on the morning following the first night in London.

"Two weeks from to-day," said Law, "in the afternoon, and not later than 4 o'clock. I shall have need for them."

"Impossible!" said the tradesman, hitherto obsequious, but now smitten with the conviction regarding the limits of human possibilities.

"At that hour, or not at all," said John Law, calmly. "At that time I shall perhaps be at my lodgings, 59 Bradwell street, West. As I have said to you, I am not clad as I could wish. It is not a matter of your convenience, but of mine own."

"But, sir," expostulated the other, "you order of the best. Nothing, I am sure, save the utmost of good workmanship would please you. I should like a month of time upon these garments, in order to make them worthy of yourself. Moreover, there are orders of the nobility already in our hands that will occupy us more than past the time you name. Make it three weeks, sir, and I promise——"

His customer only shook his head and reiterated, "You heard me well."

The tailor, sore puzzled, not wishing to lose a customer who came so well recommended, and yet hesitating at the exactions of that customer, sat with perplexity written upon his brow.

"So!" exclaimed Law. "Sir Arthur Pembroke told me that you were a clever fellow and could execute exact any order I might give you. Now it appears to me you are like everybody else. You prate only of hardships and of impossibilities."

The perspiration fairly stood out on the forehead of the man of trade.

"Sir," said he, "I should be glad to please not only a friend of Sir Arthur Pembroke, but also a gentleman of such parts as yourself. I hesitate to promise—"

"But you must promise," said John Law.

"Well, then, I do promise! I will have this apparel at your place on the day which you name. 'Tis most extraordinary, but the order shall be executed."

"As I thought," said John Law.

"But I must thank you besides," resumed the tradesman. "In good truth I must say that of all the young gentlemen who come hither—and I may show the names of the best nobility of London and of some ports beyond the seas—there hath never stepped within these doors a better figure than youself—nay, not so good. And I am a judge of men."

Law looked at him carelessly.

"You shall make me none the easier, nor yourself the easier, by soft speech," said he, "if you have not these garments ready by the time appointed. Send them, and you shall have back the fifty sovereigns by the messenger, with perhaps a coin or so in addition if all be well."

"The air of this nobility!" said the tailor, but smiling with pleasure none the less. "This is, perhaps, some affair with a lady?" he added.

"'Tis an affair with a lady, and also with certain gentlemen."

"Oh, so," said the tailor. "If it be, forsooth, an enterprise with a lady, methinks I know the outcome now." He gazed with professional pride upon the symmetrical figure before him. "You shall be all the better armed when well fitted in my garments. Not all London shall furnish a properer figure of a man, nor one better clad, when I shall have done with you, sir."

Law but half heard him, for he was already turning toward the door, where he beckoned again for his waiting chair.

"To the offices of the Bank of England," he directed. And forthwith he was again jogging through the crowded streets of London.

The offices of the Bank of England, to which this young adventurer now so nonchalantly directed his course, were then not housed in any such stately edifice as that which now covers the heart of the financial world, nor did the location of the young and struggling institution, in a by-street of the great city, tend to give dignity to a concern which still lacked importance and assuredness. Thither, then, might have gone almost any young traveler who needed a letter of credit cashed, or a bill changed after the fashion of the passing goldsmiths.

Yet it was not as mere transient customer of a money changer that young Law now sought the Bank of England, nor was it as a commercial house that the bank then commanded attention. That bank, young as it was, had already become a pillar of the throne of England. William, distracted by wars abroad and factions at home, found his demands for funds ever in excess of the supply. More than that, the people of England discovered themselves in possession of a currency fluctuating, mutilated and unstable, so that no man knew what was his actual fortune. The shrewd young financier, Montague, chancellor of the exchequer, who either by wisdom or good fortune had sanctioned the founding of the Bank of England, was at this very time addressing himself to the question of a recoinage of the specie of the realm of England. He needed help, he demanded ideas; nor was he too particular whence he obtained either the one or the other.

John Law was in London on no such blind quest as he had himself declared. He was here by the invitation, secret yet none the less obligatory, of Montague, controller of the financial policy of England. And he was to meet, here upon this fair morning, none less than my Lord Somers, keeper of the seals; none less than Sir Isaac Newton, the greatest mathematician of his time; none less than John Locke, the most learned philosopher of the day. Strong company this, for a young and unknown man, yet in the belief of Montague, himself a young man and a gambler by instinct, not too strong for this young Scotchman who had startled the Parliament of his own land by some of the most remarkable theories of finance which had ever been proposed in any country or to any government. As Law had himself arrogantly announced, he was indeed a philosopher and a mathematician, young as he was; and these things Montague was himself keen enough to know.

It promised, then, to be a strange and interesting council, this which was to meet to-day at the Bank of England, to adjust the value of England's coinage; two philosophers, one pompous trimmer, and two gamblers; the younger and more daring of whom was now calmly threading the streets of London on his way to a meeting which might mean much to him.

To John Law, adventurer, mathematician, philosopher, gambler, it seemed a natural enough thing that he should be asked to sit at the council table with the ablest minds of the day and pass upon questions the most important. This was not what gave him trouble. This matter of the coinage, these questions of finance—they were easy. But how to win the interest of the tall and gracious English girl whom he had met by chance that other morn, who had left no way open for a further meeting; how to gain access to the presence of that fair one—these were the questions which to John Law seemed of greater importance, and of greater difficulty in the answering.

The chair drew up at the somber quarters where the meeting had been set. Law knew the place by instinct, even without seeing the double row of heavy-visaged London constabulary which guarded the entrance. Here and there along the street were carriages and chairs, and multiplied conveyances of persons of consequence. Upon the narrow pavement, and within the little entrance-way that led to the inner room, there bustled about important looking men, some with hooked noses, most with florid faces and well-fed bodies, but all with a certain dignity and sobriety of expression.

Montague himself, young, smooth-faced, dark-eyed, of active frame, of mobile and pleasing features, sat at the head of a long table. The high-strung quality of his nervous system was evidenced in his restless hands, his attitude frequently changed.

At the left of Montague sat Somers, lord keeper; older, of more steady demeanor, of fuller figure, of bold face and full light eye, a politician, not a ponderer. At the right of Montague, grave, silent, impassive, now and again turning a contemplative eye about him, sat that great man, Sir Isaac Newton, known then to every nobleman—now to every schoolboy, of the world. A gem-like mind, keen, clear, hard and brilliant, exact in every fact, and forsooth held in the setting of an iron body. Gentle, unmoved, self-assured, Sir Isaac Newton was calm as morn itself as he sat in readiness to give England the benefit of his wisdom.

Beyond sat John Locke, abstruse philosopher, a man thinner and darker than his confrere, with large full orb, with the brow of the student and the man of thought. In dignity he shared with the learned gentleman sitting near him.

All those at the board looked with some intentness at the figure of the young man from the north, who came as the guest of Montague. With small formality the latter rose and advanced to meet Law with an eager grasp of the hand. He made him known to the others present promptly, but with a half apology.

"Gentlemen," said he, "I have made bold to ask the presence with us of a young man who has much concerned himself with problems such as those which we have now in hand. Sir Isaac Newton, this is Mr. Law of Edinboro'. Mr. Law, the fame of John Locke I need not lay before you, and of my Lord Somers you need no advice. Mr. Law, I shall ask you to be seated.

"I shall but serve as your mouthpiece to the court, gentlemen," resumed Montague, seating himself and turning at once to the business of the day. "We are all agreed as to the urgency of the case. The King needs behind him in these times a contented people. You have already seen the imminence of a popular discontent which may shake the throne of England, none too safe in these days of change. That we must reorganize the coinage is understood and agreed. The question is, How best to do this without further unsettling the times. My Lord Keeper, I must beg you for your suggestions.

"Sir," said Somers, shifting and coughing, "it is as you say. The question is of great moment. I should suggest a decree that the old coin shall pass by weight alone and not by its face value. Call in all the coin and have it weighed, the Government to make future payment to the owner of the coin of the difference between its nominal and its real value. The coin itself should be restored forthwith to its owner. Hence the trade and the credit of the realm would not suffer. The money of the country would be withdrawn from the use of the country only that short time wherein it was in process of counting. This, it occurs to me, would surely be a practical method, and could work harm to none." My Lord Somers sat back, puffing out his chest complacently.

"Sir Isaac," said Montague, "and Mr. Locke, we must beg you to find such fault as you may with this plan which My Lord Keeper hath suggested."

Sir Isaac made no immediate reply. John Locke stirred gently in his chair. "There seemeth much to commend in this plan of my Lord Keeper," said he, leaning slightly forward, "but in pondering my Lord Keeper's suggestion for the bringing in of this older coin, I must ask you if this plan can escape that selfish impulse of the human mind which seeketh for personal gain? For, look you, short as would be the time proposed, it taketh but still shorter time to mutilate a coin; and it doth seem to me that, under the plan of my Lord Keeper, we should see the old currency of England mutilated in a night. Sir, I should opine in the contrary of this plan, and would base my decision upon certain principles which I believe to be ever present in the human soul."

Montague cast down his eye for a moment. "Sir Isaac," at length he began, "we are relying very much upon you. Is there no suggestion which you can make on this ticklish theme?"

The large, full face of the great man was turned calmly and slowly upon the speaker. His deep and serene eye apparently saw not so much the man before him as the problem which lay on that man's mind.

"Sir," said Sir Isaac, "as John Locke hath said, this is after all much a matter of clear reasoning. There comes into this problem two chief questions: First, who shall pay the expense of the recoinage? Shall the Government pay the expense, or shall the owner of the coin, who is to obtain good coin for evil?

"Again, this matter appleth not to one man, but to many men. Now, if one half the tradesmen of England rush to us with their coin for reminting, surely the trade of the country will have left not sufficient medium with which to prosper. This I take to be the second part of this problem.

"There be certain persons of the realm who claim that we may keep our present money as it is, but mark from its face a certain amount of value. Look you, now, this were a small thing; yet, in my mind, it clearly seemeth dishonesty. For, if I owe my neighbor a debt, let us say for an hundred sovereigns, shall I not be committing injustice upon my neighbor if I pay him an hundred sovereigns less that deduction which the realm may see fit thus to impose upon the face of my sovereign? This, in justice, sirs, I hold it to be not the part of science, nor the part of honesty, neither of statesmanship, to indorse."

"Sir Isaac," cried Montague, striking his nervous hands upon the table, "recoin we must. But how, and, as you say, at whose expense? We are as far now from a plan as when we started. We but multiply difficulties. What we need now is not so much negative measures as positive ones. We must do this thing, and we must do it promptly. The question is still of how it may best be done. Mr. Law, by your leave and by the leave of these gentlemen here present, I shall take the liberty of asking you if there doth occur to your mind any plan by which we may be relieved of certain of these difficulties. I am aware, sir, that you are much a student in these matters."

A grave silence fell upon all. John Law, young, confident and arrogant in many ways as he was, none the less possessed sobriety and depth of thought, just as he possessed the external dignity to give it fitting vehicle. He gazed now at the men before him, not with timorousness or trepidation. His face was grave, and he returned their glances calmly as he rose and made the speech which, unknown to himself, was presently to prove so important in his life.

"My Lords," said he, "and gentlemen of this council, I am ill-fitted to be present here, and ill-fitted to add my advice to that which has been given. It is not for me to go beyond the purpose of this meeting, or to lay before you certain plans of my own regarding the credit of nations. I may start, as does our learned friend, simply from established principles of human nature.

"It is true that the coinage is a creature of the government. Yet I believe it to be true that the government lives purely upon credit; which is to say, the confidence of the people in that government.

"Now, we may reason in this matter perhaps from the lesser relations of our daily life. What manner of man do we most trust among those whom we meet? Surely, the honest man, the plain man, the one whose directness and integrity we do not doubt. Truly you may witness the nature of such a man in the manner of his speech, in his mien, in his conduct. Therefore, my Lords and gentlemen, it seems to me plain that we shall best gain confidence for ourselves if we act in the most simple fashion.

"Let us take up this matter directly with Parliament, not seeking to evade the knowledge of Parliament in any fashion; for, as we know, the Parliament and the King are not the best bed fellows these days, and the one is ready enough to suspect the other. Let us have a bill framed for Parliament—such bill made upon the decisions of these learned gentlemen present. Above all things, let us act with perfect openness.

"As to the plan itself, it seems that a few things may be held safe and sure. Since we cannot use the old coin, then surely we must have new coin, milled coin, which Charles, the earlier King of England, has decreed. Surely, too, as our learned friend has wisely stated, the loss in any recoinage ought, in full justice and honesty, to fall not upon the people of England, but upon the Government of England. It seems equally plain to me there must be a day set after which the old coin may no longer be used. Set it some months ahead, not, as my Lord Keeper suggests, but a few days; so that full notice may be given to all. Make your campaign free and plain, and place it so that it may be known, not only of Parliament, but of all the world. Thus you establish yourselves in the confidence of Parliament and in the good graces of this people, from whom the taxes must ultimately come."

Montague's hands smote again upon the table with a gesture of conviction. John Locke shifted again in his chair. Sir Isaac and the Lord Keeper gazed steadfastly at this young man who stood before them, calmly, assuredly, and yet with no assumption in his mien.

"Moreover," went on John Law, calmly, "there is this further benefit to be gained, as I am sure my countryman, Mr. Paterson, has long ago made plain. It is not a question of the wealth of England, but a question of the confidence of the people in the throne. There is money in abundance in England. It is the province of my Lord Chancellor to wheedle it out of those coffers where it is concealed and place it before the uses of the King. Gentlemen, it is confidence that we need. There will be no trouble to secure loans of money in this rich land, but the taxes must be the pledge to your bankers. This new Bank of England will furnish you what moneys you may need. Secure them only by the pledge of such taxes as you feel the people may not resent; give the people, free of cost, a coinage which they can trust; and then, it seems, to me, my lords and gentlemen, the problem of the revenue may be thought solved simply and easily—solved, too, without irritating either the people or the Parliament, or endangering the relations of Parliament and the throne."

The conviction which fell upon all found its best expression in the face of Montague. The youth and nervousness of the man passed away upon the instant. He sat there sober and thoughtful, quiet and resolved.

"Gentlemen," said he at last, slowly, "my course is plain from this instant. I shall draw the bill and it shall go to Parliament. The expense of this recoinage I am sure we can find maintained by the stockholders of the Bank of England, and for their pay we shall propose a new tax upon the people of England. We shall tax the windows of the houses of England, and hence tax not only the poor but the rich of England, and that proportionately with their wealth. As for the coin of England, it shall be honest coin, made honest and kept honest, at no cost to the people of old England. Sirs, my heart is lighter than it has been for many days."

The last trace of formality in the meeting having at length vanished, Montague made his way rapidly to the foot of the table. He caught Law by both his hands.

"Sir," said he, "you helped us at the last stage of our ascent. A mistake here had been ruinous, not only to myself and friends, but to the safety of the whole Government. You spoke wisely and practically. Sir, if I can ever in all my life serve you, command me, and at whatever price you name. I am not yet done with you, sir," resumed Montague, casting his arm boyishly about the other's shoulder as they walked out. "We must meet again to discuss certain problems of the currency which, I bethink me, you have studied deeply. Keep you here in London, for I shall have need of you. Within the month, perhaps within the week, I shall require you. England needs men who can do more than dawdle. Pray you, keep me advised where you may be found."

There was ill omen in the light reply. "Why, as to that, my lord," said Law, "if you should think my poor service useful, your servants might get trace of me at the Green Lion—unless I should be in prison! No man knoweth what may come."

Montague laughed lightly. "At the Green Lion, or in Newgate itself," said he. "Be ready, for I have not yet done with you."

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESOLUTION OF MR. LAW.

The problems of England's troubled finances, the questions of the coinage, the gossip of the King's embroilments with the Parliament—these things, it may again be said, occupied Law's mind far less than the question of gaining audience with his fair rescuer of the morn at Sadler's Wells. This was the puzzle which, revolve it as he might, not even his audacious wit was able to provide with plausible solution. He pondered the matter in a hundred different pleasing phases as he passed from the Bank of England through the crowded streets of London, and so at length found himself at the shabby little lodgings in Bradwell street, where he and his brother had, for the time, taken up their quarters.

"It starteth well, my boy," cried he, gayly, to his brother, when at length he had found his way up the narrow stair into the little room, and discovered Will patiently awaiting his return. "Already two of my errands are well acquit."

"You have, then, sent the letters to our goldsmith here?" said Will.

"Now to say truth, I had not thought of that. But letters of credit—why need we trouble over such matters? These English are but babes. Give me a night or so in the week at the Green Lion and we'll need no letters of credit, Will. Look at your purse, boy—since you are the thrifty cashier of our firm!"

"I like not this sort of gold," said Will Law, setting his lips judicially.

"Yet it seems to purchase well as any," said the other, indifferently. "At least, such is my hope, for I have made debt against our purse of some fifty sovereigns—some little apparel which I have ordered. For, look you, Will, I must be clothed proper. In these days, as I may tell you, I am to meet such men as Montague, chancellor of the exchequer—my Lord Keeper Somers—Sir Isaac Newton—Mr. John Locke—gentry of that sort. It is fitting I should have better garb than this which we have brought with us."

"You are ever free with some mad jest or other, Jack; but what is this new madness of which you speak?"

"No madness at all, my dear boy; for in fact I have but come from the council chamber, where I have met these very gentlemen whom I have named to you. But pray you note, my dear brother, there are those who hold John Law and his studies not so light as doth his own brother. For myself, the matter furnishes no surprise at all. As for you, you had never confidence in me, nor in yourself. Gad! Will, hadst but the courage of a flea, what days we two might have together here in this old town!"

"I want none of such days, Jack," said Will Law, soberly. "I care most to see you settled in some decent way of living. What will your mother say, if we but go on gaming and roistering, with dangers of some sudden quarrel—as this which has already sprung up—with no given aim in life, with nothing certain for an ambition—"

"Now, Will," began his brother, yet with no petulance in his tone, "pray go not too hard with me at the start. I thought I had done fairly well to sit at the table of the council of coinage on my first day in London. 'Tis not every young man gets so far as that. Come, now, Will!"

"But after all there must be serious purpose."

"Know then," cried the elder man, suddenly, "that I have found such serious purpose!"

The speaker stood looking out of the window, his eye fixed out across the roofs of London. There had now fallen from his face all trace of levity, and into his eye and mouth there came a reflex of the decision of his speech. Will stirred in his chair and at length the two faced each other.

"And pray, what is this sudden resolution, Jack?" said Will Law.

"If I must tell you, it is simply this: I am resolved to marry the girl we met at Sadler's Wells."

"How—what—?"

"Yes, how—what—?" repeated his brother, mockingly.

"But I would ask, which?"

"There was but one," said John Law. "The tall one with the brassy-brown, copper-red hair, the bright blue eye and the figure of a queen. Her like is not in all the world!"

"Methought 'twas more like to be the other," replied Will. "Yet you—how dare you think thus of that lady? Why, Jack, 'twas the Lady Catherine Knollys, sister of the Earl of Banbury!"

Law did not at once make any answer. He turned to the dressing table and began making such shift as he could to better his appearance.

"Will," said he at length, "you are, as ever, a babe and a suckling. I quite despair of you. 'Twould serve no purpose to explain anything to so faint a heart as yours. But you may come with me."

"And whither?"

"Whither? Where else than to the residence of this same lady! Look you, I have learned this. She is, as you say, the sister of the Earl of Banbury, and is for the time at the town house in Knightwell Terrace. Moreover, if that news be worth while to so white-feathered a swain as yourself, the other damsel, the dark one—that one with the mighty pretty little foot—lives there for the time as the guest of Lady Catherine. They are rated thick as peas in a pod. True, we are strangers, yet I venture we have made a beginning and if we venture more we may better that beginning. Should I falter, when luck gave me the run of trente et la va but yesterday? Nay, ever follow fortune hard and she waits for you."

"Yes," said Will, scornfully. "You get the name of gambler and add to it the name of fortune-hunting, heiress-seeking adventurer."

"Not so," replied John Law, taking snuff calmly and still keeping the evenness of his temper. "My own fortune, as I admit, I keep safe at the Green Lion. For the rest, I seek at the start only respectful footing with this maid herself. When first I saw her I knew well enough how the end would be. We were made for each other. This whole world was made for us both. Will, boy, I could not live without the Lady Catherine Knollys!"

"Oh, cease such talk, Jack! 'Tis ill-mannered, such presumption regarding a lady, even had you known her long. Besides, 'tis but another of your fancies, Jack," said Will. "Wilt never make an end of such follies?"

"Yes, my boy," said his brother gravely. "I have made an end. Indeed, I made it the other morning at Sadler's Wells."

"Methinks," said Will, dryly, "that it might be well first to be sure that you can win past the front door of the house of Knollys."

John Law still kept both his temper and his confidence.

"Come with me," said he blithely, "and I will show you how that thing may be done."

CHAPTER VII.

TWO MAIDS A-BROIDERING.

"Now a plague take all created things, Lady Kitty!" cried Mary Connynge, petulantly flinging down a silken pattern over which she had pretended to be engaged. "There are devils in the skeins to-day. I'll try no more with't."

"Fie! For shame, Mary Connynge," replied Lady Catharine Knollys, reprovingly. "So far from better temperance of speech, didst ever hear of the virtue of perseverance? Now, for my own part—"

"And what, for your own part? Have I no eyes to see that thou'rt puttering over the same corner this last half hour? What is it thou art making to-day?"

The Lady Catharine paused for a moment and held her embroidery frame away from her at arm's length, looking at it with brow puckering into a perplexed frown.

"I was working a knight," said she. "A tall one—"

"Yes, a tall one, with yellow hair, I warrant."

"Why, so it was. I was but seeking floss of the right hue, and found it difficult."

"And with blue eyes?"

"True; or perhaps gray. I could not state which. I had naught in my box would serve to suit me for the eyes. But how know you this, Mary Connynge?" asked Lady Catharine.

"Because I was making some such knight for myself," replied the other. "See! He was to have been tall, a good figure, wearing a wide hat and plume withal. But lest I spoil him, my knight—now a plague take me indeed if I do not ruin him complete!" So saying, she drew with vengeful fingers at the intricate woven silks until she had indeed undone all that had gone before.

"Nay, nay! Mary Connynge! Do not so!" replied Lady Catharine in expostulation. "The poor knight, how could he help himself? Why, as for mine, though I find him not all I could wish, I'll e'en be patient as I may, and seek if I may not mend him. These knights, you know, are most difficult. 'Tis hard to make them perfect."

Mary Connynge sat with her hands in her lap, looking idly out of the window and scarce heeding the despoiled fabric which lay on her lap. "Come, confess, Lady Kitty," said she at length, turning toward her friend. "Wert not trying to copy a knight of a hedge-row after all? Did not a certain tall young knight, with eyes of blue, or gray, or the like, give pattern for your sampler while you were broidering to-day?"

"Fie! For shame!" again replied Lady Catharine, flushing none the less. "Rather ask, does not such a thought come over thine own broidering? But as to the hedge-row, surely the gentleman explained it all proper enough; and I am sure—yes, I am very sure—that my brother Charles had quite approved of my giving the injured young man a lift in the coach—"

"Provided that your brother Charles had ever heard of such a thing!"

"Well, of that, to be sure, why trouble my brother over such a trifle, when 'twas so obviously proper?" argued Lady Catharine, bravely. "And certainly, if we come to knights and the like, good chivalry has ever demanded succor for those in distress; and if, forsooth, it was two damsels in a comfortable coach who rescued two knights from underneath a hedgerow, why, such is but the way of these modern days, when knights go seeking no more for adventures and ladies fair; as you very well know."

"As I do not know, Lady Catharine," replied Mary Connynge. "To the contrary, 'twould not surprise me to learn that he would not shrink from any adventure which might offer."

"You mean—that is—you mean the tall one, him who said he was Mr. Law of Lauriston?"

"Well, perhaps. Though I must say," replied Mary Connynge, with indirection, "that I fancy the other far more, he being not so forward, nor so full of pure conceit. I like not a man so confident." This with an eye cast down, as much as though there were present in the room some man subject to her coquetry.

"Why, I had not found him offering such an air," replied Lady Catharine, judicially. "I had but thought him frank enough, and truly most courteous."

"Why, truly," replied Mary Connynge. "But saw you naught in his eye?"

"Why, but that it was blue, or gray," replied Lady Catharine.

"Oh, ho! then my lady did look a bit, after all! And so this is why the knight flourisheth so bravely in silks to-day—Fie! but a mere adventurer, Lady Kitty. He says he is Law of Lauriston; but what proof doth he offer? And did he find such proof, it is proof of what? For my part, I did never hear of Lauriston nor its owner."

"Ah, but that I have, to the contrary," said Lady Catharine. "John Law's father was a goldsmith, and it was he who bought the properties of Lauriston and Randleston. And so far from John Law being ill-born, why, his mother was Jean Campbell, kinswoman of the Campbell, Duke of Argyll; and a mighty important man is the Duke of Argyll these days, I may tell you, as the King's army hath discovered before this. You see, I have not talked with my brother about these things for naught."

"So you make excuse for this Mr. Law of Lauriston," said Mary Connynge. "Well, I like better a knight who comes on his own horse, or in his own chariot, and who rescues me when I am in trouble, rather than asks me to give him aid. But, as to that, what matter? We set those highway travelers down, and there was an end of it. We shall never see either of them again."

"Of course not," said Lady Catharine. "It were impossible."

"Oh, quite impossible!"

Both the young women sighed, and both looked out of the window.

"Because," said Mary Connynge, "they are but strangers. That talk of having letters may be but deceit. They themselves may be coiners. I have heard it said that coiners are monstrous bold."

"To be sure, he mentioned Sir Arthur Pembroke," ventured Lady Catharine.

"Oh! And be sure Sir Arthur Pembroke will take pains enough that no tall young man, who offers roses to ladies on first acquaintance, shall ever have opportunity to present himself to Lady Catharine Knollys. Nay, nay! There will be no introduction from that source, of that be sure. Sir Arthur is jealous as a wolf of thee already, Lady Kitty. See! He hath followed thee about like a dog for three years. And after all, why not reward him, Lady Kitty? Indeed, but the other day thou wert upon the very point of giving him his answer, for thou saidst to me that he sure had the prettiest eyes of any man in London. Pray, are Sir Arthur's eyes blue or gray—or what? And can you match his eyes among the color of your flosses?"

"It might be," said Lady Catharine, musingly, "that he would some day find means to send us word."

"Who? Sir Arthur?"

"No. The young man, Mr. Law of Lauriston."

"Yes; or he might come himself," replied Mary Connynge.

"Fie! He dare not!"

"Oh, but be not too sure. Now suppose he did come—'twill do no harm for us to suppose so much as that. Suppose he stood there at your very door, Lady Kitty. Then what would you do?"

"Do! Why, tell James that we were not in, and never should be, and request the young man to leave at once."

"And never let him pass the door again."

"Certainly not! 'Twould be presumption. But then"—this with a gentle sigh—"we need not trouble ourselves with this. I doubt not he hath forgot us long ago, just as indeed we have forgotten him—though I would say—. But I have believe he hit thee, girl, with his boldness and his bow, and his fearlessness withal."

"Who, I? Why, heavens! Lady Kitty! The idea never came to my mind. Indeed no, not for an instant. Of course, as you say, 'twas but a passing occurrence, and 'twas all forgot. But, by the way, Lady Kitty, go we to Sadler's Wells to-morrow morn?"

"I see no reason for not going," replied Lady Catharine. "And we may drive about, the same way we took the other morn. I will show you the same spot where he stood and bowed so handsomely, and made so little of the fight with the robbers the night before, as though 'twere trifling enough; and made so little of his poverty, as though he were owner of the King's coin."

"But we shall never see him more," said Mary Connynge.

"To be sure not. But just to show you—see! He stood thus, his hat off, his eye laughing, I pledge you, as though for some good jest he had. And 'twas 'your pardon, ladies!' he said, as though he were indeed nobleman himself. See! thus."

What pantomime might have followed did not appear, for at that moment the butler appeared at the door with an admonitory cough. "If you please, your Ladyship," said he, "there are two persons waiting. They—that is to say, he—one of them, asks for admission to your Ladyship."

"What name does he offer, James?"

"Mr. John Law of Lauriston, your Ladyship, is the name he sends. He says, if your Ladyship please, that he has brought with him something which your Ladyship left behind, if your Ladyship please."

Lady Catharine and Mary Connynge had both arisen and drawn together, and they now turned each a swift glance upon the other.

"Are these gentlemen waiting without the street door?" asked Lady Catharine.

"No, your Ladyship. That is to say, before I thought, I allowed the tall one to come within."

"Oh, well then, you see, Mary Connynge," replied Lady Catharine, with the pink flush rising in her cheek, "it were rude to turn them now from our door, since they have already been admitted."

"Yes, we will send to the library for your brother," said Mary Connynge, dimpling at the corners of her mouth.

"No, I think it not needful to do that," replied Lady Catharine, "but we should perhaps learn what this young man brings and then we'll see to it that we chide him so that he'll no more presume upon our kindness. My brother need not know and we ourselves will end this forwardness at once, Mary Connynge, you and I. James, you may bring the gentlemen in."

Enter, therefore, John Law and his brother Will, the former seeming thus with ease to have made good his promise to win past the door of the Earl of Banbury.

John Law, as on the morning of the roadside meeting, approached in advance of his more timid brother, though both bowed deeply as they entered. He bowed again respectfully, his eyes not wandering hither and yon upon the splendors of this great room in an ancestral home of England. His gaze was fixed rather upon the beauty of the tall girl before him, whose eyes, now round and startled, were not quite able to be cold nor yet to be quite cast down; whose white throat throbbed a bit under its golden chain; whose bosom rose and fell perceptibly beneath its falls of snowy laces.

"Lady Catharine Knollys," said Johno Law, his voice deep and even, and showing no false note of embarrassment, "we come, as you may see, to make our respects to yourself and your friend, and to thank you for your kindness to two strangers."

"To two strangers, Mr. Law," said Lady Catharine, pointedly.

"Yes"—and the answering smile was hard to be denied—"to two strangers who are still strangers. I did but bethink me it was sweet to have such kindness. We were advised that London was cruel cold, and that all folk of this city hated their fellowmen. So, since 'twas welcome to be thus kindly entreated, I believed it but the act of courtesy to express our thanks more seeming than we might as that we were two beggars by the wayside. Therefore, I pay the first flower of my perpetual tribute." He bowed and extended, as he spoke, a deep red rose. His eye, though still direct, was as much imploring as it was bold.

Instinctively Mary Connynge and Lady Catharine had drawn together, retreating somewhat from this intrusion. They were now standing, like any school girls, looking timidly over their shoulders, as he advanced. Lady Catharine hesitated, and yet she moved forward a half pace, as though bidden by some unheard voice. "'Twas nothing, what we did for you and your brother," said she. She extended her hand as she spoke. "As for the flower, I think—I think a rose is a sweet-pretty thing."

She bent her cheek above the blossom, and whether the cheek or the petal were the redder, who should say? If there were any ill at ease in that room, it was not Law of Lauriston. He stood calm as though there by right. It was an escapade, an adventure, without doubt, as both these young women saw plainly enough. And now, what to do with this adventure since it had arrived?

"Sir," said Lady Catharine at length, "I am sure you must be wearied with the heavy heats of the town. Your brother must still be weak from his hurt. Pray you, be seated." She placed the rose upon the tabouret as she passed, and presently pulled at the bell cord.

"James," said she, standing very erect and full of dignity, "go to the library and see if Sir Charles be within."

When the butler's solemn cough again gave warning, it was to bring information which may or may not have been news to Lady Catharine. "Your Ladyship," said he, "Sir Charles is said to have taken carriage an hour ago, and left no word."

"Send me Cecile, James," said Lady Catharine, and again the butler vanished.

"Cecile," said she, as the maid appeared, "you may serve us with tea."

CHAPTER VIII.

CATHARINE KNOLLYS.

"You mistake, sir! I am no light o' love, John Law!"

Thus spoke Catherine Knollys. She stood near the door of the great drawing-room of the Knollys mansion, her figure becoming well its framing of deep hangings and rich tapestries. Her eyes were wide and flashing, her cheeks deeply pink, the sweet bow of her lips half a-quiver in her vehemence. Her surpassing personal beauty, rich, ripe, enticing, gave more than sufficient challenge for the fiery blood of the young man before her.

It was less than two weeks since these two had met. Surely the flood of time had run swiftly in those few days. Not a day had passed that Law had not met Catharine Knollys, nor had yet one meeting been such as the girl in her own conscience dared call better than clandestine, even though they met, as now, under her roof. Yet reason as she liked, struggle as she could, Catharine Knollys had not yet been quite able to end this swift voyaging on the flood of fate. It was so strange, so new, so sweet withal, this coming of her suitor, as from the darkness of some unknown star, so bold, so strong, so confident, and yet so humble! All the old song of the ages thrilled within her soul, and each day its compelling melody had accession. That this delirious softening of all her senses meant danger, the Lady Catharine could not deny. Yet could aught of earth be wrong when it spelled such happiness, such sweetness—when the sound of a footfall sent her blood going faster, when the sight of a tall form, the ring of a vibrant tone, caused her limbs to weaken, her throat to choke?

But ah! whence and why this spell, this sorcery—why this sweetness filling all her