

# The Courtship of Miles Standish

With Illustrations by Howard Chandler Christy

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Homeward together they walked, with a strange, indefinite feeling, That all the rest had departed and left them alone in the desert. But, as they went through the fields in the blessing and smile of the sunshine, Lighter grew their hearts, and Priscilla said very archly: "Now that our terrible Captain has gone in pursuit of the Indians, Where he is happier far than he would be commanding a household, You may speak boldly, and tell me of all that happened between you, When you returned last night, and said how ungrateful you found me."



Homeward Together They Walked.

Thereupon answered John Alden, and told her the whole of the story,— Told her his own despair, and the direful wrath of Miles Standish. Whereat the maiden smiled, and said between laughing and earnest, "He is a little chimney, and heated hot in a moment!" But as he gently rebuked her, and told her how much he had suffered,— How he had even determined to sail that day in the Mayflower, And had remained for her sake, on hearing the dangers that threatened,— All her manner was changed, and she said with a faltering accent, "Truly I thank you for this: how good you have been to me always!"

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

## The March of Miles Standish

Meanwhile the stalwart Miles Standish was marching steadily northward, Winding through forest and swamp, and along the trend of the sea-shore, All day long, with hardly a halt, the fire of his anger Burning and crackling within, and the sulphurous odor of powder Seeming more sweet to his nostrils than all the scents of the forest. Silent and moody he went, and much he revolved his discomfort; He who was used to success, and to easy victories always, Thus to be flouted, rejected, and laughed to scorn by a maiden, Thus to be mocked and betrayed by the friend whom most he had trusted! Ah! 'twas too much to be borne, and he fretted and chafed in his armor! "I alone am to blame," he muttered, "for mine was the folly. What has a rough old soldier, grown grim and gray in the harness, Used to the camp and its ways, to do with the wooing of maidens? 'Twas but a dream,—let it pass,—let it vanish like so many others! What I thought was a flower, is only a weed, and is worthless; Out of my heart will I pluck it, and throw it away, and henceforward Be but a fighter of battles, a lover and wooer of dangers!" Thus he revolved in his mind his sorry defeat and discomfort. While he was marching by day or lying at night in the forest, Looking up at the trees, and the constellations beyond them.

After a three days' march he came to an Indian encampment Pitched on the edge of a meadow, between the sea and the forest; Women at work by the tents, and the warriors, horrid with war-paint, Seated about a fire, and smoking and talking together; Who, when they saw from afar the sudden approach of the white men. Saw the flash of the sun on breast-plate and saber and musket. Straightway leaped to their feet, and two, from among them advancing, Came to parley with Standish, and offer him furs as a present. Friendship was in their looks, but in their hearts there was hatred. Brave as the title were these, and brothers gigantic in stature, Huge as Goliath of Gath, or the terrible Og, King of Bashan; One was Pecksnot named, and the other was called Wattawamat. Round their necks were suspended their knives in scabbards of wampum.



Forth He Sprang at a Bound.

Two-edged, trenchant knives, with points as sharp as a needle. Other arms had they none, for they were cunning and crafty. "Welcome, English!" they said,— these words they had learned from the traders. Touching at times on the coast, to barter and chaffer for peltries. Then in their native tongue they began to parley with Standish. Through his guide and interpreter, Hobomok, friend of the white man, Begging for blankets and knives, but mostly for muskets and powder. Kept by the white man, they said, concealed, with the plague, in his cellars. Ready to be let loose, and destroy his brother, the red man! But when Standish refused, and said he would give them the Bible. Suddenly changing their tone, they began to boast and to bluster. Then Wattawamat advanced with a stride in front of the other, And, with a lofty demeanor, thus vauntingly spake to the Captain: "Now Wattawamat can see, by the fiery eyes of the Captain, Angry he is in his heart; but the heart of the brave Wattawamat Is not afraid at the sight. He was not born of a woman, But on a mountain, at night, from an oak-tree riven by lightning. Forth he sprang at a bound, with all his weapons about him, Shouting, "Who is there here to fight with the brave Wattawamat?" Then he unsheathed his knife, and, whetting the blade on his left hand, Held it aloft and displayed a woman's face on the handle, Saying, with bitter expression and look of sinister meaning: "I have another at home, with the face of a man on the handle; and by and by they shall marry; and there will be plenty of children!" Then stood Pecksnot forth, self-vaunting, insulting Miles Standish; While with his fingers he patted the knife that hung at his bosom, Drawing it half from its sheath, and plunging it back, as he muttered: "By and by it shall see; it shall eat; ah, ah! but shall speak not! This is the mighty Captain the white men have sent to destroy us!"

Meanwhile Standish had noted the shape and figure of Indians Peeping and creeping about from bush to tree in the forest, Panning to look for game, with arrows set on their bow-strings, Drawing about him still closer and closer the net of their ambush. But undaunted he stood, and dissembled and treated them smoothly: So the old chroniclers say, that were writ in the days of the fathers. But when he heard their defiance, the boast, the taunt, and the insult, All the hot blood of his race, of Sir Hugh and of Thurston de Standish, Boiled and beat in his heart, and swelled in the veins of his temples. Headlong he leaped on the boaster, and snatching his knife from its scabbard, Plunged it into his heart, and reeling backward, the savage Fell with his face to the sky, and a fiendlike fierceness upon it. Straight there arose from the forest the awful sound of the war-whoop. And, like a flurry or snow on the whistling wind of December, Swift and sudden and keen came a flight of feathered arrows. Then came a cloud of smoke, and out of the cloud came the lightning. Out of the lightning, thunder, and death unseen ran before it. Frightened the savages fled for shelter in swamp and in thicket, Hotly pursued and beset; but their sachem, the brave Wattawamat, Fled not; he was dead. Unswerving and swift had a bullet Passed through his brain, and he fell with both hands clatching the grassward. Dying in death to hold back from his foe the head of his father. (To be Continued.)

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