

"Did you find that hole in the wall?" he called out. "Come over here where the wind can blow through you. You must feel like a grave-digger. Where is your sketch?"

I had no sketch and told him so. The interior was in truth delightfully picturesque, but the young priest was so charming that I had not even opened my trap.

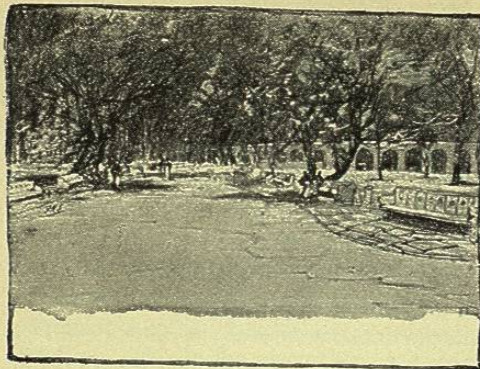
"What sort of a looking priest?"

I described him as closely as I could.

"It sounds like Geronimo. Yes — same priest."

"Well — ?"

"Oh! the old story and a sad one. Gray dawn — muffled figures — obliging duenna — diligence — governor on horseback — girl locked up in a hacienda — student forced into the church. Queer things happen in Mexico, my boy, and *cruel* ones too."



## CHAPTER X.

### TO MORELIA WITH MOON.

MOON insists on going to Morelia with me. He has a number of reasons for this sudden resolve: that the señoritas are especially charming and it is dangerous for me to go alone; that he knows the sacristan *major* of the cathedral and can buy for me for a song the entire movable property of the church; that there is a lovely alameda overgrown with wild roses, and that it is so tangled up and crooked I will lose the best part of it if he does

not pilot me about; and finally, when I demur, that he has received a dispatch from his chief to meet him in Morelia on the morrow, and he must go anyhow.

He appears the next morning in a brown linen suit, with the same old sombrero slanted over one eye, and the loose end of his necktie tossed over his shoulder. On the way to the station he holds a dozen interviews with citizens occupying balconies along the route. He generally conducts these from the middle of the street, pitching his voice to suit the elevation. Then he deflects to the sidewalk, runs his head into the door of a posada, wakes up the inmates with a volley of salutations, bobs out again, hails by name the driver of a tram, and when he comes to a standstill calls out that he has changed his mind and will walk, and so arrives at the station bubbling over with good humor, and as restless as a schoolboy.

I cannot help liking this breezy fellow despite his piratical air, his avowed contempt for all the laws that govern well-regulated society, and his professed unbelief in the sincerity of everybody's motives.

His acquaintance is marvellous. He knows everybody, from the water-carrier to the archbishop. He speaks not only Spanish but half a dozen native dialects picked up from the Indians while he was constructing the railroad. He has lived in every town and village on the line; knows Morelia, Pátzcuaro, Tzintzúntzan, and the lake as thoroughly as he does his own abiding-place at Zacatécas; is perfectly familiar with all the mountain trails and short cuts across plains and foothills; is a born tramp, the best of Bohemians, and the most entertaining travelling companion possible.

His baggage is exceedingly limited. It consists of a tooth-brush, two collars, and a bundle of cigars. He replies to my remarks on its compactness, that "anybody's shirts fit him, and that he has plenty of friends up the road." And yet with all this there is something about the fearless way in which he looks you straight in the eye, and something about the firm lines around his mouth, that, in spite of his devil-may-care recklessness, convinces you of his courage and sincerity.

"Crawl over here," he breaks out from the end of the car, "and see this hacienda. Every square acre you see, including that range of mountains, belongs to one Mexican. It covers exactly one hundred and twenty square miles. The famished pauper who owns it has taken five millions of dollars from it during the last fifteen years. For the next eighteen miles you will ride through his land."

"Does he live here?" I inquired.

"No, he knows better. He lives in Paris like a lord, and spends every cent of it."

We were entering the lake country, and caught glimpses of Cuitzo shimmering through the hills.

"These shores are alive with wild fowl," continued Moon; "there goes a flight of storks now. You can bag a pelican and half a dozen flamingoes any morning along here before breakfast. But you should see the Indians hunt. They never use a gun when they go ducking. They tie a sharp knife to a long pole and spear the birds as they fly over. When they fish they strew green boughs along the

water's edge, and when the fish seek the shade, scoop them up with a dip net made from the fibre of the pulque plant. This country has changed but little since that old pirate Cortez took possession of it, as far as the Indians go. Many of them cannot understand a word of Spanish now, and I had to pick up their jargon myself, when I was here."

"Hello, Goggles!" he shouted out, suddenly jumping from his seat as the train stopped. I looked out and saw a poor blind beggar, guided by a boy with a stick.

"I thought you were dead long ago."

In a moment more he was out of the train and had the old man by the hand. When he turned away, I could see by the way the blind face lighted up that he had made him the richer in some way. The boy too seemed overjoyed, and would have left his helpless charge in the pushing crowd but for Moon, who snatched away the leading stick, and placed it in the beggar's hand again. Then he fell to berating the boy for his carelessness, without, however, diminishing in the least the

latter's good humor, raising his voice until the car windows were filled with heads.

All this in a dialect that was wholly unintelligible.

"You know the beggar," I remarked.

"Of course. Old Tizapan. Lost his eyes digging in a silver mine. That little devil is his grandson. If I had my way I would dig a hole and fill it up with these cripples."

When we reached Morelia it was quite dark, and yet it was difficult to get Moon out of the station, so many people had a word to say to him. When we arrived at the hotel fronting the plaza he was equally welcome, everybody greeting him.

It was especially delightful to see the landlord. He first fell upon his neck and embraced him, then stood off at a distance and admired him with his arms akimbo, drinking in every word of Moon's raillery. At the bare mention of dinner, he rushed off and brought in the cook whom Moon addressed instantly as Griddles, running from Spanish into English and French, and back again into Spanish, in the most surprising way.

"We will have a Mexican dinner for the painter, Griddles! No *bon bouche*, but a square meal, *un buena comida! magnífica!* especially some little fish baked in corn husks, peppers stuffed with tomatoes with plenty of *chile*, an onion salad with garlic, stewed figs, and a cup of Uruápam coffee, — the finest in the world," — this last to me.

Later all these were duly served and deliciously cooked, and opened my eyes to the resources of a Mexican kitchen when ordered by an expert.

In the morning Moon started for his friend the sacristan. He found him up a long flight of stone steps in one end of the cathedral. But he was helpless, even for Moon. We must find Padre Bailo, who lived near the Zocolo. He had the keys and charge of all the wornout church property. Another long search across plazas and in and out of market stalls, and Padre Bailo was encountered leaving his house on his way back to the cathedral. But it was impossible. *Mañana por la mañana*, or perhaps next week, but not to-day. Moon took the dried-up old

fossil aside, and brought him back in five minutes smiling all over with a promise to unlock everything on my return from Pátzcuaro.

"Now for the alameda. It is the most delightful old tangle in Mexico: rose-trees as high as a house; by-paths overgrown with vines and lost in beds of violets; stone benches galore; through the centre an aqueduct so light it might be built of looped ribbons; and such señoritas! I met a girl under one of those arches who would have taken your breath away. She had a pair of eyes, and a foot, and"—

"Never mind what the girl had, Moon. We may find her yet on one of the benches and I will judge for myself. Show me the alameda."

"Come on, then."

At the end of a beautiful street nearly half a mile long, — in reality a raised stone causeway with stone parapets and stone benches on either side, and shaded its entire length by a double row of magnificent elms, — I found the abandoned Paseo de las Lechugas (the street of the Lettuces).

Moon had not exaggerated the charm of its surroundings. Acacias and elms interlaced their branches across the walks, roses ran riot over the stone benches, twisted their stems in and out of the railings, and tossed their blossoms away up in the branches of the great trees. High up against the blue, the graceful aqueduct stepped along on his slender legs trampling the high grass, and through and into and over all, the afternoon sun poured its flood of gold.

The very unkempt deserted air of the place added to its beauty. It looked as if the forces of nature, no longer checked, had held high revel, and in their glee had well-nigh effaced all trace of closely cropped hedge, rectangular flower-bed, and fantastic shrub. The very poppies had wandered from their beds and stared at me from the roadside with brazen faces, and the once dignified tiger-lilies had turned tramps and sat astride of the crumbling curbs, nodding gayly at me as I passed.

"Did I not tell you?" broke out Moon. "How would you like to be lost in a tan-

gle like this for a month with a Fatinitza all eyes and perfume, with little Hottentots to serve you ices, and fan you with peacock tails?"

I admitted my inability to offer any valid objection to any such delicious experience, and intimated that, but for one obstacle, he could bring on his Hottentots and trimmings at once—I was *en route* for Pátzcuaro, Tzintzúntzan, and the Titian.

This was news to Moon. He had expected Pátzcuaro, that being the terminus of the greatest railroad of the continent, — P. Moon, Civil Engineer, — but what any sane man wanted to wander around looking for a dirty adobe Indian village like Tzintzúntzan, away up a lake, with nothing but a dug-out to paddle there in, and not a place to put your head in after you landed, was a mystery to him. Besides, who said there was any Titian? At all events, I might stay in Morelia until I could find my way around alone. The Titian had already hung there three hundred years, he thought it would hold out for a day or two longer.

So we continued rambling about this most delightful of all the Mexican cities; across the plaza of La Paz at night; sitting under the trees listening to the music, and watching the love-making on the benches; in the cathedral at early mass, stopping for fruit and a cup of coffee at the market on the way; through the college of San Nicholas where Fray Geronimo had studied; to the governor's house to listen to a concert and to present ourselves to his excellency, who had sent for us; to the great pawn-shop, the Monte de Piedad, on the regular day of sale, and to the thousand and one delights of this *dolce far niente* city; returning always at sundown to the inn, to be welcomed by the landlord, who shouted for Griddles the moment he laid eyes on Moon, and began spreading the cloth on the little table under the fig-tree in the garden.

After this Bohemian existence had lasted for several days I suddenly remembered that Moon had not been out of my sight five waking minutes, and being anxious for his welfare, I ventured to jog his memory.

"Moon, did you not tell me that you came here on orders from your chief, who wanted you on urgent business and was waiting for you?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen him?"

"No."

"Heard from him?"

"No."

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Let him wait."



## CHAPTER XI.

### PÁTZCUARO AND THE LAKE.

WHEN I rapped at Moon's door the next morning he refused to open it. He apologized for this refusal by roaring through the transom that the thought of my leaving him alone in Morelia had caused him a sleepless night, and that he had determined never to look upon my face again; that he had "never loved a dear gazelle," etc., — this last sung in a high key; that he was not coming out; and that I might go to Pátzcuaro and be hanged to me.

So the landlord and Griddles escorted