

Peace and beauty all about us, death and danger just ahead,
On our faces careless courage, in our hearts a somber dread.

Then the skirmish line went forward, and the only sounds we heard
Were the hum of droning insects and the carol of a bird;
Till, far off, a flash of fire, and a little cloud went by,
Like an angel's mantle floating down from out an azure sky.

Then a shell went screaming o'er us, and the air at once was rife
With a million whispering hornets, swiftly searching for a life;
And the birds and insects fled away before the "rebel yell,"
The thunder of the battle, and the furious flames of hell.

Other memories come thronging. When our shoulder-straps were new
We were nearly all the world, but now, alas, we are so few:
Then we marched with ringing footsteps, looking gayly to the fore;
Now with wistful, dreamy glances, we look back to days of yore.

If the spirits of the dead revisit earth for weal or woe,
We might fancy they would join us, those dear friends of long ago.
Hush, who knows what ghostly comrades may have come with noiseless feet,
In the old familiar friendliness, to make our band complete?

David L. Proudfit.

HAWTHORNE'S PHILOSOPHY.

THE profession of literature in America is not even now irresistibly inviting; reputation and profit are still to be obtained at less cost of time and labor in other ways. But if we go back sixty years, and imagine ourselves to be young people of twenty-two or three, with only a collegiate experience of life and the world, and living in a third-rate New England town, with no railways and no society, the prospects of a literary career would probably seem nothing less than meager.

Hawthorne, at the outset of his life, before he had accomplished anything, had not the humility which characterized him afterwards. His mother and sisters admired him, none of his companions and peers were his intellectual superiors, and he was inwardly conscious of power and ability. The only thing that could temper his good opinion of himself was books. They showed him that there had been men in the world better than any he had met—Homer, Cæsar, Shakspeare, Napoleon, Goethe; but he could reflect that these giants had also once been young fellows like himself, with perhaps no better grounds for ambitious dreams than he had. Who could tell whether, if he had the faith to try, he might not rival the renown even of such names as these?

"The secret of the young man's character," as he himself autobiographically observes in "The Ambitious Guest," "was a high and abstracted ambition. He could have borne to live an undistinguished life, but not to be forgotten in the grave. Obscurely as he journeyed now, a glory was to beam on all his pathway—though not, perhaps, while he was

treading it. But posterity should confess that a gifted one had passed from the cradle to the tomb with none to recognize him." Allowing for artistic emphasis, this expresses Hawthorne's early view of his own aspirations. He did not covet a quick and cheap success—stares and shouts and greasy night-caps tossed in the air; but he wished to be so spiritually great that only after he was gone should the world awake to a comprehension of his greatness. He wanted to win the prize in the night, as it were, and be off before anybody was up to congratulate him. He did not wish his struggles, his anxieties, the sweat of his brow, to be visible. Let it be said only that a spirit once visited the earth, and worked wonders there, and vanished before any were aware of him.

This was visionary and impractical enough, the dream of inexperienced youth, and not devoid of an element of selfishness; but it was lofty and refined, and agreeably in contrast with average ambition. It could not be realized, for no man has become great without first being made to confess his abject brotherhood with and dependence upon the race; but it was worth feeling for a time. Illusions are soon cured, but not every one is so fortunate as to experience a noble illusion. Meanwhile, it was Hawthorne's concern to put himself to the proof. There never seems to have been any doubt in his mind as to the path in which he should seek renown. "While we were lads together at a country college," he writes to Bridge, "doing a hundred things that the faculty never heard of,—or else it had

been the worse for us,— still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction. And a fiction-monger, in due season, he became." Even before he went to college he remarks, in a letter to his mother, that none of the ordinary professions are to his taste, but that to be an author—! And yet, under the circumstances, he could scarcely have fixed upon a less promising pursuit.

Not only were the chances of success all against him, but the mere fact of his adopting such a calling would bring him into disrepute. "There is a grossness," he says, "in the conceptions of my countrymen; they will not be convinced that any good thing may consist with what they call idleness. The principle is excellent in its general influence, but most miserable in its effects on the few who violate it. I had a quick sensitiveness to public opinion, and felt as if it ranked me with the tavern-haunters and town-paupers—with the drunken poet who hawked his own Fourth of July odes, and the broken soldier who had been good for nothing since last war." The life of New England was a practical, material life, and the only standard for a man was what he could do in open, active competition with other men: the more he could add to the physical wealth of the country, the better man was he. The tavern-haunter and the town-pauper, having no ambition and no pride or sensitiveness, were serene under opprobrium; but for Hawthorne a good deal of courage and self-confidence was needed to defy the popular prejudice.

Courage in abundance, and self-confidence also, he no doubt had; but he was too young and not phlegmatic enough to maintain an absolute composure. His attitude was rather, as he intimates, a species of "light-hearted desperation." Not having any immediate means available for proving public opinion to be in the wrong, he took refuge in defiance. He made no effort to conciliate his unsympathetic neighbors, but withdrew himself from their society,— perhaps in a "you'll-be-sorry-some-day" kind of spirit,— and settled himself as best he could to show that he was the best judge of what was good for him. The world— even his own little world— adjusted itself without difficulty to this order of things, and never once troubled itself to ask or to conjecture how the ambitious author was getting along. Nor is this extraordinary; for the author took unnecessary pains to cover such light traces as he made. Whatever he wrote was either signed with fictitious names or not signed at all; and, during the first eight or ten years, probably not half a dozen human beings were aware that he had written any-

thing. He was indulging his "abstracted ambition" to the top of its bent. He was resolved not to declare himself until the curiosity and enthusiasm aroused by his anonymous writings had reached such a pitch as to render concealment no longer possible. But he seemed likely to remain undisturbed a long time. Critical insight, literary appreciation, were not the strong point of our ancestors; and the channels through which literature could reach them were correspondingly scanty. Had Hawthorne begun with a "Scarlet Letter," he might possibly have found some recognition; but, even supposing his genius to have been as yet equal to such an achievement, other scarcely less indispensable requisites were wanting. "I have another great difficulty," he wrote at the time the "Twice-told Tales" appeared, "in the lack of materials; for I have seen so little of the world that I have nothing but thin air to concoct my stories of." And again: "I used to think that I could imagine all passions, all feelings and states of the heart and mind; but how little did I know!" Moreover, the vein and style of his writing not only was not popular, but never has become so; and the number of his readers to-day is very much less than the most moderate outside estimate would be likely to make it. Widely as his name is now known, not one in a thousand of those who are familiar with it have ever read a line of his inditing. A page of sound criticism here and there, and the avowed admiration and homage of the best contemporary intellects, have given him whatever popular vogue he can claim.

Neither can he be acquitted of having voluntarily deepened his own obscurity. The consciousness of being at odds with the spirit of his time and surroundings had the effect of making him build the wall of separation still higher. Naturally reserved, the dread of unsympathetic eyes rendered him an actual recluse. What passed for society in Salem was, indeed, as destitute of attraction as society can be, and an intelligent man, with thoughts and a soul of his own, might well shun contact with it; yet Hawthorne, while his reserve was still balanced by his youth and innate sociability,— for the last is by no means incompatible with the first,— might easily have accommodated himself to the situation. But, having once admitted the repellent chill, he was never afterwards to recover from its effects. His predicament bore some resemblance to that of his own Wakefield, who, having left his wife one night for a joke, found himself prevented by some nameless and intangible perversity from returning to her for twenty years. "An influence beyond our control lays its strong hand on every deed which

we do, and weaves its consequences into an iron tissue of necessity." And again he remarks that "amid the seeming confusion of our mysterious world, individuals are so nicely adjusted to a system, and systems to one another and to a whole, that, by stepping aside for a moment, a man exposes himself to a fearful risk of losing his place forever." Unlike Wakefield, however, Hawthorne spent his period of self-banishment in something else besides speculating as to what Mrs. Wakefield thought of his absence; and, whether he gained or lost by his long solitary vigil, the literature of his country unquestionably gained. Hawthorne himself, when he was thirty-six years old, began to perceive that a Providential wisdom may have overruled his imprisonment, in order that, living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, he might still keep the dew of his youth and the freshness of his heart. In point of fact, this whole episode of his career is extraordinary, both intrinsically and in its results. It is as picturesque and emblematic as anything in his own tales. From the obscurest, he was destined to become perhaps the foremost man of letters in America, and to secure that end he must be kept apart from the rush of civilization for a space. The knights-errant of old watched their armor previous to embarking on their enterprise; the young Indian chiefs were made to undergo a period of solitude and fasting before being admitted to full standing; Bunyan wrote his book in Bedford jail; and Hawthorne, in Salem, withdrew himself from the face of man, and meditated for twelve lonely years upon humanity. He came forth a great original writer. But the example is by no means one to be followed. Hardly one man in a thousand would escape being ruined by such an experience, let alone deriving any advantage from it. Upon Hawthorne — apart from its influence upon his literary quality — it produced an ineffaceable impression. He constantly recurs to it, both in his tales and elsewhere. "Was there ever such a weary delay in obtaining the slightest recognition from the public," he asks, "as in my case? I sat down by the wayside of life like a man under enchantment." "Trouble," he says in another place, "is the next best thing to enjoyment; and there is no share in the world so horrible as to have no share in either its joys or sorrows. For the last ten years I have not lived, but only dreamed of living." And again he alludes to "my heavy youth, which has been wasted in sluggishness for lack of hope and impulse, or equally thrown away in toil that had no wise motive, and has accomplished no good end." But the goodness of the end became apparent afterwards.

The truth seems to be that Hawthorne — who, in addition to his "genius," which is always indefinable, was a man of wide sympathies and penetrating insight — got more benefit from his own society than he could have derived from any other society open to him. Providence, according to its custom, had in view not so much the individual's happiness or preferences as his possible uses to mankind. He was destined to do a certain work, and to that end were needed, not only his native abilities, but an exceptional initiation, or forty days in the wilderness. He must meditate upon life abstractly — without either the confirmation or the bias afforded by actual experience. By this means would gradually be created within him an intuitive touchstone or standard of truth, unadulterated and indestructible, by which he might investigate and analyze, without danger or confusion, the problems and perplexities of the human heart. When once this standard had been established, the spell of seclusion might safely be broken, and the neophyte be suffered to go forth among men and prove his prowess. The effect was much the same as if Hawthorne had been born full-grown, with all the spiritual wisdom and reserved power that may come from half a lifetime's patience and meditation. He might be compared to his own Ernest in "The Great Stone Face": "Angels seemed to have sat with him by the fireside; and, dwelling with angels as friend with friends, he had imbibed the sublimity of their ideas, and imbued it with the sweet and lowly charm of household words. . . . His words had power, because they accorded with his thoughts; and his thoughts had reality, because they harmonized with the life that he had always lived."

The organization of a man who could endure such a vigil must, of course, have been exceptionally thorough, and his nature unusually wholesome; and such we know to have been the case with Hawthorne. But perhaps as valuable a trait as any was his delectable leisureliness — his imperial refusal to be in a hurry. This was apparent very early, and indeed youth is apt to fancy that time is practically inexhaustible; but that leads to laziness, and between laziness and leisureliness there is a great difference. Hawthorne's space was not within the limits of the day or the year, but within himself. He had an instinctive persuasion that the garden of his mind had been well sown with all necessary seeds, and that they would grow up in their due season. At all events, he would not pull them up to see how they were getting on. He took his harvests as they came, and was inclined rather to delay than to hasten their ripening. The need for him to be patient was

not more strong than his power to be so. In the second place, he had humor; not facetiousness or buffoonery,—a forced or imported brilliance,—but innate humor, that plays about the subject like the lambent flames of incandescent coal; following in this the system of his entire development, which was endogenous. He had gravity, but not solemnity; there were no arid spots in him; his perception of the vastness of the creative plan kept him from becoming lugubrious over any partial revelation of it. This deep and subtle smile does not, however, appear in his earliest writings, when he was trying his 'prentice hand, and was more anxious about the treatment than about the matter. The humorous passages of "Fanshawe" are not spontaneous and the papers referring to "Oberon," republished after Hawthorne's death, have a positively morbid strain in them. Another valuable quality, and one not often allied to a genius so refined as his, was his imperturbable common sense, which preserves even his most imaginative flights from extravagance. Even when we enter the "Hall of Fantasy," or are among the guests at "A Select Party," or try the virtues of "Dr. Heidigger's Experiment," still we feel that the "great, round, solid earth" of which Hawthorne speaks so affectionately is beneath our feet. He does not float vaguely in mid-air, but takes his stand somewhere near the center of things, and always knows what he is about. Tracing back his fanciful vagaries, we invariably find them originating in some settled and constant middle ground of belief, from which they are measured, and which renders them comprehensible and significant.

Such being the man, and such the circumstances, let us see how they acted upon one another. We know, on his own confession, that his beginnings were by no means free from difficulties. He had to learn how to write, like other people. "Hitherto," he says in "Passages from a Relinquished Work," from which quotations have already been made—"Hitherto I had immensely underrated the difficulties of my idle trade; but now I recognized that it demanded nothing short of my whole powers, cultivated to the utmost and exerted with prodigality. No talents or attainments would come amiss: wide observation, varied knowledge, deep thoughts, and sparkling ones; pathos, levity, and a mixture of both; lofty imagination, veiling itself in the garb of common life; and the practiced art which alone could render such gifts available. Knowing the impossibility of satisfying myself, even should the world be satisfied, I did my best, investigated the causes of every defect, and strove with patient stubbornness to

remove them in the next attempt. It is one of my few sources of pride that I followed 'my object' up with the firmness and energy of a man." When a young man first attempts authorship, especially if he have selected the vein of fiction, he is apt to be misled by some traditional and artificial conception of "literature." Literature, he fancies, must be something quite distinct and different from life, and demands a new code of manners and cast of thought. It is only later that he discovers—if he make the discovery at all—that the best literature is the simplest and most translucent expression of the mind that produces it; that much as there is to be learnt, there is yet more to unlearn. The redundancy and uncertainty of ordinary speech must be reformed, but its naturalness and spontaneity must be preserved. Hawthorne, as we know, burnt more than he published of his earlier writings, and we are therefore debarred from following the steps of his self-emancipation; but there is one little tale, "The Antique Ring," which he did not include in his republications, and which probably is as good an example of all that he wished to avoid as could now be found. With the exception, indeed, of an occasional allusion to the "dusky glow" of the gem, there is nothing in either the conception or the treatment of the story that recalls the Hawthorne that we know. The precise date of the composition can only be conjectured; but conjecture would place it very far back indeed.

Hawthorne's boyish contributions to literature took the form of sentimental little poems of no originality or value; and "The Antique Ring" would seem to be scarcely oneremove above them. Between it and "The Great Carbuncle," for example, the gulf is immense. A better vein was probably struck in the "Seven Tales of my Native Land," which had witchcraft for their theme, and which his sister, to whom Hawthorne showed them, and who was an excellent judge, has commended. At all events, every allusion to witches that survives in his published work is effective and characteristic; and the point of view from which he regards those picturesque beings is entirely peculiar to himself; in no other one direction is his undefinable genius more apparent. As regards the "Seven Tales," however, he is said to have remarked that they were "not true"; and we may infer that the witches were allowed to have too much their own way in them—that their broomstick flights left the "great, round, solid earth" too far behind. For the human nature in Hawthorne's witches—those that have been preserved to us—is at least as prominent as their supernatural attributes, and, indeed, is

what gives these attributes their best effect. If, in the "Seven Tales," the author allowed himself to be subjectively dominated by his own witches, no wonder he was carried beyond the limits which his reflection could justify. The horror would be too fantastic and unmitigated, and devoid of that element upon which he uniformly insists so strongly — a "moral." There is one story among the "Twice-told Tales" which might almost be numbered in the discarded category, "The Hollow of Three Hills." But it was well worth retaining, for once in a way.

But if Hawthorne's improvement was very great, it seems also to have been very rapid. Some of the earliest published pieces, collected in the "Twice-told Tales" and "The Snow Image," show, in a modified form, many of the excellences belonging to the later productions. He partly accounts for this by the remark that "in youth 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 truth that was only in the fancy then may have since become a substance of the mind and heart." Disraeli has a similar observation in his preface to "Vivian Grey." But it is also to be remembered that the forty-five sketches, or thereabouts, republished in the two volumes above mentioned, are all that survive of the labor of a dozen years; which, considering that he was always a diligent worker, leaves a very large number to be accounted for. It was these, no doubt, that Hawthorne informs us he burnt, "without mercy or remorse, and moreover without any subsequent regret"; and it is in them that we should have traced the development of his thought and style. Nevertheless, all allowances being made, the fact remains that he schooled himself with unusual promptness and severity; a fact the more remarkable, inasmuch as he had not the benefit of outside criticism, which we of a later age enjoy in such profusion. He was his own critic, and plied his office with a truly Puritanic harshness. He was perhaps aided in this by the curious duality of his nature,—his imaginative and his matter-of-fact selves, which were always keeping each other in check. Most men in whom the imagination is highly developed are prone to be seduced by its allurements; but the spirit of Hawthorne's stern and square-visaged ancestors was strong within him, and, while it restrained him from excess, enabled him with rare impunity to career narrowly upon the verge of absurdity without ever tumbling off. In other words, his self-poise was such as to make it possible for him to do

what no one else has done before or since — to write Hawthornesque romance. He invented a new definition of romance, and his proprietary rights in the domain he discovered have never been infringed upon. Hawthorne was neither afraid of his imagination nor in subjection to it; like Prospero, he wielded easily his magic wand, and smiled at the terrors of the storm he created. Through the black frown of the clouds he saw the smiling sunshine and the peaceful blue; and deeper than the roar and tumult of thunder and tempest he heard the quiet chirp of birds and the homely murmur of daily life.

We may conclude, then, that Hawthorne's apprenticeship practically came to an end at about his twenty-seventh year; the two or three surviving pieces (including "Fanshawe") known to have been produced before that date being not only inferior to his later work, but different from it in aim and significance. He was now able to say whatever he wished, and was beginning to find out what he wished to say. The latter accomplishment might seem, in view of the writer's peculiar surroundings, the more difficult feat of the two. But Hawthorne was still too fresh to the business to admit discouragement on this score. "The flow of fancy," he says, "soon came on me so abundantly, that its indulgence was its own reward — though the hope of praise also became a powerful incitement." Indeed, no passage in a writer's career is so agreeable as this first enjoyment of the faculty of expression; every passing hour suggests a new theme, and the wealth of material opening out before him seems inexhaustible. Everything being untried, he feels an impulse to try everything; nothing is common or unclean, because the point of view from which he looks upon it is his own.

As was remarked just now, Hawthorne had no hesitation about making literature his profession; but there is nothing to show that he originally anticipated devoting himself exclusively, or mainly, to fiction. As a matter of fact, however, though many of his pieces are explicitly historical, and many others what might be termed essays, he inevitably threw about them all the glamour of a fictitious atmosphere. He saw things picturesquely, or even pictorially; and his reflections, upon whatever subject, assumed a figurative form. He has been called, in complimentary phraseology, a poet; but the remark is truer than most such compliments are. He is a poet, inasmuch as his mind tends instinctively to humanize everything — to impose upon every object of thought or sensation a human figure or order. His view is comprehensive and classifying, sensitive to analogies, and analytic

because it has first been constructive. He admits nothing unrelated, but recognizes the central love and energy organizing all things. All these are poetic gifts, enabling their possessor to sum up and re-create the seeming chaos of phenomena, and to give it novel and enlightening utterance. But Hawthorne, however well fitted inwardly or spiritually to be a poet, was preserved therefrom by such comparatively external and accidental obstacles as an unmusical ear and an aversion to the trammels of rhythmical expression. I say "preserved" in no invidious sense, for, generally speaking, nothing can be better than a poet. But extraordinary emergencies require exceptional prescriptions; and America's æsthetic want at that period seemed to demand precisely Hawthorne and nothing else. The voice was Jacob's, but the hands were Esau's. Poetry is essentially a perception of the spiritual reason and relation of things; but the American genius, which is not primitive and childlike, cannot give a full account of itself in measured feet and rhymes; it must speak at times with the directness and artlessness of homely conversation, and be poetical in its influence rather than in its aspect. In neglecting the poetic form, therefore, Hawthorne proved himself in accord with the tendency of the age, which ignores form just in proportion as it insists upon the spirit.

Art, subjectively considered, is the means adopted by the artist to tell what is in him; and Hawthorne, up to the epoch of "The Scarlet Letter," was moved to utter himself upon three classes of subjects — philosophy, history, and that derivative and sublimation of the two which is called Story. But so strong in him was the instinct of Story that it colored and shaped his treatment of the former topics. His essays take the form of allegories, and his historical pieces assume the aspect less of narratives than of pictures. He cannot be satisfied with simply telling us what happened; he must bring us to look upon the scene as transacted in his imagination. Man is his game — the living human being; nor will he consent even to follow the familiar metaphysical device, and, in his philosophical speculations, separate the subject perceiving from the object perceived. To do so was, in his opinion, a mere logical analysis of a living experience — an attempt to resuscitate the body of knowledge after its soul has fled. He blended the artificial scientific distinction of subject and object in the living life or consciousness which miraculously knows. Therefore his philosophy always expresses itself in allegory at least, if not in actual examples of human experience. Abstractions will not suit him; practical illustrations are his only wear.

And if he will not divorce philosophy from man, neither, on the other hand, will he divorce man from philosophy. In other words, he will not be a mere painter of external life, of manners, of appearance; he must penetrate the secret of his characters, and know, and demonstrate either explicitly or implicitly, not so much the how as the wherefore of their actions and conditions. Thus it happens that all his stories have their moral. "Thought," he says, "has always its efficacy, and every striking incident its moral." To be at a loss for a moral would be tantamount to not knowing what he had been writing about; to understand a thing is to moralize it. Taking a comprehensive view, we might put the matter in a phrase by saying that he turns his philosophy into human beings, and his human beings into philosophy. But the older he grew, the more did he incline to the latter process in preference to the former. He relinquished the allegories and the allegorical essays, and found all the stage he needed for them and for his historical material in the imaginative circumstances of romance.

We need not suppose that Hawthorne made these discriminations deliberately, or even consciously. Like most wholesome and well-poised natures, he evinced great spontaneity of thought and action; and among the four maxims which he recorded for his use in his thirty-second year is "to do nothing against one's genius." He was probably led to romance as the fittest vehicle of his thoughts by sheer love of art — of beauty in its most highly organized form. In his investigations into the human mind and heart, he never acts the part of the surgeon or dissector; the living and breathing creature stands before us, and Hawthorne seems to endow us with a power to see through its fleshly walls into the workings beneath. But the fleshly walls are always there; there is nothing of the French or of the modern American analyst in our romancer. He clothes and veils his conceptions; he never strips or disembowels them; there is always reverence and delicacy in his attitude, though there is always, too, unswerving insistence upon the truth. This talk about "cold-blooded dissection" is quite beside the mark. Hawthorne comprehends the personages of his dramas, and he is tender to them precisely because he comprehends them. He has assumed their trials and infirmities, and has looked out of their eyes before he investigates them with his own. "If there be a faculty which I possess more perfectly than most men," he says, "it is that of throwing myself mentally into situations foreign to my own, and detecting the circumstances of each." "Cold-blooded dissection," under such cir-

cumstances, would be a kind of imaginative suicide. He loved humanity; and no one who reads his books in an intelligent spirit can avoid feeling stimulated on the humane side.

But the profound and unsensational character of Hawthorne's work—the artistic beauty and repose of its form—lays it open to a singular objection. It makes us wish to discover its author in it; and at the same time, and for the same cause, it baffles that desire. Everything is so smoothly finished that we can with difficulty find the workman in his production. Nevertheless, he is there, and with due attention he may be discerned. In alluding to the objections taken by "some of the more crabbed" of his critics to the personal tone of his introductions and prefaces, Hawthorne remarks that if he has touched upon facts which relate to himself, it is only because they chanced to be nearest at hand, and were likewise his own property. But "these things," he adds, "hide the man instead of displaying him. You must make quite another kind of inquest, and look through the range of his fictitious characters, in order to detect any of his essential traits." This was written in 1851, and of course refers to the pieces (except "The Scarlet Letter") produced previous to that date—that is to say, to the "Twice-told Tales," the "Mosses from an Old Manse," and the "Snow Image" collection. In these volumes, then, we are to look for a reflection of the character and development of Hawthorne's mind. Here we shall find the materials—the germs—from which his creations were evolved. In several of the essays, especially, the blending of substance and form is not so complete as to render disintegration an abstruse matter. In the least guarded of them, however, the reader is curiously bamboozled, so to speak, as to the real point at issue. He is amused with a superficial phantasmagory of figures and scenery, and does not realize that the tune which sets these puppets dancing is the true gist of the whole matter. And yet this bamboozling seems to be almost involuntary on Hawthorne's part; one would say that he was deceived himself, and that the philosophical remarks and conclusions which he makes were but the fruit of a chance suggestion arising out of the concrete topic. Indeed, it is evident that his disquisitions aim not so much at establishing his claim to be an original thinker, as to ally himself in thought and belief with the mass of his fellow-men. The sketches, he tells us, "are not the talk of a secluded man with his own heart and mind, but his attempts to open an intercourse with the world." His seclusion was an accidental and external matter only; he wished to merge

himself in the general human nature, and to prove his right to be assimilated with it. Truth, not singularity, was the garment that Hawthorne coveted; for truth, while it gives its possessor the freedom of all societies, is also the real cloak of invisibility. The more closely we envelop ourselves in it, the less obtrusive become our impertinent personal lineaments. Who can see Shakspeare in his plays, or Pheidias in his statues?

And the truth which Hawthorne perceived perhaps more profoundly than any other was that of the brotherhood of man. By inheritance and training he tended towards exclusiveness; but both his heart and his intellect showed him the shallowness of such a scheme of existence. So far back as 1835 we find him canvassing the idea of "some common quality or circumstance that should bring together people the most unlike in other respects, and make a brotherhood and sisterhood of them—the rich and the proud finding themselves in the same category with the mean and the despised." In the following year he defines his conception more minutely. He will class mankind, "first, by their sorrows; for instance, wherever there are any, whether in fair mansion or hovel, who are mourning for the loss of relatives or friends, and who wear black, whether the cloth be coarse or superfine, they are to make one class. Secondly, all who have the same maladies, whether they lie under damask canopies, or on straw pallets, or in the wards of hospitals, they are to form one class. Thirdly, all who are guilty of the same sins, whether the world knows them or not, whether they languish in prison, looking forward to the gallows, or walk honored among men, they also form a class. Then proceed to generalize and classify all the world together, as none can claim utter exemption from either sorrow, sin, or disease; and, if they could, yet death, like a great parent, comes and sweeps them all through one darksome portal—all his children." In elaborating the scheme in the "Procession of Life," he finds, however, that Sin and Death are the broadest badges of humanity. Diseases are "as proper subjects of human pride as any relations of human rank that man can fix upon. Disease is the natural aristocrat." He is not satisfied, either, with the idea of forming a separate class of mankind on the basis of high intellectual power. "It is but a higher development of innate gifts common to all," and it may be doubted whether the peculiar relation of intellectual persons to one another "may not vanish as soon as the procession shall have passed beyond the circle of the present world." Even grief is not an invariable bond of alliance, for if the influence of the

world's false distinctions remain in the heart, then sorrow lacks the earnestness that makes it holy and reverend; "if the mourner have anything dearer than his grief, he must seek his true position elsewhere." When, however, the trumpet sounds for the guilty to assemble, "even the purest may be sensible of some faint responding echo in his breast; many, however, will be astonished at the fatal impulse that drags them thitherward. Nothing is more remarkable than the various deceptions by which guilt conceals itself from the perpetrator's conscience." This idea of the catholicity of guilt runs through all Hawthorne's productions. "Man," he says (in "Fancy's Show-Box"), "must not disclaim his brotherhood even with the guiltiest, since, though his hand be clean, his heart has surely been polluted by the flitting phantoms of iniquity." Again, the story of "Young Goodman Brown" — perhaps the most remarkable piece of imaginative writing in the whole list of Hawthorne's works — inculcates the same appalling lesson of fraternity in sin. "Evil is the nature of mankind!" exclaims the fallen angel. "When the friend shows his inmost heart to his friend," cries the dying Father Hooper, "the lover to his best beloved; when man does not vainly shrink from the eye of his Creator, loathsomely treasuring up the secret of his sin, then deem me a monster, for the symbol beneath which I have lived and die! I look around me, and, lo! on every visage a Black Veil!"

But though he thus insisted upon the darker aspects of human association, Hawthorne was far from neglecting the other side. Speaking of the reformers and theorizers, in "The Hall of Fantasy,"—"representatives of an unquiet period, when mankind is seeking to cast off the whole tissue of ancient custom like a tattered garment,"—and noting the apparent incompatibility of their various notions, he nevertheless perceives the underlying bond of union. "Far down beyond the fathom of the intellect," he says, "the soul acknowledges that all these varying and conflicting developments of humanity were united in one sentiment—the struggle of the race after a better and purer life than had yet been realized on earth." Or, once more, alluding to the religious sectarians, he observes that truth has an intoxicating quality when imbibed by any save a powerful intellect, and often impels the quaffer to quarrel in his cups; so that each sect surrounds its own righteousness with a hedge of thorns, and, though their hearts be large, their minds are often exclusively filled with one idea. Nevertheless, though "their own view may be bounded by country, creed, profession, the diversities of individual char-

acter, above them all is the breadth of Providence!"

Another of Hawthorne's strongest perceptions was of the artificiality of our present civilization, and of the superfluities and absurdities to which custom has insensibly blinded us. "Earth's Holocaust" is the symbolic clearing out of these abuses. Rank, government, property, literature, and the gallows are consumed one after the other; and then the radicals would do away with marriage, theology, and even with the Bible. But Hawthorne will not allow the radicals to carry him off his feet; and though he is ready to admit that nature is better than any book, and the human heart deeper than any system of philosophy, yet he puts his finger unerringly upon the weak spot in all reformations; and though the observation is put into the mouth of a personage whose "complexion was indeed fearfully dark, and his eyes glowed with a redder light than that of the bonfire," it is none the less unanswerable. "Be not so cast down, my good friends," says this lurid individual; "you shall see good days yet. There is one thing that these wisecracks have forgotten to throw into the fire, and without which all the rest of the conflagration is just nothing at all; yes, though they had burned the earth itself to a cinder."

"And what may that be?" eagerly demanded the last murderer.

"What but the human heart itself?" said the dark-visaged stranger with a portentous grin.

"Purify that inward sphere," adds Hawthorne, "and the shapes of evil that now seem almost our only realities, will turn to shadowy phantoms and vanish of their own accord; but if we go no deeper than the intellect, and strive, with merely that feeble instrument, to discern and rectify what is wrong, our whole accomplishment will be a dream." On the other hand, if reform be not always beneficial, it can do no lasting harm: "not a truth is destroyed; only what is evil can feel the action of the fire." The Titan of innovation, in short, is double in his nature, partaking of both angelic and diabolic elements; but Providence still stands behind, and overrules all to its own ends.

But he took more pleasure in imagining the condition of the world after all mistakes and irrationalities were done away with or forgotten. "We who are born into the world's artificial system," he says ("New Adam and Eve"), "can never adequately know how little in our present state and circumstances is natural, and how much is merely the interpolation of the perverted mind and heart of man. It is only through the medium of the

imagination that we can loosen these iron fetters which we call truth and reality, and make ourselves even partially sensible what prisoners we are." And then he carries his newly created pair through a day's wandering about Boston, on that day when everything physical that can give evidence of man's present position remains untouched by the hand of destiny; but no breath of a creative being, save themselves, disturbs this earthly atmosphere. The satire is gracefully and delicately managed. "Such a pair would at once distinguish between art and nature. Their instincts and intuitions would at once recognize the wisdom and simplicity of the latter; while the former, with its elaborate perversities, would offer them a continued succession of puzzles." They behold each other without astonishment; but "perhaps no other stride so vast remains to be taken as when they first turn from the reality of their mutual glance to the dreams and shadows that perplex them everywhere else." They approach a church, attracted by its spire, pointing upwards to the sky, whither they have already yearned to climb; as they enter the portal, Time, who has survived his former progeny, speaks with the iron tongue that men gave him to his two grandchildren. "They listen, but understand him not; nature would measure time by the succession of thoughts and acts which constitute real life, and not by hours of emptiness." They dimly feel some religious influence in the place, but are troubled by the roof between them and the sky. They go out and kneel at the threshold, and "give way to the spirit's natural instinct of adoration towards a beneficent Father. But, in truth, their life thus far has been a continual prayer; purity and simplicity hold converse at every moment with their Creator." Passing onward, they come to that "hospital" whose patients "were sick — and so were the purest of their brethren — with the plague of sin." Every remedy had been tried for its extirpation except the single one, "the flower that grew in Heaven and was sovereign for all the miseries of earth — man never had attempted to cure sin by Love!" His system had been one of "fear and vengeance, never successful, yet followed to the last." Escaping thence, they enter a private mansion, most of the contents of which are a puzzle to them. The pictures, for example, do not interest them, for "there is something radically artificial and deceptive in painting." This recalls Heine's apothegm — "Painting is nothing but a flat falsehood." The statue of a little child, however, impresses them more agreeably. "Sculpture in its highest excellence is more genuine than painting, and

might seem to be evolved from some natural germ by the same law as a leaf or a flower." They next enter a bank, where is hoarded "the mainspring, the life, the very essence of the system that had wrought itself into the vitals of mankind and choked their original nature in its deadly gripe." As Hawthorne elsewhere remarks, however, "the desire for wealth is the natural yearning for that life in the midst of which we find ourselves." Be that as it may, to Adam and Eve all the bullion in the bank is no better than "heaps of rubbish." A further discovery is that of a library, which excites Adam's curiosity; but Eve draws him forth again in good time, else "all the perversions, and sophistries, and false wisdom so aptly mimicking the true,— all the narrow truth, so partial that it becomes more deceptive than falsehood,— all the wrong principles and worse practice, the pernicious examples and mistaken rules of life,— all the specious theories which turn earth into cloudland, and men into shadows,— all the sad experience which it took mankind so many ages to accumulate, and from which they never drew a moral for their future guidance,— the whole heap of this disastrous lore would have tumbled at once upon Adam's head." Surely this view of literature is a radical one for even an American author to hold.

Hawthorne's religious faith was of an almost childlike simplicity, though it was as deeply rooted as his life itself. It was not his cue to insist upon the rational explanation of all mysteries; and if he had felt the longing for "some master-thought to guide me through this labyrinth of life, teaching me wherefore I was born, and how to do my task on earth, and what is death," yet he recognized the vanity of attempting to "unveil the mysteries which Divine Intelligence has revealed so far as is needful to our guidance, and hid the rest." What is essential is intuitive; and he remarks that "a blind man might as reasonably contend that a reflection in a mirror does not exist, as we, because the Creator has hitherto withheld the spiritual perception, can therefore contend that there is no spiritual world." Nor is that world a "dark realm of nothingness"; it fulfills all the wants of the human soul; nor need we even doubt that "man's disembodied spirit may re-create time and the world for itself, with all their peculiar enjoyments, should there still be human yearnings amid life eternal and infinite." The riddle of the Sphinx does not keep him awake o' nights; perhaps, he thinks, the reason of our existence "may be revealed to us after the fall of the curtain; or, not impossibly, the whole drama, in which we are

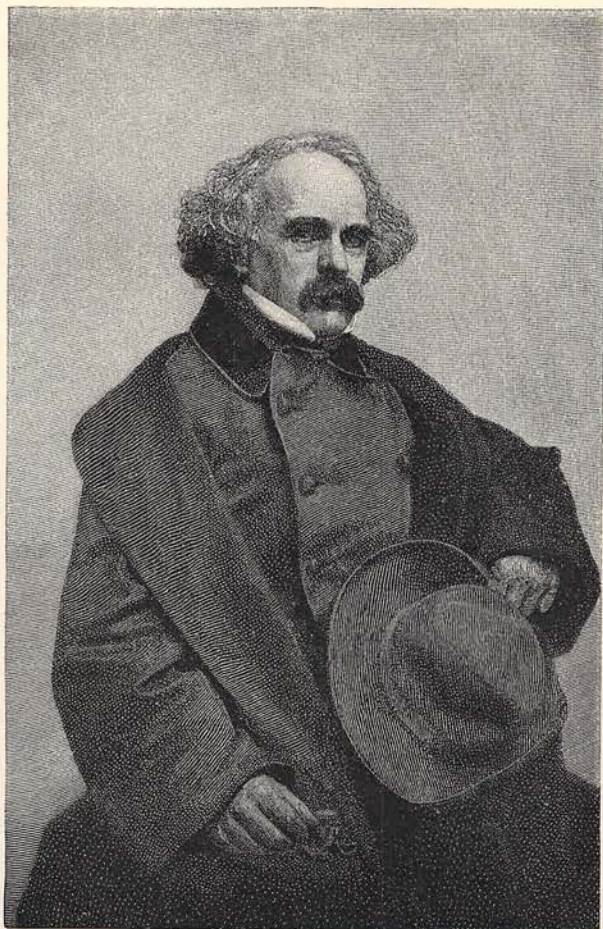
involuntary actors, may have been performed for the instruction of another set of spectators." This last, however, is a fanciful theory, not a sober belief; and for a man who has become wedded to a theory there remains, in his opinion, little hope. "There is no surer method of arriving at the Hall of Fantasy than to throw one's self into the current of a theory; for, whatever landmarks of fact may be set up along the stream, there is a law of nature that impels it thither. And let it be so; for what is good and true becomes gradually hardened into fact, while error melts away and vanishes. Therefore," he adds, "may none who believe and rejoice in the progress of mankind be angry with me because I recognized their apostles and leaders amid the fantastic radiance of those pictured windows. I love and honor such men as well as they."

These are the words of an optimist, though not of an extreme one; but it is noticeable that the deeper the level at which Hawthorne moves, the more optimistic does he become. He is not an advocate; he holds the scales impartially; but his most momentous conclusions are also his most hopeful ones. A humorous or saturnine eccentricity might have attracted more curiosity; but, once more, he wished "to open an intercourse with the world," and eccentricity is a porcupine's coat. He aimed not to startle or to titillate his hearers, but to say only what the unprejudiced judgment of mankind must agree to. To do this without once descending to commonplace is the feat of the highest genius; yet so well has Hawthorne accomplished it, that one has to ponder his utterances more than once to realize how revolutionary many of them are.

He seldom indulges in satire; but when he does so, it is to good purpose. "The Celestial Railroad" is a most felicitous conception, and is touched with a masterly hand. It exposes the modern tendency to postpone the warnings of conscience, to glide over and round the grim realities of life, and to skim comfortably forward from the cradle to the grave, outwardly respectable, but inwardly stained with every indulgence. Christian's old friend Evangelist presides at the ticket-office—though "some malicious persons" deny his identity, "and even pretend to bring competent evidence of an imposture." Among the fashionable folk at the railway station there was much pleasant conversation on indifferent topics; "while religion, though indubitably the main thing at heart, was thrown tastefully into the background. Even an infidel would have heard little or nothing to shock his sensibility." The Valley of the Shadow of Death is artificially lighted, and there is a stopping-place at the mouth of Tophet, where, accord-

ing to Mr. Smooth-it-away, "the directors had caused forges to be set up for the manufacture of railroad iron." The giants Pope and Pagan are dead; but their cavern is occupied by an amorphous monster of German extraction, Giant Transcendentalist by name, who "shouted after us, but in so strange a phraseology that we knew not what he meant, nor whether to be encouraged or affrighted." At Vanity Fair everything proceeds swimmingly until the old-fashioned pilgrims make their appearance, when "there were these two worthy simpletons, making the scene look wild and monstrous, merely by their sturdy repudiation of all part in its business or pleasures." Another station was "formerly the castle of the redoubted Giant Despair; but since his death Mr. Flimsy-Faith has repaired it (in a modern and airy style of architecture), and keeps an excellent house of entertainment there." And so they rattle along, "at the tail of a thunderbolt," with Apollyon for engineer, until they arrive at the river, where "a steam ferry-boat, the last improvement on this important route," stands ready to receive them. "But the wheels, as they began their revolution, threw a dash of spray over me so cold—so deadly cold, with the chill that will never leave those waters until Death be drowned in his own river—that, with a shiver and a heartquake, I awoke. Thank heaven, it was a Dream!" Some people object to allegories; but, deftly managed, they give wings to satire. The historian of "The Celestial Railroad" is at any rate chargeable with the same indiscretion that is ascribed to Elliston in "The Bosom Serpent"—that of "breaking through the tacit compact by which the world has done its best to secure repose without relinquishing evil."

It might be objected to an analysis such as has been indicated (rather than made) in the foregoing pages, that Hawthorne is substantially a romancer,—a teller of tales,—and that, therefore, his excursions into other regions are of little practical significance. But the story was never the chief object in Hawthorne's writings; the skeleton having once been designed, he immediately forgot all about it, and devoted all his energies to the flesh-and-blood of the composition. And this flesh-and-blood is no mere appendage; it is wrought out of the author's very life. In order that the outward beauty of the completed work may be adequately appreciated, it is, therefore, necessary to understand something of its inner organization and secret genesis. It is alive, and has the inexhaustible fascination of life—the depth beyond depth. It is illuminated by imagination and graced by art; but imagination only ren-



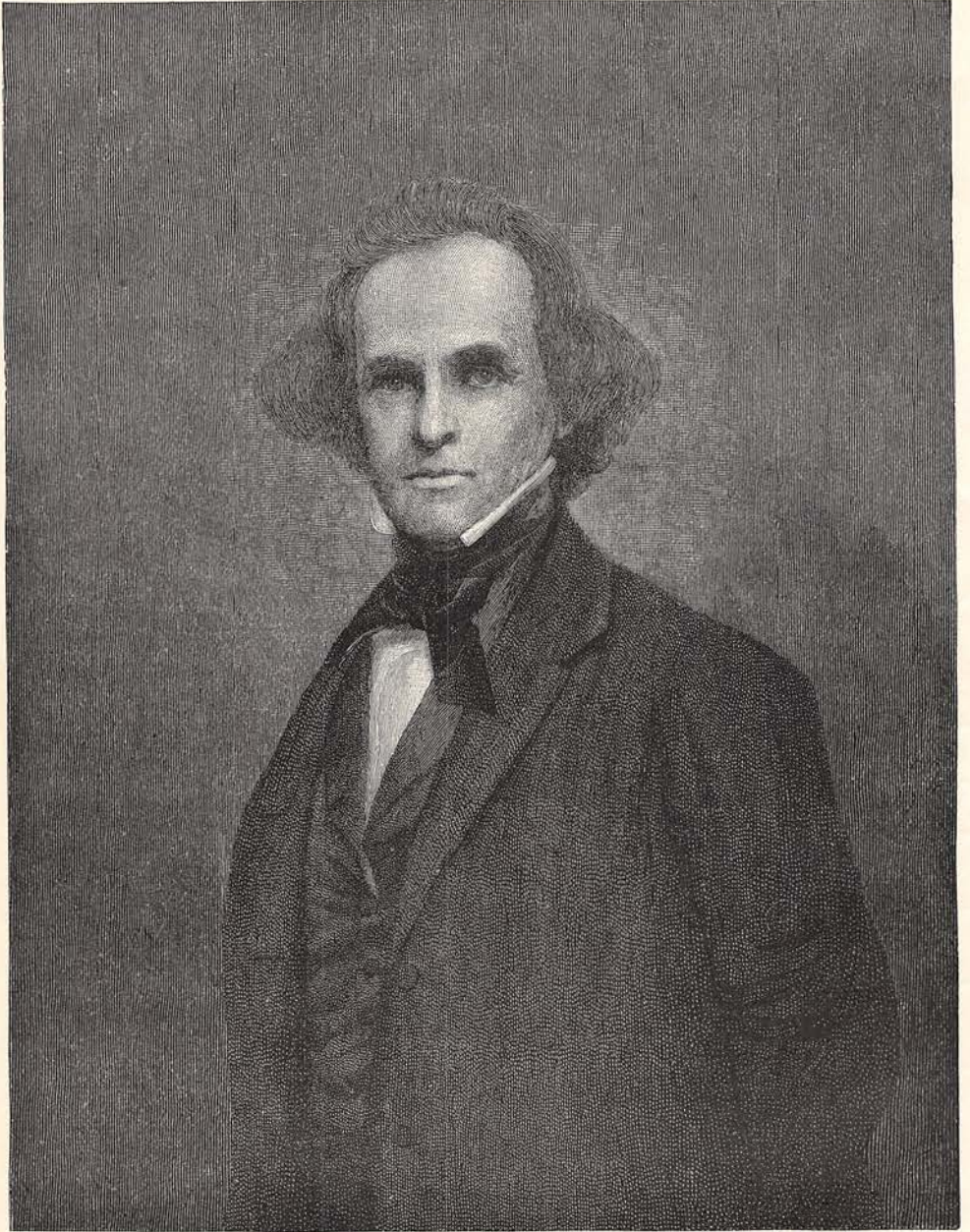
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE (ABOUT 1862). (FROM A PHOTOGRAPH BY SILLSBEE, CASE & CO.)

ders the informing truth more conspicuous, and art is the form which symmetrical truth inevitably assumes. In short, save as regards the merest externals, nothing in Hawthorne's fictions is fictitious. And therefore we lose what is best in them, unless we learn how to read between the lines—how to detect the writer's own lineaments beneath the multifarious marks wherewith he veils them. These shorter sketches, covering a wider area of thought than the complete romances, are consequently more transparent; and they show us how "The Scarlet Letter" and "The Marble Faun" came to be born. They show us, too, the value of his early seclusion, which caused him to begin with meditation instead of with observation, and thus to produce things with souls in them, instead of hollow shells painted to resemble life. However we

may probe or test his writings, we shall find no vacuum in them; the material envelope is sometimes imperfect, but the spiritual reality is always there.

Hawthorne himself perceived his defects much more keenly than his excellences, and his effort to improve is constantly visible. He endeavors to balance his rare faculty of insight by the comparatively common faculty of oversight; and the volumes of his note-books are the patent records of this study. His aim, therefore, was the perfection which only Shakspeare has attained; but Hawthorne was the bud of Shakspeare's full-blown rose. He widened every year; his roots were nourished by the Shaksperian soil; and his perfume had a purity and potency which will, perhaps, cause it to linger in the memory as long as that of the mighty Elizabethan.

Julian Hawthorne.



Nath^l Hawthorne