

# MARIE;

OR,

## THE GAMBLER OF THE MISSISSIPPI.

By JACK BRACE.

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CHAPTER I.

YOUTH, BEAUTY AND INNOCENCE.

IN the third municipality of New Orleans, a part of the city where innovation has made fewest inroads, and where the manners and customs of the early habitans are least changed, there was situated, in the year 1847, a small, low-roofed tenement, of a construction peculiar to the old-time architecture of that city. It was but a story and a half, with high pitched roof and dormer windows. In front was a wide porch or verandah, latticed and festooned with rose and jessamine, affording a cool and delightful retreat from the heat of the sun, and as the cottage was separated by a small flower-garden from the street, secluded also in a great measure from public view.

Our story opens late in the autumn, though the weather was still warm. The sun was sinking in the west, and as his rays grew less brilliant the horizon became hazy with a golden mist peculiar to the climate. Not a breath of air stirred the atmosphere, which was close and oppressive, inducing that languor which becomes habitual with the inhabitants of the South.

In this little bower which I have described was slung a grass hammock, the occupant of which was a young girl about sixteen years old. As she lay indolently swinging to and fro, holding carelessly the fan which she had scarcely the energy to use, it would be difficult to imagine a more perfect picture of beauty in repose—the soft, dreamy beauty of Southern climes! Her form, enveloped in a white muslin robe, could only be scanned in the outline of its delicate and well-rounded proportions, but an admirer of the beautiful would read,

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ily have seen that a lovelier one never sprung from the conception of an artist's brain. The thick-fringed lashes that curtained her magnificent black eyes, half veiled then, turning inward, as it were, their rays, more fitly to illuminate her own pure thoughts. Her luxuriant hair was unbound, and its raven curls wound caressingly around her swanlike throat, concealing beneath its dark masses her ivory bosom. Her features were regular and delicately chiselled, and her complexion was a light transparent olive, through which glowed the faintest rose tint, while the richest vermilion dyed her ripe, full lips.

In every attribute of loveliness she was indeed an image whose adoration might well have been excused in a poetic temperament.

The pleasant reveries of the young girl—pleasant they were if the smile that played faintly around her mouth was an indication—were interrupted by a person who, with an aged negress, formed the balance of the household of the little cottage. This was a mulatto woman, about forty years old, good looking and possessing many amiable traits, mingled, nevertheless, with something of the weakness, ignorance and folly of her class.

This person stood in the relation of guardian and protectress of the young girl, whom she had raised from early childhood, treating her at once with the respect belonging to a superior being and the affection due to offspring.

Of her own parentage Marie was entirely ignorant. She only knew, or believed, that she was an orphan, and belonged to that sad sisterhood of beautiful beings, the quadroons, whose taint of African blood, however remote, deprives them in Louisiana of the rights of honorable wedlock, and condemns them, no matter how warm their affections or pure their souls may be, to an unhallowed and degrading connection, or denies them the sweet ties and holy sympathies of love, which they are so well formed to inspire and appreciate.

A mystery hung over the life of Marie, and the only person to whom she could look for its solution was her protectress, Rachel, who either lacked the will or the information wherewith to satisfy the cravings of her young heart on the subject.

"God bless your sweet face, you ain't no chile of mine," she answered to Marie's earliest intelligent inquiries; "you was give to me when you was little piccuninny, so high, and good reason I see had to take care of you."

"What reason, Rachel?"

"Well, nebber mind what it was at first, honey. I see done it ever since because you is jess the beautifullest and best thing alive, and I loves the very ground you treads on."

"But, Rachel, who gave me to you? Surely you can tell me that?"

"Don't ax me, darling; for God's sake don't ax me. I see den took a Bible oath agin tellin; and if that terrible man ever came back, he'd kill me sure," and the woman looked frightened at the very idea of betraying a secret, the preservation of which had no doubt been enforced by the most impressive appeal which could be made both to her natural and supernatural fears.

"Could it have been my father?" asked Marie, painfully.

The reply of the mulatto, disclosing her own belief or knowledge of the race to which her charge belonged, ended the colloquy.

"May be so, may be so," said Rachel, slowly and sadly. "But you knows, darlin', that white fathers cares nothing for sich as us, and I don't think that man cared for anything but hisself. He dressed mighty fine, and had heaps of money, but I doesn't think he was a real gentleman."

The allusion to her caste silenced Marie, over whose brow a blush of ancestral, not of merited, shame was suffused, and who often, in the secret anguish of her heart, asked why should this taint be her disappointment of inheritance? But then trust in God's providence came to her aid, and she softly murmured:

"It is all for the best, since it is His will. The poor may as well murmur at not being born rich."

As Marie grew older she became more retiring in her disposition, and avoided, as much as she could, all society, refusing absolutely, to the disappointment of Rachel, over whom she soon acquired the ascendancy which a strong mind exercises over a weak one, to join in those festivities and gaieties of which her class are generally so fond, and visiting but rarely among the most respectable and select private circles. However, as Rachel not only loved and respected, but fairly adored as a superior being, her young protegee, she patiently submitted to her wishes, and never allowed her own amusements or associations to interfere with the privacy which Marie so much prized.

There was one advantage enjoyed by the young girl, however which materially influenced her character and conduct, and moulded as it were her life.

This was the friendship and fostering care of one of those truly good and holy men, whose lives not only redeem human nature from the charge of unmitigated selfishness, but are beautiful evidences of their own divine mission.

He was the cure, or pastor, of a small Catholic church in the faubourg where Marie resided, the principal worshippers of which were among her class. Father Dunois became acquainted with her at a tender age, at a school he had established, and, learning from Rachel, what probably she believed herself, that the little girl was the illegitimate offspring of a man of the world, through his connection with some handsome quadroon, who had given her into the mulatto's charge with a small provision for her support, and then disappeared, the good priest, with a sigh over human depravity, looked tenderly on one whom the sins of others had made as it were, an outcast, and his sympathies being awakened by her forlorn condition, he determined to shield her from evil, and bestow such benefits upon her as circumstances would admit.

The winning ways of the lovely child soon gained for her a warm place in the heart of Father Dunois, and as a sacred duty he undertook to guide and form the youthful mind, and guard the precious soul of one so innocent thrust ruthlessly upon the cold world.

To him the despised and deserted child of an unblest union, her blood tainted through a degraded caste, was yet a being formed in the image of the great God, with a soul to save from temptation and deliver from evil. And well and truly did the young quadroon repay his fatherly care and gentle culture. Her warm heart regarded him with filial affection, and her active intellect expanded under his able teaching into a rare development, and became cultivated far beyond her condition.

The deepest anxiety which the good father experienced for his lovely protegee was in regard to her future, for, notwithstanding his persuasions and his reasoning, Marie showed no inclination for a convent, which he so earnestly recommended as a happy and safe asylum from the cares and misfortunes of the world.

And although the priest was an earnest Catholic, he was a man of pure religion also, and did not approve of a constrained devotion to God. After perplexing himself, therefore, with various projects he usually commended her in prayers to Him who "tempers the wind to the shorn lamb."

## CHAPTER II.

### LOVE—THE TAINTED BLOOD.

"Is my rosebud 'sleep'?" asked Rachel, as she approached the hammock where Marie lay. The large eyes of the girl opened slowly, and a sweet smile played about her lips. "Come in, Marie dear," continued the mulatto, "and let me shut the door while I goes to market. To-morrow is All Saints' Day, you know, and you will want a plenty of flowers."

"Oh! yes, Rachel, be sure to get me the very prettiest you can find. There shall not be a tomb in all the cemetery dressed nicer than Lena's—dear Lena!" and tears welled up into the speaker's dark, loving eyes.

Lena was the orphan daughter of a Frenchman, who died of yellow fever, and having no relative in New Orleans, he bequeathed her to the care of the good Father Dunois, who employed Rachel to take care of her, and for nearly a year she was the playmate and companion of Marie.

Her father had expressed the dying wish that she should be sent at the earliest good opportunity to his relatives in France; but before the kind-hearted priest could fulfil his request the little girl sickened and died, and found a resting-place beside her parent's remains in the cemetery.

The beautiful and touching custom of decorating the tombs of their departed friends with flowers, on All Saints' Day, which prevails among the Catholic population of New Orleans, is well known, and has doubtlessly been admired by every stranger of feeling and sentiment who has witnessed it while visiting that city.

"Bless your heart!" said Rachel, bending over and kissing the brow of her young charge, "you is pretty enough and good enough to be a white lady. But go along in, darlin', and I'll get all you want."

"Oh no! don't send me in yet, Rachel; see, the breeze is just stirring, and I have been so warm."

"Well, then be sure you doesn't stay out after dark, and make Aggie fasten the door," replied the mulatto, as she took her departure.

A short time only had elapsed though Marie had again fallen into her dreamy reverie, when she was startled by footsteps on the gravel walk of the garden. Raising her head quickly, and in some trepidation, she encountered the gaze of a young man who saluted her with an air of deep respect, while his eyes sparkled with pleasure; and the radiance of such a smile as few possess shed an irresistible charm over his dark, swarthy but eminently handsome face.

"Is it you, Monsieur Alfred?" exclaimed Marie, while the warm blood glowed for a moment over her cheek and neck, and then rushed back to her heart, leaving her almost as pale as "monumental marble." "Rachel is not at home, and—and is there anything you wish?"

"Only a few words with you, Marie," replied the young man, in a subdued tone.

"But, monsieur, I cannot receive you; it is not proper," said Marie, with increasing confusion.

"Nay, dear Marie, I would not compromise you for the world; but indeed I must speak to you now. See," added he, gliding by her, and seating himself on a low stool at a respectful distance, but within the porch, so as to be hid from the view of the passers-by: "see, these friendly flowers will screen one from observation, and if the good Rachel returns I will take all the blame of this intrusion, which, as I have intimated, is one of necessity with me, dear Marie."

Twice had he called her "dear Marie," and the maiden's heart beat tumultuously with sweet alarm.

"Well, monsieur, since I must hear you, be brief," said she, with forced composure, "for I would rather die than have an imputation cast on me; and if the neighbors saw us here together I fear even my innocence would not save me from scandal."

"You shall suffer no wrong through me, Marie," said Alfred; "and he would be a bold man who would say one word to your discredit. But have you forgotten me so soon that you receive me so coldly?"

"I should be most ungrateful to do so," said the girl, with emotion. "The great service you rendered me in so generously and bravely rescuing me from insult, danger, perhaps dishonor, will ever fill my heart with gratitude."

"Is that all, Marie?" asked the young man, in a low soft voice.

"What more would you, monsieur? Our stations in life are far apart. What, save the heart's deep and lasting gratitude, can I render you?" demanded the young girl, in a simple, sad tone.

"But our acquaintance did not end, as you intimate it should do, Marie, with my service, which you overrate, and your thanks. Al-

though you have constantly refused my visits, I have still been permitted to see you, through the indulgence of one whom we both respect and love; and while gazing on your transcendent beauty my heart has become intoxicated with a pleasure it never knew before!"

"Oh, hush, hush, monsieur, you must not talk thus, or it will be the last time we can meet. It is true, Father Dunois permitted me to see you in his presence, and once again to thank you for an act so honorable to yourself as the defence of a poor, weak, unoffending girl against brutality and violence; and that subsequently he has not objected to my receiving you under the same restriction, when you demanded it; but oh! he would scorn me indeed if he knew I listened willingly to words which should never be spoken between us."

"But you are beautiful, Marie, and why should I not tell you so? And if with my whole soul I love you——"

"Love me, monsieur!" exclaimed the girl starting to her feet, as if to fly from some great peril, and yet pausing to gaze on him with eyes big with terror, and her slight frame tremulous with emotion, she added, "Oh, unsay those words, Monsieur Alfred, unsay them. Love me, an outcast and a pariah, whose blood is tainted with the despised current that flows in the African veins. What love could there be between us which would not prove a bond of degradation to you, of shame and infamy to me. Yes, yes, I know the conditions of your love, ye proud lords of the earth, for our sad sisterhood. I know the quadroom's fate. But I would die, sir, before I would accept it. Ay, and I would hate him eternally who proposed such a thing to me!"

There was a lofty pride in the air of that young, slight girl, as she spoke thus, which haloed her extraordinary beauty as with a glory. She looked the incarnation of woman's purity, proudly defiant of and triumphant over the serpent guile of man.

The young creole was noble in his nature, and could not fail to appreciate the high-toned virtue which shone so brightly in that humble maiden, whose loveliness of person had captivated his senses, and in pursuit of whom he had but obeyed the warm impulses of his youth, without reflecting on premeditated wrong.

Education and custom had taught him to regard the quadroom as a being of an inferior caste whom he had always known to be sought with illicit desire, though it would be unjust, perhaps, to say that he had at any time entertained unholy thoughts towards Marie, and certainly, as she now stood before him, the sentiments she inspired were not unworthy of purity's own shrine.

"By heaven! Marie, I could not harm you, and yet I do love you more deeply than ever. I care not what blood is in your veins, nor what barriers custom has raised up between us. God has made you a type of the pure and beautiful, which he has given me a soul to adore. Let me be your friend, brother; recognize with me some tie which will draw us closer together, that we may at least be happy in those holier sympathies of our nature which make love omnipotent, in the unsullied intercourse of thought and sentiment, over the feeble restraints of human prejudice? Is there none such?"

"Ay, Alfred, I have dreamed of such a tie, and the love it should consecrate," said Marie, whose tears were calmed as she read in the young creole's eyes the truth and manliness of his nature. "As we have knelt at the same altar, you knew not poor Marie was so near you, at the altar of the great God, whose goodness recognizes no human distinction; I have dreamed of a love which, surviving this perishing earth, where, perhaps, its first gleam was caught, would make us happy beyond the stars; and thus in dreams, Alfred, I have dared to love you, to hope for your love."

The beautiful enthusiasm of the young neophyte in psychology, whose teacher was Nature, whose schooling through Faith thrilled the heart of Alfred du Val with strange emotions, which swelled as she was speaking to burst forth, as she concluded in an exclamation of concentrated love and despair,

"Oh, Marie, would to God you could be my wife!"

There was a depth of tenderness and sincerity in his tone which would have made it difficult and embarrassing perhaps, for the maiden to reply, had not their confidence been terminated by an interruption, which will be explained in the next chapter.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE SLAVE.

BEFORE Marie could gather her ideas sufficiently to reply to the ejaculation of her lover, her attention was attracted to another object.

"Hist! some one comes," said she.

"It is only Rachel," said the young man. "Fear nothing. I will take the blame."

"But there is some one with her."

"Father Dunois, perhaps."

"No, it is a heavier step, and they were talking in a loud and excited tone. There! they have just entered the gate—listen!"

Alfred made no reply, but gave his attention as directed; and they both soon became eager listeners indeed.

"For the sake of the good Lord, you can't mean it—and she your own daughter, too! Oh, lordy! lordy! what must I do?"

It was the voice of Rachel who spoke in great tribulation.

"Hush, fool!" said her companion, in coarse, harsh accents. "I tell you she is no more my daughter than you are, and I'll have her, and break your neck into the bargain, if you don't mind your own business. They say she is the prettiest girl in the city, and I don't

intend the money I have spent to go for nothing. She's mine, and I'll do as I like."

"Oh! for God's sake, spare her! I know I am in your power, and you can jess kill me if you wants to, but don't tetch her, for she's an angel on earth. Oh, me! oh, me! that I was done dead!" sobbed Rachel in despair.

"Go along in and stop your cursed whimpering," exclaimed the man, "I shan't hurt the gal. It's what her betters have come to, and if she behave herself she'll live like a lady."

Rachel went slowly towards the house, wringing her hands in agony.

In the meantime it would be impossible to describe the feelings of the two young persons who occupied the porch. There could be no doubt as to who was the subject of the conversation they had just heard. To Alfred, there was a strange, dark mystery in the man's words, but to Marie they were clear enough in one sense. The little she knew of her early history satisfied her at once that the person who had accompanied Rachel was the unknown, upon whom her destiny in a measure depended. His language, at the same time that it revealed he was not her father, as it now appeared, the mulatto actually believed, yet disclosed a purpose as terrible and abhorrent as his power over her was fearful.

The meeting with this man had always been to her a subject of indefinable sensation. Rachel never alluded to him when she could avoid it, and Father Dunois had always shaken his head doubtfully when she broached the subject, so that Marie never knew exactly whether to desire his advent as a benefactor or to fear his coming as a tyrant.

There could be no doubt now, and oh! how thankful was she to Providence that in her wretchedness and woe, a friend and protector stood by her in the person of Alfred.

It was not yet dark when Rachel entered the porch, accompanied by a man of stout build and an unprepossessing sensual but rather handsome countenance, on which the marks of deep dissipation were apparent, and the expression of which was one of hardened selfishness.

He was dressed showily, wearing an inordinate quantity of flashy jewellery; while a close observer might have detected, protruding among the ruffles of his shirt bosom, the ivory handle of the famed bowie-knife, which is the indispensable companion of the ruffian and bravo of the south-west.

It would be difficult to say whether Rachel or the man who accompanied her was most astonished at the appearance of Alfred, who had risen and taken a step in front of Marie, that he might interpose between her and the threatened danger. The new-comer, however, spoke first.

"Ha! by all that's holy, here's a nice piece of work. The slut has mated already it seems, and by the Lord if he is not my modest friend of St. Philippe. Why here's fun. I say you nigger Rachel, is this your sweet innocent lamb? Is this the way you have brought

her up? And then you come whimpering to me as if she was a saint—ha!"

During the delivery of this brutal tirade, Alfred could scarcely restrain his disposition to spring upon the man and strangle him. That the reader may comprehend the man's coarse allusions, it will be necessary to relate briefly the incident which brought about an acquaintance between Alfred and Marie.

A few months previous to the opening of our story, the latter had occasion to go to a different part of the city in quest of a physician to attend Rachel, who was taken suddenly ill.

On her way she was accosted and annoyed by an individual, who only desisted when he had attracted the attention of some passers-by to himself, in such a way as threatened an unpleasant interference for him.

On her return Marie again saw him, and turning down another street to avoid him, she perceived that he followed her. It happened that the street was one notorious for the location of a ball-room devoted particularly to the society of quadroon beauties. The man, who seemed bent upon his purpose, felt, perhaps, the less hesitation from the route she had taken, and speaking a few words hastily to a cabman who was near, he continued his pursuit. It was about dusk in the evening, and when a little more than half way up the block, he overtook and accosted her. Marie resented indignantly his address, but the cabman having driven up in the meantime, and seeing there was no one near, exclaimed:

"Never mind, sir, it's only squeamishness; jump in with her quick, and I'll take you where you'll be all right."

Promptly at the suggestion the man caught Marie up and carried her towards the cab, when she uttered a wild and piercing shriek of terror. In an instant the doors of a billiard saloon, which was on the ground floor of the nearest tenement, were burst open, and a young man rushed out. One quick glance; a fierce blow with his billiard-cue, and the ruffian staggered back; her preserver caught Marie from his polluting grasp.

"Quick, quick, sir!" exclaimed the cabman, catching hold of the half-stunned ravisher, who had nearly fallen under the wheels of his vehicle, "tumble in, and let's be off, or the blasted Frenchies will be down on us like hornets." And by main strength and good management he dragged his employer in, and whipping his horse, dashed off, just as half a dozen young creoles came out of the saloon.

It was Alfred who had rescued Marie.

The rude exclamation of surprise on the part of the man who accompanied Rachel, at the sight of the two young persons together, will be readily understood, when it is said that he was himself the ruffian just alluded to; nor did this fact tend to lessen the apprehension of poor Marie as she recognised him.

Alfred replied promptly to his brutal speech:

"I do not know who you are, sir, but you have once before attempted an outrage upon this young person, and your presence here

cannot be permitted for one instant. You will go!" added he, with an imperious tone and gesture.

"The devil you say!" coldly replied the ruffian, "and who are you, pray, to order a man out of his own house?"

"It is false!" exclaimed Alfred, enraged. "You will go, or take the consequences."

"All in good time, my fine lark; I have a score to settle with you, for this; do you see," and he touched a bright red scar on the side of his forehead. "But first, Rachel, you just tell this young whippersnapper of a Frenchman, that this house and that gal both belong to me."

Alfred cast a hasty glance at Rachel, who stood the picture of terror and distress.

"Yes, Monsieur Alfred, I can't deny what Mr. Rainsford says," she stammered out.

"And who the devil is Mr. Rainsford, that he should behave like a brute to people because they happen to live in his house?" demanded the young creole fiercely.

"The one as—as give me Miss Marie to bring up and take keer on thirteen years ago."

At this explanation even Alfred was for a moment appalled.

"Well, sir, you are satisfied now, I hope, and may cut your stick in double quick time, and may be thankful to get off without having your ears split," said Rainsford, touching the handle of his bowie significantly.

"Coward! ruffian! miscreant!" exclaimed Alfred, in a perfect fury. "If you were a gentleman I would challenge you and shoot you through the heart. As it is, raise but a hand and I will kill you like a dog!" and in an instant he produced and presented a pistol. The fire in his eye, and the ready and effective weapon in hand, made the bully quake.

"Get out of my house, it is all I want."

"Certainly, I will leave your house, but I will take this young lady with me, and place her under safer guardianship than yours," said Alfred, who now, that his foe had quailed, returned his weapon, and assumed at once the acknowledged mastery of a brave spirit over a mean and dastardly one.

"Young lady! ha! ha! You Frenchmen are mighty polite. Who ever heard of calling a nigger a lady?"

"I care not for your coarse terms," replied Alfred with dignity. "This girl shall not stay here to be outraged by you." And he turned to where Marie had sank upon her knees, and with clasped hands and upraised eyes, seemed in speechless prayer to implore that God, who, in purity of heart she worshipped, for aid and comfort.

"By George!" exclaimed Rainsford, growing bold and furious, now that he was no longer confronted by the eye and weapon of the young creole, "this is too much. I say you shan't touch her, she is my slave."

The electric fire of heaven does not quicker blast the living tree

than did these words. The poor girl, who was already kneeling in a paroxysm of grief, drooped like a flower stricken and wilted by sudden blight, and sank on the floor insensible.

On Alfred Duval the effect, though different, was not less instantaneous. Quick as thought he turned his fiery glance upon Rainsford, and the wretch again cowered before him. With a strong effort he quelled his rising passion, and attained that composure so necessary for the task before him. Firmly, and almost calmly, he said:

"What you say may be true; but even the slave is under the protection of the laws in Louisiana. It is such fiends as you who bring discredit on the generous-hearted Southerners. Your hellish purpose towards that young girl, I know, and by heaven! you shall never accomplish it, if I have to kill you on the spot. Leave this house with me instantly, and swear by whatever you hold sacred, not to enter it again, or to molest her, until you have established your claim at law, which, as her next friend, I deny, and will oppose by all the influence that wealth and friends can afford; or of this I give you fair warning, that I stay here too, whether you will or not, until the process of the law can interpose in her behalf."

"By George! I'll not be dictated to thus in my own house about my own niggers," said Rainsford, who, deceived by the calmness of Alfred, again evinced some show of spirit.

"Fool," exclaimed the young man, grasping his weapon, and taking a step forward. "Fool! you know not what a creole can do when he is once aroused and determined."

There was something in the look, the tone, the whole bearing of Duval which fairly subdued his antagonist.

"Well, sir," said he doggedly, "I don't like to be bullied in my own house, but there is something in what you say. I am willing, of course, to prove my title; and if you will agree not to come after the gal, I'll let her alone until I have proved it. There is no need of any oath, a gentleman's word is enough."

"Let us go, at once," said Alfred, with an ill suppressed sneer at the ruffian's pretence of assuming the gentleman, and pointing Rainsford the way, he followed him out into the street. At the first corner they met a watchman, to whom Alfred addressed a few words in French, after which he remarked to Rainsford.

"It is not likely that we shall be very pleasant companions, so we had better part here. I will keep my part of the agreement, and will take good care that you do the same."

Without a word the man started forward, while Alfred, turning off in another direction, hastened to seek Father Dunois, to whom he related all that had occurred, and readily obtained the good priest's promise to go at once and console and watch over poor Marie.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE BOATMAN.

THE lights shown from a hundred windows, and the hum of gay voices—the music of merry laughter—the jovial shout at the happy jest, filled to the echo a large and spacious edifice, dedicated to sports and amusements; some might say dissipation; yet a stranger, entering the house, would, as soon as he became familiar with things around him, have been astonished at the absence of that excess and coarseness which too often disfigure similar scenes. There were billiard-rooms, nine-pin alleys, and even a kino table; and sometimes the mirth arose high, yet that decorum and moderation which characterises the French creole population prevailed. One feature in the picture, however, will, no doubt, appear objectionable to our readers.

It was Sunday evening. Start not, moralists! Forbear your anathema until you have examined. It was not a wanton desecration of the Sabbath on the part of the principal actors; education and custom sanction, and the Catholic Church countenances many Sunday amusements in New Orleans, which would seem sacrilegious elsewhere.

It is not the vocation of the novelist to moralize, but rather

“To catch the living manners as they rise.”

and I shall, therefore, leave the question of ethics to be discussed by such of my readers as have the leisure and inclination, with the simple remark, that many persons of excellent characters and sincere faith think such recreations, in the degree recognised by their faith, no sin, and that as honest Christians as ever whined at a conventicle may be seen at the Opera on Sunday night, in New Orleans.

It was the Sabbath evening, and then, the rooms at Madame Caldwell's were crowded. The principal part of the guests were creoles, who, generally temperate in everything else, were chatting away gracefully and gaily in the excess of volubility. Some were in the bar-room, others in the billiard-saloon or nine-pin alley, but most were in the apartment devoted to the all-engrossing game of kino.

Let us describe this game. The players, seated at long, narrow tables, ranged through the rooms, purchase, at uniform price—generally ten cents—each a card, printed with numbers of horizontal rows of five numbers ranging from one to ninety. The number of rows on a card is generally seven or nine. In addition to the card, the player is furnished with a quantity of buttons or small checks.

The keeper of the game is seated on a raised platform, before a revolving globe, with a hollow neck, through which she or he puts into the globe little balls numbered from one to ninety. These are thoroughly mixed up, and then taken out singly by means of a spring, and the number of each, as it comes out, is announced in a loud voice. The players who have that number on their cards cover it with a button, and he who first covers a full row makes kino, winning the combined stakes, minus a per centage to the gamekeeper.

On the occasion referred to, there were near a hundred persons in the room appropriated to this game. The assembly was certainly a mixed one; loafers, boatmen, sailors, mechanics, tradesmen, gentlemen of leisure and fortune; they were all there. Kino, in New Orleans, is democratic.

Just as we enter, a fine looking woman, of some forty years old, rather too much bedizened with finery, but with unmistakable kindness and good humor in her countenance, was presiding at the game. Generous, warm-hearted Madame Caldwell! How many recollect her with kindly feelings. She was neither a saint nor an anchorite; but, despite her weaknesses, there are many worse persons in this world, at whom the finger of reproach never pointed, and by many a generous and noble act did she deserve a large enough corner of the mantle of charity to cover her sins.

Busy at her vocation, but not too much so to drop a friendly word, and pass an occasional jest, she might be regarded as a very jolly goddess of fortune.

“Sixty-five, seven-ty, eight-ty-one,” she called out, as the numbers dropped into her hand; “fifty—seventy-two.”

“Kino,” cried one of the players, handing up his card to have the result verified. In an instant, their tongues freed from the restraint of the game, a little Babel of confused and confusing sounds prevailed. In the meantime, three or four well-dressed creoles arose from one of the tables, and laughing, as if ashamed of their late occupation, they sauntered up to Madame C., who was preparing to recommence her duty as gamekeeper. For some minutes they kept up a lively conversation with her, to the delay of the game and the dissatisfaction of the eager expectants of fortune; then, after looking over and provoking one or two acquaintances, they were about leaving the room when they were met at the door by a distinguished-looking young creole, whose countenance wore a half-sad, half-defiant expression, as if his mind was endeavoring to control a heart vexed with care.

“Ah! Alfred, *mon cher*,” said one of the retreating party, “glad to see you, come along out of this. No luck here. *Allons buvons un coup.*”

“With pleasure,” said Alfred Duval, brightening up at the sight of so many cheerful faces; “but wait a moment; I am seeking some one with whom I have an appointment. Ha! yonder he is, watching the game with as much scorn as so good a face can wear; is he not a man?” asked the young creole, with evident pride in his acquaintance.



"*Pardieu!* a splendid fellow! Who is he? Not a Yankee, I'll be sworn."

"Not exactly; he is a young Kentuckian who owns a plantation in Arkansas, and who sends his crop to my uncle; he is spending some time in New Orleans, and wishes to see the city. At my uncle's request I devote my time to him—I need not say with how much pleasure—when I tell you that he is not only rich, but brave, generous and *plein d'esprit*."

"Introduce him, by all means, *mon cher*."

"Certainly," said Alfred, playfully. "He must have acquaintances and you are all good fellows in your way."

He then turned towards his friend, who had not perceived his entrance.

The individual who was the subject of the foregoing remarks, was a person eminently worthy of attention, as he stood in a distant part of the room, watching calmly, with a slight curl on his haughty lip, and a shade of contempt in his countenance, though not without coin passion in his eye, the petty game which absorbed the faculties of those around him.

Drawn thither neither by views of pleasure nor a disposition to dissipate, nor even wholly actuated by the curiosity to observe strange manners and customs, he scorned a seeming participation in the scenes around him. From his retired position and quiet manners, he attracted little or no attention, while he thus moralized to himself:

"How men—grown up, thinking men—can thus give up their whole souls to an insignificant game, and allow themselves to be so absorbed by the loss or gain of a few dimes, I cannot understand. Such men as some of them appear to be, too! Now, yonder is a sinewy and honest-looking old boatman, whom it has cost many a watchful night and toilsome day to scrape together the amount he stakes here this evening, and yet though he may lose all, the utmost gains he could hope are small; still, with what intensity of purpose he plays, how deeply his faculties seem involved in the issue."

As he made these reflections, the gamekeeper called out:

"Seventy-two!"

"Kino!" promptly rejoined one of the players, as was noticed before.

"Blast it to all eternity!" exclaimed the old boatman referred to, snatching up his own card and dashing it fiercely on the floor. "Seventy-three would have saved me." Then rising from the bench upon which he had been seated, he looked around with an air of savage defiance, as if seeking some one on whom to wreak the ill humor thus engendered by his losses. His eye fell upon the graceful and manly form of the young Kentuckian, whom he at once addressed.

"You seem to look on cursed coolly, stranger; don't you never take a hand yourself?"

"Seldom," was the quiet reply, "and if my losses affected me as yours seem to do you, I would rather not try it at all."

"Losses! by the Eternal! It's all loss; the last red cent is gone,

and how I'm to get home now, with the river running t'other way and nary horse to ride, is more than I can tell; or, for the matter of that, where the next meal's vitils is to come from, 'cept to turn nigger, and go to rolling cotton on the levey."

"You should not have reduced yourself to such necessities."

"Look here, stranger, that's all-fired purty talk, but it don't butter no parsnips. I've been on an eternal spree, and jist got cleaned out, and I don't know a single human soul in this village, 'cept it's a fellow who ain't got any soul, I reckon; for you see, Dan Seely and Jim George, who fotched a load down with me, went back on the 'Buck-eye' four days ago."

"Why, then, did you gamble away your money?"

"That's jist it, you see, for blast my pictur, if I can tell. I brought an almighty lot of stuff down with Dan and Jim, and we sold clean out, may be a week ago, and I had eight hundred and fifty hard rocks to my own share and no mistake. Well, the boys were for goin right home at once, but I had heard a heap about Texas, and I thought I'd jist run over and find out what sort of a place it was, 'cause you see I'd known Davy Crockett once, so I went and spoke a passage on a schooner going to sail in a few days. Well, arter seein Dan and Jim off, I was comin 'long the levy towards my boardin-house, when who should I meet but an acquaintance I'd known a long time ago in old Kaintuck; so you see, bein sorter lonely, I buckled on to him, and he went to a ball that night, and what with drinking and dancing all night with the girls, and one thing and another, I got a kinder, sorter obfuscated, and the furst thing I does I goes along with him to a faro bank, where they give me some darned stuff strong enough to pizen an alligator; so I lost my senses clean out, and when I found myself next morning my head was swelled up as big as a beehive, and was jist as full of bees. I hadn't been awake long before up comes the same feller—I forgot to tell you he was a nigger-trader and all fired sharp at that—and says he:

"Well, how much did you lose last night?"

"Lose!" says I.

"Yes," says he, "you would play, and was about five hundred winner one time; but I couldn't make you stop all I could do, and so you lost again."

"So with that I takes out my wallet, and darn the red cent was there, and I felt all fired streaked."

"What! not broke?" says he.

"Not by a darned sight," says I, "but I lost nigh on two hundred dollars."

"You see that wasn't exactly so, for I had only three hundred and fifty left in my trunk, but I didn't choose to let on to him, for I had talked mighty big about my speculations in produce, and about buying land in Texas, and that's what sot him on, I expected, and I wanted to find him out too, for if he was playin fox on me I meant to fetch him."

"Well, come down, says he, 'and let's have a drink; I'm going to the races, and stopped to see if you wouldn't go along."

"Well, you see, stranger, I jist puts a hundred in my pocket, and arter taking two or three horns and gitting a bite to eat, off we goes to the races. I took pretty good keer not to drink too much and after having lots of fun, I came home about one hundred and fifty winner, 'cause, you see, I knows somethin' about horses. I was fool enough to think I could get my money back, and so, with that fellow urging me on, I got cleaned out; but not before they made me as drunk as David's sow. I think they put some pizen in their stuff, for I've stood a quart of Bourbon many a time without flinching. Well, the feller carried me home, and got me put to bed, and I didn't git up till late the next day; then I went out and sold my watch, and looked for him, for I was almost crazy about that money, and I didn't believe I'd been done out of it fair, nobow; but I couldn't find 'hair nor hide' of him. So, while I was santerin' about I meets another fellow who boards at the house with me, and he fotched me here last night, and I've been here purty much ever since, till I'm cleaned out of the last red! And now, stranger, if it ain't enough to rile a saint to have been such a double-distilled fool, I'd like to know."

"You certainly have not shown much wisdom, but it will be a good lesson to you in future."

"Cuss the future! what shall I do now? I can mighty easy work my way home, and that I don't care a darn for, but to go back skinned, without watch, clothes, or anything else, and git laughed at in the bargain, and maybe have them that used to trust me think I'm unehonest, I'd 'bout as lieve jump in the river, 'cause you see, stranger, I can't lie, and I shall have to tell the boys all about it."

"Well, my friend, I like that. You say you are a Kentuckian, so am I, and if you promise not to gamble again, I will help you."

"Will you, though? I've jist got old 'Black Bess,' the greatest shooting iron in old Kaintuck, with my chist of clothes up for my board, and if you will take her out for me, and git me the clothes, I'll be off in the first boat, and work my passage to boot."

"Well, here is something for the present, get a cab and go home, and to-morrow call on me at the St. Charles Hotel. Here is my address."

The boatman caught the card and the hand that held it in his rough grasp, and looking into the face of the young man, while his own weather-beaten features quivered with emotion, he said, in a hoarse voice.

"Stranger, I'm a man, if I have been fool; and you are the right stripe—raal grit to the back-bone! Only remember, if you ever want a feller who'll go through fire and water for you, call on Dick Denton, and I rayther reckon he'll be thar."

"Dick Denton! not Devil's Dick?" asked the young man, in a tone evincing a new interest in his casual acquaintance.

"Devil's Dick—that's your sort, stranger. Where on airth did you hear that?"

"Don't you remember me? My name is Harry Berford."

"Not the son of old Dan Berford what lived in Henry county—not little Harry?"

"Not so very small now, my friend," said the other, smiling.

"Remember you, Harry! I rayther think I do. Why, you are the only boy I ever let shoot Black Bess. Don't you recollect that air turkey you killed, and how proud you was? Harry, it's more than I deserve, it's more than I deserve," said he, wringing the hand of his friend, and then passing the sleeve of his rough coat across his eyes.

"Well, Denton, I am glad to meet you also. I remember my father used to say that though called Devil's Dick, you were both honest and brave, and only got the nickname because you were such a dare devil in your youth."

"I hadn't much the advantage of old Dan, Harry, and you look like a chip of the old block, only more tamed and polished off like," put in Dick, with a sly smile.

"I was going to add," said Berford, with a smile, "that since I have met you so singularly, perhaps if you can remain in New Orleans a few days longer you may do me a favor, and you shall not go home empty-handed at any rate, if only for 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

"Stay here to sarve you! Yes, I'd go all over the world on foot-back to do more than that for Auld Lang Syne, as you say, let alone to-night's work. Why, only think, you was willing to help me when you took me for a stranger. Harry, you are the right stripe."

"Well, Denton, go home now, and do not forget me to-morrow. I shall wait after breakfast for you. I am expecting a friend here, or I would ride up town with you."

"All right, Harry; I'll be thar, and if there's any scrimmage on hand Devil's Dick will be around."

Wringing the hand of his young friend and benefactor once more, the boatman left the house, an humbled but a happier man than if he had "won his whole pile back," as he expressed it to himself. The simple kindness which Berford had shown him as a stranger touched his better nature, and when he recognized him as the brave and spirited boy with whom he had passed many an hour in the woods of "Old Kentucky," whom he had taught to track the game and use the unerring rifle, and from whose father he had received many an act of kindness, his whole soul melted in that kindness which rougher natures, when unpolished, still possess, and which, awakened, gives a strength and pathos to their emotions, more eloquent than polished natures ever exhibit. The sense of his folly and madness still weighed heavily on Denton's mind, however, though relieved by his confidence that Harry would "make it all right."

"Well," said he to himself, as the cab rolled along the streets, "if I ain't game for the fool-killer, there's no snakes in Old Virginny. Here I've gone and made a cussed fool, spent a whole year's earnings, and disgraced myself into the bargain. It's all along of that darned Rainsford; I think he has been playing stool-pigeon on me, and if I

was dead sure I would make him quake. But never mind, Dick, it's all over now, and I'd have given the whole pile to have met Harry just as I did. What a splendid fellow he is! I only hope he's gone into a row, just to show some of these Frenchy fellers what Devil's Dick can do."

It was a few minutes after the above interview, when Harry Berford had relapsed again into his philosophic mood, that Alfred and his friends approached.

"Well, Harry, my brave boy, here you are, as sober as a judge, and as serious as an English lover: What think you of our New Orleans customs now?" said Alfred.

"Not very favorably from the specimen before me, I must confess," was the rather grave reply.

"Pshaw! this is mere pastime, but rather dull. Come, here are some young friends with whom I wish to make you acquainted. Let us go into another room."

Berford received gracefully and frankly the salutations of the young creoles, and soon by his open and manly disposition won their admiration and respect. The group adjourned to a private apartment, where an elegant repast was served up, seasoned by wit and gaiety.

"What say you, Berford?" asked Alfred; "our friends propose to visit St. Philippe?"

"If they will excuse me to-night, I would rather not," said Harry, in that kind of a voice which takes all unpleasantness from a denial. "I had even hoped to carry you home with me, as an adventure I met with to-night makes me anxious to intrude my confidence upon you in a matter of some import."

"*Certainement, monsieur,*" they cried with one voice; "*une affaire—c'est bien!*"

"If your friend needs anything in our power, Alfred, remember we are all at his service," said one.

"All! all!" added the others.

"Thank you, gentlemen," said Berford, "and braver friends no one could have; but my affair is not perhaps exactly of the kind you anticipate."

"*Eh bien, monsieur; toujours a votre service.* Good night—good night, Alfred."

And the party separated. There are no men in the world, not even among that chivalrous race from whom they are descended, the French, who understand the proprieties and courtesies of life—*les bienséances*—better than the creoles of New Orleans.

In half an hour Harry Berford and his friend Alfred Duval were seated in the splendid apartments of the former, at the St. Charles Hotel, where a long and deeply interesting communication was made by the young Kentuckian, the substance of which will appear in the course of our narrative. At its conclusion, Alfred grasped the hands of his friend, for so from that hour, in the holiest sense of the word, he felt that he would regard him.

"My dear friend, all that I have, all that I am is yours; command me."

"Thanks, many thanks," said Berford, warmly. "To-morrow, then, I may expect you; or will you not take a bed here to-night?"

"No, I thank you; I will come to-morrow, but to-night I have another—with a priest, I mean, and on a matter of importance, on which I may possibly ask your advice hereafter," added Alfred Duval, deeming the explanation necessary, lest his friend might think he left his society for light pleasures.

## CHAPTER V.

## FATHER DUNOIS—ALFRED SELF-COMMUNING.

THE world has no better men than are found in the Catholic priesthood. Exalted by pure and devout lives above low and sordid desires, they carry out, with beautiful earnestness and simplicity, their divine mission of charity and good-will to their fellow-beings; and however men may cavil at their creed, it cannot be denied that their practice is eminently Christian—their sphere of action is often limited, but the odor of good deeds soon spreads, and their influence becomes wide and extended. Such a man was Father Dunois, the pastor of a small church in the Third Municipality, frequented principally by the colored race. But humble as his position may seem, he was known to every truly pious Catholic in New Orleans, and the proudest heads in the city were bowed in respect when he passed.

It was after midnight, and Father Dunois was engaged in meditation and prayer in his little oratory, when a light rap was heard at the door.

"Come in!" said the priest, and our friend Alfred Du Val entered. He was not the gay, sparkling youth of a few hours previous, but quiet, subdued, and care-laden, with downcast eyes and serious brow. Taking a few steps forward, he knelt in silence at the feet of the pastor.

"*Benedicite, mi fili!*" said Father Dunois extending his hands for a moment over the youth's head. "Now rise, my son, and be seated." As Alfred obeyed, he asked nervously.

"Have you seen her, Father Dunois? Has she been with you?"

"Marie left me soon after vespers."

"Not alone—not to go home alone?"

"Patience, my son; her safety has been cared for."

"Oh, you do not—cannot know, Father Dunois—"

"*Mon cher Alfred,*" said the priest, laying his hand affectionately on the head of the young man, "I know all, and I pity you both. But there is no question now of your unfortunate passion, blameless as I

admit it to be, in view of the feebleness of human nature. We are to consult for the safety of a pure and virtuous maiden, whose life even I must pronounce innocent and beautiful, and who, by the permission of the good Father, whose ways are mysterious but all merciful, is threatened with the direst earthly evil that could befall one like her."

"Say not *we*, good father," said Alfred, in a subdued tone, "for to your wisdom alone both Marie and I submit."

"Learn rather to put your trust in God, my son, and not in me, the humblest of His servants. Let us pray that, through His mercy, the light of hope may shine through the darkness of fear and doubt."

Alfred, kneeling with Father Dunois, uttered a brief but earnest prayer. Resuming his seat, he said,

"Now, my son, listen. I have said that Marie has been with me, and while her distress touched my heart, her Christian-like resignation and faith command more than ever my esteem; and I have determined, with the support of my Heavenly Father, that she shall suffer no wrong."

"Thanks, my good father. But had you previously seen this man—this brute? Can he prove his claim? did you offer him money? You know I am rich, and thousands would be as nothing if she could be snatched from his polluting grasp."

"Be easy, Alfred; I am poor indeed, but for a good deed like this ample means are at my disposal—thanks to the piety of many a devout Catholic in this city to whom God has given the stewardship of worldly riches!—even thousands I could and would have given, had he consented to forego his claims for money."

"Ah, money will not tempt him—he will not give up his pretensions! Did you offer enough, Father Dunois?" exclaimed Alfred.

"There was no sum named, for he would not entertain the proposition. He is a hardened sinner; his heart is full of corruption and evil—a scoffer whom the anger of the Lord will overtake. He even dared—" said the priest, his pale cheek flushing for a moment.

"To insult you?" demanded Alfred. "Ah, that is something. I will find him—I will challenge him if he were the greatest blackguard on earth—and I will kill him now!"

The face of Father Dunois, which had glowed with something almost like passion as he was about to relate the gross and unmanly insult which Rainsford had uttered in a base insinuation of sinister views, as influencing the priest's desire to purchase the freedom of the beautiful quadron, grew pale again, and with a look of deep penitence, muttered, "*Mea culpa! mea culpa!*" Turning upon Alfred a look full of contrition, he said, humbly:

"Let us ask pardon of God in our hearts, my son, for yielding to unseemly and sinful passion—more unseemly and more sinful, alas! in me than you. What should I care for yonder wretch's ribald language?"

"And you say, Father Dunois," asked Alfred, after a short pause, "that he will not yield his claim for money?"

"Not all the gold in New Orleans," was his answer."

"What are we to do, then?"

"Appeal to the law. In the first case, this pretended claim of his must be searchingly investigated—"

"Pretended claim!" exclaimed Alfred.

"Aye, my son, that was my expression; for it seems impossible that a man like this should have a real claim or ownership of a girl such as Marie, and permit it to remain so long in abeyance, unless, indeed, he was nursing his own unhallowed passions, prompted by some deep and devilish instigation of evil—some motive more potent than even the gratification of his lust. To me there is a mystery so evident in the whole matter, that I have prayed earnestly to be permitted to become the instrument to unravel it, for the temporal safety of my dear scholar and child in faith."

"A mystery, father! Then she may not be—" exclaimed Alfred, his eyes sparkling and his cheek glowing.

"Peace! my son. How distempered is the blood of youth. You are about to draw conclusions which I did not mean to suggest. But let it pass," continued he, seeing Alfred's look of mingled disappointment and contrition. "Do not understand, either, that I intend to rely in such an emergency on mere surmises which may be unreal. I have taken proper precautions. You know that our laws protect even the slave from violence. To the law I have appealed through the intervention of a friend, and our Judge C— has issued an order placing her under his guardianship, where she will be in safety. Thither she went this evening."

"His guardianship! went where, Father Dunois? why not permit me to intervene?" demanded Alfred.

"*Mon cher* Alfred, I must guard both you and Marie against yourselves, for, alas! I know too well what youth and passion are. And now, young man, I exact a pledge from you; that you will neither seek this rude man in anger nor attempt to obtain an interview with Marie without my consent."

"Father!"

"Alfred! by your faith, by your honor as a gentleman, by your love and respect for me, I command you! Marie is under the guardianship of a good and honorable old gentleman, M. Dufour, whose humane feelings are strongly enlisted in her behalf."

"I promise you so far as she is concerned," said Alfred, gravely, "but for this wretch I must be free; at least you must trust my discretion; I have no present purpose of seeking him, and I will endeavor to be discreet."

"I am satisfied, my son. Now let me adjure you to strive with and conquer your unfortunate passion. You know the insuperable barrier to an honorable union with Marie; and I will not permit her to be plunged into sin and infamy through the weakness of her love and gratitude. She is the child of my adoption: there is no taint on her soul, if there is in her blood; and rescued from her present perils, she will be dedicated to the service of heaven!"

"Father Dunois, I would die before I would dishonor Marie, but cease to love her! It is impossible! Forget her? Never!"

"Such is the intemperate language of youth. I did not say forget, however, for human love is of God, and may be so tempered and purified as to linger around the heart through life, softening and sanctifying its impulses and shedding a halo on the thorny path of duty that guards us from many a peril. Ah! if to cherish one beatific vision of loveliness, for long years, to wear it in the heart next to that of the Creator, to adore the goodness it represents and to cling almost religiously to the fond memory that when living, her earthly affections were mine, be wrong, then is Pierre Dunois a great sinner."

It would be difficult to describe the soft, mild light that shone in the old priest's eyes, or the gentle glow that suffused his pallid cheek as he uttered these words, which had a holy and soul-subduing influence upon his pupil. For several moments neither of them spoke.

"Go, my son," at last, said the old man; "go, and in silence of night commune with your heart. Watch and pray!"

\* \* \* \* \*

At night and in solitude, Alfred Duval communed with his own heart, and found there tremulous and conflicting emotions which would not brook the control of sober judgment. Educated a strict Catholic, he resorted to prayer; but although the forms were on his lips, the spirit was not in his heart.

At twenty-five years love is a tyrant, and over the mind and feelings of Alfred it exercised a twofold power, that of goodness and beauty, that of pity and sympathy; and now he abjured his prejudice of caste, which placed a being like Marie beyond the pale of civilized rights, and he resolved to fly with her to Europe and marry her in the face of the world; then he remembered parents, sister, friends, the world's sneers, and shrank, coward-like, from his own resolution; now he vowed deep and terrible vengeance on her persecutor, then came thoughts less holy; what mattered forms if Marie were only his—his love, his wife—in the eye of heaven?

Yes! he would see her, he would plead with her, she could not refuse him, her persecutor should be bought, frightened, annihilated. Then came the reflection, the certainty, that Marie would refuse—or yielding would shrink, wither, die under what she was sure to consider the disgrace of such a love; and finally, in a conflict of emotion, Alfred fell into uneasy, disturbed slumbers.

It was late in the morning before he awoke, and even then a soft silvery voice startled him from his repose so suddenly that it required some moments to convince him that he was in his father's house, and that his sister was calling him. The tolling of the church bells informed him how late it was, and hurrying his toilet he soon descended to the *salon a manger*, where he found the family at breakfast.

"*Eh! bien, mon frere*, you are late this morning; do you forget it is All Saints' Day?" asked a beautiful girl of sixteen.

"I was with my young friend from Kentucky rather late, and afterwards had an appointment with Father Dunois."

"A good and holy man," said his mother.

"May you never have worse companions, my son," said the father.

The morning meal passed pleasantly off, and Alfred half forgot his sorrows in the affection of those around him. There is always a charm about the home of the polished and educated creole; the graceful politeness of the French character is there blended with a depth of feeling and manly sincerity, and tender consideration which make it a home in the best and noblest sense of the word.

## CHAPTER VI.

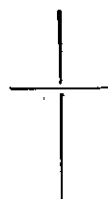
### ALL SAINTS' DAY.

EVERY one who has been at all familiar with life in New Orleans must remember the touching and beautiful ceremonies of All Saints' Day.

It is the custom of the Catholic families on that day to visit the cemeteries where rest the remains of their departed relatives and friends, to decorate their tombs with flowers, and offer up the sweet incense of devout prayers for their eternal happiness. Whole families, males and females, grown persons and children, participate in this ceremony, and may be seen gathered in groups around the tombs, some kneeling in prayer, others changing the funeral wreaths of last year, and all wearing in their countenances a marked solemnity—an appearance of true piety worthy of the occasion. Priests, too, in their robes, mingled in their congregation, ever and anon pausing to exchange a word of kindness or to utter a benediction.

The assemblage, though attentive, and in the highest degree interesting to a stranger, always impresses awe and respect even upon the most thoughtless.

A group of four persons were in front of a splendidly ornamented tomb. They were, a gentleman, somewhat past the middle age of fine appearance, but a stern and rather serious countenance, on whose shoulder leaned the wife and mother, while kneeling on a piece of carpet which the attendant, an old *bonne*, or nurse, had spread, was a lovely girl, their daughter, in an attitude of devotion. On the face of the monument, which was hung with fresh flowers, was the following inscription:



CI GIT  
HENRI DUVAL,  
Âgé 22 An., 6 m., 10 d.  
Il a tombé dans sa jeunesse  
Victim au sentiment d'honneur.

They were the parents and sister of Alfred, offering their devotions at the tomb of Alfred's elder brother, who had been killed in a duel three years previous. While they were thus engaged, two young men approached.

"Be so kind as to wait here for a few minutes, my dear Harry," said Alfred to his friend Berford, and, uncovering his head, he joined his family, and sank to his knees beside his sister.

After a few minutes' longer devotion, the whole party moved on; and beckoning Berford to his side, Alfred introduced him to his family, who received him with genial frankness, and, as the friend of Alfred, extended him a cordial invitation to visit their home.

For an hour Harry Berford wandered among the flower-decorated tombs in company with his new friends; listened with interest to the intelligent conversation of the father; heard with respect the pious remarks of the mother; and was delighted with the charming *naivete* of the gentle Julie Duval. At one of the gates they found their carriage, and, after a pressing invitation to Berford to spend the next day with them at their suburban villa, they departed.

"Come, Harry, and go back with me awhile," said Alfred, and the young men again entered the cemetery. It was not long before the young creole was in search of some one, gave a start at the sudden appearance of another party, seemed disposed to join them, and then with a distant salutation, took his friend's arm and turned off in another direction.

"What is it, Alfred—who are they?" asked Harry, who evidently saw there was much feeling as well as embarrassment in his friend's manner.

"Some other time I will tell you; I have promised not go near her."

"She is very beautiful," said Berford, "and what a fine face that old priest has?"

"Beautiful. *Mon Dieu!* she is an angel, and I am——"

"You love her! Well, what of that? I will swear she is as good as she is beautiful, for there is no record save of pure thoughts on that face," said the chivalrous Kentuckian whose romantic devotion to woman was of the loftiest character. "You love her, and

by the glance she cast this way she is not indifferent to yourself. What, then, is the trouble, my friend? There is a difficulty; let me know it; if I cannot serve, I can sympathise with you; but it shall go hard if I do not help you out of it."

"Ah! there is misery—you do not know. Come away, and I will tell you all," said Alfred.

It was indeed Marie, with Father Dunois and M. Dufour her guardian, followed by Rachel, whom they had seen, and who Alfred had indeed been looking for, though he was restrained by his promise from addressing her.

Just as he was about to draw his friend off another actor appeared on the stage, at the first sight of whom Marie shrank pale and trembling between her guardian and the priest, grasping an arm of each; while Alfred, with flashing eyes, and his hand thrust in his bosom, took a step towards the intruder, who was no other than Rainsford, flashily dressed, and wearing a reckless, defiant air. With an impudent laugh, he was about to approach Marie, when he caught sight of the young creole, whose menacing attitude made him pause suddenly.

Ere a word had passed, however, a very quiet-looking individual, with a very calm, determined countenance, whom M. Dufour had merely beckoned forward, pointing to Rainsford stepped up to him, and with a single word led him off. This person was one of those admirable detectives, of which New Orleans possesses some of the best in the world, and who had received a special mission in regard to this affair.

"Well, d—n it, I don't care," said Rainsford, as the officer led him off, explaining very quietly that it would not perhaps be safe for him to interfere with that party, or exhibit any rudeness; "my day will come yet, and I will make somebody howl for it."

Harry Berford whose gaze had been fixed searchingly on the ruffian, as soon as he had gone demanded of his friend—

"Who is that man, Alfred? His very presence moves me with strange feelings of dislike, not to say hatred."

"A villain, a black hearted villain, who, if he only had the position of a gentleman, I could challenge and shoot."

"But, what has he to do with your friends yonder? Why did that pale girl shrink so at his very appearance, or the old gentleman send an officer, as I suppose he is, after the fellow?"

"Come away with me then at once, and I will tell you the whole story as far as I know it, and you can advise and perhaps even aid me."

"With all my heart," exclaimed Harry warmly, "especially if it be to baffle that vulgar brute, and serve yon sweet girl also, whose face so much interests me. By George, unless it be your sister's, Duval, I never saw a more lovely one."

With distant but respectful salutations to Marie's party, who had paused before a humble tomb, but were still looking at them, the young men sought their cab, and drove off.

## • CHAPTER VII.

## CONFIDENCE AND COUNSEL.

It was not many minutes before the cab containing Berford and Duval arrived at the St. Charles Hotel, where they found Denton, the boatman, his engagement with whom Harry had neglected, for the purpose of accompanying Alfred to the cemetery. All three proceeded to Berford's apartments.

On entering the splendidly furnished parlor, the boatman seemed a little abashed, but with the real independance of his class, he deposited his hat on the floor and took a chair which was offered him, upon which he sat down somewhat gingerly, as if he were afraid of breaking "the thing."

"Alfred," said Harry, "this is an old and tried friend. Permit me to introduce Dick Denton, whom I have known from childhood."

"Devil's Dick, Harry; give the stranger my full name."

"If you are Harry's friend," said Alfred, extending his hand frankly, "you shall be my friend too."

"Thank you, mounsheer, and if you are a Frenchman, I must say I like the cut of your eye. If Harry says you are of the right stripe, it's enough for Devil's Dick: here's a hand 'll never forsake you. I'd do anything on aith for Harry, 'cept perhaps eat frogs."

Alfred smiled as he yielded his palm to the hard grip of the honest boatman.

"Well, Denton," said Berford, "I asked you here in the hope that you may be able to do me a service, which I will richly reward."

"Not another word about pay, if that's what you mean. Only jist say the word—what it is you want. If it's a scrimmage, so much the better; I feel all-fired wolfish with a sartin feller named Devil's Dick jist now, and as I can't lick him, why a good smart chunk of a fight might keep me from spiling."

"You must listen to me, Dick, before I know whether you can serve me or not. My friend here is already acquainted with most of the circumstances I am about to relate."

"Well, bust ahead, Harry," said the boatman, leaning his elbows upon his knees, and resting his face between his hands in an attitude characteristic of his class when listening.

"Do you remember, Denton, that I had a sister, almost an infant, when I used to hunt with you?"

"Why, yes; I remember to've seen her often in old black mammy's arms. She must be a smart bit of a gal by this time."

"And do you recollect," continued the young man, "a man who was in our neighborhood named Ranny?"

"Well, no, I can't say I do. Wern't he a nigger-trader or a black-leg?"

"Yes! gambler, counterfeiter, swindler! everything that was base and black-hearted," said Harry.

"I've heard of him a long way back. You see I must have left Henry county and went down to Hickman about two years 'fore he came there. Didn't I hear the old man had a difficulty with him?"

"Very probably. He passed a counterfeit note on my father in the purchase of a horse, and the old gentleman, who did not believe much in troubling the law in such case, gave him warning to quit the neighborhood or take the consequence."

"That was jist like old Dan Berford," interrupted Denton. "Well—I would 'av jist like to 'av bin thar!" ejaculated the boatman, raising his head and stretching forth his long brawny arms. "Well, what then?"

"Why, he sneaked off like a cur, muttering a blasphemous oath of revenge. My father's friends advised him to be on his guard, and some of them wanted Ranny taken up and prosecuted, as this was not the only or most serious offence of which he was suspected, but my father declined their advice, telling them, however, they might give him a coat of tar and feathers before he left, if they felt like it, which was accordingly done."

"Well, Harry, go on."

"Not quite three months afterwards, a negro woman, who sometimes waited on my sister, then about three years old, and who had been recently punished for some offence, came running into the house about dark one evening, saying that my sister had fallen into the river. The whole force of the place and the neighborhood was instantly called out and the water was dragged by torchlight, until late in the night, and for the next day and succeeding days without finding any trace of the body. In the meantime the woman was secured, and suspicions being uttered that she had thrown my sister in the river for revenge, it was with some difficulty the people were prevented from hanging her on the spot. My father, however, who was a just man, would not permit it. Nay, the story which she told was so straight, there was such entire absence of proof against her, and her own distress seemed so deep and real, that he contented himself with selling her. Well, the misfortune, I believe, soon broke my father's heart, for he died about three years afterwards."

"Poor old Dan!" said the boatman, burying his head again between his hands. There was a pathos in this rough exclamation which affected Harry Berford powerfully.

He arose, walked the floor a few moments with quick steps, and then pausing, placed his hand on the boatman's shoulder, and said:



"God bless you, Denton, you have a true heart!"

"Never mind that now, Harry," replied the boatman, in a husky voice, shaking his head as a sort of disclaimer of the compliment. "Go on with the story; you never found the little gal?"

"No; we mourned her long and sadly. At the bottom of the garden, near the river, a monument was erected, where my father used to go frequently, and where my mother now sits and sorrows daily for the lost one.

"About three months ago, I received a letter from a friend in Louisville, demanding my presence in that city without delay, with which I promptly complied. On my arrival, he informed me that an old negro woman belonging to one of his acquaintances was dying, and had begged her master so earnestly to send for me, that at his suggestion my friend had written. We at once repaired to the room where she lay, and I found her to be the same one I have mentioned in connection with the loss of my sister. She was much agitated at seeing me, but as soon as she was in some measure composed, we succeeded by persuasion and close inquiries in obtaining her story. It was a brief but fearful one. My sister had not fallen in the river as stated; but the woman, partly through revenge, and influenced partly by the bribes of Ranny—who had been watching about the neighborhood in disguise—had given him the child. She declared that she soon repented the act, and that her grief was deep and sincere, but that she was afraid to tell.

"After she was sold, it was her intention, in gratitude to my father, for saving her life, to have revealed the whole truth, but meeting Ranny in Louisville before she had an opportunity to do so, he had solemnly assured her that the child was dead, and even gave her a lock of hair which she had worn ever since. He also told her that if she ever breathed the facts she would be hung, and so terrified her as effectually to silence her, and cause her to lock the terrible secret in her own bosom. Her remorse was so deep, her condition so abject, that when she extended her almost fleshless, trembling fingers, holding to me the precious relic, and saying, 'Forgive me, Massa Harry, and take this to old missis,' I touched her hand and forgave her."

"But Ranny, the black-hearted coward! villain!" exclaimed Denton, springing to his feet, his stalwart frame quivering with passion, and his clenched hands extended. "What's the cowardly villain? Let me chaw him up!"

"Ay, Denton," said Harry Berford, in a deep, concentrated tone, his form dilating, his eyes glittering, and a cold, bitter smile on his lips, "that's just what I hoped you would be able to help me do—find him. Ever since that hour I have been on his track. Three times I have been near him, as I supposed, despite his aliases and disguises, but some bad fortune has baffled me, in Arkansas, in the Choctaw Nation and in Texas."

"Does he know you are after him, Harry?" asked the boatman.

"I think not; he is constantly flying his own evil deeds. I am tolerably sure that he does not suspect the individual, or the motive

even, if he thinks himself pursued. But just Heaven! only let him once come within my reach, and the atonement shall be sure and sudden."

"How does he look, Harry?"

"Look! do you suppose that I have laid my eyes on him, and that he is still alive? I have not seen him since I was a boy; then he was a man of about middle age, black hair, well built, and a face that would have been handsome but for a certain sneaking, cur-dog expression."

"But when you last heard of him?"

"He left Little Rock, if it was he who I followed there, just the day before I arrived; I followed again to the Choctaw Nation, to be again disappointed. From there an Indian, whom I had known as a schoolboy in Kentucky, accompanied me. In Texas I caught and then lost his trail again, but left my Choctaw friend, who is bound to me by ties of gratitude, and came here to attend to some business, whither he will follow me if unsuccessful. Here among the crowds that congregate in the winter I shall doubtless receive some sure information. When I met you last night, supposing that you remembered him, I thought that you could assist me."

"And so I will, Harry, though I don't think as ever I've seen him; so I will, I'll hound him all over creation for you, once put me on his trail. But tell me, do you think the gal's really dead?"

"Dead! she must be dead! Do you understand me, Denton?" said he, grasping with a vice-like grip the shoulder of the gigantic boatman until he fairly shrank from his hold; "alive, well-nigh grown and in his power; that was madness, indeed! Certainly is dead, there can be no doubt of it;" and he relaxed his hold, unconscious of the power he had exerted.

Even the rough, untutored boatman understood his feelings too well to say another word on the subject, while Alfred, who had been a quiet but deeply interested auditor, though he had heard the story on the previous night, said.

"Harry, if two disinterested friends—for more than ever do I desire to call this brave man my friend—can aid you, count on us to the death."

"To the death, Harry!" said Denton, catching a hand of each in his strong, friendly grasp.

"Thanks! thanks!" said Berford, with emotion; "and now, Denton, this is what I want with you at present," continued he. "Here is the name of one who, my Choctaw friend writes me, may be in New Orleans, and who he has learned can, if any one on earth can, put us on the track to Ranny. I wish you to take it and find him out. He is described as a gambler and a scoundrel, who would sell his soul for money. So much the better for my purpose. I will stuff him with gold if he will but bring me my foe—my victim!"

He handed a card to the boatman, who spelled slowly the name, "R-a-i-n-s—Rainsford!"

"Rainsford!" exclaimed Alfred, taking the card.



"It's him helped cheat me out of my money; I know him well," said Denton.

"It is he who persecutes Marie. You saw him at the cemetery this morning."

"Ah, that is strange," said Berford. "But calmly, my friends; you both have cause of enmity to him, yet I am sure you would not rob me of my revenge through over haste to settle your own quarrels with this man?"

"Certainly not," said Alfred. "In fact I can scarcely have a personal quarrel with such a man, though when you hear what I have to say you will not wonder that I hate him."

"In good time, my dear friends; do not think that I am so selfish as to have forgotten you. And you, Denton?"

"Darn the blasted money! he's welcome to it if he'll only tell me where the black hearted villain is."

"Well, listen to me; here is a pocket-book with one thousand dollars in it. Find this Rainsford, let him know that you have money, play with him if he wishes, and let him win or think he can win, so that you can gain his confidence. It matters not if you spend it all, only drink nothing, and keep the run of this man, or rather keep him after you, by thinking you have more money."

"But, Harry, you know I promised agin gambling."

"This is mere form; it is my money which you are giving away for my purposes. However, if you can obtain what I want from him without gambling so much the better."

"Never mind, Harry; only tell me, when I've found him and lost the money what must I do?"

"Denton, you are an old hunter, and I must leave much in your discretion. You know what I wish—to find Ranny. You may have to exercise great caution, that even the mention of the wretch's name will not be prudent; judge that yourself, but if you find him disposed to treat with us, and think I had better see him in person, you may mention me as a pigeon worth plucking, and bring us together; only beware of using my name. This may seem taking a heap of trouble for what appears a simple matter, but I know these fellows, however steeped in crime, are frequently faithful to each other, and he doubtlessly knows all about Ranny. There may be great trouble in getting him to point out his whereabouts."

"Well, Harry, I think I kin fetch it, if I only kin find out whar the darned blackleg is."

"Take this," said Alfred, hastily scribbling the address of the "detective" who had charge of the affair in regard to Marie, "get in the cab and tell the driver to take you to the place written here, give the card to the person you will find there, and he will direct you."

"And now, Denton, you can start out. Don't be afraid of the money, but use it freely, and when you have anything to tell me come up here. If I am not in, stay and make yourself at home. The servants have orders to give you everything you want."

With these instructions the boatman departed, and the young friends were left alone.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## ALFRED'S HOPELESS LOVE.

"AND now, my dear Alfred," said Harry Berford, "open your heart to me. I will give you true sympathy, honest advice and my best services, if they can avail anything. You love yonder pale and beautiful girl?"

"To madness!" exclaimed Alfred.

"She is good and pure, I dare be sworn."

"As an angel."

"Is it possible you have not won her love in return?" asked Harry, a little hesitatingly.

"Alas! she loves me too surely. Next to God and truth, her heart is all my own."

"What obstacle is there, then, my dear fellow, to your happiness? Surely, not the want of fortune on her part, for I know you are rich."

"Fortune? bah! we are rich, as you say, and I would give my whole patrimony to call Marie mine, as freely as a mother gave nourishment to her infant."

"Then why don't you marry her?" asked Berford bluntly. "I know that family differences, refusal of parents, and all those obstacles which beset true love, bring misery on many an honest heart, but we Kentuckians have a decided contempt for such old fashioned difficulties, and adopt a very summary mode of getting over them; we just carry off the girl we love, marry her, and let the old folks get pleased at their leisure. Try our plan, Alfred."

"It is impossible," said the young creole; "the impediment is not what you suppose. I cannot marry her, for she is a——"

"What! what?" demanded Berford, with intense interest.

"Quadroon?"

And springing up, with anguish and despair depicted on his pale handsome face, Alfred walked the floor with head bowed and hands nervously clenched, exhibiting that pantomime of emotion to which

the more stolid Anglo-Saxon seldom or never yields, but which is neither unmanly or ungraceful in the fiery and excitable race.

Berford gazed on him with deep and earnest sympathy, until his pace slackened, and his mind became calmer; then he said, in his rich full-toned voice, every accent of which was manly, truthful and tender,

"Alfred! my dear Alfred, from the bottom of my heart I pity you. It is true your announcement surprises me; I should never have dreamed that the remotest drop of African blood tainted that fair skin nor would it be suspected anywhere else but in New Orleans. She might pass unsuspected even in Kentucky. I promised you advice, Alfred, but alas, I know not what to say. Some might bid you take her and fly to another land, where you might wed her without disgrace; but such happiness would be purchased too dearly perhaps at the expense of all other ties and duties; besides like yourself, I have been educated with certain notions as to races which some call prejudices, but which raise insuperable barriers to an honorable alliance with those of her blood. Others might give you less moral advice, especially knowing the condition which her class usually follows; but, besides that I regard such a union, even when prompted by true love, as unblest and degrading. I should look upon him who would wrong that poor innocent maiden borne down by her sad heritage, as a villain."

"Ah!" ejaculated the creole, with a slight start, turning his glance quickly and somewhat fiercely upon the Kentuckian, whose calm, clear eye met his gaze frankly and fearlessly, as he said slowly and firmly.

"Yes, but you are not that man."

"Thanks, thanks! you do me more than justice. I would, with all my warm creole blood, and such excuse as custom gives to palliate the sin, rather die than sully her purity, or rob her of the innocence which gives her heart peace, if not present happiness. But, my dear friend, this is not all; there is something more terrible hangs over Marie than the disappointment of love."

"Tell me, my friend, there at least my advice may do some good. Indeed, I desire to know everything you can with propriety tell me; not for your sake alone; but I should feel it a privilege to do something to lighten the sadness of one so good and beautiful. You know we Kentuckians claim to be true knights-errant in behalf of woman."

"Well, listen; three months ago I was playing billiards with some friend in St. Phillippe street about dark, in the evening, when I heard a woman shriek just in front of the house. The room was on the ground floor, and the door opened immediately on the street. Being nearest, I burst out and saw a ruffian with a girl struggling in his arms and trying to force her into a cabriolet which stood ready at the curb stone. With one blow of my cue I staggered him, and caught her in my arms. My companions did not come out quick enough to catch the scoundrel, who was dragged into the cab and driven off by his accomplice. As soon as the girl revived, she uttered some incoherent

thanks, and started to go; but not thinking it safe for her to do so alone, with some difficulty I obtained permission to accompany her.

"During our walk, I could get but little from her in regard to herself, though she was profuse in her thanks, and when we arrived at the gate of her residence she besought me so earnestly not to insist on a further acquaintance, while her fervent gratitude was so evident that I was strangely puzzled, and perhaps somewhat piqued.

"It was impossible, however, to render such a service to one so innocent, and beautiful and not seek to know more of her. I did not choose to do this in a surreptitious manner. Her dress was simple, and her dwelling comparatively humble, but her language and manners were those of refinement and good education, and so I frankly told her who I was, and desired the honor of her acquaintance under such a formal introduction as would be a guarantee of respect and consideration. She at first hesitated; then with an evident struggle, and a singular change, both in her tone and manners, which indicated great sadness of heart she announced to me her condition. To the very first sentence I uttered in persistence of any desire to know her after this she replied, with the pride and dignity of a youthful queen:

"Monsieur, I have shown you the barrier between us; if you are brave and generous, as your conduct of this evening indicates, you will not attempt to overstep it; if you are otherwise, your effort would be in vain, and you will only rob a poor girl of the satisfaction she now feels in receiving a service from one whom she would wish to believe good and noble, whose memory she would be glad to cherish, and for whose happiness she will ever pray."

"What could I say? You know what is usually considered the condition of the quadroons; but you do not, perhaps, know, as I do, that of their race there are some as pure and virtuous, as intelligent and refined beings as breathe; that many of them, especially in certain neighborhoods on the coast, are free, wealthy and well educated, possess moral excellence, and enjoy all the blessings of life, except social equality with the whites and the right of marriage, which is not recognized among the descendants of the African, even with their own race."

"The right of marriage!"

"Yes, marriage is a civil contract. They are all Catholics, however, and our church, which fills so many gaps where human laws fail to excuse the moral good, gives her sanction to the union between them, though not between a white person and a quadroon which the law prohibits; but though marriage is thus made a sacrament among them, it is not, as I have said, recognized by law, and the settlement of property has to be regulated by express contracts which our jurisprudence favors.

"A quadroon girl, therefore, may be as pure as snow, as beautiful as an angel, and as accomplished as a paragon, but she cannot marry unless she finds a suitable mate in some male of her own class, which is difficult enough, first, because the proportion of females is much greater than among the pure white or blacks and next, the men of

their race seldom or never compare favorably with the women, either intellectually or physically, so that her chances are generally between a life of celibacy and a degraded and unblest union with a white man, which, I am sorry to say, is too much sanctioned by among us."

"I am not altogether uninformed on the subject, and have sometimes puzzled my brain over the enigma, as to what is to grow out of it, for if I am correctly informed, the numbers of this class are increasing," said Berford.

"I believe so."

"Well, if evil comes of it in a heavier form than individual unhappiness, it will be but the penalty of the sin of amalgamation. Where God has set his mark man should never, with his unbridled passions, overstep the bounds. But to return, what more of Marie, for of course it was her?"

"Yes. Well, I suppose my manner changed more in accordance with her feelings; for upon my expressing some regret that we could not meet again, mingled with sincere assurances of respect, she said, in consideration of my services, and because I seemed to desire it so much, that she would refer the matter, as she did everything else, to her spiritual guardian and friend, Father Dunois. The priest, who is one of the best and holiest of men, had been the instructor of my childhood, and was the friend of my family. A few days after he spoke to me on the subject and informed me of Marie's history. It appears that he had noticed her beauty and sprightliness when a girl among his Sunday school scholars, and finding on inquiry that she was a sort of waif under the care of a free mulatto woman, a good-natured, easy creature, who occupied a small cottage, free of rent, from some unknown person for taking care of the child, whom she supported by her labor, and to whom she was deeply attached, Father Dunois, assumed, with the consent of the woman, a temporal as well as spiritual guardianship over her, and making her education a labor of love.

"The old priest, who is a man of extraordinary accomplishments as well as great piety, has cultivated the graces of her mind and the sentiment of soul to an unusual degree. All this he told me, and placing before me, in the strongest light, the impropriety of seeking any further acquaintance, which might involve our feelings mutually, and would be sure in that case to bring unhappiness to one he loved and whom I must respect, he still permitted me to see Marie in his presence, to receive again her eloquent thanks and to converse with her. This was wrong, as he has since bitterly said. But there is no human being entirely free from vanity, how excellent so ever in all else, and Father Dunois, a subtle analyser of human motives, says all the error was his own, for he feels that his reasonable objections to our further acquaintance were in a measure overcome by his pride in his ward, and a secret desire to show how peerless a creature she was, one whom he deemed above human passions, and intended as the bride of heaven. But even this was excusable for he has taken great pains with the

moral culture of the class to which she belongs, devoting his life to the amelioration and happiness of a humble and despised race, when he, with his great talent and exalted piety, as well as his influential connections, might be at least a bishop. Such are the examples which our church only can exhibit."

"I trust such is the feeling of all good Christians, Alfred; though I will never deny the piety and merit of Catholic missionaries," interrupted Berford.

"Well," continued Duval, "I have said it was wrong. It was fatal to both of us—for we loved and hopelessly. I am proud to say that my love has been submitted to the ordeal of passion, and it came out pure. Only one other interview would Father Dunois permit. But two days ago, burning with a desire to see Marie, I went to her house and found her alone. She was startled at the intrusion, and bade me leave her; but the words of a full heart will come forth, and I poured out my passion at her feet. A dove could have not been more frightened at a serpent. She started to fly, but there was such truth and honesty in my language, so much respect in my deportment, and her own innocence was so strong, that she paused to listen; and then, with a word and a look, she repressed every unholy thought, and showed me my soul as it was by laying bare her own. Yes! she confessed that she loved me, but, pointing to Heaven, told me only to hope for a union there."

Alfred paused and paced the floor a few moments in silence.

"Well, my friend, with all this I can sympathise, but scarcely pity you, because a love which thus refines may halo your future with a sweet pleasant memory, if you cherish it only as a memory, which you will do, as you tell me Marie is destined for a convent."

"Ah! but you have not heard the worst. Just as we seemed to understand each other, and I was about to depart, leaving hope in one sense behind me, but carrying with me in its place all those sweetest memories you so well appreciate, a frightful incident occurred, which clouds all the future so darkly that I can see nothing. Angry voices were heard in the yard, and the good-natured mulatto came in with a low white wretch—this very Rainsford—who claimed Marie as his slave?"

"Good Heavens! His slave? What did you do? what did she say? Was any such claim heard of before?"

"Not that I am aware: yet strange to say, Rachel, the mulatto, in effect admitted his statement to be true, while, with terror and distress in every feature, she prayed for compassion and mercy to the brute, as if he had any such attributes. What did I do? Harry, my friend, if I told you the coarse jests, the fiendish threats he made, the hellish purpose he disclosed, you would call me a coward that I did not kill him on the spot. But no, I acted for the best; I terrified him until I forced him to leave the premises, and give me a pledge not to return or in any way molest Marie until he proved his claim legally."

"But what is the pledge of such a ruffian, as it seems he is, worth?"

"Nothing in the world, unless you had the power to enforce it. So I took the precaution at once. Fortunately her dwelling is located in what is called the French part of the city, and by using my influence as a creole—we are very clannish, you must know—I put her residence under a sure and strong police surveillance, and as you saw to-day, she has now ample protection. I then hurried to Father Dunois and told him all. He immediately sent for and obtained an order from one of our judges, placing Marie under the care of one of our most respectable citizens, with whom you saw her, and who was appointed curator to represent her rights, so that before ten o'clock that night she was safe under an honorable roof. Thus, my dear friend, the matter stands; if you can advise, do so."

"The first object, Alfred, seems to me would be to prevent publicity being given to this claim for Marie's sake. Cannot this man be bought off, and she quietly emancipated? Money would be no object, and if there is any delicacy or embarrassment in your coming forward, I will place any amount in the good priest's hands, or will undertake the negotiation myself."

"Many thanks, my generous friend; but I fear that plan is hopeless. It is not money which is wanting. Father Dunois, though poor by choice, could himself obtain thousands at a word, while my own command of means is unlimited. No; the attempt has been already made, and the wretch refuses absolutely to yield his claim for money. Fifty thousand dollars, he says, would not move him."

"That is very strange, considering his character—there is a mystery in this. He cannot have that refinement of passion, much less any sentiments of love, which could make her possession, even if free to pursue his unhallowed purposes, thus valuable to him. His abandonment for so many years of his claim, too adds to the complication. But if I understand your laws, the power resides somewhere to take a slave away from the owner to prevent brutality."

"There is such a law, though it is never applied, I believe, to a similar case, and there is some doubt whether the mere apprehension of bad treatment would authorise the interposition of the court. This may be, however, a forced resource if he makes good his claim. Yet merciful Heaven! what an ordeal for Marie!"

"It certainly requires all the thought, prudence and energy that we are masters of to solve satisfactorily this unhappy affair. I say, we, my dear Alfred," said Berford, putting his arm affectionately around the young creole, "for I am with you to the death in everything it may be necessary to do."

Duval thanked his friend with considerable emotion, and rallying, he said.

"For the present I must leave you. Remember, that to-morrow you spend the day with us at our place. I shall come early for you."

## CHAPTER IX.

## A QUADROON BALL—TWO OF OUR CHARACTERS.

I have no disposition or intention to clothe vice in the garb of virtue, or to lift the veil of actual life so far as to exhibit anything offensive to the most delicate sense of propriety, and, therefore, when I invite my readers to a quadroon ball, I beg them to understand that it is no scene of indecent debauchery which I propose to describe.

On the contrary, under the excellent police system which existed in New Orleans, and with the native sense of decorum which prevails among the class of whom I write, notwithstanding their legal degradation, there is less perhaps to shock modesty in the conduct of such an assembly than in many a one which obtains high recognition in the social world. In a spacious hall, situated on St. Philippe street, brilliantly lighted, and furnished on each side with two rows of benches, leaving the centre of the apartment, which was perhaps a hundred feet long, free for dancing, was gathered a gay and promiscuous company. At one end, separated by a passage, was a saloon, where drinks and refreshments were served out, and adjoining this was a room devoted to games of chance, the principal and most popular of which was a game called "craps," played with dice, and something similar to hazard.

In this apartment, intensely engaged in the chances of the dice, was one of our most important characters—Rainsford. A few quadroon beauties were flitting in and out, and several old semi-genteel habitues moved smilingly around always ready to make suggestions or to place a player's money, congratulating him on success, and accepting a small loan with so much grace that the lender felt himself the obliged person. Close around the table were gathered men of all kinds and classes; the rough boatman, who saw his hard earnings melt away with a bitter curse; the steamboat captain, with his bold, dashing manners; profligate young creoles, of the best families; and men even of high rank and standing in society, who deemed it but relaxation to see a little of the world.

Alas! curiosity is one of the most dangerous and alluring baits which vice lays to catch the unwary; and the gaming table is the greatest of all levellers except death.

Rainsford paid little attention to those around him; he had been betting high and the game of craps, while it is a very seductive one in the chances which it offers, is also a dangerous one, tempting even the most wary to increased investments, but affording no opportunity for unfair skill on the part of the player—that sleight of hand by which the unscrupulous always calculate on coming off first best, which was this man's peculiar forte.

At the time we find Rainsford he was largely a loser, and becoming noisy and profane, although he knew very well that he was not in a place where it was safe to bully. A throw with the dice was about to be made, but the game was unequal; it required a considerable sum to make the bet even, which is generally staked by the banker, but which any outside better has the privilege of doing. The banker looked around hesitatingly for a moment, when Rainsford said:

"I take it; go ahead!"

The dice were thrown, and he lost. With a desperate oath he turned from the table, at the same time dashing down some notes—

"There, take it, d-n you—I am dead broke!"

The money was counted, and found short by some fifty dollars, at which a number of by no means friendly remarks were uttered.

"You can get no more off a dead dog than his hide," said he, defiantly.

But the *sacres* which were muttered, and the fierce looks which encountered him on every side, somewhat modified his tone.

"Gentlemen, I thought I had enough. I will pay the banker to-morrow."

At this moment his eyes fell most unexpectedly upon an acquaintance.

"Hilloa! Dick, have you a spare fifty?"

"Certainly, old hoss; jist take it out of this," said our friend Denton, for it was he, handing him a hundred dollar bill.

This was the first time that the boatman had met Rainsford since parting with Harry Berford, being, in fact, the night of the day on which he had been furnished with funds, and sent in search of the gambler. He had traced him through the police offices, to whom Alfred had given him a card, and had been some time looking on, though unobserved himself.

Rainsford paid his indebtedness, and instead of returning the balance said:

"Let me try it once more with this."

To which the boatman promptly nodded an affirmative.

Luck was against the gambler, however, and he lost it quickly.

"Come and let us liquor, old hoss," said he to Denton, whose readiness to loan to him at once suggested the idea that he had obtained a fresh supply of funds, and that he, Rainsford, might possibly find a more winning game than craps.

"No, I thank you, I've set down on that," said Dick; "but I've no objection to take a turn in the other room, and look at the gals."

"Come along, then," said Rainsford, who was more than ever convinced that Dick had made a raise.

The two entered the dancing-saloon, where, in the blaze of a thousand lights, moved in the mazes of the graceful dance the sylph-like and voluptuous forms of beauties whose appearance would have done no discredit to the court of Venus. The gay laugh, the merry jest, the soft liquid tones that filled the air with vocal music—the glowing lips, disclosing, as they parted, shining rows of pearls—made up an inventory of charms which would have given a Turk a very fair idea of a sensual paradise.

Rainsford's coarse nature would have been gratified at the mere beholding of so much beauty; but his mind was preoccupied with affairs more engrossing. First, he was much vexed at his losses, which had been heavy; but his chagrin was softened by the hope of making them up by fleecing Denton again; then he had been disappointed, so far, in the principal object for which he came to the ball—the vain idea of meeting Marie. She had never been contaminated by such associations. Of course his vulgar mind could not appreciate her refinement; and burning with jealousy and hatred at the supposed intimacy between her and Alfred, it required no stronger reason perhaps than his inflamed passion to make him reject the large offers of Father Dunois; while no restraint but that of actual force of fear would have prevented him from endeavoring to get possession of her.

He did not find Marie, but the first person almost he encountered when he returned to the ball-room with Denton was Rachel, her sometime guardian, who fond to excess, as her class usually are, of pleasure, and feeling lonesome in the absence of her charge, had come to the ball to dissipate her sadness. The woman trembled visibly at the sight of Rainsford, and would have avoided him, but stopping directly in front of her, he demanded, in a rude, loud voice:

"Now, you yaller devil, where's my girl?"

"Oh, Lord! Massa Rainsford, you knows they's done took her away from me; for the Lord's sake don't make a fuss here!"

"I'll fuss you! I'll take your life if you don't get her back!"

The woman was about to deprecate his anger when he drew back and dealt her a blow, the force of which, though partially arrested by Denton, was sufficient to stagger her. A loud scream from Rachel, as she fell back, created a scene of the wildest confusion, in the midst of which, and before the police could arrest him, Rainsford was hurried from the room by Denton, who, though disapproving his violence, had no wish that the law should snatch his man from him.

Rachel soon recovered from the blow, but, like her race she was unnerved and agitated, and uttered a low, piteous moan, of "Oh, Lordy! Lordy! I'm done kilt!"

"You are a fool—he didn't hurt you," said one of her sympathisers, a bold, black-eyed quadroon, beneath whose dark olive complexion the warm blood glowed as if on fire, and whose contracted brow, short, firm lips, which curled up, showing up the bright pearl treasure of her mouth and dilating form, gave indications of as fierce

a spirit as ever resisted wrong, and which, under different auspices might have made its possessor a heroine.

Juanna was the daughter of a Spaniard, and had received a gentle culture in her childhood; but the father desiring to form a marriage of convenience, she had been pensioned off with her mother, who died soon afterwards. It was the first time when forced thus from the parental roof, that she became aware of the "curse of caste;" and when her dying parent, with lips fresh from the holy cross, declared that she had been lawfully wedded in her own distant country to him who now availed himself of the laws under which he resided to throw her off, a bitter spirit entered the heart of the young child which tinged her whole character, and gave a fierceness to her resistance of wrong.

The Spaniard soon after left New Orleans with his young bride, and Juanna, when she grew up, followed the "condition of class," but was no worse than the tyranny of custom made her. She had a high temper, a jealous disposition, and was fond of pleasure; but she was nevertheless universally popular among her people, whose cause she always boldly espoused, and generally with success, as she was under the protection of a wealthy and high-spirited creole, who entertained respect as well as affection for her. But alas! the penalty of sin is inevitable, and whether humane institutions seem to make it compulsory, or humane law excuse or palliate it, the Eternal edict is unchangeable.

Juanna, a good Catholic according to her teaching, would have answered promptly that her condition was neither disgraceful nor wrong; but the very earnestness with which she would have urged her defence, and the jealousy she felt of those belonging to her class who refused to comply with the custom to which she yielded, evinced a sense of error and an unsatisfied conscience. Among these was Marie, whom she had known in childhood, and once loved very dearly. Since Juanna had been "placed" (the term indicating the left-hand marriage of the quadroon with a white) their intercourse had ceased at the wish of Father Dunois, as well as the real desire of Marie, whose sensitive and cultivated nature shrank from what she considered the degradation of her caste.

Although Juanna had never openly resented this, and was too good-hearted in reality to seek to injure her former friends, yet she felt what seemed a slight and a reproach none the less keenly. She had heard something of the affair which caused Marie to be taken away from Rachel and placed under the guardianship of M. Dufour, and being near when the brief parley took place between Rainsford and the mulatto, and having seen the blow, she at once divined that there might be a chance of clearing up the mystery, for she readily understood by the gambler's expression about "his girl" that he was in some way or other connected with the fate of Marie. She became, therefore, one of the most active sympathisers of Rachel.

"I say he has not hurt you; but come along with me, this man must be arrested, and you know I can have it done."

"Oh! no, no, chile, you mustn't; you dunno," exclaimed the woman, holding back.

"Well come along out of the crowd, anyhow," persisted Juanna drawing Rachel's arm through her own, and with a haughty "*Place, messieurs, s'il vous plait*," to the curious crowd that environed them, she led her unresistingly to a private apartment. Here she at once ordered a glass of spirits, which he made Rachel drink and as soon as she was a little more composed, demanded of her, "Well, Rachel, what is all this about Marie?"

"Marie? Why, chile, who done talk about Miss Marie?"

"Miss Marie?" exclaimed Juanna. "You are getting polite, Rachel."

But instantly curbing her temper lest it might defeat her purpose of unravelling this mystery, which she was determined to effect, she said, in a soft, persuasive tone.

"Come, Rachel, tell me all about it; you know I am your friend and Marie's too, though she has refused to associate with me since I am placed."

"Oh, indeed I can't, Anita, I can't—I darsen't."

"Rachel, you can and must," said the quadroon calmly and firmly as she fixed her large black eyes on the woman with such an intense gaze that she fairly quailed under it. "You had better tell me than to let me find out from others, and I will know all about it somehow."

Rachel yielded, and in a broken and incoherent manner revealed all that had taken place.

"Ha! she is a slave?" exclaimed Juanna, "and the slave of a low, mean gambler; a pretty miss she to look down on the daughter of a gentlemen who was born free!"

There was such intensity of bitterness in this exclamation that it made the mulatto tremble with alarm. It was, however, only an outburst of mortified pride, which exhausted all its acerbity in expression; for when Rachel cried, in a tremor of undefined apprehension, "Oh, don't, honey, don't talk so, and she in trouble," Juanna said, calmly and almost sorrowfully:

"You are right, Rachel, I must not talk so; it is sinful. She is in trouble, and I would gladly help her if it was in my power, although she may despise me."

"Oh, no, no, Miss Juanna dear, she don't despise nobody in the 'varsal world, she don't. She loves 'em all, only you see Father Dunois didn't want to 'sociate with——" and the woman stopped with instinctive consideration.

"Speak it out, Rachel," said the quadroon, firmly—"with such as I am. Well, I have no right, perhaps to complain, and I will not; I but follow the condition which the laws of God and man impose on me. The former bid me seek a mate, and education and refinement taught me to look among the highest and noblest of the sex; while the latter compelled me to an unblest union with the man of my heart and choice. He loves me well too—my Armand does—and though



my warm, Spanish blood makes me seek pleasure in the gaieties of yonder mixed crowd, amid scenes of dancing and music, because such things are forbidden me elsewhere, yet am I true to his love. No man save he ever pressed Juanna's lips, or laid an unhallowed touch on her person."

This was said with a glowing cheek, a flashing eye, and a truthfulness of tone which showed that however degraded in caste, and through custom, the "trail of the serpent" had not yet withered those "flowers of Eden" which bloom in every true woman's soul.

"That's a fact, Miss Juanna," said Rachel, admiringly. "Yow's as good as they'll let you be, and the Great Marster up above'll judge cordingly."

"Well, never mind that now, Rachel; the question is how I can serve Marie. I understand her affairs better than you can suppose. This young Alfred Duval loves her, and she must love him, for he is one of the handsomest, bravest and richest creoles in the city; why doesn't she let him buy her and live with him?"

"She'd die fust, chile; she ain't like nobody else; 'sideas Father Dunois wouldn't let her."

"Well, Alfred is rich and generous, why doesn't he buy her and free her, so that she can go in the convent as Father Dunois wishes her to do."

"And that he would, chile, in a minnit; but Massa Rainsford won't sell her. Father Dunois is done offer him heaps of money; but he won't take it. Monsieur Alfred says he'd give fifty thousand dollars himself."

"What's the reason of this, Rachel? Fifty thousand dollars to such a man would be an immense fortune, and I know the character of Alfred Duval, and the wealth of his father and uncle well enough to believe he would actually give that sum. Surely such a man as this Rainsford cannot love her well enough himself to refuse all that money."

"He says he'll have her if he dies for it. Listen, Anita, darlin'," said Rachel, sinking her voice to a whisper; "it's horrid! I believe 'fore God she's his own daughter too!"

"His own daughter! Impossible, Rachel!" exclaimed Juanna. "There are surely no such brutes in human form. There is a mystery in all this, Rachel, and you must tell me everything you know about this man, and how you first came by Marie."

As she said this, the young quadroon leaned her elbows upon the little table which was between them, rested her face on her hands, and fixed her bright earnest black eyes upon her companion.

"Well, chile," said Rachel, as if under a spell she could not resist, "'fore God I'll tell all about it, but you must be keerful, Anita darlin', or may be you'll hang me."

"Go on, Rachel, don't fear me, I will never injure one of my race."

"Well, you see, it was maybe some thirteen or fourteen years ago—when I was younger than I is now—a yaller man was comin' to see me, and wanted to marry me. He was free and good-lookin' and had

a 'spectable standin', only folks couldn't tell how he got so much money, but that warn't none of their business, and as he was mighty free and easy with the money, why in course it warn't no objection to him, and so we got engaged. Well, you see, one night he comes to my house in a great hurry, and says he's goin' out of the city in a few days and wants me to take keer of a box what he left with me. He was mighty flusterated, as I 'membered 'arterwards, though I didn't see it then. Well, he went away, and the next day the constable come and searched my house and found the box—for I didn't think of hidin' it—and so they took that and me both to the calaboose, Lord, chile! it was full of gold and jewellery he had done stole, the villain, and fetched to me, to git an honest woman in trouble, and thar was he gone clean away and I left 'sponsible with the things upon me. I thought I should have dropped down stone dead, I did. So all night long I laid down on the floor of the calaboose and moaned. The next morning the man come what the box and the things belonged to, he was a gambler, and Tom was his waitin' man. So he questioned me and threatened me until I was nigh skeered to death; but I told him the whole truth that Tom and I was about to git married, but that I never know'd nothing about the box, 'cept he touched it."

"That's all very pretty," says he, 'but you can't fool me, one nigger will hide what another steals.'

"So I thought for sartin he'd send me to jail, and I begin to beg and offer to prove my good character, when seein' how skeered I was, he takes me one side, and says he: 'Tell me where Tom is, and maybe I'll let him off.'

"But, honey, I didn't know, and couldn't tell him in course; so arter seein' I was tellin' nuffin but the truth, he axed me if I was free."

"'Yes, master, here's my papers,' says I, for I took them with me when I was 'rested."

"What will you do for me if I'll let you off?" says he.

"Anything in the 'varsal world, master, what I can do honest," says I.

"Well," says he, 'I am going away from here for some years; I have a little girl—she's a quadroon and belongs to me, mind you—and I want you to take care of her for me. I'll rent you a house, and you must work and support her, and when I'll come back I'll do something handsome for you; but if you lose her or let anything happen to her before I come, I'll hang you, for remember I shan't dismiss this charge until I return.'

"Well, you see, Anita dear, they let me out of the calaboose, and he give Marie—then a little girl not mor'n three years old. He paid my rent six months for me, and give me some money and I never heard from him agin till three days ago, when he came and claimed Marie for his slave, and Marster Alfred was goin' to shoot him."

"And he is this same Rainsford; and you think that Marie is his daughter, and that he wishes to make her his mistress."

"Yes, that's it, chile, and it's horrid to think on."

"Rachel, she is not his daughter, I am certain; if she was, he

would not refuse fifty thousand dollars, and still be willing to dishonor her himself. There is some mystery here, and I am determined to find it out. Now go home, Rachel, and don't say a word to any one about our conversation. Stop—I'll go down stairs with you; don't be afraid of Rainsford—I'll speak to one of the police myself."

And having kindly put the mulatto in charge of a cabman whom she knew, the quadroon beauty returned to the gaieties above.

At the door of the saloon she was met by a handsome, manly looking creole, with a fine countenance, marred only by a slight sensual expression.

"Armand!" she exclaimed, holding out both hands, "you are late, *mon ami*!"

"Why, Juanna, I have been looking for you nearly an hour. They said you had gone out with some one. Ah!  *coquine*, where have you been?"

"Never mind, Armand, I wish you to take me home at once, and leave me to myself."

"Take you home and leave you alone?"

"Yes, monsieur, and give me ever so much money besides."

"What do you mean by that, Anita?"

"Armand, you are not jealous?"

"Not at all, Juanna. I have no cause I think."

"Well, do as I ask, and you shall know all hereafter. I have a good work in hand."

"One dance, then, Anita, and we go."

And gliding his arm softly around her waist as the band struck up a spirit-stirring waltz, they mingled in the gay crowd, and whirled through the mazy measure of the dance.

## CHAPTER X.

## THE GAMBLING HELL—AN ADVENTURE.

WHEN Denton had got Rainsford clear of the ball-room and of pursuit, which he did by main force, turning a corner as soon as he was out of the building, and jumping into a cab, the driver of which very promptly obeyed his order to "go ahead," he addressed the gambler with some sternness—

"What the devil do you mean for striking a gal and kicking up a muss with the wimmen when I'm with you?"

"Pshaw! she's nothing but a nigger," replied the other, "and I ought to kill her for what she's done."

"Well," said Denton, whose honest indignation was checked by the fact that an outright quarrel with Rainsford might defeat his views in regard to him, "it's none of my business, nohow. I don't think much of you for hitting a wench, anyhow; but of course I tuk you out of it as you was with me. Which way are we steering now?"

"You stood by me like a man, Denton, and I'll remember it," said Rainsford, whose temper had cooled down, and who was now intent upon fleecing his friend.

"Well, as for that," said Denton, whose greatest vanity was perhaps in his personal prowess, "it was no great things; but if you had been in a real 'knock down and drag out' skrimmage now, you might have seen how Devil's Dick would 've stood by old Satan himself if he happened to be in company with him. But, I say what shall we do? I'm in for a little fun to-night."

"Why," said Rainsford, a little cautiously, "if you can spare me another hundred, I think I could get even, or maybe win a pile, and you might try your luck too, and stand a chance to get back all you've lost."

"Well, see here, stranger," said Dick, squaring himself around in the cab, "I'm agreeable; but mind you, no tricks. I ain't goin' back to that same place either, for I've a notion they drugged me there before, and I might get rambunctious at the very sight of the citter; and I ain't goin' to tetch a drop of licker neither, that's gospel!"



"All right," replied the other, with inward satisfaction. "I'll take you to the right place this time. I was deceived in the other; it is a devilish hole, as I found out afterwards. They skinned me deep."

Whether Denton believed him or not he gave no sign, but permitted Rainsford to direct the driver where to take them. The cab soon stopped at the door of one of the most splendid halls in the Crescent City. Entering by a side door they ascended by a flight of steps and rang the bell. Having been duly scanned through a small square lattice in the door, they were admitted into an ante-room, where one of the proprietors, to whom Rainsford was known, met them. Denton was introduced, and the pair were invited into a large and splendid saloon, where a crowd of well-dressed men were playing that favorite American game, *faro*.

Rainsford managed to make a sign, and whisper a word to the proprietor as they went.

"How much?" inquired the latter.

"Perhaps a thousand or two," answered Rainsford.

"It won't do," replied the other, in a tone of contempt at the amount named. "Besides, we are 'on the square' to-night; got some big 'sports' here to-night; go along in, and try if you cannot do better next time."

The reader will understand by this brief colloquy that Rainsford had offered to sacrifice his companion to the keeper of the hall for a share in the spoils, but that the latter had declined, first, because the amount which the boatman was supposed to have was too small, but principally because some rich gamblers were playing against the game, and that it was necessarily fair.

Baffled in this attempt, Rainsford determined to try his own luck, and turning to Denton, who, if he noticed the whispered conference between the two, did not appear to remark it, he borrowed a hundred dollars, and sat down at one of the tables to play. At first he had considerable good luck and won; but pressing his stakes desperately, he experienced an adverse turn, which soon swept away his pile. Denton also played, and, as to the result, he won.

"I'm broke, Dick," said the gambler; "give me another hundred."

"Certainly," replied the other, handing the amount in the checks of the game.

"Won't you take a drink?" asked Rainsford, as he received them.

"No! and don't you ax me agin," said the other, in a low emphatic voice.

Rainsford, however, called for brandy, and drank freely himself and then commenced playing again. He lost several bets, however, in quick succession, and striking the table a blow with his fist, as he muttered an oath, he knocked over and scattered the counters of a young creole, who had taken a seat but a few moments before at the table, and whose fierce black eye, notwithstanding his youthful appearance, bespoke neither a tame or gentle spirit.

"*Sacre!* why do you knock my chips about so?" demanded he.

"D—n it, didn't you see it was an accident?" said Rainsford, sullenly.

"Don't d—n me, sir!" said the creole, half rising.

"And why not? D—n you!" exclaimed the gambler, more than usually excited by his losses and by drink.

Quick as thought the young man struck him a light blow on the face with the back of his hand, and springing two paces back, placed his hand upon a weapon in his bosom. The gambler would doubtless, under the irritation, have sprung upon him, but Denton who was perfectly cool, and who, as he expressed it, would have backed the devil in a skrimmage, if he happened to be his companion, caught him.

"Stop! don't you see he's armed? You shall have fair play when Devil's Dick is about anyhow."

The proprietor and several of the guests interfered, however, and the belligerents were kept apart.

"Let me go!" exclaimed Rainsford, struggling in the iron-like grip of the boatman. "Don't you see he struck me? I will have satisfaction."

"That's precisely what you shall have, *mon ami*," said the young creole, with the utmost sangfroid, as he stroked his black, glossy moustache with his small gloved hand.

"Will you, monsieur, have the kindness to act for me? Any gentleman's weapon is the same to me."

This was addressed to a fine, manly-looking creole, who was no other than Armand, the lover of Juanna, who, having escorted his wayward mistress home, and left her as requested, to her own plans, had come hither for the purpose of indulging in a little play.

"Dick, you'll stand by, won't you?" said Rainsford, whose blood was up.

"Sartinly," was the reply.

"Let it be with knives," whispered the gambler; "I know these Frenchies, they won't stand close quarters, and perhaps he'll back out."

Denton paid no seeming attention to the suggestion, but stepping aside with Armand, they held a short whispered conference, in which it was agreed that they should adjourn to a *salle d'armes* in the vicinity, where a room often used for similar purposes could be procured, and the affair settled.

Two others were invited as witnesses by Armand and readily accepted by Denton, who "warn't afeard of a whole team himself," as he expressed it.

The party then retired, but not before Rainsford had taken occasion to step aside and swallow nearly a tumbler full of brandy, and the rest of the company returned as quietly to their cards as though their fellow-beings had left them on a jaunt of pleasure instead of with the fatal purpose of taking each other's lives, a duel in New Orleans being too common an affair to create any extraordinary sensation.

The party soon arrived at the Salle d'armes, where, after a few words from Armand to the proprietor, they were shown up into a large room, which was quickly and brilliantly lighted up. It was empty of everything like furniture, but the floor was well sanded, and around the walls hung gloves, masks, foils and several keen, well-guarded duelling swords. Through the sand several dark spots were visible on the floor, which told of previous encounters. Armand locked the door, and handing the key to one of the gentlemen who came as witness, he took Denton one side.

In the meantime, Rainsford paced the room, regarding with emotion, first the stains upon the floor and then his young slight-looking opponent. The latter, with a lighted cigarette in his mouth, which he puffed with great nonchalance, had taken a foil from the wall, the temper of which he seemed to be trying by bending it against the floor. As he stood, with his tight-fitting frock, closely buttoned, his taper waist, but full-developed chest, his fine flashing eyes denoting high courage, and his handsome face, to which the rather heavy black moustache gave a manly air, notwithstanding his evident youth, he was a model at once of elegance and grace, an Adonis in form and feature, but none the less, it might be, a dangerous enemy in skill and courage.

"We have the choice of weapons, though we wish no advantage," said Armand to Denton.

"Well, only do the fair thing, that's all I ask," said the boatman.

"Will you take small swords?" asked the other.

"That's an unlikely weapon for a man what don't understand it."

"Pistols, then?"

"Well, that's fairer. Let me speak to him a minit."

After a few words with Rainsford, Dick returned.

"He wants bowie knives, though I hardly think it fair to that little fellow there."

"Knives! It cannot be—they are not the weapons of a gentleman," said Armand.

"Well, if we had only ground enough, and could get a couple of good rifles, I think it would be about the fair thing," said Denton.

Rainsford, who had in the meantime approached and whose courage was evaporating, when he found that Denton was not likely to support him in his attempt to back the young creole out by the choice of bowie knives, here broken in,

"I say, let us take bowies—close quarters is what I like."

"Silence, sir! You have nothing to do here; and if you interfere again, it is with me you must deal, do you understand?" exclaimed Armand, fiercely, as he advanced a step, and broken down the last vestige of a bully in Rainsford. "I say that knives are not the weapons of a gentleman!"

"And I say," exclaimed a shrill, clear voice, "that they are not the weapons of a woman!"

In an instant all eyes were turned to the young creole, who, wiping away the moustaches from his lip with one hand, lifted his hat with the

other, and shook down masses of black wavy hair, revealing the face of a beautiful female.

"A woman, sure enough, by G—d!" exclaimed Rainsford.

"A gal, by jingo!" said the boatman.

"Juanna, what means this masquerade?" demanded Armand.

"Only the first act of my plot. I wanted to know this man, and found out from the cabman who had drove him where he had gone. I sought him, but did not expect to find you or exactly to get in a duel. So come along with these two messieurs here, and let us get some supper; I am hungry. Come along, Armand, unless my friend there still wants a shot at me."

"Bah!" said Armand, looking contemptuously at the gambler. The bully, however, had all left Rainsford, and he very quietly departed, with the remark, "Of course he couldn't fight a woman!" accompanied by the boatman, who was politely and cordially saluted by the laughing party, who remained a few minutes, and then went off to seek a supper.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### DEVIL'S DICK SHOWS A TALENT FOR DIPLOMACY.

"WELL, Bob Rainsford, you ar' hoss among the gals, anyhow," said the boatman, when he had left the Salle d'armes. "Fust you hits one of them at the ball, which I must say was unmanly, and next, all on the same night, one of 'em follows you up, and would have stuck you like a pig, I've a notion, if you'd only let have her own way about fighting, for I see'd that in her eye. What's out, man?"

Rainsford, who had no wish to offend Denton, first, because he knew him to be "game to the back bone," as he would have expressed it, and next, because he believed there was money to be had by humoring him, replied in a better humor than he would otherwise have done to any unauthorized interference with his affairs,

"Blast me, Dick, if I know what this trick means. I never saw the gal before, except at the ball to-night; and what she wants with me, unless she thinks I have a big pile of money, I don't know."

"Well, what made you hit that yaller woman at the ball to-night? Come, I've been a friend to you, Bob; I've lent you three hundred dollars to-night, which in course I expect you to pay back, and I helped you away when they would have nabbed you. But I don't like that conduct no way you can fix it; so if you want me to back you up any longer, you must just explain yourself."

Now it happened that Rainsford was counting on Denton's friendship or assistance. Notwithstanding all his resources, with the addition of his share in the spoils when the boatman had been plucked, he was nevertheless "strapped"—*ie.*, short of funds. When notice had been served on him of the process which had been taken out for the purpose of rescuing Marie from his grasp if possible, he determined to employ one of the shrewdest and ablest lawyers in New Orleans, and had been obliged to pay a large fee in hand. Why he did not choose to accept the large amount offered by Father Dunois, or the still more considerable one which he knew he could get for the transfer of his title, is a mystery to be revealed in the course of our narrative.

Brute as he was, it was seemingly impossible that even a passion for the girl, whom he had seen but twice since she had grown up, could induce him to forego so large a sum of money. But the influences which control the human heart are inexplicable, and if motives of revenge against Alfred, who had so baffled and cowed him, were strong in his bosom, it was just that sort of feeling which, with a man like him, would be a sufficient superinducing reason for any sort of desperation, even to making sacrifice altogether, contrary to his usual nature. He was that character of a man often found in the world and particularly in the south-western portion of the United States, who would lie, swindle and cheat to procure money, which he squandered on every passing whim, and yet with whom the love of gold was subservient to his hatred and revenge.

Rainsford wanted money then, and the boatman seemed a providence to him, not only in this respect, but in another of scarcely secondary importance to his pecuniary necessities. He knew Denton to be bold and fearless, prompt to back his companion for the time being in a "scrimmage," regardless of the consequences, as he had shown twice on that night, and he supposed him to be, if not as great a villain as himself, at least unscrupulous enough for his purposes. With this double motive, then, he curbed his disposition so far as to seek to conciliate his companion, and even to pretend to give him his entire confidence.

"Well, you see, Dick," said he, "I own a gal—a pretty likely one as you ever saw. I bought her with her mother about fourteen years ago, before I went out trading to the Choctaw Nation, and her mother died, and so I paid a free woman to care of her and bring her up for me. Well, when I came back, about three months ago, I met her in the street, grown up, and pretty as a racehorse, and just went to speak to her, when one of those d—d Frenchmen slips up and knocks me down from behind, and carries the gal off. I was a good while getting well of the blow, and before I did I had to go up to Little Rock because of a partner of mine who died there leaving some funds. So when I got back again last week, I hunted the woman up to claim my slave, and who should I find at her house but the same d—d Frenchman cheek by jowl with her? I was pretty mad, I tell you; and was about kicking him out, pistol and all—for he tried to scare

me with one—when he calls a policeman, and after saying something in their cursed lingo, they threatened to take me to the calaboose. Knowing there was no chance of fair play, among those Frenchies, and that I had the law of them, I agreed to go if he would, and so we did. But before I could get a warrant out to take my nigger, they got out another, and put her under charge of another d—d old Frenchman until I could prove my title. Well, it was all the contrivance of that yaller devil you saw at the ball, and I ought to kill her."

This statement, garbled as it was, in connexion with what he had heard from Alfred, rather enlightened Denton, who was anxious now to hear more, as it might possibly give him an opportunity of helping the friend of Harry.

"Well, if she's trying to cheat you out of your own, that's enough to make a feller savage; but I wouldn't have hit her. What are you going to do now?"

"Fight it out, d—n them all. They offer me lots of money to sell her—that is, an old priest did, who has educated her in my absence, as if he had any right to teach a nigger to read and write."

"How much did they offer?" asked Denton.

"Well, they talked big; but I suppose I might get four or five thousand dollars, for the young fellow is rich, and has taken a liking to her."

"And why don't you sell her?"

"I'd see them d—d first! I'll have her myself, if I die for it—I've a reason."

"Well, well," said Denton, who did not wish to show too much interest, lest he might be suspected of a motive, "every feller has a right to do what he pleases with his own."

During this conversation they had been driven back, by direction of Rainsford, to the gambling-house, from which they had been absent about an hour.

"What's this?" asked the boatman, when they had got out of the place; "you don't want to go back to that hell? I should think you'd lost enough to-night."

"Oh, come along! One good turn will get us out! Don't back out now."

"Us?" said Denton. "Why I've not lost anything, leastways to-night, 'cept what I lent you."

"And do you think I won't pay you?" asked the gambler, with well-simulated indignation.

"I don't say so," replied Dick; "but I don't want to play any more to-night."

Rainsford saw that his companion was perfectly sober—in fact, all his attempts to make him drunk had proved unavailing—and hence it was necessary to be cautious.

"Well, I didn't think there was any back-out in you, Dick," said he, "What do you mean?"

"Who ever saw Devil's Dick back out?" demanded the other, with equally well-feigned anger.

"Well, I didn't say there was; but you daren't make a night of it."

"Here's in for you, old hoss!" exclaimed Devil's Dick. "I'm a ringtailed roarer, and not afeard of snakes!"

"Then just lend me a couple of hundred, and let's go in and bust them up!" said Rainsford, delighted at the humor which his companion assumed.

"Stop, there, Bob; I don't like to back out from a feller when I'm once in, but that makes five hundred. And suppose you lose, when am I to have it back?"

"To-morrow, if you wish."

"Well, but how'll you raise it?"

"Why, didn't I tell you I could get thousands for my gal?"

"Well, you see, Bob Rainsford, I lost a lot of money at that cursed hole you took me to first, and was pretty nigh done up, only I've got another big pile unexpected like, and I ain't goin' to be broke agin. Just give me your fist that if you can't pay me in three days you'll sell the gal and give me my money back, and I'm your man."

"Done!" said Rainsford, who cared very little for a verbal promise without witnesses, and felt that he was getting the money cheap. Indeed, he made a mental reservation that he would yet make Denton drunk and win that and as much more as he could from him.

The play was still going on when they returned, and only by a casual question from the gamekeeper and a slight glance of inquiry from some of the players was an interest evinced in the result of the affair, which it might be supposed had come off. Rainsford who did not care to attract an unusual attention, merely remarked that the matter had been amicably settled, and quietly sat down to play. In an hour and a half, however, he was broken, while, strange to say, the boatman, his companion, who had played on carelessly, was largely a winner. He had watched Rainsford coolly and closely, and when he saw him lose his last stake he handed in his own checks for the money he had won, amounting to some six or seven hundred dollars.

"You ain't going to break up that way, Dick," said the gambler; "give me a couple of hundred more and I'll get a turn on them yet."

"Let us get up and take a horn first," said Denton, quietly pocketing the notes which had been handed to him. To this Rainsford cheerfully agreed. When they had stepped aside and drank, Denton observing great moderation in his tipple, his companion said to him:

"Come now, Dick, you had a run, but you don't know how to play. Suppose you let me take five hundred, and rush it between us."

"No you don't," said Denton jocularly; "you are in too bad luck for me, I'm just about as even now as I'll get all night."

"Well, lend it to me, then; I swear I'll pay you every cent of it back."

"That's sockin' rather deep, Bob, and with what I lost last week I can't well afford it."

"Didn't I tell you I'd pay you back if I had to sell the gal, by G—! Come don't forsake a fellow now; that's not true grit."

"Look here, Bob Rainsford, I'll jest tell you what—as for grit, that ar critter ain't alive what's my master. I an't rich, and I've stood by you to-night and lent you five hundred dollars on your word. You've hard luck, that's true, and may be if I lend you five hundred more, you may git out; but human nature is mighty onsartin, and life too for that matter; so I'll do it on one condition, and not without, and that is, you must jest give me a bit of writin', so that I'll have a claim upon the gal if you don't pay me back in a week."

"Make it seven hundred and I will," said Rainsford, who had no intention of giving any obligation of real value but expected now that Dick had begun to drink, that he would be able to arrange the matter before the night was out to his own satisfaction.

"All the same, so as you give me the writin'."

"Well, let's take a drink, and then we'll get pen, ink and paper in the other room."

"No more licker till we fix this, Bob; go along and make the writin', and here's the spoons."

Rainsford went into the next room, where the boatman followed him, but not before he had touched one of the company on the shoulder, and beckoned him aside. This was our friend Armand, who, having finished his supper, and taken his adventurous mistress home, had returned to the gambling-saloon to meet any inquiry as to the result of the affair.

Without exactly understanding what such an invitation meant, the creole accepted it instantly.

"I say, stranger," said Denton, "you seem to be a clever fellow, and good grit too. I hope you've no hard feelings about that little skrimmage awhile ago?"

"Not the slightest," said Armand, who was amused with the character of the boatman.

"Well, then, I want to ax a small favor of you. I've lent my partner thar five hundred dollars to-night and he's so all fired ram bunkshus he wants more and I want him to give me a bit of writin' about a yaller gal that belongs to him, that'll hold good, so I can git my money back in case of accident. And though I've been keepin' company with him to-night, I wouldn't trust him much futher than I can sling a bull by the tail; so I want you to fix it all right for me, do you understand?"

"Certainly," said Armand, over whose mind flashed a gleam of sudden intelligence, for he had had an explanation with Juanna before leaving, and heard briefly the story of Marie.

Rainsford was somewhat astonished to see Armand, whom he had not noticed at the gaming-table since his return, nor had he heard the conversation between him and the boatman. So when the creole addressed him with urbanity, spoke carelessly of the little affair, and remarked, with seeming indifference, that "their friend here had asked him to draw up a little written memorandum, a mere matter of

form he presumed, which he would be happy to do if monsieur desired it," the gambler seemed to entertain no suspicion, but readily yielded his seat at the writing-desk, to Armand who, with a few rapid dashes of his pen, drew up an instrument for him to sign, while Denton was carefully counting out his money.

Whether anxiety to get hold of the cash, or whether the peculiar French caligraphy in which it was written was too difficult to read, he merely gave it a glance, and signed it. Had he been more particular, he would have seen with surprise that the name and description of Marie was accurately filled out, though he had not seen them; and notwithstanding his eagerness for play, he might have paused, and would perhaps have refused to execute the instrument.

"This only wants another witness and monsieur may hand over the funds," said Armand, signing his own name. He called a person from the other room, and Rainsford, nodding an affirmative to the question whether the instrument was his act and deed, eagerly grasped the money which Denton handed him.

The second witness, who signed his name Marx, was a little Jew with eyes so bright that they sparkled through his green goggles, and a remarkably large nose of a peculiar copperish hue. As Rainsford went towards the other room, he followed him, and twitching him by the sleeve, said something to him in a low tone.

"The d—l!" said the gambler; "how do you know anything about it?"

"Never mind; meet me to-morrow; here's my address, and we may both profit by it; anyhow, you had better come."

The gambler put the card silently in his pocket and proceeded to the table, where he soon became deeply absorbed in play.

As Denton was about following him, Armand laid his hand on his shoulder and said:

"Now, my friend, I wish you to do me a favor."

"For sartin, stranger, anything in my power," said the boatman.

"I wish you to let me keep this writing in my possession, at least for the present. I am a gentleman, a man of honor. Here is my card."

"Well, stranger, that's rather an onlikely request from one I don't hardly know; that paper's all I've got to show for twelve hundred dollars, but I shouldn't mind trustin' you for that, only there's somethin' more in it maybe than you know of."

"Exactly so, and I will not seek an explanation from you to-night," said Armand; "only do you know Alfred Duval?"

"I've seen him once; he's Harry's friend."

"Well, I am his friend; will you let me keep the paper, and call on me to-morrow?"

"Yes, keep it, and let's get along to the other room; that scamp might suspect somethin'."

We will not detain the reader over the remaining scenes in the gambling-house, except to remark that when the game closed it was daylight, and Rainsford had lost very nearly the whole sum he had obtained from Denton.

He had become much intoxicated also, and exacting a promise from the boatman to meet him that afternoon, he went off to his room to sleep off the effects of his excitement and lay plans for the future.

Armand and the Jew had departed soon after signing the writing.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MARIE—HER NEW FRIEND—FEMALE SYMPATHY.

THE reader is already aware that by a judicial order Marie had been placed under the charge of a respectable gentleman, whose general benevolence, as well as his regard for Father Dunois, made him willing to extend his protection to the persecuted girl, and afford her an asylum. In the house of M. Dufour she was treated with great kindness and consideration; her apartment was comfortably furnished, the attendance upon her wants was careful, and nothing reminded her of that inferiority of caste which, under the peculiar circumstances surrounding her, she might be supposed to feel more sensitively than ever.

At the wish of Father Dunois all communication between Marie and Rachel, whose weakness rather than her fidelity he feared, had ceased. The young girl felt some natural regrets at this abrupt parting with one who had cherished her childhood and youth so fondly, but she missed her society the less as she was favored with that of her guardian's daughter, a beautiful and intellectual girl.

Sophie Dufour possessed every charm and accomplishment which could render a female not only attractive but beloved. Her mind was of the highest order and richly cultivated, yet her manners were so simple and natural, her goodness so perfect, that the humblest felt at ease in her presence. She was just the friend Marie needed, and her noble heart, untrammelled by mere conventionalities, responded generously to the demand for sympathy which the case of the lovely and innocent quadroon presented. At a glance she read the character of her protegee; it needed not Father Dunois' assurances to convince her of the purity and refinement of the being thrown thus helplessly on her charity, as it were.

Taking her at once by the hand, she said:

"Come, Marie, have no fears, I will be your friend."

"Many thanks, dear lady?"

"Call me by a simple name, Marie; say Sophie if you please, or sister, if you will love me and put confidence in me."

"I—call you sister?" said Marie, in an almost startled tone.

"And why not, poor child?" said Sophie, laying her hand calmly

on the girl, and looking into her eyes with the tranquillising power of kindness. "Why not? are we not all children of one Father, sisters in affliction?"

"Affliction, lady? can you be unhappy—so beautiful and so good?"

"Were your too partial flattery true, it is no shield against sorrow."

"And have you known sorrow, dear sister?" said Marie, timidly and affectionately.

"Great ones, Marie; it is but a few years since I lost a fond and loving mother."

"Oh! that was a grief; but then she lives in heaven, where you will one day meet her. I never had a mother."

The despondency of this sad wail touched Sophie's heart. She meant, by opening her own sorrows, to offer sympathy and consolation. Nor did she falter at this unexpected reply.

"But the Holy Virgin will take you for her child, Marie, if you are good. Do you forget that she is the mother of the unhappy?"

"Oh! it has been the hope of my life to dedicate it to her service; but now——" She paused, and her eyes filled with tears.

"And now, my dear Marie, let us hope the impediment is but temporary, and that all will be right in a little while. Father Dunois, as well as my own father, express much confidence that it will be so, and then you shall not go away from me any more to run risks, but stay here alongside of me, until we both go hand-in-hand to the altar and become sisters in duty as well as affection."

"What! you become a nun, lady?"

"And why not, Marie? Could we do better than dedicate our lives to heaven?"

"Yes, but I thought that one so rich and beautiful——"

"Was fit only for this world; eh, Marie?"

"Ah! no, not that; but then you must be so beloved, so happy in the affection of those that love you, and perhaps," said she timidly, "there is one who some time might——"

"I understand you, Marie; but there, too, alas! my hopes are in heaven. Listen: I was beloved, and gave my whole heart—fully—freely—for she was worthy of it. One evening he resented some real or fancied slight to myself at a ball from a man he should have despised, and who, it was afterwards ascertained, sought the occasion to fix a quarrel on him, and the next morning, young, noble-hearted, beautiful and brave, he fell the victim of a cruel and barbarous custom at the hands of a professed duelist."

"Dear sister," said Marie, passing around her and looking kindly in her face, "you have, indeed, suffered more than I have. I, too, have loved, and hopelessly, as you must know; but Alfred lives."

"Alfred! What Alfred?"

"Duval," answered Marie, in a low voice. "Why, he is the brother of my Henri: where do you know him? But stop, now I remember, Father Dunois told me enough to enable me to guess the whole. Marie, you must never leave me; I must guard you against your own heart as well as your enemies."

"Lady! I am a quadroon as well as a——"

"There, that will do; leave out the ugly word. All that has not prevented you from being beautiful and having a soft heart."

"But, lady," said Marie, drawing back with pain in every feature as well as in her voice, and a woman's true dignity in her mien, "do you doubt me?"

"No, poor wounded bird," said Sophie, soothingly, "you are too good and Alfred is too honorable for me to harbor a thought of evil; but you will be happier in a convent, and Alfred has a worldly career to fulfil."

"Do you think he will forget me? Men—true and noble men, like Henri's brother, seldom forget their first love; it is cherished as something holy through life, an amulet against evil, a secret charm to exercise impure and unworthy thoughts, a talisman, whose power for good is never lost—to throw on earth."

"And in heaven?" asked Marie, her face glowing with enthusiasm.

"They meet again, where 'is neither marrying nor giving in marriage.'"

"Dear girl!" said the poor girl, kissing her hands, "you are as good as you are beautiful. I will never leave you if I can help it."

Sweet slumbers steeped the quadroon's senses that night, and beatific visions hovered about her couch which was placed in an apartment joining that of her friend. Whence do dreams come? Are they confused and disjointed memories of the past or spirit revelations of the future? Alas! who can tell? Speculation finds no basis to build on, and reason no premises on which to rear a theory! Marie dreamed. She was not herself, but a little girl playing in a flower garden with Rachel—no, it was another black woman. How she chased the butterflies and pulled the flowers and romped—how happy she was. Then her attendant grew very angry, spoke to her and took her rudely by the arms, until she was so frightened that she lost all consciousness, and the sunshine and flowers and the happiness vanished.

When she was conscious, she was floating on the dark waters, in a great, curious house, and the people all stared at her, and some were kind to her; but one who seemed to take care of her was often harsh and angry, and made her cry; and then she was in a great city—house—houses—and then she had another garden of her own, but not so large or so pretty; and her attendant came back; but no, this time it was over, and then her dream-angel shook his wings over her, and lo! the future! What scene is this? A church, an altar, and Father Dunois stands smilingly before her. She is dressed in white, with orange blossoms and a bridal wreath. It is thus that maidens are dedicated to Heaven, she is about to become a nun. Stifling a sigh of regret that rose from the depth of her heart, she turned to look for Sophie, her sister-friend, in whose sympathy she is to find strength, and lo, it is Alfred who takes her hand! With a start, she awoke and the kind face of Sophie Durant was bending over her.



"You have been dreaming, Marie, and if I may judge, not altogether unpleasant visions."

Marie's only reply was a deep blush, as she drew the covering which her start had displaced, closer around her.

"Stop, child," said Sophie, stooping down, and taking hold of a ribbon which was fastened around the quadroon's neck. "What is this?"

"I do not know," answered Marie; "I have always had it."

"Why it is a small French coin; and here are two letters, M. E. What can it be? This may be of importance to you."

"So Father Dunois thought; but we could make nothing of it."

"And if there is not a large, beautiful strawberry on your arm. Why, Marie, what a pure white skin you have!"

Marie blushed deeply, and drew the cover closely around her.

"There, child, these things may be important some day," said Sophie, quietly, not noticing her embarrassment. "Now, get up, and you may have your coffee in my room."

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CREOLE BELLE—NEW-FOUND RELATIVES.

It was the evening hour, and the setting sun shed its rays upon the broad bosom of the Mississippi, until its smooth waters gleamed like molten gold! The breeze was too light even to ripple their surface, and scarce sufficed to rustle the leaves on the orange trees which fringed the river's banks. It was the gentlest breathing of a zephyr—perfumed and pleasant. Beautiful villas bordered the coast, and rich gardens, blooming with exotics and rarest flowers gave evidence of the luxuriant beauty of the Sunny South.

Along the paths of one of these, enamelled with pebbles and white shells from the sea-beach, wandered a young girl in "maiden meditation," but I dare not say "fancy free," for there was in her manner and appearance the evidence of mental preoccupation—whether pleasant or perplexing the reader will be allowed to judge for himself. Now she sauntered along listlessly—then she started forward, and anon she stooped to pluck a flower, which she arranged in a tasteful bouquet. Her cheek glowed, and her dark eyes sparkled, and a soft smile played around her exquisite mouth. She was about the middle height for woman, with a slight and graceful form, raven hair, bright starry eyes, and of a lustrous, soul-entrancing beauty.

As she wandered along she heard a footstep upon the gravel behind her, and with an arch smile turned to meet the intruder.

"Ah, monsieur, you prefer flowers to wine, and have come to rob me of my bouquet."

"I am sure such a prize is worth more than a game of billiards," said Harry Berford, for it was he who had been spending the day with his friend Alfred, and in the home-like ease of creole manners had strayed off alone unnoticed into the garden, while the other gentleman sought the billiard-room.

"Oh, if you place no higher value on it than that, I must reserve it for some one who will," said the lady playfully.

"If I evinced any want of appreciation for the precious gift, my tongue sadly belied my heart," exclaimed Berford, gallantly.

"Heart, monsieur? Have gentlemen hearts?"

"Kentuckians have, fair lady."

"Ah! true," said Julie Du Val, in a different tone, for she was not a bit of a coquette, and though playful and gay in her disposition, she shrank instinctively from the very approaches of that unprofitable, not to say unmaidenly pastime; "true, monsieur, brave and gallant ones. See, these are the plains of Chalmette; what New Orleans girl can ever forget the men who fought there? The very name of Jackson is adopted in our families."

It would have required some one more stoical and far less chivalrous than a Kentuckian to resist the fascination of such words from lips so sweet and delivered with such true and beautiful enthusiasm.

"And what better meed for brave deeds, fair lady, than such praise, and such memories? I was not born then, but my father fought there, and the spot is doubly hallowed for me."

"Your father!"

"Yes, and after the victory remained long enough in New Orleans to win and carry off a fair prize, which amply repaid him for all hardships."

"Ah!"

"My mother was a creole."

"Then you are a half creole yourself. Here, you may have my flowers, for your father's sake," added Julie, blushing. "But you have not told me the name," she continued; "perhaps you may have kindred among us."

"I fear not. I understand there were two orphan sisters; my mother's marriage separated them, and we understood that my aunt died childless some years ago, though there had been no direct communication since the first year or two after my mother went to Kentucky."

"But your mother's name was—"

"Marie Fleuriot."

"Marie Fleuriot!" Certainly I have heard that name before! Come with me, monsieur Berford; my mother and Sophie are in the summer-house yonder—I must tell them."

The gay and happy girl danced on ahead, while Berford followed more quietly.

"Oh, ma mere! Sophie! Monsieur Berford's mother was a creole—Marie Fleuriot. Where have I heard that name?"

"Did you say that your mother's name was Marie Fleuriot, monsieur?" asked Sophie Dufour, turning very pale.

"Yes, miss," replied Harry.

"Your father married in New Orleans one of two orphan sisters?"

"Yes."

"Then you are my cousin, monsieur," said Sophie, rising and offering her hand and cheek with a blush.

Harry accepted the proffered salute with grace and feeling.

"Be seated, monsieur," said Madame Du Val. "It is pleasant indeed to find you related to one whom we all love so much as our dear Sophie. I knew your mother well, and it is strange when I heard your name I did not recognize it at once. She is alive and well, I hope?"

"She lives, madame, but is bowed down with grief by a sad event, of which, I think, you have already heard."

"Yes; Alfred told me. But do you not think your sister may yet be alive?"

"I hope not, madam," said Harry Berford, in a voice so changed, so deep and intense that it startled Julie.

"My cousin," said Sophie Dufour, "do you not think God is able to protect the good and innocent under any trials?"

"It were impious to doubt it."

Madame Duval changed the topic, and after a few moments made some excuse to leave the summer-house with her daughter, and the new found relatives were alone.

"My dear cousin," said Sophie, with all the noble frankness of her nature, "I am so happy to have found you, and have so much to say to you when you come to see me in the city. I have been almost desolate of late years, with no relation but my dear father to love me. And how often I have thought of your mother and wished to hear about her."

"And that she would love you I am right sure."

"But have you really given up all hope that your sister lives? Were you not wrong to wish her dead? May not the good God have guarded her and shielded her from evil?"

"That were a blessing too great to hope for."

"We never know what blessings are in store for us, my cousin. Had your sister any birth-mark by which she might be recognized?"

"Yes; a berry on her left arm."

"A strawberry?" asked Sophie, almost breathlessly.

"I cannot say, without reference to a memorandum which I have at my room. It was a well defined berry. But why do you ask?" demanded he in some agitation.

It required all Sophie's self-possession to control her own feelings, under the suspicion which rose involuntarily in her thoughts. And yet it might be nothing—less than nothing. Mastering her emotion, she said,

"Cousin, do not let an idle—no, not exactly an idle—but a very improbable surmise, which should not have found such ready utterance, disturb you or excite vain hopes. Yet I will deal frankly with you, only give me until to-morrow. Come to see me at my own

home, and bring the memorandum of which you spoke, and I will tell you what I meant. Will you do so—will you have so much confidence in me?"

"I will," said Harry. "I have only known you a few hours, but I would trust you with my life or my honor. I will even repress the wild thoughts your question suggests until you bid me indulge them."

"Thanks! many thanks, my dear cousin. I am so happy to feel that we shall indeed be friends. But come, a young lady must not stay out too late, even with a new-found relative," said she, playfully. "So let us join our friends; they will be ready to receive you still more kindly than ever."

## CHAPTER XIV.

### JUANNA'S PLOT.

THE reader will be at no loss to account for the readiness with which Armand complied with Denton's request to do the little piece of writing between him and Rainsford, nor for the interest he displayed in the matter when he remembers that Juanna had undertaken, from a wild impulse of generosity, to interfere in Marie's behalf. She had explained her views, and detailed what she knew to her friend, who being attached to Alfred Duval, took a ready interest in the whole affair. His appearance in the gambling-house had been already noticed; his surprise at the request of Denton was hard to suppress, though with tact he assumed the task, and actually wrote a *bona fide* bill of sale, with a clause of redemption, which, as we have seen, was duly signed and delivered. Fearing to attempt an explanation at the time with the boatman, who he had no doubt was acting under the instructions of Alfred, although the reader is aware that Dick was diplomatising "on his own hook," and unwilling to risk so precious a document to the chances of Denton's sobriety, Armand conceived the idea of keeping the instrument himself, and getting the boatman to call on him the next day.

About noon Armand entered a handsomely furnished apartment, one of a suite of rooms on Carondelet street, where he found Juanna reclining on a rich ottoman, in attractive *dishabille*, looking rosy, voluptuous and beautiful.

"*Eh bien! mon ami*, you are late this morning."

"Yes, I did not leave that cursed gambling-house until nearly daylight, and have had something to attend to this morning."

"Why, what detained you at the gambling-house? You said you



were only going back for half an hour. You did not get into another duel, I hope," said Juanna, laughing.

"No, but I met your antagonist and his friend, and was called on to perform a singular service, which may add another scene to your plot."

"What was that, pray?"

"Why, to draw up a writing giving Denton a lien on Marie for the loan of twelve hundred dollars to that scoundrel. See, there it is. I have persuaded him to let me keep it lest that rascal might get it away from him while he is drinking. It is a regular bill of sale, with a clause of redemption at a very short date."

"That was a bright thought, my friend," said Juanna, joyfully. "We will baffle that fellow yet, and free poor Marie from his persecution, though she may despise me."

"You have a noble, good heart, Anita, and no one shall despise you."

"Oh, never mind that, Armand," said the quadroon, quickly. "And so you had the bill of sale recorded?"

"Yes, with some difficulty, though, about the other witness, whose address I forgot to ask. I promised, however, to find him and bring him down."

"What was his name?"

"Here, don't you see? Marx."

"And you don't know him?"

"Never saw him before."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Juanna, gaily. "*Mon pauvre Armand*, you are not quite so bright as I said. You should have applied to me."

"What do you mean?"

"*Me voila, Marx!*" said she, taking from behind her, on the ottoman, a pair of green goggles with a false nose attached, which she put on.

"The d—l!" exclaimed the astonished creole.

"No, monsieur, not the d—l, but a pretty woman, at your service," said she, removing the disguise. "And now, my friend," she continued, "the plot becomes interesting. Did you notice me whisper to this man last night?"

"I now remember something of the kind. What was it about?"

"Only an invitation to meet me here at one o'clock to-day."

"Juanna?"

"Bah! don't be jealous and foolish at the same time. It is the Jew, Marx, whom he expects to find, and who he believes knows a little too much of his private affairs; but stay, you can remain and hear the whole, if you will. Go into the next room and keep quiet; you will find a nice little *déjeuner à la fourchette*, which you can discuss in the mean time."

"Yes, but I expect Denton here every minute; I took the liberty of making an appointment with him at your rooms."

"Well, if he will only arrive before my friend, he can breakfast

with you. He is a jewel, though a rough one. Two witnesses, also will be better than one."

A rap was given at the street door, just as she finished speaking and Juanna, reconnoitring through the blinds, found it was the boatman, whom she admitted at once.

Dick Denton was received very cordially by Armand, whom he was not surprised to find in company with the beautiful quadroon. He gazed in evident admiration at Juanna, attracted more, however, by her high-spirited conduct than her personal charms.

A few words were sufficient to place the parties in a good understanding, and Armand, as well as the quadroon, was astonished to find that the boatman had acted, in regard to Marie, upon his own surmises, without prompting from Alfred, though with an indefinite view to his interest. They were also delighted with the spirit with which he entered into their plans.

"You are a noble fellow," said Armand, "and as I fear you cannot well spare the money you have advanced in this affair, you must permit me to return it to you at once."

"Never you mind that, stranger. It warn't mine, altogether, and there's plenty more where that came from. It was given me to circumvent that horn devil, Rainsford, on another turn."

"By Alfred?"

"No, it didn't come from Mr. Dove-all; he don't know anything about this little matter, yet; but that's a friend of mine, Harry Berford, jest one of the most splendid fellows on the 'arth, who wants some information out of that critter Rainsford, and he don't mind payin', and I think I'm working it about right."

"Well, I will not inquire into your friend's secrets," said Armand, "but if you exhibit as much sagacity as you have in this affair, you will hardly fail. There, Juanna," added he quickly, as a second rapping was heard at the door, "there is your friend now. Come, Denton, we will get something to eat in the next room, and in the meantime overhear what this precious rascal has to say."

The boatman followed, only pausing to say:

"If he gets obstreperous, my pretty gal, jest remember Devil's Dick is about."

Quicker than it can be described, Joanna put on her goggles and false nose, hid her long dark hair beneath an old red velvet cap, drew around her person a half-worn tawdry man's dressing-gown, which swept the floor, and putting her feet into a pair of dilapidated slippers, she admitted the gambler, the room having been so darkened that when he entered her disguise was complete.

"Well, Jacob," said he, "what did you bring me here for, and what the d—l do you know about my business?"

"Ze bisness ish to make ze monish, zat ish always ze bisness with you and me, eh?"

"Of course it is, old fellow; so no palaver, out with it at once. You said you knew all about me, and how we could make some money together. What is it? If you know me, you know there's no fooling in me, and that I don't stand on trifles."

"Suppose you wants heaps of monish, eh?"  
 "You are about right there, old fellow; just as much as I can safely lay my hands on."

"Vell, den, you have ze handsome gal, eh?"

"Who the d—l told you about my gal, ha!" demanded Rainsford, fiercely.

"Vat! you no remember ze contract vat I witness last night?" said the Jew. "Vel, she ish von purty gal; I buys her—give mosh monish."

"I say, you old misbelieving scoundrel, what do you know about her?" demanded the gambler, who was getting excited. "Where did you ever see her?"

"Oh! I zee her many time at ze little house, you know, vid Rachel. I give mosh monish."

"Look here, you old Jewish rascal, I believe you are in a plot against me. What were you doing at Rachel's, and how came you to witness the writing I was such a double-distilled fool as to give Den ton last night? Answer me!"

"Never minds, it ish all right. I zee her since—she little gal zo high. Vell you take ze monish?"

"No; I won't sell her to you and all your backers put together. What the d—l do you want with her?"

"Ze monish, always ze monish; give much monish; ze gal very purty."

"Well, Jacob, I tell you that gal is not for sale; she is mine, and I intend to have her myself if it costs me my life; so if anybody is setting you on to this, you can just tell them that; and look here, you old Israelite, if I thought you were plotting against me, I'd just choke the Jewish soul out of you," said Rainsford, getting more and more excited. "What do you mean by bringing me here on such an errand?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Juanna, throwing off her disguise and starting up before him in all her voluptuous beauty. "Only to make a fool of you again, my brave sir."

"Damnation! if it ain't the same gal!" exclaimed Rainsford, perfectly bewildered, "and now what do you want with me, that you follow me around, and take so much trouble about my business?"

"Perhaps I am in love with you, or maybe I think you have plenty of money."

"But what has that to do with my girl?" asked the gambler, gazing with undisguised admiration on the handsome woman before him.

"Perhaps I am jealous of her."

"Pshaw! that's all gammon. I have not seen her but twice in fourteen years. Tell me the truth, what are you mixing up in my business for?"

"Well, then, for the truth," said Juanna. "I am not in love with you, nor likely to be, nor have I any designs on your purse; but Marie was my playmate, I love her and wish to serve her. She hates and fears you; why won't you sell her to the good priest?"

"I tell you no! I'll have her myself; I swore it years ago."

"Ah, years ago, eh?" said Juanna, with a peculiar emphasis.

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Rainsford, quickly, and in some confusion, as if conscious of a slip of the tongue.

"Why, I saw you strike Rachel, and I took her with me afterwards and made her tell me all about it."

"All? pooh! she knows nothing. She told you the girl was my child; that's false. She is no more my child than you are; she's my slave."

"I know better than that," said the quadroon. "She is no more your slave than she is your child."

This remark was hazarded by Juanna without the slightest foundation, and in fact without being sustained by any strong surmises on her own part that the relation between the parties was other than Rainsford had stated. It was thrown out merely to elicit something that she could take hold on; but its effect was sudden and astonishing. The gambler turned pale as death, started to his feet and exclaimed,

"It's a lie! an infernal lie! and I'll take the yaller devil's life for starting such a lie; she's mine, I tell you. I bought her and her mother both. I've got the papers to show it. She's a born slave."

"Well, perhaps it is none of my business to interfere, after all," said Juanna, who deemed it imprudent to push him too close on the matter. "I only thought to do Marie a service, as Rachel says she is so unhappy at the thought of her belonging to you. Perhaps, though, the old boatman may get her after all. Did you read the paper which you gave him carefully?"

"Why, not in particular."

"Well, I did. It was a regular bill of sale, describing her by name, and personally, with a clause that the money should be repaid in a week, or you lost the right of redemption, and the girl was his."

"Well, that's nothing. I can soon fix that matter with Dick."

"Maybe not; the bill of sale has been recorded."

"What the h—l did he mean by that?"

"To make his money secure by selling her again if you fail to pay him, I suppose."

"So he's in a plot against me too. Well, d—n it, I don't care; I can get the money easy enough if I want to before the week is out."

"How, by selling her yourself?"

"No, I tell you I won't sell her; she's—"

"Free?" suggested Juanna.

"No, d—n it, no!" said Rainsford, firmly, though he was very pale. "I tell you again she's my slave, and I mean to have her first myself."

"Well, that's lucky; for to sell a free girl would be a serious matter, and then, you know, the laws of Louisiana protect even a slave from violence."

"Look here," said Rainsford, a little savagely, "let's drop that subject, once for all; it's not a safe one."

"Not safe for you or me?" quietly asked the quadroon.

"D—n it, I say it's not safe for any one to meddle too far with my business!" exclaimed the gambler, goaded almost into a passion. Curbing his temper, however, he added, with coarse gallantry, "Pd rather talk about you."

"Well, what can you say about me? Not that I am as pretty as Marie?" said the girl, archly.

"A hundred times more so," he replied, influenced by her coquetry and beauty.

"Oh, fie! You'll be making love to me presently."

"And what if I did?"

"Why that would never do in the world; I could not permit it."

"Pooh! That's all nonsense. I know you all, and it's nothing but fair to make you pay for bringing me here on a fool's errand," said he approaching her familiarly.

"It was no fool's errand, but to meet some old friends," said Juanna, gliding past him, and throwing open the door of the inner apartment from which Armand and Denton came forth.

"H—ll!" exclaimed the baffled *roue*. "It's a regular trap you've been setting for me, eh? Much you have made of it."

"No trap, sir," said Armand. "I took the liberty of asking my friend to meet me here, not knowing your appointment; and when you came we retired."

"Well, you may think you are all-fired smart to get a nigger wench set on me."

"My friend," said Armand, with a flashing eye and an emphasis on the word which Rainsford could not mistake, "when you address me or any one connected with me, you will find it necessary to be a little more choice in the expressions you employ."

"I didn't mean any insult," said the man cowed at once; "but it's rather hard to be set upon and to have a man's private business interfered with. And you, Dick, I didn't think you'd play traitor on me."

"Nary time, Bob; I mean all fair and square. But a feller's got a right to secure himself, I reckon. If the paper you gave me was all right, that's no harm in puttin' it on the record."

"Certainly not," said Rainsford, who, though thrown off his balance for the moment, soon recovered himself, and was ready with his lifelong system of cunning. "Only you needn't have been in such a hurry; I can give you your money back by to-morrow."

"All right, Bob; it shan't cost you nothing," said Denton, who did not desire an irreparable breach at that time with Rainsford. "And now if you are going down town towards the Arcade, I'll go along too."

Nothing could have been more acceptable at the time to the gambler than this proposition, for he began to feel his position embarrassing.

"Well, I suppose there was no great harm meant, Dick," said he, "so come along." And without further ceremony they went off together.

## CHAPTER XV.

## A GLEAM OF HOPE FOR MARIE.

"Mr dear cousin, I am truly glad to welcome you," said Sophie Dufour, as she met Harry Berford at the threshold of her residence the next day after her interview with him in the garden of Mr. Duval. "This is my father, who will love you also."

"Monsieur Harry," said the old gentleman, embracing the young Kentuckian, "you are welcome—the cousin of this dear child, the nephew of my wife—you are doubly welcome to my heart and home."

There was a truthfulness in this greeting that touched Harry Berford's heart.

"My dear uncle, my sweet cousin, this is unlooked-for happiness," said he, with emotion.

The three were soon seated in a large, pleasant saloon, and an hour, two hours, passed away imperceptibly in conversation and mutual reminiscences. At length Berford said:

"Cousin, you held out a mysterious hope to me yesterday, and questioned me on some points which I am better prepared to answer now, having brought the statement of my mother, to which I referred, with me. Will it be agreeable to you to explain your meaning more fully now?"

"I scarcely know of myself how to act," said Sophie. "My surmises may have no real foundation, and only end in cruel disappointment. You expressed a wish—or an idea, if you please—on yesterday, my cousin, which seemed to me impious, yet it was not alone a presumptuous desire to curb this which actuated me. Some hope, which, I confess, has been since strengthened."

"How? what do you mean? Is it possible you think my sister lives?" demanded Berford, in much agitation.

"I have taken the liberty of communicating the whole matter to my father," said Sophie, with apparent calmness, but trembling really with emotion; "he will speak to you."

"My nephew," said Mr. Dufour, "Sophie has related to me the sad accident which happened to your family, and I deeply sympathise with your loss. Some strange coincidences, as Sophie very properly terms

them, have occurred, which seem to justify at least a close investigation. A young person of pure and good character—I am satisfied, most unfortunately situated, has come under my legal guardianship, who bears a birth mark of the same nature as described to your cousin, and who possesses, moreover, another strange link of evidences

"I did not describe the mark fully," interrupted Berford; "I can do so now from my mother's written statement—a strawberry on the right arm, near the shoulder."

"The same!" exclaimed Sophie.

"Stop, my daughter," said Mr. Dufour, "It may be a mere coincidence, and disappointment would be cruel enough in this case without exciting too much the hopes of your cousin. It is proper for me to say to you, Harry, that this girl comes to us with the alleged taint of African blood and claimed as a slave, though a purer soul, a more refined and elevated character no maiden possesses. I am sure, of my own judgment, even without the testimony of one of the best and noblest of men, Father Dunois, a Catholic priest, who has protected and educated her."

"Sir—uncle—do you, can you mean the young girl in whom my friend, Duval, has felt so great an interest?" asked Harry Berford.

"The same."

"Is she with you? May I see her?"

"Harry, would it be prudent so suddenly and without preparation? Remember, we have not dared to hint our suspicions to her yet, for your disappointment, if these are incorrect, would be as nothing to hers."

"Yes, yes—now. And thank God you have said no word to her!" exclaimed Harry Berford. "I believe much in the secret affinities of race and kindred, and my first impressions, without study or reflection, will be more truthful, more to be relied on. Do not fear for me, sir," he added, "I have more self-control than you think, and I will allow no selfish emotion of mine to cause this poor girl, even if she is what she is pretended and not my sister, one additional pang."

"You are right, my cousin," said Sophie Dufour, rising; "my father, he is right. I will call Marie, she is now talking to Father Dunois."

The few moments which intervened between the departure and return of his cousin were fraught with emotions on the part of Harry Berford far easier to imagine than describe. As Sophie re-crossed the threshold leading Marie, simply clad in pure white, with her large melancholy eyes and beautiful face, pale almost as monumental marble, his heart felt almost bursting with hope and fear.

"This is my good friend, Marie, cousin Harry," said Sophie, with a smile, and an assumed indifference she by no means felt. "She is a timid thing; but as we are all of the family, and you will be with us much, I have insisted upon her coming in to see you."

Marie had caught only a glance of Berford as she came in, and recognized him as having been with Alfred Duval on All Saint's Day, but

she dropped her eyes. He had promptly risen, however, and, advancing with a calm, even step and great courtesy of manner, while the very fountains of his heart were stirred as if by some mysterious angel visitant, he said:

"I do not feel that I am a stranger, mademoiselle, to you, whom my friends so love and respect. May I take your hand?"

There was something in his tone and manner which won instant confidence, and Marie looked up with a sad smile as she extended her hand. No sooner had her eyes met those of the young Kentuckian than a strange and perceptible thrill passed over her frame. She flushed an instant, and then became even more pale, while Berford, holding her hand, looked long and earnestly at her face and into her eyes, which seemed fixed, as if by magic, on his own.

"My mother's face—my mother's face and eyes!" he muttered. "You are—oh, God! you are my sister!" he exclaimed wildly.

A seraphic light not as of earth, beamed for a moment from Marie's eyes, and with a long drawn breath, which terminated almost in a shriek, she fell, fainting, on his breast.

We must pass briefly over the long and interesting interview which followed Marie's recovery from her swoon, and at which Father Dunois, with his clear mind and warm heart, assisted. Their conclusions might not have been valid in a court of law, but when the whole party sat down to dinner Marie was received with all the tender affection and respect of a beloved relative, every one of them, except, perhaps, the young girl herself, to whom such an event seemed too much happiness for this earth, convinced that she was indeed the lost Marie Berford.

"Why," said Harry, "you have my mother's name."

"That was the only thing that I remembered distinctly," said the young girl. "When I was given to Rachel it was by another name. But, she says, I would insist I was Marie, and so my dear father there baptised me Marie."

After dinner Harry left for the St. Charles Hotel, promising, however, to return at night, and make his abode in the house of his new found relatives. He was anxious to see Denton at once, to obtain a report of his proceedings, and take every possible means of elucidating the mystery now become so painfully interesting to him.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## DEVIL'S DICK IN CLOVER.

WHEN Harry arrived at the St. Charles Hotel it was dark, but he found his rooms lighted up, and the boatman seated in an easy chair, with the *debris* of a substantial repast beside him, a choice Havana in his mouth and a large glass of grog before him.

"Come in, Harry, it's only me; you see I'm larning the high-falutin style."

"I'm glad to see you enjoying yourself. I hope they have waited on you properly."

"Fust rate, and no mistake; couldn't have done better if it had've been you instead of old Devil's Dick. But I say, Harry, don't you think I'm going it rather strong, spending a thousand dollars a day and living in clover this way?"

"Well, never mind that, Denton, if you only do what I wish. Now, tell me, have you seen Rainsford? What does he say? Where is he. You must go with me to see him at once."

"Hold up there, Harry, take breath, and don't ax me more questions in a minnit than I can answer in an hour. Have I seen him? Well, I reckon I have pretty much tied to him these two days. What does he say? A good many things wickedder than his prayers. Where is he? That I can't tell exactly, but I reckon I'll find him in a jiffy if you say so."

"Well," said Berford, curbing his impatience, "just tell me in your own way what you have learned, but for God's sake be brief, and let us be after this man, for I have a settlement, and it may be a serious one, to make with him."

"That's right, Harry, let me go along my own way, and I'll git through quicker and more to your satisfaction," said Denton, who then related more succinctly than might have been expected the various occurrences of the last two days. When he came to the security he had exacted from Rainsford, Berford broke in:

"What! you took a bill of sale for the girl? How did you know anything about her?"

"Well, you see, Harry, it was somethin' I heard Mr. Doveall, your friend, say, and the rest I gather from Bob Rainsford arter he

struck the yaller woman; so I thought I might kill two birds with one stone, and while I was throwin' away your money on the scoundrel to save you I thought I might as well take security and sarve your friend."

"Where is the paper?"

"I've got it here safe enough, Harry; and what's more, Mr. Armand, the other friend of Mr. Doveall—he's a real grit that Mr. Armand—said it was all drawn straight and right, and he took it and had it put on record, so thar's no backing out of it. Here it is, Harry, it belongs to you in course."

With an eager hand did Harry Berford unfold, and with a wild, strange feeling in his heart did he read that paper which purported to convey as a slave the beautiful being whom he believed to be his own long lost sister. Again and again he perused it. There was no flaw; it was all legal; and, but for the clause of redemption, her fate, even if there was a mistake in her identity, would be in his hands, and he could at least rescue her from the terrible bondage with which she was threatened.

Rising without a word, he rung the bell, and at the prompt appearance of the waiter he said,

"Ask one of the proprietors to have the kindness to step up to my room, and bring another person with him. I wish them to witness an agreement. Denton, you will make me a transfer of this."

Berford seated himself at a table, and by the time the gentlemanly proprietor arrived, with one of his clerks, he had written a transfer of the bill of sale, which was duly signed and witnessed.

"And now, Denton," said Harry, as soon as the others had withdrawn, "tell me what of Ranny; does this Rainsford know him?"

"Well, Harry, on that p'int he was rather dark, and didn't like at fust to be questioned. You see I mentioned it just arter we came out of Armand's house, when we wanted another hundred dollars. He was all fired skittish about it, but he said at last that he hadn't seen him in ten or twelve years; that he was in Texas or h—ll for all he knew or cared, and when I pressed him closer, he admitted that he bought a yaller wench and her child from him fourteen years ago—that the wench was dead, and this gal, Mary, was the child—and that's all."

"Then, by Heaven, it is she! Denton, listen! I have this day seen the girl you speak of, been in her company for hours, and as there is a God in Heaven, I believe she is my lost sister! What you tell me supplies an all-important link in the testimony. You will now understand why I must see this Rainsford at once—why this paper is worth more than the Indies to me," said he grasping it convulsively. "Great God! only to think that wretch held my sister as a slave!"

This was said in a low voice, but so terrible from its intensity that the boatman, whose bronzed face was pale, and every limb of whose giant form trembled with emotion at what he had heard, rose and laying his hand affectionately on the young man's shoulder said, with simple dignity,

"Harry, my dear boy, no rashness ; it might spile all. I'm with you to the death ; but caution with a catamount wins the day. I never struck an unfair blow in my life ; but ef he's harmed old Dan Berford's darter and your sister he dies."

"Thanks, my true and brave friend. I will be cautious, and if he is reasonable, and can explain his own share in this diabolical wrong satisfactorily, I will even pay him richly. I feel now to have found my sister at all, notwithstanding the impious wish I expressed a day or two since, would have been a satisfaction ; but to have found her as I have, pure and good, as if she had never left her mother's side guarded, educated and cared for, in her forlorn position, through God's providence, by a pious and noble-hearted old man, is so great a blessing that I were ungrateful to Heaven if I did not act with moderation, and trust more to its high and just decree than to my own wilful passion."

"That's the talk, Harry, that's the beautifulest sort of talk, and you won't be none the worse for feeling so, or Dick Denton's no judge. So now, come along if you want to, and we'll find Bob Rainsford to-night, if it's possible, and he's got to do the clean thing or settle with the Devil's Dick."

In a few minutes Harry Berford was ready and proceeded, under the guidance of the boatman, to search for Rainsford.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE SEARCH FOR RAINSFORD.—JUANNA AGAIN.

THE search for Rainsford proved unavailing. Every place where Denton thought he might possibly find him was visited, without success. About ten o'clock they entered the quadroom ball-room, where Berford was somewhat surprised to find his friend Alfred.

"I came up from our place this evening ; got to the St. Charles after you had left, and not knowing where to find you, dropped in here, not so much to amuse myself as to see a friend whom I expected to find," said he.

"I am truly glad to meet you," said Harry, "and if you have no particular engagement, I wish to monopolise a little of your time."

"My dear fellow," said Alfred, with a vivacity, "you could not do me a greater favor. Where shall we go ? What can I do for you ?"

"First, let me ask if you know a quadroom named Juanna ?"

"Juanna ? Certainly ; why do you ask ? She is the *chere amie* of a noble, good-hearted fellow, Armand Latour. Have you ever seen her ?"

"No, my dear fellow ; and I have not the slightest intention of attempting to rival Monsieur Latour ; on the contrary, I suspect that I am under strong obligations to him, but I wish to know something of her."

"Oh ! she is a good girl, the daughter of a Spanish gentleman, and well educated ; but she is fond to excess of pleasure, or she would not come here ; yet honest, or Armand would not let her come."

"Well, my dear Alfred, I wish to have some conversation with this Juanna, when we can find a fitting time and place, and also with you."

"Hold ! yonder she is now. She has just finished dancing with Armand. I will introduce you to them both."

"Could it not be more privately !" said Harry.

"Certainly ; go into the room on the right hand at the head of the stairs, with your friend, and I will bring them."

In a few minutes Alfred came into the room designated, with his friend, Armand Latour and the quadroom, both of whom were introduced to Berford, and greeted Denton cordially.

"I hope you will excuse me," said Harry, "but some most singular and to me painfully interesting circumstances have made me desire your acquaintance. It seems that my good friend here has already enjoyed that advantage," laying his hand on the boatman's shoulder, "while laboring in my behalf ; and you," addressing Juanna, politely, "have, with a generous and noble impulse, engaged in kind efforts, I understand, to aid a poor, persecuted girl, in whom I take the deepest interest."

"How ! Marie !" exclaimed Alfred. "Juanna has told me of her kindly-meant interference : but I did not know that you had enlisted so warmly in my behalf."

"In my own behalf as well as yours, my friend. But do not misunderstand me. I will explain everything as soon as we can be more retired. Suffice it for the present, that I requested my friend, Denton, here, to watch a certain gambler named Rainsford, for reasons of a private nature. He had heard you speak of Marie and witnessed a brutal assault by this man on the mulatto who took care of her, so that he not only obtained some history of her from Rainsford, whether true or not, but actually obtained a bill of sale for her, as security for twelve hundred dollars loaned him at the gambling table, as your friend, Monsieur Latour, has probably told you."

"How ! what ?" exclaimed Alfred, with excitement.

"It is, *mon ami*, as monsieur says, though I have not had an opportunity to tell you yet," said Armand.

"Pardon me one moment longer," said Harry Berford, repressing, with an emphatic gesture, the expression of astonishment which was about to burst from Alfred, "I came here to search for this man Rainsford, myself ; it is all important that I should meet him, and if you can aid me to do so, I will not part with you until I have given you a full explanation."

"Perhaps, monsieur, I can do so," said the quadroom, gaily, holding

up a three-cornered note. "He is gallant, this Mr. Rainsford, and has fallen in love with me, he says, for my deviltry, as he writes me a *billet-doux*, and wishes me to meet him here at twelve o'clock. Now, if you will all adjourn beforehand to my apartments, and if you, Armand, will not get jealous, and you, Monsieur Berford, will not think too hardly of a poor quadroon girl, I will bring him there."

Armand at once seconded this, but Harry remarked,

"Nay, this is asking too much of you. The man is a thorough ruffian and may——"

"Insult or wrong me, you would say, monsieur," said Juanna. "No danger of that, I am half Spanish;" and with a meaning smile and a flash from her dark eye, she drew from her bosom a bright sharp steel poignard.

"No danger," said Armand, smiling proudly on her: "Juanna is as brave and as true as her steel. Let us go, lest this Lothario may come earlier than his engagement, and our presence would spoil all."

Juanna was reconducted to the ball-room, where she claimed the attentions of a gallant old Frenchman, a friend of Latour's, and the three departed.

As they were about entering the carriage which waited for Harry Berford, he said to Alfred,

"There is another person whom I would like to see—the mulatto who brought Marie up."

"Nothing easier," replied Alfred, who, though becoming every moment more deeply interested in the active but mysterious concern which his friend exhibited in regard to Marie, repressed his curiosity. "I know her well, and as we have an hour and a half to spare, we can drive there first."

Rachel was at home, having gone out but very little since her rude treatment by Rainsford, of whom she stood in great dread. She was much astonished at the visit. Harry Berford held a long interview with her in a room alone, and without hinting to her his suspicions of Marie's identity, he questioned her closely, and received frank and honest answers, though but little information to aid him in his discoveries. She repeated the statement of Rainsford, as he had made it to her, that Marie was the child of a quadroon woman he had bought, and who had died before the little girl was given into her charge.

"You once thought she was his own child?" asked Berford, abruptly.

"Yes, master, but he swears she ain't, and I don't think now she can be."

"Did you ever suspect she was a white child that had been stolen?" asked Berford, fixing his eyes on the mulatto.

Rachel fairly grew pale and trembled with emotion, as she replied:

"Fore God! I've done and thought so many a time. Her skin ain't like a quadroon gal, no how, nor her hair nuther; and she's good enough and 'telligent enough, to be the first lady in the land."

"Did you ever mention your suspicions to any one?"

"What for I do that, young master? who gwine to believe me? and then 'twas only 'spicion, you know."

"Did you say she had the medal around her neck when you received her?"

"Yes, for sartin, I never tacked it, for it's a charm, I does believe."

"Well, say nothing about our conversation until you see me again, and it may be I shall give you some good news. There is a trifle for you, and I will give you more hereafter."

"Deed, young master, I doesn't want nuthin' for bein' good to Marie," said Rachel, drawing back from the proffered purse.

"Never mind; take it for her sake."

"Well, you're a rare gentleman, and has a look out of your eyes when you smile jest like Marie, so I'll take it, and you may depend upon me."

In a few minutes more Berford and his friends were driving towards Juanna's rooms, where Armand soon made them comfortably at home. The young Kentuckian then related what had occurred in regard to Marie, recapitulating the story of the abduction of his sister, who he declared his firm belief she was.

Alfred's astonishment may be better conceived than described.

"But, my friend," said Harry Berford, "though I am morally convinced of the fact, we must not forget the difficulties which surround the question. This man claims her, and may prove a legal title; he may have bought her as he states, and believe her to be a slave."

"I will shoot him if he pretends to such a thing!" exclaimed Alfred.

"Rashness would be most unfortunate now, though my blood boils when I think of this claim," said Berford. "You told me, I think," added he, "that he refused a large sum of money to relinquish his title."

"Yes; I would have given half my fortune even for the privilege of knowing she was in a convent. Now——"

"Now, my friend, money shall be no object, even if my wild hopes prove false, and she is not my sister, for the sake of giving this pure young girl peace. But there is something very strange in a man like him refusing such a large sum of money."

"Hist!" said Armand, at this moment; "I hear a carriage; Juanna is coming; let us go into the next room."

The four men were scarcely comfortably seated, the door being closed, and the curtain drawn so as to exclude every ray of light, before the carriage set down its passengers, who were no other than Juanna and Rainsford. The quadroon, applying her night-key, opened the door, and striking a light, invited the gambler, who had stopped a moment to pay the fare, to come in.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## JUANNA'S TACTICS.

"WELL, my beauty," said Rainsford, who was more sober than usual, "so I have caught you at last; I thought you would come to it in the end. You're a nice gal," added he, attempting to chuck her under the chin.

"Too nice for you," said she, drawing coquettishly back from the proffered caress, "especially when you don't feel inclined to do anything I ask you."

"Why, what do you want? I'll give you as much money as you wish; I'm in funds to-night."

"Keep your money, you fool; I want none of it," said Juanna coloring.

"Well, what do you want? You ain't brought me here to make a fool of me again? Remember, I can be dangerous," said Rainsford threateningly.

"I want you to answer me a simple question," said Juanna, with out noticing his threat; "why do you refuse to sell Marie for so much money?"

"Didn't I tell you that it warn't safe to meddle with my business?" said Rainsford, growing red. "What are you so concerned about the gal for?"

"That is my business," replied the quadroon, "and unless you answer me truly, you had better get on the outside of the door, for I'll have nothing to do with you."

"Didn't I tell you I wanted her for myself?" said the gambler.

"Well, then just please to leave here, and go after her; I'm no second choice for anybody," said Juanna, with admirably counterfeited pique.

"Pooh! nonsense!" said Rainsford, pleased with what seemed to indicate a jealous partiality for himself. "I tell you that you are a hundred times prettier than she is."

"What is the reason, then?"

"Well, it is something else."

"What?"

"Nothing that I'll tell you, my beauty; but I'll kiss those ripe lips to stop your questions," said he, advancing.

Juanna drew back, exclaiming, "Take care, don't touch me—I'm dangerous."

But regardless of the menace, Rainsford, who supposed that her prudery was all assumed, of course, sprang forward, and caught her in his arms. Quick as thought she snatched a stiletto from her bosom, and holding it up, cried:

"Let me go, fool, or I will strike."

"No, you don't, my young tiger-cat," said the man, whose passions were aroused, as he wrested the weapon from her. "I know a trick worth two of that."

Juanna, notwithstanding all her courage and self-confidence, would have felt in rather an awkward position if she had not supposed that her friends were in the adjoining room. As it was, even for an instant, such stillness had been observed, she began to doubt their presence, while she endeavored to tear herself from the gambler's rude grasp. It was only for an instant, however, for the door opened, and Armand, with one stride, was beside her. With a vigorous grip he wrested the man from his hold, and flung him across the room.

Gathering himself up in no little astonishment, Rainsford exclaimed:

"Ha! by G—! another trap; I might 've known it."

"Yes, sir, a trap to catch a scoundrel in," said Armand.

"You are mighty safe to call names, with a roomfull of bullies, maybe, to back you," said the gambler, pale with rage.

"If you were a gentleman I would show you that I need no backers against you. As it is, if you do not bridle I'll cut your ears off," said the creole, with flashing eyes.

"Well, I s'pose you've no objection to a man's leaving when you don't like his company," said Rainsford, doggedly, "unless you want to murder me."

"Silence, sir! The life of such a creature as you is safe from all but the halter. When you have answered some questions to a friend in the other room you can depart in safety."

Harry Berford entered with Denton at this moment.

"Well, Bob, arter the gals agin, eh?" said the boatman.

"And you still plotting against me, Dick; I didn't expect it of you," said the gambler, sulkily.

"Pooh! man, there's no harm meant if you only do the fair thing, and fair play you shall have anyhow, ef you were the devil himself. Thar was no ambush, as you seem to think, only you will run arter the gals, and this frolicsome one here loves to make fun of you."

"Well, what do you want with me? You are three to one, and have got the advantage," said the man.

"There is no advantage to be taken, sir," said Harry Berford, who had schooled himself to perfect self-control notwithstanding the deep emotions which the presence of the man were so well calculated to excite. You possess some information of importance to a friend of mine, and if you are an honest man, you will not withhold it, while an open disclosure may and shall benefit you much."

"And suppose I don't choose to answer under the circumstances?" said the gambler.



"No violence will be used; but you will be at once arrested and legal means taken to compel you to answer."

"What do you want any how? If it is not concerning my private affairs I've no objection."

"In the first place I wish to know where is Richard Ranney?"

The gambler's face grew pale and he gave a perceptible start, but nerving himself he demanded, with a swagger,

"How do I know? and what right have you to ask me?"

"You admitted to my friend here that you knew Ranney, and had transactions with him," said Berford, calmly but with deep emphasis and a kindling eye. "There are reasons why I wish to know, and must know, where he is. Give me the information honestly and I will reward you; refuse it, and you shall not only be arrested, but held to strict account for some of your transactions with him."

This was not said in a threatening manner, but there was deep significance in the calm, measured tone with which it was spoken. While Berford had been speaking a terrible change came over the appearance of Rainsford. He had been pale and disturbed before, but he grew almost livid, and dark rings gathered under his eyes, while his limbs fairly shook.

"Who are you?" demanded he, in a low, husky voice.

"Matters not," said Berford, who for evident reasons desired to preserve an incognito; "I have sufficient reasons, and you will find I am able to keep my promise for good or ill."

"And suppose I don't choose to answer blindly about an old acquaintance, to get him into trouble, it may be?"

"Then, as I have said, you will be arrested at once yourself."

"What for? Where's your authority?" demanded the gambler.

"For aiding and abetting a kidnapper," was the stern reply.

Rainsford again lost his courage, and the rings under his eyes grew darker.

"I've already told Dick, there, that I don't know anything about him. I haven't seen him for more than twelve years, and I don't know what you mean."

"Did you not purchase, or pretend to purchase, from him a little girl about fourteen years ago?"

"I thought it was that all along," said Rainsford, assuming as much boldness as he could. "I bought a yaller wench and her child, and the bill of sale is recorded in the right office here; the woman's dead, but the gal is mine."

"And do you know," said Berford, heroically restraining his feelings, "that this girl is believed to be a white child, stolen by Ranney from her parents in Kentucky?"

"I don't know nothing about it," said the man, stubbornly, his self-reliance seeming to return to him in a measure from some inexplicable cause. "The gal is mine, and I won't be cheated out of her. I see what it all means. That gentleman," pointing to Alfred, whom he had just perceived standing in the doorway, "is at the bottom of it, but he can neither bully me out of her or buy her. She is mine, and I'll have her."

"You shall die before you lay a finger on her," exclaimed the young creole, taking a step forward.

"Peace, my friend," said Harry, interposing between Alfred and the shrinking form of the gambler. "And you, sir, know that I take an interest in this young girl so great that I would shoot you like a dog where I stand if I deemed it necessary. I tell you this man Ranney is a kidnapper, and this is a white girl stolen from her parents by him, as I have no doubt of being able to make it appear in the courts if necessary. But I wish to find him, and if you act properly in the matter you shall lose nothing, but if you have joined in the wrong or attempt to give any trouble, beware!"

"I tell you once more the gal is mine, and I'll keep her in spite of you all," said Rainsford, in cowardly triumph, for he had become well satisfied that no violence would be offered him.

The form of the Kentuckian dilated with passion, his eye grew fierce, and he took a step forward; but instantly restraining himself he said calmly,

"You can go now; but mark, no word of mine will fall to the ground. Every step you take in New Orleans is watched."

"And mind, fore you go, Bob," said Denton, "I've something to say in this matter. Remember, the gal's mine ef that twelve hundred ain't paid punctual."

"It will be paid to-morrow, every cent, wherever you please; name your place. I shan't be beat out of it by you all," said the gambler, viciously.

"Well, say at one o'clock at the St. Charles Hotel; you'll find me there."

"I will be there," said Rainsford, as he went out.

"The document is held by you, is it not, Harry?"

"Yes, but I prefer that Denton should represent me still."

"Do you think he will get the money?"

"If he dares, we'll git him," said Denton. "We'll manage to put him in limbo somehow."

"That will amount to little if our hopes are realized; if not, something shall be done to rescue her from his grasp. His conduct is strange and mysterious, however, and I must have another interview with him. In the meantime remember how important it is he should not know my name for the present. To one of you gentlemen I must be indebted in the morning for an introduction to one of your most respectable and ablest lawyers."

"I will be with you at breakfast," said Alfred.

"And you also, I hope, Monsieur Latour," said Harry.

"With pleasure. Anything, everything I can command is at your service."

"Thanks! And now permit me also to thank you," said Berford, addressing Juanna. "I shall always remember your goodness."

"Adieu, monsieur," said the quadroon, gaily. "Perhaps my role is not played out yet."

## CHAPTER XIX.

## ALFRED AND MARIE MEET AGAIN.

HARRY BERFORD passed several hours the next morning at M. Dufour's with Marie and his cousin Sophie, and everything tended to confirm his belief that he had found his lost sister. Each moment he discovered some new trait of resemblance to his mother, of whom Marie delighted to talk. Father Duval, M. Durant and Sophie, with her strong common sense, were equally convinced of the young girl's identity, although grave doubts, which were suppressed in her presence, disturbed their minds as the production of satisfactory legal proof of what appeared so plain in their moral convictions.

Alfred had not been of the party, nor indeed had he seen Marie since this great change in her prospects had taken place. His consideration was duly appreciated, and Berford said to him frankly:

"My dear Alfred, I know your feelings, and admire your honorable conduct. If our hopes are realised, I say to you without disguise, that it will give me pleasure to receive you as a brother."

It was arranged, before Harry left M. Dufour's to consult the eminent lawyer to whom he had been recommended, that Marie, Sophie and her father should visit the country-house of M. Duval, where they had been invited, and after seeing the carriage that bore them depart, he hastened to fulfil his appointment with the counsellor.

It is not necessary to give in detail their interview; suffice it that the lawyer, who was honest and learned, and who took a prompt and ready interest in the case, strengthened Berford's hope greatly by his opinion. Delay, he assured him, was all-important, but that it could be easily procured as the case now stood. In regard to the bill of sale, he said:

"You were right in your conjecture; if the money is tendered it must evidently be received and to refuse would not advantage you, and my advice is, that it be received quietly. I do not think another interview between you and this man at present would be productive of any good; nor need I warn you that threats of violence against this man would be imprudent; we must lull him into a fancied security. I will put a detective on his track, who, while he is fully as reliable as your worthy boatman, is a little better skilled in dealing with

regues. It is all important that this Rainsford should be traced back to his connection with the scoundrel who carried off your sister, and we may probably get some hold on him through the law, which may induce him to bend a little in his stubbornness."

Under the advice, then, of this gentleman, Berford made no opposition to the payment of the money on the redemption clause of the bill of sale by Rainsford, but yielding to the advice of his counsel, he abandoned the idea of a personal interview for the present, at least, with the gambler, and sent a proper and judicious agent with Denton, to act for him. He then determined to follow Marie and his cousin to the villa of M. Duval, where he might, for a few hours at least, throw off care and vexation in the enjoyment of that Eden which had so unexpectedly opened for him. At his suggestion, Alfred, who had so generously determined to forego the happiness of Marie's society, while his presence might seem indelicate, accompanied him.

It was just the dinner hour when they arrived; but Marie was not at the table. She had shrunk from the kindly expressed invitation, and with a delicacy of sentiment peculiar to creoles, as well as the high-bred French, they had not urged her farther, but her meal was carried to her room by Julie herself. It was the object of this good and noble-hearted family to remove, as far as possible, the painful embarrassment of supposed caste which naturally oppressed the mind of Marie; and Julie, with ready sympathy and true feminine tenderness, addressed herself particularly to the generous task.

Alfred seemed disappointed at the absence, while a whispered communication from Sophie Dufour to her cousin put his mind at ease. The meal passed off pleasantly enough, without particular allusion to the subject which chiefly occupied their minds. After dinner the gentlemen smoked their havanas under the cool portico, until M. Duval courteously challenged Berford to a game of billiards, in which they took M. Dufour and Alfred as partners.

When some deep sentiment of mutual sympathy draw men together who respect each other, it is astonishing what an amount of quiet satisfaction they experience in each other's company. There was little talk and no gaiety around the billiard table, and yet the time passed pleasantly away, and the evening shadows were blending with the twilight, when the sweet, sweet face of Sophie Dufour appeared at the window.

"What selfish mortals you are with your billiards. Here are four ladies left to amuse themselves in the garden."

The party at once broke up and adjourned to the summer-house. While Sophie dexterously engaged the other gentlemen in conversation, she indicated to Harry that he must take another path, which he had followed but a short distance before he found Marie promenading beneath the orange trees, arm-in-arm with Julie Duval. Both blushed at his approach, but a sweet expression of affection stole over Marie's face as she placed her hands confidently in his and gazed with a timid, yet loving and trustful look into his eyes. Men never appears more noble and attractive in female estimation than in his

character as a protector ; and the manly sensibility which beamed in the handsome countenance of the young Kentuckian thrilled the heart of Julie Duval with something more than admiration. Like a gay creole, however, she threw off the seriousness that might have proved embarrassing, and said, in a pleasant tone of raillery :

"Do scold this naughty sister of yours, monsieur, for she will persist, notwithstanding my efforts, in being sad and almost incredulous of the good future which makes us all so happy."

Berford looked from one to the other with all the deep eloquence of unspoken emotion, while Marie, to whose eyes the bright tears of happiness sprang, said :

"You are all too good to me ; and you, ma'mselle, I can never repay your generous kindness. I cannot help thinking that if, after all, this promised happiness is a cheat—a delusion, what will become of me and what will you do."

"Marie," said Harry Berford, "my sister, for that you are so I have not an earthly doubt, you do wrong to distrust Providence. Suppose, if you choose, that this all proves a delusion, do you think that such friends as you have here around you love you only because you are Marie Berford ? Do you judge thus of their hearts ? Listen ! If this cup of joy is indeed dashed from my lips, if it should prove that what now seems an iron chain of irrefragable testimony is but a rope of sand, with your pure life and admirable character, I will still be your friend, your guardian, brother ! No one will desert you who loves you now."

"And I, too, pledge it by this, sweet sister," said Julie, printing a warm kiss on her lips.

With uncontrollable emotion Marie threw herself into the arms of Berford, while Julie glided softly away, leaving them in the sweet and holy communion of kindred hearts.

Long and gratifying was the conversation which took place between the brother and sister ; for as such, after the solemn pledge of Berford, they were thenceforward to be considered, despite any chance which might dash to the ground the hopes raised as to their relationship.

Half an hour elapsed before they joined their friends in the summer-house ; but when they did so Marie was leaning in confidence on Harry's arm, her countenance placid, resigned and not uncheerful. The first person who met them at the entrance of the arbor was Alfred, who had scarcely been able to repress his eagerness to see Marie.

"My friend," said Berford, with dignity, "allow me to introduce you to my sister."

He dwelt on the words with emphasis which expressed his full meaning, and which the other understood.

"To me she is twice, and always sacred," said the young creole, respectfully. Then holding out his hand, he uttered the single word :

"Marie."

"Monsieur," she replied, placing her own hand tremblingly in his.

"We are not strangers, are we, Marie ?"

There was nothing presumptuous in his words, tone or manner. It was merely the cry of the heart, refusing to have one bright link of its past broken. Both Marie and Harry understood it.

"No, monsieur ; I owe you too much, not only for your efficient protection to me as an outcast, but for the nobleness of your conduct, and my brother understands my feelings, and will vouch for my gratitude."

It was the first time she had presumed to utter the word "brother," yet she did it with firmness, despite her emotion. Harry Berford bent down and pressed his lips to her forehead, while his eyes were moist with emotion.

The embarrassment of the moment was relieved by Sophie, who exclaimed gaily :

"Do come in, good folks ; our party is incomplete without you."

Happily, joyously sped the hours in that old summer-house. Marie having at last acquired her natural self-possession, through the kindness of her friends, which could but banish her cares, and from the confidence which she seemed intuitively to place in Harry, showed a thousand sweet and attractive graces, which shed a charm around her. At length the older persons went into the house, and Alfred, somehow or other, persuaded Sophie to wile Marie away to look at the moonlight on the water, and Berford and Julie were left alone.

Love scenes are sometimes as well imagined as expressed. So let it be with the interview between the young Kentuckian and the beautiful creole. Suffice it to say that when they left the summer-house they were betrothed.

## CHAPTER XX.

## NEW DISCOVERY

ALTHOUGH Harry Berford had nominally taken up his abode with his connection, M. Dufour, he still retained his apartments at the St. Charles Hotel, and early the next morning he started with Alfred for the city, leaving the party, who intended to spend still another day with M. Duval.

On arriving at his rooms, where he expected to find Denton and his agent, he was not a little surprised to meet the former with an individual who has not yet appeared before the reader in *propria persona*. The stranger was a young man about twenty-five years old, of middle height and formed in the most compact and graceful mould consistent with strength and activity. His complexion was a clear dark olive, his eyes black and piercing, and his hair perfectly straight, rather coarse, and dark as the raven's wing. He was, in fact, an educated and high-bred Choctaw Indian, of the noblest race in his tribe; and among the aborigines of this country there are none more noble, not even the heroic Delawares.

"Leflore, my friend, when did you arrive?" exclaimed Berford grasping his hand warmly.

"This morning," was the seemingly cold and sententious reply; but the increased light in the speaker's eyes told that the Kentuckian had not misapplied the word friend.

"And you have news for me; is it not so?"

"I have."

"Ah!" exclaimed Harry, his eye kindling. "But pardon me; I forgot to introduce you. This is my friend M. Duval; Alfred, my old friend and schoolmate, Johnson Leflore. You have already scraped an acquaintance with Denton, I presume."

"Oh, yes," said the Indian, with a faint smile, "and I am truly happy to know M. Duval, as I am your friends always."

"And now, my dear Leflore, what news? Have you found him? My friends here know everything."

"I have not seen him."

"But you know where he is?"

"Yes, in New Orleans. He arrived about ten days ago, and was here three months, whence he went to Little Rock and Texas."

"But he may have left."

"He was seen yesterday."

"Congratulate me, Alfred; it is the scoundrel Ranney of whom we speak," exclaimed Berford, with such fierceness of joy as even startled the young creole.

The statement of Leflore that Ranney had been ten days in New Orleans affected the young Kentuckian deeply. The man Rainsford must have known the fact, and on the payment of the twelve hundred dollars he must also know of Berford's presence in the city. Was he full aware of the relations between them? and would he be likely to put Ranney on his guard? Turning to the boatman, Harry asked.

"Did Rainsford pay you the money to-day, Denton?"

"Yes, Harry, I've got it all safe here. I wanted your lawyer to take it, but he wouldn't."

"And did he notice that the transfer had been made to me, or make any remark about it?"

"Well, he didn't seem to make any mention of it; he had a lawyer with him, and he and your man fixed it."

Denton was mistaken. Rainsford had not only noticed the circumstances, but a strange change came over him when he did. Turning one side he repressed his emotion, and remained quiet during the transaction.

While Harry Berford is relating to his Indian friend his supposed discovery, let us follow the gambler. Accompanied by his lawyer, he went to the office of the Recorder of Mortgages and had the proper erasures made, and then making an appointment with his counsel for an early interview, he took his way alone towards the lower part of the city. As soon as he was alone he struck his clenched fists together, and exclaimed to himself:

"And so this is young Berford! By all that's damnable, it grows thick around me; but I'll never yield! I'll die first and kill the gal too. What a fool I've been to stay away so long and not have her with me; but I'll see that yaller d—l Rachel at once, and find out all she knows. I'm roused now, and they'll find me dangerous. By the Lord, but they like to have had me with that d—d paper. It's all right now, though; but they don't know how I had to borrow the money on the same security from my d—l of a lawyer; he's got some spite against that d—d Frenchman, and if the worst comes, I'd rather he'd have her than give up, if old Dan Berford was alive and begged on his knees. By h—ll I've sworn my revenge, and I'll have it my own way!"

These mutterings were prolonged as Rainsford made his way towards the residence of the mulatto. This tenement had been occupied by Rainsford, who paid the rent in advance six months, when he gave it up to Rachel, who, with the assistance of Father Dunois, had paid it herself since; but most of the furniture belonged to the gambler, and the lease was still in his name, so that she naturally considered him the master of the place. The poor woman, whose affection for Marie amounted to perfect devotion, had grieved deeply at their separation, and was in a constant state of ner-

vous excitement between her doubts and apprehensions. She had endeavored to ransack her memory for something to aid the investigation which was to make her darling a white lady, but in vain, for her mind was too much disturbed to think connectedly.

On the very next day when we have just left Rainsford proceeding to her house in no very amiable mood, Rachel had, in wandering over the house, entered a small lumber-room, where she found, while rummaging among some litter that had been thrown aside, an old leather wallet, well worn and dirty; with natural curiosity she took it up and opened it, expecting, perhaps, to find a treasure, but it contained only one or two soiled letters. She was examining these curiously, when she heard her name called. She dropped the letters with a start of apprehension, but instantly recognizing a friendly voice in the second call, she picked them up again and went down stairs to meet Juanna.

"De Lord bless you, chile, you done scare me at fust like anything."

"And what were you doing to be scared?" asked the quadroon, pleasantly.

"Oh, nuthin', only huntin' the old lumber-room."

"Well, what did you find there?"

"Why, here, jest see, chile; you can read, tell me what these is!"

Juanna took the papers, and reading the superscription of the letter, said:

"They are two letters addressed to Richard Ranney. Who is he?"

"How in de Lord's name does I know, chile? I only thought I might find somethin' about Marie—for that man Rainsford lived in the house before I came here."

"Ah!" said the quadroon, "then we will take the liberty of reading them."

The first one she opened possessed no particular interest. It was merely a letter from one low wretch to another, alluding in coarse terms to some joint villainies, and speaking of future speculations in rascality. The quadroon handed it back and opened the next. As she perused it, her eye brightened and her cheek flushed. For in several minutes, she studied its contents, then folding it carefully and putting it in her bosom, she said:

"Why, Rachel, you have found a treasure indeed!"

"Is it about Marie?" asked the woman breathlessly.

"Yes."

"And will it do her good?"

"It will make her a lady, if all is right, as I suspect."

"But what you 'gwine to do with it, Anita, deaf?" asked Rachel, laying her hand gently on the quadroon's shoulder, and looking in her face with some apprehension. "You ain't 'gwine to burn it, or tear it up, or hide it, is you?"

"Rachel, what do you take me for?"

"I ax your pardon, Miss Anita, indeed I does; but you know you

was so mad with Marie once, chile, and may be you wouldn't like to see her a white lady."

"I forgive your suspicions, Rachel," said Juanna, holding out her hand frankly, "you had some cause for them, but you need have no fear about this letter, it will go into the right hands at once, and I shall be almost as glad as you to see justice done to Marie; but hist, who is coming?"

They looked into the yard and saw Rainsford entering the gate.

"Fore God, it's that devilish man! Don't leave me, Anita, dear, he'll kill me."

"Don't be afraid, Rachel. Say nothing about these letters," said Juanna, picking up the one she had dropped and hiding it, "and if I go, I will send the officer at the next corner to protect you."

She had scarcely finished speaking when the gambler entered. He seemed a little surprised at seeing the quadroon, but scarcely noticing her, he addressed Rachel in a rude and threatening tone. The mulatto was very much alarmed; and the high-spirited quadroon, disgusted at his brutality, said in a very calm and decided tone,

"You must offer this woman no violence, monsieur, she is under my protection."

"Your protection!" said Rainsford, sneeringly, "and what are you but a cursed free nigger yourself?"

All the Spanish blood in Juanna's veins seemed to mount to her brow, while her black eyes fairly glittered with hatred. Raising her clenched hand—not as if to strike—but with an imperative gesture, as she took one step forward, she uttered, in a startling tone, one word—

"Beware!"

The gambler shrank before the vehement, and to him the well-known courage of this singular young woman, yet he still attempted to bluster.

"Pooh! you are carrying on rather high; what have I to fear from you? There's law, I reckon, in New Orleans, and some difference between white folks and——"

"Stop!" exclaimed Juanna, in her clear ringing tones. "I will tell you, if you offered her no violence when alone, I would kill you like a dog, if you are a white man. But before you dare insult me further, remember there is a certain Monsieur Latour who will take your ears off if I say so; but without going to unnecessary extremes, allow me to say there is a police officer in call, who understands the law as well as you do, and will see that we have protection, even if there may happen to be a little African blood in our veins."

"Call him, then, and I will have you both arrested for stealing," said Rainsford, whose eye caught sight of the old pocket-book, which had lain neglected on the floor, and which he picked up as he spoke.

"Stealing, sir!"

"Yes. Where did you get this pocket-book? It is mine."

"It was found," said the quadroon, calmly, "among some old lumber in this house."

"Well, this is my house—I left it here. Where are the contents?"

"What were they?"

"Money—papers! Where are they?"

"You are telling a falsehood," said Juanna, firmly and fearlessly; "this house is not yours, though the lease may still stand in your name, and there was no money in the pocket-book—only two old letters?"

"Where are they? Give them to me at once—they are mine!"

"They are not addressed to you, sir, but to one Richard Ranney, and I shall keep them."

"By—, I'll have them or die! They are mine, I say," exclaimed the gambler, advancing towards her.

A dark smile dimpled the cheek of the singularly bold and handsome girl, as she sprang back, and drawing an elegantly mounted pistol from her bosom, she cocked and presented it.

"And I say you shall not have them if you were Richard Ranney himself. And in good time, here comes one who shall decide the matter."

As she said this she uttered an exclamation in French, which attracted the attention of a passer-by, who promptly entered the house. He was no other than the police-officer to whom Alfred had given the charge of watching the house when Marie was in it. A few rapid sentences in French from Juanna, whom he knew very well, explained the state of affairs to him, and he at once said to Rainsford,

"Come, sir, you must leave this place, or I will arrest you. I shall take charge of the papers, and if you have any claim to them you can make it good before the Recorder, with whom I shall deposit them."

Rainsford would have resisted, but prudence controlled his passion, and, muttering a deep curse, he left the house.

Juanna, taking a rapid copy of the letter which had so much interested her, handed them both to the officer, to be disposed of as he said, and the two, having quieted Rachel's fears as to the renewal of Rainsford's visit, departed, the one for his round of duty and the other for her home.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## THE LETTERS.

HARRY BERFORD had scarcely finished his recital when the waiter announced a visitor, and before he could reply whether he would receive him in his room or the public parlor, a Spanish-looking youth, dressed in exquisite style, entered.

"Pardon my importunity, monsieur," said the new comer. "I looked for you yesterday, but you were out of the city; and as I have matter of some importance to communicate, I have used no ceremony in coming at once to your room."

"If it concerns me only, these are my friends; so pray be seated," said Berford, offering a chair.

The stranger was gazing intently, however, on the boatman, over whose countenance there came a singular expression of quizzical humor.

"What does monsieur see in my countenance to laugh at?" demanded the Spaniard.

Instead of answering directly, Denton placed his hands to his sides and fairly shouted out:

"Ha, ha, ha! Well, if you don't beat creation!"

The new comer caught the infection, laughed gaily and tapping the old boatman on the cheek, playfully said:

"You are too cunning for me. I must really fall in love with you some of these days, you old alligator."

"Juanna, as I live!" said Alfred.

"Out, monsieur," replied the quadroom, taking off her hat and shaking out her beautiful long hair, until it fell like a cloud around her shoulders. "And now, Monsieur Berford, be assured I had no more serious intentions in coming to your apartment than to bring you some information, which, as Armand is otherwise engaged, I would trust to one else." This was said half earnestly and half jestingly, with an ingenuous blush.

"My dear girl," said Harry, "you will suffer no misconstruction at the hands of myself or friends. I owe you gratitude, and must always admire and respect you."

"Thank you, monsieur; I am totally independent, as you know."

and should not have made such an explanation if I had not seen a stranger in the room," said she, glancing at the Indian.

"This is my friend, Mr. Leflore, a Choctaw chief."

Leflore made a slight obeisance, in which a close observer would have readily remarked a difference of manner from the men around him, an evidence of condescension, so to call it. Education will never teach the Indian that deference and chivalry towards woman which distinguishes the white man.

Juanna did not pay much attention to his manner, but proceeded at once:

"I told you when I last saw you, monsieur, that I had not played out my role, and I have news which, if this gentleman is your friend, as the others are, I suppose I may tell at once."

"Certainly," said Berford; "he is even better acquainted than they with my affairs."

"Well then, I visited Rachel yesterday, and found that, just before my arrival, she had made an important discovery."

"The discovery—about Marie?"

"I think so, monsieur. Listen, she found, in a lumber-room, among some old trash, a pocket-book containing two letters."

"Well?"

"She said the man Rainsford had occupied the house before she went into it, and she supposed it belonged to him, but not being able to read the letters, she handed them to me."

"Well," said Berford, with increasing impatience.

"Well, monsieur, just as I had investigated the contents of the letters in walked Rainsford himself, who, after making some threats, which I laughed at, saw the old pocket-book on the floor, and snatching it up he demanded it and its contents as belonging to him."

"And you gave it to him?"

"Yes, the pocket-book, but not the letters; they were addressed to a different person, and if I mistake not, concern you."

"A different person—who?—where are they?"

"They are now in the possession of the Recorder. For prudential reasons I called in a police officer, the friend of Monsieur Alfred there, who sent the man off and took charge of the letters, which he disposed of as I have said, but not before I had taken a copy of one of them. Here it is, directed to one Richard Ranney."

"Richard Ranney!" exclaimed Berford, almost snatching the letter from her hand.

Glancing quickly at its contents, he exclaimed.

"My God, it is true! See! Alfred Leflore! My friends, this is the villain himself whose blood I have sworn to shed. This Rainsford and Ranney are one and the same: what a fool, what a thrice-sodden fool I was not to know him by instinct! But I have him! ah! thank God, I have him!"

Eagerly his friends crowded around him, to hear the contents of the letter which had so opportunely come to light. Berford read a follows:

"NATCHEZ, under the Hill, Feb. 9, 18—

"DEAR DICK—I've got your letter, and think it's the best dodge you could make, unless you'd still take my advice and let me arrange for a reward about the little gal. We might git thousands; but as you are so rantankerous about revenge, and we are going pardners in a big thing, why take your own way, and as you don't want to kill the gal you'd better leave her as you say. Bill Huckley is safe; let him sign the papers to you, and put her on record as your slave, if you choose—nobody will tell ten years from now whether she's a quadron or not—only 'hurry up your cakes,' and let's get at work. You'll find a letter at Galveston directed, as you say, to Robert Rainsford, and I'll be after you in a week. I've got matters all fixed and we'll 'go ahead or bust our boilers.' Your crony of the thumb and humb.

JACK WILSON."

"What does he mean?" demanded Alfred.

"Do you not comprehend at once?" said Leflore, whose eyes shone bright with intelligence. "This Rainsford is Ranney himself, who stole my friend's sister; he changed his name and got an accomplice to make a bill of sale to him, in his assumed name of Rainsford, of the child as slave, whom he then leaves in New Orleans, while he goes to Texas on some mission of rascality. It is as clear as daylight. There was a skillful plot of revenge here, worthy of a better cause," added the Indian, whose instincts taught him to admire address and cunning.

"It is so, without a doubt, and this scoundrel has been twice in my power without my knowing it," said Berford. "Did he know the contents of this letter? Did he see the copy or the original before the officer took it, Juanna?"

"No, monsieur; I only spoke of two letters, but did not show them or copy this in his presence."

"Perhaps he may not remember them, and will not decamp. He seems to be set upon a desperate hazard," said Harry.

"You had better get out a warrant for him at once," suggested Alfred.

"It is useless," said Leflore, "he will take no step I shall not know of."

"Well, at any rate, let us go at once to the Recorder's office. I wish to see these letters and be sure of their safety. I will ring for a carriage and we can all go together."

"Except me, monsieur," said Juanna; "my friend, the Recorder, might not like my masquerade; but I will send Armand to meet you, if he has returned."

"Harry," said Denton, who had been in a deep study ever since he heard the contents of the letter, "didn't you read something about a feller named Bill Huckley in that letter?"

"Yes."

"Well, I wonder if it ain't that old feller that's at my boardin' house sick; that's the name and he axed me this mornin' if I know a man named Rainsford, and if I wouldn't bring him to see him. I didn't promise, for I didn't know what he wanted."



My God! if it should be him truly! Go at once, Denton, but be cautious, and await me here, when you have found out."

"You needn't fear me, Harry," said the boatman, taking his leave. Juanna had already gone.

"You will please excuse me also, Berford," said the Indian. "I will join you here again in a few hours. I could do you no good at the Recorder's office, but may elsewhere."

"As you think best, Leflore; but one thing, if you find him—remember."

"I am too much of an Indian to rob my friend of his revenge," said Leflore.

"Well, Alfred, we must go alone then," said Harry.

"*Allons, mon cher.* We had better stop, however, and pick up your lawyer."

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE RECORDER'S COURT.

WHEN Juanna had given the letters to the policeman, she warned him in a few brief words of their importance, and immediately on his return home sent for her friend, Armand, and asked his advice and assistance. Latour readily understood the whole bearing of the case, and to his quick mind the thought immediately suggested itself that Rainsford should not even obtain a sight of the letters before Berford was advised of their existence. So without going in person to hunt for the Kentuckian, he hurried to the Recorder's and after a short interview with that worthy officer he easily secured his object.

When the Kentuckian, with his friend and counsel, arrived at the Recorder's after the information received from Juanna, they found Armand Latour there, who had permitted the quadroon's masquerade for the purpose of notifying Berford, because he had been advised that Rainsford's business had been confided to able and unscrupulous hands, and that an attempt would be made the next morning to obtain possession of the papers by him in the Kentuckian's absence, and therefore he deemed his own presence in the court necessary and important. The lawyer employed by Rainsford was there. He was a man of about thirty-five years old, of athletic proportions and graceful persons, very handsome, notwithstanding a somewhat forbidding expression of countenance. In disposition he was bold, haughty and overbearing; in character cruel, sensual and selfish, and in reputation such as barely to be tolerated. He was addressing the Recorder when the party entered.

"Do I understand your honor to say that I, as the counsel of Mr. Rainsford, who claims these letters, cannot even examine them? Is this usual? Is it courteous to me?"

"There is no intention to treat you with any want of courtesy, Mr. Martin; for reasons connected with the administration of justice I have determined to withhold these papers from inspection, especially by Rainsford or his counsel, until a gentleman whom I expect arrives."

"And all in good time; here he comes," said Latour, who had been very quietly listening to Rainsford's counsel, perfectly satisfied that the Recorder's mind was made up.

As Mr. Martin turned to see who was referred to, the first person his glance encountered was Alfred Duval. For an instant their eyes were fixed on each other with anything but amicable regards, and then with a scarcely perceptible shrug, the lawyer turned to look at Berford. This was the man who had slain Henri Duval, Alfred's eldest brother, in a duel, and the latter, though under a sacred promise never to quarrel with him, could scarcely repress his hatred in his presence; while Martin perfectly aware of Alfred's position, was too politic to offer an insult, which under the circumstances, would have been considered cowardly; but merely intended by his manner to protest against the existing state of things.

"And now, may it please your honor," said Mr. Martin, "as the gentleman has doubtless arrived who claims an interest in these mysterious papers, and is accompanied, I see, by eminent counsel, the documents may, I suppose, be produced and submitted for perusal."

"So far as the interests of my client are concerned," said the counsel who accompanied Berford, "it is our wish and intention that at least one of these letters shall be made public; but in the present state of the proceedings, as *amicus curiæ*, I suggest that they be withheld for the time being, as my client has a serious criminal charge to make, in which these papers are all important, and must remain in your honor's hands until given over to the prosecuting attorney——"

"A charge against my client, Mr. Robert Rainsford?" asked Martin.

"Against Richard Ranney, falsely styling himself Robert Rainsford."

"Ah! Might I ask its nature?"

"The abduction of a white female child in the State of Kentucky for which crime a requisition will be speedily made out; and for the offence against the laws of our own State, of holding or attempting to hold in slavery a free white person."

"Oh, ho!" exclaimed Martin, "it is another act of the drama of the quadroon. Truly she must be a fine creature to enlist so many *preux chevaliers* in her defence!"

"You are speaking of my sister, sir!" exclaimed Harry Berford, sternly fixing his eagle glance upon the lawyer, whose eyes glared fiercely for a moment, and then shrank from the intensity of the Kentuckian's gaze.

"She may be a princess in disguise. But until it appears, I am none the less determined to protect the interests of my client, which, in fact, are somewhat identified with my own, since I have been so foolish as to advance him twelve hundred dollars on the security of his title to this girl, who, from all accounts, is too beautiful to be carelessly lost."

Alfred breathed hard with excitement, and was about to burst out with an angry expression, but was restrained by his friend, Latour. Promptly, however, and before he could remonstrate with Armand, Harry Berford stepped up to the lawyer, and said, in a low, deep voice,

"One word more of this, sir, and I will strike you to my feet!"

Before Martin could reply, the Recorder interfered, and commanded silence and peace. Berford then made the necessary affidavit, and a warrant was issued for the arrest of Richard Ranney, alias Robert Rainsford, which was placed in the hands of a faithful and expert officer, chosen by Berford's counsel. Harry had, with much reluctance, consented to this step, for it seemed like abandoning his cherished purpose of personal vengeance; but he had been persuaded by both Alfred and his counsel, and yielded on the plea that without some such precaution was used, Rainsford, when he found out he was detected, might escape.

The party had already turned to leave the court-room, and were near the door, when Leflore, the Choctaw, entered with an angry and troubled look his usually passive features seldom wore.

"What is it, my friend?" asked Berford.

"He is off!"

"Impossible! Ranney gone? When and where?"

"He left this morning in an up-river boat?"

All eyes were turned on Rainsford's lawyer to find out whether he had been privy to his client's disappearance, but he was evidently as much astonished as they, both from the expression of his countenance and his somewhat triumphal exclamation,

"Then, by Heaven, she will be mine!"

He had scarcely uttered the words, when he measured his length on the floor, felled by a powerful blow from Harry Berford. He quickly sprang to his feet, and with a demoniac expression, said, in a low, hoarse whisper;

"Ruffian! you shall answer for this with your life."

"When you please," replied Harry.

The friends of the parties, seeing that the Recorder had retired, hurried them out of the room lest he might return and bind them over to keep the peace, though there was not so much danger of the interference of the authorities of New Orleans with such pastimes as there would be a little further North.

When they had got outside they only paused long enough for Harry to refer to Armand Latour as his friend, at the privately whispered request of that gentleman, and for him to appoint an hour to receive some one on the part of Mr. Martin to make arrangements for the proposed meeting.

Berford having obtained a promise from his counsel, who was compelled to leave him to attend another court, that he would see him in the afternoon, entered the carriage with his friends and drove towards the St. Charles Hotel.

"As we are to receive the challenge, *mon ami*, and have the choice of weapons, will you be so good as to give me your instructions," said Armand to Harry, as they rode along.

"Arrange it to your own satisfaction, my friend," replied Harry.

"No! you shall not do that!" exclaimed Alfred; "or rather, you must not take swords. *Ce mauvais Martin* is 'au fait,' with them. Do you remember, we thought Henri had no equal in the city as a swordsman, and yet he was killed by him."

"Your brother! Is this the man he fought?" asked Berford, with feeling.

"He is the same. My father exacted a sacred pledge from me that I would never quarrel with him, or I should have fought him long ago. But, my dear friend, you will avenge us all. You have the choice of weapons—take rifles; you Kentuckians are expert, and you will kill him."

"My dear Alfred, duelling, if justifiable, is only so on the ground that it equalizes the chances of combat by excluding unfair advantages. I will not, especially under existing circumstances, place myself at the mercy of this accomplished swordsman; but I will not, either, even against this man, who robbed you of a brother, my sweet cousin Sophie of an affianced lover and insulted me, take those advantages which I refuse to submit to. You are right, with the rifle the lives of most men would be in my hands, and, therefore, I discard it; the pistol will place us on a more equal footing."

"He is a crack shot with the pistol also," said Alfred.

"Never mind that, my friend. Reputed crack shots are not always the most dangerous foes. Monsieur Latour, let it be pistols, and grant me a day's delay, if your customs allow it."

"Certainly, my dear fellow, and now *c'est une affaire arrange*. Let us stop a few moments at the St. Louis Exchange and show ourselves; we shall have plenty of time, and I want one of their good punches."

The friends loitered but a short time in this celebrated bar-room the object of Armand being merely to introduce his friend to some young creoles, whom he was certain to find there at that hour, that he might enlist their sympathy in his behalf. After a brief chat with some of these, who were much pleased with the Kentuckian's frank, manly deportment, and after partaking of some refreshments, the party proceeded to the St. Charles Hotel. A gentleman appeared shortly after their arrival, and a hostile meeting was arranged for the next morning but one, to take place on the Metairie Ridge, Latour naming pistols at ten paces, and the American mode of firing.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

SOPHIE.

THE interview that afternoon between Berford and the distinguished lawyer he had employed, and who took a sincere interest in his affairs, was long and earnest. The counsellor did not disguise from his client the difficulties of the case, and frankly told him he considered his quarrel most unfortunate, since it cut off all reasonable hopes of a compromise with Martin, in case the pretended title of Rainsford accrued to him. He had taken the liberty, during the day, of seeing M. Martin, and urging him strongly on this subject, but had found him intractable and determined.

"Remember, my young friend, I do not blame you for this difficulty; I should not have acted differently myself; but I have known M. Martin from his boyhood; his father was my friend, and I have more influence over him perhaps than another; and I tell you he is fiery, perverse, and thoroughly vicious when roused. You are aware that he killed Henri Duval, a fine noble youth, for some slight ball-room misunderstanding, and it is most unfortunate that this scoundrel Rainsford, or Ranney, fell in with him. He lost considerable caste on account of some circumstances connected with his duel with Henri, and he has hated the family ever since. It was doubtless from learning the interest Alfred took in your sister's affairs, that he has taken so active a part in them himself, for the purpose of annoying and vexing him."

"What, then, shall I do, sir? This man, with wealth, connections and ability, is capable of giving us great trouble. Must we really submit to a trial? Must my sister be dragged into a court? Never! I will take the responsibility of carrying, or rather sending her, at once to Kentucky, where, if I survive this combat, I will join her, and we can defy the entanglements of your law."

"Softly, my young friend; such a step would be imprudent, most unfortunate at this time. Fear nothing, but trust the affair to me. Your sister's feelings shall be guarded as sacredly as if she were my own daughter, and if need be I will be as prompt to advise such a course, taking care to protect my good friend, M. Dufour, in regard to his responsibilities, as you will to adopt it. But, as I said, fear no-

thing, I have shown you the difficulties; leave me to battle with them. Our law is humane and just; it protects even the slave in his natural rights, and, our judges are learned and honorable; so I again beg you to leave the affair to me. In the meanwhile, dismiss unpleasant thoughts as far as possible from your mind; and, my young friend, excuse an old man if he asks you to dismiss bitterness against your opponent also from your heart. Gentlemen fight for honor, not vengeance; and your foe's death might complicate, but could not elucidate our affairs. Excuse me if I have taken too great a liberty." This was said in a voice of gentleness and emotion.

"Excuse! nay, I respect and thank you for it, sir," replied Harry Berford, taking the old gentleman's hand and pressing it respectfully. "I fear I may have cherished too much the thoughts of vengeance, even against the wretch who has so wronged you; as for M. Martin, whom I never saw until to-day, I shall not go on the ground with any desire to take his life, but shall be governed by his own conduct, and the surrounding circumstances, together with the imperative duty in the present emergency of guarding my own life, if possible."

The two parted with increasing mutual respect; and Berford, in company with Alfred, was soon on his way to what was now the paradise of earth to them both, the presence of those they loved best.

Harry Berford was of that temperament which easily throws off unpleasant thoughts in the matters of mere personal concern, and Alfred was too buoyant with the hopes inspired by the almost certainty that the clouds which hung over Marie were about to be dispersed, and leave for her and himself a clear sunshine of happiness, to be long depressed; so that, on their arrival at the villa of M. Duval, there was no trace of antipathy untoward in their countenances.

They found the family just about to sit down to dinner, Marie having been persuaded to make one of the party. She held her face up to Harry for a kiss, and blushed as she gave her hand to Alfred, who playfully retained it, led her to the table, and placing her next to his mother, took his seat on the other side of her. The meal passed off without any allusion to the absorbing topic in which all felt so deep an interest, except when in reply to M. Dufour's inquiry if anything new had occurred, Berford replied quietly that "two letters had been accidentally found, which would have an important favorable bearing upon his sister's case."

The indisposition to discuss the matter at that time, which Harry's tone and manner perhaps indicated, prevented any further inquiries. After dinner the company adjourned once more to the garden, while the two elder gentlemen lit their Havanas and made themselves comfortable on the seats of the cool summer-house. Alfred by some device drew his mother and sister, with Marie, off to wander among the flowers, and be amused by his gay sallies of wit and humor. Sophie having, in the meantime, quietly placed her arm in that of her cousin, and indicated a desire to converse with him, they strolled away in another direction.

"And now tell me briefly, cousin Harry, about these letters. What are they?"

"Two letters, found by the woman who has taken care of Marie among some rubbish left by that scoundrel; one of which is of no importance, but the other proving clearly that Rainsford and the villain Ranney are one and the same person, and that the bill of sale which he pretends to hold was a fraud, arranged between him and an accomplice."

"Why, this is as clear as sunlight: it will dispel all our troubles, and give us our dear Marie all to ourselves. Is it not so, cousin?" she exclaimed, joyously.

"Alas! my sweet cousin, I would I could say so. It is true, this wretch, notwithstanding all my precaution, has escaped me, and fled to New Orleans; but unfortunately he has made an assignment of his pretended title to a person who will probably be able to give us more trouble than he could have done. There is no doubt as to the final issue; but I would avoid publicity, and that, I fear, my present opponent will scarcely permit us to do."

"But who is this person? If he is a gentleman he will surely yield when he knows the circumstances; if not, money can certainly make him do so, and, thank Heaven, we have enough of that. Who is he?"

"A lawyer named Martin."

"Martin!" exclaimed Sophie, turning pale; "merciful Mother! is he mixed up in our affairs? Have you seen him, Harry, and do you know who he is?"

"I know all, and have met him," said Berford.

"But not quarreled with him, Harry? Tell me you have not quarreled with him!" exclaimed Sophie, in a tone of alarm.

"My sweet cousin, if you become so much excited I shall not be able to tell you any further," said Harry, smiling on her.

"Oh, no, you must tell me all. I can bear it, as I have before borne the misery caused by that fatal man."

"But have I your promise of secrecy?"

"You have, if you demand it," said she, resuming her wonted composure, though she was very pale.

"Well, cousin, these are not affairs which a gentleman wishes to tell a lady; but it may be I shall need your kind offices, and I have learned both to love and trust you. I met this man at the Recorder's Court this morning, where he represented Rainsford or Ranney. He spoke in a light, ribald tone of Marie, and I knocked him down."

"And now you must fight him?"

"I must."

"But he will kill you!" said she, in much apprehension. "He is an unrivaled swordsman."

"Fortunately the weapons and terms are of my own choice, and he will have no advantage."

"Thank Heaven for that! When does it occur?"

"The morning after to-morrow."

"Well, cousin, I will keep your secret, albeit a heavy burden upon

my heart; for to disclose it would not avail to stop this sad and sinful affair; but remember how much hangs on your life. There, you need say no more to me; I divine all you would ask. Marie shall be my sister, and Julie too. Come along, before our absence becomes too marked. I will endeavor to wear an unrevealing face. Luckily my friends are accustomed to see me have a grave one."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### FATE STILL UNPROFITOUS TO THE GAMBLER.

THE young men went up to the city early the next morning, as Berford had much business before him. On arriving at his room he found a note from the Choctaw.

It read as follows:

"A catastrophe has happened which may prove of importance to you. The steamboat on which Ranney left has blown up, and he has just been brought back to the city, pretty severely, if not mortally wounded. I go to the hospital where he is. Denton is with me, and one of us will return to bring you news during the morning.

Yours, LEFLORE."

This news made a deep impression on the mind of Harry Berford. It seemed as if Providence had taken revenge out of his hands. Of course, his anxiety to hear the result of the interview with the wounded man was great; but he knew the reliance to be placed in the intelligence and discretion of his Indian friend too well to interfere, by going directly in person to the hospital, as was his first impulse, and so he very prudently determined to remain where he was, and await the promised information.

In the meantime, he dispatched notes to Father Dunois and his counsel, requesting their presence at his apartments.

He did not wait long for information from the hospital, for half an hour had scarcely elapsed before Denton returned. The boatman did not stop to be interrogated, but grasping Berford by the hand, he spoke at once with more than his unusual directness.

"It's all right, Harry, my dear boy—it's all right; that Ingen is jest the smartest chap I ever set my eyes on. It's all right, and you must come and bring your lawyer at once."

"I have already sent for him, and while we are waiting for him, suppose you give us your news a little more in detail, Denton," said the young Kentuckian.

"Well it is a tale to tell, that's fact, Harry; but I'll not make a long story of it. Only to think of this feller, Bob Rainsford, bein' the rascal what stole old Dan Berford's darter! An' only think I should find Bill Huckley jest it the nick of time, and he so desperate poor that he would have sold himself, much less his chum, for money."

"What does this Rainsford, or Ranney, say?" asked Harry.

"Why, at first he wouldn't talk at all, and then after the Ingen said a few words to him he talked willin' enough. You see, Harry, he hopes he's goin to git well, and he sees you've got him fast; for I told him I'd got Bill Huckley, and that he knew all about his villainy; and then you see, Harry, there's some human nature in the blackest heart on airth, and this fellow's got an old mother in Kentucky, and the thoughts of her a-tuggin at his heartstrings. So to be short, we've made a fair bargain—if he gets well, he's to go free, and if he dies, we're to give his old mother somethin to make her comfortable, and he's to make a clean breast of it. So the Choctaw—what an almighty smart chap he is—sent me to say you must come along with your lawyer at once."

"And in good time; here he is, I hope," said Berford, rising to answer a knock at the door.

True enough, the lawyer and Father Dunois had arrived together. After a brief explanation, the whole party got into a carriage and proceeded directly to the hospital. Rainsford—for we still call him, for convenience sake, by his assumed name—appeared to be sinking very fast when they arrived. At the sight of Berford, whom he now knew, of course, he exhibited some uneasiness, but was quickly quieted by Leflore, who, sitting at his bedside, seemed to exercise a mesmeric influence over him. After a few words of conversation with him, the lawyer, who had taken the precaution to send for a magistrate before leaving the hotel, was satisfied that he was in the full possession of his mental faculties and on the arrival of the magistrate, who had come without delay, he reduced the confession of Rainsford to legal form, and had it properly attested and authenticated. It was full and explicit, establishing beyond cavil or question, the identity of Marie with the lost sister of Harry Berford, Father Dunois then said a few words to the dying man—for such he apparently was—and the lawyer having assured him, on the part of Berford, between whom the wrong-doer not a word had passed though all thoughts of vengeance had left the young Kentuckian's heart—that every promise to him should be faithfully observed, the party left, with the exception of Leflore, who remained at Rainsford's request.

The testimony thus taken was legally authenticated, and with the confession of Huckley, the erasure of all record, indicating the supposed condition of Marie, was easily effected, through an order of court made by the learned and humane judge who had given the first order which secured her immunity from the persecution of Rainsford.

It was late in the afternoon when the young men, accompanied by Father Dunois, arrived at the villa of M. Duval, bearing the joyful intelligence of Marie's redemption. It would be a vain attempt if we should essay to depict the happiness of the little circle of loving friends who listened to the narration of what had occurred. Marie came in for heartfelt congratulations and a full share of kisses, of which Alfred, the saucy fellow, actually claimed one himself.

Sophie Dufour only wore anything like care on her brow.

Taking Harry Berford aside, as soon as she could without attracting marked attention, she said:

"And now, my cousin, cannot this unhappy duel be avoided? Certainly there should be some means of settling it."

"I fear there is none, my dear Sophie. My good, good friend and counsel, Mr. —, has taken the liberty of seeing M. Martin without my consent, but even he has no hope of an amicable arrangement."

"How sinful that all this joy which heaven grants us should be poisoned by man's evil passions. Do not misunderstand me, cousin Harry. I blame you not; but that fatal man is a terror to me."

"Let us hope for the best, dear Sophie. I am not a duelist from any admiration of the barbarous practice, but from the force of education and necessity; and even sinful as you deem such contests to be, in them, as in everything else, heaven protects the right."

"Will you tell Marie or Julie?" asked Sophie.

"I would rather not."

When Harry Berford took leave of his sister that night, she expressed some disappointment at his returning to the city; he embraced her tenderly, however, merely saying:

"Do not love me less, dear one, because I am away."

"I shall love you always, with my whole heart," was the fond reply.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## THE DUEL.

BERFORD found Armand Latour and his lawyer at his apartments when he returned to the St. Charles. Mr. — told him that he had seen Martin, who exhibited great vexation at the discoveries in relation to Marie, not so much in regard to the anticipated loss of his money, as because he had no pretext for attempting to resist the proceedings which would be taken at once to erase the records in regard to her, and confirm judicially what was too evident to be controverted. He would listen to no suggestion, however, for an amicable settlement of his quarrel with Harry Berford, remarking, with much bitterness,

"By G—d, I'll mar some of their happiness yet!"

"I trust, my dear sir," said Berford to his lawyer, when he heard this, "that he did not understand any proposition as coming from me."

"Have no fear, my young friend, I did not compromise you; I addressed him as the friend of his father."

After an elegant repast was served in Berford's room, during which not even a thought of the morrow's serious work was allowed to sit too gravely on their enjoyment, the friends separated; apartments having been provided in the hotel for those who were to accompany him to the field.

It was some twenty minutes before the appointed time the next morning, when Harry Berford, with his friends, Latour, Denton and Leflore, arrived on the ground, where they found his adversary already present. Alfred, from notions of propriety, did not accompany his friend, but anxiously awaited the result in the neighborhood.

The usual formal salutations were passed; the seconds had a short interview, and preparations were promptly made. The parties were then properly placed, and the pistols handed them. As Armand Latour turned to go to his station, he noticed that Berford's opponent held his pistol elevated for what is called a "dropping fire," a position sometimes deemed inadmissible. He was about to object, when Berford, seeing his intention, beckoned him and remarked, in a low voice:

"Let him alone; it is better so."

The right to give the word had been won by Armand, and the arrangement was to fire between the words "fire!" and "three!"

"Gentlemen, are you both ready?"

"Ready," was the simultaneous reply.

"Fire! one—two—three? Stop!"

At the word "fire," and before another syllable could be formed, the quick eye and hand of the Kentuckian had done their work. Martin had not time to extend his pistol before the weapon dropped from his grasp, exploding in the air, and his arm fell powerless at his side. His seconds and surgeon went quickly to him, and after a few moments' conversation, a dark scowl of pain and anger resting on his brow, he permitted his friend to meet Armand, who politely asked if the challenger was satisfied.

"For the present, he must be," was the reply.

Berford and his friends then left the ground. They had scarcely got out of sight of his opponent when Alfred met them.

"Safe! my dear Harry," exclaimed he, throwing his arms around his friend.

"Yes, by the will of Heaven."

"And Martin?"

"His pistol hand is seriously injured, I think," said Armand.

This they subsequently learned to be the fact, and that amputation was necessary, the ball from Berford's pistol having crushed both bones above the wrist, and lacerated the flesh terribly.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## THE LITTLE CHAPEL.

It was some two weeks after that affair that the church of Father Dunois was decked with flowers for the marriage sacrament. Attended only by their relatives and a few intimate friends, two brides stood before the altar. They were the beautiful Marie Berford and the scarcely less lovely Julie Duval. It had been determined that the double marriage should take place before Marie went to Kentucky, to meet that mother whom she so longed now to embrace. Rachel, to whom Marie owed such a debt of gratitude, had, much to her delight, been taken into the service of that young lady, and was as happy as her nature could be.

The impressive words of the ceremony had ceased; the congratulations of relatives and friends were offered and received, and the party were about to leave the church, when a veiled female approached Marie. As she uncovered her face, the features of Juanna were disclosed, wearing a sadder and more serious expression than was ever perhaps seen upon them before.

"You will pardon this intrusion. I wanted to see you once more, and Father Dunois has been so kind as to permit me to come," said she.

"Pardon! Oh, we owe you too much for you to talk so," exclaimed Marie.

"And will you permit me to take your hand?"

Marie, blushing slightly, frankly presented her cheek. Juanna, who was unusually pale, touched it with her lips, exclaiming with emotion:

"God bless you! that kiss has made me pure again."

Armand, who acted as one of the groomsmen, was at first annoyed at the appearance of Juanna, but her manner and expression soon puzzled him.

Father Dunois stepped forward, however, and said:

"I acceded to your request, Juanna, first, because I knew it would give you pleasure to witness the happiness of your old playmate, and I was sure it would not be considered as an intrusion, but chiefly because I have a revelation to make in regard to you, for which I

deemed the time and company appropriate. The facts which I am about to state I am prepared to verify by evidence in my possession, which I recently obtained from an old priest who has lately arrived here for the purpose of seeking you, but who is now sick at my house. The knowledge of them will change your future position, and as I have known you from childhood, and know your heart is neither wanton nor corrupt, how false soever the position in which circumstances have placed you, I have chosen to relate them before our friends. Juanna, your mother was not a quadroon, but a Mexican, and the lawful wife of your father, who, fearing the prejudice he might encounter in New Orleans from her dark complexion—she was partly of Indian blood—very foolishly and wickedly, as it turned out, persuaded her to permit him to hide the fact of their marriage, and to live with him as his paramour. Why she submitted to his second marriage and a separation, I do not know, unless it was that disease had somewhat impaired her mind, and she shrank from the assertion of her rights, hoping at the time, that by yielding she would secure a better provision for you; but what I have said is susceptible of proof."

The astonishment not only of Juanna, but of all his auditors, was very great. With firmness the young Spanish girl spoke, however:

"What you tell me, Father Dunois, but adds to the resolution which I announced to you this morning to retire, with your aid, to a convent. Heaven will pardon and forgive me, the world never can."

"Juanna!" exclaimed Armand.

"Not here, and no how can I speak to you, Armand," said she with much emotion. "I will see you once more at the house of Father Dunois, with his permission."

She waved a sad adieu to the company, and turned to depart, when her steps were suddenly arrested by something at the other end of the chapel. With a shriek, her eyes starting wildly and her face pale as death, she threw herself upon the bosom of Marie. At the same moment a pistol shot ran through the room.

"Oh, God! I have saved her! Thank God! May this be some atonement for the past," exclaimed the Spanish girl, turning still more deathly pale.

Every eye had been turned to the point where she was looking, and there pale, haggard and ghost-like, his eyes wild, and glittering in their sockets like those of a basilisk, stood Ranney, with his fatal weapon pointed at the young bride. Before a hand could interpose, though each of the young men sprang instantly forward, the shot had sped, which the devoted bosom of poor Juanna only arrested in its murderous mission.

The gambler threw up his arms with a loud maniac shout.

"Ha! ha! I've spoiled some of your sport."

The next instant he lay crushed, bleeding and senseless beneath the feet of the brave boatman, who was the first to reach him.

\* \* \* \* \*



A few days after her marriage, Marie and her husband, accompanied by her brother and his bride, with her relations, Sophie and M. Dufour, were borne by a noble steamer towards that home she had not seen from infancy and to that mother of whom she had so often dreamed.

A letter had already conveyed to Mrs. Berford the joyous intelligence, and trembling on the threshold stood that eager watcher, to clasp the loved, the lost and the found once more in her fond maternal embrace.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### JUANNA'S DEATH BED

In a little room at the residence of Father Dunois, the Spanish girl, lay dying. Around her bedside were the good priest, with his friend from Mexico, who had come to seek her, Armand Latour, a physician, and that kind un vowed Sister of Charity, Sophie Dufour. Juanna's face was very pale, but placid and serene in its expression. Calling the doctor to her, she asked in a low voice :

"How long do you think I will live, doctor? Do not fear to answer me frankly; I know the worst and have no fears."

In accents tremulous with pity, not unmixed with admiration, the man whose profession is so proverbially stoical replied :

"You may live until to-morrow; but that you may be prepared for the worst, the flame may go out at sunset."

"Will I live until sunset?"

"If you are quiet I have no doubt of it."

"Thank you, doctor, it will be long enough. Armand!"

Latour came at once and bent over her.

"Dear Armand, I consent to your generous sacrifice; I think it would make me die happy."

"Do not call it a sacrifice, Juanna," said Armand, choking with emotion.

"As you will, dear Armand; but do you think they—would—all—come?" asked she hesitatingly.

Sophie Dufour overheard the inquiry, and being acquainted, through Alfred, with the purpose of Latour to offer marriage to Juanna, answered as she perceived that he hesitated :

"Certainly, my dear girl; your friends will all be here in a short time to see you, and witness that holy sacrament which monsieur has so justly and generously invoked in your behalf. Would that it were the will of the Almighty that you might be spared to us."

"Oh, generous and noble!" murmured the poor girl. "Armand, is she not good? You must never forget this."

Latour turned a look full of gratitude and admiration upon Sophie, but not trusting his voice in words, he turned momentarily aside.

"Ah! mademoiselle, his heart is priceless. May the good God make him happy when I am gone," said Juanna, in a tone low and prayer-like.

Sophie did not reply, but in her own kind and gentle heart she could not but admire the conduct of Armand Latour, who, rich almost beyond desire, accomplished and universally popular, with only that blemish upon his life so venial in the society where he lived, was so prompt to offer the atonement of marriage when it was in his power to justify and soothe the dying moments of one whose greatest fault, perhaps, was that she loved "not wisely but too well."

There was no mock modesty, nor false fastidiousness in the demeanor of the young creole lady; of immaculate purity herself, she did not shrink from the frailties of those who needed her charity, but, the incarnation of love and mercy, she was as fearless in her mission of good as she was pure and above taint in her own character.

And now weak and feeble from his recent sickness, and deeply affected by the untoward event which had just occurred, came to the bedside of the dying girl the old Mexican priest, the friend and relative of her mother. With emotion he pressed her hand and smoothed her brow, but his feelings were almost too full for expression.

"Father," said Juanna, "you knew and loved my mother; you are our relation; you performed the marriage ceremony for her?"

"I did! I did! my child; woe is the day that I find you thus!"

"Nay, father, it is God's will. I have sinned deeply, but there is redemption even for me, I hope."

"There is—there is; you have confessed it—*pax vobiscum*. You will be forgiven."

"Thank you, father; I have only a few words to say. That gentleman, who has ever been kind and gentle to me, and to whom, in the eye of God, I have been ever a faithful companion—a wife—is about to join with me in the holy sacraments of marriage. I will not go to my mother, in heaven, altogether disgraced, whatever the world may think of me. Father, I wish you to perform the ceremony."

"Daughter, I will; and thank my Heavenly Father who has spared me even for this great mercy."

"Armand," called Juanna.

As M. Latour again drew near and bent over her, Sophie Durant modestly withdrew to the other side of the room.

"Armand, I desire you and Father Clementino here to listen to my last wishes. The good Father Dunois tells me I am a great heiress, and I have signed a will giving it all to you."

"Juanna, what is gold to me?"

"Nay, listen, Armand; it was just and right; but I have a favor to ask. Will you grant it?"

"If it involves my life!"

"It is this only. I know you have wealth enough, but one-half of my estate I wish you to retain, the other I would have given to Father Clementino for his charities in the village from whence my mother came, to do with as he pleases."

"It shall be done," said Latour. "Nay, father," added he, as the old priest seemed about to protest, "I would rather it were the whole, but her wishes shall be faithfully executed. Dear Juanna, is there anything else?"

"No I wished to place something at the command of Father Dunois, but he will not accept it."

"It was from no unkindness, my child," said Father Dunois; "Monsieur Latour had requested that he might contribute to our school and chapel."

Juanna turned her eyes fondly and gratefully to her friend.

"Thanks, dear Armand, you anticipated my thoughts. I would leave some benefits for the race with whom I have been so long identified."

"All, all will be as you wish, Juanna. And now calm yourself."

The doctor here interposed, and protested against the over-excitement of conversation.

"Only one word more, Armand—that kind-hearted, brave boatman?"

"Shall never know want," replied Latour.

Motioning the others away, the doctor now gently soothed the brow of his patient, and administered a sedative, under the influence of which she sank into a momentary repose.

Father Dunois now caused an altar to be erected near the head of her bed, and made preparations for the approaching ceremony.

It was not long before a knock at the door of the apartment announced the arrival of Juanna's friend, who had awaited at the house of M. Dufour, after seeing her borne from the chapel, accompanied by Sophie and Armand, the news which was brought them, and the summons to her presence.

As they came in the Spanish girl, upon whose face a slight flush was perceptible, aroused from her repose, and as she welcomed them with a smile, a glow of ineffable satisfaction was on her countenance.

They were all there, Alfred and Marie Berford and Julie, M. Duval and his gentle wife, and M. Dufour, while in the background, a deep shade of sorrow upon his rugged brow, was Denton, the boatman. Marie glided softly to the side of the sufferer, and, leaning over, imprinted a gentle kiss upon her brow.

"Oh, dear Juanna!" murmured she, "what can I do to testify my love and gratitude?"

"Hush! I am more than repaid. God is just. Do not grieve, dear Marie; but sometimes think of me" said the dying girl.

The witnesses were now disposed for the ceremony. Juanna was slightly propped by pillows; Armand stood beside her, holding her hand, and Father Clementino, in the robes of his office, took his place at the altar. Then followed the solemn and impressive marriage ceremony of the Roman Church, which closed with a fervent benediction, and Armand Latour and Juanna De Costa were pronounced man and wife.

The excitement gave a fresh glow to the beautiful features of the Spanish girl, and, one by one, she received the congratulations of her friends with a happy smile that almost cheated them into the hope that she might yet recover, vain and delusive though it was.

As Marie imprinted a fond sisterly kiss upon her lips, she said,

"If an occasion ever occurs will you be his sister-friend? The consolation which the sympathy of a pure woman affords man in sorrow is always sweet and blessed."

"I will—I will," said Marie, tearfully.

"Armand, you hear!" said Juanna; "now, my husband, embrace me!"

Stooping down, Armand Latour gathered his old love but his new bride gently to his bosom, when, impulsively throwing her arms around his neck, she exclaimed,

"Oh! thank God, I am forgiven! I am happy now."

With this outburst of emotion the blood gushed again from her wound, her eye grew suddenly dim and her face paled, though lit by a smile of heavenly satisfaction, and upon the breast of him to whom she had never been untrue, she died gently as the flowers fade.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

## THE OLD HOME.

AFTER the funeral of Juanna, which was quiet and unostentatious but attended not only by her innumerable friends, who felt they owed so much to her heroism, but by many of the most respectable portion of that class to which she had been supposed to belong, and for whose welfare she had always shown so lively an interest, Harry Berford sought Armand Latour, and, somewhat to his surprise, found Dick Denton with him.

"I have come, my dear friend," said Berford, "to ask you if you will not go to Kentucky with us. It would be a great pleasure for me to receive you in my old home, and all of your friends desire your company. We leave the day after to-morrow, but can defer our departure if you have any business to settle."

"None that would prevent me from accepting your kind offer if I could do so, but it is impossible."

"I am sorry for that," replied Berford; "I had hoped—"

"Stop, my friend, do not misunderstand me. Nothing would give me more satisfaction than to accompany you, but, for the time, I have a duty to perform which must prevent me. I shall accompany Father Clementino to Mexico, to put him in possession of the half of my wife's property, and to carry out a wish she was too generous to name to me for fear of giving trouble. I shall take the remains of her mother and her own to be deposited among those of their kindred in their town. I have a favor to ask of you, too," he added.

"Name it, my friend," said Harry, warmly.

"It is only the loan of your aid, Denton, for a little while."

"Dick!" exclaimed Berford.

"Well, you see, Harry," said the boatman, speaking up. "I thought if you had nothing particular for me to do, and as Armand here might feel sorter lonesome, I wouldn't mind goin' along to keep him company, and see something of the world."

"If you have no objections I should like to take him with me to Mexico. She liked him and his company cheers me."

"With all my heart," exclaimed Harry. "I have no earthly con-

trol over Denton, but I am too much indebted to him not to have a regard for his interests. He could not, however, do me a greater favor than to serve you."

"It's all right, then, Harry," said the boatman; "I'll go. He'll not be sorry to have some one to talk about her—and she was a splendid creature, and no mistake."

This last was said in an aside, but with great feeling. The rough and generous nature of the boatman was just one on which the brilliant traits of Juanna were likely to make the deepest impression.

"And when do you expect to return?" asked Berford.

"Within two or three months, I hope. I will then come to you, if you are still at home, and bring him with me," said Latour.

"Do so, you will be most cordially welcome, and Denton can show you the way."

After warm and friendly adieux the friends departed.

\* \* \* \* \*

And now the noble steamer ploughs her way up the current of the "Father of Waters"—now she enters the mouth of *la belle riviere*, passes rapidly along its beautiful and fertile shores, and reaches Louisville, the end of her journey. Our friends were too much preoccupied by their own joys, hopes and regrets to pause for the enjoyment of even a few hours' recreation in that fair and hospitable city. Fortunately for their anxiety they found a packet about to start and were quickly transferred to her. The next morning Marie was called early by her brother, and, accompanied him alone to the deck, for even her husband regarded her feelings as too sacred for intrusion.

There, in sight, was the old homestead, which they were fast approaching.

Did they recognise it? Was there any spell to awaken long slumbering memories and reproduce in the mind the image which had filled it in childhood? Who can tell? Who shall say that even the earliest impressions are effaced by time and change? How often do associations crowd on the imagination, of which we can give no definite explanation save that they are wonderfully familiar to us?

One by one Harry pointed out to her the different objects, until she began at last to fancy she remembered all about them. As they approached nearer, the garden leading from the house to the river came fully in view, and Marie bent upon it a look full of inquiry not unmixed with pain. Her brother understood her at once, and said quietly:

"It is not there; it has been removed."

This was an allusion to the monument which had been erected when they thought her dead. Not wishing her mind to dwell too long on sad thoughts he continued:

"But see here, Marie, you have not noticed the little flag which we

carry," pointing to a small pennant which was floating from the flag-staff at the bow of the boat.

"No, what is it for," asked she.

"Look yonder again; do you see the centre window of the second story?"

"Yes, it is up—there is some one there—it is—my mother!" exclaimed she, throwing herself into her brother's arms.

Harry gave full time for her emotion, and then recalling her gently, he said:

"Come, my sister, it will be soon time for us to land; let us call our friends."

On descending to the cabin they found their company gathered together ready to disembark.

Alfred very considerably took charge of his own sister, leaving his wife still in the care of her brother. In a few moments they had landed, and Berford found several of the family servants ready to take charge of the baggage, and was welcomed with quiet but affectionate solicitude by them. His mother did not dare to trust herself to a public meeting with her recovered child, though her eager and palpitating heart had counted every pulse of time since the boat which bore her precious treasure had first been signalled. Although the servants well knew who the thickly-veiled lady was, conducted by their young master, with a sense of delicate propriety belonging almost universally to their race, they forbore any troublesome demonstration, though their faithful hearts rejoiced in the happiness prepared for their beloved mistress, and the eldest, a venerable old negro, said quietly:

"You go 'long fust, massa Harry; you'll find old missus in de little room back ob de parlor. Leff me to show de gemmin and ladies in."

Harry, with a word to his friends, obeyed the suggestion, and conducted his sister through the garden into the old hall to the door of the little apartment, where he gave her to the trembling arms that were outstretched to receive her.

At last the mother clasps her long lost-child. Over that sacred scene let us draw the veil. No pen can do it justice.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

## THE FLIGHT OF TIME—NEW SCENES.

TWELVE months had passed, and not a cloud darkened the horizon which surrounded our young friends, nor scarce a change worthy of note. Bright as halcyon days flew the glad hours over their heads.

The old riverside home of the Berfords retained its guests for months, and then first M. Duval and his wife were obliged to return home, and with them M. Dufour, leaving Sophie. The promise was, however, that with early summer they should reunite for a tour by the lakes and through the Northern States; and when they came again Armand Latour and the ever faithful Denton were of their company. Refined associations had toned down Devil's Dick into a more civilized and presentable being, and attached to him as they all were for his services and his sterling qualities of heart, there was no such thing as permitting him to leave them; so he maintained the position of companion and general factotum to the whole party. At times the death of Rainsford, who survived but a few hours the rude fall which Dick had given him in the chapel where poor Juanna received her death wound, appeared to weigh slightly upon his spirits; but his conscience was too clear in regard to the responsibility of that transaction to experience any permanent disturbance; and then again he would talk feelingly of the girl, "splendiferous and glorified," but on the whole these changes only tended to tone down his character to a little more softness, which sat not ungracefully upon his rude but noble nature.

And Armand, how had he borne the afflictions of the past? Sorrow especially when accompanied by anything like conscious error, has a wonderful influence to soften and sanctify even an erring disposition, if there be some good still left therein; but where noble and generous sentiments preponderate, as with Armand Latour, they often crystalize character, and render it beautiful. So it was with the husband of Juanna. He had done all that devotion and generosity could do to fulfill her wishes, and to render a worthy testimonial of respect and regard to her memory; but her claims were not put off merely with this. In the changed and sobered nature of her lover was to be found a hither memento of his affection and her influence.

Never did mutual regard and sympathies bind together friends more united and affectionate, and never was wealth more judiciously applied. It is not required by the narrative of our novel to follow the movements of the friends in detail during the time which intervened between the close of the last chapter and opening of the present; nor even to make individual reference to them, as has been in a measure done; but of her who has appeared so little in our pages, the mild, hopeful, Christian mother of Marie, it may be permitted to say that joy at the unlooked-for blessing of her child's recovery seemed to halo her life with a new glory; and if a bitter regret welled up from the secret fountains of her heart that he who had gone down in sorrow to the grave could not have survived for this glad hour of happiness, it was sweetened with thankfulness for the mercy which had been vouchsafed.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon of a bright and beautiful fall day that a cabriolet set down two young men at the entrance of a celebrated pistol gallery, about midway of the Champs Elysees in Paris, on the left side, and near where the present Gardin Mabille is located.

"There is Armand's cab; he is ahead of us," said one of them.

"Not much, I think; at any rate his antagonist has not arrived."

"Oh, there he is behind us? le Capitaine Dufour never lags where war, women or wine is concerned, or a good dinner is at stake; albeit he is a brave and gallant gentleman, and nearly related to one of our best creole families."

The speaker and his companion descended from their vehicle, which had scarcely time to move ahead before a handsome cabriolet took its place, which landed an officer in the splendid uniform of a French cuirassier, accompanied by a slight but distinguished-looking person in the habit of an Abbe.

"Charmed to see you, gentlemen," said the captain. "Allow me to present my friend, the Abbe Charleville. Where is our friend Latour? Already at his practice, eh?"

"From the presence of his cabriolet, I should judge he was ahead of us. Allons."

The parties now entered the pistol gallery, where they were well received by the urbane and gentlemanly proprietor.

"Your companion is before you, gentlemen," said he, "and has already made some fine shots."

"We will accord him those," said the captain.

The truth was this party had met for a trial of skill in pistol shooting, on a friendly wager of a dinner, to be paid by the loser of the two champions, who were Armand Latour on the one side, and Captain Dufour of the French army on the other. The two individuals who arrived first to criticise the operations were our friends Alfred Duval and Harry Berford.

Our party, consisting of M. Dufour, Sophie, Alfred, Berford and their wives, and Armand, had been in Paris about a month. Mrs. Berford was spending the time of their absence with the family of M.

Duval. She suppressed the unhappiness which a second parting with her daughter caused, with that noble generosity of which mothers alone are capable, because she believed change and travel would not only give pleasure to Marie, but tend to obliterate the sad impressions which her youthful trials had not failed to leave. Paris is the city of the world where the illusions of the senses may be gratified most with least error, and pleasure does not necessarily entail excess or dissipation, and agreeable indeed had the time of our friends passed. Americans are always well received in Paris, but particularly so the creoles of Louisiana, so many of whom are descended from the best families of France. M. Durant and Alfred Duval, besides being provided with the best letters of introduction, found relatives to receive them kindly, and open to them the avenues of the most agreeable society. Between the young married folks there was that charming confidence, that mutual unselfish desire that neither should lose any enjoyment because the other could not partake of it, which constitutes the true and only rational basis of connubial happiness. Thus, while appropriate hours were given to the society of the ladies, leisure was afforded the gentlemen to mingle freely with the world, at that age when one finds so much which is attractive in novelty and change, to avail themselves of their opportunities of social intercourse with those of their own sex.

Among the fashionable young men of Paris they found agreeable companions, and became in turn popular and admired, as indeed they were fitted in character and accomplishments to be. In a word, *les trois amis Americaines*, were in a measure lions in Parisian society, much sought and ever welcome. Ever ready to mix in reasonable amusement, affable in their manners, generous in their own entertainments, and possessed of the *savoir faire* which is so necessary, it is no wonder that they were favorites. Among their acquaintance they early numbered le Capitaine Dufour, a gentlemanly and accomplished officer, and it was during a discussion as to the skill of Americans in the use of fire-arms that a friendly wager had been made between him and Armand Latour on a trial of pistol shots.

## CHAPTER XXX.

## THE PISTOL EXERCISE—A MYSTERIOUS CHARACTER—WHO IS HE ?

ARMAND LATOUR greeted his adversary cordially. Another young Parisian, a distant relative of his own, already known to the friends M. Charles Lacour. "Now, gentlemen," said M. Lacour, "we shall have the pleasure of seeing the famous American shooting."

"Scarcely a fair specimen from me," said Armand; "you should get my friend Berford to show you what shooting is."

"I hope monsieur will so far favor us before we part; though we have been in the gallery before, I notice he does not handle the pistol."

"Because he is perfect in its use," said Alfred, laughing.

Berford disclaimed the compliment, but said he would fire a few shots after the match, if his friend so desired.

Preparations were soon made, and the match began. The parties were to fire thirteen shots, with deliberate aim, at twenty-five paces, and seven at the word of command at twelve paces, Captain Dufour having practiced this mode with great success. At the first trial they both shot with remarkable accuracy, and so closely that it was difficult to judge between them; the proprietor of the gallery regarded it as a tie, but Berford, who had been selected as umpire, gave the decision in favor of Captain Dufour, much to his gratification. In the second trial, although le capitaine certainly fired with great accuracy, especially as the mode of firing at the word is not in vogue among his countrymen, the superiority of Latour was decided.

"But," said the captain, gaily, "this decides not the bet, we have not foreseen the result. Shall we have another test?"

"As you please, captain," said Latour, pleasantly.

"Or suppose you allow me to decide it by a Kentucky rule," said Berford, pleasantly, for he believed Armand would unquestionably win, and he preferred matters should remain just as they were, for that is always some pride that is in danger of being wounded by even the most friendly trial of skill.

"Oh, certainly, by all means, a Kentucky decision, it will be a novelty," exclaimed Dufour and Latour at the same moment. Armand nodding his acquiescence.

"Well, then, gentlemen, when the stakeholder declares his inability to decide an issue in Kentucky, he most generally offers to treat the crowd, which is never refused," said Berford with something of Western humor in his manner, so quaint as to raise a general laugh. "In other words," added he, "you will be my guest to-day."

"Oh! Kentucky justice for me by all means," exclaimed Armand, laughing. The captain submitted with a protest that it was hardly fair towards the stakeholder. "And now, monsieur," said Lacour, "you will gratify us with an exhibition of your skill."

Berford took a pistol carelessly, examined it at a moment, held it at arm's length perpendicularly, with the muzzle up, extended his arm, and the instant explosion was followed by the tinkling of a little bell attached to the bull's eye, the very centre of which his ball had struck. Then requesting Armand to give him the word of command, he fired half a dozen times in succession, his pistol exploding almost instantly at the word "fire" and the ball in every instance striking the bull's eye, which was about the size of half a dollar. This was at twenty five paces.

"Wonderful! wonderful! But that is twice the distance at which duels are fought in America, monsieur, I believe?" said the captain.

"Ten paces is usual," replied Berford.

"*Mon Dieu!* I am brave, but I should not wish to stand before you at any distance," said Lacour, with a shrug, and a grimace, that made them all laugh. "Will monsieur show us some feats at ten paces?"

Harry took out a pocket-knife and asked the proprietor if he could fix it firmly with the end of the large blade perpendicular. The man declining its use, produced a blade fitted for the purpose, and placed it on the target.

Berford then measured the distance, and taking his position split several balls, still firing at the word of command, as before, on the blade; he then stood with his back to the target, and wheeling did the same thing, with scarcely a sensible difference in the time of firing. He next drew the figure of a man, and on different parts of the body small circles of an inch in diameter, which he numbered; then taking his position, he requested Armand, in giving the word, to call the number which he desired to hit, the instant before giving the word "fire!" Every time he succeeded in planting his ball in the centre of the ring, called with the same wonderful rapidity. "Wonderful, indeed," exclaimed Captain Dufour. "I see, monsieur, that you would command your opponent's life; and could yet spare it safely."

"I should be loth to take what was so evidently in my power; or even to use my skill in such a combat; yet you say truly, that it gives me the power to spare, and therefore I cherish it; though I am opposed to duelling."

The Frenchman looked a little grave at this declaration. "Yet he fought one in New Orleans and spared his antagonist under great

provocation," said Alfred, who was fearful that Harry's expression might lower him in the esteem of men to whom the duello was sacred law. "Come, Harry, a few shots with a carbine now, and we will let you off," said he.

"I have one," said the proprietor, "which I think monsieur would approve." He produced a beautiful carbine, calling Berford's attention to the sights, which were very fine and arranged in the American fashion, as also was the shape of the stock at the shoulder. Berford examined it approvingly, expressed his admiration to the satisfaction of the proprietor; and taking a visiting card from his pocket, he drew a cross in the centre and one near each corner; these he surrounded with a black ring about the size of a ten cent piece. While thus engaged, the rifle or carbine was loaded and handed to him. For the purpose of testing the sights, he fired at a little earthen figure which was on the target about sixty paces off, the head of which flew into a thousand pieces. He now proceeded to the target and fixed the card upon it, then measuring forty paces back, he prepared to shoot. Armand was again requested to give the word. In five successive shots he pierced every circle on the card, actually breaking the centre of three of the crosses, firing every time at the word "two!" or with less than three seconds to bring his rifle down, which was held perpendicularly up, and take aim.

"It is magic!" exclaimed Captain Dufour.

"Quelle diablerie!" said Lacour.

"You are the most accomplished shot in the world, monsieur," said the proprietor.

"By no means, monsieur; there are many in my country who excel me, if not in the feats I have performed, at least in others more difficult."

"I would be glad if my mysterious customer could see you shoot, monsieur; until you came I thought him unrivalled with the pistol at the word of command."

"Why do you call him your mysterious customer, Lubec?" asked Captain Dufour.

"First, because he is so taciturn and wears an air of mystery; next, because his whole soul seems bent on obtaining a certain accuracy combined with rapidity of firing, and his success is certainly astonishing, as he uses only the left hand; and lastly, because for my life I cannot tell whether he is Parisian or not," said the proprietor.

"Uses his left hand!" said M. Lacour.

"His right is gone, monsieur, probably lost in some combat, which he now practices to renew. Such is my impression."

The three friends exchanged glances.

"Do you know his name, monsieur?" asked Armand.

"M. St. Martin."

A look of intelligence passed between the friends. "How long has he been here?" continued Lacour.

"It is about three months since I first saw him?" said the proprietor.

After settling for the use of the gallery, the party separated, each to his cabriolet.

"Remember, gentlemen," said Berford, "Very's at seven."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

MONSIEUR ST. MARTIN.

THE customer of whom the proprietor had spoken had been in the habit of using a private gallery, to which no one but the person waiting was admitted. Lubec had generally done so; but monsieur arrived while the match was going on, and entering the retired gallery which he used, he bid the garcon keep quiet, while through a thin partition he heard all that transpired. His countenance expressed the most fearful passion, the most intense hatred and revenge, and though he uttered not a word, keeping the garcon quiet in his box by an emphatic and threatening gesture, yet his features, in their expressive pantomime, spoke such malignity that the attendant paled with fear and horror.

No sooner had Berford and his friends left the gallery, than regardless of his practice, he burst out and addressed the proprietor in an angry tone:

"By what right, sir, do you reveal and speculate upon the private affairs of those who honor you with their patronage?"

"If monsieur overheard me, he must be aware that I said nothing disrespectful," said the man deprecatingly.

"I am aware that you have taken an unwarrantable liberty with my affairs, which, if you were a gentleman, I would shoot you for."

"Monsieur, I have served," said Lubec, pointing to the small red ribbon that decked his buttonhole—for any Frenchman is sensitive on the point of honor, no matter how humble his position.

"Bah!" said St. Martin, using the most expressive interjection of contempt a Frenchman can utter. "That does not make you my equal. There," added he, throwing down a *billet du banque*, "is a gratuity for your extra-attention."

Lubec was in a perfect rage, which Monsieur St. Martin, as he walked coolly off, did not even condescend to notice. It happened ten minutes after our friends had left the gallery, that Alfred Duval, who was in the cabriolet with Berford, remembered that in paying for the use of the gallery he had left his tablets on the desk, and as they had not gone further than the Place Vendome, Berford insisted on driving back for it. The horse was turned and the cabriolet had proceeded about half the distance when they both at the same time noticed a gentleman walking towards them; they had not met by some fifty paces when recognition became mutual. He was Monsieur



St. Martin, or in other words Mr. Martin, the lawyer, with whom Berford had fought at New Orleans. A distant but polite salute was made by our friends, which the other returned with great formality and hauteur. Alfred noticed that in touching his hat the first impulse of Martin seemed to be with the stump of his right arm, but that he immediately changed, while his face paled and a dark expression gathered on his brow.

"It is really he then," said Alfred, after they had passed, "and he seeks your life. That pantomime of the right arm had its meaning—he will attempt to revenge its loss."

"I hope not," said Berford, seriously. "I would not willingly do him a further injury, but there is something in me of the spirit of the early hunters of Kentucky, among whom even my father may be said to have belonged, which would make me turn fiercely, and almost remorselessly, I fear, upon one who vindictively sought my life."

"I certainly hope you will not be obliged to meet him, though I fear it will be hard to avoid it; but if so, you will not certainly be so foolish as to spare him again."

"We shall see if the unfortunate necessity occurs, which I pray it may not be," replied Berford.

The young men found the proprietor of the gallery convulsed with rage, and after Alfred recovered his tablets, they were obliged to listen to his wrongs and his meditated revenge. He was insulted, outraged; he would send monsieur a message by his friend, a sous-lieutenant of the Garde.

"Let him take les pistoles with his fine practice. I understand something myself. If he kill me, well, I die with honor; but prenez-y-garde! let him look out for himself. Lubec, ci-devant lieutenant, who wears the order of the Legion of Honor, not a gentleman, *par Dieu!*" The young men did all in their power to calm Monsieur Lubec, which, by a little judicious flattery they so far succeeded in doing, that he promised to consult some of his friends before taking any hasty steps. They then took their departure for the hotel which they occupied, where the ladies were waiting for their escort to the gallery of the Louvre.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

## S O P H I E .

SOPHIE DUFOUR sat alone in her apartment at the hotel in Paris. Her friends had gone to the Louvre, but she did not like the accompanying them. Sadness rested upon her spirit. Was it the gloom of the future or a retrospect from the shadows of the past? Who shall say? Certainly the young girl had exhibited a pleasant, not to say a cheerful disposition, and had seemed, nay, was happy in the happiness of her friends; but it was impossible for a heart so full of tenderness and affection not to feel that sadness which the memories of lost love engenders. Was Sophie's heart, her loving heart, buried in the tomb of Alfred Duval? For years she had thought so, and so far as enshrining his image in the sacred shrine of her inner soul none could ever supplant him. But do the young, unless, indeed, the fountains of tenderness be exhausted in their natures, bury with the first love all hope of that pure bliss which comes of mutual regard between the sexes? We think not, and that second love implies no disloyalty to the first.

It would be inquiring too close, perhaps to ask how stood the feelings of Sophie in this regard. Yet certainly the maiden was pensive, even if her meditations were fancy free.

The room of Sophie fronted on the Rue Rivoli, and overlooked the Garden of the Tuileries, and, as in a sort of dreamy abstraction, she gazed on the idlers who passed to and fro along the walks of that celebrated promenade, her regard became suddenly fixed on the form of one who was passing slowly along, and as the stranger casually turned his face upwards towards the windows of her hotel, she grew suddenly pale, and exclaimed, with a start.

"Oh, father of mercy, it is he! What further vengeance does he meditate?"

It was a balmy spring day, and the window at which Sophie sat was up. The stranger had caught sight of her, and the recognition was mutual. A bad smile glowed upon his countenance, and with mock humility he raised his hat, making a deferential salute. The quick blood crimsoned the cheek of Sophie Dufour at what she could but deem an insult. At that moment a servant knocked at the door and presented a card.

It was Armand who called. Having some business of his own, he had not been included in the programme of the visit to the Louvre, and calling, in hopes that the party had not left, as he had something which he deemed important to communicate, he was informed that Miss Dufour alone was at home. There had grown up much friendly regard between Armand and Sophie. She pitied and could but admire him; while the fact that both labored under a great sorrow, was in some measure a bond of sympathy between them. Latour had also great confidence in the judgement and good sense of Sophie, and he knew of old her self-possession and nerve, whenever duty or principle required it. Under the circumstances, therefore, he was not sorry to find her alone; of all their party, she was the person to whom he could best open the embarrassing subject which was on his mind.

The truth was, without being aware that Alfred or Berford knew the presence of Martin, he had met him also and at once recognizing him as the M. St. Martin of the shooting-gallery, divined his object in being at Paris. This gave Armand great uneasiness; he had learned to love Berford as a brother, and he could not bear to think that his life might perhaps be sacrificed to the vindictiveness of revenge. A hundred times would he have preferred to take all the risks himself, and, in truth, he had made up his mind to forestall the supposed intention of Mr. Martin, and fix a quarrel on that individual himself, if he could only be certain as to his real purposes. It was necessary, however, as he thought, for Berford to be assured of his presence, and he desired to exact a promise from him, if possible, to use every endeavor to avoid a hostile collision. As we have said, however, he found only Sophie Dufour at home, and with his high appreciation of her character, he determined at once to council with her.

It was but a few moments before Sophie appeared in the parlor, and saluted M. Latour with friendliness.

"Ah, I fear you make a recluse of yourself, Mademoiselle Sophie; why are you not with your friends?"

"I did not feel altogether in the humor for sight-seeing, monsieur, replied Sophie; "but are you not liable to a similar charge? Why did you not go?"

"I had a little business which required attention, so I parted with my friends at the shooting-gallery, and, in fact, hoped I should yet be in time to see them, especially as an incident occurred which, I confess, gives me some uneasiness."

"Ah, monsieur, pray tell me, what do you allude to?" said Sophie, with a tremulous apprehension in her voice.

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, I am wrong to mention it, for it may only be an accident and a coincidence—and perhaps I should not trouble you with it at all. Yet you must know that I have a profound respect for your judgment, your courage and your devotion."

"Thank you, monsieur," said she, coloring slightly, "your good opinion is flattering, and will be the more valuable to me if it induces you to trust me in something which I apprehend concerns our friends."

"It is so, mademoiselle. While amusing ourselves at the shooting-gallery this morning, we heard a strange sort of story of a mysterious personage who has been for several months in constant practice, and endeavoring to attain a deadly accuracy with the pistol, which induced the proprietor of the gallery to think it was a vengeance for which he was preparing. One or two little incidents were mentioned in connection with him, such as his using the left hand, having lost his right hand, a similarity of name, &c., which, I believe, turned all our thoughts towards M. Martin, with whom Berford fought at New Orleans."

"Do you know, monsieur, that he is in Paris?" interrupted Sophie.

"It was what I was just coming to. Since parting with our friends, I have just passed him in the street."

"And I saw him from my window, walking in the ~~T~~alleries, not a minute before you called. He even——"

"Dared to salute you," demanded Armand.

"He recognised me and raised his hat,"

"It was an insult. I will call him to account at once. Thank God, I will have a chance now to save Berford!" exclaimed Latour, hastily.

"Stop, monsieur! listen to me," said Sophie, with forced calmness, though she was very pale. "You must take no such step in my behalf. Never will Sophie Dufour permit the life of one she—respects, to be risked again in sinful combat for her, especially against a wretch from whom she can conceive an insult——"

"But, mademoiselle——"

"But, monsieur, I appreciate your doubly generous motive, and particularly as respects my cousin. Yet I beg you to forbear any collision with this man; find some means of baffling his venom which will save blood—even his blood—and I shall be for ever grateful to you."

"Mademoiselle, you are an angel!" exclaimed Armand; "and the more I see and feel your excellence, the more deeply do I hate him for the wrong he has done you. But fear not," added he, "I will endeavor to obey you as you would be obeyed; and although I can give you no promise for the future, I will not make your name, as inconsiderately proposed just now, the cause of a difference with M. Martin, unless, indeed, he should hereafter dare——"

"There, monsieur," said Sophie, with a faint smile, "do not qualify your good resolutions any further. I thank you, believe me, for your generosity."

And Sophie extended her hand, which Armand pressed tenderly.

"Ah, ma'moiselle, how happy are those who win your esteem."

"Be assured that Monsieur Latour has it most sincerely," said Sophie, coloring slightly, for there was an unmistakable warmth in the manner of Armand Latour.

"And more," said he, sadly, as he dropped her hand, "I am unworthy to seek."

Sophie blushed still more deeply, but there was no displeasure in

her manner. When at last she looked up thoughtfully at Armand, for the pause grew painful, there was an expression of such deep despondency, something so hopeless and unhappy, that her heart was filled with a pity at whose touch fled all mere maidenly embarrassment, and gave place to the noble nature of the woman.

"Monsieur, you must not speak so disparagingly of yourself; I have learned to know you well, and you have my entire esteem, friendship——"

"Oh, Sophie, say love, and I shall be the happiest of mortals! Nay, *ma'moiselle*, listen to me," added he. "We have both felt heart-wounds deep, and perhaps incurable. Yours are accompanied only by pure and gentle memories, in mine there is something of wrong and remorse, but where there is repentance the good God chastens, he does not destroy; not with those as young as you and I do the affections exhaust themselves in unavailing regrets, how sacred soever the association of the past may be. I love you, I adore your goodness; accept my hand if indeed I have any power to win your regard, and oh, believe me, as we tread the paths of life together, from which it shall be my care to remove every thorn for you, there will be more happiness in the mutual sympathy of affection than in lonely grief; nor shall one unworthy jealousy grudge the holy tribute of a tear to the noble Henri Duval, while even you will think charitably of her who suffered, it may be for my sin."

Durning this manly outburst Sophie looked pityingly upon the noble, enthusiastic, but still sad countenance before her, until the tears of sympathy welled up into her beautiful eyes. Withdrawing in some natural confusion the hand which he had again taken, she said:

"Monsieur, you will excuse me now—I will see you again."

She retired as far as the door, and there a low sigh very, very sad, arrested her steps. She turned, and seeing the utter despondency which was pictured in her lover's face, her woman's nature relented.

"Monsieur Armand," said she, tremblingly, "why should I play the prude with you? Here"—extending her hand—"you have my esteem, and if indeed this poor heart would be worth your pursuit——"

She said no more, for already was the hand seized, rapturously kissed and respectfully surrendered.

"I will not agitate you further now, dear Sophie; I will seek your father, and right soon I will return. If my suit shocks in the slightest degree your sensibilities, oh, remember what happiness you bestow."

With a sweet smile and an eloquent blush, Sophie meekly said:

"Then for the present *bon jour*, monsieur."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

V E R Y ' S .

ARMAND found M. Dufour during the afternoon, and much to that good gentleman's astonishment asked of him the hand of his daughter, and assured him that he had her consent so to do. To say that the kind and affectionate parent was pleased would scarcely express his satisfaction. He had never expected that Sophie would marry, and although he generously yielded to her feelings, he disliked the idea that she should either enter a convent or spend her life in celibacy. To Armand Latour he had not a single objection. If there were errors in the earlier life of the young man, they were such as a creole might look leniently upon, and his manly character, now chastened by sorrow, was one that M. Dufour greatly admired. His consent was therefore cheerfully given. Together they returned to the hotel, for M. Dufour had not gone with the party to the Louvre, but was enjoying in quiet his favorite game of chess, at the Café de la Régence; and Sophie, having calmed her feelings, she met them with a sweet home smile. More than an hour was passed in delightful intercourse before their friends returned, and when they did there was a telltale happiness in Armand's eyes and telltale blush on Sophie's cheek, which excited a lively but unexpressed curiosity. Sophie at once retired with her two friends to make them as happy as herself almost by the revelation, for all loved and esteemed Armand; while that gentleman, excusing himself to M. Dufour, who declined to be of their dinner party, hurried off with Harry and Alfred.

"Dear Armand, how happy this makes us all!" exclaimed Alfred, when his friend informed him of his good fortune.

Berford pressed his hand quietly, but with full as sincere a meaning.

Latour did not forget, even his own happiness, the cause of disturbance he had in behalf of his friend, and although he was loth to mar the pleasure of the moment by an allusion to his apprehensions, yet his promise to Sophie and his duty made him refer as soon as possible to the matter.

"Oh, we met him also," exclaimed Alfred, "and I have no doubt at what he aims."

"But you will not allow yourself to be drawn into any difficulty with him, my friend?" said Latour, addressing Berford.

"As I said to Alfred, I shall be very sorry that any such necessity were forced on me; and yet the idea of his coolly and murderously seeking my life awakes all the devil in my nature," said Berford.

"But he witnessed all those wonderful shots of yours, Lubec, says."

"Yes," replied Alfred.

"Well, he is certainly not a coward," said Latour; "but perhaps the certainty that your skill will baffle his revenge may induce him to forego his purpose. You say also that Lubec threatens to challenge him."

"Yes," said Alfred, "but that amounts to nothing; of course Martin won't fight him."

"Pardon me, my dear fellow," said Armand, "there is no of course in the matter; the duel is rather republican in France, and if Lubec has served honorably in the army, and finds some old comrade to carry his message, M. Martin will find it rather difficult to refuse. It will be a pity, however, for with Martin's skill, and with his vindictive nature, he will probably kill him."

"But, my friend," said Alfred, "you who know so much of the duel in France should remember that there the rule is reversed. It is he who sends the challenge that chooses the weapons. Lubec may prefer swords."

"Not against a man who has only his left hand, *mon ami*," replied Latour, smiling.

"What is it you say of a man with only his left hand?" asked a pleasant voice. The friends, who were now passing along through the Palais Royal, on their way to the justly celebrated restaurant, where they were to dine, turned at the salutation, and saw Captain Dufour, who was just behind them.

"Ah! monsieur le capitaine, where are your companions?"

"They are ahead of us, I apprehend. I was delayed a few minutes. But you were speaking of a person with but one hand; which, I presume, is apropos to Lubec's mysterious customer of this morning."

"Exactly so, captain," replied Armand, "and we have found out who he is. He observed our amusements this morning, and had some high words with Lubec after we left, whom he insulted grossly."

"Insulted Lubec? That is serious," said Dufour.

"That is exactly what I have been trying to impress on my friends here," said Armand; "that, in fact, he must fight Lubec if he demands it."

"Unquestionably," said Dufour. "I would meet him myself on a proper occasion. But who is this gentleman? I think I have heard of him too."

"He is a creole of New Orleans, a lawyer of good family and fine ability, but of an angry and vindictive nature," said Latour. "Our friend Berford here fought him in New Orleans, and spared his life, by spoiling his pistol hand," said Latour.

"Ah! and it's you whom he seeks, monsieur," said the captain, addressing Berford. "With the pistol you would be safe; but there is something more here. Since I left you, I called on an acquaintance, a celebrated *maitre des armes*, and, strange to say, a person answering his description precisely has been in constant daily practice with the sword. M. says he never saw any one so perfect with the left hand."

"He was an unrivalled swordsman with his right hand," said Alfred Duval.

"It will be necessary, then, my friend, to be a little cautious," continued Captain Dufour to Harry. "Should anything occur, command me."

"Thank you, captain," said Berford, warmly. "But here we are, and our friends are no doubt waiting."

Very's. Why, many a Jonathan has walked past the place, and sneered at its pretensions, in comparison with Taylor's or Thompson's in New York, and perhaps he has sauntered in and paid a high price for a dinner which he considered no great things; but a dinner at Very's is a great thing, nevertheless.

We will not linger over a dinner; the company was mutually agreeable, and the viands were not to be surpassed; yet the friends parted at a reasonable hour. Harry had taken a box at the opera, which was then located in the celebrated Salle Venauderer. There was to be such an association of talent as perhaps the world never witnessed before or since.

The opera was "Don Giovanni," and there were Grisi, Persiani and Albertazzi; there were Rubini, Tamburini and Duprez, and last, though not least in fame or person, the great Lablache. The house was crowded with the "elite" of the Parisian world, then containing many of the most noted persons of the present century. Berford had been singularly fortunate in securing a box on such a night, but then money will do a great deal, and the gallant and wealthy young Kentuckian understood the art of dispensing it with grace as well as liberality; and extending an invitation to his guests to accept seats in his box, he parted them for a short while with an *au revoir a l'Opera*.

We shall attempt no description of the brilliant performance that evening, it is chronicled in the history of music and remembered by many still living. Notwithstanding the blaze of loyalty which was present, and the galaxy of aristocratic beauty which graced the occasion, the box which contained our American party was the cynosure of many eyes. In front sat Marie, with her rich dreamy beauty; Sophie, with her Madonna-like face, halo'd with newborn joy; and Julie bright, sparkling and rosy as Flora herself. It would have been difficult, also, to have collected half a dozen finer specimens of gentlemen than our three Americans and their Parisian guests. There were respectful glances of admiration drawn towards the party; an incident, however, towards the close of the opera, marred the enjoyment of the evening. Sophie happened to cast her eyes for a moment towards the orchestra seats between the last acts, when she encountered a rude

gaze, before which her cheek grew pale. Captain Dufour, who happened to be looking in the same direction, was the first to notice it.

"*Par Dieu !*" he exclaimed, in an aside to M. Latour, "but that person in the orchestra is rude; I will soon know the meaning of his impertinence."

"Pardon me, captain," said Armand, laying his hand upon the gallant officer's arm as he was about to leave the house quietly, "but it is my privilege."

This occurred in the rear of the box; at the same instant, Berford, who was leaning over Sophie, observed her pallor as well as the cause. He recognised in the offender M. Martin. An angry flush came over his brow, which Sophie immediately noticed and laying her hand on his arm, she whispered with a low, deep, emphasis:

"For God's sake, my cousin, if you love me, forbear."

Before the meaning of this agitation had extended even to the others in the box, a scene occurred which diverted any attention that might otherwise have been drawn thereto. Next to him and the box of the Americans, was a fashionable dressed person, wearing the ribbon of the Legion of Honor somewhat ostentatiously displayed in his button-hole. A looker on would have said that this gentleman was very much gotten up for the occasion, yet his manners were perfectly well-bred—what Frenchman's are not?—though there was evidently a quiet *empressement* about him which betokened a mind preoccupied with a single idea. He, too, had occasionally turned his eye to the box containing Berford and his friends, but with respect and deference. The slight commotion which M. Martin's impertinent glance occasioned, had been instantly observed by him also, and before the movement among our friends had attracted attention, as we have said, he suddenly arose, and with what might have seemed to others an easy *nonchalance*, placed his person between M. Martin, and the object of his gaze; to the lawyer, however the intention was as apparent as he considered it impertinent. For the first time during the evening—so engrossed had he been with other thoughts—M. Martin recognised in his neighbor, Lubec, the proprietor of the pistol gallery, and enraged at his conduct, he uttered in a low, hissing tone, an insolent order for him to get out of his way.

This was replied by a sneer of defiance, when, in a passion, Martin dashed his left hand rudely in the face of the *ci-devant* lieutenant. In an instant there was a blaze of indignation around him; a Frenchman of spirit never forgives a blow to himself, and resents it even to another. The buzz was very exciting for a moment, but quickly quieted, for two plain well-dressed gentlemen who belonged to the detective police stepped up to M. Martin and requested his company, which he had sense enough to comply with, without opposition.

The attention of our whole party was attracted of course, but in the general though momentary excitement which occurred, the evident and marked interest with which they regarded the scene passed without notice.

When the opera was over and the party retiring, Berford con-

signing Julie to M. Latour, was a few feet in advance of his friends, when he encountered M. Martin, who had been released on the assurance of an acquaintance upon whom he called, pale and threatening. Divining his motive, and wishing to avoid a scene, Berford said at once:

"I understand your object, sir, and will gratify it. Let us have no further scene."

"You are quick of apprehension, monsieur; that pleases me. There is my card. You will not keep me waiting; my right arm still pains me."

"My friend will call on you to-night," said Berford, "and now as a gentleman, spare the ladies your presence."

Martin bowed, with a smile of bitter satisfaction, and turned away before he was observed by any one, except Captain Dufour. This gallant officer came up promptly to Harry and whispered:

"You will allow me the honor?"

"Thank you, captain, warmly," said Harry, slipping the card into his hand. "I will converse with you after the *petit souper*, at which the ladies expect the honor of your company at our hotel."

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE FATE OF THE DUELLIST.

NOTWITHSTANDING the incident at the opera, which, of course, elicited some remarks, the *petit souper* at the apartments of Berford passed off gaily and pleasantly. Harry's rencontre with Martin was not revealed, however, and except with Sophie—whose admirable presence of mind enabled her to hide her emotions—the appearance of Martin gave the females of the party no particular apprehension.

After the retirement of the ladies, Berford took Captain Dufour aside, and gave him briefly his directions.

"You know that you have the right to name the weapons, according to our code," said Captain Dufour.

"But we are both Americans, and with us the right is his," replied Berford.

"Why should you waive an advantage, however, with such a man?"

"For the very reason that it is an advantage. But excuse me, my dear captain, I prefer you should at least offer him the choice."

"Which he will unhesitatingly accept," said the officer, shaking his head. "After witnessing your wonderful skill this morning, he will choose swords, and let me tell you a left-handed swordsman is a very awkward customer to deal with."

Harry only smiled and bowed in reply. Captain Dufour, promising to lose no time, now took his departure in company with M. Latour, and Berford, after some conversation with his friends, retired.

The cabriolet of the gallant captain was in the courtyard of the hotel before eight o'clock the next morning. Berford met him in the saloon, and received his report.

"Well," said Captain Dufour, "it is as I told you ; he chooses swords, and did so with such evident triumph that he must feel sure of his skill."

"And yet he may be mistaken," said Harry. "At what hour did he say, captain?"

"Ten o'clock. M. Martin has his hands full ; by that time he will have finished off poor Lubec, and be ready for you."

"Ah ! he meets Lubec then?"

"Yes ; but he seemed to make very light of it, and only regretted he must defer your claim for an hour ; but Lubec got the start of you last night, and after the scene at the theatre, M. Martin could not refuse his message, especially as it was borne by an officer of the Guard. But come, where are your friends ? They go with us of course. I wish you all to breakfast with me, and have sent Latour to make preparations. I also desire to feel your strength with the foils, and there is a nice piece of green sward in the garden of the little restaurant just outside of the barriers, where we breakfast."

"Only Lacour accompanies us ; I prefer that Alfred should remain," said Berford. "And now, captain, I will be with you in a few moments," added he, gaily ; "we must pick up Armand on our way."

Berford re-entered his own apartments, went to the bedside of his sleeping wife, around whose mouth played a faint smile, as if of pleasant dreams, and, imprinting a kiss on her brow without awakening her, he breathed an inward prayer, and at his door he met Alfred.

"Remember, my dear brother, I leave all concerning her to you."

The young creole replied only by a warm pressure of the hand, and the two joined Captain Dufour. Alfred saw them to the cabriolet, arranging, before they parted, with the captain the means of obtaining the earliest information.

Armand was already standing by his cabriolet, and being directed to follow the party, was soon driving towards the barriers.

At a beautiful and quiet little restaurant, just within the Bois de Boulogne, the friends stopped and found M. Lacour, who greeted them cordially.

"Our breakfast will be ready in half an hour, and Beaujeu promises us a famous one."

"Have you brought everything?" asked the captain.

"Oui, monsieur ; and there is a cup of coffee ready for you after your drive."

"Let us have it, *mon ami*, and a pair of foils and masks in the garden."

After a few rounds with the foils, Captain Dufour was delighted with the skill of Berford, as well as his perfect self-possession. That gallant officer was himself unrivalled in the use of the rapier, fencing almost equally with either hand, an accomplishment much sought, but he did not find that he obtained any advantage by the use of the left hand.

"Ah, that is good ; you are strong—very strong !" he exclaimed.

"And now we will not tire you. Only feel the handle of these." And opening a case which Lacour handed him he produced a pair of exquisitely mounted duelling swords, long, keen and trenchant, which had seen service.

Harry did as he was requested, and expressed the admiration which he knew was expected of him.

"Ah ! you are right ; there are no better blades in France !" exclaimed the captain. "*Mais allons déjeuner !*"

The breakfast was a very pleasant affair, not serious, but quiet. There is a mingled exhilaration and gravity on the eve of a duel in the feeling of those about to take part in it, which is as far from unbecoming lightness as it is from the seriousness of apprehension.

It was the captain, who, looking at his watch, said :

"Come, gentlemen, our time is up ; we have just half a mile to drive, and twenty minutes to do it in. I always make it a rule to arrive five minutes before the hour. No more, for that would betray a want of proper calmness."

The cabriolet in which Berford and the captain was seated was in advance, and had just turned an angle in the road when it met one containing Lubec and a young officer of the Guards. The face of the former wore a serious expression.

Captain Dufour was about to pop in with a polite salutation, but at a gesture from the officer he pulled up.

"*C'est fini, monsieur*," said the proprietor of the shooting-gallery.

"And you are unhurt, Lubec?"

"*Oui, monsieur, je vous remercie !*"

"I am glad," said Captain Dufour, extending his hand, kindly, which the other took with feeling. "And M. Martin will be waiting for us?"

The young guardsman shook his head gravely, while Lubec said, in a low voice :

"He will fight no more, *il est mort*. It was his own fault ; why did he insult—why did he give me a blow?"

"Dead !" exclaimed the captain and Berford in a breath.

"That ends our affair and it is as well," continued Dufour. "Nevertheless, we must be on the ground in time. Good morning, Lubec ; if you need my services, command them. *Bon jour, monsieur*."

A few rods further in the cabriolets, and the captain descended, requesting Berford to keep his seat. A half dozen steps through the trees brought him to a small circular grass plot, the scene of the late conflict, and there, pale and death stricken, in the last mortal agonies,

lay the duellist, his great vengeance unachieved, a victim to his own bad passions by the hand of one he despised.

The breath was fast leaving the body and the film gathering over his sight, yet he instantly recognised Captain Dufour, and a frown of baffled hate contracted his brow, while a convulsive movement shook his frame, which the next moment was still in death. One of his seconds met Captain Dufour, and after a brief conversation the latter rejoined his companions.

"Come, let us away, we have nothing more to do here."

"Can we render no assistance?" asked Berford.

"He is past human aid, and his seconds inform me that he has relatives in Paris who will care for his remains."

"How did it happen?" asked Latour.

"It seems that he proposed swords himself, which Lubec accepted. Finding his adversary stronger than he supposed, M. Martin, still feeling his superiority, attempted a difficult feat to end the matter at once; but, his foot slipping, Lubec's weapon was driven through him unavoidably, and without the poor fellow's intending such a result. *Mais allons partir, mes amis,*" said the captain, touching his horse.

"It is the providence of God!" said Berford, gravely, and in his heart he thanked that Supreme Being whose mysterious dispensation had spared him the conflict, and to whose mercy he charitably commended the soul of his foe.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

## NUPTIALS—HOME AT LAST—THE END.

It was about three weeks after the foregoing incidents that a splendid bridal party stood before the altar of one of the Catholic churches in Paris. Sophie Dufour, in her calm and quiet beauty, wore the wreath, while by her side, chastened by sorrows of the past, but looking very happy, was Armand Latour. Around them were gathered their relations, and a venerable priest performed the ceremony.

If there was a tear in the bride's eyes, or a tremulousness in her voice as she made the responses, there was peace at her heart, for she felt that she had chosen well and wisely. It would be too curious an inquiry into the human heart to analyze her feelings closely in regard to the death of M. Martin; that she felt a relief at the escape of her beloved cousin from peril is true and natural, but that pity even for him who had persecuted and insulted her, and slain the lover of her youth, is equally true and creditable to her Christian feelings. In the only conversation which she held on the subject with her father and relatives, she discovered to them the probable reasons for M. Martin's hatred. He had long been a rejected suitor, and with a nature such as his, from love to hate is a short step. This threw a larger portion of the mantle of charity over his memory in the opinion of all present, even of Alfred, than it had before received.

But we left the bride and the groom at the altar.

Well, the ceremony was over, the congratulations offered, and the party adjourned to the rooms of M. Dufour, whose happiness was in a great measure complete, where a splendid entertainment awaited them.

Never, perhaps, was a company better pleased with themselves and their entertainment. It would lengthen our story, now drawing to a close, to relate half the brilliant and happy things that were said, to tell how witty and agreeable Captain Dufour was, or how M. Lacour declared he was going to America in search of a wife, or how sweet and bright Marie and Julie, those twin-sisters in beauty and affection, appeared, or half the compliments, respectful and well timed, which were paid to the lovely Sophie. Chronicles of these things on the tide of development may be acceptable or excusable, but when the



plot has ceased the reader very properly looks upon them as superfluous.

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Six months more have passed, and our friends are once more home and, sure enough, M. Lacour has come with them. It is said he soon found what he sought in the person of a beautiful and wealthy creole.

The joy of welcome was great, and the reunion with their kindred the perfection of earthly happiness to our friends. They found all whom they loved waiting to receive them, and from devout hearts before the altar of Father Dunois' little chapel, went up the incense of thankfulness of great mercies.

Here we close, and bid adieu to the happy Marie. All Saints' Day never passes but Sophie and Armand are seen before the tomb of Henri Duval, and a tablet erected to the memory of Juanna, whose remains rest in Mexico beside her mother's, receives a fresh chaplet.

THE END.