

The Women Who Came in the Mayflower

Annie Russell Marble

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by Annie Russell Marble

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THE WOMEN WHO CAME IN THE MAYFLOWER

BY

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE

FOREWORD

This little book is intended as a memorial to the women who came in The Mayflower, and their comrades who came later in The Ann and The Fortune, who maintained the high standards of home life in early Plymouth Colony. There is no attempt to make a genealogical study of any family. The effort is to reveal glimpses of the communal life during 1621-1623. This is supplemented by a few silhouettes of individual matrons and maidens to whose influence we may trace increased resources in domestic life and education.

One must regret the lack of proof regarding many facts, about which are conflicting statements, both of the general conditions and the individual men and women. In some instances, both points of view have been given here; at other times, the more probable surmises have been mentioned.

The author feels deep gratitude, and would here express it, to the librarians of the Massachusetts Historical Society, the New England Genealogic-Historical Register, the American Antiquarian Society, the Register of Deeds, Pilgrim Hall, and the Russell Library of Plymouth, private and public libraries of Duxbury and Marshfield, and to Mr. Arthur Lord and all other individuals who have assisted in this research. The publications of the Society of Mayflower Descendants, and the remarkable researches of its editor, Mr. George E. Bowman, call for special appreciation.

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE. Worcester, Massachusetts.

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CHAPTER I

ENDURANCE AND ADVENTURE: THE VOYAGE AND LANDING

"So they left ye goodly and pleasante citie, which had been ther resting-place near 12 years; but they knew they were pilgrimes, & looked not much on those things, but lift up their eyes to ye heavens, their dearest cuntrie, and quieted their spirits."

--_Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantations. Chap. VII._

December weather in New England, even at its best, is a test of physical endurance. With warm clothes and sheltering homes today, we find compensations for the cold winds and storms in the exhilarating winter sports and the good cheer of the holiday season.

The passengers of The Mayflower anchored in Plymouth harbor, three hundred years ago, lacked compensations of sports or fireside warmth. One hundred and two in number when they sailed,--of whom twenty-nine were women,--they had been crowded for ten weeks into a vessel that was intended to carry about half the number of passengers. In low spaces between decks, with some fine weather when the open hatchways allowed air to enter and more stormy days when they were shut in amid discomforts of all kinds, they had come at last within sight of the place where, contrary to their plans, they were destined to make their settlement.

At Plymouth, England, their last port in September, they had "been kindly entertained and courteously used by divers friends there dwelling," [Footnote: Relation or Journal of a Plantation Settled at Plymouth in New-England and Proceedings Thereof; London, 1622 (Bradford and Winslow) Abbreviated In Purchas' Pilgrim, X; iv; London, 1625.] but they were homeless now, facing a new country with frozen shores, menaced by wild animals and yet more fearsome savages. Whatever trials of their good sense and sturdy faith came later, those days of waiting until shelter could be raised on shore, after the weeks of confinement, must have challenged their physical and spiritual fortitude.

There must have been exciting days for the women on shipboard and in landing. There must have been hours of distress for the older and the delight in adventure which is an unchanging trait of the young of every race. Wild winds carried away some clothes and cooking-dishes from the ship; there was a birth and a death, and occasional illness, besides the dire seasickness. John Howland, "the lustie young man," fell overboard but he caught hold of the topsail halyard which hung extended and so held on "though he was sundry fathoms under water," until he was pulled up by a rope and rescued by a boat-hook. [Footnote: Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation; ch. 9.]

Recent research [Footnote: "The Mayflower," by H. G. Marsden; Eng. Historical Review, Oct., 1904; The Mayflower Descendant, Jan., 1916] has argued that the captain of The Mayflower was probably not Thomas Jones, with reputation for severity, but a Master Christopher Jones of kindlier temper. The former captain was in Virginia, in September, 1620, according to this account. With the most generous treatment which the captain and crew could give to the women, they must have been sorely tried. There were sick to be nursed, children to be cared for, including some lively boys who played with powder and nearly caused an explosion at Cape Cod; nourishment must be found for all from a store of provisions that had been much reduced by

the delays and necessary sales to satisfy their "merchant adventurers" before they left England. They slept on damp bedding and wore musty clothes; they lacked exercise and water for drink or cleanliness. Joyful for them must have been the day recorded by Winslow and Bradford, [Footnote: Relation or Journal, etc. (1622).]--"On Monday the thirteenth of November our people went on shore to refresh themselves and our women to wash, as they had great need."

During the anxious days when the abler men were searching on land for a site for the settlement, first on Cape Cod and later at Plymouth, there were events of excitement on the ship left in the harbor. Peregrine White was born and his father's servant, Edward Thompson, died. Dorothy May Bradford, the girl-wife of the later Governor of the colony, was drowned during his absence. There were murmurings and threats against the leaders by some of the crew and others who were impatient at the long voyage, scant comforts and uncertain future. Possibly some of the complaints came from women, but in the hearts of most of them, although no women signed their names, was the resolution that inspired the men who signed that compact in the cabin of The Mayflower,--"to promise all due submission and obedience." They had pledged their "great hope and inward zeal of laying good foundation for ye propagating and advancing ye gospell of ye kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of ye world; yea, though they should be but as stepping-stones unto others for ye performing of so great a work"; with such spirit they had been impelled to leave Holland and such faith sustained them on their long journey.

Many of the women who were pioneers at Plymouth had suffered severe hardships in previous years. They could sustain their own hearts and encourage the younger ones by remembrance of the passage from England to Holland, twelve years before, when they were searched most cruelly, even deprived of their clothes and belongings by the ship's master at Boston. Later they were abandoned by the Dutchman at Hull, to wait for fourteen days of frightful storm while their husbands and protectors were carried far away in a ship towards the coast of Norway, "their little ones hanging about them and quaking with cold." [Footnote: Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation; ch. 2.]

There were women with frail bodies, like Rose Standish and Katherine Carver, but there were strong physiques and dauntless hearts sustained to great old age, matrons like Susanna White and Elizabeth Hopkins and young women like Priscilla Mullins, Mary Chilton, Elizabeth Tilley and Constance Hopkins. In our imaginations today, few women correspond to the clinging, fainting figures portrayed by some of the painters of "The Departure" or "The Landing of the Pilgrims." We may more readily believe that most of the women were upright and alert, peering anxiously but courageously into the future. Writing in 1910, John Masefield said: [Footnote: Introduction to Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers (Everyman's Library).] "A generation fond of pleasure, disinclined towards serious thought, and shrinking from hardship, even if it may be swiftly reached, will find it difficult to imagine the temper, courage and manliness of the emigrants who made the first Christian settlement of New England." Ten years ago it would have been as difficult for women of our day to understand adequately the womanliness of the Pilgrim matrons and girls. The anxieties and self-denials experienced by women of all lands during the last five years may help us to "imagine" better the dauntless spirit of these women of New-Plymouth. During those critical months of 1621-1623 they sustained their households and assisted the men in establishing an

orderly and religious colony. We may justly affirm that some of "the wisdom, prudence and patience and just and equall carriage of things by the better part" [Footnote: Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation; Bk. II.] was manifested among the women as well as the men.

In spite of the spiritual zeal which comes from devotion to a good cause, and the inspiration of steady work, the women must have suffered from homesickness, as well as from anxiety and illness. They had left in Holland not alone their loved pastor, John Robinson, and their valiant friend, Robert Cushman, but many fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters besides their "dear gossips." Mistress Brewster yearned for her elder son and her daughters, Fear and Patience; Priscilla Mullins and Mary Chilton, soon to be left orphans, had been separated from older brothers and sisters. Disease stalked among them on land and on shipboard like a demon. Before the completion of more than two or three of the one-room, thatched houses, the deaths were multiplying. Possibly this disease was typhus fever; more probably it was a form of infectious pneumonia, due to enervated conditions of the body and to exposures at Cape Cod. Winslow declared, in his account of the expedition on shore, "It blowed and did snow all that day and night and froze withal. Some of our people that are dead took the original of their death there." Had the disease been "galloping consumption," as has been suggested sometimes, it is not probable that many of those "sick unto death" would have recovered and have lived to be octogenarians.

The toll of deaths increased and the illness spread until, at one time, there were only "six or seven sound persons" to minister to the sick and to bury the dead. Fifteen of the twenty-nine women who sailed from England and Holland were buried on Plymouth hillside during the winter and spring. They were: Rose Standish; Elizabeth, wife of Edward Winslow; Mary, wife of Isaac Allerton; Sarah, wife of Francis Eaton; Katherine, wife of Governor John Carver; Alice, wife of John Rigdale; Ann, wife of Edward Fuller; Bridget and Ann Tilley, wives of John and Edward; Alice, wife of John Mullins or Molines; Mrs. James Chilton; Mrs. Christopher Martin; Mrs. Thomas Tinker; possibly Mrs. John Turner, and Ellen More, the orphan ward of Edward Winslow. Nearly twice as many men as women died during those fateful months of 1621. Can we "imagine" the courage required by the few women who remained after this devastation, as the wolves were heard howling in the night, the food supplies were fast disappearing, and the houses of shelter were delayed in completion by "frost and much foul weather," and by the very few men in physical condition to rive timber or to thatch roofs? The common house, twenty foot square, was crowded with the sick, among them Carver and Bradford, who were obliged "to rise in good speed" when the roof caught on fire, and their loaded muskets in rows beside the beds threatened an explosion. [Footnote: Mourt's Relation.]

Although the women's strength of body and soul must have been sapped yet their fidelity stood well the test; when The Mayflower was to return to England in April and the captain offered free passage to the women as well as to any men who wished to go, if the women "would cook and nurse such of the crew as were ill," not a man or a woman accepted the offer. Intrepid in bravery and faith, the women did their part in making this lonely, impoverished settlement into a home. This required adjustments of many kinds. Few in number, the women represented distinctive classes of society in birth and education. In

Leyden, for seven years, they had chosen their friends and there they formed a happy community, in spite of some poverty and more anxiety about the education and morals of their children, because of "the manifold temptations" [Footnote: Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, ch. 3.] of the Dutch city.

Many of the men, on leaving England, had renounced their more leisurely occupations and professions to practise trades in Leyden,--Brewster and Winslow as printers, Allerton as tailor, Dr. Samuel Fuller as say-weaver and others as carpenters, wool-combers, masons, cobblers, pewterers and in other crafts. A few owned residences near the famous University of Leyden, where Robinson and Brewster taught. Some educational influences would thus fall upon their families. [Footnote: The England and Holland of the Pilgrims, Henry M. Dexter and Morton Dexter, Boston, 1905.] On the other hand, others were recorded as "too poor to be taxed." Until July, 1620, there were two hundred and ninety-eight known members of this church in Leyden with nearly three hundred more associated with them. Such economic and social conditions gave to the women certain privileges and pleasures in addition to the interesting events in this picturesque city.

In The Mayflower and at Plymouth, on the other hand, the women were thrust into a small company with widely differing tastes and backgrounds. One of the first demands made upon them was for a democratic spirit,--tolerance and patience, adaptability to varied natures. The old joke that "the Pilgrim Mothers had to endure not alone their hardships but the Pilgrim Fathers also" has been overworked. These women would never have accepted pity as martyrs. They came to this new country with devotion to the men of their families and, in those days, such a call was supreme in a woman's life. They sorrowed for the women friends who had been left behind,--the wives of Dr. Fuller, Richard Warren, Francis Cooke and Degory Priest, who were to come later after months of anxious waiting for a message from New-Plymouth.

The family, not the individual, characterized the life of that community. The father was always regarded as the "head" of the family. Evidence of this is found when we try to trace the posterity of some of the pioneer women from the Old Plymouth Colony Records. A child is there recorded as "the son of Nicholas Snow," "the son of John Winslow" or "the daughter of Thomas Cushman" with no hint that the mothers of these children were, respectively, Constance Hopkins, Mary Chilton and Mary Allerton, all of whom came in The Mayflower, although the fathers arrived at Plymouth later on The Fortune and The Ann.

It would be unjust to assume that these women were conscious heroines. They wrought with courage and purpose equal to these traits in the men, but probably none of the Pilgrims had a definite vision of the future. With words of appreciation that are applicable to both sexes, ex-President Charles W. Eliot has said: [Footnote: Eighteenth Annual Dinner of Mayflower Society, Nov. 20, 1913.] "The Pilgrims did not know the issue and they had no vision of it. They just loved liberty and toleration and truth, and hoped for more of it, for more liberty, for a more perfect toleration, for more truth, and they put their lives, their labors, at the disposition of those loves without the least vision of this republic, or of what was going to come out of their industry, their devotion, their dangerous and exposed lives."

CHAPTER II

COMMUNAL AND FAMILY LIFE IN PLYMOUTH 1621-1623

Spring and summer came to bless them for their endurance and unconscious heroism. Then they could appreciate the verdict of their leaders, who chose the site of Plymouth as a "hopeful place," with running brooks, vines of sassafras and strawberry, fruit trees, fish and wild fowl and "clay excellent for pots and will wash like soap." [Footnote: Mourt's Relation] So early was the spring in 1621 that on March the third there was a thunder storm and "the birds sang in the woods most pleasantly." On March the sixteenth, Samoset came with Indian greeting. This visit must have been one of mixed sentiments for the women and we can read more than the mere words in the sentence, "We lodged him that night at Stephen Hopkins' house and watched him." [Footnote: Mourt's Relation.] Perhaps it was in deference to the women that the men gave Samoset a hat, a pair of stockings, shoes, a shirt and a piece of cloth to tie about his waist. Samoset returned soon with Squanto or Tisquantum, the only survivor of the Patuxet tribe of Indians which had perished of a pestilence Plymouth three years before. He shared with Hobomok the friendship of the settlers for many years and both Indians gave excellent service. Through the influence of Squanto the treaty was made in the spring of 1621 with Massasoit, the first League of Nations to preserve peace in the new world.

Squanto showed the men how to plant alewives or herring as fertilizer for the Indian corn. He taught the boys and girls how to gather clams and mussels on the shore and to "tread eels" in the water that is still called Eel River. He gathered wild strawberries and sassafras for the women and they prepared a "brew" which almost equalled their ale of old England. The friendly Indians assisted the men, as the seasons opened, in hunting wild turkeys, ducks and an occasional deer, welcome additions to the store of fish, sea-biscuits and cheese. We are told [Footnote: Mourt's Relation] that Squanto brought also a dog from his Indian friends as a gift to the settlement. Already there were, at least, two dogs, probably brought from Holland or England, a mastiff and a spaniel [Footnote: Winslow's Narration] to give comfort and companionship to the women and children, and to go with the men into the woods for timber and game.

It seems paradoxical to speak of child-life in this hard-pressed, serious-minded colony, but it was there and, doubtless, it was normal in its joyous and adventuresome impulses. Under eighteen years of age were the girls, Remember and Mary Allerton, Constance and Damaris Hopkins, Elizabeth Tilley and, possibly, Desire Minter and Humility Cooper. The boys were Bartholomew Allerton, who "learned to sound the drum," John Crakston, William Latham, Giles Hopkins, John and Francis Billington, Richard More, Henry Sampson, John Cooke, Resolved White, Samuel Fuller, Love and Wrestling Brewster and the babies, Oceanus Hopkins and Peregrine White. With the exception of Wrestling Brewster and Oceanus Hopkins, all these children lived to ripe old age,--a credit not alone to their hardy constitutions, but also to the care which the Plymouth women bestowed upon their households.

The flowers that grew in abundance about the settlement must have given them joy,--_arbutus_ or "mayflowers," wild roses, blue chicory, Queen Anne's lace, purple asters, golden-rod and the beautiful sabbatia or "sentry" which is still found on the banks of the fresh ponds near the town and is called "the Plymouth rose." Edward Winslow tells [Footnote: Relation of the Manners, Customs, etc., of the Indians.] of the drastic use of this bitter plant in developing hardihood among Indian boys. Early in the first year one of these fresh-water ponds, known as Billington Sea, was discovered by Francis Billington when he had climbed a high hill and had reported from it "a smaller sea." Blackberries, blueberries, plums and cherries must have been delights to the women and children. Medicinal herbs were found and used by advice of the Indian friends; the bayberry's virtues as salve, if not as candle-light, were early applied to the comforts of the households. Robins, bluebirds, "Bob Whites" and other birds sang for the pioneers as they sing for the tourist and resident in Plymouth today. The mosquito had a sting,--for Bradford gave a droll and pungent answer to the discontented colonists who had reported, in 1624, that "the people are much annoyed with musquetoos." He wrote: [Footnote: Bradford's History of Plymouth Plantation, Bk. II.] "_They_ are too delicate and unfitte to begin new plantations and colonies that cannot enduer the biting of a muskeet. We would wish such to keep at home till at least they be muskeeto proof. Yet this place is as free as any and experience teacheth that ye land is tild and ye woods cut downe, the fewer there will be and in the end scarce any at all." The _end_ has not yet come!

Good harvests and some thrilling incidents varied the hard conditions of life for the women during 1621-2. Indian corn and barley furnished a new foundation for many "a savory dish" prepared by the housewives in the mortar and pestles, kettles and skillets which they had brought from Holland. Nuts were used for food, giving piquant flavor both to "cakes" baked in the fire and to the stuffing of wild turkeys. The fare was simple, but it must have seemed a feast to the Pilgrims after the months of self-denials and extremity.

Before the winter of 1621-2 was ended, seven log houses had been built and four "common buildings" for storage, meetings and workshops. Already clapboards and furs were stored to be sent back to England to the merchant adventurers in the first ship. The seven huts, with thatched roofs and chimneys on the outside, probably in cob-house style, were of hewn planks, not of round logs. [Footnote: The Pilgrim Republic, John A. Goodwin, p. 582.] The fireplaces were of stones laid in clay from the abundant sand. In 1628 thatched roofs were condemned because of the danger of fire, [Footnote: Records of the Colony of New Plymouth.] and boards or palings were substituted. During the first two years or longer, light came into the houses through oiled paper in the windows. From the plans left by Governor Bradford and the record of the visit of De Rassieres to Plymouth, in 1627, one can visualize this first street in New England, leading from Plymouth harbor up the hill to the cannon and stockade where, later, was the fort. At the intersection of the first street and a cross-highway stood the Governor's house. It was fitting that the lot nearest to the fort hill should be assigned to Miles Standish and John Alden. All had free access to the brook where flagons were filled for drink and where the clothes were washed.

A few events that have been recorded by Winslow, Bradford and Morton were significant and must have relieved the monotony of life. On January fourth an eagle was shot, cooked and proved "to be excellent meat; it was hardly to be discerned from mutton." [Footnote: Mourt's Relation.] Four days later three seals and a cod were caught; we may assume that they furnished oil, meat and skins for the household. About the same time, John Goodman and Peter Brown lost their way in the woods, remained out all night, thinking they heard lions roar (mistaking wolves for lions), and on their return the next day John Goodman's feet were so badly frozen "that it was a long time before he was able to go." [Footnote: *Ibid.*] Wild geese were shot and used for broth on the ninth of February; the same day the Common House was set ablaze, but was saved from destruction. It is easy to imagine the exciting effects of such incidents upon the band of thirteen boys and seven girls, already enumerated. In July, the cry of "a lost child" aroused the settlement to a search for that "unwhipt rascal," John Billington, who had run away to the Nauset Indians at Eastham, but he was found unharmed by a posse of men led by Captain Standish.

To the women one of the most exciting events must have been the marriage on May 22, 1621, of Edward Winslow and Mistress Susanna White. Her husband and two men-servants had died since *The Mayflower* left England and she was alone to care for two young boys, one a baby a few weeks old. Elizabeth Barker Winslow had died seven weeks before the wedding day. Perhaps the Plymouth women gossiped a little over the brief interval of mourning, but the exigencies of the times easily explained the marriage, which was performed by a magistrate, presumably the Governor.

Even more disturbing to the peaceful life was the first duel on June 18, between Edward Lister and Edward Dotey, both servants of Stephen Hopkins. Tradition ascribed the cause to a quarrel over the attractive elder daughter of their master, Constance Hopkins. The duel was fought with swords and daggers; both youths were slightly wounded in hand and thigh and both were sentenced, as punishment, to have their hands and feet tied together and to fast for twenty-four hours but, says a record, [Footnote: *A Chronological History of New England*, by Thomas Prentice.] "within an hour, because of their great pains, at their own and their master's humble request, upon promise of better carriage, they were released by the Governor." It is easy to imagine this scene: Stephen Hopkins and his wife appealing to the Governor and Captain Standish for leniency, although the settlement was seriously troubled over the occurrence; Elder Brewster and his wife deploring the lack of Christian affection which caused the duel; Edward Winslow and his wife, dignified yet tolerant; Goodwife Helen Billington scolding as usual; Priscilla Mullins, Mary Chilton and Elizabeth Tilley condoling with the tearful and frightened Constance Hopkins, while the children stand about, excited and somewhat awed by the punishment and the distress of the offenders.

Another day of unusual interest and industry for the householders was the Thanksgiving Day when peace with the Indians and assured prosperity seemed to follow the ample harvests. To this feast, which lasted for three days or more, came ninety-one Indians bringing five deer which they had killed and dressed. These were a great boon to the women who must prepare meals for one hundred and forty people. Wild turkeys, ducks, fish and clams were procured by the colonists and cooked, perhaps with some marchpanes also, by the more expert cooks. The serious prayers and psalms of the Pilgrims were as amazing

to the Indians as were the strange whoops, dances, beads and feathers of the savages marvellous to the women and children of Plymouth Colony.

In spite of these peaceable incidents there were occasional threats of Indian treachery, like the theft of tools from two woodsmen and the later bold challenge in the form of a headless arrow wrapped in a snake's skin; the latter was returned promptly and decisively with the skin filled with bullets, and the danger was over for a time. The stockade was strengthened and, soon after, a palisade was built about the houses with gates that were locked at night. After the fort of heavy timber was completed, this was used also as a meeting-house and "was fitted accordingly for that use." It is to be hoped that warming-pans and foot-stoves were a part of the "fittings" so that the women might not be benumbed as, with dread of possible Indian attacks, they limned from the old Ainsworth's Psalm Book:

"In the Lord do I trust, how then to my soule doe ye say,
As doth a little bird unto your mountaine fly away?
For loe, the wicked bend their bow, their arrows they prepare
On string; to shoot at dark at them
In heart that upright are."
(Psalm xi.)

Even more exciting than the days already mentioned was the great event of surprise and rejoicing, November 19, 1621, when The Fortune arrived with thirty-five more Pilgrims. Some of these were soon to wed Mayflower passengers. Widow Martha Ford, recently bereft, giving birth on the night of her arrival to a fourth child, was wed to Peter Brown; Mary Becket (sometimes written Bucket) became the wife of George Soule; John Winslow; later married Mary Chilton, and Thomas Cushman, then a lad of fourteen, became the husband, in manhood, of Mary Allerton. His father, Robert Cushman, remained in the settlement while The Fortune was at anchor and left his son as ward for Governor Bradford. The notable sermon which was preached at Plymouth by Robert Cushman at this time (preserved in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth) was from the text, "Let no man seek his own; but every man another's wealth." Some of the admonitions against swelling pride and fleshly-minded hypocrites seem to us rather paradoxical when we consider the poverty and self-sacrificing spirit of these pioneers; perhaps, there were selfish and slothful malcontents even in that company of devoted, industrious men and women, for human nature was the same three hundred years ago, in large and small communities, as it is today, with some relative changes.

Among the passengers brought by The Fortune were some of great helpfulness. William Wright, with his wife Priscilla (the sister of Governor Bradford's second wife), was an expert carpenter, and Stephen Dean, who came with his wife, was able to erect a small mill and grind corn. Robert Hicks (or Heeks) was another addition to the colony, whose wife was later the teacher of some of the children. Philip De La Noye, progenitor of the Delano family in America, John and Kenelm Winslow and Jonathan Brewster were eligible men to join the group of younger men,--John Alden, John Howland and others.

The great joy in the arrival of these friends was succeeded by an agitating fear regarding the food supply, for The Fortune had suffered from bad weather and its colonists had scarcely any extra food or clothing. By careful allotments the winter was endured and

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