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## *MY CIRCULAR TOUR.*

HER name was Melissa Fitch, and I always call her the Siren of Niagara. I took that phrase from a stray remark of Epaminondas A. Coeyman's. Not a very poetical name for a siren, you will say; but the interest of historical truth must prevail with the faithful annalist above every other consideration.

My own name is Douglas Preston. I am a landscape painter by trade; and in the summer of 1878, being then in my twenty-first year, I took a three-months' circular ticket for an American tour. After knocking about a little among the White Mountains and along the St. Lawrence bank, I settled down quietly at last for steady work at Niagara. There I began my immortal view of the Horse-shoe Fall, which you must have noticed in this year's Academy, beautifully stuck against the ceiling sky-line in the dark right-hand corner of the fifth room.

When I first got to the Falls I put up at that vast palace-caravanserai, the Cataract House. But I soon found four dollars a day and a regal fare a little too expensive for my humble purse; and old Judge Decatur, of the New York State Supreme Court, to whom I had a letter of introduction, promised to find me board and lodging with some respectable family in the neighbourhood. The Judge himself lived in a large white wooden frame-house, beset with painted Doric columns and capped with a bright tin cupola—a sort of compromise between a Grecian temple, an Italian cathedral, and a square pine-wood cottage; and, with true American hospitality, he would have taken me in as his guest himself, if I would have consented to such an arrangement. Failing that, he handed me over to the maternal care of Mrs. Fitch, widow of a late deceased local surgeon and mother of the siren in question.

“She's a most refined woman, and keeps a piano,” said the Judge meditatively. “Besides, she has two real nice girls, specially one of them. Most elegant manners, I assure you. I take a deal of interest in that girl, sir. You'll find her *European* quite.”

So I arranged to go to Mrs. Fitch's, board and lodging found, for some ten pounds a month, and there to paint away to my heart's content. I was to be treated strictly as one of the family, and I took the expression in its most literal sense.

The young ladies of elegant manners were two twins of nineteen, by name Lavinia and Melissa. Lavinia was a severe-looking and highly intellectual personage, in green spectacles, who had graduated Senior Classic and Moral Philosophy Prize-woman at the Poughkeepsie Female University and Woman's Suffrage Association. Melissa was slighter and very pretty, but, as her sister said, poor girl, she had merely an everyday kind of intellect. “She could never manage her Herodotus,” Lavinia used to remark with pity; “and as for the differential calculus, she has no more notion of it than I have of making buckwheat pancakes. She can never rise, Mr. Preston, to the abstract appreciation of the Infinite, the Absolute, or the Unknowable.”

I confess I was rather vague myself as to the precise qualities of the Unknowable; but I thought it best to conceal my ignorance and condole sympathetically with Lavinia on her sister's unexpansive soullessness.

I had comfortable quarters enough at Mrs. Fitch's. A pleasant white little cottage, with bright green venetians, and a verandah overgrown with Virginia creeper, and looking out on the white foam of the American Fall, is not a bad sort of place for a young artist to spend a stray summer in. Every morning after breakfast I walked across the bridge which spans the Rapids to Goat Island, and there, at the corner near the rock once crowned by the Terrapin Tower, I planted the easel for my *magnum opus*. Before me stretched the vast ceaseless emerald-green tumbling sheet of the Horse-shoe Fall, spanned by a perpetual rainbow, and glistening day after day in the unbroken radiance of an American sun. Above me the pines and maples spread their canopy of green and let through the mellow August light to fleck my canvas—sometimes a little too provokingly from a painter's practical point of view. It never rained (how Watts and McPalet, my old fellow-students, must have envied me at Bettws-y-Coed!); and Lavinia or Melissa, singly or together, generally volunteered to bring me out my luncheon, so as to save me the trouble of leaving my work at a critical moment—a distraction which no genuine artist can endure. The girls often brought their own lunch as well, and we picnicked together on the rocks by the water's edge, mixing our claret-cup with a jugful of pure crystal caught upon the very brink of the great Fall. In England our antiquated petty proprieties would have interfered to impose upon us that most awful of human inflictions, a

chaperon; but in the happier innocence of the State of New York, I am glad to say, they do not treat every marriageable young woman on the same principle as if she were a convicted felon under the strictest police surveillance.

Walking across, one morning, near the end of the bridge, with Melissa to help me in carrying my *impedimenta*—she was a good-natured, humorous little thing, was Melissa, with dancing black eyes as full of fun as a Chipmonk squirrel's—we met a tall, lanky, and distinctly red-haired young gentleman, whom Melissa introduced to me with much mock consequence as Mr. Epaminondas A. Coeyman, of Big Squash Hollow.

“Well, Pam,” she said, after he had acknowledged the introduction with the usual highflown circumlocution of American courtesy, “how’s the farm?”

“Thank you, Liss, the farm’s salubrious, I reckon. Fall wheat shows up well for the time of year, and turnips are amazing forward, considering the weather. I suppose Mr. Preston’s the new lodger? An artist, sir, I understand?”

I signified assent.

“Going to take the Falls in a picture, sir?”

“Yes,” I answered, “I’m working at the Horse-shoe Fall, seen from Goat Island.”

“And might it be a commission from Queen Victoria, now?” said Mr. Coeyman, interrogatively.

I laughed outright. “Well, not exactly that,” I said; “but I expect to hang it at the Royal Academy.”

“Just so,” said the tall young man, with an air of superior wisdom. “I thought anyhow, as you hailed from across the water, that you’d be under monarchical patronage one way or another.”

We crossed the bridge together, and Mr. Coeyman waited awhile to see me throw in a bit of spray in the corner. He deigned to approve of my performance with lordly condescension, and then took his leave. Melissa stopped out with me during the whole morning. She was a handy little thing, with a decided taste for art (about which, however, she was frankly ignorant), and she had a capital eye for local colour, which I utilized by installing her as my mixer. It was amusing to see the interest she took in my work, and to hear her naïve comments on my handicraft. “That’s real fine, that branch,” she would say, posing herself a yard off with the knowing air of a Piccadilly critic; “and it dips into the water just like nature. But it wants a little more gloss on the upper side—right there; see: don’t you notice you haven’t caught the sunshine exactly, somehow?” Her criticisms were generally correct, and I began to perceive that, though she didn’t know the difference between perspective and *chiaroscuro*, she had the making of a born artist in her none the less.

At one o’clock Lavinia came out with lunch. “I hope Melissa hasn’t been hindering you in your work, Mr. Preston,” she said. “I’m afraid she has not a due sense of the sanctity of your noble profession.”

“Well, I don’t know about that, Vinny,” said Melissa, sharply. “I fancy I like pictures as well as anybody.”

“Your sister has been extremely useful to me,” I put in. “She has helped me immensely, both with her mixing and her criticism.”

Lavinia threw herself down on a rock beside us. “It’s a great privilege to be permitted to meet with persons of artistic cultivation, and I always like to improve such opportunities as may fall in my way,” she said. “Now, what do you think, Mr. Preston, of Michael Angelo?”

“I think,” I answered, “that he was most probably of Italian extraction. Melissa, how about this spray here? Have I got the green deep enough?”

“Oh, perfect!” Lavinia put in hastily, with a look of ecstatic admiration.

“Well,” said Melissa, “I don’t know; I think I should touch it up with just a trifle more of that pinky-green stuff with the hard name.” And she pointed to a spot or two which would certainly have been improved by a dash of richer colouring.

“Right, as usual,” I answered her; and I put in a point or so at the places she had indicated.

“But let us return to Michael Angelo, Mr. Preston,” said Lavinia, darting a rapturous glance at me through her green spectacles. “Surely you must immensely admire his gigantic intellect?”

“Gigantic!” I answered. “Oh yes, very much so, indeed. Perfectly American in its vastness, I assure you. Have you ever seen any of his works?”

“None,” Lavinia replied, with gentle resignation. “What can we expect to see, secluded as we are from the high-pulsing heart of European capitals in the rural solitude of Jefferson County?”

“Well,” said I, “I have seen his pictures, walked round his statues, climbed to the top of St. Peter’s, and read as many of his sonnets as I could swallow without choking; and, if you ask me for a candid opinion, I should say that no man could ever have spent so large a fortune on raw marble, oil-colours, blank canvas, and white foolscap.”

“Now,” said Melissa, “I think we’d better leave these Michael Angelos, and Correggios, and other outlandish people, and take our lunch at once, before the ice melts in the claret-cup; for I’ve got to go home and make the apple-float for dinner; while Vinny can stop with you if she likes and get seraphic over high art.”

Vinny did stop all the afternoon, and bored me exceedingly by invariably asking me whether I did not consider Cimabue as the father of modern painting, or what I thought of Giotto’s drapery, at the precise moment when I wished to catch the passing effect of a sunbeam on some leaf in the foreground or some rock in the midst of the whirling eddy. Considering that her whole knowledge of Cimabue and of Giotto was solely derived from the perusal of the “Treasury of Knowledge,” you will probably admit with me that her conduct was slightly provoking.

Day after day one or other of the girls fell into the habit of accompanying me pretty regularly. The more I saw of Melissa the more I liked her. She was a winsome little thing, fresh as a New England mayflower, and full of natural cleverness, which had only failed fully to develop itself because she had obstinately refused to trim the wings of her originality so as to fit the Procrustean mould of the Poughkeepsie Female University. To say the truth, I felt myself falling in love with Melissa, though the symptoms at first betokened the mildest form of that serious disease. As for Lavinia, on the other hand, her attentions were positively overpowering. Anxious, as she said, never to miss any opportunity for self-culture, she compelled me to assist her in that thankless act of husbandry to an extent which was absolutely a nuisance to a busy student. All day long, and every day, she kept pestering me with the most beautifully worded criticisms on the early Italian painters, till at length I began to wish that the “Treasury of Knowledge” had been decently buried at the bottom of the whirlpool. But as for any real love of art, she had about as much as a well-trained butler.

“Melissa,” I said one morning, towards the close of my two months, when she had helped and amused me more than usual, “how would you like to go to Europe?”

“I should love it above everything,” she answered unaffectedly. “I should like to see all these palaces and pictures you talk about. Do you know, before you came to the Falls, I never knew I cared about these things; but since I’ve watched you painting this picture, and since you’ve helped me so fine with my sketching—I used to hate sketching at Poughkeepsie—I begin to think I’m real fond of art, and no mistake.”

“But you know, Melissa,” I ventured to suggest, “you do *not* speak the Queen’s English, and you’ve got a most decided New Yorker accent.”

“Not so bad as Vinny’s,” said Melissa, with a charmingly malicious smile.

“Well, not quite so bad as Vinny’s,” I admitted cautiously, “but still quite bad enough, you know, for any practical purpose. I can’t imagine what my mother would say to a daughter-in-law who talked about being ‘real fond of art’ if I were to marry you, Melissa.”

“‘Nobody axed you, sir, she said,’” sang Melissa, gaily, to the well-known tune.

“That at least,” I said, “is good old English, Melissa. And indeed I think, if you were to spend a year in Europe first, you

might probably be made quite presentable. What do you think of it?"

"Well," said Melissa, quietly, "I don't suppose a young artist like you can be in any hurry to set up a house, now."

"Ah," I cried, "for the matter of that, I have a little income of my own from my father; and if I get hung at next Academy I dare say this Horse-shoe Fall may set me up in business as a painter. If you think we could hit it off together, and that you could manage to spend a year in Europe beforehand, just to wear the edge off your Yankeedom, suppose we consider ourselves fairly engaged?"

"Why," said Melissa, simply, "if it comes to that, you know, old Judge Decatur is our godfather, and a kind of roundabout uncle somehow. He likes you; and I reckon, if either of us were going to marry you, he wouldn't think much of the trip to Europe. So I don't mind considering it a bargain."

"In that case," I suggested, "unaccustomed as I am to matrimonial engagements, I feel spontaneously convinced that we ought to kiss one another at once and settle the question."

The same conviction having apparently occurred to Melissa's mind with the like priority to all experience, I will venture to draw a veil, in the interests of European propriety, over the remainder of that day's proceedings. It is astonishing what a difference it makes to one's feelings merely to have interchanged ratifications to a simple contract in such an informal manner. Before evening I had fully discovered that we were very seriously in love with one another, and the symptoms had progressed in such an alarming manner as to have fairly reached the critical stage.

Walking home alone an hour before dinner—Melissa had preceded me, to let the wind blow the tell-tale blushes out of her cheek—I met old Judge Decatur trudging quietly towards his Doric temple. In the fulness of my heart I opened my secret to him, and told him that I had proposed to and been accepted by one of his god-daughters. The old gentleman was overjoyed. He seized me warmly by the hand, which he gripped and shook till I thought it would have come off. He told me that the widow had hinted to him some suspicion of my affections, and that he had been heartily anxious to find her anticipations realized. "You're a nice young fellow, Preston," he said to me in his fatherly fashion; "you're an excellent young fellow, and you've got the makings of a Benjamin West in you." (Benjamin West was the old gentleman's ideal of a great artist.) "We shall see you famous yet. And that girl, sir, is a jewel. She's worthy of you! She's worthy of anybody! As to this little matter of sending her to Europe to pick up your horrid European drawl, I suppose, and bring her back with an affected English accent, that can be easily managed, if you insist upon it. I'll tell you what I mean to do for that paragon of a woman, sir: I mean to pay her down twenty thousand dollars on her wedding-day. I always meant to do it if she married anybody except that red-haired chap Epaminondas; and now she's going to marry you, sir, I'm proud to do it for both your sakes."

Four thousand pounds down, though not exactly a fortune, is still a comfortable addition to a young man's income; so I thanked the old gentleman to the best of my ability and returned to the cottage to share the good news with Melissa. There was much innocent rejoicing between us in the house of Fitch on that eventful evening.

Next morning I went to work as usual, without much expectation of progressing largely with my picture. Melissa promised to follow me about twelve o'clock and give me the benefit of her advice as to that difficult bit of water-moss in the lower right hand corner of my canvas. At about ten o'clock, however, I was suddenly startled by the somewhat unexpected appearance on the scene of Mr. Epaminondas A. Coeyman, with his red hair distinctly dishevelled and his crimson necktie flowing wildly to the winds in "admired disorder." Epaminondas had been a frequent visitor at the Fitches', but I had never before seen him in so poetical a state of disarray. On the contrary, his ruddy locks were usually conspicuous for a reckless expenditure of the best scented hair-oil, and his crimson tie was invariably noticeable for the scrupulous stiffness of its starched arrangement.

"Sir," said Epaminondas, throwing himself fiercely into an attitude expressive of despair, not unmingled with the contempt due to a detected traitor, "sir, I know the truth—I have learnt it from the lips of a grey-haired Justice of the Supreme Court in the State of New York. I come to you as Nathan the Prophet came to reproach the Hebrew monarch for the figurative theft of a ewe lamb. You, sir, you have stolen *my* ewe lamb. I regard you as a British Don Juan who has ventured with unblushing brow to desecrate the happy shores of our beloved Columbia. I consider you, sir, in the despicable light of an incarnate Class Outrage."

“A Class Outrage?” I said, hesitating, so as to gain a little time. “I hardly see your meaning, Mr. Coeyman.”

“Yes, sir,” repeated Epaminondas, flinging his arms wildly round his head, “I repeat it—you are a Class Outrage. I have loved and won that angelic being. I have long since offered her my heart, and she has honoured me by cordially accepting the palpitating gift. You come across the Atlantic, sir, like Paris to the palace of Menelaus, with your seductive manners, refined and polished by constant intercourse with a cultivated aristocracy and a splendid court. You come to her with a halo of art thrown around your head by the royal patronage which you enjoy. You steal away her heart from the natural focus towards which it should ever turn”—he struck his own breast-pocket with unnecessary violence—“the bosom of a faithful countryman and forgotten lover. I may be your equal or even your superior in intelligence. I am a graduate, sir, of the Michigan Central University. I can offer her a happy home in Big Squash Hollow; but I cannot, and I will not, cope with you in the miserable arts by which a corrupt and vicious aristocracy seeks to deprave the natural and sacred instincts of our spotless Columbian maidens.”

“But,” I said, “Mr. Coeyman, indeed you are mistaken. I am not a marquis, or an earl, or even a baronet. I am only a landscape-painter, with a very modest income; while you, I take it, are a landed proprietor. I am perfectly willing to allow my inferiority in intellect to yourself, but I really cannot help it if Miss Fitch prefers my advances to your own. Be reasonable for a moment, and let us talk the question over quietly.”

Epaminondas sat down distractedly upon a rock and nursed his leg in his arms, as though it were the last monument of his faithless love. “I have worshipped that girl,” he said, “for four years, and every year she has promised to be mine. I ask you fairly, how would you like it yourself? If you had been courting a girl for four years, how would you like a stranger to come across the Atlantic, dazzling her eyes with high art and Cimabue and Giotto? Ain’t I the sort of man she ought naturally to marry? and ain’t you an interloper who have no business whatsoever poking around these diggings?” And here he assumed an attitude strikingly suggestive of his desire to settle the difficulty by a literal appeal to arms.

I couldn’t help feeling there was a good deal of truth in his way of putting it. In the ordinary course of nature Melissa ought certainly to have married a well-to-do New York farmer, her own equal in station and culture. If what he said was true, she had treated him most shabbily. So I soothed him down as well as I was able; and after I had reduced him to a more reasonable demeanour I promised to think and talk the matter over with her, and let him know the result of my cogitations. “Miss Fitch did not even mention her engagement with you to me,” I said; “and I shall certainly speak to her upon the subject.”

“Never mentioned it!” he cried. “The faithless girl! Then it is she, and not you, who are to blame. Sir, she is the Siren of Niagara, sitting upon the edge of the Horse-shoe Fall and luring men over to their destruction in the boiling whirlpool beneath. I have noticed her growing coldness and her fondness for lingering near you, but I hardly suspected her of this.” And he left, with a bitterly sardonic smile upon his face, promising to see me later in the morning and hear the result of our interview.

When Melissa came up at twelve o’clock and took her usual place by my side beneath the maples, I began to broach the subject as delicately as I was able.

“Don’t you think, Melissa,” I said, “that one ought to be very careful, in making an engagement, to be quite sure that you have fixed upon the right person?”

“It’s rather early for you,” said Melissa, pouting, “to think of reconsidering that question already.”

“Ah, no; not that,” I answered quickly. “Supposing you had ever formed an attachment, as you naturally might, for some young farmer of the neighbourhood——”

“Just like Pam Coeyman,” Melissa interrupted me, with the tears starting to her eyes. “I never could abide the whole race of them. Well, then, I suppose you think I ought to have married him and let you off your hasty bargain at once? Oh, you cruel, wicked man!” And here Melissa burst at a moment’s notice into uncontrollable floods of tears.

Now, if you have ever been at Niagara, you will readily agree with me that the corner of Goat Island by the Horse-shoe Fall is not exactly the ideal place to settle a lovers’ quarrel. You are never safe from intrusion on the part of the ubiquitous tourist for five minutes together; and I had snatched my first kiss the day before with an uncomfortable sense

that we might at that moment be contributing an amusing incident to the foreground of the picture in the camera obscura on the opposite Canadian shore. So I hastily dried Melissa's tears, gave her half a dozen expiatory kisses, and sent her home by the long road round the island, so as to hide her red eyes, with a promise of a full explanation when I returned to luncheon, a little later.

Some minutes before that event Epaminondas Coeyman made his appearance once more in the midst of a dark clump of pines, a little to the left, in an attitude expressive of his determination to hurl himself into the abyss below if he learnt that his perfidious lover still remained untouched. "Well," he cried, beckoning to me theatrically with his hand, "and what did Lavinia answer?"

"*Lavinia!*" I exclaimed in astonishment. "Why, it's *Melissa* that I'm engaged to."

"*Melissa!*" he shrieked, rushing towards me frantically; "that insignificant, empty-headed, silly little noodle! The Judge told me you were going to marry that adorable ornament of her sex, Lavinia!"

"Lavinia!" I echoed. "What! a straight-haired, pretentious he-woman, with a pair of green goggles straddling across her nose! Why, I should as soon think of marrying the President of the Royal Society."

After which mutual insults to our respective future wives, instead of squaring up for a hand-to-hand combat—as no doubt any two right-minded persons would have done—we seized each other's outstretched palms with the utmost fervour, and shook them cordially with every sign of the most fraternal affection.

"Well, in all my days I never heard anything like it," said Epaminondas, as soon as the first ardour of our reconciliation had passed away. "We all thought you were after Lavinia. She is such a remarkably superior person, we imagined she could not fail to attract the attention of a man of artistic tastes and intellectual culture like yourself. Mrs. Fitch, she mentioned it to the Judge; and the Judge mentioned it to me—he don't like me, the judge; you see, he's so dead on that girl marrying a person of intellectual distinction. He told me how you would take Lavinia to Europe and introduce her to Mr. Tennyson and Mr. Browning and the cultivated nobility of your acquaintance—'which,' says he, 'would be her natural environment.' And there's no denying it would be so, Mr. Preston."

"Unfortunately," said I, "I have not the pleasure of knowing either Mr. Tennyson or Mr. Browning; and I think you vastly overrate the importance of my humble circle."

"Well, now, that's curious," answered Epaminondas, "seeing that you live in London, the centre of all your fashionable world."

In the afternoon I went to call on the Judge and explain to him how the mistake had arisen. The old gentleman was manifestly grieved and puzzled. "This is a bad business, Preston, my boy," said he. "I should like to stick to my arrangement, you know, but I don't quite see how to do it. You understand I took it for granted that you were going to marry Lavinia. Why, nobody ever thinks anything of that other insignificant little thing. She's pretty enough, I grant you; but then Lavinia's what I call a real live woman. Now, I'd always made up my mind to settle that twenty thousand on that girl; and last night, as soon as you had spoken to me, I sent her off a note telling her I heard she was going to be married, and promised her the money unconditionally on her wedding-day. Confound it all!" added the Judge, looking serious, "she'll have told that fellow Epaminondas all about it by this time; so there's no crying off *that* bargain. Otherwise I'd have shared it between the girls; for I like you, my boy, even though you are going to marry the wrong woman. But I'm not rich enough to fork over two little lump sums of twenty thousand; and yet, you see, I kind o' don't like to disappoint you. Come, now, mightn't we settle the case by arbitration out of court? Couldn't you manage anyhow to make an exchange with Epaminondas? Lavinia and you are just suited for one another; while he and Melissa ought to pair naturally, I take it."

I shook my head firmly. "With every respect for your judicial opinion, Judge," I said, "I must reluctantly decline the honour of Lavinia's hand. As for the money, it has been all a misconception. I would have taken Melissa without it; and, since we have misunderstood one another, I shall take her all the same."

"Well," said the Judge reflectively, "I can't give her twenty thousand dollars, but I think I can put as much or more into

your pocket another way. Suppose I were to get you the contract for supplying frescoes—I think you call them—to the New State Capitol, at Albany? That job ought to be worth about thirty or forty thousand dollars.”

“Frescoes!” I cried in horror. “Why, I’m a landscape painter. I never tried figures from life in all my days.”

“It wouldn’t be from life,” said the Judge calmly. “They’re all dead. The sort of thing we want in our country is the American Eagle with all his feathers up, ‘Columbus concluding a treaty of peace with the Indians,’ or ‘General Jackson proclaiming the Monroe Doctrine before a terrified assembly of European sovereigns.’ As to figure-painting, well, I suppose Raphael never tried his hand at frescoes afore he began his cartoons at Hampton Court, or St. Peter’s, or wherever it is. You never voted the Republican ticket, did you?”

“Certainly not,” I answered promptly.

“Then I suppose you’re a good Democrat?”

“Well, I hardly know,” I replied. “I believe I’m a Conservative in England. That’s the opposite of a Republican or a Democrat, isn’t it?”

“Bless the boy for his European ignorance!” said the Judge forcibly (whose vague views on the nature of cartoons I had just so charitably passed over). “Democrats and Republicans ain’t the same thing. They’re the exact contraries of one another. It’s plain you don’t know much about politics. However, that don’t matter a cent. Will you solemnly promise, if I get you this contract, always to support the Democratic platform?”

“Certainly,” I answered, “if you think me strong enough.”

“Why, what on earth do you take a platform to be?” said the Judge in amazement. “I mean, will you paint pictures inculcating sound Democratic principles, with a group of leading Democratic statesmen in the centre of every foreground, and the Democratic colours introduced wherever convenient in the drapery and fixings?”

“I will try my best,” I answered, “to meet the wishes of any generous patron who chooses to employ me.”

“Well, then,” said the Judge triumphantly, “that’s the sort of art required by an enlightened Legislature in the State of New York. Never mind whether you can do frescoes or not. Stick ’em in Clay and Jackson and Calhoun in commanding attitudes, and they won’t ask you where you studied your anatomy. I’ll just tell my Democratic friends at Albany that a distinguished European painter, attracted from the crowded studios of London by the unparalleled beauties of our American scenery, has decided to make his home by the setting sun, and to devote his remarkable pictorial talents to the glorious furtherance of the Democratic cause. If I add that he is about to marry one of Columbia’s fairest daughters, I should think that would tickle ’em up, and they ought to be prepared to come down handsome with fifteen thousand dollars a year, the frescoes to be completed within five years at the outside. That would give you time to get up figures, wouldn’t it?”

Within a fortnight the whole question was fully settled. I was formally installed as Pictoriographer by Appointment to the State of New York, on the understanding that I should produce two frescoes within five years of a strictly Democratic and anti-Republican character. Melissa went to England in the autumn, while I gave up my circular ticket and settled down as an American citizen at Albany, where I at once buckled to work at getting up figures for my frescoes. At first Melissa went as a sort of family-boarder at the house of a country clergyman, and assiduously cultivated the Queen’s English, together with the amenities of European society; but after six months of probation, I judged her sufficiently advanced in her mastery of that foreign tongue to take up her abode under my mother’s roof. In the succeeding year I returned to London for a few weeks’ holiday; and there we were duly married at Kensington Church, the important event being even chronicled in the *Morning Post*, thanks to my exalted position in the world of art as Pictoriographer by Appointment to a friendly Government. Melissa is the cleverest, prettiest, and best of wives. My frescoes are now progressing favourably. I have acquired a conception of the majestic attitude which befits a Democratic leader, and of the Satanic spite to be depicted on the abject countenance of a baffled Republican; and when my five years’ engagement is completed, I expect to return, with my little wife, to the suburban shades of South Kensington, and spend the remainder of my existence happily in executing remunerative commissions for all the wealthiest legislators of the American Union. I regard Judge Decatur as the true founder of my artistic fortunes.



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#### Transcriber's Note

This text has been preserved as in the original, including archaic and inconsistent spelling, punctuation and grammar, except that obvious printer's errors have been silently corrected.

[The end of *My Circular Tour* by Grant Allen]