

White Hand

A Tale of the Early Settlers of Louisiana.

BY AUSTIN C. BURDICK

CHAPTER XIV.—(Continued.)

"Simon Loboïs," she said, in a freezing tone, "spare me from your professions of love, for they only add to my misery. Now answer me a solemn question: Where is my brother?"

"Your brother?" Simon uttered, starting in spite of himself. "What should I know of him?"

"But do you not know of him?" she asked, looking him steadily in the eye. "I do not." But he trembled while he spoke; he could not help it.

"But you know he was seized by the Indians on the same night that I was."

"How should I know?"

"Simon, it is strange that you have never once asked me concerning the event of my abduction!"

"I—I—have had enough to think of without that. My love for you has engrossed my every thought, and claimed my whole attention."

"Then you know nothing of him?"

"I—I—why, how on earth should I?"

"Never mind. If you do not, then that is enough. Now, appoint the time for the wedding when you will."

"It shall be this very day."

"As you will. If it must be so, I care not for time. Henceforth all times are alike to me."

"Ay, sweet Louise, all of joy."

"Yes—such joy as the lost child feels in the deep wood; such joy as the poor orphan feels when she stands by the cold corpse of her dead parents!"

"Nonsense! But come; you shall find better quarters than these."

So Simon Loboïs led his promised bride forth from the prison house back to the dwelling from whence she had been taken on the previous night, and then he went out to hunt up some more fitting garb for her to wear. He went to the Governor, and there he succeeded in purchasing a suitable habit. It was a dress made after the fashion of the times, of pale blue silk with scarlet facings, and worked with silver lace and thread. It belonged originally to one of Perier's daughters, but she had never yet worn it, it having been made for her wedding dress, and her lover dying on the eve of marriage.

The dress fitted Louise to a fault, and when thus prepared, she suffered herself to be led to the church, for Simon had determined that there should be no subsequent question about the legality of his marriage. When they entered the rude church they found quite a number of people collected, and the aged priest was there in his robes.

The poor girl's head ached, and when she stood before the priest she trembled violently, and even Simon was startled when he saw how pale she looked.

"Go on," she whispered. "O, go on, and let me out from here, or I shall die!"

The priest commenced the ceremony, and Simon answered the questions distinctly. Then the holy man turned to the bride, and he asked her the usual questions. She looked up, and in a faint, forced voice, she replied:

"To the best of my abilities I will do all this."

What more could human law require? Even Simon was surprised, for he had feared she would hesitate. But he knew not how sick and faint she was, and that she might have answered thus promptly in order to hasten the ceremony, for she wanted fresh air. The ceremony was finished, and the nuptial tie had been formed, and the marriage was registered in the great parchment book of the clerk. The fee was paid, and then the bridegroom turned away.

"In heaven's name, my wife," cried Simon, as they reached the open air. "what is the matter? What is it that thus affects you?"

"O, I am sick—sick as death!" was the faint reply. "Hasten—hasten to our home, or I shall fall and sink by the wayside!"

Simon saw that his companion spoke the truth, and with quick steps he hurried on, sometimes bearing his bride in his arms, and anon helping her to walk. At length they reached their dwelling, and Loppa was at once sent for the physician. The old man came, and at a glance he saw that his patient had a relapse of her fever, and this time he shook his head as he remarked:

"We can't drive it off this time, Monsieur Loboïs. It is firmly seated, and must have its run. But the lady has a sound constitution, so you need apprehend no danger. But she has not followed my directions, I am sure, or she would not thus have sunk. Has she had the nutritious food I ordered?"

Simon stammered out a reply to the effect that the negro woman might have neglected it.

The physician dealt out his medicine, and having given directions for the care of his patient, he retired. Simon procured for his wife another attendant, so as to have two of them, and then he informed Louise that his business called him up the river.

"To the chateau?" asked she, faintly.

"Yes. I was in hopes that you would have accompanied me, but that is now impossible. However, I must go, though I shall return as soon as possible."

"And what will you tell my father?"

"Simply that you are my wife. Of course I shall explain how I rescued you from the savages, and how, in return, I claimed your hand. But I have prepared the best of care for you during my absence, and you shall not want for anything. The physician will be regular in

his visits, and I hope to find you well when I return."

The invalid betrayed no sorrow at the departure of her husband, nor did she exhibit any extended signs of deep affection at his adieu. She closed her eyes as he spoke the parting words, nor did she open them again until old Loppa came and whispered in her ear that her husband was gone.

CHAPTER XV.

Up and down the wide walk in the garden paced Brion St. Julien and Goupert St. Denis. The old man was pale and wan, and his steps were short and tremulous. The silvery streaks seemed to have multiplied themselves upon his head, and surely many a deep line of care was added to his brow. St. Denis looked not so pale, but a sorrowful look was upon his face, and in his dark, rich brown eye dwelt a melancholy light, such as could only come from a bruised and bleeding heart. His hands were folded upon his bosom; his eyes bent upon the ground, while within his own stout arm was locked that of his companion.

"We can search no more," said the marquis, in a broken voice. "They must either have been slain, or else borne away off to the far homes of the Chickasaws."

"And do you think old Tony's report can be relied upon?" asked Goupert.

"Yes. He says he is sure, and if he feels so, then it is so."

"Then our only hope is in enlisting the whole French force in our behalf, for these Chickasaws are a powerful, warlike people, and not easily overcome."

"Ah, we cannot do that," returned the marquis, sadly. "The Governor, Perier, is not a warm friend of mine. He had set his eyes upon this place before I found it, and he meant to have gained it free of cost. He dares not show open hostility to me, but he would not help me."

"Then," said Goupert, "I will myself go in search, even though I disguise myself in the outer semblance of the red man."

But the marquis shook his head dubiously at this.

"No, no," he said. "You would only throw away your own life, and then I should be left all alone. I could not live, Goupert, if you, too, were gone. Alas! what of life is left to either of us now! I had just seen the opening of life's promise—the budding of my soul's great hope—when this drear midnight came!"

For a while after this they walked on in silence. All search had been made that could be planned with reason, but in vain. Old Tony, who was quick of wit, and who had not forgotten the wild life of his youth, had followed the trail of the marauders a distance of forty miles, and there he lost it upon a branch of the Tickfah. This trail led in a southeasterly direction, so the bereaved ones had not a shadow of doubt that Louis and Louise had been taken to the distant homes of the Chickasaws.

The day was drawing near to its close when one of the female domestics rushed into the sitting room and announced that Simon Loboïs was coming. Both the marquis and St. Denis started to their feet, and gazed upon each other earnestly.

"O," uttered the old man, "I wish I knew that Simon was innocent of all crime in this." The words were spoken with strong, sudden emotion, and showed that the speaker had been racked with dark doubts.

"I would not say that he is guilty of all this," returned Goupert; "but things rest most darkly against him. However, we can easily tell. His face is very apt to reveal the emotions of the inner man, and I feel assured he will betray himself."

The marquis took a turn up and down the room to compose himself, and by the time he had done this, Simon's footstep sounded in the hall, and in a moment more he entered. He moved quickly up to St. Julien and caught him by the hand.

"Ah, my good, kind father," he uttered. "I have been detained longer than I expected. But I am happy to find you well."

Then the black-hearted man turned to Goupert, and with a stiff, formal bow, he said:

"Monsieur St. Denis, I hope you are well."

But the noble youth spoke not in reply. He could not. He detected in Simon's eye a look of triumph that was not to be mistaken, and from that moment his suspicions were all alive again.

"But I do not see Louis. Where is he?" asked Loboïs, after he had taken a seat.

The marquis gazed fixedly into the speaker's eye, but he could detect nothing there out of the way.

"Louis is—gone!" the old man uttered.

"How? Have you not found him yet?"

"Then you knew he was gone?" said the marquis, with a quick glance of fear.

"Yes—I knew that both your children were gone from here."

"How?" the old man asked.

"Louise herself has told me the story," was the calm response.

Both the old man and the young started to their feet.

"Louise! Louise told you?" gasped Goupert.

"Yes, monsieur," returned Simon, gazing upon the youth with a look of malignant triumph. "I had the good fortune to rescue the loved damsel from the hands of the Indians."

At this juncture the marquis sank back to his seat, and Goupert followed his example.

"And where is she now?" the stricken parent asked, in a whisper.

"She is at New Orleans. I should have brought her with me, but the state of her health would not permit. She has a fever; but you need not fear, for I have left the best of care for her."

"But how—where—did you find her?"

"It was most strange," answered Simon, assuming a devout look. "While in New Orleans, I heard that a small party of Chickasaws were on their way to-

wards Lake Pontchartrain with a white girl a prisoner. I knew, of course, that the red villains had been lurking about here; and, moreover, I knew of no other point from whence they could have brought such a prisoner, short of the fort at Natchez. The fear became so firmly fixed that I resolved to set out; so I engaged the services of one who knew the region round about the lake, and having hired some men who belonged to a ship then lying in the river, I obtained two small boats and set out. We crossed the lake, and landed as near as we could to the opening of the trail that I had been informed the Indians were upon. We mounted the bank, and almost the first thing that met my eye was the form of an Indian pacing up and down by the side of an open space in the woods. I knocked the sentinel down, and in a moment the whole party were upon their feet. At a little distance I saw the form of a female asleep upon the ground. I demanded that the prisoner should be given up to me, but I had to use some heavy threats before they would yield. At length, however, upon my promise that I would not cause them to be molested further, they gave the prisoner up, and you can imagine my deep joy when I knew that I had saved Louise St. Julien."

For some moments there was silence in the room. Goupert, who was very pale, but whose lips were firmly compressed, was the first to break it.

"How long ago was it that you found the lady?" he asked.

"About two weeks," was the reply.

"And has she been sick ever since?"

"No. I had meant to bring her with me, but she was taken down with a fever on the very day before I started."

"St. Julien," cried the youth, turning to the old man, "I will away at once and seek her, and as soon as she is able she shall be with you. Tony shall go with me."

A satanic smile dwelt upon Simon's features as Goupert ceased speaking, and in a tone of the same nature he said:

"You need not trouble yourself, Monsieur St. Denis. I assure you I should not have left Louise, had I not seen her in the care of those who will be faithful. She has her own servants to attend her."

"Her own servants!" uttered Goupert, changing color.

"Yes, monsieur."

"But Goupert had better go down, Simon, and come home with her," suggested the old man.

"Excuse me," answered Loboïs, "I object to that. Monsieur St. Denis is not just the man that I should select as an escort for my wife!"

Goupert St. Denis started half up from his seat, and then sank back like a man who has received a shot through the heart. His face was deadly pale, and his hands were clutched upon his knees.

"Your wi—I—life!" gasped the old man, starting up and taking a step towards his nephew.

"Yes, my dear father," Loboïs replied. "I am the happy man. The sweet child has accepted me as her husband. And why should she not? She owed her very life to me, and in gratitude she rewarded me with her hand."

"But not yet, Simon! You are not married?"

"Most assuredly we are."

"No, no; that is impossible! Louise would never have done—"

"Hold, sir! We will have no argument about it. Here is the document that will satisfy you."

Thus speaking, Simon took a paper from his pocket, which he opened and handed to the marquis. It was a legal certificate—an attested copy of the record—bearing the seal and signature of the colonial clerk, and vouching for the legal marriage of Simon Loboïs and Louise St. Julien. The old man read it, and then, with a deep groan, the paper fell from his hand. Quick as thought, Goupert picked it up. The hope had flashed upon his mind that the document might be a forgery; but as his eye rested upon it, the hope passed away, for he knew it was a legal transcript of the record. The paper dropped from his hand, too, and he sank back into his chair. The thing had come with a thunder-crash upon him, and for the moment he was unable to speak. But one look into the face of Loboïs started his heart to life again. (To be continued.)

A Question of Bills.

A traveller in England rested at noon at a wayside inn and took luncheon. A landlord was a social person and after presenting his bill sat down and chatted with his guest.

"By the way," the latter said, after a while, "what is your name?"

"My name," replied the landlord, "is Partridge."

"Ah," returned the traveller, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, "by the length of your bill I should have thought it was Woodcock!"

This story, as it appears in a recent book by a distinguished English diplomat, is credited with having amused Bismarck.

The Joke on the Joker.

A Long Island justice has decided that to send a worthless package by express to a person, requiring the recipient to pay charges, comes under the head of petty larceny and is punishable as such. In the case the justice decided one man had sent by express a worthless package to another as a joke. The express charge was 35 cents. The man who got the package couldn't see anything funny in the business and complained to the magistrate, who entered a charge of petty larceny and extortion and fined the joker \$5 and costs.

Hope is a lure. There is no hand that can retain a wave or a shadow.—Victor Hugo.

White blackberries and green roses have been propagated in Louisiana.

RICH GOLD NUGGETS.

Montana Collection Will Be a Feature of Portland Exposition.

Helena, Montana, March 28.—W. G. Conrad, of the banking firm of Conrad Bros., who was named by Governor Toole as one of the honorary commissioners for Montana at the Louisiana Purchase exposition and the Lewis and Clark exposition, in St. Louis and Portland, respectively, has made a most interesting announcement—that he will send what is supposed to be the largest and best collection of gold nuggets in the world to St. Louis and Portland for exhibition during the expositions.

The exhibit is owned by Conrad Bros., and was formerly the property of the First National bank in Helena. The collection was purchased by the Conrad from the receiver of the bank several years ago, upon the failure of that institution, and has since been added to.

The collection was gathered by ex-Governor Hauser, when president of the First National bank, and was the result of many years' effort. Even in days when placer mining was being done in hundreds of claims throughout the state, the collection was regarded as magnificent. Among the nuggets in the collection is one found in Nelson gulch, above Helena, which is said to be the largest single nugget ever found in the Northwest.

The present value of the collection is about \$300,000 if melted down, but in its natural state, as coming from the earth, it is worth more, a number of gems being worth several times their weight value because of their peculiar formations.

It should prove one of the features of the exposition. It will be carefully guarded day and night from the time it leaves Montana until its return from St. Louis and Portland.

RECIPROCITY IDEA IS KILLED.

Other Treaties Will Share Same Fate—President Gives Up.

Washington, March 28.—The announcement in the Jamaican legislature regarding the failure of the reciprocity treaty with the United States is but a forerunner of what may be expected in the case of all agreements of a similar character which failed to secure action by the United States senate. It was evident from the attitude of that body that the members were opposed to the reciprocity idea, as outlined in the reciprocity treaties that were sent to it by the president, and all efforts along that line have been abandoned by the administration.

The rejected treaties, among which is that with the French republic, are not, it is authoritatively stated, to be again submitted to the senate in December next, and, because of the attitude of the senate, the president is discouraging the formation of new treaties.

Sugar formed an important item of reciprocal exchange in some of the treaties, noticeably those in the West Indies, and so far as that article of import is concerned the administration is stopped from agreeing to any reduction of duty by reason of the terms of the Cuban reciprocity agreement. This specifically provides that no sugar produced by any country other than Cuba shall be admitted into the United States as by treaty on convention while the Cuban treaty is in force, at a lower rate of duty than is imposed by existing law.

RIVER IS STATIONARY.

Swift Current and Favorable Winds Keep Mississippi Down.

New Orleans, March 28.—With the river practically stationary during the day, there has been little change in the flood conditions. The phenomenal speed at which the current is flowing and favorable winds have doubtless restrained the rising tendency. A vigilant eye is being kept on every foot of levee from Red river landing to New Orleans.

Members of the state board of engineers are at various points along the Mississippi, the Red river and La Fourche. On the latter stream there are now three crevasses, but planters not immediately within range of the breaks have had time in which to construct temporary embankments. Much damage will be done to the oyster industry by the present flood.

To Pay Honolulu Plague Claims.

Washington, March 28.—W. F. McLennon, chief of the warrant division of the treasury department, today started for Honolulu, charged with the duty of disbursing the \$1,000,000 appropriated by congress to satisfy in part the judgments rendered on account of the destruction of property in Honolulu in suppressing the bubonic plague during the years 1899 and 1900. The Territory of Hawaii was also authorized by the same act to issue bonds not to exceed \$500,000 in amount, to be used in paying its share of the judgments.

San Francisco Sandbaggers.

San Francisco, March 28.—Four men, armed with sandbags, secreted themselves inside the entrance to Greenwich street wharf No. 1 yesterday morning and robbed every person who passed through the gate. The place was absolutely dark and before they ceased their operations the robbers succeeded in holding up eight men.

WORST HAS COME

BREAK IN LEVEE LETS LOOSE THE MISSISSIPPI FLOOD.

Many Lives Will Be Lost—Whole Yazoo Delta is Inundated—Realistic Torrent Pours Through Break, Swamping Three Counties in Mississippi—Efforts Being Made to Fill Crevasse.

Greenville, Miss., March 30.—A volume of water 16 feet deep and over 600 feet in length is pouring steadily through a crevasse in the levee five miles south of here, and is flooding thousands of acres of the finest farming land in the celebrated Yazoo belt. The break in the levee occurred at 11 o'clock this morning and the roar of the rushing waters can easily be heard in Greenville.

Only 200 feet of the embankment gave way at first, and a mighty effort was made by hundreds of laborers in charge of the government engineers to check the flood by cribbing and sacking, but it was soon apparent that it was beyond human power to successfully combat the relentless fury of the current. An hour later it was seen that the ends of the levee on either side of the crevasse were melting fast, the force of the current cutting the embankment away as though it was built of sand.

Major John M. Sears, who was in charge temporarily of the government office here, stated tonight that the break is unquestionably the worst in the history of the levee system. He says that the entire delta, as far south as Vicksburg, will be flooded and the farming lands in Washington, Bolivar and Sharkey counties will be under water for more than two weeks. This is the first break to be reported on the Mississippi since the present rise began. Major Sears says a desperate struggle is being made to prevent the further widening of the breach.

Reports from the interior are very meager, but it is believed the people were fully prepared for a break, and the loss of life, if any, will be reduced to a minimum, though the loss of stock may be quite heavy. The damage to plantations and the interference with planting cannot be estimated.

The situation at midnight grows worse for Greenville. Work on the protection levee through Main street has been abandoned and water has reached Washington avenue, the highest point in the city. Appeals for help have been coming in all night from the Tuxedo and Race Track additions and relief boats are being sent out. The news comes from these additions that people were seen clinging to roofs of houses and rafts to escape drowning in the rising waters.

Many lives have been reported lost, a woman and five children perishing in one house, but tomorrow will tell the fate of many poor unfortunates. The southern part of the city is entirely under water. Houses are filling and their inmates are securing rooms upstairs. By morning the water will be over all parts of the city unless another effort is made to build a protection.

The city is in total darkness, water putting out the fires in the electric light plants.

BOTH SIDES FIRM.

Seattle Street Car Strike to Be Fought to a Finish.

Seattle, March 30.—Both parties to the Seattle street car strike stand firm and business is paralyzed. Business men tried to mediate yesterday, but President Furth declared the union would not be recognized, and the strikers declared they would strike till it was recognized.

There was a slight increase in the number of cars operated, and the officials predict that this increase will continue. Barracks are being fitted up for the employees, and 18 of the latter have been sworn in as policemen and armed.

The strikers say they have gained members and ride on cars to convert nonunion men. A strike of the miners at the Renton coal mine, which supplies the power houses, is threatened.

A New Treaty Would Be Better.

New York, March 30.—Senor Silva, secretary of the Cuban senate, who has been an advocate of the treaty of reciprocity with the United States, is quoted as saying, according to the Havana correspondent of the Tribune: "I am inclined to the belief that the best thing would be to disapprove the treaty, then negotiate another. The amendments seem confusing to all of us. We have perfect confidence in President Roosevelt, but fear the amendments are in such shape that to make a new treaty is preferable."

To Lay Cable From Honolulu.

San Francisco, March 30.—The first step in the preliminary work to the laying of the cable between Honolulu and Midway island has been taken. The Pacific Commercial cable company has chartered the steamer Grace Dollar, and on April 10 she will depart from this port carrying supplies and materials for the construction of the cable station on Midway island. The British steamers Anglia and Colonia are at present in London being loaded with the cable.