

**PILGRIMS' PROGRESS**  
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Chapter 1

It was God's will for us to cross the seas; God's protection that saved us from death and God's blessing on the true way of following that gave us our little town in America. We were Pilgrims, the fathers of America. Through storms we went and through all we prayed. This is our story.

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I followed after Father who was dressed in his usual puritan black doublet, breeches, hat and shirt, which was as blindingly pure white as the other clothes were pure solitary black. Mother was behind in a woollen shawl and dress. I was dressed similarly to father and had that queer combination of nervousness, excitement and expectancy that amounts to a host of butterflies flitting their peculiar way about one's stomach. For I, Samuel Eaton, would go to the New World and (just as father said) be English *and* have a separate church to go to that was puritan. Mother almost had us go to Norway, where we would be free to go to separate churches but would not be English. Father said "No", we should "go to America where we can be English *and* have our churches."

The *Speedwell* had arrived from the Netherlands and we had planned to sail a week earlier, only the ship had leaked on the voyage and she needed to be patched up. She was carrying a large proportion of the people who would go on this voyage. And we planned to meet up here and sail on together to Virginia.

We had got into the busy part of Plymouth now, where there were lots of stalls, selling all kinds of things, from butterscotch to pottery in this crowded street. Father bought me some barley sugar sweets in a beautiful little clay pot, the type that makes a glorious Native American drumming sound if you hit it when empty - ~"as a treat for this special day", Father said.

Now through the market, we were arriving at the harbour. It was glorious. A crowd of masts, long spindly wooden fingers pointing heavenwards with great, beautiful flags and banners fluttering at the top of each; I soaked in the cries of gulls, the ripple of waves, the dockyard men's grunts as they loaded the ships all in. And there, beside two great bleak and evil looking warehouses precisely in the middle of the harbour, I saw two small gay merchant ships just like any others beside them. I could just make out their names: the *Mayflower* and the *Speedwell*.

"Eh – theer we are laddie". I was hoisted up on board the ship by a pair of strong arms and a beaming well mannered face. "Oim Robert Coppin, mat ter ships master Chjristopher Jones – oh, no," he added, seeing my face, "Oi'm no 'tickler friend 'o his, that's me rank. Oh – Oi were forgettin – 'ere's a nice polite gennelwoman. You must be 'is mother." He lifted up Mother, who was bright red with embarrassment, and then Father was lifted likewise.

As we went down below to be shown where we wold sleep and live, we were met by the Ship's Master. We went through the customary greetings and he insisted on taking us below and showing us where our luggage – which had been put on board when the *Speedwell* arrived – was stored.

When we had finally got down to where we would sleep I was shocked at how dirty, crowded and unclean it was and I said so to father. "Father, do we have to live here for two months?" (For that was how long we expected the journey to take.)

"If we want to go to the New World."

"No, can't we go somewhere else to sleep, I mean?"

"Nay, we can't do that. Try out your bedding."

I did so, and, sleepily, for it had been a long morning and I couldn't sleep the night before, for there was a host of noises invading the room from the rowdy bar below. I asked one last question to mother in the crowded musty below deck gloom: "Will we die like the other settlers in America?" She turned her head away, tears growing at an alarming rate in the corners of her eyes.

## Chapter 2

I woke up next morning and I felt famished. I enquired of food and even before I asked whether we had cast off moorings and it was only when I was half dressed that I heard orders, rattling of bells and feet upon the deck. Of a sudden, I rushed past the bedding laid out on the floor of the lower deck and joining the throng on deck half-naked. I made my way to the stern, squirming through the crowd. There were a couple of other children there staring at their homeland disappearing behind them. Soon, the harbour wall was a grey streak on the horizon; soon, the beaches were a yellow streak on the horizon; soon, England was a muddy streak on the horizon; soon, there was nothing on the horizon.

"Samuel Eaton, you should be ashamed of yourself, going about with naught on your chest. Go down and put your shirt on at once." The voice of mother shook me to my senses and in a few seconds I had scampered through the hatch to the 'tween decks like a monkey, hurried past the other bedding, and finally come to ours. It was awfully stuffy and dark with only the light of the hatch – but in the gloom – I saw some animals. I tugged my shirt on and went over to a goat. I stroked him placidly – thinking of the animals at home. He had big brown eyes – how comforting they were in this strange environment. I saw hens as well, sheep too. Thus I spent my first morning at sea saying my greetings to a farmyard on board a ship.

Started out of my daydream by a footstep, I turned round to a mischievous looking girl about my age. "Lord, if you are like us I'll be happy." Three boys and a small girl appeared behind her. She was dressed in a rages sort of skirt and a ragged sort of top. "UM?" I said, slightly perturbed.

"Let us introduce ourselves. I'm Lucy."

"And I'm Jim," another boy said.

"And I'm John£."

"And I'm a pickpocket". The girl reprimanded this latter speaker and he, blushing, replied "I ain't got a name."

"He's called Joshua" Lucy said. A toddler hugged Lucy. I assumed this was another sibling.

"Who are your parents?" I asked.

“Well, Ma loved Pa but they were both already married to different people. They made children and me and John looked like we were born of Ma’s husband. Jim, James and the baby didn’t so they were smuggled out to a wet nurse. It was all going well until the baby saw Ma in the streets and called out ‘Ma’. Then it was all out and we were sent away to be forgotten about. Pa paid a fine and Ma was whipped by her husband.

“They deserve it!” I blurted out.

“What!”

Oh, what had I done? “I – I mean that they shouldn’t commit adultery.”

“It’s all right for you when everything is black and white – but ...” The poor girl lay sobbing at my feet. Adultery was wrong – I thought – for the simple reason that it gave so much distress to its products.

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The *Speedwell* started leaking after a small while and we had to go back to port. After she was plugged up, we set to sea again, only to have the *Speedwell* leaking once more. We went back to port again. We were tired of these in and out voyages. So we left *Speedwell* and some passengers behind, but taking some. The *Mayflower* was now crowded with goats, cows, hens, sheep, 105 people and the hold was stocked with the *Speedwell* cargo as well as our own. We were lined with ships biscuit for a month and not going anywhere. We set out for a third time and having run low on supplies, stocked up at Southampton where the ship’s master hired a cooper, John Alder, there.

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After the former incident our friendship blossomed. We explored the ship, had a competition on who could eat the most maggots from the ships biscuit every evening, tried to confuse the helmsman by shouting out various calls. This was an old ship and it was steered by a whip staff – it was a lever really – from below the decks. The helmsman couldn’t see where the ship was going so he had to be shouted down orders by another crew member. We delighted in mimicking a swarthy voice and hearing the helmsman’s various blasphemies. The ship turned back and we sailed into Plymouth again due to a leak on *Speedwell*. What was that to us? It happened twice – that deserved identical treatment.

Eventually, as *Speedwell* was the cause of our troubles, we left her behind and stored the *Mayflower* with *Speedwell*’s passengers and goods. The *Speedwell*’s goods were hauled into the ship with a winch called a capstan that was turned with a yew staff that, in its turn, slotted into various holes. One then pushed it to turn the winch. The goods were taken into the hold and through the loading we discovered how to navigate mountain ranges of cargo and dodge the crates when the ship was tossed about at sea.

“Haul on the mainsheet!” Robert Coppin, Master’s mate bellowed. “Wae, steer a little to port! Na, not starboard! Theer start ter slacken! Straighten up to starboard! Slacken them sails! Oi, why don’t you start furling you filthy ....” And many more commands were shouted. After a small while the ship’s master came up and joined in the frantic shouting. With sails furled we used our momentum and drifted into the moorings where a few men were waiting. We threw the painters overboard and we were hauled into port.

The ship’s master hopped off, shook hands with all the waiting men and sent a few away cursing. The rest he took up to the poop deck and they went into the gloom of the Roundhouse where the ship’s course was set each morning.

Robert Coppin said we should be off ship for the day while the supplies were stored but multiple grumblings told that none would follow the orders. At that very moment a cart of salted meats, space and biscuits arrived. In a flash like the sun on a blade we were off ship and on land.

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Mother and father beside me, we set off to the market in order to buy a new dress for mother, a new cap for father, a bundle of white and black wool, a long dress for a baby and a bucket for mess and egested matter. The baby clothes were an indication of mother being pregnant – each time and every time since I had been born all her children had been stillborn – so I thought nothing of it.<sup>i</sup> I got a second little pot of sweets – not eht same shape as the other one, so it made no sound that was reminiscent of war drums. This would be shared by Lucy and me in the New World.

Upon returning to the ship I found he crew on deck – well pleased with their work – and a swarthy, rough young seaman, who must, with his ill manners, have been picked up at Southampton. He saw mother's bucket and taunted her "By our Lady" (mother and father were much shocked by this language) "It's the Dying people with their Death bucket. Sickness is a dangerous thing – so I've heard. You will be the first to be thrown overboard – no, you won't feel it. Hope I'll be doing it."<sup>ii</sup>

"Look here, Sir" Father retorted but to no avail. The sailor turned away cursing loudly and went away to plague another good Christian family. The next day we set sail once more with a few more crew members and full stores.

### Chapter 3

On my customary prowlings with Lucy on the morrow, we came across a tanned young seaman who was dressed in brown and had a cheerful and sunny face. He was bending a series of thin planks which were in a bucket of water and whittling a few dried (but bent) ones into suitable panels for a barrel. At our approach he looked up easily. "Hey now – a lassie and lad t'gether – what be yer names?"

"Samuel and Lucy" I piped up.

"Oh, you're Samuel and you're Lucy" he said, motioning deliberately to the wrong children. Lucy ignored the gentle teasing, enquiring as to who the gentleman was and what he was doing. "Now, Missy, I'm John Alder and Cooper by trade. I'm bending these into a panel for a barrel and I'm whittling these so they fit together. Once they're all done I'll bring tar, nails and a few metal rings up to put round the barrel. Oh bless me! I were forgettin' these circular panels here that are nailed in afore the barrels are closed up by the nails and tar. There that's what I'm a-doing."

I then enquired as to whether we could do it and he replied in the negative, but then changing his mind gave us a couple of thick sawn off bits and said we could try it in a tankard and so we did. The bits swam in the mug overnight and, me getting the 'wrong end of the stick', were plastered with ale and were – funnily enough – as sticky as though tarred.

We brought them to him and his face burst into merry laughter wrinkles. He went below; brought up some other cut offs and carved them into circles for our miniature barrels. Taking the wet and sticky panels he, with forehead furrowed, smeared it with tar and stuck the barrel together, leaving the top panel to be inserted without tar and when the barrel had dried.

We passed many days similar to this and many days were passed with her siblings also. Now, the youth with bad manners, blasphemy and bad language was stricken with a fatal illness one day and died soon after. His curses were turned upon himself and thus he was the first to be thrown overboard. Divine vengeance had been shown.

Soon after the death of this sailor, the summer and the fair weather ended. A storm hit us, a fellow traveller was thrown overboard, but he was saved by God when he caught hold of a rope trailing after the ship. We were kept below deck and many suffered from seasickness. We only came up to face the elements when the chamber pots needed emptying. It was a terrible few weeks. The children like me hugged their mothers. Lucy and her family hugged each other. We cried and called upon God but to no avail. After weeks of being thrown about, the storm stopped. The damage was repaired and the main mast, which had been broken, was fixed. We had been thrown miles off course.

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<sup>i</sup> In fact mother was mother to no less than three more children on top of me in the New World – sadly one died in the winter 1621.

<sup>ii</sup> Dead bodies were thrown overboard and he was saying that he wished us dead.