

WASHINGTON IRVING

THE CRAYON
PAPERS

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Содержание

MOUNTJOY OR SOME PASSAGES OUT OF THE LIFE OF A CASTLE-BUILDER	5
THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE	26
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	33

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MOUNTJOY OR SOME PASSAGES OUT OF THE LIFE OF A CASTLE-BUILDER

I was born among romantic scenery, in one of the wildest parts of the Hudson, which at that time was not so thickly settled as at present. My father was descended from one of the old Huguenot families that came over to this country on the revocation of the edict of Nantz. He lived in a style of easy, rural independence, on a patrimonial estate that had been for two or three generations in the family. He was an indolent, good-natured man, who took the world as it went, and had a kind of laughing philosophy, that parried all rubs and mishaps, and served him in the place of wisdom. This was the part of his character least to my taste; for I was of an enthusiastic, excitable temperament, prone to kindle up with new schemes and projects, and he was apt to dash my sallying enthusiasm by some unlucky joke; so that whenever I was in a glow with any sudden excitement, I stood in mortal dread of his good-humor.

Yet he indulged me in every vagary; for I was an only son, and of course a personage of importance in the household. I had two sisters older than myself, and one younger. The former were educated at New York, under the eye of a maiden aunt; the latter remained at home, and was my cherished playmate, the companion of my thoughts. We were two imaginative little beings, of quick susceptibility, and prone to see wonders and mysteries in everything around us. Scarce had we learned to read, when our mother made us holiday presents of all the nursery literature of the day; which at that time consisted of little books covered with gilt paper, adorned with "cuts," and filled with tales of fairies, giants, and enchanters. What draughts of delightful fiction did we then inhale! My sister Sophy was of a soft and tender nature. She would weep over the woes of the Children in the Wood, or quake at the dark romance of Blue-Beard, and the terrible mysteries of the blue chamber. But I was all for enterprise and adventure. I burned to emulate the deeds of that heroic prince who delivered the white cat from her enchantment; or he of no less royal blood, and doughty enterprise, who broke the charmed slumber of the Beauty in the Wood!

The house in which we lived was just the kind of place to foster such propensities. It was a venerable mansion, half villa, half farmhouse. The oldest part was of stone, with loop-holes for musketry, having served as a family fortress in the time of the Indians. To this there had been made various additions, some of brick, some of wood, according to the exigencies of the moment; so that it was full of nooks and crooks, and chambers of all sorts and sizes. It was buried among willows, elms, and cherry trees, and surrounded with roses and hollyhocks, with honeysuckle and sweetbrier clambering about every window. A brood of hereditary pigeons sunned themselves upon the roof; hereditary swallows and martins built about the eaves and chimneys; and hereditary bees hummed about the flower-beds.

Under the influence of our story-books every object around us now assumed a new character, and a charmed interest. The wild flowers were no longer the mere ornaments of the fields, or the resorts of the toilful bee; they were the lurking-places of fairies. We would watch the humming-bird, as it hovered around the trumpet creeper at our porch, and the butterfly as it flitted up into the blue air, above the sunny tree-tops, and fancy them some of the tiny beings from fairyland. I would call to mind all that I had read of Robin Goodfellow and his power of transformation. Oh, how I envied him that power! How I longed to be able to compress my form into utter littleness; to ride the bold

dragonfly; swing on the tall bearded grass; follow the ant into his subterraneous habitation, or dive into the cavernous depths of the honeysuckle!

While I was yet a mere child I was sent to a daily school, about two miles distant. The schoolhouse was on the edge of a wood, close by a brook overhung with birches, alders, and dwarf willows. We of the school who lived at some distance came with our dinners put up in little baskets. In the intervals of school hours we would gather round a spring, under a tuft of hazel-bushes, and have a kind of picnic; interchanging the rustic dainties with which our provident mothers had fitted us out. Then, when our joyous repast was over, and my companions were disposed for play, I would draw forth one of my cherished story-books, stretch myself on the green sward, and soon lose myself in its bewitching contents.

I became an oracle among my schoolmates on account of my superior erudition, and soon imparted to them the contagion of my infected fancy. Often in the evening, after school hours, we would sit on the trunk of some fallen tree in the woods, and vie with each other in telling extravagant stories, until the whip-poor-will began his nightly moaning, and the fireflies sparkled in the gloom. Then came the perilous journey homeward. What delight we would take in getting up wanton panics in some dusky part of the wood; scampering like frightened deer; pausing to take breath; renewing the panic, and scampering off again, wild with fictitious terror!

Our greatest trial was to pass a dark, lonely pool, covered with pond-lilies, peopled with bullfrogs and water snakes, and haunted by two white cranes. Oh! the terrors of that pond! How our little hearts would beat as we approached it; what fearful glances we would throw around! And if by chance a plash of a wild duck, or the guttural twang of a bullfrog, struck our ears, as we stole quietly by – away we sped, nor paused until completely out of the woods. Then, when I reached home, what a world of adventures and imaginary terrors would I have to relate to my sister Sophy!

As I advanced in years, this turn of mind increased upon me, and became more confirmed. I abandoned myself to the impulses of a romantic imagination, which controlled my studies, and gave a bias to all my habits. My father observed me continually with a book in my hand, and satisfied himself that I was a profound student; but what were my studies? Works of fiction; tales of chivalry; voyages of discovery; travels in the East; everything, in short, that partook of adventure and romance. I well remember with what zest I entered upon that part of my studies which treated of the heathen mythology, and particularly of the sylvan deities. Then indeed my school books became dear to me. The neighborhood was well calculated to foster the reveries of a mind like mine. It abounded with solitary retreats, wild streams, solemn forests, and silent valleys. I would ramble about for a whole day with a volume of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in my pocket, and work myself into a kind of self-delusion, so as to identify the surrounding scenes with those of which I had just been reading. I would loiter about a brook that glided through the shadowy depths of the forest, picturing it to myself the haunt of Naiads. I would steal round some bushy copse that opened upon a glade, as if I expected to come suddenly upon Diana and her nymphs, or to behold Pan and his satyrs bounding, with whoop and halloo, through the woodland. I would throw myself, during the panting heats of a summer noon, under the shade of some wide-spreading tree, and muse and dream away the hours, in a state of mental intoxication. I drank in the very light of day, as nectar, and my soul seemed to bathe with ecstasy in the deep blue of a summer sky.

In these wanderings nothing occurred to jar my feelings, or bring me back to the realities of life. There is a repose in our mighty forests that gives full scope to the imagination. Now and then I would hear the distant sound of the woodcutter's ax, or the crash of some tree which he had laid low; but these noises, echoing along the quiet landscape, could easily be wrought by fancy into harmony with its illusions. In general, however, the woody recesses of the neighborhood were peculiarly wild and unfrequented. I could ramble for a whole day, without coming upon any traces of cultivation. The partridge of the wood scarcely seemed to shun my path, and the squirrel, from his nut-tree, would gaze at me for an instant, with sparkling eye, as if wondering at the unwonted intrusion.

I cannot help dwelling on this delicious period of my life; when as yet I had known no sorrow, nor experienced any worldly care. I have since studied much, both of books and men, and of course have grown too wise to be so easily pleased; yet with all my wisdom, I must confess I look back with a secret feeling of regret to the days of happy ignorance before I had begun to be a philosopher.

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It must be evident that I was in a hopeful training for one who was to descend into the arena of life, and wrestle with the world. The tutor, also, who superintended my studies in the more advanced stage of my education, was just fitted to complete the *fata morgana* which was forming in my mind. His name was Glencoe. He was a pale, melancholy-looking man, about forty years of age; a native of Scotland, liberally educated, and who had devoted himself to the instruction of youth from taste rather than necessity; for, as he said, he loved the human heart, and delighted to study it in its earlier impulses. My two elder sisters, having returned home from a city boarding-school, were likewise placed under his care, to direct their reading in history and belles-lettres.

We all soon became attached to Glencoe. It is true, we were at first somewhat prepossessed against him. His meager, pallid countenance, his broad pronunciation, his inattention to the little forms of society, and an awkward and embarrassed manner, on first acquaintance, were much against him; but we soon discovered that under this unpromising exterior existed the kindest urbanity of temper; the warmest sympathies; the most enthusiastic benevolence. His mind was ingenious and acute. His reading had been various, but more abstruse than profound; his memory was stored, on all subjects, with facts, theories, and quotations, and crowded with crude materials for thinking. These, in a moment of excitement, would be, as it were, melted down, and poured forth in the lava of a heated imagination. At such moments, the change in the whole man was wonderful. His meager form would acquire a dignity and grace; his long, pale visage would flash with a hectic glow; his eyes would beam with intense speculation; and there would be pathetic tones and deep modulations in his voice, that delighted the ear, and spoke movingly to the heart.

But what most endeared him to us was the kindness and sympathy with which he entered into all our interests and wishes. Instead of curbing and checking our young imaginations with the reins of sober reason, he was a little too apt to catch the impulse and be hurried away with us. He could not withstand the excitement of any sally of feeling or fancy, and was prone to lend heightening tints to the illusive coloring of youthful anticipation.

Under his guidance my sisters and myself soon entered upon a more extended range of studies; but while they wandered, with delighted minds, through the wide field of history and belles-lettres, a nobler walk was opened to my superior intellect.

The mind of Glencoe presented a singular mixture of philosophy and poetry. He was fond of metaphysics and prone to indulge in abstract speculations, though his metaphysics were somewhat fine spun and fanciful, and his speculations were apt to partake of what my father most irreverently termed "humbug." For my part, I delighted in them, and the more especially because they set my father to sleep and completely confounded my sisters. I entered with my accustomed eagerness into this new branch of study. Metaphysics were now my passion. My sisters attempted to accompany me, but they soon faltered, and gave out before they had got half way through Smith's Theory of the Moral Sentiments. I, however, went on, exulting in my strength. Glencoe supplied me with books, and I devoured them with appetite, if not digestion. We walked and talked together under the trees before the house, or sat apart, like Milton's angels, and held high converse upon themes beyond the grasp of ordinary intellects. Glencoe possessed a kind of philosophic chivalry, in imitation of the old peripatetic sages, and was continually dreaming of romantic enterprises in morals, and splendid systems for the improvement of society. He had a fanciful mode of illustrating abstract subjects, peculiarly to my taste; clothing them with the language of poetry, and throwing round them almost

the magic hues of fiction. "How charming," thought I, "is divine philosophy;" not harsh and crabbed, as dull fools suppose,

"But a perpetual feast of nectar'd sweets,
Where no crude surfeit reigns."

I felt a wonderful self-complacency at being on such excellent terms with a man whom I considered on a parallel with the sages of antiquity, and looked down with a sentiment of pity on the feebleness of my sisters, who could comprehend nothing of metaphysics. It is true, when I attempted to study them by myself, I was apt to get in a fog; but when Glencoe came to my aid, everything was soon as clear to me as day. My ear drank in the beauty of his words; my imagination was dazzled with the splendor of his illustrations. It caught up the sparkling sands of poetry that glittered through his speculations, and mistook them for the golden ore of wisdom. Struck with the facility with which I seemed to imbibe and relish the most abstract doctrines, I conceived a still higher opinion of my mental powers, and was convinced that I also was a philosopher.

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I was now verging toward man's estate, and though my education had been extremely irregular – following the caprices of my humor, which I mistook for the impulses of my genius – yet I was regarded with wonder and delight by my mother and sisters, who considered me almost as wise and infallible as I considered myself. This high opinion of me was strengthened by a declamatory habit, which made me an oracle and orator at the domestic board. The time was now at hand, however, that was to put my philosophy to the test.

We had passed through a long winter, and the spring at length opened upon us with unusual sweetness. The soft serenity of the weather; the beauty of the surrounding country; the joyous notes of the birds; the balmy breath of flower and blossom, all combined to fill my bosom with indistinct sensations, and nameless wishes. Amid the soft seductions of the season, I lapsed into a state of utter indolence, both of body and mind.

Philosophy had lost its charms for me. Metaphysics – faugh! I tried to study; took down volume after volume, ran my eye vacantly over a few pages, and threw them by with distaste. I loitered about the house, with my hands in my pockets, and an air of complete vacancy. Something was necessary to make me happy; but what was that something? I sauntered to the apartments of my sisters, hoping their conversation might amuse me. They had walked out, and the room was vacant. On the table lay a volume which they had been reading. It was a novel. I had never read a novel, having conceived a contempt for works of the kind, from hearing them universally condemned. It is true, I had remarked that they were as universally read; but I considered them beneath the attention of a philosopher, and never would venture to read them, lest I should lessen my mental superiority in the eyes of my sisters. Nay, I had taken up a work of the kind now and then, when I knew my sisters were observing me, looked into it for a moment, and then laid it down, with a slight supercilious smile. On the present occasion, out of mere listlessness, I took up the volume and turned over a few of the first pages. I thought I heard some one coming, and laid it down. I was mistaken; no one was near, and what I had read tempted my curiosity to read a little further. I leaned against a window-frame, and in a few minutes was completely lost in the story. How long I stood there reading I know not, but I believe for nearly two hours. Suddenly I heard my sisters on the stairs, when I thrust the book into my bosom, and the two other volumes which lay near into my pockets, and hurried out of the house to my beloved woods. Here I remained all day beneath the trees, bewildered, bewitched, devouring the contents of these delicious volumes, and only returned to the house when it was too dark to peruse their pages.

This novel finished, I replaced it in my sisters' apartment, and looked for others. Their stock was ample, for they had brought home all that were current in the city; but my appetite demanded an immense supply. All this course of reading was carried on clandestinely, for I was a little ashamed of it, and fearful that my wisdom might be called in question; but this very privacy gave it additional zest. It was "bread eaten in secret"; it had the charm of a private amour.

But think what must have been the effect of such a course of reading on a youth of my temperament and turn of mind; indulged, too, amid romantic scenery and in the romantic season of the year. It seemed as if I had entered upon a new scene of existence. A train of combustible feelings were lighted up in me, and my soul was all tenderness and passion. Never was youth more completely love-sick, though as yet it was a mere general sentiment, and wanted a definite object. Unfortunately, our neighborhood was particularly deficient in female society, and I languished in vain for some divinity to whom I might offer up this most uneasy burden of affections. I was at one time seriously enamored of a lady whom I saw occasionally in my rides, reading at the window of a country-seat; and actually serenaded her with my flute; when, to my confusion, I discovered that she was old enough to be my mother. It was a sad damper to my romance; especially as my father heard of it, and made it the subject of one of those household jokes which he was apt to serve up at every meal-time.

I soon recovered from this check, however, but it was only to relapse into a state of amorous excitement. I passed whole days in the fields, and along the brooks; for there is something in the tender passion that makes us alive to the beauties of nature. A soft sunshiny morning infused a sort of rapture into my breast. I flung open my arms, like the Grecian youth in Ovid, as if I would take in and embrace the balmy atmosphere.¹ The song of the birds melted me to tenderness. I would lie by the side of some rivulet for hours, and form garlands of the flowers on its banks, and muse on ideal beauties, and sigh from the crowd of undefined emotions that swelled my bosom.

In this state of amorous delirium, I was strolling one morning along a beautiful wild brook, which I had discovered in a glen. There was one place where a small waterfall, leaping from among rocks into a natural basin, made a scene such as a poet might have chosen as the haunt of some shy Naiad. It was here I usually retired to banquet on my novels. In visiting the place this morning I traced distinctly, on the margin of the basin, which was of fine clear sand, the prints of a female foot of the most slender and delicate proportions. This was sufficient for an imagination like mine. Robinson Crusoe himself, when he discovered the print of a savage foot on the beach of his lonely island, could not have been more suddenly assailed with thick-coming fancies.

I endeavored to track the steps, but they only passed for a few paces along the fine sand, and then were lost among the herbage. I remained gazing in reverie upon this passing trace of loveliness. It evidently was not made by any of my sisters, for they knew nothing of this haunt; besides, the foot was smaller than theirs; it was remarkable for its beautiful delicacy.

My eye accidentally caught two or three half-withered wild flowers lying on the ground. The unknown nymph had doubtless dropped them from her bosom! Here was a new document of taste and sentiment. I treasured them up as invaluable relics. The place, too, where I found them, was remarkably picturesque, and the most beautiful part of the brook. It was overhung with a fine elm, entwined with grapevines. She who could select such a spot, who could delight in wild brooks, and wild flowers, and silent solitudes, must have fancy, and feeling, and tenderness; and with all these qualities, she must be beautiful!

But who could be this Unknown, that had thus passed by, as in a morning dream, leaving merely flowers and fairy footsteps to tell of her loveliness? There was a mystery in it that bewildered me. It was so vague and disembodied, like those "airy tongues that syllable men's names" in solitude. Every attempt to solve the mystery was vain. I could hear of no being in the neighborhood to whom this trace could be ascribed. I haunted the spot, and became daily more and more enamored. Never,

¹ Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Book vii

surely, was passion more pure and spiritual, and never lover in more dubious situation. My case could be compared only to that of the amorous prince in the fairy tale of Cinderella; but he had a glass slipper on which to lavish his tenderness. I, alas! was in love with a footstep!

The imagination is alternately a cheat and a dupe; nay, more, it is the most subtle of cheats, for it cheats itself and becomes the dupe of its own delusions. It conjures up "airy nothings," gives to them a "local habitation and a name," and then bows to their control as implicitly as though they were realities. Such was now my case. The good Numa could not more thoroughly have persuaded himself that the nymph Egeria hovered about her sacred fountain and communed with him in spirit than I had deceived myself into a kind of visionary intercourse with the airy phantom fabricated in my brain. I constructed a rustic seat at the foot of the tree where I had discovered the footsteps. I made a kind of bower there, where I used to pass my mornings reading poetry and romances. I carved hearts and darts on the tree, and hung it with garlands. My heart was full to overflowing, and wanted some faithful bosom into which it might relieve itself. What is a lover without a confidante? I thought at once of my sister Sophy, my early playmate, the sister of my affections. She was so reasonable, too, and of such correct feelings, always listening to my words as oracular sayings, and admiring my scraps of poetry as the very inspirations of the muse. From such a devoted, such a rational being, what secrets could I have?

I accordingly took her one morning to my favorite retreat. She looked around, with delighted surprise, upon the rustic seat, the bower, the tree carved with emblems of the tender passion. She turned her eyes upon me to inquire the meaning.

"Oh, Sophy," exclaimed I, clasping both her hands in mine, and looking earnestly in her face, "I am in love."

She started with surprise.

"Sit down," said I, "and I will tell you all."

She seated herself upon the rustic bench, and I went into a full history of the footstep, with all the associations of idea that had been conjured up by my imagination.

Sophy was enchanted; it was like a fairy tale; she had read of such mysterious visitations in books, and the loves thus conceived were always for beings of superior order, and were always happy. She caught the illusion in all its force; her cheek glowed; her eye brightened.

"I daresay she's pretty," said Sophy.

"Pretty!" echoed I, "she is beautiful." I went through all the reasoning by which I had logically proved the fact to my own satisfaction. I dwelt upon the evidences of her taste, her sensibility to the beauties of nature; her soft meditative habit that delighted in solitude. "Oh," said I, clasping my hands, "to have such a companion to wander through these scenes; to sit with her by this murmuring stream; to wreath garlands round her brows; to hear the music of her voice mingling with the whisperings of these groves; to –"

"Delightful! delightful!" cried Sophy; "what a sweet creature she must be! She is just the friend I want. How I shall dote upon her! Oh, my dear brother! you must not keep her all to yourself. You must let *me* have some share of her!"

I caught her to my bosom: "You shall – you shall!" cried I, "my dear Sophy; we will all live for each other!"

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The conversation with Sophy heightened the illusions of my mind; and the manner in which she had treated my daydream identified it with facts and persons and gave it still more the stamp of reality. I walked about as one in a trance, heedless of the world around and lapped in an elysium of the fancy.

In this mood I met one morning with Glencoe. He accosted me with his usual smile, and was proceeding with some general observations, but paused and fixed on me an inquiring eye.

"What is the matter with you?" said he, "you seem agitated; has anything in particular happened?"

"Nothing," said I, hesitating; "at least nothing worth communicating to you."

"Nay, my dear young friend," said he, "whatever is of sufficient importance to agitate you is worthy of being communicated to me."

"Well; but my thoughts are running on what you would think a frivolous subject."

"No subject is frivolous that has the power to awaken strong feelings."

"What think you," said I, hesitating, "what think you of love?"

Glencoe almost started at the question. "Do you call that a frivolous subject?" replied he. "Believe me, there is none fraught with such deep, such vital interest. If you talk, indeed, of the capricious inclination awakened by the mere charm of perishable beauty, I grant it to be idle in the extreme; but that love which springs from the concordant sympathies of virtuous hearts; that love which is awakened by the perception of moral excellence, and fed by meditation on intellectual as well as personal beauty; that is a passion which refines and ennobles the human heart. Oh, where is there a sight more nearly approaching to the intercourse of angels, than that of two young beings, free from the sins and follies of the world, mingling pure thoughts, and looks, and feelings, and becoming, as it were, soul of one soul and heart of one heart! How exquisite the silent converse that they hold; the soft devotion of the eye, that needs no words to make it eloquent! Yes, my friend, if there be anything in this weary world worthy of heaven, it is the pure bliss of such a mutual affection!"

The words of my worthy tutor overcame all further reserve. "Mr. Glencoe," cried I, blushing still deeper, "I am in love."

"And is that what you were ashamed to tell me? Oh, never seek to conceal from your friend so important a secret. If your passion be unworthy, it is for the steady hand of friendship to pluck it forth; if honorable, none but an enemy would seek to stifle it. On nothing does the character and happiness so much depend as on the first affection of the heart. Were you caught by some fleeting and superficial charm – a bright eye, a blooming cheek, a soft voice, or a voluptuous form – I would warn you to beware; I would tell you that beauty is but a passing gleam of the morning, a perishable flower; that accident may becloud and blight it, and that at best it must soon pass away. But were you in love with such a one as I could describe; young in years, but still younger in feelings; lovely in person, but as a type of the mind's beauty; soft in voice, in token of gentleness of spirit; blooming in countenance, like the rosy tints of morning kindling with the promise of a genial day; an eye beaming with the benignity of a happy heart; a cheerful temper, alive to all kind impulses, and frankly diffusing its own felicity; a self-poised mind, that needs not lean on others for support; an elegant taste, that can embellish solitude, and furnish out its own enjoyments – "

"My dear sir," cried I, for I could contain myself no longer, "you have described the very person!"

"Why, then, my dear young friend," said he, affectionately pressing my hand, "in God's name, love on!"

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For the remainder of the day I was in some such state of dreamy beatitude as a Turk is said to enjoy when under the influence of opium. It must be already manifest how prone I was to bewilder myself with picturings of the fancy, so as to confound them with existing realities. In the present instance, Sophy and Glencoe had contributed to promote the transient delusion. Sophy, dear girl, had as usual joined with me in my castle-building, and indulged in the same train of imaginings, while Glencoe, duped by my enthusiasm, firmly believed that I spoke of a being I had seen and known. By their sympathy with my feelings they in a manner became associated with the Unknown in my mind, and thus linked her with the circle of my intimacy.

In the evening, our family party was assembled in the hall, to enjoy the refreshing breeze. Sophy was playing some favorite Scotch airs on the piano, while Glencoe, seated apart, with his forehead resting on his hand, was buried in one of those pensive reveries that made him so interesting to me.

"What a fortunate being I am!" thought I, "blessed with such a sister and such a friend! I have only to find out this amiable Unknown, to wed her, and be happy! What a paradise will be my home, graced with a partner of such exquisite refinement! It will be a perfect fairy bower, buried among sweets and roses. Sophy shall live with us, and be the companion of all our enjoyments. Glencoe, too, shall no more be the solitary being that he now appears. He shall have a home with us. He shall have his study, where, when he pleases, he may shut himself up from the world, and bury himself in his own reflections. His retreat shall be sacred; no one shall intrude there; no one but myself, who will visit him now and then, in his seclusion, where we will devise grand schemes together for the improvement of mankind. How delightfully our days will pass, in a round of rational pleasures and elegant employments! Sometimes we will have music; sometimes we will read; sometimes we will wander through the flower garden, when I will smile with complacency on every flower my wife has planted; while in the long winter evenings the ladies will sit at their work, and listen with hushed attention to Glencoe and myself, as we discuss the abstruse doctrines of metaphysics."

From this delectable reverie, I was startled by my father's slapping me on the shoulder. "What possesses the lad?" cried he; "here have I been speaking to you half a dozen times, without receiving an answer."

"Pardon me, sir," replied I; "I was so completely lost in thought, that I did not hear you."

"Lost in thought! And pray what were you thinking of? Some of your philosophy, I suppose."

"Upon my word," said my sister Charlotte, with an arch laugh, "I suspect Harry's in love again."

"And if were in love, Charlotte," said I, somewhat nettled, and recollecting Glencoe's enthusiastic eulogy of the passion, "if I were in love, is that a matter of jest and laughter? Is the tenderest and most fervid affection that can animate the human breast to be made a matter of cold-hearted ridicule?"

My sister colored. "Certainly not, brother! – nor did I mean to make it so, or to say anything that should wound your feelings. Had I really suspected you had formed some genuine attachment, it would have been sacred in my eyes; but – but," said she, smiling, as if at some whimsical recollection, "I thought that you – you might be indulging in another little freak of the imagination."

"Ill wager any money," cried my father, "he has fallen in love again with some old lady at a window!"

"Oh, no!" cried my dear sister Sophy, with the most gracious warmth; "she is young and beautiful."

"From what I understand," said Glencoe, rousing himself, "she must be lovely in mind as in person."

I found my friends were getting me into a fine scrape. I began to perspire at every pore, and felt my ears tingle.

"Well, but," cried my father, "who is she? – what is she? Let us hear something about her."

This was no time to explain so delicate a matter. I caught up my hat, and vanished out of the house.

The moment I was in the open air, and alone, my heart upbraided me. Was this respectful treatment to my father – to *such* a father, too – who had always regarded me as the pride of his age – the staff of his hopes? It is true, he was apt sometimes to laugh at my enthusiastic flights, and did not treat my philosophy with due respect; but when had he ever thwarted a wish of my heart? Was I then to act with reserve toward him, in a matter which might affect the whole current of my future life? "I have done wrong," thought I; "but it is not too late to remedy it. I will hasten back and open my whole heart to my father!"

I returned accordingly, and was just on the point of entering the house, with my heart full of filial piety and a contrite speech upon my lips, when I heard a burst of obstreperous laughter from my father, and a loud titter from my two elder sisters.

"A footstep!" shouted he, as soon as he could recover himself; "in love with a footstep! Why, this beats the old lady at the window!" And then there was another appalling burst of laughter. Had it been a clap of thunder, it could hardly have astounded me more completely. Sophy, in the simplicity of her heart, had told all, and had set my father's risible propensities in full action.

Never was poor mortal so thoroughly crestfallen as myself. The whole delusion was at an end. I drew off silently from the house, shrinking smaller and smaller at every fresh peal of laughter; and, wandering about until the family had retired, stole quietly to my bed. Scarce any sleep, however, visited my eyes that night! I lay overwhelmed with mortification, and meditating how I might meet the family in the morning. The idea of ridicule was always intolerable to me; but to endure it on a subject by which my feelings had been so much excited seemed worse than death. I almost determined, at one time, to get up, saddle my horse, and ride off, I knew not whither.

At length I came to a resolution. Before going down to breakfast, I sent for Sophy, and employed her as ambassador to treat formally in the matter. I insisted that the subject should be buried in oblivion; otherwise I would not show my face at table. It was readily agreed to; for not one of the family would have given me pain for the world. They faithfully kept their promise. Not a word was said of the matter; but there were wry faces, and suppressed titters, that went to my soul; and whenever my father looked me in the face, it was with such a tragi-comical leer – such an attempt to pull down a serious brow upon a whimsical mouth – that I had a thousand times rather he had laughed outright.

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For a day or two after the mortifying occurrence just related, I kept as much as possible out of the way of the family, and wandered about the fields and woods by myself. I was sadly out of tune; my feelings were all jarred and unstrung. The birds sang from every grove, but I took no pleasure in their melody; and the flowers of the field bloomed unheeded around me. To be crossed in love is bad enough; but then one can fly to poetry for relief, and turn one's woes to account in soul-subduing stanzas. But to have one's whole passion, object and all, annihilated, dispelled, proved to be such stuff as dreams are made of – or, worse than all, to be turned into a proverb and a jest – what consolation is there in such a case?

I avoided the fatal brook where I had seen the footstep. My favorite resort was now the banks of the Hudson, where I sat upon the rocks and mused upon the current that dimpled by, or the waves that laved the shore; or watched the bright mutations of the clouds, and the shifting lights and shadows of the distant mountain. By degrees a returning serenity stole over my feelings; and a sigh now and then, gentle and easy, and unattended by pain, showed that my heart was recovering its susceptibility.

As I was sitting in this musing mood my eye became gradually fixed upon an object that was borne along by the tide. It proved to be a little pinnace, beautifully modeled, and gayly painted and decorated. It was an unusual sight in this neighborhood, which was rather lonely; indeed, it was rare to see any pleasure-barks in this part of the river. As it drew nearer, I perceived that there was no one on board; it had apparently drifted from its anchorage. There was not a breath of air; the little bark came floating along on the glassy stream, wheeling about with the eddies. At length it ran aground, almost at the foot of the rock on which I was seated. I descended to the margin of the river, and drawing the bark to shore, admired its light and elegant proportions and the taste with which it was fitted up. The benches were covered with cushions, and its long streamer was of silk. On one of the cushion's lay a lady's glove, of delicate size and shape, with beautifully tapered fingers. I instantly seized it and thrust it in my bosom; it seemed a match for the fairy footstep that had so fascinated me.

In a moment all the romance of my bosom was again in a glow. Here was one of the very incidents of fairy tale; a bark sent by some invisible power, some good genius, or benevolent fairy, to waft me to some delectable adventure. I recollected something of an enchanted bark, drawn by white swans, that conveyed a knight down the current of the Rhine, on some enterprise connected with love and beauty. The glove, too, showed that there was a lady fair concerned in the present adventure. It might be a gauntlet of defiance, to dare me to the enterprise.

In the spirit of romance and the whim of the moment, I sprang on board, hoisted the light sail, and pushed from shore. As if breathed by some presiding power, a light breeze at that moment sprang up, swelled out the sail, and dallied with the silken streamer. For a time I glided along under steep umbrageous banks, or across deep sequestered bays; and then stood out over a wide expansion of the river toward a high rocky promontory. It was a lovely evening; the sun was setting in a congregation of clouds that threw the whole heavens in a glow, and were reflected in the river. I delighted myself with all kinds of fantastic fancies, as to what enchanted island, or mystic bower, or necromantic palace, I was to be conveyed by the fairy bark.

In the revel of my fancy I had not noticed that the gorgeous congregation of clouds which had so much delighted me was in fact a gathering thunder gust. I perceived the truth too late. The clouds came hurrying on, darkening as they advanced. The whole face of nature was suddenly changed, and assumed that baleful and livid tint, predictive of a storm. I tried to gain the shore, but before I could reach it a blast of wind struck the water and lashed it at once into foam. The next moment it overtook the boat. Alas! I was nothing of a sailor; and my protecting fairy forsook me in the moment of peril. I endeavored to lower the sail; but in so doing I had to quit the helm; the bark was overturned in an instant, and I was thrown into the water. I endeavored to cling to the wreck, but missed my hold; being a poor swimmer I soon found myself sinking, but grasped a light oar that was floating by me. It was not sufficient for my support; I again sank beneath the surface; there was a rushing and bubbling sound in my ears, and all sense forsook me.

How long I remained insensible, I know not. I had a confused notion of being moved and tossed about, and of hearing strange beings and strange voices around me; but all this was like a hideous dream. When I at length recovered full consciousness and perception, I found myself in bed in a spacious chamber, furnished with more taste than I had been accustomed to. The bright rays of a morning sun were intercepted by curtains of a delicate rose color, that gave a soft, voluptuous tinge to every object. Not far from my bed, on a classic tripod, was a basket of beautiful exotic flowers, breathing the sweetest fragrance.

"Where am I? How came I here?"

I tasked my mind to catch at some previous event, from which I might trace up the thread of existence to the present moment. By degrees I called to mind the fairy pinnace, my daring embarkation, my adventurous voyage, and my disastrous shipwreck. Beyond that, all was chaos. How came I here? What unknown region had I landed upon? The people that inhabited it must be gentle and amiable, and of elegant tastes, for they loved downy beds, fragrant flowers, and rose-colored curtains.

While I lay thus musing, the tones of a harp reached my ear. Presently they were accompanied by a female voice. It came from the room below; but in the profound stillness of my chamber not a modulation was lost. My sisters were all considered good musicians, and sang very tolerably; but I had never heard a voice like this. There was no attempt at difficult execution, or striking effect; but there were exquisite inflections, and tender turns, which art could not reach. Nothing but feeling and sentiment could produce them. It was soul breathed forth in sound. I was always alive to the influence of music; indeed, I was susceptible of voluptuous influences of every kind – sounds, colors, shapes, and fragrant odors. I was the very slave of sensation.

I lay mute and breathless, and drank in every note of this siren strain. It thrilled through my whole frame, and filled my soul with melody and love. I pictured to myself, with curious logic, the

form of the unseen musician. Such melodious sounds and exquisite inflections could only be produced by organs of the most delicate flexibility. Such organs do not belong to coarse, vulgar forms; they are the harmonious results of fair proportions, and admirable symmetry. A being so organized must be lovely.

Again my busy imagination was at work. I called to mind the Arabian story of a prince, borne away during sleep by a good genius, to the distant abode of a princess of ravishing beauty. I do not pretend to say that I believed in having experienced a similar transportation; but it was my inveterate habit to cheat myself with fancies of the kind, and to give the tinge of illusion to surrounding realities.

The witching sound had ceased, but its vibrations still played round my heart, and filled it with a tumult of soft emotions. At this moment, a self-upbraiding pang shot through my bosom. "Ah, recreant!" a voice seemed to exclaim, "is this the stability of thine affections? What! hast thou so soon forgotten the nymph of the fountain? Has one song, idly piped in thine ear, been sufficient to charm away the cherished tenderness of a whole summer?"

The wise may smile – but I am in a confiding mood, and must confess my weakness. I felt a degree of compunction at this sudden infidelity, yet I could not resist the power of present fascination. My peace of mind was destroyed by conflicting claims. The nymph of the fountain came over my memory, with all the associations of fairy footsteps, shady groves, soft echoes, and wild streamlets; but this new passion was produced by a strain of soul-subduing melody, still lingering in my ear, aided by a downy bed, fragrant flowers, and rose-colored curtains. "Unhappy youth!" sighed I to myself, "distracted by such rival passions, and the empire of thy heart thus violently contested by the sound of a voice, and the print of a footstep!"

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I had not remained long in this mood, when I heard the door of the room gently opened. I turned my head to see what inhabitant of this enchanted palace should appear; whether page in green, a hideous dwarf, or haggard fairy. It was my own man Scipio. He advanced with cautious step, and was delighted, as he said, to find me so much myself again. My first questions were as to where I was and how I came there? Scipio told me a long story of his having been fishing in a canoe at the time of my hare-brained cruise; of his noticing the gathering squall, and my impending danger; of his hastening to join me, but arriving just in time to snatch me from a watery grave; of the great difficulty in restoring me to animation; and of my being subsequently conveyed, in a state of insensibility, to this mansion.

"But where am I?" was the reiterated demand.

"In the house of Mr. Somerville."

"Somerville – Somerville!" I recollected to have heard that a gentleman of that name had recently taken up his residence at some distance from my father's abode, on the opposite side of the Hudson. He was commonly known by the name of "French Somerville," from having passed part of his early life in France, and from his exhibiting traces of French taste in his mode of living, and the arrangements of his house. In fact, it was in his pleasure-boat, which had got adrift, that I had made my fanciful and disastrous cruise. All this was simple, straightforward matter of fact, and threatened to demolish all the cobweb romance I had been spinning, when fortunately I again heard the tinkling of a harp. I raised myself in bed and listened.

"Scipio," said I, with some little hesitation, "I heard some one singing just now. Who was it?"

"Oh, that was Miss Julia."

"Julia! Julia! Delightful! what a name! And, Scipio – is she – is she pretty?"

Scipio grinned from ear to ear. "Except Miss Sophy, she was the most beautiful young lady he had ever seen."

I should observe, that my sister Sophia was considered by all the servants a paragon of perfection.

Scipio now offered to remove the basket of flowers; he was afraid their odor might be too powerful; but Miss Julia had given them that morning to be placed in my room.

These flowers, then, had been gathered by the fairy fingers of my unseen beauty; that sweet breath which had filled my ear with melody had passed over them. I made Scipio hand them to me, culled several of the most delicate, and laid them on my bosom.

Mr. Somerville paid me a visit not long afterward. He was an interesting study for me, for he was the father of my unseen beauty, and probably resembled her. I scanned him closely. He was a tall and elegant man, with an open, affable manner, and an erect and graceful carriage. His eyes were bluish-gray, and, though not dark, yet at times were sparkling and expressive. His hair was dressed and powdered, and being lightly combed up from his forehead, added to the loftiness of his aspect. He was fluent in discourse, but his conversation had the quiet tone of polished society, without any of those bold flights of thought, and picturings of fancy, which I so much admired.

My imagination was a little puzzled, at first, to make out of this assemblage of personal and mental qualities a picture that should harmonize with my previous idea of the fair unseen. By dint, however, of selecting what it liked, and giving a touch here and a touch there, it soon furnished out a satisfactory portrait.

"Julia must be tall," thought I, "and of exquisite grace and dignity. She is not quite so courtly as her father, for she has been brought up in the retirement of the country. Neither is she of such vivacious deportment; for the tones of her voice are soft and plaintive, and she loves pathetic music. She is rather pensive – yet not too pensive; just what is called interesting. Her eyes are like her father's, except that they are of a purer blue, and more tender and languishing. She has light hair – not exactly flaxen, for I do not like flaxen hair, but between that and auburn. In a word, she is a tall, elegant, imposing, languishing blue-eyed, romantic-looking beauty." And having thus finished her picture, I felt ten times more in love with her than ever.

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I felt so much recovered that I would at once have left my room, but Mr. Somerville objected to it. He had sent early word to my family of my safety; and my father arrived in the course of the morning. He was shocked at learning the risk I had run, but rejoiced to find me so much restored, and was warm in his thanks to Mr. Somerville for his kindness. The other only required, in return, that I might remain two or three days as his guest, to give time for my recovery, and for our forming a closer acquaintance; a request which my father readily granted. Scipio accordingly accompanied my father home, and returned with a supply of clothes, and with affectionate letters from my mother and sisters.

The next morning, aided by Scipio, I made my toilet with rather more care than usual, and descended the stairs with some trepidation, eager to see the original of the portrait which had been so completely pictured in my imagination.

On entering the parlor, I found it deserted. Like the rest of the house, it was furnished in a foreign style. The curtains were of French silk; there were Grecian couches, marble tables, pier-glasses, and chandeliers. What chiefly attracted my eye, were documents of female taste that I saw around me; a piano, with an ample stock of Italian music; a book of poetry lying on the sofa; a vase of fresh flowers on a table, and a portfolio open with a skillful and half-finished sketch of them. In the window was a canary bird, in a gilt cage, and near by, the harp that had been in Julia's arms. Happy harp! But where was the being that reigned in this little empire of delicacies? – that breathed poetry and song, and dwelt among birds and flowers, and rose-colored curtains?

Suddenly I heard the hall door fly open, the quick pattering of light steps, a wild, capricious strain of music, and the shrill barking of a dog. A light, frolic nymph of fifteen came tripping into

the room, playing on a flageolet, with a little spaniel romping after her. Her gypsy hat had fallen back upon her shoulders; a profusion of glossy brown hair was blown in rich ringlets about her face, which beamed through them with the brightness of smiles and dimples.

At sight of me she stopped short, in the most beautiful confusion, stammered out a word or two about looking for her father, glided out of the door, and I heard her bounding up the staircase, like a frightened fawn, with the little dog barking after her.

When Miss Somerville returned to the parlor, she was quite a different being. She entered, stealing along by her mother's side with noiseless step, and sweet timidity; her hair was prettily adjusted, and a soft blush mantled on her damask cheek. Mr. Somerville accompanied the ladies, and introduced me regularly to them. There were many kind inquiries and much sympathy expressed, on the subject of my nautical accident, and some remarks upon the wild scenery of the neighborhood, with which the ladies seemed perfectly acquainted.

"You must know," said Mr. Somerville, "that we are great navigators, and delight in exploring every nook and corner of the river. My daughter, too, is a great hunter of the picturesque, and transfers every rock and glen to her portfolio. By the way, my dear, show Mr. Mountjoy that pretty scene you have lately sketched." Julia complied, blushing, and drew from her portfolio a colored sketch. I almost started at the sight. It was my favorite brook. A sudden thought darted across my mind. I glanced down my eye, and beheld the divinest little foot in the world. Oh, blissful conviction! The struggle of my affections was at an end. The voice and the footstep were no longer at variance. Julia Somerville was the nymph of the fountain!

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What conversation passed during breakfast I do not recollect, and hardly was conscious of at the time, for my thoughts were in complete confusion. I wished to gaze on Miss Somerville, but did not dare. Once, indeed, I ventured a glance. She was at that moment darting a similar one from under a covert of ringlets. Our eyes seemed shocked by the rencontre, and fell; hers through the natural modesty of her sex, mine through a bashfulness produced by the previous workings of my imagination. That glance, however, went like a sunbeam to my heart.

A convenient mirror favored my diffidence, and gave me the reflection of Miss Somerville's form. It is true it only presented the back of her head, but she had the merit of an ancient statue; contemplate her from any point of view, she was beautiful. And yet she was totally different from everything I had before conceived of beauty. She was not the serene, meditative maid that I had pictured the nymph of the fountain; nor the tall, soft, languishing, blue-eyed, dignified being that I had fancied the minstrel of the harp. There was nothing of dignity about her: she was girlish in her appearance, and scarcely of the middle size; but then there was the tenderness of budding youth; the sweetness of the half-blown rose, when not a tint of perfume has been withered or exhaled; there were smiles and dimples, and all the soft witcheries of ever-varying expression. I wondered that I could ever have admired any other style of beauty.

After breakfast, Mr. Somerville departed to attend to the concerns of his estate, and gave me in charge of the ladies. Mrs. Somerville also was called away by her household cares, and I was left alone with Julia! Here, then, was the situation which of all others I had most coveted. I was in the presence of the lovely being that had so long been the desire of my heart. We were alone; propitious opportunity for a lover! Did I seize upon it? Did I break out in one of my accustomed rhapsodies? No such thing! Never was being more awkwardly embarrassed.

"What can be the cause of this?" thought I. "Surely, I cannot stand in awe of this young girl. I am of course her superior in intellect, and am never embarrassed in company with my tutor, notwithstanding all his wisdom."

It was passing strange. I felt that if she were an old woman, I should be quite at my ease; if she were even an ugly woman, I should make out very well: it was her beauty that overpowered me. How little do lovely women know what awful beings they are, in the eyes of inexperienced youth! Young men brought up in the fashionable circles of our cities will smile at all this. Accustomed to mingle incessantly in female society, and to have the romance of the heart deadened by a thousand frivolous flirtations, women are nothing but women in their eyes; but to a susceptible youth like myself, brought up in the country, they are perfect divinities.

Miss Somerville was at first a little embarrassed herself; but, somehow or other, women have a natural adroitness in recovering their self-possession; they are more alert in their minds, and graceful in their manners. Besides, I was but an ordinary personage in Miss Somerville's eyes; she was not under Hie influence of such a singular course of imaginings as had surrounded her, in my eyes, with the illusions of romance. Perhaps, too, she saw the confusion in the opposite camp and gained courage from the discovery. At any rate she was the first to take the field.

Her conversation, however, was only on commonplace topics, and in an easy, well-bred style. I endeavored to respond in the same manner; but I was strangely incompetent to the task. My ideas were frozen up; even words seemed to fail me. I was excessively vexed at myself, for I wished to be uncommonly elegant. I tried two or three times to turn a pretty thought, or to utter a fine sentiment; but it would come forth so trite, so forced, so mawkish, that I was ashamed of it. My very voice sounded discordantly, though I sought to modulate it into the softest tones. "The truth is," thought I to myself, "I cannot bring my mind down to the small talk necessary for young girls; it is too masculine and robust for the mincing measure of parlor gossip. I am a philosopher – and that accounts for it."

The entrance of Mrs. Somerville at length gave me relief. I at once breathed freely, and felt a vast deal of confidence come over me. "This is strange," thought I, "that the appearance of another woman should revive my courage; that I should be a better match for two women than one. However, since it is so, I will take advantage of the circumstance, and let this young lady see that I am not so great a simpleton as she probably thinks me."

I accordingly took up the book of poetry which lay upon the sofa. It was Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Nothing could have been more fortunate; it afforded a fine scope for my favorite vein of grandiloquence. I went largely into a discussion of its merits, or rather an enthusiastic eulogy of them. My observations were addressed to Mrs. Somerville, for I found I could talk to her with more ease than to her daughter. She appeared alive to the beauties of the poet and disposed to meet me in the discussion; but it was not my object to hear her talk; it was to talk myself. I anticipated all she had to say, overpowered her with the copiousness of my ideas, and supported and illustrated them by long citations from the author.

While thus holding forth, I cast a side glance to see how Miss Somerville was affected. She had some embroidery stretched on a frame before her, but had paused in her labor, and was looking down as if lost in mute attention. I felt a glow of self-satisfaction, but I recollected, at the same time, with a kind of pique, the advantage she had enjoyed over me in our *tete-a-tete*. I determined to push my triumph, and accordingly kept on with redoubled ardor, until I had fairly exhausted my subject, or rather my thoughts.

I had scarce come to a full stop, when Miss Somerville raised her eyes from the work on which they had been fixed, and turning to her mother, observed: "I have been considering, mamma, whether to work these flowers plain, or in colors."

Had an ice-bolt shot to my heart, it could not have chilled me more effectually. "What a fool," thought I, "have I been making myself – squandering away fine thoughts, and fine language, upon a light mind and an ignorant ear! This girl knows nothing of poetry. She has no soul, I fear, for its beauties. Can any one have real sensibility of heart, and not be alive to poetry? However, she is young; this part of her education has been neglected; there is time enough to remedy it. I will be her preceptor.

I will kindle in her mind the sacred flame, and lead her through the fairy land of song. But after all, it is rather unfortunate that I should have fallen in love with a woman who knows nothing of poetry."

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I passed a day not altogether satisfactory. I was a little disappointed that Miss Somerville did not show more poetical feeling. "I am afraid, after all," said I to myself, "she is light and girlish, and more fitted to pluck wild flowers, play on the flageolet, and romp with little dogs than to converse with a man of my turn."

I believe, however, to tell the truth, I was more out of humor with myself. I thought I had made the worst first appearance that ever hero made, either in novel or fairy tale. I was out of all patience, when I called to mind my awkward attempts at ease and elegance, in the *tete-a-tete*. And then my intolerable long lecture about poetry to catch the applause of a heedless auditor! But there I was not to blame. I had certainly been eloquent: it was her fault that the eloquence was wasted. To meditate upon the embroidery of a flower, when I was expatiating on the beauties of Milton! She might at least have admired the poetry, if she did not relish the manner in which it was delivered: though that was not despicable, for I had recited passages in my best style, which my mother and sisters had always considered equal to a play. "Oh, it is evident," thought I, "Miss Somerville has very little soul!"

Such were my fancies and cogitations during the day, the greater part of which was spent in my chamber, for I was still languid. My evening was passed in the drawing-room, where I overlooked Miss Somerville's portfolio of sketches. They were executed with great taste, and showed a nice observation of the peculiarities of nature. They were all her own, and free from those cunning tints and touches of the drawing-master, by which young ladies' drawings, like their heads, are dressed up for company. There was no garish and vulgar trick of colors, either; all was executed with singular truth and simplicity.

"And yet," thought I, "this little being, who has so pure an eye to take in, as in a limpid brook, all the graceful forms and magic tints of nature, has no soul for poetry!"

Mr. Somerville, toward the latter part of the evening, observing my eye to wander occasionally to the harp, interpreted and met my wishes with his accustomed civility.

"Julia, my dear," said he, "Mr. Mountjoy would like to hear a little music from your harp; let us hear, too, the sound of your voice."

Julia immediately complied, without any of that hesitation and difficulty, by which young ladies are apt to make company pay dear for bad music. She sang a sprightly strain, in a brilliant style, that came trilling playfully over the ear; and the bright eye and dimpling smile showed that her little heart danced with the song. Her pet canary bird, who hung close by, was awakened by the music, and burst forth into an emulating strain. Julia smiled with a pretty air of defiance, and played louder.

After some time the music changed, and ran into a plaintive strain, in a minor key. Then it was that all the former witchery of her voice came over me; then it was that she seemed to sing from the heart and to the heart. Her fingers moved about the chords as if they scarcely touched them. Her whole manner and appearance changed; her eyes beamed with the softest expression; her countenance, her frame, all seemed subdued into tenderness. She rose from the harp, leaving it still vibrating with sweet sounds, and moved toward her father, to bid him good-night.

His eyes had been fixed on her intently during her performance. As she came before him he parted her shining ringlets with both his hands, and looked down with the fondness of a father on her innocent face. The music seemed still lingering in its lineaments, and the action of her father brought a moist gleam in her eye. He kissed her fair forehead, after the French mode of parental caressing: "Goodnight, and God bless you," said he, "my good little girl!"

Julia tripped away, with a tear in her eye, a dimple in her cheek, and a light heart in her bosom. I thought it the prettiest picture of paternal and filial affection I had ever seen.

When I retired to bed, a new train of thoughts crowded into my brain. "After all," said I to myself, "it is clear this girl has a soul, though she was not moved by my eloquence. She has all the outward signs and evidences of poetic feeling. She paints well, and has an eye for nature. She is a fine musician, and enters into the very soul of song. What a pity that she knows nothing of poetry! But we will see what is to be done? I am irretrievably in love with her; what then am I to do? Come down to the level of her mind, or endeavor to raise her to some kind of intellectual equality with myself? That is the most generous course. She will look up to me as a benefactor. I shall become associated in her mind with the lofty thoughts and harmonious graces of poetry. She is apparently docile: besides the difference of our ages will give me an ascendancy over her. She cannot be above sixteen years of age, and I am full turned to twenty." So, having built this most delectable of air castles, I fell asleep.

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The next morning I was quite a different being. I no longer felt fearful of stealing a glance at Julia; on the contrary, I contemplated her steadily, with the benignant eye of a benefactor. Shortly after breakfast I found myself alone with her, as I had on the preceding morning; but I felt nothing of the awkwardness of our previous *tete-a-tete*. I was elevated by the consciousness of my intellectual superiority and should almost have felt a sentiment of pity for the ignorance of the lovely little being, if I had not felt also the assurance that I should be able to dispel it. "But it is time," thought I, "to open school."

Julia was occupied in arranging some music on her piano. I looked over two or three songs; they were Moore's Irish melodies.

"These are pretty things!" said I, flirting the leaves over lightly, and giving a slight shrug, by way of qualifying the opinion.

"Oh, I love them of all things," said Julia, "they're so touching!"

"Then you like them for the poetry," said I, with an encouraging smile.

"Oh, yes; she thought them charmingly written."

Now was my time. "Poetry," said I, assuming a didactic attitude and air, "poetry is one of the most pleasing studies that can occupy a youthful mind. It renders us susceptible of the gentle impulses of humanity, and cherishes a delicate perception of all that is virtuous and elevated in morals, and graceful and beautiful in physics. It – "

I was going on in a style that would have graced a professor of rhetoric, when I saw a light smile playing about Miss Somerville's mouth, and that she began to turn over the leaves of a music-book. I recollected her inattention to my discourse of the preceding morning. "There is no fixing her light mind," thought I, "by abstract theory; we will proceed practically." As it happened, the identical volume of Milton's *Paradise Lost* was lying at hand.

"Let me recommend to you, my young friend," said I, in one of those tones of persuasive admonition, which I had so often loved in Glencoe, "let me recommend to you this admirable poem; you will find in it sources of intellectual enjoyment far superior to those songs which have delighted you." Julia looked at the book, and then at me, with a whimsically dubious air. "Milton's *Paradise Lost*?" said she; "oh, I know the greater part of that by heart."

I had not expected to find my pupil so far advanced; however, the *Paradise Lost* is a kind of school book, and its finest passages are given to young ladies as tasks.

"I find," said I to myself, "I must not treat her as so complete a novice; her inattention yesterday could not have proceeded from absolute ignorance, but merely from a want of poetic feeling. I'll try her again."

I now determined to dazzle her with my own erudition, and launched into a harangue that would have done honor to an institute. Pope, Spenser, Chaucer, and the old dramatic writers were all dipped into, with the excursive flight of a swallow. I did not confine myself to English poets, but gave a

glance at the French and Italian schools; I passed over Ariosto in full wing, but paused on Tasso's Jerusalem Delivered. I dwelt on the character of Clorinda: "There's a character," said I, "that you will find well worthy a woman's study. It shows to what exalted heights of heroism the sex can rise, how gloriously they may share even in the stern concerns of men."

"For my part," said Julia, gently taking advantage of a pause, "for my part, I prefer the character of Sophronia."

I was thunderstruck. She then had read Tasso! This girl that I had been treating as an ignoramus in poetry! She proceeded with a slight glow of the cheek, summoned up perhaps by a casual glow of feeling:

"I do not admire those masculine heroines," said she, "who aim at the bold qualities of the opposite sex. Now Sophronia only exhibits the real qualities of a woman, wrought up to their highest excitement. She is modest, gentle, and retiring, as it becomes a woman to be; but she has all the strength of affection proper to a woman. She cannot fight for her people as Clorinda does, but she can offer herself up, and die to serve them. You may admire Clorinda, but you surely would be more apt to love Sophronia; at least," added she, suddenly appearing to recollect herself, and blushing at having launched into such a discussion, "at least that is what papa observed when we read the poem together."

"Indeed," said I, dryly, for I felt disconcerted and nettled at being unexpectedly lectured by my pupil; "indeed, I do not exactly recollect the passage."

"Oh," said Julia, "I can repeat it to you;" and she immediately gave it in Italian.

Heavens and earth! – here was a situation! I knew no more of Italian than I did of the language of Psalmanazar. What a dilemma for a would-be-wise man to be placed in! I saw Julia waited for my opinion.

"In fact," said I, hesitating, "I – I do not exactly understand Italian."

"Oh," said Julia, with the utmost naivete, "I have no doubt it is very beautiful in the translation."

I was glad to break up school, and get back to my chamber, full of the mortification which a wise man in love experiences on finding his mistress wiser than himself. "Translation! translation!" muttered I to myself, as I jerked the door shut behind me: "I am surprised my father has never had me instructed in the modern languages. They are all important. What is the use of Latin and Greek? No one speaks them; but here, the moment I make my appearance in the world, a little girl slaps Italian in my face. However, thank heaven, a language is easily learned. The moment I return home, I'll set about studying Italian; and to prevent future surprise, I will study Spanish and German at the same time; and if any young lady attempts to quote Italian upon me again, I'll bury her under a heap of High Dutch poetry!"

* * * * *

I felt now like some mighty chieftain, who has carried the war into a weak country, with full confidence of success, and been repulsed and obliged to draw off his forces from before some inconsiderable fortress.

"However," thought I, "I have as yet brought only my light artillery into action; we shall see what is to be done with my heavy ordnance. Julia is evidently well versed in poetry; but it is natural she should be so; it is allied to painting and music, and is congenial to the light graces of the female character. We will try her on graver themes."

I felt all my pride awakened; it even for a time swelled higher than my love. I was determined completely to establish my mental superiority, and subdue the intellect of this little being; it would then be time to sway the scepter of gentle empire, and win the affections of her heart.

Accordingly, at dinner I again took the field, *en potence*. I now addressed myself to Mr. Somerville, for I was about to enter upon topics in which a young girl like her could not be well versed. I led, or rather forced, the conversation into a vein of historical erudition, discussing several

of the most prominent facts of ancient history, and accompanying them with sound, indisputable apothegms.

Mr. Somerville listened to me with the air of a man receiving information. I was encouraged, and went on gloriously from theme to theme of school declamation. I sat with Marius on the ruins of Carthage; I defended the bridge with Horatius Cocles; thrust my hand into the flame with Martius Scaevola, and plunged with Curtius into the yawning gulf; I fought side by side with Leonidas, at the straits of Thermopylae; and was going full drive into the battle of Plataea, when my memory, which is the worst in the world, failed me, just as I wanted the name of the Lacedemonian commander.

"Julia, my dear," said Mr. Somerville, "perhaps you may recollect the name of which Mr. Mountjoy is in quest?"

Julia colored slightly. "I believe," said she, in a low voice, "I believe it was Pausanius."

This unexpected sally, instead of re-enforcing me, threw my whole scheme of battle into confusion, and the Athenians remained unmolested in the field.

I am half inclined, since, to think Mr. Somerville meant this as a sly hit at my schoolboy pedantry; but he was too well bred not to seek to relieve me from my mortification. "Oh!" said he, "Julia is our family book of reference for names, dates, and distances, and has an excellent memory for history and geography."

I now became desperate; as a last resource I turned to metaphysics. "If she is a philosopher in petticoats," thought I, "it is all over with me." Here, however, I had the field to myself. I gave chapter and verse of my tutor's lectures, heightened by all his poetical illustrations; I even went further than he had ever ventured, and plunged into such depths of metaphysics that I was in danger of sticking in the mire at the bottom. Fortunately, I had auditors who apparently could not detect my flounderings. Neither Mr. Somerville nor his daughter offered the least interruption.

When the ladies had retired, Mr. Somerville sat some time with me; and as I was no longer anxious to astonish, I permitted myself to listen, and found that he was really agreeable. He was quite communicative, and from his conversation I was enabled to form a juster idea of his daughter's character, and the mode in which she had been brought up. Mr. Somerville had mingled much with the world, and with what is termed fashionable society. He had experienced its cold elegances and gay insincerities; its dissipation of the spirits and squanderings of the heart. Like many men of the world, though he had wandered too far from nature ever to return to it, yet he had the good taste and good feeling to look back fondly to its simple delights, and to determine that his child, if possible, should never leave them. He had superintended her education with scrupulous care, storing her mind with the graces of polite literature, and with such knowledge as would enable it to furnish its own amusement and occupation, and giving her all the accomplishments that sweeten and enliven the circle of domestic life. He had been particularly sedulous to exclude all fashionable affectations; all false sentiment, false sensibility, and false romance. "Whatever advantages she may possess," said he, "she is quite unconscious of them. She is a capricious little being, in everything but her affections; she is, however, free from art; simple, ingenuous, amiable, and, I thank God! happy."

Such was the eulogy of a fond father, delivered with a tenderness that touched me. I could not help making a casual inquiry, whether, among the graces of polite literature, he had included a slight tincture of metaphysics. He smiled, and told me he had not.

On the whole, when, as usual, that night, I summed up the day's observations on my pillow, I was not altogether dissatisfied. "Miss Somerville," said I, "loves poetry, and I like her the better for it. She has the advantage of me in Italian; agreed; what is it to know a variety of languages, but merely to have a variety of sounds to express the same idea? Original thought is the ore of the mind; language is but the accidental stamp and coinage by which it is put into circulation. If I can furnish an original idea, what care I how many languages she can translate it into? She may be able also to quote names and dates and latitudes better than I; but that is a mere effort of the memory. I admit she is more accurate in history and geography than I; but then she knows nothing of metaphysics."

I had now sufficiently recovered to return home; yet I could not think of leaving Mr. Somerville's without having a little further conversation with him on the subject of his daughter's education.

"This Mr. Somerville," thought I, "is a very accomplished, elegant man; he has seen a good deal of the world, and, upon the whole, has profited by what he has seen. He is not without information, and, as far as he thinks, appears to think correctly; but, after all, he is rather superficial, and does not think profoundly. He seems to take no delight in those metaphysical abstractions that are the proper aliment of masculine minds. I called to mind various occasions in which I had indulged largely in metaphysical discussions, but could recollect no instance where I had been able to draw him out. He had listened, it is true, with attention, and smiled as if in acquiescence, but had always appeared to avoid reply. Besides, I had made several sad blunders in the glow of eloquent declamation; but he had never interrupted me, to notice and correct them, as he would have done had he been versed in the theme.

"Now, it is really a great pity," resumed I, "that he should have the entire management of Miss Somerville's education. What a vast advantage it would be if she could be put for a little time under the superintendence of Glencoe. He would throw some deeper shades of thought into her mind, which at present is all sunshine; not but that Mr. Somerville has done very well, as far as he has gone; but then he has merely prepared the soil for the strong plants of useful knowledge. She is well versed in the leading facts of history, and the general course of belles-lettres," said I; "a little more philosophy would do wonders."

I accordingly took occasion to ask Mr. Somerville for a few moments' conversation in his study, the morning I was to depart. When we were alone I opened the matter fully to him. I commenced with the warmest eulogium of Glencoe's powers of mind and vast acquirements, and ascribed to him all my proficiency in the higher branches of knowledge. I begged, therefore, to recommend him as a friend calculated to direct the studies of Miss Somerville; to lead her mind, by degrees, to the contemplation of abstract principles, and to produce habits of philosophical analysis; "which," added I, gently smiling, "are not often cultivated by young ladies." I ventured to hint, in addition, that he would find Mr. Glencoe a most valuable and interesting acquaintance for himself; one who would stimulate and evolve the powers of his mind; and who might open to him tracts of inquiry and speculation to which perhaps he had hitherto been a stranger.

Mr. Somerville listened with grave attention. When I had finished, he thanked me in the politest manner for the interest I took in the welfare of his daughter and himself. He observed that, as it regarded himself, he was afraid he was too old to benefit by the instruction of Mr. Glencoe, and that as to his daughter, he was afraid her mind was but little fitted for the study of metaphysics. "I do not wish," continued he, "to strain her intellects with subjects they cannot grasp, but to make her familiarly acquainted with those that are within the limits of her capacity. I do not pretend to prescribe the boundaries of female genius, and am far from indulging the vulgar opinion that women are unfitted by nature for the highest intellectual pursuits. I speak only with reference to my daughter's tastes and talents. She will never make a learned woman; nor, in truth, do I desire it; for such is the jealousy of our sex, as to mental as well as physical ascendancy, that a learned woman is not always the happiest. I do not wish my daughter to excite envy, or to battle with the prejudices of the world; but to glide peaceably through life, on the good will and kind opinions of her friends. She has ample employment for her little head, in the course I have marked out for her; and is busy at present with some branches of natural history, calculated to awaken her perceptions to the beauties and wonders of nature, and to the inexhaustible volume of wisdom constantly spread open before her eyes. I consider that woman most likely to make an agreeable companion, who can draw topics of pleasing remark from every natural object; and most likely to be cheerful and contented, who is continually sensible of the order, the harmony, and the invariable beneficence that reign throughout the beautiful world we inhabit."

"But," added he, smiling, "I am betraying myself into a lecture, instead of merely giving a reply to your kind offer. Permit me to take the liberty, in return, of inquiring a little about your own pursuits. You speak of having finished your education; but of course you have a line of private study and mental occupation marked out; for you must know the importance, both in point of interest and happiness, of keeping the mind employed. May I ask what system you observe in your intellectual exercises?"

"Oh, as to system," I observed, "I could never bring myself into anything of the kind. I thought it best to let my genius take its own course, as it always acted the most vigorously when stimulated by inclination."

Mr. Somerville shook his head. "This same genius," said he, "is a wild quality that runs away with our most promising young men. It has become so much the fashion, too, to give it the reins that it is now thought an animal of too noble and generous a nature to be brought to harness. But it is all a mistake. Nature never designed these high endowments to run riot through society, and throw the whole system into confusion. No, my dear sir, genius, unless it acts upon system, is very apt to be a useless quality to society; sometimes an injurious, and certainly a very uncomfortable one, to its possessor. I have had many opportunities of seeing the progress through life of young men who were accounted geniuses, and have found it too often end in early exhaustion and bitter disappointment; and have as often noticed that these effects might be traced to a total want of system. There were no habits of business, of steady purpose, and regular application, superinduced upon the mind; everything was left to chance and impulse, and native luxuriance, and everything of course ran to waste and wild entanglement. Excuse me if I am tedious on this point, for I feel solicitous to impress it upon you, being an error extremely prevalent in our country and one into which too many of our youth have fallen. I am happy, however, to observe the zeal which still appears to actuate you for the acquisition of knowledge, and augur every good from the elevated bent of your ambition. May I ask what has been your course of study for the last six months?"

Never was question more unluckily timed. For the last six months I had been absolutely buried in novels and romances.

Mr. Somerville perceived that the question was embarrassing, and, with his invariable good breeding, immediately resumed the conversation, without waiting for a reply. He took care, however, to turn it in such a way as to draw from me an account of the whole manner in which I had been educated, and the various currents of reading into which my mind had run. He then went on to discuss, briefly but impressively, the different branches of knowledge most important to a young man in my situation; and to my surprise I found him a complete master of those studies on which I had supposed him ignorant, and on which I had been descanting so confidently.

He complimented me, however, very graciously, upon the progress I had made, but advised me for the present to turn my attention to the physical rather than the moral sciences. "These studies," said he, "store a man's mind with valuable facts, and at the same time repress self-confidence, by letting him know how boundless are the realms of knowledge, and how little we can possibly know. Whereas metaphysical studies, though of an ingenious order of intellectual employment, are apt to bewilder some minds with vague speculations. They never know how far they have advanced, or what may be the correctness of their favorite theory. They render many of our young men verbose and declamatory, and prone to mistake the aberrations of their fancy for the inspirations of divine philosophy."

I could not but interrupt him, to assent to the truth of these remarks, and to say that it had been my lot, in the course of my limited experience, to encounter young men of the kind, who had overwhelmed me by their verbosity.

Mr. Somerville smiled. "I trust," said he, kindly, "that you will guard against these errors. Avoid the eagerness with which a young man is apt to hurry into conversation, and to utter the crude and ill-digested notions which he has picked up in his recent studies. Be assured that extensive and accurate

knowledge is the slow acquisition of a studious lifetime; that a young man, however pregnant his wit, and prompt his talent, can have mastered but the rudiments of learning, and, in a manner, attained the implements of study. Whatever may have been your past assiduity, you must be sensible that as yet you have but reached the threshold of true knowledge; but at the same time you have the advantage that you are still very young, and have ample time to learn."

Here our conference ended. I walked out of the study a very different being from what I was on entering it. I had gone in with the air of a professor about to deliver a lecture; I came out like a student who had failed in his examination, and been degraded in his class.

"Very young," and "on the threshold of knowledge!" This was extremely flattering to one who had considered himself an accomplished scholar and a profound philosopher.

"It is singular," thought I; "there seems to have been a spell upon my faculties, ever since I have been in this house. I certainly have not been able to do myself justice. Whenever I have undertaken to advise, I have had the tables turned upon me. It must be that I am strange and diffident among people I am not accustomed to. I wish they could hear me talk at home!"

"After all," added I, on further reflection, "after all there is a great deal of force in what Mr. Somerville has said. Somehow or other, these men of the world do now and then hit upon remarks that would do credit to a philosopher. Some of his general observations came so home that I almost thought they were meant for myself. His advice about adopting a system of study is very judicious. I will immediately put it in practice. My mind shall operate henceforward with the regularity of clock-work."

How far I succeeded in adopting this plan, how I fared in the further pursuit of knowledge, and how I succeeded in my suit to Julia Somerville, may afford matter for a further communication to the public, if this simple record of my early life is fortunate enough to excite any curiosity.

THE GREAT MISSISSIPPI BUBBLE

"A TIME OF UNEXAMPLED PROSPERITY"

In the course of a voyage from England, I once fell in with a convoy of merchant ships bound for the West Indies. The weather was uncommonly bland; and the ships vied with each other in spreading sail to catch a light, favoring breeze, until their hulls were almost hidden beneath a cloud of canvas. The breeze went down with the sun, and his last yellow rays shone upon a thousand sails, idly flapping against the masts.

I exulted in the beauty of the scene, and augured a prosperous voyage; but the veteran master of the ship shook his head, and pronounced this halcyon calm a "weather-breeder." And so it proved. A storm burst forth in the night; the sea roared and raged; and when the day broke, I beheld the late gallant convoy scattered in every direction; some dismasted, others scudding under bare poles, and many firing signals of distress.

I have since been occasionally reminded of this scene, by those calm, sunny seasons in the commercial world, which are known by the name of "times of unexampled prosperity." They are the sure weather-breeders of traffic. Every now and then the world is visited by one of these delusive seasons, when "the credit system," as it is called, expands to full luxuriance, everybody trusts everybody; a bad debt is a thing unheard of; the broad way to certain and sudden wealth lies plain and open; and men are tempted to dash forward boldly, from the facility of borrowing.

Promissory notes, interchanged between scheming individuals, are liberally discounted at the banks, which become so many mints to coin words into cash; and as the supply of words is inexhaustible, it may readily be supposed what a vast amount of promissory capital is soon in circulation. Every one now talks in thousands; nothing is heard but gigantic operations in trade; great purchases and sales of real property, and immense sums made at every transfer. All, to be sure, as yet exists in promise; but the believer in promises calculates the aggregate as solid capital, and falls back in amazement at the amount of public wealth, the "unexampled state of public prosperity."

Now is the time for speculative and dreaming or designing men. They relate their dreams and projects to the ignorant and credulous, dazzle them with golden visions, and set them madding after shadows. The example of one stimulates another; speculation rises on speculation; bubble rises on bubble; every one helps with his breath to swell the windy superstructure, and admires and wonders at the magnitude of the inflation he has contributed to produce.

Speculation is the romance of trade, and casts contempt upon all its sober realities. It renders the stock-jobber a magician, and the exchange a region of enchantment. It elevates the merchant into a kind of knight-errant, or rather a commercial Quixote. The slow but sure gains of snug percentage become despicable in his eyes; no "operation" is thought worthy of attention that does not double or treble the investment. No business is worth following that does not promise an immediate fortune. As he sits musing over his ledger, with pen behind his ear, he is like La Mancha's hero in his study, dreaming over his books of chivalry. His dusty counting-house fades before his eyes, or changes into a Spanish mine; he gropes after diamonds, or dives after pearls. The subterranean garden of Aladdin is nothing to the realms of wealth that break upon his imagination.

Could this delusion always last, the life of a merchant would indeed be a golden dream; but it is as short as it is brilliant. Let but a doubt enter, and the "season of unexampled prosperity" is at end. The coinage of words is suddenly curtailed; the promissory capital begins to vanish into smoke; a panic succeeds, and the whole superstructure, built upon credit and reared by speculation, crumbles to the ground, leaving scarce a wreck behind:

"It is such stuff as dreams are made of."

When a man of business, therefore, hears on every side rumors of fortunes suddenly acquired; when he finds banks liberal, and brokers busy; when he sees adventurers flush of paper capital, and full of scheme and enterprise; when he perceives a greater disposition to buy than to sell; when trade overflows its accustomed channels and deluges the country; when he hears of new regions of commercial adventure; of distant marts and distant mines, swallowing merchandise and disgorging gold; when he finds joint-stock companies of all kinds forming; railroads, canals, and locomotive engines, springing up on every side; when idlers suddenly become men of business, and dash into the game of commerce as they would into the hazards of the faro table; when he beholds the streets glittering with new equipages, palaces conjured up by the magic of speculation; tradesmen flushed with sudden success, and vying with each other in ostentatious expense; in a word, when he hears the whole community joining in the theme of "unexampled prosperity," let him look upon the whole as a "weather-breeder," and prepare for the impending storm.

The foregoing remarks are intended merely as a prelude to a narrative I am about to lay before the public, of one of the most memorable instances of the infatuation of gain to be found in the whole history of commerce. I allude to the famous Mississippi Bubble. It is a matter that has passed into a proverb, and become a phrase in every one's mouth, yet of which not one merchant in ten has probably a distinct idea. I have therefore thought that an authentic account of it would be interesting and salutary, at the present moment, when we are suffering under the effects of a severe access of the credit system, and just recovering from one of its ruinous delusions.

Before entering into the story of this famous chimera, it is proper to give a few particulars concerning the individual who engendered it. John Law was born in Edinburgh in 1671. His father, William Law, was a rich goldsmith, and left his son an estate of considerable value, called Lauriston, situated about four miles from Edinburgh. Goldsmiths, in those days, acted occasionally as bankers, and his father's operations, under this character, may have originally turned the thoughts of the youth to the science of calculation, in which he became an adept; so that at an early age he excelled in playing at all games of combination.

In 1694 he appeared in London, where a handsome person, and an easy and insinuating address, gained him currency in the first circles and the nickname of "Beau Law." The same personal advantages gave him success in the world of gallantry, until he became involved in a quarrel with Beau Wilson, his rival in fashion, whom he killed in a duel, and then fled to France, to avoid prosecution.

He returned to Edinburgh in 1700, and remained there several years; during which time he first broached his great credit system, offering to supply the deficiency of coin by the establishment of a bank, which, according to his views, might emit a paper currency equivalent to the whole landed estate of the kingdom.

His scheme excited great astonishment in Edinburgh; but, though the government was not sufficiently advanced in financial knowledge to detect the fallacies upon which it was founded, Scottish caution and suspicion served in the place of wisdom, and the project was rejected. Law met with no better success with the English Parliament; and the fatal affair of the death of Wilson still hanging over him, for which he had never been able to procure a pardon, he again went to France.

The financial affairs of France were at this time in a deplorable condition. The wars, the pomp and profusion, of Louis XIV., and his religious persecutions of whole classes of the most industrious of his subjects, had exhausted his treasury, and overwhelmed the nation with debt. The old monarch clung to his selfish magnificence, and could not be induced to diminish his enormous expenditure; and his minister of finance was driven to his wits' end to devise all kinds of disastrous expedients to keep up the royal state, and to extricate the nation from its embarrassments.

In this state of things, Law ventured to bring forward his financial project. It was founded on the plan of the Bank of England, which had already been in successful operation several years. He met with immediate patronage, and a congenial spirit, in the Duke of Orleans, who had married a natural daughter of the king. The duke had been astonished at the facility with which England had

supported the burden of a public debt, created by the wars of Anne and William, and which exceeded in amount that under which France was groaning. The whole matter was soon explained by Law to his satisfaction. The latter maintained that England had stopped at the mere threshold of an art capable of creating unlimited sources of national wealth. The duke was dazzled with his splendid views and specious reasonings, and thought he clearly comprehended his system. Demarets, the Comptroller-General of Finance, was not so easily deceived. He pronounced the plan of Law more pernicious than any of the disastrous expedients that the government had yet been driven to. The old king also, Louis XIV., detested all innovations, especially those which came from a rival nation; the project of a bank, therefore, was utterly rejected.

Law remained for a while in Paris, leading a gay and affluent existence, owing to his handsome person, easy manners, flexible temper, and a faro-bank which he had set up. His agreeable career was interrupted by a message from D'Argenson, Lieutenant-General of Police, ordering him to quit Paris, alleging that he was "*rather too skillful at the game which he had introduced.*"

For several succeeding years he shifted his residence from state to state of Italy and Germany; offering his scheme of finance to every court that he visited, but without success. The Duke of Savoy, Victor Amadeus, afterward king of Sardinia, was much struck with his project; but after considering it for a time, replied, "*I am not sufficiently powerful to ruin myself.*"

The shifting, adventurous life of Law, and the equivocal means by which he appeared to live, playing high, and always with great success, threw a cloud of suspicion over him wherever he went, and caused him to be expelled by the magistracy from the semi-commercial, semi-aristocratical cities of Venice and Genoa.

The events of 1715 brought Law back again to Paris. Louis XIV. was dead. Louis XV. was a mere child, and during his minority the Duke of Orleans held the reins of government as Regent. Law had at length found his man.

The Duke of Orleans has been differently represented by different contemporaries. He appears to have had excellent natural qualities, perverted by a bad education. He was of the middle size, easy and graceful, with an agreeable countenance, and open, affable demeanor. His mind was quick and sagacious, rather than profound; and his quickness of intellect, and excellence of memory, supplied the lack of studious application. His wit was prompt and pungent; he expressed himself with vivacity and precision; his imagination was vivid, his temperament sanguine and joyous; his courage daring. His mother, the Duchess of Orleans, expressed his character in a jeu d'esprit. "The fairies," said she, "were invited to be present at his birth, and each one conferring a talent on my son, he possesses them all. Unfortunately, we had forgotten to invite an old fairy, who, arriving after all the others, exclaimed, 'He shall have all the talents, excepting that to make a good use of them.'"

Under proper tuition, the duke might have risen to real greatness; but in his early years he was put under the tutelage of the Abbe Dubois, one of the subtlest and basest spirits that ever intrigued its way into eminent place and power. The abbe was of low origin and despicable exterior, totally destitute of morals, and perfidious in the extreme; but with a supple, insinuating address, and an accommodating spirit, tolerant of all kinds of profligacy in others. Conscious of his own inherent baseness, he sought to secure an influence over his pupil, by corrupting his principles and fostering his vices; he debased him, to keep himself from being despised. Unfortunately he succeeded. To the early precepts of this infamous pander have been attributed those excesses that disgraced the manhood of the regent, and gave a licentious character to his whole course of government. His love of pleasure, quickened and indulged by those who should have restrained it, led him into all kinds of sensual indulgence. He had been taught to think lightly of the most serious duties and sacred ties; to turn virtue into a jest, and consider religion mere hypocrisy. He was a gay misanthrope, that had a sovereign but sportive contempt for mankind; believed that his most devoted servant would be his enemy, if interest prompted; and maintained that an honest man was he who had the art to conceal that he was the contrary.

He surrounded himself with a set of dissolute men like himself; who, let loose from the restraint under which they had been held, during the latter hypocritical days of Louis XIV., now gave way to every kind of debauchery. With these men the regent used to shut himself up, after the hours of business, and excluding all graver persons and graver concerns, celebrate the most drunken and disgusting orgies; where obscenity and blasphemy formed the seasoning of conversation. For the profligate companions of these revels, he invented the appellation of his *roués*, the literal meaning of which is men broken on the wheel; intended, no doubt, to express their broken-down characters and dislocated fortunes; although a contemporary asserts that it designated the punishment that most of them merited. Madame de Labran, who was present at one of the regent's suppers, was disgusted by the conduct and conversation of the host and his guests, and observed, at table, that God, after he had created man, took the refuse clay that was left, and made of it the souls of lackeys and princes.

Such was the man that now ruled the destinies of France. Law found him full of perplexities, from the disastrous state of the finances. He had already tampered with the coinage, calling in the coin of the nation, restamping it, and issuing it at a nominal increase of one-fifth; thus defrauding the nation out of twenty per cent of its capital. He was not likely, therefore, to be scrupulous about any means likely to relieve him from financial difficulties; he had even been led to listen to the cruel alternative of a national bankruptcy.

Under these circumstances, Law confidently brought forward his scheme of a bank, that was to pay off the national debt, increase the revenue, and at the same time diminish the taxes. The following is stated as the theory by which he recommended his system to the regent. The credit enjoyed by a banker or a merchant, he observed, increases his capital tenfold; that is to say, he who has a capital of one thousand livres, may, if he possess sufficient credit, extend his operations to a million, and reap profits to that amount. In like manner, a state that can collect into a bank all the current coin of the kingdom, would be as powerful as if its capital were increased tenfold. The specie must be drawn into the bank, not by way of loan, or by taxations, but in the way of deposit. This might be effected in different modes, either by inspiring confidence or by exerting authority. One mode, he observed, had already been in use. Each time that a state makes a recoinage, it becomes momentarily the depository of all the money called in, belonging to the subjects of that state. His bank was to effect the same purpose; that is to say, to receive in deposit all the coin of the kingdom, but to give in exchange its bills, which, being of an invariable value, bearing an interest, and being payable on demand, would not only supply the place of coin, but prove a better and more profitable currency.

The regent caught with avidity at the scheme. It suited his bold, reckless spirit, and his grasping extravagance. Not that he was altogether the dupe of Law's specious projects; still he was apt, like many other men, unskilled in the arcana of finance, to mistake the multiplication of money for the multiplication of wealth; not understanding that it was a mere agent or instrument in the interchange of traffic, to represent the value of the various productions of industry; and that an increased circulation of coin or bank bills, in the shape of currency, only adds a proportionably increased and fictitious value to such productions. Law enlisted the vanity of the regent in his cause. He persuaded him that he saw more clearly than others into sublime theories of finance, which were quite above the ordinary apprehension. He used to declare that, excepting the regent and the Duke of Savoy, no one had thoroughly comprehended his system.

It is certain that it met with strong opposition from the regent's ministers, the Duke de Noailles and the Chancellor d'Anguesseau; and it was no less strenuously opposed by the Parliament of Paris. Law, however, had a potent though secret coadjutor in the Abbe Dubois, now rising, during the regency, into great political power, and who retained a baneful influence over the mind of the regent. This wily priest, as avaricious as he was ambitious, drew large sums from Law as subsidies, and aided him greatly in many of his most pernicious operations. He aided him, in the present instance, to fortify the mind of the regent against all the remonstrances of his ministers and the parliament.

Accordingly, on the 2d of May, 1716, letters patent were granted to Law, to establish a bank of deposit, discount, and circulation, under the firm of "Law & Company," to continue for twenty years. The capital was fixed at six millions of livres, divided into shares of five hundred livres each, which were to be sold for twenty-five per cent of the regent's debased coin, and seventy-five per cent of the public securities; which were then at a great reduction from their nominal value, and which then amounted to nineteen hundred millions. The ostensible object of the bank, as set forth in the patent, was to encourage the commerce and manufactures of France. The louis d'ors and crowns of the bank were always to retain the same standard of value, and its bills to be payable in them on demand.

At the outset, while the bank was limited in its operations, and while its paper really represented the specie in its vaults, it seemed to realize all that had been promised from it. It rapidly acquired public confidence, and an extended circulation, and produced an activity in commerce unknown under the baneful government of Louis XIV. As the bills of the bank bore an interest, and as it was stipulated they would be of invariable value, and as hints had been artfully circulated that the coin would experience successive diminution, everybody hastened to the bank to exchange gold and silver for paper. So great became the throng of depositors, and so intense their eagerness, that there was quite a press and struggle at the bank door, and a ludicrous panic was awakened, as if there was danger of their not being admitted. An anecdote of the time relates that one of the clerks, with an ominous smile, called out to the struggling multitude, "Have a little patience, my friends; we mean to take all your money;" an assertion disastrously verified in the sequel.

Thus, by the simple establishment of a bank, Law and the regent obtained pledges of confidence for the consummation of further and more complicated schemes, as yet hidden from the public. In a little while, the bank shares rose enormously, and the amount of its notes in circulation exceeded one hundred and ten millions of livres. A subtle stroke of policy had rendered it popular with the aristocracy. Louis XIV. had several years previously imposed an income tax of a tenth, giving his royal word that it should cease in 1717. This tax had been exceedingly irksome to the privileged orders; and in the present disastrous times they had dreaded an augmentation of it. In consequence of the successful operation of Law's scheme, however, the tax was abolished, and now nothing was to be heard among the nobility and clergy but praises of the regent and the bank.

Hitherto all had gone well, and all might have continued to go well, had not the paper system been further expanded. But Law had yet the grandest part of his scheme to develop. He had to open his ideal world of speculation, his El Dorado of unbounded wealth. The English had brought the vast imaginary commerce of the South Seas in aid of their banking operations. Law sought to bring, as an immense auxiliary of his bank, the whole trade of the Mississippi. Under this name was included not merely the river so called, but the vast region known as Louisiana, extending from north latitude 29° up to Canada in north latitude 40°. This country had been granted by Louis XIV. to the Sieur Crozat, but he had been induced to resign his patent. In conformity to the plea of Mr. Law, letters patent were granted in August, 1717, for the creation of a commercial company, which was to have the colonizing of this country, and the monopoly of its trade and resources, and of the beaver or fur trade with Canada. It was called the Western, but became better known as the Mississippi Company. The capital was fixed at one hundred millions of livres, divided into shares, bearing an Interest of four per cent, which were subscribed for in the public securities. As the bank was to co-operate with the company, the regent ordered that its bills should be received the same as coin, in all payments of the public revenue. Law was appointed chief director of this company, which was an exact copy of the Earl of Oxford's South Sea Company, set on foot in 1711, and which distracted all England with the frenzy of speculation. In like manner with the delusive picturings given in that memorable scheme of the sources of rich trade to be opened in the South Sea countries, Law held forth magnificent prospects of the fortunes to be made in colonizing Louisiana, which was represented as a veritable land of promise, capable of yielding every variety of the most precious produce. Reports, too, were artfully circulated, with great mystery, as if to the "chosen few," of mines of gold and silver

recently discovered in Louisiana, and which would insure instant wealth to the early purchasers. These confidential whispers of course soon became public; and were confirmed by travelers fresh from the Mississippi, and doubtless bribed, who had seen the mines in question, and declared them superior in richness to those of Mexico and Peru. Nay, more, ocular proof was furnished to public credulity, in ingots of gold conveyed to the mint, as if just brought from the mines of Louisiana.

Extraordinary measures were adopted to force a colonization. An edict was issued to collect and transport settlers to the Mississippi. The police lent its aid. The streets and prisons of Paris, and of the provincial cities, were swept of mendicants and vagabonds of all kinds, who were conveyed to Havre de Grace. About six thousand were crowded into ships, where no precautions had been taken for their health or accommodation. Instruments of all kinds proper for the working of mines were ostentatiously paraded in public, and put on board the vessels; and the whole set sail for this fabled El Dorado, which was to prove the grave of the greater part of its wretched colonists.

D'Anguesseau, the chancellor, a man of probity and integrity, still lifted his voice against the paper system of Law, and his project of colonization, and was eloquent and prophetic in picturing the evils they were calculated to produce; the private distress and public degradation; the corruption of morals and manners; the triumph of knaves and schemers; the ruin of fortunes, and downfall of families. He was incited more and more to this opposition by the Duke de Noailles, the Minister of Finance, who was jealous of the growing ascendancy of Law over the mind of the regent, but was less honest than the chancellor in his opposition. The regent was excessively annoyed by the difficulties they conjured up in the way of his darling schemes of finance, and the countenance they gave to the opposition of parliament; which body, disgusted more and more with the abuses of the regency, and the system of Law, had gone so far as to carry its remonstrances to the very foot of the throne.

He determined to relieve himself from these two ministers, who, either through honesty or policy, interfered with all his plans. Accordingly, on the 28th of January, 1718, he dismissed the chancellor from office, and exiled him to his estate in the country; and shortly afterward removed the Duke de Noailles from the administration of the finances.

The opposition of parliament to the regent and his measures was carried on with increasing violence. That body aspired to an equal authority with the regent in the administration of affairs, and pretended, by its decree, to suspend an edict of the regency, ordering a new coinage and altering the value of the currency. But its chief hostility was leveled against Law, a foreigner and a heretic, and one who was considered by a majority of the members in the light of a malefactor. In fact, so far was this hostility carried, that secret measures were taken to investigate his malversations, and to collect evidence against him; and it was resolved in parliament that, should the testimony collected justify their suspicions, they would have him seized and brought before them; would give him a brief trial, and, if convicted, would hang him in the courtyard of the palace, and throw open the gates after the execution, that the public might behold his corpse!

Law received intimation of the danger hanging over him, and was in terrible trepidation. He took refuge in the Palais Royal, the residence of the regent, and implored his protection. The regent himself was embarrassed by the sturdy opposition of parliament, which contemplated nothing less than a decree reversing most of his public measures, especially those of finance. His indecision kept Law for a time in an agony of terror and suspense. Finally, by assembling a board of justice, and bringing to his aid the absolute authority of the king, he triumphed over parliament and relieved Law from his dread of being hanged.

The system now went on with flowing sail. The Western or Mississippi Company, being identified with the bank, rapidly increased in power and privileges. One monopoly after another was granted to it; the trade of the Indian seas; the slave trade with Senegal and Guinea; the farming of tobacco; the national coinage, etc. Each new privilege was made a pretext for issuing more bills, and caused an immense advance in the price of stock. At length, on the 4th of December, 1718, the regent gave the establishment the imposing title of "The Royal Bank," and proclaimed that he

had effected the purchase of all the shares, the proceeds of which he had added to its capital. This measure seemed to shock the public feeling more than any other connected with the system, and roused the indignation of parliament. The French nation had been so accustomed to attach an idea of everything noble, lofty, and magnificent to the royal name and person, especially during the stately and sumptuous reign of Louis XIV., that they could not at first tolerate the idea of royalty being in any degree mingled with matters of traffic and finance, and the king being in a manner a banker. It was one of the downward steps, however, by which royalty lost its illusive splendor in France, and became gradually cheapened in the public mind.

Arbitrary measures now began to be taken to force the bills of the bank into artificial currency. On the 27th of December appeared an order in council, forbidding, under severe penalties, the payment of any sum above six hundred livres in gold or silver. This decree rendered bank bills necessary in all transactions of purchase and sale, and called for a new emission. The prohibition was occasionally evaded or opposed; confiscations were the consequence; informers were rewarded, and spies and traitors began to spring up in all the domestic walks of life.

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