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THE SALEM OF HAWTHORNE.

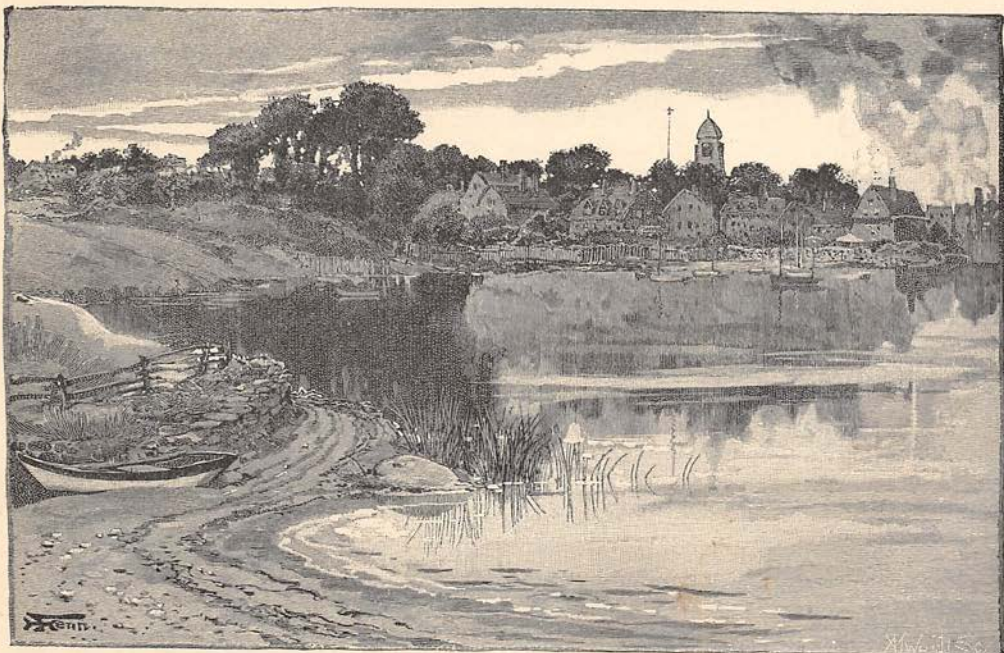
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S instinct for localities was not strongly developed; wherever he walked, in city or country (and he was very fond of walking), he constantly missed his way. This trait, or deficiency, is not without its reflection in his writings. It is of small importance to him what the topography of his story may be, — whether his house faces north or south, whether his street turns to the right or to the left. He is willing to let these and analogous matters take care of themselves; and herein he differs markedly from the great French novelist Balzac, who wrote by the map and the rule, and who always knew precisely the income of all his people, and from what investments it was derived. On the other hand, the American possessed, to quite as great a degree as the Frenchman, the perception of the picturesque; his light and shadow, his color and atmosphere, have never been surpassed. But he shunned rather than sought to make his outlines and directions correspond too closely with palpable reality. The intensity with which he could convey the feeling of a place, a character, or a situation, was almost in inverse ratio to its literal resemblance to any material prototype; he was essentially a romancer, and the world of his imagination was like the material world only as the mind of man is like his body: a spiritual world of types, elements, and harmonies, rather than a physical world of accidents, individuals, and technicalities. When I was lately visiting the scenes of his stories, I was impressed by nothing more than by the manner in which he had contrived to escape from the rigid flesh and blood of his scenes, and to make everything plastic and significant, while fully preserving and indeed intensifying the spirit and sentiment which the scenes embodied. The subtle, artistic bal-

ance and structure of his compositions would have been distorted by the intrusion of photographic facts. His characters and his scenery bore an organic relation to the theme or plot in which they appeared and acted. It has been surmised that what is technically termed construction was Hawthorne's weak point; and, in the Wilkie Collins sense of construction, this is true. But the author of "The Scarlet Letter" took a view of artistic proportion — the answering of part to part, the culmination and the catastrophe — indefinitely deeper than Mr. Collins's, because moral and spiritual. His episodes are of the mind and heart, not of the body; and on this plane the construction of his romances is as nearly perfect as, on another plane, is that of "Tom Jones" or "The Moonstone."

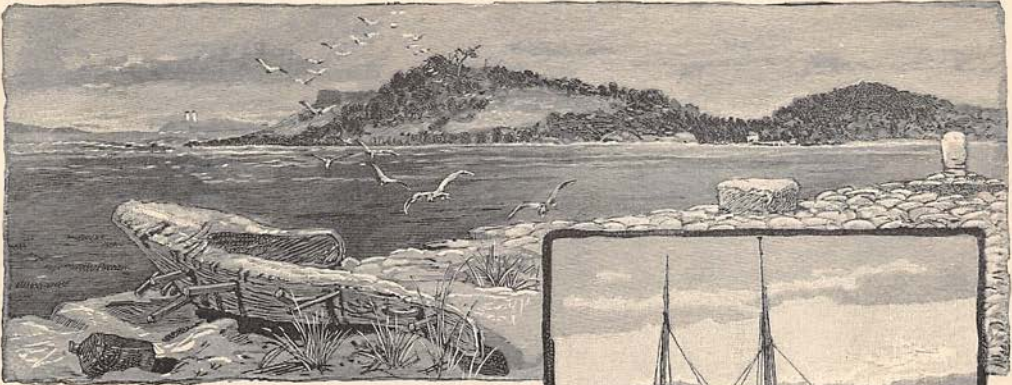
What has been said suggests the conclusion that there is comparatively little to be gained by the most conscientious consideration of the localities in which, for lack of better, the characters of Hawthorne's stories are seen and developed. The true localities of the stories are in the characters themselves, who, secondarily, are reflected in their surroundings. In the case of Dickens it was quite otherwise; and that curious sort of entertainment which is found by many people in the autographs, the birthplaces, the old hats and snuff-boxes, the inns and the graves of great or notorious personages, may receive a similar gratification in hunting out the houses and the streets of Dickens's fictitious society, and noticing how closely the fiction coincides with the reality. This pleasure has, I believe, already been tasted by the readers of this magazine; but they must not anticipate anything quite comparable to it in the present instance. What I have to report may augment their appreciation of Hawthorne's

power of making bricks without straw, and even without clay upon occasion, but will do little to enhance his reputation as a Chinese copyist. Some people will not regard this as a defect; but there is some ground for believing that Hawthorne himself aimed rather to increase than to diminish the external verisimilitude of his pictures. It would otherwise be difficult to account for the existence of his journals and note-books, from which imagination is, as much as possible, excluded, and a constant effort is made to give an accurate and dispassionate record and representation of things as they are. The impression produced by the note-books is oddly different from that of the romances — a difference comparable in kind and degree to that between the voice in ordinary speech and in singing. The descriptions in the books are conscientious and laborious, and strike one, perhaps, as having been written coldly and somewhat against the grain — written not for their own sake, but as auxiliary to an ulterior purpose. It is often edifying to observe how a passage from these records has been transmuted from commonplace metal into fine gold on being incorporated with the living organism of the romance. The specific accuracy has become less, but the fidelity to essential truth has become greater. On the whole, however, the illusion of reality is doubtless greater in Hawthorne's later works than in the "Twice-told Tales" and the "Mosses from an Old Manse." The substance of the later works is wrought

out of a wider experience and observation of actualities than is the case with the earlier ones. Yet the imagination has gained power proportionate to the increased observation and experience, and is as far as ever from being dominated by them. The work is richer and more minute, but it is just as truly creative as before; the fusion of the elements is no less complete. "The Marble Faun" is as thoroughly Hawthorne, to the outermost particle, as is "The Gray Champion" or "Feathertop." So that, after all, the result of the note-books was different from their apparent aim (as I have supposed it), and much better worth the pains bestowed on producing them. I doubt if my father ever realized how searchingly powerful his imagination was. He did not perceive the ardor of his own fire; the magic of his own atmosphere was hidden from him. He fancied he was telling his story in quite a plain and obvious way, and was rather amused at the depths and splendors which other people thought they saw in it. Of course I do not mean to imply that he did not know what he was about. The "Grimshawe" studies, lately published in this magazine, show that no one comprehended the methods and art of fiction better than he. He was never careless, and he had the unmitigable conscience of a Puritan. He was not of that order of genius that yields itself up to vague, hysteric deliriums of inspiration, and in that condition evolves something which as often turns out silly as sublime. When he

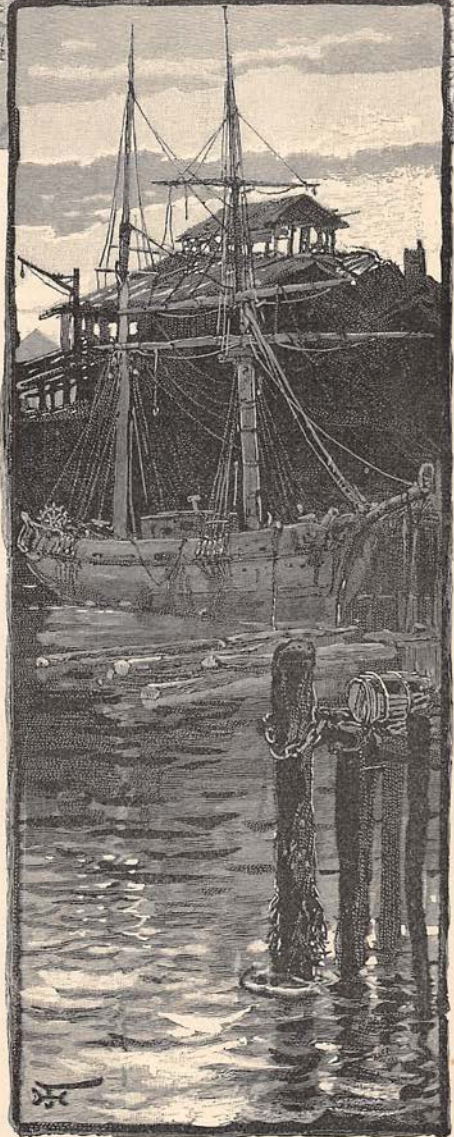


HEAD OF SALEM HARBOR.



THE END OF DERBY WHARF.

was warmed to his work, he was more himself—more in command of every faculty he possessed—than at any other time. He never wrote a sentence that he did not himself thoroughly understand. He could criticise his own processes, aims, and results as justly as the most dispassionate reviewer. But there was one quality, one faculty in himself that he could never estimate or criticise—the most important quality or faculty of all. It was the quality that no one else ever possessed, the faculty that no one else ever exercised, the thing, whatever it was, that makes him Hawthorne. Some years ago one of our magazines published a story, a translation from the German, entitled “The Face in the Rock” (or something of that kind). It was a literary curiosity, for it was neither more nor less than Hawthorne’s “Great Stone Face,” which had been translated into German and afterward turned back into English by some one who had never heard of the original. Here was the story, sentence for sentence the same, and yet as different from it as is a cabbage from a rose. I have often wondered what my father would have thought of it; whether he would have perceived as distinctly as another person the immeasurable superiority imparted by touches too fine and subtle to be described—the touches which no one else could give, and which even he gave, as it were, unconsciously, because it was the natural expression of his temperament and organization. I may return to this matter another time, for it is full of suggestion; but for the present it is enough to observe that the faculty of self-appreciation (not altogether strange to our later writers) is not precisely the most valuable element of the literary organization, inasmuch



THE DESERTED WHARVES OF SALEM.

as it stands in the way of that genial unconsciousness, of that freedom from the sense of being overlooked and criticised, which is indispensable to the production of original and harmonious work. Though Hawthorne was humility itself in his estimate of his own powers, yet when once he was under the influence of his muse, not all the criticism of ancient and modern times could have made him swerve by so much as a hair's breadth

from the path along which she led him. When he was at work he was in a region by himself,—alone with his art,—into which the voices of the exterior world could never penetrate, nor its presence intrude. The work being done, however, and sent forth, the worker would return to a colder and more skeptical state, in which he took, as it were, the part of the world against himself, and led the attack. So little is known of the man that it has always been the custom to paint his portrait from the same palette which he himself used for his pictures. But it is important to remember that the man and the writer were, in Hawthorne's case, as different as a mountain from a cloud. It was not until after his death that I read any of his romances; he had always told me that they were not suited to my age and requirements; and I remember, as I read on, being constantly unable to comprehend how a man such as I knew my father to be could have written such books. He did not talk in that way; his moods had not seemed to be of that color. The books gave me an enlarged though not a more powerful impression of him. He was a very strong man, in every application of the word. I have seen him in company with many of the great men of his time, and I was always made to feel that his was the loftier and dominant spirit—that he was to other men what Augustus Cæsar is said to have been to Marc Antony. It is true that I was but a child; but I apprehend that the perceptions of a child in such matters, being mainly intuitive, are at least as apt to be just as those of mature persons. At all events, subsequent meditation and experience have served rather to augment than to lessen my estimate of his personal power and weight. As regards the books, it is difficult to state exactly the relation they bore to the general manifestation of his character; perhaps it might be said that they resulted from the immediate action of his spirit, in a spiritual plane; whereas in other matters it acted through his material part, in the physical plane. But there is more vanity than profit in such distinctions, and the topic is, moreover, not essential to the present inquiry, indefinite and vagabond though that be.

HAWTHORNE was born in Salem; it was mostly the scene of such of his earlier tales as pretend to any definite location at all; the "House of the Seven Gables" was erected there; and finally, at the close of his literary career, he returned to Salem to find the scene of "Doctor Grimshawe's Secret." Salem, consequently, might reasonably be presumed to be a singularly picturesque and interesting old

town. In the matter of age, no doubt, it can court comparison with any settlement in New England; the place bore the name of Salem as long ago as 1629, after having been called Bastable in 1614, and Naum-Keag by the aboriginal Indians. Concerning this latter appellation, Cotton Mather, with that fondness for the miraculous which characterized his epoch, writes as follows in his "Magnalia":

"Of which place I have somewhere met with an odd observation, that the name of it is rather Hebrew than Indian; for Nahum signifies comfort, and Keik signifies an haven; and our English not only found it an haven of comfort, but happened also to put an Hebrew name upon it; for they called it Salem, for the peace which they had hoped in it."

The "odd observation" was probably met with in a publication called "The Planter's Plea," printed in London in 1630, in which it is written:

"It falls out, that the name of the place, which one late colony hath chosen for their seat, proves to be perfect Hebrew, being called Nahum Keike; by interpretation, the bosom of consolation; which it were pity that those which observed it not, should change into the name of Salem, though upon a fair ground, in remembrance of a peace settled upon a conference at a general meeting betweene them and their neighbors, after expectance of some dangerous jarre."

This fanciful etymology, though never formally recognized or adopted by the body corporate of the citizens, is informally and sentimentally used by them to this day. I remember that my maternal grandmother, at the time she was living in Boston, used affectionately to speak of her native Salem by the title of "Old Naum-Keag."

Hawthorne himself, in his "Main Street," an article printed in the "Snow-Image" volume, has given the best antiquarian picture of the growth of his native town that is likely to be met with anywhere. He begins at the period when the site of the Main street (now called Essex street) was a tract of forest land, over which the dusty pavement of the thoroughfare was hereafter to extend. This tract, about a mile and a half in length by half a mile in breadth, and bounded on three sides by water, is hardly definable nowadays. Two hundred and seventy years ago, however, along through the vista of impending boughs, might have been seen a faintly-traced path, running nearly east and west, "as if a prophecy or foreboding of the future street had stolen into the heart of the solemn old wood." The great Squaw Sachem and the red Chief Wappacowet pass on beneath the tangled shade, imagining, doubtless, that their own system of affairs will endure forever; the squirrel rustles in the trees, the deer leaps in

his covert; we catch the cruel and stealthy eye of a wolf, as he draws back into yonder imperious density of underbrush; a momentary streak of sunlight finds its way down through the gloom of the broad wilderness, and glimmers among the feathers of the In-

it. In the course of time, John Endicott, the first governor of the new settlement, enters upon the scene. "Two venerable trees unite their branches high above his head, thus forming a triumphal arch of living verdure, beneath which he pauses, with his wife leaning



ROOM IN WHICH HAWTHORNE WAS BORN.

dian's dusky hair. Can it be that the thronged street of a city will ever pass into this twilight solitude? Casting our eyes again over the scene, we behold a stalwart figure, clad in a leathern jerkin and breeches of the same, striding sturdily onward with his gun over his shoulder, bringing home the choice portions of a deer. This is Roger Conant, the first settler of Naum-Keag, "a man of thoughtful strength." There stands his habitation, "showing in its rough architecture some features of the Indian wigwam, and some of the log-cabin, and somewhat, too, of the straw-thatched cottage in Old England, where this good yeoman had his birth and breeding." A few years more, and "the forest track, trodden more and more by the hob-nailed shoes of these sturdy and ponderous Englishmen, has now a distinctness which it never would have acquired from the light tread of a hundred times as many Indian moccasins. It will be a street anon. It goes onward from one clearing to another, here plunging into a shadowy strip of woods, there open to the sunshine, but everywhere showing a decided line, along which human interests have begun to note their career. Over yonder swampy spot two trees have been felled, and laid side by side to make a causeway." This "swampy spot," by the bye, was at or about the junction of the present Essex and Washington streets, and the track of the Eastern Railway runs through

on his arm, to catch the first impression of their new-found home."

In a copy of Felt's "Annals of Salem" which belonged to my father, I have seen a lithographed portrait of this famous Puritan, with a fac-simile of his signature—"Jo: Endecott"—underneath. He wears a black skull-cap; his head and face are round and full; the hair that curls down on either side his visage is white, and so are his mustache and pointed beard. His expression is grave and resolute, but serene and kindly; scarcely the man, in appearance, to cut the Red Cross out of the banner of England, as is described in the sketch called "Endicott and the Red Cross." He is there described as "a man of stern and resolute countenance, the effect of which was heightened by a grizzled beard that swept the upper portion of his breast-plate." When in anger, "a wrathful change came over his manly countenance. The blood glowed through it till it seemed to be kindled with an internal heat; nor was it unnatural to suppose that his breast-plate would likewise become red with the angry fire of the bosom which it covered." He brandished his sword, "thrust it through the cloth, and, with his left hand, rent the Red Cross completely out of the banner. He then waved the tattered ensign above his head. . . . With a cry of triumph, the people gave their sanction to one of the boldest exploits which our history

records. And forever honored be the name of Endicott! We look back through the mist of ages, and recognize, in the rending of the Red Cross from New England's banner, the first omen of that deliverance which our fathers consummated, after the bones of the stern Puritan had lain more than a century

street. Houses of quaint architecture have now risen; most of them have one huge chimney in the center, with flues so vast that it must have been easy for the witches to fly out of them. Around this great chimney the wooden house clusters itself, in a whole community of gable-ends, each ascending into its own separate peak; the second story, with its lattice windows, projecting over the first; and the door, which is perhaps arched, provided on the outside with an iron hammer, wherewith the visitor's hand may give a thundering rat-a-tat. . . . On the upper corner of that green lane, which shall hereafter be called North street, we see the Curwen House, newly built, with the carpenters still at work on the roof, nailing down the last sheaf of shingles. On the lower corner stands another dwelling,—destined, at some period of its existence, to be the abode of an unsuccessful alchemist,—which shall likewise survive to our generation."

There is a picture of the old Curwen House in Felt's "Annals," and it seems to have at least seven gables. It has gone through many transformations since its first erection in 1642, but the edifice, which is still to be seen on the corner of North and Essex streets, a few rods west of the railway station, is said to be substantially the same building. At the time of the persecution of the witches, several examinations of those unhappy persons were held in one of its apartments. The inquiry has often been made: which of the old Salem houses was the prototype of the "House of the Seven Gables"? and the Curwen House, among several others, has been pointed out as the one. Intelligent inquirers of this kind will probably be disappointed to learn that the old Pyncheon House had no prototype at all. It is itself a type of the kind of houses that were built in the latter half of the seventeenth century. "These edifices," says Hawthorne himself, "were built in one generally accordant style, though with such subordinate variety as keeps the beholder's curiosity excited, and causes each structure, like its owner's character, to produce its own peculiar impression." In the preface to the romance he "trusts not to be considered as unpardonably offending, by laying out a street that infringes upon nobody's private rights, and appropriating a lot of land which had no visible owner, and building a house of materials long used for constructing castles in the air."

No one with any understanding of the nature of Hawthorne's genius could believe it even possible for him to import into his stories true literal portraits, either of houses or persons; but he frequently alluded, with a certain arch lifting of the right eyebrow that

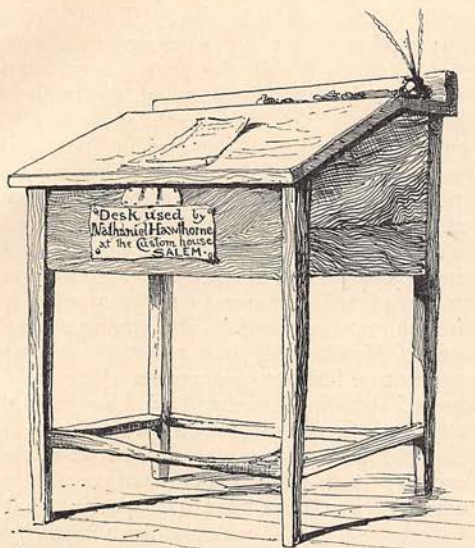


HAWTHORNE'S WINDOW IN THE CUSTOM HOUSE—WAREHOUSES ON DERBY WHARF IN THE BACKGROUND.

in the dust." This sketch, which is scarcely more than half a dozen pages in length, is one of Hawthorne's earlier pieces; but it is full of fire and

eloquence. Let us, however, return to the main street.

Six or seven years after Roger Conant's appearance, "the street had lost the aromatic odor of the pine-trees, and of the sweet-fern that grew beneath them. Gardens are fenced in, and display pumpkin-beds and rows of cabbages and beans. No wolf, for a year past, has been heard to bark, or known to range among the dwellings, except that single one, whose grizzly head, with a plash of blood beneath it, is now affixed to the portal of the meeting-house." "Still later, the forest track has been converted into a dusty thoroughfare, which, being intersected with lanes and cross-paths, may fairly be designated as Main



was characteristic of him when amused, to the perverse determination of his friends and correspondents to believe that Zenobia, for example, was suggested by Margaret Fuller; that he himself was Miles Coverdale; that the Pyncheon House existed in wood and plaster; or that Judge Pyncheon was an enemy whom he had pilloried under that fictitious name. There is not a syllable of truth in any one of these surmises; but this is something which people devoid (as most of us are) of imagination can never be persuaded to credit or comprehend.

We have now arrived, in our review of the history of Main street, at the epoch of the persecutions of the Quakers, and here Hawthorne takes occasion to insert a passage of his own ancestral annals. "There a woman,—it is Ann Coleman,—naked from the waist upward, and bound to the tail of a cart, is dragged through the main street at the pace of a brisk walk, while the constable follows with a whip of knotted cords. He loves his business, faithful officer that he is, and puts his soul into every stroke, zealous to fulfill the injunction of Major Hawthorne's warrant, in the spirit and to the letter. There came down a stroke that has drawn blood! and

with thirty such stripes of blood upon her is she to be driven into the forest. The crimson trail goes wavering along the main street; but Heaven grant that, as the rain of so many years has wept upon it time after time, and washed it all away, so there may have been a dew of mercy to cleanse this cruel blood-stain out of the record of the persecutor's life!" This Major Hawthorne, or Hathorne, as the name was then spelt, was the first American emigrant of our family. It is very characteristic of his descendant to have made this prayer of vicarious penitence for his forefathers' sin. Their blood and temperament were strong in him; he felt the burden of their misdeeds almost as his own; and I have often heard him speak, half fancifully and half in earnest, of the curse invoked by one of the witches upon Colonel John Hawthorne and all his posterity, and of the strange manner in which it had taken effect.

Following the Quakers come the witches. The witches always had a special interest or fascination for my father, as might be inferred from the character and tone of the allusions to them in his published writings. But it is perhaps not generally known that he wrote a number of tales having witches for their subject-matter, that were said by the one or two persons who saw them to be more powerful, as conceptions of weird and fantastic horror, than anything in the printed volumes of short stories. But these tales never emerged from the manuscript state, and were finally burned by their author, because, as my mother told me he had explained to her, he felt that they were not true. That is, I suppose, they embodied no moral truth; they were mere imaginative narratives, founded on history and tradition, and had not the spiritual balance and proportion of what Hawthorne would deem a work of art. But I cannot help regretting that the manuscripts were not accidentally



STENCIL PLATE, NOW IN THE CUSTOM HOUSE.

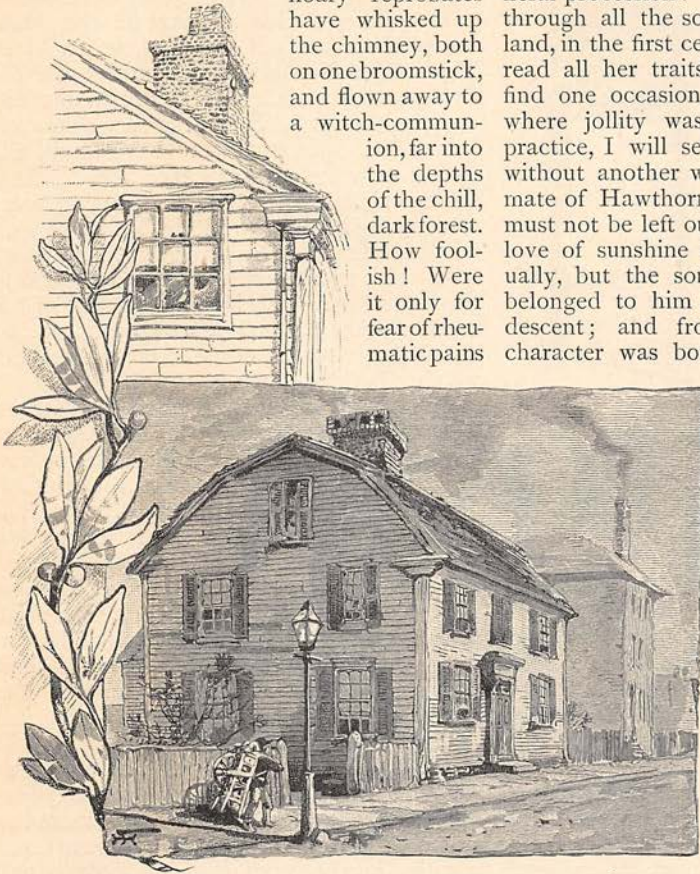
preserved. His touch acquires a deeper vividness wherever witches come in his way. "While we supposed the old man to be reading the Bible to his old wife,—she meanwhile knitting in the chimney-corner,—the pair of hoary reprobates have whisked up the chimney, both on one broomstick, and flown away to a witch-communion, far into the depths of the chill, dark forest. How foolish! Were it only for fear of rheumatic pains

continues, "I will exhibit one of the only class of scenes in which our ancestors were wont to steep their tough old hearts in wine and strong drink, and indulge in an outbreak of frisky jollity." And he introduces us to a funeral procession! "Even so; but look back through all the social customs of New England, in the first century of her existence, and read all her traits of character; and if you find one occasion, other than a funeral feast, where jollity was sanctioned by universal practice, I will set fire to my puppet-show without another word." In forming an estimate of Hawthorne, such passages as these must not be left out of account. The tropic love of sunshine belonged to him individually, but the somber web of Puritan life belonged to him likewise, by virtue of his descent; and from their marriage in his character was born that half-sportive, half-melancholy humor that glimmers along his pages, like the tender light of morning upon the stern surface of New England granite.

The history of Main street is followed only as far as the great snow of 1717, and we have a parting glimpse of "Goodman Massey taking his last walk,—often pausing,—often leaning over his staff,—and calling to mind whose dwelling stood at such and such a spot, and whose field or garden occupied the site of these more recent houses. He can render a reason for all

the bends and deviations of the thoroughfare, which, in its flexible and plastic infancy, was made to swerve aside from a straight line in order to visit every settler's door. The main street is still youthful; the coëval man is in his latest age. Soon he will be gone, a patriarch of four-score; yet shall retain a sort of infantile life, in our local history, as the first town-born child."

Salem has probably changed as slowly and as little as any town in New England; and yet, when I visited it last winter, it no longer hinted of that New England which "must have been a dismal abode for the man of pleasure, since the only boon-companion was Death." The main street is now quite a lively and progressive-looking thoroughfare, lined with handsome, albeit unpretentious brick and stone buildings, and with a horse-car track

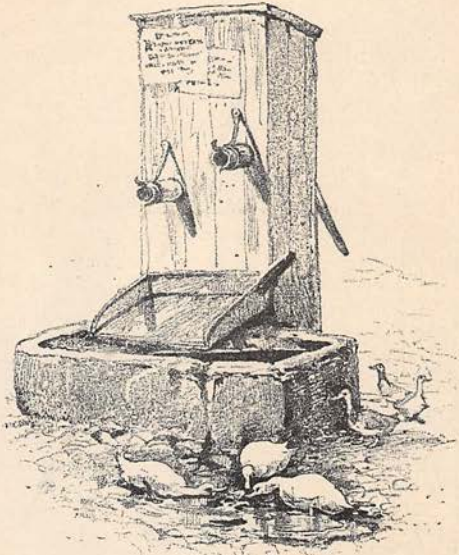


ROOM IN THE HERBERT STREET HOUSE WHERE HAWTHORNE WROTE "TWICE-TOLD TALES." HAWTHORNE'S BIRTHPLACE, ON UNION STREET.

in their old bones, they had better have stayed at home. But away they went; and the laughter of their decayed, cackling voices has been heard at midnight, aloft in the air. Now, in the sunny noontide, as they go tottering to the gallows, it is the devil's turn to laugh."

Next to the witches, the stern, gloomy, self-confident, and sometimes bloodthirsty Puritan character had the strongest attraction for him. "These scenes, you think," he says, "are all too somber. So, indeed, they are; but the blame must rest on the somber spirit of our forefathers, who wove their web of life with hardly a single thread of rose-color or gold,—and not on me, who have a tropic love of sunshine, and would gladly gild all the world with it, if I knew where to find so much. That you may believe me," he con-

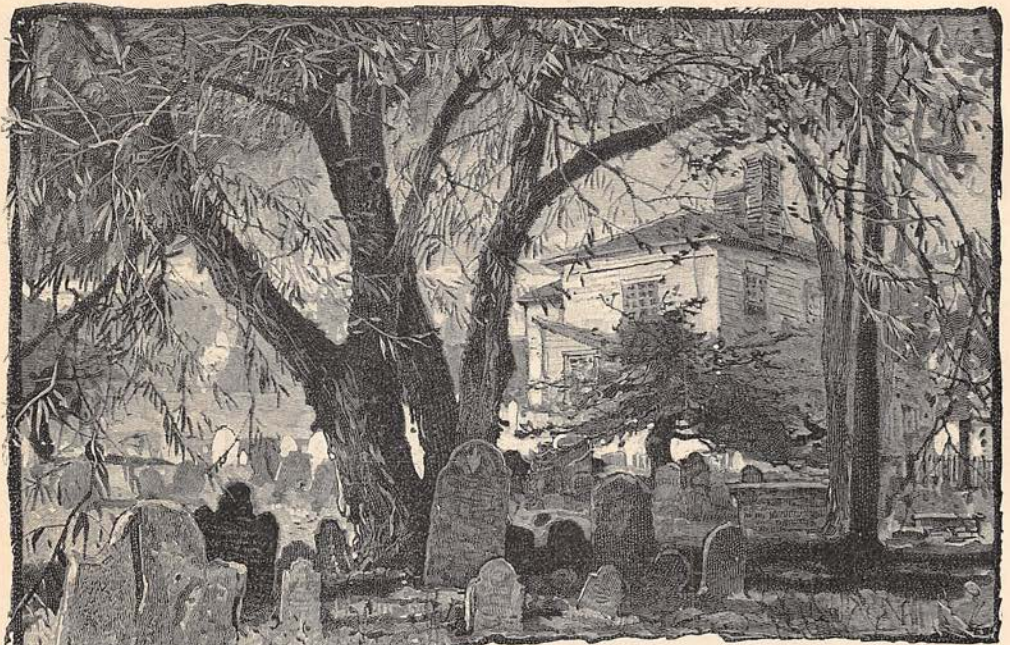
lying complacently along its length, above the forgotten footsteps of Squaw Sachem and the red Chief Wappacowet, and the crimson trail of Ann Coleman. There are town-halls and music-halls, and advertisements of the last new dramatic and operatic celebrities. There were inviting shops, full of Christmas goods and finery, and numbers of young ladies and gentlemen, in quite un-Puritanical garb, tripping gayly along the sidewalks, and not at all afraid of bewitching one another. Elderly persons there were, also, with gray hair and wrinkled faces, and some of them looking un-mirthful enough too, but not with the sturdy religious solemnity of their forefathers. The inhabitants of Salem, however, are much more a race apart—their features and demeanor belong much more to a special and recognizable type—than is the case in the neighboring city of Boston, for instance. A few faces I saw that, so far as their physical conformation was concerned, only needed the Puritan doublet and skull-cap to answer very well for the contemporaries of Winthrop and Roger Williams; and I remember a policeman, with a white pointed beard, a conical helmet, and a dark cloak, who might almost have walked out of the seventeenth century just as he was. But, upon the whole, had Salem not been my home in infancy, were I not tolerably familiar with its history and associations, and bound to it by ties of kindred, I doubt whether I should find in it anything more than a rather dull and monotonous town, in which one might live without living, and die almost without being aware of it. With the exception of the houses in Essex street, and a few structures of a public or commercial character scattered here and there, Salem seems principally composed of wooden clapboarded houses, of rather old-fashioned build, with hip roofs, and painted a sober drab or buff color. The larger number of these edifices must date back at least as far as the beginning of this century, and many doubtless much further. The more ancient portion of the town lies eastward from the railway station and southward from Essex street. Parallel with Essex street, and next to it, runs Charter street, on which is the old grave-yard mentioned in "The Dolliver Romance" and in "Doctor Grimshawe." Parallel with this again, and skirting the wharfs, extends Derby street, named after old King Derby, mentioned in "The Custom House," introductory to "The Scarlet Letter"; its eastern extremity is at the Custom House, its western merges at right angles with Centre street, and in the vicinity stands the Town Pump. Numerous cross streets go from Essex street toward two wharfs. One of these



THE TOWN PUMP.

is called Union street, neat, quiet, and narrow, though with a sidewalk on each side. On the western side, within a hundred yards of the corner, stands the house in which Nathaniel Hawthorne was born. It is a plain clapboarded structure of small size, with a three-cornered roof, and a single large chimney in the midst. The front is flush with the sidewalk, and the high stone door-steps jut forth beyond. It has evidently been repaired, and now presents a very well-kept appearance; some additions have perhaps been built on in the rear, but it remains substantially unchanged,—an eight-roomed house, with an attic in the gable, painted a quiet drab hue, with pale-green shutters to the windows. A little yard or garden, about equal in area to the house, adjoins it on the north. There is, I am happy to say, no inscription above the door or elsewhere to arrest the curious attention of the passer-by. This spot was the birthplace of a genius, but the genius itself never had its abiding-place here. It belongs to a world in which there are no places, and no time, but only love and knowledge.

Westward from Union street lies Herbert street; and the house in which Hawthorne lived with his widowed mother and sisters after his return from Bowdoin College stands here, the back yards of the two dwellings communicating. In the old time, Union and Herbert streets seem to have been practically one thoroughfare; for it was in the Herbert street house that the words, "In this dismal chamber FAME was won.—Salem, Union street," were written. The house is of more



DR. GRIMSHAW'S ABODE, FROM CHESTER STREET BURYING-GROUND: THE HOUSE IN WHICH HAWTHORNE WAS MARRIED.

stroyed the most genial inspiration. But it seems a marvel that such stories should have been written here, under conditions however favorable. They have, indeed, "the pale tint of flowers that have blossomed in too retired a shade"; but how, in such a shade, did they come to blossom at all? The mind, one would think, must have some external stimulus—some sympathy and enjoyment in surrounding objects—in order to become creative; but for Hawthorne there was nothing but the night and the day, the sunshine and the rain, the changes of the seasons, the leaves of the forest and the waves of the sea,—the simple features and processes of nature, in short,—to quicken and nourish his imagination. The human life around him was as nearly colorless as it could be. But there appears to be much the same sort of difference between some men and others that exists between a sun and its satellites. The former shines in itself, by its own resources; the latter are bright only by derivation. Hawthorne evolved his exquisite creations in a social desert, and the physical unresponsiveness and barrenness of his surroundings only served to render what he produced more pure and permanent. There is hardly any attempt at color in them; their beauty is in their form. The enjoyment inspired by form is perhaps loftier and less subject to change, albeit also less intense, than the delight of color, which is mainly dependent on temperament and emo-

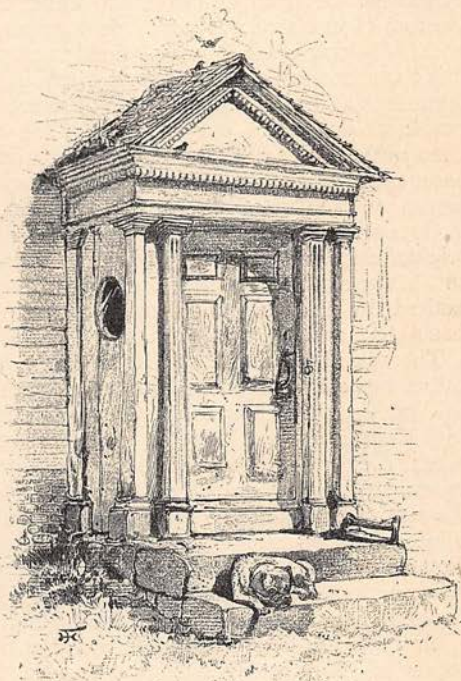
irregular form than the other, and has probably been subjected to greater alterations. The room in which Hawthorne wrote the "Twice-told Tales" is in the upper story or attic. The place was doubtless quiet enough in those days; but now there are a school and a church or chapel on the opposite side of the street. It was "recess" as I passed by, and forty or fifty boys were creating such a hubbub in the school-yard as would have de-

tion; but be that as it may, it is well for the artist, whether he work with pen or pencil, profoundly to verse himself in the intellectual laws of form before venturing to admit the passionate license of color. The genius of Hawthorne seems to have been providentially protected and trained, so that it might attain its full growth and strength in an orderly manner, without haste or eccentricity. Those lonely years in Salem were wearisome, no doubt, and often somber; but they wrought a strength and a self-poise in the solitary writer which all the splendor and phantasmagory of the world afterward could enrich and sweeten, but not mislead. In one way or another, all men who are destined to enter deeply into the mysteries of human life are led through a probationary period of solitude and fasting. They must explore the lonely and appalling recesses of the world within themselves before they are admitted to the world without.

Hawthorne, during those ten years, breathed and walked in the Salem of his day, but lived in the Salem of one and two centuries before. There he found a largeness of material, a ruggedness of light and shade, and an atmosphere that played into the hands, so to speak, of his native imagination. The historical scenes that he draws, as in "The Gray Champion," or the "Legends of the Province House," though they are as vivid and broad and full of movement as a picture by Meissonier, manifestly owe their charm and effect not to any realism or literalness of detail, but purely to the imaginative power of the writer. The real scene did not look like this, but this is the essence and purport of the real scene. It has the beauty and it gives the delight of a work of fine art: all the disproportionate elements, the obtrusive accidents, the insignificancies of matter-of-fact, are refined away. And the bulk of the tales belonging to this period have scarcely any foothold upon earth at all. They are not lyrical,—the record of moods; but they are the moral speculations, or rather conclusions, of a mind singularly penetrating, just, and mature,—of a mind so healthy and well-balanced that its lack of practical experience enhanced instead of diminishing its faculty of dispassionate analysis. "In youth," Hawthorne remarks, "men are apt to write more wisely than they really know or feel; and the remainder of life may not be idly spent in realizing and convincing themselves of the wisdom which they uttered long ago." The experience of age should be interpreted by the intuitions of youth; and this is broadly the gist of Hawthorne's literary history, as traced in his literary achievements. The truth which he divined in his youth was

the touchstone of his later knowledge, and gave unity to his career.

From Herbert street it is but a few steps to the Custom House, in the upper apartments of which was made the momentous discovery of Mr. Surveyor Pue's literary remains, and of the original scarlet letter, the history whereof has become more or less familiar to the educated fraction of Christen-



PORCH OF DR. GRIMSHAW'S HOUSE.

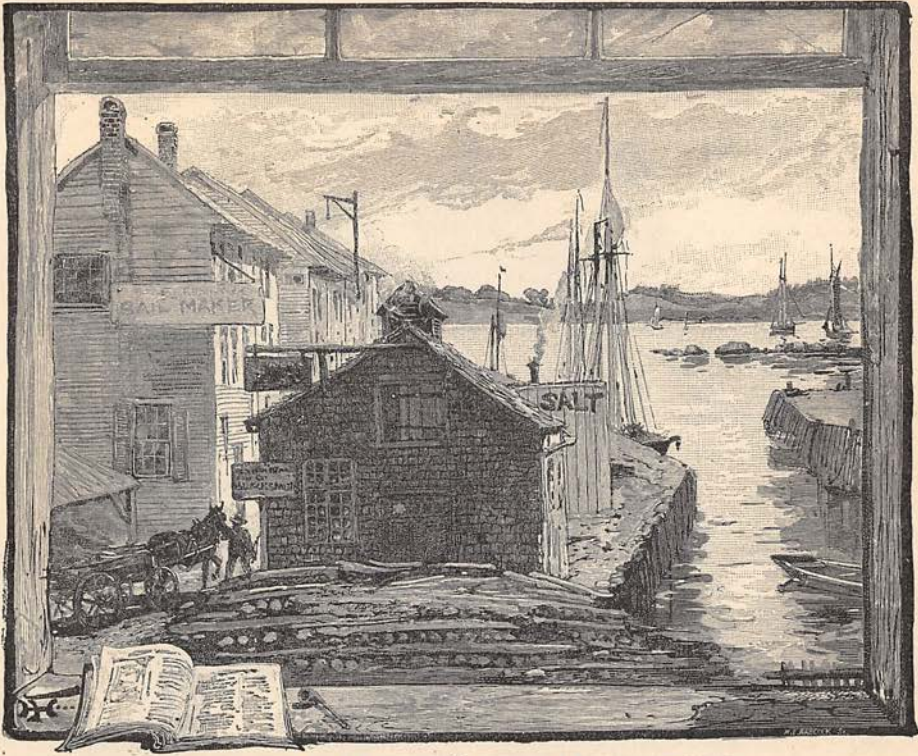
dom. The building is doubtless essentially the same as it was forty years ago. Here is still the spacious edifice of brick, with the banner of the Republic—the thirteen stripes turned vertically instead of horizontally, and thus indicating that a civil and not a military sort of Uncle Sam's government is here established—floating or drooping, in breeze or calm, from the loftiest point of its roof. Over the entrance, moreover, still hovers the enormous specimen of the American eagle, with the thunderbolts and arrows in each claw; she is heavily gilded, and appears to be in a remarkably good state of preservation. Here too is the flight of wide granite steps descending toward the street; and the portico of half a dozen wooden pillars, supporting a balcony. The entrance door was closed at the time of my visit, and the neighborhood quite as deserted as it ever could have been in Hawthorne's day. As for the row of venerable figures, sitting in old-fashioned chairs,

tipped on their hind legs back against the wall, I made no effort to discover them; nor did I attempt to explore a certain room or office, about fifteen feet square, and of a lofty height, decorated with cobwebs and dingy paint, and its floor strewn with gray sand. The room was doubtless there, but in these days of progress and Morris wall-papers, its interior might have been painfully unrecognizable. In truth, I forbore to enter the Custom House at all. A more forlorn, defunct, vacant-looking place I never beheld; and yet it is the scene of one of the most charmingly humorous and picturesque pieces of autobiographical writing in our language. The alchemy of genius never attempted to transmute baser metal than this into gold, or succeeded better. "The Custom House" is a fitting introduction to "The Scarlet Letter." The original depravity of matter in the former, and of the spirit in the latter, are respectively exalted by the magic of imagination into fascination and tragic beauty.

The rambling length of Derby street lay before me, and I traversed its lonely, mean, and uneventful extent as far as its junction with Central street. There is more liveliness here; the houses that surround the little square are less like dwellings of the dead, and the atmosphere is not so much that of a drab-colored Puritan Sunday as in other parts of the town. Here, as aforesaid, is the present town pump; but the original town pump, as appears by the stage direction at the beginning of that famous little monologue, stood at the corner of Essex and Washington streets. In Felt's "Annals" there is a wood engraving of the latter splendid thoroughfare, resembling the streets which children were wont to construct with the German toy houses that came packed in oval wooden boxes: a remarkable coach, foreshortened, with two trunks behind and a horse three or four yards in front, occupies the central foreground; the windows of the houses are five feet in height by eighteen inches in width, and are all furnished with black shutters, closed; eight or nine ladies, gentlemen, and children, in the poke bonnets and high-collared coats of the year 1839, are solemnly posed at different points along either sidewalk. Across the lower middle distance runs Essex street, indicated by two parallel lines; and on the corner at the spectator's right stands the town pump, with two symmetrical handles, and a large trough. "Little was it expected," writes the worthy Mr. Felt, "when this fountain was opened and fitted for use, that locomotives, like some monstrous leviathan, would sweep over the bed of its waters, and pour out fire and smoke, instead of the element designed to subdue

them. . . . A cistern was ordered near the first church, in lieu of 'the old town pump,' which Mr. Hawthorne, one of our city's gifted sons, has given a prominent place among his eloquent and impressive tales." The fact was, that the Eastern Railway ran a tunnel underneath Washington street, and the fountains of the great pump were thus dried up, or at any rate diverted.

From Central street I took my way back along Charter street, and soon came to an open space on the right, some three acres in extent, filled with grave-stones, and known as the Charter street burying-ground. On one corner of the inclosure, fronting the street, but partly infringing on the grave-yard, stands an old house which was once occupied by Doctor Peabody, the father of Mrs. Hawthorne; but which, in the world of romance, was the abode of Doctor Grimshawe and the two mysterious children, Elsie and Ned, and possibly, also, of good old Grandsir Dolliver and little Pansie. The description given in "Grimshawe" is tolerably exact,—quite as nearly so as might be expected of a place which one had not seen for eight or ten years, and which needed a certain picturesque glamour to make it harmonize with the story. "Doctor Grimshawe's residence," we are told, "cornered on a grave-yard, with which the house communicated by a back door. . . . It did not appear to be an ancient structure, nor one that would ever have been the abode of a very wealthy or prominent family—a three-story wooden house, perhaps a century old, low-studded, with a square front, standing right upon the street; and a small inclosed porch, containing the main entrance, affording a glimpse up and down the street through an oval window on each side. Its characteristic was decent respectability, not sinking below the boundary of the genteel. . . . A sufficient number of rooms and chambers, low, ill-lighted, ugly, but not unsusceptible of warmth and comfort, the sunniest and cheerfulest of which were on the side that looked into the grave-yard." All that applies well enough to the present Charter street house. It is of a whitish hue, irregular in plan, and about as commonplace as an old wooden house can well be. It seems, moreover, to have sunk somewhat below that genteel level which it held to in the doctor's day. It looks as if it might be unclean inside, though by no means with the appalling and portentous griminess that characterizes it in the Romance; and I doubt if there be a spider as big as a nickel in the whole building. Dreary the entire spot undeniably is, especially under such conditions as those in which I beheld it,—a

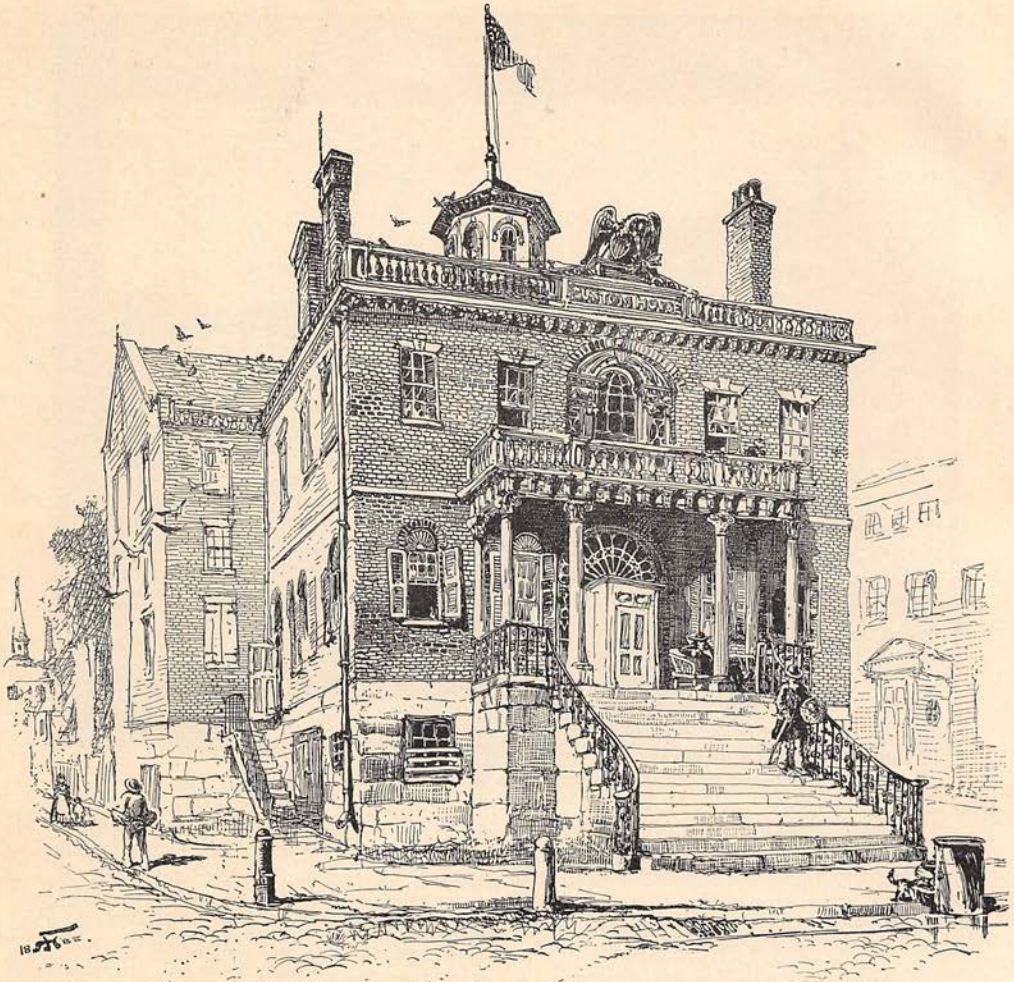


DERBY WHARF FROM HAWTHORNE'S WINDOW IN THE CUSTOM-HOUSE.

cold, gray sky, a harsh, inclement breeze, and a dull whiteness of snow underfoot. The snow, however, did not prevent an examination of the grave-stones, for these were all upright; there were no horizontal ones, such as that which marked the resting-place of him of the Bloody Footstep. I suspect, moreover, that were the sexton to tell all he knows, it would transpire that some of these head-stones are not the bona fide original slabs that were erected at the dates engraved upon them. They are reproductions, more or less accurate; some archæologist, desirous of preserving the historic records of the town, has perhaps resorted to this somewhat questionable mode of achieving his purpose. Most of the slabs are thin parallelograms of slate, the inscriptions being as fresh as if cut last week. The words, in order to carry out the illusion, are sometimes spelt in the old fashion, and the device of a death's head, or a cherub, is roughly traced on the top of the stone. One of the first graves I came upon was that of Doctor John Swinnerton, the famous quack physician, and predecessor of Grandsir Dolliver,—the man who concocted the drink of immortality, which was to have restored that venerable personage to the vigor and elasticity of his long-vanished youth.

Doctor Swinnerton expired, according to this record, in the year 1690. Undoubtedly, he was a real person. In Felt's "Annals" it is stated that "a Brinsley Accidence, with the name of John Swinnerton, supposed to be the physician, of Salem, written in it in 1652, came into the possession of Rev. Dr. Bentley, who left it to William B. Fowle, Esq., of Boston." And in the chapter about the Salem schools, it appears that on the twenty-fifth of March, 1716, "John Swinnerton began to keep the English school by the town house, at the usual compensation,"—a son, evidently, of the mystic doctor, and, so far as records go, the last of his tribe. The school-teacher's salary, in those days, seems to have been about twenty-five dollars a year.

This use of a real Salem name, by the bye, constantly occurs in Hawthorne's writings. In my strolling about the town, I recognized several over the shop-windows; and others appear in the index of Felt's "Annals." Thus Ethan Brand, Mr. Bullfinch, Clifford, Dixey, Goldthwaite, Gookin, Holgrave, Hollingsworth, Jeffrey, Maule, Pinchion or Pynchon, and others, were all, at one time or another, residents of Salem. But Doctor John Swinnerton seems to have been, for some reason, a favorite personage with my father; mention



SALEM CUSTOM-HOUSE.

of him occurs not only in "The Dolliver Romance," but also in "Grimshawe," in the introductory chapter to "The House of the Seven Gables," and, I think, in one or two of the shorter pieces. It is all of a piece with his predominating love of veracity, which, as he more than once intimates, is by no means inconsistent with the pursuit of fiction. The novel, he says, "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary, course of man's experience." The romance, "while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart, has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. . . He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated,

and, especially, to mingle the marvelous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as a portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public." In another place he says that "he designed the story and the characters to bear, of course, a certain relation to human nature and human life, but still to be so artfully and airily removed from our mundane sphere, that some laws and proprieties of their own should be implicitly and insensibly acknowledged." Miss E. P. Peabody, in a letter referring to the "Twice-told Tales," writes: "Nathaniel Hawthorne made a discovery, which was that we might be taken out of the prose of life into the region of the 'perfect good and fair,'—and into the mysteries of the Inferno as well, —without transcending the common boundaries of daily life. He did not waste his imagination in making circumstances; he was

deficient in invention; but all his imagination was employed in discovering what depths of passion, what agonies of conscience, what exquisite emotions underlie our nature, and witness to the ever-present God. He left the vulgar ground invented by human will, and kept himself in that spiritual region where imagination is native and at home. He would take the most ordinary and probable circumstances imaginable, or an historical fact perhaps, and lift the veil and show and explain the play of eternal laws that made the facts and personages what they were." Some novelists, when in search of fresh and unhackneyed material, make journeys to foreign lands, or to out-of-the-way corners of their own. Hawthorne's journeys were always inward, beneath the surface of things; but, like Jason in his passage through the labyrinth of Crete, he found it well to hold in his hand the silken clew or cord which connected him with the daylight world without, and enabled him to shape his course aright, and not lose himself in vague wanderings and speculations. To bestow the names of actual persons upon his imaginary creations was perhaps one of the means that he adopted to this end,—one of his reminders to himself to keep, as he expresses it, "undeviatingly within his immunities."

The Matthew Maule of the "Seven Gables" has perhaps (and perhaps not) a partial prototype in a certain Thomas Maule mentioned in the historic annals of Salem. This Thomas was a Quaker, and in 1669 Samuel Robinson and Samuel Shalocke were fined twenty shillings apiece for "entertayninge of him." Maule was warned to depart, but "he persevered, then and subsequently, in retaining his abode here." In 1714, "among claims for common land, Thomas Maule presented one for a place where his two shops were burnt; and in 1724 an order was issued for John Maule to pay eight pounds which his father left as a bequest to the town, three pounds of which were specified for the writing-school." Evidently Thomas Maule's fate was not so tragic as that of the fictitious Matthew; but he seems to have had a touch of the latter's obstinacy. The curse which Matthew is described as having launched against his enemy, the Puritan Colonel Pyncheon, "God will give him blood to drink!" is, however, historical, so far as the words go; but they were uttered by a woman, under circumstances mentioned, I think, in the note-books. Indeed, I am not sure that my own ancestor, Colonel John Hathorne, did not represent the Colonel Pyncheon of the occasion.

In the note-books, under date of 1838,

allusion is made to the grave of this "Colonel John Hathorne, Esq.," and the head-stone is described as being sunk deep into the earth and leaning forward, with the grass growing very long around it; "and on account of the moss it was rather difficult to make out the date." But the stone, as I saw it fifty-four years later, was as upright as if it had been put in place yesterday, and the inscription was quite clear of moss and perfectly legible. The hand of the renovator must have been at work, but it has performed its office with unusual forbearance and discretion. The passage above quoted from goes on to say: "It gives strange ideas to think how convenient to Dr. Peabody's residence the burial-ground is—the monuments standing almost within reach of the side-windows of the parlor, and there being a little gate from the back yard through which we step forth upon those old graves aforesaid." So we read in "Doctor Grimshawe" how the grave-yard communicated with the house by a back door, "so that with a hop, skip, and jump from the threshold, across a flat tombstone, the two children were in the habit of using the dismal cemetery as their play-ground." A couple of old apple-trees are spoken of; but these have disappeared, and the ground is planted with a few young elms. The south side of the inclosure is occupied by a line of low out-houses.

I might have prolonged indefinitely my desultory rambles about Salem, or this description of them; but, as the reader will long ago have perceived, there is really little or nothing to be said very pertinent to the matter ostensibly in hand. To repeat what I began with saying, material objects and associations are but the portals through which entrance is made into the region peopled and enriched by Hawthorne's genius. There is a certain pleasure—to the writer if not to the reader—in putting one's self, so far as may be practicable, in Hawthorne's physical standpoint, and thus testing, as it were, by practical experiment, the penetration of his insight and the creativeness of his imagination. But it is impossible, for me at least, as the foregoing pages abundantly testify, to adhere to the letter of my undertaking in this article, or to avoid taking up and discussing side-issues, and indulging in unpremeditated speculations. Hawthorne existed in Salem, but he lived, to all vital intents and purposes, somewhere else, whither no railway can convey the investigator, and whereof no guide-book hitherto published contains any information. In the paper still to come, I shall follow his footsteps through Concord, Boston, and Brook Farm.

Julian Hawthorne.