

when Lansing said, as they smoked their cheroots alone on the lower deck:

"Mr. Mentor, please write my father that I wish to remain South the balance of this year."

"I have done so already, Lansing. There is balm in Gilead. *I have faith in Terreverde.*"

After this the past was entirely ignored.

The gentlemen reached the plantation of Maud La Grange about seven o'clock on the morning of her birth-day. Toty and her little hostess were walking in the south part of the court-yard, and Chloe and Phillis were enjoying with Uncle Abe, the luxury of a snail's-pace promenade at the North-Eastern extremity of the grounds. So busy were the girl canary birds in chirruping, that the private-carriage of Mr. Mentor was almost at the Lodge, ere Maud perceived it, when she ran like a fawn, followed by Toty, and called loudly to the sleepy Isaac to unfasten the gate.

Uncle Abe, however, had his eyes open, and had quietly reached the carriage-walk, long before the burly black porter had got awakened, and expressing his patriarchal scorn of "dem or'nary lazy niggers," had the entrance wide open, ere the spirited bay mares came to a full stop.

Mentor and Dacre alighted, and Uncle Abe mounted beside Jim, Egbert's coachman, and after depositing the trunks on the gallery, piloted the carriage to the coach-yard, and assisted Isaac in unharnessing the horses and placing them in their stalls, in the open shed appropriated to the purpose; and I am afraid a strict economist would have thought Abraham slightly profuse in the use of provender; but then "Missey Maud" always wanted the best for "de gemmen from de city."

Maud rushed to Mentor, throwing her little arms about his neck: "Dear Guardy! I am delighted to see you. Oh, Guardy we will have such fun to-day! But here is Toty: don't you remember Toty, Guardy?"

"Of course Dacre we cannot make fish of one and fowl of the other," he replied. "And Toty was saluted by Mentor, whose face fairly scintillated with fatherly tenderness as he looked at the two girls.

"Mr. Dacre, let me make you acquainted with my pet baby, Maud La Grange—the dearest little canary bird in the whole South-West."

Dacre took the wee creature's tiny hand, and bowed quietly; and, as he saw what a child it was, said:

"Miss Maud; I hope every birth-day morning of yours, may see as cloudless a sky."

"Thank you, Mr. Dacre. But let me introduce you to Toty."

Dacre laughed: unsophisticated Maud forget every one did not know Toty as she did.

Toty was not abashed, and as Mentor whispered: "this is Miss Grade," Lansing shook hands and remarked:

"Miss Grade, you must let me say, 'Toty' too."

...Lansing, at once, was charmed by Maud's girlish ways—so artless, so thoroughly Child-Woman. And as she took his arm up the gravelled walk towards the Manor House, she caught many sly peeps into those sad violet-gray eyes, and divined there that he was lonely, unhappy, and worthy of a brighter fate. She had read this, as little "Missey Maud," not as heiress of Terreverde; and Uncle Abe's exposition of Mentor's promised present, vanished from her mind; but had the idea returned that she would one day call this young man "husband," she would have laughed as guilelessly as if some one had given her a pet kitten. It was such a funny idea—a husband! Her heart knew nothing of the love that men dream of, and which many beautiful spirits fade from earth without realizing in its glorious fruition. He was a gentleman, Guardy's friend, and seemed melancholy and good, and little Maud's simple soul realized all that was pure, holy and beautiful in the Poet. She thought if she had such a brother, her happiness would be indeed complete.

Dacre treated her as a bright and promising child. To him, as yet, she was a mere bird, that might one day bloom into a lovely flower, and her tiny hand resting on his arm,

seemed to him as that of the little sister, who, had she lived, would have been about Maud's age, but closed her eyes almost as soon as she had opened them on this work-a-day world.

Breakfast was not long delayed, and the quartette seated themselves to enjoy a Louisiana morning meal. So simple, so clean, so peaceful! Dacre felt the soothing influence of the scene; and the merry prattle of the young ladies and Mr. Mentor, who, for the time, was the most perfect child at the table, drove him out of himself and beguiled Memory of her poisoned arrows. Blessed indeed is it that Providence allows no mortal to be forever miserable or happy!

As the day wore on, the birthday preparations developed themselves. Guests arrived rapidly, and the oldest and wealthiest families in the neighborhood gathered together at Terreverde. The court-yard swarmed with figures of plainly yet richly attired gentlemen, and gorgeously-robed ladies. All the young people for twenty miles about congregated to greet Maud La Grange on her sixteenth birthday; and as each party of the visitors were accompanied by one or more family servants, and it was holiday on the plantation, the negroes were in ecstasies—many a dusky nymph wearing silks that would arouse the envy of a country maiden in the rural districts of the wise and frugal North.

A more exquisitely formed, a fairer-featured assemblage, never sun shone upon; "like the lilies of the field, they neither sewed nor spun, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." There were beautiful women, with large, dark liquid eyes, and a flowing outline, and graceful dignity of carriage, as difficult to describe as irresistibly felt by the tourist. A few old planters and their wives were present, but they formed chiefly a coterie by themselves, and let the young mingle with the young. There were heads there of which ancient Rome could alone have furnished equals in majesty and stately firmness; but then this was softened by a suavity only Old Spain could parallel.

The court-yard, with its cool shades, and the wide galleries about the mansion, were chiefly sought by the guests. Few cared to haunt the old drawing-rooms and library. It was a party where hum-drum etiquette did not intrude, for being well-bred people, "Miss Leslie's Behavior Book" was not carried in their pockets. It was a reproduction on the Western Continent of chivalrous gentlemen and noble ladies—children of a Republic yet undisturbed by the bursting of the war-clouds, and the inroads of the Vandals.

Just fancy this scene. That court-yard alive with at least two hundred human forms, shining in the splendor of a Southern September afternoon—the very flowers hiding their gaudy heads beside the loveliness of the bright fairies and cavaliers about them. Scent the magnolias, and gaze at that unclouded sky. Hear the music of the violins, tuned to gay strains by dusky figures. Mark the plantation alive with negroes enjoying the holiday, and not a care upon a single face. How the figures float before the eye, and how the dancers on the gallery are travestied by the dusky servants upon the greensward in the distance! See Mentor, at his years, joining in the dance, until Toty laughs with girlish glee. Mark Dacre, silent, quiet, forgetful of the past, absorbed in contemplation of the glowing, living panorama before him. Yonder are lovers, apart from the noisy crowd of merry dancers, love-making in shady groves where seats are placed convenient. There are two old men, looking so wistfully, and wishing they were young, and light of heart, and free to live and love, and hope and do and dare again. Here you meet Aunt Chloe and Phillis and Uncle Abe in dignified converse, slowly "meandering" from the court-yard to the field—now sharing the glories of their mistresses, Missey Maud and Missey Toty; now watching those of their own class, free from work, dancing against time and tide. The littlest picaninny enjoys the afternoon, and dances with its mate. Color, form,

light, music, youth, age, beauty, wealth, flowers, sunshine, sky, trees are all blended as in one dreamy phantasmagora, and the sounds of merry voices float away on the soft September breeze.

Then come the merry games, and crowning the Queen of the Fete, and when she sitteth in her bower and the flowers are fastened in her pretty, silken hair, you may be sure Toty is one of her maids of honor, and when she is called on to choose a King, and the young men pass in a circle round-about her leafy throne, do you marvel that she gives her hand to Lansing, who claims the penalty ere he leads her to the dance. As for a moment they were seated in that Magnolia copse, and he touched his lips to the girlish forehead, down through the foliage came a rollicking gay beam of sunshine, and rested like a halo from above upon their wealth of soft, light hair, almost the same color, seeming only divers shades of one golden hue.

Mentor saw it: he accepted the good omen, and his eyes were so moist as he looked up to the vernal throne, that Toty pressed forward and whispered in his ear: "He may have her. He deserves her, don't he?"

Mentor took Miss Grade's hand, and I believe a tear fell on it, as he answered: "Toty, those children are very near to me."

XI.

MR. AND MRS. SCHRIEFF.

The course of our narrative has, up to this point, followed Lansing Dacre's path, and we left Emily Hazleton and Carl Schrieff as they emerged from the unfinished Cathedral at Corpus Christi, after he had unfolded his plot to marry her without acquainting her parents until the knot was tied; and the reader must now prepare to return to the Concrete City, with only such knowledge of Emily's doings and feelings as has been gleaned by the few words relating to her, which have fallen in the course of the last five chapters. From them the intelligent peruser will have learned:

First—Emily had married Carl Schrieff.

Secondly—The newly-wedded couple were contemplating a visit to New Orleans at an early day, if the fever did not break out, which was improbable, considering the advanced season.

Lastly—Mrs. Schrieff had some acquaintance with Theodora Grade; knew from her Brownsville friend Dacre was going with Mentor to Terreverde; and desired Toty to write her if he were well, and if he seemed happy.

Herefrom are to be drawn these conclusions:

No. 1.—Mr. Schrieff's plot had succeeded.

No. 2.—Emily wanted change of scene, and the gaieties of the capital, at a season when the pleasure-seekers were returning from the Northern watering-places, and New Orleans was awakening from its summer sleep and getting ready for the winter campaign.

No. 3.—She either had a secret cloister in her heart, where sometimes she would kneel in secret at the shrine of her early love, or else she felt some remorse for her deceit and desired to know the Boyish Lover had survived the wound.

N. B.—Possibly feminine vanity, curiosity, and a jealousy lest he might wed some one else, had something to do with the inquiries placed P. S. to Toty's letter, by Mrs. Schrieff.

...Emily had married Mr. Schrieff, and though her parents were displeased, they of course recovered their serenity. Indeed, contrary to Emily's expectations, her father took it far more coolly than her mamma. Mr. Hazleton never stormed about the matter—but his heart went from his daughter forever. He at once asked Emily and her chosen husband to his home, and invited all the guests at the surprise party, treating them all with scrupulous politeness. His lady, less accustomed to control her feelings, gave Schrieff "a piece of her mind" openly, and told Emily she "despised her;" and in half an hour afterwards was shaking hands with the German, and kissing the naughty girl and weeping over her at a great rate. Oh, these mothers! how much they can forgive; what neglect, cruelty, dis-

obedience they pardon. They are from our cradles to our graves, if we die before them, ministering angels, loving us in poverty, disgrace, banishment: they know no sundering of the cord that binds their hearts to ours; and they reconcile us to a world that were desolate indeed without their loving care.

Mr. Hazleton was more terribly just. His manly sense of right was shocked at the deception his daughter had practiced upon her parents and her lover, and while too proud to evince his indignation, Emily felt the change in his demeanor towards her, and saw she was, in his eyes, a guest, not a child of his heart.

Carl hurried the completion of his house with all the energy native to his character, and when nearly ready to be partially habitable, he proposed to Emily a brief visit to New Orleans, with the double object of business and pleasure. They could purchase furniture, carpets and the luxuries of civilized existence, and take a recreation that was a novelty to Carl Schrieff.

To say Emily was happy, even in the first days of her married life, would be as incorrect as to assert she was miserable. That her husband, when with her, plunged her soul into a dream of forgetfulness of the Past is what might naturally be expected, but there were hours when he was away from her, engaged at his business, when the thoughts of Long Ago would come back to her; and, gradually, the spectacle of the man's moral deformity broke upon her vision. He was coarse, though intellectual; he was strong and over-bearing, and had no chivalrous respect for Woman in his heart. Utterly unprincipled, with no notion of Right and Wrong save expediency, even Emily Hazleton was shocked as she saw only the worst elements in her own nature, reflected as in an exaggerated mirror.

Even deceitful women—those who do many a wrong deed, impulsively—have fine fibres in their natures, and shrink with horror from contact with men, daily and hourly, who offend every feeling they most cherish. Women must worship something: and while it is true that they ask to be loved rather as women, than idolized as angels, sad is their lot, when they find the strength they so revered is unaccompanied by tenderness, and grace, and a looking above earth, upward towards heaven.

This is not morbid sentiment. It is a law of human life, and you shall find it, deep adown the heart of the lowliest woman in the land. Woe be to the man who dares to crush it: such flowers, trodden under the foot, ruthlessly, give birth to serpents that make home a Hades:

Emily did not learn all this in a day, nor a week, nor a month. There were times when she was under the fervid gleams of that dark, magnetic eye, that she believed she was very blessed in his love. But in this affection betwixt the twain there was no pure and exalted element; there were no cooling shades from the broad noonday sun; no drop of water for the parched and burning lips; the garden of their Union bloomed with no sweet, modest, violets; it was a hot-house where only fierce Passion flowers grew, that yielded no perfume to the air, no emblem of Hope, and Rest, and Peace to the heart.

Carl Schrieff had won the race, but the bauble mocked him, and sometimes the prophecy of India rang in his ear:

"The panther woos the snake and thinks
A dove it is, he would beguile;
The poison mixing, ere he drinks,
Let him but pause a little while:
The snake, the panther shall subdue,
The dove shall vanish like a dream,
The bitter dregs remain for you,
The grave a very refuge seem."

Carl loved his wife—as well as he could love anything; but he felt that there were chambers in her heart he had no key to unlock. Trifles light as air, told him, she had not forgotten Lansing Dacre, and it made him bitter to think that he, the Strong Man, could not conquer many a fancy that the Boy Poet had created. He saw in her, too, signs of a temper like that which had shone in her eye, when he stung her to the quick on that memorable afternoon, previous to the evening of their marriage, when he had