

THE CREOLES ABOUT 1745.—Among the people a transmutation was going on. French fathers were moving aside to make room for Creole sons. The life of the seniors had been what the life of redemptorists and liberated convicts, combining with that of a French and Swiss line and staff in and about the outposts of such a frontier, might be—idle, thriftless, gallant, bold, crude, free, and scornful of labor, which the company had brought into permanent contempt by the introduction of African slaves. In this atmosphere they had brought up their children. Now these children were taking their parents' places, and with Latin ductility were conforming to the mold of their nearest surroundings. They differed from their transatlantic stock much as the face of nature in Louisiana differed from that in France. A soil of unlimited fertility became, through slavery, not an incentive to industry, but a promise of unearned plenty. A luxurious and enervating climate joined its influence with this condition to debase even the Gallic love of pleasure to an unambitious apathy and an untrained sensuality. The courteous manners of France were largely retained; but the habit of commanding a dull and abject slave class, over which a "black code" gave every white man full powers of police, induced a certain fierce imperiousness of will and temper; while that proud love of freedom, so pervasive throughout the American wilderness, rose at times to an attitude of arrogant superiority over all constraint, and became the occasion of harsh comment in the reports sent to France by the officers of their King. In the lakes, canebrakes, and swamps, and on the bayou ridges of their dark, wet forests, and on the sunny expanses of their marshes, a great abundance of bears, panthers, deer, swans, geese, and lesser game gave a bold zest to arduous sport. The chase became almost the only form of exertion; and woodcraft often the only education. As for the gentler sex, catching less grossness from negro slavery and less rudeness from the wilderness, they were, in mind as well as morals, superior to the men. They could read and write and make a little music. Such French vivacity as still remained chose the ball-room as their chief delight, while the gaming-table was the in-door passion of the men. Unrestrained, proud, intrepid, self-reliant, rudely voluptuous, of a high intellectual order, yet uneducated, unreasoning, impulsive, and inflammable—such was the first native-born generation of Franco-Louisianians.—*George W. Cable, in the Century.*

The New York Times

Published: January 7, 1883

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