
HARRIET MARTINEAU
THE HOUR AND THE MAN, AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE

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Waiting Supper.

The nights of August are in Saint Domingo the hottest of the year. The winds then cease to befriend the panting inhabitants; and while the thermometer stands at 90 degrees, there is no steady breeze, as during the preceding months of summer. Light puffs of wind now and then fan the brow of the negro, and relieve for an instant the oppression of the European settler; but they are gone as soon as come, and seem only to have left the heat more intolerable than before.

Of these sultry evenings, one of the sultriest was the 22nd of August, 1791. This was one of five days appointed for rejoicings in the town of Cap Français—festivities among the French and Creole inhabitants, who were as ready to rejoice on appointed occasions as the dulness of colonial life renders natural, but who would have been yet more lively than they were if the date of their festival had been in January or May. There was no choice as to the date, however. They were governed in regard to their celebrations by what happened at Paris; and never had the proceedings of the mother-country been so important to the colony as now.

During the preceding year, the white proprietors of Saint Domingo, who had hailed with loud voices the revolutionary doctrines before which royalty had begun to succumb in France, were astonished to find their cries of Liberty and Equality adopted by some who had no business with such ideas and words. The mulatto proprietors and merchants of the island innocently understood the words according to

their commonly received meaning, and expected an equal share with the whites in the representation of the colony, in the distribution of its offices, and in the civil rights of its inhabitants generally. These rights having been denied by the whites to the freeborn mulattoes, with every possible manifestation of contempt and dislike, an effort had been made to wring from the whites by force what they would not grant to reason; and an ill-principled and ill-managed revolt had taken place, in the preceding October, headed by Vincent Ogé and his brother, sons of the proprietress of a coffee plantation, a few miles from Cap Français. These young men were executed, under circumstances of great barbarity. Their sufferings were as seed sown in the warm bosoms of their companions and adherents, to spring up, in due season, in a harvest of vigorous revenge. The whites suspected this; and were as anxious as their dusky neighbours to obtain the friendship and sanction of the revolutionary government at home. That government was fluctuating in its principles and in its counsels; it favoured now one party, and now the other; and on the arrival of its messengers at the ports of the colony, there ensued sometimes the loud boastings of the whites, and sometimes quiet, knowing smiles and whispered congratulations among the depressed section of the inhabitants.

The cruelties inflicted on Vincent Ogé had interested many influential persons in Paris in the cause of the mulattoes. Great zeal was exorcised in attempting to put them in a condition to protect themselves by equal laws, and thus to restrain the tyranny of the whites. The Abbé Gregoire pleaded for them in the National Assembly; and on

the 10th of March was passed the celebrated decree which gave the mulattoes the privileges of French citizens, even to the enjoyment of the suffrage, and to the possession of seats in the parochial and colonial assemblies. To Europeans there appears nothing extraordinary in the admission to these civil functions of freeborn persons, many of whom were wealthy, and many educated; but to the whites of Saint Domingo the decree was only less tremendous than the rush of the hurricane.

It arrived at Cap Français on the 30th of June, and the tidings presently spread. At first, no one believed them but the mulattoes. When it was no longer possible to doubt—when the words of Robespierre passed from mouth to mouth, till even the nuns told them to one another in the convent garden—“Perish the colonies, rather than sacrifice one iota of our principles!” the whites trampled the national cockade under their feet in the streets, countermanded their orders for the fête of the 14th of July (as they now declined taking the civic oath), and proposed to one another to offer their colony and their allegiance to England.

They found means, however, to gratify their love of power, and their class-hatred, by means short of treason. They tried disobedience first, as the milder method. The governor of the colony, Blanchelande, promised that when the decree should reach him officially, he would neglect it, and all applications from any quarter to have it enforced. This set all straight. Blanchelande was pronounced a sensible and patriotic man. The gentlemen shook hands warmly with him at every turn; the ladies made deep and significant curtseys wherever they met him; the boys taught

their little negroes to huzza at the name of Blanchelande; and the little girls called him a dear creature. In order to lose no time in showing that they meant to make laws for their own colony out of their own heads, and no others, the white gentry hastened on the election of deputies for a new General Colonial Assembly. The deputies were elected, and met, to the number of a hundred and seventy-six, at Leogane, in the southern region of the island, so early as the 9th of August. After exchanging greetings and vows of fidelity to their class-interests, under the name of patriotism, they adjourned their assembly to the 25th, when they were to meet at Cap Français. It was desirable to hold their very important session in the most important place in the colony, the centre of intelligence, the focus of news from Europe, and the spot where they had first sympathised with the ungrateful government at home, by hoisting, with their own white hands, the cap of liberty, and shouting, so that the world might hear, “Liberty and Equality!” “Down with Tyranny!”

By the 20th, the deputies were congregated at Cap Français; and daily till the great 25th were they seen to confer together in coteries in the shady piazzas, or in the Jesuits’ Walk, in the morning, and to dine together in parties in the afternoon, admitting friends and well-wishers to these tavern dinners. Each day till the 25th was to be a fête-day in the town and neighbourhood; and of these days the hot 22nd was one.

Among these friends and well-wishers were the whites upon all the plantations in the neighbourhood of the town. There was scarcely an estate in the Plaine du Nord, or on

the mountain steeps which overlooked the cape, town, and bay, on all sides but the north, which did not furnish guests to these dinners. The proprietors, their bailiffs, the clergy, the magistrates, might all be seen along the roads, in the cool of the morning; and there was a holiday air about the estates they left behind. The negroes were left for this week to do their work pretty much as they liked, or to do none at all. There was little time to think of them, and of ordinary business, when there were the mulattoes to be ostentatiously insulted, and the mother-country to be defied. So the negroes slept at noon, and danced at night, during these few August days, and even had leave to visit one another to as great an extent as was ever allowed. Perhaps they also transacted other affairs of which their masters had little suspicion.

All that ever was allowed was permitted to the slaves on the Breda estate, in the plain, a few miles from Cap Français. The attorney, or bailiff of the estate, Monsieur Bayou de Libertas, was a kind-hearted man, who, while insisting very peremptorily on his political and social rights, and vehemently denouncing all abstract enmity to them, liked that people actually about him should have their own way. While ransacking his brain for terms of abuse to vent on Lafayette and Condorcet, he rarely found anything harsh to utter when Caton got drunk, and spoiled his dinner; when Venus sent up his linen darker than it went down to the quarter, or when little Machabée picked his pocket of small coin. Such a man was, of course, particularly busy this week; and of course, the slaves under his charge were

particularly idle, and particularly likely to have friends from other plantations to visit them.

Some such visitor seemed to be expected by a family of these Breda negroes, on the Monday evening, the 22nd. This family did not live in the slave-quarter. They had a cottage near the stables, as Toussaint Breda had been Monsieur Bayou's postillion, and, when he was lately promoted to be overseer, it was found convenient to all parties that he should retain his dwelling, which had been enlarged and adorned so as to accord with the dignity of his new office. In the piazza of his dwelling sat Toussaint this evening, evidently waiting for some one to arrive; for he frequently put down his book to listen for footsteps, and more than once walked round the house to look abroad. His wife, who was within, cooking supper, and his daughter and little boy, who were beside him in the piazza, observed his restlessness; for Toussaint was a great reader, and seldom looked off the page for a moment of any spare hour that he might have for reading either the books Monsieur Bayou lent him, or the three or four volumes which he had been permitted to purchase for himself.

"Do you see Jean?" asked the wife from within. "Shall we wait supper for him?"

"Wait a little longer," said Toussaint. "It will be strange if he does not come."

"Are any more of Latour's people coming with Jean, mother?" asked Génifrède, from the piazza.

"No; they have a supper at Latour's to-night; and we should not have thought of inviting Jean, but that he wants some conversation with your father."

“Lift me up,” cried the little boy, who was trying in vain to scramble up one of the posts of the piazza, in order to reach a humming-bird’s nest, which hung in the tendrils of a creeper overhead, and which a light puff of wind now set swinging, so as to attract the child’s eye. What child ever saw a humming-bird thus rocking—its bill sticking out like a long needle on one side, and its tail at the other, without longing to clutch it? So Denis cried out imperiously to be lifted up. His father set him on the shelf within the piazza, where the calabashes were kept—a station whence he could see into the nest, and watch the bird, without being able to touch it. This was not altogether satisfactory. The little fellow looked about him for a calabash to throw at the nest; but his mother had carried in all her cups for the service of the supper-table. As no more wind came at his call, he could only blow with all his might, to swing the tendril again; and he was amusing himself thus when his father laid down his book, and stepped out to see once more whether Jean was approaching.

“Lift me down,” said the boy to his sister, when his head was giddy with blowing. Génifrède would fain have let him stay where he was, out of the way of mischief; but she saw that he was really afraid of falling, and she offered her shoulders for him to descend upon. When down, she would not let him touch her work; she took her scissors from his busy hands, and shook him off when he tried to pull the snowberries out of her hair; so that there was nothing left for the child to play with but his father’s book. He was turning it over, when Toussaint re-appeared.

“Ha! boy, a book in your hands already? I hope you may have as much comfort out of that book as I have had, Denis.”

“What is it? what is it about?” said the boy, who had heard many a story out of books from his father.

“What is it? Let us see. I think you know letters enough to spell it out for yourself. Come and try.”

The child knew the letter E, and, with a good deal of help, made out, at last, Epictetus.

“What is that?” asked the boy.

“Epictetus was a negro,” said Génifrède, complacently.

“Not a negro,” said her father, smiling. “He was a slave; but he was a white.”

“Is that the reason you read that book so much more than any other?”

“Partly; but partly because I like what is in it.”

“What is in it—any stories?” asked Denis.

“It is all about bearing and forbearing. It has taught me many things which you will have to learn by-and-by. I shall teach you some of them out of this book.”

Denis made all haste away from the promised instruction, and his father was presently again absorbed in his book. From respect to him, Génifrède kept Denis quiet by signs of admonition; and for some little time nothing was heard but the sounds that in the plains of Saint Domingo never cease—the humming and buzzing of myriads of insects, the occasional chattering of monkeys in a neighbouring wood, and, with a passing gust, a chorus of frogs from a distant swamp. Unconscious of this din, from being accustomed always to hear more or less of it, the boy

amused himself with chasing the fireflies, whose light began to glance around as darkness descended. His sister was poring over her work, which she was just finishing, when a gleam of greenish light made both look up. It came from a large meteor which sailed past towards the mountains, whither were tending also the huge masses of cloud which gather about the high peaks previous to the season of rain and hurricanes. There was nothing surprising in this meteor, for the sky was full of them in August nights; but it was very beautiful. The globe of green light floated on till it burst above the mountains, illuminating the lower clouds, and revealing along the slopes of the uplands the coffee-groves, waving and bowing their heads in the wandering winds of that high region. Génifrède shivered at the sight, and her brother threw himself upon her lap. Before he had asked half his questions about the lights of the sky, the short twilight was gone, and the evening star cast a faint shadow from the tufted posts of the piazza upon the white wall of the cottage. In a low tone, full of awe, Génifrède told the boy such stories as she had heard from her father of the mysteries of the heavens. He felt that she trembled as she told of the northern lights, which had been actually seen by some travelled persons now in Cap Français. It took some time and argument to give him an idea of cold countries; but his uncle Paul, the fisherman, had seen hail on the coast, only thirty miles from hence; and this was a great step in the evidence. Denis listened with all due belief to his sister’s description of those pale lights shooting up over the sky, till he cried out vehemently, “There they are! look!”

Génifrède screamed, and covered her face with her hands; while the boy shouted to his father, and ran to call his mother to see the lights.

What they saw, however, was little like the pale, cold rays of the aurora borealis. It was a fiery red, which, shining to some height in the air, was covered in by a canopy of smoke.

“Look up, Génifrède,” said her father, laying his hand upon her head. “It is a fire—a cane-field on fire.”

“And houses, too—the sugar-house, no doubt,” said Margot, who had come out to look. “It burns too red to be canes only. Can it be at Latour’s? That would keep Jean from coming.—It was the best supper I ever got ready for him.”

“Latour’s is over that way,” said Toussaint, pointing some distance further to the south-east. “But see! there is fire there, too! God have mercy!”

He was silent, in mournful fear that he knew now too well the reason why Jean had not come, and the nature of the conversation Jean had desired to have with him. As he stood with folded arms looking from the one conflagration to the other, Génifrède clung to him trembling with terror. In a quarter of an hour another blaze appeared on the horizon; and soon after, a fourth.

“The sky is on fire,” cried Denis, in more delight than fear. “Look at the clouds!” And the clouds did indeed show, throughout their huge pile, some a mild flame colour, and others a hard crimson edge, as during a stormy sunset.

“Alas! alas! this is rebellion,” said Toussaint; “rebellion against God and man. God have mercy! The whites have

risen against their king; and now the blacks rise against them, in turn. It is a great sin. God have mercy!”

Margot wept bitterly. “Oh, what shall we do?” she cried, “What will become of us, if there is a rebellion?”

“Be cheerful, and fear nothing,” replied her husband. “I have not rebelled, and I shall not. Monsieur Bayou has taught me to bear and forbear—yes, my boy, as this book says, and as the book of God says: We will be faithful, and fear nothing.”

“But they may burn this plantation,” cried Margot. “They may come here, and take you away. They may ruin Monsieur Bayou, and then we may be sold away; we may be parted —”

Her grief choked her words.

“Fear nothing,” said her husband, with calm authority. “We are in God’s hand; and it is a sin to fear His will. But see! there is another fire, over towards the town.”

And he called aloud the name of his eldest son, saying he should send the boy with a horse to meet his master. He himself must remain to watch at home.

Placide did not come when called, nor was he at the stables. He was gone some way off, to cut fresh grass for the cattle—a common night-labour on the plantation.

“Call Isaac, then,” said Toussaint.

“Run, Génifrède,” said her mother. “Isaac and Aimée are in the wood. Run, Génifrède.”

Génifrède did not obey. She was too much terrified to leave the piazza alone; though her father gently asked when she, his eldest daughter, and almost a woman, would leave off being scared on all occasions like a child. Margot went

herself; so far infected with her daughter’s fears as to be glad to take little Denis in her hand. She was not long gone. As soon as she entered the wood she heard the sound of her children’s laughter above the noise the monkeys made; and she was guided by it to the well. There, in the midst of the opening which let in the starlight, stood the well, surrounded by the only grass on the Breda estate that was always fresh and green; and there were Isaac and his inseparable companion, Aimée, making the grass greener by splashing each other with more than half the water they drew. Their bright eyes and teeth could be seen by the mild light, as they were too busy with their sport to heed their mother as she approached. She soon made them serious with her news. Isaac flew to help his father with the horses, while Aimée, a stout girl of twelve, assisted her mother in earnest to draw water, and carry it home.

They found Génifrède crouching alone in a corner of the piazza. In another minute Toussaint appeared on horseback, leading a saddled horse.

“I am going for Monsieur Bayou myself,” said he; adding, as he glanced round the lurid horizon, “it is not a night for boys to be abroad. I shall be back in an hour. If Monsieur Bayou comes by the new road, tell him that I am gone by Madame Ogé’s. If fire breaks out here, go into the wood. If I meet Placide, I will send him home.”

He disappeared under the limes in the avenue; and his family heard the pace of the horses quicken into a gallop before the sound died away upon the road.

Chapter Two.

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The Exclusives.

The party of deputies with whom Monsieur Bayou was dining were assembled at the great hotel, at the corner of Place Mont Archer, at Cap Français. Languidly, though gladly, did the guests, especially those from the country, enter the hotel, overpowering as was the heat of the roads and the streets. In the roads, the sand lay so deep, that the progress of horsemen was necessarily slow, while the sun seemed to shed down a deluge of flame. In the streets, there was the shelter of the piazzas; but their pillars, if accidentally touched, seemed to burn the hand; and the hum of traffic, and the sound of feet, appeared to increase the oppression caused by the weather. Within the hotel, all was comparatively cool and quiet. The dining and drawing-rooms occupied by the guests adjoined each other, and presented none but the most welcome images. The jalousies were nearly closed; and through the small spaces that were left open, there might be seen in one direction the fountain playing in the middle of the Place, and in the other, diagonally across the Rue Espagnole, the Jesuits' Walk, an oblong square laid down in grass, and shaded in the midst by an avenue of palms. Immediately opposite the hotel was the Convent of Religieuses, over whose garden wall more trees were seen; so that the guests *might* easily have forgotten that they were in the midst of a town.

The rooms were so dark that those who entered from the glare of the streets could at first see nothing. The floor was

dark, being of native mahogany, polished like a looking-glass. The walls were green, the furniture green—everything ordered in counter-action of light and heat. In the dining-room more was visible; there was the white cloth spread over the long range of tables, and the plate and glass, glittering in such light as was allowed to enter; and also the gilded balustrade of the gallery, to be used to-day as an orchestra. This gallery was canopied over, as was the seat of the chairman, with palm branches and evergreens, intermixed with fragrant shrubs, and flowers of all hues. A huge bunch of peacocks' feathers was suspended from the lofty ceiling, and it was waved incessantly to and fro, by strings pulled by two little negroes, at opposite corners of the room, causing a continual fanning of the air, and circulation of the perfumes of the flowers. The black band in the orchestra summoned the company to dinner, and entertained them while at it by playing the popular revolutionary airs which were then resounding through the colony like the hum of its insects, or the dash of its waterfalls. As they took their seats to the air of the "Marseillaise Hymn," more than one of the guests might be heard by his next neighbour singing to himself:

"Allons, enfans de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé."

Before politics, however, there was dinner to be attended to; and the first-fruits of the eloquence of the meeting was bestowed on the delicate turtle, the well-fattened land-crabs, and the rich pasties—on the cold wines, the refreshing jellies, and the piles of oranges, figs, and

almonds, pomegranates, melons, and pine-apples. The first vote of compliment was to Henri, the black cook from Saint Christophe, whence he had been brought over by the discerning hotel-keeper, who detected his culinary genius while Henri was yet but a lad. When the table was cleared, a request was sent up to the chairman from various parties at the table, that he would command Henri's attendance, to receive the testimony of the company respecting the dinner he had sent up, and to take a glass of wine from them.

Dr Proteau, the chairman, smilingly agreed, saying that such a tribute was no more than Henri's professional excellence and high reputation deserved; and Henri was accordingly summoned by a dozen of the grinning black waiters, who ran over one another in their haste to carry to the kitchen the message of these, the highest gentry of the land. The waiters presently poured into the room again, and stood in two rows from the door, where Henri appeared, not laughing like the rest, but perfectly grave, as he stood, white apron on, and napkin over his arm, his stout and tall figure erect, to receive the commands of his masters.

"Was your father a cook or a gourmand, Henri? Or are you all good cooks at Saint Christophe?" asked a deputy.

"If it is the air of Saint Christophe that makes men such cooks as Henri, the knights of Saint John of Malta had a goodly gift in it," said another.

"Can one get such another as you for money, Henri?" asked a third.

"How many boys has your wife brought you, Henri? We shall bid high for them, and make your master's fortune, if he trains them all to your profession," said a fourth.

“Tell your master he had better not part with you for any sum, Henri. We will make it worth his while to refuse more for you than was ever offered yet.”

“Your health, Henri! May you live out all the turtle now in Saint Domingo, and the next generation after them.”

Amidst all these questions and remarks, Henri escaped answering any. He stood looking on the ground, till a glass of champagne was brought to him, bowed to the company, drank it off, and was gone.

“How demure the fellow looks!” said Monsieur Papalier, a planter, to Bayou, his neighbour in the plain, who now sat opposite to him; “what an air of infinite modesty he put on! At this moment, I daresay he is snapping his fingers, and telling the women that all the money in Saint Domingo won’t buy him.”

“You are mistaken there,” said Bayou. “He is a singular fellow, is Henri, in more ways than his cookery. I believe he never snapped his fingers in his life, nor told anybody what his master gave for him. I happen to know Henri very well, from his being an acquaintance of my overseer, who is something of the same sort, only superior even to Henri.”

“The fellow looked as if he would have given a great deal more than his glass of wine to have stayed out of the room,” observed Monsieur Leroy. “He has nothing of the mulatto in him, has he? Pure African, I suppose.”

“Pure African—all safe,” replied Bayou. “But observe! the music has stopped, and we are going on to the business of the day. Silence, there! Silence, all!”

Everybody said “Silence!” and Dr Proteau rose.

He declared himself to be in a most remarkable situation—one in which he was sure every Frenchman present would sympathise with him. Here he stood, chairman of a meeting of the most loyal, the most spirited, the most patriotic citizens of the empire, chairman of an assemblage of members of a colonial parliament, and of their guests and friends—here he stood, in this capacity, and yet he was unable to propose any one of the loyal toasts by which it had, till now, been customary to sanction their social festivities. As for the toast, now never more to be heard from their lips—the health of the king and royal family—the less that was said about that the better. The times of oppression were passing away; and he, for one, would not dim the brightness of the present meeting by recalling from the horizon, where it was just disappearing, the tempest cloud of tyranny, to overshadow the young sunshine of freedom. There had been, however, another toast, to which they had been wont to respond with more enthusiasm than was ever won by despotic monarchy from its slaves. There had been a toast to which this lofty roof had rung again, and to hail which every voice had been loud, and every heart had beat high. Neither could he now propose that toast. With grief which consumed his soul, he was compelled to bury in silence—the silence of mortification, the silence of contempt, the silence of detestation—the name of the National Assembly of France. His language might appear strong; but it was mild, it was moderate; it was, he might almost say, cringing, in comparison with what the National Assembly had deserved. He need not occupy the time of his friends, nor harrow their feelings, by a narrative of the

injuries their colony had sustained at the hands of the French National Assembly. Those around him knew too well, that in return for their sympathy in the humbling of a despot, for their zeal in behalf of the eternal principles of freedom, the mother-country had, through the instrumentality of its National Council, endeavoured to strip its faithful whites in this colony of the power which they had always possessed, and which was essential to their very existence in their ancient prosperity—the exclusive power of making or enforcing laws for their own community. The attempt was now made, as they too well knew, to wrest this sacred privilege from their hands, by admitting to share it a degraded race, before whose inroads would perish all that was most dear to his fellow-citizens and to himself—the repose of their homes, the security of their property, the honour of their colour, and the prosperity of the colony. He rejoiced to see around him, and from his heart he bade them welcome, some fellow-labourers with himself in the glorious work of resisting oppression, and defending their ancient privileges, endeared to them by as many ages as had passed since distinctions of colour were made by an Almighty hand. He invited them to pledge themselves with him to denounce and resist such profane, such blasphemous innovations, proposed by shallow enthusiasts, seconded by designing knaves, and destined to be wrought out by the agency of demons—demons in human form. He called upon all patriots to join him in his pledge; and in token of their faith, to drink deep to one now more deserving of their homage than was ever king or National Assembly—he need

not say that he alluded to the noblest patriot in the colony—its guardian, its saviour—Governor Blanchelande.

The gentleman who rose, amidst the cheers and jingling of glasses, to say a few words to this toast, was a man of some importance in the colony as a member of its Assembly, though he otherwise held no higher rank than that of attorney to the estate of Monsieur Gallifet, a rich absentee. Odeluc was an old resident, and (though zealous for the privileges of the whites) a favourite with men of all colours, and therefore entitled to be listened to by all with attention, when he spoke on the conflicting interests of races. However his opinions might please or displease, all liked to look upon his bright countenance, and to hear his lively voice. Vincent Ogé had said that Odeluc was a worse foe to the mulattoes than many a worse man—he always so excited their good-will as to make them forget their rights.

As he now rose, the air from the peacock-fan stirring the white hair upon his forehead (for in the heats of Saint Domingo it was permitted to lay wigs aside), and the good wine animating yet further the spirit of his lively countenance, Odeluc was received with a murmur of welcome, before he opened his lips to speak.

“I must acknowledge, my fellow-citizens,” said he, “I never was more satisfied with regard to the state of our colony than now. We have had our troubles, to be sure, like the mother-country, and like all countries where portions of the people struggle for power which they ought not to have. But we have settled that matter for ourselves, by the help of our good Governor, and I firmly believe that we are at the commencement of a long age of peace.”

Here some applauded, while two or three shook their head. Odeluc continued—

“I see some of my friends do not altogether share my hopes. Yet are these hopes not reasonable? The Governor has himself assured me that nothing shall induce him to notice the obnoxious decree, till he has, in the first place, received it under all the official forms—in the next place, written his remonstrance to the government at home—and, in the third place, received an answer. Now, all this will take some time. In three days, we deputies shall begin our session; and never were the members of any assembly more united in their will and in their views, and therefore more powerful. We meet for the express purpose of neutralising the effects of this ill-judged decree; we have the power—we have the will—and who can doubt the results? The management of this colony has always succeeded well in the hands of the whites; they have made its laws, and enforced them—they have allowed the people of colour liberty to pursue their own business, and acquire property if they could, conscious of strength to restrain their excesses, if occasion should arise: and, as for the negro population, where in the world were affairs ever on a better footing between the masters and their force than in the colony of Saint Domingo? If all has worked so well hitherto, is it to be supposed that an ignorant shout in the National Assembly, and a piece of paper sent over to us thence, can destroy the harmony, and overthrow the prosperity which years have confirmed? I, for one, will never believe it. I see before me in my colleagues men to whom the tranquillity of the colony may be safely confided; and over their heads, and beyond

the wise laws they are about to pass for the benefit of both the supreme and subordinate interests of our community. I see, stretching beyond the reach of living eye, a scene of calm and fruitful prosperity in which our children's children may enjoy their lives, without a thought of fear or apprehension of change. Regarding Governor Blanchelande as one of the chief securities of this our long tenure of social prosperity, I beg to propose, not only that we shall now drink his health, but that we shall meet annually in his honour on this day. Yonder is Government-House. If we open our jalousies wide enough, and give the honours loudly enough, perhaps our voices may reach his ears, as the loyal greeting that he deserves."

"Do not you smell smoke?" asked Bayou of his neighbour, as the blinds were thrown open.

"What a smell of burning!" observed the chairman to Odeluc at the same moment.

"They are burning field-trash outside the town, no doubt," Odeluc answered. "We choose the nights when there is little wind, you know, for that work."

There was a small muster of soldiers round the gates of Government-House, and several people in the streets, when the honours were given to the Governor's name. But the first seemed not to hear, and the others did not turn their heads. The air that came in was so hot, that the blinds were immediately ordered to be closed again. The waiters, however, seemed to have lost their obsequiousness, and many orders and oaths were spent upon them before they did their duty.

While the other gentlemen sat down, a young man remained standing, his eyes flashing, and his countenance heated, either by wine, or by the thoughts with which he seemed big.

“My fellow-citizens,” said Monsieur Brelle, beginning in a very loud voice, “agreeing as I do in my hopes for this colony with Monsieur Odeluc, and, like him, trusting in the protection and blessing of a just Providence, which will preserve our rights, and chastise those who would infringe them—feeling thus, and thus trusting, there is a duty for me to perform. My friends, we must not permit the righteous chastisements of Providence to pass by unheeded, and be forgotten. The finger of Providence has been among us, to mark out and punish the guilty disturber of our peace. But, though dead, that guilty traitor has not ceased to disturb our peace. Do we not know that his groans have moved our enemies in the National Assembly; that his ashes have been stirred up there, to shed their poison over our names? It becomes us, in gratitude to a preserving Providence, in fidelity to that which is dearer to us than life—our fair fame—in regard to the welfare of our posterity, it becomes us to mark our reprobation of treason and rebellion, and to perpetuate in ignominy the name of the rebel and the traitor. Fill your glasses, then, gentlemen, and drink—drink deep with me—Our curse on the memory of Vincent Ogé!”

Several members of the company eagerly filled their glasses; others looked doubtfully towards the chair. Before Dr Protean seemed to have made up his mind what to do, Monsieur Papalier had risen, saying, in a rather low and conversational tone—

“My young friend will allow me to suggest to him the expediency of withdrawing his toast, as one in which his fellow-citizens cannot all cordially join. We all unite, doubtless, in reprobating treason and rebellion in the person of Ogé; but I, for one, cannot think it good, either in taste or in policy, to curse the memory of the dead in the hearing of those who desire mercy for their fallen enemies (as some here present do), or of others who look upon Ogé as no criminal, but a martyr—which is, I fear, the case with too many outside.” He pointed to the windows as he spoke, where it now appeared that the jalousies had been pushed a little open, so as to allow opportunity for some observation from without. Monsieur Papalier lowered his tone, so as to be heard, during the rest of his speech, only by those who made every effort to catch his words. Not a syllable could be heard in the orchestra outside, or even by the waiters ranged against the wall; and the chairman and others at the extremities of the table were obliged to lean forwards to catch the meaning of the speaker, who proceeded—

“No one more heartily admires the spirit and good-humour of our friend, Monsieur Odeluc, than myself: no one more enjoys being animated by the hilarity of his temper, and carried away by the hopeful enthusiasm which makes him the dispenser of happiness that he is. But I cannot always sympathise in his bright anticipations. I own I cannot to-day. He may be right. God grant he be so! But I cannot take Monsieur Odeluc’s word for it, when words so different are spoken elsewhere. There are observers at a distance—impartial lookers-on, who predict (and I fear there are signs at home which indicate) that our position is far from secure

—our prospects far other than serene. There are those who believe that we are in danger from other foes than the race of Ogé; and facts have arisen—but enough. This is not the time and place for discussion of that point. Suffice it now that, as we all know, observers at a distance can often see deeper and farther than those involved in affairs; and that Mirabeau has said—and what Mirabeau says is, at least, worth attention—Mirabeau has said of us, in connection with the events of last October, ‘They are sleeping on the margin of Vesuvius, and the first jets of the volcano are not sufficient to awaken them.’ In compliment to Mirabeau,” he concluded, smiling, and bowing to Monsieur Brelle, “if not in sympathy with what he may think my needless caution, I hope my young friend will reserve his wine for the next toast.”

Monsieur Brelle bowed, rather sulkily. No one seemed ready at the moment to start a new subject. Some attacked Monsieur Papalier in whispers for what he had said; and he to defend himself, told, also in whispers, facts of the murder of a bailiff on an estate near his own, and of suspicious circumstances attending it, which made him and others apprehend that all was not right among the negroes. His facts and surmises went round. As, in the eagerness of conversation, a few words were occasionally spoken aloud, some of the party glanced about to see if the waiters were within earshot. They were not. There was not a negro in the apartment. The band had gone out unnoticed; to refresh themselves, no doubt.

Odeluc took the brief opportunity to state his confidence that all doubts of the fidelity of the negroes were

groundless. He agreed with Monsieur Papalier that the present was not the time and place for entering at large into the subject. He would only just say that he was now an old man, that he had spent his life among the people alluded to, and knew them well, if any man did. They were revengeful, certainly, upon occasion, if harshly treated; but, otherwise, and if not corrupted by ignorant demagogues and designing agents, they were the most tractable and attached people on earth. He was confident that the masters in Saint Domingo had nothing to fear.

He was proceeding; but he perceived that the band was re-entering the orchestra, and he sat down abruptly.

The chairman now discovered that it had grown very dark, and called out for lights. His orders were echoed by several of the party, who hoped that the lights would revive some of the spirit of the evening, which had become very flat.

While waiting for lights, the jalousies were once more opened, by orders from the chair. The apartment was instantly pervaded by a dull, changeful, red light, derived from the sky, which glowed above the trees of the Jesuits' Walk with the reflection of extensive fires. The guests were rather startled, too, by perceiving that the piazza was crowded with heads; and that dusky faces, in countless number, were looking in upon them, and had probably been watching them for some time past. With the occasional puffs of wind, which brought the smell of burning, came a confused murmur, from a distance, as of voices, the tramp of many horses in the sand, and a multitude of feet in the streets. This was immediately lost in louder sounds. The

band struck up, unbidden, with all its power, the Marseillaise Hymn; and every voice in the piazza, and, by degrees, along the neighbouring streets and square, seemed to join in singing the familiar words—

“Allons enfants de la patrie,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.”

The consternation of the deputies and their guests was extreme. Every man showed his terror in his own way; but one act was universal. Each one produced arms of one sort or another. Even Odeluc, it appeared, had not come unarmed. While they were yet standing in groups about the table, the door burst open, and a negro, covered with dust and panting with haste, ran in and made for the head of the table, thrusting himself freely through the parties of gentlemen. The chairman, at sight of the man, turned pale, recoiled for a moment, and then, swearing a deep oath, drew the short sword he wore, and ran the negro through the body.

“Oh, master!” cried the poor creature, as his life ebbed out in the blood which inundated the floor.

The act was not seen by those outside, as there was a screen of persons standing between the tables and the windows. To this accident it was probably owing that the party survived that hour, and that any order was preserved in the town.

“Shame, Proteau! shame!” said Odeluc, as he bent down, and saw that the negro was dying. Papalier, Bayou, and a few more, cried “Shame!” also; while others applauded.