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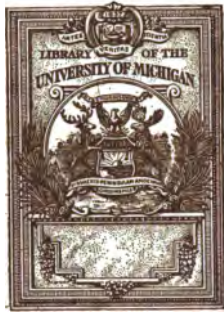
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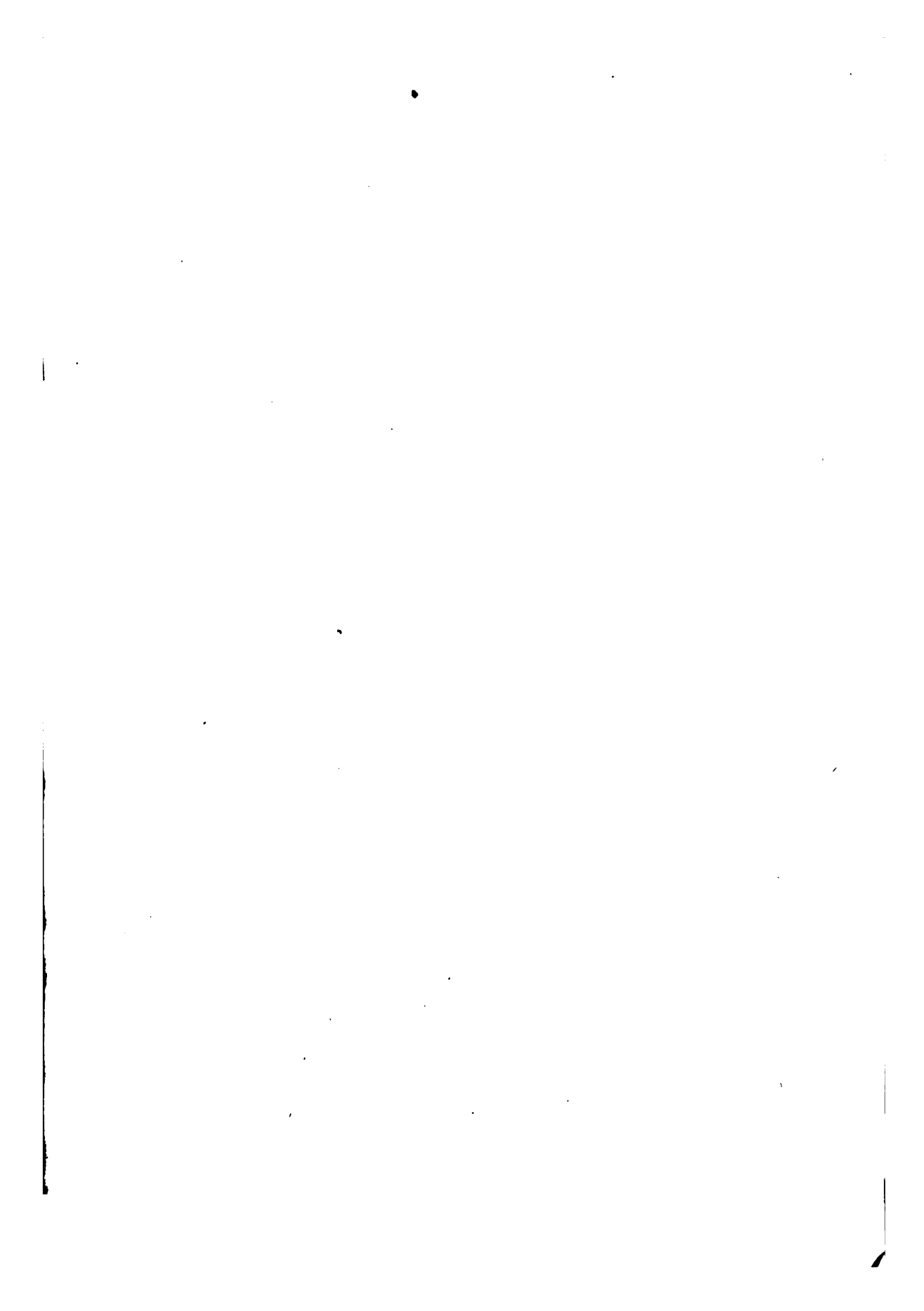
Depredation at Pemaquid  
in August, 1689

By Victor Hugo Paltsits



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THE  
DEPREDATION AT PEMAQUID  
IN AUGUST, 1689

AND EVENTS THAT LED UP TO IT

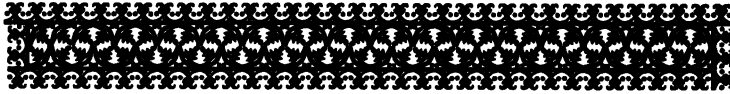
BY  
VICTOR HUGO PALTSITS

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It was with no little pleasure and anticipation that we visited Pemaquid in August, 1898, for the purpose of studying that historic territory. No longer the haunt of the prowling savage, but the resting-place of the summer-boarder, it thrills, nevertheless, the historian, as he wanders o'er its confines, and brings back to life the dead past. Here

"Lies many a relic, many a storied stone"

and

"Green is the sod where, centuries ago,  
The pavements echoed with the thronging feet  
Of busy crowds that hurried to and fro,  
And met and parted in the city street ;  
Here, where they lived, all holy thoughts revive,  
Of patient striving and of faith held fast ;  
Here, where they died, their buried records live ;  
Silent they speak from out the shadowy past."

We purpose to present a particular account of but one chapter of its history, by dealing, specifically, with Pemaquid during the last months of the administration of Sir Edmund Andros, and with the capitulation and destruction of Fort Charles under the new Boston government.

On 12 March, 1664-5, Charles II gave to his brother James, Duke of York, the territory known under the

name of Sagadahoc, and in which Pemaquid was included. But he utterly neglected his new acquisition until the resumption of his claim in 1677. The time was one of great excitement; King Philip's War, though on the wane, had not as yet been terminated. That war may properly be said to have ended with the treaty of Casco, 12 April, 1678.<sup>1</sup> The territory included within the Duke of York's patent was named "County of Cornwall" — a designation which seems to have been first applied on 1 November, 1683.<sup>2</sup> In 1685, upon his accession to the throne as James II, it became a royal province.

Pemaquid remained under the jurisdiction of New York until 1686. On 19 September of that year the king instructed Governor Dongan to deliver up Pemaquid to Sir Edmund Andros, and the royal order was couched in the following terms :

"Whereas We have thought fitt to Direct that Our Fort and Country of Pemaquid in regard of its distance from New York be for the future annexed to and Continued under the Government of Our Territory and Dominion of New England. Our Will and pleasure is That You forthwith deliver or Cause to be delivered Our said Fort and Country of Pemaquid, with the great Guns, amunition and Stores of Warr, togeather with all other Utensils and appertainances belonging to the Said Fort into the hands of Our Trusty and Well-beloved Sir Edmund Andros Knight Our Captaine Generall and Governour in Chief of Our Territory and Dominion of New England, or to the Governour or Commander in Chief there for the time being, or to Such person or persons as they shall Impower to receive the Same And for so doing this Shall be Your Warrant."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The authorities for this war are ample. The contemporary sources are indicated by Winsor in his "New England Indians" in *Mass. Hist. Soc. Proc.* 1895-6, pp. 345, ff.; and the best modern account is Bodge; "Soldiers in King Philip's War," *Leominster, Mass.*, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> "Maine Hist. Soc. Coll.," Vol. V, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> From a contemporary copy preserved in "Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXVI, fol. 94.

In the early summer of 1677, Lieut. Anthony Brockholst, consonant with his instructions from Andros, erected Fort Charles with lumber and other necessary materials, which he brought with him for that purpose from New York. The fort, then erected, was "a wooden Redoutt with two gunns aloft, & an outworke with two Bastions in each of w<sup>ch</sup> two greatt guns, and one att y<sup>e</sup> Gate."<sup>1</sup> It was the second fort, or rather redoubt, built by the English at Pemaquid. On 14 March, 1686-7, Nicholas Manning was commissioned captain of the garrison, and Francis Johnson became his lieutenant.<sup>2</sup> Fones Andros succeeded to the command on 27 August,<sup>3</sup> but his authority was of short duration. On 30 November of that year, Lieut. James Weems received his commission for that post, and it is with him that we are particularly concerned. He was carried to Pemaquid in the ketch Speedwell, John Cooke, commander.<sup>4</sup>

Contemporary documents of reputable authority prove that at Pemaquid lawlessness had full sway. Official action endeavored to repress it by the appointment of a body of justices of the peace, but success was far from assured. The perfidiousness of neighboring Indians, too, was harassing to the commander, and there were not wanting those who recommended that if the Indians were severely dealt with, they would "cringe like dogs."<sup>5</sup> The affairs wearied along, thus, in uncertainty.

<sup>1</sup> "N. Y. Coll. Docs.," Vol. III, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXVI, fol. 262 and 263.

<sup>3</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXVII, fol. 55.

<sup>4</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXVII, fol. 266 and 267.

<sup>5</sup> Joseph Pipon to Andros in "Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXIX, fol. 172 and 173.

On 26 January, 1689, William Phips and Rev. Dr. Increase Mather petitioned their majesties, William and Mary, for the removal of Governor Andros.<sup>1</sup> He was deposed on 18 April, by the uprising of the populace, and the affairs were administered by a provisional government, until the arrival of Phips, in 1692, with the new charter. The revolution in New England had a disastrous effect upon the outlying garrisons. At Pemaquid partisanship ran high. Lieutenant Weems even had the audacity to affirm his partiality for Andros, in his correspondence with the new Boston government. Several of his men deserted, and they who remained were mutinous. The Boston government having withdrawn several companies, the balance objected to the risky exposure in which this placed them. But their greatest fear was lest they might lose their pay. On 14 June the Council ordered that promise be made to Weems and his men of the king's pay "from this time forward till farther Order." On 6 July a vote was passed that "Care be taken for the preservation of Pemaquid & their majesties People & Intrest there." On 23 July, Weems informed the government that he had prevailed upon his men to remain at the garrison, by assuring them of their pay and the reinforcements promised by the Council. The men on their part signified their willingness to remain, but not without, at the same time, ventilating their minds to the government, in a letter of the 24 July.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Mass. Archives," Vol. CXXIX, fol. 217.

<sup>2</sup>"Mass. Archives," Vol. CVII, fol. 48, 184, 190, 226, 227 and 228; "Documentary History of Maine," Vol. V (Baxter MSS.), pp. 180, 181, 486, 521 and 522.

The temper of Weems was in part justifiable; for his garrison, weak and exposed, lay open to any momentary attack which might be made against it. It was only natural that he should be alarmed by the recurring news of nearby devastations. The dispersion of the English settlements, cut off from speedy succor by the many rivers and hideous woods that lay between them, laid them open to attack. The horrors of Indian treachery at Cocheco (now Dover, N. H.), in the early morning hours of 28 June, as well as the lesser, though oft-repeated onslaughts of the prowling savages in other quarters, were of a character to ruffle the most intrepid temper, and Weems was not alone in his demands for governmental action and protection. The view of the religious class was that human power had been exhausted. "Let vs take y<sup>e</sup> more heart, to follow God w<sup>th</sup> o<sup>r</sup> Prayers Night & day & never to give him rest till he hath made o<sup>r</sup> jerusalem a Quiet habitation," was the quaint way in which one wrote to the government, on 5 July.<sup>1</sup> But the government, while failing to send the reinforcements requested for Pemaquid, was not wholly dilatory in its duties. Even before the attack upon Cocheco, it was voted, on 14 June, that "some meet persons be appointed to discover whether the uprisings of the Indians under the 'late Government' of Sir Ed. Andros, are the result of English wrongs or Indian wrongs, and, in either case, a reparation to be made or satisfaction given." The commission as well was authorized to treat with the chief Indians,

<sup>1</sup>John Pynchon, from Northfield, in "Mass. Archives," Vol. CVII, fol. 178.

between Penacook (now Concord, N. H.) and Pemaquid, and who had not participated in the late depredations, with a view to keeping them neutral. The English settlers were also prohibited from trading or bartering with the Indians, so long as hostilities continued; to do so, or to give arms or ammunition to any savage or neighboring French, was judged sufficient to brand the violator as an enemy of the English crown and nation, and to subject him to the prescribed punishment.<sup>1</sup> Baron de St. Castin and unruly Indians were to be warned that their insolences and murder would be no longer tolerated. Should they not desist, peaceably, the force of arms would be employed. On 2 July, exactly one month before the woeful events at Pemaquid, the Council voted to engage the Mohawks for the destruction of the hostile eastern Indians, and promised these Indian allies, "for their Incouragement," eight pounds for every fighting man's head or scalp, which they would present as an evidence of success.<sup>2</sup>

The garrisons which it was considered important to aid and maintain were Fort Royal, Arrowsic, Sheepscott, Pemaquid and Sagadahoc; and of these Pemaquid was looked upon as the key of all the eastern parts<sup>3</sup>—the bulwark of English civilization and Protestant Christianity.

Acknowledging the breadth, and often indefiniteness, of the designation of Pemaquid in the early

<sup>1</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CVII, fol. 113.

<sup>2</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CVII, fol. 161.

<sup>3</sup> "Mass. Archives," Vol. CVII, fol. 287. Cf. also Randolph to the Com. for Trade and Plantations, in "Edward Randolph," edited for the Prince Society, by Robert N. Toppan, Vol. IV (1899), p. 233.

patents, we shall, nevertheless, for the purposes of our narrative, confine our attention only to so much of the region as is situated at and about Pemaquid Falls and southeastward on both sides of Pemaquid River, still continuing in a southeasterly direction through Pemaquid Neck to Pemaquid Point. The land contiguous to the Falls was formerly called the Falls village. More recently it has taken the name Pemaquid; while the old region of Jamestown, the more restricted and older Pemaquid, now goes by the name of Pemaquid Beach. Across the river to the northwest, where the best summer resorts of the immediate region are at present located, the name Pemaquid Harbor is applied. Just above Pemaquid Falls a stone bridge, about fifty feet in length, crosses the river. A sawmill over the falls is worked when the river is at its height. In the dry season the falls are little more than a current of water rumbling over the rocks; and it is at about this point that the fresh water of the river unites with the tide-water of Johns Bay. In old Jamestown, on Pemaquid Neck, Fort Charles, already described, was built in honor of Charles II. It was situated on the highest land there, near the water's edge, and just above Fish Point. A narrow channel separates its immediate confines from the western vein or dyke of basalt, known in early history as the Barbacan; but which no longer bears that designation, locally. The Barbacan—a name no doubt of French or Spanish origin, derived from its natural adaptedness for fortifying purposes—played an important part in the

early days. Some of the first settlements in the region were made there, and from it the Indians were wont to parley with the garrisons of old Pemaquid. To anyone unfamiliar with the region, the latter inference may seem to be an impossibility. We made the test, and could hear the laughter of boys at play near the fort site. The youth of the place, even now, communicate with one another in this manner across the channel. Such are the confines of Pemaquid, the pages of whose history—a history older than Plymouth—are red with the blood of English, French and Indians alike, who struggled for the mastery amidst deeds of daring and scenes of horror.

We have already spoken of the exposed condition of Pemaquid, and the weak state of the garrison of Fort Charles after the withdrawal or desertion of all but thirty of the soldiers.<sup>1</sup> Only ten days before the depredation, on 23 July, Weems requested the government to send to him with all speed about ten or twelve men “to be in y<sup>e</sup> Garrison for we are but weake at Present.”<sup>2</sup> But the hoped for succor came not. At the same time the Canibas or Abenaki, reinforced by other tribes, and in particular by the Maliseets of St. John River, were in council at Pentagoët (Castine), perfecting plans for the extirpation of their nearest, though to them unpleasant, neighbors—the English of Pemaquid. While there is no direct evidence that St. Castin influenced or urged

<sup>1</sup> Weems says in one place that two companies were withdrawn by the Boston government; but in another place he put the number at three companies. The former is the most likely number.—“Maine Hist. Soc. Coll.” (Baxter MSS.), pp. 180, 181, 521 and 522.

<sup>2</sup> “Mass. Archives,” Vol. CVII, fol. 227.

the savages in their determination, circumstantial evidence is strong enough to charge him with being at least a participant in the scheme. He is not likely to have either forgotten or forgiven the unwarranted attack which Andros made upon him in the previous year. But for an open-handed and energetic factor in moulding the expedition, we must look to Father Pierre Thury, the Catholic missionary at Pentagoët, who accompanied the expedition throughout. He is described by Charlevoix as "a zealous laborer and a man of capacity." Thury came over to New France, and was ordained at Quebec, 21 December, 1677, but was not, as has been inferred by some, a Jesuit. After serving in the Acadian and St. Croix missions, he was invited to the Penobscot in 1687 by St. Castin.

The plan of campaign was laid amidst appeals to heaven for success. All confessed, many received communion, and the Indians took care that their wives and children did likewise, in order, as they believed, "to raise purer hands to heaven while their fathers and husbands were combatting the heretics." This religious enthusiasm of his flock was to Thury an assurance of victory. The Perpetual Rosary was established so long as the expedition lasted, and interruption was not even permitted for meals.

Preparations proceeded amidst the orgies natural to Indian campaigning. Between two and three hundred savages<sup>1</sup> led by Father Thury, and possibly

<sup>1</sup>Charlevoix says there were only one hundred. Grace Higiman (Hegeman), afterwards captured by them, says there were between two and three hundred and no French. Another account, dated 14 August, 1689, says there were seventy canoes

escorted by a few Frenchmen, made for their canoes. With flashing paddles they held their course by the seacoast. Their hearts of iron burned with bloody hatred. They halted and embarked. Three canoes moved onward to reconnoitre, and were instructed to meet the main force at a place of rendezvous agreed upon. They may have landed first at Round Pond, but their final place of rendezvous was, it seems to us, at New Harbor, about two miles east of Fort Charles on Pemaquid Neck, where there were about twelve houses, then deserted.

Their canoes secreted, they moved stealthily along by land, unnoticed and undisturbed. Early in the morning of 2 August, John Starkey started out from the fort for New Harbor, probably to inspect that deserted region, where his own home and interests lay. He, and perhaps two others with him, if Charlevoix can be credited, fell in with some of the Indian spies along the roadside. To secure his own liberty, Starkey apprised them of the weakness of the garrison and settlement; that the elder Thomas Gyles had gone, with fourteen of his men, to his farm at the Falls, about three miles off, and that the other men of the town were "scattered abroad about their occasions." Thus credibly informed the Indians resolved on an immediate attack. After prayer, they stripped for the fight. Distributing themselves into two main bands, the one proceeded to the Falls, while the other rushed furiously on the houses in the

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with four hundred men. Weems in a petition says there were a great number of Indians and French; and again, that he was forced out of his possession by French and Indians.

settlement, alarmed those first which were farthest off, slaughtered all who attempted resistance, and bound and took captive such as laid down their arms. The attack was made at noonday when the garrison and inhabitants were off their guard, and while there was no scout abroad.<sup>1</sup> But few of the inhabitants succeeded in entering the fort as a place of refuge. Of the entire Gyles family, only one, Samuel, a boy nine years of age, got within the fort, and he happened to be near when the first alarm was given.

Of course Weems made a show of defence by opening fire on the invaders, but could not prevent the savages from obtaining possession of several stone houses close by the fort, and situated on a street, the remains of which are to be seen to this day. A large rock, now happily called "Pemaquid Rock," lay unprotected just before the fort. Behind this the Indians also entrenched themselves, and from this point and the houses occupied by them, they kept up a terrible musketry fire all day and until late at night, when they summoned Weems to surrender.<sup>2</sup> But he succeeded in holding out a little longer.

Meanwhile the other branch of the attacking party was causing havoc about Pemaquid Falls, where they killed several in the fields, especially the elder Thomas Gyles, a man of sterling worth and integrity, and largely identified with the interests of the locality. It is to his son John that historians are indebted

<sup>1</sup>"Doc. Hist. of Maine," Vol. V (Baxter MSS.), pp. 120 and 121.

<sup>2</sup>Charlevoix. "New France" (Shea's trans.), Vol. IV, p. 42.



for a particular account of this depredation, as published by him years afterward, in an account of his captivity.<sup>1</sup>

At early dawn of the following day the firing was renewed on both sides, and was for awhile incessant ; but Weems who had been severely wounded in the face by the blowing up of some gunpowder, narrowly escaping with his life,<sup>2</sup> and finding all of his men killed save seven,<sup>3</sup> determined to capitulate.

The terms proposed by Weems were for life and liberty. We give them as preserved in the narrative of Capt. John Gyles, as follows :

1. That they, the Indians should give him Mr. Pateshall's Sloop. [Richard Pateshall was killed on the first day of the incursion, as he lay off the Barbican.]

2. That they should not molest him in carrying off the few People that had got into the Fort, and three captives that they had taken.

3. That the English should carry off in their Hands what they could from the Fort.

Weems and his little party sailed in Pateshall's sloop for Boston. Cotton Mather, however, says the Indians violated the stipulations by butchering and capturing "many of them."<sup>4</sup> But none of the

<sup>1</sup> "Memoirs of Odd Adventures, Etc." Boston, 1736. An exhaustive edition of this work with many historical, genealogical and ethnological annotations, is now (1906) under way by the writer, and will speedily be published.

<sup>2</sup> Petition of Weems to Earl of Bellomont in "Maine Hist. Soc. Coll.," Vol. V (Baxter MSS.), p. 486.

<sup>3</sup> This is the number stated by Weems in his petition to the queen and privy council.—"Maine Hist. Soc. Coll.," Vol. V (Baxter MSS.), pp. 180 and 181. On p. 1, in a communication written 14 August, 1689, it is stated that twenty men were killed. Charlevoix (Shea's trans.), Vol. IV, p. 42, says that Weems and fourteen men capitulated. It is likely that a few of the latter were residents who had escaped within the fort.

<sup>4</sup> "Magnalia" (Hartford, 1868), Vol. II, p. 591.

