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Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia

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Nathaniel Hawthorne and Sophia · Ann Struthers

At the Old Manse, so as not to be distracted by the view—willow trees next to the house, orchard below, river beyond—he built a folding desk large enough for inkpot and paper into the blank wall by the fireplace.

They kept a journal together, answering and adding to each other’s entries. After her miscarriage they stood by the study window, watching sunset wrinkle across the water. She inscribed the glass with her diamond, “Man’s accidents are God’s purposes. Sophia A. Hawthorne, 1843.” He responded, “The smallest twig leans clear against the sky.” She added, “Inscribed by my husband at sunset. April 3rd. In the gold light.”

From the beginning the two Puritans were astonished to find sex fulfilling, delightful. They discovered company with each other more satisfying than the garden of pears and quinces, their limbs entwined, passion growing, but the fruit would not be excluded. “. . . the thump of a great apple was audible, falling without a breath of wind from the mere necessity of perfect ripeness.”

In July he wrote in the journal, “God bless us and keep us; for there is something more awful in happiness than in sorrow.”