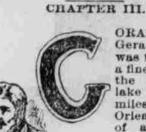
A STORY OF SLAVERY DAYS.

BY MISS M. E. BRADDON.



ORA'S father, Gerald Leslie, was the owner of a fine estate upon the banks of a lake about two miles out of New Orleans, and also of a handsome house in that city. It is at this

latter residence that we will introduce him to the reader. Gerald Leslie was in the very prime of life. Scarcely yet forty-five years of age, time had set no mark upon his thick chestnut hair or his handsome face, save a few almost imperceptible wrinkles which the cares of the last year or two had drawn in rigid lines about his well-shaped mouth.

His features were massive and regular; the brow broad and intellectual; the large hazel eyes bright but yet thoughtful; and there was a shade of melancholy in the general expression of the countenance which lent a peculiar charm to the face to Gerald Leske.

It was the face of one who had suffered. It was the face of one who found himself a lonely man in the very prime of life; in that hour of all other hours in which a man yearns for the smiles of loving eyes, the warm pressure of friendly hands. It was the face of one who had discovered too late that he had sacrificed the happiness of his life to a

mistaken principle.

While the good ship Virginia is sailing away from the dim blue shores of the fading English coast, bearing Mrs. Montresor, her nephew and niece and Cora Leslie, to their far Southern home, let us enter the planter's luxuriously furnished study, and watch him as he bends over

The burning Southern sun is banished from the apartment by means of Venetian shutters; the floor is covered with a cool matting woven from Indian reeds; and the faint plash of a fountain in a small garden at the back of the house is heard through one of the open windows.

It is not a pleasant task which occu-ples the planter. His brow contracts as he examines the papers, pausing every now and then to jot down two or three figures against a long row of accounts which look terribly formidable even to the uninitiated. At last he throws down a heap of documents with a weary sigh, and flinging himself back in his chair, abandons himself to gloomy thought.

"Yes, the truth is out at last," he muttered; "no hope of a settlement in England; no chance of a happy home on the other side of the blue Atlantic with my Cora, my only one. Nothing before me but the weary struggle of a ruined man. with difficulties so gigantic that, struggle as I may, they must close in upon me and crush me at the last. Oh, Phillip Treverton, but for the cruel deception you practiced upon me, I should not be in this position.

Philip Treverton was Gerald Leslie's late partner. He had been shot a twelvemonth before the opening of our story, in a sanguinary duel with a young Frenchman, who had insulted him in a gaminghouse. But the two men had been more than partners, they had been friends; true and sincere friends; and Gerald Leslie no more doubted the honor of his friend, Philip Treverton, than he would have doubted his own.

Amongst the debts owed by the two

planters, there was one of no less than one hundred thousand dollars due to a lawyer and usurer, one Silas Craig, a man who was both disliked and feared in New Orleans: for he was known to be a hard creditor, unscrupulous as to the means by which he enriched himself, pittless to those who were backward in paying him.

In an evil hour Gerald Leslie and Philip Treverton had had recourse to this man, and borrowed from him at a cruelly heavy rate of interest, the sum above mentioned. Treverton was, unlike his partner, a reckless speculator, and, unfortunately, not a little of a gamester; he therefore thought lightly enough of the circumstances. Not so Gerald Leslie. The thought of this loan oppressed him like a load of iron, and he was determined that it should be repaid at any sacrifice. He gathered together the money before leaving New Orleans to visit his daughter in England, and intrusted the sum to his partner, Treverton, with special directions that it should

be paid immediately to Silas Craig. Gerald Leslie knew that his partner was a gamester, but he firmly believed him to be one of the most honorable of men, and he had ever found him strictly just in all their commercial dealings.

He departed, therefore, happy in the thought that the debt was paid, and that Silas Craig, the usurer, could no longer rub his fat, greasy hands, and chuckle at the thought of his power over the haughty planter, Gerald Leslie. He departed happy in the thought that his next voyage would be to convey him to an English home, where the tyranny of prejudice could never oppress his beloved and lovely child.

The first intelligence which greeted him on his return to New Orleans, was the

death of his friend and partner. Philip Treverton had died a week before Gerald Leslie landed. He had died at midnight in a wretched chamber at a gambling-house. There was a mystery about his death-his last hours were shrouded in the darkness of the silent secrets of the night. None knew who had watched beside him in his dying moments. The murderer had escaped; the mutilated body of the murdered man was found in the waters of the Mississippi.

Philip Treverton's death was a sad blow to his survivor, Gerald Leslie. The two men had been associates for years; both thorough gentlemen, intellectual, highly educated, they had been united in the bonds of a sincere and heartfeit friendship.

What then were Gerald Leslie's feelings when he found that his friend, his partner, his associate, the man whom he had fully trusted, had deceived him; and that the money left by him in Trever-ton's hands had never been paid to Silas

Craik? In vain did he search amongst his friend's papers for the receipt; there was not one memorandum, not one scrap of paper containing any mention of the one hundred thousand dollars; and a week after Gerald Leslie's return, he received a visit from the usurer, who came to claim his debt. The planter gave him a bill at a twelvemonth's date, the heavy interest for that period fearfully increasing the debt. This bill came due on the very day on which we have introduced Gerald Leslie to the reader, and he was now every moment expecting to hear the usurer announced. He was still without funds to meet his

many other debts were pressing upon him; and he felt that in a few months his plantation must be sold, and he left a rufned man. But as the drowning wretch catches at the feeblest straw, or the frallest plank, so be clung to the hope furnished by delay.

"Once more," he muttered, as he leaned his head upon his hands in the attitude of despair, "once more must I humiliate myself to this low-minded wretch, and beg the delay which he may grant or refuse, as it pleases his base nature. Heaven help me, I little dreamed that Gerald Leelie would ever come to sue to Silas Craic.'

At this moment a cheerful-looking neuro entered the apartment, bearing a card upon a silver salver. "Massa Craig, please, massa," he

"Tell him to walk in."

"Into this room, massa?" "Yes, Cosar."

The negro departed, and in a few moments returned, ushering in a fat man, of about fifty years of age, dressed in the loose and light-colored coat and trousers,

fashionable in New Orleans. This summer costume, which was becoming to many, accorded ill with the fat and awkward figure of Silas Craig. The loose open collar displayed a bull neck that bespoke the brute force of a gensual nature. It was almost impossible to imagine a more truly repulsive appearance than that of the usurer of New Oriems; repulsive, not so much from natural ugliness, as from that hidden something, dimly revealed beneath the outward features that told the nature of the man, and caused the close observer and the physiognomist to shrink from him with instinctive abhorrence.

Cruelty leered out of the small rat-like gray eyes, hypocrisy and sensuality alike were visible in the thick lips and wide animal mouth. The usuer's hair, of a reddish yellow, was worn long, parted in the middle, and pushed behind his ears, giving a sanctimonious expression to his face. For it must be known to the reader that Silas Craig had always contrived to preserve a character for great sanctity. His voice was loudest in expressing horror at the backslidings of others; his presence was unfailing at the most frequented places of worship; and men who knew that the usurer would strip the widow or the orphan of the utmost farthing, or the last rag of clothing, beheld him drop his dollars into the plate at the close of every charity sermon.

By such pitiful artifices as these the world is duped, and Silas Craig was universally respected in New Orleans; respected in outward seeming by men who in their inmost soul loathed and execrated him.

With a bland smile, he obeyed Gerald Leslie's gesture, and seated himself in a low rocking-chair opposite the planter.
"Charming weather, Mr. Leslie," he

"Charming," answered Gerald absently. "I trust I see you well, my dear friend," murmured Silas Craig, in the fat, oily voice peculiar to him, "and yet, he added, almost affectionately, "I no not think you are looking well—no, decidedly not, you look a little harrassed; a little careworn, as if the business of this life was pressing too much upon you.'

"I have good need to look harrassed and care-worn," answered Gerald Leslie impatiently. "Come, Mr. Craig, do not let us waste time upon fine speeches and sympathy which we cannot either of us expect to feel-I know what you have ome here for, and you know that I It, so why beat about the bush? You have my acceptance, due today in your pocket, and you come to claim payment."

"You are as proud as ever, Mr. Leslie," said the usurer, an angry gleam shooting out of his small eyes, in spite of the affected smile upon his lips. "Why should I be less proud than

ever?" answered the planter, haughtily. a loathing of hypocrisy pride, I am cer-

tainly amongst the proudest.' Gerald Leslie knew that every word he uttered was calculated to infuriate Silas Craig, and that, at the moment when he had to ask a favor of him: but the haughty spirit of the planter could less brook to stoop now than ever-the very fact of having to ask this favor stung him to the quick, and urged him on to show his contempt of the man from whom he had to ask it.

The usurer sat for some few moments in silence, rubbing his hands slowly one over the other, and looking furtively at Gerald.

"You may ask me why you should be less proud today than ever, Mr. Leslie," he said, with a malicious grin. "Shall I tell you why? Because the tables are turned since the day when you passed Silas Craig in the streets of New Orleans as if he had been one of the slaves on your plantation; when you spurned him as if he had been the dirt beneath your feet. I know what you said of me in these days; I came by my money by crooked ways; I was a rogue; an usurer; my ill-gotten wealth would bring me to the gallows some day. These are the sort of things you said, and I took them quietly enough; for I am of a patient disposition, and I knew my turn would come. It has come. The times are changed since then. My wealth was illgotten, was it? You were glad enough to borrow a hundred thousand dollars of it, ill-gotten as it was; and now when I come today to ask you for the payment of that money, you take such a high tone that I can only believe you have it ready for me in your cash-box yonder.'

It was with a malicious chuckle that he uttered those concluding words; for the crafty wretch well knew the nature of Gerald Leslie, and he had suspected from the first that the money was not forth-

coming. "Not one penny of it!" cried the planter; "not one penny of it, Mr.

Craig. "Indeed!" said Silas. "Then I'm extremely sorry to hear it; as, of course, under those circumstances I can no longer delay putting an execution upon your property, and sending the Leslie plantation and your valuable lot of nig-

gers to the auctioneer's hammer." Having uttered this threat, he sat for some little time with his hands on his knees, and a smile of triumph upon his face, watching the countenance of the

Gerald Leslie's was a gloomy face to look upon in that moment; but it neither expressed grief nor humiliation, and his

enemy was disappointed. It was not enough to ruin the man he hated. Silas Craig would have given half his fortune to see that haughty spirit

lowered in the dust. The planter sat for some minutes in perfect silence, as if he were revolving some plan in his mind. Presently he looked up, and, without any alteration of his former manner, addressed the usurer

'Silas Craig, sooner than ask a favor of you, I would see every scrap of property I possess sold in the public saleroom, and would leave my native land a beggar. I do not ask you a lavor, then; I offer you a bargain. If my property is sold today, it will be sold at a loss. You will be paid, it is true, but others, for whom-pardon me-I feel a great deal

more concern, win lose. I've months hence that same property will, for certain commercial reasons known as well to you as to me, realize a much larger amount. Besides which. I have friends in the North who may come forward in the meantime to save me from ruln. Renew your bill at two months from today, and for those two months I will give you double the enormous interest I have been already paying -a ruinous bargain for me, and as valuable one for you. But no favor; remember that! Do you accept?" "I do," said Silas, after a few moments' deliberation. "The interest ought to be

trebled, though."

The planter laughed bitterly. "I have offered you the uttermost far-thing I mean to offer," he said. "I accept it," answered Silas. "Give me pen, ink and paper, and I'll draw up the document."

CHAPTER IV.



HILE the difficulties of the planter were becoming every day more pain ul to encounter, and more perilons to his future prospects of happiness the good

here!

ship Virginia reached her destination, and in due time Mrs. Montresor and her two fair charges arrived at New Orleans. Cora Leslie had given her father no warning of her coming. It had pleased the loving girl to think that she should creep to his side when he least expected her, and that the happy surprise of her arrival would come upon him in the midst of his troubles.

It was growing dusk on a lovely summer evening, when the travelers reached New Orleans. Bidding a hasty adieu to Adelaide Horton and Mrs. Montresor, with a promise to call upon them early the next day, Cora sprang into the carriage which Mortimer Percy had procured for her, requesting him to give the address to the driver.

"Your father is in town, Miss Leslie," said the young man. "You will have scarcely ten minutes' drive." "Ten minutes!" cried Cora eagerly.

"In ten minutes, then, I shall see my Her lovely countenance glowed with enthusiasm as she spoke; while her tiny hands were clasped in an ecstasy of de-

Mortimer Percy's face grew strangely mournful as he looked upon the excited

"One moment, Miss Leslie," he exclaimed earnestly, pausing with his hand upon the carriage door. "You remember what I said to you in Grosvenor Square, on the night of my aunt's bell?"
"Yes, perfectly."
"You remember that I then told you I

feared your father's welcome might not be so warm a one as your loving heart would lead you to desire. If tonight you should find it so, remember my warning, and do not doubt your father's affection, even should he receive you somewhat coldly. Remember, too, that come what may, and should the hour of trouble fall upon you as it sometimes does on the youngest and the fairest; remember that you have always a friend in Mortimer Percy, and do not scruple to appeal to him. He clasped her hand in his as he spoke

and she returned the friendly pressure. "There is a mystery in your words which I seek in vain to fathom, Mr. Percy." she said: "and I know that warnings fill me with a strange fear; but I know, too, that you have been very good to me, and should sorrow come will not hesitate to appeal to you and your cousin Adelaide.

"Adelaide is a dear, good little girl," answered Mortimer with a sigh; "but I shall be better able to serve you than she. Good night, Miss Leelie.

He released her slender hand, gave some directions to the driver and in an other moment the horse started, and Cora felt that she was on her way to her father's residence. The sun was sinking in a bed of erim-

son glory, and the dusky shadows closing in the streets of New Orleans. The houses and public buildings were

dimly visible in the declining light, as Cora looked out of the earriage window. The place seemed strange to her after her long residence in England. She had no memory of anything she saw, and felt that she was an utter stranger in her native land But the had not long to think of these

things. The carriage drew up before her father's house, and the door was opened by the black servant, Omear. Without waiting to ask any questions, she hurried into the hall, after dismissing the driver; but as she was about to inquire for her father, another negro servant emerged from one of the doors opening into the hall, and advanced to meet

He was past middle age. His hair was grizzled with patches of gray, and his face had an expression of settled melancholy rarely seen upon the negro coun-tenance. He was dressed in a loose linen jacket and trousers, and his manner and appearance altogether denoted his station, which was that of confidential man and meneral servant, factotum to his master, Mr. Leslie.

This man's name was Toby. He had served the planter faithfully for five-andtwenty years.

"Mr. Leslie can see no one this evening," he said as he approached Cora. "He will not refuse to see me," mur-mured the young ghi; "he cannot deny

himself to his daughter."
"His daughter!" exclaimed the negro. with an irrepressible burst of enthusiasm; "his daughter, Miss Cora, that was away across the sea-yonder in the free country. Cora, the child I used to nurse in the years that are gone by; ah, forgive me, forgive me, forgive the poor old ne-gro slave, who is almost wild at the

gight of his young mistress!" The faithful creature fell on his knees at Cora's feet and, clasping her hand in both his own, covered it with kisses.

"You remember me then?" said Cora. "I remember the little child that I used to carry in my arms, not the beautiful young lady from the happy English land; but the young lady has still the soft voice and the sweet smile of the little child, and she is not angry with poor Toby because he is beside himself with joy to see her once again."

"Angry with you!" exclaimed Cora; "but tell me—my father, where is he? Do not detain me longer when I should rush into his dear arms!"

"Your father-!" A sudden change came over the slave's manner. "Your tather, Miss Cora! He thinks you still in the free English country, and when he hears that you have returned—" The negro paused, with an embarraseed countenance, as he uttered these words.

"What then?" cried Cora. "If I have returned without his knowledge, am I not his daughter; and who, in his hour of sorrow, has a better right to be at his

"Yes, Miss Cora, but—"
"Tell me where is he?"
"In that room, Miss Cora," answered the negro, gravely, pointing to the door Without waiting for another word Cors

softly opened the door, and gliding into the room, stood for a moment mutely regarding her father. The Venetian shutters were clased, and a shaded lamp burned upon the planter's desk-a lamp that left the room in shadow, and threw its full light upon the careworn face of Gerald Leslie. The papers before him lay unheeded on the desk, with a halfburned cigar by their side. His finely molded chin rested upon his hand, his brow was contracted by painful thoughts and his dark brown eyes were fixed gloomily upon the ground.

He had not heard Cora's entrance. The young girl crept softly to his side, and dropping on her knees at his feet, clasping her hands about his left arm, which hung loosely over the arm of his chair.
"Father," she murmured, "dearest father!"

It was with no exclamation of joy, but with a cry of something nearer akin to agony, that the planter turned and beheld his only daughter. "Cora!" he exclaimed; "Cora, you

"Yes, dearest father. I know-I know that it is against your commands that I have come, but I felt that it could not be against your wishes." Gerald Leslie's head dropped upon his breast with a gesture of despair.

"It needed but this," he murmured, to complete my ruin. These words were uttered in a voice so low as to escape the ear of Cora; but she could still perceive that her coming had not given her father the pleasure she had

fondly hoped to have seen written in his face, when he first beheld her. "Father, father," she cried piteously, clasping her arms about his neck, and gently drawing round his head, so as to be able to look in his face; "father, can it be that you do not love me?" "Not love you, Cora, my darling, my darling!" Clasping his child to his breast, Gerald Leslie burst into a pas-

sion of sobs. This was her welcome home.

CHAPTER V.



ET us turn from the residence of Cora's father to the splendld mansion inhabited by the wealth; young planter, Augustus Horton, in one of the best streets of New Orleans. It is upward of a week after the

arrival of Mon-

tresor with her two fair charges It is a bright summer morning, and the family party are assembled in an elegantly furnished

apartment, opening into a cool veranda, filled with exotic plants. Mrs. Montresor, who, even in that warm climate, is too energetic to be idle, is seated at her embroidery. Her nephew Augustus lolls in an easy chair, reading the New Orleans papers, while Adelaide Horton reclines in a hammock near the open window. Mortimer Percy, with his hands in the pockets of his light trousers, and a cigar in his mouth, leans against the window talking to his cousin. "Say what you will, Mortimer, it is most extraordinary that Cora should not have called here since our return," exclaims Adelaide.

cousin." answered the young man. "that Mr. Leslie has taken his daughter to his country-seat upon the plantation?"
"What of that?" replied Adelaide. "Mr. Leslie's villa is but half an hour's drive from New Orleans. Nothing could have

"But do I not tell you, my dear

been easier than for him to have brought Cora here." At this moment a female slave entered, announcing Mr. Craig.

"Show him in," said Augustus, without raising his eyes from the newspaper he was reading. "Silas Craig!" exclaimed Mortimer. with a shudder of disgust. "What in

Heaven's name induces you to encourage the acquaintance of that man, Augustus? "Pshaw, Mortimer, I have none of your romantic notions. Mr. Craig is a very respectable member of society. "Respectable! Yes; the man who

makes money is respectable, no matter by what shameful means he makes it. Usurer, oppressor of the helpless, traffloker in human flesh-what matters by what hideous trade the gold is got? The vellow guineas will not sparkle less-the hollow world will not be less ready to bow to the respectable member of so-

"Fool!" cried Augustus, angrily; "Craig is here. Do you wish him to know your opinion of him?" Mortimer shrugged his shoulders and resumed his conversation with his cousin

Stlas Craig saluted the ladies with ceremonious politeness, and, after the first greetings, exclaimed with a face expreselve of sanctimonious grief and plous

"Of course, ladies, you have beard the news?" "The news! What news?" cried Adelaide and her aunt simultaneously. "What! is it possible that you have not heard of Mr. Gerald Leslie's conduct? All

New Orleans is ringing with the scandal." "What scandal?" "Ah, ladies, you may indeed well ask what scandal; for who could believe that Mr. Leslie, one of the principal planters of Louisiana, should have been guilty of

such a treason against the interest of society at large?" "Freason! Mr. Leslie! What do you

mean, Mr. Craig!" exclaimed Augustus "I mean that Gerald Leslie has been

discovered, within these last few days, to have educated in England the child of one of his slaves, a Quadroon called Francilla, whom he sold to me some fourteen years ago. The girl has been brought up in England, where she has received the education of a princess, and it is only through her unexpected return to New Orleans that the secret has been discovered.

"Merciful Heavens" cried Adelaide, hiding her face in her hands, "Cora a slave !" "There was one spark of feeling at

least," muttered Mortimer, as he watched his cousin's emotion.

"Now," pursued the pitiless usurer, "according to the Louislana law, it is criminal to teach a slave to read. What, then, must be the offense of Mr. Leslie in sending this girl to a first-class English boarding-school, and having her taught the accomplishments of a lady of the highest birth?" "A terrible offense, indeed, Mr. Craig,"

said Mortimer, bitterly, "but this girl is Gerald Leslie's own daughter, is she "She is; but what of that? Born of a slave mother, she is not the less his

slave. "I understand. As a worthy member of society, then, as a Christian and a gentlemen-in the sense in which we regard these things-he may send his daughter to toil sixteen hours a day on his plantation: he may hand her to his overseer to flogged, if she is too weak (or too lazy, as

It will most likely be called) to work; he

may sen ner, if ne will, no matter to what degradation-no matter to what infamy; but let him dare to love her let him dare look upon her with one thrill of fatherly affection-let him attempt to elevate her mind by education, to teach her that there is a free heaven above her. where slavery cannot be-let him do this, and he has committed a crime against society and the laws of Louisiana."

"Exactly so," replied Craig, rubbing his oily hands, "I see you understand the law of the land, Mr. Percy. No wonder that Geraid Leslie is a ruined man, he has wasted a princely income on the education of this girl-this slave. "Poor Cora!" exclaimed Adelaide. "What, Miss Horton, did you know

her?" asked Craig.
"I did, indeed," replied Adelaide; "we were educated at the same school-we were bosom friends."

Merciful Heaven!" exclaimed Craig, sanctimoniously; "to what pollution are our daughters exposed, when the children of slaves are folsted upon soclety in this manner!"

"No, Mr. Craig," cried Mortimer, with a bitter laugh; "the pollution is in the very atmosphere of a clime in which a father's first duty to society is to trample on the laws of humanity—the ties of flesh and blood." "Hold your tongue, Mortimer," said Augustus Horton, "you know nothing of these things; Gerald Leslie has acted

disgracefully, and this girl must pay the penalty of her father's folly." "That is Louislana justice." "Excuse me for two or three minutes, Mr. Craig," said Angustus, rising: "I have a few words to say to my cousin. I

will rejoin you almost immediately; in the meantime the ladies will amuse you. Come, Mortimer." The young man followed his cousin, after bowing coldly to Craig. The truth of the matter was that Augustus Horton wished to get his imprudent partner out of the way, as he felt that Silas Craig

would take care to spread the report of Mortimer Percy's revolutionary principles among the outraged Southerners. Left alone with the two ladies, Silas Craig felt himself very much at a loss for

conversation. He had never married, and he was always silent and ashamed in female society. Accomplished hypocrite as he was, he trembled before the keen instincts of a woman, and felt that his real

nature stood unmasked. But on this occasion he was relieved from his embarrassment in a manner that he had little expected. Just as he was preparing himself to utter some commonplace remark, a stentorian voice resounded through the vestibule without, "Oh, you needn't announce me," said the intruder; "everybody knows me. It's

I know he's here.' A close observer might have observed that Silas Craig's face grew considerably paler at the sound of his voice; but before he could make any remark the owner of it had dashed into the room, banging open the door with a noise of thunder. Well might the ladies start with an ex-

old Craig, the lawyer, I want to see, and

clamation of amazement at the apparition that stood before them. The new comer was a tall, lanky, raw-boned looking man, with long hair, which streamed in rough locks from under his fur cap. He wore a bear-skin jacket, very much the worse for bad usage, loose knickerbockertrousers, leather gaiters, and great nailed boots; his red-striped shirt was torn and ragged, and a tattered cloak hung loosely over his shoulder. When we further add that he carried a musket under his arm. the reader will be able to understand the astonishment of Mrs. Montresor and her niece at beholding such an intruder in their elegant apartment.

If a ghost risen from the grave had stood before him, Silas Craig could scarcely have appeared more terrified than he did at the sight of this man.

"So I've found you at last, my worthy Craig, have I?" cried the stranger. "I've been over every inch of ground in New Orleans, I think, looking for you. At last somebody told me you were at Mr. Horton's. 'Very well, then,' says I, 'here goes for Mr. Horton's, and here I am; but how is my dear Craig! You don't seem glad

"His dear Craig! Vulgar rufflan!" muttered Silas in an undertone; and then, with an effort to overcome his embarrassment, he said, "Why, as for being glad to see you, my dear Bill, of course I'm giad; but you see-you see the truth was I thought you were in California.' "Yes, where you sent me to dig for

gold and keep out of your way. No, the climate didu't agree with me, and I didn't find any gold, though I soon spent spent all I took with me. So, knowing I had powerful friends in New Orleans, I thought the best thing I could do would be to come back and throw myself once more on their generosity.

Silas Craig bit his thick under lip till the blood started beneath his teeth. "But I say, Craig," said the stranger, looking at the two astonished women. "where's your manners? Ain't you going to introduce me to the ladies? "Oh, to be sure," replied Silas, with

increasing embarrassment. "My dear Mrs. Montresor, my dear Miss Horton, allow me to introduce to you Mr. Bill Bowen, formerly captain of a slaver." "Captain of a slaver!" exclaimed Adelaide. "Don't be frightened, miss," said Bill;

"your brother was one of my best cus-tomers. I've done many a bit of business in the nigger trade with him." The young girl shuddered as she turned away from the speaker.

"I know my dress ain't quite the thing for a lady's drawing room," he saidlooking down down at his ragged shirtsleeves and clay stained clothes, "but we'll soon set all that to rights. My friend Craig will recommend me to his tailor and lend me the money to pay his bill, if it comes to that, won't you, Craig?"

"Oh, certainly, as far as that goes, in

consideration for past services." "Yes, 'in consideration for past ser-vices," repeated Bill Bowen, rather signifleantly. "I tell you what, Mr. Craig, as you seem doing the civil to these la-dies here, and as you don't seem over much to relish my company, I'll slope now, and drop in and take a bit of dinner with you at your own house by-and-by. What's your hour?"

"Six o'clock," muttered Craig, with ill-

concealed vexation. "Six o'clock. I shall be sure to be punctual," said Bill Bowen, "for I've got a pretty sharp appetite. Good morning, ma'am. Good morning, miss," he added, nodding familiarly to the two ladies, as he strode out of the room.

"What a horrible creature!" exclaimed Mrs. Montresor. "How can you tolerate him, Mr. Craig?"

"Why, the truth is," replied Silas, "the man has been of use to me in some trifling matters of business. He has served me for a long time one way and another, and I've got used to his queer ways. He's an eccentric sort of animal, and he works all the better for being humored, so I look over his uncultivated

manner. "I would not advise you to encourage him in running after you into people's drawing-rooms," said Mrs. Montresor, pointing to the clay left by Bill Bowen's | 2) tternouth boot upon the rich colors of the Persian

Silas reddened and an angry frows

contracted his sandy syebrows.

"I'll forgive him if he ever plays me this trick again," he muttered. "You are quite right, Mrs. Montresor, Mr. William Bowen requires to be taught a lesson, and I think Silas Craig is the man to teach it him. Pray excuse the incon-venience you have been subjected to. and permit me to wish you good morning.

"I cannot tell you how I dislike that man!" exclaimed Adelaide, when her aunt and she were alone; "he inspires me with a disgust for which I can scarcely account. And, then, again, how cruelly he spoke of Cora! Poor girl, poor girl! A slave-a slave like Myra, or Daisy, or Rose, or any of our servants. The friendship between us in broken forever, and henceforth I dare not look upon her as my equal."

The iron hand of prejudice had so strangled every warmer emotion of the soul, that this girl, whose heart was nat-urally good and generous, was prepared to abandon forever the friend and companion of her youth, because the taint of African blood was in her veins, the brand of society was stamped against her name-because she was a slave!

I o be Continued.]

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