Remember the Alamo

by Amelia E. Barr

CHAPTER I. THE CITY IN THE WILDERNESS.

"What, are you stepping westward?" "Yea."

Yet who would stop or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter there was none,
With such a sky to lead him on!"
--WORDSWORTH.

"Ah! cool night wind, tremulous stars,
Ah! glimmring water,
Fitful earth murmur,
Dreaming woods!"
--ARNOLD.

In A. D. sixteen hundred and ninety-two, a few Franciscan

monks began to build a city. The site chosen was a lovely wilderness hundreds of miles away from civilization on every side, and surrounded by savage and warlike tribes. But the spot was as beautiful as the garden of God. It was shielded by picturesque mountains, watered by two rivers, carpeted with flowers innumerable, shaded by noble trees joyful with the notes of a multitude of singing birds. To breathe the balmy atmosphere was to be conscious of some rarer and finer life, and the beauty of the sunny skies--marvellous at dawn and eve with tints of saffron and amethyst and opal--was like a dream of heaven.

One of the rivers was fed by a hundred springs situated in the midst of charming bowers. The monks called it the San Antonio; and on its banks they built three noble Missions. The shining white stone of the neighborhood rose in graceful domes and spires above the green trees.

Sculptures, bassorelievos, and lines of gorgeous coloring adorned the exteriors. Within, were splendid altars and the appealing charms of incense, fine vestures and fine music; while from the belfreys, bells sweet and resonant called to the savages,who paused spell-bound and half-afraid to listen.

Certainly these priests had to fight as well as to pray. The Indians did not suffer them to take possession of their Eden without passionate and practical protest. But what the monks had taken, they kept; and the fort and the soldier followed the priest and the Cross. Ere long, the beautiful Mission became a beautiful city, about which a sort of fame full of romance and mystery gathered. Throughout the south and west,up the great highway of the Mississippi, on the busy streets of New York, and among the silent hills of New England, men spoke of San Antonio, as in the seventeenth century they spoke of Peru;

as in the eighteenth century they spoke of Delhi, and Agra, and the Great Mogul.

Sanguine French traders carried thither rich ventures in fancy wares from New Orleans; and Spanish dons from the wealthy cities of Central Mexico, and from the splendid homes of Chihuahua, came there to buy. And from the villages of Connecticut, and the woods of Tennessee, and the lagoons of Mississippi, adventurous Americans entered the Texan territory at Nacogdoches. They went through the land, buying horses and lending their ready rifles and stout hearts to every effort of that constantly increasing body of Texans, who, even in their swaddling bands, had begun to cry Freedom!

At length this cry became a clamor that shook even the old viceroyal palace in Mexico; while in San Antonio it gave a certain pitch to all conversation, and made men wear

their cloaks, and set their beavers, and display their arms, with that demonstrative air of independence they called los Americano. For, though the Americans were numerically few,they were like the pinch of salt in a pottage--they gave the snap and savor to the whole comunity.

Over this Franciscan-Moorish city the sun set with an incomparable glory one evening in May, eighteen thirty-five. The white, flat-roofed, terraced houses--each one in its flowery court--and the domes and spires of the Missions, with their gilded crosses, had a mirage-like beauty in the rare,soft atmo phere, as if a dream of Old Spain had been materialized in a wilderness of the New World.

But human life in all its essentials was in San Antonio, as it was and has been in all other cities since the world

began. Women were in their homes, dressing and cooking, nursing their children and dreaming of their lovers. Men were in the market-places, buying and selling, talking of politics and anticipating war. And yet in spite of these fixed attributes, San Antonio was a city penetrated with romantic elements, and constantly picturesque.

On this evening, as the hour of the Angelus approached, the narrow streets and the great squares were crowded with a humanity that assaulted and captured the senses at once; so vivid and so various were its component parts. A tall sinewy American with a rifle across his shoulder was paying some money to a Mexican in blue velvet and red silk, whose breast was covered with little silver images of his favorite saints. A party of Mexican officers were strolling to the Alamo; some in white linen and scarlet sashes, others glittering with color and golden ornaments. Side by side with these were monks of

various orders: the Franciscan in his blue gown and large white hat; the Capuchin in his brown serge; the Brother of Mercy in his white flowing robes. Add to these diversities, Indian peons in ancient sandals, wom dressed as in the days of Cortez and Pizarro, Mexican vendors of every kind, Jewish traders, negro servants, rancheros curvetting on their horses, Apache and Comanhe braves on spying e xpeditions: and, in this various crowd, yet by no means of it, small groups of Americans; watchful, silent, armed to the teeth: and the mind may catch a glimpse of what the streets of San Antonio were in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty-five.

It was just before sunset that the city was always at its gayest point. Yet, at the first toll of the Angelus, a silence like that of enchantment fell upon it. As a mother cries hush to a noisy child, so the angel of the city seemed

in this evening bell to bespeak a minute for holy thought. It was only a minute, for with the last note there was even an access of tumult. The doors and windows of the better houses were thrown open, ladies began to appear on the balconies,there was a sound of laughter and merry greetings, and the tiny cloud of the cigarette in every direction.

But amid this sunset glamour of splendid color, of velvet, and silk, and gold embroidery, the man who would have certainly first attracted a stranger's eye wore the plain and ugly costume common at that day to all American gentlemen. Only black cloth and white linen and a row palmetto hat with a black ribbon around it; but he wore his simple garments with the air of a man having authority, and he returned the continual salutations of rich and poor, like one who had been long familiar with public appreciation.

It was Dr. Robert Worth, a physician whose fame had penetrated to the utmost boundaries of the territories of New Spain. He had been twenty-seven years in San Antonio. He was a familiar friend in every home. In sickness and in death he had com close to the hearts in them. Protected at first by the powerful Urrea family, he had found it easy to retain his nationality, and yet live down envy and suspicion. The rich had shown him their gratitude with gold; the poor he had never sent unrelieved away, and they had given him their love.

When in the second year of his residence he married Dona Maria Flores, he gave, even to doubtful officials, security for his political intentions. And his future conduct had seemed to warrant their fullest confidence. In those never ceasing American invasions between eighteen hundred and three and eighteen hundred and thirty-two, he

had been the friend and succourer of his countrymen, but never their confederate;their adviser, but never their confidant.

He was a tall, muscular man of a distinguished appearance. His hair was white. His face was handsome and good to see. He was laconic in speech, but his eyes were closely observant of all within their range, and they asked searching questions. He had a reverent soul, wisely tolerant as to creeds, and he loved his country with a passion which absence from it constantly intensified. He was believed to be a thoroughly practical man, fond of accumulating land and gold; but his daughter Antonia knew that he had in reality a noble imagination. When he spoke to her of the woods, she felt the echoes of the forest ring through the room; when of the sea,its walls mlted away in an horizon of long rolling waves.

He was thinking of Antonia as he walked slowly to his home in the suburbs of the city. Of all his children she was the nearest to him. She had his mother's beauty. She had also his mother's upright rectitude of nature. The Iberian strain had passed her absolutely by. She was a northern rose in a tropical garden. As he drew near to his own gates, he involuntarily quickened his steps. He knew that Antonia would be waiting. He could see among the thick flowering shrubs her tall slim figure clothed in white. As she came swiftly down the dim aisles to meet him, he felt a sentiment of worship for her. She concentrated in herself his memory of home, mther,and country. She embodied, in the perfectness of their mental companionship, that rarest and sweetest of ties--a beloved child, who is also a wise friend and a sympathetic comrade. As he entered the garden she slipped her hand into his. He clasped it tightly. His smile answered her smile. There was no need for any

words of salutation.

The full moon had risen. The white house stood clearly out in its radiance. The lattices were wide open and the parlor lighted. They walked slowly towards it, between hedges of white camelias and scarlet japonicas. Vanilla, patchuli,verbena, wild wandering honeysuckle--a hundred other scents-perfumed the light, warm air. As they came near the house there was a sound of music, soft and tinkling, with a rhythmic accent as pulsating as a beating heart.

"It is Don Luis, father."

"Ah! He plays well--and he looks well."

They had advanced to where Don Luis was distinctly visible. He was within the room, but leaning against the

open door,playing upon a mandolin. Robert Worth smiled as he offered his hand to him. It was impossible not to smile at a youth so handsome, and so charming--a youth who had all the romance of the past in his name, his home, his picturesque costume; and all the enchantments of hope and great enthusiasms in his future.

"Luis, I am glad to see you; and I felt your music as soon as I heard it."

He was glancing inquiringly around the room as he spoke; and Antonia answered the look:

"Mother and Isabel are supping with Dona Valdez. There is to be a dance. I am waiting for you, father. You must put on your velvet vest."

"And you, Luis?"

"I do not go. I asked the judge for the appointment. He refused me. Very well! I care not to drink chocolate and dance in his house. One hand washes the other, and one cousin should help another."

"Why did he refuse you?"

"Who can tell?" but Luis shrugged his shoulders expressively,and added, "He gave the office to Blas-Sangre."

"Ah!"

"Yes, it is so--naturally;--Blas-Sangre is rich, and when the devil of money condescends to appear, every little devil rises up to do him homage."

"Let it pass, Luis. Suppose you sing me that last verse again. It had a taking charm. The music was like a boat rocking on the water."

"So it ought to be. I learned the words in New Orleans. The music came from the heart of my mandolin. Listen, Senor!

"`Row young oarsman, row, young oarsman,
Into the crypt of the night we float:
Fair, faint moonbeams wash and wander,
Wash and wander about the boat.
Not a fetter is here to bind us,
Love and mery lose their spell;
Friends that we have left behind us,
Prisoners of content,--farewell!'"

"You are a wizard, Luis, and I have had a sail with you.

Now, come with us, and show those dandy soldiers from the Alamo how to dance."

"Pardon! I have not yet ceased to cross myself at the affront of this morning. And the Senora Valdez is in the same mind as her husband. I should be received by her like a dog at mass. I am going to-morrow to the American colony on the Colorado."

"Be careful, Luis. These Austin colonists are giving great trouble--there have been whispers of very strong measures. I speak as a friend."

"My heart to yours! But let me tell you this about the Americans--their drum is in the hands of one who knows how to beat it."

"As a matter of hearsay, are you aware that three