

fertile, and the climate too genial, not to attract a numerous population, which will not fail to break the yoke, that is borne only by imbecility. France, by obtaining possession of Louisiana, cannot prevent this effect, necessary from the succession of time and consciousness of strength ; but she will retard it.

After a residence of more than two months in New Orleans, I quitted it on the 29th of December, notwithstanding the pressing invitations of my friends, and the dangers of the season. The vessel in which I embarked, bound for Bourdeaux, carried Spanish colours, and was called *La Mexicana*. The country below New Orleans became level as we descended the river. The lands on both banks are well cultivated within twenty miles of the town ; but beyond that distance small portions are only attended to, on account of the whole being a great part of the year inundated by the river.

Sixty miles below New Orleans is fort Plaquemine, erected during the government and under the direction of Baron de Carondelet. Fort Plaquemine, strongly built of brick, presents a battery of twelve long pieces of cannon on both sides towards the river. Fort Bourbon, on the opposite bank, has a battery which crosses that of Plaquemine : the garrison of these two posts is composed of from eighty to one hundred men, commanded by a lieutenant-colonel.

From Plaquemine to Balise, the last Spanish port on the Mississippi, the country is uninhabited, and the land so low that there can never be any establishments formed. At Balise the pilot-major resides, who has the exclusive right of piloting all ships either to or from New Orleans. This privilege, which was granted by the Spanish government, is very injurious to navigators. The pilots under his command, having no competitors to fear, only go out when the vessel is near the port. It is the more injurious to commerce, because the approach to the land in this part of the gulf is extremely dangerous, both on account of the violence of the winds, and the number of the mouths of the Mississippi, which often deceive navigators. The accidents which happen would be in part prevented, if the pilotage was free to all that had served a regular apprenticeship : the love of gain would induce them to go to ships at some miles from the coast.

Another inconvenience of exclusive privileges is, that the King of Spain, who is charged with all the expences of piloting, maintains no vessels proper to assist those that meet with accidents.

Those that navigate in these latitudes ought to pay particular attention to the point of the compass in which it is proper to enter the port. The pilot assured me, that on account of the