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WITCHCRAFT

IN
SALEM VILLAGE
IN
1692

TOGETHER WITH SOME ACCOUNT OF OTHER
WITCHCRAFT PROSECUTIONS IN NEW
ENGLAND AND ELSEWHERE

BY
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"THE INTERVALE," ETC.

SALEM, MASS.
NORTH SHORE PUBLISHING COMPANY
BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD
1892



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SALEM OBSERVER PRESS
1 City Hall Avenue
Salem, Mass.

TO
M. E. H.

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PREFACE.

MY design in writing this book has been to tell the story of the witchcraft delusion of 1692 in such a way as to convey a faithful picture to the reader. In order to do this it seemed advisable to give some account of the settlement of Salem and the neighboring villages, and their growth from 1626 to 1692, that the reader might understand the character of the people who lived there during the period covered by this history. Following this, will be found a chapter descriptive of the court that tried the accused persons, and a brief summary of its several sittings. A chapter devoted to some account of earlier witchcraft cases, in this country and in Europe, seemed also advisable, that we might the better understand that witchcraft was not new to the world in 1692, and that "Salem Witchcraft," so-called, differed from other witchcraft only in the details.

In succeeding chapters I have dealt with each of the individuals tried and executed, according to the interest in the case or the fullness of the documentary records that have come down to us. In addition to these, such mention is made of other cases, where the accused were not executed, as the circumstances connected with them seemed to demand. No chronological order is observed in this portion of the work. The aim has been in giving the evidence, to quote the exact language so far as space would permit, otherwise it has been abridged with strict regard to conveying the true meaning of the witness.

I make no claim to originality of material. Possibly a few documents and a few facts of interest may here be brought within the range of the reading public for the first time. If my view of the witchcraft delusion of 1692 and the responsibility therefor, differs somewhat from that entertained by most of those writers, I believe it is the one now generally accepted among historical students, and the one which the judgment of the future will pronounce correct. The mistake which, it seems to me, the majority of the writers on this chapter of our history have made, is that they did not put themselves in the places of the men and women of 1692, but judged by the standard of the latter half of the nineteenth century. I have

tried to avoid this. Whether I have succeeded, the verdict of the reader alone will tell.

I have not deemed it necessary to give my authority for statements made when that authority was the records of the trials now on file in the court house in Salem. In all other cases where important statements are made on the authority of others, the reference is given. In the case of certain publications, like Calef's "More Wonders," and Mather's "Wonders of the Invisible World," the reference is usually to some recent edition, because the early editions of these works are not always accessible.

CHAPTER I.

SALEM PREVIOUS TO 1692.

SALEM was settled by the Puritans. Its settlement was a natural result of the Reformation in England. The hardy men and women who first came to ancient Naumkeag, came, not so much because of unjust law and tyrannical rulers, as because they could not respect the enforced forms of worship then existing in that country. They preferred the toils and privations of the wilderness in the new world to the tyranny of the Established Church and its supporters in the old.

In religious matters those who came to Salem differed somewhat from those who established themselves at Plymouth. The former were not true separatists from the Church of England; they were dissenters from its corruptions, its intolerance, and its formula only. In the words of the ministers at Salem, to John and Samuel Browne in 1629, they separated "not from the Church of England, but from its corruptions." "We came away," said they, "from the com-

mon prayer and ceremonies in our native land ; in this place of liberty we cannot, we will not, use them." On the other hand, the people who settled at Plymouth were separatists.¹

John Lyford and a few followers left the Plymouth colony a few years after the settlement there, owing "to dissatisfaction with the extreme separation from the English Church." They settled at or near Nantasket, but in 1625 removed to Cape Ann. There they sought to establish a fishing and farming community. Roger Conant joined the colony in the fall of 1625 and was made "governor." The affairs were in an unsatisfactory state. Fishing and farming had been unprofitable. During the succeeding spring Conant explored the coast to the mouth of Naumkeag river and concluded to make a settlement at Naumkeag. As a result of this movement a company was formed in England known as "the Governor and Colony of the Massachusetts Bay in New England." The company chose John Endicott governor, and he, with his wife and a few others, sailed for the new world on June 20, 1628. They arrived in Salem harbor early in September. On the 16th of April, following, about two hundred persons, including sixty females and twenty-six children, left England to join the colony.

“They took with them one hundred [and

1 Old Naumkeag, 2.

forty head of cattle, besides food, arms, clothing, and tools. There were four ministers in the company. Two of them — Francis Higginson and Samuel Skelton — were men of more than ordinary ability, and they were destined to play no unimportant part in the history of the new world.”

In the letters from the home company to Mr. Higginson, during the following year or two, we find much paternal advice. “Noe idle drone (is to) be permitted to live among us.” Justice is urged in this spirit: “Wee hartely pray you to admit of all complaints that shall be made to you, or any of you that are of the councell, be the complaints never so meane, and pass it not slightly over but seriously examine the truth of the business.”

In another letter: “Wee pray you to make some good lawes for the punishment of swearers, whereof it is to be feared too many are adicted.”

The suppression of intemperance is urged, by endeavoring “though there bee much strong water sent for sale, so to order it as that salvages may not for our lucre sake bee induced to excessive use, or rather abuse of it,” and by punishing those “who shall become drunck.” The company urges that, “noe tobacco bee planted unless it bee some small quantitie for mere necessitie and for phisick for preservacon

of their healths, and that the same bee taken privately by ancient men and none others."

The first step after the arrival of the ministers and this large band of men and women, was to form a church. The Plymouth church had been transplanted with the emigrants from Holland, but the men at Salem brought no church with them. They decided to found one which should be independent of all others and of all higher ecclesiastical bodies. A meeting was held on July 20, 1629, "as a solemn day of humiliation for choyce of pastor and teacher for Salem." The meeting was opened with prayer and preaching, after which the vote was taken "by each one writing in a note the name of his choice." *This was the origin of the use of the ballot in this country.*³ Skelton was thus chosen pastor, and Higginson, teacher. Having made choice of these, the sixth day of August was designated for the completion of the church organization. On that day deacons and ruling elders were chosen. Thus was fully constituted the First Church at Salem, and the "*first Protestant Church in America*, on the principle of the independence of each religious community."⁴ No liturgy was used; unnecessary ceremonies were rejected, and "the simplicity of Calvin was reduced to a still plainer standard."⁴

3 Bancroft's Hist. U. S., Centenary ed., I., 271.

4 Old Naumkeag, 12.

The "confession of faith and covenant" adopted was a very brief document, but it "comprised in a condensed shape and surpassing simplicity"⁵ all that was necessary to bind together as a church of God this little col-



FIRST CHURCH.

ony of earnest men and women. It read as follows :

"We covenant with the Lord, and one with another, and do bind ourselves in the presence of God, to walk together in all His ways, according as He is pleased to reveal Himself unto us, in His blessed word of truth."

5 Rev. C. W. Upham, Dedicatory Address.

John and Samuel Browne, although opposed to state censorship and rebelling against the intolerance and corruption of the Established Church, desired that the liturgy and common prayer be used, and attempted to set up a church founded on that idea. They were sent back to England on the ground that the safety of the colony would be endangered by any want of unity.

In the summer of 1629 the entire government of the colony was transferred to John Winthrop and eleven followers on condition that they go and reside in New England. It was ostensibly a commercial operation; but it was actually the first step toward the formation of a future powerful and independent commonwealth.⁶ Winthrop and some seven hundred others arrived in Salem in June of the following year. Bancroft has aptly described them as "a community of believers, professing themselves to be fellow members of Christ; not a school of philosophers, proclaiming universal toleration and inviting associates without regard to creed."⁷ On arriving at Salem they found the people in destitute circumstances, suffering for want of food, clothing and shelter. Winthrop was not favorably impressed with the location of the colony and explored the coast in

⁶ Old Naumkeag, 18.

⁷ Bancroft's U. S., I., 279.

the vicinity of the Mystic river, finally settling at Charlestown, whither he shortly moved the seat of government. The territory comprised in the town of Salem at that time was much greater than at present, including all of the present city and the towns of Beverly, Danvers, Marblehead, Peabody, Wenham, Manchester, and parts of Topsfield and Middleton.

In 1692, with all the original territory set off save Danvers and Middleton, the population numbered 1700. It is evident to one who studies the history of the people in Salem and vicinity in 1632 and in 1692 that a change had taken place between those periods in the character and general intelligence of the inhabitants.⁸ Many of the early settlers were men of education, and, for those times, broad and liberal views. Endicott, Winthrop, Higginson, Skelton and Saltonstall, and others of their associates, were men of more than common mould. Endicott, perhaps, in the opinion of some, exhibited a little intolerance or contempt when he cut the red cross from the flag because it reminded him of popery, but it was no such ignorant superstition as that which led to the witchcraft delusion. There were other acts which we should now call bigoted, but which in those days were

⁸ G. H. Moore's "Final Notes," 1885, 76. C. W. Upham in *Hist. Magazine*, Sept., 1869, 140. Uden's "New England Theocracy," Conant's Translation, 222. Palfrey, *Hist. New England*, 4, 123.

not so considered. No such men as those I have mentioned lived in Essex county in 1692, and few in the colony. Corwin, Hathorne, Parris, Noyes, the Putnams and their associates, were men of limited parts. I do not mean to imply that these men were inferior to their predecessors *because* they believed in witchcraft. Everybody believed in it then. Endicott and Winthrop had both signed death warrants for persons convicted of the crime; or at least had not stayed the executions of the condemned. The people generally lacked the educational advantages of their ancestors. True, there was a Harvard College, but what was that poor, infant institution, with its library limited in volumes and variety, to Oxford and Cambridge, whence came some of the early settlers. The people were more likely, in 1692, to be carried away by such a cry as that of witchcraft than in 1632. Increase and Cotton Mather, of Boston, it is true, were learned men; so was Rev. Mr. Willard, but the advice of these men and other Boston ministers was ignored. Some ministers there were in Boston and Salem who believed in all the current superstitions of the age and who sought to educate the people to believe in them, rather than to enlighten their minds and explain away, by the light of intelligence, seemingly strange occurrences. The age may well be termed the dark age of New Eng-

land history. The early dreams of independence of old England were dissipated ; religion had lost its strong hold on the people. The minister's power and influence were waning. He could not lead the people as formerly. The local unanimity, says Palfray, had been dissolved.⁹ Parties had been formed with antagonistic views of local and colonial matters. In affairs of church there were dissenters. Certain men in the community would brook no dissent from the views which it pleased them to hold. They deemed themselves infallible, and were intolerant of all who differed from them. Puritan bigotry stalked abroad more than in 1629. But it encountered more opposition, and, for a time, opposition only increased the narrowness and the intolerance.

Bancroft says : " New England, like Canaan, had been settled by fugitives. Like the Jews, they had fled to a wilderness ; like the Jews, they looked to Heaven for light to lead them on ; like the Jews, they had no supreme ruler but God ; like the Jews, they had heathen for their foes ; and they derived their legislation from the Jewish code. But for the people of New England, the days of Moses and Joshua were past ; for them there was no longer a promised land — they were in possession. Reason now insisted on bringing the adopted

⁹ Hist. New England, iv., 3.

laws to the proof, that it might hold fast only to the good. Skepticism began to appear.

4 The fear of sorcery and the evil power of the invisible world had sprung alike from the letter of the Mosaic law and from the wonder excited by the mysteries of nature

The belief in witchcraft had fastened itself on the elements of faith and come deeply branded into the common mind. The people did not rally to the error, they accepted the superstition only because it had not yet been disengaged from religion. The same causes which had given energy to the religious principle had given weight to the minister. In the settlement of New England, the temple, or, as it was called, the meeting house, was the centre round which the people gathered. As the church had successfully assumed the exclusive possession of civil franchises, the ambition of the ministers had been both excited and gratified. They were not only the counsellors by an unwritten law, they were the authors of state papers, often employed on embassies, and, at home, speakers at elections and in town meetings."¹⁰ These ministers, like Parris, and Noyes, and Hale, at the close of the seventeenth century, were losing their power and their prominence because some few enlightened men and thinkers were beginning to doubt.

10 Hist. U. S., Centenary Ed., 246-7.

They could continue their influence only by building on error and superstition. Any man or woman who doubted was their enemy. That person's power and influence must be crushed or the ministerial control was lost.

Between the settlement of Salem by Roger Conant in 1626 and the witchcraft days of 1692, the intolerance of the Puritans had been strikingly manifested on more than one occasion. The Brownes had been sent back to England for differing from Endicott and the First Church people; Endicott had cut the red cross from the flag because it reminded him of popery; Roger Williams had been banished from the colony for preaching that men should be allowed freedom of conscience in religious matters.⁹ Quakers had been hung in Boston, and Quaker women, half naked, dragged through the streets of Salem at the tail of a cart and whipped, for maintaining the doctrines of their sect.¹⁰ All this by a people who, within half a century, had come to these shores to worship according to the dictates of conscience. So, also, Thomas Scrugg, a deputy and a judge of the local court, for sympathy with Ann Hutchinson's Antimonian views, was proscribed, dis-

⁹ It was not Salem that banished Williams, but the colonial court. Salem remained true to him to the last.

¹⁰ These Quaker women had previously gone through the streets naked, voluntarily, to illustrate the spiritual nakedness of the people.

armed and deprived of his public functions; William Alford, for sympathizing with Scrugg, was censured and disarmed and left the colony; Richard Waterman, an intelligent, industrious man and law-abiding citizen, for dissenting from the severe policy of the leading men of the colony, was imprisoned and then banished; even Townsend Bishop, in 1645, because he did not promptly bring forward an infant for baptism, was handed over for discipline, and he a deputy and local magistrate. Lady Deborah Moody, because she doubted the necessity of infant baptism, was compelled to leave the colony. Even in a much later day, William Gray was persecuted in Salem for (political) opinion's sake, and driven from the city.

Sir Edmund Andros, appointed by James II, in 1686, the first royal governor of New England, had been deposed in 1688 for acts of oppression. For nearly three years the people of Massachusetts Bay colony governed themselves entirely independent of the king of England. On the accession of William and Mary, Sir William Phips was appointed governor, and came over in the spring of 1692, bringing with him the new charter. Phips was not an educated man, nor was he a man of much experience in public affairs. He had commanded one successful military expedition and one unsuccessful naval expedition. His rise to prominence

had been due in a large measure to great wealth, secured by raising buried Spanish treasure in the West Indies.

With this sketch of the history of the settlement of Salem, the people who constituted that settlement and the growth of the town, we are now prepared to consider the great calamity which befell the community two centuries ago.

CHAPTER II.

THE EARLY WITCHCRAFT CASES.

BELIEF in witchcraft, demonology, spiritualism and kindred isms, under slightly differing names and phases, is as old as the history of mankind. We read very early in our Bible: "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."¹ We find other mention of witchcraft in the Holy Book, and so on down through all the pages of history to the very year 1892.² In the twelfth century it was believed that a witch was a

¹ Exodus xx : 18.

² The *Kadkaz*, a leading Russian journal, gave an interesting account, in the early part of 1889, of a revolting case of witchcraft superstition. An old peasant woman, living near Sookoom, in Caucasus, was suspected of witchcraft. Beyond the infirmities of age, and, perhaps, of ill temper, the unhappy wretch was no doubt as innocent as the victims of our own witch finders were. Her son died, and immediately the rumor ran that she had slain him with the assistance of the Evil One, whose co-operation she had claimed. The neighbors sat in judgment over her and decided that she should be submitted to the ordeal by fire—that is to say, she was to be burned and tortured in the hope that she would confess her supposed crime. The terror of the poor old woman deprived her of coherent speech. This was assumed to be a proof of her guilt. She was seized and tied to a pole and burned to death. What gives a still more fiendish aspect to this carnival of cruelty is that her surviving son was among the most energetic of those

woman who had made a secret compact with the devil and received from him power to ride through the air when going to meetings of kindred spirits. In 1484, Pope Innocent VIII, issued a bull, ordering the arrest of persons suspected of witchcraft. In 1485, forty-one aged women were burned at the stake in Burlia for substantially the same thing as was alleged against the men and women of Essex county in 1692, and others in Massachusetts earlier than that. Some years later, forty-eight persons were condemned in Ravensburg, and a hundred in Piedmont. In Geneva, in 1515, five hundred persons are said to have been executed for witchcraft in twelve weeks.³ England, that

who tortured his mother. The peasantry of this remote region are said to be generally amiable and affectionate, and it is only when their supernatural terrors are aroused that they seek their own safety in malignant manifestations of fanatic cruelty.

Some of the negroes of the South still believe in the reality of witchcraft. In the spring of 1890 a woman of the name of Jaycox, living in Georgia, attempted to bewitch Willis Mitchell. She dropped a toad before his door after having decorated it with a long strip of red flannel in which she had tied numerous knots and to which she had attached pieces of white sewing thread and a bundle of red flannel in which were a lot of roots and sewing needles. See *Journal of American Folk Lore*, Vol. III, 205, "The Plantation Negro as a Freeman," by Bruce, and "Negro Myths from the Georgia Coast," by C. C. Jones. See also *Appendix London Spiritual Magazine* for 1868 for a case that happened in London that year; *Notes and Queries*, London, V, 143 (4th series); *Morganshire Advertiser*, Eng., for 1862.

Rev. C. B. Rice of Danvers, has wisely pointed out the distinction between "Biblical witchcraft," and the "legal witchcraft" of the 17th Century.

³ Pop. Hist. U. S. II, 451

boasted land of light, liberty and law, has been cursed with the superstition. History records that as far back as the reign of King John, about the year 1200, persons were executed for the so-called crime. It continued to be a recognized crime down to 1712 in England, and 1727 in Scotland. Executions are recorded in Aberdeen in 1597, when twenty-four persons were burned to death. In the same place, in 1617, twenty-seven women were burned at the stake. Others were hanged or burned in Barking, in 1575; in Chelmsford, Abington and Cambridge, in 1579; thirteen in St. Osith's, in 1582. Ninety were hanged in 1645, and one hundred and twenty in 1661. The last execution for witchcraft in England was in 1712, and in Scotland in 1727.⁴ Sir Mathew Hale, one of the ablest of English jurists, tried many of these cases and firmly believed there was such a thing as witchcraft. Dr. More, Sir Thomas Brown, Boyle, Cranmer, Edward Fairfax, and many other of England's wise men were believers. When, therefore, such men as these believed in witchcraft, how could the people who dwelt in the American wilderness in 1692 be expected to doubt? Chief Justice Holt was the only man of prominence on the English bench who, down to that time, had doubted the correctness of the extreme view of the delu-

⁴Ibd. 453.

sion. He at least protected the rights of the accused, which is more than was done by the judges at the trials in Salem.

The result of a century and a half of prosecutions, trials and executions in England, was a crop of books and pamphlets on the subject, mostly written by clergymen who had been believers and prosecutors, or by jurists who would naturally defend themselves and their associates and their interpretation of the law. Some of these books found their way to America. Many of them were read, during the long winter evenings, before the roaring open fires, by the simple New England people. Children were undoubtedly allowed access to them, as to the Bible and the Pilgrim's Progress. Mr. Parris himself seems to have founded his knowledge of the delusion on "Discourses of the Damned Art of Witchcraft," written about 1600 by William Perkins. As late as 1765, Blackstone, the great expounder of English law, wrote: "To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery, is at once flatly to contradict the revealed word of God in various passages both of the Old and New Testament; and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath, in its time, borne testimony either by example, seemingly well attested, or by prohibitory laws which at least suppose the possibility of commerce with evil

spirits.”⁵ Blackstone adds that “these acts continued in force until lately to the terror of all ancient females in the kingdom, and many poor wretches were sacrificed thereby to the prejudice of their neighbors, and their own illusions, not a few having, by some means or other, confessed the fact at the gallows.”⁶ How accurately this last sentence describes the condition of affairs in Essex county in 1692, we shall see in the future pages of this history.

What was witchcraft? What did people mean by the term? These are questions which should be understood in studying the delusion in the seventeenth century. In early times, witchcraft evidently meant, in connection with the terms sorcery, conjurer, etc., almost any singular conduct on the part of a person, more especially if that person were an aged female. The crabbedness of old age or misfortune was evidently looked upon as witchcraft. People whom we now term common scolds, neighborhood gossips,—those who, in some unaccountable manner, know the inmost secrets of their neighbors, what they have done and what they contemplate to do in the future,—would have been, two or three centuries ago, accused of witchcraft, in all human probability. Witches were persons supposed to have formed a com-

5 Chitty's Blackstone IV, 42. 6 Ibid., 43.

pact with the devil to torment God's people,
and sometimes to cause their death. The ap-
paritions of these bewitched persons were sup-
posed to go through the air, mostly at night and
on broom-sticks or poles, to a place of meeting.
Many of them were charged with having signed
a book presented to them for signature by his
satanic majesty. This book was said to contain
a contract which bound those who signed it to
do his bidding. Sometimes, as was believed,
they took the forms of negroes, hogs, birds or
cats when going to perform their supernatural
deeds.

For the punishment of witchcraft, in what-
ever form it appeared, the nations of the earth,
as we have already seen, fixed the penalty of
death, usually without benefit of clergy. Eng-
land by the statute of 33 Henry VIII, chap. 8,
declared all witchcraft and sorcery to be felony
without benefit of clergy. Later, by statute of
Jas. I, chap. 12, it was enacted that all persons
invoking any evil spirit, or consulting or cov-
enanting with, entertaining, employing, feeding,
or rewarding any evil spirit, etc., should be
guilty of felony without benefit of clergy, and
suffer death.⁷ Under the colonial charter, laws
for the government of the colony were adopted,
among them one against witchcraft. It pro-
vided that, "if any man or woman be a witch

⁷ Ibid., 43.

(that is, hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit) they shall be put to death.”⁸ When the charter was taken away, in 1684, these laws were abrogated. Whether they were revived by the proclamation of Andros, on his becoming governor, that all colony laws not repugnant to the laws of England would be observed,⁹ and whether the forcible removal of the governor a few years later terminated them again, have been open questions among historians and lawyers. The early witchcraft prosecutions in 1692 were undoubtedly brought under the statute of James. That some of the later ones were is certain. Most of the indictments closed in these words — which would have been the form, probably, under English law direct, or colonial law approved by the king — “against the peace of our sovereign Lord and Lady, the king and queen, their crown and dignity, and against the form of the statute in that case made and provided.”¹⁰ The indictments against Samuel Wardwell and Rebecca Eames, however, refer directly to the statutes of James I. They were among the last found. The closing words are as follows: “with the evil speritt the devill a covenant did make, wherein he promised to honor worship & believe the devill contrary to

8 Notes on the History of Witchcraft in Mass., 1883, Geo. H. Moore, 6.

9 *Ibid.*, 7. 9 Gray, 517. Mass. Hist. Coll., 2d series, VIII, 77.

10 Essex Court Records.

the statute of King James the first in that behalf made and provided."¹¹ This would seem to settle beyond controversy the question which has been raised, as to what law these prosecutions were made under. On June 15, 1692, that General Court which had convened on the 8th in obedience to the summons of Gov. Phips, passed an act to the effect that all local laws made by the late Governor and Council of Massachusetts Bay and by the late government of New Plymouth, being not repugnant to the laws of England, should be and continue in force until Nov. 10. At the adjourned session in October a general crimes bill was passed, the second section of which read: "If any man or woman be a witch, that is hath or consulteth with a familiar spirit, they shall be put to death."¹² This was substantially the language of the old colonial law. On the 14th of the following December an act was passed "for the more particular direction in the execution of the law against witchcraft." The wording was substantially that of the statute of James. The first section declares that any person who shall "use, practice or exercise any invocation or conjuration of any wicked spirit or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, or employ, feed or reward any evil or wicked spirit

11 Ibid.

12 Province Laws, I., 55.

or take up any dead man, woman or child, out of his, her or their grave, or any other place where the dead body resteth, or the skin, bone or any other part of any dead person, to be employed or used in any manner of witchcraft, sorcery, charm or enchantment whereby any person shall be killed, destroyed, wasted or consumed, pined or lamed in his or her body, shall suffer the pains of death." The second section provides that if any person attempt by sorcery to discover any hidden treasure, or restore stolen goods, or provoke unlawful love, or hurt any man or beast, though the same be not effected, he shall be imprisoned one year and once every quarter stand on the pillory in the shire town six hours with the offence written in capital letters on his breast.¹³ For a second offence of this nature the punishment was death. Both of these acts were disallowed on Aug. 22, 1695, but they had full force and effect in the meantime.

It is a little uncertain just when the first case of witchcraft arose in New England. Hutchinson says it was in 1645 at Springfield, Mass., when several persons were afflicted, among them two of the minister's children, and that every effort was made to convict some one of bewitching them,¹⁴ but in vain. It is not quite certain

¹³ Province Laws, I., 90.

¹⁴ Hist. Mass., II., 16.

that Hutchinson has not here confounded the Springfield case of 1651 with this date.

The first execution for witchcraft in the new world was at Charlestown, in 1648, the victim being Margaret Jones. She was accused of practicing witchcraft, tried, found guilty, and hanged. The records of her case, if ever there were any, have long since been destroyed. The best account of it, undoubtedly, is that found in the journals of Gov. Winthrop. He was not only governor of the colony at the time, but presided at the trial. He says the evidence against her was "that she was found to have such a malignant touch as many persons, men, women and children, whom she stroked or touched with any affection or displeasure or &c., were taken with deafness, or vomitting, or other violent pains or sickness." Her medicines, being anise-seed or other harmless things, yet had, he says, such extraordinary effect, and she used to tell such as would not make use of her physic that they would never be healed, and "accordingly their diseases and hurts continued with relapses against the ordinary course." Again, Winthrop says, "in the prison there was seen in her arms a little child which ran from her into another room and the officer following it, it vanished."¹⁵ Such is the story told by the judge who tried the case. Can we doubt the correctness of his summary of the evidence? No man in the colony

¹⁵ Winthrop's Journal, II, 326.

stood higher than John Winthrop. Margaret Jones, from all we can learn of her, was something of a physician, an "irregular practitioner," perhaps—what would be called a "quack" in this age. Possibly she met with success sometimes where a "regular" had failed. As indicating the sentiments of the times, it is worthy of note that the governor, a man naturally of sterling common sense, relates in his journal, that, "same day and hour she was executed, there was a very great tempest at Connecticut which blew down many trees."¹⁶

Shortly after the execution of Margaret Jones, her husband endeavored to secure passage to Barbadoes in a vessel then lying in Boston harbor with a hundred and eighty tons of ballast and eighty horses on board. He was refused passage because he was the husband of a witch, and "it was immediately observed that the vessel began to roll as if it would turn over." This strange action was alleged to be caused by Jones. The magistrates, being notified, issued their warrant for his arrest. As the officer, going to serve the warrant, was crossing in the ferry, the vessel continued to roll. He remarked that he had that which would tame the vessel and keep it quiet, at the same time exhibiting the document. Instantly the vessel ceased to roll, after having been in motion twelve hours. Jones was arrested and thrown into prison, and the vessel

rolled no more.¹⁷ He was not executed, and I do not find that he was ever tried.

Mary Parsons, wife of Hugh Parsons of Springfield, in 1649, circulated a report that the widow Marshfield was guilty of witchcraft. The widow began an action against the Parsons woman before Mr. Pynchon, the local magistrate, on the ground of slander. Mrs. Parsons was found guilty and sentenced to pay a fine of £3 or be whipped twenty lashes.¹⁸ In May, 1651, Mary Parsons was herself charged with witchcraft on Martha and Rebekah Moxon, children of the minister. She was tried before the General Court in Boston, on May 13, 1651, and acquitted. She was then charged with the murder of her own child, to which charge she pleaded guilty, and the court sentenced her to be hanged. A reprieve was granted on May 29, but whether it was made permanent, is not known. Hugh Parsons was tried in Boston on May 31, 1652, on a charge of witchcraft, and acquitted.¹⁹ The particulars in these cases are

17 Everett's *Anecdotes of Early Local History*.

18 King's *Hand Book of Springfield*.

19 Mass. Colonial Records for May 13, 1651. Also, May 31, 1652.

Drake says Mary Parsons died in prison, and that she had charged her husband with bewitching her. (*Hist. of Boston*, 322.) Palfrey thinks she was executed. (*Hist. New England*, IV., 96, note.) A writer in the *Mercurius Publicus*, a London newspaper, of Sept. 25, 1651, says: "Four in Springfield were detected, whereof one was executed for murder of her own child and was doubtless a witch, another is condemned, a third under trial, a fourth under suspicion." (*ibid.*)

very meagre. It is hardly safe to say that any statement relative to the final disposition of them is true beyond question. As showing somewhat the state of the public mind at that time, it is related that on the same day that Parsons was tried, the General Court appointed a day of humiliation, in consideration, among other things, "of the extent to which satan prevails amongst us in respect of witchcraft."²⁰

John Bradstreet of Rowley was tried in Ipswich on July 28, 1652, on a charge of "familiarity with the devil." The order of the court, subsequently pronounced, was that "John Bradstreet upon his presentation of the last court for suspicion of having familiarity with the devil, upon examination of the case they found he had told a lie, which was a second, being convicted once before. The court sets a fine of 20 s. or else to be whipped."²¹

The next case of which we have a record was that of Ann Hibbins of Boston, a widow, whose husband had died in 1654. Hibbins had been a prosperous trader, but during the later years of his life had met with reverses, and soon sickened and died. This double affliction is said to have made his widow crabbed and meddlesome. At all events, she had so much trouble with her neighbors that the church censured her. During

20 Mass. Colonial Records for May 13, 1651.

21 Essex Court Papers.

the closing weeks of 1655 she was accused of being a witch. We have no record of her trial. We do not know just what the form of the charge against her was, nor the nature of the evidence. The jury returned a verdict of guilty, but the judges would not receive it. The case, under the law of the times, went to the General Court for trial. Mrs. Hibbins was called to the bar and pleaded not guilty. The evidence which had been taken in court was read and the witnesses, being present, acknowledged it. The General Court thereupon adjudged the woman guilty. Gov. John Endicott pronounced sentence, and she was hanged.²² Mr. Beach, a minister at Jamaica, wrote in a letter to Increase Mather that Mr. Norton once said that Ann Hibbins was hanged for "having more wit than her neighbors; that the principal evidence against her was that, once on a time, seeing two neighbors conversing on the street she remarked that they were talking about her, and so it proved."²³ One John Scottow, a selectman and otherwise a prominent citizen, testified somewhat in favor of Mrs. Hibbins, and the court compelled him to write a most humble apology for having appeared to say a word in favor of one accused.²² It is a little singular in this case that while the woman was a sister of Deputy

²² Mass. Colonial Record, VI., pt. 1, 269; also, Witchcraft Papers, State House, Boston.

Governor Bellingham,²³ and he could undoubtedly have exerted sufficient influence to save her, nothing of the kind appears to have been done.

In 1659, John Godfrey, an Essex county man, was accused of witchcraft, and bound over to the higher court. As no further record of his case is to be found, it is presumed he was either not brought to trial or, if so, was acquitted. He sued two of the prosecutors and witnesses against him and recovered damages from them. Another item on a later court record indicates that Godfrey was before the court and fined for being drunk.

Ann Cole of Hartford, Conn., in 1662, was concerned with two people of the name of Greensmith, man and wife, in some sort of transaction which brought against them all a charge of witchcraft. John Whiting wrote to Increase Mather that she was "a person esteemed pious, behaving herself with a pleasant mixture of humility and faith under very heavy suffering."²⁴ She made a "confession" of some nature and used the names of the Greensmiths to their prejudice. The Greensmith woman confessed that a demon had had carnal knowledge of her with much seeming delight to herself.²⁵ She was executed, and two of the others

²³ Poole's Introduction to Johnson's *Wonder Working Providences*. Note, CXXIX.

²⁴ Mass. Hist. Col., VIII., 466.

²⁵ Hutchinson's Hist. Mass. Bay, II., 23.

condemned, but probably not hanged. It looks very much as if, beneath all this piety and humility exhibited by Ann Cole, there was some evil; that her conduct was not always perfect, and that to cover up her responsibility for evil deeds she confessed to being a witch.

The next case in chronological order was that of Elizabeth Knapp of Groton, Mass., in 1671. I quote largely from Putnam's account, condensed from the record left by Rev. Samuel Willard.²⁶ Elizabeth was at first subject to mental moods and violent physical actions. Strange, sudden shrieks, strange changes of countenance appeared; followed by the exclamations: "O, my leg," which she would rub; "O, my breast," and she would rub that. Afterwards came fits in which she would cry out, "money, money," offered her as inducements to yield obedience, and sometimes, "sin and misery," as threats of punishment for refusal to obey the wishes of her strange visitant. Subsequently she barked like a dog and bleated like a calf. Then she told Mr. Willard he "was a great rogue." Some voice replied "I am not satan, I am a pretty black boy, this is my pretty girl." She charged Willard himself and some others of his parish with being her tormentors. Elizabeth Knapp's case seems to call for little

²⁶ Putnam's *Witchcraft Explained*, etc., 157; also *Mass. Hist. Coll.*, VIII., 555.

comment. We may form our own opinions as to the disorder from which she suffered.

The first important Essex County case of witchcraft was that which occurred in the family of William Morse of Newbury, now Newburyport, in 1679. The family consisted, besides the old gentleman himself, of his wife, about sixty-five years of age, and a grandson, John Stiles, twelve or fifteen years of age. To show the condition of affairs as it appeared to Morse, I quote from his testimony :

About midnight, the door being locked when we went to bed, we heard a great hog in the house grunt and make a great noise, as we thought willing to get out. and that we might not be disturbed in our sleep I arose to let him out, and I found a hog in the house and the door unlocked. The door was firmly locked when we went to bed. The night following. I had a great awl lying in the window, the which awl we saw fall down out of the chimney into the ashes by the fire. After this I bid the boy put the same awl into the cupboard, which we saw done and the door shut to. This same awl came presently down the chimney again in our sight, and I took it up myself. Again the same night we saw a little Indian basket that was in the loft before come down the chimney again. And I took the same basket and put a brick into it, and the basket with the brick was gone, and came down again the third time with the brick in it, and went up again the fourth time and came down again without the brick, and the brick came down again a little after. The next day in the afternoon, my thread four times taken away, and came down the chimney, again my awl and gimlet wanting, again my leather taken away, came down the chimney, again my nails, being in the cover of a firkin, taken away, came down the chimney. The next day, being Sabbath day, I

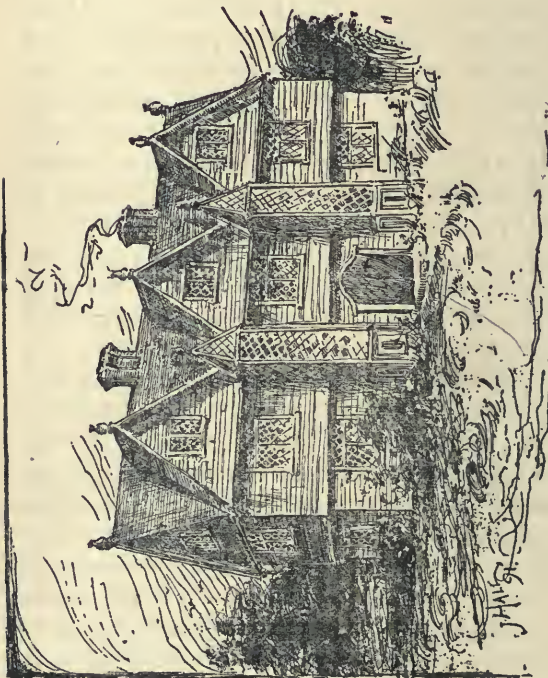
saw many stones and sticks, and pieces of bricks come down the chimney. On Monday I saw the andiron leap into the pot, dance and leap out again, leap in and dance and leap out again and leap on a table and there abide, and my wife saw the andirons on the table. Also I saw the pot turn itself over and throw down all the water.

Morse continued for some time to relate such occurrences as these. He subsequently testified that Caleb Powell came in and said: "This boy is the occasion of your grief, for he hath done these things, and hath caused his poor old grandmother to be counted a witch." Powell then told Morse that he had seen young Stiles do many of the things, and that if he would let him have the boy he should be free from trouble. He did let Powell have the lad Monday night, and had no more trouble until Friday night. Then the strange performances were renewed. The old man's cap was pulled off his head and "the cat throwed at him." They put the cat out and shut the doors and windows, and presently she walked in. After they went to bed the cat was "throwed at them five times," once wrapped in a red waistcoat. Such is the story told under oath by an old man, whom Rev. Mr. Hale said was "esteemed a sincere and understanding Christian by those who knew him." He and his wife, under all the solemnities of their oaths,—and an oath meant much in those days,—made these startling depositions. What shall we say of them? Have

the statements exaggerated the facts? How can they be met? how explained? Do we believe these old people wilfully falsified? Caleb Powell seems to have suspected the boy John of mischievously perpetrating the tricks on the old people. He thought he could put an end to them by removing the youth from their house; and he did. So long as John was away there were none of those strange occurrences. Powell was a sea-faring man, and when on land dwelt near the Morses. He was perhaps a trifle boastful of his powers, and told these simple, untravelled people what remarkable things he could do, among others that he could detect witchcraft. We should naturally expect, after Powell had demonstrated to Morse that his grandson was a mischievous scapegrace, that the grandfather would have taken the boy home and given him a sound thrashing, and then thanked the man who had exposed the imposture. But no; it was an age of religious bigotry and superstition. Morse at once turned upon Powell and charged him with practicing witchcraft. Complaint was made against him in the local court on Dec. 3, 1679. His examination took place on Dec. 8, and the court ordered Morse to give bonds to prosecute at the next term of court in Ipswich. The case was heard on March 30, 1680. The court ordered, that though it found no grounds for the procedure against Powell, "yet he had given

such ground for suspicion of his so dealing that they could not acquit him, but that he deserved to bear his own share of costs of prosecution."

Complaint was then made against Mrs. Morse herself, and on May 20, 1680, she was tried and convicted. Gov. Bradstreet, on May 27, after lecture in the meeting-house in Boston, sentenced her to be hanged. He granted a reprieve on June 1, until the next session of the court, when the reprieve was still further extended. The House of Deputies protested, and urged execution. In 1681, however, the House voted to give her a new trial, the magistrates concurring in the vote. We next hear of Mrs. Morse at her home in Newbury, through a letter written by Rev. John Hale in 1699. The records do not inform us whether she was ever tried again or how she obtained her liberty. All we know is, that from all the testimony, she lived a Christian life the remainder of her days, and always denied that she was ever guilty of witchcraft. Gov. Bradstreet, who passed sentence on Mrs. Morse, subsequently lived in Salem, and his remains were buried in the old Charter street burying ground. In 1692, as in 1680, he dared to resist the clamors of a misguided people and judiciary, and an unlearned, superstitious populace. Had Gov. Phips possessed his intelligence and firmness the harvest of death on Witch Hill would not have formed a part of our early



GOV. BRADSTREET'S HOME, SALEM.

American history. It is noteworthy that in 1692 the witchcraft delusion did not reach old Newbury. Her people evidently learned a lesson from the Morse case which they did not soon forget.

One of the latest and most interesting of the ante-Salem Village cases was that in the Goodwin family in 1688. The daughter of a Mrs. Glover was laundress in the Goodwin household in Boston. John Goodwin had four children, aged respectively thirteen, eleven, seven and five. The eldest, a girl named Martha, accused the laundress of carrying away some of the family linen. Mrs. Glover is described by Hutchinson²⁷ and Calef²⁸ as a "wild Irish woman of bad character." She talked harshly, perhaps profanely, to the children. The girl Martha immediately fell into a fit. The other children soon followed her example. "They were struck dead at the sight of the assembly's catechism, Cotton Mather's 'Milk for Babes,' and some other good books, but could read the Oxford Jests, Popish and Quaker books and the Common Prayer, without any difficulties. Sometimes they would be deaf, then dumb, then blind, and sometimes all these disorders together would come upon them. Their tongues would be drawn down their throats, then pulled out upon their chins. Their jaws, necks, shoulders,

²⁷ Hist. Mass., II., 25.

²⁸ Fowler's Ed., 357.

elbows, and all their joints would appear to be dislocated, and they would make the most pitious outcries of burnings, of being cut with knives, &c. The ministers of Boston and Charlestown kept a day of fasting and prayers at the troubled house, after which the youngest child made no more complaints." The magistrates then interposed, and the elder Glover woman was apprehended. Upon examination she would neither confess nor deny, and appeared disordered in her senses. Physicians declared her to be of sound mind, whereupon she was convicted, sentenced and executed. The eldest child went to live in the family of the minister. For some time she behaved properly, and then had fits for a short time. Hutchinson says that after this they "returned to their ordinary behavior, lived to adult age, made profession of religion, and the affliction they had been under they publicly declared to be one motive to it. One of them, I knew many years after. She had the character of a very virtuous woman, and never made any acknowledgement of fraud in the transaction."²⁹

It should be distinctly understood that the Glover woman was not prosecuted because of her religion. That had nothing to do with it. This case has sometimes been connected with the Salem cases of 1692, but it had no connection with them, either directly or indirectly.

²⁹ Hist. Mass., II., 25-26. Mass. Hist. Coll., VIII., 367.

I have thus traced, all too briefly, perhaps, the more important witchcraft cases in New England previous to 1692. Enough has here been given I trust, to show that the outbreak in Salem Village was nothing phenomenal; that it did not differ from what had happened elsewhere, save in obtaining a firmer hold in the minds of the people, and in being fostered by certain ministers and prominent men more than in other places. A few strong, calm words from them in February, 1692, would have summarily allayed the excitement and put an end to the whole wretched business. But those words were not spoken, and the tragedy followed.

NOTE. Beside the cases in New England previous to 1692, there were prosecutions for witchcraft in several southern states subsequent to that time. Grace Sherwood was accused in Princess Ann County, Virginia, in 1696. A jury of women searched her for witch marks, and the "water ordeal" was tried. That is, the sheriff was ordered to take "all such convenient assistance of boats and men as shall be by him thought fit, to meet at John Harper's plantation in order to take said Grace and put her [into water] above man's depth, and try her how she swims therein, always having care of her life to preserve her from drowning, and as soon as she came out that he request as many antient and knowing women as possible he can to search carefully for all marks or spots about her body not usual on others, etc." These "antient women" reported that they discovered certain distinctive marks of the woman. She was committed for trial.

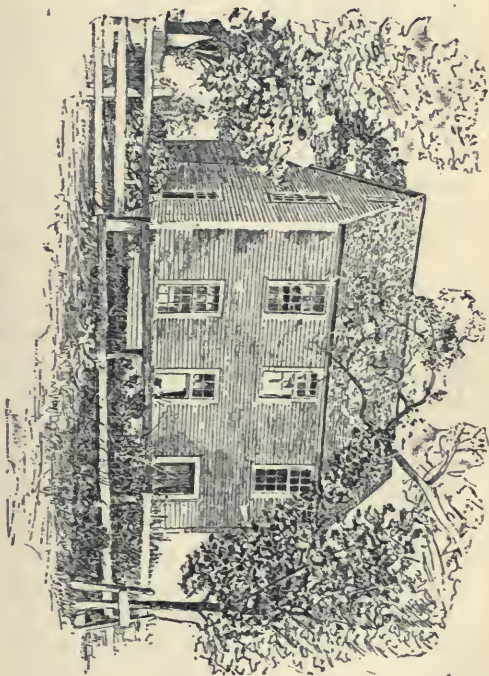
Persons were accused of witchcraft in South Carolina in 1709, tried and sentenced to be burned at the stake. Drake says they were roasted by fire but there is no evidence that they were burned to death. J. Prince, Salem Gazette, Nov. 6, 1891,

CHAPTER III.

THE OUTBREAK IN SALEM VILLAGE.

THE witchcraft delusion of 1692 undoubtedly had its inception in the home of Rev. Samuel Parris, pastor of the church in Salem Village. In his family were a daughter, Elizabeth, nine years of age; a niece, Abigail Williams, eleven years of age; and a servant, Tituba, half Indian, half negro. The tradition is that the two girls, with perhaps a few other children of the neighborhood, used, during the winter of 1691-2, to assemble in the minister's kitchen and practice tricks and incantations with Tituba. Among the other girls of the neighborhood, some of whom are believed to have been present at a portion of these performances, were Ann Putnam, twelve years of age, daughter of Sergt. Thomas Putnam; Mercy Lewis, seventeen years of age, maid in the family of Sergt. Putnam; Elizabeth Hubbard, seventeen years of age, a niece of the wife of Dr. Griggs, the village physician, and a servant in the family; and Sarah Churchill, aged twenty years, a servant

PARRIS HOUSE, SO-CALLED, SALEM VILLAGE.
[This building was added to the parsonage of 1692, after Parris departed.]



in the family of George Jacobs, Sen. Mercy Lewis had previously lived in the family of Rev. George Burroughs. During the winter these girls held occasional meetings in the neighborhood, usually at the minister's house. Calef says they began to act after a strange and unusual manner, by getting into holes and creeping under chairs and stools, and to use sundry odd postures and antic gestures, uttering foolish, ridiculous speeches, which neither they themselves nor any others could make sense of.¹

This state of affairs continuing from late in December until into February, 1692, the elder people learned something of what was transpiring in their midst. Great was their consternation. Dr. Griggs was called, but as sometimes happens, even in this age of great learning, the doctor did not know what ailed the young people. Their "disease" was one unknown to medical science. Evidently feeling obliged to give some explanation of the disorder, the doctor declared that the girls were possessed of the devil, in other words, bewitched. Thereupon the curiosity of the whole community was awakened. People came from far and near to witness the strange antics of these children. Their credulity was taxed to its utmost. Mr. Parris, as was natural, was not only an interested spectator, but he took charge of the whole business.

¹ Calef's More Wonders, Fowler's ed., 224.

He called a meeting of the ministers of the neighboring parishes to observe, to investigate, to pray. They came; they saw; they were conquered. They unanimously agreed with Dr. Griggs that the girls were bewitched. The all-important question was, Who or what caused them to act as they did? Who bewitched them? Whose spirit did the devil take to afflict them? Mr. Parris and some of the ministers and prominent people of the village undertook to solve the mystery. Several private fasts were held at the minister's house, and several were held publicly. The children at first refused to tell anything about the mysterious affair. Tituba professed to know how to discover witches, and tried some experiments with that end in view. With the assistance of her husband, John Indian, she mixed some meal with urine of the afflicted and made a cake. The children, hearing that Tituba was attempting to discover the witches, are said to have "cried out" against her. They said she pinched, pricked and tormented them, and they fell into fits. She acknowledged that she had learned how to find out a witch, but denied that she was one herself. Tituba was called an Indian, but she was not a North American Indian. She and her husband, John, were brought from the West Indies by Mr. Parris when he came to Massachu-

setts Bay. They had been his slaves there. Both spoke English but imperfectly and understood it only partially. In addition to Tituba, the children named Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn as their tormentors. Most of the early writers, think there was method in their madness. They describe Good as "a melancholy distracted person," and Osburn as "a bed-ridden old woman."² No one of the three women, they reason, was likely to be believed in any denial of the statements of these girls connected with families of prominence and respectability.

This, in brief, is the story that has come down to us from all the early and most of the later writers. I am not disposed to deny its correctness; but two or three suggestions occur in this connection, which seem worthy of mention. Is it probable that these girls, living miles apart, in some instances five miles from the minister's house, in a wilderness almost, where carriages were unknown and bridle paths often dangerous, would travel by night, in the dead of winter, to Parris's house and home again? Is it probable that their parents or mistresses would allow them out and away from home in this manner? Is it probable that such meetings, "circles" as some call them, could be held at the minister's

house and he not know it, or knowing, would permit their continuance?³

Tituba undoubtedly had familiarity with the strange tricks and jugglery practiced by the semi-barbarous races; and; although we know nothing definite about it, is it not reasonable to presume that she exhibited some of these to Elizabeth Parris and Abigail Williams, who lived in the house with her, and that they told their young friends in the village about the performances; that these friends came secretly to witness the mysterious tricks; that they were instructed in the practice of them, and did practice them for self amusement or the amazement of other young people; and that eventually the business got noised abroad and came to the knowledge of the elder people? They would naturally institute an inquiry. The girls, probably, realized that if the exact truth were known to their elders they would be severely punished; possibly publicly disciplined in church. To prevent this, may they not have claimed that they could not help doing as they did? They undoubtedly had some knowledge of witchcraft,

³The writer knows of a case in a Salem school within recent years, where a girl of eight or ten years would throw herself full length on the floor, and roll and writhe, and pretend to be in the greatest agony. The teacher eventually discovered the imposture, but the girl continued her performances to the amazement and consternation of other school girls. When told by the teacher to "get up" she would do so promptly and go out to play.

✓

enough at least to enable them to make a pretense of being bewitched. The girls could not for a moment realize the terrible consequences which were to follow. Having taken the first step, they were in the position of all who take a first step in falsehood or any other wrong doing, another step became necessary, and then another. Then they were probably commanded by their elders to tell who caused them to do these strange things ; or, as most writers put it, who "afflicted" them. As already stated, they named Tituba, Good and Osburn. Is it possible that we have misunderstood the first statements of these children ? Is it possible they did not say Tituba's *apparition* caused them to do certain strange things, but that they said *she taught* them ? Is it possible that Parris, to save scandal in his own immediate household, made Tituba declare that she had bewitched the girls ? I do not mean to assert that this is the correct version of the outbreak of witchcraft in Salem Village. I only desire to suggest what may have been ; something which offers, perhaps, a rational explanation of the beginning of this horrid nightmare. Certainly such a course is as plausible, as reasonable, and has as much basis of fact as any of the theories heretofore advanced. We know nothing about these things as matter of absolute knowledge ; all is conjecture.

At all events, the children "named" the three women as their tormentors. Joseph Hutchinson, Edward Putnam, Thomas Putnam and Thomas Preston lodged complaint against Tituba, Good and Osburn ; and on Feb. 29, Jonathan



SALEM VILLAGE CHURCH, 1692.

Corwin and John Hathorne, the Salem magistrates, issued warrants for their arrest, the first warrants issued for witchcraft in 1692. The examinations were begun on Tuesday, March 1, 1692. They were to have been held in the house of Lieut. Nathaniel Ingersoll in Salem Village, the tavern of the place; but the num-

bers who came to witness the opening scene in this great drama of the new world could not be accommodated in its rooms, and the court therefore adjourned to the meeting house.

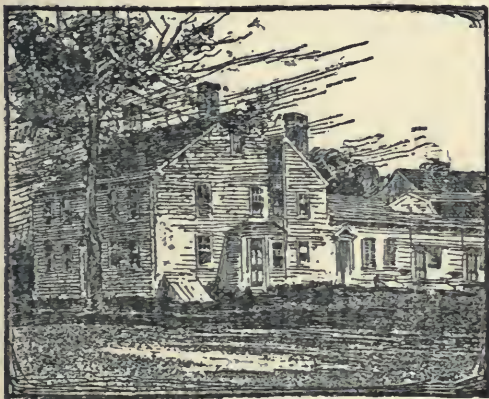
As Sarah Good was the first person examined I will deal with her case first. Sarah Good was wife of William Good, "laborer." She is said to have been about seventy years of age. Calef says⁴ she had long been counted a melancholy or distracted woman; and Upham says⁵ she was broken down by wretchedness of condition and ill-repute. Her answers to the questions propounded to her, as the reader will see, give no evidence of coming from a person "broken down," or "forlorn." She appears to have answered with a fair degree of spirit. During most of the first week in March, while on trial before the local magistrates, Sarah Good was taken to Ipswich jail every night and returned in the morning, a distance of about ten miles each way. From the testimony of her keepers and the officers who escorted her to and from jail, we learn that she exhibited considerable animation. She leaped off her horse three times, railed at the magistrates, and endeavored to kill herself. Putnam says⁶ there is no evidence that Sarah Good ever had trouble with any of her neighbors or accusers, or that any of them had

⁴ Fowler's Ed., 226.

⁵ Salem Witchcraft, II., 13.

⁶ Putnam's Witchcraft Explained, 334.

hostile feelings toward her. Evidently he had never seen the testimony of the Abbeyes and the Gadges. Samuel Abbey, aged thirty-five, told the magistrates that three years previous to the hearing William and Sarah Good, being destitute of a house, came to dwell in their house out of charity ; that they let them live there until Sarah Good was of "so turbulent a spirit, spite-



GADGE HOUSE, DANVERS.

ful and so maliciously bent" that they could not suffer her to live in their house. Ever since that time "Sarah Good hath carried it very spitefully and malitiously towards them." After she had gone from them they began to lose cattle, and lost several "in an unusual manner, in a drooping condition, and yet they would eat."

Altogether they lost seventeen in two years, besides sheep and hogs ; and " both doe believe they dyed of witchcraft." They further testified that William Good told them he went home one day and told his wife the Abbeys had lost two cows and she said she did not care if the Abbeys had lost all their cows. They concluded their testimony with this remarkable statement: "Just that very day that the said Sarah Good was taken up we the deponents had a cow that could not rise alone, but since presently after she was taken up, the said cow was well and could rise so well as if she had ailed nothing."

Sarah Gadge deposed that Sarah Good came to her house about two and a half years previously and wanted to come in ; Gadge told her she could not, for she was afraid she had been with them that had had small pox, whereupon Good fell to muttering and scolding. The next morning Gadge's cows died, " in a sudden, terrible, and strange unusual manner soe that some of the neighbors said and deponent did think it to be done by witchcraft." The testimony of these witnesses shows that some of Good's accusers had had personal encounters with her, which may have engendered ill-feeling.

We come now to the examination of Sarah Good herself. It is given here as found on the court files in Salem. The warrant issued by Hathorne and Corwin charged her with " suspicion of witchcraft done to Elizabeth Parris,

Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam and Elizabeth Hubbard, at sundry times within this two months." This warrant was returned with the certificate of George Locker, constable, that he had "brought the person of the within named Sarah Good." Her testimony was written down by Ezekiel Cheever, and is given below. The examination was on the first and fifth. It is quite evident that only portions of the testimony were taken, and that is interspersed with comments by the reporter. And here a word of caution may as well be uttered, which will apply not more to the case of Sarah Good than to others. All the testimony in these trials, or examinations, before the local magistrates was taken by persons intensely prejudiced toward the prosecution. In reading it this should always be borne in mind. Much of it was taken by Parris himself. Knowing his feelings, and that he was the leading prosecutor very often, we feel that he would be pretty sure to devote more attention to testimony against the accused than to that in their favor. In fact, this is evidenced throughout the records which have been preserved.

The examination of Sarah Good before the Worshipful Esqrs. John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin.

Sarah Good, what evil spirit have you familiarity with?
—None.

Have you made no contracts with the devil?—No.

Why do you hurt these children?—I do not hurt them. I scorn it.

Who do you employ then to do it?—I employ nobody.

What creature do you employ then?—No creature: but I am falsely accused.

Why did you go away muttering from Mr. Parris's house?—I did not mutter, but thanked him for what he gave my child.

Have you no contract with the devil?—No.

Hathorne desired the children all of them to look upon her and see if this were the person that hurt them, and so they all did look upon her and said that this was one of the persons that did torment them. Presently they were all tormented.

Sarah Good, do you not see now what you have done? Why do you not tell us the truth? Why do you thus torment these poor children?—I do not torment them.

Who do you employ then?—I employ nobody. I scorn it.

How came they thus tormented?—What do I know? You bring others here and now you charge me with it.

Why who was it?—I do not know but it was some you brought into the meeting house with you.

We brought you into the meeting-house.—But you brought in two more.

Who is it then that tormented the children? It was Osburn.

What is it you say when you go muttering away from person's houses?—If I must tell I will tell.

Do tell us, then.—If I must tell, I will tell. It is the commandments: I may say my commandments, I hope.

What commandment is it?—If I must tell you, I will tell; it is a psalm.

What psalm?

(After a long time she muttered over some part of a psalm.)

Who do you serve?—I serve God.

What God do you serve?—The God that made heaven

and earth (though she was not willing to mention the word "God"). Her answers were in a very wicked, spiteful manner, reflecting and retorting against the authority with base and abusive words; and many lies she was taken in. It was here said that her husband had said that she was either a witch or would be one very quickly. The worshipful Mr. Hathorne asked him his reason why he said so of her, whether he had ever seen anything by her. He answered: "No, not in this nature, but it was her bad carriage to him; and indeed," said he, "I may say with tears, that she is an enemy to all good."

Here is the account of this examination of Sarah Good as written down by Hathorne himself:

Salem Village, March the first, 1692. Sarah Good, upon examination, denied the matter of fact, viz., that she ever used any witchcraft or hurt the above said children, or any of them. The above named children, being all present, positively accused her of hurting them sundry times within this two months, and also that morning. Sarah Good denied that she had been at their houses in said time or near them or had done them any hurt. All the above said children then present accused her face to face. Upon which they were all dreadfully tortured and tormented for a short space of time, and, the affliction and tortures, being over they charged said Sarah Good again that she had then so tortured them, and came to them and did it, although she was personally then kept at a considerable distance from them.

Sarah Good being asked if that she did not then hurt them, who did it, and the children being again tortured, she looked upon them, and said it was one of them we brought into the house with us. We asked her who it was. She then answered, and said it was Sarah Osburn, and Sarah Osburn was then under custody, and not in the house, and the children, being quickly after recovered out of their fits, said that it was Sarah Good and also Sarah Osburn that

then did hurt and torment or afflict them, although both of them at the same time at a distance or remote from them personally. There were also sundry other questions put to her, and answers given thereunto by her according as is also given in.

On March 7, Good, with Osburn and Tituba, was sent to the jail in Boston. There she remained until June 28 when the grand jury presented an indictment against her as follows :

The jurors for our sovereign Lord and Lady, the King and Queen, present that Sarah Good, wife of William Good of Salem Village, husbandman, the second day of May in the fourth year of the reigne of our sovereign Lord and Lady, William and Mary, by the grace of God, of England, Scotland, France and Ireland, King and Queen, defenders of the faith &c., and divers other days and times, as well before as after, certain detestable arts called witchcraft and sorceries, wickedly and feloniously hath used, practiced and exercised, at and within the township of Salem within the county of Essex aforesaid, in upon and against one Sarah Vibber, wife of John Vibber, of Salem aforesaid, husbandman, by which said wicked arts she, said Sarah Vibber, the said second day of May in the fourth year abovesaid and divers other days and times as well before as after, was and is afflicted, pined, consumed, wasted and tormented, and also for sundry other acts of witchcraft by said Sarah Good committed and done, before and since that time, against the peace of our sovereign Lord and Lady, the King and Queen, their crown and dignity and against the forme of the statute in that case made and provided.

A second indictment charged her with practicing the same arts on Elizabeth Hubbard, a third charged a similar offence committed on Ann Putnam. The time alleged in the last two indictments was March 1, which, it will be re-



SARAH OSBURN HOUSE.

membered, was the date of the preliminary examination. During the trial of these cases Deliverance Hobbs gave a "confession" as follows :

"Being at a meeting of the witches in Mr. Parris's field when Mr. Burroughs preached and administered the sacrament to them, saw Sarah Good among the rest and this fully agrees with what the afflicted relate."

Abigail Hobbs testified that she "was in company with Sarah Good and knows her to be a witch, and afterwards was taken deaf; and Mary Walcott saw Good and Osburn run their fingers into this (deponent's) ears and a little after she spoke and said Good told her she should not speak." Mary Warren confessed that "Sarah Good is a witch and brought her the book to sign."

William Batten, William Shaw and Deborah Shaw testified that Susan Sheldon's hands were tied in such a manner that they were forced to cut the string. Sheldon told them it was Good Dustin that tied her hands; that she had been thus tied four times in two weeks, "the two last times by Sarah Good." They further declared that whenever she touched the string she was bit; also to a broom being carried out of the house and being put in a tree.

Johanna Chilburn testified that "the apparition of Sarah Good and her last child appeared to deponent and told her that its mother murdered it;" that Good said she did it because she

could not attend it; that the child told its mother she was a witch, and then "Sarah Good said she did give it to the devil."

Henry Herrick testified that Sarah Good came to his father's house and desired to lodge there; his father forbade it, and she went away grumbling. Being followed and forbidden to sleep in the barn, she replied that it would cost his father one or two of his best cows. Jonathan Batchelder added to this that about a week after two of his "master cattle" were removed and younger cattle put in their places, and since then several cattle had been let loose in a strange manner.

Elizabeth Hubbard, one of the afflicted, saw the apparition of Sarah Good, "who did most grievously afflict her by pinching and pricking," and so continued hurting her until the first day of March, and then tortured her on that day, the day of her examination. She had also seen the apparition of Sarah Good afflict Elizabeth Parris, Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam and Sarah Vibber. "One night," she continued, "Samuel Sibley, that was attending me, struck Sarah Good on the arm." Susannah Sheldon said she had been most grievously tortured by the apparition of Sarah Good "biting, pricking, pinching and almost choking me to death." On June 26, 1692, Good most violently pulled her down behind a chest and tied her hands togeth-

er with a wheel band and choked her, and William Battis and Thomas Buffinton were forced to cut the band from her hands, for they could not untie it. During the examination of Good this girl pretended to be afflicted, and said Sarah Good, by invisible hands, took a censer off the table and carried it out doors. Here is the deposition of Ann Putnam :

The deposition of Ann Putnam, Jr., who testifieth and saith that on the 25th of February, 1691-92, I saw the apparition of Sarah Good which did torture me most grievously, but I did not know her name until the 27th of February, and then she told me her name was Sarah Good. And then she did pinch me most grievously, and also since, several times urging me vehemently to write in her book. And also on the first of March, being the day of her examination, Sarah Good did most grievously torture me, and also several times since. And also on the first day of March, 1692, I saw the apparition of Sarah Good go and afflict the bodies of Elizabeth Parris, Abigail Williams and Elizabeth Hubbard. Also I have seen the apparition of Sarah Good afflicting the body of Sarah Vibber.

mark
Ann x Putnam.

Sarah Vibber, a woman 36 years of age, testified that Good tortured Mercy Lewis on April 11, and herself on May 2, by pressing her breath almost out, and also afflicted her infant so that she and Vibber could not hold it. Since then the apparition of Sarah Good had pinched, beat and choked her, and pricked her with pins. Subsequently, one night, Good's apparition came into her room, pulled down the clothes and looked at her four years old child, and it had a great fit.

During this trial one of the witnesses who sat in the room cried out that Good had stabbed her, and had broken the knife-blade in so doing. The point of the blade was taken from her clothes where she said she was stabbed. Thereupon a young man arose in the court and stated that he broke that very knife the previous day and threw away the point. He produced the remaining part of the knife. It was then apparent that the girl had picked up the point which he threw away and put it in the bosom of her dress, whence she drew it to corroborate her statement that some one had stabbed her. She had deliberately falsified, and used the knife-point to reinforce the falsehood. If she was false in this statement, why not in all? If one girl falsified, how do we know whom to believe?

The most remarkable witness in this case, and in respect to age, the most remarkable in this whole history, was Dorcas Good. Dorcas was daughter of the accused Sarah Good, and only five years of age. She was called to testify against her own mother. Her evidence was merely that her mother "had three birds, one black, one yellow, and these birds hurt the children and afflicted persons." It may be as well to dispose of little Dorcas and her part in the witchcraft tragedy at this point as later. She was herself accused of being a witch, and three depositions against her are on the files.

"The deposition of Mercy Lewis, aged about nineteen years, who testifieth and saith that on the 2d of April, 1692, the apperishtion of Dorrithy Good, Sarah Good's daughter, came to me and did afflict me, urging me to write in her book and several times since Dorothy Good hath afflicted me, biting, pinching and choaking me, urging me to write in her book."

Mary Walcott deposed that March 21, "saw the apparition of Dorcas Good come to her, bit her, pinched her and afflicted her most grievously, also almost choking her and urged her to write in a book." Ann Putnam testified to the same sort of torment in almost the exact words of Walcott. Dorcas was committed to jail with her mother. We have no further record of her. Whether she was ever tried is not known; probably not. Certainly she was not executed.

Sarah Good was convicted and sentenced to be hanged. She was executed on July 19. Rev. Mr. Noyes, who was present, told her as she stood on the scaffold, "You are a witch, and you know you are a witch." "You are a liar," was her indignant reply; "I am no more a witch than you are a wizzard, and if you take my life, God will give you blood to drink."

Sarah Osburn was about sixty years of age in 1692. Her husband was Alexander Osburn. Thirty years before, she had been married to Robert Prince, and still earlier to Thomas Small, both of whom were dead. Osburn came over

from Ireland a few years previous to 1692, bound to service for a term of years to one of the settlers in the Village, in consideration of a sum of money advanced to pay his expenses to this country. The widow Prince, needing some one to manage her farm, bought out his unexpired time for fifteen pounds. He carried on the farm for a short time and then married the widow.⁸ Their earlier life together and subsequent marriage naturally gave rise to some gossip of an uncomplimentary nature. This, undoubtedly, was one of the inducements for the accusing girls to "cry out" against her among the first. The Osburns appear to have been in comfortable circumstances. Their greatest cross was the illness which confined the wife to her bed much of the time. Both were members of the church, and so far as we know, they were devout Christians, sober and industrious citizens.

Sarah Osburn was examined before the local magistrates on the first, second and third of March. No particularly new or interesting facts were developed. Her examination was very nearly a repetition of the proceedings in the case of Sarah Good. She denied having familiarity with any evil spirit, or having made any contract with the devil, and said she did not hurt the children or employ any one to hurt

them. "Mr. Hathorne," says Cheever's report, "desired all the children to stand up and look upon her, and see if they did not know her, which they all did. And every one of them said that this was one of the women that did afflict them, and that they had constantly seen her in the very habit she was now in. Three evidences declared that she said this morning that she was more like to be bewitched than that she was a witch. Mr. Hathorne asked what made her say so. She answered that she was frightened one time in her sleep, and either saw or dreamed she saw a thing like an Indian, all black, which did pinch her in the neck, and pulled her by the back part of her head to the door of the house." The woman was sent to jail in Boston. There she died. The excitement and mental strain of the arrest and examination, the exposure in going to and from Ipswich jail, and the hardships of jail life in Boston, together with the ill-treatment and brutality to which all the accused were subjected, proved fatal to this feeble old woman. The last record in her case is this bill of the Boston jailer: "To chains for Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn, 14 shillings. To the keeping of Sarah Osburn from the 7th March to 10 May, when she died, being nine weeks and two days, 1£. 3s. 5d." In the fullest sense of the word,

Sarah Osburn was one of the "victims" of the witchcraft delusion of 1692.

Tituba, in the course of her examination, told a rambling and somewhat disjointed story, evidently due partly to her want of comprehension of the English language, and the broken English in which she was obliged to reply. Asked if she ever went on a witch expedition with Good and Osburn, she replied; "They are very strong and pull me, and make me go with them." "Where did you go," asked the magistrate. "Up to Mr. Putnam's and make me hurt the child." "Who did make you go?" "A man that is very strong, and these two women, Good and Osburn, but I am sorry." "How did you go? What do you ride upon?" "I ride upon a stick or pole, and Good and Osburn behind me; we ride taking hold of one another; I don't know how we go, for I saw no trees or path, but was presently there when we were up." She declared that she never practiced witchcraft in her own country. Asked what sights she saw when she went abroad, she replied: "I see a man, a dog, a hog, and two cats, a black and red, and the strange monster was Osburn's that I mentioned before, this was the hairy imp. The man would give it to me but I would not have it." To the jail in Boston went Tituba also. Calef says she was "afterwards committed to prison and lay there until sold for her fees." She declared

that her master beat her and otherwise abused her to make her confess and accuse others of witchcraft; that whatever she said by way of accusing others was because of such treatment, and that her master refused to pay her fees unless she would stand to her confession.¹⁰ Drake says Tituba was sold to pay her prison fees after lying there thirteen months.¹¹ She was never tried before any court.

¹⁰ Fowler's Ed., 227.

¹¹ Annals of N. E., 190.



CORNER OF JUDGE CORWIN HOUSE.

CHAPTER IV.

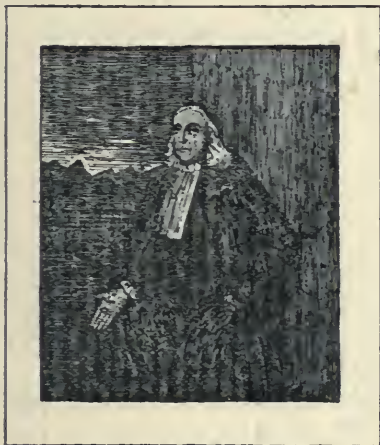
THE COURT AND PLACES OF TRIAL.

WHEN Gov. Phips arrived in Boston on May 14, 1692, he found the jails filled with persons accused of witchcraft. No courts existed ; they had fallen with the "provisional government" which succeeded the Andros administration. The charter that Phips brought over empowered the General Court to erect and constitute judicatories and courts of record or other courts, of which the Governor was to appoint the judges.¹ No meeting of the General Court could be held until after an election of members, which must be two or three weeks later. Immediate trial of the accused was demanded as their right, and also to relieve the overcrowded condition of the jails. It had long been the custom in England, in cases of emergency, for the king to appoint Commissioners of Oyer and Terminer to hear and decide the causes.² In the absence of courts and as the

¹ Province charter, 1692. Province Laws, I., 1.

² Chitty's Blackstone, Book IV., 221.

personal representative of the King, no doubt, Gov. Phips issued a commission for a court of Oyer and Terminer.³ He appointed the commissioners on May 27. William Stoughton, the deputy governor, was named first and always presided as chief justice. His previous political



CHIEF JUSTICE STOUGHTON.

affiliations had made him somewhat unpopular with the people. As a candidate for a judicial position under the preceding administration, he

3" May 27, 1692. Upon consideration that there are many criminal offenders now in custody some whereof have lyen long and many inconveniences attending the thronging of the goals at this hot season of the year, there being no judacatories or courts of justices yet established." Preamble to order of Council establishing the court. Ex. Recd., II., 176.

received not a single vote.⁴ Stoughton was educated for the ministry and not the law, but all accounts agree that he was a very able man. He was not without judicial experience, for he sat with Dudley and others at the trial of Mary Glover in 1688. Stoughton was a great friend of the Mathers. To this friendship and to his acknowledged ability he undoubtedly owed his appointment in 1692. His associates on the commission were Nathaniel Saltonstall of Haverhill, Major Bartholomew Gedney, John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin of Salem, Major John Richards, Wait Winthrop, Peter Sargent and Capt. Samuel Sewall, of Boston. Saltonstall withdrew soon after his appointment, probably immediately after the first sitting of the court, at which Bridget Bishop was tried, because he was "very much dissatisfied with the proceedings of it."⁵

The men who constituted this commission, or court, were among the ablest in the colony. None stood higher in the social scale; none in the colony were better qualified for the work of the bench. On the great question of the hour, they entertained substantially the same views as the jurists of England, and in their subsequent acts were governed by the rules laid down by the English courts in numerous cases, although

⁴ Bancroft's Hist. U. S., II., 258.

⁵ Brattle, Mass. Hist. Coll., I-V., 75.



JUDGE SAMUEL SEWALL.

possibly they did not always protect the rights of accused persons as carefully as the English judges did. Thomas Newton, a trained lawyer, was appointed special king's attorney for the trial of the witchcraft cases, and prepared the earlier ones for the court, after which he resigned and the attorney general, Anthony Checkley, took charge of the prosecution. Checkley had been attorney general since 1689, having been first chosen by "the governor, council and assembly," in that year and recommended by Phips on July 27, 1692. The fact that none of these judges were educated for the bar has been emphasized by some writers on the witchcraft troubles of 1692. That is true, but these men probably knew as much about the law of witchcraft as any lawyers in America at that time; perhaps more than most of them. The cases were tried in accordance with distinguished English precedents, and it is very much to be doubted whether the result would have been any different had lawyers occupied the bench. The office of sheriff was substituted for that of marshal, and George Corwin, a relative of Jonathan Corwin, appointed to the new office. Marshal Herrick was appointed a deputy sheriff. Persons accused of witchcraft were committed to the jails in Salem, Boston, Ipswich and Cambridge. Most of those first committed by the magistrates to await the action of the higher court

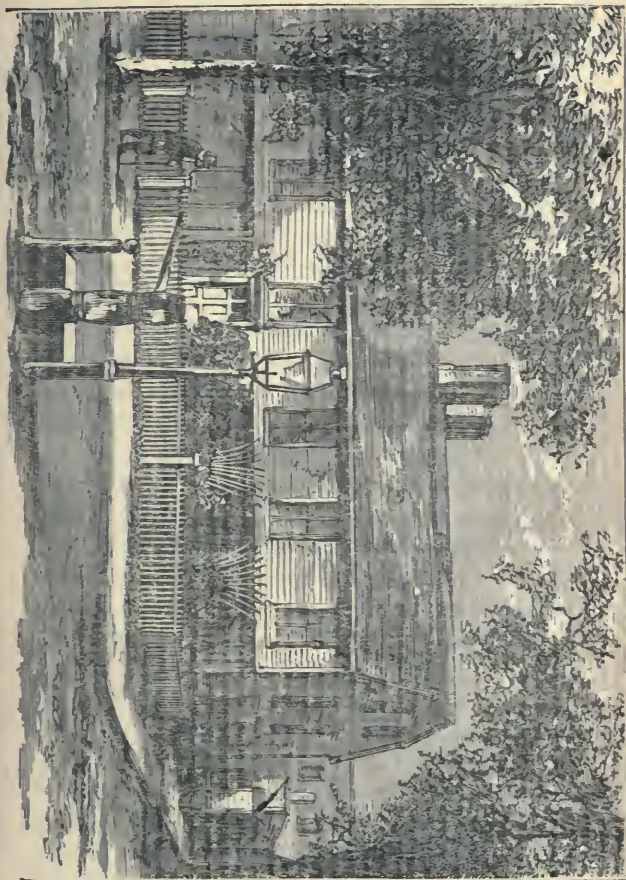
were sent to Boston, as up to this time all capital trials had taken place there. After the trials were begun in Salem, prisoners were committed to the jail in that town.⁶

The preliminary trials or examinations of the accused were held in Nathaniel Ingersoll's tavern and in the meeting house in Salem Village, now Danvers ; in the meeting-house in the town of Salem on the site of the present First Church, or in Thomas Beadle's house, or tavern, on Essex street. Nearly all the accused were finally tried in the court house that stood in what was then Town-house lane, now Washington street, about opposite the end of Lynde street, Salem. Some, perhaps, were tried in the Salem meeting house.

There is a tradition that trials or examinations of some kind were held in the Roger Williams house on the corner of Essex and North streets. No direct evidence of this exists. The court of Oyer and Terminer never sat there. The house was occupied at the time by Jonathan Corwin, and no doubt complaints were there made to him against suspected persons, and warrants for their arrest issued. Possibly grand jury deliberations were held in the house while trials were being held in the court house. In all

⁶ The Salem jail was located on Prison Lane, now St. Peter street, on the corner of the present Federal street, and some of the timbers of the old building are contained in the frame of Mr. A. C. Goodell's house near this corner, on Federal street.

JUDGE GORWIN ON ROGER WILLIAMS HOUSE. (AS IT WAS ABOUT 1850.)



probability it had some connection with the witchcraft prosecutions. The tradition has been handed down with too much directness to admit of serious doubt.

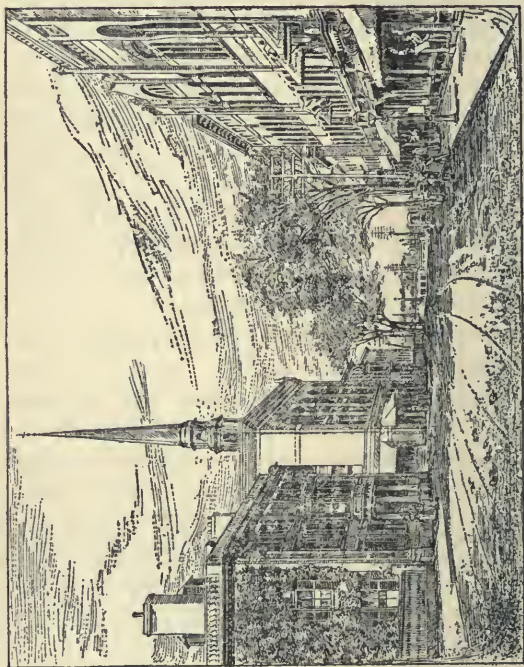
Where were the witchcraft victims hanged? No one knows as matter of absolute certainty. The tradition has always been that Gallows hill, between Salem and Peabody, was the scene of the executions. No other place has ever been seriously suggested. The records do not throw light upon this question, but the tradition is hardly open to doubt. The earliest writings in which I find mention of this hill as the place of execution bear date about one hundred years after the event. Two lives might well have spanned that period — certainly three did in innumerable instances; so that the story could hardly have been misunderstood or misstated in those transmissions. A letter written in Salem, Nov. 25, 1791, by Rev. Dr. Holyoke, furnishes the following information: "In the last month there died a man in this town, by the name of John Symonds, aged a hundred years lacking about six months, having been born in the famous '92. He has told me that his nurse had often told him, that while she was attending his mother at the time she lay in with him, she saw from the chamber windows, those unhappy people hanging on Gallows hill, who were executed for witches by the delusion of the times." A

family of the name of Symonds lived, many years ago, on Bridge street, Salem, near the bridge leading to Beverly. From that spot Gallows hill was plainly visible. Symonds families also lived in North Salem then, and the hill could be easily seen from there. A writer in the Salem Register about 1880, stated that an elderly citizen had told him that he had traced the ancient path to the summit of the hill. It did not lead from Boston street, as now, but from the old pasture entrance at the head of Broad street. This same elderly citizen remembered the oak tree that stood on the hill and had been used as a gallows, and pointed out the place where it stood in his younger days.*

The new court of Oyer and Terminer sat for the first time in Salem in June, for the purpose of trying Bridget Bishop. There are no complete records of this court now extant. Our information of its proceedings is obtained mainly from the loose papers on file in the court house

* After long and careful investigation I am convinced that the condemned persons were hanged near the head of what is now Nichols street, on the hill, a little to the south-east, perhaps; and the bodies were buried near the head of Hanson street. Caleb Buffum, who lived at the foot of the hill and made coffins, is said by his descendants to have assisted in conveying the bodies to the North river, whence they were taken away in boats by relatives or friends.

There was a tavern on the spot now occupied by the Nichols house at the head of Proctor's court, and there, on execution day, tradition in the Buffum family says, the crowd would gather to drink and make merry, many getting drunk.



SITE OF COURT HOUSE (1692), SALEM.

in Salem and the state house in Boston. Quite a number of valuable and interesting papers have, from time to time, been deposited with the Essex Institute in Salem and the historical societies of Boston. The dates of the sessions of the court are found in the History of Massachusetts written by Gov. Hutchinson. Hutchinson is supposed to have had access to the court record, but the dates which he mentions are unquestionably misleading. For instance, when he says that six persons, whom he names, were tried and convicted on August 5,⁷ we know that this was not possible. It would take more than a day to hear the testimony we now have in the cases. How much more there was then it is not possible to say; doubtless considerable.⁸ Some time must have been consumed in empanelling juries and returning and recording verdicts. Still more, we know that much time was wasted by reason of the "fits" and "afflictions" of the witnesses and the accusers. During the trial of one of these very cases that Hutchinson alleges was tried on August 5, the report says: "It cost the court a wonderful deal of trouble to hear the testimonies of the sufferers, for when they

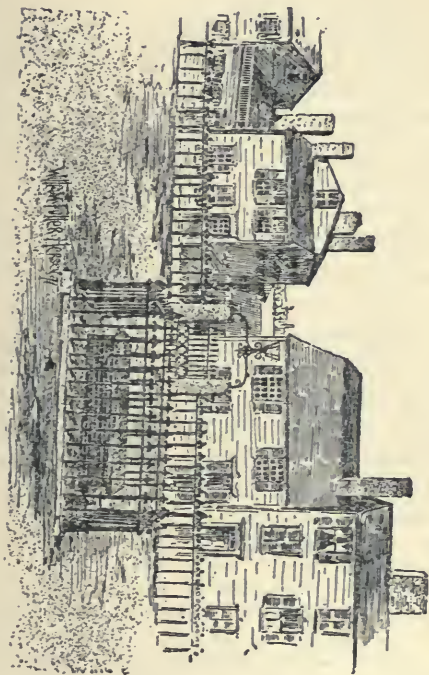
⁷ Hist. Mass., II., 55-58.

⁸ Clerk Stephen Sewall wrote in the case of Rebecca Nurse: "In this Tryall are Twenty Papers, besides this judgment & there were in this tryall as well as other Tryalls of ye same nature severall evidences vive voce which were not written and so I can give no copies of them."

were going to give in their depositions they would for a long while be taken with fits, etc." Thomas Newton, the attorney general, wrote to the clerk: "I fear we shall not this week try all we have sent for, by reason the trials will be tedious, and the afflicted persons cannot readily give their testimony, being struck dumb and senseless for a season." The probability is that the dates mentioned by Hutchinson and others as days of trial, were the days on which sentence was pronounced. August 5 was Friday; September 9 was Friday, and September 17 was Saturday. These would very naturally be sentence days, but certainly not days on which the court would come in to begin the trial of a half dozen important cases. Furthermore, the papers on file show that Burroughs, who, Hutchinson says was tried on August 5, was on trial on the 2d and 3rd of that month.⁸ His trial probably was begun on the 2d and was finished on or before the 5th. Most testimony before the grand inquest was written down when given, and at the jury trials read to the court and sworn to by the witness. Sometimes it was called testimony and at others, deposition.

The trial of Bridget Bishop was held the first

⁸ When I speak of "trials," I include the examinations before the grand jury, for most of the time was occupied in taking testimony there. Before the jury of trials, when this testimony was read, the afflicted often created scenes of confusion, and had fits, and otherwise interrupted the proceedings.



COTTON MATHER'S GRAVE, BOSTON.

week in June. Most of the depositions and testimony against her are dated June 2. This was probably the date on which they were taken before the grand jury not that of the day they were given before the jury of trials. She was convicted, and hanged on June 10, Friday. The court then adjourned to the 28th of June.

The newly elected General Court convened in Boston in the mean time, June 8. The judges, before they resumed business, in accordance with a time-honored custom, united with the Governor and council in requesting the opinion of the ministers of the churches in and around Boston on the momentous question then pending. The answer, written by Cotton Mather, was a calm, judicious paper. After acknowledging the success which God had given to "the sedulous and assiduous endeavors of the rulers to defeat the abominable witchcrafts," they prayed that "the discovery of those mysterious and mischievous wickednesses might be perfected." They continue :

"We judge that, in the prosecution of these and all such witchcrafts there is need of a very critical and exquisite caution, lest by too much credulity for things received only upon the devil's authority, there be a door opened for a long train of miserable consequences, and Satan get an advantage over us ; for we should not be ignorant of his devices.

As in complaints upon witchcraft there may be matters of inquiry which do not amount unto matters of presumption, and there may be matters of presumption which yet

may not be matters of conviction, so it is necessary that all proceedings thereabout be managed with an exceeding tenderness toward those that may be complained of, especially if they have been persons formerly of an unblemished reputation.

When the first inquiry is made into the circumstances of such as may lie under the just suspicion of witchcrafts, we could wish that there may be admitted as little as possible of such noise, company and openness as may too hastily expose them that are examined, and that there may be nothing used as a test for the trial of the suspected, the lawfulness whereof may be doubted by the people of God, but that the directions given by such judicious writers as Perkins and Barnard, may be observed.

Presumptions whereupon persons may be committed, and much more, convictions whereupon persons may be condemned as guilty of witchcrafts, ought certainly to be more considerable than barely the accused persons being represented by a spectre unto the afflicted, inasmuch as it is an undoubted and notorious thing, that a demon may by God's permission appear, even to ill purposes, in the shape of an innocent, yea, and a virtuous man. Nor can we esteem alterations made in the sufferers, by a look or touch of the accused, to be an infallible evidence of guilt, but frequently liable to be abused by the devil's legerdemain.

We know not whether some remarkable affronts given the devils, by our disbelieving these testimonies whose whole force and strength is from them alone, may not put a period unto the progress of the dreadful calamity begun upon us, in the accusation of so many persons, whereof some, we hope, are yet clear from the great transgression laid to their charge.

Nevertheless, we cannot but humbly recommend unto the government, the speedy and vigorous prosecutions of such as have rendered themselves obnoxious, according to the directions given in the laws of God and the wholesome statutes of the English nation for the detection of witchcrafts."

Many writers, in commenting on this letter of

advice, lay particular stress on the last clause, often ignoring the others. Many have quoted that alone as indicating the views of the ministers. Could anything be more unjust? The whole history of the witchcraft era, and especially the part the ministers took in it, has been warped by such perversion of this letter. Read without prejudice, is it not more like the charge of a judge to a jury than a savage demand for the shedding of innocent blood, as many historians would have us believe? Five of the six paragraphs in the letter devoted to advice are cautionary, while only one urges that those who have violated the laws of God and man, as understood by every one then, be vigorously prosecuted. Unfortunately, the judges did not heed the cautions. They were more blinded than the ministers. As Barrett Wendell says, it was "an honest warning of a danger in spite of which the court had no moral right to hesitate in the performance of its official duty."⁹

The court reconvened the last of June, and tried Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Elizabeth Howe and Susanna Martin, and finished the trial of Rebecca Nurse, begun on June 2d and continued on the 3rd. All were convicted, and sentenced to be hanged on Tuesday, July 19. The third sitting was about August 2, Tuesday, when Rev. George Burroughs, John Procter, Elizabeth

⁹ "Cotton Mather," 108.



COTTON MATHER.

Procter, George Jacobs, sen., John Willard and Martha Carrier were tried and convicted. With the exception of Elizabeth Procter, they were executed on Friday, August 19. Another session was held early in September, beginning on Tuesday, the 6th, and terminating on Saturday, the 17th. Martha Corey, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Dorcas Hoar and Mary Bradbury were tried, found guilty and sentenced the first week. All save the two last named were hanged on the 22d.

During the following week nine more accused persons were convicted and sentenced, namely: Margaret Scott, Wilnot Reed, Samuel Wardwell, Mary Parker, Abigail Faulkner, Rebecca Eames, Mary Lacey, Ann Foster and Abigail Hobbs. Scott, Reed, Wardwell and Parker were executed on Thursday, the 22d. These, with the four convicted the preceding week, were the last persons hanged for witchcraft in 1692 or, for that matter, ever in Massachusetts. It was on this occasion that Rev. Mr. Noyes, minister of the First Church in Salem, turned toward the bodies of the victims and said: "What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there."¹⁰ Hutchinson says, "Those who were condemned and were not executed, I suppose all confessed their guilt. I have seen the confessions of several of them."¹¹

¹⁰ Calef. Fowler's Ed., 265.

¹¹ Hist. Mass., II., 59.

After these convictions, the court adjourned the witchcraft trials until Nov. 2. But it never sat again to try witchcraft cases. It did sit in Boston on Oct. 10, to "trie a French malatto for shooting dead an English youth."¹² On the 28th of the preceding June the General Court passed an act establishing courts of general sessions of the peace on and after the last Tuesday in July, which was the 26th; also establishing inferior courts of common pleas to hold sessions at the same time and in places where they were formerly held. This act was disallowed by the home government on Aug. 22, 1695. These courts were established only until others should be provided. At the session of the General Court in the fall an act was passed, on Nov. 25, creating various courts, among them courts of quarter sessions and common pleas and a superior court of judicature. On the 16th of December, a further act was passed which provided that, "considering the many persons in Essex county charged as capital offenders, and that the time had passed for the sitting of the court," a special court of assize and jail delivery was ordered in the county.¹³ The first term of this court was to be held in Salem in January. These acts establishing regular courts certainly terminated the special court of Oyer and Terminer. Tribunals created in emergencies always ceased

¹² Sewall Papers, I., 366. ¹³ Province Laws, I., 100.

to exist when the emergency was passed.¹⁴ It was now passed, because regular courts had been established competent to do the work previously done by the Commissioners of Oyer and Terminer. Stoughton was made chief justice of the new court, with Richards, Winthrop, Sewall and Danforth, associates. At its session held in Salem in January, the grand jury found about fifty indictments for witchcraft, and twenty-one persons were tried. Three of them were convicted and sentenced to be hanged, viz., Mary Post of Rowley, Elizabeth Johnson, junior, and Sarah Wardwell, widow of Samuel Wardwell, of Andover. They were never executed. Four were tried in Charlestown, one in Boston, and five in Ipswich in May (the last trials), but no more convictions could be secured. Finally, in May, Gov. Phips issued a proclamation releasing all persons held in custody on charge of witchcraft—about one hundred and fifty in number.¹⁵ No other prosecutions for witchcraft were ever made in Essex county.

Only one case of witchcraft ever after occurred in Massachusetts. That was in 1693. Cotton Mather says: "It was upon the Lord's day, the 10th of September, in the year 1693, that Margaret Rule, after some hours of previous disturbance in the public assembly, fell into odd

¹⁴ Hale, P. C., II., 4.

¹⁵ Phips to Nottingham, Essex Inst. Hist. Coll. IX., pt. 2, 81.

fits, which caused her friends to carry her home, where her fits grew in a few hours into a figure that satisfied the spectators of their being preternatural." He says further that the young woman was assaulted by eight cruel spectres. "These spectres brought unto her a book and demanded of her that she would set her hand to it or touch it at least with her hand, as a sign of her becoming a servant of the devil. Upon her refusal to do what they asked they did not renew the proffers of the book unto her, but fell to tormenting her 'in a manner too hellish to be sufficiently described'." The "afflictions" of Margaret Rule continued six weeks. "At last," says Mather, "being as it were tired with their ineffectual attempts to mortify her they furiously said, 'Well, you shan't be the last.' And after a pause they added, 'Go, and the devil go with you, we can do no more,' whereupon they flew out of the room, and she, returning perfectly to herself, most affectionately gave thanks to God for her deliverance." Calef says that in answer to a question one of Margaret's friends said: "She does not eat at all, but drinks rum." Fowler says she "had a bad case of delirium tremens."¹⁶

Dwight, in his "Travels," tells of a case al-

¹⁶ See Mather's account of the "Sufferings of Margaret Rule," and Calef's comments, quoted by Fowler in his "Salem Witchcraft, etc.," pp. 25-27.

leged to have happened in Northampton after 1692, where one man accused another of witchcraft, and the case came before Magistrate Partridge. The magistrate said this case came under the head of offences where the accuser "received half of what was adjudged. A person accused of witchcraft was by law punished with twenty stripes. He should therefore order ten of those to the accuser." The trouble with this story is that the punishment for witchcraft was not "twenty stripes." It is far more likely that the magistrate ordered the stripes because he believed the accuser had made a false accusation.

A Benom woman and her daughter, aged thirteen, of Hartford, Conn., were tried on charge of witchcraft in 1697 and acquitted. Ten cases of the crime or disorder occurred in Connecticut in all.

It is quite possible that other cases occurred in different parts of the country, but the early records are too imperfect to be implicitly relied upon.

Nineteen persons had been hanged in Salem during the four months; Giles Corey had been pressed to death for refusing to plead; and Sarah Osburn and Ann Foster had died in prison from ill-treatment and exposure. Add to these the number of those who had been released

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because they confessed, those who had escaped, or been bailed, or otherwise gone free, and the total number accused and arrested must have been more than two hundred and fifty.

What led the Governor to issue this proclamation? What caused him "to put an end to the witchcraft prosecutions?" It has been often asserted in substance, that "the eyes of the Governor" and "the eyes of the people" were opened to the error of their way when Mrs. Hale, wife of the minister at Beverly, was accused. One writer says this was what finally broke the spell.¹⁸ Let us see. Mrs. Hale's name was mentioned, or "whispered about," in October, 1692. Yet when, a few weeks later, the court was reconstructed,—for that was all it amounted to,—it was composed of men, all but one of whom had been members of the court of Oyer and Terminer. All save Danforth were known to be in full sympathy with witchcraft prosecutions. That there might be no question about the right of this tribunal to hang witches, the general court in October, re-enacted the colonial statute against witchcraft, and in December re-enforced it with the English statute.¹⁹ The new court resumed the business in Salem, as already stated, in the most vigorous manner, with a zeal not exceeded by the tribu-

¹⁸ Salem Witchcraft, II., 345.

¹⁹ Notes on Hist. Witchcraft in Mass., Moore, 9.

nal which preceded it. Every effort was made by the authorities for three months longer to secure convictions. Does this look as if the spell had been broken in October? Does this look as if the prosecutions had been brought to a close because Mrs. Hale had been "named," and other persons of high connections "suspected?" The officials, who would, under those circumstances, have been the first to abate in zeal, never relaxed their efforts until the juries, composed of the common people, had refused repeatedly to convict. The juries that tried the accused in 1692 were composed of freemen only, while those of 1693 were chosen from among all those inhabitants who possessed the requisite amount of property to qualify them as electors under the new charter.²⁰ Freemen were necessarily church members and not as likely to act independently as the jurors selected from substantially the whole body of the people. It is evident that during the period between September 17, when the court of Oyer and Terminer sat for the last time, and the opening of the session of the Superior Court the following January, the people generally began to emerge from the long night-mare, the panic, into which they had been thrown. The inhabitants of Andover were among the first to protest, uniting in a re-

²⁰ Further notes on the Hist. of Witchcraft, etc., Goodell, 1884, p. 33; Also, Province Laws, 1692-93, chap. 33.

monstrance to the General Court against the witchcraft proceedings, and even bringing suits against some of their accusers. Spectral evidence lost its force, and finally was entirely rejected, leaving nothing to substantiate the charges. All other convictions had been secured largely on this species of evidence.* One thing is impressed on our minds as we study the history of these trials: and that is, that such proceedings would not be allowed in any court in this country in our day. Granting that all that is said in criticism of the "red tape" requirements of our modern courts is true, yet, as Hon. W. D. Northend has said: "under the rules of law as now fully established none of the evidence upon which convictions were found would be admitted. Spectral and kindred evidence could not be allowed, and without it not one of the accused could have been convicted."²¹

There is evidence that Gov. Phips was never in full sympathy with the modes of procedure in the witchcraft prosecutions. Being unlearned in law and theology, he seems to have followed

* When the chief judge gave the first jury their charge, he told them that they were not to mind whether the bodies of the said afflicted were really pined and consumed as was expressed in the indictment; but whether the said afflicted did not suffer from the accused such affliction as naturally tended to their being pined and consumed, wasted, &c. This, said he, is a pinning and consuming in the sense of the law." Brattle's Letter, Mass. Hist. Coll. 1st series, V., 77.

21. Essex Inst., Hist. Coll., [XX., 270.

the advice of the judges and the more bigoted of the ministers. In his letter to the home government, under date of October 14, 1692, the Governor says he was prevailed upon by the clamors of the friends of the afflicted and the advice of the deputy governor (Stoughton) to give a commission of Oyer and Terminer; that he was absent in the eastern part of the country almost the whole time, and depended upon the judgment of the court as to a method of proceeding in cases of witchcraft.²² He returned from the east about October 12. It seems always to have been a question whether the governor "decided to abolish the court" for the purpose of putting an end to the witchcraft prosecutions. It is evident that he was dissatisfied with its method of procedure. He may have thought the work could be done by the regular courts. But if he dissolved it to put an end to those prosecutions, would he have re-appointed the same men to the new court and allowed them to continue the trials with unabated zeal? If Phips really abolished this court, if it did not fall solely because of the constituting of a new tribunal with jurisdiction over the same class of cases with which it had dealt, then is it not more probable that he dissolved it because the people were complaining bitterly of the arbitrary manner in which it had

²² Phips to Nottingham, Essex Inst. Hist. Coll., IX., pt. 2, 81.

been constituted, and the arbitrary manner in which it had proceeded with its work? This view is strengthened by Phips' letter to the home government, in which he says that when he came home from the war in the east he found many persons in a strange ferment of dissatisfaction.²³ The Governor himself says he issued his freedom proclamation because he had been informed by the King's attorney general that "some of ye cleared and ye condemned were under ye same circumstances or that there was ye same reason to clear ye three condemned as ye rest according to his judgement."²⁴ He further states that the judges, when he appointed them to the new court, promised to proceed after another method, by which he meant that convictions were not to be secured on spectral evidence.²⁵ He does not at any time question the validity of the Commission of Oyer and Terminer nor of the Superior Court, nor the reality of witchcraft. All complaints are directed against modes of procedure. That the accusations made against so many people of high character and irreproachable life led to grave doubts whether the devil did not take the shapes of persons without their knowledge or consent, to afflict his victims, there can be no question. But there is no evidence that at this time any one doubted that there was such a thing as

23 Ibid. 24 Phips to Nottingham, Feb. 21, 1693. 25 Ibid.

witchcraft. Even Calef, the great critic of Mather and the judges, wrote as late as November, 1693: "That there are witches is not the doubt. The scriptures else were vain which assigns their punishment to be by death, but what this witchcraft is and wherein it does consist, seems to be the whole difficulty." ²⁶

On Oct. 11, 1692, Henry Selpins and Peter Pietrus, ministers of New York, Godfrey Delius, minister of the Dutch church at New Albany, Rudolph Varich, minister at Flatbush, answered certain questions propounded to them by Gov. Dudley of New York on behalf of the Massachusetts authorities, "for guidance in future trials there." They said, that there was such a thing as witchcraft; that "the formal essence of witchcraft consists in an alliance with the Devil"; that "the spectre or apparition of one who immediately works violence and injury upon the afflicted is by no means sufficient to convict a witch or wizzard, although preceded by enmity or threats. The reason is because the Devil can assume the shape of a good man. An honest and charitable life and conduct, probably removes the suspicion of criminal intent from those who are accused of witchcraft by the testimony of the afflicted. Still, this is not an indubitable evidence of false accusation because a cunning man might conceal his devilish

practices under the semblance of a good life in order to escape suspicion, and righteous condemnation. It is possible for those who are really tortured, convulsed and afflicted by the Devil with many miseries, during several months, to suffer no wasting of body and no weakening of their spirits. The reason is that nutrition is perfect, the stomach suffers no injury."

This information may have been asked for by the Lieutenant Governor, or by the Governor himself during one of his brief visits to Boston that summer. Whether the letter influenced the Governor in his subsequent action, it is not possible to say with certainty. Quite likely it did to some extent. On the whole, notwithstanding the letters of Gov. Phips to the home government, it is not entirely clear just what motives prompted his acts during the fall and winter of 1692-3. In some respects they were inconsistent with one another, and far from being in accord with his written statements.



THE GILES COREY MILL, DANVERS,

CHAPTER V.

MARTHA AND GILES COREY.

TWELVE days after Good, Osburn and Tituba were sent to jail, warrants were issued for Martha Corey, wife of Giles Corey. She was immediately taken into custody, and on March 21 examined before Hathorne and Corwin. Martha Corey was, upon all the evidence that has come down to us, a woman of more than average judgment and discretion. From the beginning, she resolutely and persistently denounced the whole witchcraft business. While her husband was, at first, completely carried away with the storm which swept over the rural community, she had no faith in it. She sought to persuade him not to attend the hearings, nor to countenance the prosecutions in any manner. It was charged against her that she took the saddle off his horse on one occasion when he was preparing to go to the examinations. Giles Corey was eighty years of age, and although Martha was his third wife and no doubt somewhat his junior, she was probably more than sixty years

of age at this time. She joined the Village church in 1690,¹ he the Salem church in 1691. It has always seemed a little singular that a woman of her character should be among the first to be accused. Whether her early and earnest protest led to the use of her name among the suspected, has always been a question. It may have aroused a suspicion that she was in league with the evil one.

When the name of Martha Corey was first whispered around by the girls of the accusing circle, Edward Putnam and Ezekiel Cheever paid a visit to her. They sought to secure from this old woman some sort of confession. It was on March 12. On the way, they called at Ann Putnam's, to see what assistance she could render. Asked about the clothes Corey wore when she appeared on her spectral visits, Ann replied that she had just made one of those calls, but had so blinded her that she could not see what clothes she wore. These "detectives" then rode on to Corey's. On their arrival, Martha said to them: "I know what you have come for. You are come to talk with me about being a witch, but I am none. I cannot help people's talking about me." She inquired whether the afflicted had attempted to describe her clothes. That she should so accurately divine the object

¹ See Church Record; also, Mass. Hist. Coll., 3rd series, III., 169.

of their call was by them, and the court subsequently, deemed conclusive evidence of her being a witch. Undoubtedly she had heard that her name was being "taken" by the afflicted. So, too, she may have known that the children commonly told what sort of clothes the spectral visitors wore when making their visits. The conversation was protracted, Putnam and Cheever from their own account, endeavoring by every means in their power to get some statement from Martha Corey which could be used against her. Regarding what they said to her they testified: "She made but little answer to this but seemed to smile at it as if she had showed us a pretty trick. She told us that she did not think that there were any witches. Wee told her wee were fully satisfied about the first three that they were such persons they were accused for, shee said if they were wee could not blame the devill for making witches of them, for they were idle sloathfull persons and minded nothing that was good." On the way home, Putnam and Cheever made another call on Ann. She told them that Goodwife Corey had not appeared to her during their absence.² Did she shrewdly volunteer this statement, that they might not again ask her about the clothes Corey wore at any particular time? It is, however, pretty dangerous to attempt to read the minds

² Essex Court Records.

of those who lived centuries before us by the knowledge we have of their acts, and that knowledge but partial and imperfect. And yet, the tenor of Ann Putnam's acts all through these trials was such as to justify very strong suspicions as to her honesty. The examination of Martha Corey was a sample of cross-examination and brow-beating on the part of the magistrates, which finds parallel only in the conduct of some ungentlemanly shyster lawyer of a type happily now very rare. It was quite extended, but confined mainly to an effort to make the prisoner confess. She persisted in denying. Here are some samples :

Mr. Hathorne. You are now in the hands of authority. Tell me, now, why you hurt these persons.—I do not.

Hathorne. Who doth?—Pray give me leave to go to prayer. This request was made sundry times.

Hathorne. We do not send for you to go to prayer, but tell me why you hurt these.—I am an innocent person. I never had to do with witchcraft since I was born. I am a gospel woman. * * * *

Hathorne. How could you tell, then, that the child was bid to observe what clothes you wore when some one came to speak with you? Cheever interrupted her and bid her not begin with a lie, and so Edward Putnam declared the matter.

Hathorne. Who told you that?—He said the child said.

Cheever. You speak falsely.—Then Edward Putnam read again.

Hathorne. Why did you ask if the child asked what clothes you wore?—My husband told me the others told.

Hathorne. Goodman Corey, did you tell her? The old man denied that he told her so.

Hathorne. Did you not say your husband told you so?
No answer. * * * *

Hathorne. You dare thus to lie in all this assembly. You are now before authority. I expect the truth. You promised it. Speak now and tell who told you what clothes.—Nobody.

At one time the children cried out that a man was whispering in her ear. Hathorne asked: "What did he say to you?" She replied: "We must not believe all that these distracted children say." When she denied any charge made against her there was "extreme agony of all the afflicted."

Parris, who reported this trial, says, "It was noted when she bit her lip several of the afflicted were bitten." Also, "when her hands were at liberty the afflicted were pinched." Hathorne asked: "Do you not see these children and women are rational and sober when your hands are fastened?" "Immediately they were seized with fits, and the standers-by said she was squeezing her fingers, her hands being eased by them that held them on purpose for trial. Quickly after, the marshall said, 'She hath bit her lip,' and immediately the afflicted were in an uproar." Throughout her examination she was badgered by Hathorne, badgered by Corwin, badgered by Rev. Mr. Noyes, badgered by the marshal and by the audience.

The following document is on file in the court house in Salem :

Giles Choree testifieth and saith that in the evening, sitting by the fire, my wife asked me to go to bed. I told (her) I would go to prayer & when I went to prayer I could not utter my desires with any sense, not open my mouth to speak. My wife did percieve itt & came towards me & said she was coming to me. After this in a little space I did according to my measure attend the duty. Some time last week I fetched an ox well out of the woods about noon & he laying down in the yard I went to raise him to yoke him but he could not rise but draged his hinder parts as if he had been hip shott but after did rise. I had a catt some times last week strangely taken on the suddam, & did make me think she would have died presently, my wife bid me knock her in the head butt I did not and since she is well. Another time going to duties I was interrupted for a space butt afterwards I was helpt according to my poor measure. My wife hath been wont to sitt up after I went to bed & I have percieved her to kneel down on the hearth as if she were at prayer but heard nothing. *At the examination of Sarah Good & others my wife was willing*

Here the statement ceases. Some writers attempt to discredit it as not given in the usual and regular way. Because a line is drawn through the words italicised above, they think some suspicion attaches to it, and that the parties who tried to get the old man to testify against his wife discovered that they could not draw anything derogatory from him, and there was danger that his evidence would be favorable to her. Is it not more probable that the recorder was interrupted at this point and did not then complete the statement; that afterwards he started to erase the uncompleted line, or, perhaps, meant the mark he made to be an erasure?

There appears to be no evidence in connection with this paper to prove that it was not testimony taken in court in the usual way. Its date is four days after the examination of Martha Corey, it is true ; but may it not have been given in then? Evidence would not be admitted in such an irregular manner to-day, but the practices of the courts were much different in 1692. During the examination, Mrs. Pope threw her muff at the prisoner, but did not hit her. Then she pulled off her shoe and, throwing it, struck Mrs. Corey in the head. This Mrs. Pope was an important witness in many cases, but subsequently acknowledged her error and deplored the whole business. Martha Corey was committed for trial. She was tried by the court at its September sitting, convicted, and sentenced on September 10, and executed on September 22. Calef says, "Martha Corey, wife of Giles Corey, protesting her innocence, concluded her life with an eminent prayer upon the ladder."³

After her sentence, and while awaiting execution, Parris, accompanied by Lieut. Nathaniel Putnam and two deacons of his church, visited her in jail and pronounced the sentence of excommunication upon her.⁴

³ Fowler's ed., 262.

⁴ "Accordingly, this 14 September, 1692, the three aforesaid brethren went with the pastor to her in Salem Prison ; whom we found very obdurate, justifying herself, and condemning all

The case of Giles Corey is, in some respects, the most interesting and the most tragic in all this wonderful drama of witchcraft. As previously stated, he was carried away with the delusion from the outset, and against the wishes of his wife, attended the earlier examinations. He was arrested on a warrant issued April 18, and examined on the 19th, in the Village meeting house. The accusing girls conducted themselves in the usual manner, and were so badly affected "with fits and troubled with pinches" that the court ordered Corey's hands to be tied. When the magistrates asked him if it was not enough to "act witchcraft at other times, but must you do it now in face of authority?" he replied, "I am poor creature and cannot help it." Later, the magistrate exclaimed: "Why do you tell such wicked lies against witnesses?" "One of his hands was let go," continues the record, "and several were afflicted. He held his head on one side, and then the heads of several of the afflicted were held on one side. He drew in his cheeks, and the cheeks of some of the afflicted were sucked in."

Elizabeth Woodwell deposed that she saw him

that had done anything to her just discovery or condemnation. Whereupon, after a little discourse (for her imperiousness would not suffer much), and after prayer, which she was willing to decline—the dreadful sentence of excommunication was pronounced against her." Extract from Parris' record in the church book, Mass. Hist. Coll., 3d series, III., 169.

on a lecture day come in and sit in the middlemost seat of the men's seats by the post. Mary Warren said he was hostile to her and afflicted her because he thought she caused John Procter to ask more for a piece of meadow than he was willing to give. John Derick, sixteen years of age, testified that "said Giles Corey came about the 20th of August and told me that he wanted some platters for he was gowen to have a feast he told me that he had a good mind to ask my dame but he said that she would not let him have them so he took the platters and cared them away being gown about half a oure with them then he brot them againe gowen away and said nothing." If Corey was going as a spectre why did he wish the actual platters? It is another case of bodily, material presence like that of Abigail Hobbs.

This testimony was given on September 7 before the grand inquest. There is very little evidence in Giles Corey's case. That given here comprises all of special interest. The magistrates committed him to jail. This was on or about April 18. He was brought before the court in September, to plead to an indictment for witchcraft. The old man refused to plead, "stood mute," as the law terms it. The records of the Salem church under date of September 18, Sunday, state that, "G. Corey was excommunicated. The cause of it was, that he being

accused and indicted for the sin of witchcraft, he refused to plead, and so incurred the sentence and penalty of *pain fort dure*, being undoubtedly guilty of the sin of witchcraft, or of throwing himself upon sudden and certain death, if he were otherwise innocent." Th does not say the penalty was enforced, only that it was incurred.

The English law of those days, for "standing mute" was that the prisoner "be remanded to the prison from whence he came and put into a low dark chamber, and there be laid on his back on the bare floor, naked, unless where decency forbids; that there be placed upon his body as great a weight of iron as he could bear, and more, that he have no sustenance, save only on the first day, three morsels of the worst bread, and on the second day, three draughts of standing water, that should be nearest to the prison door, and in this situation this should be alternately his daily diet till he died, or—as anciently the judgement ran—till he answered."⁵

No other instance of the enforcement of this penalty is known in New England history. Blackstone says it was adopted in England about the beginning of the rein of Henry IV. He adds that the uncertainty of its origin, the doubts of its legality, and the repugnance of its theory to the humanity of the laws of England

⁵ Chitty's Blackstone, IV., 265.



HOWARD STREET CEMETERY, SALEM.

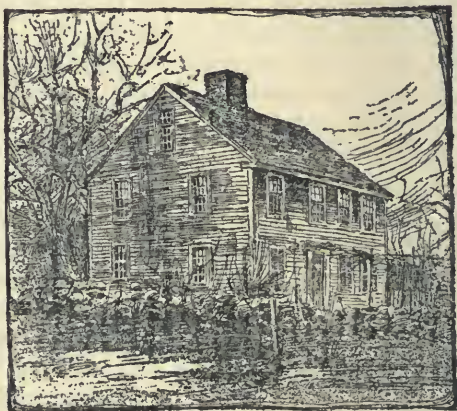


all concurred to require the abolishment of the cruel punishment, so that standing mute should amount only to a confession of guilt.⁶

There is some uncertainty as to the place where the last act in this terrible tragedy took place. The tradition has always been that it was between the Howard street burial ground and Brown street, in an open field, and that Corey urged the officers to add more weight, that his misery might the sooner be ended, a request perfectly natural for a man who had made up his mind to die that way. Calef is authority for this story of monstrous brutality on the part of the officers: "In pressing, his tongue being pressed out of his mouth, the sheriff with his cane forced it in again when he was dying."⁷ Sewall left this record: "Monday, September 19, 1692. About noon at Salem, Giles Corey was pressed to death for standing Mute; much pains was used with him two days, one after another, by the court and Capt. Gardner of Nantucket who had been of his acquaintance, but all in vain."⁸ This horrible tragedy was enacted three days previous to the hanging of Martha Corey and her nine companions. No one knows just why Corey refused to plead and suffered such a death. It may have been because of his stubborn nature and firm will, but more probably it was to save the attain of his family and

6 *Ibd.*, 266. 7 Fowler's ed., 260. 8 Sewall Papers, I., 364.

the forfeiture of his property, which would follow conviction if he pleaded. From what he had seen of previous trials, he probably concluded that conviction was certain in his case, especially if he had made up his mind not to confess. While lying in jail he drew up and executed a paper which he intended should operate as a will, but which was in reality a deed



ANN PUTNAM HOUSE, DANVERS.

of conveyance. By it he conveyed all his property to William Cleaves and John Moulton, his sons-in-law. The day after Corey's death Thomas Putnam sent to Judge Sewall the following communication :

Last night my daughter Ann was grievously tormented by witches, threatening that she should be pressed to death before Giles Corey ; but through the goodness of a gracious God, she had, at last, a little respite. Whereupon there appeared unto her (she said) a man in a winding sheet who told her that Giles Corey had murdered him by pressing him to death with his feet ; but that the devil then appeared unto him and covenanted with him and promised him that he should not be hanged. The apparition said God hardened his heart that he should not hearken to the advice of the court, and so die an easy death ; because, as it said, it must be done to him as he had done to me. The apparition also said that Giles Corey was carried to the court for this and that the jury had found the murder ; and that her father knew the man and the thing was done before she was born.

This letter needs a little explanation. Corey appears to have been a man who, in early life if not in later, did about as he pleased in the community, and had little consideration for the rights of others or for their feelings. He became involved in law suits, and even got into the criminal courts.⁹ Jacob Goodell who worked for him was carried home sick by Martha Corey, and soon after died. The gossips said his death was caused by a beating which Corey gave him. The coroner's jury said the man had been bruised to death, "having cloddors of blood about the heart." This was about 1676. To this case Thomas Putnam refers in the above quoted statement. The affair did happen before

⁹ "Giles Coree being presented upon suspicion of abusing the body of Jacob Goodell is fined." Essex County Court Records, Salem, 1676.

Ann Putnam was born, but the arrest of Corey and his subsequent horrible death must have revived all the old stories about him. No doubt Ann heard them at this time, and they were sure, under the circumstances, to lose nothing in the re-telling. Corey was also before the court in 1678 on suspicion of having set fire to John Procter's house. His innocence was clearly proved, and he turned on Procter and other of his defamers and sued them, recovering from all of them. He had had a lawsuit with Procter previous to this.¹⁰ In other ways he was mixed up unpleasantly in neighborhood affairs. Whether these controversies had anything to do with his prosecution for witchcraft in 1692, or the severity with which he was dealt, I am unable to say. Their revival would not aid him, certainly. Sewall says of the charge that Corey stamped and pressed a man to death, that "'twas not remembered till Ane Putnam was told of it by said Corey's spectre the Sabbath night before the execution."¹¹ It is hardly possible that a man could be arrested and dealt with in the manner Corey was and no one remember and recall that fourteen and sixteen years before he had been charged with murder and arson.

¹⁰ "John Prokter against Giles Corye, defendant in an action of appeal from a judgement of Maj. Hathorne in August last, the jury found for the defendant, the confirmation of the former judgement." Essex County Court Records, Salem.

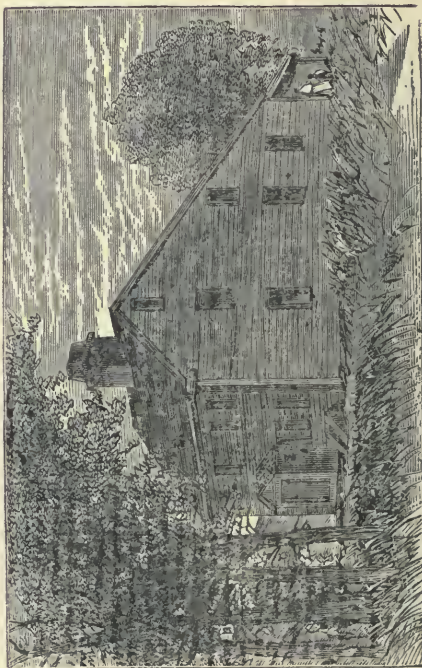
¹¹ Sewall Papers, I., 364.

CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF REBECCA NURSE.

REBECCA Nurse was born in Yarmouth, England, and baptised there on February 21, 1621. This would make her 71 years of age at the time of the witchcraft troubles. She was daughter of William Towne and wife of Francis Nurse of Salem Village. Nurse lived from about 1638 to 1678 near what is now Skerry street in the city of Salem. His occupation was that of tray-maker. In 1678 he purchased the farm in Salem Village then known as the Townsend Bishop farm, now better known as the Nurse farm.

The history of the place is this: Townsend Bishop, on January 16, 1636, received a grant of 300 acres of land in the Village. On this he built a substantial house. That house is standing to-day, and is the widely known Rebecca Nurse house. Its identity is proved beyond question by documentary evidence. Bishop sold the estate in 1641, to Henry Chickering, who in turn sold it to Governor Endicott in 1648 for



REBECCA NURSE HOUSE, DANVERS.

£160. Endicott gave the farm to his son John in 1653, but did not execute the deed until 1662. The governor died in 1665, and a lawsuit followed over the will. It was finally settled by the general court in favor of young John and his wife. John died in 1668, and his widow married in August of that year, Rev. James Allen, a minister of the First Church in Boston. She died in 1673, and thus the Bishop farm became the property of Allen, who sold it to Nurse in 1678 for £400. Nurse was to have twenty-one years in which to pay for the property, paying in the meantime an annual rental of £7 a year during the first twelve years and £10 for each remaining year.

The Nurses were blessed with eight children, Samuel, John, Francis and Benjamin, Rebecca, wife of Thomas Preston, Mary, wife of John Tarbell, Elizabeth, wife of William Russell, and Sarah, then unmarried. They dwelt on the farm or near it, and in a short time Nurse divided the larger part among them.¹ From all the information that has come down to us, Salem Village contained no more prosperous, happy and contented family than this. There were others of much greater wealth, but none that promised more enjoyment in old age than that reared and

¹For the information about the Bishop-Nurse farm, also for an account of the lawsuit which followed the purchase, I am indebted to the diligent researches of Mr. Upham.

established at Salem Village by Francis Nurse and his wife Rebecca. He had been prominent and honored in the communities where he dwelt. She was an intelligent, pious, devout woman, a veritable "mother in Israel." Against her good name and fair fame no breath of suspicion had yet been uttered. The first trouble appears to have come to this family soon after the purchase of the Bishop farm. Allen had guaranteed the title. He was soon called upon to defend it against the claims of Zerubabel Endicott, who claimed a boundary line to the Endicott possessions that pushed back the eastern bounds of the Bishop farm. The controversy was a long one, going finally to the General Court for settlement. It was decided against Endicott. Nurse, to be sure, was only indirectly interested in the suit. Allen was the principal, and he kept his promise to defend the title. Nathaniel Putnam became involved in the suit. Some writers allege that Nurse thus incurred his hostility and that this was one of the incentives to the subsequent prosecution of Rebecca Nurse. It would seem that Putnam, if anything, was united with Allen and Nurse in fighting Endicott. It is even less likely that the Topsfield controversy engendered ill-feeling between the Village people and the Nurse family which lasted until witchcraft days. This affair may as well be narrated at this point.

In 1636 the General Court defined the bounds of Salem, Ipswich and Newbury as extending six miles into the country, measuring from their respective meeting houses. Three years later, the same power, in consideration that the inhabitants of Salem had agreed to plant a village near the river that runs to Ipswich, ordered that all lands near their bounds between Salem and the river, not belonging to any person or town by former grant, should belong to said village. The farmers of Salem Village thereupon began to push settlements beyond the six-mile limit. They cleared the forests and built houses. In 1643 the General Court, unmindful of its grant to the Salem Village people, authorized the inhabitants of Ipswich to locate on the same territory and establish a village. The town of Ipswich was incorporated October 18, 1650, and in 1658 a portion of the disputed land was made a part of the town. This brought into direct conflict the Village men, who had taken up lands under the vote of the General Court in 1639, and those who settled under the act of 1643. John Putnam of the Village and others of his great family and of the settlement met the Easteys and Townes of Topsfield on the disputed ground and had angry words with them. Not until 1728, when the town of Middleton was incorporated, to include most of the disputed territory from the Village and Topsfield, was the dispute settled.

Isaac Easty's wife was sister of Rebecca Nurse. The Townes, John and Joseph, jr., were nearly related to her. While most of the inhabitants of the Village took sides against the Topsfield men, the Nurse family supported them. When the Village meeting passed a protest against the Topsfield claim, Samuel Nurse, Rebecca's oldest son, and Thomas Preston, her son-in-law, entered their written dissent. Whether this long and bitter controversey had anything to do with the prosecution of Rebecca Nurse and Mary Easty is left to conjecture. It is certain that Thomas Preston joined with Thomas and Edward Putnam in signing the complaint against Sarah Good in 1692. Does not this indicate that whatever ill-feelings arose from the Topsfield feud, thirty years before, had been entirely forgotten, or at least forgiven?

The complaint against Rebecca Nurse was made by these same Putnams, Thomas and Edward. They complained against her for "vehement suspicion of having committed sundry acts of witchcraft" upon Mrs. Ann Putnam, Ann Putnam, jr., and Abigail Williams. The justices issued their warrant on March 23. On the following day Marshal Herrick made return that he had "apprehended the within named Rebecca Nurse and lodged her at Nathaniel Ingersoll's." The examination took place on the 24th. The record of that examination, as made by Rev.

Samuel Parris at the request of the magistrates, was as follows :

What do you say (speaking to one of the afflicted), have you seen this woman hurt you?—Yes, she beat me this morning.

Abigail, have you been hurt by this woman? Yes.

Ann Putnam in a grievous fit cried out, that she hurt her.

Goody Nurse, here are two, Ann Putnam the child and Abigail Williams, complain of your hurting them. What do you say to it?—I can say before my eternal father I am innocent and God will clear my innocency. Here is never a one in the assembly but desires it. But if you be guilty, pray God discover you.

Then Hen. Kenny rose up to speak. Goodm. Kenny, what do you say? Then he entered his complaint and farther said that since this Nurse came into the house he was seized twice with an amas'd condition. Here are not only these but here is ye wife of Mr. Thomas Putnam who accuseth you by credible information & that both of tempting her to iniquity and of greatly hurting her.—I am innocent & clear & have not been able to get out of doors these 8 or 9 days.

Mr. Putnam, give in what you have to say. Then Mr. Edward Putnam gave in his relate.

Is this true, Goody Nurse?—I never afflicted no child, never in my life.

You see these accuse you. Is it true?—No.

Are you an innocent person relating to this witchcraft? Here Thomas Putnam's wife cried out, did you not bring the black man with you? Did you not bid me tempt God and dye? How oft have you eat and drunk your own damnation.

What do you say to them?—O Lord, help me—and spread out her hands & the afflicted were grievously vexed.

* * * * *

Do not you see these afflicted persons & hear them accuse

you?—The Lord knows I have not hurt them. I am an innocent person.'

It is very awful for all to see these agonies and you an old professor, thus charged with contracting with the devil by the effects of it, and yet to see you stand with dry eyes when there are so many wet.—You do not know my heart.

You would do well if you are guilty to confess and give glory to God.—I am as clear as the child unborn.

What uncertainty there may be in apparitions I know not, yet this with me strikes hard upon you, that you are at this very present charged with familiar spirits, this is your bodily person they speak to. They say now they see these familiar spirits come to your bodily person, now what do you say to that?—I have none, sir.

Possibly you may apprehend you are no witch, but have you not been led aside by temptations that way?—I have not.

Tell us, have you not had visible appearances more than what is common in nature?—I have none nor never had in my life.

Do you think these suffer voluntary or involuntary?—I cannot tell.

That is strange, every one can judge.—I must be silent.

They accuse you of hurting them & if you think it is not unwillingly but by design you must look upon them as murderers.—I cannot tell what to think of it.

Afterwards when this was somewhat insisted on she said, I do not think so. She did not understand aright what was said.

Well, then, give an answer now, do you think these suffer against their wills or not? I do not think these suffer against their wills.

Why did you never visit these afflicted persons?—Because I was afraid I should have fits too.

Upon motion of her body fits followed upon the complainants abundantly and very frequently.

Is it not an unaccountable case that when you are examined these persons are afflicted?—I have got nobody to look to but God.

Again upon stirring her hands the afflicted persons were seized with violent fits of torture.

Do you believe these afflicted persons are bewitched?—I do think they are.

When this witchcraft came upon the stage there was no suspicion of Tituba (Mr. Parris' Indian woman), she professed much love to that child, Betty Parris, but it was her apparition did the mischief, and why should not you also, be guilty, for your apparition doth hurt also?—Would you have me belie myself?

She held her neck on one side and accordingly so were the afflicted taken.

Then authority requiring it, Sam. Parris read what he had in characters taken from Mr. Thomas Putnam's wife in her fits.

What do you think of this?—I cannot help it, the devil may appear in my shape.

This is a true account of the sum of her examination, but by reason of great noises by the afflicted and many speakers many things are pretermitted memorandum.

Nurse held her head on one side and Elizabeth Hubbard (one of the sufferers) had her neck set in that posture, whereupon another patient, Abigail Williams, cried out, set up Goody Nurse's head, the maid's neck will be broke, and when some set up Nurse's head Aaron Way observed that Betty Hubbard's was immediately righted.

Salem Village, March 24th 169 $\frac{1}{2}$ The Rev. Samuel Parris being desired to take in writing the examination of Rebecca Nurse hath returned it as aforesaid and seeing what we then did see together with the charge of the persons then present we committed Rebecca Nurse, the wife of Francis Nurse, of Salem Village unto their majesties' goal in Salem as per a mittimus then given out in order to further examination.

John Hathorne,
Jonathan Corwin, asts.

Goody Nurse remained in jail until the first of June, when she was brought before the grand

jury. On June 2 the jury returned four indictments against her. The first was for afflicting Ann Putnam on March 24; the second and third for afflicting Mary Walcott and Elizabeth Hubbard on the same day, and the fourth charged her with afflicting Abigail Williams. It will be noticed that the date of the offences alleged in these several indictments is that of the day of the preliminary examination. The same is noticeable in most of these witchcraft cases. In few of the indictments is the same date of offence alleged as in the original complaint before the justices. The witnesses in the case were summoned to be present on Thursday, June 2; the testimonies of Ann Putnam, Mary Walcott and others against Nurse are dated and sworn to June 2 and 3, and the indictments bear the same date. The court convened again on June 28 and there is on the files a "petition on behalf of Rebecca Nurse" presented to the court "now sitting in Salem." It would seem that the trial must have been delayed from the 3rd to the 28th. At the trial which followed, Ann Putnam deposed that on the 13th of March she

"Saw the apparition of Goody Nurse, and she did immediately afflict me, but I did not know what her name was then, though I knew where she used to sit in our meeting house, but since that she hath grievously afflicted by biting, pinching and pricking me, and urging me to write in her book and also on the fourth day of March, being the day of her examination, I was grievously tortured by her

during the time of her examination, and also several times since, and also during the time of her examination I saw the apparition of Rebecca Nurse go and hurt the bodys of Mercy Lewis, Mary Walcott, Elizabeth Hubbard and Abigail Williams."

The deposition of Mary Walcott was in about the same language as the above, save that the apparition of Rebecca Nurse would kill her if she did not write in the book, and that Nurse "told her she had a hand in the death of Benjamin Houlton, John Harwood, Rebecca Shepard and several others." She saw the apparition of Goody Nurse during her examination go and hurt the bodies of Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, Elizabeth Hubbard and Abigail Williams. The depositions of Elizabeth Hubbard and Abigail Williams differed but little in tenor or in language from the above. Williams claimed to have been afflicted by Nurse on March 15, 16, 20, 21, 23, 31, and also on several days in May. Nurse had tempted her to leap into the fire, and she had "seen the apparition of a sacrament sitting next to [the man] with a high crowned hat." It had also confessed to her "its guilt in committing several murders together with her sister Cloys." The testimony of Sarah Vibber appears to have been given later in the month, for she deposed to being pinched and choked by the apparition of Rebecca Nurse on June 27. Among the other depositions in the case are the following :

The deposition of Johannah Childin [Sheldon] testifieth and saith that ypon the 2nd of June, 1692, that the aperition of Goody Nuss and Goodman Harwood did apeare to her and the said Harwood did look Goody Nuss in the face and said to her that she did murder him by pushing him off the cart and strock the breath out of his body."

Edward Putnam deposed that "on March 26 Ann Putnam, sen., was bitten by Rebecca Nurs as she said did, about 2 of the clock the same day she was strock with a chane the mark being in a band of a round ring and three stroaks across the ring she had six blos with a chane in the space of half an ower, and she had one remarkable one with six stroakes across her arme. I saw the mark both of bite and chane."

Sarahⁿ Houlten's deposition is the only paper among all those on file that gives any information that Rebecca Nurse ever had trouble with her neighbors or ever was called a railer and brawler. Perhaps in this case, allowance should be made for the possible exaggeration of an angry and excited neighbor. The widow Houlton deposed as follows :

About this time three years ago my dear & loving husband, Benjamin Houlten, deceased, was as well as ever I knew him in my life, till one Saturday morning that Rebecca Nurse who now stands charged for witchcraft came to our house and fell railing at him because our pigs got into her field, tho our pigs were sufficiently yoked and their fence was down in several places, yet all we could say to her could no ways pacify her but she continued railing and scolding for a great while, calling to her son Benj. Nurse to go and get a gun and kill our pigs and let none of them go out of the field, though my poor husband gave her never a misbeholding word, and within a short time after this my poor husband, going out very early in the morning, as he was coming in again he was taken with a strange fit

in the entry being struck blind and struck down two or three times so that when he came to himself he told me he thought he should never have come into the house any more, and all summer after he continued in a languishing condition, being much pained at his stomach and often struck blind, but about a fortnight before he died he was taken with strange and violent fits acting much like to our poor beloved parsons [persons] when we thought they would have died and the doctor that was with him could not find what his distemper was, and the day before he died he was chearly, but about midnight he was again most violently seized upon with violent fits till the next night about midnight, he departed this life by a cruel death.

The following depositions found on the court files indicate that there were those who dared to testify in behalf of the accused. I quote both exactly as they appear in the originals :

John Tarbell being at the house of Thomas Putnam upon the 28th day of this instant March, being the year 1692, upon discourse of many things I asked them some questions and among others I asked this question whether the garle that was afflicted did first speak of Goody Nurse before others mentioned her to her, they said she told them she saw the apparishtion of a pale-fast woman that sat in her gran-mother's seat but did not know her name, then I replied and said, but who was it that told her that it was Good Nurs; Mercy Lewis said it was Goody Putnam that said it was Goody Nurs; Goody Putnam said it was Mercy Lewes that told her; thus they turned it upon one another, saying it was you and it was you that told her, this was before any was afflicted at Thoms Putnam's beside his daughter, that they told his daughter it was Goody Nurs. Samuel Nurs doth testifie too all above written.

We whos names are underwritten cane testifie if cald to it that Goodde Nurs have beene troubled with an infirmity of body for many years which the juries of women seem to

be afraid it should be something else Rebecca Preson, Mary Tarbell.

This last statement refers to the witch mark alleged to have been found on the body of Rebecca Nurse. One of the theories of the age was that the devil set his mark upon each of his servants; that witches were all marked. A jury of the sex of the accused was appointed to examine the body for such marks. It often happened that some excrescence of flesh common to old people, or one explainable by natural causes, was found. One such had been found on the body of Goody Nurse, and reported to the court, all but one of the jury agreeing to the report. Rebecca Preston and Mary Tarbell knew that the mark was from natural causes. The prisoner stated to the court that the dissenting woman of the jury of examination was one of the most ancient, skilful and prudent, and further declared, "I there rendered a sufficient known reason of the moving cause thereof." She asked for the appointment of another jury to inquire into the case and examine the marks found on her person. No documents have been found to indicate whether her request was granted. Probably it was not.

The jury of trials returned a verdict of not guilty on June 28. Thereupon all the accusers in court "cried out" with renewed vigor and were taken in the most violent fits, rolling and

tumbling about, creating a scene of the wildest confusion. The judges told the jurymen that they had not carefully considered one expression of the prisoner, namely, that when one, Hobbs, a confessing witch, was brought in as evidence against her she said : "What, do you bring her ? She is one of us." The jury retired for further consultation.² Even then they could not agree upon a verdict of guilty. They returned to the court room and desired that the accused explain the remark. She made no response and the jury returned a verdict of guilty.³ On being informed that her silence had been construed as a confession of guilt, the prisoner made this statement :

These presence do humbly show to the honored court and jury, that I being informed that the jury brought me in guilty upon my saying that Goodwife Hobbs and her daughter were of our company; but I intended no otherwise than as they were prisoners with us, and therefore did then, and yet do judge them not legal evidence against their fellow prisoners: and I being something hard of hearing, and full of grief, none informing me how the court took up my words, and therefore had not an opportunity to declare what I intended when I said they were of our company.

Grave charges have been made against the chief justice in this case by some writers, to the effect that he fairly forced the jury to go out after the verdict of not guilty and that he practically told them to reverse the verdict.

² Neal's New England, II., 143 ; Calef, Fowler's Ed. 251.

[Fac-Simile of page of Examination of Rebecca Nurse.]

The Examination
of Rebecca Nurse at Salem Village
24. Mar. 1691.

Mr. Hathorn - What do you say (speaking to one affected) had
you seen this woman hurt you?

Yes, she beat me this morning.
As I gail have you been hurt by the women?

Yes
An' Goodman in a grievous fit cryed out that
the beast had.

Goody Nurse, here are two An^s Putnam the child &
Abigail Williams complain of your hurting them
what do you say to it

N. I can say before my Eternal father I am innocent, &
God will clear my innocence.

you do know whether you are guilty, & have familiarity
with the Devil, & now when you are here present to
see such a thing as this with a black man whis-
pering in your ear, & talk about you what do you
say to it.

It is all false I am clear

It is not an unaccountable case that when they
you are examined. These persons are afflicted & a
I have got no body to look to but God.

John Haskins 18
Janatgan. Norway

Thomas Fisk, one of the jurymen, made a statement a few days after the trial, in which he says, the court "objected to the verdict," and "manifested dissatisfaction," and "several of the jury declared themselves desirous to go out again and thereupon the court gave leave." He further stated that he "could not tell how to take the words in question till she had further opportunity to put her sense upon them;" that going into court and mentioning the words and she making no reply nor interpretation of them, "whereupon these words were to me a principal evidence against her."³

It is plain from all the evidence upon this point that had the court as counsel for the accused, which it was then in the theory of the law, guarded her interests, Rebecca Nurse would not have been convicted. The question propounded to her by the jury would have been so explained that she could understand and answer it. After conviction she was sentenced to be hanged. The Governor granted a reprieve. Thereupon, she was excommunicated from the church, as the following from the records of the First Church in Salem will show :

1692. July 3. After sacrament, the elders propounded to the church—and it was by unanimous vote consented to

3 Fisk quoted the exclamation thus: "What, do these persons give in evidence against me now? They used to come among us." This differs very materially from the words quoted above from Neal and Calef.

—that our sister Nurse, being a convicted witch by the court, and condemned to die, should be excommunicated; which was accordingly done in the afternoon, she being present.

Upham says this was meant to be understood as an eternal doom.⁴ People in those days looked upon excommunication from the church as expulsion from Heaven. What then must have been the feelings of this woman as she stood in the presence of her almost life-long church, a church which she loved, and to which she had been true and loyal for more than half a century, with the chains of a condemned witch clanking about her withered and tottering limbs, and heard the awful doom of her soul pronounced?⁵ Happily the age of superstition is passed, and we know that wherever the noblest and best of mankind and womankind abide there rests the soul of this saint and martyr.

Immediately on the reprieve being granted the afflicted renewed their clamors. They claimed to be again grievously afflicted. Their renewed complaints, the action of the church at Salem, and the clamors of "some Salem gentleman" influenced the Governor to recall the re-

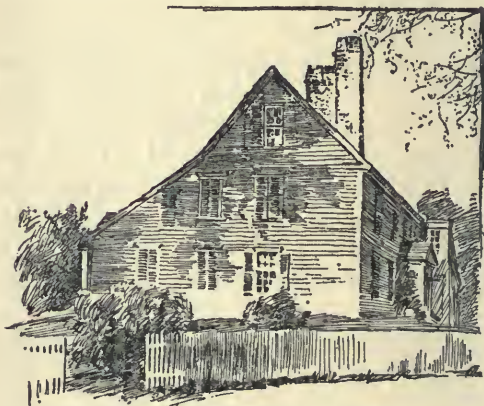
⁴ Salem Witchcraft, II., 291.

⁵ The sentence of excommunication was erased from the church book about 1712. ;

prieve and approve the sentence. Rebecca Nurse was, therefore, on July 19, carted to the summit of Gallows hill and hanged.

“They hanged this weary woman there,
Like any felon stout ;
Her white hairs on the cruel rope
Were scattered all about.”⁶

⁶ “The Death of Goody Nurse,” by Rose Terry Cooke.



SARAH HOLTEN HOUSE, DANVERS.

CHAPTER VII.

REV. GEORGE BURROUGHS.

IN speaking of Rev. George Burroughs, it seems proper to allude briefly to the early history of the Salem Village church. The witchcraft prosecutions have some times been attributed to the feelings engendered by the disagreements over the settlement of a pastor of the parish. Up to 1671 the people of Salem Villlage worshiped with the mother church in Salem. On March 22 of that year (1672 O. S.) the town of Salem voted that the farmers at the Village should "have liberty to have a minister by themselves, and when they should provide and pay him in a maintenance they should be discharged from their part of the Salem minister's maintenance."¹ Rev. James Bayley became "supply" minister of the parish in Nov. 1672, and a meeting house was erected in 1673. Some dissatisfaction was manifested with the manner of his call. The feeling increasing in intensity,

¹ Salem Town Records; Hanson's Hist. Danvers, 223.

an appeal was made to the parent church in Salem. Among Bayley's opponents were Nathaniel Putnam and Bray Wilkins, men of wealth and influence in the community. The dispute finally reached the General Court. That body decided in favor of the minister, and ordered that he be continued and settled, and be allowed £60 per annum, one-third in money and two-thirds in provisions and fuel for his family.² The people of the parish paid no attention to this order, and in 1679 Mr. Bayley resigned. Bayley came to the Village from Newbury, where he had married Mary Carr. His wife's sister, Ann Carr, accompanied them to Salem Village where, in 1678, she married Sergt. Thomas Putnam,³ of whom we shall hear much before we have finished this story. This united the minister's family with the wealthiest and most powerful family in the place.

George Burroughs was engaged as preacher in place of Mr. Bayley in November, 1680. Graduating from Harvard in 1670, he early went into the district of Maine to preach, and dwelt for some time at Casco, now Portland, where he received a grant of 150 acres of land in a section now the very heart of the city. This land he generously gave to the town in later years. Mr. Burroughs early encountered hostility in his new

²Rice's Hist. First Parish in Danvers, 15.

³Savage's Genealogical Dictionary.

parish in Danvers, as was quite natural, from the partisans of his predecessor. His salary was not promptly paid, and when, in 1681, his wife died, he had no money to pay the funeral expenses. A violent dispute raged in the parish between the Bayley and anti-Bayley factions, and Burroughs gave up the pastorate in 1682. Even this did not end his troubles. He came back from Maine, whither he had moved, to "get a reckoning" or settlement, and was arrested for a debt due to John Putnam. Yet on the very day of his arrest he had signed an order for the payment to Thomas Putnam of the amount due to himself from the parish. It appears by a bill on file on the records that when Burroughs' wife died, John Putnam allowed him to buy two gallons of Canary rum, some cloth and other articles on his account. The debt was for less than £14, and the parish owed Burroughs £33 6s. 8d., so that Putnam was amply secured.⁴

Rev. Deodat Lawson succeeded Mr. Burroughs, coming to the Village in 1684. He found much discord prevailing, not only over the settlements of Bayley and Burroughs but also over the parish records, which it was alleged had not been correctly kept during their ministries. Both disputes were referred to members of the church in Salem for advice. The advice

⁴ Salem Witchcraft, II., 262.