Section I:

The first rays of dawn were just beginning to light the black mountaintops when I left the Cape for Saint-Marc, a small town in St. Domingue, now known as Haiti. I had seen so many exquisite landscapes and thick, tall forests that, truth to tell, I had begun to believe myself indifferent to these virile beauties of creation. But at the sight of this town, with its picturesque vegetation, its bizarre and novel nature, I was stunned; I stood dumb-struck before the sublime diversity of God's works. The moment I arrived, I was accosted by an old negro, at least seventy years of age; his step was firm, his head held high, his form imposing and vigorous; save the remarkable whiteness of his curly hair, nothing betrayed his age. As is common in that country, he wore a large straw hat and was dressed in trousers of coarse gray linen, with a kind of jacket made from plain batiste.

"Good day, Master," he said, tipping his hat when he saw me.

"Ah! There you are . . .," and I offered him my hand, which he shook in return.

"Master," he said, "that's quite noble-hearted of you . . . But you know, do you not, that a negro's as vile as a dog; society rejects him; men detest him; the laws curse him. . . . Yes, he's a most unhappy being, who hasn't even the consolation of always being virtuous. . . . He may be born good, noble, and generous; God may grant him a great and loyal soul; but despite all that, he often goes to his grave with bloodstained hands, and a heart hungering after yet more vengeance. For how many times has he seen the dreams of his youth destroyed? How many times has experience taught him that his good deeds count for nothing, and that he should love neither his wife nor his son; for one day the former will be seduced by the master, and his own flesh and blood will be sold and transported away despite his despair. What, then, can you expect him to become? Shall he smash his skull against the paving stones? Shall he kill his torturer? Or do you believe the human heart can find a way to bear such misfortune?"

The old negro fell silent a moment, as if awaiting my response.

"You'd have to be mad to believe that," he continued, heatedly. "If he continues to live, it can only be for vengeance; for soon he shall rise . . . and, from the day he shakes off his servility, the master would do better to have a starving tiger raging beside him than to meet that man face to face." While the old man spoke, his face lit up, his eyes sparkled, and his heart pounded forcefully. I would not have believed one could discover that much life and power beneath such an aged exterior. Taking advantage of this moment of excitement, I said to him: "Antoine, you promised you'd tell me the story of your friend Georges."

"Do you want to hear it now?"
"Certainly . . ." We sat down, he on my trunk, myself on my valise. Here is what he told me:

"Do you see this edifice that rises so graciously toward the sky and whose reflection seems to rise from the sea; this edifice that in its peculiarity resembles a temple and in its pretense a palace? This is the house of Saint-M***. Each day, in one of this building's rooms, one finds an assemblage of hangers-on, men of independent means, and the great plantation owners. The first two groups play billiards or smoke the delicious cigars of Havana, while the third purchases negroes; that is, free men who have been torn from their country by ruse or by force, and who have become, by violence, the goods, the property of their fellow men. . . . Over here we have the husband without the wife; there, the sister without the brother; farther on, the mother without the children. This makes you shudder? Yet this loathsome commerce goes on continuously. Soon, in any case, the offering is a young Senegalese woman, so beautiful that from every mouth leaps the exclamation: 'How pretty!' Everyone there wants her for his mistress, but not one of them dares dispute the prize with the young Alfred, now twenty-one years old and one of the richest planters in the country.

"How much do you want for this woman?"

"Fifteen hundred piasters,' replied the auctioneer.

"Fifteen hundred piasters,' Alfred rejoined dryly.

"Yes indeed, Sir."

"That's your price?"

"That's my price."

"That's awfully expensive."

"Expensive?' replied the auctioneer, with an air of surprise. 'But surely you see how pretty she is; how clear her skin is, how firm her flesh is. She's eighteen years old at the most. . . .' Even as he spoke, he ran his shameless hands all over the ample and half-naked form of the beautiful African.

"Is she guaranteed?" asked Alfred, after a moment of reflection.

"As pure as the morning dew,' the auctioneer responded. But, for that matter, you yourself can. . . ."

"No no, there's no need,' said Alfred, interrupting him. 'I trust you.'

"I've never sold a single piece of bad merchandise,' replied the vendor, twirling his whiskers with a triumphant air. When the bill of sale had been signed and all formalities resolved, the auctioneer approached the young slave.
This man is now your master,' he said, pointing toward Alfred.

" 'I know it,' the negress answered coldly.

" 'Are you content?'

" 'What does it matter to me...him or some other . . .'

" 'But surely... .' stammered the auctioneer, searching for some answer. " 'But surely what?' said the African, with some humor. 'And if he doesn't suit me?'

" 'My word, that would be unfortunate, for everything is finished. . . .'

" 'Well then, I'll keep my thoughts to myself.'

"Ten minutes later, Alfred's new slave stepped into a carriage that set off along the chemin des quepes, a well-made road that leads out into those delicious fields that surround Saint-Marc like young virgins at the foot of the altar. A somber melancholy enveloped her soul, and she began to weep. The driver understood only too well what was going on inside her, and thus made no attempt to distract her. But when he saw Alfred's white house appear in the distance, he involuntarily leaned down toward the unfortunate girl and, with a voice full of tears, said to her: 'Sister, what's your name?'

" 'Laïsa,' she answered, without raising her head.

" At the sound of this name, the driver shivered. Then, gaining control of his emotions, he asked: 'Your mother?'

" 'She's dead. . . .'

" 'Your father?'

" 'He's dead. . . .'

" 'Poor child,' he murmured. 'What country are you from, Laïsa?'

" 'From Senegal. . . .'

" Tears rose in his eyes; she was a fellow countrywoman.

" 'Sister,' he said, wiping his eyes, 'perhaps you know old Chambo and his daughter. . . .'

'Why?' answered the girl, raising her head quickly.

" 'Why?' continued the driver, in obvious discomfort, 'well, old Chambo is my father, and . . .'
"'My God,' cried out the orphan, cutting off the driver before he could finish. 'You are?"

"'Jacques Chambo.'

"'You're my brother!' "

"Laïsa!"

"They threw themselves into each other's arms. They were still embracing when the carriage passed through the main entrance to Alfred's property. The overseer was waiting. . . . 'What's this I see,' he shouted, uncoiling an immense whip that he always carried on his belt; 'Jacques kissing the new arrival before my very eyes. . . What impertinence!' With this, lashes began to fall on the unhappy man, and spurts of blood leaped from his face."

Section II:

"Alfred may have been a decent man, humane and loyal with his equals; but you can be certain he was a hard, cruel man toward his slaves. I won't tell you everything he did in order to possess Laïsa; for in the end she was virtually raped. For almost a year, she shared her master's bed. But Alfred was already beginning to tire of her; he found her ugly, cold, and insolent. About this time the poor woman gave birth to a boy and gave him the name Georges. Alfred refused to recognize him, drove the mother from his presence, and relegated her to the most miserable hut on his lands, despite the fact that he knew very well, as well as one can, that he was the child's father.

"'Georges grew up without ever hearing the name of his father; and when, at times, he attempted to penetrate the mystery surrounding his birth, his mother remained inflexible, never yielding to his entreaties. On one occasion only, she said to him: 'My son, you shall learn your name only when you reach twenty-five, for then you will be a man; you will be better able to guard its secret. You don't realize that he has forbidden me to speak to you about him and threatens you if I do. . . . And Georges, don't you see, this man's hatred would be your death.'"

"'What does that matter,' Georges shouted impetuously. 'At least I could reproach him for his unspeakable conduct.'"

"'Hush. . . . Hush, Georges. The walls have ears and someone will talk,' moaned the poor mother as she trembled.

"A few years later this unhappy woman died, leaving to Georges, her only son, as his entire inheritance, a small leather pouch containing a portrait of the boy's father. But she exacted a promise that the pouch not be opened until his twenty-fifth year; then she kissed him, and her head fell back onto the pillow. . . . She was dead. The painful cries that escaped the orphan drew the other slaves around him. . . . They all set to crying, they beat their chests, they tore their hair in agony. Following these gestures of suffering, they bathed the dead woman's body and laid it out on a kind of long table, raised on wooden supports. The dead woman is placed on her back, her face turned to the East, dressed in her finest clothing, with her hands folded on her chest. At her feet is a bowl filled with holy water, in which a sprig of jasmine is floating; arid, finally, at the four corners of this funereal bed, the flames of torches rise up. . . . Each of them, having
blessed the remains of the deceased, kneels and prays; for most of the negro races, despite their
fetishism, have profound faith in the existence of God. When this first ceremony is finished,
another one, no less singular, commences. . . . There are shouts, tears, songs, and then funeral
dances!"
Section III:

"Georges had all the talents necessary for becoming a well-regarded gentleman; yet he was
possessed of a haughty, tenacious, willful nature; he had one of those oriental sorts of
dispositions, the kind that, once pushed far enough from the path of virtue, will stride boldly
down the path of crime. He would have given ten years of his life to know the name of his father,
but he dared not violate the solemn oath he had made to his dying mother. It was as if nature
pushed him toward Alfred; he liked him, as much as one can like a man; and Alfred esteemed
him, but with that esteem that the horseman bears for the most handsome and vigorous of his
chargers. In those days, a band of thieves was spreading desolation through the region; already
several of the settlers had fallen victim to them. One night, by what chance I know not, Georges
learned of their plans. They had sworn to murder Alfred. The slave ran immediately to his
master's side.

" 'Master, master,' he shouted. . . . 'In heaven's name, follow me.' "Alfred raised his eyebrows.

" 'Please! come, come, master,' the mulatto insisted passionately. " 'Good God,' Alfred replied, 'I
believe you're commanding me.'

" 'Forgive me, master . . . forgive me . . . I'm beside myself . . . I don't know what I'm saying . . .
but in heaven's name, come, follow me, because. . . .'

" 'Explain yourself,' said Alfred, in an angry tone. . . .

"The mulatto hesitated.

" 'At once; I order you,' continued Alfred, as he rose menacingly. "'Master, you're to be murdered
tonight.'

" 'By the Virgin, you're lying. . . .'

" 'Master, they mean to take your life.'

" 'Who?'

" 'The bandits.'

" 'Who told you this?'

" 'Master, that's my secret. . . .' said the mulatto in a submissive voice.

" 'Do you have weapons?' rejoined Alfred, after a moment of silence.
"The mulatto pulled back a few of the rags that covered him, revealing an axe and a pair of pistols.

"'Good,' said Alfred, hastily arming himself.

"'Master, are you ready?'

"'Let's go. . . .'

"'Let's go,' repeated the mulatto as he stepped toward the door. "Alfred held him back by the arm.

"'But where to?'

"'To your closest friend, Monsieur Arthur.'

"As they were about to leave the room, there was a ferocious pounding at the door.

"'The devil,' exclaimed the mulatto, 'it's too late. . . .'

"'What say you?'

"'They're here,' replied Georges, pointing at the door. ...

"'Master, what's wrong?'

"'Nothing . . . a sudden pain. . . .'

"'Don't worry, master, they'll have to walk over my body before they get to you,' said the slave with a calm and resigned air.

"This calm, this noble devotion, were calculated to reassure the most cowardly of men. Yet at these last words, Alfred trembled even more, overwhelmed by a horrible thought. He reckoned that Georges, despite his generosity, was an accomplice of the murderers. Such is the tyrant: he believes all other men incapable of elevated sentiments or selfless dedication, for they must be small-minded, perfidious souls . . . . Their souls are but uncultivated ground, where nothing grows but thorns and weeds. The door shook violently. At this point, Alfred could no longer control his fears; he had just seen the mulatto smiling, whether from joy or anger he knew not.

"'Scoundrel!' he shouted, dashing into the next room; 'you're trying to have me murdered, but your plot will fail'—upon which he disappeared. Georges bit his lips in rage, but had no time to think, for the door flew open and four men stood in the threshold. Like a flash of lightning, the mulatto drew his pistols and pressed his back to the wall, crying out in a deep voice:

"'Wretches! What do you want?'}
"'We want to have a talk with you,' rejoined one of them, firing a bullet at Georges from point-blank range.

"'A fine shot,' muttered Georges, shaking.

"The bullet had broken his left arm. Georges let off a shot. The brigand whirled three times about and fell stone dead. A second followed instantly. At this point, like a furious lion tormented by hunters, Georges, with his axe in his fist and his dagger in his teeth, threw himself upon his adversaries... A hideous struggle ensues... The combatants grapple... collide again... they seem bound together... The axe blade glistens... The dagger, faithful to the hand that guides it, works its way into the enemy's breast... But never a shout, not a word... not a whisper escapes the mouths of these three men, wallowing among the cadavers as if at the heart of some intoxicating orgy... To see them thus, pale and blood-spattered, silent and full of desperation, one must imagine three phantoms throwing themselves against each other, tearing themselves to pieces, in the depths of a grave... Meanwhile, Georges is covered with wounds; he can barely hold himself up... Oh! the intrepid mulatto has reached his end; the severing axe is lifted above his head... Suddenly two explosions are heard, and the two brigands slump to the floor, blaspheming God as they drop. At the same moment, Alfred returns, followed by a young negro. He has the wounded man carried to his hut, and instructs his doctor to attend to him. Now, how is it that Georges was saved by the same man who had just accused him of treachery? As he ran off, Alfred heard the sound of a gun, and the clash of steel; blushing at his own cowardice, he awoke his valet de chambre and flew to the aid of his liberator. Ah, I've forgotten to tell you that Georges had a wife, by the name Zelia, whom he loved with every fiber of his being; she was a mulatto about eighteen or twenty years old, standing very straight and tall, with black hair and a gaze full of tenderness and love. Georges lay for twelve days somewhere between life and death. Alfred visited him often; and, driven on by some fateful chance, he became enamored of Zelia. But, unfortunately for him, she was not one of these women who sell their favors or use them to pay tribute to their master. She repelled Alfred's propositions with humble dignity; for she never forgot that this was a master speaking to a slave. Instead of being moved by this display of a virtue that is so rare among women, above all among those who, like Zelia, are slaves, and who, every day, see their shameless companions prostitute themselves to the colonists, thereby only feeding more licentiousness; instead of being moved, as I said, Alfred flew into a rage... What!—him, the despot, the Bey, the Sultan of the Antilles, being spurned by a slave... how ironic! Thus he swore he would possess her... A few days before Georges was recovered, Alfred summoned Zelia to his chamber. Then, attending to nothing but his criminal desires, he threw his arms around her and planted a burning kiss on her face. The young slave begged, pleaded, resisted; but all in vain... Already he draws her toward the adulterous bed; already... Then, the young slave, filled with a noble indignation, repulses him with one final effort, but one so sudden, so powerful, that Alfred lost his balance and struck his head as he fell... At this sight, Zelia began to tear her hair in despair, crying tears of rage; for she understood perfectly, the unhappy girl, that death was her fate for having drawn the blood of a being so vile. After crying for some time, she left to be at her husband's side. He must have been dreaming about her, for there was a smile on his lips.

"'Georges... Georges...' she cried out in agony.
"The mulatto opened his eyes; and his first impulse was to smile at the sight of his beloved. Zelia recounted for him everything that had happened. He didn't want to believe it, but soon he was convinced of his misfortune; for some men entered his hut and tied up his wife while she stood sobbing. . . . Georges made an effort to rise up; but, still weakened, he fell back onto his bed, his eyes haggard, his hands clenched, his mouth gasping for air."

Section IV:

"Ten days later, two white creole children were playing in the street.

" 'Charles, 'one said to the other: 'is it true that the mulatto woman who wanted to kill her master is to be hung tomorrow?'

" 'At eight o'clock,' answered the other.

" 'Will you go?'

" 'Oh yes, certainly.'

" 'Won't that be fine, to see her pirouetting between the earth and the sky,' rejoined the first, laughing as they walked off.

"Does it surprise you to hear two children, at ten years of age, conversing so gayly on the death of another? This is, perhaps, an inevitable consequence of their education. From their earliest days, they have heard it ceaselessly repeated, that we were born to serve them, that we were created to attend to their whims, and that they need have no more or less consideration for us than for a dog. . . . Indeed, what is our agony and suffering to them? Have they not, just as often, seen their best horses die? They don't weep for them, for they're rich, and tomorrow they'll buy others. . . . While these two children were speaking, Georges was at the feet of his master.

" 'Master, have mercy . . . mercy. . . .' he cried out, weeping. . . . 'Have pity on her . . . Master, pardon her. . . . Oh! yes, pardon her, it is in your power . . . oh! speak . . . you have only to say the word . . . just one word . . . and she will live.'

"Alfred made no answer.

" 'Oh! for pity's sake . . . master . . . for pity's sake, tell me you pardon her . . . oh! speak . . . answer me, master . . . won't you pardon her. . . .' The unhappy man was bent double with pain. . . .

" Alfred remained impassive, turning his head aside. . .

" ‘Oh!' continued Georges, begging, 'please answer . . . just one word . . . please say something; you see how your silence is tearing my heart in two . . . it's killing me . . .

" 'There's nothing I can do,' Alfred finally answered, in an icy tone.
"The mulatto dried his tears, and raised himself to his full height.

"'Master,' he continued in a hollow voice, 'do you remember what you said to me, as I lay twisting in agony on my bed?'

"'No…'

"'Well! I can remember. . . the master said to the slave: you saved my life; what can I grant you in return? Do you want your freedom? 'Master,' answered the slave, 'I can never be free, while my son and my wife are slaves.' To which the master replied: 'If ever you ask me, I swear that your wishes shall be granted'; and the slave did not ask, for he was content/ that he had saved his master's life . . . but today, today when he knows that, in eighteen hours, his wife will no longer be among the living, he flies to throw himself at your feet, and to call out to you: master, in God's name, save my wife.' And the mulatto, his hands clasped, with a supplicating gaze, fell to his knees and began to cry, his tears falling like rain. . . .

"Alfred turned his head away. . . .

"'Master . . . master . . . for pity, give me an answer. . . . Oh! say that you want her to live. . . . in God's name . . . in your mother's name . . . mercy . . . have mercy upon us. . . .' and the mulatto kissed the dust at his feet.

"Alfred stood silent.

"'But speak, at least, to this poor man who begs you,' he said, sobbing. "Alfred said nothing.

"'My God . . . my God! how miserable I am. . . .' and he rolled on the floor, pulling at his hair in torment.

"Finally, Alfred decided to speak: 'I have already told you that it is no longer up to me to pardon her.'

"'Master,' murmured Georges, still crying, 'she will probably be condemned; for only you and I know that she is innocent.'

"At these words from the mulatto, the blood rose to Alfred's face, and fury to his heart. . . .

"Georges understood that it was no longer time to beg, for he had raised the veil that covered his master's crime; thus he stood up resolutely.

"'Leave . . . get out,' Alfred shouted at him.

"Instead of leaving, the mulatto crossed his arms on his chest and, with a fierce look, eyed his master scornfully from head to foot.
"'Get out! get out, I say,' continued Alfred, more and more angrily.

"'I'm not leaving,' answered Georges.

"'This is defiance, you wretch.' He made a motion to strike him, but his hand remained at his side, so full of pride and hatred was George's gaze.

"'What! you can leave her to be killed, to have her throat cut, to be murdered,' said the mulatto, 'when you know her to be innocent . . . when, like a coward, you wanted to seduce her?'

"'Insolent! What are you saying?'

"'I'm saying that it would be an infamous deed to let her die. . .

"'Georges . . . Georges. . .

"'I am saying that you're a scoundrel,' screamed Georges, giving full rein to his anger, and seizing Alfred by the arm . . . 'ah! she'll die . . . she will die because she didn't prostitute herself to you . . . because you're white ... because you're her master . . . you lying coward.'

"'Careful, Georges,' replied Alfred, trying to take a tone of assurance. 'Be careful that instead of one victim tomorrow, the executioner does not find two.'

"'You talk of victim and executioner, wretch,' shouted Georges. . . 'So that means she dies . . . her . . . my Zelia . . . but you should know that her life is linked to your own.'

"'Georges!'

"'You should know that your head will remain on your shoulders only so long as she lives.'

"'Georges. . . Georges!'

"'You should know that I will kill you, that I'll drink your blood, if even a hair on her head is harmed.'

"During all this time, the mulatto was shaking Alfred with all his strength.

"'Let me go,' cried Alfred.

"'Ah! she's dying . . . she's dying' . . . the mulatto screamed deliriously. "'Georges, let me go!'

"'Shut your mouth . . . shut it, you scoundrel . . . ah! she's dying . . . well then, should the executioner put an end to my wife . . .' he continued with a hideous smile.

"Alfred was so agitated he didn't even know that Georges had left. He went directly to his hut, where his child of two years was sleeping in a light cradle made from lianas; taking up the child,
he slipped away. In order to understand what follows, you must know that there was only a small river to cross from Alfred's home before one arrives in the midst of those thick forests that seem to hold the new world in their arms.

"For six long hours, Georges walked without a rest; at last he stopped, a few steps from a hut built in the deepest heart of the forest; you'll understand the joy that shone in his eyes when you realize that this tiny hut, isolated as it is, is the camp of the Maroons; that is, of slaves who have fled the tyranny of their masters. At this moment the hut was filled with murmurs; for a rustling had been heard in the forest, and the leader, swearing that the noise was not that of any animal, had taken his rifle and gone out... Suddenly the underbrush parted before him and he found himself face to face with a stranger.

"'By my freedom,' he cried, looking over the newcomer, 'you found our recess all too easily.'

"'Africa and freedom,' Georges replied calmly, as he pushed aside the barrel of the rifle. . . . I'm one of you.'

"'Your name.'

"'Georges, slave of Alfred.'

"They shook hands and embraced.

"The next day the crowd clamored round a scaffold, from which hung the body of a young mulatto woman. ... When she had expired, the executioner let her corpse down into a pine coffin and, ten minutes later, body and coffin were thrown into a ditch that was opened at the edge of the forest.

"Thus this woman, for having been too virtuous, died the kind of death meted out to the vilest criminal. Would this alone not suffice to render the gentlest of men dangerous and bloodthirsty?" Section V:

"Three years had passed since the death of the virtuous Zelia. For a time, Alfred was in extreme torment; by day, he seemed to see a vengeful hand descending toward his head; he trembled at night because the darkness brought him hideous, frightful dreams. Soon, however, he banished from his thoughts both the painful memory of the martyr and the terrible threat Georges had made; he married and became a father. . . . Oh! how gratified he felt, when he was told that his prayers were answered, he who had humbly kissed the church flo...
given Georges any news more important than that of the newborn’s arrival. . . . He immediately set out for the house of his enemy. On his way he met a negress who was bringing a cup of broth to Madame Alfred; he stopped her, exchanged a few insignificant words, and went on. . . . After many difficulties, he managed to slip his way, like a snake, into Alfred's rooms; once there, hidden in the space between the bed and the wall, he awaited his master. . . . A moment later, Alfred entered the room, humming a tune; he opened his secretary and took out a superb jewel box, set with diamonds, that he had promised his wife, should she give him a son; but, filled with joy and happiness, he sat down and put his head between his hands, like a man who can't believe his unexpected good fortune. Then, on raising his head, he saw before him a kind of motionless shadow, with arms crossed on its breast and two burning eyes that possessed all the ferocity of a tiger preparing to tear its prey to pieces. Alfred made a motion to stand, but a powerful arm held him down in his chair.

"'What do you want with me,' Alfred whispered, in a trembling voice. "'To compliment you on the birth of your child,' answered a voice that seemed to emerge from the tomb.

"Alfred shook from head to toe, his hair stood on end, and a cold sweat poured over his limbs.

"'I don't know you,' Alfred muttered weakly. . . .

"'Georges is the name.'

"'You. . .

"'You thought I was dead, I suppose,' said the mulatto with a convulsive laugh.

"'Help . . . help,' cried Alfred.

"'Who will help you,' rejoined the mulatto . . . haven't you dismissed your servants, haven't you closed your doors, to be alone with your wife . . . so you see, your cries are useless . . . you should commend your soul to God.'

"Alfred had begun to rise from his chair, but at these last words he fell back, pale and trembling.

"'Oh! have pity, Georges ... don't kill me, not today.'

"Georges shrugged his shoulders. 'Master, isn't it horrible to die when you're happy; to lie down in the grave at the moment you see your fondest dreams coming true . . . oh! it's horrible, isn't it,' said the mulatto with an infernal laugh....

"' Mercy, Georges . . .

"'And yet,' he continued, 'such is your destiny . . . you shall die today, this hour, this minute, without giving your wife your last farewell. . . "'Have pity . . . pity. . .'"

"'Without kissing your newborn son a second time. . .
"'Oh! mercy . . . mercy.'

"'I think my vengeance is worthy of your own . . . I would have sold my soul to the Devil, had he promised me this moment.'

"'Oh! mercy ... please take pity on me,' said Alfred, throwing himself at the feet of the mulatto.

"Georges shrugged his shoulders and raised his axe.

"'Oh! one more hour of life!'

"'To embrace your wife, is that it?'

"'One minute....'

"'To see your son again, right?'

"'Oh! have pity....'

"'You might as well plead with the starving tiger to let go his prey.'

"'In God's name, Georges.'

"'I don't believe in that any longer.'

"'In the name of your father....'

"At this, Georges's fury subsided.

"'My father . . . my father,' repeated the mulatto, tears in his eyes. 'Do you know him . . . oh! tell me his name. . . . What's his name . . . oh! tell me, tell me his name . . . I'll pardon you . . . I'll bless you.'

"And the mulatto nearly fell on his knees before his master. But suddenly, sharp cries were heard...

"'Good heavens ... that's my wife's voice,' cried Alfred, dashing toward the sounds. . . .

"As if he were coming back to his senses, the mulatto remembered that he had come to the house of his master, not to learn the name of his father, but to settle accounts with him for his wife's blood. Holding Alfred back, he told him with a hideous grin: 'Hold on, master; it's nothing.'

"'Jesus and Mary ... don't you hear her calling for help.'

"'It's nothing, I tell you.'
"'Let me go ... let me go ... it's my wife's voice.'

"'No, it's the gasps of a dying woman.'

"'Wretch, you're lying... .'

"'I poisoned her....'

"'Oh!'

"'Do you hear those cries...they're hers.'

"'The Devil....'

"'Do you hear those screams ... they're hers.'

"'A curse....'

"During all this time, Alfred had been trying to shake free of the mulatto's grip; but he held him fast, tighter and tighter. As he did, his head rose higher, his heart beat fiercely, he steadied himself for his awful task.

"'Alfred ... help ... water ... I'm suffocating,' shouted a woman, as she threw herself into the middle of the room. She was pale and disheveled, her eyes were starting out of her head, her hair was in wild disarray.

"'Alfred, Alfred . . . for heaven's sake, help me . . . some water . . . I need water ... my blood is boiling ... my heart is twitching ... oh! water, water. . .

"Alfred struggled mightily to help her, but Georges held him fast with an iron hand. Laughing like one of the damned, he cried out: 'No, master . . . I'm afraid not . . . I want your wife to die ... right there. . . before your eyes . . . right in front of you . . . do you understand, master; right in front of you, asking you for water, for air, while you can do nothing to help her.'

"'Damnation . . . may you be damned,' howled Alfred, as he struggled like a madman.

"'You can curse and blaspheme all you want,' answered the mulatto . . . 'this is the way it's going to be. . .'

"'Alfred,' the dying woman moaned again, 'good-bye . . . good-bye . I'm dying. . .

"'Look well,' responded the mulatto, still laughing. . . 'Look . . . she's gasping . . . goodness! a single drop of this water would restore her to life.' He showed him a small vial.

"'My entire fortune for that drop of water. ...' cried Alfred.
" 'Have you gone mad, master. . .'

" 'Ah! that water ... that water ... don't you see she's dying . give it to me ... please give it to me.. .'

" 'Here ..' and the mulatto flung the vial against the wall.

" 'Accursed,' screamed Alfred, seizing Georges by the neck. 'Oh! my entire life, my soul, for a dagger. . .'

" Georges released Alfred's hands.

" 'Now that she's dead, it's your turn, master,' he said as he lifted his axe.

" 'Strike, executioner . . strike . . after poisoning her, you might as well kill your own fa—.,'
The ax fell, and Alfred's head rolled across the floor, but, as it rolled, the head distinctly pronounced the final syllable, ' -ther ...' Georges at first believed he had misheard, but the word father, like a funeral knell, rang in his ears. To be certain, he opened the fateful pouch. . . 'Ah!' he cried out, 'I'm cursed. . .!' An explosion was heard; and the next day, near the corpse of Alfred, was discovered the corpse of the unhappy Georges...."