MAYNE REID

THE QUADROON: ADVENTURES IN THE FAR WEST

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Chapter One.

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The Father of Waters.

Father of Waters! I worship thy mighty stream! As the Hindoo by the shores of his sacred river, I kneel upon thy banks, and pour forth my soul in wild adoration!

Far different are the springs of our devotion. To him, the waters of his yellow Ganges are the symbols of a superstitious awe, commingled with dark fears for the mystic future; to me, thy golden wares are the souvenirs of joy, binding the present to the known and happy past. Yes, mighty river! I worship thee in the past. My heart fills with joy at the very mention of thy name!

Father of Waters! I know thee well. In the land of a thousand lakes, on the summit of the "*Hauteur de terre*," I have leaped thy tiny stream. Upon the bosom of the blue lakelet, the fountain of thy life, I have launched my birchen boat; and yielding to thy current, have floated softly southward. I have passed the meadows where the wild rice ripens on thy banks, where the white birch mirrors its silvery stem, and tall *coniferae* fling their pyramid shapes, on thy surface. I have seen the red Chippewa cleave thy crystal

waters in his bark canoe—the giant moose lave his flanks in thy cooling flood—and the stately wapiti bound gracefully along thy banks. I have listened to the music of thy shores—the call of the cacawee, the laugh of the wa-wa goose, and the trumpet-note of the great northern swan. Yes, mighty river! Even in that far northern land, thy wilderness home, have I worshipped thee!

Onward through many parallels of latitude—through many degrees of the thermal line!

I stand upon thy banks where thou leapest the rocks of Saint Antoine, and with bold frothing current cleavest thy way to the south. Already I note a change in the aspect of thy shores. The *coniferae* have disappeared, and thou art draped with a deciduous foliage of livelier hue. Oaks, elms, and maples, mingle their frondage, and stretch their broad arms over thee. Though I still look upon woods that seem illimitable, I feel that the wilderness is past. My eyes are greeted by the signs of civilisation—its sounds fall upon my ear. The hewn cabin—picturesque in its rudeness—stands among prostrate trunks; and the ring of the lumberer’s axe is heard in the far depths of the forest. The silken blades of the maize wave in triumph over fallen trees, its golden tassels giving promise of a rich return. The spire of the church peers above the green spray of the woods, and the prayer of the Christian ascends to heaven sublimely mingling with the roar of thy waters!

I launch my boat once more on thy buoyant wave; and, with heart as buoyant, glide onward and southward. I pass between bold bluffs that hem thy surging waves, and trace with pleasant wonder their singular and varied outlines—now soaring abruptly upward, now carried in gentle undulations along the blue horizon. I behold the towering form of that noted landmark "*La montaigne qui trempe à l'eau*," and the swelling cone on whose summit the soldier-traveller pitched his tent. I glide over the mirrored bosom of Pepin's lake, regarding with admiration its turreted shores. I gaze with deeper interest upon that precipitous escarpment, the "Lover's Leap," whose rocky wall has oft echoed back the joyous chaunt of the light-hearted voyageur, and once a sadder strain—the death-song of Wanona—beautiful Wanona, who sacrificed life to love!

Onward I glide, where the boundless prairies of the West impinge upon thy stream; and my eye wanders with delight over their fadeless green.

I linger a moment to gaze upon the painted warrior spurring his wild steed along thy banks—to gaze upon the Dacotah girls bathing their lithe limbs in thy crystal wave—then on again past the "Cornice Rocks"—the metalliferous shores of Galena and Dubuque—the aerial tomb of the adventurous miner.

I reach the point where the turbid Missouri rushes rudely upon thee, as though he would force thee from thy onward course. Poised in my light canoe, I watch the struggle. Fierce but short it is, for thou triumphest, and thy conquered rival

is compelled to pay his golden tribute to thy flood that rolls majestically onward!

Upon thy victorious wave I am borne still southward. I behold huge green mounds—the sole monuments of an ancient people—who once trod thy shores. Near at hand I look upon the dwellings of a far different race. I behold tall spires soaring to the sky; domes, and cupolas glittering in the sun; palaces standing upon thy banks, and palaces floating upon thy wave. I behold a great city—a metropolis!

I linger not here. I long for the sunny South; and trusting myself once more to thy current I glide onward.

I pass the sea-like estuary of the Ohio, and the embouchure of another of thy mightiest tributaries, the famed river of the plains. How changed the aspect of thy shores! I no longer look upon bold bluffs and beetling cliffs. Thou hast broken from the hills that enchained thee, and now rollest far and free, cleaving a wide way through thine own alluvion. Thy very banks are the creation of thine own fancy—the slime thou hast flung from thee in thy moments of wanton play—and thou canst break through their barriers at will. Forests again fringe thee—forests of giant trees—the spreading *platanus*, the tall tulip-tree, and the yellow-green cotton-wood rising in terraced groves from the margin of thy waters. Forests stand upon thy banks, and the wreck of forests is borne upon thy bubbling bosom!

I pass thy last great affluent, whose crimson flood just tinges the hue of thy waters. Down thy delta I glide, amid

scenes rendered classic by the sufferings of De Soto—by the adventurous daring of Iberville and La Salle.

And here my soul reaches the acmé of its admiration. Dead to beauty must be heart and eye that could behold thee here, in this thy southern land, without a thrill of sublimest emotion!

I gaze upon lovely landscapes ever changing, like scenes of enchantment, or the pictures of a panorama. They are the loveliest upon earth—for where are views to compare with thine? Not upon the Rhine, with its castled rocks—not upon the shores of that ancient inland sea—not among the Isles of the Ind. No. In no part of the world are scenes like these; nowhere is soft beauty blended so harmoniously with wild picturesqueness.

And yet not a mountain meets the eye—not even a hill—but the dark *cyprières*, draped with the silvery *tillandsia*, form a background to the picture with all the grandeur of the pyrogenous granite!

The forest no longer fringes thee here. It has long since fallen before the planter’s axe; and the golden sugar-cane, the silvery rice, and the snowy cotton-plant, flourish in its stead. Forest enough has been left to adorn the picture. I behold vegetable forms of tropic aspect, with broad shining foliage—the *Sabal* palm, the anona, the water-loving tupelo, the catalpa with its large trumpet flowers, the melting *liquidambar*, and the wax-leaved mangolia. Blending their foliage with these fair *indigènes* are an hundred lovely exotics—the orange, lemon, and fig; the Indian-lilac and tamarind; olives, myrtles, and bromelias; while the Babylonian willow contrasts its drooping fronds with the

erect reeds of the giant cane, or the lance-like blades of the *yucca gloriosa*.

Embowered amidst these beautiful forms I behold villas and mansions; of grand and varied aspect—varied as the races of men who dwell beneath their roofs. And varied are they; for the nations of the world dwell together upon thy banks—each having sent its tribute to adorn thee with the emblems of a glorious and universal civilisation. Father of Waters, farewell!

Though not born in this fair southern land, I have long lingered there; and I love it *even better than the land of my birth*. I have there spent the hours of bright youth, of adventurous manhood; and the retrospect of these hours is fraught with a thousand memories tinged with a romance that can never die. There my young heart yielded to the influence of Love—a first and virgin love. No wonder the spot should be to me the most hallowed on earth!

Reader! listen to the story of that love!

Chapter Two.

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Six Months in the Crescent City.

Like other striplings escaped from college, I was no longer happy *at home*. The yearning for travel was upon me; and I longed to make acquaintance with that world, as yet only known to me through the medium of books.

My longing was soon to be gratified; and without a sigh I beheld the hills of my native land sink behind the black waves—not much caring whether I should ever see them again.

Though emerging from the walls of a classic college, I was far from being tinctured with classic sympathies. Ten years spent in pondering over the wild hyperbole of Homer, the mechanical verse-work of Virgil, and the dry indelicacies of Horatius Flaccus, had failed to imbue me with a perception of that classic beauty felt, or pretended to be felt, by the spectacled *savant*. My mind was not formed to live on the ideal, or dream over the past. I delight rather in the real, the positive, and the present. Don Quixotes may play the troubadour among ruined castles, and mincing misses cover the ground of the guide-books. For my part I have no belief in the romance of old-world life. In the modern Tell I behold a hireling, ready to barter his brawny limbs to the use of whatever tyrant; and the picturesque Mazzaroni, upon closer acquaintance, dwindles down to the standard of a hen-roost thief. Amid the crumbling walls of Athens and the ruins of Rome I encounter inhospitality and hunger. I am not a believer in the picturesqueness of poverty. I have no relish for the romance of rags.

And yet it was a yearning for the romantic that called me from home. I longed for the poetic and picturesque, for I was just at that age when the mind is imbued with its strongest faith in their reality. Ha! mine is not yet disabused of this belief. I am older now, but the hour of disenchantment has not yet come upon me—nor ever will. There is a romance in life, that is no illusion. It lives not in the effete forms and

childish ceremonies of the fashionable drawing-room—it has no illustration in the tinsel trappings and gaudy puerilities of a Court. Stars, garters, and titles are its antidotes; red cloth and plush the upas-trees of its existence.

Its home is elsewhere, amid the grand and sublime scenes of Nature—though these are not necessary accompaniments. It is no more incidental to field and forest, rock, river, and mountain, than to the well-trodden ways of the trading-town. Its home is in human hearts—hearts that throb with high aspirations—bosoms that burn with the noble passions of Liberty and Love!

My steps then were not directed towards classic shores, but to lands of newer and more vigorous life. Westward went I in search of romance. I found it in its most attractive form under the glowing skies of Louisiana.

In the month of January, 18—, I set foot upon the soil of the New-World—upon a spot stained with English blood. The polite skipper, who had carried me across the Atlantic, landed me in his gig. I was curious to examine the field of this decisive action; for at that period of my life I had an inclination for martial affairs. But something more than mere curiosity prompted me to visit the battle-ground of New Orleans. I then held an opinion deemed heterodox—namely, that the *improvised* soldier is under certain circumstances quite equal to the professional hireling, and that long military drill is not essential to victory. The story of war, superficially studied, would seem to antagonise this theory, which conflicts also with the testimony of all military men. But the testimony of mere military men on such a matter is without value. Who ever heard of a military man

who did not desire to have his art considered as mythical as possible? Moreover, the rulers of the world have spared no pains to imbue their people with false ideas upon this point. It is necessary to put forward some excuse for that terrible incubus upon the nations, the “standing army.”

My desire to view the battle-ground upon the banks of the Mississippi had chiefly reference to this question. The action itself had been one of my strong arguments in favour of my belief; for upon this spot some six thousand men—who had never heard the absurd command, “Eyes right!”—out-generalled, “whipped,” in fact nearly annihilated, a well-equipped and veteran army of twice their number!

Since standing upon that battle-ground I have carried a sword in more than one field of action. What I then held only as a theory, I have since proved as an experience. The “drill” is a delusion. The standing army a cheat.

In another hour I was wandering through the streets of the Crescent City, no longer thinking of military affairs. My reflections were turned into a far different channel. The social life of the New-World, with all its freshness and vigour, was moving before my eyes, like a panorama; and despite of my assumption of the *nil admirari*, I could not help *wondering as I went*.

And one of my earliest surprises—one that met me on the very threshold of Transatlantic existence—was the discovery of my own utter uselessness. I could point to my desk and say, “There lie the proofs of my erudition—the highest prizes of my college class.” But of what use they? The dry theories I had been taught had no application to the purposes of real life. My logic was the prattle of the parrot.

My classic lore lay upon my mind like lumber; and I was altogether about as well prepared to struggle with life—to benefit either my fellow-man or myself—as if I had graduated in Chinese mnemonics.

And oh! ye pale professors, who drilled me in syntax and scansion, ye would deem me ungrateful indeed were I to give utterance to the contempt and indignation which I then felt for ye—then, when I looked back upon ten years of wasted existence spent under your tutelage—then, when, after believing myself an educated man, the illusion vanished, and I awoke to the knowledge that I *knew nothing*!

With some money in my purse, and very little knowledge in my head, I wandered through the Streets of New Orleans, wondering as I went.

Six months later, and I was traversing the same streets, with very little money in my purse, but with my stock of knowledge vastly augmented. During this six months I had acquired an experience of the world more extensive, than in any six years of my previous life.

I had paid somewhat dearly for this experience. My travelling fund had melted away in the alembic of cafés, theatres, masquerades, and “quadroon” balls. Some of it had been deposited in that bank (faro) which returns neither principal nor interest!

I was almost afraid to “take stock” of my affairs. At length with an effort I did so; and found, after paying my hotel bills, a balance in my favour of exactly twenty-five dollars! Twenty-five dollars to live upon until I could write home, and receive an answer—a period of three months at

the least—for I am talking of a time antecedent to the introduction of Atlantic steamers.

For six months I had been sinning bravely. I was now all repentance, and desirous of making amends. I was even willing to engage in some employment. But my cold classic training, that had not enabled me to protect my purse, was not likely to aid me in replenishing it; and in all that busy city I could find no office that I was fitted to fill!

Friendless—dispirited—a little disgusted—not a little anxious in regard to my immediate future, I sauntered about the streets. My acquaintances were becoming scarcer every day. I missed them from their usual haunts—the haunts of pleasure. “Whither had they gone?”

There was no mystery in their disappearance. It was now mid-June. The weather had become intensely hot, and every day the mercury mounted higher upon the scale. It was already dancing in the neighbourhood of 100 degrees of Fahrenheit. In a week or two might be expected that annual but unwelcome visitor known by the soubriquet of “Yellow Jack,” whose presence is alike dreaded by young and old; and it was the terror inspired by him that was driving the fashionable world of New Orleans, like birds of passage, to a northern clime.

I am not more courageous than the rest of mankind.

I had no inclination to make the acquaintance of this dreaded demon of the swamps; and it occurred to me, that I, too, had better get out of his way. To do this, it was only necessary to step on board a steamboat, and be carried to one of the up-river towns, beyond the reach of that tropical malaria in which the *vomito* delights to dwell.

Saint Louis was at this time the place of most attractive name; and I resolved to go thither; though how I was to live there I could not tell—since my funds would just avail to land me on the spot.

Upon reflection, it could scarce be “out of the frying-pan into the fire,” and my resolution to go to Saint Louis became fixed. So, packing up my *impedimenta*, I stepped on board the steamboat “Belle of the West,” bound for the far “City of the Mounds.”

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The “Belle of the West.”

I was on board at the advertised time; but punctuality on a Mississippi steamboat must not be expected; and I found myself too early, by a couple of hours at least.

The time was not thrown away. I spent it to some profit in examining the peculiar craft in which I had embarked. I say, *peculiar*; for the steamers employed upon the Mississippi and its tributary waters are unlike those of any other country—even unlike those in use in the Atlantic or Eastern States.

They are strictly “river-boats,” and could not live in anything like a rough sea; though the reckless owners of some of them have occasionally risked them along the coast from Mobile to Galveston, Texas!

The hull is built like that of a sea boat, but differs materially from the latter in depth of hold. So shallow is it,

that there is but little stowage-room allowed; and the surface of the main deck is but a few inches above the water-line. Indeed, when the boat is heavily laden, the waves lip over the gunwales. Upon the deck is placed the machinery; and there rest the huge cast-iron boilers, and the grates or “furnaces,” necessarily large, because the propelling power is produced from logs of wood. There, also, most of the freight is stowed, on account of the light capacity of the hold; and on every part, not occupied by the machinery and boilers, may be seen piles of cotton-bales, hogsheads of tobacco, or bags of corn, rising to the height of many feet. This is the freight of a down-river-boat. On the return trip, of course, the commodities are of a different character, and consist of boxes of Yankee furniture, farming implements, and “notions,” brought round by ship from Boston; coffee in bags from the West Indies, rice, sugar, oranges, and other products of the tropical South.

On the after-part of this deck is a space allotted to the humbler class of travellers known as “deck passengers.” These are never Americans. Some are labouring Irish—some poor German emigrants on their way to the far North-West; the rest are negroes—free, or more generally slaves.

I dismiss the hull by observing that there is a good reason why it is built with so little depth of hold. It is to allow the boats to pass the shoal water in many parts of the river, and particularly during the season of drought. For such purpose the lighter the draught, the greater the advantage; and a Mississippi captain, boasting of the capacity of his boat in this respect, declared, that all he wanted was *a*

heavy dew upon, the grass, to enable him to propel her across the prairies!

If there is but little of a Mississippi steamboat under the water, the reverse is true of what may be seen above its surface. Fancy a two-story house some two hundred feet in length, built of plank, and painted to the whiteness of snow; fancy along the upper story a row of green-latticed windows, or rather doors, thickly set, and opening out upon a narrow balcony; fancy a flattish or slightly rounded roof covered with tarred canvas, and in the centre a range of sky-lights like glass forcing-pits; fancy, towering above all, two enormous black cylinders of sheet-iron, each ten feet in diameter, and nearly ten times as high, the “funnels” of the boat; a smaller cylinder to one side, the “’scape-pipe;” a tall flag-staff standing up from the extreme end of the bow, with the “star-spangled banner” flying from its peak;—fancy all these, and you may form some idea of the characteristic features of a steamboat on the Mississippi.

Enter the cabin, and for the first time you will be struck with the novelty of the scene. You will there observe a splendid saloon, perhaps a hundred feet in length, richly carpeted and adorned throughout. You will note the elegance of the furniture,—costly chairs, sofas, tables, and lounges; you will note the walls, richly gilded and adorned with appropriate designs; the crystal chandeliers suspended from the ceiling; the hundred doors that lead to the “state-rooms” on each side, and the immense folding-door of stained or ornamental glass, which shuts in the sacred precinct of the “ladies’ saloon.” In short, you will note all around you a style and luxuriance to which you, as a

European traveller, have not been accustomed. You have only read of such a scene in some Oriental tale—in Mary Montagu, or the “Arabian Nights.”

And yet all this magnificence is sometimes sadly at variance with the style of the company that occupies it—for this splendid saloon is as much the property of the coarse “rowdy” as of the refined gentleman. You are startled by the apparition of a rough horse-skin boot elevated along the edge of the shining mahogany; and a dash of brown nicotian juice may have somewhat altered the pattern of the carpet! But these things are exceptional—more exceptional now than in the times of which I write.

Having satisfied myself with examining the interior structure of the “Belle of the West,” I sauntered out in front of the cabin. Here a large open space, usually known as the “awning,” forms an excellent lounging-place for the male passengers. It is simply the continuation of the “cabin-deck,” projected forward and supported by pillars that rest upon the main deck below. The roof, or “hurricane-deck,” also carried forward to the same point, and resting on slight wooden props, screens this part from sun or rain, and a low guard-rail running around it renders it safe. Being open in front and at both sides, it affords the best view; and having the advantage of a cool breeze, brought about by the motion of the boat, is usually a favourite resort. A number of chairs are here placed to accommodate the passengers, and smoking is permitted.

He must take very little interest in the movements of human life, who cannot kill an hour by observing it upon the “Levee” of New Orleans; and having seated myself and

lighted my cigar, I proceeded to spend an hour in that interesting occupation.

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The Rival Boats.

The part of the “Levee” under my eyes was that known as the “Steamboat Landing.” Some twenty or thirty boats lay along a series of wooden wharves that projected slightly into the river. Some had just arrived from up-river towns, and were discharging their freight and passengers, at this season a scanty list. Others, surrounded by a bustling swarm, were getting up steam; while still others appeared to be abandoned by both officers and crew—who were no doubt at the time enjoying themselves in the brilliant cafés and restaurants. Occasionally might be seen a jauntily-dressed clerk, with blue cottonade trowsers, white linen coat, costly Panama hat, shirt with cambric ruffles, and diamond studs. This stylish gentleman would appear for a few minutes by one of the deserted boats—perhaps transact a little business with some one—and then hurry off again to his more pleasant haunts in the city.

There were two points upon the Levee where the bustle of active life was more especially observable. These were the spaces in front of two large boats. One was that on which I had taken passage. The other, as I could read upon her wheel-house, was the “Magnolia.” The latter was also upon the eve of starting, as I could tell by the movements of

her people, by the red fires seen in her furnaces, and the hissing of steam, that every now and then screamed sharply from the direction of her boilers.

On the Levee directly in front of her “drays” were depositing their last loads, passengers were hurrying forward hat-box in hand, in fear they might be too late; trunks, boxes, bags, and barrels were being rudely pushed or rolled over the staging-planks; the gaily-dressed clerks, armed with book and pencil, were checking them off; and everything denoted the intention of a speedy departure. A scene exactly similar was being enacted in front of the “Belle of the West.”

I had not been regarding these movements very long, before I observed that there was something unusual “in the wind.” The boats lay at no great distance from each other, and their crews, by a slight elevation of voice, could converse. This they were freely doing; and from some expressions that reached me, coupled with a certain tone of defiance in which they were uttered, I could perceive that the “Magnolia” and the “Belle of the West” were “rival boats.” I soon gathered the further information, that they were about to start at the same time, and that a “race” was in contemplation!

I knew that this was no unusual occurrence among what are termed “crack” boats, and both the “Belle” and her rival came under that category. Both were of the first-class in size and magnificence of fitting; both ran in the same “trade,” that is, from New Orleans to Saint Louis; and both were commanded by well-known and popular river “captains.”

They could not be otherwise than rivals; and this feeling was shared in by the crews of both, from captain to cabin-slave.

As regards the owners and officers in such cases, there is a substantial *money motive* at the bottom of this rivalry. The boat that “whips” in one of these races, wins also the future patronage of the public. The “fast boat” becomes the fashionable boat, and is ever afterwards sure of a strong list of passengers at a high rate of fare—for there is this peculiarity among Americans: many of them will spend their last dollar to be able to say at the end of his journey that he came upon the fashionable boat, just as in England you find many people desirous of making it known that they travelled “first-class.” Snobbery is peculiar to no country—it appears to be universal.

With regard to the contemplated trial of speed between the “Belle of the West” and the “Magnolia,” the feeling of rivalry pervaded not only the crews of both boats, but I soon discovered that the passengers were affected with it. Most of these seemed as eager for the race as an English blackleg for the Derby. Some no doubt looked forward to the sport and excitement, but I soon perceived that the greater number were betting upon the result!

“The Belle’s boun’ to win!” cried a gold-studded vulgar-looking fellow at my shoulder. “I’ll go twenty dollars on the Belle. Will you bet, stranger?”

“No,” I replied, somewhat angrily, as the fellow had taken a liberty by laying his hand on my shoulder.

“Well,” retorted he, “jest as you like ’bout that;” and addressing himself to some one else he continued, “the

Belle’s the conquering boat for twenty dollars! Twenty dollars on the Belle!”

I confess I had no very pleasant reflections at that moment. It was my first trip upon an American steamboat, and my memory was brimful of stories of “boiler burstings,” “snaggings,” “blowings up,” and boats on fire. I had heard that these races not infrequently resulted in one or other of the above-named catastrophes, and I had reason to know that my information was correct.

Many of the passengers—the more sober and respectable ones—shared my feelings; and some talked of appealing to the Captain not to allow the race. But they knew they were in the minority, and held their peace.

I had made up my mind at least to ask the Captain “his intentions.” I was prompted rather by curiosity than by any other motive.

I left my seat, therefore, and having crossed the staging, walked toward the top of the wharf, where this gentleman was standing.

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A Desirable Fellow-Passenger.

Before I had entered into conversation with the Captain, I saw a barouche approaching on the opposite side, apparently coming from the French quarter of the city. It was a handsome equipage, driven by a well-clad and evidently

well-fed black, and as it drew near, I could perceive that it was occupied by a young and elegantly-attired lady.

I cannot say why, but I felt a presentiment, accompanied perhaps by a silent wish, that the occupant of the barouche was about to be a fellow-passenger. It was not long before I learnt that such was her intention.

The barouche drew up on the crest of the Levee, and I saw the lady directing some inquiry to a bystander, who immediately pointed to our Captain. The latter, perceiving that he was the object inquired after, stepped up to the side of the carriage, and bowed to the lady. I was close to the spot, and every word reached me.

“Monsieur! are you the captain of the Belle of the West?”

The lady spoke in French, a smattering of which the Captain in his intercourse with the Creoles had picked up.

“Yes, madame,” was the reply.

“I wish to take passage with you.”

“I shall be most happy to accommodate you, madame. There is still one state-room disengaged, I believe, Mr Shirley?”

Here the Captain appealed to the clerk, in order to ascertain if such was the case.

“Never mind!” said the lady, interrupting him, “for the matter of a state-room it is of no importance! You will reach my plantation before midnight, and therefore I shall not require to sleep aboard.”

The phrase, “my plantation,” evidently had an effect upon the Captain. Naturally not a rude man, it seemed to render him still more attentive and polite. The proprietor of a Louisiana plantation is a somebody not to be treated with

nonchalance; but, when that proprietor chances to be a young and charming lady, who could be otherwise than amiable? Not Captain B., commander of the “Belle of the West!” The very name of his boat negatived the presumption!

Smiling blandly, he inquired where he was to land his fair charge.

“At Bringiers,” replied the lady. “My residence is a little below, but our landing is not a good one; besides, there is some freight which it would be better to put ashore at Bringiers.”

Here the occupant of the barouche pointed to a train of drays, loaded with barrels and boxes, that had just driven up, and halted in the rear of the carriage.

The sight of the freight had a still further pleasant effect on the Captain, who was himself *part owner* of his boat. He became profuse in offers of service, and expressed his willingness to accommodate his new passenger in every way she might desire.

“Monsieur Capitaine,” continued this handsome lady, still remaining seated in her carriage, and speaking in a tone of good-natured seriousness, “I must make one condition with you.”

“Please to name it, madame.”

“Well then! It is reported that your boat is likely to have a race with some other one. If that be so, I cannot become your passenger.” The Captain looked somewhat disconcerted. “The fact is,” continued she, “I had a narrow escape once before, and I am determined to run no such risk in future.”

“Madame—,” stammered the Captain—then hesitating—

“Oh, then!” interrupted the lady, “if you cannot give me the assurance that you will not race, I must wait for some other boat.”

The Captain hung his head for some seconds. He was evidently reflecting upon his answer. To be thus denied the anticipated excitement and pleasure of the race—the victory which he confidently expected, and its grand consequences; to appear, as it were, afraid of trying the speed of his boat; afraid that she would be beaten; would give his rival a large opportunity for future bragging, and would place himself in no enviable light in the eyes of his crew and passengers—all of whom had already made up their minds for a race. On the other hand, to refuse the request of the lady—not very unreasonable when properly viewed—and still more reasonable when it was considered that that lady was the proprietress of several dray-loads of freight, and when still further considered that that lady was a rich *plantress* of the “French coast,” and might see fit next fall to send several hundred casks of sugar and as many hogsheads of tobacco down on his (the Captain’s) boat;—these considerations, I say, made the request quite reasonable. And so we suppose, upon reflection, it must have appeared to Captain B—, for after a little hesitation he granted it. Not with the best grace, however. It evidently cost him a struggle; but interest prevailed, and he granted it.

“I accept your conditions, madame. The boat shall *not* run. I give you my promise to that effect.”

“*Assez*! thanks! Monsieur le Capitaine; I am greatly obliged to you. If you will be so good as to have my freight

taken aboard. The carriage goes along. This gentleman is my steward. Here, Antoine! He will look to everything. And now pray, Capitaine, when do you contemplate starting?”

“In fifteen minutes, madame, at the latest.”

“Are you sure of that, mon Capitaine?” she inquired, with a significant laugh, which told she was no stranger to the want of punctuality of the boats.

“Quite sure, madame,” replied the Captain; “you may depend on the time.”

“Ah! then, I shall go aboard at once!” And, so saying, she lightly tripped down the steps of the barouche, and giving her arm to the Captain, who had gallantly proffered himself, was conducted to the ladies’ cabin, and of course for a time lost to the admiring eyes, not only of myself, but of a goodly number of others who had already been attracted to gaze upon this beautiful apparition.

Chapter Six.

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Antoine the Steward.

I had been very much struck by the appearance of this dame. Not so much on account of her physical beauty—though that was of a rare kind—as by the air that characterised her. I should feel a difficulty in describing this, which consisted in a certain *braverie* that bespoke courage and self-possession. There was no coarseness of manner—only the levity of a heart gay as summer, and light as gossamer, but capable, when occasion required, of

exhibiting a wonderful boldness and strength. She was a woman that would be termed beautiful in any country; but with her beauty there was combined elegance, both in dress and manner, that told you at once she was a lady accustomed to society and the world. And this, although still young—she certainly could not have been much over twenty. Louisiana has a precocious climate, however; and a Creole of twenty will count for an Englishwoman of ten years older.

Was she married? I could not bring myself to think so; besides the expressions, “my plantation” and “my steward,” would scarcely have been used by a lady who had “somebody” at home, unless, indeed, that somebody were held in very low estimation—in short, considered a “nobody.” A widow she might be—a very young widow—but even that did not seem to me probable. She had not the “cut” of a widow in my eyes, and there was not the semblance of a “weed” either about her dress or her looks. The Captain had styled her *Madame*, but he was evidently unacquainted with her, and also with the French idiom. In a doubtful case such as this, it should have been “Mademoiselle.”

Inexperienced as I was at the time—“green,” as the Americans have it—I was not without some curiosity in regard to women, especially when these chanced to be beautiful. My curiosity in the present case had been stimulated by several circumstances. First, by the attractive loveliness of the lady herself; second, by the style of her conversation and the facts it had revealed; third, by the