

Fall 1929

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Recommended Citation

William Renwick Riddell, *Thou Shalt Not Suffer a Witch to Live: Exodus, XXII, 18*, 20 *Am. Inst. Crim. L. & Criminology* 355 (1929-1930)

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“THOU SHALT NOT SUFFER A WITCH TO LIVE:”
EXODUS, XXII, 18

WILLIAM RENWICK RIDDELL

On February 2nd, 1670, William Herbert, a blacksmith of Biddeford in Devonshire, died in his bed cursing the name of Temperance Lloyd, an old widow of the same town whom he accused of bewitching him and so causing his death. On his death bed, he charged his son of the same name who succeeded him in his business, to see to it that the witch should not escape punishment.

The son laid a charge against the widow, who was arrested and tried for her life, March 14th, at Exeter: for some reason, she was acquitted.

The woman seems to have escaped suspicion and certainly prosecution for some years thereafter: apparently her diabolic powers were lying dormant.

In the spring of 1679, however, Anne Fellow the daughter of Edward Fellow, Esquire, of Biddeford was taken mysteriously ill and died—her father accused the widow Lloyd of having bewitched her. Mrs. Lloyd was brought before the Mayor and Justices of Biddeford; and it was ordered that her body should be examined by four matrons of good fame in the town—for you must know that Satan marks his own and there is wont to be a teat—mayhap two or even three—upon some hidden portion of the body of one who has sold herself to the Evil One, which he delights at time to suck. The base materialistic science of latter days calls such a protuberance, a hypertrophied clitoris or a non-strangulated hernia, malformed *labia* or unusually large *carunculae myrtiformes*: but they knew in the 17th century that they were Satanic stigmata. If any such projections were present in widow Lloyd, they were apparently then embryonic and not clear and conspicuous: and the father did not further prosecute the accused.

But in February of 1680, Miss Grace Thomas of Biddeford was taken with great pains in her head and all her limbs which continued, especially at night, until about August—no tangible evidence was available to connect the widow with this affliction notwithstanding the suspicion. In September, 1681, that which was hidden was made known: she met Temperance Lloyd on the street, who fell on her

knees before her and weeping, expressed her joy in seeing her strong again. Miss Thomas said: "Why dost thou weep for me?" and the trembling woman answered: "I weep for joy to see you so well again." And well she might rejoice: she had barely escaped the gallows a few years before, and in the preceding year only the absence of unmistakable "Devil's tokens" had saved her from prosecution: a woman, Lydia Burman, who had given evidence against her on her trial in 1670, swearing that she had "appeared unto her in the shape of a red pig," had died a strange death which the good people of Biddeford did not hesitate to attribute to her witchcraft, not to speak of Jane Dallyn wife of Symon Dallyn whose death was at least suspicious—then suspicion had passed into emphatic assertion that she had not a little to do with the storms which had vexed the coast and troubled the fishermen.

Miss Grace's ailment was the familiar pain in head and muscle, "prickings" and "sticking pains" which we now call neuralgia and rheumatism—or did, till the doctors told us there was no such thing as rheumatism—but which was then even by many of the faculty attributed to Satan operating through and with his votary. Mrs. Lloyd knew, too, that she had on her *pudenda* two protuberances which might be made to prove her a witch: although the four good women and true had not in 1679 been able to declare them "clear and conspicuous" proofs, other examiners might not be so conscientious or so unskilful. An accusation by Miss Thomas might well be fatal to her.

Whatever the cause, after the two met on September 30th, "in that very night, she (Miss Thomas) was taken very ill with sticking and pricking pains, as though pins and awls had been thrust into her body, from the crown of her head to the soles of her feet; and (she) lay as though it had been upon a rack." The pains continued, being more severe at night—on the night of June 1st, 1682, there was a frightful exacerbation, the patient "was bound and seemingly chained up with all her sticking pains gathered together in her belly, so that on a sudden her belly was swollen as big as two bellies which caused her to cry out 'I shall die, I shall die,' and in this sad condition she lay as though she had been dead . . . for about two hours." This plainly hysterical fit passed off: but on the night of June 30th, she "was again pinched and pricked to the heart with such cruel thrusting pains in her head, shoulders, arms, hands, thighs and legs, as though the flesh would have been then immediately torn from the bones with a man's fingers and thumbs . . . she

was even plucked out over her bed and lay in this condition for . . . three hours"

This was too much: Thomas Eastchurch, Gent., with whom she lodged, went to the authorities next day; and Temperance Lloyd was apprehended and put in prison: forthwith Miss Thomas "felt her pricking and sticking pains to cease and abate," although she still continued "in great weakness of body."

Next day Elizabeth Eastchurch, wife of Thomas Eastchurch, having heard her lodger complain of great pricking pains in one of her knee, examined the knee and found nine places "prickt . . . as though it had been the prick of a thorn": she at once went to Temperance Lloyd and demanded of her "whether she had any wax or clay in the form of a picture whereby she had pricked and tormented . . . Grace Thomas"; she answered "that she had no wax nor clay, but confessed that she had only a piece of leather which she had pricked nine times."

The Mayor as Chief Magistrate of Biddeford commanded that the body of the prisoner should be searched; and this was done by several women, two of whom gave evidence: they found "in her secret parts two teats hanging nigh together like unto a piece of flesh that a child has suckt . . . each about an inch in length"—almost certainly unusually long but wholly natural *carunculae*. (This is indicated *inter alia* by the fact that no teat was found in the body of the unmarried and presumably virgin Mary Trembles, to be spoken of later in the text). One of the women asked her if she had been suckt by the "black man" (meaning the devil). The widow, frightened out of her life, was ready to confess any and everything—the "teats" had sealed her doom and her only hope was to conciliate the prosecution by saying whatever was desired. She admitted that the black man had sucked her there many times, the last time on June 30th (when Miss Thomas had had her last fit). The questioner, Mrs. Anne Wakely, had been in attendance on Miss Thomas, and had on the morning of June 29th, seen "something in the shape of a magpie . . . come and flutter at" the patient's window. Asked concerning this, Temperance confessed that it was the devil in the shape of the bird and that she was at the door at the time.

Next day, the prisoner was brought before the Mayor Thomas Gist and Alderman John Davie as Justices of the Peace: Grace Thomas, Mrs. Eastchurch, Mrs. Wakely, told their story; and then the prisoner made her confession—on September 30th, the devil, in the shape of a black man, met her in Higher Gunstone Lane in Bidde-

ford and persuaded her much against her will to go with him and torture Grace Thomas: the two of them went invisible and she pinched with her nails the sufferer in her shoulders, arms, thighs and legs; as they came away she saw "something in the form of a grey or braget cat . . . go . . . into . . . Eastchurch's shop." Next day she returned invisible and saw the "braget" again: on June 30th, she and the devil tormented Miss Thomas and nearly drew her out of bed on purpose to kill her—and they also tormented her with the same object on June 1st. The devil did suck the teats and had promised that no one should discover her.

Having secured "an ample confession and declaration concerning . . . Grace Thomas," the magistrates inquired "concerning other witcheries which she had practised upon the bodies of several other persons" of Biddeford: she confessed to have "pricked William Herbert unto death . . . by the persuasion of the black man" although she had been acquitted; so, too, she "was the cause of the death of Anne Fellow." Mr. and Mrs. Eastchurch with two other witnesses had her brought next day, July 4th, to the Parish Church and along with the Rector, the Rev. Michael Ogilby, further questioned her. She now confessed to have been the cause also "of the death of one Jane Dallyn . . . by pricking her in one of her eyes, which she did so secretly perform that she was never discovered or punished for the same"; and of Lydia Burman who had given evidence against her. She now admitted that she had taken the form of a cat, gone into Eastchurch's shop and brought out a doll, "a child's baby," and put it in Grace Thomas' bed—she would not say precisely in what part of the bed, "for, if she should discover the same, . . . the devil would tear her in pieces."

She made a sad hash, too, of her attempt to say the Lord's Prayer and the Creed.

The devil "did promise her that she should live well and do well"—she had not confessed when she was in prison on the Herbert charge because "her time was not expired, for the devil had given her greater power and a longer time." The devil was about the length of her arm: she knew him by his eyes which were very big and bright: "he hopt and leapt . . . before her and did suck her . . . as she was lying down . . . which was a great pain to her and afterwards vanished clear away out of her sight."

Of course, she was committed for trial: there was quite an epidemic of witchcraft in Biddeford at the time—and, indeed, it was the common experience that when one witch was discovered others

were not far off—as witness the experience of Salem, Massachusetts. Susanna Evans, a widow, and Mary Trembles, an unmarried woman when accused, both confessed guilt: the devil in the shape of a boy had sucked the breast of the former and had had connection with her: he came in the shape of a lion to the latter, caused her to cry out with pain by sucking her *pudenda*—she had no teat there—and had carnal knowledge of her body (though this she recanted at the scaffold). Both women admitted torturing Grace Barnes but neither went so far as to kill.

The three unfortunate women came for trial to the Bar of the Court of Oyer and Terminer and General Gaol Delivery at the Castle at Exeter on August 14th, 1682: indicted, arraigned, all three were speedily found guilty, and sentenced to a felon's death. On August 25th, they were brought to the place of execution, and, as was the custom at the time and later, they were interrogated at the foot of the gallows by the Chaplain. Temperance Lloyd denied any contract with the devil or that he had had intercourse with her or taken any of her blood. She never hurt any ship, boat or bark in her life: she never rode over an arm of the sea on a cow—it was Susanna Edwards who did that. Susanna said Temperance lied, that she made up the story of her (Susanna) riding on a cow to get her hanged, too—she admitted having dealings with Satan in the guise of a short, black man. Poor Mary Trembles did nothing but commend her soul to a merciful Christ.

And so they were hanged.

All this delectable story and more is to be found in an old pamphlet worth more than twice its weight in silver: *A True and Impartial Relation of the Informations Against Three Witches, Viz.: Temperance Lloyd, Mary Trembles and Susanna Edwards. . . . London, Printed by F. Collins, n. d.*; but enough appears in the classic pages of the *State Trials*: 20 *How. St. Tr.*, 1017, *sqq.*

And we would not believe it if sworn to by a hundred witnesses, backed up by a score of confessions.