

to remove from out of his way my distasteful presence? In any case I determined that I would stand my ground, and would not quit the steamer without better grounds for doing so than I was then conscious of.

We reached Vidalia; but I was not among the two or three passengers who landed there, nor did Gregg attempt to renew his warning. To all appearances he did not even keep watch to see whether I should or should not comply with his oracular advice, doing his duty with great vigilance and steadiness, and frequent as were his visits to the drinking-bar, betraying no sign of intoxication. That he was an excellent sailor and well used to the river, I knew; and in case his sobriety did not fail him, I saw little risk of accident, whether from snag, sawyer or sand-bank. Well steered, the boat kept her course smoothly enough; and if I fancied that her old timbers strained and creaked too much under the impetus of the machinery, there was still nothing to cause alarm. The *Proserpine* was a very large boat. Her stowage was considerable, and when I praised the lavish use of decoration, the gilding, painting, mirrors, marbles, and velvet of her freshly adorned saloons, Lysander the sub-steward told me that the best of what was on board was in the hold. 'French goods they are—all belong Massa Harman—seventy—ninety—hundred thousand Dollar!' he declared, rolling his opal eyes with all an African's enjoyment of the imposing sum total.

The cargo, the captain, and the vessel were all alike puzzles to me. Harman Brothers had, in the period of commercial prosperity that had preceded the war, been chiefly exporters of cotton and importers of the wares and agricultural produce of the North. This was the first time that I had heard of any transactions on the part of the firm in what are technically styled French goods; but to be sure, the principal had always kept a large part of the business wholly in his own hands, and no clerk was ever consulted on matters outside his own department. At anyrate, Mr. Harman must be the best judge of his own affairs; and with this reflection I left the mulatto, whose prattle began to weary me, and went once more on deck. And now, as the day wore on, and evening drew near, I could not but remark that an unusual activity prevailed in the engine-room. The deck hands were constantly at work in carrying down fresh loads of wood to feed the fires, the hoarse roar and ruddy glare of which told that the furnace heat must be very considerable. Once and again the head engineer came up the ladder to exchange a few words in a subdued tone, as if of respectful remonstrance, with Gregg; but after each of these interviews the efforts to get up a fuller head of steam were redoubled. The aged vessel groaned and shivered in every timber as the machinery worked faster and faster, and the wash occasioned by our rapid passage increased, until we seemed to be chased by a long line of tawny billows.

Still, none of the passengers, so far as I could see, evinced the smallest anxiety as to the unnecessary speed of the steamer. Going at haphazard pace is so habitual in American travel, and suits so well with the national way of thought, that caution is apt to be voted effete. When I ventured to remark to one fellow-voyager, a bearded Missourian who stood beside me, looking across at the deep woods on one bank and the trim plantations on the other shore, lying level and dim behind the protecting 'levee,' that the engines were working dangerously fast, considering the age of the boat and the approaching darkness, he carelessly made answer; 'Guess we'll be all the sooner at New Orleans,