

The story, as condensed in the following narrative, tells us that many years ago, when Mexico was almost wholly without the Bible, a Mexican gentleman of large property and influence had in his possession a wooden image called "San Roman," which was said to have been found floating in the ocean, and which he seemed to think was almost divine in its influence. His estate was named after it, and he built for it a church in which it was worshipped. When the season was dry he prayed to it for rain, and in sickness or trouble they prayed to it for relief and aid.

The planter of San Roman could neither read nor write, nor could anyone on his large estate. One day when he was in Matamoras on business, a gentleman showed him a book which he said was "*the Word of God*." He had never before heard of it, and asked, "Was it a letter, or a history, or what?" And he became so interested about it that he offered its owner twenty silver dollars for it, which, however, was declined, for the owner valued it as a priceless treasure and would not part with it for money. But the planter was not to be put off. "You," he said, "can get another copy and I cannot. I never heard till now that God had sent any message to this world, but since He has I must have it. Take the twenty dollars and give me the book."

It was finally given to him, and with it he started for home. On the way he stopped at the house of a friend, and urged him to come with him and read the wonderful message he had bought. "I have a book—a strange book," he said "and I want you to go with me and read it to me and my family;" adding, with a deeply solemn air, "*It is the Word of God to man!*"

The friend thus appealed to mounted his horse and the two rode on to San Roman. As soon as they reached the place the planter ordered the great bell of the plantation to be rung, and called the hands from every part of his large estate, when he told them to be seated to hear some wonderful and most important news. After a few words of explanation, the planter turned to his friend and said, "Now begin at the beginning of the book and read on till we all understand its message."

The reader began with the first chapter of Matthew, and going on soon came to the verse which says that Jesus "shall save his people from their sins;" and then he went on with the story of the wise men of the East, and the baptism of Christ, and His feeding the five thousand, and so on to the end of the Gospel. The people become deeply interested in the new and wonderful story. As they heard of the betrayal of Christ, murmurs of sorrow ran through the crowd; and when Christ was crucified, they bowed their heads and wept. But as the narrative went on, and the Saviour rose from the grave, and talked with His disciples, and ascended on high, saying to His disciples, "Lo! I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," the planter rose and said: "There is one thing I am most glad to hear, and that is the last words of Jesus, when He tells His disciples to go into all the world and tell these glad tidings to every creature. Now," he said, "some of these disciples will come here to San Roman, and will tell us all about this good news, and teach us, as Jesus taught them. They will soon be here, I am sure, as Christ told them. In the meantime we must learn to read this wonderful book, that we may do what it commands us to do. The disciples have been long in coming to us, but the world is large, you know; and, though there may be some delay, they will certainly come, for Jesus has told them to do so."

The planter and his sons at once began to learn to read the precious book, and it was read from time to time to all on the plantation, where, as of old in Judea, "it was heard gladly." Year after year they met on the Lord's day, till at last a Christian settlement was formed and flourished where the wooden image had once been worshipped. At length the planter heard of a man in Matamoras "who talked like the book," and at once he went in search of him, when he found that all Matamoras was stirred with his teaching. It was with difficulty that the man could be persuaded to go so far into