

FIRST ISSUE OF THIS EDITION . 1907
REPRINTED . . . . 1910, 1913, 1916, 1919, 1925

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

## INTRODUCTION

"'THE House of the Seven Gables' was finished yesterday," wrote Mrs. Hawthorne from Lenox on January 27, 1851. She had heard the last pages read aloud by Hawthorne on the previous evening, and the impression they made upon her was summed up in a word: "There is unspeakable grace and beauty in the conclusion, throwing back upon the sterner tragedy of the commencement an ethereal light, and a dear home-loveliness and satisfaction." The story had taken him five months to write, in the autumn and winter of 1850-1851. It had to stand the hard test of comparison with its great and immediate predecessor, "The Scarlet Letter"; and it did not disappoint those who appreciated him at his true measure. James Russell Lowell said in a letter to him: "It is with the highest art that you have typified, in the revived likeness of Judge Pyncheon to his ancestor the Colonel, that intimate relationship between the Present and the Past in the way of ancestry and descent. which historians so carefully overlook." And his friend and fellow-romancer, Herman Melville, author of "Typee," wrote: "This book is like a fine old chamber. . . . It has delighted us; it has piqued a re-perusal; it has robbed us of a day, and made us a present of a whole year-of thoughtfulness. . . . There is a certain tragic phase of humanity which was never more powerfully embodied than by Hawthorne. We mean the tragedies of human thought in its own unbiassed, native and profounder workings. . . . "

Nathaniel Hawthorne had left Salem, the real scene of "The House of the Seven Gables," for Lenox, early in the year in which it was chiefly written. He was then forty-six

years old. He was born at Salem, Mass., on July 4, 1804, and died at Plymouth, New Hampshire, May 19, 864.

The following is the list of his published works:

Fanshawe, published anonymously, 1826; Twice-Told Tales, 1st Series, 1837; 2nd Series, 1842; Grandfather's Chair, a history for youth, 1841; Famous Old People (Grandfather's Chair), 1841; Liberty Tree: with the last words of Grandfather's Chair, 1842; Biographical Stories for Children, 1842; Mosses from an Old Manse, 1846; The Scarlet Letter, 1850; The House of the Seven Gables, 1851; True Stories from History and Biography (the whole History of Grandfather's Chair), 1851; A Wonder Book for Girls and Boys, 1851; The Snow Image and other Tales, 1851; The Blithedale Romance, 1852; Life of Franklin Pierce, 1852; Tanglewood Tales (2nd Series of the Wonder Book), 1853; A Rill from the Town-Pump, with remarks by Telba, 1857; The Marble Faun: or, The Romance of Monte Beni (published in England under the title of "Transformation"), 1860; Our Old Home, 1863; Dolliver Romance (1st Part in "Atlantic Monthly"), 1864; in 3 Parts, 1876; Pansie, a fragment, Hawthorne's last literary effort, 1864; American Note-Books, 1868; English Note-Books, edited by Sophia Hawthorne, 1870; French and Italian Note-Books, 1871; Septimius Felton; or, the Elixir of Life (from the "Atlantic Monthly" 1872; Doctor Grimshawe's Secret, with Preface and Notes by Julian Hawthorne, 1882.

Tales of the White Hills, Legends of New England, Legends of the Province House, 1877, contain tales which had already been printed in book form in "Twice-Told Tales" and the "Mosses";

"Sketches and Studies," 1883.

Hawthorne's contributions to magazines were numerous, and most of his tales appeared first in periodicals, chiefly in "The Token," 1831-1838, "New England Magazine," 1834, 1835; "Knickerbocker," 1837-1839; "Democratic Review," 1838-1846; "Atlantic Monthly," 1860-1872 (scenes from the Dolliver Romance, Septimius Felton, and passages from Hawthorne's Note-Books).

Works: in 24 volumes, 1879; in 12 volumes, with introductory

notes by Lathrop, Riverside Edition, 1883.

Biography, etc.: A. H. Japp (pseud. H. A. Page), "Memoir of N. Hawthorne," 1872; J. T. Field's "Yesterdays with Authors,"

1873; G. P. Lathrop, "A Study of Hawthorne," 1876; Henry James, "English Men of Letters," 1879; Julian Hawthorne, "Nathaniel Hawthorne and his Wife," 1885; Moncure D. Conway, "Life of Nathaniel Hawthorne," 1891; "Analytical Index of Hawthorne's Works," by E. M. O'Connor, 1882.

#### PREFACE

WHEN a writer calls his work a Romance, it need hardly be observed that he wishes to claim a certain latitude, both as to its fashion and material, which he would not have felt himself entitled to assume, had he professed to be writing a Novel. The latter form of composition is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience. The former-while, as a work of art, it must rigidly subject itself to laws, and while it sins unpardonably so far as it may swerve aside from the truth of the human heart—has fairly a right to present that truth under circumstances, to a great extent, of the writer's own choosing or creation. If he think fit, also, he may so manage his atmospherical medium as to bring out or mellow the lights, and deepen and enrich the shadows, of the picture. He will be wise, no doubt, to make a very moderate use of the privileges here stated, and especially to mingle the Marvellous rather as a slight, delicate and evanescent flavour, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public. He can hardly be said, however, to commit a literary crime, even if he disregard this caution.

In the present work, the author has proposed to himself—but with what success, fortunately, it is not for him to judge—to keep undeviatingly within his immunities. The point of view in which this tale comes under the Romantic definition lies in the attempt to connect a by-gone time with the very present that is flitting away from us. It is a legend, prolonging itself from an epoch now gray in the distance, down into our own broad daylight, and bringing along with it some of its legendary mist, which the reader, according to his pleasure, may either disregard, or allow it to float almost imperceptibly about the characters and events, for the sake

of a picturesque effect. The narrative, it may be, is woven of so humble a texture as to require this advantage, and, at the same time, to render it the more difficult of attainment.

Many writers lay very great stress upon some definite Moral purpose, at which they profess to aim their works. Not to be deficient in this particular, the author has provided himself with a moral :- the truth, namely, that the wrong-doing of one generation lives into the successive ones, and, divesting itself of every temporary advantage, becomes a pure and uncontrollable mischief; and he would feel it a singular gratification, if this romance might effectually convince mankind-or, indeed, any one man-of the folly of tumbling down an avalanche of ill-gotten gold, or real estate, on the heads of an unfortunate posterity, thereby to maim and crush them, until the accumulated mass shall be scattered abroad in its original atoms. In good faith, however, he is not sufficiently imaginative to flatter himself with the slightest hope of this kind. When romances do really teach anything, or produce any effective operation, it is usually brough a far more subtile process than the ostensible one The author has considered it hardly worth his while, therefore, relentlessly to impale the story with its moral, as with an iron rod-or rather as by sticking a pin through a butterfly-thus at once depriving it of life, and causing it to stiffen in an ungainly and unnatural attitude. A high truth, indeed, fairly, finely, and skilfully wrought out, brightening at every step, and crowning the final development of a work of fiction. may add an artistic glory, but is never any truer, and seldom any more evident, at the last page than at the first.

The reader may perhaps choose to assign an actual locality to the imaginary events of this narrative. If permitted by the historical connection—which, though slight, was essential to his plan—the author would very willingly have avoided anything of this nature. Not to speak of other objections, it exposes the romance to an inflexible and exceeding dangerous species of criticism, by bringing his fancy pictures almost into positive contact with the realities of the moment. It has been no part of his object, however, to describe local

manners, nor in any way to meddle with the characteristics of a community for whom he cherishes a proper respect and a natural regard. He trusts not to be considered as unpardonably offending, by laying out a street that infringes upon nobody's private rights, and appropriating a lot of land which had no visible owner, and building a house of materials long in use for constructing castles in the air. The personages of the tale—though they give themselves out to be of ancient stability and considerable prominence—are really of the author's own making, or, at all events, of his own mixing: their virtues can shed no lustre, nor their defects redound, in the remotest degree, to the discredit of the venerable town of which they profess to be inhabitants. He would be glad, therefore, if—especially in the quarter to which he alludes the book may be read strictly as a Romance, having a great deal more to do with the clouds overhead than with any portion of the actual soil of the County of Essex.

LENOX, January 27, 1851.

# CONTENTS

CHAP.				PAGE
I.	THE OLD PYNCHEON FAMILY			1
II.	THE LITTLE SHOP-WINDOW			26
III.	THE FIRST CUSTOMER .			38
IV.	A DAY BEHIND THE COUNTER			52
v.	MAY AND NOVEMBER .			66
VI.	MAULE'S WELL			8 r
VII.	THE GUEST	•		92
VIII.	THE PYNCHEON OF TO-DAY			109
IX.	CLIFFORD AND PHŒBE .			126
x.	THE PYNCHEON-GARDEN .			138
XI.	THE ARCHED WINDOW .			151
XII.	THE DAGUERREOTYPIST .			165
XIII.	ALICE PYNCHEON			179
xIV.	PHŒBE'S GOOD-BYE			203
xv.	THE SCOWL AND SMILE .			214
xvi.	CLIFFORD'S CHAMBER .			231
XVIJ.	THE FLIGHT OF TWO OWLS			244
XVIII.	GOVERNOR PYNCHEON.			258
XIX.	ALICE'S POSIES			274
xx.	THE FLOWER OF EDEN .			290
XXI.	THE DEPARTURE			299

XA

#### THE HOUSE

OF

# THE SEVEN GABLES

I

#### THE OLD PYNCHEON FAMILY

HALF-WAY down a bye-street of one of our New England towns stands a rusty wooden house, with seven acutely-peaked gables, facing towards various points of the compass, and a huge clustered chimney in the midst. The street is Pyncheon-street; the house is the old Pyncheon-house; and an elm-tree, of wide circumference, rooted before the door, is familiar to every town-born child by the title of the Pyncheon-elm. On my occasional visits to the town aforesaid, I seldom fail to turn down Pyncheon-street, for the sake of passing through the shadow of these two antiquities,—the great elm-tree, and the weather-beaten edifice.

The aspect of the venerable mansion has always affected me like a human countenance, bearing the traces not merely of outward storm and sunshine, but expressive, also, of the long lapse of mortal life, and accompanying vicissitudes that have passed within. Were these to be worthily recounted, they would form a narrative of no small interest and instruction, and possessing, moreover, a certain remarkable unity, which might almost seem the result of artistic arrangement. But the story would include a chain of events extending over the better part of two centuries, and written out with reasonable amplitude, would fill a

bigger folio volume, or a longer series of duodecimos, than could prudently be appropriated to the annals of all New England during a similar period. It consequently becomes imperative to make short work with most of the traditional lore of which the old Pyncheonhouse, otherwise known as the House of the Seven Gables, has been the theme. With a brief sketch, therefore, of the circumstances amid which the foundation of the house was laid, and a rapid glimpse at its quaint exterior, as it grew black in the prevalent east wind,-pointing too, here and there, at some spot of more verdant mossiness on its roof and walls,-we shall commence the real action of our tale at an epoch not very remote from the present day. Still there will be a connection with the long past-a reference to forgotten events and personages, and to manners, feelings, and opinions almost or wholly obsoletewhich, if adequately translated to the reader, would serve to illustrate how much of old material goes to make up the freshest novelty of human life. Hence, too, might be drawn a weighty lesson from the littleregarded truth, that the act of the passing generation is the germ which may and must produce good or evil fruit, in a far distant time; that, together with the seed of the merely temporary crop, which mortals term expediency, they inevitably sow the acorns of a more enduring growth, which may darkly overshadow their posterity.

The House of the Seven Gables, antique as it now looks, was not the first habitation erected by sivilized man on precisely the same spot of ground. Pyncheon-street formerly bore the humbler appellation of Maule's-lane, from the name of the original occupant of the soil, before whose cottage-door it was a cowpath. A natural spring of soft and pleasant water—a rare treasure on the sea-girt peninsula where the Puritan settlement was made—had early induced Matthew Maule to build a hut, shaggy with thatch, at this point, although somewhat too remote from what was then the centre of the village. In the

growth of the town, however, after some thirty or forty years, the site covered by this rude hovel had become exceedingly desirable in the eyes of a prominent and powerful personage, who asserted plausible claims to the proprietorship of this and a large adjacent tract of land, on the strength of a grant from the legislature. Colonel Pyncheon, the claimant, as we gather from whatever traits of him are preserved, was characterized by an iron energy of purpose. Matthew Maule, on the other hand, though an obscure man, was stubborn in the defence of what he considered his right; and, for several years, he succeeded in protecting the acre or two of earth which, with his own toil, he had hewn out of the primæval forest, to be his garden-ground and homestead. No written record of this dispute is known to be in existence. Our acquaintance with the whole subject is derived chiefly from tradition. It would be bold, therefore, and possibly unjust to venture a decisive opinion as to its merits; although it appears to have been at least a matter of doubt, whether Colonel Pyncheon's claim were not unduly stretched, in order to make it cover the small metes and bounds of Matthew Maule. What greatly strengthens such a suspicion is the fact that this controversy between two illmatched antagonists-at a period, moreover, laud it as we may, when personal influence had far more weight than now-remained for years undecided, and came to a close only with the death of the party occupying the disputed soil. The mode of his death. too, affects the mind differently in our day, from what it did a century and a half ago. It was a death that blasted with strange horror the humble name of the dweller in the cottage, and made it seem almost a religious act to drive the plough over the little area of his habitation, and obliterate his place and memory from among men.

Old Matthew Maule, in a word, was executed for the crime of witchcraft. He was one of the martyrs to that terrible delusion which should teach us, among

### House of the Seven Gables

its other morals, that the influential classes, and those who take upon themselves to be leaders of the people, are fully liable to all the passionate error that has ever characterized the maddest mob. Clengymen, judges, statesmen,—the wisest, calmest, holiest persons of their day,-stood in the inner circle round about the gallows, loudest to applaud the work of blood, latest to confess themselves miserably deceived. If any one part of their proceedings can be said to deserve less blame than another, it was the singular indiscrimination with which they persecuted, not merely the poor and aged, as in former judicial massacres, but people of all ranks; their own equals, brethren and wives. Amid the disorder of such various ruin, it is not strange that a man of inconsiderable note, like Maule, should have trodden the martyr's path to the hill of execution almost unremarked in the throng of his fellow-sufferers. But, in after days, when the frenzy of that hideous epoch had subsided, it was remembered how loudly Colonel Pyncheon had joined in the general cry, to purge the land from witchcraft; nor did it fail to be whispered that there was an invidious acrimony in the zeal with which he had sought the condemnation of Matthew Maule. It was well known that the victim had recognized the bitterness of personal enmity in his persecutor's conduct towards him, and that he declared himself hunted to death for his spoil. At the moment of execution-with the halter about his neck, and while Colonel Pyncheon sat on horseback ogrimly gazing at the scene-Maule had addressed him from the scaffold, and uttered a prophecy, of which history, as well as fireside tradition, has preserved the very words. "God," said the dying man, pointing his, finger, with a ghastly look, at the undismayed countenance of his enemy, "God will give him blood to drink!"

After the reputed wizard's death, his humble homestead had fallen an easy spoil into Colonel Pyncheon's grasp. When it was understood, however, that the

colonel intended to erect a family mansion—spacious, ponderously framed of oaken timber, and calculated to endure for many generations of his prosperityover the spot first covered by the log-built hut of Matthew Maule, there was much shaking of the head among the village gossips. Without absolutely expressing a doubt whether the stalwart Puritan had acted as a man of conscience and integrity, throughout the proceedings which have been sketched, they, nevertheless, hinted that he was about to build his house over an unquiet grave. His home would include the home of the dead and buried wizard, and would thus afford the ghost of the latter a kind of privilege to haunt its new apartments, and the chambers into which future bridegrooms were to lead their brides, and where children of the Pyncheon blood were to be born. The terror and ugliness of Maule's crime, and the wretchedness of his punishment, would darken the freshly-plastered walls, and infect them early with the scent of an old and melancholy house. Why, then, -while so much of the soil around him was bestrewn with the virgin forestleaves,-why should Colonel Pyncheon prefer a site that had already been accurst?

But the Puritan soldier and magistrate was not a man to be turned aside from his well-considered scheme, either by dread of the wizard's ghost, or by flimsy sentimentalities of any kind, however specious. Had he been told of a bad air, it might have moved him somewhat; but he was ready to encounter an evil spirit on his own ground. Endowed with common sense, as massive and hard as blocks of granite, fastened together by stern rigidity of purpose, as with iron clamps, he followed out his original design, probably without so much as imagining an objection to it. On the score of delicacy, or any scrupulousness which a finer sensibility might have taught him, the colonel, like most of his breed and generation, was impenetrable. He, therefore, dug his cellar, and laid the deep foundations of his mansion, on the

square of earth whence Matthew Maule, forty years before, had first swept away the fallen leaves. It was a curious, and, as some people thought, an ominous fact, that, very soon after the workmen began their operations, the spring of water, above mentioned, entirely lost the deliciousness of its pristine quality. Whether its sources were disturbed by the depth of the new cellar, or whatever subtler cause might lurk at the bottom, it is certain that the water of Maule's Well, as it continued to be called, grew hard and brackish. Even such we find it now; and any old woman of the neighbourhood will certify that it is productive of intestinal mischief to those

who quench their thirst there.

The reader may deem it singular that the head carpenter of the new edifice was no other than the son of the very man from whose dead gripe the property of the soil had been wrested. Not improbably he was the best workman of his time; or, perhaps, the colonel thought it expedient, or was impelled by some better feeling, thus openly to cast aside all animosity against the race of his fallen antagonist. Nor was it out of keeping with the general coarseness and matter-of-fact character of the age, that the son should be willing to earn an honest penny, or, rather, a weighty amount of sterling pounds, from the purse of his father's deadly enemy. At all events, Thomas Maule became the architect of the House of the Seven Gables, and performed his duty so faithfully that the timber framework, fastened by his hands, still holds together.

Thus the great house was built. Familiar as it stands in the writer's recollection,—for it has been an object of curiosity with him from boyhood, both as a specimen of the best and stateliest architecture of a long-past epoch, and as the scene of events more full of human interest, perhaps, than those of a gray feudal castle,—familiar as it stands, in its rusty old age, it is therefore only the more difficult to imagine the bright novelty with which it first caught the sun-

shine. The impression of its actual state, at this distance of a hundred and sixty years, darkens, inevitably, through the picture which we would fain give of its appearance on the morning when the Puritan magnate bade all the town to be his guests. A ceremony of consecration, festive as well as religious, was now to be performed. A prayer and discourse from the Rev. Mr. Higginson, and the outpouring of a psalm from the general throat of the community, was to be made acceptable to the grosser sense by ale, cider, wine, and brandy, in copious effusion, and, as some authorities aver, by an ox, roasted whole, or, at least, by the weight and substance of an ox, in more manageable joints and sirloins. The carcass of a deer, shot within twenty miles, had supplied material for the vast circumference of a pasty. A cod-fish, of sixty pounds, caught in the bay, had been dissolved into the rich liquid of a chowder. The chimney of the new house, in short, belching forth its kitchen-smoke, impregnated the whole air with the scent of meats, fowls, and fishes, spicily concocted with odoriferous herbs, and onions in abundance. The mere smell of such festivity, making its way to everybody's nostrils, was at once an invitation and appetite.

Maule's-lane, or Pyncheon-street, as it were now more deconous to call it, was thronged, at the appointed hour, as with a congregation on its way to church. All, as they approached, looked upward at the imposing edifice, which was henceforth to assume its rank among the habitations of mankind. There it rose, a little withdrawn from the life of the street, but in pride, not modesty. Its whole visible exterior was ornamented with quaint figures, conceived in the grotesqueness of a gothic fancy, and drawn or stamped in the glittering plaster, composed of lime, pebbles, and bits of glass, with which the wood-work of the walls was overspread. On every side, the seven gables pointed sharply towards the sky, and presented the aspect of a whole sisterhood of

edifices, breathing through the spiracles of one great chimney. The many lattices, with their small, diamond-shaped panes, admitted the sunlight into hall and chamber, while, nevertheless, the second story, projecting far over the base, and itself retiring beneath the third, threw a shadow and thoughtful gloom into the lower rooms. Carved globes of wood were affixed under the jutting stories. Little spiral rods of iron beautified each of the seven peaks. On the triangular portion of the gable that fronted next the street, was a dial, put up that very morning, and on which the sun was still marking the passage of the first bright hour in a history that was not destined to be all so bright. All around were scattered shavings. chips, shingles, and broken halves of bricks; these, together with the lately turned earth, on which the grass had not begun to grow, contributed to the impression of strangeness and novelty proper to a house that had yet its place to make among men's daily interests.

The principal entrance, which had almost the breadth of a church-door, was in the angle between the two front gables, and was covered by an open porch, with benches beneath its shelter. Under this arched door-way, scraping their feet on the unworn threshold, now trod the clergymen, the elders, the magistrates, the deacons, and whatever of aristocracy there was in town or country. Thither, too, thronged the plebeian classes, as freely as their betters, and in larger number. Just within the entrance, however, stood two serving-men, pointing some of the guests to the neighbourhood of the kitchen, and ushering others into the statelier rooms,-hospitable alike to all, but still with a scrutinizing regard to the high or low degree of each. Velvet garments, sombre but rich, stiffly-plaited ruffs and bands, embroidered gloves, venerable beards, the mien and countenance of authority, made it easy to distinguish the gentleman of worship, at that period, from the tradesman, with his plodding air, or the labourer, in his leathern