

CICERO'S REVENGE.

(*A Southern Story.**)

BY LOCKBURN B. SCOTT.

A FEW years after the close of the civil war between the North and the South, I had occasion to visit, for the first time, a section of the Southern States. The business which took me there was of such a nature as to leave me a good deal of leisure, which I very frequently employed in studying the past and present condition of the Negro race. This pastime proved to be most deeply interesting, developing many touches of character both grave and gay, the study of which gave much food for thought.

On one occasion I was for some days enjoying the generous hospitality of Col. ———, a wealthy Virginian planter, who came of one of the famous "First Families" of that state. My host was a man of about fifty years of age, possessed of a hearty, genial disposition which enabled him to take about all the comfort out of life that came in his way. During dinner one day I chanced to speak of the interest I had been taking in the history and development of the Negro people. This led to a very interesting discussion of many phases of the question. My entertainer proved to be a capital story teller, and many were the tales, pathetic and grotesque, he narrated to me as we sat on the broad verandah, looking out upon one of the finest plantations in all that region of country. One story especially made a deep impression upon me, partly, I suppose, because I afterwards made the acquaintance of the hero and was greatly amused at the quaintness of his philosophy and his evident desire to be regarded as a man of the world.

I will endeavor to give the substance of the story, though I fear it will lose much of its original impressiveness through the absence of the realistic surroundings of the scene of action, and the charm of Col. ———'s rich voice and vivid manner while describing the event.

During a momentary lull in the aforementioned conversation, a magnificent specimen of a darkey came up and in a tone of respect, yet indicating an easy familiarity, spoke to the Colonel about some details concerning the affairs of the estate. After he had gone, my host turned to me and asked, "Did you notice that man? I can tell you a story about him that I think will interest you. I was the only child in my father's family, and from earliest infancy was accustomed to play constantly with the slave children about the place. Cicero, or Sis as we always called him, was just my own age, and somehow or other we got to be very fond of each other. We were always together, sharers in all childish joys and sorrows. This continued until I grew old enough to begin my studies. Even here Sis essayed to follow, but soon gave it up, finding the alphabet a hopeless enigma. For a time he was intensely miserable during lesson hours, and would wander around the place with a most disconsolate air until my release from the school room. After a few weeks, however, he took to making pipes and whistles out of reeds, and in this he soon became an adept. Constant practice enabled him in a short time to produce very sweet music indeed from his primitive instruments; and often would my father, who was very indul-

* This story is founded on a metrical version which the writer saw some years since, but the author of which he cannot recall.