

A DREAM AND A FORGETTING

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A Dream and a Forgetting by Julian Hawthorne

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JULIAN HAWTHORNE

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BY

JULIAN HAWTHORNE,

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"GARTH," "FORTUNE'S FOOL," "JOHN PARMELEE'S
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OF NEW YORK

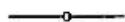
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CHAPTER I.

I KNEW well both the chief actors in this little drama; and that may be the reason why I think their story worth telling. Events are of small interest or significance compared with character; and I am free to confess that I have never succeeded in conveying to another the impressions of character that I receive. I may imagine I do it; my listener may fancy he apprehends it; but, when all is done, we discover that we have been thinking of different

things. For it is an aged truism that no one can see what does not lie within himself, or understand what he does not already know. It really does seem as if education, in the true sense of the word, were a matter less of the intellectual faculties than of the temperament and sympathies. But if that be the case, what is to become of our public-school system?

Fairfax Boardwine was educated, or at any rate he studied certain books, at the public school of his native town. This town was a place of three thousand inhabitants, within a hundred miles of New York. His father's profession was that of a farmer—which Emerson and other poets celebrate, but which, in this day and country, is not in all respects so alluring as tradition and theory make it. Intercourse with nature on the practical side seems to

be an obstacle to aesthetic communion with her. Old John Boardwine's talk was of crops and markets, never of the landscape, though his seventy acres formed part of a very charming one. He worked hard, and was, at one time, quite prosperous; but later he was outgenerated by other farmers who were nearer New York. Then he contemplated selling out and moving. But the nearest he came to selling out was to raise a mortgage on his farm; and that was never paid off until years afterward, at his death, when half the farm (and the better half) was sold outright to a speculator in artificial incubation and mushrooms, who made a fortune.

The Boardwines came of good old English stock. In the colonial days they were a "genteel" family; they fought honorably in the Revolution, when that came along;

and John's brother Philip was killed in our Civil War. Philip was a more capable and wide-awake man than John, and his loss (the two brothers had run the farm together) had a bad effect. Things went slowly down hill. There was not money enough to send Fairfax to college in what Fairfax considered proper style, so he would not go at all—and therein, I think, he made a serious mistake; for if college training and associations benefit anybody, it is just such clever self-confident fellows as Fairfax Boardwine. But he said that if he could not occupy the position of a gentleman among gentlemen, the only dignified course was to withhold his presence altogether, or words to that effect; an argument that had one manifest defect at least, namely, that the college could never know what it had lost. This incident ever

afterward supplied Fairfax with a grievance. I never could determine whether his quarrel was with his father for not creating an income for him out of empty air, or with the college for not dispensing with fees in his case, in consideration of the honor of instructing him. Meanwhile, his grievance was undoubtedly a great consolation to him.

At the age of seventeen, he had already begun to write verses. They were for the most part either erotic or philosophical. Some of them, which he showed me long afterward (I did not make his acquaintance until he was over twenty) were quite good. I recollect one which described, in more or less figurative language, how the writer had fallen in love with a young lady of sumptuous attributes, who had afterward

been faithless to him. Thereupon he fell into wayward courses:

"Dark shadows gathered round me, more and more;
The downward pathway, which I blindly trod,
Seemed leading me away from all things pure—
From confidence in man, and trust in God."

This state of things, however, was destined to undergo a beneficent change. In the course of his downward career he met another young lady, whose character and influence upon him are shadowed forth as follows:

"Yet, ere the light quite vanished from my eyes,
I saw beside the path a snow-white flower,
Which smiled upon me in such heavenly wise
That my heart throbbed, responsive to its power.
But, when I strove to pluck that flower so fair,
Dark memories of the Past rolled in between—
I stood fast-bound with icy fetters there—
The dreary chains of love that once had been!"

I liked that; and also the concluding