

Satan's Servants

By ROBERT BLOCH

Written in early 1935

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(Together with notes and commentary by H. P. Lovecraft)

SOME WHILE AGO a statement appeared to the effect that there were “no more unpublished Lovecraft stories or collaborations.” While lamenting this pronouncement, I recalled that early in 1935 I had written and submitted a story entitled *Satan's Servants*, which was rejected by Farnsworth Wright, then editor of *Weird Tales* on the grounds that the plot-structure was too flimsy for the extended length of the narrative.

At that time I was in constant correspondence with H. P. Lovecraft, and we frequently exchanged current manuscripts for suggestions and critical comment. Accordingly, I sent him my rejected story; and because the tale had a New England *locale* I made bold to ask if he would be interested in collaborating with me on a revision.

As the excerpts from his letter below will indicate, he refused a full-dress collaborative effort, but my manuscript came back copiously annotated and corrected, together with a lengthy and exhaustive list of suggestions for revision.

I placed the story in my files, fully intending to get at a new version when the time was right. Through the years the pages literally mouldered; I exhumed them from time to time when re-sorting material, moving, weeding out deadwood, and reviewing unpublished stories and outlines. Some years ago I utilized the name of the principal character, “Gideon Godfrey” when writing a tale in a modern setting. But *Satan's Servants* gathered dust for fourteen long years until I fell to musing upon the sorry fact that there would be no more Lovecraft stories or stories inspired, revised, or partially-written.

Acting on impulse, I invaded the elephants' graveyard at the bottom of my bureau and there, amidst a welter of outlines, novel fragments, radio scripts and assorted incunabula, I managed to disinter the yellowed pages of the original manuscript, with the marginalia in HPL's familiar crabbed hand. I also unearthed Lovecraft's lengthy letter in which he discussed the project of revision.

I determined to revise the tale forthwith, and spoke of my determination to August Derleth, Lovecraft's biographer, who suggested that I revise the story especially for the *Arkham Sampler*, and include a portion of the correspondence, plus some of the more pertinent critical com-

mentary in the form of footnotes to the text of the tale. Excerpts from HPL's letter accordingly follow, and the notes will be found at the conclusion of the story.

There is much to interest the student of Lovecraft's work here; his comments mirror perfectly his own precise and erudite approach to his material. From the purely personal standpoint, I was often fascinated during the process of revision by the way in which certain interpolated sentences or phrases of Lovecraft's seemed to dovetail with my own work—for in 1935 I was quite consciously a disciple of what has since come to be known as the “Lovecraft school” of weird fiction. I doubt greatly if even the self-professed “Lovecraft scholar” can pick out his actual verbal contributions to the finished tale; most of the passages which would be identified as “pure Lovecraft” are my work; all of the sentences and bridges he added are of an incidental nature and merely supplement the text. Certain major suggestions for plot-revision have been incorporated, but these in turn have been re-edited by a third party—myself, 1949 edition. For the Robert Bloch of 1935, as I painfully discovered during this revision process, is as dead as Howard Phillips Lovecraft is today. Peace to their mutual ashes!

There remains only to add that there is a possibility of one more exhumation from the past. In 1935 I wrote and published *The Shambler from the Stars*, dedicated to HPL. A year or so later, HPL wrote a sequel, *The Haunter of the Dark*, dedicated to me. In my story I used him as a character and in his story he used me. Subsequently I suggested writing a third story to complete the trilogy, taking up where he left off.

This tale, *The Shadow in the Steeple*, elicited considerable enthusiasm from Lovecraft when I outlined it to him in a letter. He urged me to write it, but I deferred. It may be that at some future date, I shall complete the project.

If not, then this is definitely to my knowledge the last story in which Lovecraft conceivably had a hand. Portions of his letter follow; then the tale itself. I now surrender my pen to Howard Phillip Lovecraft, who writes:

“And now let me congratulate you most sincerely on the excellence of *Satan's Servants*—which I read with keen pleasure and unflagging interest . . . regarding the future treatment of the story—it certainly deserves touching up and further submission for publication.

“I have taken the liberty to add some marginal notes and make some changes which seemed necessary from an historical and geographical standpoint. Most of these explain themselves.

“Roodsford had to be outside the boundaries of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, since the strict oversight prevailing within that rigid theocratic unit would never have suffered such a place to exist. Also—the location had to be shifted to some point on the coast where the settlement was not thick. Early New England

was colonized with a rush so that by 1690 the whole coastal region was dotted with thriving towns and almost continuous farmsteads. Two generations of settled life had almost removed every trace of the wilderness aspect and (after King Philip's War in 1675-6) Indians were rarely seen.

“The only place on the coast where a village could exist relatively unknown would be Maine—whose connexion with Mass, did not begin until 1663, and which was not an actual part of that province until July, 1690. I have decided to locate Roodsford between York and Wells if that is agreeable to you. Enclosed is a map of New England (which you can keep) shewing the new position. That any wilderness journey would have to start from Portsmouth and not Boston or Salem would be obvious from an inspection of this chart.

“The narration itself is splendidly vivid—my only criticism having to do with Gideon's *excessively quick* discovery of the nature and horrors of Roodsford. It would be much more powerful to have this revelation come with hideous *gradualness* after days of hellish *suspicion*...

“Be very careful when representing archaic language—for the usual tendency is to overshoot the mark and make the diction *too* ancient. Study the spelling in actual specimens of 17th century printing. I've made a few changes in your principal sample on page 1. Regarding Governor Phipps—he was no witch-finder prior to 1692, but a voyager and soldier of fortune whose career makes interesting reading. . . .

“At the end of the story I've brought up the point of whether you ought to have the action take place before or after the 1692-3 Salem affair. Certainly it ought to be *afterward* if you wish to convey the idea that this Roodsford business ended witchcraft in New England. By the way—the leading wizard in the Salem trouble, Rev. George Burroughs, came down from Wells, Maine, near the relocated site of Roodsford. You can make something of that, perhaps, if you wished. . . .

“Now as to the idea of collaboration—this tale really tempts me more than any other I've seen lately, but I honestly don't believe I could undertake any collaboration job at all at this time. . . .

“Under any circumstances collaboration is a harder task than original writing, and the only possible justification is that of wishing some idea to be properly developed which otherwise couldn't be. Now in the case of *Satan's Servants* I feel certain you can develop the tale yourself just as well as I could—hence don't feel guilty in suggesting that you try it. During recent months I have had to place a

complete veto—sheer self-defense—on all collaboration projects . . . when so many stories of my own are veritably howling to be written.

“But as I said before, in this case I feel sure I'm not doing the story any harm by staying out of it. It's great stuff, and you can polish it up just as well as anybody else could. The descriptions of the Sabbat are splendid and the climax is magnificent. The primary need is to make the traveller's introduction to the horrors subtler and more gradual. . . .

“Incidentally, I feel rather akin to Gideon since I have an actual line of *Godfrey* ancestry. On October 29, 1732, my ancestor Newman Perkins (b. 1711) was married to Mehitabel, daughter of John Godfrey of S. Kingstown, R.I. We may well assume John to be Gideon's brother or nephew or cousin!

— H. P. LOVECRAFT.”

“Satan's prevalencie of this Age is most clear in the marvellous number of Witches abounding in all places. Now hundreds are discovered in one Shire; and, if Fame deceives us not, in a Village of Fourteen Houses in the North, are found so many of this Damned Brood. . .”

— COTTON MATHER

I

IT WAS QUITE evident that the inhabitants of Roodsford¹ did not come over in the *Mayflower* or any of her sister ships; that, indeed, they had not sailed from an English port at all. Nor is there a known and reputable record of their coming to that barren region of the north coast. They simply entered the land unnoticed and without charter, permission or proviso, set up their simple dwellings.

They were let alone because their haven lay beyond the Massachusetts Bay's officious reach—in Maine, where the Puritan's autocratic hand did not descend till 1663. The first mention of the place occurs in the *Chronicles of Captain Elias Godworthy, His Trips & Explorations upon the Continent of North America*, printed by Haverstock in London, in 1672.² He describes it as “a fishing Towne of fourteen Houses, the Inhabitants of which wear doleful, ungodly Look in Keeping with Their meagre Dwellings.”³

The good Captain had made but a cursory inspection whilst passing up the coast in a sloop bound for Nova Scotian shores, and evidently no one cared to follow up his testimony, for the name of Roodsford does not recur in Colonial history until the atrocious witchcraft days of '92. Then came investigation with a vengeance.

So for a time the people and the ways of Roodsford were to the outer world very largely unknown. Even in Portsmouth they were only an unsavoury legend, while at York all mention of them was avoided by common consent.

How Gideon Godfrey of Boston gleaned his story is as yet undetermined. Perhaps he had heard some of the queer hints and furtive, whispered rumors circulated by the savages or traders⁴ who made occasional trips down the coast with supplies of furs, or perhaps something had come out in the closer surveys of Maine which accompanied its fusion with the Massachusetts Bay in 1690. Whatever the source, Gideon must have known or suspected a great deal—for only the most urgent contingency could have caused this man of God to do what he subsequently did.

In the early autumn of 1693 he moved lock, stock and barrel to a dirty little village of foreigners, in a barren wilderness seventy miles up the coast as the crow flies and fully ten miles more by the winding, ferry-broken land route. He left behind him a wife, two children, and a goodly Boston pulpit to ride, uninvited and unannounced, to Roodsford.

Gideon was a pillar of the Church. His fiery sermons, fanatical devotion to the cause of the Puritans, and stoical stamina under the rigours and hardships of a new land were belied,

however, in his ascetic countenance and asthenic physique, which gave him the outward appearance of a gangling parson. Only in his fiery, unflinching eyes was there a hint of the ardour which made him the veritable embodiment of the Orthodox Church of the Massachusetts Bay⁵ as he rode into the wilderness to do battle with the heathen.

His going caused much comment. Although he had gained the approval of his superiors, most folk deemed it a rash venture. Gideon, the wise ones declared, was a fool. And in the minds of the elders there was more of apprehension than approbation,

Nevertheless, Gideon Godfrey left Boston on horseback one morning in late September, 1693, amidst the lamentations of friends and family. Before departure *he* had outlined his route of travel to *the* Pasquantog sachems who knew something of the region through which he would journey. His plan was to ride to Newbury and spend the night, then go on to Portsmouth the following day before turning west. After that, save for a brief pause at the little village of York, Gideon would be riding straight through the unblazed forest byways feared by settlers and savages alike.

When Gideon thus charted his journey, the Indians shook their heads. Strange horror, they whispered, crept through those ancient woods and leered down from the brooding hills. They warned him of the perils of riding alone, or venturing into certain secluded forest byways after the coming of night. They counseled him to keep to the coast and stay within a circle of fire if forced to stop between towns betwixt dusk and dawn.

Gideon was most eager to secure more details concerning his destination, but when he asked the Pasquantogs what they knew of Roodsford they shook their heads and pretended not to understand his questionings. Wakimis, the elder sachem, begged him to abandon his journey, and finally proffered the services of two guides who would travel on foot.

Thus they started out, and for the first two days their schedule was maintained with fair ease—Newbury was reached, then Portsmouth, then York.

The next day they plunged at dawn into an unknown world. There was a blue mist over the western hills and a grey fog on the sea. The chill of autumn lay light upon the air, and russet leaves would soon carpet the ground.⁶ After Kittery and York were left behind they turned inland, though the guides again echoed the warnings of Wakimis when they contemplated the blackly wooded route before them. The sea was soon lost to view, and the booming voice of its waters was stilled in their ears.

They journeyed now in forest twilight. Blue shadows hung athwart the twisted pathway, or lurked beside the boles of immemorially ancient trees. Strange rustlings echoed from far-off tangled byways, bringing to Gideon's mind the sachem's tales of fabled presences in the forest. Once there came the remote evil laughter of a trickling brook, whereat the guides drew back, and Gideon's horse whinnied piteously; but Godfrey himself gave no *sign* of having heard.

Their way led them through a wood forever denser, yet with deceptive suggestions of branching paths which gave rise to temporary loss of bearings. Again and again time was lost, till at length Gideon's carefully arranged daylight travelling schedule seemed likely to prove of no avail.⁷

Fording a swiftly-charging stream shortly after midday, they came upon a still more forbidding expanse of forest where the path was merely a vague outline in shrouding gloom. Here all was silent amidst the darkness, and the small familiar voices of bird and animal were unnaturally mute. Indeed, bird and animal life seemed singularly absent, nor were there the usual insects. Even the vegetation was oddly altered; they saw neither leaves, grass, nor ordinary shrubbery—only the great black shadows of old and withered trees.

One of the savages whispered that the woods were known in Pasquantog lore; he spoke of fissures and seams in the earth near certain of the denser swamps, and of queer voices that answered when the medicine-men called. Tribal legend hinted at these beings, half-animal and half-human, who held conclaves in the grottoes and gibbered rituals deep in the earth. The White Ice—by which he meant the glaciers—had done away with many of these things, but surviving presences existed still, hidden and waiting in the forest fastness.⁸ That was why the animals and birds had fled to safer preserves in the north, where the tribe usually hunted.

“Turn back now,” the guide counselled. “Soon comes night, and we shall be lost. We are brave men, and you carry mighty medicine in your Black Book, I know. But what good is the White God's magic against the demons that thunder in the earth?”

The other guide eagerly assented and urged that they at least cut across to the coast if they could not reach Kittery or York before darkness.

Gideon listened, tightlipped and silent, and his hand searched out the great Bible in his left saddle-pack.

He clutched the book to his bosom and sat erect in the saddle.

“Hear me out,” he said. “It is in my mind that much truth lies in your heathen wisdom, for we dwell in an unknown and unhallowed land. Have not Increase and Cotton Mather, as well as other godly and eminent divines, affirmed that this America is the Devil's paradise? Have not we discovered witchcraft in the very centers of civilization, hanging⁹ the wizards in Boston and Salem? And are not these self-same witches and warlocks the minions of Satan who so lately bestirred the entire continent of Europe?”

“I have had some slight experience in these matters. I was present at the trial of the notorious Mary Wright and talked to a pious and famous witch-finder, Jeremy Edmunds; he who has told us in his sermons of the geography of Hell—finding it to be exactly four thousand, three hundred

and twenty-seven miles in circumference. It was he who urged me to dedicate myself to this journey.”

As he spoke, Gideon was conscious of his inability to translate and transmit Edmunds' message to these simple savages. The great man had indeed spoken at length of the witchcraft menace; of the foul plague of sorcery which was even now ravaging Europe as well as the colonies. He told Gideon of the damage these creatures had wrought—of storms conjured up at sea, of children deranged, of cattle ravaged by disease. He spoke of the witches and their familiars; bats, mice, ousels, cats and animals unknown to any Bestiary, creatures of evil in animal form bestowed upon witches as counselors and protectors by the Devil. Edmunds mentioned the various tests then in fashion whereby witches might be detected—trial by water, the search for witch-marks, and other scientific means of determining guilt.

“Since I learned of the extent of Satan's hold over this land, I have sought unceasingly to discover the source of this peril to our people,” Godfrey continued. The Indians listened stolidly enough, but their shifting feet and the sidelong covert glances they bestowed upon the forest's surrounding shadows gave token of their unease.

Gideon tried to explain his mission—how he had preached his sermon against the Adversary and corresponded extensively with witch-finders in England, meanwhile meeting with brother parsons in Salem, Plymouth, Newport and the inland towns. All references in the Bible had been most assiduously studied, and from obscure sources he had secured dog-eared and decaying copies of strange and terrible books. He had read the blasphemous accounts in the cryptic *Necronomicon* and the queer verse-sequence of Heber's *Daemonic Presences* with its sly hints and subtle allusions to the *Fable of the Tree and the Fruit*. In a manner befitting the true scholar, he endeavored to lay hands on all that had been written concerning the subject at hand, and he listened, as well.

Gradually, Gideon's interest had shifted to the direct study of those about him. He traced down rumors, sought the sources of stories told by isolated farmers in the far-off hills. There were the Indian myths to ponder upon as well; incredible legends of creatures who had lurked in the lands to the west and fled at the coming of the whites. The Pasquantogs held ancient beliefs concerning presences who had come to the earth from the sky or crawled out of caverns upon suitable evocation.

Many of these legends were far too fantastic for credence, but others ominously paralleled normal Christian dogma.

Horned entities—creatures with wings and hoofs—cloven footprints found in swamps—giant stags speaking in the voices of men—black beings dancing in forest glens to the sound of drums deep within the earth—these things the savages feared even as Christians did. Such stories fired Gideon with fresh zeal, and more momentous still were the actual reports of specific instances

which he gleaned from visitors and hunters who dealt with isolated and half-forgotten settlements.

Here in New England whole villages had mysteriously disappeared, not through famine or Indian attack, but by the simple process of evaporation. One day they existed and the next day nothing remained but a duster of empty houses. Other communities held dark communion under midnight moons, and children of neighboring villages were known to have vanished mysteriously just before such occasions. Sometimes a minister reached a neighboring town with an account of his rejection by parishioners in favor of new and secret ways of worship. There was talk of ceremonies in which both white men and savages adored a common altar; of isolated towns grown suddenly and amazingly prosperous in barren wilds.

More dreadful still were the mumbled accounts of strange happenings in isolated graveyards; of open graves, of coffins seemingly burst from within, of graves that were not deep enough for their purpose and of graves there were far too deep, leading to tunnels beneath the earth.

These tales and others of like nature, together with the written testimony he gathered, increased steadily during the year or more of Gideon's investigation. But appeals to authority for the commissioning of a crusade into the hinterlands met with no success. The courts were overburdened with local witchcraft trials. Storm as he would that the evil must be stamped out at its source, Gideon's sermons and appeals fell upon deaf ears. Slowly he realized that he could look for no outside aid in his battle with the Adversary.

"I have but one ally," he concluded, to the Pasquantog guides. "The Almighty attends me in this mission.

"For whilst the courts labour against a few aged men and women who practise sorcery in Salem or Boston Town, the gravest source of Evil still festers here in the wilds, crouches in the forest and broods on these silent and secret hills. Gallows Hill¹⁰ can not accommodate all the minions of Satan. This I have long since concluded.

"It has been in my mind that even as the godly have their houses of worship in which to gather and to spread the Gospel unto all, so must the spawn of Satan have builded an unsanctified sanctuary of their own. If this could be found, reached, and destroyed, then the forces of Evil could be dissipated and the hand of the Devil lifted from the land.

"Lately there came to me news of the lone village where the black northern forest presses down on a desolate coast—this Roodsford. And it was as though revelation were made; surely, I thought, this must be the very center of sin I seek!

"I have ridden forth to destroy it, and I shall not turn back. For the Lord is with me, and with you, and there is nothing to fear. No, my friends, we shall go on and do what must be done. Let us not speak again of returning until our task is accomplished."

So saying, Gideon lifted his Bible in a blessing, and with his left hand he cocked a pistol which he pointed at the guides for added emphasis.

Thus assured of his earnest conviction, the guides offered no further protest when Gideon bid them move forward down the trail into the gathering night.

Gideon, despite his outward show of assurance, felt his stomach quake with trepidation, for he knew full well the dangers amongst which he placed himself. He feared the aspect of this night-wood almost as mightily as did his guides, and he was not reassured to sense the body of his horse trembling as if taken with a sudden fever. But he still had his Bible and his prayers, plus the small comfort of *a* new lantern which he now lit and tendered to one of the Pasquantogs who led the way.

Unexpectedly, they came upon an open glade in the midst of the forest. Here, beneath a turbulent sky, dimly illumined by a cloud-choked moon, Gideon Godfrey and his two companions prepared to spend the night. Reaching Roodsford this evening was obviously out of the question, and the savages seemed oddly relieved when Gideon called a halt and tethered his horse.

Silently the Pasquantogs gathered dry wood for a fire and kindled it, Indian fashion, at the base of a cairn in the center of the clearing. There followed a brief repast of salt pork and corn bread¹¹ taken from one of Gideon's capacious saddlebags. The horse was fed and watered—for one of the guides discovered a brook that crawled in sluggish murk along one side of the clearing—then tethered again to a sapling at the edge of the glade.

There was little conversation, for the spoken word seemed to slink into the vast, silent pool of the surrounding night. The Pasquantogs lay down upon their blankets and gave themselves up to uneasy prayers to the guiding Manitou. Gideon paid them no heed, but sat alone by the lantern-light, his pistol across his lap and his Bible in hand, reading aloud softly and steadfastly from the tale of Jehu the witch-hunter.

After a time he closed the book and placed it beneath his head for a pillow. Then he extinguished the lantern and the night came down. He lay there for long moments in the darkness, fighting the panic which came with the baleful blanketing of blackness. Steadfastly, Gideon prayed himself to sleep. So the long night passed, and slowly the flame of dawn kindled the heads of the giant trees.

As Gideon awoke from dream-bedazzled sleep, he stared about the clearing with new comprehension. In last night's gloom he had not taken cognizance of the unnatural and *artificial* aspects of the glade. Now for the first time he noticed how smooth was the turf surrounding the great triad of white stones at its center. He regarded the peculiar geometrical conformation of the rocks themselves; the carefully chipped and pointed angles which bore such a calculated relation to the positions of certain of the major stars upon summer nights. There were a few grotesque

carvings at the base of the stones which were obviously the product of human handicraft; crude designs which resembled the signs and symbols Gideon had seen in some of the mouldering books of elder lore.

Could he have unwittingly chosen to pass the night in one of the meeting-places the Indians had spoken of with such dread? If so, perhaps it was only his prayers which had protected him.

Thus Gideon mused, his eyes roving the glade. Then he sat bolt upright with a sudden start, as he realized that he was now the sole occupant of the clearing.

His horse and the two guides were gone.

II

Alone in the wilderness, Gideon Godfrey took counsel with himself. He had but two possible alternatives ; the first being to retrace his footsteps and endeavor to overtake the Pasquantogs and his horse and either reclaim his property by force or join them on the trip back to civilization. The second alternative, obviously, was to continue on to Roodsford alone.

To a man of sense, the first course was undoubtedly advisable. But Gideon was not a man of sense—he was a man of God. As such, he determined, he would complete his mission. Without food, water, steed or guide he meant to travel today through the forest and reach Roodsford before nightfall. He still had his pistol and his Bible but these were as nothing compared to his faith.

He drank and washed at the brook, then rose, gave one last parting glance to the singular altar-stones within the clearing, and turned his eyes resolutely forward to the woods.

As Gideon trod the cryptic byways of the lonely fastness, his thoughts were far away. He was endeavoring now to formulate a new plan of procedure. It had been his original intention to ride into Roodsford on horseback and proceed immediately to go about the business of exorcising the spot with certain efficacious incantations as he had gleaned from the forbidden volumes over which he had pored so diligently. He was confident that he had transcribed spells of fearsome potency which would dispel the evil-doers before they could overcome him either physically or through magical means. Now all this must be abandoned, for the copies of the runes reposed in one of the saddlebags on the back of the missing horse.

Gideon's faith in the righteousness of his cause remained unshaken, even though hunger grew in his belly with the rising sun. His stride lengthened as he passed through a grove of bearded trees that muttered in the morning breeze like sage elders in some secret council. Then he emerged upon the bank of a goodly river which he must wade, then swim across, wetting himself to the skin and all but perishing in the turbulent concourse of waters. The tidal margin was high, but Gideon managed to clamber through, holding Bible and pistol alike aloft, at no small peril to his own safety.

He did not pause to dry his garments, but walked briskly along the opposite bank, for an empty stomach makes for haste. He covered several miles—many, however, on side-trails on which he had to backtrack his way¹²—before the shortened rays of the sun betokened the approach of late afternoon. It was then that he came upon the jutting peak of a lone hill, rising out of the encircling forest like a newly-emerging island from the green waves of the sea. This was the place where he turned in a northeasterly direction to the coast, and he quickened his pace so that he might come to his destination well before nightfall. But there were other mistakes made without the service of a guide, and he wandered again and again from the path, so that night descended all too soon.

Strange shadows haunted the New England dusk. The drowsy hum of autumn was in the air, and the landscape shimmered in a wan mist, borne on a moaning night wind from the waters to the east.

It was dark when Gideon saw a deep inlet of the sea. A gibbous moon hung over the fog-wreathed waters, and by the pallid light above the high bluff, Gideon Godfrey first beheld the village of Roodsford.

At first glance there was nothing extraordinary about the sight of the little community set against the background of ancient forest. Fourteen tiny two-story frame houses¹³ stood huddled about the needle-like spire of a crude church in prosaic and orthodox fashion. Gideon peered at them and wondered what there was about their aspect and setting which was awry. Perhaps it was the crazy slant of their gables to the sea; mayhap he sensed the strangeness in the absence of friendly lights in the gaping windows and upon the jutting wharf below the bluff. But all this was commonplace enough. Gideon stared and pondered at the spectacle.

Then it came to him that no road wound cheerily away amongst the hills; no figures moved along the single street. The town was silent, desolate and lone.

Gideon stood for long moments contemplating the scene, and for longer moments contemplating his own plight. Enter Roodsford he must, but neither Bible nor pistol would serve to rout any evil he might encounter there. No; this was a situation which called for cunning and stratagem; one must fight fire with fire and Gideon knew he was face to face with the Adversary, the Father of Lies.

Gideon Godfrey, servant of the Lord, would not be welcome in Roodsford, if rumor and repute held truth. But a stranger, lost in the forest, might find shelter. He might be given an opportunity to spend some time in the village; to observe and overhear, to plan a strategy.

Yes, that was now the only way. Gideon walked a few paces until he found a large stone beside the path. Here he knelt and scabbled at the hard earth, hollowing out a place of concealment for his Bible. He rose, gripping his pistol, then made a wry face as he considered its uselessness. He might fire it once, but he lacked powder and ball for any further use. With a sigh, he placed the pistol alongside the Bible and then covered the hiding-place with loose earth, replacing the rock. He noted the spot well, before striding down towards the village in the gloom of night.

No dogs howled at his coming, but the wind whispered strangely as he approached the end of the little crooked street between the huddled dwelling-places. The first house loomed ahead in shrouded darkness to his left, far back from the dusty, unpaved street. Gideon paused and considered whether or not to continue his progress, then shrugged. For his purpose, one house was as good as another; as a lone wanderer, lost in the forest, he would be most apt to seek shelter at the first door along his path.

Gideon walked up to the black, iron-knocked door set between two shuttered windows. He plied the knocker against the timbers until a booming resonance filled the brooding stillness of the street.¹⁴ For a long moment he stood there, sensing naught but the diminution of the echoes, and then, with a screech and a shudder, the door swung open.

“Welcome,” said a voice from the inner gloom. “Welcome to Roodsford.”

Gideon stepped over the threshold and into another world.

III

For a moment Gideon stood engulfed in darkness and silence, then started violently as the darkness was broken by lantern-light and the silence shattered by the screech of the closing door.

Eyes and ears affrighted by sudden sensation, Gideon steeled himself against any revelation. Yet nothing he might have imagined was comparable to the shock of actuality—for he now beheld himself standing in a room that was utterly normal in its aspect.

It was the low-raftered parlor of a typical New England farmhouse, complete with stone fireplaces, hand-hewn furniture, rough flooring covered by the skins of animals. Gideon's gaze encountered naught but the familiar fixtures of family existence in the wilderness; he even noted a spinning-wheel near the window alcove to his right.

Nor was he able to detect anything unusual in the aspect of his host, who turned now, lantern in hand, to confront him with a welcoming smile. The man before him was stooped and bent, with lined face and grizzled beard. He squinted up at Gideon with a cheerful grin and extended a gnarled hand in greeting.

“I fear you roused me from slumber,” he said. “I am alone here and it is my custom to retire early, for it is not often that visitors honor me with their presence.” He glanced self-consciously at his homespun shirt and breeches, “I must make shift with what garment I possess,” he continued, “for there is no one to tend to my needs. You will excuse my appearance.”

Gideon nodded, then cleared his throat. “It is I who must apologize. I have gone astray in my journeyings, I fear.”

“We see few travelers here,” the old man observed, eyeing Gideon closely. “You must have strayed far indeed.”

Gideon met his stare and smiled. “I would gladly tell you of my journey. At the moment I am somewhat tired and more than a little hungry—”

The hint did not pass unnoticed.

“Of course. You are welcome to sup and spend the night here.”

Thus prosaically began Gideon's stay in Roodsford ; as the house guest of old Dorcas Frye. Dorcas was a widower who had come here in '74; he lived alone, hunted and fished, kept his own household. This Gideon learned during the serving of a simple repast—this, and nothing more, although he attempted to draw out his host with remitting patience. But Dorcas Frye proved taciturn and evasive by turns.

Ordinarily, Gideon would have accepted such reticence as normal and natural—for it was not the way of the Puritan to be overly friendly with casual strangers. But suspecting what he did, Gideon read a baleful meaning into his host's unwillingness to talk about himself.

Yet there was nothing to justify any suggestion of hidden secrets or closely-guarded mysteries. The house looked typical, Dorcas seemed a harmless enough elderly settler, and there wasn't even a hint of abnormality, until—

There came a scratching and a scrabbling. Gideon's spoon clashed against the pewter bowl as he started erect, but his trepidation was as naught compared to that of his host. At the sound, old Dorcas seemed transfixed with terror. And yet, even in the brief moment of awareness, Gideon sensed that the terror was not directed towards the scratching noise, or what might produce it—the old man was afraid because Gideon *heard* the sound.

A scratching and a scrabbling. Gideon turned towards the door, noting that his host made no move to open it. At the same time he realized the reason; the very nature of the sound itself told him that it did not come from the direction of the door. Whatever person, or animal, or demon of the night might be rasping nail or claw to produce the noise, the resultant product was not caused by a scraping against wood. This was the sound of scraping against metal, or against stone—and it did not come from the direction of the door.

Gideon Godfrey's gaze encompassed the room. Was there a panel, a compartment? But how could there be, and of stone or metal? Then he noted Dorcas Frye's stare. The old man was peering at the floor under the table.

The scraping sound grew louder, became a tangible presence in the room. It was no longer possible for one to pretend not to hear, and in a moment it became impossible to pretend not to see.

For the floor *rose*.

A portion of the hardpacked earthen floor beneath the table was moving upwards. Gideon's glance pierced into the shadows, noted for the first time that there was a solid stone surface, a moving surface; recognized the rectangular outline of a trapdoor.

Dorcas was on his feet, and a moment later Gideon stood up—stood up and retreated to the wall as the trapdoor continued to rise.

Without a glance at his guest, the old man stooped and tugged the edge of the door. Gideon saw a black, well-like opening, from which issued further blackness; a moving, tangible blackness that was alive.

The blackness had a red mouth and yellow fangs, red eyes and grey, pointed claws; it was too large for a cat and too small for a wolf, and most men would have identified it as a hound. But Gideon knew that this was no ordinary black dog—anyone well-versed in the ways of witchcraft could recognize a familiar.

The beast emerged from the cistern-like opening in the earth and squatted, panting and slavering, blinking in the candlelight. For a moment it seemed unaware of Gideon's presence, and then a low growl issued from the crimson cavern of its throat. Dorcas instantly grasped it by its forepaws and restrained it, *but* the growling increased in volume and accelerated in tempo.

Gideon continued to press against the wall. He stood there, staring at man and beast squatting before him, stood there listening to the baying of the hound, stood there sensing the *wrongness* of it all. For unless he were completely bemused, something was hideously awry. The cadence of the growling was almost *conversational*, and Dorcas bent his head in a pose that could only be construed as that of a *listener*. The great dog growled, and the old man listened, and then they both sat and stared at Gideon.

He knew, then. There was no longer room for any possibility of doubt. Each witch, each wizard or warlock dedicated to the Devil, is assigned a familiar; an imp or sprite or evil spirit sent by Satan in the guise of an animal to counsel and advise, to assist and abet, to watch and to warn. Nourished by blood from the body of the master, the creature serves and protects always. This was Dorcas Frye's familiar—the hound of Hell.

Gideon Godfrey knew, and they knew that he knew. The moment for pretense was past for all of them. Nothing remained but to act. If Dorcas acted, it would be to release the great beast, release it to tear at Gideon's throat. And in a moment he would act, unless—

Gideon spoke.

“I see I have indeed found sanctuary,” he said.

“Sanctuary?” The echoed reply was an incredulous curse in Dorcas Frye's mouth, but he held the hound still.

“Until I saw the trapdoor I was not sure, but now I know.” Gideon forced a smile to his lips, but Dorcas averted his gaze in confusion.

“I do not understand,” he said. “I am but a simple farmer. As you see, the beast is ill-trained; he is of use to me in hunting but I find I must keep him in restraint at other times. Hence I dug this pit—”

Gideon saw his host's hesitancy displayed in his gnarled hands. Gradually they were loosing their grip about the dog's neck. In an instant, should hesitancy give way to decision, he would let the creature spring. Gideon moved quickly.

“Come,” he said. “There is no need to deceive me. I know, else I would not have come at this time. I should like to see what lies beneath the house.” Unhesitatingly, he walked towards the table, pushed it back, and knelt by the rim of the pit.

As he had surmised, crude footholds had been fashioned in the slanting earth beneath. Gideon was prepared for the domination of the darkness, but the waft of mephitic feter from below was almost unbearable. Still he smiled as he glanced over his shoulder at Dorcas and the hound.

“Light my way,” he urged. “Can it be that you are afraid to accompany me?”

The taunt was sufficient. Dorcas gripped a candle with one hand and held the dog by the scruff of the neck with his other hand. Slowly, he knelt and placed his feet gingerly, dragging the black beast behind him. Gideon prepared to follow.

For a moment he felt an irresistible impulse to take flight. It would be simple now to slam down the stone covering to the pit, place the stout table squarely upon the trapdoor and flee into the night. The night was dark and foreboding, but a deeper darkness lurked here below. It would be simple, it would be easy—but Gideon had a mission.

He breathed deeply, then lowered himself into the pit.

They clambered down; the wrinkled wizard, the hound of Hell, and the man of God, descending into the blackness of the bourne. The candle cast shadows on the earthen walls; shadows that crept and capered their way towards inner depths. Gideon counted fifty footholds, then felt solid shale beneath his feet.

Now they were in a corridor; now they walked silently along until they reached a large chamber carved out of the solid stone. The air was cleaner, moistly cool, and Gideon surmised they must be close to the inlet of the sea.

Dorcas led the way, tugging the hound behind him, and Gideon followed, followed until they rounded a corner of the cavern and emerged into the great dazzling center of light.

The huge chamber was empty, or seemed so at first glance. Gideon saw *a* vast circular expanse, an underground grotto of stone, with perhaps a dozen lesser entrances spaced at intervals around the walls—entrances similar to the one in which they stood, and undoubtedly

reached from other houses in the street above by the same means; trapdoor and tunnel. He saw the carvings on the walls and recognized them, then turned his gaze to the center of the cavern and saw the altar, which he likewise recognized as similar to the stone in the forest clearing.

There were two figures lying across the top of the altar stone.

Gideon moved forward, peering, eyes dazzled by the light which he now perceived came from tapers set in niches along the grotto walls. He moved forward, Dorcas and the hound at his heels, watching, waiting, hesitating. There was something about the figures on the altar which Gideon wanted to verify.

Half-way across the stone floor of the cavern he halted. A sudden rush of sound assailed his ears, coming from *behind* and *below* the other side of the altar. It was a noise composed of many individual noises ; rustlings, cheepings, chitterings, cachinnations in cacophony. And then the sound became a sight; a sight rising over the rim of the altar. Again, the sight was composed of many things.

A black, arched furry back . . . a flaring of leathery wings . . . a lashing, tiny tail . . . a fanged grimace . . . a diadem of yellow eyes . . . an arc of curving claw . . .

They crawled atop the altar in a wave; the cat, the bat, the ousel, the rat, the grinning grimalkin risen from haunted dreams. They spat and snarled and leered and mocked at Gideon as he recognized them for what they were—brothers of the dog behind him, minions of the pit, the familiars of the witches of Roodsford. They squatted on the altar, clawing at the two ail-too-familiar figures that lay silently there. They squatted and they stared at Gideon, as if daring his further approach. They hissed at him and threatened with eyes and teeth and paws.

Dorcas and the hound were very close behind. Gideon could hear the rasp of the old man's breath, the deep panting of the black beast. Still there was nothing to do but peer at the altar; peer and finally recognize the truth.

The two atop the altar were dead, but Gideon knew them now. He saw the two Indian guides who had deserted him in the forest.

How stalked, how slain, how brought here for sacrifice? How prepared now to shock him into admission of identity?

Gideon could not ponder. His every move was studied as he stood within a circle of yellow eyes.

Then the voice of Dorcas Frye croaked out, echoing through the vaulted arch of the pit.

“You have seen. Have you naught to say?”

Gideon stood silent a moment. This was the crisis. He thought of invocation and of prayer, cast the thought aside. It was not the time. But there never would be a time unless he spoke and spoke aright. Inwardly, he prayed for guidance.

They watched him for a long moment, watched him as he turned to Dorcas Frye and smiled.

“Everything is as I would desire,” he said. “You have slain the two Pasquantogs and disposed of the horse as well, I note. That is good. No one could possibly have noted my coming. I shall stay with you now until the Sabbat. You are a wise and faithful servant.”

Dorcas Frye's eyes widened as Gideon spoke. The mention of the horse was an inspiration on Gideon's part—and at the utterance of the words “Sabbat” and “servant,” the old man's mouth gaped.

“Who—who are you?” he whispered. There was silence in the cavern as he bent forward for a reply ; silence as the creatures of the night peered up at Gideon and awaited an answer.

Gideon smiled and shrugged. His hands signed the cross in reverse. “Do you not recognize me?” he asked. “I am the Messenger of the Master, sent to prepare the way for his coming. I am Asmodeus—Prince of Hell!”

IV

Later—much later—Gideon slept, in the chambers above, upon a couch of deerskin. But not before he explained that his coming was but a test of Dorcas Frye's fidelity to Satan; not before he had perjured his way into complete acceptance ; not before the fawning hound had licked his fingers.

The seventy-odd inhabitants of Roodsford had been summoned to the dark chamber to greet him, and toasts were drunk in a strange wine. Gideon chose to be silent in his new role, and to play the listener. His choice was accepted, nor did the strangers he met find it unusual or unseemly that a demon in human form should be reserved and demanding.

He spoke only enough to convey the pretense that all he heard was already known to him, but inwardly he quaked, and when finally he sought slumber he found only a delirium of dreams.

The days that followed seemed but a continuation of initial nightmare. Gideon deemed it wise to remain as Dorcas Frye's guest although he came and went as he chose, as befitted a Prince of Hell. None durst question him closely, although he asked questions in plenty. Ready respect and ready answers were accorded him always.

He learned of the growth of Roodsford, of the initial coming to these bleak and barren shores at a date which sounded incredible to his ears. Still, that alone could explain the mouldering

antiquity of their houses—so seemingly decrepit and poorly-fashioned on the exterior, but possessed of the labyrinthian passageways to the secret vaults beneath.

Gideon was told why the Indians had fled, but why the hunting and fishing were so good despite the fears of *the* animals who wisely shunned the spot; he learned, too, why crops grew lushly in rocky soil, and from whence came the exotic herbs used in charm and philtre.

There were those who spoke to him of the storms raised at sea, so that two stout and goodly ships had foundered off these shores. These had been salvaged, and some of the passengers saved, only to be given later in sacrifice. Food and luxuries had been procured from the vessels, but his informants were most pleased that some of the bodies of the drowned had been delivered from the sea.

When told of the uses to which these corpses had been put, Gideon's mask slipped badly, but there was worse to come.

He learned, gradually, why there were no children amongst the inhabitants of Roodsford, and he wondered at the absence of a common graveyard.

And then, one night, he learned—

“ 'Tis good you came,” Dorcas Frye told him, between gulps of the dark, heavy rum he'd been consuming throughout the early evening. “For as your Master knows, our plans are near completion. Long have we bided on this bleak coast, abuilding for the future; living in hovels mean and small to avoid suspicion, and conducting our worship underground. And now the time of reckoning draws nigh.”

Gideon nodded as the old man poured a brimming beaker.

“I'm the leader, you might say, of the Coven. As such, I owe responsibility to none but the Master himself. I'm honored that you were sent to help me plan the Sabbath, for it means we are ready. Ready at last! Ready to rise and rule.”

Ready to rise and rule. Gideon was on the track at last, and he drew his host out at length. Nor was the drunken oldster reluctant to babble freely.

The domain of Satan must expand, he said. Cotton Mather had not been far wrong when he said America was the witches' paradise. But it could never be held by ignorant old women or queer rural wizards. It was true that some thousands of these folk resided in New England, but they were for the most part isolated and unorganized. They limited their activities to clumsy attempts at brewing potions, or casting minor spells and afflictions on their enemies. Even the flying trips through the wild and smoke-crowned hills resulted in naught but nocturnal revels and a few meaningless ceremonies which could bring naught of pleasure to Satan the All-Lowest.

Besides, the persecution of witches had resulted in a sad diminution of worship. It was time for Roodsford to act, and to this end had its people builded and abided.

Once let an organized band of believers fall upon the cities and claim them for the Master—then all would give way before them. There was unrest in the Colonies today; many people were tired of the restrictions of the Church and the taxes of the King. They would rise if given encouragement. For the others, there would be plague and pestilence, storm and famine, with the Devil's help.

It needed only bold action. A foray on a village, a descent upon a town, a gradual encroachment and engulfment, and within a year or two the country would be won. It was unlikely that Mother England would take much note of her recalcitrant colonial possessions, and if so, there were always storms and mistrials, and strange creatures awaited a summoning from sea-slimed depths.

Then would America become truly the land of Satan! The Antichrist would overcome the Kingdom of Heaven, and the unholy federation of the new world might even in time rise and smite the churches of the old.

“But there are so few of you,” Gideon objected, knowing as he spoke that there was some mystery unrevealed.

“Yet as you realize, we cannot be harmed,” Dorcas Frye chuckled in reply. “In that lies our strength. Once our enemies in town and village realize this, they will flee before us. Surely, you understand how it will be.”

“Surely,” Gideon nodded.

“And now we must prepare for the Sabbath, prepare for the coming of the Master. He will proclaim the day of his rule, order and instruct us from the Great Hill.”

They could not be harmed.

Gideon pondered that as Dorcas droned on. Soon would come All-Hallows Eve and the night of sacrifice. Then would¹⁵ they strike and with a vengeance.

They had come here over a hundred years ago and there were no children.

Gideon pieced together the hints, and Dorcas told him of the coming festival, of the sacrifices of cattle awaiting, of the children to be taken from the village of Wells.

They could not be harmed and there were no graveyards in Roodsford. Gideon gazed at Dorcas, who spoke like a man, drank like a man, looked like a man, but who was more, or less, than any man alive.

Alive. The people of Roodsford were living dead.

That was the secret. For this they had sold their souls to Satan, so they could live past their appointed time without harm. In a flash Gideon recalled not only the absence of children, but the predominance of oldsters. He recalled the glee with which they told of the recovery of drowned bodies—new habitations for the lost souls, the damned souls. Soon an army of undead would be abroad in the land, striking terror and bringing death to the godly. Soon. Very soon.

“We'll learn on Sabbat-Eve,” Dorcas droned.

Gideon knew that Sabbat-Eve was but three nights distant.

He excused himself, shortly thereafter, but not until the moon was high over the domed hills.¹⁶ He already knew that he had been assigned the seventh place in the Coven¹⁷ upon the coming night, but there yet remained the problem of what to do about it.

As he slipped through the darkness towards the trees that loomed beyond Roodsford, Gideon remembered only one thing.

There were only three nights until the Sabbat. . . .

V

The sun sank sullenly in the hovering western hills, and murky darkness fell upon New England. Prayers were muttered in ten thousand homes, services offered up in a hundred hamlets, charms recited and spells inscribed upon amulets, doors barred and churches bolted.

Was it not Hallow-Mass, the Night of the Black Lord? It was the night of the eldritch vision, of mildewed magic, of the flying ointment, of the heart torn bloody and dripping from the breast, of the black bullock of sacrifice, of the whimpering child ravished from the home, of the homed moon, of the fire of sacrifice.¹⁸

The Pasquantogs offered up strange prayers, and the squaws mumbled knowingly in the wigwam darkness. Old crones and hoary grandsires were absent from their hovels, and heifers and cats alike seemed to have disappeared. As for the great Cotton Mather, he was sick abed with a colic, devil-sent.

It was Hallow-Mass, and drums thundered on the northern hills, throbbing and pulsing, chanting of the Sabbat. Sometimes they whispered of secrets buried beneath stark New England crags that were old when man was young and *others* shambled through the blackness and howled worship in the autumn night. Sometimes they roared out a challenge of defiance to all sanity. Sometimes they beat out messages to listeners from Beyond, invitations to attend the revels to come.

Roodsford lay deserted beneath the gloating moon, but beyond the forest, at the Great Hill, all had assembled. The women leading the bullocks, the men smeared with the unguents of evil, the celebrants from afar had gathered to squat upon the mildewed turf within the circle of stones. Crouching and nestling beside them were pawing, furry hordes of night; the familiars, impspawn of Abaddon.

Gideon Godfrey stood beside the altar-stone, staring into the blackness ringing the circling hills. His was a signal honor, for he was one of the three appointed to lead the bullocks unto sacrifice. The tethered beasts lowed dolorously, shaking their massive heads. Black candles had been attached to their horns and scent sprinkled over their glossy bodies. Their hooves were gilded, manes braided, and they stood now inhaling the reek of Sabbat ointment rising from the half-naked throng of celebrants below the altar mound.

Gideon was grateful for his place apart with the bullocks, for the revels had started in earnest. Nameless bayers yammered through the echoing hills. The throng milled and shrilled and clamoured, dancing and shrieking in honor of Lucifer as the drums beat on, shaking the firmament with their promise of greater abandon to come.

Wine was passed, wine was drunk, wine was spilled and mingled with blood. Torches flared and faded through tableau after tableau of obscene celebration. Gideon stood impassive beside the bullocks, and at his side was Dorcas Frye, face enmasked with a hooded cowl from which goat-horns rose to signify his priesthood in the Sabbat ritual.

Neither spoke. Gideon had avoided Frye for three days now, and he wondered if the old man suspected what it was he had done here in the forest when he stole away at midnight. Gideon wondered if he had a plan of his own—and Gideon waited, glancing from time to time at the altar-stone, on which a black cloth had been placed to hold the silver bowl and the silver knife of sacrifice.

But there would be no time for waiting, no time for wondering. The drums were building something in the darkness; something that throbbed and vibrated, something that soared and summoned. And now Dorcas was stepping up to the altar, wearing the Crown of Horns, and the first bullock was led forward, lowing, to kneel beneath the knife. The deed was done, the bowl was passed, and the drums thundered a litany to the Elder Shepherd.

Dorcas Frye stood alone now on the altar-top. Before the sacrifice of the other bullocks, the Summons would be made.

Dorcas held aloft the silver knife and the silver bowl. He signalled to the drummers in darkness and they fell silent.

Silently the celebrants moved forward, to gather below the altar mound and the altar stone. Dorcas bowed before the black cloth and began to chant.

Gideon recognized words, recognized syllables, recognized Latin cadence. But he did not recognize the response. The response was a drumming not made by drummers, a thunder not created by clouds. It was a roaring from *beneath* the very hills encircling them. And it rose, as Dorcas Frye's voice rose, as the faces of the Coven rose in expectation of the Coming. In a moment now—

Dorcas Frye's voice faltered. The thundering cadence missed a beat. He stared at the black altar-cloth in puzzlement. Gideon knew it was the time. He stepped forward, walked to the altar, stooped and came up in a single gesture with the silver knife. It flashed out, ripping at Frye's chest.

The oldster recoiled in sudden amazement, and a howl arose from the throng. As they hesitated, Gideon stabbed again, but saw no stain of blood appear. It was as he had dreaded.—Dorcas Frye was dead, yet alive.

There was one other way. He snatched the black covering from the altar and grasped the bulk beneath it—the bulk he had placed there three nights before. He raised it aloft and brought it down on Frye's horned head. There was a crunching sound, the sound made by the splinter of rotted bones.

Frye fell, and the cowl brushed from his face, revealed the wormy countenance of a thing long dead.

The crowd screamed, not only at the act but at the sight of Gideon Godfrey's weapon—the bulk of the great Bible he had rescued from its burial place beneath the stones and put on Satan's altar.

“Yes!” Gideon's voice rose exultant above their cries. “It's the Holy Bible, the Word of the Living God. And I am His Messenger, whom none may harm!”

Thunder echoed—true thunder, this time, from the clouds above. Out of the swirling sky came the blinding bolt, followed by the torrential tempest of sudden rain. And Gideon, crying the name of his God, descended from the altar, smiting and laying about him with the Bible for a weapon—and none that he touched could either flee or withstand him. Only corpses remained to litter the altar-base, to lie rotting in the rain. Gideon fought the fiends in a frenzy, fought them in darkness, touching them with God's word, muttering prayers that were curses and curses that were prayers. And in the end it was all over. He stood alone upon the field as the torrent washed away all but the foul odor of decay.

Then he fell upon his knees and gave thanks before setting out on the trail that led to the south. In the morning there would be clean light over the peaceful spires of Portsmouth and he would tell the good folk there that he had wandered lost in the wilderness these long weeks past.

Of Roodsford and its ways, of the peril just averted, Gideon would never speak. He knew that the village had fallen with its people and that birds and beasts would soon return there to claim as their own a land made free from the shadows of a fearsome blight. Soon Roodsford's very memory would be forgotten.

And that was as it should be, for come what may, witchcraft was now forever broken in New England. Satan's Servants were gone forever.

Index of Lovecraft's footnotes

(AUHOR'S NOTE: This is necessarily only a partial listing of HPL's notations. Some of them exist in the form of addenda and sentences which he inserted in the text of the story. Others are indications for word-changes, insertions or deletions, all of which have been made in the text and are therefore unnecessary to repeat here. And true to form, HPL also added marginal comments of praise from time to time. The notations listed here are sufficient' indication of the Lovecraft scholarship, passion for exactitude, and virtual omniscience.)

1. The original mss, gives the name as Rood-ford. HPL suggests "Roodsford" saying, "The hyphenated place name would not have occurred in early New England."
2. HPL says "Be careful about your archaisms. Certain antique spelling had vanished by 1672. Nouns were chiefly capitalized in ordinary text."
3. HPL noted that the book was printed in Boston in my original mss. and changed it to London, saying, "I doubt if Salem had a printing press as early as 1672. Nor were works of a general, non-theological character printed so early anywhere in the colonies,"
4. The "or traders" was added by HPL who comments, "Savages didn't do much coastal navigation. Whites traded considerably."
5. HPL noted that I spoke of the "Church of New England" and altered it, saying, "There was no officially recognized Church of N. E. The two fully Puritan colonies—Mass. and Conn.—supported the orthodox church known eventually as the Congregational. R. I. represents a revolt against and a repudiation of this theocratic dominance."
6. HPL—"There would not be fallen leaves even in Southern Maine till well over the line in October. The height of autumn foliage in central New England is about Oct. 10 to 15."
7. The previous sentence was inserted by HPL with comment, "Travel was very slow in 1690." And on the obverse side of the mss. page, he lists four ferry passages by name, followed by such estimates as "On horseback—ay. 5 MPH. With guides on foot—ay. 3 MPH. Boston-Nemb.— 40M. Newb.-Ports.--20 M. Ports-Roodf.-20 M. Time from Ports. to Roodf. should be 8 or 9 h., allowing for rest, delays. Starting 6 AM, intending to arrive at 3 PM, delays add 5 to 6 hours more—hence twilight or nocturnal advent would be correct." This is an excellent example of HPL's perfectionist approach to his own work.
8. HPL comments, "Probably no Indians in America before the post-glacial era—but let imagination have free scope!"
9. HPL reminds me of what I had forgotten and hence miswritten when he changes a word and says, "No witchcraft suspects were ever *burned* in North America."
10. HPL—"Gallows Hill, Salem, not so named till 1692 witchcraft." Since I revised chronology of story, it is now correct to refer to it.
11. Mss. originally spoke of venison and dried pemmican, but HPL changed, saying, "Venison not so common, and journey not long enough for pemmican,"
12. HPL—"We have to be careful about geography, picking a part of the coast not thickly settled in 1690."

13. I spoke of log houses, but HPL—"Log houses not used in New England—and never any cross on Puritan churches."
14. "Panels" in ms. HPL reproves—"No panelled doors at this period in small cottages."
15. I wrote "wouldst" but HPL struck it out, explaining, "Wouldst is second person singular. Beware of false archaisms, lest you fall into the misleading patois of some of Hodgson's stuff."
16. Orig. "Merrimack hills." But; "Merrimack too far south, or, in upper reaches, *west*, unless long-distance flights are intended."
17. HPL inserted "place in," saying, "A coven is a whole local unit of the cult. Roodsford would have but one."
18. HPL asks, "How local do you assume the Roodsford celebration to be? Is it a Sabbat confined to the one village coven or do others come from afar to participate? If the latter, insert on the evil travellers abroad in the night."