

**NOTES OF THE
HISTORY OF SLAVERY
IN MASSACHUSETTS**

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Notes of the History of Slavery in Massachusetts by George H. Moore

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GEORGE H. MOORE

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ON THE
HISTORY OF SLAVERY
IN
MASSACHUSETTS

BY
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Quis nescit, primam esse historiarum legem, ne quid falsi
dicere audeat? deinde ne quid veri non audeat?
—*Cic. de Orat.*, II., 15.

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NOTES ON THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN MASSACHUSETTS.

I.



WE find the earliest records of the history of slavery in Massachusetts at the period of the Pequod War—a few years after the Puritan settlement of the colony. Prior to that time an occasional offender against the laws was punished by being sold into slavery or adjudged to servitude; but the institution first appears clearly and distinctly in the enslaving of Indians captured in war. We may hereafter add a sketch of the theories which were held to justify the bondage of the heathen, but at present limit ourselves to the collection of facts to illustrate our general subject. And at the outset we desire to say that in this history there is nothing to comfort proslavery men anywhere. The stains which slavery has left on the proud escutcheon even of Massachusetts, are quite as significant of its hideous character as the

fatatic defiance of God and Humanity which accompanied the laying of the corner-stone of the Slaveholders' Confederacy.

The story of the extermination of the Pequods is well known. It was that warlike tribe who, in the early months of "that fatal year," 1637, were reported by Governor Winslow to Winthrop as follows:

"The Pecoats follow their fishing & planting as if they had no enemies. Their women of esteem & children are gone to Long Island with a strong guard at Pecoat. They professe there you shall finde them, and as they were there borne & bred, there their bones shall be buried, & rott in despight of the English. But if the Lord be on our side, their braggs will soon fall." *M. H. S. Coll.*, iv., vi., 164.

The extracts which follow explain themselves and hardly require comment.

Roger Williams, writing from Providence [in June, 1637] to John Winthrop, says: "I understand it would be very gratefvll to our neighbours that such Pequots as fall to them be not enslaved, like those which are taken in warr; but (as they say is their generall custome) be vsed kindly, haue howses & goods & fields given them: because they voluntarily choose to come in to them, & if not receaved will [go] to the enemie or turne wild Irish themselues: but of this more as I shall vnderstand. . . ." *M. H. S. Coll.*, iv., vi., 195.

Again [probably in July, 1637]: "It having againe pleased the Most High to put into your hands another miserable droue of Adams degenerate seede, & our brethren by nature, I am bold (if I may not

offend in it) to request the keeping & bringing vp of one of the children. I haue fixed mine eye on this little one with the red about his neck, but I will not be peremptory in my choice, but will rest in your loving pleasure for him or any," &c. *M. H. S. Coll.*, iv., vi., 195-6.

Again [probably 18th September, 1637]: "Sir, concerning captiues (pardon my wonted boldnes) the Scripture is full of mystérie & the Old Testament of types.

"If they haue deserued death 'tis sinn to spare :

"If they haue not deserued death then what punishments? Whether perpetuall flaverie.

"I doubt not but the enemie may lawfully be weaknd & despoild of all comfort of wife & children &c., but I beseech you well weigh it after a due time of trayning vp to labour & restraint, they ought not to be set free: yet so as without danger of adioyning to the enemie." *M. H. S. Coll.*, iv., vi., 214.

Later in the same year [Nov. 1637] Roger Williams, who had promised certain fugitive slaves to intercede for them, "to write that they might be vsed kindly"—fulfilled his promise in a letter to Winthrop, in which, after stating their complaints of ill usage, &c., he adds :

"My humble desire is that all that haue these poor wretches might be exhorted as to walke wifely & iustly towards them, so to make mercy eminent, for in that attribute the Father of mercy most shines to Adams miserable ofspring." *M. H. S. Coll.*, iv., vi., 218, 219.

Hugh Peter writes to John Winthrop from Salem