

friendship with the French, and he succeeded in this all the better, because these people saw clearly, by his conduct, that he was not in their midst to make a fortune. This disinterestedness established his credit, and through that he became useful—we dare to say, even necessary—to the colony.

It was especially in the Chactas nation that the missionaries rendered this essential service; those who know Louisiana know of what importance it was to maintain an alliance between this nation and ours. If alienated from our interests and excited against us, they could some day destroy the colony by sacking New Orleans, a city which is without defense. It was to prevent such acts that the missionaries endured the burden of living with the Chactas, so barbarous a people, and made them feel how advantageous to them was the friendship of the French, and of what value in their estimation ought to be the presents brought to them regularly every year. If these presents were to fail, as happened during the war, it was for the missionary to keep up their good will by promising to indemnify them. What services did the Jesuits not render also when every year they went with Messieurs the Governors to the fort of Mobile, where the Chactas assembled for the distribution of presents? To do that usefully and judiciously, it was necessary for the Governor to know at least the principal individuals of the nation, and among them the most friendly and the most important. Now who could give them these ideas, if not the missionary who lived with them,—who kept in touch with the most trusty, and who, to learn what was going on in the thirty villages of the Chactas, visited them regularly? Yet if it had only