

The Brazos bottoms near by, are four or five miles wide. They are of very great fertility, and the land commands high prices. A gentleman from Alabama had recently purchased a league (4,400 acres) for \$40,000, and during the winter, with three hundred negroes, had cleared and planted seven hundred acres. The bottom is seldom reached by freshets, but was covered in those of the years 1833, 1843, and 1852. We were landed from the ferry near night, and, barely accomplishing the dark and heavy miles of bottom by twilight, camped under a group of huge oaks, at the edge of the great coast-prairie.

To Houston the road lay across a flat surface, having a wet, sandy or "craw-fish" soil, bearing a coarse, rushy grass, diversified by occasional belts of pine and black-jack. We had reached the level prairie region of the coast, and in fact saw

henceforth not one appreciable elevation until we crossed the Mississippi. Five miles from Houston we entered a pine forest, which extends to the town.

HOUSTON.

Houston, at the head of the navigation of Buffalo Bayou, has had for many years the advantage of being the point of transshipment of a great part of the merchandise that enters or leaves the State. It shows many agreeable signs of the wealth accumulated, in homelike, retired residences, its large and good hotel, its well-supplied shops, and its shaded streets. The principal thoroughfare, opening from the steamboat landing, is the busiest we saw in Texas. Near the bayou are extensive cotton-sheds, and huge exposed piles of bales.* The bayou itself is hardly larger than an ordinary canal, and steamboats would be unable to turn, were it not for a deep creek opposite the levee, up which they can push their stems. There are several neat churches, a theatre (within the walls of a steam saw-mill), and a most remarkable number of showy bar-rooms and gambling saloons. A poster announced that the "cock-pit is open every night, and on Saturday night five fights will come off for a stake of \$100."

A curious feature of the town is the appearance of small cisterns of tar, in which long-handled dippers are floating, at the edge of the sidewalk, at the front of each store. This is for the use of the swarming wagoners.

Houston (pronounced Hewston) has the reputation of being an unhealthy residence. The country around it is low and flat,

* The receipts of cotton for the year ending Sept. 1, 1856, were 45,557 bales, or about one-half the receipts of Galveston.

and generally covered by pines. It is settled by small farmers, many of whom are Germans, owning a few cattle, and drawing a meagre subsistence from the thin soil. A large number of unfortunate emigrants, who arrive with exhausted purses, remain in the town at labor, or purchase a little patch or cabin in the vicinity. The greater part of the small tradesmen and mechanics of the town are German.

In the bayou bottoms near by, we noticed many magnolias, now in full glory of bloom, perfuming delicately the whole atmosphere. We sketched one which stood one hundred and ten feet high, in perfect symmetry of development, superbly dark and lustrous in foliage, and studded from top to lowest branch with hundreds of great delicious white flowers.