

History of the Dudley Family.

THOMAS DUDLEY THE PILGRIM.

THE first that is known of Thomas Dudley, is that he was born about A. D. 1576, in the vicinity of Northampton, England. His father was a "Capt. Roger Dudley," a military man, who flourished in the time of Robert Dudley, Queen Elizabeth's famous Earl of Leicester, and appears to have been one of the soldiers, sent over by the Queen, to aid Henry of Navarre to establish his throne, and to have fallen in the famous battle of Ivry, which Macaulay describes in his picturesque poem. The Dudleys of the Dudley castle race were ever inclined to a military life. Capt. Roger doubtless belonged to this branch of his family. Not many of his name figure among the early dissenters of Queen Elizabeth's time; but Thomas Dudley, his only son, whose mother was probably of a religious family, became a noted Puritan. The young man, being brought up by his mother's relatives, was moulded for such a life. It is a question of interest, who those relatives were.

Extensive researches have been made to learn the facts, but little has been proved by all the efforts of the most able and persistent investigators. We know that his mother was a kinswoman of Augustine Nicolls of Faxton in Northamptonshire, who was born at Ecton, in that county, 1559, a judge of the Common Pleas and Knight of the Bath, who received his law education at the Middle Temple in London, and became "Reader" there in the last year of Elizabeth, and Sergeant-at-Law the following Michaelmas term. "Nicolls" who always spelled his name in this way, was also Keeper of the Great Seal to Prince Charles. This Nicolls family had long been noted for their high attainments. His grandfather, William Nicolls, of Cley Coton, in Northamptonshire, who is styled a gentleman bearing arms, was a physician, and died in the 17th year of Elizabeth, 1575, aged 96.

Judge Nicolls' father was Thomas Nicolls, born 1530, died June 29, 1568, and was buried at Pichley, alias Pightesley, Northampton-