

<<红字>>

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内容概要

《红字》描写女主人公海斯特·白兰冲破没有爱情基础的婚姻的束缚，同年轻牧师狄姆斯台尔秘密相爱，生一女名叫珠儿，从而犯了清教严禁的通奸罪，被判处示众和终生佩戴象征通奸的红色A字。她坚不交代她的同犯，受罚后离群索居，忍辱含垢，以针线活谋生，养活自己和女儿珠儿。狄姆斯台尔牧师怀着隐蔽的罪行，心灵一直得不到安宁，不久他因心力交瘁而病倒。白兰的丈夫改名换姓，乔装成医生，发誓要找出奸夫报仇雪恨。他用旁敲侧击的办法，刺探狄姆斯台尔牧师内心的秘密。白兰眼看牧师承受着莫大的痛苦，被折磨得奄奄一息，便在森林中和他相会，两人相约带着珠儿一同乘船出逃。但她的丈夫料到了这一着，使其计划无法实现。于是，牧师携白兰和珠儿走上示众台，在大庭广众之下承认自己畏避了七年的罪责，随后倒在白兰的怀抱中死去。白兰带着珠儿远走他乡。一年以后，白兰的丈夫死了。若干年后，珠儿长大成人，安家立业，而白兰却一人再回到波士顿，仍带着那个红色的A字，用自己“崇高的道德和助人精神”，把耻辱的红字变成了道德与光荣的象征，直到老死。作者细致地描写了经过长期赎罪而在精神上自新的海斯特·白兰，长期受到信仰和良心的责备而终于坦白承认了罪过的狄姆斯台尔牧师，以及满怀复仇心理以致完全丧失人性的罗杰医生，层层深入地探究有关罪恶和人性的各种道德、哲理问题。小说以监狱和玫瑰花开场，以墓地结束，充满丰富的象征意义。

作者简介

霍桑（1804-1864），美国19世纪影响最大的浪漫主义小说家和心理小说家。

1804年7月4日出生于马萨诸塞州塞勒姆镇一个没落的世家。

他的祖辈中有人曾参与清教徒迫害异端的事件，为著名的1692年“塞勒姆驱巫案”的三名法官之一。这段历史对霍桑的思想产生了深刻的影响。

霍桑1825年大学毕业即开始从事写作，他曾匿名发表长篇小说《范肖》（1828）和几十个短篇作品，陆续出版短篇小说集《古宅青苔》（1843）、《雪影》（1851）等，逐渐得到好评。

霍桑的短篇小说大多取材于新英格兰的历史或现实生活，着重探讨人性和人的命运等问题。

著名的短篇小说《小伙子布朗》、《教长的黑纱》揭露人人皆有的隐秘的罪恶，表达了人性是恶的和人是孤独的等观点。

另一些小说如《拉伯西尼医生的女儿》，反映了他对科学和理性的怀疑，以及他反对过激和偏执的思想。

《通天的铁路》则指出技术的进步丰富了人的物质享受，却败坏了人的精神。

有少数作品正面表达了霍桑的理想，如《玉石雕像》；另外有些故事记叙了新英格兰殖民地人民的抗英斗争，但往往带有浓厚的宗教气氛和神秘色彩。

1836年和1846年霍桑曾两度在海关任职，1841年曾参加超验主义者创办的布鲁克农场。

他于1842年结婚，在康科德村居住，结识了作家爱默生、梭罗等人。

1848年由于政见与当局不同，失去海关的职务，便致力于创作活动，写出了他最重要的长篇小说《红字》（1850）。

《红字》发表后获得巨大成功，霍桑继而创作了不少作品，包括《带有七个尖角阁的房子》、《福谷传奇》等。

1857年后，霍桑侨居意大利，创作了另一部讨论善恶问题的长篇小说《玉石雕像》（1860）。

1860年霍桑返回美国，在康科德定居，坚持写作。

1864年5月19日去世，身后留下四部未完成的长篇小说。

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It is a little remarkable that——though disinclined to talk overmuch of myself and my affairs at the fireside , and to my personal friends——an autobiographical impulse should twice in my life have taken possession of me , in addressing the public. The first time was three or four years since , when I favoured the reader——inexcusably , and for no earthly reason that either the indulgent reader or the intrusive author could imagine——with a description of my way of life in the deep quietude of an Old Manse. And now——because , beyond my deserts , I was happy enough to find a listener or two on the former occasion——I again seize the public by the button , and talk of my three years' experience in a Custom House. The example of the famous “ P. P. , Clerk of this Parish , ” was never more faithfully followed. The truth seems to be , however , that , when he casts his leaves forth upon the wind , the author addresses , not the many who will fling aside his volume , or never take it up , but the few who will understand him , better than most of his schoolmates or lifemates. Some authors , indeed , do far more than this , and indulge themselves in such confidential depths of revelation as could fittingly be addressed , only and exclusively , to the one heart and mind of perfect sympathy ; as if the printed book , thrown at large on the wide world , were certain to find out the divided segment of the writer's own nature , and complete his circle of existence by bringing him into communion with it. It is scarcely decorous , however , to speak all , even where we speak impersonally. But , as thoughts are frozen and utterance benumbed unless the speaker stand in some true relation with his audience , it may be pardonable to imagine that a friend , a kind and apprehensive , though not the closest friend , is listening to our talk ; and then , a native reserve being thawed by this genial consciousness , we may prate of the circumstances that lie around us , and even of ourself , but still keep the most Me behind its veil. To this extent , and within these limits , an author , methinks , may be autobiographical , without violating either the reader's.

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