

Memorable providences

by Cotton Mather

Memorable providences relating to witchcrafts and possessions a faithful account of many wonderful and surprising things that have befallen several bewitched and possessed person in New-England, particularly a narrative of the marvellous trouble and releef experienced by a pious family in Boston, very lately and sadly molested with evil spirits : whereunto is added a discourse delivered unto a congregation in Boston on the occasion of that illustrious providence : as also a discourse delivered unto the same congregation on the occasion of an horrible self-murder committed in the town : with an appendix in vindication of a chapter in a late book of remarkable providences from the calumnies of a Quaker at Pen-silvania

Mather, Cotton, 1663-1728.

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Death of Phillip Smith

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EXEMPLE. II. AMong those Iudgments of God, which are a great Deep, I suppose few are more unfa|thomable than this. That pious and holy men suffer sometimes by the Force of horrid Witchcrafts, and hellish Witches are permitted to break thorough the Hedge which our Heavenly Father has made about them that seek Him. I suppose the Instances of this direful thing are Seldome: but that they are not Never we can produce very dismal Testimony. One, and that no less Recent than Awful, I shall now offer: and the Reader of it will thereby learn, I hope, to work out his own Salvation with Fear and Tremb|ling. SECT. I. Mr. Philip Smith, aged about Fifty years, a Son of eminently vertuous Parents, a Deacon of the Church at Hadley, a Member of our General Court, an Associate in their County Court, a Select-man for the affairs of the Town, a Lieutenant in the Troop, and, which crowns all, a man for Devotion and Gravity, and all that was Honest, exceeding exemplary; Such a man in the Winter of the Year, 1684. was mur|dered with an hideous Witchcraft, which filled all those parts with a just astonishment. This was the manner of the Murder. SECT. II. He was concerned about Re|lieving

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the Indigencies of a wretched woman in the Town; who being dissatisfied at some of his just cares about her, expressed her self unto him in such a manner, that he declared himself apprehensive of receiving mischief at her hands; he said, he doubted she would attempt his Hurt. SECT. III. About the beginning of January he began to be very Valetudinarious, labouring under those that seemed Ischiadick pains. As his Illness increased on him, so his Goodness increased in him: the standers-by could in him see one ripening apace for another world; and one filled not only with Grace to an high degree, but also with Exceeding Joy. Such Weanedness from, and Weariness of the World, he shew'd, that he knew not (he said) whether he might pray for his continuance here. Such Assurance had he of the Divine Love unto him, that in Raptures he would cry out, Lord, stay thy hand, it is enough, it is more than thy frail servant can bear! But in the midst of these things, he uttered still an hard suspicion, That the ill Woman who had threatned him, had made impressions on him. SECT. IV. While he remained yet of a sound mind, he very sedately, but very solemnly charged his Brother to look well after him. Tho' he said he now understood himself, yet he knew not how he might be; but be sure (said he) to ha a care of me for you shall see strange things,

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There shall be a wonder in Hadley! I shall not be dead when it is thought I am! This Charge he pressed over and over; and afterwards became Delirious. SECT. V. Being become Delirious, he had a Speech Incessant and Voluble beyond all imagination and this in divers Tones and sundry voices, and (as was thought) in various languages. SECT. VI. He cryed out not only of sore pain, but also of sharp Pins, pricking of him sometimes in his Toe, sometimes in his Arms, as if there had been hundreds of them. But the people upon search never found any more than One. SECT. VII. In his Distresses he exclaimed very much upon the Woman afore-mentioned, naming her, and some others, and saying, Do you not see them: There, There, There they stand. SECT. VIII. There was a strong smell of something like Musk, which was divers times in the Room where he was, and in the other Rooms, and without the House; of which no cause could be rendred. The sick-man as well, as others, complained of it; and once particularly, it so siez'd an Apple Roasting at the Fire that they were forced to throw it away. SECT. IX. Some that were about him being almost at their wits end, by beholding the greatness and the strangeness of his Calamities did three or four times in one Night, go and

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give Disturbance to the Woman that we have spoken of: all the while they were doing of it, the good man was at ease, and slept as a weary man; and these were all the times they percei|ved him to take any sleep at all. SECT. X. A small Galley-Pot of Alkermes, that was near full, and carefully look't after, yet unto the surprize of the people, was quite emp|tied, so that the sick man could not have the Be|nefit of it. SECT. XI. Several persons that sat by him, heard a Scratching, that seem'd to be on the Ticking near his feet, while his Feet lay wholly still; nay, were held in the hands of others, and his hands were far of another way. SECT. XII. Sometimes Fire was seen on the Bed, or the Covering, and when the Behol|ders began to discourse of it, it would vanish a|way. SECT. XIII. Diverse people felt some|thing often stir in the Bed, at some distance from his Body. To appearance, the thing that stir'd was as big as a Cat: some try'd to lay hold on it with their hands, but under the Covering nothing could be found. A discreet and sober Woman, resting on the Beds Feet, felt as it were a Hand, the Thumb and the Finger of it, taking her by the side, and giving her a Pinch; but turning to see What it might be, nothing was to be seen.

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SECT. XIV The Doctor standing by the sick man, and seeing him ly still, he did himself try to lean on the Beds-head; but he found the Bed to shake so, that his head was often knock|ed against the Post, though he strove to hold it still; and others upon Tryal found the same. Also, the sick man lying too near the side of the Bed, a very strong and stout man, try'd to life him a little further into the Bed; but with all his might he could not; tho' trying by 'nd by, he could lift a Bed-stead, with a Bed, and man ly|ing on it, all, without any strain to himself at all. SECT. XV. Mr Smith dyes. The Jury that viewed the Corpse found a Swelling on one Breast, which rendered it like a Womans. His Privities were wounded or burned. On his back, besides Bruises, there were several pricks, or holes, as if done with Awls or Pins. SECT. XVI. After the Opinion of all had pronounc'd him dead, his Countenance con|tinued as Lively as if he had been Alive: his Eyes closed as in a slumber; and his neither Iaw, not falling down. Thus he remained from Sat|tuesday morning about Sun-rise, till Sabbath-Day in the After-noon. When those that took him out of the Bed found him still Warm: though the the Season was as Cold as had almost been known in an Age. On the Night after the Sabbath, his Countenance was yet as fresh as before; but on Monday Morning, they found the face extremely

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tumified and discoloured; 'twas black and blue, & fresh blood seem'd to run down his Cheek in the Hairs. SECT. XVII. The night after he died, a very credible person, watching of the Corpse, perceived the Bed to move and stir, more than once; but by no means could find out the cause of it. SECT. XVIII. The second night, some that were preparing for the Funeral, do say, That they heard diverse Noises in the Room, where the Corpse lay: as though there had been a great Removing and Clattering of stools & chairs. Upon the whole, it appeared unquestionable that Witchcraft had brought a period unto the life of so good a man. EXEMPLE. III. The man of whom we have been Writing, is not the only good Christian whom evile Witchcraft has given Annoyance to. We shall add a Second Instance, wherein I shall Relate Something that I do not Approve; and that is, The Vrinary Experiment. I suppose the Vrine must be bottled with Nails and Pinns, and such Instruments in it as carry a Shew of Torture with them, if it attain its End. For I have been told, That the bare Bottling of Vrine with Filings of Steel in it, which can be better (tho scarce well)

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accounted for, has bin sound insignificant. Now to use a Charm against a Charm, or to use a Devils Shield against a Devils Sword, Who can with a good conscience try? All Communion with Hell is dangerous; all Relief and Succor coming by means whose whole Force is founded in the Laws of the Kingdom of darkness, will be ready to leave a sting on the Conscience of him that obtains it so. SECT. I. There was one Mr. St—n of North-hampton, who upon Complaint of an abused Servant unto him, had in plain and close Terms rebuked the Master of the Lad, for his too great Severity. He was a man of good Re|pute, and as good Courage: but within as little a while as the man whom he had reprov'd could return to inform his Wife, who was a person under Suspicion for Witchcraft: he was taken with many Ails and pains that increased on him to great Extremity. SECT. II. He languishes, decays, and dies: but before it came to That, strange sights were in the house. A black Cat appeared in the night, with very affrighting Circumstances; and then a Pigeon; both of which they pursued in vain, tho both of them were in the house. SECT. III. They went to the Traditi|onall Experiment of Bottling Vrine: but they could get no Vrine from him, a strange Hole through the Vrinary Passage, shedding the water

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before they could receive it into the Vessel. SECT. IV. The Corpse was view'd by the jury; an Hole was found quite thro his Yard, which hindered their Saving of any Urine, and gave a Terrible Torture to him. About the small of his back, there was a multitude of small spots, the callous out side of which, being taken away underneath were Holes, as tho made by small Shott. Upon which all concluded with good Reason, the Occasion of his Death to be something preternatural. EXEMPLE. IV. SO Horrid and Hellish is the Crime of Witchcraft, that were Gods Thoughts as our thoughts, or Gods Wayes as our wayes, it could be no other but Vnpardonable. But that the Grace of God may be admired, and that the worst of Sinners may be encouraged, Behold, Witchcraft also has found a Pardon. Let no man Despair of his own Forgiveness, but let no man also Delay about his own Repentance, how aggravated soever his Transgressions are. From the Hell of Witchcraft our merciful Jesus can fetch a guilty Creature to the Glory of Heaven. Our LORD hath sometimes Recovered those who have in the most horrid manner given themselves away to the Destroyer of their souls.