

HAWTHORNE'S IMMIGABLE.

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The reiterated *immigable* is the key to the informing sense of Hawthorne's thought. It is traceable mainly to his early interest in Rousseau, *The Newgate Calendar*, and Bunyan. To the tinker is due his bent to allegory, thence to his prose form of literary art, the Romance.

In the *Maypole of Merry Mount*, Endicott is styled the *immigable* zealot, the severest Puritan of all who laid the rock foundation of New England.

"He lifted the wreath of roses from the ruin of the Maypole, and threw it, with his own gauntleted hand, over the heads of the Lord and Lady of the May."

You would need to read the story again and dwell upon this suggestion regarding the young lovers, ready for the priest to marry them, in order to understand how Endicott's deed was a prophecy.

"No sooner had their hearts glowed with real passion than they were sensible of something vague and unsubstantial in their former pleasures, and felt a dreary presentiment of inevitable change. From the moment that they truly loved, they had subjected themselves to earth's doom of care and sorrow, and troubled joy, and had no more a home at Merry Mount."

Again:

"As the moral gloom of the world overpowers all systematic gayety, even so was their home of wild mirth made desolate amid the sad forest. They returned to it no more. But as their flowery garland was wreathed of the brightest roses that had grown there, so, in the tie that united them, were intertwined all the purest and best of their early joys."

And this, in brief, is the circle of Hawthorne's thought, wherein is distinguishable the Providence of the *immigable*.

There was Eden, where "May or her mirthful spirit, dwell all the year round at Merry Mount, sporting with the Summer's months, and revelling with Autumn, and basking in the glow of Winter's fireside."

"O, people of the Golden Age, the chief of your husbandry was to raise flowers!"

And next came the trail of the serpent, and then the "Stat-lie Eden."

In an early sketch entitled *Snowflakes*, he puts it in this way:

"Cold Winter has begun his reign already! Now, throughout New England each hearth becomes an altar, sending up the smoke of a continual sacrifice to the *immitigable* deity who tyrannizes over forest, countryside and town. Wrapped in his white mantle, his staff a huge icicle, his beard and hair a wind-tossed snow-drift, he travels over the land, in the midst of the northern blast; and woe to the harmless wanderer whom he finds upon his path! There he lies stark and stiff a human shape of ice, on the spot where Winter overtook him. On strides the tyrant over the rushing rivers and broad lakes, which turn to rock beneath his footsteps. His dreary empire is established; all around stretches the desolation of the Pole. Yet not ungrateful be his New England children—for Winter is our sire though a stern and rough one—not ungrateful even for the severities which have nourished our unyielding strength of character.

"And let us thank him, too, for the sleigh-rides, cheered by the music of the merry bells—for the cracking and rustling hearth, when the ruddy firelight gleams on hardy manhood and the blooming cheek of woman—for all the home enjoyments and kindred virtues, which flourish in a frozen soil."

Writing to Sophia Peabody, his betrothed, in September, 1841, from Brook Farm, with regard to some plan for issuing the *Grandfather's Chair* Series with illustrations from her pencil—she had illustrated the *Gentle Boy* in 1839—he suggested this for a task:

"Master Cheever is a very good subject for a sketch, es-

pecially if he is portrayed in the very act of executing judgment on an evil-doer. The little urchin may be laid across his knee, and his arms and legs, and whole person indeed, should be flying all abroad, in an agony of nervous excitement and corporal smart. The Master, on the other hand, must be calm, rigid, without anger or pity, the very personification of that *immitigable* law whereby suffering follows sin. Meantime the lion's head should have a sort of sly twist on one side of its mouth, and a wink of one eye, in order to give the impression that, after all, the crime and the punishment are neither of them the most serious thing in the world. I could draw the sketch myself, if I had but the use of——'s magic fingers."

In *The House of the Seven Gables*, there is Col. Pyncheon's picture with those stern, *immitigable* features symbolizing an evil influence, and mingling darkly their shadows with the sunshine of the passing hour.

When the inevitable moment is at hand for opening the little shop, and Miss Hepsibah has fled into the inner parlor, and flung herself into the ancestral elbow chair, and is weeping, Hawthorne comments in these words:

"How can we elevate our history of retribution for the sin of long ago, when, as one of our most prominent figures, we are compelled to introduce—not a young and lovely woman, nor even the stately remains of beauty, storm-shattered by affliction—but a gaunt, sallow, rusty-jointed maiden, in a long-waisted silk gown, and with the strange horror of a turban on her head. . . . Nevertheless, if we look through all the heroic fortunes of mankind, we shall find this same entanglement of something mean and trivial with whatsoever is noblest in joy or sorrow. Life is made up of marble and mud. And, without all the deeper trust in a comprehensive sympathy above us, we might hence be led to suspect the insult of a sneer, as well as an immitigable frown, on the iron countenance of fate." He then adds significantly:

"What is called poetic insight is the gift of discerning, in this sphere of strangely mingled elements, the beauty and

the majesty which are compelled to assume a garb so sordid."

Judge Pyncheon's face is thus described:

"It was quite striking, allowing for the difference of scale, as that betwixt a landscape under a broad sunshine and just before a thunder-storm; not that it had the passionate intensity of the latter aspect, but was cold, hard, *immitigable*, like a day-long brooding cloud."

Picturing the Past as stretched out upon the Present like a giant's dead body, Holgrave says:

"A dead man sits on all our judgment seats; and living judges do but search out and repeat his decisions: We read in dead men's books! We laugh at dead men's jokes, and cry at dead men's pathos! . . . Turn our eyes to what point we may, a dead man's white, *immitigable* face encounters them, and freezes our very heart!"

When Judge Pyncheon felt Miss **Hepsibah's** wrath poured out in words irrevocably spoken, "his look assumed sternness, the sense of power, and *immitigable* resolve; and this so natural and imperceptible a change, that it seemed as if the iron man had stood there from the first, and the meek man not at all."

"Just as there comes a warm sunbeam into every cottage window, so comes a love-beam of God's care and pity for every separate need."

Miss Hepzibah realized this at last, but not until Clifford, pointing to the room where Judge Pyncheon sat "in the hard composure of his temperament", said:

"The weight is gone, Hepzibah! It is gone off this weary old world, and we may be as light-hearted as little Phoebe herself!"

The stern and pitiless Minos bent his shaggy brows upon the poor Athenian victims:

"Any other mortal beholding their fresh and tender and their innocent looks, would have felt himself sitting on thorns until he had made every soul of them happy, by bidding them go free as the summer wind. But this *immitigable* Minos

cared only to examine whether they were plump enough to satisfy the Minotaur's appetite."

But, near his throne stood the beautiful and tender-hearted Ariadne, his daughter, who "really wept at the idea of how much human happiness would be needlessly thrown away, by giving so many young people, in the first bloom and rose blossom of their lives, to be eaten up by a creature who, no doubt, would have preferred a fat ox, or even a large pig, to the plumpest of them."

Wherefore their rescue.

In the *Blithedale Romance*, Hollingsworth is one of those who surrender themselves to an overruling purpose, and who have "no heart, no sympathy, no reason, no conscience."

"They have an idol to which they consecrate themselves high-priest, and deem it holy work to offer sacrifices of whatever is most precious; and never once seem to suspect—so cunning has the Devil been with them—that this false deity, in whose iron features, *immitigable* to all the rest of mankind, they see only benignity and love, is but a spectrum of the very priest himself, projected upon the surrounding darkness."

Hawthorne describes the horror of the spectacle of the rigid limbs of Zenobia recovered from her watery grave:

"She was the marble image of a death-agony. Her arms had grown rigid in the act of struggling, and were bent before her with clenched hands; her knees, too, were bent, and—thank God for it!—in the attitude of prayer. . . . One hope I had, and that too was mingled half with fear. She knelt as if in prayer. With the last choking consciousness, her soul bubbling out through her lips, it may be, had given itself up to the Father, reconciled and penitent. But her arms! They were bent before her, as if she struggled against Providence in never-ending hostility. Her hands! They were clenched in *immitigable* defiance."

When Miriam realized that the heart of Donatello was sending out its tendrils to her blighted soul, it was:

"Then first she became sensible of a delight and grief at once, in feeling this zephyr of a new affection, with its un-

tainted freshness, blow over her weary, stifled heart, which had no right to be revived by it. The very exquisiteness of the enjoyment made her know that it ought to be a forbidden one.

"'Donatello,' she hastily exclaimed, 'for your own sake, leave me! It is not such a happy thing as you imagine it, to wander in these woods with me, a girl from another land, burdened with a doom that she tells to none. I might make you dread me,—perhaps hate me,—if I chose; and I must choose, if I find you loving me too well!'

"'I fear nothing!' said Donatello, looking into her unfathomable eyes with perfect trust. 'I love always!'"

Miriam saw that she spoke in vain so concluded:

"'Well, then, for this one hour, let me be such as he imagines me. Tomorrow will be time enough to come back to my reality. My reality! What is it? Is the past so indestructible? the future so *immitigable*? Is the dark dream in which I walk, of such solid, stony substance, that there can be no escape out of its dungeon? Be it so! There is, at least, that ethereal quality in my spirit, that it can make me as gay as Donatello himself,—for this one hour!'"

The insoluble riddle of her future was soon thereafter propounded to her anew, in an interview with the model, who protested they had a destiny which they must needs fulfil together.

"I, too," he said, "have struggled to escape it. I was as anxious as yourself to break the tie between us,—to bury the past in a fathomless grave,—to make it impossible that we should ever meet until you confront me at the bar of Judgment! You little can imagine what steps I took to render all this secure; and what was the result? Our strange interview in the bowels of the earth convinced me of the futility of my design."

Miriam in an outburst of passion cried:

"O that we could have wandered in those dismal passages till we both perished, taking opposite paths in the darkness,

so that when we lay down to die, our last breaths might not mingle!"

"It were vain to wish it," said the model. "In all the labyrinth of the midnight paths, we should have found one another out to live or to die together."

And when he insisted that they were bound together and could never part again, she replied:

"Think how I escaped from all the past! I had made for myself a new sphere, and found new friends, new occupations, new hopes and enjoyments. My heart, methinks, was almost unburdened as if there had been no miserable life behind me. . . . Let us keep asunder, and all may go well for both."

"Never!" said he, with *immitigable* will; "your reappearance has destroyed the work of years."

The interview of Hester Prynne with Old Roger Chilligsworth relative to the sin she is expiating, is more explicit as to the nature of sin and the dark necessity of its retribution.

"Hester," he said, "I ask not wherefore nor how, thou hast fallen into the pit, or say, rather, thou hast ascended to the pedestal of infamy, on which I found thee. The reason is not far to seek. It was my folly and thy weakness, I,—a man of thought,—the bookworm of great libraries,—a man already in decay, having given my best years to feed the hungry dream of knowledge,—what had I to do with youth and beauty like thine own! Misshapen from my birth hour, how could I delude myself with the idea that intellectual gifts might veil physical deformity in a young girl's fantasy! . . . Nay, from the moment when we came down the old church steps together, a married pair, I might have beheld the bale-fire of that scarlet letter blazing at the end of our path!"

When she murmured that she had greatly wronged him, he answered:

"We have wronged each other. Mine was the first wrong, when I betrayed thy budding youth into a false and unnatural relation with my decay."

Afterwards explaining why it is not granted to him to pardon, he says:

"My old faith, long forgotten, comes back to me, and explains all that we do and all that we suffer. By thy first step awry thou didst plant the germ of evil; but since that moment, it has all been a dark necessity. Ye that have wronged me are not sinful, save in a kind of a typical illusion; neither am I fiend-like, who have snatched a fiend's office from his hands. It is our fate."

Hawthorne's illustrious daughter, Rose, comprehended her father's innermost thought and used this key-word to characterize it. In the General Introduction written for the Old Manse Edition of his Works, she writes:

"His *immitigable* thought, which had contrived intricate sorrows from the truths of character itself, was now to end its strength in witnessing the most abnormal complication his country could devise. As it were, the struggle of two brothers, trying to exterminate each other, both right, both noble of soul, bound by holy promises never to break fealty, now tearing blood from each other's veins, in the smoke of a broken compact severed by Sumter's gun; sad, heavy note, that can still make Americans shudder,—sounding alone, and followed by a silence of awe, and years of carnage. Subtle destiny could form no harsher plot than this, nor embrace higher flights of principle nor end with a richer result."

His deeply pondered thought "this one burden bore." The antecedents of it are not far to seek.

Before he was fourteen, his genius had been nourished on Shakespeare, Milton, Rousseau, *The Newgate Calendar*, and Bunyan.

To Rousseau he was largely indebted for his interest in unsophisticated human nature: Emile is the child of Nature, a veritable figure of romance.

To the *Calendar*, which was his daily diet, is due his vivid realizations of the fall of man into sin and crime. And coming in pat with this is *Paradise Lost*, the epic of the Fall, Bunyan must be credited with his note of hope in a superin-

tending Providence: *The Pilgrim's Progress* is the story of a journey from the City of Destruction to a light that shined from afar .

A sketch like *Little Annie's Rambles* mirrors Rousseau in his conception of the innocence and perfect goodness of the child, calling for an education till the twelfth year, that is negative, simply letting nature have her way, but guarding the child from the shock of opinions, and building a wall of defense about his soul, and making sure against every exterior influence that would hinder the free development of his powers.

When Little Annie hears the town crier telling the people of the show that has come to town, "she feels the impulse to go strolling away—longing after the mystery of the great world." and seizes the hand of a grown-up—the moralist—to make a ramble with him. "She is not afraid, but passes on with fearless confidence, a happy child amidst a great throng of grown people."

After she has gone the round of the wonders with her guide they hear the town crier again, announcing that a little girl has strayed away from home.

"Stop, stop, town crier! The lost is found. O, my pretty Annie, we forgot to tell your mother of our ramble, and she is in despair, and has sent the town crier to bellow up and down the streets, affrighting old and young, for the loss of a little girl who has not once let go my hand! Well, let us hasten homeward; and as we go, forget not to thank Heaven, my Annie, that, after wandering a little way into the world, you may return at the first summons, with an untainted and unwearied heart, and be a happy child again."

"But," her guide says significantly, "I have gone too far astray for the town crier to call me back."

It is not, however, the hopeless despair of Poe in *The Conqueror Worm*, where

"An angel throng, bewinged, bedight
 In veils, and drowned in tears,
 Sit in a theatre to see
 A play of hopes and fears,

and,

“That motley drama—oh, to be sure
It shall not be forgot!
With its Phantom chased for evermore
By a crowd that seize it not,
Through a circle that ever returneth in
To the self-same spot;
And much of the Madness, and more of Sin,
And Horror the soul of the plot.

The angels affirm,

“That the play is the tragedy ‘Man’,
And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.”

The moral of the fantasy of *David Swan* is that, while viewless and unexpected events thrust themselves continually athwart our path, there is still regularity enough in mortal life to render foresight even partially available, arguing a superintending Providence.

But, where the Worm is conqueror there can be, for man, no hero, and no Romance.

Hawthorne's attitude is that of a spectator:

“It resembled that of the Chorus in a classic play, which seems to be set aloof from the possibility of personal concernment, and bestows the whole measure of its hope or fear, its exultation or sorrow, on the fortunes of others, between whom and itself this sympathy is the only bond.”

Dilating further upon this thought, he says:

“Destiny, it may be,—the most skilful of stage managers, —seldom chooses to arrange its scenes, and carry forward its drama, without securing the presence of at least one calm observer. It is his office to give applause when due, and sometimes an inevitable tear, to detect the final fitness of incident to character, and distill in his long-brooding thought the whole morality of the performance.”

He wanted it understood that he was no realist, after the common acceptance of the term.

“I have appealed,” he says, “to no sentiment or sensibili-

ties save such as are diffused among us all. So far as I am a man of really individual attributes I veil my face; nor am I, nor have I ever been, one of those supremely hospitable people who serve up their own hearts delicately fried, with brain sauce, as a tidbit for their beloved public."

This places him logically in the category of the allegorist. In the introduction to *Rappaccini's Daughter*, accrediting the work to M. de l'Aubépine, Hawthorne speaks of his unfortunate position between the Transcendentalists, on the one hand, and that other great body of pen-and-ink men who address the intellect and the sympathies of the multitude; and says that his writings might have won him greater reputation but for an inveterate love of allegory, which is apt to invest his plots and characters with the aspect of scenery and people in the clouds, and to steal away the human warmth out of his conceptions, and then adds:

"In any case he generally contents himself with a slight embroidery of outward manners,—the faintest possible counterfeit of real life,—and endeavors to create an interest by some less obvious peculiarity of the subject."

His stories are constructed without the support of incidents or motives; he eschewed the usual accessories of a novel.

He painted souls more than bodies, as if he were heeding some such admonition as,

"Your business is not to catch men with show,
With homage to the perishable clay,
But lift them over it, ignore it all,
Make them forget there's such a thing as flesh.
Your business is to paint the souls of men—

Give us no more of body than shows soul!

Paint the soul, never mind the legs and arms!"

He relentlessly tears away the mask of even our every-day conventional human life, and reveals its innermost depths in painful clearness of delineation.

The stern Puritan in him—he was a Puritan who did not

go to church—compelled him to strip off the outward show which human nature wears, to be seen of men, in order to lay bare the maladies of the soul which are the sources of the sum and substance of Hawthorne's allegory.

Hawthorne is the peerless analyst of the soul.

His characters are not individuals but types. Instead of representing real life, they symbolize life. In fact they are symbolized sentiments rather than symbolized logic. This is sum and substance of Hawthorne's allegory.

But when his art reached to the marvel of creating an atmosphere in which these phantoms could live, his allegory became Romance.

Observe how Hawthorne himself felt this. In his preface to *The House of the Seven Gables*, distinguishing his work as a Romance from the Novel, he says:

"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—it 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 marvelous rather as a slight, delicate, and evanescent flavor, than as any portion of the actual substance of the dish offered to the public."

The casual reader, though not critically conscious, is yet aware of a subtle charm diffused over the background of natural scenery, creating a kind of fairy realm in which his figures, as heroes and heroines, live and move.

What a marvelous world that is in which Arthur Dimmesdale, Hester Prynne, and little Pearl move! And yet it is not so far away, but we could travel thither in a day.

Who that has read *The Scarlet Letter* has not canonized Hester Prynne! That career from budding youth, through

sin and the discipline of the red-hot iron of truth, to saint-hood, is heroic!

Not more wonderful as a work of Art, but more suggestive as to the genesis of sin is the *Marble Faun*.

Beginning with the unsophisticated man, Donatello, we find him after his sin, "haunted with a strange remorse, and an *unmitigable* resolve to obtain what he deemed justice upon himself"; then this comment by Miriam to Kenyon:

"So changed, yet still, in a deeper sense, so much the same! He has travelled in a circle, as all things heavenly and earthly do, and now comes back to his original self, with an inestimable treasure of improvement won from an experience of pain."

"The story of the fall of man! Is it not repeated in our romance of Monte Beni?"

One can believe that Hawthorne learned more for his art, and none the less for the substance of his art, from Shakespeare than from all others upon whom his genius was nourished. He found there an etherealized atmosphere pervading natural scenery and lending idealized effects to the various situations. One conspicuous instance must have engaged him, particularly, *The Tempest*. There is the unconventional world; and Miranda, the child of Nature; and Providence in the person of Prospero; and Caliban and Ariel, antipodal creatures of the enchanted realm.

Even gross Caliban appreciates that,

"—— the isle is full of noises, sounds and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not."

Into the foreground is fetched the conventional world with its selfishness and sin, and reconciliation and restoration end the dramatic romance.

One may believe that Hawthorne got his key-word from *The Tempest*. In the quarrel between Prospero and Ariel, Prospero reminds Ariel that the Witch Sycorax did confine him,

"By help of her more potent ministers
And in her most *unmitigable* rage,
Into a cloven pine."