

chance to get into much mischief," I answered. "If they have already made a noise, I thought of going to the Baron de Carondelet and telling him what I know of the expedition. He will understand what St. Gré is, and I will explain that Mr. Temple's reckless love of adventure is at the bottom of his share in the matter."

"*Bon, Davy,*" said my host, "if you go, I go with you. But I believe ze Baron think Morro good place for them jus' the sem. Ze Baron has been make *misérable* with Jacobins. But I go with you if you go."

He discoursed for some time upon the quality of the St. Grés, their public services, and before he went to sleep he made the very just remark that there was a flaw in every string of beads. As for me, I went down into the cabin, surreptitiously lighted a candle, and drew from my pocket that piece of ivory which had so strangely come into my possession once more. The face upon it had haunted me since I had first beheld it. The miniature was wrapped now in a silk handkerchief which Polly Ann had bought for me in Lexington. Shall I confess it? — I had carefully rubbed off the discolorations on the ivory at the back, and the picture lacked now only the gold setting. As for the face, I had a kind of consolation from it. I seemed to draw of its strength when I was tired, of its courage when I faltered. And, during those four days of indecision in Louisville, it seemed to say to me in words that I could not evade or forget, "Go to New Orleans." It was a sentiment — foolish, if you please — which I could not resist. Nay, which I did not try to resist, for I had little enough of it in my life. What did it matter? I should never see Madame la Vicomtesse d'Ivry-le-Tour.

She was Hélène to me; and the artist had caught the strength of her soul in her clear-cut face, in the eyes that flashed with wit and courage, — eyes that seemed to look with scorn upon what was mean in the world and untrue, with pity on the weak. Here was one who might have governed a province and still have been a woman, one who had taken into exile the best of safeguards against misfortune, — humor and an indomitable spirit.

CHAPTER V

THE HOUSE OF THE HONEYCOMBED TILES

As long as I live I shall never forget that Sunday morning of my second arrival at New Orleans. A saffron heat-haze hung over the river and the city, robbed alike from the yellow waters of the one and the pestilent moisture of the other. It would have been strange indeed if this capital of Louisiana, brought hither to a swamp from the sands of Biloxi many years ago by the energetic Bienville, were not visited from time to time by the scourge!

Again I saw the green villas on the outskirts, the verdure-dotted expanse of roofs of the city behind the levee bank, the line of Kentucky boats, keel boats and barges which brought our own resistless commerce hither in the teeth of royal mandates. Farther out, and tugging fretfully in the yellow current, were the aliens of the blue seas, high-hulled, their tracery of masts and spars shimmering in the heat: a full-rigged ocean packet from Spain, a barque and brigantine from the West Indies, a rakish slaver from Africa with her water-line dry, discharged but yesterday of a teeming horror of freight. I looked again upon the familiar rows of trees which shaded the gravelled promenades where Nick had first seen Antoinette. Then we were under it, for the river was low, and the dingy-uniformed officer was bowing over our passports beneath the awning. We walked ashore, Monsieur Vigo and I, and we joined a staring group of keel boatmen and rivermen under the willows.

Below us, the white shell walks of the Place d'Armes were thronged with gayly dressed people. Over their heads rose the fine new Cathedral, built by the munificence of Don Andreas Almonaster, and beside that the many-

windowed, heavy-arched Cabildo, nearly finished, which will stand for all time a monument to Spanish builders.

"It is Corpus Christi day," said Monsieur Vigo; "let us go and see the procession."

Here once more were the bright-turbaned negresses, the gay Creole gowns and scarfs, the linen-jacketed, broad-hatted merchants, with those of soberer and more conventional dress, laughing and chatting, the children playing despite the heat. Many of these people greeted Monsieur Vigo. There were the saturnine, long-cloaked Spaniards, too, and a greater number than I had believed of my own keen-faced countrymen lounging about, mildly amused by the scene. We crossed the square, and with the courtesy of their race the people made way for us in the press; and we were no sooner placed ere the procession came out of the church. Flaming soldiers of the Governor's guard, two by two; sober, sandalled friars in brown, priests in their robes, — another batch of color; crosses shimmering, tapers emerging from the cool darkness within to pale by the light of day. Then down on their knees to Him who sits high above the yellow haze fell the thousands in the Place d'Armes. For here was the Host itself, flower-decked in white and crimson, its gold-tasselled canopy upheld by four tonsured priests, a sheen of purple under it, — the Bishop of Louisiana in his robes.

"The Governor!" whispered Monsieur Vigo, and the word was passed from mouth to mouth as the people rose from their knees. François Louis Hector, Baron de Carondelet, resplendent in his uniform of colonel in the royal army of Spain, his orders glittering on his breast, — pillar of royalty and enemy to the Rights of Man! His eye was stern, his carriage erect, but I seemed to read in his careworn face the trials of three years in this moist capital. After the Governor, one by one, the waiting Associations fell in line, each with its own distinguishing sash. So the procession moved off into the narrow streets of the city, the people in the Place dispersed to new vantage points, and Monsieur Vigo signed me to follow him.

"I have a friend, *la veuve* Gravois, who lives very quiet. She has one room, and I ask her to take you in, Davy." He led the way through the empty Rue Chartres, turned to the right at the Rue Bienville, and stopped before an unpretentious house some three doors from the corner. Madame Gravois, elderly, wizened, primp in a starched cotton gown, opened the door herself, fell upon Monsieur Vigo in the Creole fashion; and within a quarter of an hour I was installed in her best room, which gave out on a little court behind. Monsieur Vigo promised to send his servant with my baggage, told me his address, bade me call on him for what I wanted, and took his leave.

First, there was Madame Gravois' story to listen to as she bustled about giving orders to a kinky-haired negro girl concerning my dinner. Then came the dinner, excellent — if I could have eaten it. The virtues of the former Monsieur Gravois were legion. He had come to Louisiana from Toulon, planted indigo, fought a duel, and Madame was a widow. So I condense two hours into two lines. Happily, Madame was not proof against the habits of the climate, and she retired for her siesta. I sought my room, almost suffocated by a heat which defies my pen to describe, a heat reeking with moisture sucked from the foul kennels of the city. I had felt nothing like it in my former visit to New Orleans. It seemed to bear down upon my brain, to clog the power of thought, to make me vacillating. Hitherto my reasoning had led me to seek Monsieur de St. Gré, to count upon that gentleman's common sense and his former friendship. But now that the time had come for it, I shrank from such a meeting. I remembered his passionate affection for Antoinette, I imagined that he would not listen calmly to one who was in some sort connected with her unhappiness. So a kind of cowardice drove me first to Mrs. Temple. She might know much that would save me useless trouble and blundering.

The shadows of tree-top, thatch, and wall were lengthening as I walked along the Rue Bourbon. Heedless of what the morrow might bring forth, the street was given

over to festivity. Merry groups were gathered on the corners, songs and laughter mingled in the court-yards, billiard balls clicked in the *cabarets*. A fat, jolly little Frenchman, surrounded by tripping children, sat in his doorway on the edge of the *banquette*, fiddling with all his might, pausing only to wipe the beads of perspiration from his face.

"Madame Clive, *mais oui, Monsieur, l' petite maison en face.*" Smiling benignly at the children, he began to fiddle once more.

The little house opposite! Mrs. Temple, mistress of Temple Bow, had come to this! It was a strange little home indeed, Spanish, one-story, its dormers hidden by a honeycombed screen of terra-cotta tiles. This screen was set on the extreme edge of the roof which overhung the *banquette* and shaded the yellow adobe wall of the house. Low, unpretentious, the latticed shutters of its two windows giving it but a scant air of privacy, — indeed, they were scarred by the raps of careless passers-by on the sidewalk. The two little battened doors, one step up, were closed. I rapped, waited, and rapped again. The musician across the street stopped his fiddling, glanced at me, smiled knowingly at the children; and they paused in their dance to stare. Then one of the doors was pushed open a scant four inches, a scarlet madras handkerchief appeared in the crack above a yellow face. There was a long moment of silence, during which I felt the scrutiny of a pair of sharp, black eyes.

"What yo' want, Marse?"

The woman's voice astonished me, for she spoke the dialect of the American tide-water.

"I should like to see Mrs. Clive," I answered.

The door closed a shade.

"Mistis sick, she ain't see nobody," said the woman. She closed the door a little more, and I felt tempted to put my foot in the crack.

"Tell her that Mr. David Ritchie is here," I said.

There was an instant's silence, then an exclamation.

"Lan' sakes, is you Marse Dave?" She opened the

door — furtively, I thought — just wide enough for me to pass through. I found myself in a low-ceiled, darkened room, opposite a trim negress who stood with her arms akimbo and stared at me.

"Marse Dave, you doan rec'lect me. I'se Lindy, I'se Breed's daughter. I rec'lect you when you was at Temple Bow. Marse Dave, how you'se done growed! Yassir, when I heerd from Miss Sally I done comed here to tek cyar ob her."

"How is your mistress?" I asked.

"She po'ly, Marse Dave," said Lindy, and paused for adequate words. I took note of this darcy who, faithful to a family, had come hither to share her mistress's exile and obscurity. Lindy was spare, energetic, forceful — and, I imagined, a discreet guardian indeed for the unfortunate. "She po'ly, Marse Dave, an' she ain' nebbber leabe dis year house. Marse Dave," said Lindy earnestly, lowering her voice and taking a step closer to me, "I done reckon de Mistis gwine ter die ob lonesomeness. She des sit dar an' brood, an' brood — an' she use' ter de bes' company, to de quality. No, sirree, Marse Dave, she ain' nebbber sesso, but she tink 'bout de young Marsa night an' day. Marse Dave?"

"Yes?" I said.

"Marse Dave, she have a lil pink frock dat Marsa Nick had when he was a bebbby. I done cotch Mistis lookin' at it, an' she hid it when she see me an' blush like 'twas a sin. Marse Dave?"

"Yes?" I said again.

"Where am de young Marsa?"

"I don't know, Lindy," I answered.

Lindy sighed.

"She done talk 'bout you, Marse Dave, an' how good you is —"

"And Mrs. Temple sees no one," I asked.

"Dar's one lady come hyar ebbery week, er French lady, but she speak English jes' like the Mistis. Dat's my fault," said Lindy, showing a line of white teeth.

"Your fault," I exclaimed.

"Yassir. When I comed here from Carolyn de Mistis done tole me not ter let er soul in hyah. One day erbout three mont's ergo, dis yer lady come en she des wheedled me ter let her in. She was de quality, Marse Dave, and I was des' afeard not ter. I declar' I hatter. Hush," said Lindy, putting her fingers to her lips, "dar's de Mistis!"

The door into the back room opened, and Mrs. Temple stood on the threshold, staring with uncertain eyes into the semi-darkness.

"Lindy," she said, "what have you done?"

"Miss Sally —" Lindy began, and looked at me. But I could not speak for looking at the lady in the doorway.

"Who is it?" she said again, and her hand sought the door-post tremblingly. "Who is it?"

Then I went to her. At my first step she gave a little cry and swayed, and had I not taken her in my arms I believe she would have fallen.

"David!" she said, "David, is it you? I — I cannot see very well. Why did you not speak?" She looked at Lindy and smiled. "It is because I am an old woman, Lindy," and she lifted her hand to her forehead. "See, my hair is white — I shock you, David."

Leaning on my shoulder, she led me through a little bedroom in the rear into a tiny garden court beyond, a court teeming with lavish colors and redolent with the scent of flowers. A white shell walk divided the garden and ended at the door of a low outbuilding, from the chimney of which blue smoke curled upward in the evening air. Mrs. Temple drew me almost fiercely towards a bench against the adobe wall.

"Where is he?" she said. "Where is he, David?"

The suddenness of the question staggered me; I hesitated.

"I do not know," I answered.

I could not look into her face and say it. The years of torment and suffering were written there in characters not to be mistaken. Sarah Temple, the beauty, was dead indeed. The hope which threatened to light again the dead fires in the woman's eyes frightened me.

"Ah," she said sharply, "you are deceiving me. It is not like you, David. You are deceiving me. Tell me, tell me, for the love of God, who has brought me to bear chastisement." And she gripped my arm with a strength I had not thought in her.

"Listen," I said, trying to calm myself as well as her. "Listen, Mrs. Temple." I could not bring myself to call her otherwise.

"You are keeping him away from me," she cried. "Why are you keeping him away? Have I not suffered enough? David, I cannot live long. I do not dare to die — until he has forgiven me."

I forced her, gently as I might, to sit on the bench, and I seated myself beside her.

"Listen," I said, with a sternness that hid my feelings, and perforce her expression changed again to a sad yearning, "you must hear me. And you must trust me, for I have never pretended. You shall see him if it is in my power."

She looked at me so piteously that I was near to being unmanned.

"I will trust you," she whispered.

"I have seen him," I said. She started violently, but I laid my hand on hers, and by some self-mastery that was still in her she was silent. "I saw him in Louisville a month ago, when I returned from a year's visit to Philadelphia." I could not equivocate with this woman, I could no more lie to her sorrow than to the Judgment. Why had I not foreseen her question?

"And he hates me?" She spoke with a calmness now that frightened me more than her agitation had done.

"I do not know," I answered; "when I would have spoken to him he was gone."

"He was drunk," she said. I stared at her in frightened wonderment. "He was drunk — it is better than if he had cursed me. He did not mention me? Or any one?"

"He did not," I answered.

She turned her face away.

"Go on, I will listen to you," she said, and sat immov-

able through the whole of my story, though her hand trembled in mine. And while I live I hope never to have such a thing to go through with again. Truth held me to the full, ludicrous tragedy of the tale, to the cheap character of my old Colonel's undertaking, to the incident of the drum, to the conversation in my room. Likewise, truth forbade me to rekindle her hope. I did not tell her that Nick had come with St. Gré to New Orleans, for of this my own knowledge was as yet not positive. For a long time after I had finished she was silent.

"And you think the expedition will not get here?" she asked finally, in a dead voice.

"I am positive of it," I answered, "and for the sake of those who are engaged in it, it is mercifully best that it should not. The day may come," I added, for the sake of leading her away, "when Kentucky will be strong enough to overrun Louisiana. But not now."

She turned to me with a trace of her former fierceness.

"Why are you in New Orleans?" she demanded.

A sudden resolution came to me then.

"To bring you back with me to Kentucky," I answered. She shook her head sadly, but I continued: "I have more to say. I am convinced that neither Nick nor you will be happy until you are mother and son again. You have both been wanderers long enough."

Once more she turned away and fell into a reverie. Over the housetop, from across the street, came the gay music of the fiddler. Mrs. Temple laid her hand gently on my shoulder.

"My dear," she said, smiling, "I could not live for the journey."

"You must live for it," I answered. "You have the will. You must live for it, for his sake."

She shook her head, and smiled at me with a courage which was the crown of her sufferings.

"You are talking nonsense, David," she said; "it is not like you. Come," she said, rising with something of her old manner, "I must show you what I have been doing all these years. You must admire my garden."

I followed her, marvelling, along the shell path, and there came unbidden to my mind the garden at Temple Bow, where she had once been wont to sit, tormenting Mr. Mason or bending to the tale of Harry Riddle's love. Little she cared for flowers in those days, and now they had become her life. With such thoughts in my mind, I listened unheeding to her talk. The place was formerly occupied by a shiftless fellow, a tailor; and the court, now a paradise, had been a rubbish heap. That orange tree which shaded the uneven doorway of the kitchen she had found here. Figs, pomegranates, magnolias; the camellias dazzling in their purity; the blood-red oleanders; the pink roses that hid the crumbling adobe and climbed even to the sloping tiles,—all these had been set out and cared for with her own hands. Ay, and the fragrant bed of yellow jasmine over which she lingered,—Antoinette's favorite flower.

Antoinette's flowers that she wore in her hair! In her letters Mrs. Temple had never mentioned Antoinette, and now she read the question (perchance purposely put there) in my eyes. Her voice faltered sadly. Scarce a week had she been in the house before Antoinette had found her.

"I—I sent the girl away, David. She came without Monsieur de St. Gré's knowledge, without his consent. It is natural that he thinks me—I will not say what. I sent Antoinette away. She clung to me, she would not go, and I had to be—cruel. It is one of the things which make the nights long—so long. My sins have made her life unhappy."

"And you hear of her? She is not married?" I asked.

"No, she is not married," said Mrs. Temple, stooping over the jasmines. Then she straightened and faced me, her voice shaken with earnestness. "David, do you think that Nick still loves her?"

Alas, I could not answer that. She bent over the jasmines again.

"There were five years that I knew nothing," she continued. "I did not dare ask Mr. Clark, who comes to me

on business, as you know. It was Mr. Clark who brought back Lindy on one of his trips to Charleston. And then, one day in March of this year, Madame de Montméry came."

"Madame de Montméry?" I repeated.

"It is a strange story," said Mrs. Temple. "Lindy had never admitted any one, save Mr. Clark. One day early in the spring, when I was trimming my roses by the wall there, the girl ran to me and said that a lady wished to see me. Why had she let her in? Lindy did not know, she could not refuse her. Had the lady demanded admittance? Lindy thought that I would like to see her. David, it was a providential weakness, or curiosity, that prompted me to go into the front room, and then I saw why Lindy had opened the door to her. Who she is or what she is I do not know to this day. Who am I now that I should inquire? I know that she is a lady, that she has exquisite manners, that I feel now that I cannot live without her. She comes every week, sometimes twice, she brings me little delicacies, new seeds for my garden. But, best of all, she brings me herself, and I am always counting the days until she comes again. Yes, and I always fear that she, too, will be taken away from me."

I had not heard the sound of voices, but Mrs. Temple turned, startled, and looked towards the house. I followed her glance, and suddenly I knew that my heart was beating.

CHAPTER VI

MADAME LA VICOMTESSE

HESITATING on the step, a lady stood in the vine-covered doorway, a study in black and white in a frame of pink roses. The sash at her waist, the lace mantilla that clung about her throat, the deftly coiled hair with its sheen of the night waters — these in black. The simple gown — a tribute to the art of her countrywomen — in white.

Mrs. Temple had gone forward to meet her, but I stood staring, marvelling, forgetful, in the path. They were talking, they were coming towards me, and I heard Mrs. Temple pronounce my name and hers — Madame de Montméry. I bowed, she courtesied. There was a baffling light in the lady's brown eyes when I dared to glance at them, and a smile playing around her mouth. Was there no word in the two languages to find its way to my lips? Mrs. Temple laid her hand on my arm.

"David is not what one might call a ladies' man, Madame," she said.

The lady laughed.

"Isn't he?" she said.

"I am sure you will frighten him with your wit," answered Mrs. Temple, smiling. "He is worth sparing."

"He is worth frightening, then," said the lady, in exquisite English, and she looked at me again.

"You and David should like each other," said Mrs. Temple; "you are both capable persons, friends of the friendless and towers of strength to the weak."

The lady's face became serious, but still there was the expression I could not make out. In an instant she seemed to have scrutinized me with a precision from which there could be no appeal.