

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



OUR OLD
HOME

EXTENDED ANNOTATED EDITION

Our Old Home

A Series of English Sketches

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

Nathaniel Hawthorne - A Biographical Primer

By Edward Everett Hale

American novelist: b. Salem, Mass., 4 July 1804; d. Plymouth, N. H., 19 May 1864. The founder of the family in America was William Hathorne (as the name was then spelled), a typical Puritan and a public man of importance. John, his son, was a judge, one of those presiding over the witchcraft trials. Of Joseph in the next generation little is said, but Daniel, next in decent, followed the sea and commanded a privateer in the Revolution, while his son Nathaniel, father of the romancer, was also a sea Captain. This pure New England descent gave a personal character to Hawthorne's presentations of New England life; when he writes of the strictness of the early Puritans, of the forests haunted by Indians, of the magnificence of the provincial days, of men high in the opinion of their towns-people, of the reaching out to far lands and exotic splendors, he is expressing the stored-up experience of his race. His father died when Nathaniel was but four and the little family lived

a secluded life with his mother. He was a handsome boy and quite devoted to reading, by an early accident which for a time prevented outdoor games. His first school was with Dr. Worcester, the lexicographer. In 1818 his mother moved to Raymond, Me., where her brother had bought land, and Hawthorne went to Bowdoin College. He entered college at the age of 17 in the same class with Longfellow. In the class above him was Franklin Pierce, afterward 12th President of the United States. On being graduated in 1825 Hawthorne determined upon literature as a profession, but his first efforts were without success. 'Fanshawe' was published anonymously in 1828, and shorter tales and sketches were without importance. Little need be said of these earlier years save to note that they were full of reading and observation. In 1836 he edited in Boston the *American Magazine for Useful and Entertaining Knowledge*, but gained little from it save an introduction to 'The Token,' in which his tales first came to be known. Returning to Salem he lived a very secluded life, seeing almost no one (rather a family trait), and devoted to his thoughts and imaginations. He was a strong and powerful man, of excellent health and, though silent, cheerful, and a delightful companion when he chose. But intellectually he was of a separated and individual type, having his own extravagances and powers and submitting to no companionship in influence. In 1837 appeared 'Twice Told Tales' in book form: in a preface written afterward Hawthorne says that he was at this time "the obscurest man of letters in America." Gradually he began to be more widely received. In 1839 he became engaged to Miss Sophia Peabody, but was not married for some years. In 1838 he was appointed to a place in the Boston custom house, but found that he could not easily save time enough for literature and was not very sorry when the change of administration put him out of office. In 1841 was founded the socialistic community at Brook Farm: it seemed to

Hawthorne that here was a chance for a union of intellectual and physical work, whereby he might make a suitable home for his future wife. It failed to fulfil his expectations and Hawthorne withdrew from the experiment. In 1842 he was married and moved with his wife to the Old Manse at Concord just above the historic bridge. Here chiefly he wrote the 'Mosses of an Old Manse' (1846). In 1845 he published a second series of 'Twice Told Tales'; in this year also the family moved to Salem, where he had received the appointment of surveyor at the custom house. As before, official work was a hindrance to literature; not till 1849 when he lost his position could he work seriously. He used his new-found leisure in carrying out a theme that had been long in his mind and produced 'The Scarlet Letter' in 1850. This, the first of his longer novels, was received with enthusiasm and at once gave him a distinct place in literature. He now moved to Lenox, Mass., where he began on 'The House of Seven Gables,' which was published in 1851. He also wrote 'A Wonder-Book' here, which in its way has become as famous as his more important work. In December 1851 he moved to West Newton, and shortly to Concord again, this time to the Wayside. At Newton he wrote 'The Blithedale Romance.' Having settled himself at Concord in the summer of 1852, his first literary work was to write the life of his college friend, Franklin Pierce, just nominated for the Presidency. This done he turned to 'Tanglewood Tales,' a volume not unlike the 'Wonder-Book.' In 1853 he was named consul to Liverpool: at first he declined the position, but finally resolved to take this opportunity to see something of Europe. He spent four years in England, and then a year in Italy. As before, he could write nothing while an official, and resigned in 1857 to go to Rome, where he passed the winter, and to Florence, where he received suggestions and ideas which gave him stimulus for literary work. The summer of 1858 he passed at Redcar, in Yorkshire, where

he wrote 'The Marble Faun.' In June 1860 he sailed for America, where he returned to the Wayside. For a time he did little literary work; in 1863 he published 'Our Old Home,' a series of sketches of English life, and planned a new novel, 'The Dolliver Romance,' also called 'Pansie.' But though he suffered from no disease his vitality seemed relaxed; some unfortunate accidents had a depressing effect, and in the midst of a carriage trip into the White Mountains with his old friend, Franklin Pierce, he died suddenly at Plymouth, N. H., early in the morning, 19 May 1864.

The works of Hawthorne consist of novels, short stories, tales for children, sketches of life and travel and some miscellaneous pieces of a biographical or descriptive character. Besides these there were published after his death extracts from his notebooks. Of his novels 'The Scarlet Letter' is a story of old New England; it has a powerful moral idea at bottom, but it is equally strong in its presentation of life and character in the early days of Massachusetts. 'House of the Seven Gables' presents New England life of a later date; there is more of careful analysis and presentation of character and more description of life and manners, but less moral intensity. 'The Blithedale Romance' is less strong; Hawthorne seems hardly to grasp his subject. It makes the third in what may be called a series of romances presenting the molding currents of New England life: the first showing the factors of religion and sin, the second the forces of hereditary good and evil, and the third giving a picture of intellectual and emotional ferment in a society which had come from very different beginnings. 'Septimius Felton,' finished in the main but not published by Hawthorne, is a fantastic story dealing with the idea of immortality. It was put aside by Hawthorne when he began to write 'The Dolliver Romance,' of which he completed only the first chapters. 'Dr.

Grimshaw's Secret' (published in 1882) is also not entirely finished. These three books represent a purpose that Hawthorne never carried out. He had presented New England life, with which the life of himself and his ancestry was so indissolubly connected, in three characteristic phases. He had traced New England history to its source. He now looked back across the ocean to the England he had learned to know, and thought of a tale that should bridge the gulf between the Old World and the New. But the stories are all incomplete and should be read only by the student. The same thing may be said of 'Fanshawe,' which was published anonymously early in Hawthorne's life and later withdrawn from circulation. 'The Marble Faun' presents to us a conception of the Old World at its oldest point. It is Hawthorne's most elaborate work, and if every one were familiar with the scenes so discursively described, would probably be more generally considered his best. Like the other novels its motive is based on the problem of evil, but we have not precisely atonement nor retribution, as in his first two novels. The story is one of development, a transformation of the soul through the overcoming of evil. The four novels constitute the foundation of Hawthorne's literary fame and character, but the collections of short stories do much to develop and complete the structure. They are of various kinds, as follows: (1) Sketches of current life or of history, as 'Rills from the Town Pump,' 'The Village Uncle,' 'Main Street,' 'Old News.' These are chiefly descriptive and have little story; there are about 20 of them. (2) Stories of old New England, as 'The Gray Champion,' 'The Gentle Boy,' 'Tales of the Province House.' These stories are often illustrative of some idea and so might find place in the next set. (3) Stories based upon some idea, as 'Ethan Brand,' which presents the idea of the unpardonable sin; 'The Minister's Black Veil,' the idea of the separation of each soul from its fellows; 'Young Goodman Brown,' the power of doubt in

good and evil. These are the most characteristic of Hawthorne's short stories; there are about a dozen of them. (4) Somewhat different are the allegories, as 'The Great Stone Face,' 'Rappacini's Daughter,' 'The Great Carbuncle.' Here the figures are not examples or types, but symbols, although in no story is the allegory consistent. (5) There are also purely fantastic developments of some idea, as 'The New Adam and Eve,' 'The Christmas Banquet,' 'The Celestial Railroad.' These differ from the others in that there is an almost logical development of some fancy, as in case of the first the idea of a perfectly natural pair being suddenly introduced to all the conventionalities of our civilization. There are perhaps 20 of these fantasies. Hawthorne's stories from classical mythology, the 'Wonder-Book' and 'Tanglewood Tales,' belong to a special class of books, those in which men of genius have retold stories of the past in forms suited to the present. The stories themselves are set in a piece of narrative and description which gives the atmosphere of the time of the writer, and the old legends are turned from stately myths not merely to children's stories, but to romantic fancies. Mr. Pringle in 'Tanglewood Fireside' comments on the idea: "Eustace," he says to the young college student who had been telling the stories to the children, "pray let me advise you never more to meddle with a classical myth. Your imagination is altogether Gothic and will inevitably Gothicize everything that you touch. The effect is like bedaubing a marble statue with paint. This giant, now! How can you have ventured to thrust his huge disproportioned mass among the seemly outlines of Grecian fable?" "I described the giant as he appeared to me," replied the student, "And, sir, if you would only bring your mind into such a relation to these fables as is necessary in order to remodel them, you would see at once that an old Greek has no more exclusive right to them than a modern Yankee has. They are the common property of the world and of all time" ("Wonder-Book," p. 135).

'Grandfather's Chair' was also written primarily for children and gives narratives of New England history, joined together by a running comment and narrative from Grandfather, whose old chair had come to New England, not in the *Mayflower*, but with John Winthrop and the first settlers of Boston. 'Biographical Stories,' in a somewhat similar framework, tells of the lives of Franklin, Benjamin West and others. It should be noted of these books that Hawthorne's writings for children were always written with as much care and thought as his more serious work. 'Our Old Home' was the outcome of that less remembered side of Hawthorne's genius which was a master of the details of circumstance and surroundings. The notebooks give us this also, but the American notebook has also rather a peculiar interest in giving us many of Hawthorne's first ideas which were afterward worked out into stories and sketches.

One element in Hawthorne's intellectual make-up was his interest in the observation of life and his power of description of scenes, manners and character. This is to be seen especially, as has been said, in his notebooks and in 'Our Old Home,' and in slightly modified form in the sketches noted above. These studies make up a considerable part of 'Twice Told Tales' and 'Mosses from an Old Manse,' and represent a side of Hawthorne's genius not always borne in mind. Had this interest been predominant in him we might have had in Hawthorne as great a novelist of our everyday life as James or Howells. In the 'House of Seven Gables' the power comes into full play; 100 pages hardly complete the descriptions of the simple occupations of a single uneventful day. In Hawthorne, however, this interest in the life around him was mingled with a great interest in history, as we may see, not only in the stories of old New England noted above, but in the descriptive passages of 'The Scarlet Letter.' Still we have not, even here, the special quality for which we know

Hawthorne. Many great realists have written historical novels, for the same curiosity that absorbs one in the affairs of everyday may readily absorb one in the recreation of the past. In Hawthorne, however, was another element very different. His imagination often furnished him with conceptions having little connection with the actual circumstances of life. The fanciful developments of an idea noted above (5) have almost no relation to fact: they are "made up out of his own head." They are fantastic enough, but generally they are developments of some moral idea and a still more ideal development of such conceptions was not uncommon in Hawthorne. 'Rappacini's Daughter' is an allegory in which the idea is given a wholly imaginary setting, not resembling anything that Hawthorne had ever known from observation. These two elements sometimes appear in Hawthorne's work separate and distinct just as they did in his life: sometimes he secluded himself in his room, going out only after nightfall; sometimes he wandered through the country observing life and meeting with everybody. But neither of these elements alone produced anything great, probably because for anything great we need the whole man. The true Hawthorne was a combination of these two elements, with various others of personal character, and artistic ability that cannot be specified here. The most obvious combination between these two elements, so far as literature is concerned, between the fact of external life and the idea of inward imagination, is by a symbol. The symbolist sees in everyday facts a presentation of ideas. Hawthorne wrote a number of tales that are practically allegories: 'The Great Stone Face' uses facts with which Hawthorne was familiar, persons and scenes that he knew, for the presentation of a conception of the ideal. His novels, too, are full of symbolism. 'The Scarlet Letter' itself is a symbol and the rich clothing of Little Pearl, Alice's posies among the Seven Gables, the old musty house itself, are symbols, Zenobia's flower, Hilda's

doves. But this is not the highest synthesis of power, as Hawthorne sometimes felt himself, as when he said of 'The Great Stone Face,' that the moral was too plain and manifest for a work of art. However much we may delight in symbolism it must be admitted that a symbol that represents an idea only by a fanciful connection will not bear the seriousness of analysis of which a moral idea must be capable. A scarlet letter A has no real connection with adultery, which begins with A and is a scarlet sin only to such as know certain languages and certain metaphors. So Hawthorne aimed at a higher combination of the powers of which he was quite aware, and found it in figures and situations in which great ideas are implicit. In his finest work we have, not the circumstance before the conception or the conception before the circumstance, as in allegory. We have the idea in the fact, as it is in life, the two inseparable. Hester Prynne's life does not merely present to us the idea that the breaking of a social law makes one a stranger to society with its advantages and disadvantages. Hester is the result of her breaking that law. The story of Donatello is not merely a way of conveying the idea that the soul which conquers evil thereby grows strong in being and life. Donatello himself is such a soul growing and developing. We cannot get the idea without the fact, nor the fact without the idea. This is the especial power of Hawthorne, the power of presenting truth implicit in life. Add to this his profound preoccupation with the problem of evil in this world, with its appearance, its disappearance, its metamorphoses, and we have a due to Hawthorne's greatest works. In 'The Scarlet Letter,' 'The House of Seven Gables,' 'The Marble Faun,' 'Ethan Brand,' 'The Gray Champion,' the ideas cannot be separated from the personalities which express them. It is this which constitutes Hawthorne's lasting power in literature. His observation is interesting to those that care for the things that he describes, his fancy amuses, or charms or often

stimulates our ideas. His short stories are interesting to a student of literature because they did much to give a definite character to a literary form which has since become of great importance. His novels are exquisite specimens of what he himself called the romance, in which the figures and scenes are laid in a world a little more poetic than that which makes up our daily surrounding. But Hawthorne's really great power lay in his ability to depict life so that we are made keenly aware of the dominating influence of moral motive and moral law

Our Old Home

Introductory Note.

THE years which Hawthorne passed in England were outwardly the most successful, in worldly prosperity the most abundant, and in other respects among the happiest of his life; forming in the autumn of his career a sort of counterpoise to the idyllic period spent at the Old Manse. Of these years,--from the spring of 1853 to June of 1860, excepting a part of 1858 and 1859, which interval was chiefly spent in Italy,--"Our Old Home" was the literary outcome. Much of the material composing the sketches in this volume occurs in embryonic form in the "English Note-Books," which were then still veiled from publicity; but various elements and touches of fancy were supplied by the author's mood or memory at the instant of writing. His impressions of England, outlined in the "Note-Books" and scattered at random through many pages, here assume a connected and artistic shape.

The articles embraced in "Our Old Home" were begun at The Wayside, Concord, in 1862, and were first published in the "Atlantic Monthly," which was then edited by Mr. James T. Fields. Mr. Fields has placed on record, in his "Yesterdays with Authors," the fullest memoranda now to be had relative to the production of these sketches. Hawthorne, in speaking of them, said to him: "We must remember that there is a good deal of intellectual ice mingled with this wine of memory." Indeed, he took a discouraged tone regarding the work, and wrote, on forwarding one of the manuscripts: "I hope you will like it, for the subject seemed interesting to me when I was on the spot, but I always feel a singular despondency and heaviness of heart in reopening these old journals now." At another time: "Heaven sees fit to visit me with an unshakable conviction that all this series of articles is good for nothing; but that is none of my business, provided the public and you are of a different opinion." It is probable that this down-hearted mood was a part of the general depression which weighed heavily upon Hawthorne from the beginning of the civil war until his death, and was caused by the unhappy state of the country. He looked back, also, to his English sojourn as a pleasant experience never likely to be repeated, and often longed to return to the mother-country, which had entertained him so hospitably and where he had made warm friends.

Some of these friends were startled, and perhaps a little hurt, by the frankness of the characterizations and criticisms which the book bestowed on the English. Hawthorne, however, remarks in a letter to Mr. Fields: "I really think Americans have more cause than they to complain of me. Looking over the volume, I am rather surprised to find that whenever I draw a comparison between the two peoples, I almost invariably east the balance against ourselves." And it was from Americans, in

fact, that Hawthorne received the severest censure on the publication of "Our Old Home," though for quite another cause than his remarks on their national character. He had dedicated the book to his old college-friend, Ex-President Franklin Pierce, against whom popular opinion at the North was then very bitter, on account of the attitude of compromise taken by him towards the South while he was Chief Magistrate of the Union, and his opposition to the war and to emancipation. When remonstrated with on his purpose of linking the volume with Pierce's name, Hawthorne replied to Mr. Fields: "I find that it would be a piece of poltroonery in me to withdraw either the dedication or the dedicatory letter. My long and intimate relations with Pierce render the dedication altogether proper, especially as regards this book, which would have had no existence without his kindness; and if he is so exceedingly unpopular that his name is enough to sink the volume, there is so much the more need that an old friend should stand by him. I cannot, merely on account of pecuniary profit or literary reputation, go back from what I have deliberately thought and felt it right to do; and if I were to tear out the dedication, I should never look at the volume again without remorse and shame." The collection was accordingly published, in the autumn of 1863, with the dedicatory note as it now stands. As a literary performance "Our Old Home" was received cordially, but the political and personal indignation roused by the dedication was deep. "My friends have dropped off from me like autumn leaves," Hawthorne wrote to his old comrade, Bridge, who, although in the ranks of the political party opposed to Hawthorne's views, remained loyal to him.

Of the story told about an erring doctor of divinity, in the "Consular Experiences," the author wrote to Mr. Fields: "It is every bit true (like the other anecdotes), only not told so darkly as it might have been for the reverend gentleman."

Among some correspondence the editor, a few years since, came upon a letter addressed to Hawthorne respecting this very point. The writer, who was a stranger, explained that he had had a controversy with some friends, who insisted that the circumstances narrated must have been invented by the author for effect. On the envelope Hawthorne made a memorandum to the effect that the letter had been answered by an assurance that the incident was an actual one. That this answer was received and the question settled the editor recently learned from the correspondent himself, who, curiously enough, had removed from Illinois, where his letter was written, and was occupying a house next to the Wayside, where the "Consular Experiences" was penned.

G. P. L.

To A Friend.

I HAVE not asked your consent, my dear General, to the foregoing inscription, because it would have been no inconsiderable disappointment to me had you withheld it; for I have long desired to connect your name with some book of mine, in commemoration of an early friendship that has grown old between two individuals of widely dissimilar pursuits and fortunes. I only wish that the offering were a worthier one than this volume of sketches, which certainly are not of a kind likely to prove interesting to a statesman in retirement, inasmuch as they meddle with no matters of policy or government, and have very little to say about the deeper traits of national character. In their humble way, they belong entirely to æsthetic literature, and can achieve no higher success than to represent to the American reader

a few of the external aspects of English scenery and life, especially those that are touched with the antique charm to which our countrymen are more susceptible than are the people among whom it is of native growth.

I once hoped, indeed, that so slight a volume would not be all that I might write. These and other sketches, with which in a somewhat rougher form than I have given them here, my journal was copiously filled, were intended for the side-scenes and backgrounds and exterior adornment of a work of fiction of which the plan had imperfectly developed itself in my mind, and into which I ambitiously proposed to convey more of various modes of truth than I could have grasped by a direct effort. Of course, I should not mention this abortive project, only that it has been utterly thrown aside and will never now be accomplished. The Present, the Immediate, the Actual, has proved too potent for me. It takes away not only my scanty faculty, but even my desire for imaginative composition, and leaves me sadly content to scatter a thousand peaceful fantasies upon the hurricane that is sweeping us all along with it, possibly, into a Limbo where our nation and its polity may be as literally the fragments of a shattered dream as my unwritten Romance. But I have far better hopes for our dear country; and for my individual share of the catastrophe, I afflict myself little, or not at all, and shall easily find room for the abortive work on a certain ideal shelf, where are repositied many other shadowy volumes of mine, more in number, and very much superior in quality, to those which I have succeeded in rendering actual.

To return to these poor Sketches: some of my friends have told me that they evince an asperity of sentiment towards the English people which I ought not to feel, and which it is highly inexpedient to express. The charge surprises me, because, if it be true, I have written from a shallower mood

than I supposed. I seldom came into personal relations with an Englishman without beginning to like him, and feeling my favorable impression wax stronger with the progress of the acquaintance. I never stood in an English crowd without being conscious of hereditary sympathies. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that an American is continually thrown upon his national antagonism by some acrid quality in the moral atmosphere of England. These people think so loftily of themselves, and so contemptuously of everybody else, that it requires more generosity than I possess to keep always in perfectly good-humor with them. Jotting down the little acrimonies of the moment in my journal, and transferring them thence (when they happened to be tolerably well expressed) to these pages, it is very possible that I may have said things which a profound observer of national character would hesitate to sanction, though never any, I verily believe, that had not more or less of truth. If they be true, there is no reason in the world why they should not be said. Not an Englishman of them all ever spared America for courtesy's sake or kindness; nor, in my opinion, would it contribute in the least to our mutual advantage and comfort if we were to besmear one another all over with butter and honey. At any rate, we must not judge of an Englishman's susceptibilities by our own, which likewise, I trust, are of a far less sensitive texture than formerly.

And now farewell, my dear friend; and excuse (if you think it needs any excuse) the freedom with which I thus publicly assert a personal friendship between a private individual and a statesman who has filled what was then the most august position in the world. But I dedicate my book to the Friend, and shall defer a colloquy with the Statesman till some calmer and sunnier hour. Only this let me say, that, with the record of your life in my memory, and with a sense of your character in my deeper consciousness as among the

few things that time has left as it found them, I need no assurance that you continue faithful forever to that grand idea of an irrevocable Union, which, as you once told me, was the earliest that your brave father taught you. For other men there may be a choice of paths,--for you, but one; and it rests among my certainties that no man's loyalty is more steadfast, no man's hopes or apprehensions on behalf of our national existence more deeply heartfelt, or more closely intertwined with his possibilities of personal happiness, than those of FRANKLIN PIERCE.

THE WAYSIDE, *July 2*, 1863.

Consular Experiences.

THE Consulate of the United States, in my day, was located in Washington Buildings (a shabby and smoke-stained edifice of four stories high, thus illustriously named in honor of our national establishment), at the lower corner of Brunswick Street, contiguous to the Goree Arcade, and in the neighborhood of some of the oldest docks. This was by no means a polite or elegant portion of England's great commercial city, nor were the apartments of the American official so splendid as to indicate the assumption of much consular pomp on his part. A narrow and ill-lighted staircase gave access to an equally narrow and ill-lighted passageway on the first floor, at the extremity of which, surmounting a door-frame, appeared an exceedingly stiff pictorial representation of the Goose and Gridiron, according to the English idea of those ever-to-be-honored symbols. The staircase and passageway were often thronged, of a morning, with a set of beggarly and piratical-looking scoundrels (I do no wrong to our own countrymen in styling them so, for not one in twenty was a genuine American), purporting to belong to our mercantile marine, and chiefly composed of Liverpool Black-ballers and the scum of every maritime nation on earth; such being the seamen by whose assistance we then disputed the navigation of the world with England. These specimens of a most unfortunate class of people were shipwrecked crews in quest of bed, board, and clothing; invalids asking permits for the hospital; bruised and bloody wretches complaining of ill-treatment by their officers; drunkards, desperadoes, vagabonds, and cheats, perplexingly intermingled with an uncertain proportion of reasonably honest men. All of them (save here and there a poor devil of a kidnapped landsman in his shore-going rags) wore red flannel shirts, in which they had sweltered or shivered throughout the voyage, and all required consular assistance in one form or another.

Any respectable visitor, if he could make up his mind to elbow a passage among these sea-monsters, was admitted into an outer office, where he found more of the same species, explaining their respective wants or grievances to the Vice-Consul and clerks, while their shipmates awaited their turn outside the door. Passing through this exterior court, the stranger was ushered into an inner privacy, where sat the Consul himself, ready to give personal attention to such peculiarly difficult and more important cases as might demand the exercise of (what we will courteously suppose to be) his own higher judicial or administrative sagacity.

It was an apartment of very moderate size, painted in imitation of oak, and duskiy lighted by two windows looking across a by-street at the rough brick-side of an immense cotton warehouse, a plainer and uglier structure than ever was built in America. On the walls of the room hung a large map of the United States (as they were, twenty years ago, but seem little likely to be, twenty years hence), and a similar one of Great Britain, with its territory so provokingly compact, that we may expect it to sink sooner than sunder. Farther adornments were some rude engravings of our naval victories in the War of 1812, together with the Tennessee State House, and a Hudson River steamer, and a colored, life-size lithograph of General Taylor, with an honest hideousness of aspect, occupying the place of honor above the mantel-piece. On the top of a bookcase stood a fierce and terrible bust of General Jackson, pilloried in a military collar which rose above his ears, and frowning forth immitigably at any Englishman who might happen to cross the threshold. I am afraid, however, that the truculence of the old General's expression was utterly thrown away on this stolid and obdurate race of men; for, when they occasionally inquired

whom this work of art represented, I was mortified to find that the younger ones had never heard of the battle of New Orleans, and that their elders had either forgotten it altogether, or contrived to misremember, and twist it wrong end foremost into something like an English victory. They have caught from the old Romans (whom they resemble in so many other characteristics) this excellent method of keeping the national glory intact by sweeping all defeats and humiliations clean out of their memory. Nevertheless, my patriotism forbade me to take down either the bust or the pictures, both because it seemed no more than right that an American Consulate (being a little patch of our nationality imbedded into the soil and institutions of England) should fairly represent the American taste in the fine arts, and because these decorations reminded me so delightfully of an old-fashioned American barber's shop.

One truly English object was a barometer hanging on the wall, generally indicating one or another degree of disagreeable weather, and so seldom pointing to Fair, that I began to consider that portion of its circle as made superfluously. The deep chimney, with its grate of bituminous coal, was English too, as was also the chill temperature that sometimes called for a fire at midsummer, and the foggy or smoky atmosphere which often, between November and March, compelled me to set the gas aflame at noonday. I am not aware of omitting anything important in the above descriptive inventory, unless it be some bookshelves filled with octavo volumes of the American Statutes, and a good many pigeon-holes stuffed with dusty communications from former Secretaries of State, and other official documents of similar value, constituting part of the archives of the Consulate, which I might have done my successor a favor by flinging into the coal-grate. Yes; there was one other article demanding prominent notice: the consular copy of the New Testament, bound in black

morocco, and greasy, I fear, with a daily succession of perjured kisses; at least, I can hardly hope that all the ten thousand oaths, administered by me between two breaths, to all sorts of people and on all manner worldly business, were reckoned by the swearer as if taken at his soul's peril.

Such, in short, was the dusky and stifled chamber in which I spent wearily a considerable portion of more than four good years of my existence. At first, to be quite frank with the reader, I looked upon it as not altogether fit to be tenanted by the commercial representative of so great and prosperous a country as the United States then were; and I should speedily have transferred my headquarters to airier and loftier apartments, except for the prudent consideration that my government would have left me thus to support its dignity at my own personal expense. Besides, a long line of distinguished predecessors, of whom the latest is now a gallant general under the Union banner, had found the locality good enough for them; it might certainly be tolerated, therefore, by an individual so little ambitious of external magnificence as myself. So I settled quietly down, striking some of my roots into such soil as I could find, adapting myself to circumstances, and with so much success, that, though from first to last I hated the very sight of the little room, I should yet have felt a singular kind of reluctance in changing it for a better.

Hither, in the course of my incumbency, came a great variety of visitors, principally Americans, but including almost every other nationality on earth, especially the distressed and downfallen ones, like those of Poland and Hungary. Italian bandits (for so they looked), proscribed conspirators from Spain, Spanish-Americans, Cubans who professed to have stood by Lopez, and narrowly escaped his fate, scarred French soldiers of the Second Republic,--in a word, all sufferers, or pretended ones, in the cause of

Liberty, all people homeless in the widest sense, those who never had a country, or had lost it, those whom their native land had impatiently flung off for planning a better system of things than they were born to,--a multitude of these, and, doubtless, an equal number of jail-birds, outwardly of the same feather, sought the American Consulate, in hopes of at least a bit of bread, and, perhaps, to beg a passage to the blessed shores of Freedom. In most cases there was nothing, and in any case distressingly little, to be done for them; neither was I of a proselyting disposition, nor desired to make my Consulate a nucleus for the vagrant discontents of other lands. And yet it was a proud thought, a forcible appeal to the sympathies of an American, that these unfortunates claimed the privileges of citizenship in our Republic on the strength of the very same noble misdemeanors that had rendered them outlaws to their native despotisms. So I gave them what small help I could. Methinks the true patriots and martyr-spirits of the whole world should have been conscious of a pang near the heart, when a deadly blow was aimed at the vitality of a country which they have felt to be their own in the last resort.

As for my countrymen, I grew better acquainted with many of our national characteristics during those four years than in all my preceding life. Whether brought more strikingly out by the contrast with English manners, or that my Yankee friends assumed an extra peculiarity from a sense of defiant patriotism, so it was that their tones, sentiments, and behavior, even their figures and cast of countenance, all seemed chiselled in sharper angles than ever I had imagined them to be at home. It impressed me with an odd idea of having somehow lost the property of my own person, when I occasionally heard one them speaking of me as "my Consul"! They often came to the Consulate in parties of half a dozen or more, on no business whatever, but merely to subject their public servant to a rigid

examination, and see how he was getting on with his duties. These interviews were rather formidable, being characterized by a certain stiffness which I felt to be sufficiently irksome at the moment, though it looks laughable enough in the retrospect. It is my firm belief that these fellow-citizens, possessing a native tendency to organization, generally halted outside of the door, to elect a speaker, chairman, or moderator, and thus approached me with all the formalities of a deputation from the American people. After salutations on both sides,--abrupt, awful, and severe on their part, and deprecatory on mine,--and the national ceremony of shaking hands being duly gone through with, the interview proceeded by a series of calm and well-considered questions or remarks from the spokesman (no other of the guests vouchsafing to utter a word), and diplomatic responses from the Consul, who sometimes found the investigation a little more searching than he liked. I flatter myself, however, that, by much practice, I attained considerable skill in this kind of intercourse, the art of which lies in passing off commonplaces for new and valuable truths, and talking trash and emptiness in such a way that a pretty acute auditor might mistake it for something solid. If there be any better method of dealing with such junctures, --when talk is to be created out of nothing, and within the scope of several minds at once, so that you cannot apply yourself to your interlocutor's individuality,--I have not learned it.

Sitting, as it were, in the gateway between the Old World and the New, where the steamers and packets landed the greater part of our wandering countrymen, and received them again when their wanderings were done, I saw that no people on earth have such vagabond habits as ourselves. The Continental races never travel at all if they can help it; nor does an Englishman ever think of stirring abroad, unless he has the money to spare, or proposes to himself

some definite advantage from the journey; but it seemed to me that nothing was more common than for a young American deliberately to spend all his resources in an æsthetic peregrination about Europe, returning with pockets nearly empty to begin the world in earnest. It happened, indeed, much oftener than was at all agreeable to myself, that their funds held out just long enough to bring them to the door of my Consulate, where they entered as if with an undeniable right to its shelter and protection, and required at my hands to be sent home again. In my first simplicity,--finding them gentlemanly in manners, passably educated, and only tempted a little beyond their means by a laudable desire of improving and refining themselves, or perhaps for the sake of getting better artistic instruction in music, painting, or sculpture than our country could supply,--I sometimes took charge of them on my private responsibility, since our government gives itself no trouble about its stray children, except the sea-faring class. But, after a few such experiments, discovering that none of these estimable and ingenuous young men, however trustworthy they might appear, ever dreamed of reimbursing the Consul, I deemed it expedient to take another course with them. Applying myself to some friendly shipmaster, I engaged homeward passages on their behalf, with the understanding that they were to make themselves serviceable on shipboard; and I remember several very pathetic appeals from painters and musicians, touching the damage which their artistic fingers were likely to incur from handling the ropes. But my observation of so many heavier troubles left me very little tenderness for their finger-ends. In time I grew to be reasonably hard-hearted, though it never was quite possible to leave a countryman with no shelter save an English poorhouse, when, as he invariably averred, he had only to set foot on his native soil to be possessed of ample funds. It was my ultimate conclusion, however, that American ingenuity

may be pretty safely left to itself, and that, one way or another, a Yankee vagabond is certain to turn up at his own threshold, if he has any, without help of a Consul, and perhaps be taught a lesson of foresight that may profit him hereafter.

Among these stray Americans, I met with no other case so remarkable as that of an old man, who was in the habit of visiting me once in a few months, and soberly affirmed that he had been wandering about England more than a quarter of a century (precisely twenty-seven years, I think), and all the while doing his utmost to get home again. Herman Melville, in his excellent novel or biography of "Israel Potter," has an idea somewhat similar to this. The individual now in question was a mild and patient, but very ragged and pitiable old fellow, shabby beyond description, lean and hungry-looking, but with a large and somewhat red nose. He made no complaint of his ill-fortune, but only repeated in a quiet voice, with a pathos of which he was himself evidently unconscious, "I want to get home to Ninety-Second Street, Philadelphia." He described himself as a printer by trade, said that he had come over when he was a younger man, in the hope of bettering himself, and for the sake of seeing the Old Country, but had never since been rich enough to pay his homeward passage. His manner and accent did not quite convince me that he was an American, and I told him so; but he steadfastly affirmed, "Sir, I was born and have lived in Ninety-Second Street, Philadelphia," and then went on to describe some public edifices and other local objects with which he used to be familiar, adding, with a simplicity that touched me very closely, "Sir, I had rather be there than here!" Though I still manifested a lingering doubt, he took no offence, replying with the same mild depression as at first, and insisting again and again on Ninety-Second Street. Up to the time when I saw him, he still got a little occasional job-work at

his trade, but subsisted mainly on such charity as he met with in his wanderings, shifting from place to place continually, and asking assistance to convey him to his native land. Possibly he was an impostor, one of the multitudinous shapes of English vagabondism, and told his falsehood with such powerful simplicity, because, by many repetitions, he had convinced himself of its truth. But if, as I believe, the tale was fact, how very strange and sad was this old man's fate! Homeless on a foreign shore, looking always towards his country, coming again and again to the point whence so many were setting sail for it,--so many who would soon tread in Ninety-Second Street,--losing, in this long series of years, some of the distinctive characteristics of an American, and at last dying and surrendering his clay to be a portion of the soil whence he could not escape in his lifetime.

He appeared to see that he had moved me, but did not attempt to press his advantage with any new argument, or any varied form of entreaty. He had but scanty and scattered thoughts in his gray head, and in the intervals of those, like the refrain of an old ballad, came in the monotonous burden of his appeal, "If I could only find myself in Ninety-Second Street, Philadelphia!" But even his desire of getting home had ceased to be an ardent one (if, indeed, it had not always partaken of the dreamy sluggishness of his character), although it remained his only locomotive impulse, and perhaps the sole principle of life that kept his blood from actual torpor.

The poor old fellow's story seemed to me almost as worthy of being chanted in immortal song as that of Odysseus or Evangeline. I took his case into deep consideration, but dared not incur the moral responsibility of sending him across the sea, at his age, after so many years of exile, when the very tradition of him had passed away, to find his

friends dead, or forgetful, or irretrievably vanished, and the whole country become more truly a foreign land to him than England was now,--and even Ninety-Second Street, in the weedlike decay and growth of our localities, made over anew and grown unrecognizable by his old eyes. That street, so patiently longed for, had transferred itself to the New Jerusalem, and he must seek it there, contenting his slow heart, meanwhile, with the smoke-begrimed thoroughfares of English towns, or the green country lanes and by-paths with which his wanderings had made him familiar; for doubtless he had a beaten track, and was the "long-remembered beggar" now, with food and a roughly hospitable greeting ready for him at many a farm-house door, and his choice of lodging under a score of haystacks. In America, nothing awaited him but that worst form of disappointment which comes under the guise of a long-cherished and late-accomplished purpose, and then a year or two of dry and barren sojourn in an almshouse, and death among strangers at last, where he had imagined a circle of familiar faces. So I contented myself with giving him alms, which he thankfully accepted, and went away with bent shoulders and an aspect of gentle forlornness; returning upon his orbit, however, after a few months, to tell the same sad and quiet story of his abode in England for more than twenty-seven years, in all which time he had been endeavoring, and still endeavored as patiently as ever, to find his way home to Ninety-Second Street, Philadelphia.

I recollect another case, of a more ridiculous order, but still with a foolish kind of pathos entangled in it, which impresses me now more forcibly than it did at the moment. One day, a queer, stupid, good-natured, fat-faced individual came into my private room, dressed in a sky-blue, cut-away coat and mixed trousers, both garments worn and shabby, and rather too small for his overgrown bulk. After a little

preliminary talk, he turned out to be a country shopkeeper (from Connecticut, I think), who had left a flourishing business, and come over to England purposely and solely to have an interview with the Queen. Some years before he had named his children, one for her Majesty and the other for Prince Albert, and had transmitted photographs of the little people, as well as of his wife and himself, to the illustrious godmother. The Queen had gratefully acknowledged the favor in a letter under the hand of her private secretary. Now, the shopkeeper, like a great many other Americans, had long cherished a fantastic notion that he was one of the rightful heirs of a rich English estate; and on the strength of her Majesty's letter and the hopes of royal patronage which it inspired, he had shut up his little country-store and come over to claim his inheritance. On the voyage, a German fellow-passenger had relieved him of his money on pretence of getting it favorably exchanged, and had disappeared immediately on the ship's arrival; so that the poor fellow was compelled to pawn all his clothes, except the remarkably shabby ones in which I beheld him, and in which (as he himself hinted, with a melancholy, yet good-natured smile) he did not look altogether fit to see the Queen. I agreed with him that the bobtailed coat and mixed trousers constituted a very odd-looking court-dress, and suggested that it was doubtless his present purpose to get back to Connecticut as fast as possible. But no! The resolve to see the Queen was as strong in him as ever; and it was marvellous the pertinacity with which he clung to it amid raggedness and starvation, and the earnestness of his supplication that I would supply him with funds for a suitable appearance at Windsor Castle.

I never had so satisfactory a perception of a complete booby before in my life; and it caused me to feel kindly towards him, and yet impatient and exasperated on behalf of common-sense, which could not possibly tolerate that

such an unimaginable donkey should exist. I laid his absurdity before him in the very plainest terms, but without either exciting his anger or shaking his resolution. "Oh my dear man," quoth he, with good-natured, placid, simple, and tearful stubbornness, "if you could but enter into my feelings and see the matter from beginning to end as I see it!" To confess the truth, I have since felt that I was hard-hearted to the poor simpleton, and that there was more weight in his remonstrance than I chose to be sensible of, at the time; for, like many men who have been in the habit of making playthings or tools of their imagination and sensibility, I was too rigidly tenacious of what was reasonable in the affairs of real life. And even absurdity has its rights, when, as in this case, it has absorbed a human being's entire nature and purposes. I ought to have transmitted him to Mr. Buchanan, in London, who, being a good-natured old gentleman, and anxious, just then, to gratify the universal Yankee nation, might, for the joke's sake, have got him admittance to the Queen, who had fairly laid herself open to his visit, and has received hundreds of our countrymen on infinitely slighter grounds. But I was inexorable, being turned to flint by the insufferable proximity of a fool, and refused to interfere with his business in any way except to procure him a passage home. I can see his face of mild, ridiculous despair at this moment, and appreciate, better than I could then, how awfully cruel he must have felt my obduracy to be. For years and years, the idea of an interview with Queen Victoria had haunted his poor foolish mind; and now, when he really stood on English ground, and the palace-door was hanging ajar for him, he was expected to turn back, a penniless and bamboozled simpleton, merely because an iron-hearted Consul refused to lend him thirty shillings (so low had his demand ultimately sunk) to buy a second-class ticket on the rail for London!