

AZEL AMES

THE MAYFLOWER AND
HER LOG; JULY 15,
1620-MAY 6, 1621.
VOLUME 5

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15, 1620-May 6, 1621. Volume 5**

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CHAPTER VII QUARTERS, COOKING, PROVISIONS

Probably no more vexatious problem presented itself for the time being to the "governors" of the two vessels and their "assistants," upon their selection, than the assignment of quarters to the passengers allotted to their respective ships. That these allotments were in a large measure determined by the requirements of the women and children may be considered certain. The difficulties attendant on due recognition of social and official station (far more imperative in that day than this) were in no small degree lessened by the voluntary assignment of themselves, already mentioned, of some of the Leyden chief people to the smaller ship; but in the interests of the general welfare and of harmony, certain of the leaders, both

of the Leyden and London contingents, were of necessity provided for in the larger vessel. The allotments to the respective ships made at Southampton, the designation of quarters in the ships themselves, and the final readjustments upon the MAY-FLOWER at Plymouth (England), when the remaining passengers of both ships had been united, were all necessarily determined chiefly with regard to the needs of the women, girls, and babes. Careful analysis of the list shows that there were, requiring this especial consideration, nineteen women, ten young girls, and one infant. Of the other children, none were so young that they might not readily bunk with or near their fathers in any part of the ship in which the latter might be located.

We know enough of the absolute unselfishness and devotion of all the Leyden leaders, whatever their birth or station,—so grandly proven in those terrible days of general sickness and death at New Plymouth,—to be certain that with them, under all circumstances, it was noblesse oblige, and that no self-seeking would actuate them here. It should be remembered that the MAY-FLOWER was primarily a passenger transport, her passengers being her principal freight and occupying the most of the ship, the heavier cargo being chiefly confined to the "hold." As in that day the passenger traffic was, of course, wholly by sailing vessels, they were built with cabin accommodations for it, as to numbers, etc., proportionately much beyond those of the sailing craft of to-day. The testimony of Captain John Smith, "the navigator," as to the passengers of the MAY-FLOWER

"lying wet in their cabins," and that of Bradford as to Billington's "cabin between decks," already quoted, is conclusive as to the fact that she had small cabins (the "staterooms" of to-day), intended chiefly, no doubt, for women and children. The advice of Edward Winslow to his friend George Morton, when the latter was about to come to New England in the ANNE, "build your cabins as open as possible," is suggestive of close cabins and their discomforts endured upon the MAY-FLOWER. It also suggests that the chartering-party was expected in those days to control, if not to do, the "fitting up" of the ship for her voyage. In view of the usual "breadth of beam" of ships of her class and tonnage, aft, and the fore and aft length of the poop, it is not unreasonable to suppose that there were not less than four small cabins on either side of the common (open) cabin or saloon (often depicted as the signing-place of the Compact), under the high poop deck. Constructed on the general plan of such rooms or cabins to-day (with four single berths, in tiers of two on either hand), there would be—if the women and girls were conveniently distributed among them—space for all except the Billingtons, who we know had a cabin (as had also doubtless several of the principal men) built between decks. This would also leave an after cabin for the Master, who not infrequently made his quarters, and those of his chief officer, in the "round house," when one existed, especially in a crowded ship.

Cabins and bunks "between decks" would provide for all of the males of the company, while the seamen, both of the crew

and (some of) those in the employ of the Pilgrims—like Trevore and Ely—were no doubt housed in the fore castle. Alderton and English seem to have been counted "of the company." The few data we have permit us to confidently assume that some such disposition of the passengers was (necessarily) made, and that but for the leaky decks, the inseparable discomforts of the sea, and those of over crowding, the wives of the Pilgrims (three of whom gave birth to children aboard the ship), and their daughters, were fairly "berthed."

Bradford is authority for the statement that with the "governor" of the ship's company were chosen "two or three assistants . . . to order [regulate] the people by the way [on the passage] and see to the disposition of the provisions," etc. The last-named duty must have been a most difficult and wearisome one. From what has been shown of the poverty of the ship's cooking facilities (especially for so large a company), one must infer that it would be hopeless to expect to cook food in any quantity, except when all conditions favored, and then but slowly and with much difficulty. From the fact that so many would require food at practically the same hours of the day, it is clear that there must have been distribution of food (principally uncooked) to groups or families, who, with the aid of servants (when available), must each have prepared their own meals, cooking as occasion and opportunity indicated; much after the manner of the steerage passengers in later days, but before those of the great ocean liners. There appears to have been but one

cook for the officers and crew of the ship, and his hands were doubtless full with their demands. It is certain that his service to the passengers must have been very slight. That "the cook" is named as one of the ship's crew who died in Plymouth harbor (New England) is all the knowledge we have concerning him.

The use of and dependence upon tea and coffee, now so universal, and at sea so seemingly indispensable, was then unknown, beer supplying their places, and this happily did not have to be prepared with fire. "Strong waters"—Holland gin and to some extent "aqua vitae" (brandy)—were relied upon for the (supposed) maintenance of warmth. Our Pilgrim Fathers were by no means "total abstainers," and sadly bewailed being deprived of their beer when the supply failed. They also made general and habitual (moderate) use of wine and spirits, though they sharply interdicted and promptly punished their abuse.

In the absence of cooking facilities, it became necessary in that day to rely chiefly upon such articles of food as did not require to be prepared by heat, such as biscuit (hard bread), butter, cheese ("Holland cheese" was a chief staple with the Pilgrims), "haberdyne" (or dried salt codfish), smoked herring, smoked ("cured ") ham and bacon, "dried neat's tongues," preserved and "potted" meats (a very limited list in that day), fruits, etc. Mush, oatmeal, pease-puddings, pickled eggs, sausage meats, salt beef and pork, bacon, "spiced beef," such few vegetables as they had (chiefly cabbages, turnips, and onions, —there were no potatoes in that day), etc., could be cooked in

quantity, when the weather permitted, and would then be eaten cold.

Except as dried or preserved fruits, vegetables (notably onions), limes, lemon juice, and the free use of vinegar feebly counteracted, their food was distinctively stimulant of scorbutic and tuberculosis disease, which constant exposure to cold and wet and the overcrowded state of the ship could but increase and aggravate. Bradford narrates of one of the crew of the MAY-FLOWER when in Plymouth harbor, as suggestive of the wretched conditions prevalent in the ship, that one of his shipmates, under an agreement to care for him, "got him a little spice and made him a mess of beef, once or twice," and then deserted him.

Josselyn, in his "Two Voyages to New England," gives as the result of the experience and observations had in his voyages, but a few years later, much that is interesting and of exceptional value as to the food and equipment of passengers to, and colonists in, this part of America. It has especial interest, perhaps, for the author and his readers, in the fact that Josselyn's statements were not known until after the data given in these pages had been independently worked out from various sources, and came therefore as a gratifying confirmation of the conclusions already reached.

Josselyn says as to food, as follows:—"The common proportion of victuals for the sea to a mess (being 4 men) is as followeth:—

"2 pieces of Beef of 3 lb. 1/4 apiece. Pork seems to have been inadvertently omitted.

"Four pounds of Bread [ship-bread].

"One pint & 1/2 of Pease.

"Four Gallons of Bear [Beer], with mustard and vinegar for 3 flesh days in the week."

"For four fish days to each mess per day:—

"Two pieces of Codd or Haberdine, making 3 pieces of a fish, i.e. a dried salt cod being divided into three pieces, 2 of those pieces were to be a day's ration for 4 men.

"Four pounds of Bread.

"Three-quarters of a pound of cheese.

"Bear as before."

"Oatmeal per day for 50 men 1 Gallon [dry], and so proportionable for more or fewer."

"Thus you see the ship's provision is Beefe and Porke, Fish, Butter,

Cheese, Pease, Pottage, Water-Gruel, Bisket, and six shilling Bear."

"For private fresh provision you may carry with you (in case you or any of yours should be sick at sea):—

"Conserves of Roses, Clove-Gilliflowers, Wormwood, Green-Ginger, Burnt Wine, English Spirits, Prunes to stew, Raisons of the Sun, Currence [currants], Sugar, Nutmeg, Mace, Cinna mon, Pepper and Ginger, White Bisket, Butter, or 'Captains biscuit,' made with wheat flour or Spanish Rusk, Eggs,

Rice, Juice of Lemons, well put up to cure or prevent the Scurvy, Small Skillets, Pipkins, Porringers and small Frying Pans."

Josselyn further gives us an estimate for:—

"Victuals for a whole year to be carried out of England for one man and so for more after this rate." He annexed also their current prices:—

"Eight bushels of Meal [Rye meal probably intended]

Two bushels of Pease at 3/s

Two bushels of Oatmeal at 4s/6d

One Gallon of Aqua Vitae

One Gallon of Oyl

Two Gallons of Vinegar

[No estimate of Beef or Pork, or of vegetables, is included.]

A Hogshead of English Bear

A Hogshead of Irish Bear

A Hogshead of Vinegar

A bushel of Mustard seed

A Kental [Quintal] of fish, Cod or Haberdine, 112 lb."

Edward Window, in his letter to George Morton before mentioned, advising him as to his voyage, says: "Bring juice of lemons and take it fasting. It is of good use."

It is indeed remarkable that, totally unused to any such conditions, wet, cold, poorly fed, overcrowded, storm-tossed, bruised and beaten, anxious, and with no homes to welcome them, exposed to new hardships and dangers on landing, worn and exhausted, any of the MAY-FLOWER'S company survived.

It certainly cannot be accounted strange that infectious diseases, once started among them, should have run through their ranks like fire, taking both old and young. Nor is it strange that—though more inured to hardship and the conditions of sea life—with the extreme and unusual exposure of boat service on the New England coast in mid winter, often wading in the icy water and living aboard ship in a highly infected atmosphere, the seamen should have succumbed to disease in almost equal ratio with the colonists. The author is prepared, after careful consideration, to accept and professionally indorse, with few exceptions, the conclusions as to the probable character of the decimating diseases of the passengers and crew of the MAY-FLOWER, so ably and interestingly presented by Dr. Edward E. Cornwall in the "New England Magazine" for February, 1897—From the fact that Edward Thompson, Jasper More, and Master James Chilton died within a month of the arrival at Cape Cod (and while the ship lay in that harbor), and following the axiom of vital statistics that "for each death two are constantly sick," there must have been some little (though not to say general) sickness on the MAY-FLOWER when she arrived at Cape Cod. It would, in view of the hardship of the voyage, have been very remarkable if this had not been the case. It would have been still more remarkable if the ill-conditioned, thin-blooded, town-bred "servants" and apprentices had not suffered first and most. It is significant that eight out of nine of the male "servants" should have died in the first four months. It was impossible that scurvy

should not have been prevalent with both passengers and crew.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAY-FLOWER'S LADING

Beside her human freight of one hundred and thirty or more passengers and crew, the lading of the MAY-FLOWER when she sailed from Plymouth (England), September 6/16, 1620, was considerable and various. If clearing at a custom-house of to-day her manifest would excite no little interest and surprise. Taking no account of the ship's stores and supplies (necessarily large, like her crew, when bound upon such a voyage, when every possible need till her return to her home port must be provided for before sailing), the colonists' goods and chattels were many, their provisions bulky, their ordnance, arms, and stores (in the hold) heavy, and their trading-stock fairly ample. Much of the cargo originally stowed in the SPEEDWELL, a part, as we know, of her company, and a few of her crew were transferred to the MAY-FLOWER at Plymouth, and there can be no doubt that the ship was both crowded and overladen.

It is altogether probable that the crowded condition of her spar and main decks caused the supply of live-stock taken—whether for consumption upon the voyage or for the planters' needs on shore—to be very limited as to both number and variety. It has been matter of surprise to many that no cattle (not even milch-cows) were taken, but if—as is not unlikely

—it was at first proposed to take a cow or two (when both ships were to go and larger space was available), this intent was undoubtedly abandoned at Plymouth, England, when it became evident that there would be dearth of room even for passengers, none whatever for cattle or their fodder (a large and prohibitive quantity of the latter being required for so long a voyage), and that the lateness of the season and its probable hardships would endanger the lives of the animals if taken. So far as appears the only domestic live-stock aboard the MAY-FLOWER consisted of goats, swine, poultry, and dogs. It is quite possible that some few sheep, rabbits, and poultry for immediate consumption (these requiring but little forage) may have been shipped, this being customary then as now. It is also probable that some household pets—cats and caged singing-birds, the latter always numerous in both England and Holland—were carried on board by their owners, though no direct evidence of the fact is found. There is ample proof that goats, swine, poultry, and dogs were landed with the colonists at New Plymouth, and it is equally certain that they had at first neither cattle, horses, nor sheep. Of course the she-goats were their sole reliance for milk for some time, whether afloat or ashore, and goat's flesh and pork their only possibilities in the way of fresh meat for many months, save poultry (and game after landing), though we may be sure, in view of the breeding value of their goats, poultry, and swine, few were consumed for food. The "fresh meat" mentioned as placed before Massasoit' on his first visit was probably venison, though possibly

kid's meat, pork, or poultry. Of swine and poultry they must have had a pretty fair supply, judging from their rapid increase, though their goats must have been few. They were wholly without beasts of draft or burden (though it seems strange that a few Spanish donkeys or English "jacks" had not been taken along, as being easily kept, hardy, and strong, and quite equal to light ploughing, hauling, carrying, etc.), and their lack was sorely felt. The space they and their forage demanded it was doubtless considered impracticable to spare. The only dogs that appear in evidence are a large mastiff bitch (the only dog of that breed probably seen on these shores since Pring's "bigge dogges" so frightened the Indians' in this region seventeen years before)

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