



The House Of The Seven Gables: Extended Annotated Edition

Nathaniel Hawthorne

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This is the extended annotated edition including a rare and extensive biographical essay on the author, as well as an introductory to the book written by George Parsons Lathrop.

This book, which the author himself preferred to his previous novel, is of quieter tone than "The Scarlet Letter." It is more minutely elaborated, and its pathos depends more on the peculiar temperaments of its characters. The scene is laid in Salem, and the house, which much effort has been made to identify, corresponds in many points to an old dwelling formerly standing there, known as the Curwen House, and sometimes called "the old witch-house." Engravings from a picture of it are used as illustrations of the book. Some points in the story corresponding to the history of the Hawthornes were noted in the beginning of this sketch.

The character of Clifford and the problem of his strange destiny, the mockery of fate, which, having adapted him so delicately to an existence of sensuous refinement, stripped him in his youth, at one brutal stroke, of everything fair in life, and threw him among the lowest and coarsest surroundings, is the great study of the book. Its pervading thought is the theory of inheritance, the repetition of an original type now and then down a family line, and the curse of wrong-doing, blasting innocent lives when wronger and wronged are dust.

The characters of Hepzibah and Phoebe are beautiful types, strongly contrasted on the surface, but having at bottom an intimate kinship in moral uprightness and capacity for devotion. That of Judge Pyncheon also is exquisitely worked out in the subtle self-deception of the hypocrite,—no character being so great a favorite in fiction, and none so often badly drawn, as that of the hypocrite, because it looks so much more easy and uncomplicated than it is.

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