

## CHAP. XVII.

*Affairs in the Colony of New Plymouth, political and ecclesiastical, during the second lustre of years, viz. from March 26, 1626, to March 26, 1631.*

THE first year of this second lustre was ushered in to the church of New Plymouth with the doleful news of the death<sup>1</sup> of Mr. John Robinson, their faithful and beloved pastor, about the fiftieth year of his age, who with the rest of the church was left behind at Leyden, when these transported themselves into America; which was yet made more grievous by the report of the loss of some of their other friends and relations, swept away by the raging pestilence aforesaid: which happening together with the forementioned losses suffered by their friends, much increased the sorrow of their hearts; so that it turned their joy, which the safe arrival of their agent, Captain Standish, called for, into much heaviness, they having thereby the experience of the Apostle's words verified upon them, sorrowing most of all, for that they must now conclude they should see his face no more.<sup>2</sup> For before the arrival of this sad tidings, they were not without all hope of seeing his face in New England, notwithstanding the many obstructions laid in the way, by some ill-affected persons as they conceived. He was, as it seemed, highly respected of his people, (now dispersed into two companies, further asunder than was Dothan and Hebron,<sup>3</sup>) as they were also of him. That which was the principal remora that detained him with the rest in Holland is not mentioned by any of his friends here, yet may it easily be supposed, viz. the sad difficulties, and sore trials, that his friends in New England had hitherto been encountered withal; so as those that were here could not seriously advise him and the rest to follow them, till things were brought to some better settlement in this their new Plantation, together with some back friends that did all they could to obstruct his coming over. The temptations of a wilderness, though not invincible, yet may be very hard to overcome; witness the experience of Israel of old, who

<sup>1</sup> On March 1, 1624-5.—H.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. xxxvii. 17.—H.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xx. 38.—H.

were only to pass through it, and not first plant it, as were those here. The small hopes these had of their pastor's coming over to them, being heretofore revived by the new approach of the shipping every spring, possibly made them more slow in seeking out for another supply, as also more difficult in their choice of any other. But these hopes being now quite extinct, they found it no easy matter to pitch upon a meet person at so great a distance: nor was it easy to have obtained him whom they might have chosen, and therefore were they constrained to live without the supply of that office, making good use of the abilities of their ruling elder, Mr. Brewster, who was qualified both to rule well, and also to labor in the word and doctrine, although he could never be persuaded to take upon him the pastoral office, for the administration of the sacraments, &c. In this way they continued till the year 1629, when one Mr. Ralph Smith, who came over into the Massachusetts, and finding no people there that stood in any need of his labors, he was easily persuaded to remove to Plymouth; him they called to exercise the office of a pastor, more induced thereunto, possibly, by his approving the rigid way of the Separation principles, than any fitness for the office he undertook; being much overmatched by him that he was joined with in the presbytery,<sup>1</sup> both in point of discretion to rule, and aptness to teach, so as through many infirmities, being found unable to discharge the trust committed to him with any competent satisfaction, he was forced soon after to lay it down. Many times it is found that a total vacancy of an office is easier to be borne, than an under-performance thereof. However, those of Plymouth comforted themselves, that they had the honor to set an example for others to imitate, and lay the foundation for those that came after to build upon, sc. to raise up the tabernacle of David in those days of the earth, not that was fallen down, but that which was never set up there before, that this last residue of the Gentiles, in America, might seek after God, at least have an opportunity to turn unto him, before their times should be fulfilled. And at this

<sup>1</sup> Elder Brewster. — R.

day the hopefulest company of Christian Indians do live within the bounds of Plymouth Colony.

But to return to the state of the civil affairs of this our new Plantation: the first part of this lustre being thus run out without any considerable matter acted in the Plantation, the following or second year put them upon some further attempts for setting things in a way of better subsistence. For in the first place Mr. Isaac Allerton was sent to England<sup>1</sup> to make a final issue, by composition or otherwise, of the matter depending there between the Adventurers and the Plantation, according to what had been the year before begun by Captain Standish. Accordingly the said Allerton returned in the usual season<sup>2</sup> of the following year, ||having||<sup>3</sup> dispatched the affair he was employed in according to expectation. But for matters at home among themselves, in the said year 1627, in the first place they apprehended a necessity of granting a larger distribution of land than ever yet they had done: for it seems hitherto they had allowed to each person but one acre for his propriety, besides his homestead or garden plot, that they might the better keep together, for more safety and defence, and better improvement of the general stock, therein following the prudent example of the conquering Romans in their first beginnings, when every man contented himself with two acres of land, or as much ground as he could till in one day; thence it came to pass with them, that the word *Jugerum* was used to signify the quantity of an acre with us, i. e. so much as a yoke of oxen did usually eare (from the Latin *arare*) in one day. And amongst them he was looked at as a dangerous person, that did aspire to more than seven such acres: the reason of which division among the Romans seems rather to be taken from the good quality of the soil, than the greatness or<sup>3</sup> quantity of the portion, it being more than probable that seven acres of their land, well improved, would bring forth more good grain than four times that number in or about Patuxet, now called Plymouth. But to be short, our friends, in this their second distribution, did arise but to twenty acres a man, i. e. five acres in breadth at the water side, and four in breadth up-

|| when he ||

<sup>1</sup> "I suppose in the fall," says Prince, p. 239.—H.

<sup>2</sup> In the spring. Prince, p. 242.—H.

<sup>3</sup> First written of *the*.—H.

wards toward the main land, resolving to keep such a mean in the division of their lands, as should not hinder the growth of the Plantation by the accession of others, to be added to their number, which example and practice it had been well for New England it had been longer followed; for then probably, though they had had fewer Plantations, those which they had would have more easily been defended against the barbarous assaults of their savage and cruel enemies.

During this time the painful and diligent labor of this poor people is not to be forgotten, who all this while were forced to pound their corn in mortars, not having ability in their hands to erect other engines to grind, by the help either of the winds or water, as since hath been commonly obtained.

This year also happened a memorable accident (recorded by the inhabitants ||there||) of a ship with many passengers bound for Virginia, who, having lost themselves at sea, (either through the insufficiency or bodily inability of the master and his men, or numbers of the passengers, the scurvy having strangely infected the bodies or minds of the whole company,) did in the night stumble over the shoals of Cape Cod, and the next day were forced over a sandy bar that lay at the mouth of a small harbor in ||<sup>2</sup> Manamoick|| Bay, by which means their lives were all preserved. For news thereof being brought to the Governor of Plymouth, he afforded them assistance to repair their vessel,<sup>a</sup> but for want of good mooring she was forced ashore, where at last she laid her bones; the company being all courteously entertained by the inhabitants, till they could get themselves transported to their intended port, all but some that remained as monuments of special mercy in the country where they had been so eminently delivered.<sup>1</sup>

This year, (1627,) likewise began an intercourse of trade between our friends of New Plymouth and a Plantation of the Dutch, that had a little before settled themselves upon Hudson's river, Mr. Isaac De Rosier, the Dutch Secretary, being sent to congratulate the English at Plymouth in their enterprise, desiring a mutual correspondency, in way of traffic and good neighborhood, upon account of the propinquity of their native soils and

|| themselves ||

|| <sup>a</sup> Merrimack ||

<sup>1</sup> The chief amongst them are Mr. Fells and Mr. Silsby; the master, Johnston, a Scotchman. Bradford and Morton.—H.

long continued friendship between the two nations.<sup>a</sup> This overture was courteously accepted, by the Governor and people of New Plymouth, and was the foundation of an advantageous trade that, in following years, was carried on between the English in these parts, and the said Plantation of the Dutch, to their mutual benefit. But whatever were the honey in the mouth of that beast of trade, there was a deadly sting in the tail. For, it is said, they first brought our people to the knowledge of Wampampeag; and the acquaintance therewith occasioned the Indians of these parts to learn the skill to make it, by which, as by the exchange of money, they purchased store of artillery, both from the English, Dutch, and French, which hath proved a fatal business to those that were concerned in it. It seems the trade thereof was at first, by strict Proclamation,<sup>1</sup> prohibited by the King; "Sed quid non mortalia pectora cogis, Auri sacra fames?"<sup>2</sup> "The love of money is the root of all evil."<sup>3</sup> No banks will keep out the swelling sea of their exorbitant desire, that make haste to be rich, which is ready to drown men's bodies, as well as souls, in perdition, that are resolved so to be, right or wrong. For the remaining years of this second lustre, little else is kept in mind, by any of the inhabitants, worth the communicating to posterity, save the death of some principal men that had borne a deep share in the difficulties and troubles of first settling the Plantation; such as Mr. Richard Warren<sup>4</sup> and others, who ended their pilgrimage here on earth; and after much labor and anxiety, both of body and mind, quietly fell asleep in the Lord. Foundation and corner stones, though buried, and lying low under ground, and so out of sight, ought not to be out of mind; seeing they support and bear up the weight of the whole building. "The memory of the just shall be blessed."

During all this lustre, also, the people of Plymouth held the same course in their elections; nor did they make any alteration till the year 1633, when Mr. Edward Winslow was first chosen Governor; \*to whom were added two more Assistants, seven in all, with which number last, that Colony ever since contented themselves as was said before.\*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This Proclamation, prohibiting "interloping and disorderly trading to New England in America," bears date Nov. 6, 1622, and may be seen in Hazard's State Papers, i. 151-2.—H.

<sup>2</sup> Virgil, *Æn.* III. 56.—H.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 10.—H.

<sup>4</sup> In 1628, says Morton.—H.

<sup>5</sup> See page 91.—H.

But forasmuch as, about the beginning of this lustre, at least before it was half run out, the Massachusetts Bay was begun to be planted, so that after 1628 the history of the affairs of New England is to be turned into that channel; we must, in what follows, look a little back, till we come to the springhead of that stream, and take notice of every turn of Providence that helped to raise or increase that broad river with streams; of which more in the next, and following chapters.

About September,<sup>1</sup> § in the year § 1630, was one Billington executed at Plymouth for murder. When the world was first peopled, and but one family to do that, there was yet too many to live peaceably together; so when this wilderness began first to be peopled by the English, when there was but one poor town, another Cain was found therein, who maliciously slew his neighbor in the field, as he accidentally met him, as himself was going to shoot deer. The poor fellow perceiving the intent of this Billington, his mortal enemy, sheltered himself behind trees as well as he could for a while; but the other, not being so ill a marksman as to miss his aim, made a shot at him, and struck him on the shoulder, with which he died soon after. The murderer expected that, either for want of power to execute for capital offences, or for want of people to increase the Plantation, he should have his life spared; but justice otherwise determined, and rewarded him, the first murderer of his neighbor there, with the deserved punishment of death, for a warning to others.

## CHAP. XVIII.

### *The discovery and first planting of the Massachusetts.*

SEVERAL mariners, and persons skilled in navigation, (whether employed by others in a way of fishing and trading, or to satisfy their own humors in making further and more exact discoveries of the country, is not material,) had some years before looked down into the Massachusetts Bay. The inhabitants of New Plymouth had heard the fame thereof, and in the first year after their

<sup>1</sup> In October, says Prince, p. 319.—H.