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SYNOPSIS

CHAPTER I—The time is the late '60s or early '70s and the scene a steamboat on the Mississippi river. All the types of the period are present and the floating palace is distinguished by merriment, dancing and gallantry. There are the customary drinking and gambling also. Virgil Drace, a young northern man, is on his way south on a mission of revenge. He meets an eccentric character in the person of one Liberty Shottle, who is constantly tempting the goddass of chance. They form a singular compact.

CHAPTER II.—Drace gets his mind off his mission by entering into deck sports in which he exhibits an unusual athletic prowess. Liberty Shottle is again unlucky at cards and attempts a fnancial negotiation with Drace. The latter, seeing an opportunity to use Shottle, confides to him that his mission is to find a certain ex-guerrilia, Stepho ia Vitte, who had murdered Drace's father. It is his determination announced to his new chum, to hang La Vitte as high as Haman. Drace has become enamored of a mysterious beauty aboard the boat.

(Commissed from mat week.)

"I thank you, str." "You didn't last long."

"No, master. The tangled-haired hag kicked me sidewise, like a cow. In only two pots! But what can you expect of a man that has an acefull beaten? How long can a man preserve his freedom at that rate? And a fellow with a spindle chin and a nose no bigger than the average wart beat me with four jacks. Crushed me! And he would have crushed Julius Caesar just the same. Well, after all, freedom has many responsibilities. As a slave I'll cultivate what virtues I can get hold of, and look toward old age and a cabin on the hillside. And now, as it is natural for every man to hide his degradation, will you permit me to call you Virgil in the presence of other people?"

"I thought you didn't believe in the natural thing! But all right; I grant your request. And now I suppose I'd hetter give you some pocket-change. It isn't well for even a slave to be broke.'

The slave's face brightened with hope, . "You couldn't make it as much as five dollars, could you?"

"No, thirty cents." Shottle took the money and sat drooping. Drace gave him a cigar, and they smoked for a time in silence. At last Shottle looked toward Drace, his face guiltless of the whimsical humor that had hitherto possessed it.

"Master," he said, "I don't want to be inquisitive, and if I'm prying into what's none of my business, I won't mind your saying so. But I want to be a faithful slave, and I you best if I know what-what are my master's purposes in life. For example, was there any special reason for your learning to throw and tie that way? Is there anybody in particular I could help you to put the rope on?"

Drace made no answer for a moment, but bent a searching eye upon his new servitor. Somehow the man's soul seemed to shine transparent in his face; and through it Drace saw sincerity; moreover the longing of youth for comradeship was strong within his lonely soul and won him

from reticence. "Liberty." he said, "did you ever hear of a man named Stepho la Vitte?" Liberty nodded. "Yes, I've heard of him; they say he's an outlaw, a smug-

"And worse," said Drace. "He's the man who-Liberty, give me your word, your oath, that you'll keep this a sacred secret!"

Liberty gave his word and his oath with a certain quaint dignity, and Drace went on:

"Liberty, before the war my father, Alfred Drace, was manager of a line of steamboats on the Ohio. In his employ was the creole Stepho la Vitte. After a time it came to my father's knowledge that Stepho was not only dishonest in ordinary dealings but had been guilty of piracy along the Gulf And so my father dismissed Stepho from a position which the creole's dishonesty had made lucrative

and valuable to him, "Just after that," Drace went on, "the war broke out. La Vitte became a guerrilla-one of the men of Quantrell's stamp, who kept out of the army but who gathered in bands and lived by rapine along the border. I was only a little boy, Liberty, when La Vitte's band of guerrillas crossed the Ohio near Cincinnati and raided the little town where we lived. But the horror of that night still burns like a flame

in my brain, Liberty." Drace stopped, drew from a breast pocket a card and handed it to Shottle. On it was written in bold black characters: "Stepho la Vitte, with the compliments of Alfred Drace's son

Shottle read the card, then looked inquiringly at Drace:

"Liberty," the young man explained, "those guerrillas under La Vitte burned our little town and killed near-

ly every grown man in it. For word was brought of their coming, and the men-nearly all of them married men or old-who had not gone to the war seized weapons and went out to defend their houses.

"They were massacred almost to a man. . . . And it was not plunder alone that led them to choose our little town for outrage, Liberty, but a passion for revenge. For next morning my father was found hanging to a tree. And on his breast was pinneda card that read: 'Alfred Drace, with the compliments of Stepho la Vitte."

Liberty looked again at the card he held in his hand, then handed it back to Drace. "I reckon I understand now, master," he said. "You are huntin' this Stepho to-"

"To hang him as high as Haman and to pin that card on his breast," declared Drace passionately. "While my mother lived, Liberty, I could do nothing. You know how women are in such matters. But-she died this spring, Liberty, after long years of grieving for the man that d-d outlaw foully murdered. Now I am free to strike for my honor and my father's memory-to carry justice to that mur-

With an awkward gesture Liberty stretched forth a hand, caught Drace's and wrung it warmly. "You're likelike Hamlet!" he exclaimed. "I'll do my best to help you, Hamlet. Let me be your Horatio as well as your slave,"

Drace returned the fervent handclasp. "My Horatio!" he agreed. And then, solemn again, he added: "It's a worthy cause, Liberty. It's not alone my private vengeance, but the wrongs of a whole community that the ordinary machinery of justice can never right. Why, Liberty, dozens of men fiends; little children were trodden

time of Stepho's raid their son and his young wife lived next door to them; they were well-to-do and prosperous. The day of the raid the son had received ten thousand dollars from the sale of some lands. When rumor of the raiders came, he hurriedly hid the money somewhere in the neighborhood, scribbled on a piece of paper the location of that treasure and gave it to his wife before he went out with the other men to fight. Next morning he had been shot; and the young wife had been carried off by those devilsher child with her, after the Indian custom, to keep her from suicide. No one knows what became of her. Nor has that money ever been found. Liberty, if I could find Stepho, get him in my power, I believe I could at least learn what became of that poor young woman-possibly find that paper and learn where to find the money those poor people so sorely need; for once. some years ago, a mysterious fellow was caught digging about their yard.

. But I've talked enough, Liberty. Action! Do you know any more about "Not much." replied Liberty. "I be-Heve he is often seen up the River. and sometimes down on the coast. He

else is afraid of him. So you-wemust keep dark till we get our chance. And you mustn't show your feelings in your face. Remember, master, you're just a young man out to see the world, H'm-here comes Colonel Josh. Suppose we talk to him. He was a mule-buyer in the war and may know something about Stepho."

The door was darkened. In came Joshua Mortimer, the man whom Miss were murdered by those drunken Lucy had plied with questions concerning Drace. He had dodged in for said Shottle. "Come on."

under the hoofs of their horses, and a smoke, he said, when Shottle had vomen- Near our house, Liberty, an introduced him to his master, and it old couple live in poverty. At the was evident that it was his aim to impress Drace with his military bearing. He had not been actually in the army, but had acquired the title of colone from his adventurous work of buying mules for the Confederate government The Colonei "took it" that Drace was from the North.

"Yes, but some of my people were from the South." "Ah! I congratulate you, sir. I have

a match, thank you." Drace had offered him a light. He filled his pipe with tobacco crumbs dug out of his breeches pocket, and, long legs crossed, sat back to enjoy him-

been ended some years; and if we forget an evil as easily as a virtue, sir, it will soon be only a dim memory. I

"But you were not really in the army, Colonel Josh," the slave spoke

had enough of it."

The Colonel pulled at his pipe, stretched his neck and appeared to fish for something down in his collar. "Liberty, my duty was scouting and the incidental picking up of mules, as

the records of the War Department will be pleased to exhibit, sir." After a few minutes' more conversahas his friends, and nearly everybody tion the Colonel rose. "I will now go back to the ballroom," he declared himself. "Liberty, I came aboard to-

night with your third consin, Miss Lucy Sanders.' "That so? Come down, Marse Drace,

and I'll introduce you to her." "I think, sir, that she has retired," the Colonel was quick to interpose, realizing that he had thoughtlessly suggested an invasion of his own terri-

"Not while there is a fiddle going,"

Into Virgil's heart flew the hope that the slave's cousin might be the barbaric girl with the roses; there could be no mistaking her, after meeting her, for in that brief gaze he had carried away a master's painting of her, easeled in his mind. So he was quick to hasten below with Shottle, the Colonel panting behind them.

Miss Lucy had just left off dancing. No, she was not the thrilling barbarian, but Drace swallowed his disappointment dry, like a swamp man taking quinine. Shottle might have reflected that never before had his kinswoman been so glad to see him. On his arm she hung as she cooed, but her eyes were on Drace, and he listened, not to her words, but to the music of her accent, soft as the notes of a dove. Like a frost-bitten Shanghai, the Colonel stood first on one foot and then on the other. Drace politely asked Miss Lucy to dance with him, and the Colonel dropped onto a chair.

Shottle sat beside him. "She takes to him like a duck to water," said the slave, looking after his master and his third cousin.

The Colonel sighed. "Liberty Shottle," he said, "I am going to tell you something."

"Out with it."

"It is not a matter to be spoken of so lightly, sir."

"All right; go ahead." "Liberty Shottle, it is this: I am deeply in love with your cousin, and before the dawn of another day I shall pop the question to her,"

"Pop the deuce! Lend me ten dollars."

"You shock me, sir." "Tell you what I'll do," persisted "Let me have ten, and I'll make her a speech in your favor that will kink her hair." "Shottle!"

"And I can do it. They've got my

speech on the Periclean Age hung up right now at the university. The governor of N. C. said to gov. of S. C. making his historic remark about its being a long time between drinks, that it was the most powerful speech he

ever haird." The Colonel scowled, and swore his refusal to enter into any financial transaction involving his heart; and Shottle, realizing that his efforts were vain, sank down into melancholy stlence. Miss Lucy, meanwhile, was totroducing Drace to some of her friends, net to young women, but to men and to ladies well advanced along the path. Drace soon realized that this society was far from the caricature that Shot tle and Colonel Josh might reflect; for the most part it was composed of ladies of exquisite refinement, and men strong in the dignity of medicine or the law.

"You have not chosen an opportune time to visit New Orleans," an old judge remarked to Drace. "We are forced to live under the infamy of a carpetbag government, sir. Political scoundrels, who in the North could never attain to even the meanest office, come down here where we we disfranchised and elect themselves legislators, governors-representatives of parishes that they have never seen. Heavy taxes are levied, and they pocket the money. The governor was not elected, but named by a gang of freebooters. The real citizens of the state have no vote. Their former slaves and the crooks who now manage them control the ballot-box. This is the true state of affairs. Wait till you see New Orleans, sir."

This talk was too serious for Miss Lucy. She plucked Drace away to walk with her, and she hung laughing on his arm as everywhere his eyes searched for the girl with the roses in

(Continued on page four.)



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