

The fame that preceded the Quakers to New England was not such as to win for them that respect and esteem that is accorded to them at the present day, and as those who found their way to the new world were nearly all Levellers and Fifth-Monarchy men, they did not have a favorable reception. Bowden, a Quaker authority, says the Puritans were not wholly to blame, and that the first Quakers interrupted the service in the Congregational churches. Some of the first lot were put on board a ship and sent back to England; one of them, Mary Fisher, then proceeded to Constantinople, where the Turks looked upon her as crazed. Massachusetts soon swarmed with Quakers. Bancroft says they cried from the windows at the ministers and clergymen as they passed by, and that they smeared their faces, and rushed naked through the streets and into public assemblies. Bowden admits that some of the females, otherwise noted for their chastity, in times of religious frenzy, would divest themselves of all clothing, and rush into the Congregational churches during the time of service, as a sign that the worshippers were as destitute of grace as they (the females) were of clothing. The authorities first banished them, but they returned. In self-defence the authorities proceeded to arbitrary measures, and four Quakers lost their lives, which stirred up against the magistrates such a clamor that a similar course was not repeated. Every person at the present day must condemn the act of the magistrates, but it should be recollected that they lived in the light of their day and not ours, and that their act was not sustained by the voice of the people. Bancroft says: "The magistrates wished to leave them in peace," but the noisy brawlers insisted on suffering martyrdom. After the sentence of death was passed, they were sent out of the colony, but returned to die. "For four centuries," says Bancroft, "Europe had maintained that heresy should be punished by death;" in the Netherlands alone 100,000 suffered martyrdom; "America was guilty of the death of four individuals, and they fell victims rather to the contest of will than to the opinion that Quakerism was a crime. Their own extravagances created the foul enactment. But for them the country would not have been guilty of blood."

The insurgents in Massachusetts who had risen in arms against King James and proclaimed the Prince of Orange, were in favor of the restoration of the old charter, and four-fifths of the people sustained them. A minority, including the persons who held office under King James, were in favor of a new charter. King William was disposed to restore the old at first, but he was persuaded by the more conservative men among his advisers to grant a new charter, and a governor and other officers were appointed, in whom the people had no confidence, some of them being the noted tools of King James. The new charter curtailed the liberties of the people, but enlarged the boundaries of Massachusetts, which, under it, extended to the St. Lawrence, including the whole of Acadia. Sir William Phipps was the first governor, an honest man, but bigoted and superstitious; Stoughton, who was appointed chief-justice, had been a partizan of Andros, and was hated by the people.

At that time the world believed in witchcraft, and multitudes had fallen victims in England and Scotland. Men began to doubt witchcraft in New England at this time. Some cases of witchcraft were brought before the chief-justice, and he decided that the parties were witches according to the precedents of eminent English judges. Several persons were cruelly pressed to death, and others were hanged. New England was guilty of the death of twenty persons for witchcraft, and the severe punishment of others. In October, 1692, the general court, or legislature, of Massachusetts abrogated the