The Pilgrim Fathers
and our heritage

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1. The Embarkation. Robert Weir Painting.

An invitation from Boston, a city situated so near the middle of North America to attend the celebration of a "Forefathers' Day" is certainly an unexpected event. And I confess that the primary effect of your call for an address on such an occasion was to jostle within me sundry partitions of the unknown or at least the dimly remembered. Fore father's day! the 21st of December! Plymouth! Pilgrims! New England! These expressions were in the letter of warning. A son of New England, born on the banks of the Androscoggin, nurtured in the snowy lap of Maine, fed upon the fishes of Cape Cod, and always taught to revere a species of granite called "Plymouth rock", surely he should know who his 'forefathers were. Ah well, a suggestion comes. Called up, I suppose,

by the principle of association, is a grand old picture executed by Robert Weir's master hand. It is in the Rotunda of the Capitol at Washington and entitled "The embarkation of the Pilgrims."

John Robinson. the shepherd, + his flock.

¶ Behold that venerable man in the foreground the most prominent figure of all. It is the shepherd of the flock, the pilgrim pastor, the Rev. John Robinson. His hair is silvered with age and his kindly face is beaming with the comingling effects of tender love & present sorrow. He stands as the center of a beautiful group of worthy men, comely women and children. He holds the Word of God open before him and is evidently reminding his hearers of their immortal interests. There, on the deck of a vessel was depicted in the group a mixed party, typical of those who were to go & those to stay behind. There were youthful courage, manly

strength and hoary age. There were also girlhood freshness, ripening beauty, maternal loveliness and matronly dignity. I never anywhere see a venerable man of God with the open Bible in his hands, speaking tenderly and persuasively to a listening throng that I do not immediately think of this embarkation, Robert Vrie's beautiful inspiration. There it is in the picture, love epitomized. The father-love, the mother-love, the child's, the pastor's, the human thinly veiling the divine, the tender parting sorrow gently repressed by faith and hope. Great hearts, great sacrifices, great trust in God and in His Holy Word! The vessel chosen for the farewell was the Speedwell and the place of embarkation, Delft Haven. An eye-witness has left us another glimpse description of the same event, he says:

An account of the embarkation, from an eye-witness.

"When they came [there] they found the ship

and all things ready. That night was spent with little sleep by the most, but with friendly entertainment and christian discourse and other real expressions of true christian love. The next day the weather being fair, they went on board and their friends with them, when truly doleful was the sight of that sad and mournful parting; to see what sighs and sobs and prayers did sound amongst them; what tears did gush from every eye and pitty speeches pierce each other's hearts; so that sundry of the Dutch strangers that stood on the quay as spectators, could not refrain from tears."

"But the tide, which stays for no man, calling them away that were thus loth to depart, their reverend pastor, falling down on his knees, and they all with him, with

watery cheeks commended them, with most fervent prayers to the Lord and his blessing, — and then with mutual embraces and many tears they took their leave of one another."

Such is the graphic story. Thousands of our people who may not be familiar with the written history may have seen the painting or if not they may obtain fine engravings of it as reminders of this last precious scene in Holland.

Inferences concerning the pilgrims & christians & patriots of today.

I think it does the christian or the patriot of today good to dwell upon it as the Artist did. For it is a type unique & unrivaled of self-sacrifice, self-reliance and self-government. What devotion to duty and to God! What an insight into the future where the interests of children, and children's children, the seedlets of a great Nation, were so clearly discerned, and all the Multitudinous

obstacles to their realization counted as nothing! And, my countrymen, ye who still have purity of heart, purity of faith, with an open Bible, and are actuated by a supreme devotion to duty and to God, ye may well be proud of such an ancestry.

Causes of the exile & numbers of the emigrés.

A spark kindlette a flame; a little cloud portends a shower; a small seed produces a tree with branches; a mother cradlette her son and this son a multitude; first the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear. The principle of things is plain. So that if we were to look back and seek for the truest beginnings of our national life we should expect the seed to be choice but the sowers to be few.

The history says: "Out of a thousand English Pilgrims in Holland about a hundred were

selected to go to America — such of the youngest and strongest as freely offered themselves."

The causes that impelled the pilgrim-fathers to leave England and afterward Holland are plainly recorded in every historic account. For example, the King of England, James I, who came from Scotland to England in 1603 resorted to decisive measures against all the separatists in the realm. These separatists included all who left or declined to conform to the doctrines & discipline of the Established Church. Some of King James recorded threats are quite pointed & plain to be understood. For example, at a conference at Hampton court he ~~did~~ declared: "I shall make them (the puritans) conform themselves or I will harry them out of the land or else do worse. Again "if any would not be quiet and show his obedience he were worthy to

be hanged". The puritans (these included the Pilgrims) who remained nominally connected with the Church of England were indeed scarcely tolerated, but those who, for conscience sake, sundered their connection and set up churches of their own were denounced in public proclamation and treated as if in position rebellion against the State. "Some were arrested & imprisoned, others were reprimanded, threatened and fined. A watch was set over others in their houses." Sunday meetings were forbidden. And all persons that were found hardy enough to meet in religious assemblies were immediately dispersed by the authorities. Some believing they ought to obey God rather than men for a time met secretly, but were soon discovered by spies and driven from

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house to house. They were also subjected to such ostracism and hindrances in their daily business that it became quite impossible to get on.

In view of these facts, it is not strange that the well known resolution finally forced itself upon so many persons: "We will seek a country where we can worship God according to our consciences."

The terrible persecution and consequent inspiration landed them first in Holland. It was their natural asylum; it afforded, like the Cora of Egypt to Jacob's children, an immediate relief, still before long many causes combined to make the pilgrims weary and restless in their new home.

They greatly desired for themselves & for their posterity the good old english tongue.

The toil for a livelihood was too little remunerative - it became exhausting & vexatious and clouded all their future. The manners & habits of their neighbors, epicurism & seduction, were too evidently affecting those of their children who were just then maturing into manhood & womanhood. Thus the whole object of their coming to Holland was in danger of hindrance and defeat. Furthermore complicated political disturbances had already grown out of their residence in the land and had subjected themselves & the friendly government of Holland to much annoyance. They might soon bring disaster upon the very people who had welcomed and befriended them.

Hence with these imperative considerations before them - they determined, dispensing with all government aid, to make a new home in

The Leading
the Subject.

a new world, ~~to~~ send first a few of their number, a nucleus, about one hundred souls as we have seen, to start a colony of freemen.

The landing

The Sabbath.

After a long and tedious voyage, suffering the loss of the Speedwell, which had become disabled and gone back, we read that: "At last they came on the Mayflower into Plymouth Harbor".

It was on Saturday that the vessel crossed the bay into this Harbor and we read with a profound feeling of satisfaction: "The company remained on board during the Sabbath;" ~~and the next~~ x x. x x..

Mr Duncan the Missionary at Metlakattah, Alaska, has taught his numerous Indians to keep the Sabbath. Some telegraph men were at one time

engaged in the vicinity putting up poles & wires. They continued their work on sunday. The Indians immediately sent a delegation to Mr Duncan. "How is this they said, you taught us out of your Bible to remember the Sabbath day, & not to work that day! Here are your own people working right along all the sunday!"

It was with an aching heart that the good man explained, that all the white men do not try to believe or keep God's own commandments.

With almost every conceivable inducement to go on shore & begin work for their relief, comfort & pleasure, still "the company remained on board during the Sabbath." The example has given stability to men ever since. The sabbath was

and the sabbath observance in the free & generous spirit of our Master, has been an abundant source of discipline to our youth who have remained true to the fathers' teaching and has clothed them with an independence of character which marks them wherever in the whole earth they may have gone.

"On the 21st of December, 1620, they landed". A young girl named Mary Chilton is said to have been the very first to step ashore on Plymouth Rock. Probably, like young Mordecai with his joyous prophetic face beaming with hope as he saw in vision the end of the captivity of his people, so Mary Chilton, as she bounded upon the Rock had her cheeks glowing & her eyes brightening unconsciously on shadows prophetic of the youthful enterprise, the hope & joy of a new nation.

Once when I was passing with a friend, himself a true son of the pilgrims, from Newyork to Brooklyn by the Wall street Ferry - he took me past the church where he worshipped. It was the church of the Pilgrims. It rose before us a magnificent structure, grand in its simplicity. It is built of handsome solid granite. Near one corner my friend showed me a stone projecting beyond the general surface of the front wall. All the face of the church has the smoothness of hewn stone, except this one piece of granite which is left in the rough. "That sir," he said, "is a part of Plymouth Rock." I gazed upon it with attentive interest. That fragment, I thought, had become the corner stone of a great Edifice. It is an emblem of solid worth - for this grand old church with its Plymouth corner stone is itself the harbinger of unhampered

truth, the pattern of a free church, the fold of a happy people. With closed eyes one could almost see this building of the Pilgrims multiplied a thousand times. In every city & village, upon the hillside of every ~~the~~ country town from either ocean to the top of the rocky mountains their steeples keep rising and pointing to the heavens as if to remind every soul to lift itself from the Rock of Plymouth to the Rock of Ages.

The new truth & the old.

And, beautiful fact, the seed thought of John Robinson, the farewell words on the Speedwell prevail still. "The Lord has more truth yet to break out of his holy word," he said. Within the churches which look back to Plymouth with affection the pulpits still give no uncertain sound. Their faithful worshippers, untrammeled by the mere forms and ceremonies which oppressed them in the old world fearlessly announce their faith. They are never at a loss what to teach their children or the little ones committed to their care. On the one hand they have the sanction of a divine Law, epitomized and yet most explicit in the Ten commandments of God; on the other, they have a fountain free & full, a gospel, the good news for all classes and conditions of people. These in glad tones the servants of Jehovah, the ministers of peace, are everywhere

Meditation; to them opposite forbidden the religious duties, notions, are upon our today shown us. We [illegible] give us them set forth as with flowers the earth.

The force of [illegible] the [illegible] starting strength of. The spirit, quickening power can be [illegible] [illegible] in person of them. In the [illegible] with yet into our all the [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible]: to that [illegible] and [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] of metal. The wonderful [illegible] of nature [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

proclaiming; so they grandly fulfill the religious hope which, 262 years ago today, shone in the faces of the Pilgrim voyagers as they set foot on old Plymouth Rock.

The law conservative, protective, searching, stands fast without change. The Gospel, gushing from an exhaustless fountain increases its flow. In the sunlight its jets take on all the beautiful colors of the rainbow: so that expansion and diversity are ever multiplying the exhibitions of truth. The wonderful achievements of men, which today appear holding the steam to their uses and the lightning to their control, but increase a thousand fold the circulation of the sparkling drops brighter & beautiful as diamond points, but equal & satisfying to human thirst. The thirst of the soul. It is good that our fathers repaired new bottles for the wine ever new — a free world for a free people.

I often find much jealousy concerning the pilgrim fathers - many people who cannot trace their blood to a Brewster, Carver, White, Standish or other member of the first comers by the ~~Mayflower~~ May Flower cannot see what part or lot they have in these people.
Out of the jealousy as always too has grown a disposition to detract from the fair fame of the Pilgrims. Confounding them with the Puritans generally who settled in New England, foolish intolerance, mistakes, yes even criminal conduct has at times been alleged against them; but the ~~old~~ accusations of wrong doing, ~~the~~ beyond the ordinary infirmities which ~~made~~ shew us all alike, have been squarely met & overcome by abundant contemporary history.
But ~~the after~~ the strange notion of the need of blood-relationship in order to constitute our own legitimacy, is nonsense. Half of the disbelief in the Bible comes from the literal interpretations of bigots & imputers, who mistook their messiah ~~the stumbling stone of the seed of Judah~~ ~~who was that Joseph~~ the King of Israel. How could a grovelling narrow or selfish mind comprehend that the literal Israel was only Jacob, but, the real Israel (for the spiritual is the most real) embraced all the people who gave themselves to the worship of Jehovah - literalness worried the disciples of Christ.
How horrified were they ~~disciples~~ ~~at the~~ at the idea of eating his flesh. Does this trouble you? How then can you understand all parables? "The words I speak unto you, they are spirit".

By blood, by actual family descent, who of us have any inheritance in Israel? The gulf between us & the Messiah would be impassible by such verbal interpretation. But we belong to Israel enlarged. ~~Israel's~~ by adoption. & we have the Lord, because as Jerusalem from above he has made us his brothers, brought into his own catholic ~~church~~ spiritual household. The letter killeth now & always but thanks God the Spirit maketh alive!

Now let us examine this matter and see if we are or are not properly sons in a higher & better sense than the physical descendants of the pilgrims. Jacob Abbott, the faithful historian, affords us from positive facts, after giving us an account of the forlorn condition of the voyagers just before their landing, "weakened & exhausted as they were by the fatigues of the voyage; the health impaired by the continuous use of salt provisions & hard fare. landing two months later than they had expected. and in a much more unfavorable region & climate than they had been led to hope for. and as we may suppose having amongst them the usual percentage of ordinary discontent & grumbling. Mr Abbot goes on to say:

"These threatening appearances made the leading men quite anxious, and in order the better to bind the whole company together they drew up a solemn agreement by which they formed themselves into a body politic, and agreed to submit faithfully to such laws

and regulations as should be made, by common consent, for the good of all.

This document has become quite famous, as the first example in the history of mankind, of the foundation of a civil State, by a written constitution, on the basis of universal suffrage".

I will not detain you to recite the Document itself.

There are three distinct objects named
1st the glory of God.
2nd the advancement of the Christian faith
3d the honor of their King & country.

But the spirit of the adventure is not so much in the objects set forth, as in ~~their~~ the delegates' method of effecting them. viz: "We, do by these presents solemnly & mutually, in the presence of God & one another, covenant & combine ourselves together into a civil body politic &c
by virtue hereof to enact, constitute & frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices from time to time as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the public good of the colony, unto which we promise all due submission & obedience."

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Mr Abbot comments thus:
Mr Abbot says: "This document was signed by all the men forty in number each one placing opposite his name the number of persons in his family." The

whole number of persons amounted to one hundred and one. These were the founders of New England, and this document was the origin & precursor of the many democratic constitutions that have since been established in the Northern States of America, by which civil government is recognized, not as a hereditary estate of power & prerogative in the hands of a few, but as a practical business to be transacted for the common good under the direction and control of all whose interests are involved in it."

Here it is that my interest lies: It is in this equality of rights among men, this law for the people made & executed by the people. It is still extant in every town meeting, in every properly constituted ecclesiastical assembly, every State organization; and ~~welds~~ cements the parts into a common whole, substituting, but it is true, for King & country in the original document "We the people of these United States."

Now ~~this~~ this Leaven has leavened the lump. It is the spirit of every boys debating club, it governs themselves, it organizes & controls the missionary societies which penetrate into every nook & corner of the known world. Yes it has made of our country ~~the~~ a refuge for the oppressed and has already by its reactions been the means of breaking the backbone of despotism on the globe every where. For

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story

the ~~[illegible]~~ of our progress under this written law of "equality of rights" in good time made national for the common good - has caused the Czar of Russia to look delightedly to his steps, to take courage for the emancipation & welfare of the very humblest of his people, the same story is told by our citizens on the shores of Japan, where the intelligent princes & autocrats are trying already to distribute their power without war & revolution, to the people where it by right belongs.

Why, surely every true democrat & every true republican and every believer in a free Church free enough to manage its own affairs, may not be too proud to look gratefully to this Star in the East. That little colony, few in numbers, subjected to untold hardships, dangers, & often to death itself, but which finally succeeded in planting such genuine seeds of progress - the blood relations may be few in the land but the cause of political liberty and religious freedom now every bona fide advocate, of course every lover, every man who hates monarchy on the one hand, or nihilistic communism on the other, must detest the propagating tendency of the Plymouth example.

Slavery, peonage, monopoly of every kind which keeps enriching the few at the expense of the many

Anti-negro ~~ism~~, anti-Indian ~~ism~~,
anti-Chinese ~~ism~~, anti-humanity -
all these like owls & bats at day light flee & disperse before the
steady moving hosts ~~of ideas~~. Of men
who have imbibed the ideas & principles
of our fathers.
Yes, the heritage of genuine self government,
separated & we are glad to say in
the church & in the state, is ours. It is
yours O, ye men of the West.
Whittier ~~[illegible]~~ exhorts this heritage to
our predecessors ~~to~~ in the Missouri valley &
beyond -

We cross the prairie as of old
The pilgrims crossed the sea,
To make the West, as they the East
The homestead of the free!

We go to rear a wall of men
On Freedom's southern line
And plant beside the cotton-tree
The rugged northern pine!

We're flowing from our native hills
As our free rivers flow;
The blessing of our Mother-land
is on us as we go.

We go to plant the common schools
On distant prairie swells
And give the Sabbaths of the wild
The music of her bells.

Upbearing, like the arks of old,
The Bibles in our van,
We go to test the truth of God
Against the fraud of man.

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We'll tend the prairie as of old
Our fathers sailed the sea
And make the West, as they the East
The homestead of the free.