

Englishman, who has come over to Virginia to visit his friend, Major Carter, on the neighboring plantation, and who has been commended to the kind offices of the Despardes during the temporary absence of his host. It is not always that the man and woman who are introduced to us in the first pages of a novel become lovers at once, and turn out to be the groom and bride at the last; but such is the case here, and not even the expectations and endeavors of Miss Bertie Despard, Homoselle's aunt, or of Cousin Phil, suffice to set Halsey aside from the path of his manifest destiny.

The first part of the story is occupied with Halsey's introduction to the strange and entertaining features of Virginia life, a picture which could scarcely have been more striking to the imaginary senses of an Englishman than it will prove in fact to many a reader when looked at across the dark gap of the last twenty years. For example: here is Halsey's amusing account to his friend, the Major, on the latter's return, of how he got along with his bath:

"The morning after I arrived . . . I was wakened early by a scuffling, scrambling, tittering noise, as if an army of some unknown species of animal had congregated just outside of my door. When I demanded to know the meaning of it, a little black nigger popped in, with about as much clothing on as a man in a ballet, and his face grinning all over. 'Mornin', Mas'r,' he said, with so much politeness and with such a deferential inclination of his small black person, I felt quite mortified that my recumbent position prevented my making a suitable return. 'De Major say we was to fix yo' barf eberv mornin', sah!' 'Come in and fix it then,' I said, readily falling into his phraseology as the best way of making myself understood, but wondering what a little imp like that could do in the way of filling my tub. He opened the door; and I saw, pressing behind, a lot of little darkies, with buckets, pitchers, pans, and every conceivable contrivance for holding water. 'Gad!' I exclaimed, 'a troop cometh!' In the twinkling of an eye, but with much splashing and shuffling and giggling, my tub was sufficiently full, and with such clear cold water too! 'And who are you?' I asked of the spokesman, with a desire to make friends. 'I's Nafen, and we is de Major's treevers.' Nafen I translated into Nathan; but what the deuce he meant by treevers, I could not imagine. I was not obliged to expose my ignorance, however, so I said, 'Thank you, Nathan. I shall tell your master that you are remarkably good treevers.' The Major smiled, in the grim fashion which was his nearest approach to a laugh. 'I should have thought,' he said, 'a hunter like you would guess he meant retrievers. I gave them that name the last time I went gunning, because they brought home a fine duck my dog had failed to find; and it has stuck to them, because their only occupation is to fetch and carry.'"

Much of the interest of the story lies in its life-like descriptions of similar scenes like this, and in its faithful delineation of negro character and the report of dialect and idiosyncrasy native to Virginia soil. The current widens and deepens as it flows, and takes in a variety of incidents, one of which is an obscure attempt of the negroes at an insurrection, in which an old prophet named Gabriel plays a leading part, and Chloe dies a martyr's death. Halsey is instrumental in alarming Richmond, and so in bringing the scheme to naught. For a time his sun is in

an, eclipse owing to a suspicious aspect in his relations with Chloe, who is in fact, though the truth is not told out loud, Mr. Despard's own daughter, and so half-sister to Homoselle. But in this he is cruelly wronged, as the sequel proves; and nobody is more prompt to acknowledge it than Phil Ray, the crossed and spiteful cousin, whose hatred toward Halsey almost at one time precipitates a duel. In the background stands the old haunted church, where the discontented negroes hold their secret conclaves and have their passions stirred by the fanatic Thompson. The imp, or rather the full-grown devil, of the piece, is Michael Dray, a free negro, who is painted in black colors to suit, and whose jealous rage well-nigh brings Halsey to an untimely end. The latter's lonely expeditions, with the talk about ghosts and the glimpses of "the miller's boy of Horn's Neck," lend a touch of shadowy excitement for the further delectation of the reader.

HOMOSELLE.*

THIS is not a particularly strong story, but its materials are good and fresh, and we incline to give it place by the side of *The Georgians* as the second best thus far of the Round-Robin novels. Like that it is a story of Southern life, the scene being laid in Virginia in the old times of slavery before the war. The author is to the manner born; knows to the life the architecture, style, people, and customs of a Virginia plantation under the old régime, and has succeeded in restoring a vivid picture of a social and domestic interior now passed forever away. The book would not be out of place next to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, for while never so dramatic nor intense as that, and shaped by a far less serious purpose, and written by a much less skillful hand, it depends for its interest upon somewhat the same elements and one of its characters; at least, the girl Chloe, deserves a share of the honors that have been heaped upon Topsy.

The story opens before the kitchen door of Dunmore, a farm on the James River, one breezy day in June, where old Aunt Cinthy is making strawberry preserves under the direction of Miss Homoselle Despard, Chloe being employed in keeping off the flies with a great brush, and the boy Skip, "a boy as is a boy," flitting in and out with his dog Dash to the general confusion. To this scene enters Mr. Halsey, a sturdy young

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