



Curiosities of History: Boston, September Seventeenth, 1630-1880

William W. Wheildon

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It seems proper to say in offering this little volume to the public, that no attempt has been made to exhaust the subjects of which the papers respectively treat; but rather to enlarge upon matters of historical interest to Boston, which have been referred to only in a general way by historians and previous writers.—This idea rather than any determination to select merely curious topics, has in a large measure influenced the writer; and the endeavor has been to treat them freely and fairly, and present what may be new, or comparatively new, concerning them, from such sources as are now accessible and have been open to the writer. It is not, however, intended to say that an impulse towards some curious matters of history has not been indulged, and, indeed, considering the subjects and materials which presented themselves, could scarcely have been avoided, which was by no means desirable. Although it has been impertinently said, that “the most curious thing to be found is a woman not curious,” we submit that curiosity is a quality not to be disparaged by wit or sarcasm, but is rather the germ and quality of progress in art and science and history. It has been impossible to correct or qualify, or perhaps we might say avoid, all the errors, mistakes, or contradictions, which have been encountered in preparing these pages; and very possibly we may have inadvertently added to the number. At all events, with our best endeavors against being drawn into or multiplying errors, we lay no claim to invulnerability in the matter of accuracy, or immaculacy in the way of opinions; and we very sincerely add, if errors or mistakes have been made and are found, we shall be glad to be apprised of them. There are errors in our history which it is scarcely worth the while to attempt to correct, although they are not to be countenanced and should not be repeated. A period of two hundred and fifty years since the settlement of the town includes and covers a history of no ordinary character, involving progress and development, not merely of customs, manners and opinions, but of principles, passions and government. The city is a creation, as it were, by the art and industry of man; and, with the reverence of Cotton Mather himself, we add, “With the help of God!” and we venture the comparison that no change or growth, improvement or embellishment, is to be found in the settlement or the city, that may not be paralleled in the growth, advancement and elevation of its people: indeed, we go even farther than this, the material progress to be seen around us, in all its multifarious forms and combinations, item by item, small or great, is indicative only of the advancement of the people, and marks the progress of moral, mental and intellectual power—of art, science and knowledge. We take this opportunity to acknowledge our indebtedness to several friends for the loan and use of many rare and valuable works in the preparation of this history, and in particular to Messrs. John A. Lewis and John L. DeWolf, of Boston, and Mr. J. Ward Dean, of the N. E. His. Gen. Society

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