

"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



me to the station, the *chef* carrying my traps, and the landlord a mysterious basket with a suggestive bulge in one corner of the paper covering. As the train moved slowly out, this basket was passed through the window with a remark that Mr. Moon had prepared it the night before, with especial instructions not to deliver it until I was under way. On removing the covering the bulge proved to be glass, with a tin foil covering the cork, on top of which was a card bearing the superscription of my friend, with a line stating that "charity of the commonest kind had influenced him in this attempt to keep me from starving during my idiotic search for the Titian, that the dulces beneath were the pride of Morelia, the fruit quite fresh, and the substratum of sandwiches the best Griddles could make."

I thanked the cheery fellow in my heart, forgave him his eccentricities, and wondered whether I should ever see his like again.

An hour later I had finished the customary inventory of the car: the padre

very moist and very dusty as if he had reached the station from afar, mule-back; the young Hidalgo with buckskin jacket, red sash, open slashed buckskin breeches with silver buttons of bulls' heads down the seam, wide sombrero, and the ivory handle of a revolver protruding from his hip pocket; the two demure señoritas dressed in black with veils covering their heads and shoulders, attended by the stout duenna on the adjoining seat with fat pudgy hands, hoop earrings, and restless eyes; the old Mexican, thin, yellow, and dried up, with a cigarette glued to his lower lip.

I had looked them all over carefully, speculating as one does over their several occupations and antecedents, and feeling the loss of my encyclopædic friend in unravelling their several conditions, when the door of the car immediately in front of me opened, and that ubiquitous individual himself slowly sauntered in, his cravat flying, and his big sombrero flattened against the back of his head. The only change in his costume had been the replacing of his brown linen suit with one



of a fine blue check, newly washed and ironed in streaks. From his vest pocket protruded his customary baggage, — the ivory handle and the points of two cigars.

"Why, Moon!" I blurted out, completely surprised. "Where did you come from?"

"Baggage car — had a nap. Got the basket, I see."

"I left you in bed," I continued.

"You did n't. Was shivering on the outside waiting for the landlord's clothes. How do they fit? Left mine to be washed."

"Where are you going?" I insisted, determined not to be side-tracked.

"To Pátzcuaro." Then with a merry twinkle in his eye he leaned forward, canted his sombrero over his left eye, and shading his mouth with its brim whispered confidentially, "You see, I got a dispatch from my chief to meet him in Pátzcuaro, and I managed by hurrying a little to catch this train."

Pátzcuaro lies on a high hill overlooking the lake. The beautiful sheet of water at its foot, some twenty miles long

and ten wide, is surrounded by forest-clad hills and studded with islands, and peopled almost exclusively by Indians, who support themselves by fishing.

The town is built upon hilly broken ground, the streets are narrow and crooked, and thoroughly Moorish in their character, and the general effect picturesque in the extreme.

On alighting from the train it was evident that the progressiveness of the nineteenth century ended at the station. Drawn up in the road stood a lumbering stage-coach and five horses. It was as large as a country barn, and had enormous wheels bound with iron and as heavy as an artillery wagon's. In front, there hung a boot made of leather an inch thick, with a multitude of straps and buckles. Behind, a similar boot, with more straps and buckles. On top was fastened an iron railing, protecting an immense load of miscellaneous freight. There was also a flight of steps that let down in sections, with a hand-rail to assist the passenger. Within and without, on cushions, sides, curtains, over top, bag-



gage, wheels, driver, horses, and harness the gray dust lay in layers, — not sifted over it, but piled up in heaps.

The closest scrutiny on my companion's part failed to reveal the existence of anything resembling a spring made either of leather, rawhide, or steel. This last was a disappointment to Moon, who said that occasionally some coaches were built that way.

But two passengers entered it, — Moon and I; the others, not being strangers, walked. The distance to the town from the station is some two miles, up hill. It was not until my trap rose from the floor, took a flying leap across the middle of the seat, and landed edgewise below Moon's breastbone, that I began to fully realize how badly the authorities had neglected the highway. Moon coincided, remarking that they had evidently blasted it out in the rough, but the pieces had not been gathered up.

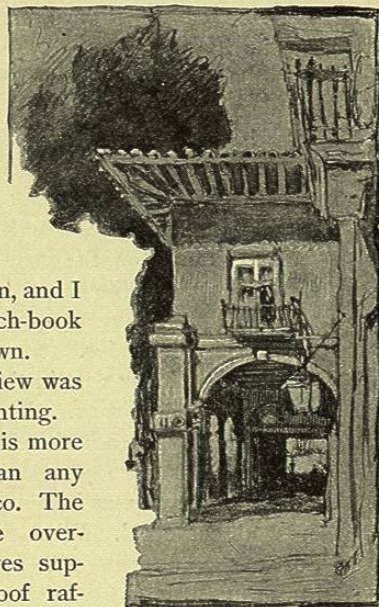
We arrived first, entering the arcade of the Fonda Concordia afoot, the coach lumbering along later minus half its top freight.

A cup of coffee, — none better than this native coffee, — an omelet with peppers, and some fruit, and Moon started out to make arrangements for my trip up the lake to Tzintzuntzan

and the Titian, and I with my sketch-book to see the town.

A closer view was not disappointing.

Patzcuaro is more Moorish than any city in Mexico. The houses have overhanging eaves supported by roof rafters similar to those seen in southern Spain. The verandas are shaded by awnings and choked up with flowers. The arcades are flanked by





slender Moorish columns, the streets are crossed by swinging lanterns stretched from house to house by iron chains, the windows and doorways are surmounted by the horseshoe arch of the Alhambra, and the whole place inside and out reminds you of Toledo transplanted. Although seven thousand feet above the level of the sea, it is so near the edge of the slope running down into the hot country that its market is filled with tropical fruits unknown on the plateau of Mexico farther east, and the streets thronged with natives dressed in costumes never met with in high latitudes.

Tradition has it that in the days of the good Bishop Quiroga, when the See of Michoacan was removed hither from Tzintzúntzan, Pátzcuaro gave promise of being an important city, as is proved by the unfinished cathedral. When, however, the See was again removed to Morelia the town rapidly declined, until to-day it is the least important of the old cities of Michoacan. The plaza is trodden down and surrounded by market stalls, the churches are either abandoned or, what is worse, reno-

vated, and there is nothing left of interest to the idler and antiquary, outside of the charm of its picturesque streets and location, except it may be the tomb of the great bishop himself, who lies buried under the altar of the Jesuit church, the *Campañia*, — his bones wrapped in silk.

I made some memoranda in my sketch-book, bought some coffee, lacquer ware, and feather work, and returned to the inn to look for Moon. He was sitting under the arcade, his feet against the column and his chair tilted back, smoking. He began as soon as I came within range: —

“Yes, know all about it. You can go there three ways: over the back of a donkey, aboard an Indian canoe, or swim.”

“How far is it?”

“Fifteen miles.”

The Titian looked smaller and less important than at any time since my leaving the city of Mexico.

“What do you suggest?”

“I am not suggesting, I’m a passenger.”

“You going?”

“Of course. Think I would leave you



here to be murdered by these devils for your watch key?"

The picture loomed up once more.

"Then we will take the canoe."

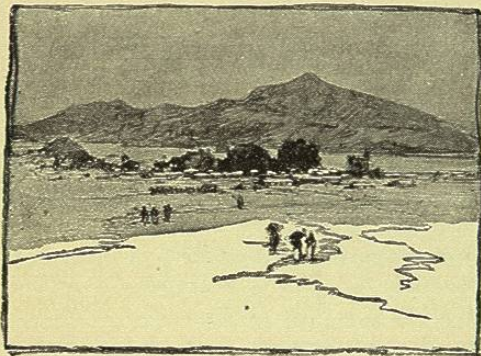
"Next week you will, not now. Listen. Yesterday was market day; market day comes but once a week. There are no canoes on the beach below us from as far up the lake as Tzintzúntzan, and the fishermen from Zanicho and towns nearer by refuse to paddle so far."

He threw away his cigar, elongated himself a foot or more, broke out into a laugh at my discomfiture, slipped his arm through mine, and remarked apologetically "that he had sent for a man and had an idea."

In half an hour the man arrived, and with him the information that some employees of the road had recently constructed from two Indian dug-out canoes a sort of catamaran; that a deck had been floored between, a mast stepped, and a sail rigged thereon. The craft awaited our pleasure.

Moon's idea oozed out in dribblets. Fully developed, it recommended the im-

mediate stocking of the ship with provisions, the hiring of six Indians with sweep oars, and a start bright and early on the morrow for Tzintzúntzan; Moon to be commodore and hold the tiller; I to have



the captain's stateroom, with free use of the deck.

The morning dawned deliciously cool and bright. Moon followed half an hour later, embodying all the characteristics of the morning and supplementing a few of his own, — another suit of clothes, a cloth cap, and an enormous spyglass.



The clothes were the result of a further exchange of courtesies with a brother engineer, the cap replaced his time-worn broad sombrero, "out of courtesy to the sail," he said, and the spyglass would be useful either as a club of defence, or to pole over shoal places, or in examining the details of the Titian. "It might be hung high, and he wanted to see it."

These explanations, however, were cut short by the final preparations for the start, — Moon giving orders in true nautical style, making fast the rudder, calling all hands aft to stow the various baskets and hampers, battening down the trap door hatches, and getting everything snug and trim for a voyage of discovery as absurd to him as if entered upon for the finding of the Holy Grail.

Finally all was ready, Moon seized the tiller, and gave the order to cast off. A faint cheer went up from the group of natives on the shore, the wind gave a kindly puff, the six Indians, stripped to their waists, bent to their oars, and the catamaran drifted clear of the gravel beach, and bore away up the lake to Tzintzúntzan.

She was certainly as queer a looking craft as ever trailed a rudder. To be exact, she was about thirty feet long, half as wide, and drew a hand's-breadth of water. Her bow flooring was slightly trimmed to a point; her square stern was protected by a bench a foot wide and high, — forming a sort of open locker under which a man could crawl and escape the sun; her deck was flat, and broken only by the mast, which was well forward, and the rests or giant oarlocks which held the sweeps. The rudder was a curiosity. It was half as long as the boat, and hung over the stern like the pole of an old-fashioned well-sweep. When fulfilling its destiny it had as free charge of the deck as the boom of a fishing smack in a gale of wind. Another peculiarity of the rudder was its independent action. It not only had ideas of its own but followed them. The skipper followed too after a brief struggle, and walked miles across the deck in humoring its whims. The sail was unique. It was made of a tarpaulin which had seen better days as the fly of a camping tent, and was nailed flat to



the short boom which wandered up and down the rude mast at will, assisted by half a dozen barrel hoops and the iron tire of a wheelbarrow. Two trap doors, cut midway the deck, led into the bowels of the dug-outs, and proved useful in bailing out leakage and overwash.

As I was only cabin passenger and so without responsibility, I stretched my length along the bench and watched Moon handle the ship. At first all went smoothly, the commodore grasped the tiller as cordially as if it had been the hand of his dearest friend, and the wilful rudder, lulled to sleep by the outburst, swayed obediently back and forth. The tarpaulin, meanwhile, bursting with the pride of its promotion, bent to the breeze in an honest effort to do its share. Suddenly the wind changed; the inflated sail lost its head and clung wildly to the mast, the catamaran careened, Moon gave a vicious jerk, and the rudder awoke. Then followed a series of misunderstandings between the commodore and the thoroughly aroused well-sweep which enlivened all the dull passages of the voyage, and in-

roduced into the general conversation every variety of imprecation known to me in languages with which I am familiar, assisted and enlarged by several dialects understood and appreciated only by the six silent, patient men keeping up their rhythmic movement at the sweeps.

When we reached the first headland on our weather bow the wind freshened to a stiff breeze, and after a brief struggle Moon decided to go about. I saw at a glance that the catamaran held different views, and that it was encouraged and "egged" on, so to speak, by its co-conspirator the rudder.

"You men on the right, stop rowing."

This order was emphasized by an empty bottle thrown from the locker. The three Indians stood motionless.

"Haul that boom," — this to me, sketching with my feet over the stern.

I obeyed with the agility of a man-o'-war's man. The sail flapped wildly, the rudder gave a staggering lurch, and Moon measured his length on the deck!

By the time the commodore had regained his feet he had exhausted his vo-



cabulary. Then with teeth hard set he lashed the rebellious rudder fast to the locker, furling the crestfallen sail, and resigned the boat to the native crew. Five minutes later he was stretched flat on the deck, bubbling over with good humor, and gloating over the contents of the hampers piled up around him.

"That town over your shoulder on the right is Xanicho," he rattled on, pointing with his fork to some adobe huts clustered around a quaint church spire.

"If we had time and a fair wind, I should like to show you the interior. It is exactly as the Jesuits left it three hundred years ago. Away over there on the right is Xarácuaro. You can see from here the ruins of the convent and of half a dozen brown hovels. Nobody there now but fishermen. The only white man in the village is the priest, and I would not wager to his being so all the way through. A little farther along, over that island, if you look close you can see a small town; it is Igrúatzio. There are important Aztecs remains about it. A paved roadway leads to the adjoining village, which was

built long before the coming of the Spaniards. I do not believe all the marvellous stories told of the Aztec sacrifices, but over the hill yonder is the ruins of the only genuine Teocalli, if there ever was such a thing, in Mexico. I have made a study of these so-called Aztec monuments and have examined most of the Teocallis or sacrificial mounds of Montezuma's people without weakening much my unbelief, but I confess this one puzzles me. One day last winter I heard the Indians talking about this mound, and two of us paddled over. It lies in a hollow of the hills back of the town, and is inclosed by a stone wall about one thousand feet long, eight feet high, and four feet wide. The Teocalli itself stands in the middle of this quadrangle. It is constructed in the form of a truncated cone about one hundred feet square at the base and nearly as high, built entirely of stone, with an outside stairway winding around its four sides. On one corner of the top are the remains of a small temple. I do not think half a hundred people outside the natives have ever



seen it. If it is not a Teocalli there is not one in all Mexico. The fact is, no other Aztec mound in Mexico is worthy of the name, — not even Cholula."

Suddenly a low point, until now hidden by an intervening headland, pushed itself into the lake. Moon reached for his spy-glass and adjusted the sliding tube.

"Do you see those two white specks over that flat shore?"

"Perfectly."

"And the clump of dark trees surrounding it?"

"Yes."

"Well, that is Tzintzúntzan. The big speck is what is left of the old Franciscan convent, the clump of trees is the olive orchard, the ancient burial-place of the Aztecs. The little speck is the top of the dome of the convent chapel, beneath which hangs your daub of a Titian."



## CHAPTER XII.

### TZINTZÚNTZAN AND THE TITIAN.

THE catamaran rounded the point, floated slowly up to the beach, and anchored on a shoal within a boat's-length of the shore. Strung along the water's edge, with wonder-stricken faces, were gathered half of the entire population of Tzintzúntzan. The other half were coming at full speed over the crest of the hill, which partly hid the village itself.

There being but two feet of water, and those wet ones, Moon shot an order in an unknown tongue into the group in front,