

The Unfortunate Elenor *Hampshire Chronicle* 3 January, 1785

Crop'd this fair rose, and rifled all its sweetness;
Then threw it like a vile defoiled weed away.

The mind of Elenor was spotless, her face was beautiful, and her person was perfect; at fifteen she appeared an intermediate being, between mortal and immortal; her eye beamed angelic benignity, and the grace of heaven emanated from her smiles.

On the same day which ushered Elenor into the world, she was deprived of her mother; the hour which brought her into life, was accompanied with one of the heaviest misfortunes to which life is incident.

The education of Elenor became the sole object of her father's care. His fortune was competent; his learning extensive, but he knew books better than men, and judged of others from the measure of his own rectitude. The father of Elenor was of a philosophic turn, he had investigated religion superficially and had rashly concluded every religion to be merely *political*. It was his opinion that *morality* alone was the great foundation for *happiness* in this world and the next. A dogmatist in this principle, he retired into the Isle of Wight, resolved to undertake the education of his daughter.

Elenor was taught by her father that the height and value of virtue consisted in the facility, utility and pleasure of its exercise. That she was the source as well as fosterer of all human pleasures; and that her rules, by rendering them just rendered them permanent. That she should be followed for her own sake. – He brought her up in the exercise of all good works.; she was a blessing to the neighbourhood of her residence, and the old and the young looked up to her as a creature more than human. Elenor was deeply read in the heathen philosophy, but totally ignorant of the divine law. She understood Locke and Newton, but knew nothing of the doctrine of redemption.

A student of Lincoln's Inn spent the summer vacation in a lodging house near the habitation of Elenor, and an intimacy took place between him and her father.

Melvil had a manly figure and penetrating eye. To a good figure he had joined the accomplishments of modern manners and those graces which are acquired from the instruction of the fencing and dancing masters. He had made the grand tour and knew the world. He was a master of music, spoke French and Italian fluently and was intimate with the polite arts. In appearance and conversation Melvil was a gentleman and a scholar.

Unhappily for poor Elenor, Melvil, like her father was a philosopher – but, alas! possessed neither *religion* nor *morality*. - The father of Elenor had principles of honesty and humanity – Melvil had neither.

Frequent disputations arose and were carried on with warmth between Melvil and the old gentleman, and Elenor was often called upon to act as umpire. She could not account for the cause – but she found an involuntary influence incline her to decide in favour of Melvil, even when her judgement decide [sic] for her father – This was *nature*.

In the conversation of Melvil, Elenor found peculiar delight – This was *nature* too. The serenity of her mind was, for the first time, disturbed by unusual sensations. They played about her heart, and sparkled in her eyes, - her complexion and her conversation became more animated: she who never before consulted her glass but from convenience, now frequently consulted it to study the effect of ornaments. – Here was *nature* operating again. Elenor did everything to gain the attention of Melvil. Melvil was a villain – he had studied women; he saw the workings of Elenor's passion, and resolved to indulge the impulse of his sensuality, tho' her ruin should pay the price. He increased [sic] his assiduities, studied her foibles, and complimented them, procured her such books as soften the heart to sensibility, and made love the sole object of his conversations: He impressed all the pleasing ideas of this passion upon the heart of Elenor, and established himself the object of her tenderest wishes, before he declared that she was the object of his – Elenor received the declaration with rapture, and oaths of eternal fidelity were exchanged.

Poor Elenor had no religion – she had nothing to assist her virtue against the assaults of *nature* and *art*, but her *philosophy*. *Nature* had possession of the citadel within, and Melvil

commanded there. One unfortunate evening, Elenor's *philosophy* being off its guard, *Nature* surrendered to the enemy, and poor *Virtue* was dislodged.

The vacation being over, Melvil returned to London, leaving Elenor in a situation which might naturally be expected from her intimacy with him. She soon after read an account of his marriage in a public print which threw her into fits, and discovered her unhappy situation to her father. The father of Elenor sought comfort from his philosophy in vain; and not having the aid of religion to support him in this critical moment of trial, died of a broken heart – nor did Elenor long survive; they were laid in the same grave within a month of each other.

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The Talisman of Truth, a Tale. *Hampshire Chronicle* 1 August, 1785
'From the Countess of Rosenburg's "Letters" lately published.'¹

How plentiful source of misfortune is an extravagant imagination! The pleasures which it procures us, are much inferior to the sufferings we oft experience from it. Although inward contentment, accompanied by outward circumstances of prosperity, form the most unhappy states, an unbounded imagination may destroy this contentment, and render useless the most propitious favours of fortune. I have known some striking examples of this truth. I have seen a young man to appearances, the most worthy of being envied, who nevertheless merited compassion and pity.

Observe the method I took to convince him, that he was the author of his own misfortunes, and that it depended only on himself to know and to remove the cause of them.

He was very fond of oriental tales: I wrote a short one, somewhat in the Arabian style. Although that manner might not have been sufficiently sustained to gratify his high relish of this species of writing, my story clearly conveyed the council I wanted to give him; and I will beg the reader's acceptance of it.

An Indian king, a descendent and favourite of the powerful Genii who preside over the destiny of the most distinguished mortals, had a son, long the sole object of his wishes, whose birth overwhelmed him with joy. He implored the auspices of the heavenly powers; two Genii instantly flew down in opposite directions and stopped their flight in the court of the palace, amidst the acclamations and transports of the people for the happy event of the prince's nativity. They were invisible to everybody but the king, and appeared before him at that moment when the newborn infant was to be shewn, for the first time, to the grandees of the kingdom.

By some unfortunate circumstances these two Genii were rivals, mentioned in the ancient Tartarian tales, one of them always made a point of artfully opposing the undertakings of the other.

The good Genius approached the child, and, after having shook his golden wings over him, pronounced these words:

"Beloved infant! I endow thee with all possible gifts of person and understanding; the knowledge of the sciences, the gift of languages, and every agreeable talent that all men may admire, and all women adore thee. I add honours and riches. Be the wonder of thy age."

"Yes," continued the rival Genius, advancing to the other side of the cradle, and blowing a feverish blast upon the forehead of the child. "Yes, I confirm all these gifts; and I will add to them, that of the most ardent and extensive imagination. By that thou wilt embrace objects, the most distant asunder, under one interesting view, and animate beings the least susceptible of life; by that the language of thy tongue, and of thy pen, shall glow with the brightest colours of poetry, and excite universal admiration; by that thou wilt form thyself a new creation, and a new order of things; thou shalt find charms and interest in a thousand objects on which men of confined fancy look with coldness and insensibility. This my gift shall carry thy desires beyond the bounds of nature."

The father could not contain his joy, as he listened to such glorious advantages, announced to his child by two mighty powers, who would infallibly bestow them. But the first Genius was grieved at what he heard: he understood the treacherous and double sense of his rival's words. In the benevolence of his spirit he let fall a tear, unobserved, on the bosom of the infant.

Having seen his colleague depart, he approached the father, and taking from his arm a talisman, gave it to him, saying, "Forget not to put this stone into the hands of thy child, as soon as he shall have attained the age of reason: it is called *The Talisman of Truth*. Teach

¹ No trace in either COPAC or the British Library catalogue.

the young man to apply it to his forehead, whenever, transported by his extravagant imagination, he loses sight of the impossibility of accomplishing the desire of his heart.”

The good Genius knew that the virtue of his present would enable the young prince to render abortive the wishes, and to triumph over the persecution, of his evil antagonist.

The father took care to deposit the precious talisman in a place of safety; but being suddenly surprised by death, he had not time to communicate to his princess or any other person whatever, the information which the Genius had given him, nor to indicate the place where he had concealed the talisman.

The young prince arriving at the age of reason much sooner than ordinary, began to display the immense riches of his mind, and the talent with which he was endowed by the good Genius. From the first moment of his launching into the career of his studies, he astonished everybody by the promptitude of his perception: his perceptions could hardly supply the veracity of his understanding, and the extent of his memory. At the same time he shewed the finest disposition of the polite arts: nothing more was requisite than to indicate them, by placing specimens before him; he would anticipate their principles, divine their rules, and instantaneously point out their characteristic excellencies. A sight so surprising excited the greatest admiration: the most scrupulous observers acknowledged the novelty of the phenomenon, and the multitude struck only with the gracefulness of his figure, regarded him as a wonder.

But scarcely had he advanced beyond the state of childhood, and felt the first ardour or youth, when the fate pronounced upon him by the bad Genius, was accomplished, and the fire of an excellent imagination was lighted up in his mind. By little and little his ideas became gigantic, and his desires immoderate: the excess of this gift, so agreeable when it is governed by reason, proved his severest torment. Nothing that he saw, nought of all that which surrounded him, could content or fill his mind: everything appeared beneath him and his sensations, it was in his imagination alone that he found objects suitable to his extravagant conceptions: he disdained realities; they inspired him with disgust. Drawn aside by the force of this tyrannical imagination it was not without restraint that he took a part in society, or could bear his existence in the face of the world! His ideas transported him so far beyond the limits of common sense, that nobody was able to follow him. He led an agitated and melancholy life in the midst of happy circumstances. The fatal fire consumed and preyed upon his health, and kept him in a state of continual suffering, difficult to be comprehended by those who were unacquainted with its cause.

He wandered about the apartments of his spacious palace; he sought its most retired corners, where the statues and monuments of his ancestors suggested ideas which soon transported his imagination beyond the bounds of the universe. As in this situation he was contemplating on death, and the immensity of eternal existence, the last relics of his beloved father, which had been deposited at the foot of a sacred urn containing his ashes, one day through some secret inspiration, excited his curiosity. He determined to see and examine them; and among the sabre, the bow, the royal turban, and other precious remains, he was struck with the brilliancy of an unknown stone, richly set, and surrounded by these words: “My son, apply this stone to thy forehead, it is the gift of the good Genius who presided at thy birth; it contains a remedy for all thy ills.”

The young man obeyed; and the touch, in an instant, dispersed the poisonous vapour he had inhaled from the blasting breath of the evil Genius. A sudden calm took possession of his soul; his extravagant ideas, his disordered and impracticable desires vanished; truth spread its clear and constant light over his imagination: and the prince was restored to himself, and became sensible of his happy lot, and the just value of those objects which ought to interest and affect him.

All his other endowments shone out now to his own glory, and the benefit of human nature. His imagination, moderate in comparison of its former exercises, but always lively and active, added charms to his sensations, and gave a new interest to his conversation. He now found his happiness to consist in adding to that of others; he loved his fellow creatures and in return, was cherished and admired by them.

Ali, a young Persian Prince *Hampshire Chronicle* 28 November, 1785

Ali, a young Persian Prince, was distinguished from his boyish days, for the vivacity of his manners, and a desire of knowledge. On his arrival at maturity, he could no longer repress his inclination for travel. After much solicitation he at length obtained permission of his father to pass a few months in surveying the countries, and acquainting himself with the customs and manners of Europe. Having by the assistance of an English Trader, who had found means to establish himself at his father's court, acquired a perfect knowledge of the English Language, he determined that should be the first country he visited. They embarked and after an agreeable voyage, the Prince and his faithful Englishman arrived in safety in the Thames. They immediately waited on the merchant to whom the Prince's remittances were made, and were received with an hospitality of which there is still some traces left, but which was once the brightest characteristic of an Englishman. It was the day before their annual feast, on their Chief Magistrate's entering into office, the merchant presented Ali and his friend with tickets, and provided them apartments in his own house.

After dinner, the Prince and Lawson (for so was his companion called) set out in a ramble. When they were tired of walking, they entered into a house of public entertainment, to refresh themselves and went down into a room, where a dozen respectable looking people were seated, enjoying themselves with their pipes. The entrance [sic] of the strangers did not

interrupt their conversation. One of them was haranguing on the present deplorable state of the nation and drew so lamentable a picture of poverty, weakness, and impending ruin, as brought tears into the eyes of the tender *Ali*. We shall see none of the magnificence of Persia tomorrow, said *Ali* to himself; these are a sensible people, and, as their finances are in so deplorable a situation, are two (sic) wise to add to its distress by unnecessary and useless expense. The daily papers were lying by. The first thing that struck the eye of *Ali* were numerous advertisements of public diversions; these I suppose, thought the Prince, are given by the monarch, for it is impossible the people labouring under such a load of misery can afford to support them. *Ali* would not trouble his friend with questions, time and attention, said he will clear all my doubts. They set out and soon after entered another public room where the ears of *Ali* were again assailed with the distresses of the nation.

The morrow came, and *Ali* was conducted to the hall of Justices, where the feast was to be held. On entering the room, he started back with astonishment. Can it be possible, said he to himself, can this be the seat of the *Merchants*, a people who are in a state of ruin and bankruptcy? He had no time for further reflection. A young man entered covered with mud. *Ali* imagined he had fallen down, and wondered why he had not gone into some house to clean himself; but he was petrified with surprise when a fat-paunched citizen, who was next him, and whose mouth was extended from ear to ear with pleasure at the sight, informed him that that *there* boy was Prime-Minister, and had been well pelted by the mob as he was coming to dinner. "Merciful Prophet! (cried *Ali*) what savages am I among, where they invite a man to dine with them, and yet suffer his coming to be impeded and his life endangered by their own people. When my father invites any of the neighbouring Kings, though his declared rivals and enemies, to visit him, he not only performs the rights of hospitality in his own state, but orders sufficient guard to defend them from the Arabs in the desert which lies between their kingdoms and his; but pray, Sir, (said *Ali* addressing the citizen) what enormous crime has he committed to provoke this treatment." "He has influenced the representations of the people to pass a very oppressive and partial tax," replied the citizen. "Has he been applied to again" demanded the Prince, "to repeal this injurious burthen." "There has been no opportunity", answered the other; "the assembly has not yet met since the passing of the act, and it is a Parliamentary rule never to make and repeal the same act in the same session."

"Heavens! – exclaimed *Ali*, "still more savage to attack a man without knowing whether he has seen his error, and is willing to retract it; certainly the Minister of England is expected to be possessed of infallibility. It was from the class of people then, on whom this tax has

been repressive, he has received this insult?" The citizen eyed the Prince with a look of contempt, and walking off, exclaiming, "No, no, young man, it was from the *mob*."

"You are at a loss I see, my dear Prince," (said Lawson) "to understand the meaning of a mob, I will endeavour to explain it to you. There are in this country, as in all others, two parties, those in power, and those endeavouring to get their places. In your father's court a Minister is displaced by the secret machinations of his enemies, without either public clamour or disturbance, and unless a Minister is the blackest and most despicable of tyrants, the lowest class are little concerned who is in or who is not; while here what is called a *mob*, that is, a collection of the vile and most infamous class of human beings, are the principle tools of an opposition. You will soon find that in the nation every man is a politician, and you have nothing to do but to tell these men, who have not one penny of property, and whose laborious life is ever the same, that their liberties and properties are in danger, to set them in a flame and work them up to mischief and destruction. The approaching ruin of the nation, the deplorable state of their commerce and finances, the folly and ignorance of their Minister is forever sounded forth by every lover of confusion and every needy interested, or party scribbler. The present Minister, who from what I can collect, even from the opposite party themselves, has by his wise conduct, since he has been in place, increased the revenues of the country, and filled the treasury, is now the object of their clamour." "Let him be tomorrow displaced, and the man of the people put in his office, do you imagine all would be content and peace?" "No, my dear Ali, the moment themselves have placed their favourite in his seat, that moment he will become the object of their aversion and clamour. Opposition is as necessary to this people as for yours to be attached to the religion and custom of their ancestors. A new candidate is raised for popularity; they flock to this standard, and every measure of the new Minister is attacked in the same manner as those of his predecessor. Would you acquire popularity, would you gain the applause and shouts of the multitude? Would you wish your name to be mentioned with huzzas and your health drunk in every porter-house of the metropolis, you will not gain these ends by taking on you the laborious offices of state by wasting your hours by concerting plans for the public good; no, my dear Prince, attach yourself to the opposition, abuse the Minister, rail even at Majesty itself and risk your ears in the pillory by seditious and inflammatory discourses. Should you have abilities sufficient to call forth the indignation of Government, your business is done, you are considered as the champion of liberty, and the devoted martyr of the public. They will raise you to the highest officer of the city, till Government, finding opposition but increases your consequence, either ceases to notice you, or buys your silence with pensions or with title. You then, my dear Prince, may laugh at those to whom you owe your future and give place to some new patriot to follow your steps and success. I can show you living proof of what I assert." "Gracious powers, (cried the Prince) I no longer wonder at this people's success, if heaven, as our holy Prophet teaches, has a particular care of madmen; this nation must certainly claim his protection!"

Who breaks the ice, a Tale *Hampshire Chronicle* 6 September, 1790

Three sharpers, having found means to be introduced to a king, told him, that they could weave a brocade of exquisite workmanship, and of so rare a property, that it would be invisible to any person who was base-born, dishonoured by his wife, or had been guilty of any villainy. The king, desirous to possess so great a rarity, gave them a kind reception, and allotted them a place to carry on their manufacture. He furnished them with money, gold, silver, silk, and all other materials. They fixed up their looms, and reported that they were employed all day upon the web.

After some time, one of them, waited upon the king, and acquainted him that the work was begun, and that the brocade would be the most beautiful in the world, as his majesty might be convinced if he would condescend to come and see it alone.

The king, to prove the reality of their pretensions, instead of going himself, sent his chamberlain, but without dropping any hint of the danger of imposition. The chamberlain went; but, when the weavers told him the property of the brocade, he had not courage enough to say he did not see it, but told the king that the work went on, and that the piece would be of unparalleled beauty.

The king sent another nobleman, who, from the same motive, made the same report.

After that he sent many others, who all declared they had seen the piece. At length the king went himself, and, upon entrance observed that all the weavers were diligently employed, and that their whole conversation turned about the success of their work; one saying, Here is a noble foliage! another, What a grand design; a third, How beautiful is this colour! But as he could see nothing all this time except the loom, and as he could not suspect the report which had been brought him by so many courtiers without any variation, he was struck to the heart, and began to doubt the legitimacy of his own birth. However, he thought it most prudent to disguise his sentiments; and when he returned to court, he began to express himself highly pleased with the goodness and beauty of this masterpiece of art.

At the end of three days he sent the steward of his household, who, that he might not lose his honour, praised the work even more extravagantly than the king had done. This redoubled the king's vexation; and he and all his courtiers remained in the utmost doubt and perplexity, no one daring to confess that this famous piece was a non-entity to him.

In this state the affair continued, till, upon occasion of a great festival, some courtiers pressed his majesty to have a robe made up of this silk, in honour of the day. When the weavers came to the presence chamber, and were acquainted with the king's purpose, they insisted that no one could make up the brocade so well as themselves, pretending that they had brought it with them curiously wrapt up, and busied themselves as if they were unfolding it. They also took measure of his majesty, handled their scissors [sic] and practised all the motions of persons busy cutting out.

On the festival day they returned, pretended as if they had brought the robe, made as if they were trying it on, and at length told his majesty that it fitted and adorned him beyond imagination.

The king, credulous and confounded, walked down the steps from his palace, mounted his horse, and began the solemn cavalcade, in which he was to show himself to his people, who, having heard that he who did not see the brocade must be a villain, This redoubled the king's vexation; and he and all his courtiers remained in the utmost doubt and perplexity, no one daring to confess that this famous piece was a non-entity to him.

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At length a Moor, who belonged to the king's stables, could not help crying out, "The king is in his shirt! The king is naked!" The ice was now broken. The next person to him said the same, and the confession of not seeing this imaginary brocade was soon made by every mouth; till at last the king himself, and all his courtiers, encouraged by the multitude, diverted themselves of their fears, and ventured to own the deception. Upon this, orders were given to apprehend the sharpers; but they had very wisely taken care of themselves, and made off with the money, gold, silver, silk, and other valuable materials, with which the king had supplied them.

This story may very well apply to the doctrine of libels. All the world has been accustomed, in conformity to the doctrine laid down by a person of great name (no one daring to confess that they could not perceive the equity of common-sense of the opinion,) to brand truth with the epithets of fake, scandalous, and malicious, till an Irish jury, like the Moor in the preceding tale, had the resolution to affirm that truth is truth.