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WILLIAM BRADFORD

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## I.

### WILLIAM BRADFORD

IN undertaking the Southworth Lectures on Congregationalism, I am reminded that several themes of great importance have been treated, and in a sense made their permanent possession, by those who have stood at this desk before me. Our learned and beloved Dr. Henry Martyn Dexter, than whom none is more deserving of honored remembrance by all interested in Congregational history, here sketched out those marvellously patient studies on the beginnings of our religious story, afterward gathered into a stately volume under the title of *The Congregationalism of the last Three Hundred Years as Seen in its Literature*,—a volume which, though now eighteen years old, leaves to those who follow him but scanty gleanings of new facts to gather from his well-reaped field. Here, too, our honored Dr. A. Hastings Ross set forth, under the descriptive title of *The Church-Kingdom*, the most elaborate and, in some respects, the most suggestive presentation of our polity made in recent years. As incumbent of this lectureship, also, Dr. Amory H. Bradford has lately outlined the development of the

churches of our order in England, and shown the spiritual and institutional kinship of the Congregational body on both sides of the Atlantic.

Barred thus from the selection of certain topics which master hands have wrought upon, the present lecturer has deemed it alike the part of modesty and of wisdom to choose a simpler theme. Instead of trying to unfold before you the development of a great religious movement as a whole, or attempting to outline the proper organization of the Body of Christ, he has thought it best to present to you a brief series of biographical sketches of men prominent in various epochs of Congregational history. In connection with these lives something of the story of Congregationalism as a whole will necessarily be glanced at; but the individual, human element will be kept as prominent as is consistent with a recollection that the prescribed theme of these lectures is "Congregationalism."

In selecting the subjects of our studies one is embarrassed by the number of those who have almost equal claim to a place in our consideration. Congregationalism has never produced a single leader of overshadowing influence, as has Lutheranism, or Methodism, or Moravianism. As befits a polity essentially democratic, it has enjoyed in all periods of its history many guides of strong individuality, forceful character, and high moral worth. And, therefore, as a selection is imperatively demanded by the limitations of a course

of lectures, I shall present to you a series of men, all of them prominent in their times, but not the only, or exclusively the ablest, leaders of Congregationalism. I desire rather that they should be, as far as possible, typical not only of the periods in which they lived, but of a wide variety of Congregational life and thought. It is with this purpose in view that I have chosen William Bradford as the subject of this first lecture. Not a minister, not a holder, apparently, at any time of any churchly office, he was nevertheless so identified with the inception, the exile, and the transplanting of the Pilgrim Church that his experiences are an epitome of its history.

It is always difficult to picture to ourselves an era different from our own. We are, most of us, so much the creatures of the age in which we live that any appreciation of the thought, or even of the material surroundings, of a bygone generation is difficult; and even those of antiquarian tastes more often know a number of facts of interest regarding a past epoch than enter into its spirit. The past to us is like some strange country across the sea, from which explorers bring reports of customs and of interests which strike us as quaint or amusing because of their want of conformity to what we see about us; of heated excitement about questions which seem trivial because they do not happen to be the questions which concern us;—a land in which men move as in a haze, unreal, nebulous,

not flesh and blood as men and women whom our morning newspaper brings to our acquaintance. It is, therefore, no easy task to transport ourselves in fancy back more than three hundred years to the little Yorkshire farming hamlet of Austerfield, where Bradford was baptized on March 19, 1590, probably very shortly after his birth. What life may have been in such a rural townlet for an orphaned boy, brought up by a grandfather's and then by an uncle's care, only vigorous imagination will enable us to conjecture from the few hints that have come down to us.

Though of a yeoman family, the best-to-do of any in the little community, Bradford's early life must have been outwardly the monotonous and laborious round of an agricultural toiler in that unpicturesque but fertile section of England, in days when farm machinery beyond the rudest implements was yet unthought of. To be sure, the great North Road from London to York ran, an unfenced horse-track, through the village of Bawtry, a mile away; yet Austerfield must have heard little of what went on in the world at large. Doubtless the defeat of the Spanish Armada, nearly two years before Bradford was born, brought rejoicing to Austerfield, but travellers of the yeoman class were few, and news from the great world outside filtered slowly among those who, as Bradford himself says, were "used to plaine countrie life."

Yet in that outer world it was a time of marked

events. The splendid reign of Elizabeth was drawing to its brilliant close. Relieved of fear of overthrow from without by the death of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the discomfiture of the avenging Spanish fleet, the English mind bloomed in a wealth and beauty of literature such as no other epoch of English story has displayed. The year of Bradford's birth witnessed the publication of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; in 1593, when Bradford was perhaps learning his letters at his grandfather's knee, came that "first heir of [his] invention," the *Venus and Adonis* of Shakespeare. In 1597, the year after the orphaned Austerfield boy was transferred by the death of his grandfather to an uncle's care, Bacon's *Essays* first awoke the admiration of English readers. Of all these things of such vast moment in English letters little Austerfield knew nothing, and of any subsequent knowledge of them the boy who grew to youth while they were happening showed no trace.

But there was a concern which, more than any other, touched all men in England at that day, and that was religion. No feature of the great national drama which had been played before the eyes of two generations of Englishmen before Bradford's birth had so immediate and visible an interest to a young man of Austerfield, or of any other English village, as that which concerned the Church. The wars with Spain, the voyages of a Raleigh or of a Drake, were at best

distant and shadowy compared with the changes that had been witnessed in the hamlet place of worship, the gift of John de Builli to the Benedictines of Blyth more than four hundred years' before Bradford was brought to its font for baptism. Perhaps the first evidence of the royal revolt from Rome which Austerfield had seen had been in the youth of Bradford's grandfather, when, in 1536,<sup>2</sup> King Henry VIII., whom an obsequious Parliament had two years before declared to be "the only supreme Head in earth of the Church of England," had suppressed the monastery of Blyth, to which little Austerfield and the neighboring Bawtry looked for the appointment of their curates. The King ultimately transferred the monastic right of appointment at Blyth and consequently the determination of what spiritual oversight Austerfield should enjoy, to the newly founded Trinity College of Cambridge University. This suppression was itself only an incident in the general abolition of monasticism throughout England; but the stir occasioned in the minds of the Austerfield dwellers was doubtless very considerable, for the region had possessed a larger proportion of these monastic establishments than most parts of the realm. Cistercians, Carthusians, Gilbertines, Augustinians, Premonstratensians, and Benedic-

<sup>1</sup> See Raine, *History and Antiquities of the Parish of Blyth, passim*. Westminster, 1860.

<sup>2</sup> Raine, *ibid.*, 72, says 1535, but he is evidently confused between Old and New Style.

tines had all dwelt in the near vicinity.<sup>1</sup> The region had fiercely resented this royal invasion of ancient rights; Lincolnshire and Yorkshiremen, perhaps some from Austerfield itself, had risen in revolt in the interest of the older institutions in 1536, but the iron will of the sovereign had prevailed here as elsewhere.

Almost immediately after the dissolution of the monastery of Blyth, if the royal mandates were enforced, as there is every reason to believe that they were, a copy of the Bible in English was placed in Austerfield church, as in every other church in the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> Still the service continued almost entirely in Latin and substantially unaltered in doctrinal purport. Then, in 1549, Austerfield in all probability witnessed the introduction of the English Prayer Book, only to have a revised form substituted in 1552; to see this swept away in 1553 in favor of the ritual of the closing days of Henry VIII., and substantially restored in 1559. As late as 1569, after Bradford's father had grown to manhood, a great wave of insurrection directed against these changes rolled from the north almost to Austerfield; and so strongly had the old faith entrenched itself, that, even after Bradford's birth, several of the neighboring county families,<sup>3</sup> in-

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Hunter, *Collections concerning . . . the Founders of New Plymouth*, pp. 24, 25. London, 1854.

<sup>2</sup> J. A. Froude, *History of England*, iii., p. 80. Books were to be provided before August 1, 1537.

<sup>3</sup> Hunter, *Collections*, pp. 25, 108.

cluding that from which his uncle-guardian leased part of the acres that young Bradford tilled, were still its adherents.

There is no reason to suppose, however, that these changes of institutions and forms of worship were accompanied by any material alteration in the character of the Austerfield ministry, or any very strenuous insistence on vital religion. The curate of Bawtry, a mile away from Austerfield and, like it, a spiritual dependency of Blyth, is described in the visitation of 1548 as "unlearned."<sup>1</sup> What degree of ignorance this may have implied may be surmised perhaps from the contemporary statement of Bishop Hooper of Gloucester, that of the priests of that diocese under the Edwardine Reformation "one hundred and sixty-eight could not say the Ten Commandments."<sup>2</sup> Nor had matters grown much better twenty years later under Elizabeth, when, in 1569, a report from the diocese of Chichester,<sup>3</sup> a region in which the Reformation had made much more progress than in Yorkshire, affirmed that "in many churches they have no sermons, not one in seven years, and some not one in twelve years . . . few churches have their quarter sermons" [*i. e.*, the four yearly discourses, then the legal minimum of ministerial pulpit effort];

<sup>1</sup> Raine, *ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> William Clark, *The Anglican Reformation*, p. 181. 1897.

<sup>3</sup> Froude, *History of England*, ix., p. 512.

Cotton Mather affirms that the inhabitants of Austerfield in Bradford's boyhood were "a most ignorant and licentious people, and like unto their priest."<sup>1</sup> Happily there is reason to believe the description exaggerated. The curate of the little church, Henry Fletcher, certainly had the clerical merit, then by no means universal, of residing in the community of which he was the accredited spiritual leader; but the judgment of the antiquary, the Rev. Joseph Hunter, expressed more than forty years ago, is doubtless correct, that Bradford owed little to Fletcher's ministry;<sup>2</sup> and as to the widely prevalent unspirituality and ignorance of the ministry and people of England at the close of Elizabeth's reign there is abundant evidence.

That this state of affairs existed so generally was due to the peculiar character of the English Reformation. That movement, more than any corresponding development on the Continent, was checked and controlled by political considerations. National independence from foreign control was the one thought to which the English people, as a whole, readily responded; but, for many years after the papal authority had been rejected, nothing like a majority of the inhabitants of England could be counted as favorers of Protestant doctrine. A church essentially unchanged in organization and discipline, and largely Roman in ritual and belief, while English in language and gov-

<sup>1</sup> *Magnalia*, ed. 1853, i., p. 109. <sup>2</sup> *Collections*, pp. 112, 113.

ernment, was the preference not only of Elizabeth, but, certainly, till the defeat of the Armada, of a majority of Englishmen. Yet side by side with this conservative tendency ran the strong current of intense Protestant conviction, led especially by those who had come into contact with the Calvinistic divines of the Continent during the Marian persecutions,— a current sweeping into its control an ever increasing proportion of the people as Elizabeth's reign went on. These two antagonistic elements the great Queen kept from such civil conflict as France contemporaneously witnessed; but at the expense of a compromise policy that preserved the ancient ministry largely undisturbed by inquiry as to belief or fitness, and repressed severely the more strenuous desires of the Protestants. The latter sought the abandonment of such remaining Roman vestments and practices as they deemed superstitious; the maintenance of an educated, spiritually enlightened, earnest ministry, which should preach the intenser doctrines of Calvinistic Protestantism with soul-searching force; and the purification of each parish by the enforcement of rigorous discipline. To their thinking, the maintenance by the Queen of the half-reformed, unstrenuous, lax-disciplined, non-preaching clergy who so largely filled the land, was a deprivation of the people of the means of grace. In the view of the Queen, to have permitted the extremer Protestants, or, as they were usually nicknamed, the

“ Puritans,” to have their way would have been to throw the county into civil discord, to limit the royal supremacy, and to go counter to her own religious preferences, which were all anti-Protestant save on the question of her own supremacy. And so it came about that the Queen and the bishops whom she appointed everywhere repressed the Puritans, and insisted that they be held in conformity to the ritual prescribed by law; so it came about, also, that, while little Austerfield had a Bible, at least in its church, and enjoyed a ritual in the English tongue from which the more obnoxious features of Romanism had been purged away, its pulpit was silent, its minister ignorant and easy-going, and its discipline lax.

This repression by the constituted authorities induced Puritanism to take increasingly an intenser form. Before Elizabeth's reign had passed far into its second decade, some Puritans had raised the question whether a system of church government wherein the ecclesiastical authorities, particularly the bishops who were the immediate royal agents, had such powers to prevent the execution of what Puritans believed to be essential and Scriptural reforms, could be the right form of church organization. Under the lead of Thomas Cartwright, from 1569 onward, the more advanced Puritans, while clinging to the idea of a national Church of which all baptized inhabitants of England were members, denied the rightfulness of the

Anglican Establishment as tested by the Word of God, and began to agitate for its substantial alteration by governmental authority. To a small radical wing of the advanced Puritans even this seemed too slow a method of approximation to the standard which they thought was set up in the New Testament; and, beginning with Robert Browne in 1580, they taught that the true method of reform was the separation of Christian men and women from an Establishment which seemed to them so little answering to the apostolic congregations, and their organization by mutual covenant into churches designedly on the model of those of the Acts and the Pauline Epistles. If the Bible is the sole source of doctrine, as all Reformation divines held it to be, why is it not of polity also? was their argument; and, judged by the Biblical standard, was not the Establishment, which tolerated so much that was worldly and unspiritual and was ruled in a way so different from the churches of the first century, essentially un-Christian and therefore to be abandoned by those earnestly seeking the Kingdom of God? These were no mere speculative theories, but beliefs for which, within the fifteen years that preceded Bradford's fourth birthday, several hundred men and women from Norwich, Bury St. Edmunds, Gloucester, and London had suffered imprisonment and exile, and which no fewer than six men had sealed with a martyr's death.

But how was it that the youthful Bradford, in the remote country village of Austerfield, came to embrace the most strenuous type of Puritan faith? The explanation is to be found in the presence, in the near vicinity, of several sympathizers with advanced Puritan views. Of these the most influential were a clergyman and a layman, Rev. Richard Clyfton and Postmaster William Brewster. Both had been students at Cambridge University,<sup>1</sup> and had there come, if not before, under the dominant impress of Puritanism, then largely influential in that seat of learning. Both began their active work shortly before the time of Bradford's birth; Clyfton having become rector at Babworth,<sup>2</sup> nine or ten miles south of Austerfield, in July, 1586, at the age of thirty-three; and Brewster having begun to assist his invalid father as postmaster at the old archiepiscopal manor of Scrooby, less than three miles from Austerfield on the way to Babworth, early in 1589,<sup>3</sup> being then some ten years younger than Clyfton.<sup>4</sup> Clyfton's vigorous Puritan preaching and catechising<sup>5</sup> from his vantage as incumbent of the Babworth living, was ably seconded by Brewster's zeal in securing the services of other Puritan ministers for more temporary labors in the region. For this work

<sup>1</sup> Edward Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers*, pp. 51, 189. London, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 83.

<sup>4</sup> John Brown, *The Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 54. 1895. He was born in 1566-7.

<sup>5</sup> Bradford, *Dialogue*, in Young's *Chronicle of the Pilgrims*, p. 453.

Brewster's position as postmaster on the great North Road gave opportunity, and his own purse contributed more largely than that of anyone else to support the preaching that he desired.<sup>1</sup> The result, as described in Bradford's own words,<sup>2</sup> was that

"by the travell & diligence of some godly & zealous preachers, & Gods blessing on their labours, as in other places of y<sup>e</sup> land, so in y<sup>e</sup> North parts, many became enlightened by y<sup>e</sup> word of God, and had their ignorance & sins discovered unto them, and begane by his grace to reforme their lives."

One of those thus spiritually quickened was the youthful Bradford himself. Of a thoughtful turn of mind by reason of illness, he was led by his study of the Bible to desire some more awakening religious instruction than the ministrations, such as they may have been, of Henry Fletcher at Austerfield afforded. And so he began, as a boy of little more than twelve, to make his way, as opportunity offered, down the road and across the fields to Babworth; and, as he grew a little older, was introduced to that company of seekers for a warmer spiritual life who met under Brewster's roof at Scrooby. Such a course must have required no little resolution in the boy, for it had no countenance from his neighbors or his uncles;<sup>3</sup> and was sure to involve serious dangers of ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> Bradford, *History of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 490. Boston, 1898.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 110.

and governmental interference. Yet we may imagine that Bradford's boyish determination was greatly strengthened when, apparently in 1604, John Robinson,<sup>1</sup> fresh from Cambridge and Norwich, came to the region, not improbably as one of the preachers of Puritan earnestness obtained by Brewster, and speedily added his strong, wise, and generous leadership to the little company of seekers for a fuller reformation. To know Robinson was in itself an education. No nobler figure stands forth in the story of early Congregationalism than that of this moderate, earnest, patient, learned, kindly man, who was for the next sixteen years to be Bradford's friend and guide. Nor shall we be far wrong, I take it, if we attribute to the influence of this one-time fellow of Corpus Christi College, aided perhaps in a less degree by that of Brewster and Clifton, that love for learning, which in spite of a total lack of all the ordinary early advantages for an education, made Bradford proficient in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, besides the considerable acquaintance with Dutch and French which his exile brought to him.<sup>2</sup> The coming of a very different, but equally earnest, man, the erratic, energetic, zealous John Smyth,<sup>3</sup> to the

<sup>1</sup> Dexter, *Congregationalism as Seen*, pp. 373-376.

<sup>2</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 113.

<sup>3</sup> The date, 1602, usually assigned for the beginning of Smyth's Gainsborough work has been subjected to recent criticism. Dr. Dexter, *True Story of John Smyth* (1881, p. 2), was inclined to accept it on the strength of Nathaniel Morton's *New Englands Memoriall* (ii.), though

important town of Gainsborough, some eight or nine miles east of Scrooby and Austerfield, probably late in 1605 or early in 1606, undoubtedly added to the general stir and ferment of the region.

It would not appear that Clyfton and Brewster, the spiritual guides of the youthful Bradford, desired or designed at first to separate from the Church of England. They earnestly wished the reform of the Establishment into something more nearly approaching what they deemed the Biblical model, they emphasized preaching, they sought a more strenuous moral discipline; but they were not as yet Separatists. Yet the opposition of the ecclesiastical authorities forced them ultimately to the Separatist position; and soon after the coming of Robinson and Smyth to the region, probably in 1606, two churches<sup>1</sup> were formed, designedly on the New Testament model. One of these churches was organ-

even he regarded it as "rather early." But Professor Arber, *Story of the Pilgrim Fathers* (1897, pp. 133, 134), shows pretty conclusively that Smyth was a "lecturer" in Lincoln as late as March, 1605, and therefore could not have begun his work at Gainsborough till after that time. On the other hand, Arber's identification of him with the John Smith who graduated M.A. at Cambridge in 1593 (*ibid.*, p. 132) rather than with the graduate who received that degree in 1579 (Dexter, etc.) seems less successful. Compare Thompson Cooper in *Dictionary of National Biography* (liii., p. 68). Since the organization of the Scrooby church, which crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*, seems to have been occasioned by, or at least contemporary with (if not indeed originally in union with), the formation of Smyth's Separatist congregation at Gainsborough, the question of the date of the beginning of his ministry there is of importance in determining the age of the *Mayflower* church.

<sup>1</sup> Arber, *ibid.*, p. 54.

ized at Gainsborough, and though destined to encounter much distraction under the leadership of Smyth in the Netherlands, was to be the means of establishing the first Baptist church in England.<sup>1</sup> The other was gathered at Scrooby, and like that of Gainsborough speedily became an exile under Clyfton and Robinson in Holland, but was privileged to become the mother of the Congregational churches of New England.

The resolution thus to separate from the Church of their fathers was not quickly or rashly formed by these Christians. It was the outcome of their study of the Word of God under the illumination of the persecutions to which their reformatory efforts within the Establishment subjected them from its constituted authorities. Bradford himself points this out very clearly. Describing the steps which brought him and his associates to the organization of the Scrooby church, he says:<sup>2</sup>

“ They [the reformers] were both scoffed and scorned by y<sup>e</sup> prophane multitude, and y<sup>e</sup> ministers urged with y<sup>e</sup> yoak of subscription, or els must be silenced; and y<sup>e</sup> poore people were so vexed with apparators, & pursuants, & y<sup>e</sup> comisarie courts, as trully their affliction was not smale; which, notwithstanding, they bore sundrie years with much patience, till they were occasioned (by y<sup>e</sup> continuance & encrease of these troubls, and other means which y<sup>e</sup> Lord raised up in those days) to see further into things by the light of y<sup>e</sup> word of God. How not only these base and beggerly ceremonies were unlawfull, but also that y<sup>e</sup> lordly

<sup>1</sup> A. H. Newman, *History of Anti-Pedobaptism*, p. 391. Philadelphia, 1897.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, pp. 12, 13.

& tiranous power of y<sup>e</sup> prelates ought not to be submitted unto; which thus, contrary to the freedome of the gospell, would load & burden mens consciences, and by their compulsive power make a prophane mixture of persons & things in y<sup>e</sup> worship of God. . . . So . . . they shooke of this yoake of antichristian bondage, and as y<sup>e</sup> Lords free people, joynd them selves (by a covenant of the Lord) into a church estate, in y<sup>e</sup> felowship of y<sup>e</sup> gospell, to walke in all his wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them, the Lord assisting them."

I have thus dwelt at considerable length on the origin and purpose of this Congregational church, of which Bradford, then entering on his seventeenth year, was one of the more youthful organizers; and I have done so, if for no other purpose, to show that it was no headstrong and hasty opposition to salutary authority that here found expression. The separation, when it came, was in this instance but the fruit of a deep conviction that the Church of England as then administered not only failed to be what a Scriptural church should be, but that it was irreformable by any efforts which these men and women of Scrooby, and Austerfield, and Babworth, and Gainsborough could make, and hence the only course open to them was to come out of it.

But to come out of it, as Bradford and those older than he speedily found, was to be subject to increased attack. They were now "hunted & persecuted on

every side,"<sup>1</sup> and, after some hesitation, took the momentous step of leaving home and country for the shelter and toleration of Holland. Yet, as Bradford records, "though they could not stay, yet were ye not suffered to goe,"<sup>2</sup> and, attempting to escape in the autumn of 1607,<sup>3</sup> Bradford found himself in Boston prison. His youth, however, procured him speedy release;<sup>4</sup> and, in the spring of 1608, he, with his associates in exile, was in Amsterdam. Though released from persecution, life was full enough of difficulties for these poor farmers in their new city home. The strange sights of the new land were not without their impressiveness to the observant young Englishman; but, as he tells us, "though they saw faire & bewtiful cities, flowing with abundance of all sorts of welth & riches, yet it was not longe before they saw the grime & grisly face of povertie coming upon them like an armed man."<sup>5</sup>

To battle for his daily bread, Bradford learned the silkweaver's trade of some French refugee,<sup>6</sup> perhaps like himself an exile for conscience, though no easy taskmaster to the learner in the unaccustomed art. After the church of which Bradford was a member removed to Leyden in the spring of 1609, Bradford

<sup>1</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> On date, see Arber, *Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 86.

<sup>4</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 22.

<sup>6</sup> Mather, *ibid.*

pursued the same general means of livelihood, though now he wrought upon the stout cotton cloth then known as fustian. Indeed, it would seem that he invested the small sum that came to him from the sale of his inheritance at Austerfield, in 1611, in an independent business venture, but the enterprise brought him more experience than success, and Cotton Mather believed, probably truly, that he judged his loss "a correction bestowed by God upon him for certain decays of internal piety."<sup>1</sup> It was as by occupation a "fustian-maker" that he was entered in the public records<sup>2</sup> of Amsterdam, when, on November 30, 1613, at the age of twenty-three, he was married to the sixteen-year-old Dorothy May<sup>3</sup> of Wisbech in the home land, whose drowning seven years later, as the *Mayflower* swung at anchor in the harbor of Cape Cod, was to sadden Bradford's coming to the New World. His young wife was a granddaughter of John May, who had died as Bishop of Carlisle in 1598, and her elder sister had been for four years settled at Amsterdam as the wife of Jean de l'Ecluse, an elder in the Separatist church of which Ainsworth was the head. Certainly Bradford must have been prospered, in some small way at least, as he grew more acquainted with his new home and its business methods, for in April, 1619, he

<sup>1</sup> *Magnalia* i., p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> Arber, *Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 163; Dexter, *Cong. as Seen*, p. 381.

<sup>3</sup> On Dorothy May, see C. H. Townshend in *New England Historical and Genealogical Register*, 1., p. 462.

sold a house in the city where he had then lived just a decade.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the chief value to Bradford of this severe experience in a foreign land was, doubtless, the preparation that it gave him for his greater work on this side of the Atlantic. Those formative years of labor and self-control, and especially of association with Robinson and Brewster in a company whose first desire was the service of God, ripened and broadened and deepened his natural qualities. The boy, who at fourteen or fifteen had been firm enough to resist his companions' jibes and his uncles' opposition, developed into no bitter and obstinate fanatic, but rather grew, under the hard discipline of his Leyden experience, into a wise and kindly manhood, so that when the emigration to New England came, in 1620, probably no other man of thirty could have been found better fitted to take prominent part in an enterprise demanding patience, courage, and forbearance.

Of the details of that emigration there is no occasion to speak here at length. We are, or ought to be, familiar with that heroic exodus story; with its beginnings in the desire of the exiles to live as Englishmen on English soil, to give better advantages spiritually and temporally to their children, and above all, as Bradford<sup>2</sup> himself wrote in noble phrase, in a

<sup>1</sup> Dexter, *True Story of John Smyth*, p. 77.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 32.

“great hope & inward zeall . . . of laying some good foundation, or at least to make some way therunto, for y<sup>e</sup> propagating & advancing y<sup>e</sup> gospell of y<sup>e</sup> kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of y<sup>e</sup> world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping stones unto others for y<sup>e</sup> performing of so great a work.”

Very interesting would it be, were not the facts so familiar, to follow the discussions of the Leyden church as timid souls raised difficulties of all magnitudes, from the expense and distance of the expedition and the barbarous cruelty of the natives, to the ability of the emigrants to substitute water for their accustomed beer.<sup>1</sup> Their negotiations with the English government, the unfortunate union with a company of speculative London merchants into which their poverty drove them, the difficulties of their long voyage, their arrival at the beginning of winter on another coast from that on which they had expected to make their landing, their December debarkation, and the rough winter experiences in home building in the wilderness, which cost them before the first springtime more of their number proportionately than have fallen from the ranks of an army in any great modern battle, are all worthy of filial remembrance. But it is with Bradford himself that we have more immediately to do.

There is no reason to suppose that the plan of emigration was especially his conception. Robinson, who

<sup>1</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, pp. 32-35.

remained at Leyden, Ruling Elder William Brewster,<sup>1</sup> Robert Cushman, and John Carver were all more prominent in the negotiations leading to it than he. Yet we find him uniting with Fuller, Allerton, and Winslow in an independent protest against some of the agreements with the London merchant partners in the colonizing enterprise,<sup>2</sup> which shows that, before leaving Leyden, Bradford was one of the more important members of the Separatist community. But, by the time of the Pilgrims' arrival on the bleak New England coast, Bradford had shown himself a man of action, taking a conspicuous share in the search for a place of settlement;<sup>3</sup> so that when death removed the first Governor, John Carver, from the civil headship of the little commonwealth, in April, 1621, the community turned naturally and unanimously to Bradford<sup>4</sup> as his successor. That office, uniting as it did the duties of the executive, legislative, and judicial leadership, was thenceforward Bradford's by thirty-one<sup>5</sup> annual elections, and would have been his uninterruptedly throughout his life had he not insisted successfully at five of the thirty-six elections held in his lifetime on the desirability of rotation in office. He always served without salary.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Winslow (*Hypocrisy Unmasked*, pp. 88, 89) attributes its inception to Robinson and Brewster.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, pp. 61, 62.

<sup>3</sup> *Mourt's Relation*, in Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers*, pp. 126, 149.

<sup>4</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 111.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Goodwin, *The Pilgrim Republic*, p. 456. 1888. <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 455.

So associated has the title, Governor, become in our minds with the headship of a great commonwealth that its application to Bradford is likely to deceive us with suggestions of a state and pomp of which his office showed no trace. Chosen the leader of the fifty-seven survivors of that first terrible winter, just after the *Mayflower* had left them in the spring of 1621, he saw the colony grow to about three hundred souls by 1630, while at his death in 1657 it may have numbered somewhat more than four thousand inhabitants.<sup>1</sup> Never an imposing station from a worldly point of view, the Plymouth governorship was a post, nevertheless, of great responsibility, for its successful occupancy in these formative years in which Bradford held it involved not merely the solution of the ordinary problems of pioneer settlement life, but the establishment of a democratic community and the maintenance of a democratic church polity under circumstances of constant peril. To tell with any fullness what Bradford did would be to give an outline of the early history of Plymouth. That is, of course, impossible in the space at our command. But we may glance briefly at four or five of the more important services that Bradford rendered to the colony of which he was Governor.

One conspicuous service, then, was the tiding of the colony over the trying period of its beginnings. As

<sup>1</sup> Compare Palfrey, *History of New England*, ii., p. 6; iii., p. 35.

for most of the *Mayflower* passengers, so for Bradford, the months after arrival in New England were a time of grief. His wife died in Provincetown harbor before the landing; and he was himself severely ill of the scurvy which cost half the company their lives within the first year. It was not till his marriage, in the summer of 1623, to Mrs. Alice Southworth, who as Alice Carpenter<sup>1</sup> had become the wife of one of his associates at Leyden the same year that he had married Dorothy May, that Bradford was able to have the comfort of a home. Yet under these discouragements he showed no want of courage or lack of faith in the success of the undertaking.<sup>2</sup> But perplexities of a public nature filled these years. Perhaps the most pressing was the crying need of food. With scarce other provisions from Europe than the scant supplies that were brought in the *Mayflower*, and unprovided with cattle till 1624, the colony for the first two or three years was reduced to the verge of starvation, except just after the autumn harvest. Bradford,<sup>3</sup> with a humor characteristic of him, after recording of the summer of 1623 that

“all ther victails were spent, and they were only to rest on Gods providence; at night not many times knowing wher to have a bitt of any thing y<sup>e</sup> next day,”

adds that

<sup>1</sup> For her history, see Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, pp. 247-249.

<sup>2</sup> Witness the confident tone of the, so-called, *Mourt's Relation*.

<sup>3</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 164.

“ as one well observed, [they] had need to pray that God would give them their dayly brade, above all people in y<sup>e</sup> world.”

Of the same year he notes: <sup>1</sup>

“ Many were ragged in aparell, & some litle beter then halfe naked. . . . But for food they were all alike, save some y<sup>t</sup> had got a few pease of y<sup>e</sup> ship y<sup>t</sup> was last hear. The best dish they could presente their friends with was a lobster, or a peece of fish, without bread or anything els but a cupp of fair spring water.”

One readily credits his further statement <sup>2</sup> that

“ y<sup>e</sup> long continuance of this diate, and their labours abroad, had something abated y<sup>e</sup> freshnes of their former complexion.”

Yet this peril of famine was, perhaps, not the worst of the dangers of the early days. The Indians, whose reported barbarities had disquieted the Leyden church when the journey was under discussion, were a source of great anxiety. True, one of the most surprising and helpful events in the Pilgrim beginnings was the arrival in little Plymouth, on April 1, 1621, of Tisquantum, or Squanto. This sole survivor of the former Indian inhabitants of the township had gained acquaintance with the English speech and ways by reason of an enforced residence in England and in Newfoundland from 1614 to 1619, and he now became

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

their instructor in planting the unfamiliar corn and their serviceable guide and interpreter.<sup>1</sup> But Massasoit, the leader of the Pokanokets, Corbitant, chief of the Pocassets, and Canonicus of the Narragansetts, to say nothing of Wituwamat and his more hostile associates of the Massachusetts tribe, had to be managed with great skill and firmness for the first three years of the colony's existence, if the struggling community was to maintain its life. Without detracting at all from the honor due to the high diplomatic and medical ability of Winslow, or the prompt executive force of Standish, no inconsiderable portion of the credit for the satisfactory relations with its Indian neighbors at which the settlement so speedily arrived belonged to the wisdom of Bradford.

But famine and Indian attack were not the only difficulties through which Bradford had to pilot the infant colony. Perils from his own countrymen were probably greater dangers than either. Thomas Weston, treasurer of the London partners in the Plymouth enterprise, and, more than any other man not a Pilgrim, responsible for the sending out of the *Mayflower*, had looked upon the Plymouth settlement simply as a money-making enterprise. The inevitable failure to pay prompt dividends turned him from a grasping and grudging supporter of the Pilgrims into

<sup>1</sup> Compare *Mourt's Relation* in Young, pp. 190, 191; Bradford, *Hist.*, pp. 114-155; Charles Francis Adams, *Three Episodes of Massachusetts History*, pp. 23-44.

an open enemy. In 1622 Weston sent out a trading expedition of his own, which, after testing the hospitality of Plymouth to the utmost, settled in unruly fashion at Wessagusset, on Boston Bay. Resolved not to burden his colony with wives and children, Weston gathered together a company of adventurers of no character, who, in spite of their boasts, were soon in such straits that they were only saved by the intervention of the Pilgrims, after having been the cause of frightful peril to Plymouth from the Indians whom their ill-treatment exasperated. No higher testimony could be had to the efficiency of the Pilgrim colony under Bradford's administration than its ability not only to defend itself but to rescue those who had at first claimed to have such superiority to it.<sup>1</sup>

Nor were this peril from Weston's adventurers, and that from Thomas Morton and his associates in riotous proceedings at Mount Wollaston in 1628,<sup>2</sup> the only dangers from their own countrymen which the colonists encountered. We often think of the population of Plymouth itself as homogeneous, devoted heart and soul to the advancement of the religious purpose which animated the Leyden emigrants. But such was by no means the case. The colony was founded by a joint partnership, that of London merchant speculators, who, moved by hope of profit, furnished most of

<sup>1</sup> Bradford, *Hist.*, pp. 137-160; Adams, *Three Episodes*, i., pp. 45-104.

<sup>2</sup> Bradford, *ibid.*, pp. 283-292; Adams, *ibid.*, pp. 162-208.

the money (in all some £7000),<sup>1</sup> and of the real Pilgrims. Both contributed men at the beginning and sent reinforcements during the first few years, but the quality of these respective contributions was very dissimilar, religion being the dominant motive with the Pilgrims proper, trade with their merchant partners. Hence the strange mixture of emigrants that Bradford notices,<sup>2</sup> for instance, in speaking of the arrival of the *Anne* in July, 1623, some of her passengers "being very usefull persons, and became good members of y<sup>e</sup> body . . . and some were so bad, as they were faine to be at charge to send them home againe y<sup>e</sup> next year." The consequence was that the dominance of Pilgrim principles, even in the colony itself, was maintained for a time with difficulty. This difficulty was much increased when the London merchants, in their desire to minimize those Separatist features of the colony which they fancied were interfering with its growth as a trading settlement, sent over John Lyford, a Puritan minister of the Church of England, with intent, as the event proved, to modify the religious institutions of Plymouth into something more satisfactory to the majority of Englishmen. Lyford at first appeared attached to the Congregational worship of the community and was consulted in public concerns, but he soon had the support of certain disaffected elements in

<sup>1</sup> Arber, *Pilgrim Fathers*, p. 320, from John Smith, *Gen. Hist. of Virginia*, vi., p. 247.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 171.

the colony, notably of John Oldham, and it was not long before he and his friends "set up a publick meeting aparte, on y<sup>e</sup> Lords day."<sup>1</sup> Here, then, was the introduction of a religious division which would transplant to the struggling colony the controversies of the mother country. It was a difficult situation that Bradford was called to face, complicated as it was by restiveness under civil control; but he met it with skill and courage, while Lyford's own want of character gave Bradford the decided advantage. Bradford's opening of Lyford's letters home to the disaffected merchant partners in London was undoubtedly high-handed, but his facing Oldham and Lyford in open town meeting was crowned with the success which his boldness deserved, and made the Leyden emigrants from this early summer of 1624 wholly masters of the internal affairs of Plymouth.<sup>2</sup>

The frustration by Bradford of this attempt to change the religious and political status of the Pilgrim colony led to the wellnigh complete alienation of the already disgruntled London partners in the enterprise, and became the occasion of yet another service rendered by him to the community of which he was the executive head. That partnership had never been satisfactory. The terms exacted of the Pilgrims were onerous, and the expectations of the merchants were

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 209.

<sup>2</sup> Compare Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, pp. 259-276.

wildly extravagant. There was never any complete community of goods at Plymouth, but at the beginning of the enterprise, by reason of the joint partnership of all in it—both of emigrants who labored and of merchants who furnished the supplies—the colonists drew food and tools and clothing from a common store, and turned into the same common treasury the results of their labor. In fact, it was an excellent example of the carrying into actual practice among a people, the majority of whom were God-fearing and conscientious in high degree, of the principles advocated by many of the more moderate of modern socialists. But it did not operate well. It caused friction at many points, and broke down, interestingly enough, as a system of efficient production. People worked under it. There were as few drones at Plymouth as in any community ever known. But, as the event proved, the colonists thus associated did not work enough to produce a result from their labors sufficient to meet the needs of the community. The first break came in 1623, at the height of the famine of which mention has already been made. The communitary methods of farming were not producing a sufficiency of food, and therefore Bradford, with the consent of his associates, reluctantly directed that in this one particular the communitary rule should be set aside and that each should plant, till, and possess corn as he saw fit. The result was so marked an increase in production that

after that harvest Plymouth was never seriously threatened with extinction by starvation. Bradford<sup>1</sup> gives as the reason, that the plan of individual ownership

“made all hands very industrious, so as much more corne was planted then other wise would have bene by any means y<sup>e</sup> Gov<sup>r</sup> or any other could use, and saved him a great deall of trouble, and gave farr better contente. The women now wente willingly into y<sup>e</sup> feild, and tooke their litle-ons with them to set corne, which before would aledg weaknes, and inability; whom to have compelled would have bene thought great tiranie and oppression.”

And Bradford<sup>2</sup> expressed the judgment of the communitary system in general, as experienced at Plymouth, that it

“was found to breed much confusion & discontent, and retard much employemēt that would have been to their benefite and comforte. For y<sup>e</sup> yong-men that were most able and fitte for labour & service did repine that they should spend their time & streingth to worke for other mens wives and children, with out any recompence. The strong, or man of parts, had no more in devission of victails & cloaths, then he that was weake and not able to doe a quarter y<sup>e</sup> other could; this was thought injuestice. The aged and graver men to be ranked and equalised in labours, and victails, cloaths, &c., with y<sup>e</sup> meaner & yonger sorte, thought it some indignite & disrespect unto them. And for mens wives to be commanded to doe servise for other men, as dresing their meate, washing their cloaths, &c., they deemd

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 162.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 163.

it a kind of slavery, neither could many husbands well brooke it.''

The stage was small and the experience brief, I grant; but it was experience, and that, too, under favorable conditions; and a page of recorded experience is more truly illuminative than a library shelf of speculation, however picturesque or warm-hearted, as to the possible workings of systems of society of which we have no actual knowledge.

The once seemingly necessary yoking of the Leyden pilgrims with the London merchants, which had been the cause of this remarkable experiment, had proved thoroughly unsatisfactory to all concerned by the time of Lyford's downfall, and that collapse rapidly hastened the termination of the partnership. In 1626, the remaining London merchant partners sold out their interests to the Plymouth colonists for £1800, to be paid in nine annual installments. The colony thus obtained its independence; but, to make it possible, Bradford and seven of his associates bound themselves personally for its payment.<sup>1</sup>

Bradford's services to the religious system which he held dear were considerable. Till 1629 the Pilgrim church stood alone, sole representative of Congregationalism in the New World. But in 1628 the vanguard of the great Puritan immigration which was to possess most of New England reached Salem under

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, pp. 252-257.

the leadership of John Endicott. He and his associates, like the early New England Puritans generally, looked with disfavor on the Plymouth Separatists. Though the Puritans of the emigration rejected the hierarchy, the service, and the discipline of the Church of England, they had no intention of separating from that body, and they condemned those who did so. But neighborliness brought better knowledge. Dr. Samuel Fuller, the godly deacon and physician of Plymouth, ministered to the sick of Endicott's company, and talked polity with the well; and when Higginson and Skelton and a large body of settlers with them reached Salem in the early summer of 1629, they found Endicott and his associates not quite ready to approve Plymouth Separatism, but well pleased with Plymouth's faith and order. So it came about that when Bradford heard that the Salem people had organized a church of experimental believers in Christ, and had chosen part of its officers according to what Plymouth deemed the Scriptural appointment, and had fixed a day for further election and ordination,<sup>1</sup> he came in one of the little boats, in which the colonists then ventured along the coast, from Plymouth to Salem with a few companions, and, for the first time on this new continent, gave the "right hand of fellowship" to the new gathered congregation.<sup>2</sup> The head

<sup>1</sup> See Charles Gott's letter in Bradford, *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, pp. 316, 317.

<sup>2</sup> Morton, *New Englands Memoriall*, p. 99, ed. 1855.

of the older colony thus thought it well worth his while to welcome with Christian sympathy the Puritan newcomers to New England, and not a little of the ease and readiness with which emigrated Puritanism was led to organize its churches substantially on the Plymouth model was due to the welcome and example of Bradford and Fuller.

Time allows us no further glance at Bradford's manifold public activities for the good of the colony of which he was the civil head, nor at his relations to other settlers in New England, illustrated in his presidency, for some two years,<sup>1</sup> of the joint body of Commissioners which, from 1643 onward till after his death, represented the united interests of the four Congregational colonies. But one private and unofficial feature of his services to the colony of his residence cannot be passed by, and that is his writings. Were it not for Bradford's *Relation, History, and Letters*, little indeed would it be that we should know of Plymouth's beginnings. He not merely wisely directed his associates while they lived—he found time and inclination to preserve their memories and deeds for perpetual remembrance. His chief work is, of course, his *History*, begun about 1630, and continued till the close of 1646. That *History* has had a more picturesque fate than that of any other American manuscript. Kept for many years in the family of Bradford's son,

<sup>1</sup> 1648 and 1656.

William, and grandson, John, it was for some time in the hands of that sturdy Puritan, Judge Samuel Sewall. Hence, with the consent of its third American owner of the Bradford name, it passed, apparently in 1728, into the New England Library collected by that most gifted as well as most patient of early students of our beginnings, Thomas Prince, pastor of the Old South Church in Boston.<sup>1</sup> Deposited in the tower of the Old South Church, it was well known as late as 1767; but during the commotions incident to the Revolutionary struggle it disappeared, in what precise way seems impossible to discover, to be mourned as hopelessly lost. The happy identification in 1855, by a comparatively minor Massachusetts historian, of certain quotations from manuscript sources in an English book already nine years in its second edition,<sup>2</sup> at length revealed to American investigators the fact,—not very much to the credit of their breadth of reading be it confessed, since the fact had been published in yet another English book seven years before,<sup>3</sup>—that the desired volume was in the library of the Bishop of London at Fulham. Printed in 1856, it became at once, as it had been to Morton, Hubbard, Mather, Prince, and Hutchinson, the prime source on the beginnings of Plymouth colony; and so permanent is the interest it excites that a reproduction in photographic facsimile was issued as recently as

<sup>1</sup> See Preface to the 1856 edition of Bradford. *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, x., xi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv.

<sup>3</sup> Dexter, Bibliography, in *Cong. as Seen*, under No. 5791.

1896. Of the honors of its home-coming on May 26, 1897, brought by an ambassador of the United States who had in a peculiar measure won the good-will of the English people, and welcomed by the Governor and the senior Senator of Massachusetts in the presence of the Legislature of the commonwealth, it is only needful to remind you. The newspaper descriptions of that scene, though too often misnaming the recovered manuscript the "Log of the *Mayflower*," must be distinct in all our memories.

Besides his *History*, Bradford's busy pen produced other work of value. The graphic account of the inception of the Plymouth settlement, published at London, in 1622, and generally known as *Mourt's Relation*, was largely his work, though with the assistance of his colleague in the leadership of Plymouth affairs, Edward Winslow.<sup>1</sup> In more advanced life, about the year 1648, Bradford put into the form of a brief dialogue his information and his recollections concerning the beginnings of Congregationalism and its leaders in England and Holland. Regarding many of these personages and events we know much more than he, thanks to the labors of Dr. Dexter and other students of Congregational beginnings. It may be, as has been charged, that his judgment of men was occasionally over kindly.<sup>2</sup> But with all its brevity and

<sup>1</sup> Young, *Chronicles of the Pilgrims*, p. 115.

<sup>2</sup> E. g., by Arber, *Pilgrim Fathers*, *passim*.

limitations, the *Dialogue* gives us many hints and pictures of value. The volume in which Bradford copied his more important letters was discovered about a hundred years ago, in grievously mutilated condition, in a baker's shop in Halifax.<sup>1</sup> Besides these more important writings, and some Hebrew exercises, which have come down in more or less perfect form to our time, Bradford left, and Prince certainly handled, several smaller treatises and records, the character of one of which, as described in Bradford's will, throws an amusing light on a trait markedly characteristic of the early settlers of New England, the disposition to write what they believed to be poetry. Bradford valued his compositions in rhyme, for he said to his executors, "I commend to you a little book with a black cover, wherein there is a word to Plymouth, a word to Boston, and a word to New England, with sundry useful verses."<sup>2</sup> There is nothing in such rhymes as have survived to give the impression of any loss to New England letters by the perishing of these compositions, and in his deficiency in real poetic gift this author was no exception among the divines, magistrates, and founders of colonies, who so generally attempted poetic expression.

Bradford's prose style is simple, direct, dignified. Often there is a kind of eloquence in his straightforwardness and force. Oftener there is a touch of

<sup>1</sup> Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, xiv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 457.

almost unconscious pathos;<sup>1</sup> as of one who had endured and suffered much. Sometimes, though rarely, there appears a flash of grim humor, that makes you feel him to have been not without appreciation of the incongruous and the absurd.<sup>2</sup> To a modern historian his paucity of definite dates, and his occasional substitution of indefinite generalities for the concrete facts we desire is a source of regret;<sup>3</sup> but his meaning is rarely doubtful. His writings are marked throughout by courage and cheer. They give us the best picture of the man himself; the modest, kindly, grateful, generous, honorable leader in a great enterprise. Shrewd and sober of judgment, profoundly religious with a religion that masters his actions rather than seeks expression in words, self-forgotten, without cant, and with far less superstition than many of his associates, it is a sweet, strong, noble character that has unconsciously written itself in the pages of his *History*. You feel that the man whose native generosity of spirit prompted him to give a passing Jesuit a dinner of fish on a Friday,<sup>4</sup> who took on himself a great share of the debt which weighed on the whole community, who refused to profit by a charter which, if strictly enforced, would have given large pecuniary gain to him and to his family, and would even have legally allowed him

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, e. g., pp. 13, 131.    <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, e. g., 134, 135, 164.

<sup>3</sup> E. g., his account of the beginnings of the Pilgrim church.

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Druillettes in 1650; Palfrey, *History of New England*, ii., p. 308.

to treat his fellow colonists as his tenants,<sup>1</sup> was one who not merely deserved the respect but the love of his associates, and you can appreciate their unflagging desire that he should be their Governor.

Bradford's last years were not without their trials. Plymouth was at best a hard place in which to obtain a livelihood; its scanty soil, its limited pasturage, its remoteness from the rivers which were the main avenues of access to trade with the Indians, and its disadvantages as a commercial port, all led to a scattering of its early settlers, as soon as the prohibition of removal was raised, in 1632; indeed the dispersion had begun even before. Plymouth, though remaining the capital, steadily waned, and Bradford had the sorrow of membership in what must be termed, I think, a decaying church. The strength of the old *Mayflower* congregation was largely drawn elsewhere in the colony. Nor could the ministry of Ralph Smith, who laid down in 1636, as Bradford says, "partly by his own willingness . . . and partly at the desire, and by y<sup>e</sup> perswasion, of others,"<sup>2</sup> the pastoral office which he had assumed in 1629, or of the much abler John Reynor, whose ministry continued nearly to Bradford's death, compare in spiritual edification with that of Robinson, the pastor of Bradford's young manhood, or even of Brewster, the ruling elder who was essentially the pastor

<sup>1</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 113; Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, pp. 337, 338.

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 418.

of the first nine years of the colony. Bradford made the spiritual good of the little commonwealth his first concern, and his last days were distressed by what he deemed the neglect of the people over whom he was Governor to provide the pecuniary means for securing a more able ministry than the scattered towns of the colony enjoyed. He would have had them raise the salaries of their ministers by a tax, as in the other Congregational colonies, instead of depending on the precarious device of voluntary contributions.<sup>1</sup> But, while he worried about many matters, nothing could disturb the essential serenity of his life, or his trust in God. Though his physical frame gradually weakened throughout his last winter, his confidence in the divine mercy toward him remained unshaken, and found expression in a triumphant declaration to his friends the day before his death, "that the good Spirit of God had given him a pledge of his happiness in another world, and the first fruits of his eternal glory."<sup>2</sup> He died May 9, 1657.

They bore him to his rest up the steep hillside to the wind-swept top, whence the eye glances over the little town below, and on to the distant slope where Bradford's helpful comrade, Standish, made his later home ; or looks out seaward, past the Gurnet, guarding the harbor, over the waves once plowed by the *Mayflower* ; till it rests, in clear weather, on Cape Cod,

<sup>1</sup> Goodwin, *Pilgrim Republic*, p. 458.   <sup>2</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, i., p. 114.

where Bradford first stepped upon American soil. From that place of thronging memories you can compass the scenes of most of his life in that raw, new wilderness. There below you he planted his garden; there at the foot of the steep southward slope runs the town brook as it did when, in the springtime of Bradford's first election, Squanto taught the Pilgrims the value of its then abundant fish; <sup>1</sup> up the steep hill-path toward you, to the structure at once fort and meeting-house that then crowned its top, Bradford used to come to Sunday worship, in his long robe, with Brewster and Standish walking in state on either hand.<sup>2</sup> And here, somewhere beneath your feet, they laid him, without a word of prayer or a verse of comfort from God's Word, for such was to be the unbroken custom of New England till a generation after his burial; <sup>3</sup> yet as Morton <sup>4</sup> says:

"with the greatest solemnities that the jurisdiction to which he belonged was in a capacity to perform, many deep sighs, as well as loud volleys of shot declaring that the people were no less sensible of their own loss, who were surviving, than mindful of the worth and honor of him that was deceased."

Bradford's own pen has recorded, in halting verse, his sense of the divine guidance in his life: <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of De Rasières, in Palfrey, i., p. 227.

<sup>3</sup> Till 1685. Even seventy-five years after Bradford's death prayer at funerals was by no means universal.

<sup>4</sup> *New Englands Memoriall*, p. 176, 1855.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

From my years young in days of youth,  
God did make known to me his truth,  
And call'd me from my native place  
For to enjoy the means of grace.  
In wilderness he did me guide,  
And in strange lands for me provide.  
In fears and wants, through weal and woe,  
A Pilgrim passed I to and fro."

It was this deep and abiding trust in God and willingness to follow God's truth as he understood it that made Bradford what he was. His talents were undoubtedly great, his administrative ability conspicuous, his patience wellnigh unailing; he was a man whom other men trusted and revered; — but the power which led him through the vicissitudes of his changeful life was that of an unreserved consecration to the service of God. The covenant of the Congregational church of which he was a member from its organization at Scrooby, through its Amsterdam and Leyden exile, and in its Plymouth transplantation till his death, had pledged him and his associates <sup>1</sup>

"to walke in all his [God's] wayes, made known, or to be made known unto them, according to their best endeavours, whatsoever it should cost them."

He kept this pledge, and, in so doing, he became a noble example of a Christian layman of the early days of Congregationalism, and one whose name Congregationalists delight to honor.

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Plim. Plant.*, p. 13.