

*A Thousand Miles  
up the  
Amazon*

*A. S. Wadia*

A THOUSAND MILES  
UP THE AMAZON

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S.S. 'HILARY' AT PORT SILENCIA

# A THOUSAND MILES UP THE AMAZON

BEING  
IMPRESSIONS OF A PLEASURE CRUISE  
TO NORTH BRAZIL  
VIA OPORTO, LISBON, AND MADEIRA

BY

ARDASER SORABJEE N. WADIA, M.A.  
*Sometime Professor of English and History, Elphinstone College, Bombay;  
Dakshina Fellow in Natural Science.*

Illustrated with Photographs by the Author

'But, O, that great river, the Amazon,  
I have sailed up its gulf with eyelids closed,  
And the yellow waters tumbled round  
And all was rimmed with sky,  
Till the banks drew in, and the trees' heads,  
And the lines of green grew higher,  
And I breathed deep, and there above me  
The forest wall stood high.'

*J. C. Squire.*

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Inscribed  
TO  
THE BOOTH LINE  
WHOSE  
ENTERPRISE AND ORGANIZING CAPACITY  
OPENED  
THE AMAZON TO THE TOURING WORLD

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MAP SHOWING THE ROUTE OF CRUISE

## FOREWORD

I FEEL I owe the reader a word in explanation of the title. From the sub-title he will have noticed that the book is not solely confined to the Cruise up the Amazon, but narrates of our visits to different ports of call on the way to our objective. As these ports are all along the Atlantic, the title might more appropriately have been: *Down the Atlantic and Up the Amazon*. But, as the book is mainly and primarily concerned with my thousand-mile Cruise up the Amazon, the opening chapters, though possessing a certain interest of their own, do but serve to prepare the reader for the main theme.

The illustrations are one and all reproductions from the original photographic studies I made of different beauty spots on the cruise. As the reader who has like myself made photography his hobby knows, the whole art of pictorial photography is really concentrated in the minute preceding the exposure of the plate. Once the picture is well composed and the plate fully exposed, the rest of the work is more or less mechanical. Still much can be added later on to the quality and artistic value of a picture by the treatment the exposed plate receives at the hands of one well versed in the technique of photography. Here I was greatly helped by the expert advice and active co-operation of my friend, Mr. James A. Sinclair; I wish, in consequence, here to express my indebtedness to him. My thanks are also due to Sir John Squire for permission to include quotations from 'Rivers' on the title page and pages 39, 68 and 69.

A. S. WADIA

MAGDALA HOUSE, POONA,  
3rd November 1935.

# THE NIGHTINGALE'S FAREWELL

## CHAPTER I

### THE NIGHTINGALE'S FAREWELL

WHAT a thing is Chance! How it at times cuts across our path and carries us hundreds, nay thousands of miles off our beaten track of life! It was a chance glance at an advertise-



ment in the pages of an English weekly that made me leave my home in the East and take a voyage of six thousand miles in response to its appeal, and at the end of that long voyage I found myself only half-way to my objective, and had to wait two months in England before I started off on the great Cruise.

But that waiting period in England was usefully spent in revisiting old haunts of beauty and interest both in town and

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in the country, and in looking up friends and acquaintances, particularly in meeting and staying with one dear old friend whose beautiful home in Berkshire has been for the last twenty-five years almost like my own home in England.

Of the time spent in England I am not sure if the old, unhurrying ways and the simple natural charms of the English countryside, particularly in the spring, did not in my estimate outweigh the many human interests and varied artistic attractions of the Imperial Metropolis. And what a countryside it was, and what a spring we had! In all my many visits to England I have never known a spring as sparkingly green or as entrancingly beautiful as the one we had in 1934. And this, too, in a county like Berkshire, where the scenery—to borrow the words of that great chronicler of the English countryside, Mary Mitford—‘without rising into grandeur, or breaking into wildness, is so peaceful, so cheerful, so varied, and so thoroughly English.’ I leave the reader to imagine what it must have meant to pass a few weeks in such a ‘thoroughly English’ county when it was at its peerless best, when the spring-flowers were out in all their traditional glory, when the air came laden with the subtle scent of a million apple-blossoms, and when the feathered songsters poured out all the joy of their little hearts in a symphonic prelude at the first faint glow of dawn or ended their lyric labours for the day with the long-drawn-out notes of their joyous evensongs. And even when all, men, birds, and beasts, had gone to rest, the great Songster of the Night would keep the peacefully sleeping countryside half-awake with his shrill notes and melodious trills, his low sweet love-calls and his rich liquid jug-jugs.

I remember one night in particular; it was the night previous to my leaving on my Amazon Cruise. I was having my usual after-dinner walk, when all unexpectedly a thin thread

of song went up into the night, followed by a gradually increasing series of notes, which streaming down a country lane fell on my all-attentive ear. For a moment I stood still, listening: and then stealthily walked up the lane, lest in the stillness of the night the crunching of the gravel should give me away. Eventually I came to a thicket abruptly rising above a bend of the lane from which poured down the magic strains in swelling torrent. And there I stood, riveted to the spot, listening to the Song of the Nightingale. And what a Song it was! How wide in compass, how rich in tone! All other birds have but a limited range of notes, and their songs are just one short stave or a few set bars which they go on repeating, so persistently at times that after a while they become monotonous and fall flat on our ears. But our songster is a lover, really a troubadour, and like a troubadour of old, he puts his whole heart into his song: his long quavering *aria* is, in consequence, sheer unrestrained ecstasy, full of longing, at once passionate and plaintive. Like a true lover he is never wanting in conceit or invention and so he would never repeat, or rather never be caught repeating, any definite set of notes: but he would go on improvising, and like a master-musician take up a theme, work round and round it, and then, when one stood enraptured by the heavenly strains, all unexpectedly he would slur into half a dozen short, sharp, rasping staccato notes, or what sounded like harsh, rasping notes, which as suddenly he would dissolve into a cadence of trills, dropping sweetly down the scale. No wonder the Spaniards call him *Ruiseñor*, the Master of Music; and then as if to live up to this Spanish title of his and display his complete mastery of musical technique he would once again take up the original theme, but reverse its phrasing, and not only reverse it, but would vary it so consistently, so cunningly, and at times so dolefully, that verses conned from

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Keats in my early care-free days came appositely to my mind and escaped my lips:

‘Darkling I listen! . . .  
Now more than ever seems it rich to die,  
To cease upon the midnight with no pain,  
While thou art pouring forth thy soul abroad  
In such an ecstasy! . . .

Adieu, Immortal Bird!  
Thou wast not made for Death,—  
No hungry generations tread thee down;  
The Voice I hear this Passing Night was heard  
In ancient days by emperor and clown.’



**PROLETARIAT PORT**



LISBON OVERLOOKING THE TAGUS

## CHAPTER II

### PROLETARIAT PORT

WITH that ecstatic *fare-ye-well* of the nightingale still humming in my ears, I left London by the Cruise Special one day early in June, reached Liverpool by tea-time, and got on the waiting *Hilary* of the Booth Steamship Company. As the steamer was leaving immediately there was, as was to be expected, hurry and bustle on board, ending in long farewells of those who had come to bid their friends good-bye and wish them *bon voyage*. I was one of these fortunate few, for a dear friend had travelled a great distance just to see me after many years of separation, and wish me God-speed on my long voyage to the south.

Before I could make time to take stock of my fellow-passengers and have a good look round my new habitation, which was to be my floating home for the next two months, we reached our first port of call. It was on the third morning after we had left Liverpool that we saw on the distant horizon the lofty headland of Cap Villano, and later on beheld an extensive panorama of green hills studded with villas of flat white walls and flaming red roofs facing an open, sunlit, deep blue sea. Before long we were in the harbour of Lexiones, and dropped anchor there. After breakfast we took our first excursion ashore to the old city of Oporto. The way lay along the banks of the Douro, and when we reached the city the very first thing we did was to visit two of its wine lodges to taste its famous Port. It was a ten-year-old Port that we were offered, matured in casks seasoned for several

decades. What a body it had, and, oh, what a flavour! Did not our eyes sparkle and did not unwonted smiles sit on the faces of all of us, young and old, when we had had a glass or two of it? But an hour ago we sat glum and dull, and not particularly interested, as we were taken in our different cars down the streets, and now as we stood round the table with our glasses filled with rich red wine we formed a magic circle of beaming faces and smiling eyes.

'O for a draught of vintage, that had been  
Cooled a long age in the deep-delved earth,  
Tasting of Flora and the country-green,  
Dance, and Provençal song, and sun-burnt mirth!'

So there must be something spiritual, something eternally gay about 'a draught of vintage' to perform magic of this description, to give a free rein to the natural loves and laughter of men, and to convert on the instant a mere conglomeration of callous, self-centred, detached units of humanity into a living affiliation of overflowing geniality, good-will, and happy comradeship. The surprising thing we were told about the grape-vine which yielded Port of the quality we had was that it grew and thrived only on a comparatively small piece of barren land, the soil of which was the poorest in all Portugal. And yet I was not really surprised to hear this, for many years ago, when I happened to be in New Zealand, I was told that its world-famous sheep thrived best and produced wool of the finest quality only when pastured on the coarsest grasslands of the South Island. This is equally true of us men, for if one were to look into the life-story of men of outstanding genius of the present century one would find that most of them were brought up amid surroundings least conducive to greatness and had continuously to contend against adverse forces and put up with defeats and

## PROLETARIAT PORT

II

discouragements before their mind matured and their genius blossomed forth.

But I was not given much time in the wine-lodges for these cogitations on the *proletarian* birth-place and breeding-ground of princely Port, or on what coarse fare and hard soil men and sheep thrive best, for we were before long whisked off from there and carried over the famous bridge of Dom Luis, back to our waiting steamer in Lexiones harbour, and in a few minutes were steaming out of it, and we reached Lisbon early next morning.

**THE MADNESS OF THE MOORS**



**OLD MOORISH CASTLE, CINTRA**

## CHAPTER III

### THE MADNESS OF THE MOORS

IN Lisbon we were again taken out in cars sightseeing, but it was a different kind of sightseeing from that of the previous day at Lexiones and Oporto. For here we were whirled away from the quay along the crowded boulevards and thence across the open country, through green woods of tall leafy trees and bushy undergrowth, up to the old Moorish town of Cintra. As we approached the summit we found scattered all round us relics of the old Moorish civilization. Those of us who knew something of the history of Islam were aware of what a cultural and civilizing force was the Moslem at the end of the Dark Ages, and how amply in the Middle Ages it contributed to the various arts and sciences. The Moors, besides sharing in general the *métier* of the Moslem for arts and sciences, had cultivated a special genius for leisure and the luxuries of life and had, above all, conceived a consuming passion for natural scenery and romantic architecture, so consuming indeed that it almost reached the white heat of madness. Greatness is akin to Madness, it is said. And no saying is truer. For to achieve real greatness a man must necessarily be *mad*; that is, he must do things in such a manner and carry things to such excess that to a prudent, well-balanced mind his reckless precipitancy and facile quixotism will appear to touch the border-line of madness. And here in Cintra that Madness of the Moors found ample scope and fullest expression. For Cintra is situated seven hundred feet above sea-level, and so commands from its summit magnificent



views of surrounding hills and spreading country. And with that eye for natural beauty which the Moors possessed in such ample measure, they picked out this beauty-spot of Portugal on which to build their dream-castle of Pena, and exhausted in their famous gardens of Monserrate all their passion for landscape gardening by designing sunny winding walks, planting graceful flowering shrubs, growing tall, umbrageous trees, and digging cool, crystalline grottoes deep into the bowels of the earth. The Castle of Pena, with its combination of graceful halls and courts, of fountains and arcades and highly ornamented interior gleaming with rich arabesque, lends a fairy charm to Cintra, and by its situation becomes the crowning glory of the hill. But Pena is by no means the only fairy castle the Moors built on the soaring heights of Cintra, as the reader can see for himself by turning to the illustration preceding this chapter.

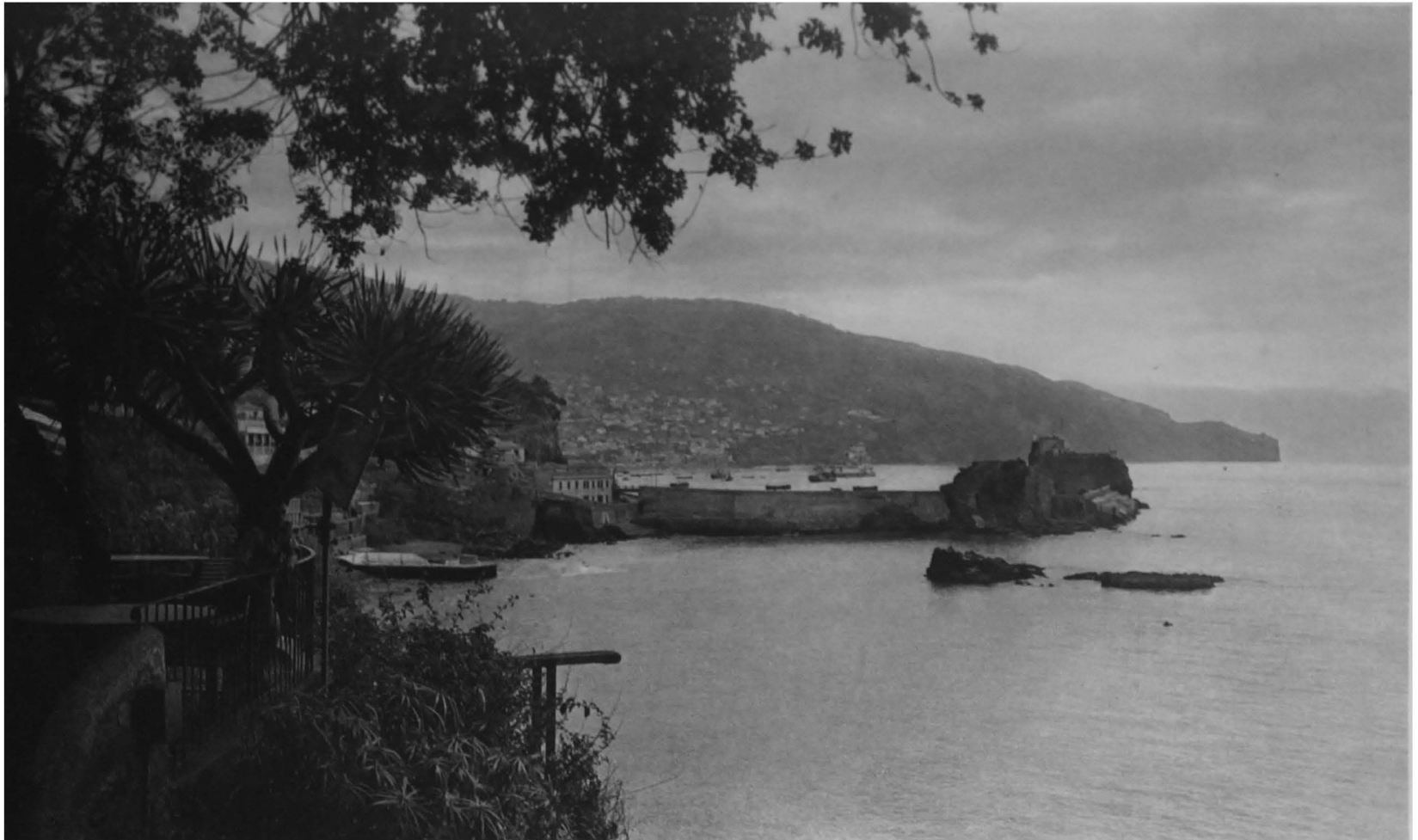
From Pena Castle we were once again whirled round and down the thickly-wooded heights of Cintra to the blue waters and golden sands of the Estorils. What a contrast and in what short time! But an hour ago we were resting on the cool, breezy, umbrageous heights of Cintra, and now we were basking on the open sun-scorched beaches and by the blue waters of the world-famous Portuguese Riviera of the Estorils. The Estorils have a unique setting. There are everywhere trees of mimosa, pepper, eucalyptus, and orange planted in serried ranks, with masses of gay geraniums, which, coming against a background of sombre pines and firs, made a sight for the gods to see and luxuriate in. No wonder the Estorils are called the Paradise of Portugal.

From the Estorils we made our way back to Lisbon. Before long the *Hilary* steamed down the Tagus and approached the white Tower of Belem, which marks for all time the spot where Portugal's most intrepid mariner landed on his return

from his epoch-making voyage of discovery in the East. In the annals of the great navigators of the world, Vasco da Gama ranks with the greatest discoverer of all time, Columbus; but, in his complete disinterestedness of motive and a certain lofty disdain for worldly fame and fortune, Vasco stands in a class by himself—a noble example to all men for all time. As we passed the white tower I

‘Pondered on his daring, his vast hope,  
That compassed a planet in a dream;  
And marvell’d at that stern defiance, where  
A single man, daring all,  
Left the kind land behind, and ventured out  
On what men deemed a hideous demon waste,  
An endless vortex, wherein poor souls caught  
Were swept to vastness, gulped and swallowed down.  
We still wonder at his greatness, though we know  
That thus for ever shall human greatness be,  
Man’s only truth in life—to Stand Alone,  
Invincible power the spirit’s solitude.’

**THE ISLE OF THE BLEST**



FUNCHAL BAY, MADEIRA

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ISLE OF THE BLEST

THE next day after leaving Lisbon we were again tossing on the high seas till the morning of the third brought us in sight of an island which in the parlance of the American globe-trotter was 'the world-traveller's final resting-place.' From the steamer the first sight of the island of Madeira was certainly attractive, but there was nothing to rave over as our Transatlantic friend once did. But when the waiting motor launch conveyed us ashore and we landed at Funchal, nestling at the foot of high mountains with a series of cultivated fields and whitewashed villas rising in terraces one above the other up the sparsely-wooded heights, the beauty of Madeira first dawned on us. And later on, when we were given seats in the quaint cretonne-covered wheelless bullock-wagons, called *carros*, which amid flower-filled gardens and colourful shops slid over the famous cobble-stoned roads of Funchal to the station of the funicular railway, we became more and more conscious of the growing loveliness of picturesque Madeira. But when the funicular pulled us three thousand feet up the soaring mountain-side where the vegetation of two zones vied with each other for supremacy—the rice with the wheat, the sugar-cane with the grape-vine, the palm with the pine, and the fig with the oak—and we saw the glittering Funchal Bay lying peacefully at our feet thousands of feet below, then it was that the indescribable beauty and fabled charms of Madeira burst on us in all their traditional glory and left us speechless.

Indeed, all over the island there were such quantities of wild flowers, displaying such gorgeous tints, and the vegetation grew in such luxuriance, and so fertile was the soil that in all truth there was not a patch of waste land in any odd corner of the sinuous mountain-roads but had a fig-tree or a grape-vine growing on it.

Madeira was, indeed, an Isle of the Blest, and our Transatlantic friend was for once right when he called it 'the world-traveller's final resting-place.' For a lover of nature could not desire a more beautiful spot or one with a more equable climate on the face of the globe in which to pass the evening of his life than this emerald island, reposing peacefully off the north-west corner of Africa. As if Madeira was not satisfied with merely capturing our heart with her scenic beauty and stirring our imagination with her soaring heights, she had kept up her sleeve one little surprise to give us the real thrill of the day and make us remember her for the rest of our lives. This was a non-stop, full-paced tobogganing over the cobble-stoned shoot down the three thousand feet of the dizzy mountain-side, straight into the heart of the town. The feat was performed by the simple means of a mountain-sledge of wicker-work with greased iron runners which tobogganed down the sinuous shoot of four miles in less than half an hour. There were two swarthy, gaily-dressed natives who ran beside the sledge, and by means of stout ropes steered it clear of all obstacles, round the sharp corners and down the precipitous descent of the amazing course. With the excitement of the shoot still running unabated in our veins, we went on board, and in the next few minutes the *Hilary* glided out of the beautiful Funchal Bay and, with a farewell blast of her siren, set her course straight for the mighty Amazon, two thousand miles away across the blue, sunlit, watery wastes of the Mid-Atlantic.

## **THE 'HILARY' SPECIAL**

## CHAPTER V

### THE 'HILARY' SPECIAL

BUT an hour ago with my fair companion I might have been seen tobogganing at breakneck speed down the mountain-side of beautiful Madeira, lined with flowering bushes and blossoming fruit-trees, and now with not a care in the world we were gliding along the heaving bosom of the Mid-Atlantic with nothing to see except a clean-cut circle of tossing, foaming blue waters meeting one's eye wherever one turned it. This magic blue circle of water seemed to have cast a spell on our *Hilary*, for she moved not an inch from its dead centre for nine days continuously. The tedium of this long, landless voyage of twenty-two hundred miles would have assuredly told on our spirits and possibly on our tempers as well, had not the bathing-pool and the cool trade-winds, the deck-games and the evening entertainments come to our assistance and helped kill time. These happy diversions were, however, not of much help to me because, to prepare myself for a keener appreciation of what was worth seeing in and knowing about that part of the world to which we were bent, I employed most of my time reading up books dealing with Amazonia, and the rest of it in taking stock of the human cargo we were carrying on board.

In my schooldays the *Essay on Man* was our favourite subject of thought and discussion. Time, however, has effaced that poetic pomposity of Pope's completely out of my mind; but there is one line of it which I have never forgotten, and which I shall never forget. And that is the one following



the opening line: '*The Proper Study of Mankind is Man.*' From the very first moment of my coming in contact with that famous adage of Pope's it seized my mind and imagination, and long years of thought and travel and wider experience of life and its limitations have only served to confirm my faith in it, and to such an extent that it has now become the cardinal tenet of my personal religion. 'There is no Religion higher than Humanity,' said Auguste Comte a hundred years ago, and no conception of religion is truer or nobler than this. Humanity is Everything. We should go to our own kind for all the happiness and contentment we need in this strange world of ours. Our chief care and primary objective in life should be to study our fellow-beings, cultivate an understanding fellowship with them, and at all times and in all circumstances be of any little use that we can possibly be to them. This simple creed, I consider, is what lies at the base of Christianity, as of every other faith I know of. At all events, when we were fairly out on the open Atlantic, I put that well-worn adage of Pope's into practice and began in all earnestness 'the proper study of mankind' on board the *Hilary*.

Besides those we shipped at different ports of call, there were twenty-six Cruise Passengers who were, like myself, taking the round trip from Liverpool to the Amazon and back to Liverpool. Of these there were six couples, mostly happily married; six unmarried maidens, mostly past middle age; three confirmed bachelors, all past fifty, one unconscionably gay, one conscientiously grave, and the third neither gay nor grave, but a mere fifty-fifty, a medley of many moods and few words—that was myself. There were four spouseless wives, most exemplarily correct and otherwise, a middle-aged, youngish-looking widow, bright, sprightly, and always beautifully gowned, and a staid, substantial-looking widower, who

knew not how to unbend and even on a holiday-cruise preserved the grave manners and precise methods of the office-room. Of the married couples there was one Welsh and one Scotch. The one at all times tried to impress me with the great doings of the Scotch and the memorable part they had played in the history of the British people, and the other with the achievements of the Welsh and the share they had in the making of English history. At the dining-table the Scotch couple had their seats next to mine, and so I had first-hand experience of some of their national traits. Happening to speak of the American railways, and their comfortable sleepers, Mrs. Mac—— said quite innocently that she could never find out for certain whether the berths in the general sleeping-cars were meant for one or two persons. 'For one, to be sure,' I answered. 'How can it be otherwise in a general sleeping-car?' 'Anyway,' she replied, 'throughout our extended tour of the States, Dad and I occupied a single berth at night.' But her hubby went even one better in the proverbial national trait of her people. Finding him standing by the deck-rail long after the dinner-bugle had gone, I went up to him and asked: 'Aren't you going down to dinner, Mr. Mac——?' 'No,' he replied, 'I don't feel like having a meal to-night,' and then, slowly turning round to me, said quite seriously, 'but you can have my dinner.' Now, who said the Scotch were not generous?

Life, it is said, is a study in contrast, and the six spinsters on board proved that completely: for the immaculate sextet, if divided into three pairs, made a perfect study in contrast. Two of these six were sisters, mid-Victorian in ideas as well as in years. When they came on deck of a morning they walked up it in measured steps, deeply intoned each word they uttered, and kept the tilt of their chins at a fixed angle. In fact, everything about them was fixed and unalterable.

Our old world moves in a fixed and an unalterable way, and though she has been at the job for quite a while, she has never come to harm yet. Why should not our good ladies follow the good example of the wise old dame and keep harm at arm's length? But what distinguished the sisters from the rest of their sex on board was the large picture-hat each wore morning, noon, and night. One morning after we had left Madeira it became suddenly squally, a strong gust of wind blew across the deck, lifted one of the old picturesque curiosities from off the head of the younger sister, and whirled it into the sea. For the moment there was a mild commotion on board, and someone suggested letting down the lifeboat to save the floating relic, merrily tossing up and down on the waves; but we all suffered from fatal indecision, and before anything could be done the precious thing was left far behind and was soon lost to sight. So used had we got to seeing the hats each morning that the departure of one of them came to us all as a personal loss.

In perfect contrast to these two Victorian Virtuositities were the two Elizabeths. The Lizzies, though equally ancient in years, were the last word in modernism inasmuch as they were casual in their speech, informal in their manners, and quite careless about their dress and appearance. They were possessed of such high spirits, the one so innocent and dove-like at sixty-eight and the other so genial, jovial, and nimble-witted at eighty-two, that I instantly took to them and gladly sought their company all the weeks we were together on board the *Hilary*.

The third pair of maidens again stood in strong contrast to each other, and to the four antithetical antiquities. For though they were both in their early twenties, yet one was so very lively and tomboyish, and so constantly on the move, that she looked like one of those aimless, restless flappers who

were a joy to the tired warrior and a nuisance to all others: while the other, being a missionary, was slow and steady in all her ways, and helpful to all, and looked the picture of calm, dignified, Christian womanhood. She had, doubtless, laid by a rich spiritual harvest gathered from her varied experiences of men and matters in the remote, uncivilized parts of Peru. Again, both my bachelor-companions possessed characters diametrically opposed, though their lives ran on singularly parallel lines, inasmuch as both were retired business men, who had made their pile and were now passing their lives haphazardly loitering about the distant corners of the globe. The one was an apostle of simplicity, wore nothing for the two months he was with us except khaki, even when he came to dine in the evening, and for the rest of the day did nothing but sit reading in a quiet corner of the deck; the other never so much as opened a book nor rested a moment, but gaddled about the deck like a popinjay in gay pull-over with still gayer companions. But I forget, there is yet another bachelor to be accounted for—a young Scotch laddie of barely ten, a voracious reader, and the one genuine scholar we had on board. He had cultivated his scholastic tastes to such a pitch that he fed with evident gusto on literary meat of a kind that would have sickened at sight any one of us, even a hardened bibliomaniac like myself. One afternoon, as he was lying full-stretched in the music-room, with a book in his hand, I went up to him and out of curiosity asked: 'Alistair, my lad, what are you reading?' In reply he handed me his book. Imagine my surprise to find it a volume of the Crime Club Library, dealing with murders of the most loathsome type. 'Alistair!' I exclaimed, 'you are much too young for such books. You should read tales of boyish adventure, like *Midshipman Easy* or *Robinson Crusoe*.' 'I read them all,' he replied, 'when I was a boy.' 'What are you now, Alistair,

if not a boy?' I asked, surprised. 'Anyway,' I continued, 'what makes you read about murders? Don't they repel and horrify you?' 'No,' he replied, lazily stretching his limbs, 'I get a big kick out of them; and there are sixteen murders in this book': and then he reproduced from memory the details of the various murders committed by 'the Butcher,' for so our Jack the Ripper signed himself each time he sent a warning note to the Police Headquarters, before ripping open the abdomen of his next victim.

Such were the ingredients of the '*Hilary*' *Special*! As all who know anything about cocktails are aware, a *Special* made with a basis of English gin with such odd ingredients as Scotch whisky and Welsh bitters, with a dash of Port and Madeira, and a spot of genuine Indian toddy, could not possibly mix as well as those made on simpler recipes. And if for a wonder it did, it was bound to have a kick in it; and such as would have sent those not used to cocktails sprawling on the deck. But by some strange freak of fortune the '*Hilary*' *Special* mixed well—I should say, most exceptionally well; and though we had to have it morning, noon, and night for seven weeks continuously, the *Special* never at any time sickened us as it might well have been expected to do. On the contrary, the *Hilary's* varied human cargo of twenty-six Cruise Passengers, with a few odd pieces shipped at Oporto and Madeira, kept together remarkably well, so well, indeed, that it formed—to put it in the racy Americanism—'just One Big Happy Family.'

# **THE GATEWAY OF THE AMAZON**



THE GATEWAY OF THE AMAZON

## CHAPTER VI

### THE GATEWAY OF THE AMAZON

AFTER the old, semi-old, and not-old members of 'the Happy Family' had had all the rest-cure they needed or did not need; after the Commander of the vessel, on crossing the Equator, had received on board, with becoming pomp and solemnity, King Neptune and His Oceanic Court, and a part of the Family was initiated by His Aquatic Majesty into the Ancient Order of Shellbacks with tonsorial ritual and time-honoured ducking; after it had indulged to its heart's content in the fun and frivolity of Carnival Night; after it had purged its soul of its long-accumulated worldly dross by listening with rapt attention and religious fervour to the wonderful tale which our Missionary Maiden had to unfold of her aunt, an English woman who, casting to the winds all the sage advice of her friends and relatives, went into the Wilds of Peru, there to serve her Lord and Saviour by bringing enlightenment to the ignorant, care to the neglected, and healing to the sick and the afflicted; and, finally, after its art-conscience had been momentarily roused by an Exhibition of photographic studies such as are seen in this volume, and its purse-strings loosened in aid of a seamen's institute—one fine morning the Happy Family was treated to the first sight of the object it had voyaged five thousand miles to see.

The first sight of the mighty Amazon came as a disappointment to many on board who had come with their imagination coloured with the entrancing pictures they had seen of it in the illustrated folders of the touring agencies and the glowing



accounts they had read of it in the books of travel. But to a few of us who adopt a different system of judgment, and who never go to anything with any preconceived notions, grandiose or otherwise, but judge everything on the spot and on its own merits, the first view of the Great River was just what one would have expected—a vast expanse of yellowish-green water flowing in a regular tide of on-coming waves with clouds scattered overhead, and on the distant horizon just a streak of indeterminable black line. This indeterminable line as we progressed became more and more defined, and presently tops of trees began to appear so thickly massed together that there was not a single break in the line noticeable anywhere. And so it kept the further we sailed up the mouth of the Amazon, only the monotony of the yellowish-green water was alternately relieved by the blue and crimson sails of fishing-boats and by the indefinite outline of a row of buildings rising on the eastern horizon, which later on became quite distinct, and before long we steamed into the port and harbour of Pará, the Gateway of the Amazon.

**IN THE NARROWS**



**NATIVE DUG-OUTS, THE NARROWS**

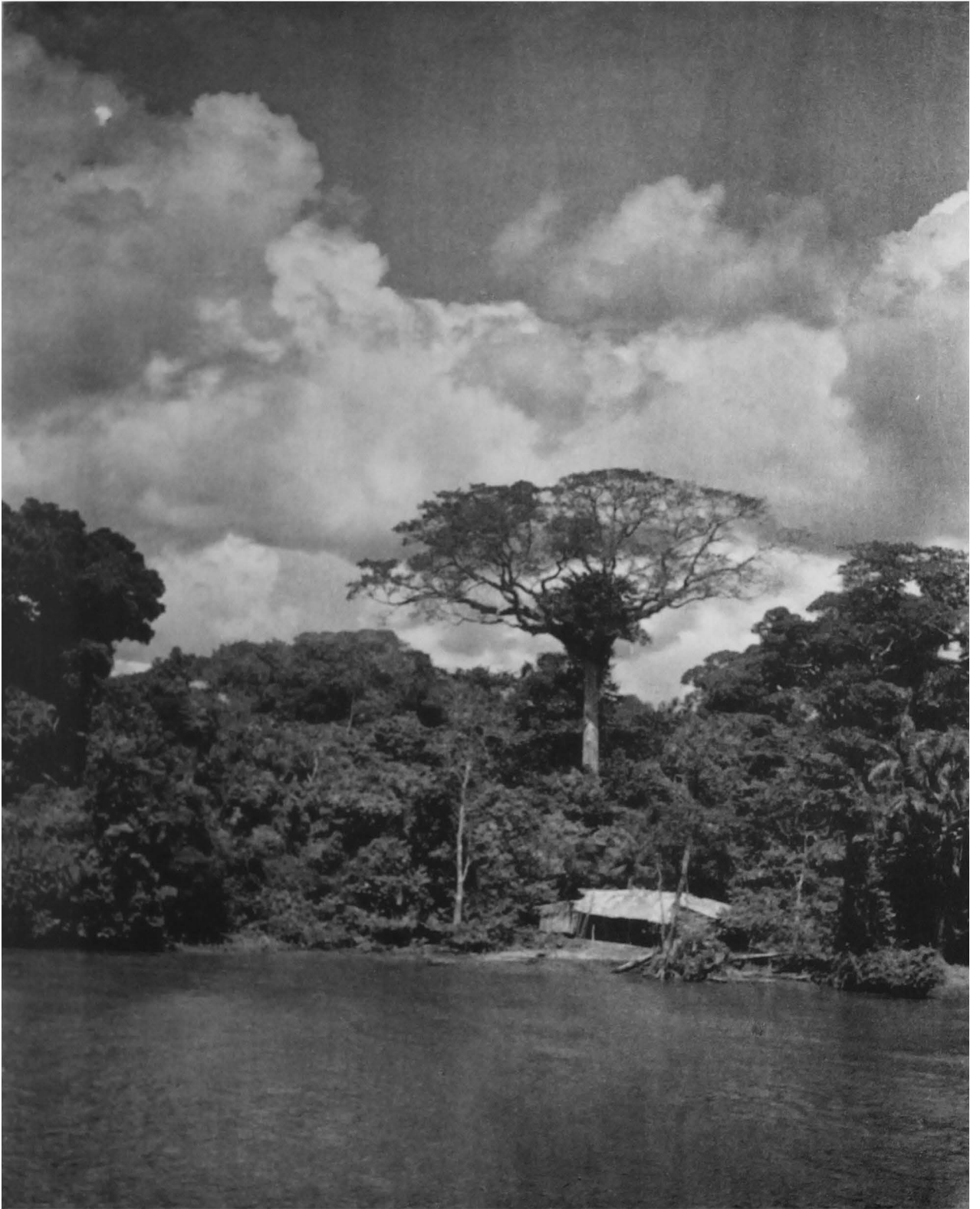
## CHAPTER VII

### IN THE NARROWS

WE men do not normally care for Contrast, but Nature simply revels in it. Never a sight she presents but a seeing eye traces a dozen subtle manifestations of her Law of Contrast. On that fundamental law of hers she bases all her manifold schemes of beauty, and by its aid she works out all her intricate plans of terrestrial existence. Take, for example, our own case. On the morning of the day we entered the Gateway she treated us to a really heart-dilating sight of two hundred miles of heaving Amazonian bosom, but the day after to another where the same heaving expanse of two hundred miles apparently *narrowed* down to a placid stream of barely two hundred feet, about the same width as the Thames at Maidenhead. On either side of this stream of water, appropriately called the Narrows, stretched two endless strips of dense forest, which form part of the region locally known as the 'Thousand Islands.'

After the noble expanse and breezy spaciousness of the Gateway, the Narrows seemed almost to suffocate us, and to cramp our imagination; but as we progressed up them, we realized that what we had lost in breadth and spaciousness we had more than made up in beauty and plenitude of vegetation. What noble height the trees attained, and what graceful contour they displayed! How very close they stood to each other, and what range of colour and what gradation of shades their foliage presented! In keeping with the mammoth size of the Amazon, everything was planned on a mammoth

scale, and everything grew in wild luxuriance, betraying at once the vast productivity and wasteful prodigality of Bountiful Nature. Indeed, on the moist green banks groups of slender assai mingled in happy harmony with groves of gargantuan bamboos, and the tall grasses and countless variety of enormous palms stood in serried ranks under the protective arms of that king of Brazilian forests, the buttressed giant, *Sumauma*. It wasn't by any means a drab, dead, silent forest, but one instinct with life and colour. Swarms of great blue morpho butterflies flitted along the edge of the forest, and the more daring ones even ventured to fly aboard, while now and again the big-billed, brightly-tinted *toucan* or a pair of majestic macaws, resplendent in half the colours of the rainbow, were seen quietly watching us from the boughs of trees, and a moment later the quiet of the whole tropical forest was broken by a flock of screeching parrots and parrakeets flying overhead. Scarcely had these disappeared and the forest once again resumed its deep age-long silence, than one noticed a curious-looking object, which to all outward appearance was an old decaying log with spinous bark floating on the water. Out of curiosity you turn your glasses on it. Barely have you done so, than it suddenly becomes animate and dashes into the water with a terrific splash. The next moment you realize that it is an alligator whose happy day-dream has been rudely disturbed by the wash of the steamer. You see a knot of your fellow-passengers pointing their finger at something on the bank opposite. You look in the direction to which they point and you notice a blue object with two white ones at a little distance. On the steamer approaching them they turn out to be a rare species of blue heron and two beautifully-poised egrets. A moment later a faint shadow traverses the water, you naturally look up and find a great hawk wheeling round and round the steamer in its ceaseless search for prey.



A BIT OF GREEN HELL WITH SOARING *SUMAUMA*

Looking down the river-bank from the steamer's deck, one is made aware of a perpetual struggle, a kind of battle-royal going on between the River and the Forest night and day. The River makes inroads into the forest-lands, and the Forest seems to retaliate by ceaselessly throwing out the tentacle-like roots of its mangrove-trees and by sending columns of water-flags trooping down into the indubitable territory of the River. Only where man intervenes and cuts strips of no-man's-land is truce proclaimed between these two world-old contestants. But these strips of clearance are few and far between, and soon the River and the Forest resume their age-long feud by perpetually carrying raids into each other's fluctuating boundaries. The River scores during the rainy season by inundating vast tracks of forest-lands, while in the dry season the Forest gets its own back from the River and makes further encroachments on the riverine territory. However, at each no-man's-land proclaimed by man there is invariably a primitive shack of a *Caboclo* family, thatched with palm leaves and raised on poles. On crude platforms in front of these shacks, groups of half-naked children may be seen watching our steamer as it passes by, while their elder brothers hastily jump into their canoes, and with a few sturdy strokes paddle out on the river and ride up and down the crest of each succeeding wave formed by the wash of our steamer. But quite regardless of the Caboclos' clearances, the solid arboreal walls flanking the river project interminably on either side and for ever shroud the impenetrable mystery of this land of unexplored forests and uncharted waterways.

'Those Forest Walls of the Amazon  
Are level under the blazing blue  
And yield no sound but the whistles and shrieks

**A THOUSAND MILES UP THE AMAZON**

Of the swarming bright macaws;  
And under their lowest drooping boughs  
Mud banks torpidly bubble,  
And the water drifts and the logs in the water  
Drift and twist and pause.'





THE END OF THE NARROWS

**GREEN HELL**



A TIMBER PORT, THE AMAZON

CHAPTER VIII  
GREEN HELL

WHAT, however, the eye failed to see behind those great 'Forest Walls of the Amazon,' Imagination with the invisible rays of its own magic eye did. Instantly the Walls became translucent and the forests behind became alive with the lurking jaguar and the wary puma, the coiling half-a-hundred-foot python and the slimy prehistoric iguana, the snorting peccaries and the tank-like armadillos, an army of vampire bats flitting restlessly in circles, just as we saw them do in the Bosque at Pará, and a legion of flies, mosquitoes, jiggers, and other poisonous insects and loathsome creeping créatures of which I had an unforgettable experience when I landed for a while at Port Silencia. No wonder the unexplored forests of the Central Brazilian Plateau swarming with these nameless vicious insects and countless devilish creatures should be known as the *Green Hell* of Brazil. Less, probably, is known about the interior of this *Green Hell* than of any other inhabited area of equal size in the world. It was so in the time of that intrepid explorer, Colonel Fawcett, and later on of that bright and breezy Brazilian adventurer, Peter Fleming, and it is so even now, and will be so for some years to come, till the autogiro comes into its own, thereby making it possible for daring fliers to land almost on any open space they chance to find in the thick, impenetrable *Matto Grosso*, and find out at the risk of their lives what truth there is in the fantastic things that have been said about it. At present one is free to believe about this mystic *Matto Grosso* almost anything one chooses to, and no one can dare contradict one's beliefs. One can, for example, believe in the theory long held

and specifically supported by an old document<sup>1</sup> discovered in the Archives of Rio de Janeiro, and recently revived by Colonel Fawcett, that a city, massively built, with huge blocks of stone, and ruins of other cities incomparably older than those of Egypt and Assyria, exist at the present moment in the heart of *Matto Grosso*. More, that this city was the cradle of a lost civilization, in certain matters more advanced than ours, where dwelled and still dwells a tribe of White Indians, which uses gold as common metal, knows of a secret mode of communicating at long distances, and possesses other secrets of engineering and natural illumination more advanced than any of which we are at present aware.<sup>2</sup> One might even go further and maintain without being authoritatively contradicted that there is to be found even to this day—as some Portuguese explorers did really maintain three centuries ago—a tribe of stalwart white women of exceptional physique and beauty, and adepts in the use of bow and arrow, after whom the river Amazon actually takes its name. At all events, *Matto Grosso*, with Mount Everest, is still and will remain for some time yet the El Dorado of the most daring and the most venturesome spirits of our age.

<sup>1</sup> Manuscript No. 512, *Biblioteca Nacional, Rio de Janeiro*.

<sup>2</sup> 'The modern Mayan Indians say their ancestors flew; and certainly their elevated plazas would make good landing fields. I have flown over Mayan cities and noted designs, like directions, only visible from the air. In some respects the Mayan culture exceeded our own. Their cities were as large as ours. Tikal had about 5,000,000 population; Copan, about 3,000,000; Palenque, 2,500,000; several others, including Chichen Itza to the north, 1,000,000 or more. Their social organization was a caste system, strangely like the system recently advocated here, called "technocracy." Their knowledge of astronomy was so profound and exact they could hardly, it seems, have attained it without telescopes. They may have had engineering secrets which we ourselves have never learned. How they moved huge masses of solid sandstone and greenstone, weighing two or three hundred tons, for distances of forty to two hundred miles, is totally unexplained. How they carved these stones so perfectly is equally mysterious. The Greeks only chiselled marble—the Mayans sculped granite! Yet we have never found a Mayan tool.'—*Lawrence T. K. Griswold*.

**THE CANTICLE OF THE CLOUDS**

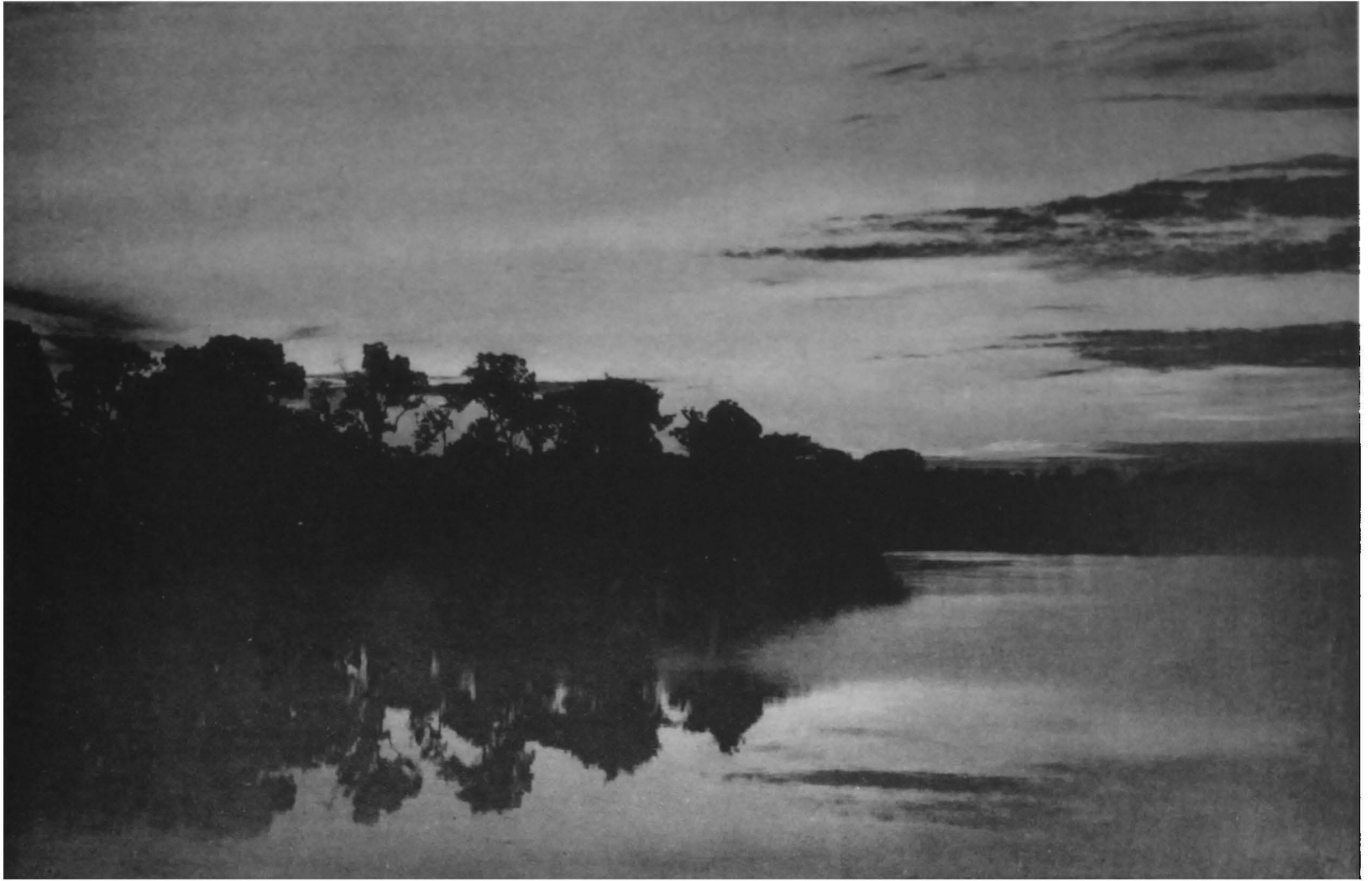


*FANTÁSIA CÉLESTE, MANAÓS*

them, much less thought them worthy of a moment of watchfulness, or a glance of admiration. Which of us, for instance, observed the grand orchestral march of cumulus clouds each noon as it passed overhead? Who among the whole gay, romping crowd on board saw that luminous background of symphonic cumulo-nimbus as we passed the giant *sumauma* tree that morning in the Narrows? Who watched, I ask, that quiet, soul-subduing sunset we had approaching Manáos breaking through a ring of silver-lined clouds? Who, I ask again, cared to notice that evening the dark elongated patch of alto-stratus which reflected placidly in the cool, glassy waters of the upper reaches of the Thousand Islands? Finally, which of us was up and about to observe that black mass of stratus on the distant horizon as the Moon Maiden stood leaning against the rails one beautiful moonlight night after we left Santarem? All, all, alas, passed unobserved as unregretted! If for some moments the general apathy on board was shaken off, it was by the sight of an alligator or a macaw or what was grossly palpable of the elemental energies of Nature, never by what was quiet and unobtrusive—the deep, the calm, and the perpetual—that which must be sought ere it is seen and subjectively listened to ere it is heard—the delicate colour-symphonies, the flaming fantasies, and the grand tone-poems of the Clouds which the Angels composed for us daily on the Amazon, and intoned to the soul's ear each single hour of our fortnight's cruise on it, which were never wanting and never repeated, and which were to be found always, yet each one found but once. And when found, oh, how they sank into the very depth of our heart and spirit and made us feel

'A Presence that disturbed us with the joy  
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime  
Of Something far more deeply interfused,





*REQUIEM, THE AMAZON*

## THE CANTICLE OF THE CLOUDS

49

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:  
A motion and a Spirit, that impels  
All thinking things, all objects of all thought  
And rolls through all things.'

# THE MOON MAIDEN



SUNSET ON THE AMAZON

## CHAPTER X

### THE MOON MAIDEN

WITH the Great River spreading each single day such a gorgeous Canopy of Clouds over us it was to be expected that the sunsets on the Amazon must be a sight in themselves: and so they were, as the reader can see for himself by turning to the study I made of one of them. Not only the sunset, but the short opalescent Equatorial twilight that succeeded it had to a meditative mind a charm and beauty all its own, especially when we sailed up into smoother waters and found their mirror-like surface coolly and peacefully reflecting the lambent evening clouds. These clouds which were a few minutes before all aglow with the resplendent colours irradiated from the setting sun, had now assumed a neutral tint of luminous russet, which in turn melted into the bluish ebony of the gathering Tropical Night.

In the Equatorial Regions everything during the day possesses clear-cut edges, and comes out in sharp contrast. But once the sun has set, there is an instant transformation. The hard, crisp, matter-of-fact world of solid reality and clear-cut edges rapidly dissolves into another totally different—a world of vanishing outline and elusive shadows. Later on, when the moon came up, it completed this magical transformation. Gone were the sordid details of the sun-seared day, gone too the bustle and noise of our over-active humanity, hard at work over quoits and deck-tennis. Instead, there spread over the landscape of dark forests and glistening waters the silvery enchantment of a beautiful moonlit night,

made vocal by the distant hum of a million insects and musical by the lilting notes of our own dance-orchestra. As the midnight hour struck the dance-music came to an end, and with it the fretful footfalls of my fellow-passengers became fainter and fainter till they finally passed away into the Silence of the Night.

It was at that witching hour of midnight, as I lay half-wakeful on my deck-chair, lulled by the unearthly beauty of the scene around, that the Moon Maiden made her mystical appearance. Softly she glided across the deck, and when she came to the deck-rail she stood leaning against it for a while, wistfully gazing far out into the glistening moonlit waters. Then of a sudden she raised her hands, brought them together palm to palm, and took a high dive over the rails. There was no sound of a splash, nor was she to be seen anywhere in the water. She had disappeared like the vision she was.

The story goes that many years ago she and her young husband were taking their honeymoon-tour up the Amazon, when one full-moon night the steamer for some reason stopped in the middle of the river. The young groom full of life and vigour was so overcome by the beauty of the scene that an irresistible impulse to have a swim in the moonlit Amazon took possession of him. Ignoring all warnings, he went to the lowermost deck and, being a good swimmer, took a dive and swam strongly out into the river; and, when last seen, he was still swimming strongly, his tall, slim, athletic figure being beautifully silhouetted against the liquid silver of the water. When after a while he did not return, everybody on board felt alarmed and a search-party was immediately made up and sent out in a boat. But the search proved unavailing, and the youth paid for his venturesomeness with his life. The bride, as might be expected, collapsed at the suddenness of the tragedy which overtook her and destroyed on the instant the



THE MOON MAIDEN

beautiful dreams of her young life. On her return to England she suffered from chronic melancholia, a strange hallucination, that she was swimming in the Amazon beside her husband, took possession of her, and shortly afterwards she died of a broken heart. But, whenever the *Hilary* happens to be passing that particular spot near Santarem on a full-moon night, the bride materializes, and appears as scantily clad as on the night of tragedy. She is then seen gliding softly across the deck, standing by the deck-rail, looking for a minute or two wistfully into the glistening waters, and then taking that dive of hers, vanishing as mysteriously as she had appeared on the scene.

What a picture of love immortal and true romance the Moon Maiden presented to my eyes as she stood for a moment or two by the lifebuoy scanning the horizon for a passing glimpse of one who had loved her dearly but who was so tragically snatched away from her young life! And yet I have heard a great industrialist and a very successful man of the world say at a public meeting that 'Romance was dead. The Machine had killed it.' Romance dead! What a travesty of facts! Romance is older than Adam and younger than youth, and it will be going strong and retain its Peter-Panish youthfulness even when the last of the man-made machines is worn out and laid to rest on the scrap-heap of the world. Unbelievable as it may seem, Romance more than the Machine is indispensable to earthly existence. Men in the past have lived without the Machine and men in some happy future may live so, but they have never lived and never can live without Romance. Indeed, Romance is the one thing that makes terrestrial life bearable and worth living. Whether it is the simple romance of a man and a maid, or the thrilling one of conquering heights or achieving wealth and fame, whatever it is, it is some kind of looking forward

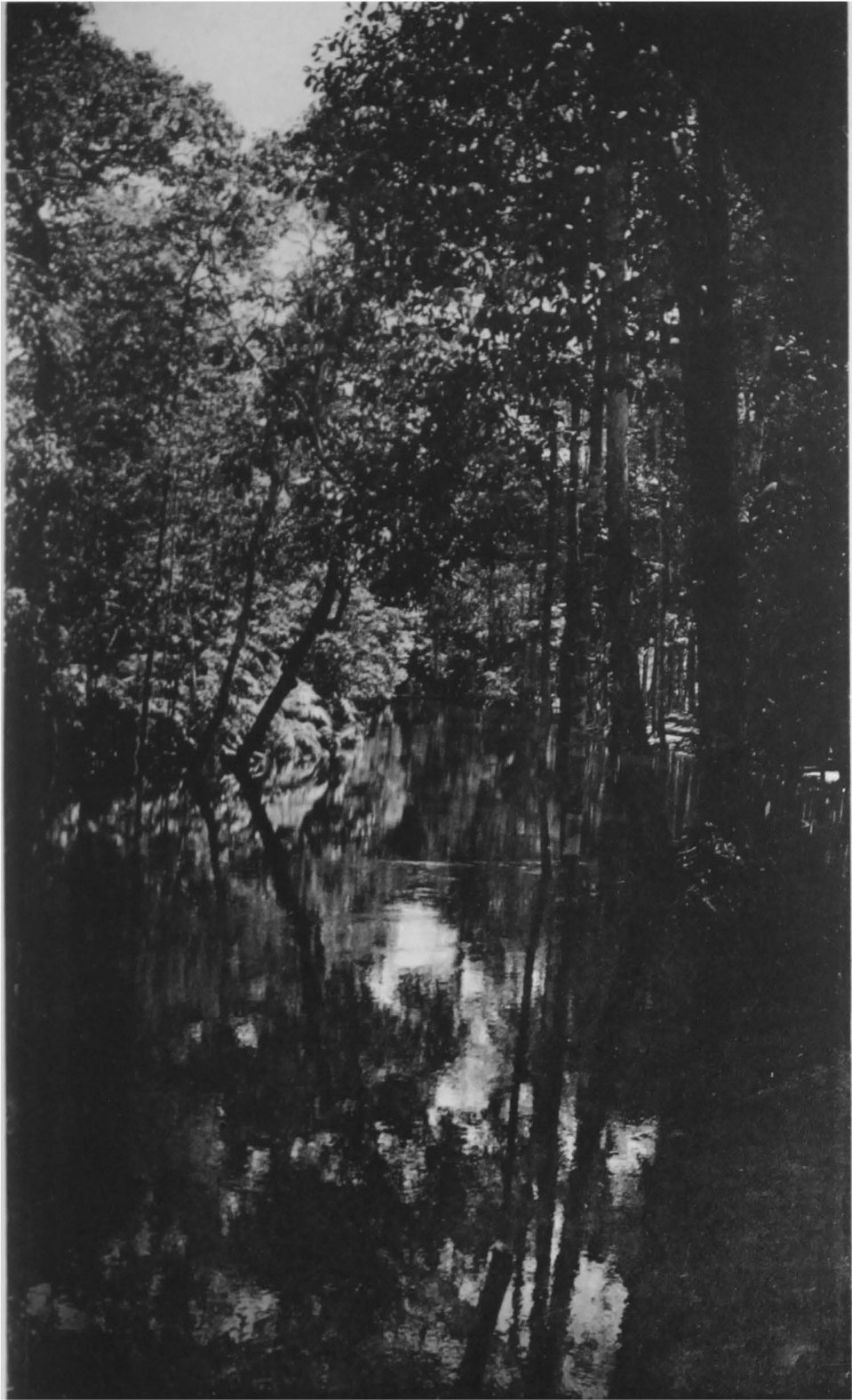


—a hope which is born in every healthy human heart, and born again and again and which never really dies in spite of a hundred apparent deaths—a hope of something wonderful to come—a belief that some day our ship with all sails set and filled with conquering breeze will come sailing victoriously over the dark, tempestuous sea of life and find safe anchorage in its home port of peaceful waters and bright sunshine, bringing with it all one has ever hoped for and sighed for. Few of us are ever too old or so worn out with life's labour and disillusionments to feel too tired to scan the horizon for the first sight of that weather-beaten ship of ours, and if it never comes to view one steps out of life still clinging to the hope that on some other fairy sea forlorn the magic casements will open giving us one assured heart-filling glance of white sails fluttering gaily before a light heavenly gale.

The Moon Maiden was a symbol, just as the sight of a young girl in her wedding-dress is a symbol, just as lovers on the stage or on the silver screen are a symbol of what most of us would like Romance to be, what most of us perhaps believed it to be until stern, plain, unvarnished facts of life stepped in and disenchanting us of our happy day-dreams. But even the dark, drab realities of a sunless day cannot for long stop our day-dreaming or block our primrose path to the elusive rainbow of Romance. It is Romance which initiates us into the great world of Make-Believe, a world of whimsical fancy and of naïve, genuine emotionalism. I say *genuine* emotionalism. None of the 'sob-stuff' is here, much less the 'sickly sentimentalism' of the wishy-washy trash that all too often passes muster for Romance. Romancism, if I may coin such a term, is in direct alignment. It drives a clean straight path through life and the arts of life, and never dashes off at a tangent to explore the nescient dark underworld of gaudy crime and moral morass. It is what it has always claimed to

be—a creature of nuance and pure fantasy. Its hall-mark is spontaneousness, upon which it relies to win its way into the hearts of men and women whose lives are drab and filled with hard, mechanical work, and none too hopeful future. These mechanized bipeds, for such has the Factory System made most men and women of our age, gladly give up many material comforts of life just to be able to get out of themselves for a passing hour or two and live in the imaginative world of romance and music, of fantasy and make-believe which picture-houses bring into their otherwise uneventful, unpromising lives. The Machine, therefore, has not killed Romance. On the contrary, it has made its presence more vitally necessary than ever in our modern world of robots, automatons, and mechanized human beings.

**SAUDADES**



A FLOODED FOREST, NEAR MANAÓS

## CHAPTER XI

### SAUDADES

IN Portuguese, the language of Brazil, there is a beautiful word which better than any English word expresses the feeling with which I came away from Brazil and remember the happy three weeks I spent there. The word is—*Saudade*. It is a kind of expansive good-bye, in which happy memories of passing companionship are blent with ardent wishes for lasting friendship, charged with abundance of sentiment and good feeling, so natural to the Latin races of Southern Europe and South America. In short, *saudade* means: 'May you retain Happy Memories of us and be blessed with peaceful days in future as you were when with us!'

The seven weeks' Cruise naturally provided me with quite a few *saudades* of varied degree and kind. First of these *saudades* I owe to the people themselves. They are a mixed race, being composed of the descendants of the original Portuguese settlers, the indigenous Indians, and the imported Negroes of the early slave days, together with the three cross-breeds of these three races. A nation made up of races so mixed as the Brazilians is apt to develop with the passage of time unhealthy communalism and strong race prejudice side by side with mutual tolerance and good-fellowship. But the Brazilians seemed to be singularly free from the limitations and undesirable developments of a mixed nationality and so possessed the happy knack of extracting all the good out of it. The Whites, the Indians, and the Negroes together with their cross-breeds, the Caboclos, mixed freely in happy harmony

and mutual tolerance. No class, colour, or communal distinctions of any kind were in principle made in public services or tolerated in social institutions and amenities of life. For instance, it was quite a common sight to see white men and women in company of brown Caboclos of either sex at a restaurant or a cinema-show, and nobody took any notice of these incongruous combinations of brown, black, and white. Coming, as I did, from a country where these unhappy distinctions are made and sedulously cherished, the example of Brazil was an eye-opener. Filled as the world is at present with reviving racial antagonisms and clashing class interests, it was a memorable experience and a veritable *saudade* to live even for a few weeks among a people who seemed to have risen above these growing race hatreds and prevailing class-consciousnesses of the rest of the nations of the world. But paradoxical as it may seem, side by side with this remarkable breadth of vision, the Brazilians betrayed peculiar narrow-mindedness or rather backwardness in their social customs and conventions. Some of these were so antiquated that at times they took us right back to the age of the early Portuguese invaders of Brazil. For instance, no young man was allowed to enter the house of a family possessing marriageable girls unless he was betrothed to one of them. Nor, if he fell in love with one of them, was he allowed to pay his court to the young lady of his choice inside her home; but it was open to him to stand outside the house on the public pavement and do all the wooing his heart yearned for, with his lady-love standing Juliet-wise at the open window of the ground-floor, while the people walked up and down the pavement casting sidelong glances at them or stood on some pretext listening to their love-lore. Even after the young man had done his wooing, *coram populo*, in the approved Brazilian fashion, and was formally engaged to the lady of his choice, he was not

even then allowed to take his future bride out with him for a motor-drive or to a cinema-show. If by some mischance the girl was seen with her fiancé at any public resort without a chaperon, a scandal would soon be started, enough to ruin her reputation for life. So firmly rooted was this institution of chaperonage in the Brazilian social code that even the engaged couple of the English colony dare not be seen driving out by themselves or seated together at a restaurant or in a cinema, lest some gossip start a scandal and their Brazilian friends cut them for flagrantly breaking an important item of their code of honour.

While jealously guarding in modes and manners of life certain old fossilized conventions of theirs, the Brazilians betrayed singularly ultra-modern tendencies in other ways. For example, their men seemed to out-lido Lido itself by appearing in their drawing - room in jazzy pyjama - jacket of glaring design and colour when their friends of either sex called on them. The English colony of Pará even went one better, for when a man called, the lady of the house asked him to take off his coat before she offered him a seat, and then the man sat in her drawing-room talking to her in his shirt-sleeves. If a man received a visit from his man friend, he was expected to say: 'Here 's the peg, and there 's the bath'—meaning, Here is the peg for your coat to hang on, and there is the bathroom for you to have a bath before you come and talk to me. I was myself once inextricably involved in the sartorial intricacies of the English colony of Pará. We had a bride on board. Some of us were asked to her wedding-reception in the evening by the leading Scotch lady in Pará, who played the fairy god-mother on such occasions. I was considerably puzzled about the clothes I was to wear at the reception. After much cogitation with myself I finally decided to go in a dark grey suit. Imagine my surprise when on being received

by my host I found him in white duck trousers and cotton shirt. And later on the bridegroom greeted me dressed similarly, and when I went to the hat-stand to put away my hat, more surprise seemed to await me. I could see no pegs on the stand, for they all lay smothered beneath a pile of white duck coats discarded by the thirty odd guests. In fact, if an English man caller was not asked by the lady on whom he called to take off his coat he would feel offended, for he would take it as a gentle hint to him that his future visits to her home would not be welcomed.

However, the people who excited our curiosity and most keenly interested us in Brazil were the Indians. With the modern passion for knowing all about the obscure nooks and corners of the remotest and most inaccessible parts of the world there are few people left on the face of the earth of whose past history and present mode of living we are not aware. Of these few and rare peoples the Indians of South America easily take the lead. No doubt we know all that is worth knowing about the habits and customs of those living along the banks of the Amazon and its main tributaries, but those others inhabiting the interior of Brazil are perhaps the only really mysterious people now left in the world. Ever since the intrepid Colonel Fawcett plunged into and was instantly swallowed up by the mystic *Matto Grosso*, the South American Indian has seized the mind and imagination of that part of mankind which has a flair for the unknown and the mysterious. Now and again a white man has pierced a stray corner of the borderland of this unexplored region, and brought to light facts about one or the other unknown Indian tribes that have made us pause and revise our traditional opinion about the uncivilized peoples of the world. For instance, many years ago a young American adventurer happened to stray into that part of *Matto Grosso* which is



inhabited by a cannibal tribe of Indians, the *Mangeromas*. He tells us how these cannibals lived in perfect peace and harmony in their vast communal hut; how unbounded was their hospitality to strangers; what fine hunters were the men, who never failed to bring home a fresh supply of game each day; and how this supply was distributed on approved Communist principles, so that none received a scrap more than he needed for himself and his family for the day. These sturdy, unconscious Communists knew no maladies, much less suffered from any of our diseases. What especially drew the attention of the American adventurer was the inventive faculty of the cannibals and the ingenious devices they possessed for catching the game of the forest. One invention in particular drew his special notice. It was a blow-gun made of a ten-foot wooden tube in which a thin poisoned arrow was inserted and ejected by the force of human breath. The Mangeroma would first fill his lungs to their utmost capacity and then through the mouthpiece blow hard into the tube, and instantly the poisoned arrow hurtled through the air to its distant objective. Such experts were these Mangeromas in the use of their blow-guns that they seldom failed to hit their objective even though it made a moving target like a monkey jumping from branch to branch. The original Mangeroma who first thought out, designed, and made by the skill of his supple fingers such an ingenious weapon as the blow-gun, which on mere pressure of air can shoot an arrow to a distance of fifty feet and more, deserves a place in the records of notable achievements of the human inventive faculty. When we are brought in contact with wild people of the type of the Mangeromas we cannot but stay to revise our set ideas about the intelligence and usefulness of the so-called savages. And those of us who to make a decent living have to toil and moil, rush and hurry to our joyless task at the desk or the machine each single day

of the week, and worry, when freed from it, about our small incomes and growing wants, cannot but cast envious glances at, and at times sigh for, the simple, open-air, unhurried existence of these sturdy, care-free Sons of the Forest. Happy, twice happy are these mortals, far removed from the world's din! Neither fame nor fortune, as we count these things, will ever be theirs. To die unwept and unhonoured is their fate. Not unsung though, for whoever comes in contact with them must needs sing their praise in his own heart, though the music reach no other ears. I, who know London and Paris, art and literature, lovely women and gallant men; I, the heir of all the ages from the ancient Medes and Persians, feel at times like bowing down in admiration before them. For the cities of the West, art and literature, gallant men and lovely women, all wear masks. We take the mask for the man. Here the man without the mask is to be found: full of happiness—and of misery. Dirty little primitive shacks, filled with smoke and unwashed brats, human beings and domestic animals living close together, the perpetual sameness of things—these looked like misery to us on board, the Children of the Mask. But to those who have never known otherwise, is it misery to them? Happiness and misery, who can define these states? It is in the mind and in the mind alone that true contentment is to be found—the mind that knows no ambition, and therefore knows no misery. Sons of the Forest, blessed are you that your simple hovel and sparse food suffice you! Strikes and lock-outs, slumps and depressions, which affect the rest of the world, do not touch you! You have solved the problem of existence—to live and to labour without haste and without worry. As the *Hilary* steamed up the Amazon and I watched long and enviously these unhurrying, untoiling sons of men leisurely moving about in the clearings of the thickly-wooded banks, the long-forgotten and



CROSSING THE TARUMÁ, NEAR MANAÓS

little-believed-in words of the Son of Man came home to me as they had never done before:

‘Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin.’

‘Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?’

‘Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.’

To us all the most memorable *saudade* of our cruise up the Amazon was our visit to the Falls of Tarumã. With the exception of the Victoria Falls I have seen all the remarkable waterfalls of the world, including Niagara. Compared with their size and height the Tarumã sinks into insignificance, into a mere absurdity, but when we consider its setting and the way that leads to it, it stands in a class by itself. All the other waterfalls of the world have an open outlook, and they fall from open heights, wooded or otherwise, but the Tarumã is situated, as the reader can see for himself by looking at its picture, in the thick of the thickest of Brazilian forests. Then its approach is such as is never found anywhere else in the world, and even cannot be imagined by any of my readers, no matter how widely he may have travelled in the world. When the mighty Amazon is in flood after the rainy season it rises to such unbelievable height that it inundates entire forests along its flooded banks. The approach to the Tarumã Falls is one such forest. We happened to be on the Amazon a week after the rainy season had ended, so the Tarumã forest was wholly submerged, only the tops of the giant trees being

seen above the surface of the water. Let me narrate our day's trip to the falls. From the *Hilary* lying alongside the port of Manáos we were taken in steam launches to the entrance of the submerged forests. There we were transferred to small rowing-boats in batches of six. The boat with the ship's officers took the lead and made its way through alleys of seemingly floating tree-tops, but the alleys soon closed up, and apparently there was nothing in front of us but a solid phalanx of rank growth of wild intertwining branches. A passage was, however, made through it by the leading boat by pushing back with oars the obstructing branches on either side, and we followed in its wake as best we could, now beating back the resiling branches, now dodging a projecting dead stump of a tree, then bending low our heads to avoid the coiling stem of a huge liana which if left to itself would have made a good strong noose round our necks, bodily lifted us right off the boat, and left us hanging in the air half-submerged where

'The stealthier, stagnant channels  
 Under low niches of drooping leaves  
 Coil into deep recesses:  
 And then did we enter, then  
 To heavy, hot, dense, dim places  
 Where creepers climb and sweat and climb,  
 And the drip and splash of oozing water  
 Loads the stifling air.  
 Rotting scrofulous steaming trunks,  
 Great horned emerald beetles crawling,  
 Ants and huge slow butterflies  
 That have strayed and lost the sun;  
 Ah, sick have we swooned as the air thickened  
 To a pallid brown ecliptic glow,  
 And on the forest, fallen with languor,  
*Thunder has begun.'*



THE TARUMÃ FALLS, NEAR MANÁOS

What was that thunder? It was the Thunder of the Tarumã. Enclosed as it was with thick forest the Tarumã thundered down to our ears, but to our eyes it fell and flowed so gently, so gracefully that it seemed as if some fairy of the forest, renowned for the length and beauty of her hair, had seated herself on the top of the falls and loosening her knot let her long silky platinum tresses flow in one thick massive sweep down the hill-side.

After this we had two memorable excursions, one to Solimões to see the giant Victoria Regia lilies, and the other to Mosqueira, to bathe in the sparkling, sun-lit waters of Chapéo Virado, but the trip to the Tarumã Falls formed the culminating point, and gave the finishing touch to our ever-inviting, never-to-be-forgotten Thousand-Mile Cruise up the Amazon.

'O many and many are rivers,  
And beautiful are all rivers,  
And lovely is water everywhere  
That leaps or glides or stays:  
Yet whatever stream I stand by  
And whatever river I dream of,  
There is *One River* still in the back of my mind,  
That stirs in my heart and speaks to me  
More sure, more dear than they.'

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