

STEPHEN HOPKINS OF THE MAYFLOWER.

By the Rev. B. F. DE COSTA, of New York City.

WITH respect to the earlier history of the Plymouth Pilgrims, it is still to be regretted that our knowledge is limited. Down to 1834 there was much uncertainty even with respect to their English homes. Mather said that Bradford was born in "Ansterfield," and that the congregation came from "the North of England." Prince said that they "lived near the joining borders of Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire." It remained, therefore, for Mr. Hunter to show that this congregation of Separatists was at Scrooby, and that "Ansterfield" should be "Austerfield," near Bawtry. The manuscript of Bradford in the Fulham Library threw additional light upon the Pilgrims, yet much of what has been written is deduction from general statements.

Mr. Hunter has pointed out the origin of a number of the Plymouth Pilgrims, who, from poverty and obscurity, rose to lasting renown. Information, nevertheless, comes slowly. Amongst those whose history, prior to 1620, is so obscure, we find Stephen Hopkins, one of the signers of the compact drawn up in the cabin of the *Mayflower*. To his antecedents, therefore, this brief article is devoted, though we have no new document to produce. Nevertheless, the inquiry may not prove altogether in vain. Strongly marked characters, like that of Stephen Hopkins, are all the more easily identified; and when such a character stamps itself in two places upon the clay of history, the separate impressions must show an unmistakable resemblance. We shall, therefore, endeavor to point out two such impressions, one stamped upon the history of New England, and the other upon the history of Bermuda. For the latter impression let us turn to the "most Dreadfull Tempest," of William Strachey, found in "Purchas His Pilgrimes" (vol. iv. p. 1734, Ed. 1625), from which it may appear that the "roaring breakers" which, according to Bradford, drove the *Mayflower* to Provincetown harbor, were not the first that had been encountered on the American coast by Stephen Hopkins.

Strachey's well-known narrative tells the story of the wreck of the "Sea Adventure" upon Bermuda, July 28, 1609. Amongst those

page 698 of the same work is a copy of the deposition of Capt. Cowell, at the trial of *Capt. Tom*. "As I was returning," he states, "from Marlborough to Boston, in the countreyes searvice, and had 18 men under my conduct, and about 3 miles from Sudbury wee ware Surprysed with divors hundred of Indians, whereof this Indian *Tom* was one, none by a grombleing sign or noyse y^t he made; as in my Judgement was y^e cause of our being ffyored vpon; at which tyme fower of my company was killed and one wounded; beside ffive horses were disenabled, [being] shot. Vpon Capt. Wadsworth's ingadisen with [y^e] Indians, I went backe and buryed y^e fflower men which ware killed, whereof was *Thomas [Har]* and *Hopkines* son of Roxbury, Goodman, a son of *Robert Wayles* of Dorchester." "Sworn in Court, 19 June, 1676."

who safely reached the shore was one Stephen Hopkins, whom we propose to identify with Stephen Hopkins of the *Mayflower*, though in the narrative of Strachey he appears as a condemned malefactor. This question of course must be treated as one of pure history, and with the simple aim of elucidating the truth.

It will be remembered that, after the wreck of the *Sea Adventure*, Governor Gates and the Admiral, Sir George Summers, resolved to make the most of the situation, and therefore, after duly organizing the people for work, they proceeded to build two small vessels, in which, May 10, 1611, the colonists sailed for Virginia.

As the work of ship-building proceeded, dissensions grew, and the "vex'd Bermoothes," celebrated (as a new study of the old subject will show) in the *Tempest* of Shakspeare, continued to be vexed, Stephen Hopkins lending his influence to the party of disorder, seeking thereby to justify the ancient name of the place, known as "the Ile of Divels." One Nicholas Bennit, however, was the first mover in the mutinies. This person, "who made much profession of Scripture," was a "mutinous and dissembling Imposter." With his confederates he retreated like an outlaw to the woods, and when captured they were banished to one of the distant islands of the Bermuda group. The worst of the six men thus banished was John Want, "an *Essex* man of *Newport* by *Saffronwalden*, both seditious and a sectary in points of Religion, in his owne prayers much deuout and frequent, but hardly drawne to the publique, insomuch as being suspected by our Minister for a *Brownist* he was often compelled to the Common Liturgie and forme of Prayer." The banished men, however, soon found that life in the solitary wilderness was not altogether desirable, and having made humble petition for restoration with much "seeming sorrow and repentance," they were pardoned.

The clemency of the Governor only encouraged the spirit of mutiny, and accordingly Stephen Hopkins set on foot another conspiracy. He is described as "A fellow who had much knowledge in the Scriptures, and could reason well therein." Strachey continuing, says that their minister chose him "to be his Clarke, to reade the Psalmes, and Chapters vpon Sondayes, at the assembly of the Congregation vnder him : who in Ianuary the twenty foure, brake with one *Samuel Sharpe* and *Humfrey Reede* (who presently discourred it to the Gouvernour) and alleaged substantiall arguments, both ciuil and diuine (the Scripture falsely quoted) that it was no breach of honesty, conscience, nor Religion, to decline from the obedience of the Gouvernour, or refuse to goe any further, led by his authority (except it so pleased themselues) since the authority ceased when the wracke was committed, and with it, they were all then freed from the gouernment of any man." Continuing the argument, Hopkins maintained that "for a matter of Conscience, it was not vnknowne to the meanest, how much they were therein bound each one to prouide for himselfe, and his owne family : for which were two

apparent reasons to stay them euen in this place; first, abundance of Gods prouidence of all manner of goode foode: next, some hope in reasonable time, when they might grow weary of the place, to build a small Barke, with the skill and help of the aforesaid *Nicholas Bennit*, whom they insinuated to them * * to be of the conspiracy, that so might get cleere from hence at their own pleasures." Again it was asserted, that "when in *Virginia*, the first would be assuredly wanting, and they might well feare to be detained in that Countrie by the authority of the Commander thereof, and their whole life to serue the turnes of the Adventurers with their travailes and labors." This conspiracy nevertheless soon came to an end. Strachey writes: "This being thus laid, and by such a one, who had gotten an opinion (as I before remembered) of Religion; when it was declared by those two accusers, not knowing what further ground it had or accomplices, it pleased the Gouvernour to let this factious offence to haue a publike affront, and contestation by these two witnesses before the whole Company, who at the tolling of a bell assembled before a Corps du guard, where the Prisoner was brought forth in manacles, and both accused, and suffered to make at large, to euery particular, his answere: which was only full of sorrow and teares, pleading simplicity and deniall. But hee being onely found, at this time, both the Captaine and the follower of this Mutinie, and generally held worthy to satisfie the punishment of his offence, with the sacrifice of his life, our Gouvernour passed the sentence of a Martiall Court vpon him, such as belongs to Mutinie and Rebellion."

Under the circumstances, like many other really courageous men who have failed at the first trial, but have gone serenely to martyrdom at a later period, Stephen Hopkins broke down; hence, "so penitent hee was, and made so much moane, alleading the ruine of his Wife and Children in this his trespasse, as it wrought in the hearts of all the better sort of the Company, who therefore with humble entreaties, and earnest supplications, went vnto our Gouvernour, whom they besought (as likewise did Captaine *Newport*, and my selfe) and neuer left him vntil we had got his pardon."

Such was the conspiracy and its end; for there is no reason to infer that he had any part in the plot which followed, whose authors proposed to take the life of the governor and others, and who declared that if they failed they "should happily suffer as Martyrs."

A careful examination of Strachey's narrative shows that theological differences united with the desire to live at ease free from authority to lay the foundations of dissension. It is tolerably clear that Stephen Hopkins was in sympathy with those suspected of being Brownists, and that as the minister's "Clarke" he felt more or less in bondage. Hopkins appears to have gone on quietly with the company to *Virginia*.

It is now, therefore, time to inquire what reasons exist for identi-

fyng Stephen Hopkins of the "Sea Adventure" with Stephen Hopkins of the "Mayflower." In the first place, it should be observed that the name of Hopkins does not appear in any of the lists of the colonists, and is never mentioned in connection with Virginia, which could not well have been the case with so marked a man if he had remained. Moreover, since we have seen that it was his desire to return to England, and since after their experience of the man, the authorities themselves would not be averse to parting with him, it is reasonable to suppose that he went back in one of the first ships, and thus passed out of the history of Virginia.

That he afterwards became a factor in Massachusetts colonization appears to be probable, and for the reason already indicated, that Hopkins of the "Sea Adventure" and Hopkins of the "Mayflower" answer to a common description. As preliminary it may be observed, that Bradford, speaking of the Plymouth Pilgrims, refers to "y^e discontented & mutinous speeches that some of the strangers amongst them had let fall from them in y^e ship—That when they came a shore they would use their own libertie; for *none had power to comand them*, the patente they had being for Virginia, and not for Newengland, which belonged to an other government, with which y^e Virginia Company had nothing to doe. And partly that shuch an acte by them done (this their condition considered) might be as firme as any patent, and in some respects more sure." That Stephen Hopkins was one of the "strangers" will appear further on, while Strachey reports him in Bermuda as saying "that it was no breach of honesty, conscience, nor Religion, to decline from the obedience of the Gouvernour, or refuse to goe any further, led by his authority (except it so pleased themselues) since the authority ceased when the wracke was committed, and with it, they *were all then freed from the goverment of any mun.*"

But a stronger resemblance is found in the fact that both were Londoners. The Sea Adventure sailed from London, while Mourt's Relation says that "Steeven Hopkins" was one of a certain "three of London." He was one of those who engaged for the enterprise with Mr. Cushman, who managed the details in that city.

Again, Hopkins of Bermuda and Hopkins of Plymouth were both men of mark. Strachey, notwithstanding his prejudice, clearly shows that he was a man of parts. His appointment as "Clarke" indicates that he was of consequence. The same character is revealed in the Relation of Mourt; and when Miles Standish made his first expedition from the Mayflower, then lying at anchor in Provincetown harbor, Hopkins was appointed with Bradford and Tilley to attend the party to give "counsel and advice."

It need hardly be added here that both were extremely religious, and that both made much of "conscience." It was this which won for Stephen Hopkins at Bermuda the good opinion of the colonists, and made him dangerous. Strachey does not say that he was

a Brownist, though he evidently sympathized more or less with them. Neither were the Plymouth colonists Brownists. The fourth of the Seven Articles of the Leyden congregation declares that the King has power to appoint bishops, while the sixth says that no ecclesiastical officers have any power unless given by the King. The "Articles" do not mention the liturgy, but the spirit in which they are drawn up is certainly tolerant as respects the appointments of the church. Still, whatever may have been the opinions of Stephen Hopkins of the Sea Adventurer at Bermuda, attendance at "public Prayer" was imperative, the roll being called there morning and evening, and "such as were wanting, were duly punished." The position of Hopkins at Bermuda as "Clarke" is, therefore, perfectly consistent with that held by Hopkins at Plymouth, and the resemblance admits of the belief that the two men were the same. Besides, the gentle and tolerant character of the Plymouth people is well understood, while the church element was so strong, that, on Christmas Day, 1621, the majority declared that "it went against their consciences to work on y^e day."

In connection with the question of theological character, the parallel as respects Scripture knowledge is evident. The Bermuda adventurer, it will be remembered, "had much knowledge in the Scriptures, and could reason well therein," while a man holding the position occupied by Hopkins in the Plymouth Colony must have been so well furnished as to render any formal statement of the fact by Mourt quite superfluous. According to Bradford, he was one of those who, though sorely off at Clark's Island on that memorable second Sunday in December, 1620, when all things were against them, and they were tempted to give the day to secular activity, nevertheless made a conscience of keeping "y^e Sabath." Hopkins of the Sea Adventure and Hopkins of the *Mayflower* were both very "pushing," and adventurous men. There was also something akin to temerity in both, if we may judge Hopkins of Plymouth by the retainer he kept; for Doty and Leister fought the first duel on record at Plymouth, and escaped on "their master's humble request." Hopkins of Bermuda and he of Plymouth, therefore, knew the importance of humility in adversity. All these circumstances, therefore, seem to point to the conclusion that Hopkins of the *Mayflower* is Hopkins of Bermuda in a new rôle. It is indeed nowhere said that the *Mayflower* Pilgrim had been in the country before, but the figure presented by the Bermuda adventurer in 1610 was not one that he would be likely to feel proud of, and he would be inclined to say as little about his former experience as possible; yet, according to Mourt, it appears as though he was recognized by the Plymouth colonists as an authority; for when the exploring party with which he was connected at Cape Cod found a limb of a tree bent curiously by the Indians over a bow, Hopkins explained its use, Mourt making the entry, "Stephen Hopkins sayed,

it had beene to catch some Deere ;" while Strachey indicates the fact that the Sea Adventure's company at Bermuda had once considered the question of trapping deer. Hopkins had evidently seen deer traps before, and if so it must have been in Virginia in 1610.

We have yet to mention another significant fact, for it appears that Hopkins at Bermuda in 1610 had a wife and children, while Hopkins of the Mayflower, 1620, was married a second time. He brought with him in the Mayflower children by his first wife. The facts exactly fit one another, and seem to demonstrate that Strachey and Morton were writing about the same individual. This indeed is not an actual demonstration, yet it may be deemed satisfactory. At least we rest the case here for the present, simply observing that, while the judgment of Hopkins may have been at fault, there is after all no real charge to be brought against his moral character. This is rather a question of personal identity.

COMPLAINT AGAINST WILLIAM ROTCH AND OTHERS, 1779.

Communicated by FREDERICK C. SANFORD, Esq., of Nantucket, Mass.

IN the autobiography of William Rotch, published in the REGISTER, he states (vol. xxxii. p. 38) that in 1779 he was "with four others impeached for high treason by Thomas Jenkins, when there was no step between being clear and death." Appended to the manuscript autobiography is the following copy of Mr. Jenkins's petition to the Massachusetts General Court. The reader is referred to the above autobiography of Mr. Rotch for his account of these matters. See also Mr. Starbuck's "Nantucket in the Revolution" (REGISTER, xxix. 50) for reference to them.

Copy of Thomas Jenkins's Complaint against Sundry Persons.

To the Honorable Council and the Honorable House of Representatives in General Court assembled at Boston, State of Massachusetts Bay, November, 1779.

Thomas Jenkins humbly sheweth, that as a true and liege subject of the State of Massachusetts Bay, as well as from enormous personal injuries received, he is most strongly urged to lay the following representation and complaint before the supreme Legislature of the State.

Your petitioner complains of Dr. Benjamin Tupper, Timothy Folger, Esq., Wm. Rotch, Samuel Starbuck and Kezia Coffin, all of the Island of Nantucket, as persons dangerous and inimical to the freedom and independence of this and the other United States of America, as encouragers, aiders and abettors of the Enemy, in making inroads on the state territories, and depredations on the property of the good subjects of this State.

It can be clearly proved, if your honors should see fit to order an in-