

ings. No sooner had I passed through the hands of a lively and chattering but polite little Frenchman, than such was the change that I hardly knew myself. True, my acquaintance with my own face, for the previous eleven months, had been extremely limited, looking-glasses not being in common use among Texan campaigners or prisoners; but I had had an occasional opportunity of obtaining a glimpse of myself, and now that I had undergone the shearing and shaving operation, the alteration wrought in my personal appearance was not only astonishing, but, I am inclined to believe, altogether in my favour.

While retracing my steps towards the Gran Sociedad, I passed a large church, in front of which a crowd of wretched beggars had already taken their stand. Such an assortment of mendicants I had never before seen collected—such squalid misery as the mass presented—and although dreading contact with the unclean and hideous *mendigós*, I could not resist pausing for a few moments to examine the different characters. There were the lame, the halt, and the blind—sickly and distorted childhood, decrepit and palsied old age. A deformed living skeleton, with a face of bluish, ashy paleness, and borne in the arms of a strong man who doubtless divided such small pittance of copper as the ghastly object received, was stretching forth its shrivelled and skinny arms to every passer. Armless and legless objects, so dressed that their crippled situation must at once strike every beholder, were beseeching alms in accents most piteous. Mothers were holding deformed, rickety, pale, and sightless children up to the public gaze, imploring the prayers and blessings of every saint in the long calendar upon such as would give to their unfortunate offspring a single claco. Wretched crip-

ples, their arms and legs contracted and twisted out of all shape, were peering, with bloodshot eyes and haggard faces, at the current of pedestrians as they passed, a gleam of satisfaction almost demoniacal lighting up their countenances as some more charitable person would throw a copper into their hands. No disguise, no concealment of their deformities, was attempted—on the contrary, it seemed as though a full exposure of their crippled limbs and repulsive distortions was the aim of all—as though they were expressly “got up” to set off their natural hideousness in the strongest possible light. Such is but a hurried picture of a portion of the miserable mendicants congregated in the vicinity of the church, and it was not without a shudder that I turned into a short street leading to my quarters. In former times the lepers of the city were allowed the privilege of begging, and it was even considered fortunate when a poor family numbered a lazarino in its fold. The wretch thus afflicted was paraded daily at some conspicuous stand, directly in the way of the passers, and the alms he or she was sure to receive would feed, clothe, and support a large family in idleness. Finding the number of lazarinós on the increase, or rather shrewdly suspecting that many of the wretches were but counterfeits, made up by the use of blisters and other applications, the city government ordered every one known to be afflicted with the disease to San Lazaro, there to be provided for; but this course was not resorted to until both foreigners and the most respectable Mexicans had openly complained of the increase of the repulsive objects to be met at every turn, and the disgrace they brought upon the city. This was the story I heard in relation to the banishment of the lepers to San Lazaro—if it be true, their places have since been filled by wretches

wanting but little to make them equally loathsome in appearance, and equally objects of pity.

Before I reached the Gran Sociedad, I met several small parties of soldiers. A moment's reflection told me that I was free, and no longer subject to their watchful control; yet I could not feel altogether at ease in close proximity with these fellows. I was in momentary expectation, although there was not the least cause for it, that some one of them would lay his hand upon my shoulders, and ask me how it happened that I was "out without a guard;" and several days elapsed before I could divest myself of the idea that I was still in some way a prisoner—before I could feel and believe that I was indeed at liberty.

An excellent breakfast was served up immediately after my return to the Gran Sociedad, Mr. Ellis and several other gentlemen being already in attendance to partake of it. Most ample justice did I and the two companions of my recent imprisonment to the rich and dainty viands, for it was now almost a year since we had seen a meal so inviting spread before us, and hardly half a dozen times within that year had we seen all those trifling necessaries known in civilized countries as knives, forks, spoons, chairs, a table, and other useful and comfortable *et cæteras*, considered by the majority of my readers, perhaps, indispensable in every well-regulated household. Our coffee, too, was of rich quality and flavour, while excellent claret was cooled by ice brought from the adjoining snow-capped mountains. The remembrance of these luxuries, trifling as they might have appeared had I never been deprived of them, still clings to me. Those, and those only, who have for months spent their time upon the prairies, and amid scenes kindred to those through which we had

passed, are able to appreciate the full blessings of civilization and the thousand and one comforts which before they heeded not.

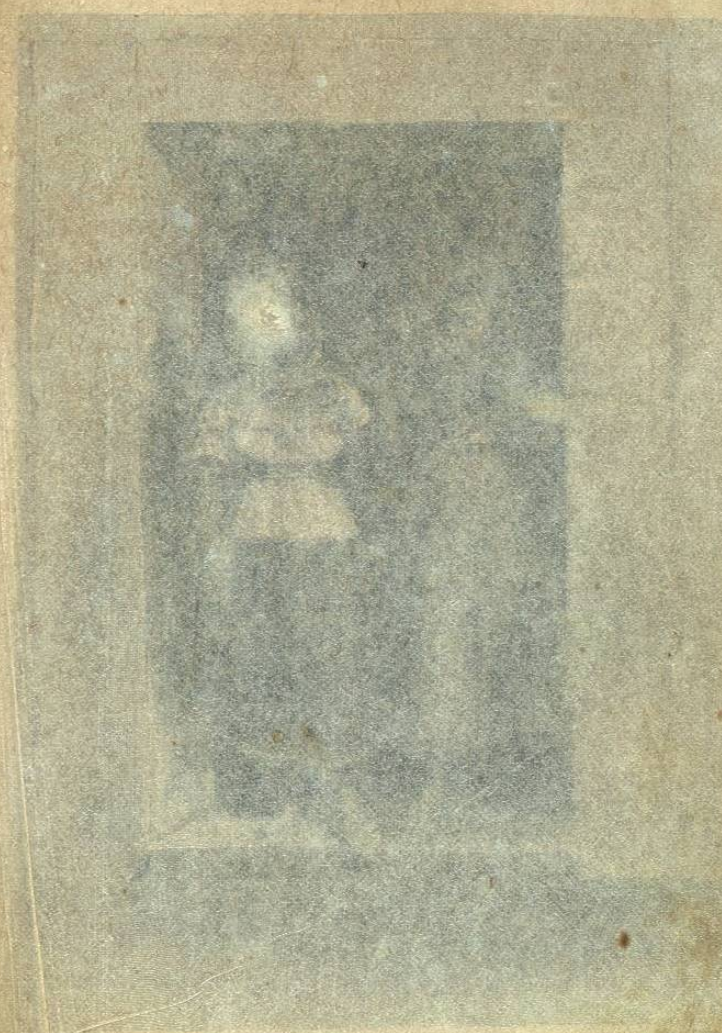
When breakfast was over, I called upon Mr. Pakenham, the English minister, in company with Mr. Mayer. Two or three of my fellow-prisoners had claimed British protection, and I wished to relate to the minister of their government, in person, some of the circumstances connected with their arrest and imprisonment, which would show the justice of their claims in the strongest possible light. I found Mr. Pakenham a plain and unostentatious but agreeable and gentlemanly man, disposed to aid his countrymen in every way. A few days after this visit, through his intercession, my friends were released.

A small party of us, procuring one of the heavy coaches of the city, next visited Santiago—the miserable quarters from which we had been removed the night before. So great had been the change wrought in my appearance by Mr. Mayer's wardrobe, aided by the French barber in the Plateros, that many of my former fellow-prisoners with difficulty recognised me—a circumstance I mention as showing how thoroughly I could have disguised myself had I attempted the escape which I contemplated. After promising the unfortunate fellows another visit, we again turned our backs upon Santiago, but before entering the coach a couple of Mexican girls came running towards us to offer their congratulations upon our release. These kind-hearted creatures were of the lower class, fruit girls, who had formed strong attachments for two of the Texan prisoners, and who never left the vicinity of Santiago during the day. Wherever the prisoners were taken they were to be seen, carrying their blankets, washing and

mending their clothes, and performing every act of kindness within their power. They now not only appeared much rejoiced at our liberation, but pressed us with questions as to the probability of the other prisoners being shortly released. After flattering them with hopes we were but too fearful would prove false, we put some silver into their hands, and then returned to the city to dine.

In the afternoon, after I had purchased several little articles of clothing of which I knew my companions in San Lazaro to be sadly in need, and adding a few bundles of puros with which they might beguile the dreary hours of their imprisonment, a small party of us rode out to that establishment. The sergeant of the guard at first positively denied us admission, saying that express orders to that effect had been received; but a dollar stealthily slipped into his hand, not only opened his heart, but the hospital doors at once. The steward of the establishment next made some objections to our entrance into the interior—but one of my companions, who spoke his language fluently, soon overcame his scruples, and we were permitted to pass without farther hindrance.

As I entered the long and gloomy hall in which I had passed some two months, the unfortunate lepers came hobbling from their cots, crowded around me, and at the same time expressed not a little satisfaction at seeing me in the possession of liberty. My former Texan companions, too, were overjoyed to see me once more; for the strange and unseasonable hour chosen for my removal, the strong guard that accompanied me from San Lazaro, combined with the appearance of the litter and the mystery in which the whole affair was shrouded, had raised suspicions in their minds that I had at



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MEXICAN GIRLS.

COSTUMES OF THE POBLANAS.

least been thrown into one of the lowest of the Mexican prisons, if no worse fate had befallen me. I believe that they were entirely ignorant of all the circumstances until I called upon them in person. After distributing our little presents, and promising to make them another visit, we left the hospital, the sergeant hurrying our departure. Whether the fellow thought we had got our dollar's worth, or whether he wished a farther bribe, is known only to himself.

Our next call was at the house of a Mexican lady—the same who had visited me while in San Lazaro, and who had sent me the present of fish I have mentioned in a former chapter. She informed me that she had heard something of my good fortune with pleasure, and was now doubly gratified that I had called upon her thus early to confirm the report of my release. At home, we found the señora a lively creature, chatty and of most agreeable manners, with a dashing, spirited way of expressing herself peculiarly pointed. An anecdote is told of her which goes far to show her character. During one of the more recent revolutions which have distracted Mexico, two or three gentlemen who had espoused the cause she favoured sought refuge, during a turn in affairs against them, in her house, anxious to escape the dangers to be encountered in the streets. So far as mere words went, they were most zealous and unflinching supporters and advocates of certain principles; but when blows came and balls whistled, they were not to be seen at the post of peril. Their party had met with various reverses, and, as they thought, everything was going directly against them, when suddenly the roar of cannon and the rattling of musketry without convinced them that their fighting friends were once more struggling manfully for the ascendancy. “Those

are our cannon! those are our cannon!" shouted one of the inflated patriots from his hiding-place, at the same time clapping his hands and skipping for joy. "Now we are gaining ground again!"

"*We!*" retorted the spirited señora, with ineffable scorn. "Fine patriots, *you*, to be sneaking and skulking here, among a parcel of women, when your friends are bravely exposing themselves in the streets for the principles you are so loud-mouthed in advocating, but which you have not the courage to stand up and protect. Would that *I* were a man. You would see me at those cannon whose music so delights your ears—not secreted among helpless women, and spending my time and breath in idle words. If those are your cannon, why don't you go and help work them, like true patriots and brave men?"

Such was the character given us of the señora, and I certainly passed a very agreeable hour at her house. Not a little is she celebrated in Mexico as a singer, and on this occasion she favoured us with a number of Spanish ballads in style most exquisite, accompanying her rich and powerful voice on the piano. The visit over, I returned once more to the Gran Sociedad, amid a shower of rain which flooded the streets, and at an early hour retired to try what success I could have in sleeping the second night after my liberation.

CHAPTER XVII.

An early Morning Walk.—Beggars at their Work.—The Plaza Mayor.—The Cathedral and Stone of the Calendar.—Strange Belief.—Interior of the Cathedral.—Its Appearance.—Filthy State of the Establishment.—Agency of a Pair of new Boots in preventing an Examination of the Cathedral.—Shops of the Portales.—The Streets of Mexico.—Another Visit to Santiago.—The "True Blue."—More of Lieutenant Hull.—Encounter with Major Howard.—His Disguise.—Particulars of the daring Escape of Captain Hudson and Major Howard.—The Italian Opera.—Castellan.—Another Encounter with Major Howard.—Farther Particulars of his Escape.—Temerity of Captain Hudson.—Mexican Pickpockets.—Their Dexterity.—Mexican Modes of Salutation.—Cordiality of Greeting.—Anecdote of a Meeting with a fair Mexican.—The Mystery solved.—An excellent Trait in Mexican Character.—Hospitality of the Lower and Middle Classes.—Their Benevolence towards the Sick.—The present Priesthood in Mexico.—Domestic Relations of the Padres.—Influence of the Priests.—Their Reluctance in resigning Power.

WITH body and mind strengthened and refreshed I arose the next morning, for although some of the objects and scenes I had beheld during the day passed in review before the eye of the slumbering mind, my sleep had been sound and unbroken. Hastily dressing, as I had resolved upon attending early mass, I descended to the street and took the direction towards one of the principal churches.

The beggars of Mexico must be an industrious class, and very early risers, for before even the sun had made his appearance I found them up and stirring—many of them already at their stands in front of the religious establishments to be met at almost every turn, and with outstretched arms reciting their well-conned prayers for charity. Determined upon going to the celebrated cathedral at once, as the headquarters where I should probably see more than at any other place devoted to