

thy of the spectacle that must have absorbed them. And then, when a second fire engine drove up, with its hoses, ladders, and boilers, it looked as if, after the first hasty maneuvers, the same routine was being established; and the robust and helmeted reinforcements seemed more the guardians of an invisible fire than its adversaries. Most of the time, however, no second truck arrived, and instead one suddenly noticed that even the policemen were gone from the scene, and the fire was extinguished. No one wanted to acknowledge that it had ever been set.

Colors

In our garden there was an abandoned, ramshackle summerhouse. I loved it for its stained-glass windows. Whenever I wandered about inside it, passing from one colored pane to the next, I was transformed; I took on the colors of the landscape that—now flaming and now dusty, now smoldering and now sumptuous—lay before me in the window. It was like what happened with my watercolors, when things would take me to their bosom⁴⁶ as soon as I overcame them in a moist cloud. Something similar occurred with soap bubbles. I traveled in them throughout the room and mingled in the play of colors of the cupola, until it burst. While considering the sky, a piece of jew-

eliry, or a book, I would lose myself in colors. Children are their prey at every turn. In those days, one could buy chocolate in pretty little crisscrossed packets, in which every square was wrapped separately in colorful tinfoil. The little edifice, which a coarse gold thread kept secure, shone resplendent in its green and gold, blue and orange, red and silver; nowhere were two identically wrapped pieces to be found touching. From out of this sparkling entanglement the colors one day broke upon me, and I am still sensible of the sweetness which my eye imbibed then. It was the sweetness of the chocolate, with which the colors were about to melt—more in my heart than on my tongue. For before I could succumb to the enticements of the treat, the higher sense in me had all at once outflanked the lower and carried me away.

The Sewing Box

We were no longer familiar with the spindle that pricked Sleeping Beauty and brought on her hundred-year sleep. But just as Snow White's mother, the queen, sat at the window when it snowed, so our mother, too, used to sit at the window with her sewing; and if three drops of blood never fell from her finger, it was only because she wore a thimble while working. In fact, the tip of the