

IV

THE LITTLE CANOE

ITS INTRODUCTION AND DESTRUCTION
AT PORTO RICO

MY friend the Señor Don is of a precise and military bearing, clad with a dignity that enhances his scant five feet of stature to herculean proportions. He is a handsome little man with pompadour hair and a bold "Wilhelm der Kaiser" mustache. His speech is exact, somewhat cold, yet with a flavor of melancholy to it, like the style of Thackeray. When he expresses himself in English, it is with seriousness, that seriousness which marks all his enterprises, but it is with some honest mistakes concerning the language as a whole. A fine love for our free institutions is also

THE LITTLE CANOE

characteristic of the Señor Don. I can not tell you how his sad story of the little canoe affects me. I may only try.

"When I am to mek retoorn to Puerto Rico, Hooaleece" (which is part of my name on the Spanish tongue), said he, "I have bear in my mind the indolence of those people. Not like that roogged American who enjoy the manly art of boxing the eye of hees frien', or to mek strong resistance on the field of the ball of the foot, or splash t'rough the water in aquatic spooorts. No, hombre! Not sooch do they mek in Puerto Rico. Nuzzing more rrrrobust than to smoke cigarillos and to drink chocolatay, and I say, Thees ees the end of these people. What manner of civilizasyone will mek the drinking of chocolatay and the perpetual smoking of cigarillos? That of the conqueror? No. That of the arts? No. That of what, then? That of nuzzing.

TROLLEY FOLLY

"Well, what then? I say, I shall to missionary these people. To them I shall introduce the can-ooo American. It ees a beginning. Bimeby the boxing-glove, the ball of the foot, the base-ball, but gradooally—poco á poco. At first the can-ooo. There it ees to sit still, after the manner of Puerto Rico, becows, if you are not to sit with preceesion, that can-ooo will to set up, and some man must fish you. I buy can-ooo. I have it transport at mooch expense. I veesit Señor Córdova at hees home upon the sea, and there also has arrrrrived my little can-ooo.

"'Ah!' says the señor, 'what ees thees leetle bo-at? Eet ees very pretty!'

"'Eet ees can-ooo American,' I tell heem. 'You pull eet with thees stick. Eet ees at your disposal. Will you not make essay at eet?' 'Buen,' says Señor Córdova; 'where to put the foot?'

THE LITTLE CANOE

"I am to tell heem, but he waits not for reply, putting the foot oopon the edge. Eenstantly that can-ooo make revolution, preceepetating Señor Córdova eento the ocean. Ah, what confusion! What disturbance! How mooch different from America! There, when I have to overthrow myself in that can-ooo, the hardy cour-rrage of those people mek them to cry, 'Ha, ha, good eye! Pool for the shore!' But now! Señora Córdova and Señoritas Córdova three mek lamentable outcry, 'Papa is to drown!' And those naygrose which are there run around like stoopeed fellows. Eet ees to me that the responsebeelity falls that my friend Córdova do not perish. There he ees, pushing the water with hees hands, and speaking as one should not before ladies.

"What to do? I can reach heem with my arm, but that ees not nautical. I have

TROLLEY FOLLY

by the—the—*como se llaman* thees pole with the iron? Ah, bo-at-hooook! si, si, sil! The bo-at-hooook, and by that I hook heem.

“‘A Dios!’ he cry, ‘I am assassinated!’

“‘Be still, foolish person!’ I say. ‘Is not your life to be saved?’

“‘Si,’ he say. ‘Tiene usted razón, but I shall walk.’ So he place his legs upon the ground beneath the water, which is not extensive in that place, and coom to shore.

“‘Will you try heem again?’ I say.

“‘Causa admiración!’ he say, ‘I theenk not. No sé the habeets of the little can-ooo.’

“So he send a naygro for stimulant, the which I eembibe, while he mek change of hees attire at hees house.

“When he has returned he say to me: ‘Let us behold you master thees bo-at of eensta-beelity. Can you mek heem go?’

“By thees time those stimulant have made my heart strong, my cour-rrage severe. Am

THE LITTLE CANOE

I not American citizen? What ees eet? I tell heem that moment:

“‘I can pool eet with the stick; I can put in the sail and fly over the water like a sheep. Do you wish to see?’

“All the ladies and Señor Córdova cry out they will not let me be so dangerous. But I am resolved. Señorita Margarita Córdova is a yoong lady ver-ree beautiful. I am an American citizen. I tek anuzzer glass of aguardiente—brandee. What do I care for one can-ooo? Two? Three? I send the naygro for the sail in a steady voice: ‘Pepe, go at once and get the sail.’

“Señor Córdova says he will resist, but I pay no attention. I place the pole; I feex the strings; I adjoost the ruddle; I put een three large stone for ballass.

“‘Once more,’ say the ladies, ‘let us in-treat—’

“‘At your feet, ladies,’ I say, ‘but I go!’

TROLLEY FOLLY

"So I go, and then for the first eet is pleasant: the weend blow carefully; the little can-ooo jump oopon the water. But now there comes a large cloud. The weend he blow not so carefully. I am far from home. On the shore, Señor Córdova and hees ladies make observacion with a telescope. It is sad, I think, that they can see me so plain, yet am I upon thees stormy ocean. Of what avail is the telescope, if I am to shipwreck the can-ooo? Ah! I would not at that time that I had the ancestors of so cour-rrageous. Eet ees one of them who make Rolando see hees feeneesh. Out oopon these violent water I am cara á cara with the ma'neefeecent past. Shall I to turn the back upon the perilous? Die, then, the thought! Beside, that moment may the Señorita Margarita be with the beautiful eye at the telescope. So I am gay; I smile, as though I mek enjoyment of the terrible bouncing of that little can-ooo; I sing

THE LITTLE CANOE

areca from *Fra Diavolo*—ti-ti-tee-tum-tee! But at heart I regret mooch. What is a can-ooo, for the most? Eet ees not so strong as paper; eet ees a small, little boat that thees wave who shake hees teeth at me may devour at a bite. And then, alas! comes in a wave—ta! Ah, verree cold! Verree damp! With my hat I mek attempt to hurl the water outdoors. Comes another wave—another. I labor desperate; eet weel not do. Eet ees not enough. The can-ooo is sinking. Bimeby I am to sit in the water. It happen. Then I am to clasp the can-ooo with my arm, for in the both end of eet exists an air-tink—a box made of iron which hold the air, that the can-ooo may remain upon the water.

"The stern of that can-ooo go down first; glides the large rocks for ballass to where I am sitting. Thees I am to t'row out. Pah! When I bend to catch heem, comes a large wave right down my neck.

TROLLEY FOLLY

"There am I, then, clasping that can-ooo passionately, only hees end sticking up from the water. Those large stone hold the other end downright.

"At once I think, 'Córdova shall survey t'rough hees telescope, and send to me assistance.' But on the second thought I see eet ees not to be. I have mek sooch large talk of what I may do with that can-ooo that Córdova shall think: 'Thees ees novelty American. My friend shows me all! What devils are thees Americans, to swim in a boat standing oop in the water? Who shall presentiment their leemitaciones?' And he shall call hees neighbors to see the es-pectacle. Everybody shall come and remark, 'Ah! Meeracoolous!' and shake hees head.

"When I think that, I am almost to weep. My friends to see me fish for fish with myself before their eyes! Behold the beautiful Margarita! Will it not to melanchate her days

THE LITTLE CANOE

of youth to rrrremember, 'Through a telescope I saw my dear friend dissolve een the water?' Sad, thees. Well, then, eet ees un-avoiadabble. So to mek en end manful—strong. Therefore I smile again. But that smile he take all my strength. I wish not to show disrespec' for thees so noble country, yet eet ees the coostom for to mek the dollar. On that account some work is not so well done. That air-tink, on which depend my life, he leak. The can-ooo ees sinking, sinking. My ear against hees side, I can hear that little noise—shhhh!—where the water run in and the air run out. Eet ees the hour-glass marking how long I shall remain een the country. When he feel oop—pop! A Dios, el mundo!

"And eet ees so slow! I am of eempatient deesposeccion. With the long waiting I am not simpatico. I look how fast the water come up on that can-ooo, and I esteemate that I have to sit in those cold water for five hours.

TROLLEY FOLLY

And my friends observe t'rough the telescope!
Misericordia! Eet ees too dam mooch! For
five hours must I smile and sink!

"And when I think that Córdoba shall say,
'Ah, but he ees not centeresting, thees fellow!
Eet ees a pairformance monotonoose to sit
there in the water! He ees not really an
American! Not sooch do they, I give my
word!' then I geenash my tooth, and I shall
to tear my hair, but how may I unclasp that
little can-ooo?

"Now, to any man thees would seem suffee-
cent—a meesery plenty for the heart to hold.
Yet listen! Here am I, three miles from
shore in the stormy ocean, grasping a sinking
can-ooo, while eet ees necessary that I seem
to enjoy myself, to compensate my friends
who witness t'rough the telescope—ees eet not
the leemit? Hear me! Now comes the
shark! Madre de Dios! How shall I now
perform? Shall I make a great splash with

THE LITTLE CANOE

my feet to enfrighen that wrrretched repteel
away?

"And Margarita mek observation of me in
the actions of the little playful child. Ah,
my heart shall burst! In her eyes to become
reediculous! Si, yet here comes the shark to
bite me by the leg. To splash eet ees reedic-
ulous, but what can be so mooch reediculous
as a man without some legs? Eet ees time I
splash. Vigorosely I the water spatter. The
shark, that cowardly insect, run away—only
to get hees friends. Around me they circu-
late, each one putting oopon me the obstruc-
tion of hees cold, unfeeling eye. And it rains.
In the air ees water! in the ocean ees water;
in the water ees sharks. I am tire of water;
I regret that I have not brought the ball of
the foot or the boxer-glove to eenvigorate
thees island.

"I am think to be missionary; I am become
martyr. One consolación I obtain. The rain

TROLLEY FOLLY

eet has obscured the view. From the shore they can not see. I am to smile no longer. That ees joy. A little joy, not too mooch, for now ees but a trifle of that can-ooo left elevated over the water, and I am fatigue with splashing. I am deciding shall I omit to splash, and thus allow thees beest of shark to bite me queeck, or shall I to drown, when—ta! A hand on the stern of my t'roat, and a voice t'rough the nose, a voice so beautiful, a voice American, saying (eef you pairmeet cemeetacion), 'Hallo, boss! Do yer cum out here for thees exercise evvereee Saturday?' and I am lift into a boat.

"So they tek me to Córdoba. My clothes he ees shorten by the water; also hees color ees not all in the same place as when I mek purchase of heem. He ees the flannel clothes with the rred, white, and blue straps. Now he ees the rainbow, and from the hat has come color to my nose, to my cheeck.

THE LITTLE CANOE

"I land calm, coomposéd—eet ees like I have made the same each day. Córdoba he ees perplex; the ladies they know not what to say.

"'Have you petroleum?' I ask Córdoba.

"He mek reply, 'Yes, I have.'

"'Of your kindness, obtain me some,' I say and retire unto the house.

"When I retoorn, the old clothes repose upon my arm; I smoke the cigarillo. With the cold blood I walk to that can-ooo. I poot the old clothes upon heem. With the petrol I es-sprinkle all. I strike the match, first to light the cigarillo—then so carelessly, I light the little can-ooo.

"'Pardon,' I say. 'Coostom American.'

"The ladies all cry, 'Ah!' and Córdoba he knock hees feest with hees head and mek out-cry: 'Ah! What devils are thees Americanos! What care they for expense!'

"So I am veen-dickateed. And that end my little can-ooo."