

"Well, I am sure you will excuse my speaking plainly, M. de Chambelle. I perfectly admit that you cannot manage your property yourself, but at the same time I would greatly prefer your applying to some other colonist to join you in the undertaking."

"What is the use of talking to me of some other colonist? Is there a single person in this neighborhood whom you could now really recommend to me as a partner? Only consider how I am situated."

"Et que diable est-il venu faire dans cette gallerie!" muttered d'Auban, and then said out loud: "But it is impossible to conclude an arrangement of this kind in an off-hand manner. There must be an agreement drawn up and signed before witnesses."

"By all means, my dear sir, as many as you please."

"But such formalities are not easily accomplished in a place like this."

"Then, for heaven's sake, let us dispense with them! The case lies in a nutshell. I have purchased this land for the little bijou of a house upon it; and as regards the plantation, I am much in the same position as a Milord Anglais I once heard of, who bought Polichinelle, and was surprised to find, when he brought it home, that it did not act of its own accord. I have used my best endeavours to master the subject. I have tried to assume the manners of a planter; but *classes le naturel, il revient au galop*, and mine is cantering back as fast as possible to its starting-point. There are things a man can do, and others he can't. I was not made for a colonist."

D'Auban was very near saying, "What were you made for?" but he checked the sneering thought. In the prime of life and full enjoyment of a vigorous intellect, he had been tempted to despise the feeble fidgety old man before him, forgetting that the race is not always to the swift or the battle to the strong. We sometimes wonder what part some particular person is sent to fulfil on earth. He or she seems to our short-sighted view so insignificant, so incapable, so devoid of the qualities we most admire, and all the while, perhaps, what appears to us his or her deficiencies are qualifications for the task or the position assigned to them by Providence. There are uses for timid

spirits, weak frames, and broken hearts, little dreamed of by those who, in the pride of health and mental vigour, know little of their value.

Some further conversation took place between the neighbors, which ended by d'Auban's promising to draw up an agreement based on M. de Chambelle's proposal. It was further decided that they would take this paper to the Mission of St. Francis, and request Father Maret and another French *habitant* to witness its signature. A day or two afterwards this was accordingly done. M. de Chambelle rubbed his hands in a transport of delight, and complimented Father Marat on the beauty of his church, in which he had never set his foot. The missionary was amused at hearing himself called M. l'Abbe, and took an opportunity, whilst his guest was flitting about his rose-bushes like a superannuated butterfly, to ask d'Auban for the history of his new partner.

"I am almost ashamed to own how little I know of him," was his answer. And then he gave a brief account of the arrival of these strangers—of the purchase of St. Agathe, and M. de Chambelle's total inability to manage the concession. When Father Marat had heard the particulars, he smiled and said, "This partnership is, then, an act of charity. But take care, my dear friend, how you involve yourself with these people. I strongly advise you to be prudent. We have hitherto been rather out of the reach of adventurers, but there seems to me something a little suspicious about the apparent helplessness of this gentleman. Do not let pity or kindness throw you off your guard."

"If he were to turn out a rogue, which I hardly can believe possible, he could not do me any harm. You see he leaves everything in my hands. I might cheat him, but he cannot injure me. I shall feel to understand him better when I have seen his daughter. Is it not strange her shutting herself up so entirely?"

"There seems to me something strange about the whole affair. Have you sent his cheque to New Orleans?"

"Yes, and took the opportunity of asking M. Dumont what he knew about him; but months may elapse, as you know, before I get an answer."

"The daughter is, to my mind, the most doubtful feature in the case. It is not often that European women of good