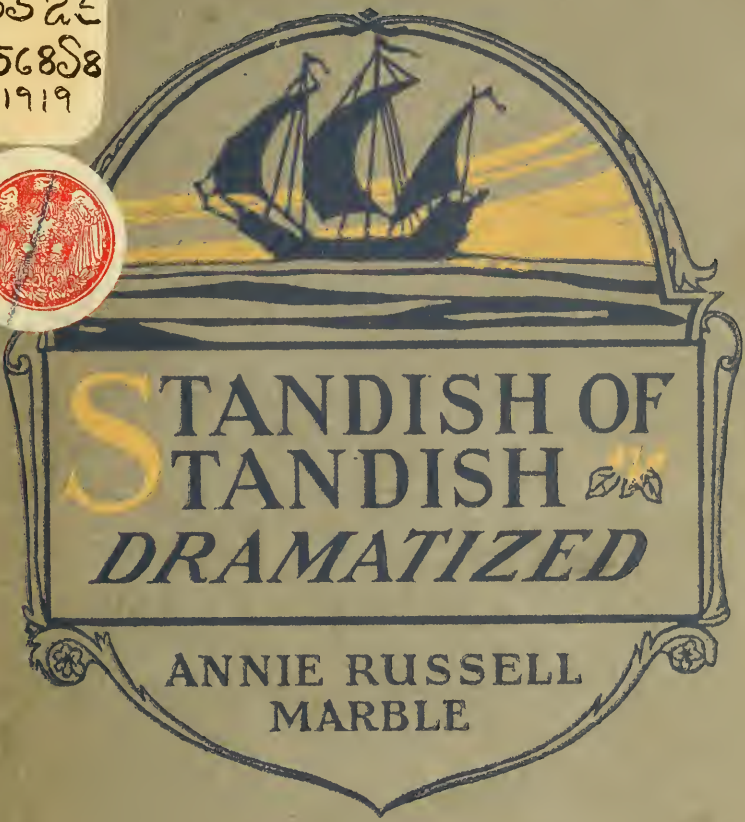



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STANDISH OF
STANDISH 
DRAMATIZED

ANNIE RUSSELL
MARBLE



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STANDISH OF STANDISH

BY

JANE G. AUSTIN

DRAMATIZED BY

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION

IN making this dramatization of the novel *Standish of Standish* the writer has endeavored to maintain both the historical atmosphere and the significant traits of characters as portrayed by Mrs. Austin. A few incidents, from the many in the story, have been chosen, such as adapted themselves to dramatic background and unity. The order of episodes has sometimes been changed without destroying the historical sequence and minor incidents have been expanded in scope and dialogue. The earlier scenes upon the Mayflower and Clarke's Island, and the later chapters which relate to the courtship of Barbara, the second wife of Miles Standish, have been omitted because the play has been restricted in time to the months between December 20, 1620, and November, 1621, inclusive. A second romance, besides that of John Alden and Priscilla, has been emphasized with imaginative episodes — the beginning of such friendship between Mary Chilton of the Mayflower and John Winslow, who came in the *Fortune* and afterwards became her husband.

Mrs. Austin has portrayed life in Plymouth Colony during this first year with a vivid revelation of humanity's experiences — tragic illness, death, and privations, on the one hand, and sturdy courage, faith, and practical achievement on the other. Moreover, the life was not all dull nor prohibitive of passing pleasures for the younger members of the colony.

Some of them wore clothes with brighter touches and cherished a few heirlooms of silver, lace, and embroideries brought from England and Holland. With force, Mrs. Austin has indirectly called attention to the fact that the *Pilgrims* were not all *Puritans* in thought or demeanor. Suggestions for costumes are given under "Characters" in the play, founded largely upon the authentic statements of Mrs. Alice Morse Earle, in her *Two Centuries of Costume in America* (New York, 1903), and other accepted volumes of later date.

The rôles of hero and heroine, in the story and play, are taken by Miles Standish and Priscilla Molines. Mrs. Austin has interpreted the "Captain of Plymouth" as a man of noble lineage and character, not alone strong in courage and resources, but also gentle and sympathetic. He is, at times, irascible in temper and sharp of tongue, but he is never depicted as uncouth or blasphemous, as in some portrayals by other writers. His affection for John Alden, and appreciation of the sterling worth and bravery of the younger man, give a strength to this character, while Priscilla's wit and playfulness react upon his shyness in clever passages. Priscilla is ardent, keen, practical, and helpful. Mary Chilton's character has been made more vivid and emphatic in the play, yet her gentle, reserved English traits make her a good foil to Priscilla. Desire Minter, as the envious, troublesome girl of the colony, is a reproduction of her part in the story, with somewhat exaggerated awkwardness to add elements of comedy. Mistress Brewster and Governor Bradford are representatives

of more formal Puritanism. Of the Indians, only Squanto appears in the play, and he is given a few lines of welcome that are traditionally accredited to Samoset.

This dramatization is intended for use by schools, women's clubs, and other organizations, especially for celebrating the tercentenary of Plymouth. Stage directions are given fully, with suggestions for costumes and setting of the single background required for the three acts.

ANNIE RUSSELL MARBLE

Worcester, Mass.

May, 1919

SCENES

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ACT I

SCENE 1

Interior of Log Cabin in Plymouth, Massachusetts, winter of 1620-21. "A Letter Home" to Fear and Patience Brewster; Miles and Rose Standish; A Visit from Squanto, the Indian.

SCENE 2

Same Interior; spring of 1621.

The Headless Arrow; Planting Fish with Corn; The Sword of Standish.

ACT II

SCENE 1

Same Interior; early autumn, 1621.

Letter-Writing and Love-Making for John and Priscilla Alden.

SCENE 2

Same Interior; autumn, ten days later.

"Why Don't You Speak for Yourself, John?" The First Thanksgiving.

ACT III

SCENE 1

Same Interior; three weeks later, November, 1621.

Indian Summer; A Love Philtre: News Brought by the Fortune.

SCENE 2

Same Interior; same day, fifteen minutes later.

Indian Threats; A Lover for Mary Chilton; "Troth-Plight Friends."

CHARACTERS

MISTRESS BREWSTER. The wife of Elder Brewster is a sweet-faced, kindly woman past middle life, slightly lame. She is sympathetic with the longings of youth, but she remonstrates, at times, at "unseemly mirth or levity." She may be dressed in dark-colored gown, with full skirts, and may wear a plain, white collar which reaches to her shoulders, a close-fitting black "band" of silk, pointed on the forehead, and above this a loose white cap, fastened at the chin. A shoulder cape, long, may be worn and removed on entrance.

PRISCILLA MOLINES. She is a gay, witty girl, with bright eyes and merry voice; she has frequent changes of moods. She may be brunette, lithe in movements, with curls and a cap on the top of her head worn jauntily. She should be able to sing the Luther Hymn and a gay French air, if possible. She is practical, quick, and deft, and devoted to Mistress Brewster. She may wear an under-petticoat of some bright color, perhaps brocaded, and outer skirts of homespun, a stomacher of any color, high in neck with full sleeves, a narrow apron and a cloak, like a cape, long with a hood in brighter colors.

MARY CHILTON. She is a fair-haired, demure girl with Saxon traits. She has a sad expression at times, but wakens to vivacity under the influence of Priscilla. She may wear a dull-colored gown with full skirts, a plain apron, and a laced bodice with a white

soft collar, like a fichu; she may also have a long cape of more somber tone than Priscilla's.

ROSE STANDISH. She is the young wife of Miles Standish, and appears only in Act I, Scene 1. She is frail, pale and gentle, proud of her husband, and brave in spirit in spite of her fatal illness. As she lies upon the couch (or settle) she could wear any dress of the period, not necessarily of dark color.¹

DESIRE MINTER. She is a fat, awkward girl, with crude manners, dull, and causing situations of comedy by her blunders; she is jealous of Priscilla, vain, and revengeful. She may wear clothes that are ill-fitting, unkempt, with hair that is untidy, but tied with bright ribbons. A gown of mixed colors with short, Dutch waist and overskirts would add to her awkward figure.

MILES STANDISH. His character is that of a brave, dignified man who inspires confidence; he is gentle in manners to Mistress Brewster and to his wife. He is irascible in temper, sensitive to a fault, and speaks impulsively. He is not tall, stout in build, military in bearing. His suit may be a doublet and hose of any dark color, preferably brown; he may wear a leathern jerkin, if desired, and a long cloak over his shoulder, with a flat hat. He sometimes places his sword in his belt.

WILLIAM BRADFORD. He is a man of about thirty, with a manner of breeding and a creed of formal

¹ Suggestions for costumes are in *Two Centuries of Costume in America* by Alice Morse Earle (New York, 1903), and other books at Art Museums; also in paintings of *The Embarkation, Departure and Landing of the Pilgrims* by Lucy, Weir, and Sargent.

words. He is mild in expression, gentle yet firm in his judgments. In Act II he may wear white ruffs and collar over his leathern jerkin, and a long cloak or cape with purple lining. He could wear a hat of black beaver with narrow rim.

JOHN ALDEN. His character blends youthful shyness with manly vigor and courage. He is tall, handsome, awkward with Priscilla, yet with frequent signs of dignity and serious grace. He would wear the doublet and hose of brown or gray.

JOHN HOWLAND. He is the clerk of the colony, young, with dark hair and muscular frame. He wears a stiff collar of white, perhaps laced, over his doublet.

SQUANTO. Tisquantum, or Squanto, was not a chief, but a survivor of the tribe of Indians that lived at Patuxet (Plymouth) and were exterminated by a plague two years before the Pilgrims came. He is friendly, ready to help the settlers, yet jealous of other Indian friends. He is always anxious to eat and drink. He would wear an Indian costume, but not that of a chief.

STANDISH OF STANDISH

DRAMATIZED



ACT I

SCENE 1

SCENE: *Plymouth, latter part of winter of 1620–21. Interior of log cabin, ELDER BREWSTER'S home, on First Street, leading from Plymouth Rock uphill to Fort. This interior is of rough timbers or any plain background. At rear, right, is a fireplace with iron hooks on which hang kettles and pots; large logs of wood are in fireplace, burning, if possible. Pegs on the wall, from which are suspended muskets, capes, and a warming pan with cover; also a sword rests on two pegs above a rude shelf. A door is at left, and beyond this, against wall, is an old chest with brass hinges. At the left center is a spinning-wheel, with a stool beside it; in center is rough table with two stools beside it; towards rear, right, is a settle or couch made of rough boards, and with coverings of homespun and skins of animals. A cupboard hangs above the fireplace or adjacent to it. A straight armchair (similar to ELDER BREWSTER'S chair in Pilgrim Hall, Plymouth) is at right near table. When curtain lifts, MISTRESS BREWSTER is seated in armchair, knitting a sock and leaning forward to speak to JOHN HOWLAND who sits on a stool beside the table, holding in one hand a quill, which he dips into an ink-horn; a large sheet of paper is on the table before him; a large Bible, with*

clasps, is also on table. MISTRESS ROSE STANDISH is reclining on the couch, her hands under her head; she looks at the fire with a sad, wistful smile. MARY CHILTON is seated at the spinning-wheel, drawing the thread through the spindle.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*dropping the sock in her lap and raising her spectacles upon her forehead, as she bends closer to table*). Surely, John Howland, we must finish this letter to my dear daughters, Fear and Patience Brewster, before the departure of the Mayflower. Hast heard when Captain Jones will sail?

JOHN HOWLAND (*holding the quill above the paper and shaking his head*). Nay, Mistress, the sailing-day is not yet fixed, but the Governor reckons it will be as soon as tide and weather are favorable.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*turning towards MARY CHILTON, who listens, holding thread*). The Elder saith that Master Jones was ready to give a free passage home to such as would take it, if the men would help to handle the ship and the women cook and minister to such as are ailing.

MARY CHILTON (*with lift of her head and a brave smile*). And Governor Carver said, "I have come here to live and to die." When the Captain took a vote of the men, saying, "All of ye are free to accept this offer without reproach," *not one* would take passage for the old home, but all would abide here and trust in God to sustain us.

JOHN HOWLAND (*nodding towards MISTRESS BREWSTER*). Aye, and Elder Brewster answered well, "Cursed be he who having put his hand to the plough turneth back."

ROSE STANDISH (*rising upon the couch, in a gentle voice says:*) And Miles, like a true soldier answered, "Our trumpeter has not been taught to sound the retreat."

MARY CHILTON (*brushing away a tear and smiling at ROSE*). None of us would return save Desire Minter, who complains because she has no butcher's meat, nor milk, nor so much as a huckster's shop where she may choose a riband or a stay-lace. Priscilla said of a truth, "Our fathers and mothers came hither with their lives in their hands to do a work; their lives were paid down and we who remain, simple maids though we be, are in a manner bound to carry on that work" — and (*looking out of the door sadly*) their graves are here on yonder hillside.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Nobly thought and said by you, Mary, and by Priscilla; and Captain Jones told the Elder he'd "fain have a prayer or two just for luck"; methinks he and his crew have need of such. But to the letter — what was writ already, John?

JOHN HOWLAND (*holding up sheet of paper and reading slowly and with hesitation*). "So Monday broke with fair and gracious skies, after that first cold, stormy Sabbath on the island, called Clarke's, by the master's mate of the same name, who stepped first ashore and claimed it in the name of King James. Our goodmen would fain explore the land-locked harbor which was before them for they saw cleared fields and a pleasant hillside beyond —"

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*dictating to JOHN, who writes while ROSE and MARY listen*). And as they approached the shore Governor Carver said, "It

seemeth to me that this place were fairly laid down on John Smith's map which we have studied"; and Master Winslow answered, "Aye, I believe it is the place he hath called Plymouth after our English town; 't is a better harbor than English Plymouth can boast." (*She pauses as JOHN'S quill scratches slowly.*)

ROSE STANDISH. Aye, and tell how when they brought the shallop up to the beach, John Howland saw the great rock which we all used as a stepping-stone, and jumping upon it, shouted, "I seize this mainland for King James"; be sure you write that, John. (*She is seized with a severe attack of coughing and lies down on couch.*)

MARY CHILTON (*rising from spinning-wheel and sitting down beside ROSE, raising her head a little, laughs gently, as the cough ceases and says*): Aye, John, and also tell how Stephen Hopkins counseled you, "Jump, then, John, but see you jump not five fathoms deep, as you did in mid-ocean and wast saved by a miracle."

(ROSE and MISTRESS BREWSTER *smile* and JOHN *turns towards MARY with a shake of his head and a teasing smile.*)

JOHN HOWLAND. Indeed, Mistress Mary, *miracle* is a new name for Gilbert Winslow who chanced to save me when I fell overboard; methought he was only a humble squire ready to serve the dames at all times, especially Mistress Mary (*with a bow*), as he did when he purveyed wood and water for the first washing-day on yonder shore where the Mayflower first dropped anchor.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*touching JOHN'S arm and pointing to the paper*). Nay, John, less of levity and more of the letter; write, "And Bradford heard the tinkle of water and found there was a fair spring with delicate water running from the hillside above —"

ROSE STANDISH (*rising upon her elbow and speaking to MARY who sits on floor beside couch*). And't was Miles said "yonder hill was a little Gibraltar ready to our hand; that if the salvages approach, our guns could meet them —"

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*as JOHN writes, bending low over the paper*). And tell my girls we were indeed favored to find here blackberry briars and sassafras whose roots are worth their weight in gold to chirurgeons and strawberry vines and plum trees — But, alas, you must also say, what will bring grief to their hearts, that when the men returned from this expedition poor Dorothy Bradford was no longer found upon the Mayflower; on the very day of her husband's departure she had gone on deck, when the rest of the company were at supper, and had never been seen again; a terrible blow it was to her poor husband — for she had lamented sore the parting with her little boy who had been left behind in England, and she had been even asking for a grave in the wilderness, for she reproached Bradford that he had taken her away from her mother and child and all that she held most dear, away to the cold, gray seas and rocks. The Elder could scarcely bring comfort to her nor to her husband on his return — (*She pauses and wipes away a tear and MARY moves towards door; she leans against the door-post and looks out sadly.*)

MARY CHILTON. Will this cold, sad winter ever end! Truly my eyes ache with unshed tears, staring at snow and nothingness.

(Sounds of singing are heard — any gay air; words of such a French song found at beginning of Act II: Sc. 2.)

(Enter PRISCILLA, throwing back her hood and, seizing MARY by the shoulders and holding back her head, with laughing tone, says): Well, there's a trifle this side of nothingness on the beach this moment. Men call it Gilbert Winslow.

JOHN HOWLAND *(rising, with a laugh, from the table, takes down hat from peg on wall)*. I'll join him; wilt come, Mistress Mary? *(To MISTRESS BREWSTER.)* Letter-writing is too serious business to fit the mood of these wenches.

PRISCILLA *(looking at him merrily and mockingly)*. Perchance thou'lt find Elizabeth Tilley more sedate company for your Worship. *(HOWLAND goes out.)*

MARY *(sitting down at spinning-wheel, but holding PRISCILLA'S hand, as MADAM BREWSTER moves chair nearer fire and folds her hands and closes her eyes)*. Hush, Priscilla; thou knowest I care for no man save my father who is under the sod. And Mistress White says that we two talk folly and are over-light in our carriage and conversation.

PRISCILLA *(tossing her head, takes off her cape and stands behind MISTRESS BREWSTER'S chair and lovingly touches her head)*. Mistress White, indeed! As thou sayest, Mary, mine eyes ache with gazing upon nothingness and *my* tongue aches with speaking nought but wisdom. Am I not become a sedate dame,

good mother? (*To MISTRESS BREWSTER.*) Master Allerton would even make me stepmother to his well-grown daughters and roguish boy — but nay, nay —

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*smiling at PRISCILLA and stroking her hand*). It is out of nature for young maids to be as staid as their elders.

PRISCILLA (*gently kissing her forehead*). Dear mother to us all!

MARY (*beginning to spin and turning towards PRISCILLA*). You and yours are French, Priscilla, and I am all English like my forbears; so thou may'st well be lighter-hearted than I am. I mean no harm, dear.

PRISCILLA (*tapping MARY's cheek lightly, gathers up papers and ink-horn from table, puts them in cupboard*). No harm is done, dear mother in Israel. (*Leans over couch.*) And how does dear Mistress Rose to-day? May it please you if I cook you some tasty bit since I am ever cooking? (*Puts more wood on fire. ROSE nods and smiles.*)

MARY (*turning from wheel towards PRISCILLA*). Dost thou really like cooking, Priscilla; or would tempt us with dainties, wonderful from such scanty store of foods as remain to us? How Desire Minter smacked her lips yestere'en over the manchet which you made for Mistress Carver!

PRISCILLA. Desire is a greedy wench. Aye, my mother and grandmother and aunts were notable cooks. They say my grandmother's patés and ragouts and conserves were famous all through Lyons, where my grandfather and his father before him were great silk manufacturers with plenty of men and maids and money at their command.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*with a smile, but shaking her finger at PRISCILLA*). Ah, Priscilla. Thou 'rt hankering after the flesh-pots. Remember Lot's wife!

PRISCILLA (*laughing and moving towards fireplace*). Lot's wife spoiled all her cookery with salt and I'll at least distil none from my own eyes. (*She takes a bucket from a peg near fireplace and moves towards door, looking out.*) How shall I call Robert Carter to bring a fresh bucket of water from the spring for my cooking?

MARY (*bending over her spinning-wheel, but smiling*). Thou canst beckon to John Alden, if he is coming, as methinks from the sounds of a voice outside. Robert Carter was thy father's servant, but John Alden is thine own and ever waiting thy command.

(PRISCILLA moves from door and stands beside

MARY, as JOHN ALDEN and MILES STANDISH enter in conversation.)

MILES STANDISH. Peter Browne and John Goodman have gone to cut thatch in the fields nigh yon little pond, and Browne has taken his dog, Nero, along to give account of any Indians that may be lurking there — and Goodman has taken his spaniel to rouse the game for Nero to pull down. (*He goes to couch and leans over ROSE.*) And how doth Mistress Rose? (*Strokes her hand and turns towards MISTRESS BREWSTER.*) She is hardly strong enough, I fear, for these shrewd winds and rough adventures.

(JOHN ALDEN stands talking to PRISCILLA, who smiles at him archly and holds the bucket, and MARY spins.)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. There's more than one in

our company, I fear me, that has adventured beyond their strength, but Rose has a brave spirit.

(MILES *talks with ROSE and takes off his outer cloak.*)

PRISCILLA (*to ALDEN*). I needs must have fresh water to brew my porridge and soup.

JOHN ALDEN (*shyly as he takes the bucket*). An onion soup, Mistress Priscilla?

PRISCILLA (*laughing*). Aye, Master Alden, an onion soup; 't will make thine mouth and thine eyes water. (*She moves towards table and takes up wooden bowl. ALDEN stands by door, putting on hat and watching PRISCILLA.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*rising with difficulty from chair*). Well, dear maid, I must help get the noon-meat ready. Dame Carver would fain have some porridge and I will make it.

(MARY *rises from wheel and assists MADAM BREWSTER, but PRISCILLA comes to her from door, puts arm about her, and moves to center.*)

PRISCILLA. Nay, dear mother, why should you do aught with three great girls standing idle before you? Go and rest on your couch. I will make the porridge and soup while Mary — and Desire, if she is about — will lay the table.

(MISTRESS BREWSTER *goes out, with PRISCILLA and MARY on either side, and JOHN ALDEN follows; MILES takes down a musket from the wall and examines it.*)

ROSE (*rising on couch*). Miles!

MILES (*hastens towards ROSE, placing musket on the table*). Aye, sweetheart, here am I.

ROSE. I was dreaming last night, Miles, that our cousin Barbara was making a sallet, and I was fain to taste it; it looked so cool and fresh — and then I wakened. I would well like some sallet, Miles.

MILES (*leaning over the couch and smiling sadly*). I will go soon and look for herbs, Rose, and Priscilla will make a sallet for thee, I know, sweetheart. I marked some sorrel at Dame Hopkins's yestere'en, albeit somewhat sere and dry.

ROSE (*rising a little and drawing MILES towards her; he stands beside the couch and strokes her hands*). I was dreaming, too, of home, mine own home. I was gathering cowslips in the meadow and the mother stood by and filled my pinafore with the cowslips — soft, cool, wet cowslips; I feel them in my hand now, so cool, so wet — Miles, I fain would have those cowslips. (*She tries to rise and falls back exhausted; MILES bends and soothes her and turns his head away with sadness.*)

MILES. Child! Child! Thou'lt break my heart. Try to sleep a little, dear one. I will say to thee one of those old Manx ballads thou didst use to lilt so lightly.

ROSE. Nay, Mistress White says they are ungodly and a snare of Satan.

MILES (*angrily*). A pest on Mistress White and her cant! (*Then sadly looking at ROSE.*) And yet I care not, so thou wilt get strong and well again, my Rose.

ROSE. Miles, dost think that Barbara will come hither? She promised me surefast that she would, so soon as there was a company ready. Will she come, think you, Miles? (*She rises and looks at MILES, who has moved towards table.*)

MILES. Like enow, sweetheart. Barbara mostly carries out what she promises.

(MILES pours some wine from a flask in the cupboard into a goblet and gives it to ROSE, smoothing her hair and looking at her tenderly as she drinks.)

ROSE. And thou'lt be very, very good to thy cousin. Miles. 'T was she who told me that thou hast a stately home in England, that thou wert a noble soul and a brave soldier — but, forsooth, I loved thee before she ever praised thee. 'T was she who first saw that thou lov'st me and she came and wept for joy upon my neck. (ROSE coughs and pants for breath.)

MILES (*gently placing her on the couch*). Peace, peace, dear child. Thou wastest thy strength in talking overmuch. Surely both of us will be good to our kinswoman. Sleep a little now, dear heart. (*He covers her with skin and stirs the fire.*)

(PRISCILLA and MARY enter with a kettle of soup, followed by JOHN ALDEN with a bucket of water and flagon. They place the kettle on hook in fireplace.)

(DESIRE MINTER, with hair flying and wild looks, enters; she has four wooden bowls in her hands; she stumbles at the door and the bowls roll over the floor; PRISCILLA and MARY pick them up, laughing.)

DESIRE (*in a voice that is almost a scream*). The Indians! The Indians are upon us! I saw their leader coming over yonder hill. (*She rushes towards MILES, who pushes her aside, but takes up his musket.*)

MILES (*to PRISCILLA*). What means the wench? Is

she dreaming or has she wild fancies as she had with the fever?

(*Outside is heard a woman's voice, coarse and shrill, saying:*) "Thou foul beast, I say, begone! Avaunt!" (*Voice comes nearer and louder:*) "Nay, grin not at me, thou devil straight from Hell. Wait till I fetch a bucket of boiling water to throw over thee."

(*All listen amazed and move towards door; ROSE rises and sits on edge of couch; MILES and ALDEN take down muskets and examine them.*)

MILES (*to ALDEN*). What means such unseemly brawling? It is the voice of Goodwife Billington, who is always scolding and, were her husband not here, though unable to control her, she would well be placed in the stocks — but (*glancing in amazement at the door*) — What means this?

(*SQUANTO enters with fringes of buckskin and beads, feathers in his long, black hair; he has a bow and arrow and a hatchet at his belt; he grins in the doorway, then enters and goes towards MILES.*)

SQUANTO (*with glance at all*). Welcome, Englishmen! (*Outside is heard a drum beating, without any tune, but in haste, and BRADFORD enters with quick steps, moves towards MILES and ALDEN and points towards the Indian.*)

BRADFORD. Look to your side-arms, men. He may mean treachery.

SQUANTO (*smiling at BRADFORD and MILES*). I, Tisquantum. I, friend of Englishmen. I come to say welcome.

BRADFORD. Truly, 't is a marvel to hear the heathen speak in our own tongue.

SQUANTO (*pointing outside door*). This place Patuxet. Tisquantum live here many moons ago. (*Looks at flagon on table and then at PRISCILLA, who, with MARY and DESIRE, are standing in background near fireplace.*) Indian like beer. Much talk make throat dry like summer. (*All laugh.*)

MILES. Thou'rt right, man, and though thy skin's tawny, thy inside is very like a white man's; John Alden, find our friend wherewith to fill his dry brook-bed of a throat. Methinks the Elder will permit us to use some of his Mistress's brewing for our visitor.

(ALDEN and PRISCILLA take from cupboard a case with two bottles. ALDEN fills a flagon and PRISCILLA takes a leg of a duck and a piece of sea-biscuit from cupboard and places them on a pewter plate; SQUANTO seizes the flagon, drinks hastily, smacks his lips, looks for more; then grabs the leg of duck from the plate held towards him by PRISCILLA, and begins to tear off the meat; he stops to grin at DESIRE, who squeals in fright and tries to hide behind PRISCILLA: as the latter looks away, DESIRE steals a piece of the biscuit and slinks away by the fireplace; MARY goes to couch and sits down, with arm about ROSE, and they watch DESIRE and SQUANTO with amusement.)

BRADFORD (*to SQUANTO*). What became of the Indians who lived in this place which you call (*hesitatingly*) Patuxet — we call it New Plymouth?

(BRADFORD sits in armchair and holds out hands towards fire.)

SQUANTO (*speaking with difficulty, because of food*

crowded into his mouth). All Indians died of plague; Tisquantum only alive; he go to England by ship, live there for two moons, more; come back to Samoset, big chief yonder. Samoset chief of Monhegan — nearer to the sunset than this place, Patuxet.

(SQUANTO *takes up empty flagon and holds it out towards ALDEN, who refills it and he drinks again with smacking lips.*)

BRADFORD (*to ALDEN*). Leave not the case-bottle within the reach of the salvage. *Enough* will loosen his tongue, but a little more will bind it. (*To MILES, who has taken down his sword and is watched closely by SQUANTO.*) Do you not perceive, Miles, and all of you, friends (*with a look about the room*), that this man may be an instrument, shaped and fitted to our hands by the Providence of God, who hath also sent His plague to sweep away the inhabitants of this spot whither He would lead His chosen people?

MILES (*with a shrug*). Pity but the salvages had known the plague was sent by Providence for such purpose. 'T would have converted them out of hand.

(PRISCILLA and JOHN ALDEN *laugh*; JOHN HOWLAND *enters, stands amazed*; SQUANTO *takes out hatchet from his belt and grins again at DESIRE, who shivers and squeals and runs to JOHN HOWLAND for protection*; ROSE *falls back on couch and PRISCILLA runs to her with wine in a goblet.*)

SQUANTO (*looking at BRADFORD*). Tisquantum come ask white man to send for talk with sachem and to make trade with white men and Indians.

BRADFORD (*looking relieved at MILES and ALDEN*).

Aye, shall we not send Winslow as envoy to his sachem to arrange for a conference? Methinks the Governor will so decide.

MILES (*handling his sword*). Nay, I claim the post of danger if there be danger. It is the right of my office as Captain.

ALDEN and HOWLAND (*bowing their heads*). Aye, Captain Standish is right.

BRADFORD (*shaking his head*). Not so, Captain; your duty is to *right* us in a quarrel; Winslow's is for counsel to *keep us out* of a quarrel. Furthermore, we need your protection here, should an attack be made upon the settlement.

ROSE. Go not, Miles, I prithee, unless they need thee. Let Winslow go and stay thou here, if so it be wise — (*She pants and MILES goes to her side.*)

MILES (*to BRADFORD*). I submit and my good will go with the ambassador; but if his skill at keeping the peace fails, then the work will be mine. (*He looks at ROSE, whispers to MARY who is bending over ROSE (with closed eyes) motions to BRADFORD and towards the door.*)

BRADFORD. John Howland, you will take Tisquantum to the loft of Stephen Hopkins for the night; we will consult with Governor Carver on this matter.

SQUANTO (*trying to drink from empty flagon and shaking his head*). No more fire-water for poor Indian!

(JOHN HOWLAND approaches SQUANTO, takes from his own pocket two sheath knives and a copper chain with a glass pendant, beckons

towards door and holds out gifts; they move towards door; PRISCILLA and MARY whisper and laugh; PRISCILLA, at fireplace, fills pewter porringer with soup for ROSE.)

MARY (*to JOHN ALDEN, as he passes couch*). Priscilla bade me tell thee to keep an eye upon the Governor's loving-cup lest this wild man might steal it.

JOHN ALDEN (*laughing*). Nay, he has no pockets to hide it in; still I will have an eye to it, for we have none so much silver in the colony that we should be willing to spare it.

BRADFORD (*getting up from armchair and moving towards door with JOHN ALDEN*). We will send small gifts to his sachem and he may return with skins of beaver and marten for trade with us.

PRISCILLA (*bending over ROSE with porringer and looking archly at JOHN*). Could they not fetch a few ermine and miniver skins while they are there? Methinks, in this wilderness, we women might at least solace ourselves with the *show* of royalty, sith we are too far away from the throne to have our rights disputed!

(MARY and DESIRE *place plates and bowls on table; MILES sits on stool by table and polishes his sword-blade.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*with a playful, tender look at PRISCILLA, as he stands at door*). Who knows but that we may form a new kingdom here in the New World? And where should we find a fitter sovereign than Queen Priscilla?

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

SCENE: *spring of 1621. Interior of log cabin, home of ELDER BREWSTER at Plymouth, same as Scene 1. In background is DESIRE MINTER, sitting by fireplace, polishing a pewter dish and watching PRISCILLA and MARY. She is clumsy in her movements and often rubs the polish of sand and ashes mixed with oil on her hands and face and eyes; she makes up faces and tries to wipe off the polish with her apron; she mutters, with surly looks at PRISCILLA. In the foreground is PRISCILLA, standing with her arm about MARY, who is crying with her head on PRISCILLA'S shoulder.*

PRISCILLA (*lifting MARY'S face and smiling at her*).
Nay, then, nay, then, no more crying, poppet!
Didst thou not cry half the night in spite of all I
could say?

MARY (*wiping her eyes on apron and trying to
move away*). But how can I be gay, and father and
mother both dead and I so weak and ailing — and
alone!

PRISCILLA (*soberly, with arm about MARY'S shoulder
as they approach the table*). But, Mary, I have lost
more than that — father, mother, brother — I'm
more grieved for thee than I can tell, dear Mary; but
still I find that to busy one's self in many ways, and
to put on as light-hearted a look as one can master,
is a help to grief. See now poor Elizabeth Tilley! She
hath cried herself ill and must tarry in bed. Is it not
better to keep afoot and be of use to others?

MARY (*disconsolately and moving dishes on table*).
Aye, I suppose so.

PRISCILLA. Well, then, *you* lay the table while I try if the fowl be boiled. Oh, if we had but some turnip or a cabbage, or aught besides beans to eat with it. (*She tests fowl in kettle in fireplace, pushing DESIRE aside gently; DESIRE makes up face behind PRISCILLA.*)

MARY (*with animation*). Canst not make a sauce of biscuit crumbs and onion and a drop of oil as thou didst for the birds?

PRISCILLA (*laughing*). Sauce for birds is not sauce for man — and boiled duck — but if thou'lt be good and cry no more, I'll toss thee up a dainty bit for thyself. (*She leaves the duck in the kettle and takes up wooden bowl and spoon from cupboard.*)

DESIRE. And for me, too?

PRISCILLA (*laughing and mocking*). And *thee*, too! But, Desire, dost know the Indians are upon us, and they'll no doubt eat thee first of all, for thou'rt both fat and tender, and will prove a dainty bit thyself, I doubt not. (*PRISCILLA goes out and MARY laughs.*)

DESIRE (*pouting and dropping her platter with a bang*). Dost mark, Mary, how Priscilla will ever flout me?

MARY (*sitting down in armchair and leaning her head on hand*). Nay, child, 't is but her way. She is full of merry quips.

DESIRE (*coming to table and pounding upon it with anger*). She needs beware how she makes quips at *me*; is there none other maid in Plymouth that is fit to marry that she should flaunt herself before the men from the doughty Captain to Gilbert Winslow and John Howland? (*DESIRE'S face is smeared with a*

dark polish and her hair is ruffled; she takes from her pocket a bit of glass and holds it in front of her face, trying to wipe off the soil with moisture from her mouth on her fingers.)

MARY (*with annoyance*). Peace, Desire. You are in a frenzy from jealousy. Priscilla is as good as she is witty and would ne'er harm man or child. Well mayst thou be ashamed!

DESIRE (*shaking her head with anger and taking a bit of faded riband from her pocket which she tries to fasten in her untidy hair*). Nay, but I'll not be ashamed. She mocks the Captain and she mocks John Alden, but, forsooth, she will keep them both ever at her heels. I have liked the Captain well and since his wife, Rose, is dead and buried weeks ago, he hath shown me that he would fain ask me for wife did not Priscilla Molines woo him so desperately.

MARY (*rising in anger and shaking DESIRE by the shoulder*). Child, cease such words of insult or I will report thee to the Elder! How dare one Christian woman speak thus of another?

DESIRE (*pulling away from MARY in anger*). Well, why should not Captain Standish marry *me* as well as another?

MARY (*with withering scorn as she sits down at spinning-wheel*). Why not, if it pleaseth *him*? I forbid not the banns.

(DESIRE goes to the chest, takes out a piece of riband stealthily, hides it in the warming pan, and sits down on the chest.)

(JOHN HOWLAND enters hastily with muskets and bullets in hand.)

JOHN HOWLAND (*to MARY*). Where is Captain Standish? Dost know, Mistress Mary? I have searched the settlement for him in vain.

MARY. He and Francis Cooke went a-field so soon as they had done breakfast and, as they carried their axes and wedges in hand, it would seem they have gone to rive timber.

(*DESIRE has approached JOHN HOWLAND and stands beside him; he turns suddenly and sees her, smirking at him; he shudders and moves towards door.*)

JOHN HOWLAND. Aye, like enow; but as 't is near noon, when they will be home for meat, we will e'en wait for the Captain's counsel and meanwhile see that all arms are in readiness. (*He moves stool close to the spinning-wheel and polishes his musket, placing his hat on floor; DESIRE pouts and waits by table; then suddenly she screeches.*)

DESIRE. Are the Indians upon us?

JOHN HOWLAND (*ignoring DESIRE and speaking to MARY*). I have heard ill news this morning. Peter Browne returned in haste from the pond where he had been a-fowling and told of a strange sight which came before his eyes. While he was waiting for the ducks to swim his way, he saw twelve stout salvages all painted and trimmed up, carrying bows and arrows and every man his little axe at his girdle. Each glided after each, like shadows upon the water, so still and smooth, and they seemed making for the settlement.

(*DESIRE screams and covers her head with her apron and falls upon the couch.*)

DESIRE (*moaning and sobbing*). Oh, they will kill us all in this terrible wilderness; why did we not return in the Mayflower?

(PRISCILLA *enters with a bunch of mayflowers in one hand and a wooden bowl in the other, laughing.*)

PRISCILLA (*to DESIRE*). Probably because some of us had more courage than thou hast, poor Desire. (*To JOHN HOWLAND.*) What old wives' tales art thou using now, John Howland, to frighten these maids withal?

(PRISCILLA *puts flowers in a goblet and places them on table.*)

MARY. Nay, Priscilla, cease thy jesting; it is serious business that John Howland is relating — how Peter Browne saw twelve salvages beyond the pond where he was a-fowling and they seemed to be stealthily moving hither.

JOHN HOWLAND. Aye, and, as he bent his ear, he caught the echo of their terrible war-cry.

(DESIRE *covers head with apron again and sobs on couch.*)

PRISCILLA (*looking out at the door*). Where, then, is Captain Standish? This is matter for his action.

(DESIRE *rises hastily and pushes angrily past PRISCILLA, at door.*)

DESIRE (*turning to PRISCILLA*). And thou dost not *always* ken where is the Captain, albeit thou hast him bewitched when he is with thee? (*With scorn, she goes out at door.*)

PRISCILLA (*flushing and with angry eyes, looking after DESIRE*). What means she, Mary, by such a flout?

MARY. She is crazed with fear and homesickness; the fever hath left her poor head empty of sense.

PRISCILLA (*laughing and moving to fireplace and kettle*). Aye, more empty than her *stomach*; she will eat up all the tasty bits that I cook for Dame Carver if she be not watched. But I must try if the fowl be tender and ready for the Captain's dinner.

(*Enter MILES STANDISH with his axe, wipes his forehead; JOHN HOWLAND rises, still cleaning his musket.*)

MILES (*to HOWLAND*). The Governor hath been telling of Peter Browne's adventure or his recital of it. Perchance it is overdone by his fear, but it 's sure to come, soon or late, and a peace won by arms is stronger than one framed of words. When the salvages have made their onset, and we have chastised them roundly, we shall be right good friends. Meantime, Francis Cooke and I left our adzes and wedges where we were hewing plank, and so soon as I have taken sup, I'll forth to look for them with my snap-hance.

(*PRISCILLA takes up fowl on plate, puts on biscuits, and MARY pours out flagon of beer and places it on table as MILES sits down.*)

PRISCILLA (*with a smile and nudge to MARY*). We've heard of locking the stable when the steed was stolen.

(*BRADFORD and SQUANTO enter; the former has a hoe in his hand and takes off his hat, wiping his brow; SQUANTO has some small fish in his hand and MARY and PRISCILLA come close and examine fish.*)

BRADFORD (*to MILES*). Didst thou ever hear, then, of planting fish along with corn?

MILES (*eating with knife and spoon*). Nay, didst thou?

BRADFORD (*leaning on his hoe*). Squanto hath been telling the men how corn should be planted when the oak leaves are as large as a mouse's ear. Naturally the salvage knoweth somewhat of the place and its customs, seeing that he hath lived here, and still it irks me to see a salvage giving lessons to his white masters.

MILES. But doth he aver that his people were used to plant *fish* with corn?

BRADFORD (*sitting down on stool at table*). Aye, and he went down to the brook yestere'en and set some manner of snare, and this morning hath taken a peck or so of little fish, for all the world like a Dutch herring, only bigger, and of these he says two must go into every hill of corn; that is, of corn of theirs, Indian corn, which we have bought — for of wheat or rye or barley he knoweth nothing.

SQUANTO (*coming towards MILES, who examines the fish*). Land hungry; corn here many years.

BRADFORD (*with a superior air*). Fancy the salvage calling the land hungry as if she were alive. Yet what saith Virgil? "She is the vigorous mother of all outward life and when she dieth the end of all things comes."

(BRADFORD *has a dreamy look and does not notice as MADAM BREWSTER enters with a cane; PRISCILLA sees her and hurries forward and MARY moves the armchair for her near the fireplace; DESIRE slinks in at door and starts at sight of SQUANTO and the fish, but hides near the cupboard. In passing the table she snatches*

a piece of fowl from the plate of MILES, who has risen and stands with back to table.)

MILES (to BRADFORD). A pest on thy dreaming and bookish fancies! Dost thou agree to putting fish to decay amid the corn we are to eat by and by?

(JOHN HOWLAND, who has been talking with PRISCILLA, is pushed forward gently by her and advances to BRADFORD and MILES at table.)

JOHN HOWLAND. We are to live by what we reap, not by what we plant. It striketh my fancy that the man who hath raised and eaten his bread on this spot for many a year is like to know better how to do it than we who have just come. But what matter as to my opinion? (*With some annoyance.*)

SQUANTO. Tisquantum get more corn for white men. (*Looks longingly at pitcher and flagon.*) Drink for dry throat, Master Captain?

MILES (*laughing.*) Aye, Priscilla will give thee a drop for that dry throat.

(PRISCILLA pours out drink and SQUANTO gulps it down; she motions to DESIRE to clear away table and MARY assists; MILES takes down his sword and examines its blade. SQUANTO looks askance at the sword and stealthily goes out; DESIRE takes a bit of biscuit and eats with gravy.)

BRADFORD. Then, John Howland, tell Stephen Hopkins that it were well to follow the native custom in these matters, at least for the first. I would that I could go a-field and do my share of the work (*rising with difficulty*). Still the rheumatics in my huckle-bone bids me hug the fire. 'T is woundy hot on that hill-

side. I've known July cooler than this April. 'T was on such a day of last week that Governor Carver fell at his planting and died in the night. (*He moves towards door.*)

(*MADAM BREWSTER is winding some yarn and PRISCILLA sits on floor beside her, holding the yarn.*)

MADAM BREWSTER. Aye, and his wife had begged him not to go a-field, for it was cruelly hot and he was overborne with toil already. But he answered, "Nay, I were indeed unfit for the leader of the brethren could I send them forth to labor that I counted too heavy for myself."

MILES. He had ever said, from the day we landed on the Clarke's Island, that he would be only the Moses to lead us and look upon the Promised Land, but that Bradford should be the Joshua who should make the people dwell in safety therein.

(*As BRADFORD is approaching the door, following JOHN HOWLAND, JOHN ALDEN enters in excitement, with a headless arrow in his hand.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*coming towards MILES, who sits on stool at table, polishing his sword*). Francis Cooke hath found this headless arrow when he returned to the tree where you would have felled timber; *your tools* were gone and this arrow was in a cleft of the log.

(*BRADFORD returns to room and HOWLAND passes out.*)

MILES (*rising and looking keenly at the arrow*). Hm! A cartel of defiance! Well, 't is like our salvage forefathers of Britain challenging Julius Cæsar and the

Roman power. (*He handles his sword with care.*) Here may be work for my Gideon.

BRADFORD. John Alden, it were well for you to call the men for a council to-night. *All* the men, mark you. We name you as sheriff.

PRISCILLA (*laughing, as she sits winding yarn*). But *none* of the women, mark you, John.

MARY (*at cupboard where she is arranging dishes*). Nay, Priscilla, who ever heard of women clamoring to be heard among men in council?

(JOHN ALDEN *goes out, followed by BRADFORD.*)

PRISCILLA (*to MILES*). Is Gideon the name of your sword, Captain?

MILES. Aye, I have christened it so; but methinks, like other converts, he finds the new name sits uneasily at times, and would fain use the old one.

PRISCILLA. And what might that be?

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

MARY and PRISCILLA (*with amazement*). A thousand years?

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*leaning forward to look at sword*). But what is its history — if you will tell it, Captain Standish?

MILES. It would be too long a tale to tell it all. It belonged to an old armorer in Ghent, for whom I did some service in protecting his daughter, and the old man was more grateful than need be and came one

night to my lodgings, bringing this sword wrapped in his mantle as a gift to me.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Perchance the sword will have another tale to tell before many days if the report of salvages lurking about be true. Prithee, say on, Captain.

(PRISCILLA takes the yarn to the spinning-wheel and winds it there, at the same time listening; MARY takes a sock from her pocket and knits, and DESIRE sits idle by the fireplace swinging her feet and body.)

MILES. This old armorer of Ghent told me how, as a young man, full of lustihood, he went out to fight the Turks and was a prisoner; a lady in the castle loved him, but he loved her not, having a sweetheart at home.

DESIRE (*pouting*). 'T is ever thus with women; they give their love and it is scorned.

(PRISCILLA looks at MARY and they smile.)

MADAM BREWSTER (*with surprise and pain, to DESIRE*). Hush, child! Such remarks are not seemly.

(JOHN ALDEN enters, wipes his brow with large handkerchief from his pocket, would speak, but pauses as he sees MILES is about to speak.)

MILES. The lady had a noble heart and set him free, giving him not alone a purse of gold, but also this sword which she averred had been captured from the Persian people hundreds of years before.

JOHN ALDEN. Said you not once it was a charmed sword, Captain?

MILES. Aye, she said there was a charm upon it that whoever should carry it would be invincible

and scatheless. She, poor maid, with tears and smiles gave it to him who loved her not and he, for very ruth, gave her a tender kiss, and they parted.

(PRISCILLA comes to MILES and examines the sword and glances at JOHN ALDEN as he stands beside her; MARY wipes away a tear; DESIRE whispers and smiles.)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Aye, I pity the maid. But she was overbold to give her love before it was asked.

PRISCILLA. What mean these outlandish signs and marks upon the blade?

MILES. Pastor Robinson told me of an ancient scholar in Amsterdam whom I found with skin as yellow as his parchments; he told me there was on this blade what would keep me from harm if I would but make it mine own. But I concern myself but little with such matters, having found my own right arm enough to keep my head and the grace of God better than any heathen charm. (*He rises and holds sword lovingly.*) I like better to call it mine Gideon.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Well spoken, Captain. Gideon was, like thee, a mighty soldier. If thou hast to lead our men against the salvages it will be "with the sword of the Lord and of Gideon," and we shall be protected.

JOHN ALDEN (*to MILES*). Would it be well to warn Goodwife Billington that she may have the Common House redded for our council to-night?

MILES. Well thought on, John. I'll tell Howland to take her the message. (*He hangs sword on peg, takes his hat and goes out.*)

PRISCILLA (*taking a bucket from the fireplace and*

calling JOHN ALDEN, as he would go out the door). John, you had better take this bucket; you or John Howland must needs lay a hand to the redding; best bring up two or three buckets of sand from the beach, and when yon slattern hath done her best, spill you the sand over all and so hide her shortcomings. (*All laugh.*)

JOHN ALDEN. 'T is good advice, Mistress Priscilla, as thine ever is. (*He bows and PRISCILLA makes a curtsy to him and MARY claps her hands; MISTRESS BREWSTER shakes her head and yet she smiles in a kindly way.*)

CURTAIN

ACT II

SCENE I

SCENE: *same as Act I.* TIME: *early autumn of 1621*
JOHN ALDEN *is standing in doorway of room, with hat in hand and PRISCILLA is mixing some food at table in a wooden bowl; she stops at times to toss her head and then stirs with more vigor; suddenly she turns and sees JOHN ALDEN, laughs, beckons to him, and he enters with a smile and comes to table; she puts down her bowl, goes to cupboard and takes down ink-horn and paper and places it on table.*

PRISCILLA. The Captain saith thou'rt a ready writer.

JOHN ALDEN (*with soft tones*). Can I do aught for thee, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA (*stirring her food and slowly approaching the fireplace*). Mayhap.

JOHN ALDEN (*moving towards her and being waved aside, as she fills an iron kettle with the food and hangs it on the crane*). And what is it, maid? Well thou knowest it is more than a joy for me to do thy bidding.

PRISCILLA (*in a teasing way*). I know not what feeling more than joy can be unless haply it topple over t'other side and become woe, and I would loth to breed thee woe.

JOHN ALDEN (*shaking his head and sitting down at table*). What is thy wish, Priscilla? Tell me what my pen can do for thee?

PRISCILLA (*laughing and coming towards the table*).

Thy pen! Then 't is not thy heart or thy hand that is at my service — only thy pen.

JOHN ALDEN (*trying to take her hand and at last seizing it*). Oh, sweetheart, thou knowest only too well that hand and heart and all I have are thine, if thou wilt but take them.

PRISCILLA (*pulling her hand away and sitting down on stool opposite JOHN*). Nay, John, thou must not speak so, nor touch my hand until I give it thee of mine own free will —

JOHN ALDEN (*interrupting and smiling*). Until! Dost thou mean that *sometime* thou wilt give it?

PRISCILLA (*taking a sock out of her pocket and beginning to knit*). Come, now Master Alden. I am ready.

JOHN ALDEN. I would thou wert ready, Priscilla. To whom shall I address the letter. (*He takes his quill and dips it in ink.*)

PRISCILLA (*with sly glance*). Methinks I would first put time and place at the head of the sheet. So I have noted that letters are begun.

JOHN ALDEN (*writing slowly*). Aye, well, then, here it is. And what next, Mistress Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. Next, Master John, thou mayst set down, "My well-beloved."

JOHN ALDEN (*with surprise and resentment*). Well, *who* is thy well-beloved?

PRISCILLA. Nay, the name is of no importance. Let us go on. "I promised thee news of my welfare so soon as opportunity should serve to send it. And now I would have thee know that I find none to take thy place in my heart or eyes —"

JOHN ALDEN (*laying down pen with anger and rising from table*). I did not deem thee so unmaidenly as to ask a man who loves thee to write thy love-message to one thou favorest more highly. 'T is not well done, Mistress, neither modest nor kind.

(*He takes his hat and starts towards door. PRISCILLA rises and stands in front of him, with flashing eyes.*)

PRISCILLA. I wonder at thy hardihood, John Alden, putting such reproach on me. Never again think that I will listen to thy wooing. (*With sudden change of manner and a laugh.*) Thou stupid oaf, did I not tell thee that the letter was to Jeanne De la Noye, my dear girl-friend in Leyden?

(*JOHN shrugs his shoulders and sits down at table, while PRISCILLA goes to fireplace and looks at kettle.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*sighing and taking up quill*). Nay, thou told'st me no such thing.

PRISCILLA (*moving slowly back to her seat*). Well, I tell thee now, and thou may'st put, "Jeanne," after "Well-beloved" at the top, an thou wilt. Art satisfied now, thou quarrelsome fellow? (*She touches his sleeve lightly and he looks up, still sober.*) Nay, now I will be good, John.

JOHN ALDEN (*writing and shaking his head*). Ah, well-a-day, I am indeed an oaf, as thou sayest, to be so wrought upon by a coy maid's smiles and frowns, but have thy will, Mistress, have thy will.

PRISCILLA (*standing beside the door with sober face*). Nay, now, John, cannot a big, brave fellow like thee take a poor maid's folly more gently? Think, then,

John of how forlorn a maid it is; think of the graves under yon hillside — (*She begins to sob and covers her face.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*hurrying to her side and placing his arm about her waist*). There, there, dear heart! Forgive my brutishness; forgive me, sweet one, or I shall go out and do some injury to myself or another, thou hast so stirred my sluggish heart —

PRISCILLA (*breaking away and laughing*). Thy sluggish heart, John! Why, thy heart is like an open tub of gunpowder, and all my poor, thoughtless words seem sparks to kindle it. (*She moves back to table, taking his hand and drawing him to his stool.*) Let us be friends and get on with my fond messages to Jeanne and her sister, Marie, or I shall have to put away my paper hardly the better for thy work.

JOHN ALDEN (*with fond looks at her as she sits down at the spinning-wheel*). Well, then, thou honey bee, as sweet as thy sting is sharp, what shall I write next?

PRISCILLA (*toying with the thread on the wheel*). Tell her, in thine own words, how long we were cooped in the ship *Mayflower* and how we landed, and Mary Chilton and not I was first of all the women to leap upon the rock we call our threshold. (*John writes and she looks down sadly.*) And, John, tell her how I am orphaned of father and mother and brother, and even the dear old servant who carried me in his arms, and many a time in Leyden walked behind us as we three malapert maids — oh, me — (*She breaks down in sobs.*)

(MILES STANDISH *enters, stands in amazement at*

door, then walks to table; PRISCILLA glides out of the door with her face hidden in her hands.)

MILES (*sternly to JOHN ALDEN*). Hast thou done aught to offend Mistress Molines?

JOHN ALDEN (*rising indignantly*). Not I. She asked me to write for her to some maid of her acquaintance in Leyden, and when it came to telling of her orphanage and desolate estate, her woman-heart gave way and she was moved to tears. (*He goes to door and looks out.*)

MILES (*with bent head*). Aye, poor child. 'T is sad enow, but perchance we will put that right presently. Bradford and I have talked of the matter and he has reminded me that when William Molines lay a-dying, he sent for me to watch with him the night and he besought me to promise that I would take the maid, Priscilla, under my keeping and not let her come to want. He said naught of marriage nor did I, and such speech would have been unseemly for him and hateful to me. Bradford thinks, forsooth, that he meant me to take her to wife when my Rose was laid to rest. If the maid is of her father's mind, I will be bound —

JOHN ALDEN (*in alarm coming towards him*). Doth Priscilla know of this — this compact betwixt her father and thee?

MILES. I know not, but 't is time I knew her mind. Doubtless, her father told her ere he died, but there has been no convenient season for wooing and — truth to tell — I have no great heart^s towards the matter. I'll tell thee, boy, thou shalt woo her for me.

JOHN ALDEN (*with vigorous protests and hastening to the door*). Nay, Master —

MILES (*taking the arm of ALDEN and leading him to table*). Nay, nay me no nays and but me no buts, for the scheme pleases me and so it shall be — the lady's angry dignity may be appeased for the delay by seeing that I woo her as princesses are wooed, by proxy. Get thee back to thy pen-craft, and when it is done, come to me at the Fort; I have work there for thee.

(MILES goes out, with a look back at ALDEN, who walks the floor; soon he sits at the table and sinks his head on his arms; he does not see PRISCILLA, who enters quietly, with a branch of pussy-wil-lows in her hands; she stands amazed, looks at JOHN, then touches him on the arm and he looks up with haggard face.)

PRISCILLA (*surprised and kindly, sitting down on stool*). Hast finished, scribe?

JOHN ALDEN (*in lifeless tone*). Wilt thou set thy name at the end, Mistress?

PRISCILLA (*turning over the sheet as JOHN ALDEN rests his head on hand*). Ah, there is a little room here. Say, "My friendly salutations to thy brothers, Jacques, Philip, and my little Guillaume, and now I think on't, Jacques asked me to advise him if this were a good place for a young man to settle, and, as I promised, I will now bid thee say that to my mind it is a place of goodly promise, and I were glad indeed to see all my friends of the house of De la Noye coming hither in the next ship.

JOHN ALDEN (*writing slowly, and with sarcasm with-*

out looking at PRISCILLA). I have heard ere now that the pith of a woman's letter was in the postscriptum, just as the sting of a honey bee cometh at the latter end. And now wilt thou sign? (*He pushes the paper towards her and still averts his face.*)

PRISCILLA (*looking keenly at him*). Yes. Give me the quill. (*He passes it. She writes slowly and with difficulty.*) *Ciel*, how it sputters and spatters. 'T is a wondrous poor pen, John.

JOHN ALDEN (*rising*). It served my turn well enow.

PRISCILLA (*surprised and puzzled at his manner*). And wilt thou not address it? (*He takes the quill, but still stands.*) To the *Sieur Jacques De la Noye* for *Mademoiselle Jeanne De la Noye*. And thank thee, kindly, John, for all thy trouble.

(JOHN ALDEN *moves towards the door; pauses, looks at her for a second.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Thou'rt more than welcome, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA (*coming towards him and reaching out her hand; he hesitates, then takes it in his*). But why so grave upon it, lad?

JOHN ALDEN. The heart knoweth its own bitterness and mine hath no lack of bitter food. (*He drops his head.*)

PRISCILLA. Nay, perhaps thou turnest sweet into bitter. A kind word to the brother of my gossip, Jeanne —

JOHN ALDEN (*turns away, goes to hearth and takes bucket and, at door, stops*). Ah, that's not all nor the worst. But, I'll fetch thee some water from the spring. (*He goes out sadly.*)

(PRISCILLA *stands looking after him at the door,*

then goes to the fireplace and stirs the fire, shakes the kettle and hums a tune, rests her head on the fireplace, goes to table, takes up letter and holds it with a smile.)

PRISCILLA. Handsome Jacques with his quick wit and gentle breeding, and our brave Captain of knightly chivalry and — and — (*looking up*) JOHN.

SLOW CURTAIN

SCENE 2

SCENE: *same interior.* TIME: *early autumn, 1621.* On top of fireplace are bayberry candles and candle-moulds; on table are flagon and wooden dipper; also some autumn fruits; PRISCILLA is sitting at the spinning-wheel alone when curtain lifts; she sings, as she gently moves the wheel, a stanza of Luther's Hymn: —

A mighty fortress is our God,
A bulwark never failing;
Our helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe,
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And armed with cruel hate;
On earth is not his equal.¹

(Suddenly she stops and listens and, from behind the scenes, is heard a gay trill like that of a bird; she stops and goes to the door.)

PRISCILLA (*standing by door*). Ah, little bird!
Better fly south before the cold winter comes on.

¹ This translation of Luther's Hymn, written by Martin Luther in 1529, is by Frederick Henry Hedge (1852). It is used here because it is more effective than the version by Miles Coverdale (1539) found in his *Remains*, p. 569 (edited, 1846).

'T is a sad country when the snow flies, cold for
body and spirit. I, too, used to sing gay songs as
blithe as thine — old lays of France as sweet as ever
bird could sing. Alack —

*(With a sudden change in her manner, she returns
to the wheel and turning it gently sings a lilting
song.)*

Pernette rises so early,
Three hours ere dawning breaks,
 Tra la la la!
Ere dawning breaks.
She gathers up her distaff,
Her spinning-wheel she takes,
Her spinning-wheel she takes,
Her spinning-wheel she takes,
 Tra la la la!

La Pernette se lève,
Trois heures avant le jour,
 Tra la la la!
Avant le jour,
Elle prend sa que-nouillette,
Avec son petit tour,
Avec son petit tour,
Avec son petit tour,
 Tra la la la! ¹

*(JOHN ALDEN comes in at door, unseen by PRIS-
CILLA, and stands with hat in hand and a sad,
tender look on his face, listening, and watching
her.)*

JOHN ALDEN *(as PRISCILLA pauses in her song)*.
Well done, maid! Thou hast so outsung the bird
that he hath flown.

¹ Early songs of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries are found
in *Sixty Folk-Songs of France*, edited by Julien Tiersot, published
by Oliver Ditson Co., 1915.

PRISCILLA (*glancing up and then turning back to the wheel*). Nay, methinks he flew because he saw an owl abroad, and owls are ever grewsome neighbors to poor little songsters).

(PRISCILLA *presses treadle swiftly and draws out a cobweb thread carefully as JOHN ALDEN approaches, but she does not look at him.*)

JOHN ALDEN. What a fine thread thou drawest, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA. 'T is hardly stout enow to hang a man, and yet stout enow for my purposes, good John.

JOHN ALDEN. Wilt weave it on Master Allerton's loom when 't is done?

PRISCILLA. Mayhap I'll weave it into lace for a pillow, as the fair maids in Holland used to do. What think'st thou, John, would be said or done should I weave some ells of span-wide lace and trim my Sunday kirtle therewith? Mistress White, nay, Mistress Winslow that is now, would rend it away with her own fingers. (*She looks up at JOHN with a smile.*)

JOHN ALDEN. And yet Master Winslow weareth cambric ruffles on occasion and his dame hath a paduasoy kirtle and mantle and so had Mistress Carver and some others of our company.

PRISCILLA (*laughing*). Marry come up! How wise the lad hath grown! Hast been pondering women's clothes instead of the books the Captain gives thee to study, John? (*With an arch look at him.*)

(JOHN ALDEN *starts and moves away and his manner becomes grave; he sits down on a stool, pushed away a little from the wheel.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Well do I like thy merry mood,

Priscilla, and care not though thou flout me ever so sharply, but mine errand to-day is somewhat of importance, and I pray thee to listen seriously.

PRISCILLA (*with averted face, fixing the thread on the wheel*). Nay, good lad, waste not such solemnities on me. 'T will be Sunday in three days, and thou canst take the Elder's place and seriously exhort (*mockingly*).

JOHN ALDEN (*straightens up and is severe in manner*). Priscilla, wilt thou be serious?

PRISCILLA (*sitting idle and looking at him with serene face*). As death, John. What is it?

JOHN ALDEN. I writ a letter for thee to thy friend Jeanne De la Noye —

PRISCILLA (*with mock-seriousness*). 'T is a sad truth, John.

JOHN ALDEN (*looking down and hesitating*). And methought there was some word in it that pointed to — pointed to —

PRISCILLA (*laughing*). Yes, good youth, that pointed to — pointed to — and what did it point to?

JOHN ALDEN. That pointed to some contract, or mayhap not more than some understanding — understanding —

PRISCILLA (*rising and standing above JOHN*). If 't was a word that pointed to any understanding of thee and thy stammering, John Alden, I pray thee speak it without more ado. Say what is in thy mind if indeed there is aught there.

JOHN ALDEN (*as PRISCILLA sits again at the wheel and begins to draw the thread*). Well, then, art thou

promised to Jacques De la Noye, and is he coming here to wed thee?

(PRISCILLA *bends her head low and pulls the thread so hard that it snaps and she tries to join it.*)

PRISCILLA. See now what mischief thy folly hath wrought to my thread! Of a truth there's no cause to complain of blindness in thy speech now, Master Alden. But still I have noted that if thou canst drive a bashful youth out of his bashfulness, there are no bounds to his frowardness. (*With a look of amusement at JOHN whose head is lowered.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Loth were I to offend thee and that thou knowest right well, but I fain would have an answer to my query. (*He hesitates and then rises.*) But, Priscilla, I am sent to thee with a proffer of marriage, and if thou'rt already bespoke 't is not fitting that thou shouldst hear it. (*He walks behind PRISCILLA and stands with bowed head.*)

PRISCILLA (*turning sharply around on her stool, getting caught in the thread and letting it snap without attention to it*). Thou'rt sent, John Alden? Who sent thee?

JOHN ALDEN (*in a low tone*). Captain Standish.

PRISCILLA (*angrily*). Sent thee! Was it too much honor to a poor maid for **him** to do his own errand?

JOHN ALDEN. Nay, be not angered, Priscilla, although he feared thou wouldst be. He feared thou wert angry already and he would have thee know he stood in terror and dared not present himself. (*He handles his hat in nervousness and stammers.*)

PRISCILLA (*leaning her head on her hand and almost sobbing*). John Alden, art thou and thy master

joined in a league to flout and insult me, an orphaned maid? If thou hast an errand from Captain Standish to me, say it in as few words as may be, or I will never speak word to thee again.

JOHN ALDEN (*placing his hat on the table and coming to PRISCILLA'S side, standing with dignity*). Thou'rt right, Priscilla, and I have done sore discredit thus far to the honorable master on whose errand I come. Captain Standish, as no doubt thou knowest, spake with thy father before he died of a marriage in time to come between him and thee —

PRISCILLA (*looking up angrily*). Nay, I knew it not, nor am bound by any such speech —

JOHN ALDEN (*with apology in manner and toying with the top of the wheel*). Captain Standish took it that thou didst know, and feared that thou hadst felt his silence to be some want of eagerness — (*stammers*).

PRISCILLA (*beginning to spin*). Aye, I see! He feared that I was angered that he had not wooed me across his wife's and my father's graves, and so thrust thee forward to bear the first outburst of my fury. (*She looks up coyly at JOHN, who meets her eye and then looks down.*) 'T was kindly thought on if not overvaliant, and 't is an honorable (*with sarcasm*), a noble office for thee, John, who hast at odd times thrown me a soft word thyself.

JOHN ALDEN (*walking the floor with agitation*). Oh, maiden, maiden, wilt thou trample to death the poor heart that thou knowest is all thine own! I "throw thee a soft word now and again." Why, thou knowest but too well how I hang like a beggar on thy foot-

steps to catch even a careless word that thou mayst fling at me. (*He bends lovingly over the wheel and towards PRISCILLA.*) Thou knowest that I love thee, maid, as blind men love sight, and dying men water —

PRISCILLA (*stopping her work and looking archly at him*). Then, why don't you speak for yourself, John?

(JOHN ALDEN *starts suddenly in confusion and walks away while PRISCILLA goes to the chest, takes out some linen and, filling the dipper from the bucket, sprinkles the clothes, standing with her face towards JOHN, front.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*pausing at door*). Ah, Priscilla, 't is not kind to try me thus! Surely thou hast triumphed often enow in despising my humble suit without wounding me afresh to-day. Sith I may not hope to call thee mine, maiden, I could better bear to see thee wife of the noble soldier whom I serve than of any other man; mayhap thou knowest not that he cometh of noble lineage, a race that hath borne coat-armor since Norman William led them across the Channel —

PRISCILLA (*with laughter in her face*). Didst not bring some heraldic tree or chart to dazzle mine eyes with?

(JOHN ALDEN *does not notice her interruption, but recites on with his back towards her.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Among his ancestors are men of noble deeds and proud achievements who have carried the name of Standish of Standish on the forefront of battle, and in Kings' Councils —

PRISCILLA (*with a movement of annoyance, holding*

the dipper in the air). Did he bid thee say all this also?

JOHN ALDEN (*sitting down on stool by table*). Nay, Priscilla, there's a time for all things, and I must feel it unworthy of thy womanhood to so perversely jeer and flout at a good man's love, when 't is honestly offered thee.

PRISCILLA. A good man's love? But I have heard naught of any *love* offered me by Miles Standish. Thou hast offered, in his name, some coat-armor, and a long lineage, and courage, both ancestral and of his own person, and — what else? I forget, but surely there was no *love* among these commodities. Didst drop it by the way, or did the Captain forget to send it, John? (*She smiles archly.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*seriously*). Mayhap he kept it back to give it thee by word of mouth, Priscilla, and if he did, it is a treasure even *thou* shouldst not despise, for never did I see a nature at once so brave, so strong, so tender. Ah, Priscilla, his is a heart of gold, a man among ten thousand — be wise beyond thy years, and answer him comfortably. (*He rises and walks floor.*)

PRISCILLA (*shaking out her linen and rolling it*). And hast thou done, John? Hast said all thy say?

JOHN ALDEN (*gasping and standing still*). Aye, maid.

PRISCILLA. Then, lad, clear thy memory of it all, and make room for the answer I will give thee.

JOHN ALDEN. And let it be a gentle one, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA. Oh, thou knowest how to dress an unwelcome message in comely phrase better than any man of mine acquaintance, unless it be Master

Winslow (*with bitter tone*). So try thy skill on simple NO, for 't is all I have to say.

JOHN ALDEN (*with an expression of gladness, followed by one of embarrassment, coming towards the table and leaning upon it*). But, Priscilla, but, maiden — bethink thee, — be not so shrewd of tongue —

PRISCILLA. Nay, wilt have my reasons, Master Envoy? Well, then, I care not for a man who cares not to do his own wooing. I care naught for coat-armor, not for pedigree, I, whose forbears were honest bourgeoisie of Lyons, —and I care not for a red beard (*with a smile*), nor for widowers, nor for men old enow to be my sire —

JOHN ALDEN (*amused*). But he is but six and thirty, maiden.

PRISCILLA. And I am naught-and-twenty, and I am a-weary of thy chat, John Alden, and — (*almost in tears as she sits down in armchair*)—and I fain would be alone, so I wish thee good e'en — and a keener wit.

(*She refuses to look at him again and he goes out sadly as MADAM BREWSTER and MARY CHILTON enter, with DESIRE coming in after, eating a plum or other fruit and slyly throwing the core into the fireplace. PRISCILLA rises hastily and assists MADAM BREWSTER to her chair and goes towards MARY, who is clapping her hands and almost dancing.*)

MARY. Oh, Priscilla, maid, what think'st thou is towards now?

PRISCILLA (*in a mocking tone*). The Governor is fain to marry thee, Mary, and the Elder is ready to give his blessing. Is't not so?

MADAM BREWSTER (*looking kindly, yet with reproof, at the girls who are standing with arms about each other*). Maids! Dear maids! Such levity of words is not seemly.

PRISCILLA (*seizing the dipper from the table*). What's thy news, Mary? Speak or I'll sprinkle thee as I did the linen.

MARY (*laughing and dodging as PRISCILLA twirls the dipper above her head*). What wouldst thou give to know? Didst sprinkle John Alden just now? He looked much as if a wet blanket had been thrown upon him when we met him in the lane a short time ago! (*They both laugh and DESIRE gives a loud giggle.*)

MADAM BREWSTER. Why, maids, what unseemly mirth is this? Know not that the laughter of fools is like the crackling of thorns under the pot — what says the Good Book?

(PRISCILLA *puts down the dipper and demurely clears away the table while MARY sits on a stool and DESIRE climbs on another stool to look into the cupboard; the stool tips and she jumps just in time to save falling; PRISCILLA pushes her away with a whispered remonstrance and DESIRE sits on chest and swings her feet awkwardly.*)

MARY. Well, Priscilla, the Governor hath resolved upon a day, or rather a week, of holiday and thanksgiving for the mercies God hath shown us. It was determined to invite King Massasoit and his train to the feast. (*With more animation.*) Think of it, Priscilla! A whole week of feasting and holiday!

PRISCILLA (*turning around at cupboard*). It sounds well enow, but who is to make ready this feasting?

MARY (*hesitating*). Why — all of us — and chiefly you, dear wench, for none can season a delicate dish like you, or —

PRISCILLA (*sitting down on the floor beside MISTRESS BREWSTER who smooths her hair*). Aye, aye, I know that song full well; but dost really think, Mary, that to do a great deal more and a good deal harder cooking than our wont, will be so very sprightly holiday?

MISTRESS BREWSTER. But 't will be doing our part to make holiday for others.

PRISCILLA. Truth, dear mother — and what shall we cook from our (*with sarcasm*) ample store? — manchetts and marchpanes and plum-porridge and possets for a change, I suppose.

MARY. The men will bring in wild turkeys which thou canst stuff with beechnuts.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Aye, and thou canst cook fish in shells as thou didst a week agone; but I fear me our men cannot dine to-day on the promise of the coming feast.

PRISCILLA (*rising hastily and going to the fireplace and taking down a kettle from hook*). Well thought on, mother dear. (*She beckons to MARY and DESIRE.*) Come maids, to work, to work. (*They begin to lay table.*)

SLOW CURTAIN

ACT III

SCENE 1

SCENE: *same as Act II.* TIME: *three weeks later, November, 1621.* There are branches of autumn leaves and corn hanging in bunches from the ceiling and fruit in clusters, drying near fireplace. MARY CHILTON enters with her apron full of nuts which she empties into a wooden bowl on table; she is flushed and her hair is ruffled by the wind; she throws back her cape and sits down in the armchair with a sad, far-away look on her face. MILES STANDISH enters, takes off his hat and wipes his forehead; he is followed by SQUANTO, with a bow and arrow, and some wild birds. MARY sees MILES, and rises from chair and he sits down; MARY goes to SQUANTO and examines the birds.)

MILES (*speaking to himself*). This is the first day that I have not felt strange in my head for a fortnight. The air indeed to-day is good, but I have a weakness still about my limbs. 'T was a strange illness and a bitter physic that the doctor gave me. 'T is a day of rare warmth for November. The Elder well said that these days are *Indian summer*, albeit the harvest is gathered and the winter is nigh.

SQUANTO. Indian summer, say you. It is a good word. It come with Massasoit to our feast, when we have much good to eat — and to drink (*with suggestive look at flask*).

(*Outside is heard a drum, and BRADFORD enters,*

greets MILES, who rises and sits on stool as BRADFORD sits in chair; SQUANTO goes out.)

BRADFORD. It is good to see thee about, Captain; dost hear Bart Allerton beat the drum-call? He does credit to your teaching, Captain; yet methinks there may be danger that a vain delight in his own performance may cause the lad, on a Sabbath, to forget that this drum, for lack of a bell, is our call to prayer. Wouldst thou direct, Miles, that in future on a Sabbath, the drum shall sound but three heavy and unmodulated beats?

MILES (*with slight annoyance*). Oh, if it will please thee better. Didst ever hear of the tyrant Procrustes?
(MARY *sits at spinning-wheel.*)

BRADFORD. What of him?

MILES. Only that he would force all men to fit one measure, though he dragged the life out of them. Dost thou fancy the God to whom we pray is better pleased with a dreary noise than with some hint of melody?
(MARY *laughs.*)

BRADFORD. Why must thou ever be so hot, Miles? Hast been chiding John Alden of late? I have noted that the youngker's face and voice are not as blithe as they were wont to be.

MILES. Like enow he's thwarted at missing a chance of a brush with the red skins when we go, as I plan, in a few days to settle matters with Corbitant and his treacherous Indians who would turn Massasoit against us if he could. John Alden has as brave a heart as any in the colony, but — in my judgment — 't were best he should not go with us on this expedition of danger.

MARY (*going out with BRADFORD*). Art going to Stephen Hopkins's? I'd fain go with thee and see the letters and gifts which the ship Fortune hath brought to Constance Hopkins.

(MILES *sits in the armchair, leans back his head and seems to sleep*; PRISCILLA *enters, glances at him, walks softly to cupboard and takes out three wooden platters in her hands, and is about to go out with them when MILES opens his eyes with a start, sees her and says* :)

MILES (*to himself*). Nay, I'll not be toyed with longer! (*To PRISCILLA, with a tone of authority.*) Mistress Molines, I would have a word with you.

PRISCILLA (*pausing in surprise, then starting for the door*). Nay, Captain, I am not of your train-band and your business must wait my pleasure and convenience. Now I am over-busy. (*She moves towards the door.*)

MILES (*rising from chair and advancing towards her*). Nay, then, if I spoke amiss I crave your pardon, Mistress, and had we more time I would beat my brains for some of the flowery phrases I used to hear among the court gallants who came to learn war in Flanders. But *I* also have business as weighty as thine and as little able to brook delay. So, I pray you of your courtesy to set down your platters on this table and listen patiently to me for a matter of five minutes.

PRISCILLA (*with proud manner, still holding the platters*). I am listening, sir.

MILES (*insistent and coming nearer to her*). Nay, *put down* the platters or let me put them down.

PRISCILLA (*tossing her head, but putting platters on table*). There, then, and glad am I — (*she pauses and mutters*).

MILES. Glad of what, Mistress?

PRISCILLA (*between tears and smiles*). That I'm not often under your orders, sir.

MILES. Ah, but we'll waste no time in skirmishing, fair enemy. Tell me rather what you meant by the loving-cup sent me at the feast a fortnight ago!

PRISCILLA (*with flashes of surprise*). I send you a loving-cup, sir?

MILES (*sitting down on stool while PRISCILLA still stands at table*). Aye, call it by what name you will; I mean the cup that Desire Minter brought me from thee, with a message that I should drink *thy* health.

PRISCILLA (*tossing her head and moving away*). Loth were I to think, Captain Standish, that you would willfully insult a maid with none to defend her, and so I will charitably suppose that you have been forced to drink too many healths to guard well your own. (*She stoops to take platters.*)

MILES (*seizing her by the arm*). Now, by the God that made us both, wench, I'll have an end to this. Nay, not one step will you stir until you or I are laid in a lie.

PRISCILLA (*cowering and raising her hands to her head*). A lie, Captain Standish?

MILES (*releasing her, but standing in front of her*). Mayhap my own lie. I say that Desire Minter brought to me a silver cup with some sweet posset, such as you have made for many of our sick folk time and again, and bade me quaff it, at your behest, to your health.

PRISCILLA (*starting back in alarm*). And that is God's truth, say you, sir?

MILES (*with severe dignity*). Mistress Molines, my word has not often been doubted; you force me to remind you that I come of noble blood.

PRISCILLA (*putting out her hand in protest and shaking her head*). Nay, nay, stop there an it please you, sir. Fear not that my humble blood shall ever sully your noble strain, albeit (*with a droll look*) you sent John Alden to woo me for your knightly self; but, mean though I be, my habit is a tolerably truthful one and (*with much spirit*) I tell you once and for all that I sent you *no* cup, I made you *no* posset, I desired *no* health drunk by you.

MILES (*sitting down in dismay and resting his head on his hand*). What, then, has this girl, Desire, wrought of mischief? Truth to tell, Priscilla, I fear me it was a poison that she gave me; for the next day a shrewd pain seized me and ever since there has been a heaviness in my head and ever and anon a sense of dizziness. Like enow she hath revenged herself — (*He pauses.*)

PRISCILLA. Like enow, for your scorn of her love. (*Looking out at door.*) Here comes Mother Brewster; let us take counsel of her.

MILES (*hurrying towards door*). Do you this for me, Priscilla. It hardly becomes a man and a soldier to seek redress for a wench's love-scratch at the hands of a woman; I'll tell the Governor. (*He stands aside as MISTRESS BREWSTER enters on arm of MARY CHILTON; he greets her and passes out.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*pausing beside table where*

PRISCILLA *stands*). Hast seen my son, Jonathan, to-day, Priscilla? It seemeth like a dream that he is here in Plymouth and has brought news that his sisters, Fear and Patience, are well and will come by the next ship. I only could weep for joy last night.

(DESIRE MINTER *appears at door, looks in, and is about to run away when* PRISCILLA *hastens to door, seizes DESIRE by the shoulders, and pushes her towards MISTRESS BREWSTER, who is sitting down in the armchair, assisted by MARY.*)

PRISCILLA (*to DESIRE*). Now, girl, you'll not escape; tell Mistress Brewster what you have done. You might have killed our Captain.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*amazed and looking at DESIRE with sharp eyes*). Killed our Captain? What words are these, Priscilla!

(DESIRE *tries to break away, but PRISCILLA holds her and DESIRE begins to cry, hiding her face in her apron.*)

PRISCILLA (*pointing to DESIRE*). Ask her!

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Cease your bawling, Desire, and tell me what this means.

(BRADFORD *enters, looks surprised at first, then sits on stool.*)

DESIRE. The Captain, first of all, asked me to wife, and if he had not been wiled away by yon — (*Pointing at PRISCILLA, while MARY gives expression of horror and disgust; she stands behind MADAM BREWSTER'S chair.*)

BRADFORD (*angrily, as they all turn with surprise to see him*). 'T was thine own idle fancy, child, that set

thee on such a notion. The Captain hath averred to me, as a Christian man, that he never made proffer to thee nor wished to do so since he first set eyes on thee. (DESIRE *cries with a loud, angry snarl and shakes herself.*) Nay, he said, "Not if there were no other woman upon earth." (PRISCILLA and MARY *smile.*) What didst thou give the Captain to drink, silly wench, and why did you say that Priscilla sent it?

(DESIRE *sobs and shakes and will not answer.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*with authority*). Answer the Governor, thou naughty child.

DESIRE (*lowering her apron*). Marry, because *she* (*looking at PRISCILLA*) hath bewitched him, and I wot well he would take it from her without gainsaying.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. But *what* was it thou gavest to Captain Standish?

DESIRE (*pouting*). 'T was — there was wench here with the salvages, and Squanto told me she was a wise woman and knew how to work spells. (*She covers her face with apron and cries.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*sternly*). Go on, Desire, tell more.

DESIRE (*sobbing and chewing an end of her hair and looking with hatred at PRISCILLA*). And so we went into the fields and pulled herbs and we knew each other's meaning — she talked a little English and I made signs and I gave her the buckle of my belt which was broke and none could mend it —

PRISCILLA. Truly a generous gift (*sarcastically*).

DESIRE (*making a face at her*). And in a swamp she found some herbs for which she sought and gave them to me.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. What did you do with the herbs, child?

(SQUANTO *slides in and watches with a grin. He has autumn leaves and a dish of clams.*)

DESIRE. She said to steep them well and give the broth to any man I loved and it would turn his fancy upon me.

BRADFORD. A love-philter, on my soul! What says the Latin poet — *Vade retrograde Sathanae.*

MISTRESS BREWSTER. What was the herb like, girl? Hast any more of it in store for a second brew?

DESIRE (*squirming*). Mayhap — a little.

BRADFORD. Go and fetch it, Desire. And do thou go with her, Priscilla, and see that the wretched wench doth not make way with it.

(PRISCILLA *takes hold of her arm and pushes her out as she balks and almost stumbles over SQUANTO, who grins at her and she screeches and runs, with PRISCILLA beside her.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*to BRADFORD*). What shall we do with such a child, full of jealous fancies and evil thoughts?

BRADFORD. John Howland is, after a sort, betrothed to the poor bemused child. I think it well to summon him that he may advise us as to the sequel of this folly, if no worse. I will call him from the Common House where he is writing records to send back in the Fortune. (*He goes out.*)

(SQUANTO *comes forward with leaves and some clams.*)

SQUANTO (*to MARY*). Mistress Priscilla? She no here?

MARY. She will be here soon, Squanto. What do you wish?

SQUANTO. I give her clams to cook; make broth with — light — dumlins — very nice.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Yes, Squanto; Priscilla makes light, fine dumplings. By the by, can you tell us more about this squaw who gave some herbs to Desire Minter?

SQUANTO (*coming forward and bowing*). Winona; Winona; she know much about herbs; she help father, our medicine man. (*To MARY.*) Like this bright leaf?

MARY (*taking the autumn leaves*). Indeed, I do like them, Squanto; they are beautiful and I will lay them on the table and make it fine for the clam stew and the sallet that Priscilla will make from savory plums.

(*DESIRE and PRISCILLA enter, followed by BRADFORD and JOHN HOWLAND talking earnestly, HOWLAND shaking his head vehemently; DESIRE has a handful of herbs which BRADFORD examines and takes from her, moving towards MISTRESS BREWSTER.*)

BRADFORD. Dr. Fuller and I have examined this herb and we think it is *Plantanthera Satyrion*, the herb supposed to give vigor to the hearts of wild men whom the mythologists celebrate.

MARY (*bending over the herb and smelling it*). I should have taken it for the iris whose flower I have noted in these swamps. (PRISCILLA *nods*.)

BRADFORD. It is kin to it, distant kin, with the difference that maketh one harmless and the other injurious. It has proved only nauseous to the good

Captain, thank God. Our good chirurgeon has brought relief to him.

SQUANTO (*with angry look and pointing a long finger at DESIRE*). She bad squaw — she would harm our Sword — our Captain.

(*DESIRE looks at him, shivers, squeals, and throws her apron over her face.*)

BRADFORD (*to HOWLAND, who has stood silent and severe by the door*). John Howland, it seemeth to me that since this maid is betrothed to thee, and is manifestly unfit to guide herself, that it is best for you to marry her here and now, and, after that, train her into more discretion than she naturally showeth.

(*PRISCILLA and MARY talk in whispers and shake heads with sympathetic looks towards HOWLAND.*)

JOHN HOWLAND (*coming forward with manly stride, looking with aversion at DESIRE, who peeks out from her apron at him as he speaks to BRADFORD*). Honored Governor and you, dear Mistress Brewster, may it please you both, it seemeth to me that a woman who shows so little modesty in the pursuit of *one* man is scarce fit for *another*. I *did* promise my late dear Mistress Carver, when she was a-dying, because this girl (*with scorn*) was her ward, that I would care for her and, if need be, take her to wife; but sure am I that if that godly and discreet matron, Mistress Carver, were alive, or if she knew aught of this that Desire hath done, she would not hold me to my word, would free me from any bonds — the rather that I have never looked upon her (*with glance of dislike*) with that tenderness that God putteth in our hearts towards those — (*He pauses and drops his head.*)

DESIRE (*snatching down her apron and stamping her foot*). Nay, then, if it comes to that, John Howland, I hate and despise thee and always have done so; and if I took thee for my bachelor at all it was only in hope that 't would give a jealous twinge to the heart of a better man, and if, at the last, I failed of him, thou wouldst be better than none; but I've changed my mind and now I'll none of thee —

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*rising in anger and leaning for support on PRISCILLA*). Peace, shameless wench! Profane not the ears of decent women with such talk! John Howland, it is my judgment that thou art free of the pledge to marry the girl, if pledge it be. What say you, Governor?

BRADFORD (*rising and moving towards the door, while SQUANTO drains the flagon on the table and looks into the pitcher which is empty*). I agree that since both man and maid desire to render back their troth, they should be permitted to do so; and I further suggest that by the first occasion presenting, Desire Minter be sent back to her friends in England, who will, as Mistress Carver told me, be content to receive her.

JOHN HOWLAND. Amen to that; and many thanks to you (*to BRADFORD*) and to you, Mistress Brewster.

(*He turns towards the door; DESIRE rushes past him; SQUANTO seizes his bow and arrow and pretends to aim at DESIRE with a hissing sound; she screams, stumbles, recovers, and runs out; PRISCILLA, with MISTRESS BREWSTER and BRADFORD, move towards door.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. What a disgraceful wench she is, and yet I feel sorry for the poor, motherless

child! I must see that she does no more harm to others or herself while she is here, for the sake of dear Mistress Carver's memory. I'll consult Mistress Hopkins and perchance we can send her back to England on the Fortune, if there be any woman on board fit to have charge of her. *(They go out.)*

(MARY CHILTON sits by the fireplace and breaks off twigs of autumn leaves; JOHN ALDEN enters, but does not see her at first; he seems to be looking for some one near the spinning-wheel; then, with a glance at MARY, he comes to her side.)

JOHN ALDEN. Ah, Mistress Mary, was n't that a glad sight yesterweek to see our own flag of old England on the ship, the Fortune! How excited we all were, even the Governor and the Captain, when they found it was not a French privateer as they feared, because of the war between France and England, come, mayhap, to harry the settlement, but our own red cross of England and the dear home colors. And did the Fortune bring to *you* news of home, Mary, as to so many of the Colony?

MARY *(shaking her head slowly)*. Nay, there are none left there of my nearest kin save a sister in Holland. Father and mother and I came and only I am left. *(She leans her head on her hands.)*

JOHN ALDEN *(looking tenderly at her)*. Nay, Mary, so fair and good a wench as thou, wilt never stay without friends. *Thou* wouldst never flout an honest fellow's love, and draw him on, and turn him back, and use him worse than a baby doth its poppet. *(He walks the floor in agitation.)* The man who marries *thee* will never rue it.

MARY (*looking up shyly*). I know not, for love and sweethearts have not come my way yet. 'T is Priscilla whom all men seek, and she, in a merry mood, listeneth to all and still keepeth her own mind secret. She is well content now, for Philip De la Noye, who came in the Fortune, has brought to her news of his brother's happy marriage.

JOHN ALDEN (*stopping beside the wheel and speaking with excitement*). What, is the fellow they call Jacques, the brother of Jeanne De la Noye, really married? (MARY *nods*.) Oh, Mary, wilt thou not have compassion on a poor stupid oaf who is no match for thee or Priscilla in subtlety and yet loveth yon maid as it is not well for man to love aught save his Maker. Tell me, Mary, doth think *she* cares aught for me?

MARY (*smiling at him*). Nay, John, that is a question none but *she* should answer. Thou lovest her overmuch. No man will ever care for *me* like that, for I have not the skill to hide my mind as Priscilla hath. But I'll help thee, John, if I can, for I do believe thou'lt make the dear maid happy if she will but stay in one mind long enow to wed thee.

(*Outside is heard PRISCILLA'S voice talking gayly and a man's voice; then hers, saying, "Au revoir, Philip, until the morrow"; she enters gayly, looks at JOHN and MARY in wonder and then amusement, takes off her cape and goes to fireplace while JOHN stands with head bowed.*)

PRISCILLA. Oh, Mary, by the way, John Winslow would fain find thee, dear maid; he knows not our settlement well as yet, seeing he has been here only a

few days and he would gather some clams for me on the beach, so I may cook them in shells. Wilt show him where they may be found? (*She laughs teasingly and stirs the fire.*)

(*MARY rises with embarrassment, then with a long look at JOHN she puts on her cape, moving towards door.*)

MARY (*looking at PRISCILLA with a bit of resentment.*) I must hasten back to our dear mother and see if she would taste a bit of porridge. *Gilbert Winslow* may well show his brother where are clams. (*She goes out.*)

PRISCILLA (*laughing and looking after her.*) Ah, Mistress Mary, in spite of thy maidenly shyness, *John Winslow* is finding a place in thy demure and gentle heart that his brother *Gilbert* ne'er could win in all these dreary months. The Fortune hath brought good tidings in many forms.

(*She takes down shells from the cupboard and places them on a platter and starts to go out when JOHN ALDEN stands before her, with outstretched hands.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Wilt answer me one little question in good faith, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. In good faith, if at all, John. (*She puts shells and platter on the table.*)

JOHN ALDEN. Then, what bond is there betwixt thee and Jacques De la Noye?

PRISCILLA. None save good will and auld acquaintance.

JOHN ALDEN. But there was?

PRISCILLA (*in a teasing tone*). Was there?

JOHN ALDEN (*very soberly*). Nay, now, Priscilla, I speak to thee in sober sadness, and I ask thee such reply as honest maid should give to honest man who woos her for his wife. If we fall to quips and cranks and wordy play, thou'rt so far out of my reach that I never come near thee, for I'm but a plain, simple fellow, Priscilla, and I love thee more than I love aught else but God and the truth. Give me a plain answer now and have pity of my misery! Hath aught that this lad, Philip, brought thee of news changed thy will or intent towards me?

PRISCILLA (*sitting upon a stool as JOHN stands above her; she extends a hand to him which he grasps eagerly, still standing*). Yes, John, I will answer thee truly and soberly. Philip De la Noye hath brought news that sets me free from a teasing obligation of which no man knows. Marie and Jeanne, his sisters, are my dear gossips and their brother, Jacques, would fain have been my bachelor in Leyden, but I was too young, my father saith, and he cared not greatly for Jacques, who was, to tell truth, somewhat gay and debonair of temper and no church member (*with a smile*) — no, not he. So, when we parted from Leyden, to come hither, Jacques would fain have me promise to wed no man but him, and he would come hither so soon as he was his own master.

JOHN ALDEN. And didst promise, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA (*tossing her head and drawing her hand away gently*). Well, nay and yea, John. I said I knew not what might meet me here and — but at last I promised to wait until the first ship had followed us and, if Jacques should come in her, I would — would listen to him again.

JOHN ALDEN (*bending towards her*). And that was all thy promise, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. Aye, and it was enow, for before we landed on yonder rock I knew that I cared *not* for Jacques De la Noye. Beside the death-bed of my mother and again by that of my brother, I knew that life was darker and deeper than Jacques could ever fathom. (*She hides her face in her hands.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*touching her hair tenderly*). Ah, Priscilla, nobly didst thou bear that sorry load of woe and care.

PRISCILLA (*looking up gratefully*). And so soon as Philip saw me, he delivered himself of the news that Jacques, some three months since, was wed to a Flemish maid, who ever looked kindly upon him and (*with spirit*) is welcome to him.

JOHN ALDEN. Say you that *honestly*, Priscilla?

PRISCILLA. As honestly as thyself could speak, lad.

JOHN ALDEN (*with excitement*). And thou'rt heart-whole?

PRISCILLA (*moving towards the spinning-wheel*). Nay, I said not exactly that.

JOHN ALDEN (*with a manner of sternness*). What! Dost thou really care for Captain Standish?

PRISCILLA (*sitting at the wheel*). As I care for the Governor and the doctor, no more, no less. (*She looks at JOHN'S face and laughs.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*standing before her, with manly voice and attitude*). Priscilla, wilt thou be my wife? (*His voice quivers at the last word and his face is tense.*)

PRISCILLA (*cooly*). Now, John, why didst thou not ask that at first rather than at last? Thou'rt too fond

of quip and wordy warfare, John, too much given to fence and intrigue. (*Looks roguishly at him.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*seizing both her hands and pressing them upon his heart as he raises her to her feet*). Nay, then, Priscilla, I'll not be turned aside again, try as thou wilt. Priscilla, wilt thou be my wife?

PRISCILLA (*not looking at his face*). I never could bear a cuckoo song *all* on two notes, and if thou'rt bound to say that phrase over and over until 't is answered —

JOHN ALDEN (*looking lovingly at her*). 'T is just what I am bound to say — Priscilla, wilt thou be my wife?

PRISCILLA (*hiding her face a bit*). Yes, John, I will, and now I hope thou'rt content. (*He kisses her.*)

(MARY CHILTON *enters hastily, looks at them, withdraws with a clap of her hands and a laugh; PRISCILLA hears her and breaking from JOHN goes to the door and calls.*)

PRISCILLA. Mary! Mary Chilton! Come back here. If you and I hasten not there will be little sup to-night. (*She goes to the table and gathers up the shells and MARY, smiling, grasps JOHN ALDEN'S hand with sympathetic joy, while PRISCILLA'S back is towards them*). Desire is naught for help and Elizabeth Tilley thinks only of John Howland, who will soon wed her, I believe; the dear mother hath her son and only you and I are left to do a hand's turn.

JOHN ALDEN (*coming forward eagerly*). Here am I, Priscilla, and I'll help thee in any way I can, if thou wilt let me.

PRISCILLA (*with a laugh*). They say they came near

bringing a Jack-of-all-trades in the Fortune, but had no room for him; so thou mayst take his place and fetch me a bucket of water from the spring. There's little difference betwixt Jack and John.

(He takes the bucket from fireplace and they all go out talking.)

CURTAIN

SCENE 2

SCENE: *Same interior.* TIME: *fifteen minutes later.*

BRADFORD *(sitting in armchair, to STANDISH, who is walking the floor)*. Nay, Standish, thou'rt unreasonable to quarrel with another man's conscience so that it thwarts not thine.

MILES. I meant not to forget courtesy, nay, nor friendship, Bradford; but my speech is ever hasty and none too smooth and — I sleep not well of late. *(He sits down at table.)* So thou wilt marry, anon?

BRADFORD *(moving chair towards table)*. I'll tell thee, friend, and thou'rt the first I've told. There is a lady in the old country —

MILES *(interrupting)*. Which old country? The Netherlands or England?

BRADFORD. She is in England, or was when we set forth. Thou must have seen her — Alice Carpenter, who wedded Edward Southworth in Amsterdam.

MILES. Oh, aye, a fair and discreet dame. And she was left a widow not many days before we left England, if I mistake not. Oh, I recall now what I have heard — was she not an old flame of thine and

thou'rt of a mind to kindle it once more (*with some sarcasm*).

BRADFORD. Something so (*with a pause*) — and now Mistress Southworth will come by the next ship.

MILES (*sitting down on stool*). Perchance I'll send for my cousin, Barbara, to come under charge of Mistress Southworth, 't is a good wench and witty, perchance a foil she might be to the quips and flouts of Mistress Molines. Nay, but *Barbara* hath a gentle heart.

BRADFORD. What ails thee, Miles? Thou'rt sorely chafed at something. Is aught amiss that I can help?

MILES (*looking out of the door*). Nay, Will, 't is naught and less than naught. 'T is but a new knowledge of mine own unworthiness. Sure "never such a fool as an old fool" is a good proverb.

BRADFORD. 'T is not to a fool that we trusted the lives of ten out of our nineteen men in our first skirmish with the salvages. (*With a gentle look at MILES.*)

MILES (*rising and marching across the room*). Oh, I can fight well enow. 'T is my trade and all I'm fit for. Aye, and, in my mood to-day, I'll be fain to fight.

(*JOHN ALDEN enters in haste with the bucket of water; MILES stops him and demands, "Salute, if you please, Master Alden!" With amazement JOHN salutes, puts down bucket and goes out, while BRADFORD laughs, and MILES turns angrily to him.*)

MILES. 'T is not for mine own glory, Will, as thou knowest. But in matters military even more than

civil, it needs that one man should be at the head, and command the respectful observance as well as obedience of those under his command. There have been signs of laxness of late in such respect. It is not *Miles Standish* whom the soldiers of Plymouth salute, when they enter this poor hut, but the *Captain* of the Colony's forces. Do you disapprove of the salute, or of any other of my military ordonnances?

BRADFORD (*gently, with a smile*). I disapprove of naught, old comrade, but of a certain want of patience beneath a friend's jest which I have sometimes marked; but Miles there 's enow to make the Governor of this Colony sorry and sober, and thou shouldst not begrudge him a moment of merriment even at thine own cost.

MILES (*coming over and placing his hand on BRADFORD'S shoulder as he sits*). Nor do I, as well thou knowest, Will. 'T is only that I am as ever a hot-headed fool and ill deserve a friend like thee. And now, what thinkest thou of Master Cushman's errand and the chidings of Weston and those London traders that we sent them not a cargo by the *Mayflower*? We, who (*with anger*) had much ado to dig the graves of half our company and find food for the rest, to be rated like laggard servants because we laded not that old hulk with merchandise for their benefit.

BRADFORD. Aye, Master Weston's letter was somewhat hard to bear, albeit we should excuse much to his ignorance of our surroundings. We will send back in the *Fortune* a good cargo of sassafras which will be a panacea to the chirurgeons, and hogsheads full of beaver skins, and the rest of the hold will be given

up to clapboards — the whole cargo will be worth at least five hundred pounds.

MILES. 'T is far more than they deserve after that letter — (*He pours out a goblet of water from the bucket and drinks it.*)

BRADFORD (*searching in his leathern jerkin and bringing out a roll of paper*). I have writ a reply to Master Weston's letter, and am fain to have your mind upon it, for I would not be over-bitter, and yet was shrewdly wounded that John Carver, lying in his honored grave, should be so rudely attacked. Shall I read it?

MILES (*walking restlessly with sword at his side*). Aye, an thou wilt, though I'm more than half in mind to take passage by the Fortune, and give Master Weston and the rest a reply after mine own fashion.

BRADFORD (*smiling*). What, and leave the train-band of Plymouth to its own destruction! (*He reads.*) Here is my poor script: "To the worshipful Master Thos: Weston:"

MILES. Little worship would he get from me!

BRADFORD (*reading*). "Sir, — Your large letter written to Mr. Carver and dated the 16th of July, 1621, I have received the 20th of Nov'br, wherein you lay many heavy imputations upon him and us all. Touching him he is departed this life, and now at rest in the Lord from all those troubles and incumbrances with which we are yet to strive."

MILES (*walking fast*). Aye, 't would be well for Master Weston's proud spirit if he were to share a few of our privations. Live on corn porridge and treacle for a month!

BRADFORD (*with a smile, reading*). "Carver needs not my apology; for his care and pains were so great for the common good both ours and yours as that therewith, it is thought, he oppressed himself and shortened his days, of whose loss we cannot sufficiently complain. At great charges in this Adventure I confess you have been —"

MILES (*interrupting*). "Charges you have been —" Sure he took from us all he could before we sailed and sent us impoverished in a crowded, ill-fitted boat to weather the wild seas of winter — *They* were more pirates than Adventurers, in sooth!

BRADFORD (*shaking his head*). Hist, Miles! Let me finish the script. "At great charges in this Adventure I confess you have been, and many losses you may sustain; but the loss of his and many other honest and industrious men's lives cannot be valued at any price. Of the one there may be hope of recovery, but the other no recompense can make good." (*He returns the letter to his jerkin.*)

MILES (*bursting out with indignation*). Oh, you're too mild, Bradford; you should bombard him with red-hot shot, hurl a flight of grape, a volley of canister into his midst — nay, then, I'll go myself and with a blow of my gauntlet across Master Weston's ears —

(Wild shouts are heard outside and screams; also rapid drum-beats and PRISCILLA, with hair flying and out of breath, rushes in, shouting.)

PRISCILLA. Captain — Captain Standish! Master Warren hath sent me to warn you that some of the newcomers are building a bonfire in the Town Square and sprinkling the pile with powder — and they ask

your council at the Common House — in faith I know not —

MILES (*with dignity, going out*). Pardon me if I venture to cut you short in your somewhat long message, Mistress, but I fear me I must haste to the bonfire lest it may become a blazing settlement. (*With a mock-bow he goes out.*)

PRISCILLA (*looking in surprise after him and laughing*). Alack-a-day! I fear me I forgot to make the salute to the Captain for the want of which he hath sent poor John Alden almost to tears by his coldness. Truly, one must be proud of the Captain, albeit he is so sore displeas'd with me — because I would not say yea to a suit that he felt forced to proffer. Well — at least I can go and make a posset for my dear dame. (*She skips about the room, making mock-salutes.*)

(MARY CHILTON *enters slowly with head down, yet smiling, and with a large bunch of wild asters and autumn leaves in her hands. She sits down dreamily at the spinning-wheel, and PRISCILLA, unseen by her, glides up and puts her hands playfully over MARY'S eyes; she pulls them down and holds PRISCILLA by the hands.*)

MARY. I saw thee not, Priscilla. I thought thou wert at the bonfire. I saw John Alden there. 'T is a wild wind for a fire.

PRISCILLA. Where did you find those gay flowers, Mary?

MARY (*shyly and with a smile*). I was walking along the meadow by Eel River —

PRISCILLA (*taking MARY'S face in her hands*). Alone, Mistress Mary?

MARY (*laughing*). No, with company.

PRISCILLA. Company — that means two — thee and John Winslow, I'll wager.

MARY. Well, 't was *thou* told me that he did not know the settlement very well and might get lost gathering clams. (*They both laugh.*) Priscilla (*with hesitation*), wilt need my help for supper to-night, or canst thou spare me to go to Mistress Winslow's to sup — for I am bidden?

PRISCILLA. Surely, a little welcome supper for "brother John." Take a flagon of my ale and my compliments to Mistress Winslow. (*PRISCILLA fills a flagon with ale, then searches in the chest anxiously, two or three times looking about.*) 'T is strange where is my scarlet riband and the brooch; it is ever in this chest.

(*She goes out with the flagon, followed by MARY, who, not heeding, almost collides with SQUANTO, who comes in, looks about, grins, sits by fireplace on stool; sees cupboard is open a little way and the case-bottle on the lower shelf; he creeps to the door, looks out, creeps back, takes down a bottle from the case, drinks a long drink, smacks his lips, spills a little on the chest and stoops to lick it up with his tongue, and pours water into bottle, puts back the case, as sounds of the drum are heard and talking outside; BRADFORD, MILES, and JOHN HOWLAND enter, followed by MISTRESS BREWSTER, who stands at door, leaning on cane at first as the three men consult a rude map on table.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. And yet, as says the Elder,

we came among these salvages to *convert* them to the knowledge of God, not to *slaughter* them.

MILES (*turning towards her*). Yet to me it seemeth, Mistress Brewster, it may be a question of *their* lives or *our* own. I should be loth to see the Elder's gray hairs dabbled with blood or to see the women of the settlement carried into captivity by the Indians.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. God's will be done. (*She sits down in chair and closes her eyes.*)

SQUANTO. Corbitant hate white man; say white man wolf; if find wolf near wigwam, red man send arrow through his head.

BRADFORD. This sachem of the Narragansetts, Corbitant, is surely not our friend and he fain would persuade Massasoit to become an enemy.

MILES (*to MISTRESS BREWSTER*). Would it be fitting, Mistress, if we were to take a drop to moisture our throats, parched by the smoke of the fire?

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Aye, and glad am I to have my ale so used — it is my home-brewing of many weeks ago. John Howland, wilt thou take down the case-bottle and pour for the men? — there are goblets in the cupboard.

(SQUANTO *grins as JOHN pours; he takes the bottle untouched by SQUANTO and pours for BRADFORD and MILES; from the other bottle, adulterated by SQUANTO, he pours a full goblet for himself and a smaller mug for SQUANTO; the latter makes up a wry face, but drinks.*)

JOHN HOWLAND (*with surprise, putting down his goblet after a swallow and speaking, so MISTRESS*

BREWSTER *will not hear him, but to MILES*). That was indeed "pale ale."

MILES (*surprised*). 'T is a noble brew with a fine sharpness, almost as of wine. (*He holds his goblet aloft and turns to MISTRESS BREWSTER.*) We drink to your better health and thank thee, Mistress. (BRADFORD *joins in the toast, but HOWLAND does not drink, although he raises his glass; SQUANTO grins and goes out.*)

BRADFORD. Squanto has of late been making trouble for us with his cock-and-bull stories; no wonder that Massasoit was aggrieved at his tale last week that Massasoit with Corbitant was coming from Nemasket to attack us, when Massasoit was ever loyal. Could he have got Squanto in his clutches it would have gone hard with the poor fool.

MILES. Yet Squanto is no fool; he hath a nimble wit as hath my Indian, Hobomock, but he ill brooks any other favorites among the red men. Didst hear the day when some of us were unearthing a keg of powder buried on the hill near the Fort, and he and the Indian who was that day in the settlement clomb the hill to see what was on. When they saw Alden hand up the keg to Hopkins, the stranger asked Squanto what it meant, and Squanto told him 't was the plague which swept the land before our coming; he said that we had captured it and kept it buried, but would loose it upon the red men who were our enemies; the Indian was well scared and offered Squanto big furs and skins if he would keep the plague from being loosed until he should have time to return to his tribe at Nemasket. (*All laugh.*)

(*A wild shout is heard outside and cries of "My boy! my boy! He's lost; he'll be devoured by the Indians! Oh, where's Captain Standish? Oh, I hate you, foul Indian beast, and all your kind! Find my boy, I say!"*)

MILES (*hurrying to door*). 'T is that common scold, Helen Billington. Never did I hear such an uproar as she can make.

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Never did I see a mother who could so berate her children when they are about her and so bewail them when they are out of her sight. Yet we must not judge; she is not well and a child is a child.

(JOHN ALDEN *enters hastily, pauses and is about to speak, stops, and salutes the Captain, while BRADFORD hides a smile.*)

JOHN ALDEN. The Billington lad has gone away, Captain, and his mother is sore distressed. She thinks he has been stolen by some stray Indian who has come to see Squanto, and she is attacking Squanto with a shrewish tongue; the lad's brothers say he has run away to visit the Indian camp at Nemasket even as he ran away to the Nausets six months ago. Wilt send out a searching party, Captain?

MILES STANDISH (*testily at first*). Perchance it would be well to let him stay away this time; he's been but a trouble to the Colony since he set fire to the keg of gunpowder under his father's bunk in the Mayflower and well-nigh blew up the ship and killed us all. John Billington is an unwhipt rascal of a boy, ever in mischief.

(*Cries repeated outside and near the door; voices*

saying: "Where is Captain Standish? Why don't they do something for the poor soul who is so distracted for the loss of her boy?" *Murmur of assents behind the scenes.*)

BRADFORD. The Billingtons can rouse much agitation and trouble in the settlement. The men might start early in the morning and, perchance, find the lad on their way to the Narragansetts, if such be your order, Captain.

(The cries are heard again of "My boy! Where is he? Find him, I say!")

MISTRESS BREWSTER *(going towards door)*. We must silence this brawling woman if aught can do so. *(She goes out.)*

BRADFORD. This chief, Corbitant, seems to mean treachery and he must be severely dealt with. If he prove as represented, Captain, it may be wise to slay him if he cannot be persuaded to be friends, for he is the heart of the conspiracy.

MILES. Aye, and I would bring his head to be set over the gate of the Fort as a warning and proof to all offenders. Yet I am no cannibal nor will I shed blood needlessly.

(As he is speaking PRISCILLA enters, pulling DESIRE MINTER in by the hand, and MARY CHILTON follows them. DESIRE hears MILES speak of the Indian's head and utters a squeal and would pull away, but is held by PRISCILLA and pushed towards the chest; PRISCILLA talks to her in low, firm tone, and JOHN ALDEN watches them.)

BRADFORD. And now, Captain Standish, it were

well that you should choose those whom you will have of your company, for the start should be made early in the day, even before the sun arise.

MILES (*looking at ALDEN and then looking away quickly*). I will choose me Hopkins, Warren, Howland, Soule, Eaton, Browne, and Cooke, — hearts of oak and arms of steel have all, — and I will take Billington, both because he is the boy's father and because he may stir up sedition while I am gone; methinks I should take also Lister and Dotey, for they are still rankerous in spirit towards each other and might try to fight another duel, as they did before. (MILES *takes his hat and moves towards door.*)

JOHN ALDEN (*approaching him with a manner and voice of pleading*). And not take me, Master?

MILES (*looking at PRISCILLA, whose back is to him, with a somewhat bitter laugh*). Nay, Jack; I've a text for thee, — "I have married a wife and cannot come." (*He goes out and JOHN looks after him sadly, then drops his head and stands still.*)

(PRISCILLA, *who has heard the taunt, turns with flashing eyes and looks after MILES, sees JOHN ALDEN standing with his hat in hand at door; steals to him, touches his arm, and speaks kindly in a whisper, but he shakes his head; he gives her a long, loving look, presses her hand, and goes out sadly; PRISCILLA returns to the rear; DESIRE has snatched a piece of biscuit and is munching it, while MARY is looking into the cupboard; BRADFORD sits at table, studying some papers which he has taken from leathern jerkin; MISTRESS BREWSTER comes in, with*

cane, stops at table, takes large Bible to her chair and sits there, reading.)

PRISCILLA (*to DESIRE*). Tell us now where you have hid the riband and the brooch; tell, or I'll report thee to the Governor for a thief.

DESIRE (*her mouth full, and trying to swallow, chokes*). Nay, I'm no thief; I told thee I left it in this room; find it for thyself.

PRISCILLA. Mary and I have searched vainly for it and thou *shalt* tell where it is hid. (*She looks in drawer in table and raises clothes from pegs.*) 'T was more than mischief prompted thee to take it from the chest.

DESIRE (*sullenly*). Perchance, it was; but 't was wicked of thee to keep such a bauble in this psalm-singing settlement; it ill became the shabby gowns that we needs must wear. I fain (*with a hoarse laugh*) would take it back to England with me and remove temptation from thee — and Mary.

(PRISCILLA, *looking into the iron pans at fireplace, stamps her foot gently.*)

MARY. Shame on thee, Desire. Hast no decency of thought or words?

PRISCILLA. Thou shalt *not* take it back to England; the brooch is *mine* and I'll keep it for my mother's sake; 't was hers and her own hair is braided in it with a lock of my brother's when he was a babe. (*She is almost in tears.*)

BRADFORD (*looking up, amazed, turning to MISTRESS BREWSTER, who is also listening*). What means this wordy battle, Mistress Brewster? (*To PRISCILLA.*) What hath Desire done now?

PRISCILLA (*pointing to DESIRE*). She hath stolen —
DESIRE. 'T is a lie!

BRADFORD (*with severity*). Silence, Desire. Say not a word until Priscilla hath told her trouble.

PRISCILLA. Well, she hath hid a bit of bright riband that I wore many a time in Holland and on it was my gold-rimmed brooch that was my mother's, I fain would find a short time ago to (*with a sly look at MARY, who drops her head*) put it on Mary's somber gown when she goes to Master Winslow's to sup to-night, and I looked for it in the chest where I have ever kept it, but it was not there. I thought, dear mother, (*turning to MISTRESS BREWSTER*) it might be in the bedroom and I searched there in that chest and table and found it not. Desire came in and saw me searching and asked, "Had I lost aught?" and when I told her what it was she mocked me and said, "What will you give me if I find it for you?" She angered me with her flouts and I knew she *could* tell, but *would* not of its whereabouts. Mary and I have searched for it, since she saith it is in the cabin, but we cannot find it, and she avers she would carry it away with her to-morrow in the ship. 'T was my mother's and I value it; it is almost the last link with my happy days of girlhood. (*She covers her face with her hands.*)

BRADFORD (*rising and pointing his finger at DESIRE*). Find thou the brooch and give it to Priscilla or I'll order thee to be publicly whipped before the Fortune sails.

(*DESIRE shivers and cowers; then moves slowly to the warming pan, hanging on the wall, opens it,*

takes out the riband and brooch and throws it on the table).

BRADFORD (*seizing her by the hand*). Nay, throw it not; give it to its owner. And to-morrow we are well rid of such a mischief-maker in the Colony.

DESIRE (*reluctantly handing it to PRISCILLA, then hurrying towards the door*). Here, take the old bauble and have joy of it. Glad am I to go where there will be no brown-skinned jade, like thee, to flirt with all the men and flaunt a poor maid, and where there will be a chance of some decent victual.

(PRISCILLA *is pinning the riband and brooch on MARY'S gown at the neck; MARY protests and they both laugh, as DESIRE goes out.*)

BRADFORD. She should be soundly punished for such shameful words. She should have a lesson in public sight for her impudence.

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*sadly*). Aye, she should be dealt with and *would* be were she to remain longer among us. But let it pass now, Governor, if it be thy pleasure, for she will be sailing away on the morrow. Poor Mistress Carver! — and she tried sore hard to train the wench in industry and breeding.

PRISCILLA (*standing in front of MARY with her head on one side*). Aye, let it pass and we will all say “Good riddance” to her to-morrow. I tried to be kind at first to the girl, but she has seemed to rebuff me at all times and has shown a cruel hatred of me since she was foiled in her love-philter for the Captain. (*To MISTRESS BREWSTER, leading MARY towards her; MARY looks conscious and shy.*) Doth not the bit of color become my Mary, dear mother?

MISTRESS BREWSTER (*hesitating*). Aye, 't is a pretty brooch; I know not about the riband, but 't is natural for maids to crave a touch of brightness.

MARY. I fear me that Mistress Winslow will not approve, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA (*putting on MARY's cape as BRADFORD puts on his hat*). Mistress Winslow hath fine lace and embroideries on her garments for state occasions and she will not deny *thee* a symbol of thy good cheer on this festival supper for her brother, John Winslow. (*Laughing and pushing MARY towards the door after BRADFORD*). Go you now, maid, with a clear conscience and a happy face and follow close to the Governor's footsteps, for the sun is set and the dark comes on — if a stray Indian should see thee he might capture thee for the sake of the riband and the gold.

(MARY goes out giving PRISCILLA's cheek a pinch and then a kiss.)

(PRISCILLA takes a bayberry candle from the shelf above the fireplace, lights it with bit of thatch, sings a strain of the French song, carries the candle to the table, goes to the chest, and takes out a piece of linen and some thread and a housewife; she brings these to the table, sits down on stool and smiles at MISTRESS BREWSTER, who sits with folded hands; the room is dimly lighted. PRISCILLA rises hurriedly, puts a kettle on the hook in the fireplace, stirs the embers, then sits down at the table and begins to mend the linen.)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. Priscilla, dost feel like singing to me for a little while the porridge is heating

for the evening-meal for the Elder and Jonathan? I love well to hear thee sing and it hath been a weary day — thy sweet voice can bring rest to my soul.

PRISCILLA. Of a truth it hath been a weary and a wearying day with much of confusion and worry and — some of great gladness — a day with tales of salvage Indians who may attack us and of a love-philter that might have destroyed life, reports of a lost child and a fire that might endanger the settlement, with a new-found lover, methinks, for my Mary, with happiness and sadness also for my John — alack — and some would say that life is but *dull* in Plymouth Colony! Of a truth it will be a good ending of such a day to sing a hymn of steadfastness and faith, and I'll gladly sing, dear mistress, while I mend this linen. (*She holds it up and shows thin places.*) It is fast melting away in its fine meshes. (*She sings the third stanza of Luther's Hymn.*)

And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph o'er us;
The prince of darkness grim —
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure;
One little word shall fell him.

(MILES comes in quietly while PRISCILLA, with her side face to the door is singing and she does not see him in the dim light; MISTRESS BREWSTER'S hands are folded and her eyes are closed; MILES takes down his sword and stands silently for a moment at the door as PRISCILLA sings on.)

That word above all earthly powers —
 No thanks to them-abideth;
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours,
 Through Him who with us sideth;
 Let goods and kindred go,
 This mortal life also;
 The body they may kill,
 God's truth abideth still;
 His kingdom is forever.

(MILES makes a sudden movement, almost losing grasp upon his sword, and PRISCILLA starts, takes the candle up and looks at him; he moves towards MISTRESS BREWSTER and PRISCILLA puts down candle on table and sits on stool, mending.)

MILES. I fain would take my sword now, for the start will be early in the morning. Wilt bid me God-speed? I've no wife nor child nor near kin to see me off (*with a look askance at PRISCILLA*). None will look on a battered old soldier when fresh young faces are at hand. (*He moves away.*)

MISTRESS BREWSTER. The Lord go with you, Captain; and may you return safely and without bloodshed, with "the sword of the Lord and of Gideon."

(*He goes to the door, bowing to MISTRESS BREWSTER and to PRISCILLA, as he would pass out; she rises with impetuosity, drops her linen and hurries to the door.*)

PRISCILLA. Captain! Captain Standish!

MILES (*coming back inside door*). Your commands, Mistress?

PRISCILLA (*putting out her hands in pleading and he comes nearer to her; they stand at front of table*). Nay, nay, sir! My father's dear loved friend, my brother's

tender nurse, — mine, for when I was low with the fever 't was you with tenderness gave me drink, — oh, what shall I say, how shall I plead for a little kindness now. Have pity on a froward maid's distress! (*She hides her face in hands and cries.*)

MILES (*with kindly tone*). What, Priscilla, thou canst weep?

PRISCILLA (*looking up*). And why not when my heart is sorrowful?

MILES (*putting his hand on her shoulder*). There, there, child! Look up and let me see thee smile as thou art wont! What is it, maid? What is thy sorrow?

PRISCILLA. That you will not forgive me, sir.

MILES (*dropping his hand and looking on the floor sadly*). Forgive thee, for what?

PRISCILLA. Thou'rt going to a terrible danger and it may be to thy death. (*She hides her face again.*)

MILES. Well, girl, 't is not worth crying for, if I am. Life is not so sweet to me that I should overmuch dread to lay it down with honor.

PRISCILLA. Oh, and it is all my fault.

(MILES *walks the floor while she stands with head drooped.*)

MILES (*standing before her*). Priscilla, I was indeed thy father's friend and I am thine — and I would have wed thee and thou didst not — refusing because thou preferred — as I well know, now mine eyes are opened — John Alden, who is also my friend, even as my younger brother, whose honor and well-being are as dear to me as mine own. What, then, is thy request and the cause of this grief?

PRISCILLA. My grief is that since the day I gave John Alden the answer to his wooing for thee (*with a sly look*) through him as envoy — and he spoke nobly of thy virtues and thy lineage — you have seemed no more my friend, but have looked upon me with coldness; and now that you go, it may be to your death, it breaketh my heart to have it so, and I fain would beg your forgiveness for aught I have done to offend you (*with a bit of old spirit*), though I know not what it may be.

MILES (*walking floor, then stopping and smiling at PRISCILLA, extending his hand*). Well, well, I forgive thee, maiden, for what seemed to me like something of scorn and slight — nay, we'll say no more of it. Here is my hand, Priscilla, and surely thy father's friend may for once touch thy cheek. (*He kisses her cheek lightly; she looks down.*) Now, child, we're friends and dear friends, and if yon salvage should sheathe his knife in my heart, perhaps thou'lt shed a tear or two, and say a prayer for the soul of — thy father's friend. And now thy petition, for time presses.

(MISTRESS BREWSTER *raises her eyes in thanksgiving and smiles.*)

PRISCILLA. That thou wilt take John Alden with thee!

MILES (*starting with surprise and laughing*). What, then! What man shall ever read a woman's will aright! I left him at home for *thy* sake, Priscilla.

PRISCILLA. So I judged, and I thank thee — no, I thank thee not for so misjudging me. (*She tosses her head and walks to table.*)

MILES. What, now? Dost want thy troth-lover slain?

PRISCILLA. Nay, in truth, nor do I want my troth-plight friend (*with a smile at MILES*) slain; but neither do I want the one or the other to lurk safely at home when his brothers have need for him at war. (*With much spirit.*) There's no coward's blood in my heart more than in yours, Captain Standish, and I care not to shelter any man behind my petticoats. John Alden is a brave man, as thou knowest, and he is greatly grieved because thou wilt not let him go with thee as he has ever done and been of noble service to thee and the Colony. I have not wed him, nor will I wed him with your black frown upon our hearts; let him go and play his part, as he would fain do as a true soldier upon that field of danger whence *you* do not care greatly to come alive. (*She extends both hands to him and he grasps them.*)

MILES. Nay, Priscilla, I care far more for life than I did an hour since, for now I have a troth-plight friend. And if my kinswoman, Barbara, shall come in the next ship, with Mistress Southworth, Barbara and thee will be boon friends, I'm sure, for ye are both witty and noble-hearted, brave women.

PRISCILLA (*still holding his hands and with persistence*). And you will take John? And if he comes home alive (*with a little shudder and repetition*) — and when he comes home, you'll smile upon our marriage?

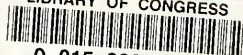
MILES (*raising and pressing her hands against his breast*). Yea, girl, yea to both requests. God bless you, Priscilla, for a brave and true woman. (*He releases her hands slowly and moves towards door.*) And now

good night to thee, dear friend, and to dear Mother Brewster also.

(He bows and goes out; PRISCILLA stands a moment, then kneels beside MISTRESS BREWSTER, with happy, uplifted head and smiling, while MISTRESS BREWSTER places her hands in blessing on PRISCILLA'S head.)

CURTAIN: END OF PLAY

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