

may look upon the present descendants of the first colonists as constituting a nation hardly inferior in numbers to what England itself was only two centuries before our times. The development, therefore, of the present inhabitants from a small original stock has been so rapid, and the intermediate generations so few, that we must be quite prepared to discover in the founders of the colony of the seventeenth century, the germ of all the wonderful results which have since so rapidly unfolded themselves.

Nor is this difficult. In the first place, before the great civil war broke out in England, when the principal emigration took place to Massachusetts, the Puritans were by no means an illiterate or uncultivated sect. They reckoned in their ranks a considerable number of men of good station and family, who had received the best education which the schools and universities then afforded. Some of the most influential of the early New England divines, such as Cotton Mather, were good scholars, and have left writings which display much reading and an acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages. Milton's "Paradise Lost" usually accompanied the Bible into the log-houses of the early settlers, and with the "Paradise Lost" the minor poems of the same author were commonly associated.

The Puritans who first went into exile, after enduring much oppression in their native country, were men who were ready to brave the wilderness rather than profess doctrines or conform to a ritual which they abhorred. They were a pure and conscientious body. They might be ignorant or fanatical, but they were at least sincere, and no hypocrites had as yet been tempted to join them for the sake of worldly promotion, as happened at a later period, when Puritanism in the mother country had become dominant in the state. Full of faith, and believing that their religious tenets must be strengthened by free investigation, they held that the study and interpretation of the Scriptures should not be the monopoly of a particular order of men, but that every layman was bound to search them for himself. Hence they were anxious to have all their children taught to read. So early as the year 1647, they instituted common schools, the law declaring "that all the brethren shall teach their children and apprentices