

and the boat gently drifting with the current, when on a promontory a little ahead of them appeared two persons, who hailed them as they approached, and made signs they wished them to stop. They turned out to be Frenchmen from the settlement of the Natches, who were on the look-out for Father Maret. They had heard that a priest was on his way to New Orleans. Father Souel had gone some weeks before to the district of the Yasous. Two or three persons had fallen ill since and were lying on their death-beds in great need of spiritual assistance. The next day happened to be a Sunday, and the French, together with a few native Christians, had commissioned these deputies to entreat the stranger priest to tarry for a few hours to say Mass for them, and to minister to the sick and dying. D'Auban did not much like the idea of this delay, but the need was so urgent that he did not feel himself justified in refusing his assent. The boat was accordingly moored to the shore and a single rower left in charge of it. The travelling party, escorted by the messengers, proceeded to the city of the Natches, where Christians from the neighboring habitations had met and were awaiting Father Maret's arrival.

Mina was enchanted to land, after so many weary days' confinement in the boat, to run on the grass and to climb the hill which stood between the river and the beautiful plain in which the tribe of the Sun—for so the Natches called themselves—had built their city, or rather the immense village, the huts of which were scattered amidst groves of acacias and tulip-trees. In the centre of a square stood the palace of the Sun, or chief, of the nation. Opposite to it was the abode of the female Sun, mother of the heir-apparent. It was only as to size that these palaces differed from the other huts. All the houses were composed of one story. They were roofed with thatch interwoven with leaves. The halls were hung with mats of a fine texture and embroidered in various colors. The day was waning as the travellers approached the city. Torches of blazing pine-wood, fixed at certain distances, and carried about in the hands of the inhabitants, threw a red light over the scene, which heightened its picturesque effect. Mina's delight knew no bounds. It was like Fairy-land opening to her sight. New and beautiful flowers seemed to grow

on every side, and the golden fruit on the trees, mingling with white blossoms, filled her with admiration. She saw, for the first time, regular gardens and alleys symmetrically planted. All the gorgeous beauty of southern vegetation united to a degree of civilization she had never before witnessed.

The party was received at the door of Father Souel's hut by his only servant, an old negro, who clapped his hands with joy at the sight of a black robe. He explained in broken French all the chief of prayer would have to do, and, with scarce a moment's delay, Father Maret hastened to the huts of the sick persons he named to him. D'Auban in the mean time went to visit some of the neighboring French colonists. He found them unconscious of any approaching danger, and did not think it prudent to communicate to them the intelligence he had received from M. Perrier. Circumstances might have changed since his letter had been written, and, in any case, a panic among the Europeans would only have been likely to precipitate a collision with the natives. In a very short time now, he would be able to confer with the governor of the colony on the necessary precautions to be taken for the protection of the Europeans. One person mentioned that, a short time ago, a deputation from the chief had gone to M. Chepar, the commander of the neighboring fort, to remonstrate on some harsh measures which the Natches complained of. There had been a great deal of mutual irritation at that time, which now appeared to have subsided. Apprehensions, however, were entertained of ill-will towards the French on the part of the Dacotahs, a fierce race, often at war with neighbors, and supposed to be hostile to the colonists.

M. des Ursins, the owner of one of the principal concessions in this district, described the Natches as a clever, cunning, but effeminate people, who would never venture on any daring act, or do more than strive to outwit their neighbors and cheat them in their bargains. "They have had, however," he added, laughing, "the worst of it just now in a transaction of this sort. Their hunters, which comprise, as you know, almost all the men of the tribe, are preparing for the winter season, and have been at the fort haggling with the officers about the purchase of guns and