LOUISIANA STUDIES.

LITERATURE, CUSTOMS AND DIALECTS,
HISTORY AND EDUCATION.

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danseur and also from the faces of the musicians who played the barrel and the jawbone, an act which must have been gratefully received by those sweltering individuals.

The ball, for such it was, lasted for several hours, and was a great amusement to us children. It must have been less entertaining to our parents, but they never interfered, as they considered that, by a well-established custom, New Year's Day was one of mirth and pleasure for the childlike slaves. Very different is this scene from those described in "Uncle Tom's Cabin," for the slaves were certainly not unhappy on the plantations.

The proof of this is, that, although our equals politically and citizens of the United States, they often refer to the time of slavery, and speak willingly of those bygone days.

Another custom which was quite interesting was the cutting of the last cane for grinding. When the hands had reached the last rows left standing, the foreman (commandeur) chose the tallest cane, and the best laborer (le meilleur couteau) came to the cane chosen, which was the only one in the field left uncut. Then the whole gang congregated around the spot, with the overseer and foreman, and the latter, taking a blue ribbon, tied it to the cane, and, brandishing the knife in the air, sang to the cane as if it were a person, and danced around it several times before cutting it. When this was done, all the laborers, men, women and children, mounted in the empty carts, carrying the last cane in triumph, waving colored handkerchiefs in the air, and singing as loud as they could. The procession went to the house of the master, who gave a drink to every negro, and the day ended with a ball, amid general rejoicing.

Shooting at the papegai was another great popular amusement. A rude bird representing a rooster was made of wood, and was placed on a high pole to be shot at. A calf or an ox was killed, and every part of the wooden bird represented a similar portion of the animal. All who wanted to shoot had to pay a certain amount for each chance. This sport is still a favorite one in the country, both with the whites and the blacks, but not so much so as before the war.

The negroes, as all ignorant people, are very superstitious. The celebrated sect of the Voudoux, of which so much has been said, was the best proof of the credulity and superstition of the blacks, as well as of the barbarity of their nature.

The idea of incantation and of charms for good or evil is as old as the world. In Virgil's eighth eclogue we all remember the words of Alphesibeus:

"Terna tibi hae primum triplici diversa colore
Licia circumdo, terque hae alta ria circ um
Effigiem duco; numero deus impare gaudet."

In the Middle Ages astrology was considered a science, and sorcery was admitted. It is well known that when John the Fearless of Burgundy killed Louis of Orleans, the celebrated theologian...