

世界名著 • 经典电影 • 双语阅读

# 红 字

*The Scarlet Letter*

◆ [美] 纳撒尼尔·霍桑 著

◆ 张 兢 刘 素 编译

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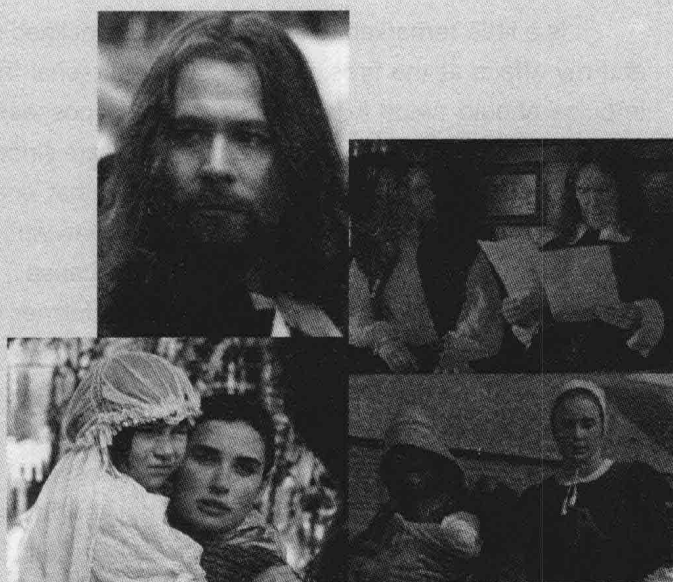
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# *The Scarlet Letter*



*The Custom-House*  
*INTRODUCTORY TO*  
*“THE PARLET LETTER”*

It is a little remarkable, that—though disinclined to talk overmuch of myself and my affairs at the fireside, and to my personal friends—an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me, in addressing the public. The first time was three or four years since, when I favored the reader—inexcusably, and for no earthly reason, that either the indulgent reader or the intrusive author could imagine—with a description of my way of life in the deep quietude of an Old Manse. And now—because, beyond my deserts, I was happy enough to find a listener or two on the former occasion—I again seize the public by the button, and talk of my three years' experience in a Custom-House. The example of the famous “P. P. , Clerk of this Parish,” was never more faithfully followed. The truth seems to be, however, that, when he casts his leaves forth upon the wind, the author addresses, not the many who will fling aside his volume, or never take it up, but the few who will understand him, better than most of his schoolmates and lifemates. Some authors, indeed, do far more than this, and indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed, only and exclusively, to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy; as if the printed book, thrown at large on the wide world, were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature, and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it. It is scarcely decorous, however, to speak all, even where we speak impersonally. But—as thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed, unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience—it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend, a kind and apprehensive, though not the closest friend, is listening to our talk; and then, a native reserve being thawed by this genial consciousness, we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us, and even of

# 海关

## ——《红字》前言

inexcusably

[ˌɪnɪksˈkjuːzəblɪ]

adv. 无法原谅地

manse

[mæns]

n. 牧师住宅

benumb

[bɪˈnʌm]

v. 使麻木, 使无感觉

这事说来有点蹊跷, 尽管我不喜欢坐在炉边, 与朋友谈论太多有关我自己和我的事情, 但在我一生中, 竟有过两次想把自己的经历写成自传公诸于众的冲动。第一次<sup>①</sup>是在三四年前, 当时在一本书里, 给读者描述了我住在一座“老宅”里, 过着幽静孤寂的生活情景。那样做实无必要, 情无可原, 无论宽宏大量的读者还是爱挑剔的作者, 都难以想象出任何实际的理由。现在这次, 同上次一样, 出乎意料, 我非常高兴逮住了一两位听众, 于是我再次抓住他们不放, 谈论起我在海关的三年经历。虽然《教区执事》<sup>②</sup>这种自吹自擂的榜样不再被人效仿, 然而, 事实似乎是这样: 在作者把书稿公诸于众时, 他与之交谈的, 不是众多把他的书弃之一旁的人, 或是从不碰该书的人, 而是为数不多的知音读者, 他们甚至比他的大多数同学或终生好友更了解他。确实, 有些作者走得更远, 他们痴迷于发掘内心深处的奥秘, 把本来只适合于讲给个别知心好友听的东西都写出来, 仿佛这本印出来的书一旦在市面上广为流传, 肯定会找到与作者自己个性不相同的部分, 通过与它的交流, 完成他生命的轮回。然而, 把一切都说出来, 即便说得八面玲珑, 也很难不偏不倚。但是, 除非叙述者和他的听众之间保持某种真诚的关系, 否则说的内容必然是呆板的, 表达起来也一定是生硬的。因此, 情有可原——说话人把听众想象成一个朋友, 一个善解人意的朋友, 当然未必是莫逆之交。有了这种亲近感, 人性中本能的谨慎化解了, 我们便会侃侃而谈, 讲述我们周围的事物, 甚至我们自身的情况。不过, 即令此时, 我们仍然要把内心深



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ourself, but still keep the inmost Me behind its veil. To this extent and within these limits, an author, methinks, may be autobiographical, without violating either the reader's rights or his own.

It will be seen, likewise, that this Custom-House sketch has a certain propriety, of a kind always recognized in literature, as explaining how a large portion of the following pages came into my possession, and as offering proofs of the authenticity of a narrative therein contained. This, in fact, —a desire to put myself in my true position as editor, or very little more, of the most *prolix* among the tales that make up my volume, —this, and no other, is my true reason for assuming a personal relation with the public. In accomplishing the main purpose, it has appeared allowable, by a few extra touches, to give a faint representation of a mode of life not heretofore described, together with some of the characters that move in it, among whom the author happened to make one.

In my native town of Salem, at the head of what, half a century ago, in the days of old King Derby, was a bustling wharf—but which is now burdened with decayed wooden warehouses, and exhibits few or no symptoms of commercial life; except, perhaps, a bark or brig, half-way down its melancholy length, discharging hides; or, nearer at hand, a Nova Scotia schooner, pitching out her cargo of firewood, —at the head, I say, of this dilapidated wharf, which the tide often overflows, and along which, at the base and in the rear of the row of buildings, the track of many languid years is seen in a border of *unthrifty* grass—here, with a view from its front windows adown this not very enlivening prospect, and thence across the harbour, stands a spacious edifice of brick. From the loftiest point of its roof, during precisely three and a half hours of each forenoon, floats or droops, in breeze or calm, the banner of the republic; but with the thirteen stripes turned vertically, instead of horizontally, and thus indicating that a civil, and not a military post of Uncle Sam's government, is here established. Its front is ornamented with a portico of half a dozen wooden pillars, supporting a balcony, beneath which a flight of wide granite steps descends towards the street. Over the entrance hovers an enormous specimen of the American eagle, with outspread wings, a shield before her breast, and, if I recollect aright, a bunch of intermingled thunderbolts and barbed arrows in each claw. With the customary infirmity of temper that characterizes this unhappy fowl, she appears, by the fierceness of her beak and eye and the general truculency of her attitude, to threaten mischief to the inoffensive community; and especially to warn all citizens, careful of their safety, against intruding on the





prolix

['prɒlɪks]

adj. 冗长的, 啰唆的

unthrifty

['ʌnθrɪftɪ]

adj. 不茂盛的

处的“我”置于面纱后面。我认为,按这个程度,在这个范围之内,作者是可以谈论自己的经历的,这样既不会侵犯读者的权利,也无损于作者本人的权利。

同样,人们还将看到,《海关》这篇文章具有某种特性,一种常在文学中被视为行规的做法:例如解释一下后面篇幅中涉及的大部分内容是怎么来到我的笔下的;又比如提供证据说明所述内容的确凿可靠。实际上,这一点——一种设法把我自己置于编辑位置上的愿望,或再多一点点,置于这本故事集中最长一篇故事的愿望——这点,也是唯一的一点,是我与公众保持某种个人关系的真正原因。达到这个主要目的之后,似乎可以允许添加几笔,勾勒一下以前没有描绘过的生活模式,以及在里面活动的人物,作者本人恰巧是其中之一。

大约半个世纪之前,也就是在老船王德比<sup>⑤</sup>叱咤风云的时期,我的家乡塞勒姆镇是一个繁忙的码头。但是,现在码头边上,却只留下一些歪歪斜斜腐朽的木头盖的仓库,当年热闹的商业场面已不复存在,只是偶尔可以见到一艘双桅或三桅帆船,停泊在了无生气的长码头中央,卸下些皮货;或许,更近处,一艘来自新斯科舍的纵帆船,正在从船舱里丢出运来的柴火。我说的是,在这个经常被潮水淹没的残败不堪的码头上首有一排建筑物,后面长着一大片稀疏的野草,它们成了荒芜岁月的见证。在这儿,从它正面的窗户里,可以看到这幅毫无生气的景象,从那里隔水相望,还可看到一座壮观的砖砌的大厦。在这大厦的屋顶,每天上午恰好三个半小时里,共和国的国旗在微风中飘扬或因无风而低垂着;但是,这面国旗上十三道条纹是垂直的而不是平行的,表示这里是山姆大叔<sup>⑥</sup>的一个民事部门而不是军事单位。大厦的正面装饰着一个六根木头柱子组成的门廊,支撑着一个阳台。门廊底下是宽大的大理石台阶,直通街心。正门上方悬挂着一只巨大的美洲鹰雕像,双翅展开,胸部护着一面盾牌,如果我没记错的话,它的两只鹰爪各抓着一束倒钩箭和霹雳。这只不悦的猛禽生就一副坏脾气,通过它凶狠的利喙和目光以及凶猛好斗的姿势,它似乎威胁要对无辜的人们施暴;特别警告镇上的全体居民,小心他们的安全,不要侵入它羽翼下的这幢建



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premises which she overshadows with her wings. Nevertheless, vixenly as she looks, many people are seeking, at this very moment, to shelter themselves under the wing of the federal eagle; imagining, I presume, that her bosom has all the softness and **snugness** of an eider-down pillow. But she has no great tenderness, even in her best of moods, and, sooner or later, —oftener soon than late, —is apt to fling off her nestlings with a scratch of her claw, a dab of her beak, or a rankling wound from her barbed arrows.

The pavement round about the above-described edifice—which we may as well name at once as the Custom-House of the port—has grass enough growing in its chinks to show that it has not, of late days, been worn by any multitudinous resort of business. In some months of the year, however, there often chances a forenoon when affairs move onward with a livelier tread. Such occasions might remind the elderly citizen of that period, before the last war with England, when Salem was a port by itself; not scorned, as she is now, by her own merchants and ship-owners, who permit her **wharves** to crumble to ruin, while their ventures go to swell, needlessly and imperceptibly, the mighty flood of commerce at New York or Boston. On some such morning, when three or four vessels happen to have arrived at once usually from Africa or South America—or to be on the verge of their departure thitherward, there is a sound of frequent feet, passing briskly up and down the granite steps. Here, before his own wife has greeted him, you may greet the sea-flushed ship-master, just in port, with his vessel's papers under his arm in a tarnished tin box. Here, too, comes his owner, cheerful or sombre, gracious or in the sulks, accordingly as his scheme of the now accomplished voyage has been realized in merchandise that will readily be turned to gold, or has buried him under a bulk of incommodities, such as nobody will care to rid him of. Here, likewise—the germ of the wrinkle-browed, grizzly-bearded, careworn merchant—we have the smart young clerk, who gets the taste of traffic as a wolf-cub does of blood, and already sends adventures in his master's ships, when he had better be sailing mimic boats upon a mill-pond. Another figure in the scene is the **outward-bound** sailor, in quest of a protection; or the recently arrived one, pale and feeble, seeking a passport to the hospital. Nor must we forget the captains of the rusty little schooners that bring firewood from the British provinces; a rough-looking set of tarpaulins, without the alertness of the Yankee aspect, but contributing an item of no slight importance to our decaying trade.

Cluster all these individuals together, as they sometimes were, with other

snugness

[ˈsnʌɡnis]

n. 舒适

wharves

wharf 的复数

[ˈhwɔːf]

n. 码头

outward-bound

adj. 驶离的, 出港的

筑物。然而, 尽管它看上去气势汹汹, 但就在这时, 许多人依然来到这只联邦雄鹰的羽翼下寻求庇护。我想, 在他们的想象中, 它的胸脯一定会像鸭绒枕头一样柔软舒适。但是, 即令在它心情最好时, 它也没有多少温柔可言, 迟早——恐怕多半是早——它也会甩掉刚孵出的雏鹰, 用爪子抓, 用喙啄, 或用倒钩箭刺它们。

上面描述的这座大厦——我们也可称它为这个港口的海关, 其四周边行道上的裂缝里已长出一丛丛野草, 表明已是有了日子没什么人来这儿办事踩踏了。不过, 一年之中有几个月, 常常在上午还有一些活动, 它们给它带来些生气。此时此景会使上了年纪的居民想起上次与英国人打仗前的那个时期<sup>⑨</sup>。那时塞勒姆本身就是一个港口, 不像现在被它自己的商人和船主们所蔑视, 任它的码头坍塌破败; 同时他们的企业毫无必要地、也是不知不觉地一窝蜂跑到纽约或波士顿去掀起了巨大的商业浪潮。在这样的上午, 有时三四艘船刚好同时靠岸, 它们通常来自非洲或南美洲, 或者是马上就要启航开往那些地方。在这种时候总可听到频频的脚步声, 在大理石的台阶上迅速上上下下。在这里, 被海风吹得满脸通红的船主, 在他自己的妻子向他打招呼之前, 你也许就在港口先行和他相遇。船长的腋下夹着一只没有光泽的铁皮盒子, 里面放着他那艘船的文件。在这里, 船长的老板也赶来了, 或兴高采烈, 或怒气冲冲, 或和蔼或震怒, 全都取决于这次刚完成的航行所筹划的货物买卖的情况: 有的货物很快就会变成金子; 有的则会变成一大堆无人问津的废物, 如此一来可就有他的好瞧了。来这里的还有满面皱纹、胡子灰白、愁眉苦脸商人的胚子——机灵的年轻职员, 他们本该在大水池里摆弄航船模型, 但就像让狼仔尝血腥一样, 他们过早地尝到了航海的滋味, 被送上老板的船出海冒险。在这个场景中的另一类人物是水手; 他可能是将要出海的水手, 正在办理护照; 也可能是刚上岸的水手, 脸色苍白, 身体虚弱, 正在设法找医院。我们也不该忘记那些锈迹斑斑的小型纵帆船的船长, 他们的船从不列颠的行省运来柴火; 这些船长套着式样不堪的防水油布衣, 看上去不像美国佬那么机灵, 但是他们对于我们日益衰颓的贸易可作出了一份不小的贡献。

把这些各色各样的人, 像他们有时会做的那样, 聚集起来,

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miscellaneous ones to **diversify** the group, and, for the time being, it made the Custom-House a stirring scene. More frequently, however, on ascending the steps, you would discern—in the entry, if it were summer time, or in their appropriate rooms, if wintry or inclement weather—a row of venerable figures, sitting in old-fashioned chairs, which were tipped on their hind legs back against the wall. Oftentimes they were asleep, but occasionally might be heard talking together, in voices between speech and a snore, and with that lack of energy that distinguishes the occupants of alms-houses, and all other human beings who depend for subsistence on charity, on **monopolized** labor, or any thing else but their own independent exertions. These old gentlemen—seated, like Matthew, at the receipt of custom, but not very liable to be summoned thence, like him, for apostolic errands—were Custom-House officers.

Furthermore, on the left hand as you enter the front door, is a certain room or office, about fifteen feet square, and of a lofty height; with two of its arched windows commanding a view of the aforesaid dilapidated wharf, and the third looking across a narrow lane, and along a portion of Derby Street. All three give glimpses of the shops of grocers, block-makers, slop-sellers, and ship-chandlers; around the doors of which are generally to be seen, laughing and gossiping, clusters of old salts, and such other wharf-rats as haunt the Wapping of a seaport. The room itself is cobwebbed, and dingy with old paint; its floor is strewn with gray sand, in a fashion that has elsewhere fallen into long disuse; and it is easy to conclude, from the general slovenliness of the place, that this is a sanctuary into which womankind, with her tools of magic, the broom and mop, has very infrequent access. In the way of furniture, there is a stove with a voluminous **funnel**; an old pine desk, with a three-legged stool beside it; two or three wooden-bottom chairs, exceedingly decrepit and infirm; and, —not to forget the library—on some shelves, a score or two of volumes of the Acts of Congress, and a bulky Digest of the Revenue Laws. A tin pipe ascends through the ceiling, and forms a medium of vocal communication with other parts of the edifice. And here, some six months ago—pacing from corner to corner, or lounging on the long-legged stool, with his elbow on the desk, and his eyes wandering up and down the columns of the morning newspaper—you might have recognized, honored reader, the same individual who welcomed you into his cheery little study, where the sunshine glimmered so pleasantly through the willow branches, on the western side of the Old Manse. But now, should you go thither to seek him, you would inquire in vain for the



diversify

[daɪ'vɜ:sɪfaɪ]

v. 使多样化

monopolize

[mə'nɒpəlaɪz]

v. 垄断，独占

funnel

['fʌnəl]

n. 漏斗，烟囱

再加上使这伙人更为多样性的其他各色人等，他们把海关一时间变成了一个沸沸扬扬的地方。然而，更常见的是，你会看到在这些台阶上拾级而上的是一长排受人尊敬的人物。如果在夏天，那么你会在这座建筑物的大门口看见他们；如果在冬天或遇上天气恶劣的日子，那么你会在他们各自的房间里看到他们。他们坐在古色古香的椅子上，跷起椅子腿，椅背抵在墙上。他们经常昏昏欲睡，但偶尔可以听到他们在一起交谈，讲话的声音像是说话，又像是鼾声，有气无力，样子就像那些生活在济贫院里的人，以及其他所有靠施舍、靠义工过活的人，反正不像是那些自食其力的人。这些老先生们便是海关职员，他们像马太一样坐在那里收税，但是不大喜欢像马太那样为使徒的事让人支派差遣<sup>⑥</sup>。

再往里走，走进正门，在左手边有一间大约十五平方英尺大小，又高又宽敞的房间或者叫办公室，有两扇拱形的窗，俯视着前面说到的那个衰败的码头，第三扇窗则朝着一条狭窄的巷子，一直可望到德比街的一小段。从这三扇窗口望去，可以瞧见各种各样的店铺——杂货铺、木工作坊、成衣店、船具商店等。在这些店铺门口，经常可以看到三五成群的老水手在那儿说笑闲聊，还有各色专吃码头饭的人徘徊在港口一带。屋子里蜘蛛网密布，陈年的油漆使房间显得昏暗，地上铺了灰砂，这种方式在其他地方早就不用了。从这个房间如此污秽的样子，很容易得出结论：这里是个罪犯的隐匿地，女性很少带着她们具有魔力的扫帚和拖把之类工具进去。在家具方面，有一个装着粗大烟囱的炉子，在一张松木桌旁边有一个三条腿的凳子，两三把摇摇欲坠的木头座椅；不要忘了还有些图书，在几个书架上有一二十本《国会法典》和大部头的《税法汇编》。一根铁管子穿过天花板，成了与大厦内其他房间传声的工具。大约六个月前，尊敬的读者，你会认出一个人，他在大房间里从这一角踱到那一角，或者仰坐在那条高脚凳子上，肘部撑在桌上，眼睛扫视着晨报的各个栏目；还是这个人欢迎你进到他在“老宅”西侧舒适的小书房里，那里阳光穿过柳枝在欢快地闪烁。但是现在，如果你要到那里去找他，你就打听不到这位民主党的海关稽查官的下落了。改革的大扫把已把他扫出了办公室，

## *The Scarlet Letter*

**Loco-foco** Surveyor. The besom of reform has swept him out of office; and a worthier successor wears his dignity and pockets his emoluments.

This old town of Salem—my native place, though I have dwelt much away from it, both in boyhood and maturer years—possesses, or did possess, a hold on my affections, the force of which I have never realized during my seasons of actual residence here. Indeed, so far as its physical aspect is concerned, with its flat, unvaried surface, covered chiefly with wooden houses, few or none of which pretend to architectural beauty—its irregularity, which is neither picturesque nor quaint, but only tame—its long and lazy street, lounging wearisomely through the whole extent of the peninsula, with Gallows Hill and New Guinea at one end, and a view of the alms-house at the other—such being the features of my native town, it would be quite as reasonable to form a sentimental attachment to a disarranged checkerboard. And yet, though invariably happiest elsewhere, there is within me a feeling for old Salem, which, in lack of a better phrase, I must be content to call affection. The sentiment is probably assignable to the deep and aged roots which my family has struck into the soil. It is now nearly two centuries and a quarter since the original Briton, the earliest emigrant of my name, made his appearance in the wild and forest-bordered settlement, which has since become a city. And here his descendants have been born and died, and have mingled their earthy substance with the soil; until no small portion of it must necessarily be akin to the mortal frame wherewith, for a little while, I walk the streets. In part, therefore, the attachment which I speak of is the mere sensuous sympathy of dust for dust. Few of my countrymen can know what it is; nor, as frequent transplantation is perhaps better for the stock, need they consider it desirable to know.

But the sentiment has likewise its moral quality. The figure of that first ancestor, invested by family tradition with a dim and dusky grandeur, was present to my boyish imagination, as far back as I can remember. It still haunts me, and induces a sort of home-feeling with the past, which I scarcely claim in reference to the present phase of the town. I seem to have a stronger claim to a residence here **on account** of this grave, bearded, sable-cloaked, and steeple-crowned progenitor—who came so early, with his Bible and his sword, and trode the unworn street with such a stately port, and made so large a figure, as a man of war and peace—a stronger claim than for myself, whose name is seldom heard and my face hardly known. He was a soldier, legislator, judge; he was a ruler in the Church; he had all the Puritanic traits, both good and

loco-foco

[lɔukəu'fəukəu]

n. 摩擦火柴；美国民主党党员

akin

[ə'kin]

adj. 同类的，同族的

on account of

由于……，因为

一个更般配的接班人穿上了他那一身庄严的制服，口袋里装进了他的那份薪俸。

我的故乡塞勒姆古镇过去和现在都拥有着我对它的挚爱——虽然童年和成年我都没有在那里居住过多久——这种爱的力量在我住在这里的那些岁月里从未觉察过。确实，就其外表而言，她平平坦坦，缺少变化，铺天盖地的大多是些木头房子，很少，甚至可以说没有一座建筑物称得上美；它的建筑没有规则，既不优美，也不古雅，而是平庸无奇。它的街道长而懒散，无精打采地躺在半岛上，从这一端的绞刑架山和新几内亚湾一直延伸到可以看到济贫院的另一端。这些便是我故乡小镇的特点，犹如一个杂乱无章，扑朔迷离的棋盘，对它有一种依恋之情也就不足为奇了。虽然在其他地方我生活得幸福愉快，但是在我内心仍保留着对古老塞勒姆镇的一种情感，找不到更贴切的词来形容我的这种感情，我乐意称它为挚爱。这种情感很可能是分派给我们家族的，它古老的根茎深深地扎入了这块土地。从我们霍桑<sup>①</sup>家的最早移民，也就是原先的不列颠人在这块荒芜的、靠近森林边缘的殖民地上出现开始，至今已将近有两个世纪又二十五年了。现在这块移民聚居地已经成了城市。他们的后代在这里生生死死，他们埋下的尸骨在地下腐烂与土壤混在一起。直至它们的每一小部分都化为尘土，不辨人形之时，我才出生，并开始在街头漫步。因此，我说的那种依恋之情部分只是尘土对尘土的同情。我的同胞大都不明白这是一种什么样的情感；也许正如经常的迁徙对该族群来说也许更好一些，他们认为也无需知道。

但是，这种感情同样具有道德的品性。我们那位最早祖先的形象，被家族的传统赋有一种暗淡阴沉的庄严特性。我回忆起来，早在我孩提时，这形象便出现在我的想象之中，至今仍萦绕在我的脑际，导致了我对过去的一种深切感情，但我不认为这种感情与当前的塞勒姆镇有什么关系，而似乎与生活在这里的祖先有着更密切的关系。最早的祖先样子严肃，蓄着大胡子，穿着黑色的大斗篷，戴着尖顶帽。他很久以前便来到这里，来时带着《圣经》和利剑，以庄严的姿态迈步走在人迹稀少的街道上，俨然是一个能够左右战争与和平的大人物。他的名声远超过我，与他相比，我的名字无人知晓，我的容貌鲜为人知。他是一名军人、议员、法官；在教会里是当权者；他具有清教

evil. He was likewise a bitter persecutor; as witness the Quakers, who have remembered him in their histories, and relate an incident of his hard severity towards a woman of their sect, which will last longer, it is to be feared, than any record of his better deeds, although these were many. His son, too, inherited the **persecuting** spirit, and made himself so conspicuous in the martyrdom of the witches, that their blood may fairly be said to have left a stain upon him. So deep a stain, indeed, that his old dry bones, in the Charter Street burial-ground, must still retain it, if they have not crumbled utterly to dust! I know not whether these ancestors of mine bethought themselves to repent, and ask pardon of Heaven for their cruelties; or whether they are now groaning under the heavy consequences of them, in another state of being. At all events, I, the present writer, as their representative, hereby take shame upon myself for their sakes, and pray that any curse incurred by them—as I have heard, and as the dreary and unprosperous condition of the race, for many a long year back, would argue to exist—may be now and henceforth removed.

Doubtless, however, either of these stern and black-browed Puritans would have thought it quite a sufficient retribution for his sins, that, after so long a lapse of years, the old trunk of the family tree, with so much venerable moss upon it, should have borne, as its topmost bough, an idler like myself. No aim, that I have ever cherished, would they recognize as **laudable**; no success of mine—if my life, beyond its domestic scope, had ever been brightened by success—would they deem otherwise than worthless, if not positively disgraceful. “What is he?” murmurs one gray shadow of my forefathers to the other. “A writer of storybooks! What kind of a business in life—what mode of glorifying God, or being serviceable to mankind in his day and generation—may that be? Why, the degenerate fellow **might as well** have been a fiddler!” Such are the compliments bandied between my great-grandsires and myself, across the gulf of time! And yet, let them scorn me as they will, strong traits of their nature have intertwined themselves with mine.

Planted deep, in the town’s earliest infancy and childhood, by these two earnest and energetic men, the race has ever since subsisted here; always, too, in respectability; never, so far as I have known, disgraced by a single unworthy member; but seldom or never, on the other hand, after the first two generations, performing any memorable deed, or so much as putting forward a claim to public notice. Gradually, they have sunk almost out of sight; as old houses, here and there about the streets, get covered half-way to the eaves



persecute

['pə:sikju:t]

v. 迫害, 为难

laudable

['lɔ:dəbl]

adj. 值得赞赏的

might as well

倒不如……, 还是……好

徒的一切特点, 善恶兼而有之。他还是一名残忍的迫害狂; 贵格派教徒曾在他们的历史中提到过他, 描述了他严厉对待该教派一名妇女的事件。恐怕他的这一劣迹比之他的那些伟绩将要更长久地流传下去, 尽管他的伟绩远多于劣迹。他的儿子<sup>⑥</sup>也继承了他这种迫害精神, 在女巫的殉难案中他臭名昭彰, 据说她们的鲜血在他身上留下了一个污点。这血污一直渗透到他的骨骼里。如果埋在宪章街墓地里的他的老骨头还没有完全化为尘土的话, 那么这个污点还一定保留在那里! 我不知道我的这些祖先是否对自己有所悔恨, 祈求上帝饶恕他们的种种暴行; 也不知道他们是否在另一个世界里为自己造成的严重后果饮恨痛泣。无论如何, 我, 一名作家, 作为他们的代表, 却为他们深感羞愧; 我祈求这些由他们招来的诅咒——如我听见的诅咒, 也如多少年前人类凄凉悲惨的境况充分说明其存在的诅咒——从此以后被消除干净。

但是, 毫无疑问, 这两个面目森然、郁郁寡欢的清教徒都应该想到, 他们的罪孽会得到报应。在我们家族的谱系上, 在那棵上面长满青苔的老树干上, 隔了许多年之后, 竟在它末梢的一个枝丫上, 冒出了我这样一个游手好闲的人。我胸无大志, 也一事无成——如果在家庭范围之外, 我的生命因成功而风光一时的话, 在他们看来即使不是十足的有失体面, 也是毫无价值的。“他是干什么的?” 我的先人中的一个灰白的幽灵向另一个咕哝道。“一个写故事的作者! 这算什么行当——既不能给上帝增光, 又不能给人类和子孙后代造福。哼! 这个堕落的东西还不如当个小提琴手呢!” 这些便是我和我的先辈们越过时间的鸿沟相互进行的恭维! 然而, 随他们怎么瞧不起我吧! 反正他们天性中的一些特性已经和我的纠结在一起, 不分彼此了。

在这个镇子的初创时期, 经过这样两个态度认真、精力充沛的男子汉的开拓经营, 我们的家族从此在这里生存下来, 而且还颇受尊敬; 就我所知, 还从未有一个不肖的成员给家族丢人现眼; 但是, 另一方面, 在最初两代人之后, 也很少或没有谁完成过可资记忆的业绩, 或者提出过引起公众注意的重大建议。渐渐地, 他们在人们的心目中消失了, 就像街上各处的老

by the accumulation of new soil. From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea; a gray-headed shipmaster, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale, which had blustered against his sire and grandsire. The boy, also, in due time, passed from the forecastle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings, to grow old, and die, and mingle his dust with the **natal** earth. This long connection of a family with one spot, as its place of birth and burial, creates a kindred between the human being and the locality, quite independent of any charm in the scenery or moral circumstances that surround him. It is not love, but instinct. The new inhabitant—who came himself from a foreign land, or whose father or grandfather came—has little claim to be called a Salemite; he has no conception of the oyster-like **tenacity** with which an old settler, over whom his third century is creeping, clings to the spot where his successive generations have been imbedded. It is no matter that the place is joyless for him; that he is weary of the old wooden houses, the mud and dust, the dead level of site and sentiment, the chill east wind, and the chilliest of social atmospheres; —all these, and whatever faults besides he may see or imagine, are nothing to the purpose. The spell survives, and just as powerfully as if the natal spot were an earthly paradise. So has it been in my case. I felt it almost as a destiny to make Salem my home; so that the mould of features and cast of character which had all along been familiar here—ever, as one representative of the race lay down in his grave, another assuming, as it were, his sentry-march along the Main Street—might still in my little day be seen and recognized in the old town. Nevertheless, this very sentiment is an evidence that the connection, which has become an unhealthy one, should at last be severed. Human nature will not flourish, any more than a potato, if it be planted and replanted, for too long a series of generations, in the same worn-out soil. My children have had other birth-places, and, so far as their fortunes may be within my control, shall strike their roots into unaccustomed earth.

On emerging from the Old Manse, it was chiefly this strange, indolent, unjoyous attachment for my native town, that brought me to fill a place in Uncle Sam's brick edifice, when I might as well, or better, have gone somewhere else. My doom was on me. It was not the first time, nor the second, that I had gone away—as it seemed, permanently—but yet returned, like the bad half-penny;