

THE INFORTUNATE

The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, An Indentured Servant 1743__EXCERPTS

At age 20, after a brief apprenticeship in the law and a financial downturn upon his father's death, William Moraley journeyed to America to serve a five-year contract as an indentured servant. Frustrated by his experiences, he decided to return to England after completing his indenture. Nine years after his return he published a memoir of his experiences as "The Infortunate." In these selections we join Moraley in 1729 as he arrives in Philadelphia on the ship *Bonetta* with about twenty other indentured servants.¹

We render'd God thanks for his Mercy in bringing us through so many Hardships, and prepar'd to sail up [the] *Delaware* River, so called from Capt. *Delaware*, who first discovered it. In order to our more safe passing, there being many Rocks at the first Entrance, we took a Pilot, and in three Tides, after passing *Newcastle* and *Chester*, arrived in *Philadelphia*, the day after *Christmas* Day. . . .²

We all of us had the Liberty of Visiting the Town, where I sold my Red Coat for a Quart of Rum, my Tie Wig for Sixpence, with which I bought a Three-penny Loaf and a Quart of Cider. Our Cargo consisting chiefly of Voluntary Slaves, who are the least to be pitied, I saw all my Companions sold off before me; my turn came last, when I was sold for eleven Pounds, to one Mr. *Isaac Pearson*, a Man of Humanity, by Trade a Smith, Clock-maker and Goldsmith, living at *Burlington*, in *New Jersey*: . . .

I left *Philadelphia* to go to *Burlington* to my Master. I went in a Boat, where I got myself Drunk for the first time after my Arrival, and then first experienced the Strength of Rum. About Twelve we landed there, and I was conveyed to my Master, where I dined upon Dumplings, boil'd Beef, and Udder, when I became enamour'd with Mrs. *Sarah*, the Daughter. I was stripp'd of my Rags, and received in lieu of them a torn Shirt, and an old Coat. They tell me it was only for the present, for I might expect better.

I went to bed that Night, being the first Time I had seen one since I left *London*, which was fifteen Weeks. . . .

National Humanities Center, 2008: nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds. William Moraley, *The Infortunate: The Voyage and Adventures of William Moraley, An Indentured Servant*, 1743; ed. Susan E. Klepp & Billy G. Smith (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992; 2d. ed., 2005), pp. 26-28, 41, 46-47, 60-61, 73-75, 77-78, 88, 93; permission pending. Some spelling and punctuation modernized by NHC for clarity. Complete image credits at nationalhumanitiescenter.org/pds/becoming_amer/imagecredits.htm.

¹ For Moraley's experiences in England that led him to become an indentured servant in America, see the *Infortunate* excerpts in History Matters at historymatters.gmu.edu/d/6229 (George Mason University and the City University of New York).

² Moraley is mistaken about the day. The ship actually entered the port of Philadelphia during the week of December 9-16, 1729, according to reports in both the city's newspapers. . . . [Klepp & Smith footnote continues.]

My Master employed me in his Business. I continued satisfied with him for sometime; but being desirous to settle at *Philadelphia* during the rest of my servitude, I declared to him, I would stay no longer, and desired him to dispose of me to some other Master, and insisted upon it, agreeably to the Tenour of my Indenture. This Demand made him cross to me, and I attempted an Escape, but was taken, and put into Prison; but was soon released with a promise to satisfy my Demand. About a Fortnight after, we went to the Mayor of *Philadelphia*, his Name was *Griffith*, a Man of exact Justice, tho' an *Irishman*, who reconciled us; so I returned back to *Burlington* and continued with him three Years, he forgiving me the other Two. I was ever after perfectly pleased with my Master's Behaviour to me, which was generous.

There lived in the Family a Relation of his, named *Hannah Lambert*, a Gentlewoman of Beauty, good Parts, and a good Fortune, Daughter to Mr. *Thomas Lambert*, a Native of *Yorkshire*. . . .

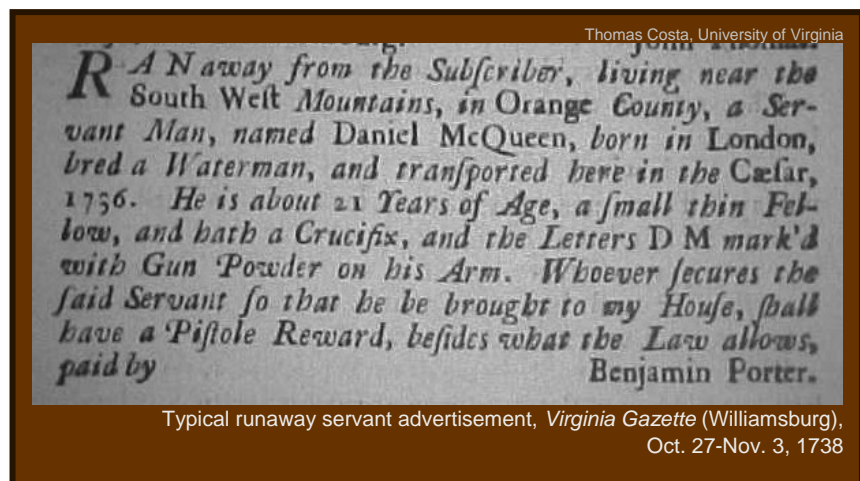
Our Family consisted of a Wife and two Daughters, with a Nephew, a Negro Slave, a bought Servant, and myself, with the aforesaid Gentlewoman. . . .

The Condition of bought Servants is very hard, notwithstanding their indentures are made in *England*, wherein it is expressly stipulated that they shall have at their Arrival all the Necessaries specified in those Indentures to be given 'em by their future Masters, such as Clothes, Meat, and Drink. Yet upon Complaint made to a Magistrate against the Master for Nonperformance, the Master is generally heard before the Servant, and it is ten to one if he does not get his Licks for his Pains, as I have experienced upon the like Occasion, to my Cost.

If they endeavor to escape, which is next to impossible, there being a Reward for taking up any Person who travels without a Pass, which is extended all over the *British Colonies*, their Masters immediately issue out a Reward for the apprehending them, from Thirty Shillings to Five Pound, as they think proper, and this generally brings them back again. Printed and Written Advertisements are also set up against the Trees and public Places in the Town, besides those in the News-papers. Notwithstanding these Difficulties, they are perpetually running away, but seldom escape, for a hot Pursuit being made brings them back, when a Justice settles the Expenses, and the Servant is obliged to serve a longer time. . . .

My Master, after we were civilly to me, and I lived very happy, to the Expiration of my Servitude. He had a Share in an Iron Work at a Place called *Mount Holly*, about seven Miles from *Burlington*, where I was sent to Work. Here I have had many a merry Day. Sometimes I have acted the Blacksmith; at other times, I have worked in the Water, stark naked, among Water Snakes. Sometimes I was a Cow Hunter in the Woods, and sometimes I got Drunk for Joy that my Work was ended.

At last this Iron Work was perfected and the time of my Servitude expired, and I became free. 'Tis impossible to express the Satisfaction I found at being released from the precarious Humour and Dependence of my Master. He accouter'd me in a indifferent Manner, and gave me my Discharge to find out a new Way of Living. I then went to *Philadelphia* and served one *Edmund Lewis*, a brisk young Clock-maker; but he being unsettled, and of a roving Temper (*like Master, like Man!*), I left him, and lived with Mr. *Graham*, a Watch-maker, newly arrived, and Nephew to the famous Mr. *Graham* in *Fleet-street*. With him I continued ten Weeks at Ten Shillings *per Week* Wages, and my Board found me; but he designing to settle at *Antigua* [island in the West Indies], I left him.



Then I roamed about like a Roving *Tartar* for the Convenience of Grazing, and for three Weeks had no Abiding Place. In the Nights I was forced to skulk about the Extremity of the Town, where I lay in a Hay-loft. . . .

But this Life not being likely to last long, and the People's Goodnature beginning to cool, I set my Wits to Work how to get home. But not presently hearing of a Ship bound for *England*, I was reduced to such Extremity that I looked like a Picture of bad Luck, and so thin that you might have seen my Ribs through my skin, and I was greatly afraid of a Consumption [i.e., lung disease]. However, having some Acquaintance in the Country, I went about cleaning Clocks and Watches, and follow'd the Occupation of a Tinker; but not being well vers'd in that Trade, where I mended one Hold, I was sure to make another.

But this Life serving only for the present did not afford me a constant Supply, so in the Intervals was forc'd to spend, when I came back, what I had earn'd in these sort of Roamings. It never cost me any Money, by way of Expense. I was welcome everywhere, though unknown, and always recommended to Business from Place to Place, where I had Variety of Entertainment, always endeavouring to ingratiate myself into the People's Favour by a modest and decent Behaviour, which, with relating Stories when desir'd, and my giving them an Account of *England*, gain'd me the Reputation of an intelligent Man, though upon Occasion I could rake with the best of them, and change my Note as proper Time offer'd. . . .

Three Days after this Adventure,³ I worked Journey Work with *Peter Bishop*, a Blacksmith, for eight Shillings a Week, and Necessaries found me, as Lodging, Meat and Drink. I worked at the great Hammer in making Horse Shoes, Horseshoe Nails, rounding of Ship Bolts, sharpening Coulters for the Plow, &c. This Life I followed six Week, and out of my Earnings bought a fine shirt, the first I wore since my Departure from *England*. Many a hard Day I have had at this Employment, but necessity enabled me to surmount all Difficulties.

During this employ, my Creditors at *Philadelphia*, where I owed trifling Debts, such as Three or Four Shillings to each, but amounted in the Whole to above Eight Pound, found me out and threaten'd me with summoning me before the Magistrate. This obliged me to leave my Blacksmith, for at that Time I could never hear a Dun with Patience; so I steer'd my Course for *New York*, to avoid their Impertinence. . . .

I now began to be heartily tir'd with these Ramblings, and endeavoured to make Friends with Masters of Ships in order to get my Passage. One Morning, as I was forging a Horse Shoe, a grave Quaker, one *Thomas Wetheril*, of *Workington in Cumberland*, told me, He found the Business I follow'd would do little for me, and advis'd me to return Home, where he heard I had considerable Relations. He said he had recommended me to Capt. *Peel*, whose Ship then lay at the Key and would sail in about five Weeks.

I who had before resolv'd to embrace the first Opportunity that offer'd readily entered into his Measures, immediately left the Horse Shoe unfinished and went to the Ship, where the Captain was, and told him Mr. *Wetheril* had sent me. He ask'd me if I was a Sailor; if not, if I would undertake to be Cook on board, he would give me my Passage, and on our arrival at *Ireland*, assist me with Money to enable me to go to *Newcastle*. I immediately struck a Bargain, and at his Desire assisted the Crew in stowing the Ship with Logs, Hogsheads, and Pipe Staves, he giving me liberty to leave the Ship when any Business in my Way offer'd.

On the 26th of July, we sailed down [the] *Delaware*, and the next Day passed by *Chester*, Capital of the County of the same Name. It is seated close to the River and contains about two hundred Houses, adorn'd with pleasant Gardens and Orchards. There I was overtaken by my old Master *Edmund Lewis*, who demanded me of the Captain, on account of an Indenture between myself and him, but the Boat being in Haste, oblig'd him to step into her, otherwise he must have gone to Sea with us, the Ship being under Sail and so I escaped being carried back.

After a transatlantic voyage of thirteen weeks, Moraley arrived in Ireland, boarded another vessel and soon "set my foot upon *English* Ground after three years and eight Months Absence." He headed to Newcastle, his home, and lived with his mother until her death three years later.

³ Moraley became lost while travelling back to Burlington from Cross-Town, where he had been sent to repair a clock..