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[From the National Era]
Extracts from the diary of Margaret Smith.
NEWBURY - 1678

August ye 1st. Capt Sewall, R. Pike, and the minister, Mr. Richardson, at our house to-day. Capt. Sewall, who lives mostlie at Boston, says that a small vessel loaded with negroes, taken on the Madagascar coast, came last week into the harbor, and that the owner thereof had offered the negroes for sale as slaves, and that they had all been sold to magistrates, ministers, and other people of distinction, in Boston and thereabouts. He said the negroes were principally women and children, and scarcelie alive, by reason of their long voyage and hard fate. He though[t] it a great scandal to the Colony, and a reproach to the Church, that they should be openlie trafficked, like cattell in the market. Uncle Rawson said it was not so formerlie. He did remember the case of Capt. Smith and one Kesar, who brought negroes from Guinea thirty years ago. The General Court urged thereto by Sir Richard Saltonstall and manie of the ministers, passed an order that, for the purpose of "bearing a witness against the heinous sin of man-stealing, justlie abhorred of all good and just men," the negroes should be taken back to their own countrie at the charge of the Colony; which was soon done. Moreover, the two men, Smith and Kesar, were duly punished.

Mr. Richardson said he did make a distinction between the stealing of men from a nation at peace with us, and the taking of captives in warre. The Scriptures - did plainlie warrant the holding of such, and especially if they be heathen.

Capt. Sewell said he did, for himself, look upon all slaveholding as contrarie to the Gospel and the Newe Dispensation. The Israelites had a special warrant for holding the heathen in servitude; but he had never heard anie one pretend that he had that authoritie for enslaving Indians and Blackamoors.

Hereupon, Mr. Richardson asked him if he did not regard Dea. Dole as a godlie man; and if he had aught to say against him and other pious men who held slaves. And he cautioned him to be careful, lest he should be counted an accuser of the brethren.

Here, Robert Pike said he would tell of a matter which had fallen under his notice. "Just after the Warre was over," said he, "owing to the loss of my shallop in the Penobscot Bay, I

changed to be in the neighborhood of him they call the Baron of Castune, who had a strong castle, with much cleared land and great fisheries, at Byguyduce. I was preparing to make a fire and sleep in the woods, with my two men, when a messenger came from the Baron, saying that his master hearing that strangers were in the neighborhood, had sent him to offer us food and shelter, as the night was cold and rainy. - So without ado we went with him, and were shown into a comfortable room in a wing of the castle, where we found a great fire blazing, and a joint of venison with wheaten loaves on the table. After we had refreshed ourselves, the Baron sent for me, and I was led into a large, fair room, where he was, re with Modockawando, who was his father-in-law, and three or four others, chiefs of the Indians togeth[er] with two of his priests. The Baron, who was a man of goodlie appearance, received me with much courtesie; and when I told him my misfortune, he said that he was glad it was in his power to afford us a shelter. He discoursed about the Warre, which he said had been a sad thing to the whites as well as the Indians, but that he now hoped the peace would be lasting. Whereupon, Modockawando, a verie grave and serious heathen, who had been sitting silent with his friends, rose up and made a loud speech to me, which I did not understand, but was told that he did explain of the whites for holding as slaves sundrie Indian captives, declaring that it did not provoke another warre. His own sister's child, he said was thus held in captivitie. He entreated me to see the great chief of our people (meaning the Governor,) and tell him that the cries of the captives were heard by his young men, and that they were talking of digging up the hatchet which the old men had buried at Casco. I told the old Savage that I did not justify the holding of Indians after the peace, and would do what I could to have them set at libertie, at which he seemed greatlie rejoiced. Since I came back from the Castine's countrie, I have urged the giving up the Indians, and manie have been released. Slavery is a hard lot and manie do account it worse than death. When in the Barbadoes, I was told that on one plantation, in the space of five years, a score of slaves had hanged themselves."

"Mr. Atkinson's Indian," said Capt. Sewall, "whom he bought of a Virginia ship-owner, did straightway on coming to his house refuse meat; and although persuasions and whippings were tried, to make him eat, he would not so much as take a sip of drink. I saw him, a day or before he died, sitting wrapped up in his blanket, adn muttering to himself. It was a sad sight, and I pray God may never see the like again. From that time I have looked upon the holding of men as slaves as a great wickedness. The Scriptures themselves do testify, that *he that tradeth into captivitie shall go into captivitie.*"

After the companie had gone, Rebecca bade her young serving girl, whom her father had bought about a year before, of the master of a Scotch vessel and who had been sold [to] pay the expense of her passage; to come to her.

She asked her if she had aught to complain of in her situation. The poor girl looked surprised but said she had not. "Are you content to live as a servant" asked Rebecca. ["Would you leave me if you could[?]" She here fell a weeping. "But if I should tell you that you are free to go or stay, as you will, would you be glad or sorry?" She here fell a weeping, queried her mistress. The poor girl was silent. "I do not wish you to leave me, Effie," said Rebecca, "but I wish you to know that you are from henceforth free, and that as you serve me hereafter, as I trust you will, it will be in love and good will, and for-suitable wager." The bondswoman did not

at first comprehend the design of her mistress, but, on hearing it explained once more, she dropped down on her knees, and clasping Rebecca, poured forth her thanks in her own dialect.

“Oh, my sweet mistress! An’ [??] ye’ve made me free. I’m a free lass, free as the birdies. But I’ll no leave ye. I’ll nae gang frae ye, as long as ye’ll keep me. The Lord bless your bonnie free and your g[o?]de heart!”

“How easie it is to make others happie, and yourselves also!” said my cousin, the tears shining in her eyes.

Extracts from the diary of Margaret Smith.

NEWBURY - 1678.

AGAMENTICUS, AUGUST YE 18TH. The weather being clear and the heate great, last week Uncle and Aunt, with Rebecca and myself, and also Leonard and Sir Thomas, thought it a fitting time to make a little journey by water to the Isles of Shoals and the Agamenticus, where dweleth my Uncle Smith, who hath pressured me in a letter to visit him. One Caleb Powell, a sea-faring man, having a good new boat, with a small cabin, did undertake to convey us. He is a drolling odd fellow, who hath been in all parts of the world, and hath seen and read much, and having a rare memorie, is not ill companie, although Uncle saith one must make no small allowance for his desire of making his hearers marvel at his stories and conceits. We sailed with a good westerlie wind down the river, passing by the great salt marshes, which stretch a long way by the sea, and in which the town’s peoples be now verie busie in mowing and gathering the grass for winter’s use. Leaving on our right hand Plum Island, (so called on account of the rare plums which doe grow upon it,) we struck into the open sea, and soon came in sight of the Islands of Shoals. There being seven of them in all, lying off the town of Hampton on the main land, about a league. We landed on that called the Star, and were hospitably entertained through the day and night by Mr. Abbott, an old inhabitant of the Islands, and largely employed in fisheries and trade, and with whom Uncle had some business. In the afternoon, Mr Abbott’s son rowed us about among the islands and showed us the manner of curing the dun-fish, for which the place is famed. They split the fishes, and lay them on the rock in the sun, using little salt, but turning them often. There is a Court-house on the biggest island, and a famous school, to which many of the planters on the main land doe send their children. We noted a great split in the rocks, where, when the Indians came to the islands manie years ago, and killed some and took others captive, one Betty Moody did hide herself, and which is hence called “Betty Moody’s hole.” Also, the pile of rocks set up by the noted Capt. John Smith, when

he did take possession of the Isles in the year 1614. We saw our old acquaintance Peckanaminet and his wife, in a little birch canoe, fishing a short way off. Mr. Abbott says he well recollects the time when the Agawams were well nigh cut off by the Tarratine Indians; for that earlie one morning, hearing a loud yelling and whooping, he went out on the point of the rocks, and saw a great fleet of canoes filled with Indians, going back from Agawam, and the noise they made he took to be their rejoicing over their victorie.

In the evening, a cold easterlie wind began to blow, and it brought in from the ocean a damp fogg, soe that we were glad to get within doors. Sir Thomas entertained us by his livelie account of things in Boston, and of a journie he had made to the Providence plantations. He then asked us if it was true, as he had learned from Mr. Mather, of Boston, that there was an house in Newbury dolefullie beset by Satan's imps, and that the familie could get no sleep because of the doings of evil spirits. Uncle Rawson said he did hear something of it, and that Mr. Richardson had been sent for to praye against the mischief. Yet as he did count Goody Morse a poor silly woman, he should give small heed to her story; but here was her near neighbour, Caleb Powell, who could doubtless tell more concerning it. Whereupon, Caleb said it was indeed true that there was a verie great disturbance in Goodman Morse his house; doors opening and shutting, household stuff whisked out of the Room and then falling down the Chimnie, and divers other strange things, manie of which he had himself scen. Yet he did believe it might be accounted for in a natural way, especiallie as the old couple had a wicked, graceless Boy living with them, who might be able to doe the tricks by his greate subtiltie and cunning. Sir Thomas said it might be the boy; but that Mr. Josselin, who had travelled much hereabout, had told him that the Indians did practice witchcraft - and that, now they were beaten in warre, he feared they would betake themselves to it, and soe doe by their devilish wisdom what they could not do by force; and verilie this did look much like the beginning of their enchantments. "That the Devil helpeth the heathen in this matter, I doe myself know for a certaintie," said Caleb Powell; "for when I was at Port Royal manie years ago, I did see with mine eyes the burning of an old negroe Wizard, who had done to death manie of the whites, as well as his own people, by a Charm which he brought with him from the Guinea countrie." Mr. Hull, the minister of the place, who was a lodger in the house, said he had heard one Foxwell, a reputable planter at Saco, lately deceased, tell of a strange affaire that did happen to himself, in a voyage to the Eastward. Being in a small shallop, and overtaken by the night, he lay at anchor a little way off the Shore, fearing to land on account of the Indians. Now, it did chance that they were waked about midnight by a loud voice from the land, crying out, Foxwell, come ashore! three times over; whereupon, looking to see from whence the voice did come, they beheld a great circle of fire on the Beach, and men and women dancing aboute it in a ring. Presentlie they vanished, and the fire was quenched also. In the morning he landed, but found no Indians nor English, onlie Brands' ends cast up by the waves; and he did believe unto the day of his death that it was a piece of Indian sorcery.

"There be strange stories told of Passaconaway, the Chief of the River Indians," he continued. "I have heard one say who saw it, that once at the Patucket falls, this chief, boasting of his skill in Magick picked up a dry skin of a snake, which had been cast off as is the wont of the reptile, and making some violent motions of his bodie, and calling upon his familiar, or Demon, he did presentlie cast it down upon the rocks, and it became a great black serpent,

which mine informant saw crawl off into some bushes, verie nimble. This Passaconaway was accounted by his tribe to be a verie cunning conjuror, and they doe believe that he could brew storms, make water burn, and cause green leaves to grow on trees in the winter; and, in brief, it may be said of him that he was not a whit behind the magicians of Egypt in the time of Moses.

"There be women in the cold regions about Norway," said Caleb Powell, "as I have heard the sailors relate, who do raise storms and sink boats at their will."

"It may well be," quoth Mr. Hull, "since Satan is spoken of as the Prince and Power of the Aire."

"The profane writers of old time doe make mention of such sorceries," said Uncle Rawson. "It is long since I have read anie of them; but Virgil and Apulius doe, if I mistake not, speak of this power over the elements."

"Do you not remember, Father," said Rebecca, "Some verses of Tibullus, in which he speaketh of a certain enchantress? Some one hath rendered them thus[:]

"Her with Charms drawing stars from Heaven, I,
And turning the course of Rivers, did espy.
She parts the Earth, and Ghosts from Sepulchres
Draws up, and fetcheth bones away from fires,
And at her pleasure scatters Clouds in the Aire,
And makes it Snow in Summer hot and faire."

Here Sir Thomas laughingly told Rebecca, that he did put more Faith in what these old writers did tell of the magick arts of the sweet-singing Syrens, and of Circe and her enchantments, and of the Illyrian maidens, so wonderful in their beautie, who did kill with their looks such as they were angrie with."

"It was, perhaps, for some such reason," said Rebecca, "that, as Mr. Abbott tells me, the General Court manie years ago did forbid Women to live on these Islands."

"Pray, how was that?" asked Sir Thomas.

"You must know," answered our host, "that in the earlier settlement of the shoals, vessels coming for fish upon this coast did here make their harbor, bringing hither manie rude sailors of different nations; and the court judged that it was not a fitting place for women, and soe did by law forbid their dwelling on the islands belonging to the Massachusetts."

He then asked his wife to get the order of the court concerning her stay on the islands, remarking that he did bring her over from the Maine in despite of the law. Soe his wife fetched it, and Uncle Rawson read it, itt being to this effect - "That a petition having been sent to the court, praying that the law might be put in force in respect to John Abbott his wife, the court doe judge it meet if no further complaint come against her, that she enjoy the companie of her husband." Whereat we all laughed heartilie.

Next morning, the fog breaking awaie earlie, we set sail for Agamenticus, running along the coast and off the mouth of the Piscataqua river, passing near where my lamented Uncle Edward dwelt, whose fame is a worthie gentleman and magistrate is still living. We had Mount Agamenticus before us all day - a faire statelie hill, rising up as it were from the water. Towards night, a smart shower came on, with thunderings and lightnings such as I did never see or hear

before; and the wind blowing and a greate raine driving upon us, we were for a time in much peril; but, through God's mercie it suddenlie cleared up, and we went into the Agamenticus River with a bright sun. Before dark, we got to the house of my honored Uncle, where he not being at home, his wife and daughters did receive us kindlie.