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For the Christmas Crescent.]

A CHRISTMAS REMINISCENCE.

A WILD SCENE AND A STRANGE STORY OF AFRICAN VOUDOUISM.

CHAPTER FIRST.

In the fall of '62 I found myself in the Confederacy with my husband and parted from the rest of my family and children, who were in New Orleans. It was during Butler's paternal regime, when those living in the city were not allowed to write to persons living outside of federal lines, nor allowed to receive even ordinary family letters. Of course the underground railroad and grapevine telegraph were kept busy. By these mysterious agencies I had managed to get letters from home, but they did not satisfy my craving heart, and as Christmas approached I resolved to make an attempt to slip quietly into our city and spend the holidays with the little folks.

There were many difficulties; my friends said that they were impossibilities that I should have to overcome to go beyond our own lines, as at the time the Confederate general at Jackson was remorselessly refusing passes to every one. But I believe that it is an admitted fact that "when a woman says she will, she will, you may depend upon it," and after beseiging Gen. P's office, and having all my entreaties refused, I set my wits to work to get through the lines without a pass. I found an old friend, Mr. B., as anxious to join his family in New Orleans as I was, and together, we resolved to attempt the adventure. Leaving all our trunks in Jackson, we got into the cars going to Pontchatoula on the 23d of December, as if we were merely going into the country a short distance. We encumbered ourselves with nothing but our traveling blankets. We reached Pontchatoula on the afternoon of the same day, and taking a crazy old vehicle, drove back to a friend's house, situated at the head of a small bayou some ten miles from the railroad. Our object was to reach the banks of the Mississippi anywhere within federal lines; as, once within them, we knew that we could obtain the few hours shelter we might need, before catching a passing boat, at the houses of some of the planters, most of whom welcomed any comer from the Confederacy, especially one who could bring them news or papers, with both of which I was well supplied.

Once at Maj. W.'s, we found, to our astonishment, that we were more than twice the distance from the river that we had expected to be. A strip of sixty miles wide of impenetrable tangled cane brake, without other path or road through its intricacies than the winding bayou that lay between us and the bourne of our desires. There was no help for it; and we would have to go through the bayou in one of the wretched skiffs used by the wood cutters to carry wood to the plantations on the river. Our only chance of finding a skiff and oarsman was to visit the cottage of the "chieftain," as Mrs. W. laughingly called him, of the runners of the underground railway. He was a negro man living near her, devoted to the Confederacy and perfectly reliable in every way.

My companion hastened at once to seek the amiable and intelligent contraband. He was amenable to reason, and promised to place us on the banks of the river by twelve the next day, if we would start at once and row all night. Time was precious; not a moment was to be lost unless we gave up our idea of passing Christmas at home. So we bid Mrs. W. good bye, and I found myself fairly embarked upon what I at the moment looked upon as a most perilous adventure.

On passing from the shade of the long natural avenue of pines that extended from the house almost to the bayou, I found myself suddenly upon its banks, in a wild romantic spot, where it widened into a small land-locked bay, with no visible means of egress. A dense jungle of reeds, cane and other marsh plants, grew down into the water, and imparted a dark gloom to its still depths, that caused an involuntary shudder. In the background stood tall, ghostly cypress, their weird branches stretching forth like arms tossed in denunciation. At the foot of the largest, and just visible, was a hut of bamboo, shaped like an Indian wigwam. An old blanket, hung before its one opening, served as door. A number of little negroes were rolling around. A boat and herculean oarsman now shot out into the bayou and approached us rapidly. As I saw our gondolier (a gigantic African, upward of six feet) and felt that in a few moments we should be entirely in his power, I almost wished that Gen. P. had stopped my flight. Every tale of midnight murder, ever read or dreamed of, flashed across my excited mind, as I stepped on board the crazy boat. A few moments more and the plantation house was out of sight, and we three were floating on the dark waters of the bayou. In many places the tall cypress nearly met their arms overhead and shut out the blue sky, the long mosses draping them waved in seeming triumph their gray funereal beards in the fast deepening evening breeze. The shadows cast by the trees were so deep, the waters looked so profound, that I felt as if advancing to where

> "Alph, the sacred river ran
> Through caverns, measureless to man,
> Down to a sunless sea."

There was naught to disturb this silence but the regular dip of Jessy—our gondolier's oar, and now and then the shrill whistle of the southern nightingale flying to his mate in some lofty pine, or the splash of an alligator, as disturbed by our approach, he rolled suddenly into the dark waters of the bayou. The scene was not conducive to jests or laughter, nor was the silence broken till late at night. Near eleven when Jessy said he could no longer see and that we should have to land at an old deserted hut to wait till

> "The wandering moon
> Riding near her highest noon"

Should give sufficient light to enable him to navigate the remainder of the bayou, which was filled with snags and quite dangerous.

"But, Missus," added the good natured old fellow, "don't be afeard, I will prop up two planks for you, to lie on and give you a good cup of coffee."

"Why, Jessy," I exclaimed, "where did you get coffee from? I have seen none since I left New Orleans."

"Missus W. gave it me for you, and see ise got my coffee pot"—an old tin pan.

"Well, Jessy, I shall be glad of both coffee and rest, and to make me forget my hard bed, you must tell me a story."

"Very good, Missus," replied Jessy, "but jes you wait here while I get some wood to build de fire—cause de snakes am bad around."

A bright fire soon cast a cheerful glow over us, but treble the gloom beyond. Inspired by its light I opened my lunch basket and in true comrade style shared its contents with my two companions. Jessy with much pride presented me with a cup of coffee, strong—and at the moment I thought good—but the bare remembrance of which for weeks afterwards gave me the most dreadful qualms, as I learned the next morning, oh, kind reader, that Jessy's strainer or dripper was the leg of a sock—not a new one, as I faintly hoped, but that (as the old man indignantly assured me, when I questioned him), "was one dun wore out," and washed clean by his wife Juba.

At the moment, quite exhausted with the day's varied excitement, after my slender supper I sank back, glad to rest, upon my blankets, folded over the bed of planks that Jessy had promised me.

The scene was not reassuring; behind me, and on either side, was a dense swamp, filled "for certain with alligators, snakes and coons," as Jessy said; but, as my imagination told me, peopled with midnight assassins and runaway negroes, who, attracted by the fire, were watching us intently. Before me lay the bayou, overshadowed with trees hiding the sky; the flickering, dancing light of the fire threw a thousand wild fantastic shades around, and in the branches of the tall sycamore, beneath whose boughs we rested. Opposite me sat my companion, Mr. B., looking quite forlorn; near him, Jessy's gigantic figure lay half revealed, half hidden, as he supinely reclined while smoking his pipe, and rolling his eyes till only the white eye balls were visible, as if he were seeking for some ghoul, to which I could not help comparing him, while gazing at his high cheek bones, flat nose, thick lips, and wondrously sharp, white teeth, which glistened in the fire light, and which he now and then snapped with a sound that made my flesh creep. I imagined him exclaiming with the giant Blundabore, in Jack the Giant Killer's famous tale, "Fee, fo, fy, fum, I smell the blood of an English mun; let him be live, or let him be dead, I'll have his bones to butter my bread." To relieve my feelings, and unable longer to endure silence, I said, "Now, Jessy, your story." But it must have a new pen and fresh chapter. I cannot pretend to give the tale in the old man's own words, and should my readers find any inaccuracies, I pray them to remember how often memory is treacherous.

CHAPTER II—JESSY'S STORY.

My earliest recollections are of running, with a number of companions, all day on the sands washed by the water of a mighty river. No clothes wore I to fetter me in the free use of my limbs; naked as I came into the world, so I ever remember myself in that innocent and happy land. When heated, into the river I fearlessly plunged, swimming more strongly than the river horse. My greatest joy was to watch for that huge animal, and, as he glided along the sands at the bottom of the clear river, to attack him with arrows poisoned with the rich blood of the deadly upas tree, given by the great Goddess Voudou* to her beloved children. But it is not so much my own story that I will tell you, as that of my mother, the Queen Juba, beloved daughter of Voudou.

In our village, my mother was chief by right of birth, and because her father had ever been the favorite of the goddess, offering her the blood of more victims than any preceding chief. No prisoner of my grandfather being ever saved to be sold as slave, or used as such in his own household; all were sacrificed by fire or smothering to the goddess-founder of our race. My mother from infancy was devoted to the service, studying her secret mysteries with the wise men of the tribe. She saw and loved my father when they were both what in this cold clime you would call children, but which in our land, loved of the sun, teeming with life, is the prime, the bursting of the bud into maturity. Love was inspired in her gentle bosom by a graceful act, making him as worthy the love of Voudou's high priestess. At one of my grandfather's sacrifices some of the victims escaped and fled to the woods. My father, then a swift-footed youth, overtook and restored the wretches to the goddess's embrace.

With my mother, whose power was already limitless, to desire was to have, and quickly were the marriage rites performed—two hundred victims, the flower of a neighboring tribe on this happy occasion, were sacrificed on the stone altar before which my parents knelt. Soon after, I was born—and my grandfather dying, my noble and virtuous parents became king and queen of the tribe. Not long did they enjoy their bliss; for in my ninth year my father was killed by some of the survivors of the tribe sacrificed at his wedding, who had incorporated themselves with the tribe Fungi, our deadliest foes.

The danger of this union was felt by my mother, who resolved, by spells and incantations, to destroy the whole tribe. She voudoued† the chiefs and their wives, filling their huts and persons with snakes, toads and all loathsome reptiles, till, in despair, they fled from that part of the country. Had my mother been content to work only against her enemies, I might not have been here this night; as it was, she turned her powers against my father's brothers, both of whom loved and desired to marry her. Indeed, she had many suitors, for she was a beauty; her nose was broad and flat, her forehead low, her eyes large, with balls so white and glistening, that of a dark night they could be seen afar, gleaming like two stars, with the bright glare of the wildcat. Her stature was upwards of six feet. Such was my mother; when one night, fifty-five years ago to-night—for I always keep the anniversary by coming here to her grave—was she torn and I with her, by wicked kinsmen from home and tribe to be sold as slaves to strangers. On this night her presence is always felt. I can hear her mourning, sobbing around.

[As Jessy rolled his eyes and clashed his teeth, I too heard the mourning sound, and saw those horrible eyes gleaming from every leaf. Shivering, I sat up and pinched my arm to convince myself that I was awake.]

When sold, we were carried on board a vessel; many moons came and went before we found ourselves on a large Southern plantation, slaves of the best and kindest of masters. My mother had just lost a young baby, and was installed as nurse to my dear young master Frank—a motherless infant of a few months. Old massa, Mr. Z., had another son, two years older than the baby—named John. When my mother was appointed Massa Frank's nurse, she was made housekeeper—and put over the other servants; even the girl nursing John, hitherto a great favorite. This enraged the servants and made them join in helping Chloe, John's nurse, to teach him to hate us and to be afraid of my mother. For his hate she did not care, till one day at Chloe's instigation he struck her. Juba, my mother, never forgave a blow.

With so many enemies around it was natural that old massa should hear many complaints against Juba, but none of them could be proved, and, as during her administration not so much as a crust of bread was unaccounted for, he would listen to nothing to her prejudice.

Master Frank being with her, she did not live with the other servants, having a small comfortably furnished cabin near the house, which the baby and I shared with her. Juba, to whom sleep was unnecessary, rarely spent a night in this cabin. Leaving me to watch the baby, she wandered forth to commune with Voudou. Once or twice the boldest of the slaves attempted to follow her, but they were always driven back in terror, when they saw her seat herself upon the back of a fiery monster, who flew away. The body of the daring negroes immediately afterwards became racked with dreadful pains, which master believed to be "rheumatics," but which we all knew to be the evidence of Voudou's anger. The goddess could only be appeased by the offenders going at midnight to the woods, where Juba would build magic fires and offer dreadful sacrifices. If Voudou was satisfied, alligators, snakes and all venomous reptiles came around and watched the frantic dances, and listened to the frantic songs. Of these dread mysteries I dare not speak, for there stands my mother, the great Queen Juba, her gleaming eyeballs fixed upon me, waving her hands and threatening all with quick destruction, should I to the wicked speak of these sacred rites.

[I looked upon the old man's agitated face and gigantic frame with terror. He stood a little back from the fire, having in his excitement risen to his feet, and with gleaming teeth and straining eye, was pointing into the darkness. I felt my blood curdle and my hair erect itself as I glanced around, imagining that I saw the enormous negress as he had described her, dancing frantically round the fire, or staring at me with glazed eyeballs. I wished to awaken my companion, but a spell was now upon me: I could not stir. Pale and trembling, I watched Jessy with horrible fascination, snakes and lizards were crawling over me, and I felt that I was to be his next sacrifice to Voudou. He continued frantically:]

After one of these midnight orgies, Juba remained dark, cold, silent to all save Master Frank, who ever did as he pleased with her.

Years fled by, bringing small change, save that the two boys became men. I belonged to Master Frank, and was devoted to him. One day, on the next plantation to our's there was great rejoicing. The eldest daughter, Miss Fanny M., had come from school. Old massa and Mr. M. were old friends, and of course our young gentlemen knew the family, and were often at the house. Once Miss Fannie and her mother came to our plantation. Master Frank brought the girl to see "Mammy Juba," as he called my mother. When Fannie saw her she screamed, and running to John, hid her white face on his arm, saying "take me away, I am afraid of her." Then Juba rolled her eyes, and I could see that she was angry. Frank too was angry at Fannie's going to her brother for protection, as both the young men already loved the girl. He was very pale, though he said nothing. Juba, looking at him said, "Frank, honey, don't you love that white faced girl, she loves John, and he loves her. But if you can't forget her come to Juba, who, with Vodou's help, can turn love to hate, and hate to love. She will make her love you."

"Thank you, mammy, but I don't think she loves John yet."

A few weeks after, at breakfast one morning, John came in laughing, and going up to his brother, said, "Fannie is mine, she has promised to marry me."

"That she never shall," answered Frank, with a great oath, as he left the room.

Going to Juba, he spent the whole day in her cabin. At night, very pale, he came to his room, carrying in his hand a bottle of stuff white like water. "Jessy," he said, "this bottle is to make Fannie love me. Juba will send John away to-morrow, but to complete her charm she wants a female rattlesnake—go at once and offer the hands a reward to get one."

"Yes, dear young master," I answered, "but oh, take care, Juba's power is dreadful."

Ere morning I carried my mother, in a cage, the biggest snake I had ever seen. Snatching the venomous brute from the box as if it were harmless, and uttering a dreadful incantation over it, she crushed its head between her teeth. In terror I watched her. "Go," she said, "bring me John's boots." I obeyed in terrified silence; smearing the soles with the snake's hot blood, she bade me replace them in his room.

As Juba had foretold, the next morning John informed his brother that he was going to Orleans to buy presents for his lady love, with whom he added, "I am going to spend the day, as the boat don't pass here till evening." Calling for his horse, he attempted to mount; the creature reared and instantly fell, laming himself so badly he could not move. Furious, John called to his servant and bade him bring his brown horse, by eleven, to Mr. M.'s, where he was going. He also called for his walking boots, the same Juba had bewitched, and hastily pulling them on, started off. As he passed through the yard he met my mother; she saluted him. In place of answering he struck viciously at her with his riding whip. Stepping aside and looking fixedly after him, she slowly raised her two hands to heaven. The negroes seeing the gesture, fled, terror stricken. John, heedless of every thing, strode hastily forward, desirous of reaching shelter before the heat of the day, for young as the morning was the heat was already dreadful. The sun had risen in blood-red clouds, Juba said "portending woe," but John thought, only promising one of those terrible lightning storms which sometimes sweep over the land and lay all level in their course.

John reached Fannie's, little guessing his dreadful companions—Juba and the mate of the rattlesnake she had killed, and with whose blood she had smeared his boots, followed him every step of the way. To Juba the monster was harmless, she controlled its every movement; woe to those against whom she directed its awakened fury. Entering Mr. M.'s hospitable mansion, John sought Fannie. Juba remained hidden amid the trees surrounding the house. She compelled the serpent to crouch at her side, awaiting her commands. Motionless, she stood, to watch the approaching hurricane, and to foster its fury with dreadful incantations.

Within the house was peace; the two lovers alone together, were for awhile forgetful of all else, till John remembered the evening journey before him, and observed the lowering sky. He started up, and whispered to Fannie, "Dearest, I must go now, or else I shall be too late for the boat." A kiss and passionate embrace, and he was gone. His horse brought by his servant, was at the door impatiently champing it's bit; he mounted and rode off. Now was Juba's opportunity, turning to her servant, the serpent, to bid him give vent to his rage, she found that while her attention had been withdrawn, the monster, dreading the approaching storm, had escaped her to seek shelter from its fury. Angered but not baffled, Juba fixed her great eyes upon the heavens and exerting all her power, invoked the mighty goddess to revenge the insults offered her high priestess.

Huge, angry drops of rain fell with sullen plash upon the parched earth; the cattle and slaves fled to shelter; all nature shrunk terrified. Without a breath of air, the stately monarchs of the land bowed their lofty tops; far as the eye could reach, John and his trembling steed were the sole living things upon the plain. For an instant he paused to wonder; then, impelled by Voudou, spurred on his horse to gain a sheltering clump of trees. "'Tis Voudou's work," shrieked Juba, guessing his intentions. As he entered the grove fierce streaks of lightning, Voudou's arrows, burst from the sky; they were launched against the devoted spot. At the instant, above the wild tumult of the elements, was heard a shriek of agony; the animal which had uttered it, mad with fear, rushed from the grove whose shelter, but a few moments before, it had so gallantly sought. Already was the storm over; its work was done; the bright blue sky was smiling above. With empty saddle, without guiding hand, but with fierce snorts and cries a horse scoured over the fields. The grove, an instant before green and fresh, was now but a blackened, charred mass—razed to the ground, as a monument of Voudou's power.

The serpent, finding itself freed from Juba's control, had glided forward, led by its sense of smell, across the floor that John, with shoes annointed with the blood of its mate, had traversed—into the very room where the lovers had been passing that happy morning. Desirous of seeking a warm, safe shelter from the storm, the monster dragged its slow length along, and mounting the sofa where the two had been seated, hid itself under the soft cushions.

The poor horse led by instinct continued its flight, till, covered with foam, two bloody streams pouring from its eyes, it reached its stable and stood trembling at the door. The negroes huddled together, terrified by the storm, crowded round the animal. As it turned its head helpless from side to side, it revealed two deep cavernous hollows, where eyes had once shown. "'Tis Juba's work," whispered the shrinking slaves, seeing her approach. At this moment Master Frank, observing from his window the excitement, came to ask the cause. My mother met him and whispered—"Frank, my promise is redeemed. Fannie will never more smile upon John." Passing her he came up to me, a few hurried questions, and John's blind riderless horse made him fear some dreadful catastrophe.

Calling for his horse, and bidding the stoutest of us to follow, he started for Mr. M's. Arriving, he asked for the family. The servants said, all were out excepting Miss Fannie, who was in the study with John. Much relieved, Frank, waiting till I joined him, bade me wait his return. Why, I cannot say, but I felt that some danger threatened him, and as he passed up the broad hall, I followed. He entered the study, I stood just outside the door. Advancing softly, I saw him lean over some one sleeping upon the sofa, I turned to go away, when the deep silence of the room was broken by a sharp rattle, never forgotten by those who have once heard it; a hiss followed by the a cry of horror, reached me. I sprang into room in time to see my dear young master snatch a snake from its soft resting place on Miss Fannie's neck and attempt to crush it. The enraged monster writhed from his trembling grasp and turning inflicted a wound on his hand. In the next instant my foot was placed upon its head. Despite my weight it wound its tail around my leg and squeezed til the power to move was almost gone. Catching my darling young master's hand and snatching his handkerchief from his pocket I tied it tightly above the wound. By this time the creature's folds were loosened from around my leg, and with a desperate crush I extinguished its life. Glancing at Miss Fannie I saw that her face was still smiling and child-like, though her throat was swollen and black, and dark purple lines were making their way upwards with fearful rapidity. I turned to Frank; he stood gazing with staring eye at her he had loved so fondly, there was no meaning in his look, shouting for help. I raised him in these strong arms and carried him from the room. I heard carriage wheels which told me Fannie's parents were returning. Going into the parlor I laid my burden on the sofa. I seized the wounded hand, and with all my strength sucked the poison.

Just then I heard my old master's voice above the shrieks of agony coming from Miss Fannie's study, calling for his sons. Going to the door I beckoned him to me. At the instant I again caught a glimpse of the poor girl's face—'twas no longer recognizable but black and swollen, with protruding tongue and staring eye. I led my master to Frank's couch but did not dare to tell him of what I feared was John's fate. Juba was seated beside her boy and had already dressed his wound with powerful herbs. That night we carried him home.

Master John's body was not found till the next day, when it was taken, frightfully crushed and burned, from under the trees in the grove where he had sought shelter from the rain.

Miss Fannie's maid Lula was the last person who had seen the young girl alive. She told us that, after her lover had left, Miss Fannie had come to her room for a book, and, taking it, had returned to the study and had thrown herself upon the sofa to read. She had doubtless fallen asleep, when the snake, attracted by the quiet and warmth, came forth and chose his resting-place. Some movement of the sleeper, or, perhaps, Frank's entrance, had angered him, and he stung her to death.

Soon after these dreadful events my old master died, and Master Frank inherited all his property. Once his own master, he resolved to sell the place and go away forever. He could never bear to see any of the old faces, save mine, and carefully avoided poor Juba, who was almost broken-hearted. Sending for her one day, he told her that she was free, and that she must choose a place where she would like a house, and that he would have it built for her and for me—as he refused, despite my prayers, to take me with him. Juba chose that spot, there, where you see that cabin standing, and there Master Frank had a house built for her.

She could not long endure separation from her boy. One dreadful night, two years afterwards, she called me to her side and said farewell. I begged her not to leave me, but paying no heed to the prayer, she looked fixedly upon me and soon a deadly stupor locked my limbs, I could not move. Suddenly the goddess Voudou appeared; her eyes were two balls of fire, around her neck were strung the hearts of all deriders of her power, twisting, writhing, palpitating, as if ever in agony. There was John's heart, Fannie's heart, leaping, each with consciousness of the presence of the other, striving to unite, ever kept apart. In her blood stained right hand she held the quivering limb of her last victim whose blood was still moist and warm on her lip. Speaking to my mother in thunder tones she said: "How is it, oh, Juba, servant of my soul, that after so many years of faithful service you tire of your work and wish to leave the world?"

Trembling for the first time in her life, bowing her proud head, my mother said: "Great goddess, you turn from me, spite of my faithful services, the only heart I wanted and that I wounded deeply to gain. Had you, goddess, not interfered with Frank Juba would have been first."

"Fool," exclaimed the goddess, with hideous laugh, "I took it from you because it was taking my place in your heart. But, slave, well have you served Voudou. She is content; you may come and take you place at her feet for footstool. Your only punishment to wander through the old scenes three times each year, on the anniversary of the three most important events of your life. All you meet shall see and fear you."

Seizing my mother, both disappeared with yells so fearful that they were heard for hundreds of miles, and were supposed to foretell dire calamities. 'Twas this night thirty years ago that this disappearance took place. Before long will a cry be heard, and a figure seen, that will erect the hair and make the blood curdle with horror." Sinking once more upon the ground, Jessy continued: "The next morning I found myself alone. Mother's bed was burned, and a charred log, bearing some resemblance to human form, lay near it. A tremendous rain had fallen during the night (brought doubtless from Africa, in Voudou's skirts) and raised the bayou to an unprecedented height. That day I rolled the charred log into its waters; they instantly subsided, while the log hissed and seathed like a spirit in pain. I heard nothing for many moons, when I was again disturbed by my mother's howling, groaning spirit. I then left this cabin. The wood cutters and fishermen avoid it, for my mother is periodically seen wandering around, wringing her hands and rolling her eyeballs. Look," he continued, starting up and pointing over his head, "in a few moments the Goddess of Night, the bride of the sun, the beautiful moon, will silver yon tree top and shed a beam on the gravestone I raised to my mother's memory. When that beam lights it, her dread voice will be heard.

With fixed eye I sat watching the spot indicated, and as the moon beam fell upon it, a wail that appeared to begin in the bowels of the earth, so distant did it seem, rose and swelled upon the chill night air, till the surrounding forests were filled with the wildly mournful sound. Like a funeral dirge did it strike upon my ear. With an answering yell I rolled my head in my blanket and dashed myself upon the ground. Up sprang my startled companion, and he and Jessy, the awful son of that weird woman Juba, raised me sobbing to my feet.

"De bot's dun ready, missus; de moon's high, and its time fur us to start. We all hab had a good rest. Mus be nigh on fur two o'clock, massa," were the first words that greeted me. Had I been asleep and dreaming, or was Jessy the relator of these horrors? I leave to my readers to decide. Mr. B remarked as we walked to the boat, "I believe old Jessy's story put us all to sleep. I only woke when the faithful creature got up to replenish the fire, at which, by the way, you were starring most fixedly—nor would you answer me when I spoke to you; for the last ten minutes you have been talking in your sleep, and I was about waking you; as you awoke yourself you are not sick I hope?"

"Oh! no; only restless, owing to my hard bed and a bad dream," I replied, glancing uneasily at Jessy, who was busy pushing our boat into deep water.

Jessy redeemed his promise; we reached the river by three in the afternoon; were fortunate enough to catch a boat, and by twelve on the night of the 24th, I was knocking quietly at our door, trying to get in without exciting the notice of any passer by.

HAGAR.

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*Voudo is a great African Goddess, and is still worshiped by hundreds of negroes in the South with dreadful sacrifices, obscene songs, dances and other barbarous rites.

†The power to voudou, or curse a person, is still believed in by the negroes in the South. If once cast under the spell, they believe that they can only be cured by the counter charms of a regular voudou doctor. These quacks extort much money from the dupes. Any negro believed to possess the power of voudouing is looked upon with great fear, and carefully avoided by other negroes. There have been instances where they have been sacrificed.

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Amount of premiums received during the year ending December 31st, 1867	$384,689 71
Assets on 31st December, 1867, valued at	767,765 81

NEW ORLEANS, January 23d, 1868.—The Board of Directors resolved to pay 6 per cent interest on all outstanding Scrip; and further declared a Scrip Dividend of 35 per cent. on the net earned participating Premiums for the year ending December 31st, 1867. THOS. SLOO, Pres't.
THOS. ANDERSON, Secretary. JNO. G. GAINES, V. P.

Directors for the year 1868—John G. Gaines, Henry Renshaw, H. T. Lonsdale, S. Biscoe, J. C. Sarelli, Hugh Wilson, E. J. Hart, John C. Ricks, J. H. Stauffer, J. B. Bres, Thos. Sloo, I. N. Marks.

STAR MUTUAL INSURANCE CO.,

—OF—

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA,

Continues to Take

Fire, River and Marine Risks at Tariff Rates.

—OFFICE—

NO. 14....CARONDELET STREET....NO. 14

CHAS. ENGSTFELD, Secretary.
LLOYD R. COLEMAN, President.

DIRECTORS:

Col. W. C. C. CLAIBORNE, No. 434 Dauphin street.
ADOLPH SCHREIBER, Esq., of E. J. Forstall & Sons.
FORRESTER DOLHONDE, Esq., of Cobb, Dolhonde & Co.
CHAS. G. JOHNSEN, Esq., Cotton Factor.
J. P. TODD, Esq., of DeVan & Mason.
R. L. BRUCE, Esq., of Hill & Bruce.
ARTHUR FORSTALL, Esq., of J. G. Lingham & Co.
B. LAPLACE, Esq., No. 381 Old Levee street.
J. A. BRASELMAN, Esq., of J. A. Braselman & Co.
JOHN D. BRITTON, Esq., of Britton & Moore.
S. GERSON, Esq., Cotton Factor.
EDWARD COCHRAN, Esq., No. 163 Spain street.

MARINE LOSSES PAYABLE IN NEW YORK OR EUROPE.

The Louisiana Mutual Insurance Company,

OFFICE No. 120 COMMON STREET,

Notify their friends and the public that they have made arrangements for the payment of losses on their Marine Risks, when so required, in New York, Liverpool, London and Havre without additional charge beyond the regular rates of premium established by the tariff of the New Orleans Board of Underwriters.

New Orleans, Oct. 16, 1868.

FIREMENS' INSURANCE COMPANY OF NEW ORLEANS.

Capital Stock....................$500,000

With privilege to increase to $3,000,000.

Office No. 25 Camp street, Story Building, corner of Camp and Common streets.

S. L. MILLAUDON, President; J. M. LAPEYRE, Vice-President;
E. N. GANUCHEAU, Secretary.

This Company offers to the insured the option of a rebate of 15 per cent., or a participation in the net profits, payable at the end of each year in cas

PIEDMOND REAL ESTATE MUTUAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY OF VIRGINIA

Authorized Capital $1,000,000.

All Loans made by this Company are Secured on Real Estate, first lien. No Loan permitted to exceed half the value of the property on which it is secured, and in case of Country Property, Buildings excluded from assessment
87½ per cent. of profits paid to Policy Holders.
Dividends declared annually and transferred at end of every year to those who insure.
Policies issued on all the most approved plans.
Policies non-forfeitable. Rates of insurance low.
Premiums received in half cash, half note.
The officers and directors of this company include some of the ablest and most responsible gentlemen in the South.

W. C. CARRINGTON, President.
J. J. HOPKINS, Secretary.
C. H. PERROW, M. D., Medical Advisor.

DIRECTORS:

W. D. Cahill,
Hudson Martin,
C. A. Shafter,
E. G. Thurmand,
T. P. Fitzpatrick,
Wm. P. Shepherd,
J. B. Peebles,
Wm. Gordon,
D. D. Hartsook.

Liberal commissions will be paid to good agents in Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana.

D. H. MAURY, General Agent,
24 Union street, New Orleans.

INSURANCE.

MERCHANTS' MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY OF NEW ORLEANS.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL STATEMENT.

In conformity with the requirements of their Charter, the Company publish the following

STATEMENT:

Premiums received during the year ending 31st May, 1868, including unearned premiums of the previous year:		
On Fire Risks		$ 813,684 43
On Marine Risks		238,734 17
On River Risks		99,543 62
Total Premiums		$1,151,962 22
Less Premiums Unearned 31st May, 1868	$226,847 00	
Return Premiums	23,471 07	—$ 250,318 07
Net Earned Premiums 31st May, 1868		$ 901,644 15
Losses paid:		
On Fire Risks	$271,226 37	
On Marine Risks	173,940 58	
On River Risks	45,929 96	
	$491,096 91	
Taxes	28,015 61	
Reinsurance, Expenses, Profit and Loss, less interest	105,202 04	— 624,314 56
Net Profit		$ 277,329 59
The Company have the following assets:		
Real Estate		$ 159,617 87
Notes Secured by Mortgage		675,807 38
Notes Secured by Pledge		89,147 23
Cash on hand		128,478 24
Premiums in course of Collection		80,753 65
City Bonds		33,000 00
Bank and Railroad Stocks		104,200 00
Bills Receivable		127,154 79
Scrips of Mutual Insurance Companies		40,805 00
Stock of Vallette Dry Dock Company		15,000 00
" Levee Steam Cotton Press		5,000 00
" Marine Dry Dock		3,700 00
" Merchants' Exchange		1,000 00
" Lightering and Wrecking Co		1,000 00
" Louisiana Equitable Life Ins. Co.		250 00
State Bonds		1,500 00
Total		$1,466,414 16
Less:		
Unclaimed interest and interest payable in July next on all outstanding Scrips of the Company	$101,246 15	
Thirty-five per cent. of Scrip issue of 1859, payable in July	70,675 75	
Unearned Premiums 31st May, 1868	226,847 00	—$398,768 90
		$1,067,645 26

The above Statement is a just, true and correct transcript from the books of the Company.

JOHN PEMBERTON, President.
PAUL FOURCHY, Secretary.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, Parish of Orleans, City of New Orleans. }
Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 9th day of June, 1868.
PAUL W. COLLENS,
Third Justice of the Peace.

At a meeting of the Board of Directors, held on the 9th day of June, 1868, it was resolved to declare a Scrip Dividend of THIRTY PER CENT. on the Net Earned Participating Premiums for the year ending 30th May, 1868, for which certificates will be issued on and after the first day of August next. Also to pay on and after the second Monday in July next THIRTY-FIVE PER CENT. ON THE SCRIP ISSUE OF 1859, and six per cent. interest on all outstanding Scrips of the Company.

DIRECTORS:

John Pemberton,
M. Puig,
Chas. Sagory,
P. S. Wiltz,
P. Maspero,
L. F. Generes,
John Morgan Hall,
J. J. Fernandez,
David McCord,
Pierre Poutz,
S. Z. Relf.

LOUISIANA EQUITABLE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY.

Capital....................$500,000,

OFFICE, 142 CANAL STREET, NEW ORLEANS.

DIRECTORS:

John Pemberton,
E. A. Tyler,
C. H. Slocomb,
F. Delbondio,
George A. Fosdick,
W. S. Pike,
J. W. Stone,
A. Thompson,
Philip Meyer,
Edward Barnett,
Edward Rigney,
W. B. Schmidt,
Alexander Marks,
C. E. Girardey,
Marshall J. Smith.

JOSEPH ELLISON, President, W. S. PIKE, Vice-President,
ST. CLAIR DEARING, Gen. Agent, W. P. HARPER, Secretary.

MEDICAL EXAMINERS.

Dr. B. H. Moss,
Dr. Henry Smith,
Dr. Sam'l Choppin,
Dr. J. H. Lewis,
Dr. Y. R. LeMonier,
Dr. W. C. Nichols.

G. A. Breaux, Attorney.

ALL KINDS OF LIFE RISKS TAKEN—Ordinary Life and Annual Endowment; Ten Annual Endowment and Five Annual Endowment; Single Payment; Participating and Non Participating, issued by this Company as low as any other Company.

ALL PAYMENTS NON-FORFEITABLE.

NEW ORLEANS MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY,

Office, Corner of Camp and Canal Streets.

EIGHTH YEAR.

Premiums received during the year ending December 31st, 1867	$411,205 41
Losses, Taxes, Expenses, Reinsurance, etc., paid during same period	$194,078 84
Assets on the 31st December, 1867	$836,564 89

NEW ORLEANS, January 11, 1868.

The Board of Directors have resolved to declare a scrip dividend of THIRTY PER CENT. on the net earned participating premiums for the year ending December 31, 1867; and have further resolved to pay Six Per Cent. interest on all outstanding certificates of Scrip, on and after the second Monday of March, 1868.

J. TUYES, President.
J. W. HINCKS, Secretary.

DIRECTORS.

Geo. Urquhart,
A. Rochereau,
G. W. Babcock,
Jno. Gauche,
T. B. Blanchard Jr.,
Wm. Stevens,
J. A. White,
W. F. Williams,
Chs. Lafitte,
J. M. Lapeyre,
A. Schreiber,
J. Tuyes.

HOME MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY OF NEW ORLEANS.

Office, No. 73 Camp st., corner of Natchez street.

SIXTEENTH YEAR.

Premiums received during the year ending December 31, 1867	$331,590 00
Losses, taxes, expenses, re-insurance, etc., paid during same period	$17,740 78
Assets on the 31st December, 1867	578 724 02

This Company continues to insure against the perils of the Seas, Rivers, and loss or damage by Fire, at the current rates of premium.

ALFRED MOULTON, President.
WM. M. PERKINS, Vice President.
A. W. HUNTER, Secretary.

TRUSTEES:

J. M. Allen,
A. Moulton,
S. P. Ethell,
Wm M. Perkins,
J. H. Ludwigsen,
Wm. Chambers,
John T. Moore,
J. E. Isenhour,
E. K. Converse,
A. H. May,
Robert Hare,
John O. Rogers.

FACTORS' AND TRADERS' INSURANCE COMPANY,

39..........Carondelet Street..........39

NEW ORLEANS, LA.

SECOND ANNUAL STATEMENT, YEAR ENDING 30TH APRIL, 1868.

Premiums for the year	$326,255 70
Losses Paid	192,710 66
Assets, 30th April, 1868	605,984 18

CASH DIVIDENDS DECLARED TO STOCKHOLDERS.
In Capital Stock Department.....TEN PER CENT.
In Premium Department....FIFTEEN PER CENT.

This Company continues to issue Policies on FIRE, RIVER and MARINE RISKS at the current rates of Premium.

All Dividends of the Company are payable in CASH, without discount.

MICHEL MUSSON, President.
HARMON DOANE, Vice President.
ED. A. PALFREY, Secretary.

TRUSTEES.

Moses Greenwood,
J. W. Burbridge,
W. A. Johnson,
John I. Noble,
John Chaffe,
Hugh McColl,
Marshall J. Smith,
I. Caulfield,
Alfred S. Huntington,
L. H. Terry,
J. D. Blair,
Robert Pitkin,
Richard Milliken,
Samuel E. Moore,
W. H. Henning,
J. J. Warren,
Simon Bloch,
R. T. Buckner,
Samuel Friedlander,
H. Frellsen,
Wm. Creevy,
E. W. Rodd,
Joseph Hoy,
Perry Nugent,
S. Cambon.

INSURANCE.

LOUISIANA MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY.

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL STATEMENT.

In conformity with the requirements of their Charter the Company publish the following statement:

Total Premiums for the year ending 29th February, 1868		$548,623 42
Viz—Fire Premiums	$256,372 57	
Marine Premiums	189,153 70	
River Premiums	103,097 15	
		$ 548,623 42
Less Return Premiums	$ 5,859 75	
Less Unearned Premiums	40,145 00	
		$ 46,004 75
Net Earned Premiums		$ 502,618 67
Losses Paid:		
Fire Losses	$ 62,597 26	
Marine Losses	184,872 79	
River Losses	94,592 09	
	$ 342,062 14	
Discount in lieu of Scrip	54,548 65	
Taxes and Internal Revenue	24,741 86	
Expenses, Rent, etc., less Discount Account	32,310 83	
Six per cent. Interest on outstanding Scrip to 1st March, 1868	27,777 80	
		$ 491,340 78
Reserved for Unadjusted Losses		$ 11,277 89

The Company have the following Assets, which in the Report of the Finance Committee of the Company, unanimously adopted by the Board of Trustees, are declared, after ample allowances and deductions are made, to be equivalent to a Cash Capital of $620,000, viz:

Invested in Real Estate	$ 46,598 11
Invested in Mortgage on Real Estate	79,019 50
Invested in City and other Bonds	82,230 00
Invested in Bank and other Stocks	123,525 06
Invested in Scrip of Insurance Companies	135,372 00
Loaned on Pledges	18,200 00
Bill Receivable	3,898 88
Premiums in course of Collection	7,263
Cash on hand	111,513 49
	$ 737,599 49

The above statement is a just, true and correct transcript from the books of the Company.

CHAS. BRIGGS, President,
J. P. ROUX, Secretary.

STATE OF LOUISIANA, Parish of Orleans, City of New Orleans. }
Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 23d day of March, 1868.
PAUL W. COLLENS,
Third Justice of the Peace.

Six per cent. interest on all outstanding Scrip will be paid the legal holders thereof on the second Monday of May next.

CHAS. BRIGGS, President.
ANT. CARRIERE, Vice President.

TRUSTEES:

Charles Briggs,
Ant. Carriere,
Geo. A. Fosdick,
R. Brugier,
Chas. Lafitte,
John S. Mannsell,
P. Anderson,
Alfred Kearny,
A. Frerichs,
Geo. W. Dunbar,
E. F. Stockmeyer,
Geo. W. Hynson,
Arch'd Montgomery,
Henry J. Voss,
E. Marquese,
Chas. Weishaar,
A. R. Montgomery,
A. Lecourt,
Frank Williams,
Thomas Byrne,
John Thornhill,
W. A. Violett,
Hugh Macdonald,
Wm. M. Pinckard,
John S. Wallis,
George Foster,
Andrew Stewart,
L. B. Pothier,
John Nixon, Jr.,
R. Pigado,
James Gallier,
Rudolph Sieg.
H. F. Green.

NINETEENTH ANNUAL STATEMENT

—OF THE—

CRESCENT MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANY.

New Orleans, May 23, 1868.

The Trustees, in conformity to the charter, submit the following statement of the affairs of the company on the 30th day of April, 1868:

Fire Premiums for year	$ 236,123 52	
Marine Premiums for year	94,062 88	
River Premiums for year	177,584 83	
		$ 507,770 23
Total net earned Premiums		$ 447,554 23
Fire losses paid and estimated	$ 89,508 63	
Marine	67,074 08	
River	85,572 47	
Paid Taxes	26,015 54	
Paid reinsurances and discount in lieu of scrip	60,101 30	
Paid interest, return premiums, general expenses less discount, etc	67,649 05	
		395,919 13
Net profits		$ 51,635 10
The Company have the following Assets:		
Bills Receivable	$ 37,494 56	
Loans on bonds and Mortgage	69,343 33	
		$ 106,837 89
Cash on hand	$ 104,577 24	
Loans on pledge of stocks on call	63,400 00	
		167,977 24
Loans on pledge of stocks on time	11,290 00	
Real Estate	75,000 00	
Scrips of other Companies and scrip account	45,083 48	
		131,373 48
Consolidated City Bonds	30,000 00	
City Bonds	96,580 00	
Bank and other stocks	196,937 17	
		323,517 17
Coupons for City Bonds past due		8,400 00
Due for Premiums in course of collection		41,630 00
		$779,814 68
The Company have also:		
Suspended Notes, Stocks and Bonds		$ 436,395 21
Forfeited Scrip account		7,509 2
Interest uncalled for	$ 7,800 23	

The above statement is a true and correct transcript from the books of the Company.

THOS. A. ADAMS, President.
HENRY V. OGDEN, Secretary.

PARISH OF ORLEANS, City of New Orleans. }
Sworn to and subscribed before me, this 23d day of May, 868.
PARIS CHILDRESS,
Second Justice of the Peace,
Parish of Orleans.

The Company will pay interest at 6 per cent. in cash on all its Outstanding Certificates of Scrip to the legal holders thereof, on and after the second Monday in June next.

The Board of Trustees have also declared a Scrip Dividend THIRTY-THREE AND ONE-THIRD per cent. on the earned premiums entitled to participation for the year ending April 30, 1868; for which certificates will be issued on and after the first Monday in August next, free of Government tax.

THOMAS A. ADAMS, President,
SAMUEL H. KENNEDY, Vice President.
HENRY V. OGDEN Secretary.

—TRUSTEES—

Thomas A. Adams,
C. T. Buddecke,
P. H. Foley,
A. G. Ober,
P. Simms,
A. Elmer Bader,
Samuel H. Kennedy,
Samuel B. Newman,
Wm. Edwards,
A. Thompson,
John Phelps,
E. H. Summers.

COMMERCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY

SECOND ANNUAL STATEMENT.

In conformity with the requirements of their charter the COMMERCIAL INSURANCE COMPANY publish the following statement:

Amount of Premiums for the year ending 31st March, 1868		
Fire Premiums	$ 52,826 44	
River Premiums	79,028 20	
Marine Premiums	29,808 11	
		$161,662 75
LOSSES PAID.		
Fire Losses	$ 13,659 39	
River Losses	84,244 33	
Marine Losses	24,373 70	
	$122,277 42	
Rebate	30,980 97	
Taxes	4,799 01	
Reinsurance	8,892 25	
Return Premiums	419 00	
Expenses, Profit and Loss, etc., less Interest	29,820 86	—$197,189 51
		$35,526 76
ASSETS.		
Cash on hand	$ 23,904 11	
Bills receivable	8,083 92	
Furniture	3,673 95	
Premiums due	24,086 46	
Stock Notes	534,225 00	—$593,973 44

The above Statement is a just, true and correct transcript from the books of the company.

S. B. BUCKNER, President.
GEO. O. SWEET, Secretary.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 21st day of April, 8.
PARIS CHILDRESS,
Second Justice Peace, Parish of Orleans.