sacred a door, and ending with a suggestion from the saffron-colored sacristan that an additional *cinco pesos* would about cover the mutilation, provided every centavo of it was given to the poor of the

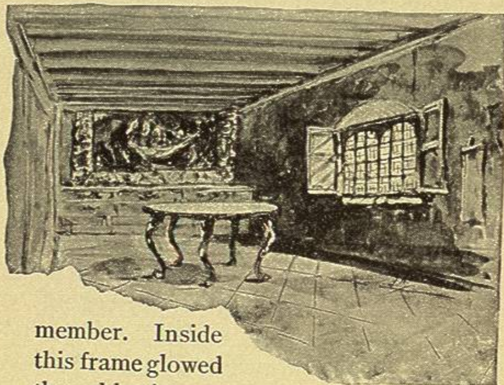
parish, and that the further insignificant sum of five pesetas, if donated to the especial use of his sun-dried excellency, might induce him to revive one of his lost arts, and operate on the lock with a rusty nail.

Moon counted out the money with a suppressed sigh, remarking that he had "always pitied the poor, but never so much as now." Then we followed the

padre and the sacristan down the winding steps leading to the cloister, through the dark corridor, past the entrance to the chapel, and halted at an arch closed by two swinging doors. His yellowness fumbled among some refuse in one corner, picked up a bit of débris, applied his eyes to an imaginary keyhole, and pushed open a pair of wooden doors entirely bare of lock, hasp, or latch. They had doubtless swung loose for half a century! I had to slip my arm through Moon's and pin his toes to the pavement to keep him still.

The padre and the half-breed uncovered and dropped upon their knees. I looked over their heads into a room about thirty feet long by twenty wide, with a high ceiling of straight square rafters. The floor was paved in great squares of marble laid diagonally, the walls were seamed, cracked, and weather-stained. The only opening other than the door was a large window, protected on the outside by three sets of iron gratings, and on the inside by double wooden shutters. The window was without glass. The only articles of furniture visible were a round ta-

ble with curved legs occupying the centre of the room, a towel-rack and towel hung on the wall, and a row of wooden drawers built like a bureau, completely filling the end of the room opposite the door. Over this was hung, or rather fitted, the three sides of a huge carved frame, showing traces of having once been gilded, — the space was not high enough to admit its top



member. Inside this frame glowed the noble picture. I forgot the padre, the oily-tongued sacristan, and even my friend Moon, in my wonder, loosened my trap, opened the stool, and sat down with bated breath to enjoy it.

My first thought was of its marvellous preservation. More than three hundred years have elapsed since the great master touched it, and yet one is deluded into the belief that it was painted but yesterday, so fresh, pure, and rich is its color. This is no doubt due to the climate, and to the clear air circulating through the open window.

The picture is an Entombment, sixteen feet long by seven feet high. Surrounding the dead Christ wrapped in a winding sheet, one end of which is held in the teeth of a disciple, stands the Virgin, Magdalen, Saint John, and nine other figures, all life-size. In the upper left hand corner is a bit of blue sky, against which is relieved an Italian villa, — the painter's own, a caprice of Titian's often seen in his later works.

The high lights fall upon the arm of the Saviour drooping from the hammock-shaped sheet in which he is carried, and upon the head covering of the Virgin bending over him. A secondary light is found in the patch of blue sky. To the right and behind the group of disciples

the shadows are intensely dark, relieving the rich tones of the browns and blues in the draperies, and the flesh tones for which the painter is famous. The exquisite drawing of each figure, the gradation of light and shade, the marvellous composition, the relief and modelling of the Christ, the low but luminous tones in which it is painted, the superb harmony of these tones, all pronounce it the work of a master.

The questions naturally arise, Is it by Titian? and if so, how came it here in an Indian village in the centre of Mexico, and why has it been lost all these years to the art world? To the first I answer, if not by Titian, who then of his time could paint it? The second is easier: until the railroads of the last few years opened up the country, Mexico's isolation was complete.

A slight résumé of the history of its surroundings may shed some light on the question. After the ruin wrought in Michoacan in the early part of the sixteenth century by the evil acts of Niño de Guzman, — the president of the first

Audencia, — terminating in the burning of the Tarascan chief Sinzicha, the people, maddened with terror, fled to the mountains around Tzintzúntzan and refused to return to their homes. To remedy these evils, the Emperor Charles V. selected the members of the second Audencia from among the wisest and best men of Spain. One of these was an intimate friend of the emperor, an eminent lawyer, the Licenciado Vasco de Quiroga. Being come to Mexico, Don Vasco, in the year 1533, visited the depopulated towns, and with admirable patience, gentleness, and love, prevailed on the terror-stricken Indians to have faith in him and return to their homes.[1]

The Bishopric of Michoacan was then founded, and this mitre was offered to Quiroga, though he was then a layman. Thereupon Quiroga took holy orders, and having been raised quickly through the successive grades of the priesthood, was consecrated a bishop and took possession of his see in the church of San Francisco in Tzintzúntzan August 22, 1538. He

[1] Janvier's *Mexican Guide*.

was then sixty-eight years old. As bishop, he completed the conquest through love that he had begun while yet a layman. He established schools of letters and the arts; introduced manufactures of copper and other metals; imported from Spain cattle and seeds for acclimatization; founded hospitals, and established the first university of New Spain, that of San Nicholas, now in Morelia.

When Philip II. ascended the throne the good deeds of the holy bishop had reached his ears, and the power and growth of his see had deeply touched the heart of the devout monarch, awakening in his mind a profound interest in the welfare of the church at Tzintzúntzan and Pátzcuaro. During this period the royal palaces at Madrid were filled with the finest pictures of Titian, and the royal family of Spain formed the subjects of his best portraits. The Emperor Charles V. had been and was then one of the master's most liberal patrons. He had made him a count, heaped upon him distinguished honors, and had been visited by him twice at Augsburg and once at Bologna where he

painted his portrait. It is even claimed by some biographers that by special invitation of his royal patron Titian visited Spain about the year 1550, and was entertained with great splendor at the court. Moreover, it is well known that he was granted a pension, and that this was kept up by Philip until the painter's death.

Remembering the dates at which these events took place; the fanatical zeal of Philip, and his interest in the distant church, redeemed and made glorious by Quiroga, the friend and *protégé* of his royal predecessor; the possible presence of Titian at the court at the time, certainly the influence of his masterpieces, together with the fact that the subject of this picture was a favorite one with him, notably the Entombment in Venice and the *replica* at the Louvre, it is quite within the range of probability that Philip either ordered this especial picture from the master himself, or selected it from the royal collection.

It is quite improbable, in view of the above facts, that the royal donor would

have sent the work of an inferior painter representing it to be by Titian, or a copy by one of his pupils.

Another distinguishing feature, and by far the most conclusive, is its handling. Without strong contrasting tones of color Titian worked out a peculiar golden mellow tone, — which of itself exercises a magical charm, — and divided it into innumerable small but significant shades, producing thereby a most complete illusion of life. This Titianesque quality is particularly marked in the nude body of the Christ, the flesh appearing to glow with a hidden light.

Moon's criticisms were thoroughly characteristic. He hoped I was satisfied. Did I want to see both sides of it; if I did, he would push out the rear wall. Would the spy-glass be of any use, etc. I waved him away, opened my easel, and began a hurried memorandum of the interior, and a rough outline of the position of the figures on the canvas. When his retreating footsteps echoed down the corridor, I closed the doors gently behind him and resumed my work. The picture absorbed me. I wanted to be shut up alone with it.

A sense of a sort of temporary ownership comes over one when left alone in a room containing some priceless treasure or thing of beauty not his own. It is a selfish pleasure which is undisturbed, and which you do not care to share with another. For the time being you monopolize it, and it is as really your own as if you had the bill of sale in your pocket. I deluded myself with this fancy, and began examining more closely the iron gratings of the window and the manner of fastening them to the masonry, wondering whether they would always be secure. I inspected all the rude ornaments on the front of the drawers of the wide low bureau which stood immediately beneath the picture; opened one of them a few inches and discovered a bundle of vestments dust covered and spattered with candle grease. Lifting myself up I noted the carving of the huge frame, and followed the lines of the old gilding into its dust-begrimed channels; and to make a closer study of the texture of the can-

vas and the handling of the pigments, I mounted the bureau itself and walked the length of the painting, applying my pocket magnifying glass to the varnished surface. When I stood upright the drooping figure of the Christ reached nearly to the level of my eye. Looking closer I found the over-glaze to be rich and singularly transparent, and after a careful scrutiny fancied I could separate into distinct tones the peculiar mosaic of color in which most of all lies the secret of Titian's flesh. In the eagerness of my search I unconsciously bent forward and laid my hand upon the Christ.

"*Cuidado! Estrangero, es muerte!*" (Beware! Stranger, it is death!") came a quick angry voice in my rear.

I started back with my heart in my mouth. Behind me, inside the doors, stood two Indians. One advanced threateningly, the other rushed out shouting for the padre. In an instant the room was crowded with natives clamoring wildly, and pointing at me with angry looks and gestures. The padre arrived breathless, followed by Moon, who had forced his

way through the throng, his big frame towering above the others.

During the hubbub I kept my place on the bureau, undecided what to do.

"You have put your foot in it!" said Moon, to me, in English in a tone of voice new to me from him. "Do exactly what I tell you, and perhaps we may get away from here with a whole skin. Turn your face to the picture." I did so. "Now come down from that old clothes-press backwards, get down on your knees, and bow three times, you lunatic."

I had sense enough left to do this reverently, and with some show of ceremony.

Then without moving a muscle of his face, and with the deepest earnestness, Moon turned to the padre and said: —

"The distinguished painter is a true believer, holy father. His hand had lost its cunning and he could no longer paint. He was told in a dream to journey to this place, where he would find this sacred treasure, upon touching which his hand would regain its power. See! Here is the proof."

The padre examined the sketch resting upon my easel, and without taking his eye from Moon, repeated the miracle to the Indians in their own tongue. The change in their demeanor was instantaneous. The noise ceased; a silence fell upon the group and they crowded about the drawing wonderstruck. Moon bowed low to the padre, caught up the standing easel, threw my trap over his shoulder, pushed me ahead of him, an opening was made, — the people standing back humbly, — and we passed through the crowd and out into the sunlight.

Once clear of the church he led the way straight to the catamaran, hoisted the sail, manned the sweeps, swung the rudder clear of the shoal, and headed for Pátzcuaro. When everything was snug and trim for the voyage home, and the catamaran had drifted slowly out into the deep water of the lake, the commodore lounged down the deck, laid his hand upon my shoulder, and said, half reprovingly, —

"Well, you beat the devil."

When we pushed off from Tzintzúntzan, the afternoon sun was glorifying our end of the universe, and in our delirium we fancied we had but to spread our one wing to reach bed and board, fifteen miles distant, before the rosy twilight could fade into velvet blue. But the wind was contrary. It was worse — it was malicious. It blew south, then north, and then took a flying turn all around the four points of the compass, and finally settled down to a steady freshness dead ahead. For hours at a time low points of land and high hills guarded by sentinel trees anchored themselves off our weather bow as if loath to part from us, and remained immovable until an extra spurt at the sweeps drove them into the darkness. To return was hazardous, to drift ashore dangerous, to advance almost impossible. As the night wore on the wind grew tired of frolicking and went careering over the mountains behind us. Then the lake grew still, and the sweeps gained upon the landscape and point after point floated off mysteriously and disappeared in the gloom.

All night we lay on the deck looking up at the stars and listening to the steady plashing of the sweeps, pitying the poor fellows at their task and lending a hand now and then to give them a breathing spell. The thin crescent of the new moon, which had glowed into life as the color left the evening sky, looked at us wonderingly for a while, then concluding that we intended making a night of it, dropped down behind the hills of Xanicho and went to bed. Her namesake wrapped his own coat about me, protesting that the night air was bad for foreigners, threw one end of the ragged tarpaulin over his own shoulders, tucked a hamper under his head, and spent the night moralizing over the deliberate cruelty of my desertion in the morning.

It was a long and dreary voyage. The provender was exhausted. There was not on board a crumb large enough to feed a fly. Between the padre, the six Indians, and ourselves every fig, dulce, bone, crust, and drop had disappeared.

When the first streak of light illumined the sky we found ourselves near enough

to Pátzcuaro to follow the outline of the hills around the town and locate the little huts close to the shore. When the dawn broke clear we were pushing aside the tall grass near the beach, and the wild fowl, startled from their haunts, were whirling around our heads.

The barking of a dog aroused the inmates of a cabin near the water's edge, and half an hour later Moon was pounding coffee in a bag and I devilling the legs of a turkey over a charcoal brazier — the inmates had devoured all but the drumsticks the night before. We were grateful that he was not a cripple. While the savory smell of the toasted *cacone*, mingled with the aroma of boiling coffee, filled the room, Moon set two plates, cut some great slices of bread from a loaf which he held between his knees, and divided equally the remnants of the frugal meal. Two anatomical specimens picked clean and white and two empty plates told the story of our appetites.

"At eight o'clock, *caro mio*, the train returns to the East. Do you still insist on being barbarous enough to leave

me? What have I done to you that you should treat me thus?"

I pleaded my necessities. I had reached the end of my journey. My task was completed; henceforth my face must be set towards the rising sun. Would he return as far with me as Zacatécas, or even to the city of Mexico?

No, he expected a dispatch from his chief. He would stay at Pátzcuaro.

I expected this. It was always his chief. No human being had ever seen him; no messenger had ever brought news of his arrival; no employee had ever explained his delay. In none of the cities through which we had travelled had Moon ever spent five minutes in looking him up, or ten seconds in regretting his absence.

When my traps were aboard, and the breezy, happy-hearted fellow had wrung my hand for the twentieth time, I said to him: —

"Moon, one thing before we part. Have you ever seen your chief for a single instant since we left Toluca?"

He looked at me quizzically, closed his

left eye, — a habit with him when anything pleased him greatly, — and replied: —

"A dozen times."

"Where?" I asked doubtingly.

"When I shave."