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## Uncanny Coincidences

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# *Uncanny Coincidences*

# Notice

## *The Exile*

This text illustrates several aspects of the ambivalent relationships between the United States and France in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by highlighting the most obscure aspects of the French Revolution seen from an American point of view. Undoubtedly, the narrator sides with the representatives of the *ancien régime* presented as the victims of an oppressive, blood-thirsty Terror.<sup>219</sup> “A breath, a whisper for the royal cause, turned the scales of the French goddess . . . The mouth that one moment was stretched with laughter, at the next, ‘grinned horribly’ upon the bloody pike” (170). The narrator scoffs unreservedly at what the Revolutionary has become by asserting that an “[e]quality of rights seemed, in those times, to have produced nothing but an equality of wrongs” (170). Thus the revolutionaries—derogatorily called “agitators” (170)—are seen as indulging in violence for violence’s sake while their indiscriminate efforts were wickedly “directed to the prostration of the old system” (170), just like “the Poissardes [who just] desired blood and not tranquillity” (175). Hence the forced exile of many aristocrats who searched in flight “the only security left” to them and who found shelter in “the asylum of the oppressed” (170). Nevertheless, the popular formula sounds somewhat ironical in a country in which the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798 were passed by the Federalist Congress partly as a protection against presumed French agents of revolutionary propaganda in America, partly against the pro-French Jeffersonians.

However, that French migration to America imposed its rules on the newcomers who often had to abandon their social status so that a noble and an ordinary person may no longer be distinguished one from the other: “The valet who found that our sympathy was graduated by the scale of rank, assumed the name and bearing of his master. His master often finding it impossible to establish his own iden-

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<sup>219</sup> During the reign of Terror (1793-1794), thousands of presumed enemies of the State were executed.

tity, quietly took up with his own family name, abandoned its titles” (171). In this context, intermarriages still contributed to the confusion when “[t]he lovely Charlotte Le Blanc had well nigh given her hand and fortune to a well dressed lacquey ; and our unfortunate friend Count Fortbien, sans credit at his lodging house, accepted with gratitude the heart and home of a rustic heiress” (171). The traditional boundaries between the rich and the poor, the noble and the commoner, dissolved in the American social melting pot.

Once again, the reader’s entrance into the field of fiction is indicated in the text by a voyage on board a boat, namely here “along the verdant shores and beautiful islands of the Oneida” (172). There, the very francophile Mr. L discovers a French family of recently arrived aristocrats who live “in the wilds of America” (172) in a roughly built cabin, “removed . . . from the comforts and enjoyments of social life” (173). Their unrefined lodgings and rudimentary equipment evoke the standard of living of pioneers on the Frontier: “a few chairs, a few articles for the table, and a rough couch on which were carelessly thrown the skins of some wild animals” (174); we also note the absence of real furniture replaced by “[a] few trunks, secured by heavy brazen bands . . . arranged about the room” (174), not unlike in a pioneer’s log cabin. Once in America, the French aristocrats had to give up the refined lifestyle they enjoyed before the Revolution when they were “so happy and so gay” and start a new simple life, “happy in [their] mutual passion” (176) and waiting for a chance to improve their condition. This new start from scratch parallels the experience and the hopes of many emigrants who came to America to find a better life, and, in accordance with the American Dream, “fortune . . . at last smiled upon the interesting exiles” and after some time, they were “once again in affluence and ease” (178).

What makes the story told remarkable is not only the peregrinations of the French couple but the fact that they meet their savior three times as if by pure chance, a series of coincidences which is structural to the story. They meet for the first time in Paris, on the occasion of the countess’s birthday “in which [Mr L.] participated so largely as [her] father’s American friend” (173), then on the Oneida island, and later on one more time in Paris, when they were well-off

again, already almost Americanized, not by the language they use—they still speak French—but by their friends—among whom “*notre ami Livingston*”—and by their sympathy for a man whom the countess relevantly calls “notre Fulton” and “our countryman” (177), showing that she considers him as a compatriot. It can be concluded that the Hudson valley should exert some magical influence on those who dare abandon civilisation for its witching wilds: Rip van Winkle spends happy days in old age, rid of his termagant wife, while ruined aristocrats go from rags to riches again; this part of America is definitely a place in which dreams easily come true.

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### *The Snow Pile*

This story, written by the fashionable Maine author of dime novels Joseph Holt Ingraham (1809-1860),<sup>220</sup> would be of no particularly literary interest if it did not reveal by the recurrent use of clichés some facets of the mentalities and popular imagery of his time. The style of his prose is classic but the series of episodes composing the narrative lacks realism and sounds rather artificial, as the author only seems to indulge in the description of implausible successive sketches leading to an unoriginal plain denouement that appears, however, as the outcome of an unforeseen coincidence. In fact, Poe’s appreciation of Ingraham’s style in his widely-read novel *Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf* (1836) could aptly be applied to “The Snow Pile”:

Upon the whole, we could wish that men possessing the weight of talent and character belonging to Professor Ingraham, would either think it necessary to bestow a somewhat greater degree of labor and attention upon the composition of their novels, or otherwise, would *not think it necessary to compose them at all*.<sup>221</sup>

Interestingly, it is one of the rare pieces published in the *American Monthly Magazine* which is explicitly signed by its author, which may be explained by the notoriety of the signer. However, the

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<sup>220</sup> See *supra* note 179.

<sup>221</sup> Edgar Allan Poe, “A Review of Ingraham’s *Lafitte*”, *The Southern Literary Messenger*, August 1836.

tone of the narrative is pleasant and gay though not devoid of some of the serious issues and stereotypes which agitated the American society of the time. The episode of the West Indian sailor, for instance, reveals Ingraham's prejudiced attitude toward colored persons, a racially biased position clearly exposed in some of his other works such as *The Southwest, By a Yankee* (1835) in which he advocates the upholding of slavery as indispensable to the stability of the Union. In the same way, Ingraham's deeply-held conservatism makes his protagonist a paternalistic, whimsical and domineering master of his servant John, even if their relationships are presented in a humorous way sometimes turning the tone of the story into that of a farce. Similarly, the caricatural happy ending shows the protagonist in his domestic happiness with "[t]hat lovely young matron sitting sewing opposite [him], while [he is] writing" (188), the female character's personality being eclipsed both by that of her new husband and that of the "old gentleman, sitting by the fire reading a newspaper" (188), namely her father who lives under the same roof.

Nevertheless, the author spices his text here and there with zesty remarks which undeniably make it more comestible. For instance, the narrator insists on the joyous mood in which he is plunged by the perambulation of young women "in light dresses and sylphide forms," noticing impishly that it was "as if there was something improper in their appearing out in such undress, as if some modest article of apparel was forgotten" (180), thus suggesting to the reader that their outfit is slightly indecent. More subtly, the snow pile which "lay like an incubus on [his] thoughts" (181) alludes to disturbing sexual fantasies, and so does the young boy, hit in his left eye by a snowball, who "went off limping as if the hurt had been in his heel instead of his head" (182), a behavior symbolically referring to the lame Oedipus who gouged his eyes out. Significantly, the snow, which the protagonist keeps in a bottle of Cologne, as if it were holy water, miraculously brings back the young lady to life and cures the narrator from his rheumatisms, so that he no longer needs his cane: emotionally speaking, he is no longer a cripple and has gained the right to found a family under the tutelary protection of his father-in-law, a conventional ending which testifies—almost psycho-analytically—of a restored order in conformity with the Law. Nothing poten-

tially subversive then can be found in Ingraham's prose, but a good solid conservatism tinged with a few discretely spicy details which probably seduced to a fairly large extent the audience of the *American Monthly Magazine*.

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### *Captain Thompson*

The title of this text sounds like that of an adventure at sea. However, the story is staged on dry land, even if it comes to an end in the harbor of Boston. The protagonists are stereotypes of nineteenth-century Romantic literature: a young student whose lonely heart is immediately seduced by Julia, a young beautiful mysterious woman, echoing so many other enamored students such as Irving's Wolfgang in "The Adventure of the German Student"<sup>222</sup> or Giovanni Guasconti's in Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter".<sup>223</sup> However, even if the life of the romantic hero is eventually and conventionally threatened by the consequences of his devotion for a forbidden woman, the author tackles the topic with an unexpected touch of humor which defuses the dramatic effect of the situation: "My heart was grieved for Mrs. Thompson; but if I was thrown down to her from a fourth-story window, I reflected that I should probably be in no situation to express my sympathy. It was philosophy to retreat" (194).

Like Goethe's Werther,<sup>224</sup> and not more confident in the future of his love life, the protagonist is a devotee of Nature, worshiping "every striking tree and sheltered moss-knoll from its base to its summit" (189) and finding in the countryside the reflection of his mood. However, his feelings for the young woman are superficial and stem largely, beyond their "elective sympathies," from the romantic atmosphere and the cosy intimacy of the stage-coach: "Travelling after twilight, I have always remarked, makes one very affectionate. . . . I can answer for its effect upon myself and Mrs. Thompson" (191).

The ephemeral romance comes to a sudden end with their arrival at the Marlborough Hotel when Julia "grew very amiably anxious

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<sup>222</sup> From *Tales of a Traveller* (1824).

<sup>223</sup> First published in 1844 in *The Democratic Review*.

<sup>224</sup> Goethe, *The Sorrows of Young Werther* (1774).

about [her husband] as the coach rattled on to Washington Street” (191). Then follows a series of coincidences which pure chance can hardly explain. First, as expected, a Captain Thompson does stay at the hotel, but his rough appearance and wild demeanor do not correspond to Julia’s and the protagonist’s anticipation. Somewhat bewildered by the presumed husband’s stunning behavior, the young student, having realised with some embarrassment that the mother and his child now “were decidedly on [his] hands” (194), is quickly relieved by the appearance at the stage-house of “another Captain Thompson, a stout, handsome fellow, who took ‘Mrs. Thompson and little John’ into his arms at one clasp, and kissed them— as one might be supposed to do after a three years’ voyage” (194).

Apparently, all is well that ends well, but the mystery is not entirely solved: first, no explanation is provided for the fact that Julia’s husband does not stay in the Marlborough Hotel as expected; secondly, there *is* a Captain Thompson at the Marlborough Hotel, so that Julia’s information eventually proves to be reliable; thirdly, the two Captain Thompsons share characteristics which make them uncannily alike: they have the same name, both of them are sailors, with the identical rank of captain, and they were supposed to stay at the same hotel. Last but not least, it seems that the sudden arrival of Mrs Thompson and her son is plausible enough for the presumed bachelor to make him cowardly and hurriedly go “to sea very suddenly,” which confirms the rumor according to which he had “a wife and child whom he had deserted in some foreign port” (194). The contrast and similarities of the two Captain Thompsons make one the Doppelgänger of the other, one nice and faithful, and his mirror image dangerous and deceitful, so that the narrative, told in the tone of an anecdote until it becomes more gloomy and evokes some of Poe’s stories,<sup>225</sup> verges unexpectedly on the supernatural genre in its conclusion.




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<sup>225</sup> In particular the pangs of another deadly rivalry in “William Wilson” (1839).



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THE EXILE.

“I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.”<sup>226</sup>

THE French Revolution<sup>227</sup> threw upon our shores many interesting varieties of the French character. Equality of rights seemed, in those times, to have produced nothing but an equality of wrongs. Emigration was the only remedy that offered to the possessors of light heels and heavy hearts, and, while the train of exiles was swelled by dukes and princes of the blood, it was often marshalled along by valets and dancing masters. Nor was this medley unnatural. The efforts of the agitators were directed to the prostration of the old system, whether upheld in the drawing rooms of Versailles,<sup>228</sup> or suspected in the coffee houses of Paris. Thus it often happened, that the humblest citizens, whose opinions were favorable to the ancient state of things, became, from that circumstance, the objects of proscription. A breath, a whisper for the royal cause, turned the scales of the French goddess, while the disturber of their equipoise felt at the same instant the point of her sword pressing rudely against his breast. A thoughtless expression, often gave a man the most fatal celebrity. The mouth that one moment was stretched with laughter, at the next, ‘grinned horribly’ upon the bloody pike. Flight was therefore the only security left the unfortunate, and ‘the asylum of the oppressed’<sup>229</sup> received its due proportion of the unhappy. Once safe

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<sup>226</sup> “Yet by your gracious patience, / I will a round unvarnished tale deliver.” William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *Othello* (Act I, scene 3).

<sup>227</sup> The French Revolution started in 1789 with the storming of the Bastille fortress. Soon, the abolition of privileges by the Assembly, together with strict anti-religious measures, led princes and nobles to flee abroad.

<sup>228</sup> Built by King Louis XIV in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the Palace of Versailles was the residence of King Louis XVI and the royal family. On October 5, 1789, a crowd marched to Versailles and brought the king and queen back to the Tuileries palace in Paris.

<sup>229</sup> Although he did not coin the phrase, these words were used by another revolutionary on the eve of the American Revolution: as Joseph Warren put it in his *Boston Massacre Oration*

however, and those who had escaped the scene of tragedy, were soon figuring in broad farce or pleasant comedy. The valet who found that our sympathy was graduated by the scale of rank, assumed the name and bearing of his master. His master often finding it impossible to establish his own identity, quietly took up with his own family name, abandoned its titles, and retreated from further observation. Many ludicrous scenes, many pathetic incidents attended this bouleversement. When, as we sometimes thought, our tears were flowing for the last of a noble line, we afterwards discovered that they had fallen for the woes of a wandering fiddler ; and, on the other hand, while we were undergoing the process of a course of French lessons, it was perhaps an Orleans<sup>230</sup> or Dubreisl who was teaching us the story of Telemachus.<sup>231</sup> The lovely Charlotte Le Blanc had well nigh given her hand and fortune to a well dressed lacquey ; and our unfortunate friend Count Fortbien, sans credit at his lodging house, accepted with gratitude the heart and home of a rustic heiress.

The incidents we are about to relate are rather of a simpler character than usual, and yet they may amuse those readers, even in this age of startling romance, who retain some quiet corner of their hearts for sympathy and feeling.

As is well known, the Oneida lake<sup>232</sup> was in the direct route of communication between Schenectada<sup>233</sup> and the western waters. The adoption of the policy of the immortal Clinton,<sup>234</sup> and the substitution of a safe and artificial navigation,<sup>235</sup> have almost effaced the recollection of the former tedious mode of travelling. It was a great relief however to the boatmen, when the sinuosities of Wood Creek<sup>236</sup> were

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(5 March 1772) : “May our land be a land of liberty, the seat of virtue, the asylum of the oppressed, a name and a praise in the whole earth.”

<sup>230</sup> The name of two branches of the royal family, the house of Valois-Orléans and that of Bourbon-Orléans.

<sup>231</sup> The son of Odysseus. Telemachus is the subject of François Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses* (1699), a stinging criticism of the French monarchy.

<sup>232</sup> A lake of central New York, northeast of Syracuse.

<sup>233</sup> Schenectady, founded in 1661, is situated on the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal.

<sup>234</sup> George Clinton (1739–1812) was vice-president of the United States under Jefferson and Madison (1804–1812). In 1777, he was elected the first governor of New York and was seen as the father of New York State. During his long governorship (22 years), he settled Native troubles and initiated the building of canals. A strong anti-federalist, he was succeeded by his political opponent John Jay in 1795.

<sup>235</sup> The construction of the Erie Canal started in 1817 and was pursued in the 1820s.

<sup>236</sup> A river on which the city of Rome, NY, is built. The city was of strategic importance during the French and Indian Wars and during the American Revolution: it was the starting

safely threaded, and the Lake opened upon their view. All was pleasure, when the merry breeze relieved the crews from labor, and carried them cheerily along the verdant shores and beautiful islands of the Oheida.

At the time of our tale, a neat cabin had risen as if by magic upon one of these oases of the watery waste. Its inmates became at once the objects of speculation and curiosity. A light canoe always lying at the waters edge indicated the fact that its owner was in correspondence with the inhabitants of the main shore, and the shrill voice of a hound was often heard, waking the sleeping echoes in the distant woodlands. Some navigators had sailed, accidentally or designedly, we know not which, so near the island as to have observed much more. They had seen a young woman of surpassing beauty, and habited in a foreign garb, laboring with her own hands, in a little garden. They also reported that the lively notes of a violin were not unfrequently heard by those who had passed by at the hour of night-fall. These circumstances came to the knowledge of a gentleman whose business had called him in that direction, and by their singularity they induced him to pay the island an immediate visit. Motives, honorable to his heart, prompted him to offer his services to its occupants, if upon examination he should find that they were worthy of that attention. Leaving his bateau<sup>237</sup> in a neighboring cove, he went off alone in a skiff and landed at a short distance from the door of the cabin. The faithful hound gave tongue as he approached, and, as he pleasantly described it—“with a *foreign accent*.” In an instant, a youthful looking man, came out with a fusee<sup>238</sup> in his hand, surprise painted on every feature. A female more beautiful than words can describe, rushed after him and caught his arm. “Oh,” said the islander, scanning his visiter from head to foot—“*Mille pardons ! Monsieur, nos malheurs, ils nous ont rendus craintifs.*”<sup>239</sup>—“*En vérité,*” added the lady, with a smile playing about her mouth, “*c’est ma faute Monsieur. Je suis sa gardienne*”—“*Gardienne tutélaire ! Madame !*”<sup>240</sup> replied the stranger, “And I must beg pardon,” he continued, in

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point of the construction of the Erie Canal.

<sup>237</sup> A flat-bottomed, clumsy boat used on lakes and rivers.

<sup>238</sup> A flintlock gun, or given the context, a misspelling for the French “fusil”(gun).

<sup>239</sup> The French for “So sorry, sir, but our shyness is due to misfortune.” (our translation).

<sup>240</sup> The French for “To tell the truth, it’s my fault, sir. I’m her guardian.”—“A tutelary guardian, madam!” (our translation).

French, “for interrupting the quiet of your charming retreat. I am fearful, removed as you are from the comforts and enjoyments of social life, that you have sometimes regretted the pleasures of former days. Can I be of *any* service to you ? I am Mr. L—of C—and nothing would give me greater pleasure than to be useful to you. Would to God, I could be as fortunate in tracing the footsteps of one family who since their arrival in America, have completely evaded my pursuit. But pray, whom have I the honor of addressing ?” The young man seized his hand, and with the air of one accustomed to courts, presented him gaily to the lady, as, “La Dame du Lac,<sup>241</sup> mais autrefois, la Comtesse Genevieve St. Hilary !” “Heavens !” cried the stranger, “can it be possible ? Do I indeed behold the daughter of Clairmont ? Is it in the wilds of America, that the Belle of the Quartier St. Germain<sup>242</sup> holds her levée ?” The lady and her husband looked astonished. “Do you not remember me ?” said the gentleman ; “have you forgotten the Champs Elysées<sup>243</sup> and the fête given in honor of your birth day in which I participated so largely as your father’s American friend. Thank Heaven I have found you at last, and yet how strange are the circumstances that have brought me hither.”

The lady seemed awakened from a dream, but instead of returning the cordial pressure of the stranger’s hand, threw herself upon her husband’s arm and wept. “*Ah mes amis !*” cried she, “*Ah chère France ! Adieu, Je ne te reverrai (sic) jamais—tout est perdu—tout est perdu !*”<sup>244</sup> The husband while he endeavored to soothe her distress, overwhelmed the stranger with his thanks, and the latter “albeit unused to the melting mood,”<sup>245</sup> found the plaintive tones of her voice, and the unaffected expressions of her grief followed in spite of herself by some natural tears. At this moment the awkwardness of the scene was relieved by the young man’s entreaties, that he would accompany them to the hut. As they moved onward, the stranger in-

<sup>241</sup> In the Arthurian legend, the Lady of the Lake gave Arthur his sword, Excalibur. She raised Lancelot and kept Merlin captive thanks to her magical powers.

<sup>242</sup> During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, this historical fashionable district of Paris was inhabited by the gentry who resided in sumptuous mansions and town houses.

<sup>243</sup> So called since 1694. In the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, it was already a very fashionable place, stretching between the Place de la Concorde, built in the 1700’s and on which stood a guillotine during the French Revolution, and the Arc de Triomphe built by Napoleon I in 1806 and completed in 1836.

<sup>244</sup> The French for “Ah, my friends, Ah dear France! Farewell, I’ll never see you again—all is lost!” (our translation).

<sup>245</sup> William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *Othello* (Act V. Scene 2).

timated as delicately as possible his plan for their immediate removal. He enlarged upon his obligations of gratitude to the father of the fair Genevieve, at the same time representing the necessity of their accepting his offers, as a matter not admitting even a discussion. The conversation was for a time interrupted as they reached the door of the cabin.

The Countess, stepping lightly before, received them as they entered. "I am ashamed," said she, "to have behaved so rudely ; but here I throw away my griefs, to play the lady mistress of this hotel. You are welcome, my dear friend, although our mansion is somewhat straightened since you were last a guest of the family. But sit down, and give me an account of the strange occurrence which brings you to the Island. *Quel miracle vous amène donc ici, Monsieur.*"<sup>246</sup>

Mr. L. then informed them of the nature of the business which had led him so far into the interior, and related the stories, he had heard on his way up the lake of which they were the unconscious subjects. He expressed his happiness at having found the very persons about whom he had been so deeply solicitous, and ended by offering them an asylum under his own roof, and the society of a family who would be devoted to their comfort.

During the impressive silence which followed his remarks, the visiter had leisure to look about him. The cabin was of the rudest materials. It was evidently the work of its inmates, with the exception of a rude window and an ill constructed chimney, which some artizans from the neighboring settlement had doubtless fabricated. The furniture consisted of a few chairs, a few articles for the table, and a rough couch on which were carelessly thrown the skins of some wild animals. A genuine cremona hung on a nail near the chimney, and a cracked toilet glass over a tottering stand in the corner. The eye was almost instantly attracted from these, however, to a small box of inlaid satin wood, which stood near the glass, half opened, and was resplendent with jewels of gold and bizarreries of silver. A few trunks, secured by heavy brazen bands, were arranged about the room and completed its brief inventory, save that a silver tankard curiously chased, and, like those sometimes seen in pictures of still life, stood upon the hearth keeping company with a tin cup filled

<sup>246</sup> The French for "It's a miracle to meet you down here, sir" (our translation).

with boiling milk, and by its fragrant odor proclaiming the intended refreshment of *Café au lait*.

“You look about you,” said the Count, “and well you may. Yet we have resided here for many months, and scarce know how we reached this lonely spot. The treachery of our countrymen, and the horrid crimes we have witnessed have almost led us to doubt the existence of social virtue. These alone have driven us to solitude. But you shall know all. It is to a friend that we commit the story of our wanderings.

“My Genevieve had scarce made me happy with her hand, ere the frightful scenes of the revolution commenced. We flattered ourselves that the concessions of the King to the people would lead to mutual confidence, but the Poissardes<sup>247</sup> desired blood and not tranquillity. The father of the Countess did not live to witness its greatest atrocities. Happily he did not anticipate the ruin of his estates, or the sufferings of his daughter. We retreated as soon as possible to the western coast, where I had a retired country seat, but in our haste the most valuable of our personal effects were left behind. Indeed the attempt to convert them to money would have led to our detection, and the assignats<sup>248</sup> which we should have received in exchange were already worthless even in the eyes of their inventors. That casket is all we can call our own, and its value has been greatly diminished, by its having been for a long time our only resource. With that we fled to England, in a small fishing vessel which hovered on the coast for the purpose of speculation. At Cowes<sup>249</sup> where we landed, a Dutch vessel touched on her passage to New York. In her we embarked for America. On our arrival we found so many of our countrymen, that our means would not allow us the pleasant relief of even occasional intercourse. We departed with the intention of penetrating to some French settlement in the West, where we might remain until the storm had blown over. Genevieve’s health permitted no such effort. When we had travelled thus far, this island attracted us by its beauty, and here we resolved to found a new Arcadia.<sup>250</sup> Occasionally I visit the nearest settlement, to part with

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<sup>247</sup> The Poissardes were Parisian market women who took part in the revolutionary uprising.

<sup>248</sup> Paper currency issued by the French revolutionary government, guaranteed by the confiscation of lands.

<sup>249</sup> A seaport town on the Isle of Wight, near Southampton, UK.

<sup>250</sup> In this region of ancient Greece, the inhabitants lived simple secluded lives.

such ornaments as are least valuable, and I regret the necessity of my absence more than the evil of our wants. In our little garden we work with our own hands, and when the weather is fine we roam over the island, or fish. That violin is our evening amusement. Genevieve's voice responds to its accompaniment, and even at my unskilful touch it awakens recollections which for a moment restore us to our home and country.

"I have been fearful that the loneliness of our situation, and our solitary mode of life, might sometimes lead to suspicions, unfavorable to our characters. We are much nearer the frontier than we at first supposed, but here we have lived, Genevieve and I, happy in our mutual passion, and waiting that change in the affairs of our government, which will recall us from poverty and exile to the saloons and circles where we were once so happy and so gay."

When he had finished, the visiter seized the hand of the Countess, and urged her not to delay their departure for a moment. "The hospitality I have shared in your father's house shall in all but its splendor, be returned in mine. Come, my batteau (sic) is close at hand. We ourselves can easily remove the most valuable of your goods. Come, on the banks of the Hudson you shall await the return of tranquillity and the restoration of your fortune."

We leave to the imaginations of our readers the surprise and gratitude which manifested themselves in the conduct of the youthful pair. After having made the obvious objections which delicacy and the fear of a too easy compliance naturally inspired, they accepted the invitation and prepared to bid adieu to the island.

In a few minutes they embarked in the skiff, and in the canoe which was fastened to it behind, the hound, the cremona, and the tankard were placed together. Every other article of furniture was abandoned to its fate.

The island was so left behind them, and its identity gradually lost in the surrounding scenery. The suddenness of this arrangement, as it afterwards turned out, gave rise to many conjectures among the residents on the lake shore. That the islanders had been murdered and thrown into the lake, was believed by some—that they had run away, was as firmly credited by others. At first, the cabin was not molested by the superstitious boatmen, who saw, as they fancied, an occasional light flitting along the beach, or heard the voice of the hound

in the murmuring night wind, or the tones of the violin uttering sounds most musical and melancholy. The dealer in jewelry, who, by virtue of his science as a blacksmith, thought silver and gold high, at double the price of old iron, and had made many a good bargain out of the Countess's jewels, cursed his stars when he heard they were gone ; and never ceased lamenting that he had not made his fortune out of "that 'ere bloody Frenchman."

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Time rolled on, and the strange events which had convulsed Europe were succeeded by comparative repose. One morning in the year 1803,<sup>251</sup> I was on the Pont Neuf<sup>252</sup> at Paris viewing the crowd which constantly assembles there, venders of nicknackery and lemonade and customers who resort thither to purchase the small wares of itinerant industry. A number of Americans had met there by appointment to witness an experiment, since crowned with splendid success in our own country. Fulton,<sup>253</sup> the protégé of Barlow,<sup>254</sup> was about making a second attempt to navigate the Seine with a small steamboat. It was presently seen coming along with tolerable speed. We were all proud of the ingenuity of our countryman, and were intently gazing upon this specimen of his talent, when a dashing equipage came rolling along, and drew up near the place where we stood.

"*Eh bien,*" said a lovely woman in the prime of life, who was seated on the back seat of the carriage," *Voilà! moncher, voilà le bateau a vapeur de notre Fulton—cela est etonnant, n'est ce pas moncher* (sic)."<sup>255</sup>

<sup>251</sup> In January 1803, during the first Jefferson administration (1801-1805), Monroe and Livingston sail for Paris to complete the Louisiana Purchase. Napoleon Bonaparte, autocratic head of the Consulate (1799-1804) had declared that France had finished with the "romance of the revolution."

<sup>252</sup> The Pont Neuf, built by King Henri IV across the river Seine, is the oldest standing Parisian bridge.

<sup>253</sup> Robert Fulton (1765-1815), American painter and engineer who built an experimental steam-operated vessel that sailed on the Seine (1803) in Paris. He later launched another steamboat—the *Clermont*—that sailed on the Hudson River between New York and Albany (1808).

<sup>254</sup> Joel Barlow (1754-1812), an American writer and diplomat. His *Letter to the National Convention of France* (1792) in which he advocated advanced revolutionary democratic principles earned him French citizenship.

<sup>255</sup> The French for "Well, my dear, here is the steamboat of our Fulton—how surprising, isn't it, my dear?" (our translation).



“*Oui, Oui,*” replied the gentleman who sat next her, and on whose breast a red ribbon was displayed, though unostentatiously, “*Oui ma Genevieve, mais où est notre ami Livingston* <sup>256</sup> ?”<sup>257</sup>

I started as if awakened from a dream. I looked intensely anxious, to catch the lady’s eye. I succeeded. I marked its sparkling joy, and in an instant I had left my wondering companions and was at the side of the fair Genevieve, and the Count St. Hilary. Our mutual adventures were quickly related. I learned that fortune had at last smiled upon the interesting exiles. They were once again in affluence and ease, and as one who had known them intimately on the banks of the Hudson, I was immediately the object of their marked attentions and unvarying friendship. I was soon, very soon, although quite an undistinguished traveller, in the enjoyment of a brilliant society, and the received guest in a circle never, never to be forgotten.

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<sup>256</sup> Robert R. Livingston (1746–1813). In 1801, he was appointed Minister to France by Jefferson; there he conducted negotiations leading to the Louisiana Purchase. He was responsible for steamboat operations in New York waters and exploited with Fulton the first American steamboat to be commercially profitable.

<sup>257</sup> The French for “Oh it is, Genevieve, but where is our friend Livingston?” (our translation).

THE  
AMERICAN MONTHLY MAGAZINE.

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JULY, 1838. (vol. XII)

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THE SNOW PILE.

BY PROFESSOR INGRAHAM,<sup>258</sup>

AUTHOR OF "THE SOUTH-WEST," "LAFITTE," "BURTON" &c.

YOUNG Spring, with her opening buds, her springing grass, her soft south wind, and singing birds, was fast subduing stern old Winter. His icy bosom, all unused to the melting mood, dissolved beneath her warm glances and showers of April tears. I had been confined to my chamber through the long winter by a tedious illness ; but when the sun, with summery warmth, shone through my window, I grew rapidly better. How grateful to the convalescent is the mild hue of the Spring sky, the tender green of the grass and young leaves, and the smiling face of nature awaking from its wintry sleep !

When my chair was first drawn to the window, and I looked up and down the streets thronged with passengers and gay equipages, I felt as if I had come into a new world. How happy every thing and every body looked ! All seemed gladness, and my own heart thrilled with a new and strange delight.

I am, or rather was at the period to which I allude, a bachelor, on the verge of thirty-five. My abode was in the heart of the city, at a corner where four streets met. Opposite my window was a row of stately elms and young locusts, the brown of their myriad buds just

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<sup>258</sup> Born in Portland, Maine, Rev. Joseph Holt Ingraham (1809-1860) became a teacher in Jefferson College, Washington, Mississippi (1830) where he started to write. He published *The Southwest, by a Yankee* (1835); *Lafitte, the Pirate of the Gulf* (1836), the first of his novels which brought him some fame; and *Burton* (1838). After having written some eighty books of average quality, "Professor" Ingraham started a religious career as a deacon in Trinity Episcopal Church at Natchez in 1851, then as an Episcopal priest in various localities of Mississippi. He continued to write dime novels until he died in an accident at the age of fifty-one.

tipped with green, so that the branches of the trees looked as if studded with emeralds. Along the outer edge of the opposite side-walk Spring had just commenced working a border of new grass ; Ladies had laid aside, or rather, chrysalis-like, come out of, their unsightly cloaks, and tripped along the pave in light dresses and sylphide forms. How odd to see slender waists in the streets after they have been so long concealed ! It seems, when we first view the fair creatures, as if there was something improper in their appearing out in such undress, as if some modest article of apparel was forgotten ; and it is some days before one is quite reconciled to the propriety of the thing.

Notwithstanding these signs of Spring that every where met my eyes as I gazed out of my window, there was one object amid all the sunny cheerfulness that chilled my heart, and cast a wintry veil over all. This was a huge bank of snow lying against the curb-stone directly beneath my window. The winter had been severe, and in the middle of April there was a heavy fall of snow. My man John, in shovelling it from the walk, had formed a pile four feet in depth before the door ; and after the snow had disappeared from the streets, from the fields, and from the distant hills, and the trees had put forth their leaves, that pile obstinately resisted the warmth of the sun and the softening influences of the rain. From my bed, I had seen through the upper lights of my window the mild deep blue of the sky, and felt the cheering presence of the April sun as it shone in a bright glowing beam through the half-opened shutter, and lay like a golden belt along the carpet. How different the sunlight of summer and winter even to the eye ! how readily does the invalid recognize and welcome the first smile of Spring in the warm glow of the returning sun ! I should not have known winter had departed if I had not seen the green tops of the budding trees, and had not been told that Spring had come—Spring, that haven of hope for the suffering valetudinarian ! They had told me, too, that the snow was gone from the earth.

I was wheeled up to the window, and the bound of the heart with which I looked forth on the gay and moving scene, was suddenly stopped as my eyes rested on that bank of snow. I sighed, and threw myself backwards in my chair in the bitterness of disappointment. In that heap, to my excited imagination lay buried the body of the dead Winter ! Although I soon became in some degree accustomed to it, I

nervously watched its gradual disappearance. I marked the scarcely melting away of its edges, the slow diminution of its height. It seemed to me that it would never dissolve. I at length became so interested in its disappearance, that I sat for hours together with my eyes intensely fixed upon it, and forgetful of every thing else. It lay like an incubus on my thoughts. It was a walking nightmare to my mind's repose. If a passing wheel bore a portion of it away clinging to its spokes, I involuntarily clapped my hands. If a vagrant school-boy abstracted a handful to make up into a snowball, I blessed him in my heart. If a cloud passed over the sun, I impatiently watched its slow passage across its disk, and with jealous impatience noted every shadow that obstructed, for a moment his melting beams.

Three days passed in this manner, and the snow pile had diminished but one third. Its shape, I remember, was an irregular oval about nine feet in length, five in breadth, and two deep in the centre, the depth gradually lessening to the edges, which were thin and icy.

The fourth morning came, and the buds of the locust trees had burst into leaves ; a robin had begun his nest on the branch of an elm, and the almanac told me it was the first day of May. Yet there lay Winter in the lap of Spring. I formed an instant resolution. The tassel of the bell-rope was within my reach, I leaned forward and pulled it with an emphasis.

John entered in haste, with alarm depicted on his rubicund visage.

“John !”

“Sir.”

“Take a shovel, and remove that eternal snow bank from the street.”

“Bank ?”

“Yes, bank. Snow bank ! A more hideous monster than the great Hydra-Bank to my eyes.<sup>259</sup> Remove it, I say.”

“Yes, Sir.”

John departed, and I gazed from the window on the pile of snow with a sort of savage triumph and relief of mind I had not experienced for some days. While I was anticipating its demolition by the muscular arm of my man John, two school-boys, of unequal size

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<sup>259</sup> An allusion to the monstrous hydra killed by Heracles, supposedly living on the island of Hydra in Greece.

and years, came in sight. As they got beneath my window, the stouter began to bully the smaller boy. I am naturally humane ; a lover of justice and hater of tyranny. My feelings forthwith became enlisted for the weaker lad, who showed proper spirit ; and so long as tongues continued to be the only weapons, he rather had the better of his adversary. At length the big boy, stung by a biting sarcasm, gave him a nice push, and sent him spinning across the trottoir into the snow. It broke his fall, which else would have been violent, and I blessed the snow pile for his sake. But, so far as my sympathies with the little fellow were concerned, I soon had additional cause to bless it.

No sooner did the brave little lad touch the snow than he grasped both hands full, and hastily and skilfully patted it into a hard round ball the size of a three-pounder ; then taking sure aim at his lubberly tormentor, who stood haw-hawing at his victory, he threw, and hit him fairly in the left eye. His tune was now changed to a yell of pain, and clapping both of his huge dirty paws to his extinguished orb, he went off limping as if the hurt had been in his heel instead of his head. The victorious little fellow compressed his lips with a decided air, gave an emphatic nod, and glanced at my window with a sort of apologetic look that meant “he deserves it, Sir, if it does put his eye out !”

“So he does, my brave lad,” said I, in a look that he understood to mean as much ; “that snow pile has done thee good service.” At this moment John, who is somewhat deliberate in his movements made appearance from the basement-front, shovel in hand and devastation in his eye. I rapped at the window as he prepared to attack the bank, and for that gallant boy’s sake the snow pile remained inviolate for that day.

With the ensuing morning I had well-nigh forgotten the incident of the snow-ball, and the summary punishment of tyranny that I had witnessed, and which had afforded me so much gratification. The first thing that met my eyes after I took my usual place at the window, was the snow bank, giving the lie-direct to gentle Spring, who each day laid the flecks of green thicker and darker on the tree-tops, and I resolutely determined to demolish without delay that last vestige of winter, and banish a sight so full of December associations.

With hasty zeal I laid a hand on each arm of my easy-chair, and half rose to reach the bell-rope, when I saw a very pretty boarding-school girl, in cottage bonnet and pantalets,<sup>260</sup> and neat white apron, with the roses of fifteen summers in her cheeks, in crossing the street, driven by a rude equestrian from the flags into the mud. My ire was roused (for my feelings are readily enlisted for the gentler sex), and I forgot the bell to turn and anathematise the careless horseman. Although in two or three light steps she safely gained the sidewalk, I saw that she had grievously mudded one of her nicely-fitting Cinderillas.<sup>261</sup> She stopped on the curb-stone, looked down at her soiled slipper, shook her head, and seemed to be very much distressed. She was neatly and tidily dressed after that simple and becoming manner peculiar to school-girls. It was Saturday, and she was doubtless going a visiting ; and to be made such a figure of by a lubberly tyro in horsemanship, was not a little annoying. I sympathised with her from the bottom of my heart. She was very young, very pretty, and in very great trouble. I could have taken my cambric pocket-handkerchief and, on bended knee, with it removed the offensive soil. She surveyed her little foot all about. The mud came within a quarter of an inch of the top of her shoe, and she was (as by her perplexed looks she evidently herself thought) in too sad a plight to walk the street. She essayed to scrape off the tenacious earth on the outer angle of the curb stone, but this operation only left it in frightful streaks.

“Dear me ! What shall I do ?” I could almost hear her say to herself ; and then, with a very prolonged and mortified air, she looked up the street and down the street ; glanced over at the opposite windows and those above her head, and at last caught my eye. I had been waiting for this, and eagerly pointed to the snow pile.

She glanced up her dark eyes full of thanks ; and in two minutes, with the aid of a lump of snow, and by rubbing her foot on the pile, now on this side and now on that, she cleaned her snug little slipper till it outshone its unsoiled fellow. Then looking me a heart full of gratitude, she tripped on her way rejoicing. For her sake the snow pile remained inviolate another day.

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<sup>260</sup> Underpants extending below the skirt, worn by women in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>261</sup> Slippers.

Forgetfulnesses of the yesterday's courtesy came with the next morning, and there remained, as I gazed from the window, only the consciousness of my annoyance. The voice of Spring came to my ears in every sound, and the winds murmured by laden with the odors of May flowers. But the snow pile fixed my eyes like a spell. There is a kind of fascination in hideous objects, which, while the heart revolts, irresistibly draws the eye. In vain I resolutely turned my eyes away from it, and strove to forget it in the contemplation of the fleecy cloud, which Winter has not ; of the summer-blue of the sky ; of the umbrageous foliage ; the bright streets and their lively pageant ; but scarcely were they averted, before they flew back again as if it moved by a watch-spring.

“That eternal snow bank !” I exclaimed, as my eyes, for the fiftieth time averted, again rested on it ; “will it never melt ?”

I reached the bell rope, and rung a quarter of an hour without ceasing. I had just regained my chair, when John came into the room as if he had been ejected from a catapult.

“Good Lord, Sir ! I am here, Sir.”

“That pile of snow, John !”

“Yes, Sir.”

“I shall have no peace till it is scattered to the four winds.”

“The shovel is below, Sir, shall I —“

“Do, John, do. Spread it on the street. If the sun wont melt it, then carry it in baskets to the kitchen and boil it. It might as well be winter all the time for what I see,” grumbled I as John departed.

I had hardly issued, for the third time, this mandate, and turned to the window to take a farewell look at the glistening object of my annoyance, when half a dozen seamen, on a shore cruise, came sailing along with that independent and inimitable swagger characteristic of the genuine tar. In their wake followed a little foreign sailor-boy, whom, by his olive skin, black, glossy hair, glittering eyes, and slight, flexible figure, I knew to be a West Indian. His restless gaze rested on the snow, and he uttered a loud exclamation of surprise and delight.

“Halloo, manikin ! what's in sight astern there ?” sung out an old tar just ahead of him, bitching up his trousers, and coming to an anchor in the middle of the side-walk.

“*Soogare ! Soogare !*” shouted the little imp, pointing to the pile of snow, and dancing up and down as if the sunny pavement had become red-hot to his naked feet.

“Sugar be ——” said the old sailor, with a look and tone of supreme contempt ; “try it and see !”

The boy bounded toward the delusive pile, grasped both hands full of the deceitful substance, and was in the act of conveying one portion of his treasure to his jacket pocket and to cram his mouth with the other, when a shrill cry of pain escaped him ; and, dropping the snow, he capered about, snapping his fingers and working his flexible features into the most ludicrous grimaces.

His shipmates hove to at his signal of distress, and roared, one and all, with lusty laughter, catching off their tarpaulins, and swinging them aloft, and slapping each other on the broad of the back in the excess of their merriment.

“Avast, there, my little hop-o-my-thumb,” said one of the sailors, as their mirth gradually subsided ; and steering up to the boy, who continued to yell with undiminished vigor, “dontee set up such a caterwauling in a calm.”

“Burnee ! Burnee !”

“Burnee my eye ! Ho, shipmates, all hands to put fire out ! Little Carlo’s scorched his fingers with a sow-ball.”

All hands now gathered round the young West Indian, and made themselves merry at his expense, with quip and joke, cutting the while many a boyish prank.

“Come, Jack,” said one, making up a large lump of snow into a ball, “lets take aboard a two-pounder apiece, and pepper some o’ these land lubbers that come athwart our hawser.”

“Aye, aye !” was the unanimous response.

Forthwith, indifferent to the gaping passers-by, each went to work to make snow-balls, and soon with two apiece stowed away in either jacket-pocket, they got the little West Indian in their midst, and moved off, a jolly troop, in full glee and ripe for a *lark*.

John, who had been kept in the back-ground by the belligerent preparations of these sons of Neptune,<sup>262</sup> having ascertained by a cautious survey through the iron railing of the basement—his head protruded just above the level of the side-walk—that they were quite

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<sup>262</sup> The Roman god of water, the counterpart of the Greek Poseidon, god of the sea.



hull-down, now made his appearance beneath the window, shovel at hand. Influenced by the whim of the moment, I rapped on the window, and made a sign for him to come in, resolved, for the amusement it had afforded me, to spare the snow pile another day.

The following morning, the sight of the scarce-diminished snow-heap rendered me oblivious of the merriment I had received front the little West Indian the day before, and mindful only of the present. My philanthropy deserted me, and with a round oath I asseverated that for sailor nor saint, woman nor angel, would I let that snow remain another moment longer.

“Ho ! *Ding a ling, a ling ling !* Ho, John, ho ! *Ding, ding, ding ! ling, ling, ding !* Ho, John, John ! *Ding ling, ling ding, l—*” and the bell-rope parted at the ceiling, and came down in my hand.

My crutch stood beside my chair. “*Thump, hump, ump’ ! Ump ! Ump ! ! Thump ! !*”

The door burst open ; the bolt-head flew across the room, and half-buried itself in the opposite wall, and John pitched headlong in, and landed on his face in the centre of the apartment. “C-c-c-comin’, Sir !” was ejected from his mouth as his head struck the floor ; “C-c-c-comin’, Sir !” scarce articulated he as he rolled over and over towards my chair ; “C-c-c-comin’, Sir,” he gasped as he got to one knee and pulled at his forelock as he was wont to do when he addressed me. The next movement brought him to his legs. “Here I am, Sir. Bless the mercies, Sir ! what *is* the matter, Sir ?”

“John !”

“Yes, Sir.”

I pointed silently to the snow pile.

John vanished.

I looked forth from the window (I need not here apologise to those who have been invalids, such will readily sympathise with the interest I took in this matter,) and enjoyed in anticipation the devastation about to be made. In less than a minute John made his appearance beneath the window, laden with two baskets, a large and a small one, a bucket and coal-hod, and lastly his broad wooden shovel. He ranged these various receptacles along the outer verge of the sidewalk ; moistened the palms of his hands after a summary mode well-known to the school-boy when about to handle his bat-stick ; seized hold of, and struck his instrument deep into the snow ; placed his

right foot firmly on one of the projecting sides thereof, and bent his shoulders to raise the gelid load.

I watched each motion with eager gratification. I noted the muscular shoulders of John as he essayed his task, with emotions of delight. I marked the opening chasms in the pile as he stirred the bulk, and felt a thrill of joy as I beheld a huge mass yield before his well-applied sinews. He stooped to lift the severed fragment to place it in one of his baskets, when there arose a sudden shouting, followed by the quick rattling of wheels and cries of warning and alarm. I had scarcely drawn a breath, when two blooded horses, wild with terror, harnessed to a landau, containing, I could see, a young and beautiful lady and an elderly gentleman came dashing furiously up the street. The fore-wheel struck and locked with the wheel of a doctor's chaise standing before the third door from mine ; and the landau, dragging the chaise with it, was drawn a few yards further on two side wheels, then upset and pitched its contents out upon the pile of snow beneath my window.

The gentleman was thrown upon his shoulder, and lay senseless. The lady's fall was arrested by John, who caught her ere she reached the ground ; but she had fainted and her fair brow was like marble as I looked down upon it. I broke two panes of glass knocking with my crutch, and shouted through the opening to have them both conveyed into my front parlor. John, assisted by a gentleman, carried the lady in, while two or three others took up the old gentleman.

I had not left my room for three months, and the rheumatism had made me a cripple. I seized my crutch, snatched a cane, and was down stairs and in the parlor just as the lady was being laid on the sofa. She was still senseless. How beautiful her alabaster features ! the veined lid ! the polished and rounded neck ! her hat was removed. Her abundant hair fell in waves of gold about her shoulders. I gazed, entranced with the bright vision. A rude hand dashed a glass of water in her face. It roused me, and I lent my aid to effect her restoration. After repeated ablutions—animation continuing to remain suspended—the Doctor, who was out lamenting over the fragments of his gig, was called in. But no blood followed the insertion of his lancet in the exquisitely veined arm. The aid gentleman in the meanwhile (thanks to the snow pile for saving his collar-bone) had recovered his senses, and was bending sorrowfully over his daughter.

A happy thought struck me. I had heard in my boyhood, among the snow-covered hills of Maine, that snow was an unfailing restorative in cases like the present. I despatched John from the room, and he instantly returned with a cubic loot of snow in his arms. I assiduously laid a large piece on her forehead ; a fragment, the size of an almond, on each eye-lid ; placed a piece on the back of the neck, and hinted to the father to lay one on her swan-like throat and, taking her two hands, I placed a lump between them, and clasped them in mine, till it melted and trickled in drops upon the carpet. What a delicious moment of my existence was that !

In a few seconds she began to revive, and in half an hour afterwards thanked me with her own lips and eyes for saving her life, as she chose to believe. The father thanked me also, I made a very pretty disclamatory speech in return, and begged they would say no more about it.

I had them to dine with me that day. I went to bed without any rheumatism. In the morning I bade John keep watch, and see that no one removed a flake from that sacred snow pile—he having previously, by my order, filled my ornamental cologne-bottle with a portion of it, and placed on my toilet.

The time of this sketch is six years ago. I was then a bachelor. I am now married. That lovely young matron sitting sewing opposite me, while I am writing, in whose person simplicity and elegance are charmingly united, is my wife. That old gentleman, sitting by the fire reading a newspaper, is her father. There is a slight scar on his left brow, which he received when he was thrown from his carriage before my door. If a blot could be printed, you would just here find a sad one, made by a chubby little blue-eyed girl of two years in her exertions to climb on my knee after her black-eyed brother Bob—who has playfully stolen her doll, and is climbing up my back to get it out of her way.

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VOL. III

APRIL, 1831

NºI

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CAPTAIN THOMPSON.

I WAS unfortunate enough, one bright July morning in my Senior year, to receive an expressive note from my Tutor, which rendered a journey of some hundred and fifty miles quite necessary. I was in the coach in less than an hour with a travelling cap pulled over a very long face, partly to avoid recognition by my classmates as we whirled by the colleges, and partly with an indefinite feeling that a pretty woman who sat in the opposite corner of the coach would observe a tear that was coquetting very capriciously with my eyelids. The rumbling echo of the wheels from the broad front of East Rock,<sup>263</sup> roused me from a very bitter fit of reflection, and recollecting that there were now two miles between me and certain official gentlemen, I raised my cap and took a long breath and a look out of the window. The lady on the back seat had a child on her lap. We three were the only passengers.

It is surprising how 'it's all in your eye' whether beautiful objects seem beautiful in this world. I do not think there is a sweeter gem of scenery in New England than the spot upon which my eye fell at that moment—the little hamlet of Whitneyville<sup>264</sup> at the foot of East Rock. I had rambled all over its wild neighborhood, and threaded for hundreds of truant days its deep passes—I knew, and loved as a romantic collegier *will* love, every striking tree and sheltered moss-knoll from its base to its summit—I had stood on the romantic bridge many a moonlight hour thinking of you, dear—(ehem !) and stargazing in the black mirror of the tarn below—and now, as I hoped to be recalled, I thought it the most exquisitely dismal spot. I ever looked upon—the trees ugly and distorted, the 'fine old tap-rock' (the Professor's epithets were as good as an apotheosis to it) desolate and naked, and the pretty buildings below (the only

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<sup>263</sup> A hill that rises in the city of New Haven, Connecticut.

<sup>264</sup> An area in which Eli Whitney, the inventor of the cotton gin, established a gun manufacture in which Samuel Colt invented the automatic revolver in 1836.

factory that ever *adorned* a stream) absolutely insulting with their peaceful picturesqueness.

‘What a desolate place!’ said I, in a soliloquizing tone as the coach rolled out from the covered bridge (a new one, by the way, that was not half as pretty as the old one) and toiled slowly up the steep hill beyond.

‘Sir!’ said the lady. She did know how a sudden start for home in the middle of the term, affects the moral sensorium. I should have called Dian<sup>265</sup> a hag.

‘I mean, madam—I beg pardon’—and then I went into a long rhodomontade to explain away my apparent want of taste, and the lady told me her son’s name was John, and that he was named after his father who was Captain Thompson of the brig *Dolly*,<sup>266</sup> that had just arrived in Boston after a three years voyage. &c. &c. &c.—ending in a request that I would assist her with my knowledge of localities when we arrived at the end of our journey.

In ten miles, I was on very sociable terms with Mrs. Thompson. In ten more, by dint of gingerbread and good humor, Master John was persuaded into my lap, and in ten more—but travellers have a reputation for a long bow, and I shall not be believed. The day was divine, and the season was June, and if it had not been for an occasional sight of the mailbag under my feet which I presumed contained a simple explanation of my journey, I could have contrived to forget the imminent peril in which I stood of losing my graduate’s sheepskin and my father’s blessing. The coach, however, rolled on, and would have rolled on just as it did, probably, if I had been ten times as miserable (I know nothing more provoking than the indifference of such vehicles to one’s feelings) and by and by, what with now and then a very sweet smile from Mrs. Thompson, and a disastrous discomfiture of my sham shirt-bosom by Master John, I think I may flatter myself that I was tolerably resigned to circumstances.

Have I described Mrs. Thompson? She was not as delicate as *Seadrift*, nor as bluff as *Moll Marlinspike*. Her cheeks were red, and her lips to match, and she had ‘two eyes with lids to them’ according to the inventory in the play<sup>267</sup>—but when the lids were up the eyes were blue—(and very soft, and gentle, and dangerous eyes they

<sup>265</sup> Poetic form of “Diana,” the Roman goddess of the moon, forests, animals, and women in childbirth.

<sup>266</sup> A trading ship launched in 1796, bound to India and the Pacific.

were)—and if it had not been for a very thin, spirited nostril, and an expression like a cocked pistol about her pretty chin, I should have thought she was made for a Niobe.<sup>268</sup> Her name was Julia (I asked her as it grew twilight, the second day) and that name always sounded to me, (as L. F. L. would say, calling for her *eau de Mousselline*) like a gushing tear! If she was not sentimental, there is no truth in symptoms. At any rate I was tender to her upon suspicion. The chain of circumstantial evidence would have borne me out, I think.

Travelling after twilight, I have always remarked, makes one very affectionate. The forty miles between Worcester<sup>269</sup> and Boston on the mail route (they used to pass it before the ‘reform’ between sunset and midnight) should be sacred to sentiment. If there were ‘tongues in trees,’<sup>270</sup> or if the crooked fences could tell straight stories, a pedestrian tour over that part of the highway would be highly interesting. I can answer for its effect upon myself and Mrs. Thompson.

We were aroused from a deep metaphysical discussion of elective sympathies, by the rattling of the wheels on the pavement; and at the same moment the city clocks struck twelve. The streets were all deserted, and the lamp-posts and watchmen performed their duties in dismal silence. Captain Thompson (so said Mrs. T.) was at the Marlborough Hotel;<sup>271</sup> and singularly forgetful as his lady had seemed to be of his existence for the previous six hours, she grew very amiably anxious about him as the coach rattled on to Washington Street. A crack of the whip brought us up to the door after a turn or two, and the half-dressed bar-keeper peered out with his flaring candle, and gave us the gratuitous information that the house was full.

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<sup>267</sup> “I will give out divers schedules of my beauty: it shall be inventoried, and every particle and utensil labelled to my will: as, item, two lips, indifferent red; item, two grey eyes, with lids to them; item, one neck, one chin, and so forth.” William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *Twelfth Nights* (Act I, Scene 4).

<sup>268</sup> A daughter of Tantalus whose children were killed by Apollo and Artemis, and who was turned into stone and wept perpetually.

<sup>269</sup> A city situated west of Boston on the Blackstone River.

<sup>270</sup> “And this our life, exempt from public haunt, / Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, / Sermons in stones, and good in every thing.” William Shakespeare (1564-1616), *As You Like It* (Act II. Sc. 1).

<sup>271</sup> Based on the principle of a boarding house in which many unmarried men resided permanently, the Marlborough Hotel became later on the first temperance hotel in the United States.

‘Is Captain Thompson here,’ said my companion in an eager voice from the coach window.

The sleepy mixer of liquors wet his thumb and finger, and snuffed two huge coffins from the wick of the candle, then sheltering it with his hand, he walked towards the lady with his head protruded inquisitively, and looked at her a minute in perfect silence.

‘Is Captain Thompson here?’ thundered I, enforcing the question with a smart slap on the shoulder, for I thought he was not fully awake.

‘Be sure!’ said the bar-keeper. But still he stood holding the candle to the lady’s face, not at all disturbed either by the emphasis of my question or the pathos of Master John, who was crying lustily to get out. The driver by this time had got off the big trunk, and the little trunk, and the bandbox, and the bag, and the two baskets, and stood beside the heap very impatient of the delay.

‘What the d—! do you mean?’ said I, getting into a passion. ‘If Captain Thompson is here, take your candle away from the lady’s face, and go up and tell him his wife and child have arrived.’

‘Wife and child!’ echoed the fellow, backing slowly into the house, with an incredulous grin crawling slowly over his dull face—‘wife and child!’ And he coolly drew his slipshod feet over the threshold and bolted the door. The driver looked at me, and I looked at Mrs. Thompson.

‘You are sure’—I saw a tear in her eye, and left the sentence unfinished. I could not doubt her. ‘The barkeeper must be drunk,’ said the driver opportunely; and believing in my soul that the driver was right, I thumped away once more at the door. In a few minutes the master of the house answered the summons from a chamber window.

‘Is Captain Thompson here?’ said I.

‘Yes Sir.’

‘Will you be kind enough to tell him his wife and child are at the door?’

‘Wife and child!’ said Boniface, repeating my words very slowly; ‘I have always understood that Captain Thompson was a bachelor!’

Mrs. Thompson leaned back in the coach and sobbed audibly.

‘It’s no consequence what you have always understood, Sir—will you convey that message to Captain Thompson, or not?’

He withdrew his head, and came down presently to the door. ‘I have no objection to showing you Capt. Thompson’s room, Sir,’ said he, and you may carry your own message ; but I assure you he’ll be very likely to pitch you over the banisters for your intelligence.’

I took the candle, and mounted after him three flights of stairs. He stopped at the landing, and, pointing to a door at the extremity of the entry, renewed his caution. I proceeded however, and rapped boldly on the pannel. A gruff ‘Come in !’ was the immediate answer ; and opening the door, I walked up to the bed, and touched my hat as courteously as I knew how.

‘Have I the honor of addressing Captain Thompson ?’

As I asked the question, I raised the candle, and got a fair look at the premises. On a bachelor’s bed, narrow and well tucked up, lay a man of the heaviest frame, whiskered to the eyes, and with a fist as it lay doubled on the coverlid like the end of the club of Hercules. A fiery lock of hair, redder than his face (I feel as if I was using a hyperbole) straggled out from a black silk handkerchief twisted tightly round his head, and his nose and mouth and chin, masses of solid purple, might have been, for delicacy of outline, hewn with a broad axe from a mahogany log. He looked at me just about as long as I have been writing this description before he answered my question.

‘What do you want ?’ he bolted at last, as if the words were forced out of his mouth with a catapult.

‘I am sorry to disturb you, Sir, but—but—(I took a backward position as I approached the crisis of my sentence, and stood prepared to run) Mrs. Thompson and little John are at the door——and——and——’

A loud laugh from the landlord in the entry cut off the sequel of my explanation, and completed my dismay. I looked at the Captain’s fist, and stole a glance over my shoulder to see if the door was open, and then the thought of Mrs. Thompson in tears shamed my courage back again, and I recovered my first position. The Captain raised himself slowly upon his elbow, and lowering his shaggy eyebrows till they met his whiskers, fixed his eyes upon me and prepared to speak. If he had levelled two pistols at me I should have been less frightened.

‘I’ll tell you what, Mr. Milk-and-water,’ said he, in a voice as deliberate and decided as the fall of a sledge hammer, (I was a



slender student in those days, and paler than usual of course,) ‘I’ll tell you what—if you are not out of this room in two minutes with your “Mrs. Thompson and little John,” I’ll slam you through that window—if I do n’t, —— ‘me !’

The threat was definite. I doubted neither his inclination nor his power to keep it. My heart was grieved for Mrs. Thompson ; but if I was thrown down to her from a fourth-story window, I reflected that I should probably be in no situation to express my sympathy. It was philosophy to retreat. I bade the Captain good night in my gentlest tone ; and as I turned away with some alacrity, he grasped a glass of brandy and water that stood on the light stand, and muttering ‘Mrs. Thompson and little John’ between his teeth, drank it at a gulp. As I passed through the door the tumbler whizzed past my head like a shot, and shivered to atoms on the entry wall.

I found ‘Mrs. Thompson and little John’ in a very moving state of unhappiness. They were decidedly on my hands— that was clear. If it had been at any other hour, I would have taken them home till the mystery could be cleared up ; but to arrive from college unexpectedly at midnight with a woman and a child—I thought it highly improbable that my motives would be appreciated.

‘I say Sir,’ said the driver, as I stood pondering the case, ‘had n’t you better take her to the stage-house and leave the matter till morning.’”

It was sensible advice, and I got in and comforted Mrs. Thompson as we drove to Hanover Street.<sup>272</sup>

The first person that appeared on the step of the tavern door was *another Captain Thompson*, a stout, handsome fellow, who took ‘Mrs. Thompson and little John’ into his arms at one clasp, and kissed them— as one might be supposed to do after a three years’ voyage. I heard in the course of a day or two, that a rough old sea captain at the Marlborough, who had been there, off and on, for thirty years, and had always sworn himself a bachelor, had been awaked at midnight by the arrival of a wife and child whom he had deserted in some foreign port, and had gone to sea very suddenly. The last part of the communication was great relief to my mind.

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<sup>272</sup> The main street of historic Boston North End.