

A CANDLE IN THE WILDERNESS

A Tale of the Beginning of New England
By IRVING BACHELLER

At a quarter of ten they set out for the prison led by a servant in uniform with sword and halberd. "This man is deaf—very deaf," said the governor. "There are times when I need such a servant. He is a most respectable looking creature and he understands every movement of my hand. I shall send him into the room with you and Robert. You can talk freely. He will not hear you."

Peggy was shown to a room beyond the warden's office where prisoners were brought to see their counsel and their friends. The servant stood erect in a corner, his halberd at his side. Robert entered. He was pale and thin but still as straight as an arrow. The two met in the middle of the room and embraced each other. For a moment neither spoke.

"I thought that I would be braver than this," said Peggy as she wiped her eyes. "Come, let us sit down together."

In a cheery tone she told him of William's refusal to plead and of his confinement, of the testimonies against him, of the circumstances that led to his release, of the humiliation of the hempen rope, of his courageous conduct which had won the admiration of the community, of the growing conviction that he, Robert Heathers, was guilty because he had fled from the jurisdiction of the court and refused to return to it, of William's going with Captain Mason to fight against the Pequots.

"Now I am to be your lawyer and for once in our life I shall ask you to obey my wishes," said Peggy. "You will be brought into court tomorrow. You will of course plead that you are not guilty. I think that I know of evidence that will delay action until it can be produced in court. I have seen men fall so often there that I am going to see what a woman can accomplish with those sturdy, iron magistrates. Their wives have no trouble in managing them."

"I had already determined to plead that I am not guilty," said Robert. "I suppose that they will hang me. I saw my fate in those stern faces on the bench. Well, I have suffered so many terrors that dying seems easy, and then I have learned one thing from the red men. It is fortitude. I have seen one of them die twenty deaths without a murmur!"

Peggy held his hand in hers and said: "Whatever happens tomorrow after you have pleaded, hold your peace and let no word pass your lips. For once—just once—I must do all the talking. I wish that I could sit with you the whole night, but we must both seek our rest and the governor is waiting for me."

So this meeting of lovers came to its end. Preceded by the dignified halberdier, Peggy walked with the governor to his house, where she spent the night. They were an hour by the fireside discussing the strange eventful story with details known only to them and laying their plans. The governor wrote a note to Porman. The maid, who brought her night clothes and helped her to bed, was told to awake her at seven and bring her soap and beer. So Peggy was up betimes and on her way to the house of Rev. Philander Porman. She had worked with him in the new school for the children of the poor. He was a learned man of rare insight, who was fond of Peggy and knew of her devotion to Robert. He had given her friendly counsel. Lately he had told her of knowing a new witness in the famous adultery case who would, he felt sure, change the complexion of the whole matter. He had been alone by the bedside of Mabel Hartley when she died and had taken her last confession. Therein the name of the witness was disclosed. Peggy was the only person who had shared his confidence in this matter. Peggy found him in his study and was heartily welcomed. She told Porman of the arrival of Robert and of his great peril from hasty action. She delivered the note from Governor Vane.

"But now the deputies have to be reckoned with," said Porman. "They like to curb the severity of the magistrates."

"Still Robert is a hated aristocrat. I hope to engage their sympathy. But I dare not go to court without the help you can give me."

"Do you wish me to go to the witness chair?"

"Not yet. But I would like a written statement, signed by you, regarding the new witness—something that will give strong support to my plea for the delay we need to find him and bring him into court. Do you know where he is?"

"Yes, and I think that we could bring him here within a week. I shall need a trusty messenger."

"You shall have Amos Todkill."

"Send him to me," said Porman as he sat down at his desk and began to write.

Soon he read to Peggy the letter which he had addressed to the magistrates, deputies and assistants of the court of colony of Massachusetts Bay. It was an admirable letter of a temperate and convincing tone. The girl was pleased with it. She went to the inn to find Amos Todkill. They

told her that he had gone to the prison. She found him sitting alone on the prison steps, his head resting on his hands. He arose and came to her with a sad look in his face.

"Oh, miss! I'm all wilted down like an empty sack thrown on the ground," he said sorrowfully.

"Cheer up, man," said Peggy. "They cannot hang him. I am going to defend with good evidence."

Amos bowed, his hat in his hand, and then looked at her face: "The candle o' the Lord is in yer soul," he said. "I can see the shine o' it in yer eyes. I reckon that's why Robert loves ye so."

"How do you know that he loves me?" Peggy asked.

"Good Lord o' mercy, gal! If he hadn't had hold o' that little hand o' yours do ye think he could 'a' hopped into hell and clim' out ag'in? Every day he were thinkin' o' you. Ye know when a man is sick and sufferin' it's a right smart help for his mind to have a cud like that to chaw on."

"Thanks, Amos! I wouldn't have missed hearing that. I have come to tell you that I need your help. Go to Rev. Philander Porman, who lives in Church lane. He will send you to find a new witness for Robert. Bring him to me as soon as you can. Here is money."

Many people were on their way to the courthouse. When she arrived there its seats were filled and the area behind them was crowded. She entered the space near the throne of Justice reserved for prisoners, officers of the court and counsel. She sat down. The grave-faced magistrates, in black robes and broad white collars, entered, followed by the assistants and deputies. Two constables came with the prisoner. The court was called to order. Robert Heathers was arraigned and asked to plead. He declared that he was not guilty.

Governor Vane said: "Before we proceed with this trial there is one here who has asked for the privilege of addressing the court and presenting a communication relating to important evidence lately discovered bearing on the point at issue. We will now give our attention to Miss Weld."

Peggy Weld arose and bowed. She was dressed in sober black with a white collar and snowy lace beneath her throat and on her wrists. The costume was cunningly chosen. It was the right accessory for her color and her beauty and the singular charm of her manner. In a moment all those stern-faced men were deeply interested. With a modest bearing and a voice filled with the music of a deep sincerity she won their sympathy. What she said is in the records of the court:

"Gentlemen, not long ago we were all impressed by the eloquent words of our governor when he spoke of the peril of haste in seeking justice, when he told how our

fathers had been wronged by hasty judgments inspired by bitter feeling and carried out with an imperfect knowledge of the truth. Remembering those words I now ask you for a brief delay in these proceedings. I ask it not because the prisoner is my lover, not because his life is dearer to me even than my own, but because I have discovered new evidence which may save you from an error the consequence of which, in ruined lives and afflicted conscience, you could never repair. I have the honor of bringing to your minds a communication from one whom you all know and respect—Rev. Philander Porman."

She read the letter: "To the magistrates, assistants and deputies of the General court, Gentlemen: I had not thought that it would ever be necessary for me to address you as I now do. But the time has come when I must tell you that I know who was guilty of adultery with Mabel Hartley on the night of October twelfth. He is not either Robert Heathers or the beloved William



What She Said is in the Records of the Court.

Heydon. He is quite another individual. I know a witness to his misbehavior who can, I hope, be brought here within a week or so. "With deep respect I am, "Your obedient servant, "Philander Porman."

Peggy sat down. Her plea for time was granted. There was a great stir in the crowd as the people began to leave their seats. The governor beckoned her to the bench and whispered: "Well done," John Winthrop shook her hand and the stern Dudley smiled as he looked down upon her.

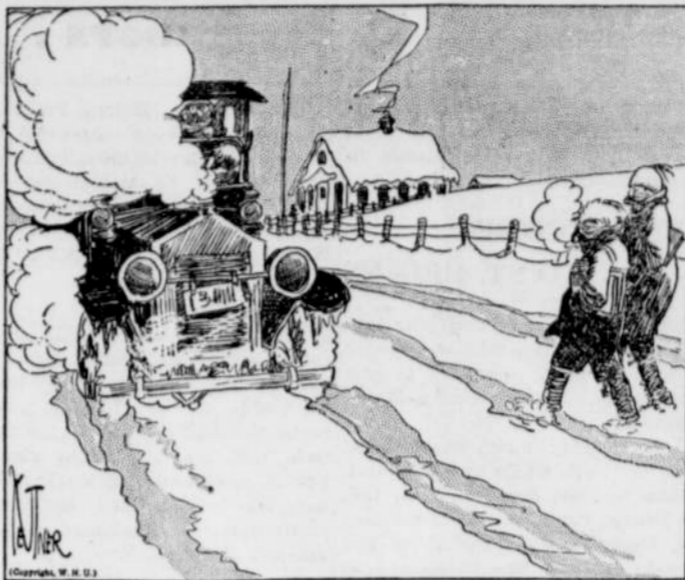
This modest maiden had become a toast and a theme in the colony.

CHAPTER XIV

William Returns From the War and is Praised for Heroic Conduct.

THE Pequot Indians had fallen on the English settlers in Connecticut and slain men and women as they worked in the fields. John Tilly had been ambushed and slain on the fresh water river. A whole family in that valley had been massacred. It all came of an ancient grievance when Thomas Hunt, an irreligious man, seized twenty-seven inoffensive Pequots in 1614 and took them away in the hold of his ship and sold them as slaves. It was a grievance against

Along the Concrete



TAX ASSESSMENTS MADE IN COUNTY

Assessing in various parts of Columbia county began March 1, according to Fred J. Watkins, county assessor, who states that five men are working in farming communities.

T. W. Tandy will have charge of the work in Marshland and vicinity; Donald Parcher will make assessments in Mayger, Rainier, and vicinity; Caly Sherman will cover the communities of Yankton, Deer Island, and Columbia City; H. T. Bennett has been given the neighborhoods of Bachelor Flat and Warren and J. G. Watts will visit homes in Scappoose and vicinity.

Owing to sharp reductions in various county expenses by the levying board, the amount to be raised by tax for 1931 expenses is only \$702,310.20 as compared to \$1,008,199.11—a difference of over \$250,000.

Levies in the various cities and towns of the county show a reduction from the levies of 1929 and 1930. The greatest difference is shown in the Vernonia levy which dropped from 93.7 in 1930 to 56.1 in 1931. The lowest levy is that of Columbia City with 39.4; St. Helens is next with 42.1 as compared with 65.8 for 1930; Goble has 43.0 for 1931 as compared to 48.8 for 1930. Scappoose levy will be 47.0; that of Clatskanie is 59.8; Rainier shows the highest levy in the county with 62.9, which is a reduction from 69.7 in 1930.

(Continued Next Week)

Bishop George Edward Epp, D. D., Rev. F. B. Culver, district superintendent of the Portland district of the Evangelical church, and Rev. C. P. Gates, district superintendent of the Salem district, were guests at the home of Rev. and Mrs. G. W. Plumer last week.

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EARLY SPUDS LOOK BETTER THIS YEAR

Little Promise Seen in Late Crop Opportunity in Grass Seed, Clover, Corn, Flax

It used to be said that the way to grow high priced potatoes was to plant cheap ones—as most farmers do just the opposite—but such doesn't appear to be the case this year, warns E. R. Jackman, crop specialist at O. S. C., in reviewing this season's crops outlook. Every indication points to poor prices on late potatoes again next year, he says, provided normal crops are produced.

"Farmers who normally grow a certain acreage year after year may well continue to do so," says Jackman, "But this is a poor time for a new man to jump into the business."

"On the other hand, there appears to be much better prospects for fair prices for early potatoes," Jackman believes. "The early crop in California promises to be greatly reduced so that it would appear to be a good bet for the potato grower to devote more of his acreage than usual to varieties to be dug as early in the summer as possible."

Jackman does not stop with telling what not to plant, but also lists a number of seed crops that give good promise, particularly in western Oregon. Red and alsike clover are the "backbone" of the seed industry, and despite present low prices Jackman believes conditions are right for an upturn in this business.

"The market still looks good for Austrian winter peas," Jackman continued. "Drouth in the south had as much to do with poor demand last fall as poor farm prices. The acreage for next year is way below requirements."

"Forget about the common Italian rye grass, as there is too much of it for present conditions, but we could grow some English rye grass. English rye grass, orchard grass, tall oat grass, chewing fescue, and meadow fescue all offer good returns and are cheap crops to grow. There is no reason why Oregon could not be producing these crops at the rate of some \$300,000 a year."

Corn and seed flax also pro-

vide possibilities of profitable expansion in many sections. Corn could replace potatoes or spring grain on thousands of acres without danger of oversupplying the local northwest market. Seed flax has an assured market in Portland and will do well when properly cared for on much western Oregon land.

COLUMBIA FARMERS MAY LOWER TAXES

"There will probably be a re-classification of Columbia county lands as the direct result of Saturday's meeting with the members of the State Tax Commission," was the opinion of O. Henry Oleen commenting on Saturday's meeting. "At the present time, Columbia county is the only one in the state that classifies farm lands as 'cultivated,' 'tillable' and 'non-tillable.' We hope that in the future our lands will be classified as 'cultivated,' which will include all lands under cultivation, or 'non-tillable' which will include stump land."

A group of farmers met with E. L. Fisher and Mr. Scott, of the state tax commission in a prolonged session. The farm owners were endeavoring to get assessments on their lands lowered. At present, Mr. Oleen stated, Columbia county farm lands are given a valuation of about \$71 per acre which is considerably more than the valuation given land in Polk, Clackamas and Marion counties.

—St. Helens Sentinel.

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THE FEATHERHEADS By Osborne

I'll be already as soon as I stick some coal on the fire . . .

WOW. WOWCH! WHERE'S THAT FOOL LIGHT!

YOU DID THAT EXPRESSLY ON PURPOSE. 'CAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE THE MELVIN'S TO-NIGHT!!

OH WELL

It "Soots" Felix