NEW ENGLAND COLONIAL DIARIES

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The mention of colonial New England inevitably calls to mind the picture of a gray-clad, white-kerchiefed woman standing beside a baggy-trousered man who holds a blunder-buss in one hand and a dead turkey in the other. If we force ourselves to abandon this Thanksgiving-card-like mental sketch, we probably find that our other associations with the words "colonial New England" are the results of our reading in the works of Longfellow, of Whittier, and, above all, of Hawthorne. Perhaps the colonies as we imagine them owe something, too, to Kenneth Roberts, or to the writer of a high-school text in history. But it is not necessary for us to look at the plantations of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay, and their off-shoots, only through the eyes of artists and scholars. We can go to the sources from which the artists and scholars drew their material—the writings of the colonists themselves. These sources will not suffice for a completely accurate historical picture; for that we should need to consult documentary records on both sides of the Atlantic, and weigh the interpretations of all evidence made by reputable historians. We should also do well to look at the houses the colonists built and the furniture they designed. The contemporary manuscripts will, however, enable us to see the early settlers as they saw themselves and will offer us an opportunity to read between the lines. We shall find their authors interesting as chroniclers, quaint as stylists, and worth meeting as people.

Many colonial journals are available for consultation. I am concerned at present with the views of colonial life—and of their own personalities—conveyed in the diaries or diary-like records of ten New Englanders: William Bradford, Edward Winslow, John Winthrop, John Hull, Samuel Sewall, Cotton Mather, Jonathan Edwards, John Comer, Timothy Walker, and Mary Rowlandson.

The entries in these diaries were made over a period of one hundred and sixty years by men of widely different temperaments, writing in varying environments, for diverse purposes. They pre-

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sent at once an outline of the history of New England, and a sketch of some of the characters that made it, unconscious self-portraits mingling with deliberate drawings of celebrities. They describe the struggles of the first settlers, and the successes of their children; they reveal the daily life and habits of the Pilgrim colonist of 1620, the Boston merchant of 1700, and the New Hampshire farmer of 1750; they reflect the influence of the church at various epochs, the tolerances and intolerances of the day, the relations of the settlers with the Indians, the contemporary attitude toward slavery, the degree of cultivation in New England society, and the ever-present desire on the part of every New Englander, from the very first, for as much independence as he could get. Bradford, Winslow, and Winthrop offer able administrators' accounts of their stewardship; Hull and Sewall give us prominent citizens' records of happenings important to their families or to the world; Mather, Edwards, Comer and Walker give us a glimpse—or, in Mather's case, a prolonged gaze—into the minister's mind; Mrs. Rowlandson lets us know what it was like to be captured in an Indian raid. No two of these people are alike, and the closest contemporaries in the group, Mather and Sewall, are the greatest opposites in character. We can generalize upon them to a certain extent; we can say that all of them are devout and hardworking; we can add that, despite occasional picturesqueness in Bradford, Winslow, Winthrop, and Sewall, none but Edwards is a literary artist, but we cannot lump them indistinguishably. By the time we have finished studying their writings, however, we shall have drawn from them a composite picture of seventeenth and early eighteenth century New England that stands a chance of being fairly just, attested to, as it is, by clergy and leading laymen of different habits of thought. We must remember that laboring men did not keep diaries for us to consult, that we are walking in the upper circles; but we come to know those upper circles, and look down from them, from various points of view. Our colonial New England ought not, then, to be too one-sided.

The earliest item on the list is Bradford's and Winslow's *Journal,* evidently a re-writing of the two men's diaries of their first year in America. It runs from November 9, 1620, to September 22, 1621, and gives a detailed and vivid account of the settlement at Plymouth, with the explorations that preceded and

followed it. The style is simple and straightforward, the narrative direct, unchoked by qualifying clauses or attempted subtleties of phrase, but somehow conveying the sense of exictement that must have possessed the authors. Venturing ashore in search of a good place to plant, they did not know what they might find, and the reader shares their suspense as he hears of their encounter with the Indians and their dog, of their hunt for water and their pleasure in the green, deer-haunted hollow where they first drank from a New England spring, of their discovery of a *cache* of corn, and of a European buried in an Indian burying-ground.[1] He follows eagerly the story of the finding of two tepees, and of the Indian attack on their camp.[2] He is interested to learn that they determined to settle at Plymouth Harbor rather because it was the best place they could find in a hurry, than because they thought it an ideal spot.[3] The actual story of the building of the houses is not very animated, but the first appearance of Samoset revives our attention,[4] and the various parleyings with the Indians keep it up to the end of the *Journal.* Some things are omitted, as a comparison with Bradford's *History* shows; in a report sent home with the hope of encouraging other colonists to come over, the numerous deaths during January and February naturally are not emphasized. But two things stand out, even so: the smallness of their numbers, perched as they were on the shore of a huge continent, at the mercy of the Indians, had the Indians only known it, and the surprising friendliness of those same Indians. The Pilgrims handled them cleverly, it is true; made a treaty with their chief, Massasoit, visited among them without apparent fear, offered to pay them for the grain they had appropriated, and made a punitive expedition against Massasoit's enemies.[5] All their diplomacy, however, would not have gone far enough if the Indians had been determined against them, or even, perhaps, if no English-speaking Samoset and Squanto had been there to help. No wonder they regarded the presence of these men as a special providence.

It is not known exactly what proportionate share Bradford and Winslow each had in the various portions of the *Journal;*

[1] William Bradford and Edward Winslow, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers,* Boston, 1841, pp. 127, 129, 133, 142–143.
[2] *Ibid.,* pp. 144, 156–158.
[3] *Ibid.,* pp. 159, 167.
[4] *Ibid.,* p. 182.
[5] *Ibid.,* pp. 193, 203 ff, 217, 219 ff.

presumably the journey to Packanokick, on which Bradford did not go, is Winslow's unaided production;[6] and the voyage to Nauset[7] seems to employ Winslow's spelling of Indian names. But when we read Bradford's *Of Plimouth Plantation,* we suspect that he may not have been solely responsible for the earlier parts of the *Journal.* Perhaps he was the editor, and supplemented his own account with entries from Winslow's diary. Or perhaps the fact that he was, in the *History,* employed on a longer work that was intended to be handed down to posterity, explains the differences in style. At any rate, the writing is a little less simple, a little less intimate. Some interesting details he was bound to skip in a work of this scope, which traced the Pilgrims' beginnings in northern England and Holland, and carried them down to the year 1646. He was not, however, forced to interlard his narrative with Biblical parallels. References to St. Paul's treatment at the hands of barbarians after his shipwreck do not illuminate the attitude of the Indians to the Pilgrims[8] (especially since Bradford cites it as a contrast). A reference to the famine in Jacob's time renders the picture of the food shortage in Plymouth no more vivid.[9] But if the *History* moralizes a bit more than the *Journal,* and lacks a little of its life, it has its bright moments too. The handling of the incident of the snake-skin,[10] and the "ramping" of Oldame when commanded to take his place in the watch,[11] the scathing denunciation of Morton,[12] the description of seventeen-year locusts as "flies, like (for bignes) to wasps, or bumble-bees" which "made such a constante yelling noyes, as made all ye woods ring of them, and ready to deafe ye hearers"[13] all reveal a sense of the dramatic, and a power over words. The *History's* value does not stop here, however, with its picturesqueness of speech, nor even with its immense documentary significance, increased as it is by the incorporation within it of much correspondence between the planters and their backers. The *History* is valuable as a portrait of an honest, courageous, and intelligent man, who hit hard at his enemies, but knew the use of a soft answer, and was capable of

[6] Bradford and Winslow, Young's footnote, p. 202.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 214, "Tisquantum" for "Squanto."
[8] William Bradford, *Of Plimouth Plantation,* Boston, 1899, p. 95.
[9] *Ibid.,* pp. 175–176.
[10] *Ibid.,* p. 133.
[11] *Ibid.,* p. 209.
[12] *Ibid.,* pp. 284, 285, 303.
[13] *Ibid.,* pp. 374–375.

seeing good in those with whom he differed—though he remained convinced that he was in the right.[14] Bradford's *History,* by acquainting us with their leader, makes the Pilgrims' accomplishments intelligible to us.

John Winthrop's *Journal* performs a similar service for the Puritans. It tells us what happened in Massachusetts Bay between 1630 and 1649, and it shows us what stuff the colony's first governor was of. Either because of an actual difference in temperament, or because he kept to a true diary form, more informal than Bradford's chronicler's style, he gives the impression of having been a trifle less austere than his Plymouth neighbor. Perhaps it is characteristic of the two that Bradford's most noteworthy sentence should be of wintry things, Winthrop's of a day in June, a day off the Maine coast, near the end of his voyage. Compare "For sumer being done, all things stand upon them with a wether-beaten face"[15] and "We had now fair sun-shine weather, and so pleasant a sweet air as did much refresh us, and there came a smell off the shore like the smell of a garden."[16] At least the difference is characteristic of the fate of the two settlements the writers headed. In the ten years between 1620 and 1630 the lot of the New Englander pioneer had become far easier. Winthrop's people had their difficulties, it is true, but they arrived on a coast where other Englishmen had already settled and had established friendly relations with the Indians, and they reached it in June instead of in November. When the Massachusetts Bay men first went ashore, it was to dine on venison pasty and good beer with John Endicott at Nahumkeck,[17] not to ransack autumn woods for whatever game or grain they could find. Instead of being supplied by one ship which they feared might sail off and leave them ill and provisionless, they came over attended by "consorts" and followed by vessels bringing cargoes of cattle, horses, and goats, more or less depleted, it is true,[18]but still far better than the nothing the

[14] Bradford, *Of Plimouth Plantation,* p. 369. He calls Roger Williams, who had shaken the dust of both Boston and Plymouth from his feet "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in judgmente." George F. Willison, in *Saints and Strangers,* New York, 1945, pp. 349–351, seems to feel that Bradford seriously doubts that Williams is "saved."

[15] *Ibid.,* p. 95.

[16] John Winthrop, *The History of New England,* Boston, 1825, p .23.

[17] *Ibid.,* p. 26.

[18] *Ibid.,* pp. 29, 30.

Plymouth colonists had. But while they differed in their fortunes, the two plantations seemed not to differ widely in other respects, so far as the reader of Bradford and Winthrop can tell. Their faith was the same, and the governors early formed the habit of consulting each other in crises.[19] Occasional jealousies broke out between them; Plymouth seems to have felt that Massachusetts left her to start the difficult work of planting Connecticut and walked off with the fruit of her efforts for an inadequate recompense,[20] and that she took too much on herself when she arrested Mr. Alden for complicity in the murder of Hocking in Kenebeck.[21] Their leadership was too wise, however, to allow them to weaken their positions by fighting among themselves, and the accounts of the two governors frequently supplement each other in very useful ways. Their sight is keen for the motes in their neighbors' eyes, and the modern reader profits from being able to consult two sources. But Winthrop is not slow to perceive faults in Massachusetts men, especially when they differ with him. He is perpetually at outs with his deputy, Thomas Dudley, and though he apparently tries hard to be humble and see the error of his own ways, there is no doubt that he believes he is not in the wrong.[22] We can trace in his records, even more clearly than in Bradford's, the desire of the colonist not to submit to arbitrary decrees of his governor,[23] and of governor and colonist alike to be as independent as possible of England.[24] Perhaps he was more autocratic than his Plymouth colleague, and consequently aroused more opposition; perhaps he merely noted down more budding rebellions; however it may be, the reader feels that the stiff-necked Yankee needs no explanation other than his descent from the chronic objectors of Massachusetts. Yet whether Winthrop were autocratic or not, the reader likes him. His affectionate letters to his wife and son [25] supplement the comparative impersonality of the diary he kept,

[19] E.g. Bradford, pp. 329–330. They talked over the execution of John Billington for murdering an Indian. Willison states that the Massachusetts Bay colonists had never actually separated from the Church of England until they reached New England and listened to the teachings of Deacon Samuel Fuller of Plymouth. Thus, it was owing to Plymouth's influence that the faiths of the two colonies were the same (Willison, p. 270).

[20] Bradford, pp. 371, 372, 403. Dorchester was the real offender.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 379.

[22] Winthrop, pp. 82 ff, 117–118.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 70, 82.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 135, 143–144, 154, 298, 299. They planned to resist any "general governour" sent out from England. See p. 154.

[25] *Ibid.*, Appendices to Vols. I and II.

evidently with the notion that this was a public record he was compiling. And even in the official document, traces of his personality are to be found. His evident enjoyment of the land breeze and the venison pasty after a long sea voyage on short commons; his softening of the deputy's heart by offering him the gift of a hog;[26] the ridiculous episode of his benightment, and barring of an Indian woman out of her own house,[27] all help to make him human.

There is little that is equally revealing in John Hull's diary, though it was a semi-private document, intended for his own use rather than for the benefit of posterity. Part of it, it is true, was certainly written with an eye to the possibility that someone else would make use of it, but the someone is probably the descendant for whose benefit he gave an account of his birth and upbringing at the opening of his record of his own affairs. The heading of the section on "public occurrences" shows that he had a future reader in mind: "Some observable passages of providence toward the country, and specially in these parts of the Massachusetts Bay; noted for the help of my own memory, wherein, if anything should not be so exactly penned, for method or time, let it be imputed to the ignorance and weakness of the penman if it should ever come to the sight of any other."[28] A comparison of the ink and handwriting of various parts of the diary suggests that the "public" section was begun first, probably about 1649, perhaps with the execution of Charles I,[29] an event especially significant for the future of the colonies. Most of the "passages" set down are not quite so spectacular; they vary from earthquakes, the establishment of the first printing press, the deaths of such men as Governor Winthrop and John Cotton, and reports of the fluctuations of the Civil War in England, to jottings on plagues of caterpillars, and the dates of the appearance and maltreatment of Quakers in Boston.[30] There can be no doubt that Hull approved both their persecution and their hanging; his eulogy on Endicott includes, among other things, commendations for his suppressing of Quakers.[31] We cannot clear the majority of early New Englanders

[26] Winthrop, p. 118.
[27] *Ibid.*, p. 62.
[28] John Hull, *Diary, Archaeologia Americana*, Vol. III, Boston, 1857, p. 167. The spelling has been modernized by the editor.
[29] *Ibid.*, Advertisement, p. 116.
[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 172, 173, 172–186, 195; 184; 178, 179, 182, 188, 189, 193, 197, 200, 202, 203.
[31] *Ibid.*, p. 215.

of the charge of being as narrow as the oppressors who drove them out of England, but Hull himself shows us that we must not think of them as devoid of all tender feelings, or as believing that any display of domestice affection was a sin. No doubt it is easier to indulge one's fondness for one's children than to be tolerant of those who differ from one on religious matters, but the Puritans have sometimes been denied even the possession of normal parental sentiment. Let us give them their due. It is impossible not to see fatherly solicitiude in Hull's entry for the fifth of January, 1660, surrounded as it is by notations on his mercantile ventures: "Our family was all partakers of the epidemical cold, but, through favor, very gently. Little Hannah lay two days without any mind to play or food." [32]

This same "little Hannah" later became the wife of Samuel Sewall, who, like his father-in-law, kept a diary, but a far more copious one. Not contented with noting down major political and personal events, Sewall recorded everything that was of interest to him, however trivial it might appear. There is in him none of the self-consciousness apparent in all the other writers we have discussed. He is not trying to appeal to an English audience, like Bradford and Winslow, or chronicling the history of an infant colony, like Bradford and Winthrop. He is not engaged in making a bare record of public occurrences and private business transactions for his own consultation, like Hull. He is talking to himself on paper. Important historical data can be gleaned from his pages; he himself could refer to them for matter bearing on investments and the hiring and dismissal of servants, and he doubtless intended his entries to be of practical use to him. His diary was an historical document and a personal reference book; if you had questioned him about it, he would probably have realized it was the first, while declaring that he meant it for the second. But as he was writing he felt no one's eye over his shoulder. He was a born diarist, of the true Pepysian stripe, and he wrote what pleased or concerned or occupied him without thought of a possible reader's reactions to his writing. He did not pose, or even exercise reserve; he was himself. As a consequence we catch glimpses, not only of the judge and councilor, sharing in all the most important political transactions of his day, but of the private citizen, interested alike in the fluctuations of the weather and the

[32] Hull, private diary, p. 152.

attendance at the latest funeral, absorbed in his family affairs or indulging in a little innocent vanity over his witticisms. We can conjecture something as to what Bradford and Winthrop and Hull were like; we *know* what Sewall was. He has told us so himself, not purposely, but by his speech and actions, as our friends do. And in revealing himself he has revealed the whole life of contemporary Boston. He is more indispensable to the social historian than to the political one; others have recorded the political events he describes, but no one has given such a picture of Boston society from 1680 to 1730 as he. Sewall does not serve merely utilitarian purposes, however; he is more than a supplier of footnotes to books on the various aspects of New England's history. He is a choice item for the collector of quaint characters.

If there is much that is ridiculous in him, there is also much that is lovable. From the early entry in which he describes his sensations during a trial at preaching, when "being afraid to look on the glass, ignorantly and unwillingly [he] stood two hours and a half" in the pulpit,[33] he has our sympathies. We take an interest in all his little foibles. We smile when he notes his surprises at finding a good dinner at Captain Hill's,[34] and preserves a perfectly inconsequential verse that came into his mind "as [he] lay in [his] bed in the morn."[35] We are amused at his account of his "strange absurd Dream" that he was Lord Mayor of London,[36] at his altercation with his neighbors over the digging of his cellar,[37] and his admission that he fell asleep in the council chamber.[38] We enjoy his simple pleasure in his own *bons mots*,[39] his occasional betrayal of literal-mindedness,[40] and his relief that the sad news announced in court turned out to be only the Queen's death, not, as he feared, that "Boston was burnt again."[41] Above all we revel in his relation of his various courtships. Before we laugh too heartily, we must acknowledge that Sewall was devoted to his first wife. He missed her greatly on his trip to England;[42] he

[33] Samuel Sewall, *Diary*, Boston, 1878, 1879, 1882, Vol. V., p. 9.
[34] *Ibid.*, V, p. 156.
[35] *Ibid.*, V, p. 479. The verse ran "To Horses, Swine, Net-Cattell, Sheep and Deer, Ninety and Seven prov'd a Mortal year."
[36] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 179.
[37] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 180.
[38] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 204.
[39] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 305, "I said I should be able to make no Judgment on the Pipins without a Review, which made the Company Laugh."
[40] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 365. He wanted the Thanksgiving to be for a plentiful *later* harvest, as the early grains had been blasted.
[41] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 19.
[42] *Ibid.*, V, pp. 237, 259.

showed his respect for her by making her the purse-holder,[43] and his understanding of her nature by his entries during her last illness. He notices her concern for him, even while she is desperately ill herself: "The Distemper increases; yet my Wife speaks to me to goe to Bed." When he is forced to record that she "ask'd not after [his] going to bed,"[44] we know that he has given up hope. We cannot grow uproarious over Samuel's relations to his Hannah. But there is no restraint necessary when we review his tentative movements toward remarriage. First Madam Winthrop appears frequently in his pages, without any specific mention of "intentions" on his part;[45] then she is supplanted by the Widow Denison, who seems to have been unwilling to dower herself sufficiently to suit him, and afterwards to have repented that she did not make a bargain when she could.[46] She was succeeded in her turn by Mrs. Tilley, with whom Sewall concluded matters in October, 1719.[47] But at the end of the following May he was on the market again.[48] Mrs. Tilley appears to have been fatally stricken with tuberculosis when he married her, and never to have been in reasonably good health during the eight months of their life together. He apparently was fond of his second wife, and upset at her death, but we cannot help being amused to discover that by September he has harked back to Madam Winthrop again, calling frequently, showering her with attentions, haggling with her as to whether he can afford to keep a coach or no, and enquiring how much she will leave him in her will. (He has offered to leave her something.) It must be said in justice to Sewall that Madam Winthrop was quite as commercial as he in her outlook. If he recorded every tract or piece of gingerbread he gave her, solemnly noted the price of "Sugar Almonds" that went her way, and eagerly remarked the wine and marmalade she offered him, she was no less anxious to know how much the almonds had cost, and she displayed a keen interest in the extent and bestowal of his estate. Presumably he was attracted by her as well as by her fortune, but she seems to have been unable to make up her mind, though inclined to regard him as a bad risk. He withdrew, perhaps before she was entirely ready to see him go; but he was justified

[43] Sewall, VI, p. 93.
[44] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 143.
[45] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 163, 168, 172, 175, 176.
[46] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 180, 187–192, 197–202, 204–206, 208.
[47] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 225, 226, 228, 231–233.
[48] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 254–255.

in supposing that her willingness to let the fire go out during a November visit did not indicate any very great likelihood of success.[49] He next felt out a Mrs. Ruggles, and, finding her unfavorable,[50] embarked on a suit to one Mrs. Mary Gibbs, who accepted him after considerable dickering.[51] Marriage was often quite openly a business arrangement with early New Englanders, more especially a second or third marriage, and Sewall made no bones about it. But he was not insensitive, or hypocritical, in this or in other respects. Indeed, he frequently displayed honesty, forthrightness, and tenderness of conscience. He did not hesitate to stand by his opinions, whether he thought they would be popular, and ingratiate him with the powers that were, or not;[52] he publicly confessed that he, a judge at the witch trials, had been in error,[53] and he not only issued a pamphlet against slavery,[54] but also took every opportunity he he had to make the lot of Indian and negro slaves and bond servants easier.[55] Sewall did not escape the limitations of his environment completely, but he was more liberal than many of his neighbors, and he was far from resembling the grim and self-righteous Puritan of legend. He may have abominated periwigs,[56] but he did not scorn a pleasure trip into the country;[57] he took an interest in planting sweet-briers and shade trees as well as orchards; he rejoiced like any pagan when swallows "chipering very rapturously" proclaimed the spring.[58] Perhaps his interest in rainbows [59] was more that of a seeker after portents than of an admirer of natural beauty, but he was capable of remarking "the Sun pleasantly rising out of the Sea." [60] He was a man of many interests; his farm, his family, his court duties (he spent a great deal of time riding circuit), his political activities, his college [61]—even his social duties, parties with his friends, excursions with his wife,[62] made constant demands on his time.

[49] Sewall, VII, p. 260 ff., *passim.*
[50] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 290–291.
[51] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 299, 306.
[52] *Ibid.*, VI, pp. 204, 215; VII, p. 203.
[53] *Ibid.*, V, p. 445.
[54] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 16.
[55] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 143; VII, p. 87.
[56] *Ibid.*, V, p. 102; VI, pp. 222, 231.
[57] *Ibid.*, V, p. 83.
[58] *Ibid.*, V, pp. 155, 173, 210; VI, pp. 128–129, 343.
[59] *Ibid.*, V, pp. 158, 165.
[60] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 276.
[61] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 202.
[62] *Ibid.*, V, p. 83.

The diary itself must have occupied him often and long, though he probably took no pains with its style. The sentences are not all complete, and the language is simple, rather than polished, though none the worse for that. Sewall's occasional recordings of his compliments and quips make us glad that he did not strain in his daily entires. When he says of the foot-high "running Oak" of the Cape that "it is content with that Stature," or remarks that nine of Mr. Jonathan Eyre's children were laid in the new burying-place with their father "to handsel the new Tomb," or notes that "Though all things look horribly winterly by reason of a great Storm of Snow, hardly got over, and much on the Ground: yet the Robbins cheerfully utter their Notes this morn,"[63] he writes at once naturally and effectively. There are no striking felicities of speech in Sewall, but he is often amusing, often picturesque, and always alive. Even from a literary point of view, he did not waste his labors on the diary he kept so faithfully.

His religion, too, was an important interest—indeed, a great part of his life; not only did he go to church regularly and take notes on the sermons, but he also devoted many hours to private fasts and thanksgivings. He had the theological bent of the day, and even, at one time, considered entering the ministry,[64] but his faith, strong as it was and constant as was its influence, never ran into excesses. His self-mortifications did not border on morbidity, as Cotton Mather's undoubtedly did.

Indeed, Mather, a fellow-diarist who was Sewall's younger contemporary and acquaintance, presents a great contrast to him in many ways. He was more of a scholar than Sewall, and less of a man of affairs. One would think that his wide learning, which was little short of encyclopaedic, would have given him greater command of the means to enjoy life and be of service to others than the judge could summon. But to me Sewall appears to have been a far more successful man, as well as a much happier one. There can be no doubt that Mather tried to employ his abilities to the greater glory of God and to the advantage of his fellow-countrymen. His diary is crammed with methodical devices for self-improvement—for instance, every day he set time aside for devising good to others, and every other week he considered what he could do for his enemies![65] Such a mechanical program for

[63] Sewall, V, p. 26; VI, pp. 16, 74–75.
[64] *Ibid.*, V, p. 9.
[65] Cotton Mather, *Diary*, Boston, 1911, Vol. VIII, pp. 23, 26.

the attainment of virtue cannot fail to make us smile, especially as Mather is obviously well-satisfied with its results, and with the consequences of other similar plans. He is very ready to believe that his prayers have special efficacy,[66] and that the devil regards him as an unusually powerful adversary.[67] On the other hand, he has occasional fits of self-abasement, some of them obviously quite genuine,[68] and he is nearly always conscious of his pride and vainly trying to subdue it.[69] He is really a pathetic figure. Unattractive as he is, with his prayers that "at least one of the most notorious and malignant Enemies to [his] Serviceableness might be smitten with such an Horror of Conscience . . . which they that hate [him] may see and be ashamed," and his numerous other betrayals of the fact that, try as he may to forgive his opponents, he is not above feelings of revenge;[70] tactless as he is, with his pious resolve to start preparing his seventy-year-old mother for death;[71] repellent as he is, with his self-righteousness and his touchiness and his general preoccupation with himself, we cannot help being sorry for him. He is not responsible for his temperament—or at least, not entirely so—and it is his temperament that accounts for many of the flaws in his character. Apparently he was not endowed with a shred of humor, and aggravated a natural tendency to morbid introspection by indulging in what he felt to be the religious duty of self-examination. This unfortunate combination of characteristics resulted in the formation of the personality we find so unpleasing. If we try to lay aside the prejudices he has raised against himself, we find much that is good in the man. He was a tremendous worker—think of the hundreds of tracts he published!—a devoted, if occasionally dense, husband and father, a conscientious pastor. While he did not oppose slavery, he wanted to see the religious welfare of the negroes looked after,[72] and he possessed enough tolerance to say that "erroneous and conscientious Dissenters" should not be persecuted. He expressed the opinion that the Quakers ought to have been sent to Bedlam, rather than the gallows.[73] He was credulous enough, in all conscience, but he

[66] Mather, VIII, pp. 369, 405.
[67] *Ibid.*, VII, pp. 155, 156.
[68] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 20.
[69] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 16; VIII, 454.
[70] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 62, 99, 139, 349.
[71] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 51.
[72] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 176.
[73] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 149.

had sufficient common sense to disapprove the conviction of witches on the evidence of a "spectral Representation."[74] For his times, he was not unduly narrow and illiberal, and he was amazingly cultivated. He recognized other fields of intellectual endeavor than the preponderantly literary ones he had studied in at Harvard. He corresponded with the Royal Society,[75] as well as with Defoe[76] and Isaac Watts;[77] he read and wrote tracts on innoculation,[78] as well as reading the *Spectator* and the *Guardian*.[79] But for all this, his diary is tedious reading. We take no stock in his amazing announcement that he was visited by an angel;[80] and we grow weary of his self-mortification; we feel that he is trying unsuccessfully to turn himself into a mystic. We may smile when we read that a man who grew drowsy during a sermon did penance by urging (perhaps contributing toward) its publication,[81] or find, after his statement that he has begged his wife to inform him of any faults he displays, the comment, "As yett she tells me of nothing."[82] We may feel that he really is human when, coming to his birthday, February 12, 1702/03, he remarks, "Methinks, *forty* sounds old and big!"[83] and we may share his pleasure in the "good-condition'd" little daughter, who gave a piece of her "Pome citron" to the brother who had been scolded for being cross to her.[84] We remember, too, with satisfaction that he disapproved whipping and wanted to see his daughters provided a trade apiece.[85] But we cannot like him. When we compare his diary with Sewall's we see at once the fundamental reason for our dislike. Sewall writes like a man interested in the world around him; Mather, for all his ameliorating qualities, like one primarily concerned with the state of his own soul.

Jonathan Edwards is not open to the same criticism. His fragmentary diary (1722–1735) deals largely with his spiritual status, it is true, but he regards himself in a far more impersonal light than Mather could ever attain. Mather might condemn him-

[74] Mather, VII, p. 150.
[75] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 245–246.
[76] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 74.
[77] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 142.
[78] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 620, 624–625 and footnote, 627–628.
[79] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 227.
[80] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 190.
[81] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 439.
[82] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 504.
[83] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 418.
[84] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 44.
[85] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 536; VIII, pp. 51, 112.

self for pride or almost any other of the seven deadly sins; he repeatedly declared that he felt himself capable of all of them, but we cannot imagine any of his self-examination resulting in the quiet and simple conclusion that he was not sweet-tempered enough, but often dogmatical or egotistic.[86] Nor can we suppose that he had much realization of the danger of dwelling on one's troubles and making them seem worse.[87] Edwards takes on a little more of the Mather tone when he urges himself to give everything the value now it would have on a sick bed,[88] or announces that he intends "to live in continual mortification . . . and never to expect or desire any worldly ease or pleasure."[89] But he is all Edwards when he discovers that he thinks things are true more quickly when they are to his own advantage, or recognizes that it may look affected to talk religiously or to do acts of kindness.[90] He does not mean to regard these appearances, but the realization that good may be awkwardly done probably made him a more acceptable mentor than Mather could ever have been. The brevity of the diary is such that we have little to go on, even if we supplement it with the *Personal Narrative,* the description of Sarah Pierrepont and the remarkable letter that Edwards, when a child, wrote describing the "flying spiders." From these we derive some conception of the struggle between his compassionate nature and his Calvinistic principles,[91] a notion of his non-theological interests,[92] and of his power over the English language. Even the short entries in the diary have a lucidity and a smoothness that are lacking in any of the other styles we have examined, not excepting the straightforward narrative of Bradford. The words come easily at his command, and fall into rhythmical sentences. His oratory in the pulpit is said to have been profoundly moving; a commonplace sentence noted down on February 3, 1724, also shows his skill in managing phrase and clause:[93] "I must be contented, where I have anything strange or remarkable to tell, not to make it appear so remarkable as it is indeed; lest through the fear of this, and the desire of making a thing appear very remarkable, I should

[86] Jonathan Edwards, *Diary* in *Works*, New York, 1829, Vol. I, pp. 84–85.
[87] *Ibid.*, p. 100.
[88] *Ibid.*, p. 101.
[89] *Ibid.*, p. 77.
[90] *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.
[91] Edwards, *Works*, I, Personal Narative, p. 60.
[92] *Ibid.*, pp. 23–28, Spider letter.
[93] *Ibid.*, p. 103.

exceed the bounds of simple verity." Edwards was not a diarist at all, in the sense that Sewall and Mather were; his notations were of importance to himself alone; it was a reflective, not an episodic, scheme that he followed. But he deserves a place on our list of diarists by virtue of his literary ability at recording his own thoughts.

Literary ability would never have won a citation for our next divine, John Comer, had his record of his thoughts and doings been as brief as Edwards's. His style is competent, but not distinguished, and he had no such share in shaping events as Sewall, no such copiousness of literary output as Mather. Indeed, he died young,[94] and had little opportunity to become a leader. There are, however, interesting elements in his account of himself. His conversion to the Baptist sect gave rise to the first crisis in his career;[95] later, he offended some of his fellow-Baptists by his advocacy of "the laying-on of hands"[96] and had to find himself a new cure. These were, to him, the most important events in his life. The modern reader finds it more significant to learn that his religious awakening was accelerated by a sermon of Cotton Mather's, that it was Increase Mather who persuaded his family to let him study rather than remain an unwilling apprentice to the glover's trade, and that he met "Dean Berkeley" when he was domiciled at Newport and the Dean, "a man of moderation," visited there.[97]

If Comer's style and matter is undistinguished, Timothy Walker's style is nearly non-existent, and his matter almost exclusively agricultural. Timothy is much the most recent diary-keeper we are concerned with, and the one who lived farthest from Boston. He notes down his daily doings and the latest news to reach him at Concord, New Hampshire, at various intervals of time between 1746 and 1780. In the early days of his jottings, the news was of the '45 in England and the church held a Thanksgiving over the suppression of the Scotch Rebellion; in the later days, it was of the raising of the siege of Charleston that he heard.[98] But throughout the length of his diary, he is occupied with the working of the farm on which he depended for a large share of his income. Most of his

[94] He died in 1734, at the age of 29. "Introduction" to *The Diary of John Comer*, 1893, p. 8.
[95] *Ibid.*, pp. 26–27, 30, 32, 33.
[96] *Ibid.*, pp. 57 ff.
[97] *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 19, 60, 71.
[98] Timothy Walker, *Diary*, Concord, 1889, pp. 135, 180.

entries are a sentence long, and to some such effect as "Hauled off my logs from my plowed land," "Killed my hogs," or "Mowed my grass upon Waternummon's Brook." [99] Probably he was so busy preaching, farming, and preparing an occasional youth for college [100] that he had little time to write more fully. We cannot gather from his terse records what sort of sermons he may have preached. No one but a local historian would take much interest in his rustic brevities.

We have not as yet heard anything from a woman. The most noteworthy authoress of anything resembling a diary during this period also represents another class we have not taken into account —the white captives among the Indians. Mary Rowlandson's *Narrative* (1682), written after the fact but in a day-to-day form, is simply and straightforwardly told, and all the more harrowing for that. We read it with constant amazement at the narrator's powers of endurance and the inexplicable cruelties and kindnesses of the Indians. Some of her captors were ill-natured without reason, others really friendly and compassionate, but all of them appeared to live a miserable hand-to-mouth existence. The tale gives most readers an entirely new notion of Indian economy. It gives us, too, an admiration of Mrs. Rowlandson, driven from her home with a dying child in her arms, ignorant whether her husband was alive or dead, and separated, except at rare intervals, from her two captive children. The courage and resourcefulness she displayed from her capture to her ransom ought, like the qualities of our other diarists, to form a part of our picture of early New England.

Let us review that picture, stressing the most significant points, and noting any additional data we may have missed. We have repeatedly had occasion to mention the early New Englanders' desire for independence—independence of arbitrary government, whether from English officials or the authorities they themselves have chosen to rule them. We have seen this reflected in Bradford and Winthrop; it can be traced, too, in Sewall's and Mather's frequent mentions of trouble over the charter, and Mather's pride when his father comes home with one written to his mind. Massachusetts Bay's views as to its rights of self government are also clearly shown in Sewall's entries about the problem of what to do when

[99] Walker, pp. 128, 140, 161.
[100] *Ibid*, note, p. 143.

the Queen died. The council felt that authority devolved on it six months after her death, in the event that no orders to continue the governor arrived from the new king. When the orders were delayed, the council voted on the matter, and the royal governor was notified of the devolution. Naturally he disagreed with the council, but a ship carrying the recommendation for his continuance did arrive before any serious consequences had occurred.[101] It is not surprising, however, that in a country of this independent temper Walker should, some sixty-five years later, have had to record the battles of a revolution.

We derive from our reading of New England diaries, then, a renewed idea of the New Englander's love of freedom. But no one has ever denied that Yankees were fond of their own way. Can we, on the basis of our knowledge, defend them against any of the unfavorable criticisms under which they have suffered? They have been called intolerant, superstitious, fanatical, and over-ascetic. Let us take up first the matter of their intolerance.

It must be admitted at once that it is utterly impossible to clear them entirely of this charge. What we have already seen of Hull's attitude toward the Quakers is sufficient to demonstrate that. His son-in-law Sewall also regarded Quakers with an extremely suspicious eye, and, when asked to further their plans for building a meeting house, indignantly refused to "have a hand in setting up their Devil Worship."[102] But he was not equally condemnatory of all who differed from him. He occasionally attended the services of the "Manifesto" Church,[103] and while he appears to have been distressed at the governor's commandeering the South Meeting House, in its off hours, for Church of England services,[104] he was also much concerned when he found that he himself had, all unwittingly, asked one of its members to a party given on Good Friday. He remarks that he was quite unaware of the date, and was "far from any design to affront the Church."[105] Mather, too, occasionally displayed a queer sort of intolerant tolerance. Besides declaring that he thought the Quakers fitter for Bedlam than the gallows, he suggested that Church of England missionaries would do well to visit English plantations where little heed was paid to religion, rather than to promote the apostasy of Dissenters

[101] Sewall, VII, pp. 33–43.
[102] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 232.
[103] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 48.
[104] *Ibid.*, V, p. 171.
[105] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 181.

(presumably dwellers in such towns as Boston).[106] He asked, also, that no one commend writers who belonged to the established church without pointing out their errors as well.[107] Thus he displayed his willingness that those in "paganizing Circumstances" should fall into the Church's clutches—a thing some sectarians would have shunned—and betrayed the fact that he thought some works of the established clergy commendable. But no one could ever advance Mather as an example of tolerance in a positive sense. Comer found at least one Congregational minister who was willing to let him communicate after an open expression of his Baptist beliefs,[108] and himself accepted calmly a Quaker's remarks at a funeral he attended.[109] Even the earliest writers afford examples of tolerance as well as of prejudice. We have seen that Bradford could speak well of Roger Williams, even when Williams had left Plymouth because his views did not jibe with the Pilgrims'. He and the Church of Plymouth were also willing to grant a certain latitude to Mr. Charles Chansey, whom they had called before they knew that he felt dipping to be the only lawful form of baptism. They were ready to grant him its lawfulness, but they felt that sprinkling was permissible likewise. Nevertheless, they offered to let him practice according to his persuasion, if he would let the "teacher" baptize the children whose parents disagreed with him. This he would not consent to, and went on his way.[110] I can find no close parallel to this liberality in Winthrop's *Journal,* however. It abounds in fulminations about Anne Hutchinson and her group, and records at best several unsuccessful attempts at the amicable solution of religious differences.[111] The most that can be said of this side of our New England ancestors of the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is that they weren't all so intolerant as some of them were.

Much the same thing is true of their superstition. We cannot wipe the Salem witchcraft trials from the pages of history. But we have already found that while Cotton Mather was credulous, he did not lose his head so completely as did the believers in "spectral representation," and that Sewall so regretted his part in the trials that he made public confession of his error. In the minor matter of signs and portents, which they linked in their

[106] Mather, VIII, p. 327.
[107] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 357–358.
[108] Comer, p. 33.
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 96.
[110] Bradford, p. 457.
[111] Winthrop, pp. 200, 246, 258.

minds with miracles and prophecies, nearly all our diarists were uncritical. Winthrop solemnly noted a contest between a mouse and a snake, won by the mouse, and, with the occurrence, its interpretation, which identified the mouse with New England and the snake with the devil.[112] Nor does he appear to have thought it extraordinary when Indian servants reported that the devil in person was trying to suborn them from the English.[113] Sewall constantly recorded the rainbows he saw, and their position in the heavens, and Mather firmly believed that his teeth ached because he had "sinned with [his] teeth."[114] He also placed implicit faith in a contemporary ghost story.[115]

Of the group, Mather seems the only one open to the charge of being a fanatic. As far as we can tell from the evidence at hand, religion was far more important in the lives of all early New Englanders than it is in the lives of their descendants. Services and public thanksgivings were supplemented by private fasts, and family prayer was a universal custom. Perhaps these are false deductions which result from the fact that so many of the diarists were ministers or had ministerial relatives, but this does not seem likely, when we consider the reasons for the settlement of Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay. It is not fair, at any rate, to call those who make religion part of their daily regime, fanatics. It is not preoccupation with religion, but misinterpretation of it, that leads to fanaticism. When we hear that Sewall's small daughter Betty became so afraid of hell-fire that she could not control her cries, and remained melancholy and tearful for several weeks, we feel that religion has been misused.[116] But Sewall himself was no fanatic, and no other diarist we have met, except Mather, appears to have allowed his religion to take the form of an unhealthy obsession.

The accusation of over-asceticism, with its companion charges of undue severity to children and narrowness of intellectual life, seems to me the one most susceptible of partial refutation. Edwards and Mather may both have indulged in self-mortification, and denied themselves innocent, if worldly, pleasures; Winthrop and Bradford may have gone to excess in their condemnation of Morton's Maypole,[117] but everyone did not follow these examples.

[112] Winthrop, p. 81.
[113] *Ibid.*, p. 254.
[114] Mather, VII, p. 24.
[115] *Ibid.*, VIII, p. 383.
[116] Sewall, V, pp. 419 ff.
[117] Bradford, pp. 284, 285, 303; Winthrop, p. 34. Willison feels that there is something to be said for Morton, and that the colonists' picture of him, and

Sewall would doubtless have agreed with the two governors on Morton (who seems to have committed other crimes than that of enjoying life); he noted with eagerness, every December 25th, that the day was not kept as a holiday, and he had the notices of St. Valentine's and Easter blotted out of the almanac printed in the colony.[118] Nine-pins, too, met with his stern disapproval.[119] But he allowed "Col. Hobbey's Negro" to sound him a Levit on January 1,[120] and, in a style very reminiscent of Pepys, "carried [his] Wife to Dorchester to eat Cherries, Rasberries, chiefly to ride and take the Air."[121] Even if Sewall did mar the occasion by spending some time in reading Calvin's comments on the psalms, this cannot be regarded in any other light than that of a pleasure party. We have seen abundant proof that Bradford, Hull, Sewall and Mather were fond of their children, and treated them with some tenderness, though it may be that young Increase Mather's evil ways, which caused his father so much sorrow, were only aggravated by the measures he took to eradicate them.

Undoubtedly the intellectual life of the cultivated early New Englander would appear cramped to the cultivated man of today. But none of the men with whom we are concerned were ignoramuses. Bradford refers to Plato and Seneca as well as to the Bible,[122] Sewall reads Ben Jonson, cites Virgil on moonlight, and further distinguishes himself as a man of cultured interests in the sights he chooses to see in England: the Bodleian, Cambridge, Stonehenge, and Salisbury and Canterbury Cathedrals[123]—the last, indeed, he found lofty and magnificent but "of little use." There is a touch of the Philistine here, and there may be in Mather, too, but his interest in the study of natural phenomena, as well as his acquaintance with the work of Defoe, Sir Richard Blackmore,[124] Addison and Steele, could not help broadening his outlook. He also encouraged his children to learn French, and actually talked Latin with his son Sammy.[125] Mather and his contemporaries did not inhabit an intellectual desert.

The lives of the earliest New Englanders tended towards

his of the colonists, are equally unfair. (Willison, pp. 274–284, and note 3 to chapter XV, p. 468.)

[118] Sewall, VI, p. 230.
[119] *Ibid.*, VII, p. 52.
[120] *Ibid.*, VI, p. 121.
[121] *Ibid.*, V, p. 83.
[122] Bradford, pp. 94, 163.
[123] Sewall, VI, p. 167; VII, p. 163; V, pp. 259–303 *passim*.
[124] Mather, VIII, p. 141.
[125] *Ibid.*, VIII, pp. 463, 554.

barrenness because they were so busy making a wilderness habitable; some of their immediate successors deliberately made their lives rather more barren than they needed to be. This we must allow. But a careful reading of Sewall does not give the impression that his days lacked interest or color. Probably Mather felt his continual "conversation with heaven" absorbing,[126] and Edwards was fascinated by the perpetual problem of the freedom of the will. To the majority of us moderns, however, Sewall's way of enjoying life is the most intelligible and imitable, and we have no hesitancy in asserting that Sewall *did* enjoy life to the full, for all his puritanical traits. As a consequence, his is the most interesting diary of the group—at once the most entertaining and the one that casts the broadest ray of light on early American history. And we need not hesitate to recommend it to those whose motives for reading are not merely antiquarian or merely scholarly; it will please anyone who likes people.

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[126] *Ibid.,* VII, 501.