

X.

A VISIT TO HOUSTON.

THE need of manufactures is, indeed, strongly felt throughout Texas. In nearly every county farmers and merchants are paying treble and quadruple the prices they can afford to pay for goods brought thousands of miles, whereas, local investment in manufacturing establishments would enable them to multiply facilities for agricultural development, and for the comfort and culture of which the interior is now so barren.

Now that transit facilities have come, such an outgrowth of manufactures may be looked for.

The wheat region of Texas comprehends 40,000 square miles. What millions of barrels of flour, if proper mills were at hand, might be placed in the market two months in advance of consignments from the West!

Houston has already begun the manufacture of cotton cloth, and applicants for situations in the mills are so numerous that the employers are embarrassed by them. At Hempstead, New Braunfels, and the State Penitentiary, this manufac-



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ture is prosperous; yet I doubt if more than \$1,000,000 is thus invested in the whole State. The people of Texas are learning that they have in their very midst all the elements necessary to support life and make it comfortable and even luxurious; and they are making a genuine effort to secure and hold Northern and Western capital.

In a few years cotton and woolen mills will rapidly multiply in Texas; labor will be cheap, because of the cheapness of provisions and the ease with which life is sustained; and Northern capital will find one of its most profitable fields in the very region which, ten years ago, was hardly counted among the cotton and woolen producing sections of the South. The "cotton train" is already a

familiar spectacle on all the great trunk lines. It is carefully guarded against danger from fire by vigilant negroes, and when seen at a distance, crawling across the level lands, looks like some huge reptile, from whose nostrils issue smoke and steam.

Houston is one of the most promising of Texan towns. It lies fifty miles inland from Galveston, on Buffalo Bayou, and is now the central point of a complicated and comprehensive railway system. It was christened after the resolute, strong-hearted and valiant man whose genius so aided in creating an independent Texas, and it cherishes his memory tenderly. It is the ambitious rival of Galveston, and because nature has endowed its streets with unusual capacity for muddiness, Galveston calls its inhabitants "mud-turtles." A free exchange of satiric compliments between the two infant cities is of frequent occurrence.

In the days of the Texan republic, when Houston was the capital, it was an important point. Only fifteen miles below the present town limits, on the banks of the picturesque bayou, that republic was born; for the travail of San Jacinto certainly brought it to the light. Audubon, the naturalist, has left a curious memorial of Houston as it was during the republic. The residence of President Houston was a typical Southern log-cabin, two large frame-works, roofed, and with a wide passage-way between. Audubon found the President dressed in a fancy velvet coat, and trowsers trimmed with broad gold lace, and was at once invited to take a drink with him. All the surroundings were uncouth and dirty, in Audubon's eyes; but he did not fail to recognize that the stern men who had planted a liberty pole on that desolate prairie in memory of the battle of San Jacinto would make Texas an autonomy. They did their rough work in their rough way; but it will stand for all time. The old "Capitol," now a hotel, stands on the main street of modern Houston. It is a plain two-story wooden structure, painted white; and contains the "Senate Chamber" which once resounded to the eloquence of the early heroes.

Houston was a little settlement which had sprung up near the town of Harrisburg, the scene of many dramatic events when the republic was struggling with Santa Anna for its life; and the Texan Congress first met there in 1837. There, too, was finally and definitely established the first Texan newspaper, *The Houston Telegraph*, an adventurous sheet which had been forced by Mexican invasion to flee from town to town, until Houston's victory confirmed its right to live. To-day it is one of the institutions of Texas; has been edited by men of rare culture; showed wonderful enterprise in obtaining news during the war of secession, and is a credit to the State.

My first visit to Houston was in winter. It was late at night when, after a long ride from the frontier of the Indian territory, where snow was still on the ground, I

"Dropt into that magic land."

Stepping from the train, I walked beneath skies which seemed Italian. The stillness, the warmth, the delicious dreaminess, the delicate languor were most intoxicating. A faint breeze, with a hint of perfume in it, came

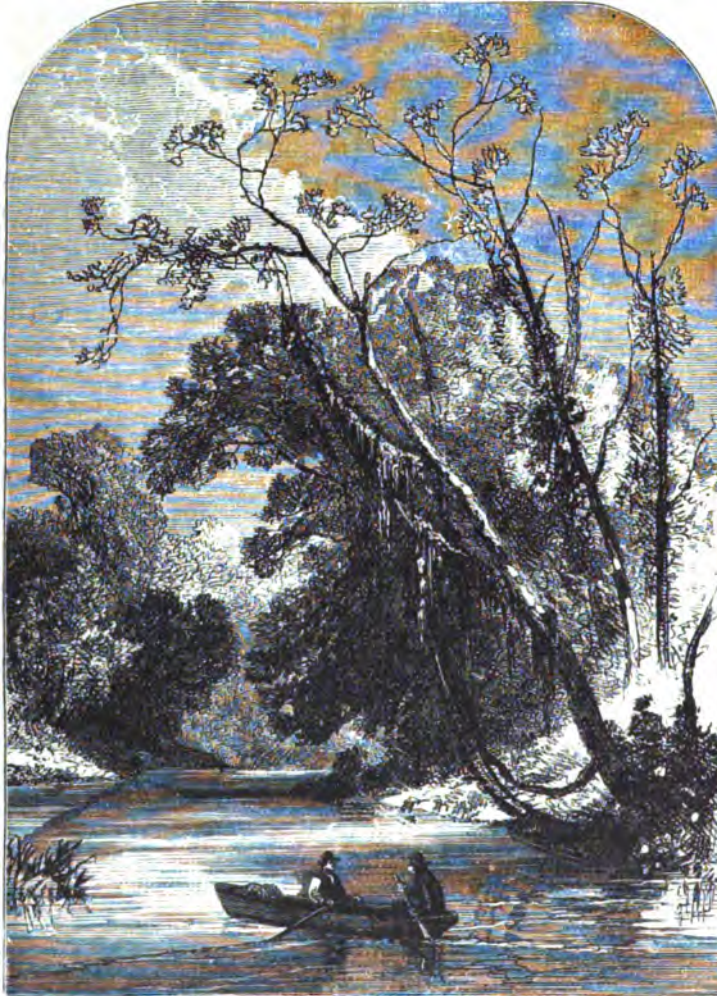
through the lattice of my window at the hotel. The magnolias sent their welcome; the roses, the dense beds of fragrant blossoms, exhaled their greeting. Roses bloom all winter, and in the early spring and May the gardens are filled with them.

The bayou which leads from Houston to Galveston, and is one of the main commercial highways between the two cities, is overhung by lofty and graceful magnolias; and in the season of their blossoming, one may sail for

miles along the channel with the heavy, passionate fragrance of the queen flower drifting about him.

Houston is set down upon prairie land; but there are some notable nooks and bluffs along the bayou, whose channel barely admits the passage of the great white steamer which plies to and from the coast. This bayou Houston hopes one day to widen and dredge all the way to Galveston; but its prettiness and romance will then be gone.

On the morning of my arrival I was inducted into the mysteries of a "Norther," which came raving and



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tearing over the town, threatening, to my fancy, to demolish even the housetops. Just previous to the outbreak, the air was clear and the sun was shining, although it was cold, and the wind cut sharply. This "dry Norther" was the revulsion after the calm and sultry atmosphere of the previous day. A cloud-wave, like a warning herald, rose up in the north, and then the Norther himself

"Upon the wings of mighty winds
Came flying all abroad."