

The Unknown Champion

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North American

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There was that in the very air of the New World that made the Pilgrims revolt against priests and kings. The Revolution was long a-breeding before shots were fired at Lexington. Stout old Endicott, having conceived a dislike to the British flag because to his mind the cross was a relic of popery, paraded his soldiers and with his sword ripped out the offending emblem in their presence. There was a faint cry of "Treason!" but he answered, "I will avouch the deed before God and man. Beat a flourish, drummer. Shout for the ensign of New England. Pope nor tyrant hath part in it now." And a loud huzza of independence went forth.

With this sentiment confirmed among the people, it is not surprising that the judges who had condemned a papist king—Charles I.—to the block should find welcome in this land. For months at a time they lived in cellars and garrets in various parts of New England, their hiding-places kept secret from the royal sheriffs who were seeking them. For a time they had shelter in a cave in West Rock, New Haven, and once in that town they were crouching beneath the bridge that a pursuing party crossed in search of them. In Ipswich the house is pointed out where they were concealed in the cellar, and the superstitious believed that, as a penalty for their regicidal decision, they are doomed to stay there, crying vainly for deliverance.

Philip, the Narragansett chief, had declared war on the people of New England, and was waging it with a persistence and fury that spread terror through the country. It was a struggle against manifest destiny, such as must needs be repeated whenever civilization comes to dispute a place in new lands with savagery, and which has been continued, more and more feebly, to our own day. The war was bloody, and for a long time the issue

hung in the balance. At last the Indian king was driven westward. The Nipmucks joined him in the Connecticut Valley, and he laid siege to the lonely settlements of Brookfield, Northfield, Deerfield, and Springfield, killing, scalping, and burning without mercy. On the 1st of September, 1675, he attacked Hadley while its people were at church, the war-yelp interrupting a prayer of the pastor. All the men of the congregation sallied out with pikes and guns and engaged the foe, but so closely were they pressed that a retreat was called, when suddenly there appeared among them a tall man, of venerable and commanding aspect, clad in leather, and armed with sword and gun.

His hair and beard were long and white, but his eye was dark and resolute, and his voice was strong. "Why sink your hearts?" he cried. "Fear ye that God will give you up to yonder heathen dogs? Follow me, and ye shall see that this day there is a champion in Israel."

Posting half the force at his command to sustain the fight, he led the others quickly by a detour to the rear of the Indians, on whom he fell with such energy that the savages, believing themselves overtaken by reinforcements newly come, fled in confusion. When the victors returned to the village the unknown champion signed to the company to fall to their knees while he offered thanks and prayer. Then he was silent for a little, and when they looked up he was gone.

They believed him to be an angel sent for their deliverance, nor, till he had gone to his account, did they know that their captain in that crisis was Colonel William Goffe, one of the regicide judges, who, with his associate Whalley, was hiding from the vengeance of the son of the king they had rebelled against. After leaving their cave in New Haven, being in peril from beasts and human hunters, they went up the Connecticut Valley to Hadley, where the clergyman of the place, Rev. John Russell, gave them shelter for fifteen years. Few were aware of their existence, and when Goffe, pale with seclusion from the light, appeared among the people near whom he had long been living, it is no wonder that they regarded him with awe.

Whalley died in the minister's house and was buried in a crypt outside of the cellar-wall, while Goffe kept much abroad, stopping in many places and under various disguises until his death, which occurred soon after that of his associate. He was buried in New Haven.

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