

**MADAME MARGOT: A
GROTESQUE LEGEND
OF OLD CHARLESTON**

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Madame Margot: A Grotesque Legend of Old Charleston by John Bennett

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JOHN BENNETT

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OF OLD CHARLESTON**

MADAME MARGOT

TO

. . . You, and you, and you,
. . . who have gone greatly here
In friendship, making some delight, some true
Song in the dark, some story against fear.

. . . Lovers yet shall tell the nightingale
Sometimes a song that we of old time made,
And gossips gathered at the twilight ale
Shall say, "Those two were friends," or "Unafraid
Of bitter thoughts were those because they loved
Better than most."

. . . There in the midst of all those words shall be
Our names, our ghosts, our immortality.

—JOHN DRINKWATER.

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MADAME MARGOT

2

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In an age so glorious, so rich and fine, and so be-starred with splendor that one almost forgets the bottomless abyss into which it plunged at last, there lived a woman in Charleston of whom a very odd story is told.

The languid, lovely, tired old town was then a city brave and gay, with Mediterranean manners and Caribbean ways.

The perfume of ten thousand flowers drifted upon the winds, which came and went over a thousand gardens, ebbing and flowing like the tide.

Clouds of snowy gold and roses rolled

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across the sky, like the vast rotundas of a city builded of colored ivory. Slowly rising overhead, in windy and ethereal masses, they stood, carvings of pale porphyry upon a turquoise wall. The earth was transfigured with beauty.

It was a golden age, when all things were fair; nothing had grown old; even the tragic and the terrible were comely then. Wonder lay on everything. Merely to exist was to be happy. It was a world of unextinguished youth; life was brimful to the lips with delight.

In the gardens rare flowers bloomed, and rare fruits ripened,—pomegranates, oranges, medlars, figs, jujubes, and the purple Indian peach; and among the flowers, like winged flames, small and bright, sped the harlequins, the painted nonpareils, delicately beating the soft wind with their pied wings; while in