



A Book of Autographs
Hawthorne, Nathaniel

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About Hawthorne:

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on July 4, 1804, in Salem, Massachusetts, where his birthplace is now a museum. William Hathorne, who emigrated from England in 1630, was the first of Hawthorne's ancestors to arrive in the colonies. After arriving, William persecuted Quakers. William's son John Hathorne was one of the judges who oversaw the Salem Witch Trials. (One theory is that having learned about this, the author added the "w" to his surname in his early twenties, shortly after graduating from college.) Hawthorne's father, Nathaniel Hathorne, Sr., was a sea captain who died in 1808 of yellow fever, when Hawthorne was only four years old, in Raymond, Maine. Hawthorne attended Bowdoin College at the expense of an uncle from 1821 to 1824, befriendng classmates Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and future president Franklin Pierce. While there he joined the Delta Kappa Epsilon fraternity. Until the publication of his *Twice-Told Tales* in 1837, Hawthorne wrote in the comparative obscurity of what he called his "owl's nest" in the family home. As he looked back on this period of his life, he wrote: "I have not lived, but only dreamed about living." And yet it was this period of brooding and writing that had formed, as Malcolm Cowley was to describe it, "the central fact in Hawthorne's career," his "term of apprenticeship" that would eventually result in the "richly meditated fiction." Hawthorne was hired in 1839 as a weigher and gauger at the Boston Custom House. He had become engaged in the previous year to the illustrator and transcendentalist Sophia Peabody. Seeking a possible home for himself and Sophia, he joined the transcendentalist utopian community at Brook Farm in 1841; later that year, however, he left when he became dissatisfied with farming and the experiment. (His Brook Farm adventure would prove an inspiration for his novel *The Blithedale Romance*.) He married Sophia in 1842; they moved to The Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts, where they lived for three years. There he wrote most of the tales collected in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Hawthorne and his wife then moved to Salem and later to the Berkshires, returning in 1852 to Concord and a new home The Wayside, previously owned by the Alcotts. Their neighbors in Concord included Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Like Hawthorne, Sophia was a reclusive person. She was bedridden with headaches until her sister introduced her to Hawthorne, after which her headaches seem to have abated. The Hawthornes enjoyed a long marriage, often taking walks in the park. Sophia greatly admired her husband's work. In one of her journals, she writes: "I am always so dazzled and bewildered with

the richness, the depth, the... jewels of beauty in his productions that I am always looking forward to a second reading where I can ponder and muse and fully take in the miraculous wealth of thoughts." In 1846, Hawthorne was appointed surveyor (determining the quantity and value of imported goods) at the Salem Custom House. Like his earlier appointment to the custom house in Boston, this employment was vulnerable to the politics of the spoils system. A Democrat, Hawthorne lost this job due to the change of administration in Washington after the presidential election of 1848. Hawthorne's career as a novelist was boosted by *The Scarlet Letter* in 1850, in which the preface refers to his three-year tenure in the Custom House at Salem. *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851) and *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) followed in quick succession. In 1852, he wrote the campaign biography of his old friend Franklin Pierce. With Pierce's election as president, Hawthorne was rewarded in 1853 with the position of United States consul in Liverpool. In 1857, his appointment ended and the Hawthorne family toured France and Italy. They returned to *The Wayside* in 1860, and that year saw the publication of *The Marble Faun*. Failing health (which biographer Edward Miller speculates was stomach cancer) prevented him from completing several more romances. Hawthorne died in his sleep on May 19, 1864, in Plymouth, New Hampshire while on a tour of the White Mountains with Pierce. He was buried in Sleepy Hollow Cemetery, Concord, Massachusetts. Wife Sophia and daughter Una were originally buried in England. However, in June 2006, they were re-interred in plots adjacent to Nathaniel. Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne had three children: Una, Julian, and Rose. Una was a victim of mental illness and died young. Julian moved out west, served a jail term for embezzlement and wrote a book about his father. Rose married George Parsons Lathrop and they became Roman Catholics. After George's death, Rose became a Dominican nun. She founded the Dominican Sisters of Hawthorne to care for victims of incurable cancer. Source: Wikipedia

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We have before us a volume of autograph letters, chiefly of soldiers and statesmen of the Revolution, and addressed to a good and brave man, General Palmer, who himself drew his sword in the cause. They are profitable reading in a quiet afternoon, and in a mood withdrawn from too intimate relation with the present time; so that we can glide backward some three quarters of a century, and surround ourselves with the ominous sublimity of circumstances that then frowned upon the writers. To give them their full effect, we should imagine that these letters have this moment been brought to town by the splashed and way-worn postrider, or perhaps by an orderly dragoon, who has ridden in a perilous hurry to deliver his despatches. They are magic scrolls, if read in the right spirit. The roll of the drum and the fanfare of the trumpet is latent in some of them; and in others, an echo of the oratory that resounded in the old halls of the Continental Congress, at Philadelphia; or the words may come to us as with the living utterance of one of those illustrious men, speaking face to face, in friendly communion. Strange, that the mere identity of paper and ink should be so powerful. The same thoughts might look cold and ineffectual, in a printed book. Human nature craves a certain materialism and clings pertinaciously to what is tangible, as if that were of more importance than the spirit accidentally involved in it. And, in truth, the original manuscript has always something which print itself must inevitably lose. An erasure, even a blot, a casual irregularity of hand, and all such little imperfections of mechanical execution, bring us close to the writer, and perhaps convey some of those subtle intimations for which language has no shape.

There are several letters from John Adams, written in a small, hasty, ungraceful hand, but earnest, and with no unnecessary flourish. The earliest is dated at Philadelphia, September 26, 1774, about twenty days after the first opening of the Continental Congress. We look at this old yellow document, scribbled on half a sheet of foolscap, and ask of it many questions for which words have no response. We would fain know what were their mutual impressions, when all those venerable faces, that have since been traced on steel, or chiselled out, of marble, and thus made familiar to posterity, first met one another's gaze! Did one spirit harmonize them, in spite of the dissimilitude of manners between the North and the South, which were now for the first time brought into political relations? Could the Virginian descendant of the Cavaliers, and the New-Englander with his hereditary Puritanism,—the aristocratic Southern planter, and the self-made man from Massachusetts or Connecticut,—at once feel that they were countrymen and brothers? What

did John Adams think of Jefferson?—and Samuel Adams of Patrick Henry? Did not North and South combine in their deference for the sage Franklin, so long the defender of the colonies in England, and whose scientific renown was already world-wide? And was there yet any whispered prophecy, any vague conjecture, circulating among the delegates, as to the destiny which might be in reserve for one stately man, who sat, for the most part, silent among them?—what station he was to assume in the world's history?—and how many statues would repeat his form and countenance, and successively crumble beneath his immortality?

The letter before us does not answer these inquiries. Its main feature is the strong expression of the uncertainty and awe that pervaded even the firm hearts of the Old Congress, while anticipating the struggle which was to ensue. "The commencement of hostilities," it says, "is exceedingly dreaded here. It is thought that an attack upon the troops, even should it prove successful, would certainly involve the whole continent in a war. It is generally thought that the Ministry would rejoice at a rupture in Boston, because it would furnish an excuse to the people at home" [this was the last time, we suspect, that John Adams spoke of England thus affectionately], "and unite them in an opinion of the necessity of pushing hostilities against us."

His next letter bears on the superscription, "Favored by General Washington." The date is June 20, 1775, three days after the battle of Bunker Hill, the news of which could not yet have arrived at Philadelphia. But the war, so much dreaded, had begun, on the quiet banks of Concord River; an army of twenty thousand men was beleaguering Boston; and here was Washington journeying northward to take the command. It seems to place us in a nearer relation with the hero, to find him performing the little courtesy of leaving a letter between friend and friend, and to hold in our hands the very document intrusted to such a messenger. John Adams says simply, "We send you Generals Washington and Lee for your comfort"; but adds nothing in regard to the character of the Commander-in-Chief. This letter displays much of the writer's ardent temperament; if he had been anywhere but in the hall of Congress, it would have been in the intrenchment before Boston.

"I hope," he writes, "a good account will be given of Gage, Haldiman, Burgoyne, Clinton, and Howe, before winter. Such a wretch as Howe, with a statue in honor of his family in Westminster Abbey, erected by the Massachusetts, to come over with the design to cut the throats of the Massachusetts people, is too much. I most sincerely, coolly, and devoutly

wish that a lucky ball or bayonet may make a signal example of him, in warning to all such unprincipled, unsentimental miscreants for the future!"

He goes on in a strain that smacks somewhat of aristocratic feeling: "Our camp will be an illustrious school of military virtue, and will be resorted to and frequented, as such, by gentlemen in great numbers from the other colonies." The term "gentleman" has seldom been used in this sense subsequently to the Revolution. Another letter introduces us to two of these gentlemen, Messrs. Acquilla Hall and Josias Carvill, volunteers, who are recommended as "of the first families in Maryland, and possessing independent fortunes."

After the British had been driven out of Boston, Adams cries out, "Fortify, fortify; and never let them get in again!" It is agreeable enough to perceive the filial affection with which John Adams, and the other delegates from the North, regard New England, and especially the good old capital of the Puritans. Their love of country was hardly yet so diluted as to extend over the whole thirteen colonies, which were rather looked upon as allies than as composing one nation. In truth, the patriotism of a citizen of the United States is a sentiment by itself of a peculiar nature, and requiring a lifetime, or at least the custom of many years, to naturalize it among the other possessions of the heart.

The collection is enriched by a letter dated "Cambridge, August 26, 1775" from Washington himself. He wrote it in that house,—now so venerable with his memory,—in that very room, where his bust now stands upon a poet's table; from this sheet of paper passed the hand that held the leading-staff! Nothing can be more perfectly in keeping with all other manifestations of Washington than the whole visible aspect and embodiment of this letter. The manuscript is as clear as daylight; the punctuation exact, to a comma. There is a calm accuracy throughout, which seems the production of a species of intelligence that cannot err, and which, if we may so speak, would affect us with a more human warmth, if we could conceive it capable of some slight human error. The chirography is characterized by a plain and easy grace, which, in the signature, is somewhat elaborated, and becomes a type of the personal manner of a gentleman of the old school, but without detriment to the truth and clearness that distinguish the rest of the manuscript. The lines are as straight and equidistant as if ruled; and from beginning to end, there is no physical symptom—as how should there be?—of a varying mood, of jets of emotion, or any of those fluctuating feelings that pass from the hearts into the fingers of common men. The paper itself (like most of

those Revolutionary letters, which are written on fabrics fit to endure the burden of ponderous and earnest thought) is stout, and of excellent quality, and bears the water-mark of Britannia, surmounted by the Crown. The subject of the letter is a statement of reasons for not taking possession of Point Alderton; a position commanding the entrance of Boston Harbor. After explaining the difficulties of the case, arising from his want of men and munitions for the adequate defence of the lines which he already occupies, Washington proceeds: "To you, sir, who are a well-wisher to the cause, and can reason upon the effects of such conduct, I may open myself with freedom, because no improper disclosures will be made of our situation. But I cannot expose my weakness to the enemy (though I believe they are pretty well informed of everything that passes), by telling this and that man, who are daily pointing out this, and that, and t' other place, of all the motives that govern my actions; notwithstanding I know what will be the consequence of not doing it,—namely, that I shall be accused of inattention to the public service, and perhaps of want of spirit to prosecute it. But this shall have no effect upon my conduct. I will steadily (as far as my judgment will assist me) pursue such measures as I think conducive to the interest of the cause, and rest satisfied under any obloquy that shall be thrown, conscious of having discharged my duty to the best of my abilities."

The above passage, like every other passage that could be quoted from his pen, is characteristic of Washington, and entirely in keeping with the calm elevation of his soul. Yet how imperfect a glimpse do we obtain of him, through the medium of this, or any of his letters! We imagine him writing calmly, with a hand that never falters; his majestic face neither darkens nor gleams with any momentary ebullition of feeling, or irregularity of thought; and thus flows forth an expression precisely to the extent of his purpose, no more, no less. Thus much we may conceive. But still we have not grasped the man; we have caught no glimpse of his interior; we have not detected his personality. It is the same with all the recorded traits of his daily life. The collection of them, by different observers, seems sufficiently abundant, and strictly harmonizes with itself, yet never brings us into intimate relationship with the hero, nor makes us feel the warmth and the human throb of his heart. What can be the reason? Is it, that his great nature was adapted to stand in relation to his country, as man stands towards man, but could not individualize itself in brotherhood to an individual?

There are two from Franklin, the earliest dated, "London, August 8, 1767," and addressed to "Mrs. Franklin, at Philadelphia." He was then in

England, as agent for the colonies in their resistance to the oppressive policy of Mr. Grenville's administration. The letter, however, makes no reference to political or other business. It contains only ten or twelve lines, beginning, "My dear child," and conveying an impression of long and venerable matrimony which has lost all its romance, but retained a familiar and quiet tenderness. He speaks of making a little excursion into the country for his health; mentions a larger letter, despatched by another vessel; alludes with homely affability to "Mrs. Stevenson," "Sally," and "our dear Polly"; desires to be remembered to "all inquiring friends"; and signs himself, "Your ever loving husband." In this conjugal epistle, brief and unimportant as it is, there are the elements that summon up the past, and enable us to create anew the man, his connections and circumstances. We can see the sage in his London lodgings,—with his wig cast aside, and replaced by a velvet cap,—penning this very letter; and then can step across the Atlantic, and behold its reception by the elderly, but still comely Madam Franklin, who breaks the seal and begins to read, first remembering to put on her spectacles. The seal, by the way, is a pompous one of armorial bearings, rather symbolical of the dignity of the Colonial Agent, and Postmaster General of America, than of the humble origin of the Newburyport printer. The writing is in the free, quick style of a man with great practice of the pen, and is particularly agreeable to the reader.

Another letter from the same famous hand is addressed to General Palmer, and dated, "Passy, October 27, 1779." By an indorsement on the outside it appears to have been transmitted to the United States through the medium of Lafayette. Franklin was now the ambassador of his country at the Court of Versailles, enjoying an immense celebrity, caressed by the French ladies, and idolized alike by the fashionable and the learned, who saw something sublime and philosophic even in his blue yarn stockings. Still, as before, he writes with the homeliness and simplicity that cause a human face to look forth from the old, yellow sheet of paper, and in words that make our ears re-echo, as with the sound of his long-extinct utterance. Yet this brief epistle, like the former, has so little of tangible matter that we are ashamed to copy it.

Next, we come to the fragment of a letter by Samuel Adams; an autograph more utterly devoid of ornament or flourish than any other in the collection. It would not have been characteristic, had his pen traced so much as a hair-line in tribute to grace, beauty, or the elaborateness of manner; for this earnest-hearted man had been produced out of the past elements of his native land, a real Puritan, with the religion of his

forefathers, and likewise with their principles of government, taking the aspect of Revolutionary politics. At heart, Samuel Adams was never so much a citizen of the United States, as he was a New-Englander, and a son of the old Bay Province. The following passage has much of the man in it: "I heartily congratulate yon," he writes from Philadelphia, after the British have left Boston, "upon the sudden and important change in our affairs, in the removal of the barbarians from the capital. We owe our grateful acknowledgments to Him who is, as he is frequently styled in Sacred Writ, 'The Lord of Hosts.' We have not yet been informed with certainty what course the enemy have steered. I hope we shall be on our guard against future attempts. Will not care be taken to fortify the harbor, and thereby prevent the entrance of ships- of-war hereafter?"

From Hancock, we have only the envelope of a document "on public service," directed to "The Hon. the Assembly, or Council of Safety of New Hampshire," and with the autograph affixed, that, stands out so prominently in the Declaration of Independence. As seen in the engraving of that instrument, the signature looks precisely what we should expect and desire in the handwriting of a princely merchant, whose penmanship had been practised in the ledger which he is represented as holding, in Copley's brilliant picture, but to whom his native ability, and the circumstances and customs of his country, had given a place among its rulers. But, on the coarse and dingy paper before us, the effect is very much inferior; the direction, all except the signature, is a scrawl, large and heavy, but not forcible; and even the name itself, while almost identical in its strokes with that of the Declaration, has a strangely different and more vulgar aspect. Perhaps it is all right, and typical of the truth. If we may trust tradition, and unpublished letters, and a few witnesses in print, there was quite as much difference between the actual man, and his historical aspect, as between the manuscript signature and the engraved one. One of his associates, both in political life and permanent renown, is said to have characterized him as a "man without a head or heart." We, of an after generation, should hardly be entitled, on whatever evidence, to assume such ungracious liberty with a name that has occupied a lofty position until it, has grown almost sacred, and which is associated with memories more sacred than itself, and has thus become a valuable reality to our countrymen, by the aged reverence that clusters round about it. Nevertheless, it may be no impiety to regard Hancock not precisely as a real personage, but as a majestic figure, useful and necessary in its way, but producing its effect far more by an ornamental outside than by any intrinsic force or virtue. The page of all

history would be half unpeopled if all such characters were banished from it.

From General Warren we have a letter dated January 14, 1775, only a few months before he attested the sincerity of his patriotism, in his own blood, on Bunker Hill. His handwriting has many ungraceful flourishes. All the small d's spout upward in parabolic curves, and descend at a considerable distance. His pen seems to have had nothing but hair-lines in it; and the whole letter, though perfectly legible, has a look of thin and unpleasant irregularity. The subject is a plan for securing to the colonial party the services of Colonel Gridley the engineer, by an appeal to his private interests. Though writing to General Palmer, an intimate friend, Warren signs himself, most ceremoniously, "Your obedient servant." Indeed, these stately formulas in winding up a letter were scarcely laid aside, whatever might be the familiarity of intercourse: husband and wife were occasionally, on paper at least, the "obedient servants" of one another; and not improbably, among well-bred people, there was a corresponding ceremonial of bows and courtesies, even in the deepest interior of domestic life. With all the reality that filled men's hearts, and which has stamped its impress on so many of these letters, it was a far more formal age than the present.

It may be remarked, that Warren was almost the only man eminently distinguished in the intellectual phase of the Revolution, previous to the breaking out of the war, who actually uplifted his arm to do battle. The legislative patriots were a distinct class from the patriots of the camp, and never laid aside the gown for the sword. It was very different in the great civil war of England, where the leading minds of the age, when argument had done its office, or left it undone, put on their steel breast-plates and appeared as leaders in the field. Educated young men, members of the old colonial families,—gentlemen, as John Adams terms them,—seem not to have sought employment in the Revolutionary army, in such numbers as might have been expected. Respectable as the officers generally were, and great as were the abilities sometimes elicited, the intellect and cultivation of the country was inadequately represented in them, as a body.

Turning another page, we find the frank of a letter from Henry Laurens, President of Congress,—him whose destiny it was, like so many noblemen of old, to pass beneath the Traitor's Gate of the Tower of London,—him whose chivalrous son sacrificed as brilliant a future as any young American could have looked forward to, in an obscure skirmish. Likewise, we have the address of a letter to Messrs. Leroy and

Bayard, in the handwriting of Jefferson; too slender a material to serve as a talisman for summoning up the writer; a most unsatisfactory fragment, affecting us like a glimpse of the retreating form of the sage of Monticello, turning the distant corner of a street. There is a scrap from Robert Morris, the financier; a letter or two from Judge Jay; and one from General Lincoln, written, apparently, on the gallop, but without any of those characteristic sparks that sometimes fly out in a hurry, when all the leisure in the world would fail to elicit them. Lincoln was the type of a New England soldier; a man of fair abilities, not especially of a warlike cast, without much chivalry, but faithful and bold, and carrying a kind of decency and restraint into the wild and ruthless business of arms.

From good old Baron Steuben, we find, not a manuscript essay on the method of arranging a battle, but a commercial draft, in a small, neat hand, as plain as print, elegant without flourish, except a very complicated one on the signature. On the whole, the specimen is sufficiently characteristic, as well of the Baron's soldierlike and German simplicity, as of the polish of the Great Frederick's aide-de-camp, a man of courts and of the world. How singular and picturesque an effect is produced, in the array of our Revolutionary army, by the intermingling of these titled personages from the Continent of Europe, with feudal associations clinging about them,—Steuben, De Kalb, Pulaski, Lafayette!—the German veteran, who had written from one famous battle-field to another for thirty years; and the young French noble, who had come hither, though yet unconscious of his high office, to light the torch that should set fire to the antiquated trumpery of his native institutions. Among these autographs, there is one from Lafayette, written long after our Revolution, but while that of his own country was in full progress. The note is merely as follows: "Enclosed you will find, my dear Sir, two tickets for the sittings of this day. One part of the debate will be on the Honors of the Pantheon, agreeably to what has been decreed by the Constitutional Assembly."

It is a pleasant and comfortable thought, that we have no such classic folly as is here indicated, to lay to the charge of our Revolutionary fathers. Both in their acts, and in the drapery of those acts, they were true to their several and simple selves, and thus left nothing behind them for a fastidious taste to sneer at. But it must be considered that our Revolution did not, like that of France, go so deep as to disturb the common-sense of the country.

General Schuyler writes a letter, under date of February 22, 1780, relating not to military affairs, from which the prejudices of his countrymen

had almost disconnected him, but to the Salt Springs of Onondaga. The expression is peculiarly direct, and the hand that of a man of business, free and flowing. The uncertainty, the vague, hearsay evidence respecting these springs, then gushing into dim daylight beneath the shadow of a remote wilderness, is such as might now be quoted in reference to the quality of the water that supplies the fountains of the Nile. The following sentence shows us an Indian woman and her son, practising their simple process in the manufacture of salt, at a fire of wind-strewn boughs, the flame of which gleams duskiy through the arches of the forest: "From a variety of information, I find the smallest quantity made by a squaw, with the assistance of one boy, with a kettle of about ten gallons' capacity, is half a bushel per day; the greatest with the same kettle, about two bushels." It is particularly interesting to find out anything as to the embryo, yet stationary arts of life among the red people, their manufactures, their agriculture, their domestic labors. It is partly the lack of this knowledge—the possession of which would establish a ground of sympathy on the part of civilized men—that makes the Indian race so shadow-like and unreal to our conception.

We could not select a greater contrast to the upright and unselfish patriot whom we have just spoken of, than the traitor Arnold, from whom there is a brief note, dated, "Crown Point, January 19, 1775," addressed to an officer under his command. The three lines of which it consists can prove bad spelling, erroneous grammar, and misplaced and superfluous punctuation; but, with all this complication of iniquity, the ruffian General contrives to express his meaning as briefly and clearly as if the rules of correct composition had been ever so scrupulously observed. This autograph, impressed with the foulest name in our history, has somewhat of the interest that would attach to a document on which a fiend-devoted wretch had signed away his salvation. But there was not substance enough in the man—a mere cross between the bull-dog and the fox—to justify much feeling of any sort about him personally. The interest, such as it is, attaches but little to the man, and far more to the circumstances amid which he acted, rendering the villany almost sublime, which, exercised in petty affairs, would only have been vulgar.

We turn another leaf, and find a memorial of Hamilton. It is but a letter of introduction, addressed to Governor Jay in favor of Mr. Davies, of Kentucky; but it gives an impression of high breeding and courtesy, as little to be mistaken as if we could see the writer's manner and hear his cultivated accents, while personally making one gentleman known to another. There is likewise a rare vigor of expression and pregnancy of

meaning, such as only a man of habitual energy of thought could have conveyed into so commonplace a thing as an introductory letter. This autograph is a graceful one, with an easy and picturesque flourish beneath the signature, symbolical of a courteous bow at the conclusion of the social ceremony so admirably performed. Hamilton might well be the leader and idol of the Federalists; for he was pre-eminent in all the high qualities that characterized the great men of that party, and which should make even a Democrat feel proud that his country had produced such a noble old band of aristocrats; and he shared all the distrust of the people, which so inevitably and so righteously brought about their ruin. With his autograph we associate that of another Federalist, his friend in life; a man far narrower than Hamilton, but endowed with a native vigor, that caused many partisans to grapple to him for support; upright, sternly inflexible, and of a simplicity of manner that might have befitted the sturdiest republican among us. In our boyhood we used to see a thin, severe figure of an ancient mail, timeworn, but apparently indestructible, moving with a step of vigorous decay along the street, and knew him as "Old Tim Pickering."

Side by side, too, with the autograph of Hamilton, we would place one from the hand that shed his blood. It is a few lines of Aaron Burr, written in 1823; when all his ambitious schemes, whatever they once were, had been so long shattered that even the fragments had crumbled away, leaving him to exert his withered energies on petty law cases, to one of which the present note refers. The hand is a little tremulous with age, yet small and fastidiously elegant, as became a man who was in the habit of writing billet-doux on scented note-paper, as well as documents of war and state. This is to us a deeply interesting autograph. Remembering what has been said of the power of Burr's personal influence, his art to tempt men, his might to subdue them, and the fascination that enabled him, though cold at heart, to win the love of woman, we gaze at this production of his pen as into his own inscrutable eyes, seeking for the mystery of his nature. How singular that a character imperfect, ruined, blasted, as this man's was, excites a stronger interest than if it had reached the highest earthly perfection of which its original elements would admit! It is by the diabolical part of Burr's character that he produces his effect on the imagination. Had he been a better man, we doubt, after all, whether the present age would not already have suffered him to wax dusty, and fade out of sight, among the mere respectable mediocrities of his own epoch. But, certainly, he was a strange, wild offshoot to have

sprung from the united stock of those two singular Christians, President Burr of Princeton College, and Jonathan Edwards!

Omitting many, we have come almost to the end of these memorials of historical men. We observe one other autograph of a distinguished soldier of the Revolution, Henry Knox, but written in 1791, when he was Secretary of War. In its physical aspect, it is well worthy to be a soldier's letter. The hand is large, round, and legible at a glance; the lines far apart, and accurately equidistant; and the whole affair looks not unlike a company of regular troops in marching order. The signature has a point-like firmness and simplicity. It is a curious observation, sustained by these autographs, though we know not how generally correct, that Southern gentlemen are more addicted to a flourish of the pen beneath their names, than those of the North.

And now we come to the men of a later generation, whose active life reaches almost within the verge of present affairs; people of dignity, no doubt, but whose characters have not acquired, either from time or circumstances, the interest that can make their autographs valuable to any but the collector. Those whom we have hitherto noticed were the men of an heroic age. They are departed, and now so utterly departed, as not even to touch upon the passing generation through the medium of persons still in life, who can claim to have known them familiarly. Their letters, therefore, come to us like material things out of the hands of mighty shadows, long historical, and traditionary, and fit companions for the sages and warriors of a thousand years ago. In spite of the proverb, it is not in a single day, or in a very few years, that a man can be reckoned "as dead as Julius Caesar." We feel little interest in scraps from the pens of old gentlemen, ambassadors, governors, senators, heads of departments, even presidents though they were, who lived lives of praiseworthy respectability, and whose powdered heads and black knee-breeches have but just vanished out of the drawing-room. Still less do we value the blotted paper of those whose reputations are dusty, not with oblivious time, but with present political turmoil and newspaper vogue. Really great men, however, seem, as to their effect on the imagination, to take their place amongst past worthies, even while walking in the very sunshine that illuminates the autumnal day in which we write. We look, not without curiosity, at the small, neat hand of Henry Clay, who, as he remarks with his habitual deference to the wishes of the fair, responds to a young lady's request for his seal; and we dwell longer over the torn-off conclusion of a note from Mr. Calhoun, whose words are strangely dashed off without letters, and whose name, were it less illustrious,

would be unrecognizable in his own autograph. But of all hands that can still grasp a pen, we know not the one, belonging to a soldier or a statesman, which could interest us more than the hand that wrote the following:

"Sir, your note of the 6th inst. is received. I hasten to answer that there was no man 'in the station of colonel, by the name of J. T. Smith,' under my command, at the battle of New Orleans; and am, respectfully,

"Yours, ANDREW JACKSON. "OCT. 19th, 1833."

The old general, we suspect, has been insnared by a pardonable little stratagem on the part of the autograph collector. The battle of New Orleans would hardly have been won, without better aid than this problematical Colonel J. T. Smith.

Intermixed with and appended to these historical autographs, there are a few literary ones. Timothy Dwight—the "old Timotheus" who sang the Conquest of Canaan, instead of choosing a more popular subject, in the British Conquest of Canada—is of eldest date. Colonel Trumbull, whose hand, at various epochs of his life, was familiar with sword, pen, and pencil, contributes two letters, which lack the picturesqueness of execution that should distinguish the chirography of an artist. The value of Trumbull's pictures is of the same nature with that of daguerreotypes, depending not upon the ideal but the actual. The beautiful signature of Washington Irving appears as the indorsement of a draft, dated in 1814, when, if we may take this document as evidence, his individuality seems to have been merged into the firm of "P. E. Irving & Co." Never was anything less mercantile than this autograph, though as legible as the writing of a bank-clerk. Without apparently aiming at artistic beauty, it has all the Sketch Book in it. We find the signature and seal of Pierpont, the latter stamped with the poet's almost living countenance. What a pleasant device for a seal is one's own face, which he may thus multiply at pleasure, and send letters to his friends,—the Head without, and the Heart within! There are a few lines in the school-girl hand of Margaret Davidson, at nine years old; and a scrap of a letter from Washington Allston, a gentle and delicate autograph, in which we catch a glimpse of thanks to his correspondent for the loan of a volume of poetry. Nothing remains, save a letter from Noah Webster, whose early toils were manifested in a spelling-book, and those of his later age in a ponderous dictionary. Under date of February 10, 1843, he writes in a sturdy, awkward hand, very fit for a lexicographer, an epistle of old man's reminiscences, from which we extract the following anecdote of Washington, presenting the patriot in a festive light:—

"When I was travelling to the South, in the year 1783, I called on General Washington at Mount Vernon. At dinner, the last course of dishes was a species of pancakes, which were handed round to each guest, accompanied with a bowl of sugar and another of molasses for seasoning them, that each guest might suit himself. When the dish came to me, I pushed by me the bowl of molasses, observing to the gentlemen present, that I had enough of that in my own country. The General burst out with a loud laugh, a thing very unusual with him. 'Ah,' said he, 'there is nothing in that story about your eating molasses in New England.' There was a gentleman from Maryland at the table; and the General immediately told a story, stating that, during the Revolution, a hogshead of molasses was stove in, in West Chester, by the oversetting of a wagon; and a body of Maryland troops being near, the soldiers ran hastily, and saved all they could by filling their hats or caps with molasses."

There are said to be temperaments endowed with sympathies so exquisite, that, by merely handling an autograph, they can detect the writer's character with unerring accuracy, and read his inmost heart as easily as a less-gifted eye would peruse the written page. Our faith in this power, be it a spiritual one, or only a refinement of the physical nature, is not unlimited, in spite of evidence. God has imparted to the human soul a marvellous strength in guarding its secrets, and he keeps at least the deepest and most inward record for his own perusal. But if there be such sympathies as we have alluded to, in how many instances would History be put to the blush by a volume of autograph letters, like this which we now close!

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