CHAPTER I.

About 70 years ago a young man

About 70 years ago a young man of strong physique and prepoasessing appearance arrived at New Orleans. He had your from New York of which city he was a native, and had brought with him a considerable sum of money, supplanted by a letter of introduction to Judge Favart de aumartin, who was then at the flood-tide of his fame.

It would not be fair to call our young pan ("our hero" would be the good old phrase) an adventurer without taking pains a qualify the impression that might be promoded. Hepworth Coleman had his own way of looking at life. Fifty years later he could have been a tragedian, probably a smous one; but the conditions were not avavorable to awaken histrionic ambition, at the time whon his character, his tastes, his ambition, should have been forming. What he saw that was most fascinating to him find no distinct form; it lay along the southwestern horizon a dreamy mistreovered something not unlike the confines of romance.

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He was rich, and what was, perhaps, a greater misfortune, he had no living kinstolk for whom he cared or who cared for him. Practically speaking, he was alone in the world; moreover, he had an imagination. Scott's novels, Byron's poetry, the Yrench romances, and I know not what else of the sort, had been his chief reading. For physicial recreation he had turned to teneing and pistol-practice. When I add that he was but 22 and unmarried, the rest way be guessed. But Coleman was not a young man of the world in the worst sense; he had not turned to evil sources of dissipation. Healthy, vigorous, full of spirit, he hevertheless had sentimental longings, as indefinite as they were persistent.

Youth is the spring-lime when "Longen folk to gon on pligrimages," as old Chaucer words it, and it would be hard to find the young man who has not felt the vaguely-outlined yet irrestatible desire to wander-to go over the herizon into a strange, new world. Hepworth Coleman, when he was taken with this longing, felt no restraint coast around him. He was absolutely free: had all the means necessary. Why should he not go where he pleased? If it seems strange that he should have been attracted to New Orleans rather than to the Old World, we must remember what New Orleans was in 1820. No other city, not even Paris, could at that time compare with it as a center of genuine romance. Nor was this romance unmixed with lawlessness of the most picturesque kind. Money poured into it from a hundred sources more or less illegitimate, besides the streams of wealth produced by cotton, sugar and rice industries. Gambling was indeed a fine art, duelling appeared more a pastime than anything else, and what went on in the gilded halls and melody-filled salles may be imagined, I suppose, though I do not care to east a glance that way.

Hepworth Coleman had heard much of the gay city, of its odorous atmosphere, its hospitality, its social charm, the smack of reckless romance in all its ways. S

The letter to Judge Favart de Caumartin was given to Coleman by his banker, who in handing it to him said:

"I don't know the judge personally, never saw him: but he has done a lot of business through us. He is very rich, evidently very influential, and certainly will be of use to you. I feel that I can take the liberty of sending you to him, because—well, he is under many obligations to the bank and is likely to want many more large favors. I fancy that you'll find him a trifle eccentric, but enthusiastically hospitable. A creole of the creoles, I judge him to be, and a representative of the nabobs."

Young Coleman considered himself lucky

A creole of the creoles, I judge him to be, and a representative of the nabobs."

Young Coleman considered himself lucky to carry with him a document that would give him an introduction to a person sorenowned as Judge Favart de Caumartin, of whom he had been recently reading a good deal, owing to a duel fought between the judge and one Colonel Sam Smith, of the United States Army, in which the latter had been killed. The duel had brought out history, from which it appeared that Judge Favart de Caumartin had fought before, not once only, but many times, and always to the death of his antagonist. Along with these facts were disclosed numerous pleturesque details of the judge's past life, with more than hints that in his young days he had been a pirate of something of the sort. The account also made the most of his wealth, his almost reckless liberality, his eccentricity, and, most of all, the air of mystery which still hung over his business operations.

All this was rich food for an imagination already thoroughly saturated with the spirit of romantic adventure, and during the voyage from New York to New Orleans Hepworth Coleman found deep satisfaction in anticipating what he felt was in store for

Hepworth Coleman found deep satisfaction in anticipating what he felt was in store fo him. In every fibre of his frame he felt the assurance that he was on his way to new and strange experiences.

His banker had sent a letter to precede

his banker had sent a letter to precede his arrival by a few days, asking a friend to secure suitable apartments for "Mr. Hepworth Coleman, gentleman," the consequence being that a dark young man, small, but well built and handsome, met him at the landing to conduct him to his suite of tooms on Royal street.

"Is you Meestu Coleman, sah?" inquired this young stranger in a musical tone of

"Is you Meestu Coleman, san? Inquired
this young stranger in a musical tone of
voice. "I look for zat man at Prayson."
"Yes, sir, thar is my name," said Coleman briskly, at the same time showing by
this look that he would like to know whom

was meeting.

"Yeree glad you come, Meestu Coleman; reree glad, sah, indeed. Got your rooms all prepare for you, sah. Yas, sah, zey is beautin' an' sharming rooms."

"Thank you; I am much indebted. Are

For some reason not exactly explainable, this whole proceeding affected Coleman peculiarly. He felt a sort of vague uneasiness, as if he were passing into an atmosphere of mystery, if not of danger.

As he was whitled through the narrow streets he caught glimpses of queer tile-dovered houses, with curious hanging gulleries; high walls and gloomy courts flanked these, and here and there a dusky pelm or a bright orange tree flung out its foliage. Blooming magnolis clumps filled the air with a heavy, languid edor.

But what most attracted the attention of Coleman was a company of four or five

How could that be the celebrated quemse be guardian pirate!
"It cannot be he," he muttered aloud.

"It is impossible."
"Veree well, Meestu Coleman," said the "Veree well, Meestu Coleman," said the young creole, dryly; "but I must inquir yo' pahdon, sah. Monsieur le Juge Favart de Caumartin ees to me well acquainted. I wemark to you, sah, zat zere ees not any mistake."

"Oh, certainly, sir, I beg a thousand pardens "exclaimed Coleman, pulling himself together and seeing his breach of etiquette. "Of course you are right, but I was so surprised to see the judge looking so young. I had supposed that he was an aged man. I am astonished."

"Oh, monsieur, le juge ees not so verce young-not so verce—hees hair not much gray."

young—not so veree—nees hair not much gray."
While they were still discussing this matter the carriage stopped in front of a square, heavy-looking house which, painted a dull red and projecting its upper gallery over the sidewalk, flung out on either side a heavy brick wall on whose top was a jagged dressing of broken bottles and jugs. It looked more like a convent than like an appartment-house.

Hepworth Coleman found his suite of rooms admirable in every respect; large,

pertment-house.

Hepworth Coleman found his suite of rooms admirable in every respect; large, airy, luxuriously furnished. His croole conductor parted with him at the door without giving his name or address, and without any explanation whatever of his connection with the matter of securing these elegant spartments or with making his arrival easy and pleasant.

Some silent and obsequious negro servants were at hand to do his bidding; but he soen dismissed them while he flung himself upon a sofa and lit his pipe. Altogether incomprehensible to him were the suggestions of secrecy and mystery connected with his reception; scarcely less so was the youthful—nay, boyish—appearance of Judge Favart de Caumartin.

As if the mysterious atmosphere meant to continue growing denser, it was while he lay on the luxurious scarlet sofa, smoking, resting, and meditating, that a beautiful girl came and stood in the doorway of his chamber. She blushed sweetly at the sight of him, recoiled violently, and then slipped swiftly away, leaving behind her a rustle of fine stuff, a sparkle of rare jewels, and a lingering bonguet of violets and rose.

The old woman retired as soon as she had arranged the repast on a round mahogany table. Coleman found the oysters, the wine, the broiled fish, and the French bread excellent to such a degree that he ate almost everything before him; then leaning far back in his chair he began to study the silver set from which all these good things had been taken. The platter was in the form of a flounder, the sugar-bowl was a trog, the cream-pitcher a heron, the coffeepot a pelican, and on each was cut the name Favart de Caumartin in plain, bold letters. Even on the five-armed silver candle-stick, in which burned five fragrant myrtle wax tapers, appeared that striking inscription. He surveyed the room now with a more critical eye, discovering at once that the pictures, the curtains, the carpets, and indeed all the articles of furniture, were costly and beautiful beyond anything he had ever seen before. Evidently he was in Judge de Caumartin's house.

house.

The moon was shining brilliantly when
Coleman went forth for a short walk on the
street. Not many people were abroad, it
being the dinner hour; but certain cafes

being the dinner hour; but certain cafes were crowded with men and women who were drinking champagne and discussing the dishes on well-spread tables.

At the door of one of these gorgeous rooms Coleman met the young man whom a few hours before he had seen leading the rout of singers in the street. It cocurred to him that now was as good as any time to present his letter to the judge, so he forthwith stepped near him and said, lifting his hat:

As if the mysterious atmosphere meant o continue growing denset, it was able pleasure, however and his pleasure, ower here of continue growing denset, it was able pleasure, however and his pleasure, ower here of continue growing denset, it was able pleasure, however and his pleasure, however and his pleasure, however and his pleasure, ower how here of the desired point of the property of the pro

Mile. de Caumartin blushed; she may have felt a touch of guilt because she could not muster courage to tell her father that she had already visited Mr. Coleman.

"I have not seen him yet," continued the judge; "I thought it best to let him have some rest before calling upon him. Cartwright advises me that he is of an excellent family—a man to be given the greatest attention, and for my banker's sake, if for nothing else, I must meet the demand upon my hospitality. He came a fortnight earlier than I expected, but I had Jules watching for him, and you know Jules never fails." for him, and you know Jules never fails."

"But you should have told me before, father, dear," said Mile. Olympe, "only a while ago, while wandering shrough the distant wing of the house, I invaded this young gentleman's apartment. It surprised him evidently as much as it abashed

"The obvious morel of which is," replied the judge quickly, "that you are hereafter to be more careful about what rooms you are tumbling into." As he spoke his dark, oval face with its fine grave smile, was almost like a boy's. The flush that lay under the skin shone through with a suggestion of some repressed stimulus, as if a great passion had forced it up. In his eyes an underglow, so to call it, smouldered with fascinating vagueness.

The obvious morel of which is," replied to great the proceed others, and all seemed to treat the proceed. "The obvious moral of which is," replied

gravity that the occasion was assuming. The maskers looked to their leader. "Don't stand there afraid," sneered Coleman; "come on and get your turn. Who's next?"

badly. As yet, however, all had escaped without deadly hurt when the leader himself made ready to fight. Those who had come to grief were quietly cared for by others, and all seemed to treat the proceedings as by no measural startling or even unappal.

They passed along the street until they for eached a narrow blind siley, into which the reached a narrow blind siley, into which the moonlight fell but diniply between dusky was allowed to the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of a few minutes; but this for was a constructed on the course of the cours

Evidently the mystic band now felt the

One after another responded, only to fare

fought, the charm of heroism fell upon him, and, like the knights of old, he felt the strength of a glorious desperation. All round him the vague spirit of dreamland seemed to hover, though the hideous pictures of skeletons and cadavers gleamed real enough in the glare of the chandeliers. What inspired him most, however, was the knowledge that he was trying his force with that of the greatest duellist in the world and one that had always killed his man.

armed his antagonist with ease in less than a minute.

Another man came on and shared the same fate, with an addition of a prick through the wrist of the aword-arm.

This was exhilarating to Coleman in his exasperation at being made the butt of some mysterious trick.

"Come next," he oried, "I want the best of you—and the best is a coward. Come on!"

Evidential the word come and shared the same fate, with an addition of a prick through the wrist of the aword to say. It had been a great pleasure for the greater part of the time quite insensible of her presence, seemed to respond the doctors. She had been having her sweet dream, was in love with him, indeed, and the command of her father struck her like a blow.

Judge Favart de Caumartin suspected

and the command of her father struck her like a blow.

Judge Favart de Caumartin suspected the truth about his daughter, and was not slow in making up his mind in the matter. He gave strict orders that the hall between Coleman's rooms and the rest of the mansion should be kept at all times locked and

barred. Love laughs at such precautions. Hep Love laughs at such precautions. Hepworth Coleman during his convalencence
lay on his back and thought of nobody but
Mile. Olympe, and when at last he was able
to get up he sent for her. It so chanced
that the judge, having got well in a measure, was gone up to Natchez on business.
Mile. Olympe did not go to see the
young man, but she wrote him a note explaining her fether's wishes.
"But he has never forbidden you to come
to see me when you are able to walk so far
as to the library," she added very frankly,
"and I see no reason why you should stay
away."

At the door of one of these progrous recess glad, said, indeed. Got your rooms all prepare for you, said, you many man whom all prepare for you, said, you many man whom all prepare for you, said, you many man whom all prepare for you, said, you many man who may be a selected to the prepare for you, said, you many man who may have a selected to the prepare for you, said, you many feel murt before he had seen. It might all your companies the prepare for you, said, you man who man who may not said the young companies the prepare for you, said, you man who man who man was a good at any time to the prepare for you, said, you man who man who man was a finite for the prepared to the p



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