

ELIZABETH John . . . it come to naught that I should forgive you. Will you forgive yourself? It is your soul, John. (*He bows his head.*) Only be sure of this, for I know it now: Whatever you will do, it is a good man does it. I have read my heart this three month, John. I have sins of my own to count. It needs a cold wife to prompt lechery . . .

PROCTOR (*In great pain.*) Enough, enough . . .

ELIZABETH Better you should know me!

PROCTOR (*Turning away.*) I will not hear it! – I know you!

ELIZABETH (*Trying to turn him back, taking his hands.*) You take my sins upon you, John!

PROCTOR (*In agony.*) No, I take my own, my own!

ELIZABETH (*She gropes for the words to express her feeling.*) I counted myself so plain, so poorly-made, no honest love could come to me! Suspicion kissed you when I did; I never knew how I should say my love. It were a cold house I kept . . . ! (*HATHORNE enters.*)

HATHORNE What say you, Proctor? The sun is soon up. (*PROCTOR lifts his head.*)

ELIZABETH (*Warmly.*) Do what you will. But let none be your judge, there be no higher judge under heaven than Proctor is! Forgive me, forgive me, John – I never knew such goodness in the world!

PROCTOR I want my life.

HATHORNE You'll confess yourself?!

PROCTOR I will have my life.

HATHORNE God be praised! – It is a providence! (*HATHORNE rushes out door, his voice is heard calling offstage.*) He will confess! Proctor will confess!

PROCTOR (*With a cry. Rising.*) Why do you cry it! It is evil, is it not? It is evil.

ELIZABETH (*Weeping.*) I cannot judge you, John, I cannot!

PROCTOR Then who will judge me? (*Suddenly clasping his hands.*) God in Heaven, what is John Proctor, what is John Proctor! (*A fury is riding in him, a tantalized search.*) I think it is honest, I think so: I am no saint. Let Rebecca go like a saint, for me it is fraud!

ELIZABETH I am not your judge, I cannot be . . .

PROCTOR Would you give them such a lie? Say it. Would you ever give them this? (*She can't answer.*) You would not; if tongs of fire were singeing you you would not! – it is evil. (*Slight pause. Sitting.*) Good then, it is evil, and I do it! (*HATHORNE enters with DANFORTH, and with them CHEEVER, PARRIS and HALE. It is a business-like, rapid entrance, as though the ice had been broken.*)

DANFORTH Praise to God, man, praise to God; you shall be blessed in Heaven for this. (*CHEEVER hurries to U. S. end of bench, puts writing box on stool, prepares to write. PROCTOR watches him.*) Now then . . . let us have it. Are you ready, Mister Cheever?

PROCTOR Why must it be written?

DANFORTH Why, for the good instruction of the village, Mister; this we shall post upon the church door! (*To PARRIS, urgently.*) Where is the Marshal?