

Old Kaskaskia eBook

Old Kaskaskia

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

Contents

Old Kaskaskia eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	9
Page 4.....	11
Page 5.....	13
Page 6.....	15
Page 7.....	16
Page 8.....	18
Page 9.....	20
Page 10.....	22
Page 11.....	24
Page 12.....	25
Page 13.....	27
Page 14.....	29
Page 15.....	31
Page 16.....	33
Page 17.....	35
Page 18.....	37
Page 19.....	39
Page 20.....	41
Page 21.....	43
Page 22.....	45

Page 23.....	47
Page 24.....	49
Page 25.....	51
Page 26.....	53
Page 27.....	55
Page 28.....	57
Page 29.....	59
Page 30.....	61
Page 31.....	63
Page 32.....	65
Page 33.....	67
Page 34.....	69
Page 35.....	70
Page 36.....	71
Page 37.....	72
Page 38.....	74
Page 39.....	75
Page 40.....	77
Page 41.....	79
Page 42.....	81
Page 43.....	83
Page 44.....	85
Page 45.....	87
Page 46.....	89
Page 47.....	91
Page 48.....	93

Page 49.....	95
Page 50.....	97
Page 51.....	99
Page 52.....	101
Page 53.....	103
Page 54.....	105
Page 55.....	107
Page 56.....	108
Page 57.....	109
Page 58.....	111
Page 59.....	113
Page 60.....	115
Page 61.....	117
Page 62.....	119
Page 63.....	120

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
PART FIRST.		1
PART SECOND.		17
PART THIRD.		33
PART FOURTH.		50

Page 1

PART FIRST.

The bonfire of st. John.

Early in the century, on a summer evening, Jean Lozier stood on the bluff looking at Kaskaskia. He loved it with the homesick longing of one who is born for towns and condemned to the fields. Moses looking into the promised land had such visions and ideals as this old lad cherished. Jean was old in feeling, though not yet out of his teens. The training-masters of life had got him early, and found under his red sunburn and knobby joints, his black eyes and bushy eyebrows, the nature that passionately aspires. The town of Kaskaskia was his sweetheart. It tantalized him with advantage and growth while he had to turn the clods of the upland. The long peninsula on which Kaskaskia stood, between the Okaw and the Mississippi rivers, lay below him in the glory of sunset. Southward to the point spread lands owned by the parish, and known as the common pasture. Jean could see the church of the Immaculate Conception and the tower built for its ancient bell, the convent northward, and all the pleasant streets bowered in trees. The wharf was crowded with vessels from New Orleans and Cahokia, and the arched stone bridge across the Okaw was a thoroughfare of hurrying carriages.

The road at the foot of the bluff, more than a hundred feet below Jean, showed its white flint belt in distant laps and stretches through northern foliage. It led to the territorial governor's country-seat of Elvirade; thence to Fort Chartres and Prairie du Rocher; so on to Cahokia, where it met the great trails of the far north. The road also swarmed with carriages and riders on horses, all moving toward Colonel Pierre Menard's house. Jean could not see his seignior's chimneys for the trees and the dismantled and deserted earthworks of Fort Gage. The fort had once protected Kaskaskia, but in these early peaceful times of the Illinois Territory it no longer maintained a garrison.

The lad guessed what was going on; those happy Kaskaskians, the fine world, were having a ball at Colonel Menard's. Summer and winter they danced, they made fetes, they enjoyed life. When the territorial Assembly met in this capital of the West, he had often frosted himself late into the winter night, watching the lights and listening to the music in Kaskaskia. Jean Lozier knew every bit of its history. The parish priest, Father Olivier, who came to hear him confess because he could not leave his grandfather, had told it to him. There was a record book transmitted from priest to priest from the earliest settlement of Cascasquia of the Illinois. Jean loved the story of young D'Artaguet, whom the boatmen yet celebrated in song. On moonlight nights, when the Mississippi showed its broad sheet four miles away across the level plain, he sometimes fooled himself with thinking he could see the fleet of young soldiers passing down the river, bearing the French flag; phantoms proceeding again to their tragedy and the Indian stake.

Page 2

He admired the seat where his seignior lived in comfort and great hospitality, but all the crowds pressing to Pierre Menard's house seemed to him to have less wisdom than the single man who met and passed them and crossed the bridge into Kaskaskia. The vesper bell rung, breaking its music in echoes against the sandstone bosom of the bluff. Red splendors faded from the sky, leaving a pearl-gray bank heaped over the farther river. Still Jean watched Kaskaskia.

"But the glory remains when the light fades away,"

he sung to himself. He had caught the line from some English boatmen.

"Ye dog, ye dog, where are you, ye dog?" called a voice from the woods behind him.

"Here, grandfather," answered Jean, starting like a whipped dog. He took his red cap from under his arm, sighing, and slouched away from the bluff edge, the coarse homespun which he wore revealing knots and joints in his work-hardened frame.

"Ye dog, am I to have my supper to-night?"

"Yes, grandfather."

But Jean took one more look at the capital of his love, which he had never entered, and for which he was unceasingly homesick. The governor's carriage dashed along the road beneath him, with a military escort from Fort Chartres. He felt no envy of such state. He would have used the carriage to cross the bridge.

"If I but lived in Kaskaskia!" whispered Jean.

The man on horseback, who met and passed the ball-goers, rode through Kaskaskia's twinkling streets in the pleasant glow of twilight. Trade had not reached its day's end. The crack of long whips could be heard, flourished over oxen yoked by the horns, or three or four ponies hitched tandem, all driven without reins, and drawing huge bales of merchandise. Few of the houses were more than one story high, but they had a sumptuous spread, each in its own square of lawn, orchard, and garden. They were built of stone, or of timbers filled in with stone and mortar.

The rider turned several corners, and stopped in front of a small house which displayed the wares of a penny-trader in its window.

From the open one of the two front doors a black boy came directly out to take the bridle; and behind him skipped a wiry shaven person, whose sleek crown was partly covered by a Madras handkerchief, the common headgear of humble Kaskaskians. His feet clogged their lightness with a pair of the wooden shoes manufactured for slaves. A sleeved blanket, made with a hood which lay back on his shoulders, almost covered him, and was girdled at the waist by a knotted cord.

“Here I am again, Father Baby,” hailed the rider, alighting.

“Welcome home, doctor. What news from Fort Chartres?”

“No news. My friend the surgeon is doing well. He need not have sent for me; but your carving doctor is a great coward when it comes to physicking himself.”

Page 3

They entered the shop, while the slave led the horse away; and no customers demanding the trading friar's attention, he followed his lodger to an inner room, having first lighted candles in his wooden sconces. Their yellow lustre showed the tidiness of the shop, and the penny merchandise arranged on shelves with that exactness which has been thought peculiar to unmarried women. Father Baby was a scandal to the established confessor of the parish, and the joke of the ungodly. Some said he had been a dancing-master before he entered the cloister, and it was no wonder he turned out a renegade and took to trading. Others declared that he had no right to the gray capote, and his tonsure was a natural loss of hair; in fact, that he never had been a friar at all. But in Kaskaskia nobody took him seriously, and Father Olivier was not severe upon him. Custom made his harlequin antics a matter of course; though Indians still paused opposite his shop and grinned at sight of a long-gown peddling. His religious practices were regular and severe, and he laid penance on himself for all the cheating he was able to accomplish.

"I rode down from Elvirade with Governor Edwards," said the doctor. "He and all Kaskaskia appear to be going to Colonel Menard's to-night."

"Yes, I stood and counted the carriages: the Bonds, the Morrisons, the Vigos, the Sauciers, the Edgars, the Joneses"—

"Has anything happened these three days past?" inquired the doctor, breaking off this list of notable Kaskaskians.

"Oh, many things have happened. But first here is your billet."

The young man broke the wafer of his invitation and unfolded the paper.

"It is a dancing-party," he remarked. His nose took an aquiline curve peculiar to him. The open sheet, as he held it, showed the name of "Dr. Dunlap" written on the outside. He leaned against a high black mantel.

"You will want hot shaving-water and your best ruffled shirt," urged the friar.

"I never dance," said the other indifferently.

"And you do well not to," declared Father Baby, with some contemptuous impatience. "A man who shakes like a load of hay should never dance. If I had carried your weight, I could have been a holier man."

Dr. Dunlap laughed, and struck his boot with his riding-whip.

"Don't deceive yourself, worthy father. The making of an abbot was not in you. You old rascal, I am scarcely in the house, and there you stand all of a tremble for your jig."

Father Baby's death's-head face wrinkled itself with expectant smiles. He shook off his wooden shoes and whirled upon one toe.

The doctor went into another room, his own apartment in the friar's small house. His office fronted this, and gave him a door to the street. Its bottles and jars and iron mortar and the vitreous slab on which he rolled pills were all lost in twilight now. There were many other doctors' offices in Kaskaskia, but this was the best equipped one, and was the lair of a man who had not only been trained in Europe, but had sailed around the entire world. Dr. Dunlap's books, some of them in board covers, made a show on his shelves. He had an articulated skeleton, and ignorant Kaskaskians would declare that they had seen it whirl past his windows many a night to the music of his violin.

Page 4

"What did you say had happened since I went away?" he inquired, sauntering back and tuning his fiddle as he came.

"There's plenty of news," responded Father Baby. "Antoine Lamarche's cow fell into the Mississippi."

Dr. Dunlap uttered a note of contempt.

"It would go wandering off where the land crumbles daily with that current setting down from the northwest against us; and Antoine was far from sneering in your cold-blooded English manner when he got the news."

"He tore his hair and screamed in your warm-blooded French manner?"

"That he did."

The doctor stood in the bar of candle-light which one of the shop sconces extended across the room, and lifted the violin to his neck. He was so large that all his gestures had a ponderous quality. His dress was disarranged by riding, and his blond skin was pricked through by the untidy growth of a three-days' beard, yet he looked very handsome.

Dr. Dunlap stood in the light, but Father Baby chose the dark for those ecstatic antics into which the fiddle threw him. He leaped high from the floor at the first note, and came down into a jig of the most perfect execution. The pat of his bare soles was exquisitely true. He raised the gown above his ankles, and would have seemed to float but for his response in sound. Yet through his most rapturous action he never ceased to be conscious of the shop. A step on the sill would break the violin's charm in the centre of a measure.

But this time no step broke it, and the doctor kept his puppet friar going until his own arm began to weary. The tune ended, and Father Baby paused, deprived of the ether in which he had been floating.

Dr. Dunlap sat down, nursing the instrument on his crossed knees while he altered its pitch.

"Are you not going to Colonel Menard's at all?" inquired the friar.

"It would be a great waste of good dancing not to," said the doctor lazily. "But you haven't told me who else has lost a cow or had an increase of goats while I was away."

"The death of even a beast excites pity in me."

"Yes, you are a holy man. You would rather skin a live Indian than a dead sheep."

The doctor tried his violin, and was lifting it again to position when Father Baby remarked:—

“They doubtless told you on the road that a party has come through from Post Vincennes.”

“Now who would doubtless tell me that?”

“The governor’s suite, since they must have known it. The party was in almost as soon as you left. Perhaps,” suggested the friar, taking a crafty revenge for much insolence, “nobody would mention it to you on account of Monsieur Zhone’s sister.”

The violin bow sunk on the strings with a squeak.

“What sister?”

“The only sister of Monsieur Reece Zhone, Mademoiselle Zhone, from Wales. She came to Kaskaskia with the party from Post Vincennes.”

Page 5

On Dr. Dunlap's face the unshorn beard developed like thorns on a mask of wax. The spirit of manly beauty no longer infused it.

"Why didn't you tell me this at first?" he asked roughly.

"Is the name of Zhone so pleasant to you?" hinted the shrugging friar. "But take an old churchman's advice now, my son, and make up your quarrel with the lawyer. There will be occasion. That pretty young thing has crossed the sea to die. I heard her cough."

The doctor's voice was husky as he attempted to inquire,—

"Did you hear what she was called?"

"Mademoiselle Mareea Zhone."

The young man sagged forward over his violin. Father Baby began to realize that his revel was over, and reluctantly stuck his toes again into his wooden shoes.

"Will you have something to eat and drink before you start?"

"I don't want anything to eat, and I am not going to Colonel Menard's to-night."

"But, my son," reasoned the staring friar, "are you going to quit your victuals and all good company because one more Zhone has come to town, and that one such a small, helpless creature? Mademoiselle Saucier will be at Menard's."

Dr. Dunlap wiped his forehead. He, and not the cool friar, appeared to have been the dancer. A chorus of slaves singing on some neighboring gallery could be heard in the pause of the violin. Beetles, lured by the shop candles, began to explore the room where the two men were, bumping themselves against the walls and buzzing their complaints.

"A man is nothing but a young beast until he is past twenty-five years old," said Dr. Dunlap.

Father Baby added his own opinion to this general remark.—

"Very often he is nothing but an old beast when you catch him past seventy. But it all depends on what kind of a man he is."

"Friar, do you believe in marriage?"

"How could I believe in marriage?"

"But do you believe in it for other people?"

“The Church has always held it to be a sacred institution.”

Dr. Dunlap muttered a combination of explosive words which he had probably picked up from sailors, making the churchman cross himself. He spoke out, with a reckless laugh:

“I married as soon as I came of age, and here I am, ruined for my prime by that act.”

“What!” exclaimed Father Baby, setting his hands on his hips, “you a man of family, and playing bachelor among the women of Kaskaskia?”

“Oh, I have no wife now. She finally died, thank Heaven. If she had only died a year sooner! But nothing matters now.”

“My son,” observed Father Baby severely, “Satan has you in his net. You utter profane words, you rail against institutions sanctioned by the Church, and you have desired the death of a human being. Repent and do penance”—

“You have a customer, friar,” sneered the young man, lifting his head to glance aside at a figure entering the shop. “Vigo’s idiot slave boy is waiting to be cheated.”

Page 6

"By my cappo!" whispered Father Baby, a cunning look netting wrinkles over his lean face, "you remind me of the bad shilling I have laid by me to pass on that nigger. O Lamb of mercy,"—he turned and hastily plumped on his knees before a sacred picture on the wall,—“I will, in expiation for passing that shilling, say twelve paters and twelve aves at the foot of the altar of thy Virgin Mother, or I will abstain from food a whole day in thy honor.”

Having offered this compromise, Father Baby sprung with a cheerful eagerness to deal with Vigo's slave boy.

The doctor sat still, his ears closed to the chatter in the shop. His bitter thoughts centred on the new arrival in Kaskaskia, on her brother, on all her family.

She herself, unconscious that he inhabited the same hemisphere with her, was standing up for the reel in Pierre Menard's house. The last carriage had driven to the tall flight of entrance steps, discharged its load, and parted with its horses to the huge stone stable under the house. The mingling languages of an English and French society sounded all around her. The girl felt bewildered, as if she had crossed ocean and forest to find, instead of savage wilderness, an enchanted English county full of French country estates. Names and dignitaries crowded her memory.

A great clear glass, gilt-framed and divided into three panels, stood over the drawing-room mantel. It reflected crowds of animated faces, as the dance began, crossing and recrossing or running the reel in a vista of rooms, the fan-lights around the hall door and its open leaves disclosing the broad gallery and the dusky world of trees outside; it reflected cluster on cluster of wax-lights. To this day the great glass stands there, and, spotless as a clear conscience, waits upon the future. It has held the image of Lafayette and many an historic companion of his.

On the other side of the hall, in the dining-room, stood a carved mahogany sideboard holding decanters and glasses. In this quiet retreat elderly people amused themselves at card-tables. Apart from them, but benignantly ready to chat with everybody, sat the parish priest; for every gathering of his flock was to him a call for social ministration.

A delicious odor of supper escaped across a stone causeway from the kitchen, and all the Menard negroes, in their best clothes, were collected on the causeway to serve it. Through open doors they watched the flying figures, and the rocking of many a dusky heel kept time to the music.

The first dance ended in some slight confusion. A little cry went through the rooms: "Rice Jones's sister has fainted!" "Mademoiselle Zhone has fainted!" But a few minutes later she was sitting on a gallery chair, leaning against her brother and trying to laugh through her coughing, and around her stood all girlish Kaskaskia, and the matrons also, as well as the black maid Colonel Menard had sent with hartshorn.

Page 7

Father Olivier brought her a glass of wine; Mrs. Edwards fanned her; the stars shone through the pecan-trees, and all the loveliness of this new hemisphere and home and the kindness of the people made her close her eyes to keep the tears from running out. The separation of the sick from all healthy mankind had never so hurt her. Something was expected of her, and she was not equal to it. She felt death's mark branding in, and her family spoke of her recovery! What folly it was to come into this gay little world where she had no rights at all! Maria Jones wondered why she had not died at sea. To be floating in that infinity of blue water would be better than this. She pictured herself in the weighted sack,—for we never separate ourselves from our bodies,—and tender forgiveness covering all her mistakes as the multitude of waters covered her.

"I will not dance again," laughed Maria. Her brother Rice could feel her little figure tremble against him. "It is ridiculous to try."

"We must have you at Elvirade," said the governor's wife soothingly. "I will not let the young people excite you to too much dancing there."

"Oh, Mrs. Edwards!" exclaimed Peggy Morrison. "I never do dance quite as much anywhere else, or have quite as good a time, as I do at Elvirade."

"Hear these children slander me when I try to set an example of sobriety in the Territory!"

"You shall not want a champion, Mrs. Edwards," said Rice Jones. "When I want to be in grave good company, I always make a pilgrimage to Elvirade."

"One ought to be grave good company enough for himself," retorted Peggy, looking at Rice Jones with jealous aggressiveness. She was a lean, sandy girl, at whom he seldom glanced, and her acrid girlhood fought him. Rice Jones was called the handsomest man in Kaskaskia, but his personal beauty was nothing to the ambitious force of his presence. The parted hair fitted his broad, high head like a glove. His straight nose extended its tip below the nostrils and shadowed the long upper lip. He had a long chin, beautifully shaped and shaven clean as marble, a mouth like a scarlet line, and a very round, smooth throat, shown by his flaring collar. His complexion kept a cool whiteness which no exposure tanned, and this made striking the blackness of his eyes and hair.

"Please will you all go back into the drawing-room?" begged Maria. "My brother will bring me a shawl, and then I shall need nothing else."

"But may I sit by you, mademoiselle?"

It was Angelique Saucier leaning down to make this request, but Peggy Morrison laughed.

“I warn you against Angelique, Miss Jones. She is the man-slayer of Kaskaskia. They all catch her like measles. If she stays out here, they will sit in a row along the gallery edge, and there will be no more dancing.”

“Do not observe what Peggy says, mademoiselle. We are relations, and so we take liberties.”

Page 8

"But no one must give up dancing," urged Maria.

They arranged for her in spite of protest, however. Rice muffled her in a shawl, Mademoiselle Saucier sat down at her right side and Peggy Morrison at her left, and the next dance began.

Maria Jones had repressed and nestling habits. She curled herself into a very small compass in the easy gallery chair, and looked off into the humid mysteries of the June night. Colonel Menard's substantial slave cabins of logs and stone were in sight, and up the bluff near the house was a sort of donjon of stone, having only one door letting into its base.

"That's where Colonel Menard puts his bad Indians," said Peggy Morrison, following Maria's glance.

"It is simply a little fortress for times of danger," said Mademoiselle Saucier, laughing. "It is also the colonel's bureau for valuable papers, and the dairy is underneath."

"Well, you French understand one another's housekeeping better than we English do; and may be the colonel has been explaining these things to you."

"But are there any savage men about here now?"

"Oh, plenty of them," declared Peggy. "We have some Pottawatomies and Kickapoos and Kaskaskias always with us,—like the poor. Nobody is afraid of them, though. Colonel Menard has them all under his thumb, and if nobody else could manage them he could. My father says they will give their furs to him for nothing rather than sell them to other people. You must see that Colonel Menard is very fascinating, but I don't think he charms Angelique as he does the Indians."

Mademoiselle Saucier's smile excused anything Peggy might say. Maria thought this French girl the most beautiful woman she had ever seen. The waist of her clinging white gown ended under the curve of her girlish breasts, and face, neck, and arms blossomed out with the polish of flower-petals. Around her throat she wore gold beads suspending a cross. Her dark hair, which had an elusive bluish mist, like grapes, was pinned high with a gold comb. Her oval face was full of a mature sympathy unusual in girls. Maria had thought at first she would rather be alone on the gallery, but this reposeful and tender French girl at once became a necessity to her.

"Peggy," said Angelique, "I hear Jules Vigo inquiring for you in the hall."

"Then I shall take to the roof," responded Peggy.

"Have some regard for Jules."

"You may have, but I shan't. I will not dance with a kangaroo."

"Do you not promise dances ahead?" inquired Maria.

"No, our mothers do not permit that," answered Angelique. "It is sometimes best to sit still and look on."

"That means, Miss Jones," explained Peggy, "that she has set a fashion to give the rest of the girls a chance. I wouldn't be so mealy-mouthed about cutting them out. But Angelique has been ruined by waiting so much on her tante-gra'mere. When you bear an old woman's temper from dawn till dusk, you soon forget you're a girl in your teens."

Page 9

"Don't abuse the little tante-gra'mere."

"She gets praise enough at our house. Mother says she's a discipline that keeps Angelique from growing vain. Thank Heaven, we don't need such discipline in our family."

"It is my father's grand-aunt," explained Angelique to Maria, "and when you see her, mademoiselle, you will be surprised to find how well she bears her hundred years, though she has not been out of her bed since I can remember. Mademoiselle, I hope I never shall be very old."

Maria gave Angelique the piercing stare which unconsciously belongs to large black eyes set in a hectic, nervous face.

"Would you die now?"

"I feel always," said the French girl, "that we stand facing the mystery every minute, and sometimes I should like to know it."

"Now hear that," said Peggy. "I'm no Catholic, but I will say for the mother superior that she never put that in your head at the convent. It is wicked to say you want to die."

"But I did not say it. The mystery of being without any body,—that is what I want to know. It is good to meditate on death."

"It isn't comfortable," said Peggy. "It makes me have chills down my back."

She glanced behind her through the many-paned open window into the dining-room. Three little girls and a boy were standing there, so close to the sill that their breath had touched Peggy's neck. They were Colonel Menard's motherless children. A black maid was with them, holding the youngest by the hand. They were whispering in French under cover of the music. French was the second mother tongue of every Kaskaskia girl, and Peggy heard what they said by merely taking her attention from her companions.

"I will get Jean Lozier to beat Monsieur Reece Zhone. Jean Lozier is such an obliging creature he will do anything I ask him."

"But, Odile," argued the boy, with some sense of equity, "she is not yet engaged to our family."

"And how shall we get her engaged to us if Monsieur Reece Zhone must hang around her? Papa says he is the most promising young man in the Territory. If I were a boy, Pierre Menard, I would do something with him."

“What would you do?”

“I would shoot him. He has duels.”

“But my father might punish me for that.”

“Very well, chicken-heart. Let Mademoiselle Saucier go, then. But I will tell you this: there is no one else in Kaskaskia that I will have for a second mother.”

“Yes, we have all chosen her,” owned Pierre, “but it seems to me papa ought to make the marriage.”

“But she would not know we children were willing to have her. If you did something to stop Monsieur Zhone’s courtship, she would then know.”

“Why do you not go out on the gallery now and tell her we want her?” exclaimed Pierre.

“The colonel says it is best to be straightforward in any matter of business.”

Page 10

“Pierre, it is plain to be seen that you do not know how to deal with young ladies. They like best to be fought over. It is not proper to *tell* her we are willing to have her. The way to do is to drive off the other suitors.”

“But there are so many. Tante Isidore says all the young men in Kaskaskia and the officers left at Fort Chartres are her suitors. Monsieur Reece Zhone is the worst one, though. I might ask him to go out to papa’s office with me to-night, but we shall be sent to bed directly after supper. Besides, here sits his sister who was carried out fainting.”

“While he is in our house we are obliged to be polite to him,” said Odile. “But if I were a boy, I would, some time, get on my pony and ride into Kaskaskia”—The conspiring went on in whispers. The children’s heads bobbed nearer each other, so Peggy overheard no more.

It was the very next evening, the evening of St. John’s Day, that young Pierre rode into Kaskaskia beside his father to see the yearly bonfire lighted. Though many of the old French customs had perished in a mixing of nationalities, St. John’s Day was yet observed; the Latin race drawing the Saxon out to participate in the festival, as so often happens wherever they dwell.

The bonfire stood in the middle of the street fronting the church. It was an octagonal pyramid, seven or eight feet high, built of dry oak and pecan limbs and logs, with straw at all the corners.

The earth yet held a red horizon rim around its dusky surface. Some half-distinct swallows were swarming into the church belfry, as silent as bats; but people swarming on the ground below made a cheerful noise, like a fair. The St. John bonfire was not a religious ceremony, but its character lifted it above the ordinary burning of brushwood at night. The most dignified Kaskaskians, heretics as well as papists, came out to see it lighted; the pagan spell of Midsummer Night more or less affecting them all.

Red points appeared at the pile’s eight corners and sprung up flame, showing the eight lads who were bent down blowing them; showing the church front, and the steps covered with little negroes good-naturedly fighting and crowding one another off; showing the crosses of slate and wood and square marble tombs in the graveyard, and a crowd of honest faces, red kerchiefs, gray cappos, and wooden shoes pressing close around it. Children raced, shouting in the light, perpetuating unconsciously the fire-worship of Asia by leaping across outer edges of the blaze. It rose and showed the bowered homes of Kaskaskia, the tavern at an angle of the streets, with two Indians, in leggins and hunting-shirts, standing on the gallery as emotionless spectators. It illuminated fields and woods stretching southward, and little weeds beside the road whitened with dust. The roaring and crackling heat drove venturesome urchins back.



Father Baby could be seen established behind a temporary counter, conveniently near the pile, yet discreetly removed from the church front. Thirsty rustics and flatboat men crowded to his kegs and clinked his glasses. The firelight shone on his crown which was bare to the sky. Father Olivier passed by, receiving submissive obeisance from the renegade, but returning him a shake of the head.

Page 11

Girls slipped back and forth through the church gate. Now their laughing faces grouped three or four together in the bonfire light. In a moment, when their mothers turned to follow them with the eye, they were nowhere to be seen. Perhaps outside the beacon's glare hobgoblins and fairies danced. Midsummer Night tricks and the freemasonry of youth were at work.

People watched one another across that pile with diverse aims. Rice Jones had his sister on his arm, wrapped in a Spanish mantilla. Her tiny face, with a rose above one ear, was startling against this black setting. They stood near Father Baby's booth; and while Peggy Morrison waited at the church gate to signal Maria, she resented Rice Jones's habitual indifference to her existence. He saw Angelique Saucier beside her mother, and the men gathering to her, among them an officer from Fort Chartres. They troubled him little; for he intended in due time to put these fellows all out of his way. There were other matters as vital to Rice Jones. Young Pierre Menard hovered vainly about him. The moment Maria left him a squad of country politicians surrounded their political leader, and he did some effectual work for his party by the light of the St. John fire.

Darkness grew outside the irregular radiance of that pile, and the night concert of insects could be heard as an interlude between children's shouts and the hum of voices. Peggy Morrison's lifted finger caught Maria's glance. It was an imperative gesture, meaning haste and secrecy, and separation from her brother Rice. Maria laughed and shook her head wistfully. The girlish pastimes of Midsummer Night were all done for her. She thought of nights in her own wild county of Merionethshire, when she had run, palpitating like a hare, to try some spell or charm which might reveal the future to her; and now it was revealed.

An apparition from the other hemisphere came upon her that instant. She saw a man standing by the friar's booth looking at her. What his eyes said she could not, through her shimmering and deadly faintness, perceive. How could he be here in Kaskaskia? The shock of seeing him annihilated physical weakness in her. She stood on limbs of stone. Her hand on her brother's arm did not tremble; but a pinched blueness spread about her nostrils and eye sockets, and dented sudden hollows in her temples.

Dr. Dunlap took a step toward her. At that, she looked around for some place to hide in, the animal instinct of flight arising first, and darted from her brother into the graveyard. Rice beheld this freak with quizzical surprise, but he had noted the disappearance of more than one maid through that gate, and was glad to have Maria with them.

"Come on," whispered Peggy, seizing her. "Clarice Vigo has gone to fetch Angelique, and then we shall be ready."

Behind the church, speaking all together like a chorus of blackbirds, the girls were clustered, out of the bonfire's light. French and English voices debated.

Page 12

"Oh, I wouldn't do such a thing."

"Your mother did it when she was a girl."

"But the young men may find it out and follow."

"Then we'll run."

"I'm afraid to go so far in the dark."

"What, to the old Jesuit College?"

"It isn't very dark, and our old Dinah will go with us; she's waiting outside the fence."

"But my father says none of our Indians are to be trusted in the dark."

"What a slander on our Indians!"

"But some of them are here; they always come to the St. John bonfire."

"All the men in Kaskaskia are here, too. We could easily give an alarm."

"Anyhow, nothing will hurt us."

"What are you going to do, girls?" inquired the voice of Angelique Saucier. The whole scheme took a foolish tinge as she spoke. They were ashamed to tell her what they were going to do.

Peggy Morrison drew near and whispered, "We want to go to the old Jesuit College and sow hempseed."

"Hempseed?"

"Yes. You do it on Midsummer Night."

"Will it grow the better for that?" asked the puzzled French girl.

"We don't want it to grow, you goose. We want to try our fortunes."

"It was Peggy Morrison's plan," spoke out Clarice Vigo.

"It's an old English custom," declared Peggy, "as old as burning brushwood."

"Would you like to observe this old English custom, Mademoiselle Zhone?" questioned Angelique.

“Yes, let us hurry on.”

“I think myself it would be charming.” The instant Angelique thought this, Peggy Morrison’s plan lost foolishness, and gained in all eyes the dignity of adventure. “But we have no hempseed.”

“Yes, we have,” responded Peggy. “Our Dinah is there outside the fence with her lap full of it.”

“And how do you sow it?”

“You scatter it and say, ‘Hempseed, I sow thee,—hempseed, I sow thee; let him who is to marry me come after me and mow thee.’”

An abashed titter ran through girlish Kaskaskia.

“And what happens then?”

“Then you look back and see somebody following you with a scythe.”

A suppressed squeal ran through girlish Kaskaskia.

“Now if we are going, we ought to go, or it will all be found out,” observed Peggy with decision.

They had only to follow the nearest cross-street to reach the old Jesuit College; but some were for making a long detour into the common fields to avoid being seen, while others were for passing close by the bonfire in a solid squad. Neither Peggy nor Angelique could reconcile these factions, and Peggy finally crossed the fence and led the way in silence. The majority hung back until they were almost belated. Then, with a venturesome rush, they scaled the fence and piled themselves upon Dinah, who was quietly trying to deal out a handful of hempseed to every passer; and some of them squalled in the fear of man at her uplifted paw. Then, shying away from the light, they entered a street which was like a canal of shadow. The houses bounding it were all dark, except the steep roof slopes of the southern row, which seemed to palpitate in the bonfire’s flicker.

Page 13

Finding themselves away from their families in this deserted lane, the girls took to their heels, and left like sheep a perceptible little cloud of dust smoking in the gloom behind them.

Beyond the last house and alongside the Okaw river stood the ruined building with gaping entrances. The girls stumbled among irregular hummocks which in earlier days had been garden beds and had supplied vegetables to the brethren. The last commandant of Kaskaskia, who occupied the Jesuits' house as a fortress, had complained to his superiors of a leaky and broken roof. There was now no roof to complain of, and the upper floors had given way in places, leaving the stone shell open to the sky. It had once been an imposing structure, costing the Jesuits forty thousand piasters. The uneven stone floor was also broken, showing gaps into vaults beneath; fearful spots to be avoided, which the custom of darkness soon revealed to all eyes. Partitions yet standing held stained and ghastly smears of rotted plaster.

The river's gurgle and rush could be distinctly heard here, while the company around the bonfire were lost in distance.

Angelique had given her arm to Maria Jones in the flight down the road; but when they entered the college Maria slipped away from her. A blacker spot in an angle of the walls and a smothered cough hinted to the care-taker where the invalid girl might be found, but where she also wished to be let alone.

Now a sob rising to a scream, as if the old building had found voice and protested against invasion, caused a recoil of the invaders. Girls brought up in neighborly relations with the wilderness, however, could be only a moment terrified by the screech-owl. But at no previous time in its history, not even when it was captured as a fort, had the Jesuit College inclosed such a cluster of wildly beating hearts. Had light been turned on the group, it would have shown every girl shaking her hand at every other girl and hissing, "S—s—sh!"

"Girls, be still."

"Girls, do be still."

"Girls, if you won't be still, somebody will come."

"Clarice Vigo, why don't you stop your noise?"

"Why do you not stop yours, mademoiselle?"

"I haven't spoken a word but sh! I have been trying my best to quiet them all."

"So have I."

“Ellen Bond fell over me. She was scared to death by a screech-owl!”

“It was you fell over me, Miss Betsey.”

“If we are going to try the charm,” announced Peggy Morrison, “we must begin. You had better all get in a line behind me and do just as I do. You can’t see me very well, but you can scatter the hempseed and say what I say. And it must be done soberly, or Satan may come mowing at our heels.”

From a distant perch to which he had removed himself, the screech-owl again remonstrated. Silence settled like the slow fluttering downward of feathers on every throbbing figure. The stir of a slipper on the pavement, or the catching of a breath, became the only tokens of human presence in the old college. These postulants of fortune in their half-visible state once more bore some resemblance to the young ladies who had stood in decorum answering compliments between the figures of the dance the night before.

Page 14

On cautious shoe leather the march began. One voice, two voices, and finally a low chorus intoned and repeated,—

“Hempseed, I sow thee,—hempseed, I sow thee; let him who is to marry me come after me and mow thee.”

Peggy led her followers out of the east door towards the river; wheeling when she reached a little wind-row of rotted timbers. This chaos had once stood up in order, forming makeshift bastions for the fort, and supporting cannon. Such boards and posts as the negroes had not carried off lay now along the river brink, and the Okaw was steadily undermining that brink as it had already undermined and carried away the Jesuits' spacious landing.

Glancing over their shoulders with secret laughter for that fearful gleam of scythes which was to come, the girls marched back; and their leader's abrupt halt jarred the entire line. A man stood in the opposite entrance. They could not see him in outline, but his unmistakable hat showed against a low-lying sky.

“Who's there?” demanded Peggy Morrison.

The intruder made no answer.

They could not see a scythe about him, but to every girl he took a different form. He was Billy Edgar, or Jules Vigo, or Rice Jones, or any other gallant of Kaskaskia, according to the varying faith which beating hearts sent to the eyes that saw him.

The spell of silence did not last. A populous roost invaded by a fox never resounded with more squalling than did the old Jesuit College. The girls swished around corners and tumbled over the vegetable beds. Angelique groped for Maria, not daring to call her name, and caught and ran with some one until they neared the light, when she found it was the dumpy little figure of her cousin Clarice.

As soon as the girls were gone, the man who had broken up their hempseed sowing advanced a few steps on the pavement. He listened, and that darker shadow in the angle of the walls was perceptible to him.

“Are you here?”

“I am here,” answered Maria.

Rice Jones's sister could not sit many minutes in the damp old building without being missed by the girls and her family. His voice trembled. She could hear his heart beating with large strokes. His presence surrounded her like an atmosphere, and in the darkness she clutched her own breast to keep the rapture from physically hurting her.

“Maria, did you know that my wife was dead?”

“Oh, James, no!”

Her whisper was more than a caress. It was surrender and peace and forgiveness. It was the snapping of a tension which had held her two years.

“Oh, James, when I saw you to-night I did not know what to do. I have not been well. You have borne it so much better than I have.”

“I thought,” said Dr. Dunlap, “it would be best for us to talk matters over.”

She caught her breath. What was the matter with this man? Once he had lain at her feet and kissed the hem of her garment. He was hers. She had never relinquished her ownership of him even when her honor had constrained her to live apart from him. Whose could he be but hers?

Page 15

Dr. Dunlap had thought twenty-four hours on what he would say at this unavoidable meeting, and he acknowledged in a business-like tone,—

“I did not treat you right, Maria. My wretched entanglement when I was a boy ruined everything. But when I persuaded you into a secret marriage with me, I meant to make it right when the other one died. And you found it out and left me. If I treated you badly, you treated me badly, too.”

He knew the long chin of the Joneses. He could imagine Maria lifting her slim chin. She did not speak.

“I came over here to begin life again. When you ran off to your friends, what was there for me to do but take to the navy again or sail for America? Kaskaskia was the largest post in the West; so I came here. And here I found your family, that I thought were in another Territory. And from the first your brother has been my enemy.”

His sulky complaint brought no response in words; but a strangling sob broke all restraint in the angle of the wall.

“Maria,” exclaimed the startled doctor, “don’t do that. You excite yourself.”

In her paroxysm she rolled down on the stone floor, and he stooped in consternation and picked her up. He rested his foot on the ledge where she had sat, and held her upon his knee. She struggled for breath until he thought she would die, and the sweat of terror stood on his forehead. When he had watched her by the bonfire, his medical knowledge gave her barely two months of life; and within those two months, he had also told himself bitterly then, Rice Jones could marry Angelique Saucier; but to have her die alone with him in this old building was what he could not contemplate.

Scarcely conscious of his own action, the doctor held her in positions which helped her, and finally had the relief of hearing her draw a free breath as she lapsed against his shoulder. Even a counterfeit tie of marriage has its power. He had lived with this woman, she believing herself his lawful wife. Their half-year together had been the loftiest period of his life. The old feeling, smothered as it was under resentment and a new passion, stirred in him. He strained her to his breast and called her the pet names he used to call her. The diminutive being upon his knee heard them without response. When she could speak she whispered,—

“Set me down.”

Dr. Dunlap moved his foot and placed her again on the stone ledge. She leaned against the wall. There was a ringing in her ears. The unpardonable sin in man is not his ceasing to love you. That may be a mortal pain, but it has dignity. It is the fearful

judgment of seeing in a flash that you have wasted your life on what was not worth the waste.

“Now if you are composed, Maria,” said Dr. Dunlap hurriedly, “I will say what I followed you here to say. The best thing for us to do, now that I am free to do it, is to have the marriage ceremony repeated over us and made valid. I am ready and willing. The only drawback is the prejudice of your family against me.”

Page 16

A magnanimous tone in his voice betrayed eagerness to put the Joneses under obligations to him.

“Dr. Dunlap,”—when Maria had spoken his name she panted awhile,—“when I found out I was not your wife, and left you, I began then to cough. But now—we can never be married.”

“Why, Maria?”

She began those formidable sounds again, and he held his breath.

Somebody in the distance began playing a violin. Its music mingled with the sounds which river-inclosed lands and the adjacent dwellings of men send up in a summer night.

“You know,” said Maria when she could speak, “how we deceived my people in Wales and in London. None of my family here know anything about that marriage.”

Another voice outside the walls, keen with anxiety, shouted her name. Dr. Dunlap hurried a few yards from her, then stopped and held his ground. A man rushed into the old building regardless of the broken floor.

“Maria, are you here?”

“Yes, brother Rice.”

She was leaving her corner to meet him. The doctor could see that she sunk to her hands and knees with weakness and helped herself up by the wall.

“Where are you? Is any one with you?”

As they met in the darkness the brother felt her hands and trembling figure.

“What possessed you to sit down here in this damp old place? You are clammy as stone. Poor little thing, were you frightened? What have you been doing?”

“I have been talking,” replied Maria.

The doctor’s heart labored like a drum. Perhaps she would tell it all out to Rice Jones now.

The same acrid restraint may be heard in a mother’s voice when she inquires, as Rice did,—

“Who was talking with you?”

“Dr. Dunlap.”

“Dr. Dunlap? You don’t know Dr. Dunlap.”

“We met in England,” daringly broke out Dr. Dunlap himself.

“He is here yet, is he?” said Rice Jones. “Doctors are supposed to be the natural protectors of ailing women; but here’s one that is helping a sick girl to take her death cold.”

An attack on his professional side was what Dr. Dunlap was not prepared for. He had nothing to say, and Maria’s brother carried her out of the old college and took the nearest way home.

Noise was ceasing around the sinking bonfire, a clatter of wooden shoes setting homeward along the streets of Kaskaskia. Maria saw the stars stretching their great network downward enmeshing the Mississippi. That nightly vision is wonderful. But what are outward wonders compared to the unseen spiritual chemistry always at work within and around us, changing our loves and beliefs and needs?

Rice stopped to rest as soon as they were out of Dr. Dunlap’s hearing. Light as she was, he felt his sister’s complete prostration in her weight.

“For God’s sake, Maria,” he said to her in Welsh,—“is that fellow anything to you?”

Page 17

She shook her head.

“But he says he met you in England.”

She said nothing, and Rice also remained in silence. When he spoke again, it was in the tone of dry statement which he used for presenting cases in court.

“My pistols have hair triggers and go off at a touch. I had a political difference with a gentleman some time ago, and this Dr. Dunlap acted as his second. We were standing ready, but before the word was given, and while the pistol hung down in my hand, it went off, and the ball struck the ground at my feet. Then Dr. Dunlap insisted I had had my shot, and must stand still and be fired at without firing again. His anxiety to have me shot was so plain that my opponent refused to fire, and we made up our difference. That’s the Dr. Dunlap we have here in the Territory, whatever he may have been in England.”

Rice hurried on with her, his motherless little sister, who had been left with kinspeople in Wales because she was too delicate to bear the hardships of the family transplanting. He blamed himself for her exposure and prostration, and held her tenderly, whispering,

“Mareea-bach!”

She tried to answer the Welsh caressing name, but her throat gurgled and a warm stream ran out of her mouth, and he knew it was blood.

PART SECOND.

A FIELD DAY.

The gallery pillars of the Sauciers’ house hung full of fragrant vines. The double doors stood hospitably wide, but no one was visible through the extent of hall, though the sound of harp music filled it, coming from a large darkened room. Angelique was playing for her great-grand-aunt Angelique, the despot of the Saucier family.

This survivor of a past century had her treasures displayed and her throne set up in the state apartment of the house. The Sauciers contented themselves with a smaller drawing-room across the hall. Her throne was a vast valanced, canopied, gilded bed, decorated with down sacks in chintz covers to keep her warm, high pillows set up as a background for her, and a little pillow for every bone which might make a dint in the feather bed. Another such piece of furniture was not to be found in the Territory. It and her ebony chairs, her claw-footed tables, her harp and dower chest, had come with her from France. The harp alone she had already given to Angelique, who was to inherit all she owned.

From childhood the girl had been this aged woman's constant attendant. Some days the black servants took their orders at the door, and nobody but Angelique was allowed to enter that room. Then the tyrant would unbend, and receive family and neighborhood visits. Though she had lived a spinster's life, she herself taught Angelique to call her "tante-gra'mere," and this absurd mixture of names had been taken up by the entire family. So tight a grip did she hold on the growing child that Angelique was educated by half-days at the convent; she never had an entire day free from tante-gra'mere. Madame Saucier often rose against such absorption, and craved the privilege of taking the girl's place.

Page 18

"There is a fete of the children on the bluffs to-day," madame would plead; or, "There is a religious procession, and the mother superior has particularly sent for Angelique."

But tante-gra'mere lifted her thin shout against every plea, and, if pushed, would throw the little pillows at her grand-nephew's wife. What were fetes and processions to her claims?

"I am the godmother of this child," she declared; "it is for me to say what she shall do."

The patriarch of a French family was held in such veneration that it was little less than a crime to cross her. The thralldom did not ruin Angelique's health, though it grew heavier with her years; but it made her old in patient endurance and sympathetic insight while she was a child. She sat pitying and excusing her elder's whims when she should have been playing. The oldest story in humanity is the story of the house tyrant,—that usurper often so physically weak that we can carry him in our arms, yet so strong that he can tumble down the pillars of family peace many times a day.

There was something monkey-like in the tempers of tante-gra'mere. To see her grasp her whip and beat her slaves with a good will, but poor execution, was to smile self-reproachfully as at the antics of a sick child. Though it is true, for a woman who had no use of her legs, she displayed astonishing reach in her arms. Her face was a mass of puckers burnt through by coal-black eyes. Her mouth was so tucked and folded inward that she appeared to have swallowed her lips. In the daytime she wore a black silk cap tied under the chin, and a dimity short gown over a quilted petticoat. Tante-gra'mere was rich in stored finery. She had inherited brocades, and dozen dozens of linen, including sheets and napkins. Her things were washed by themselves and bleached on their own green, where the family washing never dared intrude.

Fortunately for Angelique, tante-gra'mere's hours were early, and she slept as aged people seldom do. At sunset, summer or winter, she had herself promptly done up in linen, the whip placed near her hand, and her black woman's bed made within reach on the floor. She then went into a shell of sleep which dancing-parties in the house had not broken, and required no further attention until the birds stirred in the morning. Angelique rushed out to evening freedom with a zest which became rapture when she danced. Perhaps this fresh delight made her the best dancer in Kaskaskia.

The autocrat loved to compound her own dinners. She had a salver which Angelique placed before her on the bed; and the old child played in pastry or salads, or cut vegetable dice for her soup. The baking or boiling or roasting was done with rigor at her own fireplace by her blacks, the whiplash in her hand hovering over their bare spots. Silence was the law of the presence-chamber when she labored with her recipes, of which she had many, looking like spider tracks on very yellow paper. These she kept locked up with many of the ingredients for creating them. She pored over them with

unspectacled eyes whenever she mixed a cunning dish; and even Angelique dared not meddle with them, though they were to be part of the girl's inheritance.

Page 19

Angelique now played on the harp to soothe tante-gra'mere's digestion after her midday dinner, while outdoors all Kaskaskia buzzed with excitement. It was a field day in territorial politics. All the girls were at Peggy Morrison's house, watching the processions march by, and making bouquets to send up to the speakers, of whom Rice Jones was chief. Tante-gra'mere had her heavy green shutters closed, to keep out disturbing sights and the noise of fife and drum. Her eyes snapped in the gloom. It was a warm day, and the large apartment looked like a linen bazaar, so many garments had tante-gra'mere discarded on account of the heat, and hung about her. The display made Angelique's face burn when Colonel Menard was announced; but it was one of tante-gra'mere's unshakable beliefs that her linen was so superior to other people's its exposure was a favor to the public. Any attempt to fold it away would put her into a fury.

The colonel had his hat and riding-whip in his hand. He stood smiling at both the aged woman and the girl, with his comprehensive grasp of all individualities. The slave woman placed a chair for him between the bed and the harp. Angelique loved the harp; but she was glad to let her hands fall in her lap, and leave Colonel Menard to work good nature in her tante-gra'mere. The autocrat tolerated him with as much liking as she could give to any suitor of Angelique's. The intentions of the others were discovered only through slaves used as spies; but he came into her state apartment and showed her consideration. She sat up on her broad throne, against the background of pillows, and received his salute upon her hand. Afterwards he bowed over Angelique's fingers.

"I hope the seven children of monsieur the colonel are well," said tante-gra'mere in her tiny scream.

"Four, madame," corrected the visitor. "Thanks, they are very well."

They spoke in French, for although she understood English she never condescended to use it. Their conference begun each time by her inquiry after his seven children.

"And madame, I hope she is comfortable to-day?"

"I neither sleep nor eat," declared tante-gra'mere. "And with the streets full of a shouting rabble, there is no comfort to be had in Kaskaskia."

"We are rather noisy to-day. But we are very earnest in this matter. We want to be separated from the Indiana Territory and be made an independent State."

Tante-gra'mere caught up her whip, and cracked it so suddenly on the back of her little page, who was prying into a wall closet, that he leaped like a frog, and fell on all fours at the opposite corner of the hearth. His grandmother, the black woman, put him behind her, and looked steadily at their tyrant. She sat on the floor like an Indian; and she was by no means a soft, full-blooded African. High cheek-bones and lank coarse hair betrayed the half-breed. Untamed and reticent, without the drollery of the black race,

she had even a Pottawatomie name, Watch-e-kee, which French usage shortened to Wachique.

Page 20

Tante-gra'mere put this sullen slave in motion and made her bring a glass of wine for Colonel Menard. The colonel was too politic to talk to Angelique before her elder, though she had not yet answered his proposal. He had offered himself through her father, and granted her all the time she could require for making up her mind. The colonel knew of her sudden decisions against so many Kaskaskians that he particularly asked her to take time. Two dimpling grooves were cut in his cheeks by the smile which hovered there, as he rose to drink the godmother's health, and she said,—

"Angelique, you may leave the room."

Angelique left the room, and he drew his chair toward the autocrat for the conference she expected.

"It is very kind of you, madame," said Colonel Menard, "to give me this chance of speaking to you alone."

"I do so, monsieur the colonel, because I myself have something to say." The little elfin voice disregarded Wachique and the page. They were part of the furniture of the room, and did not count as listeners.

"You understand that I wish to propose for mademoiselle?"

Tante-gra'mere nodded. "I understand that you are a man who will make a contract and conduct his marriage properly; while these Welsh and English, they lean over a gallery rail and whisper, and I am told they even come fiddling under the windows after decent people are asleep."

"I am glad to have you on my side, madame."

"I am not on your side, monsieur. I am on nobody's side. And Angelique is on nobody's side. Angelique favors no suitor. She is like me: she would live a single life to the end of her days, as holy as a nun, with never a thought of courtship and weddings, but I have set my face against such a life for her. I have seen the folly of it. Here am I, a poor old helpless woman, living without respect or consideration, when I ought to be looked up to in the Territory."

"You are mistaken, madame. Your name is always mentioned with veneration."

"Ah, if I had sons crowding your peltry traffic and taking their share of these rich lands, then you would truly see me venerated. I have thought of these things many a day; and I am not going to let Angelique escape a husband, however such creatures may try a woman's religious nature."

"I will make myself as light a trial as possible," suggested Colonel Menard.

“You have had one wife.”

“Yes, madame.”

“But she died.” The tiny high voice had the thrust of an insect’s stinger.

“If she were alive, madame, I could not now have the honor of asking for Mademoiselle Angelique’s hand.”

The dimpling grooves in his cheeks did not escape tante-gra’mere’s black eyes.

“I do not like widowers,” she mused.

“Nor do I,” responded the colonel.

“Poor Therese might have been alive to-day, if she had not married you.”

Page 21

"Possibly, madame."

"And you have seven children?"

"Four, madame."

"On the whole, I like young men."

"Then you reject my suit?" observed the unmoved wooer.

"I do not reject it, and I do not accept it, monsieur the colonel. I consider it."

This gracious promise of neutrality Colonel Menard carried away with him without again seeing Angelique; and he made his way through the streets of Kaskaskia, unconscious that his little son was following Rice Jones about with the invincible persistence of a Menard.

Young Pierre had been allowed to ride into the capital this thronging day under charge of his father's body-servant and Jean Lozier. The body-servant he sent out of his way with the ponies. Jean Lozier tramped at his young seignior's heels, glad of some duty which would excuse him to his conscience.

This was the peasant lad's first taste of Kaskaskia. He could hardly believe he was there. The rapture of it at first shook him like a palsy. He had risen while the whole peninsula was yet a network of dew, and the Mississippi's sheet, reflecting the dawn, threw silver in his eyes. All thoughts of his grandfather he put resolutely out of his mind; and such thoughts troubled him little, indeed, while that sea of humanity dashed around him. The crash of martial music stirred the man in him. And when he saw the governor's carriage and the magnates of the Territory, heading the long procession; the festooned galleries, on which sat girls dressed in white, like angels, sending their slaves out with baskets of flowers to strew in the way; when he saw floating tableaux of men and scenes in the early history of the Territory,—heroes whose exploits he knew by heart; and when he heard the shouting which seemed to fill the rivers from bluff to bluff, he was willing to wade through purgatory to pay for such a day.

Traffic moved with unusual force. It was the custom for outdwelling men who had something to sell or to trade to reserve it until they came to a convention in Kasky, when they were certain to meet the best buyers. All the up-river towns sent lines of vehicles and fleets of boats to the capital. Kickapoo, Pottawatomie, and Kaskaskia Indians were there to see the white-man council, scattered immovably along the streets, their copper faces glistening in the sun, the buckskin fringes on their leggins scarcely stirring as the hours crept by. Squaws stood in the full heat, erect and silent, in yellow or dark red garments woven of silky buffalo wool, and seamed with roebuck sinews. Few of them

had taken to civilized finery. Their barbaric and simple splendor was a rebuke to poor white women.

Page 22

Many ease-loving old Frenchmen denied themselves the pleasure of following the day's pageant from point to point, and chose the best of the vacant seats fronting the empty platform in the common meadow. There they waited for speech-making to begin, smoking New Orleans tobacco, and stretching their wooden-shod feet in front of them. No kind of covering intervened betwixt their gray heads and the sky's fierce light, which made the rivers seem to wrinkle with fire. An old Frenchman loved to feel heaven's hand laid on his hair. Sometimes they spoke to one another; but the most of each man's soul was given to basking. Their attitudes said: "This is as far as I have lived. I am not living to-morrow or next day. The past has reached this instant as high-water mark, and here I rest. Move me if you can. I have arrived."

Booths were set up along the route to the common meadow, where the thirsty and hungry might find food and drink; and as the crowd surged toward its destination, a babel of cries rose from the venders of these wares. Father Baby was as great a huckster as any flatboat man of them all. He outscrambled and outsweated Spaniards from *Ste. Genevieve*; and a sorry spectacle was he to Father Olivier when a Protestant circuit-rider pointed him out. The itinerant had come to preach at early candle-lighting to the crowd of sinners which this occasion drew to Kaskaskia. There was a flourishing chapel where this good preacher was esteemed, and his infrequent messages were gladly accepted. He hated Romish practices, especially the Sunday dancing after mass, which Father Olivier allowed his humbler parishioners to indulge in. They were such children. When their week's work was over and their prayers were said, they could scarcely refrain from kicking up their heels to the sound of a fiddle.

But when the preacher saw a friar peddling spirits, he determined to denounce Kaskaskia as Sodom and Gomorrah around his whole circuit in the American bottom lands. While the fire burned in him he encountered Father Olivier, who despised him as a heretic, and respected him as a man. Each revered the honest faith that was in the other, though they thought it their duty to quarrel.

"My friend," exclaimed the preacher, "do you believe you are going in and out before this people in a God-fearing manner, when your colleague is yonder selling liquor?"

"Oh, that's only poor half-crazy Father Baby. He has no right even to the capote he wears. Nobody minds him here."

"He ought to be brought to his knees and soundly converted," declared the evangelist.

"He is on his knees half the time now," said Father Olivier mischievously. "He's religious enough, but, like you heretics, he perverts the truth to suit himself."

The preacher laughed. He was an unlearned man, but he had the great heart of an apostle, and was open to jokes.

“Do you think I am riding the wilderness for the pleasure of perverting the truth?”

Page 23

"My friend," returned Father Olivier, "you have been in our sacristy, and seen our parish records kept here by the hands of priests for a hundred years. You want to make what you call revivals; I am content with survivals, with keeping alive the faith. Yet you think I am the devil. As for me, I do not say all heretics ought to be burned."

The preacher laughed again with Father Olivier, but did not fail to add,—

"You say what I think better than I could say it myself."

The priest left his Protestant brother with a wave of the hand and a smiling shrug, and passed on his way along the array of booths. His presence was a check on many a rustic drinker. His glance, dropped here and there, saved more than one sheep from the shearer. But his own face fell, and he stopped in astonishment, when an awkward figure was pushed against him, and he recognized his upland lamb.

"Jean Lozier, what are you doing here?" said Father Olivier.

Jean had dodged him many times. The lad stood still, cap in hand, looking down. Nothing could make him sorry he had come to Kaskaskia; but he expected to do penance for it.

"Where is your grandfather?"

"He is at home, father."

"Did you leave that blind old man alone, to wander out and fall over the bluff?"

"I left him, father, but I tied him to a joist in the ceiling with a long rope."

"To hang himself?"

"No, father; it is a very long rope."

"And what will the old man do when he grows hungry?"

"His food for the day is on the table."

"My son, my son!"

"Father," exclaimed the boy with passion, "I was never in Kaskaskia before. And Colonel Menard lent me a pony to ride after my young master. I have no pleasure but watching the lights of the town at night." The great fellow began to sob. "If my grandfather would but come here, I could keep him well. I have been watching how they do things in Kaskaskia. But no, he will stay on the hills. And when I could stand it no more I tied him and came."

Father Olivier had looked into the eyes of soldiers and seen the sick longing for some particular place which neither courage nor resolution seems able to control. He saw even more than this in Jean Lozier's eyes. He saw the anguish of a creature about to be driven back from its element to another in which it cannot develop. The priest had hitherto used Jean's fondness for the capital as means of moral discipline. But the sympathy which gave so many simple natures into his literal keeping enlightened him now.

"My son," said Father Olivier, "I see how it is with you better than I ever did before. You shall come and live in Kaskaskia. I will myself forbid your grandfather to keep you longer on the hills."

"But, father, he says he will die in a great town."

"Then, my son, the crown of a little martyrdom is yours. Will you wear it until this old man ends his days, and then come to Kaskaskia as your reward? Or will you come trampling down your duty, and perhaps shortening the life of your father's father? I will not lay any penance on you for following this strong desire."

Page 24

Jean's spirit moved through his rough features, and responded to the priest's touch.

"I will wait, father," he said.

"You do right, my son. Now enjoy the remainder of this day, but do not make it too long a trial to the old man dependent on you."

Jean Lozier knew very little about the fierce partisan war raging in the Territory over separation and non-separation, and all the consequences which lay beyond either. But he took his place in a sea of listeners, having a man's object in life to struggle for. He was going to live in Kaskaskia, and have a little house of his own, a cart and two oxen; and when he had made enough by hauling bales from the wharf, he could set up in trade. His breast lifted and fell freely as he looked into this large and possible future. The patience and frugality and self-confidence of the successful man of affairs were born in him.

Rice Jones was on the speaker's platform, moulding the politics of the Territory. His voice reached over the great outdoor audience, compelling and convincing; now sinking to penetrating undertones, and now rising in thrilling music. His irony was so cutting, his humor so irrepressible. Laughter ran in waves across the sea of heads as wind runs across the grass. On many a homeward road and in many a cabin would these issues be fought over before election day, and Rice Jones's arguments quoted and propagated to the territorial limits. The serious long-jawed Virginia settler and the easy light-minded French boatman listened side by side. One had a homestead at stake, and the other had his possessions in the common fields where he labored as little as possible; but both were with Rice Jones in that political sympathy which bands unlike men together. He could say in bright words what they nebulously thought. He was the high development of themselves. They were proud of him, with that touching hero worship which is the tribute of unlettered men to those who represent their best.

Dr. Dunlap stopped an instant at the edge of the crowd, carrying his saddle-bags on his arm. He was so well known to be Rice Jones's political and personal enemy that his momentary lingering there drew a joke or two from his observers. He was exhorted to notice how the speaker could wipe up Kasky with such as he, and he replied in kind. But his face was wearing thin in his deeper and silent struggle with Rice Jones.

He knew that that judicial mind was fathoming and understanding his past relations with Maria upon the evidence he had himself furnished. Every day since their encounter in the college the doctor had armed himself. If he saw Rice Jones appear suddenly on the street, his hand sought his pocket. Sometimes he thought of leaving the Territory; which would be giving up the world and branding himself a coward. The sick girl was forgotten in this nightmare of a personal encounter. As a physician, he knew the danger of mania, and prescribed hard labor to counteract it. Dismounting under the bluff and tying

his horse, he had many times toiled and sweated up the ascent, and let himself down again, bruised and scratched by stones and briers.

Page 25

Very trivial in Dr. Dunlap's eyes were the anxieties of some poor fellows whom he saw later in the day appealing to Colonel Menard. The doctor was returning to a patient. The speeches were over, and the common meadow had become a wide picnic ground under the slant of a low afternoon sun. Those outdwelling settlers, who had other business to transact besides storing political opinions, now began to stir themselves; and a dozen needy men drew together and encouraged one another to ask Colonel Menard for salt. They were obliged to have salt at once, and he was the only great trader who brought it in by the flatboat load and kept it stored. He had a covered box in his cellar as large as one of their cabins, and it was always kept filled with cured meats.

They stood with hands in their pockets and coonskin caps slouching over their brows, stating the case to Colonel Menard. But poverty has many grades. The quizzical Frenchman detected in some of his clients a moneyed ability which raised them above their fellows.

"I have salt," admitted the colonel, speaking English to men who did not understand French, "but I have not enough to make brine of de Okaw river. I bet you ten dollaire you have not money in your pockets to pay for it."

More than half the pockets owned this fact. One man promised to pay when he killed his hogs. Another was sure he could settle by election day. But the colonel cut these promises short.

"I will settle this matter. De goats that have no money will stand on this side, and de sheep that have money will stand on that."

The hopeless majority budged to his right hand, and the confident ones to his left. He knew well what comfort or misery hung on his answer, and said with decision which no one could turn:—

"Now, messieurs, I am going to lend all my salt to these poor men who cannot get it any other way. You fellows who have money in your pockets, you may go to Sa' Loui', by gar, and buy yourselves some."

The peninsula of Kaskaskia was glorified by sunset, and even having its emerald stretches purpled by the evening shadows of the hills, before Rice Jones could go home to his sister. The hundreds thronging him all day and hurraing at his merciless wit saw none of his trouble in his face.

He had sat by Maria day after day, wiping the cold dampness from her forehead and watching her self-restraining pride. They did not talk much, and when they spoke it was to make amusement for each other. This young sister growing up over the sea had been a precious image to his early manhood. But it was easier to see her die now than the cause of Dr. Dunlap's enmity was growing distinct to him.

“No wonder he wanted me shot,” thought Rice. “No wonder he took all her family as his natural foes at sight.”

Sometimes the lawyer dropped his papers and walked his office, determining to go out and shoot Dr. Dunlap. The most judicial mind has its revolts against concise statement. In these boiling moods Rice did not want evidence; he knew enough. But cooler counsel checked him. There were plenty of grounds and plenty of days yet to come for a political duel, in which no names and no family honor need be mixed.

Page 26

Rice turned back from the gallery steps with a start at hearing a voice behind him. It was only young Pierre Menard at his father's gate. The veins on the child's temples were distended by their embarrassed throbbing, and his cheeks shone darkly red.

"I want, in fact, to speak to you, Monsieur Zhone," stammered Pierre, looking anxiously down the street lest the slave or Jean Lozier should appear before he had his say.

"What is it, colonel junior?" said Rice, returning to the gate.

"I want, in fact, to have some talk about our family."

"I hope you haven't any disagreement in your family that the law will have to settle?"

"Oh, no, monsieur, we do not quarrel much. And we never should quarrel at all if we had a mother to teach us better," said young Pierre adroitly.

Rice studied him with a sidelong glance of amusement, and let him struggle unhelped to his object.

"Monsieur Zhone, do you intend to get married?"

"Certainly," replied the prompt lawyer.

"But why should you want to get married? You have no children."

"I might have some, if I were married," argued Rice.

"But unless you get some you don't need any mother for them. On the contrary, we have great need of a mother in our family."

"I see. You came to take my advice about a stepmother. I have a stepmother myself, and I am the very man to advise you. But suppose you and I agree on the person for the place, and the colonel refuses her?"

The boy looked at him sharply, but there was no trace of raillery on Rice's face.

"You never can tell what the colonel intends to do until he does it, monsieur, but I think he will be glad to get her. The girls—all of us, in fact, think he ought to be satisfied with her."

"You are quite right. I don't know of a finer young woman in Kaskaskia than Miss Peggy Morrison."

"But she isn't the one, Monsieur Zhone. Oh, she wouldn't do at all."

"She wouldn't? I have made a mistake. It's Mademoiselle Vigo."



"Oh, no, she wouldn't do, either. There is only one that would do." The boy tried to swallow his tumult of palpitation. "It is Mademoiselle Angelique Saucier, monsieur."

Rice looked reproachfully at him over folded arms.

"That's why I came to you about it, monsieur. In the first place, Odile picked her out because she is handsome; Berenice and Alzira want her because she is good-natured; and I want her because I like to sit in the room where she is."

"Young man, this cannot be," said Rice Jones.

"Have you engaged her yourself, monsieur? If you haven't, please don't. Nobody else will suit us; and you can take Mademoiselle Peggy Morrison that you think is such a fine young woman."

Rice laughed.

"You and I are not the only men in Kaskaskia who admire Mademoiselle Saucier, my lad."

Page 27

"But you are the worst one," said Pierre eagerly. "Odile thinks if you let her alone we may get her."

"But I can't let her alone. I see the force of your claims, but human nature is so perverse, Pierre, that I want her worse than ever."

Pierre dug with his heel in the grass. His determined countenance delighted the rival.

"Monsieur, if you do get her, you have our whole family to beat."

"Yes, I see what odds there are against me," owned Rice.

"We are going to marry her if we can—and my father is willing. He is nearly always willing to please us."

"This is fair and open," pronounced Rice, "and the way for gentlemen to treat each other. You have done the right thing in coming to talk this matter over with me."

"I'm not sure of that, m'sieur."

"I am, for there is nothing better than fair and open rivalry. And after all, nobody can settle this but Mademoiselle Saucier herself. She may not be willing to take any of us. But, whatever the result, shake hands, Pierre."

The boy transferred his riding-whip, and met the lawyer's palm with a hearty grasp. They shook hands, laughing, and Pierre felt surprised to find how well he liked Rice Jones.

As the wide and capacious Kaskaskia houses were but a single story high, Maria's bedroom was almost in the garden. Sweet-brier stretched above the foundation and climbed her window; and there were rank flowers, such as marigolds and peppery bouncing-betties, which sent her pungent odors. Sometimes she could see her stepmother walking the graveled paths between the vegetable beds, or her father and Rice strolling back and forth together of an evening. Each one was certain to bring her something,—a long-stemmed pink, or phlox in a bunch, like a handful of honeycomb. The gardener pulled out dead vines and stalks and burned them behind a screen of bushes, the thin blue smoke trailing low.

Her father would leave his office to sit beside her, holding the hand which grew thinner every day. He had looked forward to his daughter's coming as a blossoming-time in his life. Maria had not left her bed since the night of her hemorrhage. A mere fortnight in the Territory seemed to have wasted half her little body.

When you have strained to bear your burden and keep up with the world's march, lightly commiserated by the strong, there is great peace in finally giving up and lying down by

the roadside. The hour often fiercely wished for, and as often repelled with awe, is here. The visible is about to become invisible. It is your turn to pass into the unknown. You have seen other faces stiffen, and other people carried out and forgotten. Your face is now going to chill the touch. You are going to be carried out. But, most wonderful of all, you who have been so keenly alive are glad to creep close to Death and lay your head in his lap.

There are natures to whom suffering is degradation. Sympathy would burn them like caustic. They are dumb on the side which seeks promiscuous fellowship. They love one person, and live or die by that love.

Page 28

"I have borne it by myself so far," Maria would think; "I can bear it by myself the rest of the way."

Yet the sleepy nurse was often roused at dead of night by her sobbing: "Oh, James, that you should be in the same town with me, and never come near to see me die! And I love you,—I love you so in spite of everything."

Sometimes she resolved to tell her brother the whole story. He would perhaps think better of Dr. Dunlap than he now did. Yet, on the contrary, his implacable pride and sense of justice might drive him directly out to kill the man she loved. And again she would burn with rage and shame at Dr. Dunlap's condescension to a legal marriage. He was willing.

"You are not willing," she would whisper fiercely at the night candle. "You do not love me any more."

The old glamour again covering her, she would lie in a waking dream for hours, living over their stolen life together. And she puzzled herself trying to fit the jagged pieces of her experience, and to understand why all these things should happen. The mystery to come is not greater than the mystery which has been, when one lies on a dying bed and counts the many diverse individuals that have lived in his skin and been called by his name.

At other times, all she had lost of common good flashed through Maria in a spark: the deeds to other souls; the enjoyment of nature, which is a continual discovery of new worlds; the calm joy of daily life, that best prayer of thanks to Almighty God.

Maria always thought of these wholesome things when Angelique came in at twilight, a little exhilarated by her escape from the tyrant at home. The nurse would give place, and go out to talk with the other negroes, while Angelique sat down and held Maria's hand. Perhaps invisible streams of health flowed from her, quieting the sick girl. She smiled with pure happiness, on account of general good and comfort; her oval face and dark hair and eyes having a certain freshness of creation. Maria looked at her and wondered what love and sorrow would do to her.

Angelique had one exquisite characteristic which Maria did not at first notice, but it grew upon her during these quiet half-hours when she was spared the effort of talking or listening. It was a fixed look of penetrating sweetness, projecting the girl herself into your nature, and making her one with you. No intrusive quality of a stare spoiled it. She merely became you for the time being; and this unconscious pretty trick had brought down many a long Kaskaskian, for it drove directly through the hearts of men.

The provincial girl sometimes puzzled herself about the method of education abroad which had produced such a repressed yet such an appealing creature as Maria Jones.

When she talked to the triangular little face on the pillow, she talked about the outdoor world rather than its people; so that after Angelique went away Maria often fell asleep, fancying herself on the grass, or lying beside the rivers or under the cool shadows of rocks.

Page 29

As Rice Jones entered the house, after his talk about Angelique with young Pierre Menard, he met her coming out. It was the first time that her twilight visits to his sister had brought them face to face, and Rice directly turned off through the garden with her, inquiring how Maria had borne the noise of the day.

"She is very quiet," said Angelique. "She was indeed falling asleep when I came out."

"I sent my man at noon and at three o'clock to bring me word of her."

There was still a great trampling of horses in the streets. Shouts of departing happy voters sounded from the Okaw bridge, mixing with the songs of river men. The primrose lights of many candles began to bloom all over Kaskaskia. Rice parted the double hedge of currant bushes which divided his father's garden from Saucier's, and followed Angelique upon her own gravel walk, holding her by his sauntering. They could smell the secluded mould in the shadow of the currant roots, which dew was just reaching. She went to a corner where a thicket of roses grew. She had taken a handful of them to Maria, and now gathered a fresh handful for herself, reaching in deftly with mittened arms, holding her gown between her knees to keep it back from the briers. Some of them were wild roses, with a thin layer of petals and effulgent yellow centres. There was a bouquet of garden-breaths from gray-green sage and rosemary leaves and the countless herbs and vegetables which every slaveholding Kaskaskian cultivated for his large household. Pink and red hollyhocks stood sentinel along the paths. The slave cabins, the loom-house, the kitchen, and a row of straw beehives were ranged at the back of the lawn, edging the garden.

Angelique came back to the main walk, picking her way with slipper toes, and offered part of her spoil to Rice. He took some roses, and held the hand which gave them. She had come in his way too soon after his mocking little talk with young Pierre Menard. He was occupied with other things, but that had made him feel a sudden need.

Angelique blushed in the dense twilight, her face taking childlike lines of apprehension. Her heart sank, and she suffered for him vicariously in advance. Her sensibility to other presences was so keen that she had once made it a subject of confession. "Father, I cannot feel any separateness from the people around me. Is this a sin?" "Believe that you have the saints and holy angels also in your company, and it will be no sin," answered Father Olivier.

Though she was used to these queer demonstrations of men, her conscience always rebuked her for the number of offers she received. No sooner did she feel on terms of excellent friendliness with any man than he began to fondle her hand and announce himself her lover. It must be as her tante-gra'mere said, that girls had too much liberty in the Territory. Jules Vigo and Billy Edgar had both proposed in one day, and Angelique hid herself in the loom-house, feeling peculiarly humbled and ashamed to

face the family, until her godmother had her almost forcibly brought back to the usual post.

Page 30

"I love you," said Rice Jones.

"But please, no, Monsieur Zhone, no."

"I love you," he repeated, compressing his lips. "Why 'no, Monsieur Zhone, no'?"

"I do not know." Angelique drew her hand back and arranged her roses over and over, looking down at them in blind distress.

"Is it Pierre Menard?"

She glanced up at him reproachfully.

"Oh, monsieur, it is only that I do not want"—She put silence in the place of words.

"Monsieur," she then appealed, "why do men ask girls who do not want them to? If one appeared anxious, then it would be reasonable."

"Not to men," said Rice, smiling. "We will have what is hard to be got. I shall have you, my Angelique. I will wait."

"Monsieur," said Angelique, thinking of an obstacle which might block his way, "I am a Catholic, and you are not."

"Priests don't frighten me. And Father Olivier is too sensible an old fellow to object to setting you in the car of my ambition."

They stood in silence.

"Good-night, Monsieur Zhone," said Angelique. "Don't wait."

"But I shall wait," said Rice.

He had bowed and turned away to the currant hedge, and Angelique was entering her father's lawn, when he came back impetuously. He framed her cheeks in his hands, and she could feel rather than see the power of possession in his eyes.

"Angelique!" he said, and the word rushed through her like flame. She recoiled, but Rice Jones was again in his father's garden, moving like a shadow toward the house, before she stirred. Whether it was the trick of the orator or the irrepressible outburst of passion, that appeal continued to ring in her ears and to thrill.

More disturbed than she had ever been before by the tactics of a lover, Angelique hurried up the back gallery steps, to find Peggy Morrison sitting in her chamber window, cross-legged, leaning over with one palm supporting a pointed chin. The swinging sashes were pushed outward, and Peggy's white gown hung down from the broad sill.

"Is that you, Peggy?" said Angelique. "I thought you were dancing at Vigo's this evening."

"I thought you were, too."

"Mama felt obliged to send our excuses, on account of going to sister's baby."

"How beautiful these large French families are!" observed Peggy; "some of them are always dying or teething, and the girls are slaves to their elders."

"We must be beautiful," said Angelique, "since two of the Morrisons have picked wives from us; and I assure you the Morrison babies give us the most trouble."

"You might expect that. I never saw any luck go with a red-headed Morrison."

Angelique sat down on the sill, also, leaning against the side of the window. The garden was becoming a void of dimness, through which a few fireflies sowed themselves. Vapor blotted such stars as they might have seen from their perch, and the foliage of fruit trees stirred with a whisper of wind.

Page 31

"I am so glad you came to stay with me, Peggy. But you are dressed; why did you not go?"

"I am hiding."

"What are you hiding from?"

"Jules Vigo, of course."

"Poor Jules."

"Yes, you are always saying poor this and that, after you set them on by rejecting them. They run about like blind, mad oxen till they bump their stupid heads against somebody that will have them. I shouldn't wonder if I got a second-hand husband one day, taking up with some cast-off of yours."

"Peggy, these things do not flatter me; they distress me," said Angelique genuinely.

"They wouldn't distress me. If I had your face, and your hands and arms, and the way you carry yourself, I'd love to kill men. They have no sense at all."

Angelique heard her grind her teeth, and exclaimed,—

"Why, Peggy, what has poor Jules done?"

"Oh, Jules!—he is nothing. I have just engaged myself to him to get rid of him, and now I have some right to be let alone. He's only the fourth one of your victims that I've accepted, and doctored up, and set on foot again. I take them in rotation, and let them easily down to marrying some girl of capacity suitable to them. And until you are married off, I have no prospect of ever being anything but second choice."

Angelique laughed.

"Your clever tongue so fascinates men that this is all mockery, your being second choice. But indeed I like men, Peggy; if they had not the foolishness of falling in love."

"Angelique Saucier, when do you intend to settle in life?"

"I do not know," said the French girl slowly. "It is pleasant to be as we are."

Peggy glanced at her through the dark.

"Do you intend to be a nun?"

"No, I have no vocation."

“Well, if you don’t marry, the time will come when you’ll be called an old maid.”

“That is what mama says. It is a pity to make ugly names for good women.”

“I’ll be drawn and quartered before I’ll be called an old maid,” said Peggy fiercely. “What difference does it make, after all, which of these simpletons one takes for a husband? Were you ever in love with one of them, Angelique?”

Peggy had the kind of eyes which show a disk of light in the dark, and they revealed it as she asked this question.

“No, I think not,” answered Angelique.

“You think not. You believe, to the best of your knowledge and recollection, that such a thing has never happened to you,” mocked Peggy. And then she made a sudden pounce at Angelique’s arm. “What was the matter with you when you ran up the gallery steps, a minute ago?”

The startled girl drew in her breath with surprise, but laughed.

“It was lighter then,” hinted Peggy.

“Did you see him?”

“Yes, I saw him. And I saw you coaxing him along with a bunch of roses, for all the world like catching a pony with a bunch of grass. And I saw him careering back to neigh in your face.”

Page 32

"Oh, Peggy, I wish Monsieur Reece Zhone could but hear what you say. Do teach me some of your clever ridicule. It must be that I take suitors too seriously."

"Thank you," said Peggy dryly, "I need it all for my second-hand lot. He is the worst fool of any of them."

"Take care, Peggy, you rouse me. Why is a man a fool for loving me?"

"He said he loved you, then?"

The Saucier negroes were gathering on doorsteps, excited by the day and the bustle of crowds which still hummed in the streets. Now a line of song was roared from the farthest cabin, and old and young voices all poured themselves into a chorus. A slender young moon showed itself under foliage, dipping almost as low as the horizon. Under all other sounds of life, but steadily and with sweet monotony, the world of little living things in grass and thicket made itself heard. The dewy darkness was a pleasure to Angelique, but Peggy moved restlessly, and finally clasped her hands behind her neck and leaned against the window side, watching as well as she could the queen of hearts opposite. She could herself feel Angelique's charm of beautiful health and outreaching sympathy. Peggy was a candid girl, and had no self-deceptions. But she did have that foreknowledge of herself which lives a germ in some unformed girls whose development surprises everybody. She knew she could become a woman of strength and influence, the best wife in the Territory for an ambitious man who had the wisdom to choose her. Her sharp fairness would round out, moreover, and her red head, melting the snows which fell in middle age on a Morrison, become a softly golden and glorious crown. At an age when Angelique would be faded, Peggy's richest bloom would appear. She was like the wild grapes under the bluffs; it required frost to ripen her. But women whom nature thus obliges to wait for beauty seldom do it graciously; transition is not repose.

"Well, which is it to be, Rice Jones or Pierre Menard? Be candid with me, Angelique, as I would be with you. You know you will have to decide some time."

"I do not think Monsieur Reece Zhone is for me," said Angelique, with intuitive avoidance of Colonel Menard's name; Peggy cared nothing for the fate of Colonel Menard. "Indeed, I believe his mind dwells more on his sister now than on any one else."

"I hate people's relations!" cried Peggy brutally; "especially their sick relations. I couldn't run every evening to pet Maria Jones and feed her pap."

"I do not pet her nor feed her pap," declared Angelique, put on the defensive. "Don't be a little beast, Peggy," she added in French.

“I see how it is: you are going to take him. The man who needs a bug in his ear worse than any other man in the Territory will never be handed over to me to get it. But let me tell you, you will have your hands full with Rice Jones. This Welsh-English stock is not soft stuff to manage. When he makes that line with his lips that looks like a red-hot razor edge, his poor wife will wish to leave this earth and take to the bluffs.”

Page 33

"You appear to think a great deal about Monsieur Reece Zhone and his future wife," said Angelique mischievously.

"I know what you mean," said Peggy defiantly, "and we may as well have it out now as any time. If you throw him at me, I shall quarrel with you. I detest Rice Jones. He makes me crosser than any other person in the world."

"How can you detest a man like that? I am almost afraid of him. He has a wonderful force. It is a great thing at his age to be elected to the National Assembly as the leader of his party in the Territory."

"I am not afraid of him," said Peggy, with a note of pride.

"No,—for I have sometimes thought, Peggy, that Monsieur Reece Zhone and you were made for each other."

Peggy Morrison sneered. Her nervous laughter, however, had a sound of jubilation.

The talk stopped there. They could see fog rising like a smoke from the earth, gradually making distant indistinct objects an obliterated memory, and filling the place where the garden had been.

"We must go in and call for candles," said Angelique.

"No," said Peggy, turning on the broad sill and stretching herself along it, "let me lay my head in your lap and watch that lovely mist come up like a dream. It makes me feel happy. You are a good girl, Angelique."

PART THIRD.

THE RISING.

Father Baby's part in the common fields lay on the Mississippi side of the peninsula, quite three miles from town. The common fields as an entire tract belonged to the community of Kaskaskia; no individual held any purchased or transferable right in them. Each man who wished to could claim his proportion of acres and plant any crop he pleased, year after year. He paid no rent, but neither did he hold any fee in the land.

Early on rainy summer mornings, the friar loved to hoist his capote on the cord, and tramp, bare-legged, out to his two-acre farm, leaving his slave, with a few small coins in the till, to keep shop should any customer forestall his return.

"The fathers of all orders," explained Father Baby, "from their earliest foundations, have counted it a worthy mortification of the flesh to till the ground. And be ready to refresh

me without grinning, when I come back muddy from performing the labor to which I might send you, if I were a man who loved sinful ease. Monastic habits are above the understanding of a black rascal like you.”.

The truth was, the friar loved to play in wet dirt. Civilized life and the confinement of a shop worked a kind of ferment in his wild spirit, which violent dancing somewhat relieved, but which intimate contact with the earth cooled and settled. Father Baby sometimes stripped off his capote and lay down in the hollow between furrows of corn, like a very lean but peaceful pig. He would not have been seen, on any account, and lifted an apprehensive head in the darkness of the morning if a bird rustled past. This performance he called a mortification of his frame; but when this sly churchman slipped up and put on his capote again, his thin visage bore the same gratified lines which may be seen on the face of a child making mud pies.

Page 34

It had rained steadily since the political field day which had drawn such crowds to Kaskaskia. The waters of the Okaw had risen, and Father Baby's way to his work had been across fields of puddles, through which he waded before dawn; knowing well that a week's growth of weeds was waiting for him in its rankness.

The rain was not over. It barely yet restrained itself, and threatened without falling; blotting out distance as the light grew. A damp air blew from the northwest. Father Baby found the little avenues between his rows of maize and pea vines choked with the liberal growth which no man plants, and he fell furiously to work. His greatest pleasure was the order and thrift of his little farm, and until these were restored he could not even wallow comfortably. When he had hoed and pulled out stubborn roots until his back ached, he stood erect, letting his hands hang outspread, magnified by their mask of dirt, and rested himself, thinking of the winter dinners he would enjoy when this moist land should take on a silver coating of frost, and a frozen sward resist the tread of his wooden shoe.

"O Lord," said Father Baby, "I confess I am a sinner; we all are. But I am a provident sinner who makes good use of the increase Thou dost send through the earth. I do Thee to wit that Antoine Lamarche's crop is pretty weedy. The lazy dog will have to buy of me, and if I do not skin him well—But hold on. My blessed Master, I had forgot that Antoine has a sick child in his house. I will set his garden in order for him. Perhaps Thou wilt count it to me for righteousness, and let it offset some of my iniquities."

So when he had finished his own, the friar put his hoe into his neighbor's patch, and worked until the sweat rolled down his thin cheeks. Gusts of rain added their moisture. As much light as the world was to have that day filtered through sheets of vapor. The bluffs bordering the Okaw could not be seen except as a vague bank of forest; and as for the lowlands across the great river, they might as well have had no existence.

It grew upon Father Baby's observation that the Mississippi had never looked so threatening. He stuck to his hoeing until he was nearly exhausted, and Antoine Lamarche's ground showed at least enough improvement to offset all the cheating he had done that week, and then made his way among bushes to the verge of the bank. The strong current always bearing down from the northwest against the peninsula had increased its velocity to a dizzy sweep. It bit out pieces of the shore as large as Father Baby's shop, and far and near these were seen falling in with splashes like the spouting of whales.

"At this rate," said Father Baby aloud, "I shall have no part left in the common fields by next year."

Page 35

The river's tremendous rolling roar was also swollen to unusual magnitude. He looked afar over a tawny surface at undermined stumps and trees racing past one another. The June rise, which the melting of snows in those vague regions around its headwaters was called, had been considerable, but nothing to terrify the Kaskaskians. One week's rain and the drainage of the bottom lands could scarcely have raised the river to such a height. "Though Heaven alone can tell," grumbled the friar, "what the Mississippi will do for its own amusement. All the able slaves in Kaskaskia should be set to work on the levee before this day is an hour older."

Carrying the hoe on his shoulder like any laborer, and drawing the hood of his garment over his bald crown as the mist of rain increased to a driving sheet, Father Baby tramped along the river edge toward an unfinished defense against the waters. It was a high dike, beginning on a shoulder of the peninsula above the town, but extending barely a mile across a marsh where the river had once continuously raveled the shore even in dry seasons. The friar was glad to discern a number of figures at work carting earth to the most exposed and sunken spots of this dike.

The marsh inside the embankment was now a little lake, and some shouting black boys were paddling about there in a canoe which had probably been made during the leisure enforced by wet weather. It was a rough and clumsy thing, but very strongly put together.

The tavern in Kaskaskia was a common meeting-place. Other guest houses, scattered through the town, fed and lodged the humble in an humble way; but none of them dared to take the name "tavern," or even to imitate its glories. In pleasant weather, its gallery was filled with men bargaining, or hiring the labor of other men. It was the gathering and distributing point of news, the headquarters of the Assembly when that body was in session,—a little hotel de ville, in fact, where municipal business was transacted.

The wainscoted dining-room, which had a ceiling traversed by oak beams, had been the scene of many a stately banquet. In front of this was the bar-room, thirty by forty feet in dimensions, with a great stone fireplace built at one end. There was a high carved mantel over this, displaying the solid silver candlesticks of the house, and the silver snuffers on their tray embossed with dragons. The bar was at the end of the room opposite the fireplace, and behind it shone the grandest of negro men in white linen, and behind him, tier on tier, an array of flasks and flat bottles nearly reaching the low ceiling. Poor Kaskaskians who entered there, entered society. They always pulled their capps off their heads, and said "Good-evening, messieurs," to the company in general. It was often as good as a feast to smell the spicy odors stealing out from the dining-room. It was a gentle community, and the tavern bar-room was by no means a resort of noisy drinkers. If any indecorum threatened, the host was able to quell it. He sat in his own leather chair, at the hearth corner in winter, and on the gallery in summer; a gigantic Frenchman, full of accumulated happiness.

Page 36

It was barely dusk when candles were lighted in the sconces around the walls, and on the mantel and bar. The host had his chair by a crackling fire, for continual dampness made the July night raw; and the crane was swung over the blaze with a steaming tea-kettle on one of its hooks. Several Indians also sat by the stone flags, opposite the host, moving nothing but their small restless eyes; aboriginal America watching transplanted Europe, and detecting the incompatible qualities of French and English blood.

The bar-room had its orchestra of three banjos, making it a hall of music every night in the year. And herein Africa added itself to the civilization of the New World. Three coal-black slaves of the host's sat on a bench sacred to them, and softly twanged their instruments, breaking out at intervals into the wild chants of their people; improvising, and stimulating each other by musical hints and exclamations. It was evident that they esteemed their office; and the male public of Kaskaskia showed them consideration. While the volume of talk was never lessened during their glees, the talkers all listened with at least one ear. There was no loud brawling, and the laughter raised by argument rarely drowned the banjos. Sometimes a Frenchman was inspired to cut a pigeon wing; and Father Baby had tripped it over every inch of this oak floor, when the frenzy for dancing seized him and the tunes were particularly irresistible. The bar-room gave him his only taste of Kaskaskia society, and he took it with zest. Little wizened black-eyed fellows clapped their hands, delighting, while their priest was not by, in the antics of a disreputable churchman; but the bigger and colder race paid little attention to him.

Various as were the home backgrounds of the lives converging at the tavern, there were but two topics before that little public while the cosy fire roared and the banjos rattled. A rumor of coming high water was running down the Mississippi valley like the wind which is driven before a rush of rain; and the non-separation party had suffered some local defeat in the Indiana Territory. The first item of news took greatest hold on those serious Anglo-Americans who had come from the Atlantic coast to found estates in this valley. On the contrary, the peasant tenant gave his mind to politics. It was still an intoxicating privilege for him to have a say in the government.

"Dese Indiana Territory fellers," piped a grasshopper of a Frenchman, springing from his chair in excitement, "dey want our slaves, dey want our Territory,—dey want de hide off our backs."

"Tony Lamarche," drawled a Virginian, "you don't know what you're talking about. You haven't e'er a slave to your name; and you don't own a foot of the Territory. As for your hide, it wouldn't make a drumhead nohow. So what are you dancin' about?"

"If I got no land, I got some of dose rights of a citizen, eh?" snorted Antoine, planting himself in front of the Virginian, and bending forward until they almost touched noses.

Page 37

"I reckon you have, and I reckon you better use them. You git your family over on to the bluff before your house is sucked into the Okaw."

"And go and hoe the weeds out of your maize patch, Antoine," exhorted Father Baby, setting an empty glass back on the bar. "I cleaned part of them out for you myself, with the rain streaming down my back, thinking only of your breadless children. And what do I find when I come home to my shop but that Antoine Lamarche has been in and carried off six dog-leg twists of tobacco on credit! I say nothing about it. I am a childless old friar; but I have never seen children eat tobacco."

The baited Frenchman turned on Father Baby; but, like a skittish girl, the friar hopped across the room, shook off his wooden shoes, picked up the skirt of his habit, and began to dance. The exhilarating drink, the ruddiness of the fire, the discomfort outside, the smoothness of the oak boards,—these were conditions of happiness for Father Baby. This was perhaps the crowning instant of his experience. He was a butterfly man. He saw his lodger, Dr. Dunlap, appear at the door as haggard as the dead. The friar's first thought was:—

"That fellow has proposed for Mademoiselle Saucier and been rejected. I'm glad I'm a churchman, and not yoked up to draw a family, like these fools, and like he wants to be. This bowing down and worshiping another human being,—crazy if you don't get her, and crazed by her if you do,—I'll have none of it."

Dr. Dunlap raised his arms and shouted to the company in the bar-room. What he said no one could hear. Hissing and roaring filled the world, submerging the crackling of the fire, the banjo tunes, and human voices. Men looked at each other, stupefied, holding their pipes from their mouths. Then a wave struck the solid old tavern, hissed across its gallery, and sprawled through the hall upon the bar-room floor. Not a person in the house could understand what had happened to Kaskaskia peninsula; but Jean Lozier stood on the bluff and saw it.

Jean was watching the lights of Kaskaskia while his sick grandfather slept. The moon was nearly full, but on such a night one forgot there was a moon. The bushes dripped on Jean, and the valley below him was a blur pierced by those rows of lights. A great darkness was coming out of the northwest, whistling as it came. He saw the sky and the turbid Mississippi meet and strangely become one. There were waters over the heavens, and waters under the heavens. A wall like a moving dam swept across the world and filled it. The boy found himself sitting on the ground holding to a sapling, drenched and half drowned by the spray which dashed up the bluffs. The darkness and hissing went over him, and he thought he was dying without absolution, at the end of the world. He lay down and gasped and shuddered until the great Thing was gone,—the incredible Thing, in which no one believes except him who has seen it, and which no name can name; that awful spirit of Deluge, which lives in the traditions of every race. Jean had never heard of waterspout or cloudburst or any modern name given to the

Force whenever its leash is slipped for a few minutes. He felt himself as trivial a thing in chaos as the ant which clung on his hand and bit him because it was drowning.

Page 38

The blind downpour being gone, though rain still fell and the wind whistled in his ears, Jean climbed across bent or broken saplings nearer the bluff's edge to look at Kaskaskia. The rows of lights were partially blotted; and lightning, by its swift unrollings, showed him a town standing in a lake. The Mississippi and the Okaw had become one water, spreading as far as the eye could see. Now bells began to clamor from that valley of foam. The bell of the Immaculate Conception, cast in France a hundred years before, which had tolled for D'Artaguet, and made jubilee over weddings and christenings, and almost lived the life of the people, sent out the alarm cry of smitten metal; and a tinkling appeal from the convent supplemented it.

There was no need of the bells to rouse Kaskaskia; they served rather as sounding buoys in a suddenly created waterway. Peggy Morrison had come to stay all night with Angelique Saucier. The two girls were shut in their bedroom, and Angelique's black maid was taking the pins from Peggy's hair, when the stone house received its shock, and shuddered like a ship. Screams were heard from the cabins. Angelique threw the sashes open, and looked into storm and darkness; yet the lightning showed her a driving current of water combed by pickets of the garden fence. It washed over the log steps, down which some of her father's slaves were plunging from their doors, to recoil and scramble and mix their despairing cries with the wakening clamor of bells.

Their master shouted encouragement to them from the back gallery. Angelique's candles were blown out by the wind when she and Peggy tried to hold them for her father. The terrified maid crouched down in a helpless bunch on the hall floor, and Madame Saucier herself brought the lantern from the attic. The perforated tin beacon, spreading its bits of light like a circular shower of silver on the gallery floor, was held high for the struggling slaves. Heads as grotesque as the waterspouts on old cathedrals craned through the darkness and up to the gallery posts. The men breasted the deepening water first, and howling little blacks rode on their fathers' shoulders. Captain Saucier pulled the trembling creatures in, standing waist-deep at the foot of the steps. The shrieking women balanced light bundles of dry clothes on their heads, and the cook brought useless kettles and pans, not realizing that all the food of the house was lost in a water-filled cellar.

The entire white-eyed colony were landed, but scarcely before it was time to close the doors of the ark. A far-off roar and a swell like that of the ocean came across the submerged country. No slave had a chance to stand whimpering and dripping in the hall. Captain Saucier put up the bars, and started a black line of men and women, with pieces of furniture, loads of clothing and linen, bedding and pewter and silver, and precious baskets of china, or tiers of books, upon their heads, up the attic stairs. Angelique's



Page 39

harp went up between two stout fellows, tingling with little sighs as they bumped it on the steps. Tante-gra'mere's room was invaded, and her treasures were transferred before she had a chance to prohibit it. The children were taken from their beds by the nurse, and carried to beds made for them in the attic, where they gazed awhile at their rude dark canopy of rafters, and fell asleep again in luxury, sure of protection, and expecting much of such novel times.

The attic, like the house under it, had dignity of space, in which another large family might have found shelter. Over rawhide trunks and the disused cradle and still-crib was now piled the salvage of a wealthy household. Two dormer windows pierced the roof fronting the street, and there was also one in the west gable, extending like a hallway toward the treetops, but none in the roof at the back.

The timbers of the house creaked, and at every blow of the water the inmates could hear it splashing to the chimneys on one side, and running down on the other.

"Now," said Captain Saucier desperately, "tante-gra'mere must be roused and carried up."

"Yes, the feather beds are all piled together for her, with fresh linen sheets and all her cushions; but," gasped madame his wife, "she has never before been waked in the night. Is it not better to send Angelique to bring her by degrees into a frame of mind for being removed?"

"There is no time. I have left her till the last minute, hoping she might wake."

They made a procession into her chamber, Angelique and Peggy carrying candles, the grand-nephew and grand-niece ready for a conflict. Waters booming against the house, and already making river coves of familiar rooms, were scarcely more to be dreaded than the obstinate will of a creature as small as a child.

Angelique lifted a ruffle of tante-gra'mere's nightcap and whispered in her ear. She stirred, and struck out with one hand, encountering the candle flame. That brought her upright, staring with indignant black eyes at the conclave.

"Dear tante-gra'mere, we are in danger. There is a great overflow of the rivers."

The autocrat felt for her whip in its accustomed place, and armed herself with it.

"Pardon us for disturbing you, tante-gra'mere," said her grand-nephew, "but I am obliged to carry you into the attic."

"Is the sun up?" cried the little voice.

"The water is, madame," answered Peggy.

"If you wait for the sun, tante-gra'mere," urged her grand-nephew's wife, "you will drown here."

"Do you tell me I will drown in my own bed? I will not drown. Where is Wachique?"

"She is carrying your chairs into the attic, tante-gra'mere."

"My chairs gone to the attic in my lifetime? And who has claimed my dower chest and my linen?"

"All your things are safely removed except this bedstead, madame," declared Angelique's mother. "They were set down more carefully than my china."



Page 40

"How long have I been asleep?"

"Only a few hours, tante-gra'mere. It is early in the night."

Her withered face was quite wrathful.

"The water is all over the floor, madame. We are standing to our ankles. In a few minutes we shall be standing to our knees. Look at it. Do you hear the roaring and the wash outside? Kaskaskia is under water, and the people have to climb to the roofs."

The aged woman always listened incredulously to Peggy. She now craned over the side of the bed, and examined for herself streams like quicksilver slipping along the dark boards.

"Why did you not do something to prevent this, instead of coming in here to break my rest?" she inquired.

Captain Saucier extended his hands to lift her, but she lay down again, holding the whip bolt upright.

"If I go to the attic, Captain Saucier, my bed goes with me."

"There is not time to move it."

"And there is such a beautiful bed up there, quite ready, with all your cushions."

"My bed goes with me," repeated tante-gra'mere.

"There will soon be water enough to carry it," remarked Peggy, "if it will float."

Waves crashing across the gallery broke against tante-gra'mere's closed shutters and spurted between the sashes. This freak of the storm devastating Kaskaskia she regarded with sidelong scrutiny, such as a crow gives to the dubious figure set to frighten it. The majesty of the terror which was abroad drove back into their littleness those sticks and pieces of cloth which she had valued so long. Again came the crash of water, and this time the shutters bowed themselves and a sash blew in, and the Mississippi burst into the room.

The candles were out, but Captain Saucier had caught up his relative as the water struck. Angelique groped for her mother, and she and Peggy led that dazed woman through the hall, laughing at their own shudders and splashes, and Captain Saucier waded after them. So the last vestige of human life forsook this home, taking to the shelter of the attic; and ripples drove into the fireplaces and frothed at the wainscots.

The jangling of the bells, to which the family had scarcely listened in their nearer tumult and frantic haste, became very distinct in the attic. So did the wind which was driving that foaming sea. All the windows were closed, but moisture was blown through the tiniest crevices. There were two rooms in the attic. In the first one the slaves huddled among piles of furniture. The west room held the children's pallets and tante-gra'mere's lowly substitute for her leviathan bed. She sat up among pillows, blinking resentfully. Angelique at once had a pair of bedroom screens brought in, and stretched a wall of privacy across the corner thus occupied; but tante-gra'mere as promptly had them rearranged to give her a tunnel for observation. In chaotic anger and terror she snapped her whip at intervals.

Page 41

"What is it, dear tante-gra'mere?" Angelique would inquire.

"Send Wachique down to bring up my bedstead."

"But, dear tante-gra'mere, Wachique would drown. The water is already half way up the attic stairs."

"Am I to lie here on the floor like a slave?"

"Dear, there are six feather beds under you."

"How long is this to last?"

"Not long, I hope."

Peggy stood at the gable window and looked out at the seething night. To her the peninsula seemed sinking. She could not see anything distinctly. Foam specked the panes. The bells kept up their alarm. Father Olivier was probably standing on the belfry ladder cheering his black ringer, and the sisters took turns at their rope with that determined calmness which was the rule of their lives. Peggy tried to see even the roof of her home. She was a grateful daughter; but her most anxious thoughts were not of the father and mother whose most anxious thoughts would be of her.

When the fury of the cloudburst had passed over, and the lightning no longer flickered in their faces, and the thunder growled away in the southeast, the risen water began to show its rolling surface. A little moonlight leaked abroad through cloudy crevices. Angelique was bathing her mother's face with camphor; for Madame Saucier sat down and fainted comfortably, when nothing else could be done. Something bumped against the side of the house, and crept crunching and bumping along, and a voice hailed them.

"That is Colonel Menard!" cried Angelique.

Her father opened one of the dormer windows and held the lantern out of it. Below the steep roof a boat was dashed by the swell, and Colonel Menard and his oarsman were trying to hold it off from the eaves. A lantern was fastened in the prow.

"How do you make a landing at this port?"

"The saints know, colonel. But we will land you. How dared you venture out in the trail of such a storm?"

"I do not like to wait on weather, Captain Saucier. Besides, I am a good swimmer. Are you all safe?"



“Safe, thank Heaven,” called Madame Saucier, reviving at the hint of such early rescue, and pressing to the window beside her husband. “But here are twenty people, counting our slaves, driven to the roof almost without warning; and who can say where the water will stop?”

“On that account, madame, I came out with the boat as soon as I could. But we shall be stove in here. Monsieur the captain, can you let the family down the roof to me?”

Captain Saucier thought he could, and he saw it would have to be done quickly. By dim lantern light the Saucier children were hurried into their clothing, and Wachique brought a wrap of fur and wool for tante-gra’mere. Three of the slave men were called in, and they rigged a rope around their master’s waist, by which they could hold and guide him in his attempt to carry living freight down the slippery roof.

Page 42

"How many can you carry?" he inquired.

"Six at a time," answered Colonel Menard. "To try to do more would hardly be safe, in this rough water."

"Were the boats at the wharf swept away?"

"It is not now easy to tell where the wharf was. But some of the large craft seem wedged among trees along the bluff. By daylight we shall get some out. And I have sent to the governor for all the boats he can muster for us."

Angelique came to the dormer window and touched her father's shoulder.

"Are you all ready?" he asked.

"Tante-gra'mere will not go into the boat."

"But she must. There will be six of you, with Peggy; and Colonel Menard cannot much longer hang by the eaves."

"Perhaps if you pick her up and run with her, papa, as you did from the danger below, she may allow it."

"She must go into the boat directly," said Captain Saucier; and the negroes paid out the rope as he stalked to the screened corner.

Angelique leaned over the sill and the chill wilderness of waters. The wind sung in her ears. She could not distinctly see Colonel Menard, and there was such a sound of waves that she was not sure it was best to try her voice against them. His man had an oar thrust into the broken window below, and was thereby able to hold the boat against the current.

"Monsieur the colonel!" called Angelique; and she saw the swift removal of his hat.

"Mademoiselle, have you been alarmed?"

"Yes, monsieur. Even my father was unable to do anything for the family until you came. But it seems when we find one relief we get another anxiety with it."

"What other anxiety have you now?"

"I am afraid you will be drowned trying to carry us out."

"My bel-o-ved, would you care?" said Pierre Menard, speaking English, which his slave could not understand, and accenting on the first syllable the name he gave her.



“Yes; it would be a serious inconvenience to me,” replied Angelique.

“Now that is worth coming here for. De northwest wind, I do not feel it since you say that.”

“I was thinking before you came, monsieur, what if I should never see you again? And if I saw you plainly now I could not talk so much. But something may happen. It is so strange, and like another world, this water.”

Tante-gra'mere screamed, and Angelique disappeared from the window-sill. It was not the mere outcry of a frightened woman. The keen small shriek was so terrible in its helplessness and appeal to Heaven that Captain Saucier was made limp by it.

“What shall I do?” he asked his family.

“I cannot force her into the boat when she cries out like that.”

“Perhaps she will go at dawn,” suggested Angelique. “The wind may sink. The howling and the darkness terrify her more than the water.”

“But Colonel Menard cannot wait until dawn. We shall all be drowned here before she will budge,” lamented Madame Saucier.

Page 43

"Leave her with me," urged Peggy Morrison, "and the rest of you go with Colonel Menard. I'll manage her. She will be ready to jump out of the window into the next boat that comes along."

"We cannot leave her, Peggy, and we cannot leave you. I am responsible to your father for your safety. I will put you and my family into the boat, and stay with her myself."

"Angelique will not leave me!" cried the little voice among the screens.

"Are you ready to lower them?" called Colonel Menard.

Captain Saucier went again to the window, his wife and daughter and Peggy with him.

"I could not leave her," said Angelique to Peggy. They stood behind the father and mother, who told their trouble across the sill.

"That spoiled old woman needs a good shaking," declared Peggy.

"Poor little tante-gra'mere. It is a dreadful thing, Peggy, to be a child when you are too old for discipline."

"Give my compliments to madame, and coax her," urged Colonel Menard. "Tell her, if she will let herself be lowered to me, I will pledge my life for her safety."

The two children stood huddled together, waiting, large-eyed and silent, while their elders kneeled around the immovable invalid. Peggy laughed at the expectant attitudes of the pleaders.

"Tante-gra'mere has now quite made up her mind to go," Madame Saucier announced over and over to her family and to Peggy, and to the slaves at the partition door, all of whom were waiting for the rescue barred from them by one obstinate little mummy.

But these hopeful assertions were wasted. Tante-gra'mere had made up her mind to stay. She held to her whip, and refused to be touched. Her fixed decree was announced to Colonel Menard. He asked for the women and children of the family in haste. He and his man were wasting time and strength holding the boat against the waves. It was in danger of being swamped.

Angelique stood deferentially before her father and asked his permission to stay with his grand-aunt. In the same deferential manner she asked permission of her mother. Madame Saucier leaned on her husband's shoulder and wept. It was plain that the mother must go with her two young children only. Peggy said she would not leave Angelique.



“Monsieur the colonel,” spoke Angelique again into the windy darkness, “we are not worth half the trouble you are taking for us. I wonder you do not leave such ridiculous people to drown or get out as we can. But my tante-gra’mere is so old; please forgive her. My mother and the children are quite ready. I wish poor Mademoiselle Zhone were with you, too.”

“I will fetch Mademoiselle Zhone out of her house before madame and the children get in,” said Pierre Menard promptly. “As for the delay, it is nothing, mademoiselle; we must get you all to land as we can.”

“Monsieur, will it not be dangerous? I thought of her because she is so sick. But there is foam everywhere; and the trees are in your way.”

Page 44

"We can find a track," answered the colonel. "Push off, boy."

The boat labored out, and the click of oars in rowlocks became presently a distant thumping, and then all sound was lost in the wash of water.

Angelique went to the dormer window in the gable. As she threw the sashes wide she was partly drenched by a wave, and tante-gra'mere sent from the screens a shrill mandate against wind which cut to the bone. Captain Saucier fastened the sashes again. He was a crestfallen man. He had fought Indians with credit, but he was not equal to the weakest member of his household.

Occasionally the rafters creaked from a blow, and a wave rushed up the roof.

"It is rising higher," said Peggy.

Angelique wished she had not mentioned Mademoiselle Zhone. Perhaps, when the colonel had risked his life to bring the sick girl out of a swamped house, her family might prefer to wait until morning to putting her in the boat now.

The bells kept ringing, now filling the attic with their vibrations, and then receding to a faint and far-off clamor as the wind swept by. They called to all the bluff-dwellers within miles of Kaskaskia.

The children sat down, and leaned their heads against their mother's knee. The others waited in drawing-room chairs; feeling the weariness of anxiety and broken domestic habits. Captain Saucier watched for the return of the boat; but before it seemed possible the little voyage could be made they felt a jar under the gable window, and Rice Jones's voice called.

The gable of the house had a sloping roof, its window being on a level with the other windows. Captain Saucier leaned far out. The wind had extinguished the boat's lantern. The rowers were trying to hold the boat broadside to the house, but it rose and fell on waves which became breakers and threatened to capsize it. All Kaskaskia men were acquainted with water. Pierre Menard had made many a river journey. But the Mississippi in this wild aspect was new to them all.

"Can you take her in?" shouted Rice. "My sister thinks she cannot be got ashore alive."

"Can you lift her to me?"

"When the next wave comes," said Rice.

He steadied himself and lifted Maria. As the swell again tossed the boat upward, he rose on a bench and lifted her as high as he could. Captain Saucier caught the frail bundle and drew the sick girl into the attic. He laid her down on the children's bed,

leaving her to Angelique, while he prepared to put them and their mother into the boat. Rice crept over the wet strip of gable roof, and entered the window after his sister. By lantern light he was a strong living figure. His austere white face was full of amusement at the Kaskaskian situation. His hat had blown away. The water had sleeked down his hair to a satin skullcap on his full head.

"This is a wet night, madame and mesdemoiselles," he observed.

Page 45

"Oh, Monsieur Zhone," lamented Madame Saucier, "how can you laugh? We are all ruined."

"No, madame. There is no such word as 'ruin' in the Territory."

"And I must take my two little children, and leave Angelique here in the midst of this water."

Rice had directly knelt down by his sister and put his hand on her forehead. Maria was quite still, and evidently gathering her little strength together.

"But why do you remain?" said Rice to Angelique. She was at Maria's opposite side, and she merely indicated the presence behind the screens; but Peggy explained aloud,

—
"She can't go because tante-gra'mere won't be moved."

"Put that limb of a Morrison girl out of the house," came an unexpected mandate from amongst the screens.

"I would gladly put her out," said Captain Saucier anxiously. "Peggy, my child, now that Mademoiselle Zhone is with Angelique, be persuaded to go with madame and the children."

Peggy shook her head, laughing. A keen new delight in delay and danger made her sparkle.

"Go yourself, Captain Saucier. One gentleman is enough to take care of us."

"I think you ought to go, Captain Saucier," said Rice. "You will be needed. The boat may be swamped by some of those large waves. I am ashamed of leaving my stepmother behind; but she would not leave my father, and Maria clung to me. We dared not fill the boat too full."

Angelique ran and kissed the children before her father put them into the boat, and offered her cheeks to her mother. Madame Saucier was a fat woman. She clung appalled to her husband, as he let her over the slippery roof. Two slave men braced themselves and held the ropes which steadied him, the whites of their eyes showing. Their mistress was landed with a plunge, but steadied on her seat by Colonel Menard.

"Oh," she cried out, "I have left the house without saying adieu to tante-gra'mere. My mind is distracted. She will as long as she lives remember this discourtesy."

"It could be easily remedied, madame," suggested Colonel Menard, panting as he braced his oar, "if she would step into the boat herself, as we all wish her to do."

“Oh, monsieur the colonel, you are the best of men. If you had only had the training of her instead of my poor gentle Francis, she might not be so hard to manage now.”

“We must not flatter ourselves, madame. But Mademoiselle Angelique must not remain here much longer for anybody’s whim.”

“Do you think the water is rising?”

“It is certainly rising.”

Madame Saucier uttered a shriek as a great swell rolled the boat. The searching wind penetrated all her garments and blew back loose ends of her hair. There was now a partially clear sky, and the moon sent forth a little lustre as a hint of what she might do when she had entirely freed herself from clouds.

The children were lowered, and after them their black nurse.

Page 46

"There is room for at least one more!" called Pierre Menard.

Captain Saucier stood irresolute.

"Can you not trust me with these fragments of our families?" said Rice.

"Certainly, Monsieur Reece, certainly. It is not that. But you see the water is still rising."

"I was testing the rise of the water when Colonel Menard reached us. The wind makes it seem higher than it really is. You can go and return, captain, while you are hesitating."

"I am torn in two," declared the Indian fighter. "It makes a child of me to leave Angelique behind."

"Francis Saucier," came in shrill French from the screens, "get into that boat, and leave my godchild alone."

The captain laughed. He also kissed the cheeks of tante-gra'mere's godchild and let himself slide down the roof, and the boat was off directly.

The slaves, before returning to their own room, again fastened the sashes of the dormer window. The clamor of bells which seemed to pour through the open window was thus partly silenced. The lantern made its dim illumination with specks of light, swinging from a nail over the window alcove. Maria had not yet unclosed her eyes. Her wasted hand made a network around one of Rice's fingers, and as the coughing spasm seized her she tightened it.

"She wants air," he said hastily, and Angelique again spread wide the window in the gable, when the thin cry of her tante-gra'mere forbade it.

"But, dear tante-gra'mere, Mademoiselle Zhone must have air."

"And must she selfishly give me rheumatism in order to give herself air?"

"But, dear tante-gra'mere"—

"Shut that window."

"I dare not, indeed."

Rice seized two corners of the feather pallet, and made it travel in a swift swish across the attic boards to the window at the front, which he opened. Supporting Maria in his arms, he signaled Angelique, with an amused face, to obey her tyrant; and she did so. But Peggy stalked behind the screens, and put her face close to the black eyes in the great soft lair built up of so many beds.

“You and I are nice people, madame,” said Peggy through her teeth. “We don’t care who suffers, if we are happy. We ought to have been twins; the same little beast lives in us both.”

Tante-gra’mere’s eyes snapped.

“You are a limb,” she responded in shrill French.

“Yes; we know each other,” said Peggy.

“When you are old, there will come a little wretch to revile you.”

“I don’t revile you, madame. I dote on you.”

“Your mother should box your ears, mademoiselle.”

“It would do me no good, madame.”

“I should like to try it,” said tante-gra’mere, without humor.

Page 47

Angelique did not hear this little quarrel. She was helping Rice with his sister. His pockets were full of Maria's medicines. He set the bottles out, and Angelique arranged them ready for use. They gave her a spoonful and raised her on pillows, and she rested drowsily again, grateful for the damp wind which made the others shiver. Angelique's sweet fixed gaze, with an unconscious focus of vital power, dwelt on the sick girl; she felt the yearning pity which mothers feel. And this, or the glamour of dim light, made her oval face and dark hair so beautiful that Rice looked at her; and Peggy, coming from the screens, resented that look.

Peggy sat down in the window, facing them, the dormer alcove making a tunnel through which she could watch like a spider; though she lounged indifferently against the frame, and turned toward the water streets and storm-drenched half houses which the moon now plainly revealed. The northwest wind set her teeth with its chill, and ripples of froth chased each other up the roof at her.

"The water is still rising," remarked Peggy.

"Look, Peggy," begged Angelique, "and see if Colonel Menard and my father are coming back with the boat."

"It is too soon," said Rice.

"Perhaps Colonel Menard will never come back," suggested Peggy. "It was a bad sign when the screech-owl screeched in the old Jesuit College."

"But the storm is over now. The water is not washing over the house."

"The moon shows plenty of whitecaps. It is rough."

"As long as this wind lasts the water will be boisterous," said Rice. "But Colonel Menard no more minds rough weather than a priest carrying the sacrament. He is used to the rivers."

"Hear a Protestant catering to a papist," observed Peggy. "But it is lost on Angelique. She is as good as engaged to Colonel Menard. She accepted him through the window before all of us, when he came to the rescue."

"Must I congratulate him?" Rice inquired of Angelique. "He certainly deserves his good luck."

"Peggy has no right to announce it so!" exclaimed Angelique, feeling invaded and despoiled of family privacy. "It is not yet called an engagement."

Peggy glanced at Rice Jones, and felt grateful to Heaven for the flood. She admired him with keen appreciation. He took his disappointment as he would have taken an offered flower, considered it without changing a muscle, and complimented the giver.

Guns began to be heard from the bluffs in answer to the bells. Peggy leaned out to look across the tossing waste at a dim ridge of shadow which she knew to be the bluffs. The sound bounded over the water. From this front window of the attic some arches of the bridge were always visible. She could not now guess where it crossed, or feel sure that any of its masonry withstood the enormous pressure.

The negroes were leaning out of their dormer window, also, and watching the nightmare world into which the sunny peninsula was changed. When a particularly high swell threw foam in their faces they started back, but others as anxious took their places.

Page 48

"Boats will be putting out from the bluffs plentifully, soon," said Rice. "Before to-morrow sunset all Kaskaskia and its goods and chattels will be moved to the uplands."

"I wonder what became of the poor cows," mused Angelique. "They were turned out to the common pasture before the storm."

"Some of them were carried down by the rivers, and some swam out to the uplands. It is a strange predicament for the capital of a great Territory. But these rich lowlands were made by water, and if they can survive overflow they must be profited by it."

"What effect will this have on the election?" inquired Peggy, and Rice laughed.

"You can't put us back on our ordinary level, Miss Peggy. We are lifted above elections for the present."

"Here is a boat!" she exclaimed, and the slaves at the other window hailed Father Olivier as he tried to steady himself at the angle formed by the roofs.

Angelique looked out, but Rice sat still beside his sister.

"Are you all quite safe?" shouted the priest.

"Quite, father. The slaves were brought in, and we are all in the attic."

"Keep up your courage and your prayers. As soon as this strong wind dies away they will put out from shore for you."

"Colonel Menard has already been here and taken part of the family."

"Has he?"

"Yes, father; though tante-gra'mere is afraid to venture yet, so we remain with her."

They could see the priest, indistinctly, sitting in a small skiff, which he tried to keep off the roof with a rough paddle.

"Where did you find a boat, father?"

"I think it is one the negroes had on the marsh by the levee. It lodged in my gallery, and by the help of the saints I am trying to voyage from house to house, as far as I can, and carry a little encouragement. I have the parish records here with me; and if this vessel capsizes, their loss would be worse for this parish than the loss of me."

"But, father, you are not trying to reach the land in that frail canoe?"

“Not yet, my daughter; not until some of the people are taken out. I did intend to venture for help, but the ringing of the bells has been of service to us. The sexton will stay in the belfry all night. I was able to get him there by means of this boat.”

“Come up here until the wind dies down, Monsieur Olivier,” urged Peggy. “That little tub is not strong enough to carry you. I have seen it. The slaves made it, with scarcely any tools, of some boards from the old Jesuit College.”

“The little tub has done good service to-night, mademoiselle; and I must get as far as the tavern, at least, to carry news of their families to men there. Antoine Lamarche’s child is dead, and his family are on the roof. I was able to minister to its parting soul; and I set the others, for safety, astride the roof-pole, promising them heavy penance if they moved before help came. He ought now to take this boat and go to them, if I can put him in heart to do it.”

Page 49

"A Protestant hardly caters to a papist when he puts some faith in the courage of a man like Father Olivier," said Rice to Peggy.

"Did I hint that you would cater to any one?" she responded, with a lift of her slender chin. The wind had blown out a long tress of Peggy's hair, which trailed to the floor. Rice seldom looked at her; but he noticed this sweep of living redness with something like approval; in shadow it shone softened to bronze.

"I think my father and Colonel Menard are coming back," said Angelique. "I see a light moving out from the bluffs."

"Oh, no; they are only picking their way among trees to a landing."

"They have gone with the current and the wind," said Rice. "It will take a longer time to make their way back against the current and the wind."

"Let us begin to bind and gag madame now, anyhow," Peggy suggested recklessly. "It's what the colonel will do, if he is forced to it. She will never of her own will go into the boat."

"Poor tante-gra'mere. I should have asked Father Olivier to urge her. But this is such a time of confusion one thinks of nothing."

Angelique bent to watch Maria's stupor. Rice had put the skeleton hand under a coverlet which was drawn to the sick girl's chin. He sat beside her on one of the brocaded drawing-room chairs, his head resting against the high back and his crossed feet stretched toward the window, in an attitude of his own which expressed quiescent power. Peggy went directly behind the screens, determined to pounce upon the woman who prolonged their stay in a flooded house, and deal with her as there would not be opportunity to do later. Tante-gra'mere was asleep.

Angelique sat down with Peggy on the floor, a little way from the pile of feather beds. They were very weary. The tonic of excitement, and even of Rice Jones's presence, failed in their effect on Peggy. It was past midnight. The girls heard cocks crowing along the bluffs. Angelique took the red head upon her shoulder, saying,—

"It would be better if we slept until they call, since there is nothing else to do."

"You might coquette over Maria Jones. I won't tell."

"What a thorn you are, Peggy! If I did not know the rose that goes with it"—Angelique did not state her alternative.

"A red rose," scoffed Peggy; and she felt herself drowsing in the mother arms.



Rice was keenly awake, and when the girls went into the privacy of the screens he sat looking out of the window at the oblong of darkly blue night sky which it shaped for him. His temples throbbed. Though the strange conditions around him were not able to vary his usual habits of thought, something exhilarated him; and he wondered at that, when Peggy had told him Angelique's decision against him. He felt at peace with the world, and for the first time even with Dr. Dunlap.

"We are here such a little time," thought Rice, "and are all such poor wretches. What does it matter, the damage we do one another in our groping about? God forgive me! I would have killed that man, and maybe added another pang to the suffering of this dying girl."

Page 50

Maria stirred. The snoring of the sleeping negroes penetrated the dividing wall. He thought he heard a rasping on the shingles outside which could not be accounted for by wind or water, and rose to his feet, that instant facing Dr. Dunlap in the window.

Dr. Dunlap had one leg across the low sill. The two men stood breathless. Maria saw the intruder. She sat up, articulating his name. At that piteous sound, betraying him to her brother, the cowardly impulse of many days' growth carried Dr. Dunlap's hand like a flash to his pocket. He fired his pistol directly into Rice's breast, and dropped back through the window to the boat he had taken from the priest.

The screams of women and the terrified outcry of slaves filled the attic. Rice threw his arms above his head, and sunk downward. In the midst of the smoke Peggy knelt by him, and lifted his head and shoulders. The night wind blew upon them, and she could discern his dilated eyes and piteous amazement.

"Dr. Dunlap has shot me," he said to her. "I don't know why he did it." And his face fell against her bosom as he died.

PART FOURTH.

THE FLOOD.

The moonlight shone in through both windows and the lantern glimmered. The choking smell of gunpowder spread from room to room. Two of the slave men sprung across the sill to pursue Dr. Dunlap, but they could do nothing. They could see him paddling away from the house, and giving himself up to the current; a desperate man, whose fate was from that hour unknown. Night and the paralysis which the flood laid upon human action favored him. Did a still pitying soul bend above his wild-eyed and reckless plunging through whirls of water, comprehending that he had been startled into assassination; that the deed was, like the result of his marriage, a tragedy he did not foresee? Some men are made for strong domestic ties, yet run with brutal precipitation into the loneliness of evil.

A desire to get out of the flood-bound tavern, an unreasonable impulse to see Angelique Saucier and perhaps be of use to her, a mistakenly silent entering of the house which he hardly knew how to approach,—these were the conditions which put him in the way of his crime. The old journey of Cain was already begun while Angelique was robbing her great-grand-aunt's bed of pillows to put under Rice Jones. The aged woman had gone into her shell of sleep, and the muffled shot, the confusion and wailing, did not wake her. Wachique and another slave lifted the body and laid it on the quickly spread couch of pillows.

Nobody thought of Maria. She lay quite still, and made no sound in that flurry of terror.

“He is badly hurt,” said Angelique. “Lizette, bring linen, the first your hand touches; and you, Achille, open his vest and find the wound quickly.”

“But it’s no use, ma’amselle,” whispered Wachique, lifting her eyes.

Page 51

"Do not be afraid, poor Achille. I will show you how myself. We cannot wait for any one to help us. What would my father and Colonel Menard say, if they found Monsieur Reece Zhone killed in our house?"

In her panic Angelique tore the vest wide, and found the great stain over the place where the heart should be. She was kneeling, and she turned back to Peggy, who stood behind her.

Death is great or it is a piteous change, like the slaughter of brutes, according as we bear ourselves in its presence. How mighty an experience it is to wait where world overlaps the edge of world, and feel the vastness of eternity around us! A moment ago—or was it many ages?—he spoke. Now he is gone, leaving a strange visible image lying there to awe us. The dead take sudden majesty. They become as gods. We think they hear us when we speak of them, and their good becomes sacred. A dead face has all human faults wiped from it; and that Shape, that Presence, whose passiveness seems infinite, how it fills the house, the town, the whole world, while it stays!

The hardest problem we have to face here is the waste of our best things,—of hopes, of patience, of love, of days, of agonizing labor, of lives which promise most. Rice's astonishment at the brutal waste of himself had already passed off his countenance. The open eyes saw nothing, but the lips were closed in sublime peace.

"And his sister," wept Angelique. "Look at Mademoiselle Zhone, also."

The dozen negroes, old and young, led by Achille, began to sob in music one of those sweet undertone chants for the dead which no race but theirs can master. They sung the power of the man and the tenderness of the young sister whose soul followed her brother's, and they called from that ark on the waters for saints and angels to come down and bless the beds of the two. The bells intoned with them, and a sinking wind carried a lighter ripple against the house.

"Send them out," spoke Peggy Morrison, with an imperious sweep of the arm; and the half-breed authoritatively hurried the other slaves back to their doorway. The submissive race understood and obeyed, anxiously watching Peggy as she wavered in her erectness and groped with the fingers of both hands.

"Put camphor under Ma'amselle Peggy's nose, Wachique," whispered Achille.

Peggy found Rice's chair, and sat down; but as soon as she returned to a consciousness of the bottle under her nose and an arm around her, she said,—

"Go away. A Morrison never faints."

Angelique was kneeling like a nun. She felt the push of a foot.

“Stop that crying,” said Peggy fiercely. “I hate to hear it. What right have you to cry?”

“No right at all. But the whole Territory will weep over this.”

“What right has the Territory in him now? The Territory will soon find another brilliant man.”

“And this poor tiny girl, Peggy, so near her death, what had she done to deserve that it should come in this form? Are men gone mad in this flood, that Dr. Dunlap, for a mere political feud, should seek out Monsieur Reece Zhone in my father’s house, and shoot him down before our eyes? I am dazed. It is like a nightmare.”

Page 52

Peggy set her mouth and looked abroad into the brightening night.

Angelique dropped her face in her hands and shook with sobbing. The three girlish figures, one rigid on the bed, another rigid in the chair, and the third bending in vicarious suffering between them, were made suddenly clear by an illumination of the moon as it began to find the western window. Wachique had busied herself seeking among piles of furniture for candles, which she considered a necessity for the dead. The house supply of wax tapers was in the submerged cellar. So she took the lantern from its nail and set it on the floor at the head of the two pallets, and it threw scattered spots of lustre on Rice's white forehead and Maria's hair. This humble shrouded torch, impertinent as it looked when the lily-white moonlight lay across it, yet reminded beholders of a stable, and a Child born in a stable who had taught the race to turn every sorrow into glory.

The night sent its quiet through the attic, though the bells which had clamored so over the destruction of verdure and homes appeared now to clamor louder over the destruction of youth.

"Do you understand this, Peggy? They died heretic and unblessed, yet I want to know what they now know until it seems to me I cannot wait. When I have been playing the harp to tante-gra'mere, and thinking so much, long, long afternoons, such a strange homesickness has grown in me. I could not make anybody believe it if I told it. These two have found out what is beyond. They have found out the great secret. Oh, Peggy, I do want to know it, also. There will be an awful mourning over them; and when they go into their little earthen cellars, people will pity that, and say, 'Poor things.' But they know the mystery of the ages now, and we know nothing. Do you think they are yet very far away? Monsieur Reece? Mademoiselle?"

Angelique's low interrogating call, made while she keenly listened with lifted face, had its only response in a mutter from Wachique, who feared any invocation of spirits. Peggy sat looking straight ahead of her without a word. She could not wash her face soft with tears, and she felt no reaching out towards disembodiment. What she wanted was love in this world, and pride in her love; long years of glad living on the verdure of earth in the light of the sun. One presence could make the common old world celestial enough for her. She had missed her desire. But Rice had turned his face to her as he died.

Two boats moved to the eaves and rested there, shaken only by a ripple of the quieting water. The overflowed rivers would lie calm when the wind allowed it, excepting where a boiling current drove. The dazed girls yet seemed to dream through the strong indignation and the inquiry and fruitless plans of arriving men. It was a dream when Captain Saucier sat down and stared haggardly at the two who had perished under his roof, and Colonel Menard stood with his hat over his face. It was a dream when the brother and sister were lowered and placed on one pallet in a boat. The hollow of the

rafters, the walls on which one might mark with his nail, the waiting black faces, the figures toiling down the roof with those loads,—were any of these sights real?

Page 53

"Wrap yourselves," said Captain Saucier to Peggy and Angelique. "The other boat is quite ready for you."

"But, papa, are Monsieur Reece and his sister going alone with the rowers?"

"I am myself going with them."

"Papa," urged Angelique, "Mademoiselle Zhone was a young girl. If I were in her place, would you not like to have some young girl sit by my head?"

"But you cannot go."

"No, but Peggy can."

"Peggy would rather go with you."

"I am sure she will do it."

"Will you, Peggy?"

"Yes, I will."

So Angelique wrapped Peggy first, and went with her as far as the window. It was the window through which Dr. Dunlap had stepped.

"Good-by, dear Peggy," whispered Angelique; for the other seemed starting on the main journey of her life.

"Good-by, dear Angelique."

Peggy's eyes were tearless still, but she looked and looked at Angelique, and looked back mutely again when she sat at Rice's head in the boat. She had him to herself. Between the water and the sky, and within the dim horizon band, she could be alone with him. He was her own while the boat felt its way across the waste. The rowers sat on a bench over the foot of the pallet. Captain Saucier was obliged to steer. Peggy sat in the prow, and while they struggled against the rivers, she looked with the proud courage of a Morrison at her dead whom she must never claim again.

The colonel put Angelique first into the waiting boat. Wachique was set in front of her, to receive tante-gra'mere when the potentate's chrysalid should be lowered. For the first time in her life Angelique leaned back, letting slip from herself all responsibility. Colonel Menard could bring her great-grand-aunt out. The sense of moving in a picture, of not feeling what she handled, and of being cut off from the realities of life followed Angelique into the boat. She was worn to exhaustion. Her torpid pulses owned the chill upon the waters.

There was room in which a few of the little blacks might be stowed without annoying tante-gra'mere, but their mothers begged to keep them until all could go together.

"Now, my children," said Colonel Menard, "have patience for another hour or two, when the boats shall return and bring you all off. The house is safe; there is no longer a strong wind driving waves over it. A few people in Kaskaskia have had to sit on their roofs since the water rose."

Achille promised to take charge of his master's household. But one of the women pointed to the stain on the floor. The lantern yet burned at the head of Rice's deserted pillows. Superstition began to rise from that spot. They no longer had Angelique among them, with her atmosphere of invisible angels.

"That is the blood of the best man in the Territory," said Colonel Menard. "I would give much more of my own to bring back the man who spilled it. Are you afraid of a mere blood-spot in the gray of the morning? Go into the other room and fasten the door, then. Achille will show you that he can stay here alone."

Page 54

"If mo'sieu' the colonel would let me go into that room, too"—

"Go in, Achille," said the colonel indulgently.

Colonel Menard made short work of embarking tante-gra'mere. In emergencies, he was deft and delicate with his hands. She never knew who caught her in coverlets and did her up like a papoose, with a pillow under her head.

"Pull westward to the next street," he gave orders to his oarsmen. "We found it easy going with the current that way. It will double the distance, but give us less trouble to get into dead water the other side of the Okaw."

Early summer dawn was breaking over that deluged world, a whiter light than moonshine giving increasing distinctness to every object. This hint of day gave rest to the tired ringers in church tower and convent belfry. The bells died away, and stillness brooded on the water plain. Hoarse roaring of the yellow current became a mere monotonous background for other sounds. A breath stole from the east, bringing the scent of rain-washed earth and foliage and sweet mints. There was no other wind; and the boat shot easily on its course alongside a thicket made by orchard treetops. Some birds, maybe proprietors of drowned nests, were already complaining over these, or toppling experimentally down on branch tips.

Kaskaskia had become a strange half-town, cut off around its middle. It affected one like a man standing on his armpits. The capital of the Territory was composed chiefly of roofs and dormer windows, of squatty wooden islands in a boundless sea. The Church of the Immaculate Conception was a laughable tent of masonry, top-heavy with its square tower. As for cultivated fields and the pastures where the cattle grazed, such vanished realities were forgotten. And what was washing over the marble tombs and slate crosses in the churchyard?

The flood strangely lifted and forced skyward the plane of life, yet lowered all life's functions. An open and liberal sky, dappling with a promise from the east, bent over and mocked paralyzed humanity.

The noble bluffs had become a sunken ridge, water meeting the forests a little below their waists. From their coverts boats could now be seen putting out in every direction, and, though the morning star was paling, each carried a light. They were like a party of belated fireflies escaping from daylight. Faces in dormer windows waited for them. Down by the Jesuit College weak hurrahs arose from people on roofs.

"The governor has come with help for us," said Pierre Menard.

In this dead world of Kaskaskia not a dog barked; not one of the shortened chimney-stacks smoked. Some of the houses had their casements closed in terrible silence; but

out of others neighbors looked and greeted Angelique in the abashed way peculiar to people who have not got used to an amputation, and are sensitive about their new appearance in the world. Heads leaned out, also, firing jokes after the boat, and offering the colonel large shares in the common fields and entire crops for a seat in his conveyance.

Page 55

Drift of rotten wood stuck to the house sides, and broken trees or stumps, jammed under gallery roofs, resented the current, and broke the surface as they rose and dipped. Strange craft, large and small, rode down the turgid sweep. Straw beehives rolled along like gigantic pine cones, and rustic hencoops of bottom-land settlers kept their balance as they moved. Far off, a cart could be outlined making a hopeless ford. The current was so broad that its sweep extended beyond the reach of sight; and perhaps the strangest object carried by this tremendous force was a small clapboarded house. Its back and front doors stood open, and in the middle of the floor stood a solitary chair. One expected to see a figure emerge from a hidden corner and sit down forlornly in the chair.

The slender voice of a violin stole across the water,—an exorcism of the spell that had fallen on Kaskaskia. As the boat reached the tavern corner, this thread of melody was easily followed to the ballroom on the second floor of the tavern, where the Assembly balls were danced. A slave, who had nothing but his daily bread to lose, and who would be assured of that by the hand of charity when his master could no longer maintain him, might take up the bow and touch the fiddle gayly in such a time of general calamity. But there was also dancing in the ballroom. The boat turned south and shot down a canal bordered by trunkless shade trees, which had been one of the principal streets of Kaskaskia. At the instant of turning, however, Father Baby could be seen as he whirled, though his skinny head and gray capote need not have added their evidence to the exact sound of his foot which came so distinctly across the water. His little shop, his goods, his secret stocking-leg of coin,—for Father Baby was his own banker,—were buried out of sight. His crop in the common fields and provision for winter lay also under the Mississippi. His late lodger had taken to the river, and was probably drowned. He had no warrant except in the nimbleness of his slave's legs that he even had a slave left. Yet he had never in his life felt so full of dance. The flood mounted to his head like wine. Father Olivier was in the tavern without forbidding it. Doubtless he thought the example an exhilarating one, when a grown-up child could dance over material loss, remembering only the joy of life.

Wachique had felt her bundle squirm from the moment it was given to her. She enlarged on the hint Colonel Menard had given, and held the drapery bound tightly around the prisoner. The boat shot past the church, and over the spot where St. John's bonfire had so recently burnt out, and across that street through which the girls had scampered on their Midsummer Night errand.

"But stop," said Colonel Menard; and he pointed out to the rowers an obstruction which none of them had seen in the night. From the Jesuit College across the true bed of the Okaw a dam had formed, probably having for its base part of the bridge masonry. Whole trees were swept into the barricade. "We cannot now cross diagonally and come back through the dead water at our leisure, for there is that dam to be passed. Pull for the old college."

Page 56

The boat was therefore turned, and thus took the same course that the girls had taken. The current was at right angles with its advance, though the houses on the north somewhat broke that force. The roofless building, ridiculously shortened in its height, had more the look of a fortress than when it was used as one. The walls had been washed out above both great entrances, making spacious jagged arches through which larger craft than theirs could pass. Colonel Menard was quick to see this; he steered and directed his men accordingly. The Jesuit College was too well built to crumble on the heads of chance passers, though the wind and the flood had battered it; to row through it would shorten their course.

Angelique did not say a word about the changed aspect of her world. A warmth in the pearly light over the bluffs promised a clear day: and how Kaskaskia would look with the sun shining on her predicament! The boat cut through braiding and twisting water, and shot into the college. Part of the building's upper floor remained; everything else was gone.

The walls threw a shadow upon them, and the green flicker, dancing up and down as they disturbed the inclosure, played curiously on their faces. The stones suddenly echoed a slap. Tante-gra'mere's struggling wrath, which Wachique had tried to keep bound in the coverlet, having found an outlet, was swift as lightning in its reprisal. The stings of the whiplash had exhilaration and dignity compared to this attack. It was the climax of her midget rages. She forgot the breeding of a gentlewoman, and furiously struck her slave in the face.

Wachique started up, her Pottawatomie blood painting her cheek bones. That instant she was an Indian, not a slave. She remembered everything this petted despot had done to her, and, lifting her bundle, threw it as far as her arms could send it across the water floor of the college. The pitiful little weight sunk with a gurgling sound.

"Sit down, woman!" shouted Colonel Menard.

Wachique cowered, and tried to obey. But the motion she had given the boat was not to be overcome. It careened, and the water rushed over their knees, filled it full, and became a whirlpool of grasping hands and choking heads.

The overturned boat, wedged partially under the flooring, lodged against the eastern wall. Both negro rowers came up from their plunge and climbed like cats upon this platform, smearing a mire of sodden plastering over their homespun trousers as they crawled. One of them reached down and caught the half-breed by the hair, as she rose at the edge of the flooring. Between them they were able to draw her up.

Page 57

The shock of a cold flood around Angelique's ears sent life as vivid as fire through her brain. The exhaustion and stupor of the night were gone. She felt her body swallowed. It went down to the floor where the girls had walked when they chanted, "Hempseed, I sow thee." It rose, and all the rapturous advantage which there was in continuing to inhabit it took mighty possession of her. She was so healthily, so happily lodged. It was a sin to say she was longing for the mystery hereafter, when all the beautiful mysteries here were unknown to her. Then Colonel Menard was holding her up, and she was dragged to sight and breathing once more, and to a solid support under her melting life. She lay on the floor, seeing the open sky above her, conscious that streams of water poured from her clothes and her hair, ran down her face, and dripped from her ears. A slow terror which had underlain all these physical perceptions now burst from her thoughts like flame. Her great-grand-aunt, the infant of the house, was all this time lying at the bottom of the old college. It was really not a minute, but minutes are long to the drowning. Angelique caught her breath, saying, "Tante-gra'mere!" She heard a plunge, and knew that Colonel Menard had stood on the platform only long enough to cast aside his coat and shoes before he dived.

The slaves, supporting themselves on their palms, stretched forward, open-mouthed. There was the rippling surface, carrying the shadow of the walls. Nothing came up. A cow could be heard lowing on the bluffs to her lost calf. The morning twitter of birds became an aggressive and sickening sound.

"Where is he?" demanded Angelique, creeping also to her trembling knees. "Where is monsieur the colonel?"

Both men gave her the silent, frightened testimony of their rolling eyes, but Wachique lay along the floor with hidden face. Not a bubble broke the yellow sheet smothering and keeping him down.

As the driving of steel it went through Angelique that the aching and passion and ferocity which rose in her were love. She loved that man under the water; she so loved him that she must go down after him; for what was life, with him there? She must have loved him when she was a child, and he used to take off his hat to her, saying, "Good-day, mademoiselle." She must have felt a childish jealousy of the woman called Madame Menard, who had once owned him,—had owned the very coloring of his face, the laugh in his eye, the mastery of his presence among men. She loved Colonel Menard—and he was gone.

"Turn over the boat!" screamed Angelique. "He is caught in the cellars of this old house, —the floors are broken. We must find him. He will never come up."

The men, ready to do anything which was suggested to their slow minds, made haste to creep along the weakened flooring, which shook as they moved, and to push the boat

from its lodgment. The oars were fast in the rowlocks, and stuck against beams or stones, and made hard work of getting the boat righted.

Page 58

"Why does he not come up? Does any one stay under water as long as this? Oh, be quick! Turn it,—turn it over!" Angelique reached down with the men to grasp the slippery boat, her vivid will giving their clumsiness direction and force. They got it free and turned it, dipping a little water as they did so; but she let herself into its wet hollow and bailed that out with her hands. The two dropped directly after her, and with one push of the oars sent the boat over the spot where Colonel Menard had gone down.

"Which of you will go in?"

"Ma'amselle, I can't swim," piteously declared the older negro.

"Neither can I, ma'amselle," pleaded the other.

"Then I shall have to go in myself. I cannot swim, either, and I shall die, but I cannot help it."

The desperate and useless impulse which so often perishes in words returned upon her with its absurdity as she stared down, trying to part the muddy atoms of the Mississippi. The men held the boat in a scarcely visible stream moving from west to east through the gaps in the building. They eyed her, waiting the motions of the Caucasian mind, but dumbly certain it was their duty to seize her if she tried to throw herself in.

They waited until Angelique hid her face upon a bench, shivering in her clinging garments with a chill which was colder than any the river gave. A ghostly shadow of themselves and the boat and the collapsed figure of the girl began to grow upon the water. More stones in the moist walls showed glistening surfaces as the light mounted. The fact that they had lost their master, that his household was without a head, that the calamity of Kaskaskia involved their future, then took possession of both poor fellows, and the great heart of Africa shook the boat with sobs and groans and useless cries for help.

"Come out here, you black rascals!" called a voice from the log dam.

Angelique lifted her head. Colonel Menard was in plain sight, resting his arms across a tree, and propping a sodden bundle on branches. Neither Angelique nor his men had turned a glance through the eastern gap, or thought of the stream sweeping to the dam. The spot where he sank, the broken floor, the inclosing walls, were their absorbing boundaries as to his fate. As the slaves saw him, a droll and sheepish look came on their faces at having wailed his death in his living ears. They shot through the door vigorously, and brought the boat with care alongside the trunk supporting him.

The colonel let them take tante-gra'mere in. He was exhausted. One arm and his cheek sunk on the side of the boat, and they drew him across it, steadying themselves by the foliage upreared by the tree.

He opened his eyes, and saw rose and pearl streaks in the sky. The sun was mounting behind the bluffs. Then a canopy of leaves intervened, and a whirl of bird wings came to his ears. The boat had reached dead water, and was moving over the submerged roadbed, and groping betwixt the stems of great pecan-trees,—the great pecan-trees which stood sentinel on the river borders of his estate. He noticed how the broken limbs flourished in the water, every leaf satisfied with the moisture it drew.

Page 59

The colonel realized that he was lying flat in a boat which had not been bailed dry, and that his head rested on wet homespun, by its odor belonging to Louis or Jacques; and he saw their black naked arms paddling with the oars. Beyond them he saw Wachique holding her mistress carefully and unrestrained; and the negro in her quailed before him at the deed the Indian had done, scarcely comforted by the twinkle in the colonel's eye. Tante-gra'mere was sitting up meekly, less affected by dampness than anybody else in the boat. She had a fresh and toughened look. Her baptism in the rivers had perhaps renewed her for another century.

"Madame, you are certainly the most remarkable woman in this Territory. You have borne this night marvelously well, and the accident of the boat even better."

"Not at all, monsieur the colonel."

She spoke as children do when effectually punished for ill temper.

"Are you cold?"

"I am wet, monsieur. We are all wet. It is indeed a time of flood."

"We shall soon see a blazing fire and a hot breakfast, and all the garments in the country will be ours without asking."

The colonel raised himself on his elbow and looked around. Angelique sat beside his head; so close that they both blushed.

They were not wet nor chilled nor hungry. They had not looked on death nor felt the shadow of eternity. The sweet mystery of continued life was before them. The flood, like a sea of glass, spread itself to the thousand footsteps of the sun.

Tante-gra'mere kept her eyes upon them. But it is not easy to hear what people say when you are riding among treetops and bird's-nests in the early morning.

"Mademoiselle, we are nearly home."

"Yes, monsieur."

"It has been to me a great night."

"I can understand that, monsieur."

"The children will be dancing when they see you. Odile and Pierre were awake, and they both cried when the first boat came home last night without you."

"Monsieur the colonel, you are too good to us."



“Angelique, do you love me?”

“It is true, monsieur.”

“But it must be owned I am a dozen years older than you, and I have loved before.”

“I never have.”

“Does it not seem a pity, then, that you who have had the pick of the Territory should become the second wife of Pierre Menard?”

“I should rather be the second choice with you, monsieur, than the first choice of any other man in the Territory.”

“Mademoiselle, I adore you.”

“That remains to be seen, monsieur.”

“What did you think when I was under water?”

“I did not think, monsieur. I perished. It was then you conquered me.”

“Good. I will take to the water whenever any little difference arises between us. It is a lucky thing for me that I am a practiced river man.”

Page 60

"I do not say it could be done again. Never will there be such another night and morning."

"Now see how it is with nature, Angelique. Life is always rising out of death. This affair of ours,—I call it a lily growing out of the water. Does it trouble you that your old home is out there standing almost to its eaves in the Mississippi?"

"Papa cannot now give me so good a dower." The girl's lowered eyes laughed into his.

"We will not have any settlements or any dower. We will be married in this new American way. Everything I have left from this flood will be yours and the children's, anyhow. But while there is game in the woods, or bacon in the cellar, or flour in the bin, or wine to be tapped, or a cup of milk left, not a child or woman or man shall go hungry. I was not unprepared for this. My fur storehouse there on the bank of the Okaw is empty. At the first rumor of high water I had the skins carried to the strong-house on the hill."

Angelique's wet hair still clung to her forehead, but her warmth had returned with a glow. The colonel was a compact man, who had passed through water as his own element. To be dripping was no hindrance to his courtship.

"When may we celebrate the marriage?"

"Is it a time to speak of marriage when two are lying dead in the house?"

His countenance changed at the rebuke, and, as all fortunate people do when they have passed the selfish fury of youth, he apologized for success.

"It is true. And Reece Zhone was the only man in the Territory whom I feared as a rival. As soon as he is laid low I forget him. He would not so soon forget me. Yet I do not forget him. The whole Illinois Territory will remember him. But Reece Zhone himself would not blame me, when I am bringing you home to my house, for hinting that I hope to keep you there."

"To keep me there, monsieur the colonel! No, I am not to be married in a hurry."

"But I made my proposals months ago, Angelique. The children and I have long had our secrets about bringing you home. Two of them sit on my knee and two of them climb my back, and we talk it over. They will not let you leave the house alive, mademoiselle. Father Olivier will still celebrate the sacraments among us. Kaskaskia will have the consolations of religion for this flood; but I may not have the consolation of knowing my own wedding-day."

"The church is now half full of water."

“Must I first bail out the church?”

“I draw the line there, monsieur the colonel. You are a prevailing man. You will doubtless wind me around your thumb as you do the Indians. But when I am married, I will be married in church, and sign the register in the old way. What, monsieur, do you think the water will never go down?”

“It will go down, yes, and the common fields will be the better for it. But it is hard a man should have to watch a river gauge to find out the date of his own wedding.”

Page 61

"Yet one would rather do that than never have a wedding at all."

"I kiss your hand on that, mademoiselle."

"What are those little rings around the base of the trees, monsieur the colonel?"

"They are marks which show that the water is already falling. It must be two inches lower than last night on the Church of the Immaculate Conception. I am one sixth of a foot on my way toward matrimony."

A tent like a white blossom showed through the woods; then many more. The bluffs all about Pierre Menard's house were dotted with them. Boats could be seen coming back from the town, full of people. Two or three sails were tacking northward on that smooth and glistening fresh-water sea. Music came across it, meeting the rising sun; the nuns sang their matin service as they were rowed.

Angelique closed her eyes over tears. It seemed to her like floating into the next world,—in music, in soft shadow, in keen rapture,—seeing the light on the hills beyond while her beloved held her by the hand.

All day boats passed back and forth between the tented bluffs and the roofs of Kaskaskia, carrying the goods of a temporarily houseless people. At dusk, some jaded men came back—among them Captain Saucier and Colonel Menard—from searching overflow and uplands for Dr. Dunlap.

At dusk, also, the fireflies again scattered over the lake, without waiting for a belated moon. Jean Lozier stood at the top of the bluff, on his old mount of vision, and watched these boats finishing the work of the day. They carried the only lights now to be seen in Kaskaskia.

He was not excited by the swarming life just below him. His idea of Kaskaskia was not a buzzing encampment around a glittering seigniorly house, with the governor's presence giving it grandeur, and Rice Jones and his sister, waiting their temporary burial on the uplands, giving it awe. Old Kaskaskia had been over yonder, the place of his desires, his love. The glamour and beauty and story were on the smothered valley, and for him they could never be anywhere else.

Father Olivier came out on the bluff, and Jean at once pulled his cap off, and looked at the ground instead of at the pale green and wild-rose tints at the farther side of the world. They heard the soft wash of the flood. The priest bared his head to the evening air.

"My son, I am sorry your grandfather died last night, while I was unable to reach him."

"Yes, father."

“You have been a good son. Your conscience acquits you. And now the time has come when you are free to go anywhere you please.”

Jean looked over the flood.

“But there’s no place to go to now, father. I was waiting for Kaskaskia, and Kaskaskia is gone.”

“Not gone, my son. The water will soon recede. The people will return to their homes. Kaskaskia will be the capital of the new State yet.”

“Yes, father,” said Jean dejectedly. He waited until the priest sauntered away. It was not for him to contradict a priest. But watching humid darkness grow over the place where Kaskaskia had been, he told himself in repeated whispers,—

Page 62

"It'll never be the same again. Old Kaskaskia is gone. Just when I am ready to go there, there is no Kaskaskia to go to."

Jean sat down, and propped his elbows on his knees and his face in his hands, as tender a spirit as ever brooded over ruin. He thought he could bear the bereavement better if battle and fire had swept it away; but to see it lying drowned before him made his heart a clod.

Singly and in bunches the lantern-bearing boats came home to their shelter in the pecan-trees, leaving the engulfed plain to starlight. No lamp was seen, no music tinkled there; in the water streets the evening wind made tiny tracks, and then it also deserted the town, leaving the liquid sheet drawn and fitted smoothly to place. Nothing but water, north, west, and south; a vast plain reflecting stars, and here and there showing spots like burnished shields. The grotesque halves of buildings in its foreground became as insignificant as flecks of shadow. The sky was a clear blue dome, the vaporous folds of the Milky Way seeming to drift across it in indistinct light.

Now, above the flowing whisper of the inland sea, Jean Lozier could hear other sounds. Thunder began in the north, and rolled with its cloud toward the point where Okaw and Mississippi met; shaggy lowered heads and flying tails and a thousand hoofs swept past him; and after them fleet naked men, who made themselves one with the horses they rode. The buffalo herds were flying before their hunters. He heard bowstrings twang, and saw great creatures stagger and fall headlong, and lie panting in the long grass.

Then pale blue wood smoke unfolded itself upward, and the lodges were spread, and there was Cascasquia of the Illinois. Black gowns came down the northern trail, and a cross was set up.

The lodges passed into wide dormered homesteads, and bowers of foliage promised the fruits of Europe among old forest trees. Jean heard the drum, and saw white uniforms moving back and forth, and gun barrels glistening, and the lilies of France floating over expeditions which put out to the south. This was Kaskaskia. The traffic of the West gathered to it. Men and women crossed the wilderness to find the charm of life there; the waterways and a north trail as firm as a Roman road bringing them easily in. Neyon de Villiers lifted the hat from his fine gray head and saluted society there; and the sulky figure of Pontiac stalked abroad. Fort Gage, and the scarlet uniform of Great Britain, and a new flag bearing thirteen stripes swam past Jean's eyes. The old French days were gone, but the new American days, blending the gathered races into one, were better still. Kaskaskia was a seat of government, a Western republic, rich and merry and generous and eloquent, with the great river and the world at her feet. The hum of traffic came up to Jean. He saw the beautiful children of gently nurtured mothers; he saw the men who moulded public opinion; he saw brawny white-clothed slaves; he saw the crowded wharf, the bridge with long rays of motes stretching across it from the low-lying sun.

Page 63

Now it disappeared. The weird, lonesome flood spread where that city of his desires had been.

“Kaskaskia is gone. ‘But the glory remains when the light fades away.’”