

2. Cotton Blossom

SCENE ONE

Opening Scene

(The levee at Natchez on the Mississippi. About 1890. The towboat "Mollie Able" is up R. The show boat "Cotton Blossom" is up L. STEVEDORES are piling up bales of cotton at R. WINDY an old pilot, stands on the Texas deck of the towboat, smoking his pipe and looking on)

STEVEDORES

Niggers all work on de Mississippi
Niggers all work while de white folks play-
Loadin' up boats wid de bales of cotton,
Gittin' no rest till de Judgement Day.

GALS

Git yo'self a bran' new gal,
A lovin' baby who's de apple of yo' eye.
Coal black Rose or high brown Sal,
Dey all kin cook de sparrer grass an' chicken pie!

STEVEDORES

Hey! Git along, git along,
Git along, git along.
Hey! Git along, git along,
git along, hey!

STEVEDORES & GALS

Niggers all work on de Mississippi
Niggers all work while de white folks play -
Loadin' up boats wid de bales of cotton,
Gittin' no rest till de Judgement Day!
Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,
Love to see you growin' free.
When dey pack you on de levee
You're a heavy load to me!
Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,
Love to see you growin' wild!
On de levee you're too heavy
For dis po' black child!

(STEVE enters from the show boat and places a picture frame left of the gangplank. PETE, the engineer, enters from the towboat. Coming down C., PETE and STEVE exchange dirty looks. STEVEDORES work upstage to a pile of bales. GALS sit around on bulkhead, leaving downstage clear. QUEENIE, the cook, waddles on from market with a basket of provisions on her head)

QUEENIE

Lordy, mah feet shure is killin' me dis mornin'.

STEVE

Mornin', Queenie.

QUEENIE

Mornin', Mars' Steve.

PETE

Hey there, nigger! Where y'all git dat brooch you're wearin'?

(WINDY takes his pipe from his mouth)

QUEENIE

You mean dis scrumptious piece of jewelry?

PETE

Where'd you git it, nigger?

QUEENIE

It was give to me.

PETE

Who give it to you?

QUEENIE

Ax me no questions 'n ah'll tell y' no lies!

(to herself, as she walks towards the show boat)

Dat man! Axin' me where ah gets mah jewelry! Hm!

(QUEENIE exits. STEVE scowls at PETE and exits after QUEENIE.

PETE plunges his hand in his pockets and goes upstage. WINDY replaces his pipe in his mouth)

STEVEDORES & GALS

Niggers all work on de Mississippi,

Niggers all work while de white folks play

Loadin' up boat wid de bales of cotton,

Gittin' no rest till de Judgement Day!

Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,

Love to see you growin' wild!

On de levee you're too heavy

For dis po' black child!

(A group of dainty, beruffled MINCING MISSES enter from R. and L.

They go over to the pictures. The GALS move upstage again, imitating the white girls' mincing gait)

1st MINCING MISS

The center picture is Julia LaVerne, the leading lady.

(PETE turns and slouches downstage)

2nd MINCING MISS

My - isn't she beautiful!

(The local BEAUX make a dashing entrance from stage right,

like the young bucks they are - they stand off and ogle the

demure maidens. PETE hangs around the picture frames as the

GIRLS turn to be demure for the BEAUX)

BEAUX

What a pretty bevy!

Ah! There! Ah, there!

The fairest of the fair

To Southern beauty

Ev'ry beau must bow!

MINCING MISSES

How you love to flatter,

You rogues! You rogues!

(confiding to audience)

Oh, goodness gracious!

They're so flirtatious!

(to Beaux)

You naughty fellows

Seem to think you please us

When you tease us

So!

You're a reckless lot

We know!

BEAUX

Little women don't be timorous!

You will find acting thus

Only makes a man more bold!

These are not the days of old!

BEAUX

(each grabbing a Mincing One)

See! The show boat!

That's old Captain Andy's "Cotton Blossom,"

Will you go?

Let me take you to the show!

GALS

H'yah! Look live dere!

GIRLS

Twil1 be delightful,

But to rightfully accept I have to make Mama

Get permission from Papa!

STEVEDORES & GALS

H'yah! Look live dere!

GIRLS & BOYS

(reading handbills)

Captain Andy has gathered a troupe

In the greatest of drammers and jolly comedies.

Stephen Baker, the handsomest leading man

And beautiful Julie LaVerne as well!

STEVEDORES & GALS

Ho! Ho! Ho!

BOYS & GIRLS

"Cotton Blossom,"

Captain Andy's floating show!

Thrills and laughter,

Concert after,

Ev'rybody's sure to go!

"Cotton Blossom," "Cotton Blossom,"

Captain Andy's floating show!

Thrills and laughter,

Concert after,

Get your girl and go!

STEVEDORES & GALS

Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,

Love to see you growin' free,

When dey pack you on de levee

You're a heavy load to me.

Cotton blossom, cotton blossom,

Love to see you growin' wild!

On de levee

You're too heavy

For dis po' black child!

BOYS & GIRLS

So get your girl and go!

STEVEDORES & GALS

So let dat whistle blow!