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NOTE-BOOK

KEPT BY

CAPT. ROBERT KEAYNE,

An Early Settler of Boston.

REMARKS

MADE BEFORE

THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

MARCH 14, 1889.

BY

SAMUEL ABBOTT GREEN, M.D.

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CAPT. ROBERT KEAYNE'S NOTE-BOOK.

At a meeting of the MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY, held in Boston, Thursday, March 14, 1889, Dr. SAMUEL A. GREEN made the following remarks:

At the last meeting of the Society a serial number of the Proceedings was placed on the table, which contained an account of the Trial of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, communicated by our Corresponding Member, Professor Franklin B. Dexter, of Yale University. The report of the trial was found among the papers of President Ezra Stiles, and had been "copied by him while a pastor in Newport, in 1771, from an original manuscript not now traceable." It would be of considerable interest now to know the whereabouts of the missing manuscript, as it has some historical value. It may, however, yet turn up, when and where it is least expected. Akin to the subject I will say that another volume apparently belonging to the same set was once in the possession of our late associate, Dr. Thomas H. Webb, and exhibited by him at a meeting of this Society. In the Proceedings (VII. 417) for August, 1864, it is recorded:—

Dr. Webb read extracts from a manuscript volume in the handwriting of Robert Keayne of Boston, consisting of notes of sermons preached by John Cotton, and of ecclesiastical proceedings of the First

Church. Dr. Webb stated that the volume corresponded in appearance and character with another manuscript-book of Keayne, now in the archives of this Society.

According to the manuscript records of the August meeting, which are somewhat fuller than appear in the printed Proceedings, the owner of the volume, whose name is not given, wished to sell it, and with that end in view the book was exhibited. On the fly-leaf was written: "Robert Keyne of Bost: New England his Booke, 1643." In point of time, it follows immediately, or nearly so, the volume referred to as belonging to the Society, which is evidently a continuation of the one used by President Stiles. In fact, the opening paragraph of the copy in this Library mentions "another Booke," which is without doubt the missing volume quoted by Stiles. Besides the abstracts of sermons, it contains a report of two curious cases of ecclesiastical discipline, — one against Sergeant Richard Wait, and the other against Mrs. Ann Hibbens, — in which nearly all the church members express themselves in regard to the points in controversy. With the change of a few words, Stiles's description of the manuscript would answer nearly as well for the copy now in the Library. It is a quarto volume of 584 closely written pages, bound in leather, and consists of an expansion of notes, taken probably from the mouth of the preacher. The first entry is dated November 23, 1639, and the last one, May 22, 1642; and on the *verso* of the fly-leaf is written "Robert Keayne of Boston in New England his Book 1639. Price 6^s." If the manuscript used by Stiles was once, as he says, "among a Family Collection of Books & Manuscripts of the Rev. M^r Wilson, first Pastor of Boston," it is highly probable that the Society's copy was also at one time in the minister's library. It may be noted here that Keayne and Wilson married sisters. The manuscript was in the possession of the Society before October, 1809, though it is not now known either when or by whom it was given. On a fly-leaf at the end of the volume is written: "Mihi missus est Junii die undecimo 1747 J S. ex cognato S T.

Warrensii." Presumably the initials S. T. stand for Solomon Townsend, and the date rather confirms the statement made by President Stiles that Mr. Wilson's library was scattered near the middle of the last century. The book begins:—

Mr Cotton. ou^r Teacher. his. Sermons. or. Expositions. vpon the Bookes. of the New Testament vpon. the Lordes dayes in the ffore-noone att Boston. in N. England. begininge at the 27th chapter. of Mathue haueinge gone ouer the rest of this. Euayngelist. allready: in another Booke.

Perhaps eighty pages of the manuscript, though they are not consecutive ones in either instance, are given up to the trials of Sergeant Richard Wait and Mrs. Ann Hibbens. The first entry in Sergeant Wait's case comes immediately after the expository lecture of April 20, 1640, and is as follows:—

Elder Oliuer calls out Richard Waight. y^t had bin longe. excomunicated. to see if he could giue satisfaction to the church for his reeturinge agayne. as. he desiens. he is now ready. to make confession. of such thinges. as are past & if you wilbe willinge to hear him. . . .

The charge against Wait at this time is not given *totidem verbis*, but may be inferred from what Mr. Cotton says at a continuation of the hearing, which is recorded just after the "exposition" of July 20, 1640, as follows:—

Brothe^r Waight. you know. how fa^r the church. hath proseded wth you. about you^r wicked confederacy wth Leicesto^r, w^{ch} when some of the Bretheren delt wth you about, you did vtterly deny. y^t you neuer. had any. familliaritie wth him, nor did neuer drinke wth him. but ouer at ou^r Brother Turners & yet since it is playnly proued. & yo^rselfe. haue confessed since. that you haue had often meetings & drinkinges. wth him.

As a result of the long hearing Wait was restored to his former position in the church.

Mrs. Hibbens's case is first considered immediately after the sermon of September 13, 1640, and heard at two later meetings, though the final decision was not reached until the

succeeding February. Her transgression is learned, inferentially, from what "Brother Dauis" testifies. He says:—

The offence was. betweene M^{rs} Hibbens & my selfe. & some others that wth I haue to lay to her charge was an vntruth or a lye or 2. that she tould, as alsoe that she accused me of a combination; and sayd. that the Timbers. of the Roome would crye for Judgment agaynst me, and yet she did not deale wth me, accordinge to the Rule of the word.

The next hearing took place on September 20, 1640, when Mrs. Hibbens and her husband each had something to say before the brethren. Both of these meetings were held on a Sunday, but the third and last hearing was on a Monday. It is recorded:—

therfor this meetinge was not one the Lords day. but apoynted one purpose to be. one a second day. of the weeke. beinge. the first day. of the 12th month. 1640. that strangers might come.

At the conclusion of the trial on February 1, 1640-41, Mr. Cotton, the minister, addressed Mrs. Hibbens, in a public admonition ending with these words:—

I doe. from this time forward. pronounce you. an. excomuicatl pson. from god. & his people.

After the remarks of the pastor the following is given:—

Elde^r Leueret Then Mrs Hibbens, you are. to dept the Congregation; as one deprived. worthely. of all the holy thinges of god.

Pastor. Let vs now seeke. to god by praye^r & call vpo. him. for a blessinge. vpon this Ordinance.

M^r Hibbens [the husband] I desier leaue. to speake. one word befo^r the Congregation be dismissed.

Pastor. Speake on.

M^r Hibbens It is my humble & arnest request to the Congregation, first to. our. Reuerend. Elders, & then to euery Brother and Sister in the Congregation, that both in publike & priuat thay wo^{ld} remember my afflicted condition. befor the Lord, & earnestly pray to god. that this Ordinance of his may be sanctified to my wife. for the good of her soule. & for the returninge of her. backe agayne. first to hir selfe. & then vnto you. & y^t is all I haue to say.

The excommunication of poor Mrs. Hibbens was among the least of her troubles, for fifteen years later, — on June 19, 1656, — she was hung as a witch. Even during the period of her ecclesiastical trial she was considered by some persons as unsettled in her mind; and the public admonition by the church must have had an irritating effect on her excited imagination. Both her shattered reason and her reputation for heresy tended to make this unfortunate woman a victim to the witchcraft delusion. Mrs. Hibbens was a sister of Governor Richard Bellingham, who suffered at times from an aberration of intellect; and perhaps there was some inherited taint of insanity, which would explain in part her peculiarities.



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