

**PASSAGES FROM THE  
AMERICAN NOTE-BOOKS  
OF NATHANIEL  
HAWTHORNE. VOL. II**

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**NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE & GEORGE PARSONS LATHROP**

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NOTE-BOOKS

OF

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

VOL. II.



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PASSAGES FROM HAWTHORNE'S  
AMERICAN NOTE-BOOKS.

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[EXTRACTS FROM HIS PRIVATE LETTERS.]

**B**ROOK FARM, OAK HILL, *April 13th*, 1841.  
— . . . Here I am in a polar Paradise! I know not how to interpret this aspect of nature, — whether it be of good or evil omen to our enterprise. But I reflect that the Plymouth pilgrims arrived in the midst of storm, and stepped ashore upon mountain snow-drifts; and, nevertheless, they prospered, and became a great people, — and doubtless it will be the same with us. I laud my stars, however, that you will not have your first impressions of (perhaps) our future home from such a day as this. . . . Through faith, I persist in believing that Spring and Summer will come in their due season; but the unregenerated man shivers within me, and suggests a doubt whether I may not have wandered within the precincts of the Arctic Circle, and chosen my heritage among everlasting snows. . . . Provide yourself with a

good stock of furs, and, if you can obtain the skin of a polar bear, you will find it a very suitable summer dress for this region. . . .

I have not yet taken my first lesson in agriculture, except that I went to see our cows foddered, yesterday afternoon. We have eight of our own; and the number is now increased by a transcendental heifer belonging to Miss Margaret Fuller. She is very fractious, I believe, and apt to kick over the milk-pail. . . . I intend to convert myself into a milkmaid this evening, but I pray Heaven that Mr. Ripley may be moved to assign me the kindest cow in the herd, otherwise I shall perform my duty with fear and trembling. . . .

I like my brethren in affliction very well; and, could you see us sitting round our table at meal-times, before the great kitchen fire, you would call it a cheerful sight. Mrs. B— is a most comfortable woman to behold. She looks as if her ample person were stuffed full of tenderness, — indeed, as if she were all one great, kind heart.

*April 14th, 10 A. M.* — . . . I did not milk the cows last night, because Mr. Ripley was afraid to trust them to my hands, or me to their horns, I know not which. But this morning I have done wonders. Before breakfast, I went out to the barn and began to chop hay for the cattle, and with such "righteous vehemence," as Mr. Ripley says, did I labor, that in the space of ten minutes I broke the machine. Then I brought wood and replenished the fires; and finally went down to breakfast, and ate up a huge mound of buckwheat cakes. After break-



fast, Mr. Ripley put a four-pronged instrument into my hands, which he gave me to understand was called a pitchfork; and he and Mr. Farley being armed with similar weapons, we all three commenced a gallant attack upon a heap of manure. This office being concluded, and I having purified myself, I sit down to finish this letter. . . .

Miss Fuller's cow hooks the other cows, and has made herself ruler of the herd, and behaves in a very tyrannical manner. . . . I shall make an excellent husbandman, — I feel the original Adam reviving within me.

*April 16th.* — . . . . Since I last wrote, there has been an addition to our community of four gentlemen in sables, who promise to be among our most useful and respectable members. They arrived yesterday about noon. Mr. Ripley had proposed to them to join us, no longer ago than that very morning. I had some conversation with them in the afternoon, and was glad to hear them express much satisfaction with their new abode and all the arrangements. They do not appear to be very communicative, however, — or perhaps it may be merely an external reserve, like my own, to shield their delicacy. Several of their prominent characteristics, as well as their black attire, lead me to believe that they are members of the clerical profession; but I have not yet ascertained from their own lips what has been the nature of their past lives. I trust to have much pleasure in their society, and, sooner or later, that we shall all of us derive great strength from our intercourse with them. I cannot too highly applaud the readiness with which

these four gentlemen in black have thrown aside all the fopperies and flummeries which have their origin in a false state of society. When I last saw them, they looked as heroically regardless of the stains and soils incident to our profession as I did when I emerged from the gold-mine. . . . .

I have milked a cow!!! . . . . The herd has rebelled against the usurpation of Miss Fuller's heifer; and, whenever they are turned out of the barn, she is compelled to take refuge under our protection. So much did she impede my labors by keeping close to me, that I found it necessary to give her two or three gentle pats with a shovel; but still she preferred to trust herself to my tender mercies, rather than venture among the horns of the herd. She is not an amiable cow; but she has a very intelligent face, and seems to be of a reflective cast of character. I doubt not that she will soon perceive the expediency of being on good terms with the rest of the sisterhood.

I have not yet been twenty yards from our house and barn; but I begin to perceive that this is a beautiful place. The scenery is of a mild and placid character, with nothing bold in its aspect; but I think its beauties will grow upon us, and make us love it the more, the longer we live here. There is a brook, so near the house that we shall be able to hear its ripple in the summer evenings, . . . . but, for agricultural purposes, it has been made to flow in a straight and rectangular fashion, which does it infinite damage as a picturesque object. . . . .

It was a moment or two before I could think whom

you meant by Mr. Dismal View. Why, he is one of the best of the brotherhood, so far as cheerfulness goes; for if he do not laugh himself, he makes the rest of us laugh continually. He is the quaintest and queerest personage you ever saw, — full of dry jokes, the humor of which is so incorporated with the strange twistifications of his physiognomy, that his sayings ought to be written down, accompanied with illustrations by Cruikshank. Then he keeps quoting innumerable scraps of Latin, and makes classical allusions, while we are turning over the goldmine; and the contrast between the nature of his employment and the character of his thoughts is irresistibly ludicrous.

I have written this epistle in the parlor, while Farmer Ripley, and Farmer Farley, and Farmer Dismal View were talking about their agricultural concerns. So you will not wonder if it is not a classical piece of composition, either in point of thought or expression.

Mr. Ripley has bought four black pigs.

*April 22d.* — . . . What an abominable hand do I scribble! but I have been chopping wood, and turning a grindstone all the forenoon; and such occupations are apt to disturb the equilibrium of the muscles and sinews. It is an endless surprise to me how much work there is to be done in the world; but, thank God, I am able to do my share of it, — and my ability increases daily. What a great, broad-shouldered, elephantine personage I shall become by and by!