

Fairfield and New Haven Counties. Crops were blighted, cattle stricken, farming utensils made invisible, and the people afflicted with strange and terrible maladies.

To such an extent had these complaints increased, that at a Special General Court, held at Hartford, June 23, 1692, a Court of Oyer and Terminer was created, which was to hold a judicial sitting at Fairfield on the second Wednesday of September that year, "for the trial of such capital cases and complaints as should come before them,"—such "complaints," it was understood, all arising from one cause—witchcraft.

The Court met at the time appointed. The record of its proceedings has been preserved to us, through the good fortune of the late Wm. L. Stone, editor of the Connecticut Mirror, who discovered it among a mass of ancient Colonial papers, in the possession of the Wylly's family of Hartford, the only record of the earlier colonial courts probably in existence; hence we may be excused for reviewing its proceedings somewhat in detail.

At the hour appointed for the opening of the Court, the magistrates entered,—men of a severe dignity, clad in judicial robes,—first His Excellency Governor Robert Treat, Esq., then Deputy-Governor William Jones, Esq., Secretary John Allyn, Mr. Andrew Leete, Capt. John Burr, Mr. Wm. Pitkin, and Capt. Moses Mansfield.

The Grand Jurors present were Joseph Bayard, Samuel Ward, Edward Hayward, Peter Ferris, Jonas Waterbury, John Bowers, Saml. Sherman, Saml. Galpin, Ebenezer Booth, John Platt, Christopher Comstock, and William Reed.

The trial proceeded. Mercy Desborough was first brought to the bar, and Secretary Allyn read her indictment as follows:

"Mercy Desborough, wife of Thomas Desborough of Compo, in Fairfield, thou art here indicted by the name of Mercy Desborough, that not having the fear of God before thine eyes, thou hast familiarity with Satan, the great enemy of God and man, and that by his instigation and help, thou hast, in a preternatural way, afflicted and done harm to the bodies and estates of sundry of their Majesties' subjects, or to some of them, contrary to the peace of our Sovereign Lord and Lady, the King and Queen, their crown and dignity, and that, on the 25th of April, of their Majesties' reign, and at sundry other times, for which by the laws of God and this Colony, thou deservest to dye."

The prisoner, on hearing the indictment read, plead "not