

THE OCTOORNOON

A STORY OF SLAVERY DAYS. BY MISS M. E. BRADDON.



CHAPTER I.

THE last notes of a favorite voice... A young South American put his head critically on one side...

Adelaide Horton was a gay and light-hearted being. Born upon the plantation of a wealthy father, the cries of broken slaves had never disturbed her infant slumbers...

On Adelaide's eighteenth birthday her aunt, Mrs. Montresor, an inhabitant of New York, and the widow of a rich merchant, had crossed the Atlantic to Augustus Horton's request...

She found Adelaide all that the most anxious relatives could have wished—elegant, accomplished, fashionable, well-bred, a little frivolous, perhaps, but what of that...

But Gilbert Margrave was one of the sons of 1839. An invention in machinery, which had enriched both the inventor and the cotton-planters of Manchester, had made the young engineer celebrated...

Few who looked upon the young girl of whom Gilbert Margrave spoke, could well have guessed otherwise than in the affirmative, she was indeed lovely in the first bloom of youth...

emblo; with the tenderness of a woman... "Take care, Mortimer," said his aunt; "you are surely not going to fall in love with Miss Leslie!"

"No, thank you, my dear boy," answered Mortimer; "but unfortunately, sometimes a certain little rosy-legged gentleman, with a bow and arrow, called Cupid, steps in; the painter forgets his privilege, and the man falls in love with the artist's model."

"You may rely upon me, Mortimer," exclaimed the young man, "my heart is as cold as ice, and my eyes are as dry as sand. I have no room for the least emotion of the heart."

"I beg, Mr. Margrave," said Cora Leslie, "that you will not listen to Miss Horton's assertions; she only grants me this eulogy because she knows that she values her niece, and she knows that you will permit me to be the judge of that, Miss Leslie?"

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ence of some sudden impulse. I am daring enough, Heaven knows, but there is one species of courage that I lack—the courage which gives the power of resistance. It is not the courage of the moment, but the courage of the heart."

"I am most impatient to see him," said Cora. "Tell me, dear Adelaide, did you ask him for tidings of my father?" "Do not think me forgetful, dear Cora, but I had so much to do in my new country, that I forgot to make the inquiries you charged me with. There now, you are angry with me, I know; I can see it in your eyes."

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CHAPTER II.

HE young planter strode with a leisurely step through the doorway of the conservatory, bowing to the two girls as he entered the room. "At last!" exclaimed Adelaide; "so you have actually returned to your country."

"I was just about to beg you to introduce me to Miss Leslie," replied Mortimer. "Mr. Mortimer Percival, cotton merchant and slave proprietor, my cousin and my future husband, as my aunt says."

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"Alas, Miss Leslie," replied the young South American, "the planter finds himself between the horns of a terrible dilemma; he must either beat his slaves or suffer from their laziness. I will own to you that Mr. Leslie is not considered too indulgent a master; but he only follows the example of the greater number of our colonists. However it is not he, but his overseer who was the chief cause of this revolt."

"Do not think me forgetful, dear Cora, but I had so much to do in my new country, that I forgot to make the inquiries you charged me with. There now, you are angry with me, I know; I can see it in your eyes."

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"No, madam, nothing is irreparable but the time which we pass far away from those we love in the hour of trouble. I implore you to take me back to him."

"I know his heart too well to fear that," exclaimed the excited girl; "but it is as may, my resolution is irrevocable; and if you refuse to take me under your charge, Mrs. Montresor, she added, 'I will go alone.'"

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