

A Pilgrim Maid

A Story of Plymouth Colony in 1620

By
Marion Ames Taggart

Illustrated by the Donaldsons

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Note from the Publisher:

This book is a wonderful book of adventure set in the times of the Pilgrims' voyage to the New World. Published in 1920, it tells the tale of Plymouth Colony using actual characters and events but blending them with the fiction of a good story. This book is in the public domain so I have formatted it to make it available either in ebook form or as a paperback. Though I have changed some of the language to make it easier to read, I have left many of the words, to encourage a larger vocabulary, several of which I have footnoted with a more modern translation.

This book would be best read with actual historical accounts of the founding of Plymouth Colony with such books as *Of Plymouth Plantation* by William Bradford.

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"Constance opened the door, stepping back to let the bride precede her"

Note From the Author

This story is like those we hear of our neighbors today: it is a mixture of fact and fancy.

The aim in telling it has been to present Plymouth Colony as it was in its first three years of existence; to keep to possibilities, even while inventing incidents.

Actual events have been transferred from a later to an earlier year when they could be made useful, to bring them within the story's compass, and to develop it.

For instance, John Billington was lost for five days and died early, but not as early as in the story. Stephen Hopkins was fined for allowing his servants to play shovelboard, but this did not happen till some time later than 1622. Stephen Hopkins was twice married; records show that there was dissension; that the second wife tried to get an inheritance for her own children, to the injury of the son and daughter of the first wife. Facts of this sort are used, enlarged upon, construed to cause, or altered to suit, certain results.

But there is fidelity to the general trend of events, above all to the spirit of Plymouth in its beginnings. As far as may be, the people who have been transferred into the story act in accordance with what is known of the actual bearers of these names.

There was a Maid of Plymouth, Constance Hopkins, who came in the Mayflower, with her father Stephen; her stepmother, Eliza; her brother, Giles, and her little half-sister and brother, Damaris and Oceanus, and to whom the Anne, in 1623, brought her husband, Honorable Nicholas Snowe, afterward one of the founders of Eastham, Massachusetts.

Undoubtedly the real Constance Hopkins was sweeter than the story can make her, as a living girl must be sweeter than one created of paper and ink. Yet it is hoped that this Plymouth Maid, Constance, of the story, may also find friends.

Marion Ames Taggart

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CHAPTER VI

Stout Hearts and Sad Ones

Constance turned away from the boys feeling that, till the trouble hanging over Giles was settled, waking or sleeping she could think of nothing else. When she reached the community house she forgot it, nor did it come to her as more than a deeper shadow on the universal darkness for weeks.

She found that during her brief absence Edward Tilley's wife had died; she had known that she was desperately ill, but the end had come suddenly. Edward Tilley himself was almost through with his struggle, and this would leave Humility, herself a very sick child, quite alone, for she had come in her cousins' care. Constance bent over her to give her the cooling water which she had fetched her.

"Elizabeth and I are alike now," whispered Humility, looking up at Constance with eyes dry of tears, but full of misery. "Cousin John Tilley was her father, and Cousin Edward and his wife but my guardians, yet they were all I had." Elizabeth Tilley had been orphaned two weeks before, and now John Tilley's brother, following him, would leave Humility Cooper, as she said, bereft as was Elizabeth.

"Not all you had, dear Humility," Constance whispered in her ear, afraid to speak aloud for there were in the room many sick whom they might disturb.

"My father will protect you, unless there is someone whom you would rather have, and we will be sisters and meet the spring with hope and love for each other, together."

"They will send for me to come home to England, my other cousins, of that I am sure. Elizabeth has no one on her side to claim her. But England is far, far away, and I am more like to join my cousins, John and Edward Tilley and their kind, dear wives where they are now than to live to make that fearful voyage again," moaned Humility, turning away her head despairingly.

"Follow John and Edward Tilley! Yes, but not for many a day!" Constance reassured her, shaking up the girl's pillow, one deft arm beneath her head to raise it.

"Sleep, Humility dear, and do not think. Or rather think of how sweetly the wind will blow through the pines when the spring sunshine calls you out into it, and we go, you and I, to seek what new flowers we may find in the New World."

"No, no," Humility moved her head on the pillow in negation. "I will be good, Constance; I will not murmur. I will remember that I lie here in God's hand; but, oh Constance, I cannot think of pleasant things, I cannot hope. I will be patient, but I cannot hope. Dear, dear, sweet Constance, you are like my mother, and yet we are almost one age. What should we all do without you, Constance?"

Constance turned away to meet Doctor Fuller's grave gaze looking down upon her. "I echo

Humility's question, Constance Hopkins: What should we all do without you? What a blessed thing has come to you thus to comfort and help these pilgrims, who are sore stricken! Come with me a moment; I have something to say to you."

Constance followed this beloved physician into the kitchen where her stepmother was busy preparing broth, her Mayflower baby, Oceanus, tied in a chair on a pillow, Damaris sitting on the floor beside him in unnatural quiet.

Dame Eliza looked up as the doctor and Constance entered, but instantly dropped her eyes, a dull red mounting in her face.

She knew that the girl was ministering to the dying with skill and sympathy far beyond her years, and she remembered the patient sweetness with which Constance, during the voyage over, forgiving her injustice, had ministered to her when she was suffering—had tenderly cared for little Damaris.

Dame Eliza had the grace to feel a passing shame, though not enough to move her to repentance, to reparation.

"Constance," Doctor Fuller said, "I am going to lay upon you a charge too heavy for your youth, but unescapable. You know how many of us have been laid to rest out yonder, pilgrims indeed, their pilgrimage over. Many more are to follow them. Mistress Standish among the first, but there are many whose end I see at hand. I fear the spring will find us a small colony, but those who remain must make up in courage for those who have left them. I

want you to undertake to be my right hand. Priscilla Mullins hath already lost her mother, and her father and her brother will not see the spring. Yet she keeps her steady heart. She will prepare me such remedies as I can command here. Truth to tell, the supply I brought with me is running low; I did not allow for the need of so many of one kind. Priscilla is reliable; steady in purpose, memory, and hand. She will see to the remedies. But you, brave Constance, will you be my medical student, visiting my patients, lingering to see that my orders are carried out, nursing, sustaining? In a word do what you have already done since we landed, but on a greater scale, as an established duty?"

"If I can," said Constance, simply.

"You can; there is no one else that I can count upon. The older men among us are dying, leaving the affairs of the colony to be carried on by the young ones. In like manner I must call upon so young a girl as you to be my assistant. The older women are doing, and must do, still more important work in preparing the nourishment on which these lives depend and which the young ones are not proficient to prepare."

Doctor Fuller looked smilingly toward Dame Eliza as he said this, as if he feared her taking offense at Constance's promotion, and sought to placate her.

Mistress Hopkins gave no sign of knowing that he had turned to her, but she said to Damaris, as if by chance: "This broth may do more than herb brews toward curing, though your mother is not a

physician's aid," and Doctor Fuller knew that he had been right.

A week later, though Humility Cooper was recovering, many more had fallen ill, and several had died.

It was late in January; the winter was set in full of wrath against those who had dared array themselves to defy its power in the wilderness, but the sun shone brightly, though without warmth-giving mercy, upon Plymouth.

There was an armed truce between Giles and his father. The boy would not beg his father's pardon for having defied him. His love for his father had been of the nature of hero-worship, and now, turned to bitterness, it increased the strength of his pride, smarting under false accusation, to resist his father.

On the other hand Stephen Hopkins, high-tempered, strong of will, was angry and hurt that his son refused to justify himself, or to plead with him. So the elder and the younger, as Constance had said, too much alike, were at a deadlock of suffering and anger toward each other.

Stephen Hopkins was beginning his house on what he had named Leyden Street, in memory of the pilgrims' refuge in Holland, though only by the eyes of faith could a street be discerned to bear the name. Like all else in Plymouth colony, Leyden Street was rather a matter of prophecy than actuality.

Giles was helping to build the house. All day he worked in silence, bearing the cold without

complaint, but in no wise evincing the slightest interest in what he did. At night, in spite of the stringent laws of the Puritan colony, Giles contrived often to slip away with John Billington into the woods. John Billington's father, who was as unruly as his boys, connived at these escapades. He was perpetually quarreling with Myles Standish, whose duty it was to enforce the law, and who did that duty without relenting, although by all the colonists, except the Billingtons, he was loved as well as respected.

Early one morning Constance hurried out of the community house, tears running down her cheeks, to meet Captain Myles coming toward it.

"Why, pretty Constance, don't grieve, child!" said the Plymouth captain, heartily.

"Giles hath come to no harm, I warrant you, though he has spent the night again with that harum-scarum Jack Billington, and this time Francis Billington, too."

"Oh, Captain Standish, it is not Giles! I forgot Giles," gasped Constance.

"Rose?" exclaimed the captain, sharply.

Constance bent her head. "She is passing. I came to seek you," she said, and together she and the captain went to Rose's side.

They found Doctor Fuller there holding Rose's hand as she lay with closed eyes, breathing lightly. In his other hand he held his watch measuring the brief moments left, in which Rose Standish should be a

part of time. Mary Brewster, the elder's wife, held up a warning finger not to disturb Rose, but Doctor Fuller looked quietly toward Captain Standish.

"It matters not now, Myles," he said. "You cannot harm her. There are but few moments left."

Myles Standish sprang forward, fell upon his knees, and raised Rose in his arms.

"Rose of the world, my English blossom, what have I done to bring thee here?" he sobbed, with a strong man's utter abandonment of grief, and with none of the Puritan habit of self-restraint.

"Wherever thou hadst gone, I would have chosen, my husband! I loved thee, Myles, I loved thee Myles!" she said, so clearly that everyone heard her sweet voice echo to the farthest corner of the room, and for the last time.

For with that supreme effort to comfort her husband, disarming his regret, Rose Standish died.

They bore Rose's body, so light that it was scarce a burden to the two men who carried it as in a litter, forth to the spot upon the hillside whither they had already made so many similar processions, which was fast becoming as thickly populated as was that portion of the colony occupied by the living.

But as the sun mounted higher, although the March winds cut on some days, then as now they do in March, yet, then as now, there were soft and dreamy days under the ascending sun's rays, made more effective by the moderating sea and flat sands.

The devastating diseases of winter began to abate; the pale, weak remnants of the Mayflower's passengers crept out to walk with a sort of wonder upon the earth which was new to them, and which they had so nearly quitted that nothing, even of those aspects of things that most recalled the home land, seemed to them familiar.

The men began to break the soil for farming, and to bring forth and discuss the grain which they had found hidden by the savages—most fortunately, for without it there would have been starvation to look forward to after all that they had endured, since no supplies from England had yet come after them.

There was talk of the Mayflower's return; she had lain all winter in Plymouth harbor because the Pilgrims had required her shelter and assistance. Soon she was to depart, a severance those ashore dreaded, albeit there was well-grounded lack of confidence in the honesty of her captain, Jones, whom the more outspoken among the colonists denounced openly as a rascal.

Little Damaris was fretful, as she so often was, one afternoon early in March; the child was not strong and consequently was peevish. Constance was trying to amuse her, sitting with the child, warmly wrapped from the keen wind, in the warmth of the sunshine behind the southern wall of the community house.

"Tell me a story, Constance," begged Damaris, though it was not "a story," but several that Constance had already told her. "Make a fairy story. I won't tell Mother you did. Fairy stories are not lies,

no matter what they say, are they, Connie? I know they are not true and you tell me they are not true, so why are they lies? Why does Mother say they are lies? Are they bad, are they, Connie? Tell me one, anyway; I won't tell her."

"Ah, little Sister, I would rather not do things that we cannot tell your mother about," said Constance. "I do not think a fairy story is wrong, because we both know it is make-believe, that there are no fairies, but your mother thinks them wrong, and I do not want you to do what you will not tell her you do. That would make God very displeased with us. Suppose you tell me a story, instead? That would be fairer; only think how many, many stories I have told you, and how long it is since you have told me the least little word of one!"

"Well," agreed Damaris, but without enthusiasm. "What shall I tell you about? Not another Bible one. I'm not so good at telling those yet."

"No, perhaps not," Constance answered, looking lazily off to sea. Then, because she was looking seaward, she added: "Shall it be one about a sailor? That ought to be an interesting story."

"A true sailor, or a made-up one?" asked Damaris, getting aroused to her task.

"Do you know one about a real sailor?" Constance somewhat sleepily inquired.

"Here is a true one," announced Damaris.

"Once upon a time there was a sailor, and he sailed on a ship named the Mayflower. And he came in.

And he said: How are you, little girl? And I said: I am pretty well, but my name is Damaris Hopkins. And he said: What a nice name. And I said: Yes, it is. And he said: Where is your folks? and I said: I don't know where my mother went out of the cabin just this minute. But my sister was around, and my brother Giles was here, fixing my hammock, 'cause it hung funny and let me roll over on myself and folded me hurt. And my other brother couldn't go nowheres 'tall, because he was born when we was sailing here, and he can't walk. And the sailor man said: Yes, there were two babies on the ship when we came that we didn't have when we started, and show me your hammock. And I did, and he said it was a nice ham—Constance, what's the matter? I felt you jump, and you look scared. Is it Indians? Connie, Connie, don't let 'em get me!"

"No, no, child, there aren't any Indians about," Constance tried to laugh. "Did I jump? Sometimes people do jump when they almost fall asleep, and I was just as sleepy as a fireside cat when you began to tell me the story. Now I am not one bit sleepy! That is the most interesting story I have heard almost—yes, I think quite—in all my life! And it is a true one?"

"Yes, every bit true," said Damaris, proudly.

"And the sailor went into the cabin, and saw your hammock, and said it was a nice one, did he? Well, so it is a nice one! Did your mother see the man?" asked Constance, trying to hide her impatience.

"No," Damaris shook her head, decidedly. "Mother was coming, but the man just put his hand in and

set my hammock swinging. Then he went out, and Mother was stopping and she didn't see him. And neither did I, not any more, ever again."

"Did you tell your mother about this sailor?" Constance inquired.

"Oh, no," sighed Damaris. "I didn't tell her. She doesn't like stories so much as we do. I tell you all my stories, and you tell me all yours, don't we, Constance? I didn't tell Mother. She says: 'That's Hopkins to like stories, and music, and art.' What's art, Connie? And she says: 'You don't get those idle ways from my side, so don't let me hear any foolish talk, for you will be punished for idle talk.' What's that, Connie?"

"Oh, idle talk is—idle talk is hard to explain to you, little Damaris! It is talk that has nothing to it, unless it may have something harmful to it. You'll understand when you are old enough to make what you do really matter. But this has not been idle talk today! Far, far from idle talk was that fine story you told me! Suppose we keep that story all to ourselves, not tell it to anyone at all, will you please, my darling little sister? Then, perhaps, some day, I will ask you to tell it to Father! Would not that be a great day for Damaris? But only if you don't tell it to any one till then, not to your mother, not to any one!" Constance insisted, hoping to impress the child to the point of secrecy, yet not to let her feel how much Constance herself set upon this request.

"I won't! I won't tell it to any one; not to Mother, not to any one," Damaris repeated the form of her vow. Then she looked up into Constance's face with

a puzzled frown. "But you wouldn't tell a fairy story, because you said you didn't want things I couldn't tell mother! And now you say I mustn't tell her about my story!" she said.

Constance burst out laughing, and hugged Damaris to her, hiding in the child's hood a merrier face than she had worn for many, many a day.

"You have caught me, little Damaris!" she cried. "Caught me fairly! But that was a fairy story, don't you see? This isn't, this is true. So this is not to be told, not now, do you see? We will tell it to Father later."

Damaris said "yes," slowly, with the frown in her smooth little brow deepening. It was puzzling; she did not really see, but since Constance expected her to see she said "yes," and felt curiously bewildered. However, what Constance said was to her small half-sister not merely law, but gospel. Constance was always right, always the most lovable, the most delightful person whom Damaris knew.

"All right, Connie. I won't tell anyone my sailor-man story," she said at last, clearing up.

"Just now," Constance supplemented her. "Some day you shall tell it, Damaris! Some day I shall want you to tell it! And now, little Sister, will you go into the house and tell Oceanus to hurry up and grow big enough to run about, because the world, our new world, is getting to be a lovely place in the spring sunshine, and he must grow big enough to enjoy it as fast as he can? I must find Giles; I have something beautiful, beautiful to tell him!"

She kissed Damaris before setting her on her feet, and the child kissed her in return, clinging to her.

"You are so funny, Constance!" she said, in great satisfaction with her sister's drollery¹ in a world that had been filled with gloom and illness for what seemed to so young a child, almost all her life.

"Ah, I want to be, Damaris! I want to be funny, and happy, and glad! Oh, I want to be!" cried Constance, and ran away at top speed with a rare relapse into her proper age and condition.

¹ curious or unusual in a way that provokes dry amusement.

