CHAPTER 36

Off for Madagascar, Asia and Africa for a Long Tour in the Unusual Parts of the Earth

My term of office as Governor was nearing a close. There had been a fight for some good cause every day and I had enjoyed every moment of it. It was touching to me to witness the evidence of regard so plainly shown by good men of all parties. It made me forget there had been any such thing as opposition or bitterness. I felt that I was over-appreciated and too well paid. The University of Michigan and Olivet College and also Alma College, had conferred upon me the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. I was the first governor of Michigan to be thus honored; not the first to deserve but the first to receive. Olivet and Alma are splendid denominational colleges. Their recognition of me would not be interpreted as political by my most bitter enemy.

At the end I was given a dinner at Hotel Downey, Lansing. Republicans, Progressives, Socialists, and Democrats came to do me honor. It was a thank God thing and I was overcome. The Democratic Governor incoming was present and said he would model his administration after mine. I had inducted him into office with all kindness, respect, and assistance. The speeches at the dinner were of such graciousness as few men live to hear. Reviewing my work as Governor, one of the great dailies of Michigan said editorially:

"Throughout its course, the Osborn administration has been free from the touch of scandal. To be sure it has not been untroubled, but those troubles have been of the clean sort, in which men could oppose each other with honest differences of opinion and without shame. They have been storms rather than embarrassments. But the fact is the troubles of his administration have

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be brief in duration and inconsequential in effect and may be easily forgotten.

"Some of the things Governor Osborn set out to do two years ago have been accomplished. In other things disappointment has been his portion. But in success or disappointment, he displayed in all his official acts and life a spirit which made the fortune of the hour seem a matter of small moment. He met his every defeat with an attitude that commanded the admiration which usually is the tribute to success alone. In friendly or in hostile sympathy with his administration as one may be, yet the name of Osborn cannot be denied place beside that of Blair, the war Governor, and of Pingree, the first insurgent, in the roll of Michigan Governors.

"Reflect now on the two years of Osborn's governorship, and consider not only the immediate results of it, but the impulse it has given to a finer, stronger conception of government by the people of this State of ours. The injury that Osborn has done is solely to Chase S. Osborn's political aspirations—if any he has. The good that Chase S. Osborn has wrought is the inalienable possession of the State."

The House of Representatives passed resolutions officially commending my work.

My brief exaugural address was well received by the Legislature and by the public. I was deeply content.

There was much I wished to do. I had not finished the earth in travel and study. There remained portions of Africa and all of Madagascar. My wife and I left at once for the East and across the seas. We stopped en route in Washington, where I addressed the Michigan Society, upon the invitation of Judge Montgomery, with whom I had sometime clashed, but who is so big that he has forgotten it and forgiven me. At the State Department I could get almost no information about Madagascar. This made me decide to proceed to France. Madagascar is a French Colony. France took possession of it one year before the United States acquired the Philippines. It furnishes a splendid opportunity of
comparing the methods and colonial potentiality of the two nations.

We took passage on the French liner *La Touraine*, with the same captain who had sent the *Titanic* a wireless warning of the iceberg, that was unheeded.

Either at the wharf at Havre, or on the train between there and Paris, our trunks and bags were broken into and robbed. I mention this because we have only suffered from such depredations while traveling in France, Italy and Spain.

One gets the idea that the average of honesty is low among the European Latins. I say European Latins because we have found the South American Latin peoples as honest as any others in the world. We have been warned in every South American country to beware of thieves while traveling, just as the American traveling public encounters “beware” signs in depots and hotels, at home and on ocean steamers. In thousands of miles of travel in South America I have never lost an article, and I grew to be less watchful there than in most countries. Friends living in South America uniformly tell me that petty larceny and sneak thieving are uncommon there, which accords with my experience.

Ambassador Herrick was very kind to us in Paris. He saw that I had access to all official source of information. I was also permitted a more intimate knowledge of Dr. Alfred Grandidier, the famous biologist, and his work. Grandidier is an authority upon nearly every branch of scientific knowledge pertaining to Madagascar. When he completes the volumes he is writing they will form an exhaustive treatise upon that big and interesting island.

We sailed from Marseilles on a stormy day. The Mediterranean was the roughest I had ever seen it and it grew worse. Off Crete we nearly foundered. The storm continued for four days. For two days it was a hurricane and during thirty-six hours our ship just headed into it, and the log did not record a single knot of progress. Mrs. Osborn remained in our statement because it was too rough to dress. She was compelled to live in the upper berth on account of the depth of water in the room. Other
women were hysterical, and men were down on their knees in prayer, just as they always rush to God in danger and helplessness and so often forget Him at other times. No one was permitted on deck. Even the captain wrung his hands. He had ordered me below a number of times. Finally learning that I was working with the deck hands helping to rig the auxiliary steering gear and doing other things, he made me a member of the crew. During all of it my brave wife was as calm as could be, and only asked me to tell her and give her enough time to put on a life preserver, if it became necessary. Many passengers, both women and men, wore life belts for two days.

We had seen trying storms in the Cape Horn region, in the China Sea, in the North Atlantic and North Pacific and in Biscay and the Indian Ocean, but nothing worse than this. The fearful thing on the Mediterranean in a bad gale is lack of sea room, which is the great menace also on Lake Superior and the other great lakes of the world. I have seen Lake Titicaca so stormswept that hundreds of balsas were destroyed. Fancy a storm on the roof of the world in a lake more than two miles up in the clouds. One really feels as if he might be washed into illimitable space.

It was our fourth trip to Egypt, but neither my wife nor myself had seen the Sahara as it must be seen to be comprehended. In order to do so I organized a caravan for the purpose of journeying over the sands that are finer than when they reposed, unmoved, on the vast floor of the ancient ocean that once existed over the Bedouin domain. We planned to go some hundreds of miles and also visit the Fayoum Oasis, either outward bound or upon our return.

We have the slides to contend with at the Panama Canal. At the Suez, dredges are kept at work constantly by the boiling, slipping, flowing ooze that comes in at the bottom and sides. Compared with the Panama Canal the Suez is not much of an engineering product; nor when compared with the St. Mary’s Fall locks, at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, where the lock problem was solved for Panama and for the world.