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## THE FATHERS OF NEW ENGLAND.

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(CONCLUDED.)

But one passion from the first eradicated all control—the *auri sacra fames* of the guardians of the Puritan sanctuary. So early as 1634, Winthrop narrates a circumstance “which brought them and all the Gospel under a common suspicion of cutting one another’s throats for beaver.” Josselyo, whose experience must have been peculiarly unsatisfactory, describes them as “full of ludification and injurious dealing; generally in their payments recusant and slow;” and even William White declares in a letter to Winthrop that “he sees such harsh dealing among the shopkeepers there, in price, weight, and measure, that he thinks that love is wanting which is the main key of religion.” Ethically it would seem that the debit and credit sides of their account were ingeniously balanced. A tenderness for their own commercial delinquencies was compensated by the mortifications of the affections of their children and of the rural appetites of their men-servants and maid-servants. Some of the magnates who were most conspicuous for their austerity were the most lax in respect of their avaricious mode of trading. The elder Dudley, who died with some doggerel against toleration in his pocket, and a notorious weakness on behalf of that receptacle which scandalised some among his leading contemporaries. Hugh Peters is an example that the ministers themselves were not incompetent hands at a bargain, for he did what might be termed “a fine stroke of business” in the codfish and lumber line while he resided in the colony; and indeed to give play to his business acutely, he hazarded the suppression of the Salem weekly lecture,—subtracting from his sermons liberally to swell the contents of his ledger.

Remembering these operations, we can agree with Mr. Hildreth that a zeal for the main chance was a notable abatement from the conventional character of the New England system. On the other hand, we are doubtful in what light to regard an appreciation of creature comforts which was its notable accompaniment. Those who condemn the Puritans as perseveringly ascetic should in fairness be informed of their tenacious endurance of the physical consolations they met with in the wilderness. Endicot and his company during the first year’s occupation in 1629, are described as “making shift to rub out the winter’s cold by the fireside, turning down many a drop of the bottell and burning tobacco with all the ease they could.” When the summer came, their resignation took another form. The reverend divine Mr. Francis Higginson, said to be “mighty in the Scriptures,” and who wrote a description of New England’s plantation in 1630, observing on the mildness of the *aire* says, that “whereas I clothed myself beforetime with double clothes and thick waistcoats to keepe me warme, even in the summer time, doe now go as thin clad as any, osely wearing a light stufte casocke upon my shirt, and stuftee breeches of one thickness, without linings.” We must farther acquaint them of any obstinate aversion to the succulent solids they happened to fall in with. Of the harbor of Plymouth it is said, “This bay is a most hopeful place; innumerable store of fowl most excellent good . . . crabs and lobsters in their time infinite.” The reverend divine already referred to delivers it as his doctrine that the “parsnips, carrots, and turnips are here bigger and sweeter than is ordinary to be found in England; the turkeys are far greater than our English turkeys, and exceeding fat, sweet, and fleshy.” “Fresh cod,” says Winslow, “in the summer is but coarse meat with us.” That “worthy and useful instrument,” as he is denominated in the “Memorial,” had a faculty for compounding a duck broth, which he benevolently turned to account on one occasion for the benefit of a sick Indian. It is also said of the colonists generally that “in their feasts they had not forgotten the English fashion of stirring up their appetites with variety of cooking their food.” Before long, they permitted certain liquors of even a *recherché* class to lubricate these *opsonia*. Dudley wrote to the Countess of Lincoln in 1631, that they had only “good water to drink till wine or beer could be made;” but before twenty years had elapsed, such was the “wonder-working Providence of Sion’s Saviour in New England,” that “Portugall had had many a mouthfull of bread and fish from us in exchange for their Madeira liquors, and also Spain.” In short, the toleration of any “wonder” that was sufficiently savory or nourishing was proclaimed with extreme promptitude. On the arrival of the Pilgrim Fathers, “the master on shore brought with him a *very fat* goose to eat with us; and we had a fat crane, and a mallard, and a dried neat’s tongue; and so we were kindly and friendly together.” On the voyage of the founders of Massachusetts in the “*Arabella*,” the captain complained that their “*victuals*” impeded

the working of the ship. It was also “a common fault in our young people that they gave themselves to drink hot waters very immoderately.” Whatever were the wants of their seniors in this respect, they fortified their weakness more reservedly and judiciously.

It is observable, that if they tolerated a few of the comforts they were also not inexorable in respect of the pomps of this wicked world. It was no part of their design to promote the advent of that equality which now obtains on the American soil. “A discrimination between gentlemen and those of inferior condition,” says Mr. Hildreth, “was carefully kept up. Only gentlemen were entitled to the prefix of ‘Mr.,’ their number was quite small; and deprivation of the right to be so addressed was inflicted as a punishment. ‘Goodman,’ or ‘Goodwoman,’ by contraction ‘Goody,’ was the address of inferior persons.” Winthrop received from Cromwell the Buccareer a present of an elegant sedan chair, which had been intended for the sister of Viceroy of Mexico. Whether he rode about in it, we are not informed; though it seems improbable that he should receive it as a piece of ornamental lumber. The governors generally were not inclined to dispense with certain little ceremonies to enhance the dignity of their office. They were preceded by halberdiers when they went abroad, and they had the services of a trumpeter to make their proclamations. An amusing circumstance arose out of the quarrel in Anne Hutchinson’s case, when the men who had carried the halberds before Vane declined to carry them before Winthrop, because they sympathised with the Antinomian side of the controversy. Had the bearers whom we assume he employed for his sedan, been similarly favorers of the Baptist exodus, they might have deposited “King Winthrop” in Boston Harbor; but we infer that these responsible officials were orthodox, as there is no intimation that he was submitted to this indignity.

Ascending in the scale of social precedent, we come again upon the dominant principle of the New England system in the extraordinary homage paid to the Ministers. As if in mockery of their human infirmity, the steam of adulation was poured around them till they breathed habitually an intoxicating atmosphere. Naturally enough did Josselyn remark their inclination to “receive your gifts but as a tribute due to their transcendancy.” In the eyes of their worshippers, “that great light and divine plant, Mr. Samuel Stone,” or, “the holy, heavenly, sweet-affecting and soul-ravishing minister, Mr. Thomas Shepleard, were princes untrammelled by secular accessories. By the subjects of their congregations these and their coadjutors were invested with more than a monarch’s pretensions. Their ecclesiastical gifts and celestial graces were a main theme of history; the clumsy harps of the New England poets twanged forth shuffling elegies in their praise; and even comets condescended to give notice of their decease. It was only appropriate, therefore, that they should exercise a paramount influence in all mundane transactions. “New England,” says Cotton Mather, “being a country whose interests are remarkably invrapped in ecclesiastical circumstances, ministers ought to concern themselves in politics.” Their intervention was on this account habitually recognised as framers of laws, as councillors of the magistrates, and as agents in embassies and political missions. Not only did they act as “doctors dubitantium” in private affairs, but they were the exhorters of the timid, the rebukers of the bold, and the deciders for the doubtful at elections and town meetings. If in any of these vocations they met with obstruction; their pride was compensated when they mounted the pulpit. There they had their opponents entirely at the mercy of their Scripture similitudes and prophetic menaces. They could preach at, and pray for, their unfortunate victims with all the rigor of a despotism tempered only, and that uncertainly, by the sand in the hour glass. As we learn from a singular passage in Mr. Fell’s “Salem,” on such occasions they spared neither age nor sex. The boys were ranged on the stairs of the meeting-house, and “a man was appointed to keep people from sleeping” by means of “a short clubbed stick haxing at one end a knob, and at the other a foxtail with which he would stroke the women’s faces that were asleep, and with the other would knock unruly dogs and men.” In the same place, Salem, as we learn from the same authority, two men were appointed to make a circuit of the town during service; and to mark down the non-attendants in order to present them to the magistrate, while, at the same time, three constables were appointed to keep watch at the three doors of the meeting-house to prevent any one from going forth “till all the exercises were finished.” Neither in measure nor equality were the ministers inclined to stint themselves of a single particle of their flocks’ adoration.

We may ascribe a part of their influence with their congregations to their intimate knowledge of the secrets of Providence, and to what we may even designate their thaumaturgical prowess. To suspicious eyes the following little circumstance reads like an exhibition of the latter accomplishment. Winthrop the younger had some books in the chamber in which he kept his corn. One of them was a Greek Testament, which was bound up together with the book of Common Prayer and the Psalms. The mice attacked the volume, and ate the Common Prayer “*every leaf of it*,” but scrupulously declined the rest of the contents, as also all the other books, “though he had above a thousand there.”—Without questioning that the Common Prayer had entirely disappeared, we may hint our impression that the destructive mice were again in some shape “the poor people, who had come over;” and we incline to credit the ministers with their edacity from the likenesses of this to a portent, we shall mention presently, exhibited by one of the Matheres. A more frequent proof of the supernatural vocation of the ministers was afforded by their interpretations of omens and judgments; for in this department they were so experienced that in case of any disparagement of their persons or doctrine, they were generally able to cite some retributive visitation. The town of Lynn, for instance, lost a great part of its cattle by a sudden disease through reducing the salary of the Rev. Mr. Cobbett. In Hubbard and Winthrop there is a chronicle of judgments against those who thwarted or slighted the Elders. One example, a young merchant did immediately after charging that “none of those black crows (meaning the aforesaid) should follow his corpse to the grave.”—Others, and especially the heretical Antinomians, were overtaken by still more exemplary catastrophes. Anne Hutchinson was on this account seized and slaughtered by the Indians; while the “copartner in her heresies, Mrs. Mary Dyer,” gave birth to a monster, which, as described, would have been a priceless treasure at our College of Surgeons. The fate of one of the same sect—a barber, who “was more than ordinary laborious to draw men to those sinful errors,” is memorable for this reason. A barber, if we reflect, was the only man who had a fair chance of competing in controversy with the ministers, as he was professionally secure of his one auditor, and had a summary means of compelling his attention. Accordingly, as we are told in “Sion’s Saviour,” “he having a fit opportunity by reason of his trade so soone as any were set doune in his chaire he would commonly be cutting of their haire and the truth together.” The appropriate penalty followed that, one of Roxbury sending for him to draw a tooth, the Antinomian clipper of orthodox doctrine lost his way in the forest, and was frozen to death. His fate is set forth as an implied warning to barber chirurgeons not to misuse their opportunities, while it serves to illustrate the effect of such examples in sustaining the principle of the Massachusetts theocracy. To resist it was like entering upon a contest with fate, for its authors dispensed judgments with as much facility as they issued and served common legal process; in short, if any one occasioned them trouble, a warrant, or a miracle, it was difficult to tell beforehand which was pretty certain to overtake the delinquent.

It was not in the nature of things that this complex machinery of beads and spectres should work satisfactorily. But for fifty years the Puritan Zion was thus upheld, and the reign of the saints upon earth anticipated. Happily it was not permitted by events that this strain upon human endurance should last; if it was too much to expect its relaxation from the ministers by whom and in whose behalf it was maintained. Repeated invitations were made to the latter to modify its rigors, but they were uniformly slighted. An example of this occurred in 1652, when Sir Richard Saltonstall, one of the original founders of the colony, wrote to Wilson and Cotton, ministers of Boston, the following letter:—

“Reverend and dear sirs, whom I unfeignedly love and respect, it doth not a little grieve my spirit to hear what sad things are reported daily of your tyranny and persecution in New England, as that you fine, whip, and imprison men for their consciences.—First you compel such to come into your assemblies as you know will not join you in your worship, and when they show their dislike thereof, or witness against it, then you stir up your magistrates to punish them for such, as you conceive, their public affronts. Truly, friends, this your practice of compelling any in matters of worship, to do that whereof they are fully persuaded, is to make them sin; for so the apostle (Rom. xiv. 23) tells us; and many are made hypocrites thereby, conforming to their outward man for fear of punishment. We pray for you and wish you prosperity every way, hoping the Lord would have given you so much light and love there; that

you might have been eyes to God’s people here, and not to practice those courses in a wilderness which you went so far to prevent. These rigid ways have laid you very low in the hearts of the saints, I do assure you I have heard them pray in the public assemblies that the Lord would give you meek and humble spirits, not to strive so much for uniformity as not to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace. I hope you do not assume to yourselves infallibility of judgment, when the most learned of the apostles confesseth he knew but in part, and saw but darkly, as through a glass; for God is light, and no further than he doth illumine us can we see, be our parts and learning ever so great. O that all those that are brethren, though they cannot think and speak the same thing, might be of one accord in the Lord.”

“To this noble remonstrance—and it was not the first of the same sort which Saltonstall had made—Wilson and Cotton wrote a very elaborate reply.—They profess to be friends of peace and moderation, but fully justify the punishments inflicted. ‘Better be hypocrites,’ they say, ‘than profane persons.—Hypocrites give God part of his due, the outward man; but the profane person giveth God neither outward nor inward man.’ You know not if you think we came into this wilderness to practice those courses which we fled from in England. We believe there is a vast difference between men’s inventions and God’s institutions; we fled from men’s inventions, to which we else should have been compelled; we compel none to men’s inventions.’ Yet after this downright claim of a divine character for their system, with an inconsistency too common to surprise, they add, ‘We are far from arrogating infallibility of judgment, or affecting uniformity; uniformity God never required, infallibility he never granted us. We content ourselves with unity in the foundation of religion and church order.’”

“About the same time William sent a warm remonstrance to his old friend and disciple Governor Endicot, against these violent proceedings. The Massachusetts theocracy could not complain that none showed them their error. They did not persevere in the system of persecution without having its wrongfulness fully pointed out.”—(Hildreth, vol. i., pp. 382-4.)

The first modification of the system was due to the interference of Charles the Second shortly subsequent to the Restoration. By a royal order, which at that time the colonists were not in a position to dispute, they were deprived of one of their most cherished privileges—the right to inflict corporal punishment upon Quakers. Later than this, in 1675, when the general court of Massachusetts, after consultation with the Elders, enumerated the sins which had brought upon them the visitation of the war with King Philip, in a spirit of contrition the persecution of the Quakers was renewed.\* But the claimants for toleration who existed in the colony, and who had been encouraged in 1662, by the king’s demands, were now a considerable party; while, on the other hand, the majority for the theocracy was decreasing. The predilection of the latter for a learned ministry also helped to modify their more obdurate convictions until their acceptance of the “Half Way Covenant,” for years a fertile subject of contention, exhibited their weakness by involving them in a compromise. To this weakness, still more effectually than to the license which had been partially procured by the Royal mandate, a great change in the temper of the colony was attributable. Nathaniel Morton concludes in New England’s Memorial with a word of advice to the passing generation, expressing his apprehensions that they were “degenerating into the plant of a strange vine.” As another of their influential divines had expressed it, they “were straggling from the sound of the silver trumpets,” and preparing “to follow music of their own.” In 1680, the Baptists, after meeting for fourteen years in private houses; summoned courage to erect a new building in which they attempted to hold a meeting publicly.

A few years later, when the neglect of the Acts of Trade, the shelter afforded to the regicides and other irregularities, had brought upon Massachusetts the revocation of her charter, greater enormities were helplessly submitted to. Under Joseph Dudley, in 1686, a religious society even worshipping according to the forms of the Episcopal Church of England was organised in Boston, and with Andros the year after, the colonists beheld the first appearance of the hated surplice. The proclamation of James’s De-

\* These sins were declared to be:—“Neglect in the training of the children of church members; pride in men’s wearing long and curled hair; excess in apparel; naked breasts and arms, and superfluous ribbons; the toleration of Quakers; hurry to leave meeting before blessing asked; profane cursing and swearing; tipping houses; want of respect for parents; idleness; extortion in shop-keepers and mechanics; and the riding from town to town of unmarried men and women, under pretence of attending lectures;—a sinful custom tending to lewdness.”