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"THE PILGRIMS OF THE ROCK."

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ORATION,

DELIVERED IN THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

BEFORE THE

SOCIETY OF THE SONS OF NEW ENGLAND

OF

PHILADELPHIA,

AT THEIR SECOND ANNIVERSARY

On the 23d December, 1845.

BY

JOSEPH R. CHANDLER,

ONE OF THE VICE-PRESIDENTS.

PHILADELPHIA:

PRINTED BY JOHN C. CLARK, 60 DOCK STREET.

1846.

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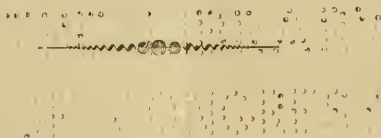
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CORRESPONDENCE.

Philadelphia, Dec. 22, 1845.

To JOSEPH R. CHANDLER, Esq.

DEAR SIR,—At a meeting of the Board of Officers of the Society of the Sons of New England, held this day, it was unanimously

“*Resolved*, That the thanks of this Society be presented to Joseph R. Chandler, Esq. for the eloquent Oration delivered on the occasion of our Second Anniversary, and that he be requested to furnish a copy for publication.”

In behalf of the Society, I take pleasure in communicating to you the above resolution, trusting you will comply with the request therein contained. I have the honour to be,

Very respectfully,

Your ob't. servant,

JOHN HANCOCK,

Recording Sec'ry.

Philadelphia, Dec. 26, 1845.

DEAR SIR,—I have the pleasure to acknowledge your note, conveying a request of the Officers of the Society of the Sons of New England, that I would present for publication, the Oration which I had the honour to deliver at their recent Anniversary. The address, though hastily prepared, is the property of the Society, and is with deference, submitted to their disposal. Please to convey to the gentlemen whom you represent, my thanks for their kindness.

I am, with great respect,

Your obedient servant,

JOS. R. CHANDLER.

JOHN HANCOCK, Esq. *Secretary*

Of the Society of the Sons of New England.

THE PILGRIMS OF THE ROCK.

It was the evening of the Christian Sabbath; all Nature seemed to have rested from even the work of praise, and to have stood in silent beauty, musing its adoration.

The posthumous splendour of the retiring sun was gorgeously stretched along the western sky; and in the east the snow on the lofty headland seemed to liquefy in the retiring light which the shadows of evening had chased slowly up its sides; here and there around, jutting points of land were tinged with the hues of the western sky, or lofty isolated hills lifted themselves up from the plain in solitary grandeur, while embosomed by these was a broad bay, whose beautiful waters were mirroring the gush of the Northern Aurora, or reflecting the first lustre of the stars that were struggling into visible existence through the fading glory that lingered in the vault above.

On the outer edge of this beautiful sheet of water, under the lee of one of the many islands which then dotted its surface, lay a small shallop, the appendage of some larger mercantile vessel; its appointments were meagre at best, but a recent storm had swept away its masts and sails and rudder, and the little barque lay a sheer hulk, scarcely affording shelter from the piercing cold of a December night; yet, up from that almost wrecked shallop went notes of joy and thankfulness for deliverance, and prayers for the safety of those whom the worshippers had left a little behind; prayers for the safety of their companion pilgrims; for the comfort of the aged, the preservation of the wise, and the support of the weak. Their hearts and their affections were turned to the pilgrims they

had left in the *Mayflower*; their spirits went to commune with the crowded tenants of that Heaven-preserved ark, where lofty thoughts occupied the leader-men; where holy musing fixed the mind of the pious mother, while the wave rocked to sleep the sea-born and the sea-borne infant, whose only lullaby had been the tempestuous winds of the storm-enduring coast.

The day had ceased,—the voice of prayer and the notes of praise were hushed in the little shallop, and the first Sabbath of the Pilgrims in Plymouth bay had been spent in holy rest and hearty worship.

On the morrow the inmates of the shallop surveyed the coast, marked the channel, and then, on the 22d of December, 1620, as we reckon time, they landed upon a projecting rock, and amid the ice and snow that had gathered upon its surface, they bowed in thanksgiving to Him who had directed them to a home by his providence, and made the winds and the storms the ministers of his will for their guidance.

Mr. President, Officers and Members
of the Society of the Sons of New England,

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—

To celebrate this *landing*, to mark our appreciation of the motives by which the actors were influenced, and to derive profit from a contemplation of their virtues, have we come up hither this afternoon.

We stand in the light of great names; and while we challenge for them the highest praise that has ever been bestowed upon the founders of a nation, we think ourselves able to trace up to them (as the source, or at least the channel,) those principles which fixed the true liberty of man on the foundation of virtue, and perpetuated freedom by the saving influences of piety. We affect to claim for these men no exemptions from the infirmities and imperfections of human nature, but we do believe that the errors in their conduct and plans which are now manifest, were then not perceptible to others, nor sus-

pected by themselves; and without incurring the risk of excusing uncharitableness, or pleading for intolerance now, we may admit it is not impossible that the rough moral climate in which the Fathers lived, may have rendered necessary some protection of the delicate principles they were rearing, as some of the most pleasant fruits are guarded by nature with thick and hirsute envelopes.

To judge correctly of the character and influencing motives of the first settlers of Plymouth Colony in New England, we must understand something of the history of the times in which they lived, something of the political and social condition of men; and could we descend into their family relations, and fully appreciate all the peculiarities of their domestic connexions, we should be yet better qualified to form a judgment of their acts, and refer those acts to their true motives. The political relations of man may change often and greatly, without affecting his conduct so much as a trifling movement in his domestic positions—there, at the centre, the least change works important aberrations at the extremity of the radii, and society has been convulsed, and governments disturbed, by circumstances that have had their origin in the narrowest relations of life; and philosophers and historians, astonished at *the results*, have vainly sought for the motive-cause, or pleased themselves with erecting theories of causes and effects, upon the movements, wishes, and fate of the rulers of nations.

The public change of religion in England, begun by Henry VIII. and consummated by Elizabeth, was marked by extraordinary convulsions, that had their origin not more in the opposition to certain doctrines generally prevalent and almost universal, than in the ceremonies and insignia by which the exposition of those doctrines were illustrated; and the forms and ceremonies came to be insignia of the doctrine, and the hostility to a creed was manifested by violence towards the outward ceremonies and decorations of its officers.

The consummation of the change under Elizabeth was short of the requirements of many; the revolution of *opinion* had

gone beyond the revolution in enactments and ceremonies; and the power which had effected the change that was admitted by the government, was composed of a few who wished to alter, and of many who wished to destroy. The conservatives held the government, and would be quiet; the destructives had the ear of the people, and were restless and laborious.

The movements of the discontented were, however, only with direct reference to their views of religion; they never professed nor intended political hostility to their rulers. Then the divine right of the sovereign was generally admitted, and the "Lord's anointed" seemed to be exempted from the antagonism of men who lacked the sacred unction; yet where the church is a part of the State, open hostility to its requirements assumes the complexion of treason; and those who inveighed against the authority of the prelates, came to be considered as chargeable with open action against the government, while they perhaps considered themselves as only asking for their share of benefits of that reformation which they had aided to achieve. The spirit of Luther had been manifest in the early periods of the religious revolution in England, but the doctrines of Calvin were operating in the minds of the later movers; and these were proclaimed with such an unction, that all the ordinary accessories of church establishments seemed to be not only of indifferent value, but they came soon to be regarded as cumbrous appendages, that retarded the action of the mind, and hindered the progress of those great truths that are above all appreciation—truths that, in early promulgation, warrant a neglect of all ordinary appearances, and dispense with those conventional arrangements that may be appropriate to the maintenance of the forms of religions, when the spirit has been allowed its perfect work, untrammelled, unlogged, unimpeded.

The spirit which was operating at the time to which I allude, was not one roused by a question of tithes or of political restrictions; it was not to be allayed by a concession which saved a contribution from limited incomes, or released the

complainants from those obligations that had from time immemorial been imposed upon them, and which they had never refused to discharge. The disquiet was caused by the restrictions upon the exercise of religious opinions long prevalent throughout the kingdom, though not always openly avowed; opinions which had been rather adopted than promulged, and which had really begun to assume form, distinctness, and a creed-like shape, when men were invited to weigh the difference between the ancient religion of the kingdom, and that which had been *allowed* by Henry VIII., modified and moulded into "form and pressure" under Edward VI., and revived under Elizabeth. Those who asked the people to think for themselves, when Edward, their monarch, was scarcely allowed the privilege, little thought how the many had been thinking; still less had they calculated the extent to which their own permission reached; and when the Virgin Queen had disposed of those who had distinguished themselves by cruelty under her sister's administration, and of those who had refused to renounce the religion which Mary had encouraged and sought to establish, she turned to the establishment of a church of which she was to be the head, and was startled at the too obvious truth, that the most zealous opponents of her sister's reign had, in the liberty of private interpretation, reached the conclusion that the forms which an established church required, were unfriendly to their spiritual progress, and that a liturgy was a hindrance of hearty devotion.

The spirit which sought to force a conformity by the fires of Smithfield was not quenched, and a Court of High Commission had authority to propound an oath to the non-conforming priest or layman: if he took the oath, he was convicted upon his own statement; if he refused, he was imprisoned for contempt. I need not tell an audience assembled in this country, in the nineteenth century, that this mode of dealing with the consciences of the people, while it served to ensure a conformity to a church, was soon to call into existence an opposition that would be strengthened in its

hostility to the religious establishment, that sustained itself by persecution,—and in time would inquire into the necessity of submitting to the political dominancy by which the religious intolerance was sustained. The progress of this hostility was slow, but sure; the people lacked the daily press to rouse the better class to an open assertion of their rights, and to stimulate the multitude to vengeance for their wrongs—but it came in time. In Elizabeth's ear, the few whispered their belief in a church without a bishop—over the headless trunk of Charles, they proclaimed their confidence in a state without a king.

The class of citizens, generally, who opposed the religious arrogance of Elizabeth, and who demanded greater simplicity in worship, more purity of life in the worshippers, were, in contempt for their virtue, denominated *Puritans*—a name not then invented, nor first applied; for in the early ages of Christianity, classes of dissenters, who affected singular austerities, were called Cathari, or Puritani. “Heretics,” at various stages of Church history, will be found thus designated; and when the name of Puritans was applied to members of the Church of England, and others of that nation, for nonconformity with requisitions of the established church, it was supposed that they had been by the designation devoted to immediate dissolution; but the time had passed when a name could destroy. The term Quaker became sanctified by the purity and goodness of those on whom it was bestowed; and the Methodists flourished with unparalleled vigour, under the title which had been borrowed to ensure to them the world's contempt.

The death of Elizabeth was looked to, as the end of persecution, when it was known that James of Scotland would succeed to the British throne. But the new monarch seized upon all the appendages of British royalty, and was as proud of being at the head of the church, as at the head of a kingdom; and he anathematized not only those who could not conform to the prescribed rules and ceremonies of public worship, but he anathematized also, the very idea of tolerance, as an encouragement to damnable heresy;—“I will

make these Puritans conform themselves," said this pedantic monarch, "or I will harry them out of the land, or I will do worse."

He was, providentially, saved the guilt of doing worse; he drove from the pulpit hundreds of the ministers of the Gospel, and then he harried priest and people out of the land.

In 1608, a band of Puritans left England for Holland. I will not recite the evils to which they were subjected in making their escape, nor the sufferings they endured while sojourning among the Hollanders. The restless, the aspiring spirit of the leaders of the Puritans, was not satisfied with the position they occupied in the Netherlands; they had no share in the government under which they lived, and they were wounded by the consequences of the very freedom of opinion allowed to others, and which allowed them to think, speak, and worship, as they desired. To them, let us say it in justice to our Fathers, to them it was not enough to be allowed to worship as they believed; they desired to be beyond the influence of antagonist creeds; they dreaded the laxity that was growing up under the boasted universal toleration of Holland; and they, as men who had left a beloved home, felt mortified, that instead of acquiring distinctness of position, they were being fast absorbed in the institutions around them, and that before long they would be merged in the population of the country that had given them refuge. They loved their native country, they loved their government; and since they could not enjoy the privileges of worship at home, they felt disposed to seek that advantage with the sacrifice of as few attachments as was compatible with its attainment; they consequently made arrangements to emigrate to the New World, and enjoy the pleasure of considering themselves subject to the civil laws of the Parliament of England, without conforming to the religious requisitions of its church.

Something of the wishes for conventual life, which had actuated others, and which were prevalent at that time, seemed to mingle in the motives of the Fathers; and they may be considered as having sought the western world with a view

of this separate sociality, by which alone their hierarchial views could be established, and the benefits of the State upon church government fully developed.

With these views they left Holland, where they had resided about twelve years, to emigrate to some part of the British possessions in America, having in view the vicinity of the mouth of the Hudson river; and after various disturbing circumstances, disappointments, and treachery, the *Mayflower*, Captain Jones, left Plymouth, England, on the 6th of September, 1620, with one hundred persons, beside the officers and crew of the vessel. Adverse winds, and ill-comprehended currents, set the ship farther north than her destination; and after trials by sea, and among the islands in the vicinity of Cape Cod, they cast anchor in the harbour at the extremity of that promontory, on the 11th of November; and having passed the vast ocean and a sea of trouble, says a historian, "before preparations as to further proceedings, they fell down upon their knees and blessed the Lord, the God who had brought them over the vast and perilous ocean, and delivered them from all dangers and miseries thereof."

The leaders of this expedition were not men to waste time in idle recreations; they had before them a business of infinite import; and while some explored the interior of the Cape, a party was sent in a shallop, a boat brought over in the *Mayflower*, to search for a suitable landing place, upon which to set up their rest. Proceeding along the indented coasts of the Cape in their open boat, the party entered what is now denominated Plymouth Bay, on Saturday, in a violent storm; spent the Sabbath as a day of sanctified rest; on the morrow landed on the "Forefathers' Rock," explored the edge of the Bay, and on Thursday returned to the *Mayflower* at the Cape. On the Monday following, the pilgrims landed, and commenced the town of Plymouth, the first Christian community in New England—the parent or leader of nearly all that have followed. There was commenced the practice of those virtues which create as well as bless a nation; there religion was made the basis of morals; there the indi-

vidual was merged in the community; there science bent itself to labour; and there, amid the storms and frosts of pitiless winter, delicate and beautiful woman suffered the pain and anguish that only woman can suffer. There, amid the cry of the famished wolf, and the howl of the jealous savage, the Pilgrim emigrant leaned upon the charged and pointed cannon, and worshipped the God of peace. There the blood of the aged congealed in the rigour of the terrible cold of the climate; and there, when the sun of early spring had melted away the snowy covering of the earth, the broken soil told that *forty-four* of the hundred that arrived had found a refuge from the blasts of the north, and the arrow of the savage;—in three months, nearly half of all who landed had ceased from their labours.

One circumstance in the deeply interesting events of the first month's residence of the Pilgrims in Plymouth is worthy of our memory. While the company were making military arrangements against the Indians that hung upon the borders, and seemed to threaten the destruction of the community, a savage, almost naked, came among the settlers, fearless, confident, and rash: he stood upright, and, to their astonishment, exclaimed, "Welcome, Englishmen." Though there was nothing miraculous in all this, yet such a salutation, from the first lord of the soil they had personally encountered, must have seemed auspicious to the Fathers; and had fancy been allowed a scope at such a time, the stranger savage, with his startling exclamation, might have been construed as the genius of a mighty people come to look at the graves of his fathers, and in the name of the Great Spirit to bid welcome those who were to be rulers, and to commend to their respect the dust of the great, with which the soil was teeming. Few, indeed, of that squalid race, comprehended much of the dignity of national existence. One tribe, however, nobly asserted their rights, and with all the strategy of war, and all the arts of diplomacy, sustained their substantive existence, till cruelty drove them from their sunny vales into hidden retreats of the almost pathless morasses; and treachery, dark

treachery, there gave up to the vengeance of the whites the lofty-minded sachem of a decaying but noble tribe. Fancy may have exaggerated the savage virtues of the children of Massasoit, who successively held the sceptre which their father relinquished with death; but truth itself awakens admiration for the lofty sentiments of royal dignity which burst the swelling heart of Alexander, as he was dragged a captive from his people, and threatened with a duration which is worse than death to an Indian chief. And who will not drop a tear of regret over the Wampanoag, the brother and successor of Alexander, the gallant and the noble Philip, who rallied his own tribe and his neighbours, to defend their soil, their people, and their rights, from the encroachments of those whose presence seemed to waste away the Indian tribes, as the rising sun dissipated the mists that hung upon their border swamps?

The question, as to the motives of the Fathers in emigrating to this country, is easily settled. History, unprejudiced, fair and admissible, tells the story; and in the hasty sketch which I have already given, may be found the means of judging of the question. The people of the congregation of the Rev. Mr. Robinson, the Pilgrim Fathers, and those whom they invited to share in their enterprise, left Holland, because neither social nor political advancement could be obtained there, and because the tolerance of the government, especially towards the sect of which the Fathers were members, seemed to weaken the efforts for religious attainment, and they turned their faces towards the New World, and towards Virginia, the general name of the portion of our country south of Connecticut, with a view of founding a colony, not of establishing a nation—of setting up a social edifice that should lean to England for *support*, while it should stand upon its proper foundation. They could scarcely be called a trading colony, though they accepted the patronage of a company established for trade, and if ever a combination was formed to extend religion by emigration, this handful of professors may be considered as associated for that purpose,—not to carry

the Gospel to others, not to teach all nations, not to convert heathens, or reconvert Christians, but to take with them their views of the Gospel, their ideas of Christianity, their form of church government, and to establish a sect or society, where the social or even political ruling actions should be derived from the code of the religious government; where the church should not only be superior to the state, but the state itself should be with the church, and of the church. I have already said that the Fathers evidently had in view a conventual life, not monastic, of course, for they came to spread their opinions without converting others,—but a religious community, governed by rules as strict as those which were professed by the religious orders of the continent of Europe at that time, and having this in view, they were not slow to prepare the code to which all were to submit, nor backward in applying the penal portions of the enactment to those who violated its requisitions.

I think it scarcely necessary to advance any historical facts in proof of this; the history of the early movements of the emigrants show what they desired, and their conduct before and after their arrival on this continent, proves that they had resolved on giving Puritanism a fair trial; of seeing whether religion was indeed “profitable unto *all* things.”

With this view of the motives of the Fathers, we are prepared to find them intolerant of teachers of opposite doctrines. We are prepared to hear, that they searched out opinions at variance from their own, and made them a ground for rigorous visitation. They left England because their opinions were not *tolerated*—their nonconformity was made a penal offence, and they departed from Holland, partly because the neglect to support these opinions by penal enactments, denoted an indifference to creeds which often results in skepticism.

Thus moved, the Fathers deemed themselves called on to propound what they considered apostolical doctrines and rites, and to prepare for their establishment and observance in the New World. They did not contemplate interference with the rights and opinions of others. They had not in view the

subjection of any man to their dominancy; nor the disturbance of any political or social body, by the proclamation and observance of their rules; and when they had been driven from their route for Virginia, toward the untrodden shores of that extremity of New England, they felt that Providence had favoured the principal, the religious, object of their emigration.

When, therefore, they found one of their own number departing from the rules of the association, they did not inquire what would have been that man's rights in England, or under English laws, but they brought him before their own magistrates, and caused him to be dealt with according to the laws and ordinances of the association; for we may scarcely call it a colony—nothing but the formal profession of regard to the British, seemed to connect it with the government under which the people were born; and few small governments of Europe, even at the present time, can boast of so many attributes and acts of sovereignty, as distinguished the colony of Plymouth for several years.

I have, I confess, made these remarks to meet the charge of intolerance and persecution, which is preferred against the little colony, upon its conduct towards professors of other sects. They felt, and they proclaimed the fact, that they had sought that obscure corner, in which to enjoy certain opinions; and especially to try the experiment of a species of hierarchy, in which all political powers should emanate from the church, and be administered by members thereof; and, consequently, all doctrines and opinions hostile to that church, would become treason to their state. The stranger, who came among them with opinions at variance from their own, was examined to know the extent of his heresy—was admonished of the spiritual and political dangers from his creed—and finally, if unyielding, was banished the colony: his return was, of course, a violation of a statute, to be punished according to the severity of its provisions. It is true, that the Pilgrims considered a departure from their platform, on some of the disputed and complex theories of theology, touching the

operation of God, and the nature and character of his dealings with sinful or repentant or forgiven man, as of much greater moment, than an open profession of belief in what they had deemed a settled, established heresy. And while a sojourner who might avow a belief in the necessity of Episcopal ordination, would, *after* the rites of hospitality, be dismissed beyond the line of the Pilgrims' authority, the stranger cast upon their shore, was invited to become one of the community, though he openly professed his belief in the doctrines of the church of Rome. Nay, he continually, during his lifetime, displayed upon his dress the outward signal of that belief, and dying, directed it to be placed upon his breast, when they laid him in their consecrated earth.

Strange—it may seem—very strange, that so intolerant of the shades of their own creed, they should have admitted among them one of such an opposite belief. But the Fathers were wise men, and wisdom dwells with prudence; they were wise to discern that the peculiarities of an opposite creed, if not enforced by rites and ceremonies, would, from the very opposite distinction of theirs, work no evil upon their established faith and habits, while shades of difference would blend with the hues of their own belief, and impart something of the peculiar colouring in the amalgamation.

This worldly prudence, this careful foresight of the Fathers, a kind of acuteness sometimes discernible in the conduct of their descendants, was doubtless manifested in the encouragement which they gave a learned practical physician and surgeon to abide in a small community whose inmates were constantly exposed to sickness and injuries that daily called for the ministration of medical and surgical science.

But I shall be asked whether the Fathers did not violate the great Christian principles of religious liberty—did they not persecute? or, if not openly, did they not keep alive a spirit of hostility towards other sects, inconsistent with Christian charity?

I stand the eulogist of the Fathers; the humble advocate of their claims to the admiration of the world for their lofty vir-

tues and their Christian graces. I hope to show that from them were transmitted the virtues that have blessed the nation; that have made the region which they inhabited the Mecca of the freeman's heart; whither devout pilgrimages are made to strengthen faith in human excellence, and to purify the virtue of patriotism.

I plead with grateful, selfish love, for the fame of the Fathers, which is part of the patrimonial inheritance of "the Sons of New England." I stand up for the glory of the rock that received these ocean-pilgrims, the rock whose name has become the exponent of all the patriotic virtues and the homely affection with which I invest the ancestors through whom we are; and which the world acknowledges to have found a genial home in that pilgrim land, and faithful cultivators in the pilgrim host. I stand here to challenge the honour of these for ourselves, and to proclaim them to the world. And yet, when the question is put—"these Pilgrim Fathers, who sought a distant clime to cultivate piety, and worship God in peace, were they intolerant of the creed of others?" I pause—not to deny the charge implied, not to answer in the negative—*amicus Soerates, amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*. The Pilgrims were our ancestors, their descendants were our fathers, and they taught and practised love of kindred and love and awful reverence to all of ancestral race: but they left the sweets of home; they encountered the dangers of the sea; they established themselves in the solitude of the wilderness, that they might worship the God of *truth* in spirit and in *truth*. Truth, then, and a love of truth are the best homage which I can pay to the best virtues of the Pilgrim Fathers; and their own light which they handed down to us, I turn back upon them, and expose the single imperfection of their character, and grant them intolerant. From policy and consistency the Fathers were intolerant.

I have sought to show on what ground the Fathers might be considered intolerant, and to excuse, if not justify, that intolerance, before I made the confession in that regard. We must judge of men by the light in which they stand; not al-

ways by that in which we are placed. The illumination that is about us, often renders more opaque the darkness that is around others; to judge correctly of men of other times, we must transport ourselves to their position—must see by their light, judge by their means of ascertaining right, and comprehend exactly the prevalence of correct moral principles around them. No men, more than the Fathers, could afford to allow us to strip away from them all that belonged to the time in which they lived, and to judge them by what belonged equally to all times; but we owe it to our own times, and to a grateful sense of what Providence has allowed us to derive from the virtues of the Pilgrims, to give them the benefit of the adverse circumstances in which they were placed, and to allow their advocate to plead those circumstances in extenuation of what, in our light, is discovered to be erroneous.

In conceding what we do with regard to the intolerancy of the Fathers, we must, I repeat it, not forget the times in which they lived, nor the circumstances in which they had been trained. We cannot doubt that the great principles of the rights of man, his social, political, and religious rights, were labouring in their breasts, and operating through their lives, while a portion of their conduct was influenced by some opinions inconsistent with those lofty motives, some lingering of the old elements that remained unsanctified by the operation of the new.

But we must not plead the errors in the conduct of the Fathers against the purity of their principles; we must not allow their treatment of the natives to lead us to deny their general philanthropy, nor their severity towards other sects to doubt the general charity of their hearts.

There is in the bosom of every pioneer or reformer in morals and religion, a lingering attachment to some portion of what he has left; and the heart and the affection, even the judgment itself, sometimes pay tribute to their early object, long after the faith is pledged to another: nay, I do not know but such a lingering attachment, such a blending of the last of the old with the first of the new, may be necessary to a

proper use of the latter. Men often err in policy, who are right in principle; and they sometimes adhere to the machinery, long after they have left the measures, of a party.

High claims are made upon the gratitude of the present generation to the Pilgrim Fathers, for the permanent blessings which have resulted to us from the establishment of the true principles of civil liberty, with the foundation of Plymouth Colony. The advent of the Pilgrims is regarded as the introduction to this continent of those principles which led to our national existence, and which, by reaction, lighted up the flame of liberty on the other side of the Atlantic.

The motives of the Pilgrims are often inferred from a remarkable document which they all signed on board the *Mayflower*—a species of magna charta, which seemed to ascertain and insure the right of all, while it recognised a perfect equality of those rights in every member of the community; and this document is often quoted as the germ of our Declaration of Independence, and the foundation of our national constitution. Allow me to read it.

“DOCUMENT.

“In the name of God, Amen. We, whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland, king, defender of the faith, &c., having undertaken, for the glory of God and advancement of the Christian faith, and honour of our king and country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do, by these presents, solemnly and mutually, in the presence of God and of one another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation, and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof, do enact, constitute, and frame such just and equal laws and ordinances, acts, constitutions, and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the colony, unto which we promise all due subjection

and obedience. In witness whereof, we have hereunto subscribed our names, at Cape Cod, the 11th day of September, in the year of the reign of our sovereign lord, King James, of England, France, and Ireland, the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth, Anno Domini 1620."

This was an instrument prepared on ship-board, and intended to give *authority*, while it proclaimed right. I discover in it, indeed, the sentiments of Christian men, seeking the peace and harmony of their confederacy, and exhibiting a remarkable tact in insuring from all an acknowledgment of the rights of the new magistracy to prevent the violation of any ordinance enacted or adopted.

The Pilgrim Fathers were, in theory, monarchists; they had strong faith, an inherent unexamined faith, in the divine right of kings; they fled away, indeed, from the authority of King James, because he attempted to enforce the act of conformity; but had that monarch proclaimed hostility against Episcopacy, and a preference for the Independents, his royal prerogatives would have found its stoutest supporters in the emigrants.

They left England, not because there was a king with almost unlimited power, but because that king did not exercise that power in their behalf. The compact which we have just read, was no more intended for a proclamation of democracy or republicanism, than are the articles of agreement between mercantile partners. The paper was as between so many subjects; and their allegiance to the king is as promptly acknowledged as their dependence on God; nor is there any reason to believe that these Pilgrims contemplated a transfer of their allegiance, or looked for any modification in the prerogatives of the sovereign. The theory of republicanism could have had but few charms for them; they had known nothing of it in England, and all that they had read of the republics of early times, or of those of Italy of later date, could scarcely have moved in them a desire to try the experiment which would cost so much to begin, and which, from all pre-

cedents, they must have believed was destined to a turbulent life and an early death.

Yet from that race of men sprung the stern asserters of human rights. On the very territory where they colonized, grew, and still exists, the purest principles of practical republicanism. The practice commenced indeed with the Fathers, and with every enlargement of the little circle that swelled out from the rock, was an extension of this principle. The necessities of their situation compelled the Fathers to select their rulers and officers from some special adaptation of the qualities of the person to the duties of his station. And this supposes a change whenever the duties changed their character, or the abilities lost their application. Office was not only a trust and a responsibility, but it implied augmented labour. And the true theory of republicanism then seemed to be developed in practice, which the necessity of the colony demanded.

The cold, uninviting climate, and the unproductive soil of Plymouth Colony attracted no scion of aristocracy to a lieutenantancy or governorship over this people; and it is a remarkable fact, that the colony passed from infancy to youth, from the gristle to the bone, without the interference of the crown, without the vampire visitation of delegated officers, without the habits or presence of one come to rule that he might live. This circumstance, you will perceive, was most favourable to the growth of republican habits; and while the colonists were constantly admitting the rights of the king, acknowledging his authority, "making mention of him in their prayers," they were silently, but steadily becoming so republican in all their manners and customs, so republican in all their political and social developments, that when at length they had acquired enough consequence to provoke the interference of the crown in their behalf, they had contracted such a habit of self-government, and such a distaste for sharing their earnings with those who only came to rule, that their nonconformity in politics, in the colony, was a worse evil than their nonconformity in religion at home.

You will perceive that though I address the Sons of New England, I speak only of the Fathers of the "Old Colony," and the time will not suffice for me to do more than even hint at these patriarchs.

And so different were the objects of many of the emigrants to other parts of New England, the founders of different portions of Massachusetts Colony for example, so different their mode of procedure, that while some general characteristics are common to all who came within the first quarter of a century after the landing in Plymouth, still there was a marked difference in the Plymouth people in the mode of government, their objects, their plans, their connexion with the natives, and their treatment of Europeans of other creeds.

The people of Plymouth were rather intolerant than persecuting, although some instances of the latter may be adduced; yet it is evident that even these cases seemed to be justified more by the circumstances and conduct of the persecuted than were those of Massachusetts Colony. My remarks, though susceptible in many cases of general application to the Fathers of New England, are, however, meant specially for those of the first immigrants to that portion of the country.

We have admitted that the Pilgrims were intolerant in religion, and that they were monarchical in their political creed.

How then came that section of the country redolent with the sweets of Christian charity, and whence sprung the republican institutions which seemed by more than a century to anticipate the best work of the American Revolution?

The Pilgrims were not, as they have been represented, men of obscure condition and uninformed minds. Many of them were of elevated position in society; some had achieved honours in the stricken field; and almost all of them were men of such attainments as would give them rank among the learned even of the present day. Miles Standish possessed the boldness of a soldier with the military skill and attainments of a commander. Carver had the dignity, the coolness, the precaution, the self-command, that made him fit to be a governor; and Bradford, the gentle and the learned, would have

shone in any assembly of modern days. But all these men had been brought up in the influences of monarchy; they had not inquired into the powers of a man whose rights were said to be divine. The great contest in which they had shared from their youth upward was, not as to what should be the form of secular government, but what should be the form of worship. And when they left England, it was because they deemed the right of James to rule *there* a divine right; and they desired to seek a place where, without denying his political prerogatives, they need not be troubled with his religious power.

They established their government, it has already been stated, on the great principles of human equality, so far as it regarded those who joined the compact. They included their allegiance to their king, because as he was not present, they had no right to divest him of a single attribute of his kingly office. Mark how justice mingles in the inceptive acts of the Pilgrims.

When they landed, they proceeded according to their constitution; the only difference among them being that of office, bestowed by the vote of all; and gradually, in the absence of kingly interference, they established among themselves as perfect a republican system as could be devised, and this not with any such end in view. The object *proposed* was the establishment of a colony, in which their religious views should be carried out; the end *obtained* was the establishment of Christianity, the infusion of its spirit into every office and institution among them, and the development of a system of republicanism, that recognised and subsequently protected the rights of man.

I shall be told, perhaps, that trying the Fathers by the great standard of moral rights, allowing them the benefit of their motives only, we cannot claim for the Pilgrims any credit for the religious charity they cultivated, or the republicanism they established.

I ask nothing for the Fathers beyond their deserts, and my admissions this afternoon in their regard might be cited

against me as evidence of my indifference to their fame; but I am too proud of the credit of that noble band of men to shrink from any defence which their conduct may require; quite too proud to ask for their fame a single addition from acts or motives of doubtful propriety. Let us look at the truth. The Fathers projected a government, with a fixed determination to establish it in righteousness; they recognised the powers of a foreign monarch, but they admitted neither hereditary nor perpetual offices among themselves; they talked of a king, and many of their proceedings bore the outward impress of monarchical institutions, but when the time arrived for the king to enforce disagreeable authority, and thus disturb that system of equal rights which had been in practice, it was found impossible to attain the object. The habits and feelings of the people were altogether republican, however the government may have been denominated; and the struggle, consequent upon the determination of the king, was not on the part of the colonists, that they might break the yoke of authority,—but on the part of the executive, that he might apply that yoke to necks that had not been accustomed to its weight. Whatever, then, may have been the plans of the Pilgrims in their political or their religious institutions, it is evident that their own virtues, their constant regard for the rights of each member of their community, and their careful administration of all their ordinances, led to the establishment of that republicanism which they never proclaimed, and to the admittance of that tolerance to others, which they had deemed unjust to themselves.

The Fathers came to extend the limits of monarchical power, but their virtues produced a perfect republic; they landed, to hedge themselves about with religious intolerance, but their piety produced enlarged charity.

They sought a refuge in the wilderness from the persecution and evils with which they had been surrounded; and their advent was the means of diffusing life, prosperity, liberty and happiness, where they abode. As the sacred ark that was deposited for safety in danger, procured blessing and pros-

perity on all the possessions of Obed-edom, so did the virtues of the Fathers go forth upon the land, and the moral and physical wilderness was made to blossom like the rose.

Far back in other centuries, we have seen the spirit of human right labouring for expression; here and there utterance was given, but in language as unfamiliar to the mass as was the handwriting upon the wall of the Chaldaic king; and if there had appeared a prophet to translate the words in which the forereaching voice had uttered the awful sentence, men would have started at the annunciation, as did Belshazzar at the Hebrew's explication. Yet adown the current of years that spirit has passed, from time to time flashing out upon the uncomprehending darkness of human intellect.—Hundreds, inspired by its sacred illumination, had called upon their fellows to come up from the grave of despotism—but there has been no response. Often has a nation seemed travelling with the mighty throes of liberty. Italy has appeared ready to become the nursing mother of human rights. England has promised to supply the heirship of man's immortal inheritance, when some adverse events have prevented the fulfilment of the desire, and quenched the untimely hope of nations. These vast conceptions belonged to the world of thought beyond the seas; there and there alone could such a work begin, but there too the great dragon of despotism stood ready to destroy the offspring of the freedom of thought; and blessed was the mother of that freedom that could flee away into the wilderness,—do we speak irreverently when we add, “where she had a place prepared of God?”

This spirit of liberty, this sense of human rights by which the Fathers were influenced, and the deep principle of piety which mingled in all their plans of action, were great ingredients in the means of success. But it has appeared to me that there was one other, often overlooked, always underrated; one, without which all others would have been ineffective. The spirit of liberty would have been grieved by the acts of licentiousness; the sense of human rights would have been blunted by a want of sympathy with others; and the deep

principle of piety would have sunk into ascetic gloom, for want of some relieving light upon the dark shades of their stern character.

He who attempts to illustrate the virtues of the Fathers—he who seeks to explain the means of their ultimate success—or he who would point out the cause of the influence of their virtues on succeeding ages, must not pause at their piety; must not rest at the commendation of their respect for human rights; must not be satisfied with an exhibition of their Christian, heavenly virtues: these were all means, all instruments, all partial causes; but the spirit of liberty would have been quenched, their piety would have wrought no extensive good, and the effects of the Fathers' pilgrimage would have ceased with the life of those who left the *Mayflower*, if all had not been blessed, sanctified, preserved, by woman's attractive charms, woman's changeless love, woman's enduring faith.

They deeply wrong that pilgrim band, who represent the men cold, ascetic, insensible to social delights and domestic joy. They deeply wrong those sainted mothers, who withhold from them the highest praise which unstained virtue, which strong affection, which self-sacrifice can demand. We talk of the endurance of the Fathers; their self-abnegation; their painful departure from their homes and their native land; their endurance of the miseries of a crowded ship; and their support of suffering on an inclement shore: these, indeed, deserve our admiration, demand the homage of our thanks. But who yet has done justice to their companions; who has calculated the pangs of the young wife, drawn by domestic affections and wife-like obedience away from the home of her infancy, away from the blessing of her parents and the graves of her ancestors?—who has comprehended the misery which woman, delicate woman (for these women were delicately educated)—who has comprehended the miseries which these delicate women must have endured, crowded into that small vessel; miseries beyond the threatenings of the storm above, and the terrors of the deep below? who has calculated the mental suffering? I speak not in such a case of

the physical pain; but who has calculated the mental suffering with which the pilgrim wife fulfilled the destiny of her sex, and in that crowded vessel became the mother of the first-born of that pilgrim band?

Who has ventured to depict—who could comprehend the untold sufferings of the pilgrim mothers in the first months of their dreadful residence in that clime, amid the storms of snow and hail, with scarcely a partition between them and tempestuous heaven; when day by day they went forth and laid in the frozen earth the body of some loved one of their flock, and smoothed down the soil over the coffinless remains, lest the tumulus which affection should heap up, an altar over the sacred relics below, should indicate to the savage a means by which affections could be outraged afresh, and a new bitterness be added to sorrows for the dead?

Man stood in all these evils contending against their influences, buffeting them with "heart of controversy," deadening the pain of an attack by the efforts to avert and avenge the blow. He stood amid the perils of the present, sustained by a hope that the future was full of reward.

But woman, whose credit is passive virtue, stood uncomplaining, unshrinking, without the chance of effort, without a thought of remuneration; looking to the dispensations of Providence, and devoted to the scene around her. No vista opened the future to her; she stood meek, but firm, ready to receive, but not to return an injury; to bear, but not to revenge a wrong; to endure, not to murmur at evil; fixed, sustained, motionless, wrapt in the present.

It was their power to endure, and the quenchless love with which endurance wrought, that lighted up the home of the Pilgrim Fathers; that made cheerful the else wretched abode; that compensated for the sacrifices, and toils, and the dangers abroad, and awoke a sense, as it created a cause, of gratitude in the heart of the husband; and, as he kneeled to ask the protection of Heaven, he felt that at his side there was the occasion for thanksgiving and praise.

It was this influence that mitigated the severity of the

creed; it was this that moved the sternness of manners, that tended towards stoicism; it was this that made that colony not merely the abode of lofty principles, but the nursing mother of home affection.

I deem it a right to state, that almost all the charges of errors brought by the world against the Puritan Fathers, are drawn from the record which those Fathers, or their immediate descendants, made of their own proceedings. It is true that some may say, these confessions only go to prove either that they were indifferent as to public opinion, or else attempted to conceal the worst by an affected confession of minor wrongs. This is not candid. The simplicity and straightforwardness of all the accounts which we have from the early settlers, go to prove that they recorded events as they occurred, without much thought of the opinion of posterity; and we may adduce this very simplicity of narrative and admission of errors, as a proof of the truth and correctness of the statement. The kind of argument I now use, is freely applied by critics to any biographical or historical work; and it has been used by high authority as a *prima facie* argument of the truth of the New Testament history.

But at worst, the statements which the Fathers make of the proceedings which we now condemn, go to prove that such conduct was consistent with the spirit of the age in which they lived; and if not justifiable by the best customs of the present times, were sustained by the practice, and perhaps permitted by the precedents, with which they were familiar. They would not have recorded that of their own conduct which was an outrage upon established maxims. Those who do wrong knowingly, know too much to perpetuate the memory of their wrong. And while we claim for our ancestors the credit of anticipating, by their practice, the benefits which were slowly developing themselves elsewhere, we confidently refer all their errors to the customs, opinions, and economy of the times in which they lived; and we demand for them the charity which such a fact may justify. In return, let us not be unmindful that other communities of the times of our

Fathers, and earlier times, have an equal claim upon our charities; and when about to condemn the conduct of those communities, let us not forget the consideration which we invoke for our ancestors.

The spirit of persecution is one that follows closely on the heels of sectarian zeal, wherever manifested, and it is Protean in its forms and exercises. The waters that are brought to quench the flames at the martyr's stake, may be directed, by mischievous engines, with force sufficient to confer a martyr's crown. Public sentiment, and the growth of a knowledge of human rights, will banish the faggot and the cord, and purge the general statute that authorized their use. But still bigotry will track its victim into his social haunts, and set ward and watch upon his domestic habits; and coldness will supply the torture of the quenched flame, and conventional proscription do the work of the dungeon and the rack.

Persecution has not ceased, nor will it ever cease, till man shall learn that the spirit of Christianity is a spirit of forgiving love; that it sanctions no violence but that for direct defence; and it imputes even the aggression of the trespasser to an ignorance of the evil which he perpetrates. The temper of the disciple who would draw a sword in the times of difficulty, is noted as a beacon for avoidance; while the example and precepts for imitation are in the language and conduct of the Master, who bowed in meek endurance—with the prayer for forgiveness—"for they know not what they do."

Shall we not be proud of our descent? Do we not well to celebrate the advent of people prepared like these to found an empire and sustain it by virtue? It is easier to condemn the faults of the Pilgrims than to imitate their virtues. And, indeed, men would be more likely to sacrifice their principles, than to encounter what they endured to establish and enjoy those principles. The error of their course was a want of faith in the efficacy of their own creed; they distrusted the power of their own principles; they had not learned how invulnerable is truth, how much more she suffers from the inconvenience of her own armour, than from the slings of her antagonists.

They, however, in boldly avowing their own creed, gave an example of candour to their descendants; and while we find our fathers seeking to partition off the waters of truth for their own enjoyment, let us be ready to trace the stream, to trace it wherever it may meander, to trace it upwards to its glorious source, to be bold and constant in our inquiry, and to have no fear as to the effect of the response. Whatever truth may be, and wherever she may be, she will never shame her friends; she will sustain herself without the necessity of violence, and in time vindicate her cause, and reward her followers.

Plymouth bay is as beautiful now as when the Fathers found it; and December's sun shines on no more lovely scene. The evening twilight is as soft and gentle as when it was first reflected from the green waters below. Some islands that once dotted the surface of the bay, and some jutting promontories, that seemed to separate important portions, have been gradually abraded by the constant attrition of the sweeping tides, and all the mass of waters, once divided by these intervening objects, have flowed and blended into one beautiful sheet, that receives into its bosom the twinkling of the winter Pleiades, and mingle and reflect the varied light of the heaven above.

And this day, there stand on the margin of that bay, thousands of the good, the great, and the beautiful of our land; doing homage to the virtues of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Mayflower. Since the advent of the Fathers, indeed, the gentle action of reason, of truth, and Christian love, has softened down and appeased the feelings which were offended at the salient points of creeds. And now, from that sanctified rock, in holy communion with our present exercises, there goes up in perfect union and unbroken harmony, one choral hymn of praise to the God of our common Fathers; and there, at this moment is replenished, the ever-lighted lamp of gratitude, which pours back its rays upon the past, and lights forward the pathway of patriotism and religion.



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