A ROMANCE OF THE REPUBLIC.

PART FIRST.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT are you going to do with yourself this evening, Alfred?" said Mr. Royal to his companion, as they issued from his counting-house in New Orleans. "Perhaps I ought to apologize for not calling you Mr. King, considering the shortness of our acquaintance; but your father and I were like brothers in our youth, and you resemble him so much, I can hardly realize that you are not he himself, and I still a young man. It used to be a joke with us that we must be cousins, since he was a King and I was of the Royal family. So excuse me if I say to you, as I used to say to him, What are you going to do with yourself, Cousin Alfred?"

"I thank you for the friendly familiarity," rejoined the young man. "It is pleasant to know that I remind you so strongly of my good father. My most earnest wish is to resemble him in character as much as I am said to resemble him in person. I have formed no plans for the evening. I was just about to ask you what there was best worth seeing or hearing in the Crescent City."

"If I should tell you I thought there was nothing better worth seeing than my daughters, you would perhaps excuse a father's partiality," rejoined Mr. Royal.

"Your daughters!" exclaimed his companion, in a tone of surprise. "I never heard that you were married."

A shadow of embarrassment passed over the merchant's face, as he replied, "Their mother was a Spanish lady, — a stranger here, — and she formed no acquaintance. She was a woman of a great heart and of rare beauty. Nothing can ever make up her loss to me; but all the joy that remains in life is centred in the daughters she has left me. I should like to introduce them to you; and that is a compliment I never before paid to any young man. My home is in the outskirts of the city; and when we have dined at the hotel, according to my daily habit, I will send off a few letters, and then, if you like to go there with me, I will call a carriage."

"Thank you," replied the young man; "unless it is your own custom to ride, I should prefer to walk. I like the exercise, and it will give a better opportunity to observe the city, which is so different from our Northern towns that it has for me the attractions of a foreign land."

In compliance with this wish, Mr. Royal took him through the principal streets, pointing out the public buildings, and now and then stopping to smile at some placard or sign which presented an odd jumble of French and English. When they came to the suburbs of the city, the aspect of things became charmingly rural. Houses were scattered here and there among trees and gardens. Mr. Royal pointed out one of them, nestled in flowers and half encircled by an orange-grove, and said, "That is my home. When I first came here, the place where it stands was a field of sugar-canes; but the city is fast stretching itself into the suburbs."

They approached the dwelling; and in answer to the

bell, the door was opened by a comely young negress, with a turban of bright colors on her head and golden hoops in her ears. Before the gentlemen had disposed of their hats and canes, a light little figure bounded from one of the rooms, clapping her hands, and exclaiming, "Ah, Papasito!" Then, seeing a stranger with him, she suddenly stood still, with a pretty look of blushing surprise.

"Never mind, Mignonne," said her father, fondly patting her head. "This is Alfred Royal King, from Boston; my namesake, and the son of a dear old friend of mine. I have invited him to see you dance. Mr. King, this is my Floracita."

The fairy dotted a courtesy, quickly and gracefully as a butterfly touching a flower, and then darted back into the room she had left. There they were met by a taller young lady, who was introduced as "My daughter Rosabella." Her beauty was superlative and peculiar. Her complexion was like a glowing reflection upon ivory from gold in the sunshine. Her large brown eyes were deeply fringed, and lambent with interior light. Lustrous dark brown hair shaded her forehead in little waves, slight as the rippling of water touched by an insect's wing. It was arranged at the back of her head in circling braids, over which fell clusters of ringlets, with moss-rose-buds nestling among them. Her full, red lips were beautifully shaped, and wore a mingled expression of dignity and sweetness. The line from ear to chin was that perfect oval which artists love, and the carriage of her head was like one born to a kingdom.

Floracita, though strikingly handsome, was of a model less superb than her elder sister. She was a charming little brunette, with laughter always lurking in ambush

within her sparkling black eyes, a mouth like "Cupid's bow carved in coral," and dimples in her cheeks, that well deserved their French name, *berceaux d'amour*.

These radiant visions of beauty took Alfred King so much by surprise, that he was for a moment confused. But he soon recovered self-possession, and, after the usual salutations, took a seat offered him near a window overlooking the garden. While the commonplaces of conversation were interchanged, he could not but notice the floral appearance of the room. The ample white lace curtains were surmounted by festoons of artificial roses, caught up by a bird of paradise. On the ceiling was an exquisitely painted garland, from the centre of which hung a tasteful basket of natural flowers, with delicate vine-tresses drooping over its edge. The walls were papered with bright arabesques of flowers, interspersed with birds and butterflies. In one corner a statuette of Flora looked down upon a geranium covered with a profusion of rich blossoms. In the opposite corner, ivy was trained to form a dark background for Canova's "Dancer in Repose," over whose arm was thrown a wreath of interwoven vines and orange-blossoms. On brackets and tables were a variety of natural flowers in vases of Sevres china, whereon the best artists of France had painted flowers in all manner of graceful combinations. The ottomans were embroidered with flowers. Rosabella's white muslin dress was trailed all over with delicately tinted roses, and the lace around the corsage was fastened in front with a mosaic basket of flowers. Floracita's black curls fell over her shoulders mixed with crimson fuchsias, and on each of her little slippers was embroidered a bouquet.

"This is the Temple of Flora," said Alfred, turning to

his host. "Flowers everywhere! Natural flowers, artificial flowers, painted flowers, embroidered flowers, and human flowers excelling them all," — glancing at the young ladies as he spoke.

Mr. Royal sighed, and in an absent sort of way answered, "Yes, yes." Then, starting up, he said abruptly, "Excuse me a moment; I wish to give the servants some directions."

Floracita, who was cutting leaves from the geranium, observed his quick movement, and, as he left the room, she turned toward their visitor and said, in a childlike, confidential sort of way: "Our dear Mamita used to call this room the Temple of Flora. She had a great passion for flowers. She chose the paper, she made the garlands for the curtains, she embroidered the ottomans, and painted that table so prettily. Papasito likes to have things remain as she arranged them, but sometimes they make him sad; for the angels took Mamita away from us two years ago."

"Even the names she gave you are flowery," said Alfred, with an expression of mingled sympathy and admiration.

"Yes; and we had a great many flowery pet-names beside," replied she. "My name is Flora, but when she was very loving with me she called me her Floracita, her little flower; and Papasito always calls me so now. Sometimes Mamita called me *Pensée Vivace.*"

"In English we call that bright little flower Jump-up-and-kiss-me," rejoined Alfred, smiling as he looked down upon the lively little fairy.

She returned the smile with an arch glance, that seemed to say, "I sha' n't do it, though." And away she skipped to meet her father, whose returning steps were heard.

"You see I spoil her," said he, as she led him into the room with a half-dancing step. "But how can I help it?"

Before there was time to respond to this question, the negress with the bright turban announced that tea was ready.

"Yes, Tulipa, we will come," said Floracita.

"Is *she* a flower too?" asked Alfred.

"Yes, she 's a flower, too," answered Floracita, with a merry little laugh. "We named her so because she always wears a red and yellow turban; but we call her Tulee, for short."

While they were partaking of refreshments, she and her father were perpetually exchanging badinage, which, childish as it was, served to enliven the repast. But when she began to throw oranges for him to catch, a reproving glance from her dignified sister reminded her of the presence of company.

"Let her do as she likes, Rosa dear," said her father. "She is used to being my little plaything, and I can't spare her to be a woman yet."

"I consider it a compliment to forget that I am a stranger," said Mr. King. "For my own part, I forgot it entirely before I had been in the house ten minutes."

Rosabella thanked him with a quiet smile and a slight inclination of her head. Floracita, notwithstanding this encouragement, paused in her merriment; and Mr. Royal began to talk over reminiscences connected with Alfred's father. When they rose from table, he said, "Come here, Mignonne! We won't be afraid of the Boston gentleman, will we?" Floracita sprang to his side. He passed his arm fondly round her, and, waiting for his guest and his elder daughter to precede them, they returned to the room they had left. They had scarcely entered it, when Flora-

cita darted to the window, and, peering forth into the twilight, she looked back roguishly at her sister, and began to sing: —

"Un petit blanc, que j'aime,
En ces lieux est venu.
Oui! oui! c'est lui même!
C'est lui! je l'ai vue!
Petit blanc! mon bon frère!
Ha! ha! petit blanc si doux!"

The progress of her song was checked by the entrance of a gentleman, who was introduced to Alfred as Mr. Fitzgerald from Savannah. His handsome person reminded one of an Italian tenor singer, and his manner was a graceful mixture of *hauteur* and insinuating courtesy. After a brief interchange of salutations, he said to Floracita, "I heard some notes of a lively little French tune, that went so trippingly I should be delighted to hear more of it."

Floracita had accidentally overheard some half-whispered words which Mr. Fitzgerald had addressed to her sister, during his last visit, and, thinking she had discovered an important secret, she was disposed to use her power mischievously. Without waiting for a repetition of his request, she sang: —

"Petit blanc, mon bon frère!
Ha! ha! petit blanc si doux!
Il n'y a rien sur la terre
De si joli que vous."

While she was singing, she darted roguish glances at her sister, whose cheeks glowed like the sun-ripened side of a golden apricot. Her father touched her shoulder, and said in a tone of annoyance, "Don't sing that foolish song, Mignonne!" She turned to him quickly with a look of surprise; for she was accustomed only to endearments from

him. In answer to her look, he added, in a gentler tone, "You know I told you I wanted my friend to see you dance. Select one of your prettiest, *ma petite*, and Rosabella will play it for you."

Mr. Fitzgerald assiduously placed the music-stool, and bent over the portfolio while Miss Royal searched for the music. A servant lighted the candelabra and drew the curtains. Alfred, glancing at Mr. Royal, saw he was watching the pair who were busy at the portfolio, and that the expression of his countenance was troubled. His eyes, however, soon had pleasanter occupation; for as soon as Rosa touched the piano, Floracita began to float round the room in a succession of graceful whirls, as if the music had taken her up and was waltzing her along. As she passed the marble Dancing Girl, she seized the wreath that was thrown over its arm, and as she went circling round, it seemed as if the tune had become a visible spirit, and that the garland was a floating accompaniment to its graceful motions. Sometimes it was held aloft by the right hand, sometimes by the left; sometimes it was a whirling semicircle behind her; and sometimes it rested on her shoulders, mingling its white orange buds and blossoms with her shower of black curls and crimson fuchsias. Now it was twined round her head in a flowery crown, and then it gracefully unwound itself, as if it were a thing alive. Ever and anon the little dancer poised herself for an instant on the point of one fairy foot, her cheeks glowing with exercise and dimpling with smiles, as she met her father's delighted gaze. Every attitude seemed spontaneous in its prettiness, as if the music had made it without her choice. At last she danced toward her father, and sank, with a wave-like motion, on the ottoman at his feet.

He patted the glossy head that nestled lovingly on his knee, and drawing a long breath, as if oppressed with happiness, he murmured, "Ah, Mignonne!"

The floating fairy vision had given such exquisite pleasure, that all had been absorbed in watching its variations. Now they looked at each other and smiled. "You would make Taglioni jealous," said Mr. Fitzgerald, addressing the little dancer; and Mr. King silently thanked her with a very expressive glance.

As Rosabella retired from the piano, she busied herself with rearranging a bouquet she had taken from one of the vases. When Mr. Fitzgerald stationed himself at her side, she lowered her eyes with a perceptibly deepening color. On her peculiar complexion a blush showed like a roseate cloud in a golden atmosphere. As Alfred gazed on the long, dark, silky fringes resting on those warmly tinted cheeks, he thought he had never seen any human creature so superbly handsome.

"Nothing but music can satisfy us after such dancing," said Mr. Fitzgerald. She looked up to him with a smile; and Alfred thought the rising of those dark eyelashes surpassed their downcast expression, as the glory of morning sunshine excels the veiled beauty of starlight.

"Shall I accompany you while you sing, 'How brightly breaks the morning'?" asked she.

"That always sings itself into my heart, whenever you raise your eyes to mine," replied he, in a low tone, as he handed her to the piano.

Together they sang that popular melody, bright and joyful as sunrise on a world of blossoms. Then came a Tyrolese song, with a double voice, sounding like echoes from the mountains. This was followed by some tender,

complaining Russian melodies, novelties which Mr. Fitzgerald had brought on a preceding visit. Feeling they were too much engrossed with each other, she said politely, "Mr. King has not yet chosen any music."

"The moon becomes visible through the curtains," replied he. "Perhaps you will salute her with 'Casta Diva.'"

"That is a favorite with us," she replied. "Either Flora or I sing it almost every moonlight night."

She sang it in very pure Italian. Then turning round on the music-stool she looked at her father, and said, "Now, *Papasito querido*, what shall I sing for you?"

"You know, dear, what I always love to hear," answered he.

With gentle touch, she drew from the keys a plaintive prelude, which soon modulated itself into "The Light of other Days." She played and sang it with so much feeling, that it seemed the voice of memory floating with softened sadness over the far-off waters of the past. The tune was familiar to Alfred, but it had never sung itself into his heart, as now. "I felt as I did in Italy, listening to a vesper-bell sounding from a distance in the stillness of twilight," said he, turning toward his host.

"All who hear Rosabella sing notice a bell in her voice," rejoined her father.

"Undoubtedly it is the voice of a belle," said Mr. Fitzgerald.

Her father, without appearing to notice the commonplace pun, went on to say, "You don't know, Mr. King, what tricks she can play with her voice. I call her a musical ventriloquist. If you want to hear the bell to perfection, ask her to sing 'Toll the bell for lovely Nell.'"

"Do give me that pleasure," said Alfred, persuasively.

She sang the pathetic melody, and with voice and piano imitated to perfection the slow tolling of a silver-toned bell. After a short pause, during which she trifled with the keys, while some general remarks were passing, she turned to Mr. Fitzgerald, who was leaning on the piano, and said, "What shall I sing for *you?*" It was a simple question, but it pierced the heart of Alfred King with a strange new pain. What would he not have given for such a soft expression in those glorious eyes when she looked at *him!*

"Since you are in a ventriloqual mood," answered Mr. Fitzgerald, "I should like to hear again what you played the last time I was here, — Agatha's Moonlight Prayer, from *Der Freyschütz.*"

She smiled, and with voice and instrument produced the indescribably dreamy effect of the two flutes. It was the very moonlight of sound.

"This is perfectly magical," murmured Alfred. He spoke in a low, almost reverential tone; for the spell of moonlight was on him, and the clear, soft voice of the singer, the novelty of her peculiar beauty, and the surpassing gracefulness of her motions, as she swayed gently to the music of the tones she produced, inspired him with a feeling of poetic deference. Through the partially open window came the lulling sound of a little trickling fountain in the garden, and the air was redolent of jasmine and orange-blossoms. On the pier-table was a little sleeping Cupid, from whose torch rose the fragrant incense of a nearly extinguished *pastille.* The pervasive spirit of beauty in the room, manifested in forms, colors, tones, and motions, affected the soul as perfume did the senses. The

visitors felt they had stayed too long, and yet they lingered. Alfred examined the reclining Cupid, and praised the gracefulness of its outline.

"Cupid could never sleep here, nor would the flame of his torch ever go out," said Mr. Fitzgerald; "but it is time *we* were going out."

The young gentlemen exchanged parting salutations with their host and his daughters, and moved toward the door. But Mr. Fitzgerald paused on the threshold to say, "Please play us out with Mozart's 'Good Night.'"

"As organists play worshippers out of the church," added Mr. King.

Rosabella bowed compliance, and, as they crossed the outer threshold, they heard the most musical of voices singing Mozart's beautiful little melody, "Buena Notte, amato bene." The young men lingered near the piazza till the last sounds floated away, and then they walked forth in the moonlight, — Fitzgerald repeating the air in a subdued whistle.

His first exclamation was, "Is n't that girl a Rose Royal?"

"She is, indeed," replied Mr. King; "and the younger sister is also extremely fascinating."

"Yes, I thought you seemed to think so," rejoined his companion. "Which do you prefer?"

Shy of revealing his thoughts to a stranger, Mr. King replied that each of the sisters was so perfect in her way, the other would be wronged by preference.

"Yes, they are both rare gems of beauty," rejoined Fitzgerald. "If I were the Grand Bashaw, I would have them both in my harem."

The levity of the remark jarred on the feelings of his

companion, who answered, in a grave and somewhat cold tone, "I saw nothing in the manners of the young ladies to suggest such a disposition of them."

"Excuse me," said Fitzgerald, laughing. "I forgot you were from the land of Puritans. I meant no indignity to the young ladies, I assure you. But when one amuses himself with imagining the impossible, it is not worth while to be scrupulous about details. I am *not* the Grand Bashaw; and when I pronounced them fit for his harem, I merely meant a compliment to their superlative beauty. That Floracita is a mischievous little sprite. Did you ever see anything more roguish than her expression while she was singing 'Petit blanc, mon bon frère'?"

"That mercurial little song excited my curiosity," replied Alfred. "Pray what is its origin?"

"I think it likely it came from the French West Indies," said Fitzgerald. "It seems to be the love-song of a young negress, addressed to a white lover. Floracita may have learned it from her mother, who was half French, half Spanish. You doubtless observed the foreign sprinkling in their talk. They told me they never spoke English with their mother. Those who have seen her describe her as a wonderful creature, who danced like Taglioni and sang like Malibran, and was more beautiful than her daughter Rosabella. But the last part of the story is incredible. If she were half as handsome, no wonder Mr. Royal idolized her, as they say he did."

"Did he marry her in the French Islands?" inquired Alfred.

"They were not married," answered Fitzgerald. "Of course not, for she was a quadroon. But here are my lodgings, and I must bid you good night."

These careless parting words produced great disturbance in the spirit of Alfred King. He had heard of those quadroon connections, as one hears of foreign customs, without any realizing sense of their consequences. That his father's friend should be a partner in such an alliance, and that these two graceful and accomplished girls should by that circumstance be excluded from the society they would so greatly ornament, surprised and bewildered him. He recalled that tinge in Rosa's complexion, not golden, but like a faint, luminous reflection of gold, and that slight waviness in the glossy hair, which seemed to him so becoming. He could not make these peculiarities seem less beautiful to his imagination, now that he knew them as signs of her connection with a proscribed race. And that bewitching little Floracita, emerging into womanhood, with the auroral light of childhood still floating round her, she seemed like a beautiful Italian child, whose proper place was among fountains and statues and pictured forms of art. The skill of no Parisian *coiffeur* could produce a result so pleasing as the profusion of raven hair, that *would* roll itself into ringlets. Octoroons! He repeated the word to himself, but it did not disenchant him. It was merely something foreign and new to his experience, like Spanish or Italian beauty. Yet he felt painfully the false position in which they were placed by the unreasoning prejudice of society.

Though he had had a fatiguing day, when he entered his chamber he felt no inclination to sleep. As he slowly paced up and down the room, he thought to himself, "My good mother shares the prejudice. How could I introduce them to *her?*" Then, as if impatient with himself, he murmured, in a vexed tone, "Why should I *think* of introducing them to my mother? A few hours ago I did n't know of their existence."

He threw himself on the bed and tried to sleep; but memory was too busy with the scene of enchantment he had recently left. A catalpa-tree threw its shadow on the moon-lighted curtain. He began to count the wavering leaves, in hopes the monotonous occupation would induce slumber. After a while he forgot to count; and as his spirit hovered between the inner and the outer world, Floracita seemed to be dancing on the leaf shadows in manifold graceful evolutions. Then he was watching a little trickling fountain, and the falling drops were tones of "The Light of other Days." Anon he was wandering among flowers in the moonlight, and from afar some one was heard singing "Casta Diva." The memory of that voice,

"While slept the limbs and senses all,
Made everything seem musical."

Again and again the panorama of the preceding evening revolved through the halls of memory with every variety of fantastic change. A light laugh broke in upon the scenes of enchantment, with the words, "Of course not, for she was a quadroon." Then the plaintive melody of "Toll the bell" resounded in his ears; not afar off, but loud and clear, as if the singer were in the room. He woke with a start, and heard the vibrations of a cathedral bell subsiding into silence. It had struck but twice, but in his spiritual ear the sounds had been modulated through many tones. "Even thus strangely," thought he, "has that rich, sonorous voice struck into the dream of my life."

Again he saw those large, lustrous eyes lowering their long-fringed veils under the ardent gaze of Gerald Fitzgerald. Again he thought of his mother, and sighed. At last a dreamless sleep stole over him, and both pleasure and pain were buried in deep oblivion.

CHAPTER II.

THE sun was up before he woke. He rose hastily and ordered breakfast and a horse; for he had resolved the day before upon an early ride. A restless, undefined feeling led him in the same direction he had taken the preceding evening. He passed the house that would forevermore be a prominent feature in the landscape of his life. Vines were gently waving in the morning air between the pillars of the piazza, where he had lingered entranced to hear the tones of "Buena Notte." The bright turban of Tulipa was glancing about, as she dusted the blinds. A peacock on the balustrade, in the sunshine, spread out his tail into a great Oriental fan, and slowly lowered it, making a prismatic shower of topaz, sapphires, and emeralds as it fell. It was the first of March; but as he rode on, thinking of the dreary landscape and boisterous winds of New England at that season, the air was filled with the fragrance of flowers, and mocking-birds and thrushes saluted him with their songs. In many places the ground was thickly strewn with oranges, and the orange-groves were beautiful with golden fruit and silver flowers gleaming among the dark glossy green foliage. Here and there was the mansion of a wealthy planter, surrounded by whitewashed slave-cabins. The negroes at their work, and their black picaninnies rolling about on the ground, seemed an appropriate part of the landscape, so tropical in its beauty of dark colors and luxuriant growth.

He rode several miles, persuading himself that he was enticed solely by the healthy exercise and the novelty of the scene. But more alluring than the pleasant landscape and the fragrant air was the hope that, if he returned late, the young ladies might be on the piazza, or visible at the windows. He was destined to be disappointed. As he passed, a curtain was slowly withdrawn from one of the windows and revealed a vase of flowers. He rode slowly, in hopes of seeing a face bend over the flowers; but the person who drew the curtain remained invisible. On the piazza nothing was in motion, except the peacock strutting along, stately as a court beauty, and drawing after him his long train of jewelled plumage. A voice, joyous as a bob-olink's, sounded apparently from the garden. He could not hear the words, but the lively tones at once suggested, "Petit blanc, mon bon frère." He recalled the words so carelessly uttered, "Of course not, for she was a quadroon," and they seemed to make harsh discord with the refrain of the song. He remembered the vivid flush that passed over Rosa's face while her playful sister teased her with that tuneful badinage. It seemed to him that Mr. Fitzgerald was well aware of his power, for he had not attempted to conceal his consciousness of the singer's mischievous intent. This train of thought was arrested by the inward question, "What is it to *me* whether he marries her or not?" Impatiently he touched his horse with the whip, as if he wanted to rush from the answer to his own query.

He had engaged to meet Mr. Royal at his counting-house, and he was careful to keep the appointment. He was received with parental kindness slightly tinged with embarrassment. After some conversation about business, Mr. Royal said: "From your silence concerning your visit

to my house last evening, I infer that Mr. Fitzgerald has given you some information relating to my daughters' history. I trust, my young friend, that you have not suspected me of any intention to deceive or entrap you. I intended to have told you myself; but I had a desire to know first how my daughters would impress you, if judged by their own merits. Having been forestalled in my purpose, I am afraid frankness on your part will now be difficult."

"A feeling of embarrassment did indeed prevent me from alluding to my visit as soon as I met you this morning," replied Alfred; "but no circumstances could alter my estimate of your daughters. Their beauty and gracefulness exceed anything I have seen."

"And they are as innocent and good as they are beautiful," rejoined the father. "But you can easily imagine that my pride and delight in them is much disturbed by anxiety concerning their future. Latterly, I have thought a good deal about closing business and taking them to France to reside. But when men get to be so old as I am, the process of being transplanted to a foreign soil seems onerous. If it were as well for *them*, I should greatly prefer returning to my native New England."

"They are tropical flowers," observed Alfred. "There is nothing Northern in their natures."

"Yes, they are tropical flowers," rejoined the father, "and my wish is to place them in perpetual sunshine. I doubt whether they could ever feel quite at home far away from jasmines and orange-groves. But climate is the least of the impediments in the way of taking them to New England. Their connection with the enslaved race is so very slight, that it might easily be concealed; but the con-

sciousness of practising concealment is always unpleasant. Your father was more free from prejudices of all sorts than any man I ever knew. If he were living, I would confide all to him, and be guided implicitly by his advice. You resemble him so strongly, that I have been involuntarily drawn to open my heart to you, as I never thought to do to so young a man. Yet I find the fulness of my confidence checked by the fear of lowering myself in the estimation of the son of my dearest friend. But perhaps, if you knew all the circumstances, and had had my experience, you would find some extenuation of my fault. I was very unhappy when I first came to New Orleans. I was devotedly attached to a young lady, and I was rudely repelled by her proud and worldly family. I was seized with a vehement desire to prove to them that I could become richer than they were. I rushed madly into the pursuit of wealth, and I was successful; but meanwhile they had married her to another, and I found that wealth alone could not bring happiness. In vain the profits of my business doubled and quadrupled. I was unsatisfied, lonely, and sad. Commercial transactions brought me into intimate relations with Señor Gonsalez, a Spanish gentleman in St. Augustine. He had formed an alliance with a beautiful slave, whom he had bought in the French West Indies. I never saw her, for she died before my acquaintance with him; but their daughter, then a girl of sixteen, was the most charming creature I ever beheld. The irresistible attraction I felt toward her the first moment I saw her was doubtless the mere fascination of the senses; but when I came to know her more, I found her so gentle, so tender, so modest, and so true, that I loved her with a strong and deep affection. I admired her, too, for other reasons than

her beauty; for she had many elegant accomplishments, procured by her father's fond indulgence during two years' residence in Paris. He was wealthy at that time; but he afterward became entangled in pecuniary difficùlties, and his health declined. He took a liking to me, and proposed that I should purchase Eulalia, and thus enable him to cancel a debt due to a troublesome creditor whom he suspected of having an eye upon his daughter. I gave him a large sum for her, and brought her with me to New Orleans. Do not despise me for it, my young friend. If it had been told to me a few years before, in my New England home, that I could ever become a party in such a transaction, I should have rejected the idea with indignation. But my disappointed and lonely condition rendered me an easy prey to temptation, and I was where public opinion sanctioned such connections. Besides, there were kindly motives mixed up with selfish ones. I pitied the unfortunate father, and I feared his handsome daughter might fall into hands that would not protect her so carefully as I resolved to do. I knew the freedom of her choice was not interfered with, for she confessed she loved me.

"Señor Gonsalez, who was more attached to her than to anything else in the world, soon afterward gathered up the fragments of his broken fortune, and came to reside near us. I know it was a great satisfaction to his dying hours that he left Eulalia in my care, and the dear girl was entirely happy with me. If I had manumitted her, carried her abroad, and legally married her, I should have no remorse mingled with my sorrow for her loss. Loving her faithfully, as I did to the latest moment of her life, I now find it difficult to explain to myself how I came to neglect such an obvious duty. I was always thinking that I would

do it at some future time. But marriage with a quadroon would have been void, according to the laws of Louisiana; and, being immersed in business, I never seemed to find time to take her abroad. When one has taken the first wrong step, it becomes dangerously easy to go on in the same path. A man's standing here is not injured by such irregular connections; and my faithful, loving Eulalia meekly accepted her situation as a portion of her inherited destiny. Mine was the fault, not hers; for I was free to do as I pleased, and she never had been. I acted in opposition to moral principles, which the education of false circumstances had given her no opportunity to form. I had remorseful thoughts at times, but I am quite sure she was never troubled in that way. She loved and trusted me entirely. She knew that the marriage of a white man with one of her race was illegal; and she quietly accepted the fact, as human beings do accept what they are powerless to overcome. Her daughters attributed her olive complexion to a Spanish origin; and their only idea was, and is, that she was my honored wife, as indeed she was in the inmost recesses of my heart. I gradually withdrew from the few acquaintances I had formed in New Orleans; partly because I was satisfied with the company of Eulalia and our children, and partly because I could not take her with me into society. She had no acquaintances here, and we acquired the habit of living in a little world by ourselves, — a world which, as you have seen, was transformed into a sort of fairy-land by her love of beautiful things. After I lost her, it was my intention to send the children immediately to France to be educated. But procrastination is my besetting sin; and the idea of parting with them was so painful, that I have deferred and deferred it. The suffer-

ing I experience on their account is a just punishment for the wrong I did their mother. When I think how beautiful, how talented, how affectionate, and how pure they are, and in what a cruel position I have placed them, I have terrible writhings of the heart. I do not think I am destined to long life; and who will protect them when I am gone?"

A consciousness of last night's wishes and dreams made Alfred blush as he said, "It occurred to me that your eldest daughter might be betrothed to Mr. Fitzgerald."

"I hope not," quickly rejoined Mr. Royal. "He is not the sort of man with whom I would like to intrust her happiness. I think, if it were so, Rosabella would have told me, for my children always confide in me."

"I took it for granted that you liked him," replied Alfred; "for you said an introduction to your home was a favor you rarely bestowed."

"I never conferred it on any young man but yourself," answered Mr. Royal, "and you owed it partly to my memory of your honest father, and partly to the expression of your face, which so much resembles his." The young man smiled and bowed, and his friend continued: "When I invited you, I was not aware Mr. Fitzgerald was in the city. I am but slightly acquainted with him, but I conjecture him to be what is called a high-blood. His manners, though elegant, seem to me flippant and audacious. He introduced himself into my domestic sanctum; and, as I partook of his father's hospitality years ago, I find it difficult to eject him. He came here a few months since, to transact some business connected with the settlement of his father's estate, and, unfortunately, he heard Rosabella singing as he rode past my house. He made

inquiries concerning the occupants; and, from what I have heard, I conjecture that he has learned more of my private history than I wished to have him know. He called without asking my permission, and told my girls that his father was my friend, and that he had consequently taken the liberty to call with some new music, which he was very desirous of hearing them sing. When I was informed of this, on my return home, I was exceedingly annoyed; and I have ever since been thinking of closing business as soon as possible, and taking my daughters to France. He called twice again during his stay in the city, but my daughters made it a point to see him only when I was at home. Now he has come again, to increase the difficulties of my position by his unwelcome assiduities."

"Unwelcome to *you*," rejoined Alfred; "but, handsome and fascinating as he is, they are not likely to be unwelcome to your daughters. Your purpose of conveying them to France is a wise one."

"Would I had done it sooner!" exclaimed Mr. Royal. "How weak I have been in allowing circumstances to drift me along!" He walked up and down the room with agitated steps; then, pausing before Alfred, he laid his hand affectionately on his shoulder, as he said, with solemn earnestness, "My young friend, I am glad your father did not accept my proposal to receive you into partnership. Let me advise you to live in New England. The institutions around us have an effect on character which it is difficult to escape entirely. Bad customs often lead well-meaning men into wrong paths."

"That was my father's reason for being unwilling I should reside in New Orleans," replied Alfred. "He said it was impossible to exaggerate the importance of social

institutions. He often used to speak of having met a number of Turkish women when he was in the environs of Constantinople. They were wrapped up like bales of cloth, with two small openings for their eyes, mounted on camels, and escorted by the overseer of the harem. The animal sound of their chatter and giggling, as they passed him, affected him painfully; for it forced upon him the idea what different beings those women would have been if they had been brought up amid the free churches and free schools of New England. He always expounded history to me in the light of that conviction; and he mourned that temporary difficulties should prevent lawgivers from checking the growth of evils that must have a blighting influence on the souls of many generations. He considered slavery a cumulative poison in the veins of this Republic, and predicted that it would some day act all at once with deadly power."

"Your father was a wise man," replied Mr. Royal, "and I agree with him. But it would be unsafe to announce it here; for slavery is a tabooed subject, except to talk in favor of it."

"I am well aware of that," rejoined Alfred. "And now I must bid you good morning. You know my mother is an invalid, and I may find letters at the post-office that will render immediate return necessary. But I will see you again; and hereafter our acquaintance may perhaps be renewed in France."

"That is a delightful hope," rejoined the merchant, cordially returning the friendly pressure of his hand. As he looked after the young man, he thought how pleasant it would be to have such a son; and he sighed deeply over the vision of a union that might have been, under other

circumstances, between his family and that of his old friend. Alfred, as he walked away, was conscious of that latent, unspoken wish. Again the query began to revolve through his mind whether the impediments were really insurmountable. There floated before him a vision of that enchanting room, where the whole of life seemed to be composed of beauty and gracefulness, music and flowers. But a shadow of Fitzgerald fell across it, and the recollection of Boston relatives rose up like an iceberg between him and fairy-land.

A letter informing him of his mother's increasing illness excited a feeling of remorse that new acquaintances had temporarily nearly driven her from his thoughts. He resolved to depart that evening; but the desire to see Rosabella again could not be suppressed. Failing to find Mr. Royal at his counting-room or his hotel, he proceeded to his suburban residence. When Tulipa informed him that "massa" had not returned from the city, he inquired for the young ladies, and was again shown into that parlor every feature of which was so indelibly impressed upon his memory. Portions of the music of *Cenerentola* lay open on the piano, and the leaves fluttered softly in a gentle breeze laden with perfumes from the garden. Near by was swinging the beaded tassel of a book-mark between the pages of a half-opened volume. He looked at the title and saw that it was Lalla Rookh. He smiled, as he glanced round the room on the flowery festoons, the graceful tangle of bright arabesques on the walls, the Dancing Girl, and the Sleeping Cupid. "All is in harmony with Canova, and Moore, and Rossini," thought he. "The Lady in Milton's Comus *has* been the ideal of my imagination; and now here I am so strangely taken captive by ——"

Rosabella entered at that moment, and almost startled him with the contrast to his ideal. Her glowing Oriental beauty and stately grace impressed him more than ever. Floracita's fairy form and airy motions were scarcely less fascinating. Their talk was very girlish. Floracita had just been reading in a French paper about the performance of *La Bayadère*, and she longed to see the ballet brought out in Paris. Rosabella thought nothing could be quite so romantic as to float on the canals of Venice by moonlight and listen to the nightingales; and she should *so* like to cross the Bridge of Sighs! Then they went into raptures over the gracefulness of Rossini's music, and the brilliancy of Auber's. Very few and very slender thoughts were conveyed in their words, but to the young man's ear they had the charm of music; for Floracita's talk went as trippingly as a lively dance, and the sweet modulations of Rosabella's voice so softened English to Italian sound, that her words seemed floating on a liquid element, like goldfish in the water. Indeed, her whole nature seemed to partake the fluid character of music. Beauty born of harmonious sound "had passed into her face," and her motions reminded one of a water-lily undulating on its native element.

The necessity of returning immediately to Boston was Alfred's apology for a brief call. Repressed feeling imparted great earnestness to the message he left for his father's friend. While he was uttering it, the conversation he had recently had with Mr. Royal came back to him with painful distinctness. After parting compliments were exchanged, he turned to say, "Excuse me, young ladies, if, in memory of our fathers' friendship, I beg of you to command my services, as if I were a brother, should it ever be in my power to serve you."

Rosabella thanked him with a slight inclination of her graceful head; and Floracita, dimpling a quick little courtesy, said sportively, "If some cruel Blue-Beard should shut us up in his castle, we will send for you."

"How funny!" exclaimed the volatile child, as the door closed after him. "He spoke as solemn as a minister; but I suppose that 's the way with Yankees. I think *cher papa* likes to preach sometimes."

Rosabella, happening to glance at the window, saw that Alfred King paused in the street and looked back. How their emotions would have deepened could they have foreseen the future!