

THE BLOOD OF THE CONQUERORS

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The blood of the conquerors by Harvey Fergusson

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HARVEY FERGUSSON

**THE BLOOD OF THE
CONQUERORS**

NEW BORZOI NOVELS

FALL, 1921

PAN

Knut Hamsun

DREAMERS

Knut Hamsun

THE TORTOISE

Mary Borden

THE CHINA SHOP

G. B. Stern

THE BRIARY-BUSH

Floyd Dell

DEADLOCK

Dorothy Richardson

THE OTHER MAGIC

E. L. Grant-Watson

WHITE SHOULDERS

George Kibbe Turner

THE CHARMED CIRCLE

Edward Alden Jewell

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by

Harvey Fergusson



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CHAPTER I

Whenever Ramon Delcasar boarded a railroad train he indulged a habit, not uncommon among men, of choosing from the women passengers the one whose appearance most pleased him to be the object of his attention during the journey. If the woman were reserved or well-chaperoned, or if she obviously belonged to another man, this attention might amount to no more than an occasional discreet glance in her direction. He never tried to make her acquaintance unless her eyes and mouth unmistakably invited him to do so.

This conservatism on his part was not due to an innate lack of self-confidence. Whenever he felt sure of his social footing, his attitude toward women was bold and assured. But his social footing was a peculiarly uncertain thing for the reason that he was a Mexican. This meant that he faced in every social contact the possibility of a more or less covert prejudice against his blood, and that he faced it with an unduly proud and sensitive spirit concealed beneath a manner of aristocratic indifference. In the little southwestern town where he had lived all his life, except the

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last three years, his social position was ostensibly of the highest. He was spoken of as belonging to an old and prominent family. Yet he knew of mothers who carefully guarded their daughters from the peril of falling in love with him, and most of his boyhood fights had started when some one called him a "damned Mexican" or a "greaser."

Except to an experienced eye there was little in his appearance or in his manner to suggest his race. His swarthy complexion indicated perhaps a touch of the Moorish blood in his Spanish ancestry, but he was no darker than are many Americans bearing Anglo-Saxon names, and his eyes were grey. His features were aquiline and pleasing, and he had in a high degree that bearing, at once proud and unself-conscious, which is called aristocratic. He spoke English with a very slight Spanish accent.

When he had gone away to a Catholic law school in St. Louis, confident of his speech and manner and appearance, he had believed that he was leaving prejudice behind him; but in this he had been disappointed. The raw spots in his consciousness, if a little less irritated at the college, were by no means healed. Some persons, it is true, seemed to think nothing of his race one way or the other; to some, mostly women, it gave him an added interest; but in the long run it worked against him. It kept him out of a fraternity, and