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*Autograph Letter of COTTON MATHER, on  
WITCHCRAFT, presented to the Literary  
and Historical Society, by the Honorable  
Chief Justice SEWELL.*

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17<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>m</sup>, 1692.

S<sup>r</sup>,

You would know whether I still retain my opinion about y<sup>e</sup> horrible Witchcrafts among us, and I acknowledge that I do.

I do still Think That when there is no further Evidence against a person but only This, That a Spectre in their Shape does afflict a neighbour, that Evidence is not enough to convict y<sup>e</sup> —— of Witchcraft.

That the Divels have a natural power w<sup>ch</sup> makes them capable of exhibiting what shape they please I suppose no body doubts, and I have no absolute promise of God that they shall not exhibit *mine*.

It is the opinion generally of all protestant writers that y<sup>e</sup> Divel may thus abuse y<sup>e</sup> innocent, yea, tis y<sup>e</sup> confession of some popish ones. And o<sup>r</sup> Honorable Judges are so eminent for their Justice, Wisdom, & Goodness that whatever their own particular sense may bee, yett they will not proceed capitally against any, upon a principle contested

with great odds on y<sup>e</sup> other side in y<sup>e</sup> Learned and Godly world.

Nevertheless, a very great use is to bee made of y<sup>e</sup> spectral impressions upon y<sup>e</sup> sufferers. They Justly Introduce, and Determine, an Enquiry into y<sup>e</sup> circumstances of y<sup>e</sup> person accused; and they strengthen other presumptions.

When so much use is made of those Things, I believe y<sup>e</sup> use for w<sup>ch</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Great God intends y<sup>m</sup> is made. And accordingly you see that y<sup>e</sup> Excellent Judges have had such an Encouraging presence of God with them, as that scarce any, if at all any, have been Tried before them, against whom God has not strangely sent in other, & more Humane & most convincing Testimonies.

If any persons have been condemned, about whom any of y<sup>e</sup> Judges, are not easy in their minds, that y<sup>e</sup> Evidence against them, has been satisfactory, it would certainly bee for y<sup>e</sup> glory of the whole Transaction to give that person a Reprieve.

It would make all matters easier if at least Bail were taken for people Accused only by y<sup>e</sup> invisible tormentors of y<sup>e</sup> poor sufferers and not Blemished by any further Grounds of suspicion against them.

The odd Effects produced upon the sufferers by y<sup>e</sup> look or touch of the accused are things wherein y<sup>e</sup> Divels may as much Impose upon some Harmless people as by the Representacôn of their shapes.

My notion of these matters is this. A Suspected and unlawfull com<sup>u</sup>nion with a Familiar Spirit, is the Thing enquired after. The communion on the *Divels* part may bee proved, while, for ought I can say, The *man* may bee Innocent; the Divel may impudently Impose his com<sup>u</sup>nion upon some that care not for his company. But if the