

THE ROCKWOOD REVIEW

beheading a King because he threatened the liberties of a people, some establishing that constitution which is at the foundation of British and American freedom, and still others nobly and heroically leaving their fatherland for consciencesake, and settling down, a little colony of stalwart men, and faithful, loving women, on the soil where first trod the Pilgrim Fathers and Mothers, the most active founders of a new English speaking world. But, measured by our higher standard, they were positively and awfully awful, you know, in their odd, old fashioned ways, and as superstitious as it was possible for civilized folks to be, and find any sort of comfort in life at all. They were burdened with witches and wizards—witches being female, and holding therefore, as always, a marked ascendancy. They didn't like them you may be sure, and got rid of them in the most summary manner possible, sometimes hanging and burning a score or more in a month. England and Scotland were specially disgraced by this cowardly belief, and still more cowardly mode of removing the imagined evil. America was not free from the wretched faith in an impossibility, and at Salem, near to the now enlightened city of Boston, witches were found in scores, and foully executed for their own supposed special good, and the general benefit of a frightened community. And what made this legalized murder yet more atrocious, was the horrible fact that the crime was committed at the instigation of an intolerant clergy, who thought that they did God service by persecuting to the death unfortunate men and women who had incurred the enmity or aroused the fears of more pretentiously pious neighbors. In the days of witchcraft, there were signs and tokens for every act. The ignorant man

and woman didn't start on a journey without consulting a "wise" man or yet wiser woman, as we might examine a barometer. When anything was stolen, there was no appeal to the police office for the services of a detective, unless the circumstance was extraordinary, when the thief-catcher was called in, but Mr. Wiseman or Mrs. Wisewoman, thought to be much more reliable and certainly much cheaper, was asked to show to the sufferer the face of the thief in a looking-glass. If rain chanced to be wanted—and there were droughts in those days, as well as now—Mrs. Wisewoman, alias witch, would cast a flint stone over her shoulder, towards the west, or wet a sprig of a broom in water, and the desired shower speedily followed. Contracts with the Man in Black, otherwise known as Old Bogie, written on parchment, signed and sealed with your own blood, secured you a fortune. Of course you had to catch your man before you signed the bond. To get rid of an enemy, you went to a witch, declared your desire, and paid your money, and forthwith the obliging lady manufactured a little waxen image of your foe, and stuck it full of pins, when the corresponding limbs of the doomed one suffered from rheumatism, wasting and disease, until death gave release from further suffering. Cows were dried, butter spoiled, oxen killed, or beer soured by similar influences. And these ladies could go and come as they pleased. Express trains and fast steamers hadn't been thought of then, and were not particularly wanted by this privileged class. Seated on a broomstick, they traversed the air in a twinkling, and their power was almost illimitable. Happily these formidable and decidedly meddlesome ladies could be checked. A horse-shoe, found or