

them must have been strange, drinking several toasts which were highly complimentary to the Texans.

It was not until dark that the joyous festivities ceased, and even after the prisoners were locked in their room for the night, wild catches of song and uproarious merriment helped still farther to enliven the scene. While Santa Anna, at his palace in one part of the city, was doubtless brooding over his misfortunes on the fatal field of San Jacinto, a crowd of jovial Texan prisoners were celebrating that very victory in another part, and in chains.

CHAPTER XVI.

Intelligence of immediate Release.—Its Effect.—Close of the Celebration.—Night Visitors at Santiago.—Arrival of Mr. Ellis with an Order for our Release.—The old Blacksmith again.—His Services dispensed with.—Once more free from Chains.—Leave Santiago and Imprisonment.—Cheers of the Texans at our Departure.—Congratulations of the young Mexican Officers.—Another night Ride through Mexico.—Encounter with a religious Procession.—Arrival at the United States Legation.—The Gran Sociedad.—Comfortable Quarters.—Sleep impossible.—Change of Circumstances.—The Watchwords of Mexico.—Encounter with a Sentinel.—Early Morn in Mexico.—Strange Cries.—“Carbon.”—Appearance of the Streets.—Picture of morning Life in Mexico.—Change of Wardrobe.—Visit to a French Barber.—A Shearing and Shaving Operation.—Improvement in personal Appearance.—Beggars in front of a Church.—Description of the wretched Throng.—Return to the Gran Sociedad.—A sumptuous Breakfast.—Visit to the British Minister, Mr. Pakenham.—Once more in Santiago.—Mexican Girls.—Visit to our old Quarters at San Lazaro.—Bribing a Sentinel.—Meeting with the Texans and Lepers.—Call at the Dwelling of a Mexican Lady, an old Friend.—Her musical Attainments.—Anecdote of her Spirit and Patriotism.

In the very midst of the celebration, and while the rejoicing was at its height, Mr. Coolidge called upon me with the intelligence that I was to be liberated im-

mediately—in fact, that the order for my release was already given, and only awaited certain signatures to be carried into effect. This gentleman, in company with a number of Americans, had been at the palace of Santa Anna when Mr. Ellis took his leave and General Thompson presented his credentials and was duly received as the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States. At this audience, Mr. Coolidge informed me, Santa Anna formally assured Mr. Ellis that he should give up to him young Howard, Sully, and myself, with four of the prisoners at Puebla who had claimed American protection. With a cunning characteristic of the Provisional President, he now saw that he had an opportunity to dispose of us without compromising his honour and dignity, and, placing our liberation in the light of a personal favour to Mr. Ellis, had consented to give us up to that gentleman. Santa Anna is never caught without some loop-hole through which to crawl when closely cornered.

The time had been when news that I was to be immediately released, coming in shape so authentic, would have filled me with sensations the most pleasing—now I received it with an indifference which even to myself appeared unaccountable. It may be that the numerous false hopes that had been held out to me partly induced this unconcern, for I should most certainly have received a present of a box of cigars with more pleasure; but the principal reason was, that I felt perfectly confident of making my escape within a few hours, or days at farthest. I say that I felt confident—I was *certain* of being free from chains and imprisonment immediately, and through my own individual exertions, and this certainly begat indifference to any other means. Another thing, which in some measure served to alloy the

cup of happiness, was the circumstance that we understood our liberation was granted, not as a right, but as a personal favour. We all had that pride of country which induced us to hope that our government would peremptorily and unconditionally demand our release, and were every way prepared to bide the issue, be it what it might. We knew the *people* of our native land, and knowing them, felt confident that our wrongs would, if persisted in, sooner or later be redressed.

The door of our prison, on the night of the celebration, was locked a little after the usual hour, yet the rejoicing still continued. As the hours sped along, the prisoners, one by one, rolled themselves in their blankets upon the stone floor, and soon fell asleep. Suffering from a cold and slight headache at the time, I had followed their example and was already in a half doze, when a sound was heard at the door as of a key slowly turning in the lock. This was between nine and ten o'clock, and the unusual circumstance of a visit at that hour not only awoke such of the prisoners as were asleep, but induced all to begin fastening the chains about their ankles and take the necessary precautions in case the old commandante had chosen that strange hour to look in upon us. I had not taken off my irons on lying down—why I know not—so that my “toilet was made” for the reception of any company that might call at our quarters.

The door at length slowly opened, and the old commandante, accompanied by Mr. Ellis, Mr. Mayer, and two or three of the Mexican officers on duty at the convent, entered our prison. On seeing Mr. Mayer at an hour so unusual, I at once felt assured that I was to be released. He introduced me to Mr. Ellis, and afterward made him acquainted with Colonel Cooke and

several of the Texan officers; and as he looked around him, as he heard the clanking of chains, and beheld such numbers of his countrymen in plight so mortifying and degrading, the kind-hearted minister was deeply affected.

He had brought the order for the release of Howard, Sully, and myself, and the old commandante had ordered a blacksmith to accompany him for the purpose of releasing us from the irons. Sully soon extricated himself without assistance, but with young Howard the case was different. His chain was almost the only one so securely fastened that it could not be got off without difficulty, and the old blacksmith was compelled to hammer away upon his anvil several minutes before the task was accomplished. I well knew that a single shake of my foot would release my ankle from the annoying load of iron; but anxious to astonish the Mexicans a little, even at this time, I allowed the blacksmith to place his anvil in a position near me. On his pointing to my ankle, and making signs that he was ready to perform the kind office of relieving me, I gave my foot a slight shake, which sent the chain clanking across the floor. The rivet, which had but partially confined it, fell near me. I quietly picked it up and put it in my pocket, determined to have some memento of Santiago and imprisonment more lasting than mere recollection, should that ever fail me. If the old commandante of the convent, in taking an account of stock, should happen to miss one of his rivets, he can charge the same to me.

In a few minutes, after promising to call upon our Texan friends on the following day, we left the lock-up room of Santiago, the prisoners giving three hearty cheers as we crossed the threshold. At the outer door

the young Mexican officers crowded around us, cordially congratulating us upon our release, and expressing the warmest wishes that our still imprisoned comrades might soon be permitted to accompany us. From their actions, it appeared that our liberation gave them emotions even as pleasurable as our own.

Mr. Ellis had procured a coach to convey us to the city, which we now entered in company with himself and Mr. Mayer. Several buildings were passed which I recollected having seen, a few nights before, while on the gloomy midnight trip from San Lazaro to Santiago. On entering one of the main streets of Mexico we met a long religious procession, preceded by bells and lights, and probably on its way to perform some funeral service. Our postillion reined up his mules, and uncovering our heads, we remained still until the last stragglers had passed. A drive of some half a mile now brought us to the apartments of Mr. Ellis, at the United States Legation, in a street immediately in the rear of the cathedral and within a stone's throw of the great palace whence came all the decrees and vaunting proclamations sent forth to the Mexican people, and which has been the scene of revolutions innumerable. At the rooms of Mr. Ellis we found several of our countrymen collected, all congratulating us upon our happy release. Our next movement was to the Gran Sociedad, a large establishment where Mr. Mayer had provided rooms for our accommodation. I had intended to take lodgings at the *Casa de Diligencias*, or Stage Hotel, but my kind friends would not listen to any such arrangement.

Once in comfortable quarters at the Gran Sociedad, free again and at liberty to do as it might please me, I passed some two or three hours in reading a file of American newspapers which had just been received

At a late hour I retired to rest, but not to sleep. From the 15th of September to the 21st of April, more than seven months, I had been a prisoner—I had performed a toilsome and painful march exceeding two thousand miles—I had seen my comrades inhumanly butchered around me, had seen them die from exposure, from hardship, and from sickness—I had passed through an endless variety of scenes the most exciting; yet all this time I had slept well, except when illness or severe inclemency of weather prevented it. Now I had liberty and every comfort at my command, but sleep would not visit my eyelids. The very quiet around me, instead of being a provocative of slumber, seemed to keep me awake. I missed the hard stone or earthen floors, the knowledge that comrades were strewn close around me, the clanking of chains—the very groans of the unfortunate *lazarinos* were wanting. I missed, too, the eternal cries of our guard—the “*centinela alerta!*” the “*quien vive?*” and “*que gente?*”* which had rung

* These are the common watchwords of sentinels on duty in Mexico. If any one approaches, the sentinel shouts aloud “*quien vive?*”—who lives, or, rather, who comes? The answer expected is “*Republica*”—the Republic. The guard next cries “*que gente?*”—what people?—the party addressed, if a friend, being expected to answer “*paisano*”—a countryman. Not a little startled is the stranger, on arriving in Mexico, as he hears these watchwords ringing around him—I know that on one occasion, to use a nautical phrase, I “was thrown all aback” by the cry. I was passing the palace at a late hour of the night, not a living being within sight or hearing, and no sound breaking the stillness save that dull and heavy echo which follows every footfall upon a pavement. I had approached within six or eight yards of a sentry-box, standing directly in front of the palace, when a sentinel, who was probably asleep, suddenly awoke, and bringing his musket to a present, in a hurried manner gave the well-known “*quien vive?*” So sudden were his movements that I was even more astonished than himself. I flourished a cane which I held in my hand around my head, as if to ward off his musket, should he level it, and not thinking of the proper answer immediately, ejaculated “An Englishman!” Whether he understood me or not I am unable to say—I passed on without farther molestation or hinderance. It may

in our ears until the grating sounds had fairly become so many lullabies. Thoughts of home, of liberty, of once more visiting the friends and scenes of other days, came crowding and jostling each other through my mind in such rapid succession that my head was in a very whirl of excitement. Tired nature at length achieved the mastery, however, and towards morning I fell asleep.

At an early hour, and before the sun was yet up, I was awakened from my dreamy slumbers by a distressing and most doleful cry in the street, apparently under the window of the second story in which I lodged. To me the sounds resembled those of some unfortunate human being, suffering pain the most acute—so piteous were the cries, that I could not but think some poor fellow had been knocked down and run over by a coach, or met with some serious hurt, and with broken limbs was groaning aloud for assistance. Arising at once, I opened a glass door and stepped out upon the small balcony which is to be seen under the windows of the better houses in Mexico. No creature whose appearance indicated pain or distress could I discover, as I ran my eye up and down the street and along the side-walks on either side. Whence could the accents of suffering proceed? In the street, immediately under the balcony, stood a swarthy, badly-dressed, half Indian half Mexican charcoal vender, his entire stock in trade strapped to his back in a large, square basket. Not the

appear singular that I called myself "an Englishman;" to account for it I would state that on that very evening I had been told by an American, while conversing as to the greater respect entertained in Mexico for the English than for our own countrymen, that he invariably "hailed from England" whenever asked as to his origin. With this true but mortifying remark fresh in my memory, and in my haste to say something, I gave the sentinel that answer.

most remote suspicion had I that he was the author of the piteous cries, which had first startled me from repose, until the fellow raised his dark but subdued eyes to the balcony where I was standing, and drawled out a word which, with the key attached to his back, I now understood to be "*carbon*"—charcoal. Had it not been that I could plainly see the charcoal, I certainly never should have suspected the meaning of the strange sounds he uttered or his calling. In giving articulation to the word "*carbon*" alone, the crier had run through the entire scale, and really used notes enough to form an Italian bravura of no inconsiderable complication. Those who have visited Mexico must have been struck, at first, with the strange and most discordant cries which assailed their ears immediately after daylight.

The morning was bright, beautiful, and balmy—the ushering in of one of those delightful days of spring-time known only in the dry, pure climate of the Mexican *tierras templadas*—and I lingered upon the balcony to survey the scene below and around me. Crowds of women, of every class and nearly every shade, were seen either going to or returning from mass at the different churches, their rebosos or mantillas coquettishly covering their heads and necks, their gait inimitably graceful, while their brilliant yet languishing black eyes were wandering from object to object with those indolent but expressive and voluptuous glances which go straight to the heart—Castilian, but indescribable. Water carriers, with their large jars strapped to their heads, were hurrying to serve their morning customers. Fellows stooping and staggering under the weight of huge coops filled with chickens, strapped to their backs after the fashion of the charcoal baskets, were visiting the houses of their daily patrons—threading and jostling

their way through the crowds of females who at this early hour thronged the principal thoroughfares, and crying aloud their calling as they passed. Fair doncellas, whose complexion bespoke their pure Spanish blood, were tripping along, followed closely by ancient and vinegar-faced dueñas, whose calling it was to prevent the charge intrusted to them by prudent mothers from falling in love or running away. Fruitmen and women, with immense baskets of luscious oranges, melons, sweet limes, bananas, and zapotes resting upon their heads, were hastening towards their stands at the market-places. Mexican girls, apparently half dressed, were watering the plants and flowers with which the opposite and adjoining balconies were adorned, while inside a window, seated cross-legged upon the floor and in dishabille exceeding loose and slight to say the least of it, was a young lady quietly sipping her chocolate, ever and anon turning her dark eyes with a dreamy expression towards the spot where I was standing, my presence not seeming in the least to disconcert her. Priests, with their long, shovel hats, monks, gentlemen, léperos, friars, mendicants, sisters of different charitable and religious orders, were mingled with the heterogeneous currents of people below me—and as if to diversify a scene already strikingly singular in the eyes of a foreigner, a gang of ragged *forzados** from some of the prisons, strongly chained and securely guarded, were sweeping or mending a street-crossing close at hand. Far off, in the distance, a string of the *voluntarios* of whom I have often made mention—convicts tied together, and on their way to some *presidio* to be manufactured into soldiers—were seen escorted onward by a detach-

* Literally galley-slaves, but by a free translation made to denote men forced to work against their will.

ment of dragoons: to enliven and still farther to vary the scene, a troop of cavalry, preceded by a dashing and showy officer and such music as a badly-blown trumpet produces, were riding past. Such were the strangely-assorted figures and groups which composed the picture spread before me the first morning after my liberation, and I continued to gaze until Mr. Mayer called at my door with inquiries as to whether I had passed as comfortable, as agreeable, and as quiet a night as I did while in San Lazaro, or more recently in Santiago.

That my wardrobe, after a seven months' imprisonment and a journey of three or four months without a trunk or portmanteau, was scanty enough, may be readily imagined; but my friend at once kindly offered me the free use of his, and I soon found myself arrayed in habiliments more befitting my new position. The purchase of a hat, at a shop in the Portales close by, still farther improved my outward man, and the patronage I bestowed upon a shoemaker in the neighbourhood, to the extent of a pair of boots, advanced the work of thorough change and renovation I had commenced. One thing was still wanting—my face required an introduction to a barber. While a prisoner, I had endeavoured to make myself as little like myself as possible, firmly convinced that I should recover my liberty in no other way than by escaping: in order, therefore, to disguise myself completely, I had assiduously cultivated whiskers, mustaches, and hair enough for a foreign prince, or even the Great Mogul himself. Now I had no farther use for these appendages, and to be relieved of them as speedily as possible I inquired the way to a French hair-dresser's in the Plateros, or street in which the gold and silver smiths, fancy and jewelry dealers, milliners and barbers pursue their different call-