

## CHAPTER XXIX.

Excursion from New Orleans to the Mouths of the River.—Steam-Boat Accidents.—River Fogs.—Successive Growths of Willow on River Bank.—Pilot-Station of the Balize.—Lighthouse destroyed by Hurricane.—Reeds, Shells, and Birds on Mud-Banks.—Drift-Wood.—Difficulty of estimating the annual Increase of Delta.—Action of Tides and Currents.—Tendency in the old Soundings to be restored.—Changes of Mouths in a Century inconsiderable.—Return to New Orleans.—Battle-Ground.—Sugar-Mill.—Contrast of French and Anglo-American Races.—Causes of Difference.—State and Progress of Negroes in Louisiana.

*Feb. 28, 1846.*—BEFORE my arrival at New Orleans, I had resolved to visit the mouths of the Mississippi, and see the banks of sand, mud, and drift timber, recently formed there during the annual inundations. Dr. William Carpenter, although in full practice as a physician, kindly offered to accompany me, and his knowledge of botany and geology, as well as his amiable manners, made him a most useful and agreeable companion.\*

I had heard much of the dangers of the Mississippi, and even before I left New England, some of my friends, partly in jest, and partly for the sake of inspiring me with due caution, in the choice of vessels and captains, had told me endless stories of the risks we should run. One of them presented to me a newspaper, containing a formidable array of last year's casualties. Fifty vessels had been snagged, twenty-seven sunk, sixteen had burst their boilers, fifteen had been run into by other vessels, thirteen destroyed by fire, ten wrecked, and seven cut through by ice. This enumeration was followed by an account of the number of persons drowned or injured. Another friend called my attention to a form of advertisement, not uncommon in the St. Louis papers, headed thus, "A fine opportunity of going below." This, he explained, "does not mean *going to the bottom*, as you might

\* This excellent naturalist, I regret to say, died soon afterward, in the prime of life, at New Orleans, in 1848.