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The Dogs of Salem

By DAVID H. KELLER

FOR several reasons the people of Salem did not feel kindly toward the two cobblers who had decided to make that town their home. It is true that they made very good shoes, which were greatly needed by the settlers: not only made good new shoes but were more than willing to repair old ones—an economy which should have appealed to the thrifty Puritans. It was also remarked to their credit that they always attended church on the Lord's day, and on that day and all others behaved and conducted themselves with the greatest propriety.

Yet, in spite of all this, the fact remained that they were foreigners, probably Italians or Spaniards. For all anyone knew they might be papists, spies, traitors to the very people who kept them alive by wearing their shoes. Then, too, the twin daughters of the richest man in town were more friendly to these nobodies than the other young men liked to see. In fact, the brother cobblers were not at all popular socially as far as the men were concerned, even though the women all looked at them sidewise.

Timothy Thomas did not like them; he hated them both equally, Amos of the dark hair and Andrew of the fair skin. Repeatedly he warned his daughters not to have any dealings with them, but Anna and Ruth kept on making trips to the cobbler shop. It was astonishing how fast their shoes wore out. The father scolded and threatened and chided and prayed over his daughters, but they kept on wearing out their shoes and

going to have them repaired, and nothing could keep the four young people apart. Angry and vexed, Timothy Thomas grew melancholy.

He had almost reached the point where he was ready to lock his daughters in their bedroom when the entire settlement was agitated and disturbed by the working of witches among the simple folk. After a lot of talk and gossip, Bridget Bishop was brought to trial on the 2nd of June, 1692.

Her case was a very clear one. Even the judges felt that the trial was simply a legal formality, but none the less took testimony of several persons. One said that this witch had looked at her and at once she had been seized by the colic. Another man stated that he was standing in the door of his house with an apple in his hand; the witch looked at him and the apple jumped out of his hand and landed in his mother's lap. A young woman told how she had had a dream of a man assaulting her, but when she cried out the man proved to be Bridget Bishop. There was no doubt that she had power over the people: if she so much as scratched her head during the trial at least a dozen young girls in the courtroom did the same, like so many monkeys. One very important witness, who had been caused to fall into fits for many years by this witch, came to tell her story, but Bridget looked at her and she was kept from talking by the appearance of another fit.

There was nothing to do but to condemn this follower of the Devil to death, and this was done.

Susanna Martin was tried on the 29th of June, 1692. She was accused of many things, but mainly of keeping imps of darkness around her house in the shape of black dogs. If she disliked a man she would give him a black puppy, and in the course of time this young dog would have fits and run and bite the man and his children. She also took unfortunate Joseph Ring with her to a Sabbat, at which place he was given a knock on the back, which made him motionless, unable to move or to speak. At these places the Devil tried to make him sign a book, but this he refused to do. After his return to his bed he would awake sore in the muscles and bruised over his body. Susanna Martin showed plainly that she was guilty by pleading that she had led a most virtuous and holy life. This, of course, was a most absurd statement for her to make when everyone knew that she actually kept black dogs.

As a result of these and similar trials nineteen persons were hanged. Among these was Mr. George Burroughs, a preacher, who showed positively that he was a witch by affirming often in public that the whole excitement was due to ignorance and superstition. There were some who believed him and opposed his execution, but the Reverend Cotton Mather appeared near the scaffold on horseback and said he knew the man was a witch and impostor and that those who pitied him were his comrades and likewise under the power of the Devil. After this speech Burroughs was hanged without any more protest, save from his own lips, which did not count.

To the surprize of all, the more witches that were hanged, the more the good people were afflicted by the evil works of the Devil and his emissaries. Many young girls had fits, were found with hair in their mouths and crooked pins inside their fast-closed hands. Persons who were unsuspected came forward and stated

that they were witches and asked to be hanged with their comrades. Occasionally a suspected person was obdurate and would neither answer questions nor plead guilty or innocent. One such case, a man, was put between two boards and pressed to death. At the very end he made signs that he was willing to speak, but the blood filled his mouth and he died silent. Those who saw this were satisfied that the Devil had sent the blood to keep him still, which was a very satisfactory explanation to all, especially the judges who had ordered the pressing.

TIMOTHY THOMAS attended many of these trials. He was even a jurymen when Elizabeth How was tried at Salem on the 30th of June, 1692. After such a liberal education he felt that he knew considerable about the diabolical mechanisms of these followers of Satan. The entire community considered him an authority on the subject.

Meantime the intimacy between his daughters and the two young cobblers continued, and Mr. Thomas, for all his wealth and power, seemed unable to stop it. He continued to brood over it.

To his great surprize a half-witted boy came to his house one evening and whispered to him that he had seen the two cobblers while they were in swimming and that each of them had the Devil's mark on his shoulder. The imbecile also declared that they looked at him and laughingly whispered to themselves, and that on the way home he was set upon by two large black dogs. Mr. Thomas talked at length to the boy, and the next day, which was the Lord's day, this same boy shrieked out in meeting that he was being bitten by two dogs and that their names were Amos and Andrew. There were marks on the boy's arms which looked like the signs of teeth. The minister, Mr. Price, immediately consulted with the magistrate and

with Mr. Timothy Thomas, with the result that the two cobblers were at once arrested—indeed they were captured by the soldiers in the meeting-house before they had time to escape—and were securely placed in the town prison.

When they were brought to trial there were some among the citizens who said in whispers that the whole matter was worthless as all knew Smiling Samuel to be a natural and a nit-wit. However, it was a different matter when Mr. Thomas himself took the stand and swore to these things as of his own knowledge and not as hearsay. He demanded that the cobblers be examined for the mark of the Beast. There it was on the left shoulder of each, a red mark similar to the head of a goat; of course it had been changed since Smiling Samuel saw it, for he stated after kissing the Book, that it was three times larger and looked like the pit of hell itself.

Things began to look bad for the cobblers. Mr. Thomas said he saw the boy when he fell and said the dogs were after him. Even while he was giving his testimony, a woman in the audience, a very good and pious lady of great charity, cried out so all could hear, "They come and bite me. Lord Jesus, save me from the black dogs!" and fell in a fit. When she was examined, the marks of teeth were found on her wrist and in her hand a bent pin stuck into the flesh, which she said Amos Canning had thrown at her from his eye.

Dr. Smithers was called to examine the Devil's marks. He found that they did not bleed when stuck by a pin.

At this part of the trial the judge asked the two men what they had to say concerning the accusations and just who the dogs were who had bitten all these people. The brothers whispered between themselves, and then Amos, being the elder, arose and said

that they were innocent of any harm, that they had led good lives, and as for the marks on them, they had been born with them. He also stated that it was time for the people of Salem to come to their senses and stop believing such nonsense.

Of course, after that, there was nothing to do save give the matter to the jury, and while they took longer at it than was the usual habit of juries in such cases, still they finally declared the two brothers guilty. Without delay the judge sentenced them to be hanged on the third day from that time.

ON THE morning of this day the jailer, going, as was his habit, to carry to the condemned their breakfast, was startled to find the brothers not in their cell. But in the cell securely fastened by fetters and chains were two black dogs, who howled dismally and tried to break their bonds and attack the frightened man.

Closing and locking the door, he at once ran to the house of the magistrate, who, when he heard the tale, went to see the minister, Mr. Pricc. The two, on their way to the jail, called out Mr. Timothy Thomas to go with them. It was early in the day, and neither of the Thomas damsels had arisen to begin the day's work, so Mr. Thomas, interested beyond measure at the news, went eagerly with the other officials, and on the way a large crowd joined them, the jailer's wife having lost no time in spreading the news of the metamorphosis, though of course she did not use that name in telling the story.

Arriving at the cell, they found it an easy matter to confirm the jailer's story. The men were not there but the dogs were. The sharp eyes of the minister, however, saw something that the jailer had not noticed. This was a message written on parchment, and while the body of the letter was printed in capital letters, still the signa-

tures were in bold script. Clearing his throat, the minister read in loud tones, so that all could hear:

TO OUR DEAR FRIENDS IN SALEM:

HAVING NO DESIRE TO DIE YOUNG AND IN SUCH A MANNER AS HANGING WE CONSIDERED IT THE PROPER THING TO ASK FOR AID AND WE THEREFORE APPEALED TO OUR GOD AND HE DIRECTED US THAT UPON A CERTAIN NIGHT HE WOULD CHANGE OUR SHAPES INTO THOSE OF BLACK DOGS & THEY TO STAY IN PRISON AND SUFFER FOR US THE PENALTY OF OUR SINS. OUR GOD TOLD US THAT OUR SPIRITS WOULD ROAM FREE OF SALEM & NORTHWARD INTO THE GREAT WOODS THERE TO ABIDE WITH TWO SALAMANDERS IN PEACE AND HAPPINESS AS A REWARD FOR OUR SUFFERINGS IN SALEM & WE WARN EVERY ONE NOT TO FOLLOW US IN OUR FLIGHT THROUGH THE AIR AS WE WILL BE PROTECTED BY A MIGHTY FOLLOWING OF MAN-EATING BIRDS OF PREY.

WITNESS OUR HAND AND SEAL GIVEN IN THIS YEAR OF THE DEVIL ASMODEUS
***1692.

AMOS CANNING
ANDREW CANNING.

This letter caused a sensation, even among the most hardened witch-hunters. If this Devil could thus save two of his witches where would his power stop? Denunciations were heard on all sides and the excitement rose to such a pitch that the minister, Mr. Price, suggested that he lead them in prayer for divine guidance. After doing so—and his prayer was a wonderful one in many ways, in spite of the howling of the dogs—he asked Mr. Timothy Thomas if he felt the spirit of the Lord directing him. That gentleman, without the least hesitation, replied that he felt God telling him in the spirit that these two familiars of the witches should suffer the penalty of death. Thereat the magistrate directed the soldiers to

take them to the scaffold and at once hang them. So on the same gallows where the witches had been hanged, these two black devil dogs gasped out their lives, after which they were burned on fagots while the minister, Mr. Price, preached a sermon, more powerful than usual in its denunciation of the Devil and his worshipers. During this sermon Smiling Samuel cried, "I see them, I see them flying through the air!"

It was nearly 10 in the morning before Mr. Timothy Thomas returned to his home. There were no signs of either of his daughters, or breakfast. A frantic search failed to locate either Anna or Ruth. A more careful investigation showed him that his strong-box was broken into and much of his wealth taken from it. This loss threw him into a brain fever, which held him bedfast for many months. When he recovered he found that no one wanted to talk about witchcraft any more, the good folk of Salem having recovered from their period of hysteria.

None the less he counted the two damsels as being dead and in the hands of the Devil, and he mourned for them the rest of his life, nor could he be reconciled to his loss.

SHORTLY after the hanging of the two dogs, the jailer, who had always been a poor man and therefore considered honest, moved to Pennsylvania, where he bought a large plantation from the Penns, paying for it outright in gold.

For many years after that there lived in Quebec two cobblers, noted for the excellency of their work and for the beauty of their wives.

