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Dedication: In memory of Harry Curwood



The Pilgrim Fathers

Even today the name ‘*Mayflower*’ is recognised by most people – it brings to mind a romantic tale of godly men and women in search of a new start on the far side of the ocean. Few, however, know of the conditions which set these folk on their perilous journey, nor the years of exile in Europe long before the *Mayflower* set sail. Neither do they know that even before arriving in the hostile environment of the New World, the ‘Pilgrims’ had been deceived, betrayed and intermingled with others whose goal was not Christian purity but financial gain.

On 13 November 1620, in a scene faintly reminiscent of Noah’s first steps from the ark onto dry ground, the passengers of the *Mayflower* stepped from their ship after sixty-five days at sea. Like Noah, they would soon realise that the corruptions they sought so hard to escape had followed hard on their heels. The faithful, Puritan settlers were godly, courageous, and earnest in their desire to worship the God of heaven in simplicity and truth, but they were not without fault and their new environment was

hostile, and many of their fellow travellers had little enthusiasm for their spiritual ideals. Within a few months of arriving, half of them would be dead. What awaited the remainder were years of hardship, conflict and disappointment before the struggling Plymouth colony saw its significance fade in the wake of other expeditions settling to the north in Boston. However, the impact these men and women made on the world continues today, not least in the ‘New England’ which they settled, populated and evangelised over many generations.

There is often confusion as to what we should call the people that the Pilgrims came into contact with on their arrival in New England. This guide uses the accepted term Natives or Native People to refer to the inhabitants of the land when the settlers arrived. Where quotes from the settlers are used, their terms have not been changed; likewise, where the Natives were referred to as ‘Praying Indians’, that description has been retained.

