

QUEEN OF THE SOUTH

A Long Search for the Heroine of a
Colored Supplement

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A Portrait of a
Brunette Beauty.

THE cabin was hot, ill-smelling. The men gathered there were unhappy, evil-tempered. Months in the fearful solitude of the ice-pack had worked the inevitable result. All were wretched beyond words, hateful to themselves and one another. They had become supersensitive from nerve-strain. The lightest word might cause a flare of wrath. Every man hunted for insults the most insidious in ordinary speech. A dozen feuds existed without rational cause.

Nor could there be hope of improvement before the weather changed, the ice broke, the sun returned after the long deadly Antarctic night of winter. The men knew the folly of their emotions; none the less they were the helpless victims of their moods. Intelligence could not control feeling under the racking torture of this imprisonment amid cold and darkness. Such suffering is the price the explorer must pay for any triumph he may win.

A sullen silence hung over the group in the cabin. Each man shunned his fellows as one shrinking from a pestilence. Some smoked and dreamed of home, some sat brooding on the iniquities of an enemy of the moment, some dozed. None read; the monotony of reading had become a curse.

The "Boy" only was not present. He had received the nickname because he was the youngest scientist of this expedition toward the South Pole. Despite the tedium of the long waiting in the ice, he retained something of youthfulness, flashes of cheery humor. Presently, now, the "Boy" came into the cabin with a shout, waving a sheet of newspaper.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "I've found something."

A languid interest showed in the faces.

"Don't be so blamed noisy," spluttered Smithers the meteorologist. But no one heeded him.

"It was in the bottom of my trunk," the "Boy" explained. "It's a page of a colored supplement of a Sunday paper. All pictures. All girls! See."

The men clustered around the sheet and studied it, absorbed. The softly tinted faces were all pretty. The lonely hearts were ravished by the spectacle. Something new to look at was a boon indeed. And such a galaxy of loveliness—ah!

"Say, I've got an idea," the "Boy" cried gleefully.

"Your first, ain't it?" Smithers queried brutally.

The "Boy" heeded him not. "I'll cut 'em all out, and we'll draw lots for 'em. There's eight of us, and ten of the girls. We'll leave out the two poorest-lookers."

After all, it was Smithers who brought a pair of shears. The "Boy" began snipping away carefully. It was a page of grouped pictures of actresses. The "Boy" was a long time cutting the irregular outlines. He realized the gravity of his task.

"I'll get the lots ready," Smithers volunteered.

see 'em. They haven't seen my lots. You fellows come here and draw. I'll take the one that's left."

Finally all was in readiness. The men crowded to Smithers's corner, and drew each a square from the sheaf he offered. One piece remained with Smithers. The men moved back to the "Boy."

"Who's number one?" the "Boy" questioned.

"Here." A man stepped forward and received from the "Boy" the first of the pictures. He gloated over it for a moment before moving. "Gee! She's a peach!" he murmured with enthusiasm.

"Number two," the "Boy" called.

The first man made way and continued his rhapsodies apart. The distribution continued. Each man received a picture, and each appeared content with what fate had given him.

Among the rest, Morton the zoologist of the party drew one of the colored likenesses. He saw with joy that it was the very face his eye had selected as favorite when he scanned the whole sheet. He retired into a corner and scrutinized his prize avariciously.

It was a full-length portrait of a brunette beauty. The small head, regally poised, was crowned with a mass of unconfined raven locks that went rippling down over her shoulders in a cascade of loveliness. She was dressed in a clinging robe of white, girdled at the waist. The form was slender, but of sumptuous virginal grace. The face was bewitching, with pouting lips, nose small and straight, eyes large, brilliant, set wide apart, looking full into the observer's.

"My sweetheart!" Morton whispered. Then, after a shamefaced glance about him, he bent and kissed the pictured smiling mouth. He bethought him to read the caption of the portrait: "Isabel Langham, who has recently won so much attention for her playing of a small part in 'Quo Vadis.'"

Morton's mood grew romantic, whereby was engendered a most fervent detestation of his comrades' company. He placed the picture in his pocket, put on his wraps and went out on deck. The pure cold air, the sense of vast spaces, were welcome. He breathed deeply, seeming thus to cleanse himself of the moral squanders from the cabin. He observed with

pleasure that an aurora began to glow in the southern sky. He hoped that the others might remain unaware of it. He wished to be left in solitary enjoyment of the celestial splendors.

For a time a haze, soft, gently luminous, veiled the wondrous brilliance of the stars. The heavens showed as at the approach of a dawn seen vaguely through mist. The haze lay a few degrees above the horizon, in the direction where it was traversed by the magnetic meridian.

Suddenly, a broad, clear bow of light spanned this horizon, reaching a hundred degrees or more on the celestial vault. Its upper edge was shining white; the lower, dark, heavy. Between this arch and the earth a segment of sky was revealed, clear, serene, its stars beaming under the dusk mass of the arch's lower curve. For a long time the luminous bow remained in tranquil beauty, its only movement a slow, rhythmic swaying to and fro; but presently great streamers of light began to shoot from its shining rim and darted high aloft, half a thousand feet—farther—to the very zenith. These columns trembled as they flashed upward; they followed one another from their respective sources like wave following wave in a rushing phosphorescent sea.

Now other streamers flamed out from opposite parts of the horizon to meet those from the arch, till the whole formed an ocean of fire, its surface an everchanging, tremulous magnificence of color. At last the leaping eddying columns of flame joined their glories at the zenith, and the corona sprang into being—the supreme splendor of the aurora australis.

Then indeed was wrought in the heavens one of the loveliest among nature's miracles. The ineffable radiance grew until it seemed to Morton that,



Varian

He Longed to Fall at Her Feet.