

CHAP. XV.

The Council established at Plymouth, in the County of Devon, for the ordering the affairs of New England, and their proceedings with reference thereto.

LETTERS PATENTS, were, as is intimated before,¹ granted by his Majesty, in the year 1606, for the limitation of Virginia, which did extend from the 34th to the 44th degree of north latitude, distinguished into two Colonies, a first and a second, (which last, called New England, was first christened by Prince Charles, and was appropriated to the Cities of Bristol [and] Exon, and town of Plymouth, in the west parts of England.) The Adventurers had liberty to take their choice for Plantations, any where between the degrees of 38 and 44, provided one hundred miles distance was left between the two Colonies aforesaid. Those that first adventured thither, whatever were the misfortunes, calamities, and hindrances, they met withal in their first enterprises of planting, were not so discouraged as wholly to lay aside the design, finding, at the last, much encouragement to go on therewith, by the prudent endeavors of Mr. Rocrast, Capt. Darmer, and others employed by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, yet held it most convenient to strengthen themselves by a new grant from his Royal Majesty; and were the rather induced thereunto because they found those of Virginia had by two several Patents settled their bounds, and excluded all from intermeddling with them, that were not free of their Company, and had wholly altered the form of their government, from the first grounds laid for the managing the affairs of both Colonies, leaving those of New England as desperates, and their business as abandoned. These considerations, together with the necessity of settling their own affairs and limits, distinct from theirs, made them at last rather to petition his majesty for the renewing their grant, because, whatsoever hopes they had of obtaining their desires, the rumor thereof was soon spread abroad, and the commodities of the place, both fish and trade, began to be so looked into, that they met with

¹ See pages 12-13.—x.

many interruptions, before they could effect their purpose. Many desired, that all that coast might be made free, both to those of Virginia, as well as [to] themselves. Others intended to bring the business into the Parliament, which about that time was to assemble, hoping to prove the same to be a monopoly, and much tending to hinder the common good. Upon these motions the Adventurers were much questioned about it, before way could be made for a new Patent. But both parties being heard by the Lords of the Council, and by the Parliament also, as Sir Ferdinando Gorges writes, in the Description of New England published in his name, Anno 1658, the business was by them so ordered, that they were directed to proceed, and to have their grant agreeable to the liberty of the Virginia Company, the form of their government only excepted. All parties not being satisfied herewith, it was heard another time before it was concluded: yea, after it had passed the seals, it was stopped upon new suggestions to the King, and by his Majesty returned to the Council to be settled; by whom the former order was confirmed, the differences cleared, and they ordered to have their Patent at last delivered to them, bearing date at Westminster, Nov. 3, 1620, as is recited in the beginning of that afterwards granted to the Company of the Massachusetts. The substance of the said Grand Charter is set down in the thirty-first chapter of this history following. But ||these|| honorable persons to whom the said Patent was made, having laid their foundation upon the royal grant of so great and sovereign a prince, imagined it could never fail, and cast their designs in the mould of a principality, or royal state, intending to build their edifice proportionable their platform, after the mode of the realm, from whence the country had its first denomination. For they ||^opurposed|| to commit the management of their whole affairs to a General ||^sGovernor||, assisted by so many of the Patentees as should be there resident upon the place, together with the officers of state, as Treasurer, Admiral, Master of the Ordnance, [and] Marshal, with other persons of judgment and experience, as by the President and Council then

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established, for the better governing those affairs, should be thought fit : resolving also, (because all men are wont most willingly to submit to those ordinances, constitutions, and orders, themselves have had an hand in the framing of,) the general laws, whereby the state should have been governed, should be first framed and agreed upon by the General Assembly of the states of those parts, both spiritual and temporal.

In prosecution of this purpose and intendment the Council of Plymouth aforesaid, or some that acted [with] their power, did, in the year 1623, send over to New England some of the forementioned general officers ; for about the end of June, 1623, arrived in New England Captain Francis West, who was sent with a commission from the said Council, to be Admiral of all the country, to restrain interlopers, and such as came either to fish or trade upon the coast, without license from them. In the end of August following,* arrived there Captain Robert Gorges, son of Sir Ferdinando, sent from the Council, as Lieutenant-General over all New England, for preventing and reforming all such evils and abuses as had been complained of, to be committed by the fishermen and others, who not only without order and leave frequented those coasts, but, when they were there, brought a reproach upon the nation by their lewdness and wickedness among the savages, abusing their women openly, and teaching their people drunkenness, with other beastly demeanors ; for the ||regulating|| of all which matters was the said General Governor sent over, not without intent also to begin some new Plantation, in some part of the Massachusetts Bay, for which end the said Captain Gorges had a Patent assigned him, for a place called Massachusick, on the northeast side of the said bay, containing thirty miles in length, and ten in breadth up into the main land.* Captain West aforesaid and Christopher ||^sLevet,|| Esq., (who came over about the same time with intent to begin another Plantation somewhere else, but without success,) with the Governor of Plymouth Colony for that time being, ||^swere|| appointed to be his Council, yet granting him authority to choose such other as he should

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* Middle of September. P. I. 141.—Ed. [Hale's ed. p. 221.—z.]

think fit. Divers of his friends, it seems, promising to send suitable supplies after him, but they withdrew when they understood how Sir Ferdinando was like to speed in the Parliament, where Sir Edward Cooke, the speaker at that time, (a great patron of the liberties of the people, and as great an enemy to all projectors,) endeavored to have the whole design of the Council of Plymouth condemned as a monopoly, and a breach of the liberties of the subject. The gentlemen on whom Captain Gorges had his dependence for supplies, upon this occasion withholding their assistance, they who were personally engaged in the design were thereby made incapable of doing any thing to purpose, and so the whole business came to nothing. For, after some troublesome agitations between Captain Gorges and Mr. Weston, who was by him called to account for the ill managing his Plantation at Weymouth, and for abusing his license from Sir Ferdinando for carrying over ordnance, (which matter was composed betwixt them by the wisdom of the Governor of Plymouth.) the General Governor, Captain Robert Gorges, soon returned home, scarce having saluted the country in his government, nor continued much longer in it than Tully's Vigilant Consul, that had not leisure, during his whole consulship, so much as once to take his sleep. For finding the place to answer neither his quality nor condition, nor the hopes he had conceived thereof, he had but small encouragement for longer abode in such a remote and desert land, not like in a long time to be inhabited. By this *experience* of Captain Robert Gorges, it appears how great a difference there is between the theoretical and practical part of an enterprise. The Utopian fancy of any projector may easily in imagination frame a flourishing Plantation, in such a country as was New England; but to the actual accomplishing thereof there is required a good number of resolved people, qualified with industry, experience, prudence, and estate, to carry on such a design to perfection, much of which were wanting in the present design.

It is said that one Mr. Morel came over with the said Captain, who was to have had a superintendency over

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other churches, but he did well in not opening his commission till there appeared a subject matter to work upon. By this means the design of a royal state, that so many honorable persons had been long travailing with, proved abortive: and the persons concerned therein not long after were in danger to have fallen into a contrary extreme, by as great an error; viz. in cantoning the whole country into so many petty lordships, and smaller divisions, that little or nothing for the future could for a long time be effectually carried on, amongst so many pretenders to grants of lands, charters, and patents, for want of establishing an orderly government under which all the planters might have been united for the public and general good. "For after the Parliament in the year 1621 was broken up ||in|| some discontent, the King not being well pleased with the speeches of some particular persons, that seemed to trench further on his honor and safety, than he saw meet to give way unto; and all hope of alteration in the government of the church, expected by many, being thereby taken away, several of the discreeter sort, to avoid what they saw themselves obnoxious unto at home, made use of their friends to procure liberty from the Council of Plymouth to settle some colony within their limits, which was granted;"^a besides those of Mr. Robinson's church, which was first obtained in the west of England. And so far was the matter proceeded in, that, within a short time after King James's death,¹ a great number of people began to flock thither, insomuch that notice was so far taken thereof by the King's Council, that Sir Ferdinando Gorges, (as himself relates,^b) who had been instrumental to draw over those that began the Colonies of New Plymouth and the Massachusetts, was ordered to confer with such as were chiefly interested in the Plantation of New England, to know whether they would wholly resign to his Majesty and his Council their Patent, leaving the sole management of their public affairs to them, with reservation of every man's right formerly granted, or whether they would stand to the said Patent, and execute the business among themselves; and to have the said Patent renewed,

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x ¹ At Theobalds, April 8, 1625, aged 59.—н. ^a America Painted to the Life, &c., (Sm. 4to. Lond. 1659.) Part 2, pp. 38, 43-5.—н.

with the reformation or addition of such things as should be found expedient. The gentlemen, to whom this proposition was made, were willing to submit all to his Majesty's pleasure, yet desired that upon the resignation of their Patent the whole might be divided among the Patentees. This, as was said, happening about the year 1635,¹ sundry parcels thereof, that had been granted by mutual consent to several of the Patentees, were confirmed anew. By this occasion Sir William Alexander, (since Earl of Sterling,) had a tract of land assigned him to the eastward from St. Croix to Pemmaquid, on his account called Nova Scotia, to whom was added on some such account, Long Island, then called Mattanwake; or else he obtained it from the Earl of Carlisle as is by many affirmed. Captain Mason obtained a grant for Naumkeag, &c., about the year 1621, [and] the land between Naumkeag and Pascataqua river, which he had confirmed in the year 1635, as is said. Sir Ferdinando Gorges, in like manner, obtained afterwards a grant for all the land from Pascataqua to Saga de Hock, which was confirmed to him by a distinct charter about the year 1639, &c. But the other divisions not being perfected in King James's days, were never looked after, and new ones were made in the beginning of King Charles's reign; by whom were Patents granted to several Adventurers, which at that time presented themselves. And as some particular persons put in for their several grants, so did the merchants and other gentlemen belonging to some cities and towns, as of Shrewsbury, Dorchester, [and] Plymouth, who obtained several grants for themselves about the mouth and upper branches of Pascataqua river, who employed as their agents Mr. Thomson,² Capt. Neale, Capt. Wiggon, and one Mr. Williams, with Mr. Samuel Maverick and others. And among the rest some knights, gentlemen and merchants about Dorchester, by the advice of one Mr. White, an eminent preacher there, obtained a Patent for all that part of New England that lies between three miles to the northward of Merrimack river, and three miles to the southward of Charles river, the seat of the Massachusetts Colony; the affairs of which, principally intended for the subject of the following dis-

¹ See pages 296-39.—H.

² See page 105.—H.

course, shall in what follows be more particularly and distinctly spoken unto in their place, after the affairs of Plymouth and the planting thereof are a little further laid open.

CHAP. XVI.

The addition of more Assistants to the ||Governor|| of Plymouth Colony, with some passages most remarkable there, in the years 1624, 1625.

OF the people that came along with Captain Robert Gorges, in hope of raising their fortunes by some new colony or plantation in New England, some returned back with their Captain that brought them; others went on to Virginia, either out of discontent and dislike of the country, or out of necessity for want of means to subsist longer therein. Plymouth people were not able to supply them, (having not enough for themselves), after their own provisions were burnt up by a fire accidentally kindled by some roystering seamen, that were entertained in the common house, that belonged to the inhabitants, where their goods were lodged. It was strongly suspected, by a long firebrand, which was found in a shed at the end of the storehouse, by some that put out the fire, that it was done on purpose. However, those of Plymouth accounted themselves bound to acknowledge the goodness of God in preserving their own store of ammunition and provision from a dangerous fire,¹ (whether casually or wilfully kindled.) With such difficulties as have been forementioned was the third year concluded, after the first settling of that Plantation.

That which happened as most remarkable in the following year, 1624, was, first, the addition of five Assistants to their Governor, Mr. Bradford, upon whose motion it was done. His judgment and prudence had now, for the three years past, commended him to the highest place of rule amongst them, by the unanimous consent of all the people. But now he solemnly desired them to change the person, when they renewed their election, and to add more for help and counsel, and the better carrying on of public affairs, using this plausible reason, that if it were

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¹ On the 5th of November, 1623. See Prince, pp. 222-3.—π.