





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2007 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation













“ SHE STOOD LIKE A BRONZE. GABRIEL WAS BESIDE HER, HIS NAKED  
CUTLASS IN HIS HAND.”

[Page 64.]

# YOUMA

THE STORY OF A WEST-INDIAN SLAVE

BY

LAFCADIO HEARN

AUTHOR OF "TWO YEARS IN THE FRENCH WEST INDIES"  
"CHITA" ETC.



NEW YORK

HARPER & BROTHERS, FRANKLIN SQUARE



Copyright, 1890, by HARPER & BROTHERS.

*All rights reserved.*

PS  
1917  
76

L-P

To my friend

JOSEPH S. TUNISON



## YOU MA.

---

THE *da*, during old colonial days, often held high rank in rich Martinique households. The *da* was usually a Creole negress,—more often, at all events, of the darker than of the lighter hue,—more commonly a *capresse* than a *mestive*; but in her particular case the prejudice of color did not exist. The *da* was a slave; but no freedwoman, however beautiful or cultivated, could enjoy social privileges equal to those of certain *das*. The *da* was respected and loved as a mother: she was at once a foster-mother and nurse. For the Creole child had two mothers:

the aristocratic white mother who gave him birth; the dark bond-mother who gave him all care, — who nursed him, bathed him, taught him to speak the soft and musical speech of slaves, took him out in her arms to show him the beautiful tropic world, told him wonderful folk-stories of evenings, lulled him to sleep, attended to his every possible want by day or by night. It was not to be wondered at that during infancy the *da* should have been loved more than the white mother: when there was any marked preference it was nearly always in the *da's* favor. The child was much more with her than with his real mother: she alone satisfied all his little needs; he found her more indulgent, more patient, perhaps even more caressing, than the other. The *da* was herself at heart a child, speaking a child-language, finding

pleasure in childish things,—artless, playful, affectionate; she comprehended the thoughts, the impulses, the pains, the faults of the little one as the white mother could not always have done: she knew intuitively how to soothe him upon all occasions, how to amuse him, how to excite and caress his imagination;—there was absolute harmony between their natures,—a happy community of likes and dislikes,—a perfect sympathy in the animal joy of being. Later on, when the child had become old enough to receive his first lessons from a tutor or governess, to learn to speak French, the affection for the *da* and the affection for the mother began to differentiate in accordance with mental expansion; but, though the mother might be more loved, the *da* was not less cherished than before. The love of the nurse lasted through life; and the

relation of the *da* to the family seldom ceased,—except in those cruel instances where she was only “hired” from another slave-holder.

In many cases the family *da* had been born upon the estate:—under the same roof she might serve as nurse for two generations. More often it would happen, that as the family multiplied and divided,—as the sons and daughters, growing up, became themselves fathers and mothers,—she would care for all their children in turn. She ended her days with her masters: although she was legally property, it would have been deemed almost an infamy to sell her. When freed by gratitude—*pour services rendus*,—she did not care to make a home of her own: freedom had small value for her except in the event of her outliving those to whom she was attached. She had children of

her own, for whom she would have desired freedom rather than for herself, and for whom she might rightfully ask it, since she had sacrificed so much of her own maternal pleasures for the sake of others' children. She was unselfish and devoted to a degree which compelled gratitude even from natures of iron;—she represented the highest development of natural goodness possible in a race mentally undeveloped, kept half savage by subservience, but physically refined in a remarkable manner by climate, environment, and all those mysterious influences which form the characteristics of Creole peoples.

The *da* is already of the past. Her special type was a product of slavery, largely created by selection: the one creation of slavery perhaps not unworthy of regret,—one strange flowering amid all the rank dark growths of that bitter soil.

The atmosphere of freedom was not essentially fatal to the permanence of the type; but with freedom came many unlooked-for changes: a great industrial depression due to foreign rivalry and new discoveries,—a commercial crisis, in brief,—accompanied the establishment of universal suffrage, the subordination of the white element to the black by a political upheaval, and the total disintegration of the old social structure. The transformation was too violent for good results; the abuse of political powers too speedily and indiscriminately conferred, intensified the old hates and evolved new ones: the races drew forever apart when they needed each other most. Then the increasing difficulty of existence quickly developed egotism: generosity and prosperity departed together; Creole life shrank into narrower channels; and the character of

all classes visibly hardened under pressure of necessities previously unknown.

. . . . There are really no more *das*: there are now only *gardiennes* or *bonnes*—nurses who can seldom keep a place more than three months. The loyalty and simplicity of the *da* have become traditions: vain to seek for any parallels among the new generation of salaried domestics! But of those who used to be *das*, several survive, and still bear the name, which, once conferred, is retained through life as an honorific title. Some are yet to be seen in Saint Pierre. . . . There is a very fine house on the seaward side of the Grande Rue, for example, on whose marble door-step one may be observed almost every fine morning,—a very aged negress, who loves the sun. That is Da Siyotte. Gentlemen of wealth and high position, merchants and judges,

salute her as they pass by. You might see the men of the family,—the gray old father and his handsome sons,—pause to chat a moment with her before going to their offices. You might see young ladies bend down and kiss her before taking their places in the carriage for a drive. You would find,—could you linger long enough,—that all visitors greet her with a smile, and a kindly query:—“*Coument ou yé, Da Siyotte?*” . . . . Woe to the stranger who should speak rudely to her, under the impression that she is only a servant! . . . . “*Si elle n'est qu'une domestique,*” said the master of the house, rebuking such a one,—“*alors vous n'êtes qu'un valet!*” For to insult the *da*, is to insult the household. When she dies, she will have such a funeral as money alone could not obtain,—a funeral of the *première classe*, attended by the richest and

proudest of the city. There are planters who will ride that day twenty miles over the mornes to act as pall-bearers. There are ladies who rarely tread pavement, who seldom go out except in their own vehicles,—but who will follow the coffin of that old negress on foot, in the hot sun, all the way to the *Cimetière du Mouillage*. And they will inter their *da* in the family vault, while the crowns of the great palms quiver to the *bourdon*.

## I.

THERE are old persons still living in Saint Pierre who remember Youma, a tall *capresse*, the property of Madame Léonie Peyronnette. The servant was better known than the mistress;—for Madame Peyronnette went out little after the loss of her husband, a wealthy merchant, who had left her in more than comfortable circumstances.

Youma was a pet slave, and also the godchild of Madame Peyronnette: it was not uncommon during the old régime for Creole ladies to become godmothers of little slaves. Douceline, the mother of Youma, had been purchased as a *da* for Madame Peyronnette's only child, Aimée—and had died when Aimée was nearly

five years old. The two children were nearly the same age, and seemed much attached to each other: after Douceline's death, Madame Peyronnette resolved to bring up the little capresse as a playmate for her daughter.

The dispositions of the two children were noticeably different; and with their growth, the difference became more marked. Aimée was demonstrative and affectionate, sensitive and passionate,—quick to veer from joy to grief, from tears to smiles. Youma, on the contrary, was almost taciturn, seldom betrayed emotion: she would play silently when Aimée screamed, and scarcely smile when Aimée laughed so violently as to frighten her mother. In spite of these differences of organization, or perhaps because of them, the two got along together very well: they had never a serious quarrel, and were first

separated only when Aimée, at the age of nine, was sent to a convent to receive an education more finished than it was thought that private teachers were capable of giving. Aimée's grief at parting from her playmate was not assuaged by the assurance that she would find at school nicer companions than a young capresse ;—Youma, who had certainly more to lose by the change, remained outwardly calm,—“*était d'une conduite irréprochable,*” said Madame Peyronnette, too fine an observer to attribute the “irreproachable conduct” to insensibility.

The friends continued to see each other, however ; for Madame Peyronnette drove to the convent in her carriage regularly every Sunday, always taking Youma with her ; and Aimée seemed scarcely less delighted to see her former playmate than to see her mother. During the first sum-

mer vacation and the Christmas holidays, the companionship of childhood was naïvely resumed; and the mutual affection survived the subsequent natural change of relation: though nominally a *bonne*, who addressed Aimée as a mistress, Youma was treated almost as a foster-sister. And when Mademoiselle had finished her studies, the young slave-maid remained her confidante, and to some extent her companion. Youma had never learned to read and write; Madame Peyronnette believed that to educate her would only make her dissatisfied with the scope of a destiny out of which no effort could elevate her; but the girl had a natural intelligence which compensated her lack of mental training in many respects: she knew what to do and how to speak upon all occasions. She had grown up into a superb woman,—certainly the finest ca-

presse of the arrondissement. Her tint was a clear deep red;—there was in her features a soft vague beauty,—a something that suggested the indefinable face of the Sphinx, especially in profile;—her hair, though curly as a black fleece, was long and not uncomely; she was graceful furthermore, and very tall. At fifteen she had seemed a woman; at eighteen she was taller by head and shoulders than her young mistress; and Mademoiselle Aimée, though not below the average stature, had to lift up her eyes, when they walked out together, to look into Youma's face. The young *bonne* was universally admired: she was one of those figures that a Martiniquais would point out with pride to a stranger as a type of the beauty of the mixed race. Even in slave days, the Creole did not refuse himself the pleasure of admiring in human

skin those tones none fear to praise in bronze or gold: he frankly confessed them exquisite;—æsthetically, his “color prejudice” had no existence. There were few young whites, nevertheless, who would have presumed to tell their admiration to Youma: there was something in the eyes and the serious manner of the young slave that protected her quite as much as the moral power of the family in which she had been brought up.

Madame Peyronnette was proud of her servant, and took pleasure in seeing her attired as handsomely as possible in the brilliant and graceful costume then worn by the women of color. In regard to dress, Youma had no reason to envy any of the freed class: she had all that a capresse could wish to wear, according to local ideas of color contrast,—*jupes* of silk and of satin,—*robes-dézindes* with

head-dresses and foulards to match,— azure with orange, red with violet, yellow with bright blue, green with rose. On particular occasions, such as the first communion of Aimée, the *fête* of madame, a ball, a wedding to which the family were invited, Youma's costume was magnificent. With her trailing *jupe* of orange satin attached just below the bosom, and exposing above it the laced and embroidered chemise, with half-sleeves leaving the braceleted arms bare, and fastened at the elbow with gold clasps (*boutons-à-clous*);—her neck-kerchief (*mouchouè-en-lai*) of canary yellow striped with green and blue;—her triple necklace of graven gold beads (*collier-chou*);—her flashing ear-pendants (*zanneaux-à-clou*), each a packet of thick gold cylinders interjoined;—her yellow-banded Madras turban, dazzling with jewelry,—“trembling-pins,”

chainlets, quivering acorns of gold (*broches-à-gland*),—she might have posed to a painter for the Queen of Sheba. There were various pretty presents from Aimée among Youma's ornaments; but the greater part of the jewelry had been purchased for her by Madame Peyronnette, in a series of New-Year gifts. Youma was denied no pleasure which it was thought she might reasonably wish for,—except liberty.

Perhaps Youma had never given herself any trouble on the subject; but Madame Peyronnette had thought a good deal about it, and had made up her mind. Twice she refused the girl's liberty to Mademoiselle Aimée, in spite of earnest prayers and tears. The refusal was prompted by motives which Aimée was then too young fully to comprehend. Madame Peyronnette's real intention was

that Youma should be enfranchised so soon as it could render her any happier to be free. For the time being, her slavery was a moral protection: it kept her legally under the control of those who loved her most; it guarded her against dangers she yet knew nothing of;—above all, it prevented the possibility of her forming a union not approved by her mistress. The godmother had plans of her own for the girl's future: she intended that Youma should one day marry a thrifty and industrious freedman,—somebody able to make a good home for her, a shipwright, cabinet-maker, builder, master mechanic of some kind;—and in such an event she was to have her liberty,—perhaps a small dowry besides. In the meanwhile she was certainly as happy as it was possible to make her.

. . . . At nineteen Aimée made a love-

match,—marrying M. Louis Desrivères, a distant cousin, some ten years older. M. Desrivères had inherited a prosperous estate on the east coast; but, like many wealthy planters, passed the greater part of the year by preference in the city; and it was to his mother's residence in the Quartier du Fort that he led his young bride. Youma, in accordance with Aimée's wish, accompanied her to her new home. It was not so far from Madame Peyronnette's dwelling in the Grande Rue to the home of the Desrivères in the Rue de la Consolation that either the daughter or the goddaughter could find the separation painful.

. . . . Thirteen months later, Youma, attired like some Oriental princess, carried to the baptismal font a baby girl, whose advent into the little colonial world was recorded in the Archives de la Marine,—

“*Lucile-Aimée-Francillette-Marie, fille du sieur Raoul-Ernest-Louis Desrivières, et de dame Adélaïde-Hortense-Aimée Peyronnette.*” Then Youma became the *da* of little Mayotte. It is by the last of the names conferred at christening that the child is generally called and known,—or, rather, by some Creole diminutive of that name. . . . The diminutive of Marie is Mayotte.

In both families Mayotte was thought to resemble her father more than her mother: she had his gray eyes, and brown hair,—that bright hair which with children of the older colonial families darkens to apparent black as they grow up. She gave promise of becoming pretty.

Another year passed, during which no happier household could have been found: then, with cruel suddenness, Aimée was

taken away by death. She had gone out with her husband in an open carriage, for a drive on the beautiful mountain-route called *La Trace*; leaving Youma with the child at home. On their return journey, one of those chilly and torrential rains which at certain seasons accompany an unexpected storm, overtook them when far from any place of shelter, and in the middle of an afternoon that had been unusually warm. Both were drenched in a moment; and a strong north-east wind, springing up, blew full upon them the whole way home. The young wife, naturally delicate, was attacked with pleurisy; and in spite of all possible aid, expired before the next sunrise.

And Youma robed her for the last time, tenderly and deftly as she had robed her for her first ball in pale blue, and for her wedding day all in vapory white.

Only now, Aimée was robed all in black, as dead Creole mothers are.

M. Desrivères had loved his young wife passionately: he had married with a fresh heart, and a character little hardened by contact with the rougher side of existence. The trial was a terrible one;—for a time it was feared that he could not survive it. When he began at last to recover from the serious illness caused by his grief, he found it impossible to linger in his home, with its memories: he went as soon as possible to his plantation, and tried to busy himself there, making from time to time brief visits to the city to see his child, whom Madame Peyronnette insisted on caring for. But Mayotte proved delicate, like her mother; and during a season of epidemic, some six months later, Madame Peyronnette decided that it would be better to send her to the coun-

try, to her father, in charge of Youma. Anse-Marine was known to be one of the healthiest places in the colony; and the child began to gain strength there, as the sensitive - plant—*zhèbe-mamisé*—toughens in the warm sea-wind.

## II.

IT is a long ride from Saint Pierre over the mountains to the plantation of Anse-Marine,—formerly owned by the Desrivères; but the fatigue of six hours in the saddle under a tropic sun is not likely to be felt by one susceptible to those marvellous beauties in which the route abounds. Sometimes it rises almost to those white clouds that nearly always veil the heads of the great peaks;—sometimes it slopes down through the green twilight of primitive forests;—sometimes it overlooks vast depths of valley walled in by mountains of strange shapes and tints;—sometimes it winds over undulations of cane-covered land, beyond whose

yellow limit appears the vapory curve of an almost purple sea.

Perhaps, for hours together, you see no motion but that of leaves and their shadows,—hear only the sound of your horse's hoofs, or the papery rustling of cane waved by the wind,—or, from the verge of some green chasm veiled by tree-ferns, the long low flute-call of an unknown bird. But, sooner or later, at a turn of the way, you come upon something of more human interest,—some living incident full of exotic charm: such as a caravan of young colored girls, barefooted and bare-armed, transporting on their heads to market the produce of a *cacajère*; or a negro running by under an amazing load of bread-fruits or *régimes-bananes*.

Perhaps you may meet a troop of black men drawing to the coast upon a *diabe*

or "devil,"—which is a low strong vehicle with screaming axles,—a *gommier* already hollowed out and shapen for a canoe: those behind pushing, and those before pulling all together, while a drummer beats his *ka* on the bottom of the unfinished boat, to the measure of their song: "*Bom! ti canot!—allé châché!—méné vini!—Bom! ti canot!*". . . .

Or perhaps you encounter a band of woodmen, sawing into planks by the roadside some newly felled tree, with a core yellow as saffron, or vermilion-red,—a tree of which you do not know the name. It has been lifted upon a strong timber framework; and three men wield the long saw,—one above, two below,—all with their shirts off. The torso of the man above is orange-yellow: one of the sawyers below is cinnamon-color, the other a shining black as of lacquer: all are

sculpturally muscled; and they sing as they saw:—

“ Aïe ! dos calé,  
     Aïe !  
 Aïe ! dos calé !  
 Aïe, scié bois,  
     Aïe !  
 Pou nou allé.” . . .

. . . . Such incidents become rarer as you begin the long descent, through cane-fields and *cacaoyères*, from the wooded heights to the further sea,—leaving shadows and coolness behind to ride over lands all uncovered to the sun; but the immense peace charms like a caress, and the magnificent expansions of the view console for the seeming absence of human life. Behind you, and to north and south, the mornes heighten their semi-circle above the undulating leagues of yellow cane,—and beyond them sharper

summits loom, all violet,—and over the violet tower successive surgings of paler peaks and cusps and jagged ridges,—phantom blues and pearls. Before you, over the yellow miles, purples the far crescent of sea under its horizon curve,—a band of upward-fading opal light ;—and a strong warm wind is blowing in your face. You ride on, sometimes up a low wide hill, sometimes over a plateau,—more often down a broad incline,—the sea alternately vanishing and reappearing,—and leave the main road at last to follow a way previously hidden by rising ground,—a plantation road, bordered with cocoa-palms. It brings you by long windings, between canes that shut off the view on either hand, to one of the prettiest valleys in the world. At least you will deem it so, as you draw rein at the verge of a morne, to admire the almost perfect half-

round of softly wrinkled hills opening to the sea,—whose foam-line stretches like a snowy quivering thread between two green peaks, over a band of ebon beach;—and the golden expanse of canes below;—and the river dividing it, broadening between fringes of bamboo, to reach the breakers;—and the tenderness of shadows blue-tinted by vapors, the flickering of sunlight in the silver of cascades, the touching of sky and sea beyond all. Last, you will notice the plantation buildings on a knoll below, in a grove of cocoa-palms:—the long yellow-painted mill, with its rumbling water-wheel and tall chimney;—the *rhommerie*;—the sugar-house;—the village of thatched cabins, with banana leaves fluttering in tiny gardens;—the single-story residence of the planter, built to resist winds and earthquakes;—the cottage of the overseer;—the hurri-

cane-house, or *case-à-vent*;—and the white silhouette of a high wooden cross at the further entrance to the little settlement.

All this was once the property of the Desrivières,—the whole valley from shore to hill-top: the *atelier* numbered nearly one hundred and fifty hands. Since then, the plantation has been sold and resold many times,—exploited with varying fortune by foreigners as well as Creoles;—and nevertheless there have been so few changes that the place itself probably looks just as it looked fifty years, or even a hundred years ago.

But at the time when the Desrivières owned Anse-Marine, plantation life offered an aspect very different to that which it presents to-day. On this estate in particular, it was patriarchal and picturesque to a degree scarcely conceivable by one who knows the colony only since the pe-

riod inaugurated by emancipation. The slaves were treated very much like children: it was a traditional family policy to sell only those who could not be controlled without physical punishment. Each adult was allowed a small garden, which he might cultivate as he pleased,—half-days being allotted twice in every week for that purpose; and the larger part of the money received for the produce, the slave was permitted to retain. Legally a slave could own nothing, yet several of the Desrivères hands were known to have economized creditable sums, with the encouragement of their owner. Work was performed with song, to the music of the drum;—there were holidays, and evenings of privileged dancing. The great occasion of the year was the *fête* of Madame Desrivères, the mother of the young planter, the old mistress (*tétesse*),—a day

of *bamboulas* and *caleindas*,—when all the slaves were received by the lady on the veranda: each kissed her hand and each found in it a silver coin. But it was a delight for the visitor, especially if a European, to watch even the common incidents of this colonial country life, so full of exotic oddities and unconscious poetry.

The routine of each day opened with an amusing scene,—the morning inspection of the feet of the children. These, up to the age of nine or ten, had little to do but to play and eat. They were under the charge of the *infirmière*, Tanga, an old African woman, who, aided by her daughters, prepared their simple food, and looked after them while their mothers were in the fields. Soon after sunrise, Tanga, accompanied by the overseer, would assemble them, and make them sit down in line on the long plank benches

under the awning of the infirmary building: then at the command, "*Lévé piézautt!*" they would all hold up their little feet together, and the inspection would begin. Whenever Tanga's sharp eye detected the small round swelling which betrays the presence of a *chique*, the child was sent to the infirmary for immediate treatment, and the mother's name taken down by the overseer for reprimand,—every mother being held responsible for a *chique* allowed to remain in her child's foot overnight. There was so much tickling and laughing and screaming at these inspections, that Tanga always had to frighten the children several times before the examination could be finished.

Another morning scene of interest was the departure of a singing caravan of women and girls, carrying to market on their heads various products of the plan-

tation: cocoa, coffee, cassia; and fruits,—cocoa-nuts, and *mangues*, oranges and bananas, corossols (custard-apples) and “cinnamon-apples” (*pommes cannelles*).

Then a merry event, which occurred almost weekly, was the sortie of the gommier,—a huge canoe nearly sixty feet long, made from a single extraordinary tree. It had no rudder, but a bow at either end, so as to move equally well in either direction; and benches for a dozen paddlers, with a raised seat in the centre for a drummer. It had two *commandeurs*, one at each bow;—it could carry a dozen barrels of rum and six or seven casks of sugar;—and it was used chiefly for transporting these products to the small vessels from Saint Pierre, which dared not venture near the dangerous surf. The gommier itself could only be launched from a sloping cradle built expressly

for it over deep water in the hollow of a projecting cliff. When the freight had been stowed and the rowers were in their seats, the drummer beat a signal; blocks were removed, cables loosed, and the long craft shot into the sea,—all its paddles smiting the water simultaneously, in time to the rhythm of the *tamtam*, or the *tambou-belai*.

Every Sunday afternoon the Père Kerambrun came on horseback from the neighboring village to catechise the negro children. It was usually in the sugar house that he held his little class,—the broad doors being thrown open front and rear to admit the sea-breeze, and the sun would throw in spidery shadows of palm-heads on the floor. The old priest knew how to teach the little ones in their own tongue,—repeating over and over again each question and answer of the Creole

catechism, till the children learned them by heart, and could chant them like a refrain.

—“*Coument ou ka crié fi Bon-Dié?*” the father would ask. (How do you call the Son of the Good-God?)

Then all the child voices, repeating the question and its answer, would shrill in unison:—

—“*Coument ou ka crié fi Bon-Dié?—Nou ka crié li Zézou-Chri.*”

—“*Et ça y fai pou nou-zautt, fi Bon-Dié-à?*” (And what did He do for us, that Son of the good God?)

—“*Et ça y fai pou nou-zautt, fi Bon-Dié-à?—Li payé pou nou p'allé dans len-fé; li baill toutt sang-li pou ça.*” (He paid for us not to go to hell; He gave all His blood for that.)

—“*Et quilé priè qui pli meillè-adans toutt priè nou ka fai?*” (And what is

the best prayer among all the prayers we say?)

—“*Et quilé priè qui pli meillè adans toutt priè nou ka fai?—C’est Note Pè,*

—“*pace Zézou-Chri  
montré nou li !*”

—all would sing together. (It is the *Notre Père*,—the Lord’s prayer,—because Jesus Christ showed us how to say it.)

And at the end of each day’s task,—when the lambi-shell was blown for the last time to summon all from the fields and the mill buildings, there was the patriarchal spectacle of evening prayer,—an old colonial custom. The master and his overseer, standing by the cross erected before the little village of the plantation, waited for all the hands to assemble. Each man came, bearing the regulation bundle of forage for the animals, and lay-

ing the package of herbs before him, removed his hat. Then all, women and men, would kneel down and repeat in unison the *Je vous salue, Marie*, the *Notre Père*, and the Creed,—as the stars thrilled out, and the yellow glow died behind the peaks.

. . . . Often, when the nights were clear and warm, the slaves would assemble after the evening meal, to hear stories told by the *libres-de-savane* (old men and women exempted from physical labor),—those curious stories which composed the best part of the unwritten literature of a people forbidden to read. In those days, such oral literature gave delight to adults as well as to children, to *békés* as well as to negroes: it even exerted some visible influence upon colonial character. Every *da* was a story-teller. Her recitals first developed in the white child intrusted to

her care the power of fancy,—Africanizing it, perhaps, to a degree that after-education could not totally remove,—creating a love of the droll and the extraordinary. One did not weary of hearing these stories often repeated;—for they were told with an art impossible to describe; and the little songs or refrains belonging to each—sometimes composed of African words, more often of nonsense-rhymes imitating the *bamboula* chants and *caleinda* improvisations,—held a weird charm which great musicians have confessed. And furthermore, in these *contes créoles*,—whether of purely African invention, or merely African adaptation of old-world folk-lore and fable,—the local color is marvellous: there is such a reflection of colonial thought and life as no translation can preserve. The scenes are laid among West Indian woods and hills, or some-

times in the quaintest quarter of an old colonial port. The European cottage of folk-tale becomes the tropical *case* or *ajoupa*, with walls of bamboo and roof of dried cane-leaves ;—the Sleeping Beauties could never be discovered in their primeval forest but by some *nègue-marron* or *chasseuchou* ;—the Cinderellas and Princesses appear as beautiful half-breed girls, wearing a costume never seen in picture-books ;—the fairies of old-world myth are changed into the Bon-Dié or the Virgin Mary ;—the Bluebeards and giants turn into *quimboiseurs* and devils ;—the devils themselves (except when they yawn to show the fire in their throats) so closely resemble the half-nude *travailleurs*, with their canvas trousers and *mouchouè-fautas* and other details of costume, as not to be readily recognized : it requires keen inspection to detect the diabolic signs,

—the red hair, crimson eyes, and horn-roots under the shadowing of the enormous “mule-food hat” or the *chapeau-bacoué*.

Then the Bon-Dié, the “good God,” figures as the best and kindest of old *békés*,—an affable gray planter whose *habitation* lies somewhere in the clouds over the *Montagne Pelée*: you can see his “sheep” and his “*choux-caraïbes*” sometimes in the sky. And the breaker of enchantments is the parish priest,—*Missié labbé*,—who saves pretty naughty girls by passing his stole about their necks. . . . It was at Anse-Marine that Youma found most of the tales she recounted to Mayotte, when the child became old enough to take delight in them.

. . . .So the life had been in the valley plantation for a hundred years, with little

varying. Doubtless there were shadows in it,—sorrows which never found utterance,—happenings that never had mention in the verses of any *chantrelle*,—days without song or laughter, when the fields were silent. . . . But the tropic sun ever flooded it with dazzling color; and great moons made rose-light over it; and always, always, out of the purple vastness of the sea, a mighty breath blew pure and warm upon it,—the breath of the winds that are called unchanging: *les Vents Alizés*.

## III.

IN the morning Youma usually took Mayotte to the river to bathe,—in a clear shallow pool curtained with bamboos, where there were many strange little fish to be seen;—sometimes in the evening, an hour before the sunsetting, she would take her to the sea-beach, to enjoy the breeze and watch the tossing of the surf. But during the heat of the day, the child was permitted to view the wonder-world of the plantation only from the verandas of the house; and the hours seemed long. The cutting of the cane in the neighboring fields to the playing of the drum,—the coming and going of the wagons creaking under their loads of severed stems,—the

sharpening of cutlasses at the grindstone,—the sweet smell of the *vesou*,—the rumble of the machines,—the noisy foaming of the little stream turning the wheel of the mill: all the sights and odors and sounds of plantation life filled her with longing to be out amidst them. What tantalized her most was the spectacle of the slave children playing on the grass-plot and about the buildings,—playing funny games in which she longed to join.

—“I wish I was a little negress,” she said one day, as she watched them from the porch.

—“Oh!” exclaimed Youma in astonishment. . . . “and why?”

—“Because then you would let me run and roll in the sun.”

—“But the sun does not hurt little negroes and negresses; and the sun would make you very sick, doudoux. . . .”

—“And that is why I wish I was a little negress.”

—“It is not nice to wish that!” declared Youma, severely.

—“Why is it not nice?”

—“Fie! . . . wish to be an ugly little negress!”

—“You are a negress, da,—or nearly the same thing,—and you are not ugly at all. You are beautiful, da; you look like chocolate.”

—“Is it not much prettier to look like cream?”

—“No: I like chocolate better than cream. . . . tell me a story, da.”

It was the only way to keep her quiet. She was four years old, and had developed an extraordinary passion for stories. The story *Montala*, of the wizard orange-tree which grew to heaven;—the story *Mazin-guin*, of the proud girl who married

a goblin;—the story of the Zombi-bird whose feathers were colored “with the colors of other days,”—the bird that sang in the stomachs of those who ate it, and then made itself whole again;—the story of La Belle, whose godmother was the Virgin;—the story of Pié-Chique-à, who learned to play the fiddle after the devil’s manner;—the story of Colibri, the Humming-Bird, who once owned the only drum there was in the world, and would not lend it when the Bon-Dié wanted to make a road, although the negroes said they could not work without a drum;—the story of Nanie Rosette, the greedy child, who sat down upon the Devil’s Rock and could not get up again, so that her mother had to hire fifty carpenters to build a house over her before midnight;—the wonderful story of Yé, who found an old blind devil roasting snails in the woods, and

stole the food out of the old devil's calabash, but was caught by him, and obliged to carry him home and feed him for ever so long . . . . these and many more such tales had been told to little Mayotte already, with the effect of stimulating her appetite for more. If these tales did not form the supreme pleasure of her stay at the plantation, they at least enhanced and colored all her other pleasures,—spreading about reality an atmosphere deliciously unreal,—imparting a fantastic personality to lifeless things,—filling the shadows with *zombis*,—giving speech to shrubs and trees and stones . . . . even the canes talked to her, *chououa-chououa*, like old whispering Babo, the *libre-de-savane*. Each habitant of the plantation,—from the smallest black child to tall Gabriel, or “Gabou,” the *commandeur* of all,—realized for her some figure of the *contes*;

and each spot of hill or shore or ravine visited in her morning walks with Youma, furnished her with the scenery for some impossible episode. . . .

—"Mayotte!" exclaimed Youma;—"you know one must not tell stories in the daytime, unless one wants to see *zombis* at night!"

—"No, da! . . . tell me one . . . I am not afraid, da."

—"Oh! the little liar! . . . You are afraid,—very much afraid of *zombis*. And if I tell you a story you will see them to-night."

—"Doudoux-da, no!—tell me one. . . ."

—"You will not wake me up to-night, and tell me you see *zombis*?"

—"No, da,—I promise."

—"Well, then, for this once,"—said Youma, uttering the traditional words

which announce that the Creole story-teller is ready,—“*bobonne fois?*”

—“*Toua fois bel conte!*” cried the delighted child. And Youma began:—

#### DAME KÉLÉMENT.

Long, long ago there lived an old woman who everybody said was a witch, and in league with the devil. And nearly all the bad things said about her were true.

One day a poor little girl lost her way in the woods. After she had walked until she could not walk any more, she sat down and began to cry. She cried for a long, long time.

All about her she could see nothing but trees and lianas;—all the ground was covered with slippery green roots; and the trees were so high, and the lianas so woven between them, that there was very little light. She was lost in the *grands bois*—the great woods which swarm with serpents. . . .

All at once, while she sat there crying, she heard strange sounds quite near her,—sounds of singing and dancing.

She got up and walked towards the sounds. Look-

ing through the trees she saw the same old woman that people used to talk about, riding on a *balai-zo*,\* and dancing round and round in a ring with ever so many serpents and *crapaud-làde*,—great ugly toads. And they were all singing :

*Kingué,*  
*Kingué ;*  
*Vonvon*  
*Malato,*  
*Vloum-voum !*  
*Jambi,*  
*Kingué,*  
*Tou galé,*  
*Zo galé,*  
*Vloum !*

The little girl stood there stupid with fright: she could not even cry any more.

But the old woman had seen the leaves move; and she came with a sort of fire playing all round her, and asked the little girl:—

—“What are you doing in the *razié* ?” †

\* A broom made of the branches of a shrub called *guiyantine*.

† *Razié*: the lower growths which occupy the ground under forest-trees, or cover the soil in places where the trees have been cleared away.

—“Mother, I lost my way in the woods.” . . .

—“Then, my child, you must come to the house with me. . . .You might undo me, unravel me, destroy me if you had a chance.”

The little girl did not understand all that the old woman said ; for the wicked old creature was talking about matters that only sorcerers know.

By the time they got to the house, the poor child was very tired : she sat down on a calabash which served the witch for a chair. Then she saw the old woman light two fires on the earth floor, with torch-gum,—which smells like incense. On one fire she placed a big pot full of *manman-chou*, *camagnioc*, yams, christophines, bananas, devil’s egg-plants (*melon-gène-diabe*), and many herbs the little girl did not know the names of. On the other fire she began to broil some toads, and an earth-lizard,—*zanoli-tè*.

At noon the old woman swallowed all that as if it was nothing at all ;—then she looked at the little girl, who was nearly dead for hunger, and said to her :—

—“Until you can tell me what name I am called by, you will not get anything to eat.” . . .Then she went away, leaving the little girl alone.

The little girl began to weep. Suddenly she felt

something touching her. It was a big serpent,—the biggest she had ever seen. She was so frightened that she almost died ;—then she cried out :—

—“ *Oti papa moin?—oti manman moin?  
Latitolé ké mangé moin !*”

But the serpent did not do her any harm : he only rubbed his head fondly against her shoulder, and sang :—

—“ *Bennemè, bennepè,—tambou belai !  
Yche p'accoutoumé tambou belai !*”

The little girl cried out louder than before :—

—“ *Oti papa moin?—oti manman moin?  
Latitolé ké mangé moin !*”

But the serpent, still rubbing his head fondly against her, answered, singing very softly :—

—“ *Bennepè, bennemè,—tambou belai !  
Yche p'accoutoumé tambou belai !*”

Then when he saw she had become less afraid, he lifted his head close to her ear, and whispered something.

The moment she heard it she ran out of the house and into the woods again. There she began to ask all the animals she met to tell her the old witch's name.

She asked every four-footed beast;—she asked all the lizards and the birds. But they did not know.

She came to a big river, and she asked all the fishes. The fishes, one after another, made answer to her that they did not know. But the *cirique*, the river crab that is yellow like a plantain,—the *cirique* knew. The *cirique* was the only one in the whole world who knew the name. The name was *Dame Kélément*.

. . . . Then the child ran back to the house with all her might; her little stomach was paining her so that she felt she could not bear the pain much longer. The old woman was already at the house, scraping some magnioc to make flour and *cassave*. . . . The little girl walked up to her, and said:

—“Give me to eat, *Dame Kélément*.”

Two flashes of fire leaped from the witch's eyes: she gave such a start that she nearly broke her head against the iron-stones that she balanced her pots on.

—“Child! you have got the better of me!” she

screamed. "Take everything!—take it, take it!—eat, eat, eat!—all in the house is yours!"

Then she sprang through the door quick as a powder-flash: she seemed to fly through the fields and woods. . . . And she ran straight to the river;—for it was deep under the bed of the river that the Devil had buried the name which he had given her. She stood on the bank, and chanted:—

—"Loche, O loche!—was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the loche, that is black like the black stones of the stream, lifted up its head, and cried:—

—"No, mamma!—no mamma!—it was not I who told that your name was Dame Kélément."

—"Titiri, O titiri!—tell me, was it any among you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the titiri, the tiny transparent titiri, answered all together, clinging to the stones:—

—"No, mamma!—no, mamma!—none of us ever said that your name was Dame Kélément."

—"Cribîche, O cribîche!—was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?"

Then the cribîche, the great crawfish of the river, lifted up his head and his claws, and made answer:—

—“No, mamma!—no, mamma!—it was not I who said that your name was Dame Kélément.”

—“*Tétart*, O *tétart*!—was it you who said that my name was Dame Kélément?”

And the *tétart*, that is gray like the gray rocks of iron to which it holds fast, made answer, saying :—

—“No, mamma!—no, mamma!—it was not I who told them that your name was Dame Kélément.”

—“*Dormeur*, O *dormeur*!—was it you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?”

And the *dormeur*, the lazy *dormeur*, that sleeps in the shadow of the rocks, awoke and rose and made answer :—

—“No, mamma!—no, mamma!—it was not I who told them that your name was Dame Kélément.”

—“*Matavalé*, O *matavalé*!—was it you that said my name was Dame Kélément?”

And the *matavalé*, the shining *matavalé*, that flashes like copper when the sun touches his scales, opened his mouth and answered :—

—“No, mamma!—no, mamma!—I never said that your name was Dame Kélément!”

—“*Milet*!—*bouc*!—*pisquette*!—*zangui*!—*zhabitant*!—was it any one among you who told that my name was Dame Kélément?”

But they all cried out:—

—“No, no, no, mamma!—none of us ever said that your name was Dame Kélément.”

—“*Cirique*, O *cirique*!—was it you who said my name was Dame Kélément?”

Then the *cirique* lifted up his eyes and his yellow claws, and screamed:—

—“Yes, you old wretch!—yes, you old witch!—yes, you old malediction!—yes, it was I who said that your name was Dame Kélément!” . . . .

The moment she heard those words she stamped on the ground so hard that the Devil heard her, and opened a great hole at her feet; and she leaped into it head-first. And the ground closed over her. Two days after, there grew up from the place a clump of the weed they call *arrête-nègue*,—the plant that is all thorns.

Now while this was happening, the serpent had turned into a man;—for the old witch had changed a man into that serpent. He took the little girl by the hand, and led her to her mother.

But they came back again next day to search the old woman's cabin. They found in it seven casks

filled with the bones of dead people ; and also ever so much silver and gold,—more than enough to make the little girl rich. When she got married, there was the finest wedding ever seen in this country.

. . . . Mayotte's morning visits to the river with Youma had furnished her with material for the imaginative scenery of the last part of this foolish little story, which delighted her so much that she made her nurse repeat it over and over again. She had seen the crawfish show their heads above the pools ; she had caught the *titiri* in her little hands ; she knew by sight the *loche* and the *tétart*, the *matavalé* and the *zhabitant*, the *dormeur* and the *cirique*. She also knew—by painful experience—the *arrête-nègue*. Dame Kélément, she fancied, must have had a face like old Tanga's when angry ; and the little girl who lost her way in the

woods must have looked just like a certain little black girl whom Tanga often had to scold, and who used to cry in the most extraordinary way: "*Aie-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe-yaïe!*"

But in the midst of her ecstasy, a faint fear came to her with the recollection of Youma's warning. . . .

—"Da," she asked, timidly, "I will not see zombis to-night, will I?"

—"Ah! you must not ask me to tell stories in the daytime any more," said Youma, guardedly.

—"But tell me, I won't see them to-night,—will I?"

—"If you see them," replied Youma, without mercy, "call me!—I will make them go away."

## IV.

YOUMA was alone in the house that night with the child; for M. Desrivières had ridden over to Sainte-Marie, and the servants occupied an adjoining building. . . . She was roused from her sleep by hearing the child cry:—

—“*Da, oh da!—moin pè!*”

The tiny lamp left burning before the images of the saints had gone out;—little Mayotte was afraid.

—“*Pa pè,*” — called Youma, quickly rising to caress her,—“*mi da-ou, chè.*”

—“Oh! there is Something in the room, *da!*” said the child. She had heard stealthy sounds.

—“No, doudoux; you have been dreaming. . . . Da will light the lamp for you.”

She felt for the matches on the little night-table,—could not find them,—remembered she had left them in the adjoining salon,—moved towards the door;—and her foot suddenly descended upon something that sent a cold shock through all her blood,—something clammy and chill, that lived! Instantly she threw all the weight of her lithe strong body upon that foot—the left: she never could tell why;—perhaps the impulse was instinctive. Under her naked sole the frigid life she strove to crush writhed with a sudden power that nearly threw her down; and in the same moment she felt something wind round her ankle, over her knee, wrapping the flesh from heel to thigh with bruising force . . . the folds of a serpent!

—“*Tambou!*” she muttered between her teeth,—and hardened her muscles against the tightening coil, and strength-

ened the pressure of her foot upon the unseen enemy. . . . The foot of the half-breed, never deformed by shoes, retains prehensile power,—grasps like a hand;—the creature writhed in vain to escape. Already the cold terror had passed; and Youma felt only the calm anger of resolve: hers was one of those semi-savage natures wherein fear rarely lives beyond the first moment of nervous surprise. She called softly to the little one.

—“*Ti doudoux?*”

—“Da?”

—“Do not move till I tell you: stay in bed; there is a *bête* in the room.”

—“*Aïe, aïe!*” sobbed the frightened child,—“what is it, da?”

—“Do not be afraid, *cocotte*: I am holding it, and it cannot bite you, unless you get up. I am going to call for Gabriel: do not stir, dear.”

And Youma called, with all the power of her clear voice :

—“*Sucou!—sucou! Eh! Gabou!*” . . . .

—“What is it?—what is it, da?” sobbed the little girl.

—“Do not cry like that, or I will get angry! How can I see what it is in the dark?” . . . .

She called again and again for aid. . . . *Bon-Diè!* how powerful the creature was!—the pressure of the coil became a numbing pain. Her strength was already beginning to weaken under the obstinate, icy, ever-increasing constriction. What if the cramp should come to help it? . . . . Or was it the entering of venom into her blood that made those strange tinglings and tremblings? . . . . She had not felt herself stricken;—but only the month before a plantation-hand had been bitten in the dark without feeling it; and they could

not save him.... "*Eh! Gabou!*".... Even the servants in the pavilion seemed to sleep like dead. And if the child should leave the bed in spite of her warning?....

—"Oh! they are coming, da!" cried Mayotte. "Gabou is coming!" She had seen the flash of his lantern through the slatted shutters. "But the door is locked, da!"

—"Stay in bed, Mayotte!—if you move it will bite you!" The salon filled with voices and sound of feet; then there was a pushing at the bedroom door.

—"It is locked," called Youma;—"break it!—smash it in!—I cannot move!"

.... A crash!—the room filled with a flare of lanterns; and Youma saw that the livid throat was under her foot;—the hideous head vainly strained at her heel.

"*Pa bouèné piess!*" cried the voice of the

commandeur. "Do not stir for your life, my girl! Keep still for your life! Stay just as you are!"

She stood like a bronze. Gabriel was beside her, his naked cutlass in his hand. . . . *Quim fò! quim fò!—pas bouèné piess, piess, piess!* . . . Then she saw the gleam of his steel pass, and the severed head leap to the wainscoting, where it fell gaping,—the eyes still burning like sparks of charcoal. In the same moment the coil loosed and dropped, and Youma lifted her foot;—the body of the reptile lashed the planking, twisted, strove to crawl as if to join the head;—again and again the cutlass descended, and each lopped fragment nevertheless moved.

—"Are you hurt, my daughter?" a kind voice asked,—the voice of M. Desrivères: he had seen it all.

—"Pa couè maïte," she answered, look-

ing at her foot. But she did not know. He led her to a chair, knelt down and began the examination himself; while Mayotte climbed to Youma's neck, clinging and kissing and crying: "Did he bite you, dear da?—did he bite you?" . . . "No, doudoux; no, cocotte: do not be afraid!" She was telling the truth unawares: the serpent had never been able to use his fangs; but the seaming of his coil remained upon the smooth red skin as if branded. . . . Gabriel had dropped his cutlass and detached the long *mouchoir-fantas* about his waist to make a ligature: he was the *panseur* of the plantation.

—"Never mind, my son," said M. Desrièrès: "she has not been bitten."

Gabriel stood dumb for astonishment.

Meanwhile the room had filled with armed plantation-hands, and a clamor of exclamations: . . . "Die Seignè! qui

*sépent!*" . . . "*Mi tête-là ka lè modé toujou!*" . . . "*C'est guiabe mèn!*" . . . "*Moceauà ka rimié pou yo joinne!*" . . . "*Aïe! Youma tchoque!—ouill papa!*" . . . And a serpent nearly six feet in length! No one had ever heard of such a feat before. When Youma told how it happened,—very simply and very calmly,—there was a dead hush of admiration. It was first broken by the rough basso of the commandeur, exclaiming:—"*Ouail! ou brave, mafi!—foute! ou sévè!*" . . . "Severe," the negro's strongest adjective to qualify courage, retains in his patois something of quaint and reverential meaning,—something of that sense which survives in our own modern application of it to art and truth: the Creole now rarely uses it except in irony, but Gabriel uttered it with unconscious exquisiteness; and M. Desrivères himself applauded.

—“*Doudoux-da-moin!*” cried Mayotte, smothering her nurse with caresses;—  
“*ti cocotte-da-moin! . . . Mais bo y, papoute!*  
—*bo y!*” she pleaded, to M. Desrivères.  
He smiled and kissed Youma’s forehead.

—“And it was all my fault,” declared Mayotte, beginning to sob again: “I made her tell me stories in the daytime.”

But that serpent was no zombi: they found his trail and followed it to a hole which some rat had gnawed in the planking of the salon, under a sideboard.

## V.

FROM that night Youma became the object of a sort of cult at Anse-Marine;—there is no quality the black admires so much as physical courage. The entire *atelier* began to evince for her a respect almost fetichistic. The girl's heroism had conquered any petty dislikes which her city manners and natural reserve might have provoked, and had hopelessly crushed the small jealousies of house-servants who imagined themselves supplanted by a stranger in the master's home. These now only sought to obtain her good-will, to win her smile;—the plantation declared itself proud of her,—boasted of her prowess to the slaves of neighboring estates;—

the hands saluted her when she passed, as if she were a mistress; and the improvisors of the *caleinda* chants celebrated her praises in their *belai*. Even the overseer, M. de Comisilles, though a rigid disciplinarian, no longer addressed her as *masi*, "my daughter," but as *Manzell*,—Manzell Youma.

But what secretly pleased her above all was the attention of Gabriel. Gabriel appeared to have taken a sudden fancy to her. Although the busiest man on the estate, he found time to show his friendship by little kindnesses and courtesies of which one could scarcely have believed so rude a nature capable. He invented opportunities to meet her during the mid-day respite from labor, and of evenings,—before or after making his nightly round to see that all the regulations of cleanliness and good order had been obeyed in

every cabin,—that clothing had been washed, and refuse removed. His visits were necessarily brief;—they were also strangely silent: he rarely spoke, except when asked a direct question, or when teased by Mayotte into taking her on his knees and answering her prattle. More usually he would simply seat himself on the veranda close to Youma's rocking-chair, and listen to her chat with the child, or her storytelling,—seldom even turning his face towards her, but seeming to watch the noisy life of the *cases*. But almost at every visit he would bring something for the child,—knowing she would share it with her *da*,—some gift of fruit gathered in his own garden: such as a bunch of *figues*, which are tiny dessert bananas scarcely two inches long;—or a *zabricot* (tropical apricot),—that singular fruit the ancient Haytians held sacred as the food

of ghosts,—a colossal plum, as large as the largest turnip, with musky vermilion flesh, and a kernel big as a duck's egg;—or an odorous branch cut from a *zorange-macaque* tree, heavy with mandarines;—or a *fouitt-defendu*,—the same, according to Creole tradition, which Eve was tempted by the Serpent to eat,—a sort of huge orange larger than a pumpkin, with a luscious pink pulp. . . . One day,—the day of Mayotte's *fête*,—Gabriel brought a very pretty present: a basket he had himself woven of bamboo strips and liana stems, filled with samples of almost everything the estate produced. There was a beautiful little sugar-loaf,—a package of *bavons-caco*, or sticks of chocolate,—a little *couï*, or half-calabash, filled with brown sugar,—a can of refined syrup,—a *pain-mi*, or boiled-maize cake, sweetened, and wrapped in a piece of balisier leaf tied

with a *ti-liane-razié*;—some *tablettes* of grated cocoa candied in liquid sugar;—and a nice bundle of Chambéry cane, tied with a cane leaf. . . . Another day, when Youma had taken the child to the river for her morning bath, she found there, fixed upon the bank beside the little pool, a broad and handsome rustic bench, built of the long tough stems of the *pommier-rose*, with split bamboos for the back and the seat: Gabriel had made it, working at night, and had carried it to the river before daybreak, as a surprise for Youma.

. . . . Silent as Gabriel's visits were, they began to exert an influence on Youma. She found in them an unfamiliar pleasure,—became accustomed to look for them with unconscious eagerness;—even felt vaguely unhappy when he did not come. And yet, after having failed to see him for a longer time than usual, she never

asked what had prevented his visit ;—she would not have confessed, even to herself, that she feared his indifference. He, on the other hand, never offered an explanation. The two strange natures comprehended each other without speech,—drew and dominated each other in a dumb, primitive, half-savage way.

. . . . He brought one afternoon a fine *sapota*,—that fruit in whose smooth flushed swarthy skin Creole fancy finds the semblance of half-breed beauty. Within its flat black seed, between the two halves of the kernel, lies a pellicle,—creamy, fragile, and shaped like a heart,—which it requires dexterity to remove without breaking. Lovers challenge each other to do it as a test of affection.

—“Mayotte,” said Youma, after they had eaten the fruit together,—“I want to see if you love me.” . . . She cracked the

flinty shell of a seed between her teeth, —then tried to remove the pellicle, and broke it.

—“Oh, da!” cried the child, “it is not true!—you know I love you.” . . . .

—“*Piess, piess!*” declared Youma, teasing her;—“you do not love me one bit!”

But Gabriel asked for a seed, and she gave him one. Rude and hard as his fingers were, he took out the little heart intact, and gave it to Mayotte.

—“*Ou ouè!*” he said, maliciously;—“*da ou ainmein moin passé ou!*” (Your da loves me better than you.)

—“It is not true!—no, *cocotte!*” Youma assured the child. But she did not feel sure of what she said.

. . . .When the cane-cutting season was over, Gabriel asked and obtained leave to

go to La Trinité one holiday morning. He returned at evening, later than the hour at which he was accustomed to find the young *capresse* on the veranda; but she was still there. Seeing him approach, she rose with the child asleep in her arms, and put her finger to her lips.

“*Quimbé!*” whispered Gabriel, slipping into Youma’s hand something flat and square, wrapped in tissue-paper: then, without another word, he strode away to his quarters.

When Mayotte had been put to bed, Youma looked at the packet. . . . A little card-board box: within it, upon a layer of pink cotton, shone two large light circles of plain gold,—barbaric ear-rings such as are only made by colonial goldsmiths, but well suited to the costume and bronze skin of the race of color . . . . Youma already possessed far finer jewelry; but

Gabriel had walked thirty kilometres for these.

He smiled as he passed by her window in the morning and saw them shimmering in her ears. Her acceptance of the gift signified assent to a question unspoken,— the question which civilized men most fear to ask, but which the Creole slave could ask without words.

## VI.

—“WHAT is it, my son?” said M. Desrivères, as Gabriel, who had asked to speak with him alone, stood nervously twirling a great straw hat between his fingers.

—“*Maître*,” he began, shyly,—“*moin ain-mein ti bonne ou.*” . . . .

—“Youma?” queried M. Desrivères in surprise.

—“*Mais oui, maître.*”

—“Is Youma willing to marry you?”

—“*Mais oui, maître.*”

For a few moments M. Desrivères could make no reply: the possibility of a union between the two had never occurred to him, and Gabriel’s revelation almost shocked him. The *commandeur* was certainly one of the finest physical men of his race,—young, industrious, intelli-

gent; but he would make a rough mate indeed for a girl brought up as Youma had been. She was also a slave, without education; but she had received a domestic training that gave her a marked superiority above her class, and she had moral qualities more delicate by far than those of Gabriel. . . . Above all, she had been the companion of Aimée's childhood, and afterwards her friend rather than her servant: the influence of Aimée had done much for her;—something of Aimée's manner, and of Aimée's thought, had become a part of her own. . . . No; Madame Peyronnette would never hear of such a union: the mere idea of it would revolt her like a brutality!

—“But, Gabriel,” he answered at last, “Youma does not belong to me. She belongs to my mother-in-law.”

—“Master, I know she belongs to Ma-

dame Peyronnette," said Gabriel, making the rim of his *chapeau-bacouè* revolve still more quickly;—"but I thought you would like to do something for me."

The planter smiled at the suggestion. . . . He had often expressed to Gabriel the wish to see him marry,—had even promised to give him a handsome wedding when he should have made a choice. But Gabriel seemed in no haste to choose. Then it became known that, while he remained indifferent to the girls of Anse-Marine, he was in the habit of making furtive visits to a neighboring estate; and M. Desrivères himself went there to discover the object of those visits. He found it in the person of a handsome *griffone*; and, wishing to give Gabriel an agreeable surprise, bought the girl for fifteen hundred francs, and brought her back with him. But from the day that she belonged

to the plantation, Gabriel paid no further attention to her whatever. Secretly, he resented his master's intermeddling in the matter; and nevertheless, in spite of that episode, it now seemed to him quite natural to beg M. Desrivères to buy Youma for him. . . . The planter, however, felt no anger;—the incident rather amused him. He valued Gabriel highly, and understood him well:—a nature impatient of control, but capable of exerting it to an extraordinary degree. As a *commandeur* he was inestimable; as a *travailleur* he would have been almost impossible to manage. His former owner, a *petit blanc*, had been glad to sell him, with the frank assurance that he was “sullen, incorrigible, and dangerous.” De Comisles, who purchased him, knew it was a case of “fine stock” unappreciated; and often boasted of the bargain he had made.

—“ I cannot buy her for you, my son,” said M. Desrivères, kindly. “ Youma is not for sale. Madame Peyronnette will not sell her at any price,—even to me. . . . I am going to the city to-morrow, and will ask my mother-in-law if she will let Youma marry you: that is all I can do.”

Gabriel ceased to twirl his hat: he stood silent for a little while, with his eyes cast down, and a decidedly sinister expression in his face. He had never thought that Youma’s fate might not be decided even by M. Desrivères’s wealth and influence: a suspicion that the planter’s assurances were false, momentarily darkened his thoughts. Then he looked up, bowed to M. Desrivères, and with a hoarsely muttered “*Mèçi, maître,*” withdrew.

—“ It is Youma who will suffer the most,” thought M. Desrivères.

## VII.

MADAME PEYRONNETTE'S decision was just what M. Desrivères had expected. She was even more astonished by Youma's choice than he had been,—could only attribute it to a fascination purely physical, or, as she termed it, animal: the one peril among all others that she had especially feared for Youma. She even reproached her son-in-law,—held him responsible for the affair; and finally insisted upon Youma's immediate return to the city. She did not wish that another should be Mayotte's nurse; but whether Mayotte remained at Anse-Marine or not, Youma should return. It was time at all

events that the child should begin to learn something more important than sucking sugar-cane and playing with little negroes; —besides, she had become quite strong, and the city was exceptionally healthy. Youma might continue to live with the Desrivères at the Fort; but a girl innocent enough to become enamoured of the first common negro who made love to her, needed looking after; and Madame Peyronnette intended to make sure that no more such things should happen. . . . M. Desrivères offered no opposition to his mother-in-law's wishes; he announced his intention to return to town himself as soon as possible, and bring Mayotte and her nurse with him.

. . . .To Youma this decision brought a shock of pain that stupefied her too much for tears. Then, with the instinctive, au-

tomatic resentment that sudden pain provokes, came to her also for the first time the full keen sense of the fact that she was a slave,—helpless to resist the will that struck her. Every disappointment she had ever known,—each constraint, reprimand, refusal, suppression of an impulse, every petty pang she had suffered since a child,—crowded to her memory, scorched it, blackened it; filled her with the delusion that she had been unhappy all her life, and with a hot secret anger against the long injustice imagined, breaking down her good sense, and her trained habit of cheerful resignation. In that instant she almost hated her godmother, hated M. Desrivères, hated everybody . . . . except Gabriel. At his advent into her life, something long held in subjection within her,—something like a darker passionate second soul, full of strange

impulses and mysterious emotions,—had risen to meet him, bursting its bonds, and winning mastery at last: the nature of the savage race whose blood dominated in her veins.

Its earlier rebellions had produced no graver result than occasional secret fits of melancholy,—beginning after Aimée's departure to school, when Youma was first taken into an existence high-hedged about in those days with formalities extraordinary. Except during the evenings of a brief theatrical season, and the occasion of a select ball, the Creole ladies remained almost cloistered in their homes from Sunday to Sunday, scarcely leaving their apartments except to go to church,—never entering a store under any circumstances, and having even the smallest details of their shopping done for them by slaves. Enervated by a climate that would

probably have exterminated the European element within a few generations but for the constant infusion of fresh blood from abroad, the white women of the colonies could adapt themselves without pain to this life of cool and elegant seclusion. But Youma was of the race of sun-lovers. The very privileges accorded her, the very training given to her as a sort of adopted child, had tended rather to contract her natural life than to expand it. In the country she had found larger opportunities for out-door enjoyment, and freedom from formal restraints of a certain kind; but even in the country her existence was confined by her duty as a nurse,—compressed into the small sphere of a child's requirements. Youma was too young to be a *da*. For the *da* there were no pleasures. The responsibilities of such a place,—requiring nothing less than absolute

self-sacrifice,—were confided as a rule only to slaves who had been mothers, who had fulfilled the natural destiny of woman. But Youma had scarcely ceased to be a child, when she found herself again sentenced to act, think, and speak as a child,—for the sake of a child not her own. Her magnificent youth dumbly protested against this perpetual constraint. Despite that sense of personal dignity Madame Peyronnette had spared no pains to cultivate in her,—the feeling of having social superiority among her class,—she sometimes found herself envying the lot of others who would have gladly changed places with her: the girls who travelled singing over the sunny mountain roads, the negresses working in the fields, chanting *belai* to the tapping of the *ka*. Youma felt a painful pleasure in watching them. She suffered so much from the

weariness of physical inaction;—she was so tired of living in shadow, of resting in rocking-chairs, of talking baby talk,—just as in other years she had been tired of dwelling behind closed shutters, and broidering and sewing in a half-light, and hearing conversations which she could not understand. Still, at such moments, she had judged herself ungrateful,—almost wicked,—and battled with her discontent, and conquered it,—until Gabriel came.

Gabriel! . . . . He seemed to open to her a new world full of all that her being longed for,—light, and joy, and melody: he appeared to her in some way blended with the freedom of air and sun, of river and sea,—fresh scents of wood and field,—the long blue shadows of morning,—the rose-light of tropical moonrise,—and the songs of the *chantrelles*,—and the merriment of dances under the cocoa-

palms to the throbbing thunder of the drums. Gabriel, so calm, so strong, so true! her man of all men, made for her by the Bon-Dié;—Gabriel, who, though a slave, could compel the esteem of his master;—Gabriel, for whom she prayed each night, and laid before the Virgin's image her little offering of wild flowers;—Gabriel, with whom she would be so happy, even in the poorest of *ajoupas*,—for whom she would gladly give liberty if she had it, or even her life if it could do him service! . . . . She wished to be beautiful—and they said she was beautiful (*you bel-bois*, like a shapely tree, like a young palm)—only for his sake . . . . And they were going to take him from her,—pretending that he was not good enough for her (as if *they* could know!),—because they wanted her to remain with them always, to suffer for them always, to live in dark-

ness and silence, like a *manicou*. And they had the power to be cruel to her, to take him away from her! The world was all wrong,—wrong at least for her. Whomsoever she loved was taken from her: first her mother, Douceline; then Aimée Desrivères;—now Gabriel.

. . . . It was the morning after his arrival from the city that M. Desrivères had called her aside to tell her: she had just returned from the river with Mayotte, after giving the child her morning bath. He had spoken kindly, but very frankly,—in a way that left no hope possible.

For a long time she sat speechless and motionless in her room: then, obeying the child's wish, went out with her upon the veranda. The day was exquisitely clear, with a tepid wind from the sea. Above her, on the nearer side of the val-

ley, sounded the mellow booming of a *tambou-belai*, and a chorus of African song. A troop of field-hands were making a new path to the summit of one of the mornes; the old path having been washed away by recent heavy rains. The overseer had surveyed the course for it, marked out the zigzag with stretched cords; and the workers were slowly descending in a double line,—all singing,—all the hoes and rammers keeping time to the drum rhythm. Sometimes the men would throw up their hoes in the air and catch them again, or exchange them in a fling, without losing the measure of the movement. And there was a girl,—young Chrysaline,—carrying a tray with tin cups, *dobannes* of water, and a pitcher of liquor;—serving drink all round at intervals; for the work was hot . . . . Youma looked for a tall figure in blue cotton shirt and white

canvas trousers at the head of the column. But Gabriel was not visible. Another was acting in his place, overseeing the task, and keeping a watch for serpents,—a black man, Marius.

Only three days more; and she would have to leave Anse-Marine,—would see Gabriel no more . . . . They were going to return to the dull hot city in the dullest and hottest month of the year . . . . Did Gabriel know?. . . . Or was it because he knew, that she did not see him among the workers? She felt that if he knew, he would contrive some chance to speak with her . . . .

Even as this feeling came, Gabriel appeared before the house,—made her a sign to leave the child and come to him.

He laid his hand caressingly upon her shoulder, and whispered:—

—“The master told me all this morning . . . he is going to take you away from us?”

—“Yes,” she answered, sadly;—“we are going back to the city.”

—“When?”

—“Monday coming.”

—“It is only Thursday,” he said, with a peculiar smile. . . . “Doudoux, you know that once they have you back in the city again, they will never let you see me, never!—yes, you know it!”

—“But, Gabriel,” she answered, with a choking in her voice,—hurt by the tone of pleading in his words: “what can I do?—you know there is not any way.”

—“There *is* a way,” he interrupted, almost roughly.

Wondering, she looked at him,—a new vague hope dawning in her large eyes,

—"There is a way, my girl," he repeated,—“if you are brave. Look!”

He pointed beyond the valley, over the sea to the north-east, where loomed a shape of phantasmal beauty,—a vision only seen in fairest weather. Out of the purpling ocean circle, the silhouette of Dominica towered against the amethystine day,—with crown of ghostly violet peaks, and clouds far curled upon them, like luminous wool of gold.

—"Doudoux, in one night!" . . . he whispered, watching her face.

She caught his meaning . . . Freedom for the slave who could set his foot on British soil!

—"Gabriel!" called the voice of M. de Comisles.

—"Eti!" he shouted in answer . . . "Think about it, my girl,—*chongé, chongé bien ché!*"

—“Gabriel!” again cried the voice of the overseer.

—“*Ka vini!*” called Gabriel, running towards the summons.

. . . . She returned to her accustomed place on the veranda, where Mayotte was playing with a black kitten. She scarcely heard the child’s laughter, and joyous callings to her to look when the little animal performed some droll prank,—answered mechanically as if half awake: her gaze continued fixed upon the shining apparition in the horizon, that tempted her will with its vapory loveliness. Slowly, while she gazed, it took diaphanous pallor,—began to fade into the vast light. Then, as the sun climbed higher, it passed mysteriously away: there remained only the clear-colored circling sea, the rounded spotlessness of the summer heaven.

... But the luminous violet memory of it lingered with her, — burned into her thought.

She did not see Gabriel again that day. He seemed to avoid her purposely, — to give her time to reflect.

## VIII.

. . . . NEVER a doubt of Gabriel's ability to carry out his project entered her mind: the possibilities of pursuit and capture, of encountering a *rafale* in that awful channel—or even worse; for the hurricane season had set in,—gave her little concern. What danger could she not brave for his sake?—anywhere with him she would feel secure.

But slowly the exaltation of her fancy began to calm. The totally unexpected suggestion of a means to frustrate the will of others, and to win all that she desired, had cooled the passion of her disappointment; and, with its cooling, her natural power of just reflection gradually

returned. Then she felt afraid,—afraid of something in herself that she knew was wrong. For even in the first moment, the proposal of Gabriel had vaguely smitten her conscience,—startled her moral sense before she could weigh, however hastily, the results of abandoning her friends, her birthplace, her duties,—of declassing herself forever,—of losing the esteem of all who put trust in her. But now as she thought,—seriously thought,—she knew that a shame rose and tingled in her face . . . .

No—no—no!—it was not true that her life had been all unhappiness. She began to recall,—in shining soft succession,—many delightful days. Days of her childhood, above all,—with Aimée, when they played together in the great court of Madame Peyronnette's house in the high street—the beautiful sunny court

with its huge-leaved queer plants and potted palms,—where the view of the splendid bay lay all open in blue light from the Grosse-Roche to Fond Corré;—with ships coming and going over the horizon, or drowsily swaying at anchor,—the court where each morning they used to feed the *zanolis*, the little green lizards of the *tonnelle*, who flashed down from the green vault of climbing vines to eat the crumbs thrown them! . . . Aimée, who shared all things with her,—even when a tall young lady. Aimée, whose dying hand clasped hers with such loving trust,—whose dying lips had whispered:—*“Youma, O Youma! you will love my child?—Youma, you will never leave her, whatever happens, while she is little?—promise, dear Youma!”* . . . And she had—promised . . .

She saw again the face of Madame Pey-

ronnette, smiling under its bands of silver hair,—smiling as when Youma felt her cheek stroked by the fine white hand that glimmered with rings;—as when she heard the gentle assurance:—“You are my daughter, too, child—my beautiful dark daughter-in-God! You must be happy;—I want you to be happy! . . . . And had she not really tried to make her so,—contrived for her,—planned for her,—expended much for her sake, that she might never have the right to envy others of her class? . . . . And Youma thought of all the gifts, the New-Year surprises,—the perpetual comfort. She had always had a room apart,—a room overlooking the *tonnelle* with its vines and pommés-de-liane, where the humming-birds circled in gleams of crimson and emerald,—a little chamber full of sea-wind: she had never been allowed to lie on a simple mattress

unrolled upon the floor, like a common domestic.

For Aimée's sake she had found scarcely less consideration in her second home, from Madame Desrivières and her son. And ever since Aimée's death, the kindness of M. Desrivières had been that of a father. He had trusted her to such a degree that he had never noticed Gabriel's visits.

.... What would all these think of her? To whom did she owe most?—to them, whom she had known so long, and the kind lady who had brought her up with her own child, after having named her at the baptismal font; or to Gabriel, whom she had known only for one season?.... Ah! never,—not even for his sake, could she be false to them!—the good God would never forgive her!.... But Ga-

briel did not know: if he knew, he could not ask her to fly with him.

. . . . Once more the darker side of her nature was quelled,—sank back sobbing to its old place. The cruel pain remained: but she lay down to rest that night with a strong resolve to seek Gabriel as soon as possible, and to say *No*.

And nevertheless her heart sank a little next morning, when Gabriel, striding by as she was taking the child to the river, said, in a low, hurried tone:—

—“Go to the beach this evening, at four o’clock. I will see you there. The gommier leaves for La Trinité with a cargo.”

Then he was gone, before she could answer a word.

## IX.

A STRANGE coast is that on which the valley of Anse-Marine opens,—a coast of fantastic capes and rocks with sinister appellations, in which the Devil's name is sometimes mentioned. Black iron ore forms the high cliffs; but countless creepers tapestry them, and lianas everywhere dangle down to meet the shore fringe of *patate-bò-lanmè*,—the vivid green sea-vine, —crawling over a sand black as powdered jet. (Its thick leaves when broken show a sap white as milk; and it bears a beautiful carmine cup-shaped flower.) The waves are very long, very heavy;—they crumble over with a crash that deafens, and ghostly uptossings of foam as of waving hands. The sea is never quiet there:

north and south the *falaises* perpetually loom through a haze of tepid spray,—rising like smoke to the sun . . . . There is a Creole legend that it was not so in other years;—that a priest, mocked by fishermen, shook his black robe against the sea, and cursed it with the curse of eternal unrest. And the fishing-boats and the spread nets rotted on the beach, while men vainly waited for the sea to calm. . . . The foam-line never vanishes through the year: it only broadens or narrows, as the surf becomes, under the pressure of the trade-winds, more or less dangerous. Sometimes it whitens far up the river mouths, leaps to the summit of the cliffs, and shakes all the land,—though there is scarcely a breeze, and not one cloud in the sky. At such a time you will see that far out, even to the horizon, the flood is blue as lapis lazuli, and smooth as a

mirror: the thunder and the foaming do not extend beyond the coast. That is a *raz-de-marée*,—a *raz-de-marée du fond*: the sea swinging from the depths,—rocking from the bottom. This spectacle may endure two, three, four days; and then cease mysteriously as it began.

For the *travailleur* of the eastern plantations, the only barrier between slavery and freedom was this wild sea. There were but few boats on the coast;—north of La Trinité, there were but few points from which a boat could be safely launched. But at Anse-Marine there was on such place,—a sort of natural cove in a promontory projecting into deep water from the southern end of the valley-opening, and curving so as to give a lee side. It was thence the *gommier* was launched to the sound of the drum; and a little boat was also kept there in a shed,—the

master's private boat,—seldom used. This Gabriel knew how to handle well.

. . . . Before the hour appointed Youma took Mayotte to the beach: the great heat of the day was spent, the strong wind was almost cool, and the cliffs were throwing shadow. A visit to this shore was a delight for the child. There were no pretty little shells like those thrown up by the tide at the Grosse Roche of Saint Pierre, and the surf was too strong to permit of her wading, as she would have wished to do. But it was a joy to see it tumbling and flashing; and the black sand was full of funny yellow hairy-legged crabs, and little sea-roaches—*ravett-lanmè*—which had spades in their tails, to dig holes with;—and sometimes one might meet a baby turtle, just out of the egg, making its way to the water.

The children came soon after,—black and yellow, brown and red,—all in charge of Tanga's daughters, Zoune and Gambi, to see the gommier go out. The little ones were not allowed to venture fairly into the water for fear of accidents; but they could gambol on the skirts of the surf to their hearts' content. They screamed and leaped all together whenever a big wave would chase up the sand, whirling and hissing about their little bare feet.

Then the wagons appeared, moving along the cliff road, with their loads of rum and sugar: it was hard work for the mules, strong and fat as they were . . . . Youma heard Gabriel's voice urging them on,—helping the drivers.

Then a slim brown boy, naked as a bronze, appeared on horseback,—coming down to the beach at a gallop, riding without a saddle. It was the overseer's

little groom, going to give M. de Comisles's horse a bath in the surf. The boy was scarcely more than a child, and the animal,—a black Porto Rico stallion,—very spirited; but the two knew each other. As the surf reached the horse's knees, the lad leaped down, and began to wash him. Then an immense breaker bursting, whelmed both almost out of sight in a quivering woolly sheet of foam. The horse seemed to like it, never moved: there was no fear for the boy,—he could swim like a *coulion*. He played about the horse, patted him, hugged his neck, threw water on him: when a heavy breaker came he would cling to the stallion's mane.

“*Yo kallé! yo kallé!*” cried the children at last, as a drum-roll vibrated from the launching-place: the freight had been stowed, the crew were in their places, the *tambouyé* on his perch. It was the signal

to let go—"lagué toutt"; and all eyes turned to see the gommier rush into the water; and everybody shouted as she reached it safely, pitched, steadied again with the first plunge of the paddles, and started on her journey, to the merry measure of *Madame lézhabitant*. The children stopped their play to watch;—and from the cliffs sounded a clapping of hands, and women's laughter, and jocose screams of *adié*,—as the long craft shot away to the open,—till the chant of the crew was lost in the voice of the surf, and the faces ceased to be distinguishable. Even then, for a minute or two the booming of the drum could be heard; but the gommier soon rounded the long point, and passed out of sight, making south . . . . The event of the day was over.

Tanga's daughters gathered their little flock, and left the beach;—the boy in the

surf leaped to the horse's back, turned him, and off they went up the valley at a gallop,—shining like a group in metal,—to dry themselves in wind and sun;—the lookers-on disappeared from the cliffs;—and the empty wagons turned back rumbling to the plantation . . . . Youma still lingered, to Mayotte's great satisfaction. The child had found a cocoa-nut—empty, shrunken, and blackened by long pitching about in the waves. She amused herself by rolling it into the surf, and seeing it cast out again—always at some distance from where it had been thrown in;—and this so much diverted her that she did not notice Gabriel hastening towards them . . . . But Youma advanced to meet him.

—“*Doudoux-moin,*” he said, breathing quickly with the hurry of his coming, as he took her hand in both his own,—“listen well to what I am going to tell you.

. . . . The gommier has gone;—there will be no boat to pursue us: we can go to-night if you will be brave. . . . To-morrow we can be free,—to-morrow morning, doudoux!”

—“Ah! Gabriel . . .” she began. But he would not hear her: he spoke on so earnestly, so rapidly, that she could not interrupt him, telling her his hopes, his plans. He had a little money,—knew what he was going to do. They would buy a little place in the country,—(it was a beautiful country there, and everything was cheap, and there were no serpents!)—he could build a little house himself,—plant a fruit garden. . . . The master’s boat was ready for their escape;—wind and sea were in their favor;—there would be no moon till after midnight;—there was nothing to fear. And with the coming sunrise they would be free.

He spoke of his love for her,—of the life they might live together,—of liberty as he imagined it,—of their children who would be free,—with naïve power of persuasion, and with a fulness that revealed how earnestly and long he had nourished his dream,—vividly imaging his thought by those strange Creole words which, like tropic lizards, change color with position. Not until he had said all that was in his heart, could Youma answer him, with the tears running down her cheeks:—

—“ Oh! Gabriel! I cannot go!—do not tell me any more; I cannot go!”....

Then she stopped,—struck dumb by the sudden change in his face. As he dropped her hand, there was an expression in his eyes she had never seen before. But he did not fix them upon her: he turned, and folded his arms, and stared at the sea.

—“Doudoux,” she went on,—“you would not let me speak . . . . I did as you told me ;—I thought it all over,—over and over again. And the more I thought about it, the more I felt it could not be . . . . And you would not give me a chance to tell you,”—she repeated, pleadingly,—touching his arm,—trying to draw his look again.

But he did not answer,—stood rigid and grim as the black rock behind him,—looking always to the horizon, where the place of his hope had been,—free Dominica, with its snakeless valleys,—all viewless now, veiled by the vapors of evening.

—“Gabriel,” she persisted, caressingly,—“listen, doudoux.” . . . .

—“Ah ! you will not come ?” he said at last,—“you will not come ?” . . . . There was almost a menace in his voice, as

he turned the wrath of his eyes upon her.

—"I cannot go, doudoux," she repeated, with gentle force. "Listen to me . . . you know I love you?"

—"Pa pàlé ça!—pa lapeine!" he answered, bitterly . . . "I offer you all that I have;—it is not enough for you . . . I give you the chance to be free with me, and you tell me you prefer to remain a slave."

—"Oh, Gabriel!" she sobbed,—“can you reproach me like that? You know in your heart whether I love you.”

—"Then you are afraid,—afraid of the sea?"

—"It is not that." . . .

—"Owill, mafi!—I thought you brave!"

—"Gabriel," she cried, almost fiercely, "I am not afraid of anything except of doing wrong,—I am afraid of the Bon-Dié only."

—“*Qui Bon-Dié ça ?*” he scoffed,—“the Bon-Dié of the békés?—the Bon-Dié of Manm-Peyronnette?”

—“You shall not talk that kind of talk to me, Gabriel!” she exclaimed, with eyes blazing,—“it brings bad luck!”

He looked at her in surprise at the sudden change in her manner, as, for the first time, her will rose to match his own.

—“*Ça ka pòté malhè, ou tenne ?*” she repeated, meeting his gaze and mastering it. He turned sullenly to the sea again, and let her speak,—listening restively to her passionate explanation. . . . Afraid?—how little he knew her heart! But she had forgotten, because of him, what it was wicked to forget. She had done wrong even to think of going with him,—forsaking the godmother who had brought her up from an infant,—deserting the mistress who had cared for her like a daughter,—

abandoning the child confided to her care, the child of Madame Desrivères, the child who loved her so much, who would suffer so much to lose her,—might even die; for she knew of a little one who had died for grief at having lost her *da*. No: it would be cruel,—it would be wicked, to leave her in such a way. . . .

—“And you leave me for a child, Youma,—a child not your own?” cried Gabriel. “You talk as if you were the only nurse in the world: there are plenty of *das*.”

—“Not like me,” said Youma,—“not at least for her. I have been mother to her since her own mother died . . . . But it is not the child only, Gabriel;—it is what I owe to those who loved and trusted me all these years.” . . . And the old sweetness came back into her voice, while she asked:—“Doudoux, could you think

me true, and see me thankless and false to those who have been good to me all my life?"

—"Good to you!" he burst out, with sudden bitterness. "Do you think them good because they do not happen to be bad? How good to you? Because they dress you beautifully,—give you a *belle jupe*, a calendered *madras*, a *collier-choux*, and put gold upon you that folks may cry:—'See how madame . . . see how monsieur is generous to a slave!' Give them?—no!—lend them only,—put them upon you for a showing: they are not yours! You can own nothing; you are a slave; you are naked as a worm before the law! You have no right to anything,—no, not even to what I gave you;—you have no right to become the wife of the man you choose;—you would have no right, if a mother, to care for your own

child,—though you give half your life, all your youth, to nursing children of *békés*. . . . No, Youma, you were not brought up like your mistress's daughter. Why were you never taught what white ladies know?—why were you never shown how to read and write?—why are you kept a slave? . . . Good to you? It was to their interest, my girl!—it repays them to-day, —since it keeps you with them,—when you could be free with me.”

—“No, no, *doudoux*,” protested the girl, —“you are not just! You do not know my godmother; you do not know what she has been for me;—you could never make me believe she has not been generous and kind! . . . Do you think, Gabriel, that people can be good only for a motive?—do you think M. Desrivières has not been kind to you?”

—“There are good *békés*, Youma;—

there are masters who are better masters than others: there is no good master!"

—"Oh, Gabriel!—and M. Desrivères?"

—"Do you believe slavery is a good thing,—a right thing, Youma?"

She could not answer him directly. The ethical question of slavery had first been brought to her mind in a vague way by her recent disappointment;—previously the subject would have seemed to her one of those into which it was not quite proper to inquire doubtingly.

—"I think it is wicked to be cruel to slaves," she replied . . . . "But since the good God arranged it so that there should be slaves and masters, doudoux. . . ."

—" *Ou trop sott!—ou trop enfant!*"—he cried out, and held his peace; feeling that it were vain to argue with her,—that what he called her folly and her childish-

ness separated them far more than the will of a mistress. Her idea of duty to her godmother, of duty to the child, appeared to be mingled in some way with her idea of religion,—to which the least light allusion would provoke her anger. He could comprehend it only as a sort of mental weakness created by *béké*-teaching. To his own thinking, slavery was a kind of trickery,—the duping of blacks by whites; and it was simply because they could not dupe him, that they had given him a position entailing no physical labor, and in which he could feel himself more free than others. He did not feel grateful therefor: it seemed to him that no possible kindnesses, no imaginable indulgences on the part of a master could deserve the voluntary sacrifice of a chance for liberty by the slave. Though really possessing a rude intelligence above his comrades,

Gabriel shared many savage traits of his race,—traits that three hundred years of colonial servitude could hardly modify: among others, the hatred of all constraint,—reasonable or unreasonable. Still the Creole *bitaco* prefers hungry liberty to any comfort obtainable by hired labor;—his refusal to work for wages necessitated the importation of coolies, yet he can do the work of three;—he is capable of prodigious physical effort; he will carry on his head twenty miles to town a load of vegetables of his own weight, or twenty-four bread-fruits; he will cutlass his way through forest to the very summit of peaks to find particular herbs and cabbage-palm for the market; he will do anything extraordinary to avoid being under orders,—martyrize his body by herculean efforts to escape control . . . . This spirit in Gabriel had been temporarily softened by

the profits and petty dignity of his position,—by the ambition of being one day able to settle on his own land in some wild place, and live independent of everybody;—but not the least of the reasons which made him valuable at Anse-Marine was his confidence of being able to escape when he pleased . . . . And, nevertheless, judging Youma by himself, the very motive she had urged for her refusal seemed to him the one of all others he could not reason with her against, because he coupled it with his own ideas of the supernatural,—likened it to certain dark superstitions of which he knew the extraordinary power. Through her kind-heartedness, the *békés* had been able to impose upon her mind;—and tenderness of heart, except to him and for him alone, he deemed childish and foolish . . . . “*C’est bon khè crabe qui lacause y pa ni tête,*” says

the negro proverb.—(It is because of the crab's good heart that he lacks a head.)

Nevertheless he himself had a heart,—though a rough one;—and it was moved by the sight of Youma's silent tears which his anger and his reproaches had caused. He loved her well in his hard way; and all his tenacity of will set itself against the losing of her. She had denied his wish; and he knew her strength of resolve,—yet with time he might find another way to make her his own. Something would depend on herself,—on such influence as she might have with her mistress; but he relied more upon the probability of a social change. Hopeless as he had pictured the future for Youma, he was far from believing it hopeless. Echoes of the words and work of philanthropists had reached him: he knew how and why the English slaves had received

their freedom;—he knew also something of which he could not speak, even in a whisper, to Youma . . . . From plantation to plantation there had passed a secret message,—framed in African speech for the ears of those chosen to know and fearless to do;—already, even within the remotest valleys of the colony, hearts had been strangely stirred by the blowing of the great wind of Emancipation. . . .

—“Doudoux-moin!” he suddenly entreated, in a tone of tenderness such as she had never heard him use,—“*pa pleiré conm ça, chè,—non!*” And she felt him drawing her close in a contrite caress. . . . “It was not with you, little heart, that I was angry!—listen: there are things you do not know, child; but I believe you—you are doing what you think is right. . . . *Pa pleiré,—non!—ti bigioule moin!* . . . Listen: since you will not come, I will

not go;—I will stay here at Anse-Marine . . . . *Pa pleiré, doudoux!*”

A little while she sobbed in his embrace without replying; then she murmured:—

—“I shall be more happy, doudoux, to know that you do not go . . . . But it is not a time to be angry, dear, when we must say good-bye for always.”

—“Ah! my little wasp! will you let them choose another husband for you, when they have you back in Saint Pierre?” he asked, with a smile of confidence.

—“Gabriel!” she cried, passionately,—“they can never do that! . . . . If they will not let me have you, doudoux, I will remain forever as I am . . . . No!—they cannot do that!”

—“*Bon, ti khè-moin!*—then it is not good-bye for always . . . . Wait!”

She looked up, wondering . . . . But in

the same moment, Mayotte, tired of playing with her cocoa-nut, and seeing Gabriel, ran to them screaming, "Gabou!—Gabou!"—and clung delightedly to the commandeur's knee.

—"No!—go and play a little while longer," said Youma. "Gabou is too tired to be pulled about."

—"Are you, Gabou?" asked Mayotte straining her little head back to look up to his face. And without waiting for his answer, she went on to tell him:—"Oh! Gabou! we are going back to town with *papoute!*"

—"He knows that," said Youma; "go and play."

—"But, da, I am tired!" she answered, discontentedly, still clinging to Gabriel's knee, expecting him to toss her up in his arms. . . . "*Pouend moin!*" she coaxed,—  
"take me up!—take me up!"

—“*Pauv piti, màgré ça!*” exclaimed Gabriel, lifting her to the level of his great bronze face,—“you do not care one bit that you are going to leave Gabou and all your dear friends at Anse-Marine,—*piess, piess, piti mechante!*—you do not love Gabou!”

—“Yes, I do!” she cooed, patting his dark cheeks,—“I do love you, Gabou!”

—“*Allé!—ti souyè!*—you love Gabou to play with you: that is all! And Gabou has no time to play with you now;—Gabou must go and see what everybody is doing, before it is time to sound the *cònelambi . . . . Bo!*—*Adié, cocotte.*”

He placed her in her nurse’s arms, and kissed Youma also,—but on the forehead only, as he had seen M. Desrivières do . . . . because of the child . . . . “*Adié, ti khè!*”

—“*Pou toujou?*” she murmured, almost inaudibly, vainly struggling with

the emotion which stifled her voice,—  
“for always?”

—“*Ah! non, chère!*” he answered, smiling to give her hope . . . . “*Même pa k'entré;—moune k'entré toujou.*”

(Only the mornes never meet;—folk always meet again.)

## X.

. . . . WOULD she ever see him again? she asked herself unceasingly through all her wakefulness of that night,—her last save one at Anse-Marine. But always came the self-answer of tears . . . . She heard the number of the hour at which she might have fled with him to freedom, and hour after hour, tingled out by the little bronze salon timepiece through its vaulted glass. She closed her eyes,—and still, as through their shut lids, saw the images of the evening: the figure of Gabriel, and Mayotte playing with her cocoa-nut, and the velvet shadowing of the black cliffs on the black sand, and a white sheeting and leaping of surf,—si-

lent like breakings of cloud. They went and came,—distorted and vanished and returned again with startling vividness, as if they would never fade utterly away. Only in the first hours of the morning there began for her that still soft darkness which is rest from thought.

But again a little while, and her mind wakened to the fancy of a voice calling her name,—faintly, as from a great distance,—a voice remembered as in a dream one holds remembrance of dreams gone before.

Then she became aware of a face,—the face of a beautiful brown woman looking at her with black soft eyes,—smiling under the yellow folds of a *madras* turban,—and lighted by a light that came from nowhere,—that was only a memory of some long-dead morning. And through the dimness round about it a soft blue radiance grew,—the ghost of a day; and

she knew the face and murmured to it:—  
“*Doudoux-manman.*” . . . .

. . . . They two were walking somewhere she had been long ago,—somewhere among mornes: she felt the guiding of her mother’s hand as when a child.

And before them as they went, something purple and vague and vast rose and spread,—the enormous spectre of the sea, rounding to the sky. And in the pearliness over its filmy verge there loomed again the vision of the English island, with long shreadings of luminous cloud across its violet peaks . . . . Slowly it brightened and slowly changed its color as she gazed; and all the peaks flushed crimson to their tips,—like a budding of wondrous roses from sea to sun. . . .

And Douceline, softly speaking, as to an infant, said:—

—“*Travail Bon-Dié toutt joli, anh?*”—

(Is it not all-pretty, the work of the good God?)

—“ Oh! my little jewel - mamma, — *ti-bijou - manman!* — oh! my little - heart-mamma, — *ti-khè - manman!* . . . . I must not go!” . . . .

. . . . But Douceline was no longer with her,—and the shining shadow of the island had also passed away,—and she heard the voice of Mayotte crying . . . . somewhere behind trees.

And she hastened there, and found her, under some huge growth that spread out coiling roots far and wide: one could not discern what tree it was for the streaming weight of lianas upon it. The child had plucked a sombre leaf, and was afraid,—something so strange had trickled upon her fingers.

—“ It is only the blood-liana,” said Youma: “ they dye with it.” . . . .

—"But it is warm," said the child,—still full of fear . . . . Then both became afraid because of a heavy pulsing sound, dull as the last flappings of a cannon-echo among the mornes. The earth shook with it. And the light began to fail,—dimmed into a red gloom, as when the sun dies.

—"It is the tree!" gasped Mayotte,—  
"*the heart of a tree!*"

But they could not go: a weird numbness weighed their feet to the ground.

And suddenly the roots of the tree bestirred with frightful life, and reached out writhing to wrap about them;—and the black gloom of branches above them became a monstrous swarming;—and the ends of the roots and the ends of the limbs had eyes. . . .

. . . . And through the ever-deepening darkness came the voice of Gabriel, crying,—"*It is a Zombi!—I cannot cut it!*"

## XI.

THE season of heavy humid heat and torrential rains,—the long *hivernage*,—had passed with its storms;—and the season of north-east winds, when the heights grow cool;—and the season of dryness, when the peaks throw off their wrappings of cloud. It was the *renouveau*, the most delicious period of the year,—that magical spring-time of the tropics, when the land suddenly steeps itself in iridescent vapor, and all distances become jewel-tinted, while nature renews her saps after the bleaching and withering of the dry months, and rekindles all her colors. The forests covered themselves at once with fruit and flowers; the shrivelled lianas

revived their luminous green, put forth new million tendrils, and over the heights of the *grands bois* poured down cataracts of blue, white, pink, and yellow blossom. The palmistes and the angelins appeared to grow suddenly taller as they shook off their dead plumes;—an aureate haze hung over the valleys of ripe cane;—and mountain roads began to turn green almost to their middle under the immense invasion of new-born grasses, herbs, and little bushes . . . . Mosses and lichens sprouted everywhere upon surfaces of stone or timber unprotected by paint;—grasses shot up through the jointing of basaltic pavements; and, simultaneously, tough bright plants burst into life from all the crevices of walls and roofs, attacking even the solid masonry of fortifications, compelling man to protect his work. An infinite variety: ferns and capillaria and vines that

sink their tendrils into the hardest rock;—the *thé-miraille*, and the *mousse-miraille*; the *pourpier* and the wild guava; the *fleur-i-Noël*, the Devil's tobacco (*tabac-diabe*), and the *lakhératt*;—even little trees, that must be removed at once for the safety of dwellings,—such as the young *fromager* or silk-cotton,—rose from wall tops and roofs,—branching from the points of gables,—rooting upon ridges and cornices. . . . The enormous cone of Pelée, which through the weeks of north winds had outlined the cusps of its cratered head against the blue light, once more drew down the clouds about it, and changed the tawny tone of its wrinkled slopes to lush green. Soft thunders rolled among the hills; tepid dashes of rain refreshed the earth at intervals;—the air grew sweet with balsamic scents;—the color of the sky itself deepened.

But though the land might put forth all its bewitchment, the hearts of the colonists were heavy. For the first time in many years the magnificent crop was being gathered with difficulty: there were mills silent for the want of arms to feed them. For the first time in centuries the slave might refuse to obey, and the master fear to punish. The Republic had been proclaimed; and the promise of emancipation had aroused in the simple minds of the negroes a ferment of fantastic ideas,—free gifts of plantations,—free donations of wealth,—perpetual repose unearned,—paradise life for all. They had seen the common result of freedom accorded for services exceptional;—they were familiar with the life of the free classes;—but such evidence had small value for them: the liberty given by the *béké* resembled in nothing that peculiar

quality of liberty to be accorded by the Republic!

They had dangerous advisers, unfortunately, to nourish such imaginings: men of color who foresaw in the coming social transformation larger political opportunities. The situation had totally changed since the time when slaves and freedmen fought alike on the side of the planters against Rochambeau and republicanism, against the *bourgeoisie* and the *patriotes*. The English capture of the island had justified that distrust of the first Revolution shown by the *hommes de couleur*, and had preserved the old régime for another half-century. But during that half-century the free class of color had obtained all the privileges previously refused it by prejudice or by caution; and the interests of the *gens de couleur* had ceased to be inseparably identified with those of the whites.

They had won all that was possible to win by the coalition; and they now knew the institution of slavery doomed beyond hope, not by the mere fiat of a convention, but by the opinion of the nineteenth century. And the promise of universal suffrage had been given. There were scarcely twelve thousand whites;—there were one hundred and fifty thousand blacks and half-breeds.

Yet there was nothing in the aspect or attitude of the slave population which could fully have explained to a stranger the alarm of the whites. The subject race had not only been physically refined by those extraordinary influences of climate and environment which produce the phenomena of creolization; but the more pleasing characteristics of the original savage nature,—its emotional artlessness, its joyousness, its kindliness, its quickness to

sympathy, its capacity to find pleasure in trifles,—had been cultivated and intensified by slavery. The very speech of the population,—the curious patois shaped in the mould of a forgotten African tongue, and liquefied with fulness of long vowel sounds,—caressed the ear like the cooing of pigeons . . . . Even to-day the stranger may find in the gentler traits of this exotic humanity an indescribable charm,—despite all those changes of character wrought by the vastly increased difficulties of life under the new conditions. Only the Creole knows by experience the darker possibilities of the same semi-savage nature: its sudden capacities of cruelty,—its blind exaltations of rage,—its stampede-furies of destruction.

. . . . Before the official announcement of political events reached the colony, the negroes,—through some unknown system

of communication swifter than government vessels,—knew their prospects, knew what was being done for them, felt themselves free. A prompt solution of the slavery question was more than desirable;—delay was becoming dangerous. There were as yet no hostile manifestations;—but the slave-owners,—knowing the history of those sudden uprisings which revealed an unsuspected power of organization and a marvellous art of secrecy,—felt the air full of menace, and generally adopted a policy of caution and forbearance. But in a class accustomed to command there will always be found men whose anger makes light of prudence, and whose resolve challenges all consequences. Such a one among the planters of 1848 dared to assert his rights even on the eve of emancipation;—chastised with his own hand the slave who refused to

work, and sent him to the city prison to await the judgment of a law that might at any moment become obsolete.

His rashness precipitated the storm. The *travailleurs* began to leave the plantations, and to mass in armed bands upon the heights overlooking Saint Pierre. The populace of the city rose in riot, burst into the cutlass stores and seized the weapons, surrounded the jail and demanded the release of the prisoner . . . . “*Si ou pa lagué y, ké ouè!—nou ké fai toutt nègue'bitation descenne!*” That terrible menace first revealed the secret understanding between the slaves of the port and the blacks of the plantation;—the officers of the law recoiled before the threat, and turned their prisoner loose.

But the long-suppressed passion of the subject class was not appeased: the mob continued to parade the streets, uttering

cries never heard before,—“*Mort aux blancs!—À bas les békés!*” . . . feeling secured from military interference by the recognized cowardice of a republican governor. Evening found the riot still unquelled,—the whites imprisoned in their residences, or fleeing for refuge to the ships in the harbor. And those dwelling on the hills, keeping watch, heard all through the night the rallying *ouklé* of negroes striding by, armed with cutlasses and bamboo pikes and bottles filled with sand. Twenty-four hours later, the whole slave-population of the island was in revolt; and the towns were threatened with a general descent of the *travailleurs*.

## XII.

ANOTHER day found the situation still more sinister. All business was suspended; every store and warehouse closed; even the markets remained empty; the bakeries had been pillaged, and provisions had become almost unobtainable. A rumor was abroad that emancipation had been voted,—that the news was being concealed,—that the official proclamation of freedom could only be enforced by an appeal to arms. . . .

Prior to the outbreak there had been a fierce heat of political excitement, created by the republican election. The white slave-holders had voted for a freedman faithful to their interests; the men of

color had used their freshly acquired privileges to secure representation in the person of a noted French abolitionist. Pictures of him had been distributed by thousands, together with republican cockades and tiny tricolored flags: the people kissed the pictures with tears of enthusiasm and shouts of "*Vive papa!*"—the colored children waved the little flags and cried: "*Vive la République!*"—some were so young they could only cry, "*Vive la 'Ipipi!*" And the complete victory of the *hommes de couleur* only intensified the exaltation . . . . But after the affair of the jail, the children ceased to appear in the streets with their little flags; and there was no longer a distribution of cockades, but a distribution of cutlasses—new cutlasses, for they had to be sharpened, and all the grindstones were in requisition.

. . . . It became more and more perilous for the whites to show themselves in the streets. They watched for chances to get to the ships, under the protection of their own slaves or of loyal freedmen, having influence with the populace, knowing every dark face in it. But after mid-day such faithful servants began to find their devotion unavailing: strange negroes were mingling with the rioters,—savage-looking men, whom the city domestics had never seen before, and who replied to the assurance "*C'est you bon béké*" (this is a *good* white) only by abuse or violence. Armed bands incessantly paraded,—beating drums,—chanting,—shouting "*À bas les békés!*"—watching for a fugitive to challenge with the phrase,—"*Eh! citoyen . . . citoyenne . . . arrête! Je te parle!*"—affecting French speech for the pleasure of the insulting *tutoiement*. They

peered for white faces at windows, cursed them, clamored: "*Mi! ausouè-à ké de-brayé ou!*"—gesturing with knives as if opening fish. Some great aggressive movement seemed to be preparing; and the *travailleurs* were always massing upon the heights. The whites who could not flee, feeling their lives in danger,—tried to prepare for defence: in some houses the women and girls made ball-cartridges. Slaves betrayed these preparations; and a rumor circulated that the *békés* were secretly organizing to attack the mob . . . . The time was long past when the whites could suppress a riot, and hang men of color to the mango-trees of the Batterie d'Esnotz; but what they had done in other days was remembered against them.

It was in the Quarter of the Fort,—the most ancient part of the city, situated on

an eminence, and isolated by the Rivière Roxelane,—that the white Creoles found themselves least safe from attack. It was especially difficult for them to reach the ships: the bridges and all approaches to the shore being crowded with armed negroes. The greater number of the houses were small, and could offer little protection if besieged;—and many persons preferred to leave their own homes and seek asylum in the few large dwellings of the district. Among such were the Desrivières family, who found refuge with their relatives the De Kersaints. The De Kersaint residence was unusually roomy,—not more than two full stories high, but long, broad, and built with the solidity of a stronghold. It stood at the verge of the old quarter, in a steeply sloping street, descending westward so as to leave a great half-disk of sea visible above the roofs,

and ascending eastward to join a country road leading to the interior. The windows of the rear overlooked vast cane-fields, extending far up the flanks of the Montagne Pelée, whose clouded crest towered fifteen miles away.

There were more than thirty persons assembled for safety at the De Kersaints'—mostly wives and daughters of relatives; and there was serious alarm among these. In the forenoon the servants had deserted the house,—one of them, a negress, irritated by some reproach, had left with the threat: "*Ausouè ou ké ouè—at-tenne!*" (Wait! you will see to-night!) M. de Kersaint, an old gentleman of seventy, who, seconded by his son, had made the fugitives as comfortable as was possible, strove to calm their fears. He believed the night would bring nothing worse than a great increase of noise and

menace: he did not think the leaders of the city populace intended more than intimidation. There might be a general descent of the plantation hands,—that would be a graver danger; but there were five hundred troops in the neighboring barracks. No criminal violence had yet occurred in the quarter: it was reported that a gentleman had been killed in the other end of the city,—but there were so many wild reports!

. . . . As a fact, the whites of the Fort,—mostly deserted by their slaves and domestics,—knew little of what was going on even in their immediate vicinity. Things that for two hundred years had been done in darkness and secrecy were now being done openly in the light. An occult power had suddenly assumed unquestioned sway,—the power of the African sorcerer.

Under the tamarinds of the Place du Fort, a *quimboiseur* plied his ghastly calling,—selling amulets, selling fetiches, selling magical ointments made of the grease of serpents. Before him stood an open cask filled with tafia mingled with gunpowder and thickened with bodies of crushed wasps. About him crowded the black men of the port,—the half-nude *gabbarriers*, wont to wield oars twenty-five feet long;—the herculean *nèguegouôis-bois*, brutalized by the labor of paddling their massive and awkward craft;—tough *canotiers*, whose skins of bronze scarcely bead in the hottest summer sun;—the crews of the *yôles* and the *sabas* and the *gommiers*;—the men of the cooperies, and the cask rollers, and the stowers;—and the fishers of *tonne*,—and the fishers of sharks. “*Ça qui lè?*” shouted the *quimboiseur*, serving out the venom in cups of

tin,—“*Ça qui lè vini bouè y? . . . .* Who will drink it, the Soul of a Man?—the Spirit of Combat?—the Essence of Falling to Rise?—the Heart-Mover?—the Hell-Breaker?” . . . . And they clamored for it, swallowed it—the wasps and the gunpowder and the alcohol, —drinking themselves into madness.

. . . . Sunset yellowed the sky,—filled the horizon with flare of gold;—the sea changed its blue to lilac;—the mornes brightened their vivid green to a tone so luminous that they seemed turning phosphorescent. Rapidly the glow crimsoned, —shadows purpled; and night spread swiftly from the east,—black-violet and full of stars.

Even as the last vermilion light began to fade, there sounded from the Place du Fort a long, weird, hollow call, that echoed sobbingly through all the hills like an

enormous moan. Then another,—from the Mouillage;—another,—from the river-mouth;—and others, interblending, from the *pirogues* and the *gabarres* and the *sabas* of the harbor: the blowing of a hundred lambi-shells,—the negroes of the city calling to their brethren of the hills . . . . So still, the fishers of sharks, from the black coast of Prêcheur, call the *travailleurs* of the heights to descend and divide the flesh.

And other moaning signals responded faintly,—from the valley of the Roxelane and the terraces of Perrinelle,—from the Morne d'Orange and the Morne Mirail and the Morne Labelle: the *travailleurs* were coming! . . . . And from the market-place, where by lantern-light the sorcerer still gave out his *l'essence-brisé-lenfè*, and his amulets and grease of serpents, began to reverberate ominously the heavy patting of a *tamtam*.

Barricaded within their homes, the whites of the lower city could hear the tumult of the gathering . . . . Masters and slaves alike were haunted by a dream of blood and fire,—the memory of Hayti.

## XIII.

AT the De Kersaints' all the apartments of the upper floor had been given up to the fugitives, except one front room where the men remained on watch: many of the women and young girls preferred to sit up with them rather than seek repose. Down-stairs all the windows and doors had been securely closed; and it was decided to extinguish all lights during the passing of a mob. Then was converse on the events of the preceding day, the late election, prospects of emancipation, the history of former uprisings,—some of which the older men remembered well,—and on the character of negroes. This topic brought out a series of anecdotes,—some

sinister, but mostly droll. A planter in the little assembly related a story about one of his own slaves who had saved enough money to buy a cow. At the first announcement of the political change in France he took the cow out of the field and tied it to the porch of his master's house. "*Pouki ou marré vache lanmaison?*" (Why do you tie the cow to the house?) asked the planter . . . . "*Moin ka marré vache lanmaison, mâite, pace yo ka proclamé la repiblique—pisse you fois repiblique-à proclamé, zaffai ta you c'est ta toutt*" (Master, I tie the cow to the house because they proclaim the Republic,—for once that the Republic is proclaimed, the belongings of one are the belongings of everybody). In spite of the general anxiety, this narrative provoked laughter. Then, the conversation taking another turn, M. Desrivières told the story of

Youma and the serpent,—there being many present who had not heard of the incident before. The young capresse, who sat with Mayotte on her knees, arose with the child, and left the apartment before M. Desrivères had ended his recital. A few minutes later he followed her into the adjoining room, called her away from the little one, and said to her, in an undertone which could not reach the child's ears:—

—“Youma, my daughter, the street is very quiet now; and I think it will be better for you to leave the child with my mother, and pass the night with our colored neighbors . . . . I can open the door for you.”

—“Why, master?”. . . . She had never asked him why before.

—“*Mafi*,” he answered, with a caress in his eyes, “I cannot ask you to stay with

us to-night. There is danger for all of us," he added, sinking his voice to a whisper: "we may be attacked."

—"That is why I wish to stay, master." . . . . This time she spoke aloud and firmly.

—"Oh! papa!" cried Mayotte, coming between them,— "do not send her anywhere!—I want her to tell me stories!"

—"Little egotist!" said M. Desrivères, stooping to kiss her,— "and if Youma wishes to go?" . . . .

—"You do not,—do you, *da?*" asked the child in surprise. She imagined herself at a sort of evening pleasure party.

—"I will stay to tell you stories," said Youma . . . . M. Desrivères pressed her hand, and left her with the child.

. . . . As M. Desrivères announced, the street had become very quiet. It was one of the most retired: during the day there

had been no gatherings in it;—some bands of negroes had passed from time to time shouting “*À bas les békés!*”—but since nightfall the disorderly element had disappeared. White citizens ventured to open their windows and look abroad. They heard the blowing of the lambi-shells without guessing its meaning,—imagined some fresh excitement in the direction of the harbor. Nevertheless, all became more anxious. The rushing of the water along the steep gutters,—the mountain water purifying every street,—seemed to sound unusually loud.

—“It always makes a great noise in this street,” said M. de Kersaint,—“there is so much incline.”

—“I think we are all more or less nervous to-night,” said another gentleman.

But Youma, suddenly returning alone

to the room where the men conversed, pointed to the windows, and exclaimed:—

—“ It is not the water !”

The ears of the half-breed have a singular keenness to sounds . . . . All talk ceased: the men held their breath to listen.

## XIV.

A HEAVY murmur, as of far surf, filled the street,—slowly loudened,—became a dull unbroken roar. From the heights it seemed to approach, and with it a glow, as of conflagration . . . . At once in every house the lights were extinguished, the windows closed, the doors secured;—the street became desolate as a cemetery. But from behind the slatted shutters of upper rooms all could watch the brightening of the light, hear the coming of the roar. . . .

—“*Yo ka vini!*” cried Youma.

And into the high street suddenly burst a storm of clamorings, a blaze of torch fires,—as a dense mass of black men in

canvas trousers, hundreds naked to the waist, came moving at a run: the down-pour of the *travailleurs*. Under the shock of their bare feet the dwellings trembled:—through all the walls a vibration passed, as of a faint earthquake . . . . If they would only go by!

Hundreds had already passed; and still the rushing vision seemed without end, the cascading of great straw hats interminable;—and over the torrent of it the steel of pikes and plantation forks and brandished cutlasses flickered in the dancing of torch fires. But there came an unexpected halt,—a struggling and shouldering, a stifling pressure,—a half lull in the tempest of shouting; while the street filled with a sinister odor of alcohol,—a stench of *tafia*. Evidently the mob was drunk, and being so, doubly dangerous. . . . . Some one had given an order, which

nobody could fully hear; a stentorian voice repeated it, as the tumult subsided: "*Là!—làmènm!—caïe béké!*" All the black faces turned to the dwelling of the De Kersaints; and all the black throats roared again. Unfortunately the imposing front of the building,—the only two-story edifice in a street of cottages,—had signalled out its proprietors as rich békés. To be a béké, a white, and to be rich, was, in the belief of the simple *travailleur* at least, to be an aristocrat, an enemy of emancipation,—most likely a slave-holder. . . . "*Fouillé là!*" the same immense voice pealed—(Search there!);—and the whole house shook to a furious knocking at the main entrance, of which the massive double doors were secured by an iron bar, as well as by lock and bolt. "*Ouvé!—ouvé ba nou!*" (Open for us!) shouted the crowd.

M. de Kersaint unfastened a shutter of one of the upper front rooms, and looked down upon the mob. It was an appalling mob;—there were nightmare-faces in it. Most of the visages were unfamiliar; but some he could recognize—faces of the port: many of the roughest city class had joined the *travailleurs* before their descent. There were women also in the mob,—gesticulating, screaming: some were plantation negresses; others were not,—and these were the worst. . . .

—“*Ça oulé, méfi?*” asked M. de Kersaint.

The first time they could not hear him for the uproar; but it soon calmed at the sight of the white-haired *béké* at the window: everybody wanted to listen. M. de Kersaint was not seriously alarmed;—he did not believe the crowd could dare more than a brutal manifestation,—what in the

patois is termed a *voum*. He repeated in Creole:—

—“What do you want, my sons?” . . . . It was thus the *béké* addressed the slave;—in his lips the word *monfi* had an almost patriarchal meaning of affection and protection: its use survives even in these republican years. But as uttered in that moment by M. de Kersaint, it fell upon the political passion of the mob like oil on fire.

—“*Ou sé pè-nou, anh?*”—laughed a mocker: “Are you our father? . . . There are no more ‘my sons’: there are only citizens,—*anni cittoyen!*”

—“*Y trop souyé! —y trop malin!*” screamed a woman’s voice. “He wants to flatter us, the old *béké!*—he is too sly!”

—“*Cittoyens, pouloss,*” responded M. de Kersaint. “Why do you want to break

into my house? Have I ever done harm to any of you?"

—"You have arms in the house!" answered the same menacing voice that had first directed the attention of the populace to the dwelling. It rang from the chest of a very tall negro, who seemed to be the leader of the riot: he wore only a straw hat and cotton trousers, and carried a cutlass. All at once M. de Kersaint remembered having seen him before,—working on the plantation of Fond-Laillet, as commandeur.

—"Sylvain, my son," answered M. de Kersaint, "we have no arms here. But we have women and children here. We have nothing to do with your wrongs."

—"Ouvé ba nou!"

—"None of you have any right to enter my house."

—"Ouvé ba nou!"

—“You have no right.”. . .

—“Ah! we will take the right,” shouted the leader; and a general roar went up,—thousands of excited voices reiterating the demand, “*Ouvé ba nou!*”

The white head withdrew from the window, and a young face appeared at it,—dark, handsome, and resolute;—the head of the younger De Kersaint.

—“*Tas de charognes!*” shouted the young man,—“yes, we have arms; and we know how to use them! The first one of you who enters this house, I shall make his black brains leap!”

He had a single loaded pistol: there was not another weapon in the building. He counted on the cowardice of the mob. But the negroes knew, or thought they knew, the truth: the old béké had not lied to them;—they were not afraid.

—“*Bon! nou ké ouè!*” menaced the

leader . . . . "*Ennou!*" he cried, turning to the crowd, "*crazé caïe-là!*" Almost in the same instant, a stone shot by some powerful hand whirred by the head of the younger De Kersaint, and crashed into the furniture of the apartment. Vainly the shutters were bolted: a second missile dashed them open again;—a third shattered those of the next window. Stone followed stone. There were several persons severely injured;—a lady was stricken senseless;—a gentleman's shoulder fractured. And the cry of the crowd was for more stones—" *Ba nou ouôches!—ba ouôches!*"—because the central pavement before the house was a rough cement, affording scanty material for missiles. But the lower cross-street was paved with rounded rocks from the river-bed;—a line of negresses formed from the point of attack to the corner at the cry of "*Fai la-*

*chaîne!*”—and the disjointed pavement was passed up along the line by apron-fuls. There was perfect order in this system of supplying projectiles: the black women had been trained for generations to “make the chain” when transporting stone from the torrents to the site of a building, or the place of a protection-wall.

Then the stone shower became terrific, —pulverizing furniture, bursting partitions, shattering chamber doors . . . . How the Creole negro can fling a stone may be comprehended only by those who have seen him, on mountain roads, bring down fruit from trees growing at inaccessible heights . . . . All the shutters of the upper front rooms had already ceased to exist; —the inmates had sought refuge in the rear apartments. But the shutters of the windows of the ground-floor, being very heavy, solid, and partly protected with

iron, continued to resist; and the doors of the great arch-way defied the brawny pressure of all the shoulders pushed against them.

—“*Méné pié-bois ici!—pié-bois!—pié-bois!*” cried the men, straining to burst the doors, under cover of the bombardment; and the cry passed up the street toward the mountain slope . . . . From within the house it was no longer possible to observe what the mob were doing;—the windows were unapproachable. But such a shout suddenly made itself heard from the street that it was evident something new had occurred . . . . “Ah! the soldiers!” joyfully exclaimed Madame de Kersaint.

She was mistaken. The fresh excitement had been caused by the appearance of the *pié-bois*,—a weighty log carried by a crew of twenty men,—all crying “*Ba*

*lai!—ba lai!*” Then those pushing at the doors fell back to give the battering-ram full play.

The men chanted as they swung it . . . .  
“*Soh-soh!—yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!*” And all the house shook to the enormous blow.

—“*Soh-soh!—yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!*” Bolts and locks burst;—the framework itself loosened in a showering of mortar;—the broad iron bar within still held, but it had bent like a bow, and the doors had yielded fully five inches.

—“*Soh-soh!—yaïe-yah! Rhâlé fò!*” A clang of broken metal; an explosion of splintered timber,—and the doors were down. The arch-way rang out the clap of their fall like a cannon-shot; the log-bearers dropped their log;—a brute roar of exultation acclaimed the feat . . . . Within, all was black.

There was a moment's hesitation;—the darkness and the voidness intimidated. "*Pòté flambeau vini!*" shouted the chief to the torch-bearers, reaching for a light . . . . "*ba moin! ba moin!*" He snatched one, and leaped forward, brandishing his weapon in the other hand. But precisely as he passed the threshold, a stunning report pealed through the archway; and the tall negro staggered, dropping torch and cutlass,—flung up both naked arms, reeled half round, and fell on his back, dead. The younger De Kersaint had kept his word.

The negroes at the entrance would have turned back in panic; but the pressure from behind, the rush of blind fury, was resistless; and the van of the populace was hurled into the arch-way,—struggling, howling, striking, stumbling over the corpse and the broken doors,—and with

such an impetus that many fell . . . . The younger De Kersaint had not thought of retreat, even when the gentlemen who had descended with him, finding resistance hopeless, were remounting to the upper rooms: he still stood at the foot of the stairs with his empty pistol,—believing himself able to hold back the invasion, to terrorize by moral force. But terror may become a blind rage, even in the slave,—when made desperate by the necessity of confronting a pistol muzzle; and the blacks flung themselves on the young man with the very fury of fear. He had time only to dash his useless weapon in the face of the foremost, as a bayonet fastened to a pole passed through his body: then he sank without one cry under such a mad slashing of cutlasses that strikers wounded each other in their frenzy . . . . Simultaneously a double-bar-

relled gun, loaded with ball, was fired from the entrancè at those reascending the stair-way,—both barrels together,—and M. Desrivères fell. He expired almost instantly, before his comrades could drag him into a room, of which the doors were at once barricaded with all the heavy furniture available;—the entire charge had entered his back, shattering the spine.

. . . .Then, after the momentary panic, came the reaction of hate, the mob thirst of vengeance;—traditional hate of the white intensified by the passions of the hour; vengeance for the fear inspired, for the killing of their leader, for all fancied or remembered wrongs. But the apartments of the ground-floor were empty: the békés had retreated to the upper rooms, whither it might be dangerous to pursue them;—perhaps they had arms in

reserve for the last extremity. It was at all events certain they could not escape. The windows of the rear were high, and looked down upon a plantation road skirting cane-fields, where armed blacks were on the watch; and the side walls were solid masonry without a single opening. Neither was escape possible by way of the roof,—elevated fully twenty feet above the tiles of adjoining cottages;—the *békés* were helpless! . . . . But no one now offered to lead the assault. There were only clamorings,—hideous threats,—utterances that seemed the conception of cannibals in delirium . . . . Meanwhile the body of the dead leader, raised upon a broken door for a litter, was being paraded through the streets by torch-light: armed men ran beside the corpse, pointing to the pink brain oozing from the wound, and crying:—“*Mi!—yo k’assassiné nou! yo ka*

*tchoué fouè nou!*" . . . The excitement became maniacal; but one voice,—a woman's, the voice of the wife of dead Sylvain, shrieked clearly through it all:—

—“*Metté difé, zautt!—brilé toutt béké!*”

And the mob caught up the cry,—stormed it through the street. “*Difé!—metté difé!*” . . . But what if the békés should make a desperate rush upon the incendiaries? . . . “*Oté lescalié!*” some one suggested, and settled all hesitations. There were arms enough to tear down any stair-way in five minutes: it took less time for the rioters to obey the suggestion. They pulled away the stairs;—they smashed the wreck into kindling-wood, piled it on the tiles of the hall-way, and fired it with torches. The balustrade was of mahogany, but the steps were *bois du nord*,—yellow pine, resinous and light . . . “*Ka pleine gomme!—ka brilé bien!*” . . .

Simultaneously the furniture of the lower rooms was demolished;—everything they contained was heaped upon the fire,—combustible or incombustible: portraits, curtains, *verrines*, bronzes, mats, mirrors, hangings . . . . “*Sacré tonnè, nou ké brilé toutt!—Ké ouè!*” . . . . There were sounds of affright overhead,—of feet wildly running,—of furniture being dragged away from doors;—there were shrieks . . . . “*Ouail!*—not so brave now, the cursed *békés!*” . . . . Then faces appeared through the smoke, looking down,—a gray-haired lady, striving to be heard, to speak to some heart;—a young mother dumbly pointing to her infant. Two black arms reached up toward her in savage mockery, and a negress hoarsely screamed: “*Ba moin li!—moin sé vlopé enlai y comm chatrou!*” —miming the cuttle-fish devouring its prey! A burst of obscene laughter fol-

lowed the infamous jest . . . . But the heat and smoke became unendurable;—the incendiaries retreated,—mostly to the street,—a few to the cane-fields in the rear, to watch for any possible attempts at escape. There was no more stone-throwing: the flingers were weary; and the mob was content to watch the progress of its vengeance. The shrieks could still be heard: they were answered by gibes and curses.

The arch-way reddened,—lighted,—began to glow like a furnace, forcing by its heat a general falling back from the entrance . . . . And soon the crackling within became a low roar, like the sound of a torrent;—all the *rez-de-chaussée* was seized by the flame. It put long yellow tongues through the windows;—they serpentine about the masonry, licked the key-stones and the wall above them,—striving to

climb;—began to devour the framework of the shutters . . . . And, at intervals, from street to street, sounded the sinister melancholy blowing of the great sea-shells.

Over all the roofs of the city the voice of an immense bell began to peal,—rapidly, continuously: the *bourdon* of the cathedral was tolling the tocsin. One after another the bells of the lesser churches joined in the alarm. But, for the first time, the pumps remained in their station-houses;—the black firemen ignored the summons! And still the soldiers,—though muttering mutiny,—were rigidly confined to their barracks by superior order. Yet the Governor\* knew the city was at the mercy of a negro mob,—knew the white population in peril of massacre. The order seemed incredible to those who read

---

\* Rostoland, maréchal de camp, gouverneur provisoire.

it with their eyes;—it remains one of the stupefying facts of French colonial history,—one of the many, not of the few, which appear to justify the white Creole's undying hate of Republicanism.

. . . . Fanned by a south breeze, the flames assailed the rear more rapidly than the front rooms of the besieged dwelling,—destroying communication between them by devouring the lobbies connected with the wrecked end of the stair-way. And, through the outpouring of smoke, men began to drop or leap from back windows,—abandoning the women and children,—goaded by the swift menace of the hideous death of fire. On the side of the street there could have been no hope;—on that of the fields there were fewer enemies: there was one desperate chance. Of those who took it, the first two were killed almost as soon as they

touched the ground;—the third, a French stranger, although frightfully wounded, was able to run for his life nearly two hundred yards before being overtaken and despatched. But two others could profit by the incident;—gaining the high canes, they fled at a crouching run between the stems,—doubling,—twisting,—and were quickly lost to view. . . . “*Béké lacampagne mênm!*” —cried the disappointed pursuers:—“*yo ka fenne kanne!*” Only a country Creole could have known the trick, successfully practised by maroon negroes—*fenne kanne* (splitting the cane). . . . Darkness and the terror of serpents aided their flight.

Some chivalrous men,—M. de Kersaint was of these,—refused that desperate chance; remained to give the consolation of their presence to the helpless women,—mothers and wives, and young girls

delicately bred, into the perfumed quiet of whose existence no shadow of fear had ever fallen before . . . . There were still nearly thirty souls within the flaming house; and the soldiers were still confined to their barracks!

The smoke being blown to the north, the view of the burning dwelling continued almost unobscured on the street side;—but as yet, since the stone-throwing began, no one had appeared at the front windows. The rabble watched and wondered: it seemed as if all communication between the front and rear of the besieged house had already been cut off, so that the last scene of the tragedy would remain hidden from them—a brutal disappointment! The first frenzy had exhausted itself: there remained only that revolting apathy which in savage natures follows the perpetration of a monstrous act;—the

tempest of outcries subsided to a low tide-roar of excited converse. . . .

—“They are women and children who scream like that.”

—“Malediction! they are *békés*—let them all roast together!”

—“*Ouill papa!*—they burned enough of us when they had the power to do it.”

—“Yes! they burned poor negresses for sorcery. The priest who confessed them said they were innocent.”

—“*Ah! c'est taille-Toto ça!*—that was in the old times!”

—“Old times! We don't forget. These are the new times, *monfi!*”

—“*C'est jusse!* . . . . We are fighting for our liberty now.”

—“*Houlo!*” . . . . A new roar went up:—there was an apparition at one of the windows.

—“*Mi! you négresse!*”

—“It is the *da!*—*Jesis-Maïa!*”

—“*Pé!*—*pé zautt!*”

—“*Pé!*” . . . . The word ran from mouth to mouth;—almost a hush followed its passage through the crowd, a hush of malignant expectation;—then Youma’s powerful contralto rang out with the distinctness of a bugle-call.

—“*Eh! tas de capons!*” she cried, fearlessly,—“cowards afraid to face men! Do you believe you will win your liberty by burning women and children? . . . . Who were the mothers of you?”

—“We are burning *békés,*” screamed a negress in response: “they kill us; we kill them. *C’est jusse!*”

—“You lie!” cried Youma. “The *békés* never murdered women and children.”

—“They did!” vociferated a mulatto in the mob, better dressed than his fellows;—“they did! In seventeen hundred and

twenty-one! In seventeen hundred and twenty-five!" . . . .

—"Aïe, macaque!" mocked Youma. "So you burn negresses now for imitation! What have the negresses done to you, Ape?"

—"They are with the békés."

—"You were with the békés yesterday, the day before yesterday, and always,—every one of you. The békés gave you to eat,—the békés gave you to drink,—the békés cared for you when you were sick . . . . The békés gave *you* freedom, O you traitor mulatto!—gave you a name, *saloprie!*—gave you the clothes you wear, ingrate! *You!*—you are not fighting for your liberty, liar!—the békés gave it to you long ago for your black mother's sake! . . . . *Fai doctè, milatt!*—I know you! . . . . coward without a family, without a race!—*fai philosofe*, O you renegade,

who would see a negress burn because a negress was your mother!—*Allé!*—*bâtà-béké!*” . . . .

Then Youma could not make herself heard: a fresh outburst of vociferation drowned her voice. But her reproaches had struck home in at least one direction: she had touched and stirred the smouldering contempt, the secret jealous hate of the black for the freedman of color; and the mulatto's discomfiture was hailed by yells of ironical laughter. In the same moment there was a violent pushing and swaying;—some one was forcing his way to the front through all the pressure,—rapidly, furiously,—smiting with his elbows, battering with his shoulders: a giant *capre* . . . . He freed himself, and sprang into the clear space before the flaming building,—making his cutlass flicker about his head,—and shouted:—

—“*Nou pa ka brilé négresse!*” . . . .

The mulatto put to scorn advanced and would have spoken;—ere he could utter a word, the travailleur, with a sudden backward blow of his unarmed hand, struck him to the ground.

—“*A moïn! méfouè!*” thundered the tall new-comer;—“Stand by me, brothers!—we do not burn negresses!”

And Youma knew it was Gabriel who stood there alone,—colossal, menacing, magnificent,—daring the hell about him for her sake . . . .

—“*Ni raison! ni raison!*” responded numbers . . . . “*Non! nou pa ka brilé négresse! . . . . Châché léchelle!*” Gabriel had forced sympathy,—wrung some sentiment of compassion from those wild-beast hearts. . . . “*Pòté léchelle vini!—içi yon léchelle!*” was clamored through the crowd . . . . “a ladder!—a ladder!”

Five minutes,—and a ladder touched the window. Gabriel himself ascended it,—reached the summit,—put out his iron hand. Even as he did so, Youma, stooping to the sill, lifted Mayotte from behind it.

The child was stupid with terror;—she did not know him.

—“Can you save her?” asked Youma,—holding up the little fair-haired girl.

Gabriel could only shake his head;—the street sent up so frightful a cry. . . .

—“*Non !—non !—non !—non !—pa lè yche-béké !—janmain yche-béké !*”

—“Then you cannot save me!” cried Youma, clasping the child to her bosom, —“*janmain ! janmain, mon ami !*”

—“Youma, in the name of God. . . .”

—“In the name of God you ask me to be a coward! . . . Are you vile, Gabriel?—

are you base? . . . Save myself and leave the child to burn? . . . Go!"

—"Leave the *béké's yche!*—leave it!—leave it, girl!" shouted a hundred voices.

—"Moin!" cried Youma, retreating beyond the reach of Gabriel's hand,—"*moin!* . . . Never shall I leave it,—never! I shall go to God with it."

—"Burn with it, then!" howled the negroes . . . "down with that ladder! down with it, down with it!" Gabriel had barely time to save himself, when the ladder was dragged away. All the first fury of the riot seemed to have been rekindled by the sight of the child;—again broke forth the tempest of maledictions.

But it calmed: there was another reaction . . . Gabriel had men to strive with him. They forced the ladder once more into position;—they formed a desperate guard about it with their cutlasses;—they

called to Youma to descend . . . . She only waved her hand in disdain : she knew she could not save the child.

And the fierce heat below began to force back the guard at the foot of the ladder . . . . Suddenly Gabriel uttered a curse of despair. Touched by a spirt of flame, the ladder itself had ignited,—and was burning furiously.

Youma remained at the window. There was now neither hate nor fear in her fine face: it was calm as in the night when Gabriel had seen her stand unmoved with her foot on the neck of the serpent.

Then a sudden light flared up behind her, and brightened. Against it her tall figure appeared, as in the Chapel of the Anchorage Gabriel had seen, against a background of gold, the figure of *Notre Dame du Bon Port* . . . . Still her smooth features expressed no emotion. Her eyes

were bent upon the blond head hiding against her breast;—her lips moved;—she was speaking to the child . . . Little Mayotte looked up one moment into the dark and beautiful bending face,—and joined her slender hands, as if to pray.

But with a piteous cry, she clung to Youma's bosom again. For the thick walls quivered as walls quiver when a hurricane blows;—and there were shrieks,—frantic, heart-sickening, from the rear,—and a noise of ruining, as of smothered thunder. Youma drew off her foulard of yellow silk, and wrapped it about the head of the child: then began to caress her with calm tenderness,—murmuring to her,—swaying her softly in her arms,—all placidly, as though lulling her to sleep. Never to Gabriel's watching eyes had Youma seemed so beautiful.

Another minute—and he saw her no

more. The figure and the light vanished together, as beams and floor and roof all quaked down at once into darkness . . . . Only the skeleton of stone remained,—black-smoking to the stars.

And stillness came,—a stillness broken only by the hissing and crepitation of the stifled fire, the booming of the tocsin, the far blowing of the great sea-shells. The victims had ceased to shriek;—the murderers stood appalled by the ghastliness of their consummated crime.

Then, from below, the flames wrestled out again,—crimsoning the smoke whirls, the naked masonry, the wreck of timbers. They wriggled upward, lengthening, lapping together,—lifted themselves erect,—grew taller, fiercer,—twined into one huge fluid spire of tongues that flapped and shivered high into the night. . . .

The yellowing light swelled,—expand-

ed from promontory to promontory,—palpitated over the harbor,—climbed the broken slopes of the dead volcano leagues through the gloom. The wooded mornes towered about the city in weird illumination,—seeming loftier than by day,—blanching and shadowing alternately with the soaring and sinking of fire;—and at each huge pulsing of the glow, the white cross of their central summit stood revealed, with the strange passion of its black Christ.

.... And the same hour, from the other side of the world,—a ship was running before the sun, bearing the Republican gift of liberty and promise of universal suffrage to the slaves of Martinique.







PS  
1917  
Y6

Hearn, Lafcadio  
Youma

PLEASE DO NOT REMOVE  
CARDS OR SLIPS FROM THIS POCKET

---

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO LIBRARY

---

