

## “In Defence of a Witch”

(1982)

Nearly three hundred years ago, in the small English village of Eyelesbarrow, a woman was accused of making use of the power of witchcraft to harm deliberately the inhabitants of the village. Many people living in the countryside had at that time strong superstitious fears and also a belief in witchcraft. However, a few others would not blindly believe in evil powers without trying to analyze carefully what they observed. The doctor of Eyelesbarrow decided to speak up in defense of Emma Holloway, accused of witchcraft; if he succeeded, she would not be burned alive.

“Goodday to you all. For some time now, a matter of grave concern has preoccupied the minds of the inhabitants of our village, and general opinion has led to the conviction of Emma Holloway for the use of witchcraft to malevolent ends. The grounds of the accusations levelled against her were, if I am not mistaken, her generally hostile and odd behavior, the frequent use of cursing apparently frequently followed by incidents, and an air of deep satisfaction whenever ill befell the house of a villager.

“Let us examine the facts. In the absence of solid proof to support the assumption that the person you believe to be a witch is indeed responsible for all the recent incidents in Eyelesbarrow, we

cannot proceed with our accusations or, indeed, with her execution. Just as threats and occurrences are two different things, so demeanor may vastly differ from action.

“Action can take place because the real person hiding inside cannot be expressed. Conversely, demeanor and attitude can lessen the need for action. It is possible and logical for a person’s strongly suggestive behavior to suggest she is letting out her feelings in words or manner rather than action.

“Every human being possesses a mind and a soul of great potential power. We can all increase the actual power of our minds and souls if we choose to do so, and use our inner resources to good, or evil, ends. This depends on the person’s personality, and also on the person’s needs.

“Human beings have strong needs, and two that stand out are the need for understanding and the need for affection. When these two needs are continually thwarted, a human being may, without strong inner balance, turn sour and vicious. People have depths of capacity and reactions that I feel we are only beginning to fathom.

“All of you have a home, or friends, to support you. You can, at least, vent your frustrations to others through normal daily contact. Even so, some of us are grim, mean, and unforgiving. Just imagine having no opportunity at all to vent your inner struggles and unhappiness, thus not being able, either, to show your better

side. Constant reprobation, disapproval, and hostility are to a rebellious mind seeds for anger.

“Many human beings also have a mean side to their nature and are capable of rejoicing over other people’s flaws and mishaps. However, we also have a conscience that prompts us to regret our meanness and we have the means to express our repentance. Imagine never having the opportunity to show or express regret and feeling, instead, that people have categorized us permanently. Wouldn’t you feel guilty and bad, and resentful of others’ lack of charity, all at once? These powerful emotions open a heart to hate.

“I believe I have faithfully depicted to you Emma Holloway’s situation. Due to a feud between persons long deceased, ill feelings have subsisted between her and influential members in our community. Her own attitude has been hostile and made matters worse but, I ask you, have we ever given her a chance to repent and make amends?

“The entire village has pit itself against her, and she has found herself alone, without friends, utterly ostracized. Isn’t her attitude, in fact, comprehensible in such a situation?

“Try to open your minds and see if all this trouble is anything else than an exchange of human resentment, anger, and fear.”