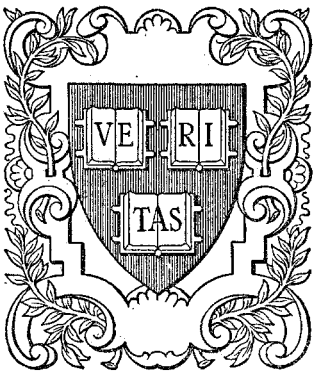
ROGER CONANT

A Founder of Massachusetts

By

CLIFFORD K. SHIPTON



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ROGER CONANT

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Roger Conant

PREFACE

FEW men of the historical stature and importance of Roger Conant have escaped a full-length biography. That he has been hitherto passed over by biographers has been due in no small part to the fact that it was not until the totalitarian states threatened our liberties as we would never have believed possible that the importance of his part in the planting of liberty in America has become apparent. In his day England had reached a parting of the ways between those two forces which today are struggling for the mastery of the world. On the one side was respect for human dignity, faith in the potentialities of the common man, and a longing for liberty of mind and body. From these have developed the humanitarian complex which we call democracy. On the other side, in Conant's day as in ours, was absolutism in mind and state, a contempt for the common man, and a belief that his only function was to slave for his masters.

During these last few years mankind would have fallen five centuries back down the ladder of human progress and the light of liberty would have been extinguished throughout the world had it not been fed the fuel of our blood. When Roger Conant, inspired by the vision of a refuge for English liberty, clung to his American foothold which lesser men abandoned for the security of established settlements, he little thought that from this refuge three centuries later there would flow back the strength which would save human liberty. True that if he had surrendered his foothold some later pioneer might have established it, or Plymouth or Virginia might have played the part without a Puritan Massachusetts. In the same way someone else would have discovered America had Columbus turned back, but we are grateful to Columbus none-the-less. If we were the Fates we would not dare cast the dice again hoping for a better fall than that which brought to Massachusetts Roger Conant and in his footsteps the Puritan Migration.

Even before the world-wide significance of the United States as the arsenal of liberty became apparent, it was recognized that Roger Conant had performed work of great importance, and for that reason he appears briefly in nearly every book on early Massachusetts; but if one were to write a life of him based on the accounts in the volumes in which he plays a secondary part, it would be a weird and curious collection of contradictions and erroneous assumptions. Even the best and most scholarly of the histories contain such errors as confusing him with his son and sending him to Ireland to die thirty-five years before his time. This confusion is inevitable, for none of the writers who have used him as a secondary character have had the time to stop and make a study of his life. It would be a vain show of erudition for me to cite by volume and page each mistake my friends and predecessors have made concerning him; anyone who undertakes to examine closely the secondary characters in this biography will find many similar failings on my part. It is in the hope of like mercy that in the pages which follow I call attention to other men's errors only to correct them, without mentioning authors and books by name.

In an effort to enable the reader to see the world through Roger Conant's eyes, I have included much background detail, all of which comes from the New England of his day. It is not, for example, a guess that the pioneers fed the chickens under the kitchen table; one of Conant's neighbors said that this was the custom. The tall stories and superstitions are culled from the lore of his New England, not from contemporary Virginia or old England.

Considering the relatively compact body of source material, it has not appeared necessary to burden the book with footnote references and formal bibliography. Anyone familiar with the sources will sometimes recognize mingled in a single section material drawn from such seventeenth-century writers as Thomas Morton, William Wood, John White, and Thomas Lechford. My debt to such moderns as Frances Rose-Troup, Frederick Odell Conant, Samuel Eliot Morison, Lawrence Shaw Mayo, Charles K. Bolton, James Duncan Phillips, Sidney Perley, and Alice Gertrude Lapham is obvious. I have freely appro-

priated the results of their labors, knowing that there was no reason for me to work over the fields they have so well cultivated. Roger Conant manuscripts are few and widely scattered; there is no collection of family papers. Without the aid of Kenneth J. Conant the book would never have seen the light of day.

Many a biographer working upon a subject of whom there have been no earlier studies has been mortified to have his man shrink into a pricked bubble of reputation or has uncovered unexpected and unpleasant traits of character. That has not been my experience with Roger Conant. He emerged, in the course of this work, as a solid, useful, gentle, honorable man, with whom it has been a pleasure to associate.

C. K. S.

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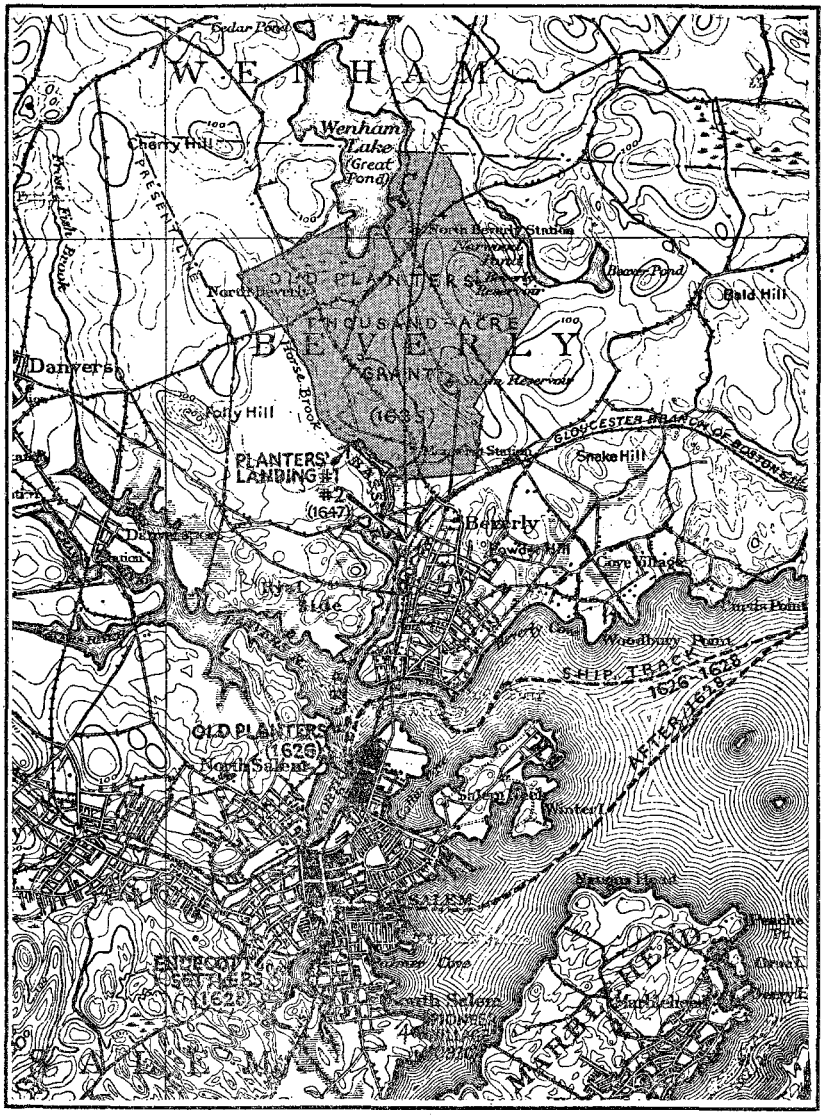

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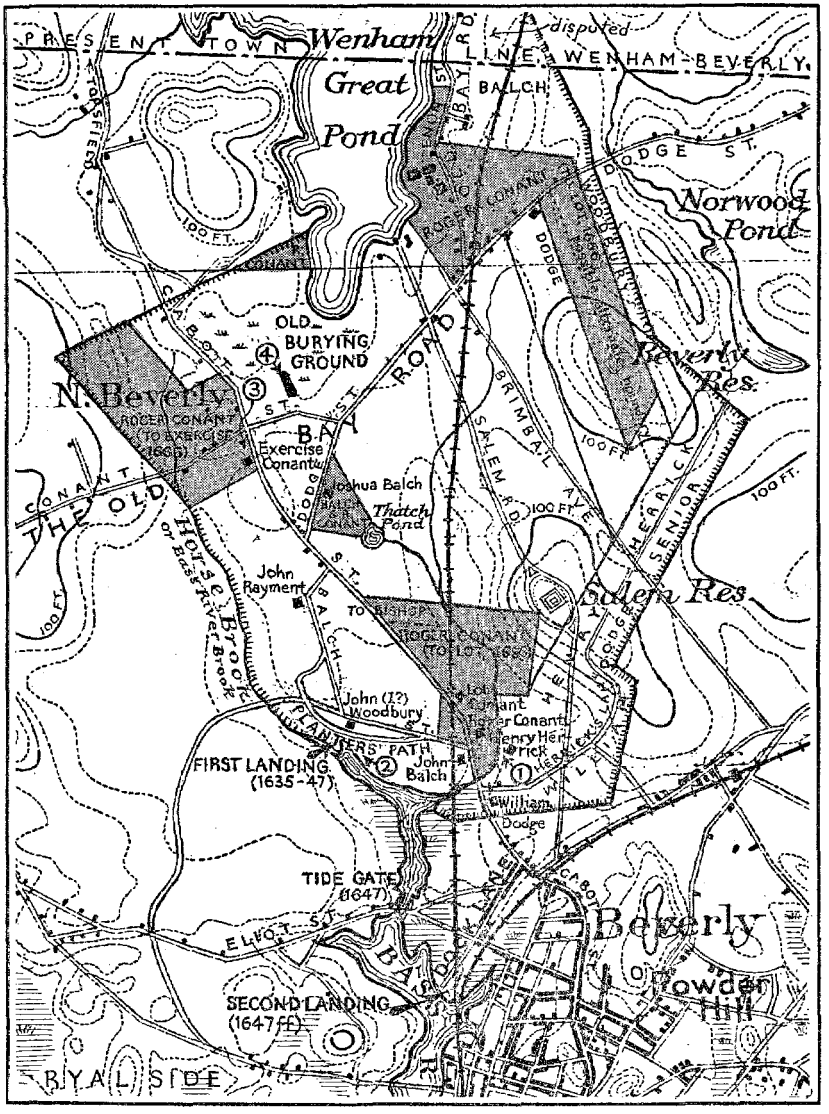


THE OLD PLANTERS' GRANT AND SURROUNDINGS

ROGER CONANT

CHAPTER I

DEVON DAYS

ON APRIL 9, 1592, Richard Conant carried his eighth child up the aisle of the old gray church at East Budleigh. "The name?" "Roger, please." The red mite was not much of a burden in the arms of the yeoman whose life spanned the years between Henry VIII and Charles I. As he stood before the font he probably let his mind wander, as one does at such times, checking over with satisfaction the things accomplished in the years which led to this milestone. There were the broad acres on which he worked beside his hired men, a rich farm, the best but one in all the parish. Too bad that Grandfather Clarke, who had been the leading merchant of Colyton in his day and had defied the headless ghost of the Earl of Devon by purchasing a part of his confiscated lands from the Crown, had not lived to see the substantial estate of the Conants and their file of eight children. The dowry which Agnes Clarke had brought fourteen years before had not been a buried talent, nor had she been a poor steward, for it was largely due to her firm hand on the affairs of the brew house, the milk house, and the weaving room that the family had prospered. It had been a successful partnership and was to continue such until they would be laid in the earth there together, on the same day, still thirty-eight years away. Yes, Richard had reason to be contented, as he walked back down the aisle. Barring accidents, he could foresee that he would be a churchwarden and a power in the community, as his now feeble father had been, and as he hoped that this little Roger would be in turn. Perhaps as he walked he noticed the pew door carved with the likeness of a ship, without suspecting that such a vessel would carry this son of his over the seas to govern a colony in that distant land which so intrigued his former neighbor, the now famous Sir Walter Ralegh.

Richard Conant provided his sons with the best possible of childhood homes. There was money enough for comforts and education, but fortunately not enough to place the family in the ruling caste, which in that generation made a pose of jeering at every honest act and decent motive. He was a model for worshipping small sons. To them his hard labor in the fields and his "exemplary piety" at home were associated with the deference which all of the villagers paid to his financial position and to his dignity as a churchwarden. It is evident from the sons' lives that they never forgot the lessons which his life taught.

Being the youngest child, Roger could not expect a large share of his father's estate, but as such he enjoyed more of the attention of his mother. She was as industrious and pious as her husband, and gay and musical as well, if we may judge by the "2 pare verginalls" in her home. These instruments, which made notes described by one authority as "scratches with sounds at the end," were not suited to accompany religious singing, so we may imagine her tinkling away at tunes fitted to the broadside ballads the peddlers sold, with little Roger, Christopher, and John piping in their trebles.

When the boys grew older they explored that strange land of red cliffs, purple heather, and green hills rolling like a frozen sea. The grown people on their business followed the Roman roads, but the boys sought out the narrow, forgotten, ways of the stone-age men, marked by bridges of single narrow slabs of capstone, long forgotten because more than a thousand years before they had been too narrow for the army carts and chariots of the Caesars. Perhaps it was because as children the Devon men had stood upon the tors where the sky swept around them, and the ancient races, Celt, Phoenician, and barrow men, whispered of the spaces of time, that as fishermen they sailed boldly out to far seas beyond the world known to the scholars. The constant presence of the past did not, as it might have done, make Devon people morbid, oppressed by the evils of ages past. Theirs was a pleasant Saxon land, watched over by the towers of Exeter cathedral, symbols of a gentle form of Christianity. There were none of the dim

racial memories of druid rites and the worship of Baal which caused the people of the continent to make a religious ceremony of burning alive dozens or scores of criminals, witches, Jews, or heretics in great holocausts. Devon fishermen sometimes saw the clouds of greasy black smoke over the villages on the opposite Breton shore and landed to watch, fascinated and nauseated. When they returned their grim faces showed the Conant boys how near they lived to a foreign land. Yet physically Brittany, Devon, and Cornwall made a single province, united by the sea between them. Intermarriage between the ruling families was common; the Montgomerys who led the Protestant faction in the civil wars in Brittany had cousins on the English side of the Channel. The authority of Paris was little minded in St. Malo, and even Bloody Mary and Elizabeth could not control the men of Devon. Neptune was the real ruler of those provinces. From both shores, for a century and possibly two before Roger was born, little fishing vessels had sailed away to the westward. They may have called their goal St. Brendan's Isle, Green Island, or White Man's Land; it meant nothing to them that a German cartographer called the "new" discovery "America," or that the crowns of France and England acknowledged that this land belonged to Spain. Fishermen were not the only ones interested in the New World. East Budleigh could not have escaped the fire of the enthusiasm of its former inhabitant, Sir Walter Ralegh, or his half-brother, Sir Humphrey Gilbert, who dreamed of old kingdoms to be sacked and new ones planted over-seas.

When Roger was a boy there still extended over Devon the chill shadow of the sails of the Armada and of the mountain of faggots gathered on the other shore to be brought over to burn the heretics of England. Thin-lipped, his father told how the Devon men had planned to burn their homes and barns rather than afford shelter to the invaders. A small boy might be thrilled by the thought of taking refuge in the hidden quarry villages of the flint-tool men, sallying out to fight like King Alfred against the invaders; and even as gentle a lad as Roger must have been could not but share the blistering hate of the Devon men for the Spanish and their faggots and torches. This

hatred of the rulers of the Spanish Main and the love of adventure by sea dripped from the defeated veterans of Drake and Hawkins who thronged the taverns and roads of East Budleigh. When Queen Elizabeth lay dying the sailors hid in the hedges and flint quarries to avoid the pressgangs which sought to sweep them up with the double purpose of manning the fleets and filling the ranks of the army in the Low Countries, and of getting them out of England in the troublesome times which were expected to follow the attempt of James to take the throne. Probably little Roger took food from the kitchen to exchange with the men in the hedges for stories of Drake and Hawkins.

When the hedges were soaked with rain Roger could play in the chamber over the hall, where an old suit of armor furnished properties for a sack of Cádiz or Darien. Perhaps his childish perusals explain why only "the moiety" remained of the map which figures in the inventory of his father's possessions. When he was a little older he heard the indignant grumbling against King James for taking Ralegh's estate at Sherborne and giving it to Robert Carr. In the frank language of the age he was told of the physical relations which were supposed to exist between the King and his favorite, Carr, which added a healthy disgust to his youthful emotions. The Gunpowder Plot, coming when he was thirteen, must have served to give a definite focus to his fears and prejudices.

It would be a mistake, however, to gather the impression that Devon life of the period was dominated by these emotions. Fears and hatreds were greater than has been usual in modern times, death was nearer, especially for the young, but life was slower, and change hardly perceptible in the countryside. Surely there were times in later years when Roger Conant looked back wistfully on his boyhood with its serenity and its faith in the changelessness of the good things around him. However, there was normal growth and development. Brother John, who was six years older, went off to grammar school, perhaps at Exeter, and thence to Oxford, on his way to the fame which merited a good biography in the next generation. John was something of a swan in this brood of ducklings, for the family was not bookish, if we may

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, EAST BUDLEIGH — EXTERIOR

ALL SAINTS' CHURCH, EAST BUDLEIGH — INTERIOR

judge by the inventory of 1629, which valued the books at only £3, exclusive of a 30*s* Bible. There is no evidence that Christopher or Roger ever passed through Latin grammar (then the gateway to scholarly pursuits), although the younger boy learned to write a beautiful hand. After all, one clerk was all that a family could afford; the younger boys must make their way in trade. So it happened that one day in 1609 Christopher rode off to London to make his fortune by climbing the ladder which rested its foot in the shop of Thomas Allen, grocer. Roger was four years younger, too young to be of much use as an apprentice, so he probably waited a little while, moping in the empty hedgerows and bedchamber where there had been three small boys to play together. No doubt he was eager to get away, for to move, when it seemed best, was in the family blood. Tradition makes the Conants French Huguenot refugees; certainly they had moved twice in the three generations of which we have a record. Richard was the only Conant in the line who lived and died where he was born.

So, very soon after Christopher's flight from the nest, or so it must have seemed to Agnes Conant, her youngest son set out joyously through the green and deep-washed lanes of Devon on the first stage of the week-long ride to London.

CHAPTER II

IN THIS REALM OF ENGLAND

TO HAVE a hero young in the London of Shakespeare and Donne must be very Heaven to a novelist, but it is only a tantalization for the biographer. Christopher and Roger shared the city streets with George Chapman, Ben Jonson, Beaumont and Fletcher, William Browne, Thomas Carew, Robert Herrick, and a dozen others familiar to every lover of literature; they may have seen Shakespeare himself sitting on the stage and critically watching the performance of his own plays. Being from the country they probably revelled in the theater when they had money, and tagged the footsteps of the great men when, which was no doubt usually, they were out of funds. Unfortunately we do not have even the bread and butter facts for an account of their youth in the metropolis. We may assume that Christopher, once he was well settled in his apprenticeship, sought out a good place for Roger. We may imagine him asking his fellows if they knew a master whose family left some meat on the platter for the apprentices and gave them something besides a hard floor for a bed. As sons of a well-to-do yeoman, the Conants were accustomed to being well-fed and warmly dressed. Evidently Christopher soon found Roger a good place with a salter, for they finished their seven years' apprenticeships not far apart.

Those were exciting days for London boys even though they did not realize the pregnancy of the events which passed before their eyes. The first act of the political tragedy of the House of Stuart was taking place on a wider stage than that of the Globe theatre. The boys of the city felt most keenly the tragedy of the death of Prince Henry, Ralegh's friend, whose hearty, healthy normality contrasted with the slipperiness of his father and the feminine uncertainty of the last three monarchs and brought back memories of the golden days of Good Prince Hal. When Henry died and Charles became the heir to the

throne, the Puritan revolution became inevitable. There was little hope now that the death of James would put an end to the growth of absolutism. Parliament fought the King's exactions and monopolies, and was dissolved for its efforts, to the great apprehension of business men and lovers of liberty. The apprentices of London caught the infection from their masters and expressed their opinion of the political situation in ways beneath the dignity of men of property.

Coming as they did from East Budleigh, the Conants were excited at the release of Ralegh from the Tower and had no doubt that he would regain his reputation by the Guiana expedition. When the King betrayed their hero to the Spanish, they resented it more bitterly than did those whose homes had not been near the path of the Armada. Nurtured in hatred of the Dons, they resented the King's action in stopping the raids against the Indies. The suspicion that the royal policy involved the reëstablishment of Catholicism and the establishment in England of despotism of the Spanish type stirred them as it did others of their class. No doubt they were in the great crowd which murmured its resentment when it saw Ralegh's head roll from the block on October 23, 1618.

While public affairs were thus striding along, Christopher and Roger were serving out their apprenticeships and setting up in business. The speed with which they established themselves as independent tradesmen is surprising and impressing. True, they had come to London at an opportune time. Until 1610 the city had been, each summer for a generation, ravaged by the plague which had once in a single year carried off a sixth of the inhabitants. There was plenty of room on the ladder for earnest and ambitious climbers and a healthy upswing in the business cycle to afford a boost. In 1616 Christopher finished his apprenticeship and was admitted to the Grocers' Company. He promptly married one Anne Wilton and established himself as a grocer and merchant in the parish of St. Lawrence, Jewry. Roger's rise was equally swift, for by November 1/11, 1618, he was well enough established to marry Sarah Horton at St. Ann's, Blackfriars. They settled near Christopher and Anne in the parish of St. Lawrence.

Roger described himself as a "salter," which did not mean that he manufactured or sold salt. The salters' guild had long since turned its attention to the preservation of meat by salting, and the distribution of the product. In the days before refrigeration that was a vitally important trade. Supplying ships' provisions became one of its most important branches, and as a result of that contact the salters began to deal in hemp, flax, tropical dyewoods, cochineal, drugs, and chemicals. Probably Roger Conant's shop or warehouse was redolent of all these, for the day of specialization in trade had not yet come. The practice of the times makes it quite certain that he was a member of the Salters' Company; but the destruction of that organization's records in the Great Fire makes proof of the fact impossible. There is every evidence that he was a successful business man, not the least of which is the fact that he had sufficient money and distinction to be called "Mr." rather than "Goodman," which was the title accorded ordinary shopkeepers. Christopher was described as "merchant," which indicates that his business was larger than one to which we would apply the term "grocer" today. The brothers were acceptable bondsmen when John Conant needed to offer surety for the first fruits of the Rectory of Lymington, where his clerical career was beginning.

It is regrettable that no Conant correspondence has survived to make these families live for us as do the Winthrops when we read their brave and charming letters. Roger and Sarah Conant, at this period, are only names in the parish register, telling that on September 19, 1619, they had a little daughter christened with her mother's name, and that thirteen months later they took her back to the church for the last time, to lie in the yard. As they stood together in their misery before the little grave on the gray October day, watching the clods fall on that bit of themselves, they could not foresee the group of happy children, browned by the hot American sun, who would in a few years be gathered around them, and would, in turn, pass on their blood to thousands of inhabitants of a new world.

On May 27, 1622, Roger brought a boy to the parish church to be christened Caleb. We can well surmise that the young father was,

in spite of his business success, turning over in his mind the idea of taking this precious bit of humanity out of the smoke and filth and stench of the great city to grow up in clean green fields like those of his own boyhood. Probably Sarah Conant was country-bred as well, for her birth is not recorded in the London registers. Such a removal was difficult. The Conants were not rich enough to buy a country estate, as Grandfather Clarke had done, nor could they see much prospect in the salter's business in a small town like East Budleigh. Under the circumstances the natural thing for Roger to do would have been to swallow the city's smoke, hold his nose against the stench of the open sewers, and remain in London to prosper and become a fat burgher who rarely ventured beyond the city ditch. Why did he abandon this comfortable security and risk his life and the lives of Sarah and Caleb in the unknown wilderness on the other side of the world? Unfortunately time has consumed the letters in which he explained to prudent people the reasons for his rash venture. We cannot be sure that his reasons were the ones which motivated those men whose correspondence has chanced to survive. The times were not yet bad enough to drive men like Conant to America for religious or political reasons, nor was he simply an adventurer. The steady development of overseas trade was making good business for salters, so money could scarcely have been a prime motive.

There was, however, a general feeling that the economic situation in England was bad. The last three generations had seen rapid changes, desirable as a whole but each change pinching some group or class. The Tudor period had been one of great economic expansion, bringing a spectacular rise in prices while wages tended to remain fixed. This was followed in the early Stuart period by deflation and falling prices, a natural tendency accentuated by the dwindling of the flow of new money from the Spanish mines, which with some reason was blamed on the unpopular royal policy of friendship with Spain. At the same time the continuing spread of the enclosure system and more efficient agricultural methods increased the amount of technological unemployment. The old system of poor relief broke down, and experiments

with work relief proved costly and unsuccessful. As is always the case in unsettled times, sections of the middle class faced ruin. The great mass of country squires and town tradesmen which had been the glory and the strength of England seemed doomed as the nation took on the ordinary continental social pattern of a small wealthy class superimposed upon a great mass of miserable peasantry. It seemed obvious that the reason why King James did nothing to check this trend was that its progress would further his plans for establishing a despotism on the cold embers of English liberties.

Roger Conant, as the son of a substantial yeoman, knew how the great agricultural middle class felt. As a member of the much smaller group of business men, he must have felt uneasy as he watched the King strangle trade and industry by taxation and by monopolies granted to his favorites. Probably his views coincided with those of his fellow West Countryman, and future friend and backer, the Reverend John White of Dorchester:

> Many among us live without employment, either wholly, or in the greatest part (especially if there happen any interruption of trade, as of late was manifested not onely in Essex, but most parts of the Land) and that doe not onely such as delight in idleness: but even folke willing to labour, who either live without exercise in their callings, or are faine to thrust into other mens, to the evident prejudice of both.

Everywhere the scarcity of employment compelled skilled workmen to charge excessive prices, or to do poor work in order to have an excuse for doing it over again. To the argument that further government regulation of business was the solution, White replied: "Good government, though it doe reforme many, yet it cannot reforme all the evills of this kind; because it will bee a great difficulty to finde out profitable employments for all that will want." As he pointed out, any attempt at agricultural adjustment, such as the proposal to "depasture" cattle, would upset the economic balance.

Indeed there was small hope that the ruling classes, most of whom seemed to be rolling in corruption, would even attempt a new deal. A Lord Treasurer had recently been overthrown for peculation too

outrageous for even those days; a Lord Keeper had been put out of office for incredibly bold bribery; and a Lord Chamberlain and a Lord Privy Seal were suspected of complicity in murder. Even anti-Puritans could see that no intelligent leadership could be expected from a ruling class most of whose lords and ladies habitually rolled drunken beneath banquet tables. The morality of the royal court was probably at the lowest point it had ever reached, and its example was causing every form of earnestness to be treated with contempt throughout the land. The importance of this lies in the fact that the great expansion and development of business and industry then in progress was in the hands of men earnestly concerned in the Protestant Reformation, which in England was most strongly represented by the Puritan group. In country circles every family which, like the Conants at East Budleigh, lived in decency and self-respect was jeered at and called Puritan, and so driven into the Puritan party regardless of its preference in the matter of religious ceremony. The fact that these business men and respectable yeomen and squires were the ones who most hated Spanish Catholicism and most loved English political liberties helped to establish party lines.

It seemed to men like Roger Conant that the evils of the times reached a climax when King James, in the counterpart of Chamberlain's Munich agreement of 1938, permitted Bohemia to be crushed. The black despotism of Spain and the Inquisition began to engulf Germany and to threaten Protestants everywhere with the fate of the Jews in Spain itself. That the lights of Protestantism, with their hopeful gleam of liberty, were being extinguished, meant little to James. More secure than Chamberlain, he could not be compelled by public opinion to make an about-face and assume the leadership of the forces of liberty. On the contrary, he dissolved the protesting Parliament and proceeded with his plans of a Spanish marriage for Prince Charles.

As England sagged under domestic evils and the black clouds boiled up on the continent, thoughtful men began to reconsider the pleas of the visionaries of Elizabeth's time for an attempt to colonize America. It was an idea which had been brought to Conant's attention

ever more frequently with the passing of the years, and each time with additional proof of its feasibility. When he was a boy the men of Devon, who best knew the American coasts, said that the question of settlement was sheer academic speculation which sounded well in the Oxford study of Richard Hakluyt, that collector of explorers' tales, but faded before the experience of seamen. Spain ruled the warm regions, and the fishermen who had visited the rocky "desart" coasts of Newfoundland and Maine could not envisage a colony there large enough to realize the dreams of a refuge for England's surplus people, a market for her woolens, and a source of raw materials. It was not until 1602 that Gosnold had proved that English grain and peas would mature in northern America. Three years later Rosier's published account of Weymouth's voyage to Maine first aroused general interest in those northern regions. Roger was still a child when the great capitalists organized the London and Plymouth companies and began the long and bitter struggle against the wilderness at Jamestown. The results in Virginia were not promising, for that colony seemed to take England's surplus men only to bury them. Each year forty or fifty West Country ships went to the more northern coasts, but reported little that was hopeful.

The group active in furthering colonization during the years of Conant's youth was almost as distant from him socially as America was physically. Great lords sat on the council boards of the London and Plymouth companies. The commoners who sat with them were exalted personages; Gorges and Popham, for example, were involved in the affairs of the Duke of Essex. It is most unlikely that Conant ever met Sir Walter Ralegh, who never, so far as we know, revisited his old home at East Budleigh. Ralegh belonged to the world of courtiers in which men still jousted in full armor, and with equal skill tossed off fluent and charming verse.

It is not at all unlikely, however, that Conant knew and derived his interest in America from that delightful liar, Captain John Smith, who, preaching the colonization of New England with the fervor of a St. Francis preaching love, turned the course of history into the

channels in which it has run. In the winter of 1614–15 Smith was in London, probably developing his fascinating stories of war in the fabulous East as a means of getting the attention of men who might pause for entertainment and remain to invest their money. No doubt he spent many an evening in Salters' Hall on Bread Street, for there were the men who furnished the salt meats and hemp for the voyages and bought such dyes and potash as came back. It was a poor-spirited apprentice who, as he shivered at the back of the hall, far from the fire, was not warmed by the Captain's call for adventurers:

> Thus you may see, of this 2000 miles more than halfe is yet unknowne to any purpose: no, not so much as the borders of the Sea are yet certainly discovered. As for the goodness and true substances of the Land, wee are for most part yet altogether ignorant of them, unless it bee those parts about the Bay of Chesapeack, and Sagadahock: but onely here and there we touched or have seene a little the edges of those large dominions, which doe stretch themselves into the Maine, God doth know how many thousand miles: whereof we can yet no more judge, then a stranger that saileth betwixt England and France can describe the . . . goodnesse and substances of Spaine, Italy, Germany, Bohemia, Hungaria and the rest.

It was hardly necessary to tell a Devon boy that "those that love their owne chimney corner, and dare not go farre beyond their owne townes end shall niever have the honour to see these wonderful workes of Almighty God." Indeed no true son of Elizabethan England could listen unmoved as Smith told of the kingdoms of Masherosqueck, Wawrigweck, Accomenticus, Passataquack, Aggawom, Naemkeck, and Massachusetts, with their furred and feathered monarchs.

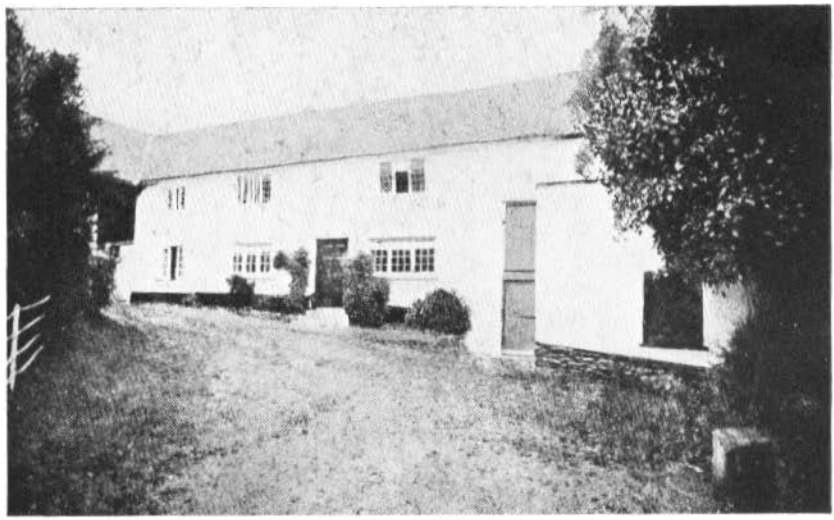
We may turn the pages of John Smith's *Description of New England,* which appeared in 1616, with the assurance that Roger Conant read them with care, trying to visualize the New World, returning and rereading them as every change in public affairs quickened his interest. Smith argued that here was a place for earnest men of small means who were disgusted with conditions at home:

> And here [in New England] are no hard Landlords to racke us with high rents, or extorted fines to consume us; no tedious pleas in law to consume

us with their many years of disputations for Justice; no multitudes to occasion such impediments to good orders, as in popular States. So freely hath God and his Majesty bestowed those blessings on them that will attempt to obtaine them, as here every man may be the master and owner of his owne labour and land; or the greatest part in a small time. If hee have nothing but his hands, he may set up this trade; and by industrie quickly grow rich; spending but halfe that time wel, which in England we abuse in idleness, worse or as ill.

A colony in New England would not require an expensive initial organization and the aid of great lords, nor would it depend on gold mines for success; it could, unlike Jamestown, begin as a supplement to the century-old fishing industry. Hitherto the West Country vessels had each year carried out fishermen who loafed coming and going, and worked on the Banks while the sailors loafed all summer. If the fishermen could be settled permanently in America with their families, they could work the year 'round, and thereby enable vessels to make quicker voyages and earlier markets, and presumably they could raise foodstuffs for themselves and the crews. Obviously, Conant speculated, a salter with good London connections might expect to do well once he was settled in such a colony. Once the plantation was established in America, it would need only men to cause a Florence, a Venice, or a Constantinople to spring up in the wilderness. After all, New England was in the same latitude as Italy and Greece, and so presumably shared their mild climate and traditional fertility. "Who would live at home idly . . . only to eate, drink, and sleepe, and so die . . . or (to maintaine a silly shewe of bravery) toyle out thy heart, soule, and time, basely; by shifts, tricks, cards, and dice," when he might have a part of the building of a new and better world?

Who can desire more content, that hath small meanes; or but only his merit to advance his fortune, then to tread and plant that ground hee hath purchased by the hazard of his life? If he have but the taste of virtue and magnanimitie, what to such a minde can bee more pleasant, then planting and building a foundation for his Posteritie, gotte from the rude earth, by Gods blessing and his owne industrie, without prejudice to any?



THE CONANT HOMESTEAD, EAST BUDLEIGH

THE MILL, EAST BUDLEIGH

It was this prospect, quite as much as religion and a hope of escaping the Spanish war, which induced the pilgrims to leave Holland for America. More than half of the Mayflower passengers were recruited in London, where Conant may well have known some of them. Most likely he knew some of the city merchants who financed the voyage, particularly Thomas Weston, an iron merchant of St. Ann's, Blackfriars, the parish in which the Conants had been married, and in which Sarah had presumably lived for a time. Indeed there is every chance that Conant himself was one of those who furnished supplies for the voyage. No doubt there was correspondence regarding the matter between Roger and his brother John, an intimate friend of that Parson Richard Bernard who had a living near Scrooby and held opinions similar to those of the Pilgrims. If Roger had any idea of joining the emigrants he would have been deterred by their radical religious tenets which were foreign to his upbringing in the church at East Budleigh. Nor were the times at home yet bad enough, or the promise of profits in America yet sure enough, to induce men of his position to join the emigration. This was also the year in which little Sarah was with the Conants, very likely sickly in her brief stay with them.

In the months which followed the loss of the little daughter, Conant would naturally have turned his mind for distraction to the increasing activity among the colonizing interests. Sir Ferdinando Gorges, governor of the fortress at Plymouth, obtained a charter under the Great Seal, reorganizing the Plymouth Company as the Council for New England, and giving it a monopoly of the fisheries. At the news of this Devon men swore broad oaths that they would continue to send out fishing ships as their fathers and grandfathers had done before them. In the House of Commons, the Puritan party attacked this monopoly with the rest but failed to kill it. Gorges was, however, an eminently practical man, with no idea of pushing his legal rights to the point where they reduced profits. In June, 1621, he issued a patent for the Plymouth Pilgrims, who had unexpectedly settled in the territory controlled by his Company. Over this and other matters

Gorges locked horns with the Puritan aristocrats who controlled the London, or Virginia, Company.

These disputes, the ominous political developments at home and on the continent, and the news of the Indian massacre in Virginia, turned men's attention to America. In 1622 three sermons on the subject of colonization were printed, John Smith published his *New England Trials*, and the collection of reports from Plymouth commonly known as "Mourt's Relation" came from the press. Smith reported eighty successful voyages to New England within the past eight years; "As for the danger, You see our Ladies and Gentlewomen account it nothing now to go thither."

Sitting by their fire, turning the pages of these tracts, with many a thoughtful glance at little Caleb's cradle, Roger and Sarah Conant decided to try the great adventure. With long care they calculated the costs, which would take a large part of their little fortune. First, the price of passage:

For a man, wife, and servant	£16	10
For one cow [little Caleb, here]	15	2
For his goods	11	00

It was the selection of the last item which was critical, for this was no steamer-trunk-and-two-suitcases summer trip. A few years later Thomas Graves, an acquaintance of Conant, drew up a list of essential goods which probably corresponds with the selection made by Roger and Sarah, for their experience was successful. The list purports to be the requirements of one man, so probably the quantity of food should be doubled, and the personal needs of a woman added, to make it represent the equipment which the Conants gathered:

8 Bushels of meale
2 Bushels of pease
2 Bushels of Otemeal
1 Gallon of Aquavitae
1 Gallon of Oyle
2 Gallons of Vineger
1 Firkin of Butter
1 Hammer
1 Shovell
1 Spade
2 Augres
4 Chissels
2 Percers stocked
1 Gimblet

1 Monmoth cap
3 Falling bands
3 Shirts
1 Wast-coat
1 Suit of Canvase
1 Suit of Frize
1 Suit of Cloth
3 Paire of Stockings
4 Paire of Shooes
2 Paire of Sheets
7 Ells of Canvas to make a bed and boulster
1 Paire of Blankets
1 Course Rug
1 Armor compleat
1 Long Piece
1 Sword
1 Belt
1 Bandilier
20 Pound of powder
60 Pound of Lead
1 Pistoll and Goose shot
1 Broad Howe
1 Narrow Howe
1 Broad Axe
1 Felling Axe
1 Steele Handsawe
1 whipsawe
1 Hatchet
2 Frowes [shingle cutters]
1 Hand-Bill
1 Grindstone
1 Pickaxe
Nayles of all sorts
1 Iron pot
1 Kettell
1 Frying pan
1 Gridiron
2 Skillets
1 Spit
Woodden Platters
Dishes
Spoons
Trenchers
Sugar
Pepper
Cloves
Mace
Cinnamon
Nutmegs
Fruit
Also there are divers other things necessary to bee taken over to this Plantation, as Bookes, Nets, Hookes and Lines, Cheese, Bacon, Kine, Goats, etc.

No doubt they carefully packed these goods according to the directions which Edward Winslow had sent over from Plymouth:

Be carefull to have a very good bread-roome to put your Biskets in, let your Cask for Beere and Water be Iron-bound for the first tyre if not more; let not your meat be drie salted, none can better doe it then the Saylers; let your meale be so hard trodd in your Cask that you shall need an Ads or Hatchet to worke it out with.

People of today, accustomed to the idea of immigration and to frequent changes of residence, can hardly realize the wrench it was

to sevententh-century people to pull up their roots and move to the other side of the world. When the Conants became weary and dizzy with the tasks of preparation, they probably picked up their copy of "Mourt's Relation" to read over and again its promises:

I never in my life remember a more seasonable yeare, than we have here enjoyed: and if we have once but Kine, Horses, and Sheepe, I make no question, but men might live as contented here, as in any part of the world. For fish and fowle, we have in great abundance, fresh Codd in the Summer is but course meat with us, our Bay is full of Lobsters all the Summer, and affordeth varietie of other Fish. . . . Here are Grapes, white and red. . . . Strawberies, Gooseberies, Raspas . . . Plums of three sorts . . . abundance of Roses . . . the Countrey wanteth only industrious men to imploy, for it would grieve your hearts (if as I) you had seene so many myles together by goodly Rivers uninhabited, and withall to consider those parts of the world wherein you live, to be even greatly burthened with abundance of people.

CHAPTER III

WESTWARD HO!

IN JUNE, 1671, Roger Conant wrote in the wavering hand of age that he had been in America "these forty-eight years and three months." This is the only evidence we have as to the date or means of his arrival. Usually, it seems, when one turns to a broken file of records for information, one finds a gap at the critical point. By contrast, one of the two surviving bits of the records of the Council for New England cover the period in which Conant was preparing to emigrate. But his name does not appear. This is disappointing, but not surprising, for only more important men figure there. Two of these with whom he was concerned were Thomas Weston and David Thomson, a well-educated Scotchman. Weston had the year before sent out to New England a group of fifty or sixty men led by his brother Andrew, who had settled at Wessagusset. At the same time a small trading vessel belonging to him landed seven passengers at Damarins Cove, whence they made their way to Plymouth. The following winter, when the Conants were preparing to emigrate, colonization activity continued. Weston sent out at least one more vessel, and Thomson obtained permission from the Council to take out ten settlers. More than forty other vessels went out to New England in the year 1623. The Conants may have gone in one of these, or in the *Jonathan of Plymouth* with Thomson, but the most likely guess is that they went in Weston's last vessel, which probably made Damarins Cove in March, 1623.

This assumption affords a reasonable account of Roger Conant's emigration and of his actions in his first two years in America. His later connections with Weston suggest an earlier acquaintance than their brief contact in Plymouth. As a salter, he may well have had early business connections with Weston, who was a member of the

ironmongers' guild and must certainly in his extensive overseas activities have relied heavily on members of the salters' guild. Possibly when brother Andrew returned to England in the winter of 1622–23, he urged that there be sent out to the colony at Wessagusset a business agent, a manager or "governor," a man who would, as a salter must, know the commodities which such a plantation required and might produce. Roger Conant had this knowledge and was moreover, his friends said, "a religious, sober and prudent gentleman," a type very much needed at Wessagusset, as we shall see.

Be that as it may , Roger, Sarah, and Caleb embarked in midwinter, 1622–23, in a small trading vessel with few if any other passengers. Edward Johnson might well have had Sarah Conant in mind when he described such a scene:

> Here also might you see weakly Women, whose hearts have trembled to set foote in the Boate, but now imboldened to venter through these tempestuous Seas with their young Babes, whom they nurture up with their Breasts, while their bodies are tossed on the tumbling waves.

Strange to her, if not to her husband, must have been the bellowing of the captain:

> Bend your passerado to the mayne-sayle, git the sailes to the yeards, about your geare on all hands, hoyse your sayles halfe mast high, make ready to set sayle, crosse your yeards, bring your Cable to the Capsterne. Boatswaine fetch an Anchor aboord, break ground or way Anchor, heave a head, men into the tops, men upon the yeards. Come is the Anchor a pike, heave out your topsayles, hawle your sheates. What's the Anchor away. Yea. Yea. Let fall your fore sayle, whose at the helme there, coyle your cable in small slakes, hawle the cat, a bitter, belay, louse, fast your Anchor with your shanke painter, stow the boate. Let falle your maine saile, on with your bonnets and drablers, steare stedy before the wind.

Having slipped out before England became involved in the war which was ruining Germany, they were spared some of the fears of later emigrants, although the captain kept in readiness the guns and the crossbows prepared to throw "wild fire" into any stranger who might decide to break the flimsy peace of the main. In time they grew ac-

customed to sleeping in their rolling bed and to being awakened by the morning greeting of the ship's boy to the captain:

"Holla Maister."
"Holla, Is the kettle boyled?"
"Yea, Yea."
"Boteswaine call up the men to Prayer and Breakfast. Boy fetch my celler of Bottles. A health to you all fore and afte."

The character of the master either lessened the hardship of the voyage or made it hell. There were masters who stole New England Indians under conditions of such baseness that the Spanish refused to buy the captives as slaves. Others were kindly men whose generosity and unselfish, often unpaid, labors saved more than one of the little settlements. Some crews were as pious and addicted to singing psalms as any Puritan congregation, and some sailors' conversations dripped religious verbiage. There were others. The passengers, accustomed to the filth of the cities, were sometimes a source of trial to the seamen. John Winthrop's captain complained that the landsmen on the *Arbella* "were verye nastye and slovenly" and made "the gunne deck where they lodged . . . beastly and noysome with their victualls, and beastlyness as would much endanger the healthe of the shippe."

Homesick landsmen moping in the damp and unheated quarters on such a winter voyage were very likely to put the owners to the expense of sacking and shot unless they could be induced to exercise. Some captains encouraged them to play games with the seamen who, alas, "would sometymes playe the wagges with them." One cure for seasickness was to stand the passengers along a horizontal rope and have them sway it up and down until they were warm and merry. Another now forgotten institution of the period was the ship's liar, who was the first detected each Monday morning in a falsehood. It is indicative of the times that there was no suggestion that a vessel might go until Monday afternoon or Tuesday morning without a liar being detected. At any rate, he that was "first taken with a lye, every Monday" was "proclaimed at the maine Mast by a generall cry, *A lyer, a lyer, a lyer.*" After that, the crew could return to their

wonted customs for a week, while the victim was made a servant of the swabber and given the job of cleaning the beak head and chains.

Among the sights strange to the Conants were the great turtles which in some places covered the sea, and when captured, John Josselyn informs us, "sob'd and wept exceedingly." If Sarah Conant was moved by the grief of these creatures, she was entertained and thrilled with terror by the descriptions of America ready in the mouths of experienced seamen for the enlightenment of emigrants. There were, for example, accounts of Maine moose which stood "twelve foot high, with exceeding fair Horns . . . two fathom from the tip of one Horn to the other." There was also a deer, whose horns extended backward to the rump and then forward again "a handful beyond their Nose." The Conants were relieved to hear that they were not likely to see these, or unicorns, because they frequented the northern regions, where, incidentally, French brandy and not English beer was the beverage. American eagles flew so high that the hawks which pursued them were overcome by the heat of the sun. In the ponds were frogs "a Foot high . . . when they set upon their breech." Indeed, although one need not believe this, the Indians reported "Pond Frogs as big as a Child of a year old." Sarah resolved to keep little Caleb away from ponds, and listened with more pleasure to the accounts of the beaver, who always sat "with his tayle hanging in the water, which else would over heate and rot off." When a log was too heavy for one of these industrious creatures to carry, he would get it "on his shoulder stayed by one of his fore feete against his head." His friends, placing themselves "three to three . . . like a teeme of Horses," "set their teeth in one anothers tough tayles" and so drew the log to the desired place. Sarah took an added interest in these creatures when she learned that when an errant beaver husband came into a strange community he was compelled to carry the heavy end of the logs until he was ready to return to his wife. She was frightened by the account of the bears, who in rutting time "walk the Country twenty, thirty, forty in a company, making a hideous noise with roaring, which you may hear a mile or two before they come."

Sometime in March, 1623, the vessel carrying the Conants made land, probably off the coast of Maine. It was not, at that season, the scene which they had drawn in their imaginations from the descriptions of previous voyagers, who had told of yellow gilliflowers and other floating blossoms "paynting the sea . . . in sheets 9 or 10 yards long," with a shore red with strawberries and roses, and fragrant forests beyond. Their landfall was the grim one which Smith had made seven years before:

> All this Coast . . . as farre I could see Eastward of it, is nothing but such high craggy Cliffy Rocks and stony Isles that I wondered such great trees could growe upon so hard foundations. It is a Countrie rather to affright, then delight one. And how to describe a more plaine spectacle of desolation, or more barren, I knowe not.

They were, at least, spared the sight of the triton which in these waters once came up and seized the side of the canoe. When a frightened man struck with a hatchet, the creature fell back into the water, so it was said, leaving one quite human hand lying severed in the bottom of the canoe. If they failed to see the phantom dances on the shores it was not because the wild rocks and the wall of black forest did not look like the bound of hell. All that made men return a second time to that horrid coast was the teeming life of the sea which, to the eye of the business man, was whole shoals of groats and tuppences, clamoring for hooks and salt. Even the rivers, it was said, were so full of sturgeon as to make canoe passage dangerous.

As the days passed and the vessel ran to the south and west, it sailed out from under the black skirts of retreating winter. At John Smith's Angoam, Roger Conant's spirits began to rise again, for he saw "many rising hilles; and on their tops and descents, many corne fields and delightful groves . . . plaine morish grasse fit for pasture, with many faire high groves of mulberrie trees gardens; and . . . also Okes, Pines and other woods." Rounding Cape Ann, he saw Naumkeag, rockier but inviting. Smith had not explored that land because of "the multitude of people" and the French traders. Multitude of people! That had been one objection to attempting a settle-

ment in this region. Every explorer had described the shores as lined with corn fields, dotted with villages, and teeming with Indians. Now it was nearly as empty as on the fifth day of the Creation week; for the Lord had sent a plague to prepare the way for Israel.

There were, indeed, a few red men here and there who, when the ship came near the shore, demanded to know whether the crew "be King Charles his Torries, with such a rumbling sound, as if one were beating an unbrac't Drumme." Was this Indian accent, perchance, the source of the "r" to which two centuries of Maine men gave voice on the seas of "Chiner" and "Indier"? Not only did some of the savages speak English, but some wore English clothes, and sat at the cabin table and ate as nicely as any Londoner, which wasn't difficult. White men had been on these coasts for over a century, and some of these red men had visited Europe. They were still, as a group, "merry countenanced," in spite of their long contact with the Europeans. On the whole, however, they lacked the glamor of the noble characters in the Dutch and French engravings, for their costume and housing resembled nothing more than those of "the wild Irish." "For their Statures," observed Parson Francis Higginson, "they are a tall and strong limmed People, their colours are tawney, they goe naked, save only they are in part covered with Beasts Skins on one of their shoulders, and weare something before their Privities: their Haire is generally blacke, and cut before like our Gentlewomen, and one locke longer then the rest, much like our Gentelmen, which fashion I thinke came from hence into England." The strange part of it was that the Indians were born white, but when young were dipped by their mothers into "a bath of Wallnut leaves, huskes of Walnuts, and such things as will staine their skinne for ever."

The handiwork of the vanished savages made "the Countrie of the Massachusets" below Naumkeag "the Paradise of all these parts." The isles were cleared for gardens and corn fields except where groves of mulberries stood. In back of the mainland shore of "high Clayie sandie cliffs" were the groves of trees which had survived the annual

burning-over by the Indians, to stand tall and separate, without underbrush, for all the world like the well-kept parks of Devon.

New Plymouth! There it was before them at last, its score and a half of plank houses looking as if the shepherd cots on a Devon moor had decided to hold a synod, and had gathered together at the call of the strange square timber-sod-and-stone structure atop the hill. Stranger yet to English eyes was the pale of heavy timbers which surrounded the settlement in a half-mile compass. For a moment it brought memories of a deer park, and then came the realization that the wall was far stronger than would be needed to keep deer in; it had been built to keep out wild men.

The anchor splashed into the harbor.

CHAPTER IV

THE YEAR WITH THE PILGRIMS, MARCH, 1623, TO SUMMER, 1624

DISILLUSION must have chilled Roger Conant like the cold New England wind as he stumbled up Plymouth's one street. The men he met stumbled too, not because of sea-legs, but because of hunger. Very likely he spoke with Winslow and heard from his lips the grim statement that the Pilgrims "were at the pits brim." Where, demanded the frightened immigrants, were the twenty-five-pound lobsters, the mackerel, cod, and bass, which at every cast filled the nets so that strong men could not pull them into the boats? "We have greate pleantie of strawberries — in June," was Winslow's laconic explanation.

There was more to the problem than the fact that the harvest of the sea and the air, like that of the earth, was seasonal. The Pilgrims were largely city folk, who did not have the knack of fishing and hunting, and had not brought proper equipment. When Conant arrived there was only one fishing boat. As soon as that came in another crew took it out again. They remained out for days if they had no luck, for they would be just as hungry on shore, and they dreaded to return empty-handed to face their hungry children. On such occasions the people on shore made shift to live on shellfish.

The spring of 1623 was dry. The corn eared out when very small in a despairing effort to reproduce before it died. The beans withered entirely. Finally a nine-hour prayer meeting brought the rain which saved the settlement. Fish and wild fowl, in their spring abundance, afforded a diet which was monotonous but better than the bread made from ground nuts which had been the staple diet during the winter. Even a plenty of fish and fowl could not cure the empty feeling in the stomachs of the Pilgrims when word came from the northward

of the wrecking of a vessel which was supposed to be that sent out by the English adventurers with the supplies necessary for the coming winter. There was rejoicing when Miles Standish brought David Thomson down from his new settlement at "Pascatoquack" with the news that the supply ship had been turned back by a storm, but not lost.

The missing vessel, the *Anne*, arrived in July, bringing Christopher Conant among its well and hearty passengers. When greetings were over, he had a wild story to tell Roger and Sarah. John Peirce, the Pilgrims' agent, had taken out in his own name a patent which would have made them his tenants. With this authority, and supplies and passengers, he embarked in the ship *Paragon*. Because of his wickedness, the "ship was sadly blasted from its first setting out . . . it sprang a leak, which was enough to have stopped their voyage: but besides that, one strand of their cable was casually cut . . . so as it broke in a stress of wind that there befel them, where she rode at anchor, so as they were in great danger to have been driven on the sands. By those accidents the ship was carried back to London, where, after fourteen days, she arrived." They refitted, took on more passengers, and set out again, only to encounter a storm, "one of the saddest that ever poor men were overtaken with, that yet escaped with their lives, since that wherein the Apostle Paul suffered shipwreck. . . . The pilot . . . being some days fastened to the vessel for fear of being washed overboard: and sometimes the company could scarse tell whether they were in the ship or in the sea, being so much over-raked with waves . . . John Peirce . . . by all this tumbling backward and forwards, was at last forced to vomit up the sweet morsel which he had swallowed down; so as the other Adventurers prevailed with him to assign over the Grand Patent to the Company." The *Paragon* limped back to port a hopeless wreck, and the goods and passengers were transferred to the *Anne*, which made the voyage in comfort.

In his relief at having at last come to rest, Christopher Conant gladly accepted from the Plymouth settlers the grant of a one acre

plot on Strawberry Hill. From the size of the grant it is evident that he had not brought out his wife. The season was too far along to permit him to raise a crop of the slow maturing Indian corn, or the peas which were then staple food, and the authorities had been obliged to rule that the newcomers must buy what food they needed; but fortunately the Conants had enough money or goods to carry them through. There was a good crop that summer; indeed Plymouth never again faced a general famine, and within two years had a surplus to sell for furs, English goods, or services.

With the fear of starvation out of his mind, Roger Conant could turn to the problem of making a home in the new land. His friend William Hubbard is the sole authority for the statement that he decided to leave Plymouth for religious reasons. Hubbard is excellent authority, but his statement does not justify the conclusions of some New England historians to the effect that the Pilgrims "abhorred" Conant, treated him badly, and drove him out into the wilderness because he did not see eye to eye with them in religious matters. In the first place, so far as contemporary evidence goes, they might well have been sorry to have him leave; and in the second place, religion was not the only, or indeed the most obvious, reason for his leaving.

The character of Roger Conant was very like that of the saintly William Bradford; but in economic and social status, according to the ideas of the time, he was far above the majority of the Pilgrims and would not have enjoyed the close association of their tight little community. The fact that he did not receive a land grant is added evidence that he intended to live by trade rather than by farming, and there was no place in their communistic organization for an independent trader. Christopher Conant, who joined the Pilgrims while waiting for his family to come over, later left Plymouth and joined the Puritans at Salem.

If, as we have assumed, Roger Conant came out intending to act as business manager or advisor for Thomas Weston's Wessagusset settlement, he probably found both a cold greeting and disturbing news at Plymouth. The Pilgrims had found Andrew Weston "a

heady yong man, and violent," and his party mainly "rude and profane fellows." Before going to Wessagusset they had spunged off the Plymouth settlers for a time. The Pilgrims, in their customary Christian spirit, had fed the unwelcome newcomers from their slender supply, doling out the food because the shiftless fellows would have eaten it all at once and then starved. Bradford labored to obtain food for them from the Indians, but they returned the kindness by stealing corn from the Pilgrims' scanty supply. Still worse, they stole from the Indians and incited them against the Pilgrims. When the Indians demanded restitution from the Weston settlers, these hanged one of their number for theft, but the story went around that they executed an innocent decrepit old man rather than the hearty young thief. The whole Wessagusset enterprise quickly collapsed as a result of shiftlessness and worse. The man Andrew Weston had left in charge gave up and went to Monhegan, and the company split into small parties to search for food. During the winter some had sold their clothes to the Indians and were compelled to choose between starving by the fire or freezing while in search of food. Some in desperation had become servants of the Indians, thus destroying all of the respect for the white men which the Pilgrims had built up. The savages gleefully and defiantly described how they had tortured to death some of the party. To prevent the outbreak of a general Indian war, Standish was compelled to go to Wessagusset, seize three of the Indian leaders, and murder them. Their heads he set upon the palisade of the abandoned fort. Most of the survivors of Weston's party worked their way northward hoping to find passage home in fishing vessels, stealing from the Indians as they went, and in one place taking bloody vengeance on innocent red men for the torture of their comrades. The Conants naturally did not care to associate with the remaining members of the Wessagusset party, among whom, according to the merry tale of Thomas Morton of Merrymount, was a prostitute who looked over the Pilgrim Fathers and decided that starvation or suicide were the only alternatives, but finally went off hopefully to Virginia.

If Roger Conant still had any idea of serving as Weston's agent in

New England, his plans were soon ruined by a new set of unfortunate events. About the time that he left England, the Council for New England had engaged David Thomson to prosecute Thomas Weston for his violations of its monoply of New England trade. The St. Ann's ironmonger was compelled to flee under an alias for New England, where he fell into the hands of the Indians and escaped with literally nothing but his shirt. He arrived at Plymouth in the summer of 1623, borrowed a pair of pants and a hundred beaver skins from the forgiving Pilgrims, and finally skipped out without repaying them. So the Conants, their plans upset at every turn, had no choice but to remain at Plymouth until they could reorient themselves.

That same summer, Captain Robert Gorges, the son of Sir Ferdinando, arrived as Governor General of New England, bringing Admiral Francis West, who was ordered to collect the fishing and trading fees for the Council for New England and to suppress the disorders of the wandering fishermen and settlers, who "brought a reproach upon the nation by their lewdness and wickedness among the savages, abusing their women openly, and teaching their people drunkenness, with other beastly demeanors." Gorges and West called Weston to task for the disorders of his men, but the rank and file of their own party was not much better. While they were at Plymouth, in November, 1623, some of their seamen in a drunken brawl burned their own provisions, and were suspected of an attempt to fire the colony storehouse with all its supplies for the winter.

Evidently Robert Gorges had a grandiose scheme for a colony with gentlemen, Church of England ministers, and a civil government, but he could not hold it together. Samuel Maverick went off to settle alone at Mystic, William Blaxton at Beacon Hill, and Thomas Walford at Charlestown. Roger Conant had little in common with these men. He was not, like Gorges, a man of "gentle" family and courtly background and he was not, like Maverick, Blaxton, and Walford, so enamored of nature and the simple life that he wished to live alone in the wilderness. So he remained at Plymouth, rather unhappily we may judge, during the winter of 1623–24. There were

COTTAGES AND CHURCH AT EAST BUDLEIGH

THE EXERCISE CONANT HOUSE, BEVERLY, MASSACHUSETTS

other "Particulars," as those who were not members of the Pilgrim business organization were called, who were dissatisfied with the situation there but did not know where to go.

Bradford's opinion of Conant's friends was not of the best: "Those that came on their perticular looked for greater matters then they found or could attaine into, aboute building great houses, and shuch pleasant situations for them, as them selves had fancied; as if they would be great men and rich all of a sudaine." Edward Winslow contemptuously suggested that a dislike for hard work was the chief source of their discontent: "A proud heart, a dainty tooth, a beggers purse, and an idle hand, bee here intollerable. . . . If therefore God hath given thee a heart to undertake such courses, upon such grounds as beare thee out in all difficulties . . . then thou wilt with true confort and thankfulness receive the least of his mercies." The Particulars resented being told that they were dissatisfied because they were lazy. There were elements in the situation distasteful to even an industrious man like Conant. Participation in public affairs was restricted to members of the Plymouth church, if that gathering of Separatists without minister, sacraments, or catechism could be called a church. There was difference, too, over the Particulars' share in those labors which had to be communal. Moreover the water was bad, and some of the Pilgrims were thievish. However the Particulars agreed to abide by the Pilgrim laws, to help in such necessary communal work as defense, to pay a poll tax of a bushel of corn, and to keep out of the fur trade until the company affairs were wound up. If Roger Conant in 1624 was the same kind of man he was twenty years later, he appreciated the courageous fight the Pilgrims were making and recognized the fact that they had grounds for their impatience with these carping onlookers who refused to lend a hand. Rather than give up the plantation, the Pilgrims had undertaken to support themselves and to buy off the adventurers in England by payments of £200 a year. This they accomplished by heroic labors, a task unique in the annals of American colonization, and an achievement sharply contrasting with the settlement of Virginia, where the 600 adventurers

sank £200,000 and received hardly a sixpence in return. Naturally the Pilgrims, engrossed in their effort, regarded Conant and the other Particulars as dangerous potential rivals in the fur trade, or at least as parasites. The question of a voice in political affairs could hardly have entered into Conant's eventual decision to leave Plymouth, for he was never interested in politics, and he could see in Bradford's demand that a body of assistants be elected, a promise of what then passed for political rights.

There remained the question of religious difference, a point which has been much exaggerated. Roger Conant has been pictured as a faithful Episcopalian, persecuted and cast out by the Congregational Pilgrims. No doubt he did find the simple ceremonies at Plymouth lacking in the religious consolation he had experienced in the ritual of the old church at East Budleigh, but there is no evidence other than Hubbard's statement that he left the settlement for religious reasons.

Conant had been at Plymouth about a year when the *Charity* arrived with fresh fuel for the difficulties between Pilgrims and Particulars. From it were landed three heifers and a bull, which were the first cattle in the colony and a great blessing, and also John Lyford, the first minister, who turned out to be anything but a blessing. Lyford was typical of a class of clergymen with which every colony from Maine to Virginia was plagued, a class composed of the lazy, the failures, and the bad of old England who found it advisable for one reason or another to come to America, as their counterparts two centuries later went to Australia. There was a reversal of this process a century later when some of the scamps among the Congregational clergy after being kicked out of their parishes here went back to old England for holy orders. That Lyford was one of the black sheep of the flock is amply proved by contemporary statements regarding his character, by his wife's bitter denunciations, and by his own confessions. The only evidence which has been produced in his favor is the fact that he was a close friend of such an eminently good man as Roger Conant; but even that does not acquit him, for Conant was also friendly with such questionable characters as Thomas Weston, Thomas

Morton, and John Oldham, of whom there will be more to say later on.

It has become the custom for modern writers to picture Lyford as a loyal Episcopalian who "braved the wrath of Bradford and others by administering the communion, baptizing at least one child [probably Lot Conant], and conducting service according to the Book of Common Prayer. For this he was driven from the colony and afterward maligned by Bradford in his History." This interpretation rests not so much upon written evidence as upon a dislike of Bradford which that man's painfully saintly qualities are likely to awaken in modern writers. In dealing with the disputes of past generations the natural tendency is to sympathize with the less well-known parties, such as Lyford and Conant, under the unjustifiable assumption that they were more like ourselves. The only contemporary account favorable to the minister comes from that jovial scamp, Thomas Morton, and even he did not dare pretend that Lyford was a faithful upholder of Episcopalian ritual. Writing with the intention of damning the Pilgrims in Archbishop Laud's eye, he had to admit that Lyford and Oldham held that the Church of England was "in some particulars . . . defective." This is strong evidence against their Episcopalianism, for Morton was not a man to avoid a good serviceable lie when he could get away with it. It is hard to reconcile Lyford's assumed orthodox Episcopalianism with the fact that he joined the Plymouth church, which Conant never did. The Pilgrims' backers in England took Bradford to task for having admitted Lyford to church membership after that individual had "renownced all, universall, nationall, and diocessan Churches." Evidently they regarded him as less of a good Anglican than even the notorious Separatists of Plymouth!

The fact seems to be that Lyford, unlike his friend Conant, was one of those individuals who so crave attention and importance that they take any path to gain them. Both Pilgrims and Particulars at first greeted him with "great joy and applause," for they had sorely felt the lack of a trained minister; but even the Separatists, who were used to public soul-searchings, were puzzled by his frequent and

tearful confessions of past sins, quite black sins the retelling of which gained him the unconsciously envious attention of those better-than-average men and women who had suppressed their own natural inclinations to err. Neither did they know what to make of his self abasement, fawning, and hand kissing. Bradford became suspicious and, acting on his prerogative as governor, had Lyford's letters to his friends at home opened and read. They were found to contain spiteful exaggerations and distortions which might well have caused the ruin of the colony by alienating its supporters in England. Bradford would certainly have been justified in keeping the letters but he had them copied and sent the originals along. Incidentally it was discovered that Lyford had purloined and copied two of Winslow's letters. If Oldham was playing the same trick of defaming his hosts he escaped, for he "was so bad a scribe" that the Pilgrims could not read his writing. There is no suggestion that Conant was suspected of being involved; evidently he was as transparently honest then as in the later period when a greater wealth of evidence permits us to judge for ourselves.

Before Bradford let it be known that he had detected Lyford's petty duplicity, the minister began to hold separate church services. It has been presumed that his purpose was to afford more of the old Church of England ceremonial for Roger Conant and the other Particulars than they could enjoy in the Pilgrims' services, but it is significant that even Thomas Morton did not claim that he was using the Book of Common Prayer. William Hubbard, whose unexpected sympathy for Lyford may well reflect Conant's attitude, says that the difference between Lyford and Bradford involved "matters of church discipline." Evidently this was not, as was the case of the Browne brothers in Salem a few years later, a simple matter of Prayer Book or no Prayer Book. It is worth noticing that although Conant followed Lyford when he was driven from Plymouth, he did not follow the Brownes and the Prayer Book when they were exiled from Salem. The evidence suggests that he was a Church of England Puritan who like Endecott and Winthrop was led by the events of the next decade into Congregational Puritanism.

Be this as it may, under the conditions existing in 1624, Plymouth could no more tolerate rival churches than Massachusetts, Virginia, Carolina, or Rome could in later years. Bradford, to undermine Lyford's influence, made public the intercepted correspondence. The minister resorted to his old trick of penitent tears and self-revilings; but by August he was again making trouble. Even his wife then gave him up and told the ugly story of his early life.

At the same time another of Conant's friends, John Oldham, was getting into a quarrel of his own with the Pilgrims. He was, as even Thomas Morton had to admit, "passionate and moody," and inclined to "proove himselfe a mad Jack in his mood." The Particulars, it will be remembered, had agreed to carry their share of the burden of defense, but when Miles Standish called Oldham to do his turn in the watch house, "Mad Jack" yelled that "the little captain" was a "raskell and begerly raskell," and drew a knife. Bradford, who came on the run, later said that Oldham "ramped more like a furious beast then a man, and cald them all treatours, and rebells, and other shuch foule language." This was the kind of situation in which "Captain Shrimp" was at his best; in a trice Oldham was "clapt up" in the watch house with a cracked crown and bloody ears. When the offender was brought out for a hearing Bradford stated the case of the colony against him and his fellow Particulars: "They were received in curtisie by the plantation, when they came only to seeke shelter and protection under their wings; not being able to stand alone, that they, (according to the fable,) like the hedghogg whom the conny in a stormy day in pittie received into her borrow, would not be content to take part with her, but in the end with her sharp pricks forst the poore conny to forsake her owne borrow." The Pilgrims were no rabbits. They ordered Oldham to get out and to send back for his family when he had shelter ready for them; Lyford they asked to be ready to leave in six months.

Oldham returned unbidden the next election day, egged on by the other Particulars, so the Pilgrims thought, to make trouble. Once there, he "suffered his unruly passion to rune beyond the limits of all

reason and modestie; in so much that some strangers which came with him were ashamed of his outrage and rebuked him; but all reprofes were but as oyle to the fire." The Pilgrims "commited him till he was tamer, and then apointed a gard of musketers which he was to pass throw, and every one was ordered to give him a thump on the brich, with the but end of his musket, and then was conveied to the water side, where a boat was ready to cary him away. Then they bid him goe and mende his maners."

Roger Conant was not one of the Particulars expelled from Plymouth in the summer of 1624, but he soon followed and joined them. As quiet and gentle as Bradford, he was no mere follower of Oldham and Lyford; these two were rather the trouble makers in an otherwise generally respectable group. There is no reason to think that religion was a primary cause for the exodus; several of the Particulars, including even Oldham, were later members of separatist churches at the Bay. It is more likely that their reason for leaving was economic. They had come out on their own, not as members of the Plymouth company. The Indian troubles provoked by the Wessagusset colony compelled them to remain at Plymouth for a time, but they would naturally leave to farm, fish, or trade for themselves as soon as conditions permitted. Roger Conant, considering his background and means, probably agreed with John Smith that the Pilgrims were people who "liked their owne conceits" and "would not be knowne to have any knowledge of any but themselves, pretending onely Religion their governour . . . when indeed it was onely their pride, and singularity, and contempt of authority; because they could not be equals, they would have no superiors."

CHAPTER V

TAKING ROOT: THE YEAR AT NANTASKET, 1624–1625

WHEN ROGER and Sarah Conant sailed out of Plymouth Harbor it was with lighter hearts than when they set foot ashore eighteen months before. The depression which had hung over the starved little town had lifted. The new world seemed less strange and forbidding, less eager to snuff out their lives. Not, indeed, that it was already familiar; it impressed them by its vastness, by its intriguing mystery, and its potentiality of marvelous things such as moderns can only find in the study of microscopy and astronomy. Even the Indians were ignorant of moderately distant regions, for they told the Pilgrims that French or Dutch ships passed from sea to sea between New England and Virginia, and that the passage must be very wide, because they knew nothing of the happenings in the southern colony. Even where geographical outlines were known, the problems of survival and transportation were sometimes impassable barriers. One speaks, for example, of the "lost colony" of Roanoke as if that had vanished into thin air, whereas actually Englishmen knew where Croatan was, but in spite of their eagerness to rescue the colonists, could not get around to it for three generations.

Although the now vanished joy of exploring an unknown world was still open to Conant, he was relieved of the fear of being lost like the Devon people at Roanoke by the fact that the country was filling up. Wessagusset was reoccupied, and new houses were appearing all along the coast. From Plymouth Oldham went first to Wessagusset, and Conant may well have stopped briefly at that spot, "delightfull to the nimble tripping Deere" and to humans alike. "It is very pleasant, and healthfull, very good ground," reported William Wood, who saw it a few years later, "and is well timbred, and hath good

store of Hey ground; it hath a very spacious harbour for shipping before the towne; the salt water being navigable for Boates & pinnaces two leagues." But disagreeable memories hung over the place, and the settlers there may well have been just as unpleasant to a quiet man like Conant. So he sailed on into the great empty bay we now know as Boston Harbor:

> The Mariners having sayled two or three Leagues towards the bottome, may behold the two Capes embracing their welcome Ships in their Armes, which thrust themselves out into the Sea in forme of a halfe-moone, the surrounding shore being high, and shewing many white Cliffes in a most pleasant prospect with divers places of low land, out of which divers Rivers vent themselves. . . . The Harbour is made by a great company of Islands, whose high Cliffes shoulder out the boistrous Seas. . . . The entrance into the great Haven is called Nantascot . . . the place of itself is a very good Haven, where Ships commonly cast Anchor, untill Winde and Tyde serve them for other places.

Perhaps this seemed, when the dusk obscured the colors, like the beloved cliffs of Devon, but the strange figures of enormous shore birds, either penguins or great auks, dispelled the illusion.

When Conant landed at Nantasket the first problem was to provide shelter for Sarah, Caleb, and Lot; the more necessary if, as is possible, the last had not yet appeared. It needs to be said again that the shelter he built was not a cabin built of round logs with locked corners, such as covered the West in the next century and now appear in pictures and reconstructions of seventeenth-century settlements. Although it is possible that some of the men in New England at that time had seen such structures in Sweden or Russia, they would not have had the skill or knowledge necessary to reproduce them. Log cabins are not simple buildings; they were not invented in America, but were an importation from northeastern Europe. Later the settlers built block houses of square-sawn timbers, twenty inches wide and five inches thick, placed on edge one upon the other, and dovetailed at the ends. But of course this construction required sawpits and a great amount of labor. When the unexpectedly bitter northwest

wind came along, "commanding every man" to find shelter, "forbidding any to outface him without prejudice to their noses," the first thing done was to follow the technique of the English shepherd on the moors:

> They burrow themselves in the Earth for their first shelter under some Hill-side, casting the Earth aloft upon Timber; they make a smoaky fire against the Earth at the highest side, and thus these poore servants of Christ provide shelter for themselves, their Wives and little ones, keeping off the short showers from their Lodgings but the long raines penetrate through, to their great disturbance in the night season: yet in these poore Wigwames (they sing Psalmes, pray and praise their God) till they can provide them houses, which ordinarily was not wont to be with many till the Earth by the Lords blessing, brought forth Bread to feed them, their Wives and little ones.

The next step in some places, and probably at Nantasket, was to build structures above ground on the plan of English barns. Instead of upright corner posts, these had curved timbers fastened together at the top, resembling wishbones stuck into the ground. Such structures appear to have been commonly called "English wigwams," although they became "houses" when chimneys were added. This period of architecture was brief in New England, for it was difficult to fix tight siding to the curved uprights. The settlers were sawmen, not axemen, so they quickly dug pits and ripped out squared timbers and planks with which to build frame houses. Those at Nantasket were doubtless the simplest, one room, story-and-a-half affairs.

The settlers inevitably noted that "Winter and Summer proved more moderate" as soon as they moved from their holes and wigwams to frame houses. Evidently the difference was a matter of degree, for we know that the windows at Nantasket were unglazed and open even in winter by the fact that Indians came and looked in. The difficulty was offset by the joy of being able to afford great fires in the chimneys which formed the back wall of the houses: "A poore Servant here that is to possesse but 50 Acres of Land, may afford to give more wood for Timber and Fire as good as the world yeelds,

then many Noble men in England can afford to do. Here is good living for those that love good Fires."

When the supply of candles which Sarah Conant had brought failed, she fell back upon the produce of the country for domestic lighting:

> Although New-England have no Tallow to make Candles of, yet by the aboundance of the Fish thereof, it can afford Oyle for Lampes, Yea our Pine-Trees that are the most plentifull of all wood, doth allow us plenty of Candles which are very usefull in a House: and they are such Candles as the Indians commonly use, having no other, and they are nothing else but the wood of the Pine Tree cloven into little slices something thin, which are so full of the moysture of Turpentine and Pitch, that they burne as cleer as a Torch.

We can imagine Sarah's complaints about the odor of the fish oil lamps and the mess made by the candlewood, which was "something sluttish, dropping a pitchie kinde of substance where it stands." Another difficulty was the "little Flyes called Musketoes," which made the faces of little Caleb and Lot "swell'd and scabby as if the small pox" had attacked them. The only remedy was to close the shutters and fill the house with smoke, which was intolerable on July nights hotter than anything the family had known in England. Even sailors on ships anchored in the bay paced the decks unable to sleep because of the torment of the little beasts. We can imagine Roger Conant remarking philosophically between swats that the gnats were just as bad in Lincolnshire and the Fens region. The second year it was noticed that the old settlers' bites did not swell so badly.

Fortunately we have quite a bit of material with which to reconstruct life in these homes scattered along the edge of the wilderness. Wandering Indians sometimes slept beneath the kitchen table and departed before the family was up, leaving gifts and certain other little things. In cold weather the poultry was fed in the same place, warm and out from under the feet of the busy housewife. Out of doors, it was a battle to protect the chickens from the hawks, which were delighted at this new and easy game. But the poultry prospered;

indeed it was said that in this invigorating climate English hens promptly learned to crow and grew spurs with which they broke their eggs. As Ann Hutchinson was to demonstrate, a similar metamorphosis occurred to English women in this climate. Domestic cats proved their worth by keeping the red squirrels out of the corn. The cutworms which infested the newly turned soil were a more serious problem and required ingenious treatment: "Gather about a quart or three pints into a birchen dish, and let that flote away on the ebb tyde. Within a day or two if you go into your field you may look your eyes out sooner than find any of them."

When Roger Conant came to Nantasket he found that some of the islands in Boston Harbor had been cleared of trees and brush for corn fields by the vanished Indian inhabitants. On what was until 1632 known as Conant's Island, and since then as Governor's Island, he planted a vineyard and the first orchard in the country. When John Josselyn visited Boston he enjoyed "very fair Pippins" from these trees, then the only ones in the colony old enough to bear. It is hard to escape the conclusion that Conant had planted them. It was evidently with this orchard in mind that Josselyn reported on the difficulties of raising apples in America:

> Their fruit-trees are subject to two diseases, the Meazles, which is when they are burned and scorched with the Sun, and lowsiness, when the woodpeckers jab holes in their bark: the way to cure them when they are lowsie is to bore a hole into the main root with an Augur, and pour in a quantity of Brandie or Rhum, and then stop it up with a pin made of the same Tree.

During the first season, Conant learned the truth of the saying that "the toile of a new Plantation being like the labours of Hercules never at an end." Probably, like the others, he was "forced to go barefoot, and bareleg," even "in time of Frost and Snow." There was no time to hunt; what flesh the family ate was venison or racoon bartered from passing Indians. The soil was incredibly fruitful, however, and before many months he found time to straighten his back and look about him. One of his first American acquaintances was the

strange "squuncke," which probably smelled as sweet by that orthography as any other. Perhaps like Josselyn he joyfully espied what he took to be one of the pineapples which French and Dutch artists pictured in their engravings of the New England landscape, but which turned out to be, when picked, a wasps' nest. His neighbor Thomas Morton esthetically described the scene about them:

> When I had more seriously considered of the bewty of the place, with all her faire indowments, I did not thinke that in all the knowne world it could be paralel'd, for so many goodly groves of trees, dainty fine round rising hillucks, delicate faire large plaines, sweete cristall fountaines, and cleare running streames that twine in fine meanders through the meads, making so sweete a murmering noise to heare as would even lull the sences with delight a sleep, so pleasantly doe they glide upon the pebble stones, jetting most jocundly where they doe meete and hand in hand runne downe.

In season the land had "plentie of single Damaske Roses verie sweete," which with "divers arematicall herbes and plants, as Sassafras, Muske Roses, Violets, Balme, Lawrell, Hunnisuckles, and the like," perfumed the air.

> And it has bin a thing observed that shipps have come from Virginea where there have bin scarce five men able to hall a rope, until they have come within 40 Degrees of latitude and smell the sweet aire of the shore, where they have suddainly recovered.

One is not surprised, after this, to hear that at Squantum there was "a Fountaine that causeth a dead sleepe for 48 howres to those that drinke 24 ounces at a draught, and so proportionably." The sweet airs are tainted now, but there are many places in that vicinity where a lesser draught will produce those results.

Even ordinary American water was a delight to Englishmen. If Conant could not subscribe to Parson Higginson's statement that it was as good a drink as old England's ale, he would have agreed with William Wood's more judicious remark: "dare I not preferre it before good Beere, as some have done, but any man will choose it before bad Beere, Wheay, or Buttermilke." The vineyard on Conant's Island indicates that he had in mind producing a still better drink,

encouraged by the quality of the large, sweet, native grapes: "These be of two sorts, red and white, there is likewise a smaller kind of grape, which groweth in the Islands which is sooner ripe and more delectable." The native cherries, on the other hand, were a disappointment to him, for "they so furre the mouth that the tongue will cleave to the roofe, and the throate wax horse with swallowing those red Bullies." There were strawberries two inches around, and so numerous that Sarah could gather a half a bushel in a forenoon.

The great marvel to Englishmen was the abundance of game. Conant had but to step out of his door to kill four or five shore birds with a single discharge of his bell-mouthed gun. Turkeys, much larger than the domesticated English ones, "exceedingly fat, sweet and fleshy," "daunced by the doore." Heath hens were such common food that servants used to stipulate in their indentures that they receive other diet. During the winter, when the supply of corn ran low, the family lived on roast wildfowl and the best of those, for even the dogs were fed on better ducks than old England bred. In the spring the flight of the pigeons, covering the skies for four or five hours together, was a marvel.

In season larger game was plentiful; Indians were known to present embarrassed Englishmen with six or seven moose at a time. The muscle-weary settlers, sitting around their fires at night, speculated on the possibility of domesticating these great beasts to supply the want of domestic cattle, which were hard to winter over. It is a surprise to hear that the English ate and liked wildcats, but if the cats all dieted like the one Josselyn killed with "six whole Ducks in the belly" the flavor may have been good. The settlers' fear of bears vanished when they heard that the Indians on the hunt sometimes chased the lumbering creatures to the wigwams to save carrying the carcases. Another fear faded when the settlers quickly learned a fact which many modern novelists have ignored: "The Woolves bee in some respect different from them of other countries; it was never knowne yet that a Woolfe ever set upon a man or woman." Indeed the terrors of the first months soon became mere local color to ornament

the verse which was as epidemic among the Puritans as among any other contemporary group of Englishmen:

> The kingly Lyon, and the strong arm'd Beare
> The large limbed Mooses, with the tripping Deare,
> Quill darting Porcupines, and Rackoones bee,
> Castelld in the hollow of an aged tree;
> The skipping Squerrell, Rabbit, purblinde Hare,
> Immured in the selfsame Castle are. . . .
> The grim fac't Ounce, and ravenous howling Woolfe,
> Whose meagre paunch suckes like a swallowing gulfe,
> Blacke glistering Otters, and rich coated Bever,
> The Civel sented Musquash smelling ever. . . .

More than the beasts, the settlers had feared the "Snakes and Serpents of strange colours, and huge greatnesses," the worst of which was the rattlesnake, which was said to be able to fly and to kill a man with his breath. It was soon discovered that this reptile was "naturally the most sleepie and unnimble creature that lives, never offering to leape or bite any man, if he be not troden on first." And even if bitten, a man could save himself by "champing" on snakeweed (which was "ranck poyson" for an unbitten man), although his flesh became as "spotted as a Leaper" until the cure was effected. If the man lived, the snake died, and vice versa. There were some places, one of which was Plymouth, where there were no rattlesnakes; indeed if one by mistake crawled onto Pilgrim soil, it promptly turned over on its back and died. The Fathers missed the obvious point that the snake could not flourish where the Book of Common Prayer did not.

In every brook there was a good store of trout, "ordinarily two and twenty inches long." Not only was the sea crowded with fish, but over-eager mackerel nineteen inches long by seven wide, ran ashore by the hogshead. Besides food, the sea provided many other things, as purple dye from shellfish to mark linen, and thorns from the back of the dogfish to cure toothache by picking the gums. It all made William Wood quite lyric:

The lucious Lobster; with the Crabfish raw,
The Brinish Oister, Muscle, Periwigge,
And Tortoise sought for by the Indian Squaw,
Which to the flats daunce many a winters Jigge,
To dive for Cocles, and to digge for Clamms,
Whereby her lazie husbands guts shee cramms.

To seventeenth-century Europeans, food in such quantities was bliss uncontrolled, and they made the most of it. The largest goose was "accompted but an indifferent meale for a couple of men," and a whole duck was the common serving for one individual. Yet, such was the air and the labor, that "no man ever surfeited himselfe either by eating or drinking," and "no man living there was ever knowne to be troubled with a cold, a cough, or a murre."

In this "better than Mahamod's paradise" Roger Conant had a varied assortment of neighbors, several of whom were to be associated with him in years to come. Probably the oldest settler was Thomas Gray, who had bought Nantasket from Chikatawbut three or four years before; he was a trader and fisherman who had come out for business rather than religion and never found Puritans or Pilgrims particularly congenial. Unless we are mistaken in the identification, he later demonstrated his prejudice by drawing a knife against a court before which he had been brought for drunkenness. Walter Knight, who had settled at Nantasket about the same time, was noted for his good carpentry and his rude speeches. Charles K. Bolton remarks that Knight "lived with his wife before marriage but not so much after marriage." Of an entirely different type was the fifty-year-old John Balch, a Somerset man who had come out to Wessagusset with Robert Gorges. The friendship of the Conants and Balches, strengthened by marriages, was to last to this day. To these and their neighbors at Nantasket, Master Lyford preached every Lord's Day. What we know of Roger Conant makes it seem most likely that it was he who induced Mrs. Lyford to swallow her resentment and join her husband at Nantasket, perhaps at the time that the Conants removed

thence from Plymouth. Her "children foure or five" were the playmates of the Conant boys. At Nantasket the minister had to work hard with his hands to shelter and feed his brood, which may be why he got into no more trouble.

In the early summer of 1625 one Captain Wollaston arrived at Wessagusset with "a great many servants, with suitable provisions, and other requisites necessary to raise a Plantation." Finding some of Gorges' survivors still in the old buildings, the newcomers moved over to Passonagessit, which was later known as Mount Wollaston. With them was the Thomas Morton, whom we have already quoted. He was a lawyer by profession, one of Weston's old settlers, who was suspected of having fled England to escape prosecution for murder. It was apparently due to him that the Weston settlement had broken up under conditions which he took care to befog in his lively book, *The New English Canaan.* In New England he proved to be a grasshopper rather than an ant, and spent his time in training native hawks to hunt while his neighbors delved.

An entirely different sort of man was David Thomson, who about the same time removed from Piscataqua to what is now known as Thompson's Island, in Boston Harbor. He had made salt successfully in his first plantation and probably spent long hours with Conant talking over the possibility of producing it in America in sufficient quantity to supply the fishing vessels. With his fine house, his wealth, wife, child, and servants, he was probably the most comfortable man in the circle. No doubt the neighbors frequently sailed over to Thompson's Island to satisfy their craving for civilized companionship and conversation. Certainly Thomas Morton spent long hours before the fireplace there, discussing with the learned Scotchman such problems as the origins of the Indians, on which they came to the conclusion that the red men were the descendants of the Trojans. Probably on such occasions Roger Conant, who had no interest in academic speculations, drowsed in the corner, while Gray pulled at a bottle and Knight eyed the wives of his neighbors. Besides Mrs. Knight and Mrs. Thomson, there were the wives of Balch, Lyford, Maverick,

and Walford, with whom Sarah Conant could discuss the problems presented by their oft-turned clothes. In all, there were between fifty and a hundred people in the Bay region that year.

Farther north, at Cape Ann, outside of the pleasant social circle of the families around Boston Harbor, was the hopeful beginnings of a colony with which Roger Conant's name was later to be associated. This plantation had its origins in a group of Dorchester men headed by the Reverend John White. Some of the investors were business men who had been sending fishing vessels to Cape Ann for several years, and about a sixth were clergymen. Probably all of them had lent an ear to John Smith's plea that such a settlement in America would pay dividends while furnishing the mother country with raw materials and affording the unemployed of England the opportunity of quitting the poor-law dole to earn a respectable livelihood. The clergymen were no doubt interested both in profits and the promise of social benefits, and may have been, even this early, taking thought for the evil hour when English Puritans might need a refuge from persecution at home. Some of the promoters had been connected with the planting of Plymouth and had been disappointed to have that colony turn out too radical in its religious polity to be comfortable for Puritans.

One suspects that Cape Ann was chosen as a site for the settlement mainly because it was prominent on the map. Gosnold, sailing from Dartmouth in Devon, had visited it in 1602, and Champlain had examined it six years later, when there were fifteen Indian settlements on it. Sailors, with no eye for fishing or farming, were pleased with the "fyne and sweet harbour" where twenty ships could ride at ease. So, about the time that Roger Conant landed at Plymouth, the Dorchester Company planted fourteen men at Cape Ann, and the following year they sent out thirty-two more. In charge of the fishing was John Tylly, who caused the Dorchester Company considerable trouble by appropriating some salt which belonged to another organization. In charge of the drying of the fish and the other work on land, which in theory included extensive farming, was Thomas Gardner, "an able

and expert man in divers faccultyes," no mere frontier refugee. The settlement was planted on the west side of Gloucester Harbor, near Stage Head. Its story was that of Wessagusset and Mount Wollaston over again. The settlers "lived merrily of that they had, neither planting or building any thing to any purpose, but one faire house for the Governour, till all was spent and the winter approached; then they grew into many diseases, and as many inconveniences, depending only of a supply from England;" but when that supply of men and goods came out, it only made the situation worse, for the voyage had been outfitted with the expectation that it would find houses built and gardens planted. In England, John White complained that the settlers had been "ill chosen and ill-commanded," and by their bad carriage had fallen into many disorders.

Through the miscalculation of the Company managers the cargo of fish sent back from the voyage of 1623 had fallen on a bad market and resulted in a financial loss, and through a combination of inefficiency, ignorance, and bad luck, the ventures of 1624 and 1625 turned out no better.

Meantime, while plans were being made for the voyage of 1625, White was taking steps to find an efficient manager to replace Tylly and Gardner. It happened that John Conant, still at Lymington, was well acquainted with White, and glad to call his attention to his "religious, sober, and prudent" brother at Nantasket. So the Company instructed its treasurer, John Humphrey, to write Roger Conant and invite him to undertake "the managing and government of all their affairs at Cape Ann."

CHAPTER VI

CAPE ANN: 1625–1626

CONANT probably received word of his appointment early in the summer of 1625, but he evidently waited until late fall before going to Cape Ann, for his friend Hubbard stated that he was at Nantasket "for the space of a year and some few months." Perhaps the delay was due to Oldham, who was invited by the Company to go along to take charge of the fur trade. It should not have taken Oldham long to make up his mind to refuse, which he did; for what fur trader could make a profit when working for a company which had twenty-one parsons on its board of directors? With Conant went Thomas Gray, John Gray, Walter Knight, Parson Lyford, and probably other neighbors from the Bay. Oldham tagged along a year later, and other individuals drifted in from time to time. Typical of these was the Mr. Fells who had been wrecked on Cape Cod while on his way to Virginia, and had first settled at Plymouth, where Bradford became uncomfortably inquisitive about his relations with his maid servant.

Among the servants of the Dorchester Company who stood at the Cape Ann landing, sizing up the new boss and his friends as they stepped ashore, were few we know by name, for most of them were of the irresponsible drifting sort to be found in construction gangs and logging camps everywhere. The chief exceptions to this anonymity are John Woodbury and Peter Palfrey. The former was a Somersetshire man who had been entrusted by the Company the year before with the difficult and important task of bringing out cattle. In the entire settlement there was only one man of the wandering scholar and gentleman type which John Smith had so bitterly cursed at Jamestown, and that was William Jeffrey, who had come out with Gorges and followed along with John Balch. True to type, he lived by him-

self for a time at Jeffrey's Creek, and finally drifted off to Rhode Island.

Many years later one of John Balch's grandsons said that there were two hundred settlers at Cape Ann under Conant. Even allowing that the company ships of 1625 had brought out men about whom we know nothing, and allowing for more wives and children than we can account for, that would still be probably at least double the real number. In all likelihood some of the men brought over on the first two voyages had drifted away, leaving the total number after Conant's arrival about fifty.

One can imagine Sarah Conant's mixed emotions as she surveyed the great Company house which was to be her home. For two years it had sheltered a crowd of lazy men and not improbably their red lady guests. But even if dirty it was a "great house," two stories and a half high, probably with gables and projecting upper story as if grasping for air and light in a London street. It is curious how building habits survive; the early brick buildings at Jamestown were typical London three-tenement houses in which the city building regulations in regard to party walls were followed. There was probably one respect in which the great house at Cape Ann differed from similar dwellings in England; it must have been by this time clapboarded. The "cats" of clay and straw with which Europeans were accustomed to fill the spaces between the timbers could not withstand New England weather.

Before Conant was fairly settled in his new home he had an unpleasant encounter with the Plymouth men. The year before, Lord Sheffield had transferred to Robert Cushman and Edward Winslow, who were acting on behalf of the Pilgrims, his rights to land granted him in this region by the Council for New England. Although this grant contained a proviso that it was invalid if the land was already occupied by others, the Plymouth men planted a little settlement along side of the Dorchester party. According to Bradford "an ignorante, foolish, self-willd fellow" who had been sent out in 1624 to make salt at Plymouth, and had gotten into various troubles there,

was sent on by the Pilgrims in 1625 to practice his trade at Cape Ann. There he ruined the pans and burned down the building. Now, it has been argued by one authority that this "ignorante, foolish, self-willd fellow" was none other than the salter, Roger Conant. To accept that identification, based only on the trade, and ignoring the fact that members of the salters' guild were not usually interested in the manufacture of salt, would require that we scrap the clear and definite statements about Conant's movements made by William Hubbard, who is by far our best source.

After this disaster, probably in the summer of 1625, the Pilgrims' agents appear to have withdrawn from Cape Ann for a short time. There were about fifty English vessels fishing on the New England coast that season, and the customary places for drying the catch were crowded. One Captain Hewes, sailing into Cape Ann harbor with a catch of green fish, saw and appropriated the landing and the drying stage built by the Plymouth men. Shortly thereafter, Miles Standish arrived and peremptorily ordered the Hewes party to get them gone. Tempers blazed, and the party in possession barricaded themselves with hogsheads at the end of the stage. Standish promptly cut off their retreat to land and was preparing to open battle when Roger Conant intervened with a plea for conciliation. Fortunately Captain William Peirce, who had brought Christopher out in the *Anne,* was at that time lying at anchor in the harbor. As gentle and sensible as Conant, he raised his voice for peace, and provided the means for obtaining it by having his crew build a new stage for Standish. The Plymouth people, no doubt to Conant's great relief, transferred their fishing base to Maine. Peirce should be remembered kindly by New England which he served faithfully and well on several occasions. A few years later he would die under Spanish guns while performing the last of his services for the Puritans.

The fact that Conant could prevent a bloody battle between two outside parties on Cape Ann only by conciliation and Peirce's assistance demonstrates the fact that there has been a misapprehension involved in calling him the first governor of Massachusetts. There was no pro-

vision for civil government at Cape Ann because the Dorchester Company settlement there lacked the corporate organization which had been provided at Virginia from the first. The term "governor" was then commonly applied to the heads of commercial organizations and to the managers of their property abroad. Conant's friend Hubbard in referring to his position uses the words "governor" and "superintendent" interchangeably. Nor did Conant's field of business extend to Massachusetts, a term then restricted to the region around Boston Harbor. As we shall see, the Dorchester Company which employed him failed; its assets were taken over by another group, the New England Company, which also failed, and was taken over in turn by the Massachusetts Bay Company, which apparently regarded him as nothing more than a caretaker in charge of the wreckage of its predecessors. Indeed if we can accept the line of reasoning which makes Conant a governor of Massachusetts, we must regard John Carver as the first of the line, for the Plymouth settlement, like that at Cape Ann, was later absorbed by the colony of Massachusetts.

Conant's year at Cape Ann was devoted to the effort to collect a stock of fish so that the company vessel which came out in the summer of 1626 might be loaded in time to get back to a good market. The theory of winter fishing was a good one. William Wood, a few years later, said that the best catch of the year was in January and February. Unfortunately the men under Conant were not the hard-working settlers of whom Wood wrote a few years later. As it was not in his nature to bully and drive, he had no better success than Tylly and Gardner, nor indeed than had the early governors of Virginia, who had civil authority but the same shiftless type of workmen. And one can hardly blame the employees who sulked by the fires, for they were asked to expose themselves to hardships so great that contemporaries marvelled that English bodies could survive the punishment the elements gave them. "Some," noted Wood, "have had their over-growne beards so frozen together, that they could not get their strong waterbottells into their mouthes." It need hardly be pointed out that Wood got his hyphen in the wrong place. Perhaps it was just as well that

the white men had beards to hinder, for an Indian was found frozen to death, "reared up against a tree with his Aquavitae bottle at his head."

The failure of the long-cherished project to maintain a New England base for the fishing fleet cannot be laid at Conant's door; the situation was hopeless when he took over. Admiral Christopher Levett, who had visited the settlement when Tylly and Gardner were in charge, reported that there was not enough good ground on Cape Ann to raise fresh vegetables for the fleet, and that the fishermen there had to go out twenty miles to make their catch. Only by experience could the Dorchester Company learn "that no sure fishing place in the Land is fit for planting, nor any good place for planting found fit for fishing, at least neere the Shoare, And secondly, rarely any Fisher-men will worke at Land, neither are Husband-men fit for Fisher-men but with long use and experience."

When the Company vessel cast anchor in the harbor in the early summer of 1626, Conant went slowly down to meet it, fumbling excuses in his mind. To his surprise he was not met with reproaches because there were no great piles of fish waiting, or gardens of green vegetables, or wide fields of sprouting corn. The news was more disturbing. When the receipts had been posted after the sale of the last cargo sent back by Tylly and Gardner, nine-tenths of the investors in the Dorchester Company had decided to drop out. They had lost the £20 apiece which they had put up, and were saddled with a deficit of £3000 besides. With amazing generosity they paid off the employees at Cape Ann and offered transportation home to all who wanted it. Most of the employees, or "servants" as they were called, scattered at once, some returning directly to England, others going to Maine to find places in the fishing fleet. Some of the settlers who had, like Oldham, followed Conant to Cape Ann, were of the footloose sort, and had already made two or three removals after their arrival in America; these moved off to try new homes. "The most honest and industrious" of the colonists were more loath to leave. Woodbury did not want to slaughter the cattle he had brought out, and he and Palfrey had

wives who, with Sarah Conant, had a woman's natural dislike of wandering. Roger Conant, always meticulously honest, was anxious to salvage all that he could for the Dorchester adventurers who had trusted him and been so generous to even the faithless and lazy servants of the Company. And there was another matter which he was "secretly conceiving in his mind, that in following times . . . it [New England] might prove a receptacle for such as upon the account of religion would be willing to begin a foreign Plantation in this part of the world." Not only were the times evil in England, but the mother country was at war with both France and Spain. On the surface, this latter fact might seem to be an assurance to the Puritans who had reason to fear the horrors of the tortures and the stake of the Inquisition for themselves, their wives and children; but they dared not trust King Charles, who had openly avowed his belief in absolute monarchy. It was all too easy for Spain and the papacy to induce a king to change his religion. The conversion of Henry IV of France to Catholicism was fresh in men's minds. Such thoughts were dangerous; one may be sure that Conant did not share his with Lyford. But he cautiously "gave some intimation to his friends in England" of his reason for thinking that the American settlement should be maintained.

When the Company ship had dropped below the horizon, carrying some of the servants and Roger Conant's plea that the settlement be supported as a possible place of refuge in case matters got worse in England, those who had agreed to stay with him turned back to their narrow and rocky fields with sinking hearts. The more they speculated on the chance that the Dorchester investers would be willing to put additional money into the Cape Ann settlement, the more they came to appreciate the assured success of Virginia. Lyford went off merrily to fill a good place which he had been offered in the older colony, and others drifted away in the weeks which followed. Even the Woodburys and Palfreys became discouraged and urged their leader to abandon Cape Ann. "But Mr. Conant," said Hubbard, "as one inspired by some superior instinct, though never so earnestly

pressed to go along with them, peremptorily declared his mind to wait the province of God in that place where now they were, though all the rest should forsake him, not doubting, as he said, but if they departed he should soon have more company." Although obviously lacking the rough qualities requisite for a successful leader of men in that hard and violent age, Roger Conant had a certain moral stature which in this crisis, illuminated by his faith and determination, won over the best of the settlers when argument and common sense failed. The Woodburys, Palfrey, Balch, Tylly, and Gardner decided to trust his instinct. With them there remained a little handful of servants.

Unfortunately John White's papers were destroyed by royalist raiders during the Civil War twenty years later, and Roger Conant's by the vicissitudes of time. It is impossible, therefore, to date exactly the correspondence which was exchanged, but now survives only in summaries, notably those made by White and Hubbard a long generation apart. It was probably in the fall of 1626 that Conant eagerly tore open the letter addressed in White's familiar hand and jubilantly read to his friends clustered around, that valiant parson's account of his efforts to interest London capital, his project to obtain a new charter for the Company, and his promise to send over friends and cattle. Without doubt the arguments White was using in England to dispel the doubts of prospective investors and settlers came in part from Conant's letters: the dreaded serpents would disappear when the fields of New England were cultivated; indeed in the past ten years "no man was ever indangered by them." As for the wild beasts, they were not as dangerous as those in Germany, nor the mosquitoes "much more noysome" than those in Lincolnshire. Very likely the vineyard on Conant's Island is reflected in White's account of wild grapes "as good as any are found in France by humane culture," some, indeed, "four inches around." Circumstantial evidence points to Roger Conant as the originator of the sometimes ridiculed tale that a lion was seen on Cape Ann. Before laughing at him one should remember that probably no one in New England had ever seen such a creature, or even

a "reasonably accurate facsimile." Thomas Morton, erudite as always, argued that lions never frequented snowy country, but both the Pilgrims and Conant's party had the evidence of great cat skins which they bought from the Indians. After all, how could they know that a Canada lynx was not a lion?

The plan for a winter base for fishermen had failed. If the settlers were to remain in America it was evident that they must rely on agriculture, so they promptly began to search for better land than they had at Cape Ann. Such exploration, as Edward Johnson described it, was difficult work:

> Through watery scrampes, they discover the fitnesse of the place, sometimes passing through the Thickets, where their hands are forced to make way for their bodies passage, and their feete clambering over the crossed Trees, which when they missed they sunke into an uncertaine bottome in water, and wade up to the knees, tumbling sometimes higher and sometimes lower, wearied with this toile, they at end of this meete with a scorching plaine, yet not so plaine, but that the ragged Bushes scratch their legs fouly, even to wearing their stockings to their bare skin in two or three houres; if they be not otherwise well defended with Bootes, or Buskings, their flesh will be torne: (that some being forced to passe on without further provision) have had the bloud trickle downe at every step, and in the time of Summer the Sun casts such a reflecting heate from the sweet Ferne, whose sent is very strong so that some herewith have beene very nere fainting.

By such "watery scrampes" through the swamps which covered much of what is now Essex County, the settlers learned the areas to avoid and came to a good opinion of the region in general:

> It is very beautifull in open Lands, mixed with goodly woods, and againe open plaines, in some places five hundred Acres, some places more, some lesse, not much troublesome for to cliere for the Plough to goe in, no place barren, but on the tops of the Hills; the grasse and weedes grow up to a mans face, in the Lowlands and by fresh Rivers aboundance of grasse and large Meddowes without any Tree or shrubbe to hinder the Sith.

When Thomas Graves, the engineer, surveyed the region a few years later, he thought that it resembled the plains of Hungary more than any other he had ever seen.

Where, then, should they settle? Availability of smooth water transportation and wide fields abandoned by the Indians led them to choose Naumkeag, and thither they ferried their wives and children, and their dwindling supply of goods. When they had clambered ashore, Sarah Conant looked back with regret toward the great house on Cape Ann, but her husband surveyed with satisfaction the land of their choice:

> The forme of the Earth here in the superficies of it is neither too flat in the plainnesse, nor too high in Hils, but partakes of both in a mediocritie, and fit for Pasture, or for Plow or meddow ground . . . though all the Countrey bee as it were a thicke Wood for the generall, yet in divers places there is much ground cleared by the Indians . . . and I am told that about three miles from us a Man may stand on a little hilly place and see divers thousands of acres of ground as good as need to be, and not a Tree in the same.

Thanks to the energy of those troopers of King Charles in Parson White's study, we do not have the letters in which Roger Conant justified his choice of Naumkeag, but without doubt his report was in substance the same as that made by Francis Higginson a couple of years later:

> The fertilitie of the Soyle is to be admired at, as appeareth in the aboundance of Grasse that groweth everie where both verie thicke, verie long, and verie high in divers places: but it groweth verie wildly with a great stalke and a broad and ranker blade, because it never had been eaten with Cattle, nor mowed with a Sythe, and seldome trampled on by foot.

It was indeed good soil, and its best crop these three centuries has been the multitude of Conants, Balches, Palfreys, Woodburys, and others who have flourished upon it and been transplanted thence into every corner of the land.

CHAPTER VII

THE WAITING AT NAUMKEAG
1626–1628

NOTHING better emphasises the distance in years between us and that landing at Naumkeag than an entry in the diary of William Bentley for 1801. That was the year in which Thomas Jefferson became President of the United States, and Nelson destroyed the Danish fleet at Copenhagen to prevent the current dictator from using it to invade England. At that time there were uncovered, six feet below the level of the ground, buried by the gradual deposits of the years, the foundations of the cottages built by Roger Conant's party. They were clustered on the bank of the North River, a little below the present site of the Beverly bridge. Why they chose the south and west slope of the ridge along which March Street now runs instead of the sheltered cove on the other side is hard to explain, unless it was to avoid boating fodder from the Beverly meadows around Salem Neck. Woodbury devoted himself to the task of cutting and bringing over the hay while the others built cottages.

Hawthorne in his *Twice-Told Tales* paints a picture of this settlement as a village of log cabins surrounded by fields dotted with the raw stumps of forest trees, a picture of the typical western frontier settlement of his own day. Actually, the cottages were framed and sided with planks, and the fields which were cultivated by the settlers were those already freed of stumps by centuries of Indian agriculture. When by 1636 the Indian fields and the natural meadows in eastern Massachusetts were occupied, the new settlers thought the country had all the population that it could support and so moved on to the Connecticut valley. When the open land there was occupied the surplus of the growing population had to emigrate to Long Island and New

Jersey. The breaking of the Indian tribes at the end of the century opened the interior of Massachusetts and Connecticut, and emigration flowed in that direction. The fact that down to the middle of the eighteenth century pioneers moving into the interior could raise large crops of wheat and rye the first year on their farms proves that they were still finding virgin meadows. It was not until the Revolution, and then in Maine, that the pressure of the New England population drove settlers into the forests where they invented, or imported from Pennsylvania and Virginia, the technique of burning the trees and planting corn among the stumps. Because of the labor involved in clearing the land, and the low yield of corn in these raw clearings, this type of pioneering involved greater hardships and a lower standard of living than the Puritans ever knew. Roger Conant farmed as his fathers had, and, except for the lack of stone buildings, his settlement at Naumkeag resembled East Budleigh more than it did the pioneer village of the American West.

The little group which built the plank cottages along the shore and plowed the abandoned fields of the Indians at Naumkeag consisted of about twenty souls, winnowed out of the hundred or more who had at one time or another served the Dorchester Company at Cape Ann. Roger Conant was still regarded as superintendent, although the Company which had employed him had gone to pieces and had never had any title to Naumkeag. With Sarah Conant were Caleb, now four years old, Lot, now two, and little Roger, whose arrival in those first months in the new settlement made him the first child born in Salem. By property or ability John Woodbury, Peter Palfrey, and John Balch stood out as more important than the rest of the settlers. William Trask, John Tylly, and Thomas Gardner were substantial men, but less prominent. There is no evidence that Tylly and Gardner showed any resentment toward Conant for having supplanted them as managers of the plantation. Among the most useful of the former employees of the company were the three carpenters, William Allen, and Richard Norman and his son, John. Walter Knight and Thomas Gray complete the roll of men we know to have been at Naumkeag.

Edward Johnson was possibly quoting one of these men when he described either their or Endecott's first winter in the new settlement:

> They made shift to rub out the Winters cold by the Fireside, having fuell enough growing at their very doores, turning down many a drop of the Bottell, and burning Tobacco with all the ease they could, discoursing betweene one while and another, of the great progresse they would make after the Summers-Sun had changed the Earths white furr'd Gowne into a greene Mantell.

It was probably before the snows set in that word came from John White that he and nine others of the old Company were resolved to stand by the venture, faithfully promising Conant "that if himself, with three others, (whom he knew to be honest and prudent men, viz. John Woodberry, John Balch, and Peter Palfreys . . .) would stay at Naumkeag . . . he would provide a Patent for them and likewise send them whatever they should write for, either men, or provision, or goods wherewith to trade with the Indians." With this good word came some provisions, and in the spring came twenty cattle.

As far as physical well being was concerned the Naumkeag planters were comfortable during the summer of 1627. Profiting by the hard-earned experience of the Pilgrims, they avoided famine. They were worried, however, by the fact that they had no legal title to the land which they were improving, and in the fall they sent John Woodbury and William Trask back to England on a ship which the adventurers had sent out, to urge that a charter or patent be obtained. Hardly had they left when developments for which Thomas Morton was responsible proved the need of civil authority around Massachusetts Bay.

Some writers have defended Thomas Morton because he wrote an amusing book about his experiences in America; but those are poor grounds, for he stands convicted by his own words of actions which threatened the lives of every settler on the coast. The omissions in his story are quite as striking as his tale. It is not unfair to fill those gaps with Hubbard's account, for Hubbard was writing when one of Morton's gang, Edward Gibbon, reformed, was Major General of Massachusetts. According to Hubbard, Morton had, the year that

Conant moved to Naumkeag, induced the men left by Captain Wollaston to rebel and turn out the man who had been left in charge. Otherwise, he told them, they would be sold for slaves, whereas if they submitted to his leadership and seized Wollaston's property, they could all be partners in the Indian trade. The people of Naumkeag, Plymouth, and the other settlements, were not particularly interested in defending Wollaston's interests, nor did they care if Morton and his followers in wild parties wasted provisions which should have lasted them for months. They had reason to object, however, when he insisted on selling fire-arms to the savages in defiance of their protests and of King James' proclamation of 1622, and when he brought all white men into contempt by his drunken gamboling with the squaws. He also had a way of shooting "hail-shot" at Indian husbands who did not move fast enough to suit him.

It was as a matter of self-preservation that the settlements, in the spring of 1628, delegated to Miles Standish and the Plymouth men the task of suppressing the nuisance. To meet the expense Conant and his party contributed £1 10*s*, William Blaxton, 12*s*, David Thomson's widow, 15*s*, and others in proportion. Those who hold that Standish and Conant suppressed Morton because as Puritans they did not like to see him enjoying life, misunderstand the situation. His sailors and the Indian lasses were not playing children's games around their Maypole at Merrymount. Indeed even in England this May Day sport was not as innocent as it has since become. The celebration goes back to the fertility rites of the stone age people who sought by imitative magic to encourage the newly planted crops. Its sexual promiscuity was originally a matter of religion, one of the blind alleys which the human race has explored in the search for God. By Conant's day religion had sought out other paths, leaving the May Day play mainly an excuse for license. It was commonly observed in the West Country; many a time as a boy he had seen the lasses returning wet from the woods in the morning, some to smile knowingly at the men, and some to weep in the parish church. But the seventeenth century was close to the earth; Plymouth and Naumkeag would not have raised a

hand against Morton if it had not been that his lasses were red, and if he had not supplied their husbands and fathers with liquor, fire-arms, and "blasts of hail-shot."

New England escaped bloody strife like that which devastated Virginia because of the prompt action of Standish at Wessagusset in 1623 and Merrymount in 1628. True, the neighboring Indians were cowed by the stronger tribes to the north and in the interior, but they had plenty of fight left in them, as events were to show. "When wee setled the Indians never then molested us in our improvements or sitting downe," said Humphrey Woodbury, "but shewed themselves very glad of our company & came & planted by us & often times came to us for shelter saying they were afraid of theire enemy Indians up in the contry: and wee did shelter them when they fled to us: & wee had theire free leave to build & plant where wee have taken up lands." Sarah Conant, shuddering, gathered her boys to her when her red guests told of their oppressors:

> These are a cruell bloody people, which were wont to come downe upon their poore neighbours with more than brutish savagenesse, spoyling of their Corne, burning their houses, slaying men, ravishing women, yea very Caniballs they were, sometimes eating on a man one part after another before his face, and while yet living; in so much that the very name of a Mowhack would strike the heart of a poore Abergentian dead, were there not hopes at hand of releefe from English to succour them.

Fortunately "these inhumane homicides" dared "not meddle with a white faced man, accompanyed with his hot mouth'd weapon." At Naumkeag there were only two or three Indian families, subjects of the weak sagamore of Agawam. Their red neighbors were few and friendly:

> Upon the river of Mistick is seated sagamore John, and upon the river of Saugus sagamore James. . . . The elder brother, John, is a handsome young man . . . conversant with us, affecting English apparel and houses, and speaking well of our God. His brother James is of a far worse disposition, yet repaireth often to us. Both these brothers command not above thirty or forty men.

Another reason why the savages set up their wigwams beside the cottages at Naumkeag was that there they were immune from the visits of their devil who, naturally enough, sometimes appeared in the form of a white man, or as a "terrible beast for shape and bigness," which seized and carried away six men at a time. Indian medicine men had interesting tricks, such as making a snake skin become a living reptile and making a piece of ice appear in a bowl of water in the summer time. The settlers, accustomed to witchcraft in England, watched this magic with indifference and regarded it as petty traffic with the devil.

In June, 1628, John Woodbury returned bringing his young son Humphrey and the good news that new investors had been found to support the settlement. They probably came in the *Peeter* or the *Happy Entrance*, little vessels of forty and twenty tons, which also brought supplies raised by the financial wizardry of John White, more remarkable than the magic of the powwows, considering the beating that the first adventurers had taken. Conant joyfully watched the landing of a dozen more cattle and lovingly fingered the invoice which was the answer to his pleas for aid. This bequest from the dying Dorchester Company included:

14 hhd of oats	1 hhd of cheese
3 tons of hay	7 bbl of butter
4 tons of salt	1 tierce of oil
"3000" of bread	1 bbl of soap
1 hhd of beef	12 suits of clothes
9 hhd of peas	5 doz stockings
3 hhd of shelled oats	10 doz boots and shoes
5 tons of beer	4 doz hats
30 hhd of malt	2 hhd of meal
	3 "dickers" of calves' skins.

We may assume that after a hearty meal of good English food, washed down with plenty of fresh beer, Woodbury unfolded to Conant the story of White's labors. He had interested a group of some ninety men, only six of whom had belonged to the old Dorchester Company,

and only three of whom were ministers, in forming a new organization to take over the assets and task of the old one. The more active members, like John Humphrey, one of White's parishioners, were West Country men, but to aid in obtaining a patent, as well as to obtain funds, these had interested various London men known as investors in the Baltic, African, and Virginia trade to furnish an imposing front. The list of new men was headed by the name of Sir Henry Roswell, the gentleman of Ford Abbey, Devonshire, who had presented John Conant with his living. Other names, then heard for the first time in New England, were Sir Richard Saltonstall, Hugh Peter, John Endecott, Richard Bellingham, and Matthew Cradock. But before these men opened their purses they stopped to enquire "whither any would be willing to engage their persons in the Voyage: by this enquiry it fell out that among others they lighted at last on Master Endecott, a man well knowne to divers persons of good note: who manifested much willingnesse to accept of the offer as soone as it was tendered."

"Master Endecott." Probably Conant racked his brain for a recollection of this man who was going to bring out the new expedition. It is not likely that he found anything in his cerebral recesses, for Endecott was older and had been an associate of Sir Edward Coke or Sir John Villiers when Roger was but an apprentice. What did Woodbury know of him? Only that he had belonged to the congregations of John White and Samuel Skelton and had married a cousin of Matthew Cradock. If Woodbury had met the man he knew well enough who would be boss when he arrived, but on that subject he would have held his tongue in Conant's hearing.

Having found a man competent to lead out the new party, the adventurers next turned to the task of getting title to the land at Naumkeag. The region was under the authority of the Council for New England, but it was impossible to gather a majority of the Council to grant a patent. Either the document which they obtained on March 19, 1627/8, was thus of doubtful validity, or Warwick, who was then in London, simply made over to them a personal grant which he had received and never acted upon. Either way, the patent had

about it a fishy smell that did not come from the bad cod which had ruined the Dorchester Company.

The first which Conant heard directly from the New England Company for a Plantation in Massachusetts, as the new organization was titled in the patent, was by a large ship which put in at Naumkeag in the early summer to discharge a consignment from the old Dorchester men. There was no need for a covering letter to tell Conant that funds were coming in from the new investors, for the wine, strong water, ammunition, and armor which were landed were not the kind of things which the old company had sent out to him. We hope that he was not too strict to investigate the wine before the arrival of Endecott, for whom it was obviously intended.

The same vessel or the next brought the news that the Petition of Right, which demanded that the King abide by the laws of the realm, had passed both houses of Parliament. The news aroused excitement at Naumkeag, for it meant either that the popular party would win its suit, and thus forestall the need for a refuge in America, or that there would soon be strife sending men flying hither. Added to this was the nervous anticipation of the arrival of the fleet. Sarah probably kept her sons' best English clothes laid out for weeks, dreading lest Master Endecott arrive unexpectedly and mistake them for Indians. Under the circumstances it may have been she who first saw the topsails of the *Abigail* of September 6. It was perhaps Tylly who rowed out to guide the large vessel to the safer anchorage in the cove, on the other side of the peninsula, where the railroad station now stands.

CHAPTER VIII

ENDECOTT: CONFLICT AND ADJUSTMENT, 1628–1630

PURITANISM was the seventeenth-century answer to the still pressing problem of the place of the individual in society. Like us the Puritans believed that the ordinary individual could play a free and intelligent part in society. Three centuries have, however, somewhat changed the problems of society. Although no believers in democracy as a political system, the Puritans would have regarded as tyrannical the degree of economic regimentation which we now accept as necessary. On the other hand the intensity of religious feeling in the seventeenth century was such that the New England Puritans believed necessary a greater degree of religious uniformity than is now desirable. Some modern writers, overlooking this fact, have condemned the Puritans for not acting as we would act in like circumstances today. These writers have seized upon Roger Conant and the Old Planters, about whom we know conveniently little, and attributed to them a modern religious attitude. An Episcopalian friend of ours writes that Roger Conant "suffered rebuffs without number" from Endecott "and bore every affront with meekness." That is possible, but the statement is fathered upon the scanty facts by its author's dislike of what he considers Puritanism to have been. Again he writes that "as one looks back upon the careers of the Old Planters of New England they seem to shine out against the background of intolerance and cruelty." That is true only if we restrict the term "Old Planters" to the dozen best out of perhaps two hundred early settlers, and only if we stare until we are cross-eyed at flaws which Puritan society shared with nearly all of its contemporaries, and indeed with modern American society. If it were in our back yards that Morton and the Wessagusset fools were breeding Indian war, we would welcome Endecott

and the "intolerance and cruelty" that are involved in every social organism. A very few of the Old Planters agreed with Blaxton in his dislike of civilization and his urge to flee before its advance. The only others among them whom we would care to own as ancestors became contented participants in the new state. The main difference between these Old Planters and the immigrants of 1628 and 1630 was that the former came over first, leaving England before events made Puritans more grim and sure of their purpose in immigration. To describe the Old Planters as victims of the later settlers is to romanticise about them.

It is unfortunate that the best recent volume on New England so compacts the story of Endecott and Conant as to give an entirely wrong impression of the relations which existed between them: "Although Governor Endecott was instructed by the Company to be tender of the 'Old Planters' and to accord them equal rights with the new, almost his first act of authority was to . . . appropriate their garden lots and houses for the new settlers. So Conant had to make the best of a bad situation by giving them up, in exchange for an inferior location on Bass River." Applying the microscope of antiquarian research to the fact reveals a quite different situation. Endecott did not seize the fields and houses of the Old Planters for the simple reason that he centered his settlement on the cove and not on the North River. Conant and his friends probably abandoned their cottages, for their foundations indicated that they were very flimsy structures, and built better houses in Endecott's settlement where they remained until, as a bonus for their early services, they were offered their pick of the farm land. Far from being an inferior location, the Bass River meadows were the best land in the vicinity, as William Wood remarked at the time. Although in the first years after Endecott's arrival a few more cottages were built on the North River, Roger Conant lived to see them all abandoned and destroyed, and the region of the first settlement left empty but for William Trask's creaking mill. When, eight years after Endecott's arrival, the Conants did move over to Bass River, they, and perhaps the other Old Planters, were paid

for the property relinquished in the village. On the whole, the relations between Conant and Endecott seem to have been better than those between some of their modern champions.

There was, of course, a clash. Endecott was a great and a good man, but he flailed about him so vigorously in his excess of energy that everyone who came near him sooner or later got a crack on the shins. And Roger Conant's shins lay directly across the path of the new governor's duty as he saw it.

There is no mystery about the fact that the New England Company chose Endecott rather than Conant for its agent. The latter had been appointed by the defunct Dorchester Company, the surviving representatives of which, in modern terms, did not control more than five per cent of the stock of the new organization. Conant's employees had scattered. Probably there were not a dozen adult males at Naumkeag when the New England Company determined to send out a hundred men under Endecott. Conant's position there was only that of the caretaker of what remained of the goods of the Dorchester Company, which had never had any title to the land at Naumkeag. Under the circumstances it would have been surprising indeed had the New England Company instructed Endecott to submit himself to Conant's authority.

There has been a good deal of speculation as to the number of men Endecott brought out, but there is no good reason for discarding John White's estimate that the united companies at Naumkeag "made up in all not much above fiftie or sixtie persons." The fact that supplies were sent out for a hundred men indicates that the Company found difficulty in collecting emigrants. The presence of the "5 beastly Sodomiticall boyes" in the expedition would indicate that the relatively small number of persons sent out was not due to a policy of careful selection.

The fact that Endecott sent these boys back to England is pretty good evidence that he considered himself, like Conant before him, as the business agent of the Company, without sufficient civil authority to deal with serious crime. Considering his temperament, it must have

been a great temptation to put the boys to death, and in this he would have been justified by the civil code of perhaps every civilized nation; in France they would have been burned alive. But if he lacked the legal authority of Governor Dale of Virginia, his was the same function, that of restoring order in a colony which had failed largely because there was no strong hand over its servants. With a will like a cat-o'-nine-tails he was the man for the job. He regarded the Old Planters as unfaithful or inefficient servants and announced his instructions and intentions so bluntly that Conant's dreams of a happy colony faded out. The old agent had no reason to resent being supplanted, and he was not the kind of man to feel bad about it, for he never sought the honors and pains which go with leadership; but he did, with the other Old Planters, resent being treated like a servant.

Some people, struck by the puritanical cast of the instructions which Endecott brought out, have jumped to the conclusion that the supposedly jolly Episcopalians at Naumkeag resented them for that reason. As a matter of fact, the instructions were very like those sent out by the London Company to Virginia and enforced so well that "a man should scarse heare an oath in a weeke" in that colony. What really hurt was that the Old Planters were forbidden to grow tobacco (as were the Virginians at one time), and that the supplies sent out were to be sold to them at cost plus thirty per cent, while the skins which they had to give in exchange were to be valued at 6*s* a pound although the price in England was about 20*s*. The original Dorchester Company servants who were now at Naumkeag could only submit bitterly because they did not have the private means to remove, and they may well have been still indebted for their passage money; but the old Particulars, like Conant and Balch, could and did threaten to leave Naumkeag and go into business with Oldham.

As always in the history of the Bay Colony when "Valiant John" Endecott was in the wrong, the strife was terrific, for ordinary people needed to be swelled with ripe indignation to be a match for him. It was, as in 1626, Roger Conant's quiet persuasion which kept the Old Planters at Naumkeag. He argued that material things "should

not disturb the peace of good christians, that came so far to provide a place where to live together in christian amity and concord." As the man who had most reason to resent the situation, his opinion carried great weight, and finally convinced his followers that they should await the result of his appeal to his friend John White to have the Company modify its instructions. Endecott went so far as to agree that they might plan to plant tobacco the following spring.

Evidently the difficulty was composed during one of these repentant love feasts with which Puritans were accustomed to end their quarrels. Being intense and hearty men they fought furiously among themselves, but being above all else sincere Christians, they took seriously the Divine injunction against strife and repented quite as vigorously. According to Conant's friend Hubbard (and who should know better?) this peace, or possibly its ratification after the receiving of the revised instructions the following summer, was celebrated by giving the name Salem to Naumkeag. "All that were present were ambitious to have a hand in the christening of this infant Plantation; for some, that liked not such affected names, had provided another." A half century later Conant complained that he had had no part in the naming of Salem, which would suggest that he was one of those who "liked not such affected names."

It has been suggested that under the compromise two "governments" were to persist in Salem until the final agreement, but there is no evidence of any organization among the Old Planters; and the New England Company, having no charter of incorporation, did not have sufficient authority to appoint a civil governor. The situation differed from that at Cape Ann under the Dorchester Company chiefly in that now there was at Salem a man who made it a practice to guide with a whip and did not try to rely on persuasion and example. It was well that it was so, for the country was still troubled by the "prophane & dissolute living of divers of our nation, former traders in these parts."

It may well be that Woodbury agreed to the peace because the sharp September mornings warned him that the cattle Endecott had brought

would starve if he did not show the newcomers how to prepare for the winter and where hay could be cut. His task was made the easier by the twelve mares which had been brought. Under his guidance these throve so that Salem used horses when other settlements had to rely on the slower oxen. While Tylly tried to make fishermen of the immigrants other Old Planters took to the marshes and woods after game. In England at that time hunting was generally considered the special privilege of great gentlemen, who still commonly used hawks and bows and arrows in accordance with the traditions of sport; so Endecott's inexperienced men, had the Old Planters gone off by themselves, might well have starved in the midst of plenty, as did the first settlers in Virginia and Plymouth. In the American thickets the "longe Fowlinge pieces with muskett boare, 6 foote longe, ½," which the Company sent out, were a worse menace to the unskilled hunters than to the wildfowl.

While the old settlers worked frantically against the time when the birds would have gone south and many of the beasts of the forest have been safe asleep in their burrows, the newcomers labored to provide shelter. Had they known how to build log cabins they might soon have been warm and comfortable, but like all Englishmen they were sawyers, not axe men. There was no time to build a sawmill, and not time enough for the men in the saw pits, so a party was sent to dismantle the great house at Cape Ann and bring its boards and timbers to be set up at Salem. They placed it near the cove, and around it they built a dozen or so small houses like those of the Old Planters on the North River. Ship carpenters, in the meantime, constructed some sort of small vessel.

There is not much question that without Conant's mediation and aid the Endecott expedition would have failed as miserably as most of its predecessors, for the winter of 1628–29 was a hard one and the newcomers so afflicted with sickness that they had to appeal to Bradford for the loan of "Dr." Samuel Fuller. This worthy was, according to Thomas Morton, "bred a Butcher," which not contemptible recommendation he sought to disguise by wearing "a long beard, and a

Garment like the Greeke that begged in Pauls Church." Endecott took a liking to this strange figure and placed him on the payroll where "hee was allowed 4*d* a moneth, and the chirgeon's chest, and made Phisition generall of Salem." In this capacity he dispensed ideas as well as medicine; but of that more later.

As troublesome as the sickness and the winter winds, were the indentured servants whom the New England Company had sent out with Endecott. They had been chosen with some care directed to the exclusion of swearers; perhaps a few hearty cussers among them would have leavened the lot to the point where their services would have been worth their keep. As it was, Endecott had to turn them loose to find their own food and shelter, or failing that, to find their way to Maine to seek passage home on a fishing vessel. The fact that he turned them loose shows that he, like Tylly, Gardner, and Conant, could get little work out of them, and that conditions were very serious at Salem. He had been sent out because his predecessors had been unable to hold the servants together and prepare the fields and buildings for a larger colony, and now, in spite of all his will power, he found himself in precisely the same situation.

Conant and Endecott appear to have got along well with each other; marvellously well considering how different their characters. Endecott's enthusiasm for setting out vineyards and orchards may well have been the result of Conant's description of his own efforts on Governor's Island. And when in the bitterest cold it seemed that the winter never would end, they talked of the news of the assassination of Buckingham and the state of affairs in England, on which there was not much room for disagreement. Probably Endecott justified the deed and Conant deplored it, but they agreed that it made still more important their task of preparing a place of refuge for their Puritan fellows in the troublesome times sure to come.

No doubt the greatest factor for peace at Salem was the sorrow which hung that winter over the great house where the gentle Mrs. Endecott lay dying. Surely Sarah Conant, the former mistress of the house, labored as a woman will to help under such circumstances; but

she was handicapped by the burden which in the early spring became little Sarah Conant who was narrowly nosed out by Elizabeth Patch from the distinction of being the first white girl born in the colony.

It was a reduced and saddened little company which on June 23, 1629, greeted the *George* and gathered around while Endecott opened and read the letters. The most important news was that Conant's prayers to have the colony placed on a firm legal basis had at last been answered. The Crown had confirmed the grant of land made in the patent issued by the Council for New England to the New England Company, and a week later that organization had been incorporated by royal charter as the Massachusetts Bay Company. Again there had been a shift in the personnel of the English backers. Of the more than a hundred men who composed the new Company, only White and Humphrey remained of the original Dorchester group. Among the others there were only three backers of the Plymouth colony, and only four clergymen. Instead of the names of Conant's West Country merchant friends where those of great London merchants and influential country gentlemen in whose higher circle Endecott had moved.

The *George* had brought a copy of the charter, the same which is still preserved in Salem. Roger Conant must have turned and pondered its pages. To Endecott it was an emblem of authority to demand for him the respect and obedience which the servants had hitherto begrudged. According to Thomas Morton that "great swelling fellow of Littleworth," as he called Endecott, "to ad a Majesty, (as hee thought), to his new assumed dignity . . . caused the Patent . . . to be carried where he went in his progresse to and froe, as an emblem of his authority; which the vulgar peoples, not acquainted with, thought it to be some instrument of Musick locked up in that covered case, and thought, (for so some said,) this man of little worth had bin a fidler."

For the Old Planters who had been on that wilderness shore for several years, the summer of 1629 was one of exhausting excitement. At the end of June someone saw the *Talbot* from the Planters' side

and sent word to Endecott, who despatched a pilot to bring her in. In the weeks which followed four other vessels arrived, putting down "about three hundred persons more, most servants, with a convenient proportion of rother [horned] Beasts, to the number of sixty or seventy or there about and some Mares and Horses." As there were before this influx only about a hundred persons in the entire region covered by the patent, the Old Planters were completely swamped. No pretense could be made of sheltering the newcomers in the half score of cottages around the great house at Salem. There was, however, plenty of fresh food; apparently the old settlers had planted great gardens both out of Christian charity and the anticipation of the opportunity to exchange their produce for the luxuries and necessities from England. Parson Higginson inspected the gardens and reported with pleasure that there was "aboundance of Corne," "very good and well liking;" "Turnips, Parsnips and Carrots . . . both bigger and sweeter then . . . ordinarily to bee found in England," and "store of Pumpions, Cowcombers," and other things which were strange to him.

The immigrants worked frantically to shelter their goods in "cottages, booths and tents," and the carpenters among them were glad indeed that the days were not as long as in the old country. The ship carpenters could not long be spared for building shelters, for many fishing boats were needed and the settlement was almost as dependent upon water as a means of transportation as was Venice. Each family of old settlers had a twenty-foot dugout or two, using these "water-horses," as one observer called them, in place of farm carts, and for every other kind of transportation.

Roger Conant must have been a very busy man as he advised with the vine planters and the makers of pitch and salt who had been sent out. There were long conferences about setting out the fruit trees, preparing the land for English grain, and planting the hops, hempseed, flaxseed, licorice, madder, and saffron. Potatoes had been shipped, but probably they had been eaten during the passage to prevent scurvy; had they been planted at Salem many lives might have

been saved during the next few years. Let us hope that after there conferences Conant was treated to a taste of the "acquavite," the "Spanish wyne," "Malega and Canari," which had been sent out. Surely there was humbler refreshment on those hot summer days, for the *Talbot* had shipped seventy-seven gallons of beer (and five of water) for every man on board.

From the invoices we can for the first time describe the appearance of the settlers. There were hose and dublets, of leather and cloth, and wide leather girdles. There were hundreds of bands, or wide white collars, and for common headwear, five hundred "redd knit capps." There were only a hundred cloth caps and the same number of black hats for the more important men to wear on the Sabbath. What with the red caps and the "wastcoates of greene cotton, bound about with red tape," the Salem people were a colorful lot. They were big and sturdy, too, if we may judge that by the fact that the average size of the shoes sent out was elevens, with a sprinkling of thirteens.

To untangle the sequence of events in that hectically busy summer of 1629 would be an amusing problem; but the necessity involved of supporting one's conclusions and putting to the sword those of others would draw us too far from the story of Roger Conant. Certainly the events were a confused jumble in his mind before they had very long joined the past.

By June it was obvious that the game and the Indian fields at Salem would not furnish food enough for the horde of immigrants, so a large party went off to plant Charlestown where, without the experience, the aid, and the fresh vegetables of the Old Planters, they passed a sickly and miserable first year.

It was not at all certain during the spring that Roger Conant and his associates would not leave Salem for more distant parts, beyond the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts Bay Company. As reluctant as Conant was to leave, he felt that the simplest sort of justice demanded that he and the others who had paid their way to America and had been of such service to Endecott ought to be the equals of the newcomers who had only contributed a few pounds to the enterprise. The

George or the *Talbot* brought word that the English backers, who were in the midst of transferring control of affairs from the old New England Company board to the officers of the Massachusetts Bay Company, of which Matthew Cradock, cousin of Endecott's wife, was elected governor, were agreeable to the compromise arrived at the year before. Endecott was elected governor and given a council of twelve to make and enforce laws. Two members of this council were to be elected by the Old Planters living within the jurisdiction of the Company. If, as has been supposed, and the difficulties of transportation would seem to require, these two were chosen by the handful of Old Planters at Salem, they had their full share of representation. From Thomas Morton's sneer about there being a cowherd on the council, it is evident that Woodbury was one of the two. Conant must have been the other. The fact that Morton does not mention him in the course of his derogatory remarks may well be explained by the fact that Conant was an old neighbor of the bibulous rascal, visited him in jail, and supplied him with vinegar. One would have expected the former master of Merrymount to ask for a different liquor; indeed he had fallen to low estate.

In regard to the economic arrangements, the Company instructed the Governor to reassure Conant and his friends:

> That it may appear, as well to all the world, as to the old planters themselves, that we seek not to make them slaves, (as it seems by your letter some of them think themselves to become by means of our Patent,) we are content they shall be partakers of such privileges as wee . . . and that they shall be incorporated into this Society, and enjoy not only those lands which formerly they have manured, but such a further proportion as by the advice and judgment of yourself, and the rest of the Council, shall be thought fit for them.

The Company still proposed to make a fat profit out of the exchange of supplies for the Old Planters' beaver, if Endecott could get away with it. If not, he was authorized to pay more. As for the planting of tobacco, on which the Conant party had insisted, the Company pointed out that some of its most important investors had declared themselves

unwilling to continue their support, if its sale or general use was permitted. Tobacco was regarded as a social evil and, moreover, there was no profit in handling it. If the permission to grow it was absolutely necessary to hold the colony together, Endecott and the Council were to indulge the old settlers in their vice, but the sale or use of it "by any of our own or particular men's servants, unless upon urgent occasion, for the benefit of health," was forbidden. Later instructions said that the weed was to "be taken privately by ancient men, and none other." It would be a mistake to see Conant and his friends, in this instance, as enlightened liberals struggling against Puritan oppression. The Virginia Company and King James had held views like those expounded by the Massachusetts Bay Company. Various reasons might be advanced for the eventual victory of tobacco in the years which followed. One which has been overlooked was the experience of Captain John Underhill. That gentleman, or shall we say, that individual, was tormented for five years because he could obtain no assurance of Salvation, "till at length, as he was taking a pipe of the good creature tobacco, the Spirit set home upon his heart an absolute promise of free grace, with such assurance and joy, as he never doubted since of his good estate, neither should he, whatever sin he should fall into." Confident in his assurance of Salvation, he merrily and with a good conscience made successful advances to a neighbor's wife.

The Company had, then, given ground on each of Conant's points and agreed that the Old Planters have the rights and privileges of £50 stockholders. This degree of concession was no doubt due in part to the Company's fear that Conant would join with Oldham, who was bidding for the support of the Council for New England by supporting the Gorges claims, which conflicted with the new charter. Oldham's price for coöperation with the Massachusetts Bay Company was a monopoly of the fur trade from which he promised them three hundred per cent profit, he to keep the balance, no questions asked. Such returns implied a liquor and gunpowder trade with the Indians, which men like Cradock and Endecott could not tolerate.

If Conant thought that he and his friends were getting less than

was due them and still played with the idea of joining Oldham, they were deterred by this sheathed sword in the Governor's instructions: "If necessity require a more severe course, when fair means will not prevail, we pray you to deal as in your descretion you shall think fittest for the general good and safety of the Plantation, and for the preservation of our privileges." It was better not to leave one's self to the discretion of that very forceful gentleman, Master Endecott. Probably events in England caused all thoughtful men in the colony to put aside small differences and close ranks, for two days before the charter had passed the seals King Charles had jailed the Puritan leaders of Parliament and begun his dictatorship. In July, Parson Higginson reported that the "ould planters" and the newcomers were "now combyned together into one body politique."

Probably as soon as the acceptance of the Company's offer by Conant and his friends made peaceful civil processes possible, the Governor called all of the leading Old Planters in the Bay region to join in a General Court at Salem. To this body he presented certain articles which he and the Reverend Samuel Skelton had drawn up, one of which was, that in all matters, civil and ecclesiastical, they follow the tenor of God's word. Among those present was Thomas Morton who had just been brought back to America by Isaac Allerton, to the great indignation of quiet people. Endecott had, earlier in the summer, chopped down the Maypole at Merrymount, so Morton, spitefully, with vain show of his legal knowedge, and probably with a hopeful glance at his old neighbor Conant, demanded the insertion in Skelton's articles of a clause to the effect that nothing be done repugnant to the laws of England. He got no support, perhaps because it was obvious that the provisions of the charter were a sufficient guarantee in that regard. It had been the original intention to make the fur trade a Company monopoly, but Endecott now proposed a general partnership. Again Morton raised his lone voice in objection. Even he had to admit that "all were united but mine Host." Considering how quarrelsome our ancestors were, the almost unanimous acquiescence of the Old Planters is evidence of an amazing degree of unity in the colony.

PANORAMA OF ROGER CONANT'S HOMESITE PLOT IN THE OLD PLANTERS' GRANT

Morton continued his lone way, relying on the support of the Gorges claimants in England, and that winter took to the woods to escape the governor's long arm. Law and order had been established on the shores of the Bay.

No group of seventeenth-century Englishmen, be it in Maine, Virginia, or Massachusetts, lived willingly without religious services. Salem was not peculiar, not more pious than Virginia had been in 1609 when, reported John Smith, they "had daily Common Prayer morning and evening, every Sunday two Sermons, and every three moneths the holy Communion." When the Jamestown Episcopalians were without a minister, they still had "Prayers daily, with a Homily on Sundaies," which is more than we can say for the settlements controlled by those two estimable Puritans, Roger Conant and John Endecott.

Now that Salem had not one, but three ministers to pick from, there was a rush to organize a church. Endecott set aside July 20, 1629, as a day of humiliation for the choice of a pastor and teacher (or junior colleague), and the choice fell upon Skelton and Higginson, respectively. To conclude the ceremony Pastor Skelton was ordained by the laying on of hands. Perhaps no other act so profoundly important in the history of New England was performed so quietly. The ordination by the laying on of hands was a declaration of religious independence from the Church of England, an alliance of the Puritans with those radical Plymouth Separatists whom Conant had rejected. Churches in the English establishment, Puritan or not, did not choose their ministers; they accepted the men the authorities sent them. Skelton had been ordained in England; to ordain him, instead of installing him, at Salem, was a symbol of a complete break with the bishops.

Straws had been blowing in the direction of this revolution for some time. Ever since good Dr. Fuller with his long robe and his funny beard had come up from Plymouth and fought to save Mrs. Endecott's life, the governor had been openly friendly with the Separatists. Higginson in England had been so far out on the Puritan left wing that it seemed probable he would be cast out of the Church of England

to starve with his brood of eight children. A father who will take that risk is far gone in his convictions. Why the Episcopalian Puritans changed to Congregational Separatists as soon as they arrived in America is a very intricate problem, but here it concerns us only as it involves Roger Conant. Perhaps no layman among the Old Planters had stronger connections with the Church of England than he. One school of modern writers has made him out to be the leader of the jolly, liberal, Episcopalian-Puritan faction and a chief victim of the dour, repressive, Puritan-Separatist group personified by Endecott, and so presumes that he disapproved of the proceedings at Salem on July 20, 1629. Actually, we have to face the fact that he did not, like the Browne brothers, prefer to return to England with the Book of Common Prayer, and also the fact that he joined the Salem church. Unfortunately the earliest list of Salem church members that survives dates from 1637. Possibly he stayed outside of the organization for several years, although the position of his name near the head of that list, with those of John and Agnes Woodbury, John and Margery Balch, Thomas Gardner, and William Trask, suggests that these leading Old Planters were original members. The fact that thirty joined on the day that the church was organized is also good evidence that the leading Old Planters participated, for "the great part" of the new immigrants were servants, and although later servants were sometimes admitted to church membership when their masters were rejected, they were judged impious until they proved otherwise. One would be hard put to it to make up a list of thirty likely church members in the Salem of 1629 without including some of the pre-Endecott settlers.

Conant's acceptance of Separatism is in some ways easier to explain than is Endecott's conversion. Conant had been in America long enough to see that the traditional method of appointing ministers would not work. Lyford had accepted a call from some Virginia planters; he had not been offered a living by a bishop or the Company. Skelton had not been sent out to a specified parish as English provincial parsons were; if he was to be employed it must be by the choice of the people. The Episcopal organization was one of those forms

which had been essential in medieval England but could in the new world be cast off like cruel penal statutes, long hair, and other unsuitable things. A homely parallel was the sawmill which could not be set up in England because it threw sawyers out of work but was generally adopted in America. To be a member of a Separatist church in New England was not a reflection upon the established church in Old England. John Winthrop was not a hypocrite when, on the point of sailing for America, he said that he loved the Church of England, nor was he suddenly converted to Separatism when he set foot on Salem shore. When his contemporaries and descendants went back to England they worshipped in the old way. When Roger Conant sent little Caleb back to England it was evidently to be under the care of John, who was still a minister of the established church.

There was not in the early seventeenth century the wide gap between the New England churches and the Church of England that there now is between the Episcopalian and Congregational organizations. English visitors complained only of the lack of the Prayer Book, the catechism, and readings from the Bible, but they frequently took communion in the New England churches, although the previous consent of the members was necessary. The covenant which Conant signed contained nothing to which any Episcopalian, nor indeed any other Christian, could object. It was not until the New England experiment had been running for ten or a dozen years that Puritans began to make up their minds as to its success and to split into Episcopal and anti-Episcopal camps. One such English Puritan, Thomas Lechford, came over well disposed to the New England system, watched it in operation, and carefully analyzed his reason for rejecting it as a way of worship. His description, in 1642, is of interest to us because it shows how far "brother Conant" had come from the services in the church at East Budleigh. Lechford objected to the amount of time spent in church, to the public handling of moral offenders in church meeting, to the lack of catechising and of reading the Scriptures, psalms, and creeds, to the bad music, to sitting at prayer, to the high standards required for communion and baptism, to the inde-

pendence of the several churches, and to the election of ministers by the church members.

A popular interpretation of the situation in seventeenth-century Massachusetts is that the group of church members, to which Conant belonged, constituted a small oligarchy which attempted with cruel and brutal intolerance to dragoon the ordinarily happy and liberal masses to accept their austere way of life. Lechford observed that "three parts of the people of the Country" remained "out of the Church," but he did not say that it was because this majority was more normal and less fanatical; on the contrary he said that it was because the churches required "confessions, and professions, both private and publique" as prerequisites for membership. Thus the majority objected not to the strictness and intolerance of the church, but to the method of admission. If Roger Conant was one of the founders of the Salem church, as we suspect, he did not have to undergo this inquisition. When a new church was gathered all that the incorporating members had to do was to agree "to forsake the Devill, and all his works, and the vanities of the sinfull world, and all their former lusts, and corruptions . . . and to cleave unto, and obey the Lord Jesus Christ, as their onely King and Lawgiver . . . and to walke together with that Church, in the unity of the faith, and brotherly love, and to submit themselves . . . in all the ordinances of Christ, to mutuall edification, and comfort, to watch over, and support one another." That was the normal seventeenth-century ideal of the good life; those were the precepts by which men like Conant tried to live within the church or outside of it. If, however, he delayed his joining the church until after its establishment, he had to submit to an ordeal which a majority of his good and religious contemporaries could not bring themselves to face:

> When a man or woman commeth to joyne unto the Church . . . he or shee commeth to the Elders in private, at one of their houses . . . upon the weeke dayes, and make knowne their desire, to enter into the Church-fellowship . . . and then the ruling Elders . . . aske him or her, if he bee willing to make known unto them the worke of grace upon their soules,

or how God hath been dealing with them about their conversion. . . . And if they satisfie the Elders, and the private assembly, (for divers of the Church . . . meet there usually) that they are true believers, that they have beene wounded in their hearts for their originall sinne, and actuall transgressions, and can pitch upon some promis of free grace in the Scripture, for the ground of their faith, and that they finde their hearts drawne to believe in Christ Jesus, for their justification and salvation . . . and that they know competently the summe of Christian faith [their names are placed before the church].

Then in public, before the entire congregation, the same ground was gone over again. Although Roger Conant was always a faithful member of the church, it is hard to imagine such a self-effacing man submitting himself to this inquisition.

It is a common assumption that the Old Planters were more liberal and high-church than the Puritans who came over later, but the marked peculiarities which the Salem church showed in its first generation are confusing. Conant and his friends were a very important part of the organization, if not at first the dominating influence, and yet their church was always theologically farther to the left, nearer to the Plymouth Separatists, than those founded by the Puritans of the Great Migration. Its marked peculiarity in the use of the majority vote, instead of requiring unanimity, in questions of admission or censure may reflect an attitude like that of Lechford. The Salem church also allowed women more voice than they had elsewhere and sent agents around to collect from non-members in their homes instead of permitting them to contribute at the services. All that we can safely say is that the Old Planters seemed to represent a sampling of the English Puritan stock which differed somewhat but not signifiicantly from the section which the Massachusetts Bay Company represented. One would expect some differences because of the changes which had taken place in English Puritanism between 1623 and 1630.

So the momentous summer of 1629 passed. In the larger crowd, Roger Conant began to slip into the background, although his experience and his solid character were still invaluable. Among the new immigrants there was one with whom he was to be much associated later.

This was William Dodge, who came from Somerset, recommended by John White as "a skilful and painful husbandman" who would be particularly useful in managing the horses. The winter of 1629–30 was as bad as the preceding. Eighty of the immigrants died, and so many were sick and needing Christian charity that the Old Planters could not hole themselves up like the bears and wait for spring. Evidently in the excitement of founding a church and a state not enough corn had been raised, for there was a serious shortage by spring, although the beer held out.

The winter was full of anticipations, for word had come that the control of the Company had passed into the hands of a group of men who were resolved to come out in the spring and bring the charter with them. Having the Company itself move to America was a bold and possibly illegal step which Conant could hardly have contemplated in his dreams of a Puritan refuge, but a step justified as a guarantee that at some future time an unfriendly group would not buy a controlling interest.

When the *Arbella*, bringing Governor John Winthrop, cast anchor in Salem harbor on June 12, 1630, the important part of the work of Roger Conant and the Old Planters was at an end. They had blazed the trail, they had held the ground despite many discouragements, they had literally nursed the Endecott colony through its first winter, but now they were to lose their identity and importance in the great mass of the Puritan migration. As individuals some of them, particularly Roger Conant, were to live long and useful lives as faithful members of the new commonwealth, but none of them ever held an important place in its councils. Their work, and that of the West Country parsons and merchants who backed them, was the founding of Massachusetts; they were the Raleghs, the explorers, who prepared the way. They were the guides, not the builders of the commonwealth. Our Massachusetts, and her daughters as far as Kansas and Iowa, were built by the East Anglians. Theirs are the white villages, the love of liberty, the fervor for knowledge, and the eager searching into the laws of this world and the Other. It was symbolical that the

metropolis of the new commonwealth was called Boston rather than Exeter or Bristol, for culturally it is their cousin and not their daughter. It is this difference which, coupled with lack of aggressiveness, explains why the Devon-born Roger Conant for the next fifty years had no important part in the public affairs of the greater commonwealth which he faithfully served. It explains why, at the age of thirty-eight, with three-fifths of his long and useful life still before him, he stepped back into the wings of the stage of history. But although the historian of great events gives Roger Conant no more lines he was still to play a leading role on the smaller stage of the town which he had founded.

CHAPTER IX

THE LAUNCHING OF THE PURITAN COMMONWEALTH, 1630–1634

WHEN the *Arbella* dropped anchor "those small number of Christians gathered at Salem" rejoiced greatly "because they saw so many that came chiefly for promoting the great Work of Christ in hand." Certainly Roger Conant was one of the Christians who rejoiced, the more so because with the dream of this day in his mind he had clung to these fields when his friends would have abandoned them four years before. Considering his services as pioneer and prophet, it is surprising that he is not once mentioned in the great mass of manuscripts accumulated by Governor Winthrop. It was Endecott, who was being superseded as governor, who went out to welcome Winthrop, and it was he who proudly showed the green peas growing in his garden. No doubt Conant joined the new governor when he took his first meal on shore, regaled with "good venyson pastrye, and good beere." We may surmise that Conant kept in the background because even the mildewed and wrinkled finery of the new gentlemen made him, after seven years in the wilderness, feel rough and ragged. Moreover, they were all bred in a social tradition in which democracy was only beginning to appear.

In thought and manner, Conant and Winthrop were nearer to each other than either was to the aggressive Endecott. Without doubt Conant respected both men, but, like nearly everyone, he was more attracted to the new governor. Even carping Thomas Morton had nothing to say against Winthrop personally; and John Smith, who greatly disliked the Pilgrims, called him "the noble Governour . . . a man of temperance and discretion." There are some men through whom the light of Jesus shines clearly despite human faults. Winthrop was one, as Ignatius Loyola and Wendell Phillips were others.

Because each individual is the product of his age and environment, the spectrum is never twice the same but the Light is clear. Winthrop was as close to the ideal of the Christian gentleman in his group and generation as Sir Philip Sidney had been in the generation before.

Conant, Endecott, and Winthrop were Puritans. That fact is important to everyone who today enjoys liberty or awaits emancipation. It has been obscured by the habit of associating Puritanism with its nonessentials, or with its aspects which represented only a rudimentary stage in the development of the essentials of our civilization. We can comprehend the significance of Conant, Endecott, and Winthrop only if we see them in the perspective of history. For ten centuries after the fall of the ancient world before the barbarians, the Church was the custodian of all that remained of civilization. The fine arts, medicine, law, indeed almost every thing which involved reading and writing, was preserved only in the hands of the clergy. The gap between them and the lay world was as great as the ages which it had taken the ancient world to develop that civilization. Naturally the laymen were regarded as intellectually incompetent beasts of burden who were to be treated kindly and led through this brief and hopeless world into eternity. The lay rulers were regarded as little better than the masses because brute strength for fighting was more important among them than was intellect.

In this medieval world a few workmen, first the weavers, dared to raise their minds above their tools and to think about religion. They obtained the Bible, read it, and began to form religious opinions of their own. This was the first step in the freeing of the individual from the solid matrix of custom which held him intellectually, socially, and politically. Of course the untrained minds of these workmen leaped to heretical conclusions which threatened the intellectual peace of the whole community. For the good of the whole the Church tried to burn out these centers of infection. But the heresies spread and drew to them men whose minds were exploring the paths of social and political freedom. These ideas were congenial to also the group of business men who had broken from medieval economic ideas and were found-

ing the modern industrial world. Although there always had been active centers of business in Catholic Europe, trade and industry were outside of the pale of the medieval philosophy which held wrong the charging of interest and deprecated the accumulation of goods for other purposes than immediate enjoyment. So it happened that there was by Conant's day a group of related communities including the Puritans of England, the Huguenots of France, the Dutch and Swiss Calvinists, and some of the German Lutherans, in whose hands were the seeds of the modern economic world and most of those things which we modern Americans regard as socially and politically precious. The actual theological differences between them and the Church are of no significance. Some of the oddities which we associate with Puritanism, such as simplicity in clothing, were practices of various Catholic groups as well as of the reformers.

In the face of these revolutionary groups the Church was forced to set up standards and close its ranks. During the Middle Ages it had been in a healthy state of intellectual flux and growth. Now, to combat the intellectual anarchy around it, it was forced to define and fix theological truth forever at the standards set up by the Council of Trent. With this, the doctrine of infallibility, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy the Church became the perfect intellectual absolutism.

As the greatest land owner in Europe the Church naturally cast its lot with the lay group which opposed the rise of the new business class. In political matters, because of its interest in preserving peace and the status quo, it almost always sided with absolutism. What has happened in Spain, where the Church is still medieval, shows this tendency in modern times.

In their attitude toward the place of the individual in the scheme of things Roger Conant and his intellectual brothers in France, Germany, and Holland were much closer to us than to Archbishop Laud and to the political Catholicism of their day; indeed they are nearer to us in this question of liberty than we are to the dictators of modern Europe and Asia. To condemn the Puritans and their brothers because they had not developed democracy as far as we have is like con-

demning Columbus because he did not take the Lisbon Clipper when he came to America.

This perspective shows the unimportance of the oddities which are popularly regarded as the badge of Puritanism. Take for example the popular association of a strict code of sexual conduct with the Puritans. True, Roger Conant and his followers were stricter in practice than most of their contemporaries. Their ideals were a reaction to the evils of their generation and the one before, of which we may take as a sample the Spanish Armada which was largely officered by the bastards of royalty and nobility, led by an illegitimate son of King Philip himself, and followed by an entire fleet of harlots. It is really surprising that this association of immorality with the forces of despotism did not make Conant harsher than he was when delinquents came before him at the Essex Quarterly Court. The Puritans did in fact have a hearty and healthy attitude toward sex, and were we their ancestors, they would have regarded our Victorian reticence in matters of sex as amusingly quaint.

The use of the Puritan as the symbol of the Prohibition Amendment by cartoonists who wished to discredit it has created another popular myth about our ancestors. Actually, Roger Conant and his contemporaries consumed amazing quantities of beer, quantities which stagger our imagination if they did not stagger the Fathers. It is a mistake to assume from this, however, that Prohibition was contrary to the Puritan mind. They never hesitated to prohibit anything which they judged to be a social evil, for they had a high degree of social consciousness. They prohibited the use of tobacco when they thought that harmful, and they tried to regulate the use of rum when that newly introduced beverage became a source of poverty and crime. Colonial Connecticut tried state wide control of rum, but gave it up when the neighboring colonies let it flow across the border. It is fruitless to argue whether the Puritans would have been for or against Federal Prohibition because they never faced the problems of urbanization and mechanization which brought it on, but their name has been so frequently coupled with it that it is worth while to point out

that modern people with typical Puritan minds were found in both the wet and dry camps. Those individuals did not close their minds to the fundamental problem involved and permit their judgment to be based on thirst or profits; they based their actions on a searching of their innermost minds to determine whether the liquor traffic or the eighteenth amendment was the worse evil. A typical Puritan wet was likely to be a teetotaler.

This painful introspection to determine God's will, or social good, as we would call it, and the determined support of the truth so discovered, despite all discouragements, is the most precious contribution of the Puritans to the modern American mind. They were never weak, indifferent, or colorless; what they did, they did with a driving determination, which made their errors hurt. Such fixity of purpose is frequently the result of ignorance and smallness of mind, but in the case of the leaders of the Great Migration it was not. They came from the most able and intelligent class in England, and their determination was to preserve the best elements in their culture, elements threatened by the turn of affairs in Europe. In this they resemble the German refugees of 1848 who would have built a similar citadel for their culture had they found an empty wilderness here. The Boers of South Africa are an example of a similar exodus without a driving cultural ideal. The Nazi regime in Germany represented a cultural ideal in the hands of men who had driving energy, but who did not as the Puritans did, by prayer and painful inner searching, measure their deeds by the yardstick of the Word of Christ.

In no generation is there a large number of men who can cling to an idealistic purpose as Roger Conant did at Salem in 1626 when most of his friends deserted him. Always the leaders must herd along the well-intentioned, less stable mass of people. No comparable group ever had a larger percentage of the leader type than did the Great Migration, a fact which accounts in large degree for Conant's relative obscurity in the larger affairs of the colony after 1630. That quality was largely due to the deliberate discouraging of the immigration of the poor in spirit and the poor in goods, for it is hard indeed for a

hungry man to hold to his spiritual ideals. Thomas Dudley put the situation succinctly:

> If any come hither to plant for worldly ends, that can live well at home, he commits an error, of which he will soon repent him; but if for spiritual . . . he may find here what may well content him, viz. materials to build, fuel to burn, ground to plant, seas and rivers to fish in . . . good water to drink, till wine or beer can be made. . . . But they must not be of the poorer sort yet, for divers years; for we have found by experience that they have hindered, not furthered the work.

John Smith, watching the preparations for the Great Migration, was impressed by the difference between "those noble Gentlemen" and the "multitude of voluntary contributors, superfluity of officers, and unexpected Commissioners" with which Virginia had been cursed in his day there. He judged that Massachusetts would succeed because it was not plagued with needless officials, idle gentlemen, and business agents of absentee investors. The emigrants of 1630 were as "well bred in labour and good husbandry as any in England," whereas in Virginia Smith had found "but those [that] were naught here and worse there." The Puritans read the story written in the graves at Jamestown and Plymouth, and profited thereby; their success was due to the bitter experience of others as well as to their own virtues.

The Puritans had the care and the means to follow Smith's advice about laying in lavish supplies for the voyage. As a result, William Wood could write of the immigration of 1633 that "of six hundred soules, not above three or foure have dyed at Sea." A year later the *Dorcas*, ill victualled, lost sixty passengers on the voyage. Except for this one instance, the foresight and the means of the Massachusetts emigrants saved them from the incredible horrors of the eighteenth-century immigrant ships.

Many men emigrate and join themselves to a new society; few have Conant's experience of having a whole society move in on them. Of the thousand or so immigrants who arrived in the Bay region between June 12 and July 6, 1630, perhaps half were on the vessels which cast anchor in the cove where the Salem railroad station now stands. The

crowd and bustle must have reminded Conant of the Exeter fair of his childhood, with this difference, that the people could not fold up their tents and booths and go home to their own beds when the season's pleasure and business were ended. The two hundred Salemites could not take in the five hundred new comers, or make much impression on the problem of building houses for them. Some of the immigrants were frank about their disappointment at finding at Salem "but a few Canvis Boothes & old houses." Indeed the village must have had a strangely raw and savage look to the people used to the age-old towns of England. Endecott's house with its brave red trim was the only one of size; several years later Lady Moody, for all her money, was still living in a house of "but one story in height and a flat roof." "Salem, where we landed, pleased us not," remarked Winthrop. In that month of June the wilderness looked better than the little settlement with its fresh graves and hungry inhabitants, and for that reason many of the immigrants sailed down to the Bay to look for better places. Their going must have been a relief to Conant, for the food shortage was severe. Good William Peirce crowded all sail on the *Lyon* to return to England for supplies.

Relatively few passengers had died on the voyage, but the total number of their survivors was sufficient to make the problem of caring for them a serious one. Despite all care, there was a considerable amount of scurvy. From April to December of 1630 between one and two hundred people died. They were mostly newcomers, but some older immigrants, including Parson Higginson, joined them under the Salem sod. Perhaps the main cause was psychological, for we short-rooted twentieth-century Americans can hardly realize the shock involved when seventeenth-century Europeans were moved to new homes. Indeed, unless we moved to some place like Tibet, we could hardly equal the effort, difficulty, and change involved in removing from old to New England in the seventeenth century. The toll was greatest among the women. When, ten years before, Governor Bradford's young wife Dorothy had disappeared over the side of the Mayflower into the cold waters of Provincetown Harbor, he seems to have

thought that it was not so much an accident as the result of days of gazing at the desolate shore. She was the first of hundreds of women who could not make the adjustment. Typical of the many losses among the cultured group was Lady Arbella Johnson who, brought up luxuriously in the family of an earl, soon after her arrival sickened and died. Her husband, Isaac, lost his interest in life and within the month followed her. Many of the leaders died, particularly the Londoners who were less accustomed to labor and the out-of-doors than the country squires and the West Country men. "It hath been allways observed heere," said Winthrop, "that such as fell into discontent and lingered after their former Conditions in England, fell into the skirvy and dyed." "This," remarks Winthrop's latest and best editor, "This comment is characteristic of Winthrop and his contemporaries: the proper explanation of this trick of thought is superstition, not ill will." Actually, it was neither superstition nor ill will; it was the observation of facts which Winthrop pondered: "Of the olde planters, and suche as Came the yeare before, there were but 2 (and those servants) which had the skirvy in all the Contrye. At Plimouthe not any had it . . . whereas at their first planting there, more than half their people dyed of it." Thomas Dudley's explanation made the psychological factor secondary:

> Touching the discouragement which the sickness and mortality which every first year hath seized upon us and those of Plymouth . . . (of which mortality it may be said of us almost as of the Egyptians, that there is not a house where there is not one dead, and in some houses, many,) the natural causes seem to be in the want of warm lodging and good diet, to which Englishmen are habituated at home, and in the sudden increase of heat which they endure that are landed here in summer, the salt meats at sea having prepared their bodies thereto; for those only these two last years died of fevers who landed in June and July; as those of Plymouth, who landed in winter, died of the scurvy; as did our poorer sort whose houses and bedding kept them not sufficiently warm, nor their diet sufficiently in heart.

To avoid the effects of the unaccustomed heat it was necessary to permit the servants "to rest from their labours in extreame hot weather,

from ten of the clocke till two." Thomas Graves, the engineer, cured some of his servants of the scurvy "onely by labour." That may be a surprising remedy for disease; but if the ladies and gentlemen had been wielding pick and shovel under the lash of Master Graves' tongue, not so many of them would have died. Unfortunately many of those whose fatal melancholia might have been cured by hard work "were very unskilled in husbandry, their bodies unable to bear labor, and yet strong labor was required;" while those poor who could, and must, work hard, did not have the food and clothing necessary for health.

Disillusionment was another cause of the mental depression which made the newcomers easy victims of disease. The older settlers, forgetting their own bad first months, had sent home such glowing descriptions of Salem as this:

> In our Plantation we have already a quart of Milke for a penny: but the aboundant encrease of Corne proves this Countrey to bee a wonderment. Thirtie, fortie, fiftie, sixtie are ordinarie here: yea Josephs encrease in Aegypt is outstript here with us. . . . There is not such greate and plentifull eares of Corne I suppose any where else to bee found but in this Country: because also of varietie of colours, as red, blew and yellow, etc. and of one Corne there springeth foure or five hundred. . . . Little Children here by setting of Corne may earne much more than their owne maintenance.

When they wrote these descriptions Conant and his friends had forgotten the stomachaches which were the first results of eating the gaudy but indigestible maize, and that children with their tender stomachs had been nothing but a liability at first. Some of the newcomers said that the situation had been misrepresented, and evidently felt that the glowing accounts of New England had arisen from a spirit of "misery loves company." Thomas Dudley was somewhat bitter about the situation:

> We found the Colony in a sad and unexpected condition, above eighty of them being dead the winter before; and many of those alive weak and sick; all the corn and bread amongst them all hardly sufficient to feed them a fortnight, insomuch that the remainder of a hundred and eighty servants

we had the two years before sent over, coming to us for victuals to sustain them, we found ourselves wholly unable to feed them . . . whereupon necessity enforced us, to our extreme loss, to give them all liberty, who had cost us about 16£ or 20£ a person.

Dudley and his sort had the strength to stick it out; others carped unreasonably and joined the great backwash of immigration:

Some say they could see no timber of two feet diameter, some the Country is all Woods; others they drunke all the Springs and Ponds dry, yet like to famish for want of fresh water; some of the danger of the rattell Snake; and that others sold their provisions at what rates they pleased to them that wanted, and so returned to England great gainers out of others miseries.

There was also the unexpected discouragement that Salem could not, at its level of culture, support the several hundred people who tried to crowd into it. The unaccustomed cold and the poor housing required great quantities of firewood which were hard to come by because of the difficulty of transportation and because of the custom of both whites and Indians of burning off the land around the village to reduce the danger of forest fire and to keep down undergrowth. Once the old Indian fields were taken up, it was necessary to break virgin sod for additional plantings, an extremely difficult task with their wooden plows of the ancient Roman model, which only cut the land without turning it. And of course game soon became relatively scarce. Probably the Conants, like the Old Planters at Charlestown, were often found with "a boiled bass, but no bread" in the family larder; and no doubt they as generously shared the cold fish. Looking back on this summer of 1630, Roger Clap, one of Conant's friends, wrote:

Bread was so very scarce, that sometimes I thought the very crusts of my father's table would have been very sweet unto me. And when I could have meal and water and salt boiled together, it was so good, who could wish better? Indeed, it would have been a strange thing to see a piece of roast beef, mutton, or veal.

This situation rested particularly hard on Roger Conant's shoulders, for after Winthrop had superseded Endecott as governor, he was, by

virtue of his greater experience, the most important man in Salem. While the mass of settlers were struggling to provide the necessities of existence there, the officers of the Bay Company were engaged in setting up the new government. At the first Court of Assistants, which met at Charlestown in August, neither the Conant nor the Endecott group was represented. They were, however, fully in accord with the action of that body in ordering that anyone who sold firearms to the Indians be fined £10 for the first offence and imprisoned for the second. Morton was arrested, summarily tried, and ordered deported. He refused to go and was ignominiously hoisted on board ship by a block and tackle.

In September the magistrates met again and summoned Endecott to join the Court of Assistants. A third meeting, this at Boston, levied a £3 tax on Salem for military purposes and appointed John Woodbury constable for the town. He was the most important of the Old Planters who would accept that necessary but rather menial office. Government by the Assistants, or magistrates, was only provisional. Not enough freemen, or stockholders in the Company, had come out with the immigrants to allow the organization to function as the charter provided, a lack particularly troublesome because the Court of Assistants was beginning to act as a legislature. Naturally enough Winthrop and the Assistants felt that it was necessary to obtain as much popular support as possible, and probably, after what had been going on in England, they saw the incongruity of levying taxes on the unrepresented Old Planters. So they invited all who wished to become freemen, or voting stockholders in the Company, to hand in their names. On this list, which is dated October 19, 1630, stand the names of Conant, Woodbury, Palfrey, and most of the other substantial Old Planters. The Assistants chose one hundred and eight who were according to the ideas of the time properly qualified; apparently their standard was reasonable for the Salem leaders were all included and no protest is recorded. The religious qualification was not adopted until the following year, but as most of these men appear to have been good Puritans, that does not seem to have made much difference. This

action put an end to the distinction between the Old Planters and the Company men which had existed since the arrival of Endecott; henceforward they were part and parcel of the great Puritan experiment which was destined to become the governmental and cultural entity which we know as Massachusetts. Christopher Conant, who had moved up from Plymouth, was also taken into the fold, for in November he was one of those chosen to act as a jury in the first criminal trial in the new state.

The winter of 1630–31 was the mild tenth winter which the Indians told the colonists they might expect. It was "a very milde season, little Frost, and lesse Snow, but cleare serene weather, few North-west winds." Similar weather had saved the Plymouth colony ten years before; a normally harsh season this year might have killed so many of the immigrants as to break up the colony. As it was, the suffering of the newcomers was frightful. "Some suffered much damage by the burning of their hay-stacks, left in the meadows, to the starving of their cattle; as others had by burning their small cottages, either framed or covered with very combustible matter, to which they were not accustomed in their former dwellings." Relatively mild as the weather was, some were caught out and frozen to death by the sudden drops of temperature which they did not expect. Many of those who lived in floorless tents, already weakened by scurvy, died of what was probably pneumonia. Most of the newcomers clung to their cottage fires, not having learned that they could keep just as warm chopping or working in a sawpit. Of course it takes a strong will to leave a fire and go out to labor on an empty stomach. Many of the immigrants could not be trusted in the woods, for some of them did not have the wit to follow their own tracks in the snow when they became lost. Except for the fact that there were experienced woodsmen like Conant, and country squires who were able to shoot "weield foule" with the cumbersome matchlocks of the period, there would have been an even greater number of fresh graves by the time spring came. The Old Planters who could obtain food from the forest and sea, and the wealthy immigrants who had brought large supplies shared what they

had with the less fortunate. Even Governor Winthrop was down to his last handful of meal when Captain Peirce brought in the *Lyon* with supplies on February 5, 1631. Massachusetts can never be too grateful to this seaman who in his kindness had risked his life and his ship by pressing sail; and to John White, who had gathered provisions in Dorchester with such zeal that some of his congregation accused him of diverting parish funds for the purpose. A Virginia pinnace loaded with corn and tobacco further eased the situation so that on February 22 the magistrates declared a day of thanksgiving throughout the colony.

That day of thanksgiving was more significant for the Conants than they knew. Never again was there a starving time so severe that Roger, with his own stomach flapping, had to put his children to bed hungry in order that he could share what food he had with families which had none. Never again did Sarah Conant have to nurse and labor in the cottages of a hundred neighbors stricken down with scurvy and pneumonia. With their stomachs full and their strength back, the settlers recovered their enthusiasm for the Puritan experiment, and once more saw New England in a roseate hue. Three years later William Wood really believed that he "never knew any that had the Poxe, Measles, Greene-sicknesse, Head-aches, Stone, or Consumption" in the colony. The settlers were so healthy that it was "strange to heare a man sneeze or cough as ordinarily they doe in old England" in public assemblies. Probably better and more earnest sermons had something to do with the lack of coughing in church. Indeed, New England was so healthy that more twins were born, and the mothers recovered more rapidly than they had at home! You could at a glance, it was said, tell the pale and sickly Virginians from the ruddy New Englanders.

As long as it seemed to the good people of Salem that the path to Heaven was a very short one, they had not thought it worth while to spend the money to hire a minister to replace Higginson as Skelton's assistant; but when they heard that a brilliant young preacher named Roger Williams had come over with Captain Peirce, they promptly

sent him a call. However, instead of the new preacher, there arrived at Salem a letter from the Assistants, asking the church to suspend its call until certain difficulties regarding Mr. Williams had been cleared up. It appeared that he had denounced the magistrates for assuming the power to punish idolatry, blasphemy, and Sabbath breaking, although practically everywhere in Europe this was regarded as a duty of the civil government. Moreover, he had refused to join with the church at Boston because its members had not publicly declared their repentance for holding communion with the Church of England while they had lived there. The fact that Williams rejected the church at Boston and accepted the call to Salem indicates that he thought that the latter belonged to the radical Puritan left wing; but certainly Roger Conant, whose father and grandfather had been church wardens, and whose brother was a distinguished minister in the Church of England, was in sympathy with the action of the magistrates. Fortunately Williams went off to Plymouth and spared Salem the strife which followed him everywhere until the settlement was older and better able to stand it.

In May, 1631, Roger Conant formally acknowledged his connection with the government by going down to Boston to attend the General Court at its first meeting since his application to be made a freeman had been approved. With Balch, Woodbury, and Oldham (the last now temporarily, at least, pious and friendly), he took the freeman's oath, by which he swore allegiance to the colony without mentioning the king's name. As a kindly and peaceful man he probably regretted the absence of his old neighbor, Thomas Walford, the first settler of Charlestown, who the month before had been ordered out of the colony jurisdiction for "contempt of authority and confronting officers."

From Thomas Dudley, who was that same day elected lieutenant-governor, Conant borrowed four bushels of seed corn to replace the stock depleted by his generosity during the hard winter. Then he hastened back to cultivate his fields and attend to his private affairs which appear to have been sadly neglected while he gave his advice and

assistance to fellow colonists in need. Unfortunately we do not know the details of his connection with Salem's first murder case, which occurred at that time; but the fact that he and Woodbury each bound himself for the very considerable sum of £40 for the presence of the accused, John Ellford, suggests that he was an Old Planter of whom they thought highly. The court vindicated their faith in Ellford by acquitting him.

Like the majority of Old Planters, Roger Conant was never primarily interested in farming. They were obliged to raise their own food, but they expected to obtain the money they needed for the purchase of manufactured goods by some sort of trade. Had Conant been trained in the making of salt, he would naturally have turned to that business, so important to New England; but if he knew the theory he lacked the pans. In 1631 he found himself with some spare cash, probably derived from the sale of his corn and cattle to the Winthrop immigrants. No wide variety of investment was offered by the vast wilderness on the edge of which he was living. As early as 1625 fur traders with Indian guides had penetrated as far as the Nipmuck country, in the modern Worcester County, to visit tribes who had not been educated to the value of the furs by the French. Such trade was now, however, a monopoly of the Massachusetts Bay Company. In 1633 John Oldham, always more footloose than his friend Conant, followed Indian trails to the Connecticut and brought back black lead, or graphite, from the Tantiusques deposit. The younger John Winthrop was much interested and eventually spent a large sum on the black lead mine, but this sort of work required more scientific knowledge and capital than Conant had. Some of the settlers were always expecting to find the South Sea, dotted with Spanish treasure galleons, just over the next rise of ground. John Smith had, however, warned that the continent was "at least more than two thousand miles wide." Until the last day of Conant's long life it was generally believed that New England was an island, with the "Great Lake of Erocoise," or the Lake of Canada, drained on one side by the Hudson or the Potomac, and on the other side by the St. Lawrence. The Indians said

that they had heard of four masted ships on the Lake of Canada, which was to the English proof that it connected with the South Sea. It was not until 1642 that Darby Field from a peak in the White Mountains saw what he thought was the great lake, but was probably Winnepesaukee. It was pointed out that the day would come when the Lake of Canada would be ringed with great cities thriving on its commerce, but that was only a dream for the winter nights before the fire.

The opportunity for profitable investment finally presented itself when the Massachusetts Bay Company threw open the fur trade to the public. Conant and Peter Palfrey organized a partnership with Anthony Dike to navigate their vessel and Francis Johnson, a youth in his twenties, to do the actual trading and manage the truck house which they established at Blue Point, near Casco. Johnson sold out after a few years, probably because new government regulations cut into the profits, and was replaced in the partnership by Richard Foxwell of Blue Point. Conant and Palfrey participated only as investors, but their activity is probably what induced the General Court to name them as the representatives of Salem in a committee composed of two men from each town (with John Oldham representing Watertown) summoned to consult with the government on the matter of "raising a public stock." This committee is an interesting body, for although it was probably intended as an informal group of fur traders called to advise the Massachusetts Bay Company in regard to its work as a trading corporation, it was also a rudimentary representative assembly and the forerunner of modern House committees on finance and taxation.

That same summer of 1632, the first serious Indian troubles since the Wessagusset affair discouraged the traders and frightened Salem itself. Relations with the immediately neighboring red men were good. The Puritans had the best of intentions toward the Indians, and were encouraged in the hope of Christianizing them by the fact that the thinness of the aboriginal population in New England would make for peace and mutual aid instead of the strife which had so nearly destroyed Virginia. Both under Conant and Endecott the

Salem people had used the Indians kindly and were accustomed to have them come into the houses, a half dozen at a time, and stand around in polite and hopeful silence watching the white men eat. The Salem Indians did not beg or steal, but some others who visited Boston that summer and acted without comprehension of the white man's idea of property, brought the colony to the verge of serious trouble. The offending Indians belonged to an important peace delegation and were taken to a church service. Three of the braves, not appreciating the spiritual food which was being set before them, walked out of the service and broke into a house in order to obtain wherewith to stay their stomachs. To let them go unpunished was to invite others to do the same; to punish them was to offend a powerful and unfriendly tribe. The final compromise satisfied no one.

On the whole, the Puritan treatment of the Indians was much nearer the Christian ideal of brotherly love than ordinary American practice was to be for two centuries and a half; far nearer than has been the treatment accorded certain European racial minorities in recent years. When smallpox swept the Indian villages, and those who could ran away leaving the stricken, their Puritan neighbors nursed the sick, although smallpox in an Indian wigwam was something which turned the stomachs of even those who had dwelt in Elizabethan London. It is a temptation to make a quip that the kindness of the Puritans converted many Indians to belief in the most unkind Puritan God, but at that time, and particularly to simple folk, red and white, it was the custom to preach much more of the Love of God and much less of the terrors of perfect divine justice than was the case in the days of Jonathan Edwards, a century later. The Indians got justice as well as kindness and mild theology. Sagamore John went to court and collected compensation from no less a person than Sir Richard Saltonstall, whose cows had broken into the Indians' corn. Just one case from a southern colony will show what a travesty on justice could occur when people did not at least make an effort to live by the Word of God. There a prominent planter told neighboring Indians that if they gathered in a certain ravine before the fog had lifted in

the morning, they would hear his God speak. Curious, they gathered and were swept away by a blast of scrap iron from a cannon. The perpetrator of this hideous joke was not punished, or even ostracized.

To see the Indians as Roger Conant saw them, we must remember that they were not much dirtier, or more cruel, than King James. In some ways their manners were even better than those of the English:

> At footeball though they play never so fiercely to outward appearance, yet angrer-boyling blood never streames in their cooler veines, if any man be throwne he laughes out his foyle, there is no seeking of revenge, no quarreling, no bloody noses, scratched faces, blacke eyes, broken shinnes, no brused members, or crushed ribs, the lamentable effects of rage; but the goale being wonne, the goods on the one side lost; friends they were at the footeball, and friends they must meete at the kettle.

It is well that Sagamore John never saw Mr. James B. Conant's football team in action.

The Tarrentines were not playing football, however, when in August, 1632, they fell murderously upon the wigwams of the sagamore of Agawam. These raiders were eastern Indians, of the birchbark canoe culture (as distinguished from the dugout Indians of Massachusetts) who had obtained firearms from the French. Frightened, the planters mediated instead of avenging their friends. At that time the Tarrentines were so pleased with their new toys that they used up their ammunition as soon as they got it, but it was evident that, with the French willing to give anything for beaver, the day would soon come when the savages would be a real menace. Later in the year the Assistants decided to have a settlement made at Agawam as an outpost against both Indians and Papists, and entrusted the task of planting it to the younger John Winthrop. This was one reason why Conant, who had lived for six years exposed to Indian whims, was not restive under the government of the Bay Company. If he had lost some freedom of action, he had gained the protection of the fort at Salem, armed now with artillery in the form of demi-culverins, sakers, and drakes which the Company had sent over. With them had come for the settlers a hundred suits of armor, not the rusty medieval sweep-

ings of the Tower of London which had been sent to Virginia, but made-to-order outfits, including "coslett, brest, back, culet, gorgett, tases, & hed peece to ech, varnished all black." Morton jeeringly remarked that the planters in these outfits looked like lobsters, and no doubt Conant felt like a boiled one on summer training days; but it was a comfortably secure feeling, all the same.

That same summer of 1632 the Salem men put on their armor and made a sally to catch the pirate Dixey Bull, who had captured Conant's partner, Anthony Dike. That honest gentleman refused to serve as pilot for the pirates, who were finally scared away by the expedition sent against them. If Conant was one of those who went out to rescue his partner, he was hardly home before the Court of Assistants called him to Boston, because of his skill and undoubted probity, to help lay out the boundary between Dorchester and Roxbury. At the same time he was asked to help locate a land grant at Saugus for John Humphrey, the treasurer of the old Dorchester Company who had seven years before written to ask him to take charge of the Cape Ann colony. Humphrey, the first deputy governor of the Massachusetts Bay Company, had evidently retained his confidence in Conant despite the failure of the first enterprise. It is not improbable that Conant's name was brought up in the Court of Assistants because the events of that year in Europe reminded them of his wisdom in clinging to Naumkeag in order to establish a refuge where they now were. So threatening did the frightful war which was then raging in Germany appear to them, that they set aside a day in September for a thanksgiving for the victories of the King of Sweden.

The summer of 1632 was short and wet, with the result that much of the Indian corn failed to mature, as was frequently the case before the white men developed better varieties. It was followed by "a terrible cold Winter, with weekly Snowes, and fierce Frosts" which froze Boston Harbor so that people might walk to the islands. Not many provisions had been sent out from England, so that many of the new immigrants were hungry, but the old settlers had enough goat meat to get along comfortably. According to William Wood, there were 4000

goats and 1500 head of cattle in the country by 1633. Even if that was too high an estimate, as seems likely, there was enough stock so that the problem was of how to feed the animals rather than the settlers. One does not think of New England as a cattle country, but had refrigeration then been available, Conant and his friends would have become cattle barons, supplying old England with beef. The opportunities for pasturing impressed the settlers:

> There be . . . in divers places neare the plantations great broad Medowes, wherein grow neither shrub nor Tree, lying low, in which Plaines growes as much grasse, as may be throwne out with a Sithe, thicke and long, as high as the shoulders, so that a good mower may cut three loads in a day.

In spite of this wealth of fodder, it took the settlers years to develop means of wintering cattle satisfactorily: "if some stranger should chance to be there in the end of every winter, he might be ready to think, that all the cattle here were the issue of Pharoah's lean kine." The difficulty was partly in the nature of the grass, which was not the imported English varieties which now cover our fields, but harsh and coarse native sorts which the cattle did not like. Moreover, in this heavy cutting the flat-bladed, straight-handled scythe, which had been used in Europe since the end of the Stone Age, bent in the coarse grass and wrenched the backs of the users. Had the Puritans permitted themselves to compensate for their blisters by curses, posterity might have been denied two most useful inventions, the ridge to strengthen the blade and the curved snath, or handle. But even before these improvements (which were promptly made) came into general use, the planters had butter and cheese at what seemed to hungry Europeans to be Utopian prices. The country was also well suited to swine, which fed on walnuts in the woods and gave the planters "the delicatest bacon" as a result. When walnuts and acorns were lacking, the pigs were fed on clams better than those, Conant must have remembered, he had bought at 12*d* the score in London. In the summer of 1633, when walnuts, acorns, and clams failed, the pigs broke through the flimsy fences and ate the corn; but even then the settlers lived pretty well on fish and fruit. One venture failed, and that was sheep raising.

Those creatures did not have the dental equipment to cope with the native grass until the larger beasts had discouraged the coarser growth by long cropping.

That same summer of 1633 the crops were also damaged by the seventeen-year cicada, whose unexpected appearance dismayed and astonished the planters:

> Ther was shuch a quantitie of a great sorte of flies, like (for bignes) to wasps, or bumble-bees, which came out of holes in the ground, and replenished all the woods, and eate the green-things, and made shuch a constante yelling noyes, as made all the woods ring of them, and ready to deafe the hearers. . . . The Indeans tould them that sicknes would follow, and so it did in June, July, August, and the cheefe heat of sommer.

But neither crop failure nor sickness could now shake the hold of Roger Conant's town on its narrow isthmus, so deep and many had its roots become. William Wood, who visited it at that time, was impressed by the wisdom of Conant's choice, and interested in one way in which the life of the planters differed from that of their neighbors:

> Salem . . . stands on the middle of a necke of land very pleasantly, having a South river on the one side, and a North river on the other side: upon this necke where the most of the houses stand is very bad and sandie ground, yet for seven yeares together it hath brought forth exceeding good corne, by being fished but every third yeare; in some places is very good ground, and very good timber, and divers springs hard by the sea side. Here likewise is store of fish, as Basses, Eeles, Lobsters, Clammes, etc. Although their land be none of the best, yet beyond those rivers is a very good soyle, where they have taken farmes, and get their Hay, and plant their corne; there they crosse these rivers with small Cannowes, which are made of whole pine trees, being about two foot & a half over, and 20 foote long: in these likewise they goe a fowling, sometimes two leagues to sea; there be more Cannowes in their towne than in all the whole Patent; every household having a water-house [-horse] or two. This Towne wants an alewife river, which is a great inconvenience.

It was a century before a Yankee living beside a barren stream thought to place in it spawning fish whose offspring have since then returned to it every year.

More troublesome to Salem than the vagaries of nature were those of Roger Williams, who returned from Plymouth late in 1633. He had not been happy there, nor had the Pilgrims been so under his ministry. Bradford accurately described him as "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in judgmente." There is no question of his greatness and goodness; among some groups of modern European liberals he has been even more honored than in America. The men of each generation, looking back upon their ancestors, choose for veneration those exceptional characters whose ideas agree with those of the later age. Among the many individualists of each generation there are bound to be a few whose ideas, regarded as crackpot by their contemporaries, appeal to posterity. Posthumous greatness of this character depends not so much upon the wisdom and influence of the men honored, as upon the accidents which shaped later society. Roger Williams scampered from one thing to another in such a manner, that almost any later society could claim that, at one or another stage in his intellectual career, he was its prophet. When he was at Salem, making Roger Conant, as a normal Puritan, writhe by his eccentricities, he was not the prophet of democracy and religious toleration that he later became. Indeed he probably would have been less popular if he had been such a prophet, for those ideals were impractical then. As it was, his peculiarities of the moment made trouble enough for the settlement.

It was Endecott, the most strong-minded and least tolerant of the Massachusetts leaders, who took Williams to his heart and became infected with the same sort of unpredictable obsessions such as requiring women to wear veils in church. Skelton, too, was blinded by the brilliant personality of the great radical, and in November, 1633, joined him in protesting against the custom of the Boston ministers of holding fortnightly meetings as likely to "bring forth a Presbytery, or superintendency to the prejudice of the churches' liberties." What was involved was not religious toleration for the individual but the privilege of the individual church to go each its own way, thrusting matches into the gunpowder barrels of controversy. In December,

Williams wrote the magistrates a rambling letter in which he asserted that the land titles, coming from the King rather than from the natives, were invalid. (He seems to have changed his mind later when he became a land owner.) He wrote that King James was a liar for signing a patent which called him the first Christian prince to have discovered this land, and for having called Europe, Christendom; and he applied three unstipulated but evidently uncomplimentary passages in Revelations to King Charles. The fact that Conant's name is notably absent from the list of Williams' followers can readily be explained by the fact that as an Old Planter he had experienced the anarchy of the days before the establishment of the government under the Massachusetts charter. Had Conant not clung to the little foothold at Salem, it is not likely that John White would have labored to put in motion the train of events which had finally culminated in the obtaining of the charter and the establishment under it of the refuge of which they had dreamed. To tear up the document on a whim, and to invite the royal government to revoke it by pulling King Charles's nose and tweeking the beard of King James' ghost must have seemed madness to a solid man like Conant. Fortunately Williams never stayed long on one tack. At the next court he penitently made peace with the magistrates and took an oath of allegiance to the King.

The easing of that strain only accentuated the pain of the news that little Caleb Conant, who had been sent back to England, probably to be educated under the eye of his Uncle John, had died there. Few grey-haired Englishmen had seen as much and survived as many dangers as this small lad who quietly ended his short and busy life. For Sarah and Roger Conant it was symbolic that the winter came early that year. By the middle of December the snow was knee deep and the smaller rivers were frozen over; but the latter part of the winter was mild.

In 1634 Conant decided to get out of the fur trade, which had proved unprofitable for men with Puritan consciences. Instead of using their guns for hunting, the Indians exhausted their ammunition in saluting any vessel which dropped anchor in a Maine harbor, in

order to obtain by threat or flattery the liquor which they craved. It was discouraging to decent men that these Indians would trade for nothing else. The vile language and abusive manner which the Indians had learned from earlier traders made them most uncomfortable customers. It is very likely that a tragedy which involved two of Conant's respectable competitors, John Alden and John Howland, speeded his decision. They found one Hocking trading on the Kennebeck in a pinnace and, in the name of Plymouth, ordered him off. He refused, and they cut one of his cables. "Hocking presented a piece and swore he would kill him that went to cut the other. They bad him do [it] if he durst, and went on to cut it. The other was as good as his word, and killed him. Hereupon one in the Plymouth pinnace, that rode by them . . . shot and killed Hocking." Conant was in the General Court when one of Hocking's relatives complained, and saw Alden arrested and placed under bond to appear for trial.

This was not the sort of business in which Roger Conant and his associates wished to be engaged, so they sold the Blue Point truck house and the Indian debts to Richard Foxwell. The consent of the colony was necessary to validate such a transfer, and before it was obtained, the French had driven out Foxwell. Probably Conant lost heavily, particularly as the original agent, Johnson, did not turn over to the proprietors some of their furs in his possession. It took years to wind up the venture.

As long as Conant's pocketbook smarted, he probably regarded this business as the most important transaction of the year 1634; but from the point of view of posterity his participation in the political revolution of that year is immeasurably more important. The seeds of democracy which the Reformation contained were beginning to sprout in the rich soil of the American wilderness. Although there were only thirty-six freemen in Salem in 1634, that number represented probably most of the householders whose financial position entitled them, according to the ideas of the century, to participate in public affairs. Probably a majority of the male inhabitants had recently come over as company servants and were too busy establishing themselves to take

much interest in the General Court. It was a healthy sign, however, when the town bemoaned the lack of a printing press and, in lieu of one, instructed the people to consult the manuscript records in the clerk's house; in non-Puritan colonies those in power seldom troubled to keep the rank and file informed of public affairs. The Puritan belief that the unenfranchised majority should know what their rulers were doing is an example of the democracy inherent in their system, as is their off-repeated statement of the dignity and importance of labor:

> Whereas many doe disparrage the land saying a man cannot live without labour, in that they more disparage and discredit themselves, in giving the world occasion to take notice of their droanish disposition, that would live of the sweate of another mans browes . . . it is as much pitty as he that can worke and will not, should eate, as it is pitty that he that would worke and cannot, should fast.

This attitude was bound to cause what William Hubbard called the carrying on of "the civil jurisdiction . . . in a more popular way," and according to him it advanced the "ecclesiastical state" on what we can see was the path to democracy. The converse was true as well; the democracy inherent in the Separatist and Congregational church systems also influenced ideas of government. No one should think for a moment that Conant and Endecott and Winthrop intended to have any truck with democracy. They knew their Greek history too well, and they believed that, because the majority of mankind is always ignorant and easily influenced, the very fact of majority approval casts suspicion on any policy. Winthrop had intended to establish a great estate, and Matthew Cradock had had a great park impaled to furnish deer hunting after the manner of the aristocrats of England, but for economic reasons such attempts failed. Deliberate policy, as well as the impossibility of keeping servants, prevented the establishment of an aristocracy, for on one occasion, when certain English gentlemen, whose wealth and support were greatly needed, demanded hereditary privileges as the price of their emigration, their proposals were reluctantly rejected by the Bay government.

When Winthrop denounced democracy as the worst form of government, he had in mind the political system. Today we include in the term "democracy" the whole field of social justice, and there the Puritans stood with us and not with the totalitarians of our day.

As far as the administration of the colony was concerned, Winthrop and the men who were regularly returned as Assistants thought that they had gone as far toward popular government as was wise when they admitted the bulk of the substantial inhabitants as freemen. Since then the freemen had gathered at the May meeting of the General Court to elect the Governor and Assistants and transact regular business, but at the other three quarterly meetings the Governor and Assistants met alone and functioned as the General Court in violation of the provisions of the charter. Although this practice was illegal, a good case could be made for it. It was obviously an economic burden on the colony to have all of its substantial inhabitants leave their business four times a year to attend the General Court. Moreover a legislature composed of all of the voters would be the purest democracy in a civilized state since the days of the Greek republics; the system had been workable in a city state but it could not be used when the voters were as scattered as they were in Massachusetts. Since the freemen would elect the best and ablest men each May, these latter would obviously give the best possible government. To still the complaints about taxes levied by the Assistants in the three meetings in which the freemen did not participate, in April, 1634, a modified form of the committee on which Conant had sat two years before was proposed. That first body had been named by the General Court. Now each town was to select two representatives to meet with their fellows in an advisory committee on taxation.

Salem chose Roger Conant as one of its representatives. As he rode or coasted along toward Boston, turning over in his mind the problems of state then looming on the horizon, he must have been impressed by the changes which had taken place since he passed up that wilderness shore to Cape Ann. Now the land was so crowded with people that one swarm was preparing to take off in search of fields and

meadows in the wilderness. Rumney Marsh (the modern Chelsea and Revere) already contained "more English tillage than in all new England, and Virginia besides . . . especially the Barly, Rye, and Oates." Beyond it, on the peninsula where only Blaxton's house had stood when Conant planted the orchard on his island in the harbor, was now such a town as he had hardly dreamed of when he had rested on his spade and surveyed the landscape:

> This Necke of land is not above foure miles in Compasse, in forme almost square, having on the South-side at one corner, a great broad hill, whereon is planted a Fort. . . . On the North side is another Hill equall in bignesse, whereon stands a Winde-mill. To the North-west is a high Mountaine with three little rising Hils on the top of it, wherefore it is called the Tramount. From the top of this Mountaine a man may over-looke all the Islands which lie before the Bay, and discry such ships as are upon the Seacoast. . . . This place hath very good land, affording rich Corne-fields, and fruitefull Gardens; having likewise sweete and plesant Springs. The inhabitants of this place for their enlargement, have taken to themselves Farme houses, in a place called Muddy-river . . . where is good ground, large timber, and a store of Marshland, and Meadow.

The freemen who gathered for the General Court noticed differences which already existed between the metropolis and their towns. They could walk about without keeping an eye out for rattlesnakes, and they could sleep at night undisturbed by the howling of wolves, which were fenced out at the Neck, and they were free from the pest of mosquitoes, which were discouraged by the salt water in the marshes. On the other hand, the visitors had to pay what seemed exorbitant prices for fires and "horse bate," for both wood and hay had to be brought in by "loyters."

When the freemen gathered in the Boston meetinghouse Winthrop greeted them with an explanation of the functions of the proposed committee. It was to be a regular and not a special body, as that on which Conant had sat two years before had been. It was not, indeed, to enact laws, but to pass on the rulings and orders of the Assistants, and particularly to give assent to money and land laws. But this was not enough for the freemen who, under the leadership of Israel

Stoughton, were determined to exercise the privileges to which they were entitled under the charter. There is no record of Conant's part in the stormy meeting which followed, but the fact that he must long have been familiar with the Salem copy of the charter, and have considered his privileges under it a part of the agreement which he had reached with Endecott, is good evidence of the side he took. We can imagine the glances which he and Endecott exchanged when the freemen demanded to see the charter in order to determine their rights. Winthrop called Stoughton a "worme" and nearly came to blows with Dudley, who sided with the freemen. Fortunately these men were Puritans, who believed that anger and pride had no place in the heart of a Christian, so they swallowed their rage and told themselves that their opponents were Godly men, even if mistaken.

None-the-less, the freemen moved swiftly to establish their rights. They forced through legislation providing that laws could be made, executive officers elected or removed, taxes laid, and common land disposed of, only by the freemen and magistrates sitting together in the General Court. This body was to meet four times a year, and was not to be dissolved without the consent of the major part of it. At the May meeting of the General Court, when officers were elected, all freemen were to attend, but for the other three sessions the freemen of each town were to choose deputies to represent it. Winthrop, staggering under the blows he was receiving, with amazing intellectual honesty, listed this among the "many good orders . . . made this court."

The next important business was the election of officers. Parson John Cotton, squinting at the political thunder clouds, preached a sermon in which he argued that no magistrate should be turned out of office without just cause. The freemen heard him and promptly, voting by paper ballots, turned Winthrop out of the governor's chair and seated Dudley in his place. Expecting to be re-elected Winthrop had prepared a great dinner which he now gallantly turned into a congratulation affair for his rivals. Undeterred by this politeness, the freemen forced through an act fining the Court of Assistants for

authorizing Thomas Mayhew to employ "Indeans to shoote with peeces." In the face of the gameness of the vanquished, the victors thought best to revoke the fine at the end of the session, but they further clipped the powers of the magistrates by providing that jury trial must be used in cases involving life or banishment.

In three crowded days, this, the second representative assembly to meet in English America, besides accomplishing a political revolution, handled a surprising amount of other business. A drunkenness case was reviewed, the murder of John Hocking was taken up, the Newton people were authorized to emigrate, town boundaries were altered, various defence measures ordered, and a large number of new freemen admitted. No legislature since that day has equalled this record of swift and peaceful (for so Winthrop called it) revolution. Democracy would not be in danger today if modern legislators tested their every act by Christian ideals, as Winthrop, Conant and their associates were accustomed to do.

As a result of this session of May 14–16, 1634, the Massachusetts Bay Company became a commonwealth, so democratic by the standards of that day that this became one of the stock charges raised against it in England. On the other hand this government has been described by modern writers as a theocracy. What were the relations of church and state under it? It was the church elders who, six years later, asked the General Court to define the bounds of civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction. In Massachusetts the church was deprived of its control over inheritance, probate, diverse, and other matters traditionally ecclesiastical in Europe. A Puritan was married by a civil magistrate and buried without religious ceremony. In Europe excommunication by the church placed a man outside of the pale of civil law. In Massachusetts, it at worst disfranchised him; the social and business relations of the excommunicated man remained legally almost unimpaired — he might even attend church! If he was a magistrate, he was permitted to remain in office, "though it were better that another were chosen at the next election." Lechford, who disliked the outcome of the Puritan experiment, never dreamed of calling it a theocracy:

The Magistrates, and Church-leaders, labour for a just and equall correspondence in jurisdictions, not to intrench one on the other, neither the civill Magistrates to be exempt from Ecclesiastical censure, nor the Ministers from Civill.

Hence the government which Roger Conant helped to establish and faithfully served, was not a theocracy if the union of church and state is meant by that term. In some ways it was less of a theocracy than Spain and France in modern times.

There is not the slightest reason to believe that Roger Conant's withdrawal from colony affairs after the General Court of May, 1634, indicated his disapproval of the government or its policies. The men who took his place as deputies were his old friends Trask and Woodbury, who, so far as we know, saw eye to eye with him on every point. As he was more distinguished than they, and regularly honored with the title of "Mr.," which was not accorded to them, there is no reason to doubt that his retirement was voluntary and due to his lack of interest in politics and administration.

CHAPTER X

THE TOWN FATHER

THE Salem to which Roger Conant retired was then a backwater of the Great Migration. Of the fifteen immigrant ships which arrived in Massachusetts in July, 1634, but one came to Salem. Because the wealthy and distinguished immigrants passed on to other towns, Salem stood near the foot of the tax list of Massachusetts communities. Its affairs remained in the hands of the Old Planters who, although in sympathy with the Bay government, were not of its inner circle. The one exception, Endecott, was then in the bad graces of the magistrates at Boston.

Backwater though Salem was, Conant and his friends knew perfectly well that their fate, with that of the rest of Massachusetts, depended on the success which Morton, Gorges, and other enemies might have in their attack on the charter. In June, 1634, came the evil news that the Privy Council authority over the colonies had been delegated to Archbishop Laud's commission for regulating plantations. There was every prospect that Gorges' proprietory claims would be recognized and a royal governor sent out to make another Ireland of Massachusetts. Endecott was placed on the Massachusetts defence committee, which was heartened by a shipment of arms contributed by the Puritans of England for resistance. In August, William Jeffrey, one of the Old Planters, received a letter from their former friend, Thomas Morton, gleefully announcing the defeat of the Company and the granting of a commission for a royal governor. Although Jeffrey was not as fully assimilated into the Bay colony as Conant, he was a freeman, and as such felt it to be his duty to show the letter to the magistrates. In the fall came the sickening news that a royal commission had been granted to a council headed by the Archbishop of York, giving it power "to make laws, ordinances, and constitutions, concerning either the state public of the said Colonies, or the utility of private

persons, and their lands, goods, debts, and succession . . . and for relief and support of the clergy, and the rule and cure of the souls of our people living in those parts, and for consigning of convenient maintenance unto them by tithes, oblations, and other profits accruing, according to . . . discretion." The possibilities, and probabilities, of the theocratic tyranny involved in this commission made Endecott's instructions of six years before seem positively benign.

Although Roger Conant, like every one else in the Bay government, was vitally interested in the outcome of this situation, it is only its Salem aspects which need hold our attention. The town objected to being taxed for the fortification of Boston and was given two old cannon of the type known as sakers, which it placed in a fort hastily built on the Marblehead side. Brooding, and straining his eyes for the sight of a royal ship which was expected to come to subdue the colony, Endecott saw the English flag with its cross of St. George in a new light. Always impulsive, he suddenly drew his sword and cut out "one part of the red cross," leaving nothing but a mutilated "v" in the canton. It was a thoroughly understandable action, for the cross to Protestants of his generation smelt of the fires of Smithfield and the Inquisition. That others felt as he did is evidence by the fact that, although only the year before William Wood had written that there was a good market for "English Colours" in the colony, the flag with the cross of St. George now quickly passed out of use. Nevertheless that was a very bad time for Endecott to defy the royal government, so the next General Court disfranchised him for a year. As Conant was clearly the second man of Salem, this episode must have shifted to his shoulders many of the problems of leadership.

It is an historical tragedy that neither Endecott's nor Conant's papers have survived to illuminate the course of events in Salem at this time. The summer of 1634 was very hot, and in August Samuel Skelton died, advancing Williams from teacher to pastor. In spite of the protests of the magistrates, and no doubt the quiet warnings of Conant, that Williams' radicalism was so extreme as to be unacceptable even in Plymouth, he was installed over the Salem church. Freed

from what appears to have been Skelton's restraining influence, Williams broke out again, and in November was summoned to appear before the Assistants for breaking his promise by preaching against the charter, the land titles, and the Church of England. The Court acted because it wished to prevent strife, not because it had a guilty conscience where Indian titles were concerned. Actually, the rights of the Indians were respected by the Puritans in a way which might make Jews, Poles, and Czechs under Nazi rule envious. In February, 1635, Williams was haled into court again, this time for holding that a magistrate who placed an unregenerate person upon oath was holding sinful communion with a wicked man! Endecott had been convinced by this argument, but was easily dissuaded once he was in court where his pastor's personality did not shine so blindingly. In July, Williams was called up by the General Court again, this time for what can hardly be dignified by a more impressive description than intolerant and twiddling compunctions. The magistrates, who were beginning to be discouraged about Williams, called upon Salem to give satisfaction for calling such a man to office. Hardly had they caught their breath, when the minister sent a letter to the other churches attacking the General Court for refusing to grant a Salem petition for more lands on the grounds of his presence there. Endecott took up the cause of Williams and Salem, and was tossed into jail for a few hours to cool off. Roger Conant must have had his private laugh at the thought of "Valiant John" behind the bars. In October, 1635, Williams was brought to court for the fifth time. Now it was for refusing to have any communion with the Bay churches (to which he had appealed only four months before) on the grounds that they were full of "antichristian pollution." At last the Salem church washed its hands of its pastor, and the General Court ordered him to leave the colony. Because of the season he was given a stay, with the understanding that he cease preaching. This he could not do. Some of the Salem women gathered to hear him in the parsonage and under his influence seceded from the church because it tolerated members who when in England attended Episcopalian services. When the magis-

trates learned of this they moved to revoke the stay of banishment; but Williams took to the wilderness and denied them the pleasure of throwing him out. As a legacy he left the Salem church a small and undigestible knot of three men and eight women who clung to his ideas.

Unfortunately the Salem church records for this period have not survived. If we had them, they would no doubt show that Roger Conant was one of the leading members there, as he was later at Beverly. He could hardly escape it for Williams and Endecott were the only other men in town accorded the dignity and responsibility which went with the title of "Mr," and now they were in popular disfavor as trouble makers. Conant must have been largely responsible for the choice of Williams' successor, a Dublin and Cambridge graduate named George Burdett. Too soon he had reason to remember the failings of his old friend Lyford, with this difference, that the new man had not left his vices behind him in England. Burdett was eventually let out at Salem for having "too loose a conscience," and went thence to Maine, where he "let loose the reins of his lust" and became "notorious for his pride and adultery." Fittingly he returned to England, joined the Royalist army, and died some years later in the odor of respectability as Dean of Leighlin.

Williams' last year at Salem would have been hectic enough for the town without him. In the spring rumors of strange vessels hovering off Cape Ann kept the town in a panic for fear Gorges had come out with a fleet to enforce his authority as governor general. In August there came the greatest storm of the century, by which "some thousands of trees were torn up by the roots . . . others broken in pieces, and wound about like withs, though of considerable bigness. . . . It raised the tide to twenty feet in some places right up and down; forcing some of the Indians to climb up the trees to save themselves from drowning, which others not being able to do, perished in the attempt." Houses and crops were flattened, and hunger averted only by the fact that the corn was ripe enough to salvage.

Before Roger Conant had fairly chopped himself out of the wreck-

age of the storm, the town asked him to head a committee, composed of himself, Trask, Woodbury, Balch, and Jeffrey Massy, to lay out lots. For their services they were to receive four pence the acre on small lots and ten shillings the hundred acres on large grants. Until the snow stopped their labors they scrambled around in the fallen timber, guessing at distances and directions, and planting stake-and-stone markers. No longer was Salem bounded by the wilderness and the sea, for Marblehead had now enough families to require that a line of demarcation be laid out between the plantations. Of the many such committees headed by "Mr. Conant," the most interesting is that appointed to see that certain land grants should not hinder "the building of a colledge" there. It was a needless precaution, however, for the General Court of which Conant had been a member had already determined the location of the future Harvard University by voting to permit the Newtown people to leave their houses and seek other homes further west. The advantage of the vacant buildings outweighed those of the Salem site. Equally remote from us, and far more important to Conant, was the work of the committee which he headed to examine and mark the great fleet of dugout canoes used by the people of Salem.

It will be remembered that when Endecott was governor the Old Planters had been enticed to remain at Naumkeag by the promise of the Company that they should receive grants of land. In the years which had elapsed since then Salem had grown too slowly to make it necessary to divide the common land, and the General Court had been too busy to bother about small grants. The Old Planters remembered the promise when they were asked to lay out lots and bounds in 1635. There was no point in taking the matter to the General Court, on whom the obligation lay, for Salem affairs were being managed by a committee of freemen including Endecott, Trask, Gardner, Conant, and Massy. Although outnumbered in this body, the Old Planters performed the greater part of its labors. It is not surprising, therefore, that on January 25, 1635/6, the committee voted that Conant, Woodbury, Trask, Palfrey, and Balch should have "5 fearmes viz. each 200 acres a peice to fearme in all a thousand acres of land togeather lying

and bei[ng] at the head of Basse River." Woodbury and Balch, who laid out the farms, saw to it that they lay in the region of fertile meadows which they had marked as the best in the region when they first moved down from Cape Ann. Now that there was no Indian danger, and now that oxen and roads had removed the necessity of clustering close by deep water, they could spread out and build in this region.

Roger Conant appears to have been a year or two in the process of moving out to his farm. For the new house he chose a site on the Indian path leading from the sea to Wenham Lake, around the head of Bass River; or, to us, on the east side of Cabot Street, near Balch Street. It was no doubt a one room, story-and-a-half, dwelling, like that built by Balch across the road and still incorporated in the present structure. In later years Conant or his sons, instead of adding to the original structure as Balch did, built a larger house on another site.

As part of the bargain the Old Planters relinquished their houses in town. In August, 1637, Conant's house was bought by the town for William Plasse, a gunsmith whose services justified the encouragement. Conant had a house in the village at a later date, probably on his lot between the highway and the south shore of the cove, but there is no question that his residence was with the other planters at Bass River. Here they formed a little subcorporation, holding some of the swamp and upland in common for thirty-five or forty years. Gradually the little circle changed. Peter Palfrey sold out to William Dodge, an old friend; and the Trask property passed to Thomas Scruggs, a new man. The old ties, reinforced by intermarriage, outlasted the generation. These families were held together by the common memory of the days when they were alone in the wilderness, not by any dislike of the new order.

The removal to Bass River in no way interfered with Roger Conant's participation in Salem affairs, which were then undergoing an institutional development of great historical importance. In at least some of the towns which were founded by people immigrating in a body, local government originated in a spontaneous mass meeting of the inhabitants; for others, whose settlers did not come over as a group,

the General Court appointed small boards of managers. In all towns the management of affairs soon passed into the hands of the resident freemen without formal legal action and without recorded objection from the non-freemen. Salem was peculiar in that it already possessed a model if not a continuous institution in the form of Endecott's council. It is almost certain that all the members of this body became freemen when the first batch of substantial settlers was taken into the Massachusetts Bay Company in 1631. This Salem body inherited at least a tradition of legal authority which the other town governments lacked, but in the first years after the Great Migration its functions were pretty closely confined to matters relating to the common land. It was natural, however, for it to take over the functions of the English parish. This last body, as a territorial division of the church, was accustomed to perform certain of the church duties, such as caring for the poor, which we would today consider purely civil matters. Certainly Roger Conant, whose father and grandfather had been church wardens, would expect the town of Salem to function like the parish of East Budleigh in these matters; it was the normal thing to do, and there was no other agency to do it. Estimates of the number of freemen in Salem vary somewhat; there were probably less than fifty in Roger Williams' day there. But even this number was too large to meet regularly to make executive decisions, so this local "General Court," as it was called, "deputed" thirteen, later twelve, to perform the functions of the selectmen of a later date. When the records begin, Conant appears quite regularly as one of the "deputies." The system was operating before March 3, 1636, when the General Court of the colony vested the control of local affairs in the towns.

There was no rigid property qualification for freemen and many were admitted to that status who would not have had the franchise in England, but at this period probably only about half of the Salem land owners were freemen. The desire to obtain the services of good artisans caused the local "General Court" to give land to any man who promised to become a useful member of the community. These land owners were designated as "inhabitants" to distinguish them from

what was at first a much larger body of servants and laborers. As early as February 6, 1637, and perhaps before, the inhabitants (including the freemen) were gathering to transact business in town meeting. This body promptly took over the functions of the "General Court" of Salem and proceeded to admit new inhabitants, levy taxes, dispose of town land, and elect the selectmen. The "proprietors," those entitled to a share in the common lands, began to meet separately as an independent body of which Roger Conant was for many years clerk. We may imagine that Sarah Conant complained that Roger wasn't home very much; if it wasn't town meeting, it was selectmen's meeting, or proprietors' meeting, or church meeting, or election day (for which the freemen went down to Boston to vote), or a meeting of the local freemen to choose deputies to the General Court. Unfortunately but few and scrambled records of all these activities exist. If they all showed the humor of the town meeting which voted to abate half of the fine on a long-haired squatter if he would get a hair cut, their loss is tragic for social as well as institutional history.

While Salem was thus evolving toward democratic government, it felt for the first time the hot hand of war. The English were well inclined toward the Indians, particularly the Pequots, whom William Wood described as "a stately warlike people," of whom he "never heard any misdemeanour; but that they were just and equall in their dealings; not treacherous either to their Country-men, or English: Requiters of courtesies, affable towards the English." According to him, they were determined pacifists because that policy promoted trade. But hardly was the ink dry on Wood's quill when the affable Pequots, for no good reason, seized and tortured to death several white men, including Conant's old friend John Tylly. A couple of years later the Block Island Indians murdered his old associate, Oldham. In August, 1636, Endecott led a little army to Block Island and the Pequot country, where he burned two towns without the loss of a man. Salem rejoiced too early in the victory, for during the winter the war spread. In the spring Captain William Trask led the Salem contingent in the campaign which resulted in the destruction of the Pequot stronghold.

A recent popular historian has cast condemnatory ink at the Puritan soldiers for "slowly burning alive" the Indians in their fortified villages. This is at best a peculiarly distorted description. Had Captain Trask inflicted unnecessary torture upon his foes he would not have been welcomed back into the social circle at Bass River; on the one occasion when angry English soldiers took that sort of vengeance, disfavor was evident. Pray, how could they get the Indians out of their bark houses without firing them, and why should the savages remain inside and burn when they might escape, and at worst get a musket ball, if they came out? Of course those who were crippled by their wounds might burn, and that went as well for the whites who fell fighting in the narrow alleys between the houses. Captain Trask brought home no story of the joyful, indiscriminate massacre of women and children such as the French foreign legion had to tell after its sack of the Arab quarter of Damascus in 1925. The Englishman rarely sinks to the level of the savages with whom he fights, and the Puritans were typical Englishmen in this. Lest it be thought that the author is prejudiced by his blood, let it be said that one of his family was a renegade who fought on the Indian side in one of these wars, and was properly hanged for his pains at Providence.

Captain Trask did bring home some strange stories to tell by the Conant fireside:

> There were some of these Indians . . . whose bodyes were not to be pierced by their sharp rapiers or swords of a long time, which made some of the Souldiers think the Devil was in them, for there were some Powwowes among them, which work strange things, with the help of Satan.

It was a surprise to the English, used to European warfare, that the Indians did not rape the women they captured. This savage peculiarity was not due to moral scruples, but to a marked preference for dark flesh, "Wherefore their Squawes use that sinfull art of painting their Faces . . . with a shining black," remarked Captain Edward Johnson. How the good captain would be distressed to know that his female descendants would follow the "sinfull art of painting their Faces" — red!

This war cleared the air and brought, not simmering hatreds and reprisals, but honest Indian respect for the arm of the white man who could avenge his wrongs so efficiently. When New Haven men tried without success to buy land from the Delawares, a refugee Pequot chief intervened and induced them to sell, saying that the English were an honest people who had been justified in breaking up his tribe.

At the same time peace won an equally important victory in Salem with the ordination of the Reverend Hugh Peter. For once Roger Conant's nominating committee guessed right, for the new minister was a man of practicality and wide vision, who saw no point in quarreling over small matters of religious practice, although he drew a new church covenant (which Conant and the other Old Planters signed) designed to exclude Separatists and Williams' followers. Interested primarily in what we would call social Christianity, he utilized to the utmost the position of the Puritan minister. Finding Salem economically stagnant he wrote to England and campaigned the country to raise funds to aid the fishing industry. His purpose was partly to provide unemployment relief, and partly to obtain cash without which the town could not buy English goods. Land was offered to induce fishermen to settle, and a convenient inn established to entertain the sailors of Virginia and New Amsterdam boats which came to buy cod. Whatever may have been Hugh Peter's effect on the colony as a whole, he was a blessing to Salem.

The year 1637 was marked by several changes in Roger Conant's life. In the spring three men with whom Conant had much to do in later life were admitted to participation in community affairs. John Pickering, a twenty-two year old carpenter and builder, of whom much more anon, was made a freeman. William Hathorne, who had come from Dorchester three years before, was now given two hundred acres with the understanding that he transfer his church membership to Salem. It is possible that this was intended to make sure that Captain Hathorne was subject to church discipline, but more likely it simply reflects the idea of the parish as a purely territorial unit to which every resident automatically belonged. This "godly"

gentleman was "indued with a quick apprehension, strong memory, and rhetorick, volubility of speech," which "caused the people to make use of him often in public service, especially when they . . . had to do with any forrein Government." Roger Conant had less of these qualities, and after 1637 gradually relinquished his place in public affairs to Hathorne, George Corwin, and Emmanuel Downing. He must have frequently seen George Downing, the college boy, who in time was to become a famous English politician and diplomat and to give his name to Downing Street in London. And finally there was William Dodge, that traditionally tall and swarthy farmer, of definitely lower social status than Conant, who by industry had now risen to the place of freeman and was frequently in the years to come to stand with his former governor as one of the most honored town fathers. By purchase of a part of Peter Palfrey's land on Bass River he became a neighbor of the Old Planters and was taken into their social circle.

That same year, 1637, saw the emergence of town government in its modern form, with Roger Conant regularly one of the selectmen, or "representatives," as they were still called. He was clerk of the selectmen that year, and sometimes thereafter, and probably town treasurer as well, for he frequently signed the receipts. After a year's trial the number of selectmen was cut from twelve to seven, who on that occasion were Endecott, Conant, Hathorne, Woodbury, Balch, Massy, and Lawrence Leech.

These men were very busy as perennial selectmen, for Salem had taken a sudden spurt and with about nine hundred inhabitants had become the second town in the Bay government. Boundaries assumed a fresh importance, so in the fall Conant had to go over and mark carefully the Saugus line which he had sketched out only two years before. The rapidly increasing number of oxen meant the planting of a greater acreage, and a series of moist warm summers brought bumper yields of corn. The new water mill poured out such a stream of golden meal that for the first time Salem had an actual surplus. The days when the little Conants had to bury their faces in their mother's apron

THE OLD PLANTERS' PATH AND FIRST LANDING PLACE ON BASS RIVER

or stuff their fists into their mouths to stifle their un-Christian wails at the sight of their father scraping out the meal barrel to feed a hungry immigrant family had faded into memory. Although the winter of 1637–38 was very hard, with deep snow from the beginning of November to the end of March, there was no hunger, or even a monotonous diet of fish.

The one fly in the meal barrel was the threat to the liberties of the colony involved in the revocation of the charter on May 3, 1637, and the appointment of Gorges as governor-general of New England in July. Fortunately he was too poor and the King too busy to execute the commission. Roger Conant worried with the rest, but he took no part in the colony's desperate measures of defence, for he was too busy with his old duties as a town father, and certain new ones.

With the establishment of the system of quarterly courts, men of property, judgment, and good reputation in their neighborhoods were pressed into service to man them. Roger Conant served on the jury which was called in December, 1636, and in the March session was foreman of the petty jury. On May 15, at the request of the General Court, the freemen of Salem chose six "assistants unto the majestrates on quarter Courts." Conant's name was not among the six, but the General Court two days later added it to the list, no doubt in accord with its regular practice of adding dignity and wealth to the bench. The function of these "assistants to the magistrates" was similar to that of the justices of the peace and quorum who in later times joined the judges on the bench. For the next three years Conant sat as a judge (although that title was not used) in the quarterly court, which corresponded to the later county court of common pleas.

Some writers who have glanced through the records of the colonial courts have obtained and promulgated the idea that our ancestors (presumably because of repressions resulting from Puritanism) were a particularly immoral lot, and that they were punished by brutal and barbarous judicial processes. Roger Conant was one of these judges and must share the opprobrium if such is deserved — let's look at the situation. At first glance it is obvious that the judges had higher

moral standards than similar officials in England, where it was a recognized practice for them to sell pardons and take bribes, even from the King of Spain. To maintain their standard of legal morals, the New England Puritans frowned upon the use of professional lawyers. They would not tolerate a system in which legal victories were awarded to the side which hired the cleverest hair-splitter. No criminal was turned loose to sin again because of a verbal error in an indictment, nor was a widow deprived of her property because of some technicality of probate law. Conant and his fellows on the bench based their decisions on simple justice as they saw it, departing from the principles of the Common Law when the application of the letter of it did not seem reasonable. Similarly on the rare occasions when they followed Biblical law, they tempered that with reason. Puritans though they were, the magistrates in one case questioned "whether adultery was death by God's law now." Practice in the courts was simple. "The parties in all causes," reported Lechford, "speake themselves for the most part, and some of the Magistrates where they thinke cause requireth, do the part of Advocates without fee or reward."

Certain modern novelists have given what they maintain is an accurate historical picture of New England by having their heroes see at one time and place all of the examples of branding and mutilation which can be culled from the records of many courts over a period of many years. These punishments were mild by European standards, and relatively rare in the colonies. Neither Salem nor any other English town in America had anything to compare with the continuous exhibition of broken and agonized bodies which was then to be seen at the place of execution outside of every large European city. For three-quarters of a century to come, English travellers were to complain that wherever they went in the rest of the world they were invited by gentle people to watch, as a pleasant entertainment, the burning alive of some poor wretch. No one ever died at the stake in Salem. More than a century later Maria Theresa had prepared for the courts of her domain a carefully illustrated book showing exactly how wit-

nesses and criminals were to be tortured; the Massachusetts code, as English practice generally, forbade torture as a punishment or as a method of obtaining evidence, with one exception (treason under certain conditions) which was never invoked here. If it is true, as it is reported, that the copious illustrations in Maria Theresa's law book were necessary because many of the imperial judges could not read, the contrast with Conant and his fellows is all the more remarkable.

There are two main reasons why Roger Conant's court was not the place of horror that its continental counterparts were. Most important is the fact that the English never made a religious rite and a public entertainment out of burning human beings alive. True, Conant himself when an apprentice may have been one of the great multitude which watched a Baptist burned at Smithfield, but in such instances the English reaction was one of horror even when the punishment seemed just and necessary. English towns never had anything like the Paris children's festival (which even modern Frenchmen seem to think was merely quaint) of collecting and burning cats. The Puritans, being intellectually the most advanced and "modern" part of the English population, very naturally took the opportunity in New England of further ameliorating what was already the mildest European code of punishment.

The other reason Roger Conant was spared the unpleasant task of ordering horrible punishments is that he did not have to deal with the savage criminal class which spawned in the misery and slime of the gutters of the cities of Europe. The diaries of John Winthrop and William Bradford have given the impression that there was a great deal of immorality and sexual perversion among the servants in New England, but a count of such cases in the colonial court records, and a questioning of any rural or small town New England chief of police of today, will suggest that Winthrop and Bradford over-emphasized these things because they were shocked by them, and that conditions have not greatly changed. There is a strikingly modern ring to such statements as that it was "a Common fault in our yonge people, that they gave themselves to drinke hott waters verye imoderately." We

should not entirely disregard Nathaniel Ward's statement that in almost twelve years among the "many thousand English" in Massachusetts he had "heard but one Oath sworne, nor never saw one man drunke, nor ever heard of three women adulteresses." Ward was ordained at Ipswich the month that Roger Conant first sat as a magistrate, and his parishioners were brought before the Salem court when they offended. Lechford, who thought the New England experiment generally a failure, said that "Profane swearing, drunkennesse, and beggers" were "but rare in the compasse of this Patent."

Mr. James Duncan Phillips has counted cases and shown that not enough people were put into the stocks to wear them smooth. Let's go a step further and sit beside Roger Conant on the bench, session by session, and see if he was a brutal, branding judge, applying a harsh law to an immoral people. He began his service with the session of June, 1637, sitting beside Endecott and Hathorne. There was evidently a large accumulation of back cases. They sentenced a servant girl to be whipped for killing the neighbor's poultry, for lying, loitering, and running away. Another servant was whipped for repeated efforts to escape. Nicholas Cary was reproved for extreme correction of one such bad servant. John Talbie's wife Dorothy, presented for frequent laying of hands on her husband to the danger of his life, scoffed at the judges, who ordered her to be chained to a post and released only to go to church, until such time as she repented. The other cases were all civil and illustrate only the undoubted quarrelsomeness and penchant for legal suits which our ancestors usually showed.

In the October session Conant had to deal with only one case of crime or misdemeanor, that of Marmeduke Barniston, who was whipped for frequent lying, burglary, and running away. In December the only case of any interest was one for defamation, another extremely common failing of the Puritans. If the six pence which Conant collected for his services in this court was his only salary, justice was cheap as well as prompt and good. The session of March, 1638, was a relatively busy one. A servant was whipped for eaves-

dropping, lying, and running away, and five other individuals were fined or put in the stocks for drunkenness and like offences. The June session was the only one during Roger Conant's three years on the bench that gave the gossips anything into which to set their teeth. A gentleman was convicted of uncleanness, fined £10, and ordered to be placed in the stocks at Lynn next training day. A goodman convicted of the same offence was given two hours in the stocks with the gentleman and ordered to make public confession before the congregation. Here was an example of the salutary Puritan practice of punishing the rich more severely than the poor for like offences. Their theory was that fines should be assessed in accordance to the importance of the sum to the offender, and that a sort of surtax of punishment should be inflicted on the rich because they ought to be good examples for the common people. There was more justice, and more democracy, in this, than there is in the modern practice by which a governor of the Commonwealth convicted of stealing $50,000 goes free, while a poor boy who steals goods to the value of $50 goes to jail.

But to get back to that summer day in 1638 when Roger Conant and the other magistrates sat behind the long trestle table in the largest room of Endecott's great house. It may have caused him to smile to remember the day when he first saw that house sitting alone in the wilderness at Cape Ann; but he must get down to the cases and so must we. Here was Goodwife Edmonds, who was ordered to confess an unspecified sin before the congregation. Robert Key and Goody Newell, who came next, were ordered placed in the stocks at Lynn for unseemly behavior. Then came Marmeduke Barton (probably our old friend "Barniston"), who had filed off his lock and run away again; he was ordered to be whipped and to have a lock placed upon his foot, unless Colonel Endecott saw fit to release him. Finally a smith was set in the stocks for "contemning authority of court." It was a busy day, and a far cry from the ones when Conant tried to manage the Dorchester Company servants without any civil authority behind him.

In September our old friend Dorothy Talbie was whipped for further misdemeanors against her long-suffering husband. One of the lunatic fringe which followed Roger Williams, she was acting on her belief that God required her to kill off her family. Eventually she killed one of her children and was hanged for it. The other case was one of Endecott's servants who was whipped and given an extra year for running away. On Christmas Day the court sat again and gave Richard Graves the present of an hour in the stocks for beating up Peter Busgutt. The latter ungratefully "contemned" the court and was set in the stocks beside his recent foe. A servant was whipped for drunkenness and theft, and Jane Verrin was presented for absence from religious worship; Hugh Peter got her off. In the spring session there was not a single case of crime or misdemeanor, and only four civil cases. With the next meeting of the court the circuit system appears to have got under way; the two Winthrops and other distinguished magistrates replaced Conant and his fellows on the bench. Probably a lack of knowledge of the law on the part of these untrained judges was beginning to tangle civil cases. In this summary we have given a complete record of the police cases from June, 1637, to March, 1639, inclusive, for one of the four county courts, this one having jurisdiction of all such cases arising among about two thousand people. Conant and his fellow magistrates ordered no one branded, no one mutilated. The whip that was used in these courts was made of light cords, nothing like the frightful cat-o'-nine-tails with which seamen in all navies were to be flayed to death for nearly two centuries to come. The offenses committed were certainly fewer and less serious than come up in a modern New England town of that size in a like period.

Yet in those years Salem was having troubles which, had they occurred in a Latin or German city, would have sent men and women to the stake and put others, screaming, into the hands of the court torturers. The trouble was, as Hubbard pointed out, that the immigrants "at their first coming over hither, were not much unlike a stock of bees newly swarmed from their old hive, which are not oft-

times without much difficulty settled in their new one, and are very apt to be disturbed with every little occasion, and not easily quieted again." There were, by count, eighty heretical errors afloat in the colony. Hubbard's suggestion that the cause was largely the psychological shock of immigration is supported by the fact that not one of Conant's group of Old Planters was infected. The trouble was as old as the Great Migration. That sound son of the Church of England, John Smith, said that the sectaries "put the Governour and his Councell to their utmost wits."

> Some [of the sectaries] could not endure the name of a Bishop, others not the sight of a Crosse nor Surplesse, others by no means the booke of common Prayer. This absolute crue, only of the Elect, holding all (but such as themselves) reprobate and cast-awaies, now make more haste to returne to Babel as they tearmed England, then stay to enjoy the land they called Canaan.

Smith prayed that Winthrop would have the wisdom to take to heart the fate of the church in Virginia which had been swamped by "the continuall inundations of mistaking directions, factions, and numbers of unprovided Libertines," and save the hopeful piety of New England by driving out such. Roger Williams is an excellent example of the intolerance of the Elect, which Smith mentions, for left to himself in Rhode Island, he one time reached the point where he believed that he alone had the truth, and he "refused communion with all, save his own wife." When all the world but Williams was heretic, he saw the wisdom of promulgating the rule that no one should be molested for conscience's sake in his colony. The matter was put to the test when the women of Rhode Island took advantage of their emancipation by devoting so much of their time to religious controversy that their hungry husbands tried to restrain them; but then the cry was raised that if they should do so, "all the women in the country would cry out of them, etc." Rather than face that, the husbands let religious liberty take its course. The result was what the Bay Puritans expected. Samuel Gorton, the leader of one of the sects, had to be whipped for uncivil abuse of the Rhode Island magistrates, and

one of the quarrelling Baptist factions tried to call in the authority of Massachusetts. The situation was not peculiar to New England; Governor Philip Bell of Barbados appealed to Massachusetts for godly Puritan ministers to help him combat the religious fanatics who kept the island in a distracted state despite his whippings and banishments.

Captain Johnson spoke like a typical Massachusetts Puritan when he called heresy that "bastardly brat." These New England Puritans (unlike the Cromwellians) were foes of religious toleration as they were foes of moral toleration. Johnson's definition of the two main groups of troublemakers is instructive; there were the "Antinomians, who deny the Morrall Law to be the Rule of Christ," and there were the "Anabaptists, who deny Civill Government to be proved of Christ." The persecutions in Massachusetts were, the magistrates believed, a necessary defense against immorality and civil anarchy. Calvin burned Servetus, and "that cruell murtherous Inquisition" was still to burn thousands, over differences regarding points of theology which the Puritans tolerated as long as the heretics did not make dangerous discord. Massachusetts had no inquisition to torture suspects into admitting their heretical thoughts. Conant's friend Hubbard accurately described the practice when he said:

> No man or society of men there, was ever denied the liberty of a peaceable dissent from what is there established, orderly professing or practicing according to their own persuasion in things wherein the substantial points of religion are not concerned; but to grant liberty for an open profession of that which directly tends to overthrow the very foundation of the Christian religion, it is hoped no sober man will expect or plead that it should be granted.

Hubbard's exceptions did not involve points of pure theology. True, a Unitarian was regarded with horror, and a Jew was looked on as a primitive survival which was an object of curiosity; but any man who believed in the Lord Jesus and lived accordingly might take communion as a guest in the Puritan churches. An individual Roman Catholic visitor was treated with courtesy; the difference with him

was not so much a matter of religion as of politics and the external form of church government.

Today when our commonwealth is threatened by Communism and Totalitarianism, and equally by the steps to which we may be driven to combat them, it is important to realize that the preservation of the essentials of our culture demands that we adhere to the standards of Conant and his fellows, for our ways are their ways, and not those of the dictators and of the Inquisition. We have simply shifted our intolerance a bit further from theological grounds; the Totalitarians and Communists are our Antinomians and Anabaptists. The vital question is the method of dealing with them. In Conant's day the King of Spain invited his guests to enjoy an auto-da-fé; in our day Franco invited his guests to watch Communists mowed down by machine gun fire or crushed under armored tanks. Massachusetts was never as intolerant as Spain under the monarchy and under Franco. It is the difference between authoritarianism and faith in the reasoning power of the human mind. Progress depends on the latter.

One example of the way the Puritan system worked will suffice. When the Elder Richard Brown of Watertown suddenly got the idea that the Church of Rome was the true church, he was not burned by the magistrates or "liquidated" by the horrified community. Rather, the leaders of the Boston church engaged him in public debate, coaxed, threatened, gave extensions, and finally laid upon him the innocuous Puritan excommunication. The ministers and magistrates soothed the church of Watertown, used prayers for guidance and reconciliation instead of thumbscrew and rack, and had the pleasure of seeing Brown, reconverted, once more a respected and influential member of the community.

As a member of the Church of England rather than the Separatist wing of the Puritan group, Roger Conant would be less tolerant of the radicals than was Endecott. His background and connections would make him believe, with Winthrop, that religious guidance should be furnished by an educated clergy and the church controlled

by well-to-do and pious laymen, and would make him distrustful of lay preachers who were guided by the "inner light." That was why he was not one of the Salem men who followed Anne Hutchinson's path in the bitter strife of 1637. His was not the simplicity of those of her followers who believed that civil magistrates could be dispensed with if people followed the inner light, or of those who, feeling the house shaken by an earthquake, said that it was the Holy Ghost coming down upon them. The inconsistency of the Hutchinson group is illustrated by the fact that although it operated largely by means of groups of as many as fifty or sixty women who gathered to worship and invoke the inner light, some of the male members of the sect held that women had no souls. At Salem Mrs. Hutchinson had three prominent adherents and several lesser followers, a few of the latter having already distinguished themselves as disorderly characters. One fanatic, Thomas Venner, was to return to England where, as the result of unwise toleration, he raised the little army of Fifth Monarchy men which tried to put all London to the sword. Probably all of them had been supporters of Roger Williams. Some were ordered disarmed, and some were driven into exile in Rhode Island. That they were not badly mistreated is indicated by the fact that the sheriff or his helper was fined for being too rough in putting one of them in the stocks. Although they were a menace to the peace of the community, it recognized that they were sincere and, for the most part, good people, so it did not subject them to the searching inquisition and persecution with which Totalitarian states deal with their minorities.

Mrs. Hutchinson was finally exiled after a trial which, although fair and merciful compared with the European practices of the day, was hardly up to modern Anglo-American standards of fairness; but within the year Salem was thrown into a tumult by one Mrs. Mary Oliver who "was (for ability of speech, and appearance of zeal and devotion) far before Mrs. Hutchinson, and so the fitter instrument to have done hurt, but that she was poor and had little acquaintance." Among her various heretical opinions was one to the effect "that, if Paul were at Salem, he would call all the inhabitants there saints."

The magistrates, who knew better, put her in jail. For several years she made trouble and was finally sentenced to be whipped. Whipping she seemed to enjoy, but, as might have been expected, she did not like being silenced for a half an hour by having a cleft stick put on her tongue. In none of these repressions is Roger Conant known to have had any part; but unless he had changed greatly since his younger days, his influence in the town must have been a strong factor in the conciliation which was finally achieved.

After his retirement from the bench Conant applied himself more actively to his personal affairs. He was still trying to recover his investment in the fur trade. When one of his old partners, Dike, was lost off Cape Cod in 1638, he was replaced in the business by Nathaniel Pickman. Conant may also have been selling goods in England, for he gave his old friend Thomas Weston a letter of attorney to collect a debt in London. The arrival of three thousand immigrants in the summer of 1638 greatly stimulated business. The colonists charged the earthquake of that year with responsibility for the several cold and wet summers which followed, and prevented the corn from ripening. This, and weariness of the cornbread diet, determined some of the Salem people in the spring of 1639 to plant wheat and rye. To assist them the town ordered the fences to be made tight. Hardly were the Salem people able to congratulate themselves when there began a series of events which profoundly changed not only their diet but their whole economy. Late in 1640 came the word that the Scots had invaded England, Parliament had been called, and that civil war, the prospect of which had been twelve years before the reason for Conant's holding together the Naumkeag colony, had begun. In England, its course was swift and bloody; John Conant was driven from Lymington and became a famous Puritan minister at St. Botolph's, in Aldersgate. The stream of migration reversed as men poured back to England to fight or to enjoy the promised reforms. Other settlers, who realized that Massachusetts had lived by selling supplies to the immigrants, dumped their property on the market and went off to Virginia where there were better prospects of earning a living by farming. The result was

that within three months the value of real estate in New England fell to a fifth of its former price. Similarly the price of cattle fell from £25 to £5 a head. This was particularly disturbing, "it being the common practise of those that had any store of cattle, to sell every year a Cow or two, which cloath'd their backs, fill'd their bellies with more varieties then the Country of itself afforded, and put gold and silver in their purses besides." The net result was that the Conants began to eat beefsteak to save it, whereas previously it had been a luxury. The corn which had formerly been exported now accumulated in worthless piles in the barns, and the manufactured goods for which it had been exchanged became far scarcer and more expensive. When the means of obtaining cash disappeared the debts which had seemed inconsequential loomed large.

To the new settlers the colony seemed ruined; if the war was won the need for it was gone, anyway, and it might revert to wilderness for all they cared. To Conant and the old settlers this depression was simply one more trial, not to be compared with the earlier ones, for at least there was food. So they turned to the making of dried fish, clapboard, and plank to sell in the West Indies, and before long they were building small, incredibly fast vessels suited to that trade. As a result, wine and molasses appeared on the table and strange foreign coins jingled in pockets. With the sudden disappearance from the markets of the English textiles in which the colonists had dressed, the women ceased their discussions of theology and turned their attentions to wool and linen. Flax was sown and did well. The colonists again tried sheep raising, which was possible now that there were clean and fenced pastures available. For the first time the whirr of the spinning wheel and the flax wheel were heard in the houses at Bass River. Fortunately a beginning had been made two years before by the settlers at Rowley, who "were the first people that set upon making Cloth in this Western World, for which end they built a fulling-mill, and caused their little-ones to be very diligent in spinning cotten wooll." In this case "cotten wooll" meant wool fibers, but soon the West Indies trade brought in vegetable cotton and furnished another source of textiles.

The younger John Winthrop had just set up a salt works across Bass River, and was producing at least some of that commodity, formerly all imported, for Salem's new fish trade with the West Indies. It is a temptation, but one without much foundation, to speculate on the influence which the presence of Roger Conant, the old salter, might have had on the choice of the site. One must admit, however, that it is not likely that Conant was very intimate with the brilliant young scientist who had been a friend of some of the leading men of Europe and had a library of technical works in which eight languages were represented.

To add to the problems of the situation the winter of 1640–41 turned out to be the coldest that Roger Conant had ever seen. The summer which followed was so cold and wet that much of the corn did not ripen. "It was observed, that people who fed upon that corn were extraordinarily infected with worms in their bodies all the year following, which in some was well prevented by leaving their bread and feeding upon salt fish." To provide employment for the poor and the means of obtaining goods from abroad, Hugh Peter procured the building of a great three hundred ton vessel at Salem. The colony appreciated the minister's judgement in economic matters and asked him to be a member of a mission to England. Salem protested his loss bitterly, and Endecott so resented it that he got into a fight with another magistrate. In the end the interests of the colony won out. On August 3, 1641, Hugh Peter embarked on that long voyage which was to end nineteen years later on the bloody scaffold at Charing Cross.

When Roger Conant turned back toward Bass River after bidding his beloved (if erratic) pastor good bye, he had reason to marvel at the evidences around him of the growth of the seed he had planted there twelve years before. Economic adversity had tossed Salem squarely onto her own feet. She had found herself, not by planting the madder and the other exotic things the Company had sent out, nor even by hemp or flax, although they were now grown profitably for local use, but by making dried fish and staves, clapboards and ships. Workmen were busy turning out salt and glass, leather and wrought

iron goods. Salem had become a colony in the Greek sense, a segment of the transplanted culture of the mother country. In 1628 Conant and his contemporaries had not expected to live to see the day when the colony would outgrow the stage of existing primarily to exploit natural resources for the mother country. In 1640 he had taken the census of the town and found 180 families, which meant well over a thousand people if his own brood of seven children was typical. Crowded into the little house at Bass River were Lot, little Roger, little Sarah, Joshua, Mary, Elizabeth, and Exercise. The hardships of little Caleb's childhood were a thing of the past. His parents must have marveled that this "remote, rocky, barren, bushy, wild-woody wilderness, a receptacle for Lions, Wolves, Bears, Foxes, Rockoones, Bags, Bevers, Otters, and all kind of wild creatures, a place that never afforded the Natives better then the flesh of a few wild creatures and parch't Indian corn incht out with Chesnuts and bitter Acorns, now through the mercy of Christ become a second England for fertilness in so short a space, that it is indeed the wonder of the world." Now, wrote Captain Johnson in 1642, "good white wheaten bread is no dainty, but even ordinary man hath his choice, if gay cloathing, and a liquerish tooth after sack, sugar, and plums lick not away his bread too fast, all which are but ordinary among those that were not able to bring their owne persons over at their first coming." True, the situation was only relatively better, and the people more exposed to vagaries of New England farming than today. That same summer the corn refused to ripen and the pigeons settled in thousands upon the wheat and rye, with the result that many families subsisted on sea food the winter following. In 1645 they suffered the earliest and hardest winter of their experience, and the next summer the caterpillars ate up the corn; but now the trade with the other colonies prevented starvation when such catastrophes emptied the larders. Perhaps in Conant's eyes the most remarkable evidence of the transformation of the country was the resettlement of barren Cape Ann and the gathering of a church there.

Salem itself had long since outgrown the great house as a place

for town meetings and worship. Conant and Endecott were the chief members of a committee appointed to enlarge the small meetinghouse which had succeeded it. The fact that it was midwinter when they gathered to draw the plans may explain the fact that they provided for a fireplace which must have nearly filled one end of the building. None of Judge Samuel Sewall's story of frozen sacrament bread rattling in the basins for them! If during the next century and a half such comfortable provision was ever made for warming a church, it has missed our attention. The contract which they signed with the builder, John Pickering, read thus:

First hee is to build a meetinge howse of 25 foote longe, the breadth of the old buildinge with gallerie answerable to the former: One Catted Chimney of 12 foote longe & 4 foote in height above the top of the building. The back whereof is to be brick or stone. This building is to have six sufficient windowes, 2 on each side & 2 at the end, & a paire of staires to ascend the galleries suteable to the former. This building is to be covered with inch & halfe planck & inch board upon that to meete close: And all this to be sufficientlie finished with daubinge & glasse & underpinninge with stone or brick with cariage & all things necessary.

The little Conants came to know every visible knot and pin in this structure, for a large part of their lives was passed within its walls. That was then considered no hardship, for the same year that the meetinghouse was built, the magistrates had to take steps to prevent the poor people from ruining their substance by attending lecture services in the neighboring towns, often two or three days a week. The fact that the squandering of money on vain apparel was also legislated against at that time suggests that people went to church for other reasons than worship. Salem protested the limitation on church attendance and five years later provided for rotating committees to see that people did not needlessly stay away from services:

Ordered that twoe be appointed every Lords day to walke forth in the time of Gods worshippe, to take notice of such as either lye about the meeting howse without attending to the word or ordinances, or that lye at home or in the fields, without giving good account thereof, and to take the names of such persons & present them to the Magistrate.

When Roger Conant walked abroad in his Sunday black and steeple hat on this duty, he was not being peculiarly "puritanical." Virginia, Quebec, and Paris had regulations quite as indigo as the "blue laws" of Massachusetts; the chief difference was that they could not be enforced among the Virginia plantations, in the cities on the continent, or even in Boston, as they could be in a village like Salem where everyone knew what everyone else was doing.

Hugh Peter was succeeded by Edward Norris, "a grave and judicious elder," who had graduated at Oxford forty years before. His son, "Yong mr Norris," was engaged "to teach skoole." This, the first provision for education, was of moment for the Conants. Discouraged by the death of Caleb, they had kept Lot and young Roger at home, probably sending them to some elderly dame to learn to read. Joshua was about ten and Exercise two, so they could benefit by the town school. In those days care was taken not to unsettle female brains by too much education. It was enough if girls learned to read the Bible in the few moments which the unceasing round of household duties left them. Free public education was charity which "Mr." Conant would have scorned as beneath the dignity of his family. A typical town order provided that "such as have children to be kept at schoole would bring in their names & what they will give for one whole yeare & Also That if any poore body hath children or a childe to be put to schoole & not able to pay for their schooling That the Towne will pay it by a rate."

There is probably some significance in the fact that Roger Conant had two periods of activity in the Salem court separated by the three years in which the town was most troubled by religious cases. There can be no doubt that he disapproved of the radicals who were being punished for causing civil disturbance, but it may be that his well known conciliatory disposition caused him to be passed by as one not firm enough against the offenders. In 1640 he appeared in the quarterly court as a witness against Tobias Hill who had said that he "had ynough of his wyf now, that he could spare his wyf to any in the Towne now for 3 or 4 days." At the next session Conant was sued by the

THE OLD BURYING GROUND AT NORTH BEVERLY

village goat keeper for not respecting the regulations regarding live stock, one of the few cases in his long life in which he was a party in a suit. His record for keeping out of court in that litigious age was little short of amazing. But beginning with the December session of 1642, almost every quarter day for thirteen years found him on the jury. The fact that he was regularly elected juryman in town meeting shows the regard in which he was held, as does the fact that frequently he was foreman. He had a share in the indictment or trial of most of the offenders who came before the county court during those years. A glance at the docket will cast light on his standards and those of the community, and on the feeling on the part of his generation that this second decade saw a decline in the ideals and practices of the people.

As foreman of the trial jury in December, 1642, Conant was very busy. There were various cases of trespass and defamation and four of drunkenness. One man was tried for unseemly behavior toward his first wife's daughter. Deborah, Lady Moody, of Lynn, was presented for not believing in infant baptism, but was not prosecuted because she was "in a way of conviction before the elders." These "Anabaptists" generally held that all civil magistrates were unlawful, and their increase was regarded as such a menace to the state that the General Court enacted a statute of banishment against them. However, during Conant's several terms as foreman of the grand jury, he never saw fit to trouble any of his peaceful neighbors of the Anabaptist persuasion. Perhaps Lady Moody was indicted because as a very prominent inhabitant her defection was likely to draw others after her. But to get back to Roger Conant's job as foreman on December 27, 1642. One Salem man was admonished "for much sleeping on the Lord's day in time of exercise." William Goult was sentenced "for reproachful and unseemly speeches against the rule of the Church to sit in the stocks an hour and be severely whipped next lecture day." One man was admonished for beating his wife and another was fined 20*s* for "opprobrious provoking words urging to a breach of the peace." This crime wave caused the court to order a pillory set up.

At the next winter session Conant was foreman of the grand jury, and as such returned indictments against three men for drunkenness, one for attempting the chastity of a neighbor's wife (he was fined 30*s*), one for living without his wife, one for assault and battery, and one couple for incontinency before marriage. As foreman of the grand jury for the July meeting of the court he presented only one individual for misconduct, a servant boy who had been stealing. As foreman of the trial jury in December, 1644, he had to deal with only five minor cases, of which the immodesty of Susan West was the most serious; she was released with a warning. During 1645 he served in only one session, and that was devoted entirely to civil cases. As foreman of the trial jury in June, 1646, the most serious case with which he had to deal was that of Evan Morris, who was convicted and fined 20*s* for threatening to kill his master, running away from the constable, and being involved in "an action of a high nature done in England." The following year he was on a grand jury which reported the usual run of defamation cases, one assault and battery, one cruelty to a child, and one case of failure to support a wife and child because of too much fondness for other women. In 1648 he saw no jury service but was a witness in a case of immoral solicitation. Apparently there was some connection between this case and the fact that Goodwife Lidia Gutch slugged Johanna Conant in the meetinghouse on the Lord's Day, although Johanna's connection with the family is unknown.

A boundary dispute caused Roger Conant and the other Bass River planters to sue certain Wenham men for trespass in June, 1649, but the case was thrown out because the testimony was defective. They tried again in December, more hopeful of success, perhaps, because Conant was on the grand jury. He participated in the presentation of one case of simple assault and one case which combined profane swearing, vile language, drunkenness, and other assorted trouble making. The following year he had an easy session on the grand jury which presented only one case of drunkenness. As foreman in November, 1651, he was busier, for there were three cases of fighting, two of men who had not sent to England for their wives, one bastardy, one un-

cleanness, and one slandering of the court. He also presented two Baptists, one for pointedly walking out of the meetinghouse at the time of baptism, and one for staying away from church altogether and getting himself baptised again. Doing his regular stint the following year, he presented only two cases of defamation and reported grounds in four civil suits.

It is evident from the records that when anything went amiss at Bass River the first thing to do was to call in Roger Conant to witness the drunkenness or whatever else might be the matter. On one occasion his testimony obtained the conviction of Mark Hascall for wearing broad lace. There were many such cases at that time; Conant was not a lone snooper, and the Puritans were not peculiar in their attitude toward excess of apparel, as it was called. There were such restrictions in Elizabethan England and even in France, where they gave the name to corduroy; but whereas the French restriction was a result of royal vanity, the English purpose was to prevent the foolish squandering of substance on vain clothing by those who could not afford it. The Puritans had been conditioned by such practices as those of the Duke of Buckingham, who spent £14,000 (wrung from the taxpayers) on one outfit of twenty-seven suits of clothes. Excessive apparel was, moreover, a sort of royal party insignia, as unpopular as the wearing of the swastika would be in Salem today.

Conant served in two of the four jury sessions in 1653, which had to deal with three cases of simple assault, two of drunkenness, two of theft (one from Conant himself), one of threatening violence, one of abusing the constable, one of bastardy, one of adultery, and one of profanity ("the pox of God"). For two years he and Palfrey were busy in the courts suing to recover money due them from the fur trading venture of twenty years before, but the long and involved story of that case throws no light on him or his times, so we may ignore it. In the meantime he continued to serve as foreman of grand and petty juries, handling no more serious cases than assault and battery. Where were the heinous sexual crimes, the branding and mutilation? Very rare, obviously, and confined largely to Boston where

there was a large non-Puritan population. It is evident from Roger Conant's experience in the courts that his contemporaries in Essex County were a rather abnormally moral and peaceful lot, and that Puritan justice as he helped to administer it was not particularly harsh or repressive.

During this same decade Roger Conant was active in local government which now took on the pattern with which we are all familiar in our own times. The town meeting became accustomed to make general provisions for policy, leaving to the seven "Select men," first so called in 1652, the administration of the policy. By special act of the General Court the participation of all legal "inhabitants," including non-church members and non-freemen, was recognized. Even the Baptists were free to bring business before the town, as indeed they were before the civil courts and the religious councils. Church members who were not freemen were obliged to participate in public affairs when called upon to do so. There is a familiar ring to the vote that inhabitants who failed to attend town meeting were to be fined 18*d* for each absence. As selectman, Conant exercised functions much more important than those of his modern successors:

> These seven men have power to give and grant out lands unto any persons who are willing to take up their dwellings within the said precinct, & to be admitted to al common priviledges of the said Town, giving them such an ample portion, both of Medow and Upland, as their present and future stock of cattel and hands were like to improve, with eye had to others that might after come to populate the said Town; this they did without any respect of persons, yet such as were exorbitant, and of a turbulent spirit, unfit for a civil society they would reject, till they come to mend their manners.

Poor relief was generally handled in town meeting. The unfortunate might receive "halfe a peck of corne from every familie," or be given a public job such as running the Cape Ann ferry. The cost of relief had by 1657 risen to £25 a year and become a source of worry to Conant and his associates; indeed it was a larger proportion of the town costs than is the case in many modern communities. Another

troublesome matter was deciding who would and who would not have "leave graunted to sell beare." If the beverage was as potent as that sounds, it was a serious matter. The selectmen also kept a careful eye on town contractors. When Conant's friend Pickering skimped on the meetinghouse job, Conant had the painful task of holding up the payments. When the same unfortunate carpenter failed to comply with specifications in building a bridge, the town did not hesitate to seize a bull and a cow which he had posted by way of bond. With such prompt efficiency common it is not surprising to find individuals fined for "abusive Cariage in towne meeting."

Besides participation in these general affairs Conant was busy with many special tasks, as auditing the constables' accounts and serving as assessor. He laid out a farm granted to Governor Winthrop, traced the bounds between Salem and Ipswich, and with John Balch had oversight of the mending of the highway in that direction. He surveyed the highways toward Wenham "& that ways," and served on a committee to lay out a way between the Salem ferry and Jeffery's Creek. By 1655 the need of mathematically accurate surveying, arising from the increase in the value of property, induced the town to engage an imported "Artist" to run the Topsfield line. Perhaps Conant's feelings were hurt, or possibly he felt that his eyes and legs were no longer equal to the task, for three years later he had to be "intreated to bound out 80 acres . . . in some convenient tyme," and to be further enticed by promise of pay for his "paynes." It may have been sentimental interest which induced him to lay out grants at Cape Ann during the next two years. Evidently the knowledge of the Old Planters was regarded as valuable, for they were from time to time given small pieces of land. They were, however, growing old. John Woodbury was sent to represent the town in the General Court in 1639, but two or three years later he died. His farm passed to his son John, and when the son died his widow married one of the Dodge boys. The narrowing circle of Old Planters was again broken in June, 1648, when John Balch died. His farm passed to his son Benjamin, a lax man who entertained suspicious strangers and was so indifferent

of his children's welfare as to permit them to go unbaptized. The death rate, abnormally low after the first bad years had carried off the weak, now rose to normal, aided by mild epidemics in 1650 and 1651. Not only had most of the Old Planters passed away, but Winthrop and the leaders of the Great Migration as well. A lesser man than Roger Conant would have stayed on his farm and cultivated memories; but instead he plunged more actively into town affairs than ever. Too old (he was in his fifties) to do as much surveying as formerly, he served more regularly as selectman. Most of his associates belonged to the newer immigration and had now so established their positions that most of them had "Mr." or some other title before their names. Solid usefulness enabled him to keep his place among the rising men.

The number of substantial newcomers in the colony may be measured by the fact that in 1642 no less than 1232 individuals were made freemen of the Colony. The outbreak of the Civil War had cut off the flow of earnest Puritans, and time had caused a steady increase in what had originally been the servant class. The resulting social changes distressed the former leaders:

> Under the pretense of being unequally rated, many men murmur exceedingly, and withdraw their shoulders from the support of the Government, to the great discouragement of those that govern. . . . Pride and excess in apparrel is frequent in these daies, when the Lord Calls his people to humiliation and humble acknowledgment of his great deliverances . . . an overeager desire after the world hath so seized on the spirits of many, that the chief end of our coming hither is forgotten; and notwithstanding all the powerful means used, we stand at a stay, as if the Lord had no farther work for his people to do, but every bird to feather his own nest.

The colony had printed its laws "that all who intend to transport themselves hither, may know this is no place of licentious liberty, nor will this people suffer any to trample down this Vineyard of the Lord, but with diligent executions will cutt off from the city of the Lord the wicked doers." Salem no longer held out her arms to all comers, but "ordered that if any inhabitant . . . shall at any time . . . receive

or take in any Forayner upon any pretence whatsoever without aprobation of the select men shall pay for everie weekes Continuance twentie shillings per weeke."

To Roger Conant, who had clung to this wilderness site inspired by the vision of "the city of the Lord," its planting, growth, and change must have seemed wonderful and strange. Now Massachusetts was united with the other Puritan colonies in the New England Confederation, a formidable state in what had been the empty wilderness. England, too, was greatly changed. The King had been beheaded, and Hugh Peter on that occasion had preached that famous sermon "out of the terrible denunciation to the king of Babylon." John Conant had become rector of Exeter College, and as an advocate of the Restoration was well on the way to his eventual conforming to the Church again. This no doubt troubled Roger Conant's mind, for the colonies sympathized when Cromwell made himself dictator in order, as they interpreted it, to save organized religion from Anne Hutchinson's intellectual brothers. Again Salem was hastily fortifying against the evils which might come with the change in times. Probably Conant's old neighbor, Nathaniel Ward, spoke for both of them when he wrote:

> Either I am in an Apoplexie, or that man is in a Lethargie, who doth not now sensibly feel God shaking the Heavens over his head, and the Earth under his feet: The Heavens so, as the Sun begins to turne into darkness, the Moon into blood, the Starres to fall down to the ground; So that little Light of Comfort or Counsell is left to the sonnes of men: The Earth so, as the foundations are failing, the righteous scarce know where to finde rest, the Inhabitants stagger like drunken men: It is in a manner dissolved both in Religions and Relations.

From this troubled world Roger Conant turned back to the little circle at Bass River, where the warm flow of blood in the veins of his children and grandchildren reminded him that the world was as young for them as it had been for him and Sarah forty years before. The Fifties was a period of active change in the colony of Old Planters' families. Lot Conant moved to Marblehead and there married

the daughter of the minister, William Walton, a Cambridge University man. The social position of the clergy put a premium on their daughters; Lot had done well for a young man who had grown up in the rough environment of the wilderness. His bride, Elizabeth, had enjoyed a sheltered childhood in England, but, so far as the records show, she made a good wife and daughter-in-law. The connection gave Roger Conant a comfortable excuse to smoke his pipe in the Marblehead parsonage and discuss affairs with an Old England man of similar background.

Young Roger, who when still a boy had been granted twenty acres by the town for being the first white child born in Salem, early removed to Marblehead where he was welcomed with a similar grant. Here too is evidence of the way in which the Old Planters clung together, for young Roger married Elizabeth, the only daughter of Thomas Weston, who had sent her to Marblehead to live with Moses Maverick, whose wife was a daughter of Isaac Allerton. Elizabeth had property in Cork and had probably spent her early life in that town, for her little son was baptized on the strength of her membership in the church there. When business took her and her husband back to Ireland, they left this little John with his grandfather at Bass River. Despite his travels, the younger Roger found time to be one of the town fathers of Marblehead.

Joshua grew up to marry Seeth, the daughter of Thomas Gardner. He was a sea captain, and died in England in 1659, leaving an only child, Joshua, Jr., to enliven the house at Bass River. Thomas Gardner took care of Seeth. Tragedy again struck the family on January 16, 1661/2, when a sudden squall took John Balch, Jr., the husband of Mary Conant:

> Balch beinge constrayned to leave the Canow in which he was bound over the river at Salem ferrie, by reason of the violence of the winde and wave and indeavoringe to returne againe to the shore died by the extremitie of the cold with the violence of the winde and rage of the sea and soe perished in the water.

For ten years Roger Conant had been actively employed inventory-

ing the estates of his neighbors; for some unknown reason that of his son-in-law Balch was the last on which he was so employed. The probate court, tempering the law by expediency after Puritan practice, ordered that Mary Conant Balch was to have the use of her husband's share of the Bass River land for seven years, after which it was to revert to Benjamin Balch. As it turned out she did not need it that long, for within a year or two she married another of her childhood friends, William Dodge, Jr.

These years were further troubled by an outbreak of the old Blue Point trading post suit which resulted when Roger Conant and Peter Palfrey got their hands on Francis Johnson in 1657. Since the plaintiffs' statement of the case before the court at Ipswich is in all probability Conant's work, it is worth retelling:

> We desire the court & jury to take notice that when we entered into this trade each man was to put into the stock what he could well Disburse & soe some put in more & some les acording as then they were able & soe each of us to be intressed both in profitt & losse according to what was disbursed.
>
> Now when Mr Johnson came from the eastward & gave over the trade, we in some short tyme desired an account of him & finding that two of us four had disbursed more then the other it was agreed that those two who were lesse out, should make ther portions even with the others which was . . . done out of there owne estate as in particular Anthony Dike payd about eight pound unto Peeter Palfry and Roger Conant neere such a some to Frances Johnson which he acknowledgeth, thereupon we found that there was twenty three pound disbursed by each of us out of our estates and as for the three bills which we received from Mr Foxwell, for the joynt goods sent him by Mr Johnson, were to answere Us twenty three pound to each of us, & the overplus to be equally devided amongst us since which tyme, Mr Johnson hath manifested in the Court wherof we had noe yet he converting of it to his owne uses.

Possibly the argument was somewhat clearer to the jury than to us; at any rate, they found "for the plantivses in the hands of the defendant 141 lb. of beavoar valeued at £70 10*s* & 70 lb. of otter at £5 17*s* 10*d* thre quarters wherof we find for the plantifes both of the beaver & otter which 3/4 amounts to £60 with the costs of the court."

At the next session of the court Roger Conant for the last time served as foreman of the trial jury. It may be worth while to glance through the docket of thirty cases and see how much mischief there was now in one of the four counties in a period of three months. The first case was that of William Beal who sued Thomas Roulandson "for wrong done his wife under pretence of marriage, taking away her good name." Roulandson was fined "for a lie in his oath." There must have been, if we but knew it, a story behind the case of Mr. George Emery who was "fined forty shillings for changing a bottle of water of Goody Laskin." The most serious case was one referred from the General Court. The verdict tells the story: "Ruben Cuppie, for accusing Richard Pitfold of beastiality, which, if it had been true, would have endangered Pitfolds life, was ordered to be whipped twenty stripes. Maj. Hathorn was to see it done." One man was fined for excessive drinking, one was fined for swearing by his faith and "Cud's buds," and another was bound over for "abusive carriage by fighting." In short, although there was a great increase in litigation, Roger Conant would have been hard put to show by his experience that the younger generation was really as wicked as the elders maintained. Although this was his last term of jury service, he continued to make himself useful as arbiter, particularly in conjunction with Jeffrey Massy. Now for the first time we find mention of compensation for such work. In 1661 he served Salem for the last time as selectman, and two years later he was for the last time asked to serve the town by laying out land.

Although Conant's advancing age, and the rise of new men in Salem affairs, restricted his activity, he was still a useful person among the Old Planters. He sat by for three hours while Jonathan Porter and Osman Trask came to an agreement about the sale of certain property, and then wrote out the final terms for them. A disagreement over this particular indenture brought him into court as a witness, as did Trask's later attempt to choke Roger Hascall by his neck cloth and his subsequent repulse with a pitchfork. Such services in court and a certain amount of drunkenness among the neighbors kept Conant from

boredom in his declining years. Besides this scandal-for-a-day sort of event, things were enlivened during the middle sixties by the attempt to establish a second mill in Salem to compete with that of William Trask, who was alleged to be slow and inefficient. Conant joined the other Old Planters in their opposition to the competitor, but it is to be hoped that he was not one of those who went down by night to pull up the builders' stakes and throw their shovels and wheelbarrows into the river.

Parson Norris had died in 1659, comforted in his last months by the knowledge that the town had already voted to "be at the charge for his buriall." His successor was John Higginson, a middle-aged man who had immigrated as a youth and served two Connecticut churches well before being called to Salem. During his benign administration Conant was more than ever active in the Salem church. He and Higginson and Thomas Lathrop, who was soon to die at Bloody Brook, rode over to Wenham on December 10, 1663, to participate as the Salem delegation in the ordination of Antipas Newman.

CHAPTER XI

THE LAST YEARS: BEVERLY

ROGER CONANT had been one of those petitioning for separate preaching at "Cape Ann side," as the Old Planters' settlement was then called. Salem very naturally, and successfully, blocked the establishment of a separate church for some years. If Bass River could be incorporated as a separate town, however, that end would automatically be achieved, which was one of the chief reasons for a petition which Conant headed on May 9, 1659:

> Wee your petitioners, (beeing upwards of Sixty families, who by reason of our inconveniency of meeting publiquely upon the Lords dayes at Salem towne, it beeing very troblesome and dangerous, to transport ourselves and families winter and sommer over the ferry;) . . . Crave and request . . . That Your Worships would be pleased . . . that we may be a towneship or villedg of & by ourselves. . . . These things we leave to your wise consideration, hopeing that your bowells will move towards us, in granteing your poor petitioners requests.

It took nearly another decade of agitation, headed by Roger Conant and William Dodge, to obtain the establishment of the Second Church of Salem, now the First Church of Beverly. The pastor who was finally settled on September 20, 1667, was that John Hale who was later to further the witchcraft prosecutions until his wife was accused, when he recanted in an honest and able tract. Conant headed the committee which chose Hale and was a member of that which settled the financial details with the parson. He was one of the four men charged with finding firewood for the parsonage, and later he served on the committee to seat the congregation in the order of the social importance of the members.

When Bass River was shortly thereafter incorporated as the town of Beverly, Conant was treated as the leading inhabitant. He served one term as selectman and sat on one session of the trial jury. His

last public service was in 1671–72 when he ran the bound between Beverly and Salem and represented the new town in the resulting negotiations. After this Exercise Conant took his father's place in public affairs. As the old man relinquished his public activities his mind naturally reverted to his younger days, and the revival of his memories prompted a petition to the General Court which tells much about him:

The umble peticion of Roger Conant of Basriver, alias Beverly, who have bin a planter in New England fortie eight yeers and upward, being one of the first, if not the very first, that resolved and made good my settlement under God . . . and have bin instrumentall, both for the founding and carring on of the same, and when in the infancy thereof, it was in great hassard of being deserted, I was a means . . . to stop the flight of those few that then were heere with me, and that by my utter deniall to goe away with them, would have gon either for England or mostly for Virginia, but thereupon stayed to the hassard of our lives. Now my umble sute and request is unto this honorabel Court onlie that the name of our towne or plantation may be altred or changed from Beverly and be called Budleigh. I have two reasons that have moved me unto this request. The first is the great dislike and discontent of many of our people for this name of Beverly, because (wee being but a smale place) it hath caused on us a Constant nickname of beggarly. . . . Secondly. I being the first that had house in Salem (and never had any hand in naming either that or any other towne) and myself with those that were then with me, being all from the western part of England, desire this western name of Budleigh . . . where myself was borne. . . . I never yet made sute or request unto the Generall Court for the least matter, tho' I thinke I might as well have done, as many others have, who have obtained much without hassard of life or preferring the publick good before theire own interest, which, I praise God, I have done.

Having for three days reviewed his services in his memory, Roger Conant decided to ask that his children be given the compensation which he had never sought for himself, so on June 1, 1671, he drew up this second and equally revealing petition:

The humble petition and request of Roger Conant, planter in new England theise fortie eight yeers, and three moneths, who was with the first (and I

think I may safely say the very first) under god, that was in this wilderness an instrument though a weak one, of founding and furthering this Collony. Whose eyes have scene the first Stones laid in the foundation thereof, and now again to see the unparaleld grouth thereof thorugh the great blessing of our great god.

I did put up a former request concerning the change of the name of our town of Beverly, and what your worships pleasure is therein I do not fully know. I had thought and proposed to move your worships that you would be pleased to grant me some smale portion of land in some Convenient place where it may be found without prejudice, and this I thought to do by word of mouth if I had come before your worships as I hoped I should doe, and was bashfull to put up two requests in on[e] paper. Wherefore if I have erred and forgot my-self in this matter, pardon my indescretion, who am old & weak and be pleased now, out of your favorable respect, to grant & give me some portion of land as shall sceme meet & good in your eyes. God hath given me children & grandchildren, soe that although I am old and cannot improve land my selfe, yet my children can, and soe both they with my selfe, shall be ingaged for your loves, and I hope our prayers shal be continuall for the blessing of god on your persons.

The General Court did not grant the first petition, but it did order that two hundred acres be given to that "very auntient planter." It was laid out a few years later along the Tyng family domaine on the Merrimack.

When the cold breath of age chilled Roger Conant he gathered what remained of his family close around him. Lot had succeeded in Marblehead to the extent of being a selectman, but he moved back to Beverly, built near his father, and joined in the formation of the new church. On November 20, 1666, Roger deeded his house and thirty acres to Lot, who the next day leased them again to his father and mother for the duration of their lives at the annual rental of "one Indian corn." To his son Exercise, who three years before had been made a freeman, the Old Planter at the same time deeded forty-five acres. After a short six years of happiness the family circle was again broken by the death of "young" Roger in Ireland. The fire of Elizabeth Weston Conant's grief still burns in the entry she made in the family Bible: "The 4 day of May 1672 being Saturday, my

dere littel sone Samuel Conant dyed. The 15 day of June 1672 being Saturday my dere, dere, dere husband Roger Conant dyed." To his fatherless grandson John, the Old Planter gave twenty acres near Wenham Pond.

The plan to have Lot Conant take care of his parents in their old age came to naught when he died in the fall of 1674. Roger Conant witnessed this will, as he had so many others, and with Exercise administered the estate which but scantly covered the needs of five sons and five daughters, the oldest twenty-four and the youngest but three. Once more there was a brood of children to be cared for and guided by the now aged and wrinkled hands of the Old Planter. It was well that he was needed, for one of the last of his old friends, Captain Trask, had gone, leaving the mill to his son John with whom there were no memories to share, sitting beside the slowly grinding stones. Governor Endecott had also passed on under the ominous glow of a comet, which may have foretold his death, or as some thought, may have foretold the execution of the royal commission which hung threatening over the liberties of the colonists. Salem was torn between the wisdom of submitting to the rule of Charles II and the official Massachusetts policy of stalling in hope that the devil would catch up with his friend. It was hard for Roger Conant to realize that the town he had founded was now no longer a settlement of a few ragged planters, but was a thriving sea port with "some very rich Merchants," their fortunes made in the trade which had been so carefully fostered when the end of the Great Migration twenty years before had threatened economic ruin. When he made his last journey to Boston he could hardly recognize that city, now in some ways even greater than Exeter in England, packed with handsome buildings "joining one to the other as in London, with many large streets, most of them paved with pebble stone." At home in Beverly, although wolves still flourished, wild turkeys had become a rarity, their places being taken by the domestic breed, now back in America after its century long trek from the Spanish colonies, through Turkey and England.

Evidently Roger Conant spent many of his last days in the chimney corner with the last of his old friends, William Dodge, talking of old times, while their neighbor from Ipswich, William Hubbard, wrote down their stories with scratching quill. It was well that the Ipswich parson did so, for the part of Conant in the founding of Massachusetts was unknown to some contemporaries like John Josselyn, who assumed that the history of the colony began with Endecott. There were still occasional visits to the court where Conant testified regarding ancient bounds:

> I doe hereby testifie, that to my utmost remembrance it [the Bishop farm] had but fower sides according to our generall custome, neither can I conceive any reason or remember any necessity that should move us to doe otherwise, for there then was roome enough. It was done many yeers past and therefore hard to remember all circumstances.

His last recorded venture into public affairs came in 1675 when he and the other Old Planters united to elect Isaak Woodbury constable, who bitterly protested that they accomplished it by "a Combination of such persons as had noe Libertie to Law to voat whoe went about enticing others to voat for me out of a designe they had against me."

It is tragic that the last days of the gentle Roger Conant should have been filled with the fire and blood of King Philip's war. On September 17, 1675, his friend Captain Thomas Lothrop and fifty-four Essex boys were killed at Bloody Brook. Lieutenant John Pickering won glory for Salem on that field, but the "Flower of Essex" was so shattered that it had to be merged with another command. Three months later two young Salem captains fell at the Narragansett fight. Closer to home, son-in-law William Dodge and a friend riding through the woods were attacked by two Indians. Dodge killed his assailant and turned back and finished off the other one. Salem, in such a panic as she had not known for fifty years, built across the neck a wall which was small comfort to the planters in Beverly. During the first year the war had been conducted by the sons of the new men who had so long before replaced Conant in town and colony

affairs, but now they were in turn replaced by still another generation of younger men, more active and more skilled in American warfare. In 1677 Salem sent a marine expedition to retake thirteen ketches which with their crews had been captured by Indians. Still Conant could take pride in the old Puritan sense of justice which hanged two English soldiers who had in the fury of war killed two peaceful squaws.

The embers of Roger Conant's life cooled as those of the villages which King Philip's Indians had burned died out. One cold March day in 1677 he called in Benjamin Balch and another neighbor and quietly dictated his will. Perhaps with his old love of peace he thought to keep the terms from his children and grandchildren until he was gone and bickering was useless.

I Roger Conant aged about eightie five yeares, being of perfect understanding, though weak & feeble in body, doe hereby declare my will and mind wherein in the first place I doe bequeath my soule unto God that gave it & my body to the grave, in hope of a blessed Resurrection.

Surely there was no great sadness in that, for his work was long since done, well done; it was time to rejoin Sarah, who had suffered and labored more than he in the planting of this colony, and had now gone on to await him with little Sarah, and Caleb, who had died so long, long ago in England. Still it was within his power to do good for the parts of Sarah and himself who still had their courses to run in this world.

For my outward estate and goods, I give unto my Sonne Exercise one hundred and fortie acres of Land lyeing neer adjoining unto the new towne of Dunstable a part of two hundred acres granted me by the General Court: also I give & bequeath unto him ten acres of Land next adjoining unto his presont home lott and land Lying by the side of william Dodgeses his land, and butts one the land of thomas Herrick: also I give him two acres of marsh at the south end of the great pond by wenham, or if my daughter Elizabeth Conant will exchange to have soe much at the great marsh neer wenham: also I give him my swamp at the head of the railes which is yet undivided betwist me and Benjamin Balch adjoining unto william Dodgeses swamp: also I give him my portion of land Lying by Henry Haggats on wenham side: now out of this fore mentioned Land he

is to pay seaven pounds toward the discharge of such Legassis as I have given & bequeathed: according as is hereafter sett down.

Exercise had been a good son. Now he alone remained of five strong boys. He was the youngest, and had not been born until the hardships were over. Caleb, Joshua, Lot, and Roger rushed to remembrance they had been fed and warmed at last; Lot and Roger and Joshua; had grown into strong men, lived good and happy lives and then gone on after Caleb. And there had been other boys in the little house:

More I give unto my grandchild John Conant sonne of Roger Conant ten acres of Land adjoining to his twenty acres by the great pond side he paying twenty pounds for the same towards the payment of legassis as after mentioned.

More I give unto my grandchild Joshua Conant seaventeen acres of Land Lying by the south side of the great marsh neer wenham and bounding unto the land of peeter woodbery: and the rest to return to my Executor.

How brave Sarah had been, and how she had suffered and labored. Sarah, his young bride in London; like that she was with him always now; and no one else remembered her so.

Also I give unto my Daughter Sarah two acres of Land lying between the head of the railes & Isaac Hull his ground as a part of six acres betwixt me and Benjamin Balch: this to her and her children.

There had been another little Sarah, in London, so many ages ago, before the Restoration, before Cromwell, before King Charles, back in the days of Scotch James. The grief of that grey October day beside the little grave in the church yard of St Lawrence stabbed again through all the years. London memories — wait, there was the argument about that debt:

Also sixtie acres of Land out of my farm granted me by the General Court neer the new town of Dunstable I give and bequeath unto the hands of Capt Roger Clap of the castle neer Dorchester for the use of a daughter of one mrs. pitts deceased whose daughter now Liveth in culleton a town in Devon in old England and is in lue for certaine goods sold for the said mrs. pitts in London and was there to be paid many years since but it is

alleaged was never paid and the aforesaid capt clap to give a discharge as theire atturney according as he is impowered and intrusted in theire behalfe.

Now something for each of the young ones who used to come in to warm themselves by their grandmother's kitchen fire and eat slices of fresh bread:

Furthermore as legacies I doe give unto my sonne lott his ten children twenty pounds to be equally divided: to my daughter Sarahs Children to John five pounds to the foure daughters five pounds betwixt them: to my daughter Mary Dodge to herself five pounds and five pounds to her five children equally divided: to Exercise his children foure pounds betwixt them: to Adroniron Veren three pounds to his sister Hannah twenty shillings and her two children each ten shillings: to my cozen Mary Veren wife to Hillier veren three pounds as also three pounds unto the daughters of My Cozen Jane Mason deceased to be divided amongst them including Love steevens her children a share:

What a tribe they are! Perhaps these last gifts will remind them how Sarah and I loved them. Let's see, what else?

My wearing apparell I give and household implements not otherwise disposed of and my Gray horse and cattle to my sonn Exercise and sheepe I give to Rebacka Connant my grandchild and one sheep to Mary Leach.

"Benjamin, I'd give you my black steeple hat if I thought that wearing it would make you go to church more willingly. You wouldn't feel the way you do if you had lived here when there were no ministers, or none better than that pleasant scamp Lyford. Now have I wound up all Lot's and Roger's and Joshua's affairs? Oh, yes:"

And whereas there remains in my hands a certain portion of cattle belonging unto one Mr Dudeney in England and by him assigned unto his nephew Richard Conant valued at twenty five pounds and now left in the hands of my sonne exercise Conant that there be a rendering up of such cattle or theire valuation mentioned unto the said Richard Conant upon seasonable demand he giving a full discharge for the same.

"There, that ends it. Strange, how quickly and simply one can gather up the last threads of a great long cable of life like mine."

And further my will is that my sonn Exercise be my executor to my will and Testament and for further help in seeing these things forementioned my sonne william Dodge and my grandchild John Conant Senior to be overseears of the same, In witness whereof I have here unto sett my hand.

The trembling cross at the bottom of the will is evidence that Roger Conant's last days were ones of inactivity. For two years longer he watched the actors in the furious drama of the public stage with more detachment and less interest than when he and brother Christopher had seen actors mouthing Shakespeare's new lines at the Globe. Finally, on November 19, 1679, he closed his eyes for the last time.

Where the dutiful Exercise laid him, no man knows. Perhaps it is just as well that this modest, quiet man lies undisturbed even by those who would make a shrine of his grave. And it is not only those of his blood who owe him respectful memory, for we all today live by the light of that liberty which has blazed up from the sparks which he nursed at Cape Ann when lesser men would have let them die out.

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