

The Courtship of Miles Standish
by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

I

Miles Standish

In the Old Colony days, in Plymouth the
land of the Pilgrims,
To and fro in a room of his simple and
primitive dwelling,
Clad in doublet and hose, and boots of Cor-
dovan leather,
Strode, with a martial air, Miles Standish
the Puritan Captain.
Buried in thought he seemed, with his
hands behind him, and pausing
Ever and anon to behold his glittering
weapons of warfare,
Hanging in shining array along the walls
of the chamber, -
Cutlass and corselet of steel, and his trusty
sword of Damascus,
Curved at the point and inscribed with its
mystical Arabic sentence,
While underneath, in a corner, were fowl-
ing-piece, musket, and matchlock.
Short of stature he was, but strongly built
and athletic,
Broad in the shoulders, deep-chested, with
muscles and sinews of iron;
Brown as a nut was his face, but his russet
beard was already
Flaked with patches of snow, as hedges
sometimes in November.
Near him was seated John Alden, his friend
and household companion,
Writing with diligent speed at a table of
pine by the window;
Fair-haired, azure eyed, with delicate Saxon
complexion,
Having the dew of his youth, and the
beauty thereof, as the captives
Whom Saint Gregory saw, and exclaimed,
“Not Angles, but Angels.”
Youngest of all was he of the men who
came in the Mayflower.

Suddenly breaking the silence, the dili-
gent scribe interrupting,
Spake, in the pride of his heart, Miles
Standish the Captain of Plymouth.
“Look at these arms,” he said, “the war-
like weapons that hang here
Burnished and bright and clean, as if for
parade or inspection!
This is the sword of Damascus I fought
with in Flanders; this breastplate,
Well I remember the day! once saved my
life in a skirmish;
Here in front you can see the very dint of
the bullet
Fired at point-blank at my heart by a Spanish
arcabucero.
Had it not been of sheer steel, the for-
gotten bones of Miles Standish
Would at this moment be mould, in their
grave in the Flemish morasses.”
Thereupon answered John Alden, but
looked not up from his writing:
“Truly the breath of the Lord hath slack-
ened the speed of the bullet;
He in his mercy preserved you, to be our
shield and our weapon!”
Still the Captain continued, unheeding the
words of the stripling:
“See, how bright they are burnished, as if
in an arsenal hanging;
That is because I have done it myself, and
not left it to others.
Serve yourself, would you be well served,
is an excellent adage;
So I take care of my arms, as you of your
pens and your inkhorn.
Then, too, there are my soldiers, my great,
invincible army,
Twelve men, all equipped, having each his
rest and his matchlock,
Eighteen shillings a month, together with
diet and pillage,
And, like Caesar, I know the name of each
of my soldiers!”
This he said with a smile, that danced in
his eyes, as the sunbeams

Dance on the waves of the sea, and vanish
again in a moment.

Alden laughed as he wrote, and still the
Captain continued:

“Look! you can see from this window my
brazen howitzer planted
High on the roof of the church, a preacher
who speaks to the purpose,
Steady, straightforward, and strong, with
irresistible logic,
Orthodox, flashing conviction right into the
hearts of the heathen.
Now we are ready, I think, for any assault
of the Indians;
Let them come, if they like, and the sooner
they try it the better,—
Let them come, if they like, be it sagamore,
sachem, or pow-wow,
Aspinet, Samoset, Corbitant, Squanto, or
Tokamahamon!”

Long at the window he stood, and wist-
fully gazed at the landscape,
Washed with a cold gray mist, the vapory
breath of the east-wind,
Forest and meadow and hill, and the steel-
blue rim of the ocean,
Lying silent and sad, in the afternoon shad-
ows and sunshine.

Over his countenance flitted a shadow like
those on the landscape,
Gloom intermingled with light; and his
voice was subdued with emotion,
Tenderness, pity, regret, as after a pause
he proceeded:

“Yonder there, on the hill by the sea, lies
buried Rose Standish;
Beautiful rose of love, that bloomed for me
by the wayside!
She was the first to die of all who came in
the Mayflower!

Green above her is growing the field of
wheat we have sown there,
Better to hide from the Indian scouts the

many already have perished!”
Sadly his face he averted, and strode up
and down, and was thoughtful.

Fixed to the opposite wall was a shelf of
books, and among them
Prominent three, distinguished alike for
bulk and for binding;
Bariffe’s Artillery Guide, and the Com-
mentaries of Caesar
Out of the Latin translated by Arthur
Goldinge of London,
And, as if guarded by these, between them
was standing the Bible.
Musing a moment before them, Miles
Standish paused, as if doubtful
Which of these three he should choose for
his consolation and comfort,
Whether the wars of the Hebrews, the fa-
mous campaigns of the Romans,
Or the Artillery practice, designed for bel-
ligerant Christians.
Finally down from its shelf he dragged the
ponderous Roman,
Seated himself by the window, and opened
the book, and in silence
Turned o’er the well-worn leaves, where
thumb-marks thick in the margin,
Like the trample of feet, proclaimed the
battle was hottest.
Nothing was heard in the room but the
hurrying pen of the stripling,
Busily writing epistles important, to go by
the Mayflower,
Ready to sail on the morrow, or next day
at latest, God willing!
Homeward bound with the tidings of all
that terrible winter,
Letters written by Alden, and full of the
name of Priscilla!
Full of the name and fame of the Pu-
ritan maiden Priscilla!

graves of our people,
Lest they should count them and see how

II

Love and Friendship

Nothing was heard in the room but the
hurrying pen of the stripling,
Or and occasional sigh from the laboring
heart of the Captain,
Reading the marvelous words and achievements of Julius Caesar.
After a while he exclaimed, as he smote
with his hand, palm downwards,
Heavily on the page: "A wonderful man
was this Caesar!
You are a writer, and I am a fighter, but
here is a fellow
Who could both write and fight, and in
both was he equally skilful!"
Straightway answered and spake John
Alden, the comely, the youthful:
"Yes, he was equally skilled, as you say,
with his pen and his weapons.
Somewhere have I read, but where I forget,
he could dictate
Seven letters at once, at the same time
writing his memoirs."
"Truly," continued the Captain, not heeding
or hearing the other,
"Truly a wonderful man was Caius Julius
Caesar!
Better be first, he said, in a little Iberian
village,
Than be second in Rome, and I think he
was right when he said it.
Twice was he married before he was
twenty, and many times after;
Battles five hundred he fought, and a
thousand cities he conquered;
He, too, fought in Flanders, as he himself
has recorded;
Finally he was stabbed by his friend, the
orator Brutus!
Now, do you know what he did on a certain
occasion in Flanders,
When the rear-guard of his army retreated,

crowded so closely together
There was no room for their swords?
Why, he seized a sword from a soldier
Put himself straight at the head of his
troops, and commanded the captains,
Calling on each by his name, to order forward
the ensigns;
Then to widen the ranks, and give more
room for their weapons;
So he won the day, the battle of something-or-other.
That's what I always say; if you wish a
thing to be well done,
You must do it yourself, you must not leave
it to others!"

All was silent again; the Captain continued
his reading.
Nothing was heard in the room but the
hurrying pen of the stripling
Writing epistles important to go the next
day by the Mayflower,
Filled with the name and the fame of the
Puritan maiden Priscilla,
Till the treacherous pen, to which he confided
the secret,
Strove to betray it by singing and shouting
the name of Priscilla!
Finally closing his book, with a bang of the
ponderous cover,
Sudden and loud as the sound of a soldier
grounding his musket,
Thus to the young man spake Miles Standish
the Captain of Plymouth:
"When you have finished your work, I have
something important to tell you.
Be not however in haste; I can wait; I
shall not be impatient!"
Straightway Alden replied, as he folded the
last of his letters,
Pushing his papers aside, and giving respectful
attention:
"Speak; for whenever you speak, I am
always ready to listen,
Always ready to hear whatever pertains to

the front giving way too,
And the immortal Twelfth Legion was
Miles Standish.”
Thereupon answered the Captain, embar-
rassed, and culling his phrases:
“’T not good for a man to be alone, say
the Scriptures.
This I have said before, and again and
again I repeat it;
Every hour in the day, I think it, and feel
it, and say it.
Since Rose Standish died, my life has been
weary and dreary;
Sick at heart have I been, beyond the heal-
ing of friendship;
Oft in my lonely hours have I thought of
the maiden Priscilla.
She is alone in the world; her father and
mother and brother
Died in the winter together, I saw her
going and coming,
Now to the grave of the dead, and now to
the bed of the dying.
Patient, courageous, and strong and said
to myself, that if ever
There were angels on earth, as there are
angels in heaven.
Two have I seen and known; and the angel
whose name is Priscilla
Holds in my desolate life the place which
the other abandoned.
Long have I cherished the thought, but
never have dared to reveal it,
Being a coward in this though valiant
enough for the most part.
Go to the damsel Priscilla, the loveliest
maiden on Plymouth,
Say that a blunt old Captain, a man not
of words but of actions,
Offers his hand and his heart, the hand and
heart of a soldier.
Not in these words, you know, but this in
short is my meaning;
I am a maker of war, and not a maker of
phrases.
You, who are bred as a scholar, can say it

pleadings and wooings of lovers,
Such as you think best adapted to win the
heart of a maiden.”

When he had spoken, John Alden, the
fair-haired, taciturn stripling,
All aghast at his words, surprised, embar-
rassed, bewildered,
Trying to mask his dismay by treating the
subject with lightness,
Trying to smile, and yet feeling his heart
stand still in his bosom,
Just as a timepiece stops in a house that is
stricken by lightning,
Thus made answer and spake, or rather
stammered, then answered:
“Such a message as that, I am sure I
should mangle and mar it;
If you would have it well done, -I am
only repeating your maxim,--
You must do it yourself, you must not leave
it to others!”
But with the air of a man whom nothing
can turn from his purpose,
Gravely shaking his head, made answer the
Captain of Plymouth:
“Truly the maxim is good, and I do not
mean to gainsay it;
But we must use it discreetly, and not
waste powder for nothing.
Now, as I said before, I was never a maker
of phrases.
I can march up to a fortress and summon
the place to surrender,
But march up to a woman with such a pro-
posal, I dare not.
I’m not afraid of bullets, nor shot
from the mouth of a cannon,
But of a thundering ‘No!’ point-blank
from the mouth of a woman,
That I confess I’m afraid of, nor am I
ashamed to confess it!
So you must grant my request, for you are
an elegant scholar,
Having the graces of speech, and skill in
the turning of phrases.”

in elegant language,
 Such as you read in your books of the
 Taking the hand of his friend, who still
 was reluctant and doubtful,
 Holding it long in his own, and pressing it
 kindly, he added:
 "Though I have spoken thus lightly, yet
 deep is the feeling that prompts me;
 Surely you cannot refuse what I ask in the
 name of our friendship!"
 Then made answer John Alden: "The
 name of friendship is sacred;
 What you demand in that name, I have not
 the power to deny you!"
 So the strong will prevail, subduing and
 moulding the gentler,
 Friendship prevailed over love, and Alden
 went on his errand.

III The Lover's Errand

So the strong will prevail, and Alden
 went on his errand,
 Out of the street of the village, and into
 the paths of the forest,
 Into the tranquil woods, where bluebirds
 and robins were building
 Towns in the populous trees, with hanging
 gardens of verdure,
 Peaceful, aerial cities of joy and affection
 and freedom.
 All around him was calm, but within him
 commotion and conflict,
 Love contending with friendship, and self
 with each generous impulse.
 To and from in his breast his thoughts were
 heaving and dashing,
 As in a foundering ship, with every roll of
 the vessel,
 Washes the bitter sea, the merciless surge
 of the ocean!
 "Must I relinquish it all," he cried with a
 wild lamentation,--
 "Must I relinquish it all, the joy, the hope,
 the illusion?"

Over the wintry sea, to the desolate shores
 of New England?
 Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its
 depths of corruption
 Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phan-
 toms of passion;
 Angels of light they seem, but are only
 delusions of Satan.
 All is clear to me now; I feel it, I see it
 distinctly!
 This is the hand of the Lord; it is laid upon
 me in anger,
 For I have followed too much the heart's
 desires and devices,
 Worshipping Astaroth blindly, and impious
 idols of Baal.
 This is the cross I must bear; the sin and
 the swift retribution."

So through the Plymouth woods John
 Alden went on his errand;
 Crossing the brook at the ford, where it
 brawled over pebble and shallow,
 Gathering still, as he went, the May-flowers
 blooming around him,
 Fragrant, filling the air with a strange and
 wonderful sweetness,
 Children lost in the woods, and covered
 with leaves in their slumber.
 "Puritan flowers," he said, "and the type
 of Puritan maidens,
 Modest and simple and sweet, the very
 type of Priscilla!
 So I will take them to her; to Priscilla the
 Mayflower of Plymouth,
 Modest and simple and sweet, as a parting
 gift I will take them;
 Breathing their silent farewells, as they
 fade and wither and perish,
 Soon to be thrown away as is the heart of
 the giver."
 So through the Plymouth woods John
 Alden went on his errand;
 Came to an open space, and saw the disk
 of the ocean,

Was it for this I have followed the flying
feet and the shadow
Sailless, sombre and cold with comfort-
less breath of the east-wind;
Saw the new-built house, and people at
work in a meadow;
Heard, as he drew near the door, the mu-
sical voice of Priscilla
Singing the hundredth psalm, the grand
old Puritan anthem,
Music that Luther sang to the sacred words
of the Psalmist,
Full of the breath of the Lord, consoling
and comforting many.
Then, as he opened the door, he beheld the
form of the maiden
Seated beside her wheel, and the carded
wool like a snow-drift
Piled at her knee, her white hands feeding
the ravenous spindle,
While with her foot on the treadle she
guided the wheel in its motion.
Open wide on her lap lay the well-worn
psalm-book of Ainsworth,
Printed in Amsterdam, the words and the
music together,
Rough-hewn, angular notes, like stones in
the wall of a church yard,
Darkened and overhung by the running vine
of the versus.
Such was the book from whose pages she
sang the old Puritan anthem,
She, the Puritan girl, in the solitude of the
forest,
Making the humble house and the modest
apparel of homespun
Beautiful with her beauty, and rich with
the wealth of her being!
Over him rushed, like a wind that is keen
and cold and relentless,
Thoughts of what might have been, and
the weight and woe of his errand;
All the dreams that had faded, and all the
hopes that had vanished,
All his life henceforth a dreary and tenant-
less mansion,

Still he said to himself, and almost fiercely
he said it,
“Let not him that putteth his hand to the
plough look backwards;
Though the ploughshare cut through the
flowers of life to its fountains,
Though it pass o’er the graves of the dead
and the hearths of the living,
It is the will of the Lord; and his mercy
endureth forever!”

So he entered the house: and the hum of
the wheel and the singing
Suddenly ceased; for Priscilla, aroused by
his step on the threshold,
Rose as he entered, and gave him her hand,
in signal of welcome,
Saying, “I knew it was you, when I heard
your step in the passage;
For I was thinking of you, as I sat there
singing and spinning.”
Awkward and dumb with delight, that a
thought of him had been mingled
Thus in the sacred psalm, that came from
the heart of the maiden,
Silent before her he stood, and gave her the
flowers for an answer,
Finding no words for his thought. He re-
membered that day in the winter,
After the great snow, when he broke
a path from the village,
Reeling and plunging along through the
drifts that encumbered the doorway,
Stamping the snow from his feet as he en-
tered the house, and Priscilla
Laughed at his snowy locks, and gave him
a seat by the fireside,
Grateful and pleased to know he had
thought of her in the snow-storm.
Had he but spoken then! perhaps not in
vain had he spoken;
Now it was all too late; the golden mo-
ment had vanished!
So he stood there abashed, and gave her
the flowers for an answer.

Haunted by vain regrets, and pallid, sorrowful faces.

Then they sat down and talked of the birds and the beautiful Spring-time, Talked of their friends at home, and the Mayflower that sailed on the morrow.

“I have been thinking all day,” said gently the Puritan maiden,

“Dreaming all night, and thinking all day, of the hedge-rows of England,— They are in blossom now, and the country is all like a garden:

Thinking of lanes and fields, and the song of the lark and the linnet,

Seeing the village street, and the familiar faces of neighbors

Going about as of old, and stopping to gossip together,

And, at the end of the street, the village church, with the ivy

Climbing the gray tower, and the quiet graves in the churchyard.

Kind are the people I live with, and dear to me is my religion;

Still my heart is so sad, that I wish myself back in Old England.

You will say it is wrong, but I cannot help it: I almost

Wish myself back in Old England, I feel so lonely and wretched.”

Thereupon answered the youth: “indeed I do not condemn you;

Stouter hearts than a woman’s have quailed in this terrible winter.

Yours is tender and trusting, and needs a stronger to lean on;

So I have come to you now, with an offer and proffer of marriage

Made by a good man and true, Miles Standish the Captain of Plymouth!”

Thus he delivered his message, the dexterous write of letters,—

Did not embellish the theme, nor array it in beautiful phrases,

Even the Captain himself could hardly have said it more bluntly.

Mute with amazement and sorrow, Priscilla the Puritan maiden

Looked into Alden’s face, her eyes dilated with wonder,

Feeling his words like a blow, that stunned her and rendered her speechless;

Till at length she exclaimed, interrupting the ominous silence:

“If the great Captain of Plymouth is so very eager to wed me,

Why does he not come himself, and take the trouble to woo me?

If I am not worth the wooing, I surely am not worth the winning!”

Then John Alden began explaining and smoothing the matter,

Making it worse as he went, by saying the Captain was busy,—

Had no time for such things—such things! the words grating harshly

Fell on the ear of Priscilla; and swift as a flash she made answer:

“Has he no time for such things, as you call it, before he is married,

Would he be likely to find it, or make it, after the wedding?

That is the way with you men; you don’t understand us, you cannot.

When you have made up your minds, after thinking of this one and that one,

Choosing, selecting, rejecting, comparing one with another,

Then you make known your desire, with abrupt and sudden avowal,

And are offended and hurt, and indignant perhaps, that a woman

Does not respond at once to a love that she never suspected,

Does not attain at a bound the height to which you have been climbing.

This is not right nor just: for surely a woman’s affection

But came straight to the point, and blurted
it out like a school-boy;
Is not a thing to be asked for, and had for
only the asking.
When one is truly in love, one not only
says it, but shows it.
Had he but waited awhile, had he only
showed that he loved me,
Even this Captain of yours—who knows?
--at last might have won me,
Old and rough as he is; but now it never
can happen.”

Still John Alden went on, unheeding the
words of Priscilla,
Urging the suit of his friend, explaining,
persuading, expanding;
Spoke of his courage and skill, and of all
his battles in Flanders,
How with the people of God he has chosen
to suffer affliction;
How, in return for his zeal, they had made
him Captain of Plymouth;
He was a gentleman born, could trace his
pedigree plainly
Back to Hugh Standish of Duxbury Hall,
in Lancashire, England,
Who was the son of Ralph, and the grand-
son of Thurston de Standish;
Heir unto vast estates, of which he was
basely defrauded,
Still bore the family arms, and had for his
crest a cock argent,
Combed and wattled gules, and all the rest
of the blazon.
He was a man of honor, of noble and gen-
erous nature;
Though he was rough, he was kindly; she
knew how during the winter
He had attended the sick, with a hand as
gentle as a woman’s;
Somewhat hasty and hot, he could not deny
it, and headstrong,
Stern as a soldier might be, but hearty, and
placable always,
Not to be laughed at and scorned, because

For he was great of heart, magnanimous,
courtly, courageous;
Any woman in Plymouth, nay, any woman
in England,
Might be happy and proud to be called the
wife of Miles Standish!

But as he warmed and glowed, in his
simple and eloquent language,
Quite forgetful of self, and full of the praise
of his rival,
Archly the maiden smiled, and, with eyes
overrunning with laughter,
Said, in a tremulous voice, “Why don’t you
speak for yourself, John?”

IV John Alden

Into the open air John Alden, perplexed
and bewildered,
Rushed like a man insane, and wandered
alone by the sea-side;
Paced up and down the sands, and bared his
head to the east-wind,
Cooling his heated brow, and the fire and
fever within him.
Slowly as of out of the heavens, with
apocalyptic splendors,
Sank the City of God, in the vision of John
the Apostle,
So, with its cloudy walls of chrysolite,
jasper, and sapphire,
Sank the broad red sun, and over its turrets
uplifted
Glimmered the golden reed of the angel
who measured the city.

“Welcome, O wind of the East!” he
exclaimed in his wild exultation,
“Welcome, O wind of the East, from the
caves of the misty Atlantic! Blowing o’er
fields of dulse, and measure-
less meadows of sea-grass,
Blowing o’er rocky wastes, and the grottoes
and gardens of ocean!

<p>he was of little stature; Lay thy cold, moist hand on my burning forehead, and wrap me close in thy garments of mist, to allay the fever within me!"</p> <p>Like an awakened conscience, the sea was moaning and tossing, Beating remorseful and loud the mutable sands of the sea-shore. Fierce in his soul was the struggle and tumult of passions contending; Love triumphant and crowned, and friendship wounded and bleeding, Passionate cries of desire, and importunate pleadings of duty! "Is it my fault," he said, "that the maiden has chosen between us? Is it my fault that he failed,--my fault that I am the victor?" Then within him there thundered a voice, like the voice of the Prophet: "It hath displeased the Lord!"—and he thought of David's transgression. Bathsheba's beautiful face, and his friend in the front of the battle! Shame and confusion of guilt, and abasement and self-condemnation, Overwhelmed him at once; and he cried in the deepest contrition: "It hath displeased the Lord! It is the temptation of Satan!"</p> <p>Then uplifting his head, he looked at the sea, and beheld there Dimly the shadowy form of the Mayflower riding at anchor, Rocked on the rising tide, and ready to sail on the morrow; Heard the voices of men through the mist, the rattle of cordage Thrown on the deck, the shouts of the mate, and the sailors' "Ay, ay, Sir!" Clear and distinct, but not loud, in the</p>	<p>and stared at the vessel, Then went hurriedly on, as one who, seeing a phantom, Stops, then quickens his pace, and follows the beckoning shadow. "Yes, it is plain to me now," he murmured; "the hand of the Lord is Leading me out of the land of darkness, the bondage of error, Through the sea, that shall lift the walls of its waters around me, Hiding me, cutting me off, from the cruel thoughts that pursue me. Back will I go o'er the ocean, this dreary land will abandon, She whom I may not love, and him whom my heart has offended. Better to be in my grave in the green old church yard in England, Close by my mother's side, and among the dust of my kindred; Better be dead and forgotten, than living in shame and dishonor; Sacred and safe and unseen, in the dark of the narrow chamber With me my secret shall lie, like a buried jewel that glimmers Bright on the hand that is dust, in the chambers of silence and darkness,-- Yes, the marriage ring of the great espousal hereafter!"</p> <p>Thus as he spake, he turned, in the strength of his strong resolution, Leaving behind him the shore, and hurried along in the twilight, Through the congenial gloom of the forest silent and somber, Till he beheld the lights in the seven houses of Plymouth, Shining like seven stars in the dusk and mist of the evening. Soon he entered his door, and found the redoubtable Captain Sitting alone, and absorbed in the martial pages of Caesar,</p>
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dripping air of the twilight.
Still for a moment he stood, and listened,
Fighting some great campaign in Hainault
or Brabant or Flanders.
“Long have you been on your errand,” he
said with a cherry demeanor,
Even as one who is waiting an answer, and
fears not the issue.
“Not far off is the house, although the
woods are between us;
But you have lingered so long, that while
you were going and coming
I have fought ten battles and sacked and
demolished a city.
Come, sit down, in order to relate to me
all that has happened.”

Then John Alden spake, and related the
wondrous adventure,
From beginning to end, minutely, just as it
happened;
How he had seen Priscilla, and how he had
sped in his courtship,
Only smoothing a little, and softening down
her refusal.
But when he came at length to the words
Priscilla had spoken,
Words so tender and cruel: “Why don’t
you speak for yourself, John?”
Up leaped the Captain of Plymouth, and
stamped on the floor, till his armor
Clanged on the wall, where it hung, with a
sound of sinister omen.
All his pent-up wrath burst forth in a sudden
explosion,
E’en as a hand-grenade, that scatters de-
struction around it.
Wildly he shouted, and loud: “John Al-
den! you have betrayed me!
Me, Miles Standish, your friend! have sup-
planted, defrauded, betrayed me!
One of my ancestors ran his sword through
the heart of Wat Tyler;
Who shall prevent me from running my
own through the heart of a traitor?
Yours is the greater treason, for yours is a

cherished and loved as a brother;
You, who have fed at my board, and drunk
at my cup, to whose keeping
I have intrusted my honor, my thoughts
the most sacred and secret,--
You too, Brutus! ah woe to the name of
friendship hereafter!
Brutus was Caesar’s friend, and you were
mine, but henceforward
Let there be nothing between us save war,
and implacable hatred!”

So spake the Captain of Plymouth, and
strode about in the chamber,
Chafing and choking with rage; like cords
were the veins in his temples.
But in the midst of his anger a man ap-
peared in the doorway,
Bringing un uttermost haste a message of
urgent importance,
Rumors of danger and war and hostile in-
cursions of Indians!
Straightway the Captain paused, and, with-
out further question or parley,
Took from the nail on the wall his sword
with its scabbard of iron,
Buckled the belt round his waist, and,
frowning fiercely, departed.
Alden was left alone. He heard the clank of
the scabbard
Growing fainter and fainter, and dying away
in the distance.
Then he arose from his seat, and looked
forth into the darkness,
Felt the cool air blow on his cheek, that
was hot with the insult,
Lifted his eyes to the heavens, and, folding
his hands as in childhood,
Prayed in the silence of night to the Father
who seeth in secret.

Meanwhile the choleric Captain strode
wrathful away to the council,
Found it already assembled, impatiently
waiting his coming;

treason to friendship!
You, who lived under my roof, whom I
Men in the middle of life, austere and grave
in deportment,
Only one of them old, the hill that was
nearest to heaven,
Covered with snow, but erect, the excellent
Elder of Plymouth.
God had sifted three kingdoms to find the
wheat for this planting,
Then had sifted the wheat, as the living
seed of a nation;
So say the chronicles old, and such is the
faith of the people!
Near them was standing an Indian, in atti-
tude stern and defiant,
Naked down to the waist, and grim and
ferocious in aspect;
While on the table before them was lying
unopened a Bible,
Ponderous, bound in leather, brass-studded,
printed in Holland.
And beside it outstretched the skin of a
rattlesnake glittered,
Filled, like a quiver, with arrows; a signal
and challenge of warfare,
Brought by the Indian, and speaking with
arroy tongues of defiance.
This Miles Standish beheld, as he entered,
and heard them debating
What were an answer befitting the hostile
message and menace,
Talking of this and of that, contriving, sug-
gesting, objecting;
One voice only for peace, and that the
voice of the Elder,
Judging it wise and well that some at least
were converted,
Rather than any were slain, for this was
but Christian behavior!
Then out spake Mile Standish, the stal-
wart Captain of Plymouth,
Muttering deep in his throat, for his voice
was husky with anger,
“What! do you mean to make war with
milk and the water of roses?

There on the roof of the church, or is it to
shoot red devils?
Truly the only tongue that is understood
by a savage
Must be the tongue of fire that speaks from
the mouth of a cannon!”
Thereupon answered and said the excellent
Elder of Plymouth,
Somewhat amazed and alarmed at this ir-
reverent language;
“Not so thought St. Paul, nor yet the other
Apostles;
Not from the cannon’s mouth were the
tongues of fire they spake with!”
But unheeded fell this mild rebuke on the
Captain,
Who had advance to the table, and thus
continues discoursing:
“Leave this matter to me, for to me by
right it pertaineth.
War is a terrible trade; but in the cause
that is righteous,
Sweet is the smell of powder; and thus I
answer the challenge!”

Then from the rattlesnake’s skin, with
a sudden contemptuous gesture,
Jerking the Indian arrows, he filled it with
powder and bullets
Full to the very jaws, and handed it back
to the savage,
Saying, in thundering tones: “Here, take
it! this is your answer!”
Silently out of the room then glided the
glistening savage,
Bearing the serpent’s skin, and seeming
himself like a serpent,
Winding his sinuous way in the dark to the
depths of the forest.

V

The Sailing of the Mayflower

Just in the gray of the dawn, as the mists
uprose from the meadows,

Is it to shoot red squirrels you have your
howitzer planted
There was a stir and a sound in the slum-
bering village of Plymouth;
Clanging and clicking of arms, and the
order imperative, "Forwards!"
Given in tone suppressed, a tramp of feet,
and then silence.
Figures ten, in the mist, marched slowly
out of the village.
Standish the stalwart it was, with eight of
his valorous army,
Led by their Indian guide, by Hobomok,
friend of the white men,
Northward marching to quell the sudden
revolt of the savage.
Giants they seemed in the mist, or the
mighty men of King David;
Giants in heart they were, who believed in
God and the Bible,--
Ay, who believed in the smiting of Midian-
ites and Philistines.
Over them gleamed far off the crimson
banners of morning;
Under them loud on the sands, the serried
billows, advancing,
Fired along the line, and in regular order
retreated.

Many a mile had they marched, when at
length the village of Plymouth
Woke from its sleep, and arose, intent on
its manifold labors.
Sweet was the air and soft; and slowly the
smoke from the chimneys
Rose over roofs of thatch, and pointed
steadily eastward;
Men came forth from the doors, and paused
and talked of the weather,
Said that the wind had changed, and was
blowing fair for the Mayflower;
Talked of their Captain's departure, and
all the dangers that menaced,
He being gone, the town, and what should
be done in his absence.
Merrily sang the birds, and the tender

Consecrated with hymns the common cares
of the household.
Out of the sea rose the sun, and the billows
rejoiced at his coming;
Beautiful on the sails of the Mayflower
riding at anchor,
Battered and blackened and worn by all
the storms of the winter.
Loosely against her masts was hanging and
flapping her canvas,
Rent by so many gales, and patched by the
hands of the sailors.
Suddenly from her side, as the sun rose over
the ocean,
Darted a puff of smoke, and floated sea-
ward; anon rang
Loud over field and forest the cannon's
roar, and the echoes
Heard and repeated the sound, the signal-
gun of departure!
Ah! but with louder echoes replied the
hearts of the people!
Meekly, in voices subdued, the chapter was
read from the Bible,
Meekly the prayer was begun, but ended
in fervent entreaty!
Then from their houses in haste came forth
the Pilgrims of Plymouth,
Men and women and children, all hurrying
down to the sea-shore.
Eager, with tearful eyes, to say farewell to
the Mayflower,
Homeward bound o'er the sea, and leaving
them here in the desert.

Foremost among them was Alden. All
night he had lain without slum-
ber,
Turning and tossing about in the heat and
unrest of his fever.
He had beheld Miles Standish, who came
back late from the council,
Stalking into the room, and heard him mut-
ter and murmur;
Sometimes it seemed a prayer, and some-
times it sounded like swearing.

<p>voices of women</p> <p>Once he had come to the bed, and stood there a moment in silence; Then he had turned away, and said "I will not wake him; Let him sleep on, it is best; for what is the use of more talking!"</p> <p>Then he extinguished the light, and threw himself down on his pallet, Dressed as he was, and ready to start at the break of the morning,-- Covered himself with the cloak he had worn in his campaigns in Flanders,-- Slept as a soldier sleeps in his bivouac, ready for action.</p> <p>But with the dawn he arose; in the twilight Alden behind him Put on his corset of steel, and all the rest of his armor, Buckle about his waist his trusty blade of Damascus, Take from the corner his musket, and so stride out of the chamber.</p> <p>Often the heart of the youth had burned and yearned to embrace him, Often his lips had essayed to speak, imploring for pardon; All the old friendship came back, with its tender and grateful emotions; But his pride overmastered the nobler nature within him,-- Pride, and the sense of his wrong, and the burning fire of insult.</p> <p>So he beheld his friends departing in anger, but spake not, Saw him go forth to danger, perhaps to death, and he spake not!</p> <p>Then he arose from his bed, and heard what the people were saying, Joined in the talk at the door, with Stephen and Richard and Gilbert, Joined in the morning prayer, and in the reading of scripture, And, with the others, in haste went hurrying</p>	<p>Down to the Plymouth Rock, that had been to their feet as a doorstep Into a world unknown,— the corner-stone of a nation!</p> <p>There with his boat was the Master, already a little impatient Lest he should lose the tide, or the wind might shift to the eastward, Square-built, hearty, and strong, with an odor of ocean about him, Speaking with this one and that, and cramming letters and parcels Into his pockets capacious, and messages mingled together Into his narrow brain, till at last he was wholly bewildered.</p> <p>Nearer the boat stood Alden, with one foot placed on the gunwale, One still firm on the rock, and talking at times with the sailors, Seated erect on the thwarts, all ready and eager for starting.</p> <p>He too was eager to go, and thus put an end to his anguish, Thinking to fly from despair, that swifter than keel is or canvas, Thinking to drown in the sea the ghost that would rise and pursue him.</p> <p>But as he gazed on the crowd, he beheld the form of Priscilla Standing dejected among them, unconscious of all that was passing.</p> <p>Fixed were her eyes upon his, as if she divined his intention, Fixed with a look so sad, so reproachful, imploring and patient, That with a sudden revulsion his heart recoiled from its purpose, As from the verge of a crag, where one step more its destruction.</p> <p>Strange is the heart of man, and fatal or fated are moments, Whereupon turn, as on hinges, the gates of the wall of adamant!</p>
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<p>down to the sea-shore, “Here I will remain!” he exclaimed, as he looked at the heavens above him, Thanking the Lord whose breath had scat- tered the mist and the madness, Wherein, blind and lost, to death he was staggering headlong. “Yonder snow-white cloud, that floats in the ether above me, Seems like a hand that is pointing and beck- oning over the ocean. There is another hand, that is not so spec- tral and ghost-like, Holding me, drawing me back, and clasp- ing mine for protection. Float, O hand of cloud, and vanish away in the ether! Roll thyself up like a fist, to threaten and daunt me; I heed not Either your warning or menace, or any omen of evil! There is no land so sacred, no air so pure and so wholesome, As is the air she breathes, and the soil that is pressed by her footsteps. Here for her sake will I stay, and like an invisible presence Hover around her forever, protecting, sup- porting her weakness; Yes! as my foot was the first that stepped on this rock at the landing, So, with the blessing of God, shall it be the last at the leaving!”</p> <p>Meanwhile the Master alert, but with dig- nified air and important, Scanning with watchful eye the tide and the wind and the weather, Walked about on the sands, and the people crowded around him Saying a few last words, and enforcing his careful remembrance. Then, taking each by the hand, as if he were grasping a tiller, Into the boat he sprang, and in haste</p>	<p>and flurry, Glad to be gone from a land of sand and sickness and sorrow, Short allowance of victual, and plenty of nothing but gospel! Lost in the sound of the oars was the last farewell of the Pilgrims. O strong hearts and true! not one went back to the Mayflower! No, not one looked back, who had set his hand to this ploughing! Soon were heard on board the shouts and songs of the sailors Heaving the windlass round, and hoisting the ponderous anchor. Then the yards were braced, and all sails set to the west-wind, Blowing steady and strong; and the Mayflower sailed from the harbor, Rounded the point of the Gurnet, and leav- ing far to the southward Island and cape of sand, and Field of the First Encounter, Took the wind on her quarter, and stood for the open Atlantic, Borne on the send of the sea, and the swell- ing hearts of the Pilgrims.</p> <p>Long in silence they watched the receed- ing sail of the vessel, Much endeared to them all, as something living and human; Then, as if filled with the spirit, and wrapt in a vision prophetic, Baring his hoary head, the excellent Elder of Plymouth Said, “Let us pray!” and they prayed, and thanked the Lord and took courage. Mournfully sobbed the waves at the base of the rock, and above them Bowed and whispered the wheat on the hill of death, and their kindred Seemed to awake in their graves, and to join in the prayer that they ut- tered.</p>
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shoved off to his vessel,
 Glad in his heart to get rid of all this worry
 Sun-illuminated and white, on the eastern
 verge of the ocean
 Gleamed the departing sail, like a marble
 slab in the graveyard;
 Buried beneath it lay forever all hope of
 escaping.
 Lo! as they turned to depart, they saw the
 form of an Indian,
 Watching them from the hill; but while
 they spake with each other,
 Pointing with outstretched hands, and say-
 ing "Look!" he had vanished.
 So they returned to their homes; but Alden
 lingered a little,
 Musing alone on the shore, and watching
 the wash of the billows
 Round the base of the rock, and the sparkle
 and flash of the sunshine,
 Like the spirit of God, moving visibly over
 the water.

V
 Priscilla

Thus for awhile he stood, and mused by
 the shore of the ocean,
 Thinking of many things, and most of all
 of Priscilla;
 And as if thought had the power to draw
 to itself, like the loadstone,
 Whosoever it touches, by subtile laws of
 its nature,
 Lo! as he turned to depart, Priscilla was
 standing beside him.

"Are you so much offended, you will not
 speak to me?" said she.
 "Am I so much to blame, that yesterday,
 when you were pleading
 Warmly the cause of another, my heart,
 impulsive and wayward,
 Pleas'd your own, and spake out, forgetful
 perhaps of decorum?
 Certainly you can forgive me for speaking
 so frankly, for saying

What I ought not to have said, yet now I
 can never unsay it;
 For there are moments in life, when the
 heart is so full of emotion,
 That if by chance it be shaken, or into its
 depths like a pebble
 Drops some careless word, it overflows, and
 its secret,
 Spilt on the ground like water, can never
 be gathered together.
 Yesterday I was shocked, when I heard
 you speak of Miles Standish,
 Praising his courage and strength, and even
 his fighting in Flanders,
 As if by fighting alone you could win the
 heart of a woman,
 Quite overlooking yourself and the rest, in
 exalting your hero.
 Therefore I spake as I did, by an irre-
 sistible impulse.
 You will forgive me, I hope, for the sake
 of the friendship between us,
 Which is too true and too sacred to be so
 easily broken!"
 Thereupon answered John Alden, the
 scholar, the friend of Miles Stan-
 dish:
 "I was not angry with you, with myself
 alone I was angry,
 Seeing how badly I managed the matter
 I had in my keeping."
 "No!" interrupted the maiden, with answer
 prompt and decisive;
 "No; you were angry with me, for speak-
 ing so frankly and freely.
 It was wrong, I acknowledge; for it is the
 fate of a woman
 Long to be patient and silent, to wait like
 a ghost that is speechless,
 Till some questioning voice dissolves the
 spell of its silence.
 Hence is the inner life of so many suffering
 women
 Sunless and silent and deep, like subter-
 ranean rivers

Running through caverns of darkness, unheard, unseen, and unfruitful,
Chafing their channels of stone, with endless and profitless murmurs.”
Thereupon answered John Alden, the young man, the lover of woman:
“Heaven forbid it, Priscilla; and truly they seem to me always
More like the beautiful rivers that watered the garden of Eden,
More like the river Euphrates, through deserts of Havilah flowing,
Filling the land with delight, and memories sweet of the garden!”
“Ah, by these words, I can see,” again interrupted the maiden,
“How very little you prize me, or care for what I am saying.
When from the depths of my heart, in pain and with secret misgiving,
Frankly I speak to you, asking for sympathy only and kindness,
Straightway you take up my words, that are plain and direct and in earnest,
Turn them away from their meaning, and answer their faltering phrases.
This is not right, it is not just, it is not true to the best that is in you;
For I know and esteem you, and feel that your nature is noble,
Lifting mine up to a higher, a more ethereal level.
Therefore, I value your friendship, and feel it perhaps more keenly
If you say aught that implies I am only as one among many,
If you make use of those common and complimentary phrases
Most men think so fine, in dealing and speaking with women,
But which women reject as insipid, if not as insulting.”

Thinking he never had seen her more fair, more divine in her beauty.
He who but yesterday pleaded so glibly the cause of another,
Stood there embarrassed and silent, and seeking in vain for an answer.
So the maiden went on, and little divined or imagined
What was at work in his heart, that made him so awkward and speechless.
“Let us, then, be what we are, and speak what we think, and in all things
Keep ourselves loyal to truth, and the sacred professions of friendship.
It is no secret I tell you, nor am I ashamed to declare it:
I have liked to be with you, to see you, to speak with you always.
So I was hurt at your words, and a little affronted to hear you
Urge me to marry your friend, though he were the Captain Miles Standish.
For I must tell you the truth: and much more to me is your friendship
Than all the love he could give, were he twice the hero you think him.”
Then she extended her hand, and Alden, who eagerly grasped it,
Felt all the wounds in his heart, that were aching and bleeding so sorely,
Healed by the touch of that hand, and he said, with a voice full of feeling:
“Yes, we must ever be friends; and of all who offer you friendship
Let me be ever the first, the truest, the nearest and dearest!”

Casting a farewell look at the glimmering sail of the Mayflower,
Distant, but still in sight, and sinking below the horizon,
Homeward together they walked, with a strange, indefinite feeling,
That all the rest had departed and left them alone in the desert.

Mute and amazed was Alden; and listened and looked at Priscilla,
 But, as they went through the fields in the blessing and smile of the sunshine,
 Lighter grew their hearts, and Priscilla said very archly:
 Now that our terrible Captain has gone in pursuit of the Indians,
 Where he is happier far than he would be commanding a household,
 You may speak boldly, and tell me of all that happened between you,
 When you returned last night, and said how ungrateful you found me.”
 Thereupon answered John Alden, and told her the whole of the story,--
 Told her his own despair, and the direful wrath of Miles Standish.
 Whereat the maiden smiled, and said between laughing and earnest,
 “He is a little chimney, and heated hot in a moment!”
 But as he gently rebuked her, and told her how he had suffered,--
 How he had even determined to sail that day in the Mayflower,
 And had remained for her sake, on hearing the dangers that threatened,--
 All her manner was changed, and she said with a faltering accent,
 “Truly I thank you for this: how good you have been to me always!”

Thus, as a pilgrim devout, who toward Jerusalem journeys,
 Taking three steps in advance, and one reluctantly backward,
 Urged by importunate zeal, and withheld by pangs of contrition;
 Slowly but steadily onward, receding yet ever advancing,
 Journeyed this Puritan youth to the Holy Land of his longings,
 Urged but the fervor of love, and withheld by remorseful misgivings.

VII The March of Miles Standish

Meanwhile the stalwart Miles Standish was marching steadily northward,
 Winding through forest and swamp, and along the trend of the sea-shore,
 All day long, with hardly a halt, the fire of his anger
 burning and crackling within, and the sulphurous odor of powder
 Seeming more sweet to his nostrils than all the scents of the forest.
 Silent and moody he went, and much he revolved his discomfort;
 He who was used to success, and to easy victories always,
 Thus to be flouted, rejected and laughed to scorn by a maiden,
 Thus to be mocked and betrayed by the friend whom most he had trusted!
 Ah! ‘t was too much to be borne, and he fretted and chafed in his armor!

“I alone am to blame,” he muttered,
 “for mine was a folly.
 What has a rough old soldier, grown grim and gray in the harness,
 Used to the camp and its ways, to do with the wooing of maidens?
 ‘T was but a dream,--let it pass,--let it vanish like so many others!
 What I thought was a flower, it only a weed, and it worthless;
 Out of my heart will I pluck it, and throw it away, and henceforward
 Be but a fighter of battles, a lover and wooer of dangers!”
 Thus he revolved in his mind his sorry defeat and discomfort,
 While he was marching by day or lying at night in the forest,
 Looking up at the trees, and the constellations beyond them.

After a three days' march he came to an
Indian encampment
Pitched on the edge of a meadow, between
the sea and the forest;
Women at work by the tents, and warriors,
horrid with war-paint,
Seated about a fire, and smoking and talk-
ing together;
Who, when they saw from afar the sudden
approach of the of the white men,
Saw the flash of the sun on breastplate and
sabre and musket,
Straightway leaped to their feet, and two,
from among them advancing,
Came to parley with Standish, and offer him
furs as a present;
Friendship was in their looks, but in their
hearts there was hatred.
Braves of the tribe were these, and brothers,
gigantic in stature,
Huge as Goliath of Gath, or the terrible
Og, king of Bashan;
One was Pecksuot named, and the other
was called Wattawamat.
Round their necks were suspended their
knives in scabbards of wampum,
Two-edged, trenchant knives, with points as
sharp as a needle.
Other arms had they none, for they were
cunning and crafty.
"Welcome, English!" they said, --these
words they had learned from the
traders
Touching at times on the coast, to barter
and chaffer for peltries.
Then in their native tongue they began to
parley with Standish,
Through his guide and interpreter, Hobo-
mok, friend of the white man,
Begging for blankets and knives, but mostly
for muskets and powder,
Kept by the white man, they said, con-
cealed, with the plague, in his cel-
lars,

Ready to be let loose, and destroy his brother
the red man!
But when Standish refused, and said he
would give them the Bible,
Suddenly changed their tone, they began
to boast and to bluster.
Then Wattawamat advanced with a stride
in front of the other,
And, with a lofty demeanor, thus vaunt-
ingly spake to the Captain:
"Now Wattawamat can see, by the fiery
eyes of the Captain,
Angry is he in his heart; but the heart of
the brave Wattawamat
Is not afraid at the sight. He was not
born of a woman,
But on a mountain at night, from an oak-
tree riven by lightning,
Forth he sprang at abound, with all his
weapons about him,
Shouting, 'Who is there here to fight with
the brave Wattawamat?'"
Then he unsheathed his knife, and whet-
ting the blade on his left hand,
Held it aloft and displayed a woman's face
on the handle;
Saying, with bitter expression and look of
sinister meaning:
"I have another at home, with the face of
a man on the handle;
By and by they shall marry; and there
will be plenty of children!"

Then stood Pecksuot forth, self-vaunt-
ing, insulting Miles Standish:
While with his fingers he patted the knife
that hung at his bosom,
Drawing it half from its sheath, and plung-
ing it back, as he muttered,
"By and by it shall see; it shall eat; ah,
ha! but shall speak not!
This is the mighty Captain the white men
have sent to destroy us!
He is a little man; let him go and work
with the woman!"

<p> Meanwhile Standish had noted the faces and figures of Indians Peeping and creeping about from the bush to tree in the forest, Feigning to look for game, with arrows set on their bow-strings, Drawing about him still closer and closer the net of their ambush. But undaunted he stood, and dissembled and treated them smoothly; So the old chronicles say, that were writ in the days of the fathers. But when he heard their defiance, the boast, the taunt, and the insult, All the hot blood of his race, of Sir Hugh and of Thurston de Standish, Boiled and beat in his heart, and swelled in the veins of his temples. Headlong he leaped on the boaster, and, snatching his knife from its scab- bard, Plunged it into his heart, and reeling back- ward, the savage Fell with his face to the sky, and a fiend- like fierceness upon it. Straight there arose from the forest the awful sound of the war-whoop. And, like a flurry of snow on the whistling wind of December, Swift and sudden and keen came a flight of feathery arrows. Then came a cloud of smoke, and out of the cloud came the lightening, Out of the lightening thunder; and death </p>	<p> unseen ran before it. Frightened the savages fled for shelter in swamp and in thicket, Hotly pursued and beset; but their sachem, the brave Wattawamat, Fled not; he was dead. Unswerving and swift had a bullet Passed through his brain, and he fell with both hands clutching the green- sword, Seeming in death to hold back from his foe the land of his fathers.</p> <p> There on the flowers of the meadow the warriors lay, and above them, Silent, with a folded arms, stood Hobomok, friend of the white man. Smiling at length he exclaimed to the stal- wart Captain of Plymouth:-- “Pecksuot bragged very loud, of his cour- age, his strength, and his stature, -- Mocked the great Captain, and called him a little man; but I see now Big enough have you been to lay him speechless before you!”</p> <p> Thus the battle was fought and won by the stalwart Miles Standish. When the tidings therefore were brought to the village of Plymouth, And as a trophy of war the head of the brave Wattawamat Scowled from the roof of the fort, which at once was a church and a fortress,</p>
<p>All who beheld it rejoiced, and praised the</p>	<p>Meanwhile Alden at home had built him</p>

Lord, and took courage.
Only Priscilla averted her face from this spectre of terror,
Thanking God in her heart that she had not married Miles Standish;
Shrinking, fearing almost, lest, coming home from his battles,
He should lay claim to her hand, as the prize and reward of his valor.

VIII The Spinning Wheel

Month after month passed away, and in Autumn the ships of the merchants
Came with kindred and friends, with cattle and corn for the Pilgrims.
All in the village was peace; the men were intent on their labors,
Busy with hewing and building, with garden-plot and with merestead,
Busy with breaking the glebe, and mowing the grass in the meadows,
Searching the sea for its fish, and hunting the deer in the forest.
All in the village was peace; but at times the rumor of warfare
Filled the air with alarm, and the apprehension of danger.
Bravely the stalwart Standish was scouring the land with its forces,
Waxing valiant in fight and defeating the alien armies,
Till his name had become a sound of fear to the nations.
Anger was still in his heart, but at times the remorse and contrition
Which in all noble natures succeed the passionate outbreak,
Came like a rising tide, that encounters the rush of a river,
Staying its current awhile, but making it bitter and brackish.

a new habitation,
Solid, substantial, of timber rough-hewn from the firs of the forest.
Wooden-barred was the door, and the roof was covered with rushes;
Latticed the windows were, and the window panes were of paper,
Oiled to admit the light, while wind and rain were excluded.

There too he dug a well, and around it planted an orchard:
Still may be seen to this day some trace of the well and the orchard.
Close to the house was the stall, where, safe and secure from annoyance,
Raghorn, the snow-white bull, that had fallen to Alden's allotment
In the division of cattle, might ruminant in the night-time
Over the pastures he cropped, made fragrant by sweet pennyroyal.

Oft when his labor was finished, with eager feet would the dreamer
Follow the pathway that ran through the woods to the house of Priscilla,
Led by illusions romantic and subtile deceptions of fancy,
Pleasure disguised as duty, and love in the semblance of friendship.
Ever of her he thought, when he fashioned the wall of his dwelling;
Ever of her he thought, when he delved in the soil of his garden;
Ever of her he thought, when he read in his Bible on Sunday
Praise of the virtuous woman as she is described in the Proverbs,--
How the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her always,
How all the days of her life she will do him good, and not evil,
How she seeketh the wool and the flax and worketh with gladness,
How she layeth her hand to the spindle and holdeth the distaff,

How she is not afraid of the snow for herself or her household,
Knowing her household are clothed with the scarlet cloth of her weaving!

So as she sat at her wheel one afternoon in the Autumn,
Alden, who opposite sat, and was watching her dexterous fingers,
As if the thread she was spinning were that of his life and his fortune,
After a pause in their talk, thus spake to the sound of the spindle.

“Truly, Priscilla,” he said, “when I see you spinning and spinning,
Never idle a moment, but thrifty and thoughtful of others,
Suddenly you are transformed, are visibly changed in a moment;
You are no longer Priscilla, but Bertha the Beautiful Spinner.”

Here the light foot of the treadle grew swifter and swifter; the spindle uttered an angry snarl, and the thread snapped short in her fingers;
While the impetuous speaker, not heeding the mischief, continued:

“You are the beautiful Bertha, the spinner, the queen of Helvetia;
She whose story I read at a stall in the streets of Southampton,
Who, as she rode on her palfrey, o’er valley and meadow and mountain,

Ever was spinning her thread from a distaff fixed to her saddle.

She was so thrifty and good, that her name passed into a proverb.

So shall it be with your own, when the spinning-wheel shall no longer hum in the house of the farmer, and fill its chamber with music.

Then shall the mothers, reproving, relate how it was in their childhood,

Praising the good old times, and the days of Priscilla the spinner!”

Straight arose from her wheel the beautiful Puritan maiden,

Pleased with the praise of her thrift from him whose praise was the sweetest,
Drew from the reel on the table a snowy skein of her spinning,

Thus making answer, meanwhile, to the flattering phrases of Alden:

“Come, you must not be idle; if I am a pattern of housewives,

Show yourself equally worthy of being the model of husbands,

Hold this skein on your hands, while I wind it, ready for knitting;

Then who knows but hereafter, when fashions have changed and manners,

Fathers may talk to their sons of the good old times of John Alden!”

Thus, with a jest and a laugh, the skein on his hands she adjusted,

He sitting awkwardly there, with his arms extended before him,

She standing graceful, erect, and winding the thread from his fingers,

Sometimes chiding a little his clumsy manner of holding,

Sometimes touching his hands, as she disentangled expertly

Twist or know in the yarn, unawares—for how could she help it?—

Sending electrical thrills through every nerve in his body.

Lo! in the midst of the scene, a breathless messenger entered,

Bringing in hurry and heat the terrible news from the village.

Yes; Miles Standish was dead!—an Indian had brought them the tidings,—

Slain by a poisoned arrow, shot down in the front of the battle,

Into an ambush beguiled, cut off with the

All the town would be burned, and all the
 people be murdered!
 Such were the tidings of evil that burst on
 the hearts of the hearers.
 Silent and statue-like stood Priscilla, her
 face looking backward
 Still at the face of the speaker, her arms
 uplifted in horror;
 But John Alden, upstarting, as if the barb
 of the arrow
 Piercing the heart of his friend had struck
 his own, and had sundered
 Once and forever the bonds that held him
 bound as a captive,
 Wild with excess of sensation, the awful
 delight of his freedom,
 Mingled with pain and regret, unconscious
 of what he was doing,
 Clasped, almost with a groan, the motion-
 less form of Priscilla,
 Pressing her close to his heart, as forever
 his own, and exclaiming:
 "Those whom the Lord hath united, let no
 man put them asunder!"

Even as rivulets twain, from distant and
 separate sources,
 Seeing each other afar, as they leap from
 the rocks, and pursuing
 Each one its devious path, but drawing nearer
 and nearer,
 Rush together at last, at their trysting-place
 in the forest;
 So these lives that had run thus far in
 separate channels,
 Coming in sight of each other, then swerv-
 ing and flowing asunder,
 Parted by barriers strong, by drawing
 nearer and nearer,
 Rushed together at last, and was lost
 in the other.

IX
 The Wedding Day

whole of his forces;
 the tent of purple and scarlet,
 Issued the sun, the greatest High-Priest, in
 his garments resplendent,
 Holiness unto the Lord, in letters of light,
 on his forehead,
 Round the hem of his robe the golden bells
 and pomegranates.
 Blessing the world he came, and the bars
 of vapor beneath him
 Gleamed like a grate of brass, and the sea
 at his feet was a laver!
 This was the wedding morn of Priscilla
 the Puritan maiden.
 Friends were assembled together; the Elder
 and Magistrate also
 Graced the scene with their presence, and
 stood like the Law and the Gospel,
 One with the sanction of earth and one with
 the blessing of heaven.
 Simply and brief was the wedding, as that
 of Ruth and of Boaz.
 Softly the youth and the maiden repeated
 the words of betrothal,
 Taking each other for husband and wife in
 the Magistrate's presence,
 After the Puritan way, and the laudable
 custom of Holland.
 Fervently then, and devoutly, the excellent
 Elder of Plymouth
 Prayed for the hearth and the home, that
 were founded that day in affection,
 Speaking of life and of death, and implor-
 ing Divine benedictions.
 Lo! when the service was ended, a form
 appeared on the threshold,
 Clad in armor of steel, a somber and sor-
 rowful figure!
 Why does the bridegroom start and stare
 at the strange apparition?
 Why does the bride turn pale, and hide her
 face on his shoulder?
 Is it a phantom of air?—a bodiless, spectral
 illusion?

Forth from the curtain of clouds, from
Long has it stood there unseen, a guest
uninvited, unwelcomed;
Over its clouded eyes there had passed ay
times and expression
Softening the gloom and revealing the warm
heart hidden beneath them,
As when across the sky the driving rack of
the rain-cloud
Grows for a moment thin, and betrays the
sun by its brightness.
Once it had lifted its hand, and moved its
lips, but was silent,
As if an iron will had mastered the fleeting
intention.
But when were ended the troth and the
prayer and the last benediction,
Into the room it strode, and the people be-
held with amazement
Bodily there in his armor Miles Standish, the
Captain of Plymouth!
Grasping the bridegroom's hand, he said
with emotion "Forgive me!
I have been angry and hurt,--to long
have I cherished the feeling;
I have been cruel and hard, but now, thank
God! it is ended.
Mine is the same hot blood that leaped n the
veins of Hugh Standish,
Sensitive, swift to resent, but as swift in
atoning for error.
Never so much as now was Miles Standish
the friend of John Alden."
Thereupon answered the bridegroom: "Let
all be forgotten between us,--
All save the dear old friendship, and that
shall grow older and dearer!"
Then the Captain advances, and, bowing,
saluted Priscilla,
Gravely, and after the manner of old-fash-
ioned gentry of England,
Something of camp and of court, of town
and of country, commingled,
Wishing her joy of her wedding, and loudly
lauding her husband.

Is it a ghost from the grave, that has come
to forbid the betrothal?
If you would be well served, you must serve
yourself; and moreover,
No man can gather cherries in Kent at the
season if Christmas!"

Great was the people's amazement, and
greater yet their rejoicing,
Thus to behold once more the sunburnt
face of their Captain,
Whom they had mourned as dead; and they
gathered and crowded about him,
Eager to see him and hear him. forgetful
of bride and of bridegroom,
Questioning, answering, laughing, and each
interrupting the other,
Till the good Captain declared, being quite
overpowered and bewildered,
He had rather break into an Indian
encampment,
Than come again to a wedding to which he
had not been invited.

Meanwhile the bridegroom went forth
and stood with the bride at the
doorway,
Breathing the perfumed air of that warm
and beautiful morning.
Touched with autumnal tints, but lonely
and sad in the sunshine,
Lay extended before them the land of toil and
privation;
There were the graves of the dead, and the
barren waste of the sea-shore,
There were the familiar fields, the groves of
pine, and the meadows;
But to their eyes transfigured, it seemed
as the Garden of Eden,
Filled with the presence of God, whose
voice was the sound of the ocean.

Soon was their vision disturbed by the
noise and stir of departure,
Friends coming forth from the house, and
impatient of longer delaying,

Then he said with a smile: "I should have remembered the adage,--
Then from a stall near at hand, amid exclamations of wonder,
Alden the thoughtful, the careful, so happy, so proud of Priscilla,
Brought out his snow-white bull, obeying the hand of his master,
Led by a cord that was tied to an iron ring in its nostrils,
Covered with crimson cloth, and a cushion placed for a saddle.
She should not walk, he said, through the dust and heat of the noonday;
Nay, she should ride like a queen, not plod along like a peasant.
Somewhat alarmed at first, but reassured by the others,
Placing her hand on the cushion, her foot in the hand of her husband,
Gayly, with joyous laugh, Priscilla mounted her palfrey.
"Nothing is wanting now, " he said with a smile, "but the distaff;
Then you would be in truth my queen, my beautiful Bertha!"

Onward the bridal procession now moved to their new habitation,
Happy husband and wife, and friends conversing together.
Pleasantly murmured the brook, as they crossed the ford in the forest,
Pleased with the image that passed, like a dream of love, through its bosom,
Tremulous, floating in air, o'er the depths of the azure abysses.
Down through the golden leaves the sun was pouring his splendors,
Gleaming on purple grapes, that, from branches above them suspended,
Mingled their odorous breath with the balm of the pine and the fir-tree,
Wild and sweet as the clusters that grew in the valley of Eshcol.
Like a picture it seemed of the primitive,

Each with his plan for the day, and the work that was left uncompleted.
Fresh with the youth of the world, and recalling Rebecca and Isaac,
Old and yet ever new, and simple and beautiful always,
Love immortal and young in the endless succession of lovers.
So onward the Plymouth woods passed onward the bridal procession.

pastoral ages,	
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