

**DRUMS
OF DAMBALA**

**H. BEDFORD
JONES**

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Title: Drums of Dambala

Date of first publication: 1932

Author: Henry Bedford-Jones (1887-1949)

Date first posted: Dec. 21, 2022

Date last updated: Dec. 21, 2022

Faded Page eBook #20221247

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DRUMS OF DAMBALA

By
Henry Bedford-Jones

First published *Covici-Friede Publishers*, 1932.

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CHAPTER I LE SERPENT'S PROPHECY

In the early summer of the year 1801, an American brig was standing into the harbor of Cap François, more generally known as Le Cap. Behind her lay Tortuga, the isle of the buccaneers; around and ahead, as she forged in under the great height of Morne Rouge, lay the golden Hispaniola of song and story, whose old native name of Haiti was coming more into local usage.

Before the brig now opened out the marvelous vista of the city, rimmed about by mountains towering up black and green, with still other mountains behind lifting into the clouds. Burned to the ground only nine years previously, and literally drenched in blood, the old city had risen from its ashes in new glory.

On the quarterdeck of the brig stood her sole passenger, while bluff Captain Michaelson pointed out to him the various points of interest showing in the city ahead—the governor's palace, the theatre, the shipping so thickly lining the quays, the temple of freedom in its little grove. The passenger listened with imperturbable air. He was dark, less than thirty years of age at a guess, and stood a full six feet. Heavy brows shaded heavy-lidded eyes; the lines ran strongly from brow to wide and firm lips, with finely carved nostrils above. When he smiled, merry lights danced in his blue eyes; for beneath those shaggy black brows, his eyes were blue, a light and sparkling blue. The contrast was severe and startling. It attracted attention on the instant. The high-boned features seemed at first glance intolerant, almost arrogant; but upon study of the man one divined how astonishingly great was his self-mastery, his restraint.

He ran his eye over the shipping in the harbor ahead, then broke in upon the captain's discourse to point out a barge approaching them, a large craft of a dozen oars, carrying a number of soldiers.

"Port officers?" he asked laconically.

"Worse, Master O'Donnell. I remember now, I forgot to salute their cursed French flag in passing the forts." The master shouted hasty orders at the mate and men, then caught the arm of O'Donnell. "One thing, sir! No talk of negroes or niggers; the word is offensive. These men are blacks, and very proud of it. They wish to be called blacks, as distinct from——"

"Thank you, sir," and O'Donnell nodded quietly. "I fancy I'll be able to handle them all right. What's the matter?"

An exclamation broke from the skipper. In the stern of the approaching barge sat two resplendent officers wearing much gold lace, huge epaulets, and the enormous curved sabres which Napoleon's Egyptian campaign had brought into fashion in the armies of France.

"You see the big chap on the larboard side? Has but one eye. That is Moyses himself; General Moyses, nephew of Toussaint Louverture. The most perfect devil unhung, a butcher, a very fiend incarnate! He's capable of anything."

"We'll have no trouble," said O'Donnell calmly. "Leave the talking to me."

The skipper shrugged, with a hopeless air. The brig came into the wind with flapping canvas, and her gangway was rigged. The barge drew in alongside. The two officers mounted to her deck and strutted aft. The port captain and health officer was a small, alert black, dwarfed by the brawny general beside him, whose features beneath his large cockaded hat wore an expression of scowling ferocity, not lessened by the one empty, hideous eye-socket.

“You, captain!” broke out Moyses angrily, in the Creole patois of the island. “Do you know, citizen, that you passed the forts without a salute? Your American flag was not dipped to the glorious tricolor of France! You and your ship are under arrest——”

“One moment, citizen general,” intervened O’Donnell, using the same patois with surprising fluency. “I will do the answering here.”

Moyes surveyed him. “And who are you?”

“An American. My name is Paul O’Donnell.” As he spoke, O’Donnell produced a folded paper and opened it. “Who may you be, and what is your authority, citizen?”

“I?” Moyses drew himself up. “Moyes! General of the army of San Domingo, captain general of this district, nephew of our governor Toussaint Louverture!”

“Whose signature you doubtless know,” said O’Donnell, holding out the paper.

The general stared at it. He could not read, but he knew well that sprawling signature. He reached out to take the letter; O’Donnell calmly folded and pocketed it.

“This is not for you. It is for General Cristophe, who I believe is in command here at Le Cap.”

“He is my subordinate!” declared Moyses angrily. “I am captain general over the entire north district, do you understand? It’s nothing to me if you carry a letter from that old uncle of mine. You and your ship are under arrest, the cargo is confiscated——”

O’Donnell took a step forward. He tapped the gold-laced chest of the general with its tinkling medals, and stared into the one flaming, savage eye. His calm assurance checked the ire of the brawny black.

“Now, listen,” he said quietly. “Stop rattling your tongue, like a monkey shaking stones in a calabash; look at me, listen to me. You are not giving orders here. I am! Here is a letter from Toussaint Louverture, ordering that every courtesy and assistance be given me by all his officers and agents. The stores, munitions and other cargo of this ship are his property. Interfere with them or with me, and you will certainly suffer. And what is more—look at me! Now do you understand, citizen general?”

That an American should speak the patois so fluently was astonishing enough; but there was more. The scarred countenance of Moyses underwent a curious change as he met the direct, staring gaze of O’Donnell. He made a swift, furtive gesture which the American understood perfectly.

“You need not look at me like that,” he said sulkily, in a very altered tone. “I have not harmed you. I have only come aboard to welcome you to Le Cap. I will go ashore and tell Citizen Cristophe of your arrival. The port captain will take care of your ship.”

While bluff Captain Michaelson gaped in utter incredulity, Moyses turned and went over the side again into his barge, which departed at once. The little port captain, staring at O’Donnell with bulging eyes, swallowed hard and then made a brisk salute.

“All right, sar,” he said in English. “No more trouble. I take care of you, sar. Let me have the ship’s papers, cap’n. I pilot her in.”

He went to the wheel, accompanied by the mate, who gave sharp orders; the brig picked up way again. The astounded skipper plucked at O’Donnell’s sleeve.

“What the devil does it all mean? How did you settle him so quick, eh?”

O’Donnell’s rather harsh features relaxed. He glanced at the port captain with a whimsical smile, and the black grinned happily at him, in obvious relief.

“Partly the name of Louverture,” said O’Donnell, “and partly because they’re afraid of the evil eye. Better get your ship’s papers for that chap, cap’n. You’ll find all clear now.”

Not comprehending in the least, the seaman shrugged and turned away. O'Donnell looked over the rail at the retiring barge, then past the other shipping to the long quays and the paved plaisance or harbor walk where black soldiers loafed in the sunlight. He chuckled softly to himself as he took a cigar from his pocket and bit at it.

Blue eyes and black brows did not necessarily mean anything, but when properly used they meant everything. This peculiar mannerism had more than once been of the utmost use to O'Donnell. If, when he opened his eyes wide and stared at them, black folk credited him with having the evil eye, he was not slow to take advantage of the fact. The twist of character, or personality, causing this singular belief was past his explanation, but the effect was obvious enough.

Presently the brig was moored at the quay. The customs officers trooped aboard, and the mulatto heading them could read well enough. The ship's papers, the name of Toussaint Louverture, quickly banished all formalities; throughout Haiti this name was a magic talisman. Toussaint was nominally governor in the name of the French Republic, but the French commissioners were absolutely powerless in the land, every iota of authority was centered in him and in his lieutenants, and it was rumored that he planned to become a king in name as well as in fact.

During the past nine years, Toussaint had risen from the position of a slave to that of a ruler more despotic than Bonaparte himself. His mere word was law, his power was unlimited, the military government he had instituted was absolute. His name was feared terribly, even by his savage lieutenants, themselves feared by all other men. During these years Toussaint had emerged from a literal sea of blood. Barbaric warfare, slaughter, flame and pitiless massacre had swept this entire island from end to end; yet in emerging from these years, Toussaint bore no stain of blood, no taint of cruelty. His justice was feared, but it was justice.

Arranging to send later for his luggage, O'Donnell left the brig and sauntered along the quays. He was in no haste to reach his destination, and wanted first to get a glimpse of the busy city, so totally different from the old city of nine years back that had been swept out of existence in four days of blood and fire. On every side were vast bustle and confusion. Ships were loading and discharging, lighters were going out to larger craft, carts were rumbling on the cobbles, and the astonishing thing was that only soldiers loafed about. Idleness was a crime under the regime of Toussaint, so far as the blacks were concerned.

Coming to the Grand Cafe, the center of social and even business life on the quays, O'Donnell turned into the city, passing through the streets to the central Place d'Armes. He found wide streets, magnificent houses, tokens of the greatest prosperity on every hand. The governor's palace, with its magnificent appointments, the imposing theatre billing the latest plays from Paris, the busy shops, all spoke eloquently of the vast wealth being produced by the reborn commerce of the island. White planters, whom Toussaint had brought back from exile to their former estates, rode through the streets on horseback, or in extremely ornate carriages with their ladies. Certain of these ladies also rode on horseback, wearing male garments and riding astride—a thing unheard of in America but not unusual in the islands and even in Paris, where Josephine and her circle had introduced the custom.

Gazing around him with frank interest, O'Donnell finally headed back towards the quays. Out across the busy harbor rose the gigantic headland dominating the western end of the bay; past the gap in the girdling hills lay the great Plaine du Nord, once the home of the richest plantations in all the new world. Thinking of these things, O'Donnell mechanically turned

aside to avoid an approaching rider, only to find the horse abruptly checked beside him. A silvery voice, penetrating, sweet, of remarkable quality, greeted him in French.

“So you have come back to our island, citizen?”

O'Donnell turned, looked up, removed his hat.

The woman in the saddle above, smiling down at him, was of a startling and vivid beauty; she was not above twenty-four or five. Raven hair, superb dark eyes filled with intelligence and fire, features delicately molded yet firm and assured, met his gaze. Her man's attire was all of green and gold, very rich, and a black groom in the same livery rode at her stirrup. Some planter's wife or daughter, no doubt; certainly a very beautiful woman, though too hard about the mouth to please O'Donnell.

“Madame, I fear there is some mistake,” he said, with a bow. “I am a stranger here, and to my great regret cannot claim acquaintance either with Le Cap or with its loveliness so suddenly personified before me.”

A laugh curved her lips, but he noted that it did not touch her eyes. On second glance, they too carried a certain peculiar hardness.

“Indeed!” she returned in surprise. “Then you are not M. Borie?”

O'Donnell smiled, and somehow kept the heart-leap from his face.

“I am an American, madame, by name O'Donnell, a commercial agent by profession.”

“So?” She regarded him for an instant. “You are the first commercial agent I ever saw who looked like an officer and a gentleman.”

“In America, madame, all men are gentlemen, and two-thirds of them are officers of something or other.”

She disregarded his whimsical response, turned her head with an impatient word to her groom, brought her riding crop smartly down, and was gone with a scramble of hooves. Looking after her, O'Donnell's gaze narrowed. Then he swung his cloak about his shoulders, pulled his hat over his eyes, and headed again for the quays.

“What a devilish stroke of luck! That was no coincidence. She knew something, she had meaning in her words. Decidedly, I've made a bad beginning!”

So thinking, he drew aside against a shop-front to let a blind, crippled old black go past. He had seen beggars enough around the cathedral in the Place d'Armes, but this creature was different. Bent half double, hobbling along with a stick outstretched before him, the scarred black thing was horrible to see. All his upper face was a repulsive scar. His left arm was twisted as though by fire, though he still used the hand. Among the rags half covering his body, O'Donnell discerned a number of native charms, showing that the man was some vaudou worshipper from the hills, perhaps a priest of the cult. This seemed the more probable because the black folk retreated hurriedly from him, so that in the crowded street he walked alone.

Within arm's length of O'Donnell, he halted and turned his sightless face to the American.

“Speak!” he said in Creole, his voice very low. “I feel you there. I can smell the blood that drips on the stones behind you. Fool! Because Le Serpent is blind, does he know nothing? Does not Dambala, the snake god, whisper to him of all that passes? I know why you have come here. Speak to me.”

O'Donnell glanced around and saw no one within hearing, though frightened faces were turned toward them.

“What shall I say?” he rejoined in the patois. “Are you a friend or enemy?”

Le Serpent cackled in hideous mirth. “You ask me that! If I were an enemy, you would not be so strong and handsome, my fine man. I know why you are here; gold and blood surround you as you walk. Gold and blood! And you know not what will come of it, but Le Serpent knows. The snake god has whispered to me. The flames will glow red against the sky, and men will die, and the woman in green and gold will throw back her head and laugh when you are stretched on the wheel for breaking.”

“What’s that?” O’Donnell started. “You know that woman?”

The blind man’s stick reached out and touched his shoulder, pressing hard against him for a moment, then fell again.

“Do I know Citizeness Rigaud, la belle Hermione? Yes. And I know *you*, my fine man! Well, your errand will come to nothing unless you find the man Mirliton. Remember the name, remember well the name! You have a false errand and a real errand, and I know what they are. This is the second time within two years that I have spoken with a Borie.”

Le Serpent departed, hobbling away down the street. O’Donnell stared after him, speechless for the moment. He had thought himself dealing with some half-crazed vaudou man from the hills, as he undoubtedly was; but this maimed wretch seemed positively able to read his mind. “A false errand and a real errand”—well, this was true, but not a soul in the world knew it except O’Donnell himself.

Collecting his startled senses, O’Donnell continued his way back to the quays. Gold and blood! Some truth in this also. At least, his ostensible errand here in Haiti was concerned with gold, and one might say his real errand was one of blood. That final sentence, however, was what held O’Donnell spellbound.

The gabbled prediction he dismissed. In his youth he had frequently met these wild folk, devotees of the snake god, the mountain god, or other black deities, and he took small stock in any of their prophecies. He did know, however, that they possessed strange and varied powers. The blind man had certainly sensed him, had named him, might have read his mind by some sort of telepathy. Unless, indeed, the cripple had overheard his brief conversation with the woman in green and gold. That might explain anything—except the final sentence.

“Another Borie!” muttered O’Donnell. “There could be only one other in the world, so this gives me a clue. He’s a friend, certainly; my one chance of success is not to antagonize these mountain blacks. A good augury! Find the man Mirliton, eh? That’s the name of a squash or calabash, I remember. Well, time enough lost! Now for Dupuche.”

Halting a strapping black officer, he inquired his way.

“Dupuche? But yes, citizen,” was the response. “House number ten, Quai Desfarges; straight ahead and to the right at the corner. You cannot—you—you—”

The officer’s eyes widened, became distended; his jaw dropped. Following his gaze, O’Donnell glanced down at his light gray cloak. What brought this look of startled fear into the black face? He could see nothing, except a round spot of red on the left shoulder. He rubbed at it, and it did not come off. Then he remembered suddenly the pressure from the blind man’s stick. Undoubtedly this stick had made the mark.

O’Donnell glanced up to question the officer, but the latter was striding away in hot haste, his big epaulets bobbing up and down. With a shrug, the American went his way.

He knew that he had come into a land of spies, of intrigue, only recently drawn from a chaos of the most frightful warfare and butchery imaginable. If Le Serpent had put this mark on his cloak, it most certainly had a meaning; the blacks might know it, but he would lose time questioning them. Here in Haiti reigned bitter hatred between blacks and mulattoes, but

not between blacks and whites. As a general thing, the attitude of the ruling blacks was one of amiable friendliness or indifference toward the whites. They would tell no secrets, though.

"Therefore, I'd best leave the mark alone," thought O'Donnell. "It may be useful."

He turned in at a warehouse and residence combined, whose signboard announced the business of Dupuche & Delcasse, Negociants. Ships were unloading along the quay; in and out of the warehouse poured every kind of merchandise from wine to furniture, while plantation carts were rumbling up with loads of sugar and rum, and going away empty. O'Donnell stepped into the dingy office where white and mulatto clerks bent over ledgers, and addressed the nearest of them.

"Is Citizen Dupuche here?"

"He is busy, citizen," came the brusque response. "When he has finished with the aide-de-camp of General Moyses, he will see you."

"Indeed!" said the American coolly. "You will kindly inform him that Citizen O'Donnell of Philadelphia is here to see him on direct business of the governor, and that he may send the aide of General Moyses to the devil. Sharp about it, citizen!"

The clerk blinked at him, then departed hastily while the others stared. Evidently the message was delivered literally. A moment after, the door of an inner office was flung open and out strode a mulatto in colonel's uniform, jingling his sabre and flinging an arrogant and furious look at O'Donnell. After him came Dupuche, rushing forward to grip his visitor's hand and shake it heartily.

"Citizen O'Donnell at last!" he exclaimed. "I did not know what had become of you. The ship was in, but you were ashore and they knew nothing of you. I have taken the liberty of sending for your things; you'll stop in my house, as my guest. Come, enter! I am honored by your presence, citizen. From our long correspondence, from our business dealings, I feel that I know you well already. You outside there—admit no one! I am not to be disturbed. In half an hour I shall want a messenger to ride to the *habitation* d'Héricourt."

The American found himself ushered into a book-lined office, bare except for chairs and a large table stacked with papers. Dupuche pulled a bell cord, and a black woman appeared at a door leading into the residence.

"Bring wine, cakes, sherbet, whatever Madame may have."

Studying his host, O'Donnell found the Frenchman to be a man of fifty, rather small of build, with ornate whiskers and much cheap jewelry in evidence. By no means an impressive person at first glance; but those square, hard-jawed features, those shrewd little eyes, told quite another story. Citizen Dupuche, confidential agent of Toussaint Louverture, had not only survived anarchy, massacre, and flame, but was riding the crest of the incredible richness and prosperity that liberty had brought to Haiti.

"Do you wish to talk of business or of personal affairs?" said Dupuche, setting out a box of Havanas.

"The latter first," rejoined O'Donnell. "I suppose that the matter of the ship's cargo is now in your hands?"

"All attended to and out of the way. I gathered, from the last letter you sent me, that you have personal affairs here of some importance."

"Yes. You forwarded me the letter from Toussaint, addressed to General Cristophe——"

Dupuche laughed and waved his hand.

"Let it wait, my friend. Henry Cristophe is a good soul, a great man, and lives like a king; he'll dine you off gold plate, give you whatever you fancy, and drink you under the table. But

you have made an enemy here, and a bad one. A bitter one. A powerful one. Moyses will some day betray his uncle or rebel against him; until that day comes, he is to be placated and feared. He's unbelievably crafty, also. Dangerous."

"So you heard how he boarded the brig, eh?"

"And how you sent him back. He'll not forget, mind."

O'Donnell shrugged carelessly. The servant appeared with a tray bearing wine and cakes and sweetmeats. When she had gone, Dupuche filled the glasses and, lifting his own, sniffed it with appreciation.

"I have but one toast to offer, citizen—Toussaint Louverture! Not bad, this wine. The Englishmen certainly know wines! General Maitland sent this to Toussaint, after his capitulation, and Toussaint sent it to me, as he never uses wine."

O'Donnell's brows lifted in surprise, and the other smiled.

"I see you know little of our governor. No, he drinks only water, eats a little bread or biscuit, a potato or so—that is all. Well, my friend, you've been his agent in Philadelphia for the past couple of years, and since most of the accounts have gone through my hands, I know you have been a good agent. Toussaint thinks highly of you."

"Thank you." O'Donnell lighted a cigar. "When shall I be able to see him?"

"God knows! In a day, a week, a month. Where he is, no one ever knows. He is presumably at Port au Prince now, but I send all messages to the plantation. They are forwarded."

"I must see him as soon as possible," said O'Donnell. "As you know, many of the émigrés from this island live in Philadelphia, and due to my own connections many of them are my friends. While it is true that numbers of the old families have returned here to resume life on their plantations, at the invitation of the governor, others have not done so. Many do not trust him, others believe that anarchy will ensue if he is killed."

Dupuche shrugged. "Personally, I think the Tiger will ensue," he said drily. "In other words, Jean Jacques Dessalines; or perhaps Christophe. I'd prefer to bet on Dessalines. He's a killer, and these blacks fear killers. If the French return and try to seize the island, anything may happen. But pray resume, citizen! Toussaint is far from dead, thank heaven!"

"You must be well aware," pursued O'Donnell, "that at the time of the first massacres and revolts nine or ten years ago, many of the planters buried their valuables and fled, glad to escape with their bare lives."

"And few were lucky enough for that, even," assented Dupuche with a nod.

"The short of it is that the emigrant members of four families have commissioned me to visit their former plantations and to disinter their valuables," said the American. "These may or may not be still concealed. I have received explicit instructions, which are in my memory alone, as to finding these hidden belongings. I am hoping to secure permission to this end from Toussaint."

Dupuche lit a cigar, inspected it critically, and puffed it into a glow.

"I admire your frankness, citizen. Your errand may prove dangerous."

"You think Toussaint may not give permission?"

"Oh, readily enough! But you must comprehend the situation here. Some of the plantations are in the hands of the original owners, who have returned. Most, however, have been farmed out to officers of the black army. The labor laws are rigidly enforced, the plantations are managed with efficiency; and the result? Wealth. The wealth of Croesus, my friend! The revenues from the rented plantations alone more than cover the entire government

expense. The planters have gained incredible riches, and so have others. Why, in the Spanish treasury at Santo Domingo, Toussaint found close to a million gourdes, or dollars, when he took that city. The state is wealthy. The people are wealthy. Luxury is on all sides of us; you have no idea in what mad luxury some of these people, white and black, are living! So much for that.”

He paused, sipped at his wine, and then lowered his voice as he proceeded.

“Death, too, is on all sides. Toussaint is all-powerful, but cannot be everywhere, and without him there is no restraint. He refused to let the English make him king here, because he believes in France and in Bonaparte. He refuses to credit my warnings. I know that Bonaparte means to destroy him and retake Haiti. There are French spies and agents among us. There are English spies and agents. The mulattoes, who hate the blacks, have their spies and agents. So have the Spanish.

“Your arrival, your very errand here, is probably known far and wide already. Certain of the blacks hate Toussaint because he is just and merciful, and makes them work, and favors the whites, as they think. At the head of these dissenters is his own nephew, Moysse, who would gladly murder him—and has tried to do so. Well, then! What passes in the mountains?”

Dupuche puffed his cigar alight. “In the mountains are the maroons, escaped slaves. They are independent; Toussaint has made them submit, but has not conquered them. What passes in the far gorges, on the roads, among the plantations even of the Plaine du Nord? Death! Death passes everywhere, I tell you. My friend, this is a land of death!” Agitation shook the man suddenly, as he leaned forward. “Give up your errand here and go safely home. I warn you! Here is a land of brave men, of damnable intrigue, of savage ignorance, of death behind a glittering smile. Go back!”

“No.”

O'Donnell uttered just the one word. The Frenchman looked into his eyes for a moment, drew a deep breath, and with a gesture of helplessness relaxed in his chair.

“Then that is settled. I shall see that you reach our governor as soon as possible. By the way, what plantations do you wish to visit and search?”

“That of Aussenac. That of Langlade. That of Dartigues. That of Borie.”

At this last word, Dupuche changed countenance.

“Monsieur! I—I mean, citizen! That was the richest plantation on the whole island, in the old days. It is the richest today. It was bought from the Borie family by Citizen St. Leger some time since.”

“And who is St. Leger? A Creole?” asked O'Donnell curiously.

“No. A man of color, a mulatto. He is supposed to be in secret the head of all the mulatto faction, but no one knows certainly. He was educated in France. He is intelligent, able, unscrupulous.”

“You appear unduly disturbed,” said O'Donnell drily. “You say that he bought the plantation from the Borie family?”

“From one of the heirs, yes. Old Colonel Borie was killed in the first outbreak. Two years ago, his son Alexandre returned from exile, sold the plantation to St. Leger, and then vanished very suddenly. Some say he was murdered; I do not know. He has a brother somewhere in America, I believe. St. Leger produced the proper documents and is now the resident owner. The plantation has given him wealth, but beyond wealth lies power, and dark things are said of him. He is a man of moods. Let him take a fancy to you—*voilà!* The world is yours. If not, he

may have you shot from ambush. Sometimes I am tempted to think he is merely an honest sort of fellow trying to keep his head above water. He'll not let you remove anything."

"He will at the order of Toussaint," said O'Donnell. "And I have the authorization of this surviving Borie heir to get the family treasures, hidden at the plantation."

"You were wiser not to press the matter," warned Dupuche uneasily. "Enemies of St. Leger have a way of disappearing."

"You think he murdered Alexandre Borie after buying the plantation?"

Dupuche frowned. "No. I tell you I think he's honest, after a queer fashion all his own! But he may have done so. And he is a friend of Moyses. He also acts for British interests here. Suppose you let this matter drop for the present—"

"No," said the American, with the same finality as before, and the other threw out his hands. "Do you, by any chance, know a lady named Rigaud?"

"God forbid!" answered Dupuche, and the color ebbed from his cheeks as he peered at O'Donnell. "Do you?"

"I encountered her today. What do you know of her? I did not care for her looks, myself."

The other shrugged.

"She is French—married Rigaud in Paris three years ago. He was a proud man, of the best blood in France. They came here to the old Rigaud plantation and he died shortly after. She manages it now. She has varied interests; chiefly, I believe, political. She is friendly with St. Leger. She mixes freely with the blacks and mulattoes. She is a secret agent here for Bonaparte; since we know this, we leave her alone and watch her. So far, so good. But things—well, things are said of her, difficult to repeat between gentlemen. The blacks declare she is a vampire. I have heard that she has pried into vaudou affairs. There's something about her—you can feel it but you can't see it, can't determine it!"

"Exactly the impression she gave me," affirmed O'Donnell, and laughed a little. "She mistook me for someone else. For one of the Borie family, I think."

Dupuche shook his head, and chewed on his cigar for a moment.

"My friend, I ask no questions," he said slowly. "There are women for whom no words have been invented. She is one of them. For nine years, cruelty and blood-lust have run riot in this land. I have seen men and women murdered by the score, tortured, mutilated, done to death by men more savage than beasts. Yet there is something inhuman about this woman that terrifies me. If she or St. Leger were at all interested in your arrival here, you may be sure they learned of it long before you came. There are spies in Philadelphia as well as in Le Cap."

O'Donnell's dark, powerful features seemed to tighten imperceptibly.

"So? I understand," he said, and then broke into a smile. "Well, that's all of my personal business here, my dear Dupuche. If you'll be good enough to write Toussaint whatever you see fit, and arrange for me to see him, I'll be glad. In the meantime——"

"Present your letter to Christophe, who will immediately make you free of Haiti, thrust gold into your pocket, and present you with a handsome horse," said Dupuche ironically. "He will make you feel at home, certainly. Tell him I said he's an honest rascal, and he'll love you. He regards Toussaint as a brother, absorbs flattery like a sponge, and hates Moyses as the devil hates holy water."

"Good! But I must not impose on your hospitality——"

"My house is your home while you are here, my friend," said Dupuche with grave courtesy. "A room is prepared for you. Take your meals with us, unless you go invited elsewhere. Be free, come and go as you like. You are one of the family. We'll talk again, eh?"

So O'Donnell went to his room. He had learned a good deal about Haiti—and wondered just how much Haiti had learned about him.

CHAPTER II

FRIENDS AND ENEMIES

General Henry Cristophe did not shove any gold into O'Donnell's pockets. However, he informed him that an excellent horse would arrive as a present for him; and then, relaxing comfortably, he puffed his long clay pipe alight, unbuttoned his high gold-laced collar, and asked O'Donnell to tell him about America.

"You know, I have been to America," he said with a chuckle. "It was during your Revolutionary War. I was only a lad then, the body slave of a French officer, but I've never forgotten your country. I like Americans; your consul here is a fine man. Tell me about your city of Philadelphia. About the street lights, the pavements, the government!"

O'Donnell complied, and to his astonishment found this huge black to be an incredibly thirsty soul, eager for knowledge, unassuming yet very conscious of his own power.

They sat in a room of the governor's ornate palace, hung with the richest of tapestries and silk brocades, crammed with gorgeous furniture, pictures, hangings. One of the secretaries had read Toussaint's letter aloud; for Cristophe, though he had learned to sign his name with many a flourish, could not read or write.

Not yet thirty-five, Cristophe had led far too active a life for any fat to lodge upon his giant frame. Otherwise, with his slightly protuberant eyes, his aquiline, heavy-jawed features, he bore a distant resemblance to King George of England. When O'Donnell mentioned the fact, the big black laughed with frank delight.

"The British officers used to say that, too," he exclaimed. "Perhaps I will be a king some day, who knows? But that is treason; long live the Republic! You speak our patois perfectly, citizen. Where did you learn it?"

"My youth was spent in a French colony, citizen general," said O'Donnell. He was delighted by this man's intelligence, by his fearless honesty, his active, alert brain.

"So was mine, though I was born in an English colony," and Cristophe chuckled as he glanced out the window. "But times have changed. Now the Hotel de la Couronne, where I was a groom and billiard marker, is gone in flame and smoke. The daughter of the man who once owned me is now my wife, and the best woman living, too! You must meet Marie Louise, citizen. She likes to hear about America. So you are going to see old Toussaint, eh? My friend, there is the greatest man on this earth!" His eyes flashed with swift animation. "You should have seen him when he was caught unawares by a regiment of our men who had gone over to the English. He ran toward them, all alone, opening his arms, making them recognize him; and what did they do? They surrounded him with yells of rejoicing, and followed him! If we had many like him—your pardon, citizen. No, do not go."

An officer entered the room hastily, saluted, and reported the capture of two brigand leaders and some thirty men, mixed blacks and mulattoes who had been terrorizing the plantations of the north plain. Dusty, riding hard, he had just arrived to make his report, and the prisoners were being led toward the city by his troops. He drew himself up proudly, evidently expecting adulation and reward. Instead, Cristophe shot him one savage look.

"Fool! Why did you take them prisoners?"

"Citizen general, they surrendered. What could I do?"

“You might try to imagine what I would do.” Cristophe beckoned one of his secretaries, who dipped a quill, wrote a few words, and brought him the paper. Taking the pen, Cristophe spelled out his illegible signature at the bottom, and thrust the paper at the officer.

“There is your order!” he cried out angrily. “Stick it on a tree above their bodies, that all who pass by may read.”

The officer saluted shakily and withdrew. An instant later, from the antechamber, came a burst of voices, and Cristophe uttered a sullen oath as he straightened up in his chair. Into the room stalked General Moyses, followed by the same mulatto aide whom O’Donnell had seen at the office of Dupuche the preceding day. Moyses strode forward angrily.

“Citizen general!” he barked. “I have ordered Colonel Gojoal to wait outside until I have spoken with you in private——”

“Let’s have our speech in public, citizen general!” snapped Cristophe, and gestured to the guard at the door. “Send in an officer of the guard and six men. Well, General Moyses?”

“These prisoners—they must not be executed like dogs!” bellowed Moyses in a gust of anger. “Their two leaders are old veterans of the rebellion, led astray by bad influences. I know them both, and will answer for their future conduct. They have surrendered, and must be treated as prisoners of war, do you understand?”

“I understand perfectly,” said Cristophe, leaning back in his chair and turning on the glaring eye of Moyses a still more savage glare. “One moment, my friend; another little matter comes first, if you please.” He looked at the soldiers who had entered, made a curt gesture. “Bring in Colonel Gojoal.”

Moyes drew back, with a puzzled frown. The dusty colonel stepped into the great room again with a brisk salute. Cristophe regarded him for an instant, then spoke.

“Citizen colonel, I gave you an order. You accepted a counter-order from another officer. Officer of the guard, take Colonel Gojoal to the military prison for one week’s stay. See that the order for execution of the brigands is forwarded immediately by one of my aides.”

The hapless colonel was seized and dragged out, shouting protests. An outburst of rage came from Moyses—but his storm of oaths were checked at sight of the pistol that had slipped into the hand of Cristophe. The latter laughed harshly.

“Yes, I understand perfectly! You and your friends want to save those brigands. They are not prisoners of war, however. They are murderers, criminals, outlaws!”

“This is an outrage!” raved Moyses furiously. “I am your superior! I am captain general of this district, and when my uncle hears of this——”

A flame leaped in the eyes of Cristophe. Abruptly, he flung off the mask of culture and his great voice roared a passionate torrent of Creole at the one-eyed Moyses.

“You damned monkey in a calabash, report to your uncle if you dare! He’ll tell you to go to the devil. Captain general, are you? Look out for your precious neck, then! I know a good deal about you and your friends—yes, and I know about that white planter you had whipped to death last week! Watch yourself, field hand! By the great god Dambala, I’ll have you triced up and given fifty lashes if you interfere with me any more, d’ye understand? I’ll cut out the one eye the French left you and hang it on a cord around your neck! Clear out of here! Go to the devil! Take that yellow dog Raphael and get to hell out of my house before I kick you out myself!”

Cristophe came out of his chair, foaming with rage. This explosion was too much for Moyses, who knew the man he faced. Without another word, he swung around and departed, followed by his aide. Cristophe flung down the pistol and came back to his chair.

“Swollen windbag!” he exclaimed contemptuously. He looked at O’Donnell, grinned, and picked up his pipe anew. “What do you think of our government, citizen?”

“I think it has one man who knows how to govern,” said the American whimsically, and Cristophe chuckled in delight.

“At least, I am learning! Will you come to my levee and ball tonight, citizen? I am giving a grand ball, and you will see some pretty uniforms. I should like to have you here, for fresh faces are always welcome, and you are a man of sense.”

O’Donnell assented, and Cristophe walked with him down the long room. Near the door, O’Donnell paused and spoke softly.

“Citizen general, favor me with some advice. Do you know of a blind man called Le Serpent?”

The other bent a penetrating look on him. “Yes. What about him?”

“Is his friendship worth having or not?”

Cristophe whistled. “Name of the devil! Here in the city, nothing much matters; but up in the mountains, even in the plain—well, General Cristophe would think twice about what he did, were Le Serpent not his friend! Me, I don’t go in for religion, like Toussaint does. I parade around in the cathedral yonder and listen to the sermons, and it pleases everyone; but in this land there is more than one kind of religion, citizen. I think you comprehend.”

“Perfectly.” O’Donnell smiled, shook hands, and so departed.

He reflected that at all events there was no monotony in Cristophe’s position. Evidently he carried out Toussaint’s ideas of discipline, which were extremely rigid. Now that he had met the lieutenant, O’Donnell felt a growing curiosity to see the commander, for it was commonly said that Cristophe, the savage Dessalines, and the others, feared Toussaint just as they themselves were feared by others. The American understood by this time, however, that he must possess himself in patience.

After crushing the mulattoes in the south, in a campaign that was appalling for its almost incredible ferocity, Toussaint was most often at Port au Prince, his headquarters; but his exact whereabouts was never definitely known. He always appeared when and where he was not supposed to be, and usually alone. He spent enormous sums on the finest horses that could be bought, for he not only loved animals devotedly but possessed a special power over them. This did not prevent him getting incredible speed from his horses; he went from end to end of Haiti like a whirlwind, and the blacks believed that he flew across the mountains. It is true that in this manner he had frequently avoided assassination.

Upon returning to the Quai Desfarges, O’Donnell found the promised horse already arrived, fully equipped, and Dupuche was vastly curious to learn all that had taken place. When the animal was led away, they went into the office, and the American described the scene with Moyse. Dupuche grimaced uneasily.

“That one-eyed rascal will make trouble yet! He and Toussaint are practically at swords’ points now. Moyse hates all whites and like Dessalines would massacre every white in Haiti if he had his way. That yellow aide, Raphael, is always coming to me with orders for money against Toussaint’s account, and some day Toussaint will tire of it. Well, go to the ball by all means! You’ll see some curious sights.”

“By the way,” said O’Donnell, “you mentioned yesterday that Alexandre Borie had come here some time ago, then disappeared. Did you see him?”

“No. I was at the Havannah then; he vanished before my return. Too bad, for I had some family affairs on hand, which I later transacted with the brother in America. Alexandre was a

handsome fellow, I understand, like the father, Colonel Borie, who was slain during the Boukman uprising. The men of that family were all famed for their blue eyes and very black hair—like your own, I imagine.”

“The combination is not unusual in America,” said O’Donnell, “especially among those of Irish descent. Well, I’m off for a ride on the new horse. What time should I go to the palace tonight?”

“About eight,” said Dupuche. “By the way, I’ve sent word concerning you to the Héricourt plantation—it’s not an hour’s ride from town, you know. Nothing has been heard from the governor, who is supposed to be in Port au Prince. He may be in Santo Domingo or Aux Cayes; one never knows. Sooner or later he’ll turn up, so be patient.”

Be patient! O’Donnell repeated the words bitterly to himself as he rode out of town, taking the road that led into the Plaine du Nord and its vast fields of cane. No further information was to be had from Dupuche. In regard to any vaudou affairs, the Frenchman knew absolutely nothing. O’Donnell fancied that the blacks whom he passed cast meaning glances after him, and he glanced down at the scarlet spot on his coat. It seemed absurd to think that this spot, which anyone might apply to his own garments, could have any deep significance—yet there it was, and the effect was not to be denied.

“If I’m to follow up my business here, I must first see Toussaint,” reflected O’Donnell. “Until then, I can only drift blindly, so I might as well play the cards that fate deals. I’ll make inquiries about the man Mirliton. Dupuche won’t know, but Cristophe may.”

It was a little past eight that evening when he passed the sentries before the palace entrance, and entered upon an astonishing scene.

The palace, ablaze with lights from sconces and from the huge lustres of cut glass, was crowded with gay uniforms and glittering gowns. Here were white planters and business men, officers from an English frigate in harbor, blacks and mulattoes of all ranks; women white and black and brown, mingling with no distinction of color in a gaiety that was real and not assumed. Caste distinctions had been long since wiped out in blood and fire. None knew what the morrow might bring; therefore today must be enjoyed to the full. Only a few years since, just across the street, a house crammed with three hundred white refugees had gone up in flames; but the ruddy torches in the cressets awakened no such scarlet memories tonight. Music came from an invisible orchestra. The levee was gaudy but not formal.

Among the throng moved Cristophe in his vivid general’s uniform, his gold-encrusted sabre clanking, his hearty voice booming above all others. He seized upon O’Donnell and presented the American to his wife. Like Toussaint, Cristophe was legally married and was devoted to his spouse, whose father’s slave he had been—a black owned by a black. In a day and a land where all passions ran riot, these two men ruled others by having first ruled themselves.

His uniform blazing with decorations, Cristophe led his guest among the groups, playing the rôle of host with boyish gusto, presenting O’Donnell to officers and planters and ladies. The huge room resounded with voices and laughter, with roaring jests, with harsh patois and liquid French accents. On all sides was a display of the utmost splendor, and yet the central figure was the former slave of the Crown Hotel, his powerful black features beaming with delight and sweat, his great hands gripping other hands to left and right. Toussaint aside, Henry Cristophe was easily the most popular man in all Haiti, though Dessalines, the Tiger, was by far the most dreaded.

The general did not approach the corner where Moyses held court, however. About the one-eyed black were grouped his own glittering aides, and here also moved the “men of color,” as the mulattoes were termed; most of these were well educated, many having the best blood of France in their veins. Due to this fact, much of the governmental business was in their hands, for few of the blacks could read or write. The majority, even to Toussaint himself, had never mastered French and could speak only the Creole patois.

Abruptly, the doors of the enormous ballroom were flung open, there was a crash of music, and silver trumpets announced the opening of the ball. Cristophe handed over the beaming Marie Louise, with an amicable grin, to General Moyses, and laughingly followed them on the floor with a bejeweled planter’s wife on his arm.

O’Donnell was watching the motley, gorgeous throng pour into the ballroom, when he heard a voice at his side. Its silvery yet piercing timbre told him, even before he turned, that he had once again encountered Madame Rigaud. She stood there smiling at him, bewilderingly lovely in a gown all green and gold, a huge topaz blazing at her bodice.

“So we meet again, citizen!” she said gaily, and held out her hand. O’Donnell bowed over it. “And you behold me alone and friendless, unable to dance because no one asks me——”

“Madame, I am your humble servant!” exclaimed O’Donnell, offering his arm. “Or I should say citizenship. My tongue’s not used to the word yet. By what magic are you thus alone, I wonder? It is my fortune, so I make the best of it!”

“Then your luck is good, citizen?”

“Excellent. Luck is ever my slave. Has it not brought you to me?”

She laughed brightly, enjoying his airy and obvious surface flatteries. When the quadrille had ended, a singularly handsome man approached with a low bow, and claimed her. Garbed in the height of fashion, he drew the eye by the distinction of his features no less than by his physical grace. Only the faintest of indications showed that he was not a pure Creole. Something about his high, thin nostrils, and the set of his brilliant brown eyes, gave the American an unfavorable impression—then he found himself being introduced.

“Citizen St. Leger! You must greet this gentleman, newly come from America. Citizen O’Donnell, I believe? The St. Leger plantation is not far from mine, mon ami. Will you visit my plantation some day? Come! I command you to let me display the fruit of my prowess, the result of my war against the soil of Haiti!”

O’Donnell murmured vague assent to the invitation, exchanged a bow with St. Leger, and watched them move off together. So this was the man!

The dancers thronged out on the floor again. The American stood apart, his eyes brooding on those two features; the tall, handsome St. Leger, the woman who moved in his arms with such remarkable feline beauty, whose face, for all its loveliness, held something terrible. The words of Dupuche flashed across his mind; there was something about this woman that one could feel but not see clearly. Then he thought of the dark and sinister remark of that maimed black in the street, and he frowned thoughtfully. Suddenly, a great hand clenched down on his arm; he found Cristophe beside him, laughing, propelling him forward.

“Come!” exclaimed the giant black mysteriously. “Come, let’s get ahead of them, my friend, just you and I. Diable! I mean to get some of that duck before these rascals gobble it all up. You know, I like ducks. Some day I’m going to have a whole flock of them——”

O’Donnell was thrust bodily into a long hall where servants were putting the finishing touches to an incredible table that ran nearly the full length of the place. It was loaded down

with steaming dishes, with glasses, with bottles of the rarest wines, with enormous silver candelabra.

Sight of this table was astonishing. The American realized that here before him were entire services of massy gold, of silver, of the rarest porcelains and Venice glass. Then Cristophe, laughing heartily at his bewilderment, was commanding the servants to fill glasses for his friend, and went plunging with both hands into the dishes of exquisite viands.

“Lock the doors!” boomed his voice. “Lock all the outer doors of the palace—run, youimps of Satan! Put guards at the doors and gates. No one is to leave the palace before sunrise; that’s the order!”

Cristophe was drunk. Not with wine, for he seldom touched liquor, but with gaiety, with power, with raw avid enjoyment of everything around him. He was like a boy turned loose in a boy’s paradise. He ate enormously, greedily, sampling everything within reach. Ten minutes later, the throng was bursting in, and so began a night O’Donnell was destined to remember long after.

In the midst of the hurly-burly, he drew Cristophe a little to one side.

“One question!” he exclaimed, his voice lost amid the uproar on all sides. “Can you tell me where to find a man named Mirliton?”

“Eh? Mirliton, is it? Squash?” Cristophe began a roaring laugh, then checked it abruptly and blinked at his questioner. “What the devil! Yes, I can tell you. I have heard about him. He lives on the Rigaud plantation—an old man, a very old man. They say he is a century old and speaks only the Dahomey language, still used by the maroons in the mountains. Yes, he has a cabin under a bougainvillea vine that is pure scarlet instead of purple; they say it was watered with blood long ago. Ask any black if you want to find him, for he’s a famous doctor, but be sure to take him a present or he’ll put bad luck on you. Well, let’s go back and have a dance, eh? I want you to dance with Marie Louise and tell her about America.”

So, presently, O’Donnell found himself dancing with Citizeness Cristophe, while couples swayed around them, growing more hilarious with every moment. All was gaiety, wild and tumultuous gaiety, but there was no drunken license. If men drank deep and women laughed high, it was because this land and all in it belonged to them, and liberty was still a new thing, its edge as yet undulled.

Now, however, O’Donnell looked ever for Hermione Rigaud, and presently found her again. He was well aware that he found her only at her own desire; he was now convinced that she was a very clever woman, and worse. Yet only a gay delight showed in his face as he whirled her into the dance. O’Donnell was fully sensible that despite all appearance, he had fallen among deadly enemies, and nothing but the utmost address and audacity would get him alive out of the maelstrom of life in this island, if he desired to accomplish his errand here.

He deliberately angled for what he sought, and presently had it.

“You did not take my invitation very seriously, citizen,” she said, laughing into his eyes as they danced. “I meant it, however. Will you pay my plantation a visit?”

“With all my heart!” said O’Donnell gallantly. “When?”

“When you will, at any hour,” she responded. He fancied an eagerness in her eyes, an almost yielding allure in her look, as she met his gaze. “I am dying to hear about your America, the news from Philadelphia, everything! I love your country. Many of my friends and relatives are there now as émigrés. They lack my courage in coming back here to upbuild my shattered fortunes, however.”

“Yes, I believe you have little fear,” he said, and had a quick pressure of her fingers for reward.

“Right! And you too are a person without fear, citizen. You speak our tongue well!”

“Indifferently,” said O’Donnell with easy nonchalance. “My nurse was a woman from this island, which accounts for it. So I may come at any hour?”

“Whenever you come, you will be welcome.” Her voice was low and rich now, intimate. “Wild dissipation such as this is rare for me, I assure you! I am a working woman. See how rough my hands have become!”

“I see, indeed. Rough as rose petals!” and O’Donnell laughed. Her eyes warmed to his, but when the dance ended she drew away from him, with a swift glance around.

“We must not dance together again,” she said softly. “It might be dangerous for you. I have many friends here; already some of them are jealous. And you know what hot tempers our men have!”

“Yes?” said O’Donnell. “You say friends. You mean suitors?”

“You do not lack impudence, citizen! Have it as you like, but for my sake be prudent.”

“For your sake,” and O’Donnell bowed gravely, “I assure you there is nothing that I would not do.”

So they parted, and he did not again approach her that night. He watched her from afar, however, and she puzzled him. While she was with St. Leger or others, she was all smiles and eager vivacity, but neither in her manner nor in theirs was any hint of intimacy, of passion, of the lover. O’Donnell was convinced that she had lied to him, and that her whole attitude toward him had been assumed. There was some inhuman quality in the woman; he could not put his finger on it, but he could sense it somehow.

That had been no idle order about locking the doors. After two attempts to leave, in each of which grinning guards refused point-blank to open the way, O’Donnell gave up. The dancing passed into wild revelry in which, oddly enough, there was nothing licentious. Wine flowed like water, more steaming dishes replaced the empty ones; and O’Donnell fancied that this enforced hospitality might have a very practical reason, in view of the massive gold and silver on all sides.

In the small hours, the American followed the example of a few others. Picking out an unoccupied chaise longue in the reception chamber, he calmly stretched out and went to sleep.

When he awakened, the level rays of sunrise were filtering in through the brocaded hangings. Music still resounded, dancing was still going on, but sleeping guests were littered about the floor and snoring in the chairs. O’Donnell obtained his hat and cloak and departed, with the laughter of Cristophe ringing out after him.

For half an hour or so he walked about town to clear his head, and reached the Dupuche homestead in time for breakfast. Dupuche and his good wife greeted their guest with much merriment, and O’Donnell recounted the details of the ball, without mention of Citizeness Rigaud, however. After a change of clothes, the American took his cloak and hat and descended to the stables, where his horse was kept among Dupuche’s wagons and heavy beasts of burden. A groom quickly saddled the beast, and O’Donnell mounted.

In that brief walk, he had resolved to visit the Rigaud plantation immediately. If the lady were not prepared for his call, so much the better.

He had no need to inquire his way. As he rode out of the city, memories flooded his brain—memories of a distant night across the years when carriages had come dashing madly down this same road, when white women and children had come pouring into the city with lurid

flames from burning cane fields and sugar mills and homes roaring up the sky behind them. He thought of the two boys and their women-folk who had gained refuge aboard a schooner in the harbor, and of the father somewhere back in the night where drums and shots filled the fiery air with ominous sound. No. Even though the outward scene had changed here, he did not need to ask his way.

These same sights and sounds, he reflected, might well come again. He had caught scattered scraps of talk here and there on the preceding night. The oft-repeated query, "And if the French come, what then?" This vague question lay deep in the hearts of these blacks who had won freedom, rising frequently to their lips. And someone had repeated a rumor that Dessalines, captain general in the south, had begun a systematic butchery of the mulattoes whom he distrusted and hated. If this were true, it meant fresh oppression, another mulatto uprising.

Early as was the morning, the road close to the city was crowded with wagons, with country folk and produce, with goats and sheep and oxen destined for slaughter or sale. In the fields were blacks hard at work, singing as they labored; under the new regime they had not only wages, but a percentage in all profits. Here in the north where Moysse ruled, the labor edicts were loosely obeyed; Moysse hated the white planters fanatically and refused to do aught that would benefit them. None the less, wealth poured into their coffers, for with a modicum of labor the rich soil brought forth abundantly.

No, Paul O'Donnell needed no directions. He jogged along at a leisurely pace, and once away from the city found the roads nearly empty. He, like many of the returned émigrés, bore the dark race no hatred for all that had happened. Private hatred was too petty a thing to survive the cataclysm of an entire social and racial system. Besides, with the rather blatant ideas of democracy that prevailed in America, and grafted into him by life there, O'Donnell had no sense of white superiority, at least of the type born from false pride. He could not help but feel a certain wondering admiration at what these blacks had accomplished. They had turned slavery into liberty, and thanks to Toussaint's elaborate system of schools and education, they promised soon to turn ignorance and superstition into real progress.

If O'Donnell thought of the Colonel Borie who had perished by some unknown hand on that night of fire and butchery years ago, it was with only a vague memory and without any bitterness. He had his own life to live, his own problems to face, his own duties to accomplish; so let the dead bury their dead, for here all the past had been swept away by the whirlwind.

From these reflections, O'Donnell was suddenly roused by a pistol shot.

CHAPTER III

DEAD HORSE, DEAD MEN

The road here was bordered by immense trees. A sharp curve hid everything ahead.

There were pistols at O'Donnell's saddle, provided with the horse, and they were loaded. He reached for one, then checked his hand and sent his horse on at a walk. A whiff of powder reek came to his nostrils, and he drew rein at sight of a black man and a horse twenty feet away.

Evidently the horse had plunged down a sharp slope in sight just ahead, had missed its footing and had gone down in disaster. The man had just put a bullet through the animal's head; and, not seeing O'Donnell as the latter drew rein at edge of the leafy stream, fell on one knee and fondled the sleek dead muzzle.

"Poor Linette!" came his voice in Creole, a thin, nasal voice. "That you should die by the hand you loved, the hand from which you so often fed! But it was a merciful shot, dear, dead friend——"

Somewhat astonished by these words, by the man's restrained sob, O'Donnell regarded him attentively and saw that he was splashed from head to foot with mud and was smeared with dust. He must have traveled far, perhaps by mountain fords, to become so mired, for all about Le Cap the roads were dry and dust-deep. Some courier, no doubt.

The black rose, turned, saw O'Donnell. He was a rather small man, frightfully ugly, with a high and narrow forehead, prominent eyes, and large buck teeth. O'Donnell saw tears on the wrinkled black cheeks, and was moved by a sudden access of sympathy for this black who could so love a horse.

"A great pity, citizen!" he exclaimed. "He broke his leg, I suppose?"

"Both legs," said the black, staring at him. "A faithful animal, a good friend, a comrade who has served me well."

O'Donnell smiled. "At least, be thankful your own neck was not broken. You must have had a nasty fall there."

"No matter; a few bruises." The other shrugged. "I was in haste to reach Le Cap, for I have important business there."

O'Donnell was much impressed by the man's air, by his voice, by his ugliness.

"Very well; you're in haste, I am not," he rejoined. "You're far from your destination, I'm close to mine, for I seek a plantation close by, where I can easily obtain another horse. Take mine, if you like, and leave him for me with Citizen Dupuche."

The other gave him an astonished glance, then smiled.

"Citizen, I accept with heartiest thanks!" he returned. "You are not of the island?"

"From America." O'Donnell dismounted and handed over the reins. "I suppose you know Dupuche, of the firm——"

"I know Dupuche very well," exclaimed the other, quickly swinging up into the saddle with remarkable agility. "I'll leave the horse with him."

"One moment—I'd better make sure about my position!" O'Donnell looked up with a whimsical smile. "Am I correct in thinking the Rigaud plantation is close by?"

The black leaned over in the saddle.

“Eh? The *habitation* Rigaud? Yes, it is not half a mile ahead. If you wish to save walking, take the path that leads out of the road—it branches off to the left, a hundred feet or so past the turn.”

As he spoke, he frowned slightly, looking O’Donnell over from head to foot. His eyes came to rest on the gray cape with its round red spot. A startled expression leaped into his face; like a flash, he wheeled the horse and was gone in a burst of speed. He waved his hand back at O’Donnell, shouted something indistinct, and vanished around the curve.

O’Donnell broke into a rueful laugh.

“The fellow can ride, assuredly. And here’s a fine piece of folly! Impulse be damned! Afoot and by no means sure of a welcome—well, what matter? A walk will do me good, and I’ll find a horse there, at all events.”

He strode ahead, came to the path branching out of the road, and paused in hesitation. It had been at the back of his mind to take a look at the St. Leger plantation, once that of the Borie family, which lay only a couple of miles farther on along this road, but being afoot he might as well give this up for the moment. With a shrug, he turned into the path.

This led him through a thick wood where palms, gray-barked *mapou* trees, wild cactus and the “accursed fig” of the jungles were all jumbled together in thick second growths, almost impenetrable. As he followed the path through the tangle, O’Donnell thought again of the little black man he had met. Something about the fellow lingered with him; an odd force of personality, perhaps, that was hard to forget. These troubled times had brought forth many remarkable blacks, men whose savage strength of character had thrust them head and shoulders above the maelstrom that for nine years had held the island in its whirling grip. If these blacks had many leaders like Cristophe or Toussaint, their future was assured.

O’Donnell freed himself from clutching thorns, advanced a few paces farther, and came suddenly out of the tangle. Ahead of him the woods thinned down to a brookside, with vast fields of cane on the farther rim. Off to the right were visible the roofs of buildings—the Rigaud plantation, no doubt. It was not these that held the gaze of the American, however, as he emerged from the thick brush.

Straight ahead, where grew a clump of half wild banana trees with gigantic fronds overhanging, was a group of men, their machetes flashing in the sun. At first O’Donnell supposed they were clearing the ground, until the glitter of a uniform gripped his attention. Leaving the cover, he strode slowly on along the path toward them.

A frightful shuddering cry reached him—a man’s voice uplifted in the very act of death, cut short abruptly. There was a shout of warning. The half-dozen figures turned, opened out, advanced toward him. Then for the first time O’Donnell realized what was happening here, realized that he was unarmed, afoot, unable to evade the issue. Five of these men were blacks, soldiers, and the sixth was Raphael, the yellow aide of General Moyses. Outstretched on the ground were the bodies of two white men, literally hacked to pieces, and against the clump of banana trees, tied there with a rope, was a straight, slim black man, hands bound, awaiting his fate stoically.

Raphael strode forward. That he had taken a hand in events was obvious, for the sabre in his hand was as red as the weapons of his men.

“Another!” he cried out. A malignant expression darted into his face as he recognized the American. “A spy from America! Kill him like the others—at him!”

Short of taking to his heels, which would be useless, O’Donnell had no recourse. He strode forward at the group. The blacks had halted, stood silent and unmoving, but Raphael

came straight at him.

“What does this mean?” demanded O’Donnell brusquely. “You shall answer for these murders, Colonel Raphael! If you——”

“At him!” ordered Raphael. “You men, surround him, cut him down quickly!”

Two of the black soldiers moved to obey; a hasty mutter from the others checked them, brought them to a sharp halt, and they gaped open-mouthed. Raphael, with an oath, flung himself forward. His sabre swung in the air for a vicious blow at O’Donnell, a blow that would have cloven his head asunder. But O’Donnell was not there to receive it.

Comprehending in a flash that for some reason he had only the mulatto to fear, O’Donnell suddenly leaped, drove straight forward beneath the flashing steel. Raphael’s wrist came down on his head. The heavy sabre was knocked away, its point catching O’Donnell in the calf of the leg. With all the impetus of his leap behind it, with this sudden swift pain from his leg aiding the effort like a spur, O’Donnell’s fist drove up beneath the mulatto’s jaw. Despite its terrific force, the blow was almost unseen, their two bodies being so close. The American appeared to plunge forward under the sabre slash, and then Raphael was staggering backward, to collapse and roll over in the dust and lie there, arms sprawled out and contorted features grinning up at the sky.

The five black soldiers had not moved.

O’Donnell drew himself up, looked at them, looked at the stalwart, level-eyed black prisoner. The five soldiers drew back from him, their eyes rolling.

“Well?” he snapped at them angrily. “What does all this mean?”

“Spies, citizen,” came the uneasy response from one of them. “We obey orders. We meant no wrong——”

“Liar!” said O’Donnell, with a glance at the hacked bodies. “Anyone can see these men are French planters. Take your devil of an officer and clear out.”

They put up their weapons. One of them flung out his hands to O’Donnell in a gesture of appeal.

“Master, do not harm us!” he said humbly. “We have not hurt you——”

“Pick up Raphael and go.”

“There is no use picking him up, master. He did not know the mark of Dambala, but we know it. He is dead, so we will leave him——”

“Obey me!” exclaimed O’Donnell angrily.

They gathered about the figure of Raphael. To the astonishment of O’Donnell, it became evident that the mulatto was indeed dead. That one fearful blow had crushed his jaw and slain him. The five carried him off and disappeared among the trees.

O’Donnell stood motionless for a moment, astounded by the death of Raphael, puzzled by the attitude of the blacks; this, however, was explained by their words. The mark of Dambala, eh? Then the thrust of that blind man’s stick had served him more directly than he had anticipated. Feeling his hand, which was rapidly swelling, he concluded that no bones were broken, and turned toward the captive black. The latter was regarding him with unwinking gaze. Going to Raphael’s fallen sabre, O’Donnell picked it up and cut the prisoner free.

“What does all this mean?” he demanded. “Who were these two whites?”

The black, a young and powerful man, pointed to one of the two bodies.

“This was Citizen Lavalley; I am his groom. The other was a friend visiting him, but I do not know his name. We went riding this morning, and on the road these soldiers halted us.

They brought us here. I do not know much about it all, master. Citizen Lavalle got into trouble with General Moyses last month. It was some dispute about a horse.”

“Explanation enough,” said O’Donnell. “What’s your name?”

“Louis, master.”

“You are now my groom. Content?”

Delight flashed in the black face. “Happy, master! I am a good groom.”

“I believe you. Do you know this?” O’Donnell touched the mark on his coat.

“Le Serpent put it there, master. He puts it on people who are not to be harmed; he is the greatest *papaloi* in the world. It is the mark of Dambala.”

Questioning further, O’Donnell could learn nothing more, and guessed that Louis knew a good deal but would not talk.

“Very well. On this plantation lives a man called Mirliton. I want to see him. Do you know anything about him?”

The eyes of the black opened wide for an instant. “Yes, master.”

“Lead me to him.”

“Good.” Louis glanced at the swollen, inflamed hand. “He will cure that for you. He is a great doctor, greater even than Toussaint Louverture. Follow me, master.”

After retrieving his fallen hat, O’Donnell followed among the trees bordering the brook and the cane field. Later on he could return to the nearby plantation house. He liked this stalwart, unafraid young Louis; after what had passed, he felt confident that he could rely implicitly on the man. Also, he had a very practical motive in keeping Louis with him, for the death of Raphael would not be passed over in silence, and this witness might be valuable.

A small clearing came into sight ahead. Here, surrounded by plantains and banana trees, was a miserable mud-walled, straw-thatched cabin with chickens running around outside, and a big pile of rags topped with straw beside the open door. On closer approach, O’Donnell perceived that the pile of rags had two bright eyes and two gnarled old hands that were clenched on a stick. Suddenly he recalled what Cristophe had said about bringing a gift, and got out a glittering sovereign from the coins in his pocket.

“He does not talk French,” said Louis, thus dignifying his own sorry dialect. “I will interpret for you, master. There is no one else here. His wives and children are up in the mountains.”

Evidently, Louis knew a good deal more than he had admitted.

As they drew near, the old man beside the door stirred the rags that covered him and peered at them. Louis squatted down beside him and began to talk rapidly; his speech was a queer clicking of consonants. A large percentage of the island slaves had been brought from Dahomey within recent years, so that many still retained their original tongue and the gods whom they had worshipped in Africa.

O’Donnell came close, spoke to the bright-eyed, bent creature, and sat down. He reached forward with the sovereign, and Mirliton put out a hand to receive it—then spoke in a thin, rasping voice. Louis jumped up hastily and darted into the hut.

“I am getting medicine for your hand and your hurt leg, master,” he called back.

Glancing down at his puffed and now painful hand, O’Donnell smiled grimly. Mirliton reached out one skinny claw, looked into his face, touched his arm, held up one finger.

“Borie!” he croaked, and waved his finger toward the hills. A grin was upon his seamed and wrinkled black face. He pointed to O’Donnell, held up two fingers. “Borie!”

The American nodded and smiled, and produced cigars. Mirliton refused. Presently Louis rejoined them with some concoction of herbs in a pot, and a dirty rag for which O'Donnell substituted his kerchief. On this the herbs were laid, and it was then bound about his hand. A similar bandage was placed around his leg, though the cut here was only a scratch. Louis brought a coal for his cigar, then talked at some length with Mirliton, who cackled with mirth. Evidently it was the tale of Raphael's death.

"Ask him," said O'Donnell impatiently, "whether my brother is alive."

Louis obeyed. "Master, he says that he is both dead and alive."

"So? And where is he now?"

"At a village called Gros Galets, master. It is up yonder in the mountains above the Cul-de-Sac, a long way from here."

"Ask him if you can guide me there."

Louis grinned. "I was born there, master. I know the place."

"Good. How far is it from the *habitation* Dartigues?"

"A day's ride on good horses. There is no one at the Dartigues plantation now; it was burned down long ago."

O'Donnell merely nodded, his face thoughtful. Now the old bag of bones began to speak rapidly; O'Donnell was convinced that he had understood their Creole speech perfectly. Louis listened, put in a word from time to time, and then turned with his eyes bulging.

"He says, master, that tonight the drums will talk a long while. He is willing to help you. He says his god has told him that soon men will die by the thousand and the ten thousand in this land, so he is going away into the mountains. He will be at Gros Galets in a week and he will serve you well, if you wish to pay him; he says your brother is very sick. He wants ten more pieces of gold like the one you gave him."

"Agreed," said O'Donnell promptly. "I will send you with them tomorrow from town."

"And he says," went on Louis, after further discussion, "that your brother had friends in the Rigaud house yonder. These friends killed him but he was brought back to life. That is all he has to tell you now."

"And it's enough," said O'Donnell, with a nod of satisfaction. "Louis, you're to go back to the highway. Start toward Le Cap, and you'll come to a dead horse lying in the road. Wait there for me. Do you understand?"

To the black, this smacked of the supernatural. He nodded, his eyes wide. The American rose, touched hands with the ancient Mirliton, and turned away.

Striding toward the Rigaud buildings, O'Donnell pondered what had just been said. He was not sure what dependence to place in the ancient black; yet he himself had immediately been recognized as a Borie. This might not seem strange, to any who had known the family and its pronounced physical traits; yet there was undeniably something singular in it all. If this story about Alexandre Borie were true, how did Mirliton know it? Somewhere there was a simple and reasonable explanation of this apparent mystery, but it was not in sight.

"Both dead and alive—killed but brought back to life!" he muttered. "It's past all comprehension. Alexandre came here and apparently vanished into thin air. I know that he saw Toussaint; nothing else. Yet here he is seemingly up in the hills, his whereabouts known to the vaudou men at least! Why no letter or message from him? This Mirliton, of course, may not be telling the truth. It may all be a game to get a dozen sovereigns out of me. Yet I have a feeling that he's sincere."

He was drawn grimly toward the house yonder, and as grimly acquiesced in the attraction. Mirliton has just said that Alexandre Borie was killed by “friends” in that house, and this confirmed what Dupuche had said. The Rigaud plantation adjoined that of the Borie family, which St. Leger had presumably bought from Alexandre; yet O’Donnell had never before heard of any such sale. St. Leger was quite obviously an intimate friend of the Rigaud woman. Yes, it all hung together. St. Leger himself might be the murderer.

“The question is, what do they know or suspect about me, and just what game is that hell-cat playing?” he reflected. Well on his guard against La Belle Hermione, he was resolved to unearth the reason for her invitation, for her playing up to him as she had done; he had a conviction that she knew or guessed something about his identity.

In this mood, he came upon the plantation house from the rear. It was a huge and very handsome building set amid gardens, with slave barracks and stables at the back. Noon was at hand, and O’Donnell passed numerous groups of blacks coming in from the fields, but they paid him little heed. Because of the heat he had removed his cloak, and it concealed his bandaged hand, so that in his appearance was nothing of particular interest.

Reaching the stables, he came around to the front of the house, where the great drive swept around in a graveled circle; here was a mounted groom, holding another horse. O’Donnell was about to address the black, when he heard his name called and saw the tall, graceful figure of St. Leger descending the wide front steps of the veranda with a smile of greeting and hand outstretched.

“Citizen O’Donnell! This is indeed a pleasant surprise!” exclaimed the mulatto in fluent French. When O’Donnell shook hands, using his left hand and showing the other in its bandage, St. Leger broke into English as fluent as his French.

“You’re hurt? And you have come on foot, eh? Has some accident happened?”

O’Donnell smiled. “A very slight one. Some brigands waylaid me on the highway nearby. My horse was killed, so I dropped in to see if I could borrow another.”

“My dear fellow! Come inside, I beg of you. Madame Rigaud—or citizenship, if you prefer—will be delighted.” St. Leger took his arm cordially. “A horse? A dozen if need be. You’re abroad early after last night!”

“I slept at the palace,” replied O’Donnell drily. “And you?”

The mulatto chuckled. “Oh, we danced all night, and shall sleep later! I was just about to start home, but I’ll stop and hear of this brigandage. Besides, I’d like to have a word with you, when the chance offers.”

Citizenship Rigaud received them on the deep, shaded veranda, where comfortable chairs and divans were thick with pillows, and two blacks waved huge feather fans to stir the lazy air and the noisy flies. In another moment O’Donnell found himself deep in a soft chair, recounting his adventure briefly and not too accurately.

“Six of them in all. I stretched one of them out, and the others carried him off; that’s all there is to it. To tell the truth, only the one attacked me. The others held off.”

“You are lucky, very lucky! And you will remain now for luncheon?” said Citizenship Rigaud, her voice and eyes beseeching. O’Donnell smilingly refused.

“Impossible; I regret deeply that I must see General Cristophe, and shall already be late for my appointment. If you’ll be good enough to let me have a horse, and another for my groom, who is waiting down the road, I shall be deeply grateful.”

St. Leger at once rose. “Allow me, Hermione, to pick out a couple of horses for Citizen O’Donnell,” he said quickly. “I’ll ride part way to town with him, if he’ll allow me, as I want

to ask him a few things about conditions in America.”

She assented, and St. Leger strode hastily away. Once he was gone, her demeanor changed swiftly. She leaned forward, her hand touching O’Donnell’s arm.

“It is such a nuisance that you find him here!” she said softly, significantly. “You see, he has some business with you; but so have I. Come, trust me, my friend! We have not long to speak in private. You can tell me the truth. Do you seek any information in regard to a man named Borie?”

Meeting those hard, unfathomable eyes of hers, O’Donnell took instant decision.

“Yes, I feel that I can trust you,” he responded confidently. “You are right. There was such a man in Philadelphia. I became his business agent, thanks to a certain resemblance between us which people noted, and which chanced to draw us together. I have heard nothing from him in a long while, and when leaving Philadelphia the family commissioned me to obtain news of him if possible. He seems to have disappeared. You noted the resemblance, eh?”

“At our first encounter,” she responded. Her eyes were sparkling now, were warm and appealing. “Then I must see you alone, as quickly as possible, for I can give you information about him—but only in confidence, mind! Don’t trust St. Leger above all! Can you return here tomorrow morning, early?”

“With the borrowed horses—why not?” assented O’Donnell. “And if anything occurs to prevent my coming, I’ll send my groom with word. Agreed?”

“Agreed!” she exclaimed, smiling into his eyes. Then she sank back indolently on her cushions, and next instant came the swift, lithe step of St. Leger.

“The horses will be along in a moment,” he said. “I took the two bays, Hermione. Well, citizen, what did you think of our general’s ball last night?”

“It was highly interesting,” said O’Donnell, ignoring the sneer in the other’s tone. “One such experience is enough to last a long while, however.” He rose, and bowed to the lady. “I deeply regret my inability to accept your hospitality, citizenship—

“Among friends, let us forget the titles of democracy!” she said laughingly. “Shall I see you soon? Next week, perhaps?”

“If I may be so honored,” and O’Donnell bent above her hand.

A moment later he was mounting beside St. Leger, whose groom took the reins of the horse destined for Louis. With a gay farewell, they rode down the avenue of trees to the highway, and turned in the direction of the city. Presently St. Leger pulled down his horse to a walk, and turned to the American.

“Let us speak English, to be safe. Citizen, I shall be frank with you. Undoubtedly you have learned something of the conditions prevailing here in the island. I know perfectly well that for some time past you have acted as business agent in Philadelphia for Toussaint, and that you are here to see him. Your name is well-known, you see.”

O’Donnell nodded. “Why not? I’ve been his agent for a couple of years or so. I think I’ve bought most of the powder and arms shipped to him from the United States.”

“Then you are aware that conditions here are very unsettled,” pursued St. Leger. “If the English come back, if the French return, no one knows what may happen. I have received information that peace will shortly be concluded between France and England.”

O’Donnell whistled softly. This was news to him.

“Well?” he asked.

“I shall not detain you now, to go into matters at length,” and St. Leger glanced at his bandaged hand. “Perhaps in a few days we can meet again and discuss affairs. As a man of

business, you may be interested in talking with me. You know that the trade of this island is mounting daily to enormous proportions. Well, if this trade could be placed entirely in the hands of the English, it would be tremendously to our advantage. A word from you to Toussaint might effect much. However, we shall talk of it again.”

O'Donnell nodded. Ahead, on the road, appeared the figure of Louis, stepping out to meet them. St. Leger drew rein.

“At your first opportunity, then, drop in at my plantation; I am nearly always at home. Does the matter interest you?”

“It does,” said O'Donnell. “I shall come in a day or two. Besides, I have other business with you; but we'll not go into that now. Au revoir!”

“Au revoir, until soon,” returned St. Leger, and turned his horse about.

His groom handed over the led horse to Louis, and departed after him. Louis swung up into the saddle, and looked at O'Donnell. His face was gray, his eyes were distended, terrorized.

“What's the matter?” exclaimed the American sharply. “You're ill?”

“No, master—it was that man yonder!”

“Eh?” O'Donnell glanced after the departing mulatto. “He? What about him?”

“That Citizen St. Leger, master! It was by his orders that my master and his friend were killed! I heard those soldiers talking about it.”

O'Donnell stared at him for an instant, then picked up his reins.

“Come on, Louis—ride for town, and ride like the devil!”

CHAPTER IV

TOUSSAINT SENDS

It was well past noon when O'Donnell rode into town, with Louis clattering at his heels. He little realized that for the last half-hour all Le Cap had been excitedly discussing him, that rumors had been flying about with miraculous speed, that his name was upon every tongue. But he discovered as much, while he rode in toward the Place d'Armes.

The black folk gaped at him, hurriedly drew away, crossed themselves. A squad of dragoons scattered wildly ahead of him with incoherent cries. A ripple of shouting, of lifted voices, ran ahead of him, so that he turned to Louis with a frown.

"What's the matter? What are they saying?"

Louis grinned delightedly. "They say that your touch brings death, master. That you are a great *boucor*, a wizard."

O'Donnell grunted, and put in his spurs. He drew rein before the palace entrance, and there was an immediate flurry among the guards there, when he dismounted and strode forward, with a curt order for Louis to accompany him.

"Take me to General Cristophe at once!" he commanded the guard officer. The latter saluted, uneasy dread in his eyes.

"Yes, citizen. Orders have just been sent out to find you. Come."

They passed into the large hall of audience, now rid of all debris of the ball. Here were Cristophe and two aides, and the giant black sprang to his feet at sight of O'Donnell.

"Citizen! What is this I have heard about you?"

"I don't know or care, citizen general," said O'Donnell. "I have come here to lay a complaint."

"I have heard one already," said Cristophe, with a grimace. He resumed his seat. "You may speak, citizen!"

O'Donnell recounted his meeting with Raphael and the five soldiers, and brought forward Louis as a witness. He did not miss the flash of fierce delight that swept into the features of Cristophe, who leaned forward and fired rapid questions at the groom, and he perceived that a very different story must have somehow reached the general.

Finished with Louis, Cristophe snapped at one of his aides, who saluted and hurried out, to return after a moment with the five black soldiers who had accompanied Raphael. When they caught sight of O'Donnell, they burst into frightened talk; one of them howled and fell prostrate, begging for mercy.

What ensued was so rapid in speech and gesture that the American could scarcely understand it. The soldiers confessed everything, he could see, but when they were led out again he was still far from comprehending all that was passing. Cristophe rose and came to him with a wide grin, and clapped him on the shoulder.

"Mon ami, you played the proper game in coming to me first! They were here ahead of you. Now, by the great god Dambala, I have that accursed dog Moyse where I want him! And he's due here any moment. You see, they accused you of having killed Raphael without provocation, but now they have confessed the truth. They said you had merely touched him and killed him. Tell me, how did you actually kill him?"

“As I told you,” said O’Donnell, with a shrug. “A blow under the chin. It was largely luck, of course; I didn’t know I was striking so hard.”

Cristophe shivered a little, though his bold eyes did not shift from those of O’Donnell. At this moment, however, Moyses came striding into the hall, an aide at his elbow, and Cristophe swung around.

“There is the murderer!” broke out General Moyses, pointing to O’Donnell. A spasm of furious rage contracted his scarred features. “Are we to let these accursed whites kill our brave patriots, who have brought English and French to their knees? Citizen general, I call upon you to administer impartial justice here! No favoritism!”

“By all the gods, then,” roared Cristophe, holding up one hand, “you shall have it! Silence!”

There was a moment of pause. In this moment, the one glaring eye of Moyses fell upon the cloak around O’Donnell’s shoulders, and the black started violently as he perceived the red mark. Then Cristophe was speaking, coolly and rapidly.

“Citizen general, listen to me. Early this morning two white citizens were seized on the highway and were atrociously murdered. They were planters, Lavalle and a friend of his from the south. Listen!”

A roll of drums was sounding from the courtyard of the palace. It ended in a sharp volley of musketry. Cristophe laughed harshly.

“The murders have been avenged; the criminals have been executed!” he exclaimed sonorously. “Those brigands were headed by your aide, Raphael, who attacked Citizen O’Donnell here and received swift punishment. I have talked with witnesses. The murderers confessed fully. As governor of this city, I commend Citizen O’Donnell for his action of this morning!”

The deep voice ceased.

General Moyses drew himself up, shaking with rage. A flame of passion leaped into his face. He was about to burst forth in furious invective, was already lifting a clenched fist towards Cristophe, when an officer burst into the room and saluted him hurriedly.

“Citizen General Moyses!” he cried out. “The citizen governor is at your house and requests your presence there immediately!”

For an instant O’Donnell did not comprehend just what was meant, though the effect of these words was tremendous. Moyses remained as though thunderstruck. The great figure of Cristophe was staring, immobile. A murmur broke from the aides—a murmur of astounded surprise, of terror.

“Impossible!” said Moyses in a choked voice, glaring at the officer, all his anger against Cristophe paralyzed. “This is some trick, some lie——”

“Citizen general,” broke in the officer stiffly, “our governor has been in the city for nearly two hours past.”

A booming laugh burst from Cristophe.

“Go, Moyses, go!” he bellowed delightedly. “Carry your cursed lies to your uncle if you dare! And tell him that I follow you!”

The name Toussaint Louverture eddied through the room, and O’Donnell had sudden comprehension of the scene. Without a word more, Moyses turned and departed. Cristophe at once leaped into action, shouting orders right and left. The news that Toussaint was in the city, had been here for some time, swept everything else off the boards. Beckoning to Louis, the American departed.

Returning home, he found Dupuche gone with Toussaint, who had been here for some time on business. Madame Dupuche undertook to take care of Louis and assigned him quarters, and O'Donnell mounted to his room. When he removed the bandage from his hand, he found it well-nigh normal again, though still tender. The cut in his leg was of small consequence and gave him little trouble.

A bath, a change of clothes, and O'Donnell descended to luncheon at the call. Dupuche had just now returned; he was bubbling over with excitement, with eagerness, with news of all sorts. He had heard all about the American's adventure, and reported that Toussaint had given General Moyses a terrific tongue-lashing for his general ineptitude as captain general and had ordered him to leave Le Cap and retire to his own plantation.

"I spoke to our governor about you," Dupuche went on, "and he's going to see you very soon. He said he would send a message with a guide to bring you; it may be tonight, it may be tomorrow. No one knows. He will probably stop at Héricourt over night. He has come to the city and gone again, leaving a thousand orders, ten thousand things to be done, turmoil like the white water in the wake of a ship! What a man he is, what a positive genius! But come, my friend—this adventure of yours! Tell me about it. I've heard all sorts of incredible rumors around town. Is it true that Lavalley is dead? He was a good fellow, that Lavalley——"

O'Donnell complied, and recounting his meeting with the black and the dead horse, thought to inquire whether the mount had been returned. Dupuche did not know and sent a servant to inquire at the stables. Word came back that the horse had been left, and Dupuche broke into a laugh.

"You give your horse to a strange black and go ahead on foot! Decidedly, my friend, you will come to a bad end one of these days unless you learn caution. And you didn't even get the rascal's name? One of Toussaint's couriers, doubtless. But now about the adventure!"

When the tale was done, Dupuche whistled softly and shook his head.

"*Diable!* You're walking in hot water. I warned you about that St. Leger, eh? Well, you know your own business best. My opinion is that Moyses is hand in glove with the mulattoes in this section, whose leader is St. Leger. He may be planning a revolt against Toussaint, or merely a massacre of the whites. This morning's business makes it look as though there might be some scheme afoot to murder the whites systematically, a few at a time, as that devil Dessalines is murdering the mulattoes in the south. You've heard about that? I told Toussaint of it this morning. I understand there's a reign of terror down there."

"Did Toussaint know of it?" asked O'Donnell curiously.

The other gave him a singular glance, and nodded.

"He said that he told Dessalines to prune the tree, not to tear it up by the roots. This Dessalines goes too far. So does Moyses. Toussaint is furious because the labor laws have not been observed and bridges and schools have not been built. Moyses should have sent a dozen selected blacks and mulattoes from this district to France, to be trained in the work of the schools, and has neglected it. You see, our governor has been horribly busy. He's had a committee working on a constitution, which he's sending Bonaparte—a constitution for the entire island. He thinks Bonaparte will sign it, guaranteeing liberty to the blacks. What think you?"

O'Donnell shrugged. "I'm afraid your governor is a visionary. I've talked with people who know Bonaparte well, and they all agree on one point; he detests and abhors negroes, and has lately weeded every black or quadroon out of his army. They say he has even dismissed General Dumas for this reason."

“There you are. If peace should ever be made with England——”

“I forgot to tell you! St. Leger informed me it was on the way.”

Dupuche threw out his hands. “Then heaven help us! This island is so rich that the Corsican will never rest until he has his hands on it. The French will return; *eh bien*, let that await its time! Well, Cristophe is evidently your friend; I congratulate you. It is lucky the soldiers with Raphael did not attack you. Evidently you’re a lucky man. You may yet dig up the Borie treasure if you can make friends with St. Leger—but don’t trust him!”

O’Donnell made no mention of his meeting with Mirliton, of St. Leger’s veiled proposals, nor of the mark of Dambala. The meal over, he visited the stables and found Louis well situated, and extremely proud at being the groom of the American, about whose mysterious powers new rumors were circulating all the time. O’Donnell could learn nothing about the black who had left his horse; the hostlers merely shrugged, said they had not observed the man and did not know him.

Returning to his room, O’Donnell was asleep in five minutes. He did not waken until late in the afternoon, when he found Dupuche shaking him. He sat up sleepily.

“Hello! What’s up?” he inquired, stifling a yawn. Dupuche thrust a paper at him.

“Read this. It just came for you. The messenger is waiting.”

Opening the unsealed paper, which was addressed to him, O’Donnell found a brief note in sprawling, awkward writing. It was in phonetic French or rather Creole, evidently scribbled off in haste by the writer:

“I will be obliged if you will come to me. I have something to tell you. Salut.

Toussaint Louverture”

“There’s no time to waste,” said Dupuche quickly. “His headquarters are always at the Noé d’Héricourt plantation, the same place where he was formerly a slave. You can get there in forty minutes, and you may have him to yourself for the evening. Well worth while, if——”

O’Donnell leaped up. “Right you are! Ready in ten minutes.”

“I’ll have horses ready and pistols loaded,” said Dupuche. “Better take your groom along; the black from Héricourt will guide you. Good luck!”

When O’Donnell descended to the courtyard, he found everything ready. Exchanging a quick handshake with Dupuche, he swung into the saddle, beckoned to the two blacks, and was gone at once.

As they crossed the Place d’Armes, he saw Cristophe approaching, riding amid a brilliant staff of officers. The general checked the others and came on along to meet O’Donnell stirrup to stirrup.

“I have something to say to you, citizen,” and his voice was low, urgent. “Perhaps you do not realize that you are in grave danger. You have enemies, or so I think, of whom you may not know. If you’ll let me pick out a dozen faithful men as guards, I shall be only too glad to do it.”

O’Donnell smiled and shook his head. “Thank you, general, but I have no need of them. I can’t parade around the island with an army corps! Have no fear. I am not without friends.”

“So I understand,” answered Cristophe gravely. “But threats have been made. However, as you prefer! If you have need, send to me at any time. Good luck!”

O’Donnell rode on out of the city with the two blacks, then put in spurs and made haste. Within half an hour they were nearing their destination, situated near the village of L’Acul, ten

miles from Le Cap.

Thanks to Toussaint's protection, the plantation of Noé d'Héricourt had survived the years of chaos intact. The house was a huge building with pillared front, gained by an avenue of magnificent trees. The gates and grounds were guarded by dragoons, while a swarm of blacks was collected about the house itself. Toussaint's letter gained instant passage for the visitors. Dismounting at the main entrance, O'Donnell turned over his reins to Louis and found himself greeted by a handsomely dressed Frenchman, who bowed ceremoniously.

"Citizen O'Donnell, I believe? I am Citizen Pascal. Will you do me the honor of accompanying me? The governor will be at liberty in a moment."

"You are not, by any chance, the philosopher of that name?" asked O'Donnell whimsically. The other smiled.

"I am a descendant of his, at least. Enter, citizen! The governor said to bring you in directly you came. Don't be surprised if he lets you wait until he finishes his dictation. Since he orders you in at once, he has evidently great confidence in you."

O'Donnell found himself led through splendid rooms filled with blacks, both in uniform and in ordinary attire. The furnishings of the house amazed him. While Toussaint personally lived a frugal life, his headquarters were invariably used as a background of the utmost magnificence, to create the more imposing effect upon others. The hangings, the lustres, were of the richest. The chairs were heavily adorned with brocades. The furniture and pictures had evidently been collected from near and far.

So the visitor came into a large book-walled library, containing nothing but a large table and four or five chairs, extremely ornate in their glittering brocade. Two immense silver candelabra on the table were just being lighted, for dusk was fast settling down. Two secretaries were writing busily; an indistinct figure by the open window was dictating rapidly to them.

"Citizen O'Donnell!" announced Pascal, passing the sentry at the door.

The man beside the window turned and approached with hand outstretched. O'Donnell found himself looking into the high-browed, almost grotesque features of the same ugly little black whom he had met on the road that same morning.

It was Toussaint Louverture.

CHAPTER V

A BLIND MAN MAY SEE AHEAD

In another five minutes, the secretaries were banished with their papers. Servants began to lay the table for dinner. O'Donnell was introduced to Toussaint's adjutant and quartermaster, one Idlinger—an Alsatian, a veteran of the wars in Europe, whose thin, pallid features and close-set eyes were not prepossessing.

"The four of us," said Toussaint, pressing O'Donnell into a chair, "will dine together. Fear not, my friends! You will not be forced to share my own repast. Smoke, Idlinger, and be comfortable. If you gentlemen will excuse me one moment, I go to inquire after the health of my old godfather, and then we're free for the evening."

He left the room with a lithe, nervous tread. Idlinger grunted.

"He has not slept since yesterday, *hein?* Thank God, I have!"

Pascal laughed amusedly. These two men, with one or two others not here, were the closest intimates of Toussaint. From the beginning of his rise to power, Toussaint appointed the most able men to fill office, regardless of their color; that he had kept about him a number of whites on whose advice he largely depended, had in no way affected his deep influence among the blacks, though certain disaffected spirits seized on the pretext to vilify him.

"Our *vieux* Toussaint," said Pascal, giving the governor the affectionate term by which he was usually known, "has been too busy to see his godfather, old Baptiste, whose son manages this plantation. Madame Suzanne is in the south—and we'll probably be back there in a day or so."

"Not I, praise be!" said Idlinger. "I'm to stay here and get affairs in shape. How go matters in America, Citizen O'Donnell?"

The three chatted together until Toussaint returned, and women brought in dinner; for the three, a regular meal, but for Toussaint a jug of water, some biscuit, and a potato, his ordinary fare. As he studied his host, O'Donnell began to realize the remarkable brain and character behind this heavy-jawed, grotesque countenance. Under the madras kerchief that was bound about his head, the eyes of Toussaint changed with every moment; now genial, winning, kindly, now aflame with animation, with deep vitality, and again dumbly pathetic, like the eyes of a dog. His black features, seamed with tiny wrinkles, looked aged and worn upon close view; but this was nothing new. Toussaint, now past fifty, had for many years been known as "old Toussaint" because of this characteristic.

The four settled themselves at the table. Toussaint, whose manners were invariably polite, apologized for the humble fare before them, and attacked his still more humble potato with gusto.

"Citizen O'Donnell," he said abruptly, "what does my government here in the north lack?"

The American laughed. "Having been here scarce two days, citizen governor, I am hardly fitted to express an opinion. Offhand, I should venture that it needs about fifty men like your General Cristophe."

"Ja!" Idlinger brought down his fist "What do I tell you? Exactly!"

Toussaint smiled. "If there were another man like Cristophe, he would be filling a similar place. No fresh news from Europe, I suppose?"

"Only of peace between France and England."

Idlinger started. Pascal's quiet features became overcast.

"It will not matter," commented Toussaint calmly. Idlinger leaned forward.

"No? I tell you it will change everything, Toussaint! The day peace is signed, that Bonaparte will send his fleet and army to seize this island!"

Toussaint smilingly dissented. "I think not. Eh, Citizen O'Donnell?"

"I believe Citizen Idlinger is correct."

Toussaint gave him a sharp look, frowned slightly, then shrugged. "We shall see. Meantime, a state is being created. Now, my good American, tell me something; the honest truth, without flattery. What, briefly, is said of me in America?"

"Without flattery?"

"Absolutely."

"Very well. You are said to be a great man, serving an obscure cause. You first joined the Spaniards and conquered almost the entire island for them. You abandoned them abruptly and joined the French, sweeping the British out of the island. Then turned upon——"

"Stop!" exclaimed Toussaint in some agitation. His wide nostrils were flaring. "You express your own opinion, do you? Or that of America?"

"Not my own, certainly. I repeat what is currently said."

"My cause obscure!" murmured Toussaint bitterly. "Obscure! When, from the day I took up arms, my sole cause has been the abolition of slavery! I joined the Spaniards, only to find their English allies were bent upon re-establishing slavery here; therefore I abandoned them. I took up arms in the name of Louis XVI, only to find that the royal commissioners and the National Assembly meant to sustain slavery. I became a republican and mastered the island, and then found that the commissioners from Paris were deceiving me, intriguing to restore the slave trade. So I bundled them out and am now governor, with liberty still my one cause. And it is obscure! Obscure!"

"Public opinion knows no justice," said O'Donnell quietly.

"True, I presume." Toussaint shrugged. "I must compliment you on the way you have handled my affairs in America. You'll be interested in learning that next week I am shipping from Port au Prince one hundred thousand gourdes—dollars, in your currency—with instructions as to the purchase of certain munitions. Your firm will handle it in your absence?"

"Perfectly," said O'Donnell.

"I desire you to figure now, this minute, on the approximate cost of fifty carronades and as many twenty-four pounders——"

"Not forgetting the light guns," put in Idlinger. "At least ten. Very light, say eight-pounders. We need them for work in the mountains, where transport is difficult."

Toussaint nodded. O'Donnell calculated rapidly and named the approximate sum. The governor gestured to Pascal.

"Make a note of it, if you please; we can attend to it on returning to Port au Prince. Now, Citizen O'Donnell, my actual business with you is ended." Toussaint leaned back in his chair, took a pinch of snuff, and extended his cup to Pascal for more of the strong black coffee he loved. "Your business with me shall now have the floor. Our friend Dupuche has told me something about it."

In a few words, O'Donnell related his ostensible errand in the island. Idlinger, smoking a long clay pipe, whistled softly and his close-set eyes took on a covetous look at the mention of buried treasure. Toussaint pulled at his long under lip and listened in silence, then nodded to his quartermaster.

“Idlinger, will you be good enough to ask Dupuis, my chief secretary, to write out a *laisser passer* for Citizen O’Donnell, and a separate document authorizing him to make this search and to remove all money or goods that he may find? Tell Dupuis to bring me the two papers for signature as soon as they are written.”

Comprehending that Toussaint desired to be left alone with O’Donnell, the quartermaster took his pipe and pouch and departed. Pascal, glancing from one to the other, also rose and excused himself. The door closed behind them.

Toussaint straightened up in his chair, and bent upon the American a gaze that was suddenly very intent and keen.

“Now! You are Paul Borie?”

“I was, yes; I am now Paul O’Donnell.” The American smiled. “When I became an American citizen, I took my mother’s name and left that of Borie to my elder brother, Alexandre. But how did you learn this?”

“Long ago, from another of my agents, before I employed your firm. If I could learn it, so could others. I know very well that you have not come here to Haiti merely to dig up treasure that may or may not exist.”

“True,” said O’Donnell. “Two years ago my brother Alexandre came here. He intended to regain the Borie plantation, and wrote that he was to have an interview with you about it. He then disappeared. Nothing more was ever heard from him.”

“I saw him,” Toussaint said slowly. “He was granted title to the lands in question. Three days later he sold them to Citizen St. Leger, to whom the lands were afterward affirmed. I remember the case. It was quite legal.”

“But he disappeared, with the money,” said O’Donnell. The other gave him a sharp look.

“So that is it?”

“That is it.”

Toussaint pulled thoughtfully at his lip, then straightened up in his chair.

“Come, my friend; I can trust you, let us be frank. He vanished, but thousands of others have vanished also. I heard he had been killed. That is all I know.”

“Nothing more definite?”

“Nothing. If I can give you help in any way, I shall be glad. You have served me well and honestly; I owe you much. This morning placed me still deeper in your debt. I can say no more.” He gestured as though closing the subject, and it was impossible to doubt his sincerity.

“I heard today about the death of Colonel Raphael,” he went on. “You did well. You have gained the hatred of my nephew, so beware! He is powerful here. He hates me, desires to supplant me. Do you know that I dare not remain here for more than a day, through fear of him? It is true; I know well what a crafty and subtle brain he has! Because he is so clever, he gives me no excuse to take action against him. When he does——”

The swift, savage flash of Toussaint’s eye was significant. O’Donnell was astounded by this plain speech.

“I cannot comprehend it,” he interjected. “If Moyse is your subordinate——”

Toussaint raised his hand. “Let me explain. My army is composed of twenty thousand veterans under arms; in time of need, uncounted thousands more. Of these, two thousand are my personal followers, my bodyguard. Each general has his own personal following, who will act as he dictates. If Cristophe ordered his men to burn Le Cap, to march against me, to attack the troops of Moyse, they would do it; their orders come from their own individual leaders, who in turn take mine. It is not a good system, but as yet I have not been able to change it.

“Intrigue is everywhere. There is much resentment because I have white men around me, use their skill, their brains, to help my people. I exist by fear; my own generals would abandon me, did they not fear me. My military government is based on fear. I had to send out flying columns to force the blacks back to work on the plantations; now they are glad of it. This entire island lives and moves on a basis of fear. By the way, do you know there is an odd mark on your cloak? I noticed it as you entered.”

O'Donnell started. “Yes. Can you tell me what it means?”

The black gave him a peculiar look. “It means that you are not to be harmed, that you are under the protection of the snake god Dambala, one of the Dahomey deities whom so many of my people worship. Whence came the mark?”

O'Donnell told about his meeting with Le Serpent, and his subsequent interview with the ancient Mirliton. Toussaint listened with a scowl on his face.

“You know your own people,” concluded the American. “Tell me whether I can place any dependence in this information about my brother.”

Toussaint raised his head. “My friend, I am a good Catholic,” he said, with the suave religious pretension characteristic of him. “I have no sympathy whatever with the mass of my people who hold the vaudou belief. It has been said that I took part in the vaudou rites which opened Boukman's rebellion; that is a lie. I have always, invariably, set myself absolutely against these abominable savage superstitions. My people know this, but they also know that my cause is their own cause. Liberty!

“I realize that these superstitions cannot be uprooted,” he went on. “They can only be educated away. That is why I have planned a system of schools for the entire island, and am sending young men and women from every district to Europe, to receive instruction and become teachers. Two of my sons are in Paris at school. Some of the blacks, even my own nephew Moysse, believe that I favor the white race; this is not true. I must make use of the white race, however, until my own people become able to rule themselves.”

He fell silent. O'Donnell lit a fresh cigar, and came back to the matter in hand.

“I gather, then, that the information given me might be of value?”

“It may possibly be correct; by all means, follow it up! Do you know why that mark was put on your cloak, why I and those of my race look upon you as a friend? Because in the old days your father, Colonel Borie, was kind to his slaves and saved many blacks from the torture. He never whipped them to death, never had dogs tear out their entrails, never crucified his mistresses, if he had any, never did any of the things that were daily occurrences on most of our plantations.

“We have remembered such men of the old regime. This Mirliton, who is a great physician and taught me much of what I know, remembers them. This Le Serpent, a noted *papaloi* or priest of the mountain gods, remembers them. Le Serpent has real power, too, God forgive me,” and Toussaint signed himself rapidly, “I have witnessed things that pass comprehension or belief! Yes, you may be certain these men are acting in good faith toward you. They may help you where I can give no help.”

“Thank you,” said O'Donnell simply. “There is another matter to take up, which involves you more closely. Very soon, perhaps tomorrow, I am to see both Citizeness Rigaud and her neighbor and friend, St. Leger——”

He paused, startled by the swift, savage light flaring in Toussaint's face.

“That woman!” exclaimed the governor in a low voice. “Rather, that inhuman fiend, if reports be true! And you know her? Beware, citizen, beware! She is clever, she does nothing

openly, and I do not know if rumor be true or false. Meantime——” he broke off and shrugged.

“I’m aware of the risk,” said O’Donnell, “and I accept it. I hope that through these people I shall learn more about Alexandre. However, St. Leger wishes to discuss something else with me. He said that he knew me to be your American agent. He wants me to induce you to put the entire island trade into British hands, and hinted at a bribe. It was he who told me of the coming peace with England.”

“St. Leger!” repeated Toussaint, his shrill voice menacing. “Yes, you are playing with fire there. That man is dangerous; he corresponds with all the mulattoes here and in the south, he represents the English interests, he has wealth and ambition. He is another who would like to supplant me, become chief of a mulatto people in this island, destroy all the blacks!”

“And knowing all this,” said O’Donnell, surprised, “you permit it?”

“Yes. Let him plot! Were he removed, another more dangerous might take his place.”

There was a silence. Presently Toussaint broke it, with a sigh.

“Spies everywhere! Traps, attempts at assassination, secret murders! The wealth of this land has been its curse. The English want a monopoly of the island trade, yes; they offered to uphold me as king here, in exchange for it. Fools! They could not realize that all I wanted was liberty, not a crown.

“Intrigue crawls everywhere here. I conquered the mulattoes and granted a general amnesty; they still plot against me. There are no strict party lines. The mulattoes want to kill all the whites; so do some of my own leaders. Dessalines wants to massacre both whites and mulattoes. Certain of the French generals, I happen to know, advocate a massacre of all mulattoes and blacks. There you are—confusion worse confounded! What shall you say to this offer from St. Leger?”

“What you desire me to say,” returned O’Donnell. The other looked at him, those expressive eyes glowing with sudden warmth.

“I know of two powerful, intelligent men who are honest, in whose hands I can place power and an army corps with entire dependence; they are Cristophe and Dessalines. Now I have found a third. Will you take the place of my nephew as captain general of the north, in supreme administrative command here?”

O’Donnell was thunderstruck. He sat for a moment staring at Toussaint, unable to comprehend that the governor was in earnest. Then the entire sincerity of the man drove in upon him. For an instant he hesitated, only to shake his head in slow negation.

“No.”

“Your reason? I offer you wealth, citizen, and power! Opportunity to do things!”

“I don’t seek wealth or power,” said O’Donnell. “Your lieutenants must be autocratic, ruthless; I am neither. And at bottom, there is the racial difference. I believe that a French fleet will sooner or later descend on this island. I am no mercenary; I would not desire to lead an army of blacks against my own race.”

“Not in the cause of liberty?”

O’Donnell shrugged. “I am an American. Besides, such an appointment would make trouble for you. It would be resented by your own people.”

“Very well,” said Toussaint. “I respect your independence of character, at least. Will you talk with St. Leger, feel him out, send me any news you may learn—in short, play the spy? Or have you scruples against this?”

“Where St. Leger and his friends are concerned,” said O’Donnell slowly, “I have no scruples whatever. I am glad to give you all the help possible.”

“Good! Then, if you learn anything, send word to Dupuche, who will forward it to me.”

Toussaint broke off suddenly. There was a pad-pad-pad of bare running feet. The door was flung open. One of the secretaries, a mulatto, came hurriedly into the room and laid two papers on the table.

“Your pardon, citizen governor!” he exclaimed excitedly. “Here are the papers you wished to sign. And—and a man has come and demands to see you. He is a blind man and says that you know him. He is called Le Serpent.”

Toussaint rose. For an instant he stood speechless, then his nasal voice broke forth.

“I do not desire to see him. Send him away.”

“We have tried, citizen governor. He says that he has something important to tell you and will not remain long. He insists on seeing you.”

Evidently Toussaint reflected that it would be better to grant a short interview than to create a scene and make a dangerous enemy. He inclined his head and resumed his seat.

“Send him in.” He motioned O’Donnell to remain seated, then picked up a quill and signed the two documents prepared for the American.

Into the room came Le Serpent. He carried no stick now, but a black boy led him by the hand. His bent and shambling figure advanced to the table, his maimed features turned first to O’Donnell, then to the governor. He made a sign, and the boy left the room.

“Citizen governor,” he exclaimed abruptly, “do you not fear to have a Borie hear what I have to say?”

“I have no secrets from him or from others,” responded Toussaint coldly. “If you mean to talk about your heathen gods, I do not wish to hear you.”

A cackle of laughter broke from Le Serpent.

“I know you’re a good Christian, old Toussaint, and I am not here to vex you, but to warn you. While you may turn your back on the gods of Africa, none the less in your heart you know their power. Dambala has whispered to me that you must not trust the French, Toussaint. I have seen a picture, and while I do not understand it, I know what it means. I have seen you sitting in a small room whose stone walls were built by the hands of Romans; I saw the ghosts of the Romans in the air around you. Ice and water covered the floor, there was a fireplace but no fire in it, and you were on a pallet, starving to death. Take heed to this warning, Toussaint! It is no idle thing. It is not I who give it, but the god Dambala, because he knows that the cause of his people is in your hand.”

Toussaint grimaced at the American.

“Thank you, Citizen Serpent,” he said austere. “I shall order that food be given you, and anything else of which you may have need.”

“I did not come for presents, citizen governor,” and Le Serpent waved his hand. Then his sightless face turned to O’Donnell. “Well, white man, have you anything to say to me?”

“Yes,” said O’Donnell quickly. “I wish to thank you for the mark you placed on my cloak. I think it has helped me.”

“You will wish you had heeded my words, you also!” was the response. “When the torturers bind you to the wheel, and flames run red up the sky, and the woman throws back her head to laugh like a dog—you will remember what I said. Well I know that you accept part of my speech and reject the rest. We shall meet again in ten days, white man, at Gros Galets. Au revoir! Toussaint, adieu.”

“Adieu,” repeated Toussaint, but he shivered slightly. A cadence in the voice of Le Serpent, impossible to describe, gave the word ominous significance, in comparison with his “au revoir” to O’Donnell. So the blind *papaloi* departed with slow steps.

The door closed, and a silence fell upon the room. Toussaint remained staring into the candle flame, his fingers playing with the madras kerchief about his head, his face changing from instant to instant, his eye uncertain, as though he were gazing forward into the future with a heart disturbed and hesitant. Those old, finely wrinkled features deepened their lines, the lips drew down at the corners, a touch of swift fright and horror appeared in the protruding eyes. Then he shook himself suddenly, drew a deep breath, and wakened from his abstraction.

He rose from his carved, brocaded, heavily stuffed chair and extended the two papers in silence to O’Donnell. He stood listening for a moment, then went to the large French windows, which had been closed against the moths and bats. He jerked one open.

“You hear?” he said, and stood motionless. O’Donnell indeed heard a low, distant pulsation, or rather felt it; an irregular mutter that presently made its presence audible by sheer force of repetition.

“Drums,” said Toussaint, peering out at the darkness. “Drums, talking from the altars of the heathen gods up and down the plain, talking to the blacks in the mountains. You hear? Yet I cannot read what they say—I, myself a black! This is the people I must uplift from superstition and savagery. Why did that blind man mention walls built by Roman hands? He has never heard of the Romans.”

“In Europe there are dungeons built by the Romans,” said O’Donnell significantly. Toussaint turned and regarded him for a moment, then broke into a thin laugh, and extended his hand in dismissal. Perhaps those words frightened him, angered him.

“I am glad to have had this talk with you, my friend. I am writing Bonaparte tonight; the constitution for the island goes to him by the next ship. Show Cristophe those letters and you’ll be given every assistance. Take good care of yourself, for I cannot well afford to lose you; honest men are rare! And if you find your brother, bring him to me. Good night!”

The interview was ended.

CHAPTER VI

A MILLION IN GOLD

The morning was moist, hot, uncomfortable in the extreme. Although O'Donnell had left Le Cap at an early hour, the heat was oppressive; the whole land was in the grip of dread summer, unregarded by blacks but terrible to whites. The mountains in their cool green majesty were tempting, alluring.

Just before reaching the Rigaud plantation, O'Donnell drew rein and turned to Louis, handing him a small packet.

"Here is money to be given Mirliton. Find your way to him; when you have left it with him, come to the plantation house and await word from me. I do not know how long I shall remain here, so be on the alert."

Louis departed by the trail through the woods, and O'Donnell rode on.

As he passed down the great tree-girt avenue toward the plantation house, grooms ran out to take his horse, and he was ushered into the house. This, a survival from the old regime, contained but few of the rich belongings with which the new masters of the land surrounded themselves.

There were no luxuries; the massive furniture was solid, ugly, uncomfortable. Except for the verandah, the house was one of those bare, unhomelike Creole mansions which so astonished English travelers, and which had made San Domingo a land of hotels and taverns. O'Donnell was shown into a large library, and a black informed him that his hostess would descend immediately.

Left to amuse himself, he calmly walked over to a large rosewood desk that stood open, and glanced down at the papers scattered about. Outspread on top of them was the second half-sheet of a letter. He read it deliberately, carefully.

“. . . expected to spare no effort or money in accomplishing previous instructions. American sources of supply must be closed. Whatever action you take will be approved, provided the result is obtained.

The First Consul
Bonaparte"

O'Donnell looked up but did not move, as he heard a step and found Madame Rigaud in the doorway.

"Careless of you, to leave important papers strewn about," he said coolly. "Good morning, citizenship. You look delightfully comfortable on this steaming day."

She stopped short, staring at him, as though scarce crediting his effrontery.

"You—you have been reading my papers?" she exclaimed breathlessly. A passionate tide of color rose in her face, her eyes flashed fire.

"Alas, madame!" O'Donnell bowed and smiled at her. "You gave me time to read only one. You see, being tentatively engaged on the side of the English, I am in the position of a political foe. And neither love nor war knows any scruple."

She stepped forward swiftly. For an instant O'Donnell thought she meant to attack him. Her face, her whole person expressed so deadly an anger that he involuntarily braced himself.

Then she halted, and her countenance became smiling and composed.

“Oh, I see!” she exclaimed. “I thought it was odd that St. Leger rode away with you—so that’s it, eh? Well, citizen, did you visit me today as an enemy?”

“An enemy who could not resist the possibility of being vanquished and brought to the point of surrender.”

She broke into a laugh, extended her hand, and he bowed above it.

“Truce, then!” she cried gaily. “After all, if St. Leger could accomplish so much in a few moments on horseback—what can I hope to accomplish here, with you at my mercy?”

“Your heart’s desire, of course,” answered O’Donnell gravely, looking into her eyes as he spoke. “I believe that you are utterly infatuated.”

“What?” Her brows went up in laughing query. “With you, my American?”

“Not in the least. With the game you play.”

She was silent for an instant, her smile fading out, her eyes searching his features. Then she nodded and took his arm.

“You are a different man today—the real man,” she said quietly. “Perhaps it was not so silly of me, after all, to leave those letters in sight; a courier brought them an hour ago and I was busy with them when you arrived. Decidedly, we have got somewhere, you and I! Come, let’s go out on the gallery. That is the one place in the house secure from eavesdropping; these blacks all spy on me if they get a chance.”

O’Donnell accompanied her, but his eyes had been opened abruptly. The letters had just come—this was a lie, since a ship from France was expected in daily but none had arrived. And if spies were everywhere, why leave letters about for their eyes—as she was now doing in going out to the verandah with him, without closing her secretaire? O’Donnell smiled grimly. He happened to know that orders and instructions were never sent by Bonaparte to his agents abroad in such fashion as this, but were invariably in cipher.

She had left the letter there for him to see, very simply. More, she had probably written it herself. Good! She had acted her part very well, and she had reacted instantly to his own words and manner; her complete change of front, her abandonment of any attempt at personal allure, showed him with what sort of antagonist he was dealing.

Seated comfortably on the wide verandah, whose latticed blinds shut out the hot sunlight, she regarded him with a cool, appraising look.

“I like you better today, my American,” she said bluntly. “I thought it strange that you should be a fool about a pretty woman. You do not look it; you look like my own sort, who make the things of sex serve them. Fools, on the contrary, do the serving.”

“Thank you,” said O’Donnell blandly. “You might make a fool of any man, I assure you! The exchange of compliments being thus ended, let us proceed to business.”

A sneer grew in her eyes. “Business! That is all you Americans think about, eh?”

“It is something worth thinking about,” he answered laughingly, though her words and look made his pulses leap. She had believed his story, then! If he could make her despise him a little, better still! “So you’ll not try to make a fool of me?”

She shrugged. “You’ve shown me my error. I like you better this way, too. I detest the rôle of temptress!”

“You play it to perfection, however. Well, I have gained untold respect for your great abilities!”

“Why? Because the First Consul thinks fit to employ me?”

“Not at all. Because you are able to deceive St. Leger so perfectly.”

She started slightly. "How do you mean? In what way?"

"Come, come!" O'Donnell regarded her smilingly. "To business. You and he are friends, have a certain mutual objective, yet your ends are very different—in fact are quite opposed. I stand between you. I know the game he is playing, and you do not know it. You understand? You do not know it! I can take bids from either side. I can be of use to either of you. I can betray either of you, unless I find it to my interest to do otherwise. You comprehend?"

His words had startled her. As he spoke, her narrowed eyes became cold, calculating, tensed. She was suddenly on the alert, every faculty centered on him.

"What makes you think I do not know St. Leger's real purpose?"

"Because, if you knew it, you'd not be sitting here doing nothing about it!" and O'Donnell chuckled gaily. "You've deceived him beautifully. He thinks you're acting in sympathy with him, that you have little influence or real ability, and that you can merely be of use to him. You, on the contrary, are also deceived by him. He's working with others, and keeping you blind to it."

His vague shaft had somehow gone home, for he saw her fingers clench until the knuckles whitened. She was silent for an instant, then spoke abruptly.

"Words are cheap, my American. Perhaps it is as you say; perhaps not. I have learned a thing or two about you since our last meeting; your encounter with Raphael, for instance, and what the blacks think of you."

He knew in a flash that she must have learned all this from St. Leger, who must have had it straight from Moyses.

"St. Leger told you, eh?" he said. "Moyse should have told you direct. Is it possible that I am correct in my surmise—that you, who should be dealing direct with Moyses, are content to let St. Leger act as go-between?"

Her eyes dilated slightly. "Let us come to business, as you suggest. I do not care to discuss my work and plans. You want certain things. I want certain things. Can we be of use to each other?"

"Possibly," he rejoined coolly. "I am here because I think you can be of value to me. Whether I can be of value to you, I don't know. It is certain that I can be of value to St. Leger, however."

"In regard to munitions?" she asked quickly. O'Donnell looked his real surprise.

"Eh? No, not at all. In regard to the English monopoly on the island trade."

Her lips drew down disdainfully. "It is no secret that he is of their party. They spent twenty thousand lives and two million pounds trying to seize the island, and failed. Let him work for them! They will not return soon."

O'Donnell laughed. "He is cleverer than I thought."

"What do you mean?" she snapped, a quick glint in her eyes.

"He wants it generally supposed that he is working for English interests; as you say, it's no secret. Suppose he has an entirely different end in view, one which he keeps secret, unknown to anyone?" As he talked, things were taking shape before his mind's eye—things he had not previously plotted out, but which came leaping full-born into his brain. "Suppose he is using you, using Moyses, making fools of you both? Remember, the mulattoes hate the whites worse than they hate the blacks! Well, let all that pass. What do you want of me?"

He perceived the instant effect of his words in her heightened color, the eagerness of her look. He was giving her something to think about, and the idea amused him.

“Let me ask first,” she returned. “You desire—what? Why are you here? To dig up the treasures of émigrés, as I have heard?”

“In large part, yes,” replied O’Donnell. “We have mentioned this man Borie, if you remember. Now, if I can find him, or obtain definite news of his death, I shall be richly repaid. He left a brother and a large estate in America, but the brother cannot touch it under American law unless he is known to be dead. That is part of my business here. Another part is the recovery of certain family treasures. You see?”

“I see more than you think,” she broke in eagerly. “We can work together, you and I. You cannot work with St. Leger. He is a mulatto, and——”

“Nonsense! Let’s abandon all this comedy of words,” said O’Donnell suddenly, gravely. “I have no taste for it. You and St. Leger lie to each other, trick each other, carry on all sorts of intrigues. You and he are working for the same object, paradoxical as it seems, with entirely different motives. That object is to rid Haiti of Toussaint Louverture and to set another in his place. On the question of who that other shall be, your paths diverge. Let us give up this dueling and come to business.”

“Very well. You want money, is it not?” she said, her eyes fastened steadily upon him, a slight pallor coming into her face. “My American, I can be a good friend or a bad enemy; a worse enemy than you imagine or dream! You want money, hidden treasure, word of Alexandre Borie—good! I can tell you something in advance of my bargain. Borie came here to the island, sold his lands to St. Leger, and an hour afterward was killed and robbed.”

“How and where?” demanded O’Donnell, rigidly controlling his emotion, his eyes deadly cold. “Can I procure a statement to this effect?”

“If I give you one, yes,” she answered. “At that time there was no house, for the Borie plantation had been burned to the ground. So, when they had gone over the place, St. Leger and Alexandre Borie came here with the notary; in that room inside, the bargain was concluded, the papers were signed and affirmed, the money was paid. Alexandre and I were friends—I might say we were more, for he was interested in me. Except that my husband had then lately died, I might have become interested in him; men have no interest whatever for me, but he was different. There was something about him that drew one.”

She paused for a moment, her eyes downcast, a delicate color coming into her face. She thus did not observe the abrupt hardening of O’Donnell’s eyes, the grim tension of his lips, but it lasted only an instant and was gone.

“Well, let that pass,” she said, and sighed. “I gave a dinner here for them. One or two other planters, whom Borie knew, were here. Shortly after it began, Alexandre was called outside to see someone who had arrived with a message for him. He did not return. Half an hour later we found his body lying down the drive, toward the road. He had been murdered and robbed.”

“So!” exclaimed O’Donnell, with a merely polite interest. “Did you see his body?”

“Yes, and he was dead.” She shuddered a little—an emotion well assumed, but still assumed. O’Donnell judged her to be, in reality, quite incapable of such an emotion.

“Good!” he exclaimed. “That will settle everything, then. Will you write out a statement to that effect?”

“Gladly—if you desire it.”

“What became of the body?”

“I do not know. I think some of St. Leger’s blacks carried it off.”

“Very well. I thank you for this information,” said O’Donnell earnestly. “If you will be so good as to write and sign a statement giving these details, I shall be in your debt.”

She leaned back and smiled. "So I can do something for you? Account it done. Now it is my turn. You read that letter, in which the First Consul said that my measures would be approved by him?"

O'Donnell nodded silently. Now he was convinced that she had forged that letter herself.

"If you are willing to do something for me, I shall place in your hands an order for one million francs, to be paid to you personally by Citizen Lacroix, the chief agent of Bonaparte in the United States."

"I have heard of him. He is in New York—eh? One million, did you say?" O'Donnell's eyes dilated. "One million francs, madame?"

"Exactly. Not in assignats, but in gold." Her gaze rested on him coolly, noted the eagerness growing in his face, the gleam in his eyes. Now she was on more solid ground, became more certain of herself momentarily.

"But—but what do you expect me to do, to earn such an amount?" he stammered.

"Save the lives of white men, men of your own color, citizen," she returned earnestly. "Assist in staying bloodshed. Show yourself a man of power, of vision, a man whom Bonaparte would delight to honor!"

"You grow cheap, my lady," said O'Donnell—strictly to himself. He stared at her as she spoke, his eyes wide in wondering inquiry. She continued, her voice very low, with a glance around to be certain none was near.

"I have information of the best, citizen. Our good governor is placing an enormous order for munitions, muskets, powder, through your firm; as he usually does, he expects this to be handled by you personally, for you have his confidence. Further, he is about to place another large order with you for cannon and more powder."

"Yes?" murmured O'Donnell breathlessly. She made a little gesture of caution.

"It is simple. Before the powder leaves your country, have black sand mixed in with it. The cannon must be cast; see that in the casting, defects are produced in the metal. You will save the lives of Frenchmen. You will be doing a great action, a noble action! You risk nothing, for I believe you are paid when the goods leave America."

This was true.

Uncontrollable agitation seized upon O'Donnell; sweat leaped out in great beads upon his forehead. To conceal what lay in his eyes, he leaned over, put his face in his hands for a moment, took out his kerchief and mopped his brow. The woman watched him with a slight smile in her eyes, almost a sneer of contempt, but it did not touch her lips. Presently he had himself under control, and brought out his case of cigars. His fingers trembled as he selected one, and seeing this, swift exultation leaped into her face. She called out sharply. A black appeared, and brought a lighted candle which he set on the table. O'Donnell lighted his Havannah in silence.

"Madame," he said hoarsely, when they were once more alone, "you tempt me—God knows, you tempt me almost beyond endurance!"

He stared at her from bloodshot eyes. It was true that his temptation was dreadful; his fingers ached to clench about that soft white throat of hers. She, however, could not read his mind, and sank back in her chair with a silvery little laugh.

"A million in gold, my American!" she said. "Listen; I will give you the order day after tomorrow. It must be written in cipher, you understand. Also, with it I will give you a letter for Citizen Lacroix. Give him the order and the letter. When he sees that the work has been done,

he will pay you instantly. Otherwise, do not ship the material. You see? You are fully protected. It is quite safe.”

“True,” he said, and drew a deep breath as though relieved.

“Wait here a moment.” She rose quickly, left the gallery and passed into the house, as though remembering something. O’Donnell looked after her.

“Dupuche was right,” he thought. “And who knows? Perhaps Le Serpent was right also. There is something terrible about this creature, something that belies the very tokens of her sex; one can sense it, one can feel it, without at all understanding it. And now, I predict that when she returns, she will tell me that St. Leger killed and robbed my brother. Let us see!”

He heard her coming, and rose as she appeared. She came toward him, slimly beautiful, her lips half open, her eyes tender. Were he not so certain now of her acting, he would have thought her deeply sincere.

“I want you to have this,” she said, holding out something in her hand. “Give it to his family, his brother.”

Lucky indeed that O’Donnell was on his guard. He went hot and cold inside, but only a perplexed curiosity showed in his face.

“Eh? Whose family?”

“Alexandre Borie’s,” she rejoined, and placed the locket in his hand. “You see, he gave it to me, just the day before he was killed. The woman was his sister, he said; it was lovely, and he wanted me to wear it.”

It was a thin miniature on ivory, framed in gold and pearls.

Not his sister, but his mother! The words were on O’Donnell’s lips, but he checked them in time. So Alexandre had given it to this woman, an acquaintance of a week or two? Had said it was his sister, wanted her to wear it? A harsh laugh broke from him. His eyes dilated fiercely. She took a step backward.

“What’s the matter?” she exclaimed in quick alarm.

“The matter?” O’Donnell recovered himself. “What is a trinket like this, at such a time? We are talking of a million francs in gold! All right, all right, I’ll see that this thing reaches the family. Now about the payment—it is agreed? It is understood?”

“Yes.” A touch of scorn lay in her eyes. “I shall be in town day after tomorrow. Where shall I see you?”

“At the house of Dupuche, where I am stopping. You know it?”

She nodded. “One thing more about Borie,” she said quietly, impressively. “St. Leger did not grieve for him, you comprehend? And once or twice since, he has said things, little things, that made me quite certain. He had Alexandre killed, no doubt for the money that was still in his pocket.”

“Oh, very likely.” O’Donnell nodded carelessly. “With your statement, the affair is closed. And now, I see that my groom is waiting out there——”

“You will not remain and lunch with me?”

“No, no! Don’t you see?” O’Donnell spoke with hoarse impatience. “I must think about this, be sure how I can manage it! It won’t be easy. I must have a portion of the payment in advance, for bribes will be necessary. The balance when done.”

“That is understood,” she answered. “A hundred thousand francs when you deliver my letter to Citizen Lacroix. I will make the stipulation.”

“Good. And now, madame, permit me to depart; you have vanquished me, as I knew you would. More, you have overwhelmed me!”

Bending over her hand, he muttered a word of farewell and strode hurriedly away, like a man plunged in deep and disturbing yet tumultuously happy thought. When he had mounted, he turned and waved a hand, and her voice reached him in a silvery farewell.

Then O'Donnell put spurs to his horse, and rode away wildly down the long avenue of trees, with Louis clattering after him. He came out into the highway, deserted, blinding hot, steaming in the noonday sunlight. He reined in his horse. His features were contorted, working with anguish, as he lifted both hands and shook his clenched fists in the air.

"Proof, proof," he cried out in English. "She murdered the one, she would make the other a traitor, the lowest of wretches! Your portrait, our mother—your portrait, that he had sworn would never leave his heart while he lived! And I sat there, listened to her damned lies, looked into her accursed eyes, gulped down all she said, could not tear the life out of her; a woman, indeed! No, a fiend incarnate! If it is true that she did it, if I can get proof, real proof——"

Louis pressed up alongside with terror in his black features, and his frightened voice pierced through the frenzy that had gripped O'Donnell.

"Eh? What is it, Louis?"

"Master, the spirit must not come upon you here!" cried out the black earnestly. "It is noon, and the sun will smite you down. See, the sweat is running from you like water! There, master; you look better now. I have seen the *papalois* when the spirit comes upon them, and I know what it is like, but it must not come in the daytime, like this——"

The gods of vaudou! O'Donnell lifted his head and laughed wildly.

"Right, Louis, right!" he cried out. "Dambala demands a sacrifice, and not the blood of a goat either! Come, on our way back to town! Prepare the sacrifice, Louis!"

Still laughing, he drove in his spurs. Louis followed after him with fresh terror in his face.

CHAPTER VII

ONE SOWS THE SEED; ANOTHER REAPS

Cristophe, his tunic stripped open, his great barrel of a chest glistening with sweat, regarded the American curiously, and handed back the documents prepared by Toussaint.

"Very well, mon ami," he said, with the good-humored camaraderie which made him by far the most popular of all the black leaders. "The Aussenac plantation is now owned by Colonel Simon. It has made him so wealthy that he is buying diamonds for all his twenty mistresses and gives grand banquets three times a week. He will laugh and tell you to help yourself to all the gold underground, so that you leave him the cane fields!"

Cristophe grinned as he proceeded. "The Langlade plantation belongs to me, also, it has made me rich. I will give you a note to my *gerant*, old Edouard, ordering him to give you every assistance. The Dartigues place is up toward the mountains, farther away; it has never been put back into cultivation and no one lives there, so you'll have no trouble. The Borie *habitation*—but you have met Citizen St. Leger, I think? Yes. Well, you will talk to him. If he opposes you, send me word and I'll have a troop of dragoons ride out there and argue the matter with him. *Diable!* I should like that! I might even go myself."

It was early morning again, the day after O'Donnell's interview with Citizeness Rigaud. Cristophe had been since daybreak up at the fortress he was building on the hill above the city. A mason himself by trade, he had been showing his men how to lay stone. Hot, disheveled, good-humored, he was meeting the dread San Domingo summer as only a black could meet it, with easy nonchalance.

Now he beckoned to a secretary, told him to write the note to his plantation manager, then regarded O'Donnell again.

"You Americans are strange men," he said. "You are walking on eggs, but you do not seem afraid, and your step is devilish sure. Everybody knows your business here. Moysse will have you killed like a fly, if you give him the chance. He has left Le Cap, I'm glad to say—has gone to his plantation over toward Limbe, but this does not mean he doesn't know everything that goes on. If you intend to ride around digging up treasure, let me give you a guard."

"No. My whereabouts would only be advertised by a guard. I'd be circumscribed in my movements, limited, bothered in a dozen ways."

"Very well, then let one of my aides ride with you. A uniform makes a tremendous impression on my people, you know," and Cristophe chuckled as he regarded his own soiled, sweat-stained grandeur. "When do you wish to visit the Aussenac plantation?"

"Now," said O'Donnell. "I can reach there by noon, discover in two hours if any of the buried things remain, and be back here by evening."

"As you like. I'll send Colonel Bartolo with you. He'll obtain laborers to dig, and wagons to fetch back your treasure, if you find any. I know none has ever been found on my plantation; those Langlades were clever men. I remember offering to spare them if they would turn over their treasures, but they laughed at me. They were still laughing when I shot them. Brave fellows, they were! That was while Le Cap was burning. It burned four whole days and nights; it was a great city in those days. Phew, how it smelled of burned flesh for weeks afterward! Well, this Bartolo is an honest fellow and you can trust him fully. He killed sixteen English with his own hand in one fight; that was why I made him a colonel."

Twenty minutes later, with the gorgeously uniformed Colonel Bartolo riding beside him and Louis in the rear, O'Donnell rode out of the city.

Cooler reflection in the matter of Citizeness Rigaud had determined him to get his ostensible errand under way before she brought her letters on the morrow. He realized full well how deep was her craft, how subtle was her guile. He wanted now to keep busy, to give fate no chance to waylay him in fresh intrigues, before he settled the affair in hand and secured the documents she had promised him. She would most assuredly keep her promise if he had hoodwinked her well enough, as he believed he had done.

"If I but had absolute knowledge that she killed Alexandre!" he thought as he rode. "I am convinced that she did, but I lack reasonable evidence. Will St. Leger furnish it? Then——"

He spurred his horse, rode faster through the heat, heading out into the Plaine du Nord.

An hour later the Aussenac plantation appeared ahead—a collection of makeshift cabins erected above the ashes of a once magnificent house in the midst of far-flung cane fields, and to one side a new house halfway built. The workers had come in from the fields. A great throng of blacks were eating beneath sun-shelters of thatched straw, with voices rising shrill and laughter ringing loud.

Colonel Simon, an immense, half-naked man, received his guests courteously and led O'Donnell and Bartolo to his own table. As Christophe had predicted, he laughed uproariously, held his fat paunch, and told O'Donnell to help himself. He even offered to take charge of the digging party, called a dozen eager blacks, and an hour later set to work under O'Donnell's direction.

Here, of course, there was no need of any guard. Besides, O'Donnell's name was known, and the tongue of Louis wagged freely, so that the American was treated with the deepest respect. His directions were simple; he was to dig between two immense palms at one corner of the plantation house. The palms had been blasted by the flames consuming the great house, but their blackened stems remained in place.

Excitement ran high when, after a half-hour's labor, a heavy barrel was disinterred. Half a dozen more followed it, and three huge iron-bound chests. Far from making any objection to the treasure being carried off, the paunchy colonel ordered up two plantation carts, loaded in the barrels and chests, and then broached a keg of tafia in celebration of the event. Half an hour afterward, O'Donnell was on his way back to Le Cap, riding ahead of the carts with Louis, who led the horse of Bartolo. The doughty colonel himself reposed aboard one of the carts, snoring off his white rum.

Before dark the treasure, if such indeed it were, was safe behind the iron doors of Dupuche's warehouse.

Next morning O'Donnell was up early, and sent word to Colonel Bartolo that he would be needed by nine sharp. The American was going this morning to the plantation now owned by Christophe, some thirteen miles from the city.

He was still at breakfast, and was arranging with Dupuche to store and ship whatever treasure might be unearthed, getting it off by the first vessel to Philadelphia, when a black summoned him in haste. He found Madame Rigaud sitting her horse in the courtyard, refusing to dismount. She was holding a large sealed packet.

"You have not changed your mind? It is agreed, then?"

"Absolutely," said O'Donnell, with a smile. She handed him down the packet.

"All you desire is here then. No, thanks, I'll not stop a moment. Au revoir!"

With a smile and a wave of her hand, she turned the horse and was gone. O'Donnell took the packet to his own room and there examined it hastily.

Besides the two letters in cipher to Lacroix, here was the thing he most desired—the statement he had requested in regard to the death of his brother. He saw at once that she was fully deceived and deemed him quite ensnared by the million-franc bribe; for not only had she written out the account substantially as she had told it him, but even expressed her belief that Alexandre had been killed and robbed at St. Leger's order. That she should have said this was surprising. That she should have written it was astounding.

"I've fooled her!" thought O'Donnell exultantly, and pocketed this document with a grim satisfaction. "She believes my yarn, believes I'm a rascally taker of bribes. Good! My honest woman, you have erected the scaffold for your own destruction."

Colonel Bartolo arrived, smelling of fresh rum. Putting away carefully the two cipher letters to Lacroix, the American joined his escort and groom below, and went riding away in huge delight and anticipation.

Bartolo was a stupid black, of gigantic strength like most of those who had risen above their fellows, but of no wit whatever. He was this morning a red-eyed, sullen, most unamiable companion. In consequence, O'Donnell left him to his own drowsy devices, and beckoned Louis to his side, questioning the black about the various events he had witnessed during the wars.

Of this, however, he soon sickened. During the past years, Louis had taken part in horrors that made the very imagination reel. He recounted them with the casual air and the utter simplicity of one who accepted them as an integral part of life. His tales of torture inflicted upon helpless whites were not new to O'Donnell, but were more graphic and detailed; it was in describing the late struggle between blacks and mulattoes that he passed all bounds.

His recital of wholesale massacres, of ghastly tortures equalled only in the history of Mongols or Cossacks, of repeated battles wherein the vanquished were literally torn to pieces by the teeth and hands of their conquerors, embodied a ferocity the more appalling in that it was to him so apparently normal. Human life meant nothing at all.

And, as O'Donnell knew only too well, this sort of thing was yet unfinished. The present peaceful and prosperous life of the island was only an interlude, a breathing space wherein the combatants were gathering strength for more dreadful struggles that could have but one end—the absolute extermination of either the black or the white race in Haiti. While the power of Toussaint lasted, there would be organization, compromise, a certain tolerance. When it failed, flame and blood would once again sweep the hapless land from end to end.

They rode on through the gathering heat of the day, with noon approaching. Men and animals dripped sweat; the trees and cane fields and mountains shimmered and swam in the heat haze. Except in the mountains or the old buccaneer isle of Tortuga, there was no escape in all the land from the dread summer heat.

"Three miles more, master!" The voice of Louis pierced into O'Donnell's reflections and aroused him. The road here ran through lush steaming growth, topped by towering trees. "Look! Do you see that huge *mapou* tree ahead beside the road? I remember it well, from years ago. I was only a boy, too small to carry a musket. There were thirty white women and half as many children, all gathered around that tree. They killed the children first, taking them by the feet and tearing them asunder, and bets were made——"

O'Donnell turned and looked at him. A grayish pallor of awful fear came into the face of Louis, and he became quiet, trembling, staring back from eyes of terror; it is true that in this

instant O'Donnell was close to shooting him down, for the words that fell from his lips passed all bearing. Yet the black meant no harm, saw no harm in what he said. He was relating a scene he had witnessed, no more.

As they approached that notable tree, O'Donnell gazed at it. What had been a mighty giant was now only a strangled stump, for the embrace of the "cursed fig" had folded around it. The octopus-like arms of this enormous parasite had crushed the tree, weaving about it a solid mass of iron creepers, which now survived triumphant over the dead *mapou*. With a clatter of hooves, Colonel Bartolo now caught up with them and drew rein abreast, yawning and grinning.

"Sound asleep!" he observed. "Wah! I am hungry. Something happened last night, and I cannot remember what it was, citizen. I recall that something was said about death coming to me from the *figuier maudit*, like that tree yonder. Perhaps it was a dream, eh? The sight of that *figuier* made me think about it."

The "cursed fig" and its surrounding growths were a scant twenty feet away, and almost abreast. Suddenly the voice of Louis rose in sharp, shrill warning.

"Master! I see a glitter, like the sun on muskets——"

His words were drowned in the roaring explosion of muskets close at hand. Powder smoke spurted out across the road. O'Donnell felt his horse give one wild spring, then come to abrupt quivering halt; he knew the poor beast must be mortally stricken. Something caught at his round hat and carried it from his head. An invisible finger tore at his shoulder, ripping away the cloth, yet not breaking the skin as it passed. Lead whistled in the air all around.

The horse of Louis plunged down and lay kicking, the groom drawing himself clear but not rising. O'Donnell, still in the saddle, snatched at his pistols, but powder smoke was rolling across the road, cloaking the trees. There was no breeze to dispel it. Then he heard a frightful scream burst from Bartolo, on his right.

Blood was gushing out across the black's gay uniform; bullets had torn through his throat and chest. Yet, even as he screamed, Bartolo struck in spurs, and his horse bounded forward. Half a dozen figures appeared at the edge of the trees. He hurled his steed directly at them, and his pistols erupted fire; as they exploded, he leaned forward, aiming at the men below him, but he did not rise. He leaned farther, toppled over from the saddle, and as he plunged down, bayonets were buried in his body. His horse went dashing away.

All this passed in a flash, as O'Donnell sat there unmoving, waiting; it was like a scene from some ghastly dream. He felt his horse quiver again, and slowly sink. Swiftly, he got out of the saddle, a pistol in either hand, and stood clear of the dying animal. A yell pealed up, and from the thinning smoke burst a clump of blacks leaping forward, five of them, soldiers in uniform. Bartolo's pistols had brought down two as he died.

One of them raised a pistol and fired; the ball sang past O'Donnell's head, clumped into the dying horse, and the animal fell, mercifully killed. O'Donnell lifted his two weapons, looking at the contorted black faces, the rolling eyes, the open mouths fronting him.

"Fools!" he cried in Creole. "Do you not know that Dambala protects me?"

He fired, then, deliberately. The two foremost figures plunged forward. The other three checked their rush. Their muskets were empty. At this instant O'Donnell heard another pistol shot from the dust behind him, then a second. One of the soldiers spun about and fell quiet. Another clapped hand to side and screamed horribly, like an animal, then turned and went dashing in among the trees. One of the black soldiers remained, gaping stupidly about, irresolute.

It was Louis who had fired those two shots, lying beside his dead horse. Now he leaped erect, a yell bursting from him, and hurled himself forward, a knife flaming in his hand. He flung himself on the soldier. This the latter understood well enough, meeting the rush with a swing of his musket; but Louis dodged disdainfully and his blade drove home into the belly of the soldier. They went down together, the knife rising and falling repeatedly, a dreadful crimson pool spreading in the dust of the road.

O'Donnell strode forward, amazed that it was so ended. The ambush had been composed of an officer and six men. The officer lay here, stricken down by Bartolo's first bullet, which had broken his spine; at short distance, the heavy pistol balls did not miss, did not fail to do their business efficiently.

The officer was a mulatto, almost white, and his eyes met the gaze of the American with a flare of hatred. He tried to speak. A pistol was in his hand. He lifted it; then his eyes glazed and his hand fell, and he died. Stepping past the hacked dead figure of Bartolo, O'Donnell went in among the trees and there found seven horses tethered, and no man guarding them. He led them out into the road and selected two.

"Louis!" At his call, the groom, who had been looting the dead men, put away his reddened knife and came quickly. "Replace these two saddles with our own. Then ride back to the city, go direct to the palace, and tell General Cristophe himself what has happened here. I shall be ahead at his plantation. You did well, Louis. I will give you a reward."

"Very well, master," said Louis, grinning. "Dambala protects you; that is now certain."

O'Donnell shrugged. Who knew? Perhaps there was some truth in it. The wonder was, to him, that he had been tempted to kill this black, who had now saved his life.

With Louis gone on the back trail, he mounted and rode on through the heat. In no long time he reached the Langlade plantation, now owned by Cristophe. The manager and his workers had come in for the noon rest, and openly wondered at this white who could travel at such an hour. None of them could read, but O'Donnell read them the letter of Cristophe, whose signature was well known to the manager. He said nothing about the ambush.

When the worst of the heat was over, O'Donnell fell to work with a corps of diggers. He knew exactly where to look, seeking two hidden quantities of stuff. One cache, despite the words of Cristophe, had long since been looted and was empty. The other remained intact. Chests were brought out, and barrels. These were being loaded into carts, in the cool of the afternoon, when an officer and half a dozen mounted men, with Louis, came dashing up.

O'Donnell rode back with them, presently. The dead assailants were identified by their uniforms as being from one of Moyses's regiments, and Bartolo's body was picked up to be taken into town by the carts. O'Donnell rode on ahead with the escort, and upon reaching town went direct to the palace.

Cristophe heard the officer's report and looked at O'Donnell.

"Shall I send for Moyses and take up the matter with him?"

"Would it accomplish anything?"

"Frankly, no. He would know nothing about the affair, would say that some of his men had turned brigand. It's not uncommon."

"Then don't waste time," said O'Donnell.

"Right. Are those horses you took to replace your own, good ones?"

"Extremely fine ones."

"Keep them. I'll give you an order for their possession. So you've been finding what you sought, eh?" The giant black grinned. "You don't seem exultant over treasure, or disturbed

over these two attempts on your life.”

“Neither do you,” said O’Donnell, nettled. Cristophe broke into a laugh.

“Why should I? You refused to let me give you a guard; these fellows wouldn’t have attacked a dozen men. Perhaps you’ll reconsider now. You have yet to visit St. Leger and the Dartigues *habitation*, which is far from the city. Your doings are evidently watched; spies are numerous. It’s too bad you killed all those rascals; a touch of fire would have made one or two do some talking. There’s nothing to be done about it now. Do you still refuse a guard?”

“No,” said O’Donnell. “In a couple of days I’ll leave to visit the Dartigues place. I suggest that two carts be sent on there tomorrow, as they’ll go slowly; then, give me an officer who can be trusted, with twenty men. They can escort me there and return here with whatever is found. From there I’m going on into the mountains with my groom.”

“So? Into the mountains?” Cristophe gave him one keen look, and shrugged. “My aide, Colonel Rideau, will accompany you. I cannot spare him as well as I can Bartolo, so be more careful, I pray! I’ll get the carts off tomorrow. It’ll take you all day to reach the Dartigues place. What about St. Leger, eh?”

“I’ll see him tomorrow. Alone.”

“Oh! Then I’ll not give Colonel Rideau any orders until I see whether you return,” said Cristophe with a grimace. O’Donnell laughed at this, and took his leave.

About nine of the following morning, after getting an early start, the American arrived at the Borie plantation.

When at last he was riding up the long approach from the highway, with Louis following, he was somewhat relieved to find that he recognized nothing about the place. None of his dim boyish memories were fulfilled, for fire had swept away everything, and the rebuilt structures were squalid affairs. The site of the old plantation house had been a small knoll dominated by huge trees. The trees were gone, the house was gone. Piles of building materials close by showed that St. Leger was about to build himself a house here, and the site had also been cleared, but no work was going forward at the moment.

No blacks were in sight about the half-dozen cabins. As O’Donnell rode up, St. Leger came striding out of the largest hut, stood for a moment staring in evident surprise, then came forward in cordial greeting.

“Citizen O’Donnell! I was just thinking of you. But you’ve come at an evil moment; my grooms are at the stables, there behind the trees——”

O’Donnell swung down and gave his reins to Louis, then took one of the pistols from the holster at his saddle. He turned to the mulatto, thrusting the pistol into the belt.

“Let us speak English, since you know it well,” he said calmly. “I’ve come here to have a talk with you. It may not be a friendly talk. That depends on you.”

In blank astonishment at this greeting, St. Leger drew himself up, then bowed.

“Enter, if you please,” he said, with a gesture toward the cabin. “I am alone.”

O’Donnell nodded and strode past him. The cabin presented but one large room, with a bed in the corner and a large desk heaped with papers at one side. He drew out a chair and sat down. St. Leger resumed his seat at the desk, his gaze fastened on the American.

“I do not comprehend your attitude,” he began. O’Donnell interrupted curtly.

“Let me explain it. My errand in the country is to collect valuables buried by certain of the old families. I have full authorization from Toussaint, and General Cristophe has placed whatever force I desire at my disposal. Among my clients, for whom I am doing this work, is the Borie family, and I wish to search here for some of their possessions. I have also been

engaged to obtain news of one Alexandre Borie, who disappeared here two years ago or less. I have succeeded. This explains my attitude toward you.”

As he listened, St. Leger’s face became a bronze mask, immobile, alert. It changed swiftly at these last words.

“Toward me?” he repeated in unassumed surprise. “But——”

O’Donnell cut in with a curt gesture.

“You made me certain overtures,” he proceeded. “By a lucky chance, I have discovered what no one else knows about you, Citizen St. Leger—your plans, your aims, your ambitions. I am by no means certain whether to consider you a friend or an enemy. This must be settled before we can go farther.”

At the word “ambitions,” St. Leger gave him a keen look.

“There is no enmity between us,” he responded slowly. “I know of no reason for any. As to the Borie property, you may search and welcome! I will place men to do the work under your orders. I am wealthy, and do not need this pitiful remnant of a lost fortune.” A certain dignity came into his manner as he went on. “I do not understand what you mean by references to my aims. I beg of you, make this more clear.”

“You have been betrayed.”

The slow, merciless words fell like a hammer-blow. A mortal pallor crept across the countenance of St. Leger.

“I? Betrayed? To whom?”

“You should say, by whom!” returned the American. “But I understand your chief fear. Be at rest; you have not been betrayed to Toussaint, as yet.”

From his pocket he took the statement made out in regard to the death of Alexandre Borie and silently handed it to the mulatto. The latter took it, with evident agitation; but as he glanced over the writing, a look of untold relief swept into his face, followed by a darkening of swift anger. He handed back the paper and looked at O’Donnell.

“To a certain extent, this document tells the truth,” he said, and smiled. “I thought you referred to other matters. It is not true that I had anything to do with Borie’s death. He was a man whom I respected and liked.” A sudden gust of fury rose in his eyes. “That woman! She, the proud Madame Rigaud, who came here from France as a wife of a rich planter, as the friend of Bonaparte! She—bah, it stifles me! Why should she accuse me of her own deliberate act?”

A flush grew in his face. His eyes, distended, stared at O’Donnell in wild, incoherent emotion. He tore at his collar, wrenched it open.

“Why?” said O’Donnell. “Because she, perhaps, has not been fooled as you supposed, but has discovered your ambition.”

St. Leger was instantly in command of himself.

“That is twice you have mentioned the word,” he said, looking gloomily at O’Donnell. The latter looked him in the eyes, calmly.

“Do you imagine she would permit your dream to come true? Not in the least. However, what I know is locked in my own heart. I have not discussed it with her, I assure you. She accuses you of having killed Alexandre Borie. You lay the blame on her. Why? That is most unlikely. She would have no reason to commit such a crime.”

A thin, sneering laugh came to St. Leger’s lips.

“No reason?” he said, and laughed again. Then he sobered, regarding O’Donnell. “Come, citizen! You say that you have discovered various things about me——”

“If I have done so, perhaps she has done so as well,” said O’Donnell gravely. “They are no concern of mine. I am entirely ready to discuss with you the chances of providing the English with a monopoly of the island trade. In fact, I have already mentioned it to the governor, but he is not receptive. Let us put all this aside. You wondered why I brought this pistol with me? Because I have been warned against you, citizen.”

“Against me?” uttered St. Leger in unassumed astonishment. “But I have no reason to harm you—none in the world!”

“You had no reason to kill Alexandre Borie,” said O’Donnell, “unless it was to rob him of the money you had just paid him.”

The mulatto’s features became very dark, under a sudden tide of passionate anger.

“Enough of this!” he cried out “Let us settle that accusation once and for all, my friend!”

“With all my heart,” said O’Donnell. “Why was Borie murdered? By whom?”

St. Leger leaned forward. Quietly, simply, he began to speak, answering these questions, and O’Donnell realized that at last he was hearing the truth.

CHAPTER VIII

ST. LEGER SETTLES EVERYTHING

It was mid-afternoon when O'Donnell left the former Borie plantation. He exchanged a last cordial word, a hearty handgrip, with St. Leger and then rode on to overtake a procession of three carts headed for Le Cap. The family goods had been recovered, and St. Leger had seen them off with a shrug and a gay smile.

Before O'Donnell's dust had settled, the fastest horse in the stables of the mulatto was being saddled and brought to the cabins. Booted and spurred, St. Leger swung up into the saddle and started away, alone. Upon reaching the highway he encountered a weary rider, apparently a white but in reality a mulatto like himself, upon a foam-lathered horse. The two drew rein, stirrup to stirrup.

"Letters from the south, citizen," exclaimed the newcomer, handing over a small packet. "Lucky I caught you, eh?"

"Good!" cried St. Leger eagerly, and tore open the packet. "Go on to the house, sleep, refresh yourself. I'll be back sometime tonight and will give you return letters."

He hurriedly ran his eye over the papers, then stuffed them into his pocket. Next moment he put spurs to his horse and shot away, riding like a madman.

Two hours later he rode up to the plantation house occupied as headquarters by General Moyses. When he dismounted from his staggering horse, the poor beast stood with feet wide apart, unable to move further, head hanging low to the ground.

"Leave him alone," said the grooms. "He is dying. He will be dead in two minutes."

St. Leger heard, but without a glance at the animal went on hurriedly into the house.

Warned of the arrival, Moyses received him alone in a large room, and posted a sentry at the closed door to keep all others out. The one-eyed general sank into a chair, lit a cigar, and waved his hand at a table loaded with rich wines of all sorts, and magnificent goblets of Venice glass.

"Something has happened?" he said. "Drink, be comfortable. You have ridden fast."

"The devil himself could ride no faster," said St. Leger with a hasty laugh, and gulped down a goblet of Canary. "Ah! That's better." He flung himself into a chair and fastened his eyes on Moyses. "Yes. Everything's happened at once; a courier came from the south just as I was leaving. But let the news wait. General, I had a long talk today with that American *negociant*, Citizen O'Donnell."

There was a little silence. Then Moyses's voice burst upon the room in a storm of curses that began loudly and ended in low, intense foulness. Moyses was capable of great fury, but he was most dangerous when he kept himself under control and his brain clear. It was not clear at all times. He might be drunk for days, and then he was like a blinded bull, for he had small restraint over his passions. His headquarters was usually occupied by white prostitutes from Le Cap and was the scene of wild and bestial revels. In these pleasures his officers and even his soldiers shared, and for this reason they were devoted to him. When he so desired, however, Moyses could hold himself strictly aloof from all dissipation, and at these times he had a brain to be reckoned with.

"Well?" he demanded harshly. "What about this American?"

"I understand how you feel toward him, but he's no enemy of mine, understand. We are very friendly. He's a good fellow." St. Leger poured more wine. His handsome features were flushed, his eyes were bloodshot. "General, we are being betrayed."

"Eh?" Moyses sat up straighter in his chair. "By whom?"

"By the Rigaud woman."

Moyse snorted disdainfully. "Nonsense."

"It is true. I have seen the documentary proof. She——"

"Listen, my friend," broke in Moyses earnestly. "She is a fool, that woman, but she has her use. I will have Toussaint Louverture taken care of; she believes that you and I will then seize the authority. So far, she's right. I'll seize the Cape. The mulattoes will rise behind you. Very good! She believes we will then rule the island for France, put the Paris commissioners in power instead of keeping them in subjection as Toussaint does. Let her think so and be damned to her! She has influence, is powerful among the whites. She will keep them quiet. They will help us. Then, when the moment comes to throw off the mask, make a clean sweep of all the whites, hoist the flag of England—well and good. But she does not know that this is our purpose, therefore she cannot betray us."

"Perhaps she has guessed, then," said St. Leger. "She is trying to get me killed through that American. She has told him something; he would admit little, but I think he knows a good deal. He had it from her. He's certain to go to Cristophe with it sooner or later, though he swore he would not do so. Still, I don't trust him or anyone not to talk."

The one eye of Moyses narrowed. "So? You are right, my friend. At this time, we cannot take chances. What do you propose?"

"She has betrayed us; therefore kill her!" said St. Leger calmly. "You know what she is like, what a fiend out of hell she can be! Get rid of her at once."

Moyse clapped his big hand down on the table, as though convinced.

"Very well! In two days I will have men about her house. I'll be there with them myself. Do you understand?"

A fierce delight transfigured the countenance of St. Leger.

"In two days. It is agreed?"

"Upon my word of honor!" said the black solemnly. "To tell the truth, I have been a little afraid of that hell-cat, but I have also desired to use her, if possible. Suppose you visit her tomorrow. Induce her to send out word immediately to the French party among the whites that I'm to be supported—eh? Once she does that, she can be killed without loss to us."

"An excellent idea. I'll do it." St. Leger refilled his goblet, filled another for Moyses, and did not see the sardonic glee that darted into the one savage eye. The two exquisite glasses lifted in air, touched with a gay clink. "Health, success, liberty! Unless you hear from me, take for granted she has done it."

"And now," said Moyses, when his glass was empty, "what news have you?"

The mulatto started in recollection, and eagerness flamed in his face.

"Of the best! Dessalines is massacring the mulattoes in the south; many have fled, all are looking to me, imploring me to do something. Five thousand are ready to rise under arms at my word. Ten thousand more men will join them immediately we can supply them with muskets."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Moyses. "You may tell them to be ready to rise and take Port au Prince on the sixth Thermidor. Toussaint will be dead, Le Cap will be in my hands."

"What? You mean it? So soon as that—the sixth Thermidor?"

Moysse nodded, chewing at his cigar. "No details, my friend. I alone know how it is to be done, and I will tell no living man. It must not fail!"

"Very well." St. Leger drew a deep breath, became cool. "They demand an immediate reply down there. The messenger is awaiting my return. That's one reason I killed my horse getting here."

A terrible smile flashed across the maimed features of Moysse. Then it was gone. He regarded the mulatto gravely.

"Do so, let them know immediately. Will you use my secretaries?"

St. Leger laughed lightly.

"I'm no such fool! I trust no secretaries. The messenger will be off tonight with the letters. You'll have to give me a fresh horse, if you will. Have the saddle changed—that's my favorite saddle and I fit into it perfectly."

Moysse grunted assent.

In effect, St. Leger was mounting in another ten minutes. Moysse, who had walked out to the horse with him, stood in talk for a moment and gave him a hearty grip of the hand. A low word was passed along by sentries who stood on watch; a cloaked horseman was coming down the drive from the highway.

"Au revoir, then!" exclaimed St. Leger, and was gone. He passed the horseman with a curious glance that told him nothing; in the starlight the cloaked figure was vague.

"Adieu, fool!" muttered the one-eyed black grimly.

The new arrival came up to where he stood, and drew rein, then stooped and spoke in a low tone. At the first words that passed, a burst of laughter escaped from Moysse, laughter so loud that St. Leger must have heard it as he rode away.

"Enter, enter! You come at the best possible time," he exclaimed eagerly. "That was St. Leger who just left."

"So I observed," replied a thin, silvery voice.

A moment later Citizeness Rigaud, clad all in black from head to foot, threw back her cloak and sat in the chair so recently vacated by St. Leger. Moysse grinned at her.

"You must die in two days," he said solemnly. "It is arranged. You are dangerous."

"So?" She regarded Moysse with a slow, feline smile. He poured wine, and she sipped it daintily. "My general, I am growing a little tired of our Citizen St. Leger."

"So am I. In some ways he is too cursed honest," growled Moysse with brutal candor.

"And I am not, eh?" She laughed lightly, amusedly. "It is all arranged, then? He is to rise with the mulattoes; you are to be placed in power, supported by an English fleet. So he tells you, at least. In reality, he'll have the English fleet behind *him*. Once Toussaint is gone, he'll turn and rend you, and will then be master of the island. Down with the blacks! Up with the men of color! Long live the mulatto republic!"

Moysse scowled at her, his one eye flaming with anger.

"I believe you," he said in a sombre voice. "Now, at least, you are speaking the truth! He is friendly with that accursed American, who has told him something. He knows you want to get him out of the way——"

"*What?*" The woman half started from her chair, with eyes ablaze, then sank back again. "That American? Impossible! No, no, it's impossible——"

"But true," said Moysse, with a nod. "The American showed him some documents, I don't know what."

Her features became pale as death, from sheer startled fury. She saw in a flash that O'Donnell had not believed her, must have gone to St. Leger about the death of Alexandre Borie, perhaps had bluffed or frightened St. Leger into telling the truth. Or did St. Leger know the truth? Did he know everything, perhaps? At this possibility, a gasp escaped her.

"Listen! You must put men to watch that American, at once!" she broke out, her voice like steel.

"Damn him!" replied Moysesulkily. "My men are afraid of him. Even the mulattoes think he cannot be killed."

"No matter; have him watched, you understand?" Her swift, vibrant tones lifted and stirred the black with their urgency. "He will attempt to communicate with Toussaint. Seize any messenger. Rather, take no chances; kill any messenger."

"Very well, that can be done," and Moyses brightened a little. "I told St. Leger everything was planned for the sixth Thermidor."

"And is it?"

He grinned at her. "It is, but you aren't going to make me talk, citizeness. St. Leger is riding home to get off letters tonight. I must send men to catch that messenger, who is now at St. Leger's house. We'll read those despatches of his, make sure he is sending the right word to the south, then can send them on by another man."

"And St. Leger will be of no further use to us—good!" she exclaimed with energy, and leaned back in her chair. "You're no fool, my general. Very well, send off your men, but tell them not to harm St. Leger. Leave him to me. I shall see him in the morning."

Moyse met her eyes, grunted something inarticulate, then rose and left the room.

When the door had closed, Madame Rigaud leaped to her feet, transformed. A spasm of uncontrollable fury seized upon her. She shook her clenched fists in the air, and her contorted features were twisted beyond recognition, but no sound came from her lips. Then, suddenly as it had come, the frenetic spasm departed. She dropped back into her chair, panting, biting her lips, her fingers twisting together.

"Tricked me—*me!*" she murmured. "Tricked me, the whole time! Now he'll let Toussaint know about the bribe, about the letters I gave him for Lacroix. I was right at the first. He is the other Borie, the brother from America. And he tricked me!"

Moyse came stamping back into the room. From the night, outside, sounded the clatter of running horses.

"They're off," he said, and came back to his chair and cigar.

"The dispatches from France have come at last," she said abruptly, and sipped at her wine. Moyses started.

"From France? Impossible! No ship has arrived. I arranged to be informed——"

She smiled. "It has not yet arrived at Le Cap," she said. "The corvette put in at Jacmel and landed a man who carried dispatches for me alone. They reached me today. She will not be around to Port au Prince, or to Le Cap, for some days."

"And the news?" inquired Moyses eagerly.

"The negotiations with the English are not succeeding. There will be no fleet until fall, perhaps until the end of the year. The First Consul consents to all my suggestions."

A flash of unholy joy lighted up the scarred face of Moyses. He remained silent, his one eye fastened upon her. She continued slowly.

"You will be confirmed as governor of the island. Slavery is to be abolished, a general amnesty is to be declared. The proclamation of August 29, 1793, giving equality to all, will be

decreed anew and ratified. The present landowners will be upheld in their property rights. All this is contingent upon one thing—the removal of Toussaint. Are you content?”

“Content!” exclaimed Moyses joyfully. “And he will be removed. All is ready——”

There came a knock at the door. To his call, one of his aides entered and saluted.

“Citizen general, a man has just arrived, a white. He will not give his name but has the password and says that you expect him.”

“Good!” said Moyses. “Admit him in two minutes. Close the door.”

The officer gone, Moyses darted to a closet, which was shut off from the room by a heavy velvet hanging. This he drew back, beckoning to the woman.

“In here—quickly! You can hear and see. He must not suspect that anyone is here.”

She caught up her cloak and obeyed. Moyses drew the hanging, then returned to his chair and lit a fresh cigar. A moment later the door opened to admit a man who wore a black kerchief about his face. He drew it away, flung off his cloak, and saluted Moyses.

The man was Idlinger.

“Welcome!” said Moyses cordially. “Help yourself to wine. Make yourself comfortable.”

Idlinger filled a goblet and drank it off.

“Of the best!” he exclaimed. “As I live, you are a judge. At Héricourt we have only plain red wine, and the devil’s own job to get that. I have to send Dupuche orders and get it put to your uncle’s account.”

“He’s gone south, I hear.”

“Gone, thank heaven!” Idlinger sighed, refilled the goblet, dropped into a chair. “I can’t stay, being on my way to Le Cap. Less dangerous to come myself than send anyone with a message. Well, I finished the job this afternoon.”

“What job?”

“About the chairs. As you demanded, though I can’t see what good there is in it.”

“If you could, others could,” Moyses laughed grimly. “Done, eh? Excellent. You’ll not know my plan, be sure of that!”

“I don’t want to know it.”

“Right. You’ll hear from me later, when the time comes. I suppose you stopped for the payment I promised, eh? Well, here it is.” From beneath some papers, Moyses produced a little canvas sack that clinked dully. “In gold. And I suggest that you keep yourself well informed. You know Citizen St. Leger? In the event that anything should happen to him within the next day or two, apply at once to have his plantation affirmed to you. In fact, you might be ready to swoop down on his *habitation* and seize whatever papers are there. You comprehend?”

“Perfectly. St. Leger, eh?” Idlinger whistled. His lean features were cynical. “I know Toussaint’s been suspicious of him, has had him watched. Many thanks, citizen general.”

“And this time,” went on Moyses, “see that you send me word the moment Toussaint arrives! You failed the other day. It was very bad all around.”

Idlinger shrugged with careless nonchalance.

“I’m taking no risks, me! I’ll send you word if it can be done safely, otherwise not. So don’t expect too much. Au revoir!”

Slipping the little sack of gold into a capacious pocket, he drew the cloak around his shoulders, tied the kerchief about his face, and so departed. Moyses closed the door after him, and Madame Rigaud came from the closet. She smiled into his one eye, and tapped him on the cheek with her finger.

“Decidedly, you are becoming a master of craft! So you intend to strike through this Ildinger, do you? Be careful lest he is but awaiting the moment to betray you.”

“Not he,” grunted Moyses confidently. “He falsified his accounts; I secured the papers. If he turns on me, he’d be shot by Toussaint within an hour, and knows it. He’s safe enough, and greedy. Besides, he knows nothing definite.”

“Neither do I,” she said, smiling. “Can’t you trust me?”

“No,” was the blunt response. “I trust nobody. When that old uncle of mine is dead, well and good! Until then, not a soul knows what I plan to do.”

She shrugged. “You’re wise enough. What about Cristophe and Dessalines?”

“Toussaint will be killed at his headquarters, at Héricourt. Cristophe will go rushing out there. While he’s gone my men seize Le Cap and Cristophe runs into an ambush on the way back. Or I may decide to have him killed at the same time. We’ll see. Remember, I demand leave to thin out the whites hereabouts!”

“Do so if you wish,” and she shrugged again. “The result is the only thing to consider. I hear Dessalines has invented a new way of empaling people. Is it true?”

“I helped him invent it,” said Moyses proudly. “The ‘bayonet,’ he calls it. The stake is sharpened at the sides instead of being left rough. It goes through a person in a day or less, instead of keeping them wriggling for two or three days. Why, I empaled one cursed mulatto wench near Port au Paix who lasted four whole days! That’s too long. With this ‘bayonet,’ you can put one on in the morning, and another on the same stake next morning—on top of the first, you understand?”

She nodded quickly. Her eyes were glinting with queer lights; each breath distended her nostrils. One would have said that an immense eagerness filled her to see this “bayonet” in operation.

“With Toussaint dead,” went on Moyses, “his bodyguard will come over to me, naturally. Cristophe dead, his men join me. If Dessalines marches against me, I’ll fight him! More than likely, though, he’ll consent to talk things over. We’ll arrange a meeting, and he’ll not leave it alive.”

“You’re not tempted to get rid of me, by any chance?” she asked, with an arch smile. Moyses regarded her for a moment, and spoke with a ring of sincerity.

“No. You’re too useful to me, citizeness. I hate whites, but I have sense enough to see that whoever rules this land must have the support of some whites. If Bonaparte upholds me as you promise, very well. I must have written promises from him before I’ll let any French fleet land. Otherwise, I’ll turn to the English. I can do that as well as St. Leger.”

“The moment you have seized Le Cap,” she answered, picking up her cloak, “send off a ship with a letter from me. Bonaparte himself will write you in return, instantly.”

“That’s all I ask,” said Moyses, with a nod. “You’re a white, and you shall live and have a great position here after I take the island. All the same, I don’t trust you or anyone else.”

Her silvery laugh rang upon the room as she took leave of him, with undisguised amusement at his attitude. She departed as she had come, cloaked and mysterious beneath the stars.

Late on the following afternoon, Citizeness Rigaud came riding up the avenue of the old Borie plantation, garbed in her accustomed green and gold, with a groom at her stirrup. St. Leger was directing the foundation levels of his new house and, discerning her approach from afar, came to meet her. If he were not glad of her coming, he gave no sign of it, but handed her down from her horse and bowed gallantly over her hand.

“I must see you alone and at once,” she breathed, as she smiled into his eyes.

“Easily done,” and he waved a hand toward his large cabin. They passed in together. St. Leger set out a chair for her, then drew one up for himself.

“Well?” he said inquiringly. “You have news?”

She nodded. “All goes well. I want to talk with you about this American, O’Donnell. You know he is an agent for the Borie family?”

“Yes. He came here and dug up the family treasures. He’s a shrewd man, no fool.”

She regarded him intently. “He’s seeking some trace of Alexandre Borie.”

“So he told me,” admitted St. Leger, with admirable sangfroid.

“Then he suspects nothing?”

“Nothing,” he replied in a tone of assurance. “How should he?”

He met her penetrating gaze frankly. She leaned back and shrugged.

“Not that it matters, of course.”

“No.” St. Leger looked at her and a thin smile touched his lips. Decision came to him with a rush. “Let us have the affair understood,” he went on, in a changed voice. “This Alexandre Borie did not die immediately, do you understand? It was I who found him lying there, if you recall. He lived a little while—long enough to tell me why he was killed. I had blacks carry away his body.”

Her face did not change; but her bosom began to rise and fall swiftly.

“You have never spoken of this before——”

“What need, before now? A secret shared is a secret lost. And now I have need of using it. Yes, madame, I know your secret—and I intend to make full use of it!”

In one instant, everything was swept away from between them; friendship, intimacy, intrigues. St. Leger continued gravely, deliberately, giving her no chance to speak; his voice was cold and harsh.

“Let us review the past,” and he watched her intently, seeing her face grow pale and more pale as he proceeded. “You came here with your husband, whom you had married in Paris. There and here, you were a great lady, the finest in the land; young, beautiful, and of extraordinary gifts. You had married a man of wealth, of position, of family, in whose veins flowed the blood of the Rohans—that is to say, princely blood. He died. And then what? You, his widow, were above all others here. The commissioners from Paris bowed to you, well knowing that you had been a friend of Bonaparte before your marriage, his secret agent after it. Men feared you, and rightly. And then came this fool Borie——”

“Stop!” she exclaimed, a terrible look darting into her eyes. St. Leger smiled.

“Stop? And why?” he said with cruel mockery. “You had power here, I repeat. This Borie recognized you. He had known you in Guadeloupe as a girl. He knew your real name there, your position. He knew that you were not, as all supposed, of pure white blood. He knew that you, like me, were a mulatto. Being a gentleman, he said nothing of it to you or anyone else; but you knew that he knew, and he was doomed.

“You feared he would talk, eh? You knew what would happen then. When it became known that you were a mulatto, your fine white friends would shun you; a fall to the very pavement, to the gutter! Wealth would avail you nothing. The blacks and whites alike would hate you. Gone would be position, power, everything. Paris would hear of it, Bonaparte would hear of it, would strip you of your place—that pallid little Corsican peasant, who hates all blacks and men of color with bitter virulence. Yes, you feared Borie’s knowledge, and perhaps

you were not averse to getting the money I had just paid him, also. Well, I have known this secret for two years, without breathing it to a soul. Now I shall make use of it."

He paused, surveying his victim. His gaze was cold, cruel, merciless. The woman before him seemed to have contracted, as though his words had sapped her strength, had shrunk her into a broken mass. Out of this inert mass pierced the flame of her eyes, like the eyes of a reptile striking forth from a heap of brush.

"Now you are in my power," went on St. Leger calmly. "Yesterday I wished to kill you, but with your fangs drawn, you will be of more use alive than dead. First, you will sign a paper that I have prepared; it gives your true name, confesses that you posed as a white in Paris and as such married Rigaud, and so on. You will write various other letters at my dictation, to Bonaparte, to the English Admiral Duckworth—in short, you will place yourself, your influence, your position, entirely at my disposal. Do you understand?"

She made a barely perceptible motion, a gesture of helpless assent.

"So!" St. Leger rose and swung toward his desk, with a light, gay laugh. "Come and sign, my pretty one! You know quite well I am not attracted by your charms, so waste no such effort. And let us have no talk. Henceforth you take orders from me. Here is a pen."

He took a quill from the desk, held it up, pointed to the paper. The woman dragged herself erect, took a staggering step forward. At the desk, she put down a hand to the polished wood to stay herself. Her face was ghastly, her eyes were tragic.

"You are cruel," she said hoarsely. "You are cruel!"

"Bah! I know you, my lady," said St. Leger. "Sign first and talk later. And don't think to have me killed as you did Borie. This paper will be in safe hands, and will be published far and wide if I die. Sign!"

She extended her hand. St. Leger perceived there was no ink upon the quill. He reached forward and dipped it into the pot of ink on the desk.

It was his last act upon earth. There was a flash of steel. One low and awful groan burst from the man as he straightened up convulsively. The woman beside him had leaped into life. She struck again and again like a snake in action, her movements almost too swift for eye to follow. The long blade in her hand drove repeatedly into the man, wrenching loose only to sink anew into his flesh. Blood burst from his side, from his back. Except for that first gasping groan, no sound came from him.

Suddenly he fell forward across the corner of the desk, then pitched off to the floor.

She stood gazing down at him, panting rapidly, a dark surge of color in her face, dark and terrible to see, transforming all her loveliness into stark horror. Then she leaned over, snatched papers from the desk, stuffed them into her pockets. A moment later she was at the door, swinging it open, turning, her gay and silvery voice ringing for those outside to hear.

"No, no, I insist! Do not leave your work; that letter is important. Au revoir."

She closed the door, adjusted her hat, walked unhurried to the horses. With a word to her groom, she swung up to the saddle and started away at a walk.

O'Donnell, on that same evening, was sitting in his room, writing a letter to Toussaint Louverture. When he had finished, he put with it the two documents Madame Rigaud had given him for delivery to the French agent in America, Citizen Lacroix. He folded them all up together and was applying seals when Dupuche knocked and entered. Following him came a black who rolled his eyes at O'Donnell and saluted.

"Here's our man," said Dupuche with satisfaction. "He's absolutely trustworthy, and frequently carries messages between here and Héricourt. If Toussaint has departed, as I think

is the case, Idlinger will forward your letters——”

“Idlinger?” O’Donnell frowned. “I don’t trust that man. No.”

“Then let them be given Jean Baptiste, the plantation manager.”

O’Donnell nodded and handed over the packet and a coin, and the black departed. Dupuche regarded the American with concern.

“It is not true that tomorrow you are leaving for the hills?”

O’Donnell assented. “Yes. Cristophe gives me a guard to the Dartigues plantation. From there I’ll go on alone with Louis. I have a definite errand, my friend.”

“I supposed as much,” said Dupuche drily. “No use to warn you, I presume.”

“No.”

The black who was carrying the dispatches rode out of town toward dark, ambling along on the road to L’Acul. He paid no heed when the pulse-beat of hooves sounded on the road behind him, except to draw out of the way of the faster riders. But he could not draw aside from the pistol bullets that tore into him and pitched him forward dead into the road.

Late that same night, O’Donnell’s packet reached General Moyse. With next morning, it was in the hands of Madame Rigaud. But, at the moment when she was reading those letters, O’Donnell and his escort were clattering toward the dark, high hills.

CHAPTER IX

THE ALTAR OF THE SNAKE

The Dartigues plantation, a long day's ride from Le Cap, occupied a superb situation on the shoulder of a hill, with a plateau behind it and long sweeps of ground falling away before. A mile-long avenue of giant chestnut trees led to the plantation itself—cisterns, house foundations, a jungled garden, banana trees and plantains crowded around. All was ruined, desolate, the cane fields vanished, the buildings gone. Not even a family of blacks lived here. Out below were gorges, hills, the Cul-de-Sac to one side and the Plaine du Nord to the other, with mountains banked up behind to where the tremendous bulk of Morne la Selle lifted its ten-thousand-foot head over all of Haiti.

After a night's rest, O'Donnell put his black soldiers to work. The carts had arrived, and knowing exactly where to seek the Dartigues treasures, no time was lost in the search. Two hours of labor saw a dozen chests and kegs disinterred and loaded into the carts, after O'Donnell had applied seals to each one. Then he was drawn aside by the officer in charge.

"Citizen, you are resolved to ride into the hills?" he asked earnestly. "Our general instructed me to dissuade you, if possible, for it is highly dangerous."

"Not to me, Colonel Rideau," answered O'Donnell. The black shook his head.

"You do not comprehend, perhaps. These hill people are blacks, but they are what we call maroons; that is to say, slaves and the descendants of slaves who have fled to the hills. They are not French like us," he exclaimed proudly. "They fight against us, are quite independent of us, and refuse to acknowledge our governor. They are savages! As for their religion, the less said the better. Their spies are no doubt watching us now."

"I rather imagine they are," said O'Donnell. "However, they have given me safe conduct and are expecting me."

The other stared at him, then crossed himself resignedly. Like Toussaint and many of the plains blacks, he was a fervent Christian, at least in theory.

"Very well, citizen, I see it is useless to argue."

"Useless," and O'Donnell smiled. "But I thank you none the less."

Ten minutes later the escort was gone with the carts.

O'Donnell watched them go with a sense of huge relief. At last he was free to take up the real errand that had brought him here to Haiti. He spoke to Louis of Colonel Rideau's protest, and the stalwart young black grinned confidently.

"Master, it is true that if the maroons knew nothing about us or did not want us to come, we would not go a mile. But you have the mark of Le Serpent on your cloak, and Mirliton told you to come. They know this, depend upon it! Besides, I know many of them, and I know the trails, and we are safer here than we would be at Le Cap."

"I believe you," said O'Donnell. "Let's be going."

Mounting, they presently gained the disused road that had brought them here, and a half-hour later were following a well-defined trail that mounted steadily along the side of a deep gorge into the hills.

They camped that evening beside a tiny mountain spring, far up on one of the great ridges flanking the enormous bulk of Morne la Selle. High though it was, this peak was completely

hidden from them by its engirdling mass. As they sat over a tiny fire and heard the far, irregular pulsation of drums, Louis became communicative.

“The drums are talking, master. There is a *maman* drum talking somewhere in the plains, and another mother-drum answering from the hills. These are big drums, taller than I am, with cowhide heads. You can hear them for a long way. The *papa* drums have goatskin heads and do not carry so far.”

“Do you know what they say?” asked the American. Louis shook his head.

“Only the *papaloi* knows that, master, or the *mamaloi* who strikes the drums; the woman is ever the chief talker, eh? Le Serpent has a big *tambor* that is all his own; when he talks with it, they hear its voice at Port au Prince and Le Cap. He made it himself when he was young, before the mulatto insurrection near Les Cayes, when he was blinded by the mulatto, Caprin. This was the man who collected all the white children and had them fed to hogs. Afterwards the whites caught him and nailed him to a cart and drove him thus through the streets of Port au Prince; then they broke him on the wheel, and he was still alive when they burned him. Le Serpent told him this would happen, but he did not believe.”

O'Donnell started slightly. He remembered certain words that Le Serpent had addressed to him, words that he had not taken seriously at all. Uneasiness stole upon him, but he shook off the feeling resolutely.

“Now Le Serpent is very powerful,” went on Louis, dropping his voice. “When he was tortured, they mutilated and blinded him. So now he becomes Papa Nebo, the priest of the dead, who talks with Dambala, the snake god, and tells Mirliton how to cure sick people and how to bring others back from the dead. There was a woman in Mornet whom he brought back after she had been dead for two days——”

The voice of Louis trailed off and died. O'Donnell looked at him, and to his astonishment saw that the black was shivering, gray with fear, staring at the trees. A sound came to him, a deep and growling pulsation that seemed to rise up out of the very ground.

“It is the drum of Le Serpent!” chattered Louis. “Ai! Now he is angry because I was talking about him!”

Terror had seized him. Presently he leaped abruptly to his feet, howled something and went dashing away among the trees; he was gone in the darkness a long time. O'Donnell rolled up in a blanket and went to sleep at last, with the growling note of Le Serpent's drum still in his ears.

Morning found them going onward, climbing a gradually ascending trail which the horses could scarcely follow. The savage beauty of their road was magnificent. These gorges were thick with palms and giant ferns, cactus, great lianas twining about the trees and looping to earth again. Towering mahogany trees reached up into the sky as though stretching toward the naked crags of rock that rose above. Now the trail would wind along bare ledges, again would plunge into the very heart of the jungle, apparently ending, yet always pushing onward, always climbing.

Louis halted suddenly. All morning he had been very silent, hardly daring to speak; but now, with trees and brush closing around them and almost shutting out the sunlight, he regained his animation. Carefully parting the branches at one side, he pointed to a small tree, little larger than a bush.

“Look, master!” he exclaimed joyfully. “Now I can ask pardon of Le Serpent by telling him of this tree! He will even reward me for finding it.”

“That shrub?”

“It’s deadly poison, master. You see those berries, like tiny green apples? When they ripen, they become red. A bit of one, no larger than your tooth, will kill you; so will the juice. If you slash the tree and the juice falls on your hand, it burns into the flesh. If you eat of it, then it burns holes in your body.”

“Oh! I’ve heard of it,” exclaimed O’Donnell, with a nod. “The *mansinile*, eh?”

Louis nodded. “Yes. The French stamped it out because they feared they would be poisoned, and with reason! More than one white family has died horribly after eating of that dish. So the French destroyed the trees and gave rewards to all who found them, until none were left; but seeds were planted again with the revolution, and a few trees grow wild like this one here. Still, they are very rare. I will mark this place and find it again, for we’ll be long enough at Gros Galets to have plenty of time.”

“What makes you say that?” asked O’Donnell sharply. “I don’t expect to be there more than a day or so.”

Louis shrugged and became evasive, nor could the American force anything further out of him. O’Donnell was vaguely disturbed by this; not that he cared a snap whether he spent a day or a month in the hills, but it argued undue knowledge on the part of his groom.

After all, was he being tricked into coming here? He pondered this query as he rode on behind the silent Louis, pondered it not for the first time. In his childhood he had heard tales of the maroons in these mountains, and he had heard other stories from émigrés who did not stint details, not being afraid to speak out in their new home.

Stories of the “goat without horns”—these came back to him, tales of the human sacrifice used by these devotees of African gods, and preferably a white victim. It was entirely possible that he had been brought up here for such a purpose, beyond any help or escape. Against this theory he could set only the words of Toussaint, the explanation of why he was favored by the priests of vaudou; this might or might not be true. Toussaint, who had tried in vain to conquer the maroons, was by no means acquainted with their rites or designs.

O’Donnell shrugged and rode on, pistols freshly primed, his blue eyes alert and vigilant. All this while they had come upon no human habitation, yet it was plain enough that none could follow this trail against opposition. A regiment could hold it against an army corps. And certainly there would be watchers on the heights, spies in every village below. Yes, he must go on, banishing doubts, trusting to the mystery and faith of these black folk.

The sense of it was here around him, deepening as he went forward and higher. The absolute silence of these trees except for occasional birds and monkeys, the utter loneliness and desolation of these naked rocks and vast gorges, were oppressive. So, too, was the knowledge that those heights above were the habitation of strange gods, mysterious and horrible deities. Still higher, remaining ever invisible behind its shrouding peaks and jutting flanks and curtain of cloud, towered Morne la Selle; rumor said that no white foot had ever trod this peak, that only the priests of vaudou knew its far recesses and cloud-tipped ledges.

Louis talked no more, had fallen into a sullen silence from which O’Donnell could not arouse him. He too felt the increasing oppression, as if it were a gathering of unseen things which accompanied and followed them along the trail; fear was in his very soul, a part of him, where the things of vaudou were concerned.

So came noon, and passed; not the steamy, terrible noon of the lowlands, but the white brilliant noon of the mountains, with a breeze stirring the trees overhead and a laugh of living water in the gorges below. And then the trail dipped abruptly, swiftly, winding down a steep hill flank, and Louis pointed.

“Nearly there, master!”

Cleared ground ahead; plantains and bananas, sure sign of close habitation. A rough plateau grew upon them, strewn with cactus and with great boulders of naked stone, the *gros galets* which gave a name to the village. Then, half a mile along, came cultivated ground by a sparkling mountain stream, and a dozen thatched cabins clustered about one large hut.

Two or three blacks appeared, peering at the two riders. More came forth, men and women and naked children, staring in black silence. Then O'Donnell saw old Mirliton, a bundle of rags sitting in the sun at a cabin doorway. Approaching, he dismounted and gave Louis his reins and walked toward the ancient man, the blacks hastily falling away before him.

“Good day, Mirliton,” he exclaimed cheerfully. “You see, I have arrived.”

“The drums told me you were on the road,” said Mirliton, unexpectedly speaking in Creole and abandoning all pretense not to understand it. His wrinkled, seamed old face showed a toothless grin. “A hut is ready for you. Presently your groom will be instructed and will tell you everything. Go in and eat. Célie! Show the white to his cabin and bring him food.”

A girl of fifteen, naked except for the inevitable *wanga* or charm worn by these hill blacks, timidly beckoned O'Donnell, who followed her. He understood that this was no time for questions. He was led into a hut that was neat and clean; on the floor was a freshly woven mat, such as the blacks used for sleeping. The girl went out and after a little came in bearing his saddlebags.

“Louis will come soon,” she said in an uncouth dialect, and was gone again.

Presently she reappeared, bearing a loaf of coarse bread and a dish containing a meat stew. O'Donnell was hungry, and ate without hesitation. He had barely finished, when Louis walked into the hut and squatted down, staring at him wide-eyed.

“You are to sleep now, master,” he said with parrot-like repetition, as though he had been taught what to say. “Later Le Serpent will come, bringing your brother. He has been living by himself, and the maroons have taken care of him for a long time, because your father was a good man. They have not harmed him. He was brought to Mirliton when he was slain, and Mirliton restored him to life and sent him here. He is a living dead man, what we call a *zombi*. Now that you have come, Mirliton and Le Serpent will try to make him wholly alive once more. This is done for the sake of your father.”

So saying, Louis rose and departed.

O'Donnell stretched out. He was entirely reassured by this reception, so far as personal safety was concerned. He had some dim memory of hearing nursery tales about a *zombi*, a resurrected corpse that obeyed the orders of the vaudou priests, but understood little about the fable. He could not at all understand, for that matter, why or how his brother could be here in the mountains. Surely if Alexandre were alive, he must have sent messages!

“It's past my comprehension, so let be,” he reflected. “Perhaps Alexandre has been held prisoner up here—who knows? Even if he were sick, he could send word. Can't tell a thing about it yet. However, he's not dead, as that she-devil thought. He's alive, and I've found him; so cheer up, heart!”

He could not sleep. Excitement, suspense, gripped him hard. His imagination rioted through all the two years his brother had been gone. A thousand conjectures filled his brain. Fancy painted picture after picture on the empty screen of time, filling the elapsed space with fantastic perils and adventures; and yet behind it all lingered the dark shadow of those ominous words—a living dead man. O'Donnell found his body rigid, his palms all asweat, his

nerves tensed, and forced himself to relax. Again and again it came, like a recurrent fever; slowly growing, indefinable and nameless, a dread that was forced down repeatedly by sheer effort of the will, only to return. He began to dread what he might see when Alexandre arrived.

The daylight faded. There was a slow, scuffling step. O'Donnell sat up, as a stooped figure filled the doorway. It was Le Serpent, alone, unguided.

"So you are here, my friend!" he said. "You have not slept. I can feel wings fluttering in the silence."

"You're not far wrong," said O'Donnell drily. With speech, with action, all the feeling of horror passed away. He was himself again. "Has my brother come?"

"He has come, he is here, you shall see him—but first I have a word to say," replied the blind figure. "Once, long ago, your father was a friend to the blacks. I was his slave. Mirliton was his slave. We do not forget good men. When your brother was dead, Mirliton saved him, made him live again, had him brought here. Now, if it is your will, we shall try to restore him to himself. It will not be easy. It may result in his death. The choice is with you."

"Where is he?"

"Look."

With the one word, Le Serpent came inside the hut and sank down to the floor. O'Donnell looked through the opening. There in the gathering dusk of evening, not ten feet outside the hut, he saw a figure led by a black. It was the figure of an old man, gray-faced, with matted gray hair about face and head, eyes blank and staring, body cloaked with rags.

"Alexandre!" cried O'Donnell, starting to his feet. "No, no—impossible——"

The blank eyes looked at him and passed him by. He halted in the doorway. Horrified realization burst upon him. Where was the handsome, soldierly, laughing man he had known two years ago? Vanished utterly. Here stood an idiot, it seemed, a man stricken, old, unkempt, a dream caught roaming through daylight hours. . . .

With a deep groan, O'Donnell swung around and sat down, utterly despairing. He saw now why Alexandre had sent out no message, why he was called a living dead man.

"Better if he had died outright!" he said in a low voice.

"That may well be," came the tones of Le Serpent. "Make your choice, Borie! Time flies, and we have work to do if you say the word."

O'Donnell shivered. He could not look again at the thing outside, yet in that gray and fearful face he had recognized the lineaments of Alexandre. There was no error, no chance of any mistake.

"Very well, I agree," he said hoarsely.

"Then you must assist," came the response. "Now with your blood; later, with your voice and presence. Hold out your arm."

O'Donnell extended his bared left arm. The hands of Le Serpent felt of wrist and biceps, probed, explored. He could not see what was passing, for darkness was now rapidly descending. Presently came a swift, sharp stab of pain, and the blind man was catching a few drops of blood from the wound, in a tiny dish. Rising after a moment, Le Serpent shuffled out and was gone.

O'Donnell waited, sunk in hopeless despair. He had rather have found Alexandre dead than as he was. What happened now did not matter.

Time passed. Lights flitted outside in the darkness, and the ruddy glare of a fire dimly penetrated into the hut. The American realized suddenly that drums were beating, had been

pulsating for some time past in a steady, monotonous throbbing. Louis appeared in the doorway, the fire glare lighting his face. He was excited, panting, his eyes were rolling wildly.

“Come, master!” he exclaimed. “It is time.”

O'Donnell rose and followed in silence, aware that he was about to plunge into savagery, yet utterly indifferent as to what happened or as to the outcome. He was deeply hurt by what he had seen. A numbness had come upon him, a torpor enveloping all his senses, stupefying his natural repugnance to what lay ahead; he acquiesced in anything and everything, in a dull and hopeless apathy.

Louis plunged into the forest. Under the starlight O'Donnell found that they were following a dim trail. This ended abruptly in a thatched cabin perched at the very brim of a deep gorge. Upon entering, O'Donnell was pressed sharply to one side by his guide; he sat down against the wall, with Louis beside him.

The one large room was lighted by two candles, each placed in the skull of a bull and supported against the farther wall. By this flickering light, the American made out the details of the place. Between the two skulls rose a mound of stones—in effect, a primitive altar. The uneven knobby top of this altar was composed of human skulls placed closely together. The only object on the top of the altar was a leafy twig, two feet in length, set between two of the skulls like a tree. About this twig coiled a small snake of a species unknown to O'Donnell, vividly colored; occasional movements of its head showed that the reptile was alive.

Before the altar stood the blind figure of Le Serpent, now wearing a woman's skirt, a large cocked hat, and a man's coat. O'Donnell dimly recalled the words of Louis on the way hither; Le Serpent now represented Papa Nebo, the god of death, blind and sexless. The *papaloi* was talking in a low voice, apparently addressing the snake before him. His outstretched hand knuckled one of three large, cylindrical drums at the right of the altar; the *maman* drum, this, and its low, heavy growl filled the place like distant thunder.

In the hut were three other persons. At one side sat the ancient Mirliton, wearing a dirty white robe on which was crudely painted a green snake. To the left of the priest, two other persons squatted close together, facing each other. A sensation of cold horror rushed upon O'Donnell when he regarded them. He did not understand in the least why they were here, or why this feeling came upon him, but it gripped him with passionate force, holding him silent, rigid, tensely awaiting something.

One of these two was his brother, blank of eye, matted of hair, frightful of countenance. Yet the other was still more terrible. This was either a white or a mulatto, O'Donnell could not be certain which; a man of perhaps thirty, emaciated, scarred and filthy, naked to the waist. His eyes were set in a stare of unspeakable terror, his lips were set in an awful and ghastly grin. At first O'Donnell thought he looked at a corpse, until he saw the man's breast moving with regular rhythm. It was clear that this unknown man saw nothing, knew nothing, of what passed around him.

Le Serpent turned and held out his hand. The voice of the drum ceased. Louis went out and quickly came in again, holding a fluttering, squawking rooster, which he placed in the grasp of the blind priest. With one swift motion, Le Serpent raised the cock's head to his mouth and there was a rush of blood; he had bitten off the head cleanly.

Holding the quivering body in his twisted left hand, Le Serpent went to Mirliton and touched his forehead with the cock's blood, then his own; he made passes in the air, deft and swift as the gestures of a priest at mass. He turned and came to Louis and O'Donnell, as though he could see them perfectly. O'Donnell closed his eyes, felt the warm, sticky touch on

his forehead, and shivered. When he looked again, Le Serpent was anointing the two squatting figures, dabbling their entire faces with blood. Neither of them moved or spoke. This done, Le Serpent flung the cock's body through the doorway and uttered a low command.

Louis rose and went forward, now holding the little dish in which O'Donnell's blood had been taken. Le Serpent, taking this, addressed the snake on the twig at some length, then went to the half-naked man facing Alexandre Borie. He put the dish to his lips and the man drank obediently as though in a trance.

Now Louis came to them and knelt down, taking the right arm of each squatting man and placing them firmly together. O'Donnell saw his black hands clamp down and tighten, holding them biceps to biceps, fingers sinking into the flesh, his face contorted with the exertion he put forth. Le Serpent leaned forward, bent over the three, then rose again, holding a dripping knife in one hand. The two right arms, held thus rigidly together, had been deeply slashed so that blood dripped from them to the earthen floor.

Now, turning to the snake above the altar, Le Serpent laid the knife down before it, and from his lips came strange sounds and strange voices. There was a stir in the thatched roof overhead, a fluttering in the air. Louis, still holding the bleeding arms together, looked up at the *papaloi*; his eyes were distended with fright, his face streamed sweat, a set grin twisted his thick lips. Even to O'Donnell there was something unearthly in the speech of Le Serpent, for from his lips fell the voices of children, of women, of men; a convulsion had seized him, so that he was bent over nearly double, and yet he spoke on, in the strange clicking speech of the Dahomey tongue.

"The dead speak!" croaked old Mirliton in Creole. "The dead speak! Bid them ask Dambala for the life of this white man, *papaloi*!"

O'Donnell found himself under an hypnotic spell, struggled to free his brain of it, sat watching, listening, convinced that above them all in this unholy place was hovering some pall of unseen horror. He could not move nor speak, even had he wanted to do so.

Suddenly, swiftly, Le Serpent flung himself into the air with a spasmodic leap. One shrill, eerie scream burst from his lips, a frightful sound that went through O'Donnell like a stab, piercing to every nerve and almost fetching a responsive shriek from him. Mirliton and Louis, indeed, gave shrill howls, but the two squatting, blood-spattered figures remained motionless, dumb.

The hand of Le Serpent flashed out. He moved with the certainty of one who had full vision; there was no fumbling, no false motion. He sprang at the squatting figures. A wild and frantic scream burst from Louis as the blade came down. It drove into the throat of the unknown man, and blood spurted forth, a gushing fountain of it, a frightful spouting crimson stream that spattered over the others.

O'Donnell tried to leap up, to shout. Iron bands seemed to constrict his forehead; with the effort, everything went black before him.

When he wakened, a dim light was burning, and he lay again in his own hut. Louis was beside him and put a cool hand on his forehead.

"It is over, master, it is over!" came his voice. "Sleep. Mirliton has taken your brother to his own house. In three days he will be himself once more, a week later he will be able to travel. Sleep!"

And strangely enough, O'Donnell fell almost at once into a deep and refreshing slumber.

CHAPTER X

A DAY WITH IDLINGER

Messidor was nearly run, and Thermidor loomed ahead—in other words, the end of July. The calendar of republican France, of which the colonies had been decreed an integral part, was in theory a very fine and ingenious thing, but it was a devilish nuisance to all foreigners whose education lay along Gregorian lines.

As might be expected, the day was hot, and Idlinger cursed the damp, unhealthy heat as he came riding into Le Cap; yellow fever was rampant, and he feared it. He went to the palace of Cristophe and spent an hour with the general's quartermaster, a facile little mulatto, arranging accounts. Then, business finished, he looked at his watch and left the palace on foot.

He betook himself to the Grand Café on the square of the quays—a deep, cool place where half the business of Le Cap was arranged over pleasant drinks and card-tables. It was distinctly not frequented by the military. Here were seamen and officers from the ships in port, *negociants*, shopkeepers, sugar buyers, salesmen of all sorts. At morning coffee time it was always crowded to the doors.

Idlinger glanced around and made his way to a table in one corner, where sat a grizzled white man in wilted garments, his bronzed features bearing a heavy scar across one cheek. He looked up and nodded. Idlinger swung around a chair and sat down, with his back to the throng.

“Good morning, Captain Golden,” he said in German.

“So the message reached you, eh? Good.”

“It did, but just what is all this about, do you know?”

“I know what one thousand francs in gold is about; that's enough of an answer for me. At the Havannah, a fellow gives me the money and puts the chairs aboard, tells me to send word to you here at Le Cap. Mean to say you don't know?”

Idlinger waited until the waiter had brought his coffee and departed again.

“Better not to know, perhaps,” he answered. “I, too, follow instructions, which are far more singular than yours. You know Dupuche, of Dupuche & Delcasse?”

“Naturally. I have goods consigned to him coming ashore now, and am arranging for a cargo to Guadeloupe.”

“Very well,” said Idlinger. “I'm going there now, to see Dupuche. Follow me in ten minutes, not longer, and when you get there, ask if he can use any chairs. Tell him you have these, that you bought them from privateer loot; make it a good story. Sell them to him at any price, cheap enough to tempt him.”

Captain Golden gave a grunt. “All right. It's a queer business, if you ask me.”

“I think so myself.” Idlinger rose. “*Auf wiedersehn!* In ten minutes, then.”

Passing along the quays, Idlinger came to the establishment of Dupuche, and was presently closeted with that astute gentleman, who set forth wine and cigars, knowing very well that to a certain extent his profits depended on the amiability of Toussaint's quartermaster. Idlinger gave him an order for wine and rum to be sent to Héricourt, then leaned back and broke into a laugh.

“These chairs of yours made me think of it,” he said. “I've had the devil's own time out at the *habitation!* These cursed blacks—whew! The place was furnished with very fine chairs, if

you recall, stuffed and brocaded and so on. Well, I've burned them all up."

"Burned them?" Dupuche stared at him, astonished. "Mon Dieu! Burned them? Those chairs of fine rosewood and mahogany, so elegantly upholstered?"

"Burned them, every last one," repeated Idlinger, his lean and pallid features wearing a sardonic grin. "Vermin, you understand? It got so that I was watching the chairs to see when they would walk away. The blacks didn't mind, but I was nearly mad. I went through the whole house like a devastating angel! You should have seen the bed of old Baptiste! He was furious when I burned it."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dupuche, with a nod of comprehension. "That's why you ordered gingham to make a new mattress and bolster for Toussaint's godfather, eh? I couldn't figure that out. But, mon ami, what will Toussaint say to this? You know, he was proud of those chairs. He loves to make a fine impression, to have handsome furniture at his headquarters. If he moves up here and finds the house empty of chairs——"

"Bah! You can pick up two or three dozen easily enough."

"Two or three—dozen?" Dupuche flung up his hands. "Name of the devil! Do chairs grow on bushes here in Le Cap? Slab stools, yes; but not chairs! Above all, such chairs as Toussaint would have. Only three days ago General Moysse sent me an order for some chairs, and I could find only two or three in the whole town——"

Idlinger's eyes widened a trifle, as though he suddenly understood something that had been puzzling him. At this instant, however, a clerk knocked and opened the door.

"Citizen! Captain Golden of the brig *l'Espérance* is here to see you."

"Admit him," said Dupuche, then addressed Idlinger as the latter rose. "No, don't go; it's nothing private. Ah, come in, Captain Golden! This is Citizen Idlinger, adjutant and quartermaster of the governor. What about some fish for days of abstinence, Idlinger? The captain has brought some of the finest salt cod you ever saw."

They discussed business, drank a health around, then Captain Golden turned to Dupuche.

"By the way," he said negligently, "I suppose you've no use for chairs? I picked up a whole batch of them at Basse Terre, privateer's loot out of some Spanish frigate, I imagine. Got them for a song, intending to use a few in my own cabin, but they were too cursed large. They're all of carved wood, and one is a mighty handsome thing, carved and brass-mounted and upholstered in brocades. You can have the lot cheap if you can use them."

Dupuche rolled his eyes at Idlinger and returned silent thanks to heaven.

"It might be, it might be," he said. "Have them brought ashore, captain, and I'll look them over. Of course, chairs are a drug on the market just now, but if these are cheap enough we might get together."

"I'll have them here in ten minutes," said Golden. "Going right aboard now. You chaps must get all sorts of good pickings here, eh? What with looting and so forth, you should feather your nests pretty well. Your health, gentlemen!"

He departed. Dupuche gave Idlinger a sly glance.

"You do not want to order some chairs for the plantation, do you?"

Idlinger burst into a laugh. "Let Toussaint do that! He watches expenses too cursed close anyway. Keep these on hand for him."

"Assuredly! I'll charge him only a fair profit, also."

"By the way," asked Idlinger, "where's the American who's stopping with you?"

"Toussaint's agent? Oh, he's been gone for a week or so, I'm not sure where. I think he went to Port au Prince. He'll be back. Why?"

“Curiosity,” and Idlinger shrugged. “Is it true that he found treasure?”

“Perhaps he did,” said Dupuche. “I got off a shipment to his firm on the schooner that left yesterday, convoyed by the American corvette. I know the papers were all put in order by the American consul, so it may have been treasure.”

Idlinger was still talking with Dupuche when a clerk announced that the chairs had been brought ashore, and the two went down to the warehouse to look them over. They were, as Golden had said, very fine chairs of carved wood, but they were heavy and distinctly ugly. One alone was different, being extremely handsome, although enormously large.

“What do you think of them?” asked Dupuche uneasily, as he eyed them. “Would Toussaint like these?”

Idlinger nodded. “Unquestionably! Besides, they are of wood, if you’ll observe. After what I say to the governor about vermin, he’ll order wooden chairs this time—you’ll see! And the one is certainly handsome. Well, here’s Golden coming. I’ll leave you to bargain with him. Au revoir!”

When the heat of the day was past, Idlinger sent his two clerks on back to Héricourt. A little later he mounted and set forth unaccompanied. A couple of miles from Le Cap he left the highway and took a seldom-used path through the woods. This presently brought him to a very small but beautiful plantation owned by one of Moyses’s aides-de-camp. Two other horses were at the door. Idlinger turned over his reins to a groom and entered.

Two minutes later he was alone with General Moyses. He accepted a glass of wine, gratefully unbuttoned his tunic, and relaxed.

“Not so bad, visiting you here!” he exclaimed. “Your health. Well, everything went off like clockwork. The chairs are now in the hands of Dupuche, who’ll hold them until Toussaint comes north and orders new chairs. That is to say, within a few days.”

“Eh?” Moyses opened his one eye wide. “How do you know that?”

“Because a messenger last night brought orders to have everything in shape to receive the headquarters staff by the first week in Thermidor.”

“So!” Moyses chuckled. “When I said the sixth Thermidor, I made a good guess, eh? But orders mean little. No one knows where he will be.”

Idlinger shrugged. He was genuinely curious about the chairs, for he could by no means imagine why Moyses was laying so careful a groundwork, going to so much trouble, over a couple of dozen chairs. That it was all a plot against Toussaint’s life, he understood perfectly, and cared not a jot.

“When you’re governor of the island,” he said, sipping his wine appreciatively, “you’ll not fear lest I tell any tales, eh? Since I don’t know your scheme. And that suits me very well, too.”

Moyes laughed heartily. He was genuinely amused by the entirely cynical Idlinger, and knew the man was a perfect tool to his purpose.

“Did you observe my order in regard to St. Leger?”

Idlinger nodded. “There were no papers, unfortunately, or none that amounted to anything. No one knows yet who killed him, unless it was Citizeness Rigaud. And no one cares. As you may have heard, I seized the plantation, turned out everyone, and Cristophe now has my application for it. Undoubtedly the council will affirm it to me.”

“And if you get it—what then?” asked Moyses curiously. Idlinger grinned.

“I’ll keep it long enough to make some money out of it, and skip out before the French come to hang you.”

"You think they'll come?" said Moyses, giving him a keen look. He knew the value of Idlinger's shrewd opinions, to which Toussaint attached small worth.

"They will," said Idlinger. "It'll pay you to listen to me. Toussaint thinks only of the black race, you comprehend; he says that he is certain to be destroyed sooner or later, and cares not if only he can achieve liberty for his people. Well, that's all right; he's filled up all day long with philosophy from Pascal and that fat little Abbé Molière. You're a man of sense, and practical. You're no fool."

"Granted," and Moyses stretched out his long legs. "About the French—what?"

"Bonaparte wants this island. It's been the wealthiest colony any nation ever had, and present conditions show that a firm government will make it so again. The Corsican will lie, will play a sharp game, to gain time; he'll promise Toussaint anything until he has a free hand to act here. Then you'll see things happen! Promises, freedom for the blacks—all will go overboard. An army and a fleet will come the moment he makes peace with England."

Moyes stirred uneasily. "If I thought that——"

"Think it. Believe it. Know it, because it's true!" said Idlinger. "Oh, I'm not so much, I admit, but my brain's sharp, and I've seen a thing or two. And I served under Bonaparte when he was a little rat's tail of a lieutenant. I know him like a book!"

"Hm! I could beat off any French fleet."

"So Toussaint says, but I know better. Dessalines is the man my money goes on. Let him get the reins, and he'll massacre every white in the island and make himself king. That's the kind of talk Bonaparte listens to! Appeal to the Corsican, and he despises you. Kick him in the pants, and he respects you. Play with him, as Toussaint does, and he destroys you."

A singular play of expression was visible in the scarred features of Moyses.

"You may be right. But if I needed French help to become firmly established——"

"Would you get it?" Idlinger laughed derisively. "You have promises from the Rigaud woman, doubtless; what are they worth? Oh, I can put two and two together! She killed St. Leger, and you put her up to it, or knew she'd do it, because you tipped me off. Well, I'm satisfied; but look out for her! She's a bad one. There's something about that woman—one can't say just what it is, but one can feel it. One can't see it in her face, but it's there."

"I shall think about it," said Moyses, and his one eye blazed savagely. "Now, to business. One thousand francs, I said, on the day everything was settled with Dupuche. Here it is." He produced a small sack, which Idlinger adroitly pocketed. "And five thousand on the day Toussaint dies."

"Eh? Not for me," said Idlinger positively. "I'm not the man for that; you need a fool. I've seen him escape knives, bullets, traps, half a dozen times. I've seen him read the minds of men he was talking with. No, no! That money is not for me."

"True." Moyses nodded gravely. "It is well known he can read people's minds. That old uncle of mine has a devil under his black hide! This is exactly why I'm not telling you the plan. Nor will you kill him. It would be folly to send any man of sense to kill him, when he has a bodyguard of fifteen hundred constantly around his headquarters! You'll have a hand in it, however."

"How so?" Idlinger wrinkled up his pale features suspiciously.

"I've already placed the proper man to do the work—one Sartain, a groom at the *habitation*. Your part will be merely to give Sartain information. He'll come to you, never fear——"

“I do fear. I want nothing to do with it,” said Idlinger bluntly. “I’ve seen men torn to pieces alive, and I know what would happen to me. Any fool can press a trigger or fire a mine. I have too much sense.”

Moyses nodded. “Very well. You’ll get instructions. Sartain is a dumb brute who’ll do exactly as he’s told, without imagination. And,” he added with dark meaning, “you shall be safe. You’re a white, but you shall be safe, and your fortune grows with mine. I give you my word of honor.”

Idlinger started slightly. “So? But I’ll not be safe if I don’t get out of here and back to headquarters.”

He rose, and Moyses accompanied him out to his waiting horse. There, when he had mounted, he leaned over for a final word.

“This is our last meeting; it’s too dangerous. Send any word through Sartain.”

“Agreed,” said Moyses. “If you need to reach me, you know how.”

Idlinger waved his hand and departed, thoughtfully.

“I shall be safe, shall I?” he muttered to himself as he rode along. “That means just one thing. Moyses is plotting with the Rigaud woman, and she’ll wrap him around her finger. So he’s planning to kill the whites, and she knows it. Probably she’s put him up to it. She’ll have a French fleet here the minute peace is declared. And after Moyses has perpetrated a massacre of whites, he’ll get no mercy. No mercy! That’s her scheme. Let the island run with blood—so much the less to be shed later! No, I don’t think I’ll stay long enough to get any money out of that plantation. The safest place for Citizen Idlinger to enjoy his pickings will be somewhere else—anywhere!”

Crafty Idlinger had not survived a thousand perils in this island of blood and fire, mainly by the exercise of his wits, without having gained a sort of sixth sense in matters concerning him. Perhaps he resented, too, the complete indifference with which Toussaint heard his advice. In dealing with blacks, Toussaint was the most astute of men; but with the white race he frequently failed, and, in Idlinger’s conviction, his peculiar obsession about Bonaparte and the necessity of keeping Haiti under the French flag was fated to draw down disaster.

Once again Idlinger gained the highway and headed for Héricourt, and once again he drew rein—this time with an oath of startled dismay. Two riders were approaching him, and a flash of green and gold told that he had encountered the last person he wanted to see.

She recognized him at the same moment, halted her groom, and rode on to meet him with a smiling exclamation. Idlinger saluted uneasily, for this woman knew him like a book, and he knew that she knew him.

“Well, Citizen Idlinger?” she inquired, her eyes probing him. “I hear you’re going to be a neighbor of mine. Welcome! I trust we shan’t dispute over our boundaries?”

“Heaven forbid!” said Idlinger with unusual devoutness. “No disputes, madame—I mean, citizenship. I am a man of peace, and no soldier.”

She broke into a silvery laugh, then sobered quickly.

“You’ve taken an unlucky *habitation*, though. You’re not afraid?”

Probing swiftly for what meaning might lie behind her words, Idlinger brightened.

“Perhaps you would like to add the Borie lands to your own, *hein?* Come, there’s an idea! You’d have the finest plantation in all the island, and the richest.”

“That is something to be considered, certainly,” she said slowly.

“And the price a mere nothing, a bagatelle!” he went on, seeing shrewdly enough that he had guessed aright. “Let us say a nominal sum, on which there can be no argument. Ten

thousand francs—the place should fetch eighty thousand today! How would that be, eh?”

She was silent for a moment, studying him. Then.

“Decidedly, you must be afraid of something, citizen! Yes, send me word the moment the lands are affirmed to you; the affair interests me. By the way, you’re not averse to money; say, five thousand in cash?”

Idlinger’s nostrils quivered like those of a dog scenting game.

“Are you speaking of francs or gourdes or portugaises——”

“Of francs, gold francs!” she cut in swiftly. “For the work of a moment.”

“Ah!” said Idlinger. “It is easy to see you are not the sort of person one should pass on the highway with a look and a nod. Mon Dieu! You speak of gold francs as though they were dust under your feet—and for the work of a moment? Well, that is something else again. A moment’s work may require long repentance.”

She smiled. “Come, tell me! What has become of Toussaint’s American agent? O’Donnell, or some such name.”

“Oh ho!” said Idlinger to himself. “So you want to find Citizen O’Donnell, do you? And for no good, I’ll be bound.”

Aloud, he mused frowningly. “What was it Dupuche said about him? He’s been away for a week or more, at Port au Prince or some such place. Dupuche wasn’t at all sure.”

“But I’ll wager you know,” she said, still smiling at him, though now with a feverish spot of red in her cheeks. “Listen, my friend! If I can find him, I’ll pay down five thousand francs, do you understand? I’ve a particular reason for wanting to see him. You were at the *habitation* when he went out there to see Toussaint, and I know your little ways.”

Idlinger, now fully reassured, grinned faintly.

“Well, I did listen at the door,” he admitted, unashamed. “But I didn’t hear much. My guess is that he’s off somewhere in the hills, trying to find a brother who’s supposed to be dead. The maroons are mixed up in it somehow. A *papaloi* visited Toussaint while O’Donnell was with him. You know we’re all good Christians at headquarters,” and he chuckled, “so we have nothing to do with those heathen in the hills. But I heard Toussaint saying farewell, telling O’Donnell to bring his brother if he found him.”

A flash lighted the woman’s eyes. She had become very pale at mention of O’Donnell’s brother, but now animation filled her countenance.

“Good!” she exclaimed. “Already you have earned half the sum, my friend. His brother, eh? Excellent! I’ll have every road watched, every approach to Le Cap guarded! He’ll bring his brother to the plantation, eh? Very good. And the moment he arrives, you get off a messenger to me. Tell him to say simply that they have come.”

“Understood,” said Idlinger. “I am glad to hear you say that I’ve earned half the sum already, because it has become terribly hard to get any ready money these days, and you know how things are at headquarters.”

“My groom will bring you twenty-five hundred francs tomorrow,” she broke in impatiently. “Gone for a week or more, eh? Then he may arrive any time. Be watchful! When does Toussaint come north?”

“Do I know whether the wind will be blowing tomorrow?” and Idlinger laughed. His eyes had swiftly narrowed, however, and she did not miss the indication. She leaned over, opened one saddle-pouch, and took out a little clinking sack.

“It is too bad you have no ideas on the subject, my friend——”

“Oh, I might have an idea or two!” Idlinger said quickly, his gaze on the sack. “Still, knowledge is another matter. Toussaint always moves either ahead of time or behind time. If I had been ordered, for example, to have provisions and quarters ready for his entire bodyguard by the first week of Thermidor, this might mean that Toussaint would arrive the last week of Thermidor, or the last of this present Messidor. He certainly would not arrive the first week of Thermidor!”

She met his eyes and weighed the little sack in her hand, so that it clinked faintly.

“But you doubtless, as you suggest, have an idea on the subject?”

“Certainly,” responded Idlinger. “Papers and letters are piling up, and yesterday came a courier from the governor’s brother Paul, who is vice governor of Santo Domingo. Therefore my guess is that Toussaint might arrive tomorrow or at the end of the week, probably no later than the first or second Thermidor.”

She silently put the sack in his hand, and Idlinger pocketed it.

“The saints send many such meetings!” he observed. “I’ll despatch the messenger, but I trust none of these blacks to repeat words. He’ll bring a letter asking if you have any cattle to sell for the use of the army.”

“Agreed,” she said with a smiling nod. “I see it will be small use to watch the roads. If those two men do reach Héricourt, the blacks would bring them by hidden trails.”

Idlinger shrugged. “It is not far from the plantation to Le Cap. But when you stop to consider how many things can happen in the course of a mile or two——”

She laughed, signed to her groom, and with a quick farewell went riding on. Idlinger glanced after her, then picked up his reins.

“Hm! I feel sorry for that American,” he murmured. “Yes, I really feel sorry for him. If he were only an open-handed, generous sort, I’d feel still sorrier for him. That reminds me——”

And shaking his head, Idlinger hauled out the little sack to examine its contents, as he jogged along. When he saw that the coins were of silver, not gold, an angry glint came into his eyes, but he said nothing.

CHAPTER XI

TOUSSAINT RIDES NORTH

Up from the south rolled dust in great clouds, and with it rolled the stamp of marching feet, bare feet, naked black feet.

Up from Port au Prince, following the road that wound between the mountains and the sea, to St. Marc, where Dessalines the Tiger was building his palace; on across the plains to Gonaives, on toward Plaisance and the Plaine du Nord wound the bright stream of men, the wagons, the marching army.

No ordinary army was this, however, but the bodyguard of Toussaint Louverture.

Thermidor had arrived, hot, sultry, terrible to all save blacks. These fifteen hundred men were picked from the veterans of ten years' savage warfare—great stalwart blacks, all six feet or over, drilled to the utmost precision, merry, singing as they marched, proud of themselves, glittering in brilliant uniforms, their muskets new and shining, bayonets gleaming in the sunlight. Their officers rode splendid horses and were heavy with gold lace, with huge epaulets, with immense ornate sabres.

Among them rode a little clump of whites—Pascal, Abbé Molière, three or four others on whose advice and knowledge Toussaint leaned heavily. These, like Toussaint and his men, scattered joyous tidings as they rode. Colonel Vincent, commissioner of the republic, had just gone back to Paris, bearing with him the new constitution of the island, framed by a handful of the most intelligent men at Toussaint's disposal. Bonaparte would sign and ratify it, the long arm of France would be stretched forth in protection and not in menace, Toussaint's government would be firmly established by right as well as by might. The wars were ended!

Small wonder this was more a triumphal progress than a march. Deputations of blacks, mulattoes and whites showered the troops with flowers and gifts, made speeches, heaped the gaily decorated and gilded carriage of Toussaint with presents. In passing through the towns, this carriage was preceded by trumpeters who wore silver helmets and gorgeous attire; nor was Toussaint himself less resplendent on these occasions with his dress uniform of scarlet and blue and gold. His hair was carefully queued behind, and an immense round hat with a high tricolor cockade and nodding ostrich feathers increased his impressive appearance.

Fully aware of the importance of display in the eyes of the blacks, Toussaint spared no details in the ensemble of color and glitter. To all appearances he made the journey behind the nodding plumes of his coach horses, with his bravely uniformed bodyguard strung out along the road before and behind, in all the style and splendor of a true despotic governor.

The night of the second Thermidor was spent at Gonaives, with Héricourt a long day's march ahead for the troops, a short day's ride for the horsemen. Before daybreak, however, couriers went dashing out of town, bearing on word of the governor's coming—not by the winding valley road through Marmelade and Limonade to the Cape, but by way of Placentia and the hill road, shorter still if Toussaint aimed at his plantation. Couriers were coming and going in all directions, for the governor kept in constant touch with all parts of the isle.

From Gonaives the march started in the early morning. Two hundred of the bodyguard set out in advance, followed by the gorgeous coach, with Toussaint dictating letters to his mulatto secretaries as he rolled along. A mile outside town, he suddenly ordered the coach halted. One of the three saddled horses led behind the vehicle was brought up. Discarding most of his fine

raiment, winding a madras handkerchief about his head, Toussaint leaped from the coach, mounted the splendid horse, and in two minutes was spurring away—not along the road, but by a trade that would take him eastward to the other highway, passing through Marmelade and the plantation country.

The coach resumed its slow progress in among the hills.

Half an hour later, it was winding through a deep valley, where trees closed in upon the road and narrowed it, so that the escort thinned out ahead of and behind the vehicle. Without warning, the trees on both sides of the road suddenly erupted white smoke. Flame stabbed from the green mass of foliage. The heavy reports of muskets volleyed and echoed among the trees. Bullets riddled the coach, smashed the carved and gilded ornaments, knocked the windows and doors into flinders. One of the two secretaries riding inside was killed instantly, the other flung himself to the floor and escaped unhurt.

At once, furious guardsmen were hurling themselves into the pall of smoke, dashing into the foliage, searching among the trees, firing blindly into the dense undergrowth. All in vain. They found not a soul, for the assassins had slipped away into the forest depths without leaving a trace.

Toussaint, meanwhile, was sweeping like a whirlwind through the rich districts at the foot of the mountains. Everywhere he came upon gangs working on the road, repairing bridges, or building schools for the system he had instituted throughout the island; it was for these scattered points that he headed. He stopped and talked with the men in charge, gained district gossip and rumors, rewarded or chided those in command, and was gone again, his splendid horse speeding like an arrow.

More than once he received warnings; invariably these were vague, however, and most of them dealt with superstition, which Toussaint derided. But as he proceeded he found constant repetition of one statement: men on horseback were on all the roads toward Le Cap. "Men of color" had been seen riding through a village. Blacks in uniform had been questioning travelers. Two white planters followed by armed blacks had passed this way, searching for someone. Beneath all this sounded the notes of uneasiness, of vague alarm. Bad signs here, unlucky portents there, flames in the mountains by night. Toussaint began to be genuinely alarmed, thinking there might be some widespread plot laid against his own life here.

Then, as he was approaching Dondon, he found men building a bridge, and from the foreman had his first definite information. Standing by his stirrup, the foreman muttered hastily to him, with quick glances at the surrounding trees.

"Citizen governor, the drums have been talking lately, and yesterday a man of color with five armed blacks was here, asking questions."

"Good." Knowing that he dealt with a man of better than average intelligence, Toussaint handed him a gourde. "This mulatto? Who was he? What was he seeking?"

"He was a stranger, citizen governor. His questions were about two whites coming from the mountains. I laughed at this and he grew angry. You can see for yourself what folly it was—two whites coming from the mountains! He said they were not French but Americans, and I never heard of any such tribe, so I said he must be crazy. He was very angry when he rode off."

"Americans!" Toussaint started. "Did he want to find them for good or for evil?"

"For evil, citizen governor. He said that soon all the whites would be destroyed in the whole island and it would then belong to the blacks and men of color. I told him that this rested with you, and he shrugged and smiled, but said nothing more."

Toussaint rode on, thoughtfully. He had intended paying a surprise visit to Cristophe at Le Cap, but all this changed his intentions entirely. So, when he came to the little hamlet of Milot, and had eaten his frugal noonday meal with the mayor, he turned aside from his course.

Precipitous hills towered up just behind the hamlet. From the hillsides, he had a view of the great rich valley running down twenty miles to the coast and Le Cap, bright green with the waving cane. There outspread lay all the Plaine du Nord, with the stark blue of the ocean beyond, with a tiny white splotch that was Le Cap beside the long bulk of Morne Rouge. Here, circling the jutting precipices, Toussaint turned off to reach L'Acul, to the westward.

A little later, crossing a small cañon that branched down into the plain from the hills, he halted to let his horse drink at the stream, when a shout lifted from the trees off to his left. Toussaint's hand went to the pistol at his knee, then he checked himself. A single black was running toward him, waving a hand. A white man was following.

"Citizen governor! Toussaint! Wait a minute!"

Toussaint waited, but did not relax his vigilance. He drew his pistol, glanced at the priming, cocked it, pinched fresh powder from his pocket into the pan. The black halted and the white man came on alone, then Toussaint recognized him and broke into a laugh.

"You, Citizen O'Donnell! I'm glad to see you. You have been traveling, it seems!"

O'Donnell strode up, smiling a greeting, for the moment out of breath. He was unshaven, his clothes were ripped to rags by thorns, but there was a glow of eager joy in his eyes, a dancing happiness in his face.

"I've found him!" he exclaimed, gripping the hand Toussaint thrust down. "He's up there in those trees, resting, with the horses——"

"Eh? Not your brother?"

O'Donnell nodded. "He wasn't dead after all; but he's suffered horribly. They cured him, restored him to himself—Le Serpent and old Mirliton did."

"Thank the good God, and not those heathen priests!" said Toussaint sharply. O'Donnell shrugged.

"Perhaps God worked through them, who knows? Whether it was their magic or their herbs, no matter. Alexandre is sound again, is recovering rapidly."

Toussaint swept a rapid glance up and down the empty road.

"Do you know there is danger for you?"

"Apparently. The maroons said so, but did not know why. They brought me here this morning, and said I must wait till night and then go on. What's happened?"

"I don't know." Toussaint's ugly, drawn features twisted in a grimace. "And there's no time to talk about it now. I must get on. You have horses? Good. I'll send a dozen men to meet and bring you in to the *habitation*."

"Very well. You got my letters with those documents from the Rigaud woman?"

"Eh? No." Toussaint's brows lifted. "That woman? What about her?"

"The devil!" exclaimed O'Donnell in dismay. "I sent you the cipher letters she gave me for the French agent in America—a letter and an order for a million francs. A bribe to spoil your shipments of powder. She knew all about your large order for munitions. If the letters haven't reached you, then——"

"They may be at Héricourt. She wanted my munitions spoiled, eh? Well, we can talk later tonight, or in the morning. I have a thousand details to look after, letters to write, everything imaginable! And a splitting headache. Au revoir!"

Putting in his spurs, he went dashing off down the road, dust spurting up after him in a long trail.

O'Donnell rejoined Louis and told him of the escort that would probably arrive before evening, and left the black on guard. Retracing his way up the brook to the thicket where the horses were tethered, he gained their little camp among the trees. Alexandre Borie rose to meet him.

Clipped and bathed, passably dressed, well fed, this was a very different appearing man from the frightful scarecrow O'Donnell had glimpsed at Gros Galets. Tall and well knit, he looked in feature much like O'Donnell, but the seamed face, the whitened hair, bore evidence to what he had endured. Also, he was weak from a fever that had settled on him. When he smiled however, there was the same strong, winning flash in his blue eyes.

"Good news!" exclaimed O'Donnell. "That was Toussaint himself as Louis thought. He was in a hurry and wouldn't stop, but is sending an escort for us. There's danger abroad."

"For you?"

"For us." O'Donnell stretched out comfortably in the shade and eyed his brother thoughtfully. "I told you about sending the Rigaud woman's letters to Toussaint. He hasn't received them and thinks they may be awaiting him, but I'll wager the worst has happened. If they've fallen into her hands, she'll be capable of anything."

"No ifs about it!" Alexandre uttered a bitter laugh. "Undoubtedly, the worst has happened. She's discovered everything, learned how you tricked her, found that I'm alive after all. Now she's watching every road for us. Le Cap will be a death trap."

"Not at all," said O'Donnell. "Quite the contrary. If this is so, Toussaint will have her arrested instantly, depend on it! Le Cap is our safest point, for Cristophe's in charge there. Moysse had moved his headquarters from town to a plantation he owned."

"I'll wager a thousand dollars that St. Leger is dead," said Alexandre. "That woman will try to prevent her secret becoming known, at any cost; it means more to her than you or I can possibly conceive. She'll either guess that St. Leger told you, or will discover it."

"We'll see. The main thing is that our troubles are over."

There had been much talk, in those slow days and nights up in Gros Galets. In the mind of Alexandre Borie was a lacuna of nearly two years, for he remembered nothing from the night he had been assaulted and left for dead.

In bridging this gap, both men had learned many things. O'Donnell discovered that St. Leger had told the truth. The mulatto was a dangerous man, one who did not hesitate to profit through blood, but he had not plotted the death of Borie. The reason for this attempt was as St. Leger had said. Alexandre had recognized in Hermione Rigaud the mulatto girl, apparently white, whom he had known a few years previously in Guadeloupe; and this recognition had sealed his doom.

"Well, old man, everything's coming right now," and O'Donnell smiled at his brother as they sat smoking beneath the trees. "The firm's done splendidly. I have enormous orders for munitions from Toussaint. I've sent home the treasure, as I told you. All that remains is to get to Philadelphia again."

The other laughed happily. "It's been wonderful of you, Paul, wonderful! And you can't know how deeply I feel it all. The thing is beyond words to express; the realization of all that's happened, of what I am now—look at me! Well, let that pass. I'll get used to it. Do you regret having taken our mother's name, having become an American?"

“It’s the best day’s work I ever did,” exclaimed O’Donnell warmly. “I tell you, it means something in the world to be an American, Alexandre. You can’t imagine what schemes I have, what I’ve heard about the western wilderness, of the country beyond the Ohio! That’s the place for the future to build on, that illimitable country stretching on past Louisiana! Our friends the émigrés can talk about dignity, can laugh at business, but I’m going in for the trade possibilities of that astounding region! Let me tell you what——”

He talked of Louisiana, of the Mississippi country, of the settlements in far Kentucky and Ohio, and accomplished his intent. Alexandre was lifted out of this island of blood, was transported to the country of Shawnees and Cherokees, flatboats, new settlements, Louisiana trade, all the western empire which O’Donnell beheld awaiting those who could seek and grasp.

So the afternoon hours passed, and when dusk approached Louis came with word that men were marching on the road from the west. Presently half a dozen of Toussaint’s mounted officers joined them, and without delay they started for the plantation.

It was close to nine o’clock when O’Donnell descended at the entrance of Héricourt, and found everything in confusion. Idlinger met him, conducting him and Alexandre to a room that had been made ready for them—a room they must share with Idlinger, since the place was crammed to the doors. Toussaint was down with fever and a blinding headache, survivals of his campaigns which attacked him at intervals; the Abbé Molière was attending him, all letters and business having been adjourned to next day.

Once in their room, food was brought in and they attacked it hungrily, O’Donnell talking the while with the pallid quartermaster.

“Toussaint did not neglect you by any means,” said Idlinger, mouthing a cigar and watching the two men curiously. “I have sent to get your clothes and belongings from Dupuche. Do you know that your return has cost me ten thousand francs?”

“Eh?” O’Donnell looked keenly at him. “And how is that? A wager?”

“No. I had arranged to sell some property to a lady, within another day or so.” Idlinger grimaced. “And now Toussaint has sent an aide and thirty men to arrest her and seize her papers and her house. You should know more about it than I.”

O’Donnell’s brows lifted. “You don’t mean Citizeness Rigaud?”

“Precisely. I don’t know whether she killed St. Leger, but——”

“St. Leger dead!” O’Donnell cast a swift glance at his brother. “You were right, Alexandre! But tell us all about it, Idlinger. I’ve had no news for ten days past.”

The quartermaster complied. He was still talking when his name was called, and a dusty officer came striding into the room and saluted.

“Gone, citizen quartermaster!” he exclaimed, wiping sweat from his black face. “She had burned her papers; only ashes remained. No one knew whither she had gone. I left twenty men to occupy the house, with orders to arrest her if she returned.”

“You wasted twenty men, but you did right,” said Idlinger coolly, and dismissed the officer. He gave O’Donnell a calm regard. “Well, I always thought she’d come to a bad end some day! But I see you’re dead tired, gentlemen. I’ll order water up; after a bath, turn in and sleep. I’ll not get to sleep for hours yet. And—listen!”

He motioned to the open windows. Outside, all about the house, were the glimmering fires of the encamped troops, and merry African voices filled the night. But through all the noise pierced a distant pulsating sound that impacted thinly on the brain.

“Drums.” Idlinger shrugged. “Something is going on, depend upon it! I know these blacks. We’re in for trouble somewhere, somehow. The men have sensed it, too. Perhaps Cristophe has planned to seize the Cape and revolt.”

“Nonsense,” said O’Donnell sharply. “Cristophe is utterly devoted to Toussaint.”

“Ambition is stronger than devotion,” observed Idlinger cynically. “Still, trouble can come from other directions; from Moyses, for example. That’s one thing about this cursed island—one never can tell what will happen, whence it will come, how it will end! Au revoir, gentlemen. The water will be up immediately.”

When the door had closed, Alexandre glanced inquiringly about the room.

“Do you know, Paul—that’s singular! We’re sitting on the floor like blacks. Not a chair in the room, and I didn’t notice any downstairs, come to think of it.”

O’Donnell laughed. “You haven’t seen a chair in two years, if you only knew it! Over the shock of readjustment, are you?”

“Absolutely. So he sent to arrest the lady, and found her gone! I’m sorry for that. She gives me exactly the same sensation as does a deadly reptile—something you can feel, but can’t quite put your finger on.”

“Exactly my thought when I met her,” said O’Donnell. “Well, let’s get rid of our rags, and tomorrow I’ll have clothes enough for us both, let’s hope.”

Bathed, shaved, they felt like new men as they stretched out on their pallets. Through the darkness came the glimmer of fires and the uneasy, dull pulsations of the distant drums, like muttering growls of beasts waiting to be loosed upon their prey.

CHAPTER XII

CHAIRS FOR THE GOVERNOR

The fourth Thermidor broke sultry, hot, oppressive. When O'Donnell was wakened for the early coffee, he found his own clothes and belongings in the room, and was informed that Toussaint would receive him and his brother immediately they were dressed.

Twenty minutes afterward, they were in Toussaint's library.

This room was his sanctum, reserved for his intimates, his correspondence, and exceptional visitors; his rather pompous levees covered all other cases. Due to his recent arrival, however, the routine of his headquarters had not yet become established. When the brothers were ushered in, Toussaint was seated on a slab stool, the usual kerchief about his head, and was busy with two secretaries. He made them a gesture of welcome, and continued his dictation.

"My compliments to General Moyses; invite him here to headquarters instantly, not later than this evening, on urgent business. Get it off by special courier to his plantation. This batch of papers goes to General Cristophe at Le Cap; refer him to the notes I have made on the documents. Send with it this order of arrest for Citizeness Rigaud. Take a letter to Dupuche, to go by the same messenger:

'I pray you, citizen, to prepare immediately two dozen wooden chairs, the handsomest you can find. I will order a wagon sent to bring them. *Salut et fraternité.*'

"Have a cart sent to the city immediately for this purpose. Better send one of my aides with these papers to Le Cap, as they are important. That is all."

He rose, came to O'Donnell and shook hands warmly, and gave Alexandre a hearty greeting.

"I'm glad to see you, and am curious to learn what has happened, in detail," he said quickly. "When I've signed these letters, I am free, and we can talk in private. Meantime, here is coffee. I regret that I must ask you to use stools; there is not a chair in the house." Vexation sharpened his voice. "A pest on that quartermaster of mine! He burned the finest chairs on the island because they had become infested with vermin, when he might have merely had them cleaned and recovered. I can't understand his folly! Well, be as comfortable as you can—yes, coffee for us all, Lucie."

A black woman brought in a tray; the strong creole coffee was Toussaint's one vice, or rather weakness. Presently the letters were written, sanded, presented for signature, and the secretaries then left the room. The governor ordered the sentry to admit only couriers, and closed the doors.

"Now we'll have peace, except for messengers—they've been coming on the average of one an hour," he declared, drawing up a stool. He glanced from one to the other, and smiled. "This is a singular affair—two brothers, different names, and so forth! But tell me what's happened, Citizen Borie. It is easy to see that you have endured much."

Alexandre laughed. "If so, I'm not aware of it!" he said, and Toussaint listened to the story with avid interest. When it was finished, he shrugged lightly.

“You’re here; what matter the means?” he observed. “I don’t know what Abbé Molière would say to this vaudou affair, so we’ll not mention it to him. Citizen O’Donnell, let me have the details of your business with Citizeness Rigaud, if you please. Those papers you mentioned have not arrived here, and I find that one or two messengers have been killed. I sent to arrest her; she has disappeared. If she’s at Le Cap, Cristophe will dig her out. What you say of her origin explains many things—her mixing with mulattoes and blacks, her personal characteristics—but proceed, proceed!”

O’Donnell recounted his interviews with the woman and St. Leger. Toussaint pulled thoughtfully at his under lip, and nodded.

“When you return home,” he said drily, “see to it that other spies do not damage my powder and cannon! Thank you for your honesty. Now, about the Borie plantation. This has been affirmed, I understand, to Citizen Idlinger; St. Leger left no heirs. I believe you lost the money he paid you, Citizen Borie?”

“Yes,” said Alexandre. “It had just been given me when I was assaulted.”

“Very well. I’ll speak with Idlinger in a day or two. The plantation will be returned to you. Would you consider remaining here and working it, under my protection?”

Borie shook his head. “Frankly, no. I want to leave the island as soon as possible.”

“Then put the deed in the hands of Dupuche; let him arrange it as your agent, and he’ll sell the place for you,” said Toussaint. His prominent eyes went to O’Donnell. “Come, citizen, I made you an offer some time ago. Would you be inclined to reconsider?”

“No, I’m for America also,” said O’Donnell, smilingly. “Thank you none the less.”

“I should like to have had a Borie close to me,” replied Toussaint. “Some of my staff bear the greatest names in France; most of the old island families are represented in my bodyguard. True, most of them are of mixed blood; what of that? Under our glorious republic all blacks, whites, men of color, are free and equal. Liberty, equality, fraternity! That is no idle motto under the tricolor——”

He fell silent for a little, lost in thought, his wrinkled features looking old and worn. O’Donnell now understood why, in part, that astonishing offer had been made him. The secret pride of the little black was enormous, unsatiated, unappeased. Suddenly Toussaint looked up, spoke quickly.

“The treasure you were seeking—you have found it?”

“All there is to find, yes. It is with Dupuche, or has gone already to America.”

“I learned this morning that a Philadelphia brig is at Le Cap; it will sail in three or four days. Let me suggest that you, Citizen Borie, go on to Le Cap and arrange about passage, in which Dupuche will of course assist you. There is no further danger. I have sent out parties to patrol all the roads and make them secure. Also, I’ll give you an escort. What do you think?”

“By all means,” said Alexandre promptly. “But my brother——”

Toussaint drank off his coffee, as the two exchanged a look, then turned to O’Donnell.

“My friend, I am about to ask that you remain here—say, for two days only. The brig will not sail until you reach Le Cap; I will give orders to that effect. I have a feeling, an intuition if you like, that something is about to happen. I do not know what it is. There is uneasiness everywhere; the men in the fields, the soldiers, townfolk, are all disturbed, and none knows why. Some influence is at work, of course, some undercurrent. I think it very likely that revolt is about to break out, perhaps some plot of the mulattoes. An attempt was made to assassinate me on the way north. Another attempt may be made. If any such thing does happen, I shall need every man upon whom I can rely.”

O'Donnell nodded. "Very well. I'll be glad to be of service in a pinch, of course, and might as well be here as at the Cape. How I can be of use I don't know."

"In a dozen ways. There is just one man up here on whom I can absolutely depend," said Toussaint slowly, "and that is Christophe. If you go to the city today, Citizen Borie, see him at once and in private. Tell him what I have just said. I must remain here. Perhaps they expect me to go to Le Cap and have prepared some plot. Tell Christophe to hold the forts under double guard of his best men, and to keep the garrison on the alert, ready to move instantly. On no account is he to leave the city; and he is to take every precaution against assassination himself. If there is really any plot, they will assuredly try to kill him and seize Le Cap. The men closest around me may be involved in it. I cannot tell."

"You think a couple of days will see something happen?" asked O'Donnell.

"I am certain of it. I know the country, our people, the way things come to pass. If anything impends, it will come today or tomorrow; the feeling of crisis is intense. It may be, as I say, some plot to seize Le Cap. It may be anything. It may be nothing. Christophe must keep me informed if he learns anything."

An hour later, Alexandre Borie swung up into the saddle, leaned over for a hand-grip with his brother, and was off with his escort for Le Cap.

For O'Donnell, the morning passed quietly. With noon, he was summoned by Toussaint, whom he found in a passionate rage. The messenger sent to General Moysse had just returned with a flat refusal on the part of Moysse to come to Héricourt. True, various excuses were given, and Moysse claimed to have been hurt in a fall from his horse; but this refusal had now turned the mind of Toussaint toward his nephew.

"Tell me," he said to O'Donnell, "have you heard anything about this rascal, any hints or gossip, which might indicate that he is involved in a scheme to rebel?"

"Nothing except Christophe's oaths."

"They are meaningless. Hm! We'll wait and see. Perhaps he intended some action, and news of my arrival here will check him. In a few days I'll have an understanding with him. What's this? A packet from France? Quickly, quickly!"

A dusty courier had just come in from Le Cap, one of Toussaint's aides, and the governor seized avidly upon the sealed packet handed him. O'Donnell left him to peruse his letters and withdrew.

The siesta hour gone, Idlinger appeared and questioned O'Donnell closely about America. The lean quartermaster made no secret of his intention to go thither when the time was ripe, saying frankly that he was laying aside money toward that end. The two were talking together out before the plantation house, when a cart piled high with chairs came creaking up.

"Thank heaven, there come the chairs!" exclaimed Idlinger in relief. "You'd never believe what a fuss old Toussaint made over those accursed chairs I burned up! It is true they were very handsome with stuffing and brocades—you'll observe that this time he ordered wooden ones! No vermin wanted! Now he'll be in better humor. I can't say these are handsome—but one of them, at all events will be certain to please him. Look at the big one!"

The chairs were unloaded, and O'Donnell watched idly as they were taken in. All but one were of plain mahogany, and by no stretch of the imagination could they be termed handsome. The one exception was so striking that O'Donnell examined it with curious interest.

It was a tremendous and ornate chair of old rosewood, with a high back and arms most intricately carved. The high stuffed seat, the back and arms, were all covered or trimmed with embroidered brocade, representing a coat of arms. The carved back came up in a point, with

enormous knobs of rosewood on either side, while both arms and back were ornamented with highly polished brass trimming, which extended in fluted tendrils along the edges of the carving. This was evidently intended to protect the delicate carving from breakage. The whole chair was so large and heavy that two men staggered under its weight.

“That one goes into the library,” ordered Idlinger. “When our governor sees it, he may pay less attention to the others. Abbé Molière will sit in it and believe that he has been created a cardinal, or at the very least an archbishop——”

“Wait!” exclaimed O’Donnell. “What’s the brass plate on the back? No, it’s silver. Here, Idlinger, read it!”

Idlinger stooped, and deciphered the Spanish text graven on the corroded silver plate:

“Made for His Excellency Sr. Don
Yriaga y Asuntos, Lima.”

“The chair of a Peruvian viceroy, perhaps!” said O’Donnell. “Singular, how it could have traveled here! Well, I’m off for a walk.”

It was dusk when he returned, to find Toussaint gone on one of his lightning rides, no one knew whither; probably to seek some information on his own account. Nor did the governor return until midnight at least. The drums again talked this night, their distant pulsations sending O’Donnell into uneasy slumber. Nothing happened, however, to waken him.

With morning, he joined Pascal for a canter, and noted with some surprise that the bodyguard about the plantation had dwindled considerably. He calculated that not five hundred men remained here now. Pascal shrugged and said frankly that he knew nothing of it.

“Me, I am an adviser in fiscal and civil affairs,” he said. “When it comes to war, I am densely ignorant; I would not know if a regiment or a brigade were in camp here. And Toussaint never tells anyone his thoughts, his plans, his aims. True, he seems to do so, seems to be simple as a child; in reality, he is deep, clever, crafty. Now that you mention it, there do seem to be fewer men around. Well, it’s none of my affair!”

O’Donnell did not see the governor, in fact, until mid-afternoon, when Toussaint sent abruptly for him. He was conducted to the library, and as before found Toussaint extremely busy with his secretaries. Now, however, the little black occupied the enormous chair, which was placed before the desk, its back to the windows. As O’Donnell entered, Toussaint was dictating a letter expressing his opinion of those chairs in no uncertain terms:

“The two dozen chairs I asked you for have arrived here. I find them very ugly indeed, and if I keep them it is only because I have no others.

“The packet from France, which you tell me was brought by Citizen Pomaroux, has been handed me by my aide-de-camp to whom you gave it. I thank you for your attention in forwarding it to me. Fraternal *salut!*”

A sharp knock came at the door. There entered an officer whose face wore a wide grin—a huge fellow, covered with dust and mud that betokened hard riding. He saluted Toussaint and held out a packet of papers, brown with dried blood.

“Citizen governor, I got him!” he announced exultantly. “He was a fighter, let me tell you; it took three bullets to finish him. There are his papers. And pray don’t forget the ten portugaises you promised.”

“Good, Captain Dessus!” Toussaint pounced on the packet. He gestured to the secretaries, who gathered up their papers and hastily departed. Swiftly, Toussaint tore at the letters, ran his eye over them, and a glow of delight shone out in his face. He sat down in his great chair, seized a quill, and wrote rapidly. When he had finished he looked at Dessus.

“Take this note to Dupuche,” he said. “Since you cannot read, listen! It says, ‘Citizen, please pay fifteen portugaises to Captain Dessus, and I will be obliged to you.’ Here, take it. Take this other letter, also to Dupuche. Find Citizeness Rigaud—you know her? If she is not at Le Cap, find her! Bring her to me, or kill her, no matter. Go! One hundred portugaises if you succeed.”

With an expression of eager joy, the captain saluted and departed. Toussaint rose, turned on his heel, came face to face with O’Donnell, and checked himself abruptly.

“Citizen! I had forgotten you were here. Well, I can trust you. This Dessus is a human bloodhound, a remarkable man, devoted to me. He has run down a messenger and brought me these papers. They are from the Rigaud woman, sent to various mulatto leaders in the south. They say nothing definite, true, but inform me none the less that I was right. A rising is imminent here, a revolt with which she is connected. She tells them to look for the word that Toussaint Louverture is dead. Do you understand? Plots and plots and more plots, always!”

“So you send a man to kill her?” said O’Donnell drily.

“Yes. What is one woman’s life balanced against the lives of hundreds and thousands? I sent for you, my friend, to tell you that I am now convinced my nephew Moysse is plotting against me. He is not mentioned in these letters, but it is evident that the Rigaud woman is hand in glove with him. I have taken measures to act swiftly in emergency. You will go to Le Cap tonight?”

“With your permission, yes.”

“Very well. This affair may hold over for several days. I should like your company at dinner tonight—not here, but at a nearby plantation, with an old friend who knew your father. You and I will go alone.”

“Alone? Is that safe for you?”

“Entirely. After dinner, you shall leave for Le Cap.”

O’Donnell assented.

So, that evening, he dined with a family of émigrés who had been reinstated by Toussaint in their lands, a Creole family, whose head had been a friend of Colonel Borie. Among these people, Toussaint was treated as an honored guest, a friend, an intimate. To a certain extent this opened O’Donnell’s eyes to the standing of the man among the proud whites of the island. That any black should sit at their table was remarkable, but that he should be held in the greatest and most sincere esteem, was a tribute beyond words.

Dinner over, they rode back to Héricourt together, but, before reaching the plantation, Toussaint drew rein.

“I am not going in for a little while,” he said, taking O’Donnell’s hand in a parting clasp. “There are things which trouble me. I wish to sit alone out here under the stars and think them out. I’ll have enough work awaiting me when I go in! Farewell. All good luck attend you, if we don’t meet again. I may get to Le Cap, or may not, before your ship sails.”

O’Donnell said farewell, thanked Toussaint for his many favors, and left him. At the plantation he met Idlinger, told him that Toussaint would not return immediately, and got his belongings. The quartermaster summoned an officer and half a dozen men to escort him to the city, and gave him a hearty grip of the hand at parting.

“Adieu, or rather au revoir! You’ll see me in Philadelphia one of these days, depend upon it. A safe journey to you!”

O’Donnell returned a cheerful farewell, swung up to the saddle, and rode away with his escort.

Idlinger came back into the house.

He passed through to the library, where a single candle was burning at the desk. Throwing his hat into a corner, he opened the windows for air and then went to the desk.

“We’re getting as much nonsense and formality about here as though it were Bonaparte’s headquarters!” he muttered. “Now I must work for an hour getting out letters, requisitions, orders. Thank the good God those mulatto secretaries are gone! No use telling them how to spell words, when I can do the writing myself. Hello! The chief hasn’t gone far, at all events.”

On the table he spied Toussaint’s enormous headgear—the big round hat with its huge cockade and nodding ostrich feathers. He drew back the heavy chair and sat down, pulled the chair up again, and then, with a dry chuckle, picked up the hat and clapped it on his head. The candle he placed at his elbow, and from one of the drawers produced some of his own printed letter-sheet with their flamboyant heading of *L’Ordonnateur des Guerres Attaché a l’Etat-Major général de l’Armée de St-Domingue*.

The gold embroidery on the stiff brocades of the chair scratched him. With a soft curse he settled down low in the chair, then took a quill from the desk and trimmed it carefully.

“I, Idlinger!” he said, and chuckled again in whimsical humor. “Behold me! Could I play the part of our old Toussaint, now? Undoubtedly. I wish I knew what the devil was in the brain of Moyses about these chairs! It’s the queerest business I ever heard of, upon my word. All this scheming—for what? Merely to supply Héricourt with chairs? No, no; that black rogue is deep and shrewd. There’s something behind it, and I can guess what, but I’d like to know the details!”

His gold-laced uniform jacket, with its heavy epaulets, was hot. He opened it, set the big hat farther back on his head, and shoving out his under jaw, glared across the room at an imaginary visitor.

“So, citizen, you desire me to appoint you a district governor?” he exclaimed. The imitation of Toussaint’s high-pitched, nasal voice was startling. One would have sworn that the governor himself was speaking.

“I have here, citizen,” he went on with his mimicry, “a dossier in which I find that during the English occupation you took their money, gave them allegiance, and surrendered your muskets to them without a struggle. What is more—oh, that is enough, is it? You no longer wish the appointment? Very good. Then I’ll not look further through this dossier. Adieu, citizen, adieu! Come and see me again.”

With a low laugh, he took up his quill, dipped it in the ink, and leaning forward over the desk, began to write rapidly.

While this little farce was running its course, a black shadow came through the shrubbery and halted at the window recently flung open by Idlinger. This window was directly behind the high carved chair.

Sartain, the groom, halted abruptly and shivered as he heard the tones of Toussaint inside the room. He dared not move until that voice had ceased speaking. Then, slowly, he put forth his head like a turtle and looked into the room, inch by inch. The long windows opened down almost to ground level; he perceived at a glance that the room was empty except for the figure

sitting at the desk. It was easy to see who that figure was. Above the high carved back of the chair showed the cockade, the ostrich plumes, of Toussaint's round hat.

There was now no sound in the room except the swift scratching of the quill. Outside, men were singing about a fire, but except for this a curious stillness was perceptible. Something was missing, giving a singular feeling of expectancy, of suspense. O'Donnell, already part way to the city at this particular moment, observed the same thing and soon discovered the reason for it. The matter of drums had entirely ceased, almost as though they were awaiting something.

At the window, Sartain moved cautiously. Men were outside in the fields, encamped all around, and he knew the danger lest they see his figure against the lighted window. He made one swift motion, his bare feet perfectly silent. Suddenly he was in the room, at the side of the window, where none outside could see him. By stretching out his arm he could touch the back of Toussaint's chair.

Twice he reached forth, and twice he hesitated, sweat rolling down his face. His thick lips parted, and he licked them nervously. The figure in the chair was writing busily. The rolling eyes of the black man swept around, came to rest again on the ostrich plumes nodding above the high chair-back. Decision came to him. One swift gesture—he put out his hand to the right-hand knob at the back of the chair, touched it, pressed hard upon it; then darted back and crouched against the wall as though a snake had bitten him.

A sharp, clicking sound broke upon the room. A sliver of the brass ornaments of the chair-back was detached; a five-inch sliver of curved brass, sharp as a razor, that swung away from the wood, driving forward and down with all the force of the concealed spring propelling it. One instant it was there. Next instant, it had plunged to its mark.

There was a sharp, gasping groan, a scrape of spasmodic feet, a little writhing struggle that ended instantly. Then silence.

The black crouched, eyes distended in wonder and terror. After a moment something dropped from the chair-seat to the floor; a globule of scarlet that spread out in a red splash. After it followed another, and another. Soon there was a growing smear of blood beneath the chair, widening out across the floor.

The black man caught his breath with a chattering gasp, and slipped from the open window as rapidly and silently as he had entered.

Ten minutes later, the silence of the night was suddenly broken by the rapid beats of a drum, somewhere close at hand. Swift, irregular, the vibrant sound rose on the darkness and gave its message. Then it ended, fell silent. Almost at once, however, the same pulsating beat was taken up farther away, not from one point alone, but from many. It sounded from the hills, from the wooded depths of plantations, sweeping from the mountains to the sea, across the Plaine du Nord, on through to Le Cap, on to Limbe Gros Morne and Port au Paix, on south to St. Marc and beyond.

While this vibrant pulse of sound was still quivering in the distance, still throbbing out its message, the door of the library opened. Into the room came Toussaint, followed by several of his officers. One looked at the figure in the chair, and leaped forward.

"Something has happened!" Toussaint darted to the table. A glance told him the ghastly truth—Idlinger, wearing his hat, the dead hand midway of a letter, the pale lean features relaxed in death. Not until they tore loose the body from that curved brass blade did the whole thing reveal itself.

“Those drums!” One of the black officers whirled suddenly. “That’s what it means, Toussaint! That message—it says that you are dead——”

Outside arose a sudden growing clamor of alarm, the shouting of men, the rise of wild shrill voices. Toussaint turned, extinguished the candle, and went to the window.

“Look!” he exclaimed, and pointed to the northern sky. Against the horizon appeared a faint radiance; as they looked, it became a ruddy glow, rising higher and higher toward the zenith. “To arms, to arms!”

They heard his voice outside. Drums beat, a trumpet’s silver voice leaped out across the night. But swifter than drums or trumpets, swifter and more terrible, rose the sea of fire mounting in the sky, red as blood.

CHAPTER XIII

NIGHT OF THE FIFTH THERMIDOR

When those drums began to talk across the horizon, O'Donnell was a third of the way to Le Cap. The blacks escorting him drew sudden rein, listening intently.

"What is it—the drums?" he asked. "What do they say, then?"

None of them replied. None of them moved or spoke. Something had happened, and they knew what it was, or guessed, but he could not break their taciturn silence. Irritated, he ordered them to ride on, and they obeyed. He saw that for some reason they were in turmoil, in the utmost dismay and consternation, but the barrier of race lay between him and them.

What he could not accomplish, however, came of itself. A red glow appeared off to the left, mounting into the sky rapidly. At once they burst into exclamations of alarm and terror. The officer turned to him.

"Citizen, shall we return? Some revolt has broken out. The men think our governor has been killed. The drums said so."

"Toussaint killed? Nonsense!" O'Donnell recovered quickly from the shock. "He knew this was coming and was ready for it. Is that fire in the direction of Le Cap?"

"No. We think it is the *habitation* Soubmise."

"Ride on to the city."

They obeyed, reassured by his words.

Before they had proceeded half a mile, however, fire was climbing into the sky from half a dozen points, to north and west of them. Even to O'Donnell it was plain that this was no sporadic outbreak, but a systematic destruction. Often and often in the past nine years had Haiti seen walls of flame mounting the sky, from cane fields and sugar factories, from plantation buildings, from cities and towns; invariably it meant the same thing—savage slaughter, brutish destruction, blood flowing in rivers.

The blacks, no less than O'Donnell, became anxious to reach the city. The horses were spurred into a mad gallop, thundering along through the night. Suddenly there was an irruption of figures into the starlit road ahead, a ruddy gleam of torches among the trees. O'Donnell and the officer, in the lead, tried to draw rein and could not. A burst of yells smote them.

"Halt there! Halt, in the name of Moyses! Vive Moyses!"

Shots spattered out, then a blast of musketry. A hurricane of lead swept the road. Down went horses and men, and over them surged the mob of figures—most of them plantation hands armed with rude weapons, but many soldiers with muskets.

"A white, a white!" went up the savage yell.

O'Donnell's horse was down. He leaped clear, a pistol in each hand, fired point-blank into the surging black figures that burst upon him; then he was down under the rush of maddened men. Stifled, pinned down by heavy shapes, he became aware of hoarsely shouted orders above him, found men with muskets beating back the mob, while others hauled him erect and closed in around him. His arms were bound together.

The men of his escort were slaughtered mercilessly, their heads sliced off and lifted on pikes in the ruddy torch-glare. The officer's heavy sabre saved him for a moment. Then, amid

yells of glee, a pike slashed in and disemboweled him, and before he was down, men were swarming over him with knives and machetes.

“To the horses!” came an order. “You ten, close around the white. Tie him in his saddle. Remember the reward for every white brought alive to headquarters!”

O'Donnell was hustled along, out of the road, away from the blood-mad throng.

These men around him were soldiers, not field hands, and were headed by an officer. This fact, and the words uttered, showed him everything. A revolt had burst, one that had been carefully planned. Parties of soldiers were distributed among the plantations, and at the signal of drums and flames were leading them on their prey.

“Citizen, why do you take prisoners?” demanded O'Donnell, finding the officer beside him. A roar of laughter answered.

“You'll see, citizen white, you'll see! Not to save your life, be sure of that. There are the horses, men. Ride on by the other plantations and pick up more if possible. André, you know this district; serve as guide. The reward is only for men, remember. Kill all others.”

Except for being tied in the saddle, with his arms bound, O'Donnell was astonished to find himself well-treated. No insults were offered him, no blows. The blacks mounted and closed around, starting away by a path leading across the fields, leaving the mob behind. Everyone was talking excitedly. Toussaint had been betraying them, now he was dead and Moyses was in his place. Utter destruction of the whites was afoot. The mulattoes were rising in the south. Dessalines was joining Moyses. Christophe was already dead and Moyses was in possession of Le Cap. The wildest and most fanciful rumors, suppositions, lies, inflamed the brains of these men. And O'Donnell perceived the reason for his treatment. The blacks cared nothing about abusing him, when slaughter filled their hearts and blood was on their hands, and more killing lay awaiting them.

The pace of the horses was quickened, as they came into a wagon road that crossed a plantation. Ahead was rising a glare of burning buildings, the tumultuous shouts of a frantic mob, the explosion of occasional shots. A mulatto officer came dashing up with shrill screamed orders; the men surrounding O'Donnell broke forward in wild haste.

A fearful scene greeted them.

The huge plantation house was ablaze at one end, surrounded by a mob of blacks who were smashing their way in at a dozen points, regardless of shots that came thick and fast from the defenders. These, driven out by flame and smoke, burst suddenly from a side doorway in a desperate effort to cut a way through—some thirty in all, whites and faithful blacks surrounding a party of women and children. Before they were twenty paces from the house, the mob had closed in around them.

O'Donnell, tugging vainly at his bonds, watched in stupefaction. Pistols crashed out, sabres and axes bit terribly at the black wave, but this wave surged in and covered the little group of fighters, overwhelmed them. Frightful screams pierced through the roar of voices and flames. Women and children were seized, passed among the mob, torn to pieces by scores of hands. Heads were lifted on pikes. One huge black decorated himself with the steaming entrails of a victim and danced in frantic delirium.

The screams died out. O'Donnell saw the officer who had captured him, with a little knot of soldiers, dragging two white men to the horses. A rush of blacks who spied the captives was beaten off with brutal efficiency. The two men, bleeding but alive, were tied to a horse beside O'Donnell, and next moment the party started off swiftly, shouting the name of Moyses

to clear a path. O'Donnell's last vision of the scene showed a number of wounded being dragged up to the house and thrust into the flames on the heads of pikes.

Horror choked him—horror so great that it left him numb, powerless, unable to speak or think clearly. Despite all the tales he had heard, despite the evidences he had seen, here was reality so frightful, so appalling, as to overpower the imagination. He wondered where Louis could be at this moment. The groom had gone to Le Cap with Alexandre Borie. Perhaps these scenes were now being repeated on a larger scale in the city, unless Christophe had heeded the warnings of Toussaint. Beside him, the American heard the two prisoners sobbing in heartbroken accents.

Thus began a night which was like a scene from some inferno, a journey fraught with the most unspeakable horror, a veritable odyssey of hell. The reddish glare from burning fields and buildings lifted ever higher as fresh fuel fed the flames, and the breeze that bore smoke and myriads of sparks across the heavens also carried the continuous detonations of exploding cane-joints, so that the night was filled with distant murmurous crepitations blended with the crackling of fire, with shots and voices, in one unending roar.

The officer in command of the party was after prisoners, for the simple reason that Moysé wanted white men to butcher at his headquarters; the fact was not denied nor concealed. From plantation to plantation swept the party. One fire-swept ruin yielded only corpses. At another, more recently ransacked, a dozen whites were chained to trees and were being tortured with every refinement of savage cruelty. The officer rescued two other men here and watched with a grin while a number of women were empaled and forced to eat the flesh of their own children.

Nor were all the victims at plantations. On the road, the party encountered a carriage and four men, with a number of blacks, dashing for refuge at Le Cap. Pistols banged. The vehicle was overturned; two of the men were cut down, with their servants, the others were captured. Upon the three women and their children in the carriage, the fury of the soldiers was let loose. The screams were lessening when there came a challenge, an exchange of shouts, and a gold-laced mulatto colonel rode up with another party of soldiers and prisoners, taking command of the whole.

"To La Chesnaye!" rose an eager yell. "Whites are holding out there, many of them. They have soldiers with them—listen!"

In truth, a sound of regular volleys could be heard, and amid shouts of fierce eagerness, the party took form and went dashing away, the prisoners, lashed to their saddles, following under a guard.

O'Donnell began to waken from the stunned helplessness that gripped him. He looked around, spoke to the white men beside him, but had no answer. Some were wounded, one babbled insensibly, others rode with closed eyes and clenched features, all were utterly blind and deaf to everything around them, stricken down beyond recall by their grief and despair.

Realizing that he was only being saved for a yet more savage slaughter at the hands of Moysé, the American whipped up his stupefied energies, roused himself from the dreadful torpor that had overwhelmed him. Desperation, instead of felling him completely, now aroused in him the will to fight, spurred him into alertness.

The party, some fifty all told, presently turned from the road and galloped along a noble avenue of trees with fire-glare ahead. Throngs of blacks surrounded a house whose roof was ablaze, but whose stone walls resisted all their attacks. To a pulsing throb of drums, by the

light of flames from blazing stacks and outbuildings, the blacks were dancing grotesquely, men and women alike, making occasional rushes at the building.

At each rush the open windows and doors vomited musketry in steady, unflinching volleys. Bodies strewed the ground. A white man, his contorted body seated on a stake, fronted the house, watching with horrible eyes. Yells of delight greeted the new arrivals, and the gold-laced colonel at once took charge of the siege. The prisoners and horses were halted and left under guard among the trees, as much to protect them as to prevent escape. Comparative quiet ensued, as the colonel issued his orders and prepared for the assault.

O'Donnell glanced around. The reins of his horse were tied to those of the other captives. He was on the outside of the group with a black soldier almost beside him, but this guard, like the rest, was intent upon the scene ahead. O'Donnell began to work at the rope about his arms, not in blind and frantic struggles, but carefully, intelligently. It had been hastily tied, and was none too tight.

In the glare of fire, the gold-laced colonel and two other officers advanced toward the house, waving a white rag tied to a musket. When they were within thirty feet of the front gallery, a voice halted them.

"Surrender!" called the mulatto. "Toussaint Louverture is dead, General Moysé is in command. I am from his staff. Surrender, and you will be taken to him. There are other prisoners under guard, to prove my words. Refuse, and you will have no quarter——"

A burst of musketry erupted from windows and doors. The colonel made one wild leap, then ran like a hare for shelter, and reached it. The other two fell to the hail of bullets. A wild yell bursting out, the waiting blacks darted forward, hurled themselves at the house, scythes and axes glittering. Bullets dropped many, but the others poured on—to be met by an unexpected and savage sally. Out poured blacks, men of Toussaint's bodyguard, placed here to act as guard. Bayonets and musket-butts ran red. For an instant O'Donnell thought they would shatter the mob completely; then the mulatto colonel hurled his soldiers through the crowded throng and upon them.

The struggle that ensued was hideous in its absolute ferocity. No quarter was asked or given. Once a man was down, he was gripped by teeth and nails and torn asunder, hacked with knives or machetes. Pikes were hungry for heads. Men and women alike bore in upon the fight, and the growling snarl of their voices was that of animals at the kill.

O'Donnell felt his arms come suddenly free.

The guard beside him, leaning forward tensely, gripped by savage emotion, was staring at the bestial struggle. Most of the guarding blacks were down now. The mob was over them, fighting at doors and windows, and some were inside; a shrill screaming of women was heard from inside the house. Only by an effort did O'Donnell keep a grip on himself, check the mad impulse to rush to the help of those whites. He knew how useless such folly would be. His one chance was to slip away, get a weapon, try and find his way to Le Cap.

The screaming from the house rose to a terrible pitch. The black guard, leaning forward, licked his lips, intent upon the spectacle. O'Donnell's fingers loosened the rope that bound him to his saddle. He was free. The guard edged his horse insensibly forward, for better view.

Swiftly, quietly, O'Donnell leaned far over and let himself fall from the saddle. The act was unobserved. Every eye was fastened upon the house, now erupting gleeful blacks who carried victims, tore at them, rent them limb from limb, drank their blood amid horrible orgies.

An instant later the American was stealing away among the trees. His best chance was to reach the road; once there, he could swiftly hide if anyone came upon him, and could be

working toward Le Cap. A weapon he must have, however. After what he had witnessed this night, he was determined not to fall alive into black hands a second time.

He halted abruptly, frozen into the dark mass of a tree. Approaching at a run along the drive, waving a sabre about his head frenziedly, was a black, hastening to be in at the death. In the starlight and the ruddy reflection from the blaze, his figure was clearly visible. He was alone.

When the panting, toiling shape was close upon him, O'Donnell hurled himself from the tree-shade. A startled gasp escaped the black, then O'Donnell's fist knocked him sprawling and the sabre flew from his hand. O'Donnell leaped forward, seized it, and next instant brought it down. The black man would run to no more killing that night or ever; he had whipped his blade to a razor edge for another's use.

The American hurried away at a steady jog trot. He had no idea of his whereabouts or how far he was from Le Cap; he must follow the road and trust to fortune. He was in the highway now, heading northward. Behind him, the shots and cries and tumult were dying out. The road was empty, apparently safe enough, and he had returned to sanity. Free, rid of the horror-spell, his self-confidence rose swiftly. He was out of the maelstrom of fire and blood, and intended to remain out of it.

A mile fled behind him without incident. As he walked and trotted, O'Donnell recalled his parting from Toussaint. Somehow, in some way, the governor was prepared for just such an emergency as this; as Pascal said, he was deep and kept his plans to himself. If he were not dead, as these slaughterers had yelled, then Moyses might not find things so smooth. Moyses had probably spread out a large part of his forces, also, to insure the rising and massacres. He would not have done this unless he believed Toussaint dead.

A group appeared in the road, debouching suddenly from a side trail. O'Donnell halted for a moment, caught a clear voice rising in French, and strode forward. At sight of him they too had stopped indecisively; three men, one old and two young, whites. All carried swords, and the old man had a pistol. They were half naked, bleeding, panting, had obviously come from some scene of destruction.

"Greetings, gentlemen!" called O'Donnell. "Are you headed for Le Cap? No others with you?"

"All others dead," said the old man. "Le Cap? Yes, if it still exists. Come, join us; we must not lose an instant. Rochambeau is there awaiting me, and General Lasalle cannot move without my report. Messieurs, order our men to follow at the double! Bring up the artillery as rapidly as possible. Forward!"

He began to march rapidly along. One of his sons drew back and touched his head significantly as he fell in beside O'Donnell.

"Finished," he murmured. "All dead behind us—it was too much for him. Is it true that Toussaint is dead, as they say?"

"I know not," said O'Donnell. "He was alive and well some time ago; how long, is hard to say. A few hours; it seems years. What time is it?"

The other shrugged. Time for him had stopped when the blacks burst in upon them after dinner. He said as much, then fell silent, striding along, forgetful of all else. So with the others. They moved like automatons. O'Donnell never learned their names. Everything was swept away in blood and fire.

Torches glimmered ahead. A crowd was surging along the road toward them, singing, yelling, beating drums. O'Donnell halted with a sharp exclamation, but the three paid him

absolutely no heed. They marched straight on, the old man's voice spurring them. O'Donnell quickly turned aside and slipped in among the thick trees.

He watched incredulously, furiously. The mob of blacks leaped forward with howls of delight, their torches lighting up the scene. The pistol flashed, the swords rose and fell; the black wave surged in and rose above the three, eddied for a moment and then dissipated. The mob, with soldiers among them, came tramping onward. Bloody heads grinned down from pikes, weapons were red in the glare. They streamed past O'Donnell's hiding place and went roaring along the road.

Presently he took up his course again, avoiding the bodies that strewed the road. He was angry at the folly of the three. Falling into a long, rapid stride, he went on until he discerned two figures approaching. They were black soldiers striving to catch up with the mob, their bayonets gleaming in the starlight, exultant songs on their lips as they swung on. The American did not slacken pace.

"A white!" broke out one of them abruptly. "Another accursed white—at him!"

They plunged forward eagerly. O'Donnell, almost under their bayonets, darted swiftly aside. His sabre swung. One stumbled and went down, his arm lopped off at the shoulder. The other swung around, faced headlong into O'Donnell's sabre-sweep, and went screaming down the road. Grimly satisfied, the American went his way.

He came suddenly around a bend and strode directly upon a group of men halted there, talking together, half a dozen of them. No time to hide, no time to take to his heels. He flung up his sabre, only to hear one wild yell of terror burst from them.

"Dambala!" they screamed. "It is he! It is he who kills at a touch!"

They broke away on all sides, fled from him, leaving him alone there. O'Donnell stared after them in amazement and wonder that this little group should have recognized him in the starlight. He must have stumbled upon men who had seen him in Le Cap, probably some from the headquarters of Moysé.

With a shrug and a bitter laugh, he went on, while ever the sparks and the ruddy glow rose higher in the heavens, and the tide of massacre swept across the great Plaine du Nord.

CHAPTER XIV

FLAMES GONE, EMBERS REMAIN

In all this land of riches, blood and death, Toussaint Louverture had for nine years been known as the most terrible of men. Not for his ability to read the minds of others and outwit them, not for his keen intelligence, but for his way of appearing unseen and unheralded and suddenly destroying his enemies like a thunderbolt.

Long hours before the discovery of Idlinger's body, before the outburst of flames and the far voice of the drums, Toussaint had foreseen everything. Hoping against hope that he might be wrong, he had none the less made the most exhaustive preparations. There now remained at the plantation headquarters less than four hundred men, the choicest of his veteran troops. While the pulsating drums were still reporting his death, Toussaint was leading out the elite of these troops, sending out the rest in parties of fifty, fan-wise. He needed no report to know what was taking place.

Like an avenging whirlwind, he fell upon those bands of burning, slaughtering mulattoes and blacks. From one plantation to the next he swept with his men, while his aides scoured the roads and byways in a steady movement forward—not for Le Cap, but for the headquarters of General Moysé. Within the half-circle of his march were gathered most of the rebel bands, and when he had passed it was as though the angel of death had gone that way.

Now and again, by the light of flickering flames, bands of surrounded blacks caught sight of him sitting his horse, calmly regarding them and their work. Then they flung themselves to the earth, begged him for mercy, screamed with tears and terror that they had thought him dead. Serene, unmoved, Toussaint heard them not, and soon they were dead. By the first flickering dawn shots might be heard across the whole Plaine du Nord, shots in regular volleys, rippling away into the distance; the sword arms of his men had become wearied by this time.

None received mercy.

Toward dawn, he issued final instructions, gathered a dozen mounted officers about him, and flew like an arrow across country toward the headquarters of Moysé.

That one-eyed nephew of Toussaint was by no means deficient in ability, and perfectly understood that his bid for fame and power must depend wholly upon one swift, sure stroke for its success. A good half of his forces had been sent out in small parties to incite the plantation blacks to rise, and to direct the burning and massacre. These parties would thus cut off all communication between Le Cap and Toussaint's headquarters, leaving Cristophe isolated in his command, hemmed in by a sky-high wall of flame.

With Le Cap in his hands, Moysé knew himself secure. His plans were certain. The drums would carry the news of Toussaint's death; this was the signal for action. A dozen of his picked officers were in the city, ready; these were to slay Cristophe at the first alarm. The whole remainder of his bodyguard was waiting just outside Le Cap, ready to rush into the city and seize it when the news of Cristophe's death reached them.

Moysé himself remained at his headquarters with a hundred men and a few intelligent mulattoes, who were his chief aides. From here, he could hurl himself either against Toussaint's army, if it broke through, or into Le Cap once his men gained the city; or, if

anything went wrong, he could retreat swiftly by the Limbe road into the mountains. Strategically, his position here was unassailable.

When the distant drums brought that long desired message, a pandemonium of jubilation burst forth and quickly spread to the men camped around the house. Moysse was hailed as governor, as general-in-chief; an exultant reception took place in the great ballroom of the house. Here where glittering crystal lustres had once shone on the lace and wigs and brocades, the court rapiers, the elegant trifles, of French noblemen and their ladies, now gathered Moysse and his mulatto officers, his black aides, his white and colored prostitutes from Le Cap, a motley throng of shoddy magnificence.

Flattery was heaped upon him, pride filled his scarred countenance and inflated him enormously. Toussaint was destroyed; in another hour or so would come word that Le Cap was his, Christophe's army at his disposal, supreme power within his grasp. Wine and rum were served out freely, but he himself touched not a drop this night.

Time passed rapidly. The horizon flared ruddily at a dozen points, this glow heightened into flames; by midnight a sea of fire almost encircled the plantation. No couriers had arrived, however.

"Where is Citizeness Rigaud?" demanded Moysse, after vain search.

"Gone, citizen general," replied one of his aides. "She took the men you had placed at her orders and departed. This was soon after the first alarm."

"*Diable!* Well, send messengers to Colonel Rameau, in command of the troops at Le Cap, and obtain a report from him immediately. Send others to Limbe. I see there is no fire in that direction; send a dozen men to discover the reason, and get a report back."

The rapid pounding of hooves was heard, as horses went rushing forth. A little while after, an aide came in and saluted.

"Citizen general! Prisoners are beginning to arrive. Whites."

"Good!" An expression of savage ferocity filled the maimed face of Moysse. "Pay the promised rewards; tear an eye from each of the accursed whites, in memory of the eye they took from me, and then have them shot."

Presently a few screams were heard from outside. Afterward sounded the reports of muskets in sharp volleys. Time passed, and more prisoners began to arrive from various quarters, in parties of five or ten. Moysse repeated his orders, and leaving the room, stood outside, watching in barbaric exultation as they were carried out. The reports coming from various parts of the plain heightened his joy, for this night his hatred of the whites was being glutted to the full.

Uneasiness began to creep upon him, however, when he realized the passage of time, for no couriers had yet appeared. Now came cries from outside, and into the brilliant ballroom was brought one of the party sent to Limbe. Blood dripped on the floor as he staggered forward; two balls had gone through his body.

"Troops on the road, citizen general!" he gasped. "It is blocked. I saw cannon also. They are Toussaint's troops? They fired on us——"

"You lie!" screamed Moysse in sudden incredulous rage. "Holding the Limbe road? Impossible! Toussaint's troops? Then they don't know he is dead!"

The messenger shivered, collapsed, was carried out. Dread silence settled upon the room. The mulattoes and blacks clustered there looked one at another, knew not what to say. The name of Toussaint had terrified them all. Moysse raged through the rooms, ordered his officers

to gather for a council, and then halted as one of the couriers sent to Le Cap hurried in and saluted breathlessly.

“Citizen general! The city is under arms; I saw General Cristophe himself riding about. I could not enter. The roads are guarded and commanded by cannon. Our officers who went into the city are sitting beside the fountain on the road that becomes Notre Dame Avenue——”

“What?” said Moyses. “You say they are sitting there?”

“On stakes, citizen general.”

To Moyses, this was terrible news. Those men had not slain Cristophe at all, but had been seized themselves and empaled. Knowing of what extremes Cristophe was capable, Moyses shivered as he thought swiftly. Now he must act at once, join Colonel Rameau with every man available, hurl himself and his bodyguard on the city in a direct assault. One supreme effort would succeed.

Going to the huge punch bowl filled with pure rum, Moyses seized a silver goblet, filled and drained it. He was about to give an order, when from outside sounded sharp yells, the pounding of hooves.

“Rameau!” arose the cry. “It is Colonel Rameau!”

Rameau rushed into the house, came to a halt, stared around. His uniform was torn and awry, his brown features convulsed, his hat was gone.

“Citizen general!” he panted in desperation. “Our troops have been surrounded by Toussaint’s men with cannon. I talked with Colonel Sainterre, his aide. We are cut off completely, and are caught between the cannon and the city. They permitted me to come here alone for orders. They demand——”

“Toussaint is dead!” A yell of insane rage escaped Moyses. “I tell you, he is dead!”

“So I told Sainterre, and he laughed,” said Colonel Rameau, amid a tense silence. “He said the drums had lied. Toussaint is not dead. Of this I had proof, for two of our own officers were brought in as prisoners and shot—officers who had gone to the south. They had been captured by Toussaint himself, who is advancing.”

In this moment, General Moyses perceived that everything was lost. A frightful contortion passed across his face as his reeling senses found truth in the reports of incredible disaster. The road of escape was blocked, commanded by cannon. He had a scant hundred men with him. The *coup* at Le Cap had failed. His bodyguard was surrounded, destroyed. He was cut off here. As he glared around, he saw man after man slinking out of the room, hurrying away.

Suddenly he turned. A man was led in between two guards; it was Sartain, the groom at Toussaint’s headquarters. He was grinning foolishly, being in liquor. Blood was splattered over his entire body.

“It is done, citizen general!” he cried out. “Now give me the reward. I would have come sooner, but I stopped to do some killing with the others. It was great work!”

Moyes glared at him, his face suffused with blood.

“You say it is done?” he asked harshly. “Toussaint is dead?”

“Dead, citizen general!” Sartain laughed foolishly. “When I pressed the knob as you commanded, the knife went into him and——”

Moyes broke into a wild, shrill scream.

“Take him out!” he yelled. “Take him out! Flay him alive and nail his skin to the big tree before the door! Go!”

Sartain was dragged out. Colonel Rameau stepped forward.

“Citizen general, your orders? I must return at once to my men. We cannot fight, for we are surrounded and outnumbered——”

“Save yourself,” said Moyses gloomily. “All is lost. *Sauve qui peut!*”

And sitting down at the punch bowl, he began to drink steadily. When he looked around again, the room was empty; he was deserted. With a harsh laugh, he unbuttoned his gold-laced tunic, glanced out at the growing daylight, and dipped the silver goblet in the rum. He had but to await the end.

Thus faded Moyses’s dream of empire with the dying flames that rimmed the horizon, and sunrise saw him being led toward Le Cap by the old uncle whom he had so despised.

If the flames had sunk, however, embers still remained red here and there. Morning brought a dense pall of smoke drifting over the whole Plaine du Nord. Several hundreds of whites had perished during the night. The killing was not ended, for in outlying spots, in the hill gorges, in the recesses of the plain, the blood-drunk blacks knew not what was passing elsewhere. Nor, despite his efforts, could Toussaint cover the entire country with his troops.

The approach of this gray dawn found O’Donnell floundering through cane fields, completely lost but heading ever toward the north. In reality, Le Cap was not three miles away, but the drifting masses of smoke hid it from sight and turned the very sunlight to a dun mist.

With the growing daylight, he discovered small buildings ahead, and hurried toward them, for he had long since been forced off the roads, floundering through fields without any sense of direction except the stars. Upon gaining the clearing, he turned away in sick dismay at sight of the bodies strewn before the unburned house. He went on, following a path that presented itself, and after a little was halted by a hail in French from the brush.

“You there, citizen! Give me a hand! Thank heaven for a white face!”

Cautiously, O’Donnell explored the bushes and aided a wounded white to emerge—a man of middle age, armed with a machete. The man held together the edges of a great slash across his breast, that bubbled blood.

“Thanks. Lemaître is the name. Manager of a plantation that went up in smoke. Is Le Cap gone like the rest of the world?”

O’Donnell shrugged. “I don’t know. Where’s the city? I’m lost.”

“Not far. Three miles or so, across country. Help me with this cursed wound and we’ll plod on in company, eh?”

When his wound was bound up, Lemaître led off by a path he knew, which cut through to a narrow road winding through the trees and brush. He told of being surprised, cut down, then getting a weapon and making his escape. He had been lying hidden most of the night, and thirst consumed him.

“We’ll come to a brook soon,” he said. “Hard to talk, for the thirst. You’re not a planter, my friend? I’ve not seen you before——”

O’Donnell told some of the things he had seen during the night, and in the midst they came to a rivulet. Lemaître lowered himself, with the American’s assistance, until he could drink from the stream. After a few greedy gulps he tried to rise, but a groan escaped him. The wound had come open. Clinging to O’Donnell’s hand, he got erect again.

“*Diantre!* I shouldn’t have stooped over. Hand me the machete, comrade——”

O’Donnell stooped to pick up the fallen machete.

At this instant a pistol crashed, almost in his face, from the bushes opposite. The powder blinded him momentarily. He heard Lemaître shout something but the shout turned into a

scream midway. A black figure leaped at O'Donnell. He struck it away, whirled his sabre, found four blacks all around him, striking, leaping at him, falling against him.

"Vive Moyse! Down with the whites!"

O'Donnell's sight cleared. He was lost; they were crowding in from every side, clutching at him, flinging ropes to bring him down. Grim-faced, he slashed with the reddened steel. A face set in a mask of ferocity became a mask of blood and vanished. Another and another went down on top of the dead Lemaitre. Then a rope tightened about his neck and jerked him backward. Black hands, iron hands, clamped about his ankle, his arms, fastened upon his throat.

Then he was down, captured despite his savage struggles.

The realization smote him with a dull despair, as his arms were lashed and he was dragged away, forced by prodding sword points to keep his feet and stumble along with his captors. These were all soldiers, as their uniforms testified.

He hurled imprecations upon them, threats, oaths, exhausting himself in futile effort to arouse their fury. They only grinned and hurried him along the faster. Presently he was moving in a sort of wild and incoherent dream, for utter weariness was upon him, and he was almost in a state of collapse. The men around him were voluble, excited, singing and laughing as they marched. From their words, he gathered that the worst rumors of the night were true, and these men know whereof they talked, being of the bodyguard of Moyse himself.

O'Donnell had no idea whither they went. The party hurried along by trails and narrow paths, encountering no one. The dawn gradually brightened, but not into full day; the pall of smoke drifting across the sky gave everything an unearthly look.

Abruptly they came on four more soldiers, waiting at a point where two trails crossed. The four had with them a white man, a gray-faced creature who gazed dumbly at O'Donnell from hunted eyes of misery and said no word as the blacks drove them on together.

Buildings appeared ahead, untouched by fire. They were crossing a cane field now, and as he eyed the structures ahead, as they drew closer, dim recognition came to O'Donnell. The other man lifted his head. A scream of sudden protest broke from him; he struggled frantically, until blows beat him into renewed submission. Now trees closed around them all, only to open out again. Coming in by a path from the fields, the party were in a great drive at the side of a plantation house. A sense of unreality seized upon O'Donnell, and with a shock he knew now where he was.

Before him was the house of Madame Rigaud.

The path had fetched them out abruptly at the side of the verandah. Here was the wide curve of the drive, hemmed on all sides by gardens and trees, and no living soul was in sight, at first glance. Black figures were sprawled at one side. O'Donnell thought they were men asleep, until he saw that their sleep would know no waking.

As the soldiers halted, as they shouted joyously and sent men into the house, the ghastly scene around him wakened O'Donnell's dullest faculties. The daylight was pitiless. To the trunks of the great trees around, hung drooping stripped bodies, livid wounds smeared with blood and blackened by fire. At one side a man had been empaled, hands bound above his head and covered with pitch, then set afire; the charred thing still sent wisps of smoke into the air. A plantation cart with huge seven-foot wheels stood before the verandah. Lashed by extended ankles and wrists to the nearer wheel was a man, still alive, still groaning, his body hanging in hideous distortion from the broken limbs. O'Donnell heard a sound beside him,

and turned to see his companion falling forward in a faint. The blacks laughed and proceeded to kick the unfortunate man awake.

Within the house was a stir of movement and a sound of voices. A handful of men sauntered out, half dressed; mulattoes, one or two nearly white. At sight of the two prisoners they began to laugh and jest, became animated, crowded eagerly around. A black officer appeared, buttoning his tunic. He glanced at the prisoners, and his eyes distended.

“It is he, it is he!” The cry broke from him and he pointed at the American. “The white who kills at a touch, who was protected by Dambala! Guard him well, you men—Dambala protects him no longer, nor any other white!”

Now the throng teemed about O’Donnell. Men stared at him curiously, struck him, prodded him with knife points and bayonets. They had not tied his feet, however. Choosing his time, getting his balance, he let drive suddenly. All his weight was behind that kick, and his boot smashed up under the jaw of a mulatto with frightful force. The man flew over backward and lay quivering, groaned a little, then relaxed and was still.

“Kill him!” The circle drew swiftly back, then a yell of ferocity burst from them. “Bring muskets! Powder, there! Powder and ball——”

“Stop!” said a voice, silvery, piercing calmly through the uproar, quieting them all as by magic.

She stood there at the verandah rail, under the uprolled lattice, gazing down at them. Her slim figure wore man’s attire of green and gold, as O’Donnell had first seen her in the streets of Le Cap, but now he perceived that her features had changed. The dark loveliness had fled out of them, and was replaced by a hard glitter. Her mouth had become thin and cruel, her whole face had altered; all the sex seemed to have fled out of her, drawing the womanly beauty from her countenance and leaving in its place rapacity, a cold passion of hatred, ferocity beyond words.

“Kill him not, my children,” she said. “The cart yonder—turn it around, and bind him to the empty wheel. Give him rum to drink so that he may enjoy himself. I will come presently and talk with him. Meantime, harm him not, but amuse yourselves with the other.”

She disappeared; there was a pealing yell of delight. Some of the blacks hurled themselves on O’Donnell, bore him to the ground, holding his arms and legs as they stripped him. Others turned the cart with its groaning burden, so that the empty wheel was toward the verandah. They carried him to it, stretched out his limbs despite all struggles, drew them tight with cords, and so left him spreadeagled, hanging there, grimly staring at the house and awaiting what might come.

The other captive was dragged away, and after a little began to scream. O’Donnell could not see what was happening, for he had been dragged behind the cart, but knew that a demoniac fury had come upon these blacks. They sang, danced grotesquely, capered about, struck the sprawled corpses with weapons. From the tree limbs were hanging several pendant, motionless figures. The blacks rushed at them, caught them in mid-leap with arms and legs wrapped around, and swung in wild frenzy. Presently O’Donnell closed his eyes, for agony was upon him. The weight of his body upon the cords binding wrists and ankles brought excruciating pain.

“You are ready to talk with me now, my good friend?”

He opened his eyes, saw her standing there in front of him, regarding him with a thin and mirthless smile. O’Donnell quivered a little. Anger convulsed him, conquered his pain.

“You have reverted to type, mulatress?” he said coldly. “An animal like the rest, eh?”

“What I am, I am,” she replied calmly. “There is no longer any secret to keep; the tables are turned, now it is the whites who are contemptible, despised, dogs fit only to be enslaved or killed! What was my shame will now become my glory. Instead of concealing it, instead of killing those who know it, I now publish it openly, you understand? And it has been a great joke, too. Madame Rigaud, the proud lady—Citizeness Rigaud, wife to the greatest blood in France, a woman of color! Moysse and his officers would not believe, until I showed them my body, until I joined them in the rites of vaudou, in the dances of the snake god and the mountain god, in the sacrifices to the gods of our people!”

O’Donnell shivered slightly, but not from cold, as he imagined what must have passed between this woman and the black leaders. Not woman, indeed, but an inhuman creature, suddenly reaping the fruit of long years of heredity, of warped mental acuity.

“So your brother is alive?” she said, and broke into a light laugh. “Well, at least he was silenced while it mattered, and my end was served. Now the whole island has spewed forth the whites. Moysse is killing them in Le Cap; not one shall escape! He swore it at the altar of Dambala.”

A mulatto officer approached with a cup of rum. He forced back O’Donnell’s head, put it to the American’s lips, poured the fiery liquid into his mouth. The screams of the other captive had died down into low shuddering cries. A few blacks approached the cart, but the woman gave them one look, and they slunk away with fear in their eyes.

“You see how they obey me,” she said. “They know I am one of them, but greater than any of them. Enjoy yourself, my friend. I shall return soon, for another word with you, but first I must have breakfast. Au revoir!”

She departed into the house.

O’Donnell’s head was cleared by the rum. He glanced around at the frenetic mulattoes and blacks, wondering dully what Providence could allow such things. Bad enough at night, here in the calm light of day these blood-mad orgies assumed unreality, took on all the horror of the abnormal. She, this woman once so lovely, was a savage like these others around her, and like them now seemed an unclean thing from some other world.

The wretched man behind the cart was dead. They came bearing his head on a pike, dancing around it, thrusting it into O’Donnell’s face with frightful jests and laughter. Some of their women had appeared from the house and joined them in the play. One of them seized an iron bar and dashed forward, shrieking, to break the American’s legs, but a man caught her back and dashed her to the ground roughly.

Presently the Rigaud woman came out again, and walked forward to O’Donnell. She leaned forward and mockingly kissed his cheek, while the blacks roared with laughter.

“Greeting, citizen!” she said derisively. “So you thought you had fooled me, eh? I admit that you did. I thought from the first you were a Borie, but you pulled the wool over my eyes very neatly——”

The blacks had come close around. One of them thrust forward a pike so that the point of it drove into O’Donnell’s thigh. Like a flash, the woman turned. A knife rose and fell in her hand. Scream upon scream of insensate fury burst from her lips. She fell forward with the falling black, stabbing him repeatedly. Such was the appalling ferocity of her rage that even the savages around retreated hastily. She rose, her black hair disheveled, and with an imprecation shook her fist at them.

“Go away!” she screamed. “Get out of my sight! Go away!”

She stood, her breast rising and falling with swift panting, her face swept by passion uncontrollable, her eyes glittering. From the bitter venom of that look, they drew back, muttered excuses, slunk away and left her alone, glaring after them. Then she swung around to her victim.

Going up to him, she laid the reeking knife to his breast, drew it back and forth, so that the warm blood was wiped from it in two scarlet lines. A laugh came to her lips as she looked at his breast, then her eyes lifted to his.

“It does not pay to be so clever with me,” she said derisively, and flung back her head in a burst of laughter.

To O’Donnell, in this moment, came with positive shock the recollection of Le Serpent’s words at their first meeting—“the woman in green and gold will throw back her head and laugh when you are stretched on the wheel for breaking.”

“Are you mad?” he exclaimed calmly. “Shame upon you, for becoming a beast like these others!”

She met his gaze and seemed suddenly to shrink back as though he had struck her. For an instant, swift pallor leaped into her face; her eyes widened on his as she stared, met his fierce, level look, quivered under the poise of his calm voice that startled her throbbing brain. Where she would have jeered at pleas, at suffering, the quiet voice of this man reached into her like a sword.

Only for an instant, however. Then, reaching forward, she struck him across the face.

“A beast!” she cried passionately. “We’ll see who’s the beast, my fine gentleman, when you shriek to me for mercy, for death to end your agony!”

“Don’t be a fool as well,” said he, contemptuously. “You’ll have no shrieks out of me, woman. Do your worst and be damned to you.”

“So?” She regarded him with narrowed eye, venomous, glittering with cold hatred. “And why do you think I’ll enjoy your torture, eh? Why do you think I killed that brother of yours, that silly fool with his fine airs? Because he knew me for what I am, yes, but there was a greater reason behind that! I’ll tell you now, and if I find him again I’ll voice it in his ears while he dies as you’ll die! Borie, indeed—and daring to call me beast! How know you that I’m not a Borie, even as you?”

O’Donnell started. “You lie, woman!”

“So that thrust reached you, eh?” she mocked him. “Aye, your father had mistresses before he married, and perhaps afterward also. And my mother was one of them.”

“You lie!” O’Donnell’s voice drove at her, and he struggled vainly at his bonds. “A lie! You are from Guadeloupe, and I know it.”

“Where my mother was sent by him, aye,” she rejoined, enjoying his acute torment with cruel delight. “You never knew this, did you? But it is so. When he married, he sent her away, and me with her——”

O’Donnell’s eye caught a moving object, and he lifted his head, thinking that some incredible vision was upon him.

Out of the trees across the drive, from the same path by which he himself had come, a man had stepped and was approaching them, a pistol in either hand. But the man was Alexandre Borie, his gaze fastened upon the stripped and bloody figure of his brother. He said nothing, he moved swiftly but without apparent haste. Perhaps he realized that, given time, the crimsoned knife would be buried in the helpless body.

Seeing the change in O'Donnell's face, the woman glanced about. She whirled swiftly, put back the hair from her eyes, and stood incredulous, gasping.

"You!" she cried out in disbelief. "You——"

"I, yes," said Alexandre.

Lifting his pistol, he fired. Then he raised the second pistol and fired, his face like stone. Both balls struck her full in the breast. She was knocked backward, dead before she struck the ground, to lie there in a crumpled heap of green and gold.

At the first shot, men appeared among the trees, here and all about the house. Men in the uniform of Toussaint's guards, muskets at the ready. A shot rang out, half a dozen more followed. Mulattoes and blacks burst from the house, yelling shrilly, only to be cut down as they emerged. The house was surrounded. More soldiers were coming up the drive. There was no escape. For a moment the struggle raged with wild ferocity, then receded. From behind the house came yells, screams, shots.

The two men by the cart were alone.

"Paul! God forgive me, I thought—I thought you were dead, that this blood on your breast was your own!" cried Alexandre. He had hastily cut the cords, and caught O'Donnell as the latter toppled free. "Not hurt? Nothing but that wound in the thigh—thanks be to heaven! I thought the she-devil had used her knife on you—safe, safe!"

With tears and laughter mingled, he fell to work rubbing ankles and wrists, tore a strip from his shirt to bind up the torn thigh. O'Donnell seized him by the shoulders, looked into his eyes, embraced him warmly.

"I thought you were a vision, Alexandre," he said. "How did you come here?"

"That groom of yours, Louis, guided us. He's somewhere about. General Moysse said the Rigaud woman might be here—he's a prisoner, drunk. Toussaint gave me fifty men——"

"Moysse a prisoner?" cried O'Donnell, incredulous.

"At Le Cap, yes. I met them as they brought him into the city. We came straight on here. I have horses, Paul. We can go at once—but you must have clothes. Wait. I'll get some in the house——"

He was about to dash away, when O'Donnell halted him.

"Alexandre! One moment. I suppose you don't know how old this Rigaud woman was?"

"Eh? Such a question!" The other stared at him in astonishment, then uttered a laugh. "As it happens, I do know. She's five years younger than I am—she mentioned it that night before I was attacked. And I remember she had been very young in Guadeloupe. Well, if you're satisfied now, I'll get you some clothes."

He departed, still laughing. O'Donnell drew a deep breath and stood looking down at the dead woman. Five years younger than Alexandre—then she had lied! She had lied in the deliberate effort to torture him—she must have lied!

O'Donnell did not mention the matter to his brother, however, then or later.

Toward the city rode the three of them, the two brethren and the grinning, happy Louis, with a dozen soldiers for escort. Drawing near Le Cap, all vestiges of destruction ceased. The city and its environs were peaceful, quiet, unharmed. Parties of Toussaint's men were patrolling every road, spreading out in all directions.

Dismissing the soldiers as they came into the city, the two brothers rode on toward the governor's palace, O'Donnell still recounting his experiences of the night. Wrists and ankles burned like fire, but the pain kept him alert, made him forget threatened collapse. All was well now, all was ended——

But not quite ended.

They turned into the Place d'Armes, and found it crowded by a vast throng of folk, black and white, all thronged there watching something. In the center of the square, a file of troops were under arms, an officer giving them sharp orders. A drum was just beginning its long, steady roll. Facing them was a tall figure, a bandage about his face.

“Citizen, who is that?” asked O'Donnell, of the nearest man.

“Who? Why, that's General Moyses—”

The words were drowned by the sharp explosion of muskets, and the blindfolded figure fell forward into the white plumes of powder smoke.

Toussaint Louverture was still terrible.

CHAPTER XV SAILS ON THE SEA

The brig *Sophie* of Philadelphia was standing very slowly out of the shallow harbor of Le Cap; the long and towering bulk of Morne Rouge killed most of the wind. Two men leaned on her rail, looking back at the quays, the crowded shipping, the temple of Freedom in its grove, the lessening bulk of the stone-faced cathedral and governor's palace, the increasing panorama of the city as distance drew it into focus.

"So it lies behind us at last," murmured O'Donnell, and glanced up at the mountains, their peaks veiled in fleecy cloud. "Thank heaven!"

Alexandre clapped him on the shoulder.

"So say I, brother mine! But tell me something. You know, Hermione Rigaud was a beauty, a real beauty, especially in her younger days. I'll not say that I wasn't a bit taken with her myself, there in Guadeloupe, until I found out that she was only part white. Between ourselves, I think that's why she hated me. But you—well, you were never a monk! How does it happen that you escaped her charm?"

O'Donnell surveyed his brother critically. In the past few days, Alexandre had changed. True, his hair was still white, but some of the deeply carved lines had lessened and faded in his face, and new life sparkled in his eyes.

"Escaped? Escaped her charm?" echoed O'Donnell, an oddly acrid tinge to his voice. "Good God, man! How could I escape her? How could anyone have escaped that woman's beauty, her fascination, her frightful and terrible charm——"

He checked himself abruptly, with a little shiver. The eyes of Alexandre widened upon him.

"Eh? But I thought—I thought——"

"Thought doesn't pay," said O'Donnell curtly, and turning from him, went below.

So the little brig grew smaller to those ashore, until they saw her white sails climb the horizon, leaning over to the wind, and vanish into the white haze in the west.

Later, a few weeks and months later, Toussaint Louverture stood on the heights above the Bay of Samana, and with his aides remained silent, stupefied by the spectacle outspread before them. There, coming down the sea-rim, was such a fleet as they or few other men had ever seen—ships covering the whole sea, it appeared. Great line-of-battle ships, troop ships, frigates, supply ships, coming by the score, apparently endless, the red bonnet of Liberty showing on their foresails, the tricolor of France flying above.

"Surely," muttered Toussaint, a terrible despair creeping into his face, "surely all of France is coming to engulf us here! Mount, ride!"

And again Cristophe, gigantic and imperturbable, stood before the entrance of the governor's palace in Le Cap and stared out to sea. Another fleet lay there, and gazing shoreward from her flagship was Napoleon's sister. Beside her stood her husband, the dashing Leclerc, in whose command were these fleets and armies come to recapture the fairest colony of France, the richest colony of any European nation.

They could not see Cristophe or the signal he made, they could not see him turn and deliberately thrust his smoking torch inside the entrance, holding it against the brocaded

hangings. But they could see the bursting smoke and flame leap upward, they could see flames spouting and roaring skyward from a dozen points in the city, until the crackling enemy of man mounted anew into heaven above the island of blood and fire.

And from the hills, from the plains, from the altars of the gods of Dahomey, growled and muttered the drums of Dambala, as prelude to what was about to come.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

By one of those happy chances which sometimes favor writers, a gentleman in California turned over to me a mass of documents brought from Haiti, about 1803, by one of his ancestors. They comprised everything from street-lighting receipts of Le Cap to the files of a general in the French army of occupation. Among them were many letters from Toussaint Louverture, others from Toussaint's adjutant and quartermaster, his plantation manager, his nephew Moysse; legal papers, documents concerning his plantation, etc.

From the great amount of petty detail presented by these papers, grew the present story. They show, for example, that Toussaint's plantation was not that mentioned in various works, but was the Noé d'Héricourt *habitation* where he had once been a slave. His letters, those of Moysse and Idlinger, are there dated as from his headquarters. A curious missive orders up stuff to make a mattress and bolster for "the respectable godfather" of Toussaint, the same black who had taught him to read and write, and whose son was his overseer.

The period of the story is that of Toussaint's supreme power. He had literally driven the English into the sea, had conquered Spanish Santo Domingo, had crushed the French and the mulatto forces. The amazing resources of the island may be indicated by the "success" of the later expedition under Leclerc, brother-in-law of Napoleon. He had eighty-odd ships, the pick of the French navy, with all the flower of Napoleon's veteran regiments and an enormous quantity of stores and munitions, while further squadrons and troops reinforced him. The net gain to France was just one man, Toussaint, seized by the blackest treachery, sent to France, and there starved to death by Napoleon's direct order. Leclerc and some 60,000 French died in Haiti and the balance capitulated to the British to save themselves. Toussaint was the most expensive prisoner in all history.

The form "Louverture" is employed instead of the more common "L'Ouverture" because Toussaint used it exclusively, both in writing and on his printed letterheads. The other form does not appear in these documents. The name of Haiti has been used to avoid confusion between the French San Domingo and the form Santo Domingo applied to the Spanish portion. Cap François, the present Cap Haitien, was known simply as Le Cap, and had been so known in common parlance for a hundred years previously.

With Idlinger I have taken unjustifiable liberties. I can discover no mention whatever of him except from his own letters, and so have used him to suit the story. The balance of my material came from that glorious forty-volume set of the *Naval Chronicle* and from the Annual Registers, where are found the despatches of Maitland, Duckworth, Leclerc, Toussaint, and others.

The letters regarding the chairs are quoted in the story, which also incorporates certain other of these documents. A most interesting letter from Cristophe, which unfortunately I could not use here, recalls his origin in the English colony of St. Christopher; his signature remains "Henry," for he retained the anglicized form of the name.

—H. BEDFORD-JONES