

Percy B. St. John



The Red Hand

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A Tale of Louisiana
by

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Book I.

CHAPTER I.

THE MONK OF ST. MARYS TOWER.

About an hour after sun-down, when the tinkling bell of the Ursuline convent was summoning to prayer, on the 12th March, 17—, two men, the one old, and the other young, were seated on the banks of one of the many lakes that branch off by narrow bayous from the vast body of waters which, taking their rise in the Rocky Mountains, and about the confines of the Great Slave Swamp, Red Lake, and Lake of the Woods, rush in one collective mass into the Gulf of Mexico, under the name of Mississippi, or father of rivers, These marshy expanses, or lagoons, are numerous in the neighbourhood of New Orleans, and for a long time served as a retreat for the lurking savage, for the runaway slave, and for the banditti which infested the suburbs of the capital of Louisiana. At no time were these lawless gangs so rife, as when Spain, by a secret concession from France, took possession of this fine province, and by ruling with an iron-rod, only laid down to take in hand the axe of the executioner, made the Creoles regret the kindly government and almost free time of the burghers and French magistrates. It was when the fierce tyranny of the Inquisition and Escorial was at its height, that we take up the thread of our narrative.

It was moonlight, and the whole scene, circumscribed in its extent, lay in full view of the two men, who, silent and thoughtful, were resting on a log that had been cast up on the white sand beach, washed ever by the murmuring waves of this diminutive inland sea, 'The cotton-tree and sycamore grew densely to the very edge of the lake, a thick grove rising close behind the strangers; whilst to the left, a channel into which the close growing foliage swept its bowing vegetation, marked the road by which the Ponchartrain might be gained. In the centre of the lagoon, on an island, not an acre in extent, rose black against the sky a lonely tower, whose shadow fell chillingly across the dancing waters to the

very feet of those who now gazed curiously upon it, The summit of this look-out, as it appeared to be, was half in ruins, while from a narrow window, near the ground, one solitary light beamed for an instant, and then was periodically obscured to appear again, as if the occupant of the apartment were walking slowly to and fro.

High over all, diffusing its borrowed light with that chaste coldness native to Diana, never so expressively noted as by him who sung of the icicle that hung on the temple—rode the silent moon; tipping the summit of the trees with a silver hue, and casting one half of the lake into darkness and gloom. A faint tracery of spring clouds was sent scudding over the blue heavens, as if the monarch of the storm, the mighty north wind, were clearing his own field to give battle; for a black spot on the edge of the horizon seemed to portend a tempest. The wild fowl—that pepper the surface of Louisianian lakes—were flying to roost; the sand hill crane passed over the heads of the wayfarers, uttering its ominous cry, and the jackal-howl of the sneaking American wolf proved that the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, could foresee the change in the elements. A moaning sigh amid the treetops showed that the still wind was being vexed by the far off currents, while on the bleached tops of a dead sycamore some croaking night-bird seemed to rejoice at the temporary disruption of nature.

»The hour and the place are well chosen«, said the elder of the two men, with a perceptible shiver. »I warrant me no Spanish buff-jerkin be on the look-out this evening. Your true Hiberian loves a pretty girl's smile, and a cigar by the earth, better than spying during stormy weather.«

»*Ma foi!*» replied his younger and more vivacious companion, »and your Spaniard is not far wrong. I repent me much this night-creeping, when I remember that I lose a ball, and seeing Marcella in an Andalusian dance.«

»Leone!" exclaimed the other, »how can a Frenchman and a patriot speak thus while his country is groaning beneath a foreign sway, and when all true men are uniting to drive the usurpers back to their own land!«

““Oh«, said Leone, with a yawn, »I certainly do not approve of this foreign sway any more than yourself, Count Thibaut, but these night rides are a great bore.«

»Who goes there?» exclaimed the count, as a rustling was heard behind them in the bushes,

»St. Louis!«

»Advance«, replied the enthusiastic noble, »and welcome, my friends.«

A dozen men, of various ages, but all, by their apparel, evidently belonging to the better classes of colonial society, now emerged from the path which led from the high road to the lake, leading their horses, which a couple of Negroes, hitherto unobserved, came hastening to relieve them of.

»It is time we made a signal«, continued the count, who was evidently the moving spirit of this small band—it was pretty evident—of conspirators.

»Aye, and that we hurried our business«, said a stout, burly man, of middle age, somewhat dolefully, »for a wet skin will be no welcome thing as we ride home.«

Count Thibaut made no reply, but taking from one of the Negroes a smouldering rope's-end, applied it to a diminutive rocket, fastened horizontally on the log which had served him as a seat. A bright flash, with a loud report, followed, and then away went the blazing messenger in the direction of the tower, sending forth, as it pursued its course, myriad sparks, and bursting at length, with beautiful effect, amid the shadowy influence of the tower.

»The signal has told«, exclaimed Thibaut, as the light in the lower part of the tower ceased to be obscured.

An instant of dead silence followed, and then the motion of some kind of boat was distinctly heard upon the water. At that very moment two heads were cautiously and noiselessly protruded from the bushes to the left, while two pair of eyes watched with intense interest what was passing under their several observations. One was marked by the shaved crown and tuft of a North American Indian, while the other had an equally unmistakeable Anglo-Saxon face, surmounted by a New England

broadbrim. These secret observers appeared mutually unaware of the presence of the other, nor did either of the apparitions last for more than a minute, both withdrawing to cover, having been tempted, no doubt, to risk discovery only from a momentary impulse, influenced by the arrival of the boat.

»Well, massa«, inquired the boatman, who stood upright, impelling his craft by means of a lung pole, »what him gen'lmen want at um Saint Marry dis time o' night?«

»St. Louis«, replied Count Thibaut, »and the Monk.«

The boatman, who had hitherto kept about half a dozen yards from the shore, now without a word pushed close to the beech, upon which the whole party went hurriedly on board his flat-bottomed boat. Again the taciturn negro, like Charon just loaded with a cargo of turbulent spirits, began his ferrying avocations. His progress was slower than before, his old boat being somewhat overloaded, which the man who had been so fearful of the storm overtaking them failed not to observe.

»An' I get not drenched by the storm, I stand a good chance of being ducked in the lake«, he muttered under his teeth, with that testy fretful tone common to all habitual grumblers.

»If we upset, we must walk to the tower«, replied Count Thibaut, sarcastically.

»Walk on the water«, said the other, piously crossing himself, »St. Francis and St. Blaire forefend.«

»There are but four feet of water between us and the earth«, continued the Count, drily.

No reply being made by the party attacked, utter silence prevailed, all being en din intently surveying the lonely and half-ruined tower they were nearing^[1]. A few stone steps, sweeping into the water, led to the narrow and deep embrasure in which the door of the Tower of St. Mary was set, while all around were no signs whatever of the hand of man. The tower rose from an island as flat as the deck of a ship.

As the boat touched the lowest step, the negro leaped ashore, and fastened his craft by its painter. The passengers then landed, and,

headed by the Count, advanced towards the door of the tower. The Count knocked.

»Come in«, said a deep, and almost unnaturally hard voice.

They entered a room furnished in a style of the utmost simplicity. A large table, a few benches, an arm chair, with an iron lamp swinging from the blackened roof, where heavy wooden beams showed marks of fire ; such, with a ladder leading to the upper part of the tower, was the principal apartment of the Tower of St. Mary. But not one of the conspirators paused to examine the appointments of the place; all eyes were fixed upon the Monk.

Seated in an arm chair, on the opposite side of the table occupied by the visitors, this personage was clothed in the usual gown and cowl of a friar, the latter being so arranged as to completely conceal his features. Slight and tall, this man exhibited evidences of great vigour and strength, while the hilt of a dagger peering through his belt, showed that he was not unprepared to defend himself in case of danger.

No one had ever seen his face.

In this, in his ubiquity, in the generous manner in which he lavished his money amid the common people, in the manifest respect which was paid him by men of both sides, by the conspirators against the state, and by the Spanish chiefs composing that state, lay the secret of his mysterious power which he had exercised over the whole city for four months.

At this distance of time all was in confusion ; the people knew not what to do ; the Creole gentry were suspicious and doubting; the Spanish rulers dreaded each day an outbreak: when no man could tell whence he came and who he was, the Monk appeared in the midst, and straightway all was changed. The people grew calm, for a beneficial hand poured balm upon their wounds; the poor were assisted with money—the sick were tended—the turbulent were appeased—and everywhere it was asked what had wrought the change? Everywhere the answer was—the Monk. At all hours, and during every kind of weather, he appeared when he was wanted. He was sent for, and came when least expected. At the hungry board, by the sick man's bed, in the midst of fiery assemblies, where the people were roused to hatred against their

oppressors, there he was; no man could say how. He seemed aware of every passing event ere almost the actors themselves had decided on any course of proceeding.

He mingled too with the upper classes, with the nobles; he healed their differences, he united them in one bond of union, he induced them to lay aside every thought but that of freeing and regenerating their country; and by the exercise of all those persuasive arts which peculiarly appertain to his profession, succeeded in attaining these desirable ends. His victory here was much assisted by the influence his eloquence obtained him with the women, amongst whom his popularity was singularly increased by the mystery which surrounded him.

At all times he had admission to the government house, where the superstitious Spaniards treated him with blind reverence, To the governor O'Reilly he was endeared by having given him secret tidings of a premature outbreak, though no man as yet knew this circumstance. One thing too was certain, the monk often entered the mansion of the Spanish general empty handed, but came away bending under the weight of gold pieces.

Equally trusted by all parties, by conspirators and by those conspired against, the monk, at the time of the opening of our tale, had acquired an unbounded degree of influence and authority. The people revered while they dreaded him; the upper classes were not free from the same superstitious influences, while it appeared too much the interest of the Spaniards to cultivate his good will, for him not to have equal power there. It thus happened that though at all times and in all places this mysterious personage was alone, never had one dared to remove the cowl which concealed his features, and expose his face to the light of day.

»Welcome, friends, welcome«, said the monk, whose voice was hard, harsh, and unnatural; »be seated. I am glad to see so many assembled in so good a cause.«

»Reverend sir«, said Count Thibaut, respectfully, »the cause is good, and our hearts willing and strong; why delay: the time of action?«

»The fruit that falls prematurely is worthless«, replied the monk, calmly; »the hour is not yet come.«

»But when then?» cried Thibaut, impatiently; »are we to be worn to death with these vain delays?«

»Count Thibaut, our rulers have not yet sinned their full. Their tyranny has, as yet, been but of a negative kind; they have done nothing overt. Let them once pass the boundary line, and I will be the first to cry to arms.«

»And the people?«

»Will then obey me. Now their passions are not roused, and until some audacious act of cruelty or oppression provokes their ire, they will be motionless.«

»But, sir monk«, exclaimed Leone, »all this is very true and very wise; but do you expect us to be always thus led by the nose, and brought riding some dozen miles after dark to be told to do nothing?«

A movement of curiosity and surprise animated the whole group of conspirators at this violent speech of Leone's addressed to the monk.

»Leone de Chazal«, replied the priest, quietly, »your country can spare you. If you prefer lounging in the boudoir of Marcella Zanetto, or, as you will, speaking treason in the ear of your cousin's betrothed, to joining the friends of freedom, I say again, we can spare you.«

»Insolent priest,« exclaimed Leone, furiously, his face suffused with crimson, and his eye quailing before the two shining orbs that glanced for an instant upon him from the monk's cowl. »Off with your mask, and let us see who it is that with the cry of freedom on his lips is, in my opinion, a Spanish spy.«

»Nay, gentlemen«, said the monk to those who would have restrained the impetuous young man, »I can protect myself;« and he unsheathed his long dagger. »But Count Leone shall have his wish; he shall see my face, if he give his honour, as a gentleman, to keep the secret of the church.«

»I do«, cried Leone, in whom burning curiosity caused passion to give way; »I do promise.«

»Advance then«, replied the monk, coldly.

Leone eagerly walked round the table, and going close up to the monk, who turned his back on the rest of the conspirators, fixed his eyes

on the face of the mysterious being who was about to discover his secret to him.

»My God!» was all the young man could say, as his eyes rested on the countenance of the churchman; and then, his mouth open, his face turning alternately pale and red, he returned, abashed and silent, amid his fellows. From that instant Leone opened not his lips. The discovery he had made had sealed up the current of his outward feelings, to throw him back upon deep thought.

After various reports had been handed in, and the details of the great work they were all engaged in had been discussed without any definite decision being come to, the conspirators took their leave, and being ferried over the lake, mounted their horses, and returned to New Orleans.

Five minutes after their departure, a boat with six stout oarsmen came to the foot of the tower steps, into which the monk entered. Immediately the rowers bent stoutly to their work, and the swift-moving craft disappeared beneath the foliage that arched over the many lagoons communicating with the lake.

[1] It I am less diffuse than is usual in romantic fiction in my description of houses, towns, and the costume of civilized life, and more lengthy when the exigencies of the narrative take me amid the natives of the soil, be it remembered these are passing away for ever, while the white settlers of Louisiana were but exaggerated re-flexions of their several original countries. Besides, my object at present is to save from utter oblivion as many of the American Indian nations as possible, as far as my humble pen can do so.

CHAPTER II.

THE SPY AND THE INDIAN.

No sooner had the party of conspirators left the shore on their way to the tower than one of the heads which had before peeped fourth from the bushes was discovered slowly thrusting itself once again into the light. Its owner for some minutes appeared quite undecided whether to allow any larger portion of his precious person to be seen, but at length, gaining courage, and perceiving that the Negroes who attended the horses had retreated within the thicket, he stepped lightly from behind the shelter afforded by a peccan tree, and stood upon the beach, gazing anxiously at the mysterious tower.

»Well, I do conclude that's queer work no haw you can fix it«, muttered he in the elegant slang which took its rise in the puritan drawl, mingled with the dialect of every nation that crossed the Atlantic, and which, less peculiar then than now, was still very amusing even so many years back; »what they can want yonder at this time o' night is on-possible to guess, but I'm bound to know, or my name's not Luke Salem.«

With these words the mysterious New Englander approached the very edge of the water, and began sounding its depth with a stick he carried in his hand.

»Well, it arn't over four feut, I reckon«, he said confidently, »and I'll jist follow that boat any haw.«

Without more ado, the inquisitive progenitor, doubtless, of some of the smartest men in all creation, at once entered the water, and began wading towards the tower. Cunning and wily in the extreme, he continued to advance without making the slightest noise, his eyes intently fixed all the while upon the light that streamed from the narrow window of the building to which he was, as he would have said, progressing. 'There was, in the very act, food for thought. He was seeking for adventure in an unknown land, and as he gazed around upon the sombre wood, as his eye rested upon the gloomy, and silent tower of St. Mary, the heart even of Luke Salem was touched with a peculiar

sensation. Why was he for gain to pry into the acts of his fellows? why was he stealing upon the inmates of the keep like the creeping panther of the woods upon his prey? And as these questions suggested themselves to his mind, thoughts welling forth unbidden from the dungeon cells of his soul, where too long they had been chained, came bubbling like some new freshet upon an arid plain, clothing all with verdure. But the picture was too complete; for as the arid sun, pouring its torrid heat upon the moist plain, scorches, withers, and cracks, so the fierce lust of gain swept the fragile bark of conscience back to its most secret haven.

But there was a spy upon the spy.

Luke Salem had no sooner discovered himself, and, after mental conference, entered the waters of the lake, which, reaching to his very chin, forced him to give unlimited care to his mode of progression, than another man stood forth also from the shelter of the thicket, and at once, with a calmness and self-possession which were remarkable, prepared to follow him. This man, as far as he could be distinguished by the deceitful light of the moon, was a North American Indian. Tall, slight, and graceful, his form was little concealed by the trammels of dress, while in his hand glittered the shining axe, or tomahawk, which, in the hands of the Columbian aborigines, is so fatal and terrible a weapon. Divesting himself in an instant of every article of clothing, the young and stalwart native stole stealthily in the rear of the white man, moving as he moved, stopping as he stopped, his eye fixed on the figure that slowly advanced in his front.

Meanwhile, Luke Salem had nearly crossed as much of the lake as lay between the shore and the tower, when, making a slight bend in his course to avoid landing at the steps, his ear caught some soup like that of a fellow-creature forcing his way through the waters. Turning sharply round, he could discover no sign of any one in his proximity, but at the distance of a dozen yards there was a rippling motion of the waters.

»A cat-fish leaping, I reckon,' muttered Luke, again fixing his gaze intently upon the tower, which he imagined to contain secrets worth their weight in gold. Making a slight diversion, he soon reached the land, and stood beside a wall of low dimensions, running from the

water's to the tower, and ending just below the window, to be near which formed, at this instant, the height of the spy's ambition. He was, however, on the wrong side, and to avoid being seen by the negro boatman it was necessary to cross it close beneath the shadow of the building. Creeping on his hands and knees, and advancing with all the serpent-like caution peculiar to his vocation, Luke Salem slowly raised himself from his degrading posture preparatory to an attempt at overcoming the obstacle which lay between him and the fruition of his hopes.

The spy was petrified!

His finger on his lips, while in one hand glittered the terrible axe, the Indian stood before him. His attitude was menacing in the extreme, while at the same time his manner betokened a desire to preserve the strictest silence. Luke was, indeed, too astonished to think, move, or speak. Surprise and terror deprived him of utterance. Within two yards was the window, for a peep through which he would willingly have suffered a night's camping out, or any other inconvenience common to civilised habits; but there, stern as fate, silent as the waning moon, and occupying the post of a sentry, ready to sell his life rather than betray his trust, stood the native. In the elegance of his proportions, in the very position he occupied, in the frown upon his brow, he resembled some Phidian statue cut in marble, and instinct only with the peculiar life and poetry which it is the attribute of genius to strike from the very stones that lie rude and misshapen in the bowels of the earth.

Once satisfied that Luke was perfectly silent, the Indian cautiously stepped over the low wall, and placed himself beside the spy, whom he motioned to retire close to the tower. The New Englander obeyed with a perceptible shudder, as, like all his countrymen, he entertained a very salutary dread of the aborigines of America, and a most serious dislike to being at the mercy of any member of a race which had received so little occasion to be very tender of the life of a white man. Recovering himself, however, and observing that the Indian contented himself with taking up a position which commanded his movements, Luke's thoughts reverted to the disagreeable nature of his disappointment. In the very act of fruition his cup of hope had been dashed from him. Had he been a

classical scholar, or had he even read the many recondite authors who love quotation, his ideas would have cogitated over the mythological parable of Tantalus; as it was, he was satisfied with the sensation that he was baulked, without being very nice about comparisons. Several times he would have spoken, but on the least evidence of such intention being made manifest, the Indian raised his awful tomahawk, with which he clove, not the spy's head, but his tongue.

In this manner an hour passed, to Luke of excruciating torment, while to the Indian it seemed to be a mere occasion for repose. At length, however, Charon's representative came forth, followed by the whole body of those who had previously entered, and who now hurried to embark and gain the land. Their return to the shores of the lake was effected with rapidity, and soon the galloping of horses proclaimed that the party of conspirators were once more on their way to New Orleans. Luke now hoped for a reprieve, but none came. The Indian was silent, motionless, and stern.

Presently the door again opened, while the boat before mentioned came to the tower. This time but one man came forth; it was the Monk, who, his face bent upon the ground, his whole mien exhibiting deep thought, walked slowly to his elegantly-shaped cutter, and seating himself, silently waved his hand to the rowers, who, with one accord, bent to their oars, like men who worked with a will.

As soon as this party was out of sight, the Indian spoke.

»My white brother is very curious to see the Tower of St. Mary. The door is open. Let him go in.«

»Well, I'm bound to say that beats me! What on 'arth, Ingin, do I want inside the tower?» exclaimed the irritated spy, »now. All I want is to go, and make no locrum about it.«

»The door is open«, replied the imperturbable Indian; »my brother can go in.«

»But I tell you, Ingin«, said Luke, »I shall git to Orleens over and above late. I must start right off.«

»The Red Hand says the door of the tower is open«, continued the Indian.

Luke started. The name—that of a young, bold, and warlike chief—sounded in his ears like a knell, for now the spy knew he was in the power of the monk, the Red Hand being looked upon as one who, imbued with lofty views by his instrumentality, was his blind and devoted adherent. None knew when or where they met, the Red Hand being never seen in New Orleans except at the house of Maximilian de Chazal, the volatile, easy, and rich cousin of Leone. What cord bound the Indian to the monk was a secret, unless it were the influence his loftiness and nobility of character exercised even upon the savage; but to Maximilian he was knit by ties of deep and lasting gratitude. The Red Hand, in early youth, had, at the peril of Maximilian's life, been saved from an ignominious death, and the Indian's heart swelled with all the loftiest emotions of friendship.

Luke Salem, who was, from mere wilfulness, it seemed, patronised by Maximilian, would elsewhere have counted on him to obtain impunity from the Indian; but here, on the Monk's own ground, his heart was filled with apprehension. Following the young chief, however, the New Englander's heart revived within him on entering the tower, where he found the old negro boatman busily engaged in preparing a savoury meal, if one were to judge from the delicious steam that exhaled from a huge pot slung over a small fire.

The Red Hand pointed to a chair near the table, and then with a politeness of manner and care which would have done credit to a ball-room, dropped at once the menacing character of a victor, and assumed that of a host.

»The white man is tired; let him rest. He is hungry; let him eat.«

Luke required not twice telling, and falling to, found that the pleasing odour had not deceived him. The supper was excellent, and when, about an hour later, the Red Hand, after informing him that he was a prisoner until further orders, pointed to an upper room as his place for the night, the spy retired to rest, with the idea that he had fallen into hands not at all so unpromising as he expected.

CHAPTER III.

THE DUMB QUADROONE.

It was the same evening on which the Monk of St. Mary's Tower had discovered his face to Leone de Chazal, that a young and lovely girl sat in her boudoir. Dressed in the gorgeous and splendid style peculiar to the times, in heavy robes of brocade, she still followed her own taste in the arrangement of her hair, whose ebony locks were gracefully smoothed over a lofty and marble brow. About seventeen she was in the lightness of her step; in the merry twinkle of her eye, in the young bloom of her cheek, a girl; while in the rounded form, in the stern and thoughtful expression she often assumed, and in the majesty of her demeanour, was all the more matured beauty of womanhood. Marietta Visconti was sometimes one and sometimes the other. Is depended on the mood of mind, which circumstances happened to bring about.

On the present occasion the orphan heiress, for such she was, and to no mean fortune, sat near an open oriel window in that dreamy pensive state which is neither sleeping nor-waking. She was far away in the misty land of speculation and doubt. Betrothed to Maximilian de Chasal at an early age, and before her parent's decease, Marietta had learned to look up on her betrothed with all the affection of an affianced wife. In his noble character, in his handsome form, she saw all her visions of romance and chivalry realized. He was wayward and fanciful, it was true, but he was brave as a lion to man, to her gentle as a lamb. Time and the Spaniard came and took possession of the land, an event which raised the deepest feelings of indignation in the minds of all, and in none more so than in the patriotic women of Louisiana. With Marietta, herself of Italian origin, but born in America, patriotism and love of country was a passion which threatened to drown all others, so earnest, impetuous, and powerful was its influence. her the Monk found a ready auxiliary, she laboured to consolidate his strength, she trumpeted his piety and mysterious character, until at length, like who fell beneath the compass of his mighty intellect, she gave him blind confidence and obedience, in every thing. Leone de Chazal, though warm and fiery as

any against the Spaniards, and the chief of nearly every conspiracy, alone refused to render the mysterious stranger his homage, in which Maximilian imitated him, without, however, mixing himself up in the secret opposition to established order and government. Balls, dances, fetes, were his daily and hourly occupation, except when he would take a sudden fancy to hunt in the woods and forests, and then no civilized amusement could detain him a moment. Rich beyond every young man in the whole of Louisiana, he was able to follow the dictation of his fancy unimpeded, while he was the only French noble admitted, without restraint, at the governor's table.

All this had its effect upon the mind of Marietta. At first she hoped that a change would take place, and that the picture before him of the daily increasing tyranny of the Spaniards would rouse Maximilian: she looked forward to the time when the Monk, by his eloquence, would succeed in mastering the stubborn opposition of her lover. But in vain. To her earnest advocacy of strong measures, by which he might hold a high position amid his fellows in the sacred cause of freedom, Maximilian replied not by denials, but by half promises, by a *bon-mot*, by some graceful act of gallantry. He said that having the best of horses, the finest estate, the largest fortune, and the loveliest mistress in New Orleans, he could not but be satisfied under any form of government. The Spaniards never interfered with him, and, therefore, he should see! Perhaps Marietta might have been less influenced by all these circumstances, had not Leone de Chazal been by her side. As the cousin of her betrothed he had every opportunity of seeing her—her doors were open to him, and of this permission he made good use, especially when Maximilian was absent— a circumstance, of late, of constant occurrence. Leone, it is true, never ventured to say anything openly against his cousin—he was, by far, too deeply versed in the tactics of love to go so far—but he wondered, and he hoped that this and that—was not the case, that Maximilian would shake off the yoke of pleasure; and, by dint of constant repetition, these things sank into the mind of the lovely heiress.

Marietta knew that Leone loved her, at least she suspected it, for not a word he had ever uttered could be interpreted into a declaration. And

did she repel him the more? No! He was so respectful, he was evidently so unhappy, he envied his cousin so generously, and sang his praises so loudly, that who could-but pity him? Marietta, too, found herself thinking of the friend rather oftener than of the lover, a circumstance which she regretted, and constantly reproached herself with—but these ey reproaches only assisted in calling the memory of his name.

»Oh, Maximilian! Maximilian!” she was exclaiming to herself when we introduced her, »why do you not rouse your-self? why not be, like Leone, devoted to your country; like Leone, spurn the pleasures of a moment for the duties for a patriot«

The hourly comparison of her lover to cousin was, unfortunate, to say the least of it. The constant falling of a tingle drop of water, once wore away a stone.

»Well, Maroc«, said she, raising her eyes, and discovering, standing before her, a little quadroone girl.

Maroc made no reply, not even appearing to hear, but moving the fingers of the right hand rapidly over the palm of the other,

She was dumb, some said deaf.

»Leone de Chazal«, repeated Marietta, reading off her fingers; »let him come in.«

The moon shone so brightly that hitherto the lovely maiden had sat by her open window without having the numerous-tapers of the room lighted; and Maroc, after touching a small gong slightly, proceeded to illumine the apartment. The chamber of the beauty was large, lofty, and of oblong shape; while from its painted roof hung—a rare article in Louisiana—two magnificent chandeliers. Sofas, ottomans, carpets, long and magnificent curtains, buffets and every variety of curiously worked furniture, adorned the place; while opposite the door of entrance was a little room entered by raising a piece of tapestry, and here the quadron glided as soon as her task was performed.

In few minutes Leone de Chazal entered—his cheek slightly pale, while in his eye might have been read a degree of agitation, somewhat rare and uncommon with him. He glanced uneasily round the room, as he crossed the threshold, and gave vent to a deep sigh, as if his bosom

had been surprisingly relieved on finding the apartment tenanted only by Marietta.

»Welcome, Leone«, said the Visconti, in her most charming manner. “Of what treason have you been plotting this night, and what plans have you matured that you are so late to pay your evening fealty hither?»

Leone advanced, took the hand of the lovely Marietta, and seated himself beside her.

»I have been to St. Mary’s Tower«, he rejoined, with some hesitation, »to a meeting of the Friends of France.«

»Who was there?» inquired Marietta, somewhat anxiously.

»Count Thibaut, several citizens, and your humble servant.«

»There was none other!«

»The—the—Monk«, said Leone, evidently embarrassed.

»The Monk, of course«, replied the fair speaker, in a disappointed tone. »But where was Maximilian?»

»Ah, amusing himself, the happy fellow«, continued Leone, who appeared to refer this subject to the other. »I saw him just now in the Place d’Armes, surrounded by half a dozen friends, laughing merrily.«

»Indeed«, said Marietta, »but I call him not ‘happy fellow,’ as you have it, but cold, hard, unfeeling Maximilian. You are too generous to excuse his lightness; when all others are striving for their country, he alone is idle.«

»The deeper politician, perhaps«, was on Leone’s lips. But this would have been standing up for a cousin rather too strongly, and he added, with a tender sigh, »Happy fellow, indeed.«

»Leone«, said Marietta, warmly, »envy him not. Noble, generous, devoted to his country, as he is in all else, I could follow Maximilian through the world, but«, continued the impetuous Italian, her form now majestic with noble passion, »I shall learn to hate a recreant.«

Leone de Chazal was astonished at this burst of feeling, he knew not what to make of it, for that evening more than any other he wished to stifle within his breast emotions which were so opposed to the interests of his cousin. For a few minutes the man of the world was taken aback,

but quickly recovering himself, he replied, »Maximilian is a noble-minded fellow, and will come out of this ordeal triumphantly.«

The words wore well, but the tone of voice destroyed their effect.

»Leone«, continued Marietta, »you know well that I wish to excuse Maximilian. He is my affianced husband, and I love him«, this was said firmly; »but I tremble when I reflect that he is the twin brother of Paul de Chazal, who died in a low public drinking room, after a night spent in'—here the lovely girl blushed deeply—" company which disgraced his name. He too began by pleasure innocent enough.

Leone glared like a wounded tiger on the beautiful speaker, as she bent her eyes sadly on the carpet. He gasped for breath, but, by a violent effort, overcame his emotion.

»You are hard, fair Marietta«, he said, with a forced laugh, »and forget that I too have been a man of pleasure, and am still.«

»But you know where to stop. You give not yourself wholly to folly, and can find time to join in plans for your country's regeneration.«

Again Maroc glided noiselessly beside her mistress. In her hand was salver, on which lay two letters.

»One for you, and one for me«, said Marietta, handing his billet to Leone, while she eagerly opened her own:

“Put no faith in the gallantries of Leone de Chazal. Remind him that he was beside Paul de Chazal when he died, Maximilian is an enigma, but worth unravelling.

“The Monk.«

Leone read:

“ Marcella Zanetto is impatient. You are an hour behind your usual time.

“The Monk.«

Both started, while the young man bit his lip, and rose as if to leave.

»You are going?“ said Marietta, scarcely aware of what she was saying, as she gazed in deep thought on the missive in her hand.

»I had forgotten a particular engagement, of which this note reminds me.

»With the Monk?» inquired Marietta, sadly, as she looked at the handwriting.

»With the Monk«, repeated the young man, evidently relieved at the excuse thus made for him; and with these words he rose, took his plumed hat, and hurriedly departed.

Marietta Visconti remained alone, her thoughts racked by doubt and uncertainty, by doubt and uncertainty too of a very unpleasant character. She loved Maximilian—she remembered that she was his betrothed; but she could not forget the causes which made her uneasy concerning his character and proceedings. And now the Monk, for whom as a devout catholic and as a patriot, she had the profoundest respect, bade her temporise. Leone, she could not disguise from herself, had, by assiduous devotion, gained a lofty place in her esteem, and now, suspicions were infused into her mind concerning him. Marietta knew not what to think, and her fair and marble brow grew clouded and sad, more clouded and sad than ever marble brow of fair girl should be.

»Maroc!» again she exclaimed, as the dumb Quadroone, only less beautiful and equally young with herself stood before her.

The girl's hands moved rapidly for an instant.

»The Monk«, read Marietta, greatly relieved, as, at the same instant, that mysterious individual stood before her.

CHAPTER IV.

When Luke Salem awoke on the morning which succeeded his capture by the terrific Red Hand, as he considered him, his first thought was of escape. Rising from his bed, he advanced to the window of his little room; it was narrow, and two heavy bars closed all hope of exit. With a deep sigh the spy returned to his couch, and was about once more to court slumber, when a tap at his door warned him that others besides himself were moving.

»Who is there?«

»The Red Hand waits for his friend«, said the deep and guttural tones of the Indian.

Luke shuddered; the very sound of the Indian's voice had in it something sanguinary to his terrified imagination.

»I am ready«, said he.

»Hugh! good.«

And, without further remark, the two men descended to the lower chamber, where a very excellent breakfast awaited them. Luke, whose appetite had not deserted him, despite the disagreeableness of his position, sat down and eat a hearty meal, while the Indian, more moderate, eat sparingly. Ere, therefore, the Yankee had satisfactorily disposed of his portion, the Chichachas rose. Luke now first noticed that he was equipped for a journey.

»You are going?“ said the spy, quietly, taking a bite at his corn cake.

»Hugh.«

»I wish you a pleasant journey. I conclude you're going far.«

»The sun will go down to rest in the happy hunting grounds before the Red Hand reaches the end of his journey.«

»Well, then, it's bound to be a long way, for an injun will walk a jackass to death.«

»Is my brother ready?“ replied the Chichachas, calmly.

»What!«

»Is my brother ready?«

»Ready! for, what?» exclaimed Luke, this time, indignantly. »I tell you what Bloody Fist«

»Red Hand«, said the Indian, his eyes flashing fire; for this nickname was one that always aroused his severest ire.

»The Red Hand«, stammered Luke, alarmed at the glare of the other's eye, which reminded him, he afterwards remarked, of a panther about to spring. »I beg your pardon; but what on earth do you ask me for about being ready. You 'll Put my dander up.«

»My brother is going with me«, continued the chief, now calm as a statue of marble.

»Where?» said Luke, his knees beginning to shake violently.

»My brother is curious.«

»But I won't go. I won't be murdered, I guess. My name isn't Luke for nothing. I'm a free-born Bostonian, I am; and I should like to know who dares make prisoner of me?«

»The Monk.«

Luke dropped the food which he held in his hand, and rose from his seat. There was a magic in the name which he could not understand himself; but all idea of resistance was gone.

The Red Hand was about five and twenty years of age. Tall, slim, and of handsome proportions; he was the beau ideal of an Indian warrior. In his hand was a gun; by his side the terrible and glistening tomahawk, while a hunting knife peeped from his breast. Few would have dared to enter into a struggle with him, and this reflection made Luke shudder as he surveyed him, planning in his own mind the probable issue of any such attempt.

»My brother is ready.«

»I am ready.«

The Indian stalked calmly to the door, and then to the edge of the lake, where a bark canoe of the lightest materials awaited them. The Red Hand motioned to the white man to enter first, and then following, the boat was pushed from the shore and headed towards the Bayou St. Jean, leading to the sea.

CHAPTER V.

THE BETRAYAL.

About the same hour that the Monk was announced to the perplexed beauty of New Orleans by the dumb Maroc, there sat in the government house, alone, in a lofty chamber, the Spanish ruler of the city. Reilly, of course of Irish origin, was about fifty years of age, a handsome but stern looking man, his natural bias now in consequence of some peculiar feelings degenerating into ferocity. He was thinking of sunny Spain, of the pleasures and dissipation's of its capital, of the coal black eyes and ruddy lips of the Andalusian beauties, and the heart of the ambitious soldier grew sad and thoughtful. He was governor of Louisiana it is true, but the people he ruled were a turbulent and uneasy set, who disliked the yoke imposed upon them. They dared not openly show their hatred of Spanish rule, but a negative opposition was easy and convenient. The governor's balls and parties were unattended, while he was never invited to any noble's house. The spirit of the warrior chafed at these undisguised symptoms of dislike, but as they could scarcely be stretched into acts of rebellion, he was compelled to endure the insult in silence. But they had irritated a sleeping lion, who was now planning some dreadful punishment for their slights.

Suddenly a servant entered. He approached the governor with reverence.

»What is it, sirrah ?«

»A stranger waits your highness's pleasure.«

»His name.«

»He refuses to give it, your excellency.«

»What sort of a man is he?«

»A cavalier, your highness — a very proper man.«

»Say that I see no man who is without a name.«

The servant bowed low and retired. In an instant he returned.

»The stranger, your highness, says 'Tell his excellency I must see him, and will.«

»What! Caramba«, cried the governor, gaily; »show the springal in. I like his boldness.«

And the governor rubbed his hands with evident satisfaction. Like most bold and daring men, he felt sympathy with kindred spirits.

A man, wrapped in a cloak, a huge slouched hat covering his head, and who placed a mask on his face as he entered the room, appeared.

»Who is it who thus boldly claims an audience with Spain's vice-gerant?«

»One, your excellency, who is anonymous.«

»How, sir?«

»One who, if you would have my secret, must be nameless«, replied the other, calmly.

»What secret?« cried Reilly, with his eyes flashing, his nostrils dilating as he spoke, for the governor began to hope some excuse for strong measure was about to be offered him.

»The Monk's!«

The Spanish soldier leaped to his feet, for he was thunderstruck.

»The Monk's!«

»The Monk's«, repeated the stranger, calmly.

»Well, sir«, said the governor, seating himself, and endeavoring to appear composed and careless, »what is your price?«

»Secrecy and impunity«, continued the other, sternly, »and the treatment of an equal.«

»Not having the honour to know you, honoured sir, I was in doubt«, replied the governor, courteously; »pray be seated.«

»Your highness is too good, But now to business. I hate this man; he annoys me; he stands in my way, and I must be rid of him. You now know my motives.«

»Exactly«, said Reilly, with a smile; »they are wonderfully my own feelings.«

»The Monk, sir governor, is to you a traitor. He is at the head of a powerful conspiracy to overturn the Spanish rule; and if he is not stayed, will succeed.«

»Say you so?« said the Spaniard; »he shall die.«

»He is dead«, continued the stranger, turning pale, and trembling.

»How, man? Have you—«

»He is dead in the eyes of the world. He died years ago.«

»Explain yourself—who is he?«

»If he be mortal man, which I sometimes doubt«, said the stranger, half gasping for breath, »he is »” and bending low, he hissed a name in the governor's ears.«

»Jesu Maria«, exclaimed the governor, crossing himself, »he is dead. I saw him buried.«

»So did I—but the Monk and he are one.«

It was an age of strong superstition, and in no land more so than among the Spaniards, where bigotry and cruelty and blood went hand in hand. Under the influence of these feelings it was that Reilly now spoke.

»But, sir stranger, we know not, if he be one of mortal mould.«

»Tush«, said the other, moodily, some trick has been played. It is he.«

»But of his treachery.«

»Listen«, and the stranger, as far as it was in his power, narrated the views of the Monk, and in a brief space of time succeeded in convincing the governor of the truth of all he asserted.

»This must be looked to«, said Reilly, clenching his teeth; “he must die. But how?«

»To-night, within an hour, his boat will leave the quay for St. Mary's Tower. Two boatmen alone accompany him this time—«

»Well—«

»He can«, and the stranger's voice trembled, »he can be waylaid. The waters of the river tell no tales.«

»Right«, said Reilly, »it shall be done. Without there.«

A servant entered.

»Send Luke Salem hither.«

»He has not returned, your highness; but this note has been just left from him;” and the domestic handed in a piece of crumpled paper.

“Most noble governor,—Expect nothing from me. I am in the power of the Red Hand.

Luke Salem.«

»Laconic«, said Reilly, biting his lip, »send Juan Salcedo hither.«

»The Red Hand!” muttered the stranger; »another creature of the Monk’s.

»Say you so?” said the governor, eagerly. »Then he too shall die. Ah! Juan Salcedo!«

»At your highness’s command.«

»Juan«, said the governor, sternly, »you are a silent and a bold man; to-night you must be doubly silent and doubly bold. Take the boat of the Inquisition, with six rowers and four of your gang. You will reach the mouth of the Bayou St. Jean, A boat will come that way— you must attack it; and mind you, Jan Salcedo, the men who man that craft must sleep below the waters of the great river this night.«

»Caramba!” exclaimed the professional assassin, »the whole lot of them? Your highness is liberal to-night.«

»All«, said Reilly, nothing offended at the ruffian’s familiarity—a familiarity that ever grows up between co-partners in crime, however great their disparity of ranks.

»But your excellency does not wish me to give everybody that comes that way a bath. In case of accident, might I be allowed to know who I am to expedite on their last journey?«

»The Monk and his boatmen.«

»The Monk!” and the before careless ruffian leaned against the wall for support.

»What!” cried Reilly, »you surely are not afraid!«

»Highness!” exclaimed Juan Salcedo, »commission me to kill the devil, but, in the name of all the saints, don’t ask me to kill the Monk.«

»You parley, rascal! Go, and in an hour prepare to receive the penalty of your crimes!«

»Highness«, said the ruffian, recovering himself by a desperate effort, »it shall be done. In an hour I shall have added another crime to the

list.«

With a low bow the assassin left the room.

»Strange power has this man!» mused Reilly; »if he should really be
——«

»What?» said the stranger.

»Nothing! but come, you will gladly wait the issue of this adventure,
Let us sup, and I can hear more of your details.«

Tap! tap! tap!

»Jesu!» cried the governor, rising from his seat, as three distinct
knocks were heard at a secret door in the wainscoted wall of the room.

»What is that?» asked the stranger.

»Come in«, said the governor, recovering himself

The door opened.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MEET ON THE WATERS.

About a hundred yards up the course of the Bayou St. Jean is an opening, surrounded on all sides by thickly overhanging trees, through which the moon pierced here and there, casting a fitful light upon the waters. The gentle wind having but force enough to reach the summits of the trees, left the surface of the little lake perfectly smooth—so still was it, it looked a sheet of molten silver, while here and there a straggling fish made a sudden leap, and caused a disturbance of the previous quiet. A screeching night owl, making evil melody, sat on the top of a tree, the only living being within hearing or sight.

Presently, however, the solitude and stillness of the place was disturbed by the dipping sound of paddles. It was a boat descending the bayou; and coming forth into the open space, proved to be that of the Red Hand, with Luke Salem as an unwilling companion. Properly to understand what follows, it must be mentioned that the events now occurring took place one hour after the tap at the governor's door, and two after the announcement of the Monk in the boudoir of the heroine of this eventful history.

The Red Hand alone managed the canoe, while the spy remained perfectly still in the bottom of the boat, planning continually an escape from the very unpleasant position into which he had brought himself, in the exercise of his very disgraceful avocation. Now and then an ejaculation of surprise or annoyance would burst from him, as if he could scarcely repress his desire to fall upon the man who occupied the part of his guardian, while prudence suggested that he would be more wise to forbear.

»Well, Injin, I do conclude you will ind this 'are journey some time or other. I'm hungry, and I reckon nature won't stand it over much longer.» :

»White man«, said the native chief, »trouble not thyself so much upon thy stomach. An Indian is not hungry; let the pale face be quiet also.«

»Now that riles me«, exclaimed the downeaster. »Because you have no appetite it follows that I must have none. If you would but just tell me where we are going to—«

»Hush«, said the Indian, suddenly, »we are not alone.«

A gentle motion of the paddle, simultaneous with his exclamation, gave the canoe an impulse, which in a few moments carried it beneath the shadow of a graceful peccan bush, where without an effort the practised boatman brought his craft to a perfect stand still. Then raising his rifle, and looking to the priming, the native remained calm and motionless watching the progress of events. Scarcely had the quick-witted Chichachas contrived thus to conceal his proximity, when a boat manned by six men pulled swiftly into the interior of the little bay, and having attained the centre, was suddenly arrested in its progress. The oarsmen had backed their oars at the command of one who, wrapped in a large cloak, and seated beneath an awning, appeared to command the craft. The boat was somewhat singular in appearance. Long, with places for a dozen oarsmen, it had towards the stern a species of cabin, covered with an awning. On top of this swung a yellow lamp, casting its jaundiced light moodily upon the dark mass of the twelve-oar cutter.

It was a boat of the Inquisition.

Luke Salem knew this, by the signal which swung above, and felt no small curiosity to know the reason of its presence. He would gladly have inquired, but the glittering axe of the Indian was near at hand, and he had a natural and wholesome dread of this instrument. It looked so sharp, so shining, that it might without much stretch of fancy be supposed to have the property of severing a head with its very shadow. At all events such was a »notion“ which often recurred to the American Angles.

In a few moments after its first arrival, the craft of the gloomy Inquisition, introduced into Louisiana by the tyrannical Spaniard, became perfectly stationary. As it lay in the still moonlight, silent and motionless, its boatmen ready but without apparent life, it was an apt representation of that dark and dreadful institution of which it was the inanimate servant. Secret, unconscious, like many human instruments, it seemed to sleep on the face of the waters, devoid of all power. But like

the unroused tiger, which dreams of blood, the servant of the Inquisition was stealthily on the watch for a victim.

Again the sound of paddles was heard.

This time too, it was a boat manned by several rowers, who advanced apparently unconscious of the ambush that awaited them. This craft had a wooden cabin, and by its dark outline, by the grim symbols of death painted glaringly in white on its outside, proclaimed itself clearly that of the Monk.

The position of the three boats is important the reader should now understand. In the very centre of the lake lay the cutter of the subtle and bigotted Inquisition, fit organ of such priests and all tyrants, About two hundred yards below was the boat of the Monk advancing rapidly, while between them, concealed in the bushes, lay the canoe of the Indian and the spy. The second proceeded swiftly for some time, until within thirty or forty yards of the first mentioned, when discovering this latter lying directly in its way, it halted.

»Advance«, said the cloaked stranger before mentioned, and whom our readers have doubtless recognised as Juan Salcedo.

»Who dares command on these waters?» replied one of the foremost boatmen.

»Spain«, said the assassin; »advance or we fire on you.«

»So, ho, my dainty son of Spain«, continued the other colloquist, »two can play at that, but as our master seeks not bloodshed, we obey.«

« And your master, who is he?«

»One whom you dare not disobey, Don Juan Salcedo«,

The ruffian trembled. He had reason to fear both parties. His life he knew was forfeited, and Reilly, the governor, was just the man to make use of this power to his ruin, At the same time he had his reasons for dreading the tenant of the boat.

»I take heaven to witness I act against my will«, he said; »but mine is a master will be obeyed-«

»So will ours.«

»And your master commands —«

»To offer no violence to your will. Do your behest.«

Next moment the boats were alongside one another. Juan Salcedo trembled, but he knew obedience was requisite. He had succeeded in bringing himself so far to disobey the governor, as to take the Monk alive to his presence. Even this violence upon that personage he considered an act which endangered his peace, and he expected each moment that some mysterious and sudden punishment would upon him.

»Sir Monk«, said he, in a trembling voice, as he passed into the narrow cabin of the boat, »I vow —«

The cabin was empty.

A roar of laughter from the boatmen, whom Juan Salcedo now discovered to be twelve in number, and armed to the teeth, shows how carefully the trick had been played. At any other time, and under any other circumstances, the Spanish bravo would have been inclined to show his resentment at the hilarity of the Monk's servants, The fact, however, of that personage being possessed of the information communicated to him alone he thought by the governor, and never breathed since to living soul, so raised the priest's character and power in his opinion, as seriously to alarm him. Juan had heard once of the devil, though his education had been scanty. I say once, because, though the worthy assassin had received many a f of the existence of Satan in his own life, yet had he not been conscious of the connection between himself and the prince of darkness, Bad men never give themselves half credit enough; they have too slender an opinion of their own merits—poor fellows! they lay it all to the effect of chance of fate, and sundry other things which hare no more to do with the matter than soda with soda water. We beg to set them right. They are really very clever and mighty men—'there is genius and originality about some criminals, and they will obtain full credit for their actions. They are too modest when they imagine that good men only know what they are about, and will meet with their reward accordingly. They share in the advantage.

Now Juan had heard of the devil, and he now began to think that he had seen him in his proper person.

»But the Monk«, said he, after a brief pause; »where is he ?«

»A simple question that," exclaimed the spokesman of the other boat, »as if any man could say.«

»Caramba«, said the Spaniard, »you are right. He is the devil himself.«

»As for that, I can't say«, observed the other; »but that dagger is not made yet which will slaughter him — no, not even if worn by Juan Salcedo.«

»You don't mean to say ——«, exclaimed the trembling ruffian.

»I say nothing; but I shall report what has passed.«

»Louis Desnoyes«, said the assassin, bending forward, and whispering, »on your soul—not a word of this. It was against my wish, The governor commanded, and I obeyed. Let me not be blamed for my obedience.«

Louis Desnoyes was about to reply, when there occurred a serious interruption, which prevented the possibility of his so doing. Juan Salcedo was standing erect in the boat, awaiting the other's reply. In his hand was clutched a dagger, and it was clear, that were the reply unfavorable, the other's death would instantly ensue. The Spanish bravo stood with clenched teeth; the yellow lamp of the Inquisition falling its light full upon his face.

»Caramba!“ cried the ruffian, as a rifle-shot struck his arm, and made him let the dagger fall to the bottom of the boat.

»To your arms, men«, thundered Louis Desnoyes; »the bloody heathen is upon us.«

A faint, far-off laugh, followed by a peculiar cry, made the Frenchman pause, while the wounded Spaniard inquired the reason of his hesitation in answering the fire from the shore.

»It is the Red Hand«, replied the Frenchman; »you have paid the penalty of our premeditated murder of the Monk. Take my advice. Return to your master, and tell him that the man he would destroy is far beyond his influence and malignity.«

Juan Salcedo, smarting from the effect of the wound, wrapped his cloak around him, and giving his orders to the boatmen, the craft of the Inquisition sped on its way back to the American Venice.

Next minute the canoe was beside the boat of the mysterious Monk, that individual occupying a seat therein. When the boat came to a halt during the first parley, the Red Hand immediately came alongside, and availing himself of this unexpected aid the great conspirator accepted the

Indian's offer, by which he avoided a disagreeable collision with the minions of the governor. To Luke Salem all passed as a dream, and when he found himself in close contact with the man in whose power he had been for two days, it was with feelings of the utmost horror. A few minutes, however, of conference, changed the current of the spy's thoughts. The Monk addressed him a few firm words, coupled with a well-filled purse; and it is surprising how quickly the Yankee spy began to have confidence in his new employer.

It was during this conversation, and before the Monk could interfere, that the Red Hand severely wounded the assassin.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CAFE PIC-A-PIC.

In the public room of a low cabaret, or café, towards sundown, sat behind the bar a solitary waiting maid. Everything denoted preparation for visitors, though none as yet were present. The liquor bottles were arranged in beautiful order; flasks of Burgundy and Rhenish, and good Spanish skins of the red, red wine were in ample profusion. The landlord of the Pic-a-Pic was evidently a very shrewd fellow, for there, before the eyes of his customers, he had placed everything which could irritate their bibular appetites, while long glasses, and stout glasses, glasses little and glasses big, gaped ready for action; of eatables there was abundance. Hot Indian corn cakes had just been transferred from the wafer iron to the platter, and smoked enticing and delicious; venison steaks, red fish, lampreys, mullet, ducks, geese, partridges, all the prolific produce of the river, lake, and prairie, proved that eating was a pastime to which the New Orlean's were by no means averse. A wide gaping door, too, showed a large hall, well sanded and variegated with the flowers of the region, hanging in fragrant and refreshing festoons. A violin and several banjos were suspended from a kind of rack, giving ample explanation of the saltatory propensities of the mercurial creoles^[2]. of the American Venice, where pleasure and excitement now seemed to drown the sense of oppression and tyranny.

»St. Michael shrive us«, cried a voice from the vast cuisine of the Pic-a-Pic— »not un *habitué* yet.«

»Not one, M. Pic-a-Pic«, replied the waitress, drily.

This waitress was no common personage. Tall, of handsome, though massive proportions, there was a stately dignity about her which belonged neither to her class nor race. At times, when reminded of some inward struggle, she would strive to throw off, by an effort, the gloom which overpowered her. She would strive to be gay, but though the effect was great, was barely able to succeed. A consuming melancholy was wearing her away — was destroying the finite if it could not the infinite. As a natural consequence, she was disliked, and received but

little consideration from the habitual frequenters of the locality. She had been there but a short time, and already the owner had warned her to quit the next day. Not that she did not her duty. No one could more carefully wait upon the guests; never had waitress more speedily supplied their demands—but she wanted the merry laugh,—the joking propensities—the liveliness necessary to make a successful *cabaret* servant.

She was sad, because she was a quadroone, and because she was virtuous.

Though more than three parts white, and wholly so in appearance, there was the naked fact ever staring her in the face that negro blood was in her veins, She was, therefore, a slave, and by the infamous laws of the land, able only to wed a slave. She could only be the mistress of a white man. Such in Louisiana was the fate of the quadroone. If beautiful, but one course was open to them, and this they almost universally followed. But the young Maria Sa, brought up under the care of a good and noble-minded mother, who died early, had never forgotten the precepts of her only parent, who, from the father, had purchased the daughter's liberty. How far this liberty extended will be seen at a later period of this narrative.

Desirous of honestly earning her living, and influenced also by motives of which none around her were aware, she accepted the post of waitress at the Pic-a-Pic. Though as a slave, or at least of the despised race, used enough to very indifferent society, her soul revolted at that of this low inn. But she never complained, silently doing her duty, and having the satisfaction of knowing that her own strong heart preserved her from the degradation of her class.

There was a talisman, however, more powerful to preserve her amid temptation than all. Maria Sa loved.

»The Virgin preserve us«, continued the inner voice. »I hope Loutre has not been conjuring to-night.«

Loutre was the sign of a rival inn.

»Very probably«, said the waitress, with a tone of indifference, which was decidedly unprofessional.

Mort de ma vie», cried the voice petulantly, »you take the matter coolly, Maria L'Lupér. Why, I am a ruined man, if that be the case. I tell you what——«

»M. Pic-a-Pic«, interrupted the superb quadroone, mildly, while a faint smile crossed her face, »I should be very, very sorry at anything of the kind.«

»I know! I know!” said the inner voice, that of a huge red-nosed, red-faced individual, who was generally known by the name of his inn, »you are a good girl, I believe, though confounded glum. Ah! I hear an arrival.«

»M. Luke Salem«, said the fair Sa, with a slight frown. Luke Salem was rather too civil.

»Bravo!” cried Pic-a-Pic; »business begins, though he be a Spanish spy!«

Luke Salem entered, with an audacious swagger, which spoke volumes for his own sense of self-importance. It could easily be seen he was no longer under the thumb of the terrific Red Hand, though had his name been mentioned, there is little doubt he would have suffered a severe fit of the shivers. He was more bravely dight than usual, and had, indeed, the appearance of having ‘risen in the world. His costume was completely renovated. A handsome sword hilt peeped out beside his belt, while a jaunty cap was set knowingly on his little head.

»Mam’zelle Sa, I conclude you look spry this evening ——«

»*Plait-il?*” said the girl, quietly.

»Ah!” exclaimed Luke, in French, »I have« peculiar fancy for my own lingo, and cannot, somehow, get on so smooth with your cursed language. Why, what on earth made your people leave off speaking English, I should like to know? English was the original language everybody realizes. It’s all out of spite your country made up that other lingo you call French, because they would vex the British. That is rather a good reason, I do say; but your ancestors might have known there was Americans.«

»Not in the days when French became a language«, smiled Maria Sa.

»Well!” said Luke, with a genuine look of astonishment, and in unmistakable American English, »that do beat all natur’ hollow. Why who ever heard talk of the time when America warn’t America. I conclude it is ginerally allowed we are the first nation on ’arth, and if that don't mean we were afore any other, my name's not Salem, that’s all.«

»What shall I serve you with?” said Maria, forced into a laugh.

»A right down jorum of whiskey toddy,« couple of pork chops, and lots o'lasses. America warn’t made I suppose. Ha! ha! ha!«

The Yankee, much tickled evidently by the idea that there was a time when English was not in America, sat down in such a position as to command a view of all who entered. The cunning and acuteness of the spy soon returned and in a moment he was once more the calm self-possessed individual he usually appeared.

Numerous visitors now entered and scattered themselves round the apartment, seemingly without concert or connection, though none the spy without a peculiar nod, which Luke returned gaily, and with much satisfaction, Women as well as men soon occupied the seats, and conversation with its attendants of eating and drinking commenced.

Near Luke were seated a woman and a men. Both kept up a constant fire of remarks upon those who entered.

»Who is that fat fellow?” said Lake, speaking in very bad French.

»That«, said the man, »is --«

»That” interrupted the woman, »is old Louis Pochez, who keeps a jeweller’s shop in the Rue Brise-fer.”«

»Is he one of us?«

»I believe you—*pardieu*—Louis Poches is a tramp. He gives four gallons of soup day to the poor.«

»But who pays for it?” put in the man.

»Why, the Monk to be sure, but—«

»Always that eternal Monk«, muttered Luke, becoming uneasy.

»Of course nothing happens in New Orleans, without he knows all about it«

»Who are these two?» continued Lake Salem, turning the conversation.

»Don't know«, said the man.

»Don't know!" chimed in the woman; »they are not of us.«

These remarks were occasioned by the entrance of two well-dressed individuals, who were, however, disguised as much as possible. It was a man and a woman. The man wore a slouched hat and a large cloak, the woman a neat chapeau, a close veil, and a Mexican serapi. They seated themselves at a side box, and called for a bottle of wine.

Maria Sa served them, not without fixing a scrutinizing glance upon them.

»You will know me again, my girl«, said the man, with a sneer.

»I know you now«, replied the girl, quietly.

»How so?«

»You visit my mistress often enough.«

»Malediction!" muttered the man.

»And who is your mistress?" said the lady, with a faint laugh.

»My mistress, at all events the owner of a of this house«, said the girl, sadly, »is Marcella Zanetto.«

« And this house is —«

»The Pic-a-Pic.«

»The Pic-a-Pic«, repeated the lady, half audibly, »it was here Paul de Chazal died.«

The man raised his hand menacingly towards Maria, though the lady saw not this action. The girl took no notice of him, but continued :—

»M. Paul de Chazal was killed in this house, I don't know in what room, Monsieur knows, he was with him.«

»He was with him when he died, said the Monk«, repeated Marietta Visconti to herself, turning pale (for it was she, accompanied by Leone de Chazal); »what is the meaning of this?" and then she added aloud, »I do not like this place. Let us go.«

»And you forget our object in coming," said Leone, savagely. »Pic-a-Pic, here is your fool of a girl turning away your customers with her

confounded stories. I wish you would teach her to hold her tongue, or speak pleasantly.«

»Maria!“ shouted the landlord furiously, amid an universal murmur of applause, »this is the last night you are waitress in this house.«

»You are mistaken«, said the girl, quietly; »I shall remain as long as I think proper.«

M. Pic-a-Pic advanced to the bar purple with rage. The fat rubicund *restaurateur* was petrified at the audacity of his menial, and that menial a quadroone.

»You will remain as long as you think proper. Now I say bundle, you audacious baggage; go, leave the house.”

»I shall remain as long as it suits me«, replied the girl, taking up a platter with glasses to carry to a customer.

M. Pic-a-Pic seized her by the arm. Luke Salem was by his side in a minute, and gave him a paper. The whole of the tenants of the café looked on with interest. The contest between the tavern-keeper and Maria was a relief to the monotonous flow of their thoughts. The Visconti's only feeling was sympathy with the girl's,

»Read that«, said Luke Salem, »and then I conclude you'll know better.«

»At your peril, M. Pic-a-Pic, give Maria Sa even an angry word. She is your superior, and only waits here to obey my orders.

»The Monk.«

»Oh Lord!“ said Pic-a-Pic, turning pale.

»The devil«, chorussed the *habitués*.

»Pray excuse me, Maria«, put in the penitent inn-keeper, »I was not aware—«

»It is forgotten«, said the girl; »was I not right? I shall stay as long as I like.«

»For ever.«

»You have high protection«, said the Visconti, having called the girl to her side, gazing curiously on her face. »Who, may Task, was your father?«

There was a touching sweetness in her tones as she replied, »You don't ask who was my mother.«

»Child«, said the blushing Visconti.

»Madam, no excuse, my mother was a slave, and not worth naming; my father was her master, the noble Pierre de Chazal.«

»Pierre de Chazal!» exclaimed Marietta.

»Yes, madam, Paul de Chazal and Maximilian have and had a common father with the outcast quadroone.«

At this moment three men entered the apartment. The first a young man dressed gaily, and in the very height of New Orleans fashion. He was of lofty stature and elegant. Handsome, with an eye in which lightness seemed to struggle with loftiness of thought, he appeared born for noble enterprises. And yet in gaiety, in pleasure, in amusements sometimes which shunned the light—for many of his hours were spent in the most secret recesses of his magnificent palace—did his time pass. Never would he even sympathize with the struggle for liberty; danced now at a citizen's house, next at the Spanish governor's ball.

»Maximilian«, said the Visconti, in a whisper; »he is here, Leone, you have not played me false.«

[2] It is often thought that a creole is a coloured one. In Louisiana it merely means a person born there of French parents.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PIC-A-PIC (continued)

The young man whom the Visconti had been so intently watching was Maximilian de Chazal. He did not perceive her, but without pausing in his course, after casting somewhat of an audacious look upon Maria Sa, audacious or intelligent it was hard to say which, advanced towards the hall usually devoted to dancing. Just within the door of this apartment was a staircase leading to the upper part of the house, and whether he disappeared by this, or whether he turned elsewhere, it was hard to say.

»Leone«, said Marietta Visconti, with unearthly calmness, »I thank thee; this must be seen out.«

»Said I not he was false?“ replied Leone de Chazal, still pale and anxious; ‘and now I have proved it.«

»No«, whispered Marietta, a woman's faith and enduring love yet whispering comfort, »not proved it. yet I believe nothing. I must see, hear, and have no loophole for doubt, ere I condemn him.«

»Maria«, said Leone, bitterly, »as it seems we have to wait, another bottle.«

Maria had momentarily disappeared ; next moment she appeared, flushed and excited, from the long chamber.

»Another bottle«, repeated Leone, eyeing her suspiciously; »what is become of the gallant Maximilian?“

Maria Sa looked at the flushed and anxious face of the lovely heiress, as she answered, »M. Maximilian de Chazal but crossed on his way to the Rue Brise-fer. He has left by our other door;“ and Maria Sa served the wine calmly.

»Said I not give me proof?“ said the Visconti, with uncontrolled delight, such as woman ever feels in the discovery of a beloved one's faith; »Leone, yon do him wrong.«

»Nay«, said de Chazal, moodily, his whole frame quivering with passion and rage as he saw the returning loveliness of the Visconti at the very thought of Maximilian's truth, »saw you not the understanding

between him and the quadroone? Believe me he is doubly false with maid and mistress.«

»Neglect me for a quadroone«, said the Visconti, proudly, and yet in under tones, while all her doubts and fears returned; »and yet can it be true?«

Leone replied not, for just at that moment the two men who had followed Maximilian seated themselves at no great distance. The position they occupied enabled these worthies to converse at their ease without attracting the attention of Luke Salem. They spoke in Spanish.

»Which is the girl?“ said the elder of the two men,

»Yon waitress, your excellency.«

»Faith, a lovely quadroone«, continued the other, after surveying the young woman with curiosity. »I commend your with, Pedro.«

These two men wore the costume of the governor's body-guard, but speaking as they did in Spanish they did not affect much concealment, that language being as yet but little understood in Louisiana.

»Your excellency, I have as sharp an eye for beauty as for dollars. Leave me alone to ferret out where pretty girls keep themselves concealed. It is like everything else—a thing which requires experience, but your excellency gives me enough practice to bring me to perfection.«

»Pedro, your tongue runs riot. But tell me—this quadroone is servant to the famous Marcelia Zanetto, mistress of De Chazal.«

»You hear«, said Leone, without moving a muscle, and in tones which reached the two interlocutors.

»I do«, continued the Visconti, her pale face still paler than ever.

»Of whom will pay her best, 'tis said. But I believe it not, your excellency«, said Pedro, with a cynical smile. »Leone de Chazal is a boaster, and, I fear me, a liar. It was but yesterday night he boasted —«

»Be careful, Don Pedro Malanso«, interrupted Leone, hurriedly, »walls have ears.«

»Ah, Monsieur Leone«, said the other, unabashed, »you will not deny what I have said.«

»I deny nothing, Don Pedro, save that my name and that of Marcella Zanetto have any right to be coupled. My cousin, perhaps——«

»Maximilian«, interrupted the Spaniard, while his companion studiously concealed his features, »is a noble youth, true as steel and as brave as a lion. Take my word for it, he flies at higher game, and, flying high, stoops not so low by the way.«

»And this higher game?“ said Leone, eagerly.

»The lovely Marietta Visconti, who else? All the town knows it.«

»Is this Visconti so lovely?“ said the coarse voice of the other trooper.

»So report says, your excellency«, observed Don Pedro. »I never saw her. Don Leone here can speak more certainly.«

»Your excellency«, said Leone, annoyed, vexed, and confounded, »can have little interest in knowing. Your taste is more easily satisfied;“ and he glanced expressively at the quadroone,

»Leone«, whispered Marietta, now thoroughly alarmed at the position in which she had so incautiously placed herself, »let us leave this place.«

The governor (for this unscrupulous and licentious soldier it was who was addressed as »your excellency“) had not been idle, though silent. His gaze had been directed towards Marietta, in the endeavour to penetrate her disguise. He saw enough to let him know that much beauty was concealed beneath her rough costume. His curiosity was piqued, and half forgetting the se of his-visit to the Pic-a-pic, he determined not to lose sight of his new discovery.

»Your excellency«, said Leone, who saw through and wished to turn his thoughts in another direction, speaking in a whisper, »are you aware that Luke Salem is in is room?«

»No«, exclaimed Reilly, warmly, »where is the dog?«

»Hush, your excellency!“ said Don Pedro, »we are in somewhat dangerous proximity to a host of rebellious creoles, and a discovery of your highness’s rank might be fraught with peril.«

»You are right, Don Pedro«, said the other; »besides, I recollect me one purpose of this disguise.«

Meanwhile, a short but rapid dialogue had taken place between Leone and Marietta, the upshot of which was that the latter agreed to test the

truth of her lover, if necessary, by an appeal to Marcella herself. Blinded by jealousy and by the strangely unpatriotic conduct of Maximilian, she was ill prepared to repel the insinuations of his cousin, who had now openly avowed himself her suitor, giving as a reason that the conduct of Maximilian justified any extremities. It was now agreed that Leone should proceed alone to discover if the coast were clear, leaving Marietta a moment alone.

The young heiress availed herself of this temporary absence to carry out a plan of her own.

»Maria Sa«, said she, »a word with you. Can I sup in a private room?

»Everything for money, lady, here«, said the quadroone, with a peculiar smile.

The Visconti rose and followed her.

»A splendid girl that«, said the governor.«

»The richest heiress in New Madrid«, replied Don Pedro, using the name common among the Spaniards.

Maria Sa led her fair charge into a room which commanded a view of the whole parlour, but in itself private.

»What will you take for supper, madam?«

»Child«, said the Visconti, warmly, and speaking with something of southern freedom, »am I mistaken in you, or are you pure, innocent?«

»As yourself!« replied the quadroone, sternly.

»Look not so fierce, girl, but listen. The Spanish governor and one of his men are in yon room; you see them near where I sat. They have a plot against a woman—I think, to bear her away this night. That woman is yourself.«

»Merciful heaven!“ cried the quadroone, turning pale. ““ And you, madam- a plot, a wicked plot, is formed against you.

»By whom, child?«

»By Leone de Chazal, who slew Paul de Chazal, and who would now murder the reputation of his brother.«

»Child—Maria—quadroone«, said Marietta, gasping for breath. »What mean you?—slew Paul de Chazal?«

»In this room, Leone, in a fit of drunken rage, pierced Paul de Chazal to the heart!«

There was a moment of silence. The Visconti began to see through the plot which had been carried out against her.

»Child, you speak warmly of Maximilian de Chazal.«

»He is my brother.«

»True, I forgot. Then Marcella Zanetto——” .

»Is one who, as a dancer, has earned an unenviable reputation; she is, in reality poor and virtuous. Her guilt exists only in the false assertions of such men as Leone.«

»Holy virgin, let me escape from this!«

»Wait here, lady, and we will leave together. My mission is accomplished.«

With these words the beautiful quadroone glided from the room, and left the heiress alone to ponder on the events of that evening. Proud would Maximilian have been could he have read into her heart! The villainy of his cousin caused the whole course of her affection to tide back full and fresh to their original possessor, and sweet and gentle were the maiden's thoughts. :

»Oh, lady! said Maria Sa, rushing in wildly, »the entrances are guarded by Spanish troops, with strict orders for not living being to leave the place.«

»Holy virgin«, cried the Visconti, »are lost.«

»Nay«, said the' voice of Leone, entering, »not lost, but found, fair lady.«

»Leone de Chazal—base recreant«, exclaimed the indignant girl, rising, and confronting him with a look, in which majesty and horror were strangely blended: »in this room, where by thy hand died thy cousin Paul, I spurn thee from me as a false and cowardly knave, who, to work out his own base ends, would sacrifice everything which other men look on as sacred an holy—not the tie of relationship—of friendship—nothing with thee is binding or powerful.«

Leone stood confounded. In the very instant of the fruition of his hope he found himself to be balked. But he could not thus tamely resign a

prize he had so dearly vowed to purchase.

»Marietta Visconti«, he said, »what is the meaning of all this? How many more changes will take place in your will——«

»None, Leone de Chazal, away! I hold no communication with a murderer.«

»Marietta«, said Leone, his teeth clenched, his eyes glaring tiger-like, while his pale cheeks denoted more than all his fury and disappointment, »are you gone mad to tempt me thus? Know you that you speak to one who will dare«

»Aye, even murder.«

»To you——I owe this«, exclaimed he, turning furiously toward the quadroone.

»You owe me nothing, my lord, but the truth«, said the girl, calmly.

Leone replied not, but left the room. As he turned to go, a smile of deep meaning passed across his features.

»Child«, said the Visconti, seizing the quadroone's arm, »he means evil.«

»Madam, I fear him not; nor need you. Put faith in me, and he shall not harm us.«

»But in what way can you contend against his power—I fear me he and the Spanish governor will together carry out their purpose. See! they talk together; they look this way—Leone smiles a fiendish smile.» -

»Madam, we must claim his protection.«

»Whose?«

»That of the Monk.» .

* But, child, how to find him—no messenger——«

»No messenger will be needed.«

And the quadroone stepped across the room to where a huge gong was suspended from the ceiling. Taking up a heavy iron stick with which to strike it, Maria spoke.

»Madam, but little is required to save us. If I can give three distinct strokes, at intervals of five minutes each, we are beyond the power of Leone de Chazal.«

»Then strike, in the name of heaven and mercy.«

CHAPTER IX.

THREE STROKES OF A GONG

»Watch, madam, the effect of what I shall do«, said the quadroone, »and mark how crime shall be baulked!«

»I watch«, replied the heiress, posting herself at the door of the room.
One!

The gong gave forth a deep roar, the echoes of which 'were heard rumbling through the whole of the building, first in one corner, and then in another. Its sound was sharp and thrilling, and the effect upon those within the large chamber was curious.

Leone started, and looked anxiously around; then, clutching his dagger, turned to hasten towards the apartment occupied by the two women. A hand was, however, laid upon his arm; it was that of the Spanish governor.

»Bah! do not mind that noise; my guards are without. If it summons to the rescue it is too late.«

Leone reseated himself, and the whispered conference was resumed.

Meanwhile Luke Salem and the whole of those men who had nodded to him on entering had each one risen, and by a simultaneous impulse, it seemed, invited his nearest fair neighbour to dance;. next minute the grand apartment of the Pic-a-Pic was almost deserted. The point of attraction was the dancing chamber; in another minute, however, the women all returned — the men had unaccountably disappeared.

»Watch, lady«, said the excited quadroone, standing by the gong, »we want to gain but ten minutes of time to be saved, hat is happening now?«

»All the men have left the tavern save Leone and the governor«, replied the Visconti.

»Good«, said the quadroone.

»Santa Maria!» whispered Reilly, turning to Pedro, »there was meaning in that sound, Where opens the rear of this illomened house?«

»On the river, your excellency.«

»Is that dog Salem gone?«

»Yes, your excellency.«

»No, your excellency«, exclaimed the spy at the very same time; »I reckon that canine quadruped is here.«

»Well, and what account are you going to give of yourself?«

»I was a g wine to say, your excellency, that here I conclude to be, after my: captivity in the hands of the Bloody Fist.«

»But, sirrah, what of the mission I sent you on? Did you find St. Mary's Tower?«

»Well, I conclude I did; it arn't left its old locality.«

»Luke Salem«, said the governor, sternly, »answer me properly and distinctly. Did you find trace of any conspiracy ?«

»A rigler conspiracy, your excellency. I found it all out.«

«You did, and the head was the Monk.«

»The Monk?“ said Luke, innocently, »I conclude I saw no Monk. What they met to speechify about was more suitable to the leader I saw.«

»And he was—«

»The Seigneur Leone de Chazal.«

»Rascal!“ said the accused.

»And the object?“ continued the governor, sternly.

»The object didn't exactly convene to my notions of the fitness of things«, said the spy, demurely; »it was to steal all the pretty gals in New Orleans, and—«

»Brave spy! good Luke!“ said the quadroone; »you have dons excellent service.«

Two!

This time the gong resounded still louder than before, its voice ringing in the ears long after the real sound had ceased.

»Again!“ said the governor, rising, in which act he was followed by Don Pedro and Leone, »there is meaning in this.«

»There is in both,“ said Leone; »let us beware the third.«

»Highness«, exclaimed a soldier, advancing, »there is a strange tumult in the street. The people congregate in masses; they say naught, but

they mutter threats, they show arms, and their rallying cry is the Monk.«

»Say you so—why did I let the traitor escape.«

»Lor'!" said Luke Salem, »that are's all nonsense, and them chaps is saucy, that's all I can say. The Monk has no more to do with it nor you, bat they love him, and its natural they should talk of him.«

»Still, my lord, the people collect«, said another soldier; »they have barred every passage, and clearly overpower us in numbers.«

‘This becomes serious«, said the governor, knitting his brow; »ground your pikes, my lads, and keep your muskets ready. At the first act of violence fire, and disperse this mob.«

»My lord«, exclaimed Leone, »if the Monk be their watch cry, better not, for be assured they are well armed and prepared for the contest. Your troops will massacred and overcome.«

Bah«, said the Spaniard, confidently, »a mob, a gang of unruly Frenchmen, »who, at the first sound of fire-arms, will disperse in every direction.«

Leone flinched. The insult to his country was not the less felt that he could not resent it.

»We shall see, my lord«, he said, sarcastically.

»Your highness«, repeated another soldior,“ some order has been given from behind, and the people have dispersed in direction.«

»They have done wisely«, said the governor. »I should have been sorry to have used force.«

Again the gong sounded.

»Three!" said Maria Sa.

Marietta Visconti held her breath, and stood in anxious expectation of the result, while Maria Sa, as if aware that all that could be done had been done, sank in exhaustion upon a stool. Leone de Chazal, who began for the first time to comprehend that the striking of the gongs had some probable connexion with the evasion of his victims, spoke to the governor, while still the sound of the third blow was ringing in their ears: »Methinks those gongs denote some preconcerted signal, which it were well to unravel. Let us join the ladies.«

»Madre de Dios!» cried the governor, »there is some mystery in this affair; I should not be surprised if that cursed Monk were at the bottom of it.«

»Monk me no monks«, said Leone, impatiently; »I am weary of such senseless quackery.«

With these words he turned towards the chamber occupied by the women, followed by the governor and his companion. Though it contained no other visible outlet but one, and no one had crossed that, the room was empty, and there hang the mysterious gong which had acted with such efficacious power.

»To arms! to arms!» shouted at the same instant the soldiery without, as, cleaving the crowd with his axe, followed by a hundred armed and painted Indians, the terrific Red Hand burst like a thunder cloud upon the unconscious Spaniards. Ere they could offer any active resistance, the soldiers of the guard were repulsed by the wild Chichachas, who remained sole masters of the café Pic-a-Pic.

The feelings of the governor and of his two friends were most acute. They saw before them no fate but that of instant death, and death under circumstances of the most terrible nature. They looked to the habitués of the café for sup but the whole party had retreated to the dancing room, where they remained totally inactive spectators. Even Luke Salem, despite that his terrors of the Red Hand were not so great as heretofore, still exhibited a decided preference for the propinquity of men verging more towards his own colour than for the neighbourhood of the Red Skin.

»What means this outrage and this violence?» cried the governor, his Iberian valour reviving; »what seek the rebellious knaves?«

»The red men are thirsty, they come to the pale faces for drink«, said the gallant youth whose name graces our title; »this house has a door; it is like the wigwam, always open.«

Suiting the action to the word, the Chichachas warrior seated himself, after casting a rapid and inquiring glance around the room.

»What means this forbearance?» muttered Reilly, in a whisper to Leone.

»We shall see; follow me;” and brushing past the crowd of Indians, who stood silent, but with fierce and threatening countenances, the three men made for the door.

On the very threshold stood the Monk.

The trio paused; there was a moment of guilty hesitation about their manner, but the priest gave them no time for thought.

»Your excellency of Spain«, he said, sternly, »they seek you in the viceregal palace. It is a matter of general inquiry why you prefer the disgraceful Pic-a-Pic to your own mansion. Go, and beware the eve of St. Michael!«

The governor, burning with indignation, hurried by, and sought the open air, there to cool his heated brow. The two would have followed, but the Monk blocked their passage.

»Leone de Chazal, vengeance has been long in store for thy crimes. Repent, or beware thou too the eve of St. Michael!«

Pale and cast down by emotions of speechless horror, the guilty man passed by.

»Thou, Don Pedro, art also guilty, but thou art the tool of another. Beware thou too, but of *Palabras milagrosas*!«

Had the fiend himself in bodily substance and shape stood before the eyes of Don Pedro, it is probable that he would have gazed with less intensity of horror than at the sound of these two words, which he had not heard pronounced before for seventeen long years, and yet which he had never for one moment lost sight of. Fixed in his mind, unalterable in their position as fate itself, they had yet not passed his lips in conjunction during the whole of that period. If then he stood with gaping mouth, with blanched lips, with eyes which started almost from their sockets, gazing in mute terror at the Monk, it will not wholly surprise our readers. They have yet to learn how two simple words, almost without meaning, could thus affect a man; but when the mystery is explained, that Don Pedro could suppose the Monk human was beyond belief. These words, used in a threatening sense *towards him*, could have but one sense. And yet they had never passed the lips of any but himself, and that seventeen years before, to one man, whose locality

was ten thousand miles from that spot, and whom he supposed dead years, years ago. It was inexplicable.

»Monk! priest! devil! what is the meaning of this?» said he, turning in the direction in which that mysterious individual had vanished. His gaze met only the rigid outlines of a knot of American Indian warriors, behind whom the omnipotent and all knowing Monk had disappeared.

Don-Pedro gave a deep sigh.

»*Pilabras milagrosas!*» he muttered; »what can be the meaning of this? It might have one. Oh, how joyous, how sweet! Are seventeen years of torture and of anguish«, he exclaimed aloud, »to be wiped out, and peace once more regain my bosom?«

»Turn not your head, move not«, said a voice near him, »but listen. Be cautious, join the governor in no more foul schemes, befriend the people, and who knows what may happen?«

»Whoever thou art«, exclaimed Don Pedro, who had been leaning his back against the half-open door of the café Pic-a-Pic, »give me one word of hope.«

»There was no reply, and the Spaniard, silent and thoughtful sought the open air.

END OF BOOK I.

Book II.

PALASRAS MILAGROSAS!^[3]

CHAPTER I.

SUPPER FOR TWO

It was a winter's night, the cold wind blew keenly, the shutters of the houses shook with violence, and made the interior all the more tempting and agreeable, Caronde Piquet felt this. Who was Caronde Piquet will be the very natural question of the reader. He was a notary, and old, honest, and, we will not maliciously say in consequence, poor; but that he was poor, was self-evident. The apartment which he occupied was small and ill-furnished; a desk, a box containing deeds and parchments, a ricketty table, and two chairs, were the whole of his *mobilier*, if we except a bed in what by courtesy was called another room—in reality a closet.

Now it by no means follows that because a man be poor, therefore he is miserable, Caronde Piquet was not. He plodded on in his avocation, with a few respectable but rich clients, who had little legal business to transact. What they had, they gave to Caronde, and Caronde after this fashion lived. He rose at dawn, made his breakfast and his bed, swept out his room, and had everything in order by office-hours. He then took a walk, for, like every poor man who thinks rightly, he found the open air his best friend. By eleven he returned, lest any one should be in want of his services, The day, however, generally passed without the visit of a client, though Caronde had enough of writing to do to occupy him until his dinner hour. This meal he luxuriated in at the neighbouring eating-house, such as they were before the revolution; and having expended his modest pittance, returned once more to his *mansarde* in the Rue Royale du Coq, No. 17. Towards evening the poor notary took another stroll, called perhaps on some friend, less solitary than himself because he had a family, and here Caronde was generally welcome. His gentle manners,

his quiet yet witty remarks, his fondness for children, his inexhaustible fund of patience, which made him the martyr to half the children in the parish—or, at all events, of his acquaintance—rendered him ever welcome to the whole circle of his friends. Thus Caronde glided smoothly down the stream of life, never in want, never in penury, and still never at the end of the year, though exercising the most rigid economy, with one penny saved.

It was a winter evening, to go back to our opening words, and Caronde Piquet sat by his little fire-place, watching the development of a *bouillon* with which he promised to regale himself for his modest supper, with that intentness native to the poor and the solitary. Caronde was thinking. Of what, he would have found it difficult to say, since his subjects of thought were not of the most extensive kind.

A loud noise was heard at the bottom of the stairs; then the step of a heavy foot ascending.

Caronde took no notice, there were so many lodgers in the same hotel.

Rat! tat! tat!

»*Peste!*» said Caronde, eyeing his *bouillon* and his preparations for supper, which were, to say the least, slightly unprofessional, with doubt; »but bah, one must eat, even if one be a notary.«

»Rat! tat!» this time rather impatiently.

»Come in«, and Caronde threw himself back in his arm-chair with the air of a millionaire, disturbed at his evening meal.

A tall man, masked, and with a huge cloak thrown around him, entered unceremoniously, and advanced into the centre of the apartment.

»You are Caronde Piquet, notary«, said the stranger, interrogatively.

»At your service, monsieur.«

»Hem!» said the other, in somewhat bad French; »I come recommended to you by a client of yours—the Marquis de St. Leon.«

»Sir, you are twice welcome. Will you be seated? What can I do for you?«

»Much, but it is an affair of moment. The first requisite is secrecy.«

»It is my profession«, said Caronde, drily.

The stranger seated himself, but without removing his mask, his hat, or his cloak.

»You would like to gain two thousand francs a year.«

»Monsieur«, said the poor notary, starting and looking at the stranger's feet with suspicion, »what am I to do for you?«

»Would you like to earn two thousand francs?«

»Certainly, with pleasure. Two thousand francs? why, it is a mine.«

»They are at your service.«

»But, monsieur, explain yourself.«

The stranger said nothing; but opening his cloak, there appeared, wrapped in deep sleep, a child. Pale but most beautiful, the little creature slept so sound as to create the suspicion that artificial means had been resorted to to cast it into slumber. It was about a year and a half old, and a girl.

Caronde's favourite instincts were all active and alive in an instant. His pale face flushed, his eyes beamed with a sparkling animation, his lips were curled into smile.

»Is it to take that child? why, I would do it for nothing.«

The stranger, whose mask covered only the upper part of his face, looked gratified, and continued: »You will be required to educate and adopt this child—you must bring it up as your own. Every year two thousand francs will be sent you. Be satisfied with this, be secret, and I confide her to you.«

»I accept the office«, said the notary, fervently, »but if you would reclaim her?«

»I shall never do so«, replied the man, moodily; 'and yet, who knows?«

»You may one day change your mind; circumstances—«

»Yes! you are right«, said the man; »and yet you must not know me.«

And the stranger mused. After a while, he took up a pen which lay on the notary's table, and wrote two words on the back of a packet, which he deposited in the notary's hands.

»The child I confide to you«, said the stranger, rising; »watch over it, guard it, as you would your own soul, and deliver to no living being but he or her who shall repeat to you the words I have written.«

The notary paid no attention to the words, for he had taken the child in his arms, and was intently engaged in admiring its pretty and innocent face. Caronde within him all the feelings, all the emotions of a father, at this moment; and under the peculiar circumstances which brought the little stranger to his door, could scarcely but experience all the feelings of one.

»Its name?» he said, after a pause.

»Call her Piquet until she be ten years old; then open the packet I have given you; you will find other instructions. I confide in you.«

»You may, sir stranger.«

The mask here stooped, and imprinted a kiss upon the child's face. He then raised himself, cast a heavy purse on the table, and left the room. The notary again on the child, on whose cheek he observed a slight humidity.

It was a tear drop by the stern man who was now heard hurrying down stairs.

»Mon Dieu!» said Caronde, »that was the child's father, and he has left it thus. So much the better; I am no longer alone. Bravo, our family increases. We must have supper for two.«

The child still slept, and Caronde bore it to the bed which for ten years he had enjoyed in solitary loneliness. It was big enough for the man and the baby, however. If it had not been, Caronde would have slept on the floor.

»Bravo!» said the notary; »God is good, and *au diable* with the philosophers. Here am I, a poor lonely devil, too poor to have a wife, and yet all my life wishing for a child of my own. Pan! pan! a knock at the door, and we have one that I will wager two sous to a bottle of brandy, can walk, and talk, and eat. Aha! talking of eating, I wonder whether *bouillon* is good for children. When it wakes, it will be hungry. All right; I know I have seen Mere Margot give a younger child, it was her grandchild, meat in lumps. Va! what es good in the whole must be

excellent diluted. Agreed, soup is just the thing; and as sure as my name is Caronde, we shall have supper for two.«

One should have seen the air with which the notary laid out his supper, even running out, so sound did the child sleep, and fetching, on the faith of the purse he had not yet looked at, certain little tit bits for the meal which the poor man had not for many a year regaled himself with. Ah! Caronde was a happy man, as he put on an extra log, lit an extra wick of his lamp, and popped bottle of wine on his table. »Yes, is good, and to the deuce with the philosophers.«

»Ta! ta!» said Caronde, as soon as the whole banquet was in apple-pie order, and he began himself, after his unusual exertions, to feel somewhat of an unusual appetite, »we sleep as if we liked it. I expect she is used to it«, and creeping in on tiptoes, the man of law seated himself on the edge of the bed.

That poor notary, in his threadbare coat, in his russet cap, pale, with no feature of outward show to recommend him, what an admirable, what a beautiful picture did he present. In his heart there was more beauty than in a Madonna of Raffaello. To see him gazing tenderly, anxiously, upon that little child, examining every feature of its little face, he seemed some guardian angel, so subdued, so eloquent was his mute patience.

Presently the child grew restless, moved, raised its diminutive hand to its little face, rubbing it as if to chase away slumber, and then woke.

»Mamma!» were its first words.

»Ta! ta!» said the poor notary, somewhat puzzled; »I had forgotten, babes do usually have mothers!«

The child heard the strange voice, looked, saw the strange face, and began to cry.

»*Mon Dieu!* what shall I do«, exclaimed Caronde, taking it in his arms and beginning to sing, at the same time bearing it into the other room. At the sight of the well furnished table, the child paused. I was evidently hungry. Caronde was delighted, and, seating himself, soon found that his little friend had an appetite which promised much for its health.

»I see we shall do favorably. Bravo, Caronde, you make a capital nurse.«

In fact, in a very short time, the child seemed perfectly reconciled; but Caronde's ways were so amusing; he plied it so perseveringly with food, he laughed, he played all kinds of queer antics, he made faces ugly enough to have frightened a horse, and the little thing, tickled irresistibly by the notary's fun, laughed too, until, what with laughing, eating, and playing with its new guardian, the young creature once more fell asleep.

»This goes famously, like a watch," said Caronde, as he put away the supper things; »and now for the packet and the money, let us put them away.«

In the purse were a hundred louis d'ors.

»An inexhaustible treasure«, said the notary.

On the packet were written these words: *Palabras Milagrosas!*

»Very queer words«, said the notary.

END OF BOOK II.

^[3]Book 1. of »The Red Hand«, which is written expressly for The Mirror, commences April 4th, and ends May 30, and may be had, price 1s. 6d.

Book III.

THE EVE OR ST. MICHAEL.

CONCLUSION.

It was some days after the events which occurred at the café Pic-a-Pic. O'Reilly and Pedro were seated at a table, conversing. The former was gay and lively—a hope consistent with his brutal character was animating him; while the latter was pale, anxious, and livid.

»That Marcella Zanetto is slow in coming«, said the governor; »she pays little obedience to the wishes of her lord and ruler.«

There was a pause of a moment, and then Luke Salem entered.

»A lady to see your lordship.«

»Let her enter.«

Marcella Zanetto, the lovely dancer who has turned the heads of half New Orleans, entered. One glance at her innocent face showed the falsity of Leone de Chazal's boasting.

»I would speak a word with Don Pedro«, said the girl, with downcast eye.

»I am here.«

»I bear a letter and a packet for you, my lord«, with which words she handed him the documents.

»And now, fair damsel, a word for me, your humble admirer«, said the governor.

»Not one!» thundered Don Pedro; »behold, licentious noble, my daughter!» and with a glare like that of a wounded tiger, the Spaniard drew his sword, and placed himself before his child. A letter from the Monk had informed him of the poor notary's emigration to Louisiana, of his death, of the gay but virtuous career of his daughter, and with this letter was a packet, and on it these words :—

»Palabras Milagrosas!«

In half an hour Don Pedro and his daughter occupied separate cells in the governor's palace.

* *
*

Two hours after the above occurrence messenger entered the chamber of the governor.

»My lord, the people rise in insurrection; in every quarter of the town armed bodies of men parade about, while it is said that the Red Hand with a thousand warriors have secretly entered.

»What day is this?«

»The eve of St. Michael, my lord.«

»Ah! say you so. Then to arms, for that accursed monk warned me it was the last night of my power.«

»I go, my lord.«

»Stay, what have you done with those two women.«

»The Visconti, my lord, is guarded carefully in the ladies' apartments of the palace, while Maria Sa attends her as a friend.«

»It is well. When these rebels are put down, it will be time to think of gentler passions.«

A second messenger entered.

»My lord, the palace is surrounded; every avenue is guarded; not a man can leave. All communication with the guardhouse and the barracks is cut off.«

»Send hither my body-guard.«

»They are disarmed and prisoners, their new chief Luke Salem has joined the insurgents.«

»Caramba!" cried the discomfited soldier of fortune, »is not escape left.«

»No«, said the deep and unnatural tones of the Monk's voice, »escape is not left. You are a prisoner, and Louisiana is once more free.«

O'Reilly, furious at the Monk's words, and seeing that he was alone, drew his brave Toledo blade, that had often done him good service in

other wars, and aiming a violent blow at the priest, struck him full on the breast.

A clangor of steel against steel was the only result. Ere the governor recovered himself from his astonishment, the Red Hand, followed by a select band of his grim warriors, entered, and guarded every avenue, and O'Reilly, seeing that resistance was useless, gave up the struggle, and handed his sword to the victor.

The monk turned and whispered a few words to Luke Salem, who stood behind him.

»My lord governor«, he then said, »you have most foully misgoverned and misruled this free province of Louisiana. The people have risen against your tyranny and that of Spain. We disown and deny your authority. To us France is alone a mistress; we own and recognize no other. Your crimes have deserved death.«

»What crimes?«

»Your conduct towards these women«, replied the Monk, as Marcella Zanetto, Maria Sa, and the Visconti entered, under the charge of Luke Salem, followed by Don Pedro,“ merits a punishment most condign . But in consideration of your position and authority, and in consideration that all your foul crimes have fallen to the ground, you are allowed to depart freely whence you came. A ship awaits you in the harbour. Whoever will accompany you is also free to go; Don Pedro—«

»I stay, Sir Monk. This is now my home.«

»This well. You, Leone de Chazal«, continued the Monk severely to the young noble, who, heavily guarded, now also entered, »are also free to accompany your friend.«

»Nay, Sir Monk«, said Leone, gaily, glancing at Marietta, and then his eye resting upon Marcella Zanetto, »there is a young lady yonder to whom I owe some reparation for past follies, and it will grieve me much if my sins are not forgiven me.«

»Thank God!“ said the Monk fervently, while the young girl held down her head and blushed. Don Pedro stroked his moustaches, as if he had not quite made up his mind.

There was a moment of deep silence.

»My friends«, said the monk at length, »Louisiana is free, the council of state awaits my presence. Before, however, I attend them, there are one or two things to be done, which I would fain perform. I would that on this glorious day not one heart should murmur of regret. Let me see all near me happy.«

Marietta glanced faintly around. She alone seemed incapable of consolation.

»Red Hand, my friend«, said the Monk, taking the warrior by the hand, and leading him beside Maria Sa, »as you will not speak for yourself, I must. Young girl: your virtuous and modest career, under peculiarly disadvantageous circumstances, deserve a much greater reward than I can give you. Here, however, is one; a great chief, who is willing to forsake his tribe, to become a citizen of New Orleans, to habit towns—where, indeed, he received his education—for your sake. Say, will you take as your husband, Antonio Miramata, commonly called the Red Hand?«

The beautiful Creole bowed her head and said, »I will.«

The Monk, whose cowl more than ever concealed his face, looked complacently on the scene.

Leone de Chazal, who, under the charge of the Monk, had been brought to a sense of his follies, had glided beside the pretty Zanetto, and was busily engaged in making, his excuses to a willing ear, for the ear of love is always willing, even to be deceived.

The Red Hand also had withdrawn from the group around the Monk, and was explaining how diffidence of his own merits alone prevented his long since declaring his affection. The young Comanche, though with many Indian characteristics, had, as a boy, always dwelt in the habitations of the whites, and his tastes easily reconciled him to permanent occupation with them. Maria Sa, whose happiness had come upon her most suddenly, listened to his words with breathless delight—the delight of a woman who discovers that her love had not been given unreturned.

The governor 'gazed with scowling eye upon the scene, while Don Pedro was thoughtful. He was thinking of the poor notary.

»Marietta Visconti«, said the Monk, »you are betrothed, I believe, to Maximilian de Chazal; shall this auspicious day be crowned by your union with him?«

»Sir Monk, I will never marry one who has forgot his country in vain pleasures.«

»A deputation from the council of state«, said Luke Salem, ushering in a venerable body of nobles and citizens.

»Most worthy and noble Monk«, said their spokesman, »we could not tarry bringing you our thanks for the glorious way in which you have freed our country. We owe everything to you. It is your intelligence, your activity, your comprehensive views, which have carried out this enterprise to maturity. As a proof of our deep gratitude, as no priest can take office, we leave to you the nomination of the governor-general and commander-in-chief of the forces of the province of Louisiana, under the approval of our most gracious king of France.«

»My lords and citizens, I thank you; and if it be I who has caused all you say, I accept the offer, and at once appoint, as governor of Louisiana, in the name of God, and as lieutenant for the king—«

A general movement of deep attention took place among the nobles and officers.

»Maximilian le Chazal, the saviour of his country.«

A deep murmur of regret, nearly of indignation, followed.

»If, my lords, you do not in five minutes sanction the appointment, Maximilian de Chazal resigns it into your hands.«

The cowl of the Monk fell back, his robe dropped at his feet, and, in the splendid dress he usually wore, the young, the gay Maximilian de Chazal stood confessed the Monk!

»My lords«, he said to the astonished, bewildered, and delighted deputation, »as Maximilian de Chazal I could do nothing. I conceived, therefore, the idea of this disguise. The better to conceal myself, I suffered my other self to remain under reproaches I was not conscious of deserving. Assiduity and my wealth did the rest. I found devoted friends, my money procured hundreds of spies and agents. I worked

night and day. The noble Red Hand was my principal friend; to him, you will learn how much I owe anon.«

»Noble Maximilian«, said the president, »you bewilder and delight us at the same 'time. Receive at once our confirmation of the appointment. Hail, our noble governor.

Loud cries succeeded.

»And Marietta«, said the Monk.

The Visconti had retreated to a corner of the room, where, proud, happy, and delighted, she gave vent to her joy in copious flood of tears.

In half an hour more, the Spanish governor, amid groans of universal execration, went on board and sailed in his own frigate for Spain.

Next day there were three weddings in New Orleans, and the people felt the pleasure of being ruled by their fellow-countrymen.

Great was the happiness of Maximilian and Marietta, who was so well pleased with her own priest that from that day she had no other.

The Red Hand and Maria Sa dwelt in happiness also, while Marcella Zanetto and Leone, though less happy than the others, had no reason to complain of the dispensations of fortune.

-THE END-