the Goodwin children, and what Calef put a stop to his doing in the case of Margaret Rule.

In 1831, I published a volume entitled *Lectures on Witchcraft, comprising a history of the Delusion, in Salem, in 1692*. In 1867, I published *Salem Witchcraft, and an account of Salem Village*; and, in the Preface, stated that "the former was prepared under circumstances which prevented a thorough investigation of the subject. Leisure and freedom from professional duties have now enabled me to prosecute the researches necessary to do justice to it. The *Lectures on Witchcraft* have long been out of print. Although frequently importuned to prepare a new edition, I was unwilling to issue, again, what I had discovered to be an inadequate presentation of the subject." In the face of this disclaimer of the authority of the original work, the Reviewer says: "In this discussion, we shall treat Mr. Upham's *Lectures and History* in the same connection, as the latter is an expansion and defence of the views presented in the former."

I ask every person of candor and fairness, to consider whether it is just to treat authors in this way? It is but poor encouragement to

them to labor to improve their works, for the first critical journal in the country to bring discredit upon their efforts, by still laying to their charge what they have themselves remedied or withdrawn. Yet [5] it is avowedly done in the article which compels me to this vindication.

The *Lectures*, for instance, printed in 1831, contained the following sentence, referring to Cotton Mather's agency, in the Goodwin case, in Boston. "An instance of witchcraft was brought about, in that place, by his management." So it appeared in a reprint of that volume, in 1832. In my recent publication, while transferring a long paragraph from the original work, *I carefully omitted*, from the body of it, the above sentence, fearing that it might lead to misapprehension. For, although I hold that the Mathers are pre-eminently answerable for the witchcraft proceedings in their day, and may be said, justly, to have caused them, of course I did not mean that, by personal instigation on the spot, they started every occurrence that ultimately was made to assume such a character. The Reviewer, with the fact well known to him, that I had suppressed and discarded this clause, flings it against me, repeatedly. He further quotes a portion of the paragraph, in the *Lectures*, in which it occurs, omitting, *without indicating the omission*, certain clauses that would have explained my meaning, *taking care, however, to include the suppressed passage*; and finishes the misrepresentation, by the following declaration, referring to the paragraph in the *Lectures*: "The same statements, in almost the same words, he reproduces in his History." This he says, knowing that the particular statement to which he was then taking exception, was not reproduced in my History.

It may be as well here, at this point, as elsewhere, once for all, to dispose of a large portion of the matter contained in the long article in the *North American Review*, now under consideration. In preparing any work, particularly in the department of history, it is to be presumed that the explorations of the writer extend far beyond what he may conclude to put into his book. He will find much that is of no account whatever; that would load down his narrative, swell it to inadmissible dimensions, and shed no additional light. Collateral and incidental questions cannot be pursued in details. A new law, however, is now given out, that must be followed, hereafter, by all writers—that is, to give not a catalogue merely, but an

account of the contents, of every book and tract they have read. It is thus announced by our Reviewer: "We assume Mr. Upham has not seen this tract, as he neither mentioned it nor made use of its material."

The document here spoken of was designed to give Increase Mather's ideas on the subject of witchcraft trials, written near the close of those in Salem, in 1692. As I had no peculiar interest in determining what his views were—as a careful study of the tract, particularly taken in connection with its *Postscript*, fails to bring any reader to a clear conception of them; and as its whole matter was altogether immaterial to my subject—I did not think it worth while to encumber my pages with it. So in respect to many other points, in treating which extended discussions might be demanded. If I had been governed by such notions as the Reviewer seems to entertain, my book, which he complains of as too long, would have been lengthened to the dimensions of a cyclopædia of theology, biography, and philosophy. For keeping to my subject, and not diverting attention to writings of no inherent value, in any point of view, and which would contribute nothing to the elucidation of my topics, I am charged by this Reviewer, in the baldest terms, with ignorance, on almost every one of his sixty odd pages, and, often, several times on the same page.

All that I say of Cotton Mather, mostly drawn from his own words, does not cover a dozen pages. Exception is taken to some unfavorable judgments, cursorily expressed. This is fair and legitimate, and would justify my being called on to substantiate them. But to assume, and proclaim, that I had not read nor seen tracts or volumes that would come under consideration in such a discussion, is as rash as it is offensive; and, besides, constitutes a charge against which no person of any self respect or common sense can be expected to defend himself. I gave the opinion of Cotton Mather's agency in the Witchcraft of 1692, to which my judgment had been led—whether with sufficient grounds or not will be seen, as I proceed—but did not branch off from my proper subject, into a detail of the sources from which that opinion was derived. If I had done so, in connection with allusions to Mather, upon the same principle it would have been necessary to do it, whenever an opinion was expressed of others, such as Roger Williams, or Hugh Peters, or

Richard Baxter. It would destroy the interest, and stretch interminably the dimensions, of any book, to break its narrative, abandon its proper subject, and stray aside into such endless collateral matter. But it must be done, if the article in the *North American Review*, is to be regarded as an authoritative announcement of a canon of criticism. Lecturers and public speakers, or writers of any kind, must be on their guard. If they should chance, for instance, to speak of Cotton Mather as a pedant, they will have the reviewers after them, belaboring them with the charge of "a great lack of research," in not having "pored over" the "prodigious" manuscript of his unpublished work, in the Library of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the whole of his three hundred and eighty-two printed works, and the huge mass of *Mather Papers*, in the Library of the American [6] Antiquarian Society; and with never having "read" the *Memorable Providences*, or "seen" the *Wonders of the Invisible World*, or "heard" of the *Magnalia Christi Americana*.