

**THE HAWTHORNE
CLASSICS. AMERICAN
STORIES; PP. 1-269**

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The Hawthorne Classics. American Stories; pp. 1-269 by Jr. Hale

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JR. HALE

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THE HAWTHORNE CLASSICS

AMERICAN STORIES

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PREFATORY NOTE

THE general idea of this series has been so often stated in other volumes, that it will be enough now to say that we have here put together such examples as will show the general character of the short story and also some of the special directions in which it has been developed.

With this view, the particular stories to be chosen were in most cases not only natural, but necessary. With Hawthorne, it was not possible to represent all the different forms in which his genius found expression; with Poe, it seemed just as well not to choose a detective story or a tale of horror. But "The Gold Bug" and "The Fall of the House of Usher" are so familiar that most readers will be glad of a chance to have one of Poe's less known stories.

E. E. H., JR.

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INTRODUCTION

THERE have been stories, short or long, ever since there have been men, or else the human race would have died of weariness before it had got well started. Men must have always amused themselves by telling stories, and the earliest forms of literature usually are stories of some sort, legends, fables, or myths. But in the literatures that we commonly know they find their earliest form in verse. Verse is almost always earlier in literature than prose. There are various reasons for this which need not be mentioned, but whatever the reason, the fact is that those longer stories that we call novels and the shorter stories that we generally call a "short story," — meaning not merely a story that is short, but rather an especial kind of story, — these are new in the literature of the world. There is always fiction, and for many centuries there has been prose fiction of a sort, but novels as we understand them to-day began practically in the middle of the eighteenth century, and short stories even later.

It is held by some writers that Irving was one of the first to write short stories. This is hardly

to be understood literally, for many short stories of one sort or another are to be found before Irving. But when we think of how many short stories Irving wrote, we find it hard to name any one else who did so much in giving this kind of fiction a definite form. "Rip Van Winkle" was his first, or among his first, and is still his most famous tale, but he wrote many others, not only Dutch tales like "Dolph Heyliger" and "Wolfert Webber," but tales of wonder and of adventure, as in the "Tales of a Traveller," tales of romance, as in "The Alhambra." With Irving the short story was, we might say, but an interesting variation from the essay. His first stories appeared in the "Sketch Book," which is otherwise chiefly made up of essays. Indeed, his idea of a story was not unlike his idea of an essay. He considered it, the story itself, he said, as being but the opportunity for the play of thought and sentiment and for the exhibition of scene and character, which is much the way that an essayist of the type of Charles Lamb¹ regards the idea that suggests his essay to him. We may notice this process of Irving in any of his stories, but most easily in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," for there we know what suggested the story to him. It was the tale of the race between Brom Bones and the galloping Hessian: of this "waggish fic-

¹ See "English Essays," p. viii.

tion," as he calls it, Irving wrote a sketch, but put it aside. Now without pretending to guess at the artistic processes of a man of genius, we may naturally suppose that the simple story of a race with a specter horseman became the story that we now know by determination of the tone or general atmosphere of the story and development of necessary characters and events. As to the tone of the story, one may see just what it is by comparing it with something by Poe or Hawthorne. As to the characters, they needed but some one to race with the specter and a reason for the race; so we have Ichabod, and Katrina, and Brom Bones. This gave what Irving called the framework. Notice now how small a part this "framework" plays in the story; and you will see that the real matter of importance lies in the descriptions of scene and character, in the rich, full atmosphere, in the pictures of life and manners. And turning to "Rip Van Winkle," we find there much the same thing, and thus may set down as a mark of Irving's stories that they are chiefly sketches of character and scenery, founded on some tale, in these cases something wonderful, actual or burlesque.

But Irving was more of an essayist than a story-writer; Hawthorne was a story-teller first, last, and always. Stories, long or short, out of his head or from the Greek, fact or fancy,—everything with him took in his mind the form of a

story. The means which Irving had, at least, made popular, Hawthorne took at once as his chief means of expression. He wrote great numbers of short stories; he somewhere rather bitterly says that at first they were not at all successful; but his later stories were, and the world has by this time come around to his earlier ones. What is their characteristic? As we read them, we are quite conscious that we have something very different from Irving. "The Great Stone Face" is quite different from "Rip Van Winkle." Some of the ways we shall easily notice: thus where Irving has descriptions for the pleasure of describing, Hawthorne usually has imaginative passages, or passages which are meant to develop an allegorical meaning, or passages giving the thoughts or fancies of some of his characters. But the real difference lies deeper; it lies in the handling of the idea. In Irving we have seen that the idea was a matter of minor importance. With Hawthorne, however, it becomes the main thing, something which gives unity to the whole. In stories so different as our two the same thing is noticeable. In "The Great Stone Face" there was an idea to present in symbolic form, and each incident or element had its particular part to play; the rich man, the general, the orator, the poet, all were necessary to bringing out clearly the final point. So with "The Gray Champion"; here a single striking incident gave the idea, and was