

"To whom?"

"Yourself, my own true cousin."

"Do I hear rightly? Speak the answer well! Once more, dear Hester, will you be my wife?"

Slowly but clearly came the solemn words, "I will."

"Thank heaven, I am content."

Still on they went, those lovers of the long ago; she with her proud head half turned aside, he stately as a king. The sun was setting when they turned their horses' steps; and in the Boston home a white-haired man was saying, "How long the children are in getting back! I have a letter here from my dear boy, and in it a kind message for Hester. Jack says he'd rather settle in America than be an elder son in England. He's proud, the rascal—thank God he is not poor."

"Here they come to us at last," said Captain Hepworth, who was looking from the window. "How well my dear girl holds herself on horseback."

"Thank me for that, sir. I trained the chit myself, and I must admit she was a ready scholar, being her father's daughter. Ah, there she is, and not a finer face was ever seen in your old Yankee town. My Jack will lose his heart when he sees her."

They came in together hand in hand, and Hester's conscious blush grew deeper as Samuel said, "Your daughter promises to be my wife if you will but consent, sir."

"Consent? You have been my son for years. Dear ones, God bless you. My precious girl, I only add by law the son I've loved so long. Wish them much joy, good brother Winthrop."