

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,<sup>1</sup> (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

||government||

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

any honor or benefit, it was fit that others should be made partakers thereof, and if it were a burden, (as it was judged in Jotham's parable<sup>1</sup> by all the trees save the ambitious bramble,) it was but equal that others should help to bear it. This reason was found more cogent in the succeeding Colonies, when several persons were ready at hand equally fitted for the government, where the Governor was often changed, at least in two of them, till of latter times, in which the choice of the people hath always run in the same channel, pitching upon the same person so long, if not longer, than he was well able to stand under the weight and burden thereof. And indeed, though it is safe ||where|| there is a liberty reserved for a change in case, yet too frequent making use thereof was never found advantageous to the subjects. But as to the people of New Plymouth—in their General Court of this year, they dealt very honorably with their Governor, in that, having yoked five ||<sup>2</sup>more|| besides himself in the government, they gave him the advantage of the yoke, by a double voice, ||<sup>3</sup>or|| the casting vote. And with that number of Assistants they rested contented till the year 1633, when two more were added, which number, since that time, was never exceeded in any of their elections.<sup>2</sup>

That which, in the second place, was looked upon as remarkable, was the safe return of their agent, Mr. Edward Winslow, who, being employed for the Colony in occasions of great weight, now arrived there in the beginning of this year,<sup>3</sup> bringing with him considerable supplies for their spiritual good, as was thought at first, as well as for their temporal. For he brought over with him one Mr. Lyford, a minister of the Gospel, upon the account of the Adventurers at London, approved by them as an able minister, and willing to run the hazard of a wilderness life, to enjoy the liberty of his own judgment in matters of religion. When he came first over he was received with great joy and applause, making a ||<sup>4</sup>praise of Jerens|| of more respect and humility than the people knew well how to understand. But upon a little further experience, finding his principles in matter of church

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<sup>1</sup> Judges ix. 7-15.—H.    <sup>2</sup> See p. 100.—H.    <sup>3</sup> In March, in the Charity.—H.

discipline not to suit so well with theirs, they took up a great displeasure against him, and could not be contented till they had shut their hands of him, alleging things against him of another nature than difference of his judgment. For some, that kept the records of their principal affairs, have left a very bad character of him, as of one that was not only very fickle and unconstant in his judgment about the things of religion, but as one that wanted soundness and uprightness in his practice and conversation. For at his first receiving into the church, they say he blessed God for such an opportunity of liberty and freedom from his former disorderly walking, and sundry corruptions he had been entangled with, yet in short time after fell into acquaintance with Mr. Oldham, and was partner with him in all his (as those of Plymouth accounted them) seditious after-practices, growing both of them very perverse, and drawing as many as they could into the same faction with them, though of the viler and looser sort, (a thing too common where faction, either in church or state, doth much prevail, witness the experience of the perilous times in these latter, as well as in former, days,) feeding themselves and others with vain hopes of what they should bring to pass in England by means of the Adventurers, who since, as they of that place account, have proved adversaries to the Plantation. It is said also, that they who were of the faction writ many private letters to England full of complaints against the Colony and church of Plymouth, using great endeavors to turn things about to another form of government, at least to some considerable alteration therein. But the Governor outwitted them, finding an handsome way to get either their letters or copies of them, before the return of the ship in which they were to be sent; whereby both the principal actors, and all their confederates, were easily convicted, as soon as ever they were called to an account. Whereupon sentence was passed upon them, more favorably, as some report, than their fact deserved, yet such as required their departures out of the Colony within a short time after, and not to return without leave. Yet at the next Court of Election, in the year 1625, Mr. Oldham returned without license, set on by others as was thought,

carrying it very badly withal, and giving too much vent to his unruly passions, which forced the Court to commit him till he was tamer, and then they granted him an honorable passport through a military ||Bumme-Guard||,<sup>1</sup> toward the place where he was to take boat, yet using no worse word as he passed by, than bidding him amend his manners, which it is reported that afterwards he did, drawn thereunto by divine conviction in a sad storm, upon which he confessed his miscarriages, and was afterward permitted to come and go at his pleasure, and as his occasions led him, spending his time, for the general, in trading with the Indians, amongst whom afterwards he lost his life, which was one occasion of the Pequod war, as shall be declared afterwards.<sup>2</sup>

As for Mr. Lyford, who was sent over for their minister, it is said that, after his dismissal from Plymouth, he never returned thither again ; but took up his station first at Nantasket, whither some of his most charitable friends repaired with him, affording him the best encouragement they could for his support, during his abode with them. However, Mr. Lyford, finding the company to be but small, and unable to do much for him, and he unable to do anything for himself, and seeing little hopes of the addition of more to them, removed soon after to Virginia, where he ended his days. Some that came over with him, that knew nothing of the wickedness he was guilty of in Ireland, out of too much charity judged of him much better than ever he deserved, both of him and of Mr. Oldham, and speak in a manner quite contrary to what is recorded in New England's Memorial :—and that his greatest error, and that which made him and the rest be looked upon as so great offenders amongst them, was, their antipathy against the way of the Separation, wherein those of Plymouth had been trained up under Mr. Robinson. As to other things, some of their friends yet surviving do affirm, upon their own knowledge, that both the forenamed persons were looked upon as seemingly, at least, religious : and that the first occasion of the quarrel with them was, the baptizing of Mr. Hilton's child, who was not joined

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<sup>1</sup> See Bradford, in Prince, pp. 231-2 ; and Davis's Morton, pp. 120-1.—H.

<sup>2</sup> See page 248.—H.

to the church at Plymouth: which, if there were any tolerable ground that it should pass for a truth, the term of wickedness wherewith their practices ||were|| branded in the Memorial of New England seems a little, if not much, too harsh, for according to the old rule, “de mortuis nil nisi bene,” speak well of the dead. The difference of men’s principles and disadvantages of their natural temper (wherein they are apt much to be misled in the managing of their designs,) ought rather, when there is sincerity, to be imputed to the weakness of their virtues, than the wickedness of their vices.<sup>1</sup> Whatever may be said this way about the present difference amongst the planters of Plymouth Colony, the sad effects of that storm were not so soon over, as the story of the things said or done was told. A small tempest may hazard the loss of a weak vessel, as an inconsiderable distemper may much endanger the welfare of a crazy body. For it seems sundry of the Adventurers, more studious of their profit than the advancing of the religion of the Separation, were pretty stiffly engaged in the business; and from that time ever after withdrew their supplies, leaving the Plantation to shift for itself, and stand or fall as it could. Yet this was their comfort, that when man forsook them, God took them up, succeeding their after endeavors with his blessing in such wise, that they were in some measure able to subsist of themselves; especially for that, within awhile after, they began to be furnished with neat cattle, the first ||<sup>a</sup>breed|| of which was brought to Plymouth by Mr. Winslow, in the year 1624.

In the year following, viz. 1625, they fell into a way of trading with the Indians more eastward, about the parts of Kennibeck; being provided of so much corn by their own industry at home, that they were able, to their no small advantage, to lend, or send rather, to those in other parts, who by reason of the coldness of the country, used not to plant any for themselves. For what was done this year, with reference to Kennibeck, proved an inlet to a further trade that way, which was found very beneficial to the Plantation afterwards.

One other passage of Providence is here also taken

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<sup>1</sup> See Prince, p. 232.—H.

notice of, by the inhabitants of Plymouth, Anno 1625; a very remarkable one. The Adventurers, having left this their new Colony to subsist of itself, and trade up and down the world, before it was well able at home to stand alone, did notwithstanding send two ships upon a fishing design upon the coast that year. In the lesser of them was sent home by the Plantation to the merchants, the Adventurers, a good quantity of beaver and other furs, to make payment for a parcel of goods sent them before, upon extreme rates; but the said vessel, though in company of the other that was bigger, all the way over, and shot deep into the English channel, yet was then surprised by a Turk's man of war, and carried into Sallee, where the said furs were sold for [a] groat a piece, which was as much too cheap, as the Adventurers' goods, by which they were produced, were thought by the purchasers to be too dear; the master and his men being made slaves into the bargain, which both Adventurers and planters had reason much to bewail.

In the bigger of the said ships was Captain Miles Standish sent over as agent for the Plantation, to make an end of some matters of difference yet depending betwixt them and the merchants of London, their correspondents, as also to promote some business with the honorable Council of New England; both which, notwithstanding the difficulty he met withal relating to those occasions by reason of the pestilence then rise at London, were happily accomplished by him, so far as he left things in an hopeful way of composition with the one, and a promise of all helpfulness and favor from the other. By this turn of Providence the common opinion of Providence is confuted, of men's venturing their persons where they venture their estates. Had Captain Standish so done, he had been carried to a wrong port, from which he had certainly made a bad return for their advantage that sent him out, as well as his own; for his goods were sent home in the small vessel, taken by the men of Sallee, (where ||their|| beaver skins were sold but for [a] groat a piece,) but he wisely embarked himself, for greater safety, in the bigger vessel, and so arrived in safety at his desired port.