

he
OUR HORSEMEN
the APOCALYPSE



BLASCO IBANEZ

THE FOUR HORSEMEN OF THE APOCALYPSE

(LOS CUATRO JINETES DEL APOCALIPSIS)

FROM THE SPANISH OF
VICENTE BLASCO-IBÁÑEZ

Authorized Translation by
CHARLOTTE BENTLEY JORDAN



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**THE FOUR HORSEMEN
OF THE APOCALYPSE**

Comments of the Press

"Superlatives are boomerangs, and enthusiasms too often won't stand recording, but . . . the case of Vicente Blasco Ibañez's 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' offers an exception. Months ago this tremendous novel of the war was reviewed from the original on this page with many ardent superlatives. Now it appears again in the translation of Charlotte Brewster Jordan . . . and after a second reading it is possible to notice it even more enthusiastically. Certainly in it Ibañez has fulfilled Sainte Beuve's definition of what a classic should be . . . it enriches the human mind and increases its treasure."—*Detroit Sunday News*.

"It gives a new view point from which to see and feel the war."

—*New York Times Book Review*—leading article.

"It is in every page instinct with indescribable fascination. . . . Predictions are rash, we know. But we venture this, that for portrayal at once of the spirit and the grim substance of war . . . our time will see no more convincing work of genius than this."—*The Tribune*, New York.

"A much more broadly-based and at the same time more deeply-moving story than any which the present reviewer has seen. These have seen the war through the eyes of their own country. . . . Senor Ibañez seems to see it through eyes that are world-wide in their sweep and with a mind that is very human and pitiful in its comprehension of the suffering and the heroism. . . . 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' is so far the distinguished novel of the war."—*Brooklyn Eagle*.

The World gives " 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' preeminent place among recent books of fiction as . . . a world romance which compels international recognition and would receive it even though its theme were a less gravely universal matter than the great war."

" 'The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse' is a great novel, one of the three or four outstanding novels of the war. It is rich and varied in scene, human in its characterizations, interesting throughout, and, above all, refreshingly straightforward and conclusive on the subject of the Germans and their methods of warfare."—*The Globe*, New York.

"Now, for the first time, a recognized master of fiction, who comes of a nation that has so far preserved its neutrality, has chosen the war for his theme. It thus occupies a unique place in war fiction."

—*New York Times Book Review*—editorial.

"The splendid spirit of France in the hour of trial is the dominant note in the story, but the wild life of the cattle herder, the careless, perfumed existence of the Frenchman of fashion, the egotistic career of the implacable German, the prophetic utterances of the philosophic Russian and a thread of romance are colorful elements in a perfect whole."

—*Globe-Democrat*, St. Louis.

"Extremely vivid . . . a series of war pictures unsurpassed in the literature of the times."—*Publisher's Weekly*.

"Powerful and masterful . . . an altogether successful book by Spain's greatest novelist."—*The Sun*, New York.

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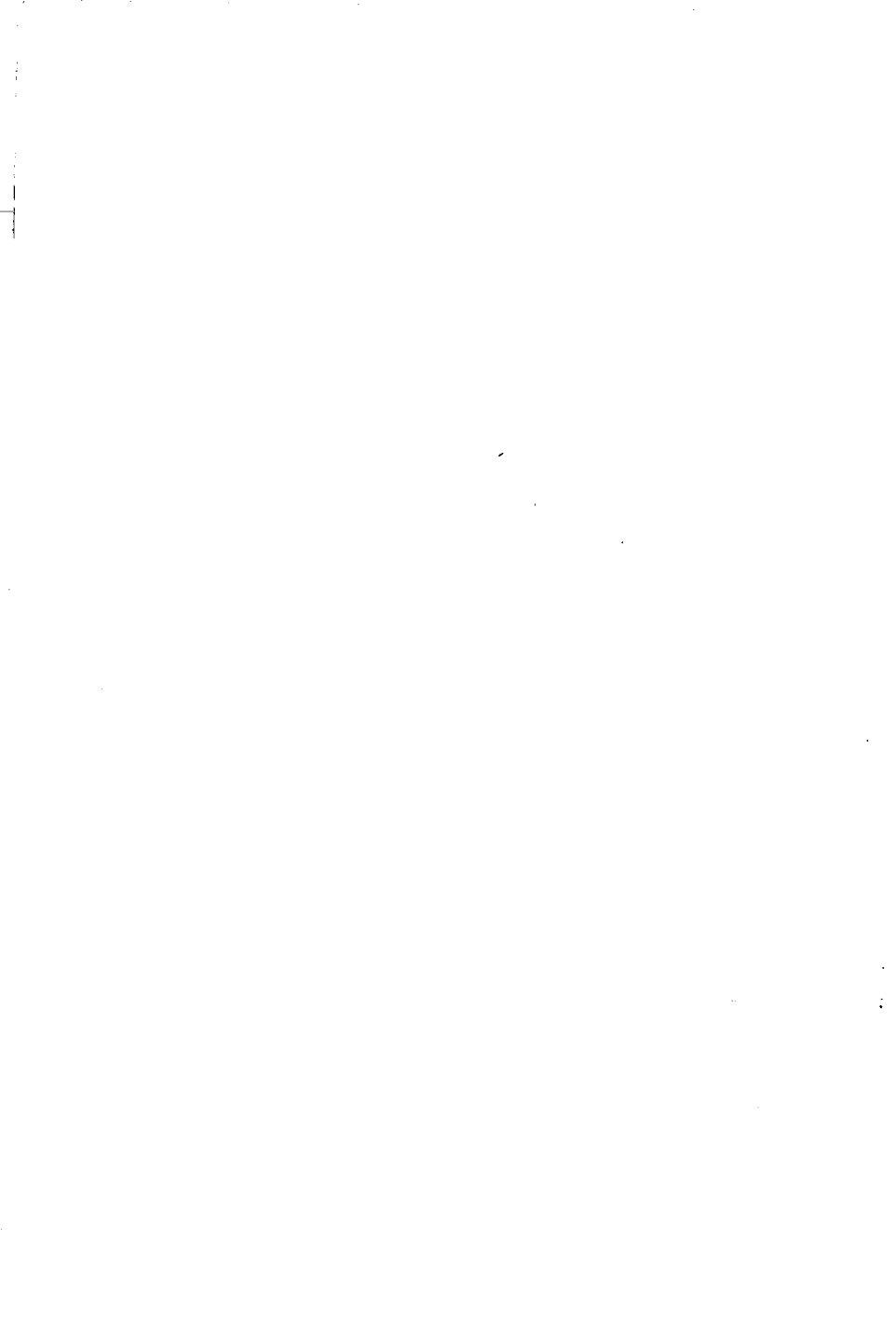
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PART I



CHAPTER I

THE TRYST

(In the Garden of the *Chapelle Expiatoire*)

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

Five months had passed since their last interview in this square had afforded the wandering lovers the refuge of a damp, depressing calmness near a boulevard of continual movement close to a great railroad station. The hour of the appointment was always five and Julio was accustomed to see his beloved approaching by the reflection of the recently lit street lamps, her figure enveloped in furs, and holding her muff before her face as if it were a half-mask. Her sweet voice, greeting him, had breathed forth a cloud of vapor, white and tenuous, congealed by the cold. After various hesitating interviews, they had abandoned the garden. Their love had acquired the majestic importance of acknowledged fact, and from five to seven had taken refuge in the fifth floor of the *rue de la Pompe* where Julio had an artist's studio. The curtains well drawn over the double glass windows, the cosy hearth-fire sending forth its ruddy flame as the

only light of the room, the monotonous song of the samovar bubbling near the cups of tea—all the seclusion of life isolated by an idolizing love—had dulled their perceptions to the fact that the afternoons were growing longer, that outside the sun was shining later and later into the pearl-covered depths of the clouds, and that a timid and pallid Spring was beginning to show its green finger tips in the buds of the branches suffering the last nips of Winter—that wild, black boar who so often turned on his tracks.

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

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

dames, loaded down with packages, who were waiting for straggling members of their families in order to take the train in the *Gare Saint Lazare*. . . .

And Julio, in his special delivery letter, had proposed meeting in this place, supposing that it would be as little frequented as in former times. She, too, with the same thoughtlessness, had in her reply, set the usual hour of five o'clock, believing that after passing a few minutes in the *Printemps* or the *Galleries* on the pretext of shopping, she would be able to slip over to the unfrequented garden without risk of being seen by any of her numerous acquaintances.

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

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

Outside of the garden he could see also the same anxiety which was making those around him so fraternal and

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sociable. The venders of newspapers were passing through the boulevard crying the evening editions, their furious speed repeatedly slackened by the eager hands of the passers-by contending for the papers. Every reader was instantly surrounded by a group begging for news or trying to decipher over his shoulder the great headlines at the top of the sheet. In the *rue des Mathurins*, on the other side of the square, a circle of workmen under the awning of a tavern were listening to the comments of a friend who accompanied his words with oratorical gestures and wavings of the paper. The traffic in the streets, the general bustle of the city was the same as in other days, but it seemed to Julio that the vehicles were whirling past more rapidly, that there was a feverish agitation in the air and that people were speaking and smiling in a different way. The women of the garden were looking even at him as if they had seen him in former days. He was able to approach them and begin a conversation without experiencing the slightest strangeness.

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

He knew exactly what course he was going to follow. He had disembarked at ten o'clock the night before, and as it was not yet twenty-four hours since he had touched land, his mentality was still that of a man who comes from afar, across oceanic immensities, from boundless horizons, and is surprised at finding himself in touch with the preoccupations which govern human communities. After disembarking he had spent two hours in a café in Boulogne, listlessly watching the middle-class families who passed their time in the monotonous placidity of a life without dangers. Then the special train for the passengers from South America had brought him

to Paris, leaving him at four in the morning on a platform of the *Gare du Nord* in the embrace of Pepe Argensola, the young Spaniard whom he sometimes called "my secretary" or "my valet" because it was difficult to define exactly the relationship between them. In reality, he was a mixture of friend and parasite, the poor comrade, complacent and capable in his companionship with a rich youth on bad terms with his family, sharing with him the ups and downs of fortune, picking up the crumbs of prosperous days, or inventing expedients to keep up appearances in the hours of poverty.

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

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

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

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

He had sailed from Buenos Aires in a steamer of the Hamburg line, the *Koenig Frederic August*. The world was in blessed tranquillity when the boat left port. Only

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the whites and half-breeds of Mexico were exterminating each other in conflicts in order that nobody might believe that man is an animal degenerated by peace. On the rest of the planet, the people were displaying unusual prudence. Even aboard the transatlantic liner, the little world of passengers of most diverse nationalities appeared a fragment of future society implanted by way of experiment in modern times—a sketch of the hereafter, without frontiers or race antagonisms.

One morning the ship band which every Sunday had sounded the *Choral* of Luther, awoke those sleeping in the first-class cabins with the most unheard-of serenade. Desnoyers rubbed his eyes believing himself under the hallucinations of a dream. The German horns were playing the *Marseillaise* through the corridors and decks. The steward, smiling at his astonishment, said, "The fourteenth of July!" On the German steamers they celebrate as their own the great festivals of all the nations represented by their cargo and passengers. Their captains are careful to observe scrupulously the rites of this religion of the flag and its historic commemoration. The most insignificant republic saw the ship decked in its honor, affording one more diversion to help combat the monotony of the voyage and further the lofty ends of the Germanic propaganda. For the first time the great festival of France was being celebrated on a German vessel, and whilst the musicians continued escorting a racy *Marseillaise* in double quick time through the different floors, the morning groups were commenting on the event.

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

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

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

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

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

Another orator arose at the same table. He was the most influential of the German passengers, a rich manufacturer from Dusseldorf who had just been visiting his

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

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

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

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

"He is saying very witty things about the French,"

volunteered the interpreter in a low voice, "but they are not offensive."

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

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

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

Finally the Captain-Counselor raised his glass in a toast to France. "*Hoch!*" he yelled as though he were commanding an evolution of his soldierly Reserves. Three times he sounded the cry and all the German contingent springing to their feet, responded with a lusty *Hoch* while the band in the corridor blared forth the *Marseillaise*.

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