

Otis James

Mary of Plymouth: A Story of the Pilgrim Settlement



James Otis

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of the Pilgrim Settlement**

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this series of stories is to show the children, and even those who have already taken up the study of history, the *home life* of the colonists with whom they meet in their books. To this end every effort has been made to avoid anything savoring of romance, and to deal only with facts, so far as that is possible, while describing the daily life of those people who conquered the wilderness whether for conscience sake or for gain.

That the stories may appeal more directly to the children, they are told from the viewpoint of a child, and purport to have been related by a child. Should any criticism be made regarding the seeming neglect to mention important historical facts, the answer would be that these books are not sent out as histories, – although it is believed that they will awaken a desire to learn more of the building of the nation, – and only such incidents as would be particularly noted by a child are used.

Surely it is entertaining as well as instructive for young people to read of the toil and privations in the homes of those who came into a new world to build up a country for themselves, and such homely facts are not to be found in the real histories of our land.

James Otis.

WHY THIS STORY WAS WRITTEN

My name is Mary, and I am setting down all these things about our people here in this new world, hoping some day to send to my dear friend, Hannah, who lives in Scrooby, England, what may really come to be a story, even though the writer of it is only sixteen years old, having lived in Plymouth since the day our company landed from the *Mayflower* in 1620, more than eleven years ago.

If Hannah ever really sees this as I have written it, she will, I know, be amused; for it is set down on pieces of birch bark and some leaves cut from the book of accounts which Edward Winslow brought with him from the old home.

Hannah will ask why I did not use fair, white paper, and, if I am standing by when she does so, I shall tell her that fair, white paper is far too precious in this new world of ours to be used for the pleasure of children.

In the last ship which came from England were large packages of white paper for the settlers at Salem, who came over to this wild land eight years after we landed, and when I asked my father to buy for me three sheets that I might make a little book, he told me the price would be more for the three sheets than he paid for the two deer skins with which to make me a winter coat.

Of course I put from my mind all hope of having paper to write on; but these sheets of bark take very well the ink made from elderberries which mother and I brewed the second winter after our new home was built. The pen is a quill taken from the wing of a wild goose shot by Captain Standish.

THE LEAKING "SPEEDWELL"

Hannah's father must have told her how much of trouble we had in getting here, for when the first vessel in which we set sail, named the *Speedwell*, put back to Plymouth in England because of leaking so badly, her master could not have failed to tell the people of Scrooby how all the hundred and two of us, men, women and children, were crowded into the *Mayflower*.

From the sixth day of September until the eleventh day of November, which is over sixty long dreary days, we were on the ocean, and then our vessel was come into what Captain John Smith had named Cape Cod Bay.

Mother believed, as did the other women, and even we children, that we would go on shore as soon as the *Mayflower* had come near to the land; but before many hours were passed, after the anchor had been dropped into the sea, even the youngest of us knew that it could not be.

We were weary with having been on board the vessel so long, and had made ourselves believe that as soon as we were arrived in the new world, food in plenty, with good, comfortable homes, would be ours.

Master Brewster, as well as the other men, said that houses must be built before we could leave the ship, and it was only needed we should go on deck and look about us, to know why this was so. Everywhere, except on the water, were snow and trees. It was a real forest as far as I could see in either direction, and everywhere the cold, white snow was piled in drifts, or blowing like feathers when the wind was high.

So deeply was the land covered that we, who watched the men when they went ashore for the first time to seek out some place whereon to make a village, thought that they had fallen into a hole while stepping off the rocks, because we lost sight of them so soon. Instead of its being an accident, however, we could see that they were floundering in the snow, Master Bradford, whose legs are the shortest, being nearly lost to view.

We waited as patiently as possible for them to come back, though I must confess that Sarah, a girl of about my own age who came aboard the *Mayflower* at Plymouth when we put back because of the *Speedwell's* leaking so badly, and I could not keep in check our eagerness to hear from those people in Virginia, who it was said were living in comfort.

Not for many days did we come to realize that the settlers in Virginia were far, very far away from where we were to land, and to see them we should be forced to take another long voyage in a ship. We had come amidst the snow and the savage Indians, instead of among people from England, as had been planned when we set out on the journey.

SEARCHING FOR A HOME

Father was wet, cold, weary, and almost discouraged when he came on board the vessel after that first day on shore. The men had found no place which looked as if it might be a good spot for our village. Father said that he was not the only member of the company who had begun to believe it would have been better had we stayed in Leyden, or in any other place where we would have been allowed to worship God in our own way, rather than thus have ventured into a wild forest where were fierce animals, and, perhaps, yet more cruel savages.

On that very night, soon after our fathers were on board again, a great storm came up. The vessel tumbled about as if she had been on the broad ocean, and when we heard the men throwing out more anchors, we children were afraid and cried, for Sarah's father said he believed the *Mayflower* would be cast ashore and wrecked on the cruel rocks over which the waves were dashing themselves into foam.

Some of the women were frightened, although my mother was not of the number, and it was only when Master Brewster came among us, praying most fervently, and saying that God would watch over us even as He had on the mighty ocean, that the cries and sobs of fear were checked. Truly did I think, while Sarah and I hugged each other very hard so that we might not be heard to cry, that this was a most wretched place in which to make a new home, and how I wished we had never left Leyden, or that we had gone back to Scrooby instead of coming here!

AFTER THE STORM

It was Saturday when our vessel first came to anchor, and the storm held furious until Monday morning, when the snow was piled up higher than before, and many of the smaller trees were hidden from sight; but yet our fathers went on shore when the sun shone once more, while the sailors made ready to launch the big boat which they call the shallop. It had been tied down on the deck of the *Mayflower*, taking up so much space that, because of her, we children could not move around comfortably on deck even when the weather permitted.

Some of the upper timbers had been broken by the waves during the storms which came upon us while we were on the ocean, and it was said that much in the way of mending must be done before she could be made seaworthy. Therefore, owing to the need of room in which to work, the sailors took her ashore where it could be done with somewhat of comfort.

You must know that a shallop is a large boat, much larger than the one belonging to our ship, which is called a longboat. To my mind a shallop is like unto a vessel such as the *Speedwell*, except that it is much smaller, capable of holding no more than twenty-five or thirty people. It has one mast, a sail, and oars, and, as father has told me, any one might safely make a long voyage in such a craft.

WASH DAY

Captain Standish led the company of men, among which was my father, into the forest to search for a place in which to make our new home, and when we lost sight of them among the trees, it seemed as if we were more alone than before.

Sarah and I could not stay on deck to watch the men while they worked, because the cold was too severe, therefore we went into the cabin where were other children huddled around the stove, and there tried to imagine what our homes would be like in such a desolate place.

While the sailors worked on the shallop, many of the women went on shore to wash clothes near the fire which had been built by the men, and a most dismal time they had, as we children heard when they came back at night. They were forced to melt snow in Master Brewster's big iron pot, and when the hot water had been poured into the tub, it speedily began to freeze. Mother said that the clothes were but little improved by having been washed in such a manner.

Next morning the cold was so bitter that the women and children did not venture much out on the deck of the vessel, save when one or another ran up to see if those who had set off to find a place for our new home were returning. The sailors continued work on the shallop during two days, and each time on coming back to the *Mayflower* for food or shelter, brought a load of wood in their boat so that we might have fuel in plenty for our fires on the ship.

FINDING THE CORN

Not until Friday evening did our fathers come back; no one of all the party of seventeen was missing, although it seemed to me they had been in great danger.

Before they had gone on their journey more than a mile from the *Mayflower*, they saw five savages and a dog coming toward them, and hastened forward to learn what they might about this new world. The Indians ran among the trees as soon as they saw our people, and they ran so swiftly it was impossible to overtake them.

After making chase without coming upon the savages, Captain Standish led the way along the shore until next day they came upon what looked as if an Indian village had once been in that place, for the land had been dug over much as though to raise crops, and there were what appeared to be many graves. On opening one of these piles of sand, there were found two baskets full of what one of the sailors said was Indian corn; but another declared it was Turkish wheat, while Captain Standish believed it should be called Guinny wheat. It had been left near the graves, for these savages believe that even after people are dead, they need food.

Later, when we had become acquainted with Samoset and Squanto, we came to know that on the spot which had been chosen for our home, there had been a large Indian village. Four years before we of the *Mayflower* came, a terrible sickness had attacked the settlement of savages, and more than two hundred died. Those who were alive and able to walk, deserted the place to go many miles into the forest away from the sea, and, except for the graves which our people found, every trace of the town was wiped out, the savages believing that only by the destruction of everything connected with the settlement, could the evil spirit of the mysterious sickness be cast out.

Our men were very glad to find this wheat, and as soon as they had brought it aboard the vessel, the women set about boiling some, for that seemed to be the only way in which it could be eaten, since it is hard, almost like flint. Neither Sarah nor I, hungry though we were, felt like eating what had been left for dead people; but we did taste of it, and found it very good, even though it had not been cooked quite enough.

It was not long, however, before we found out how to prepare it, and many a time since then has it saved us from starving, but of that I will tell you later.

ATTACKED BY THE SAVAGES

On the sixth of December, the shallop having been made ready for sea, the men started away to search once more for a place in which to build homes, and on the very next day, while they were sleeping in the forest in a hut that had been built of dead tree trunks and bushes, they were set upon by savages, who shot arrows among them.

There were thirty or forty of these savages, but as soon as our men fired upon them, they speedily disappeared. Our men then picked up the arrows, some of which were fashioned with heads of brass or eagles' claws.

No one was hurt by these weapons, although one of them passed through father's coat, and many were found sticking in the logs. Then our people gave solemn thanks to God because of having been saved from the savage foe, and afterward gathered up many of the arrows to be sent back to England, that our friends there might see what were the dangers to be met with in the woods of this new world.

Five long, dreary days went by before the company came back once more, and then we were made happy by being told that a place for our village had been found. It was a long distance from where the *Mayflower* lay at anchor; and on the next morning another great storm came up, which forced us to stay on board the vessel until the fifteenth of December, when we set sail, and Sarah and I hugged each other fervently, for at last did it appear as if we could begin to make our homes.

Even then we were forced to stay in the *Mayflower* yet longer, for after we were come into the bay where it had been said we should live, the men spent a long while choosing a place in which to build the houses.

BUILDING HOUSES

It was agreed to build first one large house of logs, where we could all live until each man had chosen a place for himself, and both Sarah and I were on shore, standing almost knee-deep in the snow on that twenty-fifth of December, as we watched the men hew down trees, trim off the branches, and dig in the frozen ground to set up the first dwelling in this strange land.

The first thing done was to build a high platform, where the cannon that had been brought from England could be placed, so that the savages might be beaten off if they came to do us harm, and then the big house was begun.

Of course we women and children were forced to go back on board the vessel while the work was being done, and very slowly was it carried on, because of the cold's being so great, and the storms so many, that our people could not work out of doors long at a time.

Our village was begun in the midst of the forest not very far from the seashore, where had been huts built by the savages; and because of the Indians having chosen that place in which to live, our people believed it would be well for them to make there the town which was to be called Plymouth, since it was from Plymouth in England that we had started on the voyage which ended in this wild place.

When mother asked father why the men did not search longer, instead of fixing upon a spot to which the savages might come back at any moment, he told her that much time must be spent in building houses, and not an hour should be wasted. They ought to get on shore as soon as possible in order to begin hunting, for the food we had on the *Mayflower* was by this time so poor that neither Sarah nor I could swallow the smallest mouthful with any pleasure.

Sarah and I were eager to be living on dry land once more, where we could move about as we pleased; for, large though the *Mayflower* had seemed to us when we first went on board, there was little room for all our company, and very many were grown so sick that they could not get out on deck even when the sun shone warm and bright.

There were nineteen plots for houses laid out in all, because of the company's being divided into nineteen families. The plots were on two sides of a way running along by a little brook, where, so I heard my father say, one could get sweet fresh water to drink. It was decided that each man should build his own house.

The plot of land where father was to build our house was quite near the bay, but yet so far in among the trees as to be shaded from the sun in the summer, while Master Carver, who was chosen to be our governor, was to build his only a short distance away.

MILES STANDISH

You must know that Captain Standish is not of the same faith as are we. He calls himself a "soldier of fortune," which means that he is ready to do battle wherever it seems as if he could strike a blow for the right. He, and his wife Rose, became friendly with us while we were at Leyden, for he was, although an Englishman, a captain in one of the Holland regiments, having enlisted in order to help the Dutch in their wars.

Because of liking a life of adventure, and also owing to the fact that he and his wife had become warm friends with Elder Brewster and my parents, Captain Standish declared that he would be our soldier, standing ever ready to guard us against the wild beasts, or the savages, if any should come to do us harm. Right gallantly has he kept his promise, and unless he had been with us this village of ours might have been destroyed more than once, and, perhaps, those of our people whose lives God had spared would have gone back to Holland or England, ceasing to strive for a foothold in this new world which is so desolate when covered with snow and ice.

A most kindly-hearted man is Captain Standish, and yet there are times when he has but slight control over his temper. Like a flash of powder when a spark falls upon it, he flares up with many a harsh word, and woe betide those against whom he has just cause for anger.

After coming to know him for one who strove not to control his tongue in moments of wrath, the Indians gave him the name of "Little pot that soon boils over," which means that his anger can be aroused quickly. He is not small, neither is he as tall as my father or Elder Brewster; but the savages spoke of him as "little," measuring him, I suppose, with many others of our people.

We had not been long in Plymouth, however, before the Indians understood what a valiant soldier he is, and then they began to call him "Strong Sword."

THE SICK PEOPLE

It was yet very cold while our fathers were putting up the houses, and the sickness increased, so that at one time before the women and children could go on shore, nearly one half of our company were unable to sit up. All the while the food was very bad, save when more baskets of Indian corn were found.

One evening, when father had come on board the vessel after working very hard on our house, I heard him say to mother that we must try to be cheerful, praying to God that the sickness which was upon our people so sorely would pass us by until we could build the home, plant a garden, and raise food from the earth.

Sarah and I often asked each other when we were alone, whether the good Lord, whom we strove to serve diligently, would allow us to starve to death in this strange land where we had hoped to be so very near Him; for, indeed, as the days passed and the food we had brought with us from England became more nearly unfit to eat, it was as if death stood close at hand.

THE NEW HOME

It seemed like a very long while before the houses were ready so that we who were well could go on shore to live. I must tell you what our home is like. In Scrooby, when one builds a house, he has the trees sawed into timbers and boards at a mill; but in this new land we had no mills. When a man in England wants to make a chimney, he buys bricks and mortar; but here, as father said, we had plenty of clay and lime, yet could not put them to proper use until tools were brought across the sea with which to work such material into needed form.

There was plenty of granite and other rock out of which to make cellars and walls; but no one could cut it, and even though it was already shaped, we had no horses with which to haul it. Think for a moment what it must mean not to have cows, sheep, oxen, horses or chickens, and we had none of these for three or four years.

My father built the house we are now living in, almost alone, having but little help from the other men when he had to raise the heavy timbers. First, after clearing away the snow, he dug a hole in the frozen ground, two or three feet deep, making it of the same shape as he had planned the house. Then, having cut down trees for timbers, he stood them upright all around the inside of this hole, leaving here a place for a door, and there another for a window, until the sides and ends of the building were made.

On the inside he filled the hole again with the earth he had taken out at the beginning, pounding it down solid to form a floor, and at the same time to help make the logs more secure in an upright position. Where the floor of earth does not hold the timbers firmly enough, what are called puncheons are fastened to the outside just beneath the roof.

Puncheons are logs that have been split and trimmed with axes until they are something like planks, and you will see very many in our village of Plymouth. Hard work it is indeed to make these puncheon planks; but they were needed to fasten crosswise on the sides and ends of our house, in order to hold the logs more firmly in place.

Across the top of the house, slanting them so much that the water would run off, father placed a layer of logs to make the roof.

Three puncheons were put across the inside of the roof, being fastened with pegs of wood, for the few nails we have among us are of too much value to be used in house building.

That the roof might prevent the water from running into the house, father stripped bark from hemlock trees, and placed it over the logs two or three layers deep, fastening the whole down with poles cut from young trees.

MASTER WHITE AND THE WOLF

Of course, when this home was first built, there were many cracks between the logs on the sides and ends; but these mother and I stuffed full of moss and clay, while father was cutting wood for the fire, until the wind no longer finds free entrance, and we are not like to be in the same plight as was Master White, less than two months after we came ashore to live.

He would not spend the time to fill up the cracks, as we had done, and one night while he lay in bed, a hungry wolf thrust his paw through and scratched the poor man's head so severely that the blood ran freely. Sarah thinks he must have awakened very quickly just then.

THE INSIDE OF THE HOUSE

We have a partition inside our house, thus dividing the lower part into two rooms. It is made of clay, with which has been mixed beach grass. Mother and I made a white liquid of powdered clam shells and water, with which we painted it until one would think it the same kind of wall you have in Scrooby. With pieces of logs we children helped to pound the earth inside until the floor was smooth and firm; but father promised that at some later time we should have a floor of puncheons, as indeed we have now, and very nice and comfortable it is.

I wish you might see it after mother and I have covered it well with clean white sand from the seashore, and marked it in pretty patterns of vines and leaves: but this last we do only when making the house ready for meeting, or for some great feast.

At the windows are shutters made of puncheons, as is also the door, and both are hung with straps of leather in the stead of real hinges.

Perhaps you may think that with only a puncheon shutter at the window, we must perforce sit in darkness when it storms, or in cold weather admit too much frost in order to have light. But let me tell you that our windows are closed quite as well as yours, though not so nicely. We brought from home some stout paper, and this, plentifully oiled, we nailed across the window space. Of course we cannot look out to see anything; but the light finds its way through readily.

A CHIMNEY WITHOUT BRICKS

I had almost forgotten to tell you how father built a chimney without either bricks or mortar, for of course we had none of those things when we first made our village.

Our chimney is of logs plastered plentifully with clay, and fastened to the outside of the building, with a hole cut through the side of the house that the fireplace may be joined to it.

The fireplace itself is built of clay, made into walls as one would lay up bricks, and held firmly together by being mixed with dried beach grass.

It looks somewhat like a large, square box, open in front, and with sides and ends at least two feet thick. It is so large that Sarah and I might stand inside, if so be the heat from the fire was not too great, and look straight out through it at the sky.

Father drags in, as if he were a horse, logs which are much larger around than is my body, and mother, or one of the neighbors, helps him roll them into the big fireplace where, once aflame, they burn from one morning until another.

BUILDING THE FIRE

The greatest trouble we have, or did have during our first winter here, was in holding the fire, for the wood, having just been cut in the forest, is green, and the fire very like to desert it unless we keep close watch. Neither mother nor I can strike a spark with flint and steel as ably as can many women in the village; therefore, when, as happened four or five times, we lost our fire, one of us took a strip of green bark, or a shovel, and borrowed from whosoever of our neighbors had the brightest blaze, enough of coals to set our own hearth warm again.

Some of the housewives who are more skilled in the use of firearms than my mother or myself, kindle a blaze by flashing a little powder in the pan of a gun, allowing the flame to strike upon the tinder, and thus be carried to shavings of dry wood. It is a speedy way of getting fire; but one needs to be well used to the method, else the fingers or the face will get more of heat than does the tinder. Father cautions us against such practice, declaring that he will not allow his weapons to remain unloaded simply for kitchen use, when at any moment the need may arise for a ready bullet.

But we have in Plymouth one chimney of which even you in Scrooby might be proud.

MASTER BRADFORD'S CHIMNEY

Master Bradford built what is a perfect luxury of a chimney, which shows what a man can do who has genius, and my mother says he showed great skill in thus building. If you please, his chimney is of stone, even though we have no means of cutting rock, such as is known at Scrooby. He sought here and there for flat stones, laying them one upon another with a plentiful mixture of clay, until he built a chimney which cannot be injured by fire, and yet is even larger than ours.

Its heart is so big that I am told Master Bradford himself can climb up through it without difficulty, and at the bottom, or, rather, where the fireplace ends and the chimney begins, is a shelf on either side, across which is laid a bar of green wood lest it burn too quickly; on this the pot-hooks and pot-claws may be hung by chains.

It would seem as if all this had made Master Bradford over vain, for because the wooden bar, which he calls a backbar, has been burned through twice, thereby spoiling the dinner, he has sent to England for an iron one, and when it comes his family may be proud indeed, for only think how easily one can cook when there are so many conveniences!

We are forced to put our pots and pans directly on the coals, and it burns one's hands terribly at times, if the fire is too bright. Besides, the cinders fall on the bread of meal, which causes much delay in the eating, because so much time is necessary in scraping them off, and even at the best, I often get more of ashes than is pleasant to the taste.

Bread of any kind is such a rarity with us that we can ill afford to have it spoiled by ashes. During the first two years we had only the meal from Indian corn with which to make it; but when we were able to raise rye, it was mixed with the other, and we had a most wholesome bread, even though it was exceeding dark in color.

SCARCITY OF FOOD

In Scrooby one thinks that he must have bread of some kind for breakfast; but we here in Plymouth have instead of wheaten loaves, pudding made of ground Indian corn, sometimes sweetened, but more often only salted, and with it alone we satisfy our hunger during at least two out of the three meals. I can remember of two seasons when all the food we had for more than three months, was this same hasty pudding, as we soon learned to call it.

That first winter we spent here was so dreadful and so long that I do not like even to think of it. Nearly all the food we had brought from England was spoiled before we came ashore.

There were many times when Sarah and I were so hungry that we cried, with our arms around each other's neck, as if being so close together would still the terrible feeling in our stomachs.

All the men who were able to walk went hunting; but at one time, before the warm weather came again, only five men were well enough to tramp through the forest, and these five had, in addition, to chop wood for the whole village.

Mother and the other women who were not on beds of sickness, went from house to house, doing what they might for those who were ill, while we children were sent to pick up dead branches for the fires, because at times the men were not able to cut wood enough for the needs of all.

Then so many died! Each day we were told that this neighbor or that had been called to Heaven. I have heard father often say since then, that the hardest of the work during those dreadful days, was to dig graves while the earth was frozen so solidly.

Think! Fifty out of our little company of one hundred and two, Captain Standish's wife among the others, were called by God, and as each went out into the other world, we who were left on earth felt more and more keenly our helplessness and desolation.

A TIMELY GIFT

It was fortunate indeed for us that Captain Standish was among those able to labor for others, else had we come much nearer dying by starvation. A famous hunter is the captain, and one day, when I was searching for leaves of the checkerberry plant under the snow, mother having said the chewing of them might save me from feeling so hungry, Captain Standish dropped a huge wild turkey in front of me.

It seemed like a gift from God, and although it was very heavy, I dragged it home, forgetting everything except that at last we should have something to eat.

Many days afterward I heard that the captain went supperless to bed that day, and when I charged him with having given to me what he needed for himself, he laughed heartily, as if it were a rare joke, saying that old soldiers like himself had long since learned how to buckle their belts more tightly, thus causing it to seem as if their stomachs were full.

A firm friend is Captain Standish, and God was good in that he was sent with us on the *Mayflower*.

It was when our troubles were heaviest, that Sarah came to my home because her mother was taken sick, and Mistress Bradford, who went there to do what she might as nurse, told Sarah to stay in some other house for a time.

THE FIRST SAVAGE VISITOR

We two were standing just outside the door of my home, breaking twigs to be used for brightening the fire in the morning, when suddenly a real savage, the first I had ever seen, dressed in skins, with many feathers on his head, came into the village crying:

"Welcome English!"

Women and children, all who were able to do so, ran out to see him, the first visitor we had had in Plymouth. His skin was very much darker than ours, being almost brown, and, save for the color, one might have believed him to be a native of Scrooby dressed in outlandish fashion to take part in some revel.

Father was the more surprised because of hearing him speak in our language, than because of his odd dress; but we afterward learned that he had met, two or three years before, some English fishermen, and they had taught him a few words.

Very friendly he was, so much so that when he put his hand on my head I was not afraid, and I myself heard him talking with Master Brewster, during which conversation he spoke a great many Indian words, and some in English that I could understand.

His name was Samoset, and after he had looked around the village, seeming to be surprised at the manner in which our houses of logs were built, he went away, much to my disappointment, for I had hoped, without any reason for so doing, that he might give me a feather from the splendid headdress he wore.

As I heard afterward, he promised to come back again, and when, six days later, he did so, there was with him another Indian, one who could talk almost the same as do our people. His was a strange story, or so it seemed to me, so strange and cruel that I wondered how he could be friendly with us, as he appeared to be, because of having suffered so much at the hands of people whose skins were white.

Squanto had been a member of the same tribe that owned the land where our village of Plymouth was built, and his real name, so Governor Bradford says, is Squantum.

SQUANTO'S STORY

Seven years before the *Mayflower* came, he had been stolen by one Captain Hunt, who had visited these shores on a fishing voyage, and by him was sent to Spain and sold as a slave. There a good Englishman saw him and bought him of his master. He was taken to London, where he worked as a servant until an exploring party, sent out by Sir Ferdinando Gorges, was about to set sail for this country, when he was given passage.

While he had been in slavery, the dreadful sickness broke out, which killed or drove away all his people; therefore, when the poor fellow came back, he found none to welcome him.

How it was I cannot say, but in some way he wandered about until coming among the tribe of Indians called the Wampanoags, where he lived until Samoset happened to come across him.

As soon as he knew that we of Plymouth were English people, he had a desire to be friendly, because of what the good Englishman had done for him.

I have heard father say many times that but for Squanto, perhaps all of us might have died during that terrible winter when the good Lord took fifty of our company, which numbered, when we left England, but an hundred and two.

LIVING IN THE WILDERNESS

You must know that in this land everything is different from what you see in England. Of course the trees are the same; but oh, so many of them! We are living now, even after our homes have been made, in the very midst of the wilderness, and in that winter time when Squanto and Samoset came to us, bringing the corn we needed so sorely, we were much like prisoners, for the snow was piled everywhere in great drifts.

The trees, growing thickly over the ground, save where they had been cut down to build our homes and to provide us with wood for the fires, prevented all, except such of the men as were well enough to go out with their guns in the hope of shooting animals that could be eaten as food, from going abroad, save from one house to the other.

And little heart had we for leaving the shelter of our homes. In nearly every house throughout the village was there sickness or death; the cold was piercing, and, however industriously we had worked filling the cracks between the logs with clay, the wind came through in many places, so that for the greater part of the time we needed to hug closely to the fire lest we freeze to death.

There were days when it seemed indeed as if the Lord had forgotten us; when, with the hunger, and the cold, and the sickness on every hand, it was as if we had been abandoned by our Maker.

THE FRIENDLY INDIANS

With the coming of Samoset and Squanto, however, although the illness was not abated, and one after another of our company died, it seemed, perhaps only to us children, as if things were changed. These Indians were the only two persons in all the great land who were willing to take us by the hand and do whatsoever they might to cheer, and because of this show of kindness did we feel the happier.

Squanto, as father has said again and again, did very much to aid. First he showed our people how to fish, and this may seem strange to you, for the English had used hooks and lines many years before the New World was dreamed of; yet, it is true that the savages could succeed, even without proper tackle, better than did our people.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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