

many is not very anxious for distant possessions; what she holds do not blossom like the rose and recall in nothing a garden of Eden. Further, she has to husband her strength at home. Her Alsace colony exacts much anxious care, and she still suffers from South Africa and Zanzibar on the brain, family jewels that His Majesty's grandmother will never part with.

The Czar's visit has created a new mania, not that of whistling the "Russian Hymn," the only air known—"for all the tunes that he could play, was o'er the hills and far away;" or attempting to pronounce Muscovite diphthongs that would crack even the trumpet of fame itself; no, the crank is, for the deluded to nominate himself to some elevated Russian function and expect the crowd to salute him *à la Shapka*. Generally they give their address the "Imperial Palace;" the police invariably conduct them there, and when they call for their ermine robes, they find the undress uniform of a strait-jacket. Suicides are painfully numerous: some from misery, and a few from love. In the latter, the unfortunates are young, and outlive their wounds—those of the heart included. But the dramas of misery, they have no shading. A few days ago, a son of middle age, and his mother, had descended from a fair social position to the last stage of want. They had not even hope, the medicine for the miserable. They managed to have a last breakfast at a restaurant. On returning to their rooms, they drew up a statement, that they had resolved to die; they signed the document, the old mother adding that it was at her request, and with full approbation she consented to being killed by her son—to be cured of starvation: she signed the codicil. She next took a seat in an arm-chair, her son did the same in one facing her; he applied a revolver to her right temple; the ball passed out through the left, lodged in the wall, after smashing the photo of her deceased husband. A second detonation: the neighbours burst open the door, and found that in death mother and son were not divided.

The bicycle tax, 10 frs. annually, the same amount as is struck on pianos, dogs and costermongers, is expected to be doubled next year. Ladies apparently met the "iniquity" by getting rid of the piano, that most costly of music and the most difficult to suppress, as Théophile Gautier and Victor Hugo asserted. The ladies must still economize by parting with their pet poodles. But the dearest friends must separate, as King Dagobert said when he threw his hounds into the river.

A special correspondent at Madagascar writes that the island has no roads and the towns no streets. Every Chinaman has his coffin and a work of art—like Sarah Bernhardt's, only she has decorated her own "box." Now every Malagasy has his own "mausoleum," in his garden. It is generally a brick construction of four walls, filled with earth and clothed with weeds. Like the Mussulmans, the Hovas like to have the dead near the quick. The *fosse commune* for the Armenians is the Dardanelles after massacre day. Z.

October 17, 1896.

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Pen and Ink Sketches in a Southern Republic.

St. Andrew's Gazette (Buenos Ayres).

AN old negro sat opposite the traveller on the trunk of a fallen eucalyptus tree. He had taken no notice of the stranger's approach, but when the latter addressed him, he looked up with an indifference that was surprising in so lonely a place. He took in, without interest, his interlocutor's worn appearance, and the weariness of his small horse. The traveller repeated his question as to the possibility of finding a lodging near. Though he spoke in the Argentine dialect, the negro replied in English, and the stranger was astonished at its correctness. As the two men walked side by side up the avenue, the stranger wondered more and more at his companion. He asked him one or two casual questions, only to elicit monosyllabic replies, which, however brief, were courteously spoken. The traveller noticed that there had once been a gravelled carriage-way where now was only a rough, thickly overgrown path. The avenue itself must have been over a mile in length, and was ended by a rotten wooden gate, supported by two very

beautifully carved stone columns. This incongruity was less striking than what lay beyond. A group of orange trees in full fruit gleamed like gold in the afternoon sun, and beneath one of them a woman sat, playing with a pile of the yellow balls as a child might have done. She built them up, and continually, as the heap gave way, she set to work to rearrange them. She took no notice whatever of the negro and his visitor, but, as they passed her, the latter had an opportunity of observing her peculiar beauty. It was the loveliness of a woman, but one whose womanhood had gone backward into childhood again.

The negro led the way through the little grove into the verandah of the house. The building lay partially in ruins, and one or two of the pillars which had once supported the verandah-roof had fallen. The stranger followed his guide round the corner of the house into a desolate *corral*, whose only occupant was an old and sorry-looking English mare, tied up to a broken post. Here the traveller's horse was bestowed, and the traveller himself was asked to cross the *patio* to the house.

Charles Lepage, as the traveller gave his name to his host, looked round him in a bewildered way. By what freak of fortune came an old French drawing-room into the desolation of the Argentine interior? The frescoes on the walls, the painting on the ceiling, though spoiled by damp, were still visible enough to show their extraordinary beauty. The floor had once been laid with mosaic: it was chipped and badly broken in many places. There was very little furniture, but what there was—a bed, a small table, and a single chair—was of richly-carved oak. There were one or two curious ornaments in a corner of the room, which the traveller knew, being somewhat of an antiquarian, to be genuine relics of the time of Marie Antoinette.

Supper having been arranged with some taste, and a candle fitted into one of the sconces on the wall, the negro turned to withdraw. But Charles Lepage made a final attempt to force him from his severe reticence. "Tell me, Don Pedro," he said courteously, "how you come to live buried here with the lovely girl who seems to be under your charge."

Pedro turned. "She is my charge," he replied, "till her death or mine. You do not know that she is mad, and, more terrible to me than that, blind."

"Why more terrible to be blind than mad?"

The negro hesitated. "Because," he said in a low voice, "of what her eyes closed on."

He relapsed into silence then and left the room. Charles Lepage puzzled over his words till his mind was strongly excited. When darkness had closed in Pedro reappeared to take away the supper dishes. "You're not afraid to sleep alone?" he asked in a curious tone.

Lepage smiled. "I have not travelled alone through the camp so far to be afraid when I have a roof over my head and a real bed to lie in," he replied.

The negro bade him "good night" impassively, and retired. Lepage amused himself for some time examining the room and its contents, but at last, drowsiness overcoming him, he threw himself on the bed and fell asleep.

It seemed to Charles Lepage that he had been sleeping a very short time indeed before he was suddenly awakened. The air was heavy with the smell of smoke. A dead silence reigned everywhere, but Lepage was absolutely sure that what had roused him was a shriek. Hastily throwing on his clothes he ran out into the *patio*. A full moon, riding high in heaven, cast one or two leaping tongues of flame into the shade. Lepage sought a way out of the enclosure to reach the burning corner of the house. He was still fumbling with the locked gate when he caught his hand on a broken spike and tore it open from the thick part of the palm to the wrist-bone. Barely noticing the pain, he turned and sought a passage through the house itself, and so came out upon the ruined verandah. His tongue refused to move; he stood like one made of stone, so still that he heard the furious beating of his own heart. Before him a man of the highest type of European cultivation stood bound, his body rigid, save when at intervals he trembled violently. Beside the captive a dark skinned native of villainous beauty looked from the Englishman to the woman Lepage had seen playing with the oranges. She stood about two yards away, in her eyes an indescribable horror. Lepage was not long in discovering the reason.