

**HISTORY OF THE TOWN OF
PLYMOUTH, WITH A
SKETCH OF THE ORIGIN AND
GROWTH OF SEPARATISM**

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History of the Town of Plymouth, with a Sketch of the Origin and Growth of Separatism by
William T. Davis

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TOWN SQUARE OF PLYMOUTH.

HISTORY

OF THE

TOWN OF PLYMOUTH,

WITH A SKETCH OF THE

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF SEPARATISM.

ILLUSTRATED.

BY

WILLIAM T. DAVIS,

FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE PILGRIM SOCIETY.

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PREFACE.

THE body of this work was written as a contribution to a voluminous history of the County of Plymouth. The available space was necessarily limited, and consequently much of the material essential to the completeness of a town history was sparingly used, while some of it was omitted altogether. To remedy a defect, which would be more apparent in a distinct and separate work, an appendix has been added, in which some of the subjects referred to in the principal text are more fully treated, and some new subjects are introduced, which the reader may find interesting and instructive.

The numbers attached to the notes in the appendix correspond to numbers placed either between the lines of the principal text in connection with the subjects to which the notes relate, or in the spaces, where they might properly be inserted.

The author has long realized the want of a concise, yet comprehensive, sketch of the Pilgrim movement, its origin, its growth, its development, and of the settlement at Plymouth to which it finally led; a history from which the general reader might obtain, without laborious research, that amount of information which every educated man should possess in the various departments of American history. All readers are not students. The student of Pilgrim history is not deterred from the task of reading Mourt's "Relation," Morton's "New England's Memorial," Thacher's "History," Young's "Chronicles," Benjamin Scott's "Lectures," and the formidable array of other books, ancient and modern, bearing directly or indirectly on the subject. But the general reader looks for a single work, in which he may find an intelligible and connected outline of the whole Pilgrim story. It has been the aim of the author to meet both the wants of this class of readers and, to a limited extent at least, the more exacting demands of the antiquary and historian. In this aim he hopes that he has not wholly failed.

PLYMOUTH, March 20, 1885.

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HISTORY OF PLYMOUTH.

CHAPTER I.

SCROOBY—HOLLAND—THE VOYAGE—THE LANDING.

No history of this ancient town can make any claim to thoroughness without a reference to those movements in the Old World which resulted in its settlement. Though the fruit which has grown and is ripening on these western shores bears no resemblance to any seen before, the branches through whose channels it draws its life are grafts of the parent tree, for whose roots we must search in foreign soil. The evolution of principles and events, making the history of man a single chain connecting the world of to-day with the remotest past, tempts the historian into more remote fields than the demands of a mere historical sketch of any town, city, or even nation would justify. No clear statement, however, of the Pilgrim colonization of New England can be made without a record of the birth of those Pilgrim principles, whose conception had long before occurred, but whose gradual development demanded a virgin soil and a free air for their life and growth.

For the date of their birth we must go back at least as far as the Reformation. Under Henry the Eighth the seeds of the Reformation were sown. The hand which sowed them was guided not so much by Protestant impulses, as by a desire to revenge itself against the Pope. Owing to the determination of Clement to oppose his divorce from Catherine, Henry shook off his allegiance to Rome and declared himself the head of the Church. Afterwards provoked into new attitudes of hostility, and finally exasperated by a retaliatory excommunication, he initiated a movement which could not fail to draw the sunlight upon the seeds of Protestantism which were ready under favorable conditions to germinate and grow. Monasteries were suppressed, shrines were demolished, the worship of images was forbidden, and Wolsey, a prince

of the Roman Church, was arrested and tried for treason. In order that the minds of the people might be turned against Rome, the Bible, translated into English by Tyndale a few years before, and smuggled as a prohibited book into England from the continent, was permitted to be printed at home, and thus the popular use and reading of the Scriptures became the corner-stone on which the structure of religious freedom was destined to be built. But Henry remained a Catholic nevertheless. He was fighting a battle in his own camp, having raised the banner of revolt against his spiritual commander, all unconscious of the enemy of Protestantism 'at the gates taking advantage of the dissensions in the citadel to plant its standards on the walls.

Thus the reign of Henry the Eighth ended in 1547, and that of his son, Edward the Sixth, began. The new king, only ten years of age, under the protectorate of Sir Edward Seymour, Earl of Hertford, and eldest brother of Queen Jane, the mother of Edward, was placed as a pupil in the hands of John Cheeke, a Greek lecturer at the University of Cambridge, and Richard Cox, who instructed him in the Protestant faith. During his short reign the religious instruction of the people was urged, and the cause of Protestantism advanced. The statute of the six articles, sometimes called the Bloody Statute, enacted under the reign of his father, was repealed, and a new liturgy, or Book of Common Prayer, drawn up. The mass was changed into the communion; confession to the priest was made optional; the English Bible was placed in every church; marriages by the clergy were permitted; the removal of all images and pictures from the churches was ordered; and the ceremonies of bearing palms on Palm Sunday, candles on Candlemas-day, ashes on Ash Wednesday, and some of the rites used on Good Friday and Easter were forbidden. It could hardly be expected that the reform would be a radical one. A revolution in spiritual matters was not attempted, for there was danger that it could not be sustained. It was a reformation only that was sought, and thus in framing

the new liturgy many popish superstitious were retained, and the Roman manual was, to a great extent, adopted as its model. But, as in every reform the most speedy and thorough eradication of old errors is in the end the surest and safest method, so the timid or conservative policy pursued under Edward not only failed to appease the opponents of reform, but fell far short of meeting the requirements of the reformers, who were eager to destroy the faintest relics of Romanism.

The result of this policy was Puritanism; and the first Puritan was John Hooper, an Oxford scholar. Hooper had severely denounced, under Henry, the provisions of the Bloody Statute and fled to Germany, where he pursued his studies in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, and became a learned scholar and divine. Returning to London under the reign of Edward, he received orders from the king and Council to preach before the court once a week during Lent. In 1550 he was appointed bishop of Gloucester, but declined it on account of the oath of supremacy in the name of God and the saints and the Holy Ghost, and also on account of the habits worn by the bishops. The king respecting his scruples concerning the oath struck it out, and both the king and Cranmer were inclined to yield to his scruples concerning the habits also, but a majority of the Council said, "The thing is indifferent, and therefore the law ought to be obeyed." After a contest of nine months, in the course of which Hooper suffered a short imprisonment for his contumacy, a compromise was effected, by which he consented to be robed in his habits at his consecration and when he preached before the king, but at all other times he should be permitted to dispense with them.

Pending the settlement of this question the Reformation went on. The doctrines of the church were yet to be remodeled. Under the direction of Archbishop Cranmer and Bishop Ridley forty-two articles were framed upon the chief points of Christian faith, which, after correction and approval by other bishops and divines, received the royal sanction. These articles are, with some alterations, the same as those now in use, having been reduced to thirty-nine at the beginning of the reign of Elizabeth. The final work of reformation in the reign of Edward was a second revision of the Book of Common Prayer, by which some new features were added, and some of those to which advanced reformers had objected were struck out.

At the age of sixteen, Edward closed his reign, to be succeeded by Bloody Mary, under whose auspices Romanism was again reinstated in England, and the

reformatory laws of Edward were repealed. The persecutions which characterized her reign perhaps, however, were the means of advancing the Protestant cause more surely than would have been possible under Edward. The reformers, whose moderate demands might have been satisfied by a partial abandonment of Romish forms, were forced into exile and subjected in other lands to new and potent influences, which only served to make their demands more extreme when the time should again arise for them to be pressed. The current of Protestantism, which flowed towards the continent to escape the persecutions of Mary, flowed back, after her five years' reign, on the accession of Elizabeth, in separate streams,—one to buoy up and sustain the English Church with all the forms with which the new queen invested it, and the other to sweep away, if possible, every vestige of Romanism in its ritual. The contumacy of John Hooper was but a single Puritan wave, which met a yielding barrier and disappeared. With the return of the exiles from Geneva a new tide of Puritanism set in, with an ocean of resolute thought behind it, which no barrier was firm enough to stay. It began its career, as was the case with Hooper, with a simple protest against forms of worship, a protest which, when conformity was demanded by the bishops, gradually expanded into a denial of the power which demanded it. The more urgent the demand the greater the resistance, until persecution converted objection to a ritual into a conscientious contempt of prelatical power.

Thus Separatism appeared as the full blossom of the bud of Puritanism. Though the great body of Puritans remained within the ranks of episcopacy, desirous only of its reform, here and there were those who claimed the right to set up churches of their own, with their own church government, their own pastors and elders, subject to no control or interference either from the bishops or the crown. The first separation from the church worthy of note took place in 1587. A body of worshippers to the number of one hundred or more occupied a hall in London in Anchor Lane belonging to the company of the Plumbers, and held service in accordance with their own methods. The clergymen present were John Benson, Christopher Coleman, Thomas Roland, and Robert Hawkins, all of whom had been deprived of their livings for non-conformity. Among the prominent laymen was William White, who was described as "a sturdy citizen of London and a man of fortune." The inquiry naturally suggests itself whether William White the "Mayflower" Pilgrim may not have belonged to the same family, and been perhaps his son.

Thirty-one of these worshipers were sent to prison, and, after ten and a half months' confinement, were warned of greater severity on the repetition of their objectionable conduct, and then discharged.

In 1578 John Copping, Eliza Thacker, and Robert Brown, all clergymen of the established church who had been deprived of their livings by the bishops, became conspicuous in the Separatist movement. Brown was a man of high family, related to Lord Treasurer Burleigh, and chaplain to the Duke of Norfolk. He fled to Holland, where, while pastor of a Separatist congregation of English exiles, he wrote several books expounding Separatist doctrines, which were surreptitiously distributed in England. At the time of their publication Copping and Thacker were in prison, and in some way managed to aid in their distribution. For this offense they were transferred from the hands of the bishops, whose prisoners they were, to the secular power, and tried on the charge of sedition. In June, 1593, both died on the gallows. Brown returned to England, and after a sentence of excommunication finally recanted, and became the recipient of a living at the hands of those whose power he had so long denied and resisted. He had, however, been identified with the new movement sufficiently long to stamp his followers with the name Brownists, a name which was for a long period applied without regard to minor differences of opinion in matters of doctrine and church government to all who had separated themselves from the established church. At a later day John Robinson warned his congregation to throw off and reject the name, but it is a reasonable conjecture that he was influenced more by a disgust at the recantation of Brown than by any opposition to the views he had promulgated.

But the fate of Copping and Thacker had little effect in checking the onward movement of Separatism. The martyrdom of Barrow and Greenwood and Ap-Henry followed soon after, and added only fuel to the flame, which was burning too fiercely for any prelatical tyranny to extinguish. Henry Barrow was a graduate of Cambridge, a member of the legal profession in London, and a frequenter of the court of Elizabeth. John Greenwood, also a graduate of Cambridge, had been ordained in the church, and had served as chaplain in the family of Lord Rich, a Puritan nobleman of Rochford in Essex. John Ap-Henry, or Penry, as he is generally called in history, was a Welshman, who took his first degree in Cambridge, and the degree of Master of Arts at Oxford. They had all passed rapidly through the mild stage of Puritanism, which they found no fit resting-place, and entered with enthusiasm into the cause of Separatism.

As Separatism grew Puritanism grew also, and as naturally as fruit follows the flower, Puritanism was constantly and inevitably swelling into Separatism. While denouncing Separatism as a schism and hating schism as a sin, the Puritan, while thinking himself merely a non-conformist in methods, found himself drifting as unconscious of motion as the aeronaut into a positive repudiation of doctrine. Francis Johnson, a noted convert to Separatism, illustrated in his career the attitude and experience of a large number of Puritans. A bitter enemy of Separatism, though a determined Puritan, he lent himself with such earnestness to the suppression of a book published by Barrow and Greenwood that only two copies were preserved, one for himself and one for a friend. When he had done his work, as he said himself, "He went home, and being set down in his study he began to turn over some pages of this book and superficially to read some things here and there as his fancy led him. At length he met with something that began to work upon his spirit, which so wrought with him as drew him to this resolution seriously to read over the whole book, the which he did once and again. In the end he was so taken, and his conscience was troubled so as he could have no rest in himself until he crossed the sea and came to London to confer with the authors, then in prison." The result of his conversion was the organization, in 1592, of a Separatist congregation in Southwark, which was the original starting-point of a society still flourishing. In 1616, Henry Jacob became pastor of this church, followed by John Lothrop, who came to America in 1634, and was settled over the church in Scituate. Johnson, soon after the organization of his church, was banished from England and became pastor of a banished church in Amsterdam, where he "caused the same book which he had been the instrument to burn to be new printed and set out at his own charge."

But in the onward movement of Separatism it may be asked, What was the attitude of Puritanism? It must not be supposed because Separatists were Puritans that Puritans were Separatists, or that there was the slightest sympathy or friendship between the two. The Puritans adhered to the church, protesting only against some of its objectionable forms, and denouncing Separatism as a schism and a sin,—the Separatists pushed to the extremes of reform, and denounced those who tarried by the way. Indeed, in the Parliament of 1593, in which the Puritan element predominated in the Commons, a law was passed so qualifying the act of 23 Elizabeth, intended to apply to Papists only, as to impose the punishment of banishment on all who were guilty of writing or speaking against the