

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

after suffering greatly for some six or eight days, finally recovered, and without being in the least marked. Those who had never been vaccinated suffered incredibly, and were badly pitted if they survived; but many of them died of the disease. In such as had been vaccinated, the disease was mild in comparison, although they endured the very extreme of pain from bad attendance and the want of comfortable apartments and beds to sleep upon. That any of those recovered who had the disease in its worst form while upon the road, is certainly remarkable—their sufferings were horrible, and numbers of them were not only pitted to a great degree, but one or two were so unfortunate as to lose an eye.

On the 25th of February, without a word or hint of previous warning, we were all ordered to pack up and remove to other quarters, our guard not even informing us whither we were to be taken. By this time I had almost entirely recovered from my illness, and as Judge Ellis had kindly sent me an excellent mattress and cot bedstead, I was very comfortable. My companions, who still slept on the floor, were exceedingly annoyed by the legions of chinchas that infested the place, but I was enabled to keep the tormentors from my immediate premises during the greater part of the night, and began fairly to conceive a liking for our prison-house, dirty and dreary as it was. The anticipation of being placed in worse quarters, for we heard horrible stories of the prisons of Mexico, may have induced this feeling.

After being formed in front of our prison, with the soldiers of our guard stationed on either side, we were ordered to march. Our course was in the direction of San Lazaro, and a walk of a few minutes found us once

more safely housed within the walls of that gloomy establishment. Five of my convalescent companions were now ordered to be in immediate readiness for a move, together with three of those who had been left at San Lazaro when we were first taken thence. It was now evident that some of us were still to be retained within the hospital—the disposition to be made of our companions was shrouded in Mexican mystery, the most impenetrable of all. Under the usual strong guard the eight Texans were marched off, each man carrying his blanket and little wallet.

The next day, a Mexican girl called at San Lazaro with news of Colonel Cooke's party. Watching an opportunity, when no one was observing us, Francisca, for that was the girl's name, slipped a note into my hand. As soon as I could open it without attracting the notice of our sentinels, for one or two of them were continually marching before our cots, I found the billet to be from one of our companions who had been separated from us the preceding day. He said that they were all with Colonel Cooke's party at Santiago, *and in chains*: but that wearing the "trinkets" was nothing after a person *got used to them!* This was philosophical, to say the least of it. In addition, the writer informed me that a number of the prisoners were about to be taken to Tacubaya, a small but pleasant village some five miles from the city, to work upon the road in front either of the archbishop's or of Santa Anna's palace, and that I could probably join the delightful party by reporting myself well! Here was an opportunity to *get used to chains*, and to obtain fresh air and exercise; but feeling that I had no highway taxes to work out in Mexico, and not being particularly anxious to appear in public with one end of a long, jingling, clanking

chain made fast to my ankle, and a man at the other end, I took all the pains in my power to decline the polite invitation of my friend. I was in no very enviable situation, to be sure, confined in San Lazaro among hideous, unclean wretches, whose very aspect was enough to frighten a man into almost any measure; but as in the hospital they would not place me in chains, and as I would have a far better opportunity of making an escape while there, I resolved to remain and forego all the fresh air and exercise I might obtain while working upon Santa Anna's roads, and in the fetters of a criminal. To remain at San Lazaro was a matter easy enough, at least so long as real sickness might detain any of my companions; for the hospital physician was a worthy, good-natured man, not disposed to investigate too closely a chronic rheumatism I "got up" especially as an excuse to stay. The only prescription he ordered in my case was a warm bath in the morning, and an occasional greasing at night. The former was agreeable enough; the latter I infinitely preferred to taking his vile glauber salts, *cosamiento blanco*,* and other inward remedies. This practice of anointing the prisoners from head to foot, with a preparation of harts-horn, lard, and other ingredients which I could not detect, was very common in San Lazaro.

I remember laughing heartily one evening while Lieutenant Burgess, one of the Texan officers, was rubbed with the liniment by a broad-shouldered, large-mouthed Mexican. The former was a man of less than the medium size, while the operator was one of the largest Mexicans I had ever seen. He had just finish-

* The *cosamiento blanco* appeared to be a very common and very innocent medicine—to judge from its appearance and taste, a mixture of magnesia and water.

ed rubbing the shoulders of the lieutenant, and had ceased his operation for a moment, when Burgess, looking him full in the face, with a ludicrous expression of mock-gravity and well-counterfeited alarm, exclaimed, "I wonder if the fellow is going to swallow me alive!"

On the 26th of February, Mr. Lawrence, who was to depart the next morning in the stage for Vera Cruz, called at San Lazaro to take his leave of me, accompanied by a gentleman who is a Corsican by birth, but who is a naturalized American. They were not admitted into the hospital, express orders having been given that no foreigner should be allowed to visit us; but the sergeant of the guard permitted me to see them at the front entrance. Lawrence's face gave me little encouragement as regarded my liberation. He endeavoured to offer some hopes of a speedy release, but I could plainly read that he hoped rather than believed such would be the case. After I had told him to inform my friends in the United States that I would contrive some way to escape if the government did not effect my liberation, that I had already gone through much and could endure a great deal more, my two friends took their leave. Why I know not; but during an imprisonment of seven months I never felt so dispirited, so ill at ease, and so restless as on this occasion, and determined to embrace any opportunity to escape that might occur.

The night Lawrence left us, a poor leper died in our room. To pass away the long evening I was engaged at a game of piquet with one of my fellow-prisoners, when an attendant came and requested us to speak only in whispers, as there was a man dying a few yards from us. He said there was no objection to our continuing our play; but as a priest was in close commu-

nion with the sufferer, loud talking might disturb him in his holy office. We ceased playing when the game was over, and immediately after retired to our cots.

I could not but indulge in a train of serious reflections upon the singular objects by which we were surrounded. In the same room, and but a few steps from me, an unfortunate *lazarino* was receiving the last consolations the religion he professed offers to the dying, while close by, a party of his companions, themselves within a few short steps of the same grave which was soon to receive the dying man, were busily engaged at a game of *monte*! So used to scenes of this description were the inmates of San Lazaro that they would have indulged, even at this time, in their usual boisterous and most unnatural mirth had not the priest forbidden it. In a far corner of the room a musical leper was strumming some lively air on a mandolin; and although he played in a low and suppressed tone, many of the notes of glee must have reached the ear of the wretched sufferer. Directly opposite my cot, an aged and gentlemanly Spaniard, in the last stages of leprosy, and who, in fact, died a few weeks after, was ever and anon striking a light and smoking his cigarritos with cool and philosophical indifference. Around a small charcoal furnace, in the centre of the room, a knot of lepers were heating their atole and tortillas—and they, too, with the perfect consciousness that one of their number was about to leave them forever, were chatting busily and tittering with the half-suppressed laugh some story of merriment might elicit—a laugh which would have been boisterous had it not been restrained by the presence of the man of God. Even among ourselves, we could not look upon the scene with those feelings of awe and deep solemnity it

would have awakened in other days; for the heart becomes callous by familiarity with affliction, misery, and death. While surrounded by the humanizing influences of society, it is difficult to conceive how the warmest feelings of our nature may become chilled by exposure to hardships and acquaintance with suffering; and confident I am that not one of the Texans then confined in San Lazaro can now look back upon the scenes he there beheld, without actual astonishment at the cold indifference he manifested at the time—scenes which, were he to encounter them at home, would arouse all becoming sensibility.

In the midst of a train of reflections, as singular in their nature as the associations around me, I fell asleep. About midnight I was awakened by the ringing of a bell and a tramp of men, and on opening my eyes beheld a procession of priests and attendants, bearing lighted candles, and preceded by a boy with a small bell, passing my cot in the direction of the dead leper—for he had now breathed his last. There is something touchingly solemn and impressive in the funeral rites of the Catholic Church, even at ordinary times and on ordinary occasions; but a midnight funeral, in such a dreary place as San Lazaro, gave an additional solemnity to the ceremonies. As the procession passed me, the members of it were muttering inarticulate prayers and crossing themselves. The brilliant light from the numerous candles showed the inmates in different attitudes of prayer near their cots—now muttering a few words, and then beating their breasts as in deep grief for the loss of their companion. Arrived at the corpse, it was placed in a rough coffin, all knelt around, a prayer for the rest of the departed spirit was said by one of the priests, and then, with incense burning and the bell

ringing, the procession marched in regular order from the room, leaving all again in darkness. Thus ended the impressive and melancholy rites, but the memory of those midnight ceremonies must still haunt all who were spectators—I can never forget them.

The morning after the events I have just related happening to be Sunday, we were all aroused at an early hour by the ringing of a small bell, calling the inmates of the hospital to mass. On this occasion I rose, and hastily dressing myself, attended the celebration. The church formed one side of the establishment, and to prevent all means of escape, a guard was stationed at the outer door. The interior of the church was decorated with numerous paintings illustrative of the sufferings of our Saviour, and especially those of the patron saint of the establishment, St. Lazarus. These paintings were generally badly-executed copies, but a wax figure of the saint, lying in a glass case and representing him as dead, was revoltingly natural. The artist had represented his subject as covered with sores, and so faithfully that the beholder could not but instantly turn from its contemplation with feelings of deep disgust. The marble floor of the church, for in Mexico there are no seats in the religious establishments, was covered with kneeling lepers, crossing themselves, beating their breasts, and telling their beads. After standing a short time in the church I left it for my quarters in the adjoining hospital, resolved never again to attend mass unless compelled by those in whose power I was; and as the priests of San Lazaro were so liberal as not to enforce our attendance, I did not a second time enter their church. In other places the prisoners were forced to attend the religious ceremonies, and in chains.

From the church I returned to my quarters, and be-

gan writing long letters to my friends in the United States, having learned that a packet was shortly to sail. At dinner-time, and before I had yet finished a letter upon which I was engaged, we were visited by a procession of priests and young lads, the latter being engaged in a course of studies before taking holy orders. The visit was not intended for us alone, but for all the inmates of the hospital. The procession made the entire circuit of the room, one of the lads handing each of the unfortunate prisoners a *medio** and a small bunch of paper cigars. Our dinner, which on Sundays was a little better than during the week, although served in the same cups, was brought to us by the lads, and each knelt upon one knee as he gave it into our hands. After this, there was some little ceremony in relation to the poor leper who had died the night before, and this over the procession left the room.

The old major-domo of the hospital, Don Antonio as he was called, allowed the fruit-women to visit us at all times, and this served to render our situation much more endurable. A person can live entirely upon the delicious and almost endless varieties of fruit which abound in Mexico, and little did I care for the boiled meats and broths—the regular hospital fare—when I could buy the fruit, which is there sold at a trifling cost. Not a day passed in which we could not purchase bananas, granaditas, oranges, melons of various kinds, pine-apples, cayotes, chirimoyas, different species of a delicious fruit called the zapote, mangoes, and other tropical productions, many of which I have never seen in any part of the United States. Some of these fruits are raised in the vicinity of Mexico, but the larger portion are brought from the *tierras calientes*, or hot countries,

* Six and a quarter cents.