

PROCEEDINGS.

ANNUAL MEETING, OCTOBER 21st, 1882, AT THE HALL OF
THE SOCIETY, IN WORCESTER.

THE President, Hon. STEPHEN SALISBURY, LL.D., in the
chair.

The following members were present (the names being arranged in order of seniority of membership): George E. Ellis, Edward E. Hale, Charles Deane, George F. Hoar, John R. Bartlett, Andrew P. Peabody, George Chandler, Joseph Sargent, Stephen Salisbury, Jr., P. Emory Aldrich, Samuel A. Green, Elijah B. Stoddard, Rufus Woodward, George S. Paine, Edward L. Davis, Henry M. Dexter, Francis H. Dewey, James F. Hunnewell, Egbert C. Smyth, John D. Washburn, George H. Preble, Thomas W. Higginson, Albert H. Hoyt, Edward G. Porter, George Dexter, Reuben A. Guild, Charles C. Smith, Hamilton B. Staples, Edmund M. Barton, Thomas L. Nelson, Lucius R. Paige, Franklin B. Dexter, George H. Moore, Charles A. Chase, Samuel S. Green, Justin Winsor, Henry W. Haynes, Edward Isaiah Thomas, Frederic W. Putnam, Solomon Lincoln.

The Honorable GEORGE F. HOAR, LL.D., read the report of the Council, and Mr. EDMUND M. BARTON, Assistant-Librarian, read the annual report of his department. The report of the Treasurer, NATHANIEL PAINE, Esq., was not presented, but the following vote was passed upon motion of CHARLES C. SMITH, Esq. :

Voted, That the members of the Society have heard with much regret of the illness of their devoted and efficient

Treasurer, Mr. NATHANIEL PAINE, and desire to extend to him their best wishes for his early restoration to health.

After a few words from Col. T. W. HIGGINSON, in relation to the Society's portrait of Francis Higginson, the reports of Messrs. HOAR and BARTON, together with that of the Treasurer, when presented, were referred to the Committee of Publication, on motion of Rev. Dr. DEXTER.

Dr. JOSEPH SARGENT and Prof. HENRY W. HAYNES were appointed a committee to collect the ballots for President, all of which were for Hon. STEPHEN SALISBURY, LL.D., who accepted the office.

Hon. SAMUEL A. GREEN, M.D., JOHN R. BARTLETT, LL.D., and Rev. ANDREW P. PEABODY, D. D., were appointed a committee to nominate the officers for the ensuing year. They reported the following, and the gentlemen named were, by ballot, unanimously elected:

Vice-Presidents:

Hon. GEORGE F. HOAR, LL.D., of Worcester.
Hon. GEORGE BANCROFT, LL.D., of Washington.

Council:

Hon. ISAAC DAVIS, LL.D., of Worcester.
Rev. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D., of Boston.
JOSEPH SARGENT, M.D., of Worcester.
Hon. SAMUEL A. GREEN, M.D., of Boston.
STEPHEN SALISBURY, JR., Esq., of Worcester.
Hon. P. EMORY ALDRICH, of Worcester.
Rev. EDWARD H. HALL, of Cambridge.
Hon. DWIGHT FOSTER, LL.D., of Boston.
Rev. EGBERT C. SMYTH, D.D., of Andover.
Rev. WILLIAM R. HUNTINGTON, D.D., of Worcester.

Secretary of Foreign Correspondence:

Hon. J. HAMMOND TRUMBULL, LL.D., of Hartford.

Secretary of Domestic Correspondence:

CHARLES DEANE, LL.D., of Cambridge.

Recording Secretary:

JOHN D. WASHBURN, LL.B., of Worcester.

Treasurer:

NATHANIEL PAINE, Esq., of Worcester.

Committee of Publication:

REV. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D., of Boston.

CHARLES DEANE, LL.D., of Cambridge.

NATHANIEL PAINE, Esq., of Worcester.

REV. EDWARD H. HALL, of Cambridge.

CHARLES A. CHASE, A.M., of Worcester.

Auditors:

HON. EDWARD L. DAVIS, of Worcester.

CHARLES A. CHASE, A.M., of Worcester.

HON. P. EMORY ALDRICH, from the Council, reported for the action of the Society, the following draft of a by-law, which was adopted as Art. XI. :

Whenever any member of the Society shall tender, in writing, a resignation of his membership, the Council may accept the same, and his name shall thereafter be omitted from the roll of members.

The Recording Secretary, from the Council, reported the following gentlemen as candidates for foreign members of the Society, and they were, by separate ballot on each name, elected :

DON MARCO XIMENES DE LA ESPADA, of Madrid, Spain.

DON JUSTO ZARAGOZA, of Madrid, Spain.

Prof. HERMANN VON HOLST, of Freiburg, Germany.

Prof. EDOUARD CHEVALIER, of Paris, France.

M. JAMES JACKSON, of Paris, France.

Rev. EDWARD E. HALE, D.D., read a brief paper descriptive of his recent visit to Palos, in Spain, which is

printed in the proceedings. On motion of Dr. GREEN, Dr. HALE was requested to present M. JACKSON'S letter on the Columbus family to the Committee of Publication for their consideration.

GEORGE H. MOORE, LL.D., read a paper entitled "Some Errors in the History of Witchcraft in Massachusetts," for which the thanks of the Society were accorded, on motion of Rev. Dr. ELLIS. In support of his motion, Dr. ELLIS said :

While listening to the elaborately wrought and rigidly authenticated statements of the admirable paper read by Dr. MOORE, some suggestions have come to my mind in connection with its subject. We are all familiar with the assertion that Stoughton, the chief judge on the bench at the trial of the Salem victims of the Witchcraft delusion, more or less out of sympathy with the confession of regret made by his associate, Judge Sewall, avowed that he felt no obligation to offer any such confession, as he had acted in the direful proceedings according to the best light which God had given him. I should like to ask if this avowal ascribed to Stoughton has any other warrant than that of tradition? Have any of those here present ever met with an expression of it under Stoughton's own hand, or as reported by one to whom he may have made it by word of mouth?

A question may be raised as to the quality and amount of the fault with which Judge Sewall charged himself in his confession. As interpreted by the feelings and opinions current at the time we might infer that his compunctions attached simply to his having admitted what was called "spectral evidence"—the fictitious assumption, through help derived from the Devil, of the form and personality of an accused person, to work mischief by proxy at a distance. We know that the first arrest of the proceedings was caused by a mistrust and then by an open repudiation of the validity of such evidence after it had been for a time allowed. Can Sewall's misgiving

be supposed to cover more than this? It certainly cannot be claimed that he renounced absolutely a belief in the possibility and actuality of the sin of witchcraft.

To all of our lineage who may be sensitive to the misrepresentations and exaggerations which have so mischievously become attached to the rehearsal in history and in lighter reference, of that New England tragedy, the question naturally presents itself—Why are the incidents of that brief episode of that single year in Salem village, made to represent in horror and reproach the sin and shame of all Christendom, at that time and long afterwards? Was there anything special, peculiar, intense, in the sombreness and the dread of an awful delusion and of the suffering, outrage and wrong inflicted by it that makes what occurred in Salem different in a single quality or aspect from similar dark experiences over the whole of Europe? In the third generation after the trials at Salem, Blackstone wrote this sentence in his commentaries: “To deny the possibility, nay, actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery is flatly to contradict the revealed will of God: and the thing itself is a truth to which every nation in the world hath in its turn borne testimony.” Every nation in the world! Was rural Salem to be the single spot where light might be expected to shine?

When, some fifty years ago, the so-called “Puseyite” movement was in its first vigor at Oxford, a zealous effort was made to define a standard or criterion for the ratification of any article of faith. One was suggested and proposed in a maxim of St. Vincent of Lerins, viz.: “What had been believed everywhere, in all time, and by everybody.” He would be a rash man who should claim that any single article of theology or divinity had that supreme warrant. The belief in witchcraft comes nearer than any article of any creed to meeting its exactions. In Great Britain thirty thousand human beings had suffered torture and death, as dealers with the Devil. There had

been four thousand such victims in Scotland in ten years. France had offered up seventy thousand, Germany nearly a hundred thousand. Massachusetts needed only a score of sufferers to bring it to grief and remorse. Why then is the deepest gloom of that dread shadow cast over one of our wilderness towns?

The explanation, I think, is not far for the search. It is to be referred simply to the awful frankness, fulness, sincerity and fidelity with which our history has been written. We tell and let out everything. Some of our local antiquarians and annalists will get up an entire new history if they have moused out two or three trivial facts, or detected two or three trivial errors. Our enemies—so often from among ourselves—keep writing books. No State, no city, no town in any portion of this wide country has had every incident, calamity, wrong or folly in its annals, its experience, its biographies, written out so fully and minutely, with such exposures and aggravations, as have most of the oldest communities in Massachusetts. A visitor from the old world, Dean Stanley, Mr. Freeman or Prof. Tyndall, and our own Zuñi Indians, finding themselves in Salem, are taken to the Essex Institute, and diligently shown the pins which were stuck into the “afflicted children,” the canes with which poor old Mr. Jacobs hobbled up to the gallows on Witch Hill, and that dismal elevation itself has to be mounted. Our earnestness and forlorn determination in such matters are like those of a poor wasted invalid creeping about for years, who gave as a reason for it, “that he wished to save funeral expenses.”

A few remarks were made by Messrs. HOAR and MOORE on the same subject, and Dr. Moore's paper was then referred to the Committee of Publication.

STEPHEN SALISBURY, JR., Esq., presented a paper by Philipp J. J. Valentini, Ph.D., on “The Olmecas and the Tultecas, a study in Early Mexican Ethnology and History,” for which the thanks of the Society were voted, on motion

of Rev. Dr. DEXTER, and the paper referred to the Committee of Publication.

Rev. EDWARD G. PORTER presented, with explanatory remarks which are elsewhere printed, an artotype copy of an ancient document discovered in Durham, England, supposed to be the oldest document in existence relating to the Washington family. Judge STAPLES moved, and it was voted, that the thanks of the Society be returned to Mr. PORTER, and the paper referred to the Committee of Publication.

Prof. FREDERIC W. PUTNAM, of Cambridge, read his "Notes on Copper Implements from Mexico," and exhibited several specimens which have recently come into possession of the Peabody Museum. His paper was referred to the Committee of Publication, with the thanks of the Society, on motion of Prof. H. W. HAYNES.

Hon. SAMUEL A. GREEN, M.D., presented a copy of the printed rules and regulations of an inoculating hospital maintained in Worcester County during the Revolution, and the Society received the same with grateful appreciation.

The meeting was then dissolved.

JOHN D. WASHBURN,

Recording Secretary.

Copyright of Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society is the property of American Antiquarian Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.