...BAIT.

...mind me as one of remarkable expression, the sort of vignette from some old romance.

Riding around the angle of the orchard I came in front of the house and halted. A clump of pear trees grew at one side and great bowers of the upper song birds flashed a little rose garden. In front of a wide veranda a magnificent oleander spread its glossy greenery. A spacious, open hall ran entirely through the box, apparently almost rotten, building, giving me a glimpse of luxuriants tufts of flag like plants bearing great red and gold flowers growing in a sort of rude back court. The place had a very ancient look, as if the house had been there so long that it was sinking in the ground, while the grass and vines and moss were enveloping it. The boards of the roof were warped, spongy and covered with lichens, while the walls, made of pine logs, were awry from the decay of the foundation, and the rude posts of the veranda were weather beaten and far from perpendicular.

The girl and a man who had met her at the landing turned at the threshold to look back at me when they heard my horse's feet. I saw that they were father and daughter; their attitude and appearance told this.

Immediately the man came toward me and spoke to me in French, which was midway between that of New Orleans and the patois of the negroes. He was very dark, almost black, with wavy dead black hair and beard, but his features showed little, if any, African peculiarity. Looking over his head at his daughter I saw that she was a shade darker than he, and the negro dash appeared to have come into her face with some emphasis, but not disagreeably.

In a moment I was a guest. My horse was cared for by a lad, and I was welcomed into the squat but spacious house, where the first thing that attracted my eyes was a rack of antlers, upon which lay three long, heavy flint lock guns, one of which was magnificently mounted with silver. Skins hung about the walls of the hall on were spread upon the floor, two of them occupied by lank, long eared, snooping hounds.

An air of rude cleanliness that was almost luxury pervaded the place, and the voices coming from the adjoining rooms were hauntingly sweet and rich. I noticed that the doors, one on either side of the passageway, were very wide and stood open, giving into large, low rooms, into one of which I was conducted by my dusky host.

"Sit down," he said, and left me, returning a few minutes later with a bottle of wine and a cup of coffee.

While he was out I glanced over the room. In one corner a magnificent mahogany four post bedstead, exquisitely carved and contained with ... the lagoon swung round the live oak wood and was lost. I was not very near the gulf coast, but the unmistakable salt fragrance was in the air.

It was May and the magnolias were ... to bloom; my horse's feet ... in fountains of lilac and violets. Everywhere the colors of a rainbow flashed, and on every side I drew in a bewildering sense ...

...night the spot a good one on ... to pass the night, and was prepared to dismount when a dog began ... out beyond a thicket of cedars. ... a half wild hound barking as if for sheer idleness. The sound was ... welcome as it was musical, for it ... that a cabin must be near.

... myself at ease in my saddle ... A noise of row locks or of a paddle touching a skiff's side now ... my ear; and I wondered why I had not before noticed the pirogue ... and the person that propelled it ... 300 yards away, and skimming swiftly over the water, the graceful little vessel came shoreward. Its occupant, a slender girl apparently, sat near the stern and wielded the paddle with vigor and ease.

Evidently the dog was baying her welcome as she returned from some voyage across the now rapidly widening bayou. The sun had fallen below the horizon, the fog was turning from rose purple to silver gray; and I noticed that the moon nearly full moon was wan against the eastern sky. Above the dark jungle of the swamp some wide winged birds were slowly sailing southward.

"Hoo-la! hoo-la! hoo-ee!" uttered a loud, sweet voice from the pirogue.

"Hoo-la—la hoo, la-hoo-hoo-ee!" answered a baritone from the shore just beyond the cedar thicket.

The girl waved her paddle in the air and replied with a yodel that sent its silvery ripples to every dreamy nook of the bayou.

I know not how to suggest the feeling that came over me; it was as if I had a glimpse of old Arcadia, as if a waft of perfect peace and quiet joy had reached me from some land of eternal apple blooms.

Overhead some wild fowl were blowing their clangerous pipes; and although I did not look up I knew that their wings were shining against the sapphire sky. In my mind flocks of poems, like strange singing birds, rustled their silken plumes and flooded me with unutterable melody.

Very soon the pirogue touched shore at some distance from me, and I saw the tall girl spring out and loop the little painter around a stake; then, springing up the bluff, she was lost to my view. I could not clearly make out her features, but felt that she was not ill-looking; her form was litheness itself, and the very embodiment of wild ...

Quite fond of feeding a house on the ... which of course, which, I turned my horse's head that way and rode ... Very soon I came upon an ... of perhaps 300 large ... and a little ... cottage showed ... and ... the hedge ... the house ...

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...sang a song, the words of which I could not catch, some girl playing the air on a dulcimer that I had seen in the library (as I may call it) and another joining in with a flute.

"Dem's de nicest singin' at song. Yah, sah, my negres," said my host. I give his pronunciation of English but imperfectly, as the spelling loses the indefinable sweetness of the intonation.

"He call he shilrain he negres," lisped the fat negress, with a low chuckle, winking at me.

"Me shilrain e sir one at ze school in Paris; yah, sah, in Paris, za been fo' years zare," quickly spoke up the man. "Dem's me negres in zare singin'."

The negress chuckled again, but said no more.

"Me ouife, sah, she in Paris, too," the man added; "she come back nax year—mebbe so."

"He know varee true oo's 'is ouife," murmured the woman with a knowing smile and a shrug of her heavy shoulders.

"Wan mo ouife come 'ome f'om Paris, I bil' a new 'ouse; yah, sah, varee large manseeon," continued my host, as we arose from the table; "a chateau—mebbe so."

The singing and playing stopped short as our footfalls on the passageway announced our approach to the room in which the musicians had gathered. I heard a scampering of the negroes as they ran out through a side door with much giggling and suppressed chattering.

My host sat with me until late, telling me much about his wife and children in Paris and about the mansion he intended to build for them when they returned.

"Me wife is varee fair, varee blonde; yah, sah, she varee pale," he insisted; "an' zem shilrain, too, za varee fair—yah, sah, quite as snow!"

My bed that night was soft and sweet, faintly fragrant, as if perfumed with some rare herb or dried flower.

Next morning when I looked out of my window I saw five young persons of different and regularly graduated ages get into a small smack and sail off down the bayou. They had fishnets and other paraphernalia of well equipped fishing folk. One of them I recognized as the girl I had seen in the pirogue the evening before.

At breakfast my host was not so gay as he had been at dinner, and his face wore a look, as I thought, of vexation. The fat negress was very attentive to us, but not much was said.

When I was ready to resume my journey the man went to fetch my horse while I arranged some things in my saddle pack. As I came out of my room I was confronted by the negress.

"That man is my husband," she said in patois. "He's ashamed of me and of his children because you are here. He wishes you to consider him a white man; but he's a negro, just as much as I and the children are negroes. He's a fool."

She spoke very gently; without the least show of feeling, smiling meantime and rubbing her dead black, closely kinked hair with her left hand.

Her husband's foot sounded on the veranda, and she hurried away.

The man had brought out his own pony, and he rode with me to put me in the right road some five miles distant. All along he talked of his absent wife and children, and sighed as he remarked that it would be a long while to wait for them to return from Paris.

I offered him money when we were parting; but he refused it with a great show of polite contempt for the thought. I could not insist, and so, bidding him good-by with many thanks, I turned my horse to go.

"Dem negres," he ventured to murmur; "yah, sah, dem negres be varee please cef you gif 'em two dollaire. I mey eet to 'em varee easy—yah, sah."

I looked deep into his mild dark eyes as I handed him the coins for the negres, and wondered how the man could bear my scrutiny. There was not a flicker in his countenance.—Maurice Thompson in The Independent.

Effect of a Cobra's Bite.

The faxidermist of the Victoria museum, London, was bitten in the hand by a cobra, from which the poison bag had been extracted, while feeding it. Supposing the bite to be harmless, he took no notice of it till pain and nausea began. Then all the usual antidotes were tried without effect. The man lost the power of speech, became paralyzed in his muscular system and ceased to breathe. Artificial respiration was applied for eight hours, after which he began to breathe again and gradually regained consciousness.

Over two days he was able to tell his friends that he had been fully aware of all that was going on during the efforts to restore him, but had not been able to move a muscle or to make his feelings known. He could see and hear and feel, but not move or twitch. He was afterward attacked by high fever and inflammation of the lungs, from which he died on the Sunday following the Wednesday on which he was bitten.—Philadelphia Ledger.

The Difference.

"I remember when we were in school together so many years ago, you had a warm friend who was always praising your good qualities. What's become of him?"

"Oh, we're friends still, but I never hear of his putting himself out to glorify me."

"Then you had an enemy who was forever trying you down. What's become of him?"

"Oh, he's at it yet."—Chicago Times.

What the English Think of Our Navy.

Instead of a completely insignificant fleet America proposes to have one shown on the list we give of 369,000 tons armored, and in all of 476,000 tons displacement, costing over 55,000,000 sterling—not of dollars, but English pounds. When it is borne in mind that the programme laid before our house of commons in 1889 was to provide for 318,000 tons only, and at a cost of 21,500,000 sterling, the magnitude of the American programme may be appreciated. It may be noticed that the armored tonnage of England in 1888 was about 500,000; and of France 318,000 tons. Consequently, if America were at once to produce 369,000 tons of armor clad ships of the newest designs, she would be more powerful than France, and, with all our additions since 1888, she would approach us in a formidable way.—London Engineer.

Testing Fast Colors.

It is stated that if a piece of dyed cloth is damped and rubbed on clean white paper it will leave no stain if the dye is a "fast" one. Another test is to lay the cloth between two sheets of paper and iron it. There should be no mark in this case either. Again, if the cloth is covered with a perforated sheet of thick paper and exposed for some hours to direct sunlight, the color of the exposed parts should not fade.—New York Journal.

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