

some lurking savage would shoot his deadly arrow upon some "settler" on his way to church. Frequently the arrow missed its aim, and then the man of peaceful thoughts is suddenly transformed into the "avenger of blood," and the musket is got ready to do its duty should the savage dare to show his dusky form. Those, indeed, must have been days of great anxiety, but still the pioneer settler clung to his meeting-house as a thing necessary to his life.

In after years, when the savage was subdued and villages and towns began to spring up, and the joys of an infant commerce began to be felt, the meeting-house kept pace with the general progress, and continued to be a place of much interest and attention. William B. Weedon, in his recently published "Economic and Social History of New England," thus graphically describes the meeting-house under the early days of Puritan rule:

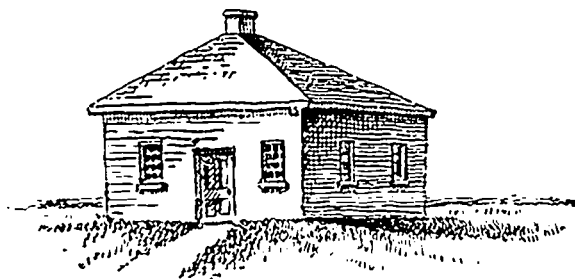
"The affairs we are considering, centred about the meeting-house, whether in centre and 'citadel,' as in Worcester or in the rich meadows of the Connecticut and the sterile plains of Plymouth, or in the sheep-walks and commons. Wherever these energetic people busied themselves, their affairs, all their concerns, put forth their highest expression in the meeting-house. They built a simple structure in the centre of the village. Bridge-water in 1671 builds one in the parallelogram of the early settlers, 46 x 26, and 14 ft. in the stud. Generally, they are of the square type which prevailed through the century. Dorchester expended £200 in 1676 for a house 50 ft. long and 45 ft. wide, which lasted until 1744. Lynn, in 1682, moved the first one to the centre of the common, and rebuilt it, 40 x 44 feet, following the above size almost exactly. This was typical of many similar churches. There were folding doors on three sides, and no porches; two semi-circular architraves over each door. The windows were in small diamond panes, set in lead. Putty was not used; where the sash was of wood, the panes were nailed in. At first the floors were generally seated, or partially so. Pews were then made, some belonging to the congregation and assigned to individuals, and some built and owned personally, according to vote of the society. Hadley had 128 seats for males and females, paid for at 3s. 3d. each. In the Lynn case there were so many individual pews that the interior bristled with peculiarities. Large, small, square, oblong, seated on three sides or seated on one, panelled in all sizes of

oak or pine, these castled Yankee notions held their ground for many years. Balustrades, with small columns of varied pattern, kept the nobility of the owner from the too close approach of the vulgar. A chair in the centre of the square pews was placed for the head of the family, or for an old gentleman or lady. One corner pew was lifted high above the stairs, almost to the ceiling, and was occupied by the blacks.

"Do not imagine that this seating of the congregation, whether upon the open benches of the community or in the private pews of proprietors, meant the deposit of so much flesh and blood in an appropriate space. That would be equality. And whoever construes early New England thus, will comprehend little of its essence.

"Saco, in 1666, seats the people by name, according to vote of the town, in ranks numbering from one to seven. In 1669 two men were voted into the first seat, and their wives into the third, so nicely did these simple folk estimate the bounds of their propriety, and so accurately did they classify the stronger and the weaker vessels into these varying shades of rank."

"The ministers and elders watched the congregation closely, and their office was supplemented by that of the tithing men. One was appointed for about ten families. These divisions were known sometimes as the 'tithing men's squadrons.' They helped to catechize



THE PRIMITIVE SCHOOL-HOUSE.

the people, and overlooked them in their homes. The office was no sinecure in the severe decorum prevailing. Some had long white wands, a knot at one end, a fox tail at the other, for use in the meeting. They rapped or tickled the speaker, according as his nerves needed the heavy thwacks or the gentle titillations of authority.

"Woburn, Mass., in 1672, had a committee of five to assign the seats. Then another committee of two to seat the committee with their wives. They were instructed by the town to respect 'estate, office and age' in the disposition. Stamford, Conn., in 1673, votes to seat its people according to 'dignity, age and estate in this present list of estate.' But all the towns had easy work with the testy touchiness of their constituents, if compared with the greater task of Newbury. In 1669, some were so much dissatisfied with seats assigned by the select men of this town that they chose for themselves. The Salem court fined two men £27 4s. for intruding on others' seats. We may see the value set upon the privilege, and the sacredness