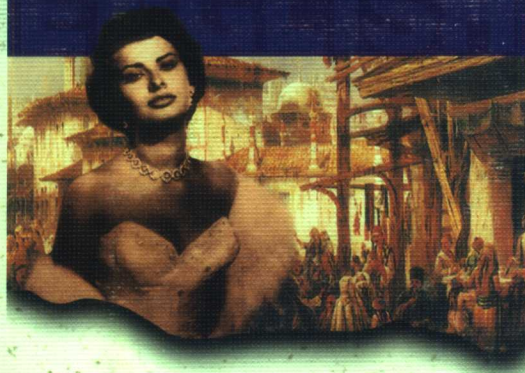


英汉对照全译



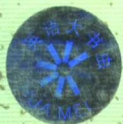
红字

The scarlet letter

英语大书虫世界文学名著文库

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 ...which subsequently became the nucleus of
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 churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is
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 ironwork of its oaken door looked more
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 Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed
 never to have known a youthful era. Before
 ... and between it and the
 ... was a grassy plot,

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红 字

(美)纳撒尼尔·霍桑 著
英语学习大书虫研究室 译

伊犁人民出版社·YILI PEOPLE'S PRESS

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导 读

纳撒尼尔·霍桑(1804—1864)是美国十九世纪杰出的浪漫主义作家。

霍桑生于新英格兰的一个破落贵族世家,他家世代都是虔诚的清教徒。到了他的童年时代,家道中衰。霍桑四岁时,当船长的父亲患病死于荷属圭亚那,九岁时他在玩耍中不慎扭伤了腿,从而导致终生跛脚,这使他更增加了一份自卑感,以读书自遣,并决心当一名作家。

1821年,霍桑进入鲍登学院就读,深为同学所推重,他在这里结识了后来的著名诗人朗费罗,当了总统的皮尔斯和投身海军的布里奇。这几位学友都对他后来的生活和创作产生过影响。

霍桑在大学期间已显露出写作才华,自费出版了一本小说《范肖》。大学毕业后,先后发表了《三个山丘的洞穴》、《一个老妇人的故事》、《我的亲戚莫里纳少校》、《罗杰·马尔文的葬礼》、《小伙子布朗》等。他在1837年发表的《故事新编》颇受欢迎。1845年以后,霍桑进入创作的成熟期,写出了他的最佳代表作《红字》。之后,他又创作了《带有七个尖角阁的房子》和《福谷传奇》等作品。

《红字》出版于1850年,是美国文学发展史上的第一部象征主义小说。这部小说以十七世纪北美清教殖民统治下的新英格兰为背景,取材于1642—1649年在波士顿发生的一个恋爱悲剧。小说通过女主人公海丝特·普琳的悲惨遭遇,反映了清教徒殖民统治的黑暗、残酷和教会的虚伪、丑恶。

海丝特·普琳是一个善良、美丽的英国姑娘,不幸嫁给了一位年老的伪善学者罗杰·奇林沃思,在这种不合理的婚姻关系中,海丝特的青春和生命力受到深深的压抑。婚后,在移居马萨诸塞州的波士顿途中丈夫被掳失踪。在独居的生活中,海丝特与青年牧师丁梅斯代尔相爱

并生下一女孩。这种行为被清教教义所不容,将她作为训诫罪恶的一个标本,罚她胸戴红 A 字(即英文通奸 Adultery 一词的第一个字母)含辱负重度过一生。她失踪的丈夫出现之后决心查出她的同犯以报仇恨。丁梅斯代尔牧师由于怯懦而隐瞒罪责,精神上备受折磨,加上罗杰·奇林沃思的迫害,牧师终于登上示众台,坦白了自己的罪过之后心力交瘁地死去了。把复仇作为生活中唯一目的的罗杰·奇林沃思也于一年后郁郁而终。而海丝特在服刑期满以后并没有远走他乡,而是重返埋有爱人尸骨的故地,重新戴上红字。

海丝特·普琳和丁梅斯代尔这对悲剧恋爱的主人公,他们的遭遇从两个侧面揭露了教会统治的罪恶。海丝特所蒙受的迫害是对教会的严刑峻法的血泪控诉:入狱、示众,佩戴红字、日甚一日的折磨、没完没了的凌辱动摇了她的宗教信仰,消弭了她的宗教热忱,很自然地萌发了反抗和叛逆的意识。而丁梅斯代尔,由于他的高贵地位,特别是由于他对上帝的迷信,他始终是宗教的奴隶,由于信仰和良心的折磨,最终在忏悔赎罪的自我折磨中死去,表现了宗教在精神上对人们的迫害和摧残。

全书写到的人物不过十多个,其中有姓名的不超过十个。值得注意的是贝灵汉总督、威尔逊牧师、西宾斯老太太和那位最年轻而唯一有同情心的姑娘这四个次要人物,他们分别是珠儿、丁梅斯代尔牧师、罗杰·奇林沃思和海丝特这四个主要人物的反衬或影子,而四名主要人物又形成两对,使他们的人性在相得益彰之中予以酣畅淋漓的表现。

《红字》在人物心理描写上的巨大成功使霍桑被推崇为十九世纪美国最著名的小说家。他开创了美国浪漫主义小说和心理分析小说的一个新时代。因而一直享誉英美和世界文坛,至今盛名不衰。他的代表作《红字》无愧于不朽名著。

译者
二〇〇一年二月

I THE PRISON-DOOR.

A THRONG of bearded men, in sad-coloured garments, and grey, steeple-crowned hats, intermixed with women, some wearing hoods, and others bareheaded, was assembled in front of a wooden edifice, the door of which was heavily timbered with oak, and studded with iron spikes.

The founders of a new colony, whatever Utopia of human virtue and happiness they might originally project, have invariably recognised it among their earliest practical necessities to allot a portion of the virgin soil as a cemetery, and another portion as the site of a prison. In accordance with this rule, it may safely be assumed that the forefathers of Boston had built the first prison-house somewhere in the vicinity of Cornhill, almost as seasonably as they marked out the first burial-ground, on Isaac Johnson's lot, and round about his grave, which subsequently became the nucleus of all the congregated sepulchres in the old churchyard of King's Chapel. Certain it is that, some fifteen or twenty years after the settlement of the town, the wooden jail was already marked with weather-stains and other indications of

牢 门

一群蓄着胡须的男人,身着颜色黯淡的衣服,头戴灰色尖顶高帽,混杂着一些女人,有的兜着头巾,有的什么也没戴,聚集在一所木建的大厦前面。大厦的门是用厚实的橡木做的,上面钉满了粗大的铁钉子。

新殖民地的建设者们,无论他们当初如何计划着人类品德和幸福的乌托邦,一定会从最初的实际需要出发,划出一块处女地作为墓地,另一块修建监狱。根据这个惯例,我们可以有把握地推断,波士顿的祖先在谷山附近建立第一座监狱与在伊沙科·约翰逊领地上划出一块地作为第一座墓地的年代几乎是在同一时期。后来便以约翰逊的墓地为核心,在皇家教堂的旧址上逐渐建成了密密麻麻的墓群。可以确定无疑地说,在该城镇建立十五至二十年之后,那座木结构的监狱便已显露出气候毁损和

age, which gave a yet darker aspect to its beetle-browed and gloomy front. The rust on the ponderous ironwork of its oaken door looked more antique than anything else in the new world. Like all that pertains to crime, it seemed never to have known a youthful era. Before this ugly edifice, and between it and the wheel-track of the street, was a grass-plot, much overgrown with burdock, pig-weed, apple-perry, and such unsightly vegetation, which evidently found something congenial in the soil that had so early borne the black flower of civilised society, a prison. But, on one side of the portal, and rooted almost at the threshold, was a wild rose-bush, covered, in this month of June, with its delicate gems, which might be imagined to offer their fragrance and fragile beauty to the prisoner as he went in, and to the condemned criminal as he came forth to his doom, in token that the deep heart of Nature could pity and be kind to him.

This rose-bush, by a strange chance, has been kept alive in history; but whether it had merely survived out of the

岁月流逝的痕迹,使它那狰狞和阴森的门面增加了几分晦暗凄楚的景象,使它那橡木大门上沉重的铁活的斑斑锈痕显得比新大陆的任何陈迹都愈发古老。象一切与罪恶二字息息相关的事物一样,这座监狱似乎从来不曾经历过自己的青春韶华。从这座丑陋的大房子门前,一直到轧着车辙的街道,有一片草地,上面过于繁茂地簇生着牛蒡、蒺藜、毒草以及各式各样非常难看的花草,这些杂草显然跟这片土地有些意气相投,在这片土地上这么早就产生了文明社会的黑花——牢狱。但是在门口的一边,几乎就生根在门槛上,有一丛野蔷薇,在这六月的时光,缀满精致的宝石般的花朵,使人想像,当囚徒进门或是当被判决的犯人出来受刑的时候,它对他们呈献出芬芳和娇媚,借以表示在大自然的深胸里,对于他们由衷的怜悯和仁慈。

这丛野蔷薇由于某种奇妙的机缘,历尽劫难,而永葆生机。我们暂且不去

stern old wilderness, so long after the fall of the gigantic pines and oaks that originally overshadowed it,— or whether, as there is fair authority for believing, it had sprung up under the footsteps of the sainted Ann Hutchinson, as she entered the prison-door— we shall not take upon us to determine. Finding it so directly on the threshold of our narrative, which is now about to issue from that inauspicious portal, we could hardly do otherwise than pluck one of its flowers, and present it to the reader. It may serve, let us hope, to symbolise some sweet moral blossom, that may be found along the track, or relieve the darkening close of a tale of human frailty and sorrow.

II

THE MARKET-PLACE.

THE grass-plot before the jail, in Prison Lane, on a certain summer morning, not less than two centuries ago, was occupied by a pretty large number of the inhabitants of Boston; all with their eyes intently fastened on the iron-clamped oak-en door. Amongst any other population, or at a later period in the history of New

费神确定究竟是什么原因使这丛野蔷薇存活下来,是仅仅因为曾遮蔽它的那些巨大的松树和栎树的伐倒败落,从而使它在严峻的荒芜中幸存下来了呢,还是因为据可靠的证据所确证的那样,传说是在圣徒安妮·赫钦森迈进狱门时,从她的脚下破土而出的呢?我们的故事将从这不详的门廊开场,而一上来就发现了它,我们很难不摘下一束花敬献读者诸君。我们希望:一路上所发现的甜蜜的道德花卉由她来象征;而这个讲述人性脆弱和悲哀的故事的悲惨的结局也将由她来缓解一下。

二

市 场

大约两个世纪前,一个夏天的早晨,在“牢街”监狱前面的草地上,挤满了大群的波士顿市民。他们的眼睛都紧紧盯着布满铁钉子的橡木大门。如果换成别的老百姓,或者推迟到新英格兰较后的历史

England, the grim rigidity that petrified the bearded physiognomies of these good people would have augured some awful business in hand. It could have betokened nothing short of the anticipated execution of some noted culprit, on whom the sentence of a legal tribunal had but confirmed the verdict of public sentiment. But, in that early severity of the Puritan character, an inference of this kind could not so indubitably be drawn. It might be, that a sluggish bond-servant, or an undutiful child, whom his parents had given over to the civil authority, was to be corrected at the whipping-post. It might be, that an Antinomian, a Quaker, or other heterodox religionist, was to be scourged out of the town, or an idle and vagrant Indian, whom the white man's fire-water had made riotous about the streets, was to be driven with stripes into the shadow of the forest. It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins, the bitter-tempered widow of the magistrate, was to die upon the gallows. In either case, there was very much the same solemnity of demeanour on the part of the spectators; as befitted a people amongst whom religion and law were almost identical, and in whose character both were so thoroughly interfused, that the mildest and the severest acts of public discipline were alike made venerable and awful. Meagre, in-

阶段,那些留着胡子的善良人们的严峻冷酷的面部表情一定会被人认为即将发生某种可怕的事情,很可能预示着一个著名的罪犯要来受他的预期的刑罚,而法院所给他的处罚,也就是公众舆论上的判决。但在早期清教徒的严酷的性格中,是难以断言会有哪一类的事情发生的。那也许是一个懒惰的奴仆,或是父母交给当局的、一个忤逆的孩子,要在鞭刑柱上受处罚。也许是一个唯信仰论者,一个教友派的教徒,或是其他异端的教徒,要被鞭挞出城。也许,是一名闲散的印第安人,喝了白人的烈酒在大街上胡闹,为此要挨鞭打,然后被赶进终年不见阳光的森林中去。也完全可能是一个巫婆,就像那个地方官的遗孀西宾斯老太太一样刻毒的老巫婆,要被判处死刑,送上刑台。不管属于哪种情况,前来观看的人总是摆出肃穆庄严的姿态,那种跟他们的身份相一致的姿态。他们把宗教和法律几乎完全视为一体,而两者在他们的

deed, and cold, was the sympathy that a transgressor might look for, from such bystanders, at the scaffold. On the other hand, a penalty which, in our days, would infer a degree of mocking infamy and ridicule, might then be invested with almost as stern a dignity as the punishment of death itself.

It was a circumstance to be noted, on the summer morning when our story begins its course, that the women, of whom there were several in the crowd, appeared to take a peculiar interest in whatever penal infliction might be expected to ensue. The age had not so much refinement, that any sense of impropriety restrained the wearers of petticoat and farthingale from stepping forth into the public ways, and wedging their not unsubstantial persons, if occasion were, into the throng nearest to the scaffold at an execution. Morally, as well as materially, there was a coarser fibre in those wives and maidens of old English birth and breeding, than in their fair descendants, separated from them by a series of six or seven generations; for, throughout that chain of ancestry, every

性格中又完全融为一体,不分彼此,因此一切有关公众纪律的条例,无论是最温和的,还是最严厉的,都同样令他们肃然起敬和望而生畏。确实,一个站在刑台上的罪人能够从这样一些旁观者身上谋得的同情是既贫乏而又淡漠的。另外,如今只意味着某种令人冷嘲热讽的惩罚,在当时却可能被赋予同死刑一样令人望而生畏的色彩。

在我们的故事开始的这个夏日的早晨,有一个情况颇须注意,人群中的几个妇女对即将发生的任何处罚都表现了特别的兴趣。在那不很文明的时代,穿着衬裙和撑裙的妇女在大街小巷上招摇过市,一有机会便要扭动她们结实的身躯向绞刑架旁的围观人群挤去,这在当时并不认为是什么不得体的事。在古老的英格兰诞生和成长起来的那些少女和妇人,比起她们六七代以后的漂亮的后裔来,在精神上就像在体质上一样,论品质是更要粗犷的;因为,经过家世承续的系

successive mother has transmitted to her child a fainter bloom, a more delicate and briefer beauty, and a slighter physical frame, if not a character of less force and solidity, than her own. The women who were now standing about the prison-door stood within less than half a century of the period when the man-like Elizabeth had been the not altogether unsuitable representative of the sex. They were her country-women; and the beef and ale of their native land, with a moral diet not a whit more refined, entered largely into their composition. The bright morning sun, therefore, shone on broad shoulders and well-developed busts, and on round and ruddy cheeks, that had ripened in the far-off island, and had hardly yet grown paler or thinner in the atmosphere of New England. There was, moreover, a boldness and rotundity of speech among these matrons, as most of them seemed to be, that would startle us at the present day, whether in respect to its purport or its volume of tone.

“Goodwives,” said a hard-featured dame of fifty, “I’ll tell ye a piece of my mind. It would be greatly for the public behoof, if we women, being of mature age and church-members in good repute,

统,每一代的母亲,纵然没有使她的孩子们在性格上比自己减少顽强坚实,而也会使她们形态比较含蓄,容貌比较鲜嫩可是保持不久,体质是比较纤弱的。当时站在牢门前的那些妇女,和那堪称为女性代表的、男子气概的伊丽莎白,是相隔不过半个世纪的时代的人物。她们是她的同族女性:她们故乡的牛肉与麦酒,以及那丝毫也未加改良的精神食粮,大量地充塞进她们的躯体。因此,明亮的晨曦所照射着的,是宽阔的肩膀、发育丰满的胸脯和又圆又红的双颊——她们都是在遥远的祖国本岛上长大成人的,远还没有在新英格兰的气氛中变得白皙与瘦削些。尤其令人瞩目是,这些主妇们多数人一开口便是粗喉咙、大嗓门,要是在今天,她们的言谈无论是含义还是音量,都足以使我们瞠目结舌。

“婆娘们”,一位面色严厉五十岁老太婆先开了腔,“我要跟你们说说我的想法。要是我们这些上了年纪、在教会里有名声

should have the handling of such malefactors as this Hester Prynne. What think ye, gossips? If the hussy stood up for judgment before us five, that are now here in a knot together, would she come off with such a sentence as the worshipful magistrates have awarded? Marry, I trow not!"

"People say," said another, "that the Reverend Master Dimmesdale, her godly pastor, takes it very grievously to heart that such a scandal should have come upon his congregation."

"The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen, but merciful overmuch,—that is a truth," added a third autumnal matron. "At the very least, they should have put the brand of a hot iron on Hester Prynne's forehead. Madam Hester would have winced at that, I warrant me. But she,—the naughty baggage,—little will she care what they put upon the bodice of her gown! Why, look you, she may cover it with a brooch, or such like heathenish adornment, and so walk the streets as brave as ever!"

"Ah, but," interposed, more softly, a

的妇道人家,能把像海丝特·普琳那样的坏女人处置了,倒是给公众办了一件大好事。你们是怎么想的,女人们?要是把那个贱货交给我们眼下站在这儿的五个姐妹来审判,她会获得像那些可敬的地方长官们给她的判决,而轻易地混过去吗?哼,我才不信呢!"

"人们说,"另一个女人说,"她的虔诚的教长丁梅斯代尔牧师,因为自己的教会里发生了这样的丑事,伤心透啦。"

"几位地方长官都是敬畏上帝的绅士,可是过分慈悲了——这是真的,"第三个,一个垂暮的女人说。"最起码他们也应当在海丝特·普琳的前额上,用烧红的铁,烙上一个印子。我担保,要那样,海丝特太太才会有所顾忌。但他们要在她衣服的胸前贴个什么东西,那个不要脸的贱货才不在乎这个呢!瞧吧,她会用个胸针或别的什么异教徒装饰品遮住它,像过去一样依然大模大样招摇过市!"

"啊,不过,"一个手里

young wife, holding a child by the hand, "Let her cover the mark as she will, the pang of it will be always in her heart."

"What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown, or the flesh of her forehead?" cried another female, the ugliest as well as the most pitiless of these self-constituted judges. "This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die. Is there not law for it? Truly there is, both in the Scripture and the statute-book. Then let the magistrates, who have made it of no effect, thank themselves if their own wives and daughters go astray!"

"Mercy on us, goodwife," exclaimed a man in the crowd, "is there no virtue in woman, save what springs from a wholesome fear of the gallows? That is the hardest word yet! Hush, now, gossips! for the lock is turning in the prison-door, and here comes Mistress Prynne herself."

The door of the jail being flung open from within, there appeared, in the first place, like a black shadow emerging into sunshine, the grim and grisly presence of the town-beadle, with a sword by his side, and his staff of office in his hand. This personage prefigured and represented

领着孩子的年轻媳妇轻声插嘴说,“她要是想遮着那记号就随她去吧,反正她心里总会受折磨的。”

“我们扯什么记号和烙印,管它是在她前襟上还是额头上呢?”另一个女人叫嚷着,她在这几个自命的法官中长相最丑,也最不留情。“这女人给我们大伙都丢了脸,她就该死。难道没有管这号事的法律吗?是有的,圣经和法典上都有明文规定。让那些不照法规办事的官老爷们的老婆女儿也去干这号事,去自作自受吧!”

“老天啊,婆娘们,”人群中有一个男人叫喊道,“难道在女人身上除了对刑台的恐惧之外,就没有别的什么德性了吗?那话儿都说得太绝了,婆娘们,别嚷嚷了!正在开牢门的大锁呢,普琳太太就要出来了。”

牢门从里面打开,仿佛是一个黑影暴露在光天化日之下,首先亮相的是一个面目狰狞的狱吏,他身上挂着刀,手里拿着权杖。此人的相貌是阴鸷、严峻的清教法典的象征和

in his aspect the whole dismal severity of the Puritanic code of law, which it was his business to administer in its final and closest application to the offender. Stretching forth the official staff in his left hand, he laid his right upon the shoulder of a young woman, whom he thus drew forward; until, on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will. She bore in her arms a child, a baby of some three months old, who winked and turned aside its little face from the too vivid light of day; because its existence, heretofore, had brought it acquainted only with the grey twilight of a dungeon, or other darksome apartment of the prison.

When the young woman—the mother of this child—stood fully revealed before the crowd, it seemed to be her first impulse to clasp the infant closely to her bosom; not so much by an impulse of motherly affection, as that she might thereby conceal a certain token, which was wrought or fastened into her dress. In a moment, however, wisely judging that one token of her shame would but poorly serve to hide another, she took the baby on her arm, and, with a burning blush, and yet a haughty smile, and a glance that would not be abashed, looked around at

写照,其职责是给罪犯以最后的、致命的一击。他左手高高举起权杖,右手抓住年轻妇女的肩膀将她朝前拉;走到门槛边,女人推开了他,她这动作显示了她天然的端庄和倔犟的个性。她似乎是自觉自愿地步出门外。她怀里抱着一个孩子,一个约有三个月大的婴儿,眨着眼睛,在那太过耀眼的光线底下转开了她的小脸蛋儿;因为自从她出生以来,就只见过土牢或是监狱里别的暗室的灰暗光线。

这个年轻女人——这个孩子的母亲——当她露出全身,伫立在人群面前的时候,她的第一个冲动,似乎就是抱紧那个婴儿,贴紧胸怀;这动作与其说是母性爱的冲动,还不如说她借此可以遮掩那缝在她衣服上的标记。不过。她马上就看明白,用她的耻辱的一个标记来掩盖另一个标记是无济于事的,于是,索兴用一条胳膊架着孩子,她虽然面孔红得

her townspeople and neighbours. On the breast of her gown, in fine red cloth, surrounded with an elaborate embroidery and fantastic flourishes of gold thread, appeared the letter A. It was so artistically done, and with so much fertility and gorgeous luxuriance of fancy, that it had all the effect of a last and fitting decoration to the apparel which she wore; and which was of a splendour in accordance with the taste of the age, but greatly beyond what was allowed by the sumptuary regulations of the colony.

The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam, and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was lady-like, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterised by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace, which is now recognised as its indication. And never had Hester Prynne appeared more ladylike, in the antique interpretation of the term, than as she issued from

发烧,却露出高傲的微笑,用毫无愧色的目光环视着她的同镇居民和街坊邻里。她的裙袍的前胸上露出了一个用红色细布做就、周围用金丝线精心绣成奇巧花边的一个字母A。这个字母制作别致,包含了丰富而华美的想像,配在她穿的那件衣服上真成了一件至善至美、巧夺天工的装饰品。而她的那身衣服也十分华美,与那个时代的审美情趣相吻合,但却大大超出了殖民地节俭的规范。

这位少妇身材颇长,体态完美到极致。她一头浓密乌黑的秀发,在太阳照射下闪闪发光。她的面貌美丽端庄、妩媚动人,再加上那弯弯的柳叶眉和深邃的黑眼珠,更加摄人心魄。即使按照当时崇尚的雍容华贵的女性风范来衡量,她也属于贵妇人之列。她的风度体现在高贵典雅之中,而不是流于如今人们欣赏的那种纤细娇嫩和难以描述的优雅。即使以当年的概念而言,海丝特·普琳也从来没有象步出监狱的此时此刻这样更象贵

the prison. Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped. It may be true, that, to a sensitive observer, there was something exquisitely painful in it. Her attire, which, indeed, she had wrought for the occasion, in prison, and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity. But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer— so that both men and women, who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne, were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time,— was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell, taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself.

“She hath good skill at her needle, that’s certain,” remarked one of her female spectators; “but did ever a woman, before this brazen hussy, contrive such a

妇。那些本来就认识她的人,原先满以为她经历过这一磨难,会黯然失色,结果却惊得都发呆了,因为他们所看到的,是她焕发的美丽,竟把笼罩着她的不幸和耻辱凝成一轮光环。不过,对于一个敏锐的观察者来说,不难发现这其中有一种微妙的痛楚。她在牢狱中专门为这个场合,大体按照自己的想像设计与缝制的这套服饰,似乎表达了她的这种心态,以其特有的既大胆狂放又精美别致的风格来宣泄她由绝望进而变为无所顾忌的情绪。可是,吸引大家目光的,而且事实上也改变了那套服饰穿着者形象的却是那个她胸前绣得绝妙异常的闪闪发光的红字。以致于熟识海丝特·普琳的人,无论是男人还是女人都觉得他们似乎是第一次看见她。这红字产生了一种魔力,使她从通常的人际关系中脱离开来,并将她自我封闭起来。

“她的确做得一手好针线哩,”一个旁观的女人说:“这个厚脸皮的贱妇,真是别开生面的,有什么

way of showing it! Why, gossips, what is it but to laugh in the faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?"

"It were well," muttered the most iron-visaged of the old dames, "if we stripped Madam Hester's rich gown off her dainty shoulders; and as for the red letter, which she hath stitched so curiously, I'll bestow a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel, to make a fitter one!"

"Oh, peace, neighbours, peace!" whispered their youngest companion; "Do not let her hear you! Not a stitch in that embroidered letter, but she has felt it in her heart."

The grim beadle now made a gesture with his staff.

"Make way, good people, make way, in the King's name!" cried he. "Open a passage; and, I promise ye, Mistress Prynne shall be set where man, woman, and child, may have a fair sight of her brave apparel, from this time till an hour past meridian. A blessing on the righteous Colony of the Massachusetts, where iniquity is dragged out into the sunshine! Come along, Madam Hester, and show

女人曾经像她这样展览给大家看的吗? 喔, 女友们, 这不就是当面嘲笑我们神圣的地方长官吗? 这不是拿这些尊贵的大人先生的惩罚来出风头吗?"

"依我看," 一个面部表情最严峻的老太太喃喃说, "最好把海丝特太太那件华丽的衣服从她的秀美的肩膀上扒下来; 至于她绣得很别致的那个红字嘛, 用我患风湿病用的法兰绒布片换下来, 倒更合适一点儿!"

"噢, 安静, 街坊们, 安静!" 她们当中最年轻的一个同伴悄悄地说, "别让她听见你们说的话! 她绣的那个字, 一针一线都扎在她的心上。"

此时, 板着面孔的狱吏用权杖示意。

"让让路, 诸位, 看在国王的面, 让让路!" 他大声喊着, "请让开一条通道。我向各位保证, 我会把普琳太太安置在男女老少都可以看得见的地方, 从现在到午后一点钟, 让大家都可以参观她的奇装异服。上帝赐福马萨诸塞州殖民地, 将罪恶昭示在