

"Does she live alone, old man?" I asked.

"Oh, no, sir, she got 'er ma wid 'er!"

"Her ma! I thought you called her 'old madam.'"

"So I did, Boss, Miss Annie's we's ole madam, she's jes' lackin' a month o' bein' as ole as me, but *Ole Miss*, she's Miss Annie's ma, she's *ole, ole*. She's one of dese heah ole Revolutioners, an' she's gittin' mighty 'cripit an' chilish.

"Yas, sir, she's a ole Revolutioner, an' in place o' dat, heah she is to-day a-livin' back o' town gratin' cocoanut!"

"Grating cocoanut! What do you mean?"

"Ter meck *pralines* ter sell, Boss!"

"And how does she sell them, pray?"

"She don't sell 'em, bless yo' heart, no! My daughter, she sells 'em!"

"Your daughter!"

"Yas, sir, my younges' gal, Calline. She's de onies' one o' my chillen what's lef'. She's de baby. She mus' be 'long 'bout fifty."

"And you have a daughter right here in N w Orleans, and live here by yourself, old man! Why doesn't she come and take care of you in your old age?"

"An' who gwine to look arter we's white folks (—lif' Ole Miss in an' out o' de baid, an' go of arrants, an' do de pot an' kittle wuck an' ca'y de yeas' cakes ter de *Exchange*, an' sell *pralines*, an answer de do' knocker? Yer see, Boss, de folks at de *Exchange*, dee don't know nut'n 'bout Ole Miss an' Miss Annie. Yer see Calline, she's dee's pertector! I aint a-sufferin', Boss, I aint! An' ef I was, hit would be God's will; but we aint made out'n de kine o' stuff ter try ter meck we-selves comfable, whilst we's white people's in tribulation."

I turned and looked at the old man. A ray from the sun, now setting, across the river, fell into his silver hair and seemed to transform it into a halo around the gentle old face. I had often found entertainment in the quiet stream of retrospective conversation that seemed to flow without an effort from his lips, but this evening I had gotten the first glimpse of his inner life.

"And don't you feel lonely here sometimes, old man?"

"I know hit looks ter you dat-a-way, Boss—I know hit looks dat-a-way—but when I set heah by de water's aidge, you cyant see 'em, but company's all around me! I'se a-settin' heah an' I aint settin' heah! I'se away back yonder! Sometimes seems like dis levee is de ole plantation, an' in dat place whar de sun's a-shinin' on de water, meckin' a silver road, all de ole-time folks dee comes out dere an' seems like dee talks ter me an' I lives de ole times agin!"

"Sometimes dee comes one by one down de shinin' road, an' sometimes a whole passel on 'em at onct, an' seems like dee sets down an' talks ter me."