

THE OLD LEVEE COTTON-PRESS.

THE GREAT SOUTH GATE.

BY GEORGE W. CABLE,

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I.

FAUBOURG STE. MARIE.

IF one will stand to-day on the broad levee at New Orleans, with his back to the Mississippi, a short way out to the left and riverward from the spot where the long vanished little Fort St. Louis once made pretense of guarding the town's upper river corner, he will look down two streets at once. They are Canal and Common, which gently diverge from their starting-point at his feet and narrow away before his eye as they run down toward the low, unsettled lots and commons behind the city.

Canal street, the center and pride of New Orleans, takes its name from the slimy old moat that once festered under the palisade wall of the Spanish town, where it ran back from river to swamp and turned northward on the line now marked by the beautiful tree-planted Rampart street.

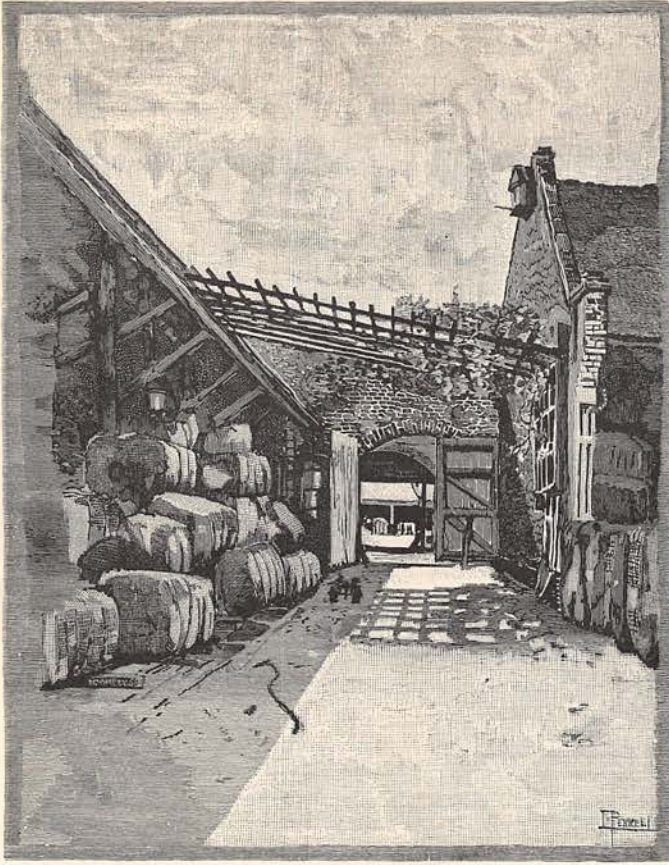
Common street marks the ancient boundary of the estates wrested from the exiled Jesuit fathers by confiscation. In the beginning of the present century, the long wedge-shaped tract between these two lines was a Government reservation, kept for the better efficiency of the fortifications that overlooked its lower border and for a public road to Noman's land. It was called the Terre Commune.

That part of the Jesuits' former plantations that lay next to the Terre Commune was mainly the property of a singular personage named Jean Gravier. Its farther side boundary was on a line now indicated by Delord street. When the fire of 1788 laid nearly

the half of New Orleans in ashes, his father, Bertrand, and his mother, Marie, had laid off this tract into lots and streets, to the depth of three squares backward from the river, and called it Villa Gravier. On her death, the name was changed in her honor, and so became the Faubourg Ste. Marie.

Capitalists had smiled upon the adventure. Julian Poydras, Claude Girod, Julia, a free woman of color, and others had given names to its cross-streets by buying corner-lots on its river-front. Along this front, under the breezy levee, ran the sunny and dusty Tchoupitoulas road, entering the town's southern river-side gate, where a sentry-box and Spanish corporal's guard drowsed in the scant shadow of Fort St. Louis. Outside the levee the deep Mississippi glided, turbid, silent, often overbrimming, with many a swirl and upward heave of its boiling depths, and, turning, sent a long smooth eddy back along this "making bank," while its main current hurried onward, townward, *northward*, as if it would double on invisible pursuers before it swept to the east and south-east from the Place d'Armes and disappeared behind the low groves of Slaughterhouse Point.

In the opening years of the century only an occasional villa and an isolated roadside shop or two had arisen along the front of Faubourg Ste. Marie and in the first street behind. Calle del Almazen, the Spanish notary wrote this street's name, for its lower (northern) end looked across the Terre Commune upon the large Almazen or store-house of Kentucky tobacco which Don Estevan Mirò thought it



ENTRANCE TO A COTTON-YARD.

wise to keep filled with purchases from the perfidious Wilkinson. Rue du Magasin, the Creoles translated it, and the Americans made it Magazine street; but it was still only a straight road. Truck-gardens covered the fertile arpents between and beyond. Here and there was a grove of wide-spreading live-oaks, here and there a clump of persimmon trees, here and there an orchard of figs, here and there an avenue of bitter oranges or of towering pecans. The present site of the "St. Charles" was a cabbage-garden. Midway between Poydras and Girod streets, behind Magazine, lay a *campo de negroes*, a slave camp, probably of cargoes of Guinea slaves. The street that cut through it became Calle del Campo—Camp street.

Far back in the rear of these lands, on the old Poydras draining canal, long since filled up and built upon,—in a lonely, dreary waste of weeds and bushes dotted thick with cypress stumps and dwarf palmetto, full of rankling ponds choked with bulrushes, flags, and pickerel-weed, fringed by willows and reeds, and haunted by frogs, snakes, crawfish, rats, and

mosquitoes, on the edge of the tangled swamp forest,—stood the dilapidated home of "Doctor" Gravier. It stood on high pillars. Its windows and doors were high and wide, its verandas were broad, its roof was steep, its chimneys were tall, and its occupant was a childless, wifeless, companionless old man, whose kindness and medical attention to negroes had won him his professional title. He claims mention as a type of that strange group of men which at this early period figured here as the shrewd acquirers of wide suburban tracts, leaders of lonely lives, and leavers of great fortunes.

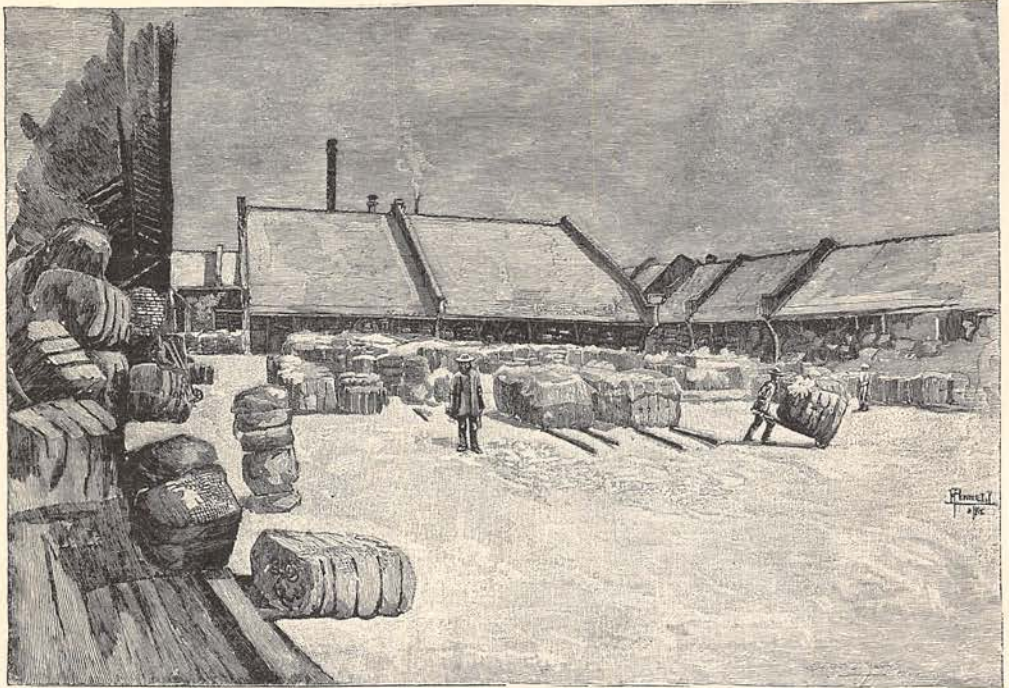
John McDonough, who at this time was a young man, a thrifty trader in Guinea negroes, and a suitor for the hand of Don Andreas Almonaster's fair daughter, the late Baroness Pontalba, became in after days a like solitary type of the same class. Jean Gravier's house long survived him, a rendezvous for desperate characters, and, if rumor is correct, the scene of many a terrible murder.

In the favoring eddy under the river-bank in front of Faubourg Ste. Marie landed the flat-boat fleets from the Ohio, the Tennessee,

and the Cumberland. Buyers crowded here for cheap and fresh provisions. The huge, huddled arks became a floating market-place, with the kersey and woolsey and jeans clad bargemen there, and the Creole and his some-

and the wider new ones alike—halls, churches, schools, stores, warehouses, banks, hotels, and theaters sprang up by day and night.

Faubourg Ste. Marie outstripped all other quarters. The unconservative American was



IN A COTTON YARD.

times brightly clad and sometimes picturesquely ragged slave here, and the produce of the West changing hands between. But there was more than this. Warehouses began to appear on the edge of Tchoupitoulas road, and barrels of pork and flour and meal to run bickering down into their open doors from the levee's top. Any eye could see that, only let war cease, there would be a wonderful change in the half-drained, sun-baked marshes and kitchen-gardens of Faubourg St. Marie.

Presently the change came. It outran the official news of peace. "Our harbor," wrote Claiborne, the governor, in March, 1815, "is again whitening with canvas; the levee is crowded with cotton, tobacco, and other articles for exportation."

A full sunrise of prosperity shone upon New Orleans. The whole great valley above began to fill up with wonderful speed and to pour down into her lap the fruits of its agriculture. Thirty-three thousand people were astir in her homes and streets. They overran the old bounds. They pulled up the old palisade. They shoveled the earth-works into the moat and pushed their streets out into the fields and thickets. In the old narrow ways—

everywhere, but in Faubourg Ste. Marie he was supreme. The Western trade crowded down like a breaking up of ice. In 1817, 1500 flat-boats and 500 barges tied up to the willows of the levee before the new faubourg. Inflation set in. Exports ran up to thirteen million dollars' worth.

In 1819 came the collapse, but development overrode it. Large areas of the *batture* were reclaimed in front of the faubourg, and the Americans covered them with store buildings. In 1812, the first steam vessel had come down the Mississippi; in 1816, for the first time, one overcame and re-ascended its current; in 1821, 441 flat-boats and 174 barges came to port, and there were 287 arrivals of steam-boats.

The kitchen-gardens vanished. Gravier street, between Tchoupitoulas and Magazine, was paved with cobble-stones. The Creoles laughed outright. "A stone pavement in New Orleans soil? It would sink out of sight!" But it bore not only their ridicule, but an uproar and gorge of wagons and drays. There was an avalanche of trade. It crammed the whole harbor-front—old town and new—with river and ocean fleets. It choked

the streets. The cry was for room and facilities. The Creoles heeded it. Up came their wooden sidewalks and curbs, brick and stone went down in their place, and by 1822 gangs of street paviors were seen and heard here, there, and yonder, swinging the pick and ramming the roundstone. There were then 41,000 people in the town and its suburbs.

The old population held its breath. It clung bravely to the failing trades of the West Indies, France, and Spain. Coffee, indigo, sugar, rice, and foreign fruits and wines were still handled in the Rues Toulouse, Conti, St. Louis, Chartres, St. Peter, and Royale; but the lion's share—the cotton, the tobacco, pork, beef, corn, flour, and northern and British fabrics—poured into and out of Faubourg Ste. Marie through the hands of the swarming Americans.

"New Orleans is going to be a mighty city," said they in effect, "and we are going to be New Orleans." But the Creole was still powerful, and jealous of everything that hinted of American absorption. He had, in 1816, elected one of his own race, General Villeré, to succeed Claiborne in the governor's chair, and to guard the rights that headlong Americans might forget. "Indeed," this governor wrote in a special message on the "scandalous practices almost every instant taking place in New Orleans and its suburbs"—"Indeed, we should be cautious in receiving all foreigners." That caution was, however, of little avail.

II.

A HUNDRED THOUSAND PEOPLE.

WHAT a change! The same Governor Villeré could not but say, "The Louisianian who retraces the condition of his country under the government of kings can never cease to bless the day when the great American confederation received him into its bosom." It was easy for Louisianians to be Americans; but to let Americans be Louisianians!—there was the rub. Yet it had to be. In ten years, the simple export and import trade of the port had increased fourfold; and in the face of inundations and pestilences, discord of sentiment and tongues, and the saddest of public morals and disorder, the population had nearly doubled.

Nothing could stop the inflow of people and wealth. In the next ten years, 1820-30, trade increased to one-and-three-quarters its already astonishing volume. The inhabitants were nearly 50,000, and the strangers from all parts of America and the commercial world were a small army. Sometimes there would be five or six thousand up-river bargemen in town at once, wild, restless, and unemployed. On the levee especially this new tremendous life and energy heaved and palpitated. Between 1831

and 1835, the mere foreign exports and imports ran up from twenty-six to nearly fifty-four million dollars. There were no wharves built out into the harbor yet, and all the vast mass of produce and goods lay out under the open sky on the long, wide, unbroken level of the curving harbor-front, where Ohio bargemen, Germans, Mississippi raftsmen, Irishmen, French, English, Creoles, Yankees, and negro and mulatto slaves surged and jostled and filled the air with shouts and imprecations.

Vice put on the same activity that commerce showed. The Creole had never been a strong moral force. The American came in as to gold diggings or diamond fields, to grab and run. The transatlantic immigrant of those days was the offscouring of Europe. The West Indian was a leader in licentiousness, gambling, and dueling. The number of billiard-rooms, gaming-houses, and lottery-offices was immense. In the old town they seemed to be every second house. There was the French Evangelical Church Lottery, the Baton Rouge Church Lottery, the Natchitoches Catholic Church Lottery, and a host of others less piously inclined. The cafés of the central town were full of filibusters. In 1819, "General" Long sailed hence against Galveston. In 1822, a hundred and fifty men left New Orleans in the sloop-of-war *Eureka*, and assisted in the taking of Porto Cabello, Venezuela, etc., etc. The paving movement had been only a flurry or two, and even in the heart of the town, where carriages sometimes sank to their axles in mud, highway robbery and murder lay always in wait for the incautious night wayfarer who ventured out alone. The police was a mounted *gendarmerie*. If the Legislature committed a tenth of the wickedness it was charged with, it was sadly corrupt. The worst day of all the week was Sunday. The stores and shops were open, but toil slackened and license gained headway. Gambling-rooms and ball-rooms were full, weapons were often out, the masques of the Salle de Condé were thronged with men of high standing, and crowds of barge and raftsmen, as well as Creoles and St. Domingans, gathered at those open-air African dances, carousals, and debaucheries in the rear of the town that have left their monument in the name of "Congo" Square.

Yet still prosperity smiled and commerce roared along the streets of the town and her faubourgs—St. Marie on her right, Marigny on her left—with ever-rising volume and value, and in spite of fearful drawbacks. The climate was deadly to Americans, and more deadly to the squalid immigrant. Social life, unattractive at best, received the Creole and shut the door. The town was without beauty,

and the landscape almost without a dry foothold. Schools were scarce and poor, churches few and ill attended, and domestic service squalid, inefficient, and corrupt. Between 1810 and 1837 there were fifteen epidemics of yellow fever. Small-pox was frequent. In 1832, while yellow fever was still epidemic, cholera entered and carried off one person in every six; many of the dead were buried where they died, and many were thrown into the river. Moreover, to get to the town or to leave it was a journey famed for its dangers. On one steam-boat, three hundred lives were lost; on another, one hundred and thirty; on another, the same number; on another, one hundred and twenty. The cost of running a steamer was six times as great as on the northern lakes.

Without these drawbacks what would New Orleans have been? For, with them all, and with others which we pass by, her population between 1830 and 1840 once more doubled its numbers. She was the fourth city of the United States in the number of her people. Cincinnati, which in the previous decade had outgrown her, was surpassed and distanced. Only New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore were larger. Boston was nearly as large; but besides these there was no other city in the Union of half her numbers. Faubourg Ste. Marie had swallowed up the suburbs above her until it comprised the whole expanse of the old Jesuits' plantations to the line of Felicity road. The old Marquis Marigny de Mandeville, whose plantation lay on the lower edge of the town just across the Esplanade, had turned it into lots and streets, and the town had run over upon it and covered it with small residences, and here and there a villa. The city boundaries had been extended to take in both these faubourgs; and the three "municipalities," as they were called, together numbered one hundred and two thousand inhabitants.

The ends of the harbor-front were losing sight of each other. In the seasons of high water the tall, broad, frail-looking steamers that crowded in together, "bow on," at the busy levee, hidden to their hurricane roofs in cargoes of cotton bales, looked down upon not merely a quiet little Spanish-American town of narrow streets, low, heavy, rugged roofs, and Latin richness and variety of color peeping out of a mass of overshadowing greenery. Fort St. Charles, the last fraction of the old fortifications, was gone, and the lofty chimney of a United States mint smoked in its place. The new Bourse, later known as St. Louis Hotel, and yet later as the famed State-house of Reconstruction days, just raised its low, black dome into view above the inter-

vening piles of brick. A huge prison lifted its frowning walls and quaint Spanish twin bell-towers gloomily over Congo Square. At the white stuccoed Merchants' Exchange, just inside the old boundary on the Canal street side, a stream of men poured in and out, for there was the post-office. Down in the lower arm of the river's bend shone the Third Municipality, —that had been Faubourg Marigny. On its front, behind a net-work of shipping, stood the Levee Cotton Press, which had cost half a million dollars. Here on the south, sweeping far around and beyond the view almost to the "Bull's Head Coffee-house," was the Second Municipality, once Faubourg Ste. Marie, with its lines and lines of warehouses, its Orleans Press, that must needs cost a quarter million more than the other, and many a lesser one. The town was full of banks: the Commercial, the Atchafalaya, the Orleans, the Canal, the City, etc. Banks's Arcade was there, a glass-roofed mercantile court in the midst of a large hotel in Magazinstreet, now long known as the St. James. Hotels were numerous. In Camp and St. Charles streets stood two theaters, where the world's stars deigned to present themselves, and the practical jokers of the upper galleries concocted sham fights and threw straw men over into the pit below, with cries of murder. Here and there a church—the First Presbyterian, the Carondelet Methodist —raised an admonitory finger. The site of old Jean Gravier's house was hidden behind Poydras Market; the uncanny iron frames of the Gas Works rose beyond. The reservoir of the water-works lay in here to the left near the river, whose muddy water it used. Back yonder in the street named for Julia, the f. w. c.,* a little bunch of schooner masts and pennons showed where the Canal Bank had dug a "New Basin" and brought the waters of Lake Pontchartrain up into this part of the city also.

It was the period when the American idea of architecture had passed from its untrained innocence to a sophomoric affectation of Greek forms. Banks, hotels, churches, theaters, mansions, cottages, all were Ionic or Corinthian, and the whole American quarter was a gleaming white. The commercial shadow of this quarter fell darkly upon the First Municipality, the old town. A quiet crept into the Rue Toulouse. The fashionable shops on the Rue Royale slipped away and spread out in Canal street. The vault of the St. Louis dome still echoed the voice of the double-tongued, French-English auctioneer of town lots and slaves; but in the cabbage-garden of "old Mr. Percy," in the heart of Faubourg Ste. Marie, a resplendent rival, the palatial St.

* Free woman of color.

Charles, lifted its dazzling cupola high above all surroundings and overpeered old town and new, river, plain, and receding forest. Its rotunda was the unofficial guildhall of all the city's most active elements. Here met the capitalist, the real estate operator, the merchant, the soldier, the tourist, the politician, the filibuster, the convivialist, the steam-boat captain, the horse-fancier; and ever conspicuous among the throng—which had a trick of separating suddenly and dodging behind the pillars of the rotunda at the sound of high words—was a man, a type, an index of great wealth to New Orleans, who in this spot was never a stranger and was never quite at home.

III.

FLUSH TIMES.

THE brow and cheek of this man were darkened by outdoor exposure, but they were not weather-beaten. His shapely, bronzed hand was no harder or rougher than was due to the use of the bridle-rein and the gunstock. His eye was the eye of a steed; his neck—the same. His hair was a little luxuriant. His speech was positive, his manner was military, his sentiments were antique, his clothing was of broadcloth, his boots were neat, and his hat was soft, broad, and slouched a little to show its fineness. Such in his best aspect was the Mississippi River planter. When sugar was his crop and Creole French his native tongue, his polish would sometimes be finer still, with a finish got in Paris, and his hotel would be the St. Louis.

He was growing to be a great power. The enormous agricultural resources of Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Tennessee were his. The money-lender gyrated around him with sweet smiles and open purse. He was mortgaged to the eyes, and still commanded a credit that courted and importuned him. He caused an immense increase of trade. His extravagant wants and the needs of his armies of slaves kept the city drained of its capital almost or quite the whole year round. Borrower and lender vied with each other in recklessness. Much the larger portion of all the varied products of the West received in New Orleans was reshipped, not to sea, but to the plantations of the interior, often returning along the same route half the distance they had originally come. Millions of capital that would have yielded slower but immensely better final results in other channels went into the planters' paper, based on the value of slaves and of lands whose value depended on slave labor,—a species of wealth unexchangeable in the great world of commerce, fictitious as paper money, and even more illusory. But,

like the paper money that was then inundating the country, this system produced an immense volume of business; and this, in turn, called into the city to fill the streets and landings and the thousands of humble dwellings that sprang up throughout the old Faubourg Marigny and spread out on the right flank of Faubourg Ste. Marie, the Irish and German emigrant, by tens of thousands.

It was in the midst of these conditions that mad speculations in Western lands and the downfall of the United States Bank rolled the great financial crisis of 1837 across the continent. Where large results had intoxicated enterprise, banks without number and often without foundation strewed their notes among the infatuated people. But in New Orleans enterprise had forgotten everything but the factorage of the staple crops. The banks were not so many, but they followed the fashion in having make-believe capital and in their crumbling to ashes at a touch. Sixty millions capital, four of deposits, twelve hundred thousand specie, eighteen hundred thousand real estate, and seventy-two millions receivables, mostly protested,—such was their record when they suspended.

"A whirlwind of ruin," said one of the newspapers, "prostrated the greater portion of the city." Everybody's hands were full of "shin-plasters." There was no other currency. Banks and banking were execrated, and their true office so ill understood that a law passed preventing the establishment of any such institution in the State. A few old banks that weathered the long financial stress accepted, with silent modesty, the monopoly thus thrown into their hands, and in 1843, having abandoned the weaker concerns to shipwreck, resumed specie payment. The city's foreign commerce had dropped to thirty-four and three-quarters million dollars, a loss of nineteen millions; but, for the first time in her history, she sent to sea a million bales of cotton.

The crisis had set only a momentary check upon agriculture. The financiers of New Orleans came out of it more than ever infatuated with the plantation idea. It had become the ruling principle in the social organism of the South, the one tremendous drawback to the best development of country and city; and now the whole lower Mississippi valley threw all its energies and all its fortune into this seductive mistake.

And still the city grew; grew as the delta sands on which it stands had grown, by the compulsory tribute of the Mississippi. The great staples of the valley poured down ever more and more. In 1842, the value of these receipts was \$45,700,000; in 1844, it was \$60,000,000; in 1846, it was over \$77,000,-

000; in 1847, it was \$90,000,000; in 1850, it was close to \$97,000,000. The city lengthened; it broadened; it lifted its head higher. The trowel rang everywhere on home-made brick and imported granite, and houses rose by hundreds. The Irish and Germans thronged down from the decks of emigrant ships at the rate of thirty thousand a year. They even partly crowded out slave service. In 1850, there were 5330 slaves less in the city than in 1840. The free mulatto also gave way. Unenterprising, despised, persecuted, this caste, once so scant in numbers, had grown, in 1840, to be nearly as numerous as the whites. The "abolition" question brought them double hatred and suspicion; and restrictive, unjust, and intolerant State legislation reduced their numbers—it must have been by exodus—from 19,000 to less than 10,000 souls. Allowing for natural increase, eleven or twelve thousand must have left the city. The proportion of whites rose from fifty-eight to seventy-eight per cent., and the whole population of New Orleans and its environs was 133,650.

Another city had sprung up on the city's upper boundary. In 1833, three suburbs, Lafayette, Livaudais, and Réligieuses, the last occupying an old plantation of the Ursuline nuns, combined into a town. About 1840, the wealthy Americans began to move up here into "large, commodious, one-story houses, full of windows on all sides, and surrounded by broad and shady gardens." Here, but nearer the river, Germans and Irish—especially the former—filed in continually, and by 1850 the town of Lafayette contained over fourteen thousand residents, nearly all white.

It was a red-letter year. The first street pavement of square granite blocks was laid. Wharf building set in strongly. The wires of the electro-magnetic telegraph drew the city into closer connection with civilization. The mind of the financier was aroused, and he turned his eye toward railroads. The "Tehuantepec route" received its first decided impulse. Mexican grants were bought; surveys were procured; much effort was made—and lost. The Mexican Government was too unstable and too fickle to be bargained with. But in 1851, meantime, two great improvements were actually set on foot; to wit, the two railways that now unite the city with the great central system of the Union in the Mississippi-Ohio valley, and with the vast Southwest, Mexico, and California. These two works moved slowly, but by 1855 and 1857 the railway trains were skimming out across the flowery *prairies tremblantes* eighty miles westward toward Texas, and the same distance northward toward the center of the continent. In

1852, Lafayette and the municipalities were consolidated into one city government. Sixteen years of subdivision under separate municipal councils, and similar expensive and obstructive nonsense, had taught Creole, American, and immigrant the value of unity and of the American principles of growth better than unity could have done it. Algiers, a suburb of machine shops and nautical repair yards, began to grow conspicuous on the farther side of the river.

The consolidation was a great step. The American quarter became the center and core of the whole city. Its new and excessively classic marble municipality hall became the city hall. Its public grounds became the chosen rendezvous of all popular assemblies. All the great trades sought domicile in its streets; and the St. Charles, at whose memorable burning in 1850 the people wept, being restored in 1852-53, made final eclipse of the old St. Louis.

A small steel-engraved picture of New Orleans, made just before this period, is obviously the inspiration of the commercial and self-important American. The ancient plaza, the cathedral, the old hall of the cabildo, the calabozos, the old Spanish barracks, the emptied convent of the Ursulines, the antiquated and decayed Rue Toulouse, the still quietly busy Chartres and Old Levee streets—all that was time honored and venerable are pushed out of view, and the lately humble Faubourg Ste. Marie fills the picture almost from side to side. Long ranks of huge, lofty-chimneyed Mississippi steamers smoke at the levee; and high above the deep and solid phalanxes of brick and stone rise the majestic dome of the first St. Charles and the stately tower of St. Patrick's Church, queen and bishop of the board.

But the ancient landmarks trembled to a worse fate than being left out of a picture. Renovation came in. In 1850, the cathedral was torn down to its foundations, and began to rise again with all of its Spanish picturesqueness lost and little or nothing gained in beauty. On its right and left absurd French roofs were clapped upon the cabildo and the court-house. The Baroness Pontalba replaced the quaint old tile-roofed store buildings that her father had built on either side of the square with large, new rows of red brick. The city laid out the Place d'Armes, once her grassy play-ground, in blinding white-shell walks, trimmed shrubbery, and dusty flowerbeds, and later, in 1855, placed in its center the bronze equestrian figure of the deliverer of New Orleans, and called the classic spot Jackson Square. Yet, even so, it remains to the present the last lurking-place of the romance of primitive New Orleans.

It was not a time to look for very good taste. All thoughts were led away by the golden charms of commerce. In 1851, the value of receipts from the interior was nearly \$107,000,000. The mint coined \$10,000,000, mostly the product of California's new-found treasure-fields. The year 1853 brought still greater increase. Of cotton alone, there came sixty-eight and a quarter million dollars' worth. The sugar crop was tens of thousands of hogsheads larger than ever before. Over a tenth of all the arrivals from sea were of steam-ships. There was another inflation. Leaving out the immense unascertained amounts of shipments *into* the interior, the city's business, in 1856, rose to two hundred and seventy-one and a quarter millions. In 1857 it was three hundred and two millions. In this year came a crash, which the whole country felt. New Orleans felt it rather less than other cities, and quickly recovered.

We pause at 1860. In that year New Orleans rose to the proudest commercial exaltation she has ever enjoyed, and at its close began that sudden and swift descent which is not the least pathetic episode of our unfortunate civil war. In that year, the city that one hundred and forty years before had consisted of one hundred bark and palmetto-thatched huts in a noisome swamp counted, as the fraction of its commerce comprised in its exports, imports, and domestic receipts, the value of three hundred and twenty-four million dollars.

IV.

WHY NOT BIGGER THAN LONDON.

THE great Creole city's geographical position has always dazzled every eye except the cold, coy scrutiny of capital. "The position of New Orleans," said President Jefferson in 1804, "certainly destines it to be the greatest city the world has ever seen." He excepted neither Rome nor Babylon. But man's most positive predictions are based upon contingencies; one unseen victory over nature bowls them down; the seeming certainties of to-morrow are changed to the opposite certainties of to-day; deserts become gardens, gardens cities, and older cities the haunts of bats and foxes.

When the early Kentuckian and Ohioan accepted nature's highway to market, and proposed the conquest of New Orleans in order to lay that highway open, they honestly believed there was no other possible outlet to the commercial world. When steam navigation came, they hailed it with joy and without question. To them it seemed an ultimate result. To the real-estate hoarding Creole, to the American merchant who was crowding

and chafing him, to every superficial eye at least, it seemed a pledge of unlimited commercial empire bestowed by the laws of gravitation. Few saw in it the stepping-stone from the old system of commerce by natural highways to a new system by direct and artificial lines.

It is hard to understand, looking back from the present, how so extravagant a mistake could have been made by wise minds. From the first—or perhaps, we should say, from the peace of 1815—the development of the West declined to wait on New Orleans, or even on steam. In 1825, the new principle of commercial transportation—that despises alike the aid and the interference of nature—opened, at Buffalo, the western end of the Erie Canal, the gate-way of a new freight route to northern Atlantic tide-waters, many hundreds of leagues more direct than the long journey down the Mississippi to New Orleans and around the dangerous capes of Florida. In the same year another canal was begun, and in 1832 it connected the Ohio with Lake Erie; so that, in 1835, the State of Ohio alone sent through Buffalo to Atlantic ports 86,000 barrels of flour, 98,000 bushels of wheat, and 2,500,000 staves.

Another outlet was found, better than all transits—manufactures. Steam, driving all manner of machinery, built towns and cities. Cincinnati had, in 1820, 32,000 inhabitants; in 1830, 52,000. Pittsburg became, "in the extent of its manufactures, the only rival of Cincinnati in the West." St. Louis, still in embryo, rose from 10,000 to 14,000. Buffalo, a town of 2100, quadrupled its numbers.

Meanwhile far down in New Orleans the Creole, grimly, and the American, more boastfully, rejoiced in a blaze of prosperity that blinded both. How should they, in a rain of wealth, take note that, to keep pace with the wonderful development in the great valley above, their increase should have been three times as great as it was, and that the sun of illimitable empire, which had promised to shine brightest upon them, was shedding brighter promises and kinder rays eastward, and even northward, *across* nature's highways and barriers. Even steam navigation began, on the great lakes, to demonstrate that the golden tolls of the Mississippi were not all to be collected at one or even two gates.

How might this have been stopped? By no means. The moment East and West saw that straighter courses toward commercial Europe could be taken than wild nature offered, the direct became the natural route, and the circuitous the unnatural. East-and-west trade lines meant, sooner or later, the commercial subordination of New Orleans, until such time as the growth of countries be-

hind her in the South-west should bring her also upon an east-and-west line. Meantime the new system could be delayed by improving the old, many of whose drawbacks were removable. That which could not be stopped could yet be postponed.

But there was one drawback which riveted all the rest. Through slave-holding, and the easy fortune-getting it afforded, an intellectual indolence spread everywhere, and the merchant of Faubourg Ste. Marie, American—often New Englander—as he was, sank under the seductions of a livelihood so simple, so purely executive, and so rich in perquisites, as the marketing of raw crops. From this mental inertia sprang an invincible provincialism; the Creole, whose society he was always courting, intensified it. Better civilizations were too far away to disturb it. A “peculiar institution” doubled that remoteness, and an enervating, luxurious climate folded it again upon itself. It colored his financial convictions and all his conduct of public affairs. He confronted obstacles with serene apathy; boasted of his city’s natural advantages, forgetting that it was man, not nature, that he had to contend with; surrendered ground which he might have held for generations; and smilingly ignored the fact that, with all her increase of wealth and population, his town was slipping back along the comparative scale of American cities. “Was she not the greatest in exports after New York?”

The same influence that made the Creole always and only a sugar, tobacco, or cotton factor, waived away the classes which might have brought in manufactures with them. Its shadow fell as a blight upon intelligent, trained labor. Immigrants from the British isles and from Europe poured in; but these adepts in mechanical and productive arts that so rapidly augmented the commonwealth staid away; there was nothing in surrounding nature or society to evolve the operative from the hod-carrier and drayman, and the prospecting manufacturer and his capital turned aside to newer towns where labor was uncontemned, and skill and technical knowledge sprang forward at the call of enlightened enterprise.

Men never guessed the whole money value of time until the great inventions for the facilitation of commerce began to appear. “Adopt us,” these seemed to say as they came forward in procession, “or you cannot become or even remain great.” But, even so, only those cities lying somewhere on right lines between the great centers of supply and demand could seize and hold them. It was the fate, not the fault, of New Orleans not to be one such. St. Louis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Pittsburg, Boston, New York, Philadelphia,

Baltimore, were more fortunate; while Cleveland, Buffalo, Chicago, were born of these new conditions. The locomotive engine smote the commercial domain of New Orleans in half, and divided the best part of her trade beyond the mouth of the Ohio among her rivals. In that decade of development—1830—40—when the plantation idea was enriching her with one hand and robbing her of double with the other, the West was filling with town life, and railroads and canals were starting eagerly eastward and westward, bearing immense burdens of freight and travel and changing the scale of miles to that of hours. Boston and New York had preëmpted the future with their daring outlays, and clasped hands tighter with the States along the Ohio by lines of direct transit. Pennsylvania joined Philadelphia with the same river, and spent more money in railroads and canals than any other State in the Union. Baltimore reached out her Chesapeake and Ohio canal and railway. Ohio and Indiana spent millions. But the census of 1840 proclaimed New Orleans the fourth city of the Union, and her merchants openly professed the belief that they were to become the metropolis of America without exertion.

Rapid transit only amused them, while raw crops and milled breadstuffs still sought the cheapest rates of freight. They looked at the tabulated figures; they were still shipping their share of the Valley’s vastly increased field products. It was not true, they said, with sudden resentment, that they “sold the skin for a goat and bought the tail for a shilling.” But they did not look far enough. Improved transportation, denser settlement, labor-saving machinery, had immensely increased the West’s producing power. New Orleans should have received and exported an even greater proportion—not merely quantity—of those products of the field. Partly not heeding, and partly unable to help it, she abandoned this magnificent surplus to the growing cities of the West and East. Still more did she fail to notice that the manufactures of the Mississippi and Ohio States had risen from fifty to one hundred and sixty-four millions. She only began to notice these facts as another decade was closing with 1850, when her small import trade had shrunken to less than a third that of Boston and a tenth that of New York.

Her people then began to call out in alarm. Now admitting, now denying, they marked, with a loser’s impatience, the progress of other cities at what seemed to be their expense. Boston had surpassed them in numbers; Brooklyn was four-fifths their size; St. Louis, seven-eighths; Cincinnati was but a twenty-fifth behind; Louisville, Chicago, Buf-

falo, Pittsburg, were coming on with populations of from forty to fifty thousand. Where were the days when New Orleans was the commercial empress of her great valley and heir-apparent to the sovereignty of the world's trade? New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Liverpool—could they ever be overtaken? American merchant and Creole property-holder cried to each other to throw off their lethargy and place New Orleans where Nature had destined her to sit.

The air was full of diagnoses: There had been too exclusive an attention to the moving of crops; there had been too much false pride against mercantile pursuits; sanitation had been neglected; there had not been even a quarantine since 1825; public improvements had been few and trivial; a social exclusiveness made the town unhomelike and repellent to the higher order of immigrant; the port charges were suicidal. One pen even brought out the underlying fact of slave labor, and contrasted its voiceless acceptance of antiquated methods of work with the reflecting, outspoken, acting liberty of the Northern workman which filled the Northern communities with practical thinkers. The absurd municipality system of city government, which split the city into four towns, was rightly blamed for much non-progression.

Much, too, was the more unjust blame laid at the door of financiers and capitalists. Railways? But who could swing a railway from New Orleans, in any direction, that would not better stretch it from some point near the center of Western supply to some other center in the manufacturing and consuming East? Slave labor had handed over the rich prize of European and New England immigration to the unmonopolized West, and the purely fortune-hunting canal-boat and locomotive pushed aside the slave and his owner and followed the free immigrant. And, in truth, it was years later, when the outstretched iron arms of Northern enterprise began to grasp the products of the South-west itself, that New Orleans capitalists, with more misgiving than enthusiasm, thrust out their first railway worthy of the name through the great plantation State of Mississippi.

Some lamented a lack of banking capital. But bankers knew that New York's was comparatively smaller. Some cried against summer absenteeism; but absenteeism was equally bad in the cities that had thriven most. Some pointed to the large proportion of foreigners; but the first census that gave this proportion showed it but forty-four and a half per cent. of the whites in New Orleans, against forty-two in Cincinnati, forty-eight in New York, and fifty-two in St. Louis. The truth lay

deeper hid. In those cities American thought prevailed, and the incoming foreigner accepted it. In New Orleans American thought was foreign, unwelcome, disparaged by the uninspiring, satirical Creole, and often apologized for by the American, who found himself a minority in a combination of social forces oftener in sympathy with European ideas than with the moral energies and the enthusiastic and venturesome enterprise of the New World. Moreover, twenty-eight thousand slaves and free blacks hampered progress by sheer dead weight.

Was it true that the import trade needed only to be cultivated? Who should support it besides the planter? And the planter, all powerful as he was, was numerically a small minority, and his favorite investments were land and negroes. The wants of his slaves were only the most primitive, and their stupid and slovenly eye-service made the introduction of labor-saving machinery a farce. Who or what should make an import trade? Not the Southern valley. Not the West, either; for her imports, she must have straight lines and prompt deliveries.

Could manufactures be developed? Not easily, at least. The same fatal shadow fell upon them. The unintelligent, uneconomical black slave was unavailable for its service; and to graft upon the slave-burdened South the high-spirited operatives of other countries was impossible.

What did all this sum up? Stripped of disguises, it stood a triumph of machinery over slavery that could not be retrieved, save possibly through a social revolution so great and apparently so ruinous that the mention of it kindled a white heat of public exasperation.

All this was emphasized by the Creole. He retained much power still, as well by his natural force as by his ownership of real estate and his easy coalition with foreigners of like ideas. He cared little to understand. It was his pride not to be understood. He divided and paralyzed public sentiment when he could no longer rule it, and often met the most imperative calls for innovation with the most unbending conservatism. For every movement was change, and every change carried him nearer and nearer toward the current of American ideas and to absorption into their flood, which bore too much the semblance of annihilation. Hold back as he might, the transformation was appallingly swift. And now a new influence had set in, which more than all others was destined to promote, ever more and more, the unity of all the diverse elements of New Orleans society, and their equipment for the

task of placing their town in a leading rank among the greatest cities of the world.

V.

THE SCHOOL-MASTER.

THE year 1841 dates the rise in New Orleans of the modern system of free public schools. It really began in the German-American suburb, Lafayette; but the next year a single school was opened in the Second Municipality "with some dozen scholars of both sexes."

All the way back to the Cession, efforts, more or less feeble, had been made for public education; but all of them lacked that idea of popular and universal benefit which has made the American public school a welcome boon throughout America, not excepting Louisiana. In 1804, an act had passed "to establish a university in the territory of Orleans." The university was to comprise the "college of New Orleans." But seven years later nothing had been done. In 1812, however, there rose on the old Bayou road, a hundred yards or so beyond the former line of the town's rear ramparts, at the corner of St. Claude street, such a modest Orleans college as \$15,000 would build and equip. But it was not free, except to fifty charity scholars. The idea was still that of condescending benevolence, not of a paying investment by society for its own protection and elevation. Ten years later this was the only school in the city of a public character. In 1826, there were three small schools where "all the branches of a polite education" were taught. Two of these were in the old Ursuline Convent. A fourth finds mention in 1838, but the college seems to have disappeared.

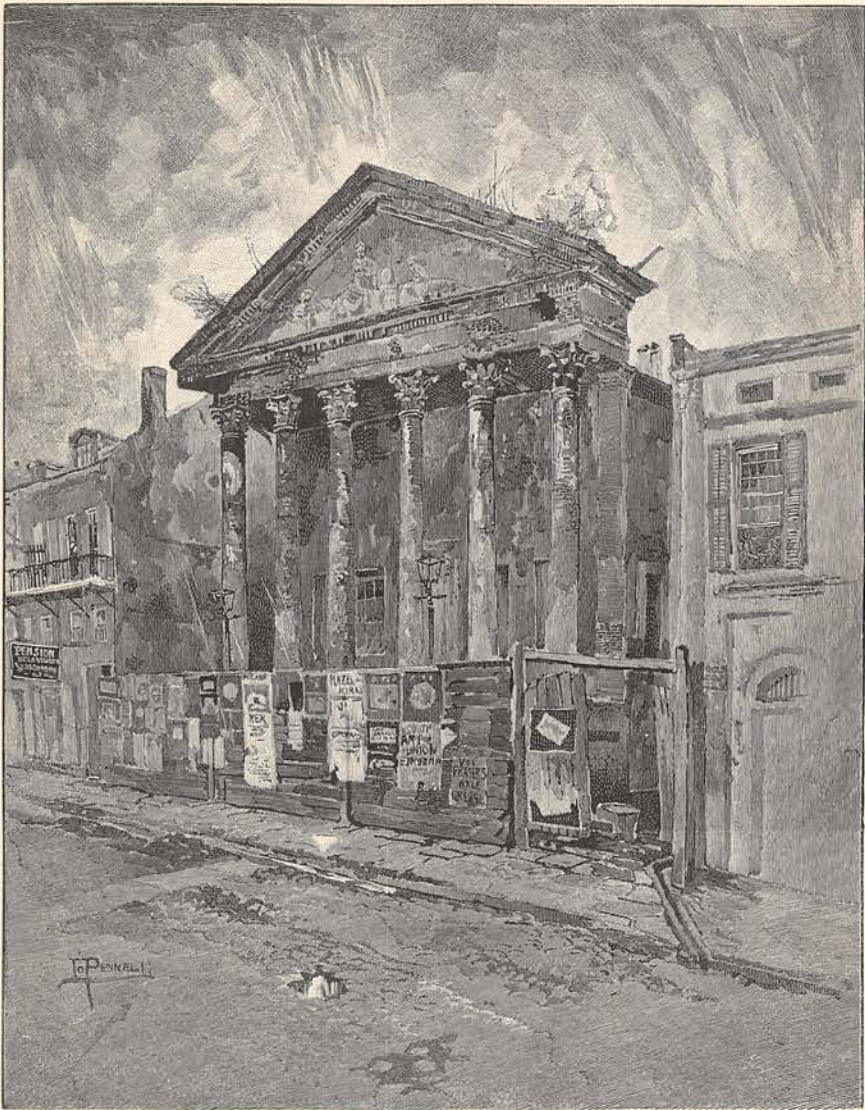
Still the mass of educable youth,—the children who played "oats, peas, beans," with French and German and Irish accents, about the countless sidewalk doorsteps of a city of one and two story cottages (it was almost such); the girls who carried their little brothers and sisters on one elbow and hip and stared in at weddings and funerals; the boys whose kite-flying and games were full of terms and outcries in mongrel French, and who abandoned everything at the wild clangor of bells and ran to fires where the volunteer firemen dropped the hose and wounded and killed each other in pitched battles; the ill-kept lads who risked their lives daily five months of the year swimming in the yellow whirlpools of the Mississippi among the wharves and flat-boats, who, naked and dripping, dodged the dignified police that stalked

them among the cotton bales, who robbed mocking-birds' nests and orange and fig-trees, and trapped nonpareils and cardinals, orchard-orioles and indigo-birds, in the gardens of Lafayette and the suburban fields,—these had not been reached, had not been sought by the educator. The public recognition of a common vital interest in a common elevation was totally lacking.

At length this feeling was aroused. Men of public spirit spoke and acted; and such pioneers as Peters, Burke, Touro, Martin, De Bow, and the Creoles Dimitry, Forstall, Gayarre, and others are gratefully remembered by a later generation for their labors in the cause of education. In the beginning of 1842 there were in the American quarter 300 children in private schools and 2000 in none. At its close, the public schools of this quarter and Lafayette had over 1000 pupils. In the next year, there were over 1300; in 1844, there were 1800. In 1845, the University of Louisiana was really established. The medical department had already an existence; this branch and that of law were in full operation in 1847, and Creole and American sat side by side before their lecturers.

Meanwhile the impulse for popular enlightenment took another good direction. In 1842, Mr. B. F. French threw open a library to the public, which in four years numbered 7500 volumes. The State Library was formed, with 3000 volumes, for the use, mainly, of the Legislature. The City Library, also 3000 volumes, was formed. In 1848 it numbered 7500 volumes; but it was intended principally for the schools, and was not entirely free. An association threw open a collection of 2000 volumes. An historical society was revived. In 1846 and 1847 public lectures were given and heartily supported; but, in 1848, a third series was cut short by a terrible epidemic of cholera. About the same time, the "Fisk" Library of 6000 volumes, with "a building for their reception," was offered to the city. But enthusiasm had declined. The gift was neglected, and as late as 1854, the city was still without a single entirely free library.

In 1850 there was but one school, Sunday-school, or public library in Louisiana to each 73,966 persons, or 100 volumes to each 2310 persons. In Rhode Island, there were eleven and a half times as many books to each person. In Massachusetts, there were 100 volumes to every 188 persons. In the pioneer State of Michigan, without any large city, there was a volume to every fourth person. True, in Louisiana there were 100 volumes to every 1218 *free* persons, but this only throws us back upon the fact that 245,000 persons



THE OLD BANK IN TOULOUSE STREET.

were totally without books and were forbidden by law to read.

It is pleasanter to know that the city's public schools grew rapidly in numbers and efficiency, and that, even when her library facilities were so meager, the proportion of youth in these schools was larger than in Baltimore or Cincinnati, only slightly inferior to St. Louis and New York, and decidedly surpassed only in Philadelphia and Boston. In the old French quarter, the approach of school-hour saw thousands of Creole children, satchel in hand, on their way to some old live-oak-shaded colonial villa, or to some old theater once the scene of nightly gambling

and sword-cane fights, or to some ancient ball-room where the now faded quadroons had once shone in splendor and waltzed with the mercantile and official dignitaries of city and State, or to some bright, new school building, all windows and verandas. Thither they went for an English education. It was not first choice, but it was free, and—the father and mother admitted, with an amiable shrug—it was also best.

The old fierce enmity against the English tongue and American manners began to lose its practical weight and to be largely a matter of fireside sentiment. The rich Creole, both of plantation and town, still drew his inspira-



OLD ST. LOUIS HOTEL. (AFTERWARD THE STATE HOUSE.)

tions from French tradition,—not books,—and sought both culture and pastime in Paris. His polish heightened; his language improved; he dropped the West Indian softness that had crept into his pronunciation, and the Africanisms of his black nurse. His children still babbled them, but they were expected to cast them off about the time of their first communion. However, the suburban lands were sold, old town and down-town property was sinking in value, the trade with Latin countries languished, and the rich Creole was only one here and there among throngs of humbler brethren who were learning the hard lessons of pinched living. To these an English-American training was too valuable to be refused. They took kindly to the American's counting-room desk. They even began to emigrate across Canal street.

VI.

LATER DAYS.

NOT schools only, but churches, multiplied rapidly. There was a great improvement in public order. Affrays were still common; the Know-nothing movement came on, and a few "thugs" terrorized the city with campaign broils, beating, stabbing, and shooting. Base

political leaders and spoilsmen utilized these disorders, and they reached an unexpected climax and end one morning confronted by a vigilance committee, which had, under cover of night, seized the town arsenal behind the old Cabildo and barricaded the approaches to the Place d'Armes with upturn paving-stones. But riots were no longer a feature of the city. It was no longer required that all the night-watch within a mile's circuit should rally at the sound of a rattle. Fire-engines were no longer needed to wet down huge mobs that threatened to demolish the Carondelet street broker's shops or the Cuban cigar stores. Drunken bargemen had ceased to swarm by many hundreds against the peace and dignity of the State, and the publicity and respectability of many other vicious practices disappeared.

Communication with the outside world was made much easier, prompter, and more frequent by the growth of railroads. Both the average Creole and the average American became more polished. The two types lost some of their points of difference. The American ceased to crave entrance into Creole society, having now separate circles of his own; and when they mingled it was on more equal terms, and the Creole was sometimes the proselyte. They were one on the great question that had made the Southern Ameri-

can the exasperated champion of ideas contrary to the ground principles of American social order. The New Orleans American was apt, moreover, by this time to be New-Orleans-born. He had learned some of the Creole lethargy, much of his love of pleasure and his childish delight in pageantry. St. Charles street—the center of the American quarter, the focus of American theaters and American indulgences in decanter and dice—seemed strangely un-American when Mardi-gras filled it with dense crowds, tinsel, rouge, grotesque rags, Circæan masks, fool's-caps and harlequin colors, lewdness, mock music, and tipsy buffoonery. "We want," said one American of strange ambition, "to make our city the Naples of America."

By and by a cloud darkened the sky. Civil war came on. The Creole, in that struggle, was little different from the Southerner at large. A little more impetuous, it may be, a little more gayly reckless, a little more prone to reason from desire; gallant, brave, enduring, faithful; son, grandson, great-grandson, of good soldiers, and a better soldier every way and truer to himself than his courageous forefathers. But we will not follow him. Arming, marching, blockade, siege, surrender, military occupation, grass-grown streets, hungry women, darkened homes, broken hearts,—let us not write the chapter; at least, not now.

The war passed. The bitter days of Reconstruction followed. They, too, must rest unrecounted. The sky is brightening again. The love of the American Union has come back to the Creole and the American of New Orleans stronger, for its absence, than it ever was before; stronger, founded in a triple sense of right, necessity, and choice.

The great south gate of the Mississippi stands to-day a city of two hundred and sixteen thousand people. Only here and there a broad avenue, with double roadway and slender grassy groves of forest trees between, marks the old dividing lines of the faubourgs that have from time to time been gathered within her boundaries. Her streets measure five hundred and sixty-six miles of length. One hundred and forty miles of street railway traverse them. Her harbor, varying from 60 to 280 feet in depth, and from 1500 to 3000 feet in width, measures twelve miles in length on either shore, and more than half of this is in actual use.

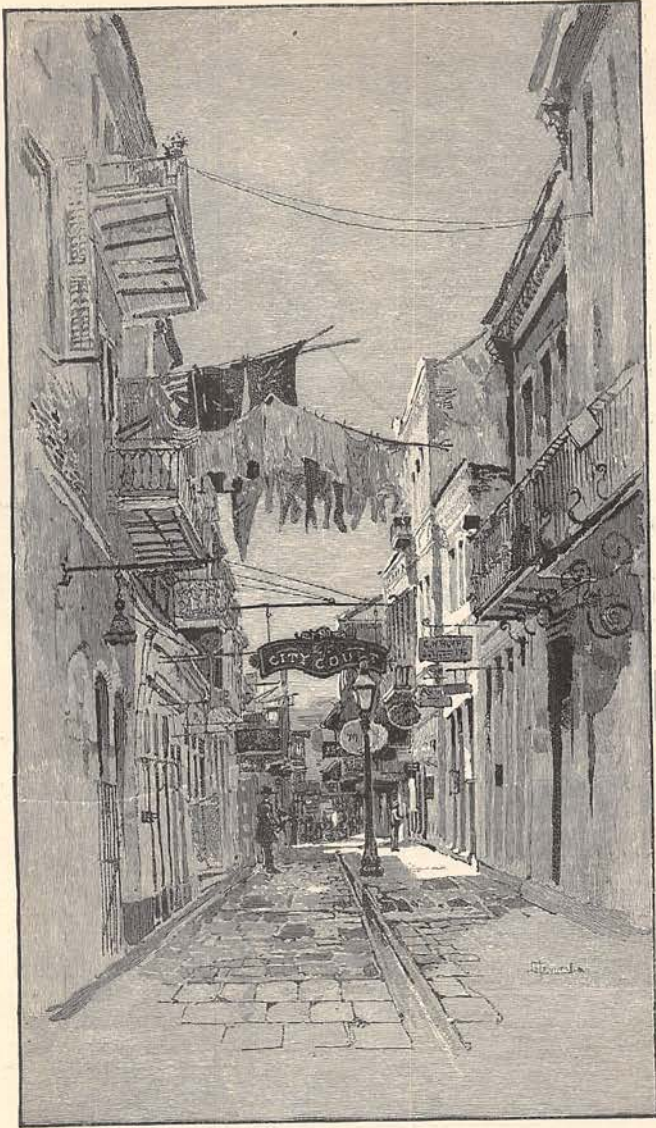
One of the many developments in commerce, unforeseen by New Orleans in her days of over-confidence, was the increase in



OLD "PASSAGE DE LA BOURSE" (EXCHANGE ALLEY AND STATE HOUSE.)

the size of sea-going vessels. It had been steady and rapid, but was only seen when the larger vessels had begun to shun the bars and mud-lumps of the river's mouths. In 1852 there were, for weeks, nearly forty ships aground there, suffering detentions of from two days to eight weeks. It is true, some slack-handed attention had been given to these bars from the earliest times. Even in 1721, M. de Pauger, a French engineer, had recommended a system for scouring them away, by confining the current, not materially different from that which proved so successful one hundred and fifty years later. The United States Government made surveys and reports in 1829, '37, '39, '47, and '51. But, while nature was now shoaling one "pass" and now deepening another, the effort to keep them open artificially was not efficiently or persistently made. Dredging, harrowing, jettying, and side-canalizing—all were proposed, and some were tried; but nothing of a permanent character was effected. In 1853 vessels were again grounding on the bars, where some of them remained for months.

At length, in 1874, Mr. James B. Eads came forward with a proposition to secure a permanent channel in one of the passes, twenty-eight feet deep, by a system of jetties. He met with strenuous opposition from pro-



EXCHANGE ALLEY, LOOKING TOWARD CANAL STREET.

fessional and unprofessional sources, but overcame both man and nature, and in July successfully completed the work which has made him world-famous and which promises to New Orleans once more a magnificent future. Through a "pass" where a few years ago vessels of ten feet draft went aground, a depth of thirty feet is assured. Capital has responded to this great change.

Railroads have hurried and are hurrying down upon the city, and have joined her with Mexico and California; new energies, new ambitions, are felt by her people; and in every department of life and every branch of society there is earnest, intelligent effort to remove old drawbacks and prepare for the harvests of richer years.