

that the ring Señora *Bustamente* had received from Van Ness was a beautiful present, and that she was so extremely proud of it that she was showing it about among all her acquaintances! Here was a discovery, and it is almost unnecessary to say that after this Don Tomas fell most essentially in our esteem. We did not let him know, however, that we had detected him in his little swindling operation. He was useful in doing errands, and probably took as little toll out of our money as any of the natives would have done. His delinquency, too, taught us all a useful lesson—it proved to us that the most specious and honest-seeming among this class of Mexicans had their tricks and failings, and that the best men among them were worthy of close watching.

CHAPTER XVI.

Arrival of a Party of our Companions as Prisoners.—Great Excitement in San Miguel.—Recognition of our Friends, and their Departure.—Don Antonio Baca.—Attachment of one of his Daughters for a Texan Prisoner.—“Old Paint” Caldwell and Nine of his Men brought in Prisoners.—Still greater Excitement in San Miguel.—The Patron Saint brought from his Niche in the Church.—A Mexican Procession.—A funny Figure.—Programme of the Procession.—An old Priest with queer Spectacles.—A Pair of Musicians.—More of San Miguel, the Patron Saint.—End of the Procession.—Startling Information.—Bustamente informs us that all our Comrades have been taken Prisoners.—Great Rejoicing in San Miguel.—General McLeod and other Texans brought into the Plaza.—Mr. Falconer.—Arrival of all the Prisoners.—Dreadful Appearance of the Texans.—Lewis arrives.—News that the Author is to be liberated.—Division of the Spoils.—Agency of Lewis in the Transaction.—A Visit from Lewis.—More of his Treachery and Rascality.—His Departure for Santa Fé.—A veritable History of Don Manuel Armijo, from his Youth upward, being a short but faithful Narrative of his thieving, gambling, assassinating, and other base Acts and Propensities.

WE had now whiled away some eighteen or twenty days in our prison-house at San Miguel, and were anxiously awaiting news of General McLeod's party and

of Armijo's success with this second band of Texans, when Bustamente came hurriedly into our apartment, just as we had finished a late breakfast, and informed us that three or four of our companions had been taken, and were then coming into the town. A crowd of women, girls, and boys, congregated upon the neighbouring housetops and around the door of the alcalde on the opposite side of the plaza, soon convinced us that something had occurred to disturb the ordinary quiet which reigned in San Miguel.

We hurried through the door of our room to a little porch, which was our prison limits, anxiously eyeing every figure within view to see if we could discover an acquaintance. Soon a small cavalcade of ragged Mexicans, guarding two mules, upon each of which a couple of men were packed, were seen turning the corner of a street leading into the plaza—the same street by which we had first entered the town. At first we were not near enough to distinguish the faces of the prisoners, but after they had been halted at the door of the alcalde we made them out to be Lieutenants Scott and Burgess, young John Howard, a brother of the major who was a prisoner with us, and the Mexican servant named Matias, whom Colonel Cooke had sent back to the prairies, from the Angosturas, with the guide to conduct General McLeod to the settlements. We bowed to our friends, and made signs and gestures that we knew and would like to converse with them; they returned our distant salutations in kind, but farther intercourse than this was not allowed by our guards. After remaining a short time at the alcalde's, our friends were sent to a rancho some three miles from San Miguel, and there quartered in the family of a kind-hearted old Mexican, named Don Antonio Baca, a man who

had frequently visited us during our imprisonment, and who had never called without bringing us eggs or some little delicacy. Although we had been denied the satisfaction of conversing with our friends, and learning something of their own movements and the position and prospects of the main party, it was still a source of congratulation to know that excellent quarters had been provided for them. Don Antonio had two or three daughters, pretty, and accomplished too, for that country; we afterward learned that one of them formed an ardent attachment—fell in love, in more common parlance—with one of our young friends, and was affected even to tears and hysterics when he was ordered to the city of Mexico. It is said that no attachment can be stronger, no love more enduring, than that of the better-informed Mexican doncella, when once her heart is touched by the blue eyes, light hair, and fair complexion of some roving Anglo-Saxon. She may not “live and love forever,” as did a certain maid mentioned by some poet; but she loves as long as she lives, and that is long enough in all reason.

A day or two after the party of Texans I have just referred to were conducted through the town, another party, numbering ten, also arrived. They were prisoners, and had the good fortune to be quartered at the house of our old friend Vigil, the man who had saved our lives when we were first captured by Salezar. We did not see this party, but from descriptions given us of their leader by our guard and the girls who visited us, we felt confident he could be no other than “Old Paint” Caldwell, the well-known leader of our spy company, and in this conjecture we were not wrong. Bustamente informed us that they had been taken prisoners by a large party of Mexicans south of the Angosturas, and

that the main body of the Texans was rapidly approaching. We at once came to the conclusion that the two small parties of our friends, now in prison near us, had been sent on in advance, and, as in our case, had been overpowered by numbers, and forced to give up their arms.

A most unwonted excitement was now created in San Miguel. The rumours rife among the people were, that the much-dreaded Texans, whom Armijo had taught them to look upon as so many bloodthirsty cannibals, were advancing in countless numbers, threatening the country with fire, devastation, and the sword. The wax figure of the patron saint of the place, San Miguel, or St. Michael as it is rendered in the English, was dragged from his niche in the little church, mounted upon a large platform, and carried about in procession. A more comical figure than this same San Miguel it would be difficult either to imagine or discover. I cannot say that his saintship had ever been tarred, but he had certainly been feathered from head to foot. From his shoulders hung listlessly a pair of huge, ill-constructed wings, his face was that of a large doll, while his head, to complete the ludicrous *tout ensemble*, was covered with a lace cap of the fashion of our grandmothers. Another figure, intended to represent the Virgin, but nothing more than a doll of the largest size, was carried in state upon the same platform, and over all was a canopy of faded yellow and pink satin, trimmed with fringe, spangles, and tassels. The platform rested upon a litter formed of two long poles, upon which were nailed cross-pieces, and into these cross-pieces were inserted four loose, rickety legs, hardly firm enough to sustain the wax and feathers, satin and spangles, which reclined above them. Whenever the procession was about to

move, the entire fabric would be lifted from the ground, and the ends of the poles placed upon the shoulders of four men.

I will endeavour to give my readers a programme of this singular procession. First came an old, baldheaded priest, a coarse, dirty blanket tied about him with a piece of rope, an open prayer-book in his hand, a rude wooden cross hanging from his neck, and a pair of spectacles on his nose which my companions at first insisted were leather, but which afterward proved to be of glass, about the size of common teacups, and set in wide rims of buffalo horn. Following close at the heels of this odd figure came our particular friend, Juan Sandobal, strumming his crazy mandolin, and digging from it the only tune within his musical scope. By his side walked a brother artist, zealously sawing away upon a rusty violin, the softest tone from which would have set Ole Bull or Wallace raving mad. As each of these performers knew but one tune, and as both were playing at the same time, the reader who may have an ear to detect a crack in a piece of china by the ring can easily imagine the effect produced by such a mixture of anything but sweet sounds. On either side of the musicians, as flankers, walked half a score of ragged, dirty-faced urchins; then came the four men bearing the car, the patron saint in a sitting posture in front, and his head, either from being hung on a pivot or from having become loose in some way, bowing and bobbing to the multitude like the figures of Chinese mandarins in some of the tea-shops. Nothing could be more grotesque and laughable than this comical head of St. Michael, enveloped in an old-fashioned lady's cap, and rising and falling with every motion of the car upon which it was borne. On the same platform, and

immediately behind the figure I have just described, stood the Virgin, dressed in pink satin and spangles, as stiff and inanimate as wood and wax could make her. In the rear of the car followed the women, children, and rabble generally of the town, the faces of a majority of the girls stained, either with vermilion or the juice of some red berry, and many of them presenting an appearance truly hideous.

At different points of the plaza the procession would halt, the bearers of the car would set down their burden, and all would kneel and cross themselves while the old priest read a sentence from the open book before him. One of the principal stopping-places appeared to be directly in front of our little window, and solemn as the affair was intended to be, it was impossible for us to retain our gravity with two such figures as the old priest and the patron saint staring us in the face. Those huge spectacles of the former alone would have drawn a smile from the gloomiest misanthrope that ever lived; and then the comical aspect of the droll figure of San Miguel—waggish in more ways than one, for while it wagged its head it also had a quaint and knowing leer about its eyes—whenever this counterfeit presentment of the saint was brought fairly in sight, we lost our gravity entirely, and were compelled to turn aside to conceal our laughter.

After the procession had knelt in front of our prison, the old priest would call upon every saint in the calendar in general, and San Miguel in particular, to aid the populace against, and protect them from, the vile horde of heretics and barbarians marching against their country. All would then respond by crossing themselves and giving utterance to groans, the *band* would next strike up, and the procession then move slowly to some

other point, there to repeat the same ceremony. In this way the time passed, from the day on which the ten prisoners alluded to a few pages back arrived at San Miguel, to the 9th of October.

At an early hour on the morning of the 9th, our guard gave us the startling information that all the Texans had been captured in the vicinity of the Laguna Colorada, or Red Lake, a body of water some thirty or forty miles south of the Angosturas. At first we could not believe this news, but it was soon confirmed by the ringing of bells, general congratulations and rejoicings, and by a grand procession in honour of the victory. Again was the patron saint of the town mounted on the car, accompanied by the ever-attendant Virgin, and borne about in triumph through the plaza and all the principal streets. Nothing could exceed the joy and enthusiasm of the inhabitants. The only gun in the place—the double-barrelled German affair I have already mentioned, and which had been used to guard and terrify us—was now brought into requisition to give greater spirit to the rejoicing. The fellow who had charge of this piece followed in the rear of the ragged rabble which formed the procession, and, as fast as he could load and fire, kept up an incessant cracking and banging, much to the delight, in particular, of a troop of graceless urchins, who hovered about him on the march. At each of the four corners, and at each of the four sides of the plaza, did the procession stop, kneel down, and publicly thank San Miguel for thus keeping his charge out of the hands of heretics, and all this while the comical image, now arrayed with an extra load of furbelows, feathers, and finery, bowed his acknowledgments to the crowd of

ragged worshippers in a style which would have done credit to any merry-andrew.

Scarcely were these nonsensical mummeries over, before General McLeod and Mr. Navarro, with some ten or fifteen Texan officers and servants, were escorted under a strong guard into the plaza, and placed for safe-keeping in the old quartel we had occupied on the day when Howland and his comrades were shot. Mr. Falconer was seen in this little party by all of us, and although grieved to see him in plight so gloomy, I was still rejoiced to notice that he was in good health. Some of the members of this small party of prisoners were continually passing and repassing our room, within twenty yards of us, on their way to the river for water; they recognised and bowed to us as they passed, but we were not allowed to communicate with them in any way, and were consequently kept in ignorance of the terms of their surrender, and the disposition that was to be made of them.

On the 12th of October, two days after, the rest of the Texan prisoners, more than a hundred and fifty in number, were marched into the plaza. Worn down and emaciated by hunger and fatigue, their pale and haggard countenances showed but too plainly that they had suffered dreadfully after we left them on the Palo Duro. The clothing of many of these poor fellows consisted of but a shirt and pair of pantaloons, and the single blanket which had been left them by the brave and "honourable" Armijo was the poorest they were the possessors of at the time of their capture. They were all taken to a room on the opposite side of the square, and then huddled in like so many sheep in a butcher's pen!

Scarcely were these unfortunate men driven into

their close and uncomfortable quarters before Lewis, well mounted and extremely well dressed, rode up to our quarters, and took lodgings in the same house in which we were confined, although in a different room. He bowed to us as he passed our window, said that "all was right," and remarked that he would call and see us in a short time. The day wore away, however, without his fulfilling his promise, although he passed within a few yards of us several times. There appeared to be a sneaking and uneasy expression about the fellow, which we all remarked; yet we could hardly believe that he had been playing a traitorous or unmanly game.

After dark, on the same day, Bustamente came into our room, and declared, positively, that I was to be released by Armijo so soon as all the prisoners had been sent off to the city of Mexico, that being their destination. This information he had from the principal priest of San Miguel, who has the reputation, among the Americans, of being an honest and worthy man. From what Bustamente could learn, by listening to the conversations of the officers attached to the staff of the governor, he was of opinion that Howard, Van Ness, and Fitzgerald, my three companions, would be taken by Armijo to Santa Fé, and shortly liberated. The same story was told by several Mexicans who visited us during the evening—that I was to be liberated was certain.

On the following morning the wagons—the same wagons with which we had set out, more than four months before, from Austin—were drawn up in line in the plaza of San Miguel, and immediate preparations were made for dividing the goods of the Texan merchants. As the merchandise was unloaded, Lewis was

seen by all of us standing by the side of Armijo, and frequently pointing out a box or bale of goods, which was placed in a large pile, apparently for him. All the while he appeared to be on excellent and most sociable terms with the governor and the Mexican officers, and was plainly seen and heard laughing and joking with them. How the abandoned man could carry out his villany, and act thus in the very faces, as it were, of his betrayed associates, is a mystery to me.

The distribution of the goods continued nearly the whole of the day, each company of the valorous warriors of Armijo receiving a share of the plunder in proportion to the time they had been in service against the Texans. In the mean time, four of our men, a gunsmith, a blacksmith, a musician, and the hospital steward of the expedition, were liberated by Armijo, and from our window we could see them walking about at liberty. They were not allowed to communicate with us, however, in any way. The governor wanted the services of these men—his only reason for giving them their liberty.

Lewis frequently passed our window on the 14th and 15th of the month, but not once did he offer to speak to us, although he always bowed as he went by. That the man had been acting badly we had now little doubt, but the extent of his treachery was far from being suspected. After dusk of the last-mentioned day a nephew of Armijo called in to see us. He spoke of my release as a measure fully determined on by his uncle, and also gave it as his opinion that my three companions would be set free.

At an early hour on the following morning, and for the first and only time, Lewis entered our room. There was a hang-dog expression, if I may so call it, about

him, which denoted that he had committed some action, and it seemed as if he could not look one of us in the face. He, however, tried to convince us that he was glad at having an opportunity, at last, of calling to bid us good-by, assuming an openness and frankness of demeanour which but ill became him. Howard asked him how it happened that the two main parties of Texans had surrendered without firing a single shot, to which Lewis gave an evasive and stammering reply. He was then asked by what means he had been fortunate enough to obtain his liberty: a question he answered by saying that the governor, for some reason unknown to him, had given him his release without his even asking for it. He then added that I was to be set free on the following morning; and, after telling my companions that he had already made every endeavour to procure their release, and that he would have one more interview with Armijo upon the subject, he hurriedly shook hands with each of us and departed. Five minutes afterward, as we learned from several visitors, he was on his way to Santa Fé, without having gone near the governor.

It may appear singular to many of my readers, that we did not at once suspect Lewis of having played a treacherous game, especially with the evidence that the party under Colonel Cooke had not made even a show of resistance; but they should recollect that we were entirely cut off from all direct communication, and also that Lewis bore an excellent reputation, and was universally esteemed by all. Under these circumstances they will feel that we must have been slow to harbour suspicion against him. It is hard to suspect one with whom we have long associated on terms of intimacy, whose life has been unstained by a single bad act, of the blackest crime in the catalogue.

On the night before Lewis's departure for Santa Fé, a young Mexican called at our room and inquired the value of several gold pieces in his possession, among them English sovereigns, French twenty-franc pieces, and different American coins. He spoke broken English, and we afterward ascertained that Lewis had recommended him to some of our poor prisoners as a trustworthy fellow. They had given him this money, a pittance they had contrived to secrete when they were searched and robbed by Armijo, on his promising that he would procure them small silver change for it. The young scoundrel, with all this money in his pockets, left for Santa Fé the next morning in company with Lewis—*par nobile fratrum*.

Another circumstance has been related to me by the sufferers themselves, which goes to show that to treachery Lewis added the most pitiful swindling. Two members of the expedition, one of them named Farley, and belonging to the company of which Lewis was captain, the other a Mr. Houghtaling, a merchant, had succeeded, during the search made at the time of the surrender, in secreting their watches, both of them valuable. With this fact Lewis became acquainted, and just before starting for Santa Fé he called upon his quondam friends, and said that he would take their watches and sell them for a heavy sum. He said they would need the money on the road, and that it would be impossible for them to dispose of the watches after leaving San Miguel, but that, on the contrary, they would lose them if the Mexicans should by chance discover them about their persons. Farley was an intimate friend of the scoundrel, and gave him his watch with little hesitation. Houghtaling did the same. That was the last they saw of their property.

One other circumstance illustrative of his character, and I have done with Lewis for the present. While at Chihuahua, on our march to the city of Mexico, I saw a copy of *La Luna*, a small paper published there. It contained a letter from Armijo to Garcia Condé, governor of Chihuahua, in which, after stating that he had been successful in capturing all the Texans, he added: "In consideration of the great service rendered by Captain W. P. Lewis, in assisting me to capture these Texans, I have given him his liberty and his goods, and earnestly recommend him to the notice of the Central Government." When it is known that all the goods Lewis had with him he could carry in his hat, it is more than probable that the governor hired him to claim a large portion of the merchandise, which he afterward divided with him, and thus defrauded the government, to which he was obliged to render an account of all the spoils taken.

The history of this petty, yet most absolute and despotic monarch, Armijo, is singular, and as I happen to have the materials at hand, no matter to him how obtained, I will here present my readers with a brief yet truthful sketch of his career, from his boyhood upward. However much he may be amazed at seeing his own history in veritable print, he cannot but acknowledge that I have done him ample justice—that his portrait is drawn with strict fidelity in every particular.

Manuel Armijo, the subject of the present memoir, as the story-books commence, was born of low and disreputable parents at or near Albuquerque, a town of no inconsiderable importance some sixty miles south of Santa Fé. From his earliest childhood his habits were bad. He commenced his career by petty pilfering, and as he advanced in years extended his operations until

they grew into important larcenies. While yet a youth, he carried on an extensive business in sheep-stealing, admitted, I believe, to be the lowest species of robbery; yet so lucrative did the young Armijo find the business, that in his own neighbourhood he gave it a tone of respectability. A wealthy *haciendero*, or large plantation owner, in the vicinity of Albuquerque, named Francisco Chavez, suffered not a little from the exceedingly liberal system of helping himself adopted by the embryo governor. Chavez possessed his thousands and tens of thousands of sheep, large numbers of which he yearly drove to the southern cities of Mexico, and there disposed of for ready cash. At home, his business was to purchase at reduced prices all the sheep offered by his poorer neighbours, and so numerous were his flocks that he could not mark, much less recognise, one tenth of what he possessed. Yet he always employed shepherds to watch his flocks, and used every precaution in his power to prevent his sheep from straying or being stolen.

But to guard against a person of young Armijo's tact and perseverance was impossible. The scape-grace would enter his flocks while the shepherds were asleep, or suborn them if awake, and by much shrewd artifice contrived to levy a continual and profitable tax upon the substance of the elderly *haciendero*. The animals thus stolen, in good time would be sold for cash to their rightful but unsuspecting owner, and thus it sometimes happened that Armijo would re-steal and re-sell, time after time, the same identical sheep. Up to this day, when among his intimate friends, General Manuel Armijo boastingly relates the exploit of having sold to "Old Chavez" the same ewe *fourteen different times*, and of having stolen her from him even in the first instance. By this means, and by having what is termed