

LEGEND MASQUERADING AS HISTORY is too familiar to excite surprise, and too tenacious of its hold on the credulity of the unscholarly to admit of much hope that it will ever be made to relax that hold. For instance, the popular conception of Juggernaut (corruption of the Sanskrit Jagannatha, Lord of the World, the name under which Vishnu, the Preserver, is worshipped at Puri in Orissa) is so far from correct as to ascribe to that god the qualities of Siva, the Destroyer, rather than those properly belonging to him; and even a competent writer like John Forster could allow himself to say, in his life of

Dickens: "Poor Johnny Tetterby staggering under his Moloch of an infant, the Juggernaut that crushed out all his enjoyments." Long ago Sir W. W. Hunter, in his "Gazetteer of India," made it plain that this Juggernaut legend has no historical basis, unless it be the fact that in any religious ceremony attended by dense throngs of people a life or two may be sacrificed in the press, or a fanatical devotee may even sacrifice his own life. Another legend that dies hard is that of the supposed witch-burning at Salem. The recent destructive fire that wiped out so many ancient landmarks in the old Massachusetts town elicited from the Baltimore "Star" the following: "On mere suspicion of being witches women were burnt alive. We should not be sorry that the old landmarks are gone." The witchcraft delusion was bad enough, and Salem has reason to be ashamed of its participation in the excesses that attended that delusion; but all New England was swept by the incredible superstition, to which even the learned and pious Cotton Mather gave his adherence, and Salem was not singular in its punishment of suspected persons. Nineteen of these were hanged as witches on Gallows Hill, and one, Giles Cory, was pressed to death for refusing to plead; but no burning at the stake took place either at Salem or elsewhere in New England. Nevertheless popular tradition will always have it that witch-burning is what Salem is chiefly to be remembered for in history.

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