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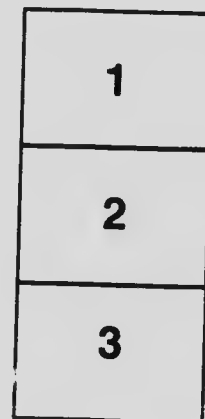
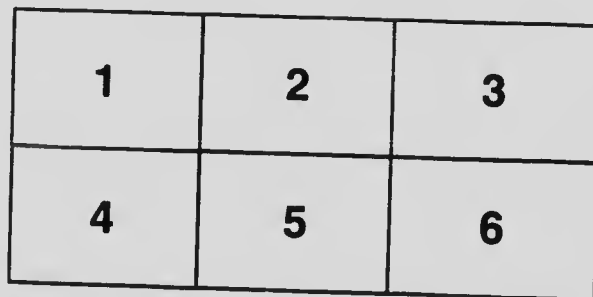
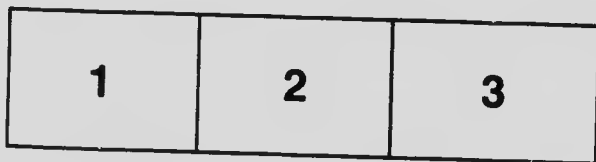
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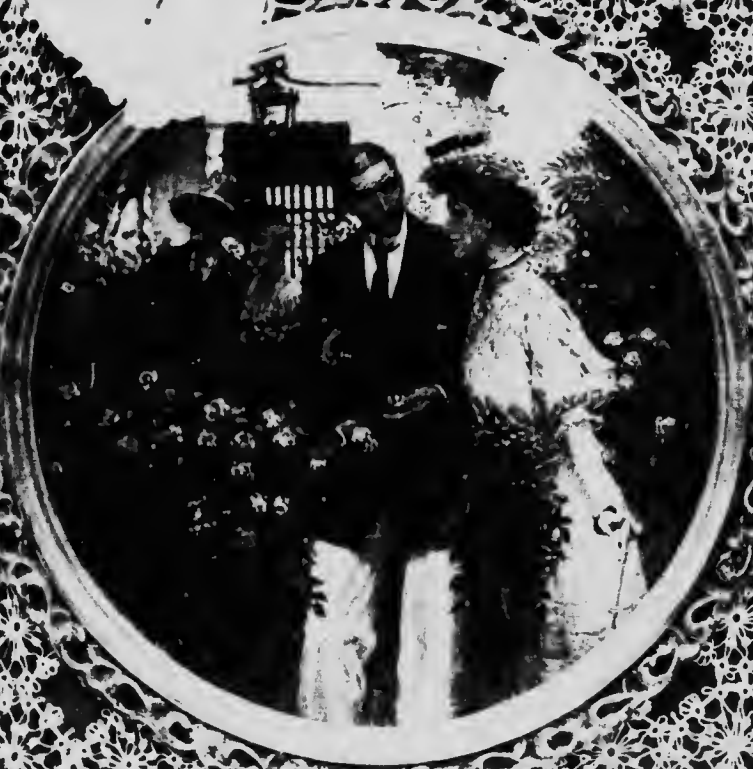


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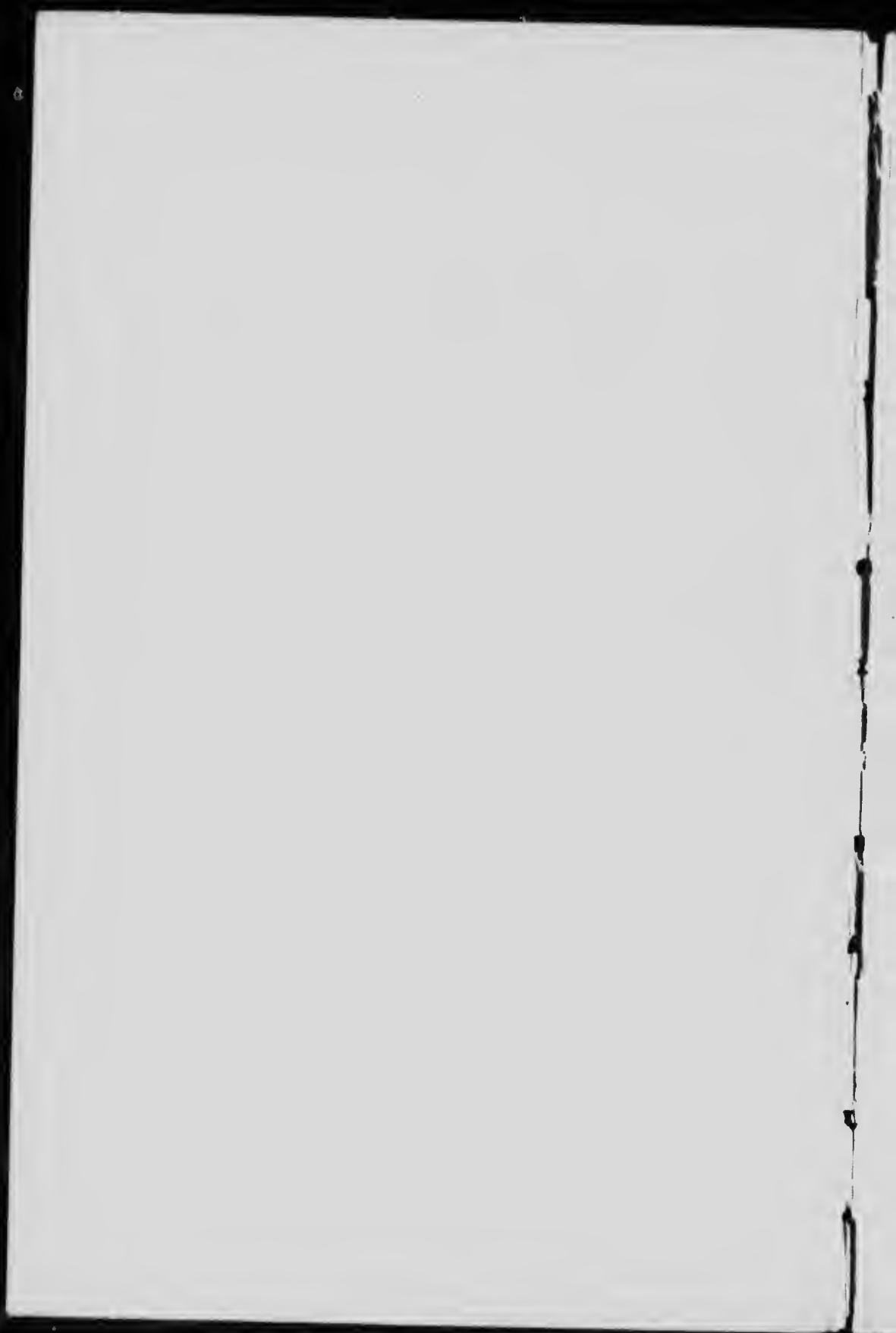


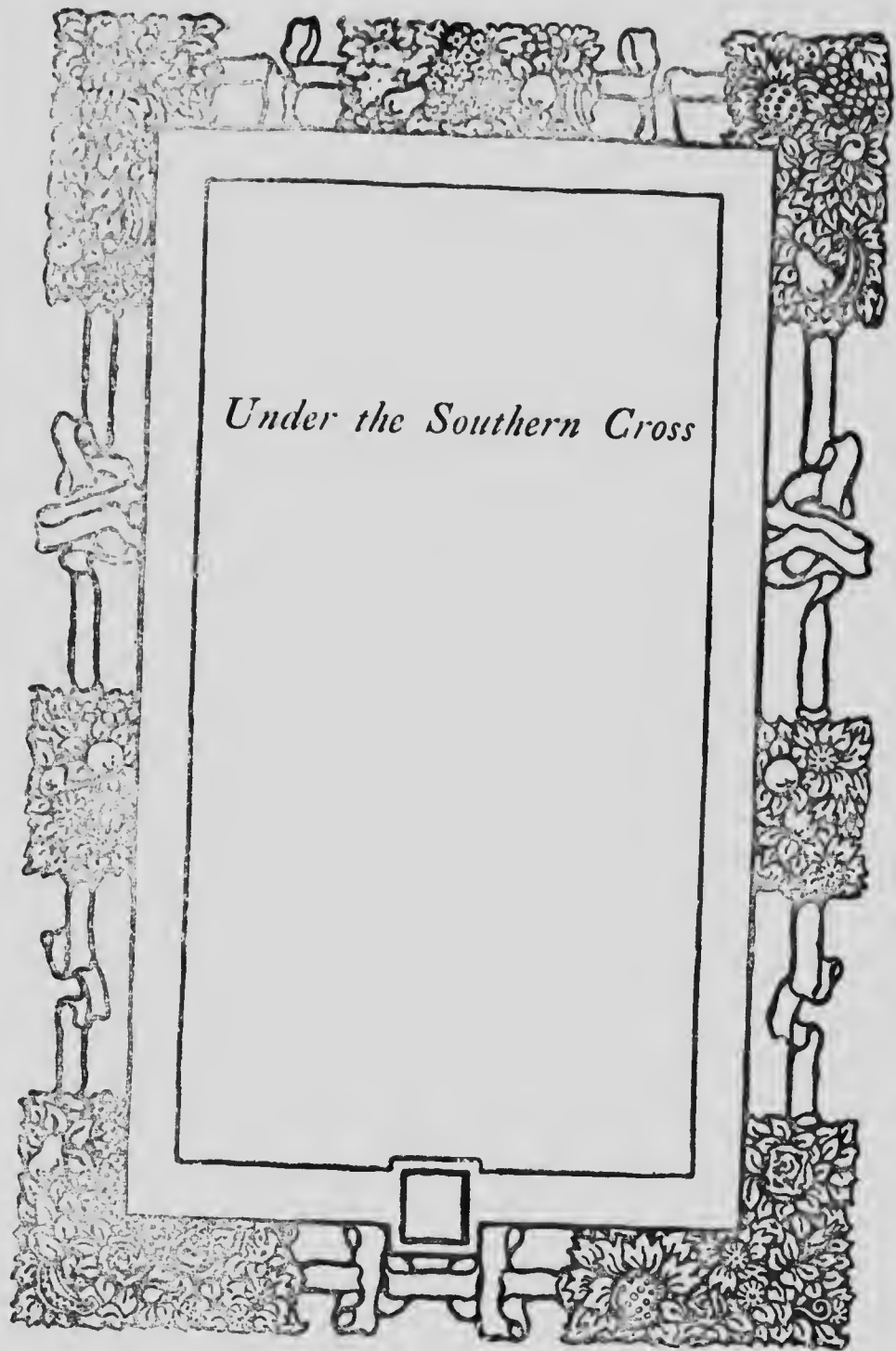
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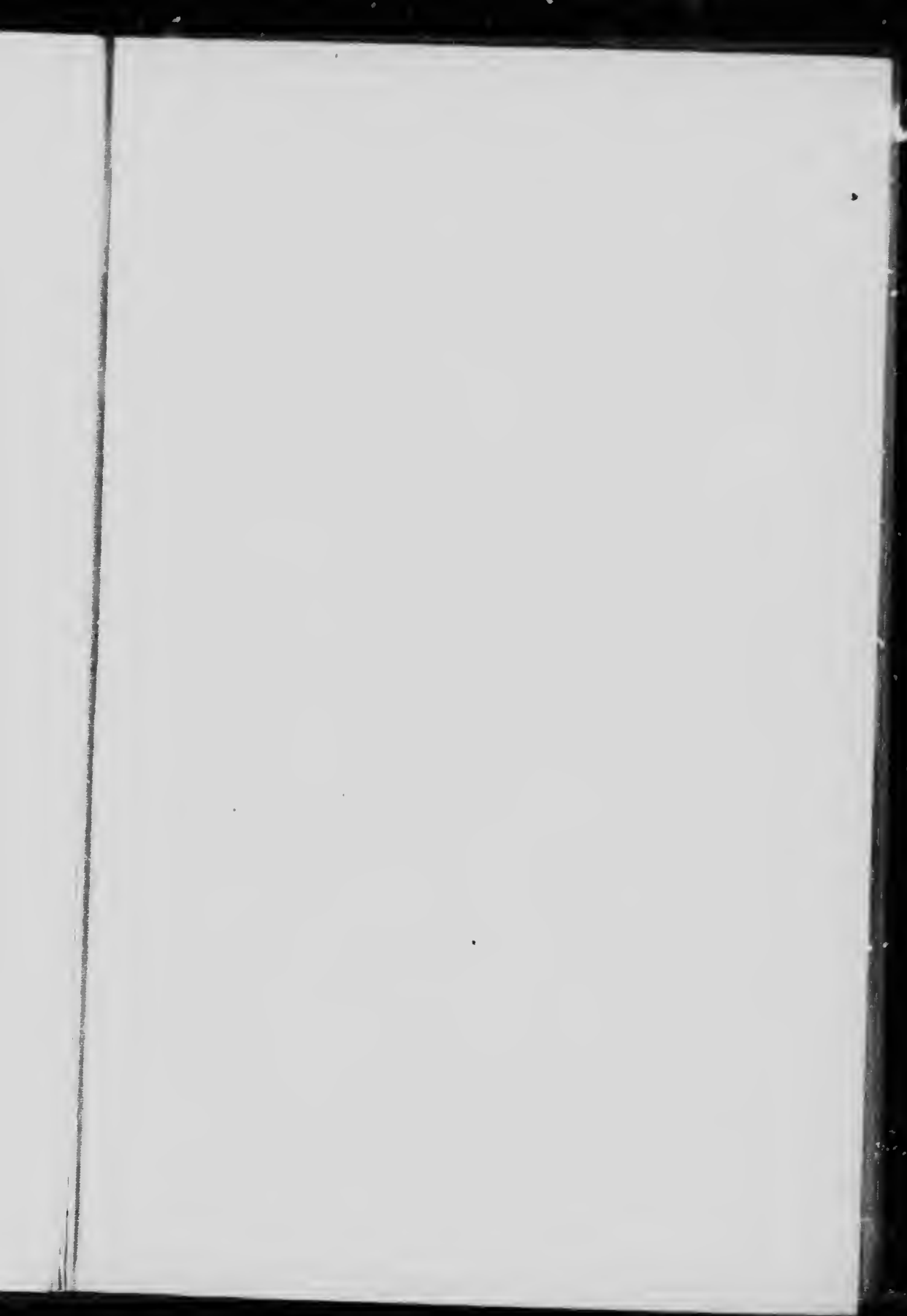






*Under the Southern Cross*







"FRUITS AND FLOWERS WERE SHOWERED UPON US"—Page 3



Under the  
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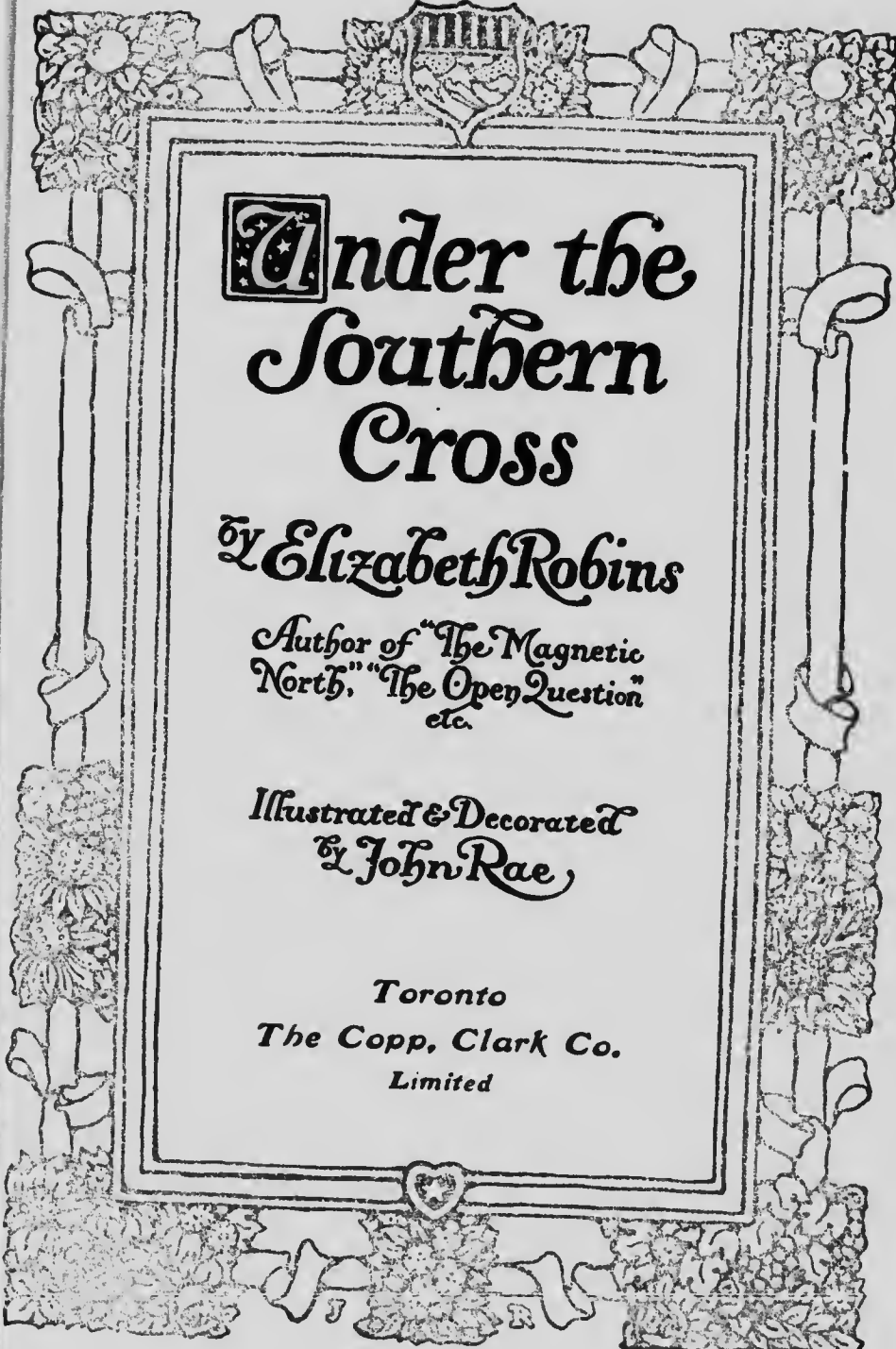
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Author of "The Mystery"  
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Cross**

*by Elizabeth Robins*

*Author of "The Magnetic  
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etc.*

*Illustrated & Decorated  
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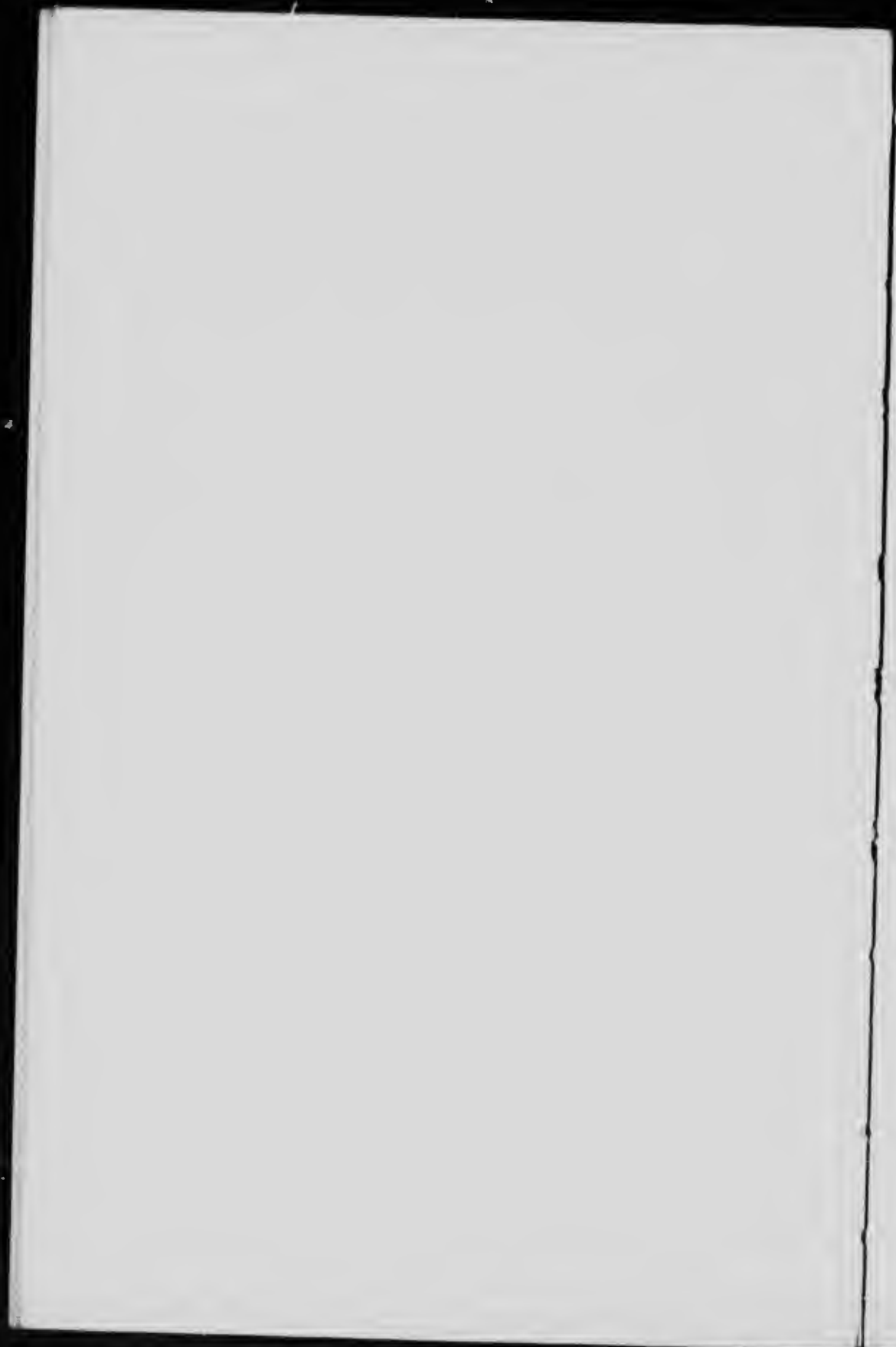
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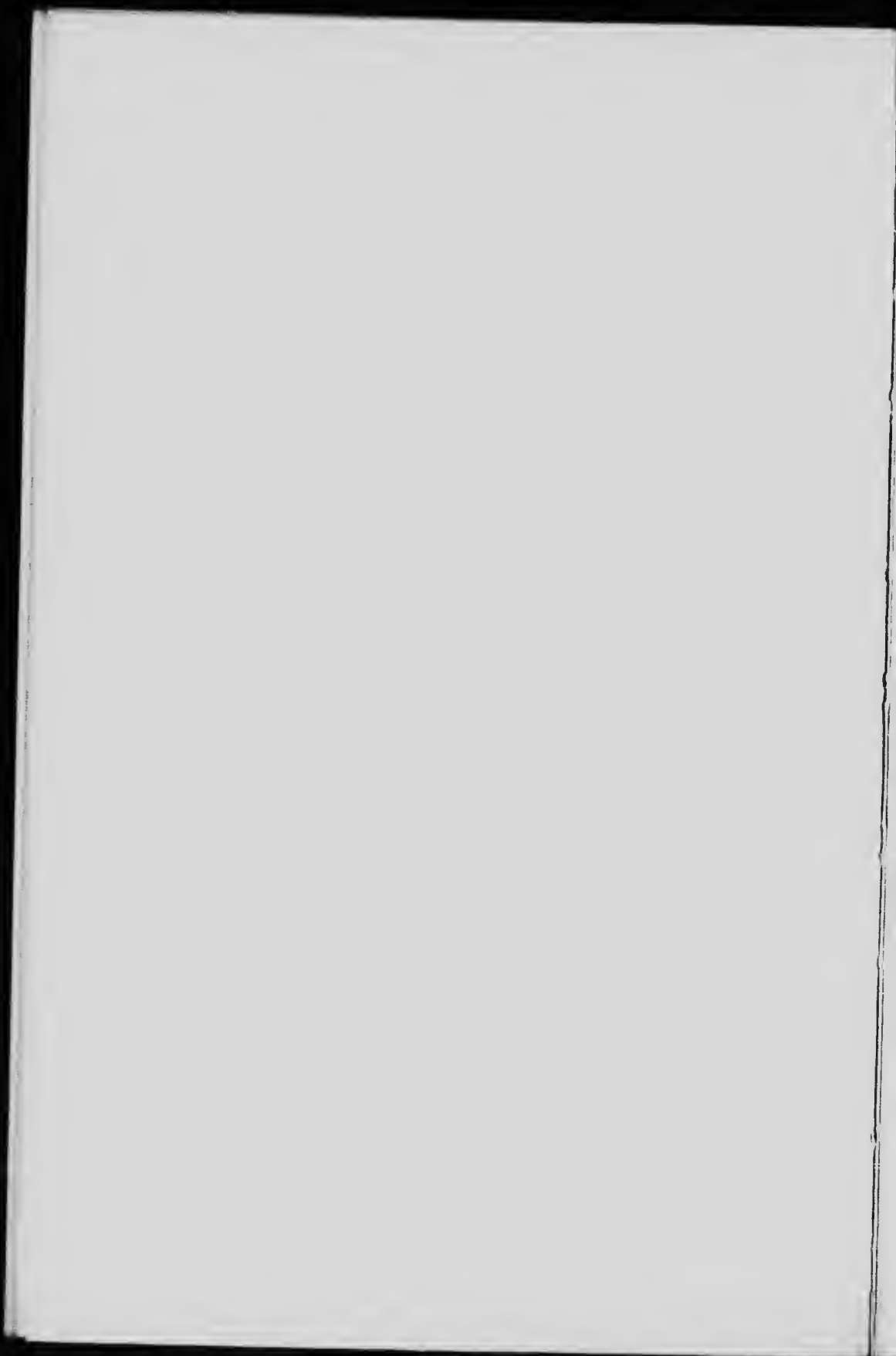
*Illustrations*

“FRUITS AND FLOWERS WERE  
SHOWERED UPON US” . *Frontispiece*

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*Chapter  
One*





## CHAPTER I

### OUR AGREEABLE FELLOW PASSENGER

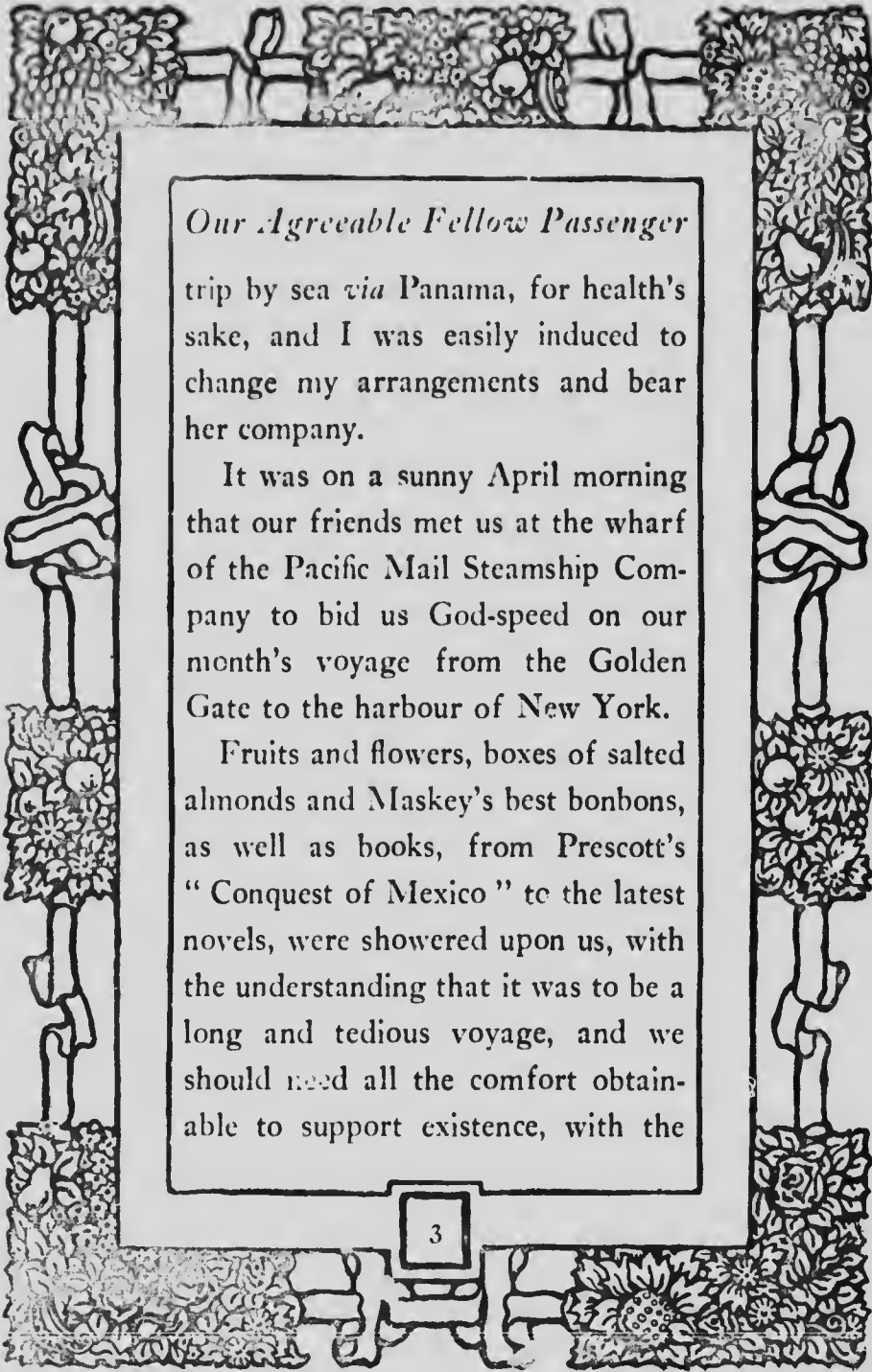
**I**N the same spirit in which a solicitous mamma or benevolent middle-aged friend will sometimes draw forth from the misty past some youthful misdeed, and set the faded picture up before a girl's eyes, framed in fiery retribution—for an object lesson and a terrible example—so will I, benevolent, if not middle-aged, put before the eyes of my sisters a certain experience of mine. I



*Under the Southern Cross*

expect my little act of self-abasement for the instruction of my sex to have this merit: the picture I will show you is not dim with age, and not cut and cramped to fit the frame of a special case. The colours are hardly dry, and both picture and tale are quite unvarnished.

I am a plain American girl of twenty. I am not so plain, as I come to think of it, as one or two others I know—not being distinguished even by unusual or commanding ugliness. I spent last winter in San Francisco with relatives, and intended returning home as I came—overland. But the invalid friend who was asked to chaperon me back to New York, was advised by her physicians to take the

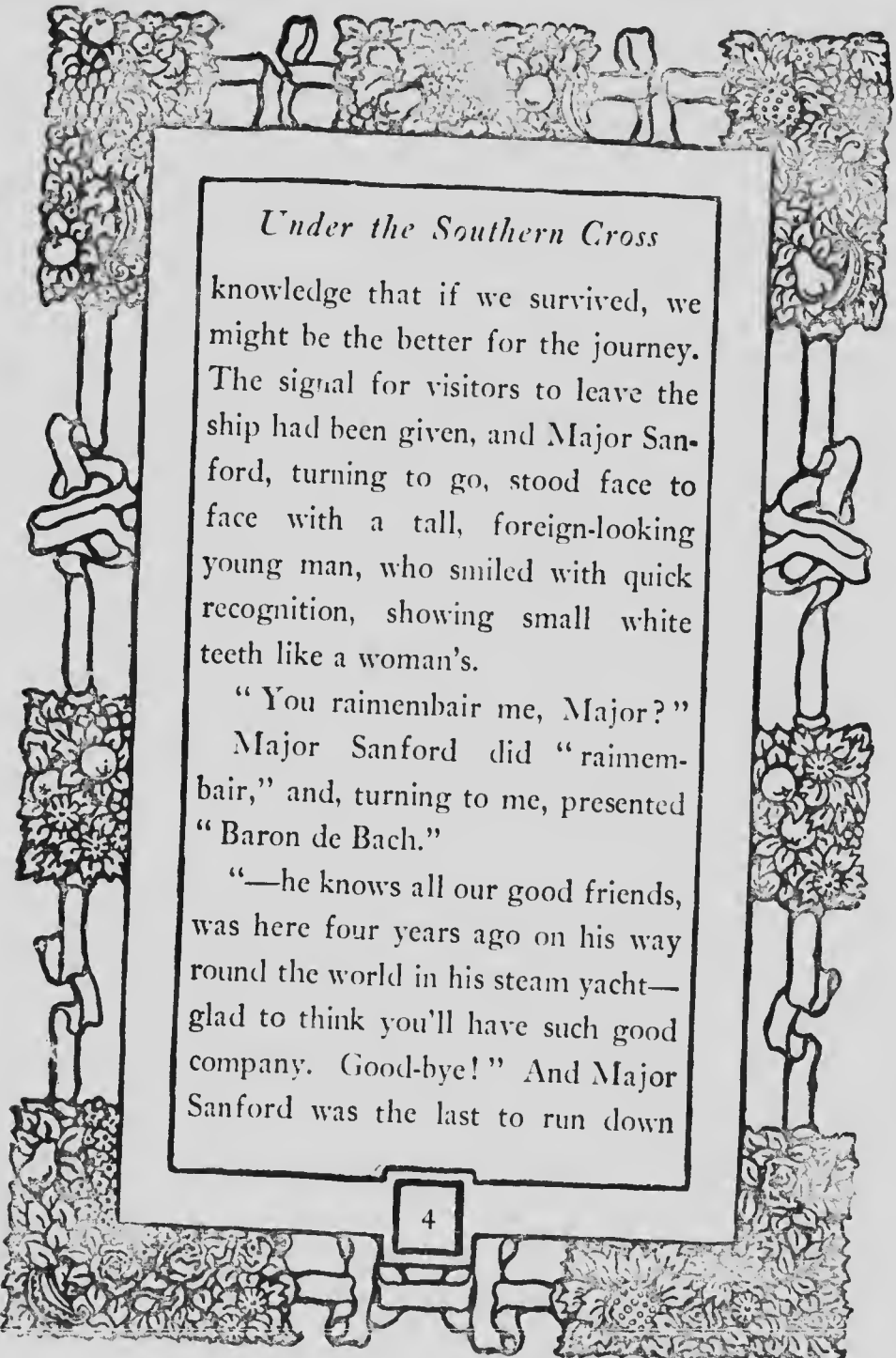


*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

trip by sea *via* Panama, for health's sake, and I was easily induced to change my arrangements and bear her company.

It was on a sunny April morning that our friends met us at the wharf of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company to bid us God-speed on our month's voyage from the Golden Gate to the harbour of New York.

Fruits and flowers, boxes of salted almonds and Maskey's best bonbons, as well as books, from Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" to the latest novels, were showered upon us, with the understanding that it was to be a long and tedious voyage, and we should need all the comfort obtainable to support existence, with the



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knowledge that if we survived, we might be the better for the journey. The signal for visitors to leave the ship had been given, and Major Sanford, turning to go, stood face to face with a tall, foreign-looking young man, who smiled with quick recognition, showing small white teeth like a woman's.

“You raimembair me, Major?”

Major Sanford did “raimembair,” and, turning to me, presented “Baron de Bach.”

“—he knows all our good friends, was here four years ago on his way round the world in his steam yacht—glad to think you'll have such good company. Good-bye!” And Major Sanford was the last to run down



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

the gangway. How little he knew what entertainment he was providing in coupling my farewell to him with "hail" to Baron de Bach!

Slowly we moved away from the dense crowd that covered the wharf. In the cloud of fluttering handkerchiefs, our friends' faces grew dim and slowly faded; the fair city at our Western portal looked like dreamland in a haze.

"You air not sorry dthat you go?" says a voice over my shoulder.

"No," I say, without turning; "I'm always glad of a change. You must have had a good time in that yacht of yours, going where you liked, and getting up steam the moment you had seen enough."



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“Yes,” says the new acquaintance meditatively, coming forward to the side of the vessel where I can see his face, “*Mais je suis très fatigué.* I am glad that I now go home.”

“You are young to be tired.” I look sideways at the boyish face. He is German, I think to myself, making a mental note of his complexion, strangely fair for a yachtsman, the eyes—heavily fringed blue eyes—the full-lipped, sensuous mouth, shapely of its kind, shadowed by a curling blond moustache.

“You are going home round Robin Hood’s barn, aren’t you?”

“Robeen Hoohd? Pardon, will you tell me who is he *en français?*”

“No, I’m not proud of my





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French, and if mistakes must be made I would rather you made them. I meant isn't this a curious way to go to Germany, if you are tired of travel and in haste to get home?"

"I lif not in Jhermany, how could you dthink——"

"Oh, I fancied the name was German, and——"

"Yes—yes, dthe name, but——"

"And you look a little German."

"Ah, mademoiselle, look at me more, I am in nodthing like Jhermans."

I could see the tall young stranger was a bit distressed that his Teutonic cast betrayed him.

"My fadthur was Jherman—my modthur is Castilian, my home is

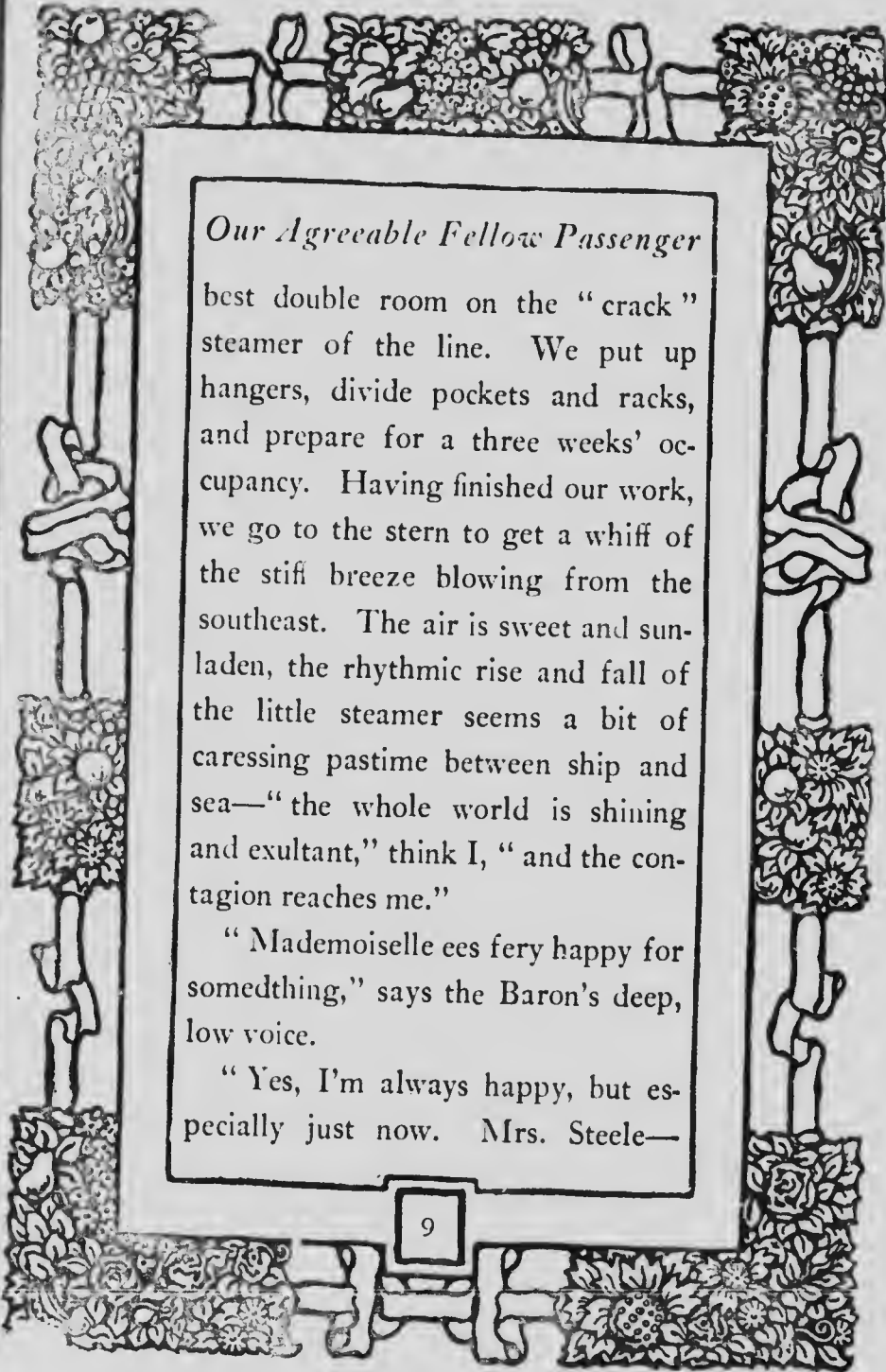


*Under the Southern Cross*

Lima, I am Peruvian, but I am educate in France. I am *cosmopolite*. And you—air Frainch?"

"I wonder where Mrs. Steele is?" I say, and turn away to find my friend standing at the stern, with the tears streaming down her handsome, care-worn face, and her great hollow eyes fixed on the fading outlines of the San Franciscan harbour. The Baron has followed, but I turn my back and devote myself to diverting Mrs. Steele.

"We must arrange our stateroom before we are ill," she says presently, in a state of hopeful anticipation, and we retire to No. 49 in the Steamship *San Miguel*, which all who have taken this journey know to be the



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

best double room on the "crack" steamer of the line. We put up hangers, divide pockets and racks, and prepare for a three weeks' occupancy. Having finished our work, we go to the stern to get a whiff of the stiff breeze blowing from the southeast. The air is sweet and sun-laden, the rhythmic rise and fall of the little steamer seems a bit of caressing pastime between ship and sea—"the whole world is shining and exultant," think I, "and the contagion reaches me."

"Mademoiselle ees fery happy for somedthing," says the Baron's deep, low voice.

"Yes, I'm always happy, but especially just now. Mrs. Steele—



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Baron de Bach, a friend of Major Sanford."

For half an hour the young Peruvian devotes himself making a good impression on Mrs. Steele. He carries her chair about until a place is discovered sufficiently sheltered from the sun and yet not too cold; he puts all our wraps and rugs on and about "Madame," who watches him with quiet amusement until I ask:

"And now, pray, what am I to do for a rug?"

"You need not a rug; you will walk dthe deck, vill you not?"

To tell the truth, walking the deck is much more in my line than being swathed and pinioned in a chair, but——



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

“Yes, my dear, it will do you good—bring me a book, and then you may explore if you like.”

So Madame is left with her French romance, and up and down in the sunshine I walk with our new acquaintance at my side.

“You air not Frainch?” he asks with a scrutinising side glance out of his fine eyes.

“I am happy to say that I am an American, and so are my ancestors for three hundred years.”

“Naixt to dthe Frainch, dthe American ladies air most beautiful, charmante and clevailr, but you haf chic, and more dthings; you might be angry I vould say. When I stood at dthe ship and see you coming *abord*



*Under the Southern Cross*

*du San Miguel* I vas so happy, for I haf fear for a dull voyage."

"H'm! You fancy then I may entertain you?"

"*Mademoiselle!*"

Very reproachful is the droop of the long lashes.

"It ess my gude hope ve may be friends, and if I succeed to amuse you, I am content à présent."

"And what office do you aspire to in the future? Shall you instruct, perhaps?"

"Dthat ees more your rôle, for if you pairmeet me to listen to your so beautiful Eenglish, I must learn much. But you will let me spik to you a leedle in Frainch, mademoi-



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selle? Dthere air zome dthings I cannot say in Eenglish."

We stop at the vessel's side, and in a glance across to Mrs. Steele I see her looking with wide-eyed amusement and a dash of concern at my companion. I turn in time to catch a queer, earnest look in the boyish face, as he stands with one hand grasping the rope ladder and his head bent down to mine.

"Anything clever or graceful that occurs to you in French, you may say to Madame Steele if you like, but you must speak English to me. There's the gong for dinner."

At the table I am placed at the Captain's right. My friends had given him special charges about me,





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and in a rough, kind-hearted way he shows me every attention. On my right sits a Guatemalan, Señor José Noma, then Mrs. Steele, and beside her, Baron de Bach. Opposite is an army officer, Captain Ball, and his wife, and several Mexicans. I feel a little unsteady and disinclined to eat, but the Baron sends me, by the Chinese waiter, a glass of champagne frappé—and my courage and interest in life return.

The Guatemalan proves to be a rich coffee planter exiled from home for political reasons, and returning now after an absence of several years to make his peace with the government. Señor José Noma is a clever, entertaining person, and one





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thing about him I am not likely to forget. He ate more chili-peppers, more mustard, more pickled chow-chow, more curry, and more cayenne pepper than I would have believed any mortal could dispose of and live.

I used to wonder whether his diet had any share in making him such a flaming firebrand of rebellion that he must needs be sent North to cool off! I am convinced, at least, that had he not drunk a generous amount of wine he must inevitably have been scorched to a cinder. He was always passing me his favourite dainties and urging upon me garlic, and some particularly awful and populous cheese. I was especially impressed in this, my



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first intercourse with a Spanish-speaking race, by their invincible habit of paying compliments, and yet their inability to convince even an unsophisticated person like myself that they meant one word they were saying.

The afternoon I devote to Mrs. Steele in our airy, pleasant stateroom. She is not exactly ill, but wants to lie down and to be read to. So we begin the "Conquest of Mexico." Towards evening I emerge from retirement, and Baron de Bach drops from somewhere at my side.

"Gude-efening, Mademoiselle. You haf us long deserted."

I explain that my friend is not well.



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

“But she will make you ill when you stay inside. I will tell her.”

“In French it may be safe, but don't attempt it in English.”

He looks mystified.

“Pardon, Mademoiselle, you look sfer as if you laugh at me, but I am not sure.”

“No, it's only my natural buoyancy that gives me a smiling aspect,” and I turn the conversation to Mexico. “We shall go ashore at Mazatlan and dine at a native hotel and see the people.”

“May I accompany you?” says the Baron.

“Mrs. Steele makes all the arrangements; you must see her about that.”



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“ Ah, but you spik not Spanish, and you must haf intairpretair. Madame Steele!” he says, as my friend appears, looking refreshed from her long rest, “ desire you not an interpretair at Mazatlan, or spik you Spanish? ”

Mrs. Steele does not “ spik Spanish,” and accepts his offices. In some way the Peruvian has secured the confidence and goodwill of my friend in a very brief acquaintance. He is decidedly agreeable, but his slight knowledge of English puts him at constant and amusing disadvantage.

The next evening as we stand at the vessel's side, watching the marvellous display of phosphorescence that plays about the prow of the *San*



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

*Miguel.* Mrs. Steele is joined by Señor Noma, and the Baron urges me to come a little further away from the light—"ve can see dthe yelly fishes viel besser." I move away unsuspectingly out of the shine of the ship's lanterns, and the Baron, folding his arms on the railing beside me, begins quite low to recite a Spanish sonnet, liquid, musical, impassioned. I look out over the waters well-named Pacific, and yield my luxurious sense a moment to the charm of the dusky beauty stretching away endless in the night, listening half in a dream to the lapping of the weirdly lit water against the side of the *San Miguel*, and to the sweet, low music of the Spanish tongue. The spell is broken



*Under the Southern Cross*

when the Peruvian begins in a rapid, excited French a sentimental declaration.

"I'm afraid I don't quite follow you," I interrupt. "Are you telling me about jelly fish or the Peruvians?"

"*Sacre! . . .*"

A low, repressed volley of Castilian followed by a few words in German.

*"Seit jenem Tage wo ich zum ersten Male in deinen schönen Augen geblickt habe, habe ich dich grenzenlos geliebt."*

"I'm sorry I can understand nothing but English," I say, turning to see if I can catch a glimpse of Mrs. Steele.



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“Señorita!”

The Peruvian holds my finger tips fast to the rail with a hand that trembles a little.

“Señorita, I must gif you anodther proof dthat I am not Jherman, and am unlike your—how you say—practical countrymen. I haf know you two days, yust so long haf I loaf you, and being Peruvian, I must die if I tell you not.”

“Blanche, where are you?” It is Mrs. Steele’s voice, and I call out:

“Do come here, the jelly fish are simply resplendent on this side.”

The Peruvian moves out of range of recognition, into the darkness beyond, while Mrs. Steele joins me on the other side.





*Under the Southern Cross*

"Where is Baron de Bach? I thought he was with you."

"So he was, but he's just gone daft—I mean aft."

"What is the matter?" says my friend; "have you disagreed about something?"

"Yes," I say, "we've disagreed, and he has the best of it, for he can argue his point with four tongues and I've only one."

Mrs. Steele is curious; she slips her arm through mine.

"Has he been overpolite to you, my dear?"

"Mrs. Steele," I say, thoughtfully, "I'm a little amused and still more perplexed by this man. Will you allow me the American girl's





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privilege of taking care of herself and promise not to interfere if I tell you how matters go?"

"Yes," says Mrs. Steele quickly. "I need no convincing that you can take care of yourself, but I rather like that big Peruvian with all his worldly experience and boyish heart. I hope he hasn't been translating into broken English the eloquence of his face. If you're wise, you'll keep him on friendly ground till near the end of the voyage at least; he will make an agreeable third in our excursions on shore. His knowledge of Spanish and Mexican customs will be useful, but if you allow him to make a goose of himself, there's an end to all friendly intercourse."



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She pauses a moment and then adds hopefully:

“But still we’ve known him only two days; I merely warn you in time for future need.”

“It’s too late,” I say, leaning far over the railing to watch the phosphorescence gleam and darken. “He has just been making furious love in four languages. Let’s go in, dear.”

That night I wake out of some unpleasant dream to hear Mrs. Steele saying:

“You sleep like the dead; we shall all go to the bottom and you will never find it out till the fish begin to nibble.”

I realise sleepily there’s a great



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

commotion without; hurried feet fly about the decks; loud orders are shouted under our window, and with a mighty trembling and throbbing, the ship's engine seems to stop suddenly. Mrs. Steele is scrambling into her *robe de chambre*, and has her head out of the porthole, while I, hardly awake even yet, lean in a bewildered way over the side of my berth to listen.

"What has happened?" Mrs. Steele calls out.

"Man overboard," answers one of the sailors; "we're lowering a boat."

"Dthere ees no fear, Madame," says the Peruvian's voice outside.

I am so sleepy I gladly take his



*Under the Southern Cross*

word for it, and am off again to the Land of Nod. Mrs. Steele's voice comes to me from afar off, with some question about a pistol, but the real soon mixes with a dream, and I know no more.

The next morning I hear that for two hours the whole ship was in a commotion. A drunken passenger of the intermediate class had tumbled overboard, been sobered by his bath, and swam valiantly till the ship's engine could be reversed and a boat lowered to his rescue. This occupied so much time that he was sinking from exhaustion when finally the sailors pulled him in. The passengers were in a panic during the outcry and subsequent stoppage of



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

the machinery. Many believed the last hour was at hand, and appeared on deck in ascension robes, and faces by no means expressive of joy at the immediate prospect of Heaven. It was great fun hearing the various experiences at breakfast. Every one had some joke on his neighbour—only the Peruvian was quiet and rather pale. As we sat on deck in the later morning sunshine, he said to me in German :

“You face danger bravely. I heard Madame Steele cry out last night, but no word from you.”

“Good reason for that; I was asleep nearly all the time.”

“Asleep!” he repeats. “Impossible!”



*Under the Southern Cross*

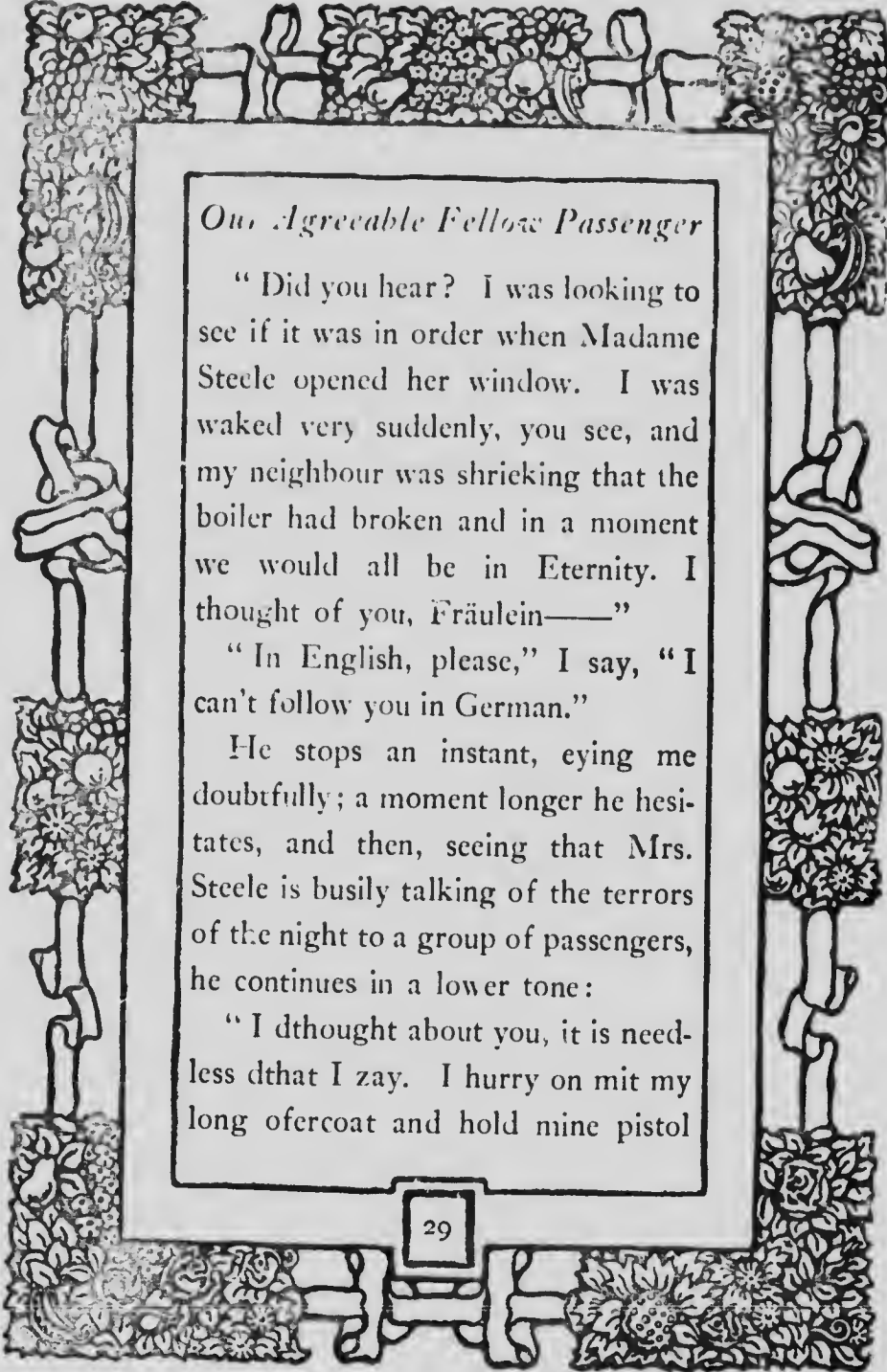
"But quite true; I only heard you say there was no fear, and then I turned over and went on with my dream."

"Ah!" he says, making the German words rumble and bristle with emphasis, "I am happy that assurance from me could so calm and comfort you."

"Yes," I say hypocritically, "the effect was magical; but were you frightened?"

"Yes, I admit it. Very much. But not for myself, I hardly need say——"

"What was that I heard about a pistol?" I interrupt, "or did I dream it?" A faint flush passes over the Peruvian's face.



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

“Did you hear? I was looking to see if it was in order when Madame Steele opened her window. I was waked very suddenly, you see, and my neighbour was shrieking that the boiler had broken and in a moment we would all be in Eternity. I thought of you, Fräulein——”

“In English, please,” I say, “I can’t follow you in German.”

He stops an instant, eying me doubtfully; a moment longer he hesitates, and then, seeing that Mrs. Steele is busily talking of the terrors of the night to a group of passengers, he continues in a lower tone:

“I dthought about you, it is needless dthat I zay. I hurry on mit my long ofercoat and hold mine pistol





*Under the Southern Cross*

deep in mine—mine—how you zay?"

"Pocket."

"Yes, in mine pawket, and I come dthree steps by a time up here to your door."

"Heavens!" I say, "did you want to shoot me?"

"No, I would safe you!"

"What was the pistol for?"

"You zee a Peruvian vill dthink qvick by a time like zo—he vill zay: 'I must safe dthe life of Señorita—dthere vill be boats, but dthere vill be many to crowd in and all vill be lost. So I vill take von leedle boat and I put dtherein Madame Steele and Señorita; if any people try to growd in, I hold dthem back; if any in-





*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

seest, I shoot dthem dead, and safe  
Señorita.' ”

“ Very humane of you.—Señor  
Noma,” I call out suddenly, as that  
fiery gentleman is passing by, “ I  
want to hear how heroic *you* were  
last night.”

“ Ah, mees,” says the Guatemalan  
deprecatingly, as he stops before us,  
“ I did sit one meeserable quarter-  
hour by the rail with two life pre-  
sairvairs and try to raimember *one*  
Ave Maria.”

Acting on Mrs. Steele’s wise sug-  
gestion, I keep the Peruvian at bay  
as much as possible; but this is not  
so easy as it might seem, and my  
best safeguard is to stay with Mrs.  
Steele every moment and insist I un-



*Under the Southern Cross*

derstand only English. Baron de Bach observes a day or two after this:

“Señorita’s knowledge of French and Jherman ees better zome days dthan odthers. But it ees gude for me that I vill learn spik zo beautiful Eenglish.”

“Forgif me, Señorita,” he says, beginning afresh after a pause, “but *what* blue eyes you haf!”

“You are colour blind, Baron,” observes Mrs. Steele, with a quiet smile. The Peruvian starts slightly. Had he forgotten her?

“Madame——” he begans.

“Hush!” I say, with uplifted finger, “I hear the bells of San Blas.”

Mrs. Steele shades her eyes with



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

one little grey-gloved hand, and looks intently towards the undulating outline of the coast. The flood of sunshine that bathes the world is flung back ceaselessly from the shimmering sea, till the poor eyes of mortals are dazed and blinded with the shifting splendour.

Beyond, the rugged coast of misty purple has rest and charm for the dazzled vision. There is a sympathetic interest in Mrs. Steele's beautiful face, and I knew her fancy, like my own, had restored the ancient Jesuit mission to the far-off headland, and the legend of consecrated bells—that still ring out from a tower long since crumbled—is fresh and vivid in her memory.



*Under the Southern Cross*

“I really believe I hear the bells, don't you, Mrs. Steele?” She puts the grey-gloved hand over her eyes as if she were tired.

“I could hear them, dear, if I were twenty.”

“What bells ees dthat?” The Peruvian turns away his fine head to listen. “I hear nodthing.”

“You are the only one that hears them, Blanche; tell us what they say.”

“Even Longfellow can't do that,” I answer, “and his sense was so acute and fine he heard them half across the world.”

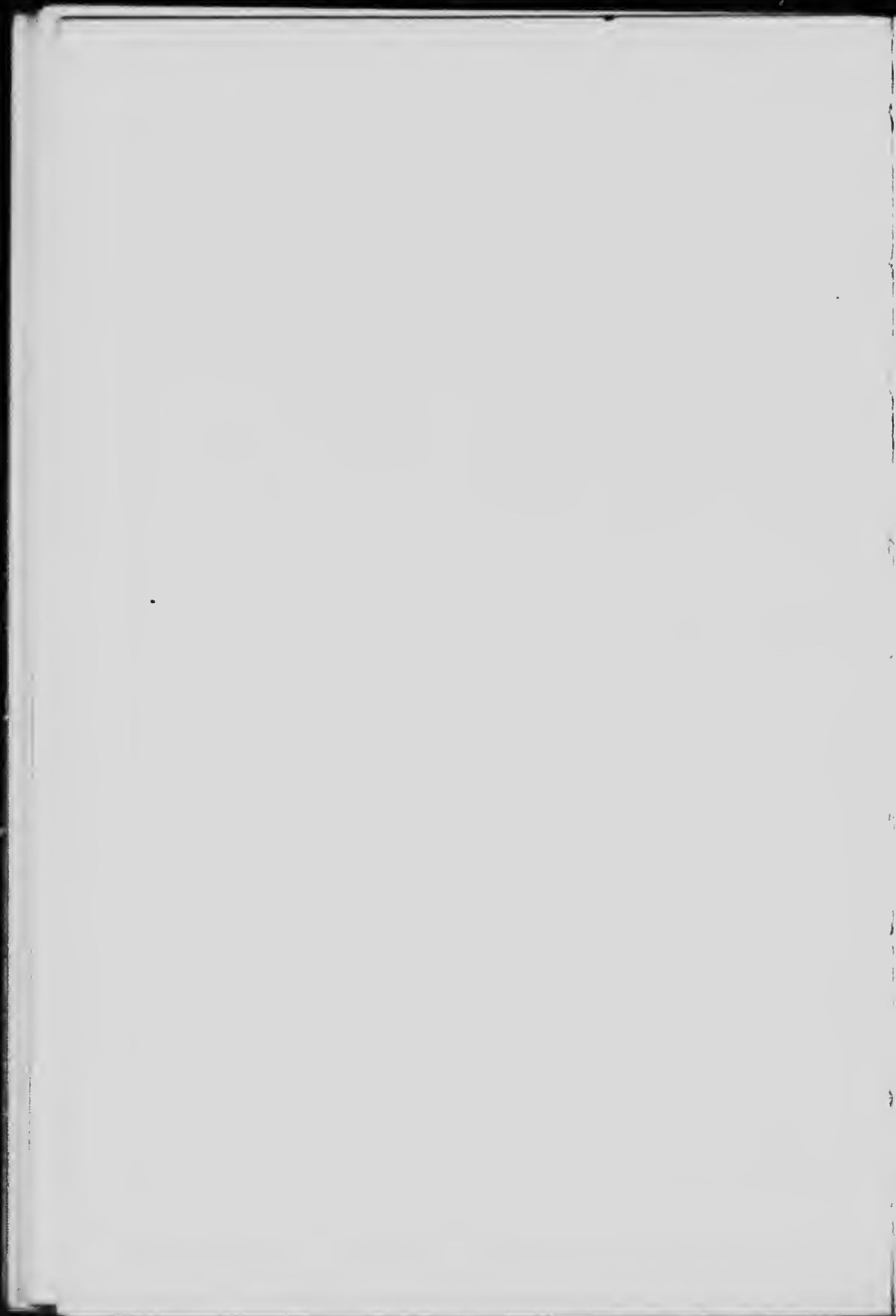
I look out to the misty coast line and repeat:



*Our Agreeable Fellow Passenger*

“What say the Bells of San Blas  
To the ships that outward pass  
To the harbour of Mazatlan?  
To them it is nothing more  
Than the sound of surf on the shore—  
Nothing more to master or man.  
But to me, a dreamer of dreams,  
To whom what is and what seems  
Are often one and the same,  
The Bells of San Blas to me  
Have a strange wild melody,  
And are something more than a name.”

“Ah, vas I not right, Madame  
Steele? I vill learn zo beautiful  
Eenglish on dthis voyage.”





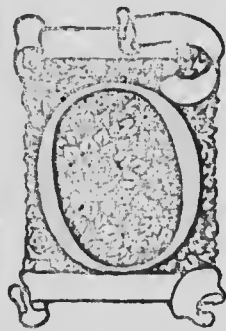
*Chapter  
Two*





## CHAPTER II

### MY INTERPRETER AT MAZATLAN



On the fifth day out from San Francisco we make the harbour of Mazatlan, on the Mexican coast. The courtesy of the Captain secures us a good view from "the bridge" as we approach our first port. A great white rock juts up in the bay like a fragment of some Titan's fortress; a lighthouse stares out to sea from a cliff at the harbour's entrance; the tall cocoa palms wave their fern leaves in the blind-



*Under the Southern Cross*

ing sunshine, and red-roofed houses huddle below the dome of the Cathedral rising white above the town.

The harbour soon swarms with the countless boats of the natives coming with fruit and wares to sell or hoping to earn a few *reales* by rowing the curious to the wharf.

Señor Noma engages the largest of these boats and invites as many as it will hold to go ashore with him. He helps in Mrs. Steele, Baron de Bach brings me, and we are soon followed by Captain Ball and his wife, and Miss Rogers, a pretty girl with her photographic camera and her mamma, who is an Episcopal clergyman's wife, and so proud of the circumstance that the gentlemen



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

have dubbed her "The Church of England."

The Mexican oarsmen make one think of comic opera brigands, except that they look rather dirtier and their speech is music without song. We land at a rude wharf in the low sea wall and pass through groups of dark-skinned natives who eye us with sleepy interest. Through narrow streets we troop one after another towards the heart of Mazatlan.

It is oppressively warm, and Captain Ball begs us all to come into a restaurant and get some cooling drink. Mrs. Steele and I have limes and Apollinaris, while Señor Noma, true to his red-hot appetite, tosses off



*Under the Southern Cross*

a glass of mezcal, the fire-water of the Mexicans, the most scorching beverage ever concocted.

“How would you like a true Megsican dinair, Mees?” says Señor Noma, blinking a little as the liquid fire pours down his throat. “It ees not bad.”

“I should fancy it might be very interesting,” I say.

“Well, then, if Madama Steele and the ladies and zhentlemen present will do me so much honour I will await them at the Hotel Nacional at seven o'clock. I must now see a friend. *Adios!*”

While the rest are taking leave Baron de Bach bows to me with his glass of Rhine wine held out to



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

touch mine. With a comparatively serene face he mutters:

“You talk to efery one but me; I vould like to shoot dhem all.”

“It mightn’t do,” I say, “even in Mexico.”

He turns away with a frown between his fine, straight brows.

“Madame, vill you and Señorita come to drive? I know dthe place and vill be intairpretair?”

“Yes,” says Mrs. Steele. “I intend sending for a carriage; we can get over more ground in that way, and we have so little time.”

The Peruvian gives an order to the servant and shortly a vehicle stands at the door. It is a lumbering old open carriage that has evi-



### *Under the Southern Cross*

deatly been grand in its day—with  
two white horses that match in  
age and decrepitude. In the best  
of spirits we drive off. The Baron  
talks Spanish with the driver and  
answers all our million inquiries.

We learn that the best houses are  
built round a hollow square called a  
*patio*, and the occasional glimpses  
through the opening of massive  
doors into these courts reveal a sun-  
shiny garden of tropical fruits and  
flowers. Roses everywhere fill the  
afternoon with fragrance, and the  
strong aroma of ripening bananas  
and pines makes the hot air heavy.

“Ees it like vhat you dthought?”  
asks the Peruvian.

“Much better in some respects.”



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

I say, "but the houses look dreadful dreary outside; they're more like prison homes, with their great blank walls and here and there a barred and grated window."

"There's a pane of glass in the town," says Mrs. Steele, "lattices inside and wooden shutters without."

"Yes, and I've noticed so many pairs of bright eyes peering through those lattices. How things!" I say feelingly, "I suppose a Mexican girl of good family must have a very stupid time."

"Not in the slightest," says the Peruvian with decision. "Vomans air much better take care off; dthey





*Under the Southern Cross*

air fery happy, I 'sure you," and turning to me—"You would like it yourself after a leedle."

"Indeed I shouldn't! And neither would the unfortunates who had charge of me."

We pass a Catholic graveyard with high adobe wall and are at the Hospital Municipal, our objective point. A dark young man in ill-fitting clothes receives us and shows us about this primitive refuge. The floors are tiled and all the appointments are rude, but very clean.

Baron de Bach distributes his Mexican dollars so generously the dark young man is quite overcome. He asks some question with solemn black eyes fixed on me. The Peru-





*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

vian laughs with slight confusion and I catch "Si" in his reply. The dark young man puts another query.

"What's it all about?" says Mrs. Steele; "you promised to interpret."

"Oh, yes, if I must. Dthis zhen-  
tleman ask if dthis young lady ees  
my wife and if she like roses."

"Oh, let us see the roses," says Mrs. Steele, calmly ignoring the wretch's prevarication, for I know to the first question he said "Yes." With my nose in the air I follow the rest into the rose garden of the hospital, where all is so lovely I quite forget I am offended.

Oh, the rose trees and the wilder-  
ness of bloom!

The dark young man gathers for



*Under the Southern Cross*

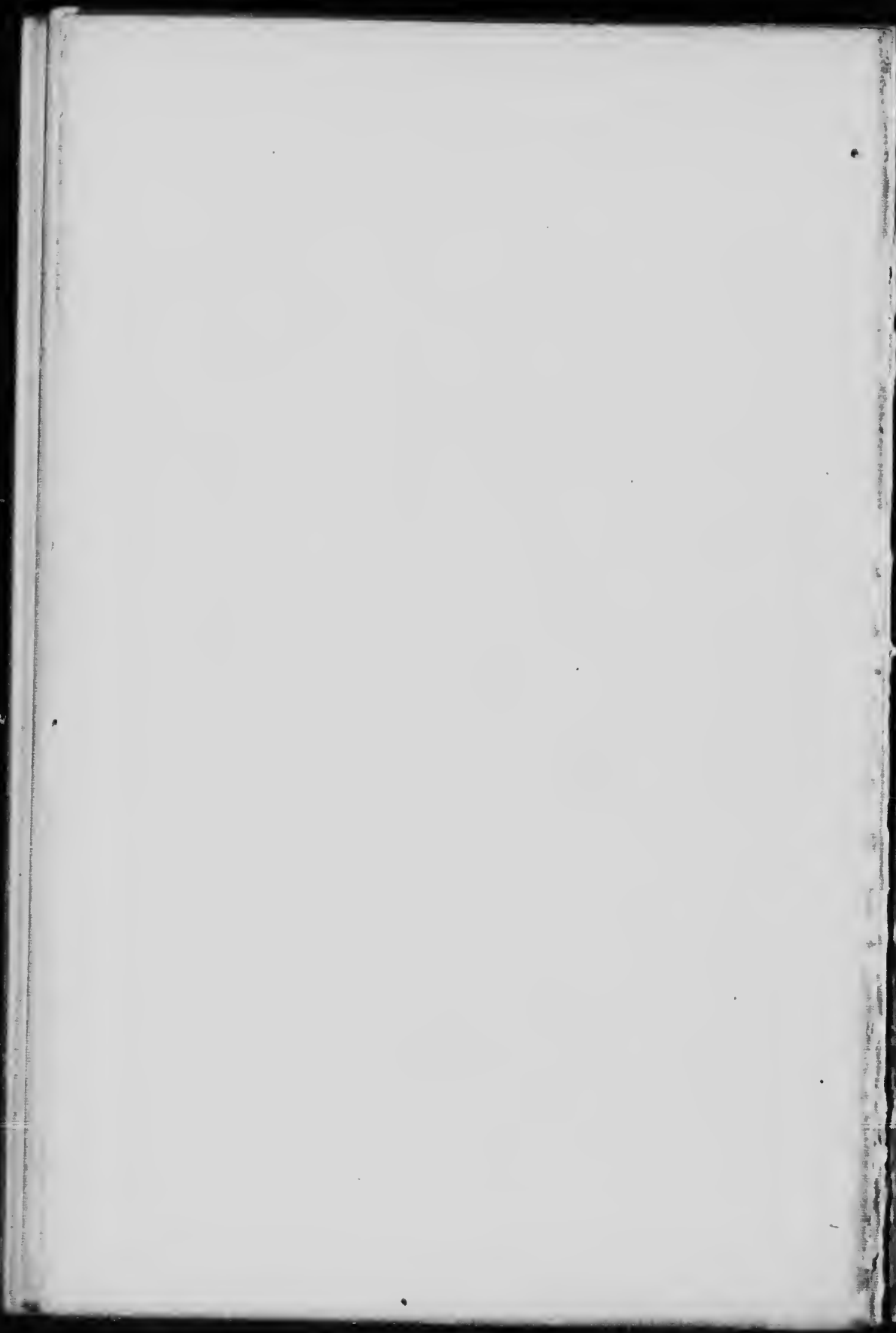
Mrs. Steele and the Baron de Bach for me.

“You ask me vonce vhat kind was a Castilian rose. Look, Señorita, so *weich* so *süss*, so *fein*, *wie die Castilien Frauen*,” and he hands me a pale pink rose, loose-petalled, fragile, and very fragrant. With great bunches in our hands we leave the hospital garden, and I notice with irritation that the dark young man in bidding me good-bye, long life and happiness, salutes me as “Señora.”

It is six o'clock and we drive towards the town. The narrow streets are full of idlers in every attitude of picturesque languor. Mrs. Steele sympathises deeply with the lean and



"LOOK, SENORITA!"—Page 48





### *My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

patient little burros with wooden racks on their backs holding on either side a clay jar filled with water.

“Efery yar ees two media, about twenty-five cent your money. Vater ees more dearer dthan vine,” explains our interpreter.

We find all the rest of the company assembled at the Hotel Nacional in the gallery on the ground floor that looks into the *patio*. Mrs. Steele and I are shown by a native servant (half Indian, I should think) into a room across the court, where we make a primitive toilet. This is the very best hotel of Mazatlan, but the guest chamber is guiltless of carpet or rug; the one high window, grated and latticed, looks into the



*Under the Southern Cross*

narrow street. A bed heavily draped with coarse curtains stands in one corner, and under a cracked glass giving forth a freckled and bilious reflection stands the deal toilet-table. A tin pan does duty for bowl, a delightful old clay carafe holds the water, and an abalone shell contains a bit of yellow laundry soap.

With these aids to beauty we reappear refreshed and ready for the dinner that is spread in the half-open gallery. Only a trellis thickly mantled with grape vines is between us and the garden; indeed, over the top of this screen I can see, as I sit at the table, the vine-leaves rise and fall in the soft air, and the more ambitious tendrils daintily pencilled



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

against the red sky of that lovely Mexican evening. An odd dinner it is; but Señor Noma makes a most courteous host, and the dishes are certainly rare and interesting—generally peppery beyond words to describe and most of them liberally seasoned with garlic. But the luscious fruits, the “*vino blanco*,” and champagne cool our smarting palates and reconcile us to our gastronomic ventures. At the beginning of the meal, out of the meditative mood that has overtaken him, Baron de Bach rouses himself to enter into earnest conversation with the little Mexican boy who is helping to serve us. I notice the boy’s snapping black eyes and fine oval face, and how he



*Under the Southern Cross*

nods with an added gleam as he says "Si! si!" to every remark of the Baron's, and finally disappears. In a few minutes he returns and presents a large bunch of lovely orchids to Mrs. Steele. Then he exchanges a few words with the Baron and is off again like a shot.

"Yust to show you dthat flowers can grow here *out* of a hospital garden," explains the Baron, bowing across the table to my friend and adding under his breath:

"I haf send for odthers for you, Señorita."

Towards the end of this curious dinner the Mexican boy returns with a great round native basket piled high with roses and strange rare





*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

flowers I have never seen before—such wonderful fantastic conceits in bloom that I can only look and clasp my hands about the dainty store. Mrs. Steele recalls Hernando Cortes' wonder and delight at the flowery surprises of the new world three hundred years ago.

"Ah, yes," says Señor Noma, who has caught the remark, "you see we haf something worth your notice in this dark corner of America. If you stay here longer you will find we haf many things you would like."

Baron de Bach is strangely quiet all the evening, but the unfailing good temper of our host and the gaiety of the others keep us at the



*Under the Southern Cross*

table till the pale crescent of the new moon looks in over the vine trellis to warn us of the waning hours.

"We must remember the Captain's caution to be back by eleven," says Captain Ball, consulting his watch.

"Yes, but it ees scarce nine o'clock," says Senor Noma. "Mrs. Steele, will you accept my escor'?" And our clever host, having won over the only possible objector, leads the way out into the dim, mysterious street.

"Vill you haf zome Eendian dthings, *en souvenir?*" asks the Baron, offering me his arm.

"Indian things!" I echoed, de-



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

lighted. "I should like to see them immensely, wouldn't you, Mrs. Steele?" and I explain. The notion is received with enthusiasm, and Baron de Bach takes us to a little shop, where some sinister-looking men and women show us glazed clay mugs rudely decorated and often adorned with some Spanish name in scrawling script. There are carafes with cups to match, pipes, whistles, and animals in clay and little dishes of every description. The Baron buys a great tray full of these things, and hires a barefooted "moso" to carry them down to the wharf. We go on to the garden-planted Plaza that had so attracted us by day. Now it is a blaze of light and



*Under the Southern Cross*

resonant with the strains of a Mexican band. Dark-visaged idlers lounge on the long seats about the garden, and a constantly shifting throng moves up and down on every side.

Affecting to show me a white flower that thrust its dainty head through the garden's iron fence and filled the air with heavy, strange perfume, Baron de Bach separates me a few moments from my friends.

"At last," he says, with a deep breath, looking around and seeing that the others have passed on, "I haf you a moment alone. I haf been in tarture dthese seven hours."

"Very polite speech," I answer, peering through the garden's iron



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

palings, "seeing that you have been with me these seven sad hours."

"Ah, Señorita, it ees no use dthat I egsplain, you air zo fery heartless. I do not find myself possible to make you out. You haf pairhaps had too many tell you 'I loaf you'—you care not any more. I haf travel dthe world ofer, many beautiful and clev-air vomans haf loaf me. I haf seen nefer a voman like you for not to are. Efery body loaf you, you loaf about, and when a man say 'You air charmante,' you say 'Will ve feeshe to-day?' If a man say 'You haf eyes wie die Sternen im Himmel' you ask 'Hear you dthose bells of San Blas?' and when a man say 'I loaf you to destraction' you



*Under the Southern Cross*

tell him 'I do so like dthose qveer Megsican Eendians.'" The Baron strikes the pavement violently with his stick. "Will you marry von qveer Megsican Eendian, Señorita?" I laugh at the funny conclusion and the Peruvian's excited face.

"Monsieur," I say, "I'm told that nearly every man says 'I love you' to an average of eighteen women in a lifetime; he perhaps really cares at various times for three, and the rest do well to let the mistake pass unchallenged and soon forgotten. I am not especially strong-minded myself, and I don't object to your talking a little nonsense, for I find you very entertaining; but I won't deceive you so



*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

far as to let you think I believe you."

A low volley of French so quick and excited that I cannot follow it is the Peruvian's reply. I am a little bit uneasy at the look in his face; the glow of ruddy health runs out like a fast-ebbing tide, and although I have not understood his French, with the intuition of my sex I comprehend his face, and I look around for the rest of the party. He catches the glance and seems to struggle for self-control.

"Señorita, take my arm; ve shall walk. I vill hope to teach Señorita zome day dthat Peruvians air no liars."

"Ah, Baron," I say deprecatingly,





*Under the Southern Cross*

“I never meant that, you didn’t understand me—I——”

“No,” he interrupts—“I know dthat often I understand you not and sometimes it ees my so bad Eenglish dthat ees to blame. If I could tell you all in Spanish you *must* believe,” and before all the people in the Plaza he lifts the hand that lies on his arm and kisses it.

I flash a horrified look around, but no one seems to have noticed.

“Like you dthe Spanish tongue?” he asks quite unconcerned.

“Yes, very much,” I say, glad to get him on some impersonal subject, “it is the most musical in the world, I believe.”

“You vould soon learn it,” he





*My Interpreter at Mazatlan*

says, "you understand many words now, I know by your face. Can you say my name, I vondair; try! Federico Guillermo."

"Federico Guillermo," I repeat imperfectly—"what a beautiful name!"

"Dthen Blanca vill call me 'Guillermo.' I like not 'de Baron de Bach' from her lips. Besides ve use not titles in Peru."

Mrs. Steele and Señor Noma call us from the corner of the Plaza as we approach.

"We've been round four times hunting for you; where in the world have you been?" says Mrs. Steele, looking disapproving and a little out of breath.

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring a repeating pattern of stylized flowers and leaves. The border is composed of vertical and horizontal sections, with the vertical sections containing a central stem-like element and the horizontal sections containing a dense floral arrangement.

*Under the Southern Cross*

“Walking about here looking for you! I couldn’t imagine where you were,” I say.

The others come up and we turn our faces towards the harbour. The dusky oarsmen are waiting for us, and we are soon skimming over the dark water—I with my hoard of flowers in my lap and my eyes fixed on the great dim hulk of the *San Miguel* anchored out in the bay.



Chapter  
Three





## CHAPTER III

### I AM LECTURED

**B**

LANCHE," says Mrs. Steele the next morning as she brushes out the lovely waves of prematurely grey hair, "what are you going to do about the

Baron?"

"Do?" I repeat innocently.

"What's the matter with him?"

"Now, Blanche, you said if I would promise not to interfere you would be frank. I'm not sure I am



*Under the Southern Cross*

wise to adhere to my side of the bargain under any circumstances. I never thought you the kind of a girl to go on letting a man fall more and more in love knowing all the while you would never be able to give him more than a passing interest."

"How do you know that? Perhaps I'm disguising all sorts of fierce and fiery feelings under my cool exterior?"

"No, my dear, you can't impose on an old friend so far as that. You are a queer girl and not always easy to understand, but you care less for the Baron de Bach than I do, and you know it. Now, what makes you act so?" and she arraigns me with uplifted brush.



*I Am Lectured*

“ Dear Mrs. Steele, I’m a student of human nature in a small way. If I know anything about our Peruvian friend he will fall out of ‘love,’ as you are pleased to call his chronic state of sentiment, as readily as he fell in, and no bones broke, either. He would have forgotten all about me before this and gone over to pretty Miss Rogers and the study of photography except that I’ve been a bit obdurate—unusually so, he is naïve enough to assure me, and his vanity is piqued.”

Mrs. Steele lays down her brush and begins to coil up the long, soft hair.

“ My dear, you are very old for your years. When I was twenty I



*Under the Southern Cross*

would have made a hero out of that man instead of calmly picking out his foibles—girls are not what they used to be.”

I retire to my stateroom after breakfast to read. The Baron retaliates by becoming aware of pretty Miss Rogers' existence. Pretty Miss Rogers' mamma is conspicuously polite to him, and pretty Miss Rogers' self offers to play the piano to his violin. It is Mrs. Steele who brings me these tidings and assures me that Miss Rogers plays well, and, as for the Baron de Bach, he is a master! I resolutely read my book till luncheon time and, going up on deck afterwards, I am surprised that the ever-watchful Baron has not hurried to



A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine motif surrounds the text. The border consists of a central vertical band with a knot-like design, flanked by horizontal bands of flowers and leaves at the top and bottom.

### *I Am Lectured*

meet me. He seems utterly indifferent to the fact of my presence and leans beside Miss Rogers at the ship's rail talking contentedly.

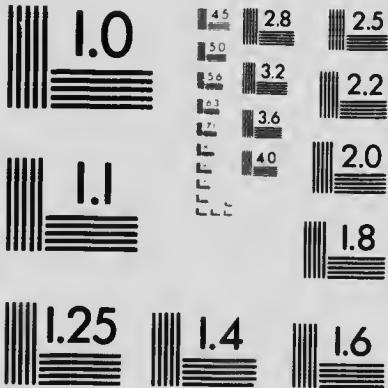
"I'm!" I muse, "music *hath* charms! At all events he must not be allowed to suppose that I notice, much less care for, his defection," and I turn to talk animatedly with Captain Ball about Mazatlan. His wife comes up with an aggressive-looking Californian who has asked several persons to present him, but I've successfully evaded his acquaintance till now.

"It's not often we have the pleasure of a word with you," says Mrs. Ball, after introducing her companion. "Baron de Bach is such a



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*Under the Southern Cross*

monopolist. Just see how he is engrossing Miss Rogers now. What a pretty girl she is, and how well she plays. Did you hear her and the Baron this morning?"

"No," I say calmly, "I was so unfortunate as to miss that. Baron de Bach has contracted a benevolent habit of reading French aloud to Mrs. Steele and me every morning, and one doesn't *always* yearn to listen to French with a dreadful German accent, so I excused myself and passed the forenoon in my room."

"You must be glad to hear the Baron has found some other congenial occupation." Mrs. Ball laughs, and exchanges a look with the Californian.



*I Am Lectured*

“It may have its advantages,” I reply, determined not to be ruffled.

At that moment the Peruvian comes up to ask me if I will sit in a group to be photographed.

“Oh, please don’t ask me,” I say pleasantly; “I hate sitting for my picture.”

“But I beg you. Madame Stelle haf promise to help us. She ask me to zay she will spik vidth you.”

With a show of indolence I accompany him to where Mrs. Steele’s chair is stretched out under the awning, for the day is very sultry.

“I haf play vidth Mees Rogair,” he whispers on the way, “and haf make her promise to get out her



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camarah—I would haf your photographic.”

Mrs. Steele groups the party, and we succeed in getting several unusually grotesque and dreadful pictures. If anything could cure one person's sentimental regard for another, it would be the sight of just such amateur caricatures as were turned out that afternoon. Mrs. Steele looks a little like her handsome self in the proofs shown us next day. Miss Rogers develops an unflattering likeness to a dutch doll—I am as black as a Congo negro and wear the scowl of a brigand, while Baron de Bach, after carefully brushing his hair and twisting his moustache to the proper curve, comes out with a white



*I Am Lectured*

blot instead of a face; a suggestion of one eye peers shyly forth from the moon-like mask, and the Peruvian is greatly disgusted. I shall ever regard an amateur's camera as a great moral engine for the extirpation of personal vanity.

On the evening of the eighth day we steam into the far-famed Bay of Acapulco.

It is sunset, and from the Captain's bridge we watch the headlands taking bolder shape against the brilliant sky, the lighthouse flushing pink in the reflection. We see the long, low red-roofed Lazaretto set peacefully among the hills, and away to the right the straggling town of Acapulco, fringed with cocoa palms



*Under the Southern Cross*

and guarded on the other side by an old and primitive fort.

A wonderful land-locked harbour is Acapulco, and the bold hills circling it seemed that night to shut it out from all the rest of the world.

“That town is more like old Spain than Spain herself,” I hear a gentleman from Madrid say to Mrs. Steele. “It has remained since Cortes’ day, with no other land communication than an occasional mule train affords; and the manners and customs and speech of Cortes’ followers are preserved there to-day.”

“Can’t we go ashore?” I ask the Captain, pleadingly.

“Well, you can’t stay long,” is





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the gruff answer. "We must get away early to-morrow morning."

But Baron de Bach, overhearing, says:

"I tell Madame Steele ve can haf supper in dthe town. Vill you come, Señorita?"

"Thanks, with pleasure, if Mrs. Steele agrees," and my spirits rise high at the prospect.

The great red sun rests one splendid moment on the wooded heights and dyes the waters of Acapulco's bay in dusky carmine, and it throws into bolder silhouette the black hull of the disabled man-of-war *Alaska*, anchored after many storms in this fair and quiet haven. The health commissioners are long in



*Under the Southern Cross*

coming, and it is late before Mrs. Steele, the Baron and I are pushed off from the *San Miguel* and headed towards the town. It is dark when we reach the wharf, and Baron de Bach gives us each an arm, saying:

“It ees not safe dthat you leaf me; stay close beside.”

“Yes,” observes Mrs. Steele encouragingly, “I’ve heard that these wretches think nothing of murdering a stranger for a ring or a few reales.”

“Dthere ees no fear; I haf mine pistol.”

But nevertheless I have a delightfully creepy sensation as we pass the occasional groups of evil-looking natives, and I keep close beside the muscular Peruvian, with a new sense



### *I Am Lectured*

of comfort in his presence. At the little hotel not far from the wharf the Baron orders supper, and then takes us into the market.

This interesting place is lit with smoky old lamps and flaring torches, and the fitful light shows weird pictures to our unaccustomed eyes. Each booth is in charge of one or more women, and here and there is a man resplendent in overshadowing sombrero, with heavy silver braid wound about the crown. The women are the scantiest of clothing, arms and neck bare, dark eyes glittering, and dusky unkempt hair. The atmosphere is stifling, but we must endure it long enough to get some of the wares. The women chatter



*Under the Southern Cross*

volubly, and even leave their booths to come and take us by the dress and urge us to some dingy stall. Vegetables and fruit are piled about in profusion, but we make our way to the pottery tables. I am afraid to admire the curious designs and archaic workmanship, for everything I notice approvingly the Peruvian straightway buys, and we soon have a basket full.

“Ah! Figurines you must haf!” he exclaims as we approach a booth populous with little clay figures, tiny men and women in native dress, engaged in native avocations. These evidence no small cleverness in the modeller, and the Baron insists on taking a dozen. Far on the other

A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine pattern surrounds the text. The border consists of a top and bottom horizontal band and two vertical side bands. The floral motifs include various flowers, leaves, and clusters of berries or small fruits.

### *I Am Lectured*

side of the market some Indian women crouch in a semi-circle over an open air fire.

“What are they doing?” asks Mrs. Steele.

“Dthey make tortillas,” says the Baron.

“Oh, yes, I’ve heard about these meal cakes,” says my friend, stopping to look at the queer group. One old woman jumps up and offers her something smoking in a pan. Mrs. Steele, bent upon discovery, bravely tears off a bit and tastes it, throwing the woman a coin.

“Give me some,” I say.

“No,” interposes the Baron, with a fatherly decision; “you vill haf supper soon, and I haf order tor-



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tillas. Mine vill be better. Vait leedle."

Really, the Baron has quite taken me in hand, I think, half amused. But he is a very necessary quantity in this pilgrimage ashore, and I walk on obediently by his side, meditating how queer that one who appeared so masterful and imperious at times could be at others so weak and almost childish. It shed a new light on his character to see him ashore. Here he knows the people and their tongue, all our wants must pass through his interpretation, and he is master of the situation. He seems, moreover, to fall naturally and simply into the new office, and treats me quite as if I were a child. I want to



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stop and get some plantains as we pass a fruit stall.

"No," says the Baron, "you must not eat dthem; dthey air—*unreif*."

"Ah, but really." I say, "I *must* taste a plantain; suppose you had never seen one of that kind before."

"I vill not buy dthem; I vill not see you ill," he says.

"Very well, I'll buy one for myself." I drop his arm and run to the booth, and, laying my finger on the greenest plantain I can find, I say:

"*Quantos?*"

The old woman in charge jibbles away for dear life, and, not feeling that I am progressing very rapidly, I lay down a media and take up the





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plantain. The Baron comes to my rescue with a half-amused, half-vexed smile.

“She haf cheat you,” and he levels a volley of Spanish at the old criminal. “See,” he says, “she vill gif you all dthose limes if you gif back dthat plantain, you vill be glad of limes *abord du San Miguel*.”

“Yes,” I say. “I’ll have the limes, too.” And I put down another media. He looks at me curiously.

“Ask her to send them to the hotel,” I say. He gives the old woman some rapid directions.

“Now ve vill haf supper,” and we are soon sitting in a private room at the hotel discussing soup, fish, tor-





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tillas and frejoles (the Mexican black bean) and enchalades, which are only the coarse Indian meal cakes, "tortillas," rolled up like a French pancake, with cheese and cayenne pepper and a variety of disagreeable things inside, but considered quite a delicacy among Mexicans. It is long before I recover from my first mouthful, and the Baron stands over me with a fan and a glass of wine, while Mrs. Steele laughs until the tears come into her eyes.

"Water! water!" I gasp.

"No, *vino blanco*, Señorita," says the Baron, putting the glass to my lips. I drain the last drop.

"Now some water, please."



*Under the Southern Cross*

"Yes, leedle more *vino blanco*," says the Peruvian, pouring out another glass.

"Don't you understand?" I say hotly. "I want water—*Wasser! De l'eau—Aqua!*"

The waiter starts at the last word and takes up a clay carafe.

The Baron shakes his head and gives some brief command in Spanish. The servant looks sulky and puts down the bottle.

"What do you mean?" I say, with still smarting tongue. "Is it Spanish etiquette to ask a lady to supper and then refuse her a glass of water?"

"Madame," says the Peruvian quietly to Mrs. Steele, "no von here



### *I Am Lectured*

drink vater; it makes always fery seeck," and he signs to the servant to serve the next course.

"I despise *vino blanco*," I say; "I'd as soon drink weak vinegar." Nevertheless I sip my second glass, as there is no prospect of anything else.

A "moso" comes in with a big basket containing our purchases. I beckon him to bring it to me, and look among the limes for my precious plantain.

"Señorita," says the Peruvian, breaking off a conversation with Mrs. Steele upon native dishes, "I haf here pineapple sairve vidth ice and sugar and vine; it is dthe most delieieux of all fruit. Allow me to



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raicommend you." And the waiter puts the tempting plate before me.

"Thank you," I say, "but I am looking for my plantain. Will you have the boy find it, there are so many things in this basket?" A few words between the "moso" and the Baron, the latter smiles a little.

"*Très curieux*, dthat old voman forget to put in dth: plantain!"

Mrs. Steele's amusement is most offensive.

"My dear, you are in the power of the interpreter; you will find our friend less manageable on shore than on board the *San Miguel*."

The Baron looks innocence itself and creates a diversion by throwing pieces of roll out over the lattice to

A decorative border surrounds the text, featuring a repeating pattern of stylized flowers, leaves, and what appears to be a ribbon or scrollwork. The border is composed of several rectangular sections connected by vertical and horizontal lines.

### *I Am Lectured*

the street children, whose black eyes and black fingers appear through the slats. Each piece is received with squeals, a grand rush and protracted squabbling, and finally the more audacious appear at the door. They peep in, throw us a flower and then scuttle away. One tiny beggar brings a small bouquet and puts it in my lap. The Baron gives her a media and says something about "vamos." She flies off, but only to tell the rest of the success of her mission, and the whole horde troop in and pile the corner of the table with more or less faded roses and appeal vociferously for "Media! media!" The Baron, seeing that we are amused, tosses a coin over



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their heads. It goes over the lattice and into the street, and the black little troop tear out and fight and scuffle under the window. They come in again and again, but finally, Peruvian patience and Mexican medias being alike exhausted, the Baron rises in his seat looking remarkably ferocious, and addresses them in stirring Spanish. The whole crowd take to their heels, tumbling one over another in excited haste.

“What in the world have you said?” asked Mrs. Steele, greatly amused.

“Oh, nodthing much,” says the Baron in his usual low and gentle tone; “I only zay if dthey effer come again I vill cut dthem up vidth a big



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knife and had them boil for breakfast."

"You barbarian!" laughs Mrs. Steele, rising. And then she looks about. "We might have a glimpse of the church before we go if there's time."

"Sairtainly!" agrees the Baron, and we find our way through the now quieter and dimmer thoroughfare to the Catholic Cathedral behind the Plaza. The occasional candle gives out too dim a light for us to form much of an idea of the interior, but it is cool and damp and mysterious. Mrs. Steele, who is a thorough and highly intelligent sight-seer, explores the dim corners and finally goes back for a last look at





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some detail she found specially interesting. I wait for her in the dusk down by the door; the Baron has disappeared for the moment. "I wish Mrs. Steele wouldn't be so particular about taking notes," I say to myself. "I'm tired, and it's very uncanny and grave-like here." A little sound beside me, and I turn with a start. In the dim light I see a chimpanzee-like face looking up to mine. It is horribly seared and wrinkled, one tooth sticks out from the wide, shrivelled lips, and the beady animal-like eyes glare through grey elf locks. I am speechless with fright, till the dreadful apparition stretches out a skinny arm and with some strange words lays





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a claw-like hand on my bare wrist. I shrink back, uttering a little muffled cry of horror.

The big Peruvian comes hurriedly towards me from the other side of the church.

“Was dthat you, Señorita?” he says.

Faint with fatigue and fright, I put out a shaking hand to steady myself against the damp pillar.

“Señorita, you air so white!” he says hurriedly, and coming near he draws me away from the clammy wall.

“You haf been frighten?” he asks softly, his face close to mine.

“Yes,” I find breath to say; “a witch or a monkey is in the



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church, and it touched me in the dark."

A shiver runs over me again at the remembrance, but I try to draw away from the strong, close grasp.

"You vill faint, Señorita—I cannot let you go; dthere ees no seat here." He takes off my hat and fans me. "Zome boy try to frighten you," he says consolingly.

Mrs. Steele calls from the other side: "Where are you, Blanche?"

The Baron answers for me, holds me closer for an instant, and I think he touches my hair lightly with his lips.

"Forgif me, Señorita. I vill find dthat boy vhat frighten you zo; I vill gif him von hundred pesos for

A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine pattern surrounds the text. The pattern includes stylized leaves, flowers, and what appears to be a small animal or figure in the center of the repeating units.

### *I Am Lectured*

my sake, and I will kill him afterwards for yours."

I put on my hat a little unsteadily, still thinking more of that awful brutish face than of the Baron. Mrs. Steele comes up with note-book open in her hand.

"I've just seen the most dreadful little old crone," she says cheerily; "she's like some grotesque dream—why, what's the matter——?"

She breaks off, looking at me as we stand under the lamplight just outside the door.

"It must be the same thing I saw," I say to the Baron; "what a goose I am—but it looked like nothing human in the half light. I was so scared," I confess, a little nervously.



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“You look like a ghost, child; it was only a withered old beggar.” And Mrs. Steele puts her arm about me, and we go to inspect an ancient well where the native women are filling clay jars and chatting merrily as they file in and out of the gateway of the enclosure with their picturesque burdens gracefully poised on head or shoulder.

“Let us go to the Plaza; Madame and Señorita can sit down for a needle.”

It is only a step, and we are soon resting on one of the semi-circular stone seats, listening to some primitive music and watching the enjoyment of the people. Mrs. Steele draws my head down on her shoulder



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and I shut my eyes. The Baron puts a coat over me and hums a low accompaniment to the fantastic air. Suddenly I become aware of someone touching me from behind the stone seat. I start up and turn quickly, to find my apparition of the church chattering at my back. Her restless eyes and the one white fang shine out from the shrivelled monkey-face, and the skeleton arms with wrinkled, black skin drawn loosely over the bones hold out long strings of shells. The strong light shows her even uglier than I had thought, but it robs her of her ghostliness, and I interrupt the Baron's probably impolite remarks by saying:

"Don't drive her away. I'll buy



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some of her shells in remembrance of the worst shock I've received in Mexico."

Soon I am decorated with chains of sea-treasures wound about waist and neck and arms, and the old crone stands by gibbering and nodding approval.

The Baron laughs at her last shot as she moves away with my media in her hand and some unusually rich guerdon from him.

"What is she chattering about?" asks Mrs. Steele.

"She zay she know dthe Señorita vidth dthe pretty eyes would like dthe shai'lls, and dthat vas vhy she follow her in dthe church, but Señorita ees easy frighten. Señor must

A decorative border with a repeating floral and scrollwork pattern surrounds the text. The border is composed of a top and bottom section with a repeating floral motif, and two vertical sections with a repeating scrollwork motif.

### *I Am Lectured*

take gude care off her and nefer leaf her."

Mrs. Steele smiles indulgently and draws out her watch.

"It's time we were going," she says. "The *San Miguel's* lights will be all out, I'm afraid."

The Baron's "cargodor" meets us at the wharf laden with our bizarre purchases, and, after bestowing us and them in the boat, he dips his oars and we glide out into the bay. The far-off steamer is wrapped in darkness, the lamps are all extinguished in the staterooms, for it is long past eleven, but the waves flash every attack of the oar, and the Southern Cross shines aslant the sky.







Chapter  
Four

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

1912

PHYSICS

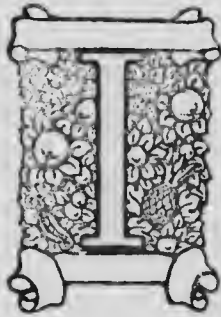
PHYSICS





## CHAPTER IV

### I DRINK COCOANUT MILK AND GO FISHING FOR PEARLS



FANCY I have just fallen asleep when I am roused by hearing someone speaking at the port hole. I open my eyes to find it is the peep o' day, and out of the dull, grey dawn a Mexican's face looks in at my window.

"What do you want?" I demand, and in the same breath, "Go away! Mrs. Steele! Mrs. Steele!" To my amazement Mrs.



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Steele appears in the doorway all dressed.

“That’s only the Baron’s boatman, my dear, come to call you. I’ve had a raging headache, and the place was so hot I dressed and went up on deck, and there was the Baron de Bach pacing up and down—he couldn’t sleep, either. He suggests we take a boat and go out to catch the early breeze and see the sun rise from the other side of the bay. Will you come?”

“Of course I will,” I say sleepily, and not in the best of tempers. “There was no need to send that evil-looking brigand to wake me! My nerves are in a continual tremor in this blessed place. Do you know,



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

Mrs. Steele," I say, fishing under the berth for a renegade stocking, "I've a sort of presentiment I shan't leave the shores of the Pacific without some kind of misfortune or hairbreadth escape."

"Nonsense!" says my practical friend, "you've eaten something that has disagreed with you. Hurry as fast as you can; the Captain says we weigh anchor at eight o'clock."

I finish a hasty toilet and follow Mrs. Steele on deck. The Baron is waiting—he looks pale and rather graver than usual.

"Good-morning, Señorita," he says, and we shake hands. "Haf you sleep?"

"Oh, yes," I say, accepting the



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coffee he has ordered. "I always sleep."

The first faint flush of the coming splendour spreads above the hills as we push off from the *San Miguel*. Deeper and deeper grow the purple and the saffron till long shafts of golden light shoot up from hilltop to high heaven, and the great red sun of the tropics peers an instant over the mountain wall that shuts in Acapulco.

"This is a sunrise I think we shall never forget," says Mrs. Steele with grave enjoyment.

The Baron and I say nothing.

The air blows cool and fresh, and we skirt the rugged beach, close to the high-piled rocks at the water's



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edge, till we come to a cocoa grove sheltering a few thatched cottages.

The Baron gives some direction to the boatman, and we are moored in shallow water. The Mexican jumps out of the boat and disappears in the grove. The water is so clear we have been able to see the bottom for a long time, and now the Baron shows me how to use a boathook in spearing the red starfish. We succeed in bringing up several, but they turn brown when out of the water and are said to sting. So we throw them back and turn to hear the Indian water-women singing and laughing as they follow the winding, rugged path half way up the heights. The red-brown feet and ankles must



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be as strong as they are shapely; the arms holding aloft the water jars are well moulded and taper finely to the wrist; splendid freedom is in every motion and a grace their fairer sisters have forgotten. I see the admiration in Baron de Bach's face.

"You like that type?" I ask.

"It ces part of dthe landscape," he answers; "ve like it in dthe picture. Ve put more deeferent vomans in our hearts and homes."

"H'm!" coughs Mrs. Steele. "My dear, the boatman is coming back with a huge bunch of cocoanuts."

"Yes," the Baron says, "I dthought you would like to taste dthe milk."





*I Drink Coconut Milk*

The Mexican rolls up his white trousers and wades back to the boat. He pulls his naked knife out of his sash and begins to cut away the thick green rind of the nut. That done, the Baron takes it from him and shows us the three eyes at one end where the fibre is soft. When the sharp point of the knife is inserted the liquid within spurts up into the Baron's face.

"Oh!" he says, with a comical look of dismay, "ve haf no cup; ve must drink like dthe natives," and he saws away an opening and hands the cocoanut to Mrs. Steele. She puts her lips to the shell and tastes a drop with dainty distrust.

"Oh, Madame, it ees fery gude—



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you will like it if you drink more!" But Mrs. Steele passes it on to me. The first sip is so cool and refreshing I greedily tip the shell to take a long draught, and the liquid runs down both sides of my mouth into my lap. The Baron insists there is an art in cocoanut tipping.

"You must hold the mout' zo—" and he illustrates, "and the cocoa zo." He puts it cautiously to his lips. "Now!" he says, after taking a sip, "you try!"

With childish good faith I take the clumsy nut, but as I lift it to drink I notice a covert gleam of satisfaction in the Peruvian's eyes, and I realise in a flash that the cocoa shell is becoming a sort of a loving-



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

cup—for there was but one little place cut for drinking where first I essayed the draught and then the Baron.

“My dear,” remarks my quiet but observant chaperon, “I have never been able before to account for the milk in the coconut. I know all about it now!”

I throw the shell into the water with an impatient gesture.

“I know all I wish to. It’s a great bother and very little gained.”

The Baron looks disagreeably amused, and I feel hot.

“Capitan,” he says to me, “vill you take dthe tiller again?”

I pick up the tiller ropes and steer out towards some small schooners



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grouped to the left of the town near the entrance of the harbour.

“I do believe those are pearl fishers,” says Mrs. Steele, who has been looking through her glass. The Baron starts up and questions the Mexican.

“*Si! Si!*” he answers, and with long, even strokes he brings us within speaking distance of the nearest vessel. Baron de Bach stands up and shouts out a series of inquiries in Spanish. I look over the side of the boat, and at a vision in the water I start from my seat with a shriek of delight and almost capsize the poor Peruvian. He clutches wildly at the air and finally keels over backwards on the astonished Mexican.



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

When they recover they find Mrs. Steele and me leaning over the side of the boat following the uncertain motions of a bloated crab-like monster crawling along the bottom of the deep.

“Why, that’s the diver,” explains Mrs. Steele. “You see that rubber tube—one end is attached to the machine on the schooner, the other to his helmet; he breathes through that. They are pumping air through it every moment.”

“Yes,” says the Baron, having regained his equilibrium. “You cannot see, but he has a basket tied with a cord to his belt; he fills it with shells, and when he makes a



*Under the Southern Cross*

pull dthey draw it up and empty it.  
Zee, now!"

He points to the steamer where, hand over hand, they haul in a cable. At the end is the square wicker basket filled with great pearl shell oysters. They turn them out and lower the receptacle for another load. The Baron throws some money to a man in the schooner, and soon three or four pearl oysters are tossed into our boat. The Mexican's knife is again called into requisition and the shells are forced open. Nothing in the first—nothing in the second—nothing in th——stop! the Baron has found a pearl!

"It ees von chance out of a dthousand!" he says, amazed. "I nefer



"THE BARON HAS FOUND A PEARL!"— Page 112







*I Drink Coconut Milk*

found von before—but it ees so leedle!”

“Never mind!” I say with enthusiasm. “We’ve been pearl-fishing and we’ve found a pearl!”

Mrs. Steele is examining it minutely; the Baron leans over to me and says low, in German:

“It shall be set for you in diamonds, Fräulein; it will remind you of spilt coconut milk and pearl-fishing in Acapulco’s shining bay—it will mean to me a woman, Blanca, fine and fair, I found on the ocean. As I think of all it signifies to me, I believe I must ask you to let me keep my pearl,” and he gazes into my eyes with such a world of meaning in his own, I look away and trail my hand



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in the water. "What say you, Fräulein?" he persists. "I have travelled so far to find it, I have so nearly missed it, and here at last it lies in my possession."

"Are you so sure it is in your possession?" I say, looking across to Mrs. Steele, who is rolling the tiny treasure about in her palm.

"At least," he says, "it is within the reach of a strong arm, and if a jewel begged is not generously given, it can be snatched out of a capricious hand, if only for safer keeping——" and the Peruvian's deep eyes look into my half-averted face.

"My friend does not speak German," I say; "she will think you very rude." Then in English,



*I Drink Cocoanut Milk*

"Please let me see the pearl again, Mrs. Steele."

"It is absolutely flawless," she says, holding it out to me. The Peruvian intercepts it. He draws out of an inner pocket a gold-mounted letter-case and a book of cigarette paper. Deliberately he wraps the pearl in one of the tissue leaves, and, looking steadily at me, pushes the new treasure far into a corner of the crested case. There is more significance than mirth in the laugh with which he says:

"I vill show all unbeliefsers dthat I know how to value and to *keep* a pearl vhen I find von."

Mrs. Steele succumbs to one of her old headaches on our return to



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the steamer, and I pass the greater part of the day in seclusion with her. After luncheon, as I linger to superintend the arrangements of the invalid's tea-tray, the Baron joins me.

"I am vairy sorry about Madame Steele's headache. Tell me, please, what can I do?"

"Nothing, thank you," I say; "there is no remedy. She is accustomed to these attacks.

"If nodthing does gude dthen why stay you efer in dthat room; you will be ill, too."

"Oh, no," I say, "no fear of that."

"But," he insists, "if you do nodthing only sit in dthat room, let me stay vidth her and you come out in



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

dthe air. Madame Steele ees not like you; she like me vairy vell."

"She likes me better, and I can't leave her."

"Haf you no care for your healdth? You air not fit to take care of yourself—dthat old voman in Acapulco vas right; you should nefer be leaf alone."

"Doesn't it ever occur to you that I might be so accustomed to manag- ing my own affairs that interfer- ence from an outsider might seem strange?"

"Outsidah!" he repeats. "I know not dthat word. I know only dthat you American vomans haf yust one fault: you air—how you zay?—spoil vidth too great power;



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you raispect no von's judgment, you need zome strong man to rule."

"To rule!" I echo, scornfully; "that may do for Peruvians, but our women are neither slaves nor imbeciles."

"No," he retorts, "but zome zay your men air a ieedle of bodth!"

"It is not to the credit of 'some'"—I see down the salt cellar hard on the tray—"that they fail to appreciate my countrymen. They have at least encouraged our learning to take such good care of ourselves that no Peruvian need trouble his head about us."

I beckon to the Chinese waiter.

"Take this tray up to 49," and I follow him with some show of



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

disdain. Señor Noma meets me at the foot of the dining-room stairs.

“I haf sent for a jar of chili-peppers for Mrs. Steele. Will you say your friend I raicommend chili-peppers, and I advice you put a little cayenne in the bif-tea. It makes vairy seeck without.”

“Thank you, Señor Noma,” I say: “Wah-Ching will bring up the peppers and I will tell Mrs. Steele what you say.” I glance back at the Peruvian. He is sitting by the table just as I left him, his chin in one hand, while with the other he strokes the wavy moustache and regards me with lowering looks. “He’s a handsome creature,” I





*Under the Southern Cross*

think, as I go upstairs; "but he's been told it too often, and he has abominably mediæval ideas about women."

All that hot afternoon I sit in the stuffy stateroom with Mrs. Steele. The wind has veered to the other side and not a breath stirs the curtains at our little window. About four o'clock the "Church of England" knocks at the door. She is profuse in proffers of assistance, and kindly tells me I am looking very badly. "You'd better go out for a little air," she says; "you'll find my daughter and Baron de Bach sitting in the breeze on the other side. He has a guitar; we've had quite a concert. He has teased Nellie to get out her





*I Drink Coconut Milk*

What a charming, bright companion he is!" she says, appealing to me.

"Very, very!" I assent, with a slight yawn.

"Do go out, Blanche, I don't need you here." Mrs. Steele looks a little self-reproached.

"No, dear, I know you don't care about my staying." I answer, "but I'm a little tired of the deck."

The "Church of England" drones on about Nellie, who is "such a child, only seventeen; so unsophisticated and so unworldly."

"Just imagine, she quite snubs that handsome Peruvian nobleman, and he is really *delightful*, you know."

We draw a simultaneous sigh of



*Under the Southern Cross*

relief when the "Church of England" leaves us to ourselves.

"Blanche," says Mrs. Steele, "you've been fighting again with the Baron. Those Rogers people would be only too glad to attach him to their party. I wouldn't let them do it if I were you. It would be too much of a feather in their cap to have distracted him from us after his very palpable devotion and our unusual friendliness."

"No, dear, I won't let our interpreter be wiled away from us. Leave him to me. He's very exasperating at times, but I'll bear with him in future; there's no denying it would be comparatively stupid without him."



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

Mrs. Steele raises the bandage from her eyes and looks at me.

“It strikes me you are about to experience a change of heart. If it were almost any other girl, I’d say beware!”

I laugh with confident unconcern.

“Oh, I don’t deny I find him more interesting than I did at first. He enrages me with his imperious self-confidence, and then charms me with his curious, romantic ways. I look upon the Baron de Bach as a kind of blessed invention for my entertainment on this trip, and that I’ve grown to like him better than I expected makes the amusement keener, of course. I’m tired to death of the commonplace, mild and circumspect



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adorer. Baron de Bach is a continual surprise and an occasional alarm! Nothing reprehensible!" I say, in answer to the quick lifting of the bandage a second time. "Only he is so unlike all the other men I have known I can't judge him by any previous standard. I have the same interest in him Uncle John had in the new variety of anthropoid ape in the Zoo at home. I study his possibilities, I starve him, I feed him, I poke him, just to see what he'll do."

"You're a wicked girl," says Mrs. Steele, slowly, "and I'm afraid a righteous judgment will overtake you. Do you remember telling me how that same ape tore



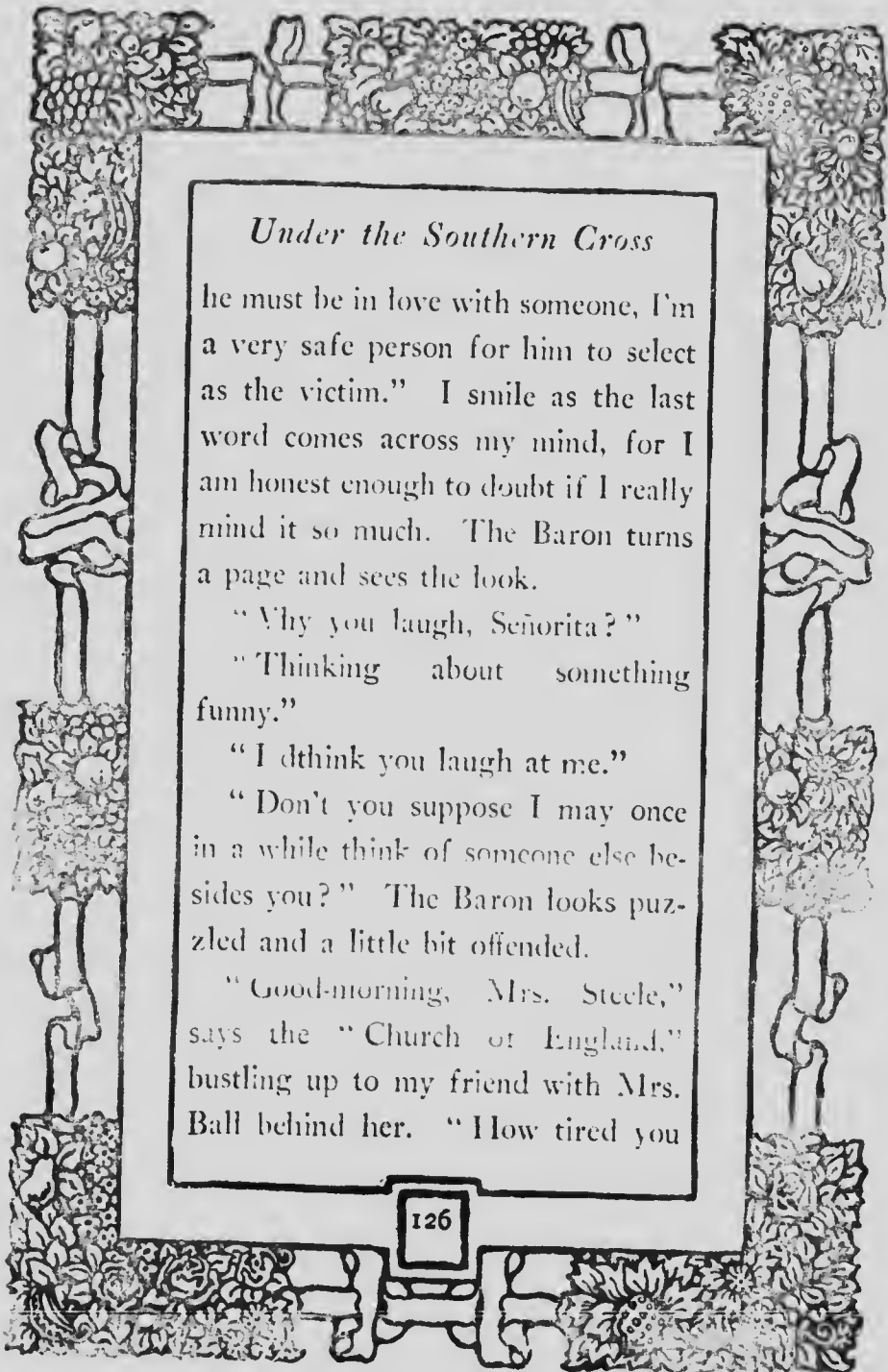
### *I Drink Coconut Milk*

your Uncle John's hand one day?—  
and *he* was caged."

"Maybe the element of uncertainty accounts for some of the interest," I say, yawning. "I believe I'll have a nap before dinner." And soon all 's quiet in stateroom 49.

On Saturday morning, the day following, Mrs. Steele, the Baron and I are sitting as usual under the deck awning. Baron de Bach is reading a French story aloud to Mrs. Steele, and I, lying back in my steamer chair, regard the reader with half-shut but attentive eyes.

"He's only a boy," I ruminatē, "a romantic, absurd, but very nice boy. There's no reason why I shouldn't like him very much; and if



*Under the Southern Cross*

he must be in love with someone, I'm a very safe person for him to select as the victim." I smile as the last word comes across my mind, for I am honest enough to doubt if I really mind it so much. The Baron turns a page and sees the look.

"Why you laugh, Señorita?"

"Thinking about something funny."

"I dthink you laugh at me."

"Don't you suppose I may once in a while think of someone else besides you?" The Baron looks puzzled and a little bit offended.

"Good-morning, Mrs. Steele," says the "Church of England," bustling up to my friend with Mrs. Ball behind her. "How tired you



*I Drink Coconut Milk*

look! Haven't you had enough of that French? Baron de Bach has promised to come and practise over the chants and hymns for to-morrow; can you spare him? As for you," she says, turning to me, "we shall earn your eternal gratitude if we carry off the Baron. You know her pet aversion is having French read out loud"—she nods in a commiserating way to the Peruvian.

"Certainly, don't let us keep you"—Mrs. Steele with her pleasant tact ignores the reference to me—"we will finish that charming chapter another time."

"What means petta-aversion?" says the Baron, looking undecided and not exactly delighted.





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“Oh, it means favourite pastime,” says Mrs. Steele.

“Oh! oh!” giggles Mrs. Ball. “Miss Blanche said the reading made her tired.”

The Baron shuts up the book with a snap.

“Madame Rogair, I am at your sairvice!”

Without looking at me he raises his cap to Mrs. Steele and follows the “Church of England.”

“*Did* you say the reading tired you?” asks Mrs. Steele.

“I believe I did, or something of the kind.”

“Pity! Those people will make all they can out of it. The Baron told me at breakfast that Mrs. Rog-





*I Drink Cocoanut Milk*

ers had asked him to join their party at the next port."

"But he won't"—I open my journal to write up the previous day.

The morning was rather dull, to tell the truth, and the sounds of revelry that floated up from the scene of the practising below were not too "sacred" to be irritatingly attractive. But even after luncheon the Baron remains with the "Church of England."

"Gone over to the enemy. I told you so," Mrs. Steele observes, as we sit alone in our corner of the deck, while over on the opposite side Baron de Bach stands laughing and chatting with pretty Miss Rogers.

"Mrs. Steele," I whisper, "I be-

A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring floral motifs, geometric patterns, and stylized figures. The border is composed of repeating sections of flowers, leaves, and geometric shapes, creating a rich, textured frame.

*Under the Southern Cross*

lieve he only does it for our edifica-  
tion and because I said the reading  
tired me. Let us go to our state-  
room; the wind is on our side  
to-day." We read and sleep in  
seclusion until evening.



*Chapter  
Five*





## CHAPTER V

### THE BARON IS CRAZED WITH MADNESS

**A**T dinner, refreshed with my long rest, I feel unusually light-hearted and gay. I laugh and chat with Señor Noma and the rough old Captain, till Mrs. Steele leans over and gives me a look of surprise. Not once do the eyes of the Peruvian turn in my direction, and he leaves the table before dessert. He is not visible on deck when we go up later at six, after talking a



*Under the Southern Cross*

while to the others, I start off on a tour of discovery.

Down at the further end of the steamer, to windward of the smoke-stack, stands the Baron in a depressed attitude smoking a pipe and looking out to sea.

“Oh, you’re here!” I call out in friendly fashion. “I’ve been looking for you. I’m sorry if I was rude about the reading”—I look as meek and penitent as I know how.

The Baron takes out his pipe and walks to the vessel’s side, where he knocks out the ashes.

“Well!” I insist, “I’ve said I’m sorry, and in English the proper reply to that is ‘I forgive you.’”

*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

A curious finger to look out  
those dark eyes of his.

"I forgive you," he says as usual  
repeats a lesson.

"And we must be in the night,  
nicht?" I say to him.

"No, not at all," he says, the  
mid, to make him.

"No," he says, "why not?"

"Because I have never been your  
friend. I have always loaf you, I have  
loafed that you as like not to loaf  
you. It is not as if you were scarce po-  
lite about me reading. I did not  
know I was you. I feel it very  
dear. It ought not matter to some  
Northern gentlemen, but I am  
the most sensible man you ever  
know.



*Under the Southern Cross*

"Sensible!" I say, in a tone scarcely flattering, trying to keep my lips from twitching.

"Yes, I am terrible sensible; a fery leedle dthing vill hurt me."

"Well, well, I'll be *your* friend, anyhow, and I'll try to be very considerate. I'll show you what a good friend a North American can be."

"My gude friend haf make my head zo ache I dthink it vill burst."

He pushes back his cap, and carries my hand to his forehead; it is very hot and the temples throb under my fingers.

"Poor fellow!" I say, hoping with might and main that no one sees. "Shall I send you some *cau de Cologne*?"



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

"No! no! If you would gif me your hand again."

"No," I say, "not here. Any-  
one who saw us would misunder-  
stand. Come to Mrs. Steele; she'll  
give you something."

"No!" says the Peruvian. "I  
vill stay here· you stay, too. Ah,  
Señorita, how can you be so indif-  
ferent to my loaf?"

"I can't stay here if you talk non-  
sense."

"Mein Gott! Vhat more sense  
can a man haf dthan to loaf you?"

"Oh, see the porpoises!" I say  
abruptly. The great clumsy fish are  
floundering about us in schools.

"Vhat heafen eyes you haf, Se-  
ñorita!"

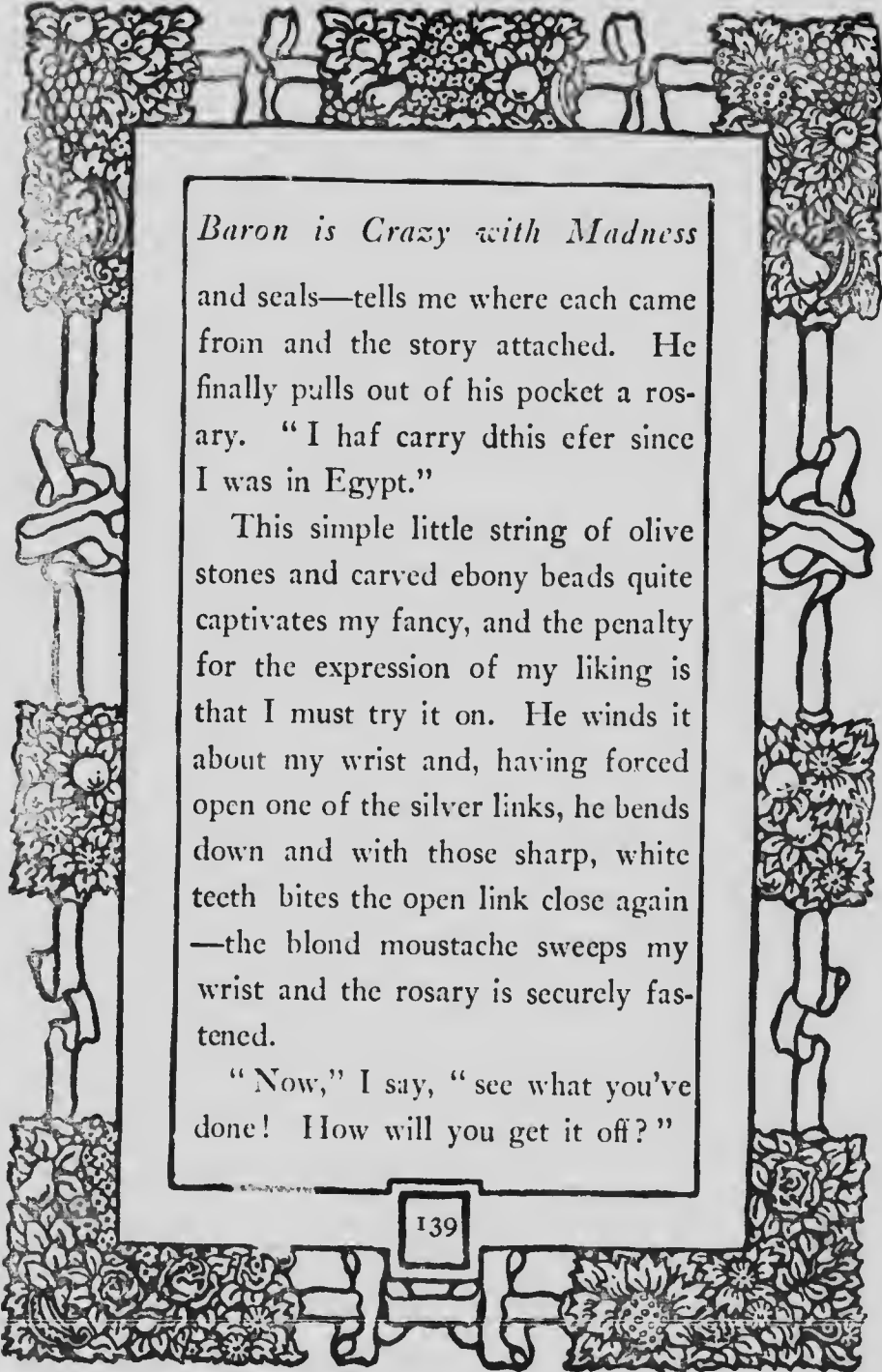


*Under the Southern Cross*

“I do believe that’s ‘San José Joe.’” I run to the rail. “You know! the huge old shark all covered with barnacles the seamen tell about.”

“You vill nefer listen,” says the Peruvian, plunging his hands far down in his yachtsman’s jacket. “I dthink, Señorita, ven you die, and St. Peter meet you at dthe gate and say, ‘You haf lif gude life, come into Heaven’—you vill fery like look over your shoulder and say, ‘Oh, Peter! vhere go all dthose nice lee-dle devils?’”

The Peruvian’s last shot certainly diverts me from all finny creatures, and we sit down on a pile of lumber, and the Baron shows me his rings



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

and seals—tells me where each came from and the story attached. He finally pulls out of his pocket a rosary. "I haf carry dthis efer since I was in Egypt."

This simple little string of olive stones and carved ebony beads quite captivates my fancy, and the penalty for the expression of my liking is that I must try it on. He winds it about my wrist and, having forced open one of the silver links, he bends down and with those sharp, white teeth bites the open link close again—the blond moustache sweeps my wrist and the rosary is securely fastened.

"Now," I say, "see what you've done! How will you get it off?"



*Under the Southern Cross*

“It comes not off till you are something less dthan my friend or something more.”

“Oh, but I can’t take your rosary; that’s absurd!”

“You cannot take a few leedle pieces of vood from your friend? Why, dthose leedle voods are only dthe—dthe—dthe—how you say?—bones off dthe olive.”

I laugh till I ache. “Bones of the olive!” I almost roll off the lumber in a spasm of merriament. Mrs. Steele, who wonders at my long absence, comes with Señor Noma to find me, and soon there are three laughing at the poor Baron’s expense.

“Hush, Blanche, it’s really too

*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

bad—you must pardon her, Baron," says Mrs. Steele.

"I mind it not more," says the Peruvian, with new philosophy. "Señorita would laugh in the face of St. Peter."

When the gong sounds for service on the morning of the second Sunday out, the Baron grumbles feelingly at the interruption. He is sketching Mrs. Steele and me and says he "hates playing on a zo bad violin"—but a promise is a promise, and we all go down "to church" in the close dining-room. The Captain reads the beautiful Morning Prayers and Litanies like a schoolboy, but the music is really admirable. Pretty Miss Rogers appears to strik-



*Under the Southern Cross*

ing advantage. Dressed simply in white, she plays the accompaniments and leads the singing in a sweet, true voice. Mrs. Steele and I sit in the background, and I'm afraid I think but little of the service. Now what perversity is in the mind of man, I meditate, that blinds him to such real beauty and accomplishment as Miss Rogers is blessed with? Of course, I'm not such a fool as not to see that with all my sadly palpable defects of face and temper, the big Peruvian finds me somehow interesting and "Miss Rogair a nice girl, but, like a dthousand odthers I haf know, a leedle stupeed." Ah, the "stupidity" is on the other side, I'm afraid! Miss Rogers is too in-

*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

experienced, my thoughts run on, to disguise her liking for the Baron, and instead of being pleased or flattered as he should be, he will leave her at a look from me, only to get laughed at for his pains. A strange world! I say to myself. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be!" sings the choir, and Miss Rogers' clear voice lingers in the "Amen."

As I walk the deck with the Baron that evening he tells me about his lovely sister, "Alvida," and about Peruvian customs.

"My sister ees dthe most beautiful voman in Peru; she haf many suitors, but she ees nefer allow to see dthem except when dthe family air





*Under the Southern Cross*

vidth her. It ees not like your coun-  
try; a man can nefer know dthe  
voman he loaf till he marry her."

"Very stupid custom," I say. "I  
wouldn't give a fig for such love.  
You could only care for the face or  
the fortune of a woman so hemmed  
about. What could you know of  
the character, of the real individual,  
that after all is the only safe thing  
to pin one's faith to."

"I like your customs better in  
zome dthings, but it makes you  
vomans too clevailr; you know men  
better dthan ve know you."

"You have the same opportuni-  
ties. It's not our fault if you don't  
profit by them."

"You tell me yourself," he goes



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

on, unheeding, "you haf many gude friends among your fadther's and brodthers' acquaintances; dthat make you care so leedle for men."

"Not a bit of it!" I laugh. "On the coatrary, it has so accustomed me to their friendship I would find life utterly unendurable without it."

"I vill make you fery angry pair-haps, but I have deescovair you like *me* leedle more dthan a friend."

"I suppose it is often flattering to a man's vanity to have a fancy like that," I say coolly, but I am conscious of a twinge; what if I do like him more than I want to think?

"It ees not fancy, Señorita; you do not know yourself you care, but you do."

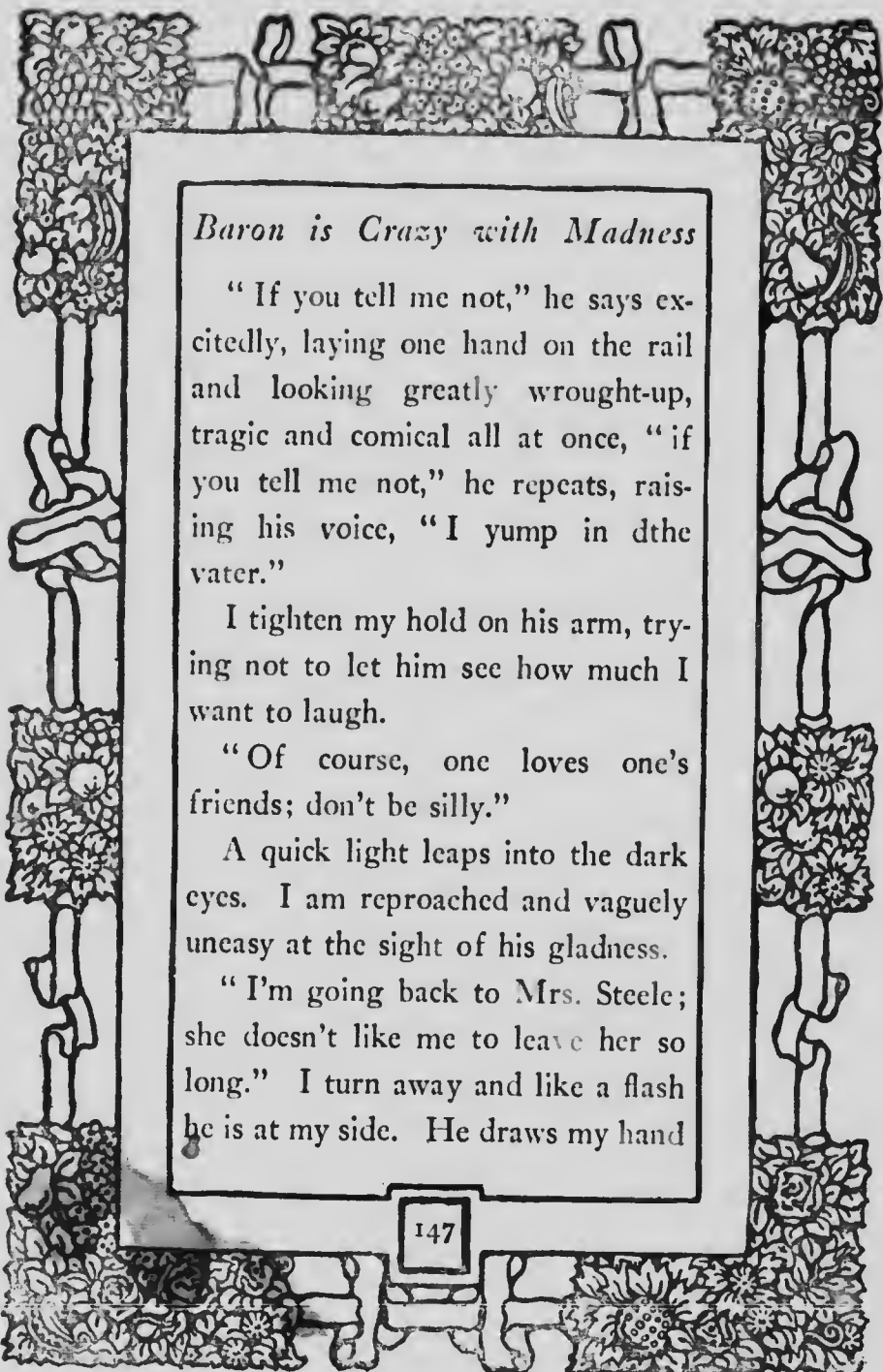


*Under the Southern Cross*

"Nonsense; I know all about it. I'm not a sentimental person and I don't mind telling you in plain English I *like* you. I must like you rather more than usual, or I wouldn't see so much of you." By this time we are away from the rest of the passengers, down by the smokestack. "I feel as if I'd known you *for years!*" I end with a sense of having turned the tide of sentiment by a little frank speaking, and feel rather proud of myself.

"Señorita," he clasps his hand over mine and speaks hurriedly, "I know you loaf me; tell me so."

Oddly enough, I feel no indignation, but I open my lips for a denial.



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

“If you tell me not,” he says excitedly, laying one hand on the rail and looking greatly wrought-up, tragic and comical all at once, “if you tell me not,” he repeats, raising his voice, “I yump in dthe vater.”

I tighten my hold on his arm, trying not to let him see how much I want to laugh.

“Of course, one loves one’s friends; don’t be silly.”

A quick light leaps into the dark eyes. I am reproached and vaguely uneasy at the sight of his gladness.

“I’m going back to Mrs. Steele; she doesn’t like me to leave her so long.” I turn away and like a flash he is at my side. He draws my hand



*Under the Southern Cross*

through his arm, holding it against his heart. I can feel the great leaps under the yachtman's gay jacket.

"Ah!" sighs the wearer, "I feel suffocate on dthis boat—it ces so small, people eferywhere and you and I so leedle alone. Ah, ve vill soon be at San José!"

"I don't see how that will mend matters." I am anxious to see what he has in mind.

"Madame Steele vant to go to Guatemala."

"Yes, but so do most of the other passengers."

"From San José to Guatemala ces seventy mile, and dthe Paris of Central America ces zomething more large dthan dthis *San Miguel*.

*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

Much can happen before we come back."

We join Mrs. Steele and talk over our plan.

The next day we arrive at Champerico, but no one goes ashore; we stay so short a time.

The deck party breaks up early that night, everyone anxious to be ready for the six o'clock breakfast call next morning.

"To-morrow we air at San José de Guatemala, and much can happen before we see *San Miguel* again." The Baron takes my hand at the saloon door as I say good-night.

"That's the second time you've made that ominous remark, Baron de Bach. What do you mean?"



*Under the Southern Cross*

"Baron de Bach!" he echoes.  
"My name ees 'Guillermo,' Blanca."

Somehow it doesn't seem so familiar or significant as if he said "Blanche."

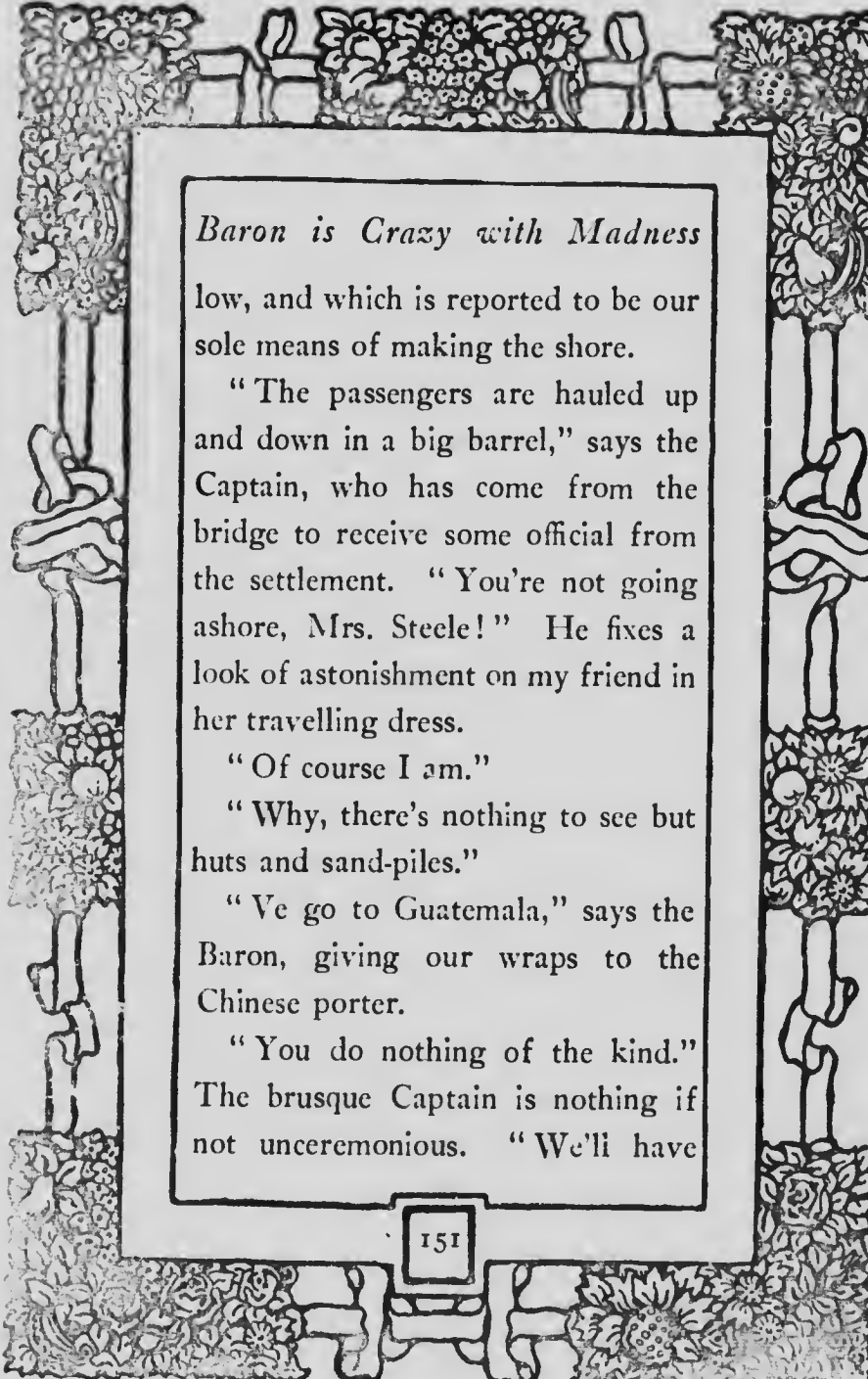
"What do you think will happen to us in Guatemala, Guillermo?"

"Blanca vil see;" he lifts the hand with the rosary falling about it to his lips and kisses the crucifix.

"Good-night, Guillermo."

"Good-night, Blanca."

By half-past seven the next morning all who purpose going ashore are standing on the lower deck of the *San Miguel*, wondering how they are to get from the steamer to the clumsy "lighter" or freight boat that the great breakers are tossing about be-



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

low, and which is reported to be our sole means of making the shore.

"The passengers are hauled up and down in a big barrel," says the Captain, who has come from the bridge to receive some official from the settlement. "You're not going ashore, Mrs. Steele!" He fixes a look of astonishment on my friend in her travelling dress.

"Of course I am."

"Why, there's nothing to see but huts and sand-piles."

"Ve go to Guatemala," says the Baron, giving our wraps to the Chinese porter.

"You do nothing of the kind." The brusque Captain is nothing if not unceremonious. "We'll have





*Under the Southern Cross*

this Hamburg cargo loaded in a day, and you can't go and get back in time; and I won't wait—I won't wait a second for anyone mad enough to go to Guatemala! You'll have to give it up," he says to Mrs. Steele.

There is a chorus of disappointment from the assembled crowd, but Mrs. Steele, with evident reluctance, says:

"Of course, it would never do to be left behind; there's yellow fever in all these ports, I'm told."

"Place is full of it—stay on the ship like sensible people. There's nothing worth seeing in Guatemala. I hate to be bothered with passengers going off—" and the Captain walks to the railing to wave his hand



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

with stiff pomposity to a Mexican who sits in the lighter.

"You air meestake, Captain," says the Baron de Bach; "all dthose yorkmen say it vill be two days load- ing dthis café."

The Captain, never very good-tempered at the best of times, is especially peppery to-day.

"Are you runnin' this ship, young man, or am I?" He seems to think he has made a forcible and irrefutable rejoinder and turns away like one who has settled something forever.

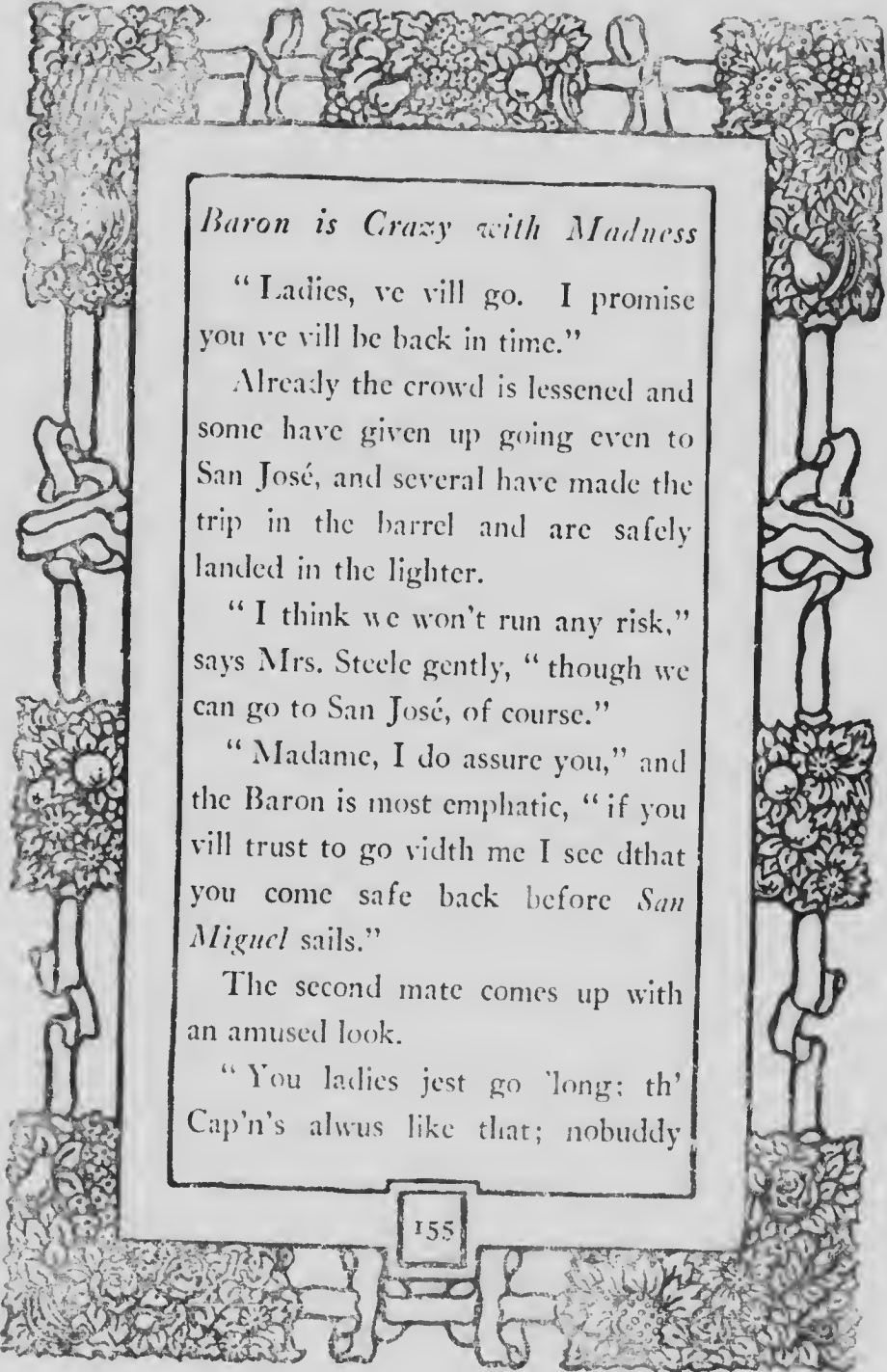
"I vill spik vidth you inside." The Baron sets down his small valise and follows the apparently unheeding Captain into the saloon. We stand



*Under the Southern Cross*

undecided, looking down at the lighter shifting about in the breakers, and watching a stout Mexican get into a huge barrel that has one side cut down and a seat fitted in—a rope with huge iron hook attached is lowered from a pulley on the steamer, and the barrel full of San José official is lifted into the air. The barrel twirls about, the official puts his hand to his eyes, and in a moment he is landed like a mammoth fish on the deck of the *San Miguel*.

We hear the voices in the saloon rising with anger. Mrs. Steele looks apprehensive and makes a step towards the door. Out strides the Baron, looking hot and excited.



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

"Ladies, ve vill go. I promise you ve vill be back in time."

Already the crowd is lessened and some have given up going even to San José, and several have made the trip in the barrel and are safely landed in the lighter.

"I think we won't run any risk," says Mrs. Steele gently, "though we can go to San José, of course."

"Madame, I do assure you," and the Baron is most emphatic, "if you vill trust to go vidth me I see dthat you come safe back before *San Miguel* sails."

The second mate comes up with an amused look.

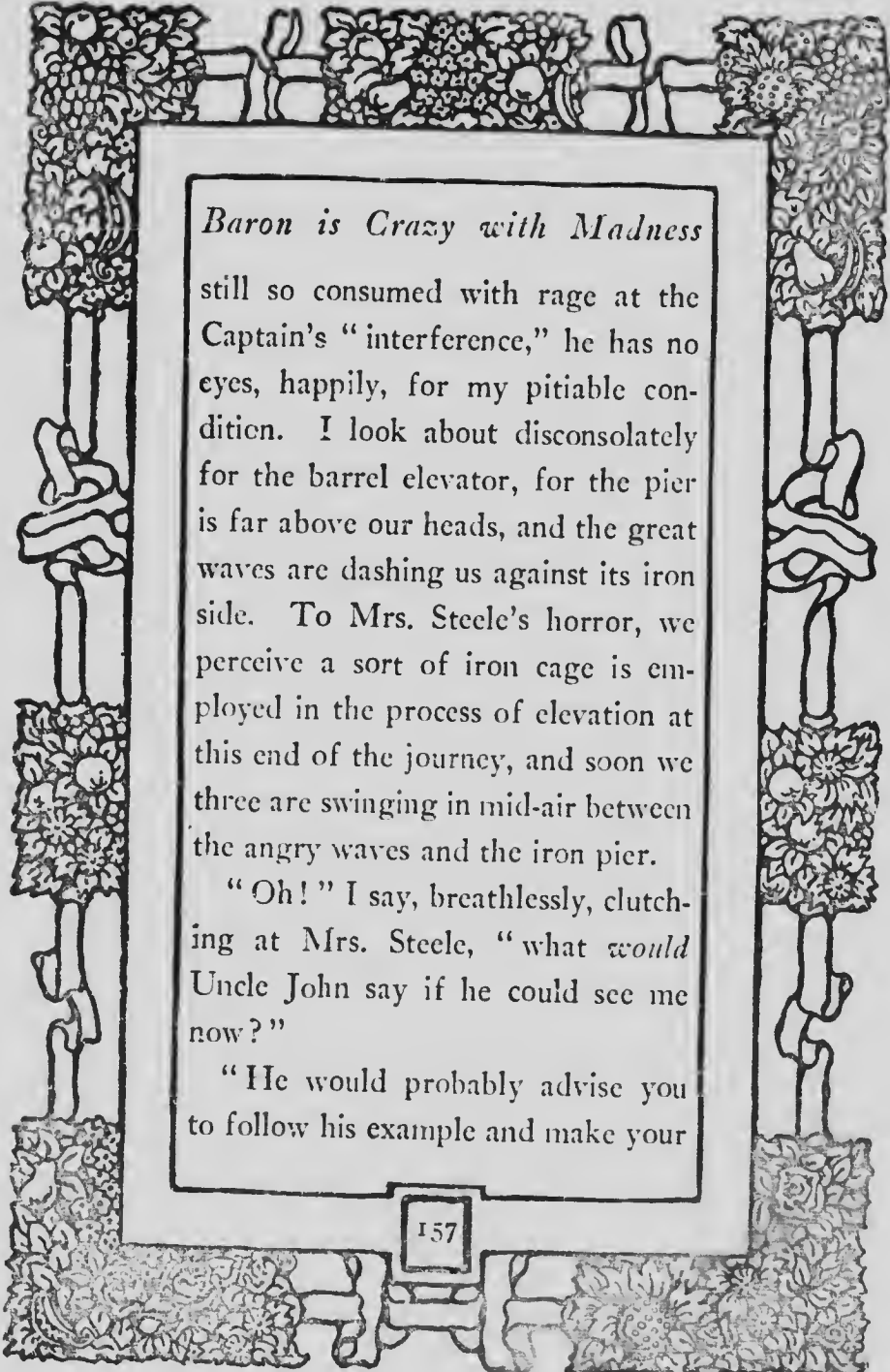
"You ladies jest go 'long; th' Cap'n's alvus like that; nobuddy



*Under the Southern Cross*

minds. We can't get away under two days, and he knows it. We ain't 'lowed to leave under forty-eight hours on 'count o' passengers from the coast."

That settles it, and each in turn we go spinning down in the barrel and sit on piles of freight in the unsteady lighter. The Mexican oarsmen stand up and propel the boat through the surf with long oars. It is rougher than it looks, and I suffer my first touch of sea-sickness. We understand why we are anchored so far away, and why the huge iron pier running out from San José extends such a distance seawards. I am quite faint and miserable when we reach the landing. The Baron is



*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

still so consumed with rage at the Captain's "interference," he has no eyes, happily, for my pitiable condition. I look about disconsolately for the barrel elevator, for the pier is far above our heads, and the great waves are dashing us against its iron side. To Mrs. Steele's horror, we perceive a sort of iron cage is employed in the process of elevation at this end of the journey, and soon we three are swinging in mid-air between the angry waves and the iron pier.

"Oh!" I say, breathlessly, clutching at Mrs. Steele, "what *would* Uncle John say if he could see me now?"

"He would probably advise you to follow his example and make your



*Under the Southern Cross*

observations from the *outside* of the cage."

I've observed that Mrs. Steele is sometimes lacking in sympathy at trying moments.

At last we are landed, and at the end of the long pier we find a narrow-gauge train—strange, primitive little cars and very dirty withal. We make ourselves as comfortable as possible—opening the windows and each one occupying a double seat, for the carriage is only half full.

"It's not more than seventy miles, I believe," says Mrs. Steele, "but it takes five hours to get there; it's an up-hill grade all the way."

"Five hours!" I repeat, dismayed. "Oh, why did no one tell

*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

me that before? I had scarcely a mouthful of breakfast."

"We haf another breakfast at Escuintla, mees, a gude one," says Señor Noma, passing through our coach to the smoking-car. I am consoled and full of interest at the prospect, as the dingy little train moves off. Mrs. Steele and I are facing each other, while the Baron sits behind me and points out the most noteworthy features of this notable expedition. We are in the tropics truly; the heat is overpowering, and the Baron leans over the back of my seat with my rough Mazatlan fan, and uses it with a generous devotion that tires him and does not cool me.

"Do fan yourself a little," I say.



A decorative border with a repeating floral and vine motif surrounds the text. The design features stylized flowers, leaves, and scrolling vines, creating a classic Art Nouveau or Arts and Crafts style frame.

*Under the Southern Cross*

"You've been the colour of a lobster ever since your interview with the Captain.

The Peruvian's brows contract—he looks ferocious in the extreme—and I am a little sorry I mentioned the Captain.

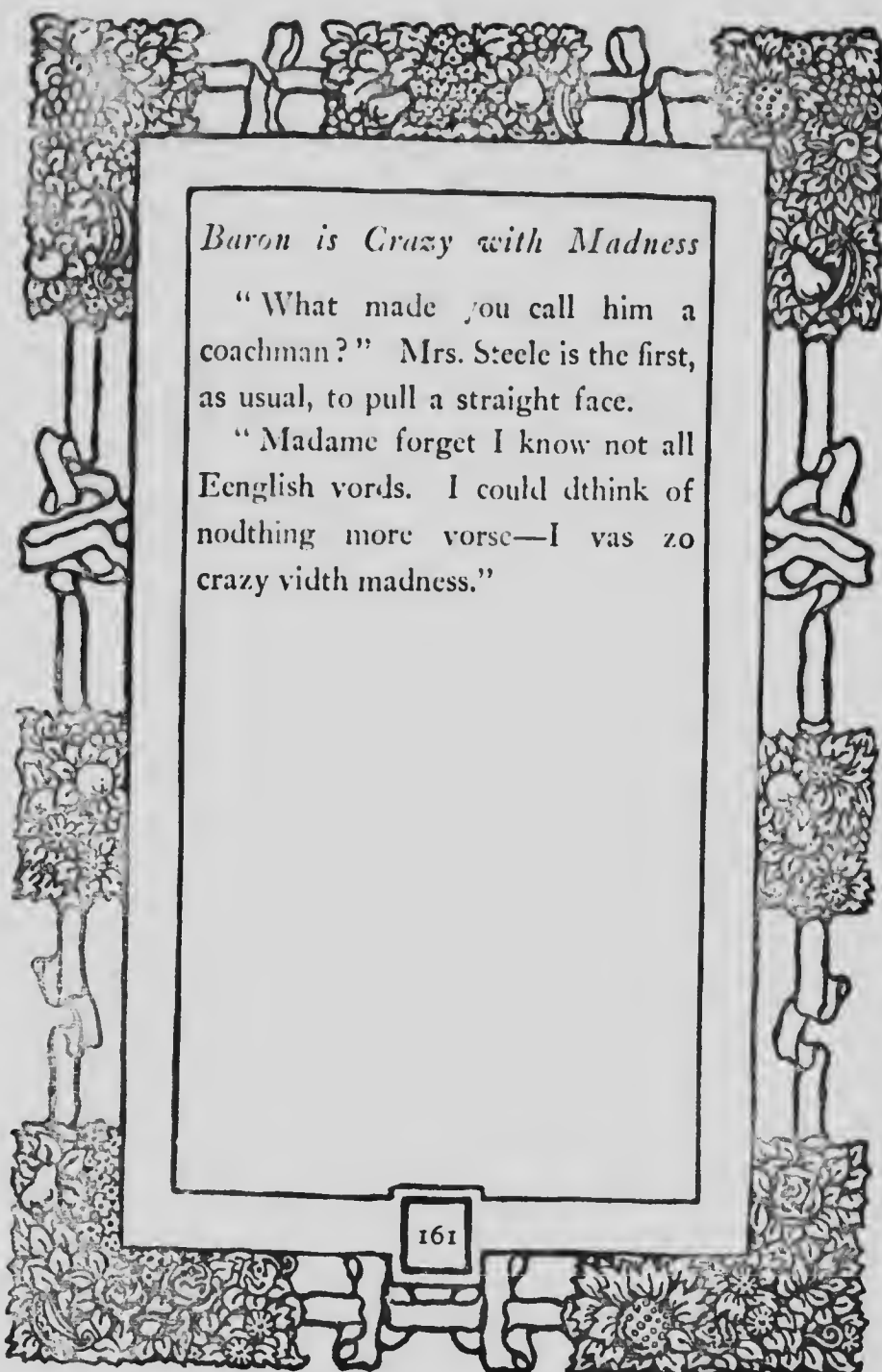
"Dthat Capitan ees von fool! He know not how to treat a zher leman. I tell him I make a procès to dthe company and get him reprimand for how he spik to me."

"Why, what did he say?" asks Mrs. Steele.

"He tell me I act like *I* vas Capitan, dthen he call me 'damn.' I tell him he vas a coachman!"

The Baron looks surprised and a bit resentful at our laughter.





*Baron is Crazy with Madness*

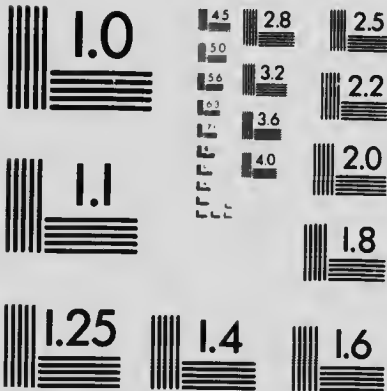
“What made you call him a coachman?” Mrs. Steele is the first, as usual, to pull a straight face.

“Madame forget I know not all Eenglish vords. I could dthink of noothing more vorse—I vas zo crazy vidth madness.”



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Chapter  
Six







## CHAPTER VI

### THE BARANCA

**S**EE the banana plantations! Oh, those date-palms!" Mrs. Steele leans out of her window, full of delight at the curious panorama moving past.

"Mrs. Steele!" I bend over and take her hand. "I hope all this will never grow dim. I want to remember it all my life."

"You will, dear." She turns away absorbed, eager to lose nothing of this new phase of Nature.



*Under the Southern Cross*

“Haf no fear—you will not forget—Blanca.”

The low voice over my shoulder is an interruption; to enjoy the gift of sight is all-sufficient for a time. With happy disregard of the man at my back, I take in the changeful, fantastic vision.

The adobe houses standing in orange groves, the long stretches of jungle, wild tangles of rank growth, cactus, giant ferns, brake and netted vines; birds of gorgeous plumage and discordant note, alligators basking on the sunny bank of a sluggish stream, half-dressed natives at work in coffee fincas, sugarcane and cotton fields; nude children standing in the doorways of palm-





*The Baranca*

thatched huts, staring with still and stupid wonder at the train, and looking like inanimate clay models of a fairer, finer race to come. It is all like a curious dream from which we waken at Escuintla to take our eleven o'clock breakfast. This place has been partially destroyed by earthquake, and Mrs. Steele urges despatch with breakfast that we may see what is left. A very tolerable meal is served in the wide, open veranda of the station.

"What a nice little spoon!" Mrs. Steele remarks, as we sit down, noticing one of tortoise shell quaintly carved.

"You like it?" is all the Baron says, and coolly puts it in his pocket.



*Under the Southern Cross*

Mrs. Steele is aghast. "I pay dthem," he says unconcernedly. "Haf leedle salade?"

I have finished first and go out to the platform. Groups of natives are gathered about, carrying on their heads round shallow baskets like trays displaying fruit, eggs and *water* for sale. These people seem very different from the Mexican Indians. They are blacker, their faces are more flat and stupid, and the women's dress is a straight piece of gay cotton cloth wound round the lower half of the body and secured at the waist with a scarf tied over. The only other encumbrance is a thin white cotton sacque, short and loose. The women immediately attack me



*The Baranca*

with vociferous gibberish, offering me their wares. Mrs. Steele sends the Baron out to look after me, and when he has bought a basket full of pineapples, sappadillos, mangoes and grenadillas, he proposes a little walk up the road. We have twenty minutes yet, he says, and Mrs. Steele is stopping to buy some grass baskets and fans. We walk up the dusty little highway, and the burning sun beats down strong and hot in our unaccustomed faces.

"Can people endure it?" I marvel, wiping away great drops of moisture.

"See that big house all come down? That was earthquake," explains my escort.



*Under the Southern Cross*

"How dreadful! Look at the thatch roofs of those queer little huts—it makes me think of peaked Robinson Crusoe hats. Just see how they're pulled far down over the sunburnt wall as if to shade their eyes from the scorching sun."

"Robeen Crusa?" The Baron looks puzzled. "I know not dthat kind of hat. Ees it like vhat you tell me about vhen I first see you—dthat 'Robeen Hood'?"

I stand still in the quiet street and wake a far-off echo with my laughter. The Peruvian gets red in the face and begins to look offended.

"Please don't mind me; I think you've said something a little 'kom-



*The Baranca*

isch'—but perhaps I've got a sun-stroke and it acts like laughing gas. Don't be cross, Guillermo." I take his arm and notice covertly that he is mollified.

"Blanca," he says, with a half smile, "dthat adobe house width vines look cool—suppose I buy dthat and ve stay here leedle vhile."

I follow his eyes.

"That mansion would hardly hold our party; it doesn't look as if it boasted more than two rooms."

"Dthat would be enough. Madame Steele vish much to see Guatemala; she go on and ve miss dthat train."

"Brilliant scheme!" I admit,



*Under the Southern Cross*

“but——” A shrill blast cuts through the air. “Heavens and earth! that’s the whistle!”

Like one possessed I tear down the road with never a glance behind—it seems miles to the station, and as I come near I see the train is moving. I make a rush for the rear platform. Voices behind scream reproof and warning, but I never look back; I grasp the iron railing and am whisked off my feet by the motion. With a desperate wrench I pull myself up the steps and steady my trembling body against the door of the baggage car. I look in. It’s locked, and no one is there. “Stupid idiot!” I mutter. “That mooning Baron hasn’t the smallest



### *The Baranca*

grain of sense—saying we had twenty minutes! Well, *he's* left anyhow—serves him right!” And then I cool down and reflect that going to Guatemala without the Baron may not be so amusing. I shake the door of the car, but no one hears, and I notice the train is slowing. “Mrs. Steele thinks I’m left and has made them come back—well, I’m not sorry, for now we’ll get that stupid Baron again. Yes, just as I thought——” as we begin to move back to Escuintla—“there’s the vine-covered hut that idiotic person proposed buying—here’s the station and . . . who’s that?” Before my astonished eyes stand Mrs. Steele and the Baron de Bach, looking anx-





*Under the Southern Cross*

iously for the advancing train. As it stops they run forward.

"My dear, don't you ever do such a foolhardy thing again," begins Mrs. Steele, severely.

"If I had known what you would do, I would haf hold you till——"

"The train doesn't go for ten minutes," Mrs. Steele interrupts; "it was only shifting to another track. You might have known the Baron would watch the time."

Mrs. Steele looks weak with apprehension—it is only when she has been alarmed that I realise how delicate she is.

"I'm so sorry you were frightened," I say, feeling too utterly reduced to rebuff the Baron for lifting





### *The Baranca*

me down from the platform as he would have taken a child.

“Come,” says Mrs. Steele, “we will get our old places.”

An Indian woman comes to the window after we are seated and offers a paraquito for sale. The Baron buys it and shows me how to hold it on my fan and let it take a piece of sappadilla from my teeth. This performance somewhat restores my spirits, and the incident of catching the wrong train at the risk of life and limb fades before the crowding interests of an eventful day. It seems hotter and closer in the cramped little car. Mrs. Steele grows faint.

“Come in dthe air.” The Baron



*Under the Southern Cross*

and I support her to the door. She recovers a little and the Peruvian returns for his valise. He brings out a silver travelling flask and sprinkles a white silk handkerchief with delicious *eau de Cologne* and gives it to Mrs. Steele. I can see it refreshes her, and I throw the Peruvian a grateful glance for his thoughtfulness. From the platform we have a far finer view of the country. The rugged wilderness of the Cordilleras hems us in on every side.

“Dthose air yust the zame mountains I look on from my home in Peru; it ees von chain from Tierra del Fuego to Mexico,” and a look of welcome comes into the handsome face. “It ees four years since I zee



### *The Baranca*

those Cordilleras. I am glad I am near them once more. *Ah!*" he exclaims, as we break through the close circle of the mountains, and, coming out on a wide plateau, a shining sheet of water bursts on our delighted vision. "Lake Amatitlan!"

The world up here is wild and silent; one feels a breathless sense of discovery and is vaguely glad there is no trace of man. No canoe rises the waves save the grey feather-boat of the wild duck, and the majestic circling hawk is the only fisherman.

"It was like this when Cortes saw it!" I say.

"It was like this when God made



*Under the Southern Cross*

it!" says Mrs. Steele, under her breath.

The train stops by the lake and we gather wild Lantana and many a new flower during the few minutes' stay. I rush into a thicket after a red lily, and come out a mass of thorns and Spanish needles. When the train starts Mrs. Steele is tired, and goes inside to rest, but the Baron and I still stay on the platform. He sits on the top step and laboriously picks the needles off my dress.

"You zee dthat smoke, Blanca? Dthat ees a volcano."

"Oh, how delightful! but there's no fire!"

"No, not at present!"

"It's very disappointing," I say,



*The Baranca*

“and the geography pictures are all wrong. They show a great burst of smoke and flame, and huge rocks shooting up out of the crater. I supposed a volcano was a sort of perpetual ‘Fourth of July.’”

“Fourth of Yuly! how mean you?”

“Oh, fireworks and explosions! but that little white funnel of steam—well, it’s a disappointment!”

“You vill zee dthree volcano near Guatemala; dthey air dthe ‘spirits’ of dthe place—call in Eenglish ‘Air,’ ‘Fire’ and ‘Vater.’ Zee on dthis leedle coin dthey haf all dthree mountains on dthe back.”

“Why, what’s the matter with your hands?” I say, taking the coin.



*Under the Southern Cross*

“All those burrs on your dress make bleed,” he says, looking a bit ruefully at his finger-tips, sore and red, and one stained a little where some obstinate briar or needle has drawn the blood.

“Oh! what a shame!” I take the shapely hand in mine and look compassionately at the hurt fingers.

“I feel it not, Blanca, when you hold it so!”

I drop the hand, instinctively steeling myself against all show of sympathy with this boyish sentimentalism.

“It should teach you a lesson. You take too much care of your hands; they are whiter and softer



*The Baranca*

than most women's—such hands are good for nothing."

"I will show you you can be mees-take." His face is quite changed, and there's something dimly threatening in the deep eyes.

"When wi' you show me?" I say, affecting a carelessness I do not quite feel.

"Perhaps in Guatemala." I leave that side of the platform and lean out over the other. "Come back, Blanca; it ees not zafe!"

His tone is entirely too dictatorial. I close my hand firmly round the iron rail and lean out further still. At that instant, as ill-luck would have it, the train encounters some obstruction on the track, something is struck, and





*Under the Southern Cross*

there is a jolt and concussion. Before I have time to recover myself I feel my hand wrested from the iron, and a powerful arm is closed around me, but instead of being drawn back, I am held out in the very position I myself had taken. Bewildered and frightened, I give one scream "on account" and turn my head with an endeavour to grasp the horrible situation. The Peruvian is holding to the rail with one hand and has me grasped under one arm as an inconsiderate child holds a kitter.

"Let me go!"

"I ask you before dthat you lean not out—but if you vill, I must zee dthat you fall not."

"I tell you I'll come back, let me





*The Baranca*

go!" and I glance out shudderingly. We have passed over the obstruction, whatever it was, and are running along the side of a steep descent.

"I am sorry you dthink my hands zo weak, for if dthey fail ve bodth go down."

"Oh, please, please!" I gasp.

"Now ve come to a baranca. I am curious to zee vill you like a 'baranca.'"

The wretch speaks as calmly as if we sat in a Pullman car. Through all my fright and indignation I wonder what on earth's a "baranca"—and forget to scream.

"Now, Señorita, if I hold you not zo far out as you like, tell me."

I look down, and under my very



*Under the Southern Cross*

eyes the solid ground ends, my horrified vision drops hundreds of feet to the bottom of a mighty gash in Cordilleras' flank, and for one sick instant I shut my eyes.

"How like you a baranca?"

Is it the wind jeering after me as I drop down, down, down? With a supreme effort I turn to see if that face is behind me, and behold! the Peruvian calmly meets my eyes with actually a smile on his lips. He is still holding me jauntily over the platform steps, and it was only my giddy fancy that fell so far.

We have passed the gorge, and, looking back, I see the "narrow-gauge" track lying across the chasm like a herring-bone over a hole.



*The Baranca*

"Ve haf more barancas if you like dthem."

"Oh, Guillermo," I say, "please let me go in!"

"Not for my sake! I can hold you here von hour vidth dthese 'gude-for-nodthing' hands."

"Oh, I don't doubt it; you're the strongest man I ever knew, but I don't like barancas. Please, *please*, Guillermo!"

He draws me back on the platform, and without asking my pardon or looking the least bit penitent, he opens the door for me to go inside.

Mrs. Steele looks away from her window as we take our former seats.

"How deliciously cool it's



*Under the Southern Cross*

grown," she says. "What makes you so white, Blanche?"

"Was it not for dthat she ees call Blanca?"

"What is it, child? Are you faint?"

"Yes, a little," I answer, wondering whether I had better tell how that Peruvian monster has been behaving.

"That's strange! It's quite unlike you to be faint. Baron, will you mix a little of this brandy with some water? That will make her feel better."

Again he takes out his traveller's cup of silver. Calling the negro conductor, he tells him to bring some "agua."



*The Baranca*

"He's afraid to leave us," I think indignantly; "he doesn't want me to tell Mrs. Steele."

"Did you notice that great cleft in the mountain we went over?" asks the latter, fanning me gently.

"Yes, dthat ees call 'baranca.' Señorita seem not to like it."

"Neither would Mrs. Steele if she had——"

"She nefer vould! Madame Steele ees a too vise voman. What you dthink, Madame? Señorita in-seest to lean out far ofer dthose steps; I beg her not, but——" he ends with a modest gesture of incompetence.

"And you," I begin, with a sudden determination to unmask



*Under the Southern Cross*

his villainy, "you rushed over and——"

"And hold you so dth that you fall not. Madame Steele, desairve I not dthanks?"

"Ah! yes, Baron. You are certainly very kind and watchful; but, Blanche, if you don't care for yourself, you ought to consider other people. It's a terrible responsibility to travel with such a foolhardy person. I can't say I'm sorry if you've been a little frightened. Take the brandy, dear."

My good friend is never severe long. The Baron holds the silver cup to my lips, and I shut out the sight of him—with closed eyes I drink the mixture obediently.



*The Baranca*

I lean my head against the window, and the voices of my friend and the Baron grow less and less distinct. The next thing I know Mrs. Steele is saying, "Is that Guatemala?" I rouse myself and look out. A white city on a wide plateau. Is this the "Paris of Central America," with its 70,000 inhabitants? Mrs. Steele is met in the dépot by some friends, Californians, who live here part of the year. We promise to dine with them, and the Baron comes back from his search for a carriage, saying one will be here presently.

"While Madame Steele talks vidth her friends, vill you come zee dthe Trocadero, vhere dthey haf bull-fights?"





*Under the Southern Cross*

"No, thank you."

"Oh, I dthought you would like."

"Where is it?"

"Yust ofer dthere, dthree steps—  
dthat round house."

"I'd better see it perhaps while I have time," I think, and I walk towards the circular building indicated. Baron de Bach keeps at my side. He tries the door—shakes it—but it is evidently locked; he leans down and looks through the keyhole.

"Oh, you can zee qvite vell dthrough here."

I put my eye to the little opening and can dimly descry an open arena with seats in tiers opposite.

"Dthey zay dtthey haf a bull-fight Dthursday"—the Baron is reading



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### *The Baranca*

the Spanish bill posted at the door. "Ve had better stay and let you zec."

"There's the carriage!" I exclaim, and we hurry back, take leave of Mrs. Steele's friends and drive over roughly cobbled streets to the Gran Hotel. Our rooms are secured to us in three languages by the Baron; he scolds the proprietor for delays in German, conciliates the wife in French, and gives orders to the servant of this polyglot establishment in Spanish. Finally we are stowed in rooms opening on the wide veranda that encloses the patio. A hasty toilet and we meet the Baron in the vestibule downstairs. We wander about the crooked streets



*Under the Southern Cross*

from shop to shop, getting at a jeweller's some ancient coins, unalloyed gold and silver rudely stamped and cut out in irregular shapes, the only currency when Central America was a Spanish province. We are longest in the great market, buying curious pottery from the Indians—calabash cups, brilliant serapes of native weaving and lovely silk rebosas. We order a variety of fans—one kind is of braided palm with clumsy handle ending in a rude brush. An Indian girl shows me how the fan is used to make the fire burn more brightly, and the brush to sweep the hearth. From market into the main Plaza, and then to the cool shelter of the Cathedral, brings



### *The Baranca*

our short afternoon to an end; we must hurry back to our dinner appointment. The Baron grumbles vigorously when he discovers he was included in the invitation, and that Mrs. Steele promised to bring him.

"Really, he hasn't seemed like himself all this afternoon," says Mrs. Steele, when we are once more in our rooms, which conveniently adjoin.

"No, he can be conspicuously disagreeable when he likes." I have in mind the "baranca" episode.

"What do you suppose makes him so absent-minded and constrained, Blanche?"

"Simple perversity, very likely." I stand in the communicating doorway, brushing a jacket. I am con-



*Under the Southern Cross*

scious that Mrs. Steele pauses in her toilet and looks keenly in my direction.

“ I still like the Baron extremely, but I'm glad to see you are not so unsophisticated or so unpractical as to be captivated by a pair of fine eyes and a melodious voice. I was once uncomplimentary enough to be afraid of the effect of such close intercourse for both of you. You two are cut out to make each other happy for a few weeks, and miserable for a lifetime. You should both be thankful that your acquaintance is to be counted by pleasant days and ended before the regretful years begin.”

“ Really, I don't know what put all that in your head! ”



### *The Baranca*

“Observation, my dear! In spite of the velvet cloak of courtesy, our Peruvian is a born tyrant, and you—forgive me—but you know you’re the very child of caprice. I am most thankful, however, that you are not impressionable. Otherwise this experience might leave a bitter taste in your mouth.”

“You seem content with *my* escape. You don’t feel any concern that the Baron may lack the valuable qualities you think are my safeguard? Suppose, just for argument’s sake, he should say I had——”

“Broken his heart? Ah, my dear, he has probably said that to a dozen. It’s a tough article, the masculine



*Under the Southern Cross*

heart, and the kind of women who strain it most are——”

“Bewildering beauties, such as *you* were at twenty! And I may rest in my defects with an easy conscience. Thank you!”

“That was not what I was going to say.”

In my heart I knew it was what she was thinking.



Chapter  
Seven







## CHAPTER VII

### THE INCA EYE

**M**

AND MRS. DALTON give us a beautiful Spanish-French dinner in a private room of the Gran Hotel where they live. Mrs. Dalton is palpably delighted with the Baron de Bach. He is unusually reserved, but gravity sits well on him, and, as I see him crossing swords with this clever woman of the world, I find my admiration growing. He seems not to see me all through dinner, and, like the stupid young person I am, I fall



*Under the Southern Cross*

to regretting that by the side of our brilliant, travelled hostess I must seem provincial and dull. I am not sorry when, shortly after dinner, Mrs. Steele, regretting we have to leave so early the following day, remembers a friend she must see that night, and we take our leave.

“Señorita look fery tire—she better stay in dthe hotel. I vill escort you, Madame, vidth plaisir.”

We stop a moment on the stairs.

“Oh, no! I especially want Blanche to see the interior of a handsome native hoase. You’re not too tired, are you, dear?”

“No,” I say, “I’ll go.”

“She would zay dthat if she die.



*The Inca Eye*

You stay here, Señorita; Madame Steele be not long."

The idea flits across my mind he has some reason of his own for not wanting me to go; but I've no notion of being left alone.

"No, I'll go with you, Mrs. Steele."

"After I escort Madame, I go to the photographic gallery; I buy you all those pictures you have not time to get this afternoon. I send them to your room; you will not be lonely."

"Oh, why can't we all go to the gallery? I do so want a collection of views. I want nothing else so much!" I plead.

It ends by our driving to Casa 47,



*Under the Southern Cross*

in a wide street opposite the public gardens. The Baron dismisses the coachman, telling him to come back in a couple of hours, and I drop the iron knocker on the massive door. A native servant draws the bolts, and our interpreter asks for "Señora Baldwin." We follow the picturesque little maid through a tiled vestibule into a starlight patio. The usual ground veranda encloses this fragrant court, the various rooms opening on it.

We are ushered into one brilliantly lit and luxuriously furnished, and the hostess and her sister make us welcome. The French consul is there with his secretary, and the conversation is mostly in their tongue.



*The Inca Eye*

Mrs. Baldwin shows us an album of enchanting views of Guatemala and the abandoned city of Antigua, so beautifully situated and so earthquake-cursed.

"More than ever," says Mrs. Steele, "I regret we did not omit something else, and take time to get photographs."

"It's not too late," our hostess says.

"Oh, no," the Baron interposes. "I go now to get them. I was thinking if Madame would like Señorita to choose them."

"No; Blanche does seem a little tired. I couldn't let her go. I think we must trust your taste, Baron; I can hardly spare the time and



*Under the Southern Cross*

strength for any more exploring to-night."

"No, indeed, you mustn't go," says Mrs. Baldwin. "I've some wonderful antiquities from a buried Aztec city to show you. When you finish those views"—she glances at me—"you'll find us in the next room. I won't say good-bye to you, Baron; of course, you'll be back. Come, Mrs. Steele"—and they go into an adjoining room.

"If you air not too tire, Señorita, you better come to dthe gallery and choose dthe pictures. Dthe Consul say it ees near here."

"Oh, really? Yes, I'll go; I know just the ones Mrs. Steele wants. You will tell her where we've gone,



*The Inca E,*

won't you?—we won't be long," I say to Mrs. Baldwin's young sister, who is chattering French to the consul.

"Yes," she answers. "It's my opinion you won't find the gallery open so late as this; but, of course, you can try."

"Oh, I hope it won't be shut. Good-bye."

"Good-bye."

The small servant nodding on the veranda takes us past the palm-shaded *patio*, and through the dark vestibule.

"*Gracias!*" I say to the dusky little servitor as the huge door opens.

"*Si! Si!* Dthousand thanks,"





*Under the Southern Cross*

mutters the Baron as the bolts fall behind us, and we are out in the moonlit street. He draws my hand through his arm.

“What makes your heart beat so?” I say.

“Come on the right side;” he changes me quickly to the other arm, and I laugh at my acuteness, little dreaming what the Baron’s well-disguised excitement foreboded. We turn down a narrow, ill-lighted street.

“What a lovely night! It makes one feel strangely, doesn’t it, to be out after dark in a foreign city that no one you know has ever visited, and that seemed in geography days as far off as the moon?” I get no



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### *The Inca Eye*

answer to my small observations, and we walk on. "The gallery isn't as near as I thought."

"It ces not far, Blanca; you air fery lofely in dthe moonlight."

"I'm glad to know what is required to make me lovely."

"You air always 'wonderschön' to me—but you look too clevailr zometimes in dthe day. In dthis moonlight you look so gentle—like a leedle child. Blanca, zay again you loaf me."

He holds my hand close and bends down until I feel his hot breath on my cheek.

"I can't say *again* what I never said once."

I begin to walk faster.



*Under the Southern Cross*

“Ve air not *abord du San Miguel*; no von see, no von hear. I know in my heart you loaf me; tell me so vonce! Blanca!” The music and entreaty in the deep voice thrill me strangely. “Oh, Blanca darling, keess me!” My puny resistance is nothing to those athlete’s arms; he holds me close one instant and I, breathless, struggle to free my hands, and push his hot cheek away from mine.

“How dare you; you are no gentleman!”

“No, I am a loaver, Blanca, not von cold Nordthern zhentleman, who haf so leedle heart it can be hush, and zo dthin, poor blood it nefer rush fire at a voman’s touch.



*The Inca Eye*

Blanca, I haf been still for days, vaiting for dthis hour. I loaf you, darling, till all my life is nodthing but von longing—I loaf you till I haf no conscience, no *religion* but my loaf. No, you shall not spik now! Blanca, you must marry me, *here* in Guatemala. You and I go not back to *San Miguel* unless you air my vife.”

“Baron!”

“Hush! Spik not so loud, and if you vill not make me mad call me not Baron.”

An awful sense of loneliness chokes me. The streets of that buried Aztec city are not more silent than this one in Guatemala.

“Guillermo, listen! I have no



*Under the Southern Cross*

friend here but you; you must take me back to Mrs. Steele. Come!"

"How vell you know men! But not *me*, Blanca—not a Peruvian. I know it ees better for you, as vell as for myself, dthat you marry me. You haf nefer been so gentle and so gude as since I hold you near dthat baranca. But you did not like it! You loaf me, but you air like a vild deer; you air so easy startle, and so hard to hold. But I vill be zo gude to Blanca, I vill make her glad I vas so strong not to let her haf her own way. If you keess me and zay before God you marry me, I take you back to Casa 47—if not, Madame Steele go alone to *San Miguel*."

"Baron de Bach, you're talking



"YOU MUST TAKE ME BACK!" — Page 210

[The page contains extremely faint and illegible text, likely bleed-through from the reverse side of the document. The text is too light to be transcribed accurately.]



*The Inca Eye*

crazy nonsense. You don't frighten me, but you *do* disgust me. You think to get some Peruvian amusement out of frightening a woman; well, you had better go to a bull-fight. I detest you! Let me go or I'll cry out!"

He puts one hand over my mouth and holds me as in a vise.

"Dthank you, Blanca! You gif me courage. I haf tell you how a Peruvian loaf; I vill tell you how he plan. In dthe bay off Panama ces my yacht. I vill keep you in Guatemala while I send for her, and dthen ve go to Peru, to Ceylon—anywhere you like but America. I write Madame Steele you air my wife, and she vill soon zee ve air not to be find;



*Under the Southern Cross*

she will go back to New York. It does no use that you cry out, no you hear, or if you do, you speak no Spanish, and I have my pistol if any interfere. I tell you so much that you make no mistake. We are not far from the house of two old friends of me. They will take care of you, till my yacht come; you need not fear me, Señorita." He loosens his grasp for an instant, and the dark street seems to whirl. I would have fallen if he had not caught me. I hear, as one dreaming, the caressing words of Spanish—I scarcely feel the hot kisses.

"I'm all alone," I think, looking down the silent street to a far-off lamp, and then up to the brilliant





*The Inca Eye*

sky, but even that seems strange, for instead of my old friends in heaven, the Southern Cross shines cold and far above me.

“Guillermo,” I say, steadying myself against his arm “you would make a terrible mistake. You don’t understand Northern women. You say you love me, and in the next breath you plan to ruin my whole life. I would make you more misery than ever a man endured, and I should hate you bitterly and without end.”

“It ees no use dthat you zay such dthings.”

“Guillermo, don’t let your love be such a curse to me.”

“A curse——”



*Under the Southern Cross*

“Yes. If any other man had roughly treated me, had abused my confidence, and, finding me defenceless, had forgotten what all brave men owe to women—what would you do to such a man?”

The Peruvian puts his hand before his eyes.

“I listen not to anything you say.”

“Yes, you will. You know you would half kill the man who would strike a woman. Some half-mad man has done worse than strike me, Guillermo, and his name is Guillermo de Bach. You are so strong, and you say you love me; will you take my part against this man?”

The moon comes out of a cloud,



*The Inca Eye*

and shows me a white face above my own, drawn tense with emotion. "It ees all settle, Blanca; I go not back."

"Oh, God! what shall I do! What kind of man are you? You complain that my countrymen are cold and deliberate; do you know why we love them? They know how to keep faith, but *you* not twenty-four hours."

"What mean you?" His voice is husky and sounds strange.

"You promised in the *San Miguel* this morning, if we trusted you enough to come with you to Guatemala, you would see that the *San Miguel* did not sail without us. Guillermo!"—with an inspiration I



*Under the Southern Cross*

draw the white face down to mine—  
“forgive me for doubting you; you  
will keep your word,” and I kiss him  
between the pain-contracted brows.

“Oh, Blanca, Blanca, you will  
kill me!”

Is it a tear that drops on my face?  
I put my arm in his and draw him  
up the dark street, whispering some  
incoherent prayer.

“Blanca, I *cannot!* I am not a  
man dthat I gif you up!”

We have turned into the broad  
avenue and an occasional pedestrian  
passes by. The Baron seems to see  
nothing.

“You are not a man when you  
break your word. Come, Guil-  
lermo!”



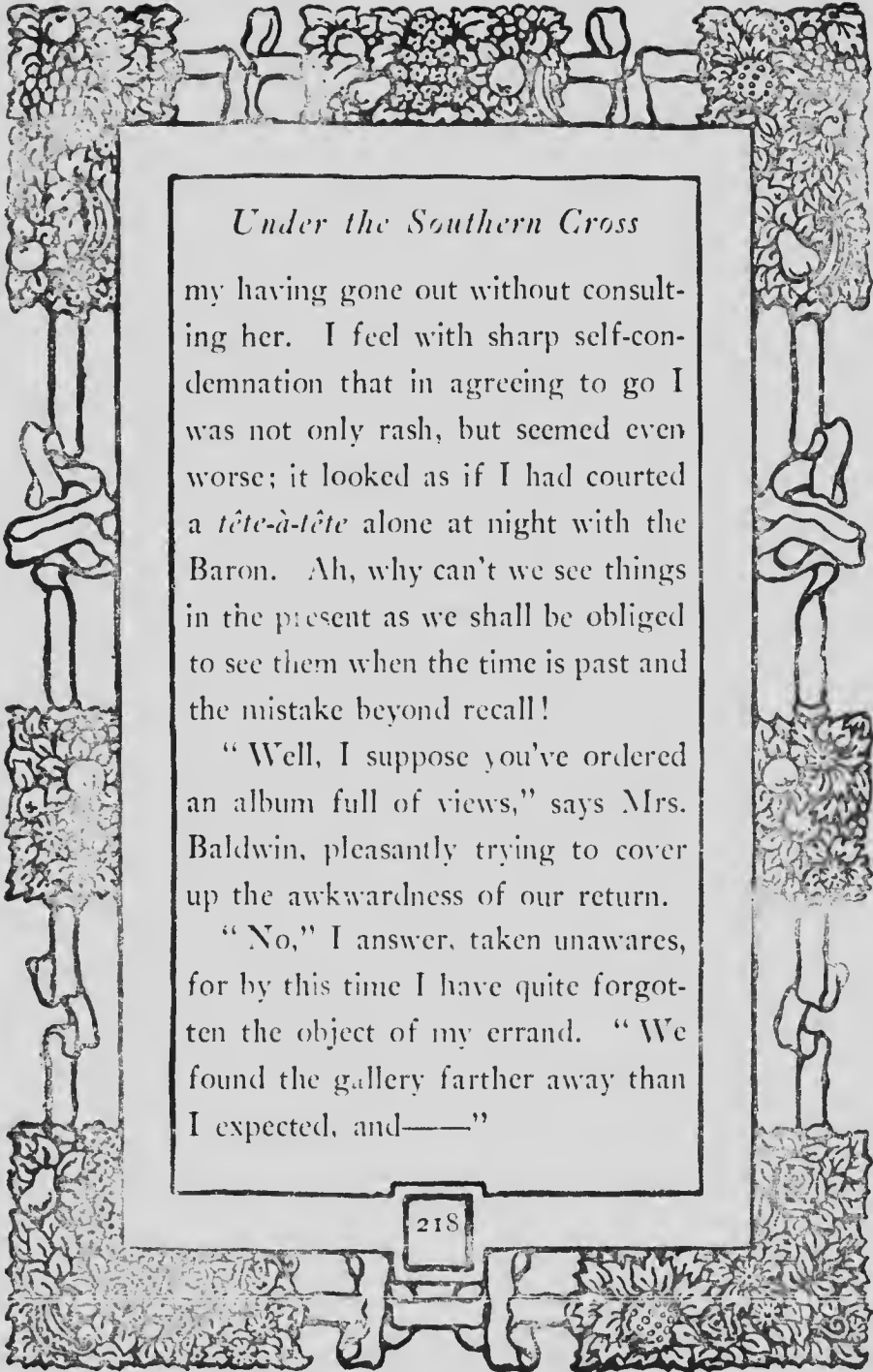
### *The Inca Eye*

We are back at last before the great door; I lift a hand trembling with excitement to raise the iron knocker. The Baron stops me.

“I am von fool, Blanca! Like your countrymen, I let you rule. But when you forget all else off me, remembair you haf find von Peruvian who loaf you so he let you ruin hees life—you vill nefer see anodther such Peruvian madman. If I haf trouble you, I haf not spare myself—keess me gude-night, Blanca . . . and good-bye.”

A moment later the great knocker . . .

. . . Steele and Mrs. Baldwin are waiting for us in the star-lit *patio*. My friend is evidently displeased at



*Under the Southern Cross*

my having gone out without consulting her. I feel with sharp self-condemnation that in agreeing to go I was not only rash, but seemed even worse; it looked as if I had courted a *tête-à-tête* alone at night with the Baron. Ah, why can't we see things in the present as we shall be obliged to see them when the time is past and the mistake beyond recall!

"Well, I suppose you've ordered an album full of views," says Mrs. Baldwin, pleasantly trying to cover up the awkwardness of our return.

"No," I answer, taken unawares, for by this time I have quite forgotten the object of my errand. "We found the gallery farther away than I expected, and——"



*The In - Eye*

"When we get dthere it vas close," says the Baron in a calm, well-controlled voice. The carriage is announced, and we bid Mrs. Baldwin good-bye. The drive home is very quiet, and we say good-night to the Baron in the vestibule.

Mrs. Steele oddly enough asks me no questions, and I know her disapproval must be strong. I think little about that, however—I am going over and over that sharp conflict in the dim, deserted street. Did it really happen or did I dream it! This is the nineteenth century and I am a plain American girl to whom nothing remarkable ever happened before, and yet it *was* true! How was I to blame for it—what will





*Under the Southern Cross*

the Baron do—how long will he remember? My last waking sensation is a weary surprise to find my pillow wet with tears.

Mrs. Steele rouses me the next morning, holding an open letter in her hand:

“Blanche! Blanche! Wake up! We’ve overslept and lost our train. Here’s a note the Baron’s just sent up. The servant has neglected to call him as well, and he thinks we could not by any exertion catch the train we intended. He has ascertained that a ‘special’ leaving Guatemala two hours after regular train time will reach San José an hour at least before the steamer can possibly sail. He has engaged this ‘special’





### *The Inca Eye*

and will see us safely on board at ten o'clock. He begs I will excuse his absence at breakfast, as he has already been served, and remains with assurances of his profound regard, my obedient servant, Federico Guillermo de Bach! So there's no time to be lost!"

My friend returns to her room to dress; I sit bolt upright in bed staring straight before me at the great shaft of yellow sunlight that lies across the floor. "You and I go not back to *San Miguel* unless you air my wife." Was it a curious dream or had he said those words?

"Are you hurrying, Blanche?" calls Mrs. Steele. "It won't do to miss our last train unless you've de-



*Under the Southern Cross*

cided you would like to stay in Guatemala."

I fly out of bed and begin to rush into my clothes. Mrs. Steele's voice has a touch of sarcasm in it that reminds me she may still be dissatisfied and suspicious about last night. "She mustn't think there's been any scene," I admonish myself; "she would say it was entirely my fault, and she will lose all confidence in me. No! Mrs. Steele must never know!"

As we enter the breakfast room an officious waiter bows and scrapes, and seats us at a table giving full view of the sunny *patio*. We have a quiet breakfast, boasting neither special cheer nor appetite, and it is



### *The Inca Eye*

soon finished. We are beginning to wonder how we shall manage to find our train if the Baron does not come for us, when the doorway is darkened and a shadow falls across the table.

Without looking up, I am sure it is he.

“Gude-morning, Madame Steele. Gude-morning, Señorita. I hope you haf slept well?”

“Good-morning,” I say, observing how white and heavy-eyed he looks in the sunlight.

“Yes, thank you, *wē’ve* slept well,” says Mrs. Steele, “too well, I’m afraid.”

“Oh, no, belief me, dthis extra train ees better.”



*Under the Southern Cross*

“You look ill, Baron; how did you sleep?”

“Dthank you, I sleep not at all till yust dthe time to rise—dtherefore am I late. If your dthings air ready ve vill start at once.” He sends a servant upstairs after our various purchases and wraps, etc., and we find them all stowed in the carriage waiting at the entrance, when we come down a few minutes later. The Baron stands by the landau, waiting to help us in. On our drive to the station he points out this and that bit of interest, quite in his usual way.

“You zee dthat, Madame?” He points to a circular roof supported on stone pillars sheltering water-tanks



*The Inca Eye*

and primitive laundry essentials  
“Dthat ees a ‘pila,’ a place vhere  
dthe vomans vash dthe garments.”  
It is surrounded by buxom young  
girls with dripping linen in their  
hands which they seemed to be beat-  
ing on stone slabs. “Dthat tree  
dthat grow beside ees palma cristi.”

“Why, it’s only what we call the  
castor-bean, only this is larger,” I  
venture to say.

“Of course, my dear! ‘A palma  
cristi by the pila ’ is the Baron’s way  
of saying a castor-oil bean by the  
wash-house.”

My laugh is a little forced, I’m  
afraid, and the Baron seems not to  
have heard.

“What is growing inside that



*Under the Southern Cross*

fence?" I ask, with a steady determination to keep up appearances.

"A kind of cactus," says the Baron, "what cochineal bugs live on—dthey—how you say it?—'raise' much cochineal bugs in Guatemala."

The three volcanoes loom up mightily. The smoke is denser and darker to-day, the "spirits" of Air, Fire and Water look down with menacing aspect on the white city in the plain.

"You must notice after you leave Acapulco the volcano 'Yzaleo'; it is all fire by the dark of the night. And in those bay off La Libertad and Puerta Arenas you must look at



### The Inca Eye

dtthose devil-feesh—*ach schreech*! ch;  
dtthey haf terrible great wings dtat  
dtthey wrap around dtat dtthe eat.”

“You speak almost as if you would not be there to join me out on the spot,” says Mrs. Croca, smiling as we pass the station and drive up at the station.

“Quite right,” I advise by a friend I to stay and see the Dthursday bull-fight—I dtthink I must.”

He helps us out of the carriage without noticing my unspoken amazement or Mrs. Croca's incredulity. “What nonsense.”

“I will see you in dtthe train and get dtthe nee back to zee your dtthings done.” He leads the way to the “special” standing with snorting





*Under the Southern Cross*

engine on the furthest track. He seats us and is gone again. A servant brings in our effects and the Baron follows.

“Madame,” he says, dropping into the seat behind Mrs. Steele, “I haf arrange to haf dthis man zee you to the ship—he spik leedle English and I am told gude off him as sairvant. I haf give him all direction—he vill take gude care off you and you vill reach *San Miguel* in gude time, as I promeese.”

“But when are you coming?” I say.

“I come not back to *San Miguel*.” He speaks to Mrs. Steele and does not meet my look. “I haf telegraph





*The Inca Eye*

to Panama for my yacht. I vill  
vait here till she come."

"But I don't understand, Baron;  
this is very sudden, isn't it?" Mrs.  
Steele looks greatly astonished.

"Not so fery! Dthis train go  
soon; I must zay gude-bye. Here  
ees dthe leedle carve spoon from  
Escuintla you zay you like. I haf  
had much plaisir to know you,  
Madame. Gude-bye!" He holds  
out his shapely white hand and Mrs.  
Steele takes it warmly.

"Indeed, Baron, I'm quite breath-  
less with surprise, and really very  
sorry to lose you. Blanche and I  
will miss you sorely. If you ever  
come to New York you know where  
to find me and a warm welcome.



*Under the Southern Cross*

Our kindest thoughts will follow you. Thank you for the spoon, although at any other time I might hesitate to become the receiver of stolen goods. Good-bye!"

"Gude-bye, Madame—gude-bye, Señorita." He holds my hand the briefest moment, and I feel a big lump come in my throat at the sight of his face. My voice wavers a little as I say:

"I am so sorry to say good-bye to you."

"Dthank you, Señorita. I haf somedthing off yours I must not forget." He puts a hand in his breast pocket and brings out the gold-crested letter-book. He takes from it a tiny roll of cigarette paper.



*The Inca Eye*

“Vidth all my boast I haf not succeed to ‘keep my pearl’; it ees yours, Señorita.”

“No, Baron——” I begin, with warm protest.

“If you vant me to haf it, Señorita, write me and I vill come from dthe end of dthe world to get it. But you vill not, zo put dthis Inca eye beside it. Dthey zay in my country it bring gude luck. But it look like dthat sun ve haf ofer our heads in Acapulco Bay, dthink you not zo, Madame?”

He shows her the curious jewel, like opaque amber sprinkled with gold dust.

“It is very curious and interesting,” says Mrs. Steele.



*Under the Southern Cross*

"Indeed it is," I agree; "thank you very much." But I scarcely see the Inca eye; I am looking into his and trying to read his face.

"Zo, Señorita, dthough you go far nordthvard dthe Inca's eye from Peru ees still upon you; I haf send him to take care off . . . dthe *pearl*. Gude-bye—Gude-bye, Madame!"

The tall figure turns away, and in a moment is gone.

"Why, Blanche, what is the matter?" Mrs. Steele's voice is sharp with concern. I try to smile and instinctively my hand goes to my tightened throat. "My poor child, do you care?"

"How absurd!" I say, with what



### *The Inca Eye*

scorn I can command. "Care about *what*, anyhow?"

"Señorita!" The handsome face of the Peruvian looks in at an open window near the far end of the car. A bell rings, the conductor shouts some warning in Spanish. In the din I run to the window and the Baron holds up a bunch of roses. "Dthink dthe best you can of me, Blanca; I vill loaf you all my life."

The look of suffering in the wonderful dark eyes brings the lump again to my throat. I take the roses and I know my eyes are misty.

"Thank you, Guillermo; it won't be hard to think good things of you. . . ."

I feel a warning hand on my shoul-



*Under the Southern Cross*

der. It is Mrs. Steele, and the touch recalls all my resolutions.

“ I shall always remember. . . .  
Good-bye ! ”

The train moves off, the Baron steps back with that same look in his face, and lifts his hat. His courtesy shows at the last some flaw, for, although Mrs. Steele is there, his lips and eyes say only:

“ Gude-bye, Blanca ! ”











