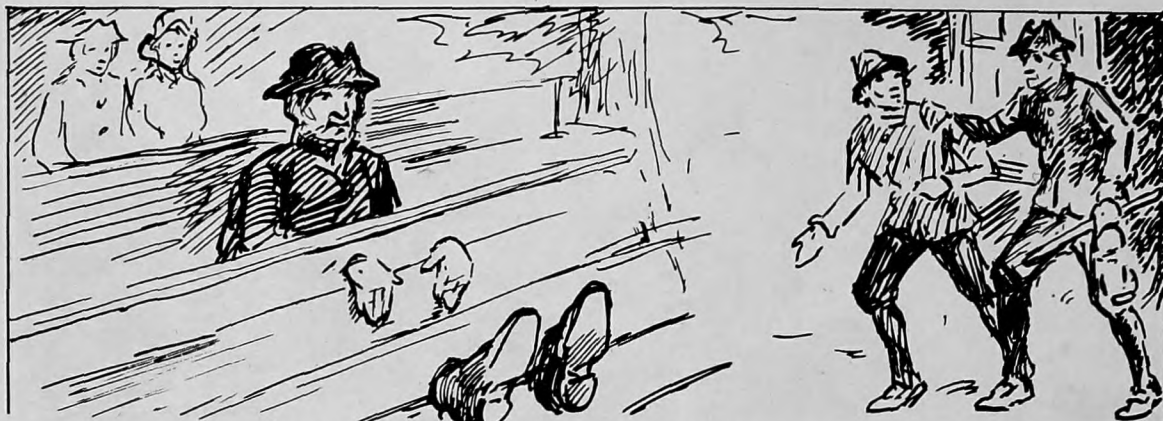




Another



HEAR YE, SAINTS AND SINNERS!

1683



1780

Both Puritan and Quakers frowned upon swearing.

"If any person or persons shall profanely take the name of God in vain, by swearing or cursing, he or they shall pay for every offense, two shilling six pence, one-half to the informer, and the other half to the country."

Inability to pay kept the village toper in the stocks at least three hours every week. Everybody could hear him swear. When the offender was under twelve, he or she must be whipped by the constable, or if by parent or master, in the presence of the constable. The parson sometimes did the whipping and he was expert at applying the cane to the right spot.

In West Jersey swearing was punishable by a fine or imprisonment. The Quaker condemned "those heathenish practices and words which are unbecoming people professing to know God . . . and tend to the stirring up of quarrels and the breaking of the peace", and imposed a fine "not exceeding two shillings, or imprisonment until paid", upon any person convicted of "cursing or using any other brutish, abusive or reviling speech either in the hearing of a magistrate or by testimony of one or more creditable persons".

The Immorality Act of 1704 made the penalty three shillings and costs for each offence, and if the fine were

not paid in three days, the offender was to be put in the stocks for two hours. Cursing and swearing were recognized as a crime, in 1798, when an act was passed, imposing a fine of fifty cents for each offence, to be paid within six days or the offender was to spend two hours in the stocks. Parents or masters were held responsible for the fines of children under fourteen, and subject to the penalties if not paid.

The Curfew Law passed by the East Jersey Assembly in 1668 enacted that any person found "away from his or her usual place of abode in night walking, drinking in any tap house, or any other house or place at unseasonable times, after nine of the clock at night, and not about their lawful occasions, or cannot give a good account of their being absent from their own place of abode at that time of night, if required of them, shall be secured by the constable till morning", and then brought before a Justice of the Peace.

In the larger towns, the night watch made his rounds promptly at nine o'clock and saw that all lights were out except in case of sickness. A candle burning after nine o'clock without satisfactory explanation was reported to the town authorities.

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