

**THE BLUE LAWS OF CONNECTICUT: A  
COLLECTION OF THE EARLIEST STATUTES  
AND JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS OF THAT  
COLONY; BEING AN EXHIBITION OF THE  
RIGOROUS MORALS AND LEGISLATION  
OF THE PURITANS**

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The Blue Laws of Connecticut: A Collection of the Earliest Statutes and Judicial Proceedings of That Colony; Being an Exhibition of the Rigorous Morals and Legislation of the Puritans by Samuel M. Smucker

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**SAMUEL M. SMUCKER**

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EDITED,

WITH AN INTRODUCTION,

BY  
*Samuel M. Smucker*  
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## PREFACE.

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THE term "Blue Laws" is an epithet which has long been applied by way of derision to those rigorous judicial regulations and proceedings which form a part of the early history of the colony of Connecticut; and which illustrate, in rather a peculiar and forcible manner, the primitive morals and legislation of the Puritans. These laws exceed, in the minuteness of their details and in the severity of their penalties, the enactments which were adopted by the rest of the American Colonies; nor are they equaled in these respects by the statutes and judicial decisions of any other community with which we are acquainted. Hence it is that they enjoy a kind of pre-eminence in regard to quaintness, bluntness, particularity, and antiquated excess of penalty, which has gained for them the equivocal epithet by which they have been generally designated for several generations.

The copy of these laws herewith presented, was originally taken from the public records which are preserved in the office of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut. The judicial proceedings which form a portion of the volume were also transcribed from the manuscript records of the court to which they appertain. The first edition of the work having long been out of print, a new impression was deemed desirable to meet the frequent calls which were made for it. The antique and obsolete orthography of this remarkable relic of the colonial era of our country has been carefully retained, as forming an essential element of its singularity and value.

S. M. S.

PHILADELPHIA, October 1850.



## INTRODUCTION.

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MEMORIALS of former ages possess an attraction for the majority of readers ; but monuments of the peculiar qualities of that stern and vigorous race of men, who have stamped the impress of their genius on society, literature, and government in almost every quarter of the civilized world, during several centuries, are invested with a superior and more absorbing interest. The Puritans and their peculiarities of manner, speech, attire, and belief have often been the subject of ridicule to the drier, of abhorrence to the sensualist, of condemnation to the bigot ; nevertheless, they have constituted one of the chief motive-powers which has urged on the car of human progress ; they have proved to be the most potent bulwarks in defense of liberty ; they have formed one of the chief sanctuaries in which virtue, love of truth, hatred to tyrants, and the best interests of mankind, have been protected and enshrined. Wherever the Anglo-Saxon race exists, moulding the laws, religion, and social condition of communities and nations, there the traditions of the quaint peculiarities and austere virtues of the Puritans will be found, as-

serting their power as *facile principes* among the controlling influences which give character to the institutions around them. Hence it is, that the singular collection of judicial enactments and decisions familiarly known as the "Blue Laws of Connecticut," possess a serious importance, and not merely, as is sometimes erroneously supposed, a risible and comical interest.

We purpose, in this Introduction, to trace briefly the origin and development of those several communities in Connecticut who framed and administered these Laws; and to narrate the leading circumstances and events which attended their history, until the period when these regulations were adopted by them and were incorporated into their civil and ecclesiastical government.

#### I. ORIGIN OF THE COLONY OF CONNECTICUT.

On the 20th of March, 1630, about ten years after the landing of the pilgrim fathers on Plymouth Rock, a number of persons who professed the same religious opinions sailed from Plymouth, England; and after a voyage of two months arrived off Nantasket Point. They proceeded up Charles river, and having landed, commenced the erection of dwellings, at a place subsequently called Dorchester. These emigrants were under the guidance of the Rev. John Warham, who had been a distinguished Puritan minister in Devonshire, England. In 1632 a second emigration took place under the conduct of the Rev. Thomas

Hooker, who settled at Newtown. A third community was also established at Watertown, under the general direction of the Rev. Mr. Phillips. These three communities were situated within the limits of the old colony of Massachusetts.

In 1634 the accession of numbers from the mother country to the Puritan colonies of the New World, in consequence of the ecclesiastical tyranny which prevailed in England, became so great, that the settlers we have just named conceived the idea, that their interests would be promoted by a removal from Massachusetts to a still newer and less populous location; and various reports having been circulated in reference to the fertility and salubrity of the region known by the name Connecticut, a number of persons resolved to remove thither, and there establish a new colony. They petitioned the Court of the elder colony for permission to withdraw; and after considerable opposition their request was granted. It was in the year 1635 that their resolution was carried into effect. First a number of persons from Watertown, plunging into the primeval wilderness of forest which divided the inhabited portions of Massachusetts from the surrounding territory, traveled toward the Connecticut river; and at length halted, erected a few huts, and commenced a settlement at Weatherfield. Other companies from Newtown and Dorchester followed, and by them the villages of Hartford and Windsor were subsequently commenced. Thus were laid the foundations of the colony of Con-