

think how I must love you, sir, to sacrifice one of my pet bipeds. are to make the coffee. You splendid coffee, Doctor John. are not to suppose that we will let you look on and criticize our cooking. It's bad luck to watch the cook, Aunt Aillook on and criticize our cooking. sey says so. You've got to help, hasn't he Miss Aimee?"

"Indeed he has," Irma said smiling. She had entered a moment before. She had a little basket on her arm, which Maddie pointed to, saying: "Jelly and tea-cakes. These with fresh butter complete our bill of fare. We'll have Bert to supper. He's coming present-He will ride back with Miss

Aimee. But as for me:
"I won't go home till morning,
Till daylight doth appear." She sang the couplet, dancing about John and finally hugging him in her arms, and planting a hearty kiss upon either cheek. Socrates shook his wings, and gave a low "hoo-hoo," by way of showing his disapproval of such undig-

nified doings. hater," cried Maddie, shaking her fist at him. "You won't get another bite out of my arm. Git-up, I'm ashamed Where's your courage, to tuck your tail that way and be cowed by a paltry feline! Oh, but Susan Anthony is giving him a cussin' in cat-Look at her back, and she spits her contempt of him, as Queen and I want to deposit these comesti-Give your arm to Miss Aimee But it's time we were about supper: and lead the way. To the kitchen-

Dr. Fontenoy laughed as he offered his arm to Irma. She was greatly relieved; she had misgivings about helping Maddie to carry out her earnest suggestion that they should not let John be alone to brood over his disappointment on the first night he had spent at home since the blow had But Mrs. Fontenoy caught at the idea, and begged Irma to accompany Maddie to Grobeck. 'And Bert can ride over after you. Aimee," she added. Aimee," she added. "The boat will not be here until late to-night—maybe not till morning. Maddie can stay at her brother's all night."

pressed the other way, she might have seen that Mrs. Fontenoy had now, in her heart, consented to her marriage with Bert. This was chiefly because her son's heart was fixed upon it: but also her pride was piqued at his having been refused. She could not conceive how any woman could resist her boy. Caleb had kindled a fire in the stove when the trio of cooks entered the

'Polly put the kettle on And let's have—coffee.' "

sung Maddie, "No tea-slops, if you please. Coffee's the drink for us folks of the miasma-haunted river regn-so I've heard you say, Doctor There's the flour barrel and the biscuit-tray, Miss Aimee. Let John pin up your pretty muslin sleeves. Uncle Caleb, you may grind the coffee; and then you can vamose the ranch

The supper was well on the way, the chicken browning and sputtering in the pan, and the biscuit being deftly nounded by Irma's pretty hands: her bare arms showing rosy-white through the powdery flour, when Bert entered. 'I searched every room in the house he said, "and hearing a clatter and chattering down here, I came to see if John had set up a private Bedlam, and find"—he stopped short, looking at Irma's bright cheeks and white arms, "as pretty a tableau as I ever saw. He came to her side.

Now I realize how Lady Waldemar looked at the wash-tub. You re-

member?

"Those naked, perfect arms, Round, glittering arms, plunged elbowdeep in suds,
Like wild swans hid in lilies—all ashake." "Poetry in the kitchen! it is not permitted," cried Maddie, flourishing a ork, with a nicely-browned chickenleg impaled upon it. We can live without poetry, music or

But civilized men must have pretty travestied Bert, trying to snatch the

chicken-leg. "Get out, both you men folks. You are only in the way; and go smoke your pipes on the piazza. John, get cut the big old meerschaum, Czar. I haven't seen his joily face in a year."

After supper they went into the sitting-room. Caleb had brightened it with a clear lamp and a bouquet of roses in an old-fashioned vase on the centre-table. They played a game of Sancho Pedro, and then John opened the cottage piano, and Irma sang old sweet songs to them. The spell of her voice, and the beauty of her profile, and her swelling throat made Bert for-get all about steam-boats and business. Once, while she was singing Schiller's impassioned little love-song, "I dream of you," their eyes met, and the look in hers and the sudden dropping of her hers and the staden dropping of her lids made his bulses quicken with hope. His heart whispered—"This woman loves you," and he said to himself: "I will find out this night—before

Maddie roused him from his reverie. 'Bert," she cried, "it's nine o'clock, and you don't know what hour your boat may come. You had better be

"So I had," he answered, starting up.
"We will go, if you please, Miss Aimee, as soon as you have put on your hat."

CHAPTER XI.

It was near the last of October, but the night was balmy as in June. Flowers perfumed the air, and Irma, with her hand upon Bert's arm, sto a moment at the gate of Grobeck in-haling the fragrance and looking at the grey stone house with its ivygrown gables—doubly picturesque in

her horse. Did a prophetic feeling warn her that this was the last time she would ever see the place where she had known some happy though fleeting hours?

Bert heard the sigh, and saw her face grow dreamy in the moonlight.

He helped her into the saddle, and, as he gave the reins into her hand, he bent his head quickly and pressed a kiss on her white wrist. iss on her white wrist.
"I love you," he said, under his

She did not withdraw her hand from the lingering kiss, and he augured hopefully from this sign. But when they had mounted and were riding, de by side, in the dimly lighted night he tried in vain to get an opportunity to speak to her of what absorbed his own thoughts and made him unmindful of surroundings. Irma talked of Dr. Fontenoy—so enthusiastically that Bert was half jealous—of Maddie, of Miss Gray aver of mocking birds and Miss Gray, even of mocking-birds and their much besung rival, the nightingale. Bert felt that his responses vere idiotic, and at last he could bear t no longer.

They were nearing home, and he had heard the faint, far whistle of a boat oming down the crooked river. She eard it too.

"It is your boat," she said. "How "It is your boat, and start from long will you stay away?"

"It depends upon you," he answered.
"It depends upon what you say to me to-night, whether I return immediately after I have transacted my father's business, or go away on a trip to Honduras and Brazil, to return—I don't know when. Say that you love meonly this—and I must stay near you forever. If there are obstacles to our marriage I will trust to time and per-

suasion to remove them. I only ask to hear your sweet lips say that you tove me. I can not help hoping that you do. Is it so? Tell me, Aimee—tell me to-night—now."

He pressed close to her side in his

earnestness. They were riding through a narrow strip of swampy woods, just beyond which rose Live Oak Hill. He could not see her face in the dusk made by the overhanging trees, but he could hear her quick breathing in the silence—broken only by the monoto-nous gurgle of the little stream. Their norses were moving side by side, his hand was laid lightly upon hers, when a sudden bound of her horse put the width of the road between them. A rustle in the branches of a tree had startled him. A night-hawk flew out from the leaves, uttering a sharp cry The horse shot away like an arrow. She kept her seat; she did not cry out; she held the reins firmly, but it did not avail to check Rob Roy. He had driven the spurs into his mare and followed her the instant her horse took fright.

They emerged from the wood; they began the ascent of the hill. The lights of Live Oaks gleamed in the distance. Bert felt a hope that she would keep her seat, and that the horse would stop in the stable-vard. But no, as she was about to pass a clump of trees a figure rushed into the road directly ahead of He swerved suddenly, and made a dash for the woods. Irma swayed in her seat, lost balance, and would have been thrown against the trees had not the good mare reached from the saddle and caught her as she was falling. Holding her in his arms, he leaped to the ground. The moonlight was full upon her face: he saw that she had fainted. He sat down with her on the trunk of a fallen tree. Her unconsciousness lasted only a She opened her eyes and looked at him: but she was still dazed. "Aimee, darling, are you hurt?" he

She shook her head a little and miled, but in a half-bewildered way. Then she shivered, as with the recollection of past danger, and clung to

"I love you," he exclaimed, passion ately, as he pressed her in his arms. "Do you not love me, Aimee? Will you not be mine?" Her lips were still half smiling. They opened slowly; they seemed shaping the word he waited to hear. Before she could speak a figure started up behind them. A voice, thick with

"No, she will not be yours! her out of your arms this instant, or I will kill you! Irma started to her feet. She knew that voice, and she felt that the long-

expected crisis had come. Bert rose and confronted Vane. "How dare you interfere here?" he manded. "What gives you the

"The fact that I am her brother is "Brother! you, who have ignored her very existence for years! You have shamed the name of brother; you have forfeited your natural rights."
"It does not matter, I do possess the right to interfere where she is con-cerned, and she will recognize it. She shall not marry you, or any other man under the sun. She belongs to me."

'Belongs to you!" 'Yes, by a bond she dare not deny," cried Vane. As he spoke he stepped suddenly to

Irma's side and threw his arm around her. His strange words—the strange look that glittered in his eyes amazed "She is your sister, not your 'slave," Harold laughed, and bent his head to Irma's as he held her forcibly with his

slender, sinewy arm. "You shall see," he said. The laugh, the tone of cool assurance gave strength to Irma.

She broke from his clasp by a sudden effort, and away from him. Her eyes flashed indignant fire into his. 'I am not your slave: I never will He laughed again.

"All the same, you will obey me," he said "She will not. Say you will not, Aimee," pleaded Bert. "Say you will not let this man influence you. He is "She will not. more of a stranger than I am. He—"
"Do you think so?" interrupted
Vane. "Ask her if I had not seen her only a short while before that affecting meeting in your parlor. Ask her where and under what circumstances we then met. If she will tell you this then I will relinquish my claim upon

looked at Irma-bewildered half doubting. He had never seen any living being so pale as she was that moment in the moonlight, but her eyes met his with a look, wild indeed. but clear and proud. He came close

"Aimee," he said, "what does this mean? Will you not explain it? What circumstance is he talking of? What does this mystery mean?"

Vane had watched her face closely. He gave her no time to speak.
"It means this," he interposed, "that
you had better give this woman up.

She is not of your order. Marry where you belong."

"Keep your advice until it is asked,"
Bert answered haughtily, "I will not
give her up. I will make her my wife
if she will let me in the face of all
your dark insinuations. I believe in
her innocence. I believe I can win her
to confide in me—to tell me what mysterious thing this is that separates us
—will you not, Aimee—my Aimee?"

His voice was full of passionate appeal. Her lips quivered. "Might not
such love be strong enough to forgive?" her heart was asking.

Her hesitation was cut short. She you belong.

give?" her heart was asking.

Her hesitation was cut short. She had almost lost the sense of Vane's presence, and she started as she felt his hot breath on her cheek.

"Don't play the fool!" he hissed in her ear. Then he turned to Bert.

"Don't you see she is suffering from the shock she has just had? Choose some other hour for your tragic love-making. Come, Aimee, you—"

"Hilloa! what is the matter? Is anybody hurt?—the horses galloped up without riders. Has anything happened?" called an excited voice.

Mr. Fontenoy. with two men-ser-

Mr. Fontenoy, with two men-servants, came in sight, hurrying around a curve in the road.

"Nobody hurt, sir—only a little scared, and my sister a bit nervous, though she behayed like a heroine. Her

horse ran with her and she came near. having a fall. She is not injured at all." "I am very glad to hear it. I told you, Bert, that Rob Roy was getting too fat and frisky. But, look here, my boy, you will lose your boat. She is coming round the last bend. You must hurry to the house and get your portmanteau with the papers—don't forget that—and be at the landing to stop her, or you will get left."

to stop her, or you will get left."

Bert turned to Irma.
"Good-bye," he said, very low,"I will

ome back to you as soon as I can. You will trust me when you know how deep and true my love is."

She answered him by a look—so sad, so tender, that he never forgot it. Somehow, it filled him with misgiging "Come," said his father, "Harold will take charge of Miss Aimee. had better go into the house directly. This night-air is treacherous.

The two walked hurriedly on. Irma was following, when Vane gripped her arm savagely and forced her into a seat upon the log. "Stay here," he said; "I have something to say to you. You and your

lover have had your sweet passages tonight; now, you and I will have our bitter ones. We must come to an understanding. I will not trifle any onger. Do you know what my pur-"No," Irma said coldly. "I doubt if you know what it is yourself." "But I do. I have been deliberating

upon it to-night. Listen to me. love you with a strength of passion that Bert Fontenoy's cold blood is incapable of. Circumstances—or fate, let us call it—have given me a hold up-I mean to take advantage of it and bind you to me whether you will or not. This is cruel, you think. Wel!, love is cruel when it is strong. But do not mean to be cruel to you. I mean to be kind—so kind that you will love me perforce. I would like to take you to myself now as my wife-since social laws decree that two who would live together must marry, but this cursed poverty has prevented me from trying to win you. I could have won your love had I tried, but I knew I had time enough for this. I am working out a plan for both our interests. You will comprehend it-appreciate it -for you are not fettered by any silly ideas of moral obligations dinned into you on Sunday-school benches. have been reared in the free woods and Nature has been your teacher. Listen then to my plan. I love luxury-so do you—and I hate work—only when I am in the mood for it. So I will take the short cut to fortune. I will marry Fannie Gray and her quarter of a million, which she will soon inherit from her aunt. The old lady is nearly eighty, and has an incurable disease. Her physician tells me it will carry her off in six months. This fortune you shall enjoy with me. You shall be the queen of my heart. I will delight myself in seeing your genius unfold in the sunshine of wealth and happiness. Yes, you shall be happy; my love will make you so. You shall know what it is to be loved. You can give me all I ask-love, congeniality-variety that will not let my passion grow cloyed. You shall be all to me. Fannie will believe that you are my sister-to the rest of the world you will seem a relation—a cousin. 1 would not have our relationship appear nearer, for I 1 would not have wish to marry you openly when Fannie is dead. And she will soon die. No; don't be horrified. I shall not kill her.

three years. Her father and mother both died of lung disease. She can not escape. She is already doomed. Her lungs are diseased. John Fontenoy thows it That is the reason why he indulged her so. But he believed he could cure her by taking her to Cuba after they were married. I shall not take her to Cuba, and in three years I shall be free to make you queen of my nome, my Irma.'

> with eyes cast down. She raised them low, and he read scorn and horror in "And did you dream that I would onsent to this proposition?" she said. You would not have dared to make it but for the hold you have upon me. You are worse than I thought. To narry a woman with an eye to her You are a heartless wretch,

She had listened to him in silence

has consumption. Her aunt's

physician, who is my friend and re-lation, told me so. She will not live

Harold Vane!' "Heartless! If I seem heartless to one woman, it is because I have so heart for another. much marry this silly little heiress for your I will not hasten her death. will be kind to her while she lives. Meantime, I will not for a day, for an hour, lose sight of you. I will keep you under my wing. You will grow to love

He looked at her with a smile in his subtle eyes. "I know the meaning of a woman's And I love you more. I am all the more determined to win you because of this resistance. Struggle as you may, you can not escape me. I will hold you as tightly as I please. You are mine!"he uttered, in a fiercely passionate whisper, with his lips against her cheek

She drew back and started to her "I am going to the house" she said He seized her and forcibly drew her

"Not yet. I have more to tell you am only approaching the point. Here This night has convinced me that I shall have trouble in keeping you. I mean to make my hold upon There is one way to do this. I must marry you—now."
Irma stared at him with a half-fas-The look in his eyes cinated gaze. made a chill run through her frame. "Have you lost your senses?" she sked. "I am in no mood to listen to

ravings."

and I am in cool earnest," he answered. 'I despise the silly ceremony of marriage, but it does give a man a hold upon a woman, and I want to strengthen mine upon you. I want also to give you a proof that I mean what I say when I declare that I will love you and shield you from harm and from want, if you will give yourself to me. Marry me now. Let our marriage be secret, and let it be kept so, until the other marriage be dissolved by death, when will remarry you openly and make you the mistress of a luxurious home.' The audacity of the proposition startled Irma. She looked at him in urious scrutiny. He took her hesitation for half consent and tried to take her into his arms; but she put

"And you propose to marry me, and afterward go through the sham of marriage with Fannie Gray, and live with "While you will be my only

wife-only the bond between us shall "Is there no law forbidding such a crime-punishing it? 1 am ignorant "And if there is such a law, isn't

there ingenuity given to man to cir-cumvent and evade it? I would break all the laws in the land for your sake. But nobody will know that any crime— as you call it—has been committed. Nobody will dream that we are married, none but the man who performs the rite. Look at me. That man is yonder, where you see the light shine from a cottage-window. He sits there, expecting us—waiting to make us one. "Years ago a cunning crime was committed. I was then in the detective business, and was employed to ferret it out. I traced it to this man, and spared him for reasons of my own. He is now an orderned minister, in full his mother, who lives yonder in that little house among the sycamores. I saw him one day this week, and engaged him to perform a marriage ceremony for me. You see, I counted on your consent. It would be folly in you to refuse. There is no safety for you outside my arms. And if you do not care for me now, you will after awhile. My own strong passion will kindle a response in you. Will it be so hard to love me, my little scornful darling? Am I so, hideous? Women have not been wont to find me so." been wont to find me so. In spite of herself, she could not help looking at him. His eyes drew her with their magnetism. They glittered nt-like beauty

in his dark face with a charmful, ser-"So you consent ?" he whispered. She started, as though she had heard

the soft hiss of a snake. Consent ?" she repeated. "Never! If you were beautiful as Apollo and could offer me untold wealth, I would not consent to what you have asked.' His face changed in an instant. His eyes contracted till they were sparks

of angry fire.

'It is because of Bert Fontenoy," he said, in his peculiar hissing whisper. "You think to marry him when I am gone, but I shall not go. I will not leave this place without you. If you will not be mine by good-will, you shall by force. I did not want to drive you into doing my will, but you force me to it. If you do not marry me now, to-night, then, as sure as Heaven, when Bert Fontenoy returns, I will expose you to him—to them all! I will tell them that I am here as a detective to find Irma Weir, whom the law wants that I have found her, hiding under the name of a dead girl and having in her possession the personal effects of Aimee Brazeale. Here in my pocket, I have a warrant for the arrest of Irma Weir, and in the same pocket I have a license to marry Irma weir which shall be used? By a word, I can bring down doom upon you, and by a word you can avert it. Choose.' He took two yellow envelopes from his pocket as he spoke. One contained, as he had said, a warrant of arrest, and the other a marriage license.

ose." he repeated. She felt his black, cruel eyes pierce into hers. She felt his hot clasp upon her arm. She could not speak for an instant; but desperation gave her courage. Her eyes flashed with the de-

flance of a panther brought to bay. "And you can seek so to enslave a woman!" she cried. "You can threaten her with such ruin, hold such a red rod of torture over her head, and yet dare to say you love her! Out upon such love! I scorn it; I refuse to trust in it. I would rather trust to the scant mercy of the world. No; I will not marry you. Expose me; drive me from friends and shelter. I can hardly be more wretched than I am!" Do you forget that exposure means more than loss of your lover and your

friends? that it means imprisonment for a capital crime-perhaps death on "Let it come," she cried. "After I have lost Bert Fontenoy's love, I do

not care what comes upon me. Now go and do your worst !" The flerce intensity of her tones, the defiant passion in her eyes half stunned him for an instant. She took advantage of his surprise. She broke from his clasp and walked rapidly away toward Live Oaks. He did not follow her; he knew it was useless in her present mood. He looked after her swift-gliding figure, and clinched his hands in anger and disappointment. He had not dreamed that she would resist him so. He had counted upon winning her to his will by his passionate entreaties, his glowing representations. But if these failed, he had felt sure he could terrify her into sub-

'Curse her obstinacy !" he muttered "She has a stronger will than I thought. But I will break it. will drive her into a corner, where she will be forced to throw herself into

Alone in her room that night, Irma walked the floor with hands clasped her throbbing head. The defiant that had sustained her gave way. She felt that it was all over with Vane would do as he threatened. She would stand before these people who had loved and honored her, branded as an impostor, an unprincipled adventuress. She seemed to feel Bert Fontenoy's look of reproach and contempt burn through the hands in

which she had hid her face. As for her other, darker secretwould Vane betray that too? She did not believe he would. He would still hold that over her. He might betray her to the Fontenoys, and claim that was here to hunt her out, but he would shield her from arrest. It was his purpose to strip her of friends and support, that she might be forced to

depend upon him. And the protection he had offered as price of his secrecy-marriage with himself-could she find safety in that way? by becoming the unacknowledged wife of a man she could not trust Such a marriage would put her wholly in his power, body and soul, and when his passion for her had grown cold. he would leave her, or, perhaps, betray her secret, as a means of ridding himself of a burden. No, she could not Harold Vane, not even to save herself. Her whole nature shuddered a

revoult against it. What then must she do? There was one thing-if it could be done. She could leave Live Oaks, secretly, of course, else Vane would follow and persecute her. She could get on some bcat going to New Orleans and hide that vortex of humanity She would draw suspicion on her head by her secret flight, but this she could not help. Her flight would confirm it. Well, she would not see his look of distrust and scorn. She would be far away, never to see his face again.

Midnight found her pondering plans
for her escape; it found Vane weaving
plans to secure her more firmly and
prevent her eluding him.

CHAPTER XII.

Irma's music lessons, next morning were given mechanically. She hardly knew what she was doing. She was listening for the far-off whistle of a steamboat. She was saying to her-self: "How can I hear to leave this place, where I have known such gleams of happiness? How can I leave this dear child who loves me? and how can I endure the thought that they all regard me with suspicion?"

But she held firm to her resolve to go away. That morning, Vane hallaid a white rose on her breakfast plate with his sweetest smile. He had talked with her awhile on the porch and made no allusion to what had assed the night before; but when he was going in, he touched her arm ghtly. When she turned, she met his een. Exed look.

"Remember, I will keep my word," he whispered, and then he smiled as though he had said something pleasant, and began to give some betanical information to give some betanical on in reply to a question from

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when Irma, watching from the front portice. saw a stain of black smoke pertico, saw a stain of black smoke upon the horizon, and knew that a boat was coming down the river. It was still some miles away. She would have time to walk to the town and take passage there instead of at Live Oaks landing, where she would be almost certain to be seen. She went to her room and hastily dressed herself in a grey walking-suit and put a change range city, she did not stop to ask

She listened nervously, while she dressed, for Maddie's step in the passage and her quick thump on the door.
"She will be sure to want to go to town with me," she said to herself; "how shall I elude her?" As she was passing the window, she saw outside a figure that seemed and are the window. vines. It stopped under the window, a brown, bonnetless head was thrust out from the green leaves, Maddie's bright eyes looked up

"I'm going to take some potato vines and slops to poor old Betty-the black cow grandma gave me when I was born, you know. She's down, they tell me, in the pasture and can't get up. You're all dressed to walk, Miss Aimee; mighty sorry I ain't going with you; but the lazy niggers would let old Betty just starve because she's of no more use. Come on with the slops,

She nodded and kissed her hand to Irma in her quaint, affectionate way, and went on, followed by the small darkey with a tub balanced on his head. Irma watched her with dimmed

She loves me now; in a few hours she will think me a miserable cheat," was her thought. In a moment she was ready to leave Live Oaks forever. Vane was in his room reading or asleep probably. She saw no one as she passed through the hall. When she was out in the bright afternoon sunshine, she walked rapid-

ly and reached the town before the boat was in sight. She dropped her thick brown veil over her face, and made her way to the wharf. She paused a little distance from the landing and waited. The boat had already whistled in token that she would stop. There was also a boat coming She could see its smoke around a hend the river and hear the rapid puffs of its escape pipe. Had it been a few days later, her pulses would have quickened at the thought of seeing Bert on the deck, but it was too soon for him to return. The down boat reached the landing first. Irma drew

"Siste viator," said a voice just behind her. The voice was sweet as a mocking-bird's note, but it sounded in her ear like a serpent's hiss.
"So you are trying to take French leave of me," said Vane, "you will find it hard to do. I am most watchful when I seem least so. I suspected you would try this game, and kept on the lookout. Attempt to go on that boat and I will follow you at once, and have

her veil more closely and prepared to

go on board.

law. You force me to such measures by your obstinacy." He spoke low and he twirled a little stick carelessly in his hand, but she read vindictive determination in his eye. It put to flight her hope of present escape, but her purpose was not shaken-it was only strengthened. She

you taken in charge by officers of the

had grown desperate. "I must use a little cunning; I must seem to give up the thought of going away," she said to herself. She threw up her veil and smiled in a halfscornful, half-resigned way.

"If I must stay, I will only torment you," she said. "But in the end, you will reward me, beautiful, wilful one," he returnsurprised but well pleased at her softened mood.

'She will give in more easily than I thought," he said to himself. A young man whom Irma knew came up and spoke to her. Vane fell back and stood leaning against a tree, idly snapping the heads off a clump of camomile flowers with his twirling

The steamboat was still at the wharf, rounded the bend and stopped also The moment it was made fast a little sharp-faced woman, with fluffy, yellow hair, tripped out, followed by a negro bearing a trunk on his shoulder. She hurriedly went on board the other boat, which soon after pushed off and steamed away on its course

Several other passengers got off the remaining boat and were snapped up the hack-drivers of the different hotels. One odd-looking old gentleman seemed greatly bewildered. He had lost his lady, he declared. She was not in her state-room, she was nowhere on the boat, she was not here

-where she was? "Was she a slim, slanky sort with ' called out an urchin, who lounged on a cotton-bale and smoked a castoff cigar stub.

Yees, yees, she was like t'at, somet'ing like t'at," cried the nervous old gentleman, his accent proclaiming him a crecie.

"Then she got on the other boat. She's give you the slip, old chap. 'Gone with a handsomer man,' " sung the

"Gone back? Mon dieu! is it possible? She was to teach my Blanche -my leetle cripple girl-and be commy chil'. I engage her in t'e citie; I pay her debts; I pay her passage up, and now she leaf t'is way. rascal; she is one deceetful womans."
He shook his fist at the disappearing boat. In the midst of his gesticulations, he lost his balance and toppled backward to the ground. The adult

by-standers laughed, the gamins on the cotton bales yelled with delight. Their mirth increased, as he struggled meffectually to rise. He was quite frail, and apparently he was hurt. Seeing that nobody came to his assistance. Irma ran up to him and helped him to his feet. It required all her strength, and when he was standing he staggered and leaned upon her a little while. "It is my spine," he said. "I haf trcuble with it frequentlee. I owe you

a t'ousand t'anks, young ladee. You are as good as you are lovelee." He had large, sad, brown eyes that illuminated his thin, sallow face, and contrasted with his white hair. Irma at him with interest as he walked slowly away. She wished she had offered to go with him and let upon her, but presently he ca a hack and got into it. As he was driven away, he bowed low to her with

his hand upon his heart. The boat was gone; the little crowd that had gathered at the wharf began to disperse. Irma and Vane were standing near each other, though he seemed not to be conscious of her pre She delayed to turn her toward Live Oaks. Something within whispered that a change in her destiny was at hand. At last she started to walk on. Her foot struck against something soft. She looked down and saw a brown leather pocket-book. She knew it must belong to the odd old gentleman. He must have lost it when pick it up quickly and conceal it from Vane, whom she saw approaching. He came up to her. "Are you going home now?" he ask-

Not immediately," she answered "I must pay a visit first. I will walk on; and you," she added, making him a little smiling, mocking bow, "can follow at a distance—as spies usually

He did not know what to say in reply. He was puzzled at the change in her manner. He was almost ashamed to follow her, but he did, after a little hesitation. He saw her enter the archand he went into a rest lite, sat down by a windong the hotel entrace, "I wish to see a gentleman who came her just now from the steamboat 'Lilly Bell.' He has long iron-grey hair and sneak. " little brokenly."



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