

[Written for the Home Journal]

## Down on the Beach:

A STORY OF THE SOUTH.

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(CONTINUED FROM OUR LAST.)

IX.

TOTY.

THE heavy double rap at the hall-door of Terroverde Manor House, which aroused Maud La Grange from her task of construing *Telemaque*, and the voice which called her name, both proceeded from a very little creature, not quite as tall as the youthful mistress of the plantation, and scarcely a year older. At the sound of the welcome, familiar tones, Madame knew it was useless to expect any more lessons from her pupil until the Birthday *fete* was over, and Monsieur Mentor had arrived and departed; so, with her blindest tones, the French Governess allowed the happy beauty a respite from study for the next week, and you may be sure "Missey Maud" gave her a kiss and a warm "thank you" for the indulgence.

Hastening down the stair-case, she reached the front door ere Townsends, the burly porter, could open the ponderous oak, and in a moment more she had seized Toty, by both hands, kissed her a dozen times, and was hurrying her visitor to her own room, when her little guest said:—

"Let us wait for Phillis, Maud."

"But who is Toty?" asks the reader. "She has not been introduced to us, and Canadians (as Britons are in duty bound to be) are suspicious of people not properly introduced."

You shall have all the particulars!

Miss Theodora Elizabeth Grade is the youngest daughter, madam, of Colonel Theodore Ravenswood Grade, of the plantation of Baton-Blanc, Lascelles Parish, Louisiana. Mr. Grade has four daughters and five sons. He has a very vast extent of land that is beautifully planted with mortgages. By birth, he is English, and a lineal descendant of the Earl of Willoughby—probably a nine hundred and ninety-ninth cousin. His wife is a Creole, and owns about fifty negroes in her own right. The only servants Mr. Grade possesses himself are his body servant, Uncle Pierre, and Aunt Phillis, who is the nurse and *Ministress Extraordinary* of his daughter Toty. Both these darkies are so old, and so utterly useless to anybody else, that nobody would take a mortgage upon them. Mr. Grade has a natural born genius for spending money, and if he had \$5,000 to-day, he would have to borrow a few picayunes to-morrow to pay his turn-pike fee, and then, probably, got trusted on his return trip. He is about fifty-five years old, and fortunate in having a wife who can wear pantaloons when occasion requires. "Toty" is Mr. Grade's pet child, and she is the bosom friend of Maud La Grange. The two girls were together in the Convent at New Orleans for four years, and shared the same dormitory, and their cots were side by side. It required all the careful surveillance of the Lady Superior to keep them from sleeping in the same bed. They acquired

among the other pupils the *soubriquet* of "The Inseparables." Living nearly eighty miles apart, they write each other at least once a week, and visit each other whenever they can coax, cajole, or worry the powers that be to permit them. It is safe to suppose that, on an average, they pass three months a year in each other's society. Of course, when Maud's birthday approaches, Toty comes at least one day beforehand. This young lady and Phillis have just arrived by the semi-weekly mail coach, and Phillis is holding an argument with the driver, who is an Irishman, on the impropriety of handling Toty's rather rickety trunk with such recklessness and disregard of its safety. It is finally dumped outside of the court-yard gate, and Maud sends two servants to bring it safely within the walls of Terroverde. Phillis again charges these darkies not to "han'le um so reckless," and as "Missey Maud's" eyes are on them, and Phillis and Toty are both popular "institutions" in this locality, the negroes convey the baggage at a snail's pace, and as if it were a package of eggs or looking-glass, up to the Purple Room, which opens on "Missey's" private apartment, while Phillis, puffing like "a porpoise in the Doldrums," follows after, at the speed of about a hundred yards an hour.

Toty Grade is as unlike Maud La Grange as a sun-flower is different from a daisy. Toty has rather large features, splendid black eyes, luxuriant and jetty tresses, and a complexion of an almost olive shade. Many a quadroon is fairer than Theodora, although the hue is of a very different tinge from the mixed African color, though ever so many removes from the full-blooded original. French and English, she is a brunette of an aggravated description; but the greatest admirer of blonde women could not call her ugly. Her figure is beautiful, and she has the tiniest hands and feet ever artist grew mad over in attempting to reproduce on canvass. She is attired in a brown linen travelling dress, which fits her little plump figure to a charm, and her gypsy flat of brownish straw is removed by her little hostess with a charming *naivete*, as she says: "Toty, I want to see your dear little face. How is the Colonel? Is Mother well? Does your brother Sam bother your guinea pigs any more? I am so glad to see you. I knew you would come, but did not think the stage would pass so early. Toty, come to my room, and we will have such a time! Madame Leveroux has given me free of that tiresome *Telemaque*. Mr. Mentor—you know Guardy—will be here day after to-morrow. Do you know he is going to bring me a present? What do you think it is, Toty? I can't guess. Uncle Abe thinks it is a husband; but I can't believe him. I don't want a husband; do you, Toty? I had such a nice breakfast this morning—broiled pigeon. I must make Uncle Abe get pigeons for you, Toty. Oh, Toty, I am so glad to see you!" And Maud kissed her visitor at least fifty times, and only desisted for want of breath.

Then Toty began jabbering, or chirruping—for these little girls were as like canary birds as women—and Maud began laughing, for Toty was so funny.

"Maud, papa wanted to come along, but mama said no. You see he went down to

New Orleans the week before last, and staid two days, and had to borrow money to get back. He says he thinks he must have been robbed. Dear papa! I know how. Oh, Maud, papa will go to those stupid faro tables, not to play, but to look on; and then he lends his money, or takes all the city to get a drink with him. He brought such a nice dress, though! Dear papa! he is always good to me, Maud. I am going to show it to you. Can't you get your dress-maker to make it up? It is so lovely—white and green and gold. Sam is away at college, and the littlest guinea pig is dead. I am afraid that miserable little nigger, Patsy, hurt it putting it in the wash-tub. Ma was going to have her whipped, but I did not let her, for Patsy knew no better. Patsy cried to come along with Phillis and I, but then she is too little, and keeps me so busy watching her tantrums, and keeping her out of mischief. I promised to bring her a doll. Emily Hazleton, whom you heard me speak of getting acquainted with at New Orleans last winter, is married."

"To Mr. Dacre?"

"No."

"Why, you told me she was engaged to him, I thought, Toty."

"Yes: she was—but she married a Corpus Christi gentleman—Mr. Schrieff. She is coming to Louisiana, the week after next, with her husband, and they will be two months in New Orleans, unless the fever breaks out. Emily never had it. But papa says it is so late now, he don't believe we shall have it this year. I want her to come to Baton-Blanc and visit me."

"But what became of Mr. Dacre?" said Maud.

"Why, how silly I am to be sure! I forgot how I came to tell you! In Emily's letter there was a postscript. She wrote me that Mr. Dacre was coming with your guardian to Terroverde—that so she had learned by a letter from Sarah Graham, who lives in Brownsville, and who received a call from Mr. Mentor and the young man. Emily said in these few lines—"I want you to tell me, dear Theodora (why can't she call me Toty, Maud?) just how he looks. Don't ask me why I changed, nor question me—I want to know that Lansing is well and happy. I cannot rest till I hear from you!"

"Why, now I see," said Maud. "That may be the gentleman Guardy wrote was coming with him. Here is the letter. Why did he not tell the young man's name?"

Toty was not good at deciphering Mr. Mentor's legal, angular hand, so Maud read it aloud.

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"Why there is some writing on the fourth page."

"Is there? I didn't see it," said Maud; and she read it aloud:—"Maud, Mr. Dacre is a very dear friend, and I hope you will be a sister to him, for my sake."

"It is him," said Maud thoughtfully. "I feel sorry for him, Toty? Don't you?"

The girls chatted on for some hours, until it was time to dress for dinner, at which ceremony, we, of course, sir, would be *de trop*—so we will withdraw, and with the license of

romancists, hurry to the Crescent City to await the Point Isabel steamer, which is coming up the river to her wharf at the Southern levee.

### MAUD'S BIRTHDAY.

If Mr. Robert Dale Owen were beginning this chapter, he would be attracted by the "co-incidence" that "Toty" reached Terroverde, and Mr. Mentor and Lansing Dacre arrived at New Orleans from Brazos St. Laago, on "the same day, at the same hour;" and you may be sure Egbert lost no time in hurrying to Terroverde, which was thirty hours' journey, in order to be present at his ward's birthday *fete*.

The old gentleman, we should say—but such men as Mentor never grow old, for their pure spirit preserves perpetual youth in their hearts—had remained weeks instead of days in Mexico, to give the first flush of Dacre's grief time to pass away, and in order that he might divert himself by changed scenes and a sensuous existence. In order that no moral-mouthed but depraved-going man should have a vulnerable place to hang a sermon upon, let it be distinctly understood that Mr. Dacre did not plunge into debauchery. It is so hard for people who live in ice-houses not to throw stones!

When Lansing Dacre disembarked at New Orleans, he was a trifle thinner and many years older than the sunny day when our readers first saw him on the prairies of the Nueces. In a few weeks of disappointed love, he had grown into a maturer manhood. Left to himself, the sensual, the vindictive, the base might have triumphed, but with Egbert Mentor near him, who had suffered the same sorrow from the mother who was sleeping her last dreamless sleep in that Maryland grave, he could not fall into the pit-falls of Despair. He never spoke of Emily Hazleton. Her letter was only answered the very day he left Matamoras. As he handed the little note to his friend, no words passed between them, save these:

"Will you be kind enough to direct another envelope like this, and post my letter inside of it?"

Certainly," said Mentor; "I had written one to her myself."

He handed it to Dacre to read:—

"MATAMORAS, Sept. 7th, 1853.

"Mrs. Carl Schrieff will accept Mr. Mentor's congratulations, and he wishes her many golden returns of her wedding-day. Her enclosure was received, and duly delivered, and her note to himself carefully perused. Will Mrs. Schrieff present her husband and parents the kind regards of Mr. Mentor?"

Lansing read it without a word. Finally, he pulled from his writing desk a copy of his reply to Emily:—

"You are free. I thank you for not returning or demanding me to send you again the little locks of hair we exchanged, when younger and less wise than we are now. May God bless you and yours, Emily!

"Matamoras, September 16th. L. D."

Henceforth, as by tacit consent, the subject was dropped between the young man and his friend, save the second evening of the voyage from Point Isabel to New Orleans,