CUPID AND THE DRAMATIST

By E. H. Beaman.

"I WISH," said the damsel, crossing her hands upon her lap and gazing dreamily in front of her, "you would write a play—"

"But," interposed the dramatist modestly, "I have written one—"

"Don't interrupt me," the damsel rebuked him, "before I have finished speaking please. I was going to say—a play with a nice lovely part in it that would suit a nice girl like me."

"A girl like you—or you?" inquired the dramatist politely.

"Me, of course. How stupid you are."

"It is, according to many critics, the peculiar privilege of a dramatist to be stupid," he explained. "I hope, however, in time, to acquire some intelligence, if you will help me."

"Help you to write a play, do you mean?" demanded the damsel, fixing her hazel eyes consideringly upon him.

"A play—to suit you," replied the dramatist, with a different smile. "The sort of play, you know, that you wish I would write."

"With a really lovely part in it—"

The dramatist bowed.

"For you," he added.

"Well," said the damsel, drawing her eyebrows together in an intense effort of reflection, "the sort of part I would like to take—I am not sure, of course," she explained parenthetically, "that I would take it. I haven't made up my mind yet whether I shall go in for the stage or not. But if I do, I should require a part to be specially written for me, you understand?"

"Yes," said the dramatist, deferentially, "I understand that. You can act, of course?"

"Act!" She left her soft eyes rest on him for an instant with mild disdain. "Of course I can act. What a very silly question. I have acted twice in amateur theatricals already."

"Forgive me," said the dramatist humbly. "I perceive that the question was, under the circumstances, absurdly superfluous. You were going to tell me the sort of really lovely part you would like to take—"

"Yes, my part," said the damsel, with a far-off look in her eyes, "will have to be that of a young and charming married woman—I suppose I had better be married?"

"Unquestionably," said the dramatist, with decision.

"At any rate, to start with," suggested the damsel.

"To start with?"

"Aren't people generally divorced by the third act, she inquired.

"Heaven forbid," said the dramatist firmly. "Not in my plays, anyhow. Separated—by cruel fate, if you like, or other political exigencies—but not divorced; that would never do. Now start again; you appear, I understand, first as a happy and charming young married woman of—er—of about—"

"Of—well, say 23. Do you think I could manage to look 23 on the stage? I am only 19, you know."

"You must try," said the dramatist, encouragingly. "A married woman of 23—yes?"

"Very well. My husband is, at the beginning, awfully in love with me—"

"How could he help it?" murmured the dramatist, sotto voice.

"But he is a villain—"

"A villain? You surprise me."

"Of course he is a villain," repeated the damsel with some asperity. "How can you write the play if he is not?"

"I don't know," said the dramatist candidly.

"A real out-and-out scoundrel. And so he brings a bad, beautiful adventuress to the house—"

"Why?" inquired the dramatist.

"Why," exclaimed the damsel, irritably. "Why do people ever do anything in plays? You ask such silly questions."

"I beg pardon," said the dramatist. "Please go on. This adventuress—"

"Cheats at bridge. They are playing cards after dinner, you know, in the drawing room—"

"I see," said the dramatist.

"She cheats at bridge, and the wife of the villain says, 'Ha, I have found you out at last, viper!' And the husband says with a sneer, 'Ermyntrude, you forget yourself. This lady is my guest!'"

"Rather a smart repartee," commented the dramatist. "Unanswerable, wasn't it?"

"Not at all," said the damsel. "The wife drays herself up to her full height—five foot-six. I am—nearly—and retorts, 'Either, she—or—I leaves your roof!'"

"That doesn't sound quite grammatical," objected the dramatist; "but never mind. What happens next?"

"Well, she leaves, of course," said the damsel. "She packs up her things at once, and drives off in a hansom with one of the gentlemen, who remarks, 'I will protect you. Fly with me!'"

"So she flies?"

"Why, what else can she do?" asked the damsel vaguely.

"Under the circumstances, I don't see that she can do anything else, having regard to the fact that the adventuress is left in possession—of the bridge table."

"Exactly," said the damsel, "that's just what I thought. They fly; and that is the end of the first act."

"Very effective and—original," murmured the dramatist, wondering if there was another girl in London with quite the same exquisite pearly tinted skin and beautiful, soft, hazel eyes as the damsel's—with the same delicious little chiselled features, and fragrant silky hair as hers."

"I am glad you like it," said the damsel. "I think it's rather good myself."

"It's deeply interesting," replied the dramatist. "Please go on with the next act. The heroine and her protector have flown, leaving the husband and the beautiful adventuress to pursue their evil machinations uninterrupted. Now for act two."

The damsel reflected a moment.

"We ought to have some more characters, oughtn't we, for the second act?" she inquired.

"It might be as well," admitted the dramatist. "A clergyman is usually popular—a clergyman who gives up smoking, or sugar, or some such little vice as that—by way of example to the villain; and preaches tremendous sermons against the wickedness of smart people, you know. Then you might introduce a millionaire, a reformed burglar or two, and an impecunious nobleman, if you like."

"Yes," said the damsel thoughtfully, "we could easily get them all in the second act; the heroine (that's me), while motoring along a country road, at night, is stopped by a burglar—"

"Good!" said the dramatist. "But where's the protector with whom she flew? Is he in the motor car, too?"

"Dear me! she left him at—at Monte Carlo, where he lost all his money. Curiously enough, she met an old school friend of hers there—a rich widow, who loaned her a motor car—and so it happened that while she was going for a moonlight drive, alone, the burglar stopped her. 'Take all I have,' sobs the heroine, offering him her purse, which

"I THINK SAID THE DRAMATIST SOLEMNLY, "THAT IT WOULD MAKE A REALLY REMARKABLE PLAY"

is empty, 'but spare my life—for my husband's sake!'"

"And he does!" said the dramatist.

"Yes. He goes into the car, and finding the purse empty, he flings it away, and exclaims with a terrible oath, 'then I will take you!'"

"Gracious!" cried the dramatist, "and where does he take her to?"

"He takes her to Paris," said the damsel. "They drive all night at a fearful pace—and when they reach Paris the burglar sells the motor car and is going to take the heroine to America with the proceeds when he accidentally discovers her name.

"'What,' he cries, 'are you the wife of my old friend Aubrey Vavasour?'

"'I am,' says the heroine, proudly.

"'Then I will tell you all,' he exclaims. 'I am not a burglar. I am Lord Postlewaite, the forger. There is a warrant out for my arrest. I throw myself upon your mercy. The police are on my track.'

"And the heroine replies: 'Fear nothing; I will save you.'

"And she does," said the dramatist, rubbing his hands with glee.

"Of course she does," went on the damsel. "She takes him back to London with her in act three disguised as a footman. Then she engages a flat in the east end, under another name and becomes a district visitor, and the footman distributes tracts for her. But he runs out to be a confirmed drunkard and the clergyman of the parish tells her she ought to get rid of him. She says, 'It is impossible. He is not a footman at all. He is my husband's old friend. He is Lord—'

"'Hush!' cries the clergyman. 'Do you mean he is Lord—' and he whispers the forger's name in her ear.

"'Yes,' said the heroine, 'but don't tell the police.'

"'Certainly not,' says the clergyman. 'I will reform him.'"

"'And he does,'" exclaimed the dramatist, with conviction.

"Yes—he makes a bet with him. 'Look here, old chap,' he says, 'I'll give up smoking if you'll give up drinking, and I'll bet you a fiver I keep it up longest.'

"'Done!' says the footman, and at the end of three days the clergyman wins.

"He is so proud of this that he proposes to the heroine, with whom he has fallen in love, but she indignantly rejects him.

"'False priest!' she exclaims, 'I am married already.'

"'Great Scott!' cries the clergyman in horror. 'I understood you were a widow. Then your husband is—'

"'Alive!' cries the heroine. The clergyman faints and the curtain falls."

"Quite time, too," agreed the dramatist. "Really, a very striking situation. A most powerful and moving play. But—how do you intend to finish it?"

"It will finish itself," replied the damsel. "Plays always do. In act four—that's the last, isn't it?"

"It is generally wise to confine oneself to four acts—if possible," said the dramatist, gently.

"Very well, then—we must bring them all together again somehow. It doesn't much matter how, does it?"

"Not a bit," agreed the dramatist.

"Let me see—oh, yes! The husband, after hunting all over London for the heroine, gives her up as dead and is on the point of marrying the adventuress when the clergyman (who has become a fashionable west end preacher, you know), meets them one day at an afternoon tea party, where he is denouncing in a loud tone the wickedness of people who do not pay their bridge debts.

The adventuress (who owes her hostess several thousand pounds) turns pale, but the husband takes the clergyman aside and gives him a bit of his mind. "Do you know who I am?" he demands. "I don't know you from a blessed crow," retorts the clergyman angrily——"

"Oh, come!" protested the dramatist. "A real respectable west-end parson——"

"Well—from Alam, then, if you like it better," said the damsel, impatiently. "Ha!" says the husband. 'Permit me to inform you that my name is Vavasour, and that lady'—pointing to the adventuress, who is trying to escape unnoticed—'is my affianced bride.'

"'You don't say so,' replies the clergyman. 'Vavasour! Why you must be Mrs. Vavasour's husband!'

"'I was,' says the husband a little annoyed.

"'You are,' cries the clergyman triumphantly, 'for she is alive. I know it. I asked her to marry me only last week.'

"'Villain,' exclaims the husband, 'You dared to propose to my wife?'

"'I thought she was your widow,' exclaimed the clergyman. 'As she is not your widow, I forbid you to espouse that person who is trying to escape from the room.' And he points his finger at the adventuress.

"'Enough!' cries the husband. 'I am ruined. She is ruined. We are all ruined. My wife is alive.'

"And at this moment the heroine drops in to pay a call upon the lady of the house, just as the adventuress is hurriedly descending the front door steps. The footman who is at the heroine's carriage door, the moment he sees the adventuress, cries: 'Arabella! It's Cincinnati Bell.' He grabs hold of her.

"'Unhand me, villain,' cries the adventuress.

"'Not if I know it,' says the footman. 'How about that forged check?' The adventuress faints, and the clergyman, happening to come out at that moment, recognizes the footman immediately.

"'Scoundrel, where's that fiver you owe me?' he exclaims.

"'Never mind the fiver,' retorts the footman. 'This wouman is the real forger of the duke's check — I can prove it. She is known in America as Cincinnati Bell. She forged the check, cashed it and gave me a half-penny. Yet I was accused of the base act, I—Lord Postlewaite, I swear to you, my revered friend, I am innocent—and this—this woman is the culprit.'

"'I believe you, my boy,' said the clergyman, pressing his hand, and they both weep. Meanfime the heroine upbraids her husband for deserting her——"

"But," protested the dramatist," surely it was the heroine who deserted the husband ——"

"Well, it's the same thing," rejoined the damsel, a trifle irritably. "Anyhow, they have a jolly row, and the other visitors intervene; and, finally, they become reconciled upon the husband promising to give up the adventuress once for all, and to live quietly at home with the heroine. The adventuress is handed over to the police; Lord Postlewaite becomes a reformed character, and is appointed lay reader to the clergyman; and—and—well, I think that's all," concluded the damsel, in a tone of relief.

"Does the heroine's friend get back her motor car, by the way?" inquired the dramatist anxiously.

"Never," replied the damsel. "She doesn't want it. She's got another."

The dramatist rose slowly and stood looking down upon the damsel. The damsel leaned back in her low chair, her hands clasped behind her head, and her little chin tilted upwards in a very provoking manner.

"I think," said the dramatist solemnly, "that it would make a really remarkable play. It contains such a wealth of imagination—such dramatic insight—and—and—such a lovely part for the heroine."

"Do you really like it?" asked the damsel, opening her eyes a little wider, and fixing them upon the dramatist's face with a critical scrutiny.

"I love it," replied the dramatist. "Yes, I love it," he added quietly. "And do you know why? Not because of its daring unconventionality, its really rather astonishing qualities, its quiet surprising situations—but because—shall I tell you why?"

"Of course," said the damsel.

"Then I love it because it comes out of that pretty little head of yours; I love the play because—because I love the playwright."

"What—do you mean me?" exclaimed the damsel, sitting up suddenly, and looking at him with big, half-startled eyes—into which something which was not exactly terror, nor even apprehension, nor altogether surprise, had swiftly crept—a something that had lain there unsuspected, perhaps, all the while a something very sweet to see reflected in a maiden's eyes—a something which made the dramatist (who was keenly alive to the advantage of the moment) stoop swiftly and clasp the damsel in his arms.

"Yes," he whispered in her ear—"I mean you. I want you to marry me, and help me to write beautiful plays—with beautiful parts in them—dear, all your life, I want you—and I must have you."

"But," murmured the damsel some moments later, while her head rested on the dramatist's shoulder in that attitude of calm resignation to fate which is peculiar to maidens engaged in such unequal conflicts; "but if I marry you I shall not be able to act these lovely parts at all—"

The dramatist laughed softly.

"You will be able, little one," he said, drawing her closer to him, "to act the loveliest part that any woman can act—the part of a true wife. And," he added, looking down into the liquid depths of the damsel's eyes, "I do not want you to be an actress. I want you to be your own real self—always—always. Will you?"

"I suppose I must," sighed the damsel, a little regretfully, "but it would have been rather jolly, you know, to act that heroine's part—just once."

MAP SHOWING VAST NEW FIELD

Pacific Coast Commerce to Be Opened *and* Developed With the Panama Canal--A Wonderful Steamboat Route Across the South American Continent Which Will Give Outlet for Products

By Alfred F. Sears, C. E.

THE Peruvian senator, Enrique Zegarra, eloquently said in a speech, in the congress of that republic, "The exigencies of the commerce of the twentieth century is continually more exacting; commerce, today does not detain itself before obstacles, not even when those are the principles of international law, and is creating, when circumstances demand, new formulas and laws of "forced expropriation for world utility, always supposing this necessary to locate and open a way for universal commerce. It opens the Isthmus of Panama at the cost of dismembering a nation and forms a new national star in the continent of America."

Working on such a formula, the senator and Emilio Clark, late American consul at Piura, have secured the attention of their congress and excited the interest of English capitalists in the project of opening to the western ocean at Paita, which Mr. Clark has aptly called the Para of the Pacific, an immense region heretofore almost unknown to the civilized world; but a region of which Humboldt said, "It will be the dispensary of the world and the cradle of a grand civilization" and of which Agassiz wrote, "it is the richest country of the world; more full of attractions, more fertile and better fitted to become the center of a most numerous population."

If I have written and spoken incessantly of the value of the South Pacific commerce, it is because I know that value by personal contact and long acquaintance, and have been forced to observe its seizure by more enterprising, more public spirited communities than this; a people possessing what is so deficient in Portland, an enterprising initiative.

ENRIQUE CARONEL ZEGARRA.

The commerce of the northern part of South America is at this time all carried down the waters of the Amazon, covering a navigation of more than 30,000 miles and draining a territory of about 2,500,000 square miles in area.

Present interest, however, relates to the fact that the commerce of a region within 200 miles of the finest harbor on the south Pacific coast, travels 3,000 miles to reach the Atlantic ocean at Para.

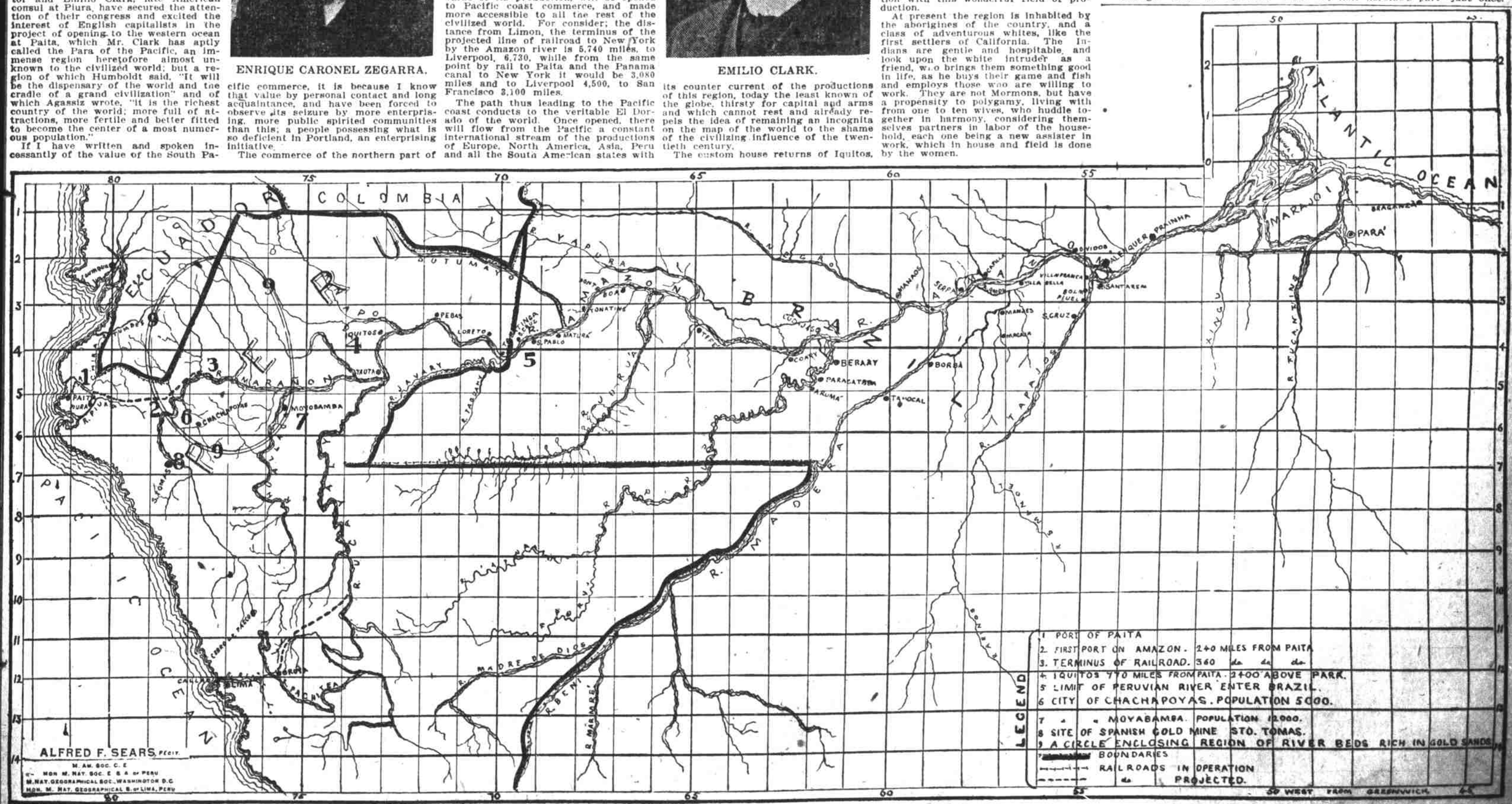
Senator Zegarra, a civil engineer, native of Peru, graduated at our American technological school of Troy, and possessing the ability to deal with the question has imbibed the American spirit of enterprise and commercialism. He has shown the Peruvian congress that by the construction of a railroad line from Paita to Limon, 360 miles, a magnificent country, incomparable with any other on the face of the earth in its wonderful capacity for amount and value of its production, will be opened to Pacific coast commerce, and made more accessible to all the rest of the civilized world. For consider; the distance from Limon, the terminus of the projected line of railroad to New York by the Amazon river is 5,740 miles, to Liverpool, 6,730, while from the same point by rail to Paita and the Panama canal to New York it would be 3,080 miles and to Liverpool 4,500, to San Francisco 3,100 miles.

The path thus leading to the Pacific coast conducts to the veritable El Dorado of the world. Once opened, there will flow from the Pacific a constant international stream of the productions of Europe, North America, Asia, Peru and all the South American states with

EMILIO CLARK.

its counter current of the productions of this region, today the least known of the globe, thirsty for capital and arms and which cannot rest and already repels the idea of remaining an incognita on the map of the world to the shame of the civilizing influence of the twentieth century.

The custom house returns of Iquitos, in 1904, showed a value of merchandise from that port to Para of $6,250,340, an amount which had increased from half that sum in 1902. I am without later figures and can only say that the region is attracting settlers under the stimulating influence of the attention of the Peruvian government, which has found it necessary to add considerably to the custom house force at Iquitos. The productions of the region are rubber, cocoa leaves, which are exported in bales for the manufacture of cocaine, also the manufactured article of cocaine, gold silver, copper, tobacco, cocoa for manufacture of chocolate, rice, coffee, cattle cotton, sugar, alcohol, wool, phosphorus, and wax.

The Peruvian gover ment is now locating the line of railroad, as proposed by Zegarra and Clark. The New York firm of Speyer Brothers and the Peruvian syndicate, limited, of London, are now constructing lines in connection with this wonderful field of production.

At present the region is inhabited by the aborigines of the country, and a class of adventurous whites, like the first settlers of California. The Indians are gentle and hospitable, and look upon the white intruder as a friend, who brings them something good in life, as he buys their game and fish and employs those who are willing to work. They are not Mormons, but have a propensity to polygamy, living with from one to ten wives, who huddle together in harmony, considering themselves partners in labor of the household, each one being a new assister in work, which in house and field is done by the women.