

or anguish—at the disgraceful exposure, I concluded—was predominant, and she retreated into the perch of her residence, closing a massive door, with a startling clang, after her.

I had little time to consider how justly my prying into such a state of affairs might excite indignation. The two black footmen, supporting the drunken man, had reached the garden gate. The moment after they emerged, dragging rather than leading their helpless charge between them, and brushing past me without noticing me, apparently in the anxious attention they were bestowing on their burden. One of them opened the door of the sedan, and both together thrust the powerless creature in. The door of the conveyance was then closed with a slam. The two fellows ran into the shafts, lifted it, and set off at a rapid pace, which certainly marked both extraordinary strength and great desire to finish up their job.

You may, however, imagine the state of mind I was left in—the unobserved spectator of the scene—when I tell you that, as the helpless object was carried by me, I felt as convinced as of my own living existence that it was—a *corpse!*

I was a surgeon, it is to be remembered. And now the stiffened, motionless limbs, the loosened neck, the general abandonment of the whole frame, and, above all, the ghastly, utterly bloodless countenance, visible under the hat, though drawn down over the eyes, startled my experience with this strangely horrible conviction. It was no drunkard—it was a dead man—the Creole beauty had cast from under her roof, and which the liveried black slaves were probably carrying to some place of murderous concealment—perhaps to cast into the river—for I perceived, though petrified into inaction at the moment, that the sedan was continuing on the route I must myself follow to reach the water-side.

What was I to do? Stop the machine—excite the fears and resentment of two powerful negroes engaged in what they themselves must know to be unlawful work, even if they were merely the instruments of a superior authority, and who were probably armed?

It would be to provoke my own immediate destruction. The horrible severity of the laws against the blacks in all that

related to preserving the safety of their white lords and owners would assuredly drive these negroes to any act of desperation to save themselves from the consequences of detection. And I saw plainly enough, in the white pallor of the dead man's complexion that he was of unmixed race. Besides, my heart sank within me as I thought of the lovely face of the girl—she was no more—from whose house they had come, and the deep impression it had made on me. I could not bring myself to believe her guilty of so frightful a crime without further proof, and determined to follow as stealthily and unobservedly as I might, and take quiet notice of what was done with the body.

Accordingly, I crossed to the other side of the road as soon as I had sufficiently rallied from my amazement to move, which was in as deep a shadow as the moonlight was brilliant on the side of the Creole lady's villa. Under this cover I trusted to be able to advance, keeping the ugly, upright coffin, rather than sedan, as I now considered it, in view. And so, for a considerable distance I was enabled to do; and I had soon reason to congratulate myself on the precaution. I noticed that the hind bearer looked repeatedly back, as if he dreaded some espionage, and was prepared to resent it. But I was already involved in the gloom, and after a few glances the darkey seemed satisfied, for he altogether withdrew his white, rolling eyes from my line of advance.

My plans, however, continued abortive in all respects, save that I kept the suspected conveyance in sight. I did not encounter a single other living individual on the way—a circumstance I thought unusual, even at that deepest hour of the night, in such a dissipated city. But so it happened.

All of a sudden my ideas sustained a singular crossing. Far from making toward the river or some lonely place of concealment for their ghastly deposit, the sedan-bearers turned into the most fashionable portion of what is called "White Orleans," meaning where the principal white inhabitants of the city—the wealthy merchants, and owners of the neighboring cotton plantations and rice fields—had their town residences. Meanwhile, conscious of all the danger of being discovered as a spy,