

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S TWELVE YEARS OF ISOLATION

by

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Documents

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE.....	1
"THE CURSED HABIT OF SOLITUDE".....	3
Different Interpretations of the Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne.....	3
Family Influence.....	5
Nathaniel Hawthorne's Early Life .....	7
Character.....	9
LIFE IN "WITCH HAUNTED" SALEM.....	13
Seven Tales of My Native Land and Fanshawe.....	18
Tales and Sketches.....	19
Travels.....	24
Hawthorne as Editor.....	33
Moodiness.....	37
Twice Told Tales.....	44
1837 - A PROMISING YEAR.....	47
Hawthorne's Attempt in Securing a Position.....	47
Sophia Peabody.....	50
CONCLUSION.....	53
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	60
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	61
APPENDIX.....	65

## INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Many literary critics consider Nathaniel Hawthorne as one of the greatest masters of prose. Numerous biographies have been written about him, but the question of how he spent the years in Salem after his return from four years of study in Bowdoin College is still a controversial issue even after almost a century since his death in 1864. Mystery seems to shroud this period when he was trying to master the art of writing. Records are very scanty about those twelve years he spent in Salem,<sup>1</sup> and critics are still at variance as to what he actually did between his graduation in 1824 and the publication of his Twice Told Tales in 1837.

It is known that after his return from college, he lived with his widowed mother and two sisters in his ancestral home on Herbert Street in Salem. However, a legend has persisted, quite romantically, about the nebulous years of his early manhood. Many writers believe that Nathaniel Hawthorne became a moody recluse and spent twelve years of his life in this "dismal upper floor chamber" in a self-imposed solitary confinement.

Hawthorne himself was primarily responsible for starting this confusing question about his early life. In 1840, writing in a rather melancholy vein to his sweetheart, Sophia Peabody, who later became his wife, he magnified this long, lonely phase of his bachelor days in order to dramatize the drab existence of his former years before he experienced the glory of reciprocated love.

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix A.

In his numerous letters and biographical notes, Hawthorne made frequent sentimental references to this "haunted chamber" which references were capitalized upon by his biographers. They have continued assuming disputation of positive assertions and recriminating denials to the effect that Hawthorne led or did not lead a depressing life after his graduation from college. Strong evidence of depressing years can be seen by an examination of the voluminous tales and sketches which he wrote during the disputed years of his life. These writings were serious musings and penetrating studies of the cardinal errors and depravities of man. They were the terribly tenacious efforts of the writer to search and trace the dark and devious sins of mankind. This peculiar preponderance of the somber and sinister human failings gave the impression that the writer himself was suffering from a dreadful remorse of conscience, and that the isolative theme of his writings was a projection of his isolated life.

On the other hand, a few of his generous biographers like Robert Cantwell and Randall Stewart, and his life-long friend, Horatio Bridge, tried to convince the world that he was never morbid and that he was never a recluse. By their judicious efforts they presented a far more intense Hawthorne--a young Hawthorne of flesh and blood who led a relatively virile and stimulating life. The writer of this thesis has attempted to summarize, weigh the evidence and evaluate the conclusions of the conflicting schools of thought about Nathaniel Hawthorne's manner of life in Salem from 1825 to 1837.

"THE CURSED HABIT OF SOLITUDE"

Different Interpretations of the Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne

Two natures in him strove  
 Like night with day, his sunshine and his gloom;  
 To him the stern forefather's creed descended,  
 The weight of some inexorable Jove  
 Prejudging from the cradle to the tomb;

Nor from his work was ever absent quite  
 The presence which, o'er cast it as we may;  
 Things far beyond our reason can suggest;  
 There was a drifting light  
 In Donatello's cell,--a fitfull ray  
 Of sunshine came to hapless Clifford's breast.<sup>1</sup>

Nathaniel Hawthorne is an enigma. His life presents an interesting picture of shades and meanings, similar to the tales he wove. The sketches, stories and novels he wrote were reflections of the American social heritage, in reality a record of the sociological and spiritual development of American culture. Most of his stories were undeniably taken from actual facts and happenings. He lived in an era when although Puritanism had declined, the vestiges of the teachings of Calvinism were still predominant. Puritanism was an integral part of his background and of his ancestors before him. However, skeptical of the uncompromising moral fanaticism of his Puritan forefathers, he wrote incessantly on their absorbing problems of sin, guilt, and redemption. This was a definite deviation in the period when the romantic optimism of Transcendentalism was supreme. Quite different from the writings of Emerson and Thoreau, Hawthorne's works seemed

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<sup>1</sup>Annie R. Marble, "Gloom and Cheer in Hawthorne," The Critic, July, 1904, p. 28.

cumberous and diffused. They were somber in style and highly introspective in theme.

In an effort to justify a Hawthorne personality that would explain the somber quality of his writings, critics wrote different stories about his life. Many of his biographers constructed an imaginary Hawthorne from what was assumed to be an internal evidence of his writings depicting him as a sort of morbid, timid person afflicted with an incredible shyness which made him exceedingly antisocial. According to his son, Julian, there were acquaintances of Hawthorne who asserted that:

...He not only possessed broad and even low human sympathies and tendencies, but that he was by no means proof against temptation...it was only by the kind precaution and charitable silence of his friends that his dissolute excesses have remained so long concealed...he was the victim of an insatiable appetite for gin, brandy and rum and if a bottle were put on the table, he could hardly maintain a decent self-restraint.<sup>1</sup>

This seems to be an exaggerated, malevolent criticism about Hawthorne. Julian alleged that although his father occasionally indulged in sociable drinking with chosen friends, Hawthorne was never inebriated.<sup>2</sup>

In practically all articles and biographies written about Hawthorne, the myth continued that he supposedly withdrew from the actual world, became a moody recluse and lived solely for the purpose of gratifying an obsession--to become a writer. This theory has been expounded, time and time again, through an extended and penetrating search for evidence: in the influence of

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<sup>1</sup>Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Wife, p. 82.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

his family, in the incident of his early life, in the character of the man, and in the tenor of his writings.

#### Family Influence

"I had always a natural tendency (it appears to have been on the paternal side) toward seclusion,"<sup>1</sup> Hawthorne wrote in preparing some biographical notes for his friend Stoddard. Soberness of spirit was a predominating trait of the Hawthornes. Little is known of the life of the sea captain Nathaniel Hawthorne, the father of Nathaniel Hawthorne, the author. "He was a silent, reserved, severe man...of a rather melancholy cast of thought."<sup>2</sup> Like his son, he was an assiduous reader. On his long voyages, he took volumes of books and pamphlets and spent his spare time reading and studying them. His marriage, apparently happy, was short, for he died in Dutch Guiana at the age of 33 when his son Nathaniel was only four years old.

Elizabeth Manning Hawthorne, the author's mother, came from "a family who seemed to have been as reserved and peculiar in their ways as the Hawthornes were in theirs."<sup>3</sup> The Mannings, like the Hawthornes, were seafarers, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's maternal grandmother lived all her life in the agony of waiting for her sons, many of whom never returned from the sea.

The life of Mrs. Elizabeth M. Hawthorne is quite as baffling as that of her distinguished son. It has usually been asserted

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<sup>1</sup>Edward Mather, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Modest Man, p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>3</sup>J. Hawthorne, loc. cit.

in Nathaniel Hawthorne's biographies that the death of his father cast an immense gloom over his mother's life. After receiving the news of her husband's death, as the legend goes, Mrs. Hawthorne retired to her room and for 37 years until her death grieved over her untimely widowhood. This romantic tale was first told by Elizabeth Peabody, Nathaniel Hawthorne's sister-in-law, based upon her hazy memory 40 years afterwards. Ever since Elizabeth Peabody's reminiscence of this mystical withdrawal of Mrs. Hawthorne from the world, this reminiscence has been exaggerated to improbable proportions. Contrary to this popular belief, Mrs. Hawthorne's letters show that "she carried on a farm, taught Sunday school in Raymond and apparently showed a keen interest in her children's welfare. ... If...Elizabeth Hawthorne went into seclusion, it was for reasons of health,"<sup>1</sup>

Nathaniel Hawthorne spent practically all his pre-college life in close and constant association with his mother. In one rare occasion when he was briefly separated from her, he wrote, "Oh how I wish I was [sic] again with you, with nothing to do but go a gunning."<sup>2</sup> In another instance, he said, "I am quite reconciled to going to college since I am to spend the vacations with you."<sup>3</sup> The easy comradeship and bantering tone of his letters to Mrs. Hawthorne revealed the close relationship that existed between the mother and son, a thing that could not have prevailed if Mrs.

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<sup>1</sup>Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne Prepares for College," The New England Quarterly, March, 1938, p. 71. (Appendix B.)

<sup>2</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 34.

<sup>3</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 107.



Hawthorne shunned the world and became the recluse some writers have made her.<sup>1</sup>

Nathaniel Hawthorne's Early Life

The rather limited circumstance of Nathaniel Hawthorne's early childhood has been cited by his biographers as the basic source of his preference for solitude in later years. He was born into a rather undefinable social and economic status and his childhood was apparently no different from that of any other boy of his age. According to custom in those days, he got his early education through a succession of private tutors. As a child, he was vivacious and very good looking--"a boy at times reserved, at times rather violent...sensitive of criticism...he could black an eye without any feeling of remorse."<sup>2</sup> A large part of his boyhood was spent in a world of women amidst the strict surveillance of his grandmother and several maternal aunts. This could not be considered a drawback, as far as his writing is concerned, for his almost clairvoyant perception of female tenderness revealed in his later novels shows the influence of women in his life. His seclusion from boys of his own age and his dependence upon feminine companionship was increased when in 1831 he broke his leg--an accident which altered the course of his life. The leg was slow in healing in spite of constant medical care. It took three years before he could fully walk again, and it was at this stage

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix C.  
<sup>2</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 28.

that he developed his love of reading. He would lie on the floor and "absorbed through the pores of his mind books that were beyond his years"<sup>1</sup>--books of Boswell, Shakespeare, Milton, Scott, and others.

Even his early adolescence was not really as lonely as he later pictured it. In a biographical note for James T. Field, he wrote, "It was there I first got my cursed habit of solitude."<sup>2</sup> He was referring to the idyllically happy years he spent on the lovely border of Sebago Lake in Raymond, Maine. With the other boys of the village--Robinson Cook, Jacob Dingley and William Symmes--he enjoyed fishing and hunting in summer and ice skating in winter. Years later he repudiated this statement of loneliness and nostalgically said that he lived in Maine "like a bird of the air, so perfect was the freedom"<sup>3</sup> he enjoyed there.

Aside from his schooling, it seemed that his mother's family provided him with instructions on social decorum, and the enthusiasm he showed in his dancing lessons when he was 14-years old gives a picture incongruous in a lonely and solitary boyhood.<sup>4</sup>

Another revealing aspect in the sunny disposition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's life was manifested in his early literary attempt. In 1820, when he was 16 years old, he composed and edited a miniature weekly "paper" called Spectator, which he circulated among the members of his family. For its initial issue he wrote an essay on Solitude.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Cantwell, The American Years, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Horatio Bridge, Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 55.

<sup>3</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>Appendix D.

Man is naturally a social being.... It is only in society that the full energy of his mind is aroused. Perhaps life may pass more tranquilly, estranged from the pursuits and vexations of the multitude, but all the hurry and whirl of passion is preferable to the cold calmness of indifference.<sup>1</sup>

This is hardly a reflection of a reclusive person unless maybe he was already fighting a tendency he deplored, that of being solitary.

#### Character

Hawthorne was a man of unruffled countenance and reserved manners and not easily given to excessive temperamental outbursts. He was never ebullient in society, was inclined to be silent in a group and was always an attentive listener. Yet in spite of his natural inclination to be very reserved he was never antisocial. His sister Elizabeth reminiscently wrote: "He liked a crowd... when there were visitors in the family he was always social."<sup>2</sup> He was often misunderstood by his acquaintances and a few of his friends.

A number of the notable figures of his time tried to gain his confidence and court his friendship but to little avail. Emerson, Melville, Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and others tried, without apparent success, to penetrate his unyielding reticence. "In his relations he formed few intimacies and rarely sought the

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Otto Mattheisen, American Renaissance, p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Randall Stewart, "Recollections of Hawthorne by His Sister Elizabeth," American Literature, January, 1945, p. 320.

friendship of others. He discouraged advances in a negative way and gave his confidence only to a few."<sup>1</sup>

The association of Hawthorne and Emerson presented a curious relationship. Both writers had known each other for 20 years and visited each other quite frequently when Hawthorne lived in Concord, but their association never developed into a lasting friendship. Emerson never thought much of Hawthorne's writings, which were completely divergent from his own philosophy. The strict Puritan moral censure reflected in Hawthorne's work exasperated him. This, however, did not in any way mar his high regard for Hawthorne as a person. It was Emerson who sought Hawthorne's company and when occasions permitted, they took long walks together and conversed lengthily, with Emerson doing most of the talking. Emerson's enthusiastic approach must have elicited a lukewarm response from Hawthorne, for Emerson recorded in his journal: "It was easy to talk to him--there were no barriers--only he said so little that I talked too much, and stopped only because, as he gave no indication, I feared to exceed."<sup>2</sup> On Hawthorne's death, Emerson wrote a most touching tribute to the man by blaming himself for his own failure in not having tried harder to win Hawthorne's friendship.

Hawthorne's association with Herman Melville must have been less apathetic, although there was a great difference in age between them. In literary endeavors the two writers expressed their

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<sup>1</sup>Bridge, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup>Randall Stewart, The American Notebooks, p. 311.

mutual admiration for each other. They both wrote outstanding allegorical stories of similar themes. Melville's praise of Hawthorne was perhaps excessive, and his adoration for the older man was unreserved. Again, it was Melville who ardously sought Hawthorne's friendship and to Hawthorne he confided his innermost thoughts, tribulations and disappointments. "Melville contrived a hundred different ways of assaulting Hawthorne's reserve...all to excite Hawthorne to some equivalent disclosure,"<sup>1</sup> but he never succeeded. Nevertheless, Hawthorne was sympathetic with Melville's undertakings. He even went so far as trying to secure, at one time, a government post for Melville to help alleviate the financial stringencies that the younger man was constantly faced with. In spite of the great efforts of Hawthorne, Melville never got the position, and this failure to help his friend left an imprint of guilt in Hawthorne. In some measure he must have balanced this inadequacy, for he encouraged and stimulated greatly the creative ability of the young author. It was during the height of their friendship that Melville wrote Moby Dick, and in recognition of his gratitude, Melville dedicated this masterpiece to Hawthorne.

Similarly, the relationship between Hawthorne and Melville did not develop to any enduring friendship, although Melville's admiration for Hawthorne's genius and his affection for the older man remained steadfast. Yet after the death of Hawthorne, Melville wondered if there were some secrets in Hawthorne's life which had

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<sup>1</sup>Mathew Josephson, "The Transfiguration of Herman Melville," The Outlook, September 19, 1928, p. 810.

never been revealed and which accounted for the gloomy passages in his books.<sup>1</sup> By expressing such a bewilderment, Melville perhaps did not fully comprehend the character of his confessor. Summarizing his relation to his own fellowmen and explaining his works, Hawthorne once wrote:

I am glad to think that God sees through my heart; and if any angel has power to penetrate into it, he is welcome to know everything that is there. Yes, and so may any mortal who is capable of full sympathy, and, therefore, worthy to come into my depths. But he must find his own way there. I can neither guide nor enlighten him. It is this involuntary reserve, I suppose, that has given the objectivity to my writings....<sup>2</sup>

To his chosen friends, Hawthorne responded with warmth, actively seeking their company and being at times painfully revealing. Horatio Bridge was one of the very few people to whom Hawthorne disclosed himself freely. His letters to Bridge embodied his deepest despair in a period when he was harrassed with utmost uncertainty about the success of his literary career. Their friendship, which began in college, lasted through a lifetime. Bridge spoke with authoritative confidence when he said, "There was more fun and frolic in his disposition than his published writings indicate."<sup>3</sup>

There was no streak of snobbery in Hawthorne's nature. His cordiality extended to those who were below his peer socially and intellectually. His childhood playmate, William Symmes, a mulatto, attested to Hawthorne's sincerity in dealing with people who could in no way be of help to him:

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<sup>1</sup>Julian Hawthorne, Hawthorne and His Circle, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup>Alexander Japp, Memoir of Nathaniel Hawthorne, p. 90.

<sup>3</sup>Bridge, op. cit., p. 6.

After the age of 20 I went to sea, and have ever since been a wanderer, occasionally meeting Hawthorne by chance. He never forgot me, and once, after he graduated came on board a vessel in Salem harbor and stayed with me two hours.... I have heard people say Hawthorne was cold and distant; if he was so, there was one of his youthful associates who, as the world goes, was not his equal socially, certainly not intellectually, who was never forgotten.... We had a long talk and he conversed in that easy, bewitching style, of which he is perfect master when he pleased.<sup>1</sup>

#### LIFE IN "WITCH HAUNTED" SALEM

In the summer of 1825, Nathaniel Hawthorne was graduated from Bowdoin College, ranking 18th among a distinguished class of 36, many of whom became public figures years later. Without much effort he passed those four years profitably in acquiring a considerable knowledge of the English language and the ability to live pleasantly with men of his age. He spent a large part of his leisure hours walking along the woods surrounding Bowdoin, participated quite passively in the usual college pranks, at times was rebellious against the faculty. He gained two life-long friends, Horatio Bridge and Franklin Pierce, whose influence and faith in his talents never wavered even in the darkest moments of his momentary failures and self-despair.<sup>2</sup>

He left Bowdoin and returned to Salem determined to be a writer yet quite uncertain of being able to become a successful one. Defiant of the high hopes of his family and unwilling to settle in the prosaic business of managing the affairs of the Manning

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Pickard, Hawthorne's First Diary, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Lloyd Morris, The Rebellious Puritan, p. 42.

stagecoach, he secretly labored--tediously preparing himself for a profession he had long aimed to be in. Even before he entered college he wrote his mother and jestingly surveyed the possibilities of a career. By a process of delicate elimination, he half-seriously arrived at a conclusion that he would rather be a writer than anything else. Writing was his latent ambition. He experimented with it in Bowdoin by surreptitiously writing tales and a draft of a novel. It was intensified by the enthusiastic encouragement of Bridge, who had positive convictions in his literary ability.

As a token of his gratitude because of Bridge's sincere and abiding belief in his literary skill, Hawthorne dedicated the Snow Image to his friend. He wrote:

If anybody is responsible for my being at this day an author, it is yourself. I know not whence your faith came; but while we were lads together at a country college, gatherine blue berries, in study hours under those tall academic pines;...doing a hundred things that the Faculty never heard of... still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction.<sup>1</sup>

He retreated to an unsympathetic Salem--a Salem for which he had little affection. By necessity he had to return to this old seaport and although endowed with a relatively roving spirit, subsided into a seemingly passive and ineffective existence. Salem had long lost its commercial grandeur and its glory had departed with the growth of Boston and New York,<sup>2</sup> but its provincial aspect of age and abandoned prosperity had a profound effect upon him. It was an ideal place to ponder upon the elusive thoughts that haunted

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<sup>1</sup>Japp, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>2</sup>Brooks, The Flowering of New England, p. 210.



him. The quaint air, the eerie atmosphere that pervaded Salem with its lingering ghosts of the persecuted witches in whose maltreatment his ancestors took an active part, captured his imagination. Here too he lived frugally, relying upon the bounty of his mother and the grudging support of his uncles while he was practicing the art of writing. No wonder it was a discouraging and trying existence. Possessed of high pride even in youth and not wanting to be dependent upon the Mannings, he had voiced his stubborn independence earlier in life by almost passing up a college education. Before entering Bowdoin, he wailed: "I can't bear the thought of living upon Uncle Robert for four years longer. How happy I should be to be able to say 'I am lord of myself.'"<sup>1</sup> To his relatives, who were not taken into his confidence about the nature of his work, he appeared to be idling his time away, and they looked askance at his idiosyncratic behavior. They had Puritan passion for work and for them to have an idler in the family was an affront.

Life in Herbert Street was tranquil, without pomp and ceremony. "The members of the household lived pretty much as they pleased. His mother...ate her meals in her own room, his sister Elizabeth usually slept until noon."<sup>2</sup> He religiously devoted all his time to and concentrated all his efforts in his work. An indefatigable writer, he kept writing and re-writing all day long for five years and alighted from his "chamber" at dusk "to take the nearest way to the most convenient solitude which was oftenest

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<sup>1</sup>Bridge, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>2</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 111.

the seashore."<sup>1</sup> Cramped by the limited confines of his room, he took those nocturnal exercises to sort out the thoughts that later had to be written down. Coming home refreshed from his walks he would carry on a half-animated political discussion with his sister Elizabeth whose political sentiments were opposed to his own. Elizabeth was a handsome woman whose wit and perception matched her distinguished brother's. It was whispered in gossip-loving Salem that she suffered from an unfortunate love affair, but this was never established. She evidently wielded some political influence and according to Cantwell, her "knowledge of life was almost frightening."<sup>2</sup> Certainly, Hawthorne valued the wisdom of his sister, and it was to Elizabeth that he first showed the result of his timid efforts.

Viewed from our present-day standard of gregarious living, it is perplexing to conceive of a young man like Hawthorne blest with such manly grace and beauty retiring into seclusion; preferring to live in such limited environs rather than honoring the society of the remaining Salem aristocracy to which by birth he no doubt belonged. But he had few friends in this town that his ancestors had built and he was always conscious of the economic impoverishment to which the Hawthorne family had sunk. The large Hawthorne fortune had dwindled even before the time of Nathaniel, the Hawthornes bequeathing nothing to him but excessive pride in their name.

Those years after college, although appearing aimless, were not entirely lonely. He had three friends in Salem with whom he

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<sup>1</sup>Mather, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>2</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 110.

associated happily and profitably. His pleasant association with William B. Pike, David Roberts and Horace Conolly prevented him from being submerged into total seclusion. "Pike was an enthusiastic collector of local anecdotes and traditions,"<sup>1</sup> and from him Hawthorne broadened his knowledge of Salem in a time when he was zealously gathering and writing witch stories. Years later, Pike proved to be a more invaluable friend, for he became Hawthorne's confidant of the vexing political problems that confronted the author while he was a consul in Liverpool.

Horace Conolly and David Roberts furnished him with heartier diversions. Very often the two would call on the Hawthornes and play whist with Nathaniel and fun-loving Louisa. Hawthorne spent many congenial evenings with the two men playing cards and moderately indulging in liquor in the house of his distant cousin, Miss Susan Ingersol, a Hawthorne descendant who "inherited the Hawthorne pride...and was an unfailing source of information about family legends and traditions."<sup>2</sup>

Reading was another form of recreation he pursued as a respite from his wearisome task of writing. He was a tireless reader of books and periodicals. He himself confided, "I had read endlessly all sorts of good and good-for-nothing books."<sup>3</sup> The record of the books he borrowed from the Athenaeum Library in Salem revealed the fact that he had a wide range of interests in reading. He read prodigious materials of varied subjects dealing with history, economics, philosophy, art, science and religion. "In nine years

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<sup>1</sup>Morris, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hawthorne, *Hawthorne and His Wife*, p. 97.

<sup>3</sup>Cantwell, *op. cit.*, p. 116.

he borrowed about seven hundred books from the library,"<sup>1</sup> which gave a clear and almost week by week account of his whereabouts during those years he spent in Salem.<sup>2</sup> He also pursued with great patience the works of English, French and Latin writers. He "thoroughly enjoyed and appreciated good poetry" and read with relishing pleasure the poems of Wordsworth, Shelly, Keats, Coleridge and Byron.

#### Seven Tales of My Native Land and Fanshawe

The result of those years of conscientious and self-disciplined efforts was Seven Tales of My Native Land, a compilation of tales and sketches, most of which were drafted in Bowdoin, dealing with New England legends and history. With trepidation he showed the work to his sister Elizabeth whose opinion he esteemed most, for he said once, "The only thing I fear is the ridicule of Elizabeth."<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth did not deride his efforts but thought them to be strikingly original with a "certain peculiar genius in them."<sup>4</sup> With this high praise he sent the book to the publisher, and spurred with happy confidence he polished and finished Fanshawe, a novel also begun in college. However, Seven Tales of My Native Land passed from one publisher to another with no one willing to undertake the hazard of publishing the work of an unknown author. "One honest man among these seventeen tells me fairly that no American publisher will meddle with an American work, seldom if by a known

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Appendix E.

<sup>3</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., P. 5.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

writer and never if by a new one unless at the writer's risk."<sup>1</sup> He recalled the book after a long period of waiting and some vague promises of publication; in a moment of consuming anger he burned it. Learning from the experience of Seven Tales of My Native Land, he published Fanshawe at his own expense in 1828. The book did not yield material success; it remained unnoticed, for it was never brought before the reading public properly. Fanshawe suffered the same fate as the previous book; with a bitter feeling that it was worthless he recalled all copies and burned them. It was a harsh gesture, for upon reading it, Horatio Bridge was once more convinced that Hawthorne had the makings of a literary genius. Fanshawe also attracted the attention of a shrewd Boston publisher, S. G. Goodrich, who thought that if the book had been in the hands of a more aggressive dealer it would have paid Hawthorne a profit.<sup>2</sup>

#### Tales and Sketches

His failures to publish discouraged the beginning of self-confidence that prompted his desire to publish the thwarted Seven Tales of My Native Land and to print Fanshawe at his own expense. But with strong persistence he continued to write, although usually "the author burned without mercy or remorse and, moreover, without subsequent regret"<sup>3</sup> most of what he had written. Through the invitation of S. G. Goodrich who thought his works had considerable merit, he sent from time to time contributions to the Token and

<sup>1</sup>Randall Stewart, Nathaniel Hawthorne: A Biography, p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>3</sup>Hawthorne, Preface, Twice Told Tales.

later to other magazines. Whatever he wrote remained unacknowledged, which enabled Goodrich to use four stories at one time, and since "they are anonymous, no objection arises from having so many pages by one author, particularly as they are as good if not better than anything else"<sup>1</sup> Goodrich could get.

Although most of Hawthorne's stories and sketches written between the years 1825-1837 showed beauty of composition--many of them considered today as great literary pieces--yet they did not attract any great amount of attention during his time. He was "the example, the par excellence...of the privately admired and publicly unappreciated man of genius."<sup>2</sup> His theme and style were not popular, because his interest was so resolutely centered upon the phenomena of sin and guilt. Human life and character engrossed him only as long as they were touched by a bewitching spiritual mysticism. He would painstakingly search "below the surface of life and find morals and motives and spiritual interpretations. 'It was his gift to see the inmost soul.'"<sup>3</sup> His works were not in tune with the time. His stories and sketches were harrowing allegories dealing with the Puritan past, not of the 19th century--a difference which made his writings seem ghostly, vague and remote. Edgar Allan Poe in his literary criticism of Hawthorne's Twice Told Tales, pointed out the main defect of Hawthorne's writings:

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>2</sup>Edgar Allan Poe, The Selected Poetry and Prose of Edgar Allan Poe, p. 373.

<sup>3</sup>Fred Lewis Pattee, The Development of the American Short Story, p. 100.

The "peculiarity" or sameness, or monotone of Hawthorne,...suffice to deprive him of all chance of popular appreciation...we find him monotonous at decidedly the worst of all possible points...from the popular sentiment and from the popular taste. I allude to the strain of allegory which completely overwhelms the greater number of his subjects....<sup>1</sup>

Hawthorne himself was constantly aware of this shortcoming and was always apologetic of the vein of his writings. Criticizing the works of Aubepine (actually one of his pseudonyms), Hawthorne wrote: "His writings...are not altogether destitute of fancy and originality; they might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory...."<sup>2</sup>

A curious tone of tranquil and pensive tenderness pervaded practically all of the fifty or more stories and sketches written during this period of his life. His writings, as in his essay "Sights From a Steeple," gave the feeling that the author stood like a detached observer on a church steeple on autumnal mornings and watched the world with sympathetic contemplation of its miserable struggle.

These dark shadows of thought that frequently fell on Hawthorne's reflective pages erroneously convey the impression that he was always melancholy and oppressively introspective. It had been pointed out by his critics that the passive and retiring nature of his temperament was the key to the somber quality of his writings. There "never lived a man to whom ordinary

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<sup>1</sup>Poe, *op. cit.*, p. 378.

<sup>2</sup>Hawthorne, Preface, Rappaccini's Daughter.

contact with his fellows was more impossible, and that the mysterious solitude in which his fictitious characters move is a mere shadow of his own imperial loneliness of soul."<sup>1</sup>

He wrote of the secrecy of the human heart as symbolized in the minister who wore a black veil (*The Minister's Black Veil*); of people who disappeared from their homes to spy upon the lives they had abandoned (*Wakefield*); of the hovering proximity of love, death, and riches in our lives and our inability to foresee them (*David Swan*); of the sinister New England witchcraft, of incest and the horrors of the Indian massacre (*Alice Doane's Appeal*); of the consuming and distorting effect of guilt and the tragic means of expiating it (*Roger Malvin's Burial*); of the mortal consequences of the wickedness of unfaithful wives (*The Hollow of the Three Hills*); of idealistic young men who lost their faith in humanity because of the universal and irrepressible occurrences of evil (*Young Goodman Brown*); of young people with secret and abstracted ambitions and their failures of realization because of the futility of human existence (*The Ambitious Guest*); of beautiful young women who withered and turned into specters of funerals on account of their inconsolable grief over the deaths of their loved ones (*The White Old Maid*); of the incapacity of men to profit from their past experiences and to resort to their stupid youthful follies that caused them misery and heartaches, even if opportunity presented itself to enable them to correct their mistakes (*Dr. Heidigger's Experiment*).

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<sup>1</sup>Paul E. More, Shelburne Essays, Vol. 1, p. 44.



He did not interest himself in many vital phases of New England life. New England scenes and history are replete with colorful stories of the sea and of Indian folklore and legends. Although practically all his writings were set against some historical background and written with fringes of historical significance, he did not emphasize one important historical fact, the Puritan struggle for a separate way of life in which they could exercise religious and moral freedom. Although he was in full sympathy with his Puritan forefathers in their struggle, yet he did not make extensive use of this theme or make it the basis of the plot except in few instances as in "The Gray Champion" and "Endicott and the Red Cross."

In several representative tales mentioned above, and in the others, there was the frequent recurrence of "symbols of guilt, of self contemplation, of isolation, of secrecy, of emotional rigidity or coldness, or death."<sup>1</sup> Even so, it would be unjust to say with absolute certainty that the clue to his proclivity for the somber and gloomy was the nature of his disposition. It should be borne in mind that Hawthorne was writing of an entirely different era--a past era. He was writing of Puritan fanaticism, narrowness, and intolerance.

He who would reproduce the atmosphere of the Puritan days must approach his tasks with all religious seriousness. For Hawthorne in the shuddery half light of this grim period, caricature and levity were impossible. All the legends of New England are cold and

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<sup>1</sup>Hyatt H. Waggoner, Introduction, Nathaniel Hawthorne: Selected Tales and Sketches, p. viii.

gloomy, and they center about personalities that were abnormal and deeds that can be told with truthfulness only in hushed tones.<sup>1</sup>

At this point, it is probably worth noting how fickle the general public's taste is. Outside of Hawthorne, the leading contributor to the Token after 1837 was N. P. Willis. The writings of the two authors presented a curious contrast.

Willis was all sunshine and summer, the other chill, dark and wintry; the one was full of love and hope, the other of doubt and distrust; the one sought the open daylight--sunshine, flowers, music, and found them everywhere; the other plunged into the dim caverns of the mind, and studied the grisly specters of jealousy, remorse and despair.<sup>2</sup>

Needless to say the works of Willis were popular, drawing laudatory comments from the public and their contemporary critics, while Hawthorne's works except for occasional criticisms in the papers remained unnoticed. Surprisingly, however, Willis is almost entirely forgotten now, while Hawthorne's stories and sketches are still considered priceless gems of American literature.

### Travels

Hawthorne biographies made considerable mention about his confining life in Salem. He "came back...in 1825...disappeared like a stone dropped into a well."<sup>3</sup> In his autobiographical notes, Hawthorne himself wrote, "I doubt whether so much as twenty people in town were aware of my existence."<sup>4</sup> Some biographers took this statement essentially as a testimony to their allegation that

<sup>1</sup>Pattee, *op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>2</sup>S. G. Goodrich, Recollections of a Lifetime, Vol. II, p. 270.

<sup>3</sup>Malcolm Cowley, "Hawthorne in Solitude," The New Republic, August 2, 1948.

<sup>4</sup>Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Short Studies of American Authors, p. 9.

Hawthorne became entirely a recluse during his residence in Salem. Evidently he was somewhat retiring. It was not in his nature to assert his presence in society, hence he did not make much effort to mingle with the inhabitants of Salem. It should be remembered that prior to his return from college, he did not live there long enough at any given time to form friendships or know many people. He had been restricted to the house for three years by his lameness; and before entering Bowdoin College where he spent four years of young manhood, he lived for quite a while in Maine.

His life in Salem was not so limited as to warrant the statement that he became a recluse. This is far from the truth, for during those twelve years he visited friends, took long vacations in nearby towns and made periodic and extensive travels outside of Salem. The sketches he wrote of these travels and his letters on these journeys show the pleasant and wide contacts he had with people. They are records of a happy and fruitful life.

Yearly, Hawthorne accompanied his Uncle Samuel Manning on horse buying trips, traveling all over New England. Like a roving reporter he gathered materials on these annual trips. After his return to Salem, in writing his sketches and tales he made use of the scenes he saw, the historical data of the places he visited, and the characteristics of the people he met. So vivid were the impressions upon his imagination of these travels that he could recreate a scene or a character with remarkable precision even after a lapse of four or five years. Most of the time the bases for his sketches and tales were just mere lines from his notes,

but so radiant were his descriptions and so convincing were his characters that they seemed to have been taken from freshly gathered data.

In 1830 he traveled through Connecticut, and of this trip he wrote, "I meet with many marvelous adventures."<sup>1</sup> He went down to New York and wrote two descriptive essays "Old Ticonderoga" and "My Visit to Niagara." The sight of Niagara must have impressed him greatly for he mentioned it again in "Rochester," a brief sketch of the town of Rochester and its legend of Sam Patch, the town's madman who leaped to his death from a precipice. Hawthorne probably also went as far as Martha's Vineyard, for he wrote a historical and descriptive essay about that island.

In 1831 he traveled in New Hampshire. On this trip, "Hawthorne made innumerable acquaintances, sitting on the doorsteps of county taverns, in the midst of squires, judges, generals and all the potentates of the land, talking about the price of hay, the value of horse-flesh..."<sup>2</sup> He visited the Shaker Village in Canterbury and attended the Shaker service. He was received cordially, was shown over the establishment and invited to dinner. Out of this trip he wrote "The Centerbury Pilgrims" and "Shaker Bridal."

In 1832 he was in Portland, Maine. He traveled through the White Mountains, and upon reaching Burlington, a town bordering on Canada, he wrote his mother on September 16:

I have arrived in health and safety at this place, and have so much to do and to see, that I cannot find time to tell you all my adventures. I passed through

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<sup>1</sup>George Lathrop, Biographical Sketch, Complete Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne, Vol. XII, p.468.

<sup>2</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 172.

the White Hills and stayed two nights and part of three days in Ethan Crawford's house. Moreover, I mounted what the people called a "plaguey high-lifted critur," and rode with four gentlemen and a guide six miles to the foot of Mt. Washington. It was but 4 o'clock A.M., when we started and a showery morning, and we have to ride through the very worst road that ever was seen, mud and mire, and several rivers to be forded and trees to be jumped over (fallen trees, I mean) through all which I galloped and trotted and tript and stumbled and arrived without breaking my neck...<sup>1</sup>

Apparently he went as far as Canada, for he wrote an essay "An Ontario Steam-Boat" in which he showed his candid observation in noting class distinctions that existed on these regular vessels that ferried along the Canadian lakes. Out of this long journey he wrote two wonderful tales, "The Ambitious Guest" and "The Great Carbuncle," and a descriptive sketch "The Notch of the White Mountains."

The summer of 1833 he spent in Swampscott, a fishing village within walking distance of Salem, "leaving no address and telling no one where he was going."<sup>2</sup> There he fell in love with Susan, a lovely and practical village maid whom he featured in a sketch called "The Village Uncle," which he appropriately sub-titled "The Mermaid, A Reverie." On one of his frequent returns home during his sojourn in Swampscott, he told Elizabeth of a mermaid-- a sentimental mermaid who gave him a pale pink sugar heart which he romantically kept for a long time. He nonchalantly ate it later, however, marking the end of the romance with Susan.

Thus we see that Hawthorne's life in Salem after his return

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<sup>1</sup>Stewart, The American Notebooks, p. 283.

<sup>2</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 168.

from college was not really as lonely and dull as pictured in most of his biographies. In addition to his yearly travels throughout New England, he visited friends and they returned his visits in Salem.

In the summer of 1837, he spent a wonderful vacation with Horatio Bridge in Augusta, Maine. Here Hawthorne was in the midst of the excitement of a threatening Canadian revolt, and he witnessed the distressing boundary dispute between Canada and Maine. Augusta was a hot-bed of political agitation, filled with easily provoked Canadians and war-eager Yankees. He saw the turmoil of a city preparing for war and on his trips to town with Bridge, he milled through the confusion of a carelessly drinking and morally liberal town. He was greatly opposed to bloodshed and must have regarded this menacing war with grave misgivings. Years later the raging Civil War aggravated his physically run-down condition, and his worries about the future of his country may have contributed to his death.

However, he enjoyed the rural atmosphere of Bridge's home outside of town. He went fishing and swimming and took long walks with Bridge. In the evenings he had long philosophical discussions with Schaeffer, an eccentric French teacher also staying with Bridge. He surveyed the surrounding areas and observed the Irish and Canadian workers building the Kennebec Dam, a project financed and supervised by Bridge.

He tarried in Augusta for several weeks, then proceeded to Thomaston, Maine, and had an equally wonderful time visiting another schoolmate, John Cilley, a rising politician in Maine. Before going

back to Salem, he and Gilley had another reunion in Boston and were guests at an impressive dinner with high ranking officers of the Navy. They were shown all over the Navy Yard and Hawthorne enjoyed himself immensely talking with Captain Percival, Captain Scott, and Commodore Downes, who all regarded him with utmost respect.

Generally a lonely life connotes dullness and monotony. Some of Hawthorne's biographers point out significantly the unmitigating gloom of his life. This does not seem to be wholly true. There were times when his life was full of excitement and some hazard. His travels during those years were exciting and probably connected with intrigues. At least some of his travels coincided with some horrifying incidents.

For instance, in 1830 the dignity and peacefulness of Salem was shattered by a gruesome tragedy. Old Captain Joseph White, a wealthy and powerful patriarch of the town, was stabbed to death in his bed. The outrageous killing shocked not only Salem but the neighboring states, and the news traveled far and wide. Hawthorne was away on one of his annual travels, but the news must have reached him. Salem was terrorized by mass apprehension of suspects and possible witnesses. It seemed that Hawthorne, on purpose, tried to put a great distance between him and Salem. According to Cantwell, Hawthorne traveled in Connecticut like a "culprit."<sup>1</sup> "The scattered records of Hawthorne's western journey are a record of flight, and yet of a guiltless fugitive."<sup>1</sup> If he was fleeing at

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<sup>1</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 161.

all, "he might have been fleeing the hostile and suspicious city to avoid being called on the witness stand with his cousins and his kinspeople."<sup>1</sup>

Scenes of disaster appeared to have a certain fascination for him. In 1838 the Pittsfield, Massachusetts, public powder explosion occurred. This shocking disaster, the cause of which was never successfully investigated, almost demolished Pittsfield, a town of 4,000, one of the largest arms manufacturing centers in the United States. It seemed Hawthorne deliberately timed his North Adam travel with this ghastly event. Nine days after the event, Hawthorne left for a "secret destination" saying he was not going to write nor be written to.<sup>2</sup>

Probably Hawthorne had no direct interest in the explosion, but upon reaching Pittsfield,

...He behaved strangely as if he was actually investigating the explosion or the events in connection with it; he asked no questions, made no direct attempt, apparently, to find out what had happened. Yet the secrecy of his journey, the strange way he traveled, and his close observation of strangers in the countryside indicate that he had a conscious purpose he could not reveal and which he feared would be discovered.<sup>3</sup>

Yet he did not stay long in Pittsfield but left the following morning and proceeded to North Adam, and stayed there for two months roaming around the village, mingling with the people, listening to their talk and living in the place as if he were a member of the community. Out of his experience in this remote Massachusetts village he wrote one of his greatest short stories,

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<sup>1</sup>Cantwell, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 265-268.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 270.



"Ethan Brand," the story of the lime-kiln burner who traveled far and wide in search of the unpardonable sin only to find that what he was vainly searching for was lodged in his own heart. The scenes and characters of the story were authentic reproductions of North Adam's surroundings and inhabitants.

The mysterious timing of some of Hawthorne's travels made him open to suspicion on account of their time relation with some gruesome events in and around Salem. His actions could possibly be interpreted that he was connected or personally interested with these events. It is also possible that such timing may have been matters of coincidence. Since the direct connection between his "guilty flights" and these events has never been ascertained, the possibility of his involvements in such incidents can be just a matter of interesting conjectures.

His yearly travels significantly throw light upon one aspect of his life. Many years afterwards he wrote Sophia describing these years in Salem. He said, "I used to think I could imagine all passions, all feelings and states of heart and mind."<sup>1</sup> He probably meant that he had never experienced love. This declaration perhaps is nothing more than his desire to emphasize the fullness of his life because of Sophia's love. However, there are indications to prove that during Hawthorne's travels in New England "he was interested in several girls," and that he always "had an appreciative eye for female beauty."<sup>2</sup> Aside from Susan

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<sup>1</sup>Stuart Sherman, Americans, p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 44.

of Swampscott, there must have been another girl who caught his fancy as early as November, 1831. He wrote his sister Louisa:

I also send the bag of coins. I believe there is a silver threepence among them, which you must take out and bring home, as I cannot put myself to the trouble of looking for it at present. It was a gift to me from the loveliest lady in the land, and it would break my heart to part with it.<sup>1</sup>

In another instance while he was visiting his friend, John Cilley, in August, 1837, at Thomaston, Maine, he stayed in a boarding house full of women and some of them fascinated him. He had a flirtation with Mary Troutt, the landlady's daughter, and his affection for her must have been a little serious for he "found when he parted...that they were both rather solemn."<sup>2</sup>

There was a time when he must really have fallen seriously in love. While he was traveling around New England, he proposed to Miss Eliza Gibbs, "'a tall, darkeyed queenly maiden'"<sup>3</sup> of Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard.

His attitude towards girls was always interested and agreeable and he treated them with gallantry. In 1837 he almost got involved in a duel through the guile and cunning maneuvers of a young lady, prominent in Salem society and apparently a good friend of Hawthorne. She used him as a party in enticing another man by playing the two men against the other. But fortunately Hawthorne's antagonist was level-headed and less impulsive, for he declined Hawthorne's challenge and explained the deceit in the lady's plot.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 126

<sup>2</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 211.

<sup>3</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 43.

These and similar incidents indicate that Hawthorne enjoyed a number of innocent amorous escapades and belie the notion that he led a monastic life in Salem.

#### Hawthorne as Editor

In January, 1836, Hawthorne escaped "the dullness of Salem" and went to Boston to edit "The Magazine of Useful and Entertaining Knowledge," a position he secured through the recommendation of his publisher, S. G. Goodrich. Without a penny to his name, Hawthorne set out from Salem by borrowing five dollars from his Uncle Robert and with unbelievable audacity proceeded to the house of Thomas Green Fessenden, a once famous American author whose satirical works Hawthorne greatly admired. He had never met the author, but while Hawthorne was in Bowdoin he had run across a long poem "with the funniest, most unusual and grotesque origin in literary history"<sup>1</sup> written by Thomas Green Fessenden. This bold visit ended with Hawthorne's being taken as a boarder in the Fessenden household throughout his stay in Boston while editing the magazine.

Hawthorne was optimistically heralded to the editorship by his friends' hearty approval on this new literary venture. From Havana, Cuba, Horatio Bridge wrote him on February 20, 1836:

...Nothing has given me so much pleasure for many a day as the intelligence concerning your late engagement in active and responsible business. I have always known that whenever you should exert yourself in earnest,

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<sup>1</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 178.

that you could could command respectability and independence and fame. As for your present situation, I do not regard it so much in itself--though it seems tolerably good to begin with--as I do for its being the introduction to other and better employment. Besides, it is no small point gained to get out of Salem. Independently of the fact about "the prophet," etc., there is a peculiar dullness about Salem--a heavy atmosphere which no literary man can breathe. You are now embarked with the other literary men, and if you can't sail with any other, I'll be d\_\_\_d...<sup>1</sup>

A few days later Franklin Pierce (another school friend and later a president of the United States), congratulated him more warmly:

...I congratulate you sincerely upon your installation in the editorial chair of the "American Magazine." I hope you will find your situation both pleasant and profitable. I wish to enter my name as a subscriber to the magazine...<sup>2</sup>

However, in spite of the encouragement of his friends and his own optimism, the editorship soon proved to be a painful experience to Hawthorne. For the most part, it was a tedious process of compiling "quotations from books and periodicals, with paraphrases or summaries of materials published elsewhere,"<sup>3</sup> although from time to time he supplied the issues with original essays and sketches he wrote. He was also constantly at loggerheads with the insolvent publishers in their inability to pay his salary. All the time he was frantically asking for money and freshly laundered clothes from home. On February 15, he wrote Louisa:

...For the Devil's sake, if you have any money send me a little. It is now a month since I left Salem, and not a damned cent have I had.... I don't want but two or three dollars. Till I receive some

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 133-134.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>3</sup>Arin Turner, Hawthorne as Editor, p. 5.

of my own, I shall continue to live as I have done...  
My present stock is 34 cts. You must pay for the letter,  
as my pockets may be entirely empty when it comes...<sup>1</sup>

On May 12, Hawthorne wrote Elizabeth imparting to her in a disagreeable mood the tidings of the tardy payment of his salary. Actually it was his first and last collection of a promised salary of \$500 a year.

I did not receive a cent of money until last Sunday, and then only twenty dollars; and as you may well suppose, I have undergone very grievous vexations. Unless they pay me the whole amount shortly, I shall return to Salem, and stay till they do.<sup>2</sup>

Elizabeth's contribution was considerable. In fact, all the issues put out of the "American Magazine" during Hawthorne's editorship were solely a brother and sister collaboration. Most of the time he was desperate and was always pressing Elizabeth for "'concoctions, prose and poetical.' 'Concoct, concoct, concoct,'"<sup>3</sup> he begged. In another instance he wrote Louisa: "I have written all but about half a page with my own pen; except what Ebe wrote. Let her send more; for I have worked my brain hard enough for this month."<sup>4</sup>

Hawthorne, with the help of Elizabeth, turned out voluminous work on varied subjects. He wrote biographical essays (Washington, General Benjamin Lincoln, Commodore Dale, Alexander Hamilton, etc.); sketches of his travels (An Ontario Steam-Boat, Martha's Vineyard); descriptive sketches (New York, Jerusalem, Mexican Custom, St. John's Graves, etc.); historical essays (Old Pirates, Captain

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<sup>1</sup>Turner, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>2</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>3</sup>Cantwell, op. cit., p. 182.

<sup>4</sup>Turner, op. cit., p. 6.

Franklin's Expedition, The Boston Tea Party, Ancient Pilgrims, etc.); literary criticism (Fessenden, John Bunyan); and essays on nature, science, industry and architecture.

Besides the variety of subjects, the original works Hawthorne produced during this period show extraordinary craftsmanship and excellent style. Although some of them quite characteristically show his moralizing tone, still they were far from morbid. His dry satirical humor disallows the contention that he was dangerously introspective. He showed his innate sense of humor by some of the miscellaneous fillers he occasionally wrote for the magazine:

Any character is better than none.<sup>1</sup>

#### The Looking-Glass

In her youth, a woman goes to the glass to see how pretty she is; in her age, she consults it to assure herself that she is not so hideous as she might be. She gets into a passion with it, but dies before she can make up her mind to break it.<sup>2</sup>

Nothing is so intolerable as a little wit and a great desire of showing it.<sup>3</sup>

#### Be Short

These two words were written, in large letters, over the door of Cotton Mather's study, as an intimation of his visitors to be sparing as possible of his precious time. The same inscription might be profitably posted up in many other places--for instance, in front of a pulpit, for the admonition of long-winded parsons; and, above all, it should be printed conspicuously, in letters of gold, on the walls of our legislative chambers.<sup>4</sup>

Hawthorne was notified of the bankruptcy of the publishing company on June 3, 1836. In spite of the irritating knowledge that

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 244.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 250.

the prospect of collecting his salary was nil, he remained in the editorial post until August when he returned to Salem. It must have been a severe test to his endurance. By February 15, he already harbored a bitter feeling about the job and about Goodrich in particular, as evidenced by the following letter he wrote Louisa:

I came here trusting to Goodrich's positive promise to pay me 45 dollars as soon as I arrived; and he has kept promising from one day to another; till I do not see that he means to pay me at all. I have now broke off all intercourse with him, and never think of going near him. In the first place, I never authorized Bowen to pay it to him; and he must have got it by telling some lie. My mind is pretty much made up about this Goodrich. He is a good-natured sort of man enough; but rather an unscrupulous one in money matters, and not particularly trustworthy in anything. I don't feel at all obliged to him about this Editorship; for he is a stock holder and director in the Bewick Co; and of course it was his interest to get the best man he could; and I defy them to get another to do for a thousand dollars what I do for 500; and furthermore, I have no doubt that Goodrich was authorized to give me 500. He made the best bargain too...<sup>1</sup>

#### Moodiness

With the bitter experience of the editorship behind him, he settled once more in Salem and wrote stories and sketches. Even in this field the meager beginnings of success did not come easily to him. Eleven years after his return to Salem from college he was still "the obscurest man of letters in America."<sup>2</sup> He had been writing continuously, still with feeble confidence in his own

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>2</sup>Higginson, op. cit., p. 10.

ability. Since 1830, his works had been appearing with greater frequency in three local magazines, the Boston Token and New England Magazine, and the Salem Gazette. Still intent in dimming his own identity, he published his works anonymously or pseudonymously. They appeared as works "by the author of Gentle Boy," "by the author of Sights from a Steeple," or with the use of pseudonyms like Ashley A. Royce and M. du Miroir.

He was severely critical of his own works and could see more keenly his defects than his excellence:

They have the pale tint of flowers that blossomed in too retired a shade... Whether from lack of power, or an unconquerable reserve, the Author's touches have often an effect of tameness; the merriest man can hardly contrive to laugh at his broadest humor, the tenderest woman...will hardly shed warm tears at his deepest pathos...it requires to be read in the clear, brown twilight atmosphere in which it was written...<sup>1</sup>

His numerous entries in his notebooks were well conceived fragments of scenes, incidents and impressions--flashes of thought that occurred to him which became bases of his stories and sketches. His notes, aside from being a repository of ideas, were also visible testimonies of his efforts to improve himself. However, by his own critical analysis he was still a fledging novice with little hope that his writings would gain recognition from an unresponsive public.

The petty remuneration derived from his works was a trifle, but enough to meet his frugal needs. "...He had no incitement to literary effort in a reasonable prospect of reputation or profit,

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<sup>1</sup>N. Hawthorne, Preface, Twice Told Tales.



nothing but the pleasure itself of composition."<sup>1</sup> Was it merely the pleasure of self-satisfaction? He admitted that it was "an enjoyment not at all amiss...and perhaps essential...but which in the long run, will hardly keep the chill out of a writer's heart, or the numbness out of his fingers."<sup>2</sup> How mildly he insinuated that success whether for its own sake or materially would hardly make the author happy!

The seemingly graceful indolence that could carelessly be attributed to his behavior during some months of the years while he was in Salem was deceiving. For a long time he had been writing, biding his time with laboring patience, until he could claim the glory attendant to success as a writer. But success was elusive, and finally an overpowering sense of failure oppressed him. He detested a failure and any unsuccessful venture he regarded with moral implication. He wrote once:

It is something else besides pride that teaches me that ill-success in life is really and justly a matter of shame... The fault of a failure is attributable--in a great degree at least--to the man who fails. I should apply this truth in judging of other men; and it behooves me not to shun its point or edge in taking it home to my own heart. Nobody has a right to live in the world unless he be strong and able, and applies his ability to good purpose.<sup>3</sup>

His imagined failure in the literary field was embarrassingly complicated by the fact that among the members of the famous class of 1825, he was the only one left who had no claim to fame.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Lawrence Sargent Hall, Hawthorne, Critic of Society, p. 42.

His schoolmates in Bowdoin were either dead or the remaining ones were going beyond him making their progress in the world. There was hardly a classmate of his "who had not been elected to the legislature, written a book, made a fortune, married an heiress, or otherwise made himself famous. He was the least successful... his work the least impressive."<sup>1</sup> Franklin Pierce and John Gilley, to name a few, were political figures commanding power and respect. Longfellow at this time surpassed them all. He had crossed the Atlantic several times and traveled over Europe. After a few years of professorship of modern languages in Bowdoin, Longfellow was appointed to teach in Harvard. Bridge, too, was involved in politics, but was more interested with the progress of the construction of the Kennebec Dam. When Hawthorne compared his life with those of his successful schoolmates, it was monotonous and futile. He was seized by a hopeless feeling of despondency. He wrote:

I sat down by the wayside of life like a man under enchantment, and a shrubbery sprung around me and the bushes grew to be saplings and saplings became trees until no exit appeared possible through the tangling depths of my obscurity.<sup>2</sup>

It is only of this period in 1836 that there is justification of the judgment of Hawthorne's being a terribly lonely person. The later part of 1836 was the grimmest period of his life, his depression verging on suicide. His dejection over his failure as

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<sup>1</sup>Cantwell, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup>N. Hawthorne, *Dedication of Snow Image* to Horatio Bridge.

a writer must have been overwhelming for he asked Bridge to destroy his letters to him. The admonishing tone of Bridge's responses are proofs that Hawthorne's despair was mainly over literary failures and that it was very acute.

At this same period Hawthorne was negotiating the publication of his book, Twice Told Tales. The delay of publication and the uncertainty of its success must have been a strong contributing factor to his depression. In September 25, Bridge wrote asking him the publisher of his book and advising him in strong terms to acknowledge his works:

...I hope to God that you will put your name upon the title page, and come before the world at once and on your own responsibility. You could not fail to make a noise and an honorable name...

I have been thinking how singularly you stand among the writers of the day; known by name to very few, and yet your writings admired more than any others with which they are ushered forth. One reason of this is that you scatter your strength under various banners... Your articles in the last "Token" alone are enough to give you a respectable name if you were known as their author...<sup>1</sup>

Again in his letter of October 16, Bridge admonished him:

"You have the blues again. Don't give up to them, for God's sake and your own and mine and everybody."<sup>2</sup> However, Hawthorne's disappointments were consuming him and in one of his letters to Bridge he ended, "I'm a doomed man, and over, I must go."<sup>3</sup> Bridge was terribly alarmed and he wrote back immediately on October 22:

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>3</sup>Bridge, op. cit., p. 68.

I have just received your last, and do not like its tone at all. There is a kind of desperate coolness in it that seems dangerous. I fear that you are too good a subject for suicide, and that some day you will end your mortal woes on your own responsibility...<sup>1</sup>

Bridge also told Cilley and possibly others of the forthcoming book, for Cilley wrote on November 17:

...Now you are indeed a writer of great repute, and soon to be the author of a book. I did not mistake your vein in that particular... Send me a copy, and I'll review it for you... Don't turn up your aristocratic nose, for it is a pathway to fame and honor...<sup>2</sup>

Bridge was having problems of his own. The progress of the dam was hampered by a severe snowfall damaging the foundation laid and the work was being resumed with irritating slowness; petty quarrels arose among his workers. Yet in spite of his own mounting troubles he never failed in encouraging Hawthorne. He wrote a commentary article in the Boston Post, calling attention to the greatness of Hawthorne's work and his anonymity:

It is a singular fact that of the few American writers by profession, one of the very best is a gentleman whose name has never yet been made public, though his writings are extensively and favorably known. We refer to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Esq., of Salem, the author of "The Gentle Boy," "The Gray Champion," etc., etc., all productions of high merit, which have appeared in the annuals and magazines of the last three or four years. Liberally educated, but bred to no profession, he has devoted himself exclusively to literary pursuits, with an ardor and success which will ere-long give him a high place among the scholars of this country. His style is classical and pure; his imagination exceedingly delicate and fanciful, and through all his writings there runs a vein of sweetest poetry.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 144-145.

Perhaps we have no writer so deeply imbued with the early literature of America, or who can so well portray the times and manner of the Puritans. Hitherto Mr. Hawthorne has published no work of magnitude; but it is to be hoped that one who has shown such unequivocal evidence of talent will soon give to the world some production which shall place him in a higher rank than can be attained by one whose efforts are confined to the sphere of magazines and annuals.<sup>1</sup>

It was Hawthorne's great fortune to have a generous and deeply interested friend like Bridge. While Hawthorne was moping in Salem, Bridge was contriving other means to lift Hawthorne's dark moods. Bridge inquired for the reasons of the undue delay of the publication of Hawthorne's book, originally entitled "Provincial Tales," which had been in the hands of S. G. Goodrich since 1830. He was informed that the reason was mainly pecuniary. Without Hawthorne's knowledge, Bridge offered to make up any financial loss with the stipulation that his intervention be kept a secret from the author. On December 25, he wrote Hawthorne a hopeful letter guarding the cause of his optimism:

Whether your book will sell extensively may be doubtful, but that is of small importance in the first book you publish. At all events, keep up your spirits till the result is ascertained; and my word for it, there is more honor and emolument in store for you from your writings than you imagine. The bane of your life has been self-distrust. This kept you back many years, which, if you had improved by publishing, would have long ago given you what you must now wait a short time for. It may be for the best, but I doubt it.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

### Twice Told Tales

People with sensible frames of mind do not stay in long, sustained periods of depression. Sudden griefs, unexpected misfortunes and soul-shaking discouragements can throw them into emotional imbalance, but reason makes them grasp at the cause of their problems and help them arrive at solutions that lead to healthy emotional recovery. And so Hawthorne, a man of practical ideals and stable emotions, realized that nothing could be gained with his brooding temperament. In 1837 he wrote in his journal: "My circumstances cannot long continue as they are and have been."<sup>1</sup> "I want to have something to do with this material world."<sup>2</sup> He knew that a cause of his moods was his lack of literary recognition and realized with good sense that the way to relieve himself of such depressive thoughts was to be a part of the material world. He must have written Bridge of his thoughts and feelings at this period and falteringly confided that an editorship would re-establish the receding tide of his self-assurance. Bridge's answer contained a certain taint of impudence:

...You say an editorship would save you. I tell you that within six months you may have an editorship in any magazine in the country if you wish it. I wish to God that I could impart to you a little of my own brass. You would dash into the contest of literary men, and do honor to yourself and country in a short time. But you never will have confidence enough in yourself, though you will have fame...<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 195.

<sup>3</sup>Bridge, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

For once Bridge's rebuke was out of place, for Hawthorne was gradually growing aware of his self-inflicted despair and realized that he was bringing misery upon himself.

Meanwhile Hawthorne's long cherished hope of publishing his book was becoming a reality. Favorable reports of the progress of the printing of Twice Told Tales reached him regularly. The publication of his book under his own name on March 6, 1837, proved to be a turning point in his literary career. Bridge was overcome with joy when he read the book and excitedly wrote Hawthorne of a possibility of the editorship of the New York Mirror. He said, "It is not unlikely that the 'Mirror' men may, upon reading your book, try to engage your services as editor..."<sup>1</sup>

Financially the book did not yield great returns at its initial publication, but it caused a minor stir in literary circles and merited the following comment in the Boston Courier:

Twice Told Tales is the title of a beautiful duodecimo just published by the American Stationer's Company. It is the production of Nathaniel Hawthorne whether a true or fictitious name, we know not--probably the latter.<sup>2</sup>

The result of twelve years of writing the same tales retold in his book was the presumption among newspaper writers that his name was a pseudonym.

Cilley, with good humor, wrote Hawthorne for a copy of the book to review it. Bridge advised Hawthorne to send a copy to Franklin

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 283.

Pierce, but Hawthorne made a much wiser and more adroit move. He sent the book to Longfellow and with touching humility wrote:

The agent of the American Stationers' Company will send you a copy of a book...of which, as a classmate, I venture to request your acceptance. We were not, it is true, so well acquainted at college that I can plead an absolute right to inflict my twice told tediousness upon you; but I have often regretted that we were not better known to each other, and have been glad of your success in literature and in more important matters...<sup>1</sup>

Hawthorne made the first move in the establishment of a long and congenial relationship between him and Longfellow. As Hawthorne had not appreciated Longfellow at Bowdoin, this overture was a surprising gesture. "He (Longfellow) was finely dressed and was a tremendous student. Hawthorne was careless in dress and no student but was always reading desultory right and left."<sup>2</sup> Longfellow was warmly responsive, cordial in his letters and lavish in his praise for the book. His enthusiastic review of Twice Told Tales appeared in the July issue of the literary aristocratic North American Review. Hawthorne did not miscalculate. It was the very way he hoped and expected Longfellow to react. He could hardly contain himself with jubilation, and with shattered equanimity he proposed to visit Longfellow right away in Cambridge:

I have to-day received and read with huge delight your review of Twice Told Tales. I frankly avow that I was not without hopes that you would do this kind office for the book; though I could not have anticipated how very kindly it would be done... I intend to set out on my travels early next week; and as I must come first to Boston I will, if possible, ride out to Cambridge; for I am anxious to hold a talk.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Samuel Longfellow, The Life of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 299.

<sup>3</sup>Longfellow, op. cit., pp. 265-266.



The epistolary record of their friendship found in Hawthorne's letters and Longfellow's journal showed that most of the time Hawthorne sought the companionship of Longfellow and that he regarded the Cambridge professor with awe and respect. Even while Hawthorne was in Liverpool, he bridged the distance that separated them by frequently writing Longfellow about his impressions of England, of situation abroad and about political gossips. The friendly relationship that existed between the two remained strong until Hawthorne's death.

#### 1837 - A PROMISING YEAR

##### Hawthorne's Attempt in Securing a Position

For Hawthorne conditions were steadily getting better. S. G. Goodrich encouragingly reported on April 8 the successful sales of Twice Told Tales. Magazine editors were entreating him for contributions. Constant praise of his book appeared in newspapers and it was being spoken "in the highest terms by discriminating gentlemen...at Cambridge"<sup>1</sup> and Boston. Public acclamation accelerated Hawthorne's confidence and exuberantly he wrote Franklin Pierce, then a newly elected senator, enlisting Pierce's aid in securing for him a government post. Pierce, a staunch believer in Hawthorne, lost no time in exerting political pressure among his colleagues to have Hawthorne appointed as a historian in a proposed exploring expedition to the South Seas. For a time

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 151.

the prospect of Hawthorne's appointment was almost certain. Hawthorne must have had other objectives aside from the historian post and must have been aiming for another position as evidenced by the following letter from Bridge who seemed to be uncertain of what Hawthorne wanted and yet was willing to do everything he could for him:

I am delighted to hear that you are likely to succeed in your wishes regarding the South Sea, and would to God that I could go with you... I forwarded a copy of your book to Cilley, telling him that his assistance would be needed to get your situation. What is the situation you want? I only wait to know this before procuring some letters for you. I think I can do something with men of influence in this State, and perhaps in yours also... I will answer for the whole Maine delegation...<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the alliance of Bridge, Pierce, and Cilley and their political maneuvers to aid Hawthorne in obtaining the historian post in the expedition, Hawthorne did not get the assignment because the naval project was temporarily suspended. However, their efforts were not entirely wasted, for two years later Hawthorne was appointed as a measurer in the Boston Custom House through the untiring and solicitous efforts of his three friends to establish him in some appointive post.

For a while nothing seemed to dampen Hawthorne's spirit, not even the failure of an appointment. He was now at last enjoying recognition. At this period he probably was also seriously contemplating marriage. On June 4, he wrote Longfellow, "I have now, or soon shall have, one sharp spur to exertion, which I lacked at an earlier period."<sup>2</sup> If he was referring to marriage, it could not

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 152-153.

<sup>2</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 284.

have been Sophia Peabody since the social intercourse between the Hawthornes and the Peabodys was opened later in 1837. This news of a drastic change in his life was received with grave doubts by Bridge, who voiced an opinion that marriage seemed to be a premature venture for Hawthorne:

Are you seriously thinking of getting married? If you are, nothing that I could say would avail to deter you. I am in doubt whether you would be more happy in this new mode of life than you are now. This I am sure of, that unless you are fortunate in your choice, you will be wretched in a tenfold degree. I confess that, personally, I have a strong desire to see you attain a high rank in literature. Hence, my preference would be that you should take the voyage if you can. And after taking a turn around the world, and establishing a name that will be worth working for, if you choose to marry you can do it with more advantage than now...<sup>1</sup>

It is hard to ascertain whether Hawthorne heeded Bridge's counsel or whether the idea of marriage was just an impulsive thought on Hawthorne's part. However, nothing came out of it and he was to remain a bachelor for five more years. Sometime in May, 1837, Hawthorne must have felt a lowering of spirit. To avert a possible recurrence of depression, he planned a trip and wrote Bridge of his proposed visit to Augusta, Maine. Bridge's response was a magnanimous invitation for a long vacation, an advice of filing application for a job, and encouragement of better times to come:

I am rejoiced that your last gives me reason to expect that you will pay me a visit soon. When you come, make your arrangements so that you can

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 158.

stay two or three months here. I have a great house to myself, and you shall have the run of it.

...I have written Pierce, advising him to inquire of the Secretary of the Navy if there is any vacancy, and recommending you for it. It might be well to put your papers on file in his office, in case you should be a candidate for one of the editorships of the magazine. It is of no use for you to feel blue. I tell you that you will be in a good situation next winter instead of "under a sod." Pierce is interested for you, and can make some arrangements I know. An editorship or a clerkship at Washington he can and will obtain. So courage...<sup>1</sup>

#### Sophia Peabody

Although the romance of Hawthorne and his wife started in 1838 when they met, yet the events leading to their significant meeting started in 1837. After the invigorating summer vacation in Maine, Hawthorne went back to Salem and lived in the tranquil atmosphere of Herbert Street with his two sisters and mother. But this peacefulness did not last long, for "the Hawthornes were summoned from their quietude by the Peabodys."<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Peabody discovered in the later part of 1837 that the stories she admired since 1830 were written by Nathaniel Hawthorne whose authorship she formerly ascribed to Elizabeth Hawthorne. The Peabodys were the promoters of cultural and intellectual discussions in Salem, particularly for Unitarians and Trancendentalists like Emerson, Channing and Margaret Fuller. Elizabeth Peabody aimed to bring elusive Hawthorne out into Salem society. Because of the growing reputation of Hawthorne, his presence was now being sought after by

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<sup>1</sup>Bridge, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>2</sup>Rose Hawthorne Lathrop, Memoirs of Hawthorne, p. 4.

the best people in town. For Elizabeth, it would be a major accomplishment to introduce the young author to her eminent friends. Such an objective, however, proved to be a great task. The Peabody and Hawthorne children, although playmates in childhood, were separated in 1816 when the Hawthornes resided in Raymond, Maine. It was, therefore, difficult to resume the friendly relationship after 21 years of acquaintance. Elizabeth Peabody was a determined and ambitious woman. She assailed the Hawthornes with books, visits, flowers, and invitations. Louisa and Elizabeth Hawthorne were the first to succumb to her charm. It took her a year before she "actually succeeded in establishing a sturdy friendship"<sup>1</sup> with Nathaniel. The unexpected visit one evening of Nathaniel with his sisters threw the Peabody household into excitement. But the flurry of emotions with which Elizabeth Peabody announced this visit to her sister Sophia was not sufficient to induce the latter to come down and meet the man who, according to Elizabeth, was "handsomer than Lord Byron."<sup>2</sup> It necessitated another visit to the Peabodys on Hawthorne's part before he beheld lovely but bed-ridden Sophia, the woman he was later to marry. The courtship, started secretly chiefly because of Sophia's ill health, culminated in marriage in 1842 after long and uncertain waiting. They had to surmount family objections, Elizabeth Hawthorne's jealousy of her brother's interest in a woman, and Hawthorne's economic insecurity. He joined the Brook

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<sup>1</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Mather, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Farm experiment in the hope that he could establish a home for his bride, but the venture failed, together with Hawthorne's investment. However, their courtship and marriage is a lovely romance in itself, and the love letters Hawthorne wrote his sweetheart and wife are literary treasures themselves. No biography of Hawthorne would be complete without mentioning Sophia Peabody, the woman largely responsible for bringing out the best of his talents in the creation of his literary masterpieces. She was his steady guide and never failing inspiration.

The year 1837 was promising not only because the events taking roots during this period led to Hawthorne's appointment to a political post and to his marriage, but also because of another important beginning. In November, 1837, Hawthorne was already interested in The Scarlet Letter. When he published "Endicott and the Red Cross" in the Salem Gazette, Hawthorne made reference to the letter "A" and its wearer. The following fragments served as a nucleus to The Scarlet Letter, a novel considered by many literary critics as a masterpiece in American literature:

There was likewise a young woman, with no mean share of beauty, whose doom it was to wear the letter A on the breast of her gown, in the eyes of all the world and her own children. And even her own children knew what the initial signified...the lost and desperate creature had embroidered the fatal token in scarlet cloth with golden thread and the nicest art of needlework so that the capital A might have been thought to mean Admirable, or anything rather than Adulteress.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 299.

## CONCLUSION

Nathaniel Hawthorne's life had so many aspects that it is open to different interpretations. Many people who looked only at his somber stories and his secluded post college years, judged him therefore a melancholy recluse. But his boyhood and adolescence were relatively happy. Probably both sides of his family exhibited a trait common to many New England characters, that of being reticent. But his reticence was not to the degree of peculiarity, nor such as to be considered an abnormality. The circumstances to which he was born gave him little chance to make varied and wide associations with people. However, the first chance he had away from the limitations of a sequestered home, when he went to college, indicated that he had a sociable nature, as shown by the easy adjustment he made in a group-living kind of life and in the friends he made while attending Bowdoin.

The many facets of his personality are hard to interpret. His taciturnity, often caused by his shyness, has been misconstrued in many cases by his biographers and associates as an evidence of some secretive aspect of his life. Yet he could overcome his shyness, and among chosen friends he was cheerful, vocal and responsive. The zealous and courageous manner in which he faced the problems of the world when he emert

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prompted him to "come out into society," the facility and aggressiveness of his adjustment to the economic world also help disprove that he was a melancholy recluse.

One aspect of his personality that has been seldom discussed, and usually overlooked in his biographies, is his sense of humor. Some of his writings show varied aspects of his sense of humor. Sometimes it is fresh and easy to discern as in "My Kinsman, Major Molineux," "Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe," and in passages of Our Old Home; or it may be dry and satirical as in "The Celestial Railroad." He wrote extravagant letters full of fun and humor to his family and intimate friends like Bridge, Pike and Longfellow. Even to new found friends, he sometimes revealed satiric and caustic humor. Hawthorne had not known Richard H. Stoddard long when he gave Stoddard some astute advice on how to play politics in Washington. The following letter shows that his humor could be serious and biting:

Are you fond of brandy? Your strength of head (which you tell me you possess) may stand you in good stead at Washington; for most of these public men are inveterate guzzlers and love a man that can stand up to them in that particular. It would never do to let them see you corned (sic), however. But I must leave you to find your own among them. If you have never associated with them heretofore, you will find them a new class, very unlike poets... When applying for an office if you are conscious of any deficiencies (moral, intellectual, or educational, or whatever else), keep them to yourself, and let those find them out whose business it may be. For example, supposing the office of Translator to the State Department be tendered to you, accept it boldly, without hinting that your acquaintance with foreign languages may not be the most familiar. If this important fact be discovered afterwards, you can be transferred to some more suitable post. The business is to establish yourself somehow and anyhow.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Richard H. Stoddard, Recollections, Personal and Literary, pp. 126-127.



The general tenor of his writing was undeniably somber and gloomy. But this should not be considered with great disfavor, since somberness was in accord with the themes and problems he was writing on. A common criticism was that his writings were melancholy. This repeated criticism of his work must have irked him, for he countered, "When people think I am pouring myself out in a tale or an essay, I am merely telling what is common to human nature, not what is peculiar to myself. I sympathize with them, not they with me."<sup>1</sup> There is little justification in regarding Hawthorne's writing totally as a reflection of his own personal gloom. After Hawthorne's death, his son Julian faithfully took over the defense against the same criticism. Julian Hawthorne answered the criticism by saying that his father's melancholy belongs "rather to his imagination than to his realities."<sup>2</sup> The statement should be given some credence. It is based upon a son's memories of a cheerful, kind and affectionate father. Hawthorne was not only an ideal father, but a loving husband, loyal to friends and capable of showing warmth and compassion for others.

While Hawthorne was in college, he decided to write. So, he had a definite purpose in returning to his native town and adhering to a pattern of life that aided him greatly in the mastery of the craft of fiction writing. Probably there were some winter months when he closeted himself in his room, hardly communicating with anyone, and in deep concentration painstakingly wrote

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<sup>1</sup>Japp, op. cit., p. 90.

<sup>2</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 126.

his tales and sketches. Apparently he was a writer who had to rely upon moods to be able to do creative work. He wrote Fields saying, "I am never good for anything in the literary way till after the first autumnal frost, which has somewhat the same effect on my imagination that it does on the foliage."<sup>1</sup> However, it was in this partial isolation wherein his literary genius was auspiciously moulded. In 1840, when he nostalgically recalled his life in Salem, he expressed no rancor in the manner of life there, but rather he gratifyingly justified his lonely existence. He said:

And now I begin to understand why I was imprisoned so many years in this lonely chamber and why I could never break through the viewless bolts and bars; for I had sooner made escape into the world, I should have grown hard and rough and been covered with earthly dust, and my heart might have become callous by rude encounters with the multitude. But living in solitude till the fullness of time was come, I still kept the dew of my youth and the freshness of my heart.<sup>2</sup>

However, there were times when he was lonely in Salem, and with valid reasons. In the first place, some loneliness was an inevitable consequence of the nature of his work. To a certain degree, "the life of a serious writer is likely to be in large part lonely."<sup>3</sup> In the second place, the slow recognition of his literary endeavors caused him to despair. He had to retell his tales twice, for very few people listened the first time he told them. Also, it was his misfortune to fall into the hands of unscrupulous publishers who exploited his talents to their advantage by encouraging him to hide his identity so that they could use

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<sup>1</sup>Malcolm Cowley, "Hawthorne in Solitude," The New Republic, August 2, 1948.

<sup>2</sup>Sherman, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>3</sup>Stewart, op. cit., p. 37.

a number of his stories at one time. His income from his labor was a pittance, but this condition was further aggravated by tardy payment and sometimes even no payment for his works published in magazines. Great credit, therefore, should be given to Hawthorne's remarkable patience. In the face of many disappointments and in spite of his small and indifferent audience, he continued to write.

To a certain extent, his life in Salem with his mother and two sisters was secluded, but not to the point of being a hermit's existence. And his mother, apparently, did not totally withdraw from human contact, as most of his biographers asserted. She must have received Bridge with cordiality during his several visits to Herbert Street, upon the invitation of Hawthorne after their graduation from college. Regarding these visits, Bridge said, "I saw no evidence of narrow circumstances in their environment. I was charmed with the quiet and refined manners of Mrs. Hawthorne and with the pleasant and lady-like bearing of her younger daughter."<sup>1</sup>

There are some evidences to show that Hawthorne was not naturally inclined to be reclusive. He was actively interested in the actual world around him and was a shrewd observer of his environment. He had a strong desire for adventure which he realized by traveling throughout New England, by taking summer vacations in neighboring places and by visits to friends' homes. He took

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<sup>1</sup>Bridge, op. cit., p. 38.

these trips for the purpose of gathering materials for his work and for the purpose, too, of getting a fresh view of life which apparently Salem did not offer. His travels enabled him to make pleasurable contact with many people. His relation with women was normal and healthy. He had flirtations with girls during his travels and on several occasions before his marriage half seriously fell in love.

It is interesting to note that Hawthorne himself was vacillating in his attitude toward the manner of life he led in Salem from 1825 to 1837. Many of his biographers in trying to interpret his life in Salem during those years used extensively his love letters to Sophia and his autobiographical notes. However, in many instances he was responsible for several inaccuracies of statement. Some of his love letters to his sweetheart and wife give a flash back of his life in Salem and reveal an over-played lamentation of his life before he met her.<sup>1</sup> Too much weight should not be given to these sentimental love notes, for they are the usual cantations of people in love who, in their desire to contrast their lives before and after finding love, are likely to present a miserable and agonizing existence before knowing their loved ones. Curiously enough, referring to the same period of his life, he repudiated his declaration of loneliness in his autobiographical notes when he said, "Meanwhile, strange as it may seem, I had lived a very tolerable life, always seemed cheerful

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<sup>1</sup>Appendix F.

and enjoyed the very best bodily health... My long seclusion had not made me melancholy or misanthropic; nor wholly unfit me for the bustle of life..."<sup>1</sup>

Probably many aspects of Hawthorne's life have not been revealed. Consequently, it is difficult to make a clear and definite conclusion about the manner of life he led in Salem after his return from college. More adequate clues probably would have been in his journal, but unfortunately no entries could be found prior to 1835. In Mrs. Hawthorne's preface to The American Notebooks, which she edited, she expressed the opinion that he must have destroyed what he had written in his journal before 1835.

Some biographers and scholars like Edward Mather, Malcolm Cowley, E. P. More, and Stuart Sherman, drew distorted pictures of Hawthorne by depicting him as a hermit who withdrew from the world when he was an apprentice in literary work and who became terribly lonely and morose. Such an extreme view is a gross misinterpretation of this period. The opinion of the writer of this thesis is that although Nathaniel Hawthorne secluded himself somewhat in Salem, he did not become a recluse, but led a relatively happy and normal life during the years 1825 to 1837.

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

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## APPENDIX

## APPENDIX A

The writer of this thesis asked the help of Professor Randall Stewart for materials that would aid in resolving her problem. The following is a reproduction of the answer of Professor Stewart attesting to the limited record available regarding Nathaniel Hawthorne's life during this period.

BROWN UNIVERSITY  
Providence 12, Rhode Island

February 16, 1954

Dear Miss Cabrera,

I should like very much to help you, but I'm afraid I can't. I can't because I don't know anything to add on your topic to what I have said in my biography. The materials on that period are indeed scanty. Believe me, if I could help you, I would. I have nothing in my possession that would be of any help. You have in the library at Kansas State College, I'm sure, the usual things: the biography of Julian Hawthorne, the Memories by Rose Hawthorne Lathrop etc. But these are of no particular aid to your proposed thesis. I think the line to take is that Hawthorne was busy reading and writing and putting himself through an arduous literary apprenticeship. From the bibliography in the Cambridge History of American Literature you can see the impressive list of tales which he published during those years. In a very real sense, those were his life. If I were you, I would concentrate upon them, rather than upon the biographical phase, about which we are able to know so little.

With cordial good wishes, I am

Yours faithfully,

/s/ Randall Stewart

## APPENDIX B

The following letter reproduced below was written by Mrs. Elizabeth Clarke Manning Hawthorne to her sister while she and her family were in Raymond, Maine, in March, 1819. In a very small measure it nullifies the assertion that Nathaniel Hawthorne's mother was a recluse. This proves that like an ordinary mother she was interested and concerned with her children's mundane affairs:

Dear Mary, I am sorry to trouble you to get another gown made but Elizabeth thinks she cannot have a gown made only in Salem. She wishes you to have it fixt fashionable (sic) the bosom lined if timmins are worn she would like to have it trimmed (sic). I should have sent the money to pay for the making and trimming (sic) but I hope William or Robert (her brothers) can supply you and charge it to me she wishes to have the silk gown longer than the one she left in Salem.

I am anxious to hear from Robert. Hope he will not hurry down I shall endeavor to take all possible care in his absence. It is needless for me to say how much I want to see you all.

Yours

E. C. Hawthorne

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Manning Hawthorne, "Hawthorne's Early Years," Essex Institute Historical Collections, Vol. LXXIV, No. 1, Jan., 1938, p. 19.

## APPENDIX C

The following letter shows the unrestrained relationship between Nathaniel Hawthorne and his mother. It is free of the taint of awe that the young people of his day were apt to show their elders. The tone employed was as easy and carefree as that he used in his letters to his sisters, Elizabeth and Louisa:

Salem, March 13, 1821

DEAR MOTHER,--Yours of the \_\_\_ was received. I am much flattered by your being so solicitous for me to write, and shall be much more so if you can read what I write, as I have a wretched pen. Mr. Manning is in great affliction concerning that naughty little watch, and Louisa and I are in like dolorous condition. I think it would be advisable to advertise him in the Portland papers. How many honors are heaped upon Uncle Richard! He will soon have as many titles as a Spanish Don. I am proud of being related to so distinguished a personage. What has become of Elizabeth? Does she never intend to notice me again? I shall begin to think she has eloped with some of those "gay deceivers" who abound in Raymond, if she does not give me some proof to the contrary. I dreamed the other night that I was walking by the Sebago; and when I awoke was so angry at finding it all a delusion, that I gave Uncle Robert (who sleeps with me) a most horrible kick. I don't read so much now as I did, because I am more taken up in studying. I am quite reconciled to going to college, since I am to spend the vacations with you. Yet four years of the best part of my life is a great deal to throw away. I have not yet concluded what profession I shall have. The being a minister is of course out of the question. I should not think that even you could desire me to choose so dull a way of life. Oh, no, mother, I was not born to vegetate forever in one place, and to live and die as calm and tranquil as-- a puddle of water. As to lawyers, there are so many already that one half of them (upon a moderate calculation) are in a state of actual starvation. A physician, then, seems to be "Hobson's choice"; but yet I should not like to live by the diseases and infirmities of my fellow-creatures. And it would weigh very heavily on my conscience, in the course of my practice, if I should chance to send any unlucky patient "ad inferum," which being interpreted is "to the realms below." Oh that I

was rich enough to live without a profession! What do you think of my becoming an author, and relying for support upon my pen? Indeed, I think the illegibility of my handwriting is very author-like. How proud you would feel to see my works praised by the reviewers, as equal to the proudest productions of the scribbling sons of John Bull. But authors are always poor devils, and therefore Satan may take them. I am in the same predicament as the honest gentleman in "Espriella's Letters,"--

"I am an Englishman, and naked I stand here,  
A-musing in my mind what garment I shall wear."

But as the mail closes soon, I must stop the career of my pen. I will only inform you that I now write no poetry, or anything else. I hope that either Elizabeth or you will write to me next week.

I remain

Your affectionate son,

Nathl. Hawthorne

Do not show this letter.

## APPENDIX D

The following letter shows that Nathaniel Hawthorne was fond of dancing and his adolescence not lonely:

Salem, Monday, July 21th (sic) 1818

Dear Uncle,

All the family are well, and I hope you are the same. Elizabeth has not returned from Newberry-Port yet, and we have not heard from her. Ma'am (his mother), Louisa & I, Mr. & Mrs. Dike, John and Mary have been to Nahant, we had a very pleasant time, fish are very thick there. Is not the house almost finished? I think I had rather go to dancing school a little longer before I come to Raymond. Does the Pond look the same as it did when I was there? It is almost as pleasant at Nehant (sic) as at Raymond. I thought there was no place that I should say so much of. I suppose you have a great many berries, we have very few. The garden I think looks as well as when you was (sic) here though there is not much done to it. I have written all I can think of.

Goodbye,

Nathl. Hawthorne

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Manning Hawthorne, op. cit., pp. 16-17.



## APPENDIX E

The impressive list of books Nathaniel Hawthorne borrowed from the Athenaeum Library helps account for the years he spent in Salem. The following is a partial list of books he borrowed in 1828 until the early part of 1829. The list shows his varied interest and great passion for reading while he was trying to master the art of writing. A complete list of the books he read during those years may be found in the issue of the "Essex Institute Historical Collection," January, 1932.

Chandler's Travels	June 2, 1828	June 4
Fable of the Bees	3	4
Looking Glass for the Pope	4	6
Disorders of Literary Men	4	10
Belsham's History of Great Britain	6	18
Letters Upon Physiognomy	6	30
Agate's Plain Truth	10	24
Belsham's History of Great Britain	18	July 7
Los Eruditos	24	12
Origin of Alphabetical Writings	30	7
Life of the Stuarts	July 7	
American Poets	7	12
Memories de Richelieu	12	21
Schlegel on History	12	31
Retrospective Review	22	24
Sidney on Government	29	Aug. 23
Schlegel's Lectures	29	11
Tour in Great Britain	Aug. 11	12
Tooke's Diversions of Purley	12	18
Tooke's Diversions of Purley	18	19
Hallam's State of Europe	21	Sept. 20
Boston Newspapers 1736	23	25
Boston Newspapers 1739	25	27
Boston Evening Post	27	29
Boston Newspapers 1771-1783	29	2
Taylor's Discourses	30	16
Boston Newspapers 1786	Sept. 2	8
Salem Gazette 1801, 1802	8	15
Cobbet's Sermons	16	20
Election Sermons	20	27
Tully's Almanac	27	Oct. 2
National Intelligencer	29	10
American Tracts	29	2

American Tracts	Oct. 2, 1828	Oct. 4
Bacon's Works	4	May 12
Tracts	4	Oct. 7
Artillery Election Sermons	7	9
Ecclesiastical Councils	9	14
Bibliographical Miscellany	10	14
Thanksgiving Sermons	14	20
Laws and Charter of Massachusetts Bay	14	17
Franklin's Work	17	24
French Prophets	17	24
Lavater	20	22
Lives of the Poets	22	23
Franklin's Works	22	Nov. 1
Fast Sermons	Nov. 1	
Lives of the Poets	3	4
Lives of the Poets	4	6
Franklin's Works	4	6
Franklin's Works	6	14
Lives of the Poets	6	
Life of President Stiles	12	14
Franklin's Works	14	15
Burns' Works	14	18
Funeral Sermons	15	20
Burke's Works	15	30
Burns' Works	18	20
Burns' Works	20	22
Political Pamphlets	20	28
Burns' Works	22	29
Annual Register	28	Dec. 5
Ordination Sermons	29	8
Blackwood	Dec. 2	6
Queen's Wake	5	24
North American Review	6	12
Occasional Sermons	8	17
Wilkes' Queen Caroline	12	24
Gage's West Indies	17	Jan. 14, 1829
Mrs. Montagu's Letters	24	3
Armstrong's Miscellany	24	14
Mrs. Montagu's Letters	Jan. 3, 1829	14
Armstrong's Miscellanies	14	24
Hurd's Dialogues	14	Mar. 7
Dryden's Poems	14	Jan. 31
Edinburgh Review	24	26
Dryden's Poems	24	26
Edinburgh Review	26	31
Angeloni's Letters	26	31
Gentleman's Instructor	31	Feb. 7
Macchiavell's Works	31	9
Edinburgh Review	Feb. 7	14
Quarterly	14	Mar. 7
Boston Newspapers	Mar. 9	21

Boston Evening Post	Mar. 9, 1829	Mar. 14
French Dominions in America	14	18
Quarterly Review	July 24	July 30
Remarkables of Increase Mather	24	Aug. 25
Quarterly Review	30	3
Quarterly Review	Aug. 3	5
Edinburgh Review	5	10
Edinburgh Review	10	12
Edinburgh Review	12	17
Essais de Montaigne	12	17
Oeuvres de Rousseau	17	20
Edinburgh Review	17	20
Edinburgh Review	20	25
Oeuvres de Rosseau	20	25
Bacon's Works	25	Sept. 9
Blackmore	25	28

## APPENDIX F

The following are extracts of Hawthorne's letters to Sophia which are full of lamentations regarding his dreary days in Salem before he knew her:

Boston, October, 1840.

...Sometimes, during my solitary life in our old Salem house, it seemed to me as if I had only life enough to know that I was not alive; for I had no wife then to keep my heart warm. But, at length, you were revealed to me, in the shadow of a seclusion as deep as my own. I drew nearer and nearer to you, and opened my heart to you, and you came to me, and will remain forever, keeping my heart warm and renewing my life with your own. You only have taught me that I have a heart, you only have thrown a light, deep downward and upward, into my soul...<sup>1</sup>

Salem, Nov. 27, 1840.

...Whenever I return to Salem, I feel how dark my life would be without the light that you have shed upon it,--how cold, without the warmth of your love. Sitting in this chamber, where my youth wasted itself in vain, I can partly estimate the change that has been wrought... I am enduring my banishment here as best I may, methinks, all enormous sinners should be sent on a pilgrimage to Salem, and compelled to spend a length of time there, proportioned to the enormity of their offenses. Such punishment would be suited to crimes that do not quite deserve hanging, yet are too aggravated for the State's Prison...<sup>2</sup>

1840

Here I sit in my old accustomed chamber, where I used to sit in days gone by. Here I have written many tales--many tales that have been burned to ashes, many that doubtless deserved the same fate. This claims to be called a haunted chamber for thousands upon thousands of visions have appeared to me in it, and some few of them have become visible to the world. If ever I should have a

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<sup>1</sup>J. Hawthorne, op. cit., p. 222.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 224.

biographer he ought to make great mention of this chamber in my memoirs, because so much of my lonely youth was wasted here, and here my mind and character were formed, and here I have been glad and hopeful and here I have been despondent. And here I sat a long, long time, waiting patiently for the world to know me, and sometimes wondering why it did not know me sooner, or whether it would ever know me at all--at least, till I were in my grave. And sometimes it seemed as if I were in my grave already, with only life enough to be chilled and benumbed. But oftener I was happy at least as happy as I then knew how to be, or was aware of the possibility of being. By and by the world found me out in my lonely chamber and called me forth not, indeed, with a loud roar or acclamation, but rather with a still, small voice and forth I went, but found nothing in the world that I thought preferable to my old solitude till now.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Sherman, op. cit., p. 129.

## APPENDIX G

The following chronologically arranged list shows the staggering number of tales and sketches Hawthorne wrote from 1830 to 1837 which were published in the current local magazines of the time:

1. The Hollow of the Three Hills, SALEM GAZETTE, 1830.
2. Sir William Phipps, SALEM GAZETTE, 1830.
3. Mrs. Hutchinson, SALEM GAZETTE, 1830.
4. An Old Woman's Tale, SALEM GAZETTE, Dec., 1830.
5. Doctor Bullivant, SALEM GAZETTE, Jan., 1831.
6. Sights From a Steeple, TOKEN, 1831.
7. The Gentle Boy, TOKEN, 1832.
8. My Kinsman, Major Molineux, TOKEN, 1832.
9. Roger Malvin's Burial, TOKEN, 1832.
10. Wives of the Dead (The Two Widows), TOKEN, 1832.
11. The Canterbury Pilgrims, TOKEN, 1833.
12. Sir William Pepperell, TOKEN, 1833.
13. The Seven Vagabonds, TOKEN, 1833.
14. The Story-Teller, No. 1 (Passages From a Relinquished Work), THE NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Nov., 1834.
15. The Story-Teller, No. 2, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Dec., 1834.
16. Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Dec., 1834.
17. Alice Doane's Appeal, TOKEN, 1834.
18. The Haunted Mind, TOKEN, 1835.
19. The Village Uncle (The Mermaid, a Reverie), TOKEN, 1835.
20. Little Annie's Ramble, YOUTH'S KEEPSAKE, 1835.
21. The Gray Champion, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Jan., 1835.
22. My Visit to Niagara, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, 1835.
23. The Colonial Newspaper, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Feb., 1835.
24. The Old French War, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, March, 1835.
25. Young Goodman Brown, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, April, 1835.
26. The Old Tory, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, May, 1835.
27. Wakefield, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, May, 1835.
28. The Ambitious Guest, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, June, 1835.
29. Graves and Goblins, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, June, 1835.
30. A Rill From the Town Pump, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, June, 1835.
31. The White Old Maid (The Old Maid in the Winding Sheet), NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, July, 1835.
32. The Vision of the Fountain, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, July, 1835.
33. The Notch of the White Mountains, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Nov., 1835.
34. Our Evening Party in the White Mountains, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Nov., 1835.
35. The Devil in Manuscript, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Nov., 1835.

35. The Canal Boat, NEW ENGLAND MAGAZINE, Dec., 1835.
37. The Wedding Knell, TOKEN, 1836.
38. The Minister's Black Veil, TOKEN, 1836.
39. The May-Pole of Merry Mount, a Parable, TOKEN, 1836.
40. Old Ticonderoga, AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE, Feb., 1836.
41. The Ontario Steamboat, MAGAZINE USEFUL KNOWLEDGE, 1836.
42. Sunday at Home, TOKEN, 1837.
43. The Great Carbuncle, TOKEN, 1837.
44. The Prophetic Pictures, TOKEN, 1837.
45. David Swan, a Fantasy, TOKEN, 1837.
46. Fancy's Show Box, a Morality, TOKEN, 1837.
47. The Man of Adamant, an Apologue, TOKEN, 1837.
48. Mrs. Bullfrog, TOKEN, 1837.
49. Monsieur du Miroir, TOKEN, 1837.
50. Dr. Heidigger's Experiment, SALEM GAZETTE, March, 1837.
51. A Bell's Biography, KNICKERBOCKER'S, March, 1837.
52. Fragments From the Journal of a Solitary Man, AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE, July, 1837.
53. Edward Fane's Rosebud, KNICKERBOCKER'S, Sept., 1837.
54. Toll Gatherer's Day, DEMOCRATIC REVIEW, Oct., 1837.
55. Endicott and the Red Cross, SALEM GAZETTE, Nov., 1837.

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE'S TWELVE YEARS OF ISOLATION

by

VIRGINIA CABRERA

B. S. E., Far Eastern University,  
Manila, Philippine Islands, 1950

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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree

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KANSAS STATE COLLEGE  
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1954



Nathaniel Hawthorne was one of the earliest and greatest of American story writers. His life is an interesting study, as interesting and sometimes as mysterious as his writings. One phase of his life has been the cause of controversy among present day writers. In 1825 after graduation from college, he returned to Salem, his home town. He lived quietly with his mother and two sisters, and for twelve years he labored hard trying to master the art of writing fiction. Most of his biographers claim that he became a recluse and lived those twelve years in solitude and total seclusion. However, other biographers of Hawthorn deny this assertion and believe that he lived a relatively active and stimulating life. The writer of this thesis has attempted to summarize, weigh the evidence and evaluate the conclusions of the conflicting schools of thought about Hawthorne's manner of life in Salem from 1825 to 1837.

Nathaniel Hawthorne was a product of New England Puritanism. His somberness and sensitive moral nature he inherited from his Puritan ancestors and with the added influence of Puritan traditions in Salem. In a prevailing strict Puritan atmosphere he nevertheless led an uneventful and relatively happy childhood and adolescence. His family, descended from original founders of the town, was economically impoverished, but in spite of financial limitations he was given a good education. From a sensitive child, he grew up to be a silent and reserved man. The writer of this thesis believes that his taciturnity has been misunderstood by his biographers, associates and some of his friends. To a chosen few, he was unreserved, cheerful and full of confidence.

While in college, he experimented in writing fiction and was encouraged heartily by a college friend, Horatio Bridge. When he returned to Salem he religiously devoted all his time to reading and to studious writing of tales and sketches, most of which he either burned or published anonymously.

Hawthorne was not a cheerful writer. The obvious somberness and melancholy tone of his writing has been cited by his critics as a principal evidence of the solitary life he led in Salem during those years. As a writer he was principally concerned with the world of spirit--what takes place in the human mind and heart. Moral problems absorbed him, and the tales and sketches he wrote dealt with the problems of sin and redemption, guilt and repentance. While his writings have moral intensity and sincerity, some reveal also his delicate sense of humor.

Hawthorne did not totally seclude himself in Salem. He enjoyed the companionship of a few people in town, and some of his college friends visited him in Salem. Every year during some months, he traveled throughout New England, made wide and pleasant contacts with people and on several occasions flirted with girls and sometimes fell half seriously in love. He visited friends and stayed away from home and from his work for long periods of time, thoroughly enjoying life and gathering materials for his tales and sketches.

There were times in Salem when he was lonely and gripped with terrible despair. His writings, painstakingly written and with considerable merit, were not popular and were mostly ignored by his contemporary literary critics. He thought of himself as a total failure, for he was about the only one among the distinguished Bowdoin class of 1824 who had not gained renown.

The publication of his Twice Told Tales in 1837 under his own name was a turning point in his life. He was "lionized in a small way" by a formerly unresponsive public, and he was discussed with favor in literary circles. From then on he rose to fame, steadily and slowly.

His first success, although minor, gave him impetus to mix freely with a larger world. He solicited aid of college friends who were active in politics to help him secure a position in the government. His close friends and loyal supporters, Horatio Bridge, Franklin Pierce, and Jonathan Cilley, tried many means to establish him in an appointive post. It took them two years before their efforts yielded result, when Hawthorne was appointed as measurer in the Boston Custom House.

There are numerous evidences to prove that Hawthorne was not naturally inclined to be reclusive. He was a cheerful and loyal friend, a person capable of warmth and compassion for others, even to those who were not his equal socially and intellectually. He was a happy and loving husband and father. He had a natural curiosity about the world about him, and he was genuinely interested in people. The easy and aggressive adjustment he made to the economic world is hard to associate with a solitary type of person that some of his biographers pictured him to be.

It is the opinion of the writer of this thesis, therefore, that although Hawthorne secluded himself somewhat in Salem, he did not become a recluse, but led a relatively happy and normal life during the years 1825 to 1837.