

"Oh," he exclaimed, "This is too bad! I swear to you I never killed a woman or a child."

"Then you did not fight in Mexico, did not help to bombard Buena Vista."³

His friends joined him, and insisted that I did the Colonel great wrong, when he looked squarely into my face and, holding out his hand, said:

"For sake of the old church, for sake of the old man, for sake of the old times, give me your hand."

I laid it in his, and hurried away, unable to speak, for he was the most eloquent man in Pennsylvania. He fell at last at the head of his regiment, while fighting in the battle of Fair Oaks,⁴ for that freedom he had betrayed in Mexico.

³Swisshelm is confusing Buena Vista with the Battle of Vera Cruz.

⁴A Civil War battle.

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GODEY'S LADY'S BOOK

Life on the Rio Grande

April 1847

Godey's Lady's Book, edited in Philadelphia by Sarah Josepha Hale, was the forerunner of today's women's magazines. It featured sentimental fiction, poetry, articles about fashion and "fashion plates" (full-color etchings of new fashions), and nonfiction stories focusing on women and the home, such as the one excerpted here. At three dollars for a year's subscription, the magazine was quite expensive. But it was also extremely popular among middle-class women, with a circulation in the high five figures in the 1840s. Godey's promoted the ideal of the "woman's sphere," or domesticity, which argued that women were especially suited to uplift the family and society through their influence in the home. The magazine avoided political issues and controversial topics, which were considered inappropriate for women. This article about life in Texas, published in the midst of the war between the United States and Mexico, studiously

From "Life on the Rio Grande," *Godey's Lady's Book*, April 1847, 177.

avoids mentioning the war. But its fawning description of the advancement of civilization in Texas, as well as the improved status of Texas women, indicates that while domesticity and Manifest Destiny might seem radically different today, they were actually mutually reinforcing ideologies. This article suggests that at least some women believed that they had a crucial role to play in advancing Manifest Destiny.

There they are, pic-nic-ing in real gipsy style, enjoying that life of freedom dwellers in the pent-up city would find so delightful—for a few days. But the scene will soon be changed. The foot of the Yankee is on the soil, and his presence is everywhere the harbinger of improvement and civilization.

It is only eleven years since Texas was a Mexican province, with but a few thousand of American colonists. It is now a member of the great family of free states that form the American Union, with more than two hundred thousand inhabitants. Cities are appearing as by the rubbing of Aladdin's lamp, dwellings and villages dotting the wide prairies, and the school-house and church rising side by side, as on our own New England hills they stand.

As an index of this wonderful change, we saw lately a list of the post-offices now established in Texas—*one hundred and nineteen!* And remember, that ten years ago where the greater number of these post-offices are now located, was wild forest and prairie.

But another and better omen of prosperity is the attention paid to education. It is this feature of life in Texas that gives it a resemblance to the New England character. As soon as Texas acquired her independence, she made noble appropriations of land for this object. . . . It seems that the citizens have now provided free schools for the education of all the children of Galveston, and this event was one of great rejoicing. They had a procession, oration, poem, and an evening party, in which parents and children seem to have been as "happy as happy could be." . . . Men may enjoy the nomadic life, but for woman the lot is hard. And to show how highly the influence of the sex is valued in this new state of Texas, we will quote a few sentences from the eloquent address of General H. McLeod,¹ delivered at Galveston on the opening of their public schools, to which we have adverted.

"The civilization of every age has been the reflection of female influence. In the early dispensation she was the handmaid and the hireling,

¹Hugh McLeod, the first Adjutant General of Texas.

and 'when the sound of the grinding was low,' woman still toiled at the mill. Under the grotesque chivalry of the middle ages, she rose from menial servitude to queenly power; from having been man's slave, she became his divinity—she was not loved, but worshiped. The ladye-love of the warrior of the cross was as far from woman's true sphere as were the purchased beauties that filled the harem of his Moslem enemy. Modern enlightenment, with its fearless spirit of investigation, has opened the dawn of a new day, and woman's release from her ancient captivity, has disenthralled mankind.

"Remember then, mothers, that the destiny of your daughters is in your own hands; upon them depend the purity and the virtues of the coming generation. Liberty is ever degenerating into license, and man is prone to abandon his sentiments and follow his passions. It is woman's high mission, her prerogative and duty, to counsel, to sustain—ay, to control him. . . ."

Such are the sentiments of a Texan. If acted upon, and the system of popular education now begun is carried out, that state (or states) will soon be among the brightest lights in our galaxy of stars.

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WALT WHITMAN

American Workingmen, Versus Slavery

September 1, 1847

Because President Polk was reticent about his war goals (see Document 27), it was far from obvious to most Americans in 1846 that a massive territorial indemnity from Mexico—opening up vast new regions to slavery—would be the result of the conflict. Poet Walt Whitman was one early supporter of the U.S. war against Mexico who was also steadfastly opposed to slavery. As editor of the Brooklyn Daily Eagle from 1846 to 1848, he predicted, in a piece titled "Shall We Fight It Out?" (May 11, 1846), that a U.S. victory would "teach the world that, while we are not

From Walt Whitman, "American Workingmen, Versus Slavery," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 1, 1847, 2.