

Sale of the Southwicks

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North American

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Bitter were the persecutions endured by Quakers at the hands of the Puritans. They were flogged if they were restless in church, and flogged if they did not go to it. Their ears were slit and they were set in the stocks if they preached, and if any tender-hearted person gave them bed, bite, or sup, he, too, was liable to punishment. They were charged with the awful offence of preaching false doctrine, and no matter how pure their lives might be, the stern Salemite would concede no good of them while their faith was different from his. They even suspected Cobbler Keezar of mischief when he declared that his magic lapstone which Agrippa had torn from the tower at Nettesheim—gave him a vision of the time when men would be as glad as nature, when the “snuffler of psalms” would sing for joy, when priests and Quakers would talk together kindly, when pillory and gallows should be gone. Poor Keezar! In ecstasy at that prospect he flung up his arms, and his lapstone rolled into the Merrimack. The tired mill-girls of Lowell still frequent the spot to seek some dim vision of future comfort.

In contrast to the tales of habitual tyranny toward the Quakers is the tradition of the Southwicks. Lawrence and Cassandra, of that name, were banished from Salem, in spite of their blameless lives, for they had embraced Quakerism. They died within three days of each other on Shelter Island, but their son and daughter, Daniel and Provided, returned to their birthplace, and were incessantly fined for not going to church. At last, having lost their property through seizures made to satisfy their fines, the General Court of Boston issued an order for their sale, as slaves, to any Englishman of Virginia or Barbadoes. Edward Butter was assigned to sell and take them to their master. The day arrived and Salem market-place was crowded with a throng of the

curious. Provided Southwick mounted the block and Butter began to call for bids. While expatiating on the aptness of the girl for field or house-service, the master of the Barbadoes ship on which Butter had engaged passage for himself and his two charges looked into her innocent face, and roared, in noble dudgeon, "If my ship were filled with silver, by God, I'd sink her in harbor rather than take away this child!" The multitude experienced a quick change of feeling and applauded the sentiment. As the judges and officers trudged away with gloomy faces, Provided Southwick descended from the auction-block, and brother and sister went forth into the town free and unharmed.

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