

THE MISSION OF THE PILGRIMS:

They first rise to our view, like a morning star from a long night of darkness and gloom, about the middle of the 16th century, under the reigns of Henry VIII., "bloody Mary," and her milder, yet bigoted successor, Elizabeth, all claiming to be head of the visible Church, having the right to determine her doctrines and forms of worship. The Puritans joined issue just here, and claimed the right to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience. This was their great distinctive principle. They regarded the human soul as above everything—above all material grandeur, above edicts and compacts—and nothing must come between it and God. Their views found little sympathy in England, and they left, after much opposition and trial, for Holland, where the principles of the Reformation had taken deeper root. This proved not to be their home. God had vaster designs for them to accomplish than they themselves had even conceived. The grand field of their mission was to be on this newly-discovered continent.

At the time of their leaving the Old World, the nations of Europe were tossing like the waves of the sea, lashed into violence by the breath of a mighty wind, or disturbed from their long repose, as by some fearful volcanic agency.

The thousand years of darkness, during which the continental millions had been lying crushed and paralyzed, had been invaded by the living spirit of the Reformation, and the great heart of humanity had been