

HOME AND SCHOOL

Vol. III.]

TORONTO, MARCH 14, 1885.

[No. 6.]

A Visit to Plymouth Rock.

BY THE EDITOR.

"THAT man is little to be envied," said Dr. Johnson as he moralized amid the mouldering monuments of the early Pilgrim faith, "whose patriotism could not gain force upon the plains of Marathon, or whose piety could not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona." So also, we think, there must be a very sluggish nature whose pulses are not quickened as they stand on Plymouth Rock and recall the thrilling memories of the *Mayflower*.

Nowhere in the world can the founding of an empire be so minutely studied as at the town of Plymouth. In the stone-vaults of the Registry Office may still be seen the earliest records of the Plymouth Colony, in the handwriting of the men who are now held in reverence the world over, for their courage in braving the perils of an unknown sea and an equally unknown shore, to face the dangers of savage men and savage beasts, in their constancy of what they believed to be their duty.

The seed of the three kingdoms, says the old chronicler, was sifted for the wheat of that planting. Winnowed by the fan of persecution, of exile, of poverty, of affliction, the false and fickle fell off, the tried and true only remained. Even after leaving the weeping group upon the shore of Delft-Haven, and parting with their English friends at Southampton, the little company of exiles, for conscience sake, was destined to a still further sifting. Twice was the tiny flotilla driven back to port by storms. One of the two small vessels of which it was composed, and a number of the feeble-hearted adventurers, were left behind, and only a hundred souls remained to essay the mighty enterprise of founding a nation.

THE MAYFLOWER

In the little cabin of the *Mayflower* were assembled some of the noblest and purest spirits on earth, whose names are an inspiration and a moral power for ever—the venerable Brewster, Governor Carver, and Bradford, his successor; Allerton, Winslow, the burly and impetuous Standish; Alden, the first to leap ashore and the last to survive; and the heroic and true-hearted mothers of the New England commonwealth.

On the wild New England shore, at

the beginning of an inclement winter, worn and wasted by a stormy voyage, and with a scant supply of the necessaries of life—behind them the boisterous ocean, before them the sombre forests, haunted by savage beasts, and

barren sand dunes of Cape Cod, an arm stretched out into the sea, as if to succour the weary voyagers. In deba king, they were forced to wade through the freezing water to the land, and sowed the seeds of suffering in

the quiet harbour—since known, in grateful remembrance of the port from which they sailed, as Plymouth Bay. The next day, despite the urgent need of despatch, they sacredly kept the Christian Sabbath in devout exercises on a small island. On Monday they crossed to the mainland, and a grateful posterity has fenced and guarded the rock on which they stepped. Thither, as to a sacred shrine of liberty, many men of many lands have made a reverent pilgrimage. "Plymouth Rock," in the brilliant rhetoric of one of these, the accomplished De Tœquerville, "is the corner-stone of a nation." The principles of which it is the symbol are certainly the foundations, broad and deep, on which national greatness is built.*

TRIALS OF THE PILGRIMS.

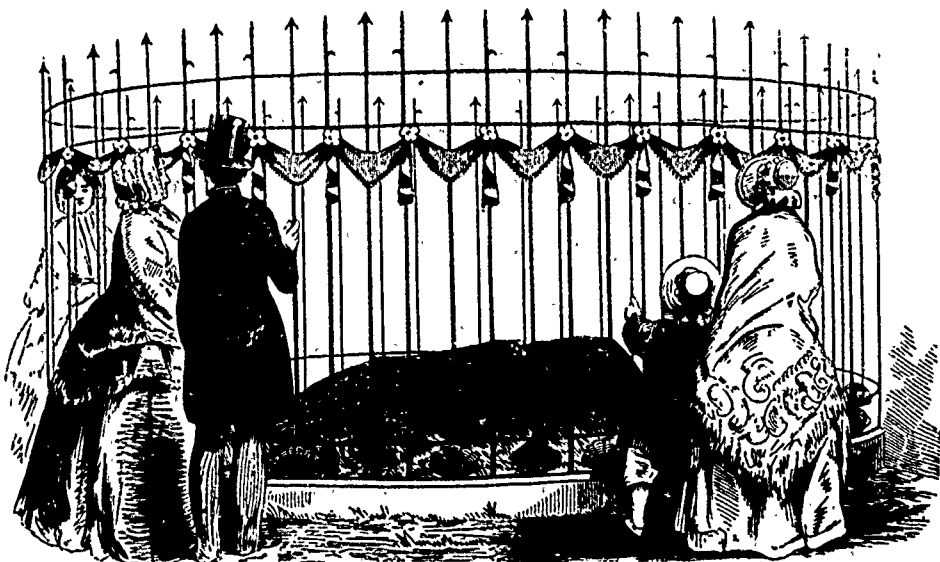
The *Mayflower* soon anchored in the quiet bay, and on Christmas Day its passengers debarked and began the building of the town of Plymouth. By the second Sunday the "Common House," some twenty feet square, was ready for worship; but the roof caught fire, and they were forced to worship beneath the wintry sky. At length, little by little, in frost and foul weather, between showers of sleet and snow, shelter for nineteen families was erected. But disease, hunger, and death, made sad havoc in the little company. "There died," says Bradford, "sometimes two or three in a day." At one time only six or seven were able to attend on the sick or bury the dead. When spring opened, of one hundred persons, scarce half remained alive. Carver, the Governor, his gentle wife, and sweet Rose Standish,—

"Beautiful rose of love, that bloomed by the wayside,
She was the first to die of all who came in the *Mayflower*;"

with many another of unremembered name were laid to rest in the "God's acre," overlooking the sea, still known as "Burial Hill." In the spring, wheat was sown over their graves "lest the Indian scouts should count them and see how many already had perished."

At length the time arrived for the departure of the *Mayflower*; and as the signal-gun of departure awoke the echoes of hill and forest—

* Down by the sea shore, now protected by a graceful canopy, is the huge boulder on which sprang John Alden, the first of the Pilgrims to land, the last of them to die.



PLYMOUTH ROCK.



BURIAL HILL, PLYMOUTH.

still more savage men, even stouter hearts than those of the frail women of that little company might have failed for fear. But we read no record of despondency or murmuring; each heart seemed inspired with lofty hope and unfaltering faith.

The first landing was effected on the

their weakened frames. "The bitterness of mortal disease was their welcome to the inhospitable shore."

PLYMOUTH ROCK.

But they must seek a more favourable site for settlement. By the good Providence of God, they reached safely