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THE PLYMOUTH COLONY AND VIRGINIA

by SAMUEL ELIOT MORISON*

THE Plymouth of the Pilgrim Fathers, by any material or quantitative standard, was one of the smaller and weaker English colonies in North America. Even in New England it was not from Plymouth but from the younger Colony of Massachusetts Bay that came the main contributions of New England to the United States, such as self-government on the local level, higher education, and what is vaguely known as Puritanism. Yet, most Americans and all Englishmen imagine that Plymouth Colony came first, to the legitimate annoyance of Virginians, whose Old Dominion was founded thirteen years earlier, and to the hot indignation of South Carolinians like Mr. Herbert Ravenel Sass, who has lately been spouting fire and steam on the subject.¹

Why, then, do people get such erroneous ideas? Why are the Pilgrim Fathers and the Plymouth Colony so popular as to drive other colonial pioneers and founders out of the public mind? One reason, I think, is that they are associated with a national holiday, Thanksgiving Day. When that day comes around, we naturally think of the Pilgrim Fathers shooting wild turkey and making barbecue for their Indian guests, just as we think of Thomas Jefferson and Virginia every Fourth of July. (North Carolina thinks we shouldn't, but never mind.) The second reason has been well

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¹"They Don't Tell the Truth About the South!" *Saturday Evening Post*, January 9, 1954, pp. 25, 67-68.

stated by my friend Bernard De Voto, in his reply to Mr. Sass: "Chance sent to Plymouth on the *Mayflower* and in the earliest years following its first voyage a number of altogether remarkable writers. The best of them was William Bradford, whose *Of Plymouth Plantation* is one of the masterpieces of American literature. . . . The writing of these men . . . was so graphic, so charged with emotion, so alive with homely details of Plymouth's daily life that it created images and symbols which have delighted people ever since."² They tell a simple but enthralling story that sticks in people's minds so that they forget the earlier annals and the even greater privations of the larger and more important colony of Virginia. And the story of that brave, resourceful little band of men and women who landed at Plymouth after Virginia was already well established, can still inspire us in an age of change and insecurity. Bradford's *History* strikes a note of stout-hearted idealism that all Americans respect, even when they cannot share it.

I do not intend to retell that story which has been told so many times and with so much sentimental flapdoodle that it has become tedious. I sympathize with the Englishman who said he wished that instead of the Pilgrims landing on Plymouth Rock, Plymouth Rock had landed on the Pilgrims. Or with the Honorable Joseph Choate who, after hearing a long and lugubrious account of the sufferings of the Pilgrim Fathers at a New England Society dinner, offered a toast to the Pilgrim Mothers because, he said, they had to endure all those hardships, and endure the Pilgrim Fathers too!

My object is to retell the history of Plymouth Colony from a new angle, that of Virginia. For the Pilgrim Fathers intended to settle in Virginia; it was no fault of theirs that they did not; and their relations with the Virginia Colony were close and friendly and, what's more, necessary for their survival as a colony. I am trying to play variations on an old theme as (my gifted Maryland and Virginia wife tells me) Brahms did on a theme of Haydn.

From the beginning there was a strong personal and institutional connection between the founders of Virginia and the founders of Plymouth, notwithstanding the fact that the former were the grandees of that era, and the Pilgrim Fathers were relatively obscure. Only one of them, William Brewster, was a university man; and only one other, Edward Winslow, had the rank of gentleman in the England of James I. Master Christopher Jones of the *Mayflower* and his mate, and possibly Stephen Hopkins, had been to America before, but they had not stayed long enough in Virginia to qualify

²"That Southern Inferiority Complex," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 16, 1954, pp. 27, 112-114.

as gentlemen. The Pilgrims were a congregation of Separatists, left-wing English Puritans who, harried out of England in 1608, sought refuge in the tolerant Netherlands and settled as a body in Leyden, where they followed various respectable but humble occupations such as spinning, weaving, and printing. After ten years, they became restive. The status of what we call "displaced persons" was repugnant. Their English character and culture were slipping; "they saw their posterity would be in danger to degenerate and be corrupted."³ The war of the Dutch Republic with Spain was about to be resumed, and they did not wish to be drawn into it. So they gave thought to removing to "some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for habitation, being devoid of all civil inhabitants, where there are only savage and brutish men which range up and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same." They considered Guiana, well advertised by Sir Walter Raleigh, "rich, fruitful, and blessed with a perpetual spring and a flourishing greenness, where vigorous nature brought forth all things in abundance and plenty without any great labour or art of man."⁴ But they reflected that Guiana was too near "the jealous Spaniard," who "would never suffer them long, but would displant or overthrow them as he did the French in Florida." So they naturally turned to Virginia. "At length," says Bradford, "the conclusion was to live as a distinct body by themselves under the general Government of Virginia."⁵

"A distinct body by themselves under the general Government of Virginia." What that meant is perfectly clear. The Virginia Company had already begun the practice of granting large tracts of land, up to 80,000 acres, to groups of individuals who would undertake to people and to cultivate them. Such grants were known as "Particular Plantations" or "Hundreds." The grantees carried special privileges such as local self-government, manorial jurisdiction, and permission to carry on an independent trade with the Indians. Over forty such "Particular Plantations" were granted by the Virginia Company; and although many of them were never taken up, a fair number actually were established. The best known were Richard Martin's Hundred; John Martin's Brandon; Southampton Hundred; Smyth of Nibley's, also known as Berkeley's Hundred; Zouche's Hundred; and Fleur de Hundred. A Particular Plantation was organized before the grantees left England, with a governor and council, like a miniature Virginia Company.

³William Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation, 1620-1647*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison (New York, 1952), p. 25. All quotations from Bradford are from this edition.

⁴Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 28.

⁵Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 29.

Each one was a colony within the colony.⁶ Only two patents of Particular Plantations have been preserved, to my knowledge. An 18th-century copy of the patent to John Martin's Brandon is in the Virginia State Library. Brandon was granted to a group of people who had already settled there, which was exceptional. The other patent, Smyth of Nibley's, does not specify where that Particular Plantation should be located; merely that it should not be within ten miles of any other. It was a patent of this kind that the Pilgrim Fathers obtained. Apparently the standard procedure was for the leaders, upon arrival in Virginia, to select a suitable site, then obtain a warrant for the land, with its boundaries defined, from the Secretary's office at Jamestown; and finally to send home for the rest of the company. This was a good way to get Virginia settled by a desirable class of people, and to keep undersirables out; as the Particular Plantation, through its manorial court, had the right to exclude anyone from settling within its borders and to keep a complete control over the land.

Kinship was responsible for the Pilgrims obtaining a patent for a Particular Plantation from the Virginia Company. The father of Elder William Brewster was bailiff of the manor of Scrooby in Yorkshire. The lord of that manor was Samuel Sandys, brother of Sir Edwin Sandys the famous Treasurer of the Virginia Company. In 1619, through the friendly influence of the distinguished Sandys brothers, the Pilgrims obtained a patent from the Virginia Company dated 9 June 1619, made out in the name of the Reverend John Wincop, chaplain in the household of the Earl of Lincoln, who was one of the most eminent English Puritans of his day.

There was nothing extraordinary or even unusual about this grant. Puritanism was strong in London, where many of the Virginia Company's stockholders lived. There was no breach as yet between the Non-Conformist and Conformist elements in the Church of England. In fact, the Virginia Company had already made a Particular Plantation grant to an exiled English Puritan in Leyden, Francis Blackwell.⁷ This seems a good place to repeat the remark that Edward Channing made some fifty years ago:

Historical writers have been altogether too prone to draw a hard and fast line of demarcation between the settlers of the Southern colonies and those who founded

⁶Charles M. Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History* (New Haven, 1934-1938) I, 128-133 and Philip Alexander Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia in the Seventeenth Century* (New York, 1910), II, 290-294. It is to be wished that some scholar will make a special study of these Particular Plantations and how they functioned. The records of Smyth of Nibley's are in the New York Public Library, and are in part printed in that Library's *Bulletin*, I (1897), 68-72; III (1899), 160-171, 208-223, 248-258, 276-295.

⁷All that is known about this enterprise is in Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 358-359.

the colonies north of the fortieth parallel. For instance, it is sometimes said that the Northern colonists came to the New World for conscience' sake, and the Southern planters sought wealth alone; but no such generalization can truthfully be made. Moreover, it is oftentimes the custom to point out some mysterious difference between the Virginian and the New Englander, which can be expressed by the words "cavalier" and "Puritan," the latter term, when thus used, signifying a social condition below that of the cavalier. No such characterization is possible.⁸

Subsequent to the granting of this patent for a Particular Plantation in Virginia, the Pilgrim community at Leyden was pulled two ways. "Some Dutchmen made them fair offers about going with them" to New Netherland, says Bradford; but they were trying to get away from the Dutch in the Old World and did not care to be under them in the New. Next, "Mr. Thomas Weston, a merchant of London" tried to persuade them "not to meddle with the Dutch or too much to depend on the Virginia Company," since "he and such merchants as were his friends . . . would set them forth."⁹

Weston wished them to throw up their Virginia grant and obtain another from the Council for New England, which was a reorganization of the old Northern Virginia Company. Sir Ferdinando Gorges, the Earl of Warwick, and other "honourable lords and gentlemen" of the Northern Virginia Company were then endeavoring to obtain a new royal charter as the Council for New England, the name given by Captain John Smith to Northern Virginia. The inducement set forth by Thomas Weston for discarding the Virginia Company patent and obtaining another one for New England, was the good fishing off the coast of Maine. He was interested in fishing and wanted the Pilgrims to work for him with hook and line on the New England banks, salt down the catch, and send it to England for sale. His arguments made some impression on the Pilgrims, and eventually he and his friends financed them; but there were several reasons why they could not head for New England. For one thing, Sir Ferdinando Gorges and the "honourable lords and gentlemen" did not succeed in getting their New England charter past the seals before the *Mayflower* sailed. Their charter was held up because they wanted a monopoly of fishing in New England waters, against which the Virginia Company and others vigorously protested; there was even a debate about it in House of Commons.¹⁰ Sentiment against monopolies had by this time become so strong in England that the King refused to grant a

⁸*A History of the United States* (New York, 1905-1925), I, 145n-146n.

⁹Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 37.

¹⁰*Proceedings and Debates of the British Parliaments Respecting North America*, ed. Leo Francis Stock (Washington, D. C., 1924-1941), I, 37-38.

fishing monopoly. Owing to this delay, the Council for New England had not yet come to life when the Pilgrims departed; consequently it could not grant them a patent.

This wholesome English sentiment of the time against legal monopolies is reflected in Lord Baltimore's Maryland charter twelve years later. Although Lord Baltimore was granted virtually sovereign powers over his Province of Maryland, fishing rights were excepted. The Charter states "Saving always to Us, our Heirs and Successors, and to all the Subjects of our Kingdoms of England and Ireland, . . . the Liberty of Fishing for Sea-Fish, as well in the Sea, Bays, Straits, and navigable Rivers, as in the Harbors, Bays, and Creeks of the Province aforesaid; and the Privilege of Salting and Drying Fish on the Shores of the same Province; and, for that Cause, to cut down and take Hedging-Wood and Twigs there growing, and to build Huts and Cabins, necessary in this Behalf."¹¹

I have an idea that if any English or American fisherman should attempt to "take Hedging-Wood and Twigs" at Gibson's Island or exercise the "Privilege of Salting and Drying Fish" at Ocean City, he would not be very well received; but the right is there. Only please note, nothing is said about free dragging of oysters!

So, the Council for New England was of no use to the Pilgrims before they sailed. They did not, however, take up their first Virginia patent, the one issued to the Reverend Mr. Wincop; why, no one has ever explained. Possibly his noble patron, the Earl of Lincoln, decided to take over the patent himself; possibly Mr. Wincop had schemes of his own in connection with the Earl's attractive daughters, one of whom became Lady Arabella Johnson and the other Lady Susan Humfry, founders of two of the first families of Massachusetts Bay. However that may be, the Pilgrims, after a fresh application to the Virginia Company, obtained a second patent, in the name of John Peirce, citizen and clothier of London. This patent, which they took with them to America, was granted by the General Court of the Virginia Company in London on 2 February 1620.

Moreover — a fact that I believe has never before been noticed — on the very first day that the Virginia Company granted this patent to the Pilgrim Fathers, and in order of business immediately following the approbation of four Particular Plantations, the Company indirectly suggested the famous Mayflower Compact. This was done by adopting a very liberal ordinance for

¹¹Francis Newton Thorpe, ed. *The Federal and State Constitutions, Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws* (Washington, D. C., 1909), III, 1683-84.

all Particular Plantations, granting to their "Captaines or leaders . . . liberty till a forme of Government be here settled for them, Associatinge unto them divers of the gravest and discreetes of their Companies, to make Orders, Ordinances and Constitutions for the better orderinge and dyrectinge of their Servants and business Provided they be not Repugnant to the Lawes of England."¹² In other words, a Particular Plantation was guaranteed a very wide range of self-government within the Virginia Colony. Thus, the Pilgrims not only obtained a land patent that they could take up anywhere south of latitude 41° N, but they were encouraged to enjoy self-government.

That is the second debt of the Plymouth Colony to the Virginia Company. The Mayflower Compact is a noble document, one of our basic charters of American liberty. It was composed by the Pilgrims themselves on board the *Mayflower*, and signed off Cape Cod. But its form follows that of the temporary constitution of Particular Plantations in Virginia as laid down by the Virginia Company of London.

Thomas Weston, although unable to divert the Pilgrims from Virginia to New England, financed their voyage and their colony; for the Virginia Company expected Particular Plantations to take care of themselves and not to draw on the Company's Treasury. Weston was a pretty bad actor. I was sorry to observe in the film "Plymouth Adventure" that he, as the villain of the story, was represented as a member of the Virginia Company. Actually he had nothing to do with the Virginia Company. He was a small-time promoter — "adventurer" was the word used in those days — who chiseled in on the business of the great chartered companies of England. He had already been hailed before the Privy Council for such misdemeanors. Now that the Virginia Company had made a success of colonization, Weston and his friends saw an opportunity to make money by financing a Particular Plantation. And it must be admitted that they squeezed the last penny out of the simple Pilgrims, who found themselves, as it were, in the hands of loan sharks. It mattered not how many bales of beaver fur and barrels of salt fish they sent over to England to pay their debts; Weston always produced an inflated "expense account" which increased their indebtedness, and they did not manage to satisfy him and his associates until 1643. This same Weston, after milking the Pilgrims and making various other independent fishing and trading adventures, migrated to Virginia. After being arrested there

¹²Susan Myra Kingsbury, ed. *The Records of the Virginia Company of London* (Washington, D. C., 1906-1935), I, 303.

more than once for breaking the laws, he moved to Maryland, acquired new property, lost it, returned to England and died there in 1646, heavily in debt.¹³

So the Pilgrims finally sailed from Southampton in the *Mayflower* with the Peirce Patent from the Virginia Company of London on board. They also had at least two men on board who had been in Virginia — John Clarke had been there in 1610. When a Spanish caravel called at Hampton Roads in 1611, Clarke was engaged to pilot her in, and when the Virginians jailed some Spaniards who came ashore to spy on them, Clarke was detained and carried to Spain, where he was kept in prison for four years. After his release he was employed by the Virginia Company of London to transport Irish cattle to Virginia, and on one of these voyages was a partner with Christopher Jones who later became master and part owner of the *Mayflower*. Among the Pilgrim Fathers themselves, Stephen Hopkins had possibly been in Virginia before; at least a man of that name is found in a passenger list to Virginia a few years earlier; but the name was a common one at that time and the two Stephen Hopkinses cannot positively be identified as the same person.

When the *Mayflower* sailed from England, what was her intended destination? Bradford in his *History* says, "some place about Hudson's River." This has thrown many historians off, since Hudson's River suggests the Dutch colony of New Netherland and not Virginia. But the mouth of the Hudson was within the domain of the Virginia Company of London, whose Charter of 1612 gave it all North America up to latitude 41° N, a parallel which crosses Westchester County, New York. It is true that the New Netherlands Company had already been chartered by the States General of the United Netherlands and that the Dutch had explored and named Hudson River; but the English did not recognize their right to it, and the Dutch made no settlement on the river until 1624, or on Manhattan Island until 1626, six years after the *Mayflower* sailed. John Pory, Secretary of the Virginia Colony, who called at Plymouth in 1622, states flatly that the *Mayflower's* "voyage was intended for Virginia," that she carried letters of introduction from Sir Edwin Sandys and John Ferrar, Treasurer and Secretary of the Virginia Company, to Governor Sir George Yeardley of the Colony, "that he should give them the best advice he could for trading in Hudson's River." It was natural that they should aim at that northern

¹³Everything now known about Thomas Weston is in Andrews, *The Colonial Period of American History*, I, 261, 330-331. Cf. Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 414-420, for the final settlement.

part of Virginia, because they expected to live by fishing and fur trading. The Hudson's mouth was the best location south of the St. Lawrence for the Indian trade, and not too far from the New England fishing grounds.

If the Pilgrims had set sail from England in the early spring, as they intended, they would probably have taken the southern route followed by *Susan Constant*, *Goodspeed*, and *Discovery* in 1607, and called at Jamestown first to make arrangements about locating and validating their patent. They might, in that event, have been persuaded to locate somewhat closer to the parent colony than the mouth of the Hudson. But, as a result of various delays, vexations, and accidents, they did not depart from Plymouth, England, until 6 September 1620. In a hurry to cross and get settled before winter set in, they took the shorter, northern route. Whether they intended by that route to make first for the Chesapeake or the Hudson there is no evidence; but a landfall on Cape Cod was by no means unusual at that period for storm-tossed mariners aiming at Cape Henry; and it was a normal landfall for ships with a Hudson River destination.

Supposing the *Mayflower* had reached that great river mouth, the Pilgrims would doubtless have located on Manhattan or Staten Island, dispatched the *Mayflower* to Jamestown with their letters of introduction and the Peirce Patent, recorded it, and obtained a warrant for their chosen settlement with its boundaries defined. There can be no doubt that Governor Yeardley and the Council at Jamestown would have welcomed a settlement of Englishmen at the Hudson River's mouth, and would have done all in their power to further it. Only seven years earlier the Virginia authorities had sent Samuel Argall to break up the French settlements at Mount Desert and Port Royal. Certainly the authorities at Jamestown in 1620 would have snapped at a chance to establish an English outpost against the Dutch, at the mouth of the Hudson.

Of course the Dutch would have had something to say about that; but again, they might not have dared to risk a war with England by offering violence to her subjects. They might have used force to dislodge the Pilgrims from Manhattan or Staten Island; but by the time the phlegmatic Dutch got around to trying conclusions, the Pilgrims would have been well established and reinforced by men and munitions from England and Virginia.

Even though the Dutch did get there first, Governor Peter Minuit and his council were so alarmed at Governor Bradford's mild reminder of the English claim to that region in 1627, that they wrote to the Dutch West India Company, who passed the word to the States General, that "The

English of New Plymouth threatened to drive away those there," and asked for forty soldiers to defend New Amsterdam against a possible assault by Myles Standish! Thus, if the Dutch at New Amsterdam were so afraid of the little, lonely Pilgrim colony in 1627, when its population did not exceed 150 or 200, it seems very unlikely that they would have attacked an English settlement at the mouth of the Hudson, when backed by the great Virginia Company of London. So much has been written about the slender population and low state of the Plymouth Colony that we forget it was the strongest European colony north of Virginia until 1630.

Another piece of evidence that the Pilgrims were expected to settle within the boundaries of Virginia is in the records of the Virginia Company of London. It was contemplated handing over to them the task of training and educating sundry orphan Indian children who had become an embarrassment to the Jamestown colonists. Sir John Wolstenholme, a friend of the Pilgrims, proposed in the General Court of the Company in February 1620 that the young Indians be made the Pilgrims' responsibility. Others objected that this would be "inconvenient" because (1) the Pilgrims would not be ready to sail for several months; (2) they would "be long in settling themselves"; and (3) the Indians were "not acquainted with them." So the children were apportioned among Smith's, Berkeley's, and Martin's Hundreds.¹⁴

Thus we may consider it proved that the Pilgrim Fathers, when they sailed from England, carried a patent as a Particular Plantation from the Virginia Company of London, and fully intended to take up their patent somewhere near the mouth of the Hudson River. Why, then, did they not?

The moving picture "Plymouth Adventure" tells us that Thomas Weston bribed Christopher Jones, master of the *Mayflower*, to land them in New England. There's not a bit of evidence to support that yarn. The real and obvious reasons for their going to New England rather than Virginia are three — time, wind, and tide.

Their departure was unduly delayed; first by the difficulty of getting enough money out of Weston & Company for their ships and supplies, then by the smaller vessel proving unseaworthy so that they had to turn back. Finally, both ships' companies piled into the *Mayflower*, and it was not until 6 September 1620 that the famous little ship "put to sea with a prosperous wind" from Plymouth in England. The fall of the year is not a pleasant season to cross the Western Ocean under sail, and the *Mayflower* had a very tempestuous voyage. It was not until 9 November, 64 days out,

¹⁴Kingsbury, *The Records of the Virginia Company of London*, I, 310-311.

that she raised the Highlands of Cape Cod. She followed the shore of Cape Cod south, and at nightfall found herself entangled in the "dangerous shoals and roaring breakers" of Pollock Rip, with a dying west wind and a strong ebb tide. Pollock Rip is a difficult place for a sailboat to navigate even today, with a dredged and buoyed channel. So nobody need wonder that after consulting with the master, the leaders of the Pilgrims decided "to bear up again for the Cape." It was as simple as that. And, having reached Cape Cod Harbor, they naturally did not care to tempt Providence again by re-summing their voyage to the Hudson.

The Pilgrims did not know much about American geography, but they had Captain John Smith's Map and *Description of New England* which had been printed in 1616. In fact, the doughty Captain offered to accompany them himself but was rejected, they "saying my books and maps were much better cheape to teach them, than my selfe," he says.¹⁵ Myles Standish was hired by the Pilgrims to be their military leader, and it was probably well that they passed over the famous Captain, who had no great reputation for due obedience to the civil authorities.

Nevertheless, they did have his map, which covered the north-south arm of Cape Cod and Plymouth Bay, and correctly placed them in latitude 42° N,¹⁶ one full degree north of the northern boundary of Virginia. Thus, their Patent was invalid. That is why, before coming to an anchor, they had to form the famous Compact on board ship on 11 November 1620 and not wait until their plantation was seated. This is clear both from Bradford's *History* and from the language of the Compact itself:

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN.

We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread Sovereign Lord King James, by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France, and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the Glory of God and advancement of the Christian Faith and Honour of our King and Country, a Voyage to plant the First Colony in the Northern Parts of Virginia, do by these presents solemnly and mutually in the presence of God and one of another, Covenant and Combine ourselves together into a Civil Body Politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal Laws, Ordinances, Acts, Constitutions and Offices, from time to time, as shall be

¹⁵This statement is in his *Continuation of the Generall Historie of Virginia, the Summer Isles, and New England* (1629), reprinted in A. G. Bradley's new edition of Edward Arber, ed. *Travels and Works of Captain John Smith* (Edinburgh, 1910), II, 892.

¹⁶The Gurnet, Plymouth, is right on the 42nd parallel, and Highland Light, Cape Cod, is at Lat. 42° 02.4"; Captain John Smith was amazingly accurate in his cartography.

thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony, unto which we promise all due submission and obedience. In witness whereof we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11th of November, in the year of the reign of our Sovereign Lord King James, of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Anno Domini 1620.¹⁷

It was too late in the year for them to up anchor and make for the Hudson; and Mr. Jones told them bluntly that they had better hurry up and find a place to settle, or he and his crew would dump them ashore and sail home. So the leaders of the expedition set forth to explore Cape Cod in the ship's boat, while the *Mayflower* with the older men and all the women and children on board, lay in Cape Cod (now Provincetown) Harbor. All along the Cape the Indians were hostile and the land was sandy and poor. At length on 11 December the ship's boat sailed into the harbor named Plymouth on Captain John Smith's map — and there the leaders of the colony decided to settle.¹⁸

Thus, by a series of accidents, the Pilgrims pitched their colony where they had not intended, in New England rather than the "Northern parts of Virginia." That some of them at least still considered themselves within Virginia is attested by an interesting association book belonging to the Virginia State Library. This is a copy of Henry Ainsworth's *Annotations Upon the Book of Psalmes* which, according to the inscription, was given to Giles Heale, surgeon of the *Mayflower*, by Isaac Allerton, one of the Pilgrim Fathers, "in Verginia" on 10 February "in the Yeare of our Lord 1620." At that date in 1620/21 the *Mayflower* was still moored in Plymouth Harbor.¹⁹

For aught they may have felt themselves to be within Virginia, in the original meaning of that name as embracing all English North America, the Pilgrims' institutional connection with the Virginia Company was

¹⁷Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 75-76. Of course the Pilgrims, as Puritans, were familiar with church covenants; and their pastor at Leyden, the Reverend John Robinson, had advised them about "civil government" in his farewell letter before they sailed (Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 370).

¹⁸It so happened that while the *Mayflower* was at sea, the "Honorable Lords and Gentlemen" of the old Northern Virginia Company at last obtained their charter as the Council of New England. This reorganized company was very glad to have the Pilgrims pioneer on their territory, and granted them a patent for the region around Plymouth in 1621.

¹⁹William M. E. Rachal, "A *Mayflower* Relic in Virginia," *Virginia Cavalcade*, Autumn 1952, pp. 10-11. Allerton, a tailor by trade (as described in this inscription) married a daughter of Elder William Brewster, removed to New Haven in 1631 and traded with Virginia; his son of the same name removed to the Northern Neck and became a colonel of militia and a Councillor. He was associated with Richard Lee in refusing to subscribe to the new oath of office after the Revolution of 1688. (Bruce, *Institutional History of Virginia*, II, 365.)

broken, much to their regret; for they were now hundreds of miles from the settlement on the James, with no other Englishmen between them and Hampton Roads, and none between them and the North Pole. But their friendly relations with Virginia did not thereby end. The first succor they had, in their straits of semi-starvation, came from the parent colony. Captain John Huddleston, master of the *Bona Nova*, who is described in the records of the Virginia Company as "one of the sufficientest masters that ever came thither," sailed on a fishing voyage from the Chesapeake to the Maine coast in 1622. He had the humanity to send a boat all the way from Maine to Plymouth with a letter, telling the Pilgrims of the terrible Indian massacre in Virginia that year, and putting them on their guard.

"By this boat," says Bradford, "the Governor returned a thankful answer, as was meet, and sent a boat of their own with them, . . . in which Mr. Winslow was sent to procure what provisions he could of the ships." Winslow "was kindly received by the foresaid gentleman," Captain Huddleston, "who had not only spared what he could, but writ to others to do the like." ("Others" suggests that *Bona Nova* was not alone.)²⁰ Winslow obtained "some good quantity" and returned safely to Plymouth. "By which the Plantation had a double benefit; first, a present refreshing by the food brought and, secondly, they knew the way to those parts for their benefit hereafter. But what was got, and this small boat brought, being divided among so many, came but to a little; yet by God's blessing it upheld them till harvest. It arose but to a quarter of a pound of bread a day to each person, and the Governor caused it to be daily" rationed out; "thus, with what else they could get, they made pretty shift till corn was ripe."²¹

That was in the summer of 1622. "Now the welcome time of harvest approached," says Bradford, "in which all had their hungry bellies filled. But it arose but to a little, in comparison of a full year's supply. . . . So . . . it . . . appeared that famine must still ensue, the next year also if not some way prevented. . . . Markets there was none to go to, but only the Indians, and they [the Pilgrims] had no trading commodities."

Again Virginia came to their rescue, in an event which Bradford describes as "Another providence of God. A ship comes into the harbor, one Captain Jones being chief therein." This was the *Discovery*, a vessel in the employ of the Virginia Company, making a trading voyage Down East before

²⁰Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 110-111. The Maine coast at that period was frequented every summer by literally hundreds of sail of fishing vessels, of which 30 to 40 were English; and some of these sailed Down East to fish after landing passengers and freight in Virginia.

²¹Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 111.

returning to England. Her master, Captain Thomas Jones, sold the Pilgrims trading truck such as beads and knives; at a high profit to be sure, but it was the first they could get, and "by this means they were fitted again to trade for beaver and other things, and intended to buy what corn they could."²²

On board the *Discovery* was John Pory, a learned and much traveled alumnus of Caius College, Cambridge. He had served for several years as secretary of the Virginia Colony and was on his way home to England. His account of the Pilgrims, rediscovered thirty-six years ago, is so vivid — and still so little known — that I shall quote part of it. It was in the form of a letter written to the Earl of Southampton, one of the most important members of the Virginia Company of London:

For whenas your Lordship knows, their voyage was intended for Virginia, being by letters from Sir Edwin Sandys and Mr. Deputy Ferrar recommended to Sir Yeardley, then governor, that he should give them the best advice he could for trading in Hudson's River, whether it were by contrariety of wind, or by the backwardness of their master or pilot, to make (as they thought it) too long a journey, they fell short both of the one and the other, arriving first at that stately harbour called Cape Cod, . . . whence in shallop the Pilot . . . after some dangerous and almost incurable errors and mistakings, stumbled by accident upon the harbour of Plymouth, where after the Planters had failed of their intention, and the Pilot of his, it pleased Almighty God (who had better provided for them than their own hearts could imagine) to plant them upon the seat of an old town, which divers years before had been abandoned of the Indians.²³

Mr. Pory there hit upon the real reasons why they settled at Plymouth: their long and late voyage, the need to settle somewhere before Christmas, and the fact that at Plymouth there were cleared cornfields and no Indians.

So they both quietly and justly sat down without either dispossessing any of the natives, or being resisted by them, and without shedding so much as one drop of blood, which felicity of theirs is confirmed unto them even by the voices of the savages themselves . . . according to the saying of St. Paul, "If the first fruits be holy, the lump is also holy"; but to leave this privilege to them whom it concerns, and to describe to your Lordship the excellency of the place, first, the harbour is not only pleasant for air and prospect, but most sure for shipping both small and great, being land-locked on all sides. The town is seated on the ascent of a hill, which besides the pleasure of variable objects entertaining the unsatisfied eye, such is the wholesomeness of the place (as the Governor [Bradford] told me) that for the space of one whole year, of the two wherein they had been there, died not one man, woman, or child. This health-

²²Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 111-112.

²³Champlin Burrage, ed. *John Pory's Lost Description of Plymouth Colony in the Earliest Days of the Pilgrim Fathers* (Boston and New York, 1918), pp. 35-37.

fulness is accompanied with much plenty both of fish and fowl every day in the year, as I know no place in the world than can match it. . . .

In the same bay lobsters are in season during the 4 months, so large, so full of meat, and so plentiful in number, as no man will believe that hath not seen. For a knife of 3 halfpence [value] I bought 10 lobsters that would well have dined 40 labouring men; and the least boy in the ship, with an hour's labour, was able to feed the whole company with them for two days, which, if those of the ship that come home do not affirm upon their oaths, let me forever loose my credit. . . . Mussels and clams they have all the year long, which being the meanist of God's blessings here, and such as these people fat their hogs with at a low water, if ours upon any extremity did enjoy in the South Colony, they would never complain of famine or want, although they wanted bread. . . . From the beginning of September till the end of March, their bay in a manner is covered with all sorts of water fowl, in such sort of swarms and multitudes as is rather admirable than credible. . . .

Now as concerning the quality of the people, how happy were it for our people in the Southern Colony, if they were as free from wickedness and vice as these are in this place! And their industry as well appeareth by their building as by a substantial palisado about their settlement of 2700 foot in compass, stronger than I have seen any in Virginia, and lastly by a blockhouse which they have erected in the highest place of the town to mount their ordnance upon, from whence they may command all the harbour.²⁴

This "blockhouse" was their combination fort and church building on Burial Hill.

Before the *Discovery* sailed for England, Mr. Pory borrowed from Governor Bradford and Elder Brewster "Mr. Ainsworth's elaborate work upon the five books of Moses" for shipboard reading; and to a farewell letter he signed himself "Your unfeigned and firm friend, John Pory."²⁵

Another consequence of the Indian massacre in Virginia, all the gory details of which were told by John Pory to the Pilgrims, was this: that when they first heard of an Indian conspiracy against them, they struck first, and hard. It was their friend Massasoit who tipped them off in 1623, after Edward Winslow had found him at death's door, following a bout of gluttony, and had cured him by administering some simple home remedies and wild duck broth. The Massachusetts Indians were at the head of the conspiracy; the Nausets, with whom the Pilgrims had had their first encounter, and all Cape Cod Indians were privy to the plan. It so happened that a group of "30 lusty men" from England, whom Thomas Weston had sent over to trade for him, were located at a place then called Wessagusset, on

²⁴Burrage, ed. *John Pory's Lost Description of Plymouth Colony*, pp. 39-42.

²⁵Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 113.

Massachusetts Bay. The "lusty men," who lacked both morale and know-how, were at their last straits. They had run out of food, and were dispersed in small groups, some digging clams and others obtaining a little to eat by doing menial tasks for the Indians, who had caused one of them to be hanged for stealing corn. The polishing off of these unfortunate Englishmen was to have been the first blow of the Indian uprising. Warned by Massasoit, and by one of the Weston colony who staggered through the woods to Plymouth to beg for help, Governor Bradford and the Council sent Captain Myles Standish and an expeditionary force of eight men to Wessagusset, to deal with the situation.

Standish quartered his company among the beachcombers and awaited developments. Presently two of the most notorious leaders of the Massachusetts Indians, Pecksuot and Witauwamat, appeared. Pecksuot, who was a gigantic savage towering over the five-foot-two Standish, defied him, and before him whetted a sharp knife of which he said, "By and by it should see, and by and by it should eat, but not speak." "These things the Captain observed," said Winslow, "yet bare with patience for the present." Standish and three of his men got Pecksuot, Witauwamat, and two other Indians into the beachcombers' house, clapped the door shut, snatched Pecksuot's famous knife from his neck and stabbed him to the heart, while his men disposed of the other three Indians. That broke the conspiracy. The rest of the Massachusetts Indians — numbering scores of warriors — ran away to the swamps of the Neponset valley; the sachem of Manomet decided that the God of the English was offended with him; the sachem of Nauset sent an embassy to Plymouth to make peace, and the sachem of Mattakeeset, the fourth conspirator, and his people went "running to and fro like men distracted."²⁶

This is the episode which Mr. Herbert Ravenel Sass calls "Capt. Myles Standish's treachery in the Wessagussett blockhouse."²⁷ A strange definition of treachery, it seems to me! But for the warning from Virginia, the warning from Massasoit, and the stout-heartedness of the Pilgrims themselves, they and all other English in New England would have been wiped out.

The story of breaking up the Indian conspiracy was printed in London by Edward Winslow on a visit to England in 1647. That wise and valiant gentleman, who had succeeded William Bradford as Governor of the Colony,

²⁶Edward Winslow, *Good News from New England*, as quoted in Alexander Young, ed. *Chronicle of the Pilgrim Fathers of the Colony of Plymouth from 1602 to 1625* (Boston, 1844), pp. 338-345.

²⁷"Mr. Sass Answers His Critic," *Saturday Evening Post*, January 16, 1954, p. 114.

never did return to New England. Oliver Cromwell appointed him, with Admiral Sir William Penn and General Robert Venables, as joint head of the English expeditionary force that captured Jamaica in 1655. He caught a fever there, died on the return passage, and was buried at sea with military honors. Among his many distinguished descendants are three flag officers of the United States Navy, including that Captain Winslow who commanded the *Kearsage* in her battle with the *Alabama*.

After 1622 there was not a year when one or more ships bound to or from Virginia did not call at Plymouth. In 1623, for instance, came the *Plantation*, Captain Francis West, brother of Lord de la Warr and a leading planter of Virginia since 1608. In 1632 the ship *Lyon*, William Pierce master, carrying 800 pounds of beaver to England, and the Pilgrims' accounts with Weston, was wrecked on the coast of Virginia; the master wrote to them on Christmas Day: "Dear friends, you may know that all your beaver and the books of your accounts are swallowed up in the sea. . . . Your afflicted brother in Christ, William Pierce."²⁸ This letter reached them only in the following April.

We may be certain that the *Lyon's* shipwrecked mariners were kindly treated in Virginia, because a few years before, the Pilgrims had done a good turn to some Virginia-bound colonists. A little ketch-rigged vessel bound for Virginia, named *Sparrowhawk*, was wrecked at Nauset Harbor on Cape Cod. The people, about 25 in number, all managed to get ashore alive, and sent a message by Indians to Plymouth for succor since "they had been six weeks at sea and had no water nor beer nor any wood left." Governor Bradford made a boat ready and himself went with it, carrying provisions and trading truck to buy them corn from the local Indians. At the desire of *Sparrowhawk's* people, he transported them, with such goods as they had saved, to Plymouth where they were "sheltered in their houses as well as they could." The master of the *Sparrowhawk* was a Scot named Johnston who had been in Virginia before. She had been chartered by Captain John Sibsey to take a company to Virginia, and there he eventually settled in Norfolk County, to become a burgess and a Councillor of the Colony. Captain Sibsey and company raised and harvested a crop of corn at Plymouth before "a couple of barks carried them away at the latter end of summer. And sundry of them have acknowledged their thankfulness since from Virginia."²⁹

²⁸Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 255n.

²⁹Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 189-192.

Another intended Virginia settler on board the *Sparrowhawk* was a certain Mr. Fells, otherwise unknown to fame. Among his servants, says Bradford, was a damsel suspected to be his concubine. They were examined by the magistrates, but nothing could be proved and the case was dismissed. In due course the girl became pregnant, and she and her master, to escape punishment, shoved off in a small boat for Massachusetts Bay (where by that time several individuals had set up as fur traders), hoping to find passage for Virginia. None offered, and they were forced to return to Plymouth, where the authorities packed them off.³⁰

Thomas Morton, the amusing scamp who had set up a trading (and filling) station on Mount Wollaston, which he called Merrymount, alludes to this incident in a chapter of his *New English Canaan* entitled "Of a barren doe of Virginia growne fruitful in New Canaan" — said fruitfulness being attributed to "such plenty of Lobsters and other delicate shellfish." According to him the guilty pair found a vessel for Virginia by crossing the neck of land to Buzzard's Bay and there the child was born, died on board ship, and was buried at sea.³¹

By a curious chance the timbers of the wrecked *Sparrowhawk*, preserved in the sands of Cape Cod, were revealed by a storm in the last century, recovered, and preserved as a precious relic. They may still be viewed in the basement of Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth. In the same museum is a reconstructed model of her. She could not have been more than 45 feet long over all, but that was not unusually small for the time.³² I wish that everyone who visits Plymouth would take a good look at this maritime relic, which to me is more precious than the famous Rock because of its human associations. Here is clear, irrefutable evidence of the tiny vessels in which the pioneers of Virginia and New England crossed the "wild and raging ocean," and of the hardships they endured. Here is a symbol of that unity between all Englishmen, whatever their creed, in the reign of Charles I, and of the Christian charity that they extended to one another in time of need. I would that a replica of the *Sparrowhawk's* rude frames and timbers might be placed in the hall of the Virginia Historical Society, and that beside it, in letters of bronze,

³⁰Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, pp. 191-192.

³¹Thomas Morton, *New English Canaan*, ed. Charles Francis Adams, Publications of the Prince Society (Boston, 1883), pp. 264-266, 273-274. It is by no means certain, however, that Morton's rather obscure and involved story relates to this girl.

³²H. H. Holly, "Sparrow-Hawk, a Seventeenth-Century Vessel in Twentieth-Century America," *The American Neptune*, XIII (1953), 51-64.

might be recorded two quotations, one from each of our respective mother colonies. First, from that touching poem of 1610 by Robert Rich, "Newes from Virginia" in which Lord de la Warr says:

Be not dismayed at all,
For scandall cannot doe us wrong,
God will not let us fall.
Let England knowe our willingnesse,
For that our worke is good,
*Wee hope to plant a nation,
Where none before hath stood.*³³

And, for Plymouth, those noble words with which Governor Bradford concluded his annals of their first decade:

Thus out of small beginnings greater things have been produced by His hand that made all things of nothing, and gives being to all things that are; and, as one small candle may light a thousand, so the light here kindled hath shone unto many, yea in some sort to our whole nation; let the glorious name of Jehovah have all the praise.³⁴

³³Alexander Brown, *The Genesis of the United States* (Boston and New York, 1891), I, 424.

³⁴Bradford, *Of Plymouth Plantation*, p. 236.