

Jane G. Austin

BETTY ALDEN
STORY OF THE PILGRIM
JANE G. AUSTIN

*Betty Alden: The first-
born daughter
of the Pilgrims*

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PREFACE.

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Everybody has sympathized with Mr. Dick who could not keep King Charles's head out of his memorial, and I hope everybody will sympathize with me who have been unable to keep Betty Alden in this her memorial so constantly as I wished and she deserved. But as the whole includes the less, her story will be found threaded through that of her people and her times in that modest subordination to which the lives of her sex were trained in that day. He who would read for himself the story of this noble woman, the first-born daughter of the Pilgrims, must seek it through ancient volumes and mouldering records, until at Little Compton in Rhode Island he finds upon her gravestone the last affectionate and honorable mention of Elizabeth, daughter of John and Priscilla Alden, and wife of William Pabodie. Or in lighter mood, he may consider the rugged rhyme tradition places in her mouth upon the occasion of the birth of her great great grandchild:—

“Rise daughter! To thy daughter run!
Thy daughter's daughter hath a son.”

One word upon a subject which has of late been a good deal discussed, but by no means settled, and that is, the burial place of Myles Standish. In the absence of all proof in any such matter, tradition becomes important, and so far as I have been able to determine, the tradition that some of

the earliest settlers were buried in the vicinity of a temporary meeting-house upon Harden Hill in Duxbury is more reliable than the tradition that Standish was laid in an old burying ground at Hall's Corner which probably was not set aside as a burial place in 1656, the date of his death.

It is matter of surprise and regret to most persons that the Pilgrims took so little pains to perpetuate the memory of their graves, and their doing so would have been a wonderful aid to those who would read the palimpsest of the past. But a little recollection diminishes the wonder, if not the regret. Practically, the Pilgrims had neither the money wherewith to import gravestones, nor the skill to fashion and sculpture them; ethically, their lives were fashioned after an ideal, and that ideal was Protestantism in its most primitive intention, a protest against Rome, her creeds and her usages; prayers for the dead were to them a horrible superstition; Purgatory a mere invention of the powers of hell; an appeal to saints, angels, or the spirits of the departed was a direct insult to the Divine Supremacy. The instant the soul left the body Protestantism decreed that it was not only useless but profane to follow it with prayers (much less masses), or with any other remembrance which might be construed as intruding upon "the counsels of the Almighty," so that while private grief was sternly rebuked as rebellion against the chastisements of a just and offended God, every form of funeral service, domestic or congregational, was set aside as superstitious and dangerous.

The only exceptions to this rule were the volleys of musketry fired over the graves of certain of the leaders, as

Carver, Standish, Bradford, and a few others, but these stern military honors were unaccompanied by even the prayer of a chaplain.

It was perhaps not altogether from fear of the Indians that the fifty of the Mayflower Pilgrims who were left alive that first spring smoothed the graves of the fifty who were gone, and planted them to corn; possibly they also feared their own hearts, sorely tempted by nature to cherish and adorn those barren graves where so much love and hope lay buried; and any step in that direction was a step backward from that "city" they had crossed the seas to seek in the wilderness.

It is I think certain that not one of the original Pilgrim graves was marked by any sort of monument. The few we now delight to honor were identified by those of their children to whom the third generation erected tablets. A few persons, of loving and unbigoted hearts, begged to be buried beside their departed friends, and Standish in his last will allowed a sunset gleam of his tender nature to shine out when he asked to be laid as near as conveniently might be to his two dear daughters; but neither he nor any of the others who made this testamentary petition mentioned where the graves were, beside which they fain would lie, nor in any one instance have they been positively identified. That of Elder Brewster, concerning whose burial we have many particulars, is altogether unknown, except that it seems to have been made upon Burying Hill. Perhaps that of Standish is there also, for when he says,—“If I die at Duxburrow I should like,” etc., he may mean that if he dies in Duxbury he would fain be carried to Plymouth, there to lie

beside his daughters and very likely his two little sons as well.

But to me it seems a small matter, this question of the grave of Standish. He lived to be old and very infirm, and neither his old age, his infirmities, nor his final surrender to death are any part of his memory. For me, he stands forever as he stood in his glorious prime among the people he so unselfishly championed, a tower of strength, courage, and endurance, the shining survival of chivalry, the gallant paladin whose coat-armor gleams amid the throng of russet jerkins and mantles of hodden gray, like the dash of color with which Turner accents his wastes of sombre water and sky. So let him stand, so let us look upon him, and honor him and glory in him, nor seek to draw the veil with which Time mercifully hides the only defeat our hero ever knew, that last fatal battle when age, and "dolorous pain," and fell disease, conquered the invincible, and restored to earth all that was mortal of a magnificent immortality. We cannot erect a monument over that forgotten grave, but in some coming day let us hope that the descendants of the soldier Pilgrim will possess themselves of the little peninsula where the site of his home may still be traced, and there place some memorial stone to tell that on this fairest spot of fair Duxbury's shore lived and died the man who gave Duxbury her name, and bequeathed to us an inheritance far richer than that which was "surreptitiously detained" from him.

BOSTON, *October, 1891.*

BETTY ALDEN.

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A WHISPER IN THE EAR.

“Tell him yourself, Pris.”

“No, no, Bab, I know too much for that! These men love not to be taught by a woman, although, if all were known, full many a whisper in the bedchamber comes out next day at the council board, and one grave master says to another, ‘Now look you, tell it not to the women lest they blab it!’ never mistrusting in his owl-head that a woman set the whole matter afloat.”

“Oh, Pris, you do love to jibe at the men. How did you ever persuade yourself to marry one of them?”

“Why, so that one of them might be guided into some sort of discretion. Doesn’t John Alden show as a bright example to his fellows?”

“And all through his wife’s training, eh, Pris?”

“Why, surely. Didst doubt such a patent fact, Mistress Standish?”

“But now, Pris, in sober sadness tell me what has given you such dark suspicions of these new-comers, and how do you venture to whisper ‘treason’ and ‘traitor’ about a man who has been anointed God’s messenger, even though it has been in the papistical Church of England?”

“If the English bishops are such servants of antichrist as the governor and the Elder make them out, I should conceive that their anointing would be rather against a man’s character than a warrant for it.” And Priscilla Alden laughed saucily into the thoughtful face of her friend and

neighbor, Barbara Standish, who, knitting busily at a little lamb's-wool stocking, shook her head as she replied,—

“Mr. Lyford is not a man to my taste, and I care not to hear him preach, but yet, we are told in Holy Writ not to speak evil of dignitaries, nor to rail against those set over us”—

“Then surely it is contrary to Holy Writ for this Master Lyford to speak evil of the governor and to rail against the captain, as he doth continually”—

“Who rails against the captain, Mistress Alden?” demanded a cheerful voice, as Myles Standish entered at the open door of his house, and, removing the broad-leafed hat picturesquely pulled over his brow, revealed temples worn bare of the rust-colored locks still clustering thickly upon the rest of his head, and matching in color the close, pointed beard and the heavy brows, beneath which the resolute and piercing eyes his enemies learned to dread in early days now shone with a genial smile.

“Who has been abusing the captain?” repeated he, as the women laughed in some confusion, looking at each other for an answer. Priscilla was the first to find it, and glancing frankly into the face of the man she might once have loved replied,—

“Why, 'tis I that am trying to stir Barbara into showing you what a nest of adders we are nourishing here in Plymouth, and moving you and the governor to set your heels upon them before it be too late.”

As she spoke, the merry gleam died out of the captain's eyes, and grasping his beard in the left hand, as was his wont in perplexity, he said gravely,—

“These are large matters for a woman’s handling, Priscilla, and it may chance that Barbara’s silence is the better part of your valor. But still,—what do you mean?”

“I mean that Master Oldhame and Master Lyford as the head, and their followers and creatures as the tail, are maturing into a very pretty monster here in our midst, which if let alone will some fine morning swallow the colony for its breakfast, and if only it would be content with the men I would say grace for it, but, unfortunately, the women and children are the tender bits, and will serve as a relish to the coarser meat.”

“Come, now, Priscilla, a truce to your quips and jibes, and tell me what there is to tell. I cry you pardon for noting your forwardness in what concerned you not”—

“Nay, Myles, you’ve said it now,” interposed Barbara, with a little laugh, while Priscilla, gathering her work in her apron, and looking very pretty with her flaming cheeks and sparkling eyes, jumped up saying,—

“At all events, John Alden’s dinner concerns both him and me, and I will go and make it ready; a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse, and a penny pipe as well as a trumpet to warn a deaf man that the enemy is upon him. Put your nose in the air, Captain Standish, and march stoutly on into the pitfall dug for your feet.”

“Come, come, Mistress Alden! These are no words for a gentlewoman,” began the captain angrily, but on the threshold Priscilla turned, a saucy laugh flashing through the anger of her face, and reminding the captain in his own despite of a sudden sunbeam glinting across dark Manomet in the midst of a thunder-storm.

“Here’s the governor coming up the hill, Myles,” whispered she, “and you may finish the rest of your scolding to him. I’m frightened as much as is safe for me a’ready.”

And light as a bird she ran down the hill just as Bradford reached the door and, glancing in, said in his sonorous and benevolent voice, “Good-morrow to you, Mistress Standish. I am sorry to have frightened away your merry gossip, but I am seeking the goodman— Ah, there you are, Captain! I would have a word with you at your leisure.”

“Shall I run after Priscilla, Myles?” asked Barbara, cordially returning the governor’s greeting.

“Nay, wife, we two will walk up to the Fort,” replied Standish, and replacing his hat, he led the way up the hill to the Fort, where he ushered his friend into a little room contrived in the southeastern angle for his private use: his office, his study, his den, or his growlery by turns, for here was his little stock of books, his writing-table and official records; here his pipes and tobacco; a stand of private arms crowned by Gideon; the colony’s telescope fashioned by Galileo; and here a deep leathern chair with a bench nigh at hand, where through many a silent hour the captain sat, and amid the smoke-wreaths of his pipe mused upon things that had been, things that might have been, and things that never could be, never could have been.

“Have a stool by the porthole, Will; ’tis something warm for September,” said he, as he closed the door.

“Ay, but you always have a good air at this east window, and a fair view as well,” returned the governor, seating himself.

“The view of the Charity is but a fleeting one, since she sails in the morning,” remarked Standish dryly.

“Yes, she does,” assented Bradford, with an air of embarrassment not lost upon the captain, who smiled ever so little, and lighted his pipe, saying between the puffs,—

“’Tis safe enough to smoke in this den of mine, Will, and your tobacco is a wonderful counselor.”

“Say you so, Myles? Then pass over your pouch, for I am in sore need of counsel and sought it of you.”

“Such as I have is at your command, Governor. What is the matter?”

“Well, ’tis hard to put it in any dignified or magisterial phrase, Myles, since, truth to tell, it comes of the distaff side of the house”—

“Ay, ay, I can believe it! Has Priscilla Alden been whispering with your wife?”

“Nay, not that I know of; in truth, ’tis somewhat idler than even that foundation, for Mistress Alden is one of our own, but this—well, to tell the story in manful sincerity, my wife informs me that Dame Lyford, who is as you know in childbed, and much beholden for care and comfort to both your wife and mine, as well as to Priscilla Alden, last night fell a-crying, and said she was a miserable wretch to receive nourishment and tendance at their hands when her husband was practicing with Oldhame and others for our destruction. In the beginning, Alice set this all down as the querulous maundering of a sick woman; but when the other persisted, and spoke of treasonable letters that her husband had writ, and read out to Oldhame in her very presence, Dame Bradford began to pay some heed, and ask questions, until

by the time the woman's strength was overborne and she could say no more, the skeleton of a plot lay bare, which should it be clothed upon with sinew, and flesh, and armor, and weapons, might slay us all both as a colony and as particular men."

"A dragon, Priscilla called it," interposed the captain.

"Priscilla! Did Mistress Lyford say as much to her as to my wife?" asked the governor, a little piqued.

"Nay, I know not, for I was, according to my wont, too outspoken to listen as I should."

"Well, but explain, I beg of you."

"All is, that Priscilla began some sort of warning anent this very matter, and I angered her with some jibe at women meddling in matters too mighty for them, so that I know not what she might have had to tell."

The Governor of Plymouth smiled in a subtle fashion peculiar to men whose vision extends beyond their own time. "Women," said he slowly, as he pressed the tobacco into his pipe,— "women, Myles, are like the bit of lighted tinder I will lay upon this inert mass of dried weed. The tinder is so trivial, so slight a thing, so difficult to handle, so easily destroyed,—and yet, brother man, how without it should we derive the solace and counsel of our pipes?"

Glancing at each other, the soldier and the statesman laughed somewhat shamefacedly, and Myles said,—

"Ay, 'tis the pith of Æsop's fable of the Lion and the Mouse."

"Well, yes, although that is a thought too arrogant, perhaps; and yet Master Lion is oftentimes a stupid fellow, though he is styled king of beasts."

“And what is the net just now, my Lord Lion?” demanded Standish, who could not quite relish Bradford’s philosophy. The governor roused himself at the question, and laying aside his meditative mood replied,—

“We both know, Captain, that all who are with us are not of us, and we have not forgot what false reports those disaffected fellows carried home in the Anne, nor the mutterings and plottings we have heard and suspected since.”

“Shorten John Oldhame by the head and you will kill the whole mutiny.”

“That sounds very simple, but is hardly a feasible course, Captain, especially as we have no proof in the matter, and it is upon this very question of proof that I came to consult you.”

“And I just shut off the only source of proof I am like to get.”

“Nay, it is not likely that Mistress Alden knows more than my wife has already repeated to me of what Dame Lyford can reveal, but our good friend Master Pierce came to my house to-day about some matters I am sending to my wife’s sister, Mary Carpenter, and all by chance mentioned that he had in trust a parcel of letters writ by Lyford, with one or two by Oldhame, and that both men had charged him to secrecy in the business. Now, Standish, those letters contain the moral of the whole matter.”

“To be sure; it is like drawing a double tooth to see them sail out of the harbor.”

“Captain, it is my duty as the chief officer of this colony to learn the contents of these missives.”

“Yes, but how? The traitors will not betray themselves.”

“I must privately open and read their letters,—it is my duty.”

“No, no, Will; no, no! I can’t give in to that; I can’t help you there, man! To open and read another man’s letter, and on the sly, is all one with hearkening at a keyhole, or telling a lie, or turning your back on an enemy without a blow. You can’t do that, Will, let the cause be what it may.”

And as the captain’s astonished gaze fixed itself upon his friend’s face, Bradford colored deeply, yet made reply in a voice both resolute and self-respecting,—

“I feel as you do, Standish, and as any honorable man must; but this is a matter involving more than mine own honor or pleasure. If these men are persuading our associates in England to withdraw from their agreement, and refuse to send us further supplies, or to find a market for our commodities, and so help out our own struggles for subsistence, we and all these weaklings dependent upon us are lost. You know yourself how hardly we came through the famine of last year, and although by the mercy of God we now may hope to provide our own food, what can we do for clothes, for tools, for even the means of communication with our old home, if the Adventurers throw us over, or if they demand immediate repayment of the moneys advanced? In every way, and for all sakes, it is imperative that we prevent an evil and false report going home to those upon whose help we still must rely for the planting of our colony.”

“To be sure it is the usage of war to intercept the enemy’s dispatches,” mused Standish, tugging at his russet beard and scowling heavily.

“To be sure it is,” returned Bradford eagerly. “And although these men are not avowed enemies, we can see that they are not friends. Do but mark how thick they are with Billington, and Hicks, and all the other malcontents. Oldhame’s house is a regular Cave of Adullam.”

“Well, Will, tell me what I am to do or to say in the matter. You know that I am ready for any duty, however odious.”

“I fain would have you go aboard the Charity with me to inspect her carriages.”

“Is there any chance of a fight?”

“No, no. I shall not go aboard until the last moment, when all but Winslow have left.”

“Winslow’s errand home is to see the Adventurers?”

“As the colony’s agent, yes.”

“And he knows your intent?”

“Not yet. I have spoken of it to no man until I had your mind upon it, Standish. To-night I shall summon the Assistants to my house, and lay the matter before them, but I felt moved to speak of it first to you in private.”

“Lest I should blaze out before them all, where you could not argue the matter coolly with me, eh?”

Bradford smiled as he knocked the ashes out of his pipe and rose to go.

“I could not do with your disapproval, old friend,” said he.

CHAPTER II

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A SHARP PAIR OF SCISSORS.

Two men stood upon Cole's Hill, half sheltering themselves behind the ragged growth of scrub oaks and poplars sprung from those graves of the first winter, sown by the survivors to wheat lest the savages should perceive that half the company were dead. That pathetic crop of grain had perished on the ground and never been renewed; but Nature, tender mother, soon replaced it with a robe of her own symbolism, green as her favorite clothing ever is, and embroidered with the starry flowers of the succory, blue as heaven.

From the grave of John Carver and Katharine his wife had sprung a graceful clump of birches, and it was behind these that the two men finally took up their post of observation. One of them was John Lyford, a smooth and white faced man, whose semi-clerical garb only accented his cunning eyes and sensual mouth. A double renegade this, for, flying to the New World to escape the punishment of his sins in England, he proffered himself to the Pilgrims as a convert to their creed, renouncing with oaths and tears his Episcopal ordination, although assured by those liberal-minded men that such recantation was not required or desired; then, having joined the Church of the Separation entirely of his own free will, he turned viperwise upon the hand that fed him, and began plotting against the peace, nay the very life, of his generous hosts, and leading away those weak and disaffected souls to be found in every community.

John Oldhame, his companion, was a very different sort of person. Big, loud-voiced, and dogmatic, he was the sailor who would see the ship driven to destruction on the rocks unless he could be captain and give orders to every one else.

The motives of these two conspirators were as diverse as their antecedents, although both came out under the auspices of the London Adventurers, of whom a word must be said. These gentlemen, knowing a good deal less of New England than we do of the sources of the Nile, had *adventured* certain moneys in fitting out the Pilgrims, and in sustaining them until they should be able to repay the sums thus advanced "with interest thereto." When the Mayflower made her first return, leaving fifty of the Pilgrims in their graves and the other fifty just struggling back to life and feebly beginning their plantation and house building, the Adventurers were exceedingly wroth that she did not come freighted with lumber, furs, and especially salted fish enough to nearly pay for her voyage. Their bitter reproaches written to Carver were answered with manly dignity by Bradford, but a really cordial feeling was never reëstablished, and when the Pilgrims requested that either Robinson or some other minister should be sent out to them, the Adventurers imposed Lyford upon them, some of them giving him secret instructions to act as a spy in their behalf.

John Oldhame, a man of means and position, came out upon a different footing, paying his own expenses, and being, as the Pilgrims phrased it, "on his own particular" instead of "on the general" or joint stock account. But

events soon made it plain that a very good understanding existed between Oldhame and the Adventurers, and that if he should be enabled to detect his hosts in defrauding the Adventurers, whose greedy maws never were fully satisfied, they would transfer their protection and countenance to him, sustaining him as a rival or even supplanter of the interests of the men they had undertaken to befriend.

The Pilgrims had the faults of their virtues in very marked degree, and carried patience, meekness, long-suffering, and credulity to a point most irritating to their historians and very subversive of their worldly interests. Doubtless, however, they found their account in the final reckoning, and one must try to be patient with their goodness. All which means that if this growing treason in their midst was at all suspected it was not noticed, and both Oldhame and Lyford were admitted to the full privileges of townsmen, including a seat at the Council and full knowledge of the colony's concerns. Lyford, in virtue of the ordination, so scornfully abjured by himself, was requested to act as minister in association with Elder Brewster, although some quiet doubts still prevented his admission to the position of pastor.

With this necessary explanation of the position of affairs we return to the hiding-place behind the birches, whence the conspirators watched a boat manned by four sailors which lay uneasily tossing on the flood tide, rubbing its nose against the Rock, while, in the offing, a ship ready for sea lay awaiting it.

"Bradford is certainly going aboard the Charity. They're waiting for him, and there he comes down The Street,"

growled Oldhame at length.

“Perhaps only to see Winslow off. He, he! the Adventurers will show Master Envoy Winslow but a sour face when they’ve read our letters,” sniggered Lyford.

“I wish he might be clapt up in jail for the rest of his life, confound him!”

“There’s Standish along of Bradford! Think he’s going aboard, too?” And Lyford’s face showed such craven terror that Oldhame laughed aloud.

“Afraid of Captain Shrimp, as Tom Morton calls him?” demanded he. “I’ve put a spoke in *his* wheel, at any rate. You writ down what I advised about another commander, didn’t you?”

“Ay. To send him over at all odds, and to arrest this fellow for high treason.”

“Ah! He’s not going aboard after all,” ejaculated Oldhame venomously. “Feels he must stay ashore and watch you and me and Hicks and Billington and some of the rest. Set him up for a sneaking, prying little watch-dog! But let him undertake to order me about as he did t’other day, and I’ll cram his square teeth down his bull’s throat for him, damn him!”

“He, he, he! There’s no love lost between you and Captain Standish, is there, Master Oldhame? There, they’re off,—Winslow and Bradford only; and Captain Shrimp returns up the hill with the rest. I sore mistrust me the governor has got scent of those letters, Oldhame.”

“Pho, pho, man! Don’t be so timorous. Pierce won’t give up the letters, and if he did, Bradford would think twice before opening them. Let him dare put a finger to one of

mine, and I'll bring the whole house about his ears! I'd like to catch him at it. I'd—why, I'd give him a taste of my fists, —one for himself, and one to pass on to his neighbor, and after that”—

“M-o-o-o!” broke in a voice close behind, and, with a start, the conspirators faced round to meet “the great red cow,” recently arrived in the Charity, and, with her, the comely but scoffing face of Priscilla Alden.

“I cry your pardon, gentlemen, if I have disturbed a secret conclave, but as my babes have a share of this cow's milk, I like her not to feed among the graves. All sorts of unclean creatures lurk here, and I fear lest the poor beast find contamination.”

“A saucy wench, and one that would well grace the ducking-stool,” growled Oldhame as Priscilla drove her cow away; while Lyford, remembering that she had that morning brought his wife a delicate breakfast, laughed uneasily and made no reply.

The governor's boat meanwhile, merrily driven by the “white-ash breeze” of four stalwart oars, had reached the ship's side, signaling, as she passed, the colony's pinnace, which, under easy sail, lay off and on the anchorage of the Charity.

“Good-morrow, Governor. You are welcome aboard, Master Winslow,” cried the hearty voice of William Pierce, master of the Charity, and friend of the Pilgrims, as the passengers came aboard; and then, as if their errand were one needing no explanation, he led the way at once to his own cabin, fastened the door, and from a small locker at the foot of the bed-place took a packet of letters enveloped in

oilskin. Laying these upon the little table and still resting his hand upon them, the honest mariner looked steadily in the faces of his visitors.

“Master Bradford, you are the governor of this colony and its chief authority. Do you, in the presence of Master Edward Winslow, your agent to the home government and one of your principal assistants, demand the surrender of these letters confided to my care by persons under your government?”

“I do, Master Pierce,” replied Bradford distinctly, “and I call Edward Winslow to witness that the responsibility is mine and that of my Board of Assistants, and that you are guiltless in the matter. Nevertheless, I will not pretend that Master Oldhame and his party are directly under my government, since they came to Plymouth on their own account, and are not ranked as of the general company, but rather on their own particular.”

“Still they are bound by the laws we all have subscribed to for our mutual safety and advantage,” suggested Winslow, and would have said more had not Pierce bluffly interposed,—

“Well, well, all these niceties are out of my line. Some colonists have confided certain letters to me; the governor of the colony makes requisition upon me before a competent witness for these letters, suspecting treason therein; I surrender them to his keeping, and there ends my responsibility. And now I will go and make sail upon my ship. Governor, your pinnace shall be summoned whenever you give the signal.” And Captain Pierce turned toward the companion-way, but presently returned, a genial smile

replacing the slight annoyance darkening his face, and going to the “ditty bag” suspended near the porthole, he fumbled for a moment, then threw what he had found upon the table, adding merrily, “And if you want to make a neat job of it, Bradford, here’s a sharp little pair of scissors. We sailors hate to see a trick of work bungled, if it’s nothing better than ferreting out treason.”

And with a smart westerly breeze the Charity set her nose toward England, and plunged bravely out into the Atlantic. Before she sighted the scene of the Pilgrim Mothers’ first washing-day, however, she lay to, while the governor’s pinnace was brought alongside, and he and Winslow came on deck and stood for a moment hand in hand.

“God be with you, brother,” said Bradford in a voice of restrained emotion. “Remember that until you return we are as a man half whose limbs are palsied; nay, Carver in that prophetic moment called you our brain. Remember it, Winslow.”



CHAPTER III.

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TREASON.

“Master Oldhame, you are set upon the watch to-night, and will report after the evening gun at the Fort.”

“The devil you say, Giles Hopkins! And who gave you leave to order your betters about?”

“Captain Standish names the watch, and I as ancient-bearer am under his orders and carry his messages.”

“You may be under Satan’s orders or under a monkey’s orders for aught I care, Giles, my boy, but if you dare come nigh me with any more of Captain Shrimp’s orders I’ll wring your neck for you, master bantam cockerel, mark you that.”

“I will report to the captain,” calmly replied Hopkins, who, despite his father’s restless example, was fast becoming one of the colony’s most valued young citizens.

A profane exclamation was Oldhame’s only reply, but as the ensign strode away he turned his head and called into the house at whose door he sat,—

“Lyford! Lyford! Here’s some merry-making afoot! Captain Shrimp has summoned me to stand on watch to-night, and I have sent him and his errand-boy to the devil. Aha! here he comes himself with fury stiffening every hair of his red beard and snapping out of his eyes. Stand behind the door and hearken”—

“Good-even, Master Oldhame,” struck in the firm and repressed tones of a voice at sound of which Lyford cringed closer in his corner, and Oldhame blustered uneasily,—

“Good-even, Myles Standish.”

“It is your turn in regular rotation, Master Oldhame, to stand sentry-watch to-night as you have done before, and as every man in the colony is called upon to do. Will you kindly report at the Fort after gun-fire this evening?”

“No, I won’t, Captain Shrimp.”

“You refuse to obey the law of the colony?”

“I refuse to be said by you, you beggarly little rascal.”

“Then I shall arrest you as a traitor, and if I had my will, I’d have you out and shoot you at sunrise.”

“Oh, you would, would you, you wretched baseborn—

“Have a care, man, have a care. Stop while you may!” And the captain’s voice deepened to a growl, and his eyes, wide open, yet contracted in the pupil to a point of fire, fixed themselves like weapons upon those of the mutineer, who, maddened by their menace, sprung to his feet knife in hand, and aimed a blow at the captain’s face that might have forever quenched the light of those magnetic eyes, had it not been caught on the hilt of Gideon, the good sword that in these days hung ever at his master’s side, although he seldom needed to quit his scabbard.

“Villain, you’ve broken my wrist!” yelled Oldhame, dropping his knife, upon which Standish planted his foot.

“To me! To me, men! Help! Murder! To me, Oldhames!” again shouted the traitor, but although a score or so of the townsmen gathered at the cry, not one made any demonstration or reply, while Standish, setting his lips and drawing two or three heavy breaths, hardly cast a glance at the crowd, but laying a hand upon Gideon’s hilt coldly demanded,—

“John Oldhame, do you refuse to stand your watch to-night?”

A volley of abuse from Oldhame was interrupted by a messenger from Bradford, who, saluting the captain, reported,—

“The governor sends to know the cause of the tumult, and desires Captain Standish to arrest any disorderly persons refusing to submit to authority.”

“My respects to the governor, and I am about to do so,” replied Standish in the hard and cold tone which at once repressed and betrayed his passion.

“John Oldhame, I arrest you in the name of the law! Alden, Howland, Browne, I summon you to my aid! Convey this man to the Fort and lock him in the strong-room. Do him no bodily harm unless he resist, but secure him without delay.”

Then ensued such a scene as Plymouth had as yet never seen, for with one or two exceptions the men who shared the struggles and perils of the colony’s first days had become too closely welded together, and were too self-respecting, to rebel against the authority they had themselves elected.

But no sooner were the goodly foundations of the new home laid and cemented in the blood of those who dared all for Freedom’s sake, than the anarchist arrived to throw down what was already wrought, and erect his own den upon the ruins.

Oldhame, maddened both at his defeat and the failure of those who had listened to his treason to make an open revolt in his favor, lost all control both of words and actions,

and so ramped and raved, so cursed and vituperated, so kicked and smote and struggled, that it was not without a most unseemly contest that he was finally secured and dragged up the Burying Hill to the Fort, where in the corner opposite to the captain's den was a strong-room, small, but as yet quite sufficient for the colony's need of a prison.

A few hours of silence and solitude wrought a change, however, and John Alden, who held the position of prison-warden, came down the hill toward sunset with a request from the prisoner that he might see Master Lyford.

"The wolf would fain take counsel with the fox," remarked Priscilla when her husband told her his errand. "And our over-amiable sheep-dogs will never say nay to such a modest request."

"Pity but they made thee governor, Pris," suggested John with a bovine smile intended to be sarcastical.

"Ay," coolly replied his wife. "'Twould save some trouble. 'Tis a roundabout way we women have to manage now."

"Eh? what do all those fine words mean when they're put straight, wife?"

"They mean that you'd better do your errand to the governor before sunset, and then come home to eat my bannocks while they're fresh."

"You're right, Pris, and I'm gone."

But the bannocks were not to be eaten for another hour or so, during which time Master Lyford was closeted with his associate in the strong-room, and Alden kept ward without.

That evening the ex-minister sought the governor's presence, and with many protestations of regret at the late unfortunate misunderstanding, as he phrased it, offered

Oldhame's submission and willingness to comply with the military requirements of the government, adding craftily,—

“If our worthy governor were also our captain there could never be any of these troubles.”

“That would be to burn down the house because the chimney smokes now and again,” replied Bradford good-humoredly. “It is largely due to Captain Standish's courage and skill, not to mention his loyalty, his steadfastness, and his wisdom, that this colony is other than a handful of ashes and a field of graves. When you new-comers have learned to know him, you will value our captain as we do.”

The next morning Master Oldhame was released, and the next night stood his watch, nor, jealously as he watched and listened for them, was there a look or a tone from the captain or any of his adherents to remind the conquered rebel of his discomfiture, or the triumph of authority.

The next Sunday, or as it was universally called, the Lord's Day, the plot laid in the strong-room of the Fort developed most unexpectedly.

When at ten o'clock Bartholomew Allerton, now promoted to the post of band-master to the colony's army, beat the “assembly” in the Town Square as a summons to the church-goers to meet and form in their usual procession up the hill, he was confronted by Peter Oldhame, a lad somewhat younger than himself, who swung a cow bell almost in the drummer's face, shouting,—

“To church! To church! Englishmen hearken to the English Church! To church! To church!”

Bradford, who was just coming out of his house with Alice and Christian Penn, her buxom handmaiden, following