
By Jane G. Austin

STANDISH OF STANDISH. A Novel. 16mo, \$1.25.

BETTY ALDEN. A Novel. 16mo, \$1.25.

A NAMELESS NOBLEMAN. A Novel. 16mo, \$1.25; paper, 50 cents.

DR. LE BARON AND HIS DAUGHTERS. A Novel. 16mo, \$1.25.

THE DESMOND HUNDRED. A Novel. 16mo, \$1.00; paper, 50 cents.

NANTUCKET SCRAPS. Being the Experiences of an Off-Islander In Season and Out of Season.
16mo, \$1.50.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY, BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

Standish of Standish

A Story of the Pilgrims

By

Jane G. Austin

AUTHOR OF "A NAMELESS NOBLEMAN," "THE DESMOND HUNDRED,"
"MRS. BEAUCHAMP BROWN," "NANTUCKET SCRAPS,"
"MOON FOLK," ETC., ETC.



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

Copyright, 1889,
By JANE G. AUSTIN.

All rights reserved.

ELEVENTH EDITION.

The Riverside Press, Cambridge, Mass., U. S. A.
Electrotyped and Printed by H. O. Houghton & Co.

Dedication.

TO THE MEMORY OF MY DEAR BROTHER,

JOHN A. GOODWIN,

**WHO MORE THAN ANY MAN HAS CONSERVED FOR OUR DELIGHT
THE STORY OF THOSE PILGRIM FATHERS
"WITHOUT WHOSE LIVES OURS HAD NOT BEEN."**

A PREFATORY NOTE.

The history of the Old Colony includes, among some very stern facts, a deal of sweet and tender romance, hitherto hardly known except to those who have learned it at their mother's knee.

But in these days many persons seem disposed to pause for a moment in the eager race after the golden fruits of the Pilgrims' husbandry, and to look curiously back at the spot where the seed was sown.

To such I offer this story of Myles Standish, The Sword-of-the-White-Men, the hero, who not for gain, not from necessity, not even from religious zeal, but purely in the knightly fervor of his blood, forsook home, and heritage, and glory, and ambition, to company that helpless band of exiles, and to be the Great-Heart of their Pilgrimage to the City that they sought.

To such students I will promise that they shall not be misled as to facts, though these be strung upon a slender thread of romance; and I will beg them to ground themselves well upon the solid Pilgrim Rock, that they may the better understand the story of Lazarus LeBaron, son of A Nameless Nobleman, to be offered them in due time, unless Time shall be no more for the Author.

BOSTON, *October*, 1889.

JANE G. AUSTIN.

CONTENTS.

I. THE BATTLE OF THE TUBS	1
II. THE LAUNCH OF THE PINNACE	19
III. THE SWORD OF STANDISH	27
IV. THE LILIES OF FRANCE	41
V. AN AWFUL DANGER	54
VI. THE FIRST ENCOUNTER	63
VII. CLARKE'S ISLAND	73
VIII. BURYING HILL	86
IX. ROSE	94
X. A TERRIBLE NIGHT	104
XI. THE COLONISTS OF COLE'S HILL	115
XII. THE HEADLESS ARROW	134
XIII. THE CAPTAIN'S PROMOTION	141
XIV. SECOND MARRIAGES	151
XV. SAMOSET	164
XVI. PRISCILLA MOLINES' LETTER	176
XVII. AN INTERNATIONAL TREATY	184
XVIII. THE LAST LINK BROKEN	197
XIX. SOWED AND REAPED IN ONE DAY	205
XX. FUNERAL-BAKED MEATS AND MARRIAGE FEASTS	213
XXI. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR	224
XXII. THE CAPTAIN'S PIPE	236
XXIII. "SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, JOHN!"	243
XXIV. THE MYSTERIOUS GRAVE	253
XXV. A LITTLE DISCIPLINE	266
XXVI. THE FIRST THANKSGIVING DAY OF NEW ENGLAND	276
XXVII. A LOVE PHILTRE	288
XXVIII. PHILIP DE LA NOYE	296
XXIX. KEEPING CHRISTMAS	311
XXX. A SOLDIER'S INSTINCT	319
XXXI. A POT OF BROTH	343
XXXII. THE SUNSET GUN	351
XXXIII. PECKSUOT'S KNIFE	356
XXXIV. THE WOLF AT THE DOOR	370
XXXV. THE BRIDES' SHIP	376
XXXVI. MARRIAGE BELLS	385
XXXVII. "AND TO BE WROTH WITH ONE WE LOVE!"	395
XXXVIII. BARBARA	406
XXXIX. A MILITARY WEDDING	416
XL. "PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW!"	420

CHAPTER I.

THE BATTLE OF THE TUBS.

It was Monday morning.

It was also the twenty-third day of November in the year of our Lord 1620; but this latter fact was either unknown or matter of profound indifference to the two-and-twenty women who stood ready to make the day memorable in the world's history, while the fact of Monday was to them one of paramount importance.

Do you ask why this was thus?

The answer is duplex: first, the two-and-twenty women were not aware of their own importance, nor could guess that History would ever concern herself with the date of their present undertaking; and second, for a reason whose roots are prehistoric, for they spring from the unfathomable depths of the feminine soul wherein abides inherently the love of purity, of order, and of tradition. Yes, in two hundred and seventy years the face of Nature, of empires, and of peoples has changed almost beyond recognition in this our New World; but the grand law at whose practical establishment in the New World we now assist, abides to-day:—

Monday is Washing Day.

[Pg 2]

Does some caviler here suggest that although the human female soul is embodied in the children of Ham, Shem, and Japhet, the mighty law referred to is binding only upon that Anglo-British-Saxon-Norman division of Japhet's daughters domiciled in and emanating from the British Isles? Let us proudly reply that in considering the result of a process we consider the whole; and let us meekly add that to our mind the Anglo-British-Saxon-Norman woman, perfected under an American sky, is the woman of the world; and finally, let us point to the two-and-twenty heroines of that Monday as chief among American women, for they were the Pilgrim Mothers of the New World.

The Pilgrim Fathers were there also; and they, too, were exemplifying a law of nature, that is to say, a law of male nature in every clime and every age. They did not love Washing Day. They felt no joy in the possibility of its observance, they felt no need of its processes. And yet again *more humano*, they did not openly set themselves against it, they did not frankly express their unworthy content in their present estate, but they feebly suggested that as the observance had been some weeks omitted, with no sensible loss of comfort to themselves, it might well be farther postponed; that the facilities were by no means remarkable; that rain was very possible, and that they had to apply themselves without delay to unshipping the pinnacle from the hold of the Mayflower, and fitting her for the immediate service of exploration.

To these arguments the women meekly responded that in the nature of things they were better fitted to judge of the emergency than their lords, whose attention must be absorbed in matters of so much higher import; that they did not require the help of any man whose work upon the pinnacle would be at all important, and that the sandy beach, the pool of fresh water, and the clumps of stunted shrubs fairly spread upon the shore in front of them were all the facilities they required. As for the weather, as Dame Hopkins piously remarked:—

[Pg 3]

"If Monday's weather be not fit for washing, there is no promise in Holy Writ of

anything better in the rest of the week."

"Oh, if thou r't bent on washing, the shrewdest storm that ever swept the Zuyder Zee will never stop thee; so get thy rags together as soon as may be," growled her husband, a grizzled, hard-visaged veteran some twenty years older than this his second wife of whom he was very fond.

"Nay, then," interposed another voice, as a shrewd, kindly looking man, albeit with a certain whimsical cast to his thin features, approached the pair; "Mistress Hopkins will do no washing to-day; no, nor even go on shore to gather chill and weariness for my little friend Oceanus."

"'Will not,' shall not? Marry and who is to hinder, if you please, good Master Fuller?" asked the young woman in a somewhat shrewish voice.

"I, Samuel Fuller, Licentiate of Cambridge, late practitioner of Bartlemy's Hospital, London, and your medical adviser, madam," replied the doctor with a dry smile and mocking bow. "Recall, if you please, that Oceanus is not yet a fortnight old, and that both mother and child are still my responsibility. Would you ruin my reputation, madam, not to mention risking your own life and the boy's?"

[Pg 4]

"Have a care, Doctor, or some fine day you'll trip in your own quips, and break your neck," replied Mistress Hopkins half sullenly, while her husband cried,—

"He's right there, Bess. Thou 'rt in no case for such rough sport as this is like to prove, and thou 'lt stay aboard whoever goes ashore."

"Yes, stay thou aboard and mind thy babe, and I'll take thy clothes along with my own, so thou 'lt let Constance come to help me," suggested the somewhat coarse voice of a woman standing by.

"Thank you kindly, goodwife Billington," replied Elizabeth Hopkins coldly. "But Alice Rigdale hath already promised to do what is needed, and Constance must stay with me to mind Damaris and Oceanus."

"Oh, if goodwife Rigdale has taken it in hand, I will step back," replied Mistress Billington sharply; and as she descended the companion-way, Hopkins muttered in his wife's ear,—

"Now thou showest some sense, wench. The least thou hast to do with the Billington brood the better I'll be pleased."

"That's worth working for, surely," retorted his wife, tossing her head pettishly.

"I tell you there's no boat to be spared, and no man to row it, and I'll have naught to say to it," exclaimed a surly voice from the companion-way, and Captain Thomas Jones, master of the Mayflower, but not of the Pilgrims, appeared on deck.

Captain Jones was not an amiable man, his training as buccaneer and slaver having possibly blunted his finer feelings, and his consciousness of present treachery probably increasing the irritability often succeeding to a murdered conscience.

[Pg 5]

Such as he was, however, this man was the Inventor of Plymouth Rock, since by his collusion with the Dutch who wished to keep the profits of their Manhattan Colony to themselves, the Mayflower had found it impossible to make her way southward around Cape Cod, and after nearly going to wreck upon the shoals off Malabar, or Tucker's Terror had been driven within the embrace of the curving arm thrown out by the New World to welcome and shelter the homeless children of the Old. There

she lay now, the weather-beaten, clumsy, strained, and groaning old bark whose name is glorious in the annals of our country while Time shall endure, and whose merest splinter would to-day be enshrined in gold; there she lay swinging gently to the send of the great Atlantic whose waves broke sonorously upon the beach outside, and came racing around the point a flood of shattered and harmless monsters, moaning and hissing, to find their prey escaped and safely landlocked.

"There's no boat, I say, and there's an end on 't," repeated Master Jones truculently as he stepped on deck, and two men who had been earnestly conversing at the stern of the brig turned round and came toward him. They were John Carver, already governor of the colony, and William Bradford, his lieutenant and successor. The governor was the first to speak, and the somewhat measured accents of his voice, with its inflections at once kindly and haughty, told of gentle breeding, of a calm and dignified temper, and of an aptness at command.

"And why no boat, Master Jones?" asked he quietly. "Methought by the terms of our agreement you were to aid us in every way in making our settlement."

[Pg 6]

"And I'm not going back of my word, am I, master?" demanded Jones peevishly. "A pack of wenches going ashore with tubs and kettles and bales and such gear is not a settlement, is it?"

"Nay, but a means thereto if haply they find the place convenient," replied Carver pleasantly. "At any rate, we will send them, since it has been promised, and the same boat will serve to transport them with their gear that is already fitted to help us ashore with the pinnace."

"And our own men will do all that is required in lading and rowing the boat," added Bradford in his mild, persuasive voice. Jones, overborne by a calm authority against which he could not bluster, turned on his heel muttering some surly assent. Carver slightly smiled as he watched the square and clumsy form expressing in every line of its back the futile rage of an overborne coward, and, turning toward the companion way, he called,—

"Howland, John Howland, a word with thee!"

"Ay, sir," replied a blithe young voice; and presently a handsome head of pure Saxon type, as indeed were both Bradford's and Carver's, appeared above the hatchway, and a strong young fellow swinging himself upon deck approached the governor, saying apologetically,—

"I was helping to get out the pinnace, and there is a mort of dust and dirt about her."

"I'll give thee a pleasanter task, John," replied Carver, smiling affectionately upon his young retainer. "Thou and John Alden and Gilbert Winslow shall take charge of the women who fain would go ashore to wash their clothes. They will use the boat already lying alongside, and thou hadst better advise with Mistress Brewster for the rest. I leave it all with you twain."

[Pg 7]

"I will do my best, sir," replied Howland with a smile that showed his short, strong teeth and made his blue eyes twinkle pleasantly; then returning to the hatchway he called down,—

"Ho, Alden! You're wanted, man, and so is Gilbert Winslow."

"He's not here, then," responded a heavier voice, as a splendid young giant swung himself up on deck and ran his fingers through a shock of curling chestnut hair; a glorious youth, six feet and over in his hose of hodden gray, with the shoulders and

sinews of an athlete, and the calm, strong face of an Egyptian god.

"What is it, John?" asked he, fixing his dark eyes upon Howland with the affectionate gladness one reads in the eyes of a dog called to his master's side, but of which few human natures are capable.

"Why, Jack, thou and I and Gilbert Winslow are appointed squires of dames to some of the women who would fain go ashore to wash clothes, and we are to pack them into yonder boat, row them ashore, and then purvey wood, water, and such like for them."

"I'd liefer haul out the pinnace," replied Alden with a grimace. "But your will is mine."

"Nay, the governor's will is thine and mine, and it is he set us this task. Where is Winslow?"

"In the cabin belike, chatting with Mary Chilton. It's the work he best loves," replied Alden grimly. "But I'll find him."

"And some of the boys, Jack," suggested Howland, as the younger man turned away. "Bart Allerton and Love Brewster, Giles Hopkins and Crakstone and Cooke, any of the lads that you fall foul of, except the Billingtons,—of them I'll have none."

[Pg 8]

"And why not the Billingtons, worshipful Master Howland, lackey of the governor, and page-boy to his wife," demanded the voice that had interrupted Mistress Hopkins, and turning toward it, Howland confronted a short, square woman, not without a certain vulgar comeliness of her own, although now her buxom complexion was florid with anger and her black eyes snapping angrily, while the arms akimbo, the swaying figure, and raised voice betrayed Helena Billington for precisely what she was, a common scold and shrew. Howland was a brave man; he had already showed both strength and prowess when, washed overboard in a "seel" of the ship, and carried fathoms deep in mid-ocean, he caught the topsail-halyards swept over with him and clung to them until he was rescued in spite of the raging wind and waves that repeatedly dragged him under; nor in the face of savage foe, or savage beast, or peril by land or sea, was John Howland ever known less than the foremost; but now in face of this angry woman he found naught to say, and blushing and stammering and half laughing fairly turned and ran away, springing up the stairs to the elevated deck cabins, in one of which Elder Brewster and his family had their lodging.

Mistress Brewster, a pale, sweet-faced woman, already at fifty-four dressing and behaving as the venerable mother in Israel, came forward to meet him, and smiling indulgently asked,—

"Now what hast thou done to goodwife Billington, thou naughty lad? I hear thy name in her complaint, and indeed all the company can hear it, if they will."

"I did but say I would none of her boys in my party, dear Mistress Brewster, and I hope you'll say so too," replied Howland, uncovering his yellow head. "They are the greatest marplots and scapegraces"—

[Pg 9]

"Nay, nay, John! Say no evil, or thou 'lt make me think thou hast 'scaped grace thyself," suggested the elder's wife with her gentle smile. "And prithee, what is thy party? Are my boys bidden, or must they e'en bide with the Billingtons?"

"The party is your party, dear dame, for the governor sent me to ask your commands upon it, and if Love and Wrestling will give us such aid as their years allow, I shall

be most grateful."

And then in simple phrase Howland repeated the governor's instructions, and requested those of the dame, who at once convened an informal council of matrons, and so well advised them that in a scant hour the clumsy boat, rolling and bumping against the side of the brig, was laden with bales of clothing, tubs whose hoops John Alden, a cooper by trade, was hurriedly overlooking, and sundry great brass and copper kettles, household necessities of that epoch, and descending as relics to us who look upon them with respectful wonder as memorial brasses of the "giants of those days."

A flock of women, all demurely and plainly dressed, although the most of them were under thirty years of age, stood waiting at the head of the ladder until the cargo was stored, and Howland, sending his assistants back on deck, planted himself upon the gunwale of the boat, and holding out his hand to a stout, solid-looking woman with a young girl beside her said,—

"Mistress Tilley, you had best come first, for you will be apt at helping the others, as I hand them down. And thou, too, Elizabeth, if thou wilt."

"And Constance Hopkins and Remember Allerton," pleaded the girl, lifting a sweet, saucy face to the young man; "we never are separated, for we're all of an age, all going on sixteen you know."

[Pg 10]

"Hush, Bess, thou 'rt malapert," chided her mother, descending heavily into the boat, while a mutinous young voice above called out,—

"Nay, I'm not going. Stepmother won't spare me."

"Now Constance Hopkins, thou naughty hussy, wilt thou grumble at tarrying with me to care for thine own dear sister and brother? Fie on thee, girl!"

"They're not my own," grumbled Constance in Remember Allerton's ear. "Giles is my own brother and he is to go, and Damaris and Oceanus are but half sister and brother, and she's but my stepmother."

"Hush, now, or she'll hear and thou 'lt come by a whipping," whispered Remember hastily, as Dame Hopkins turned from Mistress Winslow who had spoken to her, and came toward the girls. "I'll stay aboard with thee, Constance, and help thee with the babies."

"Thou 'rt a dear good wench and I love thee," replied Constance in the same tone, and, as the stepmother placed the muffled baby in her arms, she took him without comment, and went below followed by Elizabeth Tilley.

Two trips of the capacious boat sufficed to carry women, clothes, utensils, and assistants across the three quarters of a mile of shallow water lying between the brig and the shore, and the boys who went in the first boat were at once set to work to gather dry stuff from the thickets of scrub oak and pine sparsely clothing the beach, and to build several fires along the margin of a large pool or perhaps pond of fresh water divided from the harbor by a narrow beach of firm white sand. Beach and pond have long since been devoured by the hungry sea, but stumps of good-sized trees are still dug from the dreary sands environing Provincetown, to show what once has been.

[Pg 11]

The second boat-load arrived, and by help of Alden's stalwart arm, Howland's cool decision and prompt action, and Winslow's quick eye and ready aid to any woman needing assistance, the apparatus was soon adjusted, and a dozen pairs of strong

white arms were plunged in the suds, or throwing the clothes into the great caldrons bubbling over the fires which the boys gayly replenished.

Not all the women of the Mayflower were thus engaged, however, for several were delicate in health, and several others had servants who took this ungentle labor upon themselves; but those who did not labor with their hands felt no superiority, and those who did had no shame in so doing; and although the manners of the day inculcated a certain deference of manner and speech from the lower rank to the higher, and from youth to age, the very fact that every one of these persons had abandoned home and friends and comfort that they might secure liberty, induced a sense of self respect and respect for others, which is the very root and basis of a true republic. Thus Katharine Carver, wife of the governor, daughter of Bishop White, and sister of Robinson, the pastor of the community left behind in Leyden, although she sent her maid Lois, and her man-servant Roger Wilder, to do the required work, came ashore with the rest, and by a touch here and a word there, and her interest and sympathy, took her part in the labor of the whole, and delicate woman and well-born lady though she was, made each of those hard-working sisters feel that it was only her weakness, and not her station, that prevented her doing all that they did. "Eleven o' the clock," said John Alden, as the Mayflower's cracked bell told six hoarse strokes. "They said they'd bring our dinner ashore for us," and he looked wistfully toward the ship.

[Pg 12]

"Who said?" asked Howland; "for I've more faith in some say-sos than in some others."

"Well, if I remember, 't was Mistress Molines who told me," replied Alden carefully careless.

"Oh, ay," assented Howland, his blue eyes twinkling. "But I thought she was ill, poor woman."

"Nay, I meant Mistress Priscilla Molines," retorted the giant, blushing. "She said somewhat to me of an onion soup which she flavors marvelously well."

"Ah, yes, onion soup," retorted Howland gravely. "Methought it must be some such moving theme you discussed yester even as you sat on the cable. I noted even at that distance the tears in your eyes."

"And if there were tears in mine eyes it is no matter of mocking, for Mistress Priscilla was telling me that her mother is sick as she fears unto death, and"—

"John Howland, the boat is coming off with the rest of our company and noon-meat for us all. Wilt thou and John Alden receive and help them ashore, while Gilbert helps us to make ready here?"

"Surely we will, Mistress Carver," replied Howland heartily, for his relationship toward the governor and his beautiful wife was rather that of a younger brother than of a retainer; and although the smallness of his fortune had induced him to accept the patronage of the older and wealthier man, it was much as a lad of noble lineage was content a few years before this to become first the page and then the squire of a belted knight.

The boat, unable to reach the shore on account of the flatness of the beach, stuck fast about a bow-shot from dry land, and the men and boys at once tumbled over the edge and prepared to carry not only the luggage, but the female passengers ashore. Alden seeing this prospect, tore off his boots and stockings, and plunging into the chill water hastened to the stern of the boat where a slender, vivacious girl, brown,

[Pg 13]

dark-eyed, and with cheeks glowing with the dusky richness of a peach, stood balancing herself like a bird and giving orders to a young man already in the water.

"Now have a care, Robert Cartier, of that kettle. If thou spillst the soup"—

"The onion soup, Mistress Priscilla?" asked Alden approaching unperceived. Priscilla cast a look at him from the corners of her long eyes, and replied carelessly,

"Yes, Master Alden, an onion soup. Is that a favorite dish with your worship?"

"Why, thou knowest,"—began the young man with an air of bewilderment, but Priscilla interrupted him.

"Since thou art here with thy broad shoulders, John Alden, thou wilt do well to make them of use. There is Mistress Allerton struggling with a hamper beyond her strength, and there are bales of clothes that must not be wet. Load thyself, good mule, and plod shoreward."

"To be sure I will and gladly, fair mistress," replied Alden patiently. "But first let me take thee ashore dry-shod, and then I will bring all the rest."

"Beshrew thee for a modest youth," retorted Priscilla, the peach color of her cheeks deepening to pomegranate; "when I go ashore I will convey myself, or my brother will carry me; and thou, since thou art so picksome, may set thyself to work, and ask naught of me."

"But why art thou so tart when I meant naught," began Alden, bewildered; but again the girl cut him short with a stinging little laugh.

[Pg 14]

"Thou never meanest aught, poor John; but I have no time to waste with thee. Here, Robert, these come next, and take Mistress Allerton's hamper as well."

"Nay, that is for me," growled Alden, seizing the basket from the hands of the astonished servant who relinquished it with a stare and a muttered exclamation in French; for William Molines, called Mullins by the Pilgrims, his wife, son, daughter, and servant were all of the French Huguenots, who fleeing from their native land planted a colony upon the river Waal in Holland, and were at this time known as Walloons. Learning enough of Dutch to carry on the business of daily life, and of English to communicate with their co-religionists of the Pilgrim church in Leyden, they retained French as the dear home language of their birth, and the young people, like Priscilla and her brother Joseph, used the three languages with equal facility.

A little offended and a good deal puzzled by the change in Priscilla's manner since their last interview, Alden devoted himself to unloading the boat without again addressing her, until he saw her confide herself to the arms of her brother to be taken ashore; then seizing an armful of parcels, he strode along close behind the slender stripling whose thews and sinews were obviously unequal to his courage, and who floundered painfully over the uneven sands. At last he stumbled, recovered himself, plunged wildly forward, and fell flat upon his face, while his sister, suddenly seized and held aloft in two strong arms, did not so much as wet the hem of her garment, until with a few swift strides her rescuer set her on dry land and turned to help the boy who came floundering after them with a rueful and angry countenance.

[Pg 15]

"'T was all thy fault, Priscilla," began he. "Twisting and squirming to see who was coming after us."

"Nay, 't was the fault of some great monster who came trampling on our heels, and

making the water wash round my feet. Some whale or griffin belike, though he has hid himself again," and the girl affected to shade her eyes and scan the sparkling waters, while Alden strode moodily away. Priscilla glanced after his retreating figure, and spoke again to her brother in a voice whose cooing softness poor John had never heard.

"Thou poor dripping lad! And such a cough as thou hast already! Come with me sweetheart, and I'll set thee between two fires, and put my duffle cloak about thee, and heat some soup scalding hot. I would I had a sup of strong waters for thee—ah yes, I see!"

And hurriedly leading her brother to a sheltered nook between two great fires, she cast her cloak over his shoulders, and then sprang up the sand-hill with the graceful strength of an antelope to the spot where Doctor Fuller stood talking with a man whose appearance demands a word of description. Short and square built, the figure bespoke strength and long training in athletic exercises, while the haughty set of the head, the well-shaped hands and feet, and the clear cut of the features told of gentle blood and the habit of predominance. The bare head was covered with thick chestnut hair, worn at the temples by pressure of a steel cap, and well matched in color by eyes whose strong, stern glances carried defeat to the hearts of his savage foes even before his quick blows fell. The mouth, firmly closed beneath its drooping moustache, was like the eyes, stern and terrible in anger, but like them it was capable of a winning sweetness and charm only known to those he loved, those he pitied, and to the life-long friends whose loving description has come down to us; for this was Myles Standish, the soldier and hero of the Pilgrims; their dauntless defender in battle, their gentle nurse in illness, their councilor and envoy and shining example in peace; the right arm of the colony, its modest commander, and its intelligent servant.

[Pg 16]

As Priscilla approached, the two men ceased their conversation and turned toward her, neither of them unconscious of the beauty, grace, and vigor which clothed her as a garment, yet each restrained by inborn chivalry and respect from expressing his opinion.

"Oh, Doctor, or you, Captain Standish, have either of you a flask of strong waters about you? My poor Joseph has fallen in the water, and it is so cold, and he has already a cough."

"Yes, we saw him fall. He was overloaded for such a stripling," said the doctor, with his dry smile, while Standish, hastily pulling a flask from his pocket, said,—

"Here is some well-approved Hollands gin, Mistress Priscilla; and I would advise a good draught as soon as may be, and have it heated if it may be."

"Here, hand it me. I will go and give my friend Joseph a rating for undertaking tasks beyond his strength, though belike the fault was none of his!" And the doctor seizing the flask strode down the hill, while Priscilla lingered to ask,—

"How doth Mistress Standish find herself to-day? I heard she was but poorly."

"Ay, poorly enough," replied the Captain with a shadow chasing the smile from his eyes. "She is hardly strong enough for these shrewd winds and rough adventures. I had done better to leave her in England until we are established somewhere."

[Pg 17]

"There's more than one in our company, I fear me, that has adventured beyond their strength," replied Priscilla sadly, as she remembered her mother's hectic flush and wasting strength and her brother's cough.

"A forlorn hope, perhaps, set to garrison this by-corner of the world, but not forgotten by the Commander-in-chief, remember that, maid Priscilla," said the captain kindly and cheerily. "There in the Low Countries our worst trouble was that the home government never backed us as they should, and more than once we felt we were forgot and neglected; but in the warfare we have to wage here in the wilderness we can never fear that."

"Yet soldiers may die at their post here as well as there," said Priscilla, turning to go down the hill.

"So long as the work is done it matters little what becomes of the soldier," replied Myles briefly, and the two rejoined the group around the fires.

Before nightfall the clothes, dried and sweet with the sunshine and pure air, were carefully folded into the tubs and kettles, the dinner was neatly cleared away, and the whole company in several trips of the boats conveyed on board, while the carpenters and their volunteer aids remained to work while daylight lasted upon the pinnacle, the Pilgrims' own craft, intended for exploration along the shore, and for fishing when they should have made a settlement.

But Joseph Molines had not shaken off his chill by means of the captain's Hollands gin, nor did his mother or Rose Standish find themselves better in the evening than they had been in the morning, and as the darkness of the November night closed around the lonely bark, gaunt shadowy forms, Disease and Famine and Death, seemed shaping themselves among the clouds and brooding menacingly over the Forlorn Hope, as its soldiers slept or watched beneath.

[Pg 18]

[Pg 19]

CHAPTER II.

THE LAUNCH OF THE PINNACE.

"Mary! Mary Chilton! Maid Mary mine!" called Priscilla Molines in her clear bird-voice, as she ran down the steps leading to the principal cabin. "Come on deck and see the launch of the pinnacle! The carpenters call her fit for use if not finished, and the men have gone ashore to launch her. Where art thou, poppet!"

"Here," replied a gentler and sweeter voice, as Mary Chilton came forward, a long gray stocking dangling from her hands, and stood in a slant ray of sunshine which lighted her golden hair to a glory, and showed the pure tints of her May-bloom face and clear blue eyes; a lovely English face in its first fresh rapture of morning beauty.

"Right merrily will I come, Priscilla, if there be aught to see," continued she, throwing down the stocking which she was knitting for her father. "Truly my eyes ache with staring at nothingness."

"Well, there's a trifle this side of nothingness on the beach at this minute," retorted Priscilla, pinching her friend's ear. "Men call it Gilbert Winslow."

"Hush, hush, Priscilla!" whispered Mary, with a scared look toward her mother's cabin. "If anybody heard such folly! And Mistress White already tells my mother that we two are over-light in our carriage and conversation."

[Pg 20]

"Mistress White"—began Priscilla sharply, but ended the exclamation with a saucy

laugh and said instead, "Yes, truly as thou sayest, my May, mine eyes ache with gazing upon nothingness and my tongue aches with speaking naught but wisdom. It is out of nature for young maids to be as staid as their elders, and methinks I do not care to be. Let us be young while we have youth, say I."

She looked perilously pretty as she arched her brows and pouted her ripe lips, and Mary looked at her in loving admiration, while she answered sagely,—

"You and yours are French, Priscilla, and I am all English like my forbears; so thou mayst well be lighter natured than I—I mean no harm, dear."

"No harm is done, dear mother in Israel," replied Priscilla half mockingly, and seizing Mary's hand she led her on deck, where many of the women and children were collected, watching the preparations on shore for the launch of the pinnace, which, much strained by bad stowage between decks, had needed about a fortnight's work done upon her before she was fit for service.

"They only wait for her to set forth on a second exploration," said Priscilla confidentially; "and a little bird sang in my ear that they would go to-morrow."

"What little bird?" asked Mary curiously; but before Priscilla could reply another voice interposed; it was that of Bridget Tilley, who had come on deck to seek her daughter Elizabeth, and now sharply inquired,—

"Another expedition, say you? And my goodman scarce brought back from death's door, whither the first jaunt led him! Nay, now, 't is not right, 't is all one as murder, to hale dying men out of their beds and into that wilderness. No blessing will follow such work, and I'll cry upon the governor or the captain or the elder to stop it!"

[Pg 21]

"What is it, Mistress Tilley? Any wrong that I can help set right?" asked a sweet voice, and Bridget turned toward the speaker with a somewhat more subdued manner, lowering her voice as she said,—

"Thank you kindly, Mistress Standish, and God be praised that you can be on deck; but my matter is this," and again she poured out her anxieties and her fears, until Rose Standish, a fair white rose now, and trembling in the shrewd autumn air so soon to scatter her petals and bear the pure fragrance of her life down through the centuries, until men to-day love her whom they never knew, leaned wearily against the bulkhead and said,—

"Rest easy, dear dame. Thou 'rt all in the right, and it behooves us to protect our lords from their own rash courage, just as it befits their courage to protect us against salvages and wild beasts. I will whisper in my husband's ear that Master Tilley is all unfit to carry out his own brave impulses, and I will conspire with Mistress Carver and Mistress Bradford, and, above all, with our dear mother, the elder's wife, that each shall make petition to her lord to see that no sick or overborne man be allowed to adventure himself on the expedition. Will that satisfy thee, dame?"

"Right well, and you are all one with the saints we used to honor, though we do know better now."

"'T is the most comfortable promise I've heard in many a day, dear Mistress Standish," cried Priscilla vivaciously. "And well do I believe that the whispers of the wives are more weighty than the shouts of the husbands. I've never proved it myself, being but a maid; yet I have ere now marked how the prancing of the noblest steed is full deftly checked by a silken rein."

[Pg 22]

"It were well if a rein were put upon thy tongue, girl," severely interposed a comely

matron sitting near. "Thou 'rt over forward for thy years, Priscilla. Shamefastness and meekness become a maid, and when thou knowest more thou 'lt say less."

"Thanks, Mistress White, I will try to profit by your discourse," replied Priscilla demurely; but her tone did not satisfy the matron, who sharply rejoined,—

"See that thou do, Mistress Malapert, or I'll ask the elder to deal with thee. Here he is now."

And, in fact, Elder Brewster, who had caught the tone of Mistress White's voice, drew near to the group, saying pleasantly, "A goodly sight yonder, is it not? And how well our strong fellows set their shoulders to the toil! What shall we call the pinnacle when she is launched, Mistress White?"

"Methinks Discretion would be a good name, Elder," replied the lady with a glance at the two girls. "Surely, we have room for it in our company."

"Truth, my daughter, and yet to my mind Charity is a sweeter name, and one more likely to float us over troubled waters." And the elder's pleasant smile disarmed his words of all sting. "Priscilla," continued he, turning to the girl, "I hear that thy father keeps his bed to-day, and thy mother is but poorly."

"Indeed, sir, they are both in evil case," replied Priscilla sadly. "Neither of them has stomach for such food as is at hand, and so they weaken daily. John Alden shot some little birds yesterday, and I made broth of them, but, saving that, my mother has taken no meat for days."

[Pg 23]

"I will go and visit them," said the elder, and forgetting the launch he had come up to see, he went at once.

"See! See! There she goes!" cried Elizabeth Tilley, as the great boat slid gracefully down her ways to the water, dipped her bows deeply, and finding her level rode upon an even keel.

"There she goes!" echoed Constance Hopkins and Remember Allerton, who with Elizabeth Tilley constituted what may be called the rosebud division of the Pilgrim girls, all glowing in the freshness of early youth, all comely, strong, and vivacious. Priscilla Molines and Mary Chilton with Desire Minter, a distant relative and charge of Governor Carver's, made another little group of older girls, and then came the young matrons of whom there were many, while Mistress Brewster in the dignity of middle life was the recognized head and guide of all.

"Yes, there she goes," cried Priscilla, clapping her hands and dancing upon her slender feet. "And Mary," continued she, dropping her voice to a whisper, "it was Captain Standish who gave that last mighty shove"—

"Nay, it was John Alden," interrupted Mary innocently.

"I tell thee, girl, it was the captain. John Alden is ever at his elbow and striving to imitate him, but our captain is still the leader, and I do honour a man who can think as well as do, and act as well as talk. Of talkers we have enow, the dear knows; Master Winslow and Master Allerton can so argue that they would force you to swear black was white and the moon a good Dutch cheese an they chose, and they can lay out work marvelously well for others to carry out, but I mark that their own hands abide in their pockets for the most part. Then there are plenty of strong arms with no head-pieces, like John Alden and your good friend Gilbert Winslow and John Howland and"—

[Pg 24]

"Nay, nay, Priscilla, thou shalt not wrong good men so," interrupted Mary, her fair face coloring a little. "The leaders aye must lead, and the younger and simpler aye must follow in every community, and I mark not that those you flout for speaking so well fail of their share in the labor, nor do I think John Alden or the rest would do well to thrust their advice upon their betters. At all rates, yon boat had not slid down so merrily if John Alden had not put his shoulder to the work."

"Yea, put his shoulder where the captain laid his hand," retorted Priscilla with her mocking laugh, and then putting her arm around Mary's shoulders, she added affectionately,—

"What a wise little woman thou art, ever looking at both sides of the matter while I see but one! And in truth, perhaps, it is better that there be these varied excellences, so that all comers may be suited, just as thou art fond of porridge while I would liefer have soup."

"And art a rare hand at compounding it," replied Mary admiringly. "How Desire Minter smacked her lips over the dish thou gavest her the other day."

"That poor Desirée, as my gossip Jeanne De la Noye used to call her! I like well to give her some tasty bit, for it makes her so happy at so little trouble to myself, since I am ever cooking."

"Dost thou really like cooking, Priscilla; or dost thou do it because thou ought, as I do?" asked Mary, who hated the culinary art, and yet was called upon to practice it, as were all young women of the day.

"Oh, I love it," replied Priscilla, with enthusiasm. "My mother and my grandmother and all my aunts were notable cooks, and in the good old days in France before I was born, they say my grandmother's patés and conserves and ragouts were famous all through Lyons, where my grandfather and his father before him were great silk manufacturers with plenty of men and maids and money at their command."

[Pg 25]

"Ah, Priscilla, thou 'rt hankering after the flesh-pots again! Remember Lot's wife!" and Mary laughed, but gently stole a hand into that of Priscilla, who pressed it tenderly as she replied,—

"Lot's wife spoiled all her cookery with salt, and I'll at least distill none from mine own eyes. How shall I make Robert Cartier know that I want him to come aboard and help me with my father's supper?"

"Beckon to John Alden to send him," retorted Mary promptly. Priscilla turned and fixed her long dark eyes in mock bewilderment upon the other's face.

"And why is it easier to beckon to John Alden than to Robert Cartier, thou foolish girl?" asked she.

"Because Robert is only thy father's servant, and John is thine own and ever waiting thy command," replied Mary demurely, and Priscilla's rich color mounted to her brow as she laughingly retorted,—

"Now, maid Mary, that quip was more like me than thee, and I'll have none of it. 'T is for thee to carry the honey-bag to mollify the stings my naughty tongue must aye inflict. I would I were not so waspish, Mary mine!"

"Thou 'rt naught but what is dear and lovely, and I care for thee beyond any man that ever walked, saving my father," cried Mary, pressing close to her friend's side.

[Pg 26]

"Then will I be jealous of Master Chilton," murmured Priscilla, the teasing mood again rising to the surface. "For I'll have no rival in thy heart, save only Gilbert Winslow, whom I hope not to oust."

"See, there is John Alden steadfastly regarding us," cried Mary, a little annoyed. "Point thy finger at Robert as he stands staring at the boat, and then beckon. My word for it, John will read the signal aright."

"Why, then, so be it, and if Dame White sees me I'll swear 'twas thee, Mary," and Priscilla half proudly, half shyly made the signal, which was at once understood and acted upon by Alden, who, truth to tell, seldom lost sight of Priscilla when in her company. Cartier receiving the message waded after a boat just leaving the beach, and came aboard dripping wet, an imprudence so common among the younger men of the Pilgrims on that flat coast as to become a serious factor in the terrible mortality which was to sweep off half their number within a few months.

[Pg 27]

CHAPTER III.

THE SWORD OF STANDISH.

The "little bird," probably John Alden, constant companion of Standish, had sung truly in Priscilla's ear of a second exploring party about to leave the Mayflower in quest of a favorable site for the town and colony the Pilgrims had come forth to found.

To this step they were urged not only by their own wishes, but by the importunities of Captain Jones, who having obeyed his Dutch employers and brought his passengers to a point well removed from the Virginian or Manhattan shores whereon they intended to land, was now only desirous to put them ashore almost anywhere, and make sail for England while the winter storms held off and his provisions lasted. His own interest, therefore, made him zealous in the Pilgrims' service, and so heartily had he offered his men, boats, and provisions for the expedition that the Pilgrims had made him its leader, some of them still believing in his honesty and friendliness, and some others feeling that the surest way to effect their plans was to induce the surly commander to make them his own. The event proved their shrewdness, for Jones accepted the appointment with great satisfaction, and told off ten of his best seamen to add to the four-and-twenty sound men who were nearly all that the Pilgrims could muster, since, thanks to the secret councils of Rose Standish and her associates, all sick or weakly candidates were weeded out from the volunteers, and the Tilley brothers, William Moline, James Chilton, William White, and several others were kindly bidden to remain on board and nurse their strength for the next expedition.

[Pg 28]

About noon the tide serving, the four-and-thirty adventurers, divided between the ship's long-boat and their own pinnace, took the sea in teeth of a freezing northeasterly gale, and under low-lying clouds whose gray bosoms teemed with snow and sleet.

Thomas English, a mariner engaged as master of the shallop, held the helm, while as many willing hands as could grasp the oars pulled lustily in the direction of what is now called the Pamet River, a stream discovered some days previously by a foot expedition under charge of Standish, and considered as a possible seat for their

colony. The crowded state of the boats and the head wind rendered the sails useless, and oars proved inefficient to propel so large a boat as the pinnace, while the sea, rapidly rising with the rising wind, broke so dangerously over the quarter that English refused to proceed, and it was hastily resolved to run into what is now called East Harbor, land the passengers, and allow the long-boat to return to the ship, while the pinnace lay to until the gale moderated. This was done, but owing to the shoals, the men were obliged to wade knee-deep to reach land, and the cold was now so intense that their clothes froze upon them as they resumed their journey on foot. Well may we believe what William Bradford later said: "Some of our people who are dead took the original of their death on that day."

Marching six or seven miles on foot, the party encamped, building a barricade, or as they called it a "randevous," of pine boughs to protect them from savage beasts or men, and within it kindling a fire beside which they sat down to eat such provisions as they had brought, and to solace themselves with modest draughts of the strong waters they used but not abused.

[Pg 29]

The next day the exploration was continued both by sea and land, the hardy adventurers marching through snow six inches deep, or upon the loose sands of the beach where the wind flogged them with lashes of icy spray and stinging shards. In passing through a belt of woods traces of human presence were to be seen, especially certain young trees bent down and their tops made fast to the earth. Stepping aside to examine one of these, William Bradford suddenly found his leg inclosed in a noose, while the tree, released and springing upward, would have carried him ignominiously with it had not he seized the trunk of another sapling, and lustily shouted for help. His comrades came running back, and not without laughter and some grim pleasantries released him. Stephen Hopkins alone understood the trap, and cutting from it a piece of smooth fine cord twisted of wood fibres handed it to Bradford, saying,—

"Here, man, keep it by way of horn-book to teach thee wood-lore in these salvage countries. It is the moral of what we used to see among the Bermoothes some ten years gone by. Ay, and the traps too. I've seen many a wild thing, deer or what not, jerked up by the leg and hanging from a tree like Absalom, until its master came along to cut its throat and dress it, as it hung."

"Glad am I that no such master came to release me," said Bradford laughing ruefully as he rubbed his leg and limped along.

"So thou wert in the Bermudas, Hopkins?" asked Standish who was of the walking party; "wast buccaneering?"

[Pg 30]

"Nay, Captain, all men do not follow thy trade," replied Hopkins with his boisterous laugh. "Mine was quite another office, for I was lay-reader to Parson Buck, and he was chaplain to Gates who was to be governor of a Virginia colony an' he could have reached it. But like our own adventure it miscarried, and we were wrecked on the Bermoothes. We abode there six months, and the Indians showed us how to trap deer just as Bradford was trapped but now, ho, ho!"

"Lay-reader wast thou?" asked Standish surveying the burly veteran with whimsical interest. "Well, now, I'd never take thee for a parson's lieutenant, Hopkins! I can hardly fancy thee meek and mild with bands under that unkempt beard, and a gown over thy buff jacket. Wert meek and mild in those days, Hopkins, and thy tongue, was 't innocent of strange oaths?"

"A truce to thy jibes, master Captain," retorted Hopkins not half pleased at receiving

the jests he so freely offered. "If thou didst but know, my voice was more for war than peace, sith it seemed to me then even as it did before we landed here, that an expedition gone astray is an expedition ended, and that all compacts cease when their conditions cannot be fulfilled. We shipped to go to Virginia, and Gates was to be our governor; well and good, but here we were wrecked on Bermuda, and my rede was that every man was thus released from his promises and free to set forth anew for himself."

"So! Yonder threatening on the Mayflower was not thy first experience in raising sedition and discontent, and trying to turn a God-fearing community into a nest of pirates!" exclaimed Standish scornfully. "Well, what came of it in that instance?"

[Pg 31]

"Why, Gates called a court-martial, tried me for treason by an authority I denied, and sentenced me to death."

"Ay, and what then?"

"Then Parson Buck who could ill spare me, since I writ half his discourses, and the admiral who would not see murder done under cloak of law, they went to Gates and so wrought upon his temper that he set me free and bade me begone, and I went right merrily."

"Thou mindst me of an officer under me, down there by Utrecht," said Standish meditatively. "He, too, was for setting up every man for himself in the plunder of a village we had taken, and I had given orders about."

"And what became of him?" asked Hopkins, as the captain seemed to have finished.

"Oh, there was no parson just there to make use of him, and no admiral to judge about my authority, and he was shot," replied Standish quietly. Hopkins scowled and laid his hand upon his sword hilt, but Bradford, who had listened with both interest and amusement to the conversation, deftly interposed with some question about the route, and Hopkins, who prided himself upon his wood-lore, took the lead, and conducted the party by the easiest route to the spot where they would rejoin their brethren of the boat.

The Pamet River, reached at length, proved unsatisfactory for a settlement, but at its mouth were found sundry matters of interest,—the remains of a palisade formed apparently by civilized hands, the ruins of a log hut, quite different from the wigwams of the savages, and a large mound which when opened proved full of Indian corn, some shelled, some on the ear, the yellow kernels variegated with red and blue ones, like the maize still grown in that vicinity. The snow upon the ground would have concealed this "barn," as rustic John Rigdale called it, had not the previous expedition noted and marked it, and the ground was so hard frozen that it must be hewed with the stout cutlasses and axes of the Pilgrims, and the clods pried up with levers. Standish drew his sword with the rest, but after watching for a moment thrust it back into the sheath, saying to Alden who as usual was close beside him,—

[Pg 32]

"Nay, I'll none of it! What mine own thews and sinews may compass, I'll undertake right joyfully, but I'll never ask Gideon to risk his edge or his backbone in such rude labors as yon. Every man to his trade, and these are the sappers and miners with whom he has no concern."

"Is Gideon the name of your sword then, Master?" asked Alden half timidly, for Standish had the habit of command and was impatient of much questioning.

Alden however was a favorite, and the captain, like a lover, was won by the admiring glance the young man threw at the sword, as its owner unsheathed it and laid the blade fondly across his palm.

"Why ay," replied he smiling down at it, "I have christened him so; but methinks, like other converts, he finds the new name sit uneasily at times, and would fain hear the old one."

"And what might that be?"

"Ah, that is what no man alive can tell. He who forged it of that rare metal which now and again falls from the skies, and he who first wielded and named it, have lain in the dust well nigh a thousand years, if old tales be true."

[Pg 33]

"A thousand years! But what is its story,—if you will tell it, Master Standish?" and the young man's face grew bright with excitement as he glanced from the soldier's face to the blade glittering across his palm, and seeming to laugh in the wintry sunshine.

"Well, it was an old armorer in Ghent for whom I had done some service in protecting his daughter and saving some mails which my men would have plundered, and the old man was more grateful than need be, and came one night to my lodgings bringing this sword wrapped in his mantle, to offer me as a gift, for he said he would not sell it, valuing it above all price."

"And still you would have him take a price," suggested Alden exultantly, but Standish answered gently,—

"Nay, John, that is but poor pride that cannot allow another to be its benefactor. I took the old man's gift and thanked him heartily. Later on, as chance befell, I did him a good turn in a contract for arms, while he knew it not. But that is beside the matter, which is the sword. He told me, that old man did, a story fit to set in the ancient romaunts of chivalry, how he as a young fellow full of heart and lustihood went out to fight the Turks or some other heathen of those parts, and was a prisoner, and a lady loved him and he loved her not, having a sweetheart waiting for him at home. And she had a noble heart and forgave him his despite, and set him free at risk of her own life, nor gave him freedom only, but a purse of gold and this sword, which she averred had been captured from the Persian people hundreds of years before, and was a true Damascus blade forged from meteor iron, and of the curious tempering now forgotten. And she said, moreover, that there was a charm upon it that made him who carried it invincible and scathless, and she, poor maid, had robbed her father's house of this great treasure, and brought it to him who loved another woman better than her, and so with tears and smiles she gave it over, and he for very ruth gave her a tender kiss, and thus they parted."

[Pg 34]

"Nay, I pity her not. She was overbold to offer her love before it had been asked," said Alden hastily.

"Ah, boy, thou 'rt in all the hardness of thy callow youth, and nought's more hard. Wait some fifteen years till thou comest to my age, and thou 'lt pity the poor heathen maid as I do to-day. Well, my armorer took the sword and played it some forty years or more, and then, too old to wield arms, he took to dealing in them, but never sold this, for it had proved all that the lady claimed for it, and had slain his enemies, and fended his friends, and saved his own head more times than he could number, and now he gave it to me who had, he said, saved more than his life."

"And these outlandish signs and marks upon the blade?" asked Alden, peering down

at the sword.

"There, now, thou callest for another tale," replied Standish smiling good-naturedly. "But as they seem to need us not in disemboweling yon granary, and here we are guard against surprise from whoever may rightly own the treasure and come to claim it, I will e'en tell thee the rest.

"Thou knowest Pastor Robinson of Leyden, though thou wast never out of England thyself?"

[Pg 35]

"I know his fame as a pious teacher and a learned man, well beloved of his people."

"Beloved? Ay, none more so," exclaimed Standish heartily. "I ever wished I might see him in some great peril and prove my love by cutting down a round dozen of his foes. And learned! Why, man, he disputed with the most learned among their Dutch scholars openly in the big church, and left them not a leg to stand on, or a tongue to wag. Why, 't Isa no more to him to read Hebrew than for me to spell out my Bible. So then, knowing his learning and his love of all that is old and curious, I one day showed him my sword and asked if he could rede me fairly the mystical texts or whatever they might be upon the blade. But mind thee I said naught to him of any charm or amulet about it, lest I might wound his conscience, which is tender as a maid's. Thou shouldst have seen the dear old man, barnacles on nose, peering and peeping and muttering over the queer device, all at one as he were a wizard himself and working some spell. But at the last he heaved a mighty sigh, and gave me back the sword saying, nay, he could not make out more than that there were two legends in two different tongues and by different hands, and that the effigies of the sun and moon and stars pointed, he feared, to idolatrous emblems, and were not such as a Christian man might safely deal withal. So I asked him would it be better should I have the Holy Rood wrought above them as did the Crusaders of old, and beshrew me, but this device seemed to please him less than the other."

"Nay, our teachers like not the look of the Cross, nor use it as our fathers used. It savoreth of Popery, they say," interposed Alden glancing at the captain's face for sure approval, but to his surprise he saw it overcast and frowning.

[Pg 36]

"Thou knowest," replied he a little haughtily, "that I am not of the Separatist Church, nor agree in all its teachings. The Standishes were ever good Catholics, since they came over from Normandy with William the Baseborn, and if I hold not to the religion of my fathers I accept no other, nor can I ever esteem lightly those things my mother venerated."

The younger man, perplexed and mortified, remained silent, but in a moment Standish smiled and resumed his story.

"So, Pastor Robinson confessed his own want of skill, as so wise a man need not shame to do, but told me of a certain aged scholar in Amsterdam, well versed in Eastern lore, and able, if any man alive could do it, to rede me the riddle aright, and he wrote down his name and lodging and a line to recommend me to his kindly attention, and so gave me fair good-night.

"Not long after, my occasions called me to Amsterdam, and be sure I took the time to find the old ancient scholar, a queer, dried-up graybeard, with skin like the parchment covers of his folios; but he gave me courteous welcome, and I laid the sword upon the table under his nose. Faith, John, I thought that same nose would grow to my blade, for a good half hour passed away, or ever he stirred or spoke. Then he looked askance at me and said,—

"How old art thou in very truth?"

"I told him some thirty years, and he stared and stared until had he been a young man and a soldier I had asked him his intent. But as it was, I did but stare back again, until at the last his parchment cheeks creased and crackled in what may have been meant for a smile, and he said,—

[Pg 37]

"Thou mightst have been a score of thirties if thou hadst been born when this blade was forged.'

"And why?' asked I, wondering if Pastor Robinson could have known the man was an old wizard.

"Because there's that on this blade would have kept thee from all harm if thou hadst made it thine own,' said he, tapping that circle."

And turning the blade, Standish showed upon the reverse from the sun, moon, and stars, an ornamented medallion close to the hilt, containing certain cabalistic signs and marks. Below this was an inscription of several lines in totally different characters.^[1]

"And that is a charm to keep a man alive?" asked Alden with bated breath and eager eyes.

"So that old man said," replied Standish, "but I concern myself little with such matters, having ever found my own right arm enough to keep my head, and the grace of God better than any heathen charm."

"And did he read it, and the rest?" pursued Alden.

"Yes, he read it, or at the least he muttered something in some outlandish gibberish," replied the captain, laughing a little shamefacedly. "And he told me its meaning, partly in Latin, for we spoke together in that tongue, but I am such a dullard that I forgot the words as soon as he spoke them, and so asked him to write them down. Then he fell a pondering again, and said like the pastor, that the two inscriptions differed in every way, and he must muse awhile and look in his books before he could read them fairly, and he asked me to leave the sword with him. So seeing him so venerable and honorable a man I consented, although not willingly, and went my way. The next morning I sought him again not certain but that in the night he and my sword and the charm had all flown out of window together and gone to join the Witch of Endor. But no, there he sat, and the sword before him, as if they never had stirred since I left. And the old man gave me a bit of parchment covered with crabbed Latin script, and told me I should find therein the sense of my two inscriptions, though there were words even he could not decipher. So I put the parchment in my pouch, and reached my hand to the sword, when he withheld it and said,—

[Pg 38]

"This charm avails nothing for thee, my son, because it was not framed for thee, nor dost thou swear by the powers therein invoked; but I can frame one that will avail, and will protect thee from any weapon raised against thee. I have learned somewhat I never knew, in studying thy sword, and I would fain repay thee in kind.'

"Now lad, as he spoke, a certain terror seized me lest I should be found dabbling in the black art, and I said, with more than enough vehemence, that I wanted no charm, nor did I fear mortal weapon or mortal foe, for in God was my trust, and He was able to hold me scathless, or to take me when He would. And then, John, a fancy seized me, a foolish fancy of romance perhaps, but still I mind not thy knowing, so thou 'It

not babble of it to others. I asked the old man could he put what I had just said into the same tongue with that heathen charm, and so shape it that I could have it carved upon my blade above the sun and moon and stars, which those Persian idolaters worship and had graved there almost as idols. And he smiled again in that grewsome fashion of his, and said ay he could do that much, and that as three possessors had already put invocations to their gods upon the blade it was but fit I should do so in my turn.

[Pg 39]

"I liked not the quip, nor the evening of a Christian man's belief to idolatrous worship, but yet the idea of the Christian charm, if one might call it so, had taken fast possession of my mind, and I felt as though it were snatching the good blade from the powers of heathenese and giving it to God. So I put what I would say in few words, and the old man wrought upon it till he had it to his mind, and at the last took a pencil dipped in some wizard's ink or other and drew these signs upon the sword as you see them, bidding me take it to an armorer and have them cut in just as they stood. So I did, choosing, you may be sure, the armorer who had given me the sword, and showing him, as I have you, that this is no heathen charm, but the sign of a Christian man's faith."

"And what do they mean, all three of them?" asked Alden reverently. "I see the figures 1149 graved clearly enough, but what mean the other two rows?"

"My lad, thou seest wrong. The 1 and 4 and 9 are but symbols of letters not there set down, and the whole, partly from that same foolish fancy I told thee of, and partly because the old scholar bade me never tell it lest some other man should steal his learning, and partly because Gideon hath kept the first secret so many years that I feel like trusting him with another, for all these reasons I promised myself and the scholar and Gideon that I would never tell the thing to mortal man, nor even the rendering of the other devices; and lest I should be tempted to forego my word, sith I claim to be no stronger than Samson, or lest some one should surprise the secret unawares, I cut the piece of parchment in two pieces, and handed them back to the old scholar, who disguised not his huge content thereat. So thou seest, John, two of the three inscriptions I could not unravel to thee if I would, and of the third thou wilt not ask me, since it is guarded by a promise."

[Pg 40]

"Surely, Master, it is not I who would ask you to break it," said John simply. "But the name of Gideon?"

"Didst never read of Gideon in Holy Writ, John? A mighty soldier before the Lord who hewed down his father's idol-grove and came out from among his own people and carved his own way in the world. Ever as I read his story, I mind me of a man I knew in Lancashire who went to the house of his fathers to claim what was his own, and when he gat it not, he threw down the idols he had been trained to worship, and shook off the dust of that idol-grove where Mammon and Rank and the world's opinion were set up as gods, and went out into the world to hew out his own fortunes by the might of his own right arm, and his trust in the God of Israel. So now, John Alden, thou knowest more about my good sword than any man alive, for I doubt me if the scholar remembereth, and the armorer is dead. And when we go into battle, if such good luck await us, and thou hearest me cry, The Sword of the Lord and of Gideon! thou 'lt know my meaning."

[Pg 41]

CHAPTER IV.

THE LILIES OF FRANCE.

"Ho Captain Standish, thou 'rt wanted here!" cried the coarse voice of Thomas Jones as the two men approached the group gathered about the corn heap. "Come hither and teach these gentle maids the usages of war. They speak forsooth of making payment to these unbreeched salvages for the corn we are taking from this hole in the ground. Was it the way of your bold fellows in Flanders to make payment to the Spaniards if you surprised and sacked their camp?"

"The Spaniards were our declared enemies," replied Standish coldly; "and not only their gear but their lives were ours if we could take them, and so were ours theirs an' they approved themselves the better men. But here it is not so; we have no quarrel as yet with the salvages, nor is it wise to provoke one. We are but a handful, and they in their own country of unknown strength. Besides, why should we harm those who have done us no wrong? Is it not wiser to make friends and allies if we may? So Master Jones you must e'en rank me with the gentle maids who speak for honesty and justice in this matter."

"As you will, it is no concern of mine," retorted Jones with a surly laugh; "but never before did I sail in such saintly company, or find bearded men with swords at their sides carrying themselves like milk-fed babes."

[Pg 42]

"And in sad seriousness, good Master Jones, do you intend to cast a slur upon our courage?" demanded Standish, a cold smile upon his lips, while his right hand toyed with Gideon's hilt, and his right foot planted itself more firmly.

"Nay, he's no such ass," interposed Hopkins hastily. "He did but mean a merry joke, and we would have you Captain Standish tell off such men as had best remain on shore for further exploration while the rest shall return to the ship with Master Jones, who is in mind to go back before night."

"Oh, he is overdone with the work we babes have scarce begun," muttered Standish with a wrathful laugh. "Glad am I to spare him."

"And I," said Bradford joining them. "And we are all of one mind that Captain Standish shall take command of those who remain, since the governor and several others find themselves but ailing and will return with Jones, who forebodes foul weather and needs must take his men aboard to meet it."

"Why, that's no more than his duty, and mayhap I wronged him," said Standish generously. "Well, who tarries with me?"

The division was soon made, and as the boats left the shore, beneath the same cold and stormy sky that had led them forth, and feebly breasted the hissing waves which seemed to sneer at their puny efforts, the eighteen men who remained on shore drew closer together.

"Methinks our men are to be sifted like Gideon's army at Mount Moreh," said Edward Winslow running his eye over the little group as he linked his arm with Bradford's. "They went forth twenty-and-two hundred and fell away to three hundred."

[Pg 43]

"By the three hundred who lap the water with their hands will I conquer Midian," quoted Bradford in a clear and ringing voice.

"Hear you that, John?" asked Standish of the young man who followed him closely.

"It is a good omen that the grand old story should have come into Winslow's head. And now, men, my opinion is that we should strike inland, and see if we cannot come upon some settlement or stronghold of the natives, for certes, these barns and graves were not made without hands, nor were the stubble-fields reaped by ghosts. The tract lying north and east of this river is yet new to us, and, since you will be led by me, we will march for some hours hither and yon through its length and breadth, making our randevous where night may overtake us, and returning hither to meet the shallop to-morrow."

"It is good counsel, and we will follow you, Captain," said Winslow, while a consenting murmur stirred the russet beards around, and Hopkins said, "He among us who best knows the ways of woodlands, and how to steer the plainest course through these swamps and thickets, should be on the lead, it seemeth to me, Captain."

"Ay, Hopkins, I have thought of all that," interrupted Standish rather curtly; "and I have chosen my scout already. Billington, where art thou, man?"

"Here, Captain," responded a coarse voice, and a man whose mean and truculent face contrasted forcibly with those about him pushed forward and stood before the captain, who gave him a comprehensive glance, noting not only the mean and bad face, but the wiry and well-knit figure, and the eyes quick and watchful as a rat's.

"Billington," repeated he at last, "I've noticed on these expeditions that thou hast a pretty knack at woodcraft, and can smell thy way among these bogs and thorny coppices with marvelous good judgment."

[Pg 44]

"I learned such woodcraft and more while I was gamekeeper to my Lord Lovell in the old country," interrupted Billington with an impudent grin. The captain again regarded him with that penetrating glance whose power is matter of history and replied,—

"I suppose it was in such service that thou camest by that ugly scar across thy nose. Thou hast never been a soldier, well I wot."

"Thou 'rt right, Captain," said Billington putting his hand to his face with an unabashed laugh. "It was a poacher"—

"Ay, I thought it was a poacher," interrupted Standish dryly. "Well, master gamekeeper Billington, to-day thou 'rt under my orders, and I desire thee to lead us through this wood in an easterly course, and to keep a diligent eye upon all signs of occupation by the enemy, that is to say, our friends the salvages. Be very careful in this matter, an' please thee, good Billington, for shouldst thou think it a merry jest to lead us into danger of any sort, I fear me thou 'dst find it but a poor bargain for thyself."

"Nay, Captain, the man means no harm and feels that we are all comrades in this matter," said Winslow pacifically, while Hopkins muttered discontentedly,—

"O'er many masters to my mind."

Standish answered neither, except by a glance from his penetrating eyes, and Billington taking the lead the little party struck into the woods and marched rapidly and in silence for an hour or more, when Allerton, the oldest and feeblest man of the party, suddenly halted, and called to Standish that he must perforce rest for a few minutes, and was, moreover, sadly athirst. This want was immediately echoed by all, for the flasks at every man's belt contained spirits or strong beer, and the toil of the

[Pg 45]

march, sometimes in spite of Billington's skill through thickets whose thorny branches tore even the armor from the Pilgrims' backs, and sometimes through half frozen morasses, had induced a thirst craving plentiful draughts of pure water.

"We've passed neither spring nor runlet on our course, for I've looked for such," said Billington removing his leather cap and wiping his brow upon his sleeve. "And though 't is frosty weather, such a diligent march as ours heats the blood shrewdly."

"We will halt beside this coppice for a space," ordered Standish glancing at Allerton's pallid face; "and do thou search yonder hollow, Billington, for water. Alden go you with him, and keep an eye on his course."

The two men thus detailed plunged into the little hollow where indeed water should have been, but found only a pool so shallow and so sheltered as to have frozen quite solid; from this they brought some pieces of ice with which Allerton was so revived as to resume his course for another mile when he again broke down, while all the rest suffered so sensibly from thirst that they could not conceal their distress. Another halt was called, and all the younger men dispersed in various directions, while Allerton lay stretched upon the ground, his parched mouth open, and his eyes half closed. Beside him stood Standish, real concern upon his usually stern features, and in his hand a flask of spirits, from which the exhausted and fevered man turned loathingly.

"'T is as good schnapps as ever came through a still," said Standish wistfully; "and if thou couldst stomach it must surely do thee good."

[Pg 46]

"Water, water!" moaned Allerton.

"Ay, a little water mingled with it were better for thee just now," replied the Captain soothingly. "But sith water may not be had"—

"Ho, men! Water, water, a running brook!" cried Alden's hearty voice, as he came bursting his way through the thicket. "A running brook and a deer drinking at its spring."

"And why didst not shoot the deer instead of hallooing him away, thou great idiot?" demanded Standish in jesting anger, while, with such a rush as the animal sore athirst makes when he scents the water springs, all the men but three of the party burst through the undergrowth and found themselves in a lovely little dale so sheltered by hills and trees as to offer only a southern exposure to the weather. The snow of the previous day had already disappeared from this favored spot, and the little runlet with its welling spring sparkled free from frost among the long grasses, sweet-gale, and low shrubbery of the place; among these shrubs more than one dainty track leading from the forest to the runlet showed that here the deer came daily down to drink, and Alden in his heart felt he had done well not to lift a hand against the pretty creature he had surprised there. But neither the poetic Bradford, the polished Winslow, nor the meditative Howland paused any more than their brethren to note the beauty of the spot, but one and all plunging forward threw themselves upon their knees thrusting their faces into the water, and only pausing to draw breath and drink again.

"We there drank our first New England water, and with as much delight as ever we drunk drink in all our lives," wrote Bradford at a later day, and no doubt the memory of its refreshment lasted all his life.

[Pg 47]

All but three, and these three were Allerton who could not go, Standish who would not leave him, and Alden who would not leave Standish until the latter said,—

"But dost not see, John, that thou 'rt hindering me from quenching my thirst? Go thou and bring thy steel cap full of water for Master Allerton, and when I see him revived I'll go right gladly to lap water out of my hand among my three hundred."

"You are ever right, master," replied Alden briefly, and ran to do as he was bid.

An hour's rest and the food they had been unable to swallow while athirst, so refreshed the Pilgrims that even Allerton resumed the march with fresh courage and pursued it steadily until Billington, suddenly pausing and pointing down at a narrow path intersecting their own, said in a low voice to Standish who came close behind him,—

"Men's feet, not beasts. It will lead belike to a village."

"Ay," responded the captain briefly. "Look well to your weapons men, and light your matches, but let no man fire his piece without command." And drawing his sword, Standish strode eagerly forward close to Billington, who with all his faults was no coward, and blithely blew his match to a fiery glow, while glancing with his ferret eyes behind every tree and into every covert he passed.

Nothing, however, was to be seen, and suddenly the path came to an end in a large clearing covered with the stubble of maize recently gathered, while at the farther side stood several huts formed by a circle of elastic poles, the butts thrust in the ground and the tops bound together leaving a hole through which the smoke was invited to escape, and sometimes did so. The outside was protected by heavy mats of skins or braided of bark, while a more highly decorated one closed the doorway. All were evidently deserted, and after some cautious advances, the captain leaving three men on guard permitted the rest to extinguish their matches and explore the wigwams so curious to European eyes and so familiar to our own.

[Pg 48]

The interior of each showed a cooking hearth or platform framed of sticks and stones, and an assortment of wooden cooking utensils rudely carved. Among these the explorers noticed an English bucket without a bale and a copper kettle, both linking themselves in their minds to the traces of civilization already noted in the palisades and ruined cabin near which the store of corn had been found. Many baskets, both for use and ornament, were found, and sundry boxes curiously wrought with bits of clam shell, such as were used for wampum, and also little crab shells and colored pebbles, seemed to show the presence of women and their proficiency in the fancy work of their own time and taste. Several deer heads, one of them freshly killed, showed that the inmates of the wigwams were not far distant, and in a hollow tree by way of larder was hung the carcass of a deer, so well ripened that even Hopkins pronounced it "fitter for dogs than men."

From all these novelties and curiosities the Pilgrims selected a few of the prettier specimens to carry to their comrades on board, formally promising each other, as they had in case of the corn, to make due payment to the owners whenever they should be found, a promise most conscientiously performed at a later day.

By the time these matters were fully examined night was falling, and the Pilgrims, strong in their own good intentions and also in their weapons, encamped a short distance from the Indian village, and although keeping diligent guard all night saw nor heard naught to disturb their slumbers. Rousing betimes next morning, their first attention was given to prayers, and their next to making as good a breakfast as possible with the aid of some wild fowl and little birds shot during the previous day's march, and then the "meat and mass" which "hinder no man" thus attended to, they set forth in the direction of the river where they were to be picked up by the shallop.

[Pg 49]

Toward noon this point was nearly reached, in fact the clearing with the European cabin was close at hand, when Billington paused beside a mound carefully laid up with a border of beach stones and rounded high and smooth with sods, over which were laid hewn planks such as composed the cabin.

"It is another store of corn of choicer variety," declared he greedily; but Hopkins shook his head.

"It is the grave of some great sachem, or haply from these planks above him it is the grave of whoever built yon cabin and palisado."

"Belike there is treasure of some wrecked vessel which brought him hither, and which he stored away thus, until his rescue," said Rigdale.

"Should not we cautiously open it, Captain, and certify ourselves what is therein?" asked Bradford. "If it prove a grave we can but reverently cover it again, and if it be food, we need all that we can gather for food and seed."

"Ay, Master Bradford," replied Standish thoughtfully. "I like not meddling with graves for despite or for curiosity, but sith it much imports us to understand this country where we are to dwell, I think we may examine this mound, and, as thou sayest, if it be a grave of white man or of red, we will leave it as honorable as we find it."

[Pg 50]

Permission thus given, swords, bayonets, and hatchets were set to work, and in a few moments, the upper surface of sand and earth being removed, the explorers came upon a large bow, strong, tough, and beautifully carved and pointed.

"It is a sachem, and a mighty man of valor if he wielded this bow and shot these arrows," said Hopkins handling them respectfully.

"It seemeth to me like a white man's touch in this carving," said Winslow examining the bow.

"Here lieth a goodly mat, stained with red and blue in a fair pattern," said Bradford drawing it off the grave, as it now seemed certain to be.

"And what is this?" exclaimed Alden raising something which lay beneath the mat. Brushing away the mould that clung to it, this proved to be a piece of plank some twenty-seven inches in length, carefully smoothed upon one side, and painted with what seemed an heraldic achievement, while the top was cut into something of the fashion of a crest consisting of three spikes or tines.

"It is a hatchment over a noble's grave," cried Standish. "Say you not so, Master Winslow? See you, here is a shield, although I know not the device, and here is surely a crest."

"So it beseemeth, Captain," replied Winslow cautiously. "And to my mind this crest is a rude presentment of the lilies of France. See you now, Master Bradford!"

"Nay, I know naught of such toys," replied Bradford sturdily. "To my mind it looketh as much like Neptune's trident as aught else."

[Pg 51]

"Or like a muck-fork," suggested Rigdale in his broad Lancashire dialect, and with a coarse laugh resented by Standish, who, an aristocrat to his heart's core, ill brooked contempt of chivalrous emblems, especially by a rustic of his own shire.

"Well, let us get on with this business," said he peremptorily, and pulling away another mat he disclosed a store of bowls, plates, dishes, and such matters, all new

and beautifully carved and decorated.

"For the dead man to cook and eat on his journey to the happy hunting grounds, which the salvages place in the room of heaven," said Hopkins sanctimoniously. Beneath these lay another mat, and beneath this a crypt carefully bedded with dry white sand, upon which lay two packages carefully sewn up in sailcloth, the one more than six feet in length, the other barely three.

"The body of a man and child," said Bradford softly, as he helped to raise them from their pure white cell and lay them upon the earth.

"Open them with care, friends," said Standish uncovering his head. "It is some white man buried in such honor as they had knowledge of by those who loved him."

The many folds of canvas removed, there lay a strange sight before the Pilgrims' eyes. Inclosed in a great quantity of fine red powder, emitting a pungent but agreeable odor, lay the skeleton of a man, fleshless, except upon the skull, where clung the skin and a mass of beautiful hair, yellow as gold, and curling closely as if in life.

"Is the flesh turned to this red powder?" asked Alden fingering it dubiously.

[Pg 52]

"Dost know, Hopkins?" asked Standish, but the veteran shook his head.

"I have seen naught like this in all my life," confessed he. "See, here is a parcel at his feet done up in another bit of the old sail."

"Shall I open it, Captain?" asked Alden eagerly.

"Ay, an' thou wilt."

"T is clothes. A sailor's jerkin and breeches, a knife, a sail needle threaded with somewhat like a bowstring"—

"A deer's sinew. They still use it as our women do linen thread," said Hopkins taking it in his hand.

"And some bits of wrought iron," continued Alden turning them over.

"Ay, ay, ay, the poor fellow's chiefest treasures in his exile among the salvages," said Bradford gently.

"And still he was finding some comfort, you may well be sure," suggested Hopkins. "For it was a savage woman who laid him thus carefully to his rest, and yon package be sure is the bones of her child."

"Belike. Open it, John," said Standish briefly, and in effect the smaller package contained the same red and pungent powder encasing the bones of a little child, his head covered with a thinner thatch of the father's yellow curls, and the wrists, ankles, and neck surrounded with strings of fine white beads. Beside it lay a little bow and arrows ornamented with all the loving elaboration of Indian art.

"A boy, and his mother's darling, be she red or white, savage or Christian," said Bradford softly, as his thoughts flew to the baby boy left in Holland under charge of his wife Dorothy's parents.

"Yes," replied Standish gently. "Cover them reverently, and lay them in their grave again. God send comfort to that poor woman's heart."

[Pg 53]

"Certes they are no salvages," said Hopkins positively. "Never saw I yellow hair on

any but a white man's head, nor do red men wear breeches."

"Ay, he was a white man, but, as I opine, a Frenchman," declared Winslow thoughtfully.

"French surely, masters, for this is French," said Robert Cartier timidly, as he handled the pointed board. "These are indeed the lilies of France. I have seen them full oft."

"Say you so, lad?" asked Standish kindly. "Well, I suppose a man loves his country's ensign though he be naught but a Frenchman. There, place all as we found it, and let us go our ways."

[Pg 54]

CHAPTER V.

AN AWFUL DANGER.

"Found you a good burial place in yonder wilderness?" asked Dorothy Bradford of her husband the next morning as he sat beside her in their little cabin on the high quarter deck of the Mayflower.

"Ay truly, wife," replied the husband cheerily. "And much did we muse as to the remains so honorably interred. One of those we found was a little lad scarce as old as our baby John, and almost mine eyes grew wet in thinking of him so far away."

"Cruel that thou art to speak of him," exclaimed the young mother wildly, "when thou knowest I am dying for sight of the child and of home and my mother and all that I hold dear. I asked, hadst thou found a grave for poor me in this wilderness whither thou hast brought me to die."

"Nay, then, dear wife"—

"Mock me not with fair words, for they are naught. If I indeed am dear take me home to all I love. Here I have naught but thee, and one might as well love one of these cold gray rocks as thee."

"Have I not been kind and gentle to thee, Dorothy?" asked Bradford bowing his face upon his hands.

"Ay, kind enow," replied she sullenly. "And gentle, as brave men still must be to helpless women, but as for love! Tell me now, William Bradford, dost thou to-day love me as thou couldst have loved Alice Carpenter who flouted thee and married Edward Southworth instead? Nay, now, them darest not deny that thou dost love her still!"

[Pg 55]

"Peace, woman!" exclaimed Bradford raising his face, stern and pale as his wife had seldom seen it, and then as he marked her fragile features and woe-begone expression his tone changed to a gentle one. "Nay, Dorothy, thou wrongest thyself and me. I told thee of certain passages, past before I knew thee, because I would have no secret between my wife and me, and it is ill-done of thee to use my confidence as a weapon against me. And again thou wrongest me grievously; Edward Southworth's wife is naught to us; we twain are made one, and our lives are to run in the one channel while both shall last. It is for me to shape and hew that

channel, and for thee to see that its waters run clear and sweet, and, if you will, to plant posies on the banks. Let us never speak again of these matters, Dorothy, but rather turn our minds to making a fair home of the place whither God hath brought us, and doing our best by each other. Trust me, wife, thou shalt never have cause to complain for lack of aught I can win for thee or do for thee. Nay, Dorothy, my wife, weep not so bitterly!"

"Master Bradford, are you within?" asked John Howland's voice outside the door.

"Ay. What is thy errand, John?"

"The governor prays you to attend a Council convened in the great cabin."

"I will come," and laying his hand tenderly yet solemnly upon the bowed head of his wife Bradford murmured,—

"God help thee, Dorothy, God help us both!" and without waiting for a reply so left her.

[Pg 56]

In the cabin he found the principal men of the company seated around a table covered with charts, scrolls, and instruments of various sorts. Standish with a brief nod made room for the new-comer, and Carver in his measured tones explained: "Some of us were talking with Master Jones upon the question of seating ourselves by yonder river as he strongly adviseth, and I thought it best, Master Bradford, to call a general Council and settle the matter out of hand. Here are such charts as the Mayflower saileth by, and here is Master Smith's maps whereon we find this bay, and much of the coast beyond, laid fairly down. Master Hopkins counseleth a place called Agawam^[2] some twenty leagues to the northward, whereof he hath heard as a good harbor and fishing ground. Others say that we should explore yet farther along the shores of this land which Smith calleth Cape Cod, even as he nameth the whole district New England, which is verily a pleasant reminder for us, who in spite of persecution and harshness must still love the name of the land wherein we have left the bones of our sires."

"It needs not so many words, Governor," interrupted Jones rudely. "If ye will not be satisfied with the place ye saw yesterday, Coppin, our pilot, knoweth of another river with plenty of cleared land about it, and a harbor fit for a war-fleet to ride in, lying two or three leagues to the southwest of this place. What think you of taking your pinnace and going to look at it?"

"We will have in the pilot and hear his story for ourselves before we answer that query," said Carver with dignity, while Standish less temperately demanded,—

"And why, Master Jones, didst not tell us this at first rather than at last? Well nigh hadst thou forced us to land where we could if only to be rid of thy importunity."

[Pg 57]

"Why of course I had rather landed you here, and been off for home rather than to carry you further and be burdened with your queasy fancies," retorted Jones brutally. "I'm no man's fool I'd have thee to know my little fire-eater, and thou 'lt be no gladder to say good-by when the time comes than I."

"Here is Robert Coppin, friends," interposed Brewster mildly, as a hardy fellow entered the cabin and nodded with scant ceremony to the company.

"Sit thee down, Coppin," said Carver making room for the pilot beside him. "We would have thee show us upon the chart this river whereof Master Jones says thou knowest."

"Well, it should be hereaway methinks," replied Coppin bending over the map and tracing the coast line with a horny forefinger. "Is it yon? Nay, I am no scholar and steer not by a chart I cannot make out. I know the place when I see it, and I'll find it again if I'm set to it."

"Thou 'st been there, then?"

"Ay, we lay there three weeks when I sailed in the whaler Scotsman out of Glasgow, and more by token we named the place Thievish Harbor, for one of the Indians stole a harpoon out of our boat and away with it before we could reach him. 'T is a goodly river, broader and deeper than yon, and has a broad safe harbor."^[3]

"And why didst thou not tell us of this place sooner, Master Coppin, sith thou art our pilot?" sternly demanded Winslow.

"Well, master," returned Coppin slowly, and casting a furtive look at Jones who was draining a pewter flagon of beer, "I did tell Master Jones yonder, but he said he had liefer you seated here, and I was to hold my tongue"—

[Pg 58]

"Thou liest, knave," roared Jones menacing him with the flagon. "Thou liest in thy throat. Or if thou didst mumble some nonsense in mine ears, I paid no heed, doubting not that thou hadst told it all before to thy gossips among these pious folk. But, Governor, if it is your pleasure to seek out this place, I will lend you some of my men and set you forward at your own pleasure."

"Thanks for your good will, master," replied Carver coldly. "What say you, friends? Shall we try it?"

Murmurs and words of assent were heard on all sides, and Standish said,—

"My mind, if you will have it, is that this matter should be shrewdly pressed, and an end made of it as soon as may be. Our people dwindle daily; they who were well a se'nnight since are ill to-day, and may be dead to-morrow. Our provision waxeth short and poor, and be it once spent our good friend Jones will give us none of his we may be sure. We are no babes to be cast down by these things, nor frightened at facing them, but sure it is the part of wisdom to use our strength while it is left to us, and to explore this place, and any other whereof we may hear, with no farther delay. My counsel is to tell off a company of our soundest men, and set forth with Coppin this very hour, or as soon as we may."

"Well and manfully spoken, Captain Standish," replied Carver, and from more than one bearded throat came a grim murmur of approval, while Hopkins significantly added,—

[Pg 59]

"Let them who will, be treated as babes and set down here or there without their own consent. I for one am with thee, Captain, in the bolder course."

"If thou 'rt with me, thou 'rt with the governor and the brethren. I have no separate design, Master Hopkins," replied Standish coldly. "I did but give my mind subject to the approval of the rest."

"And so good a mind it seemeth to me, that I propose we follow it without delay. What say ye, friends?"

"I like the scheme so well that I fain would set forth this moment," said Bradford, over whom the depression of his interview with Dorothy still hung.

"Then in God's name let the thing go forward," said Carver solemnly raising his

hand. "And, it is my mind that such among us as have in some sort the charge of the rest should be the men to go upon this emprise, both because they are best fitted to judge what is needed, and because they will be hampered by no need of orders from headquarters. I propose, then, that leaving Elder Brewster in charge of those who remain aboard, the party should consist of me as your governor, and Captain Standish as our man of war, with Master Winslow, Master Bradford, and the Brothers Tilley from the Leyden brethren, to whom we will join Master Hopkins, Master Warren, and Edward Dotey of London."

"Will it please your excellency to add my name?" asked John Howland eagerly. "Well I wot I am not a principal man, but I have a strong arm, and would fain follow thee, if I may."

[Pg 60]

"A strong arm, a stout heart, and a ready wit," replied Carver looking kindly at his retainer. "And gladly do I number thee of the company. That then counts ten of us, and we shall have Thomas English in charge of the pinnace with John Alderton our seaman, and that methinks is enough."

"Enough to meet the danger if there be danger, and to divide the glory if there be glory," said Myles placidly, and Bradford softly and pensively replied,

"No such glory as thou didst win in Flanders, friend, but truly the 'glory that fadeth not away.'"

"Hm!" retorted Myles as softly, but pulling his red beard with a grim smile. "I'm not greedy, Will, and I'll leave those honors for thee."

"Nay," began Bradford rousing himself, but at that moment the whole brig was shaken, and the councilors startled from their dignity by a tremendous explosion which drove them from their seats, while the air was rent by yells and shrieks in various tones and degrees, and a stifling smoke and smell of gunpowder filled the cabin.

"The magazine has blown up!" shouted Standish. "Man the boats, and fetch the women and children!" And he rushed to his own cabin where Rose lay, not well enough to rise. But Bradford, seated near the companion-way, had already sprung down and presently returned leading by the ear a blubbering boy, his hands and face besmirched with gunpowder.

"Here is the culprit, Master Carver," announced he placing him in front of the governor.

"John Billington!" exclaimed Carver sternly. "Ever in mischief, what hast thou done now? Speak the truth, boy, or 't is the worse for thee."

[Pg 61]

"I did but take dad's gun from the hooks in our cabin, and she went off in my hands," whimpered the boy.

"Nay, 'twas more than that, for we heard not one but several explosions," persisted the governor.

"There was a keg of gunpowder under the bed," confessed the boy reluctantly, "and—and—some of it flew out upon the floor."

"Flew out without hands!" exclaimed Hopkins, but Carver raised his finger and asked mildly,—

"And what didst thou with the powder on the floor, John?"

"I made some squibs as father did last Guy Fawkes Day," muttered the boy.

"And dropped the fire among the loose powder on the floor, and so sent all off together!" broke in Hopkins again. "And if the keg had caught, thou wouldst have blown the ship to pieces! Thou unwhipt rascal, thou 'rt enough to corrupt a whole colony of boys. If my Bartholomew ever speaks to thee again I'll break every bone in his body, as I'd well like to thine, and will"—

"Nay, nay, Master Hopkins!" interposed the governor sternly. "It is never well to threaten what we cannot perform. We break not bones nor put to the torture in our new community; but, John Billington, I shall counsel thy father to take thee ashore and whip thee so soundly as shall make thee long remember that gunpowder is for thee forbidden fruit. Go, now, to thy cabin, and remain there till he comes, while I go to see what harm thou hast wrought."

"Mistress Carver would fain see the governor without delay," announced Lois, Mistress Carver's maid, in a quavering voice. "Jasper More was so frightened by the noise that he is in convulsions, and we know not but he is dying."

[Pg 62]

"Is Doctor Fuller here?" demanded another voice. "Mistress White would see him presently."

"And this is thy work, boy!" exclaimed Carver solemnly. "Go!"

And the boy crept miserably away, foreboding the whipping of which he was not disappointed.

[Pg 63]

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST ENCOUNTER.

So thoroughly were the bolder spirits among the Pilgrims impressed with the necessity of haste in finding an abiding place that by afternoon of the next day the pinnace was victualled and fitted for a voyage of ten days or more, and the adventurers ready to embark. To the twelve men previously named, all of whom were signers of the Constitution already drawn up to quell symptoms of insubordination on the part of Hopkins and others, were added Clarke and Coppin, acting as pilots, with the rank of master's mate, three sailors, and the master gunner, who, uninvited, thrust himself into the company in hopes of making something by traffic, or, as he phrased it, *trucking* with the Indians.

But hasten as they might many things delayed them, some of them as important as the death of Jasper More, an orphan in charge of the Carvers, and the birth of a son to Mistress White, whom his father and Doctor Fuller whimsically named Peregrine, latest of the Pilgrims, and first of native born American white men. When at last the shallop left the Mayflower's side it was in teeth of such bad weather as left the former expedition far in the shade, for not only was the northeast wind more bitter, but the temperature so low that the spray froze upon the rigging and the men's jerkins, turning them into coats of mail almost impossible to bend.

[Pg 64]

It was soon found impossible for Master English to lay his proposed course, and finally the Pilgrims resolved to land and encamp for the night, partly for the sake of the greedy gunner, who had turned so deadly sick that it was feared he would die,

and for Edward Tilley, who lay in the bottom of the boat in a dead swoon, while his brother John crouched beside him covered with John Howland's coat, which he declared was but an impediment to him in rowing.

"They should never have come. Had I guessed their unfitness I would have hindered it, but now alack it is too late, and I fear they have come to their death," said Carver in Bradford's ear, and indeed it was so. The brothers, never divided in body or soul since their birth, had as one man given their substance, their strength, their faith, to the common cause, and now were giving their lives as simply and as willingly as heroes ever will go to their death, so giving life to many.

The second night found them only as far as what we now call Eastham, and again building a "randevous" and gathering firewood, a difficult task at any time in this vicinity, for the trees were lofty and the underbrush annually burned away by the Indians to facilitate hunting. But it was finally done, as all things will be when such men set about them, the fire was built, the supper eaten, the prayer said, and the psalm sung, its rude melody rising from that wilderness to the wintry sky with the assurance of Daniel's song in the den of lions. Then all slept except Edward Dotey, to whom was committed the first watch, to last while three inches of the slow-match attached to his piece were consuming.

Striding up and down his appointed beat the young man hummed again the evening psalm, mildly anathematized the cold, peered into the blackness of the forest, and glanced enviously at his comrades sound asleep about the fire.

[Pg 65]

"T is all but burned," muttered he stooping to examine the match, and thrusting a fallen log back into the fire with his boot. But in that very instant upon the intense stillness of the night burst suddenly a discordant clamor, a confusion of horrible and unknown sounds, unlike, in simple Edward Dotey's mind, to anything possible this side of hell. Undaunted even thus, he answered the assault with a yell of quivering defiance, fired his matchlock into the air, and shouted at the top of his voice,—

"Arm! arm! arm! The fiend is upon us!"

All sprang to their feet alert and ready, and two or three pieces were shot off, but no foe appeared, and no reply was made to their shouts of defiance.

Dotey, questioned by Standish, was fain to confess he had seen nothing, and Coppin averred that he had more than once heard similar sounds upon the coast of Newfoundland, and that they were commonly thought to be the voices of sirens or mermaids who haunted lonely shores.

"If naught more imminent than mermaids is upon us I'll e'en go back to sleep," said Winslow in good-natured derision, while Standish, lighting his slow-match, said pleasantly to Dotey,—

"Lay thee down, man, and sleep. If thy fiend comes again I'll give account of him."

A few grim jests, a little laughter, and the camp was again quiet, until Standish, sure that no enemy could be at hand, resigned his watch to Howland, and he to English, until at five o'clock William Bradford aroused his comrades, reminding them that on account of the tide they must embark within the hour, and had still to breakfast.

[Pg 66]

A wintry fog, piercing in its chill, had closed down upon the camp, covering everything with a half-frozen rime, dropping sullenly like rain from such things as came near the fire, and stiffening into ice in the shade.

"I fear me our pieces will hang fire after this soaking," remarked Carver examining

his matchlock.

"It were well to try them before there is need," said Winslow firing his into the thicket behind the camp. His example was followed by several, until Standish good-humoredly cried,—

"Enough, enough, friends! Save powder and shot for the enemy if there be one. Such grapes grow not on these vines."

"Well, since the pieces are ready, and the twilight breaks, it were well for some of us to carry them and the other armor down to the boat, while the rest set out the breakfast," suggested Hopkins, always anxious to be stirring.

"Nay, 't is but poor soldiership to part from our arms even for so brief a space," said Winslow. "There be other matters, cloaks and haversacks, and such like, that can be carried, but the arms and armor should abide with them who wear them."

"Master Winslow may do as seemeth good in his own eyes, but my armor goeth now," retorted Hopkins in a belligerent tone. And loading himself with his breastplate, steel cap, matchlock, and bullet pouch, he strode obstinately away to the boat, lying some three or four hundred yards distant, waiting for the tide to float her.

[Pg 67]

Standish watched him disapprovingly, and, turning to Carver, he inquired significantly,—

"What saith our governor?"

"Let each man do as seemeth good to himself," replied Carver placably. "'T is of no great import."

"My snaphance goes nowhere out of reach of my right hand," announced Standish somewhat sharply, for the want of discipline grieved him, and Bradford, Winslow, and Howland silently indorsed both his action and his feeling. The courteous Carver said nothing, and did nothing, but a sailor seeing the governor's armor lying together, carried it down to the boat, thinking to do him a service.

Reaching the shore, Hopkins found the boat surrounded by a few inches of water, and, not caring to wade out to her, laid his load upon the shore, to wait until she fairly floated,—an example followed by the rest, some of whom strolled back to the camp, while others stood talking to those who had slept on board, until a summons to breakfast quickened their motions; but just as the laggards entered the randevous the same horrible noise that had so startled Edward Dotey burst forth again, while one of the sailors yet lingering by the shore came rushing up, shouting like a madman,—

"Salvages! Indians! They are men!" and, as if to prove his words, a shower of arrows came rattling into the randevous, one of them transfixing the lump of boiled beef laid ready for breakfast.

"Why didn't you bring up your pieces again, ye fools!" cried Standish angrily. "Run, now, and recover them before the enemy seizes them, while we men of wit cover your course."

Not waiting to dispute the style of this command, the unarmed men hastened to obey it, while Standish, taking position at the open entrance of the barricade, fired his shaphance in the direction where the sailor pointed; Bradford followed suit; but as Winslow and Howland stepped forward Standish held up his hand,—

[Pg 68]

"Hold your fire, men, until we see the foe, and Bradford load again with all speed! We must hold the randevous at all odds, for here is half our stuff, and our lives depend upon not losing it. Hasten ye laggards! Run Tilley! Run men!"

"He is spent!" cried John Howland, throwing down his piece and dashing out into the open, where he seized John Tilley round the waist and half carried, half dragged him into the inclosure.

"They will seize the shallop!" cried Carver, and springing on the barricade, heedless of his own exposure, he shouted to those in the boat,—

"Ho, Warren! English! Coppin! Are you safe and on your watch?"

"Ay, well! All is well!" cried the rough voices of the seamen, and Warren's manly tones added, "Be of good courage, brethren!"

"And quit yourselves like men," muttered Standish, his snaphance at his shoulder, his eager eyes scanning the covert.

Three shots from the pinnace rang bravely through the wood, and then came a hail, —

"Ho, comrades, bring us a light! We have no fire to set off our pieces!"

"Their matches are not alight!" exclaimed Howland, and snatching a brand from the camp-fire he again dashed out, down the wooded slope, and splashing mid-leg deep through the freezing brine, he gave the brand into Warren's hand, then rushed back as he came, the arrows whistling around his head and two sticking in his heavy frieze jerkin.

[Pg 69]

"Well done, John! well done!" cried Carver clapping the young man on the shoulder as, breathless and glowing, he stooped to pick up his matchlock. "The sight of such valor will daunten the Indians more than a whole flight of bullets."

And in fact there was for a moment a lull in the enemy's movements, but rather of rage than dismay, for the savage outcry burst forth the next moment with more ferocity than ever, and as it died away a single voice shouted in a tone of command some words, to which the rest responded by such a yell as later on curdled the blood of the hapless settlers at Deerfield and other places.

"Aha! There is a leader, there!" growled Standish, his eyes glittering and his strong teeth clenched. "Let him show himself!"

As if in answer to the wish a stalwart figure leaped from behind a large tree to the shelter of a smaller one, about half a gunshot from the camp.

"That's your man, Captain!" exclaimed Howland, who stood next him.

"Ay, leave him to me!" growled Standish. "Ha!" for an arrow well and strongly aimed hit squarely above his heart, and rebounded from the coat of mail Rose had insisted upon his putting on.

"For thee, wife!" murmured the captain, and fired.

Bark and splinters flew from the tree where the crown of the warrior's head had showed for an instant, but a shriek of derisive laughter told that no further harm was done. Standish, with a grim smile, reloaded his snaphance, while two more arrows vigorously flew, one piercing the right sleeve of his doublet, the other aimed at his face, which he avoided by moving his head. Then for one instant a dusky arm was

[Pg 70]

seen reaching over the shoulder for another arrow, and in that instant the snaphance rang cheerily out, the arm fell with a convulsive movement, and a piercing cry rang through the wood, followed by the pattering of many moccasoned feet, as dusky shadows slipped from tree to tree, and were lost in the dim recesses of the forest.

"They are routed! They fly!" cried Howland firing his piece into a rustling thicket.

"Yes, that last cry was the retreat," said Standish half regretfully plucking the arrow from his sleeve. "The chief finds his courage cooled by a broken elbow. I doubt me if ever he speed arrow again."

"Body o' me!" continued he examining the shaft in his hand. "See you, John, 't is pointed with naught but a bird's talon, curiously bound on with its own sinews. To be scratched to death by a fowl were but a poor ending for a man that has fought Alva!"

"Pursue them, Captain, pursue and terrify, but kill not, if you can help it," ordered Carver eagerly. "Let the heathen know that they are but men, and that the Lord of Hosts is on our side."

"Forward then, men! At the double-quick! Run!" and, waving his sword, Standish rushed after the flying savages, followed by all but Carver, English, and the sailors who stayed to guard the randevous and the pinnacle. But even as he ran Myles muttered, perhaps to the sword Gideon,—

"Beshrew me if I see how I am to hurl yon text in the heathen's teeth, sith we have no common tongue, and they will not stop for parley! A good man, and a gentle, but no soldier, is our governor!"

[Pg 71]

As might have been expected, the Pilgrims, in their heavy clothing and armor, proved no match for the Indians in a foot-race, and after pursuing them for about a quarter of a mile Standish called a halt, and ordered his men to raise a shout of mingled triumph and defiance, followed by a volley of three, each three reloading as the next fired.

The victory thus asserted, and the foe offering no response, the little army retired in good order upon the randevous, where they only tarried long enough to pick up the rest of their possessions and make a sheaf of arrows, pointed not only with eagle's claws, but with the tips of deer's horns and bits of brass and iron gathered from the various European vessels touching for provisions or traffic at these shores.

It was indeed to the treachery of one of these commanders that the present attack of the savages was due. Thomas Hunt, visiting these shores in 1614 to procure a cargo of dried fish for Spain, recompensed the kindness and hospitality of the savages by cajoling four-and-twenty of them on board his ship and carrying them as slaves to Malaga, where he sold several, the rest being claimed for purposes of conversion by the Franciscan Friars of those parts.

One of these captives, named Tisquantum, or Squanto, escaped from Hunt, and remained for a while in England, where he was kindly treated and learned the language with something of the mode of life. He was brought back to Cape Cod as an interpreter by an adventurer named Dermer, and finally returned to his own people, who were so enraged by his story of Hunt's treachery and cruelty, that they resolved by way of revenge to sacrifice the first white men who fell into their hands, and had they proved themselves better men than the Pilgrims would have inflicted not only death, but the most cruel torments upon them.

[Pg 72]

The goods and weapons on hoard, Carver, by a word, gathered the men around him

upon the sands, and in a few fervent and hearty words returned thanks to the God of battles for His aid and protection, invoking at the same time protection and counsel for the farther dangers of the exploration. Then embarking with all speed the shallop was pushed off and flew merrily on before the strong east wind.

CHAPTER VII.

CLARKE'S ISLAND.

"And now, Master Coppin, let us bear up for Thievish Harbor without more delays," said Carver as the boat settled to her work, and the men into their places.

"Ay, ay, master," responded the pilot cheerily. "And a good harbor and a good seat shall you find it in spite of its ill-favored name."

But as the day went on the stormy sky lowered yet more and more blackly, the wind, shifting between east and north, swooped in angry gusts across the black waters, or blew in so fierce a gale that the shallop scarcely bore her close-reefed sails, and more than once careened so as to ship alarming seas. The air, filled with sleet and icy snow, cut like a knife through the thickest clothing, and again Edward Tilley, swooning with exhaustion and cold, lay lifeless in the bottom of the boat, sadly watched by his brother in hardly better plight and by Carver, who, like the father of a family, carried all his children in his heart.

About the middle of the afternoon these skirmishes of the storm concentrated in one furious and irresistible attack, before which even the hardy sailors lowered their heads and clung to whatever lay nearest, while Clarke, who was steering, suddenly reeled violently against the bulwark, and recovering himself with a fearful oath seized an oar and thrusting it out astern shouted,—

"We be all dead men! The rudder has broke, and no man can steer in such a sea as this with an oar!"

"Two men may, so they be men and not cowards!" shouted John Alderton in retort, and springing to the stern he thrust out his own oar, calling to a comrade,— "Here, Cornish Jim, come you and help me, and so long as ash blades and stout arms hold we two will steer the craft."

"Good cheer, men!" hailed Coppin from the bows where he was on the lookout. "I see the harbor straight ahead! We are all but in! Carry on, carry on with your sails there, Clarke, and let us make the haven before the gale rises to its height."

"She'll never carry another inch of canvas," expostulated English as the mate shook out a reef in the mainsail, but Coppin and Clarke were now in command, since only they professed to know the coast, and the warning was unheeded, especially as the wind had for a moment lulled or rather drawn back for a more formidable spring, swooping down as the last reef point was loosed with a force that snatched the great sail from the men's hands, and buried the nose of the shallop deep under water. The sail cracked and filled until it was tense as iron, but the honest Holland duck could not give way, and it was the mast that had to go, breaking into three pieces and falling overboard with a splintering crash. Nor was this the worst, for with the mast went the great sail with all its hamper of blocks and cordage, which, half in and half

out the boat, threatened to capsize and swamp her before it could be cut away.

"Save the sail, men!" cried English through all the hubbub. "As good lose all as lose our sail! Gather it in and stow it as best we may. Keep her before the wind, you lubbers! Handle your oars for your lives!"

[Pg 75]

For now the great boat, losing her sail, must depend upon oars, and with two men at each, and Alderton and the Cornish giant steering as best they might against a sea howling and leaping like wild beasts around them, the shattered craft drove on past the headland of Manomet, steering straight for the deadly rocks off the Gurnet's Head, which Coppin spying from the bows, he uttered a cry of dismay, shouting,—

"The Lord be merciful to our sinful souls, for I never saw this place before!"

"Breakers ahead!" shouted Clarke. "Beach her, Alderton! Run her ashore on yon headland! We that can swim may save ourselves! Beach her, I say!"

"And I say no such coward thing," retorted Alderton. "About with her, men! Row, row for your lives! Bend down to it! So! Pull, pull! I see a channel ahead and smooth water! Hold on here, Jim, till I get out another oar, this cracks! Now then! Yeo-ho! Here we go past the reef!"

And weathering Brown's Island and the Gurnet Rocks, the brave fellow steering more by instinct than sight, for darkness had fallen with the storm, the shallop struck the channel then dividing Saquish from the Gurnet, flew through it like a hunted creature, and forging past the north headland of a small densely wooded island found herself in calm water close under its lee.

"There, men, ye are safe, thanks to stout hearts and arms and good ashen blades!" exclaimed Alderton drawing his first full breath since seizing the steering oar.

"Thanks to God Almighty who still giveth His servants the victory," amended Carver, who had toiled with the sturdiest.

[Pg 76]

"And now, where are we and what is to do next?" demanded Standish clenching his blistered hands.

"We are between two shores, maybe islands both, maybe the lee shore is the main," replied Coppin peering through the darkness. "And more I know not."

"And I for one am minded to get ashore and see if there be stuff for a fire and shelter, whatever name the place may hold," cried Hopkins dashing the drops of salt water from his face and beard.

"And I," added Standish heartily. "What say you, Master Carver? Shall we land and make some sort of randevous upon the shore?"

"The place may be full of salvages, who, drawn by the light of a fire, can come upon us unaware," replied Carver hesitatingly.

"As well risk another encounter as to perish here of cold and exhaustion," suggested Winslow.

"Safety most often lies on the side of courage," declared Standish sententiously.

"And Master Tilley will die if naught be done for him," pleaded Howland, and to this consideration Carver at once yielded his careful scruples.

"Ay, John, thou 'rt right to mind me of that," said he. "Some of us will go ashore and

make a fire, whereat to comfort those who are overborne by cold and weariness, and some shall keep the boat until the first are refreshed, and so hold watch and watch."

"And I will be of the first watch ashore," cried Clarke, the master's mate; "for I'd twice liefer meet all the salvages of the Indies than to freeze like a clod, so here goes." And stepping upon the gunwale he made a spring in the dark, alighting upon a slippery rock and measuring his length upon the sand. Nothing daunted, however, he grasped a handful of sand in each fist, as if his prostration had been voluntary, and springing to his feet cried in a braggadocio voice,—

[Pg 77]

"I seize this land for King James of England and for myself."

"Thyself!" growled Coppin, jealously. "We'll call it Clarke's Land, then; for truly 't is all thou 'rt ever likely to be master of."

"Nay, then, thou 'rt welcome to the six feet they'll give thee after thou 'rt hung," retorted Clarke, and the sailors chuckled at the jest, while the Pilgrims gravely arranged which watch should first land, and which keep the boat.

Peering around in the obscurity, the pioneers soon found a sheltered nook close under the bluff, and built their fire and made their camp very near the spot where a little wharf now lies, and where generation after generation of their children has stood to meditate, to dream, to drink in the glory of summer seas and skies, or beneath the August moon to whisper in each others ears the old, old story, never so fresh and never so real as it has come to some of them on the shores of Clarke's Island.

No rosy dreams, no moonlit passages were theirs however, who in that stormy December night first trod that pleasant shore, but rather the sternest realities of life and death, as with numb and icy fingers they struck a light and sheltered the feeble blaze loth to catch upon the wet twigs and leaves hastily collected.

"Either there are no Indians or this is an island too small for hunting," said Hopkins as he groped in the thicket at the top of the bluff for small wood.

"And how know you that?" inquired Howland who helped him.

[Pg 78]

"By this undergrowth that we are gathering, lad. The Indians burn it off year by year in the haunts of the deer, so that they may course there freely, but here thou seest are plenty of old and dry twigs."

"The better for our fire," returned Howland philosophically, not so much interested at that moment in the habits of Indians as in providing for Elizabeth Tilley's father.

The more cautious brethren in the pinnace meantime had anchored and made things as snug as possible on board, but as the fire blazed up, and one after another on shore showed signs of its genial influence, the dangers of abandoning the boat grew less and less formidable, until Standish, rubbing his hands and turning to toast the other side of his person, cried exultingly,—

"Aha, I am warm! I have seen the fire!"

"So have I seen it, and here goes to feel it!" cried Coppin jumping as far toward land as he could, and splashing the rest of the way, for he had sulkily remained on board when Clarke leaped ashore and claimed the island.

"Methinks the example is good if the manner be uncourteous," said Winslow wistfully.

"Ay," replied Carver a little annoyed by Coppin's action, although he claimed no authority over the rough fellow. "I was just about to say that it were as well that we landed, taking our arms with us and standing on our guard, for truly we are perishing here."

The permission calmly waited for was thankfully received, and in a few moments the whole party was gathered about the now jubilant fire which, fed with cedar logs, sent up clouds of perfumed smoke to float like incense among the crests of the shivering parent trees.

The next morning broke calm and 'sunshining,' and the Pilgrims, renewing their fire, offered a solemn prayer of thanksgiving and confidence, and sat down to breakfast.

[Pg 79]

After this came an exploration, which showed the small size and compact nature of the island, as well as its total lack of inhabitants. This tour was followed by an informal council about the fire, wherein it was resolved to remain during the day, which was Saturday, upon the island, drying and cleaning their weapons, rigging a temporary mast for the shallop, baling and drying her, and restoring by rest and comfort some measure of strength to the feebler members of the party. Also, and this not the least consideration, the next day being Sunday, they would thus be prepared to observe it with that decency and recollection which were part of their religion.

The plan arranged, all set heartily to work to carry it out, the sailors going aboard to bale the boat, and Clarke and Alderton undertaking to fit the new mast. A proud young cedar, growing straight and tall among his slender admirers, was soon found, and as the white man's axe for the first time since cedars grew upon Clarke's Island bit into the heart of one of their number, we well might fancy that, mingling with the east wind and the sound of the surf on Salthouse Beach rose the echo of the dirge, startling the sailors of Egean shores, long before,—

"Pan is dead! Great Pan is dead!"

Late in the afternoon when all the work was done, and the men sat or lay around the fire enjoying the Sabbatical repose long distinguishing the New England Saturday evening, Carver, Standish, Bradford, and Winslow climbed the hill rising sharply above their camping-ground, and paused by what is now called Sunset Rock to look about them.

[Pg 80]

"Clarke's Island is but a small addition to King James's territory," said Winslow with his subtle smile, as he glanced over the ninety acres of woodland lying around him.

"Our own England is not very large," replied Carver quietly, "but she hath long arms."

"And I," cried Standish gayly, "am but a little fellow, and yet am not in the way of calling upon bigger men to protect me! Despise not the day of small things, Master Winslow, albeit you carry your head some inches higher than mine."

"There is a great rock showing above the scrub oaks to the north," said Bradford pointing in that direction. "Let us climb it and see what lieth beyond."

"Have with you, brother!" responded Standish, and forcing their way through the stunted growth covering this higher and bleaker portion of the island the four men soon stood at the base of an enormous boulder about thirty feet in height, brought hither in some glacial overflow of the forgotten years.

On the southern side a deep crevice, worn by many rains, offered a foothold, even as it does to-day, and in a moment the four Pilgrim chiefs stood upon the summit and

looked about them.

The sun was setting in lavish gorgeousness, while in the deep blue vault arching overhead tiny points of light showed where the stars waited impatiently to take their places and glorify the night.

The sea, almost black in its depth of color, dashed mournfully upon the rocks fallen from the high northern and western bluffs, and across the wintry flood lay the shores of what was to be Duxbury, running out at the south into a peninsula, terminating in a bold summit. This was Captain's Hill, and the Captain standing there looked at it all unconsciously and said:—

[Pg 81]

"Yonder is a spot that might be made into a goodly hold against any foe. With a piece or two properly mounted on that fair height, and a palisado cutting off the headland from the main, it would fall into as pretty a little fortalice as could be asked."

"Too small a seat for our whole company, howbeit," said Carver scrutinizing the spot.

"And we must seek a river with commodious harbor for our fishing fleet," added Winslow, not knowing the capacities then of Jones's River and Green Bay, hard by Captain's Hill, where he was to spend the honorable evening of his days.

"Fishing!" echoed Standish contemptuously. "It is like those good dry-salters and drapers of London town, who have helped out our enterprise, to expect us, landing on this barren shore in the depth of winter, to fall on fishing before we break our fast, or build a shelter for our wives and children. Our first work is to subdue the salvages, to cut down the forest, to build houses, and plant crops. If we reach the fishing by this day twelvemonth we shall have done well."

"I fear me the Adventurers of whom you speak so slightingly will hardly be of your mind," replied Winslow coldly.

"Then let them come over here and collect their profits for themselves," retorted Standish. "And well would I like to see Thomas Weston and Robert Cushman, with some of those smug London traders who think to buy good men's lives and swords for the price of a red herring, set down here to battle with the frost and snow, and sea and swamps, not to mention the salvages. We should hear their tune change from 'Fish, fish, fish!' I warrant me."

[Pg 82]

But at this speech Winslow, even more of a diplomatist than a soldier, looked grave, and Bradford, in whose harmonious character valor was ever in accord with reason, laid a hand upon the little Captain's shoulder, and said affectionately:—

"Thy courage is still so keen, Myles, that when thine enemies are put to flight thou 'rt tempted to turn upon thy friends! Doubtless the Adventurers, mostly men of peace, traders, if thou wilt have it so, yet none the worse for that, do somewhat fail to fathom the perils of this our undertaking; still no man is to be condemned for an honest misconception, and these same traders have freely risked their money to furnish us forth. We, too, had never stood on this rock to-night had not those men thrust their hands deep into their pockets, and is it out of reason for them to ask to see some return for their money as soon as may be?"

"Not out of reason for traders, mayhap," replied Myles obstinately. "I would that we had come at our own charges altogether."

"Those of us who had a little money were not enough to furnish forth those who had

none," interposed Carver gravely; "and we have none too many hands as it is to do the work laid out for us."

"Thou 'rt right, as thou mainly art, Governor," replied Standish good-humoredly; "and haply 't is well that my hot head is linked with thy cool one."

[Pg 83]

"We were all ill sped, lacking thy skill and valor in war, Captain," replied Carver kindly, and after a moment's meditative silence he slowly added,—

"It ill befits finite man to intrude upon the Councils of infinite wisdom, and yet it seemeth borne strangely in upon my mind that God hath carefully chosen His weapons for the mighty conquest He hath set Himself to make in this wilderness, and, if I may say it without grieving your modesty, brethren, I seem to see in you, standing with me here, three chosen leaders.

"A man of war, trained from childhood in martial tactics, and in the use of weapons, and of a singular courage and determination, you, Standish, are the strong right arm of the body corporate.

"And you, Winslow, bred among courtiers and statesmen, subtle of intellect, ready of speech, cool of temper, and sound in judgment, in you I see our ambassador, our spokesman, our counselor and adviser, our Chrysostom of the golden mouth."

"And Bradford," jealously demanded Standish laying a hand upon the arm of the future governor, for whom he ever entertained a mighty affection.

Carver turned and looked full into Bradford's steadfast eyes upraised to his, and his own gaze became rapt and well-nigh prophetic. When he spoke again it was in a lower and less spontaneous voice.

"The arm strikes, the tongue parleys, but both must be in accord with the brain, or all is lost. The father of his people must think for all, plan for all, encourage, restrain, cherish, discipline all. Standish for the camp, Winslow for the council, but for you, Bradford, the sleepless vigil, the constant watch, the self-forgetting energy, whose fruits are safety, honor, and prosperity, for those who lean on you."

[Pg 84]

"But, dear friend, it is you who still must be our governor, our reliance, our father!" exclaimed Bradford eagerly, but Carver turned away and began the steep descent.

Those whom he left looked earnestly in each other's faces, yet said nothing. A future grander, and more terrible than they had imagined, seemed suddenly defined before them, and each dimly felt the burden and the honor of his own part therein laid upon him.

As thus they stood, three noble figures clearly defined against the amber of the evening sky, Richard Warren and Stephen Hopkins appeared upon the crest of the hill and paused to look about them.

"See yonder figures, looking as cut out of stone, and set up for idols in the high places of Baal," sneered Hopkins. "These be our masters, Warren, if so be we yield to them."

Warren, a genial, honest gentleman of London, who had thrown his entire patrimony, as well as his earnest soul, into this enterprise, shook his head and laughingly replied,—

"Thou 'rt ever too jealous, Stephen, for thine own comfort. Our brethren, all unconscious that they make so fine a show up there, are giving their best and their all

to the common weal, and so are we. If their best, chance to be gold, and ours but iron, think 'st thou God will value the one offering above the other? I trow not man, and I am for my part well content as matters stand."

"Nay," persisted Hopkins, "but mark you how constantly they slight us and Dotey, because we are out of England, and not of Holland, and so not of Robinson's congregation?"

[Pg 85]

"Nay," replied Warren pacifically; "I had liefer mark the many times we are called to Council and to share in whatever good may be toward. And mark you, Hopkins, you and I are the fathers of many children, and those men have none as yet, and this land whose foundations must be laid in our blood, if need be, shall become the inheritance of those we leave behind. Please God, my five girls, coming hither so soon as I have a roof to shelter them, shall become the mothers of soldiers and statesmen, maybe of kings, for who knoweth what is to come when the seed sown in tears shall be reaped in joy!"

Hopkins answered only by a contemptuous sniff, and the triumvirate descending from their pedestal, all six men returned amicably to the camp.

[Pg 86]

CHAPTER VIII.

BURYING HILL.

Much has been said and written of the Sunday spent by the advanced guard of Pilgrims upon Clarke's Island, and a very modern tradition points to the great rock in the centre of the island as the scene of their devotions. Nothing, however, is less probable than that this handful of men, with no pastor or even presiding elder among them, should leave their encampment under the bluff, and the neighborhood of their boat, to travel inland to this bleak and exposed boulder, there to set one of their number to exhort the rest. Carver certainly was a deacon of Robinson's congregation, yet this office gave him no spiritual authority, but rather the duties of a warden in the mother church, nor was the governor a man to assume any authority not his own; so although he led the informal service held in that sheltered nook, upon the shore, Winslow and Bradford and Hopkins were the chief speakers, while John Howland in his melodious and powerful voice raised a psalm that made the welkin ring, and Richard Warren stoutly cried Amen to all the rest.

Standish, his arms folded and one hand resting upon the hilt of Gideon, stood a little apart, his head reverently bared in the prayers, and with a rough attempt at melody echoing Howland's psalm; but during the exhortations or prophesyings, he strode softly up and down the beach, or mounting upon the bluff swept sea and land with the keen glances of eyes that nothing escaped. Occasionally a fervent word would be sped in his direction from one or another, and many a prayer, as before and after that hour, was urged that this bulwark of the church against her secular foes might become her obedient son. When thus exhorted or prayed for the captain's face became a study, sometimes so impenetrably obtuse, sometimes so rigid in its obstinacy, sometimes touched with shrewd amusement, and sometimes moved to tender sympathy, but never to conviction or even doubt, and as the years went on, those who loved him most, even Bradford and Alden and Brewster, ceased all effort to bring this precious comrade into their own fold, but learned to accept him as he

[Pg 87]

was.

Monday broke with clear and gracious skies and a sea only pleasantly rippled with its late commotion. Refreshed and cheered by their long rest the Pilgrims were early afoot, and at a good hour the cleaned and furbished arms were packed in the shallop, the sail, bent to its new mast, was unfurled to its fullest spread, and the eighteen men, each at his own post, eager and hopeful. It had been resolved to proceed no farther in search of Coppin's harbor, which afterward proved to be Cut River and the site of Marshfield, but to explore the landlocked harbor lying before them.

Carefully sounding as she went, the shallop felt her way through the Cow Yard or Horse Market, around Beach Point, and having the flood tide with her rode triumphantly over Dick's Flat and Mother White's Guzzle, until finally, with furled sails and her head to the wind, she lay within a biscuit toss of the shore.

"See, there are cleared fields and a river full of fish, and all things ready to our hand," cried Howland excitedly.

[Pg 88]

"Bring her up to the beach, then, and we will land and explore," replied Carver, smiling at the young man's enthusiasm.

"There is a rock a few rods ahead set ready for a steppingstone," announced Howland standing in the bows.

"Lay her up to it, men," growled English, and in a moment the bows of the shallop caressingly touched the cheek of that great gray Rock, itself a pilgrim, as has well been said, from some far northern shore, brought here by the vast forces of Nature, and laid to wait in grand patience, until the ages should bring it a name, a use, and a nation's love and honor.

"Jump then, lad, and see thou jump not five fathom deep, as thou didst out there in mid-seas!" cried Hopkins, and Howland leaping lightly from the boat to the rock cried in his blithe voice,—

"And I seize this mainland for King James, even as Master Clarke did yon island."

"Only thou dost not claim it for thine own under the king as he did," replied Coppin.

"It seemeth to me," said Carver as he stepped on shore, "as if this place were fairly laid down on Smith's map that we were studying. Think you not so, Master Winslow?"

"Ay, I believe it is the place he hath called Plymouth after our English town."

"Why, then, if we are minded to tarry here, it were well befitting that we should continue the name, for our Plymouth brethren cheered and comforted us marvelously in our sad outseting," replied the governor, and Bradford added,—

[Pg 89]

"They were in very truth kinder than our own."

"'T is a better harbor than English Plymouth can boast," said Coppin turning to survey the bay.

"Harbor! English Plymouth's harbor is no better than a slaughter pen! Not less than ten good ships were pounded to pieces there in the last year," said the sailor Alderton.

"Yes, 't is worse than the Goodwin Sands, if that can be," echoed English.

"While here is a haven most artificially contrived for safety, with its overlapping arms and islands," cried Clarke.

"Ay, the islands, Clarke's Island above all, are such as all England cannot match!" jeered Coppin, while Howland, followed by the rest, began to climb the bluff in front of them, choosing almost by instinct the easy ascent around its base, now known as Leyden Street. A little above the future site of the Common house they paused to take breath and to consult.

"Yes, here is cleared land enow for any crop we can plant in a year to come," said Dotey, looking approvingly along Cole's Hill.

"And I hear the tinkle of water falling upon water," cried Bradford gazing down toward the outlet of Town Brook. "There must be springs yonder."

"But fuel would needs be lugged on men's backs further than I for one could fancy," grumbled Hopkins glancing at the woods nowhere very near.

"We can scarce hope for arable land and dense forest in one plot of ground," remarked Winslow dryly.

"Let us march into the land and explore it fully," suggested Carver. "Every man should carry his piece with lighted match, but the rest of the gear may well be left in the boat under charge of the shipmen. Master Gunner I advise thee to stay behind also. If we meet with the Indians and there is any opening for trucking I promise thee thy full share and advantage."

[Pg 90]

"He who stays by the stuff shall share with him who goeth to the battle," quoted Standish, who was well versed in what may be called the military history of the Bible.

"'T is a venerable law, Captain, and out of a faultless code," replied Carver reverently.

"Come on, then, brethren!" cried Hopkins striding up the steep face of Burying Hill. The rest followed, and on the crest stopped to admire the magnificent view spread out in the clear light of the wintry morning.

"Yon is a sightly point for a town," said Warren pointing to Watson's Hill.

"Too far from the shore," replied Carver.

"And from those tinkling springs for whose water I already am athirst," added Bradford.

"Hm! hm!" growled Standish plucking at his beard and pacing to and fro; "here is the place for a stronghold, Master Carver, just here where we are standing. See you now, from a breastwork thrown up hereabout and mounted with a minion or two a man could sweep off an army. 'T is but a pretty shot to the rock whereon we landed, and where any but a fool would choose to land, since it is the only dry-shod landing on the beach; and here we have Bradford's springs well in range, and this ascent by which we have clomb thither. Why, it is a little Gibraltar ready to our hand. Then if the salvages approach by land, from yon fair hill which Warren advises, our heavier guns will meet them half way, and our smaller metal mow them down at close quarters. We are well set forth in gun-metal, Governor, for I saw to it myself; not only minions, but sakers and falcons and bases, not to mention each man's piece, which I fain would have had all snaphances like mine own. Ay, we are well armed, and here is our fortalice."

[Pg 91]

"But not to my mind our dwelling, Captain," replied Carver pleasantly. "Mind you, half our company are women and children, and it were hard for them to be cooped up in a fort or to descend and climb again this shrewd ascent whenever they were athirst. I say not but that a fortification here were admirable when we come at it, but methinks our dwellings were better placed under its protection than within it."

"Along this course we have just trod from the rock," suggested Winslow.

"And tending toward the springs," added Bradford with a smile.

"Nay, man, come and drink since thou 'rt so sore athirst," cried Hopkins clapping him on the back. "If 't were a spring of Hollands now, or even a double strike of English ale, I'd race thee for it, but never yet did I find my stomach clamor for cold water."

"'T is very delicate water for all that," declared Bradford as the two men, stumbling down the steep descent of Spring Lane, reached and stooped to drink of the spring at its foot.

"Too delicate for me," retorted Hopkins; "fitter for maids than men."

"Well, beer is brewed of water as well as of barley and hops," declared Bradford; "and thou 'st only to raise the grain and this fair spring will turn it into beer for thee at thy pleasure."

[Pg 92]

"And here be blackberry briars for my dame to brew her wild-berry wines, and lo you now, this is sassafras whose roots are worth their weight in gold to the chirurgeons, and these are strawberry leaves."

"And we have seen cherry and plum stocks in abundance the way we came," declared Bradford as the rest of the party straggled down the hill.

"Excellent sand and gravel for building," said Warren crumbling the soil around the spring. "Ay, and here is clay to shape into pots and pans when the goodwives have broken all they bring."

"Methinks it hath a look of fuller's clay, and so is almost as well for us as soap," said Howland taking up some and washing his hands in the brook. "There, now, see you its use!"

"Have with you, friend," cried Winslow, daintiest of the pioneers. "Surely cleanliness being next to godliness tendeth somewhat to the same satisfaction!"

The exploration, carried as far as Eel River at the south and Murdoch's Pond westerly, lasted until night, when the Pilgrims bivouacked on the shore, supping merrily on some great clams dug by the sailors and wild fowl shot by Howland and Dotey. Before they slept under the sheltering brow of Cole's Hill it was pretty well decided that Plymouth, as they began at once to call it, should be their permanent dwelling-place, more especially as in their day-long explorations they had seen no natives or even their dwellings, and the site seemed for some reason abandoned to their occupancy.

But the joyous return with good news to those on board the Mayflower was turned into grief and dismay by the tidings awaiting the explorers.

Dorothy Bradford was dead. How it could have happened, or just when, no one knew, but on the very day after her husband's departure she had gone quietly on deck while the rest of the company were at supper and never was seen again; nor till

[Pg 93]

the sea gives up its dead shall any know the story of that poor overwrought soul's last fierce struggle and defeat.

Nor can we speak of the young husband's anguish, and it may be self-reproach, in that awful hour. He speaks not himself of this matter in his journal, save in briefest words; nor dare we intrude upon such matters as lie between a man and his God. But this we may say, that as Jacob, wrestling with the angel and overcoming, went halting all his days from the wound of that strange conflict, so Bradford's face when he again took his place among his fellows told of years forever consumed in one terrible struggle.

[Pg 94]

CHAPTER IX.

ROSE.

"Myles!"

"Ay, sweetheart, here am I."

"A little drink—nay, I want it not. I was dreaming thy cousin Barbara was making a sallet, and I was fain to taste it, it looked so cool and fresh,—and I wakened. I would well like some sallet, Myles."

"As soon as the day dawns, my Rose, I will go and look for herbs. I marked some sorrel on the hill yester e'en, albeit something dry and sere."

"Why doth the ship roll so sorely, Myles?"

"Thou 'rt not on shipboard, child, but in our little hospital here ashore. Mindest thou not how thou didst mourn and cry to me, 'Take me ashore, Myles, take me ashore, that I may breathe sweet air and live.' So I lapped thee in blankets and brought thee, to-morrow is a se'nnight. Like you not this sweet new dwelling?"

"Well enow; but sweet air will not make me live if the time hath come for me to die." And the sick girl smiled wanly, inscrutably, the smile of one who knows what he will not say.

The face of the fearless soldier grew white with terror, and almost angrily he replied,

—

"Hush, child! Thy time to die hath not come. Never think it, for it shall not be."

"Nay, Myles, thou canst not daunt Death with thy stern voice and masterful eye, though thou canst quell a score of other foes with one glance."

[Pg 95]

And Rose, moving her frail little hand toward the sinewy fist clenched upon the bed-covering, slid a finger within its grasp, and went softly on with a pathetic ring of gayety in her voice,—

"I was dreaming, too, of home, mine own old home. I was gathering cowslips in the meadow at St. Mary's, and mother stood by with little Maudlin in her arms. They smiled, both of them, ah how sweetly they smiled upon me, and I filled my pinafore with the cowslips, soft, cool, wet cowslips,—I feel them in my hand now, so cool, so wet! Myles, I fain would have those cowslips, may I not?"

"Child! Child! Thou 'lt break my heart!"

"Mother and Maudlin both died the year I saw thee first, dost remember, Myles?"

"Try to sleep a little, my darling. I will say thee a psalm, or perhaps one of those old Manx ballads thou didst use to lilt so lightly."

"Mistress White says they are ungodly, and a snare of Satan," replied Rose dreamily, and before Myles could utter the wrathful comment that quivered upon his lips she went on,—

"It was across her grave I saw thee, dear, dost mind thee of that hour?"

"Thy mother's grave? ay, I mind me."

"Yes, thou camest with thy cousin Barbara to seek thy grandsire's gravestone and to search out the muniments of thy race. Thou 'lt never lay hands on that inheritance, Myles."

"I care not, so thou wilt get strong and well again, my Rose, my Rose!" And with a groan but half driven back upon his heart, the soldier turned his head aside and set his teeth upon his trembling lip. But Rose, more alive in the past than the present, rambled on in her sweet, weak voice,—

[Pg 96]

"Not only this wild hunting ground and ruined lodge where we abide, but many a fair manor in England, and many a stately home is his,' that was what Barbara told me about thee afterward; and when I praised thy presence, for I loved thee or ever I knew it myself, she straightened her neck and said full proudly, 'Ay, and not only a goodly man, but a brave soldier and noble soul.' 'Twas she who first saw that thou lovedst me, Myles, and came and wept for joy upon my neck."

"Peace, peace, dear child. Thou wastest thy strength in talking overmuch. Sleep, canst thou not, dear heart?"

"Dost think that Barbara will come hither? She promised me surefast that she would so soon as there was a company ready. She said it was so lonely there in Man when I was gone. Will she come, think you, Myles?"

"Like enow, sweetheart. Barbara mostly carries out what she promises. But"—

"And thou 'lt be very, very good to thy cousin, wilt thou not, Myles? Thou 'rt all she has now."

"Surely both of us will be good to our kinswoman, dear wife, and all the more that, as thou sayest, it was by going to visit her that I first saw thee, blooming like a very rose in that gray old Manx churchyard."

"I was ever friends with Barbara, but I loved her all the more for thy sake, dear. And she was well pleased that we two should wed—leastways she said so."

[Pg 97]

"And if she said it she meant it, for in all the years she tarried in my mother's house I never knew her tell a lie or wear two faces. But now, verily, child, I must have thee rest. Speak not again unless thou needest somewhat. I will have it so, my Rose."

"Then let me lay my hand in thine. There, then, good-night."

"Good-night, mine own."

And while the winter night lapsed through hours of deadly chill and darkness into the

sad twilight of early morning the soldier sat motionless, holding that fragile hand, gazing upon that lovely face, lovely yet so changed from the cherubic beauty that had won his heart amid the summer fields of Man but three short years before.

What he thought, what he felt in those hours, he could not himself have revealed, for a man's emotion is usually in inverse proportion to its expression, and Myles Standish was essentially a man of action and not of words; but God only knows how these strong inarticulate natures suffer in the agony that divides bone from marrow, and yet leaves the sufferer conscious of the capacity to live and to suffer yet again and again.

In some respects this vigil resembled that of Bradford in hearing of Dorothy's death, in some it was widely different, for with Bradford's grief was mingled self-reproach and keen introspection; he weighed his own life, he found it wanting, he condemned it, and offering his suffering as righteous penance, he extolled the justice of God, and submitted himself as a culprit to the scourge.

But Standish thought neither of the justice of God nor of his own demerits, nor had he skill or practice for introspection. "A man under authority and having soldiers under him," he both rendered and expected obedience, prompt, entire, and unquestioning. His was a nature of loyalty so magnificent as to need no buttresses of reason, or of self-distrust, a loyalty so sweet as to be unconscious of itself, a loyalty so entire that the soul could not get outside of it to consider it objectively.

[Pg 98]

The order came from the King of kings, and it was to be obeyed, or endured; the King could do no wrong.

Nor indeed had he been skilled to search, could Myles have found matter for self-reproach in all his dealings with the child dying at his side.

Busy from his boyhood in the pursuit of arms, and loving his mother with all the force of his great nature, the man had cared little for other women, turning with scorn from the meretricious charms of those he encountered in camp or among his comrades, and finding no time or inclination to seek others, so that except for the light fancies of an hour, or the calm affection for his cousin Barbara, whom he found on one of his visits to his home in Chorley giving a daughter's tendance to his mother, Standish had passed his three and thirtieth birthday ignorant of the nature of love, and mocking at its power.

But the first glance at the lovely girl weeping beside her mother's grave warned him that a new hour had struck, and a new foe opposed him; nor was he long in making full and frank surrender to an authority as strong as it was gentle, and as tyrannous as sweet.

Motionless and erect the soldier sat the long night through, and as if she gathered strength from the grasp of his healthy hand, Rose slept quietly until the sun rose, and the women still well enough to wait upon the sick came softly in.

Then she opened her eyes, fixed them upon his with a tender smile, and said,—

[Pg 99]

"Poor Myles! Thou hast watched all night while selfish I held thee and slept. But now begone and get thine own rest and food. I shall do well with these kind friends."

"I'll leave thee, then, for a little, but I shall not be far away, and if thou needest, send," replied her husband releasing his hand from the frail yet burning grasp that still held him. "Dame Turner, thou 'lt see that I am called if she asks for me, wilt thou?"

"Surely, Captain, but she is doing bravely this morning, and you had better rest."

"Nay, but let her not ask twice for me, or aught else."

Leaving the house, and drawing one or two eager breaths of fresh air, Standish climbed the hill where already the fortification he had proposed was nearly complete, though not yet armed. Stepping upon a great beam, squared but not laid in place, he stood looking around him as if to see what Nature and his own work could offer to fill the great gulf opening in the future.

A light fog still clung to the face of the water and hung in the hollows of the hills; shrouded in its folds the Mayflower lay like a spectre ship, ugly, unsafe, full of discomfort and misery, but yet the only link between this handful of dying men and their home. Standish gazed at her with a gathering darkness upon his face, until the burden of his thought broke out in a savage murmur,—

"*Couldst* not make thy way through yonder shoals and bring us to the fair shores I told her of! If it be thy fault, Thomas Jones!"—

The slow clenching of a jaw square and strong as a mastiff's finished the sentence, and Standish's eyes came back to the rude hut where all he loved lay dying, perhaps through this man's fault. At his feet lay the sketch as it were of the town he and his comrades had laid down in outline, and intended to build up as time and strength allowed. Already Leyden Street, or The Street, as it was at first called, lay a distinct thoroughfare from the Rock to the Fort, the eastern and western extremities of the village. Along this street were staked out plots of land, some larger and some smaller in the proportion of eight feet frontage to each person in a family, the single men, and those women and children already left desolate, being divided among the householders, and the whole company reduced to nineteen families.

[Pg 100]

Standish's own house, not yet finished, lay nearest to the Fort, which with its armament were to be his especial charge, and several of the single men had been appointed to his family. Their own illness, and that of Mistress Standish had, however, interfered with this arrangement, and only John Alden shared the house as yet with Standish, the two men sometimes eating at the Common house, the only one except the hospital really finished, and sometimes cooking for themselves such food as they could lay hands upon, for the house, unlike some of the others, already boasted a chimney laid up of sticks and clay, and showed a generous fireplace in the larger or living room which, with two little sleeping-rooms and a loft, comprised the whole accommodation.

Upon this little home so hopefully begun, so neglected during the last ten days, Myles gazed long and wistfully, smiling sadly as he saw Alden come out and look up and down the street for him, finally going to seek him in the Common house, a substantial structure some twenty feet square, built of hewn oaken logs, fitted together as closely as possible, and the crevices stopped with clay, which freely washed out in stormy weather.

[Pg 101]

The roof, like all the rest, was covered with thatch formed of dried reeds and grasses, and the windows were filled with oiled linen instead of glass, still an article of costly luxury. Above the Common house stood the building which the increasing mortality of the colony had demanded as a hospital, and below it was the storehouse, where most of the common stock of goods was collected, although some of the passengers and their possessions still remained on board the brig, where Jones gave them but scant hospitality or kindness.

Folding his arms more closely as the chill wind of February swept in from seaward,

Standish gazed upon all these objects as if they for the first time attracted his attention, and then, as the lifting fog revealed the distant landscape, he turned and fixedly regarded Captain's Hill rising in its bold isolation to the north. Long he gazed, and then, slightly shaking his head, stepped down from the beam and paced about the little enclosure, half unconsciously examining the work of platform and parapet, and following with a gunner's eye the range of the pieces yet unmounted; pausing longest before the eastern front, he marked with satisfaction how well the minion there to be placed would guard the landing and sweep the solitary street, and even knelt to look along its imaginary barrel.

Rising he brushed the soil from his knees with almost a smile, muttering,—

"Ay, lad, thou 'rt needed, thou 'rt needed, and he who is needed has no right to desert his post."

But suddenly the smile faded, for as he turned to leave the Fort his eyes fell upon Cole's Hill, where but a few rods from the Common house, and under its protection, they had dug the graves of those already dead, and where lay room enough for many more. But his battle fought, and his mind resolved, Myles was too much master of himself to need a second conflict, and setting his lips firmly beneath the tawny moustache that shaded them, he strode down the hill, and at his own door found John Alden waiting for him and changing greetings with a party of four men armed with sickles and attended by two dogs.

[Pg 102]

"Wish you good-morrow, Captain," said the foremost, a sturdy young fellow with a pleasant English face.

"Good-morrow Peter Browne, and you, John Goodman," replied the captain cordially. "Whither away?"

"To cut thatch in the fields nigh yon little pond," replied Browne pointing in a westerly direction. "And I am taking Nero along to give account of any Indians that may be lurking there."

"And John Goodman's spaniel to rouse the game for Nero to pull down," said Standish with a smile. "Well, God speed you."

And turning into the unfinished house he found Alden watching him with a look of silent friendliness and sympathy more eloquent than words; returning the greeting as mutely and as heartily, Standish would have passed into his own bedroom, but the younger man interposed,—

"Thou 'lt break thy fast, Captain, wilt thou not? All is ready and waiting your coming; some of the bean soup you liked yester even, and some fish"—

"Presently, presently, good John! I would but bathe and refresh myself. Nay, look not so doubtingly after me, friend. I am a man, and know a man's devoir."

[Pg 103]

He spoke with a smile as brave as it was gentle, and passing in closed the door.

"Doth he know she is dying!" muttered John throwing himself upon a bench; "and Priscilla sickening and her mother dead!"

[Pg 104]

CHAPTER X.

A TERRIBLE NIGHT.

As Standish entered his own house the four men to whom he had spoken passed on around the base of the hill, and reaching a tract of swampy land covered with reeds and rushes suitable for thatching, they set to work cutting them and binding in bundles ready for use. For some hours they wrought industriously, until Peter Browne, commander of the expedition, straightened his back, stretched his cramped arms, and gazing at the sun announced,—

"Noontime, men. We'll e'en rest and eat our snack."

"Art thou o' mind to come and show me the pond where thou sawest wild fowl t' other day?" asked John Goodman, townsman and friend of Browne's.

"Ay, will I. Take thy meat in thy hand and come along," replied Browne. "And we may as well finish our day there, sith this spot is well nigh stripped. Margeson and Britteridge, when you have fed, you can bind the rushes that are cut, and then come after us as far as a little pond behind that hill, due west from here I should say. You'll find it easily enough."

"Oh, ay, we'll find it," replied Margeson, a rough companion, but a good worker. "Go on mates, and take your dogs with you, for they're smelling at the victuals enough to turn a man's stomach. Get out you beast!" and raising his foot he offered to kick Nero, who growled menacingly and showed a formidable set of teeth.

[Pg 105]

"Have a care, man!" cried Browne angrily. "Meddle with that dog and he'll make victual of thee before thou knowest what ails thee. 'T is ever a poor sign when a man cannot abear dogs or children."

And the two friends, followed by the mastiff and spaniel, walked rapidly away. Two hours passed while Margeson and Britteredge, not greatly in haste, finished their lunch and tied and stacked the reeds already cut. Then shouldering their sickles they leisurely skirted the hill in front of them, and after a little search came upon the pretty sheet of water now called Murdoch's Pond.

"This will be the place," said Margeson looking about him; "but where is pepperpot Browne?"

"Or his dog?" suggested Britteridge slyly.

"Whistle and the beasts will hear us if the men do not," said Margeson suiting the action to the word. No answer followed, and both men together raised a yet shriller note, followed by shouts, halloos, and various noises supposed to carry sound to the farthest limits of space. But each effort died away in dim and distant echoes among the hills, and after a while the men looked at each other in half angry discouragement.

"They've played us a trick," said Margeson; "they're hiding to mock at us, or they've gone back to the village some other way."

"Nay," replied Britteridge pacifically; "they're not such babes as to play tricks like that. See, here are goodly reeds; let us cut and bind some while we tarry, and Browne will be back anon."

Grumbling and unconvinced Margeson still complied, and for a while longer the two worked fitfully, pausing now and again to look about them, to listen, or to shout.

[Pg 106]

At last, by tacit consent, both threw down their tools, and with slow, half-fearful gaze surveyed the scene. It was a dismal one. The sun had reached the tops of the pines, and already the water lay in black shadow at their feet, rippled by the small, bitter breeze creeping in from seaward, and stirring the sedge into faint whisperings and moanings; night birds, awaking in the depths of the forest, uttered querulous cries, and strange, vague sounds within the covert suggested prowling beast or savage creeping near and nearer.

"Ugh! 't is a grewsome spot as ever I saw," said Margeson as softly as if he feared to be overheard. "Certes the men have gone home some other way, and the sun is setting. Let us be after them, say I."

"And say I," replied Britteridge readily, and without more words the two men hurried away, and in a brief half hour presented themselves before the governor with news that their comrades were not to be found, either in the field or the town, and doubtless were lost in the forest or captured by the Indians.

Carver, ever as ready to act as to command, armed himself at once, and summoning such men as were on shore led them to the wood, where by calling, firing their pieces, and kindling torches they protracted the search far into the night, and when forced to give it up until daylight returned to the Common house for united and fervent prayers and supplications.

Early in the morning another search party, headed by Stephen Hopkins, with Billington as scout, entered the woods, but having traversed a radius of seven or eight miles returned at night weary, footsore, and with no tidings.

[Pg 107]

News of the loss was carried on board the Mayflower, and a heavy sense of misfortune and danger settled upon the little community already depressed by disease and want.

The men thus mourned were meantime in nearly as evil case as was feared.

Just before arriving at the pond, while munching their frugal lunch and discussing the prospect of game, they espied a splendid stag who had evidently been disturbed while drinking, and stood with head erect and dilated eyes gazing upon the first white men he had ever seen, and perhaps foreboding the war of extermination they had come to wage on him and his.

"Oh for a piece!" cried Browne raising an imaginary gun to his shoulder. "Seize him, Nero! Take him, good dog! Hi! Away, away!"

Nero needing no second invitation uttered a deep bay and set off, followed by the spaniel, yelping to the extent of her powers, while the two men, reckless of the fact that they were unarmed save with sickles, and could never hope to overtake the deer on foot, bounded after as fast as they could lay legs to the ground, nor paused until utterly blown and exhausted and the chase out of sight and hearing.

"Hah!" panted Browne flinging himself upon the ground; "I haven't been breathed like that since I ran in the foot-race at home in Yorkshire five year ago. Phew!"

Goodman only replied by inarticulate groans and wheezes, and while he yet struggled for breath Nero came trotting back through the woods with a mortified and contrite expression pervading his body from eloquent eyes to abject tail, while Pike, as the spaniel was called, followed at some distance with an affected carelessness of demeanor as if she would have it clearly understood that she had been running solely for her own pleasure, with no idea of chasing the deer. The men laughed, and patting

[Pg 108]

their favorites allowed them to lie and rest for some moments; then as the air grew chill they rose and strolled in the direction, as they supposed, of the clearing where they had left their comrades. But the wood was thick, and several swampy hollows induced detours; the sun was obscured by the gathering snow clouds, and neither man was skilled in woodcraft; while the dogs, roaming at pleasure, were more intent upon tracing various scents of game than of finding the way home. Thus it came that as darkness began to gather visibly among the crowding evergreens, and the last tinge of sunlight was buried in thickening clouds, the two men stopped and looked each other squarely in the face.

"Yes, John," said Browne reading the frightened eyes of his younger and less courageous companion. "Yes, lad, we're lost, and I doubt we must pass the night in the woods."

"And we lack not only food but cloaks and weapons!" exclaimed Goodman looking forlornly about him, and stooping to pat Pike, who scenting disaster in the air had returned whimpering to her master's side.

"If we could but find some deserted hut of the salvages, or some of their stored grain, or even the venison we disdained the other day," suggested Browne.

"We've seen no trace of such a thing to-day," replied Goodman disconsolately.

"Come on, then, and let us look while daylight lingers. Mayhap the dogs will lead us out if we put them to it. Hi, Nero! Home boy, home! Seek!"

[Pg 109]

Nero whimpered intelligently and trotted on for a mile or so, but with none of that appearance of conviction which sometimes gives to an animal's proceedings the force of an inspiration. Browne, who knew his dog well, felt the discouragement of his movement, and finally stopped abruptly.

"Nay, he knows no home in this wilderness and feels no call to one place more than another. 'T is past praying for, John; we must e'en make up our minds to sleep here. Suppose that we lie down in the lee of these nut-bushes, call the dogs to curl up beside us, and try to keep life going till morning; no doubt we shall find the way out then, or at least somewhat to eat."

"My blood is like ice already," murmured Goodman burying his hands in the spaniel's curly hair.

"If we had but flint and steel to make a fire it were something!" exclaimed Browne. "What Jack-o'-Bedlams we were to set off thus unprovided. Catch me so again!"

"But we came out to cut thatch, not to chase deer and get lost in the woods," suggested Goodman trying to laugh, though his teeth chattered like castanets.

"It will never do for thee to lie down as chilled as thou art," exclaimed Browne anxiously. "I promised thy old mother I'd have an eye to thee, and lo it is I that have led thee into this mischance! What shall I do for thee? I have it, lad! Sith it is too dark and rough to walk farther I'll try a fall with thee; there's naught warms a man's blood like a good wrestling match. Come on, then!"

"I'm no match for thee, Peter, but here goes!" replied Goodman struggling to his feet, and the two men joined there in the darkness and the wilderness in what might truly be called a "joust of courtesy," moved only by mutual love and good will, for the event proved Goodman's modesty well founded, and it was only a few moments before Browne, raising his slender opponent in his arms, set him down sharply two or three times upon his feet, saying,—

[Pg 110]

"I'll not throw thee, for that might prove small kindness. Art warmer?"

But before Goodman could answer a snarling cry broke from the thicket close at hand, and was answered by another and another voice until the air seemed filled with the cries of howling fiends.

Nero started to his feet, his eyes glowing, the hair bristling stiffly upon his neck, and with a fierce growl of defiance would have sprung forward had not his master seized him by the collar exclaiming,—

"Nay, fool! wouldst rush on thy destruction!"

"'T is the salvages!" stammered Goodman staring about him in the darkness.

"Nay, 't is lions," replied Browne. "Hopkins saith they swarm about here. We must climb a tree, John. Here is a stout one; up with thee, man, as fast as may be!"

"But thou, Peter?" asked John clambering into the oak his friend pointed out.

"I cannot leave Nero. He'll be gone to the lion so soon as I quit my hold of his collar, and I'll not lose him but in sorer need than this. Here, take thou the spaniel and hold her to thee for warmth."

"Nay, I'll not be safe and thou in danger," replied the young man springing down; "and, moreover, it is deadly cold perching in a tree."

"Well, then, we'll both stand on our guard here, and if the lions come we'll e'en up in the tree hand over hand and leave the poor beasts to their fate. Stamp thy feet on the ground and walk a few paces up and down, John. I fear me thou 'lt swound with the cold like poor Tilley."

[Pg 111]

"I could not well be colder and live," replied Goodman faintly, as he tried to follow his friend's injunction.

The night crept on, with frost and snow and icy rain and heavy darkness, and still the wolves prowled howling around their prey, and the good dog held them at bay with savage growls and deep-throated yelps of defiance, and his master, caring more for the humble friend he had reared and brought over seas from his English home than for his own safety, held him all night by the collar, and the spaniel whimpered with cold and terror in her master's arms, and he, poor lad, suffered all the anguish of death as his feet and legs chilled and stiffened and froze like ice. A night not to be numbered in those men's lives by hours but years, a night of exhaustion, terror, and agony, a night hopeless of morning save through the exceeding mercy of God.

The gray light broke at last, however, and with it the wolves grew mute and slunk away, Nero quieted into obedience, and Browne carefully straightening his own stiffened joints and rising to his feet looked into his comrade's face and shook his head.

"John, hearken to me, lad! We're in a sore strait but we're not dead, and daylight hath broken. Hold up thy face to the sky, man, and say 'I WILL win through this, so help me God!' and having said it, stick to it, even as Nero would have stuck to yon lion's throat until he was clawed away in shreds. Come, try it, my lad, try it!"

[Pg 112]

Catching something of his friend's heroic spirit the poor fellow did as he was bidden, but followed the brave resolve with a piteous look into the other's face while he said,
—

"My feet are froze, Peter; there is no feeling nor power in them. But lead on, and I will follow if I must crawl."

"Tarry a bit till I see"—

And not pausing to finish his sentence Browne set himself to climb the tree beneath which they had passed the night. His cramped limbs and benumbed fingers made this no easy task and more than once he was near losing his grasp and finishing the story by a headlong fall to the frozen earth, but this danger was passed also, and presently hastening down he said,—

"Well, heavy though the clouds be I can see that east is that-a-way, and not far from us rises a high hill. Come, then, lean on me; pass thy arm around my shoulders this fashion and I will help thee on. Then I will leave thee at the foot of the hill and myself climb it, and if need be some tree upon its summit. From that I shall surely catch sight of the sea, and knowing that we know all we need."

Goodman silently laid his arm around the stalwart shoulders presented to him, but found himself too weak and spent for other reply, and Browne, passing an arm around his waist, looked anxiously into his face, saying,—

"Courage, lad, courage!"

"Ay, I WILL, by God's help!" murmured the poor lad as with agony inexpressible he forced his stiffened limbs to follow one after the other.

The hill, more distant than Browne had supposed, was only reached after two hours of agonizing effort, and at the foot Goodman sank speechless and exhausted, his eyes closed, his parted lips white and drawn. Browne looked at him despairingly, and calling the dogs made one crouch at either side close to the heart and lungs of the prostrate body, and then hastened on up the hill muttering,—

[Pg 113]

"'T is best kindness to leave him." Half an hour later he came crashing down again through underbrush and fallen branches shouting,—

"Courage, John; courage, man! From the top of the biggest tree on this hill I've seen not only the sea, but our own harbor, and the old brig rocking away as peacefully as may be. Think of the good friends and the good Hollands gin and the good fires aboard of her. Come, rouse up, lad! Once more pluck up thy courage and remember thy resolve! 'T is but another hour or so and we are there!"

And yet the good fellow knew that not one but many hours lay before them, and that it was for him to find strength and endurance for both.

Once more his cheery voice and assured courage conveyed power for another effort to the half-dead lad he almost carried in his arms, and so, with frequent pauses for rest and encouragement, the day wore past, until at last on the brow of Watson's Hill, Browne, his own strength all but spent, cried tremulously,—

"Now God be praised! here is the harbor at our feet, yonder is the Mayflower, below is the village, and but a few moments more will bring thee, John, to a bed and Surgeon Fuller's care, and me to a fire and some boiling schnapps."

"God indeed be praised!" murmured Goodman rousing himself for the final effort; and so it came to pass that just at sunset the two crossed the brook and came hobbling down The Street amid a clamorous and joyful crowd of friends who lifted Goodman from his feet, nor paused until they brought them both into the house where abode Carver and also Fuller, the shrewd and crabbed physician and

[Pg 114]

philanthropist. Here Goodman was laid upon a bed, his shoes cut from his feet, and in a few moments the governor on one side and the doctor on the other were vigorously rubbing the frozen limbs with alcohol.

"Shall I lose my feet, Doctor?" asked the patient feebly.

"Lose them!" cried the doctor indignantly. "Nay! what use would a footless man be to the Adventurers who sent thee out? 'T were but a knave's trick for thee to shed thy feet first thing, and I'll see to it thou dost not."

"And that's a comfortable saying, Master Fuller," said Browne standing anxiously by.

"Thou here, Peter Browne!" exclaimed the doctor glancing up under his shaggy brows. "What art doing here, blockhead? Get thee into bed beside a good fire, and bid Hopkins mix thee a posset such as he would have for himself. Be off, I say!"

[Pg 115]

CHAPTER XI.

THE COLONISTS OF COLE'S HILL.

The next day both Carver and Bradford were forced to succumb under the epidemic already raging among the colonists, and in another fortnight the hospital and Common house were crowded to their utmost capacity with the beds of the ill and dying. The terrible colds taken in the various explorations, the vile food and bad air of the brig, with the want of ordinary comforts on shore, were at last bearing their fruit in a combination of scurvy, rheumatism, and typhoid fever of a malignant type. On board ship matters were even worse than on shore, and Jones, who would willingly have abandoned the settlers as soon as they were debarked, found himself, perforce, a sharer in their distress through the illness and death of his crew, and the danger of running short of provisions.

The day came at length when of all the company, numbering a hundred and one when they landed, only seven remained able either to nurse the sick or bury the dead, and hour by hour, as these met about their complicated duties, they studied each others faces, in terror of seeing the fatal signs that yet one more was stricken down, and the annihilation of the settlement one step farther advanced.

Of these seven, two were Elder Brewster and Myles Standish, and well did they prove themselves fit to be rulers among the people, for they became servants of all, without hesitation and without affectation, nursing, cooking, dressing loathsome wounds, and ministering in all those homely ways repugnant to refined senses, and especially, perhaps, to the dignity of man. The doctor also kept on foot, although terribly worn with sleeplessness, fatigue, and rheumatism; Peter Browne, none the worse for his day and night in the woods, with Francis Eaton to help him, took charge of digging the graves and burying the dead, already in their silent colony along the brow of Cole's Hill, almost equaling their yet suffering comrades. The two remaining sound ones were Stephen Hopkins and Helen Billington, who, as the only female nurse, was called upon to attend the sick women, so far as she could; this, of course, gave but little time for each patient, and one night the doctor hurriedly said to Standish,—

[Pg 116]

"Captain, wilt have an eye to-night to those two beds in the corner? 'T is Priscilla Molines and Desire Minter, both shrewdly burned with fever, and needing medicine and care lest they should fall to raving before morning. I'd not ask thee, knowing all thou hast on hand, but goodwife Billington must not quit"—

"Nay, nay, what needs so many words," interrupted Standish. "Give me their medicine and directions, I can care for them well enow and for Bradford whose huckle-bone^[4] giveth him sore distress to-night."

"I doubt me if he wins through," said the Doctor softly; "and White and Molines will never see the morning, and Mistress Winslow is going fast—well, I leave the maids and Bradford to thee."

"Ay, I'll do my best," replied Standish briefly.

And so it came to pass that Priscilla Molines, moaning in her feverish unrest, felt a moist linen laid upon her brow and a cup held to her parched lips.

[Pg 117]

"Petite maman!" murmured she, and with those moistened lips kissed the hand that held the cup.

Standish sadly smiled a little, and passed on to the next bed where lay Desire Minter, not so ill, but far more requiring than Priscilla.

"Here is thy draught, child," said the nurse kindly, as he raised her head and put the cup to her lips. Swallowing it eagerly, she lifted her jealous eyes and with a smile half cunning, half pathetic, whispered,—

"I love thee too, but I think it not maidenly to kiss thee till I'm asked."

"Nay, girl, thou 'rt dreaming or wild," said the Captain soothingly. "She, poor maid, is distraught, and took me for her mother. She loves me not, nor dost thou, nor do I ask any woman's love."

"Nay, then, thou 'rt mocking me. Thou dost love her, and she loves thee, for I've heard her say as much; but still I know one that loves thee better."

"If thou were not so ill, Desire, I'd find it in my heart to say—but there, sleep poor child, sleep! Thou knowst not what thou sayst."

And Standish turned impatiently away to Bradford who suffered excruciatingly that night with inflammatory rheumatism in the hip-joint.

The next morning Priscilla awaking refreshed, and for the moment quite herself, found her neighbor weeping passionately, yet from time to time regarding her in so peculiar a fashion that she said softly,—

"What is it, Desire? Art thou in sore pain?"

"It ill fits thee to pity me when it is thou that hast done me such despite," whimpered Desire sullenly.

[Pg 118]

"I! what dost thou mean?"

"Why, I have ever liked our Captain since first I saw him, and now his wife is dead and buried, why should he not marry me as well as another?"

"Why not, if it pleaseth him? I forbid not the banns," replied Priscilla, the dim wraith of her old smile passing across her face.

"Why not? Because thou hast bewitched him, thou naughty sprite, and thou knowest it."

"What dost thou mean, Desire? Speak out and done with it, for thou weariest me sore," exclaimed Priscilla impatiently, while the fever began to streak her pallid cheek and flame in her great eyes.

"Why, I saw you two kissing last night, and I suppose you're promised to each other," muttered the other sulkily, and Priscilla, rising on her elbow, fixed on her a glance beneath which the coward quailed, yet sullenly murmured,—

"Well, you did!"

"Desire Minter, thou art lying, and thou knowest it, or else thy wits are distraught, or mine."

"Ah, 't is well to try to edge out of it by brow-beating me, but thou canst not. I saw you two kissing. When he first came in he went and stood beside thy bed and looked down at it, biting at his beard, as is his wont when he is moved; and then he fell upon his knees, whispering something, and kissed the pillow, over and over, and when he stood up he drew his hand across his eyes, and all for love of thee. So now, then!"

"Is that true, Desire? Can it be true that he cares for me in that fashion?" asked Priscilla falling back bewildered, for she knew no more than did Desire that hers was the bed where Rose Standish had breathed her last sigh, and her husband had looked his last on her sweet face.

[Pg 119]

"Certes, 't is true, and thou knowest it better than I, for when, later on, he came to give thee a drink and wet thy forehead and lips, thou didst give him back his kiss right tenderly, and mutter something of 'love' and 'darling.'"

"I kissed Myles Standish!" cried Priscilla wildly.

"Ay, kissed the hand that held the cup, and when he came to me I told him I had seen it all, and that I knew before that thou lovedst him."

"Thou saidst I loved him!"

"Ay, and he said he loved thee not, nor any woman, but 't was a blind, for such a weary sigh as he fetched, and turned to look again at thee."

"I kissed him, and thou saidst I loved him, and he said he loved me not!" cried Priscilla blindly; and then with a wild cry she burst into a delirious laugh, ending in a shriek that brought Doctor Fuller from the next room.

"What is this! what is toward!" demanded he glancing from Priscilla to Desire, who replied in her sullen tones,—

"I know not, except that Captain Standish and Priscilla are sweethearts, and I told her I saw them kissing last night, and haply she is shamed as well she may be."

"And well mayst thou be doubly shamed," replied the doctor sternly, "to torment her into frenzy with thy jealous fancies, and she already at death's door. Thou sawest naught, whatever thou mayst have dreamed; and mark me now, Desire Minter, I forbid thee to speak one word more, good or bad, to Priscilla Molines while thou stayest here; and if thou heedest not, I'll put thee in another house and leave thee to shift for thyself."

[Pg 120]

Thoroughly cowed, the mischief maker promised obedience, and the doctor turned to the delirious girl, whom he finally quieted to a moaning sleep, in which he left her, muttering to himself as he went,—

"Not a month since his wife died in that bed—well—'t is no concern of mine."

And so it came about that the idea of love between Priscilla and Standish was planted in four active minds, and in time bore strange and bitter fruit.

And so the gloomy days crept on, and the sufferers and the mourners of the village which lay half-built beneath the hill passed on to take up their dwelling in the village upon the bluff, where, silent pilgrims, they lay, row upon row, hands meekly folded, lips close set, and eyes forever shut, but yet attaining all that they sought in this their pilgrimage, freedom from tyranny even of time and circumstance, freedom to worship God in spirit and in truth.

When a conqueror or a tyrant decimates his captives or his subjects, the world cries out in horror of such disregard of life, but in this instance God spared one half His people from the sorrows and the hardships they had come forth to seek, and gave them at once the reward, for which their brethren still must toil. Of the hundred and one men, women, and children, who followed Gideon to the battle, but fifty were chosen to achieve the final conquest.

Among those who survived for a little time was John Goodman, who, after lying for weeks at death's door, came slowly back for a while, and in the early spring crept out in the sunshine with the faithful Pike at his heels. Trying his strength from day to day, he at last hobbled down to the brook and across, but was no sooner beyond hail of the village than two great gray wolves, stealing from a thicket, sprang upon the dog, who, not so venturesome as Nero, ran to take refuge between her master's still tender feet, causing them not a little pain.

[Pg 121]

"Fool! Again without a weapon!" exclaimed John apostrophizing himself, and picking up a good-sized stone he threw it, with a shout, at the foremost wolf, who retreated snarling to the bushes. Stumbling back toward the village as fast as he could, Goodman came presently to a pile of stout palings cut for fencing, and arming himself with one cast an anxious look behind. It was time, for the wolves, recovering courage as he retreated, were in full pursuit, with glaring eyes and lolling tongues.

Ordering Pike to crouch behind him, the young fellow stood at bay, hooting, shouting, and waving his stave in a semicircle, within whose sweep the creatures were not anxious to intrude. Weary at length of trying to surprise the fortress by a flank movement, yet reluctant to abandon the hope of seizing Pike, the wolves finally seated themselves upon their haunches at a little distance and seemed to consult, grinning and snapping their teeth from time to time at the spaniel, who cowered almost into the ground, whimpering piteously, while her master leaned upon his paling and laughed aloud, an insult to which the wolves responded by throwing back their heads and uttering howls like those of a dog baying the moon. Then suddenly leaping into the bushes they disappeared as quickly as they came, leaving Goodman, still chuckling, to resume his path to the village.

[Pg 122]

"We'll have a merry tale for Peter Browne this evening, won't we, Pike!"

But while the brave young fellow climbed the little hill from the brook to The Street, this smiling expression gave place to one of consternation, as he beheld a column of smoke and flame issuing from the roof of the house set apart as hospital, and heard a terrified shout of,—

"Fire! Fire!"

"Fire! Fire!" echoed Goodman running toward the spot as fast as his tender feet would allow.

Sounder men were before him, however, and when he arrived a ladder was placed against the side of the burning house, and Alden, with Billington at his heels, was about to mount it, when Brewster exclaiming,—

"Here's no place for sick men," pushed both aside, ran up the ladder, and tearing the blazing thatch from the roof flung it down in handfuls so rapidly and effectually that in five minutes the threatened conflagration was subdued to smoking embers and a few fugitive flames here and there, where already the fire had fastened upon the poles laid to support the thatch. Some buckets of water passed up by the little crowd below soon extinguished these, and then the Elder, peeping down through the damaged roof into the room below, cried cheerily,—

"All is safe, friends, and no great harm done."

"God be praised!" exclaimed Bradford's voice from within, and Brewster softly said, "Amen!" as he descended the ladder less easily than he had mounted it. At the foot he encountered Doctor Fuller, who with Standish had just been to Cole's Hill arranging for another line of graves.

[Pg 123]

"Let me see your hands, Elder," demanded the physician in his usual dry fashion.

"No need, 't is naught. Go look after your sick folk," replied the Elder trying to push past, but Fuller caught him by the sleeve, exclaiming sharply,—

"A man whose hands are needed for others as oft as thine are, has no right to let them become useless, and 't is not in reason but they are burned."

"You're right, Fuller, and I'm but a froward child," said Brewster, a sudden smile replacing the frown of pain upon his face, and obediently opening out his burned and bleeding palms. "Come to the Common house, so as not to fright my wife within there, and do them up with some of your wonderful balsam."

"And were it not for thought of your work, you would not have let me see them," said Fuller glancing from under his penthouse brows with a look of cynical admiration.

"One cannot give thought to every pin-prick with such deadly sickness on all sides," replied Brewster simply. "Best go into the hospital and see if thy poor dying folk have taken any harm of the fright before thou lookest after me."

"The Captain has gone into the sick-house. I'll hold on to you," returned the Doctor curtly, and Brewster yielded with his ever gracious smile.

That evening as the Elder with his bandaged hands, Carver, gaunt and pale from an attack of fever, Standish, Winslow, John Howland, and Doctor Fuller sat at supper in the Common house, Master Jones, followed by a sailor heavily laden, presented himself at the door.

[Pg 124]

"Good e'en, Masters, and how are your sick folk?" demanded he, in a would-be cordial voice.

"Thanks for your courtesy, Master Jones," replied the governor with grave politeness. "They are doing reasonably well, except some few who do not seem like to mend in this world."

"And Master Bradford? Sure he is not going to die?" pursued Jones in a voice of strange anxiety, as he sank into the great arm-chair Carver had proffered him.

"He is as low as a man can be and live," broke in the doctor gruffly, as he fixed Jones with a glance of angry reproach, beneath which even that rough companion quailed.

"He sent aboard yesterday begging a can of beer," blurted he, his brown face reddening a little.

"Yes," replied the governor sternly, "and you made answer that though it were your own father needing it, you would not stint yourself."

"I said it, and I don't deny it," retorted Jones with a feeble attempt at bluster. "But any man has a right to change his mind if he find cause, and I've changed mine as you will see, for I've brought not a can, but a runlet of beer for Bradford, and any others who crave it and are like to die wanting it; and when that is gone if Master Carver will send on board asking it for the sick folk, he shall have it though I be forced to drink water myself on the voyage home. I'll have no dead men haunting me and bringing a plague upon the ship."

"Truly we are greatly beholden to you, Master Jones," began Carver in great surprise, but the mariner raised his hand and continued,—

"Nay, hear me out, for that's not all. I went ashore to-day and shot five geese, and here they are, all of them, not one spared, though I could have well fancied a bit of goose to my supper, but I brought all to you, and more than that, even, for here is the better half of a buck we found in the wood ready shot to our hand. The Indians had cut off his horns and carried them away, and doubtless were gone for help to carry the carcase home when we came upon it; haply they saw us coming and made a run for it; at all odds they had left him as he fell, and Sir Wolf was already tearing at his throat so busily that he knew not friends were nigh, until a bullet through his head heralded our coming. So here are the haunches for you, and I content myself with the poorer parts."

[Pg 125]

Taking the articles named from a bag which the sailor had at his direction laid upon the floor, Jones ranged them in an imposing line in the centre of the room, and resuming his chair looked at his hosts still in that conciliatory and half timid manner so utterly new to them and foreign to his usual demeanor.

"We are, indeed, deeply beholden to you, Master Jones," said Carver at length in his grave and courteous tones. "But if I may freely speak my thought, and if I read my brethren's minds aright, we cannot but muse curiously upon this sudden and marvelous change in your dealings with us, and would fain know its meaning."

"Feeling certain that Master Jones is not one to give something for nothing, and so in common prudence wishing to know at the outset what price he expects for bearing himself in Christian charity, as he seemeth desirous to do," suggested Standish with more candor than diplomacy.

"Thou 'rt ever ready with thy gibes on better men than thyself, art not?" exclaimed Jones turning angrily upon him. For reply Standish leaned back in his chair, pulled at his red beard, and laughed contemptuously; but Winslow hastily interposed with a voice like oil upon the waves.

[Pg 126]

"Our captain will still have his jest upon all of us, Master Jones, but in truth as the governor hath said, we cannot but admire at this wonderful generosity on thy part,

and fain would know whence it ariseth."

"Why, sure 't is not far to seek," replied Jones with a hideous grimace intended for a conciliatory smile; "we have ever been good friends, have we not, and you all wish me well, as I do all of you. Certes, none of you would try to bring evil upon our heads, lest it fall upon your own instead, for still those who wish ill to others fall upon ill luck themselves. Is it not so, Elder?"

"Art speaking of Christian doctrine, or of heathen superstition, Master Jones?" inquired the Elder fixing his mild, yet penetrating eyes upon the seaman, who slunk beneath their gaze.

"Nay, then!" blustered he rising to his feet, "I came hither when I would fain have stayed in my own cabin aboard, and I came not to chop logic nor to be put to the question like a malefactor, but to bring help to my sick neighbors, who, to be sure, cried out for it lustily enough before they got it, but now pick and question at my good meat and drink as if 't were like to poison them. Well, that's an end on 't, and you can take it or leave it, as you will. Good e'en to you."

"Nay, nay, Master Jones," interposed Carver hastily, as the angry man made toward the door. "Let us not part thus, especially in view of thy great kindness toward us, for which, in good sooth, we are more grateful than we have yet expressed. Let pass the over curious queries we have ventured, and sit up at the table for a little meat and drink, such as it may be. Here is some broiled fish, and here some clams"—

[Pg 127]

"I care not for eating, having finished mine own supper but now," grumbled Jones sinking back into Carver's arm-chair; "still if you'll broach yon runlet of beer I'll taste a mug on 't, for my throat is as dry as a chimbley."

"The beer is for our sick folk who crave it as they gather their strength," said Carver pleasantly; "but we have here a case of strong waters of our own, if that will serve thy turn."

"Why, ay, 't will serve my turn better than t' other," replied Jones drawing his hairy hand across his mouth with an agreeable smile, as he added,—

"I did but ask for the beer, thinking you who are well needed the spirits for yourselves."

"We can spare what we need for ourselves more lightly than what we need for others," said Carver in that grand simplicity of nature which fails to perceive the magnificence of its own impulses. And from a shelf above his head the governor took a square bottle of spirits, while Howland poured water from a kettle over the fire into a pewter flagon, and produced a sugar bason from a chest in the corner of the room. These, with a smaller pewter cup, he placed before the seaman who eagerly mixed himself a stiff dram, drank it, and prepared another, which he sipped luxuriously, as leaning back in his chair he looked slowly around the circle of his entertainers, and finally burst forth,—

"The plain truth is, there are no folk like these in any latitude I've sailed, and a man must deal with them accordingly. 'T is what I told Clarke and Coppin before I came ashore. What men but you would give another what you want yourselves, and lacking it may find yourselves in worse case than him you help? And 't is not all chat, for still I've marked it both afloat and ashore, and the poor wretches you've left in the ship will pluck the morsel from their own lips to put it to another's."

[Pg 128]

"So it is, that with all your losses, a kind of good luck aye follows you, and I shall

not marvel if, in the end, you build up your colony here, and see good days when I am—well, it matters not where—I doubt me if priests or parsons know. But they who flout you or do you a churlish turn find no good luck resting on them, but rather a curse,—yea, I've marked that too. 'T is better to be friends than foes with some folk."

"Timeo Daneos et dona ferentes," quoted Winslow in the ear of Elder Brewster, who sat watching the sailor curiously, and now suddenly said,—

"And so thy shipmen are very ill too, Master Jones!"

"Lo you, now! I said naught of it, and how well you knew. What dost mean, Elder?"

"Naught but friendly interest like thine own," replied the Elder gently, yet never removing that steadfast gaze, beneath which Jones fidgeted impatiently, and finally cried in a sort of desperate surrender,—

"Well, then, as well you know already, 't is that matter brought me here to-night. My men have sickened daily, and everything hath gone awry, since we bundled you and your goods ashore a month or so ago, when some of you were fain to tarry aboard, or at least leave your stuff there, and come and go."

[Pg 129]

"But thou wast afeard we should drink thy beer by stealth. Nay, thou saidst it," declared Standish disdainfully.

"Well, yes, I'll not go back of saying it," retorted Jones half abashed and half defiant. "For where else shall you find me men who will drink water if another man hath beer where they may get it?"

"We heard from our friends on board that scurvy had broken out among the shipmen," said Carver motioning Standish to hold his peace.

"Scurvy, and fever, and rheumaticks, and flux, and the foul fiend knoweth what beside," replied Jones desperately. "Now Clarke hath still been warning me that you were so sib with the saints"—

"Nay, God forbid!" ejaculated Brewster.

Jones looked at him in astonishment, then nodding his head as one who yields a point he cannot understand continued: "Well, if not the saints, whosoever you have put in their room; but Clarke says you are e'en like the warlocks of olden time who called fire out of heaven on their enemies, and it came as oft as they called; and he says Master Brewster is like some Messire Moses who dealt all manner of ill to those who crossed him; and I marked, and so did Clarke, how yester morn when I denied Bradford the beer he craved, and answered the governor in so curst a humor, three men fell ill before night, and two, who were mending, died in torment. And Clarke said, and so it seemed most like to me, that 't was you had done it, and might yet do worse; and so I would fain be friends, and I come myself to bring the beer and the meat, and I'll promise to do as much again and again; nay, I'll swear it by the toe of St. Hubert, that my mother paid gold to kiss for me or ever I was born, yea, I'll swear it, if you masters will take off the curse, and promise to say masses, nay, nay, to say sermons and make mention of me to the Lord."

[Pg 130]

"Knowest thou what the Apostle Peter said to one Simon Magus when he would have bought the grace of God for gold?" demanded Brewster sternly.

"Nay, I never knew any of thy folk before," replied Jones humbly; but Winslow consulting the pacific governor with his eyes smoothly interposed,—

"Surely we will pray for thee and for thy men, Master Jones, albeit our prayers have no more weight than those of any other sinful men, and our Elder hath neither the power nor the will to bring plagues upon our enemies. There is naught of art-magic in our practices, I do assure thee, master."

"Well, I know not; but in all honesty I'd rather be friends than foes with men like you."

"And friends we are most heartily," said Carver. "Our folk on board are still mending, are they not?"

"Rigdale and Tinker are yet in bed, and their wives wait upon them, hand and foot, though fitter to be in their own beds. And not only on them, but now and again find time to run and give a drink or some such tendance to our men lying groaning at the other side the bulkhead. You mind that knave boatswain who still scoffed and swore at thy prayers, Elder, and so grievously flouted the first who fell sick among you?"

Brewster nodded, and Standish bringing his clenched fist down upon the table growled,—

"I mind him so well that I've promised him a skin full of broken bones the first time I catch him ashore."

"Then thou 'lt be glad to know that he lies a-dying to-night," replied Jones with horrible naïveté.

"Dying!"

"No question on 't; and this morning as he lay groaning in sore distress, and calling upon one and another to wait on him, and none had time or stomach for it, goodwife Rigdale came to the caboose for a morsel of meat after her night's watch, and hearing him she cried, 'Alack, poor soul!' and hastened to him with the very cup she was just putting to her own lips. The dog fastened to it, I promise you, and drank every drop, then gazing up at her asked a bit too late,—

"'Hast any left for thyself?'"

"She smiled on him with that white face she wears nowadays and said,—

"'Nay, but thou 'rt more than welcome.' Then says Master Boatswain, not knowing that I heard him,—

"'Oh, if I was set to get over this, as well do I know I am not, I would ask no better than to join your company and forswear all I have held dear. For now do I see how true Christians carry themselves to each other when they are in trouble, while we heathen let each other lie and die like dogs.'

"So the poor wench, fit to drop as she was, knelt and began praying for him, and I stole away."

"But do not those men care one for another in their sickness?" asked Brewster indignantly.

"As yonder wolf tended upon the dying buck," replied Jones with a careless laugh. "To drink his blood while it was warm was his chief care, and my men part the gear of their dying messmates before their eyes. Why, one of the quartermasters, Williams, thou knowest, would fain have hired Bowman, the other quartermaster, to befriend him to the last, and promised him all his goods if he should die, and money

if he got well; but the knave did but make him two messes of broth, and some kind of posset to drink o' nights, and then left him, swearing all over the ship that Williams was cozening him by living so long, and he would do no more for him though he starved, and yet the poor soul lay a-dying then."

"And Bowman had his goods?" demanded Howland sternly.

"Ay had he, or ever the breath was out of the body. Then there was Cooper, who died cursing and swearing at his wife, and her spendthrift ways, that wasted all his wage and still sent him to gather more. And there was the gunner whose whole thought was that he must quit his gear, and would have his chest stand where he could see it, and the key under his pillow to the last; and when one of your men asked would he listen to a bit of a prayer he bawled out with a curse, 'Nay, what profit was there in prayers, or who would pay him for hearkening.'

"I tell you, masters, 't is the worst port ever I made, and albeit I'm not a man of dainty or queasy stomach, it turns me sick to see and hear such things, and know that I'm master of a crew bound for hell though we called it Virginia."

"Mayhap if the Mayflower's crew had used more diligence in seeking to land us in Virginia they had not themselves made the port thou speakest of," said Standish bitterly, while Carver, sighing profoundly, pushed back from the table in sign that the conference was ended, but said in a voice of unfeigned friendliness,—

"Truly, Master Jones, thou needest and shall have our kindest sympathy, and our prayers, for this that you tell of is a fearful condition, and a fatal for both body and soul, and well may you call upon Almighty God for pardon and for mercy. If any of your men are fain to come on shore we will receive them and give such tendance as we do to our own, and right certain am I that those of our company yet on board will do all that they are able for you. Forgetting the past, about which we might justly murmur if we would, we are ready in your necessity to reckon you as brothers, and to spend and to be spent in your service, as God giveth ability.

"Will it please thee to tarry while we hold our evening devotions, and join thy prayers to ours, that the Lord will have mercy upon all of us?"

"Yes, I'll tarry, though 't is not greatly in my way. Haply He might take it amiss if I went," muttered Jones looking about him uneasily, while Carver regarded his hopeless neophyte with divine compassion, and Elder Brewster prayed long and fervently that not only the children should be fed, but that the dogs might eat of the crumbs that fell from the table, and that in the end even the sons of Belial might be forgiven their blindness and hardness of heart, and receive even though undeservingly the uncovenanted mercies of God.

Fortunately for his good intentions the object of many of these petitions quite failed to comprehend them, and when the devotion was over rose and went away far more gently than he had come.

CHAPTER XII.

THE HEADLESS ARROW.

"Where is the governor? Hast seen him of late, Mistress Priscilla?"

"Nay, Peter Browne, not since breakfast; but what is thy great haste? Have the skies fallen, or our friends the lions eaten up Nero?"

"Nay, then, 't is worse than lions; ay, here is Master Carver."

"Here am I, Peter, and what wouldst thou with me in such haste?"

"Why, sir, I have ill news. This morning I went a-fowling to a pond beyond that where we cut thatch and fell into such mishap, and as I lay quiet at my stand waiting till the ducks might swim my way, I saw, for I heard naught, twelve stout salvages all painted and trimmed up, carrying bows and arrows and every man his little axe at his girdle. Each glided after each like shadows upon the water, so still and smooth, and they seemed making for the town. Then as I bent my ear to the quarter whence they came I caught the far-off echo of that same fiendish cry that saluted us at the First Encounter, and would seem to be their war-cry or slogan."

"And then?"

"I waited till all were past and all sound died away, and then I fetched a compass, and ran home as fast as I might to warn the company and the captain."

[Pg 135]

"And thou didst well, Peter," replied Carver musingly, while Priscilla standing in the doorway behind him, with Mary Chilton at her side, nodded mockingly, and clapped her hands in silent applause.

Turning suddenly, the governor surprised her antics, but smiling, asked,—

"Dost know, Priscilla, whither Captain Standish went this morning?"

"He and Francis Cooke went a-field so soon as they had done breakfast, sir, and as they carried axes and wedges in hand, it would seem they had gone to rive timber," replied Priscilla demurely.

"Ay, like enough; but as 't is near noon, when they will be home for dinner, we will e'en wait till we have the captain's counsel, and meantime I'll see that all have their arms in readiness."

"And I will go help to make the dinner ready," said Priscilla. "Thou canst lay the table, Mary."

"Ay," replied the girl listlessly, and turning suddenly to hide the tears that filled her blue eyes. Priscilla looked after her, and the forced gayety faded from her own face as she put her arm about her friend's waist and led her away.

"Nay, then, nay, then," whispered she; "no more crying, poppet! Didst thou not cry half the night in spite of all I could say?"

"But how can I be gay, and father and mother both dead, and I so weak and ailing, and alone."

"But, Mary, I have lost more than that," said Priscilla in a low voice, and with that hard constraint of manner common to those who seldom speak of their emotions.

"I know thou hast lost father, mother, brother"—

[Pg 136]

"And even the faithful servant whom I remember in the dear old home when I was a toddling child," said Priscilla gloomily.

"Ay, but some have tenderer hearts than others and feel these things more cruelly,"

persisted Mary weeping unrestrainedly.

Priscilla removed her arm from the others waist and stood for a moment looking out at the open door with a mirthless smile upon her lips. Then, with one long sigh, she turned, and patting Mary's heaving shoulder said gently enough,—

"I'm more grieved for thee than I can tell, dear Mary; but still I find that to busy one's self in many ways, and to put on as light-hearted a look as one can muster, is a help to grief. See now poor Elizabeth Tilley. She hath cried herself ill, and must tarry in bed where is naught to divert her grief. Is it not better to keep afoot and be of use to others, at least?"

"Ay, I suppose so," replied Mary disconsolately.

"Well, then, lay the table, while I try if the meat is boiled. Oh, if we had but some turnips, or a cabbage, or aught beside beans to eat with it."

"Canst not make a sauce of biscuit crumbs and butter and an onion, as thou didst for the birds?" asked Mary drying her eyes.

"Sauce for birds is not sauce for boiled beef," replied Priscilla, her artistic taste shocked not a little; "but if thou 'lt be good, I'll toss thee up a dainty bit for thyself."

"And me, too!" exclaimed Desire Minter, who had just come in at the door.

"And thee, too," echoed Priscilla. "But, Desire, dost know the Indians are upon us, and they'll no doubt eat thee first of all, for thou 'rt both fat and tender, and will prove a dainty bit thyself, I doubt not."

[Pg 137]

"Well, dear maids, is the noon-meat ready?" asked Mistress Brewster's gentle voice at the door. "Dame Carver would fain have some porridge, and if thou 'lt move thy kettle a bit, Priscilla, I will make it myself."

"Now, dear mother, why should you do aught but rest, with three great girls standing idle before you?" cried Priscilla gently seating the weary woman in her husband's arm-chair. "I will make the porridge while Desire lifts the beef from the pot, and Mary lays the table. Our mother is more than tired with last night's watching beside Mistress Carver."

"Nay, then, child, I'll rest a minute, since I have such willing hands to wait on me, and well I know thou art the most delicate cook among us. Dame Carver will be the gainer."

And leaning her head against the back of the chair, poor, weary Mistress Brewster closed her eyes, and even dozed, while the three girls busily carried on their tasks, with low-voiced murmurs of talk that rather soothed than disturbed the sleeper.

The first plan, of dividing the settlers into nineteen families and building a house for each, had been abandoned before more than two or three of the houses were begun, and now that the prostrating sickness interrupting their plans was past, and the survivors counted, it was found that sadly few dwellings were needed to contain them, so that at present all were divided among four or five houses, although as the men gained strength for labor each wrought upon his future home in all the time to be spared from the common needs.

The house where we have found Priscilla was that of Elder Brewster, situated on the corner of The Street and the King's Highway, as the Pilgrims called the path crossing The Street at right angles, and leading down to the brook, although to-day we should

[Pg 138]

say that the elder's house stood on the corner of Leyden and Market streets; like all others built at this time, it was a low structure covered in with planks hewn from the forest trees, and roofed with thatch. At each side of the entrance door lay a tolerably large room, that on the right hand, nearest to the brook, used as kitchen, dining, and general living room, while the other was the family sleeping room, and also used as a withdrawing room, where the elder held counsel with the governor, or other friends, and studied his exhortation for the coming Sunday; here, also, Mistress Brewster led her boys, or the maidens she guided, for reproof, counsel, or tender comforting. At the back of this room, partitioned by a curtain, was a nook, where Wrestling, a delicate child of six, and Love, his sturdier brother, two years older, nestled like kittens in a little cot. Above in the loft, reached by a ladderlike staircase, was a comfortable room appropriated to Mary Chilton, Priscilla Molines, and Elizabeth Tilley, all orphaned within three months, and at once adopted by the Elder's wife as her especial charge.

In the next house, on a lot of land appropriated at first to John Goodman and some others, the governor had taken up his abode with his delicate wife, her maid Lois, Desire Minter their ward, and several children whom she cared for. John Howland, the governor's secretary and right-hand man, also lived here, and, like the manly man he was, hesitated not to give help wherever it was needed.

[Pg 139]

Owing to Mrs. Carver's very delicate health, it had been arranged that this family should share the table at Elder Brewster's, where the young girls just mentioned were ready and glad to take charge of the household labors, leaving their elders free for other matters.

In another house, placed in charge of Stephen Hopkins and his bustling wife, nearly all the unmarried men were gathered, and made a hearty and soberly jocund family. The third house, headed by Isaac Allerton and his daughters, was the home of Bradford, Winslow, Mistress Susannah White, with her children, Resolved and Peregrine, and her brother, Doctor Fuller, with their little nephew, Samuel Fuller, whose father and mother both lay on Cole's Hill.

In the Common house, under charge of Master Warren, with the Billingtons as officials, were gathered the rest of the company except Standish, who slept in his own house on the hill, but had his place at Elder Brewster's table when he chose to take it.

Hither he now came, silent and grave as was his wont since Rose died, but ever ready to give his aid and sympathy, whether in handicraft or counsel, to the governor, the elder, or the women struggling with unwonted labors. Of lamentation there was none, and since the day the soldier stood beside that open grave and watched the mould piled upon the coffin his own hands had fashioned no man, not even the elder, had heard his wife's name, or any allusion to his loss, pass his lips; yet those who knew him best marked well the line that had deepened between his brows, the still endurance of his eyes, and the sadness underlying every intonation of his voice; and those who knew him not, and had in their shallower natures no chord to vibrate in sympathy with this grand patience, comprehended it not, and seeing him thus ready and helpful, not evading such pleasant talk as lightened the toil of his comrades, not preoccupied or gloomy, these thought the light wound was already healed, and more than one beside Desire Minter speculated upon his second choice.

[Pg 140]

Listening to the governor's report of Browne's discovery, Standish nodded, as not surprised, and said,—

"Ay, 't is sure to come, soon or late, and a peace won by arms is stronger than one

framed of words. When the salvages have made their onset and we have chastised them roundly, we shall be right good friends. Meantime, Francis Cooke and I left our adzes and wedges where we were hewing plank, and so soon as I have taken bite and sup I'll forth to look for them with my snaphance."

"We've heard of locking the stable door when the steed was stolen," murmured Priscilla to Mary, and the captain, whose ear was quick as a hare's, half turned toward her with a glint of laughter in his eyes.

But the jibe was prophetic, for when, half an hour later, Standish and Cooke returned to the tree they had felled, the tools were all gone, and a headless arrow was left standing derisively in the cleft of a log.

"Hm! A cartel of defiance," said the captain drawing it out and grimly examining it. "Well, 't is like our savage forefathers of Britain challenging Julius Cæsar and the Roman power. But come, Cooke, 't is certain we cannot rive plank with our naked hands, and since our tools are gone, we had best go home and work at the housen. To-morrow we'll take some order with these masters."

[Pg 141]

CHAPTER XIII.

THE CAPTAIN'S PROMOTION.

The afternoon and evening were devoted to a thorough review and furbishing of weapons, many of which had suffered from exposure and neglect during the press of building and of sickness.

And surely never could artist find better subject for his painting than the scene at Elder Brewster's fireside that night where upon the hearth Standish and Alden moulded a heap of silvery bullets, while Priscilla and Mary and Elizabeth Tilley twirled their spinning-wheels, or knitted the long woolen hose worn both by men and women in those days, looking demurely from time to time toward the hearth, where Alden occasionally dropped a little boiling lead into a skillet of hot water, and nodded to one or other of the girls as he drew out the emblems thus formed.

At the back of the room gathered Brewster and Winslow and Carver and Bradford, discussing plans of defense in low and eager tones, while over all fell the broad and ruddy light of the floods of flame that rushed weltering up the chimney and out upon the night, carrying tidings to the wild woods and wilder men crouching in their depths that here were encamped a little band of invaders stronger than the primeval forest, stronger than the primeval man, stronger than Nature, stronger than Tradition.

[Pg 142]

"Then it is well resolved," said Carver rising at last and coming toward the fire, "that to-morrow, so soon as we have committed ourselves to God's protection, and broken our fast, we will assemble with all the men of our company in the Common house, and take counsel for the safety and guidance of the colony. Does this movement suit you, Captain Standish?"

"Ay, Governor. A council of war is ever fitting prelude to action," replied Standish laying down his bullet-mould and standing up.

"And this is a council *coram populo*," said Winslow smiling. "A congress of the whole people."

"Our first town-meeting, if indeed we be a town," said Bradford, answering Winslow's smile.

"Alden, we name you sheriff *pro tempore*, to warn the brethren of this convention. All the men, mind you," said the governor quietly.

"But none of the women, mark you!" whispered Priscilla to John as Carver turned aside.

"Nay, who ever heard of women clamoring to be heard among men in council," suggested Mary Chilton, while Alden, with a side glance and smile at the merry maids, followed the governor a step and said,—

"Ay, sir, and I will moreover warn goodwife Billington to-night, that she may have the Common house redded betimes."

"Well thought on, John," replied Carver smiling, for goodwife Billington's untidiness was but too notorious among her associates.

"Thou 'lt have to lay a hand to 't thyself, John," murmured Priscilla as the young man returned to the fire to gather up the bullets and moulds, and if it must be confessed to seize the chance of one more word with Priscilla; "best bring up two or three buckets of sand from the beach, and when yon slattern hath done her best, spill you the sand over all, and so hide her shortcomings."

[Pg 143]

"'T is good advice, as thine ever is," returned the lover, and so energetic did Goody Billington find both his reminders and his help that evening and the next morning, that the Common house was set in order at a good hour, and by nine o'clock the Council, consisting of nineteen men, all that were left of the forty-one who signed the original compact on board the Mayflower, gathered around the table, where beside the governor sat Howland, ready to take minutes of the proceedings of the meeting, and, as it were, to open the Town Records of Plymouth.

The governor in a short address set forth the danger which evidently menaced the little colony, and invited the opinion of the freemen assembled as to the means of meeting it. One and another offered his brief remarks, and at last Bradford in a few strong and sensible words proposed that the whole company there present should be resolved into a military body, and properly exercised in the use of arms and tactics of defense.

"That is my own thought, Master Bradford," replied Carver eagerly; "and this course is the more feasible that we have among us a man so skilled in warfare, and so judicious in counsel as our brother Standish, who hath already the rank of Captain in the armies of our sovereign King James, and hath for love of liberty and the truth given up the sure prospect of advancement in the king's armies, now that the hordes of Spain are again let loose upon our Dutch allies, and every British soldier is called to their defense. I therefore propose that we appoint Captain Standish our military commander-in-chief, with full power to organize, order, and enforce his authority as he shall see best for the interests of the community, and I for one place myself in all such matters under his command, and promise to answer to his summons, and yield to his counsel in all things appertaining to warfare, offensive or defensive."

[Pg 144]

"And I say as doth the governor," added Winslow, turning his astute and thoughtful face to Standish, with a smile of brotherly confidence.

"And I," added Bradford heartily, and the word of assent went round the table, until each man had given his personal adherence to the new commander-in-chief, and

Brewster closed the list by saying with a benevolent smile,—

"And I, although a man of peace, and too well stricken in years to become an active soldier, will in time of need refuse not to strike a blow under our captain's command for the defense of those God hath entrusted to our care."

"And shall we call Master Standish General, or how shall we mark his new dignity?" asked Hopkins a little pompously.

"Nay, I'll be naught but Captain," replied Standish hastily. "So runneth my commission from good Queen Bess, heaven rest her soul, and here have we neither parchment nor seals, no, nor authority for making out new commissions. I have that I tell of, and 't is enough: 'Our well beloved Captain, Myles Standish,' it runneth, and by that name I'll live and die. But aside from that, I would say, friends, that I am well pleased at the trust you place in me, and that so long as God giveth me life and strength I will heartily place them at the service of this"—

[Pg 145]

But a shriek, followed by a hubbub of voices, and the pattering of many light feet, broke off the captain's sentence, and brought several of the Council to their feet, and to the door, just as it was burst open by a crowd of women and children all clamoring,—

"The Indians! They are upon us! They are coming into the housen! Haste! Haste if ye be men!"

Not waiting to question farther, Standish seized his snaphance which in these days seldom was out of reach, and briefly shouting, "Follow me!" rushed out, looked about him, and seeing nothing seized young John Billington by the arm and demanded, "Where are these Indians, thou yelping cur! Didst rouse that hubbub for naught?"

"Nay, Bart Allerton and Johnny Cooke and I all saw them"—

"Well, lead on, and show them to me too," demanded the captain sternly, and preceded by the half-frightened, half-delighted boys, and followed in more or less order by his new army, he marched up Leyden and down Market streets, until across the brook on the crest of a little hill two savages in full panoply of war suddenly appeared, and gazed defiantly upon the white men.

"Governor, the advance guard of the enemy is in sight, and I propose that I with another, cross the brook and parley with him," said Standish turning to Carver and unconsciously resuming the stiff military manner and habit of a trained soldier in actual service.

"Your powers are discretionary, Captain Standish," replied Carver with gentle dignity. "All is left in your own hands, always remembering that we desire peace rather than war, if so be we may have it in honor."

"Hopkins, wilt volunteer to come with me?" asked the captain briefly, and as briefly the veteran answered, "Ay, Captain," and followed.

[Pg 146]

But as the party of parley approached, the Indian scouts withdrew, and before Standish could reach the spot where they had stood no creature was in sight, although the stir and murmur of a multitude not seeking to conceal itself were heard from the woods densely clothing Watson's Hill and the valley between.

Returning with this report to the town, the captain gave it as his opinion that so long as the enemy held off he should be left undisturbed while the colony devoted itself to

works of defense, especially finishing and arming the Fort upon the hill, and making it ready for immediate use.

"It were well that you and I, Governor, went aboard this morning and stirred up Master Jones to get out our ordnance and help fetch it ashore," concluded he. "Shall we go at once?"

"So soon as the tide makes, Captain; for when the water is out, our harbor is somewhat wet for walking, yet by no means suited for navigation," replied Carver casting a whimsical glance at the verdant flats, then as now replacing the tides of Plymouth Harbor.

"A wise provision of Nature whereby the clams are twice a day left within our reach," replied Standish in the same tone. "After noon-meat then, we will go."

But when the governor and the captain arrived on board the Mayflower they found Jones too stupid with liquor to listen to any plans, and too short-handed when he had been made to understand to carry them out with half the dispatch the ardent spirit of Standish prompted, so that all they effected was to have two of the larger pieces hoisted out of the hold, and one landed and left upon the sand. The next day was devoted to finishing the preparations on shore, and finally on Wednesday, the third day of March, Captain Jones with all of his men fit for service came on shore with the rest of the ordnance, and, aided by the Pilgrims, dragged the clumsy pieces to the top of the eminence now called Burying Hill, and mounted them in the positions carefully marked out beforehand by Standish. The two minions, each eight feet long, a thousand pounds in weight, and carrying a three-pound ball, were planted, the one to command the landing at the rock, and the other the crest of Watson's Hill, where the savages had twice appeared. The saker, a still heavier piece, commanded the north, where the dense coverts of an evergreen forest hid what was soon to be known as the Massachusetts trail, and a very menacing quarter. The two other pieces called bases, and of much lighter calibre, were set at the western face of the Fort, where they would do good service should an enemy attempt to skirt the hill and approach at that side. The pieces were heavy, the appliances crude and clumsy, a shrewd east wind was driving in a sea-fog of the chillest description, and Standish, although he toiled and tugged with the best, proved himself a martinet in his requirements, not sparing in the heat of the struggle some of those curious oaths for which "our army in Flanders" gained a name. But the elder turned a deaf ear at these moments, and neither the truly devout Carver, nor the elegant Winslow, nor formal Allerton, nor self-restrained Bradford, chose to notice these lapses on the part of him who was giving all his energies and all his experience to their defense. As the sun set, Master Jones straightened his back, and setting his hands upon his hips exclaimed,—

[Pg 147]

"There, then, my little generalissimo, thy guns are set, and by thine own ordering, not mine. And let me tell thee now, 't is lucky thou and I do not often train in company, for I'd sooner serve in an Algerian galley than under thee, and if thou wast under me, I'd shoot thee in the first half day."

Standish, who was on his knees sighting his saker, did not hurry himself to rise, but when he did so turned and eyed his ally with a grim smile.

"Thou 'rt right, Jones. Two game-cocks seldom agree until they have fought a main or two. Yet methinks I could train thee to something after a while."

Jones's red face grew redder yet, but before his slow wit had compassed a retort, Carver interposed,—

[Pg 148]

"And now that our good day's work is done, it is seemly that we should soberly rejoice and exult. Master Jones, wilt thou and thy men sup with us?"

The sailor's face cleared directly, and with a roar of jovial merriment he replied,—

"Marry will we, Master Governor, an' if you had not bidden us, I had bidden you to the feast, for I brought more than cold iron ashore, I promise you."

"What, then? Some beer and strong waters?" demanded Hopkins eagerly.

"Ay, man, and a fat goose ten pound weight, and some wild fowl beside, and a whole runlet of beer and a pottle of Hollands. I brought them that we should all make merry for once, and forget all that's come and gone, and that you should wish me a fair passage home, and good luck on getting there."

"Thou 'rt a good fellow, after all, Jones, and I for one will meet thee half way, and pledge thee in mine own liquor, and change a bit of my tender crane shot yesterday for a leg of thy goose." So saying, Standish smote the sailor upon his shoulder, and took his great paw into the grasp of a hand small and shapely, but of such iron grip that the burly fellow winced, and wringing away his fingers cried,—

[Pg 149]

"Nay, then, thou 'rt more cruel as a friend than thou 'rt maddening as a master. I'll none of thee."

"And where are thy generous gifts now bestowed?" asked Bradford practically.

"In the Common house. I bade Clarke go down the hill after our snack at noon, and take them all out of the boat's cuddy and carry them up to goodwife Billington, who is a famous cook, of wild fowl in particular"—

"She hath had practice while her goodman was poach—nay, then, I mean gamekeeper on my Lord the Marquis of Carrabas's estates," put in Standish gravely, and Billington, who stood by, started, tried to look fierce, but ended with a craven laugh.

"Then Alden," suggested the Governor, "thou hadst best tell the women at the elder's house to send over their own vivers, or a portion of them, to the Common house, and we will all sup together. We have the captain's crane and a brace of mallards, and a salted neat's tongue, with some other matters, Master Jones, and can methinks well forget for one night that hunger and cold and danger are lying at the door. 'T is wise to be merry at times that we may better bear trouble at others."

"Ay, 't is a poor heart that never rejoices," replied the Master, in what for him was a pleasant voice, although with a suspicious look around, lest anybody should be jeering at his unwonted amenity.

[Pg 150]

But Standish was casting a comprehensive look about his little fortalice to see if all was ready to be left for the night, and the younger men were already going down the hill, and Carver and Bradford stood awaiting their guest with cheerful and open countenance, devoid of mischief or guile. So the old sea-dog sheathed his fangs, restrained his growl, and assumed the bearing of coarse good humor which was his rare concession to the claims of good society.

And now Alden hasting upon his errand found that Priscilla had already been warned by Helen Billington of the proposed feast, and with Mistress Brewster's consent had arranged the tables in the Common house, and added to the heavier viands some delicate dishes of her own composition, finishing by making a kettle of plum porridge whereon the women were to regale themselves in the Brewster kitchen

while their lords feasted in the Common house.

And thus with sober mirth and honest friendliness closed a day so important in the annals of the settlement.

[Pg 151]

CHAPTER XIV.

SECOND MARRIAGES.

Doubtless the Indians lurking in the woods of Watson's Hill had watched with wonder and alarm the process of mounting and securing the ordnance of the Fort, itself a novel structure in their eyes, and wisely concluded to consider the question of peace or war a little further before bringing it to an open issue. At any rate, they were no more seen at present, and the colonists wasted no time in pursuing them, but as the ground dried and warmed hastened to put in such grain and garden seeds as they had provided, and to lay out the little plots of ground attached to each house. Among the other crops was one whose harvest no man, woman, or child of that well-nigh famished company would have eaten, a crop of wheat whose ripened seeds were allowed to fall as they would, to sink again into the earth, or to feed the birds of heaven, for it was sown above the leveled graves of that half the Pilgrims who in the first four months found the city that they sought. So numerous and so prominent upon the bold bluff of Cole's Hill were these graves becoming, that Standish, overlooking the town from the Fort and his home close beneath its walls, pointed out to Carver and Bradford that the savages, doubtless as keen-eyed as himself, would in seeing how many of the invaders were under ground find courage to attack those still living, and it was his proposal that the earth should be leveled and planted.

[Pg 152]

"To what crop?" asked Bradford.

"It matters not," replied Standish a little impatiently. "No man will care to eat of it, knowing what lies beneath."

"Thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat or of some other grain, but God giveth it a body," quoted Carver in a low voice, and Standish reverently answered,—

"Ay. Let it be wheat, since that is Paul's order."

But that night as the sun was setting behind the gloomy evergreen forest closing the western horizon, the captain, avoiding his comrades, went quietly up the hill to the Fort, and thence made a circuit northward and eastward so as to come out upon the bluff of Cole's Hill. Passing among the graves with careful feet he presently stood beside one, mounded and shaped with care, and protected by willow rods bent over it and into the ground at either side. Recently cut, these boughs yet bore their pretty catkins, and the leaves which had already started seemed inclined to persist in life and growth.

Removing his buff-cap and folding his arms Standish stood long beside this grave, silent and almost stern of look, but his heart eloquent with that deep and inarticulate language in which great souls commune with God, and with those mysteries of life so far transcending man's comprehension or powers of definition.

At last he gently pulled up the ends of the willow rods at one side, and passing round

to the other would have done the same, but seeing how fresh and green they looked held his hand.

"They would grow an' I left them," muttered he; but then with a mournful gesture added in the same tone, "Nay, then, what need. I shall know where thou liest, Rose, and"—

[Pg 153]

Not ungently he drew the twigs from the earth, and stood holding them in his hand as a voice behind him said,—

"Ay, brother, we must say good-by even to the graves we have loved. Stern necessity is our master."

Standish, ill pleased at the interruption, turned a dark face upon the new-comer.

"And yet I have heard, Master Winslow, that thou art already speaking of marriage with Mistress White. Is stern necessity master there also?"

"Yes, Standish," replied Winslow frowning a little and speaking more coldly than at first. "You may see it for yourself. Here are we, a scant threescore souls, not one score grown men, come to people a savage land and make terms with hordes of savage inhabitants. Is it not the clearest, ay, sternest necessity that those of us who are unwived, to our sorrow though it be, should take the women who remain, be they maids or widows, in honorable wedlock, and rear up children to fill our places when we are gone? Have we a right, man, to follow our own fantasies and mourn and mourn like cushat doves over the graves of our lost mates while the women we ought to cherish struggle on uncared for?"

"Hast put the matter in this light to William White's widow?" asked Standish sarcastically.

"Nay," returned Winslow with his usual calm. "Words that suit men are not always for women's ears. What I may say to Susanna White is not of necessity the business of the Council"—

"Any more than my errand here to-night," retorted Standish, the spark kindling in his brown eyes.

[Pg 154]

"Softly, brother, softly," replied Winslow in his measured tones, and laying a finger upon the other's arm. "It would ill befit us two to quarrel here between thy wife's grave and mine. We are brethren, and if I said aught that displeased thee I am right sorry"—

"Nay, then, 't is I was hasty," interrupted Standish. "Surely thy marriage is thine own affair, not mine, and I wish you godspeed with all my heart."

"And yet, brother, I am not all content lacking thine approval, for there is neither head nor heart in the colony more honorable than thine."

"He who praises thee to the face is a false friend; the true one reproveth thee," quoted Standish with his peculiar grim smile.

"And am not I reproving thee for thy selfish disregard of the common weal?" persisted Winslow, his own smile a little forced. "Nay, then, must I bewray confidence and tell thee that one who knows assures me that Priscilla Molines would not say thee nay wert thou to ask her?"

"Pst! What folly art thou at now, Master Winslow? This is no more than woman's gossip. Some of thy new love's havers, I'll be bound."

"Did not William Molines send to seek speech with thee the night he died?" asked Winslow fixing his keen eyes upon the soldier's perturbed face.

"Ay, but it was he and I alone."

"Well, then, he had taken counsel first with a godly matron, in whose judgment he trusted."

"Mistress White?"

"Ay."

"I would I had known it that day." And with no farther good-by the Captain turned and strode down the hill ill pleased.

[Pg 155]

The next day rose warm and misty. The veiled sun seemed smiling behind the soft vapors, and the earth throbbing with the sweet hopes of spring smiled back at him. The leaves of willow, and alder, and birch, and maple, and elm, uncurled their delicate fronds and shyly held out hands of welcome to the south wind; the birds sang clear and sweet in the woods, and the delicate springs of sweet water answered back with rippling laughter and joyous dance.

"A goodly scene, a veritable garden of the Lord," said William Bradford standing outside the elder's door, and gazing down upon the valley of Town Brook, and across at the wood-covered hillside beyond. Standish, whom he addressed, was just coming out of the house, after his breakfast, and without reply laid his hand upon the younger man's arm and led him up the hill.

"Whither bound this fair morning my Captain?" asked Bradford, in whose blood the brave morning air worked like wine.

"First to fetch my snaphance, and then I will have thee into the wood for a stroll to enjoy thy fine day, and to hold counsel with thy friend."

"And that is ever to mine own advantage," replied Bradford with affectionate honesty. Standish glanced at him with the rare sweetness sometimes lighting the rigor of his soldierly face, and as they had reached the door of the cabin nestled beneath the Fort, where John Alden and his friend abode, Standish entered, leaving the future governor to feast his eyes upon the wider view outspread at his feet. Climbing still further to the platform of the Fort, he stood lost in reverie, his eyes fixed upon the lonely Mayflower, sole occupant of the harbor, as she clumsily rode at anchor tossing upon the flood tide.

[Pg 156]

"We shall miss the crazy craft when she is gone," said Standish rejoicing him.

"Ay. She is the last bit of Old England," replied Bradford, musingly. For a few moments the two men stood intently gazing upon the vessel, each heart busy with its own thoughts, then, as by a common impulse turned, descending the side of the hill toward the lower spring, and passed into the forest.

"What is thy matter for counsel, friend?" asked Bradford finding that Standish strode on in what seemed gloomy silence.

"Yon ship."

"The Mayflower?"

"What other? She brought a hundred souls to these shores some six months ago."

"Ay, and now we are fifty."

"Fifty alive, and fifty under the sea, or on yon headland where to-day we level the mounds over their poor bodies and plant wheat to cheat the salvages."

"'T is too true, good friend, and well I wot that the delight of thine eyes lies buried there"—

"And thine beneath the waters of our first harbor," interrupted Standish harshly, for the proud, tender heart could not bear even so light a touch.

"Yes," replied Bradford briefly, and over his face passed a cloud blotting out all the boyish enjoyment of scene and hour that had enlivened its ordinarily thoughtful features. Was Dorothy May indeed the delight of his eyes and heart?

"Yes, we two men came hither husbands, and to-day we stand as widowers, and 't is in that matter I seek counsel," exclaimed Standish suddenly as he turned to face his friend. "Last night, Master Winslow standing between the graves of his wife and mine, read me a lecture upon the duty unwived men owe to the community. He says it is naught but selfishness to let our private griefs rule our lives, that we are bound to seek new mates and raise up children to carry on the work we have begun. Nor can we doubt his own patriotism, or the honesty of his counsels, for already he has spoken to the widow of William White, and his own wife but six weeks under ground."

[Pg 157]

"Yes, I know—they will be wed shortly," replied Bradford a little embarrassed. Standish eyed him keenly.

"And thou art of his mind, and mayhap thine own new mate is already bespoken?" demanded he in angry surprise.

"Nay, Standish, thou 'rt not reasonable to quarrel with another man's conscience so that it thwarts not thine," replied Bradford patiently, although the color rose to his cheek as he felt the scorn of his comrade's voice. "Neither Winslow nor I would do aught that we could not answer for to God, and have not we come to this wilderness that we might be free to serve Him only, in matters of conscience?"

"I meant not to forget courtesy, nay, nor friendship neither, Bradford; but my speech is ever hasty and none too smooth. So thou wilt marry, anon?"

"I'll tell thee friend, and thou 'rt the first I've told. There is a lady in the old country"—

"Which old country? The Netherlands or England?"

"She is in England now, or was when we set forth. Thou must have seen her, Standish,—Alice Carpenter, who wedded Edward Southworth in Amsterdam."

[Pg 158]

"Oh, ay. A goodly crop of daughters had Father Carpenter, and not one hung on hand so soon as she was marriageable. Truly, I remember Mistress Southworth well, a fair and discreet dame. And she was left a widow not many days before we left England, if I mistake not."

"Ay. One little week."

"And didst thou woo her as in the play I saw when last I was in London, King Richard wooed the widow of him he had slain, following her husband's corse to the grave? Nay then, nay then, man, I meant it not awry. But to ask a woman within one week of her widowhood, and thou still wived"—

"Nay, nay, nay, Myles, thou 'rt all alee and I doubt me if I had not better kept mine own counsel. I have not looked upon Alice Carpenter's face nor heard her voice since she was Southworth's wife."

"Oh, ay—I see, I see—'t is an old flame and thou 'rt of mind to try to kindle it once more. You were sweethearts of old, eh, lad?"

"Something so,—though I meant not to say so much, and now must leave the secret in thine honor, Captain."

"Dost doubt the ward, Bradford?"

"Nay. I trust thee as myself, and thou knowest it. Why must thou ever be so hot, Myles? Yes, when Master Carpenter and his fair troop of daughters came to Leyden it was not long until I saw that Alice was both fairest and sweetest of them all; but thou knowest the fight we had for bread, winning it by strange and unaccustomed labors: I, who knew naught but my books, and something of husbandry, becoming a weaver of baize; Brewster a ribbon weaver, Tilley a silk worker, Cushman a wool comber, Eaton a carpenter, and so on; well, goodman Carpenter was loth to trust his maid to such scant living as I could offer, nor would he let us even call ourselves troth-plight; and Alice, the gentle, timid maid that she was, yielded all to her father's will, and I, in the naughty pride of a young man's heart, was angered that she would not promise to hold herself against all importunities, and we quarreled, or forsooth I should say I quarreled, and flung away, and I knew Dorothy May and her kin, and she, poor soul, was ready to wed as her father willed"—

[Pg 159]

"Enough Will, enough; it is not good to put all that is in one's heart into words. I see the whole story. And now thou 'lt write to Mistress Southworth and ask her to come out with the residue of our company, and become thy wife?"

"Ay, dear friend, that is my plan," said Bradford, wringing the hand Standish extended, and turning his flushed face aside.

"And why not?" asked Myles heartily. "'T is no new affair, no hasty furnishing forth of a marriage feast with the cold vivers of the funeral tables, as yon fellow said in the play. 'T is marvelous like one of those old romaunts my kinswoman Barbara used to tell over to me and the dear lass that's gone. There now—and thou hadst not this matter in hand, I'd wive thee to Barbara Standish—'t is the best wench alive, I do believe, and full of quip, and crank as a jest book."

"Thy cousin?" asked Bradford rather absently.

"Ay, but I know not just how nigh. Her father held for his lifetime a little place of ours on the Isle of Man, and I, trying to find an old record that should give me a fair estate feloniously held from me now, went over there once and again, and so met Rose, and went yet again and again, until we two wed, and I carried her away to my friends in the Netherlands."

[Pg 160]

"And is thy cousin wed?"

"Nay, did not I say I'd like to give her to thee to wife? But barring that, I'll send for her to come with the next company, perchance under charge of thy sober widow, Will, and I'll marry her to one of these our good friends here. So if I do not marry myself, for the weal of the community as Winslow says, I shall purvey for some one of them a wife and mother of children in my stead."

"'T is well thought on, Captain," replied Bradford laughing, "and I can promise that if

Mistress Southworth makes the voyage she will gladly take charge of thy cousin, for whom we will choose a husband of our best. But why wilt not thou marry again, thyself? Was not that in thy mind in speaking of counsel?"

"Ay—nay—in good sooth I know not, lad. I fain would know thine own intentions, and I have them, but for myself—truth to tell, I care not to wed again. I lived many years with only my good sword here as sweetheart and comrade, and I was well stead, and—none can make good the treasure late found and soon lost—but yet—come now, Will, confidence for confidence, I'll tell thee somewhat"—

"Touching fair Mistress Priscilla?" asked Bradford with a smile of quiet humor.

"Aha!" exclaimed Standish, a swarthy color mounting to his cheek. "'T is common talk, then!"

"Well, I know not—certes I have heard it spoken on more than once, but to say 'common talk'—we who are left alive are so few and so bound together that 't is no more than a family, and the weal of each is common to all."

[Pg 161]

"But what hast thou heard, in very truth?"

"Why, naught, except that Priscilla hath a sort of kindness for thee, and thou hast, in a way, made her affairs thine own, and so 't was naught but likely"—

"Ay, ay, I see, I ever had but an ill idea of great families, having been born into one myself,—as thou sayest, the affairs of one are the gossip of all."

"Nay, I said"—

"Pst, man, I know what thou saidst, and what I think, so hold thy peace. Nay, then, this idle prating hath a certain foundation, as smoke aye shows some little fire beneath, and I'll tell it thee. When William Molines lay a-dying his mind was sore distraught at leaving his poor, motherless maid alone, for his son Joseph had gone before him, so he sent for me to watch with him that night, and somewhere in the small hours we thought his time had come, and he besought me to promise that I would take the maid under my keeping and not let her come to want. He said naught of marriage, nor did I, for my wife was but then at rest, and such speech would have been unseemly for him and hateful to me. I took his words as they were spoken, and I gave my promise, and so far as there was need I have kept it, and seen that the maid was housed and fed and looked after by Mistress Brewster, but more, I thought not on."

"Master Molines was a discreet and careful man and seldom told out all his thought," said Bradford astutely. "Methinks he counted upon 'the way of a man with a maid,' and left it to thee to find out the most perfect plan of caring for a young gentlewoman."

[Pg 162]

"Dost think so, Will? Dost think he meant me to take her to wife? Dost think she so considers it?" and Myles snatching off his barret-cap pushed up the hair from his suddenly heated and burning forehead. Bradford looked at him with his peculiar smile of subtle humor and shrewd kindness.

"Why, Myles, thou lookst fairly frightened! Thou who never counted the foe, or thought twice ere leading a forlorn hope, or asked quarter of Turk or Spaniard"—

"Nay, nay, nay, Will, spare thy gibes! Here is a moil, here is an ambushment! Here am I, going fair and softly on mine own way, and of a sudden the trap is sprung, and Honor starts up and cries, 'There's but one way out of it, take it, willy-nilly!' If the

maid is of her father's mind I am bound to her."

"I think she would not say thee nay," said Bradford demurely.

"Thou hast no right to avow that, Will, and I were but a sorry knave to believe it. A lady's yea-say is an honor to any man, and he who receives it must do so in all reverence. No man hath a right to fancy or to say that a modest maid is ready with yea or nay before she is asked."

"Thou art right, and I wrong, Myles, and in truth I know naught of Mistress Priscilla's mind."

"But I will, and that ere many days are past. Thou hast done me a good turn, Will, in showing me where I stand. I dreamed not that Molines was—well,—he died peacefully and I will not disturb his rest. Yes, I will but wait until the Mayflower is gone and my cabin weather-tight, and the garden sown, and then I will speak with Priscilla. If Barbara comes she'll be rare good company for both of us."

[Pg 163]

Again Bradford smiled very quietly, and the two men walked on in silence.

[Pg 164]

CHAPTER XV.

SAMOSET.

Once more the freemen of the colony were convened in Council around the well-scoured table in the principal room of the Common house, become for the nonce a House of Commons, and Captain Standish was explaining the scheme he had arranged for organizing his little army, when again the solemnity of the meeting was invaded by shrill cries of alarm and anger, this time, however, in a solo rather than chorus, for goodwife Billington having taken the field, her more timid sisters were abashed into silence.

"Thou foul beast, I say begone! Scat! Avaunt! Nay, grin not at me thou devil straight from hell! Wait but till I fetch a bucket of boiling water to throw over thee, thou Cheshire cat! I'll soon see how much of thy nasty color is fast dye"—

"What means this unseemly brawling?" sternly demanded Elder Brewster as Standish ceased speaking, and all eyes involuntarily turned toward the door.

"Billington, the voice is that of thy wife. Go, and warn her that we tolerate no common scolds in our midst, and that the cucking-stool and the pillory"—

But the elder's threats and Billington's shamefaced obedience and the wonder of all who had listened to the outbreak were cut short by a startling apparition upon the threshold; the savages had really come at last, or at least one of them, for here stood, tall and erect, the splendid figure of a man, naked except for a waistband of buckskin fringe, his skin of a bright copper color glistening in the morning sun, and forming a rich background for the vari-colored paints with which it was decorated; his coarse, black hair, cut square above the eyebrows, fell upon his shoulders at the back, and was ornamented by three eagle-feathers woven into its tresses; in his hand he carried a bow nearly as tall as himself, and two arrows; a sharp little hatchet, evidently of European make, was thrust into his girdle, but the keenness of its edge was less than that of the glances with which he watched the slightest movement of

[Pg 165]

the armed men who started to their feet at his approach.

The savage was the first to speak, and his utterance has become as classic as Cæsar's "Veni,"—for it was,—

"Welcome!"

As he pronounced it, and looked about him with kindly, if wary eyes, the Pilgrims drew a long breath, and the tense anxiety of the moment lapsed into aspects various as the temperaments of the men.

"What! Do these men speak English, then!" exclaimed Allerton bewildered, while Standish muttered,—

"Look to your side-arms, men. He may mean treachery," and noble Carver, extending his hand, said,—

"Thanks for your courtesy, friend. How know you our language?"

"I am Samoset. I am friend of Englishmen. I come to say welcome."

"Truly 't is a marvel to hear him speak in our own tongue and so glibly too. Mark you how he chooses his words as one of some dignity himself," said Bradford softly, but the quick ears of the savage caught the substance of his words, and tapping his broad chest lightly with his fingers he proudly replied,—

"Samoset, sachem of Monhegan. Samoset do well to many Englishmen in his own country."

"And where is Monhegan, friend Samoset?" asked Carver pleasantly. "Might it be this place?"

"This place Patuxet. Monhegan nearer to the sunrise," replied Samoset pointing eastward.

"And how far?"

"Suppose walk, five days; big wind in ship, one day."

"And how camest thou, and when?"

"Ship. Three, four moons ago."

"Ah, then it is not an armed assault upon us," said Carver aside and in a tone of relief.

"Nay, these salvages are more treacherous than a quicksand. Try him with more questions," suggested Hopkins, the other men murmuring assent, while the Indian glancing with his opaque, black eyes from one to another showed not how much he understood of what went on about him.

"In vino veritas," suggested Bradford with a smile. "Were it not well to give him something by way of welcome?"

"Samoset like beer. Much talk make throat dry like brook in summer," remarked the guest, but whether in response or not no one could say.

"Thou 'rt right, man, and though thy skin's tawny, thy inside is very like a white man's," exclaimed Standish with a laugh. "John Alden, thou knowest the cupboards of this place passing well; find our friend wherewith to fill yon dry brook-bed of a

throat; that is with the governor's permission."

[Pg 167]

"Surely, surely, Captain Standish," replied Carver with gentle alacrity. "Your word is enough. And while Alden finds wherewithal to feed and quench his thirst, John Howland shall bring a mantle or cloak from my house to throw about him, for it is not seemly that our people should see us entertaining a man stark as he was born."

"T is well said, Master Carver. I had some such thought myself," said Allerton rather primly, while Hopkins and Billington exchanged an irreverent grin, and Standish stroked his moustache.

The cloak was brought, and gracefully accepted by Samoset, who evidently regarded it as a ceremonial robe of state, designed to mark his admittance as an honored guest at the white men's board, and draping it toga-wise across his shoulder, he sat down to a plentiful repast of cold duck, biscuit, butter, cheese, and a kind of sausage called black pudding. To these solids was added a comfortable tankard of spirits and water, from which Samoset at once imbibed a protracted draught.

"Englishman have better drink than poor Indian," remarked he placing the tankard close beside his plate, and seizing a leg of the duck in his hands.

"T is sure enough that he has been much with white men,—yes, and Englishmen, too, by the way he takes down his liquor," remarked Hopkins.

"Nay, methinks our Dutch brethren could take down a deep draught, too, and this is their own liquor," said Bradford, while Winslow muttered in Carver's ear,—

"Let not Alden leave the case-bottle within reach of the savage. Enough will loosen his tongue, but a little more will bind it."

"True," assented the Governor, nodding to Alden, who quietly replaced the bottle in the case whence he had taken it. Samoset followed it with longing eyes, but his own dignity prevented remonstrance except by finishing the flagon and ostentatiously turning it upside down.

[Pg 168]

After this, the meal was soon finished, and the conversation resumed, partly by signs and inference, partly by Samoset's limited stock of English. By one means and the other the Pilgrims presently learned that Monhegan was a large island near to the mainland in a northeasterly direction, and a great resort of fishing vessels, mostly English, with whose masters Samoset, as sachem of the Indians in those parts, had both traded and feasted, learning their language, their manners, and, what was worse, their habits of strong drink and profanity, neither of which however seemed to have taken any great hold upon him, being reserved rather as accomplishments and proofs that he too had studied men and manners.

The master of one of these fishing craft some few months previously had invited the sachem to accompany him across the bay to Cape Cod, where the sailor wished to traffic with the natives, and Samoset had since remained in this part of the country visiting Massasoit, sachem of the Wampanoags, who with a large party of his warriors was now lying in the forest outside of the settlement, waiting apparently for the result of Samoset's reconnoissance before he should determine on his own line of action.

Farther inquiry elicited the fact that the former inhabitants of Plymouth, or Patuxet, a people tributary to Massasoit, but living under their own sachem, had been totally exterminated by a plague, perhaps small-pox, which had swept over the country two or three years before the landing of the Pilgrims, leaving, so far as Samoset could

[Pg 169]

tell, only one man alive; this man seeking refuge among the Nausets, the tribe to the east of Patuxet, was one of the victims entrapped by Hunt, escaping from whom, he lived a long time in England with a merchant of London named Slaney, who finally sent him in a fishing vessel to Newfoundland, whence he had made his way back to his friends on Cape Cod.

"And this man," demanded Winslow eagerly. "Where is he now? Do ye not perceive, friends, that this is an instrument shaped and fitted to our hands by the Providence of God, who hath also sent His plague to sweep away the inhabitants of this spot whither He would lead His chosen people?"

"Of a truth it seemeth so," replied Carver reverently, while Standish muttered in his beard,—

"Pity but the salvages had known 't was Providence! 'T would have converted them out of hand."

The elder who had his own opinion of the soldier's orthodoxy looked askance at the half-heard murmuring, and suddenly demanded,—

"Where, then, is this man? How call you him?"

"Tisquantum he name. English trader across big water call him other fool name. Red man not know it."

"Tisquantum is well enough for a name, but why did he not come hither with you, Samoset?"

"Tisquantum much wise. He like see other fox put his paw in trap first before he try it." And as he thus betrayed his comrade's diplomacy the savage allowed a subtle smile to lighten his eyes, which, with the instinct that in simple mental organizations is so much surer than reason, he fixed upon Winslow, who laughed outright as he replied,—

[Pg 170]

"Wiser than thou, Samoset, me-seemeth. How is it thou wast so much more daring than thy fellow?"

"Samoset poor fool. He not know enough to be afraid of anything. Not wiselike white man and Tisquantum." And the sachem with a superb smile settled the tomahawk at his girdle, and threw off the folds of his horseman's cloak. But the grim smile upon most of the faces around the board showed that the jest had given no offense to men who knew their own and each other's courage, and the conference presently broke up, the visitor amusing himself by strolling around the village, discreetly wrapped in his cloak, and taking a malicious delight in encountering Helen Billington, who never failed to greet him with a fusillade of suppressed wrath, to which he listened attentively, as if desirous of storing up some of the objurgations for his own future use. As night fell, and the guest showed no intention of departure, some of the more cautious settlers suggested that he should be put on board the Mayflower for safe keeping, a plan which met Samoset's ready approval, for as he sententiously remarked,—

"Captain-man have much strong waters."

But then, as now, he who would navigate Plymouth Harbor must take both wind and tide into account, and when Samoset with Cooke, Browne, and Eaton to row him reached the shallop, they found her high and dry, with a stiff east wind in her teeth. The next plan was to bestow the dangerous guest safely on shore, and this was finally done in the loft of Stephen Hopkins's house, the veteran host grimly

promising that he should not stir so much as a finger-nail but he would know it; and in spite of goodwife Billington's assurance to her sisters that they should one and all be murdered in their beds before morning, the sun arose upon them in peace and safety, and soon after breakfast the Indian was dismissed with some small gifts, and an agreement that he should come again the next day, bringing Squanto, and such others as desired to trade with the white men, and could offer skins of beaver, martin, or other valuable fur.

"Could not they fetch a few ermine and miniver skins while they are at it," suggested Priscilla. "Methinks in this wilderness we women might at least solace ourselves with the show of royalty, sith we are too far from the throne to have our right disputed."

"Who knows but that we may found a new kingdom here in the New World," replied John Alden playfully. "And where should we find a fitter sovereign than Queen Priscilla?"

But Saturday passed over quietly, and it was not until Sunday morning that the Pilgrims coming out of the Common house after the morning service met Samoset stalking into the village followed by five other tall fellows, powerful but unarmed, Standish having sternly warned Samoset that neither he nor his companions must bring any weapon into the white man's settlement without permission. Much to the relief of the women who encountered these guests, it was at once seen that Samoset had understood and communicated the hint involved in lending him a cloak to wear during his previous visit, for all were fully dressed in deerskin robes with leggings fastened to the girdle and disappearing at the ankle within moccasins of a style very familiar to our eyes, although a great marvel to those of the Pilgrims, who, however soon adopted and enjoyed them highly. Samoset and another savage, who seemed to be his especial associate, also carried each a finely dressed wild-cat skin as a sort of shield upon the left arm, and all were profusely decorated with paint, feathers, strings of shells, and one man with the tail of a fox gracefully draped across his forehead. All wore the hair in the cavalier style, long upon the shoulders and cut square across the brow, and all were comely and dignified looking warriors.

The governor, elder, captain, with some other of the principal men, stood still in the open space where the King's Highway crossed The Street, and greeted, soberly as befitted the day, yet cordially as befitted charity and hospitality, their guests, who watched with wary eyes every movement of the hosts whom they hardly trusted, while Samoset, stepping forward, unrolled a fine mat, or wrapping-rug, in his arm, and ceremoniously laid two axes and a wedge at the feet of Standish, saying briefly,

"The white chief has his own again."

"Our tools. Yes, that is as it should be," replied the captain, "although we may not use them to-day."

"Six hungry guests to divide the dinner with us!" exclaimed Priscilla in dismay as she stood at Mistress Brewster's side, her glowing brunette beauty shining out in contrast with the soft ashen tints of the older woman's face.

"Ay 't will put us to our trumps to make ready enough hot victual for all," replied the elder's wife.

"They shall have none of the marchpane thou didst make yestere'en, Priscilla!" expostulated Desire Minter anxiously. "There is no more than enow for us that be women."

"That will rest as our dear mother says," replied Priscilla smiling into Dame Brewster's face.

"Nay, it needs not the marchpane thou madest so toilsomely to entertain these salvages to whom our ship-biscuit are a treat," and the elder woman smiled tenderly back into the glowing face so near her own.

So presently the table in the Common house was spread with what to the red men was a feast of the gods, and they gravely ate enough for twelve men, evidently carrying out the time-honored policy of Dugald Dalgetty and of the camel, to lay in as there is opportunity provision not only for the present, but the future. Dinner ended, both red and white men assembled in the open space before mentioned, now in Plymouth called the Town Square, and the Indians grouping themselves in the centre began what may be called a dance, although from the gravity of their faces and solemnity of their movements the elder was seized with a suspicion that fairly turned him pale.

"Are the heathen creatures practicing their incantations and warlock-work in our very midst, and on the Lord's Day?" demanded he. "Stephen Hopkins, thou knowest their devices, how is it?"

"Nay, Elder," replied Hopkins chuckling in spite of his efforts at Sunday sobriety. "It is a feast-dance, a manner of thanksgiving"—

"A sort of grace after meat," suggested Billington in an aside; but the elder heard him, and turning the current of his wrath in that direction exclaimed,—

"Peace, ribald! Thou art worse than the heathen in making sport of holy things."

"I knew not yon antics were holy things, Elder," retorted the reckless jester; but Standish ranging up alongside of him muttered,—

"One word more and thou 'lt deal with me, John Billington," and though the reprobate affected to laugh contemptuously he remained silent.

To the solemn feast-dance succeeded a more lively measure accompanied with barbarous sounds intended for singing, and the performance ended with gestures and pantomime obviously suggesting a treaty of amity and peace, as indeed Samoset presently interpreted it, closing the scene with the offer of such skins as the men wore upon their arms, and promises of more furs in the near future.

But the Sunday-keeping Pilgrims would not enter even into the semblance of trade upon that day, and, although they could not explain the reason to the Indians, made them understand that their dances, their singing, and their gifts, which were of course to be repaid, were all impossible for them to consider upon that day, and that, in fact, the sooner they withdrew from the village the better their hosts would be pleased. Adding however the wisdom of the serpent to the guilelessness of the dove, they coupled with this dismissal a very earnest invitation for the savages to return on the morrow and bring more skins, indeed all that they could spare, the white men promising to purchase them at a fair price.

The Indians listened gravely to so much of this harangue as Samoset translated to them, and the five new-comers at once, and with no ceremony of farewell, glided one after the other down the path leading past the spring to Watson's Hill, and were no more seen; but Samoset throwing himself upon the ground pressed his hands upon his stomach moaning loudly and declaring himself in great agony.

"He has a colic from over-feeding. Give him a dose of strong waters and capsicum," said the elder compassionately; and Standish with a grim smile remarked, "Truly the man hath been an apt scholar in the ways of civilization. He minds me of a varlet of mine own, whose colics I effectually cured after a while by mingling a certain drug with the strong waters he craved. 'T was better than a sea-voyage for clearing his stomach."

[Pg 175]

"Nay, Captain, we'll not deal so harshly with the poor fellow at the beginning, whatever may come at the end," said the Governor smiling. "Howland, get the man his dram, and if he will not go, put him to sleep in Hopkins's house and under his ward."

[Pg 176]

CHAPTER XVI.

PRISCILLA MOLINES' LETTER.

"John Alden, the captain says thou 'rt a ready writer. Didst learn that along with coopering?"

"Nay, Mistress Priscilla, I was not dubbed cooper until I was a se'nnight old, or so."

"Oho! Then thy schoolcraft all came in the first week of thy life. Eh?"

"Have thy way, Priscilla. Thou knowst well enow thou canst not anger me."

"Truly? Well I never cared to see a man maiden-mEEK. But thou canst write?"

"Ay, and so canst thou, I have heard."

"Heed not all thou hearest, John; no, nor believe all thou seest."

"But what about my pencraft? Can I do aught for thee, Priscilla?"

"Mayhap."

"And what is it, maid? Well thou knowest that it is more than joy for me to do thy bidding."

"Nay, I know not what feeling 'more than joy' can be, unless haply it topple over t' other side and become woe, and I would be loth to breed thee woe."

"And I am as loth to let thee; but still thou dost it and will do it."

"Verily!"

"Ay, verily; but what is thy bidding, Priscilla? for I have an errand on hand."

[Pg 177]

"And what weighty matter claims thee for its guardian?"

"Nay, 't is no such weighty matter, nor is it a secret. The governor will have me warn the men to gather in the Common house to-morrow to complete the affairs twice broken off by the visit of our red-skinned neighbors."

"And mark my words, John, they'll come again to-morrow so sure as you try to hold council. 'T is a fate, and you'll not escape it."

"Pooh, child! Dost believe in signs and fates?"

"My forbears did. Haply thou hadst none, and so escaped the corruption of such folly."

"Nay now, Priscilla, each one of us has just as many grandsires as another all the way back to Adam, only some of us have had more important matter in hand than to reckon up their names, and 't will never spoil a night's rest for me that I know not if my great-grandam was Cicely or Phyllis. But tell me, mistress, what my pen can do for thee?"

"Thy pen! Then 't is not thy heart or thy hand that is at my service?" and Priscilla raised a pair of such melting and velvety brown eyes to the somewhat offended face of the young giant that he at once tumbled into the depths of abject submission, and trying to seize her hand exclaimed,—

"Oh sweetheart, thou knowest only too well that hand and heart and all I have are thine if thou wilt but take them."

"Nay, John, thou must not speak so, no, nor touch my hand until I give it thee of mine own free will"—

"Until? Nay, that means that some time thou wilt give it!"

[Pg 178]

"Well, then, I don't say until, and if thou dost pester me I'll say never. And I'll ask John Howland to write my letter."

"Stay, stay Priscilla! If 't is a letter to be written let me write it, for I was the first one asked, and I'll not pester thee, lass. I am a patient man by nature, and I'll bide thy good pleasure."

"There, now, that's more sensible, and as my own time runs short as well as thine, sit down at the corner of the table here—hast thy ink-horn with thee? Ay, well, here is paper ready, and we have time before I must make supper."

"Yes, an hour or more," said John looking at some marks upon the window ledge cut to show the shadows cast at noon, at sunrise, and at sunset at this time in the year. Priscilla meantime had arranged the writing materials upon the corner of the heavy oaken table with its twisted legs and cross pieces still to be seen in Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth as Elder Brewster's table, and drawing up two new-made oaken stools, for the elder's chair in the chimney-corner was not to be lightly or profanely occupied, she said,—

"Come now, Master Alden, I am ready."

"I would thou wert ready," murmured John, but as the blooming face remained bent over the table, and the very shoulders showed cold indifference, he continued hastily as he seated himself,—

"And so am I ready. To whom shall I address the letter?"

"Methinks I would first put time and place at the head of the sheet. So have I noted that letters are most commonly begun."

"Ay. Well, then, here is:—

[Pg 179]

"The Settlement of New Plymouth, March the 21st inst. A. D. 1620." For thus in Old Style did John Alden count the date we now should set at March 31st, 1621. And having written it in the queer crabbed Saxon script we find so hard to decipher he

inquired,—

"And what next, Mistress Priscilla?"

"Next, Master John, thou mayest set down,"—

"My well beloved"—

"Well, who is thy well beloved?" demanded John pen in hand and flame on cheek.

"Nay, the name is of no importance," replied Priscilla coldly. "Let us go on."

"Very well, 'My well beloved,' is set down."

"I promised thee news of my welfare so soon as opportunity should serve to send it."—

"Well?"

—"And now I would have thee know that I find none to take thy place in my heart or eyes"—

The young man laid down his pen, and with a sterner look upon his face than the teasing girl had ever seen there, rose from the table saying,—

"I did not deem thee so unmaidenly, Priscilla, as to ask a man who loves thee to write thy love-messages to one thou favorest more highly. 'T is not well done, mistress, neither modest nor kind."

"I wonder at thy hardihood, John Alden, putting such reproach upon me. Never think again that I will listen to thy wooing after such insult, and thou stupid oaf, did I not tell thee that the letter was to Jeanne De la Noye, my dear girl-friend in Leyden?"

"Nay, thou toldst me no such thing."

"Well, I tell thee now, and thou mayst put Jeanne after 'my well-beloved' at the top, an' thou wilt. Art satisfied now, thou quarrelsome fellow?"

"Satisfied that thou wilt bring me to an untimely grave, thou wicked girl!"

"Well, then sit down and finish my letter before thou seekest that same grave, for the shadow creeps on apace. Nay, now, I will be good, good John."

"Ah well-a-day, I am indeed an oaf, as thou sayest, to be so wrought upon by a coy maid's smiles or frowns, but have thy will mistress, have thy will."

"Nay now, John, cannot a big, brave fellow like thee take a poor maid's folly more gently? Think then, dear John, of how forlorn a maid it is; think of the graves under yon springing wheat"—

"There, there, dear heart, forgive my rude brutishness; forgive me, sweet one, or I shall go out and do some injury to myself or another, thou hast so stirred my sluggish heart"—

But a peal of laughter, rich and sweet as a bob-o-link's song, cut short his speech, and Priscilla dashing away the tears that hung in her archly curved eyelashes exclaimed,—

"Thy sluggish heart, John! Why, thy heart is like an open tub of gunpowder, and all my poor thoughtless words seem sparks to kindle it! Well, then, sith both are sorry, and both fain would be friends, let us get on with my fond messages to Jeanne and

her sister Marie, or I shall have to put away my paper hardly the worse for thy work."

"Well, then, thou honey bee, as sweet as thy sting is sharp, what next?"

"Tell her in thine own words how long we were cooped in yon vile-smelling old tub, and how when we landed, Mary Chilton and not I was first of all the women to leap upon the rock we call our threshold; and oh John, tell her how I am orphaned of father and mother and brother, and even the dear old servant who carried me in his arms, and many a time in Leyden walked behind us three malapert maids—oh me, oh me!"—

[Pg 181]

She turned away to the window and bowed her face in her hands, smothering the sobs that she could not quite restrain. John sat still, looking at her, his own eyes dim and his face very pale. At this moment the door was suddenly thrust open, and Standish entered the room exclaiming,—

"Is Alden here?"

"Ay, Captain," replied the young man rising and coming forward. Standish cast a hasty glance at the figure of the young girl, another at the young man's face, and motioned him to follow outside.

"Hast thou done aught to offend Mistress Molines?" demanded he as John drew the door close after him.

"Not I," replied he somewhat indignantly. "She asked me to write for her to some maid of her acquaintance in Leyden, and when it came to telling of her orphanage and desolate estate her woman-heart gave way, and she was moved to tears."

"Ay, ay, poor child! 'T is sad enow, but we will put all that right presently—yes, I promised William Molines, and so let him die at ease, and I will keep my word to the dead. A husband and a home, and haply a troop of little rogues and wenches at her knees will soon comfort her orphanhood, eh, John?"

"I know not, sir—I—doth she know of this compact betwixt her father and you?"

"Come, now, thou 'rt not my father confessor, lad, nor yet my general," replied Standish with peremptory good humor. "Get thee back to thy pen-craft, and when it is done come to me at the Fort, I have work for thee."

[Pg 182]

"Yes, sir." And the young man turned again into the house where Priscilla, quite calm, but a little subdued in manner, awaited him.

"And now wilt thou set thy name at the foot, Priscilla?" asked the scribe when the fourth side of the paper was nearly covered.

"Let me see. Ah, there is yet a little room. Say, 'My friendly salutation to thy brothers, Jacques, Philip, and little Guillaume; and now I think on 't, Jacques asked me to advise him if this were a good place for a young man to settle, and as I promised, I will now bid thee say that to my mind it is a place of goodly promise, and I were glad indeed to see all my friends of the house of De la Noye coming hither in the next ship.'"

"I have heard ere now that the pith of a woman's letter was in the post scriptum, just as the sting of a honey bee cometh at the latter end," said John dryly. "And now wilt thou sign?"

"Yes. Give me the quill. *Ciel*, how it sputters and spatters! 'T is a wondrous poor

pen, John."

"It served my turn well enow," replied John surveying with a grim smile the childish signature surrounded with a halo of ink-spatters; but as not one third of the women in the company could have done as well, Priscilla felt no more chagrin at not being a clerk, than a young lady of to-day would at not knowing trigonometry.

"And now address it to the Sieur Jacques De la Noye for Mademoiselle Jeanne De la Noye, and I will trust thee to put it with the letters already writ to go by the Mayflower. And thank thee kindly, John, for thy trouble."

[Pg 183]

"Thou 'rt more than welcome, Priscilla."

"But why so grave upon 't, lad?"

"The heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and mine hath no lack of bitter food, Priscilla."

"Nay, perhaps thou turn 'st sweet into bitter. A kind word to the brother of my gossip Jeanne"—

"Ah, that's not all, nor the worst. But there, I'll fetch thee some water from the spring." And seizing the bucket, the young man went hastily out, leaving Priscilla staring at the folded letter upon the table, while she half murmured,—

"Handsome Jacques with his quick wit and gentle breeding, and our brave Captain, the pink of knightly chivalry, and—John!"—

[Pg 184]

CHAPTER XVII.

AN INTERNATIONAL TREATY.

Priscilla's prophecy proved a true one, for hardly were the one-and-twenty men of the colony assembled around the table in the Common house to hold a final Council upon their new orders, than young Cooke came rapping at the door to announce that a large body of Indians had appeared on Watson's Hill, and seemed advancing on the village. The Council once more was hastily broken up, Carver only pausing to say with a glance around the circle,—

"It is clearly understood that Captain Standish is in full control of all military proceedings in this community, and we are all bound to follow his orders without cavil or delay."

"Ay," responded a score of deep-throated voices lacking that of Myles himself, who said,—

"The governor's authority is above that of the commandant unless martial law be proclaimed, and I shall be the first man to submit to it."

"When gentlefolks meets, compliments passes," muttered Billington with a sneer, while Edward Dotey and Edward Lister, nominally servants to Stephen Hopkins, but already ruffling with the best, tittered and nudged each other as they followed their betters out of the house.

Now Dame Nature in compounding a leader does not often omit to furnish him with five extra-keen senses, as well as a certain sixth sense called intuition, quickwittedness, or, if you please, instinct; and Standish, born for a leader, was fully furnished forth with all six of these videttes, and seldom failed to see, hear, and understand all that went on in his vicinity. So did he now, and although his stern visage showed no shadow of change, he inwardly made the comment,—

"Hopkins's varlets, eh? Like master, like man. And Billington—wait a bit, Master Poacher!"

"Ah, here is our friend Samoset coming up the hill, and another with him," remarked Bradford as the little group of authorities paused at the head of the path leading to the spring and to Watson's Hill.

"Tisquantum, I'll be bound. He looks to have a certain veneer of civilization over his savagery," remarked Winslow, and in another minute the two savages arrived within speaking distance, and the stranger tapping his breast grandiloquently exclaimed,—

"This is Tisquantum, friend of Englishmen."

"Tisquantum is welcome, and so is Samoset," replied Carver gravely. "Have they brought furs to truck for the white men's goods?"

But hereupon Squanto, as Tisquantum (He-who-is-angry) was familiarly designated, began a long and very flowery harangue, from which the Pilgrims gathered that the present was more of a diplomatic and international affair than a trading expedition, and that Massasoit, the sachem or chief of all this region, had come in royal progress, attended by his brother Quadequina and sixty chosen warriors, to greet the white men, and to settle upon what terms he would admit them to his territory.

So soon as the importance of this embassy was made plain, the Pilgrims prepared to meet the occasion with suitable formalities, and while Samoset and Squanto refreshed themselves in Stephen Hopkins's house, Standish hastened to put his entire command under arms, excepting the elder, who constituted the reserved force only to be called out in great emergencies. The military band, composed of four of the well-grown lads of the colony, Giles Hopkins, Bartholomew Allerton, John Crakstone, and John Cooke, was also called out and equipped with its two drums, a trumpet, and a fife, while a house just roofed in and not yet portioned into rooms, was hastily prepared as an audience chamber by clearing it of litter, and spreading at the upper end a large green rug belonging to Edward Winslow, and various cushions and mats, while a high-backed settle in the place of honor covered with some scarlet broadcloth cloaks stood ready to receive the king and the governor in equal honor. Everything being thus in readiness, Samoset and Squanto were dispatched with a courteous message to the king as the Pilgrims chose to translate the Indian term of sachem, inviting him to a conference, but the envoys, soon returning, brought an intricate greeting, from which Winslow the diplomatist at last evolved the meaning that Massasoit declined to trust himself among the white men without adequate hostages for his safety, and desired that one of the principal of the strangers should come to him while Samoset and Squanto remained in the village.

"Zounds! And does the barbarian fancy that two of his naked salvages count as one of our meanest, not to say our principal men!" exclaimed Standish angrily, but Winslow interposed,—

"If the governor and the brethren consider me as a fit man to answer the demand I will go and convey what message is decided upon to this potentate, and if he accepts me will remain as hostage while he visits the settlement."

"Nay, Winslow, I claim the post of danger, if danger there be. It is the right of mine office," exclaimed Standish.

"Not so, Captain; thy duty is to do us right in a quarrel, mine to keep us out of a quarrel. Each man to his own work, say you not so Governor?"

"Master Winslow is right, Captain Standish, and furthermore we need your protection here, should an attack be made upon the village."

"I submit, and my good will go with thee, Master Ambassador," replied Standish cordially; "but be sure if thy skill at keeping the peace fails of saving thy scalp, thou shalt have a royal guard of salvages to escort thee whither thou wilt go."

"Gramercy for thy courtesy good my Valiant," replied Winslow in the same tone. "But I hope my wit shall avail to save my scalp."

And a few moments later the courtly Winslow, armed cap-a-pie and carrying a haversack of gifts at his back, strode down the hill, and across the brook to a point where a knot of dusky warriors awaited him, and with them passed out of sight, leaving his comrades to an hour of extreme solicitude and impatience.

Although out of sight their comrade, however, was in reality close at hand, for Massasoit had with Indian cunning selected a spot for the interview whence himself unseen he could through the branches of the shielding shrubbery overlook the approach from the village, and perceive any movement upon the side of the other party long before it could be made effectual. Standing in the middle of a little glade to receive Winslow, resting lightly upon the strung bow in his right hand, Massasoit presented the ideal figure of an Indian chief, uncorrupted by the vulgar vices of civilization. Lofty of stature and of mien, his expression grave and even haughty, his frame replete with the easy strength of vigorous maturity, he looked, as Winslow decided in the first quick glance, more worthy to be the king of red men than James the First of England did to be the king of white men.

[Pg 188]

For costume the Indian wore buckskin leggings, highly ornamented moccasins, a belt with fringe several inches long, and a curious skin, dressed and ornamented upon the inside with elaborate designs, slung over his left shoulder by way of cloak. He also wore a necklace of white beads carved from bone, and depending from it at the back of his neck a pouch from which as a mark of royal favor he occasionally bestowed a little tobacco upon his followers, most of whom were provided with pipes. In his carefully dressed hair the chief wore three beautiful eagle-feathers, and his comely face was disfigured by a broad stripe of dark red or murray-colored paint.

Removing his hat and bowing courteously before this grave and silent figure, Winslow unfastened his haversack, and produced two sheath knives and a copper chain with a glittering pendant which might have been of jewels, but really was of glass.

These he laid at one side, and at the other a pocket-knife with a brilliant earring. Finally he set by themselves a parcel of biscuit, a little pot of butter, and a flask of strong waters. Having arranged all these matters with great deliberation under the gravely observant eyes of the king, Winslow stood upright and demanded who could speak English. It proving that nobody could, another delay ensued while a *pniese*, or as we might say a noble of the king's suite, was dispatched to the village to summon Squanto and to remain as hostage in his place. During the half hour of this exchange, Massasoit remained standing precisely as Winslow had found him with his warriors half hid among the trees as motionless as himself. Winslow leaning against a great

[Pg 189]

white birch on the edge of the little glade rested his left hand upon the hilt of his sword, and setting the other upon his hip imitated the immobility of the savages, and in his glistening steel cap and hauberk, his gauntlets and greaves, his bristling moustache and steady outlook, presented the fitting counterpart to the savage grandeur of Massasoit. It was one of those momentary tableaux in which History occasionally foreshadows or defines her policy, and had an artist been privileged to study the scene he should have given us a noble picture of this first meeting of the Powers of the Old World and the New.

Squanto at last returned, and Massasoit for the first time opening his lips said gravely,—

"Tell the white man he is welcome."

"Thank your king for his courtesy," replied Winslow bowing toward the chief; "and tell him that my sovereign lord and master King James the First of Great Britain salutes him by me, and will be ready to make terms of peace and amity with him." Waiting a moment for this message to be delivered the ambassador went on,—

"And tell him furthermore, that Governor Carver, the chief man of our settlement, is desirous of seeing him, and of arranging with him terms of alliance and of trade. Our desire is to purchase peltrie of every sort, and we are ready to pay for all that we receive, but it is best that the governor and the king should arrange these matters together. Meantime the governor begs your king's acceptance of this little gift," designating the two knives, the copper chain, and the provisions, "for his own use; while to his brother the Prince Quadequina he offers this knife for his pocket,—nay, —for his girdle, and this jewel for his ear. And if the king will now go to the village to confer with our governor, I, who am not ranked the lowest among our company, will remain here as surety until his return."

[Pg 190]

This speech having been somewhat lamely and laboriously translated into the vernacular by Squanto, Winslow wiped his brow and wished that it consisted with his dignity to throw off his armor and stretch himself upon the pine needles at his feet, but it evidently did not; and in a moment or two Squanto delivered to him the king's reply that he was very willing to become an ally of King James, and that he would go into the village to meet the governor leaving Winslow as guest of Quadequina, but that first he was ready to exchange for some very valuable peltrie the armor and weapons now worn by his guest, and as he observed by the other men of the colony.

To this proposition Winslow returned a most decided negative, adding that among his people no soldier relinquished his weapons except with his life, which chivalrous boast Squanto after a moment's consideration translated,—

"White man says these things to him all one as red man's scalp-lock to him," and Massasoit replied by a guttural sound sometimes rendered "Hugh!" although no letters can express it, and its intent is to convey comprehension, approbation, contempt, or assent, according to the intonation. In the present instance it conveyed approbation mingled with disappointment, and Massasoit drawing forward his tobacco pouch filled his pipe, lighted it with a sort of slow match made of bark, and having drawn two or three whiffs passed it to Winslow who gravely accepted it. Next the chief tasting the dainties offered him by one of his officers distributed the remainder among his followers, excepting the flask of gin, which having cautiously tried he laid aside, evidently not understanding it, and unwilling to offend the donor by showing his distaste for it. And here let it be said that Massasoit, although he learned to drink the "fire-water" of the white men, never became its victim like so

[Pg 191]

many of his brethren.

These ceremonies over, Winslow, already a little uneasy lest Standish and his musketeers should come to seek him and disturb the harmony he was endeavoring to establish between this dusky potentate and his own people, suggested to Squanto that the governor would be growing impatient to receive his guest, and that the day was getting on.

This hint the interpreter conveyed in his own fashion to the king, who simply drawing his puma robe a little farther forward, muttered a word to Quadequina who stood beside him, and moved toward the village followed by about twenty warriors.

Winslow, somewhat startled by the suddenness of this departure would have followed at least for a few steps, but Quadequina, a younger and handsomer copy of his brother, stopped him by a single finger laid upon his breast, and a few guttural sounds which Squanto paused to interpret as a direction that the white man should remain where he was until the return of the sachem.

[Pg 192]

"Certainly. It is as a hostage that I am here. I would but move to a spot whence I may see the progress of his majesty and his greeting. Tell the prince that he has my parole not to escape."

But neither the words nor the spirit of this chivalrous utterance were familiar to Squanto, across whose red and yellow and oily countenance a gleam of humor shot and was gone, while he gravely reported to Quadequina,—

"The white man does but place himself to see the head men of his village fall to the ground before Massasoit and his sachems. He trembles before Quadequina and entreats his kindness."

"Hugh! I think thou liest, Squanto," sententiously replied the young sachem. "I see no trembling in this warrior's face, nor do I believe his people will fall down before Massasoit. Go, and see that thou dost speak more truly in the sachem's presence, or he will hang thy scalp in his wigwam to-night."

Squanto a little depressed at this suggestion, attempted no reply, but hastened after the chief who already was nearing the brook, while from the side of the town approached Standish, preceded by drum and fife and followed by six musketeers. Arriving first at the dividing line the captain halted his men, and summoning Squanto by name, bid him demand that the twenty followers of the king should leave their bows, arrows, and tomahawks where they now stood and come over unarmed, adding that the importance of their hostage might well cover this further concession. Massasoit after gazing for a moment into his opponent's face conceded the point without parley, and at a sign from him the warriors threw their weapons in a pile and followed him unarmed through the shallow ford of the brook. Standish meantime deployed his men into guard of honor so that the chief passed between two lines of men who presented arms, and closing in behind him escorted him with drum and fife to the unfinished house where he was seated in state at one end of the settle, and his followers upon the cushions at the right hand of the Green Rug, which may be said to have distinguished this meeting as the Cloth of Gold, just a hundred years before, had that of the interview between Henry VIII. and Francis I.

[Pg 193]

Hardly was the chief seated when the sonorous sounds of the trumpet, well supported by the larger drum, replaced the shriller notes of fife and small drum, and Governor Carver in full armor and wearing a plumed hat, made his appearance, followed by six more musketeers, the two guards exhausting pretty nearly the whole available force of the Pilgrim army at this time.

Massasoit rose as the governor approached, and when Carver extended his hand laid his own in it, each potentate saluting the other with a punctilious gravity much to be admired. Carver then seated himself at the other end of the settle, and turning to Howland, who stood as a sort of Aid at his elbow, he requested some strong waters to be brought that he and the king might pledge health and amity to each other. This request having been foreseen was immediately complied with, and a great silver loving-cup with two handles and filled with a compound of Holland gin, sugar, and spice, with a moderate amount of water, was brought and presented to the governor who tasted decorously, and then passed it to the sachem, who seizing both handles carried it to his mouth and drank with an air of stern determination, as one who would not allow personal distaste to interfere with public obligations. The cup was then passed to the other guests, and replenished more than once until all had tasted, Squanto remarking to his next neighbor as he handed him the cup,—

[Pg 194]

"It is the witch water to make a man brave that I have told you of drinking in the house of Slaney in the land of these Englishmen."

"Hugh! It is like the sun in summer," muttered the neighbor passing it on in his turn.

"John Howland!" whispered a low voice at the unglazed window near which the young man stood, and as he leaned hastily out he nearly bumped heads with pretty Elizabeth Tilley, who laughing said,—

"Nay, 't is no such great alarm, but Priscilla bade me tell thee to keep an eye upon the governor's loving-cup, lest some of these wild men steal it."

"Nay, they have no pockets to hide it in," replied John laughing. "Still I will have an eye to it, for we have none so much silverware in the colony that we should be willing to spare it."

The ceremony of welcome over, the business of the meeting began, and Massasoit, albeit a little incommoded by his strange potation, showed himself both dignified and friendly in his intentions. Carver on his side was as honorable as he was shrewd, and in the course of an hour the first American International Treaty was harmoniously concluded, and so much to the advantage of both sides, that not only was it sacredly observed in the beginning, but nineteen years later, when Massasoit felt his own days drawing to a close, he brought his sons, Alexander and Philip, to Plymouth, where this "Auncient League and Confederacy" was formally renewed and ratified before the court then in session.

[Pg 195]

Business over, the sachem produced his pipe, filled it, smoked a little, and passed it to the governor, and in this manner it went round the assembly, red men and white together each taking a few whiffs, and when it was empty returning it to Massasoit, who seemed to be custodian of the tribal stock of tobacco.

Facts are stubborn things and History is sacred, and the scene just described is in all its details simple matter of History, but is it not a singular irony of fate that we who spend our lives in a crusade against strong drink and tobacco must, nevertheless, despair of rivaling the virtues of these men, who began their solemn covenant with the savages they had come to Christianize, by giving them gin, and ended it by accepting from them tobacco?

After the Council came a feast of the simple dainties furnished by the Pilgrim commissariat, and after that an informal mingling of the two companies, during which the Indians examined and essayed to sound the trumpet whose notes had so startled them, although the fife had seemed to them only the older brother of the

whistles they so often made of willow twigs.

Before Massasoit took leave he requested that Winslow might remain while Quadequina came to view the wonders of the white man's village, and this favor being good-naturedly conceded, the prince, as our Englishmen called him, soon arrived with a fresh troop of followers, all of whom expected and received both meat, drink, and attention. But as the sun was setting Winslow appeared on the other side of the brook, and the savages were hastily dismissed, except Squanto and Samoset, both of whom insisted upon staying, not only for the night, but declared that they were ready to leave their own people and remain with the white men, whose way of life they so much approved, and to whom they could be of much use in many ways. Squanto in especial pleaded that this place was his own home, and that he had only left it for the village of the Nausets whence Hunt had stolen him, because all his people were dead of the plague, and he was afraid of their ghosts. His wigwam had once stood as he declared at the head of the King's Highway, and the Town Brook was his stewpond for the fish on which he mostly fed. Altogether it was quite evident that Squanto was rather the host than the guest of the Pilgrims, and as such they with grave jest and solemn fun consented to accept him. As for Samoset, he already had helped himself to the freedom of the town, and these two, with Hobomok, the especial retainer of Standish, remained the faithful and useful friends of the white men until death divided them.

[Pg 196]

[Pg 197]

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE LAST LINK BROKEN.

"Ho Jack! Where's thy master?"

"In heaven, Master Jones, or mayhap thou meanest King James, who by last accounts was in London."

"I crave thy pardon, worshipful Master Alden!" and the shipmaster bowed in ludicrous parody of reverence. "I would fain know where thy servant Carver, and thine other retainers, Winslow, and Standish, and Allerton, and the dominie may be."

"'T is a large question, Master Jones, for I do not keep them in my pocket as a general thing, and they are just now about their own business. Might I ask thine?"

"Were I not in such haste 't would be to cudgel some manners into thy big carcase, Master Insolent; but come now, prythee be a good lad and bring me to the governor, the captain, and the elder, for time and tide are pressing, and I would fain be gone."

"In that direction our fancies pull together rarely, and if thou 'lt find a seat in the Common house I'll see if I can come upon the Fathers."

With an inarticulate growl the master of the Mayflower did as he was bid, and by the time goodwife Billington had cleared and wiped the benches and table, the men he had requested to see, along with Winslow, Allerton, Bradford, and Doctor Fuller, came in together, for the hour was just past noon, and the people collected for dinner had not yet dispersed.

[Pg 198]

"Good-morrow, Captain Jones," said Carver courteously; "John Alden tells me thou wouldst have speech of all of us together."

"Yes, Master Governor, and glad am I that peevish boy did my errand so largely, for what I have to say concerns every man, ay, and woman and child, in your settlement."

"In truth! And what may it be, Master Jones? Sit you down, and goodwife Billington set on some beer for our guest."

"Well thought on, and I'll not forget to send you another can or so before I sail."

"Is the sailing day fixed as yet?"

"To-morrow's flood will see me off, wind and weather permitting."

"And God willing," sternly interposed the elder; but Jones fixing his twinkling eyes upon Brewster's face over the edge of the pewter pot covering the lower half of his face answered scoffingly as he set the flagon down,—

"If as you say God guides the wind and weather, reverend sir, fair weather speaks His willingness for me to sail, doth it not?"

"Sith thy time is so short, Jones, mayhap thou 'lt spare it, and tell thine errand at once," interposed Standish sharply, and Jones turned upon him with a leer.

"So cock-a-hoop still, my little Captain! Hard work and starving do not cool thy temper, do they? But hold, man, hold. 'T is indeed true that I am scant for time and mine errand is just this: Ye have been good friends and true to me when I was in need, with my men half down and half ready to mutiny, and your women have well-nigh brought me to believe in saints and angels and such like gear, and so I am come to offer such of you as will take it, a free passage home, if the men will help to handle the ship and the women cook, and nurse such as may be ailing. Or if you choose to give up the emprise and load in your stuff and yourselves as ye were before, I'll take the stuff for passage money and trust Master Carver's word for the rest."

[Pg 199]

The Pilgrims paused on their reply, and man looked at man, each reading his own thought in the other's eyes. Then Carver spoke in grave deliberateness,—

"Brethren, ye have heard Master Jones's proffer, and I doubt not ye agree with me that it is kindly and generously spoken and meant. What say ye to it man by man? Elder Brewster?"

"I say, Cursed be he who having put his hand to the plough turneth back."

"And Master Allerton?"

"I will abide the decision of the rest."

"And Master Winslow?"

"I and mine remain here."

"And thou, Captain Standish?"

"Our trumpeter has not been taught to sound the retreat."

"And Bradford?"

"I fain would stay here."

"And thou, Doctor?"

"I faith I see better hope of practice here than in the old countries. I'll stay."

"And I have come here to live and to die," said Carver in conclusion. "So you see good Master Jones, that while kindly grateful for your offer and your heartiness, we cannot accept the first, but will requite the last with equal good will."

[Pg 200]

"Ay, I want your good will, and perhaps you'll give me a prayer or two just for luck, dominie?"

"Surely we will pray for thee, Master Jones," replied Brewster with fine reticence of tone.

"But before we say more, brethren," resumed the governor, "we must not forget that, as the master hath said, this question concerns every man, woman, and child in the colony; and while we would not send unprotected women or children upon a long voyage with such a crew as man the Mayflower,"—

"Nay, they're not psalm singers," muttered Jones half exultant half ashamed,

—"every man in the company has a right to decide for himself and those belonging to him," calmly concluded the governor, "and I will ask our captain, as equal in authority to myself, to bid the attendance of every man over twenty years old in the company, here at once."

"It shall be done, Governor," replied Standish rising, and ten minutes later a dozen or so more of men comprising all that were left alive of the Pilgrim Fathers crowded into the Common house and stood attentive while Carver briefly but distinctly conveyed to them Master Jones's offer.

"Ye understand, brethren," said he in conclusion, "that any one of you, or all of you are free to accept this offer without reproach. We seven men, to whom the message first was conveyed, have for ourselves refused it, but our will is not binding upon you or any of you. Master Hopkins, Master Warren, Cooke, Soule, Eaton, Howland, Alden, Gilbert Winslow, Browne, Dotey, and Lister, Billington, Goodman, Gardner, I call upon each of you to answer in turn, will you and those belonging to you return to England in the Mayflower, or will you abide here and trust in God to sustain us in the undertaking we have entered upon in His name. Master Warren and Master Hopkins will you declare your wishes?"

[Pg 201]

"I have no desire but to stay, and I have writ to my wife to come to me and bring our five daughters," said Warren without hesitation, and Hopkins gruffly added his sentence,—

"I am no idle maid with a yea-say and a nay-say. I am here with all belonging to me, and here I abide."

And so in effect said every man there, each gently questioned by Carver, and each speaking his mind without fear or force, until at the end the governor turned to the grim old sea-dog who stood looking incredulously on, and with a cheek tinged by honorable pride declared,—

"We thank you, friend, for your kindly invitation to take passage with you for our old home, but not one among us will give up the hope of our new home. Not one having set hand to the plough will turn back!"

"Not one?" asked the master looking slowly around.

"Not one," replied the elder exultantly; and like the breaking of a great wave upon

the Rock a score of deep-throated voices echoed back the boast,—

"NOT ONE."

The next morning broke clear and lovely, and with the sun rose a southwest wind, best of all winds for those who would extricate themselves from the somewhat tyrannous triple embrace of Plymouth Beach, The Gurnet, and Manomet. Directly after breakfast the Pilgrims' pinnace went out manned by half the men of the colony, some carrying a last letter, some a little additional package of furs or curiosities for those at home, some only to say good-by and take a last look at the dingy quarters that had been their home for so many months. Captain Jones, hearty and hospitable in these last hours, had provided what he called a snack, and both beer and strong waters were freely set out upon the cabin table, nor did even the Elder refuse to do him right in a parting glass of Nantz.

[Pg 202]

"Had I known you for such good fellows when first we joined company there had never been ill-will between us," said the master of the Mayflower. "But at least we will drown it now."

"It is drowned deep as Pharaoh's host in the Red Sea," responded Myles heartily, and the elder cried Amen.

An hour or so later, as the pinnace slowly beat back to her moorings, a group of women followed by some stragglers of the other sex climbed the hill and seated themselves about the Fort to watch the departure of the Mayflower. Priscilla and Mary Chilton as usual were close together, and Desire Minter seated herself beside them saying wearily,—

"Would I were a man!"

"Thou a man my Desirée!" exclaimed Priscilla turning upon her eyes sparkling with fun, although a suspicious red lingered around the lids. "Wouldst woo me for thy wife?"

"Thou 'rt ever looking for every man to woo thee, but I'd have thee know there's one man, and his house not so far away, that's as near wooing me as thee."

"Oh cruel, cruel Desirée to wound my fond hopes so savagely," began Priscilla; but Mary ever more practical than humorous interrupted her,—

[Pg 203]

"Why dost want to be a man, Desire?"

"Because we women were not asked would we accept Master Jones's hospitality and go home, and so I had no chance to say 'Ay and thank y' sir?'"

"Would you have so said Desirée?" asked Priscilla serious in a minute.

"Why sure I would," replied the girl pettishly. "Why should any of us want to stay? There's plenty of hard work and plenty of prayers I grant you, and when you have said that you've said all. No decent housen, no butcher's meat, or milk, or garden stuff, or so much as a huckster's shop where one might cheapen a ribbon or a stay-lace—what is there here to live for?"

"Naught for thee, my poor Desirée, I'm afraid," said Priscilla almost tenderly. "And I wish thou couldst go home, but a maid may not venture herself alone."

"I know she may not, and I tried to make my cousin Carver think as I do, that so she might persuade the Governor to go, but wow! at the first word she fell upon me with such a storm of words"—

"Sweet Mistress Carver storm!" cried the two girls derisively, and Priscilla added more gravely,—

"I can fancy what she tried to make thee feel, Desirée; but thou couldst not feel it, and mayhap most young maids like us could not, but thou seest Mary and I are different; our fathers and our mothers came hither with their lives in their hands to do a work, and we came to help them. Well, the lives were paid down and the work was not done, so we who remain, simple maids though we be, are in a manner bound to carry on that work, and not let them have died quite in vain. And their graves are here."

[Pg 204]

Mary Chilton bowed her head upon her knees, and for a moment there was a great silence, then Desire said querulously,—

"Well, but what is there for me to do?"

"Come home and help me cook the dinner!" cried Priscilla jumping to her feet, while practical Mary added, "And I dare say some man will marry thee, Desire, and thou mayest have children."

"I! I'll marry no man here—save one!" protested Desire tossing her head and rising more slowly.

"Save one! Now is that happy he named John Howland?" asked a merry voice at her elbow, and Desire with a start and a laugh exclaimed,—

"Fie on thee, John, to take a poor maid at her word so shortly."

"Thou shouldst not shout thy resolves into a man's ear didst not thou want him to hear them," replied John carelessly, and forgot the idle words which were to bear an ill and unexpected crop for him at no distant date.

[Pg 205]

CHAPTER XIX.

SOWED AND REAPED IN ONE DAY.

"Bradford thou wast bred to the land wast not?" demanded Hopkins bursting into the house where William Bradford, ill and crippled with rheumatism in his "huckle-bone" or hip-joint, sat beside the fire reading an old Latin copy of the Georgics.

"Bred to the land? Well, my forbears were husbandmen, and the uncle who cared for me as an orphan boy was a yeoman, but as I had some estate and not very rugged health, they aye left me alone with my books in my young days. But why?"

"Didst thou ever hear then, or didst thou ever read in thy books, of planting fish along with corn?"

"Nay. Didst thou?"

"That is what I am coming at. A lot of the men are talking with this Squanto about the place and time and manner of setting corn. Naturally the poor brute knoweth somewhat of the place and its customs, seeing that he hath always lived here, and still it irks me to see a salvage giving lessons to his white masters. He saith too that

corn is to be planted when the oak leaves are as large as a mouse's ear. Such rotten rubbish!"

"But doth he aver that his people were used to plant fish with the corn?"

"Ay, and he went down to the brook yester even and set some manner of snare, and this morning hath taken a peck or so of little fish, for all the world like a Dutch herring only bigger, and of these he says two must go into every hill of the corn, that is, this corn of theirs, for of wheat or rye or barley he knoweth nothing."

[Pg 206]

"By way of enrichment, I suppose."

"Ay, for in his gibberish he saith that corn hath been raised hereabout again and again, and now the land is hungry. Ha, ha, man, fancy the salvage calling the dead earth hungry, as if it were alive."

"Our dear mother Earth dead, sayst thou!" exclaimed Bradford smiling dreamily and glancing at his Virgil. "Nay, man, she is the vigorous fecund mother of all outward life, and when she dieth, the end of all things hath come."

"A pest on thy dreaming and thy bookish phantasies!" roared Hopkins kicking the smouldering log upon the hearth until a river of sparks flowed up and out of the wide chimney. "Dost thou agree to putting fish to decay amid the corn we are to eat by and by?"

"We are not to live by what we plant, but by what we reap, friend Hopkins," replied Bradford still smiling in the inscrutable fashion of a man who pursues his own train of thought far down beneath his surface conversation.

"Dost thou agree to the herring?" roared Hopkins smiting the table with his brawny fist.

"Why yes, Hopkins, if it needs that I give my sanction. It striketh my fancy that the man who hath raised and eaten his bread on this spot for some thirty years is like to know better how to do it than we who have just come. But what matter as to my opinion?"

"Oh ay, I did not tell it as I should, but the governor sent me out of the field to ask thee, knowing that thou wast yeoman born."

[Pg 207]

"Then I pray thee tell the Governor that in my poor mind it were well to follow the native customs in these matters at least for the first. I would that I could get a-field and do my share of the work."

"Thou 'rt as well off here. 'T is woundy hot on that hill-side. I've known July cooler than this April."

"And still my rheumatism hugs the fire," said Bradford taking up the tongs and readjusting the scattered logs, while bustling Dame Hopkins hung her dinner-pot upon the crane in the farthest corner, and began a clatter of tongue before which her husband fled apace.

That night when the men came home from the field all spoke of the unusual and exhaustive heat of the weather, for it was now one of those periods of unseasonable sultriness which from time to time afflict our spring season, as on April 19, 1775, when the wheat stood high enough above ground to bend before the breeze, and the British soldiers fell down beside the road, overcome by heat in their rapid flight from the "embattled farmers" of Concord and Lexington. But the next morning rose even

sultrier and more debilitating, and Mistress Katharine Carver following her husband to the door laid a hand upon his shoulder saying,—

"Go not a-field to-day, John. It is even more cruelly hot than yesterday, and thou art overborne with toil already. Stay with me, I pray thee."

"Nay, Kate, I were indeed unfit for the leader of the brethren could I send them forth to labor that I counted too heavy for myself. Let me go, sweetheart, and if thou wilt, say a prayer that I faint not by the way."

"That will I truly, and yet"—

The rest died on her lips for he was gone, yet for a few minutes longer she stood watching the tall figure as it disappeared up the hill path and listening to the murmur of a spinning-wheel in Elder Brewster's house, fitfully accompanied by a blithe tune lilted now and again by the spinner.

[Pg 208]

"Priscilla is early at her work," thought the dame. "I would I might sing and spin like that!" and with a little sigh she leaned her head against the door-post and closed her eyes; a sweet, pale face, colorless and pure as an Easter lily, and eyes whose blueness seemed to show through the weary lids with their deep golden fringe. A fair woman, a lovely woman, delicately bred, for her father was one of those English bishops whose authority her husband and his friends so resolutely denied, and both she and her sister, Pastor Robinson's wife, had "lain in the lilies and fed on the roses of life" until love led them to ardent sympathy with the Separatist movement, and they had wed with two of its most powerful leaders, while their brother, Roger White, became one himself.

"From heat to heat the day increased," and Katharine Carver lay faint and exhausted upon a settle drawn close beside the open door, when a strange sound of both assured and stumbling feet drew near, and as she started up it was to meet John Howland, half leading, half supporting her husband, whose face, deeply flushed, lay upon the other's shoulder.

"Be not over startled, dear lady!" exclaimed Howland. "The governor findeth himself a little overborne by the heat, and hath come"—

"John! Dear heart, what is it! Nay, try not to speak! Here, good John Howland, help me to lay him upon the bed—there then, dear one"—

"Fret not thyself, Kate, 't is but a pain in my head—ah—'t is shrewd enough, but it will pass—there, there, good wife, fret not thyself!"

[Pg 209]

"John Howland, wilt thou find Surgeon Fuller, and mayhap Dame Brewster, but no more. I will wring a napkin out of fair water and lay to his head, for it burneth like fire."

"Ay, it burneth like fire," muttered the sick man wearily moving the poor head from side to side, and Katharine left alone dropped for one moment upon her knees and raised streaming eyes and clasped hands to Heaven, then rose, and when the Doctor and gentle Mary Brewster entered she stood white and calm at her husband's head.

"Ay, ay, he hath sunstroke," muttered the surgeon, laying a hand upon the patient's forehead, "and no wonder, for it is shrewdly hot to-day, and he toiling away like any Hodge of them all. I must let him blood. Canst get me a basin and a bandage, Mistress?"

"I will fetch them, Katharine. Sit you down." And the Elder's wife slipped out of the

door and back again before even impatient Doctor Fuller could wonder where she was.

An hour later Carver arousing from the stupor that was growing upon him, asked to see William Bradford, who at once hobbled in from the neighboring house, although himself hardly able to sit up.

"It grieves me to find thee in such evil case, brother," said he painfully seating himself beside the sick man's pillow.

"Thy sorrows will last longer than mine, Will. I must set my house in order so far as I have time. Dost mind, Bradford, what I said to thee and Winslow and Standish, the time I saw ye standing upon the great rock in yon island before we landed in this place?"

[Pg 210]

"Yes, dear friend, I do remember."

"Well, 't was borne in upon me then, that I was only to look upon the Promised Land, and then for my sins to die, and that thou wert the Joshua who should conquer our Canaan and make the people to dwell safely therein. Thou shalt be their governor, Bradford, and—their servant."

"As thou hast ever been! Chief of all because the helper of all."

"Send for Winslow and Standish and the elder. I cannot long command my senses, and fain would speak—nay, 't was but a passing pang. Send for them, and meanwhile call John Howland and Kate, my wife. I must hasten—hasten"—

Again the stupor crept over him, but steadily fighting it off, and holding his consciousness in the grasp of a strong man's will, he again opened his eyes as his wife, so pale, so still, so self-controlled, leaned over him and laid her cool fingers upon his brow.

"Ay, sweetheart, 't is thy touch. I could tell it among a hundred. Dear, wilt thou go home to thy father's house? He'll have thee, now thy poor 'Brownist' is gone. Or wilt thou go to thy sister Robinson? She will be fain to have thee."

"'Whither thou goest I will go,' my husband."

"Say you so, Dame? Ay, thou wast ever of a high heart, and a brave. Mayhap our Lord will be merciful to both of us,—but His will be done. Thou 'lt be submissive to thy God, Kate, as thou hast ever been to thy lord?"

"Ay, dear, my lord, I will try to do thy bidding even thus far."

"Ah, Kate, Kate, thou hast never failed in all our happy wedded life—fail not now—promise—promise"—

[Pg 211]

"Dear love, I promise to bow myself in all loving submission to whatsoever our God shall send."

"Ay, that is right, that is well, that is mine own noble Kate. And Howland, I leave her to thy care—be a brother, a leal and true friend—thou knowest what that word means—I can no more—my senses reel"—

"It needs no more, dear master, dear friend, if I may call my master so"—

"My friend," murmured Carver.

"Then I do pledge my word as a God-fearing man, that from this moment the first

care, the chiefest duty of my life shall be to serve and shield and comfort my dear lady so far as God gives me power. I will be her servant, her brother, her friend, in all ways, and under all comings, and so help me God, as I shall keep this my promise."

"Thou dost comfort my soul, even as it enters upon the valley of the shadow. Stand ye two aside and bring in my brethren."

Howland quietly opened the door, and the three who had stood grouped against the golden sky on that December evening on Clarke's Island silently entered the room and stood around the bed, where in the awful hush that clings about the last hour their chief lay half unconscious and yet able to rally his energies for one more mighty effort.

"Brethren, I go—God remaineth—His blessing be upon you, and all His Israel here.—Forgive my shortcomings—forgive if I have offended any, knowing or unknowing"—

"Thou hast ever been our best and dearest earthly friend—pardon thou us, dear saint!" murmured Winslow.

[Pg 212]

—"And if ye will follow my counsel, make William Bradford your Governor—and set aside all jealousy, all heart burning—Winslow dost promise?"

"Ay, friend, I promise right heartily."

"Standish?"

"Ay, Governor."

"Good-by—I can no more—Elder, say a prayer—yet cease before I die"—

And with a long, quivering sigh as of one who relinquishes his grasp of a burden too mighty for his strength, the first Governor of Plymouth Colony went to render an account of his stewardship.

[Pg 213]

CHAPTER XX.

FUNERAL—BAKED MEATS AND MARRIAGE FEASTS.

"Methinks our governor should not be buried with as little ceremony as we perforce have showed our meanest servant," said Captain Standish gloomily to Elder Brewster the evening of Carver's death. "You Separatists despise the ministering of the Church, but what have ye set in its place?"

"We clothe not the coffins of the dead with the filthy rags of Popery, and we pray not for the souls of them whom God hath taken into His own hand, for that were of the sins of presumption against which David doth specially pray, but yet,"—and the Elder's face softened, "I am of your mind, Captain, that we should honor our chief magistrate in the last service we can render him, and although by his own wish I ceased to pray for him ere the last breath was sped, and will never again pray for him or any parted soul, I well approve of such military honors as we are able to pay to his memory, and I will carry my musket with the rest, and fire it as you shall direct."

"Why, that's more than ever I would have looked for, Elder," exclaimed Standish in amaze. "But since you so proffer, I gladly accept your aid and countenance, and by your leave, since as yet we have no governor in place of him who is gone, I will order the funeral by mine own ideas."

[Pg 214]

"As a military man?"

"Surely. I claim no spiritual powers," and with a curious expression of content and disapproval upon his face the captain went away to so arrange and order his plan, that at sunrise on the third day a guard of twelve men, including the elder, presented themselves at the house of mourning, and receiving the coffin upon the crossed barrels of their muskets carried it along the brow of the hill to the grave newly opened amid the springing wheat.

Mistress Carver had made but one request, and that of piteous earnestness,—

"See that they make his grave where another may be dug close beside," pleaded she, and John Howland had seen that it was as she desired.

Earth to earth was reverently and silently laid, the grave was covered in, and then, at the captain's signal, the twelve muskets were fired in relays of four, and their mournful echo mingled with the sobbing dirge of the waves breaking upon the Pilgrim Rock, while the dense column of smoke rising grandly to heaven was the only monument then or ever erected to John Carver, that willing martyr and gallant gentleman who had indeed "given his life for the brethren."

Returning to the Common house the Guard of Honor joined with the rest of the townsmen in a Council, whereat they elected William Bradford to be their second Governor, and as he now lay ill in his bed, Isaac Allerton was chosen to be his Assistant and mouthpiece.

Bradford, neither over elated nor daunted by his new dignities, accepted the nomination, and with few and brief intervals retained it until his own death some four-and-thirty years later, and nobly and faithfully did he perform its duties.

[Pg 215]

About a week after Carver's funeral the new governor, now convalescent, received a visit from Edward Winslow, who sought him with the formal request that he as chief magistrate of the colony would perform the marriage ceremony between him and Susanna, widow of William White.

For the Separatists during their sojourn in Holland had accepted the creed of that nation of traders, and held with them that marriage is merely a civil contract, requiring a magistrate to secure the proper amount of goods to each party, and make sure that neither defrauded the other. As for the sacramental blessing of the Church, said the Dutchman and the Separatist, it costs money and bestows none, and priests are ever dangerous associates, so we'll none of them or their craft.

Apart from this view of the matter however, the civil authority was the only one available in this case, since Pastor Robinson had been detained in Leyden with the rest of his flock, and Elder Brewster had no authority except to preach.

"It will be my first essay at such an office, Winslow, and I know not precisely how to go about it," replied Bradford smilingly when his friend had somewhat formally declared his errand.

"But you were yourself wed that way," replied the bridegroom impatiently. "For me, my first wife held to her early teaching in that particular, and would be married in a church and by a minister."

"Yes, I was wed by a magistrate in Amsterdam," replied Bradford reluctantly; "but the old Dutchman did so mumble and mouth his words that I gathered not the sense of half. Likely it is, however, Master Carver hath left some Manual for such occasion. He was warned or ever he left England that he was like to be our Governor for longer than the voyage."

"Doubtless, then, he had some such office-book. Shall I bid John Howland search for it?" asked Winslow.

"Nay, the widow hath already sent me a box of papers and some little books, which she said should be the governor's. I have not yet searched them, but I will do so before I sleep. What day have you set for your wedding, Winslow?"

"Why, we would not seem to fail in respect to our dear departed brother, and would leave a clear fortnight between his funeral and our wedding; so an' it please you we will set the marriage for Thursday of next week."

"And at what hour?"

"At even when all may rest from their labor it seemeth best. After supper we will be ready."

"Wilt come to me or I to thee?"

"The dame saith she would fain be wed in her new home. It is just finished to-day, and such gear as we have will be carried thither to-morrow."

"I mind me that Mistress White hath a fair cradle of her own," suggested Bradford dryly.

"Ay. Peregrine lieth in it now."

"May it never stand idle. I will come to thy new house then on Thursday of next week, after supper."

As Winslow departed, Desire Minter met him on the threshold, and with a hasty reverence asked,—

"Is the governor within, and can I see him?"

"Ay, lass, he is within, and I know not why thou shouldst not see him. Knock and enter."

And Bradford still languid from his late illness raised his head from the back of his chair with a patient smile as the knock was immediately followed by Desire's broad and comely face.

"Can your worship grant me a few moments if it please your honor?"

"Nay, Desire, it needs not so much ceremony to speak to William Bradford. What wouldst thou?"

"Well, worshipful sir, 't is a little advice. Your honor sees that I am a poor lonely lass, bereft now of even my cousin Carver's husband"—

"Nay, my girl, our late governor was more than 'even my cousin's husband.' Pay honor to him rather than to me."

"Ay, but he is dead and cannot help me, and thou art alive."

"And better a live dog than a dead lion," murmured Bradford looking sorrowfully at the girl whose selfish cunning was not keen enough to disguise itself.

"Well?"

"Why, I fain would know your honor's judgment upon my marriage."

"Thou marry! And who is the man?"

"Why, there now is the question, sir? Captain Standish hath showed me that he fain would ask me to wife, did not Priscilla Molines woo him so desperately"—

"Peace, child! How dare one Christian woman speak thus of another!"

"But 't is so, your worship; 't is so, indeed, and how can I gainsay it?" whimpered the girl. "She as good as asked him when we were sick together in the hospital, and she wrought upon her father to ask him, and what could he do between them, and still he would rather have had me to wife, and I would have not said him nay."

[Pg 218]

"Well, and what can I do about it?"

"Bid Priscilla give him up, your honor, and bid him speak out to me, and quickly, for else John Howland will have me to wife."

"Ah, and hath Howland also asked thee?"

"Yes, your honor, he asked me as the Mayflower was sailing out of the harbor, and I told my cousin Carver, and she says it will be an ease to her mind to leave me with so good a man to my husband, but for me I had rather have the Captain."

"And thou callest upon me to straighten this coil, and marry thee to whichever man will have thee, eh?"

"Yes, your honor."

"Thou 'rt a simple lass, and knowst not half thou sayest. Go now, and I will send for thee in a day or two. But see thou keep a quiet tongue. Say not one word so much as to the rushes, or thou shalt have no husband at all. Mind that!"

"Oh, I'll not speak, I'll not forget, trust me to do all your honor's bidding," cried the girl joyfully, and Bradford gazing at her in compassionate wonder rejoined,—

"Well, go now, and remember. Stay, send me one of the lads, no matter which. The first one thou seest."

And when Giles Hopkins presently appeared he sent him to crave the presence of Captain Standish when he should have finished his noon-meat. The Captain came at once, and after a few friendly words the governor calmly inquired,—

"Dost wish to wed with Desire Minter, Myles?"

[Pg 219]

"Desire Minter! Has thy fever come back and turned thy brain, Bradford?"

"Nay, but wilt thou wed with her?"

"Not if there was no other woman upon earth. Dost catch my meaning, Will?"

"Ay, I fear me that I do."

"Fearest! Why, dost thou desire so monstrous a sacrifice to the common weal, as Winslow words it? If the wench must be wed there are men enow who are not of thy

nearest friends, Bradford. And, besides, thou knowest I am to marry Priscilla Molines, and now I think on 't, 't is time to arrange it. I did but wait for the brig to be gone, but then the governor's death put all thought of marriage gear out of my head."

"Oh ay, I mind me now that thou didst speak of Priscilla. Hast ever spoken to her?"

"Not I. I have no skill in such matters, nor time, nor thought. I'll write her a cartel, I mean a letter of proposals"—

"But can she read? Not many of our women are so deeply learned."

"I know not, I hope not. The only woman I ever cared to speak to of love could do no more than sign her name and 't was enough."

"Well, then, settle it thine own way, only let it be soon, for I fain would see thee with a home and children about thy hearth, old friend."

"Ay, I suppose 't is a duty,—a man who hath given all beside, may well give his own way into the bargain. I'll marry before your new old love can reach here, Governor."

"Nay, when thou sayest 'Governor,' I note that thou art ill pleased with somewhat, Myles. Is it with me?"

[Pg 220]

"Nay, Will, 't is with thy words."

And laughing in his own grim way the Captain left the house, and strode up the hill to solace his spirit by examining and petting his big guns.

That same evening Bradford walked painfully across the little space dividing Hopkins's house from that where Katharine Carver sat alone beside the little fire still comfortable to an invalid, and after some conversation said,—

"Dame, hast any plan for marrying thy kinswoman Desire Minter to any of our young fellows?"

"I am glad you have spoken of it, Governor Bradford," replied the widow eagerly. "For it is a matter largely in my thoughts. I do not think I am to tarry very long behind my dear lord,—nay, do not speak of that I beseech you, kind sir,—but it hath dwelt painfully on my mind that the poor silly maid would be left alone, and none so ill-fitted to care for herself have I ever seen. But she tells me that John Howland hath spoken to her, and she is not ill inclined to him. Would not it be approved of your judgment, Governor?"

"Ay, if in truth both parties desire it, dame. Suppose we have Howland in before us now, and ask him his will? Thou canst deal with the maid after."

"He is just without, cleaving some fuel for this fire, if your excellency will please to call him."

"I will, but first, Dame, let me beg thee, of our old friendship, of the love I bore thy husband and he to me, treat me not with such cruel formality. True it is that his honors have fallen upon me, and that his place knoweth him no more; and yet it is his spirit, his counsel, and his ensample that rules my poor actions at every turn. Be not jealous, be not resentful, mistress, though well I wot so loving and so faithful a heart as thine cannot well escape such weakness, for 't is part of woman's nature. But canst not be a little mindful of thine old friend's feelings too, and soften somewhat of this stately ceremony in speaking to him?"

[Pg 221]

"Yes, he loved thee, he loved thee well, and he would have chidden me"—

"Nay, nay, weep not, Dame Katharine. I did not mean to grieve thee but only to tell how I was grieved; but then, we men are still too clumsy to meddle with women's tender natures. Be what thou wilt, speak as thou wilt to me dear Dame, I am and ever shall be thy faithful friend and servant."

He went out as he spoke, and when a few moments later Howland and he returned together the lady had resumed her usual quietude of manner.

"Sit thee down, John. Mistress Carver and I have somewhat to ask of thee. Art thou minded to wed?"

"Not while my mistress needeth my service."

"Mayhap 't will further her comfort, John."

"Is it thy wish, Dame?" and the young man turned so eager a face toward her, and spoke so brightly, that a smile stirred the widow's pale lips as she replied,—

"'T is plain enough that 't is thy wish, John, and it will wonderfully content my conscience in the matter of bringing Desire Minter away from the home she had, poor though it then seemed."

"Desire Minter!" echoed Howland.

"Why yes, she told me how you spoke to her the day the Mayflower sailed, and she modestly avows that she is well content to be thy wife."

"But"—

"What is it, Howland? Speak out, man," interposed Bradford with authority. "Thou seemest dazed."

"Why, truth to tell, sir, and my dear Dame, I thought not of Desire as my wife"—

"Didst thou not speak to her of marriage?"

"Surely not,—or—there was some idle jest between us, I mind not what, and I never thought on 't again."

"But she did, thou seest," said the Governor sternly. "Thou knowest how 'idle jesting that is not convenient' is condemned in Holy Writ, and now is the saying proven. The maid believed thee in earnest, and hath set her mind upon thee"—

But of a sudden Bradford remembering Desire's plainly expressed preference for the Captain, if he might be had, paused abruptly, and Dame Carver took up the word,—

"It would much comfort my mind, John, if thou wouldst consent to this thing. The maiden's future is a fardel upon my shoulders now, and they are not over strong. 'T is a good wench, John, if not over brilliant."

"Say no more, dame, say no more. If it will be a pleasure and a comfort to thee, it is enough."

"But hast thou any other choice, John? Wouldst thou have chosen Priscilla, like thy friend Alden?"

"Nay, Dame."

"But thou hast something in thy mind, good John. Tell it out, I pray thee."

"Well, then, to speak all my mind, Mistress, there is no maid among us so fair in my eyes, and so sweet, and pure, and true, as Elizabeth Tilley, and I had"—

"Why, she is scarce turned sixteen, dear boy," exclaimed the widow.

"I had thought to wait a year or two for her," faltered Howland, but Bradford interposed,—

"Nay, nay, John, we cannot have our sturdy men waiting for little maids to grow up. There are boys enow coming on for them, and as for thee, why man, thou 'rt five-and-twenty, art not?"

"Seven-and-twenty, sir. But all this is beside the matter. If my dear mistress asks me to marry Desire Minter as a comfort to her, I will do it to-day."

"I thank thee heartily, John." And in the affectionate glance and smile his lily-like dame turned upon him Howland felt more than repaid for his sacrifice.

"And yet," continued she, "I will not let thee marry to-day, nor for a year. But if thou wilt call thyself betrothed to her, and promise me on thy faith to deal truly by her, and at the year's end marry her if you both are still so minded, I will be content. I shall leave her in thy care, even as he who is gone left me in thy care, and a good and faithful guardian hast thou been, dear friend."

"I pledged my life to him that I would do my best, and now I pledge it in your hands, my honored mistress and dear lady, that I will so deal with this maid as shall most please you."

And so John Howland and Desire Minter were formally betrothed; and before the month of May was gone the wheat upon the hill-side was again disturbed as John Carver's wife came to lay herself down to rest close beside him in sweet content.

"They tell of broken hearts," said Surgeon Fuller musing above that double grave; "and were I asked to name Dame Katharine's complaint I know no name for it but that."

[Pg 223]

[Pg 224]

CHAPTER XXI.

AN AFFAIR OF HONOR.

"Thou liest foully, Edward Dotey! Thou liest even as Ananias and Sapphira lied."

"Liest, thou son of Belial! 'T is thou that liest, and art a cock-a-hoop braggart into the bargain, Master Edward Lister! Tell me that our master's daughter gave thee that kerchief"—

"If thou couldst read, I'd show thee 'Constance Hopkins' fairly wrought upon it by the young mistress's own hand."

"Then thou stolest it, and I will straight to our master and tell him on 't!"

"Hi, hi, my springalds! what meaneth all this vapping and noise? What's amiss, Lister?"

"It matters not what's amiss John Billington. Pass on and attend to thine own

affairs."

"Lister's afraid to tell that he carrieth stolen goods in his doublet and lies about them into the bargain," sneered Edward Dotey.

"I lie do I, thou base-born coward! Lie thou there, then!"

And Edward Lister with one generous buffet stretched his opponent upon the pile of firewood they had been hewing a little way from the town.

Billington who had wandered in that direction with his gun upon his shoulder looking for game, helped the fallen man to his feet and officiously fingered a bruise rising upon his cheek.

[Pg 225]

"Hi! Hi! But here's a coil! He's wounded thee sorely, Dotey! I'm witness that he assaulted thee, with intent to kill like enough. Canst stand?"

"Let me go, let me at him, leave go of my arm John Billington! I'll soon show thee"—

"Nay Ned," interposed Lister, as Billington with a malignant grin upon his face half hindered, half permitted Dotey's struggles to free himself from the poacher's sinewy arms. "Nay, man, I meant not to draw e'en so much blood as trickles down thy cheek"—

"He meant to draw it by the bucketful and not in drops," interpreted Billington. "And now he tries to crawl off. Take thy knife to him, man; nay, get ye both your swords and hack away at each other until we see which is the better bird. 'T is long since I saw a main"—

"Ay, we'll fight it out, Lister, and see which is the better man in the matter you wot of." And Dotey, who was furiously jealous lest his fellow retainer should have made more progress in the regard of Constance Hopkins than himself, nodded meaningly toward him, while Billington watched both with Mephistophilean glee.

"Agreed," replied Lister more coolly. "Although thou knowest private quarrels are forbidden by the Captain."

"Hah! Thou 'rt afraid of our peppery little Captain!" cried Billington. "Some day thou 'lt see me take him between thumb and finger and crack him like a flea if he mells too much with me."

"I heard thee flout at his command t' other day, and I heard him tell thee the next time thou didst so let loose thy tongue, he'd take order with thee," exclaimed Lister hotly, and Billington snapping his fingers contemptuously retorted,—

[Pg 226]

"'T is no use, Dotey. Lister's afraid of thee and will not fight. 'T is a good boy, but not over-brave."

"Stay you here, you two, till I can go and come, and we will see who is the coward!" retorted Lister furiously, and before either could reply he sped away in the direction of the village.

"'T is like a bull-fight," cried Billington with a coarse laugh. "The creature is hard to wake, but when he hath darts enough quivering in his hide he rouses up and showeth rare sport. Now let us find a fair, smooth field for our sword play. 'T is not so easy in this wild land."

"I know not why our captain should forbid the duello; 't is ever the way of gentles to

settle their disputes at the point of the sword," said Dotey musingly.

"Ay, and in this place we all are gentles, or all simples, I know not which," added Billington. "Certes, one man should here count as good as another, and 't is often in my mind to say so, and to cry, Down with governors, and captains, and elders"—

"Nay, nay, such talk smacks too strong of treason to suit my ear," exclaimed Dotey, who was, after all, an honest, well-meaning young fellow, a little carried away just now by jealousy and by the intoxicating air of liberty and freedom, but by no means to the extent of joining or desiring a revolt against the appointed powers of Church or State.

"Well, here is Lister, and with not only swords but daggers if I can see aright. Ay, that's a good lad, that's a brave lad, Lister! There's no craven in thy skin, is there, and I shrewdly nip mine own tongue for so calling thee. Come now, my merry men, let me place you fairly, each with his shoulder to the sun, each planted firmly on sound footing. There then, that is as well as may be, and well enow. Come, one, two, three, and lay on!"

[Pg 227]

But careful as Lister had been in securing and bringing away his weapons, he had not escaped the scrutiny of two bright eyes hidden behind the curtain dividing the nook where Constance Hopkins and her sister Damaris slept, from the main room of the dwelling, and no sooner had the young man left the house than Constance hastily followed, and running lightly up the hill to where the Captain with John Alden at his side was roofing in an addition to his half-built house she cried,—

"Captain Standish, I fear me there's mischief afoot with Edward Dotey and Edward Lister!"

"Ay? And what makes thee think so, my lass?" asked Standish peering down from his coign of vantage. "Where are they?"

"My father sent them afield this morning to rive and pile firewood, but a few minutes agone Edward Lister came creeping into the house and up to the loft where they two and Bartholomew sleep, and I who was below heard the clank of steel, and peeping saw that he brought down two swords and had stuck two daggers in his belt"—

"Aha! Swords and daggers, my young masters!" exclaimed the Captain, hastily descending the ladder beside which Constance stood. "John, drop thy hammer and take thy piece; nay, take a good stick in hand, and we will soon bring these springalds to order. Whereaway are they, girl?"

[Pg 228]

"That-a-way, sir; nay, see you not Lister's cap bob up and down as he runneth behind yon bushes?"

"Ay, lass, thou hast a sharp eye. Go home and rest content—thou 'rt a wise and good child."

Ten minutes later the captain and his follower plunging through the underwood fringing Watson's Hill heard the clash of steel upon steel and a coarse voice crying, —

"Well played, Dotey! Nay, 't is naught but a scratch—don't give over for that, Lister; up and at him again, boy! Get thy revenge on him!"

"That knave Billington!" growled Standish: "I could have sworn he was in it! Here you! Stop that! Drop your blades, men! Drop them!"

Lister and Dotey, nothing loth, for both were wounded, obeyed the summons, and staggering back from each other stood leaning upon their swords and panting desperately, while Billington dexterously stepping backward behind an elder bush made his way forest-ward with a stealthy footstep, and a shrewd use of cover, suggestive of his former calling.

"And now what meaneth this, ye young fools!" sternly demanded Standish. "Are ye aping the sins of your betters and claiming the rights of the duello? Rights say I! Nay, 't is forbidden to any man in this colony, and ye know it well, ha?"

"Yea, Captain, we knew 't was forbidden, but we had a quarrel"—

"And why if ye must fight did ye take to deadly weapons? Have ye not a pair of fists apiece, or if that could not content ye, are there not single-sticks enow in these woods? I've a mind to take my ramrod in hand and show ye the virtue of a good stick, but I promise you that if not I, some other shall give you a lesson you'll not forget. Come, march!"

[Pg 229]

"I'm shrewdly slashed in the leg, Captain," expostulated Dotey; "and fear me I cannot walk."

"Ay? Sit down, then, and let me see. Thou 'st a sore wound in thy leather breeches, but—ay, there's a scratch beneath, but naught to hinder your moving. Here, I'll plaster it up in a twinkling."

And from the pocket of his doublet the old soldier produced a case containing some of the most essential requisites of surgery, and with a deftness and delicacy of touch, surprising to one who had not seen him beside a sick-bed, he soon had the wound safe and comfortable.

"There, man, thou 'rt fit to walk from here to Cape Cod. Many a mile have I marched with a worse wound than that, and no better than a rag or at best my belt bound round it. Now you sirrah! Hast a scratch, too?"

For reply Lister silently held out a hand whence the blood dripped freely from a cut across the palm.

"Tried to grasp 't other fool's dagger in thy naked hand, eh?" coolly remarked the Captain as he cut a strip of plaster to fit the wound. "Now the next time take my counsel and catch it in the leathern sleeve of thy jerkin. Better wound a dead calf than a live one."

"Next time, sayst he!" commented Dotey in a mock aside to his companion. "So we were not so far astray this time."

"Next time thou meetest a dagger, I should have said," retorted the Captain with his grimest smile. "I never said ye were not to fight, for I trow ye'll have chance enough at that before I'm done with ye; but when a handful of men are set as we are to garrison a little post on the frontier of a savage country, for one to fall afoul of another and to risk two lives out of a dozen for some senseless feud of their own is to my mind little short of treason to the government they've sworn to defend. Now then, march! Alden, give Dotey thy arm to lean upon if he needs it. Forward!"

[Pg 230]

That night Dotey and Lister slept in two rooms under guard, and the next morning the freemen of the colony were convened in the Common house to judge their case. With them Billington was also summoned, although neither Dotey nor Lister had betrayed his complicity.

Accused of deliberate assault upon each other with deadly weapons both men humbly pleaded guilty and expressed their penitence, but to this Bradford gravely replied,—

"Glad are we to know that ye are penitent, and resolved upon amendment, but ne'er the less we cannot therefore omit some signal punishment both to make a serious impression upon your own memories, and to advertise to all other evil-doers that we bear not the sword of justice in vain. Brethren, I pray you speak your minds. What ought to be done to these would-be murderers?"

"In the army they would have earned a flogging," remarked the captain sitting at the governor's right hand.

"Perhaps solitary confinement with fasting would subdue the angry heat of their blood most effectually," said the elder at Bradford's other side.

"Had we a pillory or a pair of stocks I would advise that public disgrace," said Winslow; and Allerton suggested,—

"They might be fined for the benefit of the public purse."

"If the Governor will leave them to me I'll promise to trounce them well, and after, to set them extra tasks for a month or so," offered Hopkins; and Alden murmured to Howland,—

[Pg 231]

"Allerton is treasurer of the public purse, and Hopkins will profit by the extra labor, mark you!"

"What is thy counsel, Surgeon Fuller?" inquired Bradford, and the whimsical doctor replied,—

"I once saw two fellows in a little village of Sussex lying upon the stones of the market-place, tied neck and heels, and methinks I never have heard such ingenious profanity as those men were yelling each at his unseen comrade. I asked the publican where I baited my horse the cause of so strange a spectacle, and he said this was their manner of disciplining brawlers in the ale-house. They were to lie there four-and-twenty hours without bite or sup, and so I left them. Methinks it were a suitable discipline in this case, but I may fairly hope the profanity of those unenlightened rustics will give place with our erring brethren to sighs of penitence and sorrow."

"What think you, brethren, of our good surgeon's suggestion?" asked Bradford, restraining the smile tempting the corners of his mouth. "It approves itself to me as a fair sentence. Will those who are so minded raise their right hands?"

The larger number of right hands rose in the air, and the sentence was pronounced that so soon as the doctor assured the authorities that the wounded men would take no harm from the exposure, the duelists, bound neck and heels, should be laid at the meeting of the four roads, there to remain four-and-twenty hours without food or water, and until that time each was to remain locked in a separate chamber.

"And now John Billington," continued Bradford sternly, as the younger men were removed, "how hast thou to defend thyself from the charge of blood guiltiness in stirring up strife between these two?"

[Pg 232]

"Nay, your worship, it was their own quarrel," replied Billington hardily. "I did but chance to pass and saw them at it, and so tarried a moment to see fair play."

"And to hound them on at each other, as if it were a bull-baiting for thine own

amusement," interposed Standish in a contemptuous tone. "Nay, lie not about it, man! I heard thee, and saw thee!"

"Surely, Billington," resumed the governor, "thou hast not so soon forgotten how thou wast convened before us some weeks since, charged with insolence and disobedience to our captain, and with seditious speech anent the government. We did then speak of some such punishment as this for thee, but thy outcry of penitence and promise of amendment, coupled with the shame of chastising thee in sight of thine own wife and sons, was so great that we forgave thee, the more that Captain Standish passed over the affront to himself; but now we see that the penitence was but feigned, and the amendment a thing of naught, and much I fear me, John Billington, that an' thou amend not thy ways, harsher discipline than we would willingly inflict will be thy portion in time to come."

The governor spoke with more than usual solemnity fixing upon the offender a gaze severe yet pitiful and reluctant, as one who foresees for another a fate deserved indeed, and yet too terrible to contemplate. Perhaps before that astute and reflective mind there rose a vision of the gallows nine years later to be erected by his own order, whereon John Billington, deliberate murderer of John Newcomen, should expiate his crime and open the gloomy record of capital punishment in New England.

[Pg 233]

At the present moment, however, the offender slunk away with his reproof, and the meeting proceeded to consider other matters, for, while the new government felt itself competent to deal with matters of life and death, it also found no matter too trifling for its attention.

Four days later Edward Dotey and Edward Lister, their wounds comfortably healed, were brought out into the market place as in fond reminiscence of home the Pilgrims called what is now the Town Square of Plymouth, and each offender was solemnly tied neck and heels together,—an attitude at once ignominious and painful.

The governor, with Allerton his assistant, the captain, the elder, Winslow, Hopkins, and Warren stood formally arrayed to witness the execution of the sentence, which Billington was forced to carry out. The less important members of the community surrounded the scene, and from amid the fluctuating crowd murmurs of amaze, of pity, of approval, or the reverse became from time to time audible.

"Nay, then, 't is a shame to see Christian men so served, and they so scarce a commodity in these parts," declared Helen Billington to her neighbor Mistress Hopkins, who nippingly replied,—

"Mayhap we've mistook the men we've put in power."

"Ay," returned the coarser malcontent. "They passed by thy goodman, and put worse men over his head."

"Master Hopkins careth naught for such honors as these have to bestow. His name was made or ever he came hither," replied Elizabeth a little coldly as she moved away.

[Pg 234]

"Glad am I to see that thy goodman leaveth the cord as slack as may be, Goody Billington," whispered Lois, late maid to Mistress Carver, but now the promised second wife of Francis Eaton, who stood beside her, and overhearing the whisper said reprovingly,—

"Nay, wench, thou speakest foolishly. If evil-doers are to go unwhipt of justice how

long shall this colony endure. See you not that if these roysterers had each killed the other, there had been two men the less to stand between your silly throats and the hatchets of the salvages?"

"Ay, there's sound sense in that, Francis," replied Lois yielding admiringly to the superior wisdom of her betrothed, but Helen Billington nodding and blinking, muttered to her boy John, as she leaned upon his shoulder,—

"Wait but till dark, when all the wiseacres are asleep, and see if thy daddy sets not these men free, ay, and puts weapons in their hands like enough, to revenge themselves withal."

The offenders bound, and laid each upon his side on the bare ground, the court withdrew and the crowd dispersed. But scarce an hour had passed ere Hopkins presented himself before the governor and his assistant, at work over the colony's records, those precious first minutes, now forever lost, and with an elaborately quiet and restrained demeanor said,—

"Master Bradford, yon poor knaves of mine are suffering shrewdly from cramps and shooting pains as well as from the ache of their scarce healed wounds. They promise in sad sincerity to amend their ways, and when all is said, they are good and kindly lads, and did but ape the fashions of their betters in the Old World. May not I persuade your worship to look over their offense for this time, and to remit their pains and penalties as soon as may be?"

[Pg 235]

"Thou sayest they are penitent, good Master Hopkins?" asked Bradford judicially.

"Ay, and to my mind honestly so."

"We will speak with them, Master Allerton, and if the captain and the elder agree with me, Master Hopkins, thy petition is granted, for indeed it is to me more pain to make another suffer than to suffer myself, even as a father feels the rod upon his own heart the while he lays it on his son's back."

"And yet the warning that to spare the rod will spoil the child applies to the children of the State as well as to the household," remarked Allerton, whose lively son Bartholomew could have testified to his father's strict obedience to Solomon's precept.

The chiefs of the colony were soon reassembled about the grotesque figures of the suffering duelists, and with their approval, the governor having demanded and received ample professions of contrition, and promises of amendment, ordered Billington to release the prisoners, who shamefacedly crept away to their master's house, and thus ended the first and for many years the only duel fought upon New England soil.

[Pg 236]

CHAPTER XXII.

THE CAPTAIN'S PIPE.

It was a lovely evening in June, and, the labors of the day being ended, while the hour for nightly devotion had not yet come, Plymouth enjoyed an hour of rest.

Seven houses now lined The Street, leading from the Rock to the Fort, and of these the highest on the northerly side was that of Captain Standish, built so near to the Fort indeed, that John Alden, if so idly minded to amuse himself, could easily salute each gun of the little battery with a pebble upon its nose. He was in fact thus occupied on this especial evening, while the captain sitting upon a bench beside the cottage door smoked a pipe wondrously carved from a block of chalcedony by some "Ancient Arrowmaker" of forgotten fame, and presented to Standish by his admiring friend Hobomok, who, having silently studied at his leisure the half dozen principal men among the Pilgrims, had settled upon Standish as most nearly representing his ideal of combined courage, wisdom, and endurance, so that he already was beginning to be known as "the Captain's Indian," just as Squanto was especially Bradford's henchman.

"'T is a goodly sight—a sweet and fair country," said the Captain half aloud, and Alden just pausing to note that his last pebble had gone down the throat of the saker, turned to inquire,—

[Pg 237]

"What is it, master?"

For reply the captain took the pipe from his mouth, and with the stem pointed to Manomet, where mile after mile of fresh young verdure rose steeply against the rosy eastern sky, while the sun sinking behind what was to be the Captain's Hill shot a flood of golden glory across the placid bay cresting each little wave with radiance, and burying itself at last among the whispering foliage of the mount.

"Saw you ever a fairer sight, lad?"

"Nay, 't is fair as the Hills of Beulah whereof the elder spake last night," softly replied John.

"And fairer, for we can see it with our eyes of to-day," replied the captain dryly. The younger man glanced briefly at his master's face, and failing to read its complex expression, contented himself with a somewhat uneasy smile as he turned to gaze upon the scene in thoughtful silence.

Standish noting with one of his quick glances his follower's embarrassment, took counsel with himself, and as he quietly refilled his pipe said,—

"Mark me well, lad, I mean not to cast aught of discredit on the elder's teaching, nor to shake any man's faith in Beulahs, or Canaans, or hills of Paradise, for doubtless Holy Writ gives warrant for such forecasting; and surely approved masters of strategy, and warfare both offensive and defensive, like Moses, and David, and Joshua, did not fight for the guerdon of a fool's bauble, or a May-queen's garland. But yet, mind thee, John, there are other great soldiers given us as ensamples in that same Holy Writ who seemed to set no store upon the Beulahs, and cared naught for milk or honey; men like Gideon, and Samson, and Saul, and Joab; and still the Lord of Hosts led these men forth, and fought for them and fended them, so long as they fought for themselves and were careful to catch the order and obey it. I know not, Jack, these matters are too mighty for a poor soldier like me to handle understandingly; and still somehow it seemeth me that this same Lord of Hosts will know how to deal mercifully even with a rough, war-worn fellow like me, who repenteth him of his sins and hath freely given himself to do battle in Christ's name against all Heathenesse, and to stand forth with this handful of saints against His foes and theirs, and that, although he cannot clearly see the Hills of Beulah, nor cares for such luscious cates as suit some stomachs. Dost catch my meaning, boy?"

[Pg 238]

"Ay, master, and well do I wish my hope of God's favor were as fairly founded"—

"Nay now, nay now, did not I this minute tell thee that I care naught for sweets? Save thy honey for some maiden's lips. Ah, and now I think on 't, here is a quiet and leisure time wherein to study out the strategy of that wooing emprise I was telling thee of—nay, did I tell thee?"

"Wooing—what—I—I know not fairly," stammered John Alden, but the captain still gazing upon Hither Manomet, where now the purple bloom of twilight was replacing the glory of the sunset, marked not the pallor stealing the red from beneath the brown of the young fellow's cheek, nor heard the discordant falter of his voice.

"Ay," replied he thoughtfully,—"my wooing of Priscilla Molines, thou knowest. I thought I spoke to thee of it, but at all odds the time has now well come when I should address the maid. I ought indeed to have done it long ago, and mayhap she will be a bit peevish at the delay, for doubtless her father told her ere he died of our compact, but there has been no convenient season, and truth to tell, Jack, I have no great heart toward the matter—yon green plateau lies betwixt me and"—

[Pg 239]

And in the sudden silence John Alden's gaze went out over the steel gray waters, out and out to the far horizon line where the rose tint had faded from the sky and a low line of fog gathered slowly and sadly.

"I'll tell thee, boy," suddenly resumed the captain rising from the bench and confronting his companion, while lightly touching his breast with the mouthpiece of the pipe upon whose cold ashes John mechanically fixed his eyes,—"thou shalt woo her for me."

"I—I woo her—nay, master, nay"—

"And why nay, thou foolish boy? 'T will be rare practice for thee against some of these lasses grow up, and thou wouldst fain go a-wooing on thine own account. Nay, then, can it be that a young fellow who would gayly go forth against Goliath of Gath were he in these parts is craven before the bright eyes and nimble tongue of a little maid? Dost think Priscilla will box thine ears?"

"Nay, but"—

"Nay me no buts and but me no nays, for the scheme tickles my fancy hugely, and so it shall be. Thou seest, Jack, it were more than a little awkward for me to show reason why I have not spoken sooner, and the fair lady's angry dignity will be appeased by seeing that I stand in awe of her, and woo her as princesses are wooed, by proxy. Thou shalt be my proxy, Jack, and see thou serve me not so scurvy a trick as—ha, here cometh the governor."

[Pg 240]

And, in effect, Bradford striding up the hill with all the vigor of his one-and-thirty years was already so close at hand as to save John Alden the pain of a reply.

"Good e'en, Governor," cried Standish going a step or two to meet his guest.

"Good e'en, Captain,—Alden. There's more trouble toward about the Billingtons."

"What now?" demanded the captain with a stern brevity auguring ill for the frequent offender.

"Nay, 't is no willful offense this time, nor is the father to blame except for not training his boys better; but the son John hath run away to go to the salvages his brother says, and the mother saith he is stolen, and whichever way it may be, he has been missing since yester even at bedtime, and now we have to go and look him up."

"Ill bird of an ill egg," growled Standish. "Mayhap 't were better not to find him."

"And yet we must," replied Bradford gently. "And as Squanto reports that the boy shaped his course for Manomet, my idea is that it were well for us to take our boat and coast along the headland and so on in the course we came at first, observing the shore, and noting such points as may be of use in the future. Mayhap we shall come as far as the First Encounter, and make out whether those salvages whom Squanto calls the Nausets are still so dangerously disposed toward us. At any rate we will try to discover our creditors for the seed-corn springing so greenly over yonder."

"Pity that Winslow hath gone to Sowams to visit Massasoit," remarked the captain dryly. "We shall miss his subtle wit in these delicate affairs of state."

[Pg 241]

"Yes, and if it comes to blows we shall miss no less Stephen Hopkins's doughty arm," replied Bradford. "But sith both are gone, we had better leave the Elder in charge of the settlement along with Master Allerton, John Howland, who is a stout man-at-arms, John Alden, Gilbert Winslow, Dotey, and Cooke."

"Seven men in all."

"Yes, and with Winslow and Hopkins away, that leaves ten of us to go on this expedition, and I shall take Lister lest he brawl with Dotey, and Billington not only that he is the boy's father, but lest he raise a sedition in the camp."

"Well thought on. I tell thee thou hast a head-piece of thine own, Will, though thou art so mild spoken."

Bradford laughed with a glance of affectionate recognition of the soldier's compliment, and then the two arranged the details of the proposed expedition, while Alden standing straight and still as a statue watched the gloom of night blotting all the color from sky, and sea, and shore, even as the fog crept stealthily in swallowing all before it, and a great dumb wave of sorrow and dismay surged up from his own heart, and swallowed all the brightness of his life.

Suddenly from the Town Square at the foot of the hill rose the sound of a drum not inartistically touched, and both the governor and the captain rose to their feet.

"Bart Allerton hath learned to use the drumsticks as if he had served with us in Flanders," said the soldier complacently, as they turned down the little sinuous footpath.

"Yes," replied the governor gravely. "He does credit to thy teaching, Captain, and yet methinks there may be danger that a vain delight in his own performance may cause the lad, and haply others, to forget that this, for lack of a bell, is our call to prayer. Couldst thou find it in thy heart, Myles, to direct that in future the drum shall sound but three heavy and unmodulated beats?"

[Pg 242]

"Oh ay, if it will please thee better, Will. Didst ever read of the tyrant Procrustes?"

"What of him?"

"Only that he would force all men to fit to one measure, though he dragged the life out of them. Dost fancy the God to whom we shall presently pray is better pleased with a dreary noise than with some hint at melody? Alden, come on, lad, 't is time for prayers, and thy woesome face suits the occasion. What's amiss, lad?"

"Naught's amiss, master," replied the youth more briefly than his wont, and with a sudden spring from a projecting boulder he passed the two elder men and arrived

first at the Common house.

"That younker's face and voice are not so blithe as might be. Hast been chiding him, Myles?" asked Bradford as they followed down the hill.

"Nay," replied the captain. "But like enough he's thwarted at missing the chance of a brush with the redskins to-morrow, and 't is a pity."

"Nay, Myles, look not so pensive on 't," responded the governor laughing. "There are men, believe it if you can, who love the smell of roses better than of blood. To my fancy John Alden—but there, light jesting is surely ill befitting the hour of prayer."

[Pg 243]

CHAPTER XXIII.

"SPEAK FOR YOURSELF, JOHN!"

Further information gathered by Squanto and Hobomok from the Indian guests who were constantly in and out of the village proved that John Billington had wandered as far as Manomet, and that Canacum, the sachem of that place, had sent him on with some Nauset braves who were visiting him, as a present or perhaps hostage to Aspinet, chief of the Nausets and Pamets. The course of the rescuing party was thus determined, and, apart from the recovery of little Billington, Bradford was glad of the opportunity of offering payment to the Nausets for the corn borrowed from the mysterious granary near the First Encounter, and also much desired to hear an explanation of the grave containing the bones of the French sailor and little child.

It was, therefore, with considerable satisfaction that he next morning led his little party to the water side, and embarked them just as the sun rising joyously from out the blue, blue sea, sent a handful of merry shafts to tip each wave with glory and glance in harmless flame from every point of armor or of weapon in the pinnace, as the crew moved every man to his appointed place, the captain pushing sturdily with an oar while John Alden, half in, half out the water, heaved mightily at the bows hanging at the foot of the Rock.

"Once more! Now again! There she floats!" cried the captain. "One more shove, John! There, there, enough! Fare thee well, lad, and mind the business I bade thee take in hand!"

[Pg 244]

"Ay, master," replied the youth, but as he stepped upon the Rock, and shook the waters from his mighty limbs, he heaved a sigh so ponderous that surely it helped to fill the mainsail now curving grandly to the gathering breeze.

But the summer day ripened to noon, and waned until the sun all but touched the crest of Captain's Hill, before the young man gave over the work at which he had labored like a Titan all day long, and going down to the brook at a point where the captain and he had dug a semicircular basin and paved it about with white sea-pebbles by way of a lavatory, he made his toilet, chiefly by throwing the clear cool water in bucketfuls over his head and neck, and then rubbing himself with a coarse towel until the crisp hair curled vivaciously, and the fair skin glowed out from under its coat of sunbrown in strong relief to the white teeth and blue eyes that made the face so comely in its strength.

A little brushing of the dark doublet and leathern small-clothes, the low russet boots

and knitted hose that completed his costume, and the unwilling envoy strolled down the hill to Elder Brewster's cottage and paused unseen and unheard outside the open door. It was the quiet time in the afternoon when the rougher labors of the day were ended, and the housewife might rest herself with the more delicate tasks of spinning, knitting, or needlework, for it was in these, "the good old days" we all so plaintively lament, that the distich—

"Man may work from sun to sun
But woman's work is never done"—

originated, and was something more than a bitter jest.

[Pg 245]

In the elder's busy household all the women were using this hour for their own refreshment. Mistress Brewster was lying upon her bed, Mary Chilton had taken her knitting and gone to sit awhile with Desire Minter and Elizabeth Tilley, and Priscilla drawing her quaintly carved spinning-wheel into the middle of the room so that she could look out of the window giving upon the brook and distant Manomet, was spinning some exquisitely fine linen thread, with which she purposed to weave cambric delicate enough for kerchiefs and caps. As she spun, she sang as the birds sing, that is from the heart, and not from the score; and now it was a blithe chanson brought by her mother from her French home, and now it was a snatch of some Dutch folks-*lied* or some Flemish drinking-song, and again the rude melody of an old Huguenot hymn, the half devout, half defiant invocation of men who prayed with naked swords in their hands. But suddenly into the sonorous strains of Luther's Hymn broke the joyous trill of a linnets song, and the bird alighting upon a neighboring poplar seemed challenging the unseen songster to a trial of skill. The stately hymn broke off in a little burst of laughter; and then accepting the challenge, the girl took up the linnets strain in an unworded song, sweeter, richer, more full of joy, and love, and sunshine than his own, until the little fellow with an angry chirp and flirt of the wings flew onward to the forest where he knew no such unequal contest awaited him.

"Well done, maid!" exclaimed Alden stepping in at the open door. "Thou hast so outsung the bird that he hath flown."

"Nay, methinks he flew because he saw an owl abroad, and owls are ever grewsome neighbors to poor little songsters," replied Priscilla dryly, and, pressing the treadle swiftly she drew out her cobweb thread with such earnest care that she could not look up at the tall and comely guest who awkwardly stood awaiting some more hospitable greeting. Receiving none, he presently subsided upon a stool hard by the spinning-wheel, and after watching its steady whirl for some moments said,—

[Pg 246]

"What a fine thread thou drawest, Priscilla."

"'T is hardly stout enough to hang a man, and yet stout enough for my purposes, good John."

"Wilt weave it on Master Allerton's loom when 't is done?"

"Mayhap I'll weave it on a pillow into lace, as the maids in fair Holland are used to do."

"Dost know their art?"

"Ay. Jeanne De la Noye to whom I writ a letter by thy hand, John, she taught me, and I overpassed my teacher ere I was done. What thinkst thou, John, would be said or done should I weave some ells of spanwide lace and trim my Sunday kirtle

therewith? Mistress White, nay, Mistress Winslow that is now, would rend it away with her own fingers."

"And yet Master Winslow weareth cambric ruffs on occasion, and his dame hath a paduasoy kirtle and mantle, and so had Mistress Carver, and some others of our company."

"Marry come up! How wise the lad hath grown! Hast been pondering women's clothes instead of the books the Captain gives thee to study, John?"

A change passed over the young man's face. The careless allusion had recalled his errand, and moreover linked itself with a memory Priscilla had willfully evoked. He was silent for a moment, and then pushing his seat a little farther from the wheel he quietly said,—

"Well do I like thy merry mood, Priscilla, and care not though thou flout me ever so sharply, but mine errand to-day is somewhat of importance, and I pray thee to listen seriously."

"Nay, good lad, waste not such solemnities on me. 'T will be Sunday in three days, and thou canst take the elder's place, and let him learn of thee how soberly and seriously to exhort a sinner."

"Priscilla, wilt thou be serious?"

"As death, John. What is it?"

"I writ a letter for thee to thy friend Jeanne De la Noye"—

"'T is a sad truth, John."

"And methought there was in it some word that pointed to—to"—

"Yes; good youth, that pointed to—to—and what then?"

"That pointed to some contract, or mayhap naught more than some understanding"—

"If 't was a word that pointed to any understanding of thee and thy stammerings, John Alden, I pray thee speak it without more ado. Say out what is in thy mind if indeed there is aught there."

"Well then, art thou promised to Jacques De la Noye, and is he coming here to wed thee?"

The rich color of Priscilla's cheek deepened to crimson and the slender thread in her hand snapped sharply, but in an instant she recovered herself, and deftly joining the thread exclaimed.—

"See now what mischief thy folly hath wrought! Of a truth there's no call to complain of blindness in thy speech now, Master Alden. But still I have noted that if thou canst drive a bashful youth out of his bashfulness, there are no bounds to his forwardness."

"Loth were I to offend thee, Priscilla, and that thou knowest right well, but I fain would have an answer to my query. If 't is a secret, thou knowest I will keep it."

"Nay, I'll keep it myself, and not trouble thee with what proved too burdensome for myself."

"But Priscilla, I am sent to thee with a proffer of marriage, and if thou 'rt already

bespoke 't is not fitting that thou shouldst hear it."

"Thou 'rt sent, John Alden!" exclaimed the girl dropping the thread, and pressing her foot upon the treadle until it creaked. "Who sent thee?"

"Captain Standish."

"Sent thee! Was it too much honor to a poor maid for him to do his own errand?"

"Nay, be not angered, Priscilla, although he feared thou wouldst be."

"Ah, he did fear it, did he. Then why did he do it?"

"Why, he feared that thou wert angry already, and he would have thee know he stood in terror, and dared not present himself"—

"John Alden, art thou and thy master joined in league to flout and insult me, an orphaned maid? If thou hast an errand from Captain Standish to me, say it out in a few words as may be, or I will never speak word to thee again."

Perhaps the sight of that suddenly pallid face, those blazing eyes and brave scornful mouth, steadied the young man's nerves, as cowards in the camp have been known to become heroes in the field; at any rate his brow cleared, his voice grew assured, and rising to his feet with a certain solemnity he said,—

[Pg 249]

"Thou 'rt right, Priscilla, and I have done sore discredit thus far to the honorable master on whose errand I come. Captain Standish, as no doubt thou knowest, spake with thy father before he died of a marriage in time to come between him and thee"—

"Nay, I knew it not, nor am bound by any such speech," interposed Priscilla hastily; but Alden continued unmoved,—

"Captain Standish took it that thou didst know, and feared that thou hadst felt his silence to be some want of eagerness"—

"Ay, I see! He feared that I was angered that he had not wooed me across his wife's and my father's graves, and so thrust thee forward to bear the first outburst of my fury! 'T was kindly thought on if not over-valiant, and 't is an honorable, a noble office for thee, John, who hast at odd times thrown me a soft word thyself."

"Oh maiden, maiden, wilt thou trample to death the poor heart that thou knowest is all thine own! I 'throw thee a soft word now and again! Why, thou knowest but too well how I hang like a beggar on thy footsteps to catch even a careless word that thou mayst fling to me! Thou knowest that I love thee, maid, as blind men love sight, and dying men water, and"—

"*Then why don't you speak for yourself, John?*" demanded Priscilla quietly, and a dainty smile softened the proud curve of her lips, and a gleam of tenderness quenched the fire of her eyes; but John, his eyes fixed upon the ground, saw it not.

[Pg 250]

"Ah Priscilla, 't is not kind to try me thus!" cried he. "Sure thou hast triumphed often enough in despising my humble suit, without wounding me afresh to-day, and when I fain would rally my poor wits to honorably fulfill the embassy that brings me here. Sith I may not hope to call thee mine, maiden, I could better bear to see thee the wife of the noble soldier whom I serve than of any other man, be he Fleming or Dutchman or what not, so that thou art not promised."

"Go on, then, and say thy knight's message most worthy squire, and let us make an

end on 't."

"Thou knowest the captain for thyself, Priscilla, but mayhap thou knowest not that he cometh of noble lineage, a race that hath borne coat-armor since Norman William led them across the Channel"—

"Didst not bring some heraldic tree or chart to dazzle mine eyes withal?" inquired Priscilla, mockingly; but the ambassador, determined not again to be turned from his purpose, went on,—

"Among his ancestors are men of noble deeds and proud achievements who have carried the name of Standish of Standish in the forefront of battle, and in King's Councils, and have ranked among the princes of the idolatrous Church to which they still cling; but among them all, Priscilla, hath never risen a braver, or a nobler, or a more honorable man than he who woos thee"—

"Did he bid thee say all that also?"

"Nay, Priscilla, there's a time for all things, and I must feel it unworthy of thy womanhood to so perversely jeer and flout at a good man's love, when 't is honestly offered thee."

"Nor would I, John. But I have heard naught of any love offered me by Myles Standish. Thou hast offered in his name some coat-armor, and a long lineage, and courage both ancestral and of his own person, and—what else? I forget, but surely there was no love among these commodities. Didst drop it by the way, or did the captain forget to send it, John?"

[Pg 251]

"Mayhap, he kept it back to give it thee by word of mouth, Priscilla, and if he did, it is a treasure even thou shouldst not despise, for never did I see a nature at once so brave, so strong, and so tender. Thou knowest how sorely ill I was six weeks or so by-gone, and none did a hand's turn for me but the captain, nor needed to, for never was nurse so delicate of touch, so unwearied, so cheerful, and so full of device as he. No woman ever equaled him in those matters where we long for woman's tendance, and yet never a soldier played the man more valiantly where man's work was in hand. Ah Priscilla, 't is a heart of gold, a man among ten thousand, a tower of strength in danger, and a tender comforter in suffering that is offered thee—be wise beyond thy years, and answer him comfortably."

"And hast thou done, John? Hast said all thy say?"

"Ay, maid."

"Then clear thy memory of it all, and make room for the answer I will give thee."

"And let it be a gentle one, Priscilla."

"Oh, thou knowest how to dress an unwelcome message in comely phrase better than any man of mine acquaintance, unless it be Master Winslow," retorted Priscilla bitterly. "So try thy skill on simple NO, for 't is all I have to say."

"But Priscilla, but maiden, bethink thee—be not so shrewd of tongue"—

"Nay, wilt have my reasons, Master Envoy? Well then, I care not for a man who cares not to do his own wooing. I care not for a man so well assured that I will be held by what he avers is my dead father's bidding, that he can let weeks and months roll by or ever he finds time to convince himself of the matter. I care naught for coat-armor, nor for pedigree, I, whose forbears were honest bourgeoisie of Lyons who

[Pg 252]

scrupled not to give up all for conscience sake, while this man is neither Papist like his kinsfolk, nor Independent like these he lives among. And I care not for a red beard, nor for widowers, nor for men old enough to be my sire"—

"Nay, he is but six-and-thirty, maiden."

"And I am naught-and-twenty, and I am a-weary of thy chat, John Alden, and I fain would be alone, so I wish thee good e'en—and a keener wit."

"But Priscilla," gasped the poor fellow as the wheel was pushed so suddenly aside that he had to spring out of its way, while its mistress whirled past him and up the clumsy stair leading to her nook in the loft of the cabin.

"But Priscilla!" came back in wrathful mimicry from the head of the stair, and while Alden still stood bewildered, in at the open door flocked Mary Chilton, and Desire, and Elizabeth, their girlish laughter bubbling over at some girlish jest, and with a muttered greeting Alden stalked through their midst and was gone.

"He came looking for Priscilla, and is grumly at not finding her," whispered Elizabeth Tilley; but Mary Chilton with a wise nod replied, as one who knows,—

"Did he but know it, she's not ill inclined to him when all is said. Unless I sore mistake she'll say yea next time he asks her."

[Pg 253]

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE MYSTERIOUS GRAVE.

"A fair and goodly day!" exclaimed Standish ever sensitive to the aspects of nature, although never allowing himself to be mastered by any extremity of weather.

"Ay," replied Bradford. "And yet methinks that cloud rising over Manomet hath a stormy look."

"Let us once weather the Gurnet's Nose, and a south wind will not harm us," ventured Billington, whose out-of-door prowlings had at least made him weatherwise.

"Ay, if south wind is all that it means," said Doctor Fuller gravely. "But to my mind yon cloud is of no common kind. It minds me shrewdly of those whirlwind or cyclone clouds that used to fright us in the China Seas when I sailed them as a lad."

"Say you so, Surgeon!" replied Bradford looking uneasily at the cloud rapidly rising and enlarging in the southern horizon. "Be ready with the sheets, Peter Browne and Cooke, and Francis Eaton had best stand with Latham at the helm."

"Look! Look you there! 'T is a waterspout!" cried Fuller, pointing excitedly at the cloud, which, driven on with furious force by an upper current of wind unfelt below, was now bellying in a marked and abnormal fashion, while from the lowest point of the convexity appeared a spiral column of dense vapor rapidly elongating itself toward the sea whose waters assumed a black and sullen aspect, disturbed by chopping counter currents of short waves, which gradually, as the waterspout neared them, fell into its rotary motion, rising at the centre of the whirlpool into a column of foaming water, a liquid stalagmite climbing to meet the stalactite bending to it from

[Pg 254]

above.

"If we had but a heavy gun!" cried Warren. "They say to hit the waterspout in the centre where it joins the other from below will disperse it."

"Knocks the wind out of it," explained Billington.

"But we have nothing better than these bird guns," cried Standish contemptuously touching with his foot the pile of weapons covered with a tarpaulin lying in the bottom of the boat. "And it drives down upon us like a charge of horse. Here, let me to the helm."

"There is no way upon the boat, Captain," expostulated Eaton. "No man can steer without a wind."

"Thou 'rt right, friend," replied the captain gravely, as he felt the rudder give beneath his hand. "There's naught to do but tarry until Master Waterspout declareth his pleasure."

"Until God declareth His pleasure," amended Bradford quietly. "Men, let us pray."

And baring his head the governor poured forth a strong and manful petition to Him who rideth upon the wings of the wind and reigneth a King forever over His own creation.

Standish standing upright beside the useless tiller bared his head and listened reverently, but always with an eye to the waterspout and to the clouds, and as a deep-throated Amen rose from his comrades he gave the tiller a shove and joyously cried,—

"A puff, a breath! Enough to steer us past!" And the boat feeling her helm again careened gently to the little gust of wind out of the west, and slid away upon her course, while the waterspout, more furious in its speed at every instant, swept past and out to sea, where it presently broke and fell with a thunderous explosion.

[Pg 255]

"Another crowning mercy!" exclaimed Bradford devoutly, and Standish answered with his reticent smile,—

"Had Master Jones of the Mayflower been here, he would have more than ever felt 't is better to be friends than foes with prayerful men."

To the waterspout succeeded light and baffling winds so that labor as they might, it was fully dark when the Pilgrim pinnacle entered what is now Barnstable, then Cummaquid Harbor. Anchoring for safety, they lay down to get such rest as the position afforded, and woke betimes in the morning to find themselves high and dry in the centre of the harbor, the channel encircling them and making up toward the land. Upon the shore as seen across this channel appeared some savages gathering clams and muscles.

Bradford at once dispatched Squanto and Tockamahamon, who had come along as guides and interpreters, to interview these men and barter for some of the shellfish, but in a very short time the envoys came splashing merrily back with an invitation for the white men to land and breakfast with Janno, the chief of the Mattakees, who was, the fishermen said, close at hand. They also corroborated the statement that the missing boy had gone down the Cape with the Nausets, and would be found at Eastham, Aspinet's headquarters.

"I see no reason for gainsaying such a comfortable proposal," said Bradford turning

with a smile to Standish who cheerily replied,—

"Nor I, so that they leave hostages aboard, and we carry every man his piece ashore."

"We must e'en wade for it, sith there is neither dry ground for footing nor water for swimming," suggested Browne stripping off hose and shoon; but as Bradford and Standish began to follow his example they were prevented by the Indians, who offered each a back to the two chiefs, at the same time intimating to the others that if they would but wait all the company should be similarly accommodated. The doctor accepted, but Browne and the rest preferred their own legs as a dependence, and the whole party presently reached shore, where Janno, the handsome and courteous young chief of the Mattakees, stood with several of his pnieses or nobles around him ready to receive them. Squanto at once stood forth as interpreter, and so flowery and mellifluous were the phrases of welcome that he interpreted, that the captain edging toward Bradford muttered,—

"I hope Master Warren will look well after the hostages left aboard, for all this is too sweet to be wholesome. I mistrust treachery, Governor."

"Nay, I mistrust Squanto, Captain," replied Bradford laughing. "The poor fellow doth glorify himself at some cost to the truth, I fancy."

"Beshrew me but before another month I'll know enough of their jargon to need no lying interpreter," muttered Standish, and he kept his word.

The Indian breakfast, already nearly ready, proved both toothsome and plentiful. It consisted of lobsters, clams, and muscles, both cooked and raw, ears of green maize roasted in the husk, and no-cake, that is to say, pounded corn mixed with water and baked in the ashes, the germ and animus of hoe-cake, bannocks, Johnnycake, and all the various forms of maize-bread so well known throughout our land.

Breakfast over Janno rather timidly inquired if the white chiefs would permit the visit of an old squaw of his tribe who much desired to see them.

"Surely if the good woman hath occasion to speak with us," replied Bradford amiably. "Why doth the chief seem to mistrust our willingness?"

"Squaw no speak to brave in council," explained Squanto with an air of shocked propriety; but before he could further explain a bowed and decrepit figure emerged from one of the little huts on the edge of the woods and slowly approached the white men who stepped forward to meet her, desiring Squanto to assure her of welcome. Coming so close to the little group that Standish muttered, "Sure she is minded to salute us," the poor old crone peered into the face of one after another of the white men, then wofully shook her head and began to mutter in her own tongue with strange gesticulations, but as he heard them Squanto uttered a shrill cry of terror, and the sachem stepping forward spoke some words of stern command, before which the old woman humbly bowed and became silent.

"What is it? Would she curse us? What is her grievance? What is her story?" demanded Bradford half indignantly, and Squanto, after some conference with the sachem, informed them that this woman, once called Sunlight-upon-the-Waters, but now known as The-Night-in-Winter, had been mother of seven tall sons who filled her wigwam with venison, and shared their corn and tobacco with her; but three of these sons were among the captives entrapped and sold to slavery by Hunt, and the other four had perished in the plague brought down upon the red men by the curse of The-White-Fool who died about the same time; and thus The-Night-in-Winter, having just cause, hated the white men as she hated death and the devil, and wished

to curse them as The-White-Fool had cursed her people, but the sachem would not let her, and now she was doubly bereft of her children, since she might not even avenge them.

"T is a piteous tale," said Bradford gently when Squanto had finished. "And we cannot be amazed that this poor heathen mother should thus feel. There is warrant for it among the classics, Surgeon; Medea and others were moved in the same fashion. But Squanto, explain to her that we and all honest white men abhor the course of Master Hunt, and had we found him at such commerce we would have delivered her sons, and thee too, Squanto, out of his hands. Tell her our mind is to deal honestly and Christianly by all men, and here, give her this fair chain, and this length of red cloth. Tell her that she would do ill to curse us, for we are friends to her and her people."

"And ask who was The-White-Fool, and what his story," demanded Standish as Squanto finished rendering the governor's message.

"Squanto know that in himself. Every Pokanoket know that," replied Squanto, while Janno muttered gloomily in his own tongue,—

"All red men know The-White-Fool's curse. All feel it." So Squanto in his broken yet picturesque phrases told how "many snows ago" a large French ship was wrecked farther down the Cape and nearly everything aboard was lost. Several of her crew, however, came safely ashore and made a sort of camp with some earthwork defenses on the mouth of the Pamet River.

[Pg 259]

"Why men, we saw it, and mused upon the marks of European skill and training," exclaimed Standish.

"Ay, and the house hard by, and the marvelous grave with the fair-haired man and infant so curiously embalmed," added Fuller.

"Truly, this is passing strange!" murmured Bradford. "But get on with thy story, Tisquantum."

The Frenchmen were quiet and peaceable enough, Tisquantum could not but allow, and yet his people would not permit them to dwell unmolested, perhaps from some vague fear of ancient prophecy that a pale-faced race should come from the rising sun and drive the red men into the western seas; perhaps from some race-hatred lying below the savage's power of expression; at any rate, as Tisquantum finally declared with a significant gesture,—

"Sagamore, powahs, pnieses, braves, all men say, It is not good for pale men with hair like the sunrise to live among the red men whose hair is like the night. Let them be gone!"

"And what did the red men do about it, Squanto?" asked Standish sternly, while in his eyes kindled the danger light before which Squanto quailed, yet sullenly replied,

—

"Red man find what you call wolf around his wigwam, red man send arrow through his head."

"Do you mean, you heathen, that you murdered these helpless, shipwrecked white men? Murdered them in cold blood?" demanded Standish, seizing Gideon's hilt and half drawing him from his scabbard.

"Tisquantum not here. Tisquantum not Mattakee, not Nauset; Tisquantum Patuxet,

where white men live," hastily replied Squanto; while Bradford suggested in a rapid aside, "Best leave go thy sword and restrain thy wrath, Captain, or we be but dead men. Look at the faces of those men behind the sachem. Already they finger their tomahawks."

"More like, thy timidity will give the savages courage to fall upon us, and we shall share the fate of these, who though naught but Frenchmen were at least white, and wore breeches," retorted Standish angrily. The color flashed into Bradford's cheek, but after an instant's silence he quietly replied,—

"Thou knowest well enow, Standish, that my timidity is not for myself but for these, and yet more for the helpless ones we have left behind. I trust when it comes to blows, the Governor of Plymouth will be found where he belongs, next to her fiery Captain."

"Be content, Will, be content. Once more thou 'rt right and I all wrong. 'T is not the first time nor the last, but let us ask in all patience what these fellows mean with their White-Fool. Sure they have not made me out so suddenly as this, have they?"

"Nay, Myles, I trow no man but thyself will ever call thee fool, nay, nor overly white, either!" and glancing at the Captain's bronzed face lighted once more by its smile of grim humor, Bradford turned to Squanto and bade him explain in the hearing of both savages and white men the meaning of this reference, and also the fate of the French mariners cast ashore at Eastham.

Squanto nothing loth to display his oratory struck an attitude, and with native eloquence and much gesticulation described, first, the storm which four years ago had driven the French brig upon the sands; then the efforts of the mariners to launch their boats, their defeat, and the breaking up both of boats and brig; then the arrival upon shore of thirteen men, two of whom died of wounds and exhaustion. The eleven survivors finding some wreckage upon the beach proceeded the next morning to build themselves a shelter, and finally erected the cabin and threw up the earthwork discovered by the Pilgrims in their second exploration.

Up to this point the Indians had been content to curiously watch the proceedings of these interlopers, but finding that they were establishing themselves permanently, they held a council and resolved that they should die, partly in atonement for the outrage done to the red men some two years before by Hunt the kidnapper, and partly from some vague fear lest the strangers with their superior knowledge and appliances should conquer and injure the proper owners of the soil.

Not choosing to assault them openly, for the men were brave, alert, and well armed, the Indians laid in wait around the spring where they must daily go for water, watched them as they went afield in pursuit of game, in fact harassed them at every turn, until of the eleven but three were left alive, and they, so broken in strength, courage, and hope, that they were easily captured and reduced to slavery. One remained here at Nauset, and the other two were sent, one to the Massachusetts, the other to the Namasket tribes, where they were kept as the mock and victims of the brutal sport of the savages. The one who remained at Nauset was the best looking, and evidently the most attractive of the three, and from Squanto's description seemed to have been an officer, and a very attractive young man. The-White-Birch, sister of Aspinet, chief of the Nausets, having fixed her regards upon the prisoner, discovered these peculiarities, and one day when the boys of the village were amusing themselves with seeing how near they could shoot their blunted arrows to the prisoner's eyes without putting them out, she stepped forward, and, Pocahontas-like, announced that she took this man for her husband, and as such claimed his release

from torture. Her demand was complied with, and the half dead victim unbound and informed of his new honors; but it was too late—want, misery, and cruelty had done their work, and the poor fellow's wits had fled. He accepted the tender care and affection of The-White-Birch as a child might have done, but the joyous gallantry of the debonair young French officer was a thing of the past, and the bridegroom had become as completely the child of nature as his bride. He was adopted into the tribe, and the Indian name given him, in no spirit of taunt or contempt, but simply as a descriptive appellation, meant The-White-Fool.

They were married, these two strange lovers, and lived in the cabin built of ship's planks by The-White-Fool's dead comrades. In due time a son was born to them, the idol of his mother's heart, and the constant companion of the father, who seemed to find in the child some link with his own stray wits; but when the boy was about three years old the poor exile was seized with a fever, and in his delirium escaping from his tender nurse stalked naked through the village proclaiming in the native tongue that the wrath of God hung over this people and this land, because of the cruel wrong they had done to him and to his comrades; and he foretold that before seven snows had covered his grave, white men from over the sea should come like the wildfowl in the spring and settle down upon the creeks and ponds, and fill the forest with their cry, and the red men should melt away as the snow melts and their place be no more seen.

[Pg 263]

It was really worth something to hear Squanto declaim this wild prophecy with the shrill voice and fevered gestures of the delirious captive; and as they caught his meaning the prieses around Janno stirred in their places, laid hand upon the tomahawk at each man's girdle, and cast menacing looks upon the strangers.

"Have a care, Squanto! Say no more on that head, or thou 'lt stir up strife afresh," muttered Bradford in the interpreter's ear, while Standish fixed his eyes upon Janno ready to sacrifice him at the first hostile movement. But the young chief casting a meaning glance around the circle said quietly,—

"The-White-Birch was of the blood of Aspinet my brother, and The-White-Fool was her husband."

"Well said, Chief!" exclaimed Standish who had already mastered much of the Indian language, and in accordance with his late resolve soon became the most expert interpreter in the colony, while Bradford nodding said, "Go on, Squanto!"

Little however remained to tell. The ill-starred Frenchman died within a few hours of his prophecy, and hardly had The-White-Birch laid him in his honored grave when she was called to bury her little boy, whom the father had named Louis, along with him. Then she set off alone to find the comrades of her lost love at Namasket, and Shawmut, that they might with her lament his death; but whether illness came upon her and she crept aside to die, or haply some wild creature slew and devoured her, or in her maze of grief she strayed away and starved in the limitless woods, none ever knew; she never was heard of again.

[Pg 264]

"And the other two captives?" inquired Standish.

"The Feast-of-Green-Corn before the last one, Captain Dermer carried them away in his ship," replied Squanto proud of his English and his information.

"Ay, ay, and now we understand why these Nauset Indians attacked us at the First Encounter," said Standish.

"Especially as they had probably watched us stealing their corn," added Fuller dryly.

"Borrowing, not stealing, Surgeon," retorted Bradford briskly. "And a part of our errand to the First Encounter is to satisfy our creditor for the debt. Let us be going."

An hour later the shallop, now riding gayly upon the flood tide, put forth from Barnstable Harbor, carrying not only its own crew, but Janno with several of his followers, he having volunteered as guide and negotiator with Aspinet for the restoration of little Billington.

The voyage prospered, and before night the boy, decked with strings of beads and various savage ornaments, was restored to his guardians by Aspinet himself; while the first red man allowed to come on board the shallop was the owner of the corn "borrowed" by the Pilgrims, who now repaid its value twofold by an order for goods to be delivered at Plymouth. But more important than boy or corn, at any rate to the ears of Standish, was a report here received that the Narragansetts, their friend Massasoit's neighbors and deadly foes, had made a raid upon his domains and carried him away prisoner. Also that one of Massasoit's pnieses called Corbitant had become an ally of the Narragansetts, and was now at Namasket, only fourteen miles from Plymouth, trying to raise a revolt against both his chief and the white men their allies. He was also fiercely denouncing Squanto, Hobomok, and Tockamahamon as renegades and traitors to their own people, who should be at once put to death.

[Pg 265]

This news was so alarming that without waiting for trade, or for the feast offered to them, the Pilgrims at once set sail, and after stormy weather and sundry adventures arrived safely at home toward night of the third day from their departure. John Billington was received with vociferous joy by his mother, treated to a lithe bundle of birch rods by his father, and assaulted by his brother, who at once fought him for the possession of the bead necklaces and other gauds he had brought home. The men of the colony were meantime hearing the report brought in by Nepeof, a sachem just from Namasket, of the treacherous proceedings there, and before they had been three hours at home Squanto and Hobomok were dispatched to discover the truth of the matter, while Nepeof was held as a hostage.

[Pg 266]

CHAPTER XXV.

A LITTLE DISCIPLINE.

"And how sped you in your errand, Master Envoy?" inquired Standish as, lighted pipe in hand, he once more seated himself upon the bench outside his cabin door to enjoy the sunset hour.

But at the sudden question John Alden's face flushed deeper than the sunset, and he stammered, "I am so blundering, Master—I told the maiden all you bade me, but—but"—

"But what, thou stammering idiot!" roared the captain, his serene brow suddenly overcast, and the red surging up to his own brow. "Dost mean to say the girl flouted the suit of—nay, then, what dost thou mean? Speak out, man, and be not so timorous!"

"Here is Giles Hopkins!" exclaimed John, as feet were heard running up the hill, and the captain angrily turned to meet the new-comer, shouting,—

"Well, what dost thou want, youngster? Is a man never to be rid of half-wit boys in this place!"

"Please, Captain, the governor desires you to come in haste to a sudden Council. The Indians are come in, and methinks"—

"And who in Beelzebub's name cares what thou thinkst!" shouted the captain. "Begone before I box thy malapert ears." And driving the lad before him he strode down the hill without another word or look at John, who grinding his heel into the turf muttered,—

[Pg 267]

"And now he's angered, and beshrew me if I could not find it in my heart to wish Priscilla had said him yea, rather than nay. It were easier to bear her scorn of me if I knew that he was content. 'T is not so hard to suffer loss if a dear friend gains by that same loss."

Meantime Standish striding wrathfully down the hill met Priscilla as she darted out of the door of the elder's house. At sight of him she stopped short, coloring scarlet, and yet her whole face gleaming with a wicked inclination to laugh.

The captain also hesitated a moment, and then removing his barret cap with a bow whose stately courtesy recalled his lineage he said,—

"Pardon me, Mistress Molines, for what it seems was undue presumption. May I ask if the Council is convened here or at the Common house?"

"At the Common house, Captain; but indeed and by my faith I know not"—

"Pardon if I venture to cut you short, Mistress, but I am summoned in haste to the Council."

And with another formal bow the captain hastened on, leaving Priscilla biting her lip and staring after him, half angry, half amused. "One could be proud of him—if—if—Oh heart, heart! What is 't thou 'rt clamoring for! Well—at least I can go and make a posset for my dear dame, and the rest may wait." And with a sigh and a smile and a blush the girl turned back to the things of the hour.

"Now here's a coil, Captain!" exclaimed Bradford as Standish entered the large room where about a dozen of the men of the colony were assembled in informal council, while in the midst stood Hobomok, his red skin streaming with perspiration and stained with travel, while his usually impassive face bore an expression of genuine grief and dismay.

[Pg 268]

"What is it? Ha, Hobomok returned alone!"

"Yes, and with evil tidings," replied the Governor. "He and Squanto reached Namasket early this morning and sought to conceal themselves in a house belonging to Squanto, though now lent to a kinsman. But some one betrayed them to Corbitant, who was vapping around the village calling upon the men to rise in revolt against Massasoit and deliver him up to the Narragansetts, and saying that we white men should all be slain, and also those who have made alliance with us, for already he had news of our visit to Nauset, and the contract made with Aspinet, and Canacum, and Iyanough. While yet he raved against Squanto, and Hobomok, and Tockamahamon, a traitor told him that the two first were hiding in the village, and he swore a great oath by all his gods that they should die, especially Squanto, in whom, said he, the white men will lose their tongue"—

"What meant he by that, Governor?" demanded Warren.

"Why, that he is our interpreter," sharply replied Standish. "What else should he mean? What next, Governor?"

"Next they circumvented Squanto in his cabin, and Corbitant seizing him held a knife to his throat, mocking and taunting him as is their fashion, while two fell upon Hobomok, but he being a lusty fellow and quick, broke from them and fled hither so fast as legs could carry him. You see the condition he is in."

"And left thy comrade to die!" ejaculated Standish looking scornfully at the Indian, who humbly replied in his own tongue,—

[Pg 269]

"Hobomok only one man. Corbitant many men. Squanto perhaps dead, but the white man will send a hundred of his enemies to be his servants in the Happy Land. A brave fears not to die, if he may be avenged."

"Ha! 'T is the savage philosophy, and not a bad one," said Standish, and although the elder raised stern eyes of rebuke upon the reckless soldier he continued,—

"And I shall lead our forces to avenge both the death of our servant and Massasoit's capture, shall I not, brethren? What is your will?"

"Sound policy dictates that if our allies are to respect us, or our enemies fear us, we should not suffer such an affront as this to pass," declared Winslow. "England hath never yet borne that her flag should be insulted, and we are Englishmen."

"You are right, Winslow," replied Bradford solemnly. "And loth though we may be to shed the blood of these men, whom we fain would convert to friends and Christians, it is my mind that in this instance we are bound to deal with them as with our own children, whom we indeed chastise, but still with an eye to their own future happiness."

"Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them which are exercised thereby," quoted the Elder sententiously, while Standish stood impatiently twisting his moustache, and glancing around the assembly as if selecting his men.

"And now, having chapter and verse for avenging this affront, let us set about doing it," exclaimed he as several of the company murmured Amen to the Elder's approved quotation. But Bradford fixed his steady eyes upon the soldier's face for a moment before he somewhat coldly asked,—

[Pg 270]

"How many men do you think it best to take, Captain Standish?"

"Ten. Hopkins, the Surgeon, Winslow, Browne, Howland, Gilbert Winslow, Billington, Eaton, Dotey, and Lister," replied Standish promptly, and then with his peculiarly winning smile he added,—

"You see I leave the governor, with Master Allerton his assistant, to guide the colony, and the elder to pray for our success, and Master Warren for a councilor, and the rest to carry on our various labors and protect the weaklings."

"It is a good division it seemeth to me. What say you all, brethren?" asked the governor still gravely, and one by one each man signified his assent, only Howland coming close to the captain asked,—

"May not Alden go with us, Captain? He hath a very pretty fashion with his weapon."

"Am I captain, or art thou, John Howland?" growled the leader, and as all turned out of the house to prepare for the march in the following dawn, Bradford laid his hand upon his friend's shoulder and walked along with him.

"What ails thee, Myles? Thou 'rt sorely chafed at something. Is aught amiss that I can help?"

"Nay, Will, 't is naught, and less than naught. 'T is but a new knowledge of mine own unworthiness. Sure 'never such a fool as an old fool' is a good proverb."

"'T is not to a fool that we trust the lives of ten out of our nineteen men," said Bradford quietly.

"Oh, I can fight well enow," replied the soldier bitterly. "'T is my trade, and all I'm fit for. Ay, and in my mood to-day I'll be fain to fight. I only fear this knave Corbitant hath run away."

[Pg 271]

"If so, he confesses his defeat without the need of bloodshed," suggested Bradford. "And at all odds, Standish, our policy is to make friends by fair means if we may. Remember, if Squanto is not harmed, Corbitant is not to be touched. If indeed our poor friend is slain, then have you warrant for Corbitant's head, and the lives of all who helped to murder Squanto. Thou 'rt too honorable a man and too good a Christian to let thine own chafed humor interfere with justice."

"I am too well drilled a soldier to disobey orders, Governor," replied the Captain briefly, and so they parted, nor did Standish and Alden exchange a sentence that night save barely these,—

"In one word, John, was the answer to my message yes or no?"

"Dear Master, it was no."

"I bade thee answer in one word, and thou hast disobeyed me in using five."

The next morning brought one of those furious summer storms peculiar to August, and the little force, loaded with armor, weapons, and knapsacks, found themselves much distressed by the humid heat. Reaching a sheltered spot about a mile from Namasket, Standish resolved to remain there until dark, giving the men opportunity for rest and refreshment, and trusting to the storm and the night to cover his attack upon a foe ten times his own number.

As darkness closed in upon the encampment, the captain roused himself from a soldier's nap, and briefly ordered,—

"Eat what provisions you have left in your knapsacks, men, and empty your flasks. Then pile and leave both beside this rock. Those of us who are alive in the morning will subsist upon the enemy. Those who are not will feel no lack."

[Pg 272]

Soon after dark the little troop set forth, but Hobomok, deceived by the darkness and the rain, missed the route, and for three weary hours the men floundered around in the dripping forest, the guide wisely keeping out of the captain's reach, until in a gleam of watery moonlight Winslow recognized a peculiar clump of trees which he had noticed upon his late journey with Hopkins to visit Massasoit; and Hobomok recovering from his bewilderment led the way as fast as the men could follow him, until in the edge of a large clearing he paused, and pointing to a detached hut whispered,—

"Corbitant sleep there."

"Now God be praised that there is a chance of fighting rather than floundering!" piously exclaimed Standish, and with brief exact phrases he proceeded to set the battle in array. Eight men were to silently surround the house, their pieces ready, and their orders to cut down if necessary any who should attempt to escape from the house. Standish and Winslow, followed by Hobomok, marched meantime straight into a hut, and the captain in a loud voice demanded,—

"Where is Corbitant? Give him up and no one else shall be harmed!"

A moment of panic-stricken silence ensued, and then through the darkness was heard the indefinite rustling sound of living creatures seeking covertly to escape from an enclosure.

"Look to it, outside!" shouted Standish. "Let no man pass your guard! Hobomok, tell them that we will harm none if they give up Corbitant and those who helped him to murder Tisquantum!"

[Pg 273]

But the hubbub increased momentarily, and presently a shout of "Back! Back!" from without was followed by a loud shriek in a woman's voice.

"Fools!" roared Standish in the native tongue. "Keep still. Stay in the house. We hurt none but Corbitant!"

Yet still the tumult grew; the savages trusting no promises, endeavored to escape through the various openings of the wigwam, and although the sentinels were as careful as possible, and heartily desirous of avoiding bloodshed, several of the Indians were more or less hurt, while the half-grown boys perceiving the immunity of the women from harm, ran from one door to the other crying out,—

"Neen squaes! Neen squaes!" (I am a girl! I am a girl!)

The women also hung around Hobomok, pulling at his hands and clothing, for attention, while they shrieked, "Oh Hobomok, I am thy friend! Thou knowest I am thy friend!"

Winslow meantime had stirred up the embers of a fire near the doorway of the hut, and the flame leaping out cast a wild and fitful glare over the scene, in the midst of which Hobomok, climbing the stout pole in the centre of the cabin, thrust his head through the smoke-hole at the top, and after emitting a hideous war-whoop shouted the names of Tisquantum and Tockamahamon at the top of his voice, for one of the women had assured him that the former was alive, and that Corbitant was already many miles on his homeward way.

[Pg 274]

Not two minutes had elapsed, when an answering whoop was heard from the cluster of huts forming the village of Namasket, now the town of Middleboro', and an irregular stream of warriors, headed by Tisquantum in person, came running toward the beleaguered hut.

The struggle was now over, for so soon as the *casus belli* was disproved by Squanto's appearance, the capture of Corbitant was no longer desirable, and Standish ordered his men to sheathe their swords and release their prisoners. Those who had been wounded by persisting in trying to escape were attended to by Surgeon Fuller, and by Standish's invitation returned to Plymouth with their friendly conquerors to receive a certain amount of petting by way of compensation for their wounds, although the captain did not fail to point out that if they had believed and obeyed him, they need not have been hurt at all.

Tisquantum shrewdly flattered at the importance set upon his life by his white

friends, seated himself with them around the new-fed fire, and with much gesticulation and flowery forms of speech related how, by his combined prowess and subtlety, he had forced Corbitant to release him, and finally to leave Namasket with his warriors, not, however, without hideous threats of what should befall that village if it persisted in an alliance with the white men, who were soon to be exterminated with all their friends.

"Ha! We will send an embassy to this haughty sachem, with some counter promises and warnings," exclaimed Standish in hearing this part of the report; and at the last moment, before the little army with its captives left the place upon the following morning, a runner was dispatched to follow Corbitant, and assure him from The-Sword-of-the-White-Men, as Standish now began to be called among the Indians, that unless Massasoit returned in safety from the country of the Narragansetts, whither he had been beguiled, the death of the great sachem should be visited upon Corbitant and all his tribe to the uttermost, and that if anything more was heard of sedition and treachery as preached either among the Namaskets or elsewhere, Corbitant should find that no distance and no concealment should avail to save him from punishment.

[Pg 275]

The message was duly delivered, and so convincing did its terrors, combined with the prompt action of the white men prove, that various sachems who had hitherto held aloof, even those of the Isles of Capawack, now called Martha's Vineyard, sent to beg for a treaty of peace and mutual support; and in the end Corbitant prayed the kind offices of Massasoit, now restored to his kingdom, to make his submission to the white men.

But though so fair in outward seeming, this peace was but a hollow one, and one more lesson was needed before the Indians became in very truth the friends and allies of the white men.

[Pg 276]

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE FIRST THANKSGIVING DAY OF NEW ENGLAND.

"Oh Priscilla, girl, what thinkst thou is toward now?" demanded Mary Chilton, running down to the spring where her friend was sprinkling and turning a piece of coarse linen spun and woven by her own hands for domestic use; but straightening herself at the merry summons, her dark eyes lighted with animation as she responded in the same tone,—

"The governor is fain to marry thee, and the elder is ready to give his blessing. Is 't so?"

"Thou foolish girl! It's not at me Master Bradford looks oftenest, not nigh as often as the captain looks at thee, nay but John Alden"—

"What is it! What's thy news! Speak quick or I'll sprinkle thee rather than the linen!" and raising the wooden dipper Priscilla whirled it so rapidly round her head that not a drop was spilled, while Mary shrieking and laughing darted back and crouched behind an alder bush.

"Maids! Maids! Whence this unseemly mirth! Know ye not that the laughter of fools

is like the crackling of thorns under the pot, a sure sign of the fire they are hasting to? The devil goeth about like a roaring lion"—

"Sometimes methinks he seemeth more like an ass," murmured Priscilla in Mary's ear, setting her off into convulsions of repressed laughter, while her naughty tormentor looked demurely up the bank to the angular figure defined against the evening sky and said,—

[Pg 277]

"We are beholden to you for the admonition, Master Allerton, and it must be a marvelous comfort to you that Mary and Remember Allerton weep so much oftener than they laugh."

"I would, thou froward wench, that I had the training of thee for a while. Mayhap thou wouldst find cause for weeping"—

"Nay, I'm sure on 't. The very thought well-nigh makes me weep now," retorted Priscilla blithely, as the sour-visaged Councilor went on his way, and Mary half frightened, half delighted, came forward saying,—

"Oh Priscilla, how dost thou dare flout Master Allerton in that style! He'll have thee before the Church."

"Not he!" replied Priscilla coolly. "Hist now, poppet, and I'll tell thee something—thou 'lt not repeat it though?"

"Not I," replied Mary stoutly.

"Well, then, dost think I should make a fitting stepdame for Bartholomew and Mary and Remember?"

"Dost mean"—

"Ay do I, just that. And because I could not but laugh merrily at the notion when 't was placed before me last Sunday night, the Assistant looketh sourly enough but dareth not meddle with me lest I make others laugh as well as myself."

"Priscilla! Mary!" called Elizabeth Tilley's voice from the doorstep. "Mistress Brewster would have you in to see about noon-meat."

"But thy news, poppet, quick!" exclaimed Priscilla as gathering up her gear she slowly led the way up the hill.

[Pg 278]

"Why, the governor hath resolved upon a day, or rather a week, of holiday and of thanksgiving for the mercies God hath showed us. Think of it, Pris! A whole week of feasting and holiday!"

"Hm!" dryly responded Priscilla. "It sounds well enow, but who is to make ready this feasting?"

"Why—all of us—and chiefly you, dear wench, for none can season a delicate dish or"—

"Ay, ay, I know that song full well; but dost really think, Molly, that to do a good deal more, and a good deal harder cooking than our wont, will be so very sprightly a holiday?"

"But 't will be doing our part to make holiday for the others," replied Mary simply.

"Now, then, if thou 'rt not at thy old tricks of shaming my selfish frowardness!" exclaimed Priscilla, and laughing they entered the house where all the women of the

community were assembled in eager debate over their share in the approaching festival.

"The governor hath already ordered my man, with Dotey and Soule and Latham, to go afield to-morrow with their guns, and to spend two days in gathering game," announced Helen Billington with an air of importance.

"And it was determined to invite King Massasoit and his train to the feast," eagerly added Mistress Winslow, who, with her baby Peregrine White in her arms, had run across the street to join the council.

"Methinks another party should go to the beach to dig clams," suggested Dame Hopkins. "For though not so toothsome as venison and birds 't is a prey more surely to be come by."

"The elder saith the God of Jacob sendeth us the clams as he did manna to those other children of his in the desert," added the weak sweet voice of the elder's wife. "At morning and at night we may gather them in certainty."

[Pg 279]

"But they hold not sweet over Sunday, that is if the day be hot," suggested Desire Minter ruefully.

"And Priscilla we shall look to thee for marchpanes and manchets and plum porridge and possets and all manner of tasty cates, such as only thou canst make," said the dame hastily, and fixing her eyes upon the girl's face as if to hinder any irreverent laughter at Desire's speech.

"All that I can do I will do blithely and steadfastly if it will pleasure you, mother," replied Priscilla gently, as she knelt down beside the invalid and rested against the arm of that old chair which you may see to-day reverently preserved in Plymouth.

"I know thou wilt, sweetheart," replied the dame laying her frail hand upon the girl's abundant hair. "But I fear me our men cannot dine to-day on the promise of the coming feast."

"Well thought on, mother. Come maids to work, to work!"

That same afternoon Squanto was dispatched to Namasket to send from thence a runner to Massasoit inviting him, with his brother and a fitting escort, to the feast of Thanksgiving now fixed for the following Thursday; and so cordially did the great sachem respond, that about sunrise on the appointed day the laggards of the settlement were aroused by the terrific whoop and succession of unearthly shrieks with which the guests announced at once their arrival and their festive and playful condition of mind.

[Pg 280]

Three of the leaders were ready even at this hour to receive the over punctual guests: the elder, who had risen early to prepare a few brief remarks suited to the occasion; Standish, who was always afoot to fire his sunrise gun; and Bradford, who valued the quiet morning hour in which he might allow his mind to dwell upon those abstruse and profound subjects so dear to his heart, and yet never allowed to intrude upon the business of the working day. So, while Winslow with his wife's assistance did on his more festive doublet and hose, and Allerton spake bitter words to Remember who had forgotten to replace the button that should hold her father's collar in place, and gentle Warren, the gruff Surgeon, and the rest made ready as they might, these three stood forth to receive Massasoit and Quadequina, who with a dozen or so of their principal pnieses came forward with considerable dignity, and through Squanto and Hobomok made their compliments in truly regal style, while

their followers to the number of about ninety men with a few women remained modestly in the background.

Presently when the village was well afoot, and a big fire started between the elder's house and the brook for cooking purposes, the roll of the drum announced the morning prayers, with which the Pilgrims began every day, and more especially this Feast of Thanksgiving. The Indians stood reverently around, Massasoit explaining in low gutturals to a chieftain who had never visited Plymouth before, that the white men thus propitiated the Great Spirit, and engaged Him both to prosper them and kill their enemies.

Prayers ended, Priscilla with her attendants flew back to the fire, and presently a long table spread in the open air for the men was covered with great wooden bowls full of what a later generation named hasty-pudding, to be eaten with butter and treacle, for milk was not to be had for more than one year to come. Other bowls contained an excellent clam chowder with plenty of sea biscuit swimming in the savory broth, while great pieces of cold boiled beef with mustard, flanked by dishes of turnips, offered solid resistance to those who so joyfully attacked them.

[Pg 281]

Another table in the Common house offered somewhat more delicate food to the women and children, chief among it a great pewter bowl of plum-porridge with bits of toasted cracker floating upon it.

The meal was a rude one looked upon with the dainty eyes and languid appetites of to-day, but to those sturdy and heroic men and women it was a veritable feast, and at its close Quadequina with an amiable smile nodded to one of his attendants, who produced and poured upon the table something like a bushel of popped corn,—a dainty hitherto unseen and unknown by most of the Pilgrims.

All tasted, and John Howland hastily gathering up a portion upon a wooden plate carried it to the Common house for the delectation of the women, that is to say, for Elizabeth Tilley, whose firm young teeth crunched it with much gusto.

Breakfast over, with a grace after meat that amounted to another service, the governor announced that some military exercises under the direction of Captain Standish would now take place, and the guests were invited to seat themselves in the vicinity of a fire kindled on the ground at the northerly part of the village about at the head of Middle Street, and designed more as a common centre and social feature than for need since the weather was mild and lovely, so peculiarly so that when it recurred the next November and the next, the people remembering that first feast said, "Why, here is the Indians' summer again!" But on that day the only thought was that God accepted their thanksgiving and smiled His approval.

[Pg 282]

Hardly had the guests comprehended the announcement and placed themselves in order, when a wild fanfare of trumpets, an imposing roll of drums was heard from the vicinity of the Fort, and down the hill in orderly array marched the little army of nineteen men, preceded by the military band and led by their doughty Captain. Above their heads floated the banner of Old England, and beneath their corselets beat true English hearts; and yet here stood the nucleus of that power which a century and a half later was to successfully defy and throw off the rule of that magnificent but cruel stepdame; here stood the first American army; and then, as since, that score of determined souls struck terror into the hearts of five times their number.

"If they have beguiled us here to destroy us!" murmured Quadequina in his brother's ear.

"Canst not tell an eagle from a carrion-crow?" returned the wiser man. "Would Winsnow, or The-Sword, or the Chief, or the powah, do this? Peace, my brother."

But as the military manœuvres accompanied with frequent discharges of musketry, and accented at one point with a tremendous roar from the cannon of the Fort progressed, not only Quadequina, but many other of the braves became very uneasy; and to this cause as well as benevolence, may be attributed the offer made at dinner time by Quadequina to lead a hunting party of his own people into the woods to look for deer, whose haunts they well knew.

[Pg 283]

Standish alone suspected this *arrière pensée*, and when Bradford mildly applauded the generous kindness of their guests, he answered with a chuckle,—

"Ay, as kind as the traveler who begs the highwayman to let him go home and fetch a larger treasure."

But in spite of his doubts the prince intended and made a *bonâ fide* hunt, and returned early in the next day with as much venison as lasted the entire company four days.

"Oh, if I had but some Spanish chestnuts to stuff these turkeys, they might seem more like their brethren across the seas," exclaimed Priscilla as she turned over a pile of the wild birds and chose those to be first cooked.

"Nay, but to me the flavor is better, and the meat more succulent of these than of any I ever saw at home," replied John Alden. "And the size! Do but look at this fellow, he will scale well-nigh twenty pound if an ounce."

"If 't were a goose I would name it John, 't would be so prodigious a goose," replied Priscilla with a glance so saucy and so bewitching that her adorer forgot to reply, and she went briskly on,—

"Come now, young man, there's much to do and scant time to talk of it. Call me some of those gaping boys yonder and let them pluck these fowl, and bid John Billington come and break up these deer. And I must have wood and water galore to make meat for a hundred men. Stir thyself!"

"I was thinking, Priscilla—why not stuff the turkeys with beechnuts? There is store of them up at our cottage."

[Pg 284]

"How came they there? Doth our doughty Captain go birds-nesting and nutting in his by-times?"

"Nay, but I did, that is, I gathered the nuts for thee, and then—then feared if I offered them thou 'dst only flout me"—

"Oh, sure never was a poor maid so bestead with blind men—well, fetch thy beechnuts."

"Nay, Priscilla, but blind, blind? How then am I blind, maiden, say?"

"Why, not to have discovered ere this how I dote upon beechnuts. There, get thee gone for them."

The dressing of beechnuts proved a rare success, but the preparation proved so long a process that only the delicate young bird made ready for the table where Mistress Brewster presided was thus honored, although in after times Priscilla often made what she called goose-dressing; and when a few years later some sweet potatoes were brought to Plymouth from the Carolinas, she at once adopted them for the same

purpose.

And so the festival went on for its appointed length of three days, and perhaps the hearty fellowship and good will manifested by the white men toward their guests, and their determination to meet them on the ground of common interests and sympathies, went quite as far as their evident superiority in arms and resources toward establishing the deep-founded and highly valued peace, without which the handful of white men could never have made good their footing upon that stern and sterile coast.

On the Saturday the feast was closed by a state dinner whose composition taxed Priscilla as head cook to the limit of her resources, and with flushed cheek and knitted brow she moved about among her willing assistants with all the importance of a Bechamel, a Felix, the *maître-d'hôtel* of Cardinal Fesch with his two turbot, or luckless Vatel who fell upon his sword and died because he had no turbot at all; or even, rising in the grandeur of the comparison, we may liken her to Domitian, who, weary of persecuting Christians, one day called the Roman Senate together to decide with him upon the sauce with which another historic turbot should be dressed.

[Pg 285]

Some late arrivals among the Indians had that morning brought in several large baskets of the delicious oysters for which Wareham is still famous, and although it was an unfamiliar delicacy to her, Priscilla, remembering a tradition brought from Ostend to Leyden by some travelers, compounded these with biscuit-crumbs, spices, and wine, and was looking about for an iron pan wherein to bake them, when Elizabeth Tilley brought forward some great clam and scallop shells which John Howland had presented to her, just as now a young man might offer a unique Sèvres tea-set to the lady of his love.

"Wouldn't it do to fill these with thy oyster compote, and so set them in the ashes to roast?" inquired she. "Being many they can be laid at every man's place at table."

"Why, 't is a noble idea, child," exclaimed Priscilla eagerly. "'T will be a novelty, and will set off the board famously. Say you not so, John?"

"Ay," returned Alden, who was busily opening the oysters at her side. "And more by token there is a magnificence in the idea that thou hast not thought on; for as at a great man's table the silver dishes each bear the crest of his arms, so we being Pilgrims and thus privileged to wear the scallop shell in our hats, do rather choose to display it upon our board."

[Pg 286]

"Ah, John, thou hast an excellent wit—in *some* things," replied Priscilla with a half sigh which set the young fellow wondering for an hour.

By noon the long tables were spread, and still the sweet warm air of the "Indian Summer" made the out-of-door feast not only possible but charming, for the gauzy veil upon the distant forest, and the marine horizon, and the curves of Captain's Hill, seemed to shut in this little scene from all the world of turmoil and danger and fatigue, while the thick yellow sunshine filtered through with just warmth enough for comfort, and the sighing southerly breeze brought wafts of perfume from the forest, and bore away, as it wandered northward, the peals of laughter, the merry yet discreet songs, and the multitudinous hum of blithe voices, Saxon and savage, male and female, adult and childish, that filled the dreamy air.

The oysters in their scallop shells were a singular success, and so were the mighty venison pasties, and the savory stew compounded of all that flies the air, and all that flies the hunter in Plymouth woods, no longer flying now but swimming in a glorious broth cunningly seasoned by Priscilla's anxious hand, and thick bestead with

dumplings of barley flour, light, toothsome, and satisfying. Beside these were roasts of various kinds, and thin cakes of bread or manchets, and bowls of salad set off with wreaths of autumn leaves laid around them, and great baskets of grapes, white and purple, and of the native plum, so delicious when fully ripe in its three colors of black, white, and red. With these were plentiful flagons of ale, for already the housewives had laid down the first brewing of the native brand, and had moreover learned of the Indians to concoct a beverage akin to what is now called root beer, well flavored with sassafras, of which the Pilgrims had been glad to find good store since it brought a great price in the English market.

[Pg 287]

It was during the last half hour of this feast that Desire Minter, who with the other girls served the tables where the men sat at meat, placed a little silver cup at Captain Standish's right hand saying,—

"Priscilla sends you some shrub, kind sir, of her own composition, and prays you drink her health."

"Why, then, 't is kind of her who hath been most unkind of late," returned Myles, upon whose seasoned brain the constant potations of three days had wrought to lull suspicion and reserve, and taking the cup he tossed off its contents at a draught, and rising bowed toward Priscilla who was flitting in and out among the tables. She returned the salute with a little air of surprise, and Myles reseating himself turned to question Desire again, but she had departed carrying the cup with her.

"Nay, then, I'll be toyed with no longer," muttered the Captain angrily, and although he bore his part in the closing ceremonies with which the governor bade a cordial and even affectionate farewell to the king, the prince, their nobles, and their following, there was a glint in his eye and a set to his lips that would have told one who knew him well that the spirit of the man was roused and not lightly to be laid to rest again.

[Pg 288]

CHAPTER XXVII.

A LOVE PHILTRE.

The last pniese had made his uncouth obeisance and departed, and busy hands were removing all signs of the late commotion in haste that the setting sun should find the village ready for its Sunday rest and peace, when Myles Standish suddenly presented himself before Priscilla Molines as she came up from the spring with a pile of wooden trenchers in her hands.

"Mistress Molines a word with you," began he with an unconscious imperiousness that at once aroused the girl's rebellious spirit.

"Nay, Captain, I am not of your train band, and your business must await my pleasure and convenience. Now, I am over busy."

"Nay, then, if I spoke amiss I crave your pardon, mistress, and had we more time I would beat my brains for some of the flowery phrases I used to hear among the court gallants who came to learn war in Flanders. But I also have business almost as weighty as thine and as little able to brook delay. So I pray you of your courtesy to set down your platters on this clean sod, and listen patiently to me for a matter of

five minutes."

"I am listening, sir."

"Nay, put down the platters or let me put them down."

"There then, and glad am I"—

"Of what, mistress?"

"That I'm not often under thy orders, sir."

"Ah! But we'll waste no time in skirmishing, fair enemy. Tell me rather what didst mean by the loving-cup thou sendst me? May I take it sooth and truly as relenting on thy part?"

"I send you a loving-cup, sir!" exclaimed the girl, her eyes flashing, and her color rising.

"Yes. Call it by what name you will; I mean the cup Desire Minter brought me from thee, with a message that I should drink thy health."

"Loth were I to think, Captain Standish, that you would willfully insult a maid with none to defend her, and so I will charitably suppose that you have been forced to drink too many healths to guard well thine own. Good e'en, sir."

"Now by the God that made us both, wench, I'll have an end of this. Nay, not one step dost thou stir until you or I are laid in a lie."

"A lie, Captain Standish!"

"Mayhap my own lie. I say that Desire Minter brought me a silver cup of some sweet posset, such as you have made for our sick folk time and again, and bade me from you quaff it to your health."

"And that is God's truth, say you, sir?"

"Mistress Molines, my word has not often been doubted, and you force me to remind you that I come not of mechanical"—

"Nay, nay, stop there, an' it please you, sir! We'll unwind this coil before we snarl another. Fear not that my base mechanical blood shall ever sully your noble strain; but mean though I be, my habit is a tolerably truthful one, and I tell you once and for all that I sent you no cup, I made you no posset, I desired no health drunk by you."

"Nay, then, what hath this girl Desire wrought? And truth to tell Priscilla, I fear me 't is poison, for a shrewd pain seizeth me ever and anon, and a strange heaviness is in my head."

"And there's a sultry color on your cheek—nay, then, we'll see the surgeon"—

"And thou 't forgive whatever I have said amiss, Priscilla, for mayhap I'll trouble thee no more. Like enough she hath revenged herself"—

"For your scorn of her love," interposed Priscilla vivaciously. "Like enough, like enough. Come to the house, Captain, and let us take counsel with the dear mother. She still knows best."

"Go thou, Priscilla. It hardly beseems a man and a soldier to seek redress for a wench's love scratch at the hands of an old woman—nay, nay, fire not up afresh! No

one can honor Mistress Brewster more than I do, but tell me, is she a man or is she young? Sooth now, Priscilla!"

"And still in thy masterful mood thou 'lt have the last word, doughty Captain. But go you home, then, and bid John Alden make a fire and heat a good kettle of water, and I'll away to the mother who will deal with Desire in short measure."

"'T is good counsel and I'll follow it, for in sober sadness I feel strangely amiss." And the soldier, who now was as livid as he had been flushed, strode away up the hill, while Priscilla picking up the trenchers fled like a lapwing into the house where she found Desire seated sullenly in a corner, while the elder, his wife, and the governor were gathered together near the fire cozily discussing the events of the day. Standing before them and restraining her natural vivacity that it might not discredit the importance of her story, Priscilla in brief and pungent phrases told the story of the loving draught, and as Desire rose and stole toward the door laid a hand upon her arm that effectually detained her until the elder sternly said,—

[Pg 291]

"Remain you here, Desire Minter, until this report is sifted."

"Were it not well to send at once for our good physician, that he may know what hath been done before he sees the captain?" suggested Bradford mildly, and the elder assenting, Priscilla was dispatched for doctor Fuller, who arrived within the minute, and listened with profound attention, while Mistress Brewster, to whom alone the girl would reply, extracted from her a most startling story.

"The captain first of all asked me to wife, and if he had not been wiled away from me by artful"—

"Nay, nay, Desire, thou 'rt not to say such things as that," interposed the dame with gentle severity, and Bradford added in much the same tone,—

"'T was thine own idle fancy, girl, that set thee on such a notion. The captain hath averred to me as Christian man that he never made proffer to thee nor wished so to do since first he set eyes on thee."

"He did then," muttered Desire sullenly, and Mistress Brewster interposed.

"Leaving that aside, tell us, Desire, what didst thou give the captain to drink, and why didst say that Priscilla sent it?"

"Marry, because she hath bewitched him, and I wot well he would take it from her without gainsaying."

[Pg 292]

"But what was it thou gavest him?"

"'T was—there was a wench here with the savages, and Squanto told me she was a wise woman and knew how to work spells"—

"Well then, go on, Desire."

"And so I went with her pulling herbs in the fields and swamps, and with one word English and one of jabber, we knew each other's meaning, and I gave her the buckle of my belt which was broke and none here could mend it."

"A generous gift, truly," interposed the elder, but his wife beseeching silence with a gesture asked,—

"And what gave she thee, Desire?"

"Some herbs, mother."

"And what were the herbs to do?"

"She said steep them well, and give the broth to any man I fancied, and it would turn his fancy on me."

"A love philtre! *Vade retrograde Sathanas!*" exclaimed the elder half rising from his chair, but here the doctor eagerly interposed,—

"What like was the herb, girl? Hast any of it in store for a second dose?"

"Mayhap—a little," muttered Desire twisting and turning, but seeing no means of escape.

"Go and fetch it," commanded the elder. "And Priscilla do thou go too and see that the wretched creature doth not make way with it."

"And sith John Howland is after a sort betrothed to the poor bemused child, I think it well to summon him, that he may advise with us as to the sequela of this folly. I will call him to the Council." And Bradford followed the two girls from the room.

"If she hath murdered the captain, she shall die the death," exclaimed the elder striding about the room, and pausing before the great chair where his pale and fragile wife sat looking up at him with beseeching eyes.

[Pg 293]

"Nay, William, she is hardly older than our own dear girls, and it would ill become us who still carry our own lives in our hands to deprive a poor silly maid of hers."

"So the best road out of the maze is to cure the captain," remarked Doctor Fuller dryly. "After that we'll marry the girl to John Howland, and trust him to keep her quiet. Here they come."

And in at the open door came the governor and Howland, Desire and Priscilla, who carried in her hand a little box full of half-dried leaves, which she presented to the doctor, who solemnly pulling from his pocket a pair of clumsy ironbowed spectacles put them astride his nose, and taking the herbs to the window carefully examined them, while all the rest stood anxiously around staring with all their might.

"Hm! Hah! Yes, well yes, I see, I see!" murmured the botanist, and then turning to Bradford he fixed him with a meditative gaze over the tops of his barnacles and said,

"You know something of botany, Governor. Say you not that this is the *Platanthera Satyrion*, the herb supposed to give vigor to the hearts of those wild men whom the mythologists celebrate?"

"Is it? I should have taken it for the iris whose flower I have noted in these swamps."

"'T is akin, ay, distant kin, but with the difference that maketh one harmless, and 't other deadly. I will take it to Sister Winslow's house and examine it with my books, but still I can aver at once that 't is *Platanthera*; and if it is also *Satyrion* I will promise that it shall prove only nauseous and distasteful to our good Captain, and by no means deadly. I will go to see him."

[Pg 294]

"And John Howland," said the Governor turning toward the young man who stood looking with aversion at the figure of Desire, who with her head in her apron wept loud and angrily, "it seemeth to me that since this maid is betrothed to you, and is manifestly unfit to guide herself, that it is best for you to marry her here, and now,

and after that train her into more discretion than she naturally showeth."

"May it please you, Master Bradford, and you, Elder," replied Howland coldly, "it seemeth to me that a woman who shows so little modesty in the pursuit of one man is scarce fit wife for another. I did indeed promise my late dear mistress whose ward this girl was, that I would care for her, and if need be take her to wife; but sure am I that if that godly and discreet matron could know of all this, she would hold me free of my bonds, the rather that I have never looked upon her with that tenderness that God putteth in our hearts toward those"—

"Nay, then, if it comes to that," interposed Desire, snatching away her apron and showing a swollen and tear-stained face, "I hate and despise thee, John Howland, and always have and always will; and if I took thee for my bachelor at all it was only in hope that 't would give a jealous twinge to the heart of a better man, and if at the last I failed of him thou wouldst be better than none; but I've changed my mind, and now I'll none of thee, not if ne'er another man"—

"Peace, shameless wench!" thundered the elder, striking the table with his hand. "Profane not the ears of a decent matron with such talk. John Howland, it is my rede that thou art free of thy pledge to marry this woman. What say you, Governor?"

[Pg 295]

"I agree with you, Elder Brewster, that since both man and maid desire to render back their troth that they should be permitted so to do; and I further suggest that by the first occasion presenting, Desire Minter be sent back to her friends in England, who will, as Mistress Carver told me, be content to receive her."

"Amen!" ejaculated John Howland with such unction that Bradford gravely smiled as he followed him from the room, and murmured under his breath,— "He will wed Elizabeth Tilley, an' I'm not mistaken."

[Pg 296]

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PHILIP DE LA NOYE.

"'T is a year ago to-day since we in the Mayflower sighted land in this place," said Bradford to Standish, as the two stood beside the gun just fired for sunset when all obligatory labor ended in the village.

"Ay, is it so? Well, it hath been a year of note in more ways than one, and the next is like to be as adventurous. Ha! Look you there, Bradford! Dost see that Indian runner breasting the hill. Some great news, surely,—come, let us go to meet him."

"Squanto is before us. See him leap the brook"—

But Standish was already half way down the hill, and presently in the open space already spoken of as the Town Square he and two or three of the other leaders met the runner, who escorted by Squanto came panting up the hill from the brook, and after the usual salutations informed the governor that he was sent from Aspinet, sachem of the Nausets, to inform the white men that a vessel had been watched feeling her way through the shoals around Cape Cod, and was now laying her course apparently for Plymouth. Not knowing whether this might be good or bad news, the sachem had felt it a friendly act to convey it to his new allies with the greatest possible dispatch.

"And he did well, and both he and thou shall see that we are not ungrateful," replied Bradford courteously. "Tisquantum, take this man to the Common house, and see that he is suitably refreshed. And now, brethren, what meaneth this? Is it indeed good news or bad?"

[Pg 297]

"Bad," replied Standish promptly. "For well do we know that no relief was to be sent us until our friends the traders had seen the first fruits of their Adventure, and as we perforce sent home the Mayflower empty, I for one expect to hear no more from Cheapside unless it be a rating."

"There hath not been time for the Mayflower to go and return, were our friends never so willing to aid us," suggested the elder pacifically.

"Then what think you, men?" persisted Bradford. "Allerton, Winslow, Warren, what say ye all?"

"We know that the French are at war with England," suggested Winslow. "And this may be a privateer coming to harry the settlement."

"In that case it were well to hide whatever we have of value and retreat to the woods with the women and children," said Allerton turning pale.

"And leave our housen, and the Fort and its armament, and our boats!" exclaimed Standish contemptuously. "Nay, Governor, my counsel is that we at once arm ourselves, train what guns we can upon the offing, and if these indeed be buccaneers, French, Spanish, or Turks, receive them with a volley that shall leave little work for a second one. The women and children may retreat to the woods, and he who has any pots, or cups, or pans of value may bury them an' he chooses. My best treasures are Gideon and my snaphance, and I cannot spare them so long as I live to wield them."

"That's the chat that suits me, neighbor," declared Hopkins in his usual rough, hearty fashion, while Allerton, an unwonted tinge of color upon his sallow cheek, hastened to avow himself as ready for fighting as any man since fighting was decided to be the best policy.

[Pg 298]

And now Standish assumed control of the occasion and showed himself in his most becoming attitude. His quick eyes and ready hands were everywhere, and the somewhat sharp and terse military orders that sometimes had seemed a thought arbitrary now carried assurance in their tone, and strengthened the hearts of some and supported the determination of others, who left to themselves would have scattered like sheep without a leader.

"Let each man arm and harness himself and report for inspection in the Town Square," was the first order, and while it was obeyed the Captain climbed the hill carrying the "perspective glass" made by Galileo himself during his exile in Holland, and brought to the new world by Governor Carver, whose widow bequeathed it to the colony as one of its chief treasures.

He was followed by William Trevor, one of the seamen hired by the colony for a year, a fellow of quick eyesight and undaunted courage. The Captain silently and carefully adjusted his lenses, and then handed the glass to Trevor.

"Now you, Bill, clap your eye to that and get it on yon headland, Farther Manomet, d' ye see?"

"Ay, Captain, I have it, and can count the squirrels on the tree tops."

"Canst tell a ship's topmast from a squirrel if one should heave in sight?"

"Mayhap I could, master."

"Well, then, watch for it, and so soon as any craft of any color, be it one of your squirrels on a chip, an Indian in a canoe, or a French man-of-war, send this boy Cooke tumbling down the hill to bring the news. Now, man, show thy discretion and thy wit."

[Pg 299]

"Ay, ay, Captain, you may trust Bill Trevor for a keen lookout. When I sailed aboard a whaler"—

But already the Captain was out of hearing, and presently was inspecting his little army, mustered in the Town Square, each man armed and armored.

Drawn up in two ranks the twenty men presented a striking array, for in the forefront stood the governor, the elder, the surgeon, Winslow, Allerton, Warren, Hopkins, Howland, Alden, and Peter Browne, ancestor of John Brown of Ossawatimie; while the file closers, if not men of equal note in affairs, were each one a sturdy and determined Englishman, ready to fight till the death and never guess that he could be conquered.

The inspection over, the train band was dismissed with orders to stand ready to reassemble at a moment's warning, and meantime to make such dispositions of private property as seemed good to each man.

Hardly was this order obeyed when from the Fort came Trevor's sonorous hail,—

"Sail ho!" and presently young Cooke came pelting down the hill reporting with a military salute to the captain.

"Trevor saith, sir, that a ship of not over sixty ton is drawing around Manomet, and that she flieth no colors as yet."

"Ha! Let us see then, let us see!" cried the captain, and two minutes later was at the top of the hill, glass in hand.

"Hm! Square rigged, slender built—what say you, Trevor, is she a Frenchman?"

[Pg 300]

"More like a Dutchman to my mind, sir."

"Ah, then were we all right, and with a goodly new store of schnapps to comfort our souls, but my mind misdoubts me. Now let us see if we can train this saker to command the offing. Boy, run down the hill and fetch Billington and Master Hopkins. 'T will do no harm, and may—ay, this minion will sweep the Rock like a new broom. Here, Billington, come on man and lend me thy bull's neck and shoulders. I would shift the carriage of this saker. Ho, Hopkins, give us a little help here. There yeo-ho, men! Again, now then—yeo-ho! Now we have it, now! There, settle her in place, that's it, there! Now then, Trevor, how about the Frenchman?"

"She is laying her course for this harbor, Captain. You may see her without the glass well enow, for she's going about to fetch Beach Point."

"Is tide high enow to carry her over Brown's Islands, as Champlain calleth the outer flats?" asked Hopkins, who by fits liked to appear erudite.

"Ay, 't is full water at noon to-day," replied Trevor, his eye glued to the glass.

"Now then, now then, here she is making straight into the harbor," exclaimed

Standish excitedly, and plunging down the hill followed by the rest, he made signal to Bart Allerton standing expectant at his own door to sound the "assembly" upon the trumpet which he had learned to manage with great precision.

Ten minutes later the whole array of fighting men stood steady in their ranks, with the larger boys hanging in the rear, each carrying a spare gun, or some other weapon, and all eyes fixed upon the point where the stranger would appear as she beat her way into the harbor.

[Pg 301]

Suddenly the captain waved his hand above his head, glancing up at the Fort where, under the folds of the British standard, stood Trevor, linstock in hand. Another moment, and out from the hoarse throat of the saker roared a defiant peal echoing grandly from hill to hill, startling the savages who covertly watched the arrival of new foes or new friends as the case might be, and rolling ominously across the waters of the harbor to demand the name of the intruder.

"They be busy with their ancient-staff," reported Trevor presently, as he resumed the spy-glass. "There goes the bunting—ha—ay—run boy, and tell the captain 't is the red cross of Merrie England; 't is the home colors, boy!"

But already the eager eyes in the Town Square had recognized the flag, and Standish lapsing from the martinet into the exile waved Gideon above his head shouting,—

"'T is our own flag, men; 't is the red cross of Old England! Three cheers boys, three cheers for the dear old flag! Now then!"

And the glad shout arose, and again and again, not only from the bearded throats of men, but in the shrill treble of boys, and the dainty voices of girls, who just out of sight watched as women do, when life and honor hang in the balance.

"Oh Mary, Mary maid, why art thou crying! Silly wench"—

"Nay, but thou 'rt crying thyself, Priscilla! Nay, now thou 'rt laughing!"

"To think how John Alden turned white as any maid when the good news came!" sobbed Priscilla running in to fling her arms around Dame Brewster, who sat with folded hands and rapt face praying to the God of battles.

[Pg 302]

"Oh mother, mother, they all are safe, and 't is an English ship. Belike, Fear and Patience and their brother are aboard."

"Nay, dear maid, nay, be not so carried away. If indeed God sendeth my children"—

But the mere thought of such joy was too much for the self-control the poor mother so struggled for, and when the elder hastened into the house he found his wife weeping for joy upon Priscilla's heaving breast.

"Nay then, wife, nay then, doest thou well?—and yet mine own eyes might but too easily rain with gratitude. Dame, wife I say, nay then—let us pray that in all things His will be done."

And in less than an hour Mary Brewster was sobbing afresh in the stalwart embrace of her eldest son Jonathan, a young fellow of five-and-thirty, who full of health and courage was come to be the staff of her old age, and to bring news of the fair sisters who would come anon.

For this was the Fortune, a little ship of fifty-five tons, dispatched by the Adventurers in London to carry over some of the colonists disappointed of a passage in the Mayflower, but principally to convey Robert Cushman, who came pledged to

obtain the consent of the Pilgrims to a contract more favorable to their English friends than that they were disposed to undertake. With him came his son Thomas, a boy of fourteen, whom his father upon his hasty return in the *Fortune* left behind under charge of the governor, to whom he subsequently wrote, "I pray you care for my son as for your own;" and so well did Bradford train the boy soon orphaned and left entirely to his charge, that Thomas Cushman became successor of William Brewster as Ruling Elder of the Pilgrim Church, and now lies on Burying Hill beneath a goodly monument erected by his numerous descendants.

[Pg 303]

But little on that bleak November day recked the boy of future honors or proud posterities, for he and his friend Thomas Prence, future governor of the colony, but then a merry youth of nineteen, were hand and glove with a gay company of lads and young men who had accepted the adventure of Pilgrimage as they would have sailed with Drake, or Hawkins, or Captain Cooke,—any leader who promised novelty, excitement, and the chance of hard knocks and treasure.

So little responsible for their own welfare were many of these youngers that, although fairly fitted out for the voyage, they had while weather-bound in the British Channel gone ashore at Old Plymouth and "brushed away" even their cloaks and extra doublets, in some cases their very bedding and such cooking utensils as passengers were then expected to provide themselves with. So far from bringing fresh supplies of food to the colony, these runagates had devoured perforce the provisions that should have victualled the *Fortune* on her return voyage, and the colonists were forced for humanity's sake, to supply her out of their own scanty stock.

Among these young fellows was a slight, dark-eyed lad of about nineteen, who so soon as he had landed asked for the *Demoiselle Molines*.

"Priscilla Molines? Dost thou know her then?" inquired Alden who heard the question, although addressed to Billington, who only grinned at the lad's French accent and made no reply.

[Pg 304]

"Certainly, yes. My sister is of her closest friends."

"Ay? Is thy name De la Noye?"

"Truly!" exclaimed the boy, his face lighting vivaciously. "I am Philip de la Noye."

"Hm, and your brother Jacques—is he in the company, or coming in the next ship?" asked Alden grimly; but at that moment Priscilla coming swiftly forward, held out both hands to the new-comer exclaiming joyously in French,—

"Philip, dear lad! Glad am I to see thee."

"She will have news now from her lover," muttered Alden bitterly, but just then the captain hailed,—

"Here Jack, put thy long legs and brawny thews to service in bringing some of these budgets up the hill. Here's a poor soul with three little children tugging at her skirts and she a widow, and fit to be put to bed herself."

"I'll help her up the hill, Captain," interposed Peter Browne hastily, and as he carefully aided the Widow Ford to climb the steep ascent some sprite might have whispered in his ear that this was his own future wife. That night was born Martha Ford, who should from similarity of history have married Peregrine White, but who instead wedded William Nelson.

Not until the last bale or packet unloaded from the Fortune had been disposed of in the Common storehouse, or in some one of the houses all hospitably thrown open to the new-comers, did John Alden cease his labors or exchange more than a brief word with those about him, until at last Bradford cheerily declared labor over for the day and added,—

"Come friends to my house, and hear what Master Cushman will have to tell us of affairs in the old home. Come Alden, and reward thy labors with a good flagon of beer."

[Pg 305]

Muttering some reply, the young man followed the rest up Leyden Street, but as they reached the governor's house, a somewhat larger and more important cabin than the rest, he passed quickly on and up the hill. Pausing but a moment at the Fort, he struck down the steep southerly side to the brook, and having performed his simple toilet strode moodily on toward the forest, but had only gone a few rods when a familiar voice called his name, and turning he saw Priscilla with Mary Chilton and the young Frenchman, to whom they seemed to be showing the brook and its springs of "delicate water."

Very reluctantly Alden turned and moved toward them.

"Did you speak, Mistress Mary?" inquired he as the party approached.

"I—I," stammered Mary blushing vividly.

"It was I who bade her do so," interposed Priscilla with an impatient glance at the English girl whose honesty had spoiled her little finesse. "We thought you looked but dull, and I would fain bring my new-arrived friend Philip De la Noye to your acquaintance."

The two men exchanged salutations, Philip with the ready grace of a Latin, John with that distinguishing a Saxon, especially if displeased.

"We are strolling about a bit before making ready for supper," added Priscilla. "Philip is curious as to our manner of life in these wilds."

"T is but ill suited to slender folk," replied Alden glancing superciliously at the slight stripling, who, for his part, surveyed with a sort of amused wonder the thews and stature of the young giant striding sullenly at Priscilla's other hand.

[Pg 306]

"Nay, we do not pack diamonds in bales like hay," retorted Priscilla stingingly, and then turning to Philip she inquired eagerly,—

"And Jacques and Guillaume are well, quite, quite well, are they?"

"Yes, and Marie and Jeanne," replied Philip placidly.

"And have you news from friends at home, Mary?" asked John decidedly moving to her side.

"Nay, there are none left there of my nearest kin," replied the girl sadly. "We came all of us together, and only I am left."

"Nay, Mary, so fair and so good a maid as thou, will never stay long without friends. Thou wouldst never flout an honest fellow's love and draw him on, and turn him back, and use him worse than a baby doth its puppet. The man who loves thee will never rue it."

So meaning were his glances and his tone, that for a moment the simple maid stood

aghast. Could it be that Alden's constancy had given out, and he was now ready to woo her instead of her friend; but in another moment the truth dawned upon her, and with more diplomacy than she often showed Mary smiled and shook her head.

"I know not, for love and sweethearts have not come my way yet. 'T is Priscilla whom all men seek, and she in merry mood listeth to all and still keepeth her own mind secret. She is well content to-night, for this lad hath brought news of his brother's marriage."

"What, the fellow they call Jacques?" demanded John glancing eagerly toward the other couple now walking some paces in advance.

"Ay, and Guillaume is betrothed, and Jeanne. They are dear friends of our Priscilla."

[Pg 307]

"But—but—nay, then, maid Mary, have compassion on a poor stupid oaf who is no match for her or you or any woman in subtlety and fence, and yet loveth yon maid as it is not well for man to love aught but his Maker. Tell me, doth she care aught for me?"

"Nay, John, that is a question none but she should answer, but yet I may tell thee thus much. The news she hath to-day may embolden thee to ask again."

"Good wench, true friend!" exclaimed Alden, his whole face lighting with a new hope. "And now as we turn toward home, if thou wouldst but engage yon boy's attention, and let me essay while hope is strong and courage fresh, I will put my fate once more to the touch and know if joy and I are henceforth partners, or the coldest of strangers."

"Ah, lad, thou lovest her overmuch," replied Mary, letting her placid blue eyes rest upon him half curiously, half enviously. "No man will ever care for me like that, for I have not the skill to hide my mind as Priscilla hath. But I'll help thee, John, for I do believe thou 'lt make the dear maid happy if she will but stay in one mind long enough to wed thee."

And in a few moments when the setting sun warned Priscilla that it was time to turn homeward, and the two parties came together, Mary showed Philip De la Noye the strawberry plants of which he had asked, and so detained him for a moment, while John walking on with Priscilla impatiently began,—

"Wilt answer me one little question in good faith, mistress?"

"In good faith if at all, John."

"Then, what bond is there betwixt thee and this lad's brother Jacques?"

[Pg 308]

"None save good will and old acquaintance."

"But there was."

"Was there?"

"Nay now, Priscilla, I speak to thee in sober sadness, and I ask such reply as honest maid should give to honest man who woos her for his wife. If we fall to quips and cranks and wordy play, thou 'rt so far out of my reach that I know not if I ever come near thee, for I'm but a plain simple fellow, Priscilla, and I love thee more than I love aught else but God and the truth. Give me now a plain answer and have pity of my misery. Has aught of this lad's news changed thy will or thy intent toward me?"

And Priscilla moving slowly along beside her wooer shot a rapid sidelong glance at

his white face, and for the first time in their acquaintance felt a thrill of respect akin to fear, sweep in his direction across her gay self-assertive nature.

"Yes, John, I will answer thee truly and soberly," replied she in a voice he had never heard from her before. "Philip De la Noye hath brought news that sets me free from a teasing obligation of which no man knows. Marie and Jeanne, his sisters, are my dear friends and gossips, and their brother Jacques would fain have been my bachelor in Leyden, but I was too young my father said to listen to such talk, and he cared not greatly for Jacques, who was to tell truth somewhat gay and debonair of temper, and no church member, no, not he. So when we parted from Leyden to come hither, and I went to bid good-by to my friends, James, as you call him in English, would fain have me promise to wed no man but him, and he would come hither so soon as he was his own master."

[Pg 309]

"And didst promise, Priscilla?"

"Well, nay and yea, John. I said I knew not what might meet me here, and—but at long and at last I promised to wait until the first ship had followed us, and if Jacques came in her I would—would listen to him again."

"And that was all thy promise, maiden?"

"Ay, and enough, for before we landed on yonder Rock, and 't was Mary Chilton and not thee, John, who first skipt ashore"—

"Oh, mind not that just now, Priscilla."

"Well, before I myself came ashore I knew that I cared not for Jacques De la Noye. Beside the deathbed of my mother, and again by that of my brother, I knew that life was darker and deeper than he could fathom."

"Ay, maid, and nobly didst thou bear that sorry load of woe and care."

Priscilla's color rose, and her dark eyes flashed a message of thanks, but without other reply she went steadily on,—

"And so soon as Philip saw me, he delivered himself of the news that Jacques, some three months since, was wed at Saint Peter's Church to Gertrude Bartholmei, a merry Flemish maid, who ever looked kindly on him, and now is welcome to him."

"Say you that honestly, Priscilla?"

"As honestly as thyself could speak, lad."

"And thou 'rt heart-whole?"

"Nay, I said not exactly that."

"What! Dost really care for the captain?"

"As I care for the governor and the doctor; no more, no less."

[Pg 310]

"Priscilla, wilt be my wife?"

"Nay then, John, why didst not ask that at first rather than at last? Thou 'rt too fond of quip and quirk and wordy warfare, John, too much given to fence and intrigue."

"I, Priscilla! Nay then, I'll not be turned aside again, try as thou wilt. Priscilla, wilt be my wife?"

"Nay then, I never could bear a cuckoo song all on two notes, and if thou 'rt bound to say that phrase over and over till 't is answered"—

"'T is just what I am bound to do. Priscilla, wilt be my wife?"

"Yes, John, I will, and now I hope thou 'rt content."

"Wait till I see thee alone this evening, and I'll tell thee how content. Oh, maiden"—

"I will wait in what patience I may until that threatened evening hour," interrupted Priscilla as restively as the young colt who, after long coquetting, at last feels the bridle slipped over his head. "Mary, an' thou hasten not there'll be little done toward supper at supper time. Desire is naught and less than naught now that she's going home, and Bessy Tilley thinketh only of John Howland, and the dear mother hath her son, so who is left but thee and me to do a hand's turn."

"Here am I, Priscilla, and I'll help thee in any way thou 'lt say," suggested John Alden a little presuming upon his recent acceptance, and for his pains receiving a snub that made him wince again, for Priscilla coldly replied,—

"They say they came nigh bringing a Jack in the Fortune, but had no room for him; so thou mayst take his place, and fetch me a bucket of water from the spring. There's no mighty difference betwixt Jack and John."

[Pg 311]

CHAPTER XXIX.

KEEPING CHRISTMAS.

And now began a new epoch in the life of the colony. The passengers of the Fortune, thirty-five in number, although nominally of the same belief and manners as the Mayflower Pilgrims, were in effect a new element which, in spite of the generous efforts of the new-comers, did not readily assimilate with the sober and restrained tone natural to men who had suffered and struggled and conquered at such terrible loss to themselves, as had the first comers.

A score of gay young fellows upon whom life sat so lightly that they cared not how they periled it, was no doubt a valuable acquisition to the fighting force of the colony, and almost upon the day of their arrival the Captain enrolled, divided, and began to train them, forming four companies of twelve men each, for some of the larger boys of the Mayflower were now enlisted, and this force of fifty men was at least once in every week led over to the Training Green across the brook, and there inspected, manœuvred, marched and counter-marched, disciplined in prompt obedience and rapid movement; until the birds of the air who watched from the neighboring forest should have carried a warning to their co-aborigines, the Narragansetts, the Neponsets, the Namaskets, and the Manomets, not yet convinced, spite of the late warning, that the white man was their Fate against which it was but bitter defeat to struggle. The training over, each company in turn escorted the captain to his own quarters, and fired a salute of honor as he dismissed them.

[Pg 312]

"'T is not for mine own glory, Will, as thou who knowest me will believe," said Standish, while the governor and he smoking a placid pipe on the evening of the first training, discussed the events of the day. "But in matters military even more than civil, it needs that one man should be at the head, and command the respectful

observance as well as the obedience of those under his command. It is not Myles Standish whom the soldiers of Plymouth salute as he enters this poor hut, but the Captain of the Colony's forces."

"Ay, ay, Myles, I know thy humility," replied Bradford with his smile of gentle subtlety. The captain shot an inquiring glance out of his red-brown eyes, and in turn laughed a little uncomfortably.

"Nay now, thou 'rt laughing at me, Will. I claim no great meed of humility to be sure, and yet thou knowest lad, that if I could serve this emprise better by carrying a musket in the ranks"—

"Nay now, old friend, may not I smile at some jest between myself and my pipe, but thou must tack more meaning to it than Brewster says hung on Lord Burleigh's nod? And yet in sober sadness, Myles, 't is marvel to me how thou, born to a great name and to such observance as awaits the children of wealthy houses, and then, when hardly more than a boy, placed in authority such as appertaineth to an English army officer in time of war, how thou hast failed to become more arrogant and peremptory than thou art. And as for a musket in the ranks, what were that to such offices as not yet a year ago I saw thee fill around the beds of the sick and dying in our first great plague? When had we a tenderer nurse, a more patient watcher? What office was too loathly for thee, what tence too tiring?"—

[Pg 313]

"Will, an' thou holdst not thy tongue I'll leave thee to thyself."

"Thou 'lt never be so rude in thine own house, Myles. Such manners would ill befit a Standish of Standish."

"Come now, Governor, do you disapprove of the salute, or of any other of my military ordonnances?"

"I disapprove of naught, old comrade, but of a certain want of patience beneath a friend's jest which I have sometimes marked, and haply it is I who am at fault to try thee so; but Myles, there's enow to make the governor of this colony sorry and sober, and thou shouldst not grudge him a moment of merriment even at thine own cost."

"Nor do I, as well thou knowest, Will. 'T is only that I am as ever a hot-headed fool and ill deserve a friend like thee. And now what thinkst thou of Master Cushman's errand, and the chidings of those London traders that we sent them not a cargo by the Mayflower? We who had much ado to dig the graves of half our company and to find food for the rest, to be rated like laggard servants because we laded not that old hulk with merchandise for their benefit."

"Ay, Master Weston's letter was somewhat hard to bear, albeit we should excuse much to his ignorance of our surroundings," said Bradford placably, although the color rose to his cheek at thought of the injustice he and his friends had suffered. "I have writ a reply," continued he, laying down his pipe and drawing a roll of paper from the pocket of his leathern jerkin, "and am fain to have your mind upon it, for I would not be over bitter, and yet was shrewdly wounded that John Carver lying in his honored grave should be so rudely attacked. Shall I read it?"

[Pg 314]

"Ay, an' thou wilt, though I'm more than half in mind to take passage by the Fortune, and give Master Weston and the rest a reply after mine own fashion."

"What, and leave the train band to its own destruction! But here you have my poor script:—

"To the worshipful Master Thos: Weston:

"Sir,—Your large letter written to Mr. Carver and dated the 16th of July 1621 I have received the 20th of Nov'br, wherein you lay many heavy imputations upon him and us all. Touching him he is departed this life, and now is at rest in the Lord from all those troubles and incumbrances with which we are yet to strive. He needs not my apology; for his care and pains were so great for the common good both ours and yours, as that therewith it is thought, he oppressed himself and shortened his days of whose loss we cannot sufficiently complain. At great charges in this Adventure I confess you have been, and many losses you may sustain; but the loss of his and many other honest and industrious mens lives cannot be valued at any price. Of the one there may be hope of recovery, but the other no recompence can make good."

"Oh, you're too mild, Bradford," burst out the captain as the reader paused and looked up for approval. "You should bombard him with red-hot shot, hurl a flight of grape, a volley of canister into his midst—nay then, but I'll go myself and with a blow of my gauntlet across Master Weston's ears"—

[Pg 315]

"Captain—Captain Standish! Master Warren hath sent me to warn your worship that some of the new-comers are building a bonfire in the Town Square, and sprinkling the pile with powder"—

"There, Myles, thou seest how well we can spare thee! Wouldst leave me at the mercy of these rough companions who"—

But already the captain armed with a stout stick was half way down the hill, and, smiling quaintly to himself Bradford relighted his pipe and went home to finish his letter.

A week later the Fortune sailed on her return voyage carrying Cushman, who left his son Thomas under Bradford's care until he should come again, not knowing that his next voyage should be across the shoreless sea whence no bark hath yet returned. Under his charge traveled Desire Minter, loudly proclaiming her joy at returning to regions "where a body might at least look for decent victual," and Humility Cooper, Elizabeth Tilley's little cousin. The two seamen, Trevor and Ely, also returned, their year of service having expired; but in spite of the dearth of provision, already imminent owing to the unprovided condition of the new-comers, not one of the Pilgrims embraced this opportunity of escape.

Besides her passengers, the Fortune carried valuable freight consigned to Weston as agent of the Adventurers. The best room was given to sassafras root, of which the colonists had gathered great store, and with much rejoicing, for being just then the panacea of both French and English physicians, it was worth something like forty dollars of our present money per pound. Besides the sassafras were several hogsheads of beaver skins, also very valuable at that time, and the rest of the hold was filled with clapboards and other finished lumber, the whole cargo worth at least twenty-five hundred dollars. The most precious thing on board that little vessel however, if we except human life, was a manuscript journal written by William Bradford and Edward Winslow, and sent home to their friend George Morton in London, who, finding it too good to be kept to himself, had it printed the very same year by "John Bellamy at his shop at the Two Greyhounds, near the Royal Exchange, London," and as he did not give the names of its authors, nor bestow any distinctive title upon it, it came to be called "Mourt's Relation," and was the first book ever printed about that insignificant knot of emigrants in whom we now glory as the Forefathers of New England. But alas for human hopes, alas for the honest

[Pg 316]

rejoicings of the Pilgrims in their goodly cargo, just before the Fortune sighted the English coast she was captured by a French cruiser and carried into Isle Dieu. Two weeks later the vessel, crew, and passengers were released, but the sassafras, the beaver skins, and the lumber went to heal and warm and house Frenchmen instead of Englishmen, and Thomas Weston's pockets still cried out with their emptiness. Happily for the world, however, the Frenchmen did not appreciate the "Relation," and it went peacefully on in Robert Cushman's mails, and reached good George Morton's hands.

About a week after the sailing of the Fortune came Christmas Day, and Bradford doing on his clothing for a good day at lumbering allowed himself a half regretful memory of the sports and revelings with which he and the other youth of Austerfield had been wont to observe the Feast; but presently remembering his new beliefs, the Separatist leader murmured something about "rags of Popery," and went down to his breakfast.

[Pg 317]

"Call the men together, Howland," ordered he in some displeasure as leaving his house axe in hand he found only his older comrades awaiting him. "Where are the new-comers? I see none of them."

"An' it please you, Governor, Hicks and the rest of them say it goeth against their conscience to work on Christmas Day," reported Howland with a grim smile.

For a moment Bradford frowned, but as he caught the gay glint of Standish's eyes his own softened, and after a brief pause he answered temperately,—

"We will force no man's conscience. Tell Robert Hicks and the rest that I excuse them until they be better informed."

At noon the wood-choppers returned to the village weary and hungry, for already had the entire company been placed upon half rations of food, so to continue until another cargo should arrive, or the next year's crop be ripe. Well for their endurance that they could not foresee that no farther cargo of provisions should ever arrive for them, from those who had undertaken to support them, and that the next year's crop should prove a failure. But now as they wearily toiled up the hill from the brookside, eager for the hour of rest and the scanty meal they were learning to value so highly, sounds of loud revelry and boisterous mirth fell upon their ears, sounds alien to their mood, their necessities, and on this day to their principles.

"Those runagates are holding Christmas revels in spite of you, Governor," remarked Standish half jeeringly; while Hopkins, whose humor just now was not far removed from mutiny, muttered that if godless men were to play, he saw not why good Christians should be forced to work, call it Christmas Day or any other.

[Pg 318]

"You are right, Hopkins, although somewhat discourteous in your rectitude," replied Bradford, and hasting forward he came in sight of the Town Square, where some fifteen or twenty of the Fortune passengers were amusing themselves at "stool-ball," a kind of cricket, at pitching the bar, wrestling, hopping-matches, and various other old English sports, many of which had been encouraged and even led by the governor in the late week of Thanksgiving. But now advancing into the midst, his air of serene authority as much as his uplifted hand imposing silence upon the merry rebels, who dropped their various implements, and tried in vain to appear at ease, Bradford looking from one to another quietly said,—

"I told you this morning that if you made the keeping of Christmas Day matter of conscience, I should leave you alone until you were better informed; now, however, I warn you that it goeth against my conscience as governor of this colony to let idle

men play while others work, and if indeed you find matter of devotion in the day ye shall keep it quietly and soberly in your housen. There shall be neither reveling nor gaming in the streets, and that I promise you. Let whosoever owneth these toys take them away and store them out of sight; and remember, men, that the Apostle saith, 'If a man will not work neither shall he eat.'

Silently and shamefacedly the revelers collected bats and balls, cricket stools, bars, poles, and iron weights, carrying them each man to his own house, and in the afternoon the chopping party was augmented by nearly every one of the new-comers.

[Pg 319]

CHAPTER XXX.

A SOLDIER'S INSTINCT.

A year and more from that Christmas Day has sped, and again we find Bradford and Standish with Winslow gathered together at the governor's house, resting after the labors of the day, smoking the consoling pipe, and even tasting from time to time the contents of a square case bottle, which, with a jug of hot water and a basin of sugar were set forth upon a curious little clawfooted table worth to-day its weight in gold if only it could have survived.

None of the three look younger than they did when they first stepped upon the Rock; sun and wind, and winter storm and summer heat have bronzed their English complexions and deepened the lines about the quiet steadfast lips and anxious eyes. Already Bradford's shoulders were a little bowed, partly by the burden of his responsibility, partly by arduous manual labor, but upon his face had grown the serenity and somewhat of the impassiveness into which the Egyptians loved to mould the features of their kings,—that expression which of all others belongs to a man who uses great power firmly and decisively, and yet looks upon himself as but a steward, who soon or late shall be called to render a strict account of his stewardship.

And Winslow, courtly, learned, and fit for lofty emprise, how bore he this life of toil and privation, this constant contention with such foes as famine, and disease, and squalor, and uncouth savagery? Look at the portrait painted of him in London some years later, and see if there is not an infinite weariness, a brooding *Cui bono?* set as a seal upon those haughty features. Can one after studying that face much wonder that when the Massachusetts Bay authorities in 1646 besought Plymouth to spare their sometime governor, their wise and astute statesman, to arrange the Bay's quarrel with the Home government, Winslow eagerly accepted the mission, although as Bradford sadly records, his going was—"much to the weakening of this government, without whose consent he took these employments upon him."

[Pg 320]

So well, however, did he fill the larger sphere for which his ambitious nature perhaps had secretly pined, that after four years of arduous service when the Massachusetts quarrel was well adjusted, and Winslow would have returned home, President Steele, whom he had helped to found the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, wrote to the Colonial Commissioners in New England that although Winslow was unwilling to be kept longer from his family, he could not yet be spared, because his great acquaintance and influence with members of Parliament made him invaluable to the work in hand.

Then in 1652 the Protector, Oliver Cromwell, placed him at the head of a committee for settling a Dutch quarrel; and in 1655 the same power named him governor of Hispaniola, and dispatched him thither with a fleet and body of soldiers to conquer and take possession of his new territory. But General Venable in command of the soldiers, and Admiral Penn in command of the fleet, fell to loggerheads as to which was the other's superior, and even Winslow's diplomacy could not heal the breach; so the attack upon Hispaniola proved a disgraceful failure, and as the fleet sailed away to attack Jamaica, the Great Commissioner, as they called him fell ill of chagrin and worry, and after a few days of wild delirium wherein he stood upon Burying Hill, and drank of the Pilgrims' Spring, and spoke loving words to the wife and children he should see no more, he died, and was committed to the great deep with a salute of two-and-forty guns, and never a kiss or tear, for all who loved him were far away.

[Pg 321]

But all this honor, all this disaster, lies in the future, for as yet Winslow is only seven-and-twenty, and yet the lines of ambition, of weariness, of hauteur are foreshadowed upon his face; already Time with his light indelible pencil has faintly traced the furrows he by and by will plow that all who run may read.

Perhaps the least change of all is that upon the captain's face, for before ever he landed on the Rock full twenty years of a soldier's life had set those firm lips, and steadied those marvelous eyes, and impressed upon every line of the deep bronzed face the air of the vigilant commander who was both born and bred for the post he fills so thoroughly. If any change, perhaps there is a softening one, for those keen eyes have looked so often upon misery and need, and so little upon bloodshed in these three last years, that they have gained somewhat of tenderness, somewhat of human sympathy; and the look that dying men and women have strained their glazing eyes to see to the last, is not so far from the surface as once it was. But the governor is speaking,—

[Pg 322]

"Yes, my friends, I will confess to feeling more than a little uneasy over the matter. This party whom our sometime friend Weston hath sent over to settle at our very doors as it were, and to steal our trade with the Indians, and so hold us from paying off our debt to the Adventurers"—

"With whom he was still to abide as our Advocate," growled Standish.

"Ay. He hath doubtless served us a sorry turn by not only dividing himself from the Adventurers, but setting up a rival trading-post of his own," remarked Winslow.

"And worse than that is this news Squanto brings in to-day," resumed the governor. "I mean the dealings of those new-comers with the Indians."

"Yes, they carry themselves like both knaves and fools, and will presently find their own necks in the noose," said Standish rapping the ashes out of his pipe with such force as to break it.

"But worse again than that," suggested Winslow quietly, "is the danger they bring upon us. Hobomok warneth me that there is a wide discontent growing among the red men, springing from the conduct of these men at Weymouth as they call it. The Neponsets have suffered robbery, and insult, and outrage at their hands, and both the Massachusetts on the one hand and the Pokanokets on the other are in sympathy with them. Then you will see, brethren, that Canonicus with his Narragansetts, who already hath sent us his cartel of defiance, will make brief alliance with Massasoit, and all will combine to drive every white man from the country. There is hardly any bound to the mischief these roysterers at Weymouth have set on foot."

[Pg 323]

"And Massasoit no longer our friend, since we refused to send him poor Squanto's

head," said Bradford meditatively.

"Yes," laughed the captain. "'T is food for mirth, were a man dying, to see Squanto skulk at our heels like a dog who sees a lion in the path. He hardly dares step outside the palisado, for fear some envoy of Massasoit's shall pounce upon him."

"'T is a good lesson to teach him discretion," said Winslow. "Certes he stirred up strife between us and the sachem with his cock-and-bull stories."

"Especially when he sent his squaw to warn us that Canonicus with Massasoit and Corbitant were on the way from Namasket to devour us."

"Ay, no wonder Massasoit was aggrieved at being so slandered, and could he have got Tisquantum once within his clutches 't would have gone hard with the poor fool. But never burnt child dreaded fire as he now doth the outside of the palisado."

"Didst hear, Winslow, that t' other day when some of us were unearthing a keg of powder buried there in the Fort, Squanto and a savage guest of his clomb the hill to see what was going on? The magazine is passably deep as you know, and Squanto himself had never seen it opened; so when they saw Alden hand up the keg to Hopkins, the guest asked in the Indian tongue what was in it, and Squanto told him 't was the plague which just before our coming swept the land, and that the white men had captured it and buried it here upon the hill to let loose upon their enemies; and in the end the knave got a goodly price from his visitor for assurance that the plague should not be liberated till he had time to reach Sandwich."

[Pg 324]

All three men laughed, but Bradford said,—"I fear me Squanto hath done us no little harm with his double dealings, his jealousy of Hobomok, and his craving for bribes; but withal he hath been so good a friend to us, more than useful at the first when we knew naught of the place or how to live, or plant, or fish, that I thought right to risk even Massasoit's enmity rather than to give our poor knave up to his wrath."

"And then I never can forget," said Winslow, "that Squanto as only survivor of the Patuxets was in some sort lord of the soil whereon we pitched."

"Yes truly," responded the captain with a short laugh. "Like myself he was born to great estates and sees them enjoyed by others."

"Well then, since nothing is imminent in this matter of the Weymouth colonists and their quarrel with the Indians, we had better, now that the palisado around the town is complete"—

"Gates, bolts, bastions, all complete from the great rock around to the brook," interposed Standish, his figure visibly dilating with satisfaction. Bradford smiled and allowed his eyes to rest affectionately for an instant upon his comrade, then continued in a lighter tone,—

"So having fortified your hold, Captain, it is now fitting that you should provision it. Thou knowest how in my journeyings last month I bought and stored corn at Nauset, and Manomet, and Barnstable, and now that we have a moment's breathing space, it were well that some one should take the pinnace and fetch it. At the same time there will be good occasion to feel the pulse of the various chiefs, and determine what is their intended course and so settle our own."

"Nay, Winslow is the man for that work, Governor," replied the captain bluntly. "I will go and get the corn, and if need be teach the savages a lesson upon the dangers of plotting and conniving, but as to talking smoothly with men who are lying to me"—

[Pg 325]

"But why prejudice them, Captain," began Winslow, when with a tap upon the door Squanto himself appeared ushering in a strange Indian whom he fluently presented as a friend of his who had come with great news. Bidden to deliver it, the stranger stated that a great Dutch ship had gone ashore at Sowams (Bristol), and would be wrecked unless help could be had, and this could not be given by the Indians, for Massasoit lay dying and no one would stir without his command.

This news changed the aspect of affairs, and Winslow was at once appointed to pay Massasoit a visit of inquiry, and in case of his death to make an alliance if possible with Corbitant, his probable successor as sachem of the Pokanokets. He also was to see the commander of the Dutch vessel, and in case of a wreck to offer the hospitality of Plymouth to the sufferers, for in case of the famine narrowly impending over the colony, the friendship and aid of the Dutch might become of the last importance. Besides this, the dangerous Narragansetts were known to have made alliance with the Dutch, and might by them be deterred from molesting the Plymouth settlers if they were known to be their friends.

"And so, Myles," declared Bradford finding himself alone with his friend at the end of the informal council, "thou must e'en go by thyself for the corn, with what men thou dost call for, and I doubt not we shall find thee burgeon into a diplomatist equal at least to the great Cecil or to Sir Walter Raleigh"—

"Ay, and that minds me," interrupted Standish "of the news sent us by good Master Huddlestone of the Betsey, how the Virginia savages had massacred three hundred and forty-seven of Raleigh's settlers, and would have made an end of them but for warning given by a friendly Indian."

[Pg 326]

"Ay, it was heavy news, and a timely warning," said the governor losing his air of gayety and sighing deeply. "And if indeed Weston's men have angered the Neponsets to the pitch we fear, the news of this Virginia success will embolden them to undertake the same revenge. Be wary, Standish, and very gentle in thy dealings. If war is determined, let it be entered upon deliberately and formally; take not the matter into thine own hands and mayhap lose us our commander just at the onset."

"Ay Will, 'T'll roar thee gently' as any sucking dove, an' there seemeth need to roar at all."

"Best not roar at all until all thy comrades may join in unison," and once more Bradford's face lighted with its peculiar smile, the sort of smile one might bestow upon his double should he meet him and address him with a jest unknown to any other.

And so it came to pass that the next morning's rising sun saw two important expeditions leaving the hamlet in opposite directions. Toward the dark and almost pathless woods at the North marched Winslow accompanied by Master John Hampden, then visiting the colony and studying the science of republican government in its most perfect, because most simple, development. With them went Hobomok as guide and interpreter, and after them went the tearful prayers of Susanna Winslow, who loved her new lord better than she had the father of baby Peregrine toddling at her side, as she stood in the cabin door to gaze after the little group already almost out of sight, and making now for the "Massachusetts trail" where it crosses Jones's River in Kingston. And as one driving over that pleasant road which now intersects the old trail pauses to look up its green ascent, or on across the placid stream it forded, does he not almost catch sight of the goodly forms of those young men, quaintly clad in doublet and hose and the wide hats or the close

[Pg 327]

barret caps of the day, led by the sleek slender savage who patiently stood by, while Winslow turned and pointed out the beauties of sea and shore to his thoughtful companion.

"A pleasant sight, a goodly scene," said Hampden, as at last they turned away and struck into the dense forest. "If it be God's will I for one shall be well content to return hither and end my days."

"And yet there is world's work to do yonder for a man with an eye to read the times," said Winslow flinging a hand eastward.

"No wife or child to see me off, Mistress Winslow," said the captain as he passed the door where Susanna lingered, and she, smiling with the tear in her eye, answered pleasantly,—

"Then why not purvey thee one, Captain Standish? Well I wot you need not long go a-begging."

"Nay, none will look on a battered old soldier when fresh young faces are at hand," replied Standish casting a whimsical glance after Alden who preceded him down the hill, while the matron shook her head murmuring,— "Such fools as maids will be!"

Besides Alden, the captain had chosen five men, enough to man the boat, and to make a good defense in case of attack, but among these he had included none of the fire-eaters, none of the independent souls of the little colony. Alden, to whom the captain had given the names of those to be summoned, had noted this feature of the selection, and ventured to comment upon it approvingly.

[Pg 328]

"Ay, lad," replied his master with a grim smile. "'T is a service of danger, and a service of diplomacy, and I must have my force well in hand with no danger of a baulk from within. Dost know how the Romans conquered the world? I bade thee study my Cæsar in thy leisure moments."

"By power to command, Master?"

"Nay, boy, but by power to obey. Their forces moved as one man, as a grand machine, and so they carried the Roman eagles to all the known world. There's the model of a Roman soldier in that big Book yonder. He says to his Sovereign Lord, 'Give not yourself the inconvenience of coming to heal my servant, but send some spirit to carry the command. I know how it is; I also am under the commands of my general, and men are under me. I say to this one, Go, and he goeth; and to the other, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.' There's the model of a soldier for you, John Alden; perfect obedience rendered, perfect obedience expected, perfect faith in the commander-in-chief. Now, then, off upon your errand, sir, and mind you tarry not at the Elder's house. There is no errand there."

The shallop's first port was Nauset, and here, although the corn was obtained and loaded without difficulty, a thief stole some clothes from the boat while it was for the moment unguarded; and finding mild words of no avail in their recovery, Standish sought Aspinet, who was encamped at a little distance from the shore, and refusing all hospitality or friendly conversation roundly announced that unless the missing articles were restored without delay he should at once make sail for Plymouth and declare war upon the whole tribe.

[Pg 329]

Marching down to his boat closely followed by Alden the captain suddenly paused and struck his heel upon the ground.

"Now then, I was to roar like a dove, and I have howled like any wolf! And I to preach obedience! nay then, John, thou 'rt free to flout me as thou wilt."

"But, Captain, so far as I heard the governor's command it was only to fetch some corn," suggested Alden slyly. "All else was left at your discretion, as indeed all matters military are. Such was the tenor of the vote that made you our Captain."

"Come, now, John, that's not ill thought on; that's not so dull as might be," replied the captain glancing merrily at his follower. "Thou 'st been studying under Winslow as well as Standish. Well, then, let us wait and see what comes of my roar."

An hour later as the boat's crew sat around their camp-fire eating their frugal dinner, the sound of many feet was heard breaking through the neighboring thickets, and Standish with a glance at Alden said quietly,—

"Stand to your arms, men, but softly and without offense until we see the need. The savages are in force."

But as it turned out the force was but a guard of honor to Aspinet, who came in state, followed by two women bringing the stolen coats elaborately bound around with gayly colored withes; these they at once took on board and laid in the cuddy, while Aspinet improving upon Tisquantum's former lessons as to the mode of saluting sovereigns seized upon Standish's hand, and much to his disgust licked it from wrist to fingers, at the same time bending his knee in uncouth genuflection.

[Pg 330]

"Enough, enough, Aspinet," exclaimed the captain half laughing, half revolted at the homage. "The coats are returned I see"—

"And I have much beaten him who took them," averred Aspinet complacently. "And Aspinet is the friend of the white men though all other Indians turn against them."

"Why, that is well, sachem," replied Standish, who was already able to converse freely with the red men in their own tongue. "Keep you to that mind, and hold your tribe to it, and no harm's done. And now men, all aboard, and we will be off."

With a fair wind the shallop soon made Barnstable or Mattachiest, and here Iyanough (or Janno) met them on landing with protestations of welcome so profuse and unusual that the captain was at once upon his guard, especially as he noticed among the crowd many new faces which he was confident belonged to Massachusetts Indians. Night falling before the corn could be loaded, and ice making so suddenly as to freeze the shallop in before she fairly floated, the captain was obliged to accept an invitation for himself and crew to sleep in one of the Indian huts; but as the chief with some of his principal men escorted them to it, Standish's quick eye surprised a glance between one of the strangers and a Pamet Indian called Kamuso, who had always appeared to be one of the warmest friends of the white men, but in whose manner to-night Standish felt something of treachery and evil intention.

[Pg 331]

And he was right, for Kamuso had been won over to the conspiracy beginning with the Narragansetts and extending all the way down the Cape, and so soon as runners from the Nausets had warned the Mattakees that Standish and a small crew were about to land among them, it was agreed that now was the best time to cut off The-Sword-of-the-White-Men, and so deprive the colony of one of its principal safeguards. Janno himself would fain have spared Standish, with whom he had ever

been on friendly terms; but Kamuso so wrought upon the Mattakee warriors that their sachem was forced either to drop the reins altogether or to suffer his unruly steeds to take their own course. Like Pontius Pilate he chose the latter course, and to his own destruction. Before the pinnacle was anchored, the plan of the massacre was fully laid, and Kamuso had claimed the glory of killing The Sword with his own hand.

But the subtle instinct which was Standish's sixth sense warned him of some unknown danger, and having carefully inspected the wigwam offered to his use, he directed that the fire newly kindled outside the door should be extinguished; and while the Indians officiously busied themselves in doing this, the captain by a word, a look, a sign, drew his men inside the hut, and rapidly conveyed to them his suspicions, and enjoined the greatest caution upon all.

"The fire would have betrayed our forms to archers hidden in yonder thicket," added he. "And as I will have half to watch while the others sleep, the watch must keep themselves under shelter of the cabin and away from any chance of ambush."

Murmurs of wrath, of wonder, but of acquiescence arose from the half dozen bearded throats around, and the captain at once set the watch, to be relieved every two hours. In vain Janno offered another wigwam if this were too small, and urged that all his white brothers should sleep at once while his own men watched; in vain Kamuso tried to attach himself to the party inside, meaning to stab the captain in his sleep; without a show of anger or suspicion Standish put both attempts aside, and finally with a jeering laugh advised Janno to retire to his own wigwam and to order his braves to do the same, for some of the white men as he averred were given to discharging their pieces in their sleep, or at any shadow that came within range, and it might happen that some of his friends should thus come by harm, which would be a great grief to him.

[Pg 332]

"The Sword has pierced our intention," said Janno to Kamuso in their own tongue as the two withdrew. "Better give it up. He has eyes all around him."

"I will kill him," retorted Kamuso sullenly. "To-night, to-morrow, next week,—I will kill him."

The next day so soon as the shallop floated and was loaded Standish embarked, sick at heart as he received the slavish homage of Janno, whom he had liked and trusted so much, and who even while he yielded to the plot for the captain's death and that of all his friends really clung to him in love and reverence. Poor Janno, weak but not wicked, his punishment was both swift and stern; for fleeing a little later from the vengeance of the white men, he perished miserably among the swamps and thickets of Barnstable, and his lonely grave was only lately discovered. Go and look at his bones in Pilgrim Hall at Plymouth and muse upon the dangers of cowardice and weakness.

[Pg 333]

As the shallop pushed off from shore, an Indian came running down the beach, and with a cat-like spring leaped upon the deck. It was Kamuso, who said he was bound for Sandwich and would beg a passage in the pinnacle.

A sudden spark kindled in the captain's red-brown eyes and one hand tugged impatiently at his moustache, but he said nothing, and the Indian proceeded to make himself useful in a variety of ways; and as the wind was favorable and the distance short, Standish made no open objection to the company of the spy, but busied himself with freshly charging his weapons, and curiously examining every inch of Gideon's shining blade.

A little after noon the shallop made the harbor of Sandwich, or as the Pilgrims called it Manomet, and Standish at once went ashore, eager to see if Canacum shared in the wide-spread disaffection of the Indians. But ten minutes in the sachem's wigwam convinced the wary observer that something was wrong, for the old friendliness of manner had given place to restraint and formality; and although Canacum was very ready to deliver the corn, and professed great pleasure at the captain's visit, his voice and manner were both cold and false, and such of his braves as came into the wigwam showed a very different face from what Standish had hitherto encountered.

Suddenly a sound was heard without, and as the captain sprang to his feet and laid his hand upon Gideon's hilt, the door-mat was thrust aside, and two Indians recognized by their paint as Neponsets entered the cabin. Canacum received them with effusive cordiality, and presented the principal one to Standish as Wituwamat a pniese of the Neponsets.

[Pg 334]

Standish received the careless salutation of the new-comer in silent gravity, and stepping to the door summoned Howland and Alden to his side, first however sending a message to the boat-keepers to be well on guard against a surprise.

Returning into the hut with his two friends, the captain found Wituwamat upon his feet beginning an impassioned harangue to Canacum, who listened uneasily. Standish was already an excellent Indian scholar, and could converse in several dialects with great ease; but so soon as he appeared Wituwamat fell into a style so figurative and blind, and took pains to use such unusual and obsolete expressions, that Canacum himself could hardly understand him, and Standish was soon left hopelessly in the background. At a later day, however, one of the warriors then present repeated to the captain the amount of the Neponset's message, which was that Obtakiest, sachem of the Neponsets, had entered into a solemn compact with Canonicus, sachem of the Narragansetts, to cut off the Weymouth colonists, root and branch; but that as the Plymouth men would assuredly revenge their brethren, it was necessary that they should perish as well, and that while the two chiefs mentioned advanced upon the settlement from the west, they invited Canacum, Janno, and Aspinet to fall upon them from the east, and having slain man and boy to equably divide the women and other plunder. As earnest of his authority Wituwamat here presented Canacum with a knife stolen or bought from the Weymouth settlers, and jeeringly said the coward pale faces had brought over the weapons that should cut their own throats.

Having thus delivered his message, the Neponset indulged himself in a burst of self-glorification, boasting that he had in his day killed both French and Englishmen, and that he found the sport very amusing, for they died crying and making wry faces more like children than men.

[Pg 335]

"What is the impudent villain saying, and what means that knife, Captain?" muttered Howland in the captain's ear, but he shaking his head impatiently replied,—

"He means violence and treachery of some sort, but what form it takes I wot not. Be on your guard, John."

The harangue ended, refreshments were served, but the Neponsets were now treated with so much more courtesy and attention than the white men that Standish refusing the poorer portion offered to him and his comrades, rose and indignantly left the cabin, ordering his men to construct a shelter near the beach, and there cook some of the provisions they had brought. But they had hardly begun to do this when Kamuso appeared, full of indignant protests at Canacum's inhospitality, and loudly declaring that an affront to his friends was an affront to him, and he should desert the wigwam where the red men were feasting, and share the humbler fare of his white friends.

"Well, I wish thou hadst brought along a kettle to cook some corn in!" exclaimed Standish with something of his old joviality of manner, for his suspicions in falling upon Canacum had in some degree lifted from Kamuso, who certainly played his part with wonderful skill, and had he been white instead of red, and civilized instead of savage, might have left his name on record as a diplomatist beside that of Machiavelli or Ignatius Loyola.

"A kettle! My brother would like a kettle!" exclaimed he now. "Nay, a friend of mine hath one which I will buy of him and present to The Sword. I am rich, I Kamuso, and can make rich presents to those I love."

[Pg 336]

And rushing back to the wigwams, he presently returned with a good-sized brass kettle, which he ostentatiously laid at the captain's feet, refusing the handful of beads Standish offered in return.

"Hm!" growled the captain. "That's not in nature. Alden use the kettle an' thou wilt, but after, return it to the Pamet. We'll not have them making a Benjamin's sack of our shallop."

After dinner Standish so peremptorily demanded that his corn should at once be put aboard that Canacum could do nothing but yield. The squaws were summoned, and John Alden stood by with pencil and paper, keeping tally as each delivered her basket-full on the beach, while Howland standing mid-leg deep in the icy water shot it over the gunwale.

"Here men, bear a hand, and let us get this thing over and be off," commanded Standish, himself seizing a full basket and motioning Dotey to another.

"And I, and I, my brother!" exclaimed Kamuso in his loud braggadocio manner as he awkwardly lifted a third. "Never in all my life have I done squaw's work, for I am a brave, I am a pniese, but what my brother does I do."

"Nay, 't is too much honor!" replied Standish with his grimmest smile; "especially as thou art somewhat awkward"—

And in effect the Pamet as he tried to swing the full basket off his shoulder lost his hold, and the corn came showering down upon the sand. At length, however, the tale was complete, and as the tide was out, and night coming on, the captain decided to camp once more upon the beach, refusing somewhat curtly the pressing invitation sent by Canacum that the white men should sleep in his house. And once more Kamuso loudly proclaimed that he was of the white men's party and should share their quarters wherever they might be. Standish silently permitted him to do as he would, but, as on the previous evening, he divided the little company into watches, one to sleep and one to stand on guard.

[Pg 337]

"So soon as he sleeps I shall kill him," muttered Kamuso to Wituwamat, as they secretly met behind Canacum's wigwam. "Give me now the knife sent by Obtakiest."

"Here it is, brother, and when it is red with the blood of The Sword it shall be thine own. Else it returns to him who sends it."

"It shall be red, it shall drink, it shall drip with the brave blood, it shall shine as the sun rising across the waters! It shall feast, and Kamuso shall be chief of Obtakiest's pnieses; yes, he shall be sachem of the Massachusetts!"

Wituwamat made no reply in words, but as he turned away shivered heavily. Perhaps a premonition of his own terrible fate crossed his brain, perhaps the hooting of the

owl just then skimming across the thicket stirred his superstitious fancy, but without a word he reëntered the wigwam; and Kamuso concealing the knife went back to the randevous, where already the first watch slept, and Standish, in command of the second, stood beside the fire leaning on his snaphance, and, deep in meditation fixed his eyes upon the approaching savage so sternly that he believing that all was discovered was on the point of springing at his prey, and risking all upon one sudden blow, when the captain, awaking from his reverie, sighed profoundly, and perceiving for the first time Kamuso's approach quietly said,—

[Pg 338]

"So it is thee, Pamet! Go back and sleep warm in the wigwams of the Mattakees. We need no help here."

"Kamuso is no Mattakee; Kamuso is the friend of the white men. While The Sword wakes, Kamuso will gaze upon him and learn how to become the terror of his foes."

"'T is easier to be the terror of one's foes than the delight of one's friends," muttered Standish gloomily, and then pulling himself together he stirred the embers with his heel, and throwing on more wood said carelessly,—

"E'en as thou wilt. Kamuso, go or stay, watch or sleep, 't is all one to me."

And marching up and down the strip of level beach the soldier hummed an old ballad song of Man, which Rose had loved to sing, and clean forgot the savage who, crouching in the shadow, fingered the knife hilt hidden in his waist cloth, and never removed the gaze of his snaky eyes from the figure of his destined prey.

The night went on, and Standish waked the second watch and dismissed the first, but still himself took no rest, nor felt the need of it, as he paced up and down, his outward senses alert to the smallest sign, and his memory roaming at will over scenes for many years forgot; over boyhood's eager days, his mother's tenderness, his father's death upon a French battle-field, his own early days as a soldier, his home-coming to find Barbara acting a daughter's part to the dying mother—Rose—ah Rose! He stood a moment at the point of his promenade furthest from the randevous, his back to the fire, his gaze fixed upon the sea whose lapping waves seemed whispering with sobbing sighs, Rose!—Rose!—Rose!—

[Pg 339]

A faint sound upon the shingle caught the outward ear of the soldier, and wheeling instinctively he faced the Pamet, who with his hand upon the hilt of the dagger had crept up to within six feet of his victim, and already had selected the spot between those square shoulders where the fatal blow should be planted.

"Ha savage! What does this mean! Why are you tracking me!" demanded the captain angrily, but the wily Indian, instead of starting back and betraying himself by terror, advanced quietly, not even removing his hand from the hidden knife hilt, and answered smoothly in his own tongue,—

"The red man's moccason sounds not upon the sand as the white man's boot. I did but come to ask my lord if he will not rest at all. Midnight is long past, and the day must bring its labors. Will not The Sword sheath for a while his intolerable splendor in sleep, while his slave watches for him?"

"Why, Kamuso, thou 'rt more than eloquent! Pity but thou shouldst be trained, and brought to London to show off before the King!" laughed Standish. "But sleep and I have quarreled for to-night. I know not how it is, but never after a sound night's rest did I feel more fresh and on the alert. Go thou and sleep if thou 'rt sleepy, but come not creeping after me again, or I'll send thee packing! I like not such surprises."

"The will of my lord is the will of his slave," meekly replied Kamuso, and crept back to his former sheltered nook beside the fire. The chill March night grew on toward morning, the east reddened with an angry glare, the solemn stars wheeled on their appointed courses, and Mars, who had held the morning watch, gave way to Sol, bidding him have a care of his son, whom he had left gazing with sleepless eyes across the waters to the East.

"Up, men! 'T is morning at last, and surely never was a night so long as this. Up, and let us break our fast and be off within the hour!"

So cried the captain, and in a moment all his command was afoot and active. Kamuso, his face black with sullen rage, retreated to the wigwams to confess his defeat to Wituwamat and Canacum, who listening said quietly,—

"His totem is too strong for us. The Sword will never fall before the tomahawk."

"It is because he is so strong that Obtakiest took a knife of the white man's make and use, and sent it. The powah that charmed the weapons of The Sword may have charmed this knife also."

And Kamuso drawing the Weymouth knife from his belt regarded it with disgust for a moment, then thrusting it back into his belt doggedly declared,—

"But all is not over. Wait, my brothers, wait for the end, and then say if Kamuso is a fool."

As the pinnacle drew out of Manomet Harbor Standish for the first time perceived that the Pamet was aboard her, and rather sharply demanded,—

"Whither bound now, Kamuso? Thou didst but ask passage to Manomet."

"My white brothers have not all the corn they need, have they?" asked the Indian, an air of humble sympathy pervading his voice and manner.

"Nay. If the famine we forebode is upon us we need twice, thrice, as much as this, before the harvest not yet sown is ready for use."

"For that then is Kamuso here. At Nauset, Aspinet hath great store of corn hidden from the white men, but it is not his alone, it is mine, it is the tribe's, it is The Sword's. Let my lord come to Nauset and I will have his canoe filled to the brim, there shall not be room to put in one grain more—Kamuso says it."

"Hm! That would be a matter of fifty bushels or more," replied Standish literally. "What say you, Howland? What is your mind, men?"

Various brief replies showed that the mind of the crew was to obey the captain's orders, and after a moment's thought he muttered to Howland in Dutch,—

"I like not this fellow's carriage. He is too smooth to be honest, and yet what can one wretched savage do against seven men armed and on their watch? But pass the word among the rest to be wary, and Alden, I leave it in charge to thee, lad, in case the savage treacherously smites me as I think he meant last night, do thou avenge me."

"He'll not breathe thrice after his blow, Master," replied Alden in his deepest tones.

"Well said, lad; but gentle thy face and eke thy voice, or he'll suspect. Now then, lads, put her before this western wind, and ho for Nauset once more!"

The command was obeyed, but lo the wind, which had since sunrise blown softly

from the south of west making a fair breeze for Nauset near the end of the Cape, now suddenly hauled round with angry gusts and gathering mists, until it stood in the northeast right in the teeth of the shallop's course, while every sign of sky and sea foreboded a gathering storm.

[Pg 342]

"His totem is too strong," muttered the Pamet in his throat, and the hand beneath his garment clinching the handle of the dagger seized with it a handful of his own flesh and griped it savagely, while in silence he called upon his gods for help.

But none came, more than to the priests of Baal what time Elijah jeered them, and after a brief consultation with his crew Standish once more altered his course, and the pinnacle with double-reefed sails flew before the rising wind like a hunted creature to her covert, bearing The-Sword-of-the-White-Men safely to his post.

[Pg 343]

CHAPTER XXXI.

A POT OF BROTH.

Yes, a Pot of Broth, and one more classic than any black broth ever supped by Spartan; more pregnant of Fate than the hell-broth compounded by Macbeth's witches; broth in which was brewed the destiny of a great nation, broth but for whose brewing I certainly, and you, if you be of Pilgrim strain, had never been, for in its seething liquid was dissolved a wide-spread and most powerful conspiracy that in its fruition would have left Plymouth Rock a funeral monument in a field of blood.

Hardly an hour after the pinnacle had landed its passengers at the Rock, and the Pamet, sullenly declining farther hospitality, had proceeded on his way to meet Obtakiest and report his ill success, when Winslow with John Hampden and Hobomok entered the village from the north, sore spent with travel and scanty food, but laden with matter of the profoundest interest. A Council of the chiefs, including nearly all of the Mayflower men, was immediately called together in the Common house, now used altogether for these assemblages and for divine worship, and first Standish and then Winslow were called upon for their reports.

The captain's was given with military brevity.

"I have brought a hundred bushels of corn and all the men I carried away. The savages are no doubt disaffected, and a notorious blood-thirsty rascal called Wituwamat, a Neponset, brought Canacum a knife wherewith to kill some one, and I fancy 't is myself; but though he impudently delivered both knife and message in my presence, he so wrapped up his meaning in new and strange phrases, that I could make but little of it. Perhaps Master Winslow can read my riddle as well as tell his own story."

[Pg 344]

"Methinks I can, Captain," replied Winslow pleasantly; and then in smooth and polished phrase bearing such resemblance to Standish's rough and brief utterances as a rapier doth to a battle-axe, the future Grand Commissioner narrated how he had found Massasoit as it seemed already dying, for he could neither see, nor swallow either medicine or food.

The sachem's wigwam was so crowded with visitors that the white men could

scarcely edge their way in, and around the bed circled the powahs at their incantations, "making," said Winslow, "such a hellish noise as distempered us that were well, and was therefore unlike to ease him that was sick."

This ended, and about half the guests persuaded to withdraw, the dying chief was with difficulty made to understand who were his visitors, and feebly groping with his hand he faintly murmured,—

"*Winsnow, keen Winsnow?*" (Is it you Winsnow?) To which Winslow gently replied, grasping the cold hand,—

"It is Winslow who is come to see you, sachem."

"I shall never see thee again, Winsnow," muttered the dying man, and those standing by explained that the sight had left his eyes some hours before.

But Winslow, after patiently repeating over and over the message of sympathy and friendship delivered him by the governor, produced a little pot of what he calls a confection of many comfortable conserves, and with the point of his knife inserted a portion between the sick man's teeth.

[Pg 345]

"It will kill him! He cannot swallow," declared the favorite wife, who stood chafing her lord's hands; but presently as the conserve, prepared by Doctor Fuller and of rare virtue, melted, it trickled down the patient's throat, who presently whispered, "More!" and Winslow well pleased administered several doses. Then, finding the mouth whose muscles had now relaxed, foul with fever, this courtly and haughty gentleman, this necessity of the Lord Protector of England, this Grand Commissioner of the future, with his own hands performed a nurse's loathly work, and ceased not until the sachem, refreshed, relieved, rescued from death, was able to ask for drink, when Hampden prepared some of the confection with water, and Winslow administered it. All night this work went on, and when morning broke, the sick man could see and hear and swallow as well as ever he could, and his appetite returning he demanded broth such as he had tasted at Plymouth.

Now that especial broth was a delicious compound of Priscilla's compounding, and Winslow knew no more of its recipe than you or I do, nor were any materials such as should go to the making of white man's broth at hand. Worst of all, Winslow had never taken note or share in culinary labors, for Susanna was a notable housewife and had both men and maids at her command; but a willing mind is a powerful teacher, and not only Winslow the man, was full of Christian charity, but Winslow the statesman desired intensely that Massasoit should remain sachem of the Pokanokets, instead of making way for Corbitant, who had once declared his enmity to the white men, and had only been put down by the strong hand.

[Pg 346]

So Winslow leaving his patient for a moment went into the fresh air, both to revive himself and to write a hasty note, begging Doctor Fuller to send not only some medicine suited to the case, but a pair of chickens, and a recipe for making them into broth, with such other material as might be needed.

Fifty miles of forest lay between Sowams and Plymouth, but a swift runner was dispatched at once with the missive, and the promise of a rich reward if he hastened his return; then Winslow turned to his fellow-statesman who stood looking on with an amused smile.

"Master Hampden, know you how to make broth?" demanded he.

"I have no teaching but mother wit," replied Hampden. "And you are richer in that

than I."

"Nay then—here Pibayo, is that thy name?"

"Ahhe," replied the squaw modestly.

"Thou hast corn in store?"

"Ahhe," again replied the woman, and Winslow making the most of his little stock of Indian words directed her to bruise some of the maize in her stone mortar, and meantime calling for one of the egg-shaped earthen stew-pans used by the natives, he half filled it with water, and settled it into the hot ashes of the open air fire. The maize ready, he winnowed it in his hands, blowing away the husks and chaff, and poured the rest into the boiling water.

"So far well," remarked he gayly to Hampden; "but what next? I remember in the garden of our home at Droitwich there was a gay plot of golden bloom that my mother called broth marigolds, but we shall hardly come by such in this wilderness."

[Pg 347]

"Methinks there are turnips in broth," ventured Hampden.

"And there are turnips in Plymouth, but that is not here," retorted Winslow. "Come, let us see what herbs Dame Nature will afford."

A little search and some questioning showed the herbalists a goodly bush of sassafras, and Winslow, who with the rest of his generation ascribed almost magical virtues to this plant, enthusiastically tugged up several of its roots, and cleansing them in the brook, sliced them thinly into his broth. Finally he added a handful of strawberry leaves, the only green thing to be found, and leaving the mess to stew for a while, he strained it through his handkerchief, and presented it to his patient who eagerly drank a pint of it.

Perhaps there really is magic in sassafras, perhaps the child of nature throve upon this strictly Pre-Raphaelitish composition, perhaps Indian gruel with strawberry leaves in it and strained through a pocket handkerchief is the disguise under which the Elixir Vitæ masquerades among us; certain it is that beneath its benign influence the sachem of the Pokanokets revived so rapidly that when, twenty-four hours from his departure, the runner arrived with the chickens and the physic, his master frankly threw the physic to the dogs, and handed over the fowls to Pibayo, bidding her guard them carefully, feed them well, and order them to lay eggs and provide chickens for future illnesses.

So this was the fateful broth of which we spoke but now, and its results were immediate, for although Massasoit himself said nothing more than,—

[Pg 348]

"Now I perceive that the English are my friends and love me, and while I live I will never forget this kindness that they have showed me," he in a private conclave with some of his most trusted pnieases solemnly charged Hobomok with a message for Winslow, only to be delivered however as upon their return they came within sight of Plymouth. This message, to hear which the Council had been convened, was to the effect that the Neponsets had fully determined to fall upon the Weymouth settlers and cut them off root and branch so soon as two of them, who were ship-carpenters, had completed some boats they were now building to the order of the Indians.

The forty braves of the Neponset tribe were fully equal to this task, and if the Plymouth Colony would remain neutral they had no desire to injure them; but knowing full well that they would not, and having moreover a superstitious dread of Standish's prowess and abilities, they had arranged with all the tribes lying near

Plymouth to join with them, and on an appointed day to massacre the entire colony.

"Ay, ay," interrupted Standish at this point of Winslow's narrative. "Now do I comprehend some of the figures and parables of Wituwamat's impudent speech, what time he delivered the knife to Canacum. The bloody hound—well, brother, get on with thy narrative."

So Winslow told how Massasoit had been urged again and again to join the conspiracy, but never would, although his pride had been indeed sore wounded by a lying story of how the governor and captain and Winslow, his especial friend, having been told of his desperate illness, cared naught for it, not even enough to send Hobomok his own pniese to inquire for him; and now, being undeceived, he would himself have killed the liar, whose name was Pecksuot, but on second thought left him to the white men whom he earnestly charged to take the matter into their own hands, and with no warning, no parley, to go and kill Pecksuot, Wituwamat, Obtakiest, and several other ringleaders of the conspiracy, for, as he assured them most earnestly and solemnly, unless these men were promptly and effectually dealt with, both the Weymouth colony and themselves would be overwhelmed and massacred without mercy. Finally, the sachem added that he as Sagamore of the Pokanokets, and as it were regent of the Massachusetts, had authority to order the punishment of these rebels to his expressed commands for peace, and he hereby did so.

[Pg 349]

"And very sensible and good the sachem's counsel seemeth in my ears," remarked Standish complacently.

"Nay, Captain," replied the Elder sternly. "Men's lives are not so lightly to be dealt withal. We came among these salvages to convert them to the knowledge of God, not to slaughter them."

"Meseemeth, Elder," returned Standish impatiently, "it is a question of our lives or theirs. I should be loth to see your gray hairs dabbled in blood, and Mistress Brewster carried into captivity to drudge as the slave of a squaw."

The elder turned even paler than his wont and covered his eyes with his hand, but murmured,—

"God His will be done."

"Ay, so say I," replied the captain more gently. "But as I read Holy Writ the chosen folk were often punished for sparing their foes, but never for laying roundly on. 'Go and smite me Amalek and spare not,' is one of many orders, and if the commander-in-chief obeyed not he was cashiered without so much as a court-martial."

[Pg 350]

Several eager voices rose in reply, but Bradford lightly tapping the table around which the Council was gathered said decisively,—

"These matters are too large, brethren, to be thus discussed. Let each one declare his mind soberly and briefly, and without controversy. To-morrow is the day appointed for our town meeting and annual election of officers, and I will then lay the case before the whole, and also will rehearse our own conclusions. Then, the voice of the majority shall decide the matter."

And so began the reign of "the people" in America, for this was the first great question to be decided since the coming of the Fortune had so enlarged the colony that the Council was no longer composed of the whole, as it was when the treaty with Massasoit was concluded.

[Pg 351]

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE SUNSET GUN.

The town meeting was over, and its decisions if important were unanimous, even Elder Brewster, converted perhaps by Standish's Biblical references, giving his voice for the stringent measures rendered necessary by the growth and magnitude of the conspiracy.

Captain Standish with what force he might select was to take the pinnace, and under cover of a trading expedition make a landing at Weymouth, and first of all discover from the colonists themselves the truth of their condition. If it should prove as represented he was to at once attack whatever leaders of the conspiracy might be found, and in especial he was to slay Wituwamat, of whom Massasoit had spoken as the heart of the conspiracy, and to bring his head to Plymouth to be set over the gate of the Fort as a proof and a warning to their neighbors on the east, whom they would not now punish, but hoped rather to persuade.

"And now, Captain Standish, it were well that you should select those whom you will have of your company, while we are all gathered together here," said the governor when the primary question had been finally decided.

Standish rose and looked thoughtfully from face to face.

"T is a hard matter," said he at last with a gleam of pride in his eye. "Here be fifty good men and true, and I need no more than half a dozen." [Pg 352]

"The Neponsets number forty warriors," suggested Winslow.

"Yes, but they will not be gathered together, having no knowledge of our purpose, and if the shallop is watched from shore, as belike it will be, a large force of armed men would bewray our intent, and runners would gather the braves in a few hours and so bring down a great slaughter upon the tribe," replied the captain in confident simplicity. "But if we go no more in number than ordinary, no more than in our late voyage to Nauset for corn, they will suspect nothing, and the matter may be well concluded with no more than five or six examples, Wituwamat being the principal."

"And glad am I, brother, to see a certain tenderness of human life in your counsels," said the elder approvingly.

"Nay, elder, I am not all out a cannibal and ogre," replied the captain. "So now I will choose me Hopkins and Howland and Billington, and Eaton and Browne and Cooke and Soule, seven hearts of oak and arms of steel: it is enough."

"And not one of us Fortune men, Captain?" demanded Robert Hicks, a stalwart fellow who afterward became almost a rebel to the colony's authority.

"Nay, Master Hicks," replied the captain gravely. "I mean no discredit to the courage or the good will of the new-comers, of whom you are a principal; but this service is one of strategy as well as daring, and so soon as the pinnace leaves yon Rock, there must be but one mind and one will in her, and that is mine. The men whom I have chosen, my comrades of the Mayflower, I know as I know mine own sword, and I can trust them as I do him. There's no offense Master Hicks, but a stricken field is no [Pg 353]

place to learn to handle a new sword or a new comrade."

"And not me, Master," said a low voice as the captain stepped out of the Common house and turned his face homeward.

"Nay, Jack, I've a text for thee too. 'I have married a wife and cannot come.'" And with a somewhat bitter laugh he strode on up the hill, leaving John Alden looking sadly after him.

That night as Standish slowly entered the Fort to fire his sunset gun, he was startled at seeing a muffled figure seated upon an empty powder keg in an angle of the works. As he appeared she rose, and pushing back her hood showed the beautiful face of Priscilla Molines, now strangely pale and distraught.

"You here, Mistress Molines," exclaimed the captain somewhat sternly. "Alden is not coming."

"It is not Alden but Captain Standish I fain would speak withal, and I hope he will pardon my forwardness in seeking him here."

The captain briefly waved the apology aside. "Your commands, madam?" inquired he.

"Nay, nay sir, my father's dear loved friend, my brother's tender nurse,—mine—oh what shall I say, how shall I plead for a little kindness. Have pity on a froward maid's distress"—

"What Priscilla, thou canst weep!"

"And why not when my heart is sorrowful unto death."

"But—there then, child, wipe thine eyes and look up and let me see thee smile as thou art wont. What is it, maid? What is thy sorrow?"

"That you will not forgive me, sir."

"Forgive thee for what?" But the captain dropped the hand he had seized in his sympathy, and the dark look crept back to his face.

"Thou 'rt going to a terrible danger—my friend—and it may be to thy death."

"Well girl, 't is not worth crying for if I am. Life is not so sweet to me that I should over much dread to lay it down with honor."

"Oh, oh, and it is my fault!"—sobbed Priscilla.

The captain strode up and down the narrow space pulling at his red beard and frowning thoughtfully; then stopping before the girl who stood as he had left her, he quietly said,—

"Priscilla, I was indeed thy father's friend, and I am thine, and I fain would have wed thee, and thou didst refuse, preferring John Alden, who also is my friend, even as my younger brother, whose honor and well being are dear to me as mine own. What then is the meaning of thy grief, and what is thy request?"

"My grief is that since the day I gave John Alden my promise, you, sir, have been no more my friend, but ever looked upon me with coldness and disdain; and now that you go, it may be to your death, it breaketh my heart to have it so, and I fain would beg your forgiveness for aught I have done to offend you, though I know not what it may be."

"Know not—well, well, let it pass—'t is but one more traverse. Yes child, I forgive thee for what to me seemed like something of scorn and slight, something of double dealing and treachery—nay, we'll say no more on 't. Here is my hand, Priscilla—and surely thy father's friend may for once taste thy cheek. Now child, we're friends and dear friends, and if yon savage sheathes his knife in my heart perhaps thou 'lt shed a tear or two, and say a prayer for the soul of—thy father's friend. And now thy petition, for time presses."

[Pg 355]

"That thou wilt take John Alden with thee."

"What then! Who shall read a woman's will aright! I left him at home for thy sake, Priscilla."

"So I guessed and I thank you—nay, I thank you not for so misjudging me." And the fire in the hazel eyes upraised to his, dried the tears sharply.

"Why, what now! Dost want thy troth-plight lover slain?"

"No in truth, nor do I want my troth-plight friend, for thou art that now, slain; but neither do I want the one nor the other to lurk safely at home when his brothers are at the war. There's no coward's blood in my heart more than in yours, Captain Standish, and I care not to shelter any man behind my petticoats. I have not wed John Alden all this long year and more, because I would not wed with your frown black upon my heart, and I will not wed him now until he hath showed himself a man upon that same field whence you do not greatly care to come alive."

"Nay, Priscilla, I care more now for life than I did an hour since, for I have a friend."

"And you will take John, and if he comes home alive you'll smile upon our marriage?"

"Yes girl, yes to both. God bless you, Priscilla, for a brave and true woman. And now—good-night."

A moment later as the dark clad figure flitted down the hill Standish stood with bared head and fixed eyes silent for a little space, and then the boom of the sunset gun sounded in solemn Amen to the soldier's silent prayer.

[Pg 356]

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PECKSUOT'S KNIFE.

The next morning as the village sat at breakfast, two men at half an hour's interval passed hastily down the forest trail, and entering the town sought the governor's house.

The first was Wassapinewat, brother of Obtakiest, chief of the Neponsets, who, having suffered both wounds and terror in Corbitant's attempted rebellion, now hastened to turn State's evidence, and while warning the white men of his brother's intended attack wash his hands of any share in it.

The other visitor was a long lank Caucasian, Phineas Pratt by name, carpenter by trade, Weymouth settler by position. This man half dead with suffering of various

sorts, footsore and weary, came stumbling down the King's Highway just as Bradford came out of his own door followed by Wassapinewat, at sight of whom Phineas started and trembled, then pointing a finger at him shrieked,—

"Have a care, Governor! 'T is one of the bloody salvages sworn to take all our lives!"

"Nay, friend Pratt, for I remember thee well, 't is a penitent robber now, come to warn us of danger. Methinks thine errand may be the same. Come in, and after due refreshment tell us the truth of this matter."

[Pg 357]

But weary as he was, the excited fugitive would pause for neither rest nor refreshment until he had poured out his story of the wrongs, the insults, the threats with which the Neponsets had harassed the Weymouth men in their weakness, in part revenging the foul wrongs they while strong had put upon the savages, until in an Indian council of the day before, it had been formally resolved to wait only for two days' more work upon the boats which Phineas and another were finishing, and then to inaugurate the massacre.

Both Pratt and Wassapinewat had by different channels learned the result of this council, and each had resolved to not only save himself from the explosion of this mine, but to warn the Plymouth colonists of their danger, and each had set out by a slightly different route from the other and made the journey in ignorance of the other's movements.

It was afterward discovered, however, that Pratt's flight was at once discovered, and an Indian dispatched to overtake and kill him, a catastrophe averted by the carpenter's straying from the path in the darkness, so that his pursuer reached Plymouth, and went on to Manomet before the village was astir.

These two confirmatory reports were very welcome to Bradford, upon whom the nominal responsibility of the expedition rested, and to the elder whose reverend face was very pale and grave in these days.

Standish, however, as he had felt no doubts, now felt no added impulse, but went quietly on, seeing his command and his stores embarked, and examining personally the arms of his eight soldiers.

At last all was ready, the men seated each at his post, Hobomok in the bow, and Standish at the stern, the men and boys who stayed behind grouped upon the shore, while a vague cloud of skirts and kirtles hovered upon the brow of Cole's Hill, when Elder Brewster, baring his white head, stepped upon the Rock, and raising his hands to heaven prayed loud and fervently that the God of battles, the God of victory, the God of their fathers, would bless, protect, and prosper those who went forth in His name to do battle for His Right; and as the old man's voice rose clear and sonorous in its impassioned appeal, the first breath of a favoring wind came out of the South, and the lapping waves of the incoming tide answered melodiously to the deep diapason of the Amen sent up from fifty bearded throats.

[Pg 358]

"And now we may go home and make our mourning weeds," said Priscilla with a petulant half-sob, half-laugh, as she and Mary Chilton turned away from the wheatfield on the hill.

"Nay, John Alden will come home safe, I'm sure on 't," said Mary gently, but her vivacious friend turned sharply upon her.

"And if he comes not at all, I'd liefer know him dead in honor, than lingering here

among the women like some others."

"Gilbert Winslow, or his brother John if you mean him, would have gone as gladly as any man had the captain chosen him," replied Mary composedly, if coldly, and Priscilla turned and clipped her in a sharp embrace, crying out that indeed her friend were no more than right to beat her for a froward child.

The prosperous wind lasted all the way, and before noon the shallop lay at anchor close beside the Swan, a small craft owned by the Weymouth men, and intended for their use in trading and fishing. Standish's first visit was to her, and much to his surprise he found her both undefended and deserted. Landing with four of his men he next proceeded to the plantation, as it was called, where some ten or twelve substantial buildings surrounded with a stockade established a very defensible position, but here again neglect and suicidal folly stared him in the face.

[Pg 359]

The settlers were dispersed in every direction: three had that very morning gone to live among the Indians; many were roaming the woods and shore in search of food; one poor fellow going to dig clams on the previous day had stuck fast in the mud by reason of weakness, and though the Indians stood upon the shore watching him with shouts of derisive laughter, not one put out a hand to help him, and he perished miserably at the flow of the tide.

The master of the Swan, stricken with the folly of strong drink, met all Standish's expostulations with a fatuous laugh, and the declaration that there was no danger,—no danger whatever; that he and the Indians were such friends that he carried no arms, and never closed the gates of the stockade; that all the stories reaching Plymouth were lies or blunders; and that although they were short of provisions, and especially of strong waters, they asked nothing more of the Plymouth people than some fresh supplies to last until Sanders, the head of the colony, should return from Monhegan on the coast of Maine, whither he had gone for corn.

Leaving the drunken captain in disgust, Standish at once took the command of the post upon himself, and dispatched Hobomok and two of the settlers who came to place themselves under his orders, to bring in all of the others whom they could reach, sending word that he would feed them. Many of them, including Sanders' lieutenant named Manning, came at the summons, and before night all who would were safe within the stockade, and were served each man with a pint of shelled corn, all that could be spared, for it was taken from the Pilgrims' stock of seed-corn.

[Pg 360]

Then in a brief and vigorous address Standish told the colonists why he had come, and repeated to them the assurance given him by Hobomok that the day but one after his arrival was the day fixed upon for the massacre, the boats needing but the one day's work to complete them. Furthermore, he assured them that he needed nor would accept any help from them in his punishment of the savages, the danger and the responsibility being no more than Plymouth could endure, and, as he significantly added, "The savages were not like to flee before men who had so often fled before them."

Hardly was the harangue ended when a Neponset bringing a few hastily collected furs entered the stockade, and warily approaching the captain offered them for sale. Standish controlling all appearance of indignation parleyed with him and paid a fair price for the furs, but as the Indian turned toward one of the houses, he called him back, and dismissed him somewhat peremptorily.

"To spy out the land hath he come," remarked he to Alden. "And I will not have him glean our purpose." But the savage had already learned something, and went back to

his comrades to report that The-Sword-of-the-White-Men "spoke smoothly, but his eyes showed that there was anger in his heart."

The second morning so soon as the gates were opened several Indians entered together. One of them named Pecksuot, a pniese of great celebrity, greeted Hobomok jeeringly, and told him that he supposed his master had come to kill all the Neponsets including himself, and added,—

[Pg 361]

"Tell him to begin if he dare; we are not afraid of him, nor shall we run away and hide. Let him begin unless he is afraid. Is he afraid?"

Hobomok repeated the message word for word, but Standish only replied,—

"Tell the pniese I would speak with his sachem, Obtakiest."

"Obtakiest is busy, or he is feasting, or he is sleeping," replied Pecksuot disdainfully. "He does not trouble himself to run about after any little fellow who sends for him."

Again Hobomok translated the insult, but added in a low voice,—

"Obtakiest is waiting for some of his braves who are gone to the Shawmuts for help. When they return he will attack the white men."

"So! Then we will not wait for them, but so soon as we can gather the heads in one place we will return some of their courtly challenges." And Standish ground his strong teeth together in the pain of self-restraint under insult.

Perceiving that he did not mean to act, some of the Indians who had lingered a little behind at first, now came forward, hopping and dancing around Standish, whetting their knives upon their palms, making insulting gestures, and shouting all sorts of jeers and taunts at him and the white men generally.

Then Wituwamat came forward and in his own tongue cried out,—

[Pg 362]

"The Captain Sword-of-the-White-Men escaped the knife I carried to Canacum for him, but he will not escape this." And he showed a dagger hung around his neck by a deer's sinew, on whose wooden handle a woman's face was not inartistically carved.

"This is Wituwamat's squaw-knife," declared he. "At home he has another with a man's face upon it which has already killed both French and English; by and by they will marry, and there shall be a knife ready for every white man's heart; they can see, they can eat, and they make no childish noise like the white man's weapons. But the squaw knife is enough for the white pniese."

"Hm! Methinks I cannot much longer keep Gideon in his scabbard—he will fly out of his own accord," muttered Standish, a deadly pallor showing beneath the bronze of his skin. Pecksuot saw it, and mistook it for the hue of fear. With a savage smile he approached and stood close beside the Captain, towering above his head, for he was a giant in stature and strength.

"The Sword-of-the-White-Men may be a great pniese, but he is a very little man," said he contemptuously. "Now I am a pniese as well as he, and I am besides a very big man, and a very brave warrior. The Sword had better run away before I devour him."

Without reply Standish turned and walked into the principal house of the village, and looked around the large lower room.

"It will do as well as another place," said he briefly. "Alden and Howland remove me

this great table to the side of the room, and pitch out this settle and the stools. Now John Alden get you gone and send me Hopkins and Billington. Tarry you with Cooke and Browne at the gate; bid Soule and Eaton stand on guard, and if they hear me cry Rescue! make in to my help. Let no more of the salvages into the stockade until we have settled with these. Hobomok, tell Pecksuot, Kamuso, whom I saw behind the rest, Wituwamat, and that notorious ruffian his brother, that I fain would speak with them in this place."

"Four to four," remarked Billington with grewsome relish.

"Ay. Take you Wituwamat; Hopkins, I leave you to deal with Kamuso; Howland, take the young fellow, and I will deal with Pecksuot, for in truth he is a bigger man than I, but we will see if he is a better."

What story Hobomok may have invented to bring the four ringleaders into the house we know not, but as five white men remained outside with at least an equal number of Indians, they could not fear being overmatched, and presently came stalking impudently in, exchanging jeers and laughter of the most irritating nature.

Hobomok followed, and closing the door stood with his back against it, calmly observing the scene, but taking no part in it.

Then at last the captain loosed the reins of the fiery spirit struggling and chafing beneath the curb so long, and fixing his eyes red with the blaze of anger upon Pecksuot, he cried,—

"On guard, O Pecksuot!" and sprang upon him, seizing the squaw-knife, which was sharpened at the back as well as at the front, and ground at the tip to a needle point. With a coarse laugh Pecksuot snatched at the captain's throat with his left hand, while his right closed like iron over the captain's grasp of the hilt and tried to turn it against him. But the rebound from his forced inaction had strung the soldier's muscles like steel and thrilled along his nerves like fire. A roar like that of a lion broke from his panting chest, and with one mighty effort he wrung the knife from the grasp of the giant, and turning its point drove it deep into the heart of the boaster. A wild cry of death and defeat rung through the room as he fell headlong, and Wituwamat turning his head to look, gave Billington his chance and received his own mortal wound; while Kamuso fighting with the silent courage of a great warrior only succumbed at last beneath a dozen wounds from Hopkins's short sword, and Howland having disarmed and wounded his opponent presented him as prisoner under Standish's orders.

"Should'st have slain him in the heat of the onset, Howland," panted the captain, wiping his hands and looking around him. "Now—take him out, Billington, and hang him to the tree in the middle of the parade. We shall leave him there as an example for the others. Open the door, Hobomok."

Hobomok did as he was bid, but then advancing with slow step to the side of the fallen Pecksuot he placed a foot upon his chest and softly said,—

"Yes, my brother, thou wast a very big man, but I have seen a little man bring thee low."

It was the giant's funeral elegy.

"I have notched my sword on yon villain's skull," exclaimed Hopkins wiping and examining his blade, and the Captain smiling shrewdly said,—

"I risked not Gideon in such ignoble warfare, though he clattered in his scabbord.

Savage weapons for savage hearts, say I."

"Ha! There's fighting without!" cried Hopkins, rushing to the door, where in effect Soule and Browne had shot down two stout savages, who hearing Pecksuot's death cry had tried to avenge him; while another rushing upon Alden with uplifted knife was caught in mid career by a bullet from the captain's snaphance snatched up at Hopkins's warning.

[Pg 365]

So fell seven of the savages, who would if they could have barbarously murdered seventy white men, women, and children, and thus did the Captain of the Pilgrim forces teach the red men a lesson that lasted in vivid force until the men of that generation had given way to those of poor weak Sachem Philip's day.

That night one of the three colonists who had gone to live among the Indians returned to the village bringing news that in the evening a runner had arrived at the place where he was, and had delivered a "short and sad" message to his hosts, probably the news of Pecksuot's and Wituwamat's death. The Indians had begun at once to collect and arm, and he foreboding evil had slunk away after vainly trying to persuade his comrades to do the same.

"They will be slain out of revenge," declared Hobomok in his own tongue, and the event proved him a true prophet.

In the early gray of morning the watch reported a file of Indians emerging from the forest, and Standish with four of his own men, and two settlers who implored permission to join him, went to meet them. A bushy hillock lay midway between the two parties, and the Indians were making for its shelter, when the Pilgrims breaking into a double run forestalled them, and reached the summit where, as Standish declared, he was ready to welcome the whole Neponset tribe.

[Pg 366]

The Indians at once fell behind each man his tree, and a flight of arrows aimed chiefly at Standish and Hobomok ensued.

"Let no man shoot until he hath a fair mark," ordered the Captain. "'T is useless to waste ammunition upon tree-trunks."

"Both their pnieses are dead, and Obtakiest himself is none!" suddenly declared Hobomok. "I alone can drive them!" and throwing off his coat, leaving his chest with its gleaming "totem" bare, he extended wide his arms and rushed down the hill shouting at the top of his voice,—

"Hobomok the pniese! Hobomok the devil! Hobomok is awake! Hobomok has come!"

"The fool will be shot! Hath he gone mad!" shouted Billington, but Hopkins grasped his arm.

"Let be, let be! He knows what he is about. Himself told me that his name Hobomok answereth to our word Devil, and that while every pniese through fasting and self-torture gains much power over demons and is greatly feared by all who are not pnieses, he having taken the foul fiend's name, had gained double the power of the rest, and could when put to it summon Sathanas and all his brood to aid him. Those others know it, and—lo, you now, see them scatter, see them fly!" and with a loud laugh he pointed to the savage crew, who panic stricken were fleeing before the pniese like a flock of frightened sheep.

"Have after them! Follow me, men!" shouted Standish rushing down the hill, the others following as fast as they could, but not fast enough, for before they came

within shot, the party was halted by Hobomok's return, who half glorious, half laughing, reported the enemy hidden in a swamp, whither he led his friends.

[Pg 367]

"We will slay no more if we can help it," declared the captain. "Alden, show a flag of truce. Haply they will understand it."

But although as Standish drew near the thicket, Alden carrying the white flag beside him, the savages refrained from firing, his invitation to parley was received with a volley of abuse and defiance renewed at every attempt of his to speak.

"Obtakiest is there. I know his voice," declared Hobomok who had crept up behind. "He will not show himself lest I curse him."

"Obtakiest! Sachem! Art thou there?" demanded Standish. "Come forth then like a man, and we two will fight it out here in the midst. I challenge thee, sachem!"

A hoarse laugh and a volley of obscene abuse was the reply, and Standish indignantly cried,—

"Dost not know how base and cowardly it is to hide there and tongue it like an angry woman! Thou 'rt not fit to be called a man!"

A shower of arrows was the only response to this, and presently the movement of the bushes showed that the Indians were retreating to a deeper fastness, and Standish deeply disgusted marched his own men back to the village, the only casualty on either side being the broken arm of the powah or priest, who with Wituwamat and Pecksuot were really the heart of the conspiracy; for Obtakiest after a while sent a squaw to Plymouth abjectly begging for peace, and declaring that he had since Standish's visit changed his camp every night for fear of receiving another one.

"And now, Master Manning, and you, master of the Swan and friend of the Neponsets," demanded Standish, as he arrayed the Weymouth men before him, and declared his success in their quarrel, "what shall I do more for your comfort or safety before my return to Plymouth? For myself, I should never fear to remain in this plantation had I the half of your men, but for yourselves ye must judge. Only I will add that I am charged by Governor Bradford to say that any who will come to settle in Plymouth and abide by its laws and governance shall be kindly welcomed."

[Pg 368]

The settlers debated the matter among themselves for a while, and although a few and those of the best, decided to accept the invitation to Plymouth albeit somewhat coldly given, the majority decided to desert the post where they had suffered so much, and to join some other of Weston's men at Monhegan. The Pilgrims cheerfully lent their help, and before night the settlers had loaded all their portable property into the Swan, Standish had seen the gates of the stockade securely bolted and barred, and Hobomok with some red paint had traced upon each a hideous emblem, which he assured the white men would frighten away any predatory Indian.

Standish only laughed, but Hopkins nodded sagely.

"The rogue is right—I know the symbol, and have seen the terror it carries," said he; and true it is that whether from superstitious or from martial terrors, that stockade and the houses it enclosed, and the body of the savage left swinging from the tree in their midst, were never molested or apparently visited by the red men again. As the heavy laden Swan weltered out of the harbor, victualed with all that remained of Standish's seed corn except a scanty ration apiece to his own men, the pinnacle bore gallantly up for Plymouth, and in due course joyfully arrived there bringing home all her crew victorious and unscathed.

[Pg 369]

With them came Wituwamat's head to be set on a pike over the gateway of the Fort, for these our Fathers were not of our day or thought in such matters; and these Englishmen did but follow the usage of England, when so lately as 1747 the heads of the unhappy Pretender's more unhappy followers defiled the air of London's busiest street.

Standish for one never doubted of the justice of his course either in the slaying of the colony's avowed enemies, or the exposure of the ringleader's head; not even when a year or so later Bradford sorrowfully placed in his hands a letter just received from his revered Pastor Robinson at Leyden, who in commenting on the death of the Indians said,—

"Oh how happy a thing it had been had you converted some before you had killed any. Let me be bold to exhort you seriously to consider of the disposition of your captain, whom I love;—but there is cause to fear that by occasion, especially of provocation, there may be wanting in him that tenderness of the life of man made after God's image, that is meet."

Standish read the letter, and returning it without a word went out from his friend's presence, nor did he ever after allude to it, but a blow had been struck upon that loyal loving heart from which it never in this life recovered.

Thirty years later as the hero set his house in order, his failing hand wrote these words,—

"I give 3£. to Mercy Robinson whom I tenderly love for her grandfather's sake."

And that was his revenge.

[Pg 370]

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE WOLF AT THE DOOR.

Midsummer was upon the land, and the heat and drought were intense. Day after day the sun rose fierce and pitiless, drinking up at a draught what scanty dews had distilled in a night so brief and heated that it brought no refreshment to herbage or to man. Day after day wistful eyes searched the horizon for a cloud if no bigger than a man's hand, and still only the hard blue above and the palpitating horizon line stared blankly back. The crops languished in the field, some already dead, and the scanty store saved from the seed corn quite gone. Many a day a few clams, a lobster, or a piece of fish without bread or any vegetable, was a family's whole subsistence.

Early in July the ship *Plantation* had touched at Plymouth having on board two hogsheads of dried peas for sale, but seeing the bitter need of the colonists the shipmaster raised the price to £8 per hogshead, and although they had the money, the Fathers refused to submit to the extortion, and the peas sailed southward.

It is but forty miles from Plymouth to Boston Harbor, where about a hundred and fifty years later the women signed a declaration that they would forego the use of tea rather than submit to extortion, and their fathers and husbands and lovers flung a goodly cargo into the sea.

[Pg 371]

But a stout spirit although it keeps a man up puts no flesh on his bones, and soon it

became a piteous sight to stand in the Town Square and mark the faces and figures of those who passed by. Strong men staggered from weakness as they walked, women glided along like mournful white wraiths, even the little children in their quaint garb looked worn and emaciated. Standish, who relying upon his iron constitution and long training in a soldier's endurance, had regularly divided his rations with some woman or child, had grown so gaunt and worn that he might well have posed as The Skeleton in Armor, when he held his monthly muster, and Mistress Brewster, although some private provision was made for her, wasted away piteously.

"Where is the ship spoken by the master of the Plantation?" was the daily cry, and daily Hobomok climbed the great tulip-tree on the crest of Watson's Hill and swept the horizon line with eyes keener than any white man's.

"The Lord abaseth us for our sins," declared the elder. "Call a solemn assembly, proclaim a fast, let us entreat our God to have mercy, and our Lord to pardon. Who can tell but He yet may turn and have compassion, and spare the remnant of His people. Even as a servant looketh to the hand of his master even so let us wait upon our God, beseeching that He spare, that He pardon, that He restore us, who for our sins are appointed to die."

So spake the elder after the evening prayers of a day even more exhausting than its predecessors, and Myles Standish, leaning against the wall for very weakness, muttered,—

"Nay, what sin have these women and children wrought? What odds between a God like that and the Shietan of the salvages? Nay, Elder, thou hast not bettered the faith my mother lived and died by."

[Pg 372]

But the fast was appointed for the next day, which fell on a Thursday, and as the sun sprang up with even an added blaze of pitiless heat, he saw a mournful procession winding up the hill to the Fort, now so completed as to offer a large lower room for purposes of devotion or of refuge, while the ordnance mounted on the roof gained a wider range, and presented a more formidable aspect.

At the head walked Elder Brewster, but the shadowy form of Mary his wife reclined in the old chair set beside the window, whence she could watch the procession she was unable to join except in spirit. Then came the Governor and the Captain, Allerton and Winslow, Warren and Fuller, Hopkins and Howland, Alden and Browne, and the rest of the glorious band, the least of whom has his name written in the Libro d'Oro of the men posterity delighteth to honor. After the men came the women, meek and gentle, yet strong and courageous, and the children, poor little heroes and heroines, involuntary martyrs like the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem.

"Get thee to the roof, Hobomok," ordered the captain, "and say the prayers the elder hath so painfully taught thee; but mind me, lad, keep thine eyes upon the horizon and watch for the answer, whether it be a sail, or whether it be a rain cloud. Shalt play the part of Elijah's servant, and the elder is the very moral of the stern old prophet."

No morsel of food, no drop of drink, had passed the lips of that wan company since the pittance of the night before, and yet for nine long hours of that fearful day, the air so heated that it hardly fed the lungs, and the sun blazing so pitilessly upon the log structure that a faint odor of parching wood mingled with the torrid air within the Fort, yes, for nine long hours the elder prayed, or preached, or recited aloud the deep abasement of the penitential psalms, and the wail of the prophets, proclaiming, yet deprecating, the wrath of an offended God.

[Pg 373]

In the intervals others spoke; Doctor Fuller, himself a deacon in the church, and Bradford, whose petition less abject than that of the elder, called confidently for help, upon Him who twice fed a starving multitude, who promised that no petition in His name should go unanswered, who hungering in the wilderness knew the extremity of famine, who cried aloud, I Thirst, who has promised to be with His own in all time till Time shall be no more.

Standish, like the statue of a sentinel in bronze, stood at the door leaning upon his snaphance, listening intently to all, and breathing a deep-throated Amen to the governor's prayer.

Noon blazed overhead, and Priscilla, ah, poor white, attenuate Priscilla, crept down the hill to the elder's house, and gathering a handful of fire-wood warmed some broth made from a rabbit snared by Alden the day before, and silently brought a cup to the mother, who drank it with the tears brimming over her patient, faded eyes.

"I am not worthy to fast with the rest of you. I am an unprofitable servant," whispered she handing back the cup and covering her face.

"Oh, mother, mother, do not break my heart," cried the girl, whom the smell of food had turned sick and faint. "It is not so, dear saint. The Lord will not have thee fast because He knows thou art already perfected"—

[Pg 374]

"Hush, hush, my child; thy words are both wild and wicked. Get thee back to the House of Prayer, and beg our God to forgive thy sin of presumption. Fare thee well—nay, one moment,—doth,—doth the elder look sadly spent?—he is not over strong—and Jonathan? Didst mark him and the boys? Wrestling is but puny."

"They are all in such strength as can be looked for, mother dear, and will hold out as well as any." And Priscilla wanly smiled in the poor pinched face, adjusted the cushions and the foot-rest, and without so much as a drop of cold water for herself, wearily climbed the hill. The captain making room for her to pass looked with anxious sympathy into her face, but spake no word, and again the withering hours passed on, and the elder prayed in a husky and broken whisper, and his hearers muttered an Amen, hollow and mournful as the echo from an open tomb.

Three o'clock, and Hobomok scrambled down from the roof, and stood in the open doorway. His master saw and went out to him. In a moment he came again, and passing between the banks of rude benches stood before the elder, who, pausing suddenly, fixed upon him a gaze of piteous inquiry, while a little movement among the hundred starving souls watching and praying heralded his news.

"The answer has come, Elder," announced the soldier briefly. "A full rigged ship has just cleared Manomet headland, and a cloud black with rain is rolling up out of the Southwest."

[Pg 375]

"Let us pray!" said the elder softly; and Standish bowed his head with the rest as the holy man, his voice strong and fervent once more, poured out for himself and his people such gratitude as perhaps is only possible from those "appointed to die," and suddenly rescued by the hand of a merciful Father.

A few moments later, as the procession wound down the hill, somewhat less formally than it had gone up, the southern and western sky were black with clouds already veiling the sun, and within an hour a soft and tender rain began to fall, soaking quietly into the earth gaping all over with the wounds of drought, and reviving, as Bradford quaintly phrased it, both their drooping affections and their withered corn.

"The white man's God is better than the red man's," remarked Hobomok privately to Wanalancet, who was visiting Plymouth. "When our powahs pray for rain, and cut themselves, and offer sacrifice, it comes sometimes, but in noisy floods that tear up the earth, and beat down the maize, and do more harm than good. Wanalancet better turn praying Indian like Hobomok."

[Pg 376]

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE BRIDES' SHIP.

The rain proved as persistent as it was gentle, and under its influence the wind sighed itself asleep, leaving at sunset the ship espied by Hobomok becalmed outside Beach Point. Some of the Pilgrims would have rowed out to her, but Bradford knew from his own feelings how unfit they were for such heavy labor.

"A little patience should not be hard for men who have patiently waited so long," said he smiling. "Let us all break our fast with thanksgiving."

"One more cup of broth and a bit of the hare," said Priscilla gayly, as she set a little table beside her precious invalid. "And to-morrow I doubt not but I can offer you a posset of white flour and sugar and spice and all sorts of comfortable things. Whatever the ship may be 't is sure to have the making of a posset in her."

"Oh Priscilla, dear maid, if it might be,—if I dared think of my two girls"—

The trembling voice gave way, and for a moment Priscilla could not speak. Then she cheerily said,—

"If not themselves there is sure to be news of them, and God is very good. Pr'ythee take the broth."

"There then, good child. Now go to thine own supper. Mary is placing it upon the board."

Dropping a light kiss upon the face lovingly upturned, Priscilla passed into the outer room where upon the great table standing to-day in Pilgrim Hall rested a wooden bowl filled with boiled clams, and beside it a dish of coarse salt and a pewter flagon of water. Only this, no bread, no vegetable, no after course; but at the head of the table stood the elder, his worn face radiant with gratitude, as, uplifting his voice, he gave thanks to God for that he and his might "suck of the abundance of the seas and of the treasures hid in the sand."

[Pg 377]

After midnight a breeze sprung up, but the master of the Anne cautiously waited for the full tide to float him over the many flats then as now obstructing Plymouth Harbor, and it was not until another sunrise that the travel-worn and over-crowded bark folded her patched sails and dropped her anchor not far from the old anchorage ground of the Mayflower.

The governor no longer tried to restrain the enthusiasm of his townsmen; in fact, he himself helped to drag up the anchor of the pinnace and make her ready for a visit to the stranger. With him went Jonathan Brewster to see if perchance his sisters might be on board; and Doctor Fuller, and Robert Hicks, and Francis Cooke, and William Palmer, and Master Warren, albeit not fit even for so small an exertion, for every

one of these men thought it possible that his wife might be aboard, nor was one of them disappointed, for the Anne, might well have dropped her anchor to the tune of "Sweethearts and Wives," so laden was she with those precious commodities.

"Come Captain!" called Bradford as the dory lay ready to transport the last three to the pinnace already under sail.

"No," somewhat morosely returned Standish. "I shall only be in the way of other men's rejoicings. There's naught for me aboard that or any other ship that floats. No, I say,—push off, Cooke!"

[Pg 378]

And the captain strode up the hill, and climbed the roof of the Fort to cover and pet his big guns and see that the dampness did them no mischief.

Below, Alden helped Priscilla to make ready all the food remaining in the village, for surely the new-comer had brought supplies, and the famine was at an end.

"If this ship might bring him a wife as perchance it hath to our good surgeon," said John after describing his master's mood.

"Ay, but I fear me he'll be hard to suit," replied Priscilla.

"Natheless, remember sweetheart, you promised me that so soon as the famine was over and our new house finished"—

"And the captain cheerful as his wont."

"Ay, well so soon as all these matters were settled fairly, you promised"—

"Oh sooth, good lad, stand not gaping there and minding me of last winter's snow and last summer's roses! Go and call the captain and the elder to their breakfast while I see to the dear mother."

But breakfast was hardly over when Mistress Winslow ran across the street to the elder's wife.

"Lo you now, dear mother," cried she excitedly. "There are three boats rowing toward the Rock, and in every one of them you may make out women's gear, and who knows but Patience and Fear are of the company. All the men have gone down to the Rock, and I am going."

Out she ran again, and Priscilla quickly moved to the mother's side, but great joys do not kill even though they startle, and presently the white white face was raised with a smile almost of heaven illuminating it, and the dame softly said,—

[Pg 379]

"Yes, they have come. I knew it in the night. They have come, but Priscilla thou 'rt none the less my dear and duteous daughter. Now get you to the Rock with the rest. I shall be well alone."

"Now is Will Bradford well content; now is comedy ready to tread upon the heels of tragedy, and funeral dirges to end in marriage chimes," muttered the captain as he plunged down the steep of Leyden Street, and stood with overcast face and compressed lips watching the boats sweeping merrily up to the landing.

In the foremost sat the governor, and close beside him two female figures their backs to the shore. On the next thwart Surgeon Fuller, his whimsical face for once honestly glad, leaned an elbow on his knee and peered up into the comely face of Bridget, his young wife, for Agnes Carpenter lay asleep beneath St. Peter's Church in old Leyden town. But her sister Juliana had come with her husband, George Morton, and their

five children, Patience already a winsome lass of fifteen, soon to marry John Faunce and become mother of the last ruling Elder of Plymouth Church.

Later on, two more of these fair Carpenter girls were to come over to the home of their sister Alice: Priscilla, who married William Wright, one of the joyous passengers of the Fortune; and Mary, of whom the Chronicles say that she died "a godly old maid" in her sister's home.

Pardon the interlude, but there is something very fascinating in the story of this family of five beautiful girls so eagerly sought in marriage by the best men of the colony, and of her who was the flower of all and yet died "a godly old maid."

The governor's boat was at the Rock, and willing hands on shore caught at the rope thrown from the bows, and dragged her up so that the passengers could step out dry shod. Standish drew back a little, and with folded arms stood watching the debarkation. Last of all came Bradford and the two ladies he had escorted.

[Pg 380]

"So that is Mistress Alice Carpenter Southworth, is it," muttered the soldier grasping a handful of his ruddy beard. "Well, it is a winsome dame and a gentle; I wonder not that Will hath"—

But the calm comment ended abruptly in an exclamation of incredulity and pleasure, for when Mistress Southworth stood safely upon the strand, Bradford turned and gave his hand to her companion, a girl of some four or five and twenty years old, with one of those rounded and supple figures which combine strength and delicacy, endurance and elasticity, and are very slow in yielding to the attacks of Time. A demure hood tied under the chin framed a round face, whose firm fair skin had defied the tarnish of the sea, and only gained a somewhat warmer glow in cheek and lip than its native tone. Little tendrils of sunny brown hair pushed their laughing way from beneath the edge of the hood and curled joyously to the fingers of the toying wind. Straight dark brows and long eyelashes of the same deep tint gave character to the face, and shaded a pair of eyes whose beauty has stamped itself upon every generation of this woman's descendants. Large, and peculiarly opened, these eyes were of a clear violet blue, but with pupils whose frequent dilatation gave such range of tint and expression, and such extraordinary brilliancy that many were found to insist that the eyes themselves were black, while others vowed that no such intensity of blue had ever been seen in human orbs before. But neither in the shape, nor the color, nor the brilliancy, nor the pathetic curve of the upper lid, did the wonderful beauty of these eyes abide; it was a fascination, a compelling power in their regard; the power of appeal or of assurance, of love or wrath, of promise or of trust, that dwelt in their depths, and leaped or stole thence bending to their service the will of all who gazed steadfastly upon them. Weapons more dangerous in a woman's hands than was Gideon the Sword, in the hands of the Captain of Plymouth.

[Pg 381]

As their owner lightly leaping from the gunwale of the boat alighted upon the Rock, these eyes sought and rested merrily upon Myles' wonder-stricken face, while a joyous smile illuminated the features and showed bright and pretty teeth.

"Barbara!" exclaimed the captain, leaping down from the hillock where he had so unsympathetically posted himself to observe the landing.

"Yes, Barbara," returned a blithe voice. "Come all this way to look after her cousin, who cared not to come so far as the ship to greet her."

"But how was I to know thou wert coming, lass? Ever and always at thine old trick of laying me in some blunder! Well, thou 'rt welcome, Bab, welcome as flowers in

May." And seizing the round face between his two hands Myles pressed a hearty salute upon either cheek.

"And Captain," broke in Bradford's well pleased voice, "let me bring you to the notice of Mistress Southworth, in whose matronly company your cousin has journeyed."

A fair and gentle English face, albeit not without a quiet determination in its lines, was turned upon the soldier as Alice Southworth held out her hand saying,—

[Pg 382]

"And greatly beholden am I to Mistress Standish for her companionship. I know not quite how we could have borne some of our discomfiture had not she cheered and upheld us as she did."

"Ay, 't is a way the wench hath of old," replied the captain gayly. "I mind me of a home across the seas where one declared that naught but Barbara's care kept her in life at all. But in good sooth, girl, why didst not warn me of thy coming?"

"I would fain take thee by surprise, cousin, and methinks I have."

"A total, an utter surprise."

"We had fared but ill here in the colony had yon sachem surprised thee as effectually, Myles," laughed the governor as the little party climbed The Street, a long procession of jocund men, women, and children streaming after them, the joy of reunion and the flood of loving greetings sweeping away the conventional barriers wherein the Separatists attempted to imprison Nature.

"Ah! There are the elder's girls!" said Bradford, as they halted before his gate and looked back upon the busy street.

"Yes, Fear and Patience, sweet maids both of them," replied Alice.

"And those five merry Warren girls have found their father," said Barbara. "But he looks not over strong."

"No," replied the governor sadly. "He hath not grudged both to spend and to be spent for the common weal, and glad am I that his wife hath come to restrain his zeal. But come in, come in, dear friends, and Mistress Eaton, who cares for me and my house until I can purvey me another housekeeper, will make you welcome."

[Pg 383]

"I would not say nay to some breakfast, nor I think would you, maid Barbara, eh?" laughed Alice, and the governor's face clouded.

"I fear me there is but sorry cheer to set before you, dear friends," said he. "Mistress Eaton warned me last night that a few clams were all she had, or could compass, in her larder."

"Something was told aboard of a famine in the place," said Barbara quietly, "and I fancied it could do no harm to put some provant left over of my stores into a bag and carry it ashore. If none wanted it I could leave it hid, and—but here it is—the bag, Myles?"

"What, this sack I have tugged up the hill? All this, provision?"

"Ay, for the cook gave me a good bit of boiled beef, and a hen to boot."

"Beef!" exclaimed the captain involuntarily, but in a tone of such amazed delight that Barbara's eyes dwelt upon him in pity and wonder.

"Myles! Thou dost not mean that thou hast been actually a-hungered!" said she. "Oh Alice, they are starving."

"Starving!" echoed Alice in the same tone of dismay. "Oh Will!"

"Nay, nay, nay!" protested the governor with a somewhat hollow laugh. "We have not feasted of late, perhaps, and the word beef hath a strange sound in our ears, since no meat save a little wild game hath been seen among us for a year or more, but still, thank God, we are well and hearty"—

[Pg 384]

"Well and hearty!" repeated Alice Southworth. "Look at him, Barbara; look at his cheeks, his temples, look at that hand, all as one with the skeleton in the museum of Leyden. Oh Barbara, to think that we should find them starving after all!"

"Better starving than starved," replied Barbara calmly. "And if the governor will give me warrant, and this same Mistress Eaton will lend me her aid, I will soon set forth a table that shall make hungry men's hearts leap within them."

"There, Will," exclaimed Alice generously. "That is the sort of maid she is, never stopping to lament and wring her hands as silly I do, but ever looking for the way to mend the evil, and finding it, too."

Dame Eaton, whom we have known as Lois, maid to Mistress Carver, but now married to Francis Eaton and promoted on her marriage to be the governor's housekeeper, soon made her appearance, and the three women were not long in setting forth a breakfast whereunto the governor invited as many of his neighbors as the table could accommodate, and over which he offered a thanksgiving, glowing with loving gratitude to Him who giveth all.

[Pg 385]

CHAPTER XXXVI.

MARRIAGE BELLS.

"And now, Governor, we have to billet all these new-comers as best we may. Six-and-ninety names the captain of the Anne reports on his roster, and that fairly doubles the population of Plymouth. Where shall we bestow them all?"

"Why, Captain, you know that many of our men expecting their wives and children have built housen and now will occupy them; and for the rest, I am minded, if you will have me, to impose myself upon you and Alden, and leave mine own house to Mistress Southworth and your cousin. Then, as the elder's daughters now have come, Priscilla Molines, whom my dame knoweth and loveth well, and Mary Chilton and Elizabeth Tilley can all find room here also, and the rest we will dispose of among the other families. Mayhap for a while the young men may sleep at the Fort."

"Nay, Governor, we'll have no rantipoles at the Fort meddling and making among the ammunition, and playing tricks with the guns. Alden and you and I and Howland, and some other of the ancients, will swing our hammocks at the Fort if you will, and my house may be turned into a billet for the bachelors, until we can help them to knock up housen for themselves."

"So be it, comrade, and yet 't is hardly worth while to make great changes or fatigues until"—

"Until?"—

"Until some among us are wed, Myles."

"Why, truly yes. I had forgot, and yet I have heard the jingle of marriage bells in thy voice since ever yon ship rounded Manomet. How soon will it be, Will?"

"So soon as my dame agreeth," replied Bradford contentedly. "At all odds before the Anne returneth. We have magistrates enow among us, however, for Master Oldham and Master Hatherly both carry the king's patent as justices; and this Master Lyford who cometh in Oldham's train is preacher in the Church of England."

"Ha! Say you so, Will? One of the 'hireling priests' of such noisome odour in the nostrils of thy friends of the stricter sort at Leyden!"

"Nay, Captain, but you will remember that Pastor Robinson did receive members of England's Church to the Lord's Table, and did counsel us to live in brotherly love and communion with them."

"And so fell into disfavor with his old friends the Brownists," remarked Standish carelessly. "Well, 't is all one to me, who am no church member, and deny not due respect to the old faith of mine house. And you will be wed anon, Will?"

"Ay, and we will have your Barbara to stay with us until she finds another home, if you and she consent. Dame Alice loves her passing well."

"'T is a good wench and a comfortable one," replied Standish well pleased. "Had Rose lived, or had Priscilla said me yea, I had taken Barbara under mine own roof; but now I must wait until she makes her choice of the swains that soon will come a-wooing, and then she and her husband shall come to me."

"Ay," returned Bradford musingly, and checking upon his lips the smile that danced in his eyes. "Thy plans are ever wisely laid, Myles."

Turning into his own house Bradford found Alice with her wimple and scarf on just about to leave it.

"Whither away, mistress?" asked he gayly.

"Only to breathe a mouthful of fresh air, Master Governor. I have been so long a-shipboard that four walls seem a prison to me. Mayhap I'll take passage back again with good Master Pierce."

"Mayhap thou 'lt do naught of the sort. I have thee now, and I'll not let thee go, as I did sometime in Leyden."

"Thou didst anger me sore, Will, when thou 'dst not close with that good man's offer of half his business, though it was but a merchant's. And my father crying up Edward Southworth"—

"Nay, Alice, we'll not go pulling open old wounds to see if they be healed. I would not, I could not do violence to my English name and blood and become a Dutch trader though it were to gain thy hand, nor did I think thou wouldst in thine anger go so far—but there, sweetheart, we'll say no more on 't, now or ever. God has been exceeding gracious in bringing us once more together, and we will not be ungrateful. Thy boys shall find a father in me, Alice, and should Elder May give me again my little John"—

"Nay, the boy is well with his grandsire in Leyden, and my Constant and Thomas

must abide with their father's folk for a while. They would not part from me unless I left the boys for a year or two."

"And still thou wouldst come, Alice."

"Dost mind what words Ruth said to Naomi, Will?"

"Truly do I, Alice."

[Pg 388]

And as the two long-parted lovers looked deep into each other's eyes there needed no further speech to show that the long winter was over and the time of the singing of birds had come.

Two weeks from the arrival of the Anne all Plymouth put on festal gear and merry faces. Good cheer abounded in place of famine, for the new-comers were well stored with provision, and although this was not turned into the common stock, those who had promising crops—and since the Fast Day there had been no stint of rain, and the corn promised marvelously well—could always obtain dry provisions for the promise of a share in the green meat when it should be gathered.

And fitting it was that Plymouth should keep holiday, for not only was it the governor's marriage morn, but Priscilla Molines, whom all her townfolk loved, was to become John Alden's wife; and as the two friends could not be parted, Mary Chilton had promised upon the day of Priscilla's marriage to give her hand to John Winslow, one of the Fortune's pilgrims and brother of Edward and Gilbert. Finally John Howland so strongly pleaded his cause before the elder and his wife that they consented to give him Elizabeth Tilley to wife, young though she was, and to allow him to take her to the pretty cottage he had built upon The Street, next to Stephen Hopkins's substantial house on the corner of The Street and the King's Highway. John Alden also had built a cottage between the captain's house and the governor's; and Eaton with his wife Lois was to share a house with Peter Browne, who had manfully assumed the charge of Widow Martha Ford and her three children.

Christian Penn, a stalwart lass, passenger of the Anne, was to make one of the governor's family, and literally to be "help" to his wife in the duties of the household, while Mary Becket consented to fill the same place in Edward Winslow's home.

[Pg 389]

Barbara, cordially invited both by Alice Southworth and by Priscilla to become their perpetual guest, laughingly accepted both invitations, saying to Priscilla,—

"When I find too much pepper in thy soup, Pris, I'll e'en go cool my tongue with Dame Alice's comfitures; and when I fancy one new-wed pair were as content without me, I'll e'en go and inflict myself upon t' other."

"And the captain will keep house with only Hobomok," said Priscilla dubiously.

"Nay, Kit Conant is to 'bide with them, and do certain service, and I shall still be in and out," said Barbara briskly. "Like enough the most they eat will be of my brewing. We shall do well enow for the captain. But, Priscilla, what ailed thee not to wed him, since his comfort sits so nigh thy heart?"

"Why, 't is but Christian to pity them who are in need, yet none can wed with more than one man at a time, and from the first I knew that John Alden was the one for me. Wed him thyself, Barbara, and send Kit Conant about his business."

A sudden color surged all over Barbara's face, and the wonderful eyes shot out an angry spark, but after a moment she quietly said,—

"Myles and I have ever been more like brother and sister than cousins. His mother was all as one with mine own."

"Ay, and so it is. Yes, yes, I see," said Priscilla hurriedly, but when Barbara had left her she stood for many minutes drumming on the table, and thoughtfully gazing through the open door at the blue wonder of the sea.

[Pg 390]

And now the wedding day had come, a glorious golden summer day, and some of the older folk, whose habits of early life held rigidly to the soil since planted anew to a Separatist crop, remembered that it was Lammas Day. One of these was Elizabeth, Master Warren's new-come wife, and as she looked abroad in the early morning, she sighed a bit and said,—

"A year ago, Richard, I looked upon another guess sort of scene than this. The church bells were ringing and the people trooping in, and many was the goodwife who brought her loaf baked of the first-fruit wheat to offer it for the parson's table if not for the Communion"—

"Nay wife, nay, remember Lot's wife," chided the husband, already so far upon his way to that abode of Light where shall be no Separatism and no uncharity.

As all the world would fain be present at one or the other of the four marriages, it was concluded that they should be held in the open air, and the captain with much enthusiasm directed the spreading of an open tent, or, more properly, a canopy upon the greensward stretching across the King's Highway from Bradford's house to Hopkins's.

This completed, and the military band paraded ready to salute the governor upon his arrival, Standish stood aside, wiping his brow, and looking jovially about him at the tables already spread with the wedding feast, which was thriftily to take the place of the villagers' ordinary dinner.

"A cheerful and a refreshing season, Captain," said a staid voice at his elbow.

[Pg 391]

"Ay," replied Standish briefly and with something of the good-humor gone from his face, for he had no great love for Isaac Allerton, Assistant of the Governor, and one of the principal men of the colony, though he was.

"Methinks you and I might be principals instead of spectators at some such solemnity, and offend no law of God or man."

"I know no law against your being wed if it pleases you, Master Allerton," replied the soldier briefly.

"No—no, as you justly say, no law, Captain, and truth to tell I had it in my mind to speak to you this morning"—

"To me, to me!" exclaimed the captain, wheeling round and staring at the smooth face and narrow figure of the assistant. "Dost fancy that I am a pretty maid hid within a buff jerkin?"

"Ha! ha! Our good captain still must have his joke. Nay then, in sober earnest my dear brother, your cousin, Mistress Barbara Standish, doth much commend herself to my mind as a discreet and godly maiden, notable in household ways, and of a mild and biddable nature. I fain would have her to wife, Standish, if I may do so with your consent."

"Nay now, Master Allerton, your eyes are keener after a good chance for trucking

than ever a pair in the colony, and I'm not saying that the governor could find a better assistant in his weighty affairs of State, but you've no more eye for a gentlewoman's good qualities than I have for a peddler's. 'Mild and biddable,' forsooth! Those virtues were left out when they brewed the Standish blood, Master Allerton, and courage and honor and some other trifles thrown in to make amends. Why man, should you wed Barbara Standish and raise a hand upon her as I've seen you do upon your daughters, woman-grown, I'd not answer but she'd have your life's blood for it; and if you bade her stint the measure of the corn she sold to your neighbors, she'd quit your roof and you, before you could say whiskerando! No, no, Master Allerton, best not try to mate yourself with a Standish. No luck would come on 't I promise you."

[Pg 392]

"Methinks, Captain Standish," replied the councilor smoothly, although his pale face had taken a livid cast harmonizing with a green light in his narrow eyes,— "methinks you take over much upon yourself in this our land of liberty and God-given rights. Why should you decide so absolutely for Mistress Standish? Why may not she speak her own mind. She at least has no narrow and ignorant prejudice against me, unless indeed you have already instilled it into her mind."

"Nay now, Allerton, dost in sober sadness suppose that in meeting my kinswoman after a five years' parting I chose you as my theme of discourse? As for the rest, I lay no constraint upon Mistress Standish. Speak to her if you will and as soon as you will, but tell her all the story, tell her of your grown children, and of your years"—

"They are no more than yours," sharply interrupted the councilor.

"Did I say they were? Well, speak to her I say—ha, here come the brides. Now trumpets!"

And as the trumpets blew a joyous fanfare and the drums and fife burst forth in a blithe jargon intended for the good old tune of Haste to the Wedding, out from the door of the governor's house came Bradford leading Alice Southworth, fair and delicate and sweet, yet with a little air of state about her, as one who had already known the honors of matronhood and now was called to become the wife of a ruler. Next came Priscilla, dressed in a fair white gown trimmed with old Flemish lace at which Mistress Winslow looked askance, her rich color a little subdued, and a somewhat tremulous curve to her ripe lips, while the great brown eyes were filled with a dreamy haze not far from tears. She was wedding the man of her love, but she stood all alone beside him, this brave yet tender-hearted Priscilla of ours,—she stood alone, and she thought of her mother, the mother so loved, so mourned, so near to that faithful heart to-day.

[Pg 393]

Then came well-born, well-nurtured John Winslow and Mary Chilton, the fair English May whose sweet blossoms are ever upheld by such a sturdy and healthy stock, ay, and are protected by substantial thorns from meddling fingers even while its fragrance is graciously shed abroad for all the world to glory in.

And last of all came John Howland, that "lusty yonge man" who on the voyage had been washed overboard and carried fathoms deep beneath the sea, yet by his courage and endurance survived the ordeal, and lived to found one of the chiefest Plymouth families. By the hand he led Elizabeth Tilley, a sweet slip of a girl, with true and loving eyes ever and anon glancing proudly at the stalwart form of the only man she ever loved, and yet never thought to win.

Four noble and comely couple pacing through the grassy street and taking their places under the canopy where Elder Brewster, a magistrate, if not an ordained

minister, stood beside a little table whereon was laid the colony's first Record Book brought by the Anne, and now to be used for the first time, for hitherto the "scanty annals of the poor" settlement had been kept in Governor Bradford's note-book, now alas lost to posterity.

[Pg 394]

The simple ceremony was soon over, and as the Separatists denied themselves the privilege of a religious service lest some taint of Papistry might lurk therein, Elder Brewster closed his magisterial office with a prayer in which Isaac and Rebecca were not forgotten, and about which hung a curious flavor of the Church of England service so familiar to the elder's youth.

"Priscilla! Mine at last! My very own," whispered John Alden in his bride's ear as the group broke up and all the world pressed in to offer congratulations.

"There, there, John, if thou hast but just discovered that notable fact I'll leave thee to digest it while I go to see that the dinner is served as it should be."

[Pg 395]

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"AND TO BE WROTH WITH ONE WE LOVE."

"Barbara, hath Master Allerton asked thee to be his wife?" inquired Myles, as he and his cousin sat together upon the bench in front of his own house some few evenings after the weddings.

"He spoke to the governor, and he to me," replied Barbara, a little spark of mirth glinting in her blue eyes.

"And thou saidst?"—

"I said that I hardly knew Master Allerton by sight as yet, and was in no haste to wed."

"What sort of yea-nay answer was that, thou silly wench? Why didst not say No, round and full?"

"Because No, wrapped in gentle words, served my turn as well, cousin."

"Come now, I do remember that tone of old, soft as snow and unbendable as ice. So 't is the same Barbara I quarreled with so oft, is it? Ever quite sure that her own way is the best, and ever watchful lest any should lay a finger on her free will."

"Methinks, Myles, you give your kinswoman a somewhat unlovely temper of her own. How is it about Captain Standish in these days? Hath he grown meek and mild, and afraid to carry himself after his own mind?"

"Why so tart, Barbara? Because I chid thee for trifling with Allerton?"

[Pg 396]

"Nay Myles, I made not yon weary voyage for the sake of quarreling with thee. Well dost thou know, cousin, I would not trifle with any man, and I begged the governor to enforce out of his own mouth the no-say that I worded gently, for truly there is no reason for me to flout the gentleman. How could he honor me more than to ask me to wife?"

"Well, well, so long as thou hast said No and will stick to No, all is well; but I like not this man Allerton; he is too shrewd a trader for a simple gentleman to cope with. He sold me corn and gave scant measure, and I told him of it too. He likes me not better than I like him."

"Rest easy, Myles, I'll never make him thy cousin. I care not if I never wed."

"Nay, that's too far on t' other side the hedge. A comely and a winsome lass like thee is sure to wed, but what runs in my head, Barbara, is that there is none left here fit for thee. I would that Bradford had not been so constant to his old-time sweetheart. I would have given thee to him, for though his folk were but yeomen of the better sort there at home, here he is the Governor and playeth his part as well as any Howard or Percy of them all. Winslow cometh of good lineage and carrieth his coat-armor; but he and now his brother John are wed, and Gilbert will leave us anon, so that verily I see no man left with whom a Standish might fitly wed."

A peal of merry laughter broke in upon the captain's meditative pause, and his indignant and astonished regard only seemed to aggravate the matter, until at last Barbara breathlessly exclaimed,—

"Nay Myles, for sweet pity's sake look not so glum, nor devour me all at one mouthful. Dost remember how I used to tell thee to beware, for 'a little pot is soon hot,' and thine own wrath will choke thee some day?"

[Pg 397]

"Glad am I to amuse you so pleasantly Mistress Standish, but may I ask the exact provocation to mirth I have just now offered?"

"Oh Myles, I meant not to chafe thy temper so sorely, and I pray thee hold me excused for untimely laughter; but in good sooth it so tickled my fancy to hear thee airing thine old world quips and quiddities about coat-armor, and one with whom a Standish might fitly wed, and yeomen snatched from oblivion by the saving grace of a governor's title! And look upon these rocks and wild woods and swart savages and thine own rude labors—nay then, but I must laugh or burst!"

And giving way to her humor the girl trolled out peal after peal of delicious laughter, while her cousin folding his arms sat regarding her with an iron visage, which whenever she caught sight of it set her off again. At last, however, she wiped her eyes and penitently cried,—

"I did not think myself so rude, Myles. Pr'ythee forgive me, cousin. Nay, look not so ungently upon me! Here's my hand on 't I am sorry."

But the captain took not the offered hand nor unbent his angry brow. Rising from the bench he paced up and down for a moment, then stopping in front of Barbara calmly said,—

"Nay, I'm not angry. At first I was astonished that a gentlewoman could so forget herself; but I do remember that Thomas Standish, your father, married beneath his station, and so imported a strain into the blood of his noble house that will crop out now and again in his children. I should not therefore too much admire at such derelictions from courtesy and gentleness as I but now have seen."

[Pg 398]

As he slowly spoke his bitter words the lingering gleams of laughter and the softening lines of penitence faded from Barbara's face. Rising to her height, nearly equal with that of her cousin, she gazed full into his angry eyes with the blue splendor of her own all ablaze with indignation and contempt.

"You dare to make light of my mother, do you, Captain Standish! My dear and

dearly honored mother, who in her brave love endured the poverty and the labors that my father had no skill to save her from. My mother, who carried her noble husband upon her shoulders as it were, and would not even die till he was dead. Myles Standish, I take shame to myself that I am kin to you, and if ever I do wed, it shall be to lose my name and forget my lineage."

She passed him going down the hill, but with a long step he overtook her, saying almost timidly,—

"Nay, nay, thou 'rt over sharp with me, Barbara! I said, and I meant, no word against thy mother, of whom I ever heard report as one of the sweetest and faithfulest of wives"—

"There, that will do, sir. My mother needs no praise of yours, and, thanks be to God, hath gone where she may rest from the burden of her high marriage. Let me pass an 't please you, Master Captain."

"But Barbara, nay Barbara, stay but to hear a word"—

"There have been words enow and to spare. I go now to tell the governor that I am minded to take passage in the Anne once more. My mother's folk in Bedfordshire, yeomen all of them, Captain Standish, will make me gay and welcome, and with them and such as them will I live and die."

[Pg 399]

"And fill thy leisure with fashioning silk purses out of fabric thou 'lt find to hand," cried the captain, his temper flashing up again; but Barbara neither turned nor replied as she fled down the hill to hide the tears she could no longer restrain.

Howbeit she said no word to Bradford of the return passage, a fact which Standish easily discovered when early next morning he met the governor and stopped to say to him,—

"Well met, Will; I was on my road to seek thee, man."

"Ay, and for what, brother?"

"Why, Will, I'm moped with naught to do, and all these strange faces at every turn. I liked it better when we were to ourselves and it was only to fight the Neponsets now and again. I fain would find some work further agate than yon palisado."

"Why, then, thy wish and my desire fit together as cup and ball, for here is the Little James unladen and idle. She is to stay with us, thou knowest, for use in trading and fishing, but Bridges, her master, saith some of his men are grumbling already at prospect of such peaceful emprises. They fain would go buccaneering in the Spanish Seas, or discover some such road to hasty fortune, albeit bloody and violent. Master Bridges and I agreed that it was best to find work for these uneasy souls withouten too much delay, and I told him we had been thinking to send a party to look after the fishing-stage we built last year at Cape Ann. Gloucester, they say Roger Conant hath named the place already. Now what say you, Myles? Will take some men and join them to Bridges' buccaneers, and hold all in hand and start them on fishing?"

[Pg 400]

"'T will suit me woundy well, governor. Howbeit, 't is not the time for cod, is it?"

"No, but mackerel and bluefish are in season, and at all odds 't is well to be on hand to claim the staging, for Conant hath sent word by an Indian that some English ships were harrying our fishermen at Monhegan, and we had best look to our properties in those regions."

"Ay, ay, 't is as thou sayest, Will, like cup and ball, thy need and my desire. How soon can we sail?"

"Why, to-night, an' it pleaseth thee. Bridges is in haste to get off, and the sooner the Little James is afloat the more content he will find himself. And as to thy company. Here is a minute of the men I had thought on."

"H—m, h—m," muttered the captain glancing over the list handed him by Bradford. "Yes, these are sound good fellows all, and none of them burthened with wives. And by that same token, Will, thou and thy dame will care for my kinswoman, and bar Master Allerton from persecuting her with his most mawkish suit while I am gone?"

"Surely, Myles, we'll care for Mistress Barbara, who is to my wife as one of her own sisters."

"Yes, the Carpenters are gentlefolk, if not a county family like ours," said Standish simply. Bradford stared a little, but only replied,—

"Then I put the command in your hands, Captain, and you will order matters as suits your own convenience and pleasure. Master Bridges will welcome you right gladly."

[Pg 401]

And before the sun, just risen over Manomet, sank behind Captain's Hill, the Little James had rounded the Gurnet, and was standing on for Cape Ann, with Myles Standish leaning against her mainmast, and smoking the pipe Hobomok had bestowed upon him with the assurance that he who used it carried a charmed life so long as it remained unbroken. The captain's arms were folded and his eyes fixed upon the fort-crowned hill where lay his home, but it was not of fort or home that he mused as at the last he muttered,—

"And yet I glory in thy spirit, thou proud peat!"

Early the next morning Standish was somewhat roughly roused from his slumbers by Master Bridges, who, shaking his shoulder, cried,—

"Here, Captain, here's gear for thee. Rouse thee, Master!"

"What is 't, Bridges? What's to do, man? Are the savages upon us?"

"Nay, but pirates, or as good."

"Ha! That's well. Send all your small arms on deck, Master Bridges, pipe to quarters, train your falcon—I'll be on deck anon"—

"Nay, but you do somewhat mistake, Captain. I said indeed pirates, but that's not sure. There is a little ship anchored within a cable's length of the James, and her men are busy on shore with the fishing-stage which Lister saith is yours"—

"And so it is, every sliver of it."

"Mayhap, then, you'll come on deck and tell these merry men as much, for they do only jeer at me."

"They'll not jeer long when my snaphance joins in the debate," said Standish grimly as he followed the master up the companion way.

[Pg 402]

"Hail me yon craft, and ask for her commandant," ordered he, glancing rapidly over the scene. Bridges obeyed, and got reply that Master Hewes, captain of the Fisherman out of Southampton, was on shore with all his men except the ship-keeper, who, however, spared the jibes with which he had seasoned his reply to

Bridges' first informal hail.

"The wind is fair, the tide flood. Carry your craft further in-shore, Master Bridges, that we may parley with these pirates from the vantage ground of our own deck," ordered the captain, and was obeyed so fairly that the Little James presently lay hove-to within a biscuit-toss of the staging, where some fifteen or twenty men were diligently employed in curing a take of fish.

A short sharp colloquy ensued, Standish claiming the erection and its precincts as the property of Plymouth, and ordering the interlopers to at once release it, and to carry away their fish and their utensils, leaving room for the lawful owners' occupancy.

To this demand Hewes impudently replied that when he had done with the fish-flakes he cared not who used them, and that he would abandon the place when it suited his own convenience, and not before.

"Well and good; then we shall come and take it," shouted the captain in conclusion, and turning his attention in-board, he rapidly divided his men and Bridges' into two storming parties, while a watch left on board was to take charge of the light falcon mounted on deck, and at a signal from shore to begin the dance by firing upon the staging which Hewes was already barricading with a row of barrels, behind which he rapidly posted his men, musket in hand, and matches alight.

[Pg 403]

"Now by St. Lawrence!" cried Standish, watching these preparations. "But the fellow hath a pretty notion of a barricado! I could not have done so very much better in his place. 'T is fairer fortune than we could look for, to meet so ready a fellow, and you shall see some pretty sport anon, Master Bridges."

But at this moment a little group of men hastening from the fishing huts marking the present site of Gloucester, appeared upon the scene, and in their leader both Standish and Bridges recognized Roger Conant, a friend and sometime visitor of Plymouth, who immediately upon arrival of the Anne had gone to join some friends fishing at Monhegan, and now, with them, was establishing a sister station at Gloucester. Warned by the Indians that Hewes had seized the Plymouth fishing-stage, and seeing the Little James entering the bay, Conant hastened to collect his friends and present himself upon the scene of action to act as mediator, or ally of Plymouth, as circumstances might direct.

"We have come none too soon, men!" exclaimed Conant breathlessly as at a run he rounded the headland closing in the cove, and saw upon the barricaded staging Hewes and his men blowing at their matches, while Standish, his eyes aflame and an angry smile upon his lips, sprang ashore and hurried his men out of the boat.

"Now glad am I to see you, Master Conant," cried Bridges, already waiting upon the beach, and hastening toward him he said in a lower voice. "Our captain hath got on his fighting cap, and thrown discretion to the winds. 'T will be an ill day for Plymouth if her men are led on to kill Englishmen fishing with the king's license."

[Pg 404]

"Ay indeed will it. Bide a bit till I can parley with both thy captain and Hewes, who is not an ill fellow if one handleth him gingerly."

"Gingerly goeth not smoothly with peppery, and 't is but half the truth to call our captain that," said Bridges with a dry smile, as Conant passed him to reach Standish who was marshaling his men upon the sands.

Too long it were to detail the arguments of the man of peace, the delicate manipulation of the tempers of both parties, the concessions wrung from the one side

and the other, until after several hours' debate Standish moodily said,—

"Well Conant, sith you put it so, sith you make it out that by enforcing the colony's right I do but attack the colony's life, I yield, for I am sworn defender and champion of Plymouth and her prosperity, and never shall it be said that Myles Standish preferred his own quarrel to the well-being of those he had sworn to protect. To leave yon fellow unscathed for his insolence, sits like a blister on a raw wound, but go and make what terms you can with him. I suppose you require not that I abandon the colony's property altogether to him."

"Nay, nay, Captain, but I am thinking that my comrades and I, with some of the Little James' men and Master Hewes' company, should clap to and run up another staging in a few hours either for the new-comers or the Plymouth men"—

"For Plymouth if you would pleasure me. I would not my men should take the leavings of yon rabble at any price," interrupted Standish haughtily.

"So be it, and if Hewes with his men will do their best, and Master Bridges and you will send your crew to help, we also will labor in the common cause until each party shall have a staging of its own, and the bond of Christian charity need not be broken."

"That same bond will be all the safer if I may get away from here with as small delay as may be," retorted Standish.

"And that too shall be," replied Conant cheerfully. "For I fain would speak with the Master of the Anne before she sails, and I'll e'en take our own pinnace and set you across the bay, and be back again before my mates have well missed me."

"So wilt thou save me from some such explosion as befalls when a little pot is tightly closed and its contents overheated," replied Myles with a grim smile, and although Conant stared at the odd simile, he paused not to ask its solution, but so hastened the building of the stage and the other business of the day that when sunset fell, the two men, leaving the rest at an amicable supper eaten in common, spread the wide sails of their pinnace to a fitful western wind, and skimmed southward under the soothing and chastening light of the new-risen moon.

The western wind though often sighing in capricious languor never quite deserted those who trusted to it, and at a good hour next morning the pinnace dropped her anchor beside the Anne, and her dory carried the two mew ashore just as Plymouth woke to a new day.

[Pg 405]

[Pg 406]

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

BARBARA.

"Wilt give me some breakfast, Priscilla?" asked a well-known voice, as Mistress Alden bent to uncover her bake kettle, or Dutch oven, to see if the manchets of fine flour her husband liked so heartily were well browned.

"Lord-a-mercy!" cried she nearly dropping the cover and springing to her feet. "What, 't is truly thee, Captain, and not thy spook? Why 't was but yester e'en Dame Bradford told me thou wert away with Master Bridges on a fishing adventure, and

none might guess the day of thy return."

"She said so, did she?" replied the captain; "and who heard it beside thee, Priscilla?"

"Why—now let me think—yea and verily, Christian Penn was in the room and no doubt heard the sad tidings though she said naught."

"And none beside, Mistress Alden?"

"None—nay, now I think on 't, thy kinswoman Barbara was in presence. But there, my manchets will be burnt to crusts. Sit thee down, Captain, sit thee down."

"And what said Mistress Standish anent my going?" asked Myles seating himself upon a three-legged stool and doffing his slouched hat.

Priscilla looked at him with one of the keen glances which John declared counted the cockles of a man's heart. Then she smiled with an air of satisfaction and replied,—

[Pg 407]

"Barbara said naught, and so told me much."

"Told thee much? Come now, Priscilla, spare me thine old-time jibes and puzzlements and show thyself true womanly, and mine own honest friend. I'm sore bestead, Priscilla—I have a quarrel with Myles Standish, and 't is as big a fardel as my shoulders will bear. Tell me what Barbara's silence meant to thee?"

"It meant that it was her doings that thou hadst gone, and that thy going both angered and grieved her, Captain."

"Angered, mayhap."

"Yea, and grieved. She ate no supper, although I prayed her to taste a new confection of mine own invention."

"Priscilla, dost think Master Allerton would be—would make a"—

"Would be the right goodman for Barbara? No, and no again, I think naught of the kind."

"Ah! You women are so quick upon the trigger, Priscilla. I would my snaphance went to the aim as lightly and as surely as your or Barbara's thought."

"Come now, Captain, the manchets are done, and the fish is broiled, and the porridge made. Wait but till I call the goodman and open a pottle of my summer beer; 't is dear Dame Brewster's diet-drink, with a thought more flavor to it, and John says—ah, here thou art, thou big sluggard. We need no horn to call thee to thy meat."

Entering the cottage with a grin upon his lips and the promise of a kiss in his eyes, Alden started joyfully at sight of the Captain, and at Priscilla's impatient summons he bashfully took the head of the table and asked the blessing upon his family and their daily bread, which was then the undisputed duty of every head of a household. The captain ate well, as Priscilla slyly noted; and as she rose from the table and began rapidly to carry the few pewter and wooden dishes to the scullery John had added to the two rooms and loft comprising the cottage, she muttered,—

[Pg 408]

"What fools we women be! When they care for us the most, a savory dish will comfort them, and we must pule, and pine, and pale—ah!"

For the captain had followed and stood at the housewife's elbow with a confused and somewhat foolish smile upon his face.

"Wilt do me a favour, Priscilla?"

"Gladly, as thou knowest, sir."

"Nay, sir me no sirs, Priscilla! Take me for thine own familiar friend as already I am Alden's."

"'T is an ill-advised quotation, Captain, for the 'own familiar friend' of the Psalmist proved a false one. But ne'ertheless I'll wear the cap, and haply prove as true as another to my promise. What can I do for thee, Captain?"

"Why—as thou dost seem to surmise, Priscilla, there is a question between Barbara and me—truth to tell I gave her just matter of offense, and now I've thought better on 't and fain would tell her so, and yet I fear me if I ask outright she'll not let me come to speech of her."

"Ay, ay, good friend, I see," exclaimed Priscilla, holding up her slender shapely hand. "And here's the cat's-paw that's to pull thy chestnuts from the fire!"

"Nay Priscilla"—

[Pg 409]

"Yea Captain! Put not thy wit to further distress, good friend, for it needs not; I see all and more than all thou couldst tell me. Go thy way to the Fort, and look over thy dear guns and wait until thou seest—what thou wilt see."

And with a little push the young matron thrust her guest out of the open door of the scullery, and hastened to finish her own labors.

Almost an hour passed and the Captain of the Armies of New England had uncovered and examined and sighted and petted each gun in his armament more than once; had considered the range of the saker, the minion, the falcon, and the bases; and had stood gazing blankly at the whitened skull of Wituwamat above the gate of the Fort until the wrens who nested there began to fly restlessly in and out, fancying that the captain planned an invasion of their territory. He still stood in this posture when the rustle of a footfall among the dried herbage reached his quick ear, and turning he confronted Barbara, whose down-dropt eyes hid the gleam of amusement the sight of his melancholy attitude had kindled in their depths.

"Priscilla says that you have returned home from the fishing because you were but poorly, cousin, and she would have me come and ask if you cared to speak with the surgeon who is going afield presently."

"So chill, so frozen, Barbara? Is 't so a kinswoman should speak with one ill at ease both in mind and body?"

"I came but as a messenger, sir, and venture not to presume upon any claim of kindred to one who joins the blood of Percivale to that of Standish."

"Nay now, nay now, Barbara!—Here, come to the shaded side of the Fort, and sit you down where we two sat"—

[Pg 410]

"We two sat on the bench without your door the last parley that we had, good cousin."

"'Gentle tongues aye give the sharpest wounds,' and it is thou who provest the proverb true, Barbara."

"Nay, I'll sit me down and listen with all meekness to what thou hast to say, Captain Standish."

"Thanks for even so much courtesy, Barbara, for I have sought thee to say that I deserve none at thy hands. I, to whose protection and comforting thou hast come across the sea, have treated thee as no base-born churl hath warrant for treating the meanest of woman-kind. I, to pride myself upon gentle blood and knightly training, and then throw insult and taunt upon a woman's unshielded head! Nay, Barbara, had any man three days ago forecast my doing such a thing, I had hurled the lie in his teeth, and haply crammed it down with Gideon's hilt. Nay—the good sword may well be ashamed of his master; well may I look for him to shiver in my grasp when next I draw him"—

"Myles! Myles, I'll hear no more! Nay then, not a word, or I shall hold it proven that my wish is naught to thee, for all thy contrite sayings. I fear me Priscilla is right, and thou 'rt truly ill. This hot sun hath touched thy head with some such distemper as sped poor Master Carver. Sit thee down here beside me, and I'll fetch cool water from the spring to bathe thy temples."

"It needs not, cousin. My distemper is of the mind, the heart; nay, it is wounded honor, lass, and there's no ill of body can sting a man so shrewdly as that. Say that I have thy pardon, Barbara, if thou canst say it in truth, and 't will be better than any med'cine in Fuller's chest."

[Pg 411]

"Why, certes, Myles, thou hast my forgiveness and over and over for any rough word thou mayst have said, and in sober sadness I mind not what they were, for all my thought hath been of my unkindness to thee. Myles, I never told thee, but when thy mother lay a-dying, and thou far away, fighting the Spaniards in Holland, she bade me care for thee even as she would have done, and fill a sister's place—and more, and I laid my hand in hers and promised sacredly, and so she rested content."

"And why didst never tell me this before, cousin?"

"I know not—nay, but that's not all out true, and I'll tell thee no lies, Myles. When next thou camest to our poor home at Man, thou didst see Rose, and from the first I knew well enow that there'd be no need of sister-care for one who found so sweet a wife."

"Ay, she was sweet,—sweet as her pretty name. Dost know, Barbara, when these bushes burgeon in early summer with their soft and fragrant bloom it ever minds me of that sweet and fragile Rose that lies beneath."

But Barbara was silent.

"Ah well, ah well, 't is a brief chapter strangely at odds with the rude life wherein it found itself, and now 't is closed, and better so for her. She could not have bloomed among these dreary sands and savage woods; it was not fitting."

He paced a few steps back and forward, and Barbara rose, her clear eyes full of a woman's noble and patient strength.

"And so, Myles, we are at peace again, and I at least will make it my endeavor that there shall be no such breach of charity in the future."

[Pg 412]

"Nay, Barbara, stay a little, I pray thee. I have somewhat to say, for which in advance I must ask thy patience and indulgence. Thou 'lt not be angered at me so soon again, Barbara?"

"Nay, I'll not be angered, cousin." But Barbara's voice was very sad.

"'T is this, and I thought of it all last night as we flitted in the moonlight across the

bay, and what thou sayest of my mother's charge to thee fits my thought like hand and glove. Why should not we two wed, Barbara?"

He turned and looked at her, and stood amazed to see how the steadfast calm of her face broke up in a tempest of indignation, of grief, of outraged womanhood.

"Why, Barbara! Why, cousin! What is it, what have I said? What ails thee, dear? What works upon thee so cruelly?"

"That any man should dare fancy it of me—there, there, let be, let me pass, let me go!"

"Nay, then, I'll not let thee go. I'm but a rude bungler in these women-ways, and I've said or done somewhat that wounds thee sorely, and I'll not let thee go till 't is all outsaid and I have once more cleared myself of at least willful offense toward thee."

"Wilt keep me by force, sir?"

"Ay maid I will, for 't is only in bodily strength that I'm thy match, and so for the moment I will e'en use it. Sit thee here now and listen yet again, as I say, Why may not we two wed, cousin Barbara? Thou 'rt not mine own cousin, thou knowest, child; 't was thy father and mine were in that bond; and—now bear with me, Barbara—I've a shrewd suspicion that my mother bade thee be not a sister but a wife to me. Truth now, did she not, maid?"

[Pg 413]

"She could not guide either my love or thine, so why would she try?"

"Nay, that's no answer, lass, but we'll let the question go. There's not a woman alive, Barbara, so dear to me as thou; there's none I hold in greater reverence or trust; there's none with whom I would so gladly live out my days, and—though now I risk thy scorn,—there's none whose lineage I so respect"—

"What, the Henley lineage?" murmured Barbara, with face averted to hide a smile.

"Nay, thou 'rt all Standish, Barbara! Thou 'rt more Standish than I, for thou hast the eyes of those old portraits my poor father vainly tried to wrest from his cousin Alexander. Let me look at those eyes, Barbara!"

"And so because it suits thy convenience to make me thy wife, thou takst no heed of mine own fancies," said Barbara, not heeding this request. "And I pray thee unhand me, for I promise to patiently abide till thou hast said thy say."

"Now there again thou dost me wrong, lass, for as I told thee t' other day there's no bachelor here fit to wed with thee, there's none I'd give thee to, nor would I see thee wither away unwed."

"Gramercy cousin, but methinks that is a question I well might settle for myself."

"Why nay, sith there is no gentleman unwed among our company, save Allerton, whom I love as little as thou dost."

"I care not for any"—

"I know it, Barbara, I know it well. Thou 'rt that rare marvel, a woman sufficing unto herself, for as I believe, thou hast never fancied any man, though more than one hath fancied thee."

[Pg 414]

"'T is my cold heart," murmured Barbara with a little smile strangled in its birth.

"Nay," replied her cousin thoughtfully as he pulled at his moustache and gazed upon

the ground at his feet. "Nay, I call thee not so much heartless as fancy-free. Thou 'rt kind and gentle, ay, and loving as my dear mother knew. I'm well content with thy heart for such as it is, Barbara, if thou 'lt but give it me."

"Nay, Myles, I'm deadly sure I've none to give, and out of nothing nothing comes."

"Thou ne'er canst love me, Barbara?"

"No more than I love thee now, Myles."

"With calm cousin-love thou meanest?"

"I am ill skilled at logic, Myles. I cannot set out my feelings in class and order, as our chirurgeon doth his herbs and flowers."

"Well, Barbara, I'm grieved that thou lookest upon me so coldly, but I draw not back from my petition. I'd liefer have thy calm tenderness than another's hot love, for I can trust thee as I trust mine own honor, and I know full well that thou 'lt ever be better than thy word. So take me, Barbara, for thy husband, and fulfill the dear mother's last desire, and give me the hope of teaching thee in the days to come to love me even as I love thee."

But for all answer Barbara only turned and laid her hands in his, and slowly raised the wonder of her eyes until they looked straight into his; and the man whose front had never quailed in face of death or danger grew pallid beneath his bronze, and trembled like a leaf in the wind.

[Pg 415]

"What!—Barbara!—Dost really love me, maid? Nay, cheat me not—speak! Dost love me, sweetheart, already?"

But Barbara said never a word, nor did Myles ever know more of the secret of her life than in that one supreme moment he read in her steadfast eyes.

[Pg 416]

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A MILITARY WEDDING.

"And thou 'rt not amazed, Elsie, that our captain and his kinswoman will wed?" asked Governor Bradford of his wife in the privacy of the family bedroom.

"No more than at the sun's rising in the East," replied Alice with a demure little smile.

"Hm! Master Galileo saith the sun riseth not at all, and though the power of Rome caused him to gainsay it, he did tell me privily in Amsterdam that it was sooth, and the sun bided forever in the one place while this round world turned over daily."

"I ever thought the good man was a little crazed," replied Mistress Bradford serenely. "Like Paul, much learning had made him mad."

"Nay wife, 't was Festus charged Paul with madness, because the apostle knew more than himself. Haply 't is so with Master Galileo."

"It may be, William. These be not matters for women to meddle withal," replied Alice meekly.

"But anent our captain's wooing of his cousin, Elsie? How is 't thou 'rt not amazed like the rest of us?"

"Because I saw long since that Barbara would never wed another than her cousin, and thou knowest, Will, how like draws to like, even across the waste of ocean."

[Pg 417]

"Ay dame, I know it well and sweetly, and never shall I forget to give thanks to Him whose wisdom reacheth from end to end, sweetly ordering all things. But how chanced Mistress Barbara to confess her fondness to thee, sweetheart?"

"Nay now! Though men do be our masters in most things, how dull they still show themselves in others. As if a maid, or for that matter a widow, would ever 'confess her fondness' for any man till he had wooed her so to do, and but coyly then, if she be wise."

"Too coyly for him to credit her with overmuch tenderness," suggested the bridegroom.

"Facts speak louder than words, and if a woman will set herself upon far and perilous journeys, and compass sea and land to come to him who calleth her, methinks he need not doubt her friendship for him. Nay now, nay now, we talk of Barbara and the Captain, and I'll tell thee. Since I was left alone in London,—so lonely too in my wide house in Duke's Place,—I have taken dear and sweet counsel with Barbara, whom I first knew in the congregation of Pastor Jacob, and she hath been my guest for weeks and months at a time, so that if any two women know each other well, their names are Barbara and Alice."

"But yet she never told thee that she loved her cousin? Now that is passing strange."

"'T would to my mind have been far stranger had she so bewrayed herself."

"But still those gentle eyes of thine read the secret of her heart?"

"I did mistrust it for long, but when I had thy letter, Will, and settled my mind to come to thee, I told Barbara somewhat of the old story"—

[Pg 418]

"Of how thou wast minded to spite thy comely face by cutting off its nose?"

But Mistress Bradford had no smile for her husband's somewhat coarse jest, and went quietly on,—

"And I told her, too, that her kinsman, Myles, had lost the sweet wife of whom she had so often and so gently spoken; and at the last I told her I was minded to sell all that I had and go to our folk in New England, and I asked her would she go, to be ever and always my dear sister if no other home should offer, and though we said no word that day of Captain Standish, sure am I that he was in both our minds. And now, dear man, dost see through the millstone?"

"Ay, since woman's wit hath delved a hole, I can see through it as well as another." And the governor kissed his wife as merrily as another man, while she adjusting the demure matron's cap about her fair young face went out to see that the breakfast was fairly spread.

A fortnight later when the Anne had sailed, and the Little James had returned and gone again upon a luckless fishing trip, and the new-comers had settled into their appointed places, and the town was once more quiet, there came a fair September day when work was laid aside, and after breakfast the armies of the colony, at least a hundred souls in all,—if we count the trumpeters, the buglers, the fifers, and the

drummers,—assembled on the Training Green just across the brook, and after some evolutions marched in orderly array back again past the spring and up the hill to the governor's house, where they were joined by him and the elder. Then up and on to the captain's house, where a guard of honor presented itself at the door, and ushered forth the chief, carefully dressed in his uniform of state, while at his side merrily clanked Gideon, resplendent, though none but he and his master knew it, in such a furbishing and polishing as seldom had fallen to his lot before.

[Pg 419]

Saluting his comrades gravely and with somewhat more of dignity than his wont, the captain took his place, and the procession climbed the short ascent remaining to the door of the Fort, where entered the dignitaries and as many more as could find room. Here in the great room now used as a place of worship a group of matrons and maids awaited them, with Barbara in their midst, fair and stately in her white robes, the glory of her eyes outvying any jewels she could have worn.

The meagre civil service was spoken by the governor, but at the request of both bride and bridegroom the elder made a prayer to which the captain listened more reverently than his wont, and cried Amen more heartily.

Then they came forth these two Standishes made one, and the train band escorted them to their home, and fired a salute of honor, whose reverberating waves rolling across the waters broke at last upon the foot of Captain's Hill, sighing away into silence over the quiet plain where one day should be dug a warrior's grave, marked head and foot with a great three-cornered stone.

[Pg 420]

CHAPTER XL.

"PARTING IS SUCH SWEET SORROW."

And so, tenderly, reluctantly, lingeringly we leave them, these dear ones whose memory we cherish so lovingly, and in the sober reality of whose lives lies a charm no romance can ever reach.

Would you know more of them, for there are, as the Sultana promised morning by morning, stranger and better things to come than these that have been told, go read the annals of the Pilgrims, those precious fragments left to us by Bradford and by Winslow, and a letter written by De Rasières, Secretary of the Dutch Colony at Manhattan, who, visiting Plymouth upon a diplomatic errand in 1627, wrote to his superiors a letter preserved in the Royal Library of Holland wherein he draws this little picture of the town we have tried to reproduce, and mentions some of these dear friends whose lives we know so much better than he did.

"New Plymouth lies on the slope of a hill, stretching east toward the sea-coast with a broad street about a cannon shot long, leading down the hill with a cross street in the middle going southward to the rivulet, and northward to the land. The houses are constructed of hewn planks, with gardens also enclosed behind, and at the sides, with hewn planks, so that their houses and court-yards are arranged in very good order, with a stockade against a sudden attack; and at the ends of the streets there are three wooden gates. In the centre on the cross street stands the Governor's house, before which is a square erection upon which four patereros are mounted so as to flank along the streets.

[Pg 421]

"Upon the hill they have a large square house, with a flat roof made of thick sawn planks stayed with oak beams, upon the top of which they have six cannons which shoot iron balls of four or five pounds and command the surrounding country. The lower part they use for their church, where they preach on Sundays and the usual holidays. They assemble by beat of drum, each with his musket or firelock, in front of the Captain's door; they have their cloaks on, and place themselves in order three abreast, and are led by a sergeant without beat of drum. Behind comes the Governor in a long robe; beside him on the right hand comes the preacher with his cloak on, and on the left hand the Captain with his side-arms and cloak on, and with a small cane in his hand; and so they march in good order, and each sets his arms down near him. Thus they are constantly on their guard night and day."

But after all, glad as we are of this little loophole pierced through the mists of antiquity, the fashion of our friends' houses and court-yards, their cloaks and muskets and quaint Sunday procession are not as valuable to us as the story of their individual lives: the story of Priscilla and John Alden and their children; of Myles, military power of the colony, beyond his threescore years and ten; of Barbara, called his "dear wife" in the dignified Last Will, wherein he bequeaths "Ormistic, Bousconge, Wrightington, Maudesley" and the rest, to Alexander his "son and heir," sturdily proclaiming with as it were his last breath, that these fair domains were "surreptitiously detained" from him. And Lora Standish, fair sweet shadow upon the mirror of the past; and Mary Dingley, beloved of the grand old warrior; and Alice Bradford, of whom at the last Morton wrote,—

[Pg 422]

"A doe my loving friend,
Of those that's left I have not such another."

And Bradford himself, and Brewster, and Winslow, and Howland, each one of whom hath left behind him enough of achievement to fill a dozen of the degenerate lives of a butterfly of to-day; and the women they loved, and the young men and maidens who rose up around them: ah, how can we leave them, how can we say good-by! Shall we not rather cherish them and study them more than we ever yet have done, feeling in our hearts that those virtues, that courage, and that nobility of life may be ours as well as theirs, may illustrate the easy life of to-day, and make it less unworthy to be the fruit of the Tree of Liberty, planted in the blood and watered by the tears of our Fathers.

Footnotes:

- [1] This sword may still be seen in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth, Massachusetts.
- [2] Ipswich.
- [3] Jones River, Duxbury.
- [4] Hip-bone.

Corrections

[Page 58](#), Comma added after "Thou liest, knave"

[Page 102](#), Comma added after "Good-morrow"

[Page 144](#), Hyphen added to "commander in-chief"

[Page 149](#), Period added after "his unwonted amenity"

[Page 179](#), Double quote added after "thou mayest set down"

[Page 304](#), Period added after "Glad am I to see thee"

[Page 363](#), "Pecksnot" changed to "Pecksuot"

[Page 422](#), "freind" changed to "friend"

