

## CHAPTER IV.

The old Jesuits' Hospital of Chihuahua.—American Visitors.—Asked for the Particulars of my own Death.—A stealthy Interview.—Dr. Jennison.—Clean Beds.—A sumptuous English Breakfast.—Prisoner in the adjoining Dungeon.—A Meeting.—The Mystery unveiled.—Singular Trial.—Testimony of General McLeod and Messrs. Van Ness and Navarro.—A Release from Chains.—An excellent Dinner from the Señora Magoffin.—Visitors at our Room.—Letters to my Friends.—“La Luna.”—Armijo's Letter to Garcia Condé.—Implicated with the Leaders of the Expedition.—Lewis's probable Agency in the Affair.—A Gasconading Editor.—Poetic Address to a Horse.—Movements of Lewis.—A lively little French Woman.—Our Treatment by the Foreigners in Mexico.—Departure from Chihuahua.—Collection of the Inhabitants.—Furnished a Horse by a Friend.—Difficulty of mounting the Pony.—His Feats and Antics.—The Mexican Saddle, and its Advantages.—El Ojito.—Encounter with American Wagoners.—Arrival at San Pablo.—A Chihuahua Major.—Our Accommodations at San Pablo.—Practical Knowledge of Entomological Science.—Mexican Horse Jockeys.—Mr. Falconer mounted again.—Saucillo.—An Escape agitated.—Death of Larrabee.—A young Mexican Musician.—Santa Rosalia.—The Alcalde and his Daughter.—A stolen Horse claimed.—Military *versus* Civil Law.—Roadside Graves and Crosses.—Stories in relation to them.

It was about two o'clock on the afternoon of the 21st of November when we were introduced to the Salon los Distinguidos of the Jesuits' Hospital at Chihuahua. At dusk, two American gentlemen made their way, by some means, through the ponderous gate which leads from the street to the interior of the hospital, and came to our door, but were denied admittance by the sentinel. One of the gentlemen, however, while walking up and down in front of our open door, stealthily, and in low and hurried tones, asked me if I could give him the particulars of the death of Fitzgerald, Van Ness, Howard, and Kendall. To be asked the particulars of one's own death! I gave the American my name, pointed

to Van Ness, who was sitting on a hospital-cot close by, in such ruddy health that he seemed likely to live seventy years to come, and then told the gentleman that the other victims mentioned as among the killed were both in Chihuahua, at the Presidio, enjoying the full measure of life and strength, and ready to corroborate my statement. I hardly know which were the most astonished—we to hear of our own deaths, or the gentleman to learn, from our own lips, that we were still in the land of the living. There was no opportunity, however, for an outward expression of surprise, as the sentinel at the door showed great uneasiness even at our few hurried questions and answers, not one word of which could he understand. I simply told the American that we had been fortunate enough to escape with our lives thus far, although nothing but a miracle had saved us. Our visitors then left, but not until they had promised to use every endeavour, with Governor Condé, for permission to visit us in our room, and do all in their power to soften the rigours of our confinement.

It is so seldom that a man is called upon to relate the particulars of his own death, that few of my readers can know what feelings the inquiry will excite. Our own were of a nature exceedingly mixed. There was something pleasant, to be sure, in the fact that we were able to answer all anxious inquiries in person; but it was not without a slight misgiving as to our chances in perspective that we hastily recounted the particulars of our recent fortunate escape from a death that seemed almost inevitable.

On the following day we learned the name of the gentleman who had questioned us, and the reasons which had induced him to suppose us dead. It seems

that Colonel Cooke and Dr. Brenham had reported that we were shot at San Miguel, with Howland and his unfortunate companions, believing such to be the case from the statements made to them while in New Mexico, and from the fact that we were not seen by any of them nor marched in their company towards the capital. The name of the gentleman who first visited us at the hospital was Dr. Jennison, a native of New-England, but at that time the principal conductor of the mint at Chihuahua. He has since paid the debt of nature; but the memory of his courteous and gentlemanly manners, and of his kindness and exceeding liberality in furnishing the prisoners with shoes and other articles of which they stood in utmost need, still lives in the hearts of those he befriended.

Our visitors had scarcely left us before clean mattresses and sheets were brought to our room, and comfortable beds made, after which we passed a quiet night in sleep. The next morning an English gentleman sent us in a sumptuous breakfast—the first really substantial meal I had seen since I left the United States. It consisted of plain beefsteak, tender and of delicious flavour, baked Irish potatoes and most excellent bread, with a generous supply of coffee. The Mexican servant who brought it informed us that the gentlemen who had called upon us the previous evening would endeavour to see and converse with us during the day; and one of them, passing our door in the course of the morning, said that so soon as our depositions were taken in relation to the prisoner confined next door, the foreigners would all be permitted to visit us. We were still left in profound ignorance as to the name of the unfortunate man, or the nature of the charge against him; but the whole story was soon to be told.

Although there was no entrance to the interior of the square, on one side of which we were confined, save through a large archway from the street, we were not allowed even to cross this yard unaccompanied by one of the sentinels. While passing a gateway near the entrance to the kitchen, a dragoon trailing close at my heels, I encountered, face to face, the prisoner confined in the dungeon adjoining our apartment. He was dressed in a green blanket coat, with black collar and cuffs, had large, black whiskers, and wore his hair extremely long, and although his complexion at the time appeared dark, his face was extremely pale. I was about to accost him, when he gave me a look that appeared to be so full of mingled scorn, hatred, and enmity, that I was for a moment chilled into silence. I may have mistaken its expression, or he might deem it prudent to act thus coldly and strangely in the presence of Mexican witnesses; but at the time I felt confident that he considered himself indebted to us for his sufferings and the loss of his liberty—I thought there was no mistaking that black scowl he gave me as I passed him.

Ignorant alike of his name, business, and the circumstances of his arrest, and conscious of my own innocence in the matter, I had no sooner passed him than I was extremely anxious to come to some explanation; but my watchful guard would allow no communication, and I was forced onward without a chance to justify myself from the erroneous impressions under which I thought he must be labouring. Two soldiers accompanied the prisoner, and he was shortly locked up in his gloomy cell.

This accidental meeting, which troubled me not a little, was early in the morning. Towards noon, the mystery which veiled our neighbour was dispelled.

The secretary of Governor Condé, accompanied by another officer of state and a Mexican lawyer who understood a little English, arrived at our quarters to take depositions in relation to the case of Captain Dryden, which turned out to be the name of the prisoner. It seems that he had been mentioned in some of the papers of the Texan Commissioners as a man whom they might consult on reaching New Mexico. When the expedition arrived in the neighbourhood of Santa Fé, Captain D. was residing in Chihuahua. On receiving the intelligence of his name being found among the Texan papers, the authorities caused him to be arrested and confined in chains in the strongest dungeon of the place.

On the arrival of the persons appointed to take our depositions, General McLeod, Messrs. Van Ness, Falconer, and myself were called from the room, and Mr. Navarro was examined alone. Afterward General McLeod was taken into the room and questioned in private, the Mexican officers taking every precaution to prevent anything like collusion. Mr. Van Ness was next examined, and the testimony of all taken down in writing—as Mr. Falconer and myself knew nothing of the prisoner, we were not examined. The testimony of all went to show that they knew nothing of Mr. Dryden—that his name might have appeared among the papers, but that it was probably without his consent—at all events, he was in no way identified with the Santa Fé Expedition, so far as they were concerned. The effect of this testimony was to procure the release of the prisoner from chains, to give him a greater degree of personal liberty, and his American friends were afterward allowed to converse with him. Some twelve months afterward, as I have been pleased to learn, Captain Dryden was released from confinement through

the intervention of our minister at Mexico, General Waddy Thompson.

Scarcely had the officers of state left our room before an excellent dinner, comprising a great variety of Mexican dishes, with two bottles of Champagne, was sent to us by the Señora Magoffin, wife of the merchant who had furnished us with the coffee and other luxuries at San Miguel, and whom we had afterward passed on the road to El Paso. We had not the pleasure of seeing the señora, but she was represented to us as a kind-hearted, affable, and exceedingly well-informed woman, a Mexican by birth. Mr. Navarro was acquainted with her, she having lived at San Antonio de Bexar prior to the Texan Revolution, and I believe he received permission to call upon her while we were in Chihuahua. Two or three of her children, fine, intelligent boys, called upon us daily at meal-times, for their mother furnished us regularly with three meals a day, having obtained permission from the governor to that effect.

After dinner, we were visited by nearly all the Americans and foreigners in the place, the governor having no objection to their calling upon us after the testimony in relation to Captain Dryden had been taken. They offered us every attention and kindness, and supplied us with books and writing materials, as well as clean clothing. From this place I wrote letters to Mr. Ellis, then our minister at Mexico, and to my friends in the United States. A part of these letters only reached their destinations; but as the larger portion of them were written with the belief that they might possibly fall into the hands of the Mexicans, I was guarded in my language, and cared but little whether they ever got safe through or not.

Among other papers, brought to our room by the

foreigners, was a copy of *La Luna*, a small weekly sheet published at Chihuahua. It contained a letter from Armijo to Governor Condé, giving him the number and rank of the prisoners. The last sentence of this letter was in substance as follows: "You will please guard with especial care Señors Navarro, McLeod, Cooke, Brenham, and Kendall, on account of their superior intelligence, standing, and influence." Here I was expressly implicated as one of the leaders of the expedition, and for this I at once supposed that I was indebted to the traitor Lewis. Armijo, as I well knew, contemplated giving me my liberty at San Miguel—the reasons for his not doing so were obvious. Lewis was probably fearful that I should be in his way at Santa Fé, and accordingly made such statements to Armijo as induced him to send me to Mexico as a prisoner of importance. It had the effect of ensuring me better treatment upon the road, if nothing else; for the Mexicans invariably treat their more important prisoners with the greater deference.

The same paper contained several stirring appeals, both in prose and verse, to the known patriotism and valour of the citizens of Chihuahua! An immediate invasion of Texas was urged, with all the force that can be infused through the Spanish language into a war proclamation. To drive the usurping Texans from a soil which did not belong to them, to sweep them from the face of the earth as with a whirlwind, was set down as the easiest thing imaginable, especially when the oft-tried and impetuous bravery of the Chihuahua soldiers was brought to bear upon them. When it is considered that the inhabitants of that city are really prisoners within their own walls, hardly daring to venture outside on account of the hordes of Apache and Comanche war-

riors continually prowling in their vicinity, the idea of an invasion of Texas from that quarter is somewhat ludicrous. But the editor had seen evidences that the Texans were not absolutely invincible; he had seen some three hundred half-starved prisoners from that country marched by his doors, and his long-pent-up and furious wrath found vent, on paper, in a laughable tissue of bombast and gasconade. The same paper, too, contained a stirring appeal from some poetical correspondent to a favourite gray horse, imploring said horse to start immediately with him to the bloodstained prairies of Texas, and when there to ride down, run over, and trample under foot the Texan heretics until not even one was left. Of the two, I am strongly inclined to believe that the animal was much more ready to undertake the perilous journey than the man.

From conversations I have had with several American merchants, who are engaged in the Santa Fé and Chihuahua trade, and who visited the United States during the summer of 1843, I have learned the movements of Lewis since the capture of the expedition. On his arrival at Santa Fé the foreigners treated him with much coolness and distrust, convinced that he had acted badly, although not aware of the extent of his treachery. No positive insults were offered him, but Lewis was soon led to imagine that his countrymen suspected him of some agency in inducing Colonel Cooke to surrender, and with this belief he quietly and secretly started for Chihuahua. This city, in which he had lived several years, he entered in the night, and at once presented himself to one of his former intimate friends and associates. The meeting, so far as the latter was concerned, was far from cordial—the whilom friend of the traitor had heard of his perfidy, and at once advised

him to leave Chihuahua if he would escape the just indignation of the foreign population.

But Lewis could not or would not believe that a mark had thus been set upon him, and accordingly, on the following morning, openly walked the streets, apparently resolved to retreat no farther, but brave public opinion on the spot. While a clerk in the place, he had gained the good-will and esteem of the residents, many of whom were still there, and when, in company with the brave but unfortunate Howland, he had left to join the revolutionists in Texas, somewhere about the year 1835, no one bore a better name or reputation; now, the tables were turned. His former associates treated him coldly and with suspicion, either cutting him directly, or plainly manifesting that all their former confidence and friendship were lost. Lewis saw and felt this, and that very evening was on the road to the Pacific.

His bad name, however, had travelled faster than himself, for, arrived at Guaymas, he found the same coldness and distrust on the part of the foreign residents—the mark, even here, was upon him. His advances were repulsed, his society avoided, and as if to flee from himself, he embarked for the Sandwich Islands. From thence, under an assumed name, he is known to have sailed for Valparaiso, or some other port on the South American coast, and since then nothing farther has been heard from him.

Judging from his previous conduct, I cannot believe that Lewis was aware of the enormity of his offence until he saw the disposition made of Colonel Cooke and his former friends and associates by Armijo. He did not lack good sense, but he lacked resolution—a fact which the quick eye of Armijo at once saw, and which he immediately turned to his own advantage. In Lewis

he found an instrument upon whose fears he could play, and by threats probably converted him into a tool wherewith to work his treacherous and cowardly schemes. On awaking to a full realization of the extent of his crime, the same lack of resolution prevented Lewis from seeking to undo the black web of treachery in which he was entangled, but rather induced him to the commission of farther acts of a like nature and of almost equal atrocity. How often does the heedless first offence lead to the commission of well-matured and more heinous crimes—crimes at the bare thought of which the perpetrator would at first revolt with horror, but which he soon deems necessary to cover the original sin and fortify his present precarious position. So it is in nine cases out of ten, so it was with Lewis: but I must leave this dark subject, and return to the *Salon los Distinguidos*.

On the evening of the 26th of November, we were visited by a lively, chattering little French woman, who came accompanied by a pretty and intelligent Mexican girl, a native of the place, and belonging to one of the first families. The former was some twenty-eight or thirty years of age, not handsome, but extremely naïve and entertaining, and speaking four or five languages with much fluency.

Her visit lasted nearly an hour, during which she ran on with the greatest volubility—evincing no little emotion at the recital of our sufferings, and then laughing merrily as some ludicrous circumstance would be related. She gave us a short history of herself—a history which showed that her life had been eventful. She had travelled the world over, and finally had settled down at that most out-of-the-way place, Chihuahua. There she was assisting her husband, a German druggist, in