

and borne along upon litters, while the rest were seated upon jackasses, and nearly all had the earlier symptoms of that disease plainly developed in their countenances. The clothing, too, of the majority, would have disgraced a party of beggars—a description of the different costumes were impossible. No wonder, then, that our appearance excited deep sensation among the women as we entered the city, for they crowded about us in groups, wondering at the sight of a party of strangers in plight so melancholy, guarded like criminals upon the road.

Although suffering severely from headache at the time, having but partially recovered from an attack of fever at San Cristobal, I still could not help laughing at a little circumstance which occurred before we had advanced twenty yards into the city. Among our party was old Major Bennett, our quartermaster before the capture of the expedition. The major was some fifty-five or sixty years of age, hale and hearty naturally, although suffering much at the time from the severe headache and pains incident to the small-pox in its earlier stages. He was a native of Massachusetts, born and educated among the descendants of the Puritans, knew the Bible almost by heart, and was always ready with a passage from that book with which to illustrate or point his discourse. The major was a young man at the breaking out of the last war between the United States and England, immediately enlisted in the service of his country, and was a lieutenant at the celebrated and hard-fought battles of Bridgewater and Lundy's Lane. In the earlier conflicts of Texas he was also engaged, and was wounded in several places at the battle of Victoria. He was now sick and a prisoner, but nothing could depress his spirits or prevent him from quoting Scripture, in or out of season.

The anecdote I am about to relate showed the character of the man, and would have provoked a smile from Niobe herself. The major was drumming, with his heels, the flanks of a lazy donkey upon which he was mounted, when three or four women came out of a house immediately before him. Struck by his wretched appearance, the kind-hearted creatures clasped their hands with pity, uttered their common expressions of compassion, while their lustrous eyes became instantly suffused with tears. The major saw the effect his woe-begone aspect had created, and instantly resolved upon a speech. Seizing his donkey by the ear and pulling his head round—the common way of stopping the animal—he looked steadfastly in the faces of the poor women who had marked his appearance. He then raised his other hand, as if to impress more forcibly what he was about to utter, and ejaculated, "*Weep not, daughters of Mexico, your rulers are coming, seated upon asses.*" This slightly-altered quotation from the Scriptures he uttered with a mock-gravity truly ludicrous, and then, pulling his donkey's head back to its original position, by dint of much kicking forced it into a mincing trot, and soon overtook our party. I had paused to hear the major's speech, well knowing, from his character and the unwonted preparation he had made, that it would be something uncommon; but little did I think he would force from me a laugh so hearty as that which followed the winding-up of his address. What the women thought of us I know not; they of course did not understand a word of what he said.\*

\* Some strange fatality appears to have attended my more intimate friends of the ill-fated Santa Fé Expedition. The ink with which I recorded the deaths of Fitzgerald, Brenham, Whittaker, Seavy, Holliday, and Old Paint Caldwell had hardly dried, before I was compelled to add Major Bennett to the list. He died during the fall of 1843, in Texas.

After crossing a canal immediately in the outskirts of the city, and proceeding some three hundred yards, we were drawn up and halted in front of the old church and hospital of San Lazaro, or Saint Lazarus. Enclosed within a wall were several buildings, devoted to the uses of the sick and also of the priests and hospital attendants, while in the centre was a small garden, in which were a fountain and a profusion of roses and other flowers. To the right of the main entrance stands the old church, which, with the department of the male *lazarinos*, or lepers, forms nearly one side of the establishment, and has no wall around it. In fact, the walls are only placed in the rear of the buildings.

Up to the very time of our arrival we were ignorant of our destination, and as we now gazed upon the hideous countenances that peered at us from the front building, we were still at a loss as to what manner of place had been selected for our new prison; that it was disgusting and horrible was evident enough.

A short conference with some of the attendants at the front door being over, our guard escorted us into the interior. Although the shades of evening had by this time set in, we could still see that the walls in the interior were hung with badly-painted pictures, the subjects all religious. Arriving at a species of anteroom, looking in upon a long and dimly-lighted hall which was filled with cots, we were ordered to stop, and there take up our lodgings for the night upon the floor. Within the hall, though it was now nearly dark, we could plainly see wretched figures hobbling about, many of them upon crutches, and several of the unfortunate creatures who came and looked at us were entirely bereft of noses, and their faces otherwise horribly disfigured with sores. Our guard informed us that the inmates were

suffering under that dreadful disease, the leprosy, an affliction almost unknown in the United States; but although we had much speculation on the subject, it was not until the next day that we were made fully acquainted with "the secrets of our prison-house."

After an indifferent night's sleep, for the passage-way in which we had been compelled to take up our quarters was cold, dreary, and uncomfortable, we rose the next morning to a full sense of our wretched situation. I was half dozing, when a slight shake of my shoulder aroused me to full consciousness. The regular physician of the hospital was standing by me, accompanied by the major-domo and several attendants. The former asked me my disease, felt my pulse, looked at my tongue, and then prescribed a dose of glauber salts and a light diet. In truth, I was in good health enough, only requiring quiet and nutritious food for a day or two to recover my strength; but the Mexican physician probably thought that salts could do me no harm, and accordingly prescribed them. I tried to beg off when the attendant brought me the medicine, but was compelled to swallow it to the very dregs. I have no peculiar partiality for salts at any time, and now to take them when there was not the least necessity appeared to give the dose an additionally bitter flavour. To all the other prisoners a particular medicine and diet were prescribed; those who were more severely afflicted were provided with cots in the long hall, while the rest of us were compelled to remain in the dreary passage where we had spent the first night. This not one of us regretted when we had an opportunity of seeing the companions with whom we should have been compelled to associate in the large hall of San Lazaro.

The room in which the men afflicted with the leprosy

are confined is nearly three hundred feet in length, by about thirty-five in width. The windows are large and numerous, admitting a sufficiency of air during the heat of the day, and are all grated. At first I could see no reason why the windows of a hospital were grated; but afterward learned that when a person is known to be a *lazarino*, or leper, he is at once taken to San Lazaro, and there confined as a kind of prisoner until liberated by death—for I believe that none ever recover from the horrible disease. At the time when we were confined in the hospital the male department contained some fifty or sixty inmates, while in the female part of the establishment, which was in another building, there was a still greater number.

I feel not a little reluctant to attempt a picture of the unfortunate wretches who inhabit San Lazaro. The disease with which they are afflicted is unknown in Anglo-Saxon countries, or if there are any cases they are very rare. Other than those afflicted with the leprosy there were no occupants of the hospital until our arrival, and the reason assigned by the Mexican government for confining us there was said to be that we had a contagious disease among us. The appearance of the unfortunate lepers is loathsome and hideous to a degree that beggars description. It makes its first appearance by scaly eruptions on different parts of the face and body of the victim, and these eruptions are never perfectly healed. The limbs of many, and more especially the hands, at first appear to be drawn and twisted out of all shape. Gradually the nose and parts of the feet are carried away, while the features become distorted and hideous. The voice assumes, at times, a husky and unnatural tone, and again the doomed patient is unable to articulate except in a shrill, piping treble. With

many, when near the last stages, all powers of speech are lost, and vainly do they endeavour to make known their wants by sounds which belong not to this earth of ours. Death steps in at last to relieve the poor creatures of their sufferings, and to them at least it would seem that the visit of the grim tyrant must be welcome.

Whether the leprosy of Mexico is contagious I am unable to say. With many I have little doubt that it is to a degree constitutional—being, in fact, hereditary, and perhaps never entirely eradicated from the blood. The climate may have some effect in engendering and keeping alive the disease, but of this, too, I am uncertain. The common belief among the lower classes is, that it is communicated by contact; and indeed I am inclined to think that the only risk a person runs of taking it is from touching the person of one afflicted with it in its worst stages. The families and friends of the *lazarinos* would frequently visit them, bringing many little luxuries to add to their comfort. They would sit and converse with them, too, for hours, apparently regardless of danger; but for myself I took particular care not to come in too close contact with the unfortunate lepers.

Notwithstanding their lot would seem to be most melancholy, as a body they appeared well to enjoy themselves. Afterward, and while confined among them for some two months, I had every opportunity to observe them closely; and one who has had no such opportunity can hardly imagine how much happiness and hilarity prevail among beings doomed to a lingering but certain death. Many of them were continually playing at draughts or cards, taking the most intense interest in the games. On many occasions I saw parties of four engaged at cards who had not a single nose

or entire finger among them; and any little success of one of them would be hailed with every demonstration of delight. Their dexterity, too, in shuffling and dealing cards, when bereft of fingers, was astonishing. Many of them were musicians, performing on both the harp and mandolin, and after nightfall they usually had a dance among themselves. Frequently they were visited by some of the female inmates of the hospital, who would join their merry-makings. To describe one of their dances were impossible. A set of them would take the floor, composed of one or more couples. Some of the dancers were upon crutches, and almost all were in some way lame or disabled. The music would strike up, and then would follow some monotonous Mexican dance, accompanied by singing from voices which were excruciatingly harsh and discordant. The weird sisters around the magic caldron never made a more grotesque or frightful appearance than did these lepers, and had Macbeth encountered the latter upon the heath he would have run outright, without even exchanging a word of parley. The wretched inmates of the hospital enjoyed themselves, however, at these dances, and but that their loud laughter was grating and discordant it would have sounded joyous enough. The true feelings of merriment were there, but no midnight revel of witches or hobgoblins, or of the misshapen dwarfs romancers have created, could compare with the horrible manifestations of mirth that fell upon our ears, or could in any way shadow forth the strange orgies we frequently beheld within the gloomy walls of San Lazaro.

We were visited, the first day of our imprisonment here, by Mr. Mayer and a large number of Americans, all manifesting not a little disgust at the horrible situation in which they found us. Among the Mexicans

themselves this hospital is looked upon with a feeling akin to terror—as a receptacle that never gives up its victims—for those who once cross its gloomy threshold seldom or never retrace their steps. Whether there are other patients than those suffering with the leprosy admitted within its walls I know not—the regular hospital for the small-pox is situated in a different part of the city, and why they did not take us to it was a matter of some surprise with all.

As regards our food, we had no reason to complain. In their hospitals the Mexicans are invariably kind and attentive to the sick, administering to their wants with unsparing hands. While at San Lazaro, four loaves of fine, well-baked wheaten bread were given to each of the Texan prisoners every morning—an ample supply for the day. For breakfast a tin cup of tea, made of some herb to which I am a stranger, was brought us. It was well sweetened, had a small quantity of milk boiled with it, and although weak and rather insipid, I have little doubt it was extremely wholesome. During the day a generous supply of orangeade was given us, cool and refreshing. At noon our dinner was brought to us in three tin cups, accurately made to fit one within the other. The upper one was covered and served as a cover for the second, as did the second for the one at the bottom. The lower cup was generally filled with mutton broth, having a piece of the meat left within it, and also a quantity of *garbanzos*, or large Spanish peas. In the second, they generally sent us a small piece of baked mutton, and in the upper cup we found alternately boiled rice and fried potatoes. Each cup was numbered with the figures attached to some cot in the hospital, and seeing the numbers on my dinner utensils staring me in the face from the couch of a leper,

my appetite for the contents was gone at once. Afterward, when we complained of this carelessness of the hospital waiters, the cups corresponding with the numbers of our cots were invariably brought to us. Neither knife, fork, plate, nor spoon was sent with the dinner, but as we had been accustomed to eat without such conveniences, their non-appearance gave us but little annoyance.

Many of the Texans had no appetites. Others, again, swallowed their food with much apparent satisfaction; but there were those among us who could not be induced to eat the plain but nutritious food offered them on the first day—the appearance of everything around was too revolting. Some of us succeeded, however, although against positive orders, in bribing our guard to smuggle in a quantity of fried eggs; and watching an opportunity when no one of the hospital attendants was observing us, we stealthily made a very good dinner. At night another cup of tea was brought us, and the bill of fare of our first day in San Lazaro was not altered during the stay of any of the Texans, except that a lighter diet was ordered for those who were deemed unable to eat meat.

On the second morning we received another call from the physician. He examined us all as on his first visit, prescribing for such as he thought needed medicine. When my turn came I told the doctor that I was much better—a little weak only—and that I thought rest alone was requisite in my particular case. I was anxious to escape taking his vile medicines, and this time I succeeded.

In this way the first four days were spent, the doctor paying us regular morning visits, and our American friends calling upon us during the day. I was led to be-

lieve, in the mean time, that our minister might have obtained my release upon parole, until my case should be finally acted upon and decided by the Mexican government; but in this I was disappointed. I told my friends that I would always hold myself subject to the disposal of the American minister or the government of Mexico, and be in readiness, when called upon, let my sentence be what it might. Whether Mr. Ellis ever made an attempt to procure my release on parole or not I am unable to say; he may have thought it unadvisable to make any such solicitations while a correspondence was pending in relation to myself. Had I been imprisoned in any other place than San Lazaro, I should not have been so anxious to obtain a liberty only nominal; but to be compelled to breathe the air of that horrible place, and to have no associates but lepers and small-pox patients, was at first annoying to a degree that rendered the confinement almost insupportable. Some of my friends advised me to report myself well at once, in which case I should have been immediately taken to Santiago and confined with Colonel Cooke's party. There I was confident I should be put in chains and compelled to work in the streets—by no means a pleasant anticipation to a person undergoing an imprisonment than which nothing could be more unjust. While halting between these opinions, and hardly knowing which to choose—San Lazaro, and all its horrors of association, or Santiago and the chain-gang—such of us as could not be provided with cots, were ordered to take up our beds—a blanket each—and prepare for instant departure.

There were eleven of us in all who were now ordered to leave the hospital, seven of the original eighteen being unable to move. Under a strong guard we were

escorted some three or four squares directly towards the heart of the city, in utter ignorance of our destination. Arrived in front of a gate having a mud house on either side, and a small, gloomy church in the rear, we were halted. An old Mexican in a ragged blanket soon appeared at the gate, and ushered us into a small room, upon the floor of which, stowed almost as close as they could be, were a coarse mattress and two clean blankets for each of us. Although the place seemed anything but comfortable, and in fact was in a condition hardly fit to shelter a brute, we still thought it a palace in comparison with San Lazaro—we could now breathe freely. Little did we then imagine the serious annoyances to which we were to be subject in our new quarters.

At dark, our rations of tea and bread were sent us from San Lazaro. The tea was brought in the regular hospital cups; but as the hideous inmates of that horrible place were no longer in our presence, we drank the beverage with far less reluctance. A regular guard of soldiers was now stationed over us, one of them marching up and down in front of our door. The old Mexican with the ragged blanket offered to do any little errand, and after sending him for candles we retired to our mattresses, firmly impressed with the belief that we were to sleep comfortably enough. The luxury of even a mattress we had been strangers to for nine months, a single blanket and the hard ground or floor having been the bed of each during all that time; but now that we had been provided with an apology for a place of rest—now that a coarse husk mattress was between us and the floor—we considered ourselves fortunate, and stretched our limbs upon the humble beds, confident of sound and refreshing sleep.

How bitterly were we disappointed! Scarcely had we touched the mattresses before we were visited by myriads of chinchés! From every crevice and cranny of the walls they poured in thousands—the cracks of the floor appeared to send forth their legions to the onslaught. I thought of our quarters at San Miguel; but there our tormentors came only by hundreds, while here we were literally eaten alive by thousands. The room we were in had been unoccupied, probably, for months, and our assailants were as bloodthirsty as hyenas. The witty little Irishman, Jimmy Tweed, who was of the party, declared that he would willingly change his situation for a den of half-starved, royal Bengal tigers, while old Major Bennett alluded to the locusts and other plagues of Egypt as trifling in comparison with what we were compelled to endure. To obtain a moment of sleep was utterly impossible, and after a night spent in tossing and rolling about we were rejoiced when daylight came, for it drove our annoying visitors to their hiding-places. We made a complaint the next day, and asked to be removed to any place—back even to San Lazaro and all its horrors—but our request was unheeded. After this, and while confined in our present quarters, we slept much during the day, and our nights we passed in reading and conversation.

The colonel of the regiment from which our guard was detailed gave orders to the different sergeants that no one was to be allowed to visit or hold any conversation with us; but this did not prevent our friends from gaining access. A dollar, slyly slipped into the hand of any of the guard, would gain an admittance readily. Books and writing paper, besides many little luxuries, were brought by my friends; the old Mexican who had charge of the premises was always ready

to bring us any article of food we might wish, and but for the vile chinchas at night we really should have passed our time agreeably enough. The sergeant of one of our guards, a light mulatto, was invariably attentive. He was born in New-Orleans, but at an early age emigrated to Mexico, where he had joined the army. Having picked up an education, just enough to read and write, he had been promoted, and ever when he was on guard we were well treated. He was particularly partial to me; learning that I was a resident of his native city, he asked me innumerable questions of the place and its older inhabitants, and invariably called me his *paisano*, or countryman.

On the 18th of February Mr. Lumsden, with a party of United States naval officers, among whom were Lieutenants Blunt and Johnson, left Mexico in the stage for Vera Cruz, on their way home. They had by this time nearly given up all hope of my being liberated through the intervention of Mr. Ellis, and Mr. L., in particular, was anxious that I should at once attempt an escape, either by bribing the guard or slipping past them in the night. The undertaking would have been fraught with little danger; but I was advised by friends, so long as my associate in business was in the country, to make no attempt of the kind. His movements were said to be closely watched by the authorities; and had I escaped while he was in the city, the circumstance would, in all probability, have involved him in difficulty, and very likely caused his arrest as in some way accessory. Under these circumstances I determined to make no attempt at an escape, at least until my friends were safely out of the country.

## CHAPTER XII.

Taken ill with the Small-pox.—Washington's Birthday.—A Patriotic American.—An excellent Dinner.—More of the Small-pox.—Ordered to move our Quarters.—Once more among the Lepers of San Lazaro.—Eight of our Companions marched to Santiago.—Philosophy in Chains.—The Irons nothing after one gets used to them.—Fresh Air and Exercise.—Determination to forego them.—System of Anointing in San Lazaro.—Anecdote of Lieutenant Burgess.—Visit from Mr. Lawrence.—His Departure for the United States.—Death of an unfortunate Leper.—A midnight Funeral in San Lazaro.—Its imposing yet gloomy Character.—Mass in the Church of San Lazaro.—Decorations of the Establishment.—Disgusting Figure of St. Lazarus.—A Procession and a Present.—Don Antonio.—The Fruits of Mexico.—A File of American Newspapers.—Present from Mr. Ellis.—Visited by Mr. Falconer.—Beauties of the "Vicar of Wakefield."—Death of another Leper.—Five of our Companions marched to Santiago.—Preparations for a Celebration.—The 11th of March in San Lazaro.—The Hospital visited by Throngs.—Compelled to receive Alms.—Dinner provided for us by a Party of Ladies.—Take an Account of Stock.—Strange Present from a Mexican Lady.—"Charles O'Malley" in San Lazaro.—Another Celebration among the Lepers.—Fondness of the Mexicans for Flowers and Ornaments.—A dolorous Chant.—The Celebration closes with a Dance.—Wild Revels of the Lepers.

On the 19th of February, the day after Mr. Lumsden left for New-Orleans, I was taken with a slight fever, pains in my bones and head, and other symptoms of the small-pox. I had been previously vaccinated, and therefore cared little for the disease except as it occasioned annoyance and severe suffering. On the 22d, Washington's birthday, a lithographed portrait of the "Father of his Country" was brought to each prisoner by a warm-hearted and enthusiastic American resident, and accompanying these were a generous chicken pie and several bottles of excellent wine. I was much too ill, however, to partake of these luxuries; in fact, I was unable to sit up from extreme dizziness and pain in my head. I took little or no medicine for the disease, and