

**THE LIFE AND CURIOUS
ADVENTURES OF PETER
WILLIAMSON, WHO WAS
CARRIED OFF FROM ABERDEEN
AND SOLD FOR A SLAVE**

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The Life and Curious Adventures of Peter Williamson, Who Was Carried off from Aberdeen
and Sold for a Slave by Peter Williamson

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THE LIFE
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CONTAINING

The History of the Author's surprising Adventures; Adventures in North America; his Captivity among the Indians, and the manner of his escape; the Customs, Dress, &c., of the Savages; Military Operations in that Quarter; a Description of the British Settlements, &c.



THE KENILWORTH LEAVING PORT.

Twentieth Edition.

ABERDEEN:
JAMES DANIEL & SON, 46 & 48 CASTLE STREET.
MDCCLXXVIII.

174

French and Indian Cruelty.

INTRODUCTION.



THE reader is not here to expect a large and useless detail of the transactions of late years, in that part of the world where ever since my infancy, it has been my misfortune to have lived. Were it in my power, indeed, to set off with pompous diction, and embellish with artificial descriptions what has so engrossed the attention of Europe, so well as the scenes of action for some years past, perhaps I might; but my poor pen being wholly unfit for such a task, and never otherwise employed than just for my own affairs and amusement, while I had the pleasure of living tranquil and undisturbed, I must beg leave to desist from such an attempt; and if such is expected from me, claim the indulgence of that pardon which is never refused to those incapacitated for performing what may be desired of them. And as a plain, impartial, and succinct narrative of my own life and various vicissitudes of fortune is all that I now shall aim at, I shall herein confine myself to plain, simple truth, and, in the dictates resulting from an honest heart, give the reader no other entertainment than what shall be matter of fact, and of such things as have actually happened to me, or come to my own knowledge in the sphere of life in which it has been my lot to be placed. Not but I hope I may be allowed, now and then, to carry on my narrative from the information I have received of such things as relate to my design, though they have not been done or transacted in my presence.

It being usual, in narratives like this to give a short account of the Author's birth, education, and juvenile exploits; the same being looked upon as necessary, or at least a satisfactory piece of information to the curious and inquisitive reader, I shall without boasting of a family I am no way entitled to, or recounting adventures in my youth to which I was entirely a stranger, in a short manner gratify such curiosity; not expecting, as I said before, to be admired for that elegance of style, and profusion of words, so universally made use of in details and histories of those adventurers who have of late years obliged the world with their anecdotes and memoirs, and which have had scarce any other existence than in the brains of a bookseller's or a printer's Gazetteer; who, from fewer incidents, and less surprising matter than will be found in this short narrative, have been and are daily enabled to spin and work out their elaborate performances to three or four volumes. That I, like them, publish this for support, is true; but, as I am too sensible, the major part of mankind will give much more to a bookseller, to be in the fashion, or satisfy their curiosity in having or reading a new puffed-up history or novel, than to a real object of distress, for an accurate and faithful account of a series of misfortunes, I have thought it more advisable to confine myself as to size and price, than by making a larger volume, miss that assistance and relief of which I at present am in so great need.

THE AUTHOR'S BIRTH, &c.

Know, therefore, that I was born in Hirlay, in the parish of Aboyne, in the county of Aberdeen, North Britain, if not of rich, yet of respectable parents, who supported me in the best manner they could, as long as

they had the happiness of having me under their protection; but fatally for me, and to their great grief, as it afterwards proved, I was sent to live with an aunt at Aberdeen; when, under the years of pupillarity, playing on the quay, with others of my companions—being of a stout robust constitution—I was taken notice of by two fellows belonging to a vessel in the harbour, employed, as the trade then was, by some of the worthy merchants in the town, in that villainous and execrable practice, called 'kidnapping,' that is stealing young children from their parents, and selling them as slaves in the plantations abroad. Being marked out by these monsters of impiety as their prey, I was cajoled on board the ship by them, where I was no sooner got, than they conducted me between the decks to some others they had kidnapped in the same manner. At that time I had no sense of the fate that was destined for me, and spent the time in childish amusements with my fellow-sufferers in the steerage, being never suffered to go upon deck whilst the vessel lay in the harbour, which was until such a time as they had got in their loading, with a complement of unhappy youths for carrying on their wicked commerce

In about a month's time the ship 'Kenilworth' set sail for America. The treatment we met with, and the trifling incidents which happened during the voyage, I hope I may be excused from relating, as not being at that time of an age sufficient to remark any thing more than what must occur to every one on such an occasion. However, I cannot forget, that when we arrived on the coast we were destined for, a hard gale of wind sprung up from the S.E., and, to the captain's great surprise (he not thinking he was near land, although having been 11 weeks on the passage), about 12 o'clock at night, the ship struck on a sand bank, off Cape May, near the Cape of Delaware, and to the great terror and affright of the ship's company, in a

short time was almost full of water. The boat was then hoisted out, into which the captain and his fellow-villains—the crew, got with some difficulty, leaving me and my deluded companions to perish, as they then naturally concluded inevitable death to be our fate. Often in my distresses and miseries since, have I wished that such had been the consequence, when in a state of innocence! But Providence thought proper to reserve me for future trials of its goodness. Thus abandoned and deserted, without the least prospect of relief, but threatened every moment with death, did these villains leave us. The cries, the shrieks, and tears of a parcel of infants, had no effect on, nor caused the least remorse in the breasts of these merciless wretches. Scarce can I say to which to give the preference, whether to such as these, who have had the opportunity of knowing the Christian religion, or to the savages hereinafter described, who profane not the Gospel, nor boast of humanity; and if they act in a more brutal and butcherly manner, yet it is to their enemies, for the sake of plunder and the rewards offered them—for their principles are alike—the love of sordid gain being both their motives. The ship being on a sand bank, which did not give way to let her deeper, we lay in the same deplorable condition until morning, when, though we saw the land of Cape May at about a mile's distance, we knew not what would be our fate.

The wind at length abated, and the captain, unwilling to lose all her cargo, about 10 o'clock, sent some of his crew in a boat to the ship's side to bring us on shore, where we lay in a sort of camp, made of the sails of the vessel and such other things as we could get. The provisions lasted us until we were taken in by a vessel bound to Philadelphia, lying on this island, as well as I can recollect, near three weeks. Very little of the cargo was saved undamaged, and the vessel was entirely lost.

When arrived and landed at Philadelphia, the capital of Pennsylvania, the captain had soon people enough who came to buy us. He making the most of his villainous loading, after his disaster, sold us at about £16 per head. What became of my unhappy companions I never knew ; but it was my lot to be sold to one of my countrymen, whose name was Hugh Wilson, a North Briton, for the term of seven years, who had in his youth undergone the same fate as myself—having been kidnapped from St. Johnstown in Scotland. As I shall often have occasion to mention Philadelphia during the course of my adventures, I shall in this place, give a short and concise description of the finest city of America, and one of the best laid out in the world.

DESCRIPTION OF PHILADELPHIA.

THIS city would have been a capital fit for an empire had it been built and inhabited according to the proprietor's plan. Considering its late foundation, it is a large city, and most commodiously situated between Delaware and Schuylkill, two navigable rivers, the former being 2 miles broad, and navigable 300 miles for small vessels. It extends in length 2 miles from the one river to the other. There are 8 long streets, 2 miles in length, all straight and spacious. The houses are stately, very numerous (being near 3000), and still increasing, and all carried on regularly, according to the first plan. It has two fronts to the water, one on the east side facing the Schuylkill, and that on the west facing the Delaware. The Schuylkill being navigable 800 miles above the falls, the eastern part is most populous, where the warehouses (some three stories high, and wharfs are numerous and convenient. All

the houses have large orchards and gardens belonging to them. The merchants that reside here are numerous and wealthy, many of them keeping their coaches, &c. In the centre of the city there is a space of ten acres, whereon are built the state house, market house, and school house. The former is built of brick, and has a prison under it. The streets have their names from the several sorts of timber common in Pennsylvania: as Mulberry Street, Sassafras Street, Chestnut Street, Beech Street, and Cedar Street. The oldest church is Christ Church, and has a numerous congregation; but the major part of the inhabitants being at first Quakers, still continue so, who have several meeting houses, and may not improperly be called the church, as by law established, being the originals. The quay is beautiful, and 200 feet square, to which a ship may lay her broadside. Near the town, and on the spot which separates it from the Schuylkill, where that river falls into the Delaware, is found black earth of a great depth, and covered with vegetation; and which, it is evident, has been recently left by the water. It has all the character of land perfectly new, and as yet scarcely raised from the bed of the river. This land is used for meadows, and is in great estimation. It is acknowledged, however, to be extremely unhealthy. Between that and Wilmington the quality of the stone is quartzose; ocher is also to be found in an imperfect state. As the advantages this city may boast of has rendered it one of the best trading towns out of the British empire; so in all probability it will increase in commerce and riches if not prevented by party faction and religious feuds, which of late years have made it suffer considerably. The assemblies and courts of judicature are held here, as in all capitals. The French have no city like it in all America.