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THE BRIDE of THE SUN

GASTON LEROUX

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The Bride of the Sun

BY

GASTON LEROUX

Author of "The Mystery of the Yellow Room," "The Perfume of the Lady in Black," etc.

NEW YORK

McBRIDE, NAST & COMPANY

1915

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BOOK I

THE GOLDEN SUN BRACELET

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THE BRIDE OF THE SUN

I

As the liner steamed into Callao Roads, and long before it had anchored, it was surrounded by a flotilla of small boats. A moment later, deck, saloons and cabins were invaded by a host of gesticulating and strong-minded boatmen, whose badges attested that they were duly licensed to carry off what passengers and luggage they could. They raged impotently, however, round Francis Montgomery, F.R.S., who sat enthroned on a pile of securely locked boxes in which were stored his cherished manuscripts and books.

It was in vain that they told him it would be two full hours before the ship came alongside the Darsena dock. Nothing would part him from his treasures, nothing induce him to allow these half-crazed foreigners to hurl his precious luggage overside into those frail-looking skiffs.

When this was suggested to him by a tall young man who called him uncle, the irascible scientist explained with fluency and point that the idea was an utterly ridiculous one. So Dick

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Montgomery shrugged his broad shoulders, and with a "See you presently," that hardly interrupted his uncle's flow of words, beckoned to a boatman.

A moment later he had left the ship's side and was nearing the shore — the Eldorado of his young ambition, the land of gold and legends, the Peru of Pizarro and the Incas. Then the thought of a young girl's face blotted out those dreams to make way for new ones.

The monotonous outline of the waterfront brought no disappointment. Little did he care that the city stretched out there before his eyes was little more than a narrow, unbeautiful blur along the sea coast, that there were none of those towers, steeples or minarets with which our ancient ports beckon out to sea that the traveler is welcome. Even when his boat had passed the Mole, and they drew level with the modern works of the Muelle Darsena, well calculated to excite the interest of a younger engineer, he remained indifferent.

He had asked the boatman where the Calle de Lima lay, and his eyes hardly left the part of the city which had been pointed out to him in reply. At the landing stage he threw a handfull of centavos to his man, and shouldered his way through the press of guides, interpreters, hotel touts and other waterside parasites.

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Soon he was before the Calle de Lima, a thoroughfare which seemed to be the boundary line between the old city and the new. Above, to the east, was the business section — streets broad or narrow fronted with big, modern buildings that were the homes of English, French, German, Italian and Spanish firms without number. Below, to the west, a network of tortuous rows and alleys, full of color, with colonnades and verandahs encroaching on every available space.

Dick plunged into this labyrinth, shouldered by muscular Chinamen carrying huge loads, and by lazy Indians. Here and there was to be seen a sailor leaving or entering one of the many cafés which opened their doors into the cool bustle of the narrow streets. Though it was his first visit to Callao, the young man hardly hesitated in his way. Then he stopped short against a decrepit old wall close to a verandah from which came the sound of a fresh young voice, young but very assured.

"Just as you like, señor," it said in Spanish. "But at that price your fertilizer can only be of an inferior quality."

For a few minutes the argument went on within. Then there was an exchange of courteous farewells and a door was closed. Dick approached the balcony and looked into the room. Seated before an enormous ledger was a young

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girl, busily engaged in transcribing figures into a little note-book attached by a gold chain to the daintiest of waists. Her face, a strikingly beautiful one, was a little set under its crown of coal-black hair as she bent over her task. It was not the head of a languorous Southern belle — rather the curls of Carmen helmeting a blue-eyed Minerva, a little goddess of reason of to-day and a thorough business-woman. At last she lifted her head.

"Maria-Teresa? . . ."

"Dick!"

The heavy green ledger slipped and crashed to the floor, as she ran toward him both hands outstretched.

"Well, and how is business?"

"So, so. . . . And how are you? . . . But we did not expect you till to-morrow."

"We made rather a good passage."

"And how is May?"

"She's a very grown-up person now. I suppose you've heard? Her second baby was born just before we left."

"And dear smoky old London?"

"It was raining hard when last I saw it."

"But where is your uncle?"

"Still on board. He won't leave his collection. . . . Does nothing all day but take notes for his next book. . . . Wait a minute, I'll come

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in. Where's the door? I suppose it would be bad form to climb in through the window? Won't I be in the way, though? You seem awfully busy."

"I am, but you may come in. Round the corner there, and the first door on your right."

He followed her indications and found an archway leading into a huge courtyard crowded with Chinese coolies and Quichua Indians. A huge dray, coming from the direction of the harbor, rumbled under the archway, and wheeled in the court to let an empty one pass out. People and things seemed to unite in making as much dust and noise as possible.

"So she manages all this," he reflected as he made his way toward a door at which she had appeared.

"You may kiss me," she said as she closed the door behind them.

He took her in his arms and held her to him, by far the more troubled of the two. Again it was she who spoke first.

"So you really have not forgotten?"

"Could you believe it, dear?"

"Well, you were so long in coming."

"But I wrote, and . . ."

"Well, never mind now. It is not too late. I have just refused my fourth suitor, Don Alonso de Cuelar. And father, I think, is furious with

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me for refusing the most eligible young man in Lima. . . . Well, why don't you say something?"

"Forgive me, dear. . . . How is your father? and the kiddies? . . . I hardly know what I am saying, I am so glad."

"Father is very well, and very glad to hear that you were coming. To tell the truth though, he is far more interested in your uncle's visit. He has arranged a meeting at the Geographical Society for him. And for the past month he has been thinking and talking of nothing but archæology. They have been digging up all sorts of things."

"And so he has been angry with you?"

"He seems to think he has every reason to be. I am twenty-three and he already sees me an old maid. . . . It's awfully funny! Do you know what they call me in Lima now? The Virgin of the Sun!"

"What does that mean?"

"Aunt Agnes and Aunt Irene will explain better than I can. It's something like one of the Vestals — an old Inca legend."

"H'm, some superstitious rot. . . . But look here, Maria-Teresa, I'm an awful coward. Do you think your father . . ."

"Of course! He'll do anything I like if he is asked at the right moment. We'll be married in

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three months' time from San Domingo. Truly we will!"

"You dear! . . . But I'm only a poor devil of an engineer, and he may not think me much of a son-in-law for the Marquis de la Torre."

"Nonsense, you're clever, and I make you a gift of the whole of Peru. There's plenty to do there for an engineer."

"I can hardly believe my luck, Maria-Teresa! That I — I. . . . But, tell me, how did it all happen?"

"The old, old way. First you are neighbors, or meet by accident. Then you are friends . . . just friends, nothing else. . . . And then . . .?"

Their hands joined, and they remained thus for a moment, in silence.

Suddenly, a burst of noise came from the court-yard, and a moment later a hurried knock announced the entrance of an excited employee. At the sight of the stranger, he stopped short, but Maria-Teresa told him to speak. Dick, who both understood and spoke Spanish well, listened.

"The Indians are back from the Islands, señorita. There has been trouble between them and the Chinamen. One coolie was killed and three were badly wounded."

Maria-Teresa showed no outward sign of emotion. Her voice hardened as she asked:—

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"Where did it happen . . . in the Northern Islands?"

"No, at Chincha."

"Then Huascar was there?"

"Yes, señorita. He came back with them, and is outside."

"Send him in to me."

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II

THE man went out, signing as he went to a stalwart Indian who walked quietly into the office. Maria-Teresa, back at her desk, hardly raised her eyes. The newcomer, who took off his straw sombrero with a sweep worthy of a hidalgo of Castille, was a Trigullo Indian. These are perhaps the finest tribe of their race and claim descent from Manco-Capac, first king of the Incas. A mass of black hair, falling nearly to his shoulders, framed a profile which might have been copied from a bronze medallion. His eyes, strangely soft as he looked at the young girl before him, provoked immediate antagonism from Dick. He was wrapped in a bright-colored poncho, and a heavy sheath-knife hung from his belt.

"Tell me how it happened," ordered Maria-Teresa without returning the Indian's salute.

Under his rigid demeanor, it was evident that he resented this tone before a stranger. Then he began to speak in Quichua, only to be interrupted and told to use Spanish. The Indian frowned and glanced haughtily at the listening engineer.

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"I am waiting," said Maria-Teresa. "So your Indians have killed one of my coolies?"

"The shameless ones laughed because our Indians fired cohetes in honor of the first quarter of the moon."

"I do not pay your Indians to pass their time in setting off fireworks."

"It was the occasion of the Noble Feast of the Moon."

"Yes, I know! The moon, and the stars, and the sun, and every Catholic festival as well! Your Indians do nothing but celebrate. They are lazy, and drunkards. I have stood them so far because they were your friends, and you have always been a good servant, but this is too much."

"The shameless sons of the West are not your servants. They do not love you. . . ."

"No, but they work."

"For nothing . . . They have no pride. . . . They are the sons of dogs."

"They earn their wages. . . . Your men, I keep out of charity!"

"Charity!" The Indian stepped back as if struck, and his hand, swung clear of the poncho, was lifted over his head as if in menace. Then it dropped and he strode to the door. But before opening it, he turned and

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spoke rapidly in Quichua, his eyes flaming. Then, throwing his poncho over his shoulder, he went out.

Maria-Teresa sat silent for a while, toying with her pencil.

"What did he say?" asked Dick.

"That he was going, and that I should never see him again."

"He looked furious."

"Oh, he is not dangerous. It is a way they have. He says he did everything he could to prevent the trouble. . . . He is a good man himself, but his gang are hopeless. You have no idea what a nuisance these Indians are. Proud as Lucifer, and as lazy as drones. . . . I shall never employ another one."

"Wouldn't that make trouble?"

"It might! But what else can I do? I can't have all my coolies killed off like that."

"And what of Huascar?"

"He will do as he pleases. . . . He was brought up in the place, and was devoted to my mother."

"It must be hard for him to leave."

"I suppose so."

"And you wouldn't do anything to keep him?"

"No. . . . Goodness, we are forgetting all about your uncle!" She rang, and a man came

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in. "Order the motor. . . . By the way, what are the Indians doing?"

"They've left with Huascar."

"All of them?"

"Yes, señorita."

"Without saying a word?"

"Not a word, señorita."

"Who paid them off?"

"They refused to take any money. Huascar ordered them to."

"And what of the Island coolies?"

"They have not been near the place."

"But the dead man . . . and the wounded?"

"The Chinamen take them back to their own quarters."

"Funny people. . . . Tell them to bring the motor round."

While speaking she had put on a bonnet, and now drew on her gloves.

"I shall drive," she said to the liveried negro boy who brought round the car.

As they shot toward the Muelle Darsena, Dick admired the coolness with which she took the machine through the twisting streets. The boy, crouching at their feet, was evidently used to the speed, and showed no terror as they grazed walls and corners.

"Do you do a great deal of motoring out here?"

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"No, not very much. The roads are too bad. I always use this to get from Callao to Lima, and there are one or two runs to the seaside, to places like Ancon or Carillos — just a minute, Dick."

She stopped the car, and waved her hand to a curly gray head which had appeared at a window, between two flower pots. This head reappeared at a low door, on the shoulders of a gallant old gentleman in sumptuous uniform. Maria-Teresa jumped out of the motor, exchanged a few sentences with him, and then rejoined Dick again.

"That was the Chief of Police," she explained. "I told him about that affair. There will be no trouble unless the Chinamen take legal proceedings, which is not likely."

They reached the steamers' landing stage in time. The tugs had only just brought alongside the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's liner, on board which Uncle Francis was still taking notes: — "On entering the port of Callao, one is struck, etc., etc." He lost precious material by not being with Maria-Teresa as she enthusiastically described "her harbor" to Dick. . . . Sixty millions spent in improvements . . . 50,000 square meters of docks. . . . How she loved it all for its commercial bustle, for its constant coming and going of ships, for its intense life,

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and all it meant — the riches that would flow through it after the opening of the Panama Canal . . . the renascence of Peru. . . . Chili conquered and Santiago crushed . . . the defeat of 1878 avenged . . . and San Francisco yonder had best look to itself!

Dick, listening to the girl at his side, was amazed to hear her give figures with as much authority as an engineer, estimate profits as surely as a shipowner. What a splendid little brain it was, and how much better than that imaginative, dreaming type which he deplored both in men and women, a type exemplified by his uncle with all his chimeric hypotheses.

"It would all be so splendid," she added, frowning, "if we only stopped making fools of ourselves. But we are always doing it."

"In what way?"

"With our revolutions!"

They were now standing on the quay, while the liner gradually swung in.

"Oh, are they at it here as well? We found one on in Venezuela, and then another at Guayaquil. The city was under martial law, and some general or other who had been in power for about forty-eight hours was preparing to march on Quito and wipe out the government."

"Yes, it is like an epidemic," went on the

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young girl, "an epidemic which is sweeping the Andes just now. The news from Boloisa is worrying me, too. Things are bad round Lake Titicaca."

"Not really! That's a nuisance . . . not a cheerful outlook for my business in the Cuzco." Dick was evidently put out by the news.

"I had not intended telling you about it until to-morrow. You must not think of unpleasant things to-day . . . all that district is in the hands of Garcia's men now."

"Who is Garcia?"

"Oh, one of my old suitors."

"Has everybody in the country been in love with you, Maria-Teresa?"

"Well, I had the attraction of having been brought up abroad . . . at the first presidential ball I went to after mother's death there was no getting rid of them. . . . Garcia was there. And now he has raised the revolt among the Arequipa and Cuzco Indians. . . . He wants Vointemilla's place as president."

"I suppose they have sent troops against them?"

"Oh, yes, the two armies are out there . . . but, of course, they are not fighting."

"Why?"

"Because of the festival of the Interaymi."

"And what on earth is that?"

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"The Festival of the Sun. . . . You see, three quarters of the troops on both sides are Indian. . . . So, of course, they get drunk together during the fêtes. . . . In the end, Garcia will be driven over the Boloisan border, but in the meantime he is playing the very mischief with fertilizer rates."

She turned toward the liner again, and, catching sight of Uncle Francis, raised her hand in reply to the frantic waving of a notebook.

"How are you, Mr. Montgomery?" she cried. "Did you enjoy the crossing?"

The gangways were run out, and they went on board.

Mr. Montgomery's first question was the same as had been his nephew's.

"Well, and how is business?"

For all those who knew her in Europe had marveled at the change which had come over the "little girl" at her mother's death, and her sudden determination to return to Peru and herself take charge of the family's fertilizer business and concessions. She had also been influenced in this decision by the fact that there were her little brother and sister, Isabella and Christobal, who needed her care. And finally there was her father, perhaps the greatest child of the three, who had always royally spent the money which his wife's business brought in.

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Maria-Teresa's mother, the daughter of a big Liverpool shipowner, met the handsome Marquis de la Torre one summer when he was an attaché at the Peruvian legation in London. The following winter she went back to Peru with him. Inheriting a great deal of her father's business acumen, she made a great success of a guano concession which her husband had hitherto left unexploited.

At first the marquis protested vigorously that the wife of Christobal de la Torre should not work, but when he found that he could draw almost to any extent on an ever-replenishing exchequer, he forgave her for making him so wealthy. Yet on his wife's death did he find it surprising that Maria-Teresa should have inherited her abilities, and allowed the daughter to take over all the duties which had been the mother's.

"And where is your father, my dear?" asked Uncle Francis, still with a wary eye on his luggage.

"He did not expect to see you until to-morrow. They are going to give you such a reception! The whole Geographical Society is turning out in your honor."

When his luggage had been taken to the station, and he had personally supervised its registration for Lima, Uncle Francis at last consented

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to take a seat in the motor, and Maria-Teresa put on full speed, for she wished to reach home before the early tropical nightfall.

After passing a line of adobe houses and a few comfortable villas, they came to a long stretch of marshy ground, overgrown with reeds and willows, and spotted with clumps of banana trees and tamarisks, with here and there an eucalyptus or an araucaria pine. The whole countryside was burnt yellow by the sun, by a drought hardly ever relieved by a drop of rain, and which makes the campo round Lima and Callao anything but enchanting. A little further along they passed some scattered bamboo and adobe huts.

This parched landscape would have been infinitely desolate had it not been relieved at intervals by the luxuriant growth surrounding some hacienda — sugar-cane, maize and rice plantations, making a brilliant green oasis round the white farm buildings. The badly-built clay roads which crossed the highway were peopled by droves of cattle, heavy carts, and flocks of sheep which mounted shepherds were bringing back to the farms. And all this animation formed a strange contrast to the arid aspect of the surrounding country. In spite of the jolting shaking of the car over a poorly kept road, Uncle Francis kept taking notes, and even more

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notes. Soon, with the lower spurs of the Cordilleras, they saw on the horizon the spires and domes which make Lima look almost like a Mussulman city.

They were now running alongside the Rimac, a stream infested by crayfish. Negro fishermen were to be seen every few yards dragging behind them in the water sacks attached to their belts, and in which they threw their catch to keep it alive. Turning to comment on them, Dick noticed Maria-Teresa's preoccupied air, and asked her the cause.

"It is very strange," she said, "we have not met a single Indian."

The motor was almost in Lima now, having reached the famous Ciudad de los Reyes, the City of Kings founded by the Conquistador. Maria-Teresa, who loved her Lima, and wished to show it off, made a detour, swerving from the road and running a short distance along the stony bed of dried-up Rimac, careless of the risk to her tires.

Certainly the picturesque corner to which she brought them was worth the detour. The walls of the houses could hardly be seen, overgrown, as it were, with wooden galleries and balconies. Some of them were for all the world like finely carved boxes, adorned with a hundred arabesques — little rooms suspended in mid-air, with

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mysterious bars and trellised shutters, and strongly reminiscent of Peru or Bagdad. Only here it was not rare to see women's faces half hidden in the shadows, though in no way hiding. For the ladies of Lima are famed for their beauty and coquetry. They were to be seen here in the streets, wearing the manta, that fine black shawl which is wrapped round the head and shoulders and which no woman in South America uses with so much grace as the girl of Lima. Like the haik of the Mor, the manta hides all but two great dark eyes, but its wearer can, when she wishes, throw it aside just enough to give a sweet glimpse of harmonious features and a complexion made even more white by the provoking shadow of the veil. Dick had this amply proved to him, and seemed so interested that Maria-Teresa began to scold.

"They are far too attractive in those mantas," she said. "I shall show you some Europeans now."

She turned the car up an adjoining street, which brought them to the new city, to broad roads and avenues opening up splendid vistas of the distant Andes. They crossed the Paseo Amancaes, which is the heart of the Mayfair of Lima, and Maria-Teresa several times exchanged bows with friends and acquaintances. Here the black manta was replaced by Paris hats over-

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dressed from the rue de la Paix, for its discreet shadow is too discreet to be correct at nightfall. It was the hour at which all fashionable Lima was driving or walking, or gossiping in the tea-rooms, where one loiters happily over helados in an atmosphere of chiffons, flirting and politics. When they reached the Plaza Mayor, the first stars had risen on the horizon. The crowd was dense, and carriages advanced only at a walking pace. Women dressed as for the ball, with flowers in their dark curls, passed in open carriages. Young men grouped round a fountain in the center of the square, raised their hats and smiled into passing victorias.

"It really is strange," murmured Maria-Teresa, "not an Indian in sight!"

"Do they generally come to this part of the city, then?"

"Yes, there are always some who come to watch the people come past. . . ."

Standing in front of a café was a group of half-breeds, talking politics. One could distinctly hear the names of Garcia and Vointemilla, the president, neither of them treated over gently. One of the group, evidently a shop-keeper, was moaning his fears of a return to the era of pronunciamentos.

The car turned at the corner of the cathedral, and entered a rather narrow street. Seeing the

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way clear, Maria-Teresa put on speed only to pull up sharply a second later, just in time to avoid running down a man wrapped in a poncho, who stood motionless in the middle of the street. Both young people recognized him.

"Huascar!" exclaimed Maria-Teresa.

"Huascar, señorita, who begs you to take another road."

"The road is free to all, Huascar. Stand aside."

"Huascar has nothing more to say to the señorita. To pass, she must pass over Huascar."

Dick half rose in his seat, as if to intervene, but Maria-Teresa put a hand on his sleeve.

"You behave very strangely, Huascar," she said. "Why are there no Indians in the town to-day?"

"Huascar's brethren do as they please, they are free men."

She shrugged her shoulders, thought a moment, and began to turn the car round.

Before starting again, however, she spoke to the Indian, who had not moved.

"Are you always my friend, Huascar?"

For an answer, the Indian slowly raised his sombrero, and looked up to the early stars, as if calling them to witness. With a brief "Adios!" Maria-Teresa drove on.

When the motor stopped again, it was before

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a big house, the door-keeper of which rushed out to help his young mistress to alight. He was forestalled, however, by the Marquis de la Torre himself, who had just driven up, and who greeted the two Montgomerys with delight. "Enter, señor. This house is yours," he said grandly to Uncle Francis.

The Marquis was a slim little gentleman of excessive smartness, dressed almost like a young man. When he moved and he was hardly ever still, he seemed to radiate brilliancy: from his eyes, his clothes, his jewels. But for all that, he was never undignified, and kept his grand manner without losing his vivacity in circumstances when others would have had to arm themselves with severity. Outside his club and the study of geographical questions he cared for nothing so much as romping with his son Christobal, a sturdy youngster of seven. At times one might have taken them for playmates on a holiday from the same school, filling the house with their noise, while little Isabella, who was nearly six, and loved ceremony, scolded them pompously, after the manner of an Infanta.

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III

THE Marquis de la Torre's residence was half modern, half historical, with here and there quaint old-fashioned rooms and corners. Don Christobal was something of a collector, and had adorned his home with ancient paneling, carved galleries several centuries old, rude furniture dating back to before the conquest, faded tapestry — all so many relics of the various towns of old Peru which his ancestors had first sacked and then peopled. And each object recalled some anecdote or story which the host detailed at length to all willing listeners.

It was in one of these historical corners that Mr. Montgomery and his nephew were presented to two old ladies — two Velasquez canvases brought to life, yet striving to retain all their pictorial dignity. Attired after a fashion long since forgotten, Aunt Agnes and her duenna might almost have been taken for antiques of Don Christobal's collection: they lived altogether in another age, and their happiest moments were those passed in telling fear-inspiring legends. All the tales of old Peru had a home in this ancient room of theirs, and many an

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evening had been whiled away there by these narratives — the two Christobals, father and son, and little Infanta Isabella listening in one corner, while Maria-Teresa, at the other end of the room, went over her accounts and wrote her letters in a great splash of yellow lamplight.

Uncle Francis was delighted to meet in real life two such perfect types of the New Spain of yore, set in the very frame they needed. They were great friends at once, and the savant, taken to his own room, changed his clothes hurriedly to be able to rejoin them. At dinner, installed between the two, he begged for more legends, more stories. Maria-Teresa, thinking it time to talk of more serious matters, interrupted by telling her father of the trouble between the Indians and coolies.

When they heard that Maria-Teresa had discharged the Indians, Aunt Agnes shook her head doubtfully, and Irene openly expressed her disapproval. Both agreed that the young girl had acted imprudently, and particularly so on the eve of the Interaymi festival. This view was also taken by the Marquis, whose protest took an even more active form when he learned that Huascar had also left. Huascar had always been a very faithful servant, he argued, and his brusk departure was strange. Maria-Teresa explained shortly that for some time past Huas-

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car's manner had displeased her, and that she had let him know it.

"That is another matter," said the Marquis. "But I am no more comfortable about it . . . there is something in the air . . . the Indians are not behaving normally. . . . The other day, in the Plaza Mayor, I heard extraordinary remarks being made by some half-breeds to a couple of Quichua chiefs."

"Yes, we did not meet a single Indian on the way from Callao, and I have not seen one in the city," said Dick. "Why is that, I wonder?"

"Because of the festival," interjected Aunt Agnes. "They have their secret meetings. They disappear into the mountains, or some warren of theirs — catacombs like the Early Christians. One day, the order comes from some corner of the Andes, and they vanish like shadows, to reappear a few days later like a swarm of locusts."

"My sister exaggerates a little," said the Marquis, smiling. "They are not so very dangerous, after all."

"But you yourself are worried, Christobal. You have just said so."

"Only because there might be some rioting. . . ."

"Have they got it in them?" asked Mr. Montgomery. "They seem so nerveless. . . ."

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"They are not all like that. . . . Yes, we have had one or two native rebellions, but it was never anything very serious."

"How many of them are there in the country?" put in Dick.

"About two-thirds of the population," answered Maria-Teresa. "But they are no more capable of really rebelling than they are of working properly. It is the Garcia business that has unsettled them, coming after a long period of quiet." She turned to her father. "What does the President think of it all?"

"He does not seem to worry a great deal. This Indian unrest recurs every ten years."

"Why every ten years?" demanded Uncle Francis.

"Because of the Sun Festival," said old Irene. "The Quichuas hold it every ten years."

"Where?" Dick took a sudden interest.

"Nobody knows," replied Aunt Agnes, in a curiously strangled voice. "There are sacrifices . . . and the ashes of the victims are thrown into rivers and streams . . . to carry away the sins of the nation, the Indians believe."

"That is really very interesting!" exclaimed Uncle Francis.

"Some of the sacrifices are human," half groaned the old lady, dropping her head to her plate.

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"Human sacrifices!"

"Oh, Auntie!" laughed Maria-Teresa.

"Curious," remarked the savant. "And there may be some truth in it. I know that they were customary at the Festival of the Sun among the Incas. And Prescott makes it clear that the Quichuas have kept not only the language of their ancestors, but also many of the ancient customs."

"Yes, but they became Christians when the Spaniards conquered their country," suggested Dick.

"Not that that affects them much," commented the Marquis. "It gives them two religions instead of one, and they have mixed up the rites and beliefs of the two in a most amazing fashion."

"What do they want to do, then? Re-build the Empire of the Incas?"

"They don't know what they want," replied Maria-Teresa. "In the days of the Incas, every living being in the Empire had to work, they were practically the slaves of the Sons of the Sun. When that iron discipline was removed, they gradually learned to do nothing but sleep. Of course, that meant poverty and misery, which they attribute, not to their laziness, but to the fact that they are no longer ruled by the descendants of Mono-Capac! From what Huascar told

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me, they still hope for a return of the old kings."

"And they still go in for human sacrifice?" asked Dick.

"Of course not! What absolute nonsense!" Aunt Agnes and Irene both turned to Uncle Francis.

"Maria-Teresa was brought up abroad, and does not know. . . . She cannot know. . . . But she is wrong to laugh at what she calls 'all these old stories.' . . . There is plenty of proof, and we are sure of it. . . . Every ten years — all great events were decennial among the Incas — every ten years, the Quichua Indians offer a bride to the Sun."

"A bride to the Sun?" exclaimed Uncle Francis, half horrified, half incredulous.

"Yes . . . they sacrifice a young girl in one of those horrible Inca temples of theirs, where no stranger has ever gone! . . . It is terrible, but it is true."

"Really . . . it is so difficult to believe. . . . Do you mean to say that they kill her?"

"They do . . . as a sacrifice to the Sun."

"But how? By fire?"

"No, it is even more horrible than that. Death by fire is only for far more unimportant ceremonies. At the Interaymi, they wall up their victim alive. . . . And it is always a Spanish girl. . . . They kidnap one, as beautiful

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and of as good family as possible. . . . It is vengeance against the race that destroyed theirs."

Maria-Teresa was frankly laughing at her aunt's intense seriousness, only equaled by the gravity with which Uncle Francis listened. The savant looked at her smiling face half disapprovingly, and brought his scientific knowledge to the defense of the old ladies. Everything they said corresponded perfectly with what well-known writers and explorers had been able to discover about the Virgins of the Sun. There was no doubt that human sacrifice had been rife among the Incas, both in honor of the Sun and for the King himself, many of the victims going to the altar of their own free will. This was particularly the case when an Inca died — it was like Suttee of the East.

"Prescott and Wiener, the greatest authorities on the subject, are agreed," said Uncle Francis. "Prescott tells us that at one royal burial, more than a thousand people, wives, maids and servants of the Inca, were sacrificed on his tomb."

Aunt Agnes shuddered, while Irene, bending her head, made the sign of the Cross.

"All this is very true, my dear sir," said Don Christobal, carrying on the conversation, "and I see that our Geographical Society here will be

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able to give you very little that is new to you. Would it interest you to visit our latest excavations at Ancon to-morrow? There is ample proof there that Suttee was practised among the Incas."

"What exactly were these Virgins of the Sun?" asked Dick, turning to his uncle, who, delighted to be able to show his erudition, at once launched into an explanation.

"The Virgins of the Sun, or the 'elected ones,' as they were called, were young girls, vowed to the service of the divinity. They were taken from their families as children, and put into convents where they were placed under the care of women called *mammaconas*,— girls who had grown old in these monasteries. Under the guidance of these venerable matrons, the virgins were taught their religious duties, weaving and embroidery were their chief occupations, and it was they who made the fine vicuna wool for the hangings of the temples and the Inca's home and attire."

"Yes," said gray-haired Irene, "but their chief duty was to guard the sacred fire acquired anew by the temple at each Raymi festival."

"That is so," replied the savant. "They lived absolutely alone. From the moment they entered the home, they were entirely cut off from their families and friends. The Inca alone, and

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his queen, the Coya, were allowed within the sacred precincts. The most rigid discipline and supervision were exercised over them."

"And woe to the girl who transgressed," added Aunt Irene. "By Inca law she was buried alive, while the town or village from which she came was razed to the ground and 'sown with stones,' so that all memory of it should be lost."

"You are perfectly right, madam," agreed Uncle Francis.

"Sweet country!" Dick exclaimed.

"What an amazing civilization they must have possessed," continued Uncle Francis. "The ceremonies of their temples are almost identical with those of ancient Rome. . . . Little did Christopher Columbus think, when he saw a few painted savages, that on the other seaboard, behind this belt of primitive land and tribes, there was a whole world with its customs, monuments, laws and conquests. Two empires, sir: that of the Aztecs in Mexico, that of the Incas in Peru. And with civilizations rivaling that of the Mediterranean. It is as if an Eastern prince, reaching the steppes of Scythia, had claimed the discovery of Europe, returning to his States without knowing that Rome existed, and convinced that the rest of the world was a howling waste!"

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"He must have been a bit of a fool," hazarded Dick. "A true conqueror guesses there are new lands to conquer even before he sees them."

"Like Pizarro and Cortes!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"Who came to destroy everything . . ." began Uncle Francis. Fortunately, Don Christobal did not hear him, and he stopped in time. Maria-Teresa, seated opposite the savant, had trodden on his foot, and he bit his lip, remembering that de la Torre, the Marquis' ancestor, had been one of Pizarro's "destroyers."

Both old ladies, however, had heard, and opened their eyes at this denunciation of a cause which to them was that of the true faith against the infidel. Maria-Teresa, anxious to smooth matters over, quickly brought them back to their Inca legends.

"All this is very fine," she said, "but there is nothing to show that the Indians still sacrifice human beings."

"How can you say that!" they exclaimed in chorus.

"Well, has anybody ever had definite proof of it?"

Aunt Agnes was not to be shaken in her convictions.

"When I was a little girl," she declared, "I had an old nurse who belonged to one of the

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Lake Titicaca tribes of Quichuas. She told me that she herself had seen three Spanish girls walled up alive at three successive Interaymi fêtes."

"Where did the girls come from?" asked Dick.

"They were Lima girls."

"But then, any number of people must have known of it," he answered, secretly amused by the grave airs of the two old ladies.

"It was, and is, common property," retorted Aunt Agnes. "The names of their last two victims were known to everybody. One vanished ten years ago, and the other ten years before that."

"Yes, yes, common property!" laughed Don Christobal.

"There is nothing to laugh about, Christobal," said Aunt Agnes drily.

And the duenna repeated in a low voice, "No, no, nothing to laugh about."

The Marquis was determined to have his laugh.

"Let us mourn the poor children," he said, groaning. "Cut off from the affection of their parents at so early an age! How terrible!"

"Christobal, can you tell me what became of Amelia de Vargas and Marie Cristina de Orellana?"

"Yes, what became of them?" urged Irene.

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"There we are! . . . the old story! I expected it!" exclaimed the Marquis.

"You might speak seriously! You knew Amelia de Vargas. . . ."

"A charming girl . . . the sweetest smile in the city! . . . That was twenty years ago. . . . How time flies! . . . Yes, she disappeared . . . with a poor cousin."

"I heard the other day that it was a toreador," interjected Maria-Teresa. "They revive that old story every ten years, at the time of the Interaymi."

"She disappeared outside the bull-ring," explained Aunt Agnes. "There was a fight in the crowd, and she was separated from her parents. Nobody ever saw her again. Afterwards, some people remembered catching sight of her surrounded by a group of Indians. She died at their hands, walled up alive."

"What a gorgeous imagination crowds have! But the fact remains that that poor cousin of hers disappeared about the same time."

"So you are pleased to say, Christobal. But what of Maria Cristina de Orellana?"

"Oh, that was another matter . . . a very sad case. She was out for a walk with her father round the Cuzco, and went into one of the caves, never to reappear. She lost her way in the old subterranean passages, of course. The govern-

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ment had all the entrances blocked up after that."

"And since then," commented Aunt Agnes, "her poor father has been a madman. For the past ten years, he has haunted the Cuzco ruins, calling in vain to his daughter. He, at all events, will not believe that she was not carried off by the Indians."

"But you yourself say he is mad."

"He lost his reason when he acquired the certitude that she had perished in their temple. A few days before she vanished, Maria-Cristina mysteriously received a very old and very heavy gold bracelet. That bracelet had a center plaque representing the sun. . . ."

"My dear Agnes, you know that in this country jewelers stick the sun in wherever and whenever they can."

"That bracelet was the *real* one . . . the same one that was sent to Amelia."

"Are you not exaggerating, Agnes? Really, really! . . . And with stories like these running about, they expect poor historians to be accurate! . . . I hope you are not taking notes of all this, Mr. Montgomery."

"I am exaggerating nothing," retorted Aunt Agnes obstinately. "It was the real Golden Sun bracelet. . . . Every ten years since Atahualpa, the last Inca king, was burned alive by

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Pizarro, the Inca priests have sent it to a Spanish girl they had chosen to be the Bride of the Sun. And every one of them has been walled up alive. . . . I remember that poor Orellana girl laughing and joking about the Golden Sun bracelet! The whole town knew about it."

"The whole town always does have a pretty lively imagination at the time of the Interaymi," insisted the Marquis. He turned to Mr. Montgomery. "You have no idea, my dear sir, how hard it is for our Society to get away from all these weird legends."

"Legends are not things to be despised in research work," disagreed Uncle Francis. "For my part, I am delighted to have found a country where they are still so living."

At this moment a servant came in with a small parcel on a silver tray.

"A registered package, señorita," he said. "Will the señorita sign here?"

Maria-Teresa, having signed, was turning the box over in her fingers.

"It is from Cajamarca," she remarked. "Who from, I wonder? I know nobody there. . . . Will you excuse me?"

The young girl cut the string, broke the seals and opened the little wooden box.

"A bracelet!" she exclaimed, and laughed a little nervously. "What an extraordinary coin-

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cidence! . . . Why, it is the Golden Sun bracelet! It is, really! The bracelet of the Bride of the Sun!"

Every person in the room had risen, with the exception of the two old ladies, who sat as if stunned. All eyes were turned on the heavy bracelet in darkened old gold, with its sun-adorned center plaque on which the rays seemed blurred out by the dust of centuries.

"Well, that is funny!" laughed Maria-Teresa.

"Of course!" exclaimed the Marquis, whose voice had changed a little. "Evidently a joke by Alonso de Cuelar. You refused him, my dear, and he has invented rather a pretty revenge. His little vengeance on the Bride of the Sun. . . . All the young men of the town call you that because you refuse to marry. . . . Well, what are we looking so blue about over there? Surely, Agnes, you are not going to make yourself ill over a harmless joke like this?"

Maria-Teresa was showing the bracelet to Uncle Francis and Dick.

"Father!" she exclaimed. "I think I shall keep it! Tell Don Alonso I shall wear it as a token of friendship. . . . It really is a beauty! . . . What do you think of it, Mr. Montgomery?"

"It seems to me at least three or four hundred years old."

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"Pieces like that are still occasionally found in excavations round royal tombs, but they are rare," said the Marquis. "I am not surprised Don Alonso had to go to Cajamarca for that one."

"Where is Cajamarca?" asked Dick.

"Cajamarca," said the savant, horrified at his nephew's ignorance, "is the Caxamarxa of the Incas, their second capital in Pizarro's day. . . ."

"And the city where their last king was burned at the stake!" groaned Aunt Agnes.

They rushed to her side, for she was on the point of fainting and had to be carried to her room. The old duenna followed them, as white as her lace, and crossing herself tremulously.

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IV

On the day after his arrival, Uncle Francis was solemnly and officially received by the Geographical Society of Lima, the fine archæological, statistical and hydrographical work of which keenly interested him. With so much scientific enthusiasm did he express himself, that he conquered all hearts. By far the proudest and happiest man present, however, was Don Christobal, basking in the reflected glory of his distinguished guest. As they were all leaving after the ceremony — Maria-Teresa wearing her bracelet despite the protests of her aunt and the duenna — the Marquis met Don Alonso de Cuelar.

"Why, Cuelar," he exclaimed, "I thought you were at Cajamarca!"

Don Alonso opened his eyes in surprise, evidently not understanding.

"Come, come, Cuelar, you may confess. I shall not be angry. Both Maria-Teresa and I agree that your little revenge was a very neat one."

"My revenge? . . ."

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"Of course! The bracelet!"

"What bracelet?"

At this moment Maria-Teresa and Dick joined the group. Maria-Teresa, seeing her father laughing as he talked, felt quite sure that the mystery of the bracelet had already been cleared up.

"Thank you ever so much," she said, holding out the slim hand adorned by the heavy bracelet. "You see, I wear it as a token of friendship."

"But I should never have permitted myself such a liberty," protested the young man, looking in amazement from one to the other.

"Are you serious? . . . It really was not you?"

"No! . . . But what does it all mean? . . . And what a peculiar bracelet."

"Do you not recognize it?" laughed Maria-Teresa, still unconvinced. "It is, apparently, the Golden Sun bracelet which the Indian priests always send to the Bride of the Sun at the Interaymi. . . . And as you, I understand, were the originator of my nickname, I naturally supposed that, in spite of everything you heard, you bore no malice to the Virgin of the Sun."

"What a charming idea! I am only sorry," he added, "that it was not mine. I shall never

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forgive myself for not having thought of it. You must attribute it, señorita, to one of those other unfortunates who, like myself, have worshiped in vain. . . . There is Pedro Ribera. . . . He looks dark enough to have done it. . . . Ribera!"

But Ribera knew no more of the bracelet than Don Alonso. He also admired the strange jewel, and was equally sorry he had not sent it.

Don Christobal was becoming irritated, and was sorry now that he had mentioned the matter to them. He could not, without appearing ridiculous, ask them not to speak of it, and he knew very well that within two hours every tea-table in the Plaza Mayor would be discussing the new topic. Maria-Teresa guessed his thoughts.

"As our guess was wrong, the whole thing rather loses point. So we must wait until the generous donor comes and confesses. In the meantime, let it be forgotten." And, slipping off the bracelet, she put it into her reticule.

"I wonder if it was Huascar," suggested Dick, as the two young men left them.

"Huascar? Why Huascar?" asked the Marquis.

"Well, it's an old Indian bracelet. . . . He's the only Indian I know of, and I know he is very devoted to the family. Suppose he found

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the bracelet in some old ruin and didn't know what to do with it. . . ."

"Oh, let us not talk of it any more," interrupted Maria-Teresa, slightly troubled. "What does it matter! . . . Besides, we are bound to know, sooner or later. . . . Some day a friend of father's, back from the Sierra, will ask me why I am not wearing his present. That is sure to happen."

"Of course it is," affirmed Dick.

The Marquis, far from satisfied, and still seeking a possible explanation, suddenly turned on Dick.

"You sent it!" he exclaimed, triumphant.

"I? Why, I have only just arrived in the country. . . ."

"But you could very well have bought it when the liner put in at Guayaquil, and then sent it to some agent or other at Cajamarca to have it forwarded here. . . . You must have read the legend of the bracelet in one of your uncle's books."

"Really, Father!" protested Maria-Teresa. "Mr. Montgomery is an engineer. . . ."

"Yes, yes, I know. Very hard-working. . . . Come here to try experiments with some new pump to clear the Cuzco gold-mines of water. . . . I know all that. . . . But that is no reason why he should not send you a bracelet."

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"But why should he, Father?"

"Is there not a reason why he should, my daughter?"

This time, Maria-Teresa blushed deeply and Dick tried to look unconcerned, while Don Christobal smiled at them quizzically.

"So you thought your old father was blind, eh? . . . You thought he guessed nothing . . . that he did not understand what you had left behind you in London? . . . Well, Dick?"

"Really, sir . . . I . . . I . . . hardly dared hope. . . ."

"Didn't you? . . . There, there, that's enough. . . . You may put the bracelet on her arm again. . . . Pair of young fools."

Maria-Teresa slipped her arm through her father's, and squeezed it.

"Dear Father!"

Then, turning to Dick and opening her reticule, she whispered rapidly:

"Say you sent it. What can it matter?"

Dick, completely taken aback, clasped the bracelet on Maria-Teresa's wrist without protest. He scarcely heard a word said by the Marquis, who was delighted to have solved the mystery.

"Well, young man, you can flatter yourself that you thoroughly mystified everybody." And with that he hurried after Uncle Francis, who

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had been carried off to drink champagne by a group of admirers.

Dick and Maria-Teresa, left alone, exchanged looks. A moment later, they were brought to earth again by the advent of a horde of excited scientists.

"But what will your father say when he finds out who really sent the bracelet?"

"He will forgive you. I only made you tell the story to reassure him. . . . Between you and me, those old tales told by Aunt Agnes and Irene were worrying him a little. . . . He is rather a child in some ways."

Carriages and motors were rapidly filling with people starting for the excavations outside the town, and then on by rail to Ancon, where Uncle Francis was to be shown the latest Inca discoveries. The Marquis and Mr. Montgomery passed them in one motor. Maria-Teresa waved to them, and walked on towards the town with Dick.

They were all to meet again that evening to dine and pass the night at the Marquis' sea-side villa between Lima and Ancon. Uncle Francis would thus be able to begin his researches the very next morning, for Don Christobal's villa, itself a treasure-house of antiques, stood in the very center of the excavations.

Meanwhile, the young people, less interested

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in things of death than the members of the Geographical and Archæological Society, went to explore Lima. It was only after a long walk in the Pascos de Amancaes that they in their turn started by motor over an execrable road.

The approach of night could already be felt, and the great plain over which they were speeding was made even more desolate by the presence of the slow-flying gallinazos, or black vultures, overhead. These scavengers, half-starved in appearance, are the common adjuncts of scenery in Peru, tolerated and even respected, as they are, by a grateful municipality.

Here and there were haciendas, each with its group of pastures and grazing horses, kept from galloping into the surrounding waste by the four-foot mud walls. Otherwise, it was a sandy desert, at some points dotted with skeletons of a long-dead race dug up by curious scientists and then left to bleach in the sun.

"Not exactly cheerful," commented Dick.

Maria-Teresa, intent on her driving, did not answer, but pointed with one gauntleted hand at a group of half-breeds playing bowls with human skulls at the corner of a hacienda.

They were soon in the outskirts of Ancon, and found the Marquis, Uncle Francis, and their fellow-scientists busily arguing in the center of an Inca cemetery. On all sides were opened

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tombs, each containing a mummy rudely drawn from its thousand-year sleep by the pick of the excavator. Dick and Maria-Teresa had left their motor, but did not join the others. Instead, they wandered silently, almost sadly, in another direction, and the car had started off again in the care of the negro chauffeur, to be garaged at Ancon.

"It is horrible," said Maria-Teresa, pressing Dick's hand. "Why cannot they leave them in peace?"

Seated on a little mound well out of sight of the others, they forgot their surroundings. And it was in this horrible burial-ground they exchanged their first true lovers' kiss.

The sound of voices brought them back to reality. The president of the Society, followed by an interested retinue, was explaining the most interesting tombs.

"Walking through this necropolis," he said, "it is no effort to evoke the shades of the Incas, and to feel for a minute as if one were living among them. . . . Here, six feet below ground, we first found a dog which had been sacrificed on its master's tomb. . . . The dead man's wife and chief servants also followed him to the next world. . . . We next found the wife's body. . . . Like the dog, she had been strangled, probably because she had not had the courage to take her

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own life. . . . Finally, we heard the Indian workman cry out, 'Aqui esta el muerto.' (Here is the dead one) . . . for to the native mind, the only body worthy of notice is that of the master. . . . When we cut the thongs and unrolled the wrappings about him — the man had evidently been a great chief — we found the mummy in an extraordinary state of preservation,— the head was almost intact. . . . Gentlemen, the ancient Egyptians did no better."

At this moment, excited ones from another part of the cemetery attracted their attention, and a workman ran up to tell them that a sensational discovery had been made — the tomb of three Inca chiefs with strange-shaped skulls. Dick and Maria-Teresa followed the others to the spot indicated.

When they reached the newly-discovered tomb, workmen were passing up to the surface little sacks full of corn, jars which had once contained chicha — all the things necessary for a long voyage. Then came golden vases, silver amphora, goblets, hammered statuettes, jewels: — a veritable treasure brought to light by one stroke of the pick. Finally, the three mummies were brought to the surface and unrolled with every precaution. One of the scientists present bent down to uncover the faces, and there was a murmur of horror from those present.

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To understand what Dick and Maria-Teresa had been among the first to see, it is necessary for the reader to know that it was customary among the Incas to shape living skulls to any form they wished. This strange custom exists even in modern days, though in a far lesser degree, among the Basque inhabitants of the Pyrenees. The skulls of babies, set in vices or bound into various molds, were gradually deformed till they took the shape of a sugar-loaf, of a squarish box, of an enormous lime, and so forth. Phrenology was evidently a science known to the Incas, who, precursors of Gall and Spezhurn, thus sought to develop abnormally the intellectual or warlike qualities of a child by compressing or enlarging such and such a part of the brain. It has been proved, though, that this practise was allowed only in the case of children of the Inca himself, called upon in afterlife to take high position in the State. The common people kept their normal skulls and normal brains.

Of the three heads just brought to light, one was cuneiform — a monstrous sugar-loaf. It was horrible to see this nightmare face, like the head of a beast of the Apocalypse, framed in locks which seemed to be still living as they gently moved in the sea breeze. The second head was flattened out, cap-like, with a huge

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bump at the back. The third was almost square, resembling nothing so much as a small valise.

Maria-Teresa shrank before this triple horror and, despite his evident curiosity, drew her fiancé away from the violated sepulchre. They strolled down to the beach, where the Pacific murmured gently as it came to rest on the sands. So peaceful is the sea at Ancon, so free from currents and gales, that it has become the great resort of the inhabitants of Lima. At this season, however, it was still deserted, so that Dick and Maria-Teresa met nobody during their walk to the Marquis' villa.

It was dusk when they reached it, still under the depressing influence of the three strange heads, and vainly trying to joke the impression away. As the sun disappeared on the horizon, the wind rose and conjured up in the half-light pale sand-whorls which might have been so many phantoms dancing up from the huacas to reproach them for impiety and sacrilege. Though they were neither of them over-imaginative, the young people were glad to see the fat major-domo who came forward to announce that the Marquis and Uncle Francis had already arrived. He, at all events, was solid flesh and blood.

As Maria-Teresa entered the house, a little Quichua maid, Concha, literally threw herself at

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her mistress' feet, protesting that she had been dead in the señorita's absence, and had been brought to life again by her return.

"See what devotion we get here for eight soles a month!" she laughed, completely cured of her fears by the sight of the familiar objects about her. "Into the bargain, she cooks puchero, our native stew, to perfection. You must try it some day."

"Señorita," interjected the maid, her broad lips parting in an enormous smile, "I have prepared locro for to-night."

Dinner was not a very long meal. Everybody was tired, and Uncle Francis was anxious to be up early in the morning. Dick and Maria-Teresa prosaically enjoyed their locro — a maize cooked with meat, spiced and served with the chicha which still further heightens the taste of all popular dishes in Peru — and, when they parted at the doors of their rooms on the first floor, were quite ready to laugh over the incidents of the afternoon. Maria-Teresa's hand lingered in Dick's.

"Good night, little Bride of the Sun," he said, and bending down, kissed the disk on the bracelet. "But surely you are not going to keep that thing on? . . . A bracelet from the Lord knows where and the Lord knows whom?"

"It is dear to me now, Dick. . . . Now that

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you have kissed it, it shall never leave me. . . . Good night."

She disappeared into her room, and the young engineer had turned toward his when a shriek was heard, and Maria-Teresa rushed to the landing, in a panic of fear.

"They are in there! They are in there!" she gasped, her teeth chattering.

"What? What? . . . what is the matter?"

"The three living skulls!"

"Maria-Teresa!"

"I tell you they are! All three of them, staring in through the window! . . . They looked at me with such eyes . . . horrible, living eyes. . . . No, no! . . . Dick! . . . Don't go in!"

Taking the light from her trembling hand, Dick went into the room. There was nothing to be seen. He crossed to the balcony, and threw open the French windows: on one side was the sea, on the other a panorama over the flat country and the Inca burial-ground. Everything was perfectly normal.

"Come, dear. . . . You must have imagined. . . ."

"Dick, I tell you I saw them!"

"What did you see?"

"There, on the balcony, staring through the panes. . . . Those three Inca chiefs with their hideous heads."

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"But, Maria-Teresa, be reasonable. They are dead. . . . You yourself saw them dug up. . . . Surely you cannot believe in ghosts. . . ."

"Those I saw were not ghosts. They were living."

Thinking to reassure her, he began to laugh heartily.

"Don't, Dick, don't! . . . I *did* see them . . . they were exactly like those in the grave . . . the sugar-loaf, the cap, and the valise. . . . Exactly the same! . . . But what did they come here for?"

Don Christobal, drawn from the smoking-room by the noise, jeered at his daughter's fears. Uncle Francis, too, appeared in a night-cap, which started everybody laughing except Maria-Teresa. To quieten her, the major-domo was sent round the house and explored the grounds. He returned to report that he had found nothing.

"You are worried by what you saw this afternoon, my child," said the Marquis.

But Maria-Teresa would not reenter the room, and ordered another on the opposite side of the villa to be prepared for her. Dick, using every argument he could think of, finally convinced her that she had been the victim of a hallucination. Half ashamed of herself, she made him go out to the first-floor balcony with

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her, trying, in her turn, to efface any unfavorable impression she might have made.

The balcony on which they were was almost directly over the sea, for on this side the beach reached right up to the walls of the villa. After a time, the immense peace of the night completed Dick's work, and the girl was perfectly quiet when she took off her bracelet.

"I think this is what has been worrying me," she said. "I never before imagined that I saw a ghost. . . ." And she threw the bracelet into the sea.

"A very good place for it," agreed Dick. "A ring will do ever so much better. You do at all events know where *that* comes from."

Before long the whole house was at rest, and the remainder of the night passed by quietly. But at seven o'clock, when people were beginning to stir again, an agonized scream from Maria-Teresa's room sent the servants rushing to her aid. When they entered the room, they found their mistress sitting up in bed, staring at her wrist with horror-stricken eyes. The Golden Sun bracelet had returned during the night!

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BOOK II

THE LIVING PAST

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I

DICK was nearly as frightened as Maria-Teresa when he found what had happened. On the previous night he himself had seen her throw the bracelet into the sea, and yet it was there on her arm again when she woke up. What could it all mean? He could find nothing to say, and in spite of himself began to go over the terrible legend told by the two old ladies. It was preposterous, impossible, but he could not help believing in it now.

The Marquis and Uncle Francis, brought out by the noise, joined the others in the young girl's room. Don Christobal's sharp voice drove the servants from the room and brought out the whole story. Dick confessed his duplicity in the matter of the bracelet, and told how the jewel had been thrown away.

Maria-Teresa was shaking with fever, and her father took her in his arms. He was less worried by the strange story told him than by the state in which his daughter was. He had always seen her so calm, so sure of herself, that her terror shook all his own matter-of-fact convictions.

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As to Uncle Francis, half-pleased with this striking story for his next book, he could only repeat:—"But it's impossible, you know. Quite impossible."

And then it was all explained in the most absurdly obvious way. Little Concha, back from marketing at Ancon, hurried to her mistress' room and brought the solution of the mystery with her. Childishly naive, she explained that, on going out onto the beach in the morning, she had seen something glitter in the sand. She picked the object up, and found that it was a bracelet, which she recognized as one worn by her mistress on the previous day. Thinking that it had been lost from the balcony, and rushing to give Maria-Teresa a pleasant surprise, she had put it on her arm again without waking her. A huge burst of laughter from them all greeted the end of her simple story and Concha, terribly vexed, ran out of the room.

"It seems to me we are all getting a little mad," said the Marquis.

"That infernal bracelet is enough to drive one to a lunatic asylum," added Dick. "We must get rid of it at all costs."

"No! If it ever came back a second time, I could not answer for my reason." And Maria-Teresa joined nervously in the laughter. "What we all need," she added, "is a change of air, of

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scenery. . . . We ought to go for a little trip in the mountains, Father, and show a little of our country to Mr. Montgomery and Dick. . . . Suppose we start to-night? . . . Back to Lima first, and not a word to Aunt Agnes or Irene, for it would make them both ill. . . . I shall go into Callao with Dick to give a few orders, and in the evening we take the boat."

"To get to the mountains?"

"Of course, Father . . . to get to Pacasmayo."

"Pacasmayo!" groaned the scientist. "A horrible place. I know it. Our liner put in there for four hours. There's nothing interesting in that part of the world, is there?"

"Nothing interesting! Why, do you know where one goes to from Pacasmayo? To Cajamarca, Mr. Montgomery!"

Uncle Francis straightened himself up:—"Cajamarca! . . . the Caxamarxa of the Incas!"

"The very place."

"Caxamarxa . . . the dream of my life, my dear!"

"There is nothing to prevent it becoming a reality. . . . And at the same time, Father, we can find out the name of the mysterious sender of this thing. It was sent from Cajamarca, you remember."

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"An excellent idea," agreed Don Christobal. "We really must find a solution to that mystery as well."

"And whoever the joker is, he will pay for it," said Maria-Teresa, who was now toying with the bracelet. "He laughs best who laughs last!"

With which she drove them all out of her room and called for Concha, who, when she came to dress her mistress, received a masterly box on the ears to teach her to wake people up next time she brought back a lost bracelet. Concha, unused to such treatment, burst into tears, and Maria-Teresa, ashamed of herself, filled the little maid's hands with chocolates to make her smile again. Do what she would, Maria-Teresa could not regain her calm. Every movement she made betrayed the inward storm, and she stamped whenever she thought of the cowardice she had shown. . . .

Broadly speaking, all roads in Peru are little more than mule-paths. The only exception is in favor of the great paved highways built by the Incas, which link the wilds of Bolivia to the capital of Ecuador, and in comparison with which the finest monuments of the Gallo-Roman period are not so very remarkable, after all. It is for this reason that travelers wishing to reach the interior must take boat along the coast to

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one of the harbor towns which are the termini of the railways leading into the ever-delightful Sierra.

For Peru may be divided into three great parallel bands of country. First the Costa, or coast district, which rises gradually from the sea-board to an altitude of from 1,500 to 2,000 meters on the western slopes of the Andes. Then the Sierra, half mountain and half plateau, with altitudes varying between 2,000 and 4,000 meters. Finally the Montana, with its forests, which sweeps down to the east of the Cordilleras, stretching toward the Amazon in long slopes which, from 2,000 meters, gradually drop to only 500. Landscape, climate and products are all different in these three zones. The Costa is rich; the Sierra has smiling valleys and a relatively warm climate; the Montana is a veritable ocean of verdure.

Perhaps the most curious thing in this curious country is the variety of its landscape in a relatively small region, for to reach the Sierra one is obliged to scale some of the highest mountains in the world, and that in an equatorial country. In a few hours, one travels through districts where trees of all latitudes and plants of all climates grow and are cultivated side by side. Walnut-trees neighbor with waving palms; beetroot and sugar-cane grow in adjoin-

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