

White Hand

A Tale of the Early Settlers of Louisiana.

BY AUSTIN C. BUR

CHAPTER XI.—(Continued.)

Coqualla blushed and hung down her head when she saw the people gazing upon her, and her companion trembled violently. But they were not left long in suspense. Stung Serpent was absent, but the Great Sun stepped down from the elevated seat that he occupied, and from one of the attendants he took a bow and an arrow, and a crown of feathers, to which was affixed an oak twig. The latter he placed upon White Hand's head, and the weapons he placed in his hand. Then to Coqualla the old chief gave a laurel twig and an ear of corn.

"My son," then spoke the Great Sun, in a solemn and impressive tone, "I, as the eldest male relative of the bride, do now bestow her upon thee. Thou hast been crowned with the plumage of the soaring bird, which signifieth the power of command you shall exercise in the household. The twig of oak tells us that the depth of no forest can prevent thee from procuring food in times of need; while the bow and arrow in thy hand signifieth that even unto death thou wilt protect her who is now given unto thee for a wife." Then the Great Sun turned to the bride: "Coqualla, in thy hand thou holdest the twig of laurel—the emblem of purity. So wilt thou ever remain pure and unsullied, that the green laurel may be no more pure than art thou. The ear of corn thou hast also assumed. Never let thy household want for food whilst thou art thus provided."

Then the chieftain resumed his seat, and the same old man who had led White Hand to the temple stepped forward and delivered a sort of sermon, after which the couple were hailed as man and wife. In the midst of these rejoicings, the entrance to the house was darkened, and in a moment more Stung Serpent stood within the place. He looked upon White Hand, and his brow darkened, but a close observer could have seen that the look was assumed.

"Who hath done this?" he demanded, in a loud tone.

"I, my brother," answered the Great Sun. "They loved each other well, and I gave thy child away."

Stung Serpent bowed his head a few moments, and when he looked up again his brow was clear.

"Then my promise is made void," he said; "for no man can harm the husband of his child. White Hand, thou art safe with us; but remember thine oath!"

"The husband of thy child will not break his promise," spoke the White Hand, solemnly.

"It is well. I am in season for the festivities."

And thereupon the festivities commenced, and they were kept up till late in the evening, and then the newly married couple were conducted to a dwelling that the king himself gave them. It was just back of the house of Stung Serpent, and was within the line of the great circle of dwellings, but its post of honor was marked by its nearness to the abode of the Great Sun.

After the newly married pair had been conducted to their dwelling, the youth felt a hand upon his arm, and on turning he saw the Great Sun.

"White Hand," he said, "follow me, for the Great Sun of the Natchez has much to say to thee."

Full of wonder, the youth followed the king from the place, but he did not fear, for there was only kindness in the tones of the monarch. On they went until they reached a gigantic oak that stood in the very center of the village, and here the Great Sun stopped.

"White Hand," he said, in a low, solemn tone, "thou hast sworn to my brother that thou wilt not betray thyself to thy countrymen, nor leave the village of the White Apple without our consent. Only six miles from here is the fort and village of the white man; so thou seest how great is the trust we repose in thee."

"Yet I will not break my word," said the youth, while a spirit of awe crept over him. There was something grand and sublime in the scene about him, and he could not shake off the impression that a sort of mystic fate was being worked out in all this. The heavens were without a cloud, and the myriad stars were twinkling like tiny eyes of fire away off in the dark vault. The broad, smooth plain stretched off like a mystic lake, while the huts of the Natchez were dimly visible in the great circle.

"White Hand," resumed the dark monarch, "I do not think that the Great Spirit of our people is the same God that made the white man. The country away beyond the great salt lake, they tell me, is full of white men, and your God has given them laws not like our laws. They pray to their God for vengeance on the Natchez, and the dread vengeance comes. Like the swift storm at night, and like the bound of the beast of prey, it comes upon us. My son, thou canst pray?"

"Yes," murmured the youth.

"Then wilt thou not pray for the Natchez? Wilt thou not pray that He will send no more calamities upon us? Thou art good, and true, and noble. What sayest thou?"

A strange truth now flashed upon the youth's mind. The Indians, in their simple dread of the white man's God, had believed that if they could possess one of the true worshippers of that God, and persuade him to intercede for them, the calamities that resulted from the prayers of their enemies might be averted. Yet White Hand did not wonder, for he knew

how simple were the ideas that the red men entertained of their own Deity. And, moreover, he knew that the Indians had often heard the monks praying, and when he remembered how direct and common were the appeals thus made, he did not question the influence it must have upon those who were wont to regard Deity as a being to be propitiated with gifts and outer show. The youth's first thought was to try and correct the error into which the chief had fallen; but when he came to reflect that in such a work he should have to uproot the prejudices of a lifetime, he resolved to do as was asked of him.

"Great and mighty king," said the youth, in a tone that gave evidence of his truth, "I think God will answer my prayers as quickly as those of any of my people, and so far as the Natchez are in the right, will I pray for them."

"And thou wilt tell him all the wrongs we suffer, and all the indignities that are heaped upon us?"

"I will," replied White Hand.

"Then thou shalt be the well-beloved of the Natchez. Let us return now, and as we go, I will tell thee more. The white chief at Rosalie is called Chopart. He is a bad man, and a liar. I dare not tell thee all the evil he has done. But he has robbed us of our cattle, and we can have no redress. He has encroached upon our lands, and we cannot drive him off. But O! the day of reckoning must come. Beware, my son, that thou lettest not thy sympathy run with these bad men, for the hour is nigh at hand—the hour of vengeance and retribution!"

The king spoke no more, only to bid White Hand good-night when they reached the dwelling, and soon the youth was with his princess. Truly his situation was a strange one, and that night he prayed long and fervently, but he dared not let his wife know all his prayer.

CHAPTER XII.

On the very evening that White Hand reached the village of the White Apple a party of Chickasaws stepped upon the northern shore of Lake Pontchartrain. They were ten in number, and with them was a prisoner, who now reclined against a small hickory tree. Her silken gown is torn and soiled by the thorns and bushes through which she has been led, and the thin shoes are worn through till the feet have become sore and bleeding; for the way she has come has been a hard one, and many sharp brambles have bestrewn the path. But she rests now. The flames dart up from a fire near at hand. Sick and faint, she sinks down upon the soft mossy bed at the foot of the tree, and ere long all her dangers and troubles are forgotten in sleep.

The fair prisoner ever and anon starts up with frightful dreams, until at length, when the night is far spent, she is aroused by strange sounds near at hand, amid which she can distinguish the clash of arms and the hum of angry voices. The idea of escape breaks upon her mind. A moment she gazes around, and she sees men in conference about her, with weapons drawn, and voices raised as if in anger. She moves only a step, and a hand is laid upon her shoulder. A stout Chickasaw holds her fast and tells her she cannot escape. In a moment more the Chickasaw is pushed rudely aside, and Louise looks up into the moon-lit face of Simon Loboia!

"Ha!" he cries, with well-assumed astonishment, "and was my suspicion correct? Have I found my beloved thus dragged away by ruthless savages? Early this morning a runner brought the news to New Orleans that a white girl was being carried off by the Chickasaws, and that their trail bent towards the great lake. A mystic voice whispered thy name in my ear. Why it was I know not; but I started, and I have found thee. Look up, sweet Louise, for thou art safe. Thou art rescued!"

The maiden's first emotion seemed to be to shrink from the white man, but in a moment more she gave him her hand.

"And am I free from these savages?" she asked, gazing first into Simon's face and then upon the motley crew about her.

"Ay, thou art, Louise. Do you not see that they are all quelled? Heaven must have directed me to this spot. Fear no more, for thou shalt be safe with me."

Under any other circumstances, Louise might have been frantic with joy at such salutation, but now she was moved by so many conflicting doubts that the coming of the rescuers seemed to move her but little. By the bright moonlight she could see the crew about her, and they did not look like deadly enemies. No one was wounded, nor did any one appear to be hurt. To be sure, there had been the sound of strife, but it may have only been a mock battle after all. At any rate, so ran the maiden's thoughts, though she kept them to herself.

"Come," continued Simon, after waiting some moments for an answer that he did not receive—"come with me now. The savages will not dare to harm you more, nor will they dare molest us."

Louise suffered herself to be led to the shore of the lake, and there she found two boats in waiting. She had been seated in one of them when the chief of the Chickasaw party came down and called Simon back. A bitter smile stole over the maiden's face as she saw this, and her suspicions were well confirmed when she saw Loboia follow the red man up the bank. But the cousin returned in a few moments, and having seated himself by the side of Louise, the boats were manned and shoved off.

"The red dog wanted me to promise that I would not expose his crime to the Governor," said Simon, after the boats had got well into the lake. "I would have made them all prisoners, only that I feared you might be harmed in the melee. You did not notice how we came upon them, and what first occurred, did you?" Simon gazed sharply into his companion's face as he thus spoke, as though he would read any suspicion she might hold.

"I saw nothing until I was grasped by the shoulder," she truthfully replied, "for I was sound asleep when you came."

"So I thought. But I will explain: One

of the men who accompanied me knew the various trails that lead to the lake, and he guided us here. We landed, and we found the Indians asleep, all save one; but they were upon their feet by the time we were up with them, and I saw that some of them had guns. At that moment I espied you asleep upon the ground. In an instant I forbade my men to fire, for I feared you might be hit. I told the leader of the Indians that he was discovered, and that if he did not give up his prisoner, I would have the whole French force down upon his people before another sun had set. And I furthermore told him that if he would quietly deliver up the maiden, we would not harm him. A scuffle ensued between some of the red men and two of my companions, but we quickly stopped it, and the Indians agreed to give you up if we would let them depart in peace. I consented, and—you know the rest. Was it not fortunate that I heard the report this morning?—and was it not very fortunate that heaven whispered to me that you might be the prisoner?"

"It was very fortunate," returned Louise.

"And perhaps you think it was strange," added Simon. "But yet I had some ground for the fear. The runner told me that the Indians were on the Tickfah trail, and I could think of no place from whence they could have brought a young white maiden captive in that direction save from the estate of our father. I say our father, for surely he has been a father to me. The more I thought of the matter, the more confirmed my fears became. A French ship lay in the river, and I easily hired some of her men to come with me. O, Louise, do you realize how great is the blessing thus fallen upon you? What must have been your fate had I not found you as I did?"

But the maiden did not reply. She was thinking how flimsy and improbable was the story her companion had told, and she wondered if he thought her such a simpleton as to believe all he said.

"Do you realize what a fate must have been yours?" Simon urged. "A death of torture, or a life of misery."

"I know the Indians are sometimes revengeful, but I do not think they would have murdered a defenseless girl," said Louise.

"Ah, you do not know them. You do not know these Chickasaws. They are monsters of cruelty!"

"And yet they have been very kind to me."

"Kind, Louise? Then why are you so pale and wan?—and why so feeble?"

"Because I am not well. I am sick. Last night I had a severe fever, but my captors prepared some medicine from roots that they found in the earth, and it relieved me at once."

"Ah, that was but to hold you up on your journey. But you are sick, even now. Let me fix a place for repose."

Simon spread a blanket upon the boat's bottom in the stern sheets, and fixed it so that Louise could lay her head upon one of the thwarts, and when this was fixed, she availed herself of the opportunity for rest thus afforded, for she was in truth sick and faint, and her head ached. It was not all the result of mere fatigue or fright, but disease had absolutely fastened upon her—a slight cold, perhaps, at first, but now verging to a fever.

Yet Louise slept, and when she awoke, she found the sun shining down full upon her, and the boat had reached the southern shore. She was assisted to land, but she could not walk. However, horses were at hand, and when she was seated in the saddle, the party started across the land towards New Orleans, which they reached before noon. The place contained not more than a hundred dwellings, and those were humble and primitive in form. The territory of the town had been laid out into squares, sixty-six in number, of three hundred feet each. These squares were eleven in number upon the river, and six in depth; so that with all the obstacles of the natural state of the land, its geographical position had marked it out in the mind of its founder as the nucleus of a mighty city. His quick and comprehensive mind understood the advantages of the position in a commercial point of view, for he saw that here was the natural point between ocean and inland navigation.

To a low, wooden house on Bourbon street was Louise conducted, and at her own request she was at once shown to a bed, and a physician sent for. An old negro woman, named Loppa, came to wait upon her, and in a little while the physician came. He was an old man, and well skilled in drugs. He examined the patient's pulse, her tongue, and asked numerous questions, and then announced that with care she might be well in a very few days.

During the rest of that day and the following night, Louise saw no more of Simon Loboia. Her head ached much, but finally the old doctor's potions quieted the nervous action, and late in the evening she sank into a gentle slumber. On the following morning she felt much better, so that the doctor smiled when he came. In three days from that time she was fairly recovered from her disease, though she was very weak, partly from the severe shock she had received, and partly from the effects of the medicines she had taken. At all events, the physician deemed it not necessary to call again, and only ordered now that his patient's diet should be strictly attended to.

As Louise thus began to regain her strength, she wondered when Simon Loboia would take her home. She had asked him once, but had gained no direct answer.

(To be continued.)

Memory.

From 123 answers to questions published two or three years ago, Messrs. V. and O. Henri find that a person's first memory may be of an extent occurring as early as the age of 6 months or as late as 8 years—2 to 4 years being the usual age.

RIVER CONTINUES TO RAISE.

Flood Situation in Mississippi Valley at Danger Point.

Memphis, Tenn., March 14.—There is little change in the river situation tonight, and, although the rise today has been slight, the situation is considered grave and the stage of more than 38 feet is still expected. The gauge tonight shows 35.8.

The levee two miles south of Caruthersville is caving badly, and the greatest danger is looked for at this point. The country for 50 miles around Caruthersville is flooded, and railway traffic is suspended. Another weak spot in the levee system apparent now is at Vancluse, Ark., near Greenville, Miss. A "sand boil" appeared there just back of the levee between the horns of a bend in the river west of Lake Chicot. The "boil" was promptly suppressed, but appearances indicate an underground fissure that may prove dangerous.

Private dispatches from Caruthersville say the situation there is practically unchanged, and that the embankments will hold a stage three feet greater than at present.

Captain Lucas, in charge of the First and Second districts, left here today for Helena to personally investigate conditions in the White river district. Supplies and men were also sent there to strengthen the levee. Supplies and men also have been sent to Cat Island, where the rush of the waters through the 17 mile gap in the levee is causing uneasiness, and to Pekin point, where the strengthening work is in progress on the embankments.

No news has been received today from the area in Mississippi county, Arkansas, which was reported flooded yesterday by water percolating through the embankments.

The engineers here say the crest of the rise probably will reach Memphis Sunday, unless there are further heavy rains general over this area. They predict a record breaking stage of water on account of the fact that the levees are holding against the flood.

AUTHORITY WITH A STRING.

Chinese Diplomats Not Allowed to Make Final Bargain.

Washington, March 14.—The plenipotentiaries of the powers who are engaged at Shanghai in negotiating trade treaties with the Chinese commissioners have discovered what they regard as flaws in the credentials of the Chinese agents which may make it impossible for them to bind their government to treaty form. The matter already has been brought to the attention of the state department, and Mr. Conger is asking for advice, he, too, being engaged in the negotiations.

It appears that the Chinese commissioners must memorialize the throne before the treaties will have force, and the powers object to this lack of authority on the part of the commissioners. Because Mr. Conger will have to refer any treaty he may draw up to his government here for approval, precisely as the Chinese commissioners must do on their side, the United States government is not in a position to protest very strongly against the sufficiency of the Chinese credentials, so that Mr. Conger will go on with this treaty making, while doing his best to have the Chinese credentials enlarged.

PRESIDENT'S TRIP WEST.

Will Leave Washington About April 1st and Not Return Until June.

Washington, March 14.—President Roosevelt's contemplated western trip was a subject of some discussion at the white house today. Senators Long, of Kansas, and Hopkins, of Illinois, and Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Brisow, of Kansas, talked with the president about his tour. The Kansas people are urging the president to make some stops in their state after the dedication of the exposition grounds on April 30. Only one stop has thus far been arranged. The president has accepted an invitation to attend a meeting of the railway branch of the Y. M. C. A., to be held at Topeka May 1. Few other details of the itinerary have been worked out. It has been decided with practical definiteness that only one trip will be made.

While no date for the beginning of the trip can be fixed definitely until the senate shall have adjourned, it is expected now that it will not be far from April 1. After leaving Washington the president will not return to Washington until some time in June. It is likely that the first two or three weeks of the trip will be passed principally in the Yellowstone park. There the president will seek rest and recreation, but it is understood that he will do little hunting.

Wholesale Mail Robbery.

Boston, March 14.—The city police, acting with postoffice inspectors, have arrested five young men who, it is charged, have in the last six months robbed the mails of \$50,000. Some of the prisoners, all of whom were employed as mail wagon drivers, have admitted to the inspectors that they ripped open the mail bags in broad daylight in places no less conspicuous than the North Union and South Terminal railway stations. Their plunder consisted of gold watches, rings, silverware, revolvers, knives, books, etc.

PAY TWICE IN 1904

NEW OREGON LAW MAKES TAXES PAYABLE BY DECEMBER 31.

Goes into Effect Next Year—Assessors Begin Work on First Monday in January—Annual Levy by County Courts Will Be Made at September Term—Other Changes.

Salem, Oregon, March 16.—Taxpayers in Oregon will pay taxes twice in 1904. They will pay the taxes levied upon the tax roll of 1903 and also the taxes levied upon the roll of 1904. This is due to a change in the law by which taxes are to be paid in the fall of the same year the assessment is made. In order to effect this change it was necessary to make the taxes payable three months earlier or nine months later. The collection of taxes is already three months later than it should be, so the legislature decided to make the taxes payable in the preceding fall rather than in the succeeding fall.

Under the present law the assessment is made after the first Monday in March, the assessment roll being filed in September, the levy thereon made the following January and the taxes collected by the first Monday in April. Thus the taxes on the assessment of 1902 are not paid until 1903.

The new law provides that the assessor shall on the first Monday of January procure blank assessment rolls and proceed forthwith to make his assessment, and return the roll by the first Monday in July, showing all the property owned in his county on the first Monday in January. Section 360 of the code has been amended so as to provide that the county board of equalization shall sit on the first Monday of July, instead of on the last Monday of August, as heretofore. Section 3082 was amended so as to limit the time for correcting the assessment rolls by the board of equalization of the county court to 20 days.

Under the new law county courts must make the annual tax levy in September following the assessment. In order that the county courts may have information as to the amount required, it is provided that the state board of apportionment shall make its estimate of state expenses in July, instead of in January, as at present. Cities and school districts must notify the county clerks of their annual tax levies by the first day of September, instead of by the first day of February, as under the old law. This gives the county courts full information for the levying of taxes at the September term of court.

All taxes are payable by the 31st day of December of the same year, section 3106 of the code having been amended so as to make that provision. All taxes not paid by the 31st day of December become delinquent on that day; provided, however, that if one-half of the taxes due on any parcel of land are paid by the 31st of December, the property-owner may have until the following first Monday in April, and if the remainder be not then paid, it becomes delinquent, and, besides the penalty, interest at the rate of 12 per cent will be charged on such remainder from the 31st day of December. On all delinquent taxes interest is to be charged at the rate of 12 per cent per annum from the date of the delinquency, and if the taxes remain delinquent 30 days, a penalty of 5 per cent will be added. On all taxes paid on or before the 31st day of December, a rebate of 2 per cent will be allowed. Under the present law the rebate is 3 per cent. On the first Monday in February the sheriff must begin the collection of delinquent taxes by levying upon personal property, and on the first Monday in April close the delinquent roll and return it to the county court.

County treasurers are required to pay one-half the state taxes by January 15, and the other half by July 15, but the provisions of this act do not apply to any taxes heretofore levied.

Delinquent sales are to take place by October 1.

The new law shortens the entire time for making an assessment and collecting the taxes one month.

Taxpayers will pay their 1903 taxes in March, 1904, and their 1904 taxes in December, 1904.

Chinese Rebels Still Gaining.

Victoria, March 16.—The steamer Tooa Maru, which arrived last night, brought news of further engagements between the Chinese government forces and the Kwangai rebels, in which the imperial troops were defeated with loss, some high officials being among the slain. The governor of Hunan has telegraphed to the Chinese government to the effect that the rebellion has reached a most dangerous stage, and he requests the government to mobilize troops in other provinces as a precaution against emergencies.