

TANGLEWOOD TALES

BY
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



*Illustrated with line drawings
and 8 colour plates by*

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TANGLEWOOD TALES

THE CHILDREN'S ILLUSTRATED CLASSICS

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE was an American. He was born at Salem, Massachusetts, on 4th July 1804, and died in 1864.

He spent a somewhat solitary childhood in the country in Maine, where his mother moved when he was eight or nine years old, and it was during these early years, when for a time he was lame (though subsequently cured), that he read any and every book upon which he could lay hands.

Later he went to college, and before long began to think seriously of writing as a profession. But he was employed in the Boston custom house, and then after his marriage in 1842 was a surveyor at the Salem customs, contributing in his spare time to a number of periodicals. Then he went to live at Lennox, looking across the mountains and lakes, and here he wrote the famous 'Wonder Book.' In 1853 he published 'Tanglewood Tales,' a further series of 'Wonder Book' stories.

*Hawthorne became United States consul at Liverpool
in 1853, eventually returning to America,
where he died.*

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THE WAYSIDE

INTRODUCTORY

A SHORT time ago, I was favoured with a flying visit from my young friend Eustace Bright, whom I had not before met with since quitting the breezy mountains of Berkshire. It being the winter vacation at his college, Eustace was allowing himself a little relaxation, in the hope, he told me, of repairing the inroads which severe application to study

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had made upon his health; and I was happy to conclude, from the excellent physical condition in which I saw him, that the remedy had already been attended with very desirable success. He had now run up from Boston by the noon train, partly impelled by the friendly regard with which he is pleased to honour me, and partly, as I soon found, on a matter of literary business.

It delighted me to receive Mr. Bright, for the first time, under a roof, though a very humble one, which I could really call my own. Nor did I fail (as is the custom of landed proprietors all about the world) to parade the poor fellow up and down over my half a dozen acres; secretly rejoicing, nevertheless, that the disarray of the inclement season, and particularly the six inches of snow then upon the ground, prevented him from observing the ragged neglect of soil and shrubbery into which the place has lapsed. It was idle, however, to imagine that an airy guest from Monument Mountain, Bald Summit, and old Graylock, shaggy with primeval forests, could see anything to admire in my poor little hill-side, with its growth of frail and insect-eaten locust-trees. Eustace very frankly called the view from my hill-top tame; and so, no doubt, it was, after rough, broken, rugged, headlong Berkshire, and especially the northern parts of the country with which his college residence had made him familiar. But to me there is a peculiar, quiet charm in these broad meadows and gentle eminences. They are better than mountains, because they do not stamp and stereotype themselves into the brain, and this grow wearisome with the same strong impression repeated day after day. A few summer weeks among mountains, a lifetime among green meadows and placid slopes, with outlines

for ever new, because continually fading out of the memory—such would be my sober choice.

I doubt whether Eustace did not internally pronounce the whole thing a bore, until I led him to my predecessor's little ruined, rustic summer-house, midway on the hill-side. It is a mere skeleton of slender, decaying tree-trunks, with neither walls nor a roof; nothing but a tracery of branches and twigs, which the next winter blast will be very likely to scatter in fragments along the terrace. It looks, and is, as evanescent as a dream; and yet, in a rustic network of boughs, it has somehow enclosed a hint of spiritual beauty, and has become a true emblem of the subtile and ethereal mind that planned it. I made Eustace Bright sit down on a snowy bank, which had heaped itself over the mossy seat, and, gazing through the arched window opposite, he acknowledged that the scene at once grew picturesque.

'Simple as it looks,' said he, 'this little edifice seems to be the work of magic. It is full of suggestiveness, and, in its way, is as good as a cathedral. Ah, it would be just the spot for one to sit in, of a summer afternoon, and tell the children some of those wild stories from the classic myths!'

'It would, indeed,' answered I. 'The summer-house itself, so airy and so broken, is like one of those old tales, imperfectly remembered; and these living branches of the Baldwin apple-tree, thrusting themselves so rudely in, are like your unwarrantable interpolations. But, by the by, have you added any more legends to the series, since the publication of the *Wonder Book*?'

'Many more,' said Eustace; 'Primrose, Periwinkle, and the rest of them allow me no comfort of my life, unless I tell them a story every day or two. I have run away

from home partly to escape the importunity of those little wretches! But I have written out six of the new stories, and have brought them for you to look over.'

'Are they as good as the first?' I inquired.

'Better chosen and better handled,' replied Eustace Bright. 'You will say so when you read them.'

'Possibly not,' I remarked. 'I know, from my own experience, that an author's last work is always his best one, in his own estimate, until it quite loses the red heat of composition. After that, it falls into its true place quietly enough. But let us adjourn to my study and examine these new stories. It would hardly be doing yourself justice, were you to bring me acquainted with them, sitting here on this snow bank!'

So we descended the hill to my small, old cottage, and shut ourselves up in the south-eastern room, where the sunshine comes in, warmly and brightly, through the better half of a winter's day. Eustace put his bundle of manuscript into my hands; and I skimmed through it pretty rapidly, trying to find out its merits and demerits by the touch of my fingers, as a veteran story-teller ought to know how to do.

It will be remembered that Mr. Bright condescended to avail himself of my literary experience by constituting me editor of the *Wonder Book*. As he had no reason to complain of the reception of that erudite work by the public, he was now disposed to retain me in a similar position, with respect to the present volume, which he entitled *Tanglewood Tales*. Not, as Eustace hinted, that there was any real necessity for my services, as introducer, inasmuch as his own name had become established, in some good degree of favour, with the literary world. But the connection with

myself, he was kind enough to say, had been highly agreeable; nor was he by any means desirous, as most people are, of kicking away the ladder that had perhaps helped him to reach his present elevation. My young friend was willing, in short, that the fresh verdure of his growing reputation should spread over my straggling and half-naked boughs; even as I have sometimes thought of training a vine, with its broad leafiness and purple fruitage, over the worm-eaten posts and rafters of the rustic summer-house. I was not insensible to the advantages of his proposal, and gladly assured him of my acceptance.

Merely from the titles of the stories, I saw at once that the subjects were not less rich than those of the former volume; nor did I at all doubt that Mr. Bright's audacity (so far as that endowment might avail) had enabled him to take full advantage of whatever capabilities they offered. Yet, in spite of my experience of his free way of handling them, I did not quite see, I confess, how he could have obviated all the difficulties in the way of rendering them presentable to children. These old legends, so brimming over with everything that is most abhorrent to our Christianized moral sense—some of them so hideous, others so melancholy and miserable, amid which the Greek tragedians sought their themes, and moulded them into the sternest forms of grief that ever the world saw, was such material the stuff that children's playthings should be made of! How were they to be purified? How was the blessed sunshine to be thrown into them?

But Eustace told me that these myths were the most singular things in the world, and that he was invariably astonished, whenever he began to relate one, by the readiness

with which it adapted itself to the childish purity of his auditors. The objectionable characteristics seem to be a parasitical growth, having no essential connection with the original fable. They fall away, and are thought of no more, the instant he puts his imagination in sympathy with the innocent little circle, whose wide-open eyes are fixed so eagerly upon him. Thus the stories (not by any strained effort of the narrator's, but in harmony with their inherent germ) transform themselves, and reassume the shapes which they might be supposed to possess in the pure childhood of the world. When the first poet or romancer told these marvellous legends (such is Eustace Bright's opinion) it was still the Golden Age. Evil had never yet existed, and sorrow, misfortune, crime, were mere shadows which the mind fancifully created for itself, as a shelter against too sunny realities; or, at most, but prophetic dreams, to which the dreamer himself did not yield a waking credence. Children are now the only representatives of the men and women of that happy era; and therefore it is that we must raise the intellect and fancy to the level of childhood, in order to re-create the original myths.

I let the youthful author talk as much and as extravagantly as he pleased, and was glad to see him commencing life with such confidence in himself and his performances. A few years will do all that is necessary towards showing him the truth in both respects. Meanwhile, it is but right to say, he does really appear to have overcome the moral objections against these fables, although at the expense of such liberties with their structure as must be left to plead their own excuse, without any help from me. Indeed, except that there was a necessity for it—and that the inner

life of the legends cannot be come at save by making them entirely one's own property—there is no defence to be made.

Eustace informed me that he had told his stories to the children in various situations—in the woods, on the shore of the lake, in the dell of Shadow Brook, in the play-room, at Tanglewood fireside, and in a magnificent palace of snow, with ice windows, which he helped his little friends to build. His auditors were even more delighted with the contents of the present volume than with the specimens which have already been given to the world. The classically learned Mr. Pringle, too, had listened to two or three of the tales, and censured them even more bitterly than he did 'The Three Golden Apples'; so that, what with praise, and what with criticism, Eustace Bright thinks that there is good hope of at least as much success with the public as in the case of the *Wonder Book*.

I made all sorts of inquiries about the children, not doubting that there would be great eagerness to hear of their welfare, among some good little folks who have written to me, to ask for another volume of myths. They are all, I am happy to say (unless we except Clover), in excellent health and spirits. Primrose is now almost a young lady, and, Eustace tells me, is just as saucy as ever. She pretends to consider herself quite beyond the age to be interested by such idle stories as these; but, for all that, whenever a story is to be told, Primrose never fails to be one of the listeners, and to make fun of it when finished. Periwinkle is very much grown, and is expected to shut up her baby house and throw away her doll in a month or two more. Sweet Fern has learned to read and write, and has put on a jacket and pair of pantaloons—all of which improvements I am

sorry for. Squash-blossom, Blue Eye, Plantain, and Buttercup have had the scarlet fever, but came easily through it. Huckleberry, Milk-weed, and Dandelion were attacked with the whooping-cough, but bore it bravely, and kept out of doors whenever the sun shone. Cowslip, during the autumn, had either the measles or some eruption that looked very much like it, but was hardly sick a day. Poor Clover has been a good deal troubled with her second teeth, which have made her meagre in aspect and rather fractious in temper; nor, even when she smiles, is the matter much mended, since it discloses the gap just within her lips, almost as wide as the barn door. But all this will pass over, and it is predicted that she will turn out a very pretty girl.

As for Mr. Bright himself, he is now in his senior year at Williams College, and has a prospect of graduating with some degree of honourable distinction at the next commencement. In his oration for the bachelor's degree, he gives me to understand he will treat of the classical myths viewed in the aspect of babies' stories, and has a great mind to discuss the expediency of using up the whole of ancient history, for the same purpose. I do not know what he means to do with himself after leaving college, but trust that, by dabbling so early with the dangerous and seductive business of authorship, he will not be tempted to become an author by profession. If so, I shall be very sorry for the little that I have had to do with the matter, in encouraging these first beginnings.

I wish there were any likelihood of my soon seeing Primrose, Periwinkle, Dandelion, Sweet Fern, Clover, Plantain, Huckleberry, Milk-weed, Cowslip, Buttercup, Blue Eye, and Squash-blossom again. But as I do not know

when I shall revisit Tanglewood, and as Eustace Bright probably will not ask me to edit a third *Wonder Book*, the public of little folks must not expect to hear any more about those dear children from me. Heaven bless them, and everybody else, whether grown people or children!



The Minotaur

IN the old city of Troezen, at the foot of a lofty mountain, there lived, a very long time ago, a little boy named Theseus. His grandfather, King Pittheus, was the sovereign of that country, and was reckoned a very wise man; so that Theseus, being brought up in the royal palace, and being naturally a bright lad, could hardly fail of profiting by the old king's instructions. His mother's name was Aethra. As for his father, the boy had never seen him. But from his earliest remembrance, Aethra used to go with little Theseus into a wood, and sit down upon a moss-grown rock, which was deeply sunken into the earth. Here she often talked with her son about his father, and said that he was called Aegeus, and that he was a great king, and ruled over Attica, and dwelt at Athens, which was as famous a city as any in the world. Theseus was very fond of hearing about King Aegeus, and often asked his good mother Aethra why he did not come and live with them at Troezen.

'Ah, my dear son,' answered Aethra, with a sigh, 'a monarch has his people to take care of. The men and women over whom he rules are in the place of children to him; and he can seldom spare time to love his own children as other parents do. Your father will never be able to leave his kingdom for the sake of seeing his little boy.'

'Well, but, dear mother,' asked the boy, 'why cannot I go to this famous city of Athens, and tell King Aegeus that I am his son?'

'That may happen by and by,' said Aethra. 'Be patient, and we shall see. You are not yet big and strong enough to set out on such an errand.'

'And how soon shall I be strong enough?' Theseus persisted in inquiring.

'You are but a tiny boy as yet,' replied his mother. 'See if you can lift this rock on which we are sitting?'

The little fellow had a great opinion of his own strength. So, grasping the rough protuberances of the rock, he tugged and toiled amain, and got himself quite out of breath, without being able to stir the heavy stone. It seemed to be rooted into the ground. No wonder he could not move it; for it would have taken all the force of a very strong man to lift it out of its earthly bed.

His mother stood looking on, with a sad kind of a smile on her lips and in her eyes, to see the zealous and yet puny efforts of her little boy. She could not help being sorrowful at finding him already so impatient to begin his adventures in the world.

'You see how it is, my dear Theseus,' said she. 'You must possess far more strength than now before I can trust you to go to Athens, and tell King Aegeus that you are his son. But when you can lift this rock, and show me what is hidden beneath it, I promise you my permission to depart.'

Often and often, after this, did Theseus ask his mother whether it was yet time for him to go to Athens; and still his mother pointed to the rock, and told him that, for years

to come, he could not be strong enough to move it. And again and again the rosy-cheeked and curly-headed boy would tug and strain at the huge mass of stone, striving, child as he was, to do what a giant could hardly have done without taking both of his great hands to the task. Meanwhile the rock seemed to be sinking further and further into the ground. The moss grew over it thicker and thicker, until at last it looked almost like a soft green seat, with only a few grey knobs of granite peeping out. The overhanging trees, also, shed their brown leaves upon it, as often as the autumn came; and at its base grew ferns and wild flowers, some of which crept right over its surface. To all appearance, the rock was as firmly fastened as any other portion of the earth's substance.

But, difficult as the matter looked, Theseus was now growing up to be such a vigorous youth, that, in his own opinion, the time would quickly come when he might hope to get the upper hand of this ponderous lump of stone.

'Mother, I do believe it has started!' cried he, after one of his attempts. 'The earth around it is certainly a little cracked!'

'No, no, child!' his mother hastily answered. 'It is not possible you can have moved it, such a boy as you still are!'

Now would she be convinced, although Theseus showed her the place where he fancied that the stem of a flower had been partly uprooted by the movement of the rock. But Aethra sighed and looked disquieted; for, no doubt, she began to be conscious that her son was no longer a child, and that, in a little while hence, she must send him forth among the perils and troubles of the world.

It was not more than a year afterwards when they were again sitting on the moss-covered stone. Aethra had once more told him the oft-repeated story of his father, and how gladly he would receive Theseus at his stately palace, and how he would present him to his courtiers and the people, and tell them that here was the heir of his dominions. The eyes of Theseus glowed with enthusiasm, and he would hardly sit still to hear his mother speak.

'Dear mother Aethra,' he exclaimed, 'I never felt half so strong as now! I am no longer a child, nor a boy, nor a mere youth! I feel myself a man! It is now time to make one earnest trial to remove the stone.'

'Ah, my dearest Theseus,' replied his mother, 'not yet! not yet!'

'Yes, mother,' said he resolutely, 'the time has come!'

Then Theseus bent himself in good earnest to the task, and strained every sinew, with manly strength and resolution. He put his whole brave heart into the effort. He wrestled with the big and sluggish stone, as if it had been a living enemy. He heaved, he lifted, he resolved now to succeed, or else to perish there, and let the rock be his monument for ever! Aethra stood gazing at him, and clasped her hands, partly with a mother's pride and partly with a mother's sorrow. The great rock stirred! Yes, it was raised slowly from the bedded moss and earth, uprooting the shrubs and flowers along with it, and was turned upon its side. Theseus had conquered!

While taking breath, he looked joyfully at his mother, and she smiled upon him through her tears.

'Yes, Theseus,' she said, 'the time has come, and you must stay no longer at my side! See what King Aegeus,