

**THE RIVERSIDE LITERATURE
SERIES. TANGLEWOOD TALES
FOR GIRLS AND BOYS: BEING
A SECOND WONDER-BOOK**

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The Riverside Literature Series. Tanglewood Tales for Girls and Boys: Being a Second Wonder-Book by Nathaniel Hawthorne

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THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR. (Page 42)

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BEING A SECOND WONDER-BOOK

BY

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE



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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

TANGLEWOOD TALES.

HAWTHORNE'S first "Wonder-Book" was so well received, that he was induced to undertake another within eighteen months from the time of finishing the first. To this new volume, made up in the same way of Greek myths retold with a modern, free, half realistic and half fanciful tone, he gave the name "Tanglewood Tales." The previous series having been ostensibly narrated by one Eustace Bright, among the hills of Berkshire, these additional stories in the like vein were represented as having been brought by Eustace Bright to Hawthorne, at his new home, The Wayside, in Concord.

This place Hawthorne had bought and moved into, early in the summer of 1852, after finishing "The Blithedale Romance" at West Newton, during the preceding winter.¹ Some slight references to it are made in the Introduction headed "The Wayside," where "my predecessor's little ruined, rustic summer-house, midway on the hill-side," is mentioned. The predecessor was Mr. A. Bronson Alcott, one of the so-called Transcendental school of thinkers, the intimate friend of Ralph Waldo Emerson, and the father of

¹ For a detailed account of The Wayside, the prefatory note to *Septimius Felton*, in the Riverside Edition of Hawthorne's works, may be consulted.

Miss Louisa M. Alcott, since become one of the most popular of writers for children. This summer-house, therefore, becomes to the mind a sort of station between the new generation and the old, a link between Hawthorne in his capacity of tale-teller to the little folks of America, and the woman who, at that time a child, has in later years assembled from the young people a vast audience of her own. The romancer speaks of this rustic structure in a letter to George William Curtis, dated July 14, 1852:—

“ Mr. Alcott expended a good deal of taste and some money (to no great purpose) in forming the hill-side behind the house into terraces, and building arbors and summer-houses of rough stems and branches and trees, on a system of his own. They must have been very pretty in their day, and are so still, although much decayed, and shattered more and more by every breeze that blows.”

No vestige of this sylvan edifice now remains.

Prior to his return to Concord and installation at The Wayside, Hawthorne had contemplated giving up that humble abode at Lenox, which, in a letter to George William Curtis, he had called “the ugliest little old red farm-house you ever saw,” and renting the country-seat of Mrs. Fanny Kemble, in the same vicinity. But as I have mentioned in the Introductory Note prefixed to the “Wonder-Book,” he had already begun to languish somewhat in the inland air of the Berkshire Valley; added to which was the not altogether favorable influence of the striking scenery in that picturesque mountain-district. In October, 1851, he wrote from Lenox to a friend: “We shall leave here (with much joy) on the first day of December.”

The sojourn at West Newton, however, served only

to occupy the interval between Lenox and his settlement at Concord. After he had arrived at the latter place, he wrote to Horatio Bridge (October 13, 1852): "In a day or two I intend to begin a new romance, which, if possible, I intend to make more genial than the last." The "last" was "The Blithedale Romance;" but of the newly projected work here mentioned we find no further trace, and it is impossible to conjecture what scheme for a fresh work of fiction was then occupying the author's mind. The "campaign" *Life of Franklin Pierce* had already been produced after his coming to *The Wayside*, and he was apparently free to turn his attention to this projected romance; but instead of pursuing the design, whatever it may have been, he took up the composition of the "Tanglewood Tales," which were completed in the early spring of 1853. On the 13th of March, that year, he wrote the preface for them. Ten days later his appointment to the consulate at Liverpool by President Pierce was confirmed by the Senate of the United States.

G. F. L.

THE WAYSIDE.

INTRODUCTORY.

A SHORT time ago, I was favored with a flying visit from my young friend Eustace Bright, whom I had not before met with since quitting the breezy mountains of Berkshire. It being the winter vacation at his college, Eustace was allowing himself a little relaxation, in the hope, he told me, of repairing the inroads which severe application to study had made upon his health; and I was happy to conclude, from the excellent physical condition in which I saw him, that the remedy had already been attended with very desirable success. He had now run up from Boston by the noon train, partly impelled by the friendly regard with which he is pleased to honor me, and partly, as I soon found, on a matter of literary business.

It delighted me to receive Mr. Bright, for the first time, under a roof, though a very humble one, which I could really call my own. Nor did I fail (as is the custom of landed proprietors all about the world) to parade the poor fellow up and down over my half a dozen acres; secretly rejoicing, nevertheless, that the disarray of the inclement season, and particularly the six inches of snow then upon the ground, prevented him from observing the ragged neglect of soil and shrubbery into which the place has lapsed. It was idle, however, to imagine that an airy guest from

Monument Mountain, Bald-Summit, and old Graylock, shaggy with primeval forests, could see anything to admire in my poor little hill-side, with its growth of frail and insect-eaten locust-trees. Eustace very frankly called the view from my hill-top tame; and so, no doubt, it was, after rough, broken, rugged, head-long Berkshire, and especially the northern parts of the county, with which his college residence had made him familiar. But to me there is a peculiar, quiet charm in these broad meadows and gentle eminences. They are better than mountains, because they do not stamp and stereotype themselves into the brain, and thus grow wearisome with the same strong impression, repeated day after day. A few summer weeks among mountains, a lifetime among green meadows and placid slopes, with outlines forever new, because continually fading out of the memory, — such would be my sober choice.

I doubt whether Eustace did not internally pronounce the whole thing a bore, until I led him to my predecessor's little ruined, rustic summer-house, midway on the hill-side. It is a mere skeleton of slender, decaying tree-trunks, with neither walls nor a roof; nothing but a tracery of branches and twigs, which the next wintry blast will be very likely to scatter in fragments along the terrace. It looks, and is, as evanescent as a dream; and yet, in its rustic net-work of boughs, it has somehow enclosed a hint of spiritual beauty, and has become a true emblem of the subtle and ethereal mind that planned it. I made Eustace Bright sit down on a snow-bank, which had heaped itself over the mossy seat, and gazing through the arched window opposite, he acknowledged that the scene at once grew picturesque.