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He pulled alongside and steadled the

canoe while they got in. Now he pad-

talked, and whom the other two ad-

dressed as Tonez, requested to be set

on a bushy shore where the water was

so shallow that the canoe was almost

stuck in the ooze. With his paddle

Drace propped his craft steady, for

them to get out. Tonez got out-and

with the quickness of a cat snatched

a rope from beneath his coat and

threw a noose about Drace's arms.

Then the two men in the boat threw

themselves upon him. There was a

hard struggle in the canoe and then

out into the water, but they brought

him ashore, wound about with the rope.

Now they made haste to He him se-

curely. The canoe was dragged

ashore; Drace stretched out in it, and

now they took it on their shoulders

and hastened through the tangled un-

derbrush. He had fought hard, but

had not cried out. But as he was

carried along, he swore bitterly at

himself for not looking at first with

"Ah, you would steal about and

spy," said Tonez. "But you steal about

no more. The carpetbaggers, they say,

You brave? and you say, 'Yes, I am

"Ah, you come with the joke. To-

Drace lay quietly tugging at the

ropes that bound him. If he could

spring out free, what a scattering he

would make of them! They stopped,

entering some sort of doorway, and

rested the canoe on the ground. Tonez

lighted a candle, and Drace saw that

he was in an old cabin, almost ready

to fall. They rolled him out on the

floor, face down, and beneath his arms

they passed the paddle of the cance,

so that he could not turn over. Then

the others went out, leaving Tones

"Does the kind gentleman know why

they gone? They go to get the dry

To make the fire. It is not cold, no?

But they will make the fire of the cab-

them that his friends would hang

them; but they laughed, Tonez bend-

"In a few minutes I light the blaze

talk of Stepho's daughter. Remember

"The kind gentleman he come close.

I'm Portuguese. But no matter. When

and he pat us on the back and give us

kind gentleman's eyes when he lie

that way on his jaw. I will not stoop

so low with the candle . . . Oh, what

a fine pile they get! It will make the

blaze beautiful. All ready, yes? I will

Drace could not see him, but he

heard the first crackle of the dried

rushes, saw the flame dim the candle

light. Now he cried aloud, the men laughing, the mounting flame crack-

ling louder. Tonez came back to him.

need this candle to light you to bed:

so I blow it out, see? And I take it

They hastened out, and he heard

them laughing as they ran through the

underbrush. With all his harnessed

might he strove to break the paddle so

that he might roll toward the door, but

it was strong, and he broke only the

tip of the blade. A louder crackling

told him that the dry boards above

were catching. Soon the roof would

fall in; great sparks would fly upward,

Why should he lie there, seeing all

this in his mind, he wondered. He had

read that men approaching death

sometimes speak foolish words, and

here he lay, with his mind on trivial

things. Soon he would writhe in a

furnace. How all about him glared!

He wondered how long it would be be-

fore a tongue of flame should lick him

And then something touched his

hand, something cold and swift. A

knife cut the ropes that bound him;

and in his great and sudden foy Drace

almost lost his reason. But he did not

ery out; no word was spoken. Just

one look, and then he screened her

from the flames as they fled through

fall and hiss in the water.

with its agony . .

ing over him with the candle.

she may love me some, too."

"You Spanish devil!"

touch It off."

with me."

morrow, we will laugh. Will you? No,

him in their power.

come just in time."

you will not laugh.

holding the candle.

"You are liars, I was..."

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 unucky at cards and attempts a financial negotiation with Drace. The latter, seeing an opportunity to use Shottle, confides to him that his mission is to find a certain ex-guerrilla, Stepho la 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.

CHAPTER III.—The steamer reaches New Orleans, at that time in the somewhat turbulent throes of carpetbag government. Shottle becomes possessed of two tickets for the French ball, a great society event, and proposes that Drace accompany him to the affair. The young men attend and Drace unexpectedly meets the girl who had fired his heart aboard the steamer. She is accompanied by one Boyce, whose proprietary interest indicates that he is her fiance. Through stratagem Shottle learns that the name of the girl is Nadine la Vitte and that her companion of the evening is the man who is seeking to marry her.

CHAPTER IV.—Drace passes an uneasy night torn by the suspicion that Nadine is the daughter of old Stepho la Vitte, now an admitted outlaw. Now, more than ever, is he resolved to find where the girl lives and to find Stepho. Drace and Shottle begin a search of the city. In one of their nocturnal pligrimages they come upon a mob intent upon hanging a poor wretch from the limb of a tree. It is a typical carpetbag execution and aroused the resentment of an opposing mob of citisens. Drace takes a hand in the fight which starts and is instrumental in preventing the execution. From a window opposite the scene, he catches a glimpse of one he is sure is Nadine.

CHAPTER V.—The escapade, the fight, the interference with the execution get Drace and Shottle into bad standing with the authorities, but instead of punishment are given until the next day to board a steamer bound north. Returning to the house where he thought he had glimpsed the girl, Drace finds the place abandoned. Through Colonel Josh, at emissary employed at the suggestion of Shottle, he gets a faint clue in the discovery that a certain Frenchman, a wine fealer, is reported to be an intimate of Stepho la Vitte. There is only a short time before the departure of the steamer when Drace and Shottle go to call on the Frenchman. The latter is too keen to be inveigled into giving up any information, but Shottle, spying around among the casks and bottles, especially the articles made up for shipment, makes an important discovery. So as not to arouse the suspicions of the Frenchman, he casually draws Drace away from the place and onto the steamer. On board he informs Drace that one of the cases was addressed to Stepho la Vitte at Farnum's Landing, Mississippi, It is the next stop below Bethpage's Landing and Colonel Bethpage is Liberty Shottle's uncle.

CHAPTER VI.—Drace and Shottle are

CHAPTER VI.-Drace and Shottle are CHAPTER VI.—Drace and Shottle are received with genuine hospitality by Colonel Bethpage and find the plantation and its environs delightful. After a brief stay and a characteristic financial transaction with the colonel, Shottle goes away ostensibly on a business trip to Vicksburg, but in reality to seek his favorite form of amusement. Drace makes the plantation his headquarters and from pieces of information gathered from various sources, becomes convinced that La Vite has a haunt in a great wood of a press and a tangle of salt cedar, a sort of everslades, a marsh with hundreds of knoll islands rising here and there among the bayous. A shrewd old negro had told him that the outlaw lived in a house built of periwinkle shells. Day after day Drace takes a canoe and goes farther and farther into the mosshanging wilds. At his feet lies a rope, one end of it a hangman's nose.

end of it a hangman's noose.

CHAPTER VII.— Drace penetrates into the wilderness, discovers Periwinkle House and finds Nadine alone. She is much alarmed and warns him her father will shoot him. He makes love to her and to get him to go she agrees to meet him again the following Thursday. On his way home Drace is accosted by three men who ask to be set across the river. They overpower him and bind him with ropes. Led by Tony they throw Drace into an old cabin. Tony taunts Drace and avows his love for Nadine, while the others collect fuel. Tony sets fire to the cabin and the three go off laughing. And then his bonds are cut and with Nadine's help he gets safely out. She tells him how she was led to come to his rescue.

(Continued from last week.)

"Never would a man before talk like this to me . . . But if you must come when I beg you no, let it be next Thursday. My father then will be in the hills to buy cattle."

"This is Friday, and that will be a week, lacking one day. You have set

doomsday for my return." "If you come before, you will not find me. And now it is the good-by." She drew back quickly through the door, and down into the fringe of tall cane he went, parting his way to the canoe that lay nosing the mossy bank. Only now that she was gone and

night had come did he remember-remember that this girl who had bewitched the swift minutes with him was the daughter of his sworn enemy

Stepho la Vitte. A voice called him as he was cursing himself for a traitor to his father's memory. On a point of land he saw three men standing. One of them beckoned him, and he turned in to-

ward them. One of them spoke: "Would you be kind to set us across? The night he comes, and we would not be lost in the swamp. We will get to the river. Would you, spoke: "God bless you, Nadine!

He had held her hand, leading her as they ran, but now in the shadow safe from danger, she withdrew it from him, and when he reached again to take it, she shook her head.

"No, it must not be. I told you to go quick, but you did not go quick enough. Then Tonez he see your boat. and with the others, he walt for you. I run around and I watch him, with the knife to stab him if he hurt my brave friend. Then in dim light I see them carry the bont, and I think they have killed you; and I steal along to stab, but then I know you are in the boat. All I do then was to watch till they go, and then I go lu. It was not hard to do, No."

"You are an angel."

She laughed, shaking her head. "Angels do not go into the fire. They not belong there . . . Now, I tell I show you the crooked way, through the woods and out to the river. The moon has come, and we can see. If you know the way, you are safe; but if you do not, you mire down and die in the ooze, and not in the flame. You would please follow me

He followed her, hoping that she might be slow, to prelong the joy of his being with her, but she was agile, walking swiftly. Sometimes she would turn slightly about to warn him of a dangerous place, and once she smiled, the moon full in her face. "Tell me," he inquired then: "What has passed tonight, I hope, does not change what was set for Thursday."

The land was beginning to rise, and she was walking faster.

"Thursday you may come." She halted in an open space and ointed toward the river.

"The bird. I hear him sing now, The nagnolia trees are over there. And now it was again good-night." She gave him no chance to detain

her, for in an instant she was running;

suspicion on the brutes who now had and he stood looking till in the deep shade her form was lost, Old Stepho had not come home when the Creole girl reached the house in the swamp. She sat down to think and brave.' Then they say, 'You find old to listen to his footstep. He did not Stepho.' And you go to find him. He is not at home. But his men, they

mused a long time and slept . . . A knocking on the door and Stepho's voice called her: "The sun he was high, but the leetle

gel she sleep."

come; and undressing, she lay down,

Soon she came out, and he drew her to him and pressed his sandpaper cheek against the coil of her hair. They sat where the house threw its cool shade. Slowly he rocked in his big chair, looking up at the cane that hid his home.

"This air, he good. He comes through salt marsh from the Gulf, with not the malaria. You bloom always like the flower." "But, Father, when do we leave

nere? It must not be that we are here to live all the time?" "Ha! The little bird wish to leave the pest, to try her wings? That is the way of birds and women. Soon, I suppose, you will wish to marry some fine rushes and the dead bark. For why?

man and leave your old father." "No-it is not that. I love you . . .

in, and when the morning come, there But it is lonely here, and-" will be the ashes of the kind gentle-"Mr. Boyce, he is a fine young man. man; and the people they will say: If you marry him, you would not so 'Ah, he lie down to sleep, and burn | much leave me. I see him often. He | the courthouse here not long ago, the Drace heard them piling their murwhich I bring down from the hills, derous fuel into a corner. Again be Why you no wish to marry him?" appealed to them, tried threats, told

"But I do not love him." "You would soon learn; he is a fine young man, I owe him much; and he know much about my business that he would keep quiet about if-if he was of the family. And he would take you and take the candle away . . . You often to the city and give you rich

dresses and diamonds." "My dresses they are fine enough. I know that I get lonesome here. I Stepho come, we tell him what we do, cannot play with the book all the time You are going again to buy catmoney. But the light would hurt the tle in the hills, are you not?"

> "I will buy them, yes." "And you must on Thursday go to the hills?"

"Yes, on the Thursday, I will go." He fell asleep, for he was tired; and when the sun came about, she drew his chair into the shade. He opened his eyes, patted her hand and slept again. She heard a slight sound, and looking, saw Tonez coming through the cane. Swiftly she advanced toward him, with hand upraised, cautioning "We leave you now, You will not

> "You must make no noise. He is asleep.

"But I have come to tell him that the carpetbagger spy he gone to come back not again."

"Go away, and you can come back and tell him." "No, I stay and talk to you."

Stepho's voice called out. "Tones, come. I am here."

She did not wish to hear them talk. She looked at the Portuguese and mused as she walked away: "You do not know, you scorpion, how close you come to the stab. Your time will come, and I watch you."

#### CHAPTER VIII

It was a long time before Drace found a boat to set him over to the opposite shore. It was so late when he reached the Bethpage place that he did not go up to his room. The house was so quiet, the hounds themselves asleep, that he stole into the garden to pass the remainder of the night on a couch in the summer house. The air was heavy with roses breathing in of hickory bark, would be scorned at through the lattice, and as he straight- a sheriff's sale; but sir, Mark Antony, ened out, grateful for repose, this in his first triumph, his chariot drawn the door, out through the light, into thought came to him:

"Pale they call death, but to me it are at this moment, enthroned and

will ever be red. And I have looked into its red countenance, and was not afraid. I thank God that He gave me that strength. . . But what s

melodrama!" At the brenkfast table, Tycle, with mother tenderness, upbraided Drace for sleeping out for fear of arousing the house. Afterward Druce and the General strolled out under the trees.

"By the way," the General said presently. "I have an engagement to deliver an address before a teachers meeting in Natchez, and I should much like to have you bear me company. We can leave this evening on the Black Hawk and reach there early in the morning."

"I'd like very much to go," answered Drace. "But can we get back before Thursday?"

"Easily by Wednesday morning. Anything important for Thursday?"

"Oh, no. An old fellow down at the ferry wants me to go fishing with him Thursday, and I gave him my word that I'd be on hand. Most remarkable old man, full of fun; quite a charac-

"You must mean old Spence. But are you sure it is not that pretty daughter of his that attracts you? You'll have to be a little careful, my son. We may associate with men out of our social running, but not with . . . Ah, Tycle! Mr. Drace has just consented to give me his co pany to Natchez."

The Black Hawk's band played a velcome, and the captain came down the plank to conduct the General on board. From a quiet, lazy and almost deserted landing the place leared into the full throb of life. Negroes and shiftless whites came from their hovels to gaze upon the magic splendor of this journeying palace, and the threeshell man stepped ashore to gather up dollars.

Dinner was a state occasion, and after it, the ball. Then their staterooms-then morning, and Natchez.

The address was to be delivered in the afternoon, and when the time came the General led him over to the hall to hear the speech, imprisoned him without ball in a corner, and there he had to sit. The address was long, academi and dull, and the sufferer mused: "I don't see why Shottle ever called

you a remarkable character." Everybody came about the General

to take his hand. Young women told him that they had never been so thrilled. Drace lled to him, too, swore him an orator.

"Let us walk off alone," said the General. Slowly they walked at first, but after

time the old gentleman struck a brisker pace, toward the River.

"Now, my boy, as we've got through with those beaters of dust out of old carpets, we'll have some fun. Old ful house, a gracious wife and handcan. We'll go down to old Tobe Mason's tavern, under the hill. Tobe is a gentle old fellow, never killed but three men. One of them shot Tobe's leg off and now he wears a peg; and I want to tell you that when he unstraps it and hops around in a fight, he's right meddlesome. At a trial in buy from me the mules and cattle judge issued an order that all deadly sheriffs at the door-and sir, they made old Tobe take off his wooden

The tavern was as tough a place as river men could make it. Built of logs, bricks, stone and clapboards, it looked like an architectural stagger, trying to climb the hill. In the main room was the bar. Herein Tobe gave his famous 'possum feasts and dances, have the diamonds, too. But you must | when the spirit of liquor mounted high enough to swing its partner off the

"Well, I'll be knocked in the head for a steer!" old Tobe cried out, stumping toward the General. "I haven't seed you since the River tuck fire. Well, well! Thinkin' about you the other day. . . . Glad to shake your hand, Mr. Drace. Set right down."

"Tobe, I'm glad to see you," said the "And fetch us about two General. quarts of that summer-grape wine. Let me tell you about it, Drace. We have a wild grape here that gets ripe along in August. It's much larger and is not sour like the fox-grape, and its vine likes to climb about a sassatras sapling. And then you see an umbrella of grapes. Now don't say a word till you've had a good taste of it. Tobe makes it himself, and he'll fetch us some that's at least twenty-five years old. Here we are."

The wine was as red as blood, cool and yet warm. Its flavor was the ripened sweetness of the spirit of autumn, it was as mellow as the scent of the apple at harvest time.

"What do you think of it, hey?" "Uncle Howard, are you sure that this was not made by Bacchus instead of Tobe?"

"Good, my boy! Enjoying yourself?" "Yes, I'm doing fine, General, You see, I can't express myself as well as you can. I haven't as much to draw from. You've not only book-knowledge but experience, worth more socially than all the libraries in the world,"

"You hit it off well. But what is

better than it all? Moral freedom. This table here is rough, with one rheumatic leg slightly drawn; these chairs we sit in, bottomed with strips by lions, was not more regal than we

out, for as that same Antony said: Scant not my cups.'-Tohe, where's that old scoundrel who used to play The Arkansaw Traveler'?"

Tobe stumped his way over from the

"That's the man, What's become of

"Nothin'. And I reckon he's playin' right now down at Cadman's joint, that ought to be wiped off the earth. Want him?"

"Need him, Tobias. Send a boy after him." Old Slithers, bald and wrinkled,

came with his home-made fiddle. The (Continued Next Week.)

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