

in Europe; or for the sake of the liberal ransom they hoped to gain from the friends of their captives, the Indians frequently carried away men, women, and children through the pathless forest, some hundreds of miles from their homes. Of these unfortunate people, some were killed by the stroke of the tomahawk; some were tortured in a manner too horrible to relate; and some died from starvation, cold, fatigue, and anguish of mind: whilst others, more fortunate, having been supported through their trials by a firm reliance on Providence, and an unconquerable spirit, lived to return in safety to their families, and give an account of their adventures and sufferings.

The town of Lancaster in Massachusetts, which stands upon the Nashua river, amongst the most beautiful hills and valleys, was incorporated by an act of legislature in 1653. For the first twenty-two years the inhabitants lived in peace and safety; but in 1676, Pometacom, or, as the English called him, King Philip,* engaged the Nashua Indians in his scheme of extirpating the English, and on the 10th of February of that year he marched against Lancaster with about fifteen hundred Indians of different tribes. At that time there were in the town about sixty families. The savages burnt most of the houses, and amongst them, several that were garrisoned.

One of these was the house of the Rev. Mr. Rowlandson, the minister, who was absent. Forty-two persons had sought shelter under its roof, and for two hours they defended themselves against the furious assault of the enemy; but at length the Indians succeeded in setting the house on fire; twelve of its inmates they killed, and the rest, along with some other inhabitants of the town, making in all, forty men, women, and children, they took prisoners. The men they killed, but the women and children they spared, hoping to obtain a ransom for them.

Amongst the captives were Mrs. Rowlandson, her children, and her sister, who also had her children

* Washington Irving in his "Sketch Book," gives some account of "Philip of Pokanoket."