

## XIII. City on Posters

THE BALLYHOO methods that had served Carl in his bicycle and automobile selling days helped now at Miami Beach. A glittering publicity façade glamorized a city that was still in the making, concealing the make-shift scenery backstage.

The romantic posters that first brought Miami Beach to the attention of a nationwide public pictured Spanish palaces fretted with grill work, troubadours singing under palm trees, lovers drifting under sails on moonlit lagoons. This was the way Carl pictured it—this was the way it had to be.

I made one swift summer visit to Europe without Carl—our “ten minute” European tour at the start of the war had cured Carl of his last ounce of willingness to leave American soil ever again—and from Venice I shipped him a red, black and gold gondola, complete with fringed pillows and the costume for a gondolier. Carl was as enchanted as a child with a new toy. He had Edward Purdy, his boatbuilder, make copies of this gondola. Painted gold and circus-red, and carrying musicians with guitars and mandolins and sweet-voiced singers in Venetian costumes, these gay craft drifted through the canals and the lagoons of Miami Beach. I have often wondered what happened to those gondolas. They have just disappeared. The little sailboats for hire on Biscayne Bay were set with red, henna and turquoise sails. Italian troubadours in gay costumes strolled around the Roman pools, singing and playing.

I had happened on these singers while visiting my brother Roy in Baltimore. From under my window one Sunday morning came “O Solo Mio” sung in sweet tenor tones to a guitar and mandolin accompaniment. Looking out, I called down to the two Italian singers: “Have you ever been in Miami Beach?”