

THE GRANDISSIMES

BY GEORGE W. CABLE

PART 2/3

CHAPTER XX

A VERY NATURAL MISTAKE

MR. Raoul Innerarity proved a treasure. The fact became patent in a few hours. To a student of the community he was a key, a lamp, a lexicon, a microscope, a tabulated statement, a book of heraldry, a city directory, a glass of wine, a Book of Days, a pair of wings, a comic almanac, a diving bell, a Creole *veritas*. Before the day had had time to cool, his continual stream of words had done more to elucidate the mysteries in which his employer had begun to be befogged than half a year of the apothecary's slow and scrupulous guessing. It was like showing how to carve a strange fowl. The way he dovetailed story into story and drew forward in panoramic procession Lufki-Humma and Epaminondas Fusilier, Zephyr Grandissime and the lady of the *lettre de cachet*, Demosthenes De Grapion and the *fille à l'hôpital*, Georges De Grapion and the *fille à la cassette*, Numa Grandissime, father of the two Honorés, young Nancanou and old Agricola,--the way he made them

"Knit hands and beat the ground
In a light, fantastic round,"

would have shamed the skilled volubility of Sheharazade.

"Look!" said the story-teller, summing up; "you take hanny 'istory of France an' see the hage of my familie. Pipple talk about de Boulignys, de Sauvés, de Grandprès, de Lemoynes, de St. Maxents,--bla-a-a! De Grandissimes is as hole as de dev'! What? De mose of de Creole families is not so hold as plenty of my yallah kinfolks!"

The apothecary found very soon that a little salt improved M. Raoul's statements.

But here he was, a perfect treasure, and Frowenfeld, fleeing before his illimitable talking power in order to digest in seclusion the ancestral episodes of the Grandissimes and De Grapions, laid pleasant plans for the immediate future. To-morrow morning he would leave the shop in Raoul's care and call on M. Honoré Grandissime to advise with him concerning the retention of the born artist as a drug-clerk. To-morrow evening he would pluck courage and force his large but bashful feet up to the doorstep of Number 19 rue Bienville. And the next evening he would go and see what might be the matter with Doctor Keene, who had looked ill on last parting with the evening group that lounged in Frowenfeld's door, some three days before. The intermediate hours were to be devoted, of course, to the prescription desk and his "dead stock."

And yet after this order of movement had been thus compactly planned, there all the more seemed still to be that abroad which, now on this side, and now on that, was urging him in a nervous whisper to make haste. There had escaped into the air, it seemed, and was gliding about, the expectation of a crisis.

Such a feeling would have been natural enough to the tenants of Number 19 rue Bienville, now spending the tenth of the eighteen days of grace allowed them in which to save their little fortress.

For Palmyre's assurance that the candle burning would certainly cause the rent-money to be forthcoming in time was to Clotilde unknown, and to Aurora it was poor stuff to make peace of mind of. But there was a degree of impracticability in these ladies, which, if it was unfortunate, was, nevertheless, a part of their Creole beauty, and made the absence of any really brilliant outlook what the galaxy makes a moonless sky. Perhaps they had not been as diligent as they might have been in canvassing all possible ways and means for meeting the pecuniary emergency so fast bearing down upon them. From a Creole standpoint, they were not bad managers. They could dress delightfully on an incredibly small outlay; could wear a well-to-do smile over an inward sigh of stifled hunger; could tell the parents of their one or two scholars to consult their convenience, and then come home to a table that would make any kind soul weep; but as to estimating the velocity of bills-payable in their orbits, such trained sagacity was not theirs. Their economy knew how to avoid what the Creole-African apothegm calls *commerce Man Lizon--qui asseté pou' trois picayuns et vend' pou' ein escalin* (bought for three picayunes and sold for two); but it was an economy that made their very hound a Spartan; for, had that economy been half as wise as it was heroic, his one meal a day would not always have been the cook's leavings of cold rice and the lickings of the gumbo plates.

On the morning fixed by Joseph Frowenfeld for calling on M. Grandissime, on the banquette of the rue Toulouse, directly in front of an old Spanish archway and opposite a blacksmith's shop,--this blacksmith's shop stood between a jeweller's store and a large, balconied and dormer-windowed wine-warehouse--Aurore Nancanou, closely veiled, had halted in a hesitating way and was inquiring of a gigantic negro cartman the whereabouts of the counting-room of M. Honoré Grandissime.

Before he could respond she descried the name upon a staircase within the archway, and, thanking the cartman as she would have thanked a prince, hastened to ascend. An inspiring smell of warm rusks, coming from a bakery in the paved court below, rushed through the archway and up the stair and accompanied her into the cemetery-like silence of the counting-room. There were in the department some fourteen clerks. It was a den of Grandissimes. More than half of them were men beyond middle life, and some were yet older. One or two were so handsome, under their noble silvery locks, that almost any woman--Clotilde, for instance,--would have thought, "No doubt that one, or that one, is the head of the house." Aurora approached the railing which shut in the silent toilers and directed her eyes to the farthest corner of the room. There sat there at a large desk a thin, sickly-looking man with very sore eyes and two pairs of spectacles, plying a quill with a privileged loudness.

"H-h-m-m!" said she, very softly.

A young man laid down his rule and stepped to the rail with a silent bow. His face showed a jaded look. Night revelry, rather than care or years, had wrinkled it; but his bow was high-bred.

"Madame,"--in an undertone.

"Monsieur, it is M. Grandissime whom I wish to see," she said in French.

But the young man responded in English.

"You har one tenant, ent it?"

"Yes, seh."

"Zen eet ees M. De Brahmin zat you 'ave to see."

"No, seh; M. Grandissime."

"M. Grandissime nevva see one tenant."

"I muz see M. Grandissime."

Aurora lifted her veil and laid it up on her bonnet.

The clerk immediately crossed the floor to the distant desk. The quill of the sore-eyed man scratched louder--scratch, scratch--as though it were trying to scratch under the door of Number 19 rue Bienville--for a moment, and then ceased. The clerk, with one hand behind him and one touching the desk, murmured a few words, to which the other, after glancing under his arm at Aurora, gave a short, low reply and resumed his pen. The clerk returned, came through a gateway in the railing, led the way into a rich inner room, and turning with another courtly bow, handed her a cushioned armchair and retired.

"After eighteen years," thought Aurora, as she found herself alone. It had been eighteen years since any representative of the De Grapion line had met a Grandissime face to face, so far as she knew; even that representative was only her deceased husband, a mere connection by marriage. How many years it was since her grandfather, Georges De Grapion, captain of dragoons, had had his fatal meeting with a Mandarin de Grandissime, she did not remember. There, opposite her on the wall, was the portrait of a young man in a corslet who might have been M. Mandarin himself. She felt the blood of her race growing warmer in her veins. "Insolent tribe," she said, without speaking, "we have no more men left to fight you; but now wait. See what a woman can do."

These thoughts ran through her mind as her eye passed from one object to another. Something reminded her of Frowenfeld, and, with mingled defiance at her inherited enemies and amusement at the apothecary, she indulged in a quiet smile. The smile was still there as her glance in its gradual sweep reached a small mirror.

She almost leaped from her seat.

Not because that mirror revealed a recess which she had not previously noticed; not because behind a

costly desk therein sat a youngish man, reading a letter; not because he might have been observing her, for it was altogether likely that, to avoid premature interruption, he had avoided looking up; nor because this was evidently Honoré Grandissime; but because Honoré Grandissime, if this were he, was the same person whom she had seen only with his back turned in the pharmacy--the rider whose horse ten days ago had knocked her down, the Lieutenant of Dragoons who had unmasked and to whom she had unmasked at the ball! Fly! But where? How? It was too late; she had not even time to lower her veil. M. Grandissime looked up at the glass, dropped the letter with a slight start of consternation and advanced quickly toward her. For an instant her embarrassment showed itself in a mantling blush and a distressful yearning to escape; but the next moment she rose, all a-flutter within, it is true, but with a face as nearly sedate as the inborn witchery of her eyes would allow.

He spoke in Parisian French:

"Please be seated, madame."

She sank down.

"Do you wish to see me?"

"No, sir."

She did not see her way out of this falsehood, but--she couldn't say yes.

Silence followed.

"Whom do--"

"I wish to see M. Honoré Grandissime."

"That is my name, madame."

"Ah!"--with an angelic smile; she had collected her wits now, and was ready for war. "You are not one of his clerks?"

M. Grandissime smiled softly, while he said to himself: "You little honey-bee, you want to sting me, eh?" and then he answered her question.

"No, madame; I am the gentleman you are looking for."

"The gentleman she was look--" her pride resented the fact. "Me!"--thought she--"I am the lady whom, I have not a doubt, you have been longing to meet ever since the ball;" but her look was unmoved gravity. She touched her handkerchief to her lips and handed him the rent notice.

"I received that from your office the Monday before last."

There was a slight emphasis in the announcement of the time; it was the day of the run-over.

Honoré Grandissime, stopping with the rent-notice only half unfolded, saw the advisability of calling up all the resources of his sagacity and wit in order to answer wisely; and as they answered his call a brighter nobility so overspread face and person that Aurora inwardly exclaimed at it even while she exulted in her thrust.

"Monday before last?"

She slightly bowed.

"A serious misfortune befell me that day," said M. Grandissime.

"Ah?" replied the lady, raising her brows with polite distress, "but you have entirely recovered, I suppose."

"It was I, madame, who that evening caused you a mortification for which I fear you will accept no apology."

"On the contrary," said Aurora, with an air of generous protestation, "it is I who should apologize; I fear I injured your horse."

M. Grandissime only smiled, and opening the rent-notice dropped his glance upon it while he said in a preoccupied tone:

"My horse is very well, I thank you."

But as he read the paper, his face assumed a serious air and he seemed to take an unnecessary length of time to reach the bottom of it.

"He is trying to think how he will get rid of me," thought Aurora; "he is making up some pretext with which to dismiss me, and when the tenth of March comes we shall be put into the street."

M. Grandissime extended the letter toward her, but she did not lift her hands.

"I beg to assure you, madame, I could never have permitted this notice to reach you from my office; I am not the Honoré Grandissime for whom this is signed."

Aurora smiled in a way to signify clearly that that was just the subterfuge she had been anticipating. Had she been at home she would have thrown herself, face downward, upon the bed; but she only smiled meditatively upward at the picture of an East Indian harbor and made an unnecessary rearrangement of her handkerchief under her folded hands.

"There are, you know,"--began Honoré, with a smile which changed the meaning to "You know very well there are"--"two Honoré Grandissimes. This one who sent you this letter is a man of color--"

"Oh!" exclaimed Aurora, with a sudden malicious sparkle.

"If you will entrust this paper to me," said Honoré, quietly, "I will see him and do now engage that you shall have no further trouble about it. Of course, I do not mean that I will pay it, myself; I dare not offer to take such a liberty."

Then he felt that a warm impulse had carried him a step too far.

Aurora rose up with a refusal as firm as it was silent. She neither smiled nor scintillated now, but wore an expression of amiable practicality as she presently said, receiving back the rent-notice as she spoke:

"I thank you, sir, but it might seem strange to him to find his notice in the hands of a person who can claim no interest in the matter. I shall have to attend to it myself."

"Ah! little enchantress," thought her grave-faced listener, as he gave attention, "this, after all--ball and all--is the mood in which you look your very, very best"--a fact which nobody knew better than the enchantress herself.

He walked beside her toward the open door leading back into the counting-room, and the dozen or more clerks, who, each by some ingenuity of his own, managed to secure a glimpse of them, could not fail to feel that they had never before seen quite so fair a couple. But she dropped her veil, bowed M. Grandissime a polite "No farther," and passed out.

M. Grandissime walked once up and down his private office, gave the door a soft push with his foot and lighted a cigar.

The clerk who had before acted as usher came in and handed him a slip of paper with a name written on it. M. Grandissime folded it twice, gazed out the window, and finally nodded. The clerk disappeared, and Joseph Frowenfeld paused an instant in the door and then advanced, with a buoyant good-morning.

"Good-morning," responded M. Grandissime.

He smiled and extended his hand, yet there was a mechanical and preoccupied air that was not what Joseph felt justified in expecting.

"How can I serve you, Mr. Frhowenfeld?" asked the merchant, glancing through into the counting-room. His coldness was almost all in Joseph's imagination, but to the apothecary it seemed such that he was nearly induced to walk away without answering. However, he replied:

"A young man whom I have employed refers to you to recommend him."

"Yes, sir? Prhay, who is that?"

"Your cousin, I believe, Mr. Raoul Innerarity."

M. Grandissime gave a low, short laugh, and took two steps toward his desk.

"Rhaoul? Oh yes, I rhecommend Rhaoul to you. As an assistant in yo' sto'--the best man you could find."

"Thank you, sir," said Joseph, coldly. "Good-morning!" he added turning to go.

"Mr. Frhowenfeld," said the other, "do you evva rhide?"

"I used to ride," replied the apothecary, turning, hat in hand, and wondering what such a question could mean.

"If I send a saddle-hoss to yo' do' on day aftah to-morrhow evening at fo' o'clock, will you rhide out with me for-h about a hour-h and a half--just for a little pleasu'e?"

Joseph was yet more astonished than before. He hesitated, accepted the invitation, and once more said good-morning.

CHAPTER XXI

DOCTOR KEENE RECOVERS HIS BULLET

It early attracted the apothecary's notice, in observing the civilization around him, that it kept the flimsy false bottoms in its social errors only by incessant reiteration. As he re-entered the shop, dissatisfied with himself for accepting M. Grandissime's invitation to ride, he knew by the fervent words which he overheard from the lips of his employee that the f.m.c. had been making one of his reconnoissances, and possibly had ventured in to inquire for his tenant.

"I t'ink, me, dat hanny w'ite man is a gen'leman; but I don't care if a man are good like a h-angel, if 'e har not pu'e w'ite 'ow can 'e be a gen'leman?"

Raoul's words were addressed to a man who, as he rose up and handed Frowenfeld a note, ratified the Creole's sentiment by a spurt of tobacco juice and an affirmative "Hm-m."

The note was a lead-pencil scrawl, without date.

DEAR JOE: Come and see me some time this evening.
I am on my back in bed. Want your help in a little
matter. Yours, Keene.

I have found out who ---- ----"

Frowenfeld pondered: "I have found out who ---- ----
" Ah! Doctor Keene had found out who stabbed
Agricola.

Some delays occurred in the afternoon, but toward sunset the apothecary dressed and went out. From the doctor's bedside in the rue St. Louis, if not delayed beyond all expectation, he would proceed to visit the ladies at Number 19 rue Bienville. The air was growing cold and threatening bad weather.

He found the Doctor prostrate, wasted, hoarse, cross and almost too weak for speech. He could only whisper, as his friend approached his pillow:

"These vile lungs!"

"Hemorrhage?"

The invalid held up three small, freckled fingers.

Joseph dared not show pity in his gaze, but it seemed savage not to express some feeling, so after standing a moment he began to say:

"I am very sorry--"

"You needn't bother yourself!" whispered the doctor, who lay frowning upward. By and by he whispered again.

Frowenfeld bent his ear, and the little man, so merry when well, repeated, in a savage hiss:

"Sit down!"

It was some time before he again broke the silence.

"Tell you what I want--you to do--for me."

"Well, sir--"

"Hold on!" gasped the invalid, shutting his eyes with impatience,--"till I get through."

He lay a little while motionless, and then drew from under his pillow a wallet, and from the wallet a pistol-ball.

"Took that out--a badly neglected wound--last day I saw you." Here a pause, an appalling cough, and by and by a whisper: "Knew the bullet in an instant." He

smiled wearily. "Peculiar size." He made a feeble motion. Frowenfeld guessed the meaning of it and handed him a pistol from a small table. The ball slipped softly home. "Refused two hundred dollars--those pistols"--with a sigh and closed eyes. By and by again--"Patient had smart fever--but it will be gone--time you get--there. Want you to--take care--t' I get up."

"But, Doctor--"

The sick man turned away his face with a petulant frown; but presently, with an effort at self-control, brought it back and whispered:

"You mean you--not physician?"

"Yes."

"No. No more are half--doc's. You can do it. Simple gun-shot wound in the shoulder." A rest. "Pretty wound; ranges"--he gave up the effort to describe it. "You'll see it." Another rest. "You see--this matter has been kept quiet so far. I don't want any one--else to know--anything about it." He sighed audibly and looked as though he had gone to sleep, but whispered again, with his eyes closed--"specially on culprit's own account."

Frowenfeld was silent: but the invalid was waiting for an answer, and, not getting it, stirred peevishly.

"Do you wish me to go to-night?" asked the apothecary.

"To-morrow morning. Will you--?"

"Certainly, Doctor."

The invalid lay quite still for several minutes, looking steadily at his friend, and finally let a faint smile play about his mouth,--a wan reminder of his habitual roguery.

"Good boy," he whispered.

Frowenfeld rose and straightened the bedclothes, took a few steps about the room, and finally returned. The Doctor's restless eye had followed him at every movement.

"You'll go?"

"Yes," replied the apothecary, hat in hand; "where is it?"

"Corner Bienville and Bourbon,--upper river corner,--yellow one-story house, doorsteps on street. You know the house?"

"I think I do."

"Good-night. Here!--I wish you would send that black girl in here--as you go out--make me better fire--Joe!" the call was a ghostly whisper.

Frowenfeld paused in the door.

"You don't mind my--bad manners, Joe?"

The apothecary gave one of his infrequent smiles.

"No, Doctor."

He started toward Number 19 rue Bienville, but a light, cold sprinkle set in, and he turned back toward his shop. No sooner had the rain got him there than it stopped, as rain sometimes will do.

CHAPTER XXII

WARS WITHIN THE BREAST

The next morning came in frigid and gray. The unseasonable numerals which the meteorologist recorded in his tables might have provoked a superstitious lover of better weather to suppose that Monsieur Danny, the head imp of discord, had been among the aërial currents. The passionate southern sky, looking down and seeing some six thousand to seventy-five hundred of her favorite children disconcerted and shivering, tried in vain, for two hours, to smile upon them with a little frozen sunshine, and finally burst into tears.

In thus giving way to despondency, it is sad to say, the sky was closely imitating the simultaneous behavior of Aurora Nancanou. Never was pretty lady in cheerier mood than that in which she had come home from Honoré's counting-room. Hard would it be to find the material with which to build again the castles-in-air that she founded upon two or three little discoveries there made. Should she tell them to Clotilde? Ah! and for what? No, Clotilde was a dear daughter--ha! few women were capable of having such a daughter as Clotilde; but there were things about which she was entirely too scrupulous. So, when she came in from that errand profoundly satisfied that she would in future hear no more about the rent than she might choose to hear, she had been too shrewd to expose herself to her daughter's catechising. She would save her little revelations for disclosure when they might be used to advantage. As she threw her bonnet upon the bed, she exclaimed, in a tone of gentle and wearied reproach:

"Why did you not remind me that M. Honoré Grandissime, that precious somebody-great, has the honor to rejoice in a quadron half-brother of the same illustrious name? Why did you not remind me, eh?"

"Ah! and you know it as well as A, B, C," playfully retorted Clotilde.

"Well, guess which one is our landlord?"

"Which one?"

"*Ma foi!* how do *I* know? I had to wait a shameful long time to see *Monsieur le prince*,--just because I am a De Grapion, I know. When at last I saw him, he says, 'Madame, this is the other Honoré Grandissime.' There, you see we are the victims of a conspiracy; if I go to the other, he will send me back to the first. But, Clotilde, my darling," cried the beautiful speaker, beamingly, "dismiss all fear and care; we shall have no more trouble about it."

"And how, indeed, do you know that?"

"Something tells it to me in my ear. I feel it! Trust in Providence, my child. Look at me, how happy I am; but you--you never trust in Providence. That is why we have so much trouble,--because you don't trust in Providence. Oh! I am so hungry, let us have dinner."

"What sort of a person is M. Grandissime in his appearance?" asked Clotilde, over their feeble excuse for a dinner.

"What sort? Do you imagine I had nothing better to do than notice whether a Grandissime is good-looking or not? For all I know to the contrary, he is--some more rice, please, my dear."

But this light-heartedness did not last long. It was based on an unutterable secret, all her own, about which she still had trembling doubts; this, too, notwithstanding her consultation of the dark oracles. She was going to stop that. In the long run, these charms and spells themselves bring bad luck. Moreover, the practice, indulged in to excess, was wicked, and she had promised Clotilde,--that droll little saint,--to resort to them no more. Hereafter, she should do nothing of the sort, except, to be sure, to take such ordinary precautions against misfortune as casting upon the floor a little of whatever she might be eating or drinking to propitiate M. Assonquer. She

would have liked, could she have done it without fear of detection, to pour upon the front door-sill an oblation of beer sweetened with black molasses to Papa Lébat (who keeps the invisible keys of all the doors that admit suitors), but she dared not; and then, the hound would surely have licked it up. Ah me! was she forgetting that she was a widow?

She was in poor plight to meet the all but icy gray morning; and, to make her misery still greater, she found, on dressing, that an accident had overtaken her, which she knew to be a trustworthy sign of love grown cold. She had lost--alas! how can we communicate it in English!--a small piece of lute-string ribbon, about *so long*, which she used for--not a necktie exactly, but--

And she hunted and hunted, and couldn't bear to give up the search, and sat down to breakfast and ate nothing, and rose up and searched again (not that she cared for the omen), and struck the hound with the broom, and broke the broom, and hunted again, and looked out the front window, and saw the rain beginning to fall, and dropped into a chair--crying, "Oh! Clotilde, my child, my child! the rent collector will be here Saturday and turn us into the street!" and so fell a-weeping.

A little tear-letting lightened her unrevealable burden, and she rose, rejoicing that Clotilde had happened to be out of eye-and-ear-shot. The scanty fire in the fireplace was ample to warm the room; the fire within her made it too insufferably hot! Rain or no rain, she parted the window-curtains and lifted the sash. What a mark for Love's arrow she was, as, at the window, she stretched her two arms upward! And, "right so," who should chance to come cantering by, the big drops of rain pattering after him, but the knightliest man in that old town, and the fittest to perfect the fine old-fashioned poetry of the scene!

"Clotilde," said Aurora, turning from her mirror, whither she had hastened to see if her face showed signs of tears (Clotilde was entering the room), "we shall never be turned out of this house by Honoré Grandissime!"

"Why?" asked Clotilde, stopping short in the floor, forgetting Aurora's trust in Providence, and expecting to hear that M. Grandissime had been found dead in his bed.

"Because I saw him just now; he rode by on horseback. A man with that noble face could never *do such a thing!*"

The astonished Clotilde looked at her mother searchingly. This sort of speech about a Grandissime? But Aurora was the picture of innocence.

Clotilde uttered a derisive laugh.

"*Impertinente!*" exclaimed the other, laboring not to join in it.

"Ah-h-h!" cried Clotilde, in the same mood, "and what face had he when he wrote that letter?"

"What face?"

"Yes, what face?"

"I do not know what face you mean," said Aurora.

"What face," repeated Clotilde, "had Monsieur Honoré de Grandissime on the day that he wrote--"

"Ah, f-fah!" cried Aurora, and turned away, "you don't know what you are talking about! You make me wish sometimes that I were dead!"

Clotilde had gone and shut down the sash, as it began to rain hard and blow. As she was turning away, her eye was attracted by an object at a distance.

"What is it?" asked Aurora, from a seat before the fire.

"Nothing," said Clotilde, weary of the sensational,--
"a man in the rain."

It was the apothecary of the rue Royale, turning from that street toward the rue Bourbon, and bowing his head against the swirling norther.

CHAPTER XXIII

FROWENFELD KEEPS HIS APPOINTMENT

Doctor Keene, his ill-humor slept off, lay in bed in a quiescent state of great mental enjoyment. At times he would smile and close his eyes, open them again and murmur to himself, and turn his head languidly and smile again. And when the rain and wind, all tangled together, came against the window with a whirl and a slap, his smile broadened almost to laughter.

"He's in it," he murmured, "he's just reaching there. I would give fifty dollars to see him when he first gets into the house and sees where he is."

As this wish was finding expression on the lips of the little sick man, Joseph Frowenfeld was making room on a narrow doorstep for the outward opening of a pair of small batten doors, upon which he had knocked with the vigorous haste of a man in the rain. As they parted, he hurriedly helped them open, darted within, heedless of the odd black shape which shuffled out of his way, wheeled and clapped them

shut again, swung down the bar and then turned, and with the good-natured face that properly goes with a ducking, looked to see where he was.

One object--around which everything else instantly became nothing--set his gaze. On the high bed, whose hangings of blue we have already described, silently regarding the intruder with a pair of eyes that sent an icy thrill through him and fastened him where he stood, lay Palmyre Philosophe. Her dress was a long, snowy morning-gown, wound loosely about at the waist with a cord and tassel of scarlet silk; a bright-colored woollen shawl covered her from the waist down, and a necklace of red coral heightened to its utmost her untamable beauty.



"Silently regarding the intruder with a pair of eyes that sent an icy chill through him and fastened him where he stood, lay Palmyre Philosophe".

An instantaneous indignation against Doctor Keene set the face of the speechless apothecary on fire, and this, being as instantaneously comprehended by the philosophe, was the best of introductions. Yet her gaze did not change.

The Congo negress broke the spell with a bristling protest, all in African b's and k's, but hushed and drew off at a single word of command from her mistress.

In Frowenfeld's mind an angry determination was taking shape, to be neither trifled with nor contemned. And this again the quadroon discerned, before he was himself aware of it.

"Doctor Keene"--he began, but stopped, so uncomfortable were her eyes.

She did not stir or reply.

Then he bethought him with a start, and took off his dripping hat.

At this a perceptible sparkle of imperious approval shot along her glance; it gave the apothecary speech.

"The doctor is sick, and he asked me to dress your wound."

She made the slightest discernible motion of the head, remained for a moment silent, and then, still with the same eye, motioned her hand toward a chair near a comfortable fire.

He sat down. It would be well to dry himself. He drew near the hearth and let his gaze fall into the fire. When he presently lifted his eyes and looked full upon the woman with a steady, candid glance, she was regarding him with apparent coldness, but with secret diligence and scrutiny, and a yet more inward and secret surprise and admiration. Hard rubbing was bringing out the grain of the apothecary. But she presently suppressed the feeling. She hated men.

But Frowenfeld, even while his eyes met hers, could not resent her hostility. This monument of the shame of two races--this poisonous blossom of crime growing out of crime--this final, unanswerable white man's accuser--this would-be murderess--what ranks and companies would have to stand up in the Great

Day with her and answer as accessory before the fact! He looked again into the fire.

The patient spoke:

"*Eh bi'n, Miché?*" Her look was severe, but less aggressive. The shuffle of the old negress's feet was heard and she appeared bearing warm and cold water and fresh bandages; after depositing them she tarried.

"Your fever is gone," said Frowenfeld, standing by the bed. He had laid his fingers on her wrist. She brushed them off and once more turned full upon him the cold hostility of her passionate eyes.

The apothecary, instead of blushing, turned pale.

"You--" he was going to say, "You insult me;" but his lips came tightly together. Two big cords appeared between his brows, and his blue eyes spoke for him. Then, as the returning blood rushed even to his forehead, he said, speaking his words one by one;

"Please understand that you must trust me."

She may not have understood his English, but she comprehended, nevertheless. She looked up fixedly for a moment, then passively closed her eyes. Then she turned, and Frowenfeld put out one strong arm, helped her to a sitting posture on the side of the bed and drew the shawl about her.

"Zizi," she said, and the negress, who had stood perfectly still since depositing the water and bandages, came forward and proceeded to bare the philosophe's superb shoulder. As Frowenfeld again put forward his hand, she lifted her own as if to prevent him, but he kindly and firmly put it away and addressed himself with silent diligence to his task; and by the time he had finished, his womanly touch, his commanding gentleness, his easy despatch, had inspired Palmyre not only with a sense of safety, comfort, and repose, but with a pleased wonder.

This woman had stood all her life with dagger drawn, on the defensive against what certainly was to her an unmerciful world. With possibly one exception, the man now before her was the only one she had ever encountered whose speech and gesture were clearly keyed to that profound respect which is woman's first, foundation claim on man. And yet, by inexorable decree, she belonged to what we used to call "the happiest people under the sun." We ought to stop saying that.

So far as Palmyre knew, the entire masculine wing of the mighty and exalted race, three-fourths of whose blood bequeathed her none of its prerogatives, regarded her as legitimate prey. The man before her did not. There lay the fundamental difference that, in her sight, as soon as she discovered it, glorified him. Before this assurance the cold fierceness of her eyes gave way, and a friendlier light from them rewarded the apothecary's final touch. He called for more pillows, made a nest of them, and, as she let herself softly into it, directed his next consideration toward his hat and the door.

It was many an hour after he had backed out into the trivial remains of the rain-storm before he could replace with more tranquillizing images the vision of the philosophe reclining among her pillows, in the act of making that uneasy movement of her fingers upon the collar button of her robe, which women make when they are uncertain about the perfection of their dishabille, and giving her inaudible adieu with the majesty of an empress.

CHAPTER XXIV

FROWENFELD MAKES AN ARGUMENT

On the afternoon of the same day on which Frowenfeld visited the house of the philosophe, the weather, which had been so unfavorable to his late plans, changed; the rain ceased, the wind drew around to the south, and the barometer promised a clear sky. Wherefore he decided to leave his business, when he should have made his evening weather notes, to the care of M. Raoul Innerarity, and venture to test both Mademoiselle Clotilde's repellent attitude and Aurora's seeming cordiality at Number 19 rue Bienville.

Why he should go was a question which the apothecary felt himself but partially prepared to answer. What necessity called him, what good was to be effected, what was to happen next, were points he would have liked to be clear upon. That he should be going merely because he was invited to come--merely for the pleasure of breathing their atmosphere--that he should be supinely gravitating toward them--this conclusion he positively could not allow; no, no; the love of books and the fear of women alike protested.

True, they were a part of that book which is pronounced "the proper study of mankind,"--indeed, that was probably the reason which he sought: he was going to contemplate them as a frontispiece to that unwriteable volume which he had undertaken to con. Also, there was a charitable motive. Doctor Keene, months before, had expressed a deep concern regarding their lack of protection and even of daily provision; he must quietly look into that. Would some unforeseen circumstance shut him off this evening again from this very proper use of time and opportunity?

As he was sitting at the table in his back room, registering his sunset observations, and wondering what would become of him if Aurora should be out and that other in, he was startled by a loud, deep voice exclaiming, close behind him:

"Eh, bien! Monsieur le Professeur!"

Frowenfeld knew by the tone, before he looked behind him, that he would find M. Agricola Fusilier very red in the face; and when he looked, the only qualification he could make was that the citizen's countenance was not so ruddy as the red handkerchief in which his arm was hanging.

"What have you there?" slowly continued the patriarch, taking his free hand off his fettered arm and laying it upon the page as Frowenfeld hurriedly rose, and endeavored to shut the book.

"Some private memoranda," answered the meteorologist, managing to get one page turned backward, reddening with confusion and indignation, and noticing that Agricola's spectacles were upside down.

"Private! Eh? No such thing, sir! Professor Frowenfeld, allow me" (a classic oath) "to say to your face, sir, that you are the most brilliant and the most valuable man--of your years--in afflicted Louisiana! Ha!" (reading:) "'Morning observation; Cathedral clock, 7 A.M. Thermometer 70 degrees.' Ha! 'Hygrometer 15'--but this is not to-day's weather? Ah! no. Ha! 'Barometer 30.380.' Ha! 'Sky cloudy, dark; wind, south, light.' Ha! 'River rising.' Ha! Professor Frowenfeld, when will you give your splendid services to your section? You must tell me, my son, for I ask you, my son, not from curiosity, but out of impatient interest."

"I cannot say that I shall ever publish my tables," replied the "son," pulling at the book.

"Then, sir, in the name of Louisiana," thundered the old man, clinging to the book, "I can! They shall be published! Ah! yes, dear Frowenfeld. The book, of course, will be in French, eh? You would not so affront the most sacred prejudices of the noble people to whom you owe everything as to publish it in English? You--ah! have we torn it?"

"I do not write French," said the apothecary, laying the torn edges together.

"Professor Frowenfeld, men are born for each other. What do I behold before me? I behold before me, in the person of my gifted young friend, a supplement to myself! Why has Nature strengthened the soul of Agricola to hold the crumbling fortress of this body until these eyes--which were once, my dear boy, as proud and piercing as the battle-steed's--have become dim?"

Joseph's insurmountable respect for gray hairs kept him standing, but he did not respond with any conjecture as to Nature's intentions, and there was a stern silence.

The crumbling fortress resumed, his voice pitched low like the beginning of the long roll. He knew Nature's design.

"It was in order that you, Professor Frowenfeld, might become my vicar! Your book shall be in French! We must give it a wide scope! It shall contain valuable geographical, topographical, biographical, and historical notes. It shall contain complete lists of all the officials in the province (I don't say territory, I say province) with their salaries and perquisites; ah! we will expose that! And--ha! I will write some political essays for it. Raoul shall illustrate it. Honoré shall give you money to publish it. Ah! Professor Frowenfeld, the star of your fame is rising out of the waves of oblivion! Come--I dropped in purposely to ask you--come across the street and take a glass of *taffia* with Agricola Fusilier."

This crowning honor the apothecary was insane enough to decline, and Agricola went away with many professions of endearment, but secretly offended because Joseph had not asked about his wound.

All the same the apothecary, without loss of time, departed for the yellow-washed cottage, Number 19 rue Bienville.

"To-morrow, at four P.M.," he said to himself, "if the weather is favorable, I ride with M. Grandissime."

He almost saw his books and instruments look up at him reproachfully.

The ladies were at home. Aurora herself opened the door, and Clotilde came forward from the bright fireplace with a cordiality never before so unqualified. There was something about these ladies--in their simple, but noble grace, in their half-Gallic, half-classic beauty, in a jocund buoyancy mated to an amiable dignity--that made them appear to the scholar as though they had just bounded into life from the garlanded procession of some old fresco. The resemblance was not a little helped on by the costume of the late Revolution (most acceptably chastened and belated by the distance from Paris). Their black hair, somewhat heavier on Clotilde's head, where it rippled once or twice, was knotted *en Grecque*, and adorned only with the spoils of a nosegay given to Clotilde by a chivalric small boy in the home of her music scholar.

"We was expectin' you since several days," said Clotilde, as the three sat down before the fire, Frowenfeld in a cushioned chair whose moth-holes had been carefully darned.

Frowenfeld intimated, with tolerable composure, that matters beyond his control had delayed his coming, beyond his intention.

"You gedd'n' ridge," said Aurora, dropping her wrists across each other.

Frowenfeld, for once, laughed outright, and it seemed so odd in him to do so that both the ladies followed his example. The ambition to be rich had never entered his thought, although in an unemotional, German way, he was prospering in a little city where wealth was daily pouring in, and a man had only to keep step, so to say, to march into possessions.

"You hought to 'ave a mo' larger sto' an' some clerque," pursued Aurora.

The apothecary answered that he was contemplating the enlargement of his present place or removal to a roomier, and that he had already employed an assistant.

"Oo it is, 'Sieur Frowenfel'?"

Clotilde turned toward the questioner a remonstrative glance.

"His name," replied Frowenfeld, betraying a slight embarrassment, "is--Innerarity; Mr. Raoul Innerarity; he is--"

"Ee pain' dad pigtu' w'at 'angin' in yo' window?"

Clotilde's remonstrance rose to a slight movement and a murmur.

Frowenfeld answered in the affirmative, and possibly betrayed the faint shadow of a smile. The response was a peal of laughter from both ladies.



"On their part, they would sit in deep attention, shielding their faces from the fire, and responding to enunciations directly contrary to their convictions with an occasional 'yes-seh,' or 'ceddenly,' or 'of coze,' or,--prettier affirmation still,--a solemn drooping of the eyelids".

"He is an excellent drug clerk," said Frowenfeld defensively.

Whereat Aurora laughed again, leaning over and touching Clotilde's knee with one finger.

"An' excellen' drug cl'--ha, ha, ha! oh!"

"You muz podden uz, M'sieu' Frowenfel'," said Clotilde, with forced gravity.

Aurora sighed her participation in the apology; and, a few moments later, the apothecary and both ladies (the one as fond of the abstract as the other two were ignorant of the concrete) were engaged in an animated, running discussion on art, society, climate, education,--all those large, secondary *desiderata* which seem of first importance to young ambition and secluded beauty, flying to and fro among these subjects with all the liveliness and uncertainty of a game of pussy-wants-a-corner.

Frowenfeld had never before spent such an hour. At its expiration, he had so well held his own against both the others, that the three had settled down to this sort of entertainment: Aurora would make an assertion, or Clotilde would ask a question; and Frowenfeld, moved by that frankness and ardent zeal for truth which had enlisted the early friendship of Dr. Keene, amused and attracted Honoré Grandissime, won the confidence of the f.m.c., and tamed the fiery distrust and enmity of Palmyre, would present his opinions without the thought of a reservation either in himself or his hearers. On their part, they would sit in deep attention, shielding their faces from the fire, and responding to enunciations directly contrary to their convictions with an occasional "yes-seh," or "ceddenly," or "of coze," or,--prettier affirmation still,--a solemn drooping of the eyelids, a slight compression of the lips, and a low, slow declination of the head.

"The bane of all Creole art-effort"--(we take up the apothecary's words at a point where Clotilde was leaning forward and slightly frowning in an honest attempt to comprehend his condensed English)--"the bane of all Creole art-effort, so far as I have seen it, is amateurism."

"Amateu"-- murmured Clotilde, a little beclouded on the main word and distracted by a French difference

of meaning, but planting an elbow on one knee in the genuineness of her attention, and responding with a bow.

"That is to say," said Frowenfeld, apologizing for the homeliness of his further explanation by a smile, "a kind of ambitious indolence that lays very large eggs, but can neither see the necessity for building a nest beforehand, nor command the patience to hatch the eggs afterward."

"Of coze," said Aurora.

"It is a great pity," said the sermonizer, looking at the face of Clotilde, elongated in the brass andiron; and, after a pause: "Nothing on earth can take the place of hard and patient labor. But that, in this community, is not esteemed; most sorts of it are contemned; the humbler sorts are despised, and the higher are regarded with mingled patronage and commiseration. Most of those who come to my shop with their efforts at art hasten to explain, either that they are merely seeking pastime, or else that they are driven to their course by want; and if I advise them to take their work back and finish it, they take it back and never return. Industry is not only despised, but has been degraded and disgraced, handed over into the hands of African savages."

"Doze Creole' is *lezzy*," said Aurora.

"That is a hard word to apply to those who do not *consciously* deserve it," said Frowenfeld; "but if they could only wake up to the fact,--find it out themselves--"

"Ceddenly," said Clotilde.

"'Sieur Frowenfel'," said Aurora, leaning her head on one side, "some pipple thing it is doze climade; 'ow you lag doze climade?"

"I do not suppose," replied the visitor, "there is a more delightful climate in the world."

"Ah-h-h!"--both ladies at once, in a low, gracious tone of acknowledgment.

"I thing Louisiana is a paradize-me!" said Aurora. "W'ere you goin' fin' sudge a h-air?" She respired a sample of it. "W'ere you goin' fin' sudge a so ridge groun'? De weed' in my bag yard is twenny-five feet 'igh!"

"Ah! maman!"

"Twenty-six!" said Aurora, correcting herself. "W'ere you fin' sudge a reever lag dad Mississippi? *On dit,*" she said, turning to Clotilde, "*que ses eaux ont la propriété de contribuer même à multiplier l'espèce humaine*--ha, ha, ha!"

Clotilde turned away an unmoved countenance to hear Frowenfeld.

Frowenfeld had contracted a habit of falling into meditation whenever the French language left him out of the conversation.

"Yes," he said, breaking a contemplative pause, "the climate is *too* comfortable and the soil too rich,--though I do not think it is entirely on their account that the people who enjoy them are so sadly in arrears to the civilized world." He blushed with the fear that his talk was bookish, and felt grateful to Clotilde for seeming to understand his speech.

"W'ad you fin' de rizzon is, 'Sieur Frowenfel'?" she asked.

"I do not wish to philosophize," he answered.

"*Mais*, go hon." "*Mais*, go ahade," said both ladies, settling themselves.

"It is largely owing," exclaimed Frowenfeld, with sudden fervor, "to a defective organization of society, which keeps this community, and will continue to keep it for an indefinite time to come, entirely unprepared and disinclined to follow the course of modern thought."

"Of coze," murmured Aurora, who had lost her bearings almost at the first word.

"One great general subject of thought now is human rights,--universal human rights. The entire literature of the world is becoming tinctured with contradictions of the dogmas upon which society in this section is built. Human rights is, of all subjects, the one upon which this community is most violently determined to hear no discussion. It has pronounced that slavery and caste are right, and sealed up the whole subject. What, then, will they do with the world's literature? They will coldly decline to look at it, and will become, more and more as the world moves on, a comparatively illiterate people."

"Bud, 'Sieur Frowenfel'," said Clotilde, as Frowenfeld paused--Aurora was stunned to silence,--"de Unitee State' goin' pud doze nigga' free, aind it?"

Frowenfeld pushed his hair hard back. He was in the stream now, and might as well go through.

"I have heard that charge made, even by some Americans. I do not know. But there is a slavery that no legislation can abolish,--the slavery of caste. That, like all the slaveries on earth, is a double bondage. And what a bondage it is which compels a community, in order to preserve its established tyrannies, to walk behind the rest of the intelligent world! What a bondage is that which incites a people to adopt a system of social and civil distinctions, possessing all the enormities and none of the advantages of those systems which Europe is learning to despise! This system, moreover, is only kept up by a flourish of weapons. We have here what you may call an armed aristocracy. The class over which these instruments of main force are held is chosen for its servility, ignorance, and cowardice; hence, indolence in the ruling class. When a man's social or civil standing is not dependent on his knowing how to read, he is not likely to become a scholar."

"Of coze," said Aurora, with a pensive respiration, "I thing id is doze climade," and the apothecary stopped, as a man should who finds himself unloading large philosophy in a little parlor.

"I thing, me, dey hought to pud doze quadroon' free?" It was Clotilde who spoke, ending with the rising inflection to indicate the tentative character of this daringly premature declaration.

Frowenfeld did not answer hastily.

"The quadroons," said he, "want a great deal more than mere free papers can secure them. Emancipation before the law, though it may be a right which man has no right to withhold, is to them little more than a mockery until they achieve emancipation in the minds and good will of the people--'the people,' did I say? I mean the ruling class." He stopped again. One must inevitably feel a little silly, setting up tenpins for ladies who are too polite, even if able, to bowl them down.

Aurora and the visitor began to speak simultaneously; both apologized, and Aurora said:

"'Sieur Frowenfel', w'en I was a lill girl,"--and Frowenfeld knew that he was going to hear the story of Palmyre. Clotilde moved, with the obvious intention to mend the fire. Aurora asked, in French, why she did not call the cook to do it, and Frowenfeld said, "Let me,"--threw on some wood, and took a seat nearer Clotilde. Aurora had the floor.

CHAPTER XXV

AURORA AS A HISTORIAN

Alas! the phonograph was invented three-quarters of a century too late. If type could entrap one-half the pretty oddities of Aurora's speech,--the arch, the pathetic, the grave, the earnest, the matter-of-fact, the ecstatic tones of her voice,--nay, could it but reproduce the movement of her hands, the eloquence of her eyes, or the shapings of her mouth,--ah! but type--even the phonograph--is such an inadequate thing! Sometimes she laughed; sometimes Clotilde, unexpectedly to herself, joined her; and twice or thrice she provoked a similar demonstration from the ox-like apothecary,--to her own intense amusement. Sometimes she shook her head in solemn scorn; and, when Frowenfeld, at a certain point where Palmyre's fate locked hands for a time with that of Bras-Coupé, asked a fervid question concerning that strange personage, tears leaped into her eyes, as she said:

"Ah! 'Sieur Frowenfel', iv I tra to tell de sto'y of Bras-Coupé, I goin' to cry lag a lill bebbby."

The account of the childhood days upon the plantation at Cannes Brulées may be passed by. It was early in Palmyre's fifteenth year that that Kentuckian, 'mutual friend' of her master and Agricola, prevailed with M. de Grapion to send her to the paternal Grandissime mansion,--a complimentary gift, through Agricola, to Mademoiselle, his niece,--returnable ten years after date.

The journey was made in safety; and, by and by, Palmyre was presented to her new mistress. The occasion was notable. In a great chair in the centre sat the *grandpère*, a Chevalier de Grandissime, whose business had narrowed down to sitting on the front veranda and wearing his decorations,--the cross

of St. Louis being one; on his right, Colonel Numa Grandissime, with one arm dropped around Honoré, then a boy of Palmyre's age, expecting to be off in sixty days for France; and on the left, with Honoré's fair sister nestled against her, "Madame Numa," as the Creoles would call her, a stately woman and beautiful, a great admirer of her brother Agricola. (Aurora took pains to explain that she received these minutiae from Palmyre herself in later years.) One other member of the group was a young don of some twenty years' age, not an inmate of the house, but only a cousin of Aurora on her deceased mother's side. To make the affair complete, and as a seal to this tacit Grandissime-de-Grapion treaty, this sole available representative of the "other side" was made a guest for the evening. Like the true Spaniard that he was, Don José Martinez fell deeply in love with Honoré's sister. Then there came Agricola leading in Palmyre. There were others, for the Grandissime mansion was always full of Grandissimes; but this was the central group.

In this house Palmyre grew to womanhood, retaining without interruption the place into which she seemed to enter by right of indisputable superiority over all competitors,—the place of favorite attendant to the sister of Honoré. Attendant, we say, for servant she never seemed. She grew tall, arrowy, lithe, imperial, diligent, neat, thorough, silent. Her new mistress, though scarcely at all her senior, was yet distinctly her mistress; she had that through her Fusilier blood; experience was just then beginning to show that the Fusilier Grandissime was a superb variety; she was a mistress one could wish to obey. Palmyre loved her, and through her contact ceased, for a time, at least, to be the pet leopard she had been at the Cannes Brulées.

Honoré went away to Paris only sixty days after Palmyre entered the house. But even that was not soon enough.

"'Sieur Frowenfel'," said Aurora, in her recital, "Palmyre, she never tole me dad, *mais* I am shoe, *shoe* dad she fall in love wid Honoré Grandissime. 'Sieur Frowenfel', I thing dad Honoré Grandissime is one bad man, ent it? Whad you thing, 'Sieur Frowenfel'?"

"I think, as I said to you the last time, that he is one of the best, as I know that he is one of the kindest and most enlightened gentlemen in the city," said the apothecary.

"Ah, 'Sieur Frowenfel'! ha, ha!"

"That is my conviction."

The lady went on with her story.

"Hanny'ow, I know she *continue* in love wid 'im all doze ten year' w'at 'e been gone. She baig Mademoiselle Grandissime to wrad dad ledder to my papa to ass to kip her two years mo'."

Here Aurora carefully omitted that episode which Doctor Keene had related to Frowenfeld,--her own marriage and removal to Fausse Rivière, the visit of her husband to the city, his unfortunate and finally fatal affair with Agricola, and the surrender of all her land and slaves to that successful duellist.

M. de Grapion, through all that, stood by his engagement concerning Palmyre; and, at the end of ten years, to his own astonishment, responded favorably to a letter from Honoré's sister, irresistible for its goodness, good sense, and eloquent pleading, asking leave to detain Palmyre two years longer; but this response came only after the old master and his pretty, stricken Aurora had wept over it until they were weak and gentle,--and was not a response either, but only a silent consent.

Shortly before the return of Honoré--and here it was that Aurora took up again the thread of her account--while his mother, long-widowed, reigned in the paternal mansion, with Agricola for her manager,

Bras-Coupé appeared. From that advent, and the long and varied mental sufferings which its consequences brought upon her, sprang that second change in Palmyre, which made her finally untamable, and ended in a manumission, granted her more for fear than for conscience' sake. When Aurora attempted to tell those experiences, even leaving Bras-Coupé as much as might be out of the recital, she choked with tears at the very start, stopped, laughed, and said:

"*C'est tout--daz* all. 'Sieur Frowenfel', oo you fine dad pigtu' to loog lag, yonnah, hon de wall?"

She spoke as if he might have overlooked it, though twenty times, at least, in the last hour, she had seen him glance at it.

"It is a good likeness," said the apothecary, turning to Clotilde, yet showing himself somewhat puzzled in the matter of the costume.

The ladies laughed.

"Daz ma grade-gran'-mamma," said Clotilde.

"Dass one *fille à la cassette*," said Aurora, "my gran'-muzzah; *mais*, ad de sem tarn id is Clotilde." She touched her daughter under the chin with a ringed finger. "Clotilde is my gran'-mamma."

Frowenfeld rose to go.

"You muz come again, 'Sieur Frowenfel'," said both ladies, in a breath.

What could he say?

CHAPTER XXVI

A RIDE AND A RESCUE

"Douane or Bienville?"

Such was the choice presented by Honoré Grandissime to Joseph Frowenfeld, as the former on a lively brown colt and the apothecary on a nervy chestnut fell into a gentle, preliminary trot while yet in the rue Royale, looked after by that great admirer of both, Raoul Innerarity.

"Douane?" said Frowenfeld. (It was the street we call Custom-house.)

"It has mud-holes," objected Honoré.

"Well, then, the rue du Canal?"

"The canal--I can smell it from here. Why not rue Bienville?"

Frowenfeld said he did not know. (We give the statement for what it is worth.)

Notice their route. A spirit of perversity seems to have entered into the very topography of this quarter. They turned up the rue Bienville (up is toward the river); reaching the levee, they took their course up the shore of the Mississippi (almost due south), and broke into a lively gallop on the Tchoupitoulas road, which in those days skirted that margin of the river nearest the sunsetting, namely, the *eastern* bank.

Conversation moved sluggishly for a time, halting upon trite topics or swinging easily from polite inquiry to mild affirmation, and back again. They were men of thought, these two, and one of them did not fully understand why he was in his present position; hence some reticence. It was one of those afternoons in early March that make one wonder how

the rest of the world avoids emigrating to Louisiana in a body.

"Is not the season early?" asked Frowenfeld.

M. Grandissime believed it was; but then the Creole spring always seemed so, he said.

The land was an inverted firmament of flowers. The birds were an innumerable, busy, joy-compelling multitude, darting and fluttering hither and thither, as one might imagine the babes do in heaven. The orange-groves were in blossom; their dark-green boughs seemed snowed upon from a cloud of incense, and a listening ear might catch an incessant, whispered trickle of falling petals, dropping "as the honey-comb." The magnolia was beginning to add to its dark and shining evergreen foliage frequent sprays of pale new leaves and long, slender, buff buds of others yet to come. The oaks, both the bare-armed and the "green-robed senators," the willows, and the plaqueminiars, were putting out their subdued florescence as if they smiled in grave participation with the laughing gardens. The homes that gave perfection to this beauty were those old, large, belvidered colonial villas, of which you may still here and there see one standing, battered into half ruin, high and broad, among foundries, cotton- and tobacco-sheds, junk-yards, and longshoremen's hovels, like one unconquered elephant in a wreck of artillery. In Frowenfeld's day the "smell of their garments was like Lebanon." They were seen by glimpses through chance openings in lofty hedges of Cherokee-rose or bois-d'arc, under boughs of cedar or pride-of-China, above their groves of orange or down their long, overarched avenues of oleander; and the lemon and the pomegranate, the banana, the fig, the shaddock, and at times even the mango and the guava, joined "hands around" and tossed their fragrant locks above the lilies and roses. Frowenfeld forgot to ask himself further concerning the probable intent of M. Grandissime's invitation to ride; these

beauties seemed rich enough in good reasons. He felt glad and grateful.

At a certain point the two horses turned of their own impulse, as by force of habit, and with a few clambering strides mounted to the top of the levee and stood still, facing the broad, dancing, hurrying, brimming river.

The Creole stole an amused glance at the elated, self-forgetful look of his immigrant friend.

"Mr. Frowenfeld," he said, as the delighted apothecary turned with unwonted suddenness and saw his smile, "I believe you like this better than discussion. You find it easier to be in harmony with Louisiana than with Louisianians, eh?"

Frowenfeld colored with surprise. Something unpleasant had lately occurred in his shop. Was this to signify that M. Grandissime had heard of it?

"I am a Louisianian," replied he, as if this were a point assailed.

"I would not insinuate otherwise," said M. Grandissime, with a kindly gesture. "I would like you to feel so. We are citizens now of a different government from that under which we lived the morning we first met. Yet"--the Creole paused and smiled--"you are not, and I am glad you are not, what we call a Louisianian."

Frowenfeld's color increased. He turned quickly in his saddle as if to say something very positive, but hesitated, restrained himself and asked:

"Mr. Grandissime, is not your Creole 'we' a word that does much damage?"

The Creole's response was at first only a smile, followed by a thoughtful countenance; but he presently said, with some suddenness:

"My-de'-seh, yes. Yet you see I am, even this moment, forgetting we are not a separate people.

Yes, our Creole 'we' does damage, and our Creole 'you' does more. I assure you, sir, I try hard to get my people to understand that it is time to stop calling those who come and add themselves to the community, aliens, interlopers, invaders. That is what I hear my cousins, 'Polyte and Sylvestre, in the heat of discussion, called you the other evening; is it so?"

"I brought it upon myself," said Frowenfeld. "I brought it upon myself."

"Ah!" interrupted M. Grandissime, with a broad smile, "excuse me--I am fully prepared to believe it. But the charge is a false one. I told them so. My-de'-seh--I know that a citizen of the United States in the United States has a right to become, and to be called, under the laws governing the case, a Louisianian, a Vermonter, or a Virginian, as it may suit his whim; and even if he should be found dishonest or dangerous, he has a right to be treated just exactly as we treat the knaves and ruffians who are native born! Every discreet man must admit that."

"But if they do not enforce it, Mr. Grandissime," quickly responded the sore apothecary, "if they continually forget it--if one must surrender himself to the errors and crimes of the community as he finds it--"

The Creole uttered a low laugh.

"Party differences, Mr. Frowenfeld; they have them in all countries."

"So your cousins said," said Frowenfeld.

"And how did you answer them?"

"Offensively," said the apothecary, with sincere mortification.

"Oh! that was easy," replied the other, amusedly; "but how?"

"I said that, having here only such party differences as are common elsewhere, we do not behave as they elsewhere do; that in most civilized countries the immigrant is welcome, but here he is not. I am afraid I have not learned the art of courteous debate," said Frowenfeld, with a smile of apology.

"'Tis a great art," said the Creole, quietly, stroking his horse's neck. "I suppose my cousins denied your statement with indignation, eh?"

"Yes; they said the honest immigrant is always welcome."

"Well, do you not find that true?"

"But, Mr. Grandissime, that is requiring the immigrant to prove his innocence!" Frowenfeld spoke from the heart. "And even the honest immigrant is welcome only when he leaves his peculiar opinions behind him. Is that right, sir?"

The Creole smiled at Frowenfeld's heat.

"My-de'-seh, my cousins complain that you advocate measures fatal to the prevailing order of society."

"But," replied the unyielding Frowenfeld, turning redder than ever, "that is the very thing that American liberty gives me the right--peaceably--to do! Here is a structure of society defective, dangerous, erected on views of human relations which the world is abandoning as false; yet the immigrant's welcome is modified with the warning not to touch these false foundations with one of his fingers."

"Did you tell my cousins the foundations of society here are false?"

"I regret to say I did, very abruptly. I told them they were privately aware of the fact."

"You may say," said the ever-amiable Creole, "that you allowed debate to run into controversy, eh?"

Frowenfeld was silent; he compared the gentleness of this Creole's rebukes with the asperity of his advocacy of right, and felt humiliated. But M. Grandissime spoke with a rallying smile.

"Mr. Frowenfeld, you never make pills with eight corners eh?"

"No, sir." The apothecary smiled.

"No, you make them round; cannot you make your doctrines the same way? My-de'-seh, you will think me impertinent; but the reason I speak is because I wish very much that you and my cousins would not be offended with each other. To tell you the truth, my-de'-seh, I hoped to use you with them--pardon my frankness."

"If Louisiana had more men like you, M. Grandissime," cried the untrained Frowenfeld, "society would be less sore to the touch."

"My-de'-seh," said the Creole, laying his hand out toward his companion and turning his horse in such a way as to turn the other also, "do me one favor; remember that it *is* sore to the touch."

The animals picked their steps down the inner face of the levee and resumed their course up the road at a walk.

"Did you see that man just turn the bend of the road, away yonder?" the Creole asked.

"Yes."

"Did you recognize him?"

"It was--my landlord, wasn't it?"

"Yes. Did he not have a conversation with you lately, too?"

"Yes, sir; why do you ask?"

"It has had a bad effect on him. I wonder why he is out here on foot?"

The horses quickened their paces. The two friends rode along in silence. Frowenfeld noticed his companion frequently cast an eye up along the distant sunset shadows of the road with a new anxiety. Yet, when M. Grandissime broke the silence it was only to say:

"I suppose you find the blemishes in our state of society can all be attributed to one main defect, Mr. Frowenfeld?"

Frowenfeld was glad of the chance to answer:

"I have not overlooked that this society has disadvantages as well as blemishes; it is distant from enlightened centres; it has a language and religion different from that of the great people of which it is now called to be a part. That it has also positive blemishes of organism--"

"Yes," interrupted the Creole, smiling at the immigrant's sudden magnanimity, "its positive blemishes; do they all spring from one main defect?"

"I think not. The climate has its influence, the soil has its influence--dwellers in swamps cannot be mountaineers."

"But after all," persisted the Creole, "the greater part of our troubles comes from--"

"Slavery," said Frowenfeld, "or rather caste."

"Exactly," said M. Grandissime.

"You surprise me, sir," said the simple apothecary. "I supposed you were--"

"My-de'-seh," exclaimed M. Grandissime, suddenly becoming very earnest, "I am nothing, nothing! There is where you have the advantage of me. I am but a *dilettante*, whether in politics, in philosophy, morals, or religion. I am afraid to go deeply into anything, lest it should make ruin in my name, my family, my property."

He laughed unpleasantly.

The question darted into Frowenfeld's mind, whether this might not be a hint of the matter that M. Grandissime had been trying to see him about.

"Mr. Grandissime," he said, "I can hardly believe you would neglect a duty either for family, property, or society."

"Well, you mistake," said the Creole, so coldly that Frowenfeld colored.

They galloped on. M. Grandissime brightened again, almost to the degree of vivacity. By and by they slackened to a slow trot and were silent. The gardens had been long left behind, and they were passing between continuous Cherokee-rose hedges on the right and on the left, along that bend of the Mississippi where its waters, glancing off three miles above from the old De Macarty levee (now Carrollton), at the slightest opposition in the breeze go whirling and leaping like a herd of dervishes across to the ever-crumbling shore, now marked by the little yellow depot-house of Westwego. Miles up the broad flood the sun was disappearing gorgeously. From their saddles, the two horsemen feasted on the scene without comment.

But presently, M. Grandissime uttered a low ejaculation and spurred his horse toward a tree hard by, preparing, as he went, to fasten his rein to an overhanging branch. Frowenfeld, agreeable to his beckon, imitated the movement.

"I fear he intends to drown himself," whispered M. Grandissime, as they hurriedly dismounted.

"Who? Not--"

"Yes, your landlord, as you call him. He is on the flatboat; I saw his hat over the levee. When we get on top the levee, we must get right into it. But do not follow him into the water in front of the flat; it is

certain death; no power of man could keep you from going under it."

The words were quickly spoken; they scrambled to the levee's crown. Just abreast of them lay a flatboat, emptied of its cargo and moored to the levee. They leaped into it. A human figure swerved from the onset of the Creole and ran toward the bow of the boat, and in an instant more would have been in the river.

"Stop!" said Frowenfeld, seizing the unresisting f.m.c. firmly by the collar.

Honoré Grandissime smiled, partly at the apothecary's brief speech, but much more at his success.

"Let him go, Mr. Frowenfeld," he said, as he came near.

The silent man turned away his face with a gesture of shame.

M. Grandissime, in a gentle voice, exchanged a few words with him, and he turned and walked away, gained the shore, descended the levee, and took a foot-path which soon hid him behind a hedge.

"He gives his pledge not to try again," said the Creole, as the two companions proceeded to resume the saddle. "Do not look after him." (Joseph had cast a searching look over the hedge.)

They turned homeward.

"Ah! Mr. Frowenfeld," said the Creole, suddenly, "if the *immygrant* has cause of complaint, how much more has *that* man! True, it is only love for which he would have just now drowned himself; yet what an accusation, my-de'-seh, is his whole life against that 'caste' which shuts him up within its narrow and almost solitary limits! And yet, Mr. Frowenfeld, this people esteem this very same crime of caste the holiest and most precious of their virtues. My-de'-

seh, it never occurs to us that in this matter we are interested, and therefore disqualified, witnesses. We say we are not understood; that the jury (the civilized world) renders its decision without viewing the body; that we are judged from a distance. We forget that we ourselves are too *close* to see distinctly, and so continue, a spectacle to civilization, sitting in a horrible darkness, my-de'-seh!" He frowned.

"The shadow of the Ethiopian," said the grave apothecary.

M. Grandissime's quick gesture implied that Frowenfeld had said the very word.

"Ah! my-de'-seh, when I try sometimes to stand outside and look at it, I am *ama-aze* at the length, the blackness of that shadow!" (He was so deeply in earnest that he took no care of his English.) "It is the *Némésis* w'ich, instead of coming afteh, glides along by the side of this morhal, political, commercial, social mistake! It blanches, my-de'-seh, ow whole civilization! It drhags us a centurhy behind the rhes' of the world! It rhetahds and poisons everhy industrhy we got!--mos' of all our-h immense agrhicultu'e! It brheeds a thousan' cusses that nevva leave home but jus' flutter-h up an' rhoost, my-de'-seh, on ow *heads*; an' we nevva know it!--yes, sometimes some of us know it."

He changed the subject.

They had repassed the ruins of Fort St. Louis, and were well within the precincts of the little city, when, as they pulled up from a final gallop, mention was made of Doctor Keene. He was improving; Honoré had seen him that morning; so, at another hour, had Frowenfeld. Doctor Keene had told Honoré about Palmyre's wound.

"You was at her house again this morning?" asked the Creole.

"Yes," said Frowenfeld.

M. Grandissime shook his head warningly.

"'Tis a dangerous business. You are almost sure to become the object of slander. You ought to tell Doctor Keene to make some other arrangement, or presently you, too, will be under the--" he lowered his voice, for Frowenfeld was dismounting at the shop door, and three or four acquaintances stood around--"under the 'shadow of the Ethiopian."

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FÊTE DE GRANDPÈRE

Sojourners in New Orleans who take their afternoon drive down Esplanade street will notice, across on the right, between it and that sorry streak once fondly known as Champs Élysées, two or three large, old houses, rising above the general surroundings and displaying architectural features which identify them with an irrevocable past--a past when the faithful and true Creole could, without fear of contradiction, express his religious belief that the antipathy he felt for the Américain invader was an inborn horror laid lengthwise in his ante-natal bones by a discriminating and appreciative Providence. There is, for instance, or was until lately, one house which some hundred and fifteen years ago was the suburban residence of the old sea-captain governor, Kerlerec. It stands up among the oranges as silent and gray as a pelican, and, so far as we know, has never had one

cypress plank added or subtracted since its master was called to France and thrown into the Bastille. Another has two dormer windows looking out westward, and, when the setting sun strikes the panes, reminds one of a man with spectacles standing up in an audience, searching for a friend who is not there and will never come back. These houses are the last remaining--if, indeed, they were not pulled down yesterday--of a group that once marked from afar the direction of the old highway between the city's walls and the suburb St. Jean. Here clustered the earlier aristocracy of the colony; all that pretty crew of counts, chevaliers, marquises, colonels, dons, etc., who loved their kings, and especially their kings' moneys, with an *abandon* which affected the accuracy of nearly all their accounts.

Among these stood the great mother-mansion of the Grandissimes. Do not look for it now; it is quite gone. The round, white-plastered brick pillars which held the house fifteen feet up from the reeking ground and rose on loftily to sustain the great overspreading roof, or clustered in the cool, paved basement; the lofty halls, with their multitudinous glitter of gilded brass and twinkle of sweet-smelling wax-candles; the immense encircling veranda, where twenty Creole girls might walk abreast; the great front stairs, descending from the veranda to the garden, with a lofty palm on either side, on whose broad steps forty Grandissimes could gather on a birthday afternoon; and the belvidere, whence you could see the cathedral, the Ursulines', the governor's mansion, and the river, far away, shining between the villas of Tchoupitoulas Coast--all have disappeared as entirely beyond recall as the flowers that bloomed in the gardens on the day of this *fête de grandpère*.

Odd to say, it was not the grandpère's birthday that had passed. For weeks the happy children of the many Grandissime branches--the Mandarins, the St. Blancards, the Brahmins--had been standing with their uplifted arms apart, awaiting the signal to clap

hands and jump, and still, from week to week, the appointed day had been made to fall back, and fall back before--what think you?--an inability to understand Honoré.

It was a sad paradox in the history of this majestic old house that her best child gave her the most annoyance; but it had long been so. Even in Honoré's early youth, a scant two years after she had watched him, over the tops of her green myrtles and white and crimson oleanders, go away, a lad of fifteen, supposing he would of course come back a Grandissime of the Grandissimes--an inflexible of the inflexibles--he was found "inciting" (so the stately dames and officials who graced her front veranda called it) a Grandissime-De Grapion reconciliation by means of transatlantic letters, and reducing the flames of the old feud, rekindled by the Fusilier-Nancanou duel, to a little foul smoke. The main difficulty seemed to be that Honoré could not be satisfied with a clean conscience as to his own deeds and the peace and fellowships of single households; his longing was, and had ever been-- he had inherited it from his father--to see one unbroken and harmonious Grandissime family gathering yearly under this venerated roof without reproach before all persons, classes, and races with whom they had ever had to do. It was not hard for the old mansion to forgive him once or twice; but she had had to do it often. It seems no over-stretch of fancy to say she sometimes gazed down upon his erring ways with a look of patient sadness in her large and beautiful windows.

And how had that forbearance been rewarded? Take one short instance: when, seven years before this present *fête de grandpère*, he came back from Europe, and she (this old home which we cannot help but personify), though in trouble then--a trouble that sent up the old feud flames again--opened her halls to rejoice in him with the joy of all her gathered families, he presently said such strange things in

favor of indiscriminate human freedom that for very shame's sake she hushed them up, in the fond hope that he would outgrow such heresies. But he? On top of all the rest, he declined a military commission and engaged in commerce--"shopkeeping, *parbleu!*"

However, therein was developed a grain of consolation. Honoré became--as he chose to call it--more prudent. With much tact, Agricola was amiably crowded off the dictator's chair, to become, instead, a sort of seneschal. For a time the family peace was perfect, and Honoré, by a touch here to-day and a word there to-morrow, was ever lifting the name, and all who bore it, a little and a little higher; when suddenly, as in his father's day--that dear Numa who knew how to sacrifice his very soul, as a sort of Iphigenia for the propitiation of the family gods--as in Numa's day came the cession to Spain, so now fell this other cession, like an unexpected tornado, threatening the wreck of her children's slave-schooners and the prostration alike of their slave-made crops and their Spanish liberties; and just in the fateful moment where Numa would have stood by her, Honoré had let go. Ah, it was bitter!

"See what foreign education does!" cried a Mandarin de Grandissime of the Baton Rouge Coast. "I am sorry now"--derisively--"that I never sent *my* boy to France, am I not? No! No-o-o! I would rather my son should never know how to read, than that he should come back from Paris repudiating the sentiments and prejudices of his own father. Is education better than family peace? Ah, bah! My son make friends with Américains and tell me they--that call a negro 'monsieur'--are as good as his father? But that is what we get for letting Honoré become a merchant. Ha! the degradation! Shaking hands with men who do not believe in the slave trade! Shake hands? Yes; associate--fraternize! with apothecaries and negrophiles. And now we are invited to meet at the *fête de grandpère*, in the house where he is really the chief--the *caçique!*"

No! The family would not come together on the first appointment; no, nor on the second; no, not if the grandpapa did express his wish; no, nor on the third--nor on the fourth.

"*Non, Messieurs!*" cried both youth and reckless age; and, sometimes, also, the stronger heads of the family, the men of means, of force and of influence, urged on from behind by their proud and beautiful wives and daughters.

Arms, generally, rather than heads, ruled there in those days. Sentiments (which are the real laws) took shape in accordance with the poetry, rather than the reason, of things, and the community recognized the supreme domination of "the gentleman" in questions of right and of "the ladies" in matters of sentiment. Under such conditions strength establishes over weakness a showy protection which is the subtlest of tyrannies, yet which, in the very moment of extending its arm over woman, confers upon her a power which a truer freedom would only diminish; constitutes her in a large degree an autocrat of public sentiment and thus accepts her narrowest prejudices and most belated errors as veriest need-be's of social life.

The clans classified easily into three groups; there were those who boiled, those who stewed, and those who merely steamed under a close cover. The men in the first two groups were, for the most part, those who were holding office under old Spanish commissions, and were daily expecting themselves to be displaced and Louisiana thereby ruined. The steaming ones were a goodly fraction of the family--the timid, the apathetic, the "conservative." The conservatives found ease better than exactitude, the trouble of thinking great, the agony of deciding harrowing, and the alternative of smiling cynically and being liberal so much easier--and the warm weather coming on with a rapidity--wearying to contemplate.

"The Yankee was an inferior animal."

"Certainly."

"But Honoré had a right to his convictions."

"Yes, that was so, too."

"It looked very traitorous, however."

"Yes, so it did."

"Nevertheless, it might turn out that Honoré was advancing the true interests of his people."

"Very likely."

"It would not do to accept office under the Yankee government."

"Of course not."

"Yet it would never do to let the Yankees get the offices, either."

"That was true; nobody could deny that."

"If Spain or France got the country back, they would certainly remember and reward those who had held out faithfully."

"Certainly! That was an old habit with France and Spain."

"But if they did not get the country back--"

"Yes, that is so; Honoré is a very good fellow, and--"

And, one after another, under the mild coolness of Honoré's amiable disregard, their indignation trickled back from steam to water, and they went on drawing their stipends, some in Honoré's counting-room, where they held positions, some from the provisional government, which had as yet made but few changes, and some, secretly, from the cunning Casa-Calvo; for, blow the wind east or blow the wind west, the affinity of the average Grandissime for a salary abideth forever.

Then, at the right moment, Honoré made a single happy stroke, and even the hot Grandissimes, they of the interior parishes and they of Agricola's squadron, slaked and crumbled when he wrote each a letter saying that the governor was about to send them appointments, and that it would be well, if they wished to *evade* them, to write the governor at once, surrendering their present commissions. Well! Evade? They would evade nothing! Do you think they would so belittle themselves as to write to the usurper? They would submit to keep the positions first.

But the next move was Honoré's making the whole town aware of his apostasy. The great mansion, with the old grandpère sitting out in front, shivered. As we have seen, he had ridden through the Place d'Armes with the arch-usurper himself. Yet, after all, a Grandissime would be a Grandissime still; whatever he did he did openly. And wasn't that glorious--never to be ashamed of anything, no matter how bad? It was not everyone who could ride with the governor.

And blood was so much thicker than vinegar that the family, that would not meet either in January or February, met in the first week of March, every constituent one of them.

The feast has been eaten. The garden now is joyous with children and the veranda resplendent with ladies. From among the latter the eye quickly selects one. She is perceptibly taller than the others; she sits in their midst near the great hall entrance; and as you look at her there is no claim of ancestry the Grandissimes can make which you would not allow. Her hair, once black, now lifted up into a glistening snow-drift, augments the majesty of a still beautiful face, while her full stature and stately bearing suggest the finer parts of Agricola, her brother. It is Madame Grandissime, the mother of Honoré.

One who sits at her left, and is very small, is a favorite cousin. On her right is her daughter, the

widowed señora of José Martinez; she has wonderful black hair and a white brow as wonderful. The commanding carriage of the mother is tempered in her to a gentle dignity and calm, contrasting pointedly with the animated manners of the courtly matrons among whom she sits, and whose continuous conversation takes this direction or that, at the pleasure of Madame Grandissime.

But if you can command your powers of attention, despite those children who are shouting Creole French and sliding down the rails of the front stair, turn the eye to the laughing squadron of beautiful girls, which every few minutes, at an end of the veranda, appears, wheels and disappears, and you note, as it were by flashes, the characteristics of face and figure that mark the Louisianaises in the perfection of the new-blown flower. You see that blondes are not impossible; there, indeed, are two sisters who might be undistinguishable twins but that one has blue eyes and golden hair. You note the exquisite pencilling of their eyebrows, here and there some heavier and more velvety, where a less vivacious expression betrays a share of Spanish blood. As Grandissimes, you mark their tendency to exceed the medium Creole stature, an appearance heightened by the fashion of their robes. There is scarcely a rose in all their cheeks, and a full red-ripeness of the lips would hardly be in keeping; but there is plenty of life in their eyes, which glance out between the curtains of their long lashes with a merry dancing that keeps time to the prattle of tongues. You are not able to get a straight look into them, and if you could you would see only your own image cast back in pitiful miniature; but you turn away and feel, as you fortify yourself with an inward smile, that they know you, you man, through and through, like a little song. And in turning, your sight is glad to rest again on the face of Honoré's mother. You see, this time, that she *is* his mother, by a charm you had overlooked, a candid, serene and lovable

smile. It is the wonder of those who see that smile that she can ever be harsh.

The playful, mock-martial tread of the delicate Creole feet is all at once swallowed up by the sound of many heavier steps in the hall, and the fathers, grandfathers, sons, brothers, uncles and nephews of the great family come out, not a man of them that cannot, with a little care, keep on his feet. Their descendants of the present day sip from shallower glasses and with less marked results.

The matrons, rising, offer the chief seat to the first comer, the great-grandsire--the oldest living Grandissime--Alcibiade, a shaken but unfallen monument of early colonial days, a browned and corrugated souvenir of De Vaudreuil's pomps, of O'Reilly's iron rule, of Galvez' brilliant wars--a man who had seen Bienville and Zephyr Grandissime. With what splendor of manner Madame Fusilier de Grandissime offers, and he accepts, the place of honor! Before he sits down he pauses a moment to hear out the companion on whose arm he had been leaning. But Théophile, a dark, graceful youth of eighteen, though he is recounting something with all the oblivious ardor of his kind, becomes instantly silent, bows with grave deference to the ladies, hands the aged forefather gracefully to his seat, and turning, recommences the recital before one who hears all with the same perfect courtesy--his beloved cousin Honoré.

Meanwhile, the gentlemen throng out. Gallant crew! These are they who have been pausing proudly week after week in an endeavor (?) to understand the opaque motives of Numa's son.

In the middle of the veranda pauses a tall, muscular man of fifty, with the usual smooth face and an iron-gray queue. That is Colonel Agamemnon Brahmin de Grandissime, purveyor to the family's military pride, conservator of its military glory, and, after Honoré, the most admired of the name. Achille Grandissime,

he who took Agricola away from Frowenfeld's shop in the carriage, essays to engage Agamemnon in conversation, and the colonel, with a glance at his kinsman's nether limbs and another at his own, and with that placid facility with which the graver sort of Creoles take up the trivial topics of the lighter, grapples the subject of boots. A tall, bronzed, slender young man, who prefixes to Grandissime the maternal St. Blancard, asks where his wife is, is answered from a distance, throws her a kiss and sits down on a step, with Jean Baptiste de Grandissime, a piratical-looking black-beard, above him, and Alphonse Mandarin, an olive-skinned boy, below. Valentine Grandissime, of Tchoupitoulas, goes quite down to the bottom of the steps and leans against the balustrade. He is a large, broad-shouldered, well-built man, and, as he stands smoking a cigar, with his black-stockinged legs crossed, he glances at the sky with the eye of a hunter--or, it may be, of a sailor.

"Valentine will not marry," says one of two ladies who lean over the rail of the veranda above. "I wonder why."

The other fixes on her a meaning look, and she twitches her shoulders and pouts, seeing she has asked a foolish question, the answer to which would only put Valentine in a numerous class and do him no credit.

Such were the choice spirits of the family. Agricola had retired. Raoul was there; his pretty auburn head might have been seen about half-way up the steps, close to one well sprinkled with premature gray.

"No such thing!" exclaimed his companion.

(The conversation was entirely in Creole French.)

"I give you my sacred word of honor!" cried Raoul.

"That Honoré is having all his business carried on in English?" asked the incredulous Sylvestre. (Such was his name.)

"I swear--" replied Raoul, resorting to his favorite pledge--"on a stack of Bibles that high!"

"Ah-h-h-h, pf-f-f-f!"

This polite expression of unbelief was further emphasized by a spasmodic flirt of one hand, with the thumb pointed outward.

"Ask him! ask him!" cried Raoul.

"Honoré!" called Sylvestre, rising up. Two or three persons passed the call around the corner of the veranda.

Honoré came with a chain of six girls on either arm. By the time he arrived, there was a Babel of discussion.

"Raoul says you have ordered all your books and accounts to be written in English," said Sylvestre.

"Well?"

"It is not true, is it?"

"Yes."

The entire veranda of ladies raised one long-drawn, deprecatory "Ah!" except Honoré's mother. She turned upon him a look of silent but intense and indignant disappointment.

"Honoré!" cried Sylvestre, desirous of repairing his defeat, "Honoré!"

But Honoré was receiving the clamorous abuse of the two half dozens of girls.

"Honoré!" cried Sylvestre again, holding up a torn scrap of writing-paper which bore the marks of the counting-room floor and of a boot-heel, "how do you spell 'la-dee?'"

There was a moment's hush to hear the answer.

"Ask Valentine," said Honoré.

Everybody laughed aloud. That taciturn man's only retort was to survey the company above him with an unmoved countenance, and to push the ashes slowly from his cigar with his little finger. M. Valentine Grandissime, of Tchoupitoulas, could not read.

"Show it to Agricola," cried two or three, as that great man came out upon the veranda, heavy-eyed, and with tumbled hair.

Sylvestre, spying Agricola's head beyond the ladies, put the question.

"How is it spelled on that paper?" retorted the king of beasts.

"L-a-y--"

"Ignoramus!" growled the old man.

"I did not spell it," cried Raoul, and attempted to seize the paper. But Sylvestre throwing his hand behind him, a lady snatched the paper, two or three cried "Give it to Agricola!" and a pretty boy, whom the laughter and excitement had lured from the garden, scampered up the steps and handed it to the old man.

"Honoré!" cried Raoul, "it must not be read. It is one of your private matters."

But Raoul's insinuation that anybody would entrust him with a private matter brought another laugh.

Honoré nodded to his uncle to read it out, and those who could not understand English, as well as those who could, listened. It was a paper Sylvestre had picked out of a waste-basket on the day of Aurore's visit to the counting-room. Agricola read:

"What is that layde want in thare with Honoré?"
"Honoré is goin giv her bac that proprety--that is Aurore De Grapion what Agricola kill the husband."

That was the whole writing, but Agricola never finished. He was reading aloud--"that is Aurore De Grap--"

At that moment he dropped the paper and blackened with wrath; a sharp flash of astonishment ran through the company; an instant of silence followed and Agricola's thundering voice rolled down upon Sylvestre in a succession of terrible imprecations.

It was painful to see the young man's face as, speechless, he received this abuse. He stood pale and frightened, with a smile playing about his mouth, half of distress and half of defiance, that said as plain as a smile could say, "Uncle Agricola, you will have to pay for this mistake."

As the old man ceased, Sylvestre turned and cast a look downward to Valentine Grandissime, then walked up the steps, and passing with a courteous bow through the group that surrounded Agricola, went into the house. Valentine looked at the zenith, then at his shoe-buckles, tossed his cigar quietly into the grass and passed around a corner of the house to meet Sylvestre in the rear.

Honoré had already nodded to his uncle to come aside with him, and Agricola had done so. The rest of the company, save a few male figures down in the garden, after some feeble efforts to keep up their spirits on the veranda, remarked the growing coolness or the waning daylight, and singly or in pairs withdrew. It was not long before Raoul, who had come up upon the veranda, was left alone. He seemed to wait for something, as, leaning over the rail while the stars came out, he sang to himself, in a soft undertone, a snatch of a Creole song:

"La pluie--la pluie tombait,
Crapaud criait,
Moustique chantait--"

The moon shone so brightly that the children in the garden did not break off their hide-and-seek, and now and then Raoul suspended the murmur of his song, absorbed in the fate of some little elf gliding from one black shadow to crouch in another. He was himself in the deep shade of a magnolia, over whose outer boughs the moonlight was trickling, as if the whole tree had been dipped in quicksilver.

In the broad walk running down to the garden gate some six or seven dark forms sat in chairs, not too far away for the light of their cigars to be occasionally seen and their voices to reach his ear; but he did not listen. In a little while there came a light footstep, and a soft, mock-startled "Who is that?" and one of that same sparkling group of girls that had lately hung upon Honoré came so close to Raoul, in her attempt to discern his lineaments, that their lips accidentally met. They had but a moment of hand-in-hand converse before they were hustled forth by a feminine scouting party and thrust along into one of the great rooms of the house, where the youth and beauty of the Grandissimes were gathered in an expansive semicircle around a languishing fire, waiting to hear a story, or a song, or both, or half a dozen of each, from that master of narrative and melody, Raoul Innerarity.

"But mark," they cried unitedly, "you have got to wind up with the story of Bras-Coupé!"

"A song! A song!"

"Une chanson Créole! Une chanson des nègres!"

"Sing 'yé tolé dancé la doung y doung doung!" cried a black-eyed girl.

Raoul explained that it had too many objectionable phrases.

"Oh, just hum the objectionable phrases and go right on."

But instead he sang them this:

"La *premier'* *fois* *mo* *té* *'oir* *li,*
Li *té* *posé* *au* *bord* *so* *lit;*
Mo *di',* *Bouzon,* *bel* *n'amourèse!*
L'aut' *fois* *li* *té* *si'* *so* *la* *saise*
Comme *vié* *Madam* *dans* *so* *fauteil,*
Quand *li* *vivé* *côté* *soleil.*

So *giés* *yé* *té* *plis* *noir* *passé* *la* *nouitte,*
So *dé* *la* *lev'* *plis* *doux* *passe* *la* *quitte!*
Tou' *mo* *la* *vie,* *zamein* *mo* *oir*
Ein *n'* *amourèse* *zoli* *comme* *ça!*
Mo' *blié* *manzé--mo'* *blié* *boir'--*
Mo' *blié* *tout* *dipi* *ç'* *temps-là--*
Mo' *blié* *parlé--mo'* *blié* *dormi,*
Quand mo pensé après zami!"

"And you have heard Bras-Coupé sing that, yourself?"

"Once upon a time," said Raoul, warming with his subject, "we were coming down from Pointe Macarty in three pirogues. We had been three days fishing and hunting in Lake Salvador. Bras-Coupé had one pirogue with six paddles--"

"Oh, yes!" cried a youth named Baltazar; "sing that, Raoul!"

And he sang that.

"But oh, Raoul, sing that song the negroes sing when they go out in the bayous at night, stealing pigs and chickens!"

"That boat song, do you mean, which they sing as a signal to those on shore?" He hummed.



"Dé zabs, dé zabs, dé counou ouaïe ouaïe,
Dé zabs, dé zabs, dé counou ouaïe ouaïe,
Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe,
Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe,
Counou ouaïe ouaïe ouaïe, momza;
Momza, momza, momza, momza,
Roza, roza, roza-et--momza."

This was followed by another and still another, until the hour began to grow late. And then they gathered

closer around him and heard the promised story. At the same hour Honoré Grandissime, wrapping himself in a greatcoat and giving himself up to sad and somewhat bitter reflections, had wandered from the paternal house, and by and by from the grounds, not knowing why or whither, but after a time soliciting, at Frowenfeld's closing door, the favor of his company. He had been feeling a kind of suffocation. This it was that made him seek and prize the presence and hand-grasp of the inexperienced apothecary. He led him out to the edge of the river. Here they sat down, and with a laborious attempt at a hard and jesting mood, Honoré told the same dark story.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE STORY OF BRAS-COUPÉ

"A very little more than eight years ago," began Honoré--but not only Honoré, but Raoul also; and not only they, but another, earlier on the same day,--Honoré, the f.m.c. But we shall not exactly follow the words of any one of these.

Bras-Coupé, they said, had been, in Africa and under another name, a prince among his people. In a certain war of conquest, to which he had been driven by *ennui*, he was captured, stripped of his royalty, marched down upon the beach of the Atlantic, and, attired as a true son of Adam, with two goodly arms

intact, became a commodity. Passing out of first hands in barter for a looking-glass, he was shipped in good order and condition on board the good schooner *Égalité*, whereof Blank was master, to be delivered without delay at the port of Nouvelle Orléans (the dangers of fire and navigation excepted), unto Blank Blank. In witness whereof, He that made men's skins of different colors, but all blood of one, hath entered the same upon His book, and sealed it to the day of judgment.

Of the voyage little is recorded--here below; the less the better. Part of the living merchandise failed to keep; the weather was rough, the cargo large, the vessel small. However, the captain discovered there was room over the side, and there--all flesh is grass--from time to time during the voyage he jettisoned the unmerchantable.

Yet, when the reopened hatches let in the sweet smell of the land, Bras-Coupé had come to the upper--the favored--the buttered side of the world; the anchor slid with a rumble of relief down through the muddy fathoms of the Mississippi, and the prince could hear through the schooner's side the savage current of the river, leaping and licking about the bows, and whimpering low welcomes home. A splendid picture to the eyes of the royal captive, as his head came up out of the hatchway, was the little Franco-Spanish-American city that lay on the low, brimming bank. There were little forts that showed their whitewashed teeth; there was a green parade-ground, and yellow barracks, and cabildo, and hospital, and cavalry stables, and custom-house, and a most inviting jail, convenient to the cathedral--all of dazzling white and yellow, with a black stripe marking the track of the conflagration of 1794, and here and there among the low roofs a lofty one with round-topped dormer windows and a breezy belvidere looking out upon the plantations of coffee and indigo beyond the town.

When Bras-Coupé staggered ashore, he stood but a moment among a drove of "likely boys," before

Agricola Fusilier, managing the business adventures of the Grandissime estate, as well as the residents thereon, and struck with admiration for the physical beauties of the chieftain (a man may even fancy a negro--as a negro), bought the lot, and, both to resell him with the rest to some unappreciative 'Cadian, induced Don José Martinez' overseer to become his purchaser.

Down in the rich parish of St. Bernard (whose boundary line now touches that of the distended city) lay the plantation, known before Bras-Coupé passed away as La Renaissance. Here it was that he entered at once upon a chapter of agreeable surprises. He was humanely met, presented with a clean garment, lifted into a cart drawn by oxen, taken to a whitewashed cabin of logs, finer than his palace at home, and made to comprehend that it was a free gift. He was also given some clean food, whereupon he fell sick. At home it would have been the part of piety for the magnate next the throne to launch him heavenward at once; but now, healing doses were administered, and to his amazement he recovered. It reminded him that he was no longer king.

His name, he replied to an inquiry touching that subject, was-----, something in the Jaloff tongue, which he by and by condescended to render into Congo: Mioko-Koanga; in French Bras-Coupé; the Arm Cut Off. Truly it would have been easy to admit, had this been his meaning, that his tribe, in losing him, had lost its strong right arm close off at the shoulder; not so easy for his high-paying purchaser to allow, if this other was his intent: that the arm which might no longer shake the spear or swing the wooden sword was no better than a useless stump never to be lifted for aught else. But whether easy to allow or not, that was his meaning. He made himself a type of all Slavery, turning into flesh and blood the truth that all Slavery is maiming.

He beheld more luxury in a week than all his subjects had seen in a century. Here Congo girls were dressed

in cottons and flannels worth, where he came from, an elephant's tusk apiece. Everybody wore clothes--children and lads alone excepted. Not a lion had invaded the settlement since his immigration. The serpents were as nothing; an occasional one coming up through the floor--that was all. True, there was more emaciation than unassisted conjecture could explain--a profusion of enlarged joints and diminished muscles, which, thank God, was even then confined to a narrow section and disappeared with Spanish rule. He had no experimental knowledge of it; nay, regular meals, on the contrary, gave him anxious concern, yet had the effect--spite of his apprehension that he was being fattened for a purpose--of restoring the herculean puissance which formerly in Africa had made him the terror of the battle.

When one day he had come to be quite himself, he was invited out into the sunshine, and escorted by the driver (a sort of foreman to the overseer), went forth dimly wondering. They reached a field where some men and women were hoeing. He had seen men and women--subjects of his--labor--a little--in Africa. The driver handed him a hoe; he examined it with silent interest--until by signs he was requested to join the pastime.

"What?"

He spoke, not with his lips, but with the recoil of his splendid frame and the ferocious expansion of his eyes. This invitation was a cataract of lightning leaping down an ink-black sky. In one instant of all-pervading clearness he read his sentence--WORK.

Bras-Coupé was six feet five. With a sweep as quick as instinct the back of the hoe smote the driver full in the head. Next, the prince lifted the nearest Congo crosswise, brought thirty-two teeth together in his wildly kicking leg and cast him away as a bad morsel; then, throwing another into the branches of a willow, and a woman over his head into a draining-

ditch, he made one bound for freedom, and fell to his knees, rocking from side to side under the effect of a pistol-ball from the overseer. It had struck him in the forehead, and running around the skull in search of a penetrable spot, tradition--which sometimes jests--says came out despairingly, exactly where it had entered.

It so happened that, except the overseer, the whole company were black. Why should the trivial scandal be blabbed? A plaster or two made everything even in a short time, except in the driver's case--for the driver died. The woman whom Bras-Coupé had thrown over his head lived to sell *calas* to Joseph Frowenfeld.

Don José, young and austere, knew nothing about agriculture and cared as much about human nature. The overseer often thought this, but never said it; he would not trust even himself with the dangerous criticism. When he ventured to reveal the foregoing incidents to the señor he laid all the blame possible upon the man whom death had removed beyond the reach of correction, and brought his account to a climax by hazarding the asserting that Bras-Coupé was an animal that could not be whipped.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the master, with gentle emphasis, "how so?"

"Perhaps señor had better ride down to the quarters," replied the overseer.

It was a great sacrifice of dignity, but the master made it.

"Bring him out."

They brought him out--chains on his feet, chains on his wrists, an iron yoke on his neck. The Spanish Creole master had often seen the bull, with his long, keen horns and blazing eye, standing in the arena; but this was as though he had come face to face with a rhinoceros.

"This man is not a Congo," he said.

"He is a Jaloff," replied the encouraged overseer. "See his fine, straight nose; moreover, he is a *candio*-a prince. If I whip him he will die."

The dauntless captive and fearless master stood looking into each other's eyes until each recognized in the other his peer in physical courage, and each was struck with an admiration for the other which no after difference was sufficient entirely to destroy. Had Bras-Coupé's eye quailed but once--just for one little instant--he would have got the lash; but, as it was--

"Get an interpreter," said Don José; then, more privately, "and come to an understanding. I shall require it of you."

Where might one find an interpreter--one not merely able to render a Jaloff's meaning into Creole French, or Spanish, but with such a turn for diplomatic correspondence as would bring about an "understanding" with this African buffalo? The overseer was left standing and thinking, and Clemence, who had not forgotten who threw her into the draining-ditch, cunningly passed by.

"Ah, Clemence--"

"Mo pas capabe! Mo pas capabe! (I cannot, I cannot!) *Ya, ya, ya! 'oir Miché Agricol' Fusilier! ouala yune bon monture, oui!"*--which was to signify that Agricola could interpret the very Papa Lébat.

"Agricola Fusilier! The last man on earth to make peace."

But there seemed to be no choice, and to Agricola the overseer went. It was but a little ride to the Grandissime place.

"I, Agricola Fusilier, stand as an interpreter to a negro? H-sir!"

"But I thought you might know of some person," said the weakening applicant, rubbing his ear with his hand.

"Ah!" replied Agricola, addressing the surrounding scenery, "if I did not--who would? You may take Palmyre."

The overseer softly smote his hands together at the happy thought.

"Yes," said Agricola, "take Palmyre; she has picked up as many negro dialects as I know European languages."

And she went to the don's plantation as interpreter, followed by Agricola's prayer to Fate that she might in some way be overtaken by disaster. The two hated each other with all the strength they had. He knew not only her pride, but her passion for the absent Honoré. He hated her, also, for her intelligence, for the high favor in which she stood with her mistress, and for her invincible spirit, which was more offensively patent to him than to others, since he was himself the chief object of her silent detestation.

It was Palmyre's habit to do nothing without painstaking. "When Mademoiselle comes to be Señora," thought she--she knew that her mistress and the don were affianced--"it will be well to have a Señor's esteem. I shall endeavor to succeed." It was from this motive, then, that with the aid of her mistress she attired herself in a resplendence of scarlet and beads and feathers that could not fail the double purpose of connecting her with the children of Ethiopia and commanding the captive's instant admiration.

Alas for those who succeed too well! No sooner did the African turn his tiger glance upon her than the fire of his eyes died out; and when she spoke to him in the dear accents of his native tongue, the matter of strife vanished from his mind. He loved.

He sat down tamely in his irons and listened to Palmyre's argument as a wrecked mariner would listen to ghostly church-bells. He would give a short assent, feast his eyes, again assent, and feast his ears; but when at length she made bold to approach the actual issue, and finally uttered the loathed word, *Work*, he rose up, six feet five, a statue of indignation in black marble.

And then Palmyre, too, rose up, glorying in him, and went to explain to master and overseer. Bras-Coupé understood, she said, that he was a slave--it was the fortune of war, and he was a warrior; but, according to a generally recognized principle in African international law, he could not reasonably be expected to work.

"As Señor will remember I told him," remarked the overseer; "how can a man expect to plow with a zebra?"

Here he recalled a fact in his earlier experience. An African of this stripe had been found to answer admirably as a "driver" to make others work. A second and third parley, extending through two or three days, were held with the prince, looking to his appointment to the vacant office of driver; yet what was the master's amazement to learn at length that his Highness declined the proffered honor.

"Stop!" spoke the overseer again, detecting a look of alarm in Palmyre's face as she turned away, "he doesn't do any such thing. If Señor will let me take the man to Agricola--"

"No!" cried Palmyre, with an agonized look, "I will tell. He will take the place and fill it if you will give me to him for his own--but oh, messieurs, for the love of God--I do not want to be his wife!"

The overseer looked at the Señor, ready to approve whatever he should decide. Bras-Coupé's intrepid audacity took the Spaniard's heart by irresistible assault.

"I leave it entirely with Señor Fusilier," he said.

"But he is not my master; he has no right--"

"Silence!"

And she was silent; and so, sometimes, is fire in the wall.

Agricola's consent was given with malicious promptness, and as Bras-Coupé's fetters fell off it was decreed that, should he fill his office efficiently, there should be a wedding on the rear veranda of the Grandissime mansion simultaneously with the one already appointed to take place in the grand hall of the same house six months from that present day. In the meanwhile Palmyre should remain with Mademoiselle, who had promptly but quietly made up her mind that Palmyre should not be wed unless she wished to be. Bras-Coupé made no objection, was royally worthless for a time, but learned fast, mastered the "gumbo" dialect in a few weeks, and in six months was the most valuable man ever bought for gourde dollars. Nevertheless, there were but three persons within as many square miles who were not most vividly afraid of him.

The first was Palmyre. His bearing in her presence was ever one of solemn, exalted respect, which, whether from pure magnanimity in himself, or by reason of her magnetic eye, was something worth being there to see. "It was royal!" said the overseer.

The second was not that official. When Bras-Coupé said--as, at stated intervals, he did say--"*Mo courri c'ez Agricole Fusilier pou' 'oir 'namourouse* (I go to Agricola Fusilier to see my betrothed,)" the overseer would sooner have intercepted a score of painted Chickasaws than that one lover. He would look after him and shake a prophetic head. "Trouble coming; better not deceive that fellow;" yet that was the very thing Palmyre dared do. Her admiration for Bras-Coupé was almost boundless. She rejoiced in his stature; she revelled in the contemplation of his

untamable spirit; he seemed to her the gigantic embodiment of her own dark, fierce will, the expanded realization of her lifetime longing for terrible strength. But the single deficiency in all this impassioned regard was--what so many fairer loves have found impossible to explain to so many gentler lovers--an entire absence of preference; her heart she could not give him--she did not have it. Yet after her first prayer to the Spaniard and his overseer for deliverance, to the secret surprise and chagrin of her young mistress, she simulated content. It was artifice; she knew Agricola's power, and to seem to consent was her one chance with him. He might thus be beguiled into withdrawing his own consent. That failing, she had Mademoiselle's promise to come to the rescue, which she could use at the last moment; and that failing, there was a dirk in her bosom, for which a certain hard breast was not too hard. Another element of safety, of which she knew nothing, was a letter from the Cannes Brulée. The word had reached there that love had conquered--that, despite all hard words, and rancor, and positive injury, the Grandissime hand--the fairest of Grandissime hands--was about to be laid into that of one who without much stretch might be called a De Grapion; that there was, moreover, positive effort being made to induce a restitution of old gaming-table spoils. Honoré and Mademoiselle, his sister, one on each side of the Atlantic, were striving for this end. Don José sent this intelligence to his kinsman as glad tidings (a lover never imagines there are two sides to that which makes him happy), and, to add a touch of humor, told how Palmyre, also, was given to the chieftain. The letter that came back to the young Spaniard did not blame him so much: *he* was ignorant of all the facts; but a very formal one to Agricola begged to notify him that if Palmyre's union with Bras-Coupé should be completed, as sure as there was a God in heaven, the writer would have the life of the man who knowingly had thus endeavored to dishonor one who *shared the blood of the De*

Grapians. Thereupon Agricola, contrary to his general character, began to drop hints to Don José that the engagement of Bras-Coupé and Palmyre need not be considered irreversible; but the don was not desirous of disappointing his terrible pet. Palmyre, unluckily, played her game a little too deeply. She thought the moment had come for herself to insist on the match, and thus provoke Agricola to forbid it. To her incalculable dismay she saw him a second time reconsider and become silent.

The second person who did not fear Bras-Coupé was Mademoiselle. On one of the giant's earliest visits to see Palmyre he obeyed the summons which she brought him, to appear before the lady. A more artificial man might have objected on the score of dress, his attire being a single gaudy garment tightly enveloping the waist and thighs. As his eyes fell upon the beautiful white lady he prostrated himself upon the ground, his arms outstretched before him. He would not move till she was gone. Then he arose like a hermit who has seen a vision. "*Bras-Coupé n' pas oulé oir zombis* (Bras-Coupé dares not look upon a spirit)." From that hour he worshipped. He saw her often; every time, after one glance at her countenance, he would prostrate his gigantic length with his face in the dust.

The third person who did not fear him was--Agricola? Nay, it was the Spaniard--a man whose capability to fear anything in nature or beyond had never been discovered.

Long before the end of his probation Bras-Coupé would have slipped the entanglements of bondage, though as yet he felt them only as one feels a spider's web across the face, had not the master, according to a little affectation of the times, promoted him to be his game-keeper. Many a day did these two living magazines of wrath spend together in the dismal swamps and on the meagre intersecting ridges, making war upon deer and bear and wildcat; or on the Mississippi after wild goose and pelican; when

even a word misplaced would have made either the slayer of the other. Yet the months ran smoothly round and the wedding night drew nigh[3]. A goodly company had assembled. All things were ready. The bride was dressed, the bridegroom had come. On the great back piazza, which had been inclosed with sail-cloth and lighted with lanterns, was Palmyre, full of a new and deep design and playing her deceit to the last, robed in costly garments to whose beauty was added the charm of their having been worn once, and once only, by her beloved Mademoiselle.

[3] An over-zealous Franciscan once complained bitterly to the bishop of Havana, that people were being married in Louisiana in their own houses after dark and thinking nothing of it. It is not certain that he had reference to the Grandissime mansion; at any rate he was tittered down by the whole community.

But where was Bras-Coupé?

The question was asked of Palmyre by Agricola with a gaze that meant in English, "No tricks, girl!"

Among the servants who huddled at the windows and door to see the inner magnificence a frightened whisper was already going round.

"We have made a sad discovery, Miché Fusilier," said the overseer. "Bras-Coupé is here; we have him in a room just yonder. But--the truth is, sir, Bras-Coupé is a voudou."

"Well, and suppose he is; what of it? Only hush; do not let his master know it. It is nothing; all the blacks are voudous, more or less."

"But he declines to dress himself--has painted himself all rings and stripes, antelope fashion."

"Tell him Agricola Fusilier says, 'dress immediately!'"

"Oh, Miché, we have said that five times already, and his answer--you will pardon me--his answer is--"

spitting on the ground--that you are a contemptible *dotchian* (white trash)."

There is nothing to do but privily to call the very bride--the lady herself. She comes forth in all her glory, small, but oh, so beautiful! Slam! Bras-Coupé is upon his face, his finger-tips touching the tips of her snowy slippers. She gently bids him go and dress, and at once he goes.

Ah! now the question may be answered without whispering. There is Bras-Coupé, towering above all heads, in ridiculous red and blue regimentals, but with a look of savage dignity upon him that keeps every one from laughing. The murmur of admiration that passed along the thronged gallery leaped up into a shout in the bosom of Palmyre. Oh, Bras-Coupé--heroic soul! She would not falter. She would let the silly priest say his say--then her cunning should help her *not to be* his wife, yet to show his mighty arm how and when to strike.

"He is looking for Palmyre," said some, and at that moment he saw her.

"Ho-o-o-o-o!"

Agricola's best roar was a penny trumpet to Bras-Coupé's note of joy. The whole masculine half of the indoor company flocked out to see what the matter was. Bras-Coupé was taking her hand in one of his and laying his other upon her head; and as some one made an unnecessary gesture for silence, he sang, beating slow and solemn time with his naked foot and with the hand that dropped hers to smite his breast:

"En haut la montagne, zami,
Mo pé coupé canne, zami,
Pou' fé l'a'zen' zami,
Pou' mo baille Palmyre.
Ah! Palmyre, Palmyre mo c'ere,
Mo l'aimé 'ou'--mo l'aimé 'ou'."

"*Montagne?*" asked one slave of another, "*qui est ça, montagne? gnia pas quiç 'ose comme ça dans la Louisiana?* (What's a mountain?" We haven't such things in Louisiana.)"

"*Mein ye gagnein plein montagnes dans l'Afrique, listen!*"

"*Ah! Palmyre, Palmyre, mo' piti zozo, Mo l'aimé 'ou'--mo l'aimé, l'aimé 'ou'.*"

"Bravissimo!--" but just then a counter-attraction drew the white company back into the house. An old French priest with sandalled feet and a dirty face had arrived. There was a moment of handshaking with the good father, then a moment of palpitation and holding of the breath, and then--you would have known it by the turning away of two or three feminine heads in tears--the lily hand became the don's, to have and to hold, by authority of the Church and the Spanish king. And all was merry, save that outside there was coming up as villanous a night as ever cast black looks in through snug windows.

It was just as the newly-wed Spaniard, with Agricola and all the guests, were concluding the byplay of marrying the darker couple, that the hurricane struck the dwelling. The holy and jovial father had made faint pretence of kissing this second bride; the ladies, colonels, dons, etc.,--though the joke struck them as a trifle coarse--were beginning to laugh and clap hands again and the gowned jester to bow to right and left, when Bras-Coupé, tardily realizing the consummation of his hopes, stepped forward to embrace his wife.

"Bras-Coupé!"

The voice was that of Palmyre's mistress. She had not been able to comprehend her maid's behavior, but now Palmyre had darted upon her an appealing look.

The warrior stopped as if a javelin had flashed over his head and stuck in the wall.

"Bras-Coupé must wait till I give him his wife."

He sank, with hidden face, slowly to the floor.

"Bras-Coupé hears the voice of zombis; the voice is sweet, but the words are very strong; from the same sugar-cane comes *sirop* and *tafia*; Bras-Coupé says to zombis, 'Bras-Coupé will wait; but if the *dotchians* deceive Bras-Coupé--" he rose to his feet with his eyes closed and his great black fist lifted over his head--"Bras-Coupé will call Voudou-Magnan!"

The crowd retreated and the storm fell like a burst of infernal applause. A whiff like fifty witches flouted up the canvas curtain of the gallery and a fierce black cloud, drawing the moon under its cloak, belched forth a stream of fire that seemed to flood the ground; a peal of thunder followed as if the sky had fallen in, the house quivered, the great oaks groaned, and every lesser thing bowed down before the awful blast. Every lip held its breath for a minute--or an hour, no one knew--there was a sudden lull of the wind, and the floods came down. Have you heard it thunder and rain in those Louisiana lowlands? Every clap seems to crack the world. It has rained a moment; you peer through the black pane--your house is an island, all the land is sea.

However, the supper was spread in the hall and in due time the guests were filled. Then a supper was spread in the big hall in the basement, below stairs, the sons and daughters of Ham came down like the fowls of the air upon a rice-field, and Bras-Coupé, throwing his heels about with the joyous carelessness of a smutted Mercury, for the first time in his life tasted the blood of the grape. A second, a fifth, a tenth time he tasted it, drinking more deeply each time, and would have taken it ten times more had not his bride cunningly concealed it. It was like stealing a tiger's kittens.

The moment quickly came when he wanted his eleventh bumper. As he presented his request a silent shiver of consternation ran through the dark company; and when, in what the prince meant as a remonstrative tone, he repeated the petition--splitting the table with his fist by way of punctuation--there ensued a hustling up staircases and a cramming into dim corners that left him alone at the banquet.

Leaving the table, he strode upstairs and into the chirruping and dancing of the grand salon. There was a halt in the cotillion and a hush of amazement like the shutting off of steam. Bras-Coupé strode straight to his master, laid his paw upon his fellow-bridegroom's shoulder and in a thunder-tone demanded:

"More!"

The master swore a Spanish oath, lifted his hand and--fell, beneath the terrific fist of his slave, with a bang that jingled the candelabra. Dolorous stroke!--for the dealer of it. Given, apparently to him--poor, tipsy savage--in self-defence, punishable, in a white offender, by a small fine or a few days' imprisonment, it assured Bras-Coupé the death of a felon; such was the old *Code Noir*. (We have a *Code Noir* now, but the new one is a mental reservation, not an enactment.)

The guests stood for an instant as if frozen, smitten stiff with the instant expectation of insurrection, conflagration and rapine (just as we do to-day whenever some poor swaggering Pompey rolls up his fist and gets a ball through his body), while, single-handed and naked-fisted in a room full of swords, the giant stood over his master, making strange signs and passes and rolling out in wrathful words of his mother tongue what it needed no interpreter to tell his swarming enemies was a voodoo malediction.

"*Nous sommes grigis!*" screamed two or three ladies, "we are bewitched!"

"Look to your wives and daughters!" shouted a Brahmin-Mandarin.

"Shoot the black devils without mercy!" cried a Mandarin-Fusilier, unconsciously putting into a single outflash of words the whole Creole treatment of race troubles.



"Bras-Coupé was practically declaring his independence on a slight rise of ground hardly

sixty feet in circumference and lifted scarce above the water in the inmost depths of the swamp''.

With a single bound Bras-Coupé reached the drawing-room door; his gaudy regimentals made a red and blue streak down the hall; there was a rush of frilled and powdered gentlemen to the rear veranda, an avalanche of lightning with Bras-Coupé in the midst making for the swamp, and then all without was blackness of darkness and all within was a wild commingled chatter of Creole, French, and Spanish tongues,--in the midst of which the reluctant Agricola returned his dresssword to its scabbard.

While the wet lanterns swung on crazily in the trees along the way by which the bridegroom was to have borne his bride; while Madame Grandissime prepared an impromptu bridalchamber; while the Spaniard bathed his eye and the blue gash on his cheek-bone; while Palmyre paced her room in a fever and wild tremor of conflicting emotions throughout the night, and the guests splashed home after the storm as best they could, Bras-Coupé was practically declaring his independence on a slight rise of ground hardly sixty feet in circumference and lifted scarce above the water in the inmost depths of the swamp.

And amid what surroundings! Endless colonnades of cypresses; long, motionless drapings of gray moss; broad sheets of noisome waters, pitchy black, resting on bottomless ooze; cypress knees studding the surface; patches of floating green, gleaming brilliantly here and there; yonder where the sunbeams wedge themselves in, constellations of water-lilies, the many-hued iris, and a multitude of flowers that no man had named; here, too, serpents great and small, of wonderful colorings, and the dull and loathsome moccasin sliding warily off the dead tree; in dimmer recesses the cow alligator, with her nest hard by; turtles a century old; owls and bats, raccoons, opossums, rats, centipedes and creatures of

like vileness; great vines of beautiful leaf and scarlet fruit in deadly clusters; maddening mosquitoes, parasitic insects, gorgeous dragon-flies and pretty water-lizards: the blue heron, the snowy crane, the red-bird, the moss-bird, the night-hawk and the chuckwill's-widow; a solemn stillness and stifled air only now and then disturbed by the call or whirl of the summer duck, the dismal ventriloquous note of the rain-crow, or the splash of a dead branch falling into the clear but lifeless bayou.

The pack of Cuban hounds that howl from Don José's kennels cannot snuff the trail of the stolen canoe that glides through the sombre blue vapors of the African's fastnesses. His arrows send no telltale reverberations to the distant clearing. Many a wretch in his native wilderness has Bras-Coupé himself, in palmier days, driven to just such an existence, to escape the chains and horrors of the barracoons; therefore not a whit broods he over man's inhumanity, but, taking the affair as a matter of course, casts about him for a future.

CHAPTER XXIX

THE STORY OF BRAS-COUPÉ, CONTINUED

Bras-Coupé let the autumn pass, and wintered in his den.

Don José, in a majestic way, endeavored to be happy. He took his señora to his hall, and under her rule it took on for a while a look and feeling which turned it from a hunting-lodge into a home. Wherever the lady's steps turned--or it is as correct to say wherever the proud tread of Palmyre turned--the features of bachelor's-hall disappeared; guns, dogs, oars, saddles, nets, went their way into proper banishment, and the broad halls and lofty chambers--the floors now muffled with mats of palmetto-leaf--no longer re-echoed the tread of a lonely master, but breathed a redolence of flowers and a rippling murmur of well-contented song.

But the song was not from the throat of Bras-Coupé's "*piti zozo*." Silent and severe by day, she moaned away whole nights heaping reproaches upon herself for the impulse--now to her, because it had failed, inexplicable in its folly--which had permitted her hand to lie in Bras-Coupé's and the priest to bind them together.

For in the audacity of her pride, or, as Agricola would have said, in the immensity of her impudence, she had held herself consecrate to a hopeless love. But now she was a black man's wife! and even he unable to sit at her feet and learn the lesson she had hoped to teach him. She had heard of San Domingo; for months the fierce heart within her silent bosom had been leaping and shouting and seeing visions of fire and blood, and when she brooded over the nearness of Agricola and the remoteness of Honoré these visions got from her a sort of mad consent. The lesson she would have taught the giant was Insurrection. But it was too late. Letting her dagger sleep in her bosom, and with an undefined belief in imaginary resources, she had consented to join hands with her giant hero before the priest; and when the wedding had come and gone like a white sail, she was seized with a lasting, fierce despair. A wild aggressiveness that had formerly characterized her glance in moments of anger--moments which had

grown more and more infrequent under the softening influence of her Mademoiselle's nature--now came back intensified, and blazed in her eye perpetually. Whatever her secret love may have been in kind, its sinking beyond hope below the horizon had left her fifty times the mutineer she had been before--the mutineer who has nothing to lose.

"She loves her *candio*" said the negroes.

"Simple creatures!" said the overseer, who prided himself on his discernment, "she loves nothing; she hates Agricola; it's a case of hate at first sight--the strongest kind."

Both were partly right; her feelings were wonderfully knit to the African; and she now dedicated herself to Agricola's ruin.

The señor, it has been said, endeavored to be happy; but now his heart conceived and brought forth its first-born fear, sired by superstition--the fear that he was bewitched. The negroes said that Bras-Coupé had cursed the land. Morning after morning the master looked out with apprehension toward the fields, until one night the worm came upon the indigo, and between sunset and sunrise every green leaf had been eaten up and there was nothing left for either insect or apprehension to feed upon.

And then he said--and the echo came back from the Cannes Brulées--that the very bottom culpability of this thing rested on the Grandissimes, and specifically on their fogleman Agricola, through his putting the hellish African upon him. Moreover, fever and death, to a degree unknown before, fell upon his slaves. Those to whom life was spared--but to whom strength did not return--wandered about the place like scarecrows, looking for shelter, and made the very air dismal with the reiteration, "*No' ouanga* (we are bewitched), *Bras-Coupé fé moi des grigis* (the voodoo's spells are on me)." The ripple of song was hushed and the flowers fell upon the floor.

"I have heard an English maxim," wrote Colonel De Grapion to his kinsman, "which I would recommend you to put into practice--'Fight the devil with fire.'"

No, he would not recognize devils as belligerents.

But if Rome commissioned exorcists, could not he employ one?

No, he would not! If his hounds could not catch Bras-Coupé, why, let him go. The overseer tried the hounds once more and came home with the best one across his saddle-bow, an arrow run half through its side.

Once the blacks attempted by certain familiar rum-pourings and nocturnal charm-singing to lift the curse; but the moment the master heard the wild monotone of their infernal worship, he stopped it with a word.

Early in February came the spring, and with it some resurrection of hope and courage. It may have been--it certainly was, in part--because young Honoré Grandissime had returned. He was like the sun's warmth wherever he went; and the other Honoré was like his shadow. The fairer one quickly saw the meaning of these things, hastened to cheer the young don with hopes of a better future, and to effect, if he could, the restoration of Bras-Coupé to his master's favor. But this latter effort was an idle one. He had long sittings with his uncle Agricola to the same end, but they always ended fruitless and often angrily.

His dark half-brother had seen Palmyre and loved her. Honoré would gladly have solved one or two riddles by effecting their honorable union in marriage. The previous ceremony on the Grandissime back piazza need be no impediment; all slave-owners understood those things. Following Honoré's advice, the f.m.c., who had come into possession of his paternal portion, sent to Cannes Brulées a written offer, to buy Palmyre at any price that her master might name, stating his intention to

free her and make her his wife. Colonel De Grapion could hardly hope to settle Palmyre's fate more satisfactorily, yet he could not forego an opportunity to indulge his pride by following up the threat he had hung over Agricola to kill whosoever should give Palmyre to a black man. He referred the subject and the would-be purchaser to him. It would open up to the old braggart a line of retreat, thought the planter of the Cannes Brulées.

But the idea of retreat had left Citizen Fusilier.

"She is already married," said he to M. Honoré Grandissime, f.m.c. "She is the lawful wife of Bras-Coupé; and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. You know it, sirrah. You did this for impudence, to make a show of your wealth. You intended it as an insinuation of equality. I overlook the impertinence for the sake of the man whose white blood you carry; but h-mark you, if ever you bring your Parisian airs and self-sufficient face on a level with mine again, h-I will slap it."

The quadron, three nights after, was so indiscreet as to give him the opportunity, and he did it--at that quadron ball to which Dr. Keene alluded in talking to Frowenfeld.

But Don José, we say, plucked up new spirit..

"Last year's disasters were but fortune's freaks," he said. "See, others' crops have failed all about us."

The overseer shook his head.

"C'est ce maudit cocodri' là bas (It is that accursed alligator, Bras-Coupé, down yonder in the swamp)."

And by and by the master was again smitten with the same belief. He and his neighbors put in their crops afresh. The spring waned, summer passed, the fevers returned, the year wore round, but no harvest smiled. "Alas!" cried the planters, "we are all poor men!" The worst among the worst were the fields of Bras-Coupé's master--parched and shrivelled. "He does

not understand planting," said his neighbors; "neither does his overseer. Maybe, too, it is true as he says, that he is voodooed."

One day at high noon the master was taken sick with fever.

The third noon after--the sad wife sitting by the bedside--suddenly, right in the centre of the room, with the door open behind him, stood the magnificent, half-nude form of Bras-Coupé. He did not fall down as the mistress's eyes met his, though all his flesh quivered. The master was lying with his eyes closed. The fever had done a fearful three days' work.

"Mioko-Koanga oulé so' femme (Bras-Coupé wants his wife)."

The master started wildly and stared upon his slave.

"Bras-Coupé oulé so' femme!" repeated the black.

"Seize him!" cried the sick man, trying to rise.

But, though several servants had ventured in with frightened faces, none dared molest the giant. The master turned his entreating eyes upon his wife, but she seemed stunned, and only covered her face with her hands and sat as if paralyzed by a foreknowledge of what was coming.

Bras-Coupé lifted his great black palm and commenced:

"Mo cé voudrai que la maison ci là, et tout ça qui pas femme' ici, s'raient encore maudits! (May this house, and all in it who are not women, be accursed)."

The master fell back upon his pillow with a groan of helpless wrath.

The African pointed his finger through the open window.

"May its fields not know the plough nor nourish the herds that overrun it."

The domestics, who had thus far stood their ground, suddenly rushed from the room like stampeded cattle, and at that moment appeared Palmyre.

"Speak to him," faintly cried the panting invalid.

She went firmly up to her husband and lifted her hand. With an easy motion, but quick as lightning, as a lion sets foot on a dog, he caught her by the arm.

"*Bras-Coupé oulé so' femme*," he said, and just then Palmyre would have gone with him to the equator.

"You shall not have her!" gasped the master.

The African seemed to rise in height, and still holding his wife at arm's length, resumed his malediction:

"May weeds cover the ground until the air is full of their odor and the wild beasts of the forest come and lie down under their cover."

With a frantic effort the master lifted himself upon his elbow and extended his clenched fist in speechless defiance; but his brain reeled, his sight went out, and when again he saw, Palmyre and her mistress were bending over him, the overseer stood awkwardly by, and *Bras-Coupé* was gone.

The plantation became an invalid camp. The words of the voodoo found fulfilment on every side. The plough went not out; the herds wandered through broken hedges from field to field and came up with staring bones and shrunken sides; a frenzied mob of weeds and thorns wrestled and throttled each other in a struggle for standing-room--rag-weed, smart-weed, sneeze-weed, bindweed, iron-weed--until the burning skies of midsummer checked their growth and crowned their unshorn tops with rank and dingy flowers.

"Why in the name of--St. Francis," asked the priest of the overseer, "didn't the señora use her power over the black scoundrel when he stood and cursed, that day?"

"Why, to tell you the truth, father," said the overseer, in a discreet whisper, "I can only suppose she thought Bras-Coupé had half a right to do it."

"Ah, ah, I see; like her brother Honoré--looks at both sides of a question--a miserable practice; but why couldn't Palmyre use *her* eyes? They would have stopped him."

"Palmyre? Why Palmyre has become the best *monture* (Plutonian medium) in the parish. Agricola Fusilier himself is afraid of her. Sir, I think sometimes Bras-Coupé is dead and his spirit has gone into Palmyre. She would rather add to his curse than take from it."

"Ah!" said the jovial divine, with a fat smile, "castigation would help her case; the whip is a great sanctifier. I fancy it would even make a Christian of the inexpugnable Bras-Coupé."

But Bras-Coupé kept beyond the reach alike of the lash and of the Latin Bible.

By and by came a man with a rumor, whom the overseer brought to the master's sick-room, to tell that an enterprising Frenchman was attempting to produce a new staple in Louisiana, one that worms would not annihilate. It was that year of history when the despairing planters saw ruin hovering so close over them that they cried to heaven for succor. Providence raised up Étienne de Boré. "And if Étienne is successful," cried the news-bearer, "and gets the juice of the sugar-cane to crystallize, so shall all of us, after him, and shall yet save our lands and homes. Oh, Señor, it will make you strong again to see these fields all cane and the long rows of negroes and negresses cutting it, while they sing their song of those droll African numerals, counting the canes they

cut," and the bearer of good tidings sang them for very joy:



An - o - qué, An - o - bia, Bia-t



Au-mon-dé, Au-tap - o - té, Au - p

"And Honoré Grandissime is going to introduce it on his lands," said Don José.

"That is true," said Agricola Fusilier, coming in. Honoré, the indefatigable peacemaker, had brought his uncle and his brother-in-law for the moment not only to speaking, but to friendly terms.

The señor smiled.

"I have some good tidings, too," he said; "my beloved lady has borne me a son."

"Another scion of the house of Grand--I mean Martinez!" exclaimed Agricola. "And now, Don José, let me say that *I* have an item of rare intelligence!"

The don lifted his feeble head and opened his inquiring eyes with a sudden, savage light in them.

"No," said Agricola, "he is not exactly taken yet, but they are on his track."

"Who?"

"The police. We may say he is virtually in our grasp."

It was on a Sabbath afternoon that a band of Choctaws having just played a game of racquette behind the city and a similar game being about to end between the white champions of two rival faubourgs, the beating of tom-toms, rattling of mules' jawbones and sounding of wooden horns drew the populace across the fields to a spot whose present name of Congo Square still preserves a reminder of its old barbaric pastimes. On a grassy plain under the ramparts, the performers of these hideous discords sat upon the ground facing each other, and in their midst the dancers danced. They gyrated in couples, a few at a time, throwing their bodies into the most startling attitudes and the wildest contortions, while the whole company of black lookers-on, incited by the tones of the weird music and the violent posturing of the dancers, swayed and writhed in passionate sympathy, beating their breasts, palms and thighs in time with the bones and drums, and at frequent intervals lifting, in that wild African unison no more to be described than forgotten, the unutterable songs of the Babouille and Counjaille dances, with their ejaculatory burdens of "*Aie! Aie! Voudou Magnan!*" and "*Aie Calinda! Dancé Calinda!*" The volume of sound rose and fell with the augmentation or diminution of the dancers' extravagances. Now a fresh man, young and supple, bounding into the ring, revived the flagging rattlers, drummers and trumpeters; now a wearied dancer, finding his strength going, gathered all his force at the cry of "*Dancé zisqu'a mort!*" rallied to a grand finale and with one magnificent antic fell, foaming at the mouth.

The amusement had reached its height. Many participants had been lugged out by the neck to avoid their being danced on, and the enthusiasm had risen to a frenzy, when there bounded into the ring the blackest of black men, an athlete of superb figure, in breeches of "Indienne"--the stuff used for slave women's best dresses--jingling with bells, his feet in moccasins, his tight, crisp hair decked out with feathers, a necklace of alligator's teeth rattling on his breast and a living serpent twined about his neck.

It chanced that but one couple was dancing. Whether they had been sent there by advice of Agricola is not certain. Snatching a tambourine from a bystander as he entered, the stranger thrust the male dancer aside, faced the woman and began a series of saturnalian antics, compared with which all that had gone before was tame and sluggish; and as he finally leaped, with tinkling heels, clean over his bewildered partner's head, the multitude howled with rapture.

Ill-starred Bras-Coupé. He was in that extra-hazardous and irresponsible condition of mind and body known in the undignified present as "drunk again."

By the strangest fortune, if not, as we have just hinted, by some design, the man whom he had once deposited in the willow bushes, and the woman Clemence, were the very two dancers, and no other, whom he had interrupted. The man first stupidly regarded, next admiringly gazed upon, and then distinctly recognized, his whilom driver. Five minutes later the Spanish police were putting their heads together to devise a quick and permanent capture; and in the midst of the sixth minute, as the wonderful fellow was rising in a yet more astounding leap than his last, a lasso fell about his neck and brought him, crashing like a burnt tree, face upward upon the turf.

"The runaway slave," said the old French code, continued in force by the Spaniards, "the runaway

slave who shall continue to be so for one month from the day of his being denounced to the officers of justice shall have his ears cut off and shall be branded with the flower de luce on the shoulder; and on a second offence of the same nature, persisted in during one month of his being denounced, he shall be hamstrung, and be marked with the flower de luce on the other shoulder. On the third offence he shall die." Bras-Coupé had run away only twice. "But," said Agricola, "these 'bossals' must be taught their place. Besides, there is Article 27 of the same code: 'The slave who, having struck his master, shall have produced a bruise, shall suffer capital punishment'--a very necessary law!" He concluded with a scowl upon Palmyre, who shot back a glance which he never forgot.

The Spaniard showed himself very merciful--for a Spaniard; he spared the captive's life. He might have been more merciful still; but Honoré Grandissime said some indignant things in the African's favor, and as much to teach the Grandissimes a lesson as to punish the runaway, he would have repented his clemency, as he repented the momentary truce with Agricola, but for the tearful pleading of the señora and the hot, dry eyes of her maid. Because of these he overlooked the offence against his person and estate, and delivered Bras-Coupé to the law to suffer only the penalties of the crime he had committed against society by attempting to be a free man.

We repeat it for the credit of Palmyre, that she pleaded for Bras-Coupé. But what it cost her to make that intercession, knowing that his death would leave her free, and that if he lived she must be his wife, let us not attempt to say.

In the midst of the ancient town, in a part which is now crumbling away, stood the Calaboza, with its humid vaults and grated cells, its iron cages and its whips; and there, soon enough, they strapped Bras-Coupé face downward and laid on the lash. And yet not a sound came from the mutilated but

unconquered African to annoy the ear of the sleeping city.

("And you suffered this thing to take place?" asked Joseph Frowenfeld of Honoré Grandissime.

"My-de'-seh!" exclaimed the Creole, "they lied to me--said they would not harm him!")

He was brought at sunrise to the plantation. The air was sweet with the smell of the weed-grown fields. The long-horned oxen that drew him and the naked boy that drove the team stopped before his cabin.

"You cannot put that creature in there," said the thoughtful overseer. "He would suffocate under a roof--he has been too long out-of-doors for that. Put him on my cottage porch." There, at last, Palmyre burst into tears and sank down, while before her, on a soft bed of dry grass, rested the helpless form of the captive giant, a cloth thrown over his galled back, his ears shorn from his head, and the tendons behind his knees severed. His eyes were dry, but there was in them that unspeakable despair that fills the eye of the charger when, fallen in battle, he gazes with sidewise-bended neck on the ruin wrought upon him. His eye turned sometimes slowly to his wife. He need not demand her now--she was always by him.

There was much talk over him--much idle talk. He merely lay still under it with a fixed frown; but once some incautious tongue dropped the name of Agricola. The black man's eyes came so quickly round to Palmyre that she thought he would speak; but no; his words were all in his eyes. She answered their gleam with a fierce affirmative glance, whereupon he slowly bent his head and spat upon the floor.

There was yet one more trial of his wild nature. The mandate came from his master's sick-bed that he must lift the curse.

Bras-Coupé merely smiled. God keep thy enemy from such a smile!

The overseer, with a policy less Spanish than his master's, endeavored to use persuasion. But the fallen prince would not so much as turn one glance from his parted hamstrings. Palmyre was then besought to intercede. She made one poor attempt, but her husband was nearer doing her an unkindness than ever he had been before; he made a slow sign for silence--with his fist; and every mouth was stopped.

At midnight following, there came, on the breeze that blew from the mansion, a sound of running here and there, of wailing and sobbing--another Bridegroom was coming, and the Spaniard, with much such a lamp in hand as most of us shall be found with, neither burning brightly nor wholly gone out, went forth to meet Him.

"Bras-Coupé," said Palmyre, next evening, speaking low in his mangled ear, "the master is dead; he is just buried. As he was dying, Bras-Coupé, he asked that you would forgive him."

The maimed man looked steadfastly at his wife. He had not spoken since the lash struck him, and he spoke not now; but in those large, clear eyes, where his remaining strength seemed to have taken refuge as in a citadel, the old fierceness flared up for a moment, and then, like an expiring beacon, went out.

"Is your mistress well enough by this time to venture here?" whispered the overseer to Palmyre. "Let her come. Tell her not to fear, but to bring the babe--in her own arms, tell her--quickly!"

The lady came, her infant boy in her arms, knelt down beside the bed of sweet grass and set the child within the hollow of the African's arm. Bras-Coupé turned his gaze upon it; it smiled, its mother's smile, and put its hand upon the runaway's face, and the first tears of Bras-Coupé's life, the dying testimony of his humanity, gushed from his eyes and rolled

down his cheek upon the infant's hand. He laid his own tenderly upon the babe's forehead, then removing it, waved it abroad, inaudibly moved his lips, dropped his arm, and closed his eyes. The curse was lifted.

"*Le pauv' dgiab'!*" said the overseer, wiping his eyes and looking fieldward. "Palmyre, you must get the priest."

The priest came, in the identical gown in which he had appeared the night of the two weddings. To the good father's many tender questions Bras-Coupé turned a failing eye that gave no answers; until, at length:

"Do you know where you are going?" asked the holy man.

"Yes," answered his eyes, brightening.

"Where?"

He did not reply; he was lost in contemplation, and seemed looking far away.

So the question was repeated.

"Do you know where you are going?"

And again the answer of the eyes. He knew.

"Where?"

The overseer at the edge of the porch, the widow with her babe, and Palmyre and the priest bending over the dying bed, turned an eager ear to catch the answer.

"To--" the voice failed a moment; the departing hero essayed again; again it failed; he tried once more, lifted his hand, and with an ecstatic, upward smile, whispered, "To--Africa"--and was gone.



CHAPTER XXX

PARALYSIS

As we have said, the story of Bras-Coupé was told that day three times: to the Grandissime beauties once, to Frowenfeld twice. The fair Grandissimes all agreed, at the close; that it was pitiful. Specially, that it was a great pity to have hamstrung Bras-Coupé, a man who even in his cursing had made an exception in favor of the ladies. True, they could suggest no alternative; it was undeniable that he had deserved his fate; still, it seemed a pity. They dispersed, retired and went to sleep confirmed in this sentiment. In Frowenfeld the story stirred deeper feelings.

On this same day, while it was still early morning, Honoré Grandissime, f.m.c., with more than even his wonted slowness of step and propriety of rich attire, had reappeared in the shop of the rue Royale. He did not need to say he desired another private interview. Frowenfeld ushered him silently and at once into his rear room, offered him a chair (which he accepted), and sat down before him.

In his labored way the quadron stated his knowledge that Frowenfeld had been three times to the dwelling of Palmyre Philosophe. Why, he further intimated, he knew not, nor would he ask; but *he*--when *he* had applied for admission--had been refused. He had laid open his heart to the apothecary's eyes--"It may have been unwisely--"

Frowenfeld interrupted him; Palmyre had been ill for several days; Doctor Keene--who, Mr. Grandissime probably knew, was her physician--

The landlord bowed, and Frowenfeld went on to explain that Doctor Keene, while attending her, had also fallen sick and had asked him to take the care of this one case until he could himself resume it. So there, in a word, was the reason why Joseph had, and others had not, been admitted to her presence.

As obviously to the apothecary's eyes as anything intangible could be, a load of suffering was lifted from the quadron's mind, as this explanation was

concluded. Yet he only sat in meditation before his tenant, who regarded him long and sadly. Then, seized with one of his energetic impulses, he suddenly said:

"Mr. Grandissime, you are a man of intelligence, accomplishments, leisure and wealth; why" (clenchings his fists and frowning), "why do you not give yourself--your time--wealth--attainments--energies--everything--to the cause of the downtrodden race with which this community's scorn unjustly compels you to rank yourself?"

The quadron did not meet Frowenfeld's kindled eyes for a moment, and when he did, it was slowly and dejectedly.

"He canno' be," he said, and then, seeing his words were not understood, he added: "He 'ave no Cause. Dad peop' 'ave no Cause." He went on from this with many pauses and gropings after words and idiom, to tell, with a plaintiveness that seemed to Frowenfeld almost unmanly, the reasons why the people, a little of whose blood had been enough to blast his life, would never be free by the force of their own arm. Reduced to the meanings which he vainly tried to convey in words, his statement was this: that that people was not a people. Their cause--was in Africa. They upheld it there--they lost it there--and to those that are here the struggle was over; they were, one and all, prisoners of war.

"You speak of them in the third person," said Frowenfeld.

"Ah ham nod a slev."

"Are you certain of that?" asked the tenant.

His landlord looked at him.

"It seems to me," said Frowenfeld, "that you--your class--the free quadroons--are the saddest slaves of all. Your men, for a little property, and your women, for a little amorous attention, let themselves be shorn

even of the virtue of discontent, and for a paltry bait of sham freedom have consented to endure a tyrannous contumely which flattens them into the dirt like grass under a slab. I would rather be a runaway in the swamps than content myself with such a freedom. As your class stands before the world to-day--free in form but slaves in spirit--you are--I do not know but I was almost ready to say--a warning to philanthropists!"

The free man of color slowly arose.

"I trust you know," said Frowenfeld, "that I say nothing in offence."

"Havery word is tru'," replied the sad man.

"Mr. Grandissime," said the apothecary, as his landlord sank back again into his seat, "I know you are a broken-hearted man."

The quadroon laid his fist upon his heart and looked up.

"And being broken-hearted, you are thus specially fitted for a work of patient and sustained self-sacrifice. You have only those things to lose which grief has taught you to despise--ease, money, display. Give yourself to your people--to those, I mean, who groan, or should groan, under the degraded lot which is theirs and yours in common."

The quadroon shook his head, and after a moment's silence, answered:

"Ah cannod be one Toussaint l'Ouverture. Ah cannod trah to be. Hiv I trah, I h-only s'all soogceed to be one Bras-Coupé."

"You entirely misunderstand me," said Frowenfeld in quick response. "I have no stronger disbelief than my disbelief in insurrection. I believe that to every desirable end there are two roads, the way of strife and the way of peace. I can imagine a man in your place, going about among his people, stirring up their

minds to a noble discontent, laying out his means, sparingly here and bountifully there, as in each case might seem wisest, for their enlightenment, their moral elevation, their training in skilled work; going, too, among the men of the prouder caste, among such as have a spirit of fairness, and seeking to prevail with them for a public recognition of the rights of all; using all his cunning to show them the double damage of all oppression, both great and petty--"

The quadroon motioned "enough." There was a heat in his eyes which Frowenfeld had never seen before.

"M'sieu'," he said, "waid till Agricola Fusilier ees keel."

"Do you mean 'dies'?"

"No," insisted the quadroon; "listen." And with slow, painstaking phrase this man of strong feeling and feeble will (the trait of his caste) told--as Frowenfeld felt he would do the moment he said "listen"--such part of the story of Bras-Coupé as showed how he came by his deadly hatred of Agricola.

"Tale me," said the landlord, as he concluded the recital, "w'y deen Bras Coupé mague dad curze on Agricola Fusilier? Becoze Agricola ees one sorcier! Elz 'e bin dade sinz long tamm."

The speaker's gestures seemed to imply that his own hand, if need be, would have brought the event to pass.

As he rose to say adieu, Frowenfeld, without previous intention, laid a hand upon his visitor's arm.

"Is there no one who can make peace between you?"

The landlord shook his head.

"'Tis impossib'. We don' wand."

"I mean," insisted Frowenfeld, "Is there no man who can stand between you and those who wrong you, and effect a peaceful reparation?"

The landlord slowly moved away, neither he nor his tenant speaking, but each knowing that the one man in the minds of both, as a possible peacemaker, was Honoré Grandissime.

"Should the opportunity offer," continued Joseph, "may I speak a word for you myself?"

The quadroon paused a moment, smiled politely though bitterly, and departed repeating again:

"'Tis impossib'. We don' wand."

"Palsied," murmured Frowenfeld, looking after him, regretfully,--"like all of them."

Frowenfeld's thoughts were still on the same theme when, the day having passed, the hour was approaching wherein Innerarity was exhorted to tell his good-night story in the merry circle at the distant Grandissime mansion. As the apothecary was closing his last door for the night, the fairer Honoré called him out into the moonlight.

"Withered," the student was saying audibly to himself, "not in the shadow of the Ethiopian, but in the glare of the white man."

"Who is withered?" pleasantly demanded Honoré. The apothecary started slightly.

"Did I speak? How do you do, sir? I meant the free quadroons."

"Including the gentleman from whom you rent your store?"

"Yes, him especially; he told me this morning the story of Bras-Coupé."

M. Grandissime laughed. Joseph did not see why, nor did the laugh sound entirely genuine.

"Do not open the door, Mr Frowenfeld," said the Creole, "Get your greatcoat and cane and come take a walk with me; I will tell you the same story."

It was two hours before they approached this door again on their return. Just before they reached it, Honoré stopped under the huge street-lamp, whose light had gone out, where a large stone lay before him on the ground in the narrow, moonlit street. There was a tall, unfinished building at his back.

"Mr Frowenfeld,"--he struck the stone with his cane,--"this stone is Bras-Coupé--we cast it aside because it turns the edge of our tools."

He laughed. He had laughed to-night more than was comfortable to a man of Frowenfeld's quiet mind.

As the apothecary thrust his shopkey into the lock and so paused to hear his companion, who had begun again to speak, he wondered what it could be--for M. Grandissime had not disclosed it--that induced such a man as he to roam aimlessly, as it seemed, in deserted streets at such chill and dangerous hours. "What does he want with me?" The thought was so natural that it was no miracle the Creole read it.

"Well," said he, smiling and taking an attitude, "you are a great man for causes, Mr. Frowenfeld; but me, I am for results, ha, ha! You may ponder the philosophy of Bras-Coupé in your study, but *I* have got to get rid of his results, me. You know them."

"You tell me it revived a war where you had made a peace," said Frowenfeld.

"Yes--yes--that is his results; but good night, Mr. Frowenfeld."

"Good night, sir."

CHAPTER XXXI

ANOTHER WOUND IN A NEW PLACE

Each day found Doctor Keene's strength increasing, and on the morning following the incidents last recorded he was imprudently projecting an outdoor promenade. An announcement from Honoré Grandissime, who had paid an early call, had, to that gentleman's no small surprise, produced a sudden and violent effect on the little man's temper.

He was sitting alone by his window, looking out upon the levee, when the apothecary entered the apartment.

"Frowenfeld," he instantly began, with evident displeasure most unaccountable to Joseph, "I hear you have been visiting the Nancanous."

"Yes, I have been there."

"Well, you had no business to go!"

Doctor Keene smote the arm of his chair with his fist.

Frowenfeld reddened with indignation, but suppressed his retort. He stood still in the middle of the floor, and Doctor Keene looked out of the window.

"Doctor Keene," said the visitor, when his attitude was no longer tolerable, "have you anything more to say to me before I leave you?"

"No, sir."

"It is necessary for me, then, to say that in fulfilment of my promise, I am going from here to the house of Palmyre, and that she will need no further attention

after to-day. As to your present manner toward me, I shall endeavor to suspend judgment until I have some knowledge of its cause."

The doctor made no reply, but went on looking out of the window, and Frowenfeld turned and left him.

As he arrived in the philosophe's sick-chamber--where he found her sitting in a chair set well back from a small fire--she half-whispered "Miché" with a fine, greeting smile, as if to a brother after a week's absence. To a person forced to lie abed, shut away from occupation and events, a day is ten, three are a month: not merely in the wear and tear upon the patience, but also in the amount of thinking and recollecting done. It was to be expected, then, that on this, the apothecary's fourth visit, Palmyre would have learned to take pleasure in his coming.

But the smile was followed by a faint, momentary frown, as if Frowenfeld had hardly returned it in kind. Likely enough, he had not. He was not distinctively a man of smiles; and as he engaged in his appointed task she presently thought of this.

"This wound is doing so well," said Joseph, still engaged with the bandages, "that I shall not need to come again." He was not looking at her as he spoke, but he felt her give a sudden start. "What is this?" he thought, but presently said very quietly: "With the assistance of your slave woman, you can now attend to it yourself."

She made no answer.

When, with a bow, he would have bade her good morning, she held out her hand for his. After a barely perceptible hesitation, he gave it, whereupon she held it fast, in a way to indicate that there was something to be said which he must stay and hear.

She looked up into his face. She may have been merely framing in her mind the word or two of English she was about to utter; but an excitement

shone through her eyes and reddened her lips, and something sent out from her countenance a look of wild distress.

"You goin' tell 'im?" she asked.

"Who? Agricola?"

"*Non!*"

He spoke the next name more softly.

"Honoré?"

Her eyes looked deeply into his for a moment, then dropped, and she made a sign of assent.

He was about to say that Honoré knew already, but saw no necessity for doing so, and changed his answer.

"I will never tell any one."

"You know?" she asked, lifting her eyes for an instant. She meant to ask if he knew the motive that had prompted her murderous intent.

"I know your whole sad history."

She looked at him for a moment, fixedly; then, still holding his hand with one of hers, she threw the other to her face and turned away her head. He thought she moaned.

Thus she remained for a few moments, then suddenly she turned, clasped both hands about his, her face flamed up and she opened her lips to speak, but speech failed. An expression of pain and supplication came upon her countenance, and the cry burst from her:

"Meg 'im to love me!"

He tried to withdraw his hand, but she held it fast, and, looking up imploringly with her wide, electric eyes, cried:

"Vous pouvez le faire, vous pouvez le faire (You can do it, you can do it); vous êtes sorcier, moi conné bien vous êtes sorcier (you are a sorcerer, I know)."

However harmless or healthful Joseph's touch might be to the philosophe, he felt now that hers, to him, was poisonous. He dared encounter her eyes, her touch, her voice, no longer. The better man in him was suffocating. He scarce had power left to liberate his right hand with his left, to seize his hat and go.

Instantly she rose from her chair, threw herself on her knees in his path, and found command of his language sufficient to cry as she lifted her arms, bared of their drapery:

"Oh, my God! don' rif-used me--don' rif-used me!"

There was no time to know whether Frowenfeld wavered or not. The thought flashed into his mind that in all probability all the care and skill he had spent upon the wound was being brought to naught in this moment of wild posturing and excitement; but before it could have effect upon his movements, a stunning blow fell upon the back of his head, and Palmyre's slave woman, the Congo dwarf, under the impression that it was the most timely of strokes, stood brandishing a billet of pine and preparing to repeat the blow.

He hurled her, snarling and gnashing like an ape, against the farther wall, cast the bar from the street door and plunged out, hatless, bleeding and stunned.

CHAPTER XXXII

INTERRUPTED PRELIMINARIES

About the same time of day, three gentlemen (we use the term gentlemen in its petrified state) were walking down the rue Royale from the direction of the Faubourg Ste. Marie.

They were coming down toward Palmyre's corner. The middle one, tall and shapely, might have been mistaken at first glance for Honoré Grandissime, but was taller and broader, and wore a cocked hat, which Honoré did not. It was Valentine. The short, black-bearded man in buckskin breeches on his right was Jean-Baptiste Grandissime, and the slight one on the left, who, with the prettiest and most graceful gestures and balancings, was leading the conversation, was Hippolyte Brahmin-Mandarin, a cousin and counterpart of that sturdy-hearted challenger of Agricola, Sylvestre.

"But after all," he was saying in Louisiana French, "there is no spot comparable, for comfortable seclusion, to the old orange grove under the levee on the Point; twenty minutes in a skiff, five minutes for preliminaries--you would not want more, the ground has been measured off five hundred times--'are you ready?'--"

"Ah, bah!" said Valentine, tossing his head, "the Yankees would be down on us before you could count one."

"Well, then, behind the Jesuits' warehouses, if you insist. I don't care. Perdition take such a government! I am almost sorry I went to the governor's reception."

"It was quiet, I hear; a sort of quiet ball, all promenading and no contra-dances. One quadron ball is worth five of such."

This was the opinion of Jean-Baptiste.

"No, it was fine, anyhow. There was a contra-dance. The music was--tárata joonc, tará, tará--tárata joonc, tarárata joonc, tará--oh! it was the finest thing--and composed here. They compose as fine things here as they do anywhere in the--look there! That man came out of Palmyre's house; see how he staggered just then!"

"Drunk," said Jean-Baptiste.

"No, he seems to be hurt. He has been struck on the head. Oho, I tell you, gentlemen, that same Palmyre is a wonderful animal! Do you see? She not only defends herself and ejects the wretch, but she puts her mark upon him; she identifies him, ha, ha, ha! Look at the high art of the thing; she keeps his hat as a small souvenir and gives him a receipt for it on the back of his head. Ah! but hasn't she taught him a lesson? Why, gentlemen,--it is--if it isn't that sorcerer of an apothecary!"

"What?" exclaimed the other two; "well, well, but this is too good! Caught at last, ha, ha, ha, the saintly villain! Ah, ha, ha! Will not Honoré be proud of him now? Ah! *voilà un joli Joseph!* What did I tell you? Didn't I *always* tell you so?"

"But the beauty of it is, he is caught so cleverly. No escape--no possible explanation. There he is, gentlemen, as plain as a rat in a barrel, and with as plain a case. Ha, ha, ha! Isn't it just glorious?"

And all three laughed in such an ecstasy of glee that Frowenfeld looked back, saw them, and knew forthwith that his good name was gone. The three gentlemen, with tears of merriment still in their eyes, reached a corner and disappeared.

"Mister," said a child, trotting along under Frowenfeld's elbow,--the odd English of the New Orleans street-urchin was at that day just beginning

to be heard--"Mister, dey got some blood on de back of you' hade!"

But Frowenfeld hurried on groaning with mental anguish.

CHAPTER XXXIII

UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL

It was the year 1804. The world was trembling under the tread of the dread Corsican. It was but now that he had tossed away the whole Valley of the Mississippi, dropping it overboard as a little sand from a balloon, and Christendom in a pale agony of suspense was watching the turn of his eye; yet when a gibbering black fool here on the edge of civilization merely swings a pine-knot, the swinging of that pine-knot becomes to Joseph Frowenfeld, student of man, a matter of greater moment than the destination of the Boulogne Flotilla. For it now became for the moment the foremost necessity of his life to show, to that minute fraction of the earth's population which our terror misnames "the world," that a man may leap forth hatless and bleeding from the house of a New Orleans quadron into the open street and yet be pure white within. Would it answer to tell the truth? Parts of that truth he was pledged not to tell; and even if he could tell it all it was incredible--bore all the features of a flimsy lie.

"Mister," repeated the same child who had spoken before, reinforced by another under the other elbow, "dey got some *blood* on de back of you' hade."

And the other added the suggestion:

"Dey got one drug-sto', yondah."

Frowenfeld groaned again. The knock had been a hard one, the ground and sky went round not a little, but he retained withal a white-hot process of thought that kept before him his hopeless inability to explain. He was confined alive. The world (so-called) would bury him in utter loathing, and write on his headstone the one word--hypocrite. And he should lie there and helplessly contemplate Honoré pushing forward those purposes which he had begun to hope he was to have had the honor of furthering. But instead of so doing he would now be the by-word of the street.

"Mister," interposed the child once more, spokesman this time for a dozen blacks and whites of all sizes trailing along before and behind, "*dey got some blood* on de back of you' hade."

That same morning Clotilde had given a music-scholar her appointed lesson, and at its conclusion had borrowed of her patroness (how pleasant it must have been to have such things to lend!) a little yellow maid, in order that, with more propriety, she might make a business call. It was that matter of the rent--one that had of late occasioned her great secret distress. "It is plain," she had begun to say to herself, unable to comprehend Aurora's peculiar trust in Providence, "that if the money is to be got I must get it." A possibility had flashed upon her mind; she had nurtured it into a project, had submitted it to her father-confessor in the cathedral, and received his unqualified approval of it, and was ready this morning to put it into execution. A great merit of the plan was its simplicity. It was merely to find for her heaviest bracelet a purchaser in time, and a price

sufficient, to pay to-morrow's "maturities." See there again!--to her, her little secret was of greater import than the collision of almost any pine-knot with almost any head.

It must not be accepted as evidence either of her unwillingness to sell or of the amount of gold in the bracelet, that it took the total of Clotilde's moral and physical strength to carry it to the shop where she hoped--against hope--to dispose of it.

'Sieur Frowenfeld, M. Innerarity said, was out, but would certainly be in in a few minutes, and she was persuaded to take a chair against the half-hidden door at the bottom of the shop with the little borrowed maid crouched at her feet.

She had twice or thrice felt a regret that she had undertaken to wait, and was about to rise and go, when suddenly she saw before her Joseph Frowenfeld, wiping the sweat of anguish from his brow and smeared with blood from his forehead down. She rose quickly and silently, turned sick and blind, and laid her hand upon the back of the chair for support. Frowenfeld stood an instant before her, groaned, and disappeared through the door. The little maid, retreating backward against her from the direction of the street-door, drew to her attention a crowd of sight-seers which had rushed up to the doors and against which Raoul was hurriedly closing the shop.

CHAPTER XXXIV

CLOTILDE AS A SURGEON

Was it worse to stay, or to fly? The decision must be instantaneous. But Raoul made it easy by crying in their common tongue, as he slammed a massive shutter and shot its bolt:

"Go to him! he is down--I heard him fall. Go to him!"

At this rallying cry she seized her shield--that is to say, the little yellow attendant--and hurried into the room. Joseph lay just beyond the middle of the apartment, face downward. She found water and a basin, wet her own handkerchief, and dropped to her knees beside his head; but the moment he felt the small feminine hands he stood up. She took him by the arm.

"*Asseyez-vous, Monsieur*--pliz to give you'sev de pens to seet down, 'Sieu' Frowenfel'."

She spoke with a nervous tenderness in contrast with her alarmed and entreating expression of face, and gently pushed him into a chair.

The child ran behind the bed and burst into frightened sobs, but ceased when Clotilde turned for an instant and glared at her.

"Mague yo' 'ead back," said Clotilde, and with tremulous tenderness she softly pressed back his brow and began wiping off the blood. "W'ere you is 'urted?"

But while she was asking her question she had found the gash and was growing alarmed at its ugliness, when Raoul, having made everything fast, came in with:

"Wat's de mattah, 'Sieur Frowenfel'? w'at's de mattah wid you? Oo done dat, 'Sieur Frowen fel'?"

Joseph lifted his head and drew away from it the small hand and wet handkerchief, and without letting go the hand, looked again into Clotilde's eyes, and said:

"Go home; oh, go home!"

"Oh! no," protested Raoul, whereupon Clotilde turned upon him with a perfectly amiable, nurse's grimace for silence.

"I goin' rad now," she said.

Raoul's silence was only momentary.

"Were you lef you' hat, 'Sieur Frowenfel'?" he asked, and stole an artist's glance at Clotilde, while Joseph straightened up, and nerving himself to a tolerable calmness of speech, said:

"I have been struck with a stick of wood by a half-witted person under a misunderstanding of my intentions; but the circumstances are such as to blacken my character hopelessly; but I am innocent!" he cried, stretching forward both arms and quite losing his momentary self-control.

"'Sieu' Frowenfel'!" cried Clotilde, tears leaping to her eyes, "I am shoe of it!"

"I believe you! I believe you, 'Sieur Frowenfel'!" exclaimed Raoul with sincerity.

"You will not believe me," said Joseph. "You will not; it will be impossible."

"*Mais*" cried Clotilde, "id shall nod be impossib'!"

But the apothecary shook his head.

"All I can be suspected of will seem probable; the truth only is incredible."

His head began to sink and a pallor to overspread his face.

"*Allez, Monsieur, allez,*" cried Clotilde to Raoul, a picture of beautiful terror which he tried afterward to paint from memory, "*appelez Doctah Kin!*"

Raoul made a dash for his hat, and the next moment she heard, with unpleasant distinctness, his impetuous hand slam the shop door and lock her in.

"*Baille ma do l'eau*" she called to the little mulattress, who responded by searching wildly for a cup and presently bringing a measuring-glass full of water.

Clotilde gave it to the wounded man, and he rose at once and stood on his feet.

"Raoul."

"'E gone at Doctah Kin."

"I do not need Doctor Keene; I am not badly hurt. Raoul should not have left you here in this manner. You must not stay."

"Bud, 'Sieur Frowenfel', I am afred to paz dad gangue!"

A new distress seized Joseph in view of this additional complication. But, unmindful of this suggestion, the fair Creole suddenly exclaimed:

"'Sieu' Frowenfel', you har a hinnocen' man! Go, hopen yo' do's an' stan juz as you har ub biffod crowd and sesso! My God! 'Sieu' Frowenfel', iv you cannod stan' ub by you'sev--"

She ceased suddenly with a wild look, as if another word would have broken the levees of her eyes, and in that instant Frowenfeld recovered the full stature of a man.

"God bless you!" he cried. "I will do it!" He started, then turned again toward her, dumb for an instant, and said: "And God reward you! You believe in me, and you do not even know me."

Her eyes became wilder still as she looked up into his face with the words:

"*Mais*, I does know you--betteh'n you know anny't'in' boud it!" and turned away, blushing violently.

Frowenfeld gave a start. She had given him too much light. He recognized her, and she knew it. For another instant he gazed at her averted face, and then with forced quietness said:

"Please go into the shop."

The whole time that had elapsed since the shutting of the doors had not exceeded five minutes; a sixth sufficed for Clotilde and her attendant to resume their original position in the nook by the private door and for Frowenfeld to wash his face and hands. Then the alert and numerous ears without heard a drawing of bolts at the door next to that which Raoul had issued, its leaves opened outward, and first the pale hands and then the white, weakened face and still bloody hair and apparel of the apothecary made their appearance. He opened a window and another door. The one locked by Raoul, when unbolted, yielded without a key, and the shop stood open.

"My friends," said the trembling proprietor, "if any of you wishes to buy anything, I am ready to serve him. The rest will please move away."

The invitation, though probably understood, was responded to by only a few at the banquette's edge, where a respectable face or two wore scrutinizing frowns. The remainder persisted in silently standing and gazing in at the bloody man.

Frowenfeld bore the gaze. There was one element of emphatic satisfaction in it--it drew their observation from Clotilde at the other end of the shop. He stole a glance backward; she was not there. She had watched her chance, safely escaped through the side door, and was gone.

Raoul returned.

"Sieur Frowenfel', Doctor Keene is took worse ag'in. 'E is in bed; but 'e say to tell you in dat lill troubl' of dis mawnin' it is himseff w'at is inti'lie wrong, an' 'e hass you poddon. 'E says sen' fo' Doctor Conrotte, but I din go fo' him; dat ole scoun'rel--he believe in puttin' de niggas fre'."

Frowenfeld said he would not consult professional advisers; with a little assistance from Raoul, he could give the cut the slight attention it needed. He went back into his room, while Raoul turned back to the door and addressed the public.

"Pray, Messieurs, come in and be seated." He spoke in the Creole French of the gutters. "Come in. M. Frowenfeld is dressing, and desires that you will have a little patience. Come in. Take chairs. You will not come in? No? Nor you, Monsieur? No? I will set some chairs outside, eh? No?"

They moved by twos and threes away, and Raoul, retiring, gave his employer such momentary aid as was required. When Joseph, in changed dress, once more appeared, only a child or two lingered to see him, and he had nothing to do but sit down and, as far as he felt at liberty to do so, answer his assistant's questions.

During the recital, Raoul was obliged to exercise the severest self-restraint to avoid laughing,--a feeling which was modified by the desire to assure his employer that he understood this sort of thing perfectly, had run the same risks himself, and thought no less of a man, *providing he was a gentleman*, because of an unlucky retributive knock on the head. But he feared laughter would overclimb speech; and, indeed, with all expression of sympathy stifled, he did not succeed so completely in hiding the conflicting emotion but that Joseph did once turn his pale, grave face surprisedly, hearing a snuffling sound, suddenly stifled in a drawer of corks. Said Raoul, with an unsteady utterance, as he slammed the drawer:

"H-h-dat makes me dat I can't 'elp to laugh w'en I t'ink of dat fool yesse'dy w'at want to buy my pigshoe for honly one 'undred dolla'--ha, ha ha, ha!"

He laughed almost indecorously.

"Raoul," said Frowenfeld, rising and closing his eyes, "I am going back for my hat. It would make matters worse for that person to send it to me, and it would be something like a vindication for me to go back to the house and get it."

Mr. Innerarity was about to make strenuous objection, when there came in one whom he recognized as an attaché of his cousin Honoré's counting-room, and handed the apothecary a note. It contained Honoré's request that if Frowenfeld was in his shop he would have the goodness to wait there until the writer could call and see him.

"I will wait," was the reply.

CHAPTER XXXV

"FO' WAD YOU CRYNE?"

Clotilde, a step or two from home, dismissed her attendant, and as Aurora, with anxious haste, opened to her familiar knock, appeared before her pale and trembling.

"*Ah, ma fille--*"

The overwrought girl dropped her head and wept without restraint upon her mother's neck. She let herself be guided to a chair, and there, while Aurora nestled close to her side, yielded a few moments to reverie before she was called upon to speak. Then Aurora first quietly took possession of her hands, and after another tender pause asked in English, which was equivalent to whispering:

"Were you was, *chérie*?"

"Sieur Frowenfel'--"

Aurora straightened up with angry astonishment and drew in her breath for an emphatic speech, but Clotilde, liberating her own hands, took Aurora's, and hurriedly said, turning still paler as she spoke:

"'E godd his 'ead strigue! 'Tis all knog in be'ine! 'E come in blidding--"

"In w'ere?" cried Aurora.

"In 'is shob."

"You was in dad shob of 'Sieur Frowenfel'?"

"I wend ad 'is shob to pay doze rend."

"How--you wend ad 'is shob to pay--"

Clotilde produced the bracelet. The two looked at each other in silence for a moment, while Aurora took in without further explanation Clotilde's project and its failure.

"An' 'Sieur Frowenfel'--dey kill 'im? Ah! *Ma chère*, fo' wad you mague me to hass all dose question?"

Clotilde gave a brief account of the matter, omitting only her conversation with Frowenfeld.

"*Mais*, oo strigue 'im?" demanded Aurora, impatiently.

"Addunno!" replied the other. "Bud I does know 'e is hinnocen'!"

A small scouting-party of tears reappeared on the edge of her eyes.

"Innocen' from wad?"

Aurora betrayed a twinkle of amusement.

"Hev'ryt'in', iv you pliz!" exclaimed Clotilde, with most uncalled-for warmth.

"An' you crah bic-ause 'e is nod guiltie?"

"Ah! foolish!"

"Ah, non, my chile, I know fo' wad you cryne: 't is h-only de sighd of de blood."

"Oh, sighd of blood!"

Clotilde let a little nervous laugh escape through her dejection.

"Well, then,"--Aurora's eyes twinkled like stars,--"id muz be bic-ause 'Sieur Frowenfel' bump 'is 'ead--ha, ha, ha!"

"'Tis nod tru'!" cried Clotilde; but, instead of laughing, as Aurora had supposed she would, she sent a double flash of light from her eyes, crimsoned, and retorted, as the tears again sprang from their lurking-place, "You wand to mague ligue you don't kyah! But *I* know! I know verrie well! You kyah fifty time' as mudge as me! I know you! I know you! I bin wadge you!"



""Ma lill dotter, wad dad meggin you cry? Iv you will tell me wad dad mague you cry, I will tell you--on ma *second word of honor*'--she rolled up her fist--'juz wad I thing about dad 'Sieur Frowenfel!"".

Aurora was quite dumb for a moment, and gazed at Clotilde, wondering what could have made her so unlike herself. Then she half rose up, and, as she

reached forward an arm, and laid it tenderly about her daughter's neck, said:

"Ma lill dotter, wad dad meggin you cry? Iv you will tell me wad dad mague you cry, I will tell you--on ma *second word of honor*--she rolled up her fist--"juz wad I thing about dad 'Sieur Frowenfel'!"

"I don't kyah wad de whole worl' thing about 'im!"

"*Mais*, anny'ow, tell me fo' wad you cryne!"

Clotilde gazed aside for a moment and then confronted her questioner consentingly.

"I tole 'im I knowed 'e was h-innocen'."

"Eh, Men, dad was h-only de poli-i-idenez. Wad 'e said?"

"E said I din knowed 'im 'tall."

"An' you," exclaimed Aurora, "it is nod pozzible dad you--"

"I tole 'im I know 'im bette'n 'e know anny't'in' 'boud id!"

The speaker dropped her face into her mother's lap.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Aurora, "an' wad of dad? I would say dad, me, fo' time' a day. I gi'e you my word 'e don godd dad sens' to know wad dad mean."

"Ah! don godd sens'!" cried Clotilde, lifting her head up suddenly with a face of agony. "'E reg--'e reggo-ni-i-ize me!"

Aurora caught her daughter's cheeks between her hands and laughed all over them.

"*Mais*, don you see 'ow dad was luggy? Now, you know?--'e goin' fall in love wid you an' you goin' 'ave dad sadizfagzion to rif-use de biggis' hand in Noo-'leans. An' you will be h-even, ha, ha! Bud me--you wand to know wad I thing about 'im? I thing 'e is one--egcellen' drug-cl--ah, ha, ha!"

Clotilde replied with a smile of grieved incredulity.

"De bez in de ciddy!" insisted the other. She crossed the forefinger of one hand upon that of the other and kissed them, reversed the cross and kissed them again. "*Mais*, ad de sem tam," she added, giving her daughter time to smile, "I thing 'e is one *noble gen'leman*. Nod to sood me, of coze, *mais*, *çà fait rien*--daz nott'n; me, I am now a h'ole woman, you know, eh? Noboddie can' nevva sood me no mo', nod ivven dad Govenno' Cleb-orne."

She tried to look old and jaded.

"Ah, Govenno' Cleb-orne!" exclaimed Clotilde.

"Yass!--Ah, you!--you thing iv a man is nod a Creole 'e bown to be no 'coun'! I assu' you dey don' godd no boddy wad I fine a so nize gen'leman lag Govenno' Cleb-orne! Ah! Clotilde, you godd no lib'ral'ty!"

The speaker rose, cast a discouraged parting look upon her narrow-minded companion and went to investigate the slumbrous silence of the kitchen.

CHAPTER XXXVI

AURORA'S LAST PICAYUNE

Not often in Aurora's life had joy and trembling so been mingled in one cup as on this day. Clotilde wept; and certainly the mother's heart could but

respond; yet Clotilde's tears filled her with a secret pleasure which fought its way up into the beams of her eyes and asserted itself in the frequency and heartiness of her laugh despite her sincere participation in her companion's distresses and a fearful looking forward to to-morrow.

Why these flashes of gladness? If we do not know, it is because we have overlooked one of her sources of trouble. From the night of the *bal masqué* she had--we dare say no more than that she had been haunted; she certainly would not at first have admitted even so much to herself. Yet the fact was not thereby altered, and first the fact and later the feeling had given her much distress of mind. Who he was whose image would not down, for a long time she did not know. This, alone, was torture; not merely because it was mystery, but because it helped to force upon her consciousness that her affections, spite of her, were ready and waiting for him and he did not come after them. That he loved her, she knew; she had achieved at the ball an overwhelming victory, to her certain knowledge, or, depend upon it, she never would have unmasked--never.

But with this torture was mingled not only the ecstasy of loving, but the fear of her daughter. This is a world that allows nothing without its obverse and reverse. Strange differences are often seen between the two sides; and one of the strangest and most inharmonious in this world of human relations is that coinage which a mother sometimes finds herself offering to a daughter, and which reads on one side, Bridegroom, and on the other, Stepfather.

Then, all this torture to be hidden under smiles! Worse still, when by and by Messieurs Agoussou, Assonquer, Danny and others had been appealed to and a Providence boundless in tender compassion had answered in their stead, she and her lover had simultaneously discovered each other's identity only to find that he was a Montague to her Capulet. And the source of her agony must be hidden, and falsely

attributed to the rent deficiency and their unprotected lives. Its true nature must be concealed even from Clotilde. What a secret--for what a spirit--to keep from what a companion!--a secret yielding honey to her, but, it might be, gall to Clotilde. She felt like one locked in the Garden of Eden all alone--alone with all the ravishing flowers, alone with all the lions and tigers. She wished she had told the secret when it was small and had let it increase by gradual accretions in Clotilde's knowledge day by day. At first it had been but a garland, then it had become a chain, now it was a ball and chain; and it was oh! and oh! if Clotilde would only fall in love herself! How that would simplify matters! More than twice or thrice she had tried to reveal her overstrained heart in broken sections; but on her approach to the very outer confines of the matter, Clotilde had always behaved so strangely, so nervously, in short, so beyond Aurora's comprehension, that she invariably failed to make any revelation.

And now, here in the very central darkness of this cloud of troubles, comes in Clotilde, throws herself upon the defiant little bosom so full of hidden suffering, and weeps tears of innocent confession that in a moment lay the dust of half of Aurora's perplexities. Strange world! The tears of the orphan making the widow weep for joy, if she only dared.

The pair sat down opposite each other at their little dinner-table. They had a fixed hour for dinner. It is well to have a fixed hour; it is in the direction of system. Even if you have not the dinner, there is the hour. Alphonsina was not in perfect harmony with this fixed-hour idea. It was Aurora's belief, often expressed in hungry moments with the laugh of a vexed Creole lady (a laugh worthy of study), that on the day when dinner should really be served at the appointed hour, the cook would drop dead of apoplexy and she of fright. She said it to-day, shutting her arms down to her side, closing her eyes with her eyebrows raised, and dropping into her chair

at the table like a dead bird from its perch. Not that she felt particularly hungry; but there is a certain desultoriness allowable at table more than elsewhere, and which suited the hither-thither movement of her conflicting feelings. This is why she had wished for dinner.

Boiled shrimps, rice, claret-and-water, bread--they were dining well the day before execution. Dining is hardly correct, either, for Clotilde, at least, did not eat; they only sat. Clotilde had, too, if not her unknown, at least her unconfessed emotions. Aurora's were tossed by the waves, hers were sunken beneath them. Aurora had a faith that the rent would be paid--a faith which was only a vapor, but a vapor gilded by the sun--that is, by Apollo, or, to be still more explicit, by Honoré Grandissime. Clotilde, deprived of this confidence, had tried to raise means wherewith to meet the dread obligation, or, rather, had tried to try and had failed. To-day was the ninth, to-morrow, the street. Joseph Frowenfeld was hurt; her dependence upon his good offices was gone. When she thought of him suffering under public contumely, it seemed to her as if she could feel the big drops of blood dropping from her heart; and when she recalled her own actions, speeches, and demonstrations in his presence, exaggerated by the groundless fear that he had guessed into the deepest springs of her feelings, then she felt those drops of blood congeal. Even if the apothecary had been duller of discernment than she supposed, here was Aurora on the opposite side of the table, reading every thought of her inmost soul. But worst of all was 'Sieur Frowenfel's indifference. It is true that, as he had directed upon her that gaze of recognition, there was a look of mighty gladness, if she dared believe her eyes. But no, she dared not; there was nothing there for her, she thought,--probably (when this anguish of public disgrace should by any means be lifted) a benevolent smile at her and her betrayal of interest. Clotilde felt as though she had been laid entire upon a slide of his microscope.

Aurora at length broke her reverie.

"Clotilde,"--she spoke in French--"the matter with you is that you have no heart. You never did have any. Really and truly, you do not care whether 'Sieur Frowenfel' lives or dies. You do not care how he is or where he is this minute. I wish you had some of my too large heart. I not only have the heart, as I tell you, to think kindly of our enemies, those Grandissime, for example"--she waved her hand with the air of selecting at random--"but I am burning up to know what is the condition of that poor, sick, noble 'Sieur Frowenfel', and I am going to do it!"

The heart which Clotilde was accused of not having gave a stir of deep gratitude. Dear, pretty little mother! Not only knowing full well the existence of this swelling heart and the significance, to-day, of its every warm pulsation, but kindly covering up the discovery with make-believe reproaches. The tears started in her eyes; that was her reply.

"Oh, now! it is the rent again, I suppose," cried Aurora, "always the rent. It is not the rent that worries *me*, it is 'Sieur Frowenfel', poor man. But very well, Mademoiselle Silence, I will match you for making me do all the talking." She was really beginning to sink under the labor of carrying all the sprightliness for both. "Come," she said, savagely, "propose something."

"Would you think well to go and inquire?"

"Ah, listen! Go and what? No, Mademoiselle, I think not."

"Well, send Alphonsina."

"What? And let him know that I am anxious about him? Let me tell you, my little girl, I shall not drag upon myself the responsibility of increasing the self-conceit of any of that sex."

"Well, then, send to buy a picayune's worth of something."

"Ah, ha, ha! An emetic, for instance. Tell him we are poisoned on mushrooms, ha, ha, ha!"

Clotilde laughed too.

"Ah, no," she said. "Send for something he does not sell."

Aurora was laughing while Clotilde spoke; but as she caught these words she stopped with open-mouthed astonishment, and, as Clotilde blushed, laughed again.

"Oh, Clotilde, Clotilde, Clotilde!"--she leaned forward over the table, her face beaming with love and laughter--"you rowdy! you rascal! You are just as bad as your mother, whom you think so wicked! I accept your advice. Alphonsina!"

"Momselle!"

The answer came from the kitchen.

"Come go--or, rather,--*vini 'ci courri dans boutique de l'apothecaire*. Clotilde," she continued, in better French, holding up the coin to view, "look!"

"What?"

"The last picayune we have in the world--ha, ha, ha!"

CHAPTER XXXVII

HONORÉ MAKES SOME CONFESSIONS

"Comment ça va, Raoul?" said Honoré Grandissime; he had come to the shop according to the proposal contained in his note. "Where is Mr. Frowenfeld?"

He found the apothecary in the rear room, dressed, but just rising from the bed at sound of his voice. He closed the door after him; they shook hands and took chairs.

"You have fever," said the merchant. "I have been troubled that way myself, some, lately." He rubbed his face all over, hard, with one hand, and looked at the ceiling. "Loss of sleep, I suppose, in both of us; in your case voluntary--in pursuit of study, most likely; in my case--effect of anxiety." He smiled a moment and then suddenly sobered as after a pause he said:

"But I hear you are in trouble; may I ask--"

Frowenfeld had interrupted him with almost the same words:

"May I venture to ask, Mr. Grandissime, what--"

And both were silent for a moment.

"Oh," said Honoré, with a gesture. "My trouble--I did not mean to mention it; 't is an old matter--in part. You know, Mr. Frowenfeld, there is a kind of tree not dreamed of in botany, that lets fall its fruit every day in the year--you know? We call it--with reverence--'our dead father's mistakes.' I have had to eat much of that fruit; a man who has to do that must expect to have now and then a little fever."

"I have heard," replied Frowenfeld, "that some of the titles under which your relatives hold their lands are found to be of the kind which the State's authorities are pronouncing worthless. I hope this is not the case."

"I wish they had never been put into my custody," said M. Grandissime.

Some new thought moved him to draw his chair closer.

"Mr. Frowenfeld, those two ladies whom you went to see the other evening--"

His listener started a little:

"Yes."

"Did they ever tell you their history?"

"No, sir; but I have heard it."

"And you think they have been deeply wronged, eh? Come, Mr. Frowenfeld, take right hold of the acacia-bush." M. Grandissime did not smile.

Frowenfeld winced. "I think they have."

"And you think restitution should be made them, no doubt, eh?"

"I do."

"At any cost?"

The questioner showed a faint, unpleasant smile, that stirred something like opposition in the breast of the apothecary.

"Yes," he answered.

The next question had a tincture even of fierceness:

"You think it right to sink fifty or a hundred people into poverty to lift one or two out?"

"Mr. Grandissime," said Frowenfeld, slowly, "you bade me study this community."

"I adv--yes; what is it you find?"

"I find--it may be the same with other communities, I suppose it is, more or less--that just upon the culmination of the moral issue it turns and asks the question which is behind it, instead of the question which is before it."

"And what is the question before me?"

"I know it only in the abstract."

"Well?"

The apothecary looked distressed.

"You should not make me say it," he objected.

"Nevertheless," said the Creole, "I take that liberty."

"Well, then," said Frowenfeld, "the question behind is Expediency and the question in front, Divine Justice. You are asking yourself--"

He checked himself.

"Which I ought to regard," said M. Grandissime, quickly. "Expediency, of course, and be like the rest of mankind." He put on a look of bitter humor. "It is all easy enough for you, Mr. Frowenfeld, my-de'-seh; you have the easy part--the theorizing."

He saw the ungenerousness of his speech as soon as it was uttered, yet he did not modify it.

"True, Mr. Grandissime," said Frowenfeld; and after a pause--"but you have the noble part--the doing."

"Ah, my-de'-seh!" exclaimed Honoré; "the noble part! There is the bitterness of the draught! The opportunity to act is pushed upon me, but the opportunity to act nobly has passed by."

He again drew his chair closer, glanced behind him and spoke low:

"Because for years I have had a kind of custody of all my kinsmen's property interests, Agricola's among them, it is supposed that he has always kept the plantation of Aurore Nancanou (or rather of Clotilde--who, you know, by our laws is the real heir). That is a mistake. Explain it as you please, call it remorse, pride, love--what you like--while I was in France and he was managing my mother's business, unknown to me he gave me that plantation. When I succeeded

him I found it and all its revenues kept distinct--as was but proper--from all other accounts, and belonging to me. 'Twas a fine, extensive place, had a good overseer on it and--I kept it. Why? Because I was a coward. I did not want it or its revenues; but, like my father, I would not offend my people. Peace first and justice afterwards--that was the principle on which I quietly made myself the trustee of a plantation and income which you would have given back to their owners, eh?"

Frowenfeld was silent.

"My-de'-seh, recollect that to us the Grandissime name is a treasure. And what has preserved it so long? Cherishing the unity of our family; that has done it; that is how my father did it. Just or unjust, good or bad, needful or not, done elsewhere or not, I do not say; but it is a Creole trait. See, even now" (the speaker smiled on one side of his mouth) "in a certain section of the territory certain men, Creoles" (he whispered, gravely), "*some Grandissimes among them*, evading the United States revenue laws and even beating and killing some of the officials: well! Do the people at large repudiate those men? My-de'-seh, in no wise, seh! No; if they were *Américains*--but a Louisianian--is a Louisianian; touch him not; when you touch him you touch all Louisiana! So with us Grandissimes; we are legion, but we are one. Now, my-de'-seh, the thing you ask me to do is to cast overboard that old traditional principle which is the secret of our existence."

"I ask you?"

"Ah, bah! you know you expect it. Ah! but you do not know the uproar such an action would make. And no 'noble part' in it, my-de'-seh, either. A few months ago--when we met by those graves--if I had acted then, my action would have been one of pure--even violent--*self*-sacrifice. Do you remember--on the levee, by the Place d'Armes--me asking you to send Agricola to me? I tried then to speak of it. He would

not let me. Then, my people felt safe in their land-titles and public offices; this restitution would have hurt nothing but pride. Now, titles in doubt, government appointments uncertain, no ready capital in reach for any purpose, except that which would have to be handed over with the plantation (for to tell you the fact, my-de'-seh, no other account on my books has prospered), with matters changed in this way, I become the destroyer of my own flesh and blood! Yes, seh! and lest I might still find some room to boast, another change moves me into a position where it suits me, my-de'-seh, to make the restitution so fatal to those of my name. When you and I first met, those ladies were as much strangers to me as to you--as far as I *knew*. Then, if I had done this thing--but now--now, my-de'-seh, I find myself in love with one of them!"

M. Grandissime looked his friend straight in the eye with the frowning energy of one who asserts an ugly fact.

Frowenfeld, regarding the speaker with a gaze of respectful attention, did not falter; but his fevered blood, with an impulse that started him half from his seat, surged up into his head and face; and then--

M. Grandissime blushed.

In the few silent seconds that followed, the glances of the two friends continued to pass into each other's eyes, while about Honoré's mouth hovered the smile of one who candidly surrenders his innermost secret, and the lips of the apothecary set themselves together as though he were whispering to himself behind them, "Steady."

"Mr. Frowenfeld," said the Creole, taking a sudden breath and waving a hand, "I came to ask about *your* trouble; but if you think you have any reason to withhold your confidence--"

"No, sir; no! But can I be no help to you in this matter?"

The Creole leaned back smilingly in his chair and knit his fingers.

"No, I did not intend to say all this; I came to offer my help to you; but my mind is full--what do you expect? My-de'-seh, the foam must come first out of the bottle. You see"--he leaned forward again, laid two fingers in his palm and deepened his tone--"I will tell you: this tree--'our dead father's mistakes'--is about to drop another rotten apple. I spoke just now of the uproar this restitution would make; why, my-de'-seh, just the mention of the lady's name at my house, when we lately held the *fête de grandpère*, has given rise to a quarrel which is likely to end in a duel."

"Raoul was telling me," said the apothecary.

M. Grandissime made an affirmative gesture.

"Mr. Frowenfeld, if you--if any one--could teach my people--I mean my family--the value of peace (I do not say the duty, my-de'-seh; a merchant talks of values); if you could teach them the value of peace, I would give you, if that was your price"--he ran the edge of his left hand knife-wise around the wrist of his right--"that. And if you would teach it to the whole community--well--I think I would not give my head; maybe you would." He laughed.

"There is a peace which is bad," said the contemplative apothecary.

"Yes," said the Creole, promptly, "the very kind that I have been keeping all this time--and my father before me!"

He spoke with much warmth.

"Yes," he said again, after a pause which was not a rest, "I often see that we Grandissimes are a good example of the Creoles at large; we have one element that makes for peace; that--pardon the self-consciousness--is myself; and another element that makes for strife--led by my uncle Agricola; but, my-

de'-seh, the peace element is that which ought to make the strife, and the strife element is that which ought to be made to keep the peace! Mr. Frowenfeld, I propose to become the strife-maker; how then, can I be a peacemaker at the same time? There is my diffycultie."

"Mr. Grandissime," exclaimed Frowenfeld, "if you have any design in view founded on the high principles which I know to be the foundations of all your feelings, and can make use of the aid of a disgraced man, use me."

"You are very generous," said the Creole, and both were silent. Honoré dropped his eyes from Frowenfeld's to the floor, rubbed his knee with his palm, and suddenly looked up.

"You are innocent of wrong?"

"Before God."

"I feel sure of it. Tell me in a few words all about it. I ought to be able to extricate you. Let me hear it."

Frowenfeld again told as much as he thought he could, consistently with his pledges to Palmyre, touching with extreme lightness upon the part taken by Clotilde.

"Turn around," said M. Grandissime at the close; "let me see the back of your head. And it is that that is giving you this fever, eh?"

"Partly," replied Frowenfeld; "but how shall I vindicate my innocence? I think I ought to go back openly to this woman's house and get my hat. I was about to do that when I got your note; yet it seems a feeble--even if possible--expedient."

"My friend," said Honoré, "leave it to me. I see your whole case, both what you tell and what you conceal. I guess it with ease. Knowing Palmyre so well, and knowing (what you do not) that all the voudous in town think you a sorcerer, I know just what she

would drop down and beg you for--a *ouangan*, ha, ha! You see? Leave it all to me--and your hat with Palmyre, take a febrifuge and a nap, and await word from me."

"And may I offer you no help in your difficulty?" asked the apothecary, as the two rose and grasped hands.

"Oh!" said the Creole, with a little shrug, "you may do anything you can--which will be nothing."