VICENTE BLASCO IBANEZ

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

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www.jazzybee-verlag.de
admin@jazzybee-verlag.de

Contents:

PART I

CHAPTER I. THE TRYST

(In the Garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire)

They were to have met in the garden of the Chapelle Expiatoire at five o'clock in the afternoon, but Julio Desnoyers with the impatience of a lover who hopes to advance the moment of meeting by presenting himself before the appointed time, arrived an half hour earlier. The change of the seasons was at this time greatly confused in his mind, and evidently demanded some readjustment.

Five months had passed since their last interview in this square had afforded the wandering lovers the refuge of a damp, depressing calmness near a boulevard of continual movement close to a great railroad station. The hour of the appointment was always five and Julio was accustomed to see his beloved approaching by the reflection of the recently lit street lamps, her figure enveloped in furs, and holding her muff before her face as if it were a half-mask. Her sweet voice, greeting him, had breathed forth a cloud of vapor, white and tenuous, congealed by the cold. After various hesitating interviews, they had abandoned the garden. Their love had acquired the majestic importance of acknowledged fact, and from five to seven had taken refuge in the fifth floor of the rue de la Pompe where Julio had an artist's studio. The curtains well drawn over the double glass windows, the cosy hearth-fire sending forth its ruddy flame as the only light of the room, the monotonous song of the samovar bubbling near the cups of tea—all the seclusion of life isolated by an idolizing love—had dulled their perceptions to the fact that the afternoons were growing longer, that outside the sun was shining later and later into the pearl-covered depths of the clouds, and that a timid and pallid Spring was beginning to show its green finger tips in the buds of the branches suffering the last

nips of Winter—that wild, black boar who so often turned on his tracks.

Then Julio had made his trip to Buenos Aires, encountering in the other hemisphere the last smile of Autumn and the first icy winds from the pampas. And just as his mind was becoming reconciled to the fact that for him Winter was an eternal season—since it always came to meet him in his change of domicile from one extreme of the planet to the other—lo, Summer was unexpectedly confronting him in this dreary garden!

A swarm of children was racing and screaming through the short avenues around the monument. On entering the place, the first thing that Julio encountered was a hoop which came rolling toward his legs, trundled by a childish hand. Then he stumbled over a ball. Around the chestnut trees was gathering the usual warm-weather crowd, seeking the blue shade perforated with points of light. Many nurse-maids from the neighboring houses were working and chattering here, following with indifferent glances the rough games of the children confided to their care. Near them were the men who had brought their papers down into the garden under the impression that they could read them in the midst of peaceful groves. All of the benches were full. A few women were occupying camp stools with that feeling of superiority which ownership always confers. The iron chairs, "pay-seats," were serving as resting places for various suburban dames, loaded down with packages, who were waiting for straggling members of their families in order to take the train in the Gare Saint Lazare. . . .

And Julio, in his special delivery letter, had proposed meeting in this place, supposing that it would be as little frequented as in former times. She, too, with the same thoughtlessness, had in her reply, set the usual hour of five o'clock, believing that after passing a few minutes in the Printemps or the Galeries on the pretext of shopping, she

would be able to slip over to the unfrequented garden without risk of being seen by any of her numerous acquaintances.

Desnoyers was enjoying an almost forgotten sensation, that of strolling through vast spaces, crushing as he walked the grains of sand under his feet. For the past twenty days his rovings had been upon planks, following with the automatic precision of a riding school the oval promenade on the deck of a ship. His feet accustomed to insecure ground, still were keeping on terra firma a certain sensation of elastic unsteadiness. His goings and comings were not awakening the curiosity of the people seated in the open, for a common preoccupation seemed to be monopolizing all the men and women. The groups were exchanging impressions. Those who happened to have a paper in their hands, saw their neighbors approaching them with a smile of interrogation. There had suddenly disappeared that distrust and suspicion which impels the inhabitants of large cities mutually to ignore one another, taking each other's measure at a glance as though they were enemies.

"They are talking about the war," said Desnoyers to himself. "At this time, all Paris speaks of nothing but the possibility of war."

Outside of the garden he could see also the same anxiety which was making those around him so fraternal and sociable. The venders of newspapers were passing through the boulevard crying the evening editions, their furious speed repeatedly slackened by the eager hands of the passers-by contending for the papers. Every reader was instantly surrounded by a group begging for news or trying to decipher over his shoulder the great headlines at the top of the sheet. In the rue des Mathurins, on the other side of the square, a circle of workmen under the awning of a tavern were listening to the comments of a friend who accompanied his words with oratorical gestures and

wavings of the paper. The traffic in the streets, the general bustle of the city was the same as in other days, but it seemed to Julio that the vehicles were whirling past more rapidly, that there was a feverish agitation in the air and that people were speaking and smiling in a different way. The women of the garden were looking even at him as if they had seen him in former days. He was able to approach them and begin a conversation without experiencing the slightest strangeness.

"They are talking of the war," he said again but with the commiseration of a superior intelligence which foresees the future and feels above the impressions of the vulgar crowd.

He knew exactly what course he was going to follow. He had disembarked at ten o'clock the night before, and as it was not yet twenty-four hours since he had touched land, his mentality was still that of a man who comes from afar, across oceanic immensities, from boundless horizons, and is surprised at finding himself in touch with the preoccupations which govern human communities. After disembarking he had spent two hours in a cafe in Boulogne, listlessly watching the middle-class families who passed their time in the monotonous placidity of a life without dangers. Then the special train for the passengers from South America had brought him to Paris, leaving him at four in the morning on a platform of the Gare du Nord in the embrace of Pepe Argensola, the young Spaniard whom he sometimes called "my secretary" or "my valet" because it was difficult to define exactly the relationship between them. In reality, he was a mixture of friend and parasite, the poor comrade, complacent and capable in his companionship with a rich youth on bad terms with his family, sharing with him the ups and downs of fortune, picking up the crumbs of prosperous days, or inventing expedients to keep up appearances in the hours of poverty.

"What about the war?" Argensola had asked him before inquiring about the result of his trip. "You have come a long

ways and should know much."

Soon he was sound asleep in his dear old bed while his "secretary" was pacing up and down the studio talking of Servia, Russia and the Kaiser. This youth, too, skeptical as he generally was about everything not connected with his own interests, appeared infected by the general excitement.

When Desnoyers awoke he found her note awaiting him, setting their meeting at five that afternoon and also containing a few words about the threatened danger which was claiming the attention of all Paris. Upon going out in search of lunch the concierge, on the pretext of welcoming him back, had asked him the war news. And in the restaurant, the cafe and the street, always war . . . the possibility of war with Germany. . . .

Julio was an optimist. What did all this restlessness signify to a man who had just been living more than twenty days among Germans, crossing the Atlantic under the flag of the Empire?

He had sailed from Buenos Aires in a steamer of the Hamburg line, the Koenig Frederic August. The world was in blessed tranquillity when the boat left port. Only the whites and half-breeds of Mexico were exterminating each other in conflicts in order that nobody might believe that man is an animal degenerated by peace. On the rest of the planet, the people were displaying unusual prudence. Even aboard the transatlantic liner, the little world of passengers of most diverse nationalities appeared a fragment of future society implanted by way of experiment in modern times—a sketch of the hereafter, without frontiers or race antagonisms.

One morning the ship band which every Sunday had sounded the Choral of Luther, awoke those sleeping in the first-class cabins with the most unheard-of serenade. Desnoyers rubbed his eyes believing himself under the hallucinations of a dream. The German horns were playing

the Marseillaise through the corridors and decks. The steward, smiling at his astonishment, said, "The fourteenth of July!" On the German steamers they celebrate as their own the great festivals of all the nations represented by their cargo and passengers. Their captains are careful to observe scrupulously the rites of this religion of the flag and its historic commemoration. The most insignificant republic saw the ship decked in its honor, affording one more diversion to help combat the monotony of the voyage and further the lofty ends of the Germanic propaganda. For the first time the great festival of France was being celebrated on a German vessel, and whilst the musicians continued escorting a racy Marseillaise in double quick time through the different floors, the morning groups were commenting on the event.

"What finesse!" exclaimed the South American ladies. "These Germans are not so phlegmatic as they seem. It is an attention . . . something very distinguished. . . . And is it possible that some still believe that they and the French might come to blows?"

The very few Frenchmen who were travelling on the steamer found themselves admired as though they had increased immeasurably in public esteem. There were only three;—an old jeweller who had been visiting his branch shops in America, and two demi-mondaines from the rue de la Paix, the most timid and well-behaved persons aboard, vestals with bright eyes and disdainful noses who held themselves stiffly aloof in this uncongenial atmosphere.

At night there was a gala banquet in the dining room at the end of which the French flag and that of the Empire formed a flaunting, conspicuous drapery. All the German passengers were in dress suits, and their wives were wearing low-necked gowns. The uniforms of the attendants were as resplendent as on a day of a grand review.

During dessert the tapping of a knife upon a glass reduced the table to sudden silence. The Commandant was

going to speak. And this brave mariner who united to his nautical functions the obligation of making harangues at banquets and opening the dance with the lady of most importance, began unrolling a string of words like the noise of clappers between long intervals of silence. Desnoyers knew a little German as a souvenir of a visit to some relatives in Berlin, and so was able to catch a few words. The Commandant was repeating every few minutes "peace" and "friends." A table neighbor, a commercial commissioner, offered his services as interpreter to Julio, with that obsequiousness which lives on advertisement.

"The Commandant asks God to maintain peace between Germany and France and hopes that the two peoples will become increasingly friendly."

Another orator arose at the same table. He was the most influential of the German passengers, a rich manufacturer from Dusseldorf who had just been visiting his agents in America. He was never mentioned by name. He bore the title of Commercial Counsellor, and among his countrymen was always Herr Comerzienrath and his wife was entitled Frau Rath. The Counsellor's Lady, much younger than her important husband, had from the first attracted the attention of Desnoyers. She, too, had made an exception in favor of this young Argentinian, abdicating her title from their first conversation. "Call me Bertha," she said as condescendingly as a duchess of Versailles might have spoken to a handsome abbot seated at her feet. Her husband, also protested upon hearing Desnoyers call him "Counsellor," like his compatriots.

"My friends," he said, "call me 'Captain.' I command a company of the Landsturm." And the air with which the manufacturer accompanied these words, revealed the melancholy of an unappreciated man scorning the honors he has in order to think only of those he does not possess.

While he was delivering his discourse, Julio was examining his small head and thick neck which gave him a

certain resemblance to a bull dog. In imagination he saw the high and oppressive collar of a uniform making a double roll of fat above its stiff edge. The waxed, upright moustaches were bristling aggressively. His voice was sharp and dry as though he were shaking out his words. . . . Thus the Emperor would utter his harangues, so the martial burgher, with instinctive imitation, was contracting his left arm, supporting his hand upon the hilt of an invisible sword.

In spite of his fierce and oratorical gesture of command, all the listening Germans laughed uproariously at his first words, like men who knew how to appreciate the sacrifice of a Herr Comerzienrath when he deigns to divert a festivity.

"He is saying very witty things about the French," volunteered the interpreter in a low voice, "but they are not offensive."

Julio had guessed as much upon hearing repeatedly the word Franzosen. He almost understood what the orator was saying—"Franzosen—great children, light-hearted, amusing, improvident. The things that they might do together if they would only forget past grudges!" The attentive Germans were no longer laughing. The Counsellor was laying aside his irony, that grandiloquent, crushing irony, weighing many tons, as enormous as a ship. Then he began unrolling the serious part of his harangue, so that he himself, was also greatly affected.

"He says, sir," reported Julio's neighbor, "that he wishes France to become a very great nation so that some day we may march together against other enemies . . . against OTHERS!"

And he winked one eye, smiling maliciously with that smile of common intelligence which this allusion to the mysterious enemy always awakened.

Finally the Captain-Counsellor raised his glass in a toast to France. "Hoch!" he yelled as though he were

commanding an evolution of his soldierly Reserves. Three times he sounded the cry and all the German contingent springing to their feet, responded with a lusty Hoch while the band in the corridor blared forth the Marseillaise.

Desnoyers was greatly moved. Thrills of enthusiasm were coursing up and down his spine. His eyes became so moist that, when drinking his champagne, he almost believed that he had swallowed some tears. He bore a French name. He had French blood in his veins, and this that the gringoes were doing—although generally they seemed to him ridiculous and ordinary—was really worth acknowledging. The subjects of the Kaiser celebrating the great date of the Revolution! He believed that he was witnessing a great historic event.

"Very well done!" he said to the other South Americans at the near tables. "We must admit that they have done the handsome thing."

Then with the vehemence of his twenty-seven years, he accosted the jeweller in the passage way, reproaching him for his silence. He was the only French citizen aboard. He should have made a few words of acknowledgment. The fiesta was ending awkwardly through his fault.

"And why have you not spoken as a son of France?" retorted the jeweller.

"I am an Argentinian citizen," replied Julio.

And he left the older man believing that he ought to have spoken and making explanations to those around him. It was a very dangerous thing, he protested, to meddle in diplomatic affairs. Furthermore, he had not instructions from his government. And for a few hours he believed that he had been on the point of playing a great role in history.

Desnoyers passed the rest of the evening in the smoking room attracted thither by the presence of the Counsellor's Lady. The Captain of the Landsturm, sticking a preposterous cigar between his moustachios, was playing poker with his countrymen ranking next to him in dignity

and riches. His wife stayed beside him most of the time, watching the goings and comings of the stewards carrying great bocks, without daring to share in this tremendous consumption of beer. Her special preoccupation was to keep vacant near her a seat which Desnoyers might occupy. She considered him the most distinguished man on board because he was accustomed to taking champagne with all his meals. He was of medium height, a decided brunette, with a small foot, which obliged her to tuck hers under her skirts, and a triangular face under two masses of hair, straight, black and glossy as lacquer, the very opposite of the type of men about her. Besides, he was living in Paris, in the city which she had never seen after numerous trips in both hemispheres.

"Oh, Paris! Paris!" she sighed, opening her eyes and pursing her lips in order to express her admiration when she was speaking alone to the Argentinian. "How I should love to go there!"

And in order that he might feel free to tell her things about Paris, she permitted herself certain confidences about the pleasures of Berlin, but with a blushing modesty, admitting in advance that in the world there was more—much more—that she wished to become acquainted with.

While pacing around the Chapelle Expiatoire, Julio recalled with a certain remorse the wife of Counsellor Erckmann. He who had made the trip to America for a woman's sake, in order to collect money and marry her! Then he immediately began making excuses for his conduct. Nobody was going to know. Furthermore he did not pretend to be an ascetic, and Bertha Erckmann was certainly a tempting adventure in mid ocean. Upon recalling her, his imagination always saw a race horse—large, spare, roan colored, and with a long stride. She was an up-to-date German who admitted no defect in her country except the excessive weight of its women, combating in her person this national menace with every

known system of dieting. For her every meal was a species of torment, and the procession of bocks in the smoking room a tantalizing agony. The slenderness achieved and maintained by will power only made more prominent the size of her frame, the powerful skeleton with heavy jaws and large teeth, strong and dazzling, which perhaps suggested Desnoyers' disrespectful comparison. "She is thin, but enormous, nevertheless!" was always his conclusion.

But then, he considered her, notwithstanding, the most distinguished woman on board—distinguished for the sea—elegant in the style of Munich, with clothes of indescribable colors that suggested Persian art and the vignettes of mediaeval manuscripts. The husband admired Bertha's elegance, lamenting her childlessness in secret, almost as though it were a crime of high treason. Germany was magnificent because of the fertility of its women. The Kaiser, with his artistic hyperbole, had proclaimed that the true German beauty should have a waist measure of at least a yard and a half.

When Desnoyers entered into the smoking room in order to take the seat which Bertha had reserved for him, her husband and his wealthy hangers-on had their pack of cards lying idle upon the green felt. Herr Rath was continuing his discourse and his listeners, taking their cigars from their mouths, were emitting grunts of approbation. The arrival of Julio provoked a general smile of amiability. Here was France coming to fraternize with them. They knew that his father was French, and that fact made him as welcome as though he came in direct line from the palace of the Quai d'Orsay, representing the highest diplomacy of the Republic. The craze for proselyting made them all promptly concede to him unlimited importance.

"We," continued the Counsellor looking fixedly at Desnoyers as if he were expecting a solemn declaration

from him, "we wish to live on good terms with France."

The youth nodded his head so as not to appear inattentive. It appeared to him a very good thing that these peoples should not be enemies, and as far as he was concerned, they might affirm this relationship as often as they wished: the only thing that was interesting him just at that time was a certain knee that was seeking his under the table, transmitting its gentle warmth through a double curtain of silk.

"But France," complained the manufacturer, "is most unresponsive towards us. For many years past, our Emperor has been holding out his hand with noble loyalty, but she pretends not to see it. . . . That, you must admit, is not as it should be."

Just here Desnoyers believed that he ought to say something in order that the spokesman might not divine his more engrossing occupation.

"Perhaps you are not doing enough. If, first of all, you would return that which you took away from France!" . . .

Stupefied silence followed this remark, as if the alarm signal had sounded through the boat. Some of those who were about putting their cigars in their mouths, remained with hands immovable within two inches of their lips, their eyes almost popping out of their heads. But the Captain of the Landsturm was there to formulate their mute protest.

"Return!" he said in a voice almost extinguished by the sudden swelling of his neck. "We have nothing to return, for we have taken nothing. That which we possess, we acquire by our heroism."

The hidden knee with its agreeable friction made itself more insinuating, as though counselling the youth to greater prudence.

"Do not say such things," breathed Bertha, "thus only the republicans, corrupted by Paris, talk. A youth so distinguished who has been in Berlin, and has relatives in Germany!" . . .

But Desnoyers felt a hereditary impulse of aggressiveness before each of her husband's statements, enunciated in haughty tones, and responded coldly:—

"It is as if I should take your watch and then propose that we should be friends, forgetting the occurrence. Although you might forget, the first thing for me to do would be to return the watch."

Counsellor Erckmann wished to retort with so many things at once that he stuttered horribly, leaping from one idea to the other. To compare the reconquest of Alsace to a robbery. A German country! The race . . . the language . . . the history! . . .

"But when did they announce their wish to be German?" asked the youth without losing his calmness. "When have you consulted their opinion?"

The Counsellor hesitated, not knowing whether to argue with this insolent fellow or crush him with his scorn.

"Young man, you do not know what you are talking about," he finally blustered with withering contempt. "You are an Argentinian and do not understand the affairs of Europe."

And the others agreed, suddenly repudiating the citizenship which they had attributed to him a little while before. The Counsellor, with military rudeness, brusquely turned his back upon him, and taking up the pack, distributed the cards. The game was renewed. Desnoyers, seeing himself isolated by the scornful silence, felt greatly tempted to break up the playing by violence; but the hidden knee continued counselling self-control, and an invisible hand had sought his right, pressing it sweetly. That was enough to make him recover his serenity. The Counsellor's Lady seemed to be absorbed in the progress of the game. He also looked on, a malignant smile contracting slightly the lines of his mouth as he was mentally ejaculating by way of consolation, "Captain, Captain! . . . You little know what is awaiting you!"

On terra firma, he would never again have approached these men; but life on a transatlantic liner, with its inevitable promiscuousness, obliges forgetfulness. The following day the Counsellor and his friends came in search of him, flattering his sensibilities by erasing every irritating memory. He was a distinguished youth belonging to a wealthy family, and all of them had shops and business in his country. The only thing was that he should be careful not to mention his French origin. He was an Argentinian; and thereupon, the entire chorus interested itself in the grandeur of his country and all the nations of South America where they had agencies or investments—exaggerating its importance as though its petty republics were great powers, commenting with gravity upon the deeds and words of its political leaders and giving him to understand that in Germany there was no one who was not concerned about the future of South America, predicting for all its divisions most glorious prosperity—a reflex of the Empire, always, provided, of course, that they kept under Germanic influence.

In spite of these flatteries, Desnoyers was no longer presenting himself with his former assiduity at the hour of poker. The Counsellor's wife was retiring to her stateroom earlier than usual—their approach to the Equator inducing such an irresistible desire for sleep, that she had to abandon her husband to his card playing. Julio also had mysterious occupations which prevented his appearance on deck until after midnight. With the precipitation of a man who desires to be seen in order to avoid suspicion, he was accustomed to enter the smoking room talking loudly as he seated himself near the husband and his boon companions.

The game had ended, and an orgy of beer and fat cigars from Hamburg was celebrating the success of the winners. It was the hour of Teutonic expansion, of intimacy among men, of heavy, sluggish jokes, of off-color stories. The Counsellor was presiding with much majesty over the

diableries of his chums, prudent business men from the Hanseatic ports who had big accounts in the Deutsche Bank or were shopkeepers installed in the republic of the La Plata, with an innumerable family. He was a warrior, a captain, and on applauding every heavy jest with a laugh that distended his fat neck, he fancied that he was among his comrades at arms.

In honor of the South Americans who, tired of pacing the deck, had dropped in to hear what the gringoes were saying, they were turning into Spanish the witticisms and licentious anecdotes awakened in the memory by a superabundance of beer. Julio was marvelling at the ready laugh of all these men. While the foreigners were remaining unmoved, they would break forth into loud horse-laughs throwing themselves back in their seats. And when the German audience was growing cold, the story-teller would resort to an infallible expedient to remedy his lack of success:—

"They told this yarn to the Kaiser, and when the Kaiser heard it he laughed heartily."

It was not necessary to say more. They all laughed then. Ha, ha, ha! with a spontaneous roar but a short one, a laugh in three blows, since to prolong it, might be interpreted as a lack of respect to His Majesty.

As they neared Europe, a batch of news came to meet the boat. The employees in the wireless telegraphy office were working incessantly. One night, on entering the smoking room, Desnoyers saw the German notables gesticulating with animated countenances. They were no longer drinking beer. They had had bottles of champagne uncorked, and the Counsellor's Lady, much impressed, had not retired to her stateroom. Captain Erckmann, spying the young Argentinian, offered him a glass.

"It is war," he shouted with enthusiasm. "War at last. . . . The hour has come!"

Desnoyers made a gesture of astonishment. War! . . . What war? . . . Like all the others, he had read on the news bulletin outside a radiogram stating that the Austrian government had just sent an ultimatum to Servia; but it made not the slightest impression on him, for he was not at all interested in the Balkan affairs. Those were but the quarrels of a miserable little nation monopolizing the attention of the world, distracting it from more worthwhile matters. How could this event concern the martial Counsellor? The two nations would soon come to an understanding. Diplomacy sometimes amounted to something.

"No," insisted the German ferociously. "It is war, blessed war. Russia will sustain Servia, and we will support our ally. . . . What will France do? Do you know what France will do?" . . .

Julio shrugged his shoulders testily as though asking to be left out of all international discussions.

"It is war," asserted the Counsellor, "the preventive war that we need. Russia is growing too fast, and is preparing to fight us. Four years more of peace and she will have finished her strategic railroads, and her military power, united to that of her allies, will be worth as much as ours. It is better to strike a powerful blow now. It is necessary to take advantage of this opportunity. . . . War. Preventive war!"

All his clan were listening in silence. Some did not appear to feel the contagion of his enthusiasm. War! . . . In imagination they saw their business paralyzed, their agencies bankrupt, the banks cutting down credit . . . a catastrophe more frightful to them than the slaughters of battles. But they applauded with nods and grunts all of Erckmann's ferocious demonstrations. He was a Herr Rath, and an officer besides. He must be in the secrets of the destiny of his country, and that was enough to make them drink silently to the success of the war.

Julio thought that the Counsellor and his admirers must be drunk. "Look here, Captain," he said in a conciliatory tone, "what you say lacks logic. How could war possibly be acceptable to industrial Germany? Every moment its business is increasing, every month it conquers a new market and every year its commercial balance soars upward in unheard of proportions. Sixty years ago, it had to man its boats with Berlin hack drivers arrested by the police. Now its commercial fleets and war vessels cross all oceans, and there is no port where the German merchant marine does not occupy the greatest part of the docks. It would only be necessary to continue living in this way, to put yourselves beyond the exigencies of war! Twenty years more of peace, and the Germans would be lords of the world's commerce, conquering England, the former mistress of the seas, in a bloodless struggle. And are they going to risk all this—like a gambler who stakes his entire fortune on a single card—in a struggle that might result unfavorably?" . . .

"No, war," insisted the Counsellor furiously, "preventive war. We live surrounded by our enemies, and this state of things cannot go on. It is best to end it at once. Either they or we! Germany feels herself strong enough to challenge the world. We've got to put an end to this Russian menace! And if France doesn't keep herself quiet, so much the worse for her! . . . And if anyone else . . . ANYONE dares to come in against us, so much the worse for him! When I set up a new machine in my shops, it is to make it produce unceasingly. We possess the finest army in the world, and it is necessary to give it exercise that it may not rust out."

He then continued with heavy emphasis, "They have put a band of iron around us in order to throttle us. But Germany has a strong chest and has only to expand in order to burst its bands. We must awake before they manacle us in our sleep. Woe to those who then oppose us! . . ."

Desnoyers felt obliged to reply to this arrogance. He had never seen the iron circle of which the Germans were complaining. The nations were merely unwilling to continue living, unsuspecting and inactive, before boundless German ambition. They were simply preparing to defend themselves against an almost certain attack. They wished to maintain their dignity, repeatedly violated under most absurd pretexts.

"I wonder if it is not the others," he concluded, "who are obliged to defend themselves because you represent a menace to the world!"

An invisible hand sought his under the table, as it had some nights before, to recommend prudence; but now he clasped it forcibly with the authority of a right acquired.

"Oh, sir!" sighed the sweet Bertha, "to talk like that, a youth so distinguished who has . . ."

She was not able to finish, for her husband interrupted. They were no longer in American waters, and the Counsellor expressed himself with the rudeness of a master of his house.

"I have the honor to inform you, young man," he said, imitating the cutting coldness of the diplomats, "that you are merely a South American and know nothing of the affairs of Europe."

He did not call him an "Indian," but Julio heard the implication as though he had used the word itself. Ah, if that hidden handclasp had not held him with its sentimental thrills! . . . But this contact kept him calm and even made him smile. "Thanks, Captain," he said to himself. "It is the least you can do to get even with me!"

Here his relations with the German and his clientele came to an end. The merchants, as they approached nearer and nearer to their native land, began casting off that servile desire of ingratiating themselves which they had assumed in all their trips to the new world. They now had more important things to occupy them. The telegraphic

service was working without cessation. The Commandant of the vessel was conferring in his apartment with the Counsellor as his compatriot of most importance. His friends were hunting out the most obscure places in order to talk confidentially with one another. Even Bertha commenced to avoid Desnoyers. She was still smiling distantly at him, but that smile was more of a souvenir than a reality.

Between Lisbon and the coast of England, Julio spoke with her husband for the last time. Every morning was appearing on the bulletin board the alarming news transmitted by radiograph. The Empire was arming itself against its enemies. God would punish them, making all manner of troubles fall upon them. Desnoyers was motionless with astonishment before the last piece of news —"Three hundred thousand revolutionists are now besieging Paris. The suburbs are beginning to burn. The horrors of the Commune have broken out again."

"My, but these Germans have gone mad!" exclaimed the disgusted youth to the curious group surrounding the radio-sheet. "We are going to lose the little sense that we have left! . . . What revolutionists are they talking about? How could a revolution break out in Paris if the men of the government are not reactionary?"

A gruff voice sounded behind him, rude, authoritative, as if trying to banish the doubts of the audience. It was the Herr Comerzienrath who was speaking.

"Young man, these notices are sent us by the first agencies of Germany . . . and Germany never lies."

After this affirmation, he turned his back upon them and they saw him no more.

On the following morning, the last day of the voyage. Desnoyers' steward awoke him in great excitement. "Herr, come up on deck! a most beautiful spectacle!"

The sea was veiled by the fog, but behind its hazy curtains could be distinguished some silhouettes like

islands with great towers and sharp, pointed minarets. The islands were advancing over the oily waters slowly and majestically, with impressive dignity. Julio counted eighteen. They appeared to fill the ocean. It was the Channel Fleet which had just left the English coast by Government order, sailing around simply to show its strength. Seeing this procession of dreadnoughts for the first time, Desnoyers was reminded of a flock of marine monsters, and gained a better idea of the British power. The German ship passed among them, shrinking, humiliated, quickening its speed. "One might suppose," mused the youth, "that she had an uneasy conscience and wished to scud to safety." A South American passenger near him was jesting with one of the Germans, "What if they have already declared war! . . . What if they should make us prisoners!"

After midday, they entered Southampton roads. The Frederic August hurried to get away as soon as possible, and transacted business with dizzying celerity. The cargo of passengers and baggage was enormous. Two launches approached the transatlantic and discharged an avalanche of Germans residents in England who invaded the decks with the joy of those who tread friendly soil, desiring to see Hamburg as soon as possible. Then the boat sailed through the Channel with a speed most unusual in these places.

The people, leaning on the railing, were commenting on the extraordinary encounters in this marine boulevard, usually frequented by ships of peace. Certain smoke lines on the horizon were from the French squadron carrying President Poincare who was returning from Russia. The European alarm had interrupted his trip. Then they saw more English vessels patrolling the coast line like aggressive and vigilant dogs. Two North American battleships could be distinguished by their mast-heads in the form of baskets. Then a Russian battleship, white and glistening, passed at full steam on its way to the Baltic.

"Bad!" said the South American passengers regretfully. "Very bad! It looks this time as if it were going to be serious!" and they glanced uneasily at the neighboring coasts on both sides. Although they presented the usual appearance, behind them, perhaps, a new period of history was in the making.

The transatlantic was due at Boulogne at midnight where it was supposed to wait until daybreak to discharge its passengers comfortably. It arrived, nevertheless, at ten, dropped anchor outside the harbor, and the Commandant gave orders that the disembarkation should take place in less than an hour. For this reason they had quickened their speed, consuming a vast amount of extra coal. It was necessary to get away as soon as possible, seeking the refuge of Hamburg. The radiographic apparatus had evidently been working to some purpose.

By the glare of the bluish searchlights which were spreading a livid clearness over the sea, began the unloading of passengers and baggage for Paris, from the transatlantic into the tenders. "Hurry! Hurry!" The seamen were pushing forward the ladies of slow step who were recounting their valises, believing that they had lost some. The stewards loaded themselves up with babies as though they were bundles. The general precipitation dissipated the usual exaggerated and oily Teutonic amiability. "They are regular bootlickers," thought Desnoyers. "They believe that their hour of triumph has come, and do not think it necessary to pretend any longer." . . .

He was soon in a launch that was bobbing up and down on the waves near the black and immovable hulk of the great liner, dotted with many circles of light and filled with people waving handkerchiefs. Julio recognized Bertha who was waving her hand without seeing him, without knowing in which tender he was, but feeling obliged to show her gratefulness for the sweet memories that now were being

lost in the mystery of the sea and the night. "Adieu, Frau Rath!"

The distance between the departing transatlantic and the lighters was widening. As though it had been awaiting this moment with impunity, a stentorian voice on the upper deck shouted with a noisy guffaw, "See you later! Soon we shall meet you in Paris!" And the marine band, the very same band that three days before had astonished Desnoyers with its unexpected Marseillaise, burst forth into a military march of the time of Frederick the Great—a march of grenadiers with an accompaniment of trumpets.

That had been the night before. Although twenty-four hours had not yet passed by, Desnoyers was already considering it as a distant event of shadowy reality. His thoughts, always disposed to take the opposite side, did not share in the general alarm. The insolence of the Counsellor now appeared to him but the boastings of a burgher turned into a soldier. The disquietude of the people of Paris, was but the nervous agitation of a city which lived placidly and became alarmed at the first hint of danger to its comfort. So many times they had spoken of an immediate war, always settling things peacefully at the last moment! . . . Furthermore he did not want war to come because it would upset all his plans for the future; and the man accepted as logical and reasonable everything that suited his selfishness, placing it above reality.

"No, there will not be war," he repeated as he continued pacing up and down the garden. "These people are beside themselves. How could a war possibly break out in these days?" . . .

And after disposing of his doubts, which certainly would in a short time come up again, he thought of the joy of the moment, consulting his watch. Five o'clock! She might come now at any minute! He thought that he recognized her afar off in a lady who was passing through the grating by the rue Pasquier. She seemed to him a little different,

but it occurred to him that possibly the Summer fashions might have altered her appearance. But soon he saw that he had made a mistake. She was not alone, another lady was with her. They were perhaps English or North American women who worshipped the memory of Marie Antoinette and wished to visit the Chapelle Expiatoire, the old tomb of the executed queen. Julio watched them as they climbed the flights of steps and crossed the interior patio in which were interred the eight hundred Swiss soldiers killed in the attack of the Tenth of August, with other victims of revolutionary fury.

Disgusted at his error, he continued his tramp. His ill humor made the monument with which the Bourbon restoration had adorned the old cemetery of the Madeleine, appear uglier than ever to him. Time was passing, but she did not come. Every time that he turned, he looked hungrily at the entrances of the garden. And then it happened as in all their meetings. She suddenly appeared as if she had fallen from the sky or risen up from the ground, like an apparition. A cough, a slight rustling of footsteps, and as he turned, Julio almost collided with her.

"Marguerite! Oh, Marguerite!" . . .

It was she, and yet he was slow to recognize her. He felt a certain strangeness in seeing in full reality the countenance which had occupied his imagination for three months, each time more spirituelle and shadowy with the idealism of absence. But his doubts were of short duration. Then it seemed as though time and space were eliminated, that he had not made any voyage, and but a few hours had intervened since their last interview.

Marguerite divined the expansion which might follow Julio's exclamations, the vehement hand-clasp, perhaps something more, so she kept herself calm and serene.

"No; not here," she said with a grimace of repugnance. "What a ridiculous idea for us to have met here!"

They were about to seat themselves on the iron chairs, in the shadow of some shrubbery, when she rose suddenly. Those who were passing along the boulevard might see them by merely casting their eyes toward the garden. At this time, many of her friends might be passing through the neighborhood because of its proximity to the big shops. . . . They, therefore, sought refuge at a corner of the monument, placing themselves between it and the rue des Mathurins. Desnoyers brought two chairs near the hedge, so that when seated they were invisible to those passing on the other side of the railing. But this was not solitude. A few steps away, a fat, nearsighted man was reading his paper, and a group of women were chatting and embroidering. A woman with a red wig and two dogs—some housekeeper who had come down into the garden in order to give her pets an airing—passed several times near the amorous pair, smiling discreetly.

"How annoying!" groaned Marguerite. "Why did we ever come to this place!"

The two scrutinized each other carefully, wishing to see exactly what transformation Time had wrought.

"You are darker than ever," she said. "You look like a man of the sea."

Julio was finding her even lovelier than before, and felt sure that possessing her was well worth all the contrarieties which had brought about his trip to South America. She was taller than he, with an elegantly proportioned slenderness. "She has the musical step," Desnoyers had told himself, when seeing her in his imagination; and now, on beholding her again, the first thing that he admired was her rhythmic tread, light and graceful as she passed through the garden seeking another seat. Her features were not regular but they had a piquant fascination—a true Parisian face. Everything that had been invented for the embellishment of feminine charm was used about her person with the most exquisite fastidiousness.

She had always lived for herself. Only a few months before had she abdicated a part of this sweet selfishness, sacrificing reunions, teas, and calls in order to give Desnoyers some of the afternoon hours.

Stylish and painted like a priceless doll, with no loftier ambition than to be a model, interpreting with personal elegance the latest confections of the modistes, she was at last experiencing the same preoccupations and joys as other women, creating for herself an inner life. The nucleus of this new life, hidden under her former frivolity, was Desnoyers. Just as she was imagining that she had reorganized her existence—adjusting the satisfactions of worldly elegance to the delights of love in intimate secrecy—a fulminating catastrophe (the intervention of her husband whose possible appearance she seemed to have overlooked) had disturbed her thoughtless happiness. She who was accustomed to think herself the centre of the universe, imagining that events ought to revolve around her desires and tastes, had suffered this cruel surprise with more astonishment than grief.

"And you, how do you think I look?" Marguerite queried.

"I must tell you that the fashion has changed. The sheath skirt has passed away. Now it is worn short and with more fullness."

Desnoyers had to interest himself in her apparel with the same devotion, mixing his appreciation of the latest freak of the fashion-monger with his eulogies of Marguerite's beauty.

"Have you thought much about me?" she continued. "You have not been unfaithful to me a single time? Not even once? . . . Tell me the truth; you know I can always tell when you are lying."

"I have always thought of you," he said putting his hand on his heart, as if he were swearing before a judge.

And he said it roundly, with an accent of truth, since in his infidelities—now completely forgotten—the memory of