

The following prompts are excerpts from poems in *Afro-Creole Poetry in French from Louisiana's Radical Civil War–Era Newspapers* (THNOC, 2020). They were translated from the French by Clint Bruce.

## *The War and the Future*

*Dialogue between an American and a Foreigner*

L. DE P. [unknown author]

translated from the French by Clint Bruce

### THE AMERICAN

Ah! This country a model republic would be  
If only it had upheld faithfully  
The rights proclaimed with such solemnity,  
And if, all while applauding liberty,  
It hadn't sought to render it powerless.

translated from the French by Clint Bruce

## *Love*

*For Miss Louise C*——

BERTHE D—— [possibly Adolphe Duhart]<sup>90</sup>

What is love? — An inexpressible thing; a volume in a word;  
an ocean in a tear; a whirlwind in a sigh.

— Anonymous<sup>91</sup>

What's Love? Love, you see, is a feeling most sweet;  
Without forethought, it forms within our soul  
And suddenly seizes it, binding its hands and feet,  
And makes it glow like a hidden, burning coal.

90. Berthe Duhart, daughter of Adolphe and Odilia, died before the age of three, on 28 July 1864.

91. This quotation, popular in the nineteenth century, is an adaptation of a passage from "Of Love," a poem by the English writer Martin F. Tupper (1810–89).

translated from the French by Clint Bruce

## *A Strange Coincidence*

[probably Armand Lanusse]

Last night, colonel Ferrier<sup>45</sup> (pronounced *keurnel* in English) and Abbott Châlons<sup>46</sup> each experienced the following dream, which they recalled, no less strangely enough, in more or less the same way. The dream resembles that of Patrice. Here it is:

### THE ABBOT'S DREAM

Last night I dreamed that, at illness's behest,  
Beside a black man I'd been laid to rest.  
Unable to bear his wretched proximity,  
I spoke to him thus, as a corpse of quality:  
"Be gone, you scoundrel! Go somewhere else to rot,  
For you have no business near my burial plot."  
"A scoundrel?" with utter arrogance he replied,  
"You're a scoundrel yourself; this cannot be denied,  
For all are equal here, I'm pleased to say:  
We both decay in precisely the same way.  
Ignoring the worms devouring our skin,  
As you did in church, you insult me once again."

The colonel's dream is identical with the exception of the final two lines, which are as follows:

Down here, a simple negro is worth, I'm afraid,  
A brilliant colonel commanding a French brigade.

[published Tuesday, 19 May 1863]

45. Alphonse Ferrier, a French citizen of New Orleans and an officer of the Brigade française (a former Confederate militia composed of French nationals), expressed displeasure at his troops having been placed side-by-side with the black soldiers and *gens de couleur* of the original (i.e., Confederate) Native Guards. "A Strange Coincidence" was published together with a letter from Armand Lanusse, who denounces Ferrier's hypocritical attitude; the scathing irony and otherwise similar tone of both the poem and the letter suggest that Lanusse wrote both texts.

46. During his Civil War-era tenure at St. Mary's Church in New Orleans, the French priest Gabriel Chalon (the spelling found in most nineteenth-century documents) reinstated segregation at mass.