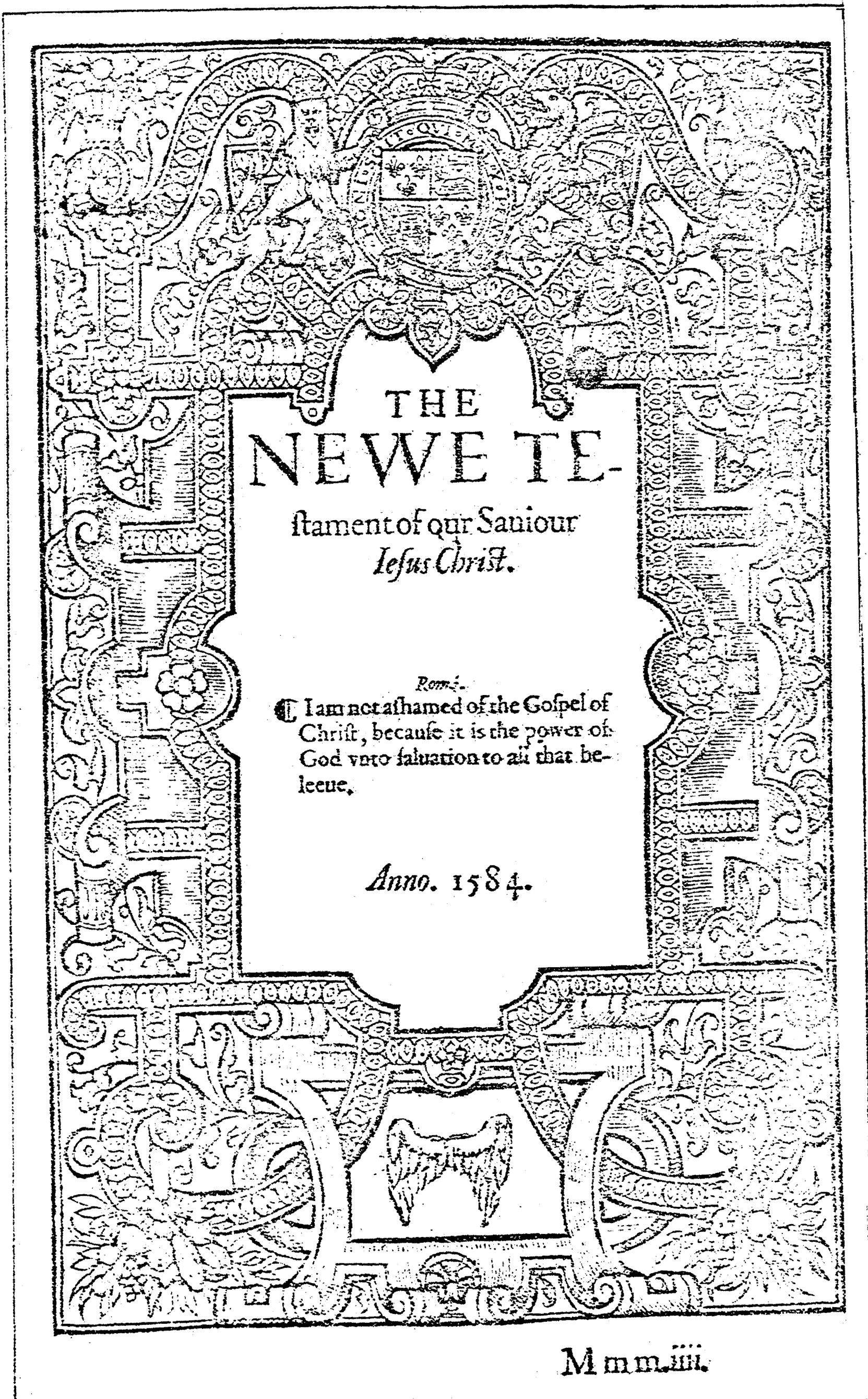


RICHARD SEYMOUR

OF HARTFORD

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PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRODUCTION OF THE TITLE-PAGE OF FAMOUS OLD "BISHOP'S BIBLE," PUBLISHED IN 1584, AND STILL IN POSSESSION OF THE SEYMOUR FAMILY IN AMERICA—A NOTABLE SURVIVAL OF EARLIEST BOOK-MAKING

RICHARD SEYMOUR OF HARTFORD

PROGENITOR OF THE SEYMOURS IN AMERICA

BY

MORRIS WOODRUFF SEYMOUR

No one has ever essayed even a short excursion into the field of genealogical research without finding many blind paths, conflicting trials and even insurmountable obstacles. Of all the puzzles in the world a genealogical puzzle is usually the most difficult of solution, since the people who could solve it are gone, leaving usually but little, if any, trail behind them. Such a puzzle for many years has been the lineage of Richard Seymour who settled in and was made a townsman in Hartford in the year 1639.

That his descendants should desire to know who he was and from whence he came, is most natural. In view of the distinguished character of some of his descendants, their prominence in the affairs of this and other states, and of the nation, it may perhaps fairly be said to give a wider interest in the question. Increased interest is added to this discussion from certain other well authenticated facts of history.

A Richard Seymour was the chaplain of the fleet sent out by Lord Popham and Sir George Gorges in 1607, which attempted to establish a settlement at the mouth of the Kennebeck river in the State of Maine. The arrival of the fleet at Sebino on the 16th of August; the formal taking possession of the land in the name of King James; the religious and other ceremonies; the reading of their charter; the rendering of the English church service and the delivery of the first sermon ever known to have been preached in the English tongue in New England; are in the fullest details matters of history. At one time it was thought that this Reverend Richard Seymour—Richard the Chaplain—might be the same man who twenty-one years later settled in Hartford. But recent researches in England have disproved this theory. Who, then, was Richard Seymour, the settler? Richard Seymour of Hartford in 1639? Was he a son of Sir Edward Seymour, Baronet, the head of the Devonshire branch of the Seymour family—a family which from the time of William the Conqueror to the present day has played so conspicuous a part in English history, furnishing from its ranks persons to fill every station in the gift of that nation, from kings, queens and protectors, down through the ranks of Parliament, the army, the navy and the church.

Among the choicest possessions of the Seymour family in this country is an old "Bishop's Bible," published in 1584.

It is a family Bible in the strictest sense of those words, containing all the usual entries in such a book. On the front page of the New Testament part is a rudely sketched coat of arms of the

Duke of Somerset, with the motto printed on a scarf or ribbon underneath. Written under that is the following:

RICHARD SEYMOUR
OF BERY POMERY,
HEYTOR HUND. IN YE COM. DEVON
His BOOKE
HARTFORD, YE COLLONY OF CONECTI-
COT IN NEWE
ENGLAND, ANNOQUE DOMINI
1640

This Bible is said to have belonged to Richard Seymour. Other entries show that it was used by John Seymour, Richard's second son, in Hartford in the year 1666. Since that time it has always been in the possession of some member of the Seymour family.

Assuming the record to have been made by Richard himself, or even his son John, it is a distinct declaration or claim that Richard was of the Berry Pomeroy Seymours.

The two entries above quoted, the one following the other, would seem to indicate that the first was made while Richard was still in England, and the latter after the settlement in Hartford. We submit that a court of law would admit such a record in evidence as proof of the facts therein stated, and that in the absence of contradictory evidence would establish by a judgment such facts, if they became important. But let us examine the question further and see if there be not other evidence which tends to corroborate the truth of this record.

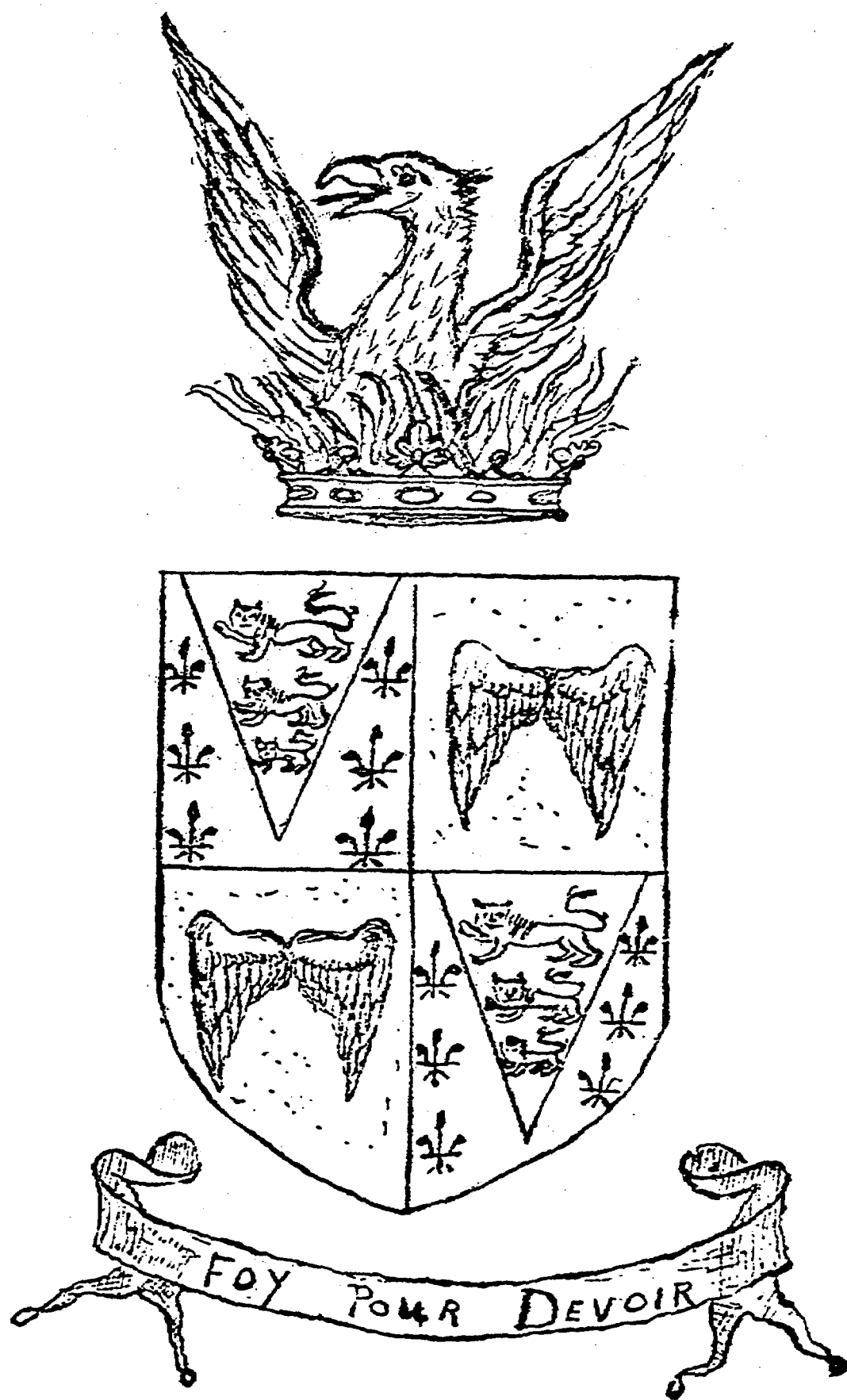
A careful examination of records, histories and monuments, both in this country and in England, discloses the following facts, all of which are susceptible of easy proof and can be fully relied upon.

(a) Richard did not emigrate from Massachusetts with Hooker and Stone in the fall of 1635. He first appeared in Hartford in 1639, but was treated as an original settler and allotted his portion of the public land, precisely as were the original settlers.

(b) From facts to be given later, he was forty-four or forty-five years of age at that time.

(c) That he was a man whose personal qualities inspired the confidence of his fellowmen is evidenced by the fact already stated in reference to his allotment of public land as an original settler, and the further fact that soon after his arrival in Hartford, he was elected "Chimney Viewer," a no mean office in those days, and one that corresponded somewhat with the head of the fire department in modern times. Again, his association with Governor Ludlow, Captain Patrick and others in obtaining from the General Court the right to settle that part of the colony lying west of Fairfield, which subsequently became the town of Norwalk—an enterprise that in those days required skill, daring and considerable means—shows that in addition to his other qualities, he was possessed of means enough to make him a partner in such an enterprise.

(d) His eldest son Thomas was probably born in England, certainly as early as 1633, an inference drawn from the fact that we know from the records of the Augmentation office in London the age of Hannah Marvin, his wife, whom he married in 1653, she having been born in England in 1633. At the time of his marriage, Thomas was certainly of full age and probably older than his wife. The precise ages of Richard's other sons, John, Zachariah and Richard are not accurately known, but they were probably



Richard Seymour
of Bery Pomeroy
Keytor hund. in ye Com Devon.
his Booke.

HARTFORD. ye Colony of Conecticut
In Newe England. Annoque Domini
1640.

EXACT REPRODUCTION OF RUDELY SKETCHED COAT-OF-ARMS OF THE DUKE OF SOMERSET ON THE FRONT PAGE OF NEW TESTAMENT IN THE "BISHOP'S BIBLE"—EVIDENCE THAT THE SEYMOURS OF AMERICA CAME FROM BERRY POMEROY WHERE THE FAMILY HAS BEEN PROMINENT SINCE THE TIMES OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

This English origin is not
correct. See N.E. Reg. 71/105-12
M.M. Jarvis

born in Hartford between the years 1639 and 1650, when Richard removed to Norwalk. Soon after his settlement there, Mr. Fitch having been elected in 1654 Governor of the Colony, Richard was elected to succeed Governor Fitch as "Townsmen" of Norwalk, the highest position in the gift of the people of the town, another, and, in view of his recent arrival, a rather remarkable exhibition of the character of the man and the esteem in which he was held by his contemporaries. He lived only a short time thereafter, and died in 1655. His will is dated July 29, 1655. Immediately after his death, Governor John Steele of Farmington and Hartford went to Norwalk and took upon himself the guardianship of three minor children, and in the fall of the same year married Mercy Seymour, the widow, and removed with them to Farmington, where, and in Hartford, some member of the family has ever since resided.

On the 13th of October, 1668, the administrators of John Steele settled the guardianship account with those Seymour children, showing that the youngest was of age at that time, and took from them a receipt, duly acknowledged, showing they were paid in full.

Turning now to the English family of Seymour. It is perfectly well authenticated that Sir Edward Seymour, the first Baronet of Berry Pomeroy, was the great-grandson of Sir Edward Seymour, the Earl of Hertford, Duke of Somerset and Lord Protector of England, brother of Jane Seymour, wife of Henry VIII, and uncle of King Edward VI. Sir Edward Seymour, the first Baronet, married Elizabeth, the daughter of Sir Arthur Champernown of Dartington. Their fifth son was named Richard and was born in 1595-6, as appears from the records of Exeter College, Oxford, where under the head of "Matriculations" appears this entry:

"161 2-3 5 Feb. Seymour, Richard. Devon. Barronetti filius 17."

Now Sir Edward Seymour was the only Seymour at that date in the County of Devon who was a Baronet, and this Richard who was seventeen years old in 1612-3 was his son, but as if to remove all possibility of question, in Boases Register of Exeter College there is a list of college plate donated by various individuals from time to time, in which is this entry:

"Ex dono Richardo Seymour, hujus Collegii. Commensalis ex filii Edwardi Seymour, Baronnetti. 14 3-4 oz."

by which it appears that Richard was not only the son of a Seymour, a baronet of Devon, but of Sir Edward Seymour.

Here then, we find a Richard Seymour of the right age and possessing all the qualifications to justify the statement set forth by Richard Seymour, the settler, in his family Bible, but unfortunately Lieut. Col. Vivian in his "Visitation of Devon," published in 1895, states that this Richard Seymour died and was buried "22 Aug. 1637 at Berry Pomeroy," a fact which, if true, disposes, of course, of all thought that this Richard was Richard the settler at Hartford, 1639. Is this statement of Colonel Vivian's true? Let us examine that question. In the first place, it is to be noted that Colonel Vivian not only gives certain facts as recorded at the Visitation of 1620, but he supplements these facts by certain statements of his own derived from other monuments and records found by him bearing on the subject. The particular statement regarding Richard's death was not of course derived from Sir Edward himself, for he was dead at the time this original record was made, he having died and been buried May 27, 1613; but finding in the churchyard at Berry Pomeroy the record of the death of a Richard Seymour as of August 22, 1637, Col Vivian

assumed (not unnaturally perhaps) that it was Richard, the fifth son of Sir Edward. But as a matter of fact, as appears by other records, there was about this time and in the same family two other Richard Seymours, and one whose death equally well fits this description, and regarding whom there are some extraneous facts tending to prove that it was he, and not Richard, the fifth son of Sir Edward, who thus died and was buried.

In this same Visitation it appears that Sir Edward had a fourth son named William, and that this William had a son named Richard, who was married May 20, 1626, and that this Richard had a son named Richard, all apparently living at the same time. We have then these three Richards: Richard, the son of Sir Edward; Richard, the son of William; and Richard, the son of Richard, the son of William. The records clearly show that this last Richard lived till and died in England August 26, 1648, and lies buried at Cockington. This not only disposes of Richard, the great-grandson of Sir Edward, but shows the care with which the various records of the family have been preserved. Now may it not have been Richard, the son of William, who was buried at Berry Pomeroy, August 22, 1637? The following facts prove conclusively, we submit, that it was.

The probate records of Exeter show that Richard Seymour, the son of William, made a nuncupative will on the 16th day of August, 1637. As the laws of England then stood, no nuncupative will could be admitted to probate, unless such will was made by a person *in extremis*. So that the nuncupative will of Richard, the son of William, could not have been admitted to probate, unless he had died shortly after the 16th day of August, 1637. That it was admitted to probate and his estate settled under that will appears of record.

Again, in the same court a record appears which shows that one of his aunts on the 19th day of January, 1638, made oath that an inventory of his estate had been made by certain persons named. Again, there is an entire absence of any other record of the death or burial of this Richard at Berry Pomeroy, at Plympton or elsewhere, so far as the most diligent search reveals, unless he was the Richard buried at Berry Pomeroy, August 22, 1637, six days after the making of his nuncupative will. William, the father of this Richard, and the brother of Richard, the son of Sir Edward, lies buried at St. Marie's, Plympton, having died January 30, 1621. If then our deductions are correct, we have located all the Richards, except the son of Sir Edward. The death and burial of nearly all the other members of this distinguished English family can be easily traced. The writer has personally made a pious pilgrimage to nearly all of these. Some of their tombs are quaint specimens of mural sculpture, but all show a high appreciation of the virtues of the departed and a pious care as to their precise relationship and identification. By the English law, the inheritance of both honors and property depends so much on seniority of birth that the family and other records are there kept with an exactness little known or appreciated in the colonies in the seventeenth century.

In view of all these facts, is it not singular that no record exists of the death or burial of Richard Seymour, the fifth son of Sir Edward? Is it an unfair or far-fetched deduction to assume that the reason is that his body lies in an unmarked grave in an old burying ground, washed by the waters of Long Island Sound in the old town of Norwalk?