

*The Vial poured out upon the S E A.*

A *N.*  
Remarkable RELATION

Of certain

*289*

PIRATES

Brought unto a Tragical and Untimely  
E N D.

Some CONFERENCES with them,  
after their *Condemnation.*

Their BEHAVIOUR at their *Ex-  
ecution.*

A N D A

S E R M O N

Preached on that Occasion.

Job XX. 29.

*This is the Portion of a wicked Man from GOD,  
and the Heritage appointed unto him by GOD.*

B O S T O N: Printed by T. Fleet, for N. Belknap, and  
sold at his Shop near *Scarlet's Wharf.* 1726.

*The Vial Poured Out upon the Sea*

[ 1726 ]

JOB XXIV. 19.

*He is swift as the Waters; their Portion is cursed in the Earth, he beholdeth  
not the way of the Vineyards.*

Thus Paraphrased by the Incomparable Sir *Richard Blackmore.*

To this vile Cruc you may the PIRATE add  
Who puts to Sea the Merchant to invade,  
And reaps the Profit of another's Trade.  
He sculks behind some Rock, or swiftly flies  
From Creek to Creek, rich Vessels to surprize.  
By this ungodly Course the Robber gains,  
And lays up so much Wealth, that he disdains  
And mocks the poor, unprofitable Toil,  
Of those, who plant the Vine, or till the Soil.

A Remarkable RELATION  
of a  
*Cockatrice* crush'd in the Egg.

A Vessel of that sort which they call, a *Snoe*, belonging to certain  
Merchants in *Bristol*, and commanded by *John Green*, of that City, sailed  
from *Jamaica*, some time in *April*, 1726, bound for *Guinea*. The Boatswain,  
*William Fly*, having before concerted with some aboard, (in a way of

Revenge, they said, for *Bad Usage*) the Destruction of the *Master* and the *Mate*, and the proper *Consequences*, on May 27, about One a Clock in the Morning, he, with one *Alexander Mitchel*, went into the Cabin, and siezing on the *Master*, held his Hands, while *Mitchel* wounded him. Then they hawled him up; who perceiving their Intention to throw him overboard, beg'd, *For the Lord's Sake, don't throw me overboard; For if you do, you throw me into Hell immediately.* But *Fly* bid him say, *Lord, Have Mercy on my Soul!* And when he siezed the Mainsheets with his Hand, to prolong his Time, the merciless Monsters, with a Cooper's Broad-axe, cut off his Hand, and threw him over-board. While this was a doing, one *Samuel Cole*, presently assisted with *Mitchel* and one *Winthrop*, secured the *Mate*, whose Name was *Thomas Jenkins*, and brought him upon Deck, telling him, *that he should go after the Master.* Accordingly, having first cut him down the Shoulder with a Broad-axe, they threw him over, just before the Main Shrouds. After he was thrown over, he cried out unto the Doctor, *For the Lord's Sake, to fling him a Rope.* But *Fly* soon secured the Doctor, and put him in Irons; and confined the Gunner also and the Carpenter, who were not for their Turn.

Two Days after this, they met one of the Ships, that came out in Company with *Green*, and hailing them, ask'd, How Captain *Green* did. They answered, *Very well! At your Service!* But upon consulting, whether they had best attack that Ship, they left her, in Consideration, That they had not Hands enough to Man her. So, they bore away for *North-Carolina*; Where, off Cape *Hattaras* Bar, on June 3. there lay a Sloop at Anchor, whereof the Commander was one whose Name is *Fulker*. Some of the Sloop's Hands went aboard *Fly*, who was now become the Captain of the *Snoe*, supposing them to want a Pilot. *Fly* commanded *Fulker* aboard, and informed him, *They were Gentlemen of Fortune*, and let him know, that they must have the *Sloop*, if it sailed better than the *Snoe*. The contrary Winds rendring the *Sloop* unable to be brought off, our New Captain fell into a great Passion, and swore he would burn her, and bringing *Fulker* to the Geers, (who it seems, unadvisedly provoked them) inflicted a severe Scourging upon him. The Boats Cruc, could not bring the *Sloop* any further than the Bar, but there she bilg'd and sank; and the Pirates endeavoured then to set her on Fire, but could not make the Fire to take. *Fulker* and his Men, and his Passengers, were detained Prisoners by *Fly*; But on June 5. they sailed from thence; and on the Day following they saw a Ship commanded by one whose Name is *Gale*, bound from *Barbados* to *Virginia*. They could not come up with *Gale* till the next Morning; when they hoisted their *Black Flag*, and fired several Guns at the Ship; and there being little Wind, *Gale* struck; and *Fly* made the Men his Prisoners; but robbed the Ship only of several Sails, and some Cloaths and small Arms; and after a Captivity of

Two Days released them; at the same time giving *Fulker*, and one of his Passengers, and a Servant, and *Green's* Doctor, their Liberty. However they forceably detained one *William Atkinson*, who had been Commander of a Brigantine, but left her for a Passage home in *Fulker*, bound then for *Boston*; And who had often declared, That if the *Pirates* ever took him, he would humour them, till he could see his first Opportunity to rise upon them. They wanted him to be their *Pilot*, for the Coast of *New-England*; which they told him, he should be, or, *They would blow his Brains out.* It seems, they forgot, how bad a Coast *New-England* has been for *Pirates* to come upon! Off of *Delaware Bay*, they met a Sloop commanded by one *Harris*, bound from *New-York* to *Pensilvania*, having about Fifty Scotch-Irish Passengers aboard; which upon their hoisting of their *Black Flag* Surrendred unto them. After they had a little ransack'd the Vessel, and kept her twenty four Hours, they forced a Lusty Blade, one *James Benbrook*, from her, and so dismiss'd her. *Fly* bore away for *Martha's Vineyard*, pretending to Water there, and so away for *Guinea*; But the *Pilot* purposely miss'd the port, (whereat *Fly* was very angry,) and on June 23. bearing Eastward, they mett with a *Fishing Schooner*, on *Browns Bank*; from which upon *Fly's* hoisting his *Black Flag*, and threatning to sink her, the *Master* came aboard them, & *Fly* told him, he must have the *Schooner*, unless he could inform him, where to get a better Sailor. About Noon, they saw some other *Schooners*; and *Fly* sent that *Schooner* with seven hands after them. *Fly* (who had now entirely sold himself to the God of *Ekron*;) and Three other *Pirates*, whereof one (*Samuel Cole* aforesaid) was in Irons upon Suspicion of Mutiny, remained aboard the *Snoe*; and fifteen others that had been taken by him; namely, *Fulker's* *Mate*, a couple of his Boys, *Green's* Gunner and Carpenter, five of *Gale's* Men, *Benbrook*, Three Fishermen belonging to the *Schooner*, and our *Atkinson*. While the *Pirates* were gone upon their chase, there appeared in Sight several other *Fishing-Vessels*; and *Atkinson* by telling *Fly* what he saw, drew him forward, from his two Loaden Guns, and *Sword*, which he had with him; and while *Fly* satt on the *Windlace* with his Prospective-Glass, *Benbrook* and *Walker*, (who had been *Fulker's* *Mate*) upon the Direction from *Atkinson*, secured *Fly*, and put him in Irons; and *Atkinson* struck another of the *Pirates*; and with the Help of the Carpenter, soon confined the other Two. Thus they made themselves Masters of the *Snoe*; the rest of the Prisoners all the while standing unactive, not being made acquainted with the Design, which was now managing for their Deliverance.

On June 26. the Happy *Captors* brought in their *New Captives*; having taken them *Captives*, whose *Captives* they were. So, *The Triumphant of the wicked*, was but for a moment.

And, the *Special Court of Admiralty* which the *Act of Parliament* has

ordered for the Trial of *Pirates*, (Whereof the chief Judge, was the Honourable WILLIAM DUMMER Esqr. the Lieutenant Governour, and Commander in Chief, of the *Massachuset-Province*;) quickly tried these *Four Pirates*, and after plain and full Conviction, on July 3. pass'd the just *Sentence of Death* upon them; namely, upon *William Fly*, the upstart Captain, who was a Young man, about Seven and twenty years of old; *Henry Greenville*, a married Man about forty seven years of Age; *Samuel Cole*, about Thirty seven years of Age, having a Wife and seven Children; And, *George Condick*, a Youth of Twenty, or thereabouts.

They were now cast into a place, Where, besides the *prayers*, which abundance of Godly Christians made for them, That in *the Destruction of the Flesh* their *Spirit* might be *Saved*, great pains were taken, by the Ministers of City, to dispose them for a Return unto God.

#### THE EXECUTION.

And now, *speedily*, that is to say, On *Tuesday*, the *Sentence against the Evil Works* of these Men, must be executed. One of the Four, namely, *Condick*, was Reprieved. As for *Fly*, he had been all along, a most uncommon and amazing Instance of Impenitency and Stupidity, and what *Spectacles of Obduration* the Wicked will be, when they have by a course of Wickedness under and against Warnings, provoked the GOD of Heaven to withhold His Influences from them. The Sullen and Raging Mood, into which he fell, upon his being first *Imprison'd*, caused him to break forth into furious Execrations, and Blasphemies too hideous to be mention'd; and not eat one morsel of any thing, but subsist only upon a little Drinking, for almost all the remaining part of his Life. He declined appearing in the Public Assemblies, on the *Lords-day*, with the other Prisoners, to be under the appointed means of Grace, because, forsooth, *he would not have the Mob to gaze upon him*. He seem'd all along ambitious to have it said, *That he died a brave fellow!* He pass'd along to the place of Execution, with a *Nosegay* in his hand, and making his *Complements*, where he *thought he saw occasion*. Arriving there, he nimbly mounted the Stage, and would fain have put on a Smiling Aspect. He reproached the Hangman, for not understanding his Trade, and with his own Hands rectified matters, to render all things more Convenient and Effectual.

When he was called upon, to *Speak* what he should judge proper to be spoken on that sad occasion, at least for the Warning of Survivors, he only said, *That he would advise the Masters of Vessels to carry it well to their Men, lest they should be put upon doing as he had done.*

At the same time, he declared his obstinate Refusal, to *Forgive* the Person that had been the Instrument of bringing him to Justice. When the Necessity of that *Charity* was urgently press'd upon him; and advantage taken from a Recital of the *Lords-Prayer* used among the Devotions of the Criminals on the present Occasion, to urge it; he still persisted in his *Unrelenting Frame*; and an Expression of that Importance was in the last words, he Expired withal. But it was observed and is affirm'd, by some Spectators, that in the Midst of all his affected *Bravery*, a very sensible *Trembling* attended him; His hands and his *Knees* were plainly seen to *Tremble*.—And so we must leave him for the *Judgment to come*.

The other Two, *Cole* and *Greenville*, had much greater Signs of *Repentance* upon them. They made their *Prayers*, and seem'd continually *praying*, and much affected. They desired the Spectators to take *Warning* by them. And they mentioned Profane *Swearing* and *Cursing*, with *Drunkenness* and *Subbath-breaking*, as Crimes which were now particularly grievous to them. They also justified the *Court*, as well as acknowledged the *Justice* of the Glorious GOD, in the Punishment they were now brought unto.

A Minister present having made a Pertinent and Pathetic *Prayer*, the Officer, willing that all that was possible might be done for their good, after some time, ask'd them, whether they would have another *Prayer*. *Fly* did not accept the offer, but said, *If the other Two be Ready, I am!* However, the *other Two* desiring it, another such *prayer* was made by another Minister; and after *that*, another by a Third; with which they joined attentively. (while *Fly* look'd about him unconcerned.)

Then the Execution was finished; And *Fly's* Carcase hanged in Chains, on an Island, at the Entrance into *Boston-Harbour*.

*Cole*, being one that could use his Pen, did on the Morning before his Execution, give out a Paper, in which "he Lamented his early accustoming of himself to Profane *Swearing*; and Blasphemous *Language*; and Excessive *Drinking*, and his frequent *stealing of Liquors* from his Master, for the Satisfaction of them who hired him to do it. He added his bitter Lamentations, that when he came to *Man's Estate*, he abandoned himself to criminal Pleasures, to *Drinking*, *Dancing*, *Whoring*, and the rest. He begg'd all *Sea faring-Men* to take Warning by his Ignominious and Miserable Death; to which he was now brought, by the Enticements of the Wicked. He confess'd himself to be justly Condemned; and gave abundance of Thanks, for the Assistance of Good Ministers, and the wholesome Instructions and holy Directions they had given him, and express'd his Hope of entring into

Heaven, by the Blood of His Glorious Redeemer. And he earnestly desired, that this Paper might be published to the World.["]

The poor Man, in the Prison, had owned unto a Minister, That from the Moment of the *Murders* on Board, he never had a minutes Quiet in his Mind, but was continually Meditating how to run away from the *whole World*, and if it were possible run away from *himself*. The Apprehension of his having some Intention to knock the *Vessel* on the Head, and perhaps the *Captain*, caused them, for some Days before Mr. *Atkinson's* happy Revolution, to lay him in *Irons*, and every Day cruelly to bestow more than an Hundred Lashes upon him; whereof he continued Sore to his Death. He now saw the Glorious GOD, beginning to Execute on him *His Vengeance*, by the Hands of his *own Bloody Companions*: And he endured such *Miseries*, as made him look upon his forlorn Circumstances in the *Boston-Gaol*, as a sort of a Deliverance. It was *there* endeavoured, that this *Construction* of his *Miseries* might be set home upon him. However, it was admirable to see, how the Vengeance of GOD, sometimes makes *Accomplices* in Sin, horrible *Scourges* to one another!

It was a Saying of the *Oriental*s, *Happy is he, who corrects his Faults by the Faults of others*. And now, *Happy* would our *Sea-faring* People particularly be, if the *Crimes* and the *Ends* of some whom they have seen *Drowned in Perdition*, might effectually cause them to beware of the *Faults*, with which they may any of them charge themselves.

Upon those words used unto *Achan* just before his Execution, *The Lord shall trouble thee THIS DAY*; the Jews have a Charitable Fancy, That on THAT DAY, he saw an end of all his *Trouble*; and that in the world to come he shall have no further *Trouble*, but be found among the Penitent and the Pardoned. With the *Malefactors*, who dy Penitent and Pardoned, it will be so; But the Infallible Judgment of who are so, is what none but GOD *the Judge of all, can determine*.

*Finis.*

### Source Notes

Cotton Mather's account of William Fly and his fellow conspirators was published as the introductory section of *The Vial poured out upon the Sea* (Boston, 1726). Mather's title for his pirate account was "A Remarkable Relation Of A Cockatrice crush'd in the Egg." Since a cockatrice (also known as a basilisk) was one of the deadliest of fabulous serpents (whose merest glance could kill), Mather's title provided readers with an obvious perspective from which to read the text. Following the "Remarkable Relation," he included two long dialogues between himself and Fly. In these exchanges the minister attempted to accomplish in print what he failed to do in person. Fly was one of the most stubborn and defiant pirates ever executed in Boston, not only refusing to cooperate with the authorities but also to express any of the expected signs of penitence. Rather than have the public perceive the recalcitrant pirate as bold, Mather set out in print to render him more foolish than courageous, more damned than defiant. In the dialogues (presented as the conferences he held with the pirates in jail), the minister demonstrated Fly's depravity. Despite the imminence of his execution, the pirate refused to either confess or to forgive. When asked to confess, he responded: "I can't charge my self with Murder. I did not strike and wound the Master or Mate!" (8) When asked to forgive, he replied: "Tis a Vain Thing to dissemble. No; I can't. There are those, that I can't forgive" (19). Fly even went so far as to justify the mutiny and murders: "I shan't own myself Guilty of any Murder.—Our Captain and his Mate used us Barbarously. We poor Men can't have Justice done us. There is nothing said to our Commanders, let them ever so much abuse us, and use us like Dogs" (21). In Mather's account, then, Fly revealed himself to be blindly and stupidly wicked. In concluding his dialogue, the minister surrendered his struggle to save the pirate's soul: "We can do no more, but with Tears (which, alas, you have not for yourself!) Lament the unaccountable and unparallel'd *Obduration* that you are given up unto" (21). After his dialogues, the minister inserted his execution sermon, which appropriately took its text from Job 4: 21: "They Dy even without Wisdom." Following this sermon Mather added his execution account, thus using the beginning and the end of Fly's story as a frame narrative for his sacred lessons.

Although his career as a pirate captain lasted barely a month, Fly attracted considerable attention. In addition to the accounts included in *The Boston Newsletter* and *The Boston Gazette* (from June to July 1726), three narratives were published in Boston shortly after the executions: Mather's *Vial*, Benjamin Colman's *It is a Fearful Thing to Fall into the Hands of the Living God*, and Joseph Edwards' *The Tryals of Sixteen Persons for Piracy*. Fly even caused enough of a stir to receive his own chapter in the second volume of Daniel Defoe's *A General History of the Pyrates* (London, 1728). For more recent accounts of Fly, see Dow and Edmonds, Snow, Rankin, and Williams, "Puritans and Pirates." For the best recent discussions of piracy, see Rediker, "Under the Banner" and *Between the Devil and the Deep Blue* and Ritchie.