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The Maypole of Merrymount



A Young Reader's Story of Early America

by

Jack Dempsey and --- You?

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THANKS! Dr. Jack Dempsey

The Maypole of Merrymount: A Young Reader’s Story of Early America.

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CONTACT:

Dr. Jack Dempsey

001 781 438 3042 jpd37@hotmail.com

Based on

New English Canaan (Amsterdam 1637) by Thomas Morton (1576?-1647?),
and on his biography, *Thomas Morton: The Life & Renaissance of an Early American Poet*,
by Jack Dempsey (2000: Digital Scanning Inc., Scituate MA)

Recommended for Readers age 10 and beyond

About Thomas Morton & Merrymount

This is the true story of Thomas Morton - a good-humored adventurer at the start of Colonial America who wrote extraordinary, hopeful things about it. Born to the wild outdoors of England's West Country in the days of Shakespeare and Queen Elizabeth I, Thomas was "landsman" for a small group of traders and planters on Massachusetts Bay in 1624. In three years, with Native American connections, they built a small successful plantation, Merrymount. Together in Spring 1627 they and "all comers" celebrated with old English festival "Revels" around a Maypole (near today's Wollaston Beach in Quincy, Mass.). Their manifesto in verse and song became America's first English poetry, and the Maypole acquired a new name, the Liberty Pole.

Merrymount was impossible without Native Americans - Massachusetts, Wampanoags and others, "Peoples of the Dawn" who have lived there 13,000 years. Thomas observed and admired the comfortable lives of their families, sustained by farming, hunting, fishing and trade. Some spoke English too: they had trade with Europeans for 100 years before "The Pilgrims" of 1620's Plimoth Plantation.

"Mine Host" Thomas Morton was a "rascal" who loved learning, from nature and other people as well as books. Both adventurous and patient, Thomas kept his good humor when discouraged, and made contributions to America as a place of "respect" and toleration. When he could no longer do that, he wrote *New English Canaan*: to help

others understand Native peoples, to show America's great beauty, and to encourage people to build new places like Merrymount. This is what he wrote about the land his Plimoth Pilgrim neighbors called "a hideous and desolate wilderness":

The more I looked, the more I liked it. And, when I had more seriously considered of the beauty of the place, with all her fair endowments, I did not think that in all the known world it could be paralleled. For so many goodly groves of trees, delicate fair large plains, sweet crystal fountains that twined in fine meanders through the fields, making so sweet a murmuring noise as would even lull your senses with delight asleep; so pleasantly did they glide upon the pebble-stones, jetting most jocundly where they did meet....Contained within the volume of this land, birds in abundance, fish in multitudes; and discovered besides, millions of turtledoves upon the green boughs, which sat pecking at the full, ripe, pleasant grapes that were supported by the lusty trees, whose fruitful loads did cause their arms to bend. Where here and there dispersed you might see lilies, and of the Daphnean tree; which made this land to me seem Paradise. For in mine eye, 'twas Nature's Masterpiece, her chiefest magazine of all, where lived her store. If this land be not rich, then is the whole world poor.

Parents and teachers need fresh facts about positive examples. May Merrymount's success inspire new Revels, with dances, songs, performances, poetry and music for "all comers" in your new world.

Enjoy!

The Maypole of Merrymount

He should know how to write out discourse of his Art in true terms, without affectation or rudeness. He should have sweetness of speech, to persuade....He should have strength of arguments, to defend and maintain his profession against envy or slander. He should have knowledge in the Sun, Moon, and Stars....

He would not be unskillful in Music, that whenever either Melancholy, heaviness of thought, or the perturbations of his own fancy stirreth up sadness in him, he may remove the same....He must be full of love, both to his pleasure and to his neighbor....

Then he must be liberal, and not working only for his own belly, as if it could never be satisfied. He must with much cheerfulness bestow the fruits of his skill amongst his honest neighbors, who being partners of his gain, will doubly renown his triumph...

Gervase Markham, *The Pleasure of Princes, or,
Good Men's Recreations*, 1613

“I say, fellows, watch out! Something is hiding in those bushes!”

“Don’t be foolish. Let’s investigate,” says Thomas to his band of friends.

These are boys of Devonshire, the wild West Country of old England. The name Devon means “People of the Land,” and Devon folk love the outdoors most of all. After school, Thomas leads his friends to explore a new path home over the handsome rolling fields. All around them are green forests, and little farming towns along the rivers under wide-open, bright blue sky. When the wind is quiet, you can hear the Atlantic Ocean’s waves not far away. And these boys go running together after Thomas as fast as their favorite smart dogs, as fast as falcons that sail in high circles over the land.

Look! It’s a lonesome old stone, half-green in the weeds. In fact, these boys know many places with peculiar stones in the hills around their towns. Even a castle or two.

“Why, these are Latin words scratched in,” Thomas says. “Well, fellows? We all do our homework in Latin, the speech of the old Romans and the scholars’ books. What about this word? *I - M - P - E - R - A - T - O - R*?” Thomas spells it out for them.

“Obviously,” says Nigel, ever with a sniff, “Roman soldiers were here – for the *Emperor* of Rome. What, a thousand years ago? I prefer our proper English.”

“But imagine,” Thomas grins to his friends. “What if you were a Roman boy in this strange English place, so far from home? How would you make it a good place to live? You’d have to learn from the older people living here already. My word, Nigel – so many different times and peoples gave us our ‘proper English’!”

“Come on, then!” “Still got daylight for fishing!” his friends say all together.

But Thomas lingers longer there. Old things give him new ideas all the time...

ILLUSTRATION 1: Thomas Morton a “middle gentry” boy of English Renaissance times, with friends and their dogs along a country path: all carry books or a fishing pole in a scene that includes the text’s visual details. Thomas is kneeling/pointing at an old Roman milestone’s word “IMPERATOR” (Emperor), while “Nigel” replies to him and the other boys look eager to be moving on.

In the rolling fields of Thomas' Devonshire, people grow corn and barley for their food. They fish along the sea and hunt big red deer. Year-round, there is plenty of work to do, much to learn – skills for a person to *rise* to, as people say to Thomas.

Thomas is lucky. He goes to school, and reads to the family by their warm winter fires. But just as much, give Thomas the great outdoors! His mother and father teach him every animal and plant, so he can fish, hunt, and find his way. How he loves wild hawks and falcons! He goes to grand outdoor feasts, too, while people “rove” about the land. Devon families visit and make each other at home: they call it “hospitality.”

The more Thomas learns, the more he feels strong and sure he can take care of himself. His father and uncles say, someday Thomas will “rise” to his turn to serve their country, and their queen, great Elizabeth the First. That, they say, means adventure.

Every May, Devon's people turn out to welcome Spring's fine weather with a holiday called a Revels. They want to say Thank You to the world turning warm and green again. They take a grand noisy walk together hand in hand around their fields, share games in the countryside, and then dance around a Maypole eighty feet high, in their craziest costumes. *Unite, and Unite – Now let us unite!* they sing. Thomas jumps into the shows and feasts too. Devon's sailors tell tall tales, and people trade where the Maypole stands at the center of the Revels, in the market towns.

What Thomas likes about May is that everybody has a place in the work and in the fun. Sometimes people do have an argument. But they can work it out, because they remember each other's good hospitality, and they need each other's help to get the work done, living in Devon. In fact, just as often in May there, young men and women meet each other because of the Maypole Revels, and decide to get married someday...

ILLUSTRATION 2: With the Atlantic and ships in the background, and a small English port-town's buildings and quays in the mid-background, we see this town's village green spreading outward toward the foreground of semi-wooded green countryside and corn fields – and in the center of this whole scene we focus on the village green, centered on a very tall Maypole crowned with buck's horns and flying colored streamers, many of which are held by dancers around it including Thomas (now about 15), with his mother and father clapping as they watch. To one side, a May Queen and (green) John Barleycorn sit enthroned country-style: green "sitting bowers" and a crowd including drum/fiddle/pipe-players curve around the Maypole scene (people in Upper, Middle and Lower class English Renaissance dress), many of the dancers in bright cloth-strips (1 or 2 in animal costumes), with bells on their legs, flowers in their hair and holding green boughs high. Sheep, cows, and horses and stores of grain might be visible with traders. One trader has a hooded falcon or hawk on his arm (the hunting gentry).

When Thomas Morton turns fifteen, his parents say, "It is time to become a gentleman. We sent you to school. But Thomas, you must make your way in life."

Where? In London, the capital of England! But how? Thomas can hardly imagine how, the first time he sees the place. So many houses and great buildings, so many people and their trades so close together inside London's walls, around the Queen. Thomas has to learn again to find his way, through tangled city streets.

From his mother and father, from books and hunting, Thomas knows how to be patient. And, in the city, it helps young men from Devon to live together, at a kind of hotel-and-school called Clifford's Inn. Ah, hospitality! Here, with many great Inns or houses, Queen Elizabeth and the royal court help young men to rise to their talents.

Thomas decides to study England's laws. He has to find tiny libraries crammed with huge books, and the law courts are crowded every day, with men saying things that shape the world. There is Latin, French and German to know. Thomas and his fellows learn from the Masters, who care for them – and, they Moot. A Moot is a careful talk about a problem in the law. Judges decide which students speak the best – even though it's just talk, or "Moot!" Thomas needs his homework, and his wits. But he likes to see the law bring out the truth, however ticklish that can be.

As in Devon, hard work and better play. The London students invite Thomas into a whole week of shows for Queen Elizabeth herself. England's great poet William Shakespeare is just getting started at his writing there, like Thomas at the law.

They dream up ridiculous poems, shows and dances. The Queen is amused. She loves their parades all through London in her honor. Thomas even sees a play with a Maypole in it, about a faraway country where Englishmen have odd adventures...

ILLUSTRATION 3: The horizon is the urban skyline of Elizabethan London. At right, an official building of Renaissance times represents one of the Inns of Court: a blue banner/escutcheon reading "Clifford's Inn" in gold above the door. The doors and big windows are thrown open so we can see walls and tables inside covered with big law books and parchments: a study-hall with living rooms upstairs. The greater scene from left across the middle this page features a courtyard amidst other buildings, and there Queen Elizabeth I presides and is clapping, seated among a few elite courtiers as a modest student "play" goes on before her at center. In the play, two "Cavalier" style gentlemen are beholding the wild dance of three feathered Native American-looking "fantastic theatre figures" as they circle around a modest Maypole – with only a pair of buck's horns at the top and without its colored streamers. Thomas Morton, now a long-haired and strong-looking teenager in a dark "Sunday best" kind of suit, looks on happily between two brighter-dressed but smaller Inns of Court fellow students, laughing with an arm over each one's shoulders. A white-wigged pair of stern English judges also look on, perhaps "askance" at the two fancy fops at Morton's sides.

As Thomas becomes a man, his work – as an *attorney* - helps people to work out their differences with the help of courts and laws. In London, King James I becomes England's next ruler. He wants men with many skills to make England great in the world. But Thomas misses his good country pastimes, after years of London study. So, he goes fishing, hunting, and "roving" on the land all he can, with new city friends, and on his visits home to Devon. Smart "puppy-dogs" are always at his side.

Thomas' mother and father love to see him riding his horse to work in the law courts of many small towns. He is a rugged gentleman who likes clever jokes, using his mind, and working carefully. And, Thomas is proud to work with the law. In England, laws can tell even Kings what they can or cannot do. But in Devon, there is not enough land in the Morton family for Thomas to make his own home with them. "So! When, Traveling Thomas, will you find a good wife?" the Devon people tease him.

"On the same day that good luck finds me a home," he always answers.

Luck is not far off, in this time of "old ideas made new." When Thomas turns 45, he gets work for a powerful man, Sir Ferdinando Gorges. Ferdinando sees that Thomas is a steady man to count upon and trust. Ferdinando invites Thomas to his country house, a mansion where King James' Councilors for New England meet.

They show Thomas huge old maps, and tiny new books about "Indians," the Native Americans. "Mr. Morton," Ferdinando smiles, "how would you like to put your skills to work for England - in the *New* England?"

Thomas' heart jumps up. Can America, so far from home, become the home he is looking for? "Go see the ship loading up now, in the harbor," Ferdinando says. "Ask for the ship called *Unity*, Thomas. I daresay that's a name with luck."

ILLUSTRATION 4: The great meeting-table of The Council for New England in the “study, library, map room” (with tall windows in the background) in the Devonshire country home of Sir Ferdinando Gorges. With a line of the sea just over the green wooded hills’ horizon, we see Morton standing at the table with hands spread over a map that shows the familiar Cape Cod outline. He is now a rugged gentleman of 45, clean-shaven with long Cavalier-style hair and the middle-class suit of a horseback-attorney. Across from Morton sits Gorges declaring the “Good Luck!” in his speech (gray-bearded, in a much-superior governor’s mantle/necklace and fur hat); and, around the table in animated talk are 5-6 older bearded English noblemen, also in furs and superior class of dress. Signs, tools and instruments of exploration and Morton’s voyage are at hand – a model ship on the table or mantel, layers of parchments and maps and books including *John Smith’s Adventures in Virginia*, a tall spyglass, a couple of Native New England stone tobacco-pipes and a small open chest of glass beads, mirrors, iron hatchets and other “trade truck.” An open crate or row of standing matchlock-guns is also visible.

June 1624: How can it be so beautiful? Thomas jots this into his Day Book.

Well, *Unity* did spring a leak on her two-month sail across the vast Atlantic Ocean. Thomas feared for his life, like the handful of lads coming to work with him. The sailors laughed! Then, Thomas had to out-smart the captain. For money, Captain Wollaston planned to ship these lads to a much harder life, in the southern Virginia Colony. But Thomas remembered how the Masters at Clifford's Inn took care of him, in London. He wrote to Ferdinando – and the lads became his partners in the adventure. Together they got to work in every way. Now, where to live?

The wide blue bay of the Massachusetts Indians is full of islands green with trees along white-sandy beaches. Never before has Thomas the hunter seen so many birds, ducks and geese and hawks along the shore, red cardinals and hummingbirds in the forests. Never so many deer and turkeys, bears and beaver dams, and trees hanging down with wild grapes. Everywhere flowers, the fresh streams sweet, and full of bass to catch for supper. Stony brooks fill the land and summer air with soothing sounds.

Waterfalls in the dainty hills. Blue herons dance in the marshes. Thomas walks a “dry-foot” mile of beach on the backs of fat oysters. This is country wide-awake alive, and filled with a great silence. Thomas - the man of the great outdoors - breathes in the forests and meadowlands all around, and wonders if he ever saw Nature before.

He waits to meet American people, too. Thomas wants to be patient. Who can teach him more of how to be at home and live well here? Thomas sees gardens for corn, beans and squash, big and clever. By the sea, he finds huge heaps of oyster-shells, from years of Indian feasting. And sometimes at night, as Thomas and the lads camp out eating duck and lobster, they hear music. A singing like they've never heard before.

ILLUSTRATION 5: At the “Squa Rock” location of this scene, which simply shows Thomas Morton (and some of his indentured-servant boys) “beholding” the American continent in as much as possible of its described living detail. Their small boat or shallop is drawn up on a white-sandy beach on Massachusetts Bay (with an isle or two in background). As most of the second-hand-dressed young men look around in shared wonder, Thomas (in hunter’s/outdoorsman’s equipage and broad hat, with his “Day Book” under one arm – and, dogs at his sides) is pointing out to remark the tall rock-formation called Squa Rock, which looks like a handsome woman’s profile.

Meanwhile, Neponset Massachusett braves are watching from their hidden vantage-point. One brave (wearing trade-silver) stands with folded arms while another wags a warning finger at him - different points of view about these latest “visitors.”

Thomas and the lads choose a little hill that looks out onto Massachusetts Bay. They work a year to build little cabins on it. They see only Indian footprints in the snow. That next Spring, a Native New England woman does the trick. She lets Thomas Morton find *her*, by sitting and crying out loud on the beach at the place called Squa Rock. When Thomas tries to understand, she guides him and two of the lads (Walter and Edward) to a great village along the Neponset River. This is the home of Chikatawbak, "House Afire," Sachem and speaker for the Neponset Massachusetts.

First thing – Hospitality! "There is meat for you, and a place to rest," say House Afire and the families around him. House Afire speaks English, to help him serve his people in these years of strangers coming to America. Here, a leader is first a listener. From these strong Massachusetts women and men, House Afire knows what the families need and want, like Thomas with his lads.

"You can live on that hill, if you have respect," says House Afire. "Catch our beaver for their furs, to make English hats. But, when you trade," adds House Afire, "you trade here, Thomas. You also trade guns. And, special tools to fix them."

"Guns!" "Tools!" cry Walter and Edward, in fear and sudden hopelessness.

"Because," House Afire explains, "so many of our families die of English sickness. We have good cousins here, Abenakis, Narragansetts. But sometimes they steal our corn or make trouble. Thomas, in a real fight, guns are slow, and good for little but their thunder. But thunder itself has power - to help us keep our rights!"

So that is Thomas' choice, and the lads' besides. They can trust and work with House Afire and the Massachusetts to make themselves good new lives. Or they can fail, and go back to England, where they started with less hope.

ILLUSTRATION 6: Background & Contexts: a Native New England village of the 17th century, “open” rather than walled with a palisade, with family-members at chores near their small round homes of bent poles and sheets of bark, in clusters along the Neponset River. Canoes, green corn and gardens clear to see. The focus is in front of the greatest lodge, where Massachusetts men, women and children watch Sachem House Afire (the eldest man, in a red English trade-coat with all his other regalia), and a proud-looking woman in a turkey-feather mantle, confronting Thomas Morton (whose dress now looks more “frontier.”)

At issue at center between him and the Native people are: a big chest of “trade truck” and hand-tools such as seen at Ferdinando Gorges’ house, a big pile of beaver and other fine animal pelts – and, the pair of matchlock rifles that Walter and Edward (both dressed in more seasoned ways) are “handing over” with one hand while covering their eyes/looking away (expecting disaster) with the other.

Thomas needs all his wits now – all his confidence, and his learning! For Walter, Edward and the lads worry much about trading guns. They worry also that King James has made a “Proclamation” against a trade like that with Native Americans.

“Then be proud of England, where a King’s word is not a law,” Thomas answers. “Boys, Ferdinando and the King’s own Council send us the guns, to bring us trade!”

That year, Thomas and Sachem House Afire begin to visit often. The lads and the Massachusetts families learn each other’s words and ways of life. They borrow what they like from each other, share what works best, and otherwise do as they please. They hunt together, feast, tell stories, and play wild games along the beaches. And, Thomas is horrified when House Afire shows him some villages with no people anymore – only their bones. Many indeed died of a sickness from some of the English.

Thomas keeps making notes in his Day Book, about Native peoples, America’s plants and animals, and more. One day, a show-off sort of Englishman comes to ask Thomas’ help. He wants Native friends to make him a big important fur-trader right away. “If you insist,” Thomas says. “But I advise you to get to know the Massachusetts slowly. First, learn their words, and how they think. Otherwise---”

But this Englishman doesn’t listen. Two Native men agree to take him into the forests on a hunting-trip. Suddenly, in their camp at night, this fellow jumps up and runs away, screaming! “What is wrong with *him*?” one Massachusetts man asks his cousin. “Look!” the other says. “He’s got his pants on over his head!”

“He thinks we’re shooting arrows at him!” “Come back!” they laugh and laugh. Thomas laughs too as he writes the story of the fool he calls “Master Bubble.”

If you come to America, Thomas scribbles, bring a good supply of brains!

ILLUSTRATION 7: A full yellow moon hangs big in the night sky above a clearing and temporary camp in the New England forest. At left, standing over their packs and sleeping-mats by the fire, two Massachusetts men are scratching their heads and/or slapping a knee in astonished laughter – as, at right, “Master Bubble” (a young, buck-toothed and wild-eyed Englishman) is running away from them into the brush and thorn-bushes, screaming aloud in needless terror, his bare legs “pitifully scratched” because he is starting to pull his trousers down over his head, to protect himself from arrows that aren’t there.

Unite, and unite! Now, let us unite! For Summer is a-comin' today!

And where we all are going, we all will unite! In the merry morning of May...

Drums beat! Voices shout and sing, *Winter, Go!* People clap, stamp feet, leap, whirl, and dance, two-by-two with greens and flowers in their hair. Some fire guns into the air – all to celebrate a fresh bright Spring by the Massachusetts shore. Thomas finds new uses for more old ideas and customs in this wholly new place.

Why not? Three years' work have brought good trade, from Thomas' hilltop to Maine and Connecticut. House Afire was right. Guns do not matter much, except to scare people who might steal from Massachusetts families. For days, fishermen and sailors keep arriving in boats for the party, and Native cousins in big dugout canoes. Even enemies seem to share good spirits for awhile. Thomas invites "all comers"!

Native families always held Spring gatherings for work, feasts and fun. Old fishermen and "fish-wives" know this is not the first Revels in America. Indeed, some of the children about look like Native people – with English blond hair! This year of 1627, Walter and some lads want to start new families. But they won't go "home" to find English wives. *This* has become their home. They name it *Merrymount*.

Thomas writes a May Day Poem. Each year, it says, this will be "holiday" to keep friendships strong, and to work out people's problems together, as a family does. At high noon, everybody dances in a huge Unity Circle, while Thomas sings his Song (page 36) to spread good feeling. People give speeches, race and wrestle, play games, trade and dine, with toasts of "Nectar" - which is "Friendship," even if it's water!

"Home!" Thomas cries. He does not see who else comes in secret to the feast.

ILLUSTRATION 8: This May Day 1627 spectacle on the little hilltop at Merrymount should include “frontier versions” of all the Revels and Maypole elements in earlier illustrations – centered on the Maypole and the Unity Circle dance of “all comers,” with Morton in full dress and a red sash egging on the crowd, singing at the top of his lungs beside the Maypole (Poem/Song nailed up). Besides Walter, Edward and English lads paired with Native women, the Circle includes old, adult and young generations of European and Indian families holding hands in well-mixed order. Sachem House Afire in his red coat and his woman-partner in turkey-feather mantle share the day. (Earlier Native figures can/should be repeated here.) Fishermen and “fish-wives” with flutes, a fiddle, drums, French “hand-organ” etc. play music beside a Native song-group, and camp dogs howl: a big liquor cask is set up, a trench is dug for baking fish and clams, and trade-goods lie in heaps from furs to baskets, pottery and tools.

Hidden “to one side” (however the artist wishes placement), Captain Myles Standish of Plimoth Plantation keeps his helmeted head down, and holds his matchlock-rifle at the ready as he scowls and watches.

And then it's back to everybody's ways of life and work. Thomas sends reports and many furs to Ferdinando's Council. On foot, by boat, he travels far. He fills his Day Book with notes on every kind of tree and creature he observes – people, too.

It only takes a summer day or so to sail to the other two English places close by, where families work to make homes like his own. Thomas visits them. They all serve England and its new king Charles, do they not? But one summer day in the good year after the Revels, Thomas is visiting with Englishmen camped at Weymouth. And there, out springs a short fierce soldier - Captain Myles Standish - to capture him! Why?

Thomas thinks him comical, and plays along. Then, in the night, Thomas easily sneaks away, back to Merrymount. Now it will be hard to capture him, in his cabin with Walter and a duck-hunting gun. "What is this all about?" asks Walter, nervously.

"Ask Captain Shrimp, or his fellows at Plimoth!" says Thomas. "We met their head-man, William Bradford. I believe what he said. Their families came here through every hardship just to live their ways in freedom. Think of the strong homes and the church they have built. Well, Walter, did we invite them to good Revels, or not?"

"Plimothers! Those are serious, brave people," Walter says. "But they don't much like this wild country, nor our ways, nor Indians'. That big wall around Plimoth, built by the Captain – That won't help them to fix bad business, or get new trade. Visits, gifts, and real respect work here. Oh, no! There's the Captain, and eight angry men!"

"Stop!" Thomas shouts, as Myles Standish lines up his soldiers' guns. "Captain, I will come out before real trouble. To talk, and to hear what might be wrong. Was somebody hurt? What laws were broken? Are you King Charles' police?"

"The way you live hurts our entire country!" comes the preposterous reply.

ILLUSTRATION 9: A Summer day of 1628 at Merrymount. At center stands the Maypole and the rest of the open hilltop camp including perhaps 2-3 large wooden “picnic tables” with seats, bottles/cups, odd rocks, tools, and books on it; drinking-casks full and empty lie about, animal skins nailed up to dry .

At right, Morton’s larger thatch-roof cabin (a smaller cabin or two of the lads’ might be visible). The lad Walter, poking a small fowling-piece out one of the windows, looks quite worried. Thomas Morton stands in his open doorway with a matchlock gun in one hand and the other raised to say “Stop!” as he speaks: he wears a Native-style deerskin “blouse” and a wampum necklace, English trousers/boots and hat, has his sword-buckler on. If possible, via the open door or window, we can see part of his blue and gold “Clifford’s Inn” banner hung inside (from Illustration 3, page 16).

At left “below,” where Merrymount’s hill slopes upward ahead of him, Captain Myles Standish lifts his sword to shout “Present!” to his ready rank of eight Plimoth planters with matchlock guns. Standish “the little chimney” is shortest of his group, with cropped red hair and beard, helmet, in an overcoat stagey with martial embroidery, two pistols and a dagger in his belt and a rattling load of cartridge-bandoliers. The planters with him, much younger “civilian” yeomen in shirts/suspenders, lack other weapons but wear different “pick me up” kinds of metal helmets, a single metal guard on one shin or shoulder.

Outside, there is no talk. Captain Standish's men take Thomas "hard by," off to Plimoth. They keep him in their wooden fort, with its heavy cannons, on the top floor of their church. Soon, using a boat, the English of Plimoth leave Thomas on a tiny rocky island far out in the ocean, with no way to help himself. "So to your Indian friends with guns, and so to your Revels!" Captain Standish growls. Will Thomas die there?

He squeezes drops of fresh water from cracked shellfish. Soon, Mr. Bradford and Plimoth remember Thomas' powerful Council friends. So, they have a fishing boat stop by, at least to ship Thomas out of America. The Merrymount lads can only worry what comes next. Standish and Bradford hope Thomas is in big trouble back in England.

Next Spring, first ship – It's Thomas! He is over 50 now, strong, free, and homesick for Merrymount. The Plimoths are shocked. Their frustrated leaders and traders do not like his success, not at all. "You again! *What* are you doing here?"

"Cheerio!" Thomas answers with a wave. But at Merrymount, Thomas finds that a Captain named Endecott - from another new town, Salem - has chopped the Maypole down! "Well," Thomas tells the lads, women and family at his table. "Let us stay together yet. Oh, Captain 'Littleworth' will see what time can turn around!"

By the fall of that year's deep snows, and the merry days of old English Christmas, Thomas again fills his home and his Day Book with friends.

But soon, the best times at Merrymount are over. Next June, in 1630, tall ships appear close by up the Massachusetts shore. Hundreds more "Separated" English people and families are coming, to build "a city on a hill," called Boston. Thomas tries a visit. He offers to hunt deer and turkeys to feed these hungry, sea-sick, but hopeful planters. Instead, the end of Merrymount will be the first order of their business.

ILLUSTRATION 10: We are inside the high wooden palisade-wall of Plimoth Plantation (only a strip of blue sky and green tops of trees appear above its sharpened posts) – watching Thomas Morton walk back out into nature through the half-opened main gate (a full-dress soldier at its chains/crossbar). Morton looks in his prime with a fresh green suit of clothes and well-equipped pack: he is half-turning back to wave his “Cheerio!”

Receiving his blithe farewell are the scowling Captain Standish and two other Plimoth leaders: William Bradford in middle-class suit, grave and stern with one fist on hip, his Bible in other hand (gray streaks, but clearly younger than Morton); and perhaps Edward Winslow, a tall gaunt man of 40s with short hair but a neat “van dyke” – who is sneering at Morton even as his two hands try to comfort Bradford. They are not telling Morton to go: they can’t stop him. Nothing in the scene suggests active trade.

The documented fact – seen and recorded by an outside third-party visitor to Plimoth at this time – is that a Native American head is rotting on a pike (London-style) atop the wooden church/fort building. With it on a pole flies a “piece of linen” that was dipped in their blood (1623). If this Illustration’s intended sense of “release from confinement” allows for it, these details should be included. See Dempsey ed., *Good News From New England and Other Writings on the Killings at Weymouth Colony* (2001: ix).

It is seldom wise to “sorely mistreat” a skillful attorney of the law.

What do you do when Boston’s leaders arrest you for no crime, and hoist you out of America without a trial under the laws? What do you do when they burn down your home, in front of your hard-working lads and Massachusetts friends?

“Stop!” says Sachem House Afire. “Winter is near! People need warm houses!”

But the new men of Boston won’t listen. That is how much they want to get rid of people like Thomas and homes like his. Into the fire go Thomas’ Day Book writings. The lad Edward is scared. He joins up with Boston. Before long, he is a Captain when Boston makes a foolish war out of troubles with Pequot Indians. Walter and other lads depart. “Different ways” they liked, and so they go, to make new lives and families.

Thomas, back in England, tells Ferdinando and the Council what happened. Those men know the new King, Charles I. Charles gave the people of Boston permission to live in America. So, Thomas is there in the court-room when the King and Council discuss what Boston did - to Thomas and to other “old English” men like him.

The High Judges take years to decide these matters. Waiting, Thomas grows homesick for his friends. Was it a dream, all they built together? Thomas visits good Devon places. And there stands the old Roman stone, in weeds. That whole world, mighty Rome, is gone, into yesterday! Is that the fate of Merrymount too?

Thomas’ heart is homesick and afraid. But it tells him, *If you can’t always win, you can speak your share of the truth.* So, Thomas waits – and writes. At first, with fiery anger. Yet, the more he writes – how to understand Native peoples, how rich and beautiful America is, then his poems and favorite stories – Thomas’ weary heart begins to glow again. And that becomes the spirit of his Merrymount book, *New English Canaan.*

ILLUSTRATION 11: A three-panel scene. In the Center Panel is Morton the attorney with wry determination on his face (and long but graying hair), seated at a writing table he's covered with "New Canaan" pages (Roman numerals I, II and III atop 3 piles?). His barrister's white "periwig" sits on a law-book to one side, a cup and bottle, candle, odd rocks, a feather. And, he is intensely "remembering" scenes in the other two Panels:

Left Panel: The side of an ice-caked sailing ship, where Thomas Morton is being hoisted aboard in a cow's harness, shaking his fist in rage at a laughing crowd of Boston Puritans. A pair of old leaders in beaver hats and medallions (John Winthrop and vice-governor Edward Dudley) look on with stern satisfaction.

Right Panel: Also Midwinter, Merrymount in flames, the Maypole in sawn-up pieces (its crown of horns fallen): watching in protest are Sachem House Afire (older in red coat) and Native woman in turkey-feather mantle; Walter and a lad or two, Native wives, toddlers take comfort close together. An "English regular" officer shouts orders with sword high. One soldier axes a drinking-cask and another rips big pages out of Morton's Day Book.

Sure enough, after 13 years, the High Judges declare it - Thomas shall have his home in America again! They declare that the "Separated" Englishmen of Boston take the King's permission too far, with their own rules and laws and punishments.

But, all this time, Thomas sees his country grow divided. Like many people, Thomas in his way "stands" for "old England." For the King and the English church. But just as many people want to "separate," to make new churches and laws like the Englishmen of Plimoth and Boston. Old Thomas sees both sides make ready to draw their guns and swords. A terrible civil war is coming. And the King will fall.

So it is that no one can make the High Judges' words come true. Thomas - now 70 years old, still strong - decides to go home. Where his heart is.

In America, life is hard for the Massachusetts. Thomas sees his own part in that. He meets mixed groups of people trying to live without Boston rules. But Merrymount soon belongs to a family named Adams. Thomas hunts ducks to feed himself, and bumps into cranky old Captain Shrimp! Where, now, can Thomas live out his days?

Bad news. Boston has read Thomas' book! Soldiers quickly hunt him down and lock him up, in chains. Nobody ever says or shows why. On comes the Massachusetts winter of 1645. The jail has a wide-open window. Thomas grows ill. With people afraid to help, he manages to write to ask for justice. What, "a poor worm," has he done?

Come Spring, Boston makes Thomas leave Massachusetts forever. When he bumps into a last old friend of Merrymount, "Good green land by the sea, in Maine," he says. And there, among new planters and old Native families, Thomas finds the ways of home alive. "I remember a good song for a Maypole dance," he smiles.

Thanks to Thomas Morton, so do we.

ILLUSTRATION 12: A seaside fishing village on the coast of Maine (a sign says “Welcome to Agamenticus, York”), 1645-47. There’s a little “town green” with Native Abenaki wigwam dwellings visible at its far forest edge, and at center a good-sized Maypole with moose antlers at the top.

Thomas Morton, in old age gray and bent but dignified with his walking-stick and green suit, sits happy on a beach-boulder watching just a few Native and European children at play, imitating dances and songs of May Revels.

‘THE SONG’ from the May Day Revels at Merrymount, 1627

CHORUS: *Drink and be merry, merry, merry boys,
Let all your delights be in marrying's joys:
Yo! to unions, now the day is come:
About the merry Maypole take a room...*

Make green garlands, bring bottles out
And fill sweet Nectar freely about:
Uncover your head, and fear no harm,
For here's good medicine to keep it warm.

So drink and be merry, merry, merry boys...

Nectar is a thing assigned
By the Deity's own mind
To cure the heart oppressed with grief
And of good medicines is the chief.

So drink and be merry, merry, merry boys...

Give to the melancholy man
A cup or two of it now and then:
This Nectar will soon revive his blood
And make him be of a merrier mood.

To drink and be merry, merry, merry boys...

Give to the ladies free from scorn
No Irish cloth nor Scotch outworn:
Lasses in beaver coats, come away,
Ye shall be welcome to us night and day.

To drink and be merry, merry, merry boys...

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