BLUE LAWS OF CONNECTICUT.

The Blue Laws of Connecticut is a title given the legislation of that Commonwealth by the Rev.

Samuel Peters, who parodied its laws in a volume published many years ago, and so cleverly was

the parody worded that even now but few know whether the laws he quoted were or were not actual legislation by the lawmakers of Connecticut. They were not, but, while they were not, the bona fide laws were every whit as blue as those he alleged to have been in existence. One of the laws best

known as a Connecticut Blue Law is a prohibition of mothers from kissing their children of Sunday, or on that day erroneously called by the Puritans the Sabbath. While there never was such a   
statute in Connecticut, there were laws similarly tyrannical, for it is on record, that men were   
fined for kissing their wives publicly on that day

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The laws we here quote justify this assertion, and the records of the courts prove it beyond

question. These courts had wide latitude in punishing offenses against religion and Puritan   
morality, and written statutes were not necessary in order to fine, whip, and imprison those who

deviated from the Puritan standard of conduct. The actual statutes of Connecticut were as blue as

anything the Rev. Samuel Peters could imagine, and it is only that the people were unacquainted

with these laws that they were aroused when Mr. Peters parodied them. There was then awakened

in the minds of his readers undisguised contempt for the people who could enact them, and much

indignation and condemnation has been wasted upon a set of laws which never existed, while

most tyrannical statutes which were real have gone unnoticed and their sponsors uncondemned.

When the Rev. Mr. Peters wrote his volume he was in England, and he probably wrote from

memory, with no copy of the Connecticut Code by him. As a New England clergyman he knew

what the practice was as to Sabbath observance, and the practice reflected the laws, or the laws   
the practice, as one pleases. And the practice was " blue" indeed, as were the punishments for   
Sabbath breaking. Three of the most famous of the pretended statutes which Mr. Peters quoted were

these: " No one shall travel, cook victuals, make beds, sweep house, cut hair, or shave on the   
Sabbath Day."

" No woman shall kiss her child on the Sabbath or fasting day."

" No one shall ride on the Sabbath day, or walk in his garden or elsewhere except reverently to

and from meeting."

Yet these rules had all the effect of legal enactments. As to the first, the Puritans from sunset

on Saturday until Sunday night, would not shave, have rooms swept, nor beds made, nor food   
prepared, nor cooking utensils and table-ware washed. Men in large numbers were fined for walking and, riding unnecessarily on Sunday, and for riding "violently to and from meeting." That is why

Mr. Peters put the word "reverently" in his alleged statute. As late as 1831, a lady journeying to her father's house in Lebanon. Conn., was fined for unnecessary traveling on the Sabbath.

And Captain Jemble of Boston, in 1656, was kept for two hours in the public stocks for his lewd   
and unseemly behavior in "publiquely" kissing his wife on Sunday. His wife met him upon the   
doorstep when he returned from a three years' voyage, and they scandalized the neighbors with the warmth of their greeting. In 1670 two lovers of New London, Conn., were accused and tried for   
"sitting together on the Lord's day under an apple tree in Goodman Chapman's orchard."

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The following is a list of the Sabbath Day offenses taken cognizance of by the authorities,

and the punishment meted out. It is compiled from "The Sabbath in Puritan New England,"

taken from church and court records. It was not necessary for the state legislature to make laws   
of the "blue " variety for these minor offenses.

In those days each person knew his neighbor's business thoroughly. The ministers ruled with   
severity, the "tythingmen" and constables were their willing servants, and the courts punished   
 Sabbath breaking and offenses against religion as parent would deal with erring children for   
breaches of conduct. It was a very paternal government, as a stern parent wielding the rod, with   
no intention of spoiling the child by sparing it.

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In New London, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a man was fined for catching eels

on Sunday; another was " fined twenty shillings for sailing a boat on the Lord's Day."

In Plymouth a man was "sharply whipped" for shooting fowl on Sunday; another was fined for   
carrying a grist of corn home on the Lord's Day, and the miller who allowed him to take it was

also fined. Elizabeth Eddy of the same town was fined, in 1652, "ten shillings for wringing and

hanging out clothes." A Plymouth man, for attending to his tar-pits on the Sabbath, was set in

the stocks. James Watt, in 1658, was publicly reproved for writing a note about common business on the Lord's Day, at least in the evening somewhat too soon." A Plymouth man who drove a yoke of   
oxen was "presented " before the court, as was also another offender who drove some cows a short   
distance "without need " on the Sabbath.

In Newbury, in 1646, Aquila Chase and his wife were fined for tilling their own garden on the   
Sabbath. In Wareham, in 1772, William Telsies acknowledged himself "guilty of racking hay on the   
Lord's Day" and was fined ten shillings; and in 1774 another Wareham citizen was fined for a   
breach of the Sabbath in "puling apples," was fined five shillings. A Dunstable soldier, for   
"wetting a piece of an old hat to put in his shoe" to protect his foot, was fined and paid forty shillings. A Maine man who was rebuked and fined for "unseemly walking" on the Lord's Day protested that he ran to save a man from drowning. The court made him pay his fine.

In 1760 the legislature of Massachusetts passed the law that "any person able of Body who .shall absent themselves from publick worship of God on the Lord's Day shall pay ten shillings fine." By the Connecticut code the fine it was the same, and the law was not suspended till 1770. By the New Haven code five shillings was the fine for non-attendarce at church, and the offender was often punished otherwise as well. Some convicted of "sloathefulness" for this, and sentenced to be   
"publicquely whipped." The Quakers contributed liberally to the support of the court, and were   
fined in great numbers for refusing to attend the church which they hated, and which also warmly abhorred them ; and they were zealously set in the stocks, and whipped and caged and pilloried as   
well — whipped if they came and expressed any dissatisfaction, and whipped if they stayed away."

The use of tobacco was absolutely forbidden under any circumstances on the Sabbath within two   
miles of the meeting-house. Violators of this rule were fined ten shillings, and in Portsmouth   
were set as jailbirds in the cage. Mistress Oliver was forced to stand in public with a cleft stick on her tongue for "reproaching the elders." A New Haven man was severely whipped for declaring the sermon horrid.

CAPITALL LAWES. 2. If any man or woman bee a Witch, that is hath or consulteth with a familiar   
siprit, they shall be put to death. — Exodus 22. 18.   
3. If any person blemish God the Son or holy Ghost, with direct, express, presumptuous or highhanded blasphemy, or shall curse in the like manner, he e shall be put to death. — Lev. 24. 15, 16.