

1731.

a single chief, and that most of them kept themselves shut up from the fear of falling into the hands of the Indians if they attempted to escape separately, or of being perceived by the besiegers if they all escaped in a body.

Most of them escape.

They were not, however, cannonaded; moreover, the weather was fearful, the rain having been incessant for three days; the besieged trusted that the French would be less careful in watching the passes, and they were not mistaken. About eight o'clock at night, Mr. de Benac sent word to Mr. Perrier that they were escaping. The trenches and all the posts at once were ordered to fire, but the fugitives passed unperceived along a bayou or little river, which ran between the quarter of the militia and that of the Baron de Cresnay; and before it was known, and we entered the fort, they were already far off with their wives and children. Only one woman was found, who had been just delivered of a child, and one man in the act of escaping.<sup>1</sup>

Our Indians refuse to pursue them. The French army decamps.

The next day, the 26th, we endeavored to induce the Indians to pursue these fugitives, but they refused, saying that as they had escaped by our fault, it was our business to pursue them; so that having no longer any enemies to fight, our troops had to think of returning. The same day, all the prisoners were bound; the Sun, his brother, brother-in-law, Saint Côme and all of that family were put on board the Saint Louis. Forty warriors were put in the demi-galley commanded by le Sueur. The women and children, numbering in all three hundred and eighty-seven persons, were distributed among the other vessels. The whole army embarked on the 27th, and on the 5th of February reached New Orleans.<sup>2</sup>

Forces of the Natchez after this siege.

The war was far from being finished. Le Sueur had ascertained from the Head Chief that the whole nation was not by any means in the fort that we had besieged;

<sup>1</sup> Perrier's Dispatch, March 25, sent to St. Domingo and sold as slaves. Bienville saw them there this affair mainly as here. in 1733. Letter, 28 January. Gayarré, i., p. 292.

<sup>2</sup> The Sun and other chiefs were