

HENRY PETERSON

DULCIBEL: A
TALE OF OLD
SALEM

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Henry Peterson

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CHAPTER I.

Dulcibel Burton

In the afternoon of a sunny Autumn day, nearly two hundred years ago, a young man was walking along one of the newly opened roads which led into Salem village, or what is now called Danvers Centre, in the then Province of Massachusetts Bay.

The town of Salem, that which is now the widely known city of that name, lay between four and five miles to the southeast, on a tongue of land formed by two inlets of the sea, called now as then North and South Rivers. Next to Plymouth it is the oldest town in New England, having been first settled in 1626. Not till three years after were Boston and Charlestown commenced by the arrival of eleven ships from England. It is a significant fact, as showing the hardships to which the early settlers were exposed, that of the fifteen hundred persons composing this Boston expedition, two hundred died during the first winter. Salem has also the honor of establishing the first New England church organization, in 1629, with the Reverend Francis Higginson as its pastor.

Salem village was an adjunct of Salem, the town taking in the adjacent lands for the purpose of tillage to a distance of six miles from the meeting-house. But in the progress of settlement, Salem village also became entitled to a church of its own; and it had one regularly established at the date of our story, with the Reverend Samuel Parris as presiding elder or minister.

There had been many bickerings and disputes before a minister could be found acceptable to all in Salem village. And the present minister was by no means a universal favorite. The principal point of contention on his part was the parsonage and its adjacent two acres of ground. Master Parris claimed that the church had voted him a free gift of these; while his opponents not only denied that it had been done, but that it lawfully could be done. This latter view was undoubtedly correct; for the parsonage land was a gift to the church, for the perpetual use of its pastor, whosoever he might be. But Master Parris would not listen to reason on this subject, and was not inclined to look kindly upon the men who steadfastly opposed him.

The inhabitants of Salem village were a goodly as well as godly people, but owing to these church differences about their ministers, as well as other disputes and lawsuits relative to the bounds of their respective properties, there was no little amount of ill feeling among them. Small causes in a village are just as effective as larger ones in a nation, in producing discord and strife; and the Puritans as a people were distinguished by all that determination to insist upon their rights, and that scorn of compromising difficulties, which men of earnest and honest but narrow natures have manifested in all ages of the world. Selfishness and uncharitableness are never so dangerous as when they assume the character of a conscientious devotion to the just and the true.

But all this time the young man has been walking almost due north from the meeting house in Salem village.

The road was not what would be called a good one in these days, for it was not much more than a bridle-path; the riding being generally at that time on horseback. But it was not the rather broken and uneven condition of the path which caused the frown on the young pedestrian's face, or the irritability shown by the sharp slashes of the maple switch in his hand upon the aspiring weeds along the roadside.

"If ever mortal man was so bothered," he muttered at last, coming to a stop. "Of course she is the best match, the other is below me, and has a spice of Satan in her; but then she makes the blood stir in a man. Ha!"

This exclamation came as he lifted his eyes from the ground, and gazed up the road before him. There, about half a mile distant, was a young woman riding toward him. Then she stopped her horse under a tree, and evidently was trying to break off a switch, while her horse pranced around in a most excited fashion. The horse at last starts in a rapid gallop. The young man sees that in trying to get the switch, she has allowed the bridle to get loose and over the horse's head, and can no longer control the fiery animal. Down the road towards him she comes in a sharp gallop, striving to stop the animal with her voice, evidently not the least frightened, but holding on to the pommel of the saddle with one hand while she makes desperate grasps at the hanging rein with the other.

The young Puritan smiled, he took in the situation with a glance, and felt no fear for her but rather amusement. He was on the top of a steep hill, and he knew he could easily stop the horse as it came up; even if she did not succeed in regaining her bridle, owing to the better chances the hill gave her.

"She is plucky, anyhow, if she is rather a tame wench," said he, as the girl grasped the bridle rein at last, when about half way up the hill, and became again mistress of the blooded creature beneath her.

"Is that the way you generally ride, Dulcibel?" asked the young man smiling.

"It all comes from starting without my riding whip," replied the girl. "Oh, do stop!" she continued to the horse who now on the level again, began sidling and curveting.

"Give me that switch of yours, Jethro. Now, you shall see a miracle."

No sooner was the switch in her hand, than the aspect and behavior of the animal changed as if by magic. You might have thought the little mare had been raised in the enclosure of a Quaker meeting-house, so sober and docile did she seem.

"It is always so," said the girl laughing. "The little witch knows at once whether I have a whip with me or not, and acts accordingly. No, I will not forgive you," and she gave the horse two or three sharp cuts, which it took like a martyr. "Oh, I wish you would misbehave a little now; I should like to punish you severely."

They made a very pretty picture, the little jet-black mare, and the mistress with her scarlet paragon bodice, even if the latter was entirely too pronounced for the taste of the great majority of the inhabitants, young and old, of Salem village.

"But how do you happen to be here?" said the girl.

"I called to see you, and found you had gone on a visit to Joseph Putnam's. So I thought I would walk up the road and meet you coming back."

"What a sweet creature Mistress Putnam is, and both so young for man and wife."

"Yes, Jo married early, but he is big enough and strong enough, don't you think so?"

"He is a worshiped man indeed. Have you met the stranger yet?"

"That Ellis Raymond? No, but I hear he is something of a popinjay in his attire, and swelled up with the conceit that he is better than any of us colonists."

"I do not think so," and the girl's cheek colored a deeper red. "He seems to be a very modest young man indeed. I liked him very much."

"Oh, well, I have not seen him yet. But they say his father was a son of Belial, and fought under the tyrant at Naseby."

"But that is all over and his widowed mother is one of us."

"Hang him, what does it matter!" Then, changing his tone, and looking at her a little suspiciously. "Did Leah Herrick say anything to you against me the other night at the husking?"

"I do not allow people to talk to me against my friends," replied she earnestly.

"She was talking to you a long time I saw."

"Yes."

"It must have been an interesting subject."

"It was rather an unpleasant one to me."

"Ah!"

"She wanted me to join the 'circle' which they have just started at the minister's house. She says that old Tituba has promised to show them how the Indians of Barbados conjure and powwow, and that it will be great sport for the winter nights."

"What did you say to it?"

"I told her I would have nothing to do with such things; that I had no liking for them, and that I thought it was wrong to tamper with such matters."

"That was all she said to you?" and the young man seemed to breathe more freely.

The girl was sharp-witted – what girl is not so in all affairs of the heart? – and it was now her turn. "Leah is very handsome," she said.

"Yes – everybody says so," he replied coolly, as if it were a fact of very little importance to him, and a matter which he had thought very little about.

Dulcibel, was not one to aim all around the remark; she came at once, simply and directly to the point.

"Did you ever pay her any attentions?"

"Oh, no, not to speak of. What made you think of such an absurd thing?"

"Not to speak of" – what do you mean?"

"Oh, I kept company with her for awhile – before you came to Salem – when we were merely boy and girl."

"There never was any troth plighted between you?"

"How foolish you are, Dulcibel! What has started you off on this track?"

"Yourself. Answer me plainly. Was there ever any love compact between you?"

"Oh, pshaw! what nonsense all this is!"

"If you do not answer me, I shall ask her this very evening."

"Of course there was nothing between us – nothing of any account – only a boy and girl affair – calling her my little wife, and that kind of nonsense."

"I think that a great deal. Did that continue up to the time I came to the village?"

"How seriously you take it all! Remember, I have your promise, Dulcibel."

"A promise on a promise is no promise – every girl knows that. If you do not answer me fully and truly, Jethro, I shall ask Leah."

"Yes," said the young man desperately "there was a kind of childish troth up to that time, but it was, as I said, a mere boy and girl affair."

"Boy and girl! You were eighteen, Jethro; and she sixteen nearly as old as Joseph Putnam and his wife were when they married."

"I do not care. I will not be bound by it; and Leah knows it."

"You acted unfairly toward me, Jethro. Leah has the prior right. I recall my troth. I will not marry you without her consent."

"You will not!" said the young man passionately – for well he knew that Leah's consent would never be given.

"No, I will not!"

"Then take your troth back in welcome. In truth, I met you here this day to tell you that. I love Leah Herrick's little finger better than your whole body with your Jezebel's bodice, and your fine lady's airs. You had better go now and marry that conceited popinjay up at Jo Putnam's, if you can get him."

With that he pushed off down the hill, and up the road, that he might not be forced to accompany her back to the village.

Dulcibel was not prepared for such a burst of wrath, and such an uncovering of the heart. Which of us has not been struck with wonder, even far more than indignation, at such times? A sudden difference occurs, and the man or the woman in whom you have had faith, and whom you have believed noble and admirable, suddenly appears what he or she really is, a very common and vulgar nature. It makes us sick at heart that we could have been so deceived.

Such was the effect upon Dulcibel. What a chasm she had escaped. To think she had really agreed to marry such a spirit as that! But fortunately it was now all over.

She not only had lost a lover, but a friend. And one day before, this also would have had its unpleasant side to her. But now she felt even a sensation of relief. Was it because this very day a new vision had entered into the charmed circle of her life? If it were so, she did not acknowledge the fact to herself; or even wonder in her own mind, why the sudden breaking of her troth-plight had not left her in a sadder humor. For she put "Little Witch" into a brisk canter, and with a smile upon her face rode into the main street of the village.

CHAPTER II.

In Which Some Necessary Information is Given

Dulcibel Burton was an orphan. Her father becoming a little unsound in doctrine, and being greatly pleased with the larger liberty of conscience offered by William Penn to his colonists in Pennsylvania, had leased his house and lands to a farmer by the name of Buckley, and departed for Philadelphia. This was some ten years previous to the opening of our story. After living happily in Philadelphia for about eight years he died suddenly, and his wife decided to return to her old home in Salem village, having arranged to board with Goodman Buckley, whose lease had not yet expired. But in the course of the following winter she also died, leaving this only child, Dulcibel, now a beautiful girl of eighteen years. Dulcibel, as was natural, went on living with the Buckleys, who had no children of their own, and were very good-hearted and affectionate people.

Dulcibel therefore was an heiress, in a not very large way, besides having wealthy relatives in England, from some of whom in the course of years more or less might reasonably be expected. And as our Puritan ancestors were by no means blind to their worldly interests, believing that godliness had the promise of this world as well as that which is to come – the bereaved maiden became quite an object of interest to the young men of the vicinity.

I have called her beautiful, and not without good reason. With the old manuscript volume – a family heirloom of some Quaker friends of mine – from which I have drawn the facts of this narrative, came also an old miniature, the work of a well-known English artist of that period. The colors have faded considerably, but the general contour and the features are well preserved. The face is oval, with a rather higher and fuller forehead than usual; the hair, which was evidently of a rather light brown, being parted in the center, and brought down with a little variation from the strict Madonna fashion. The eyes are large, and blue. The lips rather full. A snood or fillet of blue ribbon confined her luxuriant hair. In form she was rather above the usual height of women, and slender as became her age; though with a perceptible tendency towards greater fullness with increasing years.

There is rather curiously a great resemblance between this miniature, and a picture I have in my possession of the first wife of a celebrated New England poet. He himself being named for one of the Judges who sat in the Special Court appointed for the trial of the alleged witches, it would be curious if the beautiful and angelic wife of his youth were allied by blood to one of those who had the misfortune to come under the ban of witchcraft.

Being both beautiful and an heiress, Dulcibel naturally attracted the attention of her near neighbor in the village, Jethro Sands. Jethro was quite a handsome young man after a certain style, though, as his life proved, narrow minded, vindictive and avaricious. Still he had a high reputation as a young man with the elders of the village; for he had early seen how advantageous it was to have a good standing in the church, and was very orthodox in his faith, and very regular in his attendance at all the church services. Besides, he was a staunch champion of the Reverend Mr. Parris in all his difficulties with the parish, and in return was invariably spoken of by the minister as one of the most promising young men in that neighborhood.

Jethro resided with his aunt, the widow Sands. She inherited from her husband the whole of his property. His deed for the land narrated that the boundary line ran "from an old dry stump, due south, to the southwest corner of his hog-pen, then east by southerly to the top of the hill near a little pond, then north by west to the highway side, and thence along the highway to the old dry stump again aforesaid." There is a tradition in the village that by an adroit removal of his hog-pen to another location, and the uprooting and transplanting of the old dry stump, at a time when nobody seemed to take a very active interest in the adjoining land, owing to its title being disputed in successive lawsuits, Jethro, who inherited at the death of his aunt, became the possessor of a large tract of land that did

not originally belong to him. But then such stories are apt to crop up after the death of every man who has acquired the reputation of being crafty and close in his dealings.

We left Jethro, after his interview with Dulcibel, walking on in order that he might avoid her further company. After going a short distance he turned and saw that she was riding rapidly homeward. Then he began to retrace his steps.

"It was bound to come," he muttered. "I have seen she was getting cold and thought it was Leah's work, but it seems she was true to her promise after all. Well, Leah is poor, and not of so good a family, but she is worth a dozen of such as Dulcibel Burton."

Then after some minutes' silent striding, "I hate her though for it, all the same. Everybody will know she has thrown me off. But nobody shall get ahead of Jethro Sands in the long run. I'll make her sorry for it before she dies, the spoiled brat of a Quaker infidel!"

CHAPTER III.

The Circle in the Minister's House

It would, perhaps be unfair to hold the Reverend Master Parris responsible for the wild doings that went on in the parsonage house during the winter evenings of 1691-2, in the face of his solemn assertion, made several years afterwards, that he was ignorant of them. And yet, how could such things have been without the knowledge either of himself or his wife? Mistress Parris has come down to us with the reputation of a kindly and discreet woman – nothing having been said to her discredit, so far as I am aware, even by those who had a bitter controversy with her husband. And yet she certainly must have known of the doings of the famous "circle," even if she refrained from speaking of them to her husband.

At the very bottom of the whole thing, perhaps, were the West Indian slaves – "John Indias" and his wife Tituba, whom Master Parris had brought with him from Barbados. There were two children in the house, a little daughter of nine, named Elizabeth; and Abigail Williams, three years older. These very probably, Tituba often had sought to impress, as is the manner of negro servants, with tales of witchcraft, the "evil-eye" and "evil hand" spirits, powwowing, etc. Ann Putnam, another precocious child of twelve, the daughter of a near neighbor, Sergeant Putnam, the parish clerk, also was soon drawn into the knowledge of the savage mysteries. And, before very long, a regular "circle" of these and older girls was formed for the purpose of amusing and startling themselves with the investigation and performance of forbidden things.

At the present day this would not be so reprehensible. We are comparatively an unbelieving generation; and what are called "spiritual circles" are common, though not always unattended with mischievous results. But at that time when it was considered a deadly sin to seek intercourse with those who claimed to have "a familiar spirit," that such practices should be allowed to go on for a whole winter, in the house of a Puritan minister, seems unaccountable. But the fact itself is undoubted, and the consequences are written in mingled tears and blood upon the saddest pages of the history of New England.

Among the members of this "circle" were Mary Walcott, aged seventeen, the daughter of Captain Walcott; Elizabeth Hubbard and Mercy Lewis, also seventeen; Elizabeth Booth and Susannah Sheldon, aged eighteen; and Mary

Warren, Sarah Churchhill and Leah Herrick, aged twenty; these latter being the oldest of the party. They were all the daughters of respectable and even leading men, with the exception of Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren, Leah Herrick and Sarah Churchhill, who were living out as domestics, but who seem to have visited as friends and equals the other girls in the village. In fact, it was not considered at that time degrading in country neighborhoods – perhaps it is not so now in many places – for the sons and daughters of men of respectability, and even of property, to occupy the position of "help" or servant, eating at the same table with, and being considered members of the family. In the case before us, Mercy Lewis, Mary Warren and Sarah Churchhill seem to have been among the most active and influential members of the party. Though Abigail Williams, the minister's niece, and Ann Putnam, only eleven and twelve years of age respectively, proved themselves capable of an immense deal of mischief.

What the proceedings of these young women actually were, neither tradition nor any records that I have met with, informs us; but the result was even worse than could have been expected. By the close of the winter they had managed to get their nervous systems, their imaginations, and their minds and hearts, into a most dreadful condition. If they had regularly sold themselves to be the servants of the Evil One, as was then universally believed to be possible – and which may really be possible, for anything I know to the contrary – their condition could hardly have been worse than it was. They were

liable to sudden faintings of an unnatural character, to spasmodic movements and jerkings of the head and limbs, to trances, to the seeing of witches and devils, to deafness, to dumbness, to alarming outcries, to impudent and lying speeches and statements, and to almost everything else that was false, irregular and unnatural.

Some of these things were doubtless involuntary but the voluntary and involuntary seemed to be so mingled in their behavior, that it was difficult sometimes to determine which was one and which the other. The moral sense seemed to have become confused, if not utterly lost for the time.

They were full of tricks. They stuck concealed pins into their bodies, and accused others of doing it – their contortions and trances were to a great extent mere shams – they lied without scruple – they bore false witness, and what in many, if not most, cases they knew was false witness, against not only those to whom they bore ill will but against the most virtuous and kindly women of the neighborhood; and if the religious delusion had taken another shape, and we see no reason why it should not have done so, and put the whole of them on trial as seekers after "familiar spirits" and condemned the older girls to death, there would at least have been some show of justice in the proceedings; while, as it is, there is not a single ray of light to illuminate the judicial gloom.

When at last Mr. Parris and Thomas Putnam became aware of the condition of their children, they called in the village physician, Dr. Griggs. The latter, finding he could do nothing with his medicines, gave it as his opinion that they were "under an evil hand" – the polite medical phrase of that day, for being bewitched.

That important point being settled, the next followed of course, "Who has bewitched them?" The children being asked said, "Tituba."

CHAPTER IV.

Satan's Especial Grudge against Our Puritan Fathers

"Tituba!" And who else? Why need there have been anybody else? Why could not the whole thing have stopped just there? No doubt Tituba was guilty, if any one was. But Tituba escaped, by shrewdly also becoming an accuser.

"Who else?" This set the children's imagination roving. Their first charges were not so unreasonable. Why, the vagrant Sarah Good, a social outcast, wandering about without any settled habitation; and Sarah Osburn, a bed-ridden woman, half distracted by family troubles who had seen better days. There the truth was out. Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osburn were the agents of the devil in this foul attempt against the peace of the godly inhabitants of Salem village.

For it was a common belief even amongst the wisest and best of our Puritan fathers, that the devil had a special spite against the New England colonies. They looked at it in this way. He had conquered in the fight against the Lord in the old world. He was the supreme and undoubted lord of the "heathen salvages" in the new. Now that the Puritan forces had commenced an onslaught upon him in the western hemisphere, to which he had an immemorial right as it were, could it be wondered at that he was incensed beyond all calculation? Was he, after having Europe, Asia and Africa, to be driven out of North America by a small body of steeple-hatted, psalm-singing, and conceited Puritans? No wonder his satanic ire was aroused; and that he was up to all manner of devices to harass, disorganize and afflict the camp of his enemies.

I am afraid this seems a little ridiculous to readers nowadays; but to the men and women of two hundred years ago it was grim and sober earnest, honestly and earnestly believed in.

Who, in the face of such wonderful changes in our religious views, can venture to predict what will be the belief of our descendants two hundred years hence?

CHAPTER V.

Leah Herrick's Position and Feelings

I have classed Leah Herrick among the domestics; but her position was rather above that. She had lived with the Widow Sands, Jethro's aunt, since she had been twelve years old, assisting in the housework, and receiving her board and clothing in return. Now, at the age of twenty, she was worth more than that recompense; but she still remained on the old terms, as if she were a daughter instead of a servant.

She remained, asking nothing more, because she had made up her mind to be Jethro's wife. She had a passion for Jethro, and she knew that Jethro reciprocated it. But his aunt, who was ambitious, wished him to look higher; and therefore did not encourage such an alliance. Leah was however too valuable and too cheap an assistant to be dispensed with, and thus removed from such a dangerous proximity, besides the widow really had no objection to her, save on account of her poverty.

Leah said nothing when she saw that Jethro's attentions were directed in another direction; but without saying anything directly to Dulcibel, she contrived to impress her with the fact that she had trespassed upon her rightful domain. For Leah was a cat; and amidst her soft purrings, she would occasionally put out her velvety paw, and give a wicked little scratch that made the blood come, and so softly and innocently too, that the sufferer could hardly take offence at it.

Between these sharp intimations of Leah, and the unpleasant revelations of the innate hardness of the young man's character, which resulted from the closer intimacy of a betrothal, Dulcibel's affection had been gradually cooling for several months. But although the longed-for estrangement between the two had at length taken place, Leah did not feel quite safe yet; for the Widow Sands was very much put out about it, and censured her nephew for his want of wisdom in not holding Dulcibel to her engagement. "She has a good house and farm already, and she will be certain to receive much more on the death of her bachelor uncle in England," said the aunt sharply. "You must strive to undo that foolish hour's work. It was only a tiff on her part, and you should have cried your eyes out if necessary."

And so Leah, thinking in her own heart that Jethro was a prize for any girl, was in constant dread of a renewal of the engagement, and ready to go to any length to prevent it.

Although a member of the "circle" that met at the minister's house, Leah was not so regular an attendant as the others; for there were no men there and she never liked to miss the opportunity of a private conversation with Jethro, opportunities which were somewhat limited, owing to the continual watchfulness of her mistress. Still she went frequently enough to be fully imbued with the spirit of their doings, while not becoming such a victim as most of them were to disordered nerves, and an impaired and confused mental and moral constitution.

CHAPTER VI.

A Disorderly Scene in Church

If anything were needed to add to the excitement which the condition of the "afflicted children," as they were generally termed, naturally produced in Salem village and the adjoining neighborhood, it was a scene in the village church one Sunday morning.

The church was a low, small structure, with rough, unplastered roof and walls, and wooden benches instead of pews. The sexes were divided, the men sitting on one side and the women on the other, but each person in his or her regular and appointed seat.

It was the custom at that time to select a seating committee of judicious and careful men, whose very important duty it was to seat the congregation. In doing this they proceeded on certain well-defined principles.

The front seats were to be filled with the older members of the congregation, a due reverence for age, as well as for the fact that these were more apt to be weak of sight and infirm of hearing, necessitated this. Then came the elders and deacons of the church; then the wealthier citizens of the parish; then the younger people and the children.

The Puritan fathers had their faults; but they never would have tolerated the fashionable custom of these days, whereby the wealthy, without regard to their age, occupy the front pews; and the poorer members, no matter how aged, or infirm of sight or hearing are often forced back where they can neither see the minister nor hear the sermon. And one can imagine in what forcible terms they would have denounced some city meeting-houses of the present era where the church is regarded somewhat in the light of an opera house, and the doors of the pews kept locked and closed until those who have purchased the right to reserved seats shall have had the first chance to enter.

The Reverend Master Lawson, a visiting elder, was the officiating minister on the Sunday to which we have referred. The psalm had been sung after the opening prayer and the minister was about to come forward to give his sermon, when, before he could rise from his seat, Abigail Williams, the niece of the Reverend Master Parris, only twelve years old, and one of the "circle" cried out loudly: – "Now stand up and name your text!"

When he had read the text, she exclaimed insolently, "It's a long text." And then when he was referring to his doctrine, she said: – "I know no doctrine you mentioned. If you named any, I have forgotten it."

And then when he had concluded, she cried out, "Look! there sits Goody Osburn upon the beam, suckling her yellow-bird betwixt her fingers."

Then Ann Putnam, that other child of twelve, joined in; "There flies the yellow-bird to the minister's hat, hanging on the pin in the pulpit."

Of course such disorderly proceedings produced a great excitement in the congregation; but the two children do not appear to have been rebuked by either of the ministers, or by any of the officers of the church; it seeming to have been the general conclusion that they were not responsible for what they said, but were constrained by an irresistible and diabolical influence. In truth, the children were regarded with awe and pity instead of reproof and blame, and therefore naturally felt encouraged to further efforts in the same direction.

I have said that this was the general feeling, but that feeling was not universal. Several of the members, notably young Joseph Putnam, Francis Nurse and Peter Cloyse were very much displeased at the toleration shown to such disorderly doings, and began to absent themselves from public worship, with the result of incurring the anger of the children, who were rapidly assuming the role of destroying angels to the people of Salem village and its vicinity.

As fasting and prayer were the usual resources of our Puritan fathers in difficulties, these were naturally resorted to at once upon this occasion. The families to which the "afflicted children" belonged assembled the neighbors – who had also fasted – and, under the guidance of the Reverend Master Parris, besought the Lord to deliver them from the power of the Evil One. These were exciting occasions, for, whenever there was a pause in the proceedings, such of the "afflicted" as were present would break out into demoniac howlings, followed by contortions and rigid trances, which, in the words of our manuscript, were "enough to make the devil himself weep."

These village prayers, however, seeming to be insufficient, Master Parris called a meeting of the neighboring ministers; but the prayers of these also had no effect. The "children" even surpassed themselves on this occasion. The ministers could not doubt the evidence of their own reverend eyes and ears, and united in the declaration of their belief that Satan had been let loose in this little Massachusetts village, to confound and annoy the godly, to a greater extent than they had ever before known or heard of. And now that the ministers had spoken, it was almost irreligious and atheistical for others to express any doubt. For if the ministers could not speak with authority in a case of this kind, which seemed to be within their peculiar field and province, what was their judgment worth upon any matter?

CHAPTER VII. A Conversation with Dulcibel

As Dulcibel sat in the little room which she had furnished in a pretty but simple way for a parlor, some days after the meeting of the ministers, her thoughts naturally dwelt upon all these exciting events which were occurring around her. It was an April day, and the snow had melted earlier than usual, and it seemed as if the spring might be an exceptionally forward one. The sun was pleasantly warm, and the wind blowing soft and gently from the south; and a canary bird in the rustic cage that hung on the wall was singing at intervals a hymn of rejoicing at the coming of the spring. The bird was one that had been given her by a distinguished sea-captain of Boston town, who had brought it home from the West Indies. Dulcibel had tamed and petted it, until she could let it out from the cage and allow it to fly around the room; then, at the words, "Come Cherry," as she opened the little door of the cage, the bird would fly in again, knowing that he would be rewarded for his good conduct with a little piece of sweet cake.

Cherry would perch on her finger and sing his prettiest strains on some occasions; and at others eat out of her hand. But his prettiest feat was to kiss his mistress by putting his little beak to her lips, when she would say in a caressing tone, "Kiss me, pretty Cherry."

After playing with the canary for a little while, Dulcibel sighed and put him back in his cage, hearing a knock at the front door of the cottage. And she had just turned from the cage to take a seat, when the door opened and two persons entered.

"I am glad to see you, friends," she said calmly, inviting them to be seated.

It was Joseph Putnam, accompanied by his friend and visitor, Ellis Raymond, the young man of whom Dulcibel had spoken to Jethro Sands.

Joseph Putnam was one of that somewhat distinguished family from whom came the Putnams of Revolutionary fame; Major-General Israel Putnam, the wolf-slayer, being one of his younger children. He, the father I mean, was a man of fine, athletic frame, not only of body but of mind. He was one of the very few in Salem village who despised the whole witch-delusion from the beginning. He did not disbelieve in the existence of witches – or that the devil was tormenting the "afflicted children" – but that faith should be put in their wild stories was quite another matter.

Of his companion, Master Ellis Raymond, I find no other certain account anywhere than in my Quaker friend's manuscript. From the little that is there given of personal description I have only the three phrases "a comelie young man," "a very quick-witted person," "a very determined and courageous man," out of which to build a physical and spiritual description. And so I think it rather safer to leave the portraiture to the imagination of my readers.

"Do you expect to remain long in Salem?" asked Dulcibel.

"I do not know yet," was the reply. "I came that I might see what prospects the new world holds out to young men."

"I want Master Raymond to purchase the Orchard Farm, and settle down among us," said Joseph Putnam. "It can be bought I think."

"I have heard people say the price is a very high one," said Dulcibel.

"It is high but the land is worth the money. In twenty years it will seem very low. My father saw the time when a good cow was worth as much as a fifty-acre farm, but land is continually rising in value."

"I shall look farther south before deciding," said Raymond. "I am told the land is better there; besides there are too many witches here," and he smiled.

"We have been up to see my brother Thomas," continued Joseph Putnam. "He always has had the reputation of being a sober-headed man, but he is all off his balance now."

"What does Mistress Putnam say?" asked Dulcibel.

"Oh, she is at the bottom of all his craziness, she and that elfish daughter. Sister Ann is a very intelligent woman in some respects, but she is wild upon this question."

"I am told by the neighbors that the child is greatly afflicted."

"She came in the room while we were there," responded Master Raymond. "I knew not what to make of it. She flung herself down on the floor, she crept under the table, she shrieked, she said Goody Osburn was sticking pins in her, and wound up by going into convulsions."

"What can it all mean? – it is terrible," said Dulcibel.

"Well, the Doctor says she is suffering under an 'evil hand,' and the ministers have given their solemn opinion that she is bewitched; and brother Thomas and Sister Ann, and about all the rest of the family agree with them."

"I am afraid it will go hard with those two old women," interposed Ellis Raymond.

"They will hang them as sure as they are tried," answered Joseph Putnam. "Not that it makes much difference, for neither of them is much to speak of; but they have a right to a fair trial nevertheless, and they cannot get such a thing just now in Salem village."

"I can hardly believe there are such things as witches," said Dulcibel, "and if there are, I do not believe the good Lord would allow them to torment innocent children."

"Oh, I don't know that it will do to say there are no witches," replied Joseph Putnam gravely. "It seems to me we must give up the Bible if we say that. For the Old Testament expressly commands that we must not suffer a witch to live; and it would be absurd to give such a command if there were no such persons as witches."

"I suppose it must be so," admitted Dulcibel, with a deep sigh.

"And then again in the New Testament we have continual references to persons possessed with devils, and others who had familiar spirits, and if such persons existed then, why not now?"

"Oh, of course, it is so," again admitted Dulcibel with even a deeper sigh than before.

But even in that day, outside of the Puritan and other religious bodies, there were unbelievers; and Ellis Raymond had allowed himself to smile once or twice, unperceived by the others, during their conversation. Thus we read in the life of that eminent jurist, the Honorable Francis North, who presided at a trial for witchcraft about ten years before the period of which we are writing, that he looked upon the whole thing as a vulgar delusion, though he said it was necessary to be very careful to conceal such opinions from the juries of the time, or else they would set down the judges at once as irreligious persons, and bring in the prisoners guilty.

"I am not so certain of it," said Ellis Raymond.

"How! What do you mean, Master Raymond?" exclaimed Joseph Putnam; like all his family, he was orthodox to the bone in his opinions.

"My idea is that in the old times they supposed all distracted and insane people – especially the violent ones, the maniacs – to be possessed with devils."

"Do you think so?" queried Dulcibel in a glad voice, a light seeming to break in upon her.

"Well, I take it for granted that there were plenty of insane people in the old times as there are now; and yet I see no mention of them as such, in either the Old or the New Testament."

"I never thought of that before; it seems to me a very reasonable explanation, does it not strike you so, Master Putnam?"

"So reasonable, that it reasons away all our faith in the absolute truthfulness of every word of the holy scriptures," replied Joseph Putnam sternly. "Do you suppose the Evangelists, when they spoke of persons having 'familiar spirits,' and being 'possessed of devils,' did not know what they were talking about? I would rather believe that every insane person now is possessed with a devil, and that such is the true explanation of his or her insanity, than to fly in the face of the holy scriptures as you do, Master Raymond."

Dulcibel's countenance fell. "Yes," she responded in reverential tones, "the holy Evangelists must know best. If they said so, it must be so."

"You little orthodox darling!" thought young Master Raymond, gazing upon her beautiful sad face. But of course he did not express himself to such an effect, except by his gaze; and Dulcibel happening to look up and catch the admiring expression of two clear brown eyes, turned her own instantly down again, while a faint blush mantled her cheeks.

The young Englishman knew that in arousing such heterodox opinions he was getting on dangerous ground. For expressing not a greater degree of heresy than he had uttered, other men and even women had been turned neck and heels out of the Puritan settlements. And as he had no desire to leave Salem just at present, he began to "hedge" a little, as betting men sometimes say.

"Insane people, maniacs especially, do sometimes act as if they were possessed of the devil," he said frankly. "And no doubt their insanity is often the result of the sinful indulgence of their wicked propensities and passions."

"Yes, that seems to be very reasonable," said Dulcibel. "Every sinful act seems to me a yielding to the evil one, and such yielding becoming common, he may at least be able to enter into the soul, and take absolute possession of it. Oh, it is very fearful!" and she shuddered.

"But I find one opinion almost universal in Salem," continued Raymond, "and that is one which I think has no ground to sustain it in the scriptures, and is very mischievous. It is that the devil cannot act directly upon human beings to afflict and torment them; but that he is forced to have recourse to the agency of other human beings, who have become his worshipers and agents. Thus in the cases of these children and young girls, instead of admitting that the devil and his imps are directly afflicting them, they begin to look around for witches and wizards as the sources of the trouble."

"Yes," responded Joseph Putnam earnestly, "that false and unscriptural doctrine is the source of all the trouble. That little Ann Putnam, Abigail Williams and the others are bewitched, may perhaps be true – a number of godly ministers say so, and they ought to know. But, if they are bewitched, it is the devil and his imps that have done it. If they are 'possessed with devils' – and does not that scripture mean that the devils directly take possession of them – what is their testimony worth against others? It is nearly the testimony of Satan and his imps, speaking through them. While they are in that state, their evidence should not be allowed credence by any magistrate, any more than the devil's should."

It seems very curious to those of the present day who have investigated this matter of witch persecutions, that such a sound and orthodox view as this of Joseph Putnam's should have had such little weight with the judges and ministers and other leading men of the seventeenth century. While a few urged it, even as Joseph Putnam did, at the risk of his own life, the great majority not only of the common people but of the leading classes, regarded it as unsound and irreligious. But the whole history of the world proves that the *vox populi* is very seldom the *vox Dei*. The light shines down from the rising sun in the heavens, and the mountain tops first receive the rays. The last new truth is always first perceived by the small minority of superior minds and souls. How indeed could it be otherwise, so long as truth like light always shines down from above?

"Have you communicated this view to your brother and sister?" asked Dulcibel.

"I have talked with them for a whole evening, but I do think Sister Ann is possessed too," replied Joseph Putnam. "She fairly raves sometimes. You know how bitterly she feels about that old church quarrel, when a small minority of the Parish succeeded in preventing the permanent settlement of her sister's husband as minister. She seems to have the idea that all that party are emissaries of Satan. I do not wonder her little girl should be so nervous and excitable, being the child of such a nervous, high-strung woman. But I am going to see them again this afternoon; will you go too, Master Raymond?"

"I think not," replied the latter with a smile, "I should do harm, I fear, instead of good. I will stay here and talk with Mistress Dulcibel a little while longer."

Master Putnam departed, and then the conversation became of a lighter character. The young Englishman told Dulcibel of his home in the old world, and of his travels in France and Switzerland.

And they talked of all those little things which young people will – little things, but which afford constant peeps into each other's mind and heart. Dulcibel thought she had never met such a cultivated young man, although she had read of such; and he felt very certain that he never met with such a lovely young woman. Not that she was over intelligent – one of those precociously "smart" young women that, thanks to the female colleges and the "higher culture" are being "developed" in such alarming numbers nowadays. If she had been such a being, I fancy Master Raymond would have found her less attractive. Ah, well, after a time perhaps, we of the present day shall have another craze – that of barbarism – in which the "coming woman" shall pride herself mainly upon possessing a strong, healthy and vigorous physical organization, developed within the feminine lines of beauty, and only a reasonable degree of intelligence and "culture." And then I hope we shall see the last of walking female encyclopedias, with thin waists, and sickly and enfeebled bodies; fit to be the mothers only of a rapidly dwindling race, even if they have the wish and power to become mothers at all.

I am not much of a believer in love at first sight, but certainly persons may become very much interested in each other after a few hours' conversation; and so it was in the case before us. When Ellis Raymond took up his hat, and then lingered minute after minute, as if he could not bring himself to the point of departure, he simply manifested anew to the maiden what his tones and looks had been telling her for an hour, that he admired her very greatly.

"Come soon again," Dulcibel said softly, as the young man managed to open the door at last, and make his final adieu. "And indeed I shall if you will permit me," was his earnest response.

But some fair reader may ask, "What were these two doing during all the winter, that they had not seen each other?"

I answer that Dulcibel had withdrawn from the village gatherings since the breaking of the engagement with Jethro. At the best, it was an acknowledgment that she had been too hasty in a matter that she should not have allowed herself to fail in; and she felt humbled under the thought. Besides, it seemed to her refined and sensitive nature only decorous that she should withdraw for a time into the seclusion of her own home under such circumstances.

As for the village gossips, they entirely misinterpreted her conduct. Inasmuch as Jethro went around as usual, and put a bold face upon the matter, they came to the conclusion that he had thrown her off, and that she was moping at home, because she felt the blow so keenly.

Thus it was that while the young Englishman had attended many social gatherings during the winter he had never met the one person whom he was especially desirous of again meeting.

One little passage of the conversation between the two it may be well however to refer to expressly for its bearing upon a very serious matter. Raymond had mentioned that he had not seen her recently flying around on that little jet black horse, and had asked whether she still owned it.

"Oh, yes," replied Dulcibel; "I doubt that I should be able to sell Little Witch if I wished to do so."

"Ah, how is that? She seems to be a very fine riding beast."

"She is, very! But you have not heard that I am the only one that has ever ridden her or that can ride her."

"Indeed! that is curious."

I have owned her from a little colt. She was never broken to harness; and no one, as I said, has ever ridden her but me. So that now if any other person, man or woman, attempts to do so, she will not allow it. She rears, she plunges, and finally as a last resort, if necessary, lies down on the ground and refuses to stir. "Why, that is very flattering to you, Dulcibel," said Raymond smiling. "I never knew an animal of better taste."

"That may be," replied the maiden blushing; "but you see how it is that I shall never be able to sell Little Witch if I desire to do so. She is not worth her keep to any one but me."

"Little Witch! Why did you ever give her a name like that?"

"Oh, I was a mere child – and my father, who had been a sea-captain, and all over the world, did not believe in witches. He named her "Little Witch" because she was so black, and so bent on her own way. But I must change her name now that people are talking so about witches. In truth my mother never liked it."

CHAPTER VIII.

An Examination of Reputed Witches

Warrants had been duly issued against Sarah Good, Sarah Osburn, and the Indian woman Tituba, and they were now to be tried for the very serious offence of bewitching the "afflicted children."

One way that the witches of that day were supposed to work, was to make images out of rags, like dolls, which they named for the persons they meant to torment. Then, by sticking pins and needles into the dolls, tightening cords around their throats, and similar doings, the witches caused the same amount of pain as if they had done it to the living objects of their enmity.

In these cases, the officers who executed the warrants of arrest, stated "that they had made diligent search for images and such like, but could find none."

On the day appointed for the examination of these poor women, the two leading magistrates of the neighborhood, John Hathorne and Jonathan Corwin, rode up the principal street of the village attended by the marshal and constables, in quite an imposing array. The crowd was so great that they had to hold the session in the meeting-house. The magistrates belonged to the highest legislative and judicial body in the colony. Hathorne, as the name was then spelt, was the ancestor of the gifted author, Nathaniel Hawthorne – the alteration in the spelling of the name probably being made to make it conform more nearly to the pronunciation. Hathorne was a man of force and ability – though evidently also as narrow-minded and unfair as only a bigot can be. All through the examination that ensued he took a leading part, and with him, to be accused was to be set down at once as guilty. Never, among either Christian or heathen people, was there a greater travesty of justice than these examinations and trials for witchcraft, conducted by the very foremost men of the Massachusetts colony.

The accounts of the examination of these three women in the manuscript book I have alluded to, are substantially the same as in the official records, which are among those that have been preserved. I will give some quotations to show how the examinations were conducted: —

"Sarah Good, what evil spirit are you familiar with?"

She answered sharply, "None!"

"Have you made no contracts with the Devil?"

"No!"

"Why then do you hurt these children?"

"I do not hurt them. I would scorn to do it."

"Here the children who were facing her, began to be dreadfully tormented; and then when their torments were over for the time, again accused her, and also Sarah Osburn.

"Sarah Good, why do you not tell us the truth? Why do you thus torment them?"

"I do not torment them."

"Who then does torment them?"

"It may be that Sarah Osburn does, for I do not."

"Her answers," says the official report, "were very quick, sharp and malignant."

It must be remembered in reading these reports, that the accused were not allowed any counsel, either at the preliminary examinations, or on the trials; that the apparent sufferings of the children were very great, producing almost a frenzied state of feeling in the crowd who looked on; and that they themselves were often as much puzzled as their accusers, to account for what was taking place before their eyes.

In the examination of Sarah Osburn, we have similar questions and similar answers. In addition, however, three witnesses alleged that she had said that very morning, that she was "more like to be

bewitched herself." Mr. Hathorne asked why she said that. She answered that either she saw at one time, or dreamed that she saw, a thing like an Indian, all black, which did pinch her in the neck, and pulled her by the back part of the head to the door of the house. And there was also a lying spirit.

"What lying spirit was this?"

"It was a voice that I thought I heard."

"What did it say to you?"

"That I should go no more to meeting; but I said I would, and did go the next Sabbath day."

"Were you ever tempted further?"

"No."

"Why did you yield then to the Devil, not to go to meeting for the last three years?"

"Alas! I have been sick all that time, and not able to go."

Then Tituba was brought in. Tituba was in the "circle" or an attendant and inspirer of the "circle" from the first; and had marvelous things to tell. How it was that the "children" turned against her and accused her, I do not know; but probably she had practised so much upon them in various ways, that she really was guilty of trying to do the things she was charged with.

"Tituba, why do you hurt these children?"

"Tituba does not hurt 'em."

"Who does hurt them then?"

"The debbil, for all I knows."

"Did you ever see the Devil?" Tituba gave a low laugh. "Of course I've seen the debbil. The debbil came an' said, 'Serb me, Tituba.' But I would not hurt the child'en."

"Who else have you seen?"

"Four women. Goody Osburn and Sarah Good, and two other women. Dey all hurt de child'en."

"How does the Devil appear to you?"

"Sometimes he is like a dog, and sometimes like a hog. The black dog always goes with a yellow bird."

"Has the Devil any other shapes?"

"Yes, he sometimes comes as a red cat, and then a black cat."

"And they all tell you to hurt the children?"

"Yes, but I said I would not."

"Did you not pinch Elizabeth Hubbard this morning?"

"The black man brought me to her, and made me pinch her."

"Why did you go to Thomas Putnam's last night and hurt his daughter Ann?"

"He made me go."

"How did you go?"

"We rode on sticks; we soon got there."

"Has Sarah Good any familiar?"

"Yes, a yeller bird. It sucks her between her fingers. And Sarah Osburn has a thing with a head like a woman, and it has two wings."

("Abigail Williams, who lives with her uncle, the Rev. Master Parris, here testified that she did see the same creature, and it turned into the shape of Goody Osburn.")

"Tituba further said that she had also seen a hairy animal with Goody Osburn, that had only two legs, and walked like a man. And that she saw Sarah Good, last Saturday, set a wolf upon Elizabeth Hubbard."

("The friends of Elizabeth Hubbard here said that she did complain of being torn by a wolf on that day.")

"Tituba being asked further to describe her ride to Thomas Putnam's, for the purpose of tormenting his daughter Ann, said that she rode upon a stick or pole, and Sarah Good and Sarah

Osburn behind her, all taking hold of one another. Did not know how it was done, for she saw no trees nor path, but was presently there."

These examinations were continued for several days, each of the accused being brought at various times before the magistrates, who seem to have taken great interest in the absurd stories with which the "afflicted children" and Tituba regaled them. Finally, all three of the accused were committed to Boston jail, there to await their trial for practising witchcraft; being heavily ironed, as, being witches, it was supposed to be very difficult to keep them from escaping; and as their ability to torment people with their spectres, was considered lessened in proportion to the weight and tightness of the chains with which they were fettered. It is not to be wondered at, that under these inflictions, at the end of two months, the invalid, Sarah Osburn, died. Tituba, however, lay in jail until, finally, at the expiration of a year and a month, she was sold in payment of her jail fees. One account saying that her owner, the Rev. Master Parris, refused to pay her jail fees, unless she would still adhere to what she had testified on her examination, instead of alleging that he whipped and otherwise abused her, to make her confess that she was a witch.

CHAPTER IX.

One Hundred and Fifty More Alleged Witches

Ah this was bad enough, but it was but the beginning of trouble. Tituba had spoken of two other women, but had given no names. The "afflicted children" were still afflicted, and growing worse, instead of better. The Rev. Master Noyes of Salem town, the Rev. Master Parris of Salem village, Sergeant Thomas Putnam, and his wife, – which last also was becoming bewitched, and had many old enmities – and many other influential people and church members, were growing more excited, and vindictive against the troubles of their peace, with every passing day.

"Who are they that still torment you in this horrible manner?" was the question asked of the children and young women, and they had their answers ready.

There had been an old quarrel between the Endicotts and the Nurses, a family which owned the Bishop Farm, about the eastern boundary of said farm. There had been the quarrel about who should be minister, in which the Nurses had sided with the determined opponents of Mistress Ann Putnam's reverend brother-in-law. The Nurses and other families were staunch opposers of Master Parris's claim to ownership of the Parsonage and its grounds. And it was not to be wondered at, that the accusations should be made against opponents rather than against friends.

Besides, there were those who had very little faith in the children themselves, and had taken a kind of stand against them; and these too, were in a dangerous position.

"Who torments you now?" The answer was ready: Martha Corey, and Rebecca Nurse, and Bridget Bishop, and so on; the charges being made now against the members, often the heads, of the most reputable families in Salem town and village and the surrounding neighborhoods. Before the coming of the winter snows probably one hundred and fifty persons were in prison at Salem and Ipswich and Boston and Cambridge. Two-thirds of these were women; many of them were aged and venerable men and women of the highest reputation for behavior and piety. Yet, they were bound with chains, and exposed to all the hardships that attended incarceration in small and badly constructed prisons.

A special court composed of the leading judges in the province being appointed by the Governor for the trial of these accused persons, a mass of what would be now styled "utter nonsense" was brought against them. No wonder that the official record of this co-called court of justice is now nowhere to be found. The partial accounts that have come down to us are sufficient to brand its proceeding with everlasting infamy. Let us recur to the charges against some of these persons:

The Rev. Cotton Mather, speaking of the trial of Bridget Bishop, says: "There was one strange thing with which the Court was *newly entertained*. As this woman was passing by the meeting-house, she gave a look towards the house; and immediately a demon, invisibly entering the house, tore down a part of it; so that, though there was no person to be seen there, yet the people, at the noise, running in, found a board, which was strongly fastened with several nails, transported into another quarter of the house."

A court of very ignorant men would be "entertained" now with such a story, in a very different sense from that in which the Rev. Cotton Mather used the word. The Court of 1692, doubtless swallowed the story whole, for it was no more absurd than the bulk of the evidence upon which they condemned the reputed witches.

One of the charges against the Rev. Master Burroughs, who had himself been a minister for a short time in the village, was, that though a small, slender man, he was a giant in strength. Several persons witnessed that "he had held out a gun of seven foot barrel with one hand; and had carried a barrel full of cider from a canoe to the shore." Burroughs said that an Indian present at the time did the same, but the answer was ready. "That was the black man, or the Devil, who looks like an Indian."

Another charge against Master Burroughs was, that he went on a certain occasion between two places in a shorter time than was possible, if the Devil had not assisted him. Both Increase Mather, the father, and his son Cotton, two of the most prominent and influential of the Boston ministers, said that the testimony as to Mr. Burroughs' giant strength was alone sufficient rightfully to convict him. It is not improbable that the real animus of the feeling against Master Burroughs was the belief that he was not sound in the faith; for Master Cotton Mather, after his execution, declared to the people that he was "no ordained minister," and called their attention to the fact that Satan often appeared as an angel of light.

CHAPTER X.

Bridget Bishop Condemned to Die

Salem, the habitation of peace, had become, by this time a pandemonium. The "afflicted children" were making accusations in every direction, and Mistress Ann Putnam, and many others, were imitating their example.

To doubt was to be accused; but very few managed to keep their heads sufficiently in the whirlwind of excitement, even to be able to doubt. With the exception of Joseph Putnam, and his visitor, Ellis Raymond, there were very few, if any, open and outspoken doubters, and indignant censurers of the whole affair. Dulcibel Burton also, though in a gentler and less emphatic way, sided naturally with them, but, although she was much less violent in her condemnation, she provoked even more anger from the orthodox believers in the delusion.

For Joseph Putnam, as belonging to one of the most influential and wealthy families in Salem, seemed to have some right to have an opinion. And Master Raymond was visiting at his house, and naturally would be influenced by him.

Besides, he was only a stranger at the best; and therefore, not entirely responsible to them for his views. But Dulcibel was a woman, and it was outrageous that she, at her years, should set up her crude opinions against the authority of the ministers and the elders.

Besides, Joseph Putnam was known to be a determined and even rather desperate young man when his passions were aroused, as they seldom were though, save in some just cause; and he had let it be known that it would be worth any person's life to attempt to arrest him. It was almost the universal habit of that day, to wear the belt and sword; and Messrs. Putnam and Raymond went thus constantly armed. Master Putnam also kept two horses constantly saddled in his stable, day and night, to escape with if necessary, into the forest, through which they might make their way to New York. For the people of that province, who did not admire their Puritan neighbors very much, received all such fugitives gladly, and gave them full protection.

As for Master Raymond, although he saw that his position was becoming dangerous, he determined to remain, notwithstanding the period which he had fixed for his departure had long before arrived. His avowed reason given to Joseph Putnam, was that he was resolved to see the crazy affair through. His avowed reason, which Master Putnam perfectly understood, was to prosecute his suit to Dulcibel, and see her safely through the dangerous excitement also.

"They have condemned Bridget Bishop to death," said Master Putnam, coming into the house one morning from a conversation with a neighbor.

"I supposed they would," replied Master Raymond. "But how nobly she bore herself against such a mass of stupid and senseless testimony. Did you know her?"

"I have often stopped at her Inn. A fine, free-spoken woman; a little bold in her manners, but nothing wrong about her."

"Did you ever hear such nonsense as that about her tearing down a part of the meeting-house simply by looking at it? And yet there sat the best lawyers in the colony on the bench as her judges, and swallowed it all down as if it had been gospel."

"And then those other stories of her appearing in people's bed-rooms, and vanishing away suddenly; and of her being responsible for the illness and death of her neighbors' children; what could be more absurd?"

"And of the finding of puppets, made of rags and hogs' bristles, in the walls and crevices of her cellar! Really, it would be utterly contemptible if it were not so horrible."

"Yes, she is to be executed on Gallows Hill; and next week! I can scarcely believe it, Master Raymond. If I could muster a score or two of other stout fellows, I would carry her off from the very foot of the gallows."

"Oh, the frenzy has only begun, my friend," replied Raymond. "You know whose trial comes on next?"

"How any one can say a word against Mistress Nurse – that lovely and venerable woman – passeth my comprehension," said Joseph Putnam's young wife, who had been a listener to the conversation, while engaged in some household duties.

"My sister-in-law, Ann Putnam, seems to have a spite against that woman. I went to see her yesterday, and she almost foams at the mouth while talking of her."

"The examination of Mistress Nurse before the magistrate comes off to-day. Shall we not attend it?"

"Of course, but be careful of thy language, Friend Raymond. Do not let thy indignation run away with thy discretion."

Raymond laughed outright, as did young Mistress Putnam. "This advice from you, Master Joseph! who art such a very model of prudence and cold-bloodedness! If thou wilt be only half as cautious and discreet as I am, we shall give no offence even to the craziest of them."

CHAPTER XI.

Examination of Rebecca Nurse

When they arrived at the village, the examination was in progress. Mistress Rebecca Nurse, the mother of a large family; aged, venerable, and bending now a little under the weight of years, was standing as a culprit before the magistrates, who doubtless had often met her in the social gatherings of the neighborhood.

She was guarded by two constables, she who needed no guarding. Around, and as near her as they were allowed to stand, stood her husband and her grown-up sons and daughters.

One of the strangest features of the time, as it strikes the reader of this day, was the peaceful submission to the lawful authorities practised by the husbands and fathers, and grown-up sons and brothers of the women accused. Reaching as the list of alleged witches did in a short time, to between one hundred and fifty and two hundred persons – nearly the whole of them members of the most respectable families – it is wonderful that a determined stand in their behalf was not the result. One hundred resolute men, resolved to sacrifice their lives if need be, would have put a stop to the whole matter. And if there had been even twenty men in Salem, like Joseph Putnam, the thing no doubt would have been done.

And in the opinion of the present writer, such a course would have been far more worthy of praise, than the slavish submission to such outrages as were perpetrated under the names of law, justice and religion. The sons of these men, eighty years later, showed at Lexington and Concord and Bunker Hill, that when Law and Peace become but grotesque masks, under which are hidden the faces of legalized injustice and tyranny, then the time has come for armed revolt and organized resistance.

But such was the darkness and bigotry of the day in respect to religious belief, that the great majority of the people were mentally paralyzed by the accepted faith, so that they were not able in many respects to distinguish light from darkness. When an estimable man or woman was accused of being a witch, for the term was indifferently applied to both sexes, even their own married partners, their own children, had a more or less strong conviction that it might possibly be so. And this made the peculiar horror of it.

In at least fifty cases, the accused confessed that they were witches, and sometimes accused others in turn. This was owing generally to the influence of their relatives, who implored them to confess; for to confess was invariably to be acquitted, or to be let off with simple imprisonment.

But to return to poor Rebecca Nurse, haled without warning from her prosperous, happy home at the Bishop Farm, carried to jail, loaded with chains, and now brought up for the tragic farce of a judicial examination. In this case also, the account given in my friend's little book is amply confirmed by other records. Mistress Ann Putnam, Abigail Williams (the minister's niece), Elizabeth Hubbard and Mary Walcott, were the accusers.

"Abigail Williams, have you been hurt by this woman?" said magistrate Hathorne.

"Yes," replied Abigail. And then Mistress Ann Putnam fell to the floor in a fit; crying out between her violent spasms, that it was Rebecca Nurse who was then afflicting her.

"What do you say to those charges?" The accused replied: "I can say before the eternal Father that I am innocent of any such wicked doings, and God will clear my innocence."

Then a man named Henry Kenney rose, and said that Mistress Nurse frequently tormented him also; and that even since he had been there that day, he had been seized twice with an amazed condition.

"The villain!" muttered Joseph Putnam to those around him, "if I had him left to me for a time, I would have him in an amazed condition!"

"You are an unbeliever, and everybody knows it, Master Putnam," said one near him. "But we who are of the godly, know that Satan goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

"Quiet there!" said one of the magistrates.

Edward Putnam (another of the brothers) then gave in his evidence, saying that he had seen Mistress Ann Putnam, and the other accusers, grievously tormented again and again, and declaring that Rebecca Nurse was the person who did it.

"These are serious charges, Mistress Nurse," said Squire Hathorne, "are they true?"

"I have told you that they are false. Why, I was confined to my sick bed at the time it is said they occurred."

"But did you not send your spectre to torment them?"

"How could I? And I would not if I could."

Here Mistress Putnam was taken with another fit. Worse than the other, which greatly affected the whole people. Coming to a little, she cried out: "Did you not bring the black man with you? Did you not tell me to tempt God and die? Did you not eat and drink the red blood to your own damnation?"

These words were shrieked out so wildly, that all the people were greatly agitated and murmured against such wickedness. But the prisoner releasing her hand for a moment cried out, "Oh, Lord, help me!"

"Hold her hands," some cried then, for the afflicted persons seemed to be grievously tormented by her. But her hands being again firmly held by the guards, they seemed comforted.

Then the worthy magistrate Hathorne said, "Do you not see that when your hands are loosed these people are afflicted?"

"The Lord knows," she answered, "that I have not hurt them."

"You would do well if you are guilty to confess it; and give glory to God."

"I have nothing to confess. I am as innocent as an unborn child."

"Is it not strange that when you are examined, these persons should be afflicted thus?"

"Yes, it is very strange."

"Do you believe these afflicted persons are bewitched?"

"I surely do think they must be."

Wearied of the proceedings and the excitement, the aged lady allowed her head to droop on one side. Instantly the heads of the accusers were bent the same way.

Abigail Williams cried out, "Set up Mistress Nurse's neck, our necks will all be broken." The jailers held up the prisoner's neck; and the necks of all the accused were instantly made straight again. This was considered a marvelous proof; and produced a wonderful effect upon the magistrates and the people. Mistress Ann Putnam went into such great bodily agony at this time, charging it all upon the prisoner, that the magistrates gave her husband permission to carry her out of the house. Only then, when no longer in the sight of the prisoner, could she regain her peace.

"Mistress Nurse was then recommitted to the jail in Salem, in order to further examination."

"What deviltry is coming next?" said Joseph Putnam to his friend.

Many of those around glared on the speaker, but he was well known to all of them as a daring – and when angered even a desperate young man – and they allowed him to say with impunity, freely what no one else could even have whispered. His son in after years, looked not into the wolf's eyes in the dark den with a sterner gaze, than he looked into the superstitious and vengeful wolves' eyes around him.

"To think that a godly old woman like Mistress Nurse, should be tormented by this Devil's brood of witches, led on by that she-devil sister of mine, Ann Putnam."

Many around heard him, but none cared to meet the young man's fierce eyes, as they blazed upon those that were nearest.

"Do control yourself, my friend," whispered Master Raymond. "Preserve yourself for a time when your indignation may do some good."

Then the constable brought in a little girl of about five years of age, Dorcas Good, a daughter of Sarah Good, who had been arrested on the complaint of Edward and Jonathan Putnam.

The evidence against this little girl of five was overwhelming. Mistress Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis, and Mary Walcott were the accusers – charging the innocent and pretty little creature with biting, pinching and choking them – the little girl smiling while they were giving their testimony. She was not old enough to understand what it was all about, and that even her life was in danger from these demoniacs. They absolutely pretended to show the marks of her little teeth in their arms. Then, after going through the usual convulsions, they shrieked out that she was running pins into them; and the pins were found on examination sticking into their bodies.

The little girl was, as I have said, at first inclined to laugh at all the curious proceedings, and the spasms and contortions of the witnesses, but at last, seeing everyone so solemn and looking so wickedly at her, she began to cry; until Joseph Putnam went up to her and gave her some sweet cake to eat, which he had provided for his own luncheon and then, looking into his kind face, she began to smile again.

The Magistrates frowned upon Master Putnam, as he did this, but he paid no attention to their frowns. And when the little girl was ordered back to jail as a prisoner to await her trial, he bent down and kissed her before she was led away by the constable.

This was the end of the proceedings for that day and the crowd began to disperse.

"This is a pretty day's work you have made of it, sister-in-law," said Joseph Putnam, striding up to his brother's wife. "You say that you are tormented by many devils, and I believe it. Now I want to give you, and all the Devil's brood around you, fair warning that if you dare to touch with your foul lies any one belonging to my house including the stranger within my gates, you shall answer it with your lives, in spite of all your judges and prisons."

So saying, he glared at his two brothers, who made no reply, and walked out of the meeting-house in which this ungodly business had been transacted.

"Oh, it is only Joe," said Thomas Putnam; "he always was the spoiled child of the family."

His wife said nothing, but soon a hard, bitter smile took the place of the angry flush that the young man's words had produced. Dulcibel Burton was not one of his household, nor within his gates.

CHAPTER XII.

Burn Me, or Hang Me, I Will Stand in the Truth of Christ

After the trial and conviction of Bridget Bishop, the Special Court of seven Judges – a majority of whom were leading citizens of Boston, the Deputy Governor of the Province, acting as Chief-Justice – decided to take further counsel in this wonderful and important matter of the fathers of the church. So the Court took a recess, while it consulted the ministers of Boston and other places, respecting its duty in the case. The response of the ministers, while urging in general terms the importance of caution and circumspection, recommended the earnest and vigorous carrying on of the war against Satan and his disciples.

Among the new victims, one of the most striking cases was that of George Jacobs and his granddaughter Margaret. The former was a venerable-looking man, very tall, with long, thin white hair, who was compelled by his infirmities to support himself in walking with two staffs. Sarah Churchill, a chief witness, against him, was a servant in his family; and probably was feeding in this way some old grudge.

"You accuse me of being a wizard," said the old man on his examination; "you might as well charge me with being a buzzard."

They asked the accused to repeat the Lord's prayer. And Master Parris, the minister, who acted as a reporter, said "he could not repeat it right after many trials."

"Well," said the brave old man finally, after they had badgered him with all kinds of nonsensical questions, "Well, burn me, or hang me, I will stand in the truth of Christ!"

As his manly bearing was evidently producing an effect, the "afflicted girls" came out in full force the next day at the adjourned session. When he was brought in, they fell at once into the most grievous fits and screechings.

"Who hurts you?" was asked, after they had recovered somewhat.

"This man," said Abigail Williams, going off into another fit.

"This is the man," averred Ann Putnam; "he hurts me, and wants me to write in the red book; and promises if I will do so, to make me as well as his grand-daughter."

"Yes, this is the man," cried Mercy Lewis, "he almost kills me."

"It is the one who used to come to me. I know him by his two staffs, with one of which he used to beat the life out of me," said Mary Walcott.

Mercy Lewis for her part walked towards him; but as soon as she got near, fell into great fits.

Then Ann Putnam and Abigail Williams "had each of them a pin stuck in their hands and they said it was done by this old Jacobs."

The Magistrates took all this wicked acting in sober earnest; and asked the prisoner, "what he had to say to it?"

"Only that it is false," he replied. "I know no more of it than the child that was born last night."

But the honest old man's denial went of course, for nothing. Neither did Sarah Ingersoll's deposition made a short time afterwards; in which she testified that "Sarah Churchill came to her after giving her evidence, crying and wringing her hands, and saying that she has belied herself and others in saying she had set her hand to the Devil's book." She said that "they had threatened her that if she did not say it, they would put her in the dungeon along with Master Burroughs."

And that, "if she told Master Noyes, the minister, but once that she had set her hand to the book, he would believe her; but if she told him the truth a hundred times, he would not believe her."

The truth no doubt is that Master Noyes, Master Parris, Cotton Mather, and all the other ministers, with one or two exceptions, having committed themselves fully to the prosecution of the witches, would listen to nothing that tended to prove that the principal witnesses were deliberate and

malicious liars; and that, so far as the other witnesses were concerned, they were grossly superstitious and deluded persons.

No charity that is fairly clear-sighted, can cover over the evidence of the "afflicted circle" with the mantle of self-delusion. Self-delusion does not conceal pins, stick them into its own body, and charge the accused person with doing it, knowing that the accusation may be the prisoner's death. This was done repeatedly by Mistress Ann Putnam, and her Satanic brood of false accusers.

Sarah Churchill was no worse than the others, judging by her remorse after she had helped to murder with her lying tongue her venerable master and we have in the deposition of Sarah Ingersoll, undoubted proof that she testified falsely.

When Ann Putnam, Mercy Lewis and Mary Walcott all united in charging little Dorcas Good – five years old! – with biting, pinching and almost choking them; "showing the marks of her little teeth on their arms, and the pins sticking in their bodies, where they had averred she was piercing them" – can any sane, clear-minded man or woman suppose it was an innocent delusion, and not a piece of horribly wicked lying?

When in open court some of the "afflicted" came out of their fits with "their wrists bound together, by invisible means," with "a real cord" so that "it could hardly be taken off without cutting," was there not only deception, but undeniable collusion of two or more in deception?

When an iron spindle was used by an alleged "spectre" to torture a "sufferer," the said iron spindle not being discernible by the by-standers until it became visible by being snatched by the sufferer from the spectre's hand, was there any self-delusion there? Was it not merely wicked imposture and cunning knavery?

I defy any person possessing in the least a judicial and accurate mind, to investigate the records of this witchcraft delusion without coming to the conclusion that the "afflicted girls," who led off in this matter, and were the principal witnesses, continually testified to what they knew to be utterly false. There is no possible excuse for them on the ground of "delusion." However much we may recoil from the sad belief that they testified in the large majority of cases to what they knew to be entirely false, the facts of the case compel us with an irresistible force to such an unhappy conclusion. When we are positively certain that a witness, in a case of life or death, has testified falsely against the prisoner again and again, is it possible that we can give him or her the benefit of even a doubt as to the animus of the testimony? The falsehoods I have referred to were cases of palpable, unmistakable and deliberate lying. And the only escape from considering it *wilful* lying, is to make a supposition not much in accord with the temper of the present times, that, having tampered with evil spirits, and invoked the Devil continually during the long evenings of the preceding winter, the prince of powers of the air had at last come at their call, and ordered a legion of his creatures to take possession of the minds and bodies that they had so freely offered to him. For certainly there is no way of explaining the conduct of the "afflicted circle" of girls and women, than by supposing either that they were guilty of the most enormous wickedness, or else that they were "possessed with devils."

CHAPTER XIII.

Dulcibel in Danger

The terrible excitement of these days was enough to drive the more excitable portion of the inhabitants of Salem almost crazy. The work of the house and of the farm was neglected; a large number of suspected persons and their relatives were sunk in the deepest grief, the families of some of the imprisoned knew not where to get their daily food; for their property was generally taken possession of by the officers of the law at the time of the arrest, the accused being considered guilty until they were proved to be innocent. Upon conviction of a capital offence the property of the condemned was attainted, being confiscated by the state; and the constables took possession at once, in order that it might not be spirited away.

And no one outside of the circle of the accusers knew whose turn might come next. Neither sex, nor age, nor high character, as we have seen, was a bar against the malice, or the wantonness of the "afflicted." The man or woman who had lived a righteous life for over eighty years, the little child who wondered what it all meant, the maiden whose only fault might be to have a jealous rival, all were alike in danger.

Especially were those in peril, however, who dared to take the side of any of the accused, and express even the faintest disbelief in the justice of the legal proceedings, or the honesty of the witnesses. These would be surely singled out for punishment. Again and again, had this been done until the voices of all but the very boldest were effectually silenced. Those arrested now, as a general thing, would confess at once to the truthfulness of all the charges brought against them, and even invent still more improbable stories of their own, as this mollified the accusers, and they often would be let off with a solemn reprimand by the magistrates.

Joseph Putnam and his male servants went constantly armed; and two horses were kept saddled day and night, in his stable. He never went to the village unaccompanied; and made no secret of his determination to resist the arrest of himself or, as he had phrased it, "any one within his gates," to the last drop of his blood.

Living with the Goodman Buckley who had leased the Burton property, was a hired man named Antipas Newton. He was a good worker though now getting old, and had in one sense been leased with the place by Dulcibel's father.

Antipas's history had been a sad one. Adopted when left an orphan by a benevolent farmer who had no children, he managed by diligence and strict economy to acquire by the age of thirty, quite a comfortable property of his own. Then the old couple that he called Father and Mother became converts to Quakerism. Fined and imprisoned, deprived of their property, and, after the expiration of their term of imprisonment, ordered to leave the colony, they had been "harbored" by the man for whom they had done so much in his early years.

Antipas was a person of limited intelligence, but of strong affections and wide sympathies. Again and again, he harbored these persecuted ones, who despite their whippings and banishment would persist in returning to Salem. Finally, Antipas himself was heavily fined, and his property sold to pay the fines. His wife had died early, but a young daughter who kept his house in order, and who had failed in her attendance at the church which was engaged in persecuting her father, was also fined heavily. As her father's property was all gone, and she had no money of her own, she could not pay the fine, and was put in prison, to be sent to Barbados, and sold as a slave, that thus the fine might be collected. But the anguish, and the exposure of her prison, were too much for the young girl; and she died before means of transportation could be found.

As a result of these persecutions, Antipas became demented. As his insanity grew evident, the prosecutions ceased; but he was still in danger of starvation, so few would give him employment,

both on account of his impaired mind, and of the odium which attached to any friend of the abhorred Quakers.

Captain Burton, Dulcibel's father, came to the village at this time. He had been one of the sea-captains who had indignantly refused to take the Southwick children, or any other of the Salem children, to Barbados; and he pitied the poor insane man, and gave him employment. Not only did he do this, but, as we have said, made it an article of the lease of his property, that the Buckleys should also keep Antipas as a farm servant.

Antipas, to the general surprise of the villagers had proved to be an excellent servant, notwithstanding his insanity. Only on training days and other periods of excitement, did his insanity obtrude itself. At all other times he seemed to be a cheerful, simple-hearted, and very capable and industrious "hand."

To Dulcibel, as was natural, Antipas always manifested the greatest devotion. Her little black mare was always groomed to perfection, he never being satisfied until he took a white linen handkerchief that he kept for the purpose, and, passing it over the mare's shining coat, saw that no stain or loose black hair remained on it.

"You think that Mistress Dulcibel is an angel, do you not?" said one of the female servants to him about this time, a little scornfully.

"No, I know what she is," he replied. "Shall I tell you – but if I do, you will not believe" – and he looked at the girl a little doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, I will," said the girl.

"Come here then and I will whisper it to you. I heard the minister read about her once, she is the woman that is 'clothed with the sun and has the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars.'"

"That is wicked, Antipas. If Master Parris heard that you said things like that, he would have you whipped and put in the stocks."

"Master Parris? you mean Beelzebub! I know Beelzebub when I see him." And Antipas gave one of his unnatural, insane laughs, which were getting very frequent of late.

For the general excitement was proving too much for Antipas. He stopped frequently in his work, and muttered to himself; and then laughed wildly, or shed tears. He talked about the witches and the Devil and evil spirits, and the strange things that he saw at night, in the insane fashion that characterized the "afflicted children."

As for Dulcibel in these times, she kept pretty much to herself, going out very little. As she could not sympathize with the general gossip of the neighborhood, she remained at home, and consequently had very few visitors. Joseph Putnam called whenever he came to the village, which, as I have stated, was but seldom; and Ellis Raymond came every few days.

Yes, it was a courtship, I suppose; but one of a very grave and serious character. The conversation generally turned upon the exciting events continually occurring, some new arrest, some new confession, some new and outrageously absurd charges.

Master Raymond's hand, if anyone accosted him suddenly, instinctively sought the hilt of his rapier. He was better skilled in the use of that weapon than was usual, and had no fear that he should be unable to escape from the constables, if not taken at a disadvantage. Still, as that would compel him to fly into the woods, and as it would separate him from Dulcibel, he had been very careful not to express in public his abhorrence of all the recent proceedings. I am afraid that he was guilty of considerable dissimulation, even paying his court to some of the "afflicted" maidens when he had the opportunity, with soft words and handsome presents; and trying in this way to enlist a party in his behalf, in case he or any of his friends should need supporters.

Joseph Putnam censured him one day for his double dealing, which was a thing not only out of Master Joseph's line, but one which his frank and outspoken nature rendered it very difficult for him to practise. But Raymond with his references to King David's behavior towards Achish, King of Gath,

and to certain other scripture, especially Paul's being "all things to all men that he might save all," was rather too weighty for Joseph, whose forte was sensible assertion rather than ingenious argument. And so Master Raymond persevered in his course, feeling no more compunction in deceiving the Salemites, as he said to himself, than he would in deceiving and cheating a pack of savage wolves, who were themselves arrayed in sheep's clothing.

Jethro Sands had of late shown a disposition to renew his attentions to Dulcibel; but, after two or three visits, in the last of which he had given the maiden the desired opportunity, she had plainly intimated to him that the old state of affairs between them could never be restored.

"I know the reason too," said Jethro, angrily "it is all owing to that English popinjay, who rides about as if we colonists were not fit to dust his pretty coat for him."

"He is a gentleman, and a friend of mine," replied Dulcibel warmly.

"Why do you not say a lover of yours, at once?"

"You have no right to talk to me in that manner. I will not endure it."

"You will not – how will you help it?" He was now thoroughly angry, and all his native coarseness came to the surface.

"I will show you," said Dulcibel, the Norse blood of her father glowing in her face. "Good evening, Sir!" and she left the room.

Jethro had not expected such a quiet, but effective answer. He sat twirling his thumbs, for awhile, hoping that she would return. But realizing at last that she would not, he took his departure in a towering anger. Of course this was the last of his visits. But Dulcibel had made a deadly enemy.

It was unfortunate, for the maiden already had many who disliked her among the young people of the village. She was a superior person for one thing, and "gave herself airs," as some said. To be superior, without having wealth or an acknowledged high social position, is always to be envied, and often to be hated. Then again, Dulcibel dressed with more richness and variety of costume than was usual in the Puritan villages. This set many of the women, both young and old, against her. Her scarlet bodice, especially, was a favorite theme for animadversion; some even going so far as to call her ironically "the scarlet woman." It is curious how unpopular a perfectly amiable, sweet-tempered and sweet-tongued maiden may often become, especially with her own sex, because of their innate feeling that she is not, in spite of all her courteous endeavors, really one of them. It is an evil day for the swan when she finds herself the only swan among a large flock of geese.

Dulcibel's antecedents also were not as orthodox as they might be. Her mother, it was granted, was "pious," and of a "godly" connection; but her father, as he had himself once said, "had no religion to speak of." He had further replied to the question, asked him when he first came to Salem, as to whether he was "a professor of religion," that he was "only a sea captain, and had no other profession." And a certain freedom of thought characterized Dulcibel, that she could scarcely have derived from her pious mother. In fact, it was something like the freedom of the winds and of the clouds, blowing where they liked; and had been probably caught up by her father in his many voyages over the untrammelled seas.

At first Dulcibel had been rather impressed by the sermons of Master Parris and Master Noyes and the other ministers, to the effect that Satan was making a deadly assault upon the "saints," in revenge for their interference with his hitherto undisputed domination of the new world. But the longer she thought about it, the more she was inclined to adopt Joseph Putnam's theory, that his sister-in-law and niece and the other "afflicted" persons were possessed by devils.

She inclined to this view in preference even to what she knew was Ellis Raymond's real conviction, that they were a set of hysterical and vicious girls and women who had rendered themselves half-insane by tampering for a whole winter with their nervous and spiritual organizations; until they could scarcely now distinguish the true from the untrue, the real from the unreal, good from evil, or light from darkness.

"They have become reprobates and given over to an evil mind," said Master Raymond to her one day; clothing his thought as nearly as he could in scriptural language, in order to commend it to her.

"Yes, this seems to be a reasonable explanation of their wicked conduct," replied Dulcibel. "But I think after all, that it amounts to about the same thing as Joseph Putnam says, only that his is the stronger and more satisfactory statement."

And thinking of it, Master Raymond had to come to the same conclusion. His own view and that of his friends were about the same, only they had expressed themselves in different phrases.

CHAPTER XIV. Bad News

The blow fell at last, and where they might have expected it. As Joseph Putnam said afterwards, "Why did I not bring them out to my house? They would not have dared to take them from under my roof, and they could not have done it if they had dared."

One of his servants had been sent to the village on an errand; he had not performed his errand, but he had hurried back at once with the news. Dulcibel Burton had been arrested the previous evening, about nine o'clock, on the charge of being a witch. Antipas Newton had also been arrested. Both had been taken to prison, and put in irons.

A desperate, determined look came into the faces of the two men as they gathered every word the servant had to tell. Young Mistress Putnam burst into tears. But the men dashed a tear or two from their eyes, and began to collect their thoughts. It was not weeping but stern daring, that would be needed before this thing was through.

The prisoners were to be brought up that afternoon for examination. "I have my two men, who will follow wherever I lead them," said Master Putnam. "That makes four of us. Shall we carry her off from under their very eyes?" And his face glowed – the fighting instinct of his race was very strong within him.

"It might not succeed, those men are neither cowards nor babies," answered his guest. "Besides, it would lead probably to your banishment and the confiscation of your property. No, we must have the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the boldness of the lion."

"The result of the examination may be favorable, so young and good and beautiful as she is," said Mistress Putnam.

"They lap their tongues in the blood of lambs, and say it is sweet as honey," replied her husband, shaking his head. "No, they will show no mercy; but we must try to match them."

"Yes, and with as little hazard and cost to you, my noble friend, as possible," said Master Raymond. "Let me act, and take all the risk. They cannot get hold of my property; and I would just as lief live in New York or Philadelphia or England as among this brood of crazy vipers."

"That is wise counsel, Joseph," said his wife.

"Oh, I suppose it is," he answered emphatically. "But I hate wise counsel."

"Still, my good friend, you must admit that, as Dulcibel betrothed herself to me only two days ago, I am the one to take the greatest risk in this matter."

"Indeed!" said Mistress Putnam. "I knew it would be so; and I told Joseph it would be, only yesterday."

"I give you joy of such a mistress!" cried Master Putnam, grasping his friend's hand. "Yes, I grant now your right of precedence in this danger, and I will follow your lead – yes, to the death!"

"I hold you to that," said Master Raymond. "Remember you are pledged to follow my lead. Now, whatever I do, do not wonder, much less express any wonder. For this is war, and I have a right to meet craft with craft, and guile with guile. Depend upon it, I will save her, or perish with her."

CHAPTER XV. The Arrest of Dulcibel and Antipas

The arrest of Dulcibel had been entirely unexpected to herself and the Buckleys. Dulcibel indeed had wondered, when walking through the village in the morning, that several persons she knew had seemed to avoid meeting her. But she was too full of happiness in her recent betrothal to take umbrage or alarm at such an unimportant circumstance. A few months now, and Salem, she hoped, would see her no more forever. She knew, for Master Raymond had told her, that there were plenty of places in the world where life was reasonably gay and sunny and hopeful; not like this dull valley of the shadow of death in which she was now living. Raymond's plan was to get married; sell her property, which might take a few months, more or less; and then sail for England, to introduce his charming wife to a large circle of relatives.

Dulcibel had been reading a book that Raymond had brought to her – a volume of Shakespeare's plays – a prohibited book among the Puritan fathers, and which would have been made the text for one of Master Parris's most denunciatory sermons if he had known that it was in the village. Having finished "Macbeth" she laid the book down upon the table and began playing with her canary, holding it to her cheek, putting its bill to her lips, and otherwise fondling it. While she was thus engaged, she began to have the uncomfortable feeling which sensitive persons often have when some one is watching them; and turning involuntarily to the window which looked out on a garden at the side of the house, she saw in the dim light that dark faces, with curious eyes, seemed nearly to fill up the lower half of the casement. In great surprise, and with a sudden tremor, she rose quickly from the seat; and, as she did so, the weird faces and glistening eyes disappeared, and two constables, attended by a crowd of the villagers, entered the room. One of these walked at once to her side, and seizing her by the arm said, "I arrest you, Dulcibel Burton, by the authority of Magistrate Hathorne. Come along with me."

"What does all this mean, friend Herrick?" said Goodman Buckley, coming into the room.

"It means," said the constable, "that this young woman is no better than the other witches, who have been joining hand with Satan against the peace and dignity of this province." Then, turning to Dame Buckley, "Get her a shawl and bonnet, goodwife; if you do not wish her to go out unprotected in the night's cold."

"A witch – what nonsense!" said Dame Buckley.

"Nonsense, is it?" said the other constable. "What is this?" taking up the book from the table. "A book of plays! profane and wicked stage plays, in Salem village! You had better hold your peace, goodwife; or you may go to prison yourself for harboring such licentious devices of Satan in your house."

Goodwife Buckley started and grew pale. A book of wicked stage-plays under her roof! She could make no reply, but went off without speaking to pack up a bundle of the accused maiden's clothing.

"See here!" continued the constable, opening the book, "All about witches, as I thought! Hecat and three other witches!

'Round about the cauldron go:
In the poisoned entrails throw.'

It is horrible!"

"Put the accursed book in the fire, Master Taunton," said Herrick.

There was a small fire burning on the hearth, for the evening was a little cool, and the other constable threw the book amidst the live coals; but was surprised to see that it did not flame up rapidly.

"That is witchcraft, if there ever was witchcraft!" said Jethro Sands, who was at the front of the crowd. "See, it will not burn. The Devil looks out for his own."

"Yes, we shall have to stay here all night, if we wait for that book to burn up," said Master Herrick. "Now if it had been a Bible, or a Psalm-book, it would have been consumed by this time."

"My father told me," said one of the crowd, "that they were once six weeks trying to burn up some witch's book in Holland, and then had to tear each leaf separately before they could burn it."

"Where is the yellow bird – her familiar – that she was sending on some witch's errand when we were watching at the window?" said another of the crowd.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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