The French Face of Nathaniel Hawthorne
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The French Face of
This book is for

Matt

—in whose observant presence it was conceived—

and for

Christi’s parents

—whose forethought made it possible.
There is a reflex of negation, of rejection, at the very root of the French character: an instinctive recoil from the new, the untasted, the untested, like the retracting of an insect’s feelers at contact with an unfamiliar object; and no one can hope to understand the French without bearing in mind that his unquestioning respect for rules of which the meaning is forgotten acts as a perpetual necessary check to the idol-breaking instinct of the freest minds in the world.

—Edith Wharton, *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919)