

ACROSS PACIFIC SEAS.

IV.—THE LAST DAYS.

By the Editor.

Many months have gone, like Hans Breitmann's party, 'afay in the ewigkeit' since my last published memoranda of travel were pencilled on the upper deck of the good ship Moana in the North Pacific seas. It was a mellow April day. The sun's red eye was looking aslant at the lazily nodding palm-plumes and the feathery algeroba groves of the ocean paradise of Honolulu; the wave-washed coral-reef that circled its crescent bay lay far astern in the parting haze of the tropical spring day, a faint line of white lace on the deep-blue skirt of the ocean; and we were passing in front of the lone island of desolation and death,

Molokai of the Lepers.

The isle of death lay to the right of our path through the wonderfully soft and brilliant blue of those tropical waters—long-backed, and with sloping sides, circled by a thin white frill of sea-foam where the waves leaped and frisked and gambolled with the dark rocks along its rugged shores. Somebody has described the island kingdom of Hawaii as 'the sweetest and saddest in the world.' It is, indeed, a paradise of the green and luscious things that are the gems of botanic life. But the trail of the serpent is over it all, and in the physical order it has left no slimmer and more fetid mark than that most dreaded of all scourges, that 'most ancient and most human of all scourges,' Asiatic leprosy. People dislike talking of leprosy in Honolulu, just as they do not relish conversation about the convict days in some of the States of the Australian Commonwealth, and as they taboo remarks about cretinism in certain cantons of the Swiss Republic. The stricken ones in the fast diminishing native population of the Hawaiian Islands are gathered together in a receiving house conducted by the Franciscan Sisters in Honolulu, and are then quietly deported to Molokai, where they are hemmed in a perpetual seclusion by the deep sea on the one side, and by an impassable barrier of sheer precipice on the other. There were 1014 unfortunates stricken with the noisome distemper waiting on Molokai for slow-coming death as we passed the dismal home, where human flesh reaches its worst degradation on this side of the grave, in the leper-villages of Kalawao and Kalaupapa. The women and girls are in charge of the Franciscan Sisters; the Brothers of St. Francis devote their lives to the noble but repulsive work of assuaging the sufferings of the leprosy men and boys. The latest report by the Governor of Hawaii dwells in terms of warm eulogium upon 'the unselfish devotion' and the splendid 'self-sacrifice of the Brothers and Sisters.' They have banished themselves for ever from the joys and comforts of ordinary human intercourse, to enter the living charnel-house of Molokai, there to toil and endure on and on through the ceaseless sight and touch and smell and taste of long-drawn agony till death comes—and it must be for them, as for their leprosy charges,

Beautiful as feet of friend
Coming with welcome at our journey's end.

But have I not written at length concerning that lone Pacific isle of death, and its touching and harrowing tale of direst human woe, and of the noble and quiet Catholic heroism which is likewise in active and beneficent operation among the leper populations in Japan, China, Burmah, India, Columbia, the Seychelles Islands, New Brunswick, and a score of other places upon our planet? For leprosy has placed 'a girdle round the earth' such as Puck never dreamed of on that midsummer night. And the Church—and she alone—follows its hapless victims everywhere, and gathers them lovingly to her great mother's heart.

We soon passed this dismal isle to the right. On the left we fast drew off from the

Rugged Coast of Oahu,

where the brown and yellow cliffs rise gaunt and bare, and sentry rocks stand erect and defiant in the tossing waters. Inland, beyond them, rose rank after rank of steep, bare, crowded purple-shadowed mountains whose jagged and fantastic peaks stood sharp and clear against the western sky. In the tropics there is none of the long-lingering and poetic twilight of the temperate zones: night follows hard upon the heels of day. As we cleared the islands the sun dipped into the ocean behind the embattled summits of the clustering hills. There was a brief yellow and crimson afterglow. It faded as swiftly as the tints upon a dying salmon; and then the sudden

tropical night came down like the drop-scene of a ghostly theatre. When the last outpost rocks were passed, round whirled the wheel and the steersman pointed the vessel's head towards the pine-clad mountains of British Columbia.

We were still in the tropics. But a friendly breeze stole over the starboard bows as we pounded our way over the trackless fields of ocean. It was the same welcome air that had fanned our faces all along the watery way from Brisbane to Fiji and Honolulu. It wandered out of the north, from the home of Boreas in the far-off ice-fields, whispering, as it passed, to the wavelets of the smooth Pacific seas; it toyed with the rigging; it combed out the smoke from the funnel like long tresses of the dark, fuzzy hair of the Hawaiian maidens; and, when the tropical night settled upon us like a thick, downy blanket, its caressing coolness was as a refreshing draught, or a bath of gently-falling spray, or a mother softly fanning the face of a stricken child. It was a draught of life, and we stood on the deck and expanded our chests and swilled it in great lungfuls. When you cross through the Indian or Pacific tropics your mind goes a-wondering how this life-giving north wind should be the most dreaded of all the breaths that blow at Buenos Aires, where it has as evil a reputation as the plague-carrying east wind in old Europe. One wonders, too, why northern poets have railed at it as 'rude,' 'blustering,' and a 'foe to human kind,' and, on the other hand, have exhausted the language of blessing and panegyric upon the 'wind of the sunny south.' The words are Bryant's, who sang:—

'Wind of the sunny south! oh, still delay
In the gay woods and in the golden air,
Like a good old age released from care,
Journeying, in long serenity, away.'

But it may be that Boreas, like many a pater-familias that we have heard of, is as fickle as a turnstile—as rude and blustering as Nansen and the poets make him in his own home, and as gentle as a sucking-dove and as mild as mother's milk when he travels among strangers.

In his 'Jail Journal' Mitchel remarks that 'when one is cut off from his ordinary occupations and environment, dinner is

The Great Event

of the day.' And so it is with the average traveller at sea. It is to him what the daily arrival of the solitary train is to the inhabitants of the little iron township 'way back by the railroad track where alluvial claims have 'broken out,' or man is busy fighting the forest with axe and fire-stick and flying teeth of tempered steel. There are other time-killing occupations that 'set' like attendant satellites about the great central Act of the ship-board day; deck-pacing; reading; games of a more or less perfunctory kind, such as rope-quoits and deck-billiards; 'cricket-matches' that are almost as conventional as those of our budding city Graces and Spofforths whose wicket is a battered kerosene-tin and whose crease a waste allotment; odd sports, with stereotyped and ever-amusing obstacle-races—witnessed with all the excitement attendant on a championship athletic meeting; setting watches at the varying hour of noon, which is announced with a short 'whoosh' of the steam-whistle; occasional concerts; long-drawn daily chats among groups of friends over protracted cups of afternoon tea, 'the favorite beverage of the intellectual,' as De Quincey the opium-eater styles it—'une boisson fade et melancolique' ('an insipid and melancholy drink'), is Balzac's verdict upon it. And then there is the perennial excitement over the speed with which the ship cleaves through the water. This is made, by those so inclined, the subject of endless wagers, and of daily 'sweeps,' with their concomitant auctions of numbers, which excite an interest second only to that which centres around the well-laid and admirably served dinner-table and the dainty viands of the Canadian-Australian line. Books and innocent pastimes and the genial companionship of my old and valued friend and former college-companion, Father Barlow (P.P. of Penrith, N.S.W.), and pleasant intercourse with esteemed and courteous fellow-voyagers from Dunedin and other parts of New Zealand—all of them hastening to the Coronation—and a thousand kindly good-offices received and given, went to fill in my 'cross-Pacific days. As we slipped

'Northward towards the icy rocks,
Northward o'er the seas.'

the breath that stole down our track gradually reached the bracing and pleasant coolness of a northern April day. For two days after we had left Honolulu, a flock of big, rusty-brown tropical sea-birds floated on silent and motionless pinion in our wake, occasionally flopping awkwardly, with sprawling red feet and shrill cries, into