

THE LEPERS OF MOLOKAI



CHARLES WARREN STODDARD

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE



NLM 00101906 1

SURGEON GENERAL'S OFFICE
LIBRARY.

Section, _____

No. _____

Le...
201647

40
61

The Lepers of Molokai

By the Same Author

Poems. Out of Print.

South Sea Idyls. Charles Scribner's Sons.

Darballa: A Flight into Egypt. D. Appleton & Co.

Hawaiian Life: Lazy Letters from Low Latitudes.
F. T. Neely.

A Troubled Heart. The Ave Maria.

The Wonder-Worker of Padua. The Ave Maria.

A Cruise Under the Crescent. Rand, McNally & Co.

Over the Rocky Mountains to Alaska. B. Herder.

In the Footprints of the Padres. A. M. Robertson.

Exits and Entrances. Lathrop Publishing Co.

The Island of Tranquil Delights. Small, Maynard
& Co.

For the Pleasure of His Company. A. M. Robertson.

The
Lepers of Molokai

BY

Charles Warren Stoddard

New edition. Enlarged



The Ave Maria Press
NOTRE DAME, INDIANA
U. S. A.

LIBRARY
SPECIAL SERVICES OFFICE

FEB-8-1909

201647

COPYRIGHT:
REV. D. E. HUDSON, C. S. C.

WCE

S867L

1889

Felw# 4058, no. 2

PP5102

TO MY DEAR FRIENDS

Bellamy Storer

AND

Maria Longworth Storer

All hope abandon ye who enter here.

—DANTE.

Prologue

THE afternoon was waning in the tropical seaport; already the heat was tempered and the glare softened by the humidity of the slowly approaching dusk. A little while and the sun would sink silently into the immeasurable abyss beyond the waves, and the brief, delicious twilight, bathed for a moment only in the splendor of the afterglow, would adorn itself with clusters of trembling stars.

At such an hour, beguiled with reveries and soothed by the exquisite fragrance that exhales at dew-fall, I was startled by a piercing cry that seemed the last agonizing protest of a riven heart. Not one voice only broke upon the stillness, but another and another, and yet another, until a chorus of despair rang shrilly over the low-roofed cottages in the grove

The Lepers of Molokai

that stood between me and the not far-distant shore. With no little emotion I hurried seaward, and speedily overtook a melancholy procession of weeping women following a few silent people, who were being conducted with decent haste toward the esplanade of Honolulu.

The miserable beings, with a dazed look of lingering death in their fearful countenances, were soon disposed on the deck of a small outward-bound craft; and then, in the few moments that intervened between the casting off of the shoreline and the sudden impulse of the little steamer as she swung about in mid-stream, and made bravely for the mouth of the harbor, the pitiful wail of men, women and children was renewed. Those grouped upon the extreme edge of the wharf were wringing their hands over the water, while rivers of tears coursed down their ashen cheeks. The others, upon the deck of the departing vessel, brooded for a time as in dull agony,

The Lepers of Molokai

but anon an unearthly cry rang over the tranquil sea: it was their long farewell.

The sun, just touching the horizon, seemed to pause for a moment, while the great deep burst into a sheet of flame; tongues of fire darted and played among the wavelets as they tossed in the evening breeze; and the broad rays shot from cloud to cloud, painting them with glory, and crowning the peaks of the beautiful island with red-gold. Even the palm-trees were gilded, and their plumes glistened as they swayed rhythmically to the low melody of the tide that ebbed beneath them.

So faded that ill-starred bark like a mote in the shimmering sea. A few moments only, and the splendor died away—the twilight glow of the tropics is as brief as it is intense—and the sudden coming of night drew a veil over a picture that, though frequent, is nevertheless painful to the least sympathetic observer.

The Lepers of Molokai

Darkness had come; the silence that came with it was broken only by the splash of ripples under the bow of some passing canoe, or the low moan of the water upon the distant reef. But the mourners were still crouching upon the edge of the dock, whence their eyes had caught the last glimpse of the fading forms of those whom they were never again to behold in the flesh; for those despairing but unresisting souls, swallowed up in the transfiguration of the sunset, were lepers, snatched from the breast of sympathy and from the arms of love, doomed to the hopeless degradation of everlasting banishment, and borne in the night to that dim island whose melancholy shores are the sole refuge of these hostages to death: an island as solitary, as silent, as serene as dreamland—mournful Molokai.

I.

FOR three years and more I had been a resident of the Hawaiian or Sandwich Islands. Twenty years before I had visited that little kingdom, and had again and again returned to it with the ardor of first love. The kingdom, which has been called "the sweetest and the saddest in the world," has ever possessed for me the greatest interest; and I have learned to know and to appreciate the charmingly ingenuous islanders, who, while they have acquired all the rights and titles to civilization, have likewise been visited by one of the most dreaded ills that flesh is heir to—the Asiatic leprosy.

Many a time I had longed to revisit the leper settlement on Molo-kai; sixteen years before I had first looked upon that ill-fated spot,—a village that was then considerably

The Lepers of Molokai

smaller, for the lepers were scattered throughout the kingdom. But my desire was not easily satisfied; for there is a justifiable disinclination on the part of the Government to permit the curious to explore the settlement, and circulate sensational reports concerning the life of the lepers in their banishment.

A permission to visit the settlement was finally, by order of the president of the Board of Health, signed by the secretary of the Board, and forwarded to my address; together with a polite letter from the president of the Board stating the cause of its delay. It seems that they had resolved that no further permissions should be granted, hoping thus to keep secret the painful truths concerning leprosy in the Hawaiian kingdom.

Provided with this necessary passport, I was doubly fortunate in being invited to join two of the Government physicians, who were about to visit Molokai professionally

The Lepers of Molokai

on a tour of inspection. Thus one afternoon in October, 1884, I shook hands with Dr. George K. Fitch and Dr. Arthur Mauritz on board the inter-island steamer *Likelike*, and shortly after we three were on our way to Molokai.

There was a sunset at sea, a late moon-rise, and about midnight we came to anchor off Kaunakakai, the chief port of the island, and were presently rowed a long mile to shore, in a whale-boat manned by Kanakas. We seemed to have picked this jovial crew up at sea, for the boat was awaiting our arrival far out beyond the reef.

Safe on shore, we found the airy cottage of a high chiefess at our disposal; willing hands brewed deep bowls of chicken-broth, and there was an abundance of good bread for our refreshment. This might easily be called a square meal in many parts of the Hawaiian Islands, where the markets are few and meagrely supplied.

The Lepers of Molokai

Our cottage stood close to the shore; the moon was shining upon the sea, and sifting through the feathery boughs of the mesquite trees over the white sand that had drifted all about us. Natives gathered around us, talking drowsily, yet with no thought of sleep; for the arrival of the weekly steamer is the one event in their aimless and easy lives. Small sleep for us that night! The doctors were diagnosing leprosy over their cigars; I listened, or dreamed of my former experiences on the island, which has come to be known as one of the most interesting though the least visited and most solitary of the group.

We dozed a little toward dawn,—dozed to the murmur of wavelets that broke very softly upon the shore not a stone's throw distant; but we were hoping to be in the saddle and away before sunrise, and were astir betimes. As is usually the case with the happy-go-lucky Hawaiian, neither beast nor human

The Lepers of Molokai

appeared until nine o'clock in the day; but we were so glad to get started even at that late hour that we forgave and forgot in a moment.

It is a long, hot, dusty ride from the beach to the far edge of the windward cliffs of Molokai. There is no half-way house, no road-side spring, no shelter from the fierce glare of the sun. The salt-sea "trades" blow over the ridge of the island, clothed in clouds of fine red dust; but one is constantly ascending into purer, clearer, sweeter air; and when the rain-swept highlands are reached, the scattering groves of *kukui kamane* trees, the deep and verdant ravines musical with sparkling rivulets, the whir of wings, the delicious temperature, the cloud-capped and almost inaccessible heights that shelter the upper regions, beguile one into the belief that he has actually entered another zone.

At the end of the third long and monotonous hour we came to a halt, and were hospitably entertained by

The Lepers of Molokai

Mr. R. W. Meyer, a pioneer of Molokai, agent of the Board of Health, and superintendent of the leper settlement. On this beautiful height he stands between the world and those who are no longer of it; and but for my passport he could have retained me a prisoner in his family until the return of my companions after their tour of inspection. It is but a mile or two from the Meyer mansion to the brink of the cliff, where we were to abandon our horses; there was no longer any need of haste, and we tarried in delightful conversation with the gentleman whose hospitality is famous, and whose home-life is almost patriarchal.

The ride to the cliff, through a gently undulating land, rich in perennial verdure, was most exhilarating. Our well-baited beasts, seeming to enjoy the bracing atmosphere as well as we, followed with a light foot the trail that wound along umbrageous groves, where the squir-

The Lepers of Molokai

rel and the rabbit skipped nimbly; anon through grassy meadows, the pheasant and the plover darting from underfoot at our approach; or beside reedy pools, where the wild duck floated fearlessly, and were too bold or too weary, after their long flight from Labrador, to take wing again.

Cattle and sheep covered the hills; but the shy deer were hidden in the brush, where the quail piped and called, and the wild dove cooed. Indeed it was difficult to believe that we were still in the tropics; for all these birds and beasts, save only the far-flying duck, are importations—chiefly the property of the king,—and each and all of them now thoroughly domesticated.

Suddenly we came upon a rustic bar that blocked the way. Here we dismounted, and a lad who had accompanied us thus far took charge of the animals, that were to be led back to the pasturage at Mr. Meyer's, there to await our pleasure. The

The Lepers of Molokai

little luggage we had brought with us—it was as little as possible—was deposited on the grass, while we approached a jungle that grew upon the edge of the cliff. Tearing our way through the shrubs and vines, we came upon the brink, and looked down. We were three thousand feet in the air; the whole face of the abyss was a cataract of verdure, breaking at intervals into a foam of flowers; and upon the crest of this cataract we were balanced like the birds of the air. Surely it was a bird's-eye view that thrilled us at that moment: there was a great sweep of sky-blue sea; and a greater sweep of sea-blue sky; and between the two we hung suspended among the branches that bent under our weight.

A little sail looking like a snowflake, seemed ready to melt in the dreamy and delicious distance. A rain-cloud was trailing across the horizon; but for this feature we would hardly have known where to

The Lepers of Molokai

draw the line, for sea and sky were as one. Far beneath us was a tongue of land thrust out into the sea; it was sunburnt and dust-colored, blackened at the edges, where the rough lava rocks were uncovered, and frothed from end to end with tumbling breakers. Scarcely a tree was visible throughout its length and breadth; but it was divided and subdivided, by low stone walls, into a thousand small lots of every conceivable shape: each one perhaps a birthright, and all of them no doubt under cultivation formerly; for Molokai was once densely populated, and this isolated portion of the island was in those days a popular resort.

On one shore of the lowland was a little hamlet: a handful of tiny white cottages scattered in a green and sheltered spot. On the opposite shore, two miles away, was another and somewhat larger settlement, with its cottages more scattered, and its garden spots less

The Lepers of Molokai

green. Both of these villages were nestling near the cliffs, one of them quite in the shadow; between the two there were but few habitations, and at the farther end of the lowland, where it jutted into the sea, there were none at all. Near the centre of the lowland was a small, low crater, a hillock with a funnel-shaped hollow in the middle of it, and in the bottom of the hollow a pool of water that rises and falls with the sea-tide. The whole plain was like a crust over the water, with a broken bubble in the midst of it.

This was the site of the leper settlement on Molokai, that has been much written about, and most written about by those who have never seen it. Its history is still almost a mystery, save to the few who have been in some way associated with it. Rumors concerning it—whether true or false it were difficult to determine—have often redounded to the discredit of the Hawaiian Government. Certain it is that in some cases the

The Lepers of Molokai

affairs at the settlement have been deliberately, perhaps maliciously, misrepresented; I have read more than one account descriptive of the settlement the writers of which could never have visited Molokai; even the geography of the territory was imaginary, and absurdly incorrect. As for the victims of the plague left howling in their last agonies, in the columns of the daily press, such cases are unknown in the annals of leprosy.

The sun was still blazing upon the plain below us; we were to foot it down the zigzag trail, each with his share of luggage. It was every man for himself now; but the hindermost had the advantage, for there was no one to send tiny avalanches of gravel and dirt into his neck during that perilous descent.

A little later and the long shadows would begin to swing out from the cliff, cooling the downward path. We resolved to camp for a while on the breezy heights above the sunlit

The Lepers of Molokai

settlement, while we thought on the palms and the still waters we had left that morning, the health and happiness that sported beside them, and on the abomination of desolation we were likely to abide with before the dusk of the evening had begun to shut it out from our eyes.

II.

IT is now more than half a century since leprosy was introduced into the Hawaiian Islands. It would be quite impossible to point with certainty to the original case, but it is generally understood that the seed of the dreadful malady came from Asia, and came in the person of an ill-fated foreigner. He may or may not have been aware of the incalculable injury he was about to inflict upon a nation that had been, until the arrival of Captain Cook in 1790, almost entirely free from the numerous contagious diseases that prevail among civilized communities; but the life he led in Hawaii was such as to speedily communicate this mortal disease, and it was not long before its unmistakable symptoms were developing in every quarter of the kingdom.

The Lepers of Molokai

Then would have been a proper time in which to check, so far as possible, the spread of the pestilence; yet even then it was perhaps too late. The Hawaiians are a sociable people; they are continually traveling from one country to another; they live in the closest intimacy; are generous and hospitable to a fault. A Hawaiian's home is your home the moment you enter it, and so long as you choose to lodge there all that is in the house is at your disposal. If your wardrobe needs replenishing, you are welcome to the wardrobe of the family; though the chances are that you would hardly better yourself were you to appropriate the entire stock.

It may as well be added here that this custom was general in former years, but of late the simplicity and generosity of the natives have been so often abused that a stranger is now greeted with some caution and discrimination.

Leprosy develops slowly: one may

The Lepers of Molokai

be a leper for months or even years before the symptoms of the disease begin to discover themselves and at last become externally evident. Then they are unmistakable; but by this time great mischief may have been done, and done innocently enough perhaps; for the leper will have but recently become conscious of his state.

Thus leprosy spread through the kingdom, and spread to such an alarming degree that it became necessary to take public action in the matter.

The disease is acknowledged by the medical world to be incurable. It has ever been so considered; and as yet, though a thousand experiments have been tried, the most hopeful of the scientists have abandoned the field in despair.

The Mosaic Law was explicit in regard to the treatment of those afflicted with leprosy: they were to be set apart, without the gates, and to walk alone, crying: "Unclean!

The Lepers of Molokai

unclean!" Their garments were to be burned, their houses cleansed, and all direct communication between the clean and the unclean was expressly prohibited. In like manner, segregation was considered to be the only hope of the Hawaiian race. A suitable place was sought to which the lepers might be removed, where they might be tenderly cared for, and jealously guarded; and there they were to end their miserable days.

The prospect of life banishment alarmed the natives, both the sick and the hale; they were not, and they still are not, afraid of the disease. They are a most affectionate people: they love their friends with a love passing the love of woman; moreover, they are fearless of death—at heart they are fatalists.

When the health agent of the Government went forth in search of the afflicted, hoping to gather them together, house them, feed

The Lepers of Molokai

them and clothe them at the Government expense, he found great difficulty in securing any of them. At the approach of this health officer the lepers would be secreted by friends, who were willing to brave possible contagion rather than part with those so dear to them. Sometimes the unfortunates were surprised, and given into the hands of the police, who were to have charge of them until they could be shipped to the new settlement.

Eye-witnesses of the heart-rending scenes that followed these captures will not soon forget the agony of the final partings. Terrible as was the emergency, the voice of the Government could justly say with "Hamlet":

"I must be cruel only to be kind."

It was a question of saving the remnant of the nation at the price of the hopeless few.

The little lowland at our feet was found to be, by all odds, the most

The Lepers of Molokai

desirable locality in the whole group for a settlement such as was proposed. There are few white people on the Island of Molokai. This lowland was seldom, perhaps never, visited; indeed there was no necessity of its being visited by those who were not concerned in the welfare of the natives. The few settlers—old settlers certainly—still rusticating on the breezy and unsheltered plains below us, could dispose of their birthrights if they chose to do so, or they could remain; for there was abundant room for all who were likely to find sanctuary in that sad spot. There was ample sustenance both on land and sea; fishes were living among the foam-crested rocks; the husbandman would find an immediate market for his produce, and he was alike fearless and hospitably disposed. Indeed, all things considered, no better refuge for the leper could be found; and so the little lowland under the great windward cliff of Molokai was

The Lepers of Molokai

speedily and permanently secured.

Transportation began immediately, and for twenty years it has continued; it has continued in spite of the pitiful protestations of friends and relations, and in spite of the first instinct of humanity—the natural appeal of the sympathetic. It has continued, and it will—it must—continue until the last vestige of leprosy has disappeared from the kingdom.

Hawaii in thus separating the clean from the unclean is following, somewhat tardily perhaps, the wise and vigorous example of the older commonwealths of the world. Sir James Y. Simpson, Bart., of the University of Edinburgh, in his learned and conclusive essay on "Leprosy and Leper Hospitals of England and Scotland," gives a list of 110 leper-houses that existed in Great Britain from the 12th to the 16th century. He says: "By Astruce, Bach, and others, it has been averred that the leprosy of the Middle Ages was introduced from

The Lepers of Molokai

the East by those who returned from the Crusades, though the disease was not unknown on the continent at an earlier period; and there were two lazar-houses at Canterbury during the reign of William the Conqueror, seven years previous to the first Crusade."

Mezeray records that in the 12th century there was scarcely a town or village in France without its leper hospital. Mauratori gives a similar account of the extent of the disease during the Middle Ages in Italy. Old Scandinavian historians amply prove that the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Northern Europe equally became its unfortunate victims.

In England and Scotland during the same period leprosy was as rife as it was on the neighboring continent; almost every large town in Great Britain had a leper hospital, or a village near it for the reception and isolation of the diseased. Some of the cities were supplied with more than one lazar-house: there were

The Lepers of Molokai

six of these establishments at Norwich, or its immediate vicinity, and five at Lynn Regis.

In that age, when leprosy flourished, laws were enacted by nearly all the powers of Europe to arrest its diffusion among their subjects. The Popes issued Bulls regarding the ecclesiastical separation and rights of the afflicted. A particular order of knighthood was instituted to watch over the sick. "According to the tenor of various civil codes and local enactments in Great Britain and other countries," says a writer, "when a person became afflicted with leprosy he was considered as legally and politically dead, and lost the privileges belonging to his right of citizenship."

Thus we dwelt upon a theme that was now continually uppermost in our minds; and while we sat upon the brow of the cliff, lo! the shadows had swung out over the plain, and tinted the shallow shore-line of the sea a deeper indigo.

The Lepers of Molokai

“Come, let us be going,” said one of the party; whereupon we shouldered our packs, and, with staff in hand, approaching the precipitous trail, single-file, took the first downward step. It was like plunging into space.

III.

WE were dropping, slipping, shambling down a sharp flank of the cliff, that cut the air like a flying buttress. By a series of irregular steps we slowly descended, leaping from rock to rock when practicable, but often putting off our packs, sliding into the little ledge below, and then dragging the packs after us.

On each side of us was a dense growth of brush, a kind of natural parapet, over which we could hurl a stone a thousand feet into the sheer depths, but we could not hear it strike. Sea-birds soared above us and below us; sometimes they hovered just over our heads, and eyed us curiously; then with a stroke of their powerful wings they would soar away, with a cry that was half fearful, half defiant. My brain whirled as I watched them poised in mid-air, and thought of the awful distance between them and the earth.

The Lepers of Molokai

For two hours we continued to descend, often pausing for breath, sometimes sinking through weariness, always wondering if this were not the last turn in the zigzag that seemed to wind on to the end of time. Now and then we came upon the carcasses of cattle that had perished in this awful path; for herds are sometimes driven down the steep incline to supply the leper market, and there is always some loss of life in these cases.

At intervals we treaded deliciously cool and shady groves, from under whose dense boughs we could look slantwise into the settlement, and see men and women moving to and fro; and so at last we came out upon the treeless plain, faint and foot-sore—at least this was my state—and began slowly to make our way toward Kalawao, the chief leper village, about a mile and a half distant. At the lodge—a neat frame building, reserved for the exclusive use of the visiting physician and his friends—

The Lepers of Molokai

we deposited our packs, left orders for an early dinner, and proceeded toward the neighboring village.

The first glimpse of Kalawao might lead a stranger to pronounce it a thriving hamlet of perhaps five hundred inhabitants. Its single street is bordered by neat whitewashed cottages, with numerous little gardens of bright flowers, and clusters of graceful and decorative tropical trees. It lies so near the base of the mountain that not a few of the huge stones that were loosened by the rains have come thundering down the heights, and rolled almost to the fences that enclose the village suburbs.

As we passed down the street, Dr. Fitch was greeted on every hand. He had been expected, for it was his custom to visit the settlement monthly; and many a shout of welcome was raised, and many an "Aloha!"—the fond salutation of the race—rang from doorway, window, and veranda. One group of stal-

The Lepers of Molokai

wart fellows swung their hats in air, and gave three lusty cheers for "*Kauka*" (the doctor), topping them off with a burst of childish laughter.

Thus far, inasmuch as we had scarcely looked into the faces of these villagers, they seemed to us the merriest and most contented community in the world; but let it be remembered that we were all in the deep afternoon shadow, and our arrival was the sensation of the hour.

By the roadside, in the edge of the village, between it and the sea, stood a little chapel; the cross upon its low belfry, and the larger cross in the cemetery beyond, assured us that the poor villagers were not neglected in the hour of their extremity.

As we drew near, the churchyard gate was swung open for us by a troop of laughing urchins, who stood hat in hand to give us welcome. Now, for the first time, I noticed that they were all disfigured: that their faces were seared and scarred;

The Lepers of Molokai

their hands and feet maimed and sometimes bleeding; their eyes like the eyes of some half-tamed animal; their mouths shapeless, and their whole aspect in many cases repulsive.

These were lepers; so were they, each of them, that had greeted us as we passed through the village; so are they all, with a few privileged exceptions, who dwell in the two little villages under the cliffs by the sea.

Other lepers gathered about us as we entered the churchyard: the chapel steps were crowded with them—for a stranger is seldom seen at Kalawao—and as their number increased, it seemed as if each newcomer was more horrible than the last, until corruption could go no farther, and flesh suffer no deeper dishonor this side of the grave. They voluntarily drew aside as we advanced, closing in behind us, and encircling us at every step.

The chapel door stood ajar; in a moment it was thrown open, and a

The Lepers of Molokai

young priest paused upon the threshold to give us welcome. His cassock was worn and faded; his hair tumbled like a school-boy's, his hands stained and hardened by toil; but the glow of health was in his face, the buoyancy of youth in his manner; while his ringing laugh, his ready sympathy, and his inspiring magnetism told of one who in any sphere might do a noble work, and who in that which he has chosen is doing the noblest of all works.

This was Father Damien, the self-exiled priest, the one clean man in the midst of his flock of lepers.

We were urged to dine with him. Good soul! he was conscious of asking us to the humblest of tables, but we were a thousand times welcome to the best he had. When we assured him that our dinner was even then in preparation, and that we had packed over with us all the way from Honolulu, butter, flour, and other delicacies, he insisted upon our adding a fowl to our bill of fare,

The Lepers of Molokai

with his compliments and his blessing.

Having with a few words dispersed the group of lepers — it was constantly increasing in numbers and horrors—he brought from his cottage into the churchyard a handful of corn, and, scattering a little of it upon the ground, he gave a peculiar cry. In a moment his fowls flocked from all quarters; they seemed to descend out of the air in clouds; they lit upon his arms, and fed out of his hands; they fought for footing upon his shoulders and even upon his head; they covered him with caresses and with feathers. He stood knee-deep among as fine a flock of fowls as any fancier would care to see; they were his pride, his playthings; and yet a brace of them he sacrificed upon the altar of friendship, and bade us go in peace.

Such was Father Damien of Kalawao.

IV.

THAT evening we sat at dinner in the doctor's lodge and ate of the priest's feathered darlings. We were served by a young Hawaiian in the incipient stages of leprosy, and his leprous wife had kindly prepared our food for us.

None of us seemed to have the least fear of these good people,—perhaps because, as yet, they showed little or no trace of the disease that was devouring them piecemeal.

Suitable precautions are taken to preserve the lodge from contamination: it is securely locked at all times; the key is given only into the doctor's hands, or those of such few foreign guests as visit Kalawao by permission of the Board of Health. (It will readily be conjectured how very few these are.)

The scanty furniture of the lodge is kept scrupulously clean. Anxious

The Lepers of Molokai

inquirers who seek the visiting physician at all hours—often those that are unseasonable—are supposed to stop at the gate and carry on the consultation over the pickets thereof; but this they sometimes forget to do.

There were several of these callers during the evening, whilst we sat on the sheltered veranda, looking off upon the quiet village. The wind blew briskly from the sea; it rattled the windows, and hissed through the long grass in the doorway. The huge cliff before us towered into the very sky, touched now and again with beauty as the clouds swept from the face of the moon.

One by one the twinkling lights in the village disappeared, and when the curfew tolled not a glimmer was left; and the only sound we heard was the clatter of the window-shutters, and the boom of the sea as it broke upon the rocks by the shore.

There was but one topic of conversation during all our stay; that

The Lepers of Molokai

was, of course, the leprosy; we had it for breakfast, dinner and tea,—morning and evening, and even far into the night. We considered the subject in all its lights and bearings; the theme was inexhaustible, and possessed for us, at that moment, an almost horrible interest. And think of it for a moment: this very day vestiges of the plague are to be found in localities the most dissimilar in regard to temperature, climate, situation, and soil.

The leper is to be found in Sumatra, under the Equator; in parts of Iceland, almost within the verge of the Arctic Circle; in the temperate regions of both hemispheres, as at Hamel-en-Arade in the Cape district, and in the North, at Madeira and Morocco; in the dry and arid plains of Arabia; in the wet and malarious districts of Batavia and Surinam; along the shores of Guinea and Sierra Leone; and in the interior of Africa, Hindostan, Asia Minor, and Asiatic Russia; on the sea-

The Lepers of Molokai

coast, as at Carthage, and thousands of feet above the level of the ocean, on the table-lands of Mexico; on some of the islands in the Indian, Chinese, Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas; and basking in the sunshine in the heart of the Pacific. And yet, elsewhere, among all of these victims of the most terrible of scourges, gathered in communities and lazarettos, confined in the remote chambers of pest-houses, or wandering neglected and alone, there is no colony like this at Kalawao, in which a whole population may be said to share the affliction in common.

It was hard to realize where we were when the night shut out the spectacle of those suffering ones; hard to believe that we were in any danger even when surrounded by the dead and the dying. Then some one opened the Bible, and, turning to the Book of Leviticus read how, in those days, the leprous man was solemnly pronounced un-

The Lepers of Molokai

clean; how his clothes were rent, and he was shunned, and his habitation was without the camp; how the priest came unto the house, and the *stones* in which the plague was were cast into an unclean place without the city; and the house was scraped, and the dust of the scrapings was unclean. Other stones were taken to replace the old stones, and they were plastered with fresh mortar; then the people waited the result.

When the priest came again, if the plague was spread in the house, it was "a fretting leprosy in the house"; and the house was broken down, and the stones of it, and the timbers, and the mortar, were carried out of the city into an unclean place; and he that went into the house was unclean, and his garments were put off. As for the garments of the leper, if the plague spread in the garment, either in the warp or in the woof or in the skin, or in any work that was made of skin, "it was a fretting leprosy," and it was burnt

The Lepers of Molokai

in the fire. This was the law for the leprosy of a garment and of a house in those days.

Still the wind blew briskly from the sea; a delicious coolness was gathering; the air was soft and bracing, and the crash of the waves like glorious music. Sometimes a rock came rolling down the cliff,—a rock loosened by the wild goats that feed there. Sometimes a wild bird screeched as it swept over us like a shadow. It was a weird night we were passing in the weirdest of all places.

“Even the royal families were not exempt,” said the doctor, who had been listening to the reading of the Mosaic Law.

And they were not. Henry III. was suspected of being a leper. It was a local tradition that the leper-house at Waterford, in Ireland, was founded by King John, the father of Henry III., in consequence of his son's being afflicted, at Lismore, with an eruption that was thought

The Lepers of Molokai

to be leprosy. Historians have alleged that Henry IV. was leprous toward the end of his life. Robert the Bruce died of leprosy; and Baldwin IV., king of Jerusalem, died at the age of three and twenty, a leper. These were the pampered darlings of the throne, and they fell victims to the plague which was centred in that little village within whose borders we were domesticated!

As we retired for the night I could not but think that once in the toils of this insidious charmer—for it seems almost to have a fascination for the Hawaiian—not cedar wood, nor scarlet, nor hyssop, nor clean birds, nor ewes of the first year, nor measures of fine flour, nor offerings of any sort, even though they were potent in the days of the prophets, shall cleanse us for evermore.

V.

THERE was little sleep that night. I was thinking of my first visit to the settlement in 1868, when the keeper and his family did what they could to make Dr. Lee, the then visiting physician, and myself comfortable.

The Walsh family had a history, and a sad one it was. Failing health compelled the retirement of Mr. Walsh from the British army some years previous to my acquaintance with him. With his wife and children he sought a home in the colonies,—that first hope of the young and enthusiastic, the last resort of the despairing. Misfortune and death pursued him from shore to shore. Discouraged by unprofitable speculations in Australia and New Zealand, he sailed for the far-distant Hawaiian Islands.

The Lepers of Molokai

Seven children had been taken from them by death; but one remained—a good lad, though, alas! in delicate health, subject to physical disorders, and therefore a constant source of anxiety.

Upon the arrival of the Walshes in Honolulu, it was announced that a keeper was needed at the new leper settlement—one who would make his home with the lepers, and devote his entire attention to them. Mr. Walsh offered his own and his wife's services, and they were accepted. The little family at once moved to Molokai, and took up their residence at Kalawao.

Upon my visit at that time, the doctor and I sought shelter under their roof, the only refuge available. The house was extremely small: I think there were but two rooms in it; but the son was absent for a few days—away in the mountains with some companions—and the living room, in which we sat by day, where we ate, and which was also a

The Lepers of Molokai

dispensary on a small scale, was our sleeping-room at night. The doctor found his bed in a little alcove, while I slept on the lounge.

I remember the charity, the loving kindness, and the deep poverty of those gracious people. I remember their modest apologies for the table, upon which were spread only the barest necessaries of life. (Sea-biscuit sopped in milk was a staple in that humble home.) I remember their efforts at merriment: how they tried to make light of their sorrowful strait; but their very mirth was pathetic. With what tenderness they spoke of their absent boy and his infirmities; with what fearful hope they pictured his future and their own!

One of the half-dozen volumes that constituted the family library was Father Faber's "All for Jesus." It was the mainstay of the house; it was taken down at odd moments during the day; put into my hands again and again, that I might read

The Lepers of Molokai

this or that favorite passage—and read it aloud; for Mr. Walsh was rapidly losing his sight, and his eyes were then shielded by double green glasses.

Husband and wife worked as one in that vineyard. Many a time was Mrs. Walsh called to the bedside of the dying, to lend the aid of her tearful sympathy to some fainting soul in its last agony. Fifty—yea, a hundred times a day were these gentle people called to the door to minister to the wants of some pitiful creature, and very likely some one whom they had seen but a little while before; for they made their rounds frequently between dawn and dark. Other guests they had no hope of seeing; for who would be likely to seek their hospitality as long as they dwelt in that sad place?

As we were about leaving the settlement, Mr. Walsh drew me aside, and with charming embarrassment said that he had been searching the house over for some little token to

The Lepers of Molokai

offer me as a *souvenir* of my visit. The only thing he could find, in fact almost the only thing he could offer—for he could not part with his crucifix, his rosary, his two or three pious pictures, or his precious volume of Father Faber—was a little pocket-map of the city of Mexico. “You are always travelling,” said he: “I shall travel no more; and some day perhaps this will be of service to you.”

I received it gratefully, and said: “Mr. Walsh, I will go to Mexico, and open this map in memory of your kindness.” And some day I hope to do so.

Not many months later, having returned to San Francisco, I received a letter in an unfamiliar hand. It bore several postmarks, and showed signs of some hard usage. The letter had evidently gone astray; it was dated at least two months before; but on reading it I found fresh assurances of the warm friendship of the Walsh family. It was written

The Lepers of Molokai

in Mr. Walsh's slow and careful hand, and conveyed the modest request that if I published anything concerning his poor little settlement, I would be good enough to let him see it; he added: "You know we hear so little of the world in Kalawao."

The same mail brought me a newspaper from the capital of the Kingdom. On glancing through it, my eye fell upon a paragraph that startled me. His letter was still open before me; and by the printed lines, that grew blurred as I read them, I learned that, Mr. Walsh having become almost totally blind, and beginning to fail so rapidly as to alarm his wife and son, it was thought best for the family to return to Honolulu and seek medical advice.

They took passage in one of the inter-Island schooners—never noted for their excellent accommodations—and set sail. The elements were not propitious: head-winds or calms delayed them; and at last, when they were nearing port, while they reclined

The Lepers of Molokai

upon the deck in the glare of the sun—for the atmosphere of the little cabin was intolerable—Mr. Walsh was seized with a sudden paroxysm, and almost immediately expired.

The despair of the mother as she bowed over the inanimate form of her husband, added to his own natural grief, so wrought upon the emotions of the son that in a moment he became a raving maniac. He had been subject to periods of insanity, and now he had gone mad. His violence was such that it became necessary to lash him to the mast. And in this plight the stricken family ended their mission among the lepers of Molokai.

VI.

IT seems we were about to enter the valley of the shadows of death. A day had been set apart for the inspection of tenements and of the several wards where the worst cases of leprosy were in charge of leprous friends, who were as yet but little crippled by the ravages of the disease.

The hospital wards—a row of long, cool buildings—are ranged on two sides of a breezy and treeless square. There is an abundance of fresh air and sunshine in Kalawao, but these life-giving elements can not aid the hopeless victims of leprosy. As we approached the wards, we found some of the patients wandering listlessly in the shade of the low-hanging eaves, or lounging in the verandas; some were sunning themselves at the corners of the buildings; not a few were within doors, sitting mutely

The Lepers of Molokai

alone, or in groups, or reclining upon the cots that stood in double rows down the length of each ward.

Father Damien, who had called early to offer his services as escort, knew each individual case; like the good physician that he is, ministering to the bodies as well as to the souls of his flock, his finger is upon the pulse of his suffering people, as with painful gravity he watches the tide of life slowly ebbing day by day.

Most of these lepers were capable of smiling when spoken to—and I believe they would smile in their last breath; for of all nations on the face of the globe the Hawaiian is perhaps the most amiable and the most ingenuous. But what smiles were those that greeted us! what horror-stricken faces, in which the muscles seemed to have forgotten their office, and to be now sporting derisively! It was as if the mantle of Victor Hugo's "*L'Homme qui Rit*" were being striven for by those utterly unconscious of the disgust

The Lepers of Molokai

it necessarily inspires. Still they smiled responsively, like children: smiled innocently and amiably, but with an expression that was satirical and sometimes almost devilish; their swollen faces, with the flesh knotted and blotched, grew a thousand times more horrible while they smiled, and the features bore a look of fixed agony never to be forgotten by one who has beheld it.

It is a singular and a fortunate fact that the leper suffers but little pain until almost his final hour; much inconvenience certainly he endures, but endures it patiently and painlessly, until the fangs of the loathsome disease strike the vitals; and then the end is at hand.

Maundrel, an English traveller of the 17th century, writing of the leprosy he saw in Syria, says: "It is a distemper so noisome that it might well pass for the utmost corruption of the human body on this side of the grave." Such is the case to-day in Molokai.

The Lepers of Molokai

Listen to the diagnosis of the leprosy as it is found in nearly every land under the sun: When leprosy is fully developed it is characterized by the presence of dusky red or livid tubercles of different sizes upon the face, lips, nose, eyebrows, ears, and extremities of the body. The skin of the tuberculated face is at the same time thickened, wrinkled, and shining, and the features are very greatly distorted. The hair of the eyebrows, eyelashes, and beard falls off; the eyes are often injected, and the conjunctiva swelled; the pupil of the eye contracts, giving the organ a weird, cat-like expression; the voice becomes hoarse and nasal; the sense of smell is impaired or lost, and that of touch, or common sensation, is strangely altered. The tuberculated parts, which are, in the first instance, sometimes supersensitive, latterly in the course of the disease, become paralyzed, or anæsthetic. As the malady progresses, the tubercles soften and open; ulcera-

The Lepers of Molokai

tions of similar mucous tubercles appear in the nose and throat, rendering the breath extremely offensive; tubercular masses, or leprous tubercles as shown by dissection, begin to form internally upon various mucous membranes, and on the surface of the kidneys, lungs, etc.; cracks, fissures, and circular ulcers appear on the fingers, toes, and extremities, and joint after joint drops off by a kind of spontaneous gangrene. Sometimes the upper and sometimes the lower extremities are specially afflicted by this mortification and mutilation of parts.

Dr. Halbeck, an Eastern traveller, tells us that in looking down from a neighboring height into the great leper hospital of Hamel-en-Arade, he saw two lepers sowing peas in the field. "The one had no hands, the other had no feet,—these members being wasted away by disease. The one who wanted hands was carrying the other, who wanted feet, on his back; and he again carried in

The Lepers of Molokai

his hands a bag of seed, and dropped a pea every now and then, which the other pressed into the ground with his foot."

Cases as deplorable may be found at Kalawao; but there the maimed are not expected to do any manual labor, and for the most part they are surrounded by friends who are able and ready—yea, eager to serve them.

As we were passing through one of the wards, we found a little heap of humanity drawn up in bed and covered all over with a red woolen blanket. Some one raised this covering, and exposed a withered face; the eyes did not open; the eyelids, which were like thick films, quivered feebly; the flesh of an arm that lay across the breast was eaten away, it looked as if it had been eaten by rats, but it was only the fang of the destroyer that had struck there.

This miserable creature was being fanned by a friend, who smiled complacently as he told us that the

The Lepers of Molokai

old man was dying. Again and again we visited him, and three days later found him apparently unchanged; without eating or drinking, and almost without breathing, he lay curled in an ignominious heap of corruption, awaiting tardy death.

His companions were in nowise disconcerted, but dozed on the neighboring cots, played cards in the corner, or sat moodily apart, as if watching for some one—and so they were! They were watching with dogged indifference the approach of the destroyer; they could mark his progress inch by inch in the mortifying bodies of their fellows; and hour after hour this was the sole diversion of the more moody victims.

From cottage to cottage, across lots, through garden spots ablaze with brilliant flowers, and rank with shrubs of brightest green—lepers were everywhere waiting to receive us; they crouched under the thick banana hedges, or in the smallest

The Lepers of Molokai

of verandas, or squatted upon the floor within doors.

Often we found the walls of the rooms papered with illustrations cut from *Harper's Weekly*, *Frank Leslie's* or the *London News*. And graphic, flaring chromo-lithographs were not wanting; nor, in many cases, a crucifix, or a holy picture, or the beads. But Father Damien made no distinction in the bestowal of his favors, and everywhere he was welcomed as a friend.

It seemed strange to me that those doomed exiles, who have only to look upon the disfigured faces of their companions to see the living image of their own, have, in most cases, hearts that are comparatively light, and spirits comparatively gay; and yet they are all, or nearly all of them, dwelling within sound of the busy hammer that is shaping the coffins which are to enclose their remains! That hammer seemed never idle; coffins were piled where they were visible to all who passed the

The Lepers of Molokai

workshop; and yet two or three per week are called for, and "God's acre" is crowded with the dead.

When we escaped from the green labyrinth of the settlement, I thought of Dante emerging from the *Inferno* under the guidance of Virgil; and, clasping the hand of Father Damien, I entered his house, there to digest the experiences of the day.

VII.

IT is a small, two-story house, with stairs leading from the lower to the upper veranda. Having seated me in his easiest chair, the good priest excused himself for a few moments, during which I busied myself in filling some pages of my notebook.

When he returned he brought with him an improvised supper: a bit of meat, a dish of rice, fried eggs, and large bowls of coffee, with nuggets of sugar on sea-biscuits, that served as trays, and were afterward to be eaten. All this he had prepared with his own hands; together we discussed it, and then withdrew to the full enjoyment of a pipe and a cigarette.

Now I assumed the attitude of the interviewer, but found my subject a diffident and difficult one; it was only after considerable persua-

The Lepers of Molokai

sion that I gathered the brief record of his life; and even then the modest Father was fearful that I might flatter him, or give my readers a too favorable impression of one who seemed quite unconscious of having done anything worthy of note. I can not do him justice, but here, in brief, is the story of his career:

Born in Louvain, Belgium, Jan. 3, 1840; when he was but four and twenty, his brother, who had just entered the priesthood, was ordered to embark for Honolulu, but at the moment fell sick with typhoid fever. Young Damien, who was a theological student at the University, having received minor orders, and belonging to the same Order—the Society of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary (commonly called Society of Picpus)—at once wrote to his superior, and begged that he might be sent upon the mission in his brother's stead. In one week he was on the way to that far country. He was ordained upon his arrival in

The Lepers of Molokai

Honolulu, and for a few years led the life of toil and privation which invariably falls to the lot of the Catholic missionary.

In 1873 he, in common with others of the clergy, was invited to be present at the dedication of a beautiful chapel just completed by Father Leonor at Wailuku, on the Island of Maui. There he met the Bishop, who expressed regret that he was still unable to send a priest to Molokai; for the demand was far in excess of the supply. Father Damien at once said: "My Lord, I hear that a small vessel will next week take cattle from Kawaihae to Kaulapapa: if you will permit me I will go there to help the lepers make their Easter duties."

His request was granted, and in company with the Bishop and the French Consul, he landed at the settlement, where he found a colony of eight hundred lepers, of whom between four and five hundred were Catholics. A public meeting was

The Lepers of Molokai

immediately called, at which the Bishop and the Consul presided. His Grace arose to address the singular gathering, and said: "Since you have written me so often that you have no priest, I leave you one for a little time"; and, imparting the benediction, he returned immediately to the vessel which was to sail that very hour. Father Damien added: "As there is much to be done here, by your leave I will not even accompany you to the shore." Thus the good work was at once begun. It was high time: the lepers were dying at the rate of from eight to twelve per week. The priest had not time to build himself a hut—he had not even the material with which to build it—and for a season he slept in the open air, under a tree, exposed to the wind and the rain.

Soon after he received a letter of congratulation from the white residents of Honolulu—chiefly Protestants—together with some lumber, and a purse of \$120; then he put

The Lepers of Molokai

up his little house, and began to feel at home. After remaining some weeks at Kalawao, he was obliged to go to Honolulu, there being no more convenient priest to whom he could make his confession.

He naturally called upon the president of the Board of Health, who seemed much surprised, but received the priest with frigid politeness. He then asked leave to return to the settlement on Molokai, and was curtly informed that he might indeed return, but that in that case he must remain there for good.

Father Damien explained to this gentleman how necessary it is for one priest to see another at reasonable intervals, in order to make his confession, and asked permission to visit Lahaina, on the Island of Maui, not far from Molokai, promising to return there directly in a small boat, as soon as he had attended to his religious duties. This was denied him. He was told that he must remain at Kalawao, and not leave

The Lepers of Molokai

it on any pretension whatever. Nor would the Board permit the priest at Lahaina to visit Father Damien at Kalawao.

Here an eminent physician—one of the Board of Health—pleaded his cause, insisting that permission be granted the Father to go and come at will. “This is the rule in all civilized countries,” said he; “the priest and the physician are exempt. They have privileges which no one else has, and which no one else should have.” The doctor was heartily seconded by the French Consul, in whose hands the business of the mission was deposited; and Father Damien returned to Kalawao on a special permit.

Shortly after his return he received an official notice that he must remain where he was; and that on any attempt to leave the island, or even to visit other portions of Molokai, he would be immediately put under arrest. The notice was sharply worded. This roused the indignation of the

The Lepers of Molokai

priest, and he notified the Board of Health that if they would attend strictly to their duties, he would attend to his. When it became necessary for him to visit a priest on a neighboring island, he did so, asking no odds of any man; he also visited his scattered flock on the circuit of Molokai, attending faithfully and fearlessly to the wants of his people.

Often on these rounds he was the welcome guest of a gentleman, the son of a Protestant missionary; and on one occasion the host said to him, playfully: "I suppose you are aware that I have orders to place you under immediate arrest if you presume to leave your leper settlement?" And this was the sheriff of Molokai.

Six months later a permit came, granting Father Damien leave to come and go as he pleased; but in eleven years how seldom has he cared to use it!

This interview seeming to be an event in the life of my good friend, it was celebrated with another pipe

The Lepers of Molokai

and an extra sip of coffee; but before the former was finished, or the latter had cooled, he was called quickly away, to attend the bedside of some passing soul.

VIII.

HATHER DAMIEN'S duties were never-ending. From early Mass till long after his flock was housed in sleep, he was busy; and when at last he had sought his pillow, it was too often to lie awake planning for the future, and perhaps to be called again into the ward-rooms to ease the anguish of the sick or the dying.

The neat white cottages which have taken the place of the thatched huts of the natives were erected under his eye; and, furthermore, he personally assisted in the construction of most of them. The small chapel which he found at the settlement has become the transept of the present edifice; he, with the aid of a handful of lepers, enlarged the building, painted it without, decorated it within; and there he daily offers the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, preaches frequently, instructs

The Lepers of Molokai

the children, and fills all the offices of the Church.

Forty orphan boys and girls are under his immediate direction. Houses with dormitories have been erected for them; and the girls, under the direction of suitable instructors are taught needle-work and the domestic arts. It has been found advisable to permit those who are of a marriageable age to marry the partners of their choice, and these marriages are duly solemnized in the presence of witnesses.

The spiritual wants of the priest's flock were sufficient fully to occupy his time. On Sundays and feast-days there was High Mass at Kalawao; the celebrant was then obliged to hasten to Kaulapapa, and there again offer the Divine Sacrifice; now—at noon—he was permitted to partake of a little refreshment, the first since midnight; then back to Kalawao for Vespers, Benediction, and Catechism; over again to Kaulapapa, to repeat the offices; and at last, at

The Lepers of Molokai

nightfall, home once more, to look after the affairs of his people, and to cook his own supper, and put his house in order for the night. He was indeed Jack-of-all-trades: physician of the soul and of the body, magistrate, school-teacher, carpenter, joiner, painter, gardener, house-keeper, cook, and even, in some cases, undertaker and grave-digger. Great was his need of help, and long was he in need of it before it came. More than 1,600 lepers had been buried under his administration, and a death-bed was always awaiting him—sometimes two or three of them.

Help came to him finally—the welcome aid he had so longed for.

“We have not seen Father Albert yet,” said he; “to-morrow I will call for you, and we will visit Kaula-papa.”

IX.

ALIGHT buggy that had seen its best days was standing at the door of the doctor's lodge; a very comfortable beast, that rejoiced in the name of "William," was being fastened to the vehicle with such fragments of harness as had survived the wear and tear of time. Father Damien, the proud possessor of this conveyance, then announced himself in readiness, and we set out for Kaulapapa, the rival leper village, about two miles distant.

It was not a bad road we followed, thanks to the efforts of the energetic priest, but William, whose days are numbered, evidently has no intention of hurrying through any one of them. "*Aueh!* you are a little lazy, my William," said the Father to his pet, touching him lightly with the stump of a whip. William paused for a moment, apparently lost in the contemplation of nature.

The Lepers of Molokai

Presently we met a procession of half-handed lepers, who were laboriously moving a shanty from one site to another. Father Damien tightened his reins, and, by way of apology for the possible misbehavior of his steed, said: "He has never seen such a thing, poor beast!" But William, being absorbed in thought, passed the phenomenon unnoticed; and so we came to Kaulapapa, beyond the treeless and undulating plain. It is an almost pretty village—bright, sunshiny, and having an air of prosperity, no doubt brightened by the newly-constructed dock, and the freshly-painted whale-boat that was beached beside it.

The lesser lions of Kaulapapa were soon disposed of, and we adjourned to the neatest cottage in the village. Flowers blossomed before it, and the land was steeped in sunshine,—so was the sea, that sparkled but a stone's-throw from the door-yard. This was the home of Father Albert, who, in his age and infirmities, has

The Lepers of Molokai

still the cheerfulness of that sunshine and the sweetness of his well-kept garden-spot. He welcomed us in his veranda, with silver hair and flowing beard. Books and papers were on his table, pictures upon the wall; the neatly-curtained windows admitted the fresh sea-breeze. A light repast was offered us. The hospitality of these impoverished priests is proverbial, and worthy to be remembered with the widow's mite.

Close at hand was Father Albert's chapel. It is as quaint as it is cozy, full of color—odd combinations of color on wall and ceiling. Father Albert whispered: "It is in barbarous taste, but I have sought to please the poor lepers, who are fond of this display." The altar was like a picture, and there was a goodly number of those beautiful, mild-faced, artistically-tinted statues of the saints, such as always remind me of the attractive shop-windows in the vicinity of Saint Sulpice in Paris. In the main isle, before the

The Lepers of Molokai

altar, stood a French organ, of which Father Albert was justly proud. By an ingenious displacement of the key-board the same chord may be pitched in a higher or lower key, without changing the position of the hand upon the keys; moreover, when desirable, through a still more convenient attachment—by pressing a finger upon one single note—the complementary chord in treble and bass is struck at the same moment. It is needless to add that the most indifferent performer need hardly go astray upon this instrument, and that the simplest one-finger exercise becomes at once quite imposing. It was Father Albert's pleasure to exhibit the automatic accomplishments of this organ, and he finished with a graceful, old-fashioned waltz measure, skilfully rendered, with the air of one who is not quite indifferent to the charms of melody; his thin hands lightly swept the keys, while his face retained the sweet gravity that distinguishes it.

The Lepers of Molokai

There is a small cemetery almost under the eaves of the chapel, where little children are buried—as if they would be lonely out yonder on the plain; there is a large one, with an ornamental gateway painted in black and white; in the centre of it stands a tall, slender cross, and beyond it, within hearing, is the sea. There is a race-track—a long stretch of grass-grown road—running out to the breezy fishing-point, with its cluster of rush-huts. The sea was like crystal all up and down the coast; branches of coral and darting fish are visible at a great depth; sharks are not uncommon visitors, and yet there were lepers fishing and bathing among the rocks—the strangely shaped lava rocks, that at times received the sea and shouldered it off in avalanches of foam.

This is about all there is at Kaulapapa, though it is the one port of the lepers, and a small steamer visits it weekly, and sometimes a schooner runs in with a load of long-expected

The Lepers of Molokai

freight. Little else can be said of it, save to tell the story of the gentle soul who has come to make his home there—Father Damien's right-hand man, his fellow-priest. But Father Albert can tell his story much better than I can, and I will not touch a line of the letter with which he has favored me.

X.

LISTEN to the story of another of the Catholic missionaries in Hawaii:

“Born in France, in the diocese of Coutances, in the year 1825, of pious parents, richer in the gifts of grace than in the fleeting goods of this world. My studies, as far as philosophy inclusive, were pursued with a certain degree of success at the College of Avranches, and the *Petit Séminaire* of Mortain, and I received my degree of *Bachelier es Lettres* at the Academy of Paris. In 1845 I entered the novitiate of the Fathers of Picpus, or of the Sacred Hearts. At the outbreak of the Revolution of 1848 I was sent, with several other young professed, to Chili, where I continued my theological studies, at the same time teaching in our colleges at Valparaiso and Santiago. After my ordination in 1850, I was,

The Lepers of Molokai

at my own request, in 1852, sent to our missions in Oceanica.

“Attached from the first to the Vicariate of Tahiti, I have remained there a little over twenty years, performing the ordinary missionary duties in the Archipelago so well named Poumoutous. Between Tahiti and *les Gambiers* they form a long train of *madreporic* islets, distant from each other several days’ sail, covered with sand and brush, only a few metres above the level of the sea. At that time they were divided into two sections—the distinction between them being well defined—one of which, trading for some time in nacker (mother-of-pearl), or cocoa-oil, was to some extent civilized; but unfortunately some deserters from American whaling vessels introduced Mormonism in its highest degree of fanaticism and immorality. The other inhabitants were savages, cannibals, and pagans.

“Naturally, Catholic missionary work would begin with the first,

The Lepers of Molokai

and it was already so far advanced as to claim a little band of catechumens and neophytes in three different islands when I arrived myself, toward the end of 1852, at the isle of Chainé (Ana), the principal one of the group. It was also the *boulevard* (stronghold) of Mormonism, whose followers exasperated at the first success of Catholicity, openly revolted soon after my arrival, killed a corporal of the guards, burned and pillaged the church and presbytery of the village, and seriously wounded two missionaries, one of whom carried to the grave the mark of the deep wounds he had received on the head.

“I remained several years assisting the first missionaries to spread the good tidings of the Gospel in those Mormon isles, and then I obtained from Mgr. Jaunin, our Vicar-Apostolic, permission to go to the pagan and savage isles. The *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*—the weekly record of the Catholic missions—

The Lepers of Molokai

have published in part a *resumé* of my dangers, my labors, and my success in those isles, through which I travelled during five or six years. I believe that my remarkably lean condition saved me several times from the teeth of these cannibals. My bold and firm bearing in some way magnetized those big fat fellows of kanaks, who in moments of a savage fury several times threatened to put an end to me.

“In 1872 I was the sole survivor of the four first missionaries to the Archipelago. But the fatigue and privations endured among these poor isles had completely ruined my health. I was then sent to France, where I arrived about the end of the year 1873. I had the happiness of visiting the new and famous pilgrimages of Pontmain, Lourdes, and La Salette. Still better, I had the good fortune to visit Italy—Milan, where I venerated the precious body of St. Charles, resting in a rich mausoleum under the grand altar of

The Lepers of Molokai

the most magnificent church in the whole world; Loreto, where I said Mass twice in the *Santa Casa* of Nazareth; Rome, where I remained two weeks, and had two audiences with the Sovereign Pontiff, Pius IX. —one public, the other private and personal.

“After so many unexpected graces and blessings, my only desire was to return and die among my dear Poumoutous. But the doctors in Paris who were treating me thought in unadvisable, and would only permit me to go to the Sandwich Islands, where the climate and food seemed to them more suitable to my condition of health. I arrived here in 1874, and for nearly five years I have been engaged, in company with the celebrated Father Damien, in the care, corporal and spiritual, of my dear brothers, the lepers of Molokai. My health to-day is perfectly restored, and I feel myself able and ready to rejoin at Poumoutous my old *confrère*, Father

The Lepers of Molokai

Fierens, who wrote lately in the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith* that the old Mormon isles are at the present day mostly Catholic, and that the savages and pagans are almost wholly civilized and Christianized. I am, however, very happy and content in my present work, and I leave entirely to my superiors to dispose of me as they think best."

XI.

THE local press of Honolulu—at least a portion of it—has found much fault with the ministry for having neglected to segregate each individual leper in the Kingdom long ago. It is true that for some time after the introduction of the plague, the Board of Health took little or no action toward the prevention of its development; but it is likewise true that in the last fifteen years 2,500 lepers have been banished to Molokai.

The average death-rate is 150 per annum; there are always between 700 and 800 lepers at the settlement, and these are provided for by the Government. The last biennial appropriation of \$90,000 is insufficient, as the President of the Board of Health asserts; for, beside the settlement on Molokai, there is a branch hospital near Honolulu, where doubt-

The Lepers of Molokai

ful cases are held for treatment; and this is nearly always filled. From this branch hospital, called Kakaako, the confirmed lepers are shipped to Molokai.

Kakaako, like Tracadie, is in charge of a Sisterhood. The Bishop of Olba, whose life is devoted to the spiritual welfare of the Hawaiian race, at the urgent request of the King and Queen sent Father Leonor to America, to obtain, if possible, the aid of such Sisters as were able to endure the hardships of service in Hawaii. Seven ladies of the Franciscan Order, established at Syracuse, N. Y., were shortly on their way; others are expected to join them, and then some of these devoted Sisters will locate at the leper settlement on Molokai.

The settlement has been visited by the Princess Regent, and, if I mistake not, by the Queen also. Both take the deepest interest in the welfare of the unfortunates, and in 1884 a very successful fair was

The Lepers of Molokai

held in Honolulu for the benefit of the lepers; on this occasion the several booths were in charge of the queen, two princesses, and the first ladies of the little capital.

Nor is the King unmindful of the devotion of the Catholic mission to the good work. In 1881 Bishop Hermann, then Coadjutor to the late Bishop Maigret, paid a formal visit to Kalawao. It was a great day for the leper settlement. The Bishop was to be received with salutes, music, and banners; triumphal arches were erected; presently, all being in readiness, a swarm of volunteers went out to watch for the first signs of his Lordship's approach. Intense excitement prevailed, and when at last a group of tiny figures was discovered climbing down the huge precipice above Kalawao, the enthusiasm of the poor lepers knew no bounds.

It was a happy day for Father Damien; but he was not then aware of the *fête* that was in store for him.

The Lepers of Molokai

When the Bishop reached the base of the Pali (the cliff), he was received by Father Damien and a deputation from Kalawao; they then mounted horses, and rode solemnly into the plain. The good bishop, who had been overtaken by a rain-storm, was drenched to the skin; but his discomfort was soon forgotten, for at the first triumphal arch he was received by a body of 800 lepers, with banners flying; cheers rent the air; the brass band—lepers all of them—struck up a march, and the procession advanced on Kalawao.

In front of the chapel was another arch, more beautiful than the first; here the entire population had assembled to welcome the distinguished visitor; he excused himself for a few moments only, in order to change his dripping garments for dry ones, and returned to receive the formal welcome and congratulations of the inhabitants. Songs were sung, addresses of welcome delivered, and then his Lordship rose to reply.

The Lepers of Molokai

The delight of Father Damien, the most modest of men, had almost made him bold; but to his embarrassment, he found himself summoned by his superior to receive publicly the congratulations of the many who were eager to express their admiration and gratitude for the noble self-sacrifice displayed by the young priest. "Moreover," added his Lordship, "I am commissioned by his Majesty to place upon your neck this testimonial of his esteem." And with that the Bishop hung upon the breast of the bewildered Father the glittering Cross of a Knight Commander of the Order of Kalakaua I. A thousand voices rent the air—cheer upon cheer; cheer upon cheer awoke the slumbering echoes of that silent shore, and there were those who wept with joy at the honor so justly conferred upon their beloved pastor.

Father Damien, in his confusion, was about to remove the bauble, but he was at once ordered by the

The Lepers of Molokai

Bishop to allow it to remain, at least so long as he was a guest at Kalawao. And again the banners waved, the women wept, and the shouts of the people mingled with the trumpet blast of the band boys; for a red-letter day had stolen unexpectedly into the melancholy annals of Kalawao.

XII.

HIGH MASS at Kalawao—the solemn Mystery offered almost in the spirit of a *requiem*; for the participants are doomed, and the living are well-nigh dead.

I was directed by Father Damien to a small enclosure at the left of the altar. It was not unlike a witness box; a railing enclosed the single seat, and no leper was ever permitted to open the gate that shut me in.

The neatly robed sanctuary boys were all disfigured—some with pitiful, distorted features; but, fortunately, none of these seem to suffer any pain, or much inconvenience; though fingers and toes are in many cases missing, and the eyelids are thickened and drawn out of shape. The very beautiful sacramental vessels, of richly-wrought gold, were sent to Father Damien by the superior of St. Roche, in Paris; they are used only at High Mass.

The Lepers of Molokai

With the greatest sweetness and gravity the celebrant proceeded. The chapel was filled with worshippers, and all of them seemed to be singing, or trying to sing, simple refrains, that sounded strangely enough in the hoarse throats of the singers.

The devotion of the Catholic Hawaiian is remarkable, because the race is much given to childish levity; and I have nowhere else seen such evidences of genuine contrition—certainly not in the meetings presided over by native ministers: the American Protestant missionaries having retired from the field, and left it in the hands of the aborigines.

What a contrast was here: the bright altar, cleanly furnished; the young priest, a picture of health, chanting with clear, ringing voice the *Pater noster*; at his feet the acolytes, upon whose infant features was already fixed the seal of early death! Beyond the altar-railing corruption ran riot; there was scarcely a form in that whole congregation

The Lepers of Molokai

from which one would not turn with horror, and many of these worshippers seemed actually to have risen from the corruption of the grave.

The solemn boom of the sea-surf was fit accompaniment to that most solemn service; and the long, low sough of the sea-wind was like a sigh of sympathy. The very air was polluted; the fetid odor of the charnel-house pervaded it; and all that chamber of horrors seemed but the portal of the tomb.

This is the Feast of the Master as celebrated at Kalawao; and to celebrate it thus is Father Damien's blessed privilege. I thought of that verse in St. Luke: "And as He entered into a certain town, there met Him ten men that were lepers, who stood afar off, and lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Verily their prayer is answered; for He hath mercy on them, and blesses them in the person of His servant.

XIII.

THESE is yet much to be done for the lepers. Many who seem whole and sound, who are still in the full enjoyment of life and liberty, are doubtless the unconscious victims of a disease that has been declared incurable by the best medical testimony of the age. The germ has been planted—it has possibly been inherited—and sooner or later it will make itself visible. The law of segregation must be enforced until the last leper has ended his miserable existence, and the survivors are delivered from the ravages of the plague.

The fear of contagion and of possible infection hangs over the ill-fated Kingdom. The Hawaiians are a susceptible people; possessed of much physical beauty, and of but little strength and endurance, they succumb easily under the influence of

The Lepers of Molokai

diseases that with us are of small moment. With them the measles are almost as much to be dreaded as the small-pox; they need the same watchful care that one gives to an unreasoning child; they live lives of reckless intercourse, and seem to invite epidemics. Your Hawaiian in a high fever will deliberately plunge into the sea, and remain there in the hope of cooling off; the chill of the grave too often follows this amazing act of stupidity.

The lepers, once gathered together, should be forbidden all intercourse with those who are not leprous; they have no fear of contagion; they divide their garments among their friends; they pass a pipe from mouth to mouth, Indian-fashion; they marry even where one or the other is known to be leprous. At Kakaako the lepers are on one side of a high picket-fence; their friends on the other side spend hours daily in affectionate intercourse, passing the pipe back and forth, fondling one

The Lepers of Molokai

another, and even kiss at meeting and parting.

That the Sisters at Kakaako, who certainly have their own poor lodgings, but who are constantly mingling with the lepers, may yet fall victims to the plague, is by no means unlikely. Even where great care is taken to avoid contact with a leprous person or a leprous object, the leprosy has finally developed, and in such cases the direct cause of it can not be traced.

Father Damien's escape, after eleven years of intimacy with the worst known cases; after having nursed the sick and buried the dead—more than 1,600 of them—can be looked upon as almost miraculous. He is working with them and for them night and day; his intimates are lepers; his house is hardly ever free of them. It is true that he does his own cooking and his own housework, and whatever is to be done about the altar; a native, not a leper, washes for him, and mends his

The Lepers of Molokai

clothing when necessary; but the tools that are so often in his hands are handled by lepers; and whatever is passed about the village comes to him from those who are, to put it broadly, in all stages of decomposition. This is also the case with all who are brought in contact with lepers at large—those who are not at the settlement—and it must continue to be the case so long as a leper is left unconfined.

I remember how, one day, as we were walking among the wards of the hospital at Kalawao, Father Damien turned suddenly to us, and said: "Ah! here is something dreadful I must show you!" We approached what seemed a little bundle of rags, or rubbish, half hidden under a soiled blanket; the curious doctors were about to examine it, when the good Father seized me, and cried, excitedly: "You must not look! You must not look!" I assured him that I was not at all afraid to see even the worst that could be shown me

The Lepers of Molokai

there; for my eyes had become accustomed to horrors, and the most sickening sights no longer affected me. A corner of the blanket was raised cautiously: a breathing object lay beneath; a face, a human face, was turned slowly toward us—a face in which scarcely a trace of anything human remained. The dark skin was puffed out and blackened; a kind of moss, or mould, gummy and glistening, covered it; the muscles of the mouth, having contracted, laid bare the grinning teeth; the thickened tongue lay like a fig between them; the eyelids, curled tightly back, exposed the inner surface, and the protruding eyeballs, now shapeless and broken, looked not unlike bursted grapes. It was a leprous child, who within the last few days had assumed that horrible visage; surely the grave knows nothing more frightful than this!

Similar cases are rare; perhaps this was the only one of precisely such a nature. But the uncomplain-

The Lepers of Molokai

ing sufferer before us was after all merely a leper, and so long as leprosy remains in the land other victims like unto this one may sit watching and praying for death from hour to hour.

Within the last few weeks a hospital or home for leprous children has been founded at Kakaako, near Honolulu. It was solemnly opened by their Majesties the King and Queen. The Queen gave the key of it into the hands of the superior of the Sisters who have charge of the branch hospital at Kakaako. Then the King graciously decorated the lady with the Order of Kapiolani. Father Leonor, through whose earnest efforts the aid of the admirable Franciscan Sisters was secured, has also been decorated by the King. Indeed their Majesties and the present Cabinet have shown the deepest interest in the welfare of the lepers, and probably all that it is possible to do for their relief and for the security of the nation is being done.

The Lepers of Molokai

In this respect the little Kingdom of Hawaii is worthy of the sympathy and the admiration of the world.

Better accommodations are needed at the settlement—a much larger appropriation; and as for the priests who have consecrated their lives to this glorious work of mercy, is there any wish of theirs which should not be heeded, any request with which the Government should not comply?

XIV.

IN those last days I used to seek the Father and find him, now at the top of a ladder, hammer and nail in hand; or in the garden, or the hospital ward, or the kitchen, or away on a sick-call, as the case might be. It was seldom he could sit with me, for not a moment was he really free. Once I captured him, on a plea of paying my parting call. With the greatest reluctance, and only at my urgent request, he went in search of his decoration. It was found in its neat morocco case, hidden away in an unvisited corner, with the dust an inch thick on it. "It is not for this that I am here," said he, disparagingly; and he acknowledged that he had never put the riband about his neck; indeed he had hardly looked at the bauble since the day when the Bishop desired him to wear it for the gratification of his simple flock.

The Lepers of Molokai

Once I wandered alone into the chapel; a small organ was standing near an open window; beyond the window was the very pandanus tree under which Father Damien found shelter when he first came to Kalawao. I sat at the instrument, dreaming over the keys, and thinking of the life one must lead in such a spot; of the need and the lack of human sympathy; of the solitude of the soul destined to a communion with perpetual death—and, hearing a slight rustling near me, I turned, and found the chapel nearly filled with lepers, who had silently stolen in, one after another, at the sound of the organ. The situation was rather startling; but when I asked where Father Damien might be found they directed me, and stood aside to let me pass.

I found him where I might have known he was likely to be found, working bravely among his men, he by far the most industrious of them all. As I approached them unob-

The Lepers of Molokai

served, the bell of the little chapel rang out the *Angelus*; on the instant they all knelt, uncovered, and in their midst the priest recited the beautiful prayer, to which they responded in soft, low voices,—while the gentle breeze rustled the broad leaves about them, and the sun poured a flood of glory upon their bowed forms. Lepers all of them, save the good pastor, and soon to follow in the ghastly procession, whose motionless bodies he blesses in their peaceful sleep.

Angelus Domini! Was not that sight pleasing in the eyes of God?

XV.

FAREWELL! The time had come to say farewell. The evening before our departure we saw a pleasant phase of life at the leper settlement. The little steamer that visits them at intervals was due; long before sunset a faint smoke-cloud on the horizon heralded her approach, and the news spread like wild-fire from Kalawao to Kaulapapa; the excitement grew as the steamer drew near, and when she passed the little land of the proscribed, and blew a shrill, long blast, that was echoed in a half-dozen neighboring valleys, everyone who was able to leave his bed was on his way to the landing. Many horses are owned at the settlement, and there is dry pasturage for many more; the cavalcade and the infantry soon depopulated one village, and filled the other to overflowing.

The Lepers of Molokai

More lepers were arriving, and were welcomed with tears of sympathy to their new home. The scene was pathetic beyond description, and were it not evident that the exiles are as comfortable and as happy, in course of time, on Molokai as they can be anywhere in the world, nature would revolt at the spectacle. It is undoubtedly best as it is, and it is as well as it can be under the circumstances.

That was a gala night at Kaulapapa, but we were thinking most of our departure on the morrow. We had chosen another trail up the Pali; there are but two, and it may be almost said of them that each is more dreadful than the other. As is usually the case, we were assured that the ascent was easy; that it had been made in fifty minutes, and without suffering much fatigue. We began gaily enough; the path bordered a pretty curve of the shore, and then led up into a wooded plateau, where the view was charming, the

The Lepers of Molokai

air delicious. For a time we threaded a grove, and beyond that the trail was shaded at intervals, while the underbrush hedged us in as we rounded the shoulders of the cliff.

Anon came steep acclivities, with stretches of bare, sun-heated rocks, where our hearts fainted—at least mine did. There was one terrible bit of wall-like cliff that was almost perpendicular; it crumbled as we clung to it like cats; and when I looked below to find footing, I discovered that the rock upon which I was stretched in an agony of suspense was apparently overhanging the sea; the deep, green water was far below me; I felt as if I were climbing into the sky—and then I nearly fell from sheer fright. But a cloud blew down upon us—they fly low in that latitude; in this thin disguise I tried to forget that I was suspended in mid-air by my eyelids, with nothing but sole-leather between me and a thousand feet of space, with certain death at the lower end of it.

The Lepers of Molokai

We were rained upon and shined upon, covered with dust and *débris*, and when we reached the top of the Pali I was dizzy, and parched with thirst. It was my last ascent; we made it in two hours and forty minutes, with my heart knocking wildly at my ribs all the way up. It is the mountain of difficulty. Surely no leper may ever hope to scale it! Nor was ever so weird a spot dedicated to such sorrow and long-suffering before.

With health and companionship, one might endure banishment, but these lepers are dying by inches; they sit about much of the time, with an air of hopeless resignation,—sit there, waiting for the grave to open and receive them.

The martyrs of Molokai! If we pity the lepers, who are, fortunately, soon comforted after every grief, what shall we say of those servants of God who have dedicated their lives to this noble work? Think of their unutterable loneliness, shut in

The Lepers of Molokai

between vast stretches of sea and sky—a solitude that has driven men mad before now. They receive no guests, for no one cares to visit them; very few of their friends write to them, for some are even afraid to receive a reply.

Their meagre rations are sometimes unavoidably cut short, yet one hears no complaint from them in their own behalf: it is always a compassionate appeal in behalf of their suffering charges. These are their companions—if the uncompanionable can be called such,—these, the helpless and the hopeless; and over the devoted heads of those involuntary martyrs hangs ever the possible—yea, the probable—fate that is hourly expiated in revolting and ignominious death.

Take heed, O people! lest in these self-sacrificing ministers ye entertain an angel unawares. Untrumpeted, incomparable heroes! “Verily they shall receive their reward.”

XVI.

A LETTER lies open before me—a letter written some months ago by Father Damien, and addressed to his superior, the Father-General of the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts. From this letter I am permitted to quote certain passages relating to the celebration of a Church festival at the leper settlement on Molokai; and as I read and re-read the letter—a transcription by another hand, but annotated and signed by Father Damien himself—I wish it were possible for me suitably to preface it; I wish that my text might worthily shadow his, and that the whole were engrossed upon parchment in antique, rustic lettering, such as the monks of old fashioned in the solitude of the cloister. For thus should his lines shine in scarlet and gold, even as the precious versicles of the missal

The Lepers of Molokai

illuminate and glorify the devoutly decorated page.

But poetical justice is not to be hoped for in this practical age. I am reminded of this as I look from my window upon a landscape brilliant in its mantle of sparkling snow, and see on every hand the evidences of ruddy health, wealth, prosperity, and the thousand joyous diversions of the season; while he, the martyr priest, is silently ministering to his proscribed flock upon that forbidden island, in poverty and affliction. Therefore, only the plainest statements, in black and white, must suffice us.

Hear how modestly he announces his fate to his superior:

“KALAWAO, MOLOKAI, Aug. 25, 1886.

“MY RIGHT REV. FATHER:—By a letter of his Lordship Bishop Hermann, our beloved Vicar-Apostolic, published lately in the *Missions Catholiques*, the public has been informed of the exceptional situation in which I find myself. As I wrote you about two years ago that I had then suspicions of the first germs of leprosy being in

The Lepers of Molokai

my system—the natural consequence of a long stay with these lepers,—be not surprised or too much pained to know that one of your spiritual children is decorated not only with the Royal Cross of King Kalakaua, but also with the cross more heavy, and considered less honorable, of leprosy, with which Our Divine Saviour has permitted me to be stigmatized.

“My robust constitution has thus far resisted well for thirteen years of service here, but now it begins to be undermined by little and little, in proportion as the *bacilli lepras* invade the system. However, I am still up, and, with some management, continue my active life as heretofore. In fact, my work has been doubled by the departure of our much regretted Father Albert. Instead of one leprous village and one church under my charge, I have now double service, morning and evening, on Sundays and festivals. During the week, besides the visits to the sick at their houses, the care given to about forty orphans leaves me hardly any free time.

“Because of our life being so monotonous I have but little of a journal to communicate. . . , and will limit myself to an account of our celebration of the last Corpus Christi. . . .

“On Easter Sunday it was determined that Corpus Christi should be celebrated at Kalawao by a procession. My two choirs of singers (Kalawao and Kaulapapa), at a meeting for consultation held at Kaulapapa, decided that they would prepare themselves by learning

The Lepers of Molokai

appropriate music for High Mass and Benediction. With a perseverance surprising for natives, they practised each intervening day in their respective school houses, meeting together on certain days at either Kalawao or Kaulapapa.

“The celebration was fixed for the Sunday within the Octave. On that beautiful day the majority of my people of both parishes assisted at the first Mass and received Holy Communion, having prepared themselves by good confessions—from Wednesday until Saturday the *curé* had been occupied to the limit of his strength in the confessional. At ten o'clock we had the grand Mass. The church being too small to accommodate all the faithful, the seats were given up to those who came from the other portions of the settlement, and the residents of the immediate vicinity remained outside, about the door and windows. The singers, not wishing to use the harmonium, placed it outside to make room for the whole choir; they numbered about forty, all but three or four being lepers. They were well exercised under the direction of a blind leper having considerable musical talent, who struck the measure. Their singing would compare favorably with that heard in many cathedrals.

“It was my sermon only that fell short of the general standard. I was too fatigued to enter fully into the deep subject of the feast; and, besides, I wished to avoid my habitual fault of preaching too long.

“Immediately after Mass—without leaving

The Lepers of Molokai

the *curé* time for breakfast—the procession was formed, the cross and the large banner being in advance. Then came the drum and the musical instruments of tin—may some charitable soul supply us with brass instruments!—and then two associations bearing the Hawaiian flag, followed by two lines of Christian women; after these the men, then the singers—always directed by my good blind Petro, under a parasol and guided by another native. The incense-bearers marched before the canopy, at each corner of which was a lantern-bearer, each lantern being carried upon a staff and beautifully ornamented with flowers. The portable repository, well decorated, augmented the display.

“Arriving at the residence of the superintendent of the settlement, the repository was placed under the veranda, and there I exposed the Blessed Sacrament. Favored by the prolongation of the chant, we had opportunity to rest ourselves upon the grass after our march. The Benediction given, the procession returned to the church by the route it came.

“At the close of the religious exercises the Christians were all refreshed by the *agapæ*, consisting of *poi*—the native dish—and a pig weighing three hundred pounds. . . .

“By this you will see that Our Blessed Lord grants us at times consolation in our afflictions.”

I do not know if the exquisite simplicity of this narrative will or

The Lepers of Molokai

can affect the casual reader as it affects me; probably not; but as I hold Father Damien's letter in my hand, and read it again and yet again, I seem to see the green lowlands of Molokai, shut in by that profoundly blue sea, glowing in the sunshine under the windward cliffs.

I seem to have been watching there all day, even from the dawn; to have marked the earliest riser who was abroad before the stars were dim—they rise betimes in those tropical climates, and take cat-naps between whiles. Then the *Angelus* rang out upon the sea, and the beloved pastor went to and fro, very busy with the preparations for the feast.

I see the dim procession of the penitents painfully making their way to early Mass, many, yea most of them, sorely crippled, and some of them dwelling two miles distant from the chapel at Kalawao. From early Mass to High Mass all was confusion; it always is with those

The Lepers of Molokai

excitable, childlike natives, and this was one of the few great days of the year.

Ah! what suspense during the formation of the procession, and what distractions at High Mass, with the great choir singing like wild birds, and almost as sweetly, despite their untrained voices! And when the procession was at last formed, and there was a buzzing as of whole hives of bees up and down the line, the band—the pitiful, plaintive little tin band—struck up, to the intense admiration of the gentle souls who were celebrating; and the choir no doubt relieved it at intervals, while the great banner fluttered bravely, and the censer boys swung their censers high in air, and veiled their sweet, reverent faces in fragrant clouds as they slowly strode backward from before the canopy where Father Damien bore aloft the Sacred Host.

But oh! the heat of the sun and the shadowless dust of this long march

The Lepers of Molokai

(for it is a long march to the house of the superintendent), and the fatigue of the lame and the halt and the blind; lepers all of these,—bleeding, disfigured, dismembered lepers! And no shade there, either; though, as the dear Father says, “favored by the prolongation of the chant, we had opportunity to rest ourselves upon the grass after our march.”

Perhaps the sea-breeze blew in a little and fanned them; perhaps they lay panting like lizards in the sun, as I have done in that self-same place. But, in any case, they were happy—almost happier than we mortals dare to be; for the joyousness of the *fête* was culminating, and the children of misfortune unspeakable, with their revered pastor, wended their way back to Kalawao, there to feast literally as they do not feast more than once in the whole year.

They do not suspect, over yonder, what a surprise is in store for them: a thousand goodly dollars—the vol-

The Lepers of Molokai

untary gift of the charitable readers of *The Ave Maria*—lie in the hands of the editor, awaiting the order of Father Damien. Before next Corpus Christi Day there will be a beautiful new tabernacle worthy to receive the Body of Our Lord; and there will be a fund to draw from—a blessed fund, enough to supply many of the more pressing needs of the poor lepers at the settlement.

I know how it will be: Corpus Christi Day of '86 will be remembered among the traditions of the settlement. It will be discussed with more or less enthusiasm till the feast comes round again. It has brightened the lives of those who are doomed to walk in darkness, and the memory of it will sweeten the bitterness of the cup that may not pass from them even unto the end.

Epilogue

WHEN I laid down my pen at the close of the last chapter of this lamentable narrative, it was with a sigh of relief that I turned to more cheerful themes. I believed that the worst had been told, and that henceforth I could think of the Pastor of Molokai as of one standing sentinel over the haunt of affliction, wrestling night and day with the Angel of Death,—his body clean as the soul it encased; uncontaminated in the midst of contamination; an impenetrable armor shielding him from the poison darts that assail him on every hand, and he a living witness to the certitude of a special providence.

Such indeed he has been for more than a decade; but within a twelve-month from the time when together we sat with the dead and dying, when I saw with my own eyes the evidences of his wholesome and holy

The Lepers of Molokai

influence, and heard with my own ears of the works of mercy to which he consecrated his life—heard it from the lips of those whose hearts were overflowing with gratitude,—in one brief year he has been seized, treacherously, I might almost say, and his fate is sealed in common with that of his ill-starred flock; yet there is more Christian valor in his surrender than in many a conquest that is blazoned in the annals of history.

Listen to these passages from a letter recently received from Kala-wao:

“Since March last my confrère Father Albert has left Molokai and this Archipelago, and has returned to Tahiti and the Poumoutous. I am now the only priest on Molokai, and am supposed to be myself afflicted with this terrible disease. . . .

“Impossible for me to go any more to Honolulu, on account of the leprosy breaking out on me. Those *microbes* have finally settled themselves in my left leg and my ear, and one eyebrow begins to fall. I expect to have my face soon disfigured.

“Having no doubt myself of the true character of my disease, I feel calm, resigned, and happier among my people. Almighty God knows what

The Lepers of Molokai

is best for my own sanctification, and with that conviction I say daily a good *fiat voluntas tua*.

“Please pray for your afflicted friend, and recommend me and my unhappy people to all servants of the Lord.”

It is the beginning of the end. Already his garment is a winding-sheet, and a grave awaits him in the mouth of the dark valley.

Is this the reward of virtue, and of piety, humility and devotion? No! All worldly distinctions are as nothing in comparison with the home which awaits him eternal in the heavens. Death, even such a death as his, comes honorably to one who exchanges a life of voluntary sacrifice for a crown of glory.

A little while and he will have perished in the foul embraces of that ghoulisn monster, whose ill-gotten brood is scattered even unto the ends of the earth. It is not impossible, yea, it is not improbable, that at some future time in these United States it may become necessary to enact special laws for the protection of the people at large,

The Lepers of Molokai

and the segregation of those who have fallen victims to the most dreadful of all scourges.

The seeds of the plague are sown in the track of the Chinese cooly, and the fact should be considered in season; for anon we may hear the hopeless cry ringing from shore to shore—"Too late, too late!"

Reverend and beloved Father! at your feet I lay this tribute in memory of our last sad meeting and parting. In my heart you live forever; nothing can touch you further, and when you are laid to rest, I believe that you will have achieved a record of modest heroism almost without a parallel in these times. Degradation it may be in the eyes of many, the death in life, the slow, sure-footed decay; but out of the loam of this corruptible body springs heavenward the invisible blossom of the soul. Oh, my friend! forget me not, as I can not cease to remember thee, when the fragrance of that flower shall gladden the paths of paradise.

* * *

FOR a long period after the news of Father Damien's death startled the world into a consciousness that something of unusual solemnity had taken place—something that had filled every sensitive heart with seriousness, or sorrow, or even the bitterest grief—I received by nearly every post, and by word of mouth, messages of condolence. These came to me personally because I had written and published a booklet describing Father Damien as I knew him among his lepers at the gruesome settlement on Molokai.

Friends wrote me as a matter of course; strangers wrote me because they were sympathetic and much moved and some of them—chiefly women—had been seized with the one overwhelming desire to follow in his footsteps, to make a holy sacrifice of their lives for his sake and for the sake of those who still survived him.

The Lepers of Molokai

One English woman, laboring under a false impression, made a somewhat spectacular pilgrimage to Hawaii, with the avowed intention of burying herself alive at the leper settlement on Molokai, so that she might continue the work of Father Damien and thus end her days near his grave. She, with thousands of others, at that time believed that in his death the devoted settlement was left without a temporal head or a spiritual guide; in brief, that chaos had come again.

The fact was, for several years previous to the death of Father Damien, a number of Franciscan Sisters had been caring for the wants of the women and girl lepers. If one of them succumbed to the fatal germ with which the air was laden, her place was immediately filled by a volunteer from the Mother House in Troy, New York, U. S. A. There is never need of lay-help there, and it is wisely ordained that only the Sisters of one Order shall labor in

The Lepers of Molokai

the one place. The lady from England whose triumphal progress from the world that now is to the Limbo of Leprosy, not having taken the vow of celibacy and not being needed at Molokai, married and went her way.

One reader of "The Lepers of Molokai," who had served in the War of the Rebellion, and felt himself fit for a more arduous duty, sought me out and expressed his wish to go to Father Damien and become his assistant. It was his one hope, his one prayer, to go to Molokai and die there even as they were all dying from day to day. He became a Brother and a very present help to the dying Father.

After his death it was a pathetic hour for me when the mail arrived and was opened. Sweet but sad reminders were the almost daily communications such as these: Out of a grand Roman palazzo, not a stone's throw from the Quirinale, came this cry:—

The Lepers of Molokai

“O weep for Father Damien; he is dead! . . . Till the future dares forget the past, his fate and fame shall be an echo and a light unto eternity!

“My dear friend, ever since the sad news came to us these lines have been on my brain. ‘Woe is me! Whence are we, and why are we?’ I have no words to express the deep interest I have felt in the devotion and self-sacrifice of that man of men.”

She who wrote those lines was the wife of William Wetmore Story. He was poet, novelist, essayist, sculptor, painter, musician, amateur actor, lawyer. And now they both rest in their Roman graves.

Other messages came from near and far; I have read them more than once and they have thrown me into a retrospective mood out of which I have sometimes found it difficult to extricate myself. As the sky is overcast to-day, so is my heart, and I take a kind of sad pleasure in turning over a bundle of letters

The Lepers of Molokai

—very precious in my eyes—which I have laid away for safe keeping. I wonder if it will be thought indelicate if I quote a little from some of these letters? As they betray a nobility of soul in the several writers that redounds to their lasting credit, and as the letters are not marked “confidential,” and are not of a strictly private nature, it seems to me that I may venture to let my readers share with me the pleasure such communications afford.

Here is “Francesca” of Florence—Miss Francesca Alexander, who wrote “The Story of Ida,” “Road-Side Songs of Tuscany,” etc., who has plucked out the heart of Italy and sung about it and written about it and etched it with such cunning art that John Ruskin set her upon a pedestal and almost worshipped her. She says:

“The story of Father Damien is a most wonderful record of Christian life, and of what the grace of God can do. I could not read it

The Lepers of Molokai

without tears; yet I can give thanks to know that such a man lives— (he had been dead three weeks when she penned that line, and none of us knew it or even suspected it.) What a blessing for you to have such a friend! Thank you a thousand times for a copy of 'The Lepers of Molokai.' It will be kept among my most precious things; and if I am not the better for it, it will be my own fault."

Later she added: "Since receiving your letter I have heard that your saintly friend has gone to his reward. All must rejoice for him, and no doubt you do so; still, for yourself, the loss out of your life is a great one—too great ever to be made good until you go where he is. The memory of such a friendship is a great blessing. My heart aches when I think of those poor afflicted people, who have lost their best friend—though, of course, no one could have wished to keep him to suffer longer."

The Lepers of Molokai

Shall I permit you, dear reader, to turn the several pages that conclude thus?—"Now you have a long letter in a most horrible English. God bless you!" The writer is the author of "Die Geier Wally," known in English as "The Vulture Maiden"; "The Hour will Come"; "A Graveyard Flower"; "At the Foot of the Cross," etc. Her home was in Ober-Ammergau, where we met. She had been reading "The Lepers of Molokai," and with that enthusiasm which is her chief characteristic she says, in a brave attempt at English: "Your book has made me a great impression. Oh, this Father Damien has all my love! Your gentle and poetic feather (quill?) has depicted a character we must love and admire and to whom whole humanity should feel obliged. How lovely and moving is your epilogue and your words of kindest farewell to the afflicted friend!

"Yes, indeed, you have recommended him and his unhappy people

The Lepers of Molokai

to the Christian humanity, and you have lift (left?) by this description of martyrdom, upon a higher step in patience and resignation, in judgment and admiration, our better veneration for the power of Catholic mind.

“We readers of this book are with your hero priest, standing upon his highness; with him triumphant of disease and death. I think you will find my best thanks in these words.”

So wrote the famous Wilhelmine von Hillern.

Now I must offer a translation; for the writer of the letter before me has not the courage of the noble lady from whom I have quoted above. He says:

“With the liveliest interest I have read your chronicle of the unhappy ones of Molokai, and I thank you heartily for the information contained in this little book. It has touched my soul here and there, as does the descent of Dante into the Inferno—*la perdute gente*,—but at

The Lepers of Molokai

the same time the touching and heroic figure of Father Damien spreads a glimpse of comfort and glorification over the horrible picture of the deepest human misery. For me to look into that distant world was the more interesting as I have made the fate of one of the victims of the dreadful plague the subject of a novel; and for this purpose was obliged to make myself familiar with the traditions concerning leprosy, lazar-houses, etc., and all the manners and customs which attach to them.

“I beg to present you with this novel, which has been published under the title of ‘Lichentrost’—[a compound word most difficult to translate and probably invented by the poet novelist. It means ‘consolation-for-those-who-are-fatally-ill.’ O the possibilities of this comprehensive, cornucopious, all-digesting Teutonic tongue!]

“Unfortunately I am not sufficiently master of English to answer

The Lepers of Molokai

you in your own language, but my book should prove to you that yours could hardly find a more grateful reader than

“Yours truly,
“PAUL HEYSE.”

As for myself, when I saw in the telegrams of the day that the long-suffering martyr of Molokai had passed to his reward, for a moment I felt as if there were a blank in the life that now is,—a loss to the world which must be felt for an age to come; but in the next moment I was overwhelmed with a thought of the welcome that awaited him in the kingdom of heaven. It was almost too much to think of; it is still enough to make the honors of this life unspeakably foolish by comparison. That his example has not been lost, that he has not suffered in vain, is amply proved by the numberless eulogies that have emanated from every conceivable source. Of the writers from whom I have quoted above, two are Protes-

The Lepers of Molokai

tant and one a non-believer—no member of any sect under the sun. It is well for the age that the sacrifice of Father Damien can touch the heart of everyone who hears it; that in the glow which seems to hallow the memory of this archetype all sectarian bigotry and prejudice are forgotten, and the sentiment of grief for the fate of this modern martyr becomes common and universal.

Robert Louis Stevenson's "Open Letter to the Rev. Dr. Hyde of Honolulu" has pilloried the one defamer of the martyr, for all time.

That he was the most humble and modest of men has been amply proven; but I would like to state here that when the first draft of my sketch entitled "The Lepers of Molokai" was submitted to him for criticism, correction and approval, I called it "The Martyrs of Molokai." I considered Father Damien and his then coadjutor, Father Albert, martyrs. I must ever consider those

The Lepers of Molokai

who sacrifice their lives for the glory of God in His church at Kalawao and Kaulapapa, and the spiritual and temporal welfare of the victims of leprosy congregated there, martyrs. But Father Damien disclaimed the honor for himself and his followers, and forbade me to use the word; therefore, at his wish and with his approval, the sketch was called "The Lepers of Molokai."

Father Damien was not the first priest to die of leprosy at Molokai, but he was the one priest who went there in the beginning and stayed there even unto the end—through sixteen horrible years. In November, 1888, a good soul silently passed away; on the 11th of that month Father Gregory Archambeaux died of leprosy at Molokai. How well I remember Father Gregory!—so we always called him, and I doubt that a dozen people in the whole Kingdom knew his name was Archambeaux. I used to see him at Father Leanor's pretty chapel in Wailuku, on the island of

The Lepers of Molokai

Maui. I think I have written something for *The Ave Maria* concerning that chapel in a sketch called "A Mission in Mid-Ocean."

Often I have ridden up to the grove that shelters the mission house at Wailuku, and dismounted to seek a little rest there. Usually the place seemed deserted; doors stood wide open, windows likewise—one does not care to confine the heat in that hot land. I used to walk through the small, stuffy, scantily furnished rooms, calling on Father Gregory in a moderately loud voice; sometimes he would reply from a cramped office, hardly bigger than a packing-case, where he was busying himself with the business affairs of the parish—these also must receive the closest attention. Sometimes he would be weeding in the vegetable garden; sometimes inspecting the school close at hand,—a very fine school, in the hands of the good Brothers of Mary. Oftener I would wander over to the chapel and find him there, hearing

The Lepers of Molokai

catechism, teaching the choir children a new hymn, absorbed in the confessional, or tidying the sanctuary with careful and loving hands.

All this time I had noticed, what no one could help noticing, that the uncomplaining Father was a great sufferer. In walking even a short distance he was suddenly seized by a kind of cramp that would sometimes almost throw him to the earth. The pain he suffered at such times was excruciating. Great drops of cold sweat stood upon his forehead, and his face was almost unrecognizable in its convulsions. It was with the utmost difficulty that he refrained from shrieking in anguish. I know not how many times I have seen him so affected, yet I never heard a word of complaint escape his lips. He was always amiable, even cheerful—as I knew him; always glad to welcome a guest to his mission house—there were few calls upon his hospitality; always quick to set forth the best the place

The Lepers of Molokai

afforded—which was seldom more than a sea-biscuit and a glass of moderately good French claret—but claret was a luxury reserved for the honored guest.

The affairs of the parish—a new hospital had been lately opened under the care of the Franciscan Sisters—kept him busy enough; but when I dropped in to interrupt his monotonous routine I found that I could divert his mind for a moment with a little gossip concerning the varying fortunes of his fair and well-beloved France. Probably he thought this a kind of dissipation, and cried "*Mea culpa!*" when I had ridden away and left him to an examination of conscience.

A newspaper clipping which lies before me, in referring to the death of Father Gregory, says: "He never had any exterior wound; but his inward pains were the more excruciating, and he lingered for a long time." Doubtless the fatal seed was sown even when I knew him, though

The Lepers of Molokai

he did not go to Molokai for some time after that; his sufferings were the same in the two islands, and I know how terrible they were.

Ah me! martyrs in very truth are they; and the martyrology of Molokai may yet prove to be the one record of the age that shall touch the heart and enlighten the understanding of posterity.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF MEDICINE



NLM 00101906 1