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February, 1847, by Albert James Pickett**

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FEBRUARY, 1847 \*\*\*

# **EIGHT DAYS IN NEW-ORLEANS**

**IN FEBRUARY,**

**1847,**

**BY ALBERT J. PICKETT,**

**OF MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA.**

## **NOTE.**

The following Sketches of New-Orleans originally appeared in the Alabama Journal of Montgomery. For the purpose of presenting them to the perusal of his friends at a distance, the author has caused them to be embodied in the present form.

These pages were written from the recollection of only a few days sojourn in the Crescent City. The period allowed the author of collecting information was very limited. It is also his first essay at descriptive and historic writing. The author fondly indulges the hope that these things will be taken into consideration by his charitable friends, and will cause them to cast the veil of compassion over imperfections.

MAY 18<sup>TH</sup>, 1847.

## CHAPTER I.

### A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE DISCOVERY OF THE MISSISSIPPI.— DESOTO'S EXPEDITION,—HIS DEATH,—THE FATE OF HIS PARTY, ETC.

On a recent excursion to the Crescent City, I collected some facts and statistics which are respectfully submitted to the public. In attempting a description of this magnificent emporium of commerce, as it exists at the present day, I will briefly allude to its early history, commencing with the great "drain" of the western world, which is destined to bear upon its turbid bosom half the commerce of the American Union.

Three hundred and thirty years ago the noble Mississippi rolled its waters to its ocean home in native silence and grandeur, hitherto seen by no European eye, when suddenly one morning HERNANDEZ DE SOTO stood upon its banks. How awfully sublime must have been the contemplations of that man. He had discovered it a thousand miles from its mouth, two thousand from its source. No one had ever seen its rise,—no one its exit into the ocean. But it was reserved for the Governor of Cuba to find it through a wilderness, at a place and under circumstances the most thrilling and romantic. Four years previous to this discovery, he embarked for Florida with an outfit of a thousand men, with arms, munitions, priests and chains. His object, the conquest of a country teeming with wealth and splendour, like that which his former Captain found in the conquest of Peru. He penetrated Florida, Georgia and Alabama, finding no gold—no splendid Montezuma—nothing but savages breathing out an innocent and monotonous existence, inhabiting a country in a state of nature alone. After hardships the most unheard of, disappointments the most mortifying, the proud and enterprising De Soto threw his troops into Mauville, a large town near the confluence of the Bigby and Alabama. Here a most disastrous battle attended him, for although he routed the enemy in the death of thousands, he lost all his baggage and most of his horses. His fleet then lay at the bay of Pensacola, awaiting his arrival, and by reaching it in a few days he could have terminated his disastrous campaign. But the proud Castilian was not to be subdued by misfortunes and disappointments. He determined to find just such a country as he had constantly sought. Fired with fresh intelligence of the magnificence of the people who lived near the "Father of Waters," we find him pursuing his expedition in a sunset direction in company with his jaded, reduced and dispirited force, with a fortitude and courage which none but a Spaniard knows. He surmounted innumerable difficulties, which both nature and man interposed to arrest his progress; and finally, through a dense and almost endless forest, he suddenly gratified his vision with the majestic Mississippi. Crossing over the great river, he toiled in the prairies and swamps of Arkansas and Missouri, until wants and vicissitudes of the most trying character impelled his return. Arrived once more upon its virgin banks, his lofty spirit fell, and brooding over his fallen fortunes, a fever terminated his existence far from home, in the American wilds!

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Just before he passed from life, he caused his officers to surround his bed, appointed Luis de Muscoso his successor in command, and bid them an affectionate farewell. He also had his soldiers introduced by twenties, endeavored to cheer their drooping spirits, (who were now inconsolable at the loss of their great leader,) exhorted them to keep together, share each other's burthens, and endeavor to reach their native country, which he was never to see. To conceal his body from the brutalities of the natives, it was encased in an oaken trough, and silently plunged in the middle of the channel, at the dark and gloomy hour of midnight, and the muddy waters washed the bones of one of the noblest sons of Spain!<sup>A</sup> Thus was the Adelantado of Florida the first to behold the Mississippi river; the first to close his eyes in death upon it, and the first to find a grave in its deep and turbid channel.

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Muscoso and his remaining troops, now annoyed by the natives, by hunger and disease, built some vessels, and dropped down the river, in the hopes of reaching Cuba. And three hundred and thirty years ago these adventurers silently floated by the spot where New Orleans now stands! No hand had ever felled a tree,—no civilized voice had ever echoed among the forests of that place. But nature, eternal nature, ruled supreme. The poor fellows went out at one of the mouths of the river, and a tremendous tornado encountered and dispersed them. But few lived to reach home.

The several journalists of that expedition describe the Mississippi river of that day exactly as it is at present, in respect to several things, "a river so broad that if a man stood still on the other side, it could not be discerned whether he was a man or not. The channel was very deep, the current strong, the water muddy and filled with floating trees."

A long century was added to the age of the world before the Mississippi river was beheld again by civilized man. Col. Woods, of the Virginia colony next saw it, and crossed it. Marquette, in 1673, started at its source, and came down as far as the Arkansas. The Chevalier de la Salle, some years after this, commenced near its head and descended to the gulf, with seventeen men. Having returned to France, he fitted out an expedition, but his vessels were unable to find the river. He made another voyage, but could not find its mouth. Iberville was the first voyager that ever entered this river from the ocean, and he erected a fort at Biloxi, near Mobile, in 1697.

See "Monette's History of the Mississippi Valley," vol. I., from pp. 16, to 64. This learned man and eloquent writer has given a most interesting account of De Soto's expedition. His work is recently published, and should be extensively read by the people of the south-west particularly.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF NEW ORLEANS,—OF BILOXI,—NATCHEZ.— GOVERNOR IBERVILLE AND HIS SUCCESSOR.

Iberville, the father of Louisiana, having formed a settlement at Biloxi, by erecting a fort and leaving a garrison, proceeded up the river, and established a town at Natchez, on that splendid bluff which towers above the angry waters of the Mississippi. On his departure for France, his brother, Bienville, was made Governor, and he appears to have been anxious to procure a more eligible site for the capitol of the province than either of those which his predecessor had selected. Dropping down the vast current he most patiently made a thorough examination of the banks from Natchez to the gulf, and finally determined to make the Crescent Bend the future capitol. His judgment was good, although the visitor frequently wonders why the city was not placed nearer the ocean. It was, perhaps, the most elevated spot convenient to the outlet, and was certainly nearest Lake Pontchartrain, upon the commerce of which the founder no doubt made reasonable calculations. But whether the settlement of New Orleans was the result of accident, as many suppose, or of well conceived design, it matters but little. It was selected by Bienville, and he threw fifty able men forthwith into the forest to felling the trees, exactly one hundred and twenty-nine years ago! In defiance of the united opposition of Natchez and Biloxi, the Governor pushed forward his work. It appears that in the very outset this place encountered difficulties of various kinds, which thwarted its prosperity for nearly a century. While only one year old, the Mississippi rising to an unprecedented height, swept away every vestige of human innovation. Being totally abandoned for three years, it was again settled by Delorme, "who acting under positive instructions, removed to it the government establishment." In the following year it contained about one hundred houses scattered in all directions, with no regularity, with no dyke to protect them from the rolling waves, no fort to repel the incursions of the Indians; without the smallest luxury and comfort, without society, without religious enjoyment, reduced by disease and assailed by the venom of every tropical insect, did these enterprising sons of France struggle for existence and a town. No sooner were they left to some kind of repose than they were visited by a dreadful tornado, which blew away their houses, destroyed their shipping, and ruined their gardens. But New Orleans has risen above all disasters and opposition. One of the most remarkable characters of that day was Governor Bienville. He must have been a determined man, with great good sense, and had the confidence of the citizens. He was made Governor three times, and for many years exercised a salutary influence over the destinies of Louisiana.

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A few years after this period, a body of Jesuit priests and nuns arriving from France, gave a new impetus to the town. They made a most fortunate location, and their property greatly augmented in value. But these pious adventurers were also to be disturbed. The Pope of Rome not only expelled that sect from Europe, but pursued them in American exile. Their property in New Orleans, variously estimated to be worth now, from fifteen to thirty millions, was then confiscated and sold for one hundred and eighty thousand dollars. These unfortunate people still further had to satisfy the tyrannical decree to the full measure, by leaving Louisiana! Fifty-one years elapsed from the settlement of Orleans until it was visited by that dreadful disease, the yellow fever, and we may ascribe that affliction, as we may do many other entailed evils, to the English. They introduced it by importing to Louisiana a cargo of slaves; and now these philanthropists would be willing to see our nation exterminated, and our throats cut, because we are pursuing a system of mild domestic slavery, when they imposed it upon us in the most heartless and aggravated form, by kidnapping and robbery!!! But I am digressing.

To terminate this very rapid and imperfect sketch of the history of Orleans, I will introduce a brief summary, with the remark, however, that the Louisianians had every impediment thrown in their way in endeavoring to become a prosperous and happy people. They were handed over by the French government to a chartered company, who afterwards returned them to the government. They were then sold to Spain, and a remorseless governor of that nation introduced a system of plunder and oppression. Afterwards Spain ceded this country again to France, and France sold it to the United States for fifteen millions of dollars! A sum that startled many of our economical republicans of that day, but which, compared to the advantages of the purchase and the revenue since derived, was a most paltry sum. In 1778 a fire consumed nine hundred houses. In 1785, seventy years after it was founded, the population was only four thousand seven hundred and eighty. In 1791 the first comedians arrived from Cape Francois. In 1800 Spain receded the province to France, and it was purchased by the United States in 1803. In 1810 the population amounted to twenty-four thousand five hundred and fifty-two souls: Ever since the cession to the United States the strides of the city of Orleans have been rapid, and her march onward!

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## CHAPTER III.

### GEN. JACKSON.—THE BATTLE OF NEW ORLEANS.—THE POPULATION AT THAT DAY, AND OTHER THINGS ABOUT THE CRESCENT CITY.

The most extraordinary man that ever lived in any age or country, was Gen. ANDREW JACKSON. From youth to the last moments of his life, he swayed the minds and actions of men beyond anything on record. Buonaparte, with all his power, was at last subdued, and died at St. Helena as harmless as a child. The venerated "Father of his country" lost much of his popularity and influence after he retired to Mount Vernon.<sup>A</sup> Nearly all the great men of whom we read, lose to some extent their position towards the close of their lives. But Gen. Jackson retained his influence so long as the breath remained in his body. While retired at the Hermitage, divested of all official power, with a weak and attenuated frame, bowed down with disease and tottering to decay; whilst the last light was flickering in that once refulgent lamp, did this masterly and commanding man dictate the nomination of a President, and achieve, through his expressed opinions, the annexation of Texas!! This is mentioned, not by way of political boasting, but to show the powerful influence he exerted over the destinies of this Union, even when the hand of death was upon him! It was the efforts of this distinguished Captain which saved New Orleans in 1814. No sooner had that devoted city become free from that despotic and ruinous policy which had for a century crippled its energies, no sooner had it been made a member of our family, than the ruthless hand of fate was down upon it once more. To sack it, to dishonor it, there were ready encamped on its outskirts eight thousand chosen troops, who had fought under Wellington in the peninsular war; veterans in service, and the flower of the British army.

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General Jackson reached Orleans under the most embarrassing circumstances. His troops numbered only four thousand, as undisciplined as children of the forest could be, with few arms and but little ammunition. The population of the city was made up principally of French, Spanish and Dutch, who knew not our laws, who were aliens in feelings, who had never heard of Jackson, but who looked upon his raw troops with doubt and dismay, while the splendid numbers in the British lines over-awed and intimidated them. Among this mixed and doubtful mass, it was the aim of the American commander to inspire confidence and make them stand by him. In the darkest hour of his deepest embarrassment, when mutiny and riot stalked over the infatuated city, when much of the talent and influence of Orleans was at that moment employed in overtures to the enemy; in that dark hour that tortured the commander's soul, a large deputation of French ladies implored him with tears and lamentations, to surrender the city and save their lives and persons. When informed by his aid, Col. Livingston, who was familiar with the French language, the nature of their visit, this great native Captain, this commander by the creation of his Maker, rose in his stirrups and said, in a loud voice, "Tell them, Colonel, to rely upon me, I will protect them, defend the city, and save it!" Jackson carried out his bold declaration, which seemed groundless when made. No man but him had nerve enough to make, and none to demonstrate it under such unfavorable circumstances. In a conversation with the Duke of Wellington, not long since, that distinguished soldier remarked to Col. King, our Ex-Minister to France, "that taking into account the disparagement of the opposite forces and the number slain on either side, the battle of New Orleans was unrivalled in the annals of warfare." Only seven Americans paid the debt of war, while the bloody field was covered with two thousand sons of Britain!

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After the defeated troops had embarked for England, and peace being declared, the Crescent City, relieved of many of its trammels, made the most mastodon strides to wealth and fame. Her population increased rapidly in despite of the yellow fever, which annually swept off thousands. As disease made fearful lanes through the ranks, the avenues were immediately filled by fresh pioneers invited by the inducements which her commerce held out. The population of New Orleans in 1810 was 17,242; in 1820, 27,126; in 1830, 46,310; in 1840, 102,193; and at this time it amounts to 170,000 souls! In regard to her population Orleans is not unlike Astor with his money. Each have arrived at that prosperous state when it requires but a few years to double their numbers.

When Napoleon sold Louisiana to Mr. Jefferson, the condition of Orleans was poor indeed compared to its present imposing and magnificent appearance. Norman, a writer, says "at that time the public property transferred to us consisted of two large brick stores, a government house, a military hospital, powder magazine on the opposite side of the river, an old frame custom-house, extensive barracks below those now remaining, five miserable redoubts, a town-house, market-house, assembly room and prison, a cathedral and presbytery, and a charity hospital." The Second Municipality, which now contains a population of fifty thousand, with lofty and compact buildings, the centre of trade and enterprise, where now towers the conspicuous St. Charles and comfortable Verandah, was not many years since a sugar plantation belonging to Monsieur Gravier. In 1823, the enterprising Caldwell erected the American theatre on a portion of this field, and was considered a madman for building in the country. The lovers of the drama could only reach the theatre upon the gunwales of flat-bottomed boats, but how soon was this isolated building surrounded by wealth, beauty and fashion!

**Footnote A:** [\(return\)](#)

Some of the author's friends find fault with the contrast here made in regard to the

influence which Gen. Washington and Jackson exerted over the people of the United States, and they say that I have ranked Jackson before the "Father of his Country," for true greatness. Now, while I agree with them that Washington was the purest and greatest man that ever lived, I say that Jackson was the most brilliant of the two, and exercised more influence over the people than any other man that ever lived!

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## CHAPTER IV.

### NEW ORLEANS IN 1847.—ITS EXTENT AND SITUATION.—LAFAYETTE.—CARROLLTON, ETC.

Omitting an account of the many deadly quarrels which were constantly fermented with the Indians—of the battles of the Louisianas with the Spanish and English—of the horrible and unparalleled murder of twelve of the principle citizens of Orleans, by the order of O'Reilly, the Spanish commandant, who had invited them to one of his banquets—nay, of a thousand interesting things connected with the history of this romantic city, which could not have been embodied in these hasty numbers, I proceed to consider its present condition and prospects.

The bend of land which sustains all this magnificence and wealth, is very much like that opposite Montgomery. A citizen acquainted with our localities, may very justly imagine New Orleans to commence on the west side of the Alabama, below Jackson's Ferry, continuing on by Bibb's gate and terminating just below town.—Opposite old Alabama town he may suppose the city of Lafayette to commence, then, further on, the town of Bouligny, and then Carrollton.

The city proper is, by the river, five miles long, and will average three-fourths of a mile wide. Then commences Lafayette, which extends up the river two miles further, and, as they are so intimately connected and associated, it all may be considered as one vast place, seven miles in extent. After a succession of splendid mansions, farms, and other houses, the whole resembling a continued village, Bouligny and Carrollton unite with the chain of commerce. A century from this date, Orleans, like London, will reach out her arms and encompass within her limits every town and hamlet for miles around. As London swallowed up Westminster, Southwark, Lambeth, and Chelsea, so will Lafayette, Bouligny, Carrollton, and others adjacent be lost in her future immensity. It will then all be New Orleans, the largest city on the continent of America, and perhaps in the world.

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The foundation consists of a plain inclining from the river, and when looking from the St. Charles to the Levee, the singular spectacle is presented of ships and boats standing raised up before you, and the little rivulet in the street, just after a rain, running in a smart current by you and losing itself in the swamp, as if afraid to mingle with the "Father of Waters." As health and cleanliness are greatly promoted by this gentle inclined plain, it is most fortunate that Orleans is so situated. In ancient times the inhabitants were either amphibious or lived at great sufferance from the floods. But now they are protected by the Levee. A stranger however, upon the impulse, would think that protection uncertain. But if he would reflect for a moment, he would wisely determine that it requires not a very strong dyke to pen up the surplus water during a freshet, for the main current is confined by immense banks reaching far, far below. To render my position more palpable, suppose the river should suddenly dry up, Orleans would then be standing on a bluff three hundred and sixty feet high, for that is the depth of the river opposite the city. The foundation, a low alluvial bottom, has been much improved by draining and filling up. No building is erected without the foundation is made firm by piling with long logs driven down with immense force; but very massive buildings, even with this precaution, will continue to settle. It is said that the St. Charles is two feet lower now than formerly. Three great streets divide the city into municipalities. Between Canal and Esplanade, lies the first Municipality, between Esplanade and the lowest street on the outskirts, far down the river, lies the Third Municipality; and between Canal and Felicity, is the Second. They are wide and beautiful streets, running perfectly straight from the river to the farthest back limits, serving not only as boundaries for municipal purposes, but absolutely separating different races. The everlasting Yankees, with their shrewdness and enterprize, inhabit the Second Municipality; the wealthy French and Spanish fill up the First, with a large mixture of native Americans; but the Third Municipality is entirely French and Spanish. It was impossible for me to ascertain how many streets run through the city, but there are many. No fault can be found of the topography of Orleans, and it is strange that the regularity of the thoroughfares should have been so well preserved under all the changes and vicissitudes through which she has passed. Everything is of interest here; even the names of the streets attract the notice of the visitor; and as he rides along, he may trace the different races who have formed and named them. He will pass through streets which the descendants of Spain first laid out, such as Esplanade, Ferdinand Casacalvo, Morales, and Perdido. Again his eye will glance at French names, such as Josephine, Bourbon, Chartres, Notre Dame, Dauphin, and Toulouse. Then there are various streets bearing the names of all the saints known to the Catholic devotee. In respect to names very little of Orleans has been Americanized. Occasionally you will meet with such names as Commerce and Canal, which doubtless sound very vulgar to the the French. But the master street of the world is the great Levee, usually from two to five hundred feet wide from the river to the buildings. From this great thoroughfare all others diverge, and it is the greatest

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mart of its extent in the world. While I was there, THIRTY-SIX THOUSAND BARRELS OF FLOUR were sold in a few hours! And while this astonishing transfer was going on, thousands of other produce and commodities were changing hands. Many years ago it was used as a fashionable promenade to enjoy the breezes of the Mississippi. Commerce has changed its character entirely. Now scenes of the most intensely exciting character are upon the Levee. The very air howls with an eternal din and noise. Drays and wagons of all descriptions, loaded with the produce of every clime, move on continually in one unbroken chain. Ships from every nation, whose masts tower aloft in a dense forest for five miles, with thirty thousand sailors and stevedores, busily loading and unloading, stand in your view. Steamboats, and crafts of every make and shape, from every river which empties into the Mississippi, are here mingling in the strife of commerce. The rough and homely produce of the far and cold Iowa—of the distant Wisconsin—of the black and stormy Northern Lakes, is here thrown upon the Levee in hurry and confusion mingled and mixed with the sweets and luxuries of the sunny tropics. Here, too, the various races of men astonish one. The Kentuckian with an honest and ruddy face; the Yankee with his shrewd and enterprising look; the rich planter of Mississippi; the elegant and chivalrous Carolinian; the sensible and honest citizen from the "Old North State;" the lively, fine-looking, and smart Georgian; the talented and handsome Virginian; the swarthy creole sugar planter; the rough hunter from the gorges of the Rocky Mountains—all natives of the Union—all freemen alike—all meet upon this common ground of LIBERTY and COMMERCE. And this picture must be carried out with the children of *adoption*. Here is also the dark and mysterious Spaniard puffing his cigar and sending up volumes of smoke through his black imperials; the gay and frisky Frenchman; the sturdy Dutchman; the son of Erin, and the cunning Jew. A trite adage says that "it takes all kinds of people to make a world;" verily, then, the Levee is a world.

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## CHAPTER V.

### THE CATHEDRAL.—ORPHAN'S ASYLUM.—THE SISTERS OF CHARITY, ETC.

Immediately opposite the Place d'Armes, and fronting the levee, rises in solemn grandeur, the celebrated Cathedral. It must be very old, and was said to have been erected through the zealous munificence of Don Andre Almonoster. Connected with the building is a story curious and romantic, and from all I could learn no less true. When Don Andre died, he exacted of the priesthood the positive injunction, that every Saturday evening prayer should be offered up for his soul, and in default thereof the property was to pass into other hands. From that day to this, in fulfilling these extraordinary stipulations, not a solitary omission has been made. And as you stand about sundown at the Cathedral, you will hear the doleful bell mournfully recalling the memory of the departed Don Andre! I was there at that hour. The dark and frowning church towered far above me. The deep-toned bell echoed its mournful sound until twilight began to mantle the city with her sable curtains. I thought of Don Andre. I thought of his injunction; I thought of his soul, and I turned from the consecrated place with feelings the most singular and solemn.

The edifice in appearance is grand, antique and venerable. Judging from the disregard to repairs, I should conclude it was designed for it to remain so. Built of brick, with very thick walls and stuccoed, it nevertheless looks black and dingy, all which assists to make it more imposing to the stranger. A large door in the middle will let you into the ante-chamber, and from this by a door on the right and one on the left, you enter the immense chapel. Passing by two large marble basins filled with holy water, where devotees sprinkle and cross themselves upon entering; you are by the side of the "confession boxes." There are three on each side, each about ten feet high and eight feet square, with three apartments or stalls; the middle one for the priest, the other two for those wishing to lay down their burden of sins. The priest standing in the middle hears an account of the transgressions of the one on the right through a small grated window, while the one on the left is kneeling until his fellow-sufferer gets through. All that can be heard is a low whispering and murmuring throughout all the confessional boxes, where six priests are continually officiating. When the penitent is dismissed by the holy father, he appears to be a happier man, and on coming out of the box immediately kneels before the altar, and another person takes his place.

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This system of confession is often denounced; I do not pretend to defend it, but there is much excuse for it. What Protestant is there who in deep trouble, does not find relief in disclosing those troubles to an old confidential person in whom he can confide, and who gives him good advice? Are not the cases somewhat similar?

I watched and listened attentively to see or hear the settlement between the father and sinner, but I made no discoveries and heard no money jingle. All classes unite here in the services, and as you cast your eye over this devout assembly, the elegant young lady may be seen kneeling on the hard stone floor, beside the negro or mulatto. And still further on, the well-attired gentleman prostrates himself with the ragged beggar in worshipping the same common and universal God! All appear to be deeply engaged, and in no church can there be found so much profound silence, awe and veneration. The three altars are so far distant that the fathers are seldom heard, and the worshippers are governed in their devotions by the ringing of bells. There is nothing very

imposing in the interior, some very fine paintings representing incidents in the Bible, hang around the walls.

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In regard to the public buildings, "there is probably no city in the United States that has so many benevolent institutions as New Orleans, in proportion to its population. Certainly it has not an equal in those voluntary contributions which are sometimes required to answer the immediate calls of distress. Here assembled a mixed multitude, composed of almost every nation and tongue, from the frozen to the torrid zone, and whether it be the sympathy of strangers, or the influence of the "sunny south," their purses open and their hearts respond like those of brothers, to the demands of charity."<sup>A</sup>

The Female Orphan Asylum is a fine building on the corner of Camp and Prytania streets, and the visitor who has never seen any thing of the kind will be well repaid by an examination. He will be met at the door by one of the Sisters of Charity, (known as Nuns,) a lady about forty years old, rather stooping, but mild and holy, dressed in black, with a hood of the same, partly covering her head. Her dress is gathered around her waist by a black belt made of bombazine, to which is attached some keys and Catholic relics. She beckons you in the house, and proceeds on before you with a gait as noiseless and nimble as a cat. The first room you enter is the school for small girls, numbering about fifty, who all rise simultaneously on your entrance. You then pass into a room of fifty girls, generally from twelve to sixteen years of age. Here they exhibit specimens of needle work, painting, etc., all well executed. These schools are under the especial care and management of the good sisters, and nothing can exceed the orderly, neat and well-behaved deportment of the girls. We next visited the kitchen; if a clean, neat, ungreased apartment can bear that appellation. There we found the Lady Superior up to her elbows in dough, and busily assisted by several charity girls in cooking dinner. She was a fat, healthy looking lady, about forty years old, and looked like she had more of the good things of this life at her command, or rather appeared to have made better use of them than her sisters. The dining-room is well arranged, so are the dormitories, which are composed of four spacious rooms, very airy and commodious. Each school has its dormitory, and every girl has a separate bed, neat and comfortable, exactly corresponding to her size and length. Just as the good sister (our conductress) opened the door of the chapel, she dropped upon her knees and repeated something to herself. On opening the door, we saw another sister "solitary and alone," kneeling, rising and prostrating herself before the altar. She was deeply engaged in her devotions, and never once turned her head to look at us.

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Being struck with the infinite degree of trouble which the Sisters must daily encounter in nursing and rearing over one hundred orphan girls from a month to sixteen years of age, I alluded to it, she replied, "That is what we are here for. We give up the allurements of the world to devote our days exclusively in doing good, and what you call troubles are our pleasures."

This immense building, with four school rooms, four dormitories, dining rooms and many other apartments, are all under the management of seven Sisters, who attend to every thing, even wash and scour the floors, dress and teach the children. But the most interesting apartment was that of the infants. Here we found about thirty children about four years old, clean and well dressed and sending up their innocent and sweet little voices in singing praises to God! It was almost impossible to notice any difference in the sizes of this interesting little circle. Not one of the little sweets had father or mother alive. No one could look upon them with feelings other than those of pity and love. Like so many young birds holding their little heads above their nests, would these sweet little children ask us, "Have you any candy for me?"

**Footnote A:** [\(return\)](#)

"Norman's New Orleans and Environs."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE UNITED STATES BRANCH MINT.—THE WATER WORKS.—MARKETS, ETC.

The stranger should never leave the Crescent City without seeing the Mint, where money is made as if by magic. It is situated in the old Jackson square, between Barrack and Esplanade streets. It is a fine edifice, having a projecting centre building with two exterior wings. The walls are strong and thick, plastered in good imitation of granite; the length, 282 by 108 deep. This mint was commenced in 1835, and the whole cost of building, fencing, machinery, and furniture, was \$300,000. The yard is handsomely enclosed with iron railing on a granite basement. You enter at a fine gate, and passing through the first court over a block wood pavement, you ascend a flight of granite steps, and enter in a large passage where sets a pleasant old gentleman, who requires you to register your name and residence. This being done, he leads the visitor among the furnaces where the smelting is performed; then in a large room where the metal is formed into bars of various sizes by running it through powerful iron rollers. These bars are then cut out into coins from the size of half a dime to a doubloon, by means of a machine something like a punch, but which moves with great regularity, and power, and despatch. The polite old gentleman then leads you down below, and in a remote wing stands a man solitary and alone by the side of the most splendid and beautiful machinery which ever was made, who puts the cut pieces of coin by

twenties into a tube which fits them exactly, and the machinery stamps them one by one, with an eagle on one side, and the Goddess of Liberty on the other. The untiring machinery goes up and down, and stamps according to different sizes, from eighty to one hundred and fifty to the minute! and they are received into a beautiful silver vase below. Before the coin is brought into this finishing room, it is not counted, but weighed; and after it is here impressed, it is then weighed again. In 1838, the mint coined only the amount \$40,243; 1839, \$263,650; 1840, \$915,600; 1841, \$642,200; 1842, \$1,275,750; 1843, \$4,568,000; 1844, \$4,208,500; 1845, \$1,473,000. The falling off during the last year mentioned, has been owing to the state of our foreign exchanges being against the interests of the mint.

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The chief work has consisted in the new coinage of old Spanish dollars, French, German, and English coins. The unwrought gold is chiefly from Alabama, and is greatly on the increase. Nothing is charged for the coinage of pure metal. The expenses are borne by the Government, and are annually about fifty-two thousand dollars.

A large portion of the city of Orleans is watered from the large reservoir in the upper part of the second municipality. An iron pipe eighteen inches in diameter, is placed in the river twelve feet below the surface, and through this, great columns of water are continually ascending by sixty horse power force-pumps, situated in brick buildings on Tchoupitoulas and Richard streets. The water is carried under ground for two hundred yards further, and forced up the reservoir alluded to, which has been made in the manner of an artificial mound, from the sediment of the river. The reservoir is built on the top of the mound, and is about three hundred feet square, walled with brick and cemented, with four apartments in it, each having about five feet live water in them. Every month or two, the water is drawn off from two of them, and the deposit formed six inches deep is scraped off, and the water let in again. A pavilion in the middle of the reservoir affords a pleasant seat, and affords you a commanding view of the immediate neighborhood. The pumps force up 2,280 gallons per minute. The cost of the works is about \$1,490,000; expenses, \$17,000; revenue, \$75000. The water is distributed through cast iron pipes from sixteen to six inches in diameter, and is sold at the rate of three dollars per head. The daily consumption is near one million three hundred thousand gallons.

The city of New Orleans is more abundantly blessed, according to its extent, with good markets than any city on the continent. They may be found in all directions, affording a great abundance of the best that the whole Mississippi valley and the far western plains of Texas can produce.

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The great attraction to visitors is the celebrated FRENCH MARKET. The French, English, Spanish, Dutch, Swiss and Italian languages are employed here in trading, buying, and selling, and a kind of mongrel mixture and jumble of each and all is spoken by the lower class in the market. It lies on the Levee, admirably situated, and extends a long ways. All is hurry, jostling and confusion; the very drums of your ears ache with the eternal jargon—with the cursing, swearing, whooping, hollowing, cavilling, laughing, crying, cheating and stealing, which are all in full blast. The screams of parrots, the music of birds, the barking of dogs, the cries of oystermen, the screams of children, the Dutch girl's organ, the French negro humming a piece of the last opera—all are going it, increasing the novelty of this novel place. The people engaged in building the tower of Babel, whose language was confounded and confused for their presumptuous undertaking, never made a worse jargon or inflicted a greater blow upon harmonious sounds, than is to be found here. While looking around at the various commodities exposed for sale, I saw scores of opossums, coons, crawfish, eels, minks, and frogs, brought there to satiate the fancy appetite of the French. But what was my astonishment on seeing a basket of five fat *puppies* about six weeks old, which the owner informed me were for French gentlemen to eat! In charity for the Frenchman's taste, I have sometimes thought the vender of these little barkers was palming a quiz upon me. I hope so.

This is an unrivalled market. Every fish that swims in the Gulf, every bird that flies in the air, or swims upon the wave, every quadruped that scours the plains or skulks in dens, which are usually eaten by men, can be had in great abundance. All kinds of grain and roots raised in the up country, all the luxuries of the tropics, are here. The elk of the Osage river, the buffalo of the Yellowstone, venison of Louisiana, and the bear of Mississippi, fill the list, and contribute in pandering to the appetites of luxurious citizens.

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## CHAPTER VII.

### OTHER PUBLIC BUILDINGS.—THE FRENCH THEATRE.—THE CARNIVAL. —THE ST. CHARLES, ETC.

I cannot undertake to describe the numerous public buildings which adorn the city of Orleans. I will merely observe that the stranger would be much entertained and instructed by visiting the Gas Works, the Chapel of the Ursulines, St. Patrick's Church, the Cypress Grove Cemetery, and other beautiful resting places of the dead; the Charity Hospital, the Maison de Sante, the Marine Hospital, the Municipal Hall, the Workhouses in the First and Second Municipalities, the City Prisons, the City Hall, the Orleans Cotton Press, the Commercial Exchange, the Merchants'



Exchange, the Medical College, and many others too numerous to mention.

A very great object of attraction at night is the Orleans Theatre, the most conveniently arranged building, perhaps in America. With a very commodious and elevated pit, with grated boxes on the sides for persons desiring to be private, two tiers of boxes and one of galleries above, the whole is so admirably arranged as to allow spectators every privilege of seeing and hearing. The pieces performed at this novel theatre are generally well selected operas, and although the acting is in the French language, yet the pantomime is so excellent and the costume so much to the life, that it requires but little practice on the part of the Alabamian to unravel the plot and become intensely engaged. Every kind of instrument necessary in producing sweet and harmonious sounds, is to be found in the orchestra, and the music is alternately melodious and grand. The dress circle surpasses all others for the beauty and fashion which it contains. It literally glows with diamonds and sparkling eyes!! In front are seated ladies most magnificently dressed, from all parts of the south and west, and among them sat the beautiful daughter of the hero of Mexico! As the child of the captor of Monterey, she was the object of attraction throughout the dress circle, and doubtless was loved by all for the noble deeds of her brave and patriotic father. On the sides of the circle are beauties still more richly attired, if possible, but darker and more effeminate than the former, but pretty and sweet beyond all description. They are the daughters of Louisianians!

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No theatre in the world can be better patronised. Every night it is crowded with fashionable audiences. For weeks together seats at an extravagant price are engaged far ahead. In going away from this little world of gaiety and amusement, the visitor may justly conclude that Frenchmen never get old! Here are men portly in appearance and elegant in manners, whose heads are "silvered o'er with many winters," apparently sixty and seventy years of age, entering into the merits of the play with spirits as gay and ardent as the young man of twenty. At the conclusion of a fine act, they will rise upon their feet and shout with rapture and delight, "bravo! bravo!! bravissimo!!! c'est bien!!!!"

I shall continue to speak more frequently of the French and Spanish population than of the native Americans, because, being the more novel and strange, they are the most interesting. They have a great many singular customs and attractive amusements. Among others, "Mardi-Gras, or Shrove Tuesday," when the religious holidays are at an end, is of some interest. I saw this ceremony under unfavorable auspices. It rained the whole day, and the procession did not exceed an hundred, who constantly appeared in small detachments, some riding on horseback, others in open wagons and cabs, but many on foot; all masked and most fantastically and even ridiculously dressed. I presume the eminently pious portion of the Catholics do not engage in this celebration, unless giving it a more serious and respectable turn, for it struck me as I witnessed it as composed of persons of a low and vulgar character. Every Mardi-Gras man has his pockets filled with flour, and as he passes the well-dressed stranger, who excited by curiosity gets near, throws handfuls upon him, to the amusement of those bystanders who fortunately escape. One wagon in particular contained eight hideous-looking objects, dressed in bear, panther and buffalo skins, with horns of various descriptions on. Among them was his Satanic Majesty, with the same old cloven feet, lashing tail, and black skin. Those on foot fared badly, for scores of boys would follow them up, and pelt them with sticks and mud, and in one instance I saw a fellow stripped of his old woman's habiliments and mask, who looked stupid and ridiculous to the laughing boys and spectators.

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But while quitting a description of this poor celebration, once so large and interesting, I must not fail to notice the grandest sight my eyes ever beheld. I was standing on the gallery of the Verandah; in front of me rose up high in the air the imposing and magnificent St. Charles. On its granite gallery stood crowds of the finest race of men upon the globe—below, the streets were full, all looking at the Carnival. For four stories high, every window was full of beauty and fashion. Never had the remark so often made to me before, been so entirely convincing, that New Orleans contained more handsome ladies and fine looking men than any city in the Union. Every thing in front of the St. Charles is rich and inviting. The men all free and easy and elegantly apparelled, with forms cast in Nature's best mould; the ladies all gay, cheerful and beautiful; the cabs and coaches all elegant, with the most dazzling caparisons covering the noble horses. The eminent merchant, the learned jurist, the respectable planter, the dashing young fellow, the officer of the army, all congregate before the St. Charles, the best house in the world!

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE ROADS IN THE ENVIRONS.—THE TOWN OF CARROLLTON.—THE WOOD YARDS.—RIVER-BOTTOMS, ETC.

Of the various delightful rides in the environs of the city, none affords so much interest as the route to Carrollton. You reach that place on a railroad, commencing in the upper part of the second municipality, and running a third of the way through the suburbs of Lafayette, the remainder passing over a wide and lovely plain, with the Mississippi river on your left, and the deep and dismal swamp on your right. It is impossible to conceive a more interesting level than

this, for as far as the eye can reach, objects of both nature and art are most agreeably presented. The road first passes a splendid country seat, resembling in appearance our imperfect ideas of a French chateau, surrounded with shrubbery of the greenest shade, with orange trees covered with buds and blossoms whose fragrance embalms the air, and burthened with golden globes which richly glitter in the sun. And next you see spread out upon this beautiful plain, heads of cattle and sheep grazing upon the soft green sward, which none but the alluvial bottoms of the noble Mississippi can afford in such inviting varieties. Further on, you enter a pecan grove, resembling some of the oaks in our forests, but every tree alike—all of the same size—bearing aloft the nutritious nuts which make them so celebrated. The road passes by many handsome seats and villas, the style of which at once indicates the taste and wealth of the inmates.

While enjoying this interesting ride, my mind suddenly fell back upon Orleans, and was at once wrapt in thoughts of futurity. An hundred years hence, where now browse those innocent cattle in undisturbed silence—where now grow the green grass, "the vine and the fig-tree,"—will then be occupied by churches, towers, hotels, and theatres! What place is this? It is a part of New Orleans the queen city of America.

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Carrollton is a small place, but contains some fine residences; and there is a large public garden, tastefully laid out, belonging to the railroad company. The sale of wood seems to be the principal employment of the inhabitants. Rafts containing one hundred large logs about fifty feet long, almost entirely of ash, pinned together, are floated down from all parts of the world above Orleans, from as high up as Missouri. While winding their way through the torturous currents of the river, these raftsmen may be considered the most independent set of people that navigate the great watery thoroughfare. All boats and crafts avoid them and they have nothing to fear. A small hut of the most temporary character, made of boards, and sometimes the bottom of an old yawl turned up, is all the covering these amphibious and nondescript watermen have. Upon landing, the raft is sold to the proprietor of the wood yard. A log at a time is hauled upon the levee by large chains attached to a stationary windlass. It is then sawed into blocks four feet long, bolted up and put in cords which are sold for four dollars. At one of the wood yards, thirty hands were employed, and they sold \$15,000 worth of wood per year.

I must ask pardon for so often recurring to Mr. Calhoun's great "inland sea." It is to me the most interesting of all objects. I sat upon the levee at Carrollton. I saw it in all its might and majesty, nothing interposing to intercept the view. I thought of the countless number of rills, of the many creeks, of the numerous lakes, and of the untold rivers, rising in different regions and latitudes thousands of miles apart, combining every variety of minerals known to the continent—here passing by me, confined in one vast and deep channel, lashing its banks with violence, and pressing onward and onward its mighty waters to the briney sea! I cannot say, "to its ocean home," for it has none. It finds no resting place in the Gulf like other rivers, but the sea groans and gives way to its immensity, and we find its discoloured current far within the tropics! The reader of this number being well acquainted with the low, marshy, dismal character of the several mouths of the Mississippi, will doubtless be surprised at being informed that there is a mountain there near four hundred feet high! He has only to reflect that the river from Natchez to the Balize is usually from three to four hundred feet deep; across the bar there is only eighteen feet water; beyond the bar, just in the ocean, the Gulf is unfathomable. So, then, the river in going into the sea, has to pass over a mountain, which it is strange has not been washed away, for the river, as before observed, is not arrested in its onward course by the ocean to much extent.

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The levee at Carrollton is considerably higher than the plain upon which reposes the town. This great work that has occupied the labor, time, and enterprize of Louisiana for years, appears to afford a permanent and durable protection from the floods of the river. It commences at Fort Plaquemines, and extends to Baton Rouge, the distance of one hundred and sixty-three miles, on the east side of the river; on the west side it extends as high up as Arkansas. It will average four feet high and fifteen feet wide, and follows the river in its winding course. A visitor, seeing no ditch from which the earth is taken to erect this artificial dyke, is at first at a loss to know where soil was obtained to make it. On the margin of the river a continual deposit is forming called "batture;" this is drawn back from the river and makes the levee. It soon becomes soil, and has given rise to much litigation, for ownership is exercised over it when formed. The levee has not given way in a long time, to do any extensive damage. Near this place, in 1816, the river rising to an unprecedented height, broke through and inundated much of Orleans; but governor Claiborne had a vessel sunk in the crevasse, which stopped it.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### ORLEANS AT NIGHT.—THE COMMERCE OF THE PLACE.—THE TWENTY-SECOND OF FEBRUARY.

When the sun sheds his last rays behind the hills of peaceful Alabama, then it is that the farmer whistles a note over his last furrow, and thanks himself that the toils of day are nearly over; then the hunter checks his horse, blows his last horn and turns for home; then the lazy angler rises

from the green bank, strings his silvery fish, winds up his lines and quits the quiet stream; then the children cease to "gambol o'er the plain," and night soon shrouds all objects in darkness and repose.

Not so with Orleans. Over her massive buildings and pretty streets, the veil of night is cast in vain! Anon a soft and yellow light issues from a thousand lamps, and tells that untiring man is still abroad. Has the merchant pored over his books the whole day, he at this happy hour sups his tea, and thinks in anticipation of Monsieur Malet's delightful party. Has the lawyer attended upon the courts and given audience to clients, he now forms plans for this night's amusement. Has the laborious editor written "copy" by the long hour until exhausted and fatigued, he now kicks the exchange papers under the table, throws aside his pen, and recals with delight the Orleans Theatre and the sweet music of Norma. Has the gay matron visited and shopped, and shopped and visited for the last eight hours, she now once more attires herself for the splendid "route" of Mad. Solon. Has the creole maiden danced and sung, and slept and read, and lounged in flowing dishabille, she now rises from her delicious ottoman and for the St. Louis masquerade, once more adorns her lovely form. Has the good and pious man toiled all day in honorable trade in behalf of his virtuous wife and smiling children, he now sits around his evening meal, blesses his Maker for "all the good HE gives," and catches with joy the sound of the deep-toned bell, calling him to the worship of his God. Thus may all tastes and dispositions find accommodation by "Orleans at night."

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The cabs and coaches moving in all directions, with lights attached, resemble at a distance so many 'ignuis fatuis,' or jack o' the lanterns. They never stop, but go the whole night; for the gay and dissipated, surfeited with one amusement, seek another, and it is not uncommon for the same person to have made the entire rounds of the public amusements in one night. Stepping out of the theatre at eleven o'clock, they are escorted by the eager cabmen proposing to convey them to the Quarteroon Ball, the St. Louis Masquerade, and many other places. By the way, these cabs are most delightful inventions, easy to get in, fine to ride in. To prevent cheating on the part of the driver, the police have arranged the fare, so that the visitor pays one dollar per hour, as long as he rides. The city is supplied with one thousand cabs and coaches for public hire. There are fifteen hundred milk and market wagons. The quantity of milk consumed at the St. Charles Hotel alone, is eighty gallons per day!

Four thousand drays are constantly moving with merchandise of all kinds. They are drawn by large mules driven in tandem style, and although these useful animals are apparently well fed, they are certainly most unmercifully laden and cruelly beaten. I should suppose that twelve thousand mules are engaged in the commerce of Orleans one way and another. What a mart for Kentucky!

When the reader reflects that this immense city is assisted by twenty thousand miles of river navigation, extending into all parts of the western country, which is a world of itself, added to the commerce which it enjoys through the lakes and the great gulf, he will not be surprised in casting his eye over the following items: Number of ships which arrived in 1846, 743; barks, 377; brigs 447; schooners, 518; flatboats, 2670; arrivals of steamboats, 2763. There are 550 steamboats employed in the river navigation. The value of produce exported was \$72,000,000; of imports, \$35,000,000. Number of lawyers, 300; physicians, 200; commission merchants, 560.

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This statement proves the commerce of Orleans to be very great, but it must be borne in mind that it is constantly on the increase, and no calculations can be made upon it in future, as to where it will stop. Mississippi, Tennessee, Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Missouri, Iowa, Wisconsin, are all yearly increasing in population and produce; the latter of which must find a market here. Then I may add the product of another world not hitherto contributing, the whole western part of the valley, from the extreme north-western base of the Rocky Mountains, far, far down to the mouth of the Rio Grande, embracing the whole of Texas, all the Santa Fé territory, and the vast regions now inhabited by the Cherokees, Foxes, Creeks, Osages, and other tribes, who roam in "wilds immeasurably spread."

"The country tributary to Orleans" so Norman says, "contains nearly as many square miles and more tillable ground than all of continental Europe, and if peopled as densely as England, would sustain a population of five hundred millions." He is hardly large enough in his conceptions. Who can tell the future size of the Crescent City? None but HIM who numbers the sands on the sea shore, and notices the sparrows as they fall!

On the twenty-second of February, the hearts of the patriotic Louisianians were made glad by the roar of cannon and the waving of flags. The vessels for miles were hung with beautiful banners of every civilized nation and clime, unfolding their rich colors to the ocean breeze. When I saw the sons of Spain, and France, England and Russia, thus doing homage to the memory of WASHINGTON, the greatest and best man that ever lived, I felt a spirit of gratitude towards those noble nations, mingled with pride and satisfaction for the glory of my own country. The military of Orleans formed upon Canal street and marched through the First Municipality down the Bayou road, and halted upon a beautiful green. For some cause the "native" Americans did not turn out. There were two Spanish, two German, one Swiss, and four French companies upon parade. Should I attempt to describe the splendid evolutions of these incomparable troops, and the noble bearing of their skilful and accomplished officers, I would utterly fail to do justice. Presently along their lines appeared upon a "snow white steed," GOVERNOR JOHNSON, an elegant man about forty-five years old, six feet high, straight and majestic, with florid complexion and sandy hair. He was

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accompanied by his Aids all in the most expensive uniform. After reviewing the troops marquees and tents were pitched, and vast collation tables covered the ground. And while mirth and hilarity universally prevailed, at that very moment twenty thousand infuriated Mexicans were pressing upon the plains of Buena Vista, preparing to immolate the army of the brave TAYLOR!

And now, kind and indulgent reader, I will no longer obtrude upon your patience; these sketches are at an end. If they have afforded you any amusement, I am compensated.

THE END.

Transcriber's Note: The spellings of the original document have been retained, with the following exceptions: on page 18, "by draining and filling up" was corrected to "by draining and filling up"; on page 19, "Everything thing is" was corrected to "Everything is" and "move on continuually in" to "move on continually in"; on page 34, "navigate the great watery thouroughfare" was corrected to "navigate the great watery thoroughfare"; and on page 37, "Has the laborions editor" was corrected to "Has the laborious editor" and 'attires herself for the splended "route"' to 'attires herself for the splendid "route"'.

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK EIGHT DAYS IN NEW-ORLEANS IN  
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