

NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

of trance mediums, and he was not in the least superstitious; but he was remarkably fond of reading ghost stories, and would have liked to believe them, if he could have done so in all sincerity. He sometimes felt as if he were a ghost himself, gliding noiselessly in the walks of men, and wondered that the sun should cast a shadow from him. However, we cannot imagine him as seated in jurisdiction at a criminal tribunal. His gentle nature would have recoiled from that, as it might from a serpent.

In the Charter Street burial-ground there is a slate gravestone, artistically carved about its edges, with the name, "Col. John Hathorne Esq.," upon it. It is somewhat sunken into the earth, and leans forward as if wishing to hide the inscription upon it from the gaze of mankind. The grass about it and the moss upon the stone assist in doing this, although repeatedly cut and cleaned away. It seems as if Nature wished to draw a kind of veil over the memory of the witch's judge, himself the sorrowful victim of a theocratic oligarchy. The lesson we learn from his errors is, to trust our own hearts and not to believe too fixedly in the doctrines of Church and State. It must be a dull sensibility that can look on this old slate-stone without a feeling of pathos and a larger charity for the errors of human nature.

It is said that one of the convicted witches cursed Judge Hathorne,—himself and his descendants forever; but it is more than likely that they all cursed him bitterly enough, and