

The town, and village, and country around turned out, as was natural, in a mass, to see the terrible sight. And yet the crowd was comparatively a small one, the colony then being so thinly settled. But this, to Master Raymond's eyes, gave a new horror to the scene. If there had been a crowd like that when London brought together its thousands at Tyburn, it would have seemed less appalling. But here were a few people—not[Pg 208] alienated from each other by ancestral differences in creed or politics, and who had never seen each other's faces before—but members of the same little band which had fled together from their old home, holding the same political views, the same religious faith; who had sat on the same benches at church, eaten at the same table of the Lord's supper, near neighbors on their farms, or in the town and village streets; now hunting each other down like wolves, and hanging each other up in cold blood! This it was that set apart the Salem persecution from all other persecutions of those old days against witches and heretics; and which has given it a painful pre-eminence in horror. It was neighbor hanging neighbor; and brother and sister persecuting to death with the foulest lies and juggling tricks their spiritual brothers and sisters. And the plea of "delusion" will not excuse it, except to those who have not investigated its studied cruelty and malice. Sheer, unadulterated wickedness had its full share in the persecution; and that wickedness can only be partly extenuated by the plea of possible insanity or of demoniacal possession.



Marched from jail for the last time

[Pg 209]The route to the gallows hill was a rough and difficult one; but the condemned were marched from the jail for the last time, one by one, and compelled to walk attended by a small guard and a rude and jeering company. There was Rebecca Nurse, infirm but venerable and lovely, the beloved mother of a large family; there was the Reverend George Burroughs, a small dark man, whose great physical strength was enough, as the Reverend Increase Mather, then President of Harvard College, said, to prove he was a witch; but who did not believe in infant baptism, and probably was not up to the orthodox standard of the day in other respects, though in conduct a very correct and exemplary man; there was old John Procter, with his two staffs, and long thin white hair; there was John Willard, a good, innocent young man, lied to death by Susanna Sheldon, aged eighteen; there was unhappy Martha Carrier four of whose children, one a girl of eight, had been frightened into testifying before the Special Court against her; saying that their mother had taken them to a witch meeting, and that the Devil had promised her that she should be queen of hell; there was gentle, patient and saintlike Elizabeth How, with "Father, forgive them!" on her mild lips; and two others of whom we now know little, save that they were most falsely and wickedly accused.[Pg 210]

There also were the circle of the "afflicted," gazing with hard dry eyes on the murder they had done and with jeers and scoffs on their thin and cruel lips.

There, too, were the reverend ministers, Master Parris of Salem village, and Master Noyes of Salem town, and Master Cotton Mather, who had come down from Boston in his black clothes, like a buzzard that scents death and blood a long way off, to lend his spiritual countenance to the terrible occasion.

Master Noyes, however, the most of the time, seemed rather quiet and subdued. He was thinking perhaps of Sarah Good's fierce prediction, when he urged her, as she came up to the gallows to confess, saying to her that, "she was a witch, and she knew it!" Outraged beyond all endurance at this last insult at such a moment, Sarah Good cried out: "It is a lie! I am no more a witch than you are. God will yet give you blood to drink for this day's cruel work!" Which prediction it is said in Salem, came true—Master Noyes dying of an internal hemorrhage bleeding profusely at the mouth.

It was not a scene that men of sound and kindly hearts would wish to witness; and yet Joseph Putnam and Ellis Raymond felt drawn to it by an[Pg 211] irresistible sense of duty. Hard, indeed, it was for Master Raymond; for the necessity of the case compelled him to suppress all show of sympathy with the sufferer, in order that he might more effectually carry out his plans for Dulcibel's escape from the similar

penalty that menaced her. And he, therefore, could not even ride around like Master Putnam, with a frowning face, uttering occasional emphatic expressions of his indignation and horror, that the crowd would probably not have endured from any one else.

There were some incidents that were especially noticeable. Samuel Wardwell had "confessed" in his fear, but subsequently taken back his false confession, and met his death. While he was speaking at the foot of the gallows declaring his innocence, the tobacco smoke from the pipe of the executioner, blew into his face and interrupted him.

Then one of the accusing girls laughed out, and said that "the Devil did hinder him," but Joseph Putnam cried, "If the Devil does hinder him, then it is good proof that he is not one of his." At which some few of the crowd applauded; while others said that Master Putnam himself was no better than he ought to be.[Pg 212]

The Reverend Master Burroughs, when upon the ladder, addressing the crowd, asserted earnestly his entire innocence. Such was the effect of his words that Master Raymond even hoped that an effort would be made to rescue him. But one of the "afflicted girls" cried out, "See! there stands the black man in the air at his side."

Then another said, "The black man is telling him what to say."

But Master Burroughs answered: "Then I will repeat the Lord's prayer. Would the Devil tell me to say that?"

But when he had ended, Master Cotton Mather, who was riding around on his horse, said to the people that "the Devil often transformed himself into an angel of light; and that Master Burroughs was not a rightly ordained minister;" and the executioner at a sign from the official, cut the matter short by turning off the condemned man.

Rebecca Nurse and the other women, with the exception of their last short prayers, said nothing—submitting quietly and composedly to their legal murder. And before the close of one short hour eight lifeless bodies hung dangling beneath the summer sun.

Joseph Putnam and Master Raymond, and a[Pg 213] few others upon whom the solemn words of the condemned had made an evident impression, turned away from the sad sight, and wiped their tearful eyes. But Master Parris and Master Noyes, and Master Cotton Mather seemed rather exultant than otherwise; though Master Noyes did say; "What a sad thing it is to see eight firebrands of hell hanging there!" But, as

Master Cotton Mather more consistently answered: "Why should godly ministers be sad to see the firebrands of hell in the burning."

Then, as the hours went on, the bodies were cut down, and stuck into short and shallow graves, dug out with difficulty between the rocks—in some instances, the ground not covering them entirely. There some remained without further attention; but, in the case of others, whose relatives were still true to them, there came loving hands by night, and bore the remains away to find a secret sepulcher, where none could molest them.

But the gallows remained on the Hill, where it could be seen from a great distance; causing a thrill of wonder in the bosom of the wandering savage, as of the wandering sailor, gazing at its skeleton outline against the sunset sky from far out at sea—waiting for ten more victims!

CHAPTER XXXI.

[Pg 214]

A New Plan of Escape.

About this time a new plan of escape was suggested to Master Raymond; coming to him in a note from Dulcibel.

Master Philip English, one of the wealthiest inhabitants of Salem town, and his wife Mary, had been arrested—the latter a short time previous to her husband. He was a merchant managing a large business, owning fourteen houses in the town, a wharf, and twenty-one vessels. He had one of the best dwellings in Salem—situated at its eastern end, and having a fine outlook over the adjacent seas. He had probably offended some one in his business transactions; or, supposing that he was safely entrenched in his wealth and high social position, he might have expressed some decided opinions, relative to Mistress Ann Putnam and the "afflicted children."

As for his wife, she was a lady of exalted character who had been an only child and had inherited a large property from her father. The deputy-marshal, Manning, came to arrest her in the night time, during her husband's absence. She had[Pg 215] retired to her bed; but he was admitted to her chamber, where he read the warrant for her apprehension. He allowed her till morning, however, placing guards around the house that she might not escape. Knowing that such an accusation generally meant conviction and death, "she arose calmly in the morning, attended the family prayers, spoke to a near relative of the best plan for the education of her children, kissed them

with great composure, amid their agony of cries and tears, and then told the officer that she was ready to die."

On her examination the usual scene ensued, and the usual falsehoods were told. Perhaps the "afflicted girls" were a little more bitter than they would have been, had she not laughed outright at a portion of their testimony. She was a very nice person in her habits, and it was testified against her, that being out one day in the streets of Salem walking around on visits to her friends during a whole morning, notwithstanding the streets were exceedingly sloppy and muddy, it could not be perceived that her shoes and white stockings were soiled in the least. As we have said, at this singular proof of her being a witch, the intelligent lady had laughed outright. And this of course brought[Pg 216] out the additional statement, that she had been carried along on the back of an invisible "familiar"—a spectral blue boar—the whole way. Of course this was sufficient, and she was committed for trial.

And now wealthy Master Philip English and his wife were both in prison; and he daily concocting plans by which he might find himself on the deck of the fastest sailer of all those twenty-one vessels of his.

Uncle Robie had thought this might be also a good opportunity for Dulcibel. And it struck Master Raymond the same way; while Master English had no objection, especially as it was mainly for Dulcibel that the jailer would open the prison doors. And this was better than the violence he had at first contemplated; for, as his vessels gradually began to accumulate in port, owing to the interruption to his business caused by his arrest, he had only to give the word, and a party of his sailors would have broken open the prison some dark night, and released him from captivity.

The "Albatross," Master English's fastest sailer at length came into port; and the arrangements were speedily made. The first north-westerly[Pg 217] wind, whether the night were clear or stormy—though of course with such a wind it would probably be clear—the attempt was to be made, immediately after midnight. Uncle Robie was to unlock the jail-doors, let them out, lock the doors again behind them, and have a plentiful supply of witch stories to account for the escape. And Master Raymond had some hopes also, that Abigail Williams would come to the jailer's support in anything that seemed to compromise him in the least; for he had promised to send her a beautiful gift from England, when he returned home again. And with such a sharpener to the vision, the precocious child would be able to see even more wonderful things than any she had already testified to.

The favorable wind came at length, and with it an exceedingly propitious night; there being a moon just large enough to enable them to see their way, with not enough light

to disclose anything sharply. Master Raymond had planned all along to take Dulcibel's horse also with them; and if he could ride the animal, it would obviate the necessity of taking another horse also, and being plagued what to do with it when they arrived at the prison. For he was very desirous that Master[Pg 218] Putnam should not be in the least involved in the matter.

Master Raymond therefore had been practising up in the woods for about a week, at what the minister had failed so deplorably in, the riding of the little black mare. At first he could absolutely do nothing with her; she would not be ridden by any male biped. But finally he adopted a suggestion of quick-witted Mistress Putnam. He put on a side saddle and a skirt, and rode the animal woman fashion—and all without the least difficulty. The little mare seeming to say by her behavior, "Ah, now, that is sensible. Why did you not do it before?"

So, late on the evening appointed for the attempted escape, after taking an affectionate leave of his host and hostess, and putting a few necessary articles of apparel into a portmanteau strapped behind the saddle, Master Raymond started for Salem town.

Leaving the village to the right, he made good time to the town, meeting no one at that late hour. He had covered the mare with a large horse-blanket, so that she should not easily be recognized by any one who might happen to meet them. There was a night watchman in Salem town; but a party[Pg 219] of sailors had undertaken to get him off the principal street at the appointed hour, by the offer of refreshments at one of their haunts; and by this time he was too full of Jamaica spirits to walk very steadily or see very clearly.

Arrived at the prison, Master Raymond found the Captain and mate of the "Albatross" impatiently awaiting him. It was not full time yet, but they concluded to give the signal, three hoots of an owl; which the mate gave with great force and precision. Still all seemed dark and quiet as before.

Then they waited, walking up and down to keep the blood in their veins in motion, as the nights were a little cool.

"It is full time now," said the Captain, "give the signal again, Brady."

Brady gave it—if anything with greater force and precision than before.

But not a sign from within.

Had the jailer's courage given away at the last moment? Or could he have betrayed them? They paced up and down for an hour longer. It was evident that, for some reason or other, the plan had miscarried.

"Well, there is no use awaiting here," exclaimed [Pg 220] the Captain of the "Albatross" with an oath; "I am going back to the ship."

Master Raymond acquiesced. There was no use in waiting longer. And so he redonned his petticoat—much to the amusement of the seamen and started back to Master Putnam's arriving there in the darkest hours of the night, just before the breaking of the day.

CHAPTER XXXII.

[Pg 221]

Why the Plan Failed.

The reason of the failure of the plan of escape may be gathered from a little conversation that took place between Squire Hathorne and Thomas Putnam the morning of the day fixed upon by Master Philip English.

Thomas Putnam had called to see the magistrate at the suggestion of that not very admirable but certainly very sharp-witted wife of his. I do not suppose that Thomas Putnam was at all a bad man, but it is a lamentable sight to see, as we so often do, a good kind honest-hearted man made a mere tool of by some keen-witted and unscrupulous woman; in whose goodness he believes, in a kind of small-minded and yet not altogether ignoble spirit of devotion, mainly because she is a woman. Being a woman, she cannot be, as he foolishly supposes, the shallow-hearted, mischievous being that she really is.

"Do you know, Squire, how Master English's sailors are talking around the wharves?"

"No! What are the rascals saying?"

"Well, Mistress Putnam has been told by a [Pg 222] friend of hers in the town, that he heard a half-drunken sailor, belonging to one of Master English's vessels, say that they meant to tear down the jail some night, hang the jailers, and carry off their Master and Mistress."

"Ah," said the Squire, "this must be looked into."

"Another of the sailors is reported to have said, that if the magistrates attempted to hang Mistress English they would hang Squire Hathorne, and Squire Gedney, if they could catch him, by the side of her."

"The impudent varlets!" exclaimed Squire Hathorne, his wine-red face growing redder. "Master English shall sweat for this. How many of his sailors are in port now?"

"Oh, I suppose there are fifty of them; and all reckless, unprincipled men. To my certain knowledge, there is not a member of church among them."

"The godless knaves!" cried the magistrate. "I should like to set the whole lot of them in the stocks, and then whip them out of the town at the cart's tail."

"Yes, that is what they deserve, but then we cannot forget that they are necessary to the inter[Pg 223]ests of the town—unless Salem is to give up all her shipping business—and these sailors are so clannish that if you strike one of them, you strike all. No, it seems to me, Squire, we had better take no public notice of their vapping; but simply adopt means to counteract any plans they may be laying."

"Well, what would you suggest, Master Putnam? Has Mistress Putnam any ideas upon the subject? I have always found her a very sensible woman."

"Yes, my wife is a very remarkable woman if I do say it," replied Master Putnam. "Her plan is to send Master English and his wife off at once to Boston—that will save us all further trouble with them and their sailors."

"A capital idea! It shall be carried out this very day," said the magistrate.

"And she also suggests that the young witch woman, Dulcibel Burton, should be sent with them. That friend of my brother Joseph, is still staying around here; and Mistress Putnam does not exactly comprehend his motives for so long a visit."

"Ah, indeed—what motive has he?" And Squire Hathorne rubbed his broad forehead.[Pg 224]

"There was some talk at one time of his keeping company with Mistress Burton."

"What, the witch! that is too bad. For he seems like a rather pleasant young gentleman; and I hear he is the heir of a large estate in the old country."

"Of course there may be nothing in it—but Mistress Putnam also heard from one of her female cronies the other day, that jailer Foster was at one time a mate on board Captain Burton's vessel."

"Ah!"

"And you know how very handsome that Mistress Dulcibel is; and, being besides a witch of great power, it seems to Mistress Putnam that it is exposing jailer Foster to very great temptation."

"Mistress Putnam is quite correct," said Squire Hathorne. "Mistress Dulcibel had better be transferred to Boston also. There the worshipful Master Haughton has the power and the will to see that all these imps of Satan are kept safely."

"As the seamen may be lying around and make a disturbance if the removal comes to their knowledge, Mistress Putnam suggested that it had better[Pg 225] not be done until evening. It would be a night ride; but then, as Mistress Putnam said, witches rather preferred to make their journeys in the night time—so that it would be a positive kindness to the prisoners."

"Very true! very well thought of!" replied Squire Hathorne, with a grim smile. "And no doubt they will be very thankful that we furnish them with horses instead of broomsticks. Though as for Mistress Dulcibel, I suppose she would prefer her familiar, the black mare, to any other animal."

"That was very marvelous. Abigail Williams says that she is certain that the mare, after jumping the gate, never came down to earth again, but flew straight on up into the thundercloud."

"And it thundered when the black beast entered the cloud, did it not?" said the magistrate in a sobered tone. He evidently saw nothing unreasonable in the story.

"Yes—it thundered—but not the common kind of thunder—it was enough to make your flesh creep. The minister says he is only too thankful that the Satanic beast did throw him off. He might have been carried off to hell with her."

"Yes, it was a very foolish thing to get on the[Pg 226] back of a witch's familiar," said the magistrate. "It was tempting Providence. And Master Parris has cause for thankfulness that only such a mild reproof as a slight wetting, was allowed to be inflicted upon him. These are perilous times, Master Putnam. Satan is truly going about like a roaring lion, seeking what he may devour. Against this chosen seed,—this little remnant of God's people left upon the whole earth—no wonder that he is tearing and raging."

"Ah me, my Christian friend, it is too true! And no wonder that he is so bold, and full of joyful subtlety. For is he not prevailing, in spite of all our efforts? You know there are at least four hundred members of what rightly calls itself the Church of England—for certainly it is not the church of Christ—in Boston alone! When the royal Governor made the town authorities give up the South Church—even our own Church, built with

our own money—to their so-called Rector to hold their idolatrous services in, we might have known that Satan was at our doors!"

"Oh, that such horrible things should happen in the godly town of Boston!" responded Squire Hathorne. "But when the King interfered between Justice and the Quakers, and forbade[Pg 227] the righteous discipline we were exercising upon them, of course a door was opened for all other latitudinarianism and false doctrine. Why, I am told that there are now quite a number of Quakers in Boston; and that they even had the assurance to apply to the magistrates the other day, for permission to erect a meeting-house!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed Master Putnam. "They ought to have been whipped out of their presence."

"Yes," continued the worthy Magistrate irefully; "but when the King ordered that the right of voting for our rulers should no longer be restricted to church-members; but that every man of fair estate and good moral character, as he phrases it, should be allowed to vote, even if he is not a member at all, he aimed a blow at the very Magistracy itself."

"Yes, that is worse than heresy! And how can a man possess a good moral character, without being a member of the true church?"

"Of course—that is self-evident. But it shows how the righteous seed is being overflooded with iniquity, even in its last chosen house; how our Canaan is being given up to the Philistines. And therefore it is, doubtless, that Satan, in the pride[Pg 228] of his success, is introducing his emissaries into the very house of the Lord itself; and promising great rewards to them who will bow down and sign their names in his red book, and worship him. Ah! we have fallen on evil times, Master Putnam."

And so the two worthy Puritans condoled with each other, until, Master Putnam, bethinking himself that he had some worldly business to attend to, Squire Hathorne proceeded to give the necessary directions for the removal of the three prisoners from Salem to Boston jail.

This was accomplished that very night, as Mistress Putnam had suggested; Deputy Marshall Herrick and a constable guarding the party. Dulcibel occupied a pillion behind jailer Foster; Master English and his wife rode together; while Master Herrick and the constable each had a horse to himself.

The original plan was for Dulcibel to ride behind Master Herrick; but upon jailer Foster representing that there might be some danger of a rescue, and offering to join the

party, it was arranged that he should have special charge of Mistress Dulcibel, whom he represented to Herrick as being in his opinion a most marvelous witch.[Pg 229]

Uncle Robie's true reason for going, however, was that the jailer in Boston was an old friend of his, and he wished to speak a secret word to him that might insure Dulcibel kinder treatment than was usually given in Boston jail to any alleged transgressor.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

[Pg 230]

Mistress Ann Putnam's Fair Warning.

In the course of the next day the removal of the three prisoners became known to everybody. Master Raymond wondered when he heard it, whether it was a check-mate to the plan of escape, with which the magistrates, in some way had become acquainted; or whether it was a mere chance coincidence. Finally he satisfied himself that it was the latter—though no doubt suggested by the rather loose threats of Master English's many sailors.

When jailer Foster returned, he found means to inform Master Raymond that it had been entirely impossible—so suddenly was the whole thing sprung upon him—to let anyone in their secret know of what was going on. He had not even taken the assistant jailer, his own son, into his confidence, because he did not wish to expose him to needless danger. His son was not required to afford any help, and therefore it would be unwise to incur any risk of punishment. Besides, while Uncle Robie had made up his mind to do some tall lying of his own for the sake of saving innocent[Pg 231] lives, he saw no reason why his son, should be placed under a similar necessity. Lying seemed to be absolutely needful in the case; but it was well to do as little of it as possible.

From his conversation with Master Herrick, Uncle Robie concluded that nothing had been divulged; and that the magistrates had acted only on the supposition that trouble of some kind might result from the sailors. And, looked at from that point of view, it was quite sufficient to account for the removal of two of the prisoners. As to why Dulcibel also should be sent to Boston, he could get no satisfactory explanation. It seemed in fact to be a matter of mere caprice, so far as uncle Robie could find out.

They had pushed on through the night to Boston—about a four hours' slow ride—and delivered the three prisoners safely to the keeper of Boston jail. Uncle Robie adding the assurance to Goodwife Buckley—who acted as Master Raymond's confidential

agent in the matter—that he had spoken a word to his old crony who believed no more in witches than he did, which would insure to her as kind treatment as possible. And Robie further said that he had been assured by the Boston jailer, that Mistress Phips, the wife of the Gov[Pg 232]ernor, had no sympathy whatever with the witchcraft prosecutions, but a great deal of sympathy for the victims of it.

The game was therefore played out at Salem, now that Dulcibel had been transferred to Boston; and Master Raymond began to make arrangements at once to leave the place. In some respects the change of scene was for the worse; for he had no hold upon the Boston jailer, and had no friend there like Joseph Putnam, prepared to go to any length on his behalf. But, on the other hand, in Boston they seemed outside of the circle of Mistress Ann Putnam's powerful and malign influence. This of itself was no small gain; and, thinking over the whole matter, Master Raymond came to the conclusion that perhaps the chances of escape would be even greater in Boston than in Salem.

So, in the course of the ensuing week, Master Raymond took an affectionate leave of his kind young host and hostess, and departed for Boston town, avowedly on his way back to his English home. This last was of course brought out prominently in all his leave-takings—he was, after a short stay in Boston, to embark for England. "What shall I send you from England?" was[Pg 233] among his last questions to the various members of the "afflicted circle." And one said laughingly one thing, and one another; the young man taking it gravely, and making a note in his little notebook of each request. If things should come to the worst, he was putting himself in a good position to influence the character of the testimony. A hundred pounds in this way would be money well employed.

Even to Mistress Ann Putnam he did not hesitate to put the same question, after a friendly leave-taking. Mistress Putnam rather liked the young Englishman; it was mainly against Dulcibel as the friend of her brother-in-law that she had warred; and if Master Raymond had not also been the warm friend and guest of Joseph Putnam, she might have relented in her persecution of Dulcibel for his sake. But her desire to pain and punish Master Joseph,—who had said so many things against her in the Putnam family—overpowered all such sentimental considerations. Besides, what Dulcibel had said of her when before the magistrates, had greatly incensed her.

"What shall you send me from England? And are you really going back there?" And she fixed her cold green eyes upon the young man's face.[Pg 234]

"Oh, yes, I am going back again, like the bad penny," replied Master Raymond smiling.

"How soon?"

"Oh, I cannot say exactly. Perhaps the Boston gentlemen may be so fascinating that they will detain me longer than I have planned."

"Is it because the Salem gentlewomen are so fascinating that you have remained here? We feel quite complimented in the village by the length of your visit."

"Yes, I have found the Salem gentlewomen among the most charming of their sex. But you have not told me what I shall send you from London when I return?"

"Oh, I leave that entirely with you, and to your own good taste. Perhaps by the time you get back to London, you will not wish to send me anything."

"I cannot imagine such a case. But I shall endeavor, as you leave it all to me, to find something pretty and appropriate; something suited to the most gifted person, among men and women, that I have found in the New World."

Mistress Putnam's face colored with evident pleasure—even she was not averse to a compliment of this kind; knowing, as she did, that she had a [Pg 235] wonderful intellectual capacity for planning and scheming. In fact if she had possessed as large a heart as brain, she would have been a very noble and even wonderful woman. Master Raymond thought he had told no falsehood in calling her the "most gifted"—he considered her so in certain directions.

And so they parted—the last words of Mistress Putnam being, the young man thought, very significant ones.

"I would not," she said in a light, but still impressive manner, "if I were you, stay a very long time in Boston. There is, I think, something dangerous to the health of strangers in the air of that town, of late. It would be a very great pity for you to catch one of our deadly fevers, and never be able to return to your home and friends. Take my advice now—it is honest and well meant—and do not linger long in the dangerous air of Boston."

Thanking her for her solicitude as to his health, Master Raymond shook her thin hand and departed. But all the ride back to Joseph Putnam's, he was thinking over those last words.

What was their real meaning? What could they mean but this? "You are going to Boston to try to save Dulcibel Burton. I do not want to hurt [Pg 236] you; but I may be compelled to do it. Leave Boston as soon as you can, and spare me the necessity that may arise of denouncing you also. Joseph Putnam, whom I hate, but whose person

and household I am for family reasons compelled to respect, when you are in Boston is no longer your protector. I can just as easily, and even far more easily, reach you than I could reach Captain Alden. Beware how you interfere with my plans. Even while I pity you, I shall not spare you!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

[Pg 237]

Master Raymond Goes Again to Boston.

Master Raymond had agreed to keep his friend Joseph Putnam informed by letter of his movements—for there had been a postal system established a number of years before through the Massachusetts colony—but of course he had to be very careful as to what he put upon paper; the Puritan official mind not being over-scrupulous as to the means it took of attaining its ends.

He had brought excellent letters to persons of the highest character in Boston, and had received invitations from many of them to make his home in their houses—for the Boston people of all classes, and especially the wealthy, obeyed the Scriptural injunction, and were "given to hospitality;" which I believe is true to the present day. But Master Raymond, considering the errand he was on, thought it wisest to take up his abode at an Inn—lest he might involve his entertainers in the peril attending his unlawful but righteous designs. So he took a cheery room at the Red Lion, in the northern part of the town, which was quite a reputable house, and convenient for many purposes[Pg 238] not the least being its proximity to the harbor, which made it a favorite resort for the better class of sea-captains.

Calling around upon the families to which he had presented letters on his first visit, immediately after his arrival in the colony, he speedily established very pleasant social relations with a good many very different circles. And he soon was able to sum up the condition of affairs in the town as follows:

First, there was by far the most numerous and the ruling sect, the Puritans. The previous Governor, shut out by King James, Sir Edmund Andros, had been an Episcopalian; but the present one sent out on the accession of William and Mary, Sir William Phips, was himself a Puritan, sitting under the weekly teachings of the Reverend Master Cotton Mather at the North church.

Then there was an Episcopal circle, composed of about four hundred people in all, meeting at King's Chapel, built about three years before, with the Reverend Master Robert Ratcliffe as Rector.

Besides these, there was a small number of Quakers, now dwelling in peace, so far as personal manifestations were concerned, being protected by the King's mandate. These had even grown[Pg 239] so bold of late, as to be seeking permission to erect a meeting-house; which almost moved the Puritan divines to prophesy famine, earthquakes and pestilence as the results of such an ungodly toleration of heresy.

Then there were a number of Baptists, who also now dwelt in peace, under the King's protection.

Adding to the foregoing the people without any religion to speak of, who principally belonged to or were connected with the seafaring class, and Master Raymond found that he had a pretty clear idea of the inhabitants of Boston.

In relation to the Witchcraft prosecutions, the young Englishman ascertained that the above classes seemed to favor the prosecutions just in proportion to the extent of their Puritan orthodoxy. The great majority of the Puritans believed devoutly in witches, and in the duty of obeying the command, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." And generally in proportion to a Puritan church-member's orthodoxy, was the extent of his belief in witchcraft, and the fierceness of his exterminating zeal.

The Episcopalians and the Baptists were either very lukewarm, or else in decided opposition to the prosecutions looking upon them as simply addi[Pg 240]tional proofs of Puritan narrowness, intolerance and bigotry.

The Quakers held to the latter opinion even more firmly than the liberal Episcopalians and Baptists: adding to it the belief that it was a judgment allowed to come upon the Puritans, to punish them for their cruelty to God's chosen messengers.

As for the seafaring class, they looked upon the whole affair as a piece of madness, which could only overtake people whose contracted notions were a result of perpetually living in one place, and that on the land. And since the arrest of a man so well thought of, and of their own class as Captain Alden, the vocabulary allowed by the law in Boston was entirely too limited to embrace adequately a seaman's emphatic sense of the iniquitous proceedings. As one of them forcibly expressed himself to Master Raymond:—"He would be *condemned*, if he wouldn't like to see the *condemned* town of Boston, and all its *condemned* preachers, buried like Port Royal, ten *condemned* fathoms deep, under the *condemned* soil upon which it was built!" He used another emphatic word of course, in the place of the

word *condemned*; but that doubtless was because at that time they had[Pg 241] not our "revised version" of the New Testament.

The sea-captain who expressed himself in this emphatic way to Master Raymond, was the captain in whose vessel he had come over from England, and who had made another voyage back and forth since that time. The young man was strolling around the wharves, gazing at the vessels when he had been accosted by the aforesaid captain. At that particular moment however, he had come to a stand, earnestly regarding, as he had several times before, a vessel that was lying anchored out in the stream.

After passing some additional words with the captain upon various matters, and especially upon the witches, a subject that every conversation at that time was apt to be very full of, he turned towards the water and said:—

"That seems to be a good craft out there."

It was a vessel of two masts, slender and raking, and with a long, low hull—something of the model which a good many years later, went by the name of the Baltimore clipper.

"Yes, she is a beauty!" replied the captain.

"She looks as if she might be a good sailer."

"Good! I reckon she is. The Storm King can[Pg 242] show her heels to any vessel that goes out of this port—or out of London either, for that matter."

"What is she engaged in?"

Here the captain gave a low whistle, and followed it up with a wink.

"Buccaneers occasionally, I suppose?"

"Oh, Captain Tolley is not so very *condemned* particular what he does—so that of course it is entirely lawful," and the captain winked again. "He owns his vessel, you see—carries her in his pocket—and has no *condemned* lot of land-lubber owners on shore who cannot get away if there is any trouble, from the *condemned* magistrates and constables."

"That is an advantage sometimes," said the young man. He was thinking of his own case probably.

"Of course it is. Law is a very good thing—in its place. But if I buy a bag of coffee in the East Indies or in South America, why should I have to pay a lot of money on it, before I

am allowed to sell it to the people that like coffee in some other country? *Condemn* it! There's no justice in it."

Master Raymond was in no mood just then to argue great moral questions. So he answered by asking:[Pg 243]—

"Captain Tolley does not make too many inquiries then when a good offer is made him?"

"Do not misunderstand me, young man," replied the captain gravely. "My friend, Captain Tolley, would be the last man to commit piracy, or anything of that kind. But just look at the case. Here Captain Tolley is, off at sea, attending to his proper business. Well, he comes into some *condemned* port, just to get a little water perhaps, and some fresh provisions; and hears that while he has been away, these *condemned* land-lubbers have been making some new rules and regulations, without even asking any of us seafaring men anything about it. Then, if we do not obey their foolish rules, they nab us when we come into port again, and fine us—perhaps put us in the bilboes. Now, as a fair man, do you call that justice?"

Master Raymond laughed good-humoredly. "I see it has its unfair side," said he. "By the way, I should like to look over that vessel of his. Could you give me a line of introduction to him?"

"Of course I can—nothing pleases Tolley more than to have people admire his vessel—even though a landsman's admiration, you know, really cannot seem of much account to a sailor. But I cannot write here; let us adjourn to the Lion."

CHAPTER XXXV.

[Pg 244]

Captain Tolley and the Storm King.

The next day furnished with a brief note of introduction, Master Raymond, with the aid of a skiff, put himself on the deck of the Storm King. Captain Tolley received him with due courtesy, wondering who the stranger was. The Captain was a well-built, athletic, though not very large man, with a face naturally dark in hue, and bronzed by exposure to the southern sun. As Master Raymond ascertained afterwards, he was the son of an English father and a Spanish mother; and he could speak English, French and Spanish with equal facility. While he considered himself an Englishman of birth, his nationality

sat very loosely upon him; and, if need be, he was just as willing to run up the French or Spanish colors on the Storm King, as the red cross of St. George.

After reading the note of introduction, Captain Tolley gave a keen look at his visitor. "Yes, the Storm King is a bird and a beauty," said he proudly. "Look at her! See what great wings she has! And what a hull, to cut the seas! She was built after my own plans. Give me plenty[Pg 245] of sea-room, and a fair start, and I will laugh at all the gun frigates of the royal navy."

"She looks to be all you say," said his visitor admiringly—but rather surprised that not an oath had yet fallen from the lips of the Captain. He had not learned that Captain Tolley, to use his own language, "never washed his ammunition in port or in mild weather." When aroused by a severe storm or other peril, the Captain was transformed into a different man. Then, in the war of the elements, or of man's angry passions, he also lightened and thundered, and swore big guns.

"Let us go down into the cabin," said the Captain. Reaching there, he filled a couple of glasses with wine and putting the decanter on the table, invited his visitor to be seated. Then, closing the door, he said with a smile, "nothing that is said inside this cabin ever is told anywhere else."

There was that in the speech, bearing and looks of Captain Tolley which inspired Master Raymond with great confidence in him. "I feel that I may trust you, Captain," he said earnestly.

"I have done business for a great many gentlemen, and no one ever found me untrue to him," replied Captain Tolley, proudly. "Some things[Pg 246] I will not do for anybody, or for any price; but that ends it. I never betray confidence."

"Do you believe in witches, Captain?"

"Indeed I do."

"Well I suppose that settles it," replied the young man in a disappointed tone, rising to his feet.

"I know a little witch down in Jamaica, that has been tormenting me almost to death for the last three years. But I tell you she is a beauty—as pretty as, as—the Storm King! She doesn't carry quite as many petticoats though," added the Captain laughing.

"Oh! That is the kind of witch you mean!" and Master Raymond sat down again.

"It is the only kind that I ever came across—and they are bad enough for me," responded the Captain drily.

"I know a little witch of that kind," said Master Raymond, humoring the Captain's fancy; "but she is now in Boston prison, and in danger of her life."

"Ah! I think I have heard something of her—very beautiful, is she not? I caught a glimpse of her when I went up to see Captain Alden, who the bigoted fools have got in limbo there. I could not[Pg 247] help laughing at Alden—the idea of calling him a witch. Alden is a religious man, you know!"

"But it may cost him his life!"

"That is what I went to see him about. I offered to come up with a party some night, break open the jail, and carry him off to New York in the Storm King."

"Well?"

"Oh, you know the better people are not in the jail, but in the jailer's house—having given their promise to Keeper Arnold that they will not try to escape, if thus kindly treated. And besides, if he runs off, they will confiscate his property; of which Alden foolishly has a good deal in houses and lands. So he thinks it the best policy to hold on to his anchor, and see if the storm will not blow itself out."

"And so you have no conscientious scruples against breaking the law, by carrying off any of these imprisoned persons?"

"Conscientious scruples and the Puritan laws be d——!" exclaimed the Captain; thinking perhaps that this was an occasion when he might with propriety break his rule as to swearing while in port.

"Your language expresses my sentiments ex[Pg 248]actly!" responded the young Englishman, who had never uttered an oath in his life. "Captain, I am betrothed to that young lady you saw when you went to see Captain Alden. If she is ever brought to trial, those Salem hell-hounds will swear away her life. I mean to rescue her—or die with her. I am able and willing to pay you any reasonable price for your aid and assistance, Will you help me?"

The Captain sprang to his feet. "Will I help you? The great God dash the Storm King to pieces on her next voyage if I fail you! See here," taking a letter out of a drawer, "it is a profitable offer just made me. But it is a mere matter of merchandise; and this is a matter of a woman's life! You shall pay me what you can afford to, and what you think right; but, money or no money, I and the Storm King, and her brave crew, who will follow wherever I lead, are at your service!"

As Captain Tolley uttered these words, in an impassioned, though low voice, and with a glowing face and sparkling blue eyes, Master Raymond thought he had never seen a handsomer man. He grasped the Captain's extended hand, and shook it warmly. "I shall never forget this noble[Pg 249] offer," he exclaimed. And he never did forget it; for from that moment the two were life-long friends.

"What is your plan?" said the Captain.

"A peaceable escape if possible. If not, what you propose to Captain Alden."

"I should like the last the best," said the Captain.

"Why, it would expose you to penalties—and keep your vessel hereafter out of Boston harbor."

"You see that I have an old grudge of my own," replied the Captain. "These Puritan rascals once arrested me for bringing some Quakers from Barbados—good, honest, innocent people, a little touched here, you know,"—and the Captain tapped his broad, brown brow with his finger. "They caught me on shore, fined me, and would have put me in the stocks; but my mate got word of it, we were lying out in the storm, trained two big guns to bear upon the town, and gave them just fifteen minutes to send me on board again. That was twenty years ago, and I have not been here since."

"They sent you on board, I suppose?"

"Oh, the Saints are not fools," replied the Captain, laughing. "As for being shut out of Boston[Pg 250] harbor hereafter, I do not fear that much. The reign of the Saints is nearly over. Do you not see that the Quakers are back, and the Baptists, and the prayer-book men, as they call the Episcopalians!—and they do not touch them, though they would whip the whole of them out of the Province, at the cart's tail, if they dared. But there are Kings in Israel again!" and the Captain laughed heartily. "And the Kings are always better shepherds to the flock than the Priests."

"You may have to lie here idle for a while; but I will bear the expense of it," said Master Raymond. "Have the proper papers drawn up, and I will sign them."

"No, there shall be no papers between you and me," rejoined the Captain stoutly. "I hate these lawyers' pledges. I never deal with a man, if I can help it, who needs a signed and sealed paper to keep him to his word. I know what you are, and you ought to be able to see by this time what I am. The Storm King shall lie here three months, if need be—and you shall pay me monthly my reasonable charges. But I will make out no bill, and you shall have no receipt, to cause any trouble to anybody, hereafter."

"That will suit me," replied Master Raymond,[Pg 251] "I shall be in the bar-room of the Red Lion every morning at ten. You must be there too. But we will only nod to each other, unless I have something to tell you. Then I will slip a note into your hand, making an appointment for an interview. I fear there may be spies upon my movements."

Captain Tolley assenting to these arrangements, Master Raymond and he again shook hands, and the latter was put ashore in one of the Storm King's boats. It was a little curious that as the young man reached the wharf, ascending a few wooden steps from the boat, whom should he see at a little distance, walking briskly into the town, but one who he thought was Master Thomas Putnam. He could not see the man's face, for his back was toward him; but he felt certain that it was the loving and obedient husband of Mistress Ann Putnam.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

[Pg 252]

Sir William Phips and Lady Mary.

When Mistress Dulcibel Burton, in company with Master Philip English and his wife, arrived at Boston jail, and were delivered into the care of Keeper Arnold, they received far better treatment than they had expected.

The prison itself, situated in a portion of Boston which is now considered the centre of fashion and elegance, was one of those cruel Bridewells, which were a befitting illustration of what some suppose to have been the superior manners and customs of the "good old times." It was built of stone, its walls being three feet thick. Its windows were barred with iron to prevent escape; but being without glazed sashes, the wind and rain and snow and cold of winter found ready access to the cells within. The doors were covered with the large heads of iron spikes—the cells being formed by partitions of heavy plank. And the passage ways of the prison were described by one who had been confined in this Boston Bridewell, as being "like the dark valley of the shadow of death."

But the jailers seem to have been more humane[Pg 253] than the builders of the prison; and those awaiting trial, especially, were frequently allowed rooms in the Keeper's house—probably always paying well, however, for the privilege.

Thus, as Captain Tolley had said, Captain Alden was confined in Keeper Arnold's house; and, when the party in which the readers of this story are especially interested, arrived late at night from Salem, they were taken to comparatively comfortable

apartments. The jailer knew that Master Philip English was a very wealthy man; and, as for Dulcibel, Uncle Robie did not forget to say to his old crony Arnold, among other favorable things, that she not only had warm friends, among the best people of Salem, but that in her own right, she possessed a very pretty little fortune, and was fully able to pay a good price for any favors extended to her.

The magistrates in Salem had refused to take bail for Captain Alden; but Master English was soon able to make an arrangement, by which he and his wife were allowed the freedom of the town in the daytime; it being understood that they should return regularly, and pass the night in the jail—or, speaking strictly, in the Keeper's house.

For things in Boston were different from what[Pg 254] they were at Salem. In Salem the Puritan spirit reigned supreme in magistrates and in ministers. But in Boston, there was, as we have said, a strong anti-Puritan influence. The officials sent over from England were generally Episcopalians—the officers of the English men-of-war frequently in port, also were generally Episcopalians. And though the present Governor, Sir William Phips, was a member of the North Church, the Reverend Cotton Mather taking the place of his father, the Reverend Increase Mather—and though the Governor was greatly under the influence of that dogmatic and superstitious divine—his wife, Lady Mary, was utterly opposed to the whole witchcraft delusion and persecution.

Sir William himself had quite a romantic career. Starting in life as one of the later offspring of a father and mother who had twenty-six children, and had come as poor emigrants to Maine, he was a simple and ignorant caretaker of sheep until eighteen years of age. Then he became a ship carpenter; and at the age of twenty-two went to Boston, working at his trade in the day time, and learning how to read and write at night. In Boston he had the good fortune to capture the heart of a fair widow by the name of Mistress Hull,[Pg 255] who was a daughter of Captain Robert Spencer. With her hand he received a fair estate; which was the beginning of a large fortune. For, it enabled him to set up a ship-yard of his own; and by ventures to recover lost treasure, sunk in shipwrecked Spanish galleons, under the patronage of the Duke of Albemarle, he took back to England at one time the large amount of £300,000 in gold, silver and precious stones, of which his share was £16,000—and in addition a gold cup, valued at £1,000 presented to his wife Mary. And such was the able conduct and the strict integrity he had shown in the face of many difficulties and temptations, that King James knighted him, making him Sir William.

Now, through his own deserts, and the influence of the Reverend Increase Mather, agent in England of the colony, he was Governor-in-Chief of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, and Captain General (for military purposes) of all New England. And he was living in that "fair brick house in Green lane," which, years before, he had promised his wife that he would some day build for her to live in.

Lady Mary was a very sweet, nice woman; but she had a will of her own, and never could be[Pg 256] persuaded that Sir William's rise in the world was not owing entirely to her having taken pity on him, and married below her station. And really there was considerable truth in this view of the matter, which she was not inclined to have him forget; and Sir William, being a manly and generous, though at times rather choleric gentleman, generally admitted the truth of her assertion that "she had made him," rather than have any controversy with her about it. One of the first acts of Sir William on arriving to fill his position as Governor, was to order chains put upon all the alleged witches in the prisons. In this order might be very plainly traced the hand of his pastor, the Reverend Cotton Mather. Lady Mary was outraged by such a command. One of her first visits had been to the jail, to see Captain Alden, whom she knew well. Keeper Arnold had shown her the order. "Put on the irons," said Lady Mary. The jailer did so. "Now that you have obeyed Sir William, take them off again." The jailer smiled, but hesitated. "Do as I command you, and I will be accountable to Sir William." Very gladly did Keeper Arnold obey—he had no faith in such accusations, brought against some of the best behaved people he ever had in his charge.[Pg 257]

"Now, do the same to all the other prisoners!" commanded the spirited lady.

"I may as well be hung for a cow as a calf," said the jailer laughing—and he went gravely with one pair of fetters all through the cells, complying literally with the new Governor's orders.

Of course this soon got to the ears of the Rev. Cotton Mather, who went in high indignation to the Governor. But the latter seemed to be very much amused, and could not be brought to manifest any great amount of indignation. "You know that Lady Mary has a will of her own," said he to his pastor. "If you choose to go and talk to her, I will take you to her boudoir; but I am not anxious to get into hot water for the sake of a few witches." The minister thought of it a moment; but then concluded wisely not to go. For, as Lady Mary said to her husband afterwards, "I wish that you had brought him to me. I would have told him just what I think of him, and his superstitious, hard-hearted doings. For me, I never mean to enter North Church more. I shall go hereafter to South Church; Masters Willard and Moody have some Christian charity left in them."

"I think you are too hard on Master Cot[Pg 258]ton Mather, my dear," replied Sir William mildly.

"Too hard, am I? What would you say if those girl imps at Salem should accuse me next! Your own loving wife,—to the world."

"Oh, my dear wife, that is too monstrous even to think of!"

"No more monstrous than their accusation of Mistress English of Salem, and her husband. You know them—what do you think of that?"

"Certainly, that is very singular and impossible; but Master Mather says—"

"Master Mather ought to be hung himself," said the indignant lady; "for he has helped to murder better people than he is, a great deal."

"My dear, I must remonstrate—"

"And there is Captain Alden—he is a witch, too, it seems!" And Lady Mary laughed scornfully. "Why not you too? You are no better a man than Captain Alden."

"Oh, the Captain shall not be hurt."

"It will not be through any mercy of his judges then. But, answer my question: what will you do, if they dare to accuse me? Answer me that!"

"You certainly are not serious, Lady Mary?"

"I am perfectly serious. I have heard already[Pg 259] a whisper from Salem that they are thinking of it. They even have wished me warned against the consequences of my high-handed proceedings. Now if they cry out against me, what will you do?"

We have said that Sir William was naturally choleric—though he always put a strong constraint upon himself when talking with his wife, whom he really loved; but now he started to his feet.

"If they dare to breathe a whisper against you, my wife, Lady Mary, I will blow the whole concern to perdition! Confound it, Madam, there are limits to everything!"

She went up to him and put her arm around his neck and kissed him. "I thought that before they touched me, they would have to chain the lion that lies at my door," she said proudly and affectionately; for, notwithstanding these little tiffs, she really was fond of her husband, and proud of his romantic career.

But—coming back to our sheep—Dulcibel not having the same amount of wealth and influence behind her as Master English had, was very well contented at being allowed

a room in Keeper Arnold's house; and was on the whole getting along very comfortably. Master Raymond had seen[Pg 260] her soon after his arrival, but it was in company with the jailer; the principal result being that he had secretly passed her a letter, and had assured himself that she was not in a suffering condition.

But things of late were looking brighter, for Master Raymond had made the acquaintance of Lady Mary through a friend to whom he had letters from England, and Lady Mary had begun to take an interest in Dulcibel, whom she had seen on one of her visits to Mistress English.

Through Lady Mary, in some way, Dulcibel hoped to escape from the prison; trusting that, if once at large, Master Raymond would be able to provide for her safety. But there was one great difficulty. She, with the others, had given her word to the Keeper not to escape, as the price of her present exemption from confinement in an exposed, unhealthy cell. How this promise was to be managed, neither of them had been able to think of. Keeper Arnold might be approached; but Dulcibel feared not—at least under present circumstances. If brought to trial and convicted then to save her life, Dulcibel thought he might be persuaded to aid her. As to breaking her word to the Keeper, that never entered the mind of the truthful maiden, or of her lover. Death even was[Pg 261] more endurable than the thought of dishonor—if they had thought of the matter at all. But as I have said, they never even thought of a such thing. And therefore how to manage the affair was a very perplexing question.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

[Pg 262]

The First Rattle of the Rattlesnake.

One day about this time Master Raymond was sitting in the porch of the Red Lion, thinking over a sight he had just seen;—a man had passed by wearing on the back of his drab coat a capital I two inches long, cut out of black cloth, and sewed upon it. On inquiry he found the man had married his deceased wife's sister; and both he and the woman had been first whipped, and then condemned to wear this letter for the rest of their lives, according to the law of the colony.^[3]

Master Raymond was puzzling over the matter not being able to make out that any real offence had been committed, when who should walk up to the porch but Master Joseph Putnam. After a hearty hand-shaking between the two, they retired to Master Raymond's apartments.

"Well, how are things getting along at Salem?"

"Oh, about as usual!"

"Any more accusations?"

"Plenty of them, people are beginning to find out that the best way to protect themselves is [Pg 263]to sham being 'afflicted,' and accuse somebody else."

"I saw that a good while ago."

"And when a girl or a woman is accused, her relatives and her friends gather around her, and implore her to confess, to save her life. For they have found that not one person who has been accused of being a witch, and has admitted the fact, has been convicted.

"And yet it would seem that a confession of witchcraft ought to be a better proof of it, than the mere assertion of possible enemies," responded Master Raymond.

"Of course—if there was any show of reason or fairness in the prosecutions, from first to last; but as it is all sheer malice and wickedness, on the part of the accusers, from the beginning to the end, it would be vain to expect any reasonableness or fairness from them."

"We must admit, however, that there is some delusion in it. It would be too uncharitable to believe otherwise," said Master Raymond thoughtfully.

"There may have been at the very first—on the part of the children," replied Master Putnam. "They might have supposed that Tituba and friend[Pg 264]less Sarah Good tormented them—but since then, there has not been more than one part of delusion to twenty parts of wickedness. Why, can any sane man suppose that she-wolf sister-in-law of mine does not know she is lying, when she brings such horrible charges against the best men and women in Salem?"

"No, I give up Mistress Ann, she is possessed by a lying devil," admitted Master Raymond.

"It is well she does not hear that speech," said Joseph Putnam.

"Why?"

"Because, up to this time, you seem to have managed to soften her heart a little."

"I have tried to. I have thought myself justified in playing a part—as King David once did you know."

"It is that which brings me here. I met her at the house of a friend whom I called to see on some business a day or two ago."

"Ah!"

"She said to me, in that soft purring voice of hers, 'Brother Joseph, I hear that your good friend Master Raymond is still in Boston.' I answered that I believed he was. 'When he took leave of me,' she continued, 'I advised him[Pg 265] not to stay long in that town—as it was often a bad climate for strangers. I am sorry he does not take wise counsel.' Then she passed on, and out of the house. Have you any idea what she meant?"

Master Raymond studied a moment over it in silence. Then he said:—"It is the first warning of the rattlesnake, I suppose. How many do they usually give before they spring?"

"Three, the saying goes. But I guess this rattlesnake cannot be trusted to give more than one."

"I was convinced I saw your brother Thomas as I came ashore from the Storm King the other day."

"Ah, that explains it then. She understands it all then. She understands it all now just as well as if you had told her."

"But why should she pursue so fiendishly an innocent girl like Dulcibel, who is not conscious of ever having offended her?"

"Why do tigers slay, and scorpions sting? Because it is their nature, I suppose," replied Master Putnam philosophically. "Because, Mistress Dulcibel openly ridiculed and denounced her and the whole witchcraft business. And you will note that there has not been a single instance of[Pg 266] this being done, that the circle of accusers have not seemed maddened to frenzy."

"Yes,—there has been one case—your own."

"That is true—because I am Thomas Putnam's brother. And, dupe and tool as he is of that she-wolf, and though there is no great amount of love lost between us—still I am his brother! And that protects me. Besides they know that it is as much any two men's lives are worth to attempt to arrest me."

"And then you think there is no special enmity against Dulcibel?"

"I have not said so. Jethro Sands hates her because she refused him; Leah Herrick wants her driven away, because she herself wants to marry Jethro, and fears Jethro might after all, succeed in getting Dulcibel; and Sister Ann hates her, because—"

"Well, because what?"

"Oh, it seems too egotistical to say it—because she knows she is one of my dear friends."

"She must dislike you very much then?"

"She does."

"Why?"

"Oh, there is no good reason. At the first, she was inclined to like me—but I always knew she[Pg 267] was a cold-blooded snake and she-wolf, and I would have nothing to do with her. Then when brother Thomas began to sink his manhood and become the mere dupe and tool of a scheming woman, I remonstrated with him. I think, friend Raymond, that I am as chivalrous as any man ought to be. I admire a woman in her true place as much as any man—and would fight and die for her. But for these men that forget their manhood, these Marc Antonies who yield up their sound reason and their manly strength to the wiles and tears and charms of selfish and ambitious Cleopatras, I have nothing but contempt. There are plenty of them around in all ages of the world, and they generally glory in their shame. Of course brother Thomas did not enjoy very much my mean opinion of his conduct—and as for sister Ann, she has never forgiven me, and never will."

"And so you think she hates Dulcibel, mainly because you love her?"

"That is about the shape of it," said Master Putnam drily. "That Dulcibel feels for me the affection of a sister, only intensifies my sister-in-law's aversion to her. But then, you see, that merely on the general principle of denouncing all who set themselves in opposition to the so-called[Pg 268] afflicted circle, Dulcibel would be accused of witchcraft."

"Well, for my part, I think the whole affair can only be accounted for as being a piece of what we men of the world, who do not belong to any church, call devilishness," said Master Raymond hotly.

"You see," responded Master Putnam, "that you men of the world have to come to the same conclusion that we church members do. You impute it to 'devilishness' and we

to being 'possessed by the devil.' It is about the same thing. And now give me an idea of your latest plans. Perhaps I can forward them in some way, either here or at Salem."

[3]See Drake's History of Boston

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

[Pg 269]

Conflicting Currents in Boston.

All this time the under-current of opposition to these criminal proceedings against the alleged witches, was growing stronger, at Boston. The Reverend Samuel Willard and Joshua Moody both ministers of undoubted orthodoxy from the Puritan stand-point, did not scruple to visit the accused in the keeping of jailer Arnold, and sympathize openly with them. Captain Alden and Master Philip English and his wife especially, were persons of too great wealth and reputation not to have many sympathizing friends.

On the other hand, the great majority of the Puritans, under the lead of the Reverend Cotton Mather, and the two Salem ministers, Parris and Noyes were determined that the prosecution should go on, until the witches, those children of the Evil One, were thoroughly cast out; even if half of their congregations should have to be hung by the other half.

At a recent trial in Salem, one of the "afflicted" had even gone so far as to cry out against the Rev. Master Willard. But the Court, it seemed, was[Pg 270] not quite ready for that; for the girl was sent out of court, being told that she must have mistaken the person. When this was reported to Master Willard, it by no means tended to lessen his growing belief that the prosecutions were inspired by evil spirits.

Of course in this condition of things, the position of the Governor, Sir William Phips, became a matter of the first importance. As he owed his office mainly to the influence of the Rev. Increase Mather, and sat under the weekly ministrations of his learned son, Cotton Mather, the witch prosecutors had a very great hold upon him. With a good natural intellect, Sir William had received a very scanty education; and was therefore much impressed by the prodigious attainments of such men as the two Mathers. To differ with them on a theological matter seemed to him rather presumptuous. If they did not know what was sound in theology, and right in practise; why was there any use in having ministers at all, or who could be expected to be certain of anything?

Then if Sir William turned to the law, he was met by an almost unanimous array of lawyers and judges who endorsed the witchcraft prosecution. Chief-Justice Stoughton, honest and learned[Pg 271] Judge Sewall—and nearly all the rest of the judiciary—were sure of the truth in this matter. Not one magistrate could be found in the whole province, to decide as a sensible English judge is reported by tradition to have done, in the case of an old woman who at last acknowledged in the feebleness of her confused intellect that she was a witch, and in the habit of riding about on a broomstick: "Well, as I know of no law that forbids old women riding about on broomsticks, if they fancy that mode of conveyance, you are discharged." But there was not one magistrate at that time, wise or learned enough to make such a sensible decision in the whole of New England.

Thus with the almost unanimous bar, and the great preponderance of the clergy, advising him to pursue a certain course, Sir William undoubtedly would have followed it, had he not been a man whose sympathies naturally were with sea-captains, military officers, and other men-of-the-world; and, moreover, if he had not a wife, herself the daughter of a sea-captain, who was an utter disbeliever in her accused friends being witches, and who had moreover a very strong will of her own.

Of course if the Governor should come to Lady Mary's opinion, the prosecution might as well be[Pg 272] abandoned—for, with a stroke of his pen, he could remit the sentences of all the convicted persons. Left to himself and Lady Mary, he doubtless would have done this; but he wished to continue in his office, and to be a successful Governor; and he knew that to array himself against the prosecution and punishment of the alleged witches was to displease the great majority of the people of the province; including, as I have shown, the most influential persons. In fact, it was simply to retire from his government in disgrace.

All this the Reverend Cotton Mather represented to Sir William, with much else of a less worldly, but no doubt still more effective character, based upon various passages of the old Testament rather than upon anything corresponding to them in the New.

And so the prosecutions and convictions went on; but the further executions waited upon the Governor's decision.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

[Pg 273]

The Rattlesnake Makes a Spring.

It was a Thursday afternoon, and the "afflicted circle" was having one of its informal meetings at the house of Mistress Ann Putnam. At these meetings the latest developments were talked over; and all the scandal of the neighborhood, and even of Boston and other towns, gathered and discussed. Thus in the examination of Captain Alden in addition to the material charges of witchcraft against him, which I have noted, were entirely irrelevant slanders of the grossest kind against his moral character which the "afflicted girls" must have gathered from very low and vulgar sources.

The only man present on this occasion was Jethro Sands; and the girls, especially Leah Herrick, could not but wonder who now was to be "cried out against," that Jethro was brought into their counsels.

It is a curious natural instinct which leads every faculty—even the basest—to crave more food in proportion to the extent in which it has been already gratified. In the first place, the "afflicted" girls no doubt had their little spites, revenges, and[Pg 274] jealousies to indulge, but afterwards they seemed to "cry out" against those of whom they hardly knew anything, either to oblige another of the party, or to punish for an expressed disbelief in their sincerity, or even out of the mere wantonness of power to do evil.

Mistress Ann Putnam opened the serious business of the afternoon, after an hour or so had been spent in gossip and tale-bearing, by an account of some recent troubles of hers.

"A few nights ago," said she, "I awakened in the middle of the night with choking and strangling. I knew at once that a new 'evil hand' was upon me; for the torment was different from any I had ever experienced. I thought the hand that grasped me around the throat would have killed me—and there was a heavy weight upon my breast, so that I could hardly breathe. I clutched at the thing that pressed upon my breast, and it felt hard and bony like a horse's hoof—and it was a horse. By the faint moonlight I saw it was the wild black 'familiar' that belongs to the snake-marked witch, Dulcibel Burton. But the hand that grasped my throat was the strong hand of a man. I caught a sight of his face. I knew it well. But I pity him so much that I hesitate to[Pg 275] reveal it. I feel as if I would almost rather suffer myself, than accuse so fine a young man as he seemed to be of such wicked conduct."

"But it appears to me that it is your duty to expose him, Mistress Putnam," said Jethro Sands. "I know the young man whose spectre you saw, for he and that black witch of a mare seem to be making their nightly rounds together. They 'afflicted' me the other night the same way. I flung them off; and I asked him what he meant by acting in that way? And he said he was a lover of the witch Dulcibel; who was one of the queens of Hell—I might know that by the snake-mark on her bosom. And she had told him that he must afflict all those who had testified against her; and she would lend him her 'familiar,' the black mare, to help him do it."

By this time, even the dullest of the girls of course saw very plainly who was being aimed at; but Mistress Putnam added, "upon learning that Master Jethro had also been afflicted by this person, I had very little doubt that I should find the guilty young man had been doing the same to all of you; for we have seen heretofore that when these witches attack one of us, they attack all, hating all for the same reason, that we expose and[Pg 276] denounce them. I may add that I have also heard that the young man in question is now in Boston doing all he can in aid of the snake-witch Dulcibel Burton; and representing all of us to Lady Mary Phips and other influential persons, as being untruthful and malicious accusers of innocent people." Here she turned to one who had always been her right-hand as it were, and said:—"I suppose you have been tormented in the same way, dear Abigail?"

Ann Putnam, her daughter, however, that precocious and unmanageable girl of twelve, here broke in: "I think my mother is entirely mistaken. I was treated just the same way about a week ago; but it was not the spectre of Master Raymond at all—it was the spectre of another man whom I never saw before. It was not at all like Master Raymond; and I, for one, will not join in crying out against him."

In those old times, parents were treated with a much greater show, at least, of respect and veneration than they are at present; and therefore Mistress Putnam was greatly shocked at her daughter's language; but her daughter was well known to all present as an exceptional child, being very forward and self-willed, and therefore her mother simply[Pg 277] said, "I had not expected such unkind behavior from you, Ann."

"Master Raymond has been very kind to all of us, you know—has given us pretty things, and has promised to send us all presents when he gets back from England; and I have heard you and father both say, that the Putnams always stand up for their friends."

This reference to the promised presents from England, evidently told all around the circle. They had nothing to gain by "crying out" against Master Raymond, they had something to gain by not doing it; besides, he was a very handsome young man, who

had tried to make himself agreeable to almost all of them as he had opportunity. And though Dulcibel's beauty went for nothing in their eyes, a young man's good looks and gallant bearing were something entirely different.

And so Abigail Williams, and Mary Walcot, and Mercy Lewis, and Leah Herrick, and Sarah Churchill, and Elizabeth Hubbard all had the same tale to tell with suitable variations, as young Ann Putnam had. They were certain that the face of the "spectre" was not the face of Master Raymond; but of some person they had never before seen. Mercy Lewis and Sarah Churchill,[Pg 278] in fact, were inclined to think it was the face of Satan himself; and they all wondered very much that Mistress Putnam could have mistaken such an old and ugly face, for that of the comely young Englishman.

As for Leah Herrick, she did not care in her secret heart if Master Raymond were in love with Dulcibel—so that he would only take her out of the country, where there was no danger of Jethro's seeing her any more. All her belief that Dulcibel was a witch was based upon jealousy, and now that it was utterly improbable that Jethro would ever turn his thoughts in that direction again, she had no hard feeling towards her; while, as she also had reason to expect a handsome present from England, she did not share in the least Jethro's bitterness against the young Englishman.

[Pg 279]But although Mistress Putnam was thus utterly foiled in her effort to enlist the "afflicted circle" in her support, she was not the woman to give up her settled purpose on that account. She knew well that she was a host in herself, so far as the magistrates were concerned. And, having Jethro Sands to join her, it made up the two witnesses that were absolutely necessary by the law of Massachusetts as of Moses. The "afflicted circle" might not aid her, but it was not likely that they would openly revolt, and take part against her in public; and so she went the very next morning in company with that obedient tool, her husband and Jethro Sands, to the office of Squire Hathorne, and got him to issue a warrant for the arrest of Master Ellis Raymond, on the usual charge of practicing witchcraft.

CHAPTER XL.

[Pg 280]

An Interview with Lady Mary.

Master Raymond, having obtained an introduction to the Governor's wife, Lady Mary, lost no time in endeavoring to "cultivate the amenities of life," so far as that very influential person was concerned. He had paid the most deferential court to her on

several occasions where he had been able to meet her socially; and had impressed the Governor's lady very favorably, as being an unusually handsome, well-bred and highly cultivated young man. A comely and high-spirited lady of forty, she was better pleased to be the recipient of the courteous and deferential attentions of a young Englishman of good connections like Master Raymond, than even to listen to the wise and weighty counsel of so learned a man as Master Cotton Mather.

Only in the last minutes of their last meeting however, when handing her ladyship to her carriage, did Master Raymond feel at liberty to ask her if he could have a short private interview with her the next morning. She looked a little surprised, and then said,[Pg 281] "Of course, Master Raymond."

"At what hour will it suit your ladyship?"

"At twelve, precisely, I have an engagement at one;" and the carriage drove off.

A minute or two before twelve, Master Raymond was at the Governor's house in Green lane; and was duly admitted, as one expected, and shown into her ladyship's boudoir.

"Now, come right to the point, Master Raymond; and tell me what I can do for you," said her ladyship smiling. "If I can help you, I will; if I cannot, or must not, I shall say so at once—and you must continue to be just as good a friend to me as ever."

"I promise that to your ladyship," replied the young man earnestly. He really liked and admired Lady Mary very much.

"Is it love, or money?—young men always want one of these."

"Your ladyship is as quick-witted in this as in everything else."

"Well, which is it?"

"Love."

"Ah—who?"

"Mistress Dulcibel Burton."

"What!—not the girl with the snake-mark?"[Pg 282]

Raymond bowed his head very low in answer.

Lady Mary laughed. "She is a witch then, it seems; for she has bewitched you."

"We were betrothed to each other only a few days before that absurd and lying charge was made against her."

"And her horse—her black mare—that upset the Reverend Master Parris into the duck pond; and then went up into the clouds; and, as Master Cotton Mather solemnly assured me, has never been seen or heard of since—what of it—where is it, really?"

"In an out-of-the-way place, up in Master Joseph Putnam's woods," replied the young man smiling.

"And you are certain of it?"

"As certain as riding the mare for about ten miles will warrant."

"Master Mather assured me that no man—except perhaps Satan or one of his imps—could ride her."

"Then I must be Satan or one of his imps, I suppose."

"How did you manage it?"

"I put a side-saddle on the beast; and a woman's skirt on myself." [Pg 283]

The lady laughed outright. "Oh, that is too good! It reminds me of what Sir William often says, 'Anything can be done, if you know how to do it!' I must tell it to him he will enjoy it so much. And it will be a good thing to plague Master Mather with."

"Please do not tell anyone just now," protested the young man earnestly. "It may bring my good friend, Joseph Putnam, into trouble. And it would only make them all angrier than they are with Dulcibel."

"Dulcibel—that is a strange name. It is Italian—is it not?"

"I judge so. It is a family name. I suppose there is Italian blood in the family. At least Mistress Dulcibel looks it."

"She does. She is very beautiful—of a kind of strange, fascinating beauty. I do not wonder she bewitched you. Was that serpent mark too from Italy?"

"I think it very likely."

"Perhaps she is descended from Cleopatra—and that is the mark left by the serpent on the famous queen's breast."

"I think it exceedingly probable," said Master Raymond. My readers will have observed before [Pg 284] this, that he was an exceedingly polite and politic young man.

"Well, and so you want me to get Mistress Dulcibel, this witch descendant of that famous old witch, Cleopatra, out of prison?"

"I hoped that, from the well-known kindness of heart of your ladyship, you would be able to do something for us."

"You see the difficulty is simply here. I know that all these charges of witchcraft against such good, nice people as Captain Alden, Master and Mistress English, your betrothed Dulcibel, and a hundred others, are mere bigotry and superstition at the best, and sheer spite and maliciousness at the worst—but what can I do? Sir William owes his position to the Reverend Increase Mather—and, besides, not being a greatly learned man himself, is more impressed than he ought to be by the learning of the ministers and the lawyers. I tell him that a learned fool is the greatest fool alive; but still he is much puzzled. If he does not conform to the wishes of the ministers and the judges, who are able to lead the great majority of the people in any direction they choose, he will lose his position as Governor. Now, while this is not so much in itself, it will be a bar to his future[Pg 285] advancement—for preferment does not often seek the men who fail, even when they fail from having superior wisdom and nobleness to the multitude."

It was evident that Sir William and Lady Mary had talked over this witchcraft matter, and its bearing upon his position, a good many times. And Master Raymond saw very clearly the difficulties of the case.

"And still, if the robe of the Governor can only continue to be worn by dyeing it with innocent blood, I think that a man of the natural greatness and nobility of Sir William, would not hesitate as to his decision."

"But a new Governor in his place might do worse."

"Yes, he might easily do that."

"When it comes to taking more lives by his order, then he will decide upon his course. So far he is temporizing," said the lady.

"And Dulcibel?"

"She is not suffering," was the reply. "Oh, if I only could say the same of the poor old women, and poor young women, now lying in those cold and loathsome cells—innocent of any crime whatever either against God or against man—I should not feel it all here so heavily," and Lady[Pg 286] Mary pressed her hand against her heart. "But we are not responsible for it! I have taken off every chain—and do all I dare; while Sir William shuts his eyes to my unlawful doings."

"Will you aid her to escape, should her life be in danger? You told me to speak out frankly and to the point."

The lady hesitated only for a moment. "I will do all I can—even to putting my own life in peril. When something *must* be done, come to me again. And now judge me and Sir William kindly; knowing that we are not despots, but compelled to rule somewhat in accordance with the desires of those whom we have been sent here to govern."

Lady Mary extended her hand; the young man took it, as he might have taken the hand of his sovereign Queen, and pressed it with his lips. Then he bowed himself out of the boudoir.

CHAPTER XLI.

[Pg 287]

Master Raymond is Arrested for Witchcraft.

As Master Raymond walked up the street toward the Red Lion, he felt in better spirits. He had secured the aid, if things should come to the worst of a very influential friend—and one who, woman-like, would be apt to go even farther than her word, as noble spirits in such cases are apt to do. Therefore he was comparatively light-hearted.

Suddenly he felt a strong grasp upon his shoulder; and turning, he saw a couple of men beside him. One he knew well as deputy-marshal Herrick, of Salem.

"You are wanted at Salem, Master Raymond," said Marshall Herrick gravely, producing a paper.

Raymond felt a sinking of heart as he glanced over it—it was the warrant for his arrest, issued by Squire Hathorne.

"At whose complaint?" he asked, controlling his emotions, and speaking quite calmly and pleasantly.[Pg 288]

"At the complaint of Mistress Ann Putnam and Master Jethro Sands," replied the officer.

"Of witchcraft? That is very curious. For as Dr. Griggs knows, just before I left Salem Farms, I was suffering from 'an evil hand' myself."

"Indeed!" said the officer.

"When am I to go?"

"Immediately. We have provided a horse for you."

"I should like to get my valise, and some clothes from the Red Lion."

The officer hesitated.

Master Raymond smiled pleasantly. "You must be hungry about this time of day, and they have some of the best wine at the Lion I ever tasted. You shall drink a bottle or two with me. You know that a man travels all the better for a good dinner and a bottle of good wine."

The officers hesitated no longer. "You are a sensible man, Master Raymond, whether you are a witch or not," said the deputy marshall.

"I think if the wine were better and plentier around Salem, there would be fewer witches," rejoined Master Raymond; which the other officer considered a very witty remark, judging by the way he laughed at it.[Pg 289]

The result of this strategic movement of Master Raymond's, was that he had a couple of very pleasant and good-humored officials to attend him all the way to Salem jail, where they arrived in the course of the evening. Proving that thus by the aid of a little metaphorical oil and sugar, even official machinery could be made to work a good deal smoother than it otherwise would. While the officers themselves expressed their utter disbelief to the people they met, of the truth of the charges that had been brought against Master Raymond; who in truth was himself "an afflicted person," and had been suffering some time from an "evil hand," as the wise Dr. Griggs had declared.

The Salem keeper, Uncle Robie, true to his accustomed plan of action, received Master Raymond very gruffly; but after he had got rid of the other professionals, he had a good long talk, and made his cell quite comfortable for him. He also took him in to visit Antipas, who was delighted to see him, and also to hear that Mistress Dulcibel, was quite comfortably lodged with Keeper Arnold.

Then the young man threw himself upon his bed, and slept soundly till morning. He did not need much study to decide upon his plans, as he[Pg 290] had contemplated such a possibility as that, ever since the arrest of Dulcibel, and had fully made up his mind in what manner he would meet it. If, however, he had known the results of the conference of the "afflicted circle" two days previous, he would have felt more encouraged as to the probable success of the defence he meditated. The constable that had aided the deputy-marshall in making the arrest, had agreed however to send word to Joseph Putnam of what had occurred; and comforted by the thought of having at least one staunch friend to stand by him, Master Raymond had slept soundly even on a prison pallet.

The next morning, as early as the rules of the jail would admit, Joseph Putnam came to see him. "I had intended to come and see you in Boston to-day," said Master Joseph, "but the she-wolf was too quick for me."

"Why, had you heard anything?"

"Yes, and I hardly understand it. Abigail Williams called to see Goodwife Buckley yesterday, and told her in confidence that it was probable you would be cried out against by Sister Ann and Jethro Sands; and to warn me of it."

"Abigail Williams!"

"Yes; and she also dropped a hint that none of[Pg 291] the other 'afflicted girls' had anything to do with it—for they looked upon you as a very nice young man, and a friend."

"Well, that is good news indeed," said Master Raymond brightening up.

"And I called upon Doctor Griggs on my way here, and he says he is confident there was an 'evil hand' upon you when you were suffering at my house; and he will be on hand at the examination to give his testimony, if it is needed, to that effect."

"But that terrible sister-in-law of yours! If she could only be kept away from the examination for half-an-hour; and give me time to impress the magistrates and the people a little."

"It might be done perhaps," said Joseph Putnam musing.

"Do not be too conscientious about the means, my dear friend," continued Master Raymond. "Do not stand so straight that you lean backward. Remember that this is war and a just war against false witnesses, the shedders of innocent blood, and wicked or deceived rulers. If I am imprisoned, what is to become of Dulcibel? Think of her—do not think of me."

Joseph Putnam was greatly agitated. "I will[Pg 292] do all I can for both of you. But my soul recoils from anything like deceit, as from wickedness itself. But I will think over it, and see if I cannot devise some way to keep Sister Ann away, for a time or altogether."

"Give me at least fifteen minutes to work on the Magistrates, and to enlist the sympathies of the people in my behalf. For me, so far as my conscience is concerned, I should not hesitate to shoot that Jezebel. For the murder of the twenty innocent men and women who have now been put to death, she is mainly responsible. And to kill her who surely deserves to die, might save the lives of fifty others."

Joseph Putnam shook his head. "I cannot see the matter in that light, Friend Raymond."

"Oh," replied Raymond, "of course I do not mean you should kill Mistress Ann. I only put it as giving my idea of how far *my* conscience would allow me to go in the matter. Draw her off in some way though—keep her out of the room for awhile—give me a little time to work in."

"I will do all I can; you may be sure of that," responded Master Putnam emphatically.

Here further confidential conversation was prevented by the entrance of the marshall.

CHAPTER XLII.

[Pg 293]

Master Raymond Astonishes the Magistrates.

The examination was to commence at three o'clock in the afternoon, and to be held in the Court House in the town, as being more convenient to Squire Hathorne than the meeting-house in the village.

As Master Thomas Putnam's house and farm were several miles beyond the village, it made quite a long ride for them to attend the examination. He had arranged with his wife, however, to start immediately after their usual twelve o'clock dinner, taking her behind him on a pillion, as was customary at that day—his daughter Ann being already in town, where she was paying a visit to a friend. He had received however a message about ten o'clock, requesting his immediate presence at Ipswich, on a matter of the most urgent importance; and though he was greatly puzzled by it, he concluded to go at once to Ipswich and go from there direct to Salem town, without coming home again, as it would be very much out of his road to do so.[Pg 294]

According to this new arrangement, Mistress Ann would take the other horse, and a lady's saddle, and ride to town by herself. They had still a third horse, but that was already in town with her daughter.

The Court House was but a short distance from the prison; and, as it was a good Puritan fashion to be punctual to the minute, at three o'clock precisely Squires Hathorne and Corwin were in their arm-chairs, and Master Raymond standing on the raised platform in front of them. As the latter looked carefully around the room, he saw that neither Thomas Putnam nor his mischievous wife, nor his own best friend Joseph Putnam, was present. Squire Hathorne also observed that Mistress Ann

Putnam was not present; but, as she was usually very punctual, he concluded that she would be there in a few minutes, and after some whispered words with his colleague, resolved to proceed with the examination.

Turning to the young Englishman, he said in his usual stern tones:—"Ellis Raymond, you are brought before authority, upon high suspicion of sundry acts of witchcraft. Now tell us the truth of this matter."

But no answer came from the accused. Then,[Pg 295] when all eyes were intently regarding him, he gave a wild shriek, and fell outstretched upon the platform.

"Let me to him!" said Dr. Griggs, elbowing his way through the crowd. "I said a month ago that an 'evil hand' was upon him; and now I am certain of it."

Master Raymond had not been an attentive observer of the recent trials for nothing; and he now gave the audience an exhibition which would compare favorably with the best, even with Mistress Ann Putnam's and Abigail William's. His face became shockingly contorted, and he writhed and twisted and turned convulsively. He tore imaginary spectral hands from around his neck. He pushed imaginary weights from off his breast. He cried, "Take them away! Pray, take them away!" until the whole company were very much affected; and even the magistrates were greatly astounded.

Dr. Griggs loosened his collar and unbuttoned his doublet, and had water brought to sprinkle his face keeping up a running fire of words at the same time, to the effect that he knew, and had said, as least a month before, that Master Raymond had an "evil hand" upon him.[Pg 296]

"Who is it hurts you?" at length asked credulous Squire Hathorne.

"See, there is the yellow bird!" cried the young man, staring into vacancy. "He is coming to peck my eyes out! Kill it! kill it!" dashing his hands out from his face violently. "Has no one a sword—pray do try to kill it!"

Here an impetuous young villager, standing by, drew his rapier, and stabbed violently in the direction of the supposed spectral bird.

"Oh! Oh! You almost killed it! See, there are some of its feathers!" And three yellow feathers were seen floating in the air; being small chicken feathers with which he had been provided that very morning by Uncle Robie, the jailer; and which the adroit Master Raymond rightly thought would have a prodigious effect.

And the result was fully equal to his expectations. From that moment, it was evident that he had all the beholders with him; and Squire Hathorne, disposed as he had been

to condemn him almost without a hearing, was completely staggered. He had the feathers from the "yellow bird" carefully placed upon his desk, with the purpose of transmitting them at once to Master Cotton Mather who, with these palpable proofs of the reality of the[Pg 297] spectral appearance would be able utterly to demolish all the skeptical unbelievers.

Finding that such an effect had been produced, Master Raymond allowed himself to regain his composure somewhat.

"Mistress Ann Putnam, who is one of the two complainants, unaccountably is not here," said Squire Hathorne. "Master Jethro Sands, what have you to say against this young man? You are the other complainant."

"Probably my mother has come to the conclusion that she was mistaken, as I told her; and therefore she has remained at home," said Ann Putnam, the daughter; who was delighted with the feather exhibition, and was secretly wondering how it was done.

"Well, what have you to say,—Jethro Sands?"

The audience looked around at Jethro with scornful faces, evidently considering him an imposter. What did he know about witches—compared to this rich young man from over the seas?

"Tell him you find you were mistaken also," whispered Leah Herrick.

"After seeing what we have seen, I withdraw my charges, Squire. I think that Mistress Put[Pg 298]nam and myself must have been visited by the spectre of somebody else, and not by Master Raymond."

"I hope that next time you will wait until you are quite certain," replied Squire Hathorne gruffly. "Do you know that Master Raymond can have his action against you for very heavy damages, for slander and defamation?"

"I certainly am very sorry, and humbly beg Master Raymond's pardon," said Jethro, very much alarmed. He had never thought that the affair might take this turn—as indeed it did in many cases, some six months afterward; and which was a very effective damper upon the spirits of the prosecutors.

Then the magistrates could do nothing less than discharge the prisoner; and Master Raymond stepped down from the platform a free man, to be surrounded by quite a circle of sympathizing friends. But his first thanks were due to Dr. Griggs for his professional services.

"Doctor, those things you did for me when in the convulsions, relieved me greatly," and he took out his purse. "Yes, Doctor, I insist upon it. Skill like yours is always worth its recompense. We must not muzzle the ox, you know,[Pg 299] that treads out the corn." And he put a gold piece into Dr. Grigg's palm—which was not often favored with anything but silver in Salem.

Dr. Griggs was glad that he had been able to render him a little service; and said that, if there had been the least necessity for it, he would have gone on the platform, and testified as to the complete absurdity of the charge that that excellent woman, Mistress Ann Putnam, evidently in mistake, had brought against him.

Then the "afflicted circle" had to be spoken to, who this afternoon did not appear to be in the least afflicted, but in the very best of spirits. They now felt more admiration for him than ever; and greeted him with great cordiality as he came to where they were standing. "When are you going back to England?" was a frequent question; and he assured them he now hoped to go before many weeks; and then, smiling, added that they would be certain to hear from him.

As the crowd thinned out a little, Abigail Williams called him aside; "and did you really see the yellow bird, Master Raymond?" said she archly.

"The yellow bird!" replied he dreamily. "Ah! you know that when we that are 'afflicted'[Pg 300] go into trances, we are not conscious of all that we see."

"For it seemed to me," continued the girl in a low tone, "that those feathers looked very much like chicken feathers." Then she laughed cunningly, and peered into his face.

"Indeed!" replied the young man gravely; "well, a chicken's bill, pecking at your eyes, is not a thing to be made light of. I knew of a girl, one of whose eyes was put entirely out by her pet canary."

And as he moved at once toward the rest of the group, the quick-witted and precocious child was compelled to follow.

The magistrates had left the Court House, with the majority of the people, including Jethro Sands, when who should come in, walking hastily, and his face flushed with hard riding, but Thomas Putnam.

"Am I too late? What was done?" he said quickly to Leah Herrick, who was standing near the door.

"Oh, the charge broke down, and Master Raymond was discharged."

"Ah! Where is my wife?"

"She did not come. It was said by your daughter, that she probably found she was mistaken in the person, and stayed for that reason."

"I do not believe it—she would have told me. What did Jethro Sands do?"

"Oh, he withdrew the charges, so far as he was concerned. There was a great deal more danger that Master Raymond would prove him to be a witch, than he Master Raymond."

"I see—it is a case of conspiracy!" exclaimed Master Putnam hotly. "Had you any hand in this, Master Raymond?" turning to the young Englishman, who had drawn near, on his way to the door.

"Ah, Master Putnam, glad to see you. You did get here early enough however to witness my triumphant vindication. Here is learned Dr. Griggs, and young Mistress Williams, and your own gifted daughter, and handsome Mistress Herrick, and half-a-dozen others of my old friends who were ready to testify in my behalf, if any testimony had been needed. Make my compliments to Mistress Putnam; and give her my best thanks for her noble course, in confessing by her absence that she was mistaken, and that she had accused the wrong person."

The cool assurance with which this was uttered, [Pg 302] quite confused Thomas Putnam. Could his wife have stayed away purposely? Perhaps so, for she was accustomed to rapid changes of her plans. But why then had he been lured off on a wild-goose chase all the way to Ipswich?

While he was standing there musing, his daughter came up. "I think, father, you and mother, next time, had better take my advice," said that incorrigible and unmanageable young lady; just about as opposite a character to the usual child of that period as could well be imagined. But these witchcraft trials, in which she figured so prominently had utterly demoralized her in this as in certain other respects.

CHAPTER XLIII.

[Pg 303]

Why Thomas Putnam Went to Ipswich.

What young Master Joseph Putnam undertook to do, he was apt to do pretty thoroughly. When he had once made up his mind to keep both his brother's wife and his brother himself, away from the examination, he had rapidly thought over various plans, and adopted two which he felt pretty certain would not fail. They all involved a

little deceit, or at least double dealing—and he hated both those things with a righteous hatred—but it was to prevent a great injustice, and perhaps to save life.

As he rode rapidly homeward, turning over various plans, in his mind, he had passed through the village, when he saw some one approaching on what seemed to be the skeleton of an old horse. He at once recognized the rider as an odd character, a carpenter, whom he at one time had occasion to employ in doing some work on a small property he owned in Ipswich. Reining up his horse, Master Putnam stopped to have a chat with the man—whose oddity mainly consisted in his taciturnity, which was broken only by brief and pithy sentences.[Pg 304]

"A fine day Ezekiel—how are things in Ipswich?"

"Grunt!"

"Ah! I am sorry to hear it. Why, what is the matter?"

"Broomsticks, chiefly."

"You mean the witches. That is a bad business. But how shall we mend it?"

The old carpenter was too shrewd to commit himself. He glanced at Master Putnam, and then turning his head aside, and giving a little laugh, said, "Burn all the broomsticks."

"A good idea," replied Master Putnam, also laughing. "Oh, by the way, Ezekiel, I wonder if you could do a little errand for me?" and the young man took out his purse and began opening it. "You are not in a great hurry, are you?"

"Hurry, is for fools!"

"You know where my brother Thomas lives? Up this road?" They were just where two roads joined, one leading by his own house, and the other past his brother's.

"I wish I knew the road to heaven as well."

"You know how to keep silent, and how to talk also, Ezekiel—especially when you are well paid for it?"[Pg 305]

The old man laughed. "A little bullet sometimes makes a big hole," he said.

"I want you to go to my brother Thomas, and say simply these words:—Ipswich Crown and Anchor. Very important indeed. At once. Wait till he comes."

"All right." And he held out his hand, into which Master Joseph put as much silver as the old man could make in a whole week's work.

"You are not to remember who sent you, or anything else than those words. Perhaps you have been drinking rather too much cider, you know. Do you understand?"

The old man's face assumed at once a very dull and vacant expression, and he said in that impressive manner which rather too many glasses is apt to give, "Ipswich. Crown and Anchor. Very important indeed. At once. Wait till he comes."

"That will do very well, Ezekiel. But not a word more, mind!"

"Tight as a rat-trap," replied the old man—and he turned his skeleton's head, and went up the road towards Thomas Putnam's.

Joseph felt certain that this would take his brother to Ipswich. Both of them were greatly interested in a lawsuit with certain of the Ipswich[Pg 306] people, regarding the northern boundary of the Putnam farms. Thomas was managing the matter for the family; and was continually on the look-out for fresh evidence to support the Putnam claim. In fact, bright Master Raymond had once said that, between the Salem witches and the Ips-witches, Master Thomas seemed to have no peace of his life. But this was before the witch persecutions had assumed such a tragical aspect.

When Ezekiel had found Thomas Putnam and delivered his brief message, without dismounting from his skeleton steed, Master Putnam asked at once who sent the message.

"Ipswich. Crown and Anchor. Very important indeed! At once. Wait till he comes," repeated the old man, with a face of the most impassive solemnity, and emphasizing every sentence with his long fore-finger.

And that was all Master Thomas could get out of him. That much came just as often as he wished it; but no more—not a word.

Mistress Ann Putnam had come out to the gate by that time. "He has been drinking too much cider," she said.

This gave a suggestion to Ezekiel.

"Yes, too much cider. Rum—steady me!"[Pg 307]

Mistress Putnam thought that it might produce an effect of that kind, and, going back into the house, soon reappeared with a rather stiff drink of West India rum; which the old man tossed off with no perceptible difficulty.

He smiled as he handed back the tin cup which had held it. "Yes—steady now!" he said.

"Who gave you the message?" again asked Master Putnam.

Ezekiel looked solemn and thoughtful. "Who gave 'im the message," replied Ezekiel slowly.

"Yes—who sent you to me?"

"Who sent yer—to—me?" again repeated Ezekiel. "Ipswich. Crown and Anchor. At once. Wait till he comes." Then the old man's countenance cleared up, as if everything now must be perfectly satisfactory.

"Oh there is no use in trying to get any more out of him—he is too much fuddled," said Mistress Putnam impatiently.

"More rum—steady me!" mumbled Ezekiel.

"No, not a drop more," said Thomas Putnam peremptorily. "You have had too much already."

The old man frowned—and turning the skeleton steed after considerable effort, he gave his parting[Pg 308] shot—"Crown and anchor—wait till he comes!" and rode off in a spasmodic trot down the lane.

"I shall have to go to Ipswich, and see about this, it may supply the missing link in our chain of evidence!"

"But how about this afternoon?" queried his wife.

"Oh, I can get to Salem by three o'clock, by fast riding. I will leave the roan horse for you."

"Saddle the grey mare, Jehosaphat."

And thus it was that his brother Joseph, looking out of his sitting-room window, about an hour after his arrival at home, saw Master Thomas Putnam, on his well-known grey mare, riding along the road past his house on the most direct route to Ipswich.

"He is out of the way, for one—if he waits an hour or two for any person to meet him on important business at the Crown and Anchor," thought the young man. "It is important indeed though that he should go, and keep himself out of mischief; and from helping to take any more innocent lives. And when he comes to his senses—in the next world, if not in this—he will thank me for deceiving him. Now let me see whether I can do as good a turn for that delectable wife of his."

CHAPTER XLIV.

[Pg 309]

How Master Joseph Circumvented Mistress Ann.

About an hour afterwards, Master Joseph saw one of his farm-hands coming over the fields from the direction of his brother's house, which was about two miles almost directly to the west of his own house. Going out to meet him, he said—

"Well, Simon Peter, I see that you got the rake."

"Yes, Master Joseph; but they wish me to return it as soon as we can."

"That is right. Finish your job in the garden this afternoon, and take it back early tomorrow morning. You can go to work now."

The man walked off toward the garden.

"Wait a moment!" his master cried. The man stopped. "Anything new at brother Thomas's? Are they all at home?"

"No, indeed! Master Thomas has gone off to Ipswich—and little Ann is at Salem town."

"I could not borrow a horse, then, of them, you think?"

"No, indeed, sir. There is only one left in the[Pg 310] stable; and Mistress Putnam means to use that to go to the trial this afternoon."

"Oh, well, I do not care much;" and his master walked off to the house, while Simon Peter went to his work.

Then, after a somewhat earlier dinner than usual, Master Joseph ordered his young horse, Sweetbriar, saddled; and after kissing his wife "in a scandalous manner"—that is, out of doors, where some one might have seen him do it—he mounted, and cantered off down the lane.

The young man loved a good horse and he claimed that Sweetbriar, with a year or two more of age and hardening, would be the fastest horse in the Province. As to temper, the horse was well named; for he could be as sweet, when properly handled, as a rose; and as sharp and briary as any rose-stalk under contrary conditions. A nervous, sensitive, high-mettled animal; Mistress Putnam, though a good rider, said it was too much work to manage him. While her husband always responded that Sweetbriar could be ridden by any one, for he was as gentle as a lamb.

Just as Mistress Ann Putnam had got through her dinner, she saw her brother-in-law Joseph riding up the lane. The brothers, as has been[Pg 311] seen, differed very widely relative to the Witchcraft prosecutions; but still they visited one another, as they were held together by various family ties, and especially by the old lawsuit against certain of the Ipswich men, to which I have alluded.

Therefore Mistress Putnam opened the door and went out to the garden gate, where by this time the young man had dismounted, and fastened his horse.

"Is brother Thomas at home, Sister Ann?"

"No—he had a call to Ipswich this morning."

"Ah—the lawsuit business."

"I suppose so. But the messenger was so overcome with liquor, that he could not even remember who sent him."

"Why, how could Thomas know where to go then?"

"Oh, the man managed to say that his employee would be waiting for Thomas at the "Crown and Anchor," where he usually stops you know."

"Well, I am glad that Thomas went. I stopped to see if Jehosaphat could do a little errand for me—I might have sent one of my own men, but I forget matters sometimes."

"You will find him at the barn," replied Mistress[Pg 312]

Putnam, a little anxious to cut short the conversation, as she wished to get ready for her ride to Salem.

Going to the barn, Master Joseph soon found Jehosaphat. "How do, Fatty!" this was the not very dignified diminutive into which Jehosaphat had dwindled in common use.

"How are you getting along?"

"Fair to middlin, sir. Not as well though as on the old place, Master Joseph."

"I do not want to interfere with my brother, remember; but if at any time he should not want you any more, remember the old place is still open for you. It was your own fault, you know, that you went."

"I did not know when I was well off, Master Joseph. I was a fool, that was all."

"I thought so," replied Master Joseph pithily. "But no matter about that now—can you do an errand for me?"

"Of course I can—the mistress willing."

"Well, I said I wished to send you on an errand, and she told me where to find you."

"That is all right then."

"Go to Goodman Buckley's, in Salem village, and ask him for a bundle I left—bring it to my[Pg 313] house, you know, you can take the roan horse there. And, by the way, Fatty, if you want to stop an hour or two to see the widow Jones's pretty daughter, I guess no great harm will be done."

Jehosaphat giggled—but then his face clouded. "But Mistress Putnam wants to take the roan herself this afternoon. The trial comes off, you know."

"Oh, it is not a trial—it is only an examination. And it is all fiddlesticks, anyhow. My sister-in-law is ruining her health by all this witch business. But if she insists upon going, I will lend her one of my horses. Therefore that need not keep you."

So Jehosaphat, in high glee at having an afternoon's holiday, with the roan horse, threw on the saddle and mounted.

As he rode at a rapid canter down the lane, Mistress Ann heard the noise, but supposed it was Master Joseph riding off again,—and did not even trouble herself to look out of the window, especially as she was just then changing her gown.

Not long after, coming into the family room, who should she see there, sitting demurely, reading one of the Reverend Cotton Mather's most popular sermons, but the same Master Joseph Putnam whom she had thought she was well rid of.[Pg 314]

"I thought you had gone. I surely heard you riding down the lane," she said in a surprised tone.

"Oh, no, I wanted to speak with you about something."

"Who was it then?—I surely heard some one."

"Perhaps it was one of those spectral horses, with a spectral rider. As Master Mather says: These are very wonderful and appalling times!" And the young man laughed a little scornfully.

"Brother Joseph, I do not care to talk with you upon this question. I greatly regret, as do your brothers and your uncles, that you have gone over to the infidels and the scoffers."

"And I regret that they are making such fools of themselves," replied Joseph hotly.

"I have no time to discuss this question, brother Joseph," said Mistress Ann with dignity. "I am going to Salem town this afternoon, very much in the cross, to give my testimony against a young friend of yours. Would that I could have been spared this trial!" and his sister-in-law looked up to the ceiling sanctimoniously. As Joseph told his young wife that night, her hypocrisy hardened his heart against her; so that he could have kept her at home by sheer force, if it were necessary,[Pg 315] and at all expedient—in fact he would have preferred that rough but sincere way.

"If you testify to anything that throws doubt upon Master Raymond's perfect innocency and goodness, you will testify to a lie," replied Master Joseph severely.

"As I said, I have no time for argument. Will you be good enough to tell Jehosaphat to saddle the roan for me."

"You know that I had your permission to send Fatty off on an errand—and he is not back yet."

Mistress Putnam started and bit her lip. She had made a mistake. "I suppose he will be back before long."

"I doubt it. I sent him to the village."

"Well, I suppose I can put on the saddle myself. Your conscience probably would not allow you to do it—even if common courtesy towards a woman, and that woman your sister, demanded it."

"Without deciding the latter point, I should think it almost impossible for me to put a saddle on the roan just now."

"Why? I do not understand you."

"Because he is doubtless miles away by this time."

"Jehosaphat did not take the horse!"[Pg 316]

"It is precisely what he did do."

"He knew I wanted the roan to ride to Salem town this afternoon."

"He told me you did; but I said that I thought you would have too much sense to go. Still, if you would go, that I would lend you one of my horses."

"Well, where is your horse?"

"There, at the door. You can take off my saddle, and put on your side-saddle, and, if you are in a hurry, Sweetbriar can do the distance in half the time that the roan could."

Mistress Putnam could have cried with anger and vexation. Like many people of strong and resolute will, she was a good deal of a coward on horseback; and she knew that Sweetbriar was what the farmers called "a young and very skittish animal." Still her determined spirit rose against thus being outdone; besides, she knew well that in a case like this, where none of the "afflicted circle," not even her own daughter, would aid her, the whole thing might fall through if she were not present. So she said, "Well, I will saddle your horse myself."

Here Master Joseph relented—because he now felt certain of his game. "I have conscientious[Pg 317] scruples against lifting even my little finger to aid you in this unholy business," he said more placidly, "but under the circumstances, I will saddle Sweetbriar for you."

So saying, he took off his saddle from the horse, and substituted the side-saddle which he brought from the barn. Then he led Sweetbriar to the horse-block, and his sister-in-law mounted.

She glanced at his spurs. "You ride him with spurs, I see. Hand me my riding-whip," she said, pointing to where she had laid it, when she first came out.

"I would not strike him, if I were you. He is not used to the whip—it might make him troublesome."

Mistress Putnam made no reply; but gathered up the reins, and the horse started down the lane.

A singular smile came across the young man's features. He went back and closed the door of the house, and then started in a rapid walk across the field towards his own home. Neither of them thought it mattered that the house was left for a time unprotected. Mistress Putnam knew that a couple of farm-hands were at work in a distant field, who would be back at sundown; and there were so few strollers at that time, that no farmer[Pg 318] thought of bolting up his doors and windows when he went to meeting, or to see a neighbor.

The way home across the fields was a good deal nearer than to go by the road, as the latter made quite an angle. And, as the young man strode swiftly, on he could see in many places his sister-in-law, riding deliberately along, and approaching the forks of the road, where anyone going to his own house, would turn and ride away from, instead of toward Salem.

"When she gets to the forks of the road, look out for squalls," said Master Joseph to himself. For many had been his own fights with Sweetbriar, when the horse wanted to

go towards his stable, after a long ride, and his young master wanted him to go in the opposite direction. Sweetbriar had already gone about twenty miles that day—and, besides, had been given only the merest mouthful for dinner, with the object of preparing him for this special occasion.

The next swell in the ground afforded the young man an excellent view. Sweetbriar had arrived at the turn which led to his stable; where rest and oats awaited him; and it evidently seemed to Him the height of injustice and unreason to be asked to go all the way back to Salem again. Mistress[Pg 319] Ann, however, knew nothing of these previous experiences of the animal, but imputed his insubordinate behavior entirely to self-will and obstinacy. And thus, as the great globe moves around the sun in a perpetual circle, as the result of the two conflicting forces of gravitation and fly-off-it-iveness, so Sweetbriar circled around and around, like a cat chasing his tail, as the result of the conflicting wills of himself and his rider.

Master Joseph watched the progress of the whole affair with decided pleasure. "No woman but a witch could get Sweetbriar past that turn," he said to himself, laughing outright, "And no man, who had not a pair of spurs on."

At last, getting out of all patience, Mistress Putnam raised her whip and brought it down sharply on her horse's shoulder. This decided the struggle; for, unused to such punishment, the fiery animal reared, and then turning, sprang up the road that led to his stable at a wild gallop.

His rider as I have said, was not a very good horse-woman, and she now took hold of the horn of the saddle with her right hand, to enable her to keep her seat; and tried to moderate the gait of the horse with the reins and the voice, abandoning all further resistance to his will as useless.[Pg 320]

Setting off at a run, Master Joseph was able to reach home just about the same time as his sister-in-law did.

"Ah! I am glad you changed your mind, Sister Ann, about going to Salem. It is a great deal more sensible to come and spend the afternoon with Elizabeth."

"Very glad to see you, Sister Ann," said Mistress Joseph, coming out to the horse-block, at which Sweetbriar, from force of habit, had stopped.

Mistress Ann looked offended, and replied coldly, "I had no intention of coming here this afternoon, Sister Elizabeth; but this vile brute, which Joseph lent me, after sending away my own horse, would neither obey the reins nor the whip."

"You rascal!" said Master Joseph severely, addressing the horse. "You do not deserve to have a lady ride you."

"Can you not lend me another horse—say the one Elizabeth always rides?"

"All the other horses are out at work," replied Master Joseph; "and before I could get one of them in, and at all groomed up, ready for the saddle, I am afraid it would be too late for your purpose."

"So I must be compelled to do as you wish, and[Pg 321] stay away from the examination?" said Mistress Ann bitterly.

"Oh, if you choose, I will put a pillion on Sweetbriar, and see how that works?" replied Master Joseph with a meek and patient expression of countenance, as of one upbraided without cause. "To be sure, Sweetbriar has never been asked to carry double; but he might as well learn now as ever."

"That seems to be the only thing that can be done now," and the expression of Mistress Ann's face resembled that of a martyr who was about to be tied to the stake; for riding on a pillion brought the lady always into the closest proximity with the gentleman, and she was now cherishing towards Master Joseph a temper that could hardly be called sisterly.

There was necessarily a great waste of time in getting the pillion on Sweetbriar. He never had carried double, and he evidently felt insulted by being asked to do it. Master Joseph glanced at the sun, and knew it must be now full two o'clock. Only by fast riding, would it be possible to get to Salem court-house by three; and the roads, as they then were, did not admit of fast riding except in a few places.[Pg 322]

It was no easy thing for Mistress Ann to get on Sweetbriar, for the horse backed and sidled off from the horse-block whenever she attempted it—all his sweetness seemed gone by this time, and the briars alone remained. At least fifteen minutes more were lost in this way. But at last the difficult feat was accomplished.

"Hold on to me tightly," said the young man, "or you will be thrown off—" for the irritated animal began to curvet around in all directions, manifesting a strong determination to go back to his stable, instead of forward towards Salem.

"I think we had better try the other road, and not pass the forks where you had so much trouble with him," said Master Joseph, as the horse went more quietly, going up the first hill.

"As you think best," said his sister-in-law, in a sharp tone, "If I had a horse like this I would shoot him!"

"Oh, Sweetbriar is good enough usually. I never saw him so violent and troublesome as he is to-day. And I think I know the reason of it."

"What is the reason?"

"I fear he has an 'evil hand' upon him," said Master Joseph with great solemnity.

"Nonsense," replied Mistress Ann sharply.[Pg 323]

"He has got the wicked One in him; that is the matter with him."

"That is about the same thing," said Master Joseph.

Now they were at the top of the hill, and the horse broke into tantrums again; requiring all of Master Joseph's skill to prevent his toppling himself and his two riders over one of the many boulders that obstructed the road.

"If you do not hold on to me more tightly, Sister Ann, you will be thrown off," said Master Joseph, putting back his right hand to steady her. And Mistress Ann was compelled to lock her arms around him, or take the chance of serious injury from being dashed to the rough highway. The young man would have liked to relieve his feelings by a hearty burst of laughter, as he felt her arms embracing him so warmly, but of course he dared not.

They soon came near the main road, running due north and south, and which it was necessary to take, as it led directly down to Salem. Sweetbriar knew that road well—and that he never stopped when once turned to the south on it, short of a six mile ride. He remembered his recent victorious struggle at the Forks, and now[Pg 324] resolved upon another battle. All of Master Putnam's efforts—or what seemed so—could not get him headed southward on that road. In truth, burdened as he was, the young man really could not do it, without incurring too much risk to the lady behind him. Those who have ever had such a battle with a wilful, mettlesome horse, know that it often requires the utmost patience and determination on the part of his rider, to come out victorious. The best plan—the writer speaks from some experience—is to pull the animal round in a circle until his brain becomes confused, and then start him off in the right direction.

But Sweetbriar evidently had a better brain than usual, for when the whirl came to an end, it always found his pointing like the magnetic needle to the north. It had been Master Joseph's plan to pretend a good deal of earnestness in the struggle which he

was certain would come in this place; but he was pleased to find that there was no need of any pretence in the matter. The horse, under the circumstances, the young man having a lady's safety to consult, was the master. Repeated trials only proved it. Whenever the fierce, final tug of war came, Mistress Ann's safety had to be consulted, and the horse had his own way. So, [Pg 325] as the result Sweetbriar started off in a sharp canter up, instead of down, the road.

"Take me home then," said his sister-in-law—"if you will not take me to Salem."

"If I *will* not," repeated Master Joseph. "I give you my honest word, Sister Ann, that I could not make this horse go down the road, with us two on his back, if I stayed here all the afternoon trying. I should think you must have seen that."

"No matter. Take me home."

"Besides, we could not get to Salem before four o'clock now, if Sweetbriar went his best and prettiest."

"I give it up. Let us turn and go home."

"If we turn and go back the way we came, I do not think I shall be able to get this self-willed animal past my own gate."

"Well, what do you mean to do?" said the lady bitterly. "Ride on up to Topsfield?"

Master Joseph laughed. "No—there is a road strikes off towards your house a short distance above here, and I think I can get you home by it, without any further trouble."

"Very well—get me home as soon as you can. I do not feel like any further riding, or much more talking." [Pg 326]

"Of course it is very aggravating," replied Master Putnam soothingly, "but then you know as Master Parris says, that all these earthly disappointments are our most valuable experiences—teaching us not to set our hopes upon worldly things, but upon those of a more enduring and satisfying character."

His sister-in-law's face, that he could not see, she being behind him, wore a look as she listened to this, which could be hardly called evangelical.

"You wished very much I know to go this afternoon to Salem," continued Master Joseph, in the same sermonizing tone; "but doubtless your wish has been overruled for good. I think, as a member of church, you should be willing to acquiesce patiently in the singular turn that affairs have taken, and console yourself with the thought that

you have been innocently riding these peaceful roads instead of being in Salem, doing perchance an infinite deal of mischief."

"No doubt what you are saying seems to you very wise and edifying, Joseph Putnam, but I have a bad headache, and do not care to converse any further."

"But you must admit that your projected visit has been frustrated in a very singular, if not remark[Pg 327]able manner?" Master Joseph knew that he had her now at an advantage; she was compelled to listen to everything he chose to say. His saddle was even better in that respect than the minister's pulpit—you might leave a church, but she could not leave the horse.

"I do not see anything very miraculous, brother Joseph, in a young man like you having a self-willed and unprincipled horse. In truth, the wonder would be if you had a decent and well-governed animal," replied his sister-in-law wrathfully.

The young man smiled at the retort, but she could not see the gleam of sunshine as it passed rapidly over his face; lingering a moment in the soft depths of his sweet blue eyes. There was no smile however in his voice, but the previous solemnity, as he continued:—

"And yet if Balaam's ass could see the angel of the Lord, with his drawn-sword, standing in the way, and barring his further progress in wrongdoing, why might not this horse—who is much more intelligent than an ass—have seen a similar vision?"

The young man had begun this speech somewhat in sport; but as he ended it, the assumed tone of[Pg 328] solemnity had passed into one of real earnestness. For, as he asked himself, "Why should it not be? This woman with him was bound on a wicked errand. Why should not the angel or the Lord stand in her way also—and the horse see him, even if his riders did not?"

Mistress Putnam made no answer. Perhaps now that the young man was really in earnest, what he said made some impression upon her, but, more probably it did not.

He, too, relapsed into silence. It seemed to him a good place to stop his preaching, and let his sister-in-law think over what he had said.

"Thank Heaven we are here at last!" said the baffled woman, as they rode up to the horse-block at her own door. Sweetbriar stood very quiet, and she stepped on the block, Master Joseph keeping his seat.

"Will you dismount and stay to supper, brother Joseph?" said Mistress Ann, in a soft purring tone. Master Joseph fairly started with his surprise, and looked steadily into her dark, inscrutable eyes—eyes like Jael's as she gazed upon sleeping Sisera.

"No, I thank you—I expect a friend to supper. I hope brother Thomas heard some good news at[Pg 329] Ipswich. Come and see us when you feel like it." And he rode off.

As he told his wife afterwards, he would not have taken supper with his sister Ann that evening as he valued his life.

And yet perhaps it was all imagination—and he did not see that thing lurking in the depths of his sister-in-law's cold, unfathomable eyes that he thought he did. And yet her testimony against Rebecca Nurse, reads to us, even at this late day, with all the charity that we are disposed to exercise towards things so long past, as cold-blooded, deliberate murder.

CHAPTER XLV.

[Pg 330]

The Two Plotters Congratulate Each Other.

When Master Joseph arrived home, he told his wife of what a perverse course things had taken, amid his own and her frequent laughter. And then he could do nothing else than walk up and down impatiently, glancing at frequent intervals towards the road, to see if anybody were coming.

In the course of an hour or so, nobody appearing and Sweetbriar being sweetened up again by a good feed, he ordered the horse brought out. Then he was persuaded by his wife to recall the order, and wait patiently till sundown.

"What impatient creatures you men are!" said Mistress Elizabeth with feminine superiority. "Doubtless he will be along. Give him sufficient time. Now, do not worry, husband mine, but take things patiently."

So Master Joseph was induced to control his restlessness and just as soon as he could have been reasonably expected, Master Raymond was seen riding up the lane at a light canter.

"Hurrah!" cried Master Joseph, running to meet him. "And is it all over?"[Pg 331]

"We have smitten Ammon, hip and thigh, from Aroer even till thou come to Minnith!" answered Master Raymond, laughing. "It was you that kept the she-wolf away, I know. How did you do it?"

"Come in and I will tell you all about it. And I want to hear how all went off in Salem."

After a couple of hours' conversation, broken frequently by irresponsible bursts of laughter, the young men were mutually enlightened; and complimented each other upon the success with which they had worked out their respective schemes—while young Mistress Elizabeth complimented them both, thinking honestly in her innocent heart that two such wonderful young men certainly had never before existed.

"How I should like to have seen you astonishing old Squire Hathorne," said Master Joseph.

"I am afraid you would have spoiled all by laughing," said his young wife. "You know you never can control your merriment, Joseph."

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"I cannot? You should have seen me preaching to sister Ann this afternoon. I kept my face all the time as sober as a judge's. You know she had to take it all quietly—she could not even run away from it."

"I would have given one of your five-pound Massachusetts notes to see it," said Master Raymond. "And five pounds more to see your brother Thomas stamping up and down the bar-room of the 'Crown and Anchor,' waiting for that Ipswich man to meet him."

"I was very careful all through not to tell a direct falsehood," said Master Joseph; "it is bad enough to deceive people, without being guilty of downright lying."

"Oh, of course," replied Master Raymond. "I do not know that I told a downright lie either, all day; although I must admit that I acted a pretty big one. But you must deal with fools according to their folly—you know we have Scripture for that."

"I do not think I would have done it merely to save myself," said Master Joseph, evidently a little conscience-smitten. "But to save you, my friend, that seems to be different."

"And Dulcibel," added Master Raymond. "If I were imprisoned what would become of her?"

"Yes, I am glad I did it," responded his friend, regaining his confidence. "I have really hurt neither brother Thomas nor Sister Ann; on the contrary, I have prevented them

from doing[Pg 333] a great wrong. I am willing to answer for this day's work at the Last Day—and I feel certain that then at least, both of them will thank me for it."

"I have no doubt of it," said Mistress Elizabeth who herself brought up in the rigid Puritan school, had felt the same misgivings as her husband, but whose scruples were also removed by this last consideration.

As for Master Raymond, he, being more a man of the world, had felt no scruples at playing such a deceitful part. I am afraid, that to save Dulcibel, he would not have scrupled at open and downright lying. Not that he had not all the sensitiveness of an honorable man as to his word; but because he looked upon the whole affair as a piece of malicious wickedness, in defiance of all just law, and which every true-hearted man was bound to oppose and defeat by all means allowable in open or secret warfare.

"I suppose you go back to Boston to morrow?" said his host, as they were about to separate for the night.

"Yes, immediately after breakfast. This affair is a warning to me, to push my plans to a consummation as soon as possible. I think I know what their next move will be—a shrewd man once[Pg 334] said, just think what is the wisest thing for your enemies to do, and provide against that."

"What is it?"

"Remove the Governor."

"Why, I understood he was a mere puppet in the hands of the two Mathers."

"He would be perhaps; but there is a Lady Phips."

"Ah!' the gray mare is the better horse,' is she, as it is over at brother Thomas's?"

"Yes, I think so. Now mark my prediction, friend Joseph; the first blow will be struck at Lady Mary. If Sir William resists, as I feel certain that he will—for he is, if not well educated, a thoroughly manly man—then he will be ousted from his position. You will note that it has been the game all through to strike at any one, man or woman, who came between these vampires and their prey. I know of only one exception."

"Ah, who is that?"

"Yourself."

Master Joseph smiled grimly. "They value their own lives very highly, friend Raymond; and know that to arrest me would be no child's play. Besides, Sweetbriar is never long unsaddled; and he is the fastest horse in Salem."[Pg 335]

"Yes, and to add to all that, you are a Putnam; and your wife is closely connected with Squire Hathorne."

"There may be something in that," said his friend.

"Yes, even Mistress Ann has her limits, which her husband—submissive in so many things—will not allow her to pass. But we are both a little tired, after such an eventful day. Good night!"

CHAPTER XLVI.

[Pg 336]

Mistress Ann's Opinion of the Matter.

While the foregoing conversation was taking place, one of a very different kind was passing between Mistress Ann and her worthy husband. He had gathered up all the particulars he could of the examination and had brought them home to his wife for her instruction.

After listening to all that he had to tell, with at least outward calmness, she said bitterly: "The whole thing was a trick, you see, to keep you and me away from Salem."

"Do you think so? Do you think then, that no man really wanted to see me at Ipswich?"

"It is as plain as the nose on your face," replied his wife. "You were to be decoyed off to Ipswich, my horse sent out of the way, and then Joseph's madcap horse offered to me, they knowing well that the worthless creature would not behave himself with any woman on his back."

"Oh, pshaw, Ann; you do not mean that my simple-hearted brother, Joseph Putnam, ever planned and carried out a subtle scheme of that kind?" said honest Thomas, with an older brother's [Pg 337] undervaluation of the capabilities of a mere boy like Joseph.

"I do not say that Joseph thought it all out, for very probably he did not; doubtless that Master Raymond put him up to it—for he seems cunning and unprincipled enough for anything, judging, by what you have told me of his ridiculous doings."

"You may call them ridiculous, Ann; but they impressed everybody very much indeed. Dr. Griggs, told me that he had no doubt whatever that an 'evil hand' was on him."

"Dr. Griggs is an old simpleton," said his wife crossly.

"And even Squire Hathorne says that he never saw a stronger case of spectral persecution. Why, when one of the young men thrust the point of his rapier at the yellow bird, some of its feathers were cut off and came fluttering to the ground. Squire Hathorne says he never saw anything more wonderful."

"Nonsense—it is all trickery!"

[Pg 338]"Trickery? Why, my dear wife, the Squire has the feathers!—and he means to send them at once to Master Cotton Mather by a special messenger, to confute all the scoffers and unbelievers in Boston and Plymouth!"

A scornful reply was at the end of his wife's tongue but, on second thought, she did not allow it to get any farther. Suppose that she did convince her husband and Squire Hathorne that they had been grossly deceived and imposed upon—and that Master Raymond's apparent afflictions and spectral appearance were the result of skilful juggling, what then? Would their enlightenment stop there? How about the pins that the girls had concealed around their necks, and taken up with their mouths? How about Mary Walcot secretly biting herself, and then screaming out that good Rebecca Nurse had bitten her? How about the little prints on the arms of the "afflicted girls," which they allowed were made by the teeth of little Dorcas Good, that child not five years old; and which Mistress Ann knew were made by the girls themselves? How about the bites and streaks and bruises which she herself had shown as the visible proof that the spectre of good Rebecca Nurse, then lying in jail, was biting her and beating her with her chains? For Edward Putnam had sworn: "I saw the marks both of bite and chains."

Perhaps it was safer to let Master Raymond's juggling go unexposed, considering that she herself [Pg 339] and the "afflicted girls" had done so very much of it.

Therefore she said, "I have no faith in Master Raymond nevertheless; no more than Moses had in King Pharaoh's sorcerers, when they did the very same miracles before the king that he had done. I believe him now to be a cunning and a very bad young man, and I think if I had been on the spot, instead of his being at this very moment as I have very little doubt, over at brother's, where they are congratulating each other on the success of their unprincipled plans, Master Raymond would now be lying in Salem jail."

"Probably you are correct, my dear," responded her husband meekly; "and I think it not unlikely that Master Raymond may have thought the same, and planned to keep you away—but it was evident to me, that if the 'afflicted girls' had taken one side or the

other in the matter, it would not have been yours. Why, even our own daughter Ann, was laughing and joking with him when I entered the court room."

"Yes," said his wife disdainfully—"that is girl-nature, all over the earth! Just put a handsome young man before them, who has seen the world, and is full of his smiles and flatteries and cajole[Pg 340]ments, and the wisest of women can do nothing with them. But the cold years bring them out of that!" she added bitterly. "They find what they call love, is a folly and a snare."

Her husband looked out of the window into the dark night, and made no reply to this outburst. He had always loved his wife, and he thought, when he married her, that she loved him—although he was an excellent match, so far as property and family were concerned. Still she would occasionally talk in this way; and he hoped and trusted that it did not mean much.

"I think myself," he said at length, "that it is quite as much the pretty gifts he has made them, and has promised to send them from England, as his handsome face and pleasant manners."

"Oh, of course, it all goes together. They are a set of mere giggling girls; and that is all you can make of them. And our daughter Ann is as bad as any of the lot. I wish she did not take so much after your family, Thomas."

[Pg 341]This roused her husband a little. "I am sure, Ann, that our family are much stronger and healthier than your own are. And as to Ann's being like the other girls, I wish she was. She is about the only delicate and nervous one among them."

"Well, Thomas, if you have got at last upon that matter of the superiority of the Putnams to everybody else in the Province, I think I shall go to bed," retorted his wife. "That is the only thing that you are thoroughly unreasonable about. But I do not think you ever had a single minister, or any learned scholar, in your family, or ever owned a whole island, in the Merrimack river as my family, the Harmons, always have done, since the country was first settled—and probably always shall, for the next five hundred years."

To this Thomas Putnam had no answer. He knew well that he had no minister and no island in his family—and those two things, in his wife's estimation, were things that no family of any reputation should be without. He had not brought on the discussion, although his wife had accused him of so doing, and had only asserted what he thought the truth in stating that the Putnams were the stronger and sturdier race.

"I do not wish to hurt your feelings, Thomas, in reminding you of these things," continued his wife, finding he was not intending to reply; "I will admit that your family is a very reputable and worthy one, even if it is not especially gifted with intellect like the Harmons, else you may be sure[Pg 342] that I should not have married into it. But I have a headache, and do not wish to continue this discussion any longer, as it is unpleasant to me, and besides in very bad taste."

And so, taking the hint, Master Putnam, like a dutiful husband, who really loved his somewhat peevish and fretful wife, acknowledged by his silence in the future that the Harmons were much superior to any family that could not boast of possessing a minister and an island; the latter for five hundred years!

CHAPTER XLVII.

[Pg 343]

Master Raymond Visits Lady Mary.

When Master Raymond returned to Boston, he found that an important event had taken place in his absence. Captain Alden and Master Philip English and his wife, had all escaped from prison, and were nowhere to be found. How Captain Alden had managed things with the jailer the young man was not able to ascertain—probably however, by a liberal use of money. As for Master English and his wife, they were, as I have already said, at liberty in the day time, under heavy bonds; and had nothing to do but walk off sometime between sunrise and sundown. As Master English's ship, "The Porcupine," had been lying for a week or two in Boston harbor, and left with a brisk northwest wind early in the morning of the day when they were reported missing, it was not difficult for anyone to surmise as to their mode of escape. As to Captain Alden, he might or might not have gone with them.

As was natural, there was a good deal of righteous indignation expressed by all in authority. The jailer was reprimanded for his carelessness in[Pg 344] the case of Captain Alden, and warned that if another prisoner escaped, he would forfeit his, of late, very profitable position. And the large properties of both gentlemen were attached and held as being subject to confiscation.

But while the magistrates and officials usually were in earnest in these proceedings, it was generally believed that the Governor, influenced by Lady Mary, had secretly favored the escaping parties. The two ministers of South Church—Masters Willard and Moody—were also known to have frequently visited the Captain and Master

English in their confinement, and to have expressed themselves very freely in public, relative to the absurdity of the charges which had been made against them. Master Moody had even gone so far as to preach a sermon on the text, 'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another,' which was supposed by many to have a direct bearing on the case of the accused. And it is certain that soon afterwards, the Reverend Master Moody found it expedient to resign his position in South Church and go back to his old home in Portsmouth.

Anxious to learn the true inwardness of all this matter, Master Raymond called a few days after[Pg 345] his return to see Lady Mary. Upon sending in his name, a maid immediately appeared, and he was taken as before to the boudoir where he found her ladyship eagerly awaiting him.

"And so you are safely out of the lion's den, Master Raymond," said she, laughing. "I heard you had passed through securely."

The young man smiled. "Yes, thanks to Providence, and to a good friend of mine in Salem."

"Tell me all about it," said the lady. "I have had the magisterial account already, and now wish to have yours."

"Will your ladyship pardon me if I ask a question first? I am so anxious to hear about Mistress Dulcibel. Have you seen her lately—and is she well?"

"As well and as blooming as ever. The keeper and his wife treat her very kindly—and I think would continue to do so—even if the supply of British gold pieces were to fail. By the way, she might be on the high seas now—or rather in New York—if she had so chosen."

"I wish she had. Why did she not go with them?"

"Because your arrest complicated things so.[Pg 346] She would not go and leave you in the hands of the Philistines."

"Oh, that was foolish."

"I think so, too; but I do not think that you are exactly the person to say so," responded the lady, a little offended at what seemed a want of appreciation of the sacrifice that Dulcibel had made on his account.

But Master Raymond appeared not to notice the rebuke. He simply added: "If I could have been there to counsel her, I would have convinced her that I was in no serious

danger—for, even if imprisoned, I do not think there is a jail in the Province that could hold me."

"Well, there was a difficulty with the Keeper also—for she had given her word, you know, not to escape, when she was taken into his house."

"But Captain Alden had also given his word. How did he manage it?"

"I do not know," replied the lady. "But, to a hint dropped by Dulcibel, the jailer shook his head resolutely, and said that no money would tempt him."

"The difficulty in her case then remains the same as ever," said the young man thoughtfully, and a little gloomily. "She might go into the[Pg 347] prison. But that would be to give warning that she had planned to escape. Besides, it is such a vile place, that I hate the idea of her passing a single night in one of its sickening cells."

"Perhaps I can wring a pardon out of Sir William," said the lady musing.

"Oh, Lady Mary, if you only could, we should both forever worship you!"

The lady smiled at the young man's impassioned language and manner—he looked as if he would throw himself at her feet.

"I should be too glad to do it. But Sir William just now is more rigid than ever. He had a call yesterday from his pastor, Master Cotton Mather, and a long talk from him about the witches. Master Mather, it seems, has had further evidence and of the most convincing character, of the reality of these spectral appearances."

"Indeed!" said Master Raymond showing great interest for he had an idea of what was coming.

"Yes, in a recent examination at Salem before Squire Hathorne, a young man struck with his sword at a spectral yellow bird which was tormenting an afflicted person; and several small yellow feathers were cut off by the thrust, and floated down to the floor. Squire Hathorne writes to[Pg 348] Master Mather that he would not have believed it, if he had not seen it; but, as it was, he would be willing to take his oath before any Court in Christendom, that this wonderful thing really occurred."

Master Raymond could not help laughing.

"I see you have no more faith in the story than I have," continued Lady Mary. "But it had a great effect upon Sir William, coming from a man of such wonderful learning and wisdom as Master Cotton Mather. Especially as he said that he had seen the yellow

feathers himself; which had since been sent to him by Squire Hathorne, and which had a singular smell of sulphur about them."

The young man broke into a heartier laugh than before. Then he said scornfully, "It seems to me that no amount of learning, however great, can make a sensible man out of a fool."

"Why, you know something about this then? Did it happen while you were in Salem?"

"I know everything about it," said Master Raymond, "I am the very man that worked the miracle." And he proceeded to give Lady Mary a detailed account of the whole affair, substantially as it is known to the reader.

"By the way, as to the feathers smelling of[Pg 349] sulphur," concluded the young man, "I think that it is very probable, inasmuch as I observed the jailer's wife that very morning giving the younger chickens powdered brimstone to cure them of the pip."

"I think you are a marvelously clever young man," was the lady's first remark as he concluded his account.

"Thank your ladyship!" replied Master Raymond smiling. "I hope I shall always act so as to deserve such a good opinion."

"I would have given my gold cup—which the Duke of Albemarle gave me—to have been there; especially when the yellow bird's feathers came floating down to Squire Hathorne's reverential amazement," said Lady Mary, laughing heartily. "You must come up here tomorrow morning at noon. Master Mather is to bring his feathers to show the Governor, and to astound the Governor's skeptical wife. You are not afraid to come, are you?"

"I shall enjoy it very much—that is, if the Governor will promise that I shall not suffer for my disclosures. I am free now, and I do not wish to be arrested again."

"Oh, I will see to that. The Governor will be[Pg 350] so curious to hear your story, that he will promise all that you desire as to your safety. Besides, he will not be sorry to take down Master Mather a little; these Puritan ministers presume on their vocation too much. They all think they are perfectly capable of governing not only Provinces, but Kingdoms; while the whole history of the world proves their utter incapacity to govern even a village wisely."

"That is true as the gospel, Lady Mary. But one thing I have always noticed. That while every minister thinks this, he would himself far rather be governed even by one of the

world's people, than by a minister of any other belief than his own. So you see they really do think the same as we do about it; only they do not always know it."

"You are a bright young man," Lady Mary replied pleasantly, "and I think almost good enough to wear such a sweet rose next your heart as Mistress Dulcibel."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

[Pg 351]

Captain Tolley's Propositions.

That evening as Master Raymond was standing in the bar-room of the Red Lion, Captain Tolley came in, and after tossing off a stout glass of rum and water, went out again, giving the young Englishman a nod and the agreed-upon-signal, a smoothing of his black beard with the left hand. After the lapse of a few minutes, Master Raymond followed, going towards the wharves, which in the evening were almost deserted. Arrived at the end of one of the wharves, he found the Captain of the Storm King.

"So you got out of the clutches of those Salem rascals safely?" said the Captain. "I was afraid I should have to go all the way to Salem for you."

"You would not have deserted me then, Captain?"

"That is not the kind of a marlinespike I am," replied the Captain quaintly. "I'd have got you out of Salem jail, unless it is a good deal stronger than the Boston one."

"Thank you, Captain, but I am glad there was no need of your trying." [Pg 352]

"You heard of course that Captain Alden was off, and Master and Mistress English?"

"Yes—and very glad I was too."

"Why did not your sweetheart go with the Englishes?"

"There were several reasons—one, a rather foolish one, she would not leave me in prison."

"She would not?"

"No."

"D—— me! Why that girl is fit to be a sailor's wife! When we get her off safely I intend to have her as the figure-head of the Storm King."

"I am afraid that would be a very unhealthy position—she might catch a bad cold," replied Master Raymond.

"Oh, of course I mean in wood, painted white with red cheeks," said Captain Tolley. "It brings good luck to have a fine woman for a figure-head—pleases old Nep, you know."

"But we must get her off first," rejoined Master Raymond. "Now to keep out of that hateful jail, she has given her word to Keeper Arnold not to escape. You know she cannot break her word."

"Of course not," replied the Captain; "a lady is like a sailor, she cannot go back on her promise." [Pg 353]

"And there is where the trouble comes in."

"Buy Keeper Arnold over."

"I am afraid I cannot—not for a good while at least. They are all down upon him for Captain Alden's escape. They might give him a terrible whipping if another prisoner got off."

The Captain shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, I saw them whip some Quakers once. It was not a good honest lash, but something the hangman had got up on purpose, and which cut to the very bone. I have seen men and women killed, down on the Spanish main, but I never saw a sight like that! Good, harmless men and women too! A little touched here, you know," and the Captain tapped his forehead lightly with his forefinger.

"Yes—I should not like to hear that Master Arnold had been tortured like that on our account."

"Suppose we carry her off some night by force, she having no hand in the arrangements? She can even refuse to go, you know, if she pleases—we will handle her as gently as a little bird, and you can come up and rescue her, if you choose, and knock down two or three of us. How would that do? Half-a-dozen of the Storm King's men could easily do that. Choose a night with a brisk [Pg 354] nor'wester, and we would be past the castle's guns before the sleepy land-lubbers had their eyes open."

Master Raymond shook his head dubiously. "I do not like it—and yet I suppose it must do, if nothing better can be found. Of course if we carry her off bodily, against her will, it would neither be a breaking of her pledge nor expose Keeper Arnold to any danger of after punishment, though he might perhaps get pretty seriously hurt in resisting us, and she would not like that much."

"I suppose then we must wait a while longer," said the Captain. "I am ready any time you say the word—only be careful that a good west or a nor'west wind is blowing. When once out on the high seas, we can take care of ourselves."

"Many French privateers out there?"

"Thick as blackberries. But they are of no account. Those we cannot fight, we can easily run away from. There is no craft on these seas, that can overhaul the Storm King!"

With a hearty shake of the hand the two parted, the Captain for the vessel of which he was so proud; Master Raymond for his room in the Red Lion.

CHAPTER XLIX.

[Pg 355]

Master Raymond Confounds Master Cotton Mather.

The next day, a little before noon, Master Raymond knocked at the door of the Governor's Mansion, and was at once conducted to Lady Mary's boudoir. "The Reverend Master Mather is already with the Governor," said her ladyship, "and I expect to receive a summons to join them every moment." And in fact the words were hardly out of her mouth, when Sir William's private secretary, Master Josslyn, appeared, with a request for her ladyship's presence.

"Come with me," said she to Master Raymond; "but do not say anything—much less smile or laugh—until I call upon you for your testimony."

As they entered, the courteous Governor handed his lady to a seat on the sofa; and Master Mather made a dignified obeisance.

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"I have brought along a young friend of mine, who was with me, and would also like to hear of all these wonderful things," said her ladyship; and Master Raymond bowed very deferentially to both the high dignities, they returning the bow, while Sir William politely requested him to be seated.

"I was just on the point of showing to Sir William the most remarkable curiosities of even this very remarkable era—and he suggested that you also doubtless would like to see them," said the minister; at this time a man of about thirty years of age. He was a

rather comely and intelligent looking man, and Master Raymond wondered that one who appeared so intellectual, should be the victim of such absurd hallucinations.

Lady Mary bent her head approvingly, in answer to the minister. "I should like very much to see them," she replied courteously; and Master Mather continued:—

"In the work I have been preparing on the "Wonders of the Invisible World," several of the sheets of which I have already shown to Sir William, I have collected many curious and wonderful instances. Thus in the case of the eldest daughter of Master John Goodwin, whom I took to my own house, in order that I might more thoroughly investigate the spiritual and physical phenomena of witchcraft, I found that while the devils that tormented her were familiar with Latin, Greek and Hebrew, they seemed to have very little knowledge of the various Indian dialects."

"That certainly is very curious," replied Sir[Pg 357] William, "inasmuch as those heathen are undeniably the children of the devil, as all our wisest and most godly ministers agree."

"Yes," continued the minister, "it is true; and that makes me conjecture, that these devils were in fact only playing a part; to deceive me into thinking that the red heathen around us were not really the children of Satan, as they undoubtedly are."

"I think that the most reasonable view," responded the Governor.

"As to the reality of this new assault by Satan upon this little seed of God's people in the new world," continued Master Mather, fervently, "I have now no doubt whatever. Proof has been multiplied upon proof, and the man, or woman, who does not by this time believe, is simply one of those deplorable doubters, like Thomas, who never can be convinced. For my part, I consider Witchcraft the most nefarious high treason against the Majesty on High! And a principal design of my book is to manifest its hideous enormity, and to promote a pious thankfulness to God that Justice so far is being inflexibly executed among us."

Lady Mary's face flushed a little, for she saw the[Pg 358] drift of the minister's censure. It was well known in all the inner circles, that she had neither faith in the reality of witchcraft, nor the least sympathy with the numerous prosecutions, and the inflexible justice which the minister lauded. The Governor knew his wife's temper, and hastened to say:—

"Still we must admit, Master Mather, that some persons, with tender conscience, require more convincing proofs than do others. And therefore I was anxious that Lady

Mary should see these feathers you spoke of, cut from the wings of one of those yellow birds which appear to be used so frequently as familiars by the Salem witches."

"Oh, yes, I had forgotten them for the moment." And putting his hand into his breast pocket, Master Mather produced a small box, which he opened carefully and called their attention to a couple of small yellow feathers placed on a piece of black cloth within. "I would not take a hundred pounds for these spectral feathers," said the minister exultingly. "They are the only positive proof of the kind, now existing in the whole world. With these little feathers I shall dash out the brains of a host of unbelievers—especially of that silly Calef, or Caitiff, who is[Pg 359] all the time going around among the merchants, wagging his vile tongue against me."

Sir William and Lady Mary had been looking upon the feathers very curiously. At last Lady Mary gave a low, incredulous laugh. Her husband looked at her inquiringly.

"They are nothing but common chicken feathers which could be picked up in any barn yard," she said scornfully.

"Your ladyship is very much mistaken, you never saw chicken feathers like those," said the minister, his face now also flushing.

"Who was the yellow bird afflicting, when these feathers were cut?" the lady asked.

"A young man was on his examination for witchcraft, Squire Hathorne writes me; but he was found to be himself a victim, and was released—which proves, by the way, how careful the worshipful magistrates are in Salem, lest any who are innocent should be implicated with the guilty. The young man began to cry out that an 'evil hand' was on him, and that a yellow bird was trying to peck out his eyes. Whereupon one of the by-standers pulled out his rapier, and smote at the spectral bird—when these feathers were cut off; becoming visible of course as soon as they were[Pg 360] detached from the bird and its evil influence. It is one of the most wonderful things that I ever heard of," and Master Mather gazed on the feathers with admiring and almost reverential eyes.

"Sir William," said his lady, "you have, I hope, a little common sense left, if these Massachusetts ministers and magistrates have all gone crazy on this subject. You know what a chicken is, if they do not. Are not those simply chicken feathers?"

"Why, my dear," replied the Governor, wriggling in his great arm-chair, "I grant that they certainly do look like chicken feathers; but then you know, the yellow bird the witches use, may have feathers like unto a chicken's."

"Nonsense!" replied Lady Mary. "None are so blind as those that will not see. I suppose that if I were to bring that afflicted young man here, and he were to acknowledge that the whole thing was a trick, got up by him to save his life, you would not believe him?"

"Indeed I should," replied Sir William.

"Yes, Lady Mary, find the young man, and question him yourself," said Master Mather.

"None are so certain as those that have never informed themselves. I have made inquiry into[Pg 361] these marvelous things; I even took that afflicted girl, as I have told you, into my own house, in order to inform myself of the truth. When you have investigated the matter to one-tenth the extent that I have, you will be prepared to give a reasonable opinion as to its truth or falsehood. Until then, some modesty of statement would become a lady who sets up her crude opinion against all the ministers and the magistracy of the land."

This was a tone which the leading ministers of that day among the Puritans, did not hesitate to take, even where high dignitaries were concerned and Master Mather had the highest ideas of the privilege of his order.

"Then I suppose, Master Mather, that if the afflicted young man himself should testify that these feathers were simply chicken feathers, that he had artfully thrown up into the air, you would not acknowledge that he had deceived you?"

"If such an impossible thing could happen, though I know that it could not, of course I should be compelled to admit that Squire Hathorne and a hundred others, who all saw this marvelous thing plainly, in open day, were deceived by the trick of an unprincipled mountebank and juggler."

"I shall hold both you and Sir William to your[Pg 362] word," replied Lady Mary emphatically. Then, turning to the young Englishman, who had remained entirely silent so far, paying evident attention to all that was spoken, but giving no sign of approval or disapproval, she said, "Master Raymond, what do you think of this matter?"

Master Raymond rose from his chair and stepped a pace or two forward. Then he said, "If I answer your ladyship's question freely, it might be to my own hurt. Having had my head once in the lion's mouth, I am not anxious to put it there again."

The lady looked significantly at Sir William.

"Speak out truly, and fear nothing, young man," said the Governor. "Nothing that you say here shall ever work you injury while I am Governor of the Province."

"What do you wish to know, Lady Mary?"

"You, I believe, were the afflicted young man, to whom Master Mather has referred?"

Master Raymond bowed.

"Was there any reality in those pretended afflictions?"

"Only a bad cold to begin with," said the young man smiling.

"How about the yellow bird?"[Pg 363]

"It was all a sham. I dealt with credulous and dangerous fools according to their folly."

"How about those feathers?"

"They are feathers I got from the wings of one of the Salem jailor's chickens."

Sir William laughed,

"How about the smell of sulphur which Squire Hathorne and Master Mather have detected in the feathers?"

"I think it very probable; as I observed Goodwife Foster that morning giving her chickens powdered brimstone for the pip."

Here the Governor laughed loudly and long until Master Mather said indignantly, "I am sorry, Sir William, that you can treat so lightly this infamous confession of falsehood and villainy. This impudent young man deserves to be set for three days in the pillory, and then whipped at the cart's tail out of town."

"Of course it is a very shameful piece of business," replied the Governor, regaining his gravity. "But you know that as the confession has been made only on the promise of perfect immunity, I cannot, as a man of my word, suffer the least harm to come to the young person for making it."

"Oh, of course not," said the minister, taking[Pg 364] up his hat, and preparing to leave the room; "but it is scandalous! scandalous! All respect for the Magistracy and authority seems to be fading out of the popular mind. I consider you a dangerous man, a very dangerous young man!" This last of course to Master Raymond.

"And I consider you tenfold more dangerous with your clerical influence, and credulity, and superstition!" replied the young Englishman hotly. Being of good family, he was not inclined to take such insults mildly. "How dare you, with your hands all red with the blood of twenty innocent men and women, talk to me about being dangerous!"

"Peace!" said Sir William with dignity. "My audience chamber is no place to quarrel in.

"I beg your Excellency's pardon!" said Master Raymond, humbly.

"One moment, before you go," said Lady Mary, stepping in front of the minister. "I suppose you will be as good as your word, Master Mather and admit that with all your wisdom you were entirely mistaken?"

"I acknowledge that Squire Hathorne and myself have been grossly deceived by an unprincipled adventurer—but that proves nothing. Because[Pg 365] Jannes and Jambres imitated with their sorceries the miracles of Moses, did it prove that Moses was an impostor? There was one Judas among the twelve apostles, but does that invalidate the credibility of the eleven others, who were not liars and cheats? It is the great and overwhelming burden of the testimony which decides in this as in all other disputed matters—not mere isolated cases. Good afternoon, madam. I will see you soon again, Sir William, when we can have a quiet talk to ourselves."

"Stay!" cried Lady Mary, as the offended minister was stalking out of the room. "You have forgotten something," and she pointed to the little box, containing the chicken's feathers which had been left lying upon the table.

The minister gave a gesture expressive of mingled contempt and indignation—but did not come back for it. It was evident that he valued the feathers now at considerably less than one hundred pounds.

"Young man," said the Governor, smiling, "you are a very bright and keen-witted person, but I would advise you not to linger in this province any longer than is absolutely necessary. Master Mather is much stronger here than I am."

CHAPTER L.

[Pg 366]

Bringing Affairs to a Crisis.

The next morning a note came to Master Raymond from Joseph Putnam, brought by one of the farm-hands.

It was important. Abigail Williams had called upon Goodwife Buckley, and told her in confidence that it was in contemplation, as she had learned from Ann Putnam, to bring Dulcibel Burton back to Salem jail again. The escape of Captain Alden and the Englishes from the Bridewell in Boston, had caused a doubt in Salem as to its security.

Besides, Lady Phips had taken ground so openly against the witch prosecutions, that there was no knowing to how great an extent she might not go to aid any prisoner in whom she took an interest.

Abigail Williams further said that Mistress Ann Putnam had become very bitter both against her brother-in-law Joseph and his friend Master Raymond. She was busy combatting the idea that the latter really ever had been afflicted—and was endeavoring to rouse Squire Hathorne's indignation against him as being a deceiver.[Pg 367]

As the young man read this last, he wondered what effect would be produced upon the credulous magistrate, when he received word from Master Mather as to what had occurred in the Governor's presence. Would he be so angry as to take very arbitrary measures; or so ashamed as to let it all pass, rather than expose the extent to which he had been duped? He feared the former—knowing in which way Mistress Ann Putnam's great influence with him would be directed.

Master Joseph advised immediate action—if peaceable means would not serve, then the use of violent ones. If Captain Tolley could not find among his sailors those who would undertake the job, he, Master Joseph, would come down any night with three stout men, overpower the keepers, and carry off Mistress Dulcibel, with the requisite amount of violence to keep her promise unbroken.

Master Raymond wrote a note in return. He was much obliged for the information. It was evident that the time had come for action; and that it was dangerous to delay much longer. Of course peaceable means were to be preferred; and it was possible he might be able either to bribe the keeper, or to get a release from the Governor; but, if force had to be resorted to,[Pg 368] Captain Tolley could command his whole crew for such a service, as they were the kind of men who would like nothing better. In fact, they would not hesitate to open fire upon the town, if he ordered it—and even run up the flag of a French privateer.

After dispatching this business, Master Raymond went out on the porch of the Red Lion, and began an examination of the clouds and the weather-cocks. It had been raining slightly for a day or two, with the wind from the southeast; but though the vanes still pointed to the southeast, and the light lower clouds were moving from the same point of the compass, he caught glimpses through the scud of higher clouds that were moving in an entirely opposite direction.

"How do you make it out?" said a well-known voice. He had heard some one approaching, but had supposed it to be a stranger.

"I am not much of a sailor; but I should say it would clear up, with a brisk wind from the west or the northwest by afternoon."

"Aye!" said Captain Tolley, for it was he; "and a stiff nor'wester by night. If it isn't I'll give my head for a foot-ball. Were I bound out of the harbor, I would not whistle for a better[Pg 369] wind than we shall have before six hours are over."

Master Raymond glanced around; no one was near them. "Are you certain of that, Captain? Would it do to bet upon?"

"You may bet all you are worth, and your sweetheart into the bargain," replied the Captain laughing, with a significant look out of his eyes.

"When are you going, Captain?"

"Oh, to-night, perhaps—if I can get all my live stock on board.

"To-night then let it be," said the young man in a whisper; "by fair means, or by foul. I may succeed by fair means; have a boat waiting at the wharf for me. It will be light enough to get out of the harbor?"

"There is a gibbous moon—plenty. Once past the castle, and we are safe. We can easily break open the keeper's house—and quiet him with a pistol at his head."

"You must not harm him—he has been a good friend to her."

"Of course—only scare him a little. Besides, he is not a good friend, if he makes a noise."

"Well, I will see you by ten o'clock—with her or without her—Yes, I will bet you a gold piece,[Pg 370] Captain, that the wind gets around to the west by four o'clock." This last was in Master Raymond's usual tones—the previous conversation having been in whispers.

"You will be safe enough in that, Master Raymond," said the landlord of the Red Lion, whose steps the young Englishman had heard approaching.

"Do you think so? I do not want to take the young man's money, he is only a landsman you know, Mate; but I will bet you a piece of eight that the wind will not get around till a half hour after that time. And we will take it all out in drinks at your bar, at our leisure."

"Done!" said the landlord. "And now let us go in, and take a drink all around in advance."

CHAPTER LI.

[Pg 371]

Lady Mary's Coup D'Etat.

Master Raymond's next proceeding was to call on Lady Phips. Sending in his name, with a request to see her ladyship on very important business, he was ushered as usual into her boudoir.

"I must be doing something, Lady Mary," he said, after a few words relative to the evident change of weather; "I have news from Salem that the Magistrates are about to send Mistress Dulcibel back to Salem jail."

"That is sad," she answered.

"And, besides, there is no knowing what new proceedings they may be concocting against me. I must take Sir William's advice, and get out of this hornet's nest as soon as possible."

"Well what can I do for you?"

"Get an order from Sir William releasing Dulcibel from prison."

"Oh, that I could! God knows how gladly I would do it."

"You can at least try," said Master Raymond desperately.

The lady hesitated a moment. "Yes, as you[Pg 372] say, I can at least try. But you know how impossible it is to carry on the government of this Province without the support of the ministers and the magistrates. Sir William is naturally anxious to succeed; for, if he fails here, it will block his road to further preferment."

"And he will allow the shedding of innocent blood to go on, in order to promote his own selfish ambition?" said the young man indignantly.

"You are unjust to the Governor. He will do all he can to moderate this fanaticism; and, if it comes to the worst, he will order a general jail-delivery, and meet the consequences. But he hopes much from time, and from such developments as those of your chicken feathers"—and the lady smiled at the thought of the minister's discomfiture.

"Some things can wait, but I cannot wait," insisted Master Raymond. "You must acknowledge that."

"Sir William starts this afternoon on a visit to Plymouth, to remain for a day or so; but I will have a talk with him, and see what I can do," replied the lady. "Call here again at six o'clock this evening."

"Such beauty and spirit as yours must be[Pg 373] irresistible in the cause of virtue and innocence," said the young man, rising to depart.

"No flattery, Master Raymond; I will do all I can without that;" but Lady Mary being still a very comely woman, as she certainly was a very spirited one, was not much displeased at the compliment, coming from such a handsome young man as Master Raymond. Eulogy that the hearer hopes embodies but the simple truth, is always pleasant alike to men and women. It is falsehood, and not truth, that constitutes the essence of Flattery.

The day dragged on very drearily and slowly to Master Raymond. The waiting for the hour of action is so irksome, that even the approach of danger is a relief. But patience will at last weary out the slowest hours; and punctually at six o'clock, the young man stood again at the door of the Governor's mansion.

Lady Mary evidently was expecting him—for he was shown in at once. She looked up wearily as he entered. "I can do nothing to-day," she said.

"What ground did the Governor take?"

"That sound policy forbade him to move in the matter at present. The persecuting party were[Pg 374] very indignant at the escape of Captain Alden and the Englishes; and now for him to grant a pardon to another of the accused, would be to irritate them to madness."

Master Raymond acknowledged to himself the soundness of the Governor's policy; but he only said: "Then it seems that Dulcibel must go back to Salem prison; and I run a good chance of going to prison also, as a self-confessed deceiver and impostor."

"If she were released, could you both get away from Boston—at once?"

Master Raymond's voice sank to a whisper. "I have all my plans arranged. By the third hour after midnight, we shall be where we can snap our fingers at the magistrates of Boston."

"I have been thinking of a plan. It may work—or may not. But it is worth trying."

The young man's face lightened.

"You know that England is ruled by William and Mary, why should not the Province of Massachusetts also be?"

"I do not understand you."

"Upon leaving Sir William, I was somewhat indignant that he would not grant my request. And to pacify me, he said he was sorry that I had[Pg 375] not the same share in the government here, that Queen Mary had at home—and then I could do more as I pleased."

Still Master Raymond's face showed that he was puzzled to catch her meaning.

She laughed and rose from her chair; the old, resolute expression upon her spirited face, and, opening the door into the next room, which was the Governor's private office, she said:

"Come here a moment, Master Josslyn."

The private Secretary entered.

"Prepare me," she said to the Secretary, "the proper paper, to be signed by the Governor, ordering Keeper Arnold to release at once Mistress Dulcibel Burton from confinement in the Boston Bridewell."

"But the Governor, you know, is absent, Lady Mary," said the Secretary, "and his signature will be necessary."

"Oh, I will see to that," replied the lady a little haughtily.

Master Raymond sat quietly—waiting for what was to come next. He could not conceive how Lady Mary intended to manage it. As for the lady, she tapped the table with her shapely fingers impatiently.[Pg 376]

In a few minutes Master Josslyn reappeared with the paper. "All it now wants is the signature of the Governor," said he.

The lady took up a pen from the table by which she was sitting, and filled it with ink; then with a firm hand she signed the paper, "William Phips, Governor, by Lady Mary Phips."

"But, your ladyship, the keeper will not acknowledge the validity of that signature, or obey it," said Master Josslyn in some alarm.

"He will not? We shall see!" responded her ladyship rising. "Order my carriage, Master Josslyn."

In fifteen minutes, Lady Mary, accompanied by Master Raymond, was at Keeper Arnold's house.

"I bring you good news, Master Arnold," said Lady Mary, "I know you will rejoice, such a tender-hearted man as you are at the release of Mistress Dulcibel Burton. Here is the official document." She flourished it at him, but still kept it in her hand.

Dulcibel was soon informed of the good news; and came flying out to meet her benefactor and her lover.

"Put on a shawl and your veil at once; and[Pg 377] make a bundle of your belongings," said Lady Mary, kissing her. "Master Raymond is in a great hurry to carry you off—at which I confess that I do not wonder." Dulcibel tripped off—the sooner she was out of that close place the better.

"Well, what is it, Master Arnold?" said Lady Mary to the keeper, who acted as if he wished to say something.

"It is only a form, my lady; but you have not shown me the Governor's warrant yet?"

"Why, yes I have," said Lady Mary, fluttering it at him as before.

But Keeper Arnold was fully aware of the responsibility of his position; and putting out his hand, he steadied the fluttering paper sufficiently to glance over its contents. When he came to the signature, his face paled. "Pardon me, my lady; but this is not the Governor's writing."

"Of course it is not—why, you silly loon, how could it be when he has gone to Plymouth? But you will perceive that it is in Master Josslyn's writing—and the Governor ought to have signed it before he started."

"This is hardly in regular form, my lady."

"It is not? Do you not see the Governor's[Pg 378] name; and there below it is my name, as proof of the Governor's. Do you mean to impeach my attestation of Sir William's signature? There is my name, Lady Mary Phips: and I will take the responsibility of this paper being a legal one. If anybody finds fault with you, send him to me; and I will say you did it, in the Governor's absence from town, at my peremptory order." The lady's face glowed, and her eyes flashed, with her excitement and determination.

"It would be as much as my position is worth to disobey it and me!" rejoined Lady Mary. "I will have you out of this place in three days' time, if you cast disrespect upon my written name."

"There can be no great haste in this matter. Bring the release tomorrow, and I will consult authority in the meanwhile," said the keeper pleadingly.

"Authority? The Governor's name is authority! I am authority! Who dare you set up beside us? You forget your proper respect and duty, Master Arnold."

The keeper was overborne at last. "You will uphold me, if I do this thing, Lady Mary?" said he imploringly.

"You know me, Master Arnold—and that I[Pg 379] never desert my friends! I shall accept the full responsibility of this deed before Sir William and the magistrates. And they cannot order any punishment which he cannot pardon."

By this time it had grown quite dark. "Shall I take you anywhere in my carriage?" said Lady Mary, as Dulcibel reappeared with a bundle.

"It is not necessary," replied Master Raymond joyfully, "I will not compromise you any further. God forever bless your ladyship! There is not another woman in New England with the spirit and courage to do what you have done this day—and the reader of our history a hundred years to come, as he reads this page, shall cry fervently, God bless the fearless and generous soul of Lady Mary!"

"Let me know when you are safe," she whispered to the young man, as he stood by her carriage. "Master and Mistress English are now the guests of Governor Fletcher of New York—changing a Boston prison for a Governor's mansion. You will be perfectly secure in that Province—or in Pennsylvania, or Maryland or Virginia." And the carriage drove off.

It was in that early hour of the evening, when the streets in town and city, are more deserted than[Pg 380] they are for some hours afterwards; everyone being indoors, and not come out for visiting or amusement. And so the young man and his companion walked towards the north-eastern part of the town, meeting only one or two persons, who took no special notice of them.

"You do not ask where we are going, Dulcibel?" at last said Master Raymond.

She could not see the sweet smile on his face; but she could feel it in his voice.

"Anywhere, with you!" the maiden replied in a low tone.

"We are going to be married."

He felt the pressure of her hand upon his arm in response.

"That is, if we can find a minister to perform the ceremony."

"That will be difficult, I should think."

"Yes, difficult, but not impossible. After getting you out of prison, as Lady Mary did, I should not like to call anything impossible."

"Lady Mary is an angel!"

"Yes, one of the kind with wings," replied her companion laughing. "She has kindly loaned us her wings though—and we are flying away on them." [Pg 381]

Before long they were at one of the wharves; then on a small boat—then on the deck of the "Storm King."

"I am better than my word, Captain Tolley."

"Aye! indeed you are. And this is the birdie! Fair Mistress, the "Storm King" and his brood are ready to die to shield you from harm."

Dulcibel looked wonder out of her clear blue eyes. What did it all mean? She smiled at the Captain's devoted speech. "I do not want any one to die for me, Captain. I would rather have you sing me a good sea-song, such as my father, who was also a sea-captain, used to delight me with at home."

"Oh, we can do that too," answered the Captain gaily. "I hope we shall have a jolly time of it, before we reach our destination. Now, come down into the cabin and see the preparations I have made for you; a sailor's daughter must have the best of sailor's cheer."

"One word, Captain," said Master Raymond, as the Captain came up on deck again, leaving Dulcibel to the privacy of her state-room. "It does not seem fitting that a young unmarried woman should be alone on a vessel like this, with no matron to bear her company." [Pg 382]

"Sir!" said the Captain, "I would have you know that the maiden is as safe from aught that could offend her modesty on the decks of the "Storm King," as if she were in her father's house."

"Of course she is. I know that well—and mean not the least offense. And she, innocent as she is, has no other thought. But this is a slanderous world, Captain, and we men who know the world, must think for her."

"Oh, I admit that," said Captain Tolley, somewhat mollified, "we cannot expect of mere land's people, who put an innocent girl like that into prison for no offense, the gentle

behavior towards women that comes naturally from a seaman; but what do you propose?"

"To send for one of the Boston ministers, and marry her before we leave port."

"Why, of course," replied the Captain. "It is the very thing. Whom shall we send for? The North Church is nearest—how would Master Cotton Mather do?"

The young man stood thoughtfully silent for a moment or two. The ministers of South Church and of King's chapel were more heterodox in all this witchcraft business; but for that very reason[Pg 383] he did not wish to compromise them in any way. Besides, he owed a grudge to Master Mather, for his general course in sustaining the persecution, and his recent language in particular towards himself. So his lips gradually settled into a stern determination, and he replied "Master Mather is the very man."

"It may require a little ingenuity to get him aboard at this time of the evening," said the Captain. "But I reckon my first mate, Simmons, can do it, if any one can."

"Here, Simmons," to the first mate, who was standing near, "you look like a pillar of the church, go ashore and bring off Master Cotton Mather with you. A wealthy young Englishman is dying—and he cannot pass away from Boston in peace without his ministerial services."

"Dying?" ejaculated Master Raymond.

"Yes, dying! dying to get married—and you cannot pass out of Boston harbor in peace, without his ministerial services."

"Would it not do as well to ask him to come and marry us?"

"I doubt it," replied the Captain. "Master Mather is honest in his faith, even if he is bigoted and superstitious—and death cannot be put off[Pg 384] like marriage till tomorrow. But take your own course, Simmons—only bring him."

"Shall I use force, sir, if he will not come peaceably?" asked the mate coolly.

"Not if it will make a disturbance," said his commander. "We do not want to run the gauntlet of the castle's guns as we go out of the harbor. The wind is hardly lively enough for that."

"I will go down and tell Dulcibel," said Master Raymond. "It is rather sudden, but she is a maiden of great good sense, and will see clearly the necessity of the case. And as she is an orphan, she has no father or mother whose consent she might consider

necessary. But Mate"—going to the side of the vessel, which the boat was just leaving, "not a word as to my name or that of the maiden. That would spoil all."

"Aye, aye, sir! Trust me to bring him!" and the boat started for the shore, under the vigorous strokes of two oarsmen.

CHAPTER LII.

[Pg 385]

An Unwilling Parson.

Not quite an hour had elapsed, when the sound of oars was again heard; and Captain Tolley, peering through the dark, saw that another form was seated opposite the mate in the stern-sheets of the boat.

"I thought that Simmons would bring him," said Captain Tolley to the second mate; "such a smooth tongue as he has. It is a pity he wasn't a minister himself—his genius is half wasted here."

"Glad to see you on board the Storm King, Master Mather," was the greeting of the Captain, as the minister was helped up to the deck by the mates.

"The Storm King! Why I was told that it was an English frigate, just come into port," said the minister in a surprised voice.

"The messenger must have made a mistake," replied the Captain coolly. "You know that landsmen always do get things mixed."

[Pg 386]"Well, as I am here, no matter. Show me the dying man."

"Walk down into the cabin," said the Captain politely.

Entering the cabin which was well lighted, Master Raymond stepped forward, "I am happy to see you, Master Mather. You remember me, do you not?"

"Master Raymond, I believe," returned the minister coldly. "Where is the dying man who requires my spiritual ministrations?"

"Dying!" laughed the Captain. "How strangely that fellow got things mixed. I said dying to get married—did I not, Master Raymond?"

"Of course you did—that is, after you had explained yourself."

Master Mather's face looked blank, he did not know what to make of it.

"In truth, Master Mather," said the young Englishman, "I was under the necessity of getting married this evening; and, thinking over the worshipful ministers of Boston town, I singled you out as the one I should prefer to officiate on the happy occasion."

"I decline to have anything to do with it," said Master Mather indignantly, turning on his heel, and going to the door of the cabin. But here a muscular sailor, with a boarding pike, promptly[Pg 387] forbade his passage by putting the pike across the door way.

"What do you mean by barring my way in this manner?" said the minister in great wrath to the captain. "Have you no reverence for the law?"

"Not a particle for Boston law," replied Captain Tolley. "The only law recognized on board the Storm King is the command of its Captain. You have been brought here to marry these two young friends of mine; and you will not leave the vessel before you do it—if I have to take you with us all the way to China."

Master Mather pondered the matter for a moment. "This is too informal, there are certain preliminaries that are necessary in such cases."

"Advisable—but I am told not absolutely necessary," replied Master Raymond.

"Wait then for an hour or two; and we shall be on the high seas—and out of any jurisdiction," added Captain Tolley.

"Who is this maiden? Who gives her away?" asked the minister.

"This maiden is Mistress Dulcibel Burton," said Master Raymond, taking her by the hand.

[Pg 388]"She is an orphan; but I give her away," added the Captain.

"Dulcibel Burton! the serpent witch!" exclaimed Master Mather. "What is that convict doing here? Has she broken jail?"

"Master Mather," said the Captain in an excited tone, "if you utter another word of insult against this innocent and beautiful maiden, I will have you flung overboard to the sharks! So take care of what you say!" and the indignant seaman shook his finger in the minister's face warningly.

"Master Mather," added Raymond, more coolly, "Mistress Burton has not broken jail. She was duly released from custody by Keeper Arnold on the presentation of an official paper by Lady Mary Phips. Therefore your conscience need not be uneasy on that score."

"Why are you here then—why making this haste? It is evident that there is something wrong about it."

"Boston has not treated either of us so well that we are very desirous of remaining," replied Master Raymond. "And as we are going together, it is only decorous that we should get married. If you however refuse to marry us, we shall be compelled to take you with us—for the mere presence of such a respected minister will be sufficient to[Pg 389] shield the maiden's name from all reckless calumniators."

The second mate came to the door of the cabin. "Captain, there is a fine breeze blowing, it is a pity not to use it."

"Make all ready, sir," replied the Captain. Then turning to the minister, "There is no particular hurry, Master Mather. You can take the night to think over it. To-morrow morning probably, if you come to your senses, we may be able to send you ashore somewhere, between here and the capes of the Delaware."

"This is outrageous!" said Master Mather. "I will hold both of you accountable for it."

"It is a bad time to threaten, when your head is in the lion's mouth, Master Mather," returned Captain Tolley fiercely. "No one knows but my own men that you ever came on board the 'Storm King.' How do you know that I am not Captain Kidd himself?"

[Pg 390]The minister's face grew pale. It was no disparagement to his manhood. Even Master Raymond's face grew very serious—for did even he know that this Captain Tolley might not be the renowned freebooter, of whose many acts of daring and violence the wide seas rang?

"I would counsel you for your own good to do at once what you will have to do ultimately," said Master Raymond gravely. "I owe you no thanks for anything; but"—and the young man laughed as he turned to Dulcibel—"I never could trap even a fox without pitying the animal."

Dulcibel went up to the minister, and put her hand upon his arm:—"Do I look so much like a witch?" she said in a playful tone.

"We are told that Satan can enrobe himself like an angel of light," replied Master Mather severely. "I judge you by what I have heard of your cruel deeds."

"As you judged the cruel yellow bird that turned out to be only a harmless little chicken," said Master Raymond sarcastically. "Enough of this folly. Will you marry us now—or not? If you will, you shall be put ashore unharmed. If you will not, you shall go along with us. Make up your mind at once, for we shall soon be out of Boston harbor."

Master Mather had a strong will—and an equally strong won't—but the Philistines were, for this time, too much for him. That reference to Captain Kidd had frightened him badly. "Stand up—and I will marry you. Unscrupulous as you[Pg 391] both are, it is better that you should be married by legal rites, than allowed to go your own way to destruction."

And then—the important ceremony being duly gone through—he pronounced Master Ellis Raymond and Mistress Dulcibel Burton man and wife. The Captain being allowed by Master Raymond to take the first kiss, as acting in the place of the bride's father.

"No, not a penny!" said the minister, closing his hand against the golden pieces that the groom held out to him. "All I ask is, that you comply with your promise—and put me on shore again as soon as possible."

"Better take a drink of wine first," said the Captain, filling up a glass and handing it to him.

"I will neither break bread nor drink wine on this"—he was going to say *accursed* ship; but the fierce eyes of the possible freebooter were upon him, and he said, "on this unhappy vessel."

Captain Tolley laughed heartily. "Oh well, good wine never goes begging. The anchor is not up yet, and we will put you off just where you came on. Come along!"

Without a word of leave-taking to the two whom he had joined together, Master Mather followed[Pg 392] the Captain. In fact though, Master Raymond and Dulcibel scarcely noted his going, for they were now seated on a small sofa, the arm of the young husband around the shapely waist of his newly-made wife, and the minister dismissed from their minds as completely as the wine-glass out of which they had just drank. He had answered their purpose and in the deep bliss of their new relation, they thought no more about him.

As Master Mather turned to descend to the boat again—not wasting any formal words of leave-taking upon the Captain either—the latter grasped him by the arm.

"Wait one moment," said Captain Tolley. "You will speak of what has occurred here this evening Master Mather, or not, at your pleasure. But be careful of what you say—for there is no power on this coast, strong enough to protect you against my vengeance!" And with a scowl upon his face, that would not have done injustice to the dreaded Captain Kidd himself, he added in a hoarse, fierce tone the one impressive word "Beware!"

The minister made no reply. It was a day of fierce men and wild deeds—especially on the high[Pg 393] seas. Prudence in some positions is far better than valor.

"Now, my hearties! let us get out of this harbor as soon as possible!" cried the Captain. "I might have held him till we were opposite the castle, and put him ashore there; but it is safer as it is. We have a regular clearance, and he cannot do anything legally under an hour or two at least—while in half-an-hour we shall be outside. With a stiff breeze like this, once on the open seas, I fear neither man nor devil!"

CHAPTER LIII.

[Pg 394]

The Wedding Trip and Where Then.

Whether Master Mather did make any serious effort to prevent the "Storm King" from leaving the harbor, I am unable to say; but as I find no reference to this affair either in his biography or his numerous works, I am inclined to think that like a wise man, he held his peace as to what had occurred, and resolved never to go on board another vessel after nightfall.

Certainly no cannon ball cut the waves as the "Storm King" sailed swiftly past the castle, and no signal was displayed signifying that she must come at once to anchor.

And the little trip to New York was as pleasant in all respects as a young couple on a bridal tour could desire—even if the mere relief from the anxieties and threatened dangers of the previous long months had not been of itself a cause of happiness.

Arrived at New York, Master Philip English and his wife received them with open arms. Master Raymond had brought letters from England to Governor Fletcher and others, and soon made[Pg 395] warm friends among the very best people. There was no sympathy whatever in New York at that time with the witchcraft persecutions in Massachusetts; and all fugitives were received, as in the case of the Englishes, with great sympathy and kindness.

Much to my regret, at this point, the old manuscript book to which I have been so largely indebted, suddenly closes its record of the fortunes of Master and Mistress Raymond. Whether they went to England, and took up their residence there among Master Raymond's friends, or found a home in this new world, I am therefore not able with absolute certainty to say. From what I have been able, however, to gather from other quarters, I have come to the conclusion that they were so much pleased with

their reception in New York, that Master Raymond purchased an estate on the east side of the Hudson River, where he and the charming Dulcibel lived and loved to a good old age, leaving three sons and three daughters. If this couple really were our hero and heroine, then the Raymonds became connected, through the three daughters, with the Smiths, the Joneses and the Browns. In one way, perhaps, the question might be set at rest, were it not too delicate[Pg 396] a one for successful handling. There is little doubt that among the descendants of Mistress Dulcibel, on the female side, the birth-mark of the serpent, more or less distinct, will be found occasionally occurring, even now, at the lapse of almost two centuries. Therefore, if among the secret traditions of any of the families I have mentioned, there be one relative to this curious birth-mark, doubtless that would be sufficient proof that in their veins runs the rich blood of the charming Dulcibel Raymond.

CHAPTER LIV.

[Pg 397]

Some Concluding Remarks.

Perhaps before I conclude I should state that the keeper of the Boston Bridewell, Master Arnold, was summarily dismissed for accepting the validity of the Governor's signature. But he did not take it very grievously to heart for Master Raymond, Captain Alden and others whom he had obliged saw him largely recompensed. Captain Alden, by the way, had fled for concealment to his relatives in Duxbury. Being asked when he appeared there, "Where he came from?" the old captain said "he was fleeing from the devil—who was still after him." However his relatives managed to keep him safely, until all danger was passed, both from the devil and from his imps.

As for Lady Mary, the indignation of "the faithful" was hot against her—and finally against Sir William, who could not be made to see in it anything but a very good joke. "You know that Lady Mary will have her own way," he said to Master Mather.

"Wives should be kept in due gospel subjection!" returned the minister.[Pg 398]

"Oh, yes, rejoined the Governor smiling; but I wish you had a wife like Lady Mary, and would try it on her! I think we should hear something breaking."

But when Mistress Ann Putnam and others began "to cry out" against Lady Mary as a witch, the Governor waxed angry in his turn.

"It is time to put a stop to all this," he said indignantly. "They will denounce me as a witch next." So he issued a general pardon and jail delivery—alike to the ten persons who were then under sentence of death, to those who had escaped from prison, and to the one hundred and fifty lying in different jails, and the two hundred others who had been denounced for prosecution.

It was a fair blow, delivered at the very front and forehead of the cruel persecution and it did its good work, though it lost Sir William his position—sending him back to England to answer the charges of his enemies, and to die there soon afterwards in his forty-fifth year.

When Chief-Justice Stoughton, engaged in fresh trials against the reputed witches, read the Governor's proclamation of Pardon, he was so indignant that he left his seat on the bench, and could not be prevailed upon to return to it. [Pg 399]

Neither could he, to the day of his death, be brought to see that he had done anything else than what was right in the whole matter.

Not so the jury—which, several years after, confessed its great mistake, and publicly asked forgiveness. Nor Judge Sewall, who rose openly in church, and confessed his fault, and afterward kept one of the days of execution, with every returning year, sacred to repentance and prayer—seeing no person from sunrise to nightfall, mourning in the privacy of his own room the sin he had committed.

Mistress Ann Putnam and her husband both died within the seven years, as Dulcibel in her moment of spiritual exaltation had predicted. Her daughter Ann lived to make a public confession, asking pardon of those whom she had (she said unintentionally) injured, and died at the age of thirty-five—her grave being one that nobody wanted their loved ones to lie next to.

As for the majority of the "afflicted circle," they fell as the years went on into various evil ways—one authority describing them as "abandoned to open and shameless vice."

Master Philip English, after the issue of the Governor's pardon, returned to Salem. Seven[Pg 400]teen years afterwards, he was still trying to recover his property from the officials of the Province. Of £1500 seized, he never recovered more than £300; while his wife died in two years, at the age of forty-two, in consequence of the treatment to which she had been subjected.

Master Joseph Putnam and his fair Elizabeth lived on in peace at the old place; taking into his service the Quaker Antipas upon his release from prison. The latter was

always quiet and peaceful, save when any allusion was made to the witches. But he had easy service and good treatment; and was a great favorite with the children, especially with that image of his father, who afterwards became distinguished as the Major General Putnam of Revolutionary fame.

As for the presents that had been promised to the "afflicted circle," they came to them duly, and from London too. And they were rich gifts also; but such a collection of odd and grotesque articles, certainly are not often got together. Master Raymond had commissioned an eccentric friend of his in London to purchase them, and send them on; acquainting him with the peculiar circumstances. There were yellow birds, and red dragons, and other fantastic animals, birds and beasts. But[Pg 401] they came from London and the "circle" found them just suited to their peculiar tastes; and they always maintained, even in defiance of Mistress Ann, that Master Raymond was a lovely gentleman and an "afflicted" person himself. It will thus be seen that these Salem maidens were in their day truly esthetic—having that sympathetic fondness for unlovely and repulsive things, which is the unerring indication of a daughter of Lilith.

And now, in conclusion, some one may ask, "Did the Province of Massachusetts ever make any suitable atonement for the great wrongs her Courts of Injustice had committed?" I answer Never! Massachusetts has never made any, adequate atonement—no, not to this day!

The General Assembly, eighteen years afterwards, did indeed pass an act reversing the convictions and attainders in all but six of the cases; and ordering the distribution of the paltry sum of £578 among the heirs of twenty-four persons, as a kind of compensation to the families of those who had suffered; but this was all—nothing, or next to nothing!

[Pg 402]Perhaps the day will some time come, when the cry of innocent blood from the rocky platform of Witch Hill, shall swell into sufficient volume to be heard across the chasm of two centuries. Then, on some high pedestal, where the world can see it, Massachusetts shall proclaim in enduring marble her penitence and ask a late forgiveness of the twenty innocent men and women whom she so terribly wronged. And as all around, and even the mariner far out at sea, shall behold the gleaming shaft, standing where stood the rude gallows of two centuries ago, they shall say with softening eyes and glowing cheeks: "It is never too late to right a great wrong; and Massachusetts now makes all the expiation that is possible to those whom her deluded forefathers dishonored and persecuted and slew!"