

England were homogeneous to a remarkable degree and were drawn from the sturdiest part of the English stock. In all history there has been no other instance of colonization so exclusively effected by picked men. The colonists knew this and were proud of it, as well they might be. It was simple truth that was spoken by William Stoughton, when he said in his election sermon of 1688, 'God sifted a whole nation that He might send choice grain into the wilderness.' One kernel of this choice grain was our ancestor, Henry Burt, whose memory we are here to-day to honor.

I have sought in vain for some knowledge of Henry Burt's origin and life before he came to America. The early settlers generally left no traces of their English residence or connections. It would seem as though in starting a new life in a new country they deliberately ignored their past as a useless encumbrance, and that the waves of the Atlantic, like those of the fabulous Lethe, were the waters of oblivion.

In my researches in English records I have found that the Burts were there an ancient family, their name being derived from the Anglo-Saxon word "beort," signifying "bright" or "illustrious." The earliest mention of the name I have found is in Bloomfield's great history of Norfolk county, where it is recorded that, in the year 1199, a manor in that county was granted to Sir Hamo de Burt which was alienated by his grandson, Sir Thomas de Burt, in 1290. I have found records of the Burts in several English counties, notably in Leicester, Dorset and Surrey, as also in London, and all in honorable connection, but to none of them could I trace our ancestor. Before leaving the English branch, I would mention the high character of Thomas Burt, the present member of Parliament for Morpeth, the first laboring man elected to that august body, and concerning whom you will hear more fully from our cousin, Mr. Henry M. Burt. I will add that the wife of the great German marshal, Von Moltke, was an English girl, Mary Burt, whose father, John Burt, had taken the marshal's sister for his second wife.

It appears from the early records of Roxbury, Massachusetts, that Henry Burt probably came to America in the ship James in 1635. Of his subsequent career in that town there is no trace until we find in the Colonial records that at a session of the

"Generall Corte," on "The 5th day of the 9th Mo. 1639" "The Treasure^r was order^d to alow 8℥ to Roxberry for Henry Burts losse by fyer." From this it would appear that the only insurance against fire at that time was by an appropriation from the public purse. Prior to this Mr. Burt had become interested in the efforts of his fellow-townsmen, Mr. William Pynchon, to establish a settlement at Agawam on the Connecticut river. There were at that time many projects for a western migration from Massachusetts Bay and vicinity, to which locations the earliest settlements were confined. This unrest was not akin to the nomadic mobility of the pioneers in our own Western settlements, who constantly shifted their habitations to keep in advance of the frontier line. It originated in several motives, the main one being the result of the minor theological differences among the colonists, which disposed those of the same creed to seek isolation. It must be borne in mind that these early settlements were quite as theological as political in their constitution, and that homogeneity in religious belief was considered essential in each community. Another inducement to these migrations was the superior attractions of these interior lands; the light, sandy soil to the south of Boston and the rock-ribbed coast to the north could not compare with the great alluvial meadows on the Connecticut, in those qualities of tillage and fertility so engaging to the farmer; and such was the almost universal occupation of the forefathers. These and other mixed motives led to the almost simultaneous settlements at Providence, Rhode Island; New Haven, Wethersfield, Hartford and Windsor, Connecticut, and Springfield, Massachusetts; all by men from the towns of Massachusetts Bay. These several localities will always be notable in our history as the first outposts in that irresistible advance upon our broad domain that has gradually and surely rescued it from primeval wilderness and established the dominion of civilization from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

Whatever may have been Mr. Burt's original intentions as to the time of his moving to Agawam, they were suddenly decided by the burning of his Roxbury house, in September, 1639, and soon after that calamity he moved, with all his family, to the new settlement here, where he lived until his

death, in 1662. He immediately took an active part in all the affairs, religious and secular. He was chosen one of the first selectmen, an office he held for several years; he was a member of the divers committees to lay out and allot the lands and "for the ordering of the prudential affairs of the Plantation;" he was elected "the Clarke of the Writs," an office analagous in its duties to those of our town and county clerks. In 1650, and at other times during a vacancy in the position of minister, he conducted the religious services of the town, receiving therefor a monthly stipend of thirty shillings. It is said that his residence was on what is now Main street, between Union and Wilcox. Of his personal appearance and disposition we have no knowledge, but the several offices he held in town and church indicate his ability as well as the respect and esteem his fellow-townsmen entertained for him in entrusting to his management such important public affairs.

Appreciating the fact that the earliest town governments of New England were replete with every good democratic instinct, and contained within themselves the fecund and potent germ of all that is best in our political institutions, we may well be proud of the prominent part taken by our ancestor in one of the earliest of these famous nurseries of regulated political freedom.

The maiden name of Mr. Burt's wife is unknown, but her Christian name was Eulalia. Of her there is an interesting legend. The Rev. Dr. Ezra Stiles, a noted clergyman, and from 1778 to 1795 the President of Yale College, was directly descended from Henry and Eulalia Burt, through their daughter, Dorcas, who married John Stiles of Windsor. Dr. Stiles prepared in 1764 a genealogy of his family, in which he says: "There is a tradition in the family that the mother of this Dorcas Burt, before she came over from England, was laid out for dead and put in her coffin, but at her funeral signs of life appeared, and she recovered and came to New England, settled at Springfield, and here in America had nineteen children, ten of whom lived to have children, one of whom was this Dorcas." Like most oral traditions, there are in this some apparent discrepancies; there can be no doubt but that our ancestress, Eulalia, was on the point of being buried alive, for such tartling events leave deep and lasting impressions that are trans-