

## **THOMAS MAYHEW**

### **Who Began Missionary Work among the Indians When He Was Seventy (1658-1680)**

SUCH a valiant soul ought surely to be included in the list of Heroes. Some folk think their work is done at seventy, but not so Mr. Thomas Mayhew, the New Englander, Governor of Martha's Vineyard and adjacent islands, in the far-back year of 1641. However, his missionary work did not begin that year, and it did begin first of all in the giving of his son to devote his life to the Indians. Pr. Thomas Mayhew, Jr., was first a minister to the settlers in his neighbourhood but extended his service of love to the thousands of red men thereabouts.

His first accomplishment was the mastery of the native language. He was very successful in this, and soon had a flourishing mission. The first convert was named Hiacoomes. He put himself under Mr. Mayhew's instruction, and became a teacher, and afterwards a preacher to his own people. The very first school in New England for the benefit of the Indians was established in 1651. In another year, a church was organized. There were two hundred and eighty-two members. The "covenant," which all agreed to accept as church-members, was prepared in the Indian tongue by Mr. Mayhew.

About five years after this, the earnest missionary set out for England, to get money for his mission. He was lost at sea.

Then it was that his father, the governor, at the age of seventy, determined to take his son's place, and bravely began the study of the native language. Heroes are not all young men, you see, although many begin very early to be heroic.

This staunch missionary began preaching at the different plantations week by week in turn, sometimes walling twenty miles through the woods to meet his Indian congregations. In 1670 was organized the first Indian church with a native pastor. There were then about three thousand native Christians upon the island.

The indefatigable Mr. Mayhew kept on with his missionary work until he died, in his ninety-third year. Is not this a wonderful record?

His grandson, John, became associated with the work and was active in it until he died in 1688, when his son, Experience, took it up, and continued it for thirty-two years. In 1709 he translated the Psalms and John's Gospel. Surely this is a family that should not be forgotten.