

But just the same I know this afternoon meeting of a young girl with any man would condemn her under Spanish eyes and etiquette to—the ranks of the nameless!

CHAPTER XV.

“I’LL KICK THE JUDGE OF THE SUPREME COURT OF MANILA DOWN MY STEPS.”

So gradually the affair moves on to a climax the mind of man would scarcely guess.

During this time Captain-General Primo de Rivera discovers that Spanish gold is more potent than Spanish arms, and not being able to crush the rebellion by the fire of musketry, proceeds to throw silver dollars at the patriot Aguinaldo and his chief men, a much more demoralizing bombardment than even that of Mauser bullets.

Thus it comes to pass about this time—it has now approached the end of November—that the Rebels discover they don’t care about fighting the disciplined troops of Spain; and Señor Aguinaldo with one or two more of his principal officers, under free passport and safe conduct from the Captain-General, journey into Manila and meet the Spanish officials to arrange for a pacification of the Insurgents. This *pacification* is six hundred thousand silver dollars, part paid the Rebel leader in advance, together with free and safe passport for him and some other of the high lights of his following to Hong Kong, where the balance of the money will be put to the patriot’s credit. All this General Don Emilio Aguinaldo—as he calls himself now—stipulates shall be done before his insurgents lay down their arms.

But this surrender of the Rebels and the apparent approach of the end of the Rebellion seems to have a by no means tranquillizing effect upon poor old “Bully” Gordon, who meets me one evening early in December in the garden of his residence as I step in from the Calzada San Miguel, and whispers in his half drunken way: “You have h-heard the news, have you, Se-señor Jackie? Aguinaldo’s g-going to lay down

his arms. This rebellion will soon be in—in Kingdom come. This is my f-finish!”

“How so?” I ask.

“Because, *Ca-caramba!*—there won’t be any more rebels to round up, and they’ll bring me to the mast sure, before they l-lose the *chance* of calling me a conspirator. My time is coming,” he grinds his teeth together, “but hang me, if I don’t have one go at that devil of the Supreme Court of Manila.”

To this I pay little attention as the old sea-dog has whispered somewhat similar threats several times, and go up the stairs to the *caida* where Miss Mazie meets me, a rather frightened look upon her face.

“Don’t go into the salon yet, Jack,” she whispers.

“Why not?”

“Maud is there with Don Amadeo. He—he brought a lot of papers with him.”

“Hang it, what of that? Don’t they always look at photographs?” I grin. “Isn’t the duenna asleep in the far corner of the parlor?”

“No, I think Maud has contrived to get Señora Valrigo out of the room. They are talking very low and very earnestly together.”

“Well, supposing we talk very low and very earnestly here,” I whisper, and draw Mazie into the well-known retirement of the Japanese screen.

But we haven’t kissed more than four or five times before I hear hasty steps coming from Don Silas’s room, which is at the other side of the house.

That sea-dog, apparently inflamed by wine and in a very nasty humor, kicks an unfortunate cat out of the window over the balcony into the yard below as he comes cursing and striding along. I notice El Corregidor glance mockingly after him out of the doorway where the two have been apparently taking a quiet nip together.

“Oh, what’s Papa going to do?” whispers Mazie. “*Dios mio!* He is swearing in English!” For the burly sea-captain, whose six feet in height is but little lessened by the stoop of debauchery and years, stamps straight into the main salon.

I spring up to follow him and am just in time to see the opening of a most extraordinary interview,

Even as I look in, Maud is standing beautiful as a

goddess. The soft laces of a tropic evening robe sweep about her, enveloping a figure that blends the lithe graces of a girl with those lines of feminine beauty that make Venus the admired goddess of this earth. Its black gauzes give the girl a stately radiance as they float away from rounded arms and chiseled shoulders and sculptured bust that gleam dazzling as ivory and are white as snow. She looks almost a statue, though it is one that has caught the spark from Heaven, and is warm and glowing enough to set fire to much colder clay than that of the legal Don Juan; for her bosom is heaving like breakers on the shore, her eyes are ablaze with the triumph of a woman *who has won!* She is saying: "Then we understand each other, esteemed Don Amadeo?"

"Yes, *Dios mio*, fair Señorita Ysabelita, the matter is arranged. I am so happy."

"To-morrow you will keep your promise to me, and I will keep my promise to you," murmurs the maiden, and extends her hand for the conquering judge to kiss.

But even as Don Amadeo bends over it and his eyes blaze up as he puts his ardent lips upon the white veined member, astonishment comes upon the judge of the Supreme Court. He is seized by the scruff of the neck, and thrown across the apartment in about the same manner as I imagine Bully Gordon used to handle his cabin-boy in years gone by.

For one moment the girl stares as if she can't believe, then mutters with lips that have grown very pale: "You fool! You imbecile!"

"Fool!" screams the captain. "You dare talk that way to me, you hussy. Imbecile? I am sane enough to protect my honor. Don Amadeo de Torres!" he speaks savagely as the judge rises half dazed from an ottoman that has checked his fall, "your Honor will leave my house, and if I ever see you in it I'll kick the judge of the Supreme Court of Manila down my steps and through my courtyard and out into the street, boot you as I would that cat I slung out of the window a minute ago. By the Lord Almighty!" he turns upon his daughter, "it's lucky you didn't keep your promise to-morrow, you minx, for if you had I would have killed Don Amadeo de Torres."

At this, Mazie who is behind me bursts out crying, but Maud's face from being marble becomes red as the flowers of the fire-tree. For one second she gazes on her father as if scarce understanding him; then her hands fly to her eyes and hide them as if ashamed.

At this the drunken sea-dog bursts out upon her once more: "You hussy, who can't look me in the face!"

"CAN'T I?" And the hands come down and the eyes blaze at her father until he cowers; then she bursts out on him: "You drunken fool! you imbecile! you dolt, who dares doubt your daughter's honor. For this insult I never will forgive you. Kneel down and apologize to Don Amadeo for doubting him, for doubting me!"

"Damned if I will! I'll throw your Spanish lover over the veranda first."

For the girl is between them, her white lips begging: "Think not of this, dear Don Amadeo," and her gesture is imploring to the judge, who, with white face, is moving towards the door. "Don't heed him," she cries, "my word to you is given, so is your word to me."

"What! Giving your amorous promises before my face, you wanton! By Heaven, when I came in here I thought you were the innocent fly and Don Amadeo the spider. But now I know you're both birds of a feather!" snarls the captain with a horrid oath.

At this, dear little Mazie runs at her father and screams to him: "Liar!" then comes shuddering back to me.

But Maud unheeding this save by a kind of awful shuddering blush, goes on in desperate pleading: "My word to you is given, and it shall be kept religiously, Don Amadeo. Only for the love of Heaven, keep your promise to me, that's all I ask. Think nothing of this; it will pass away from my besotted father with his drink."

"I will think nothing of this, Señorita Maud; neither of what came before. We will consider the affair obliterated. Señor Gordon, I'll no more darken your doors. You have the supreme assurance that no insult of yours to me shall affect my rulings in your case when it comes before me. *Adios*, young lady."

And the judge would go to the door, but Maud has stopped him and is saying: "Remember, don't heed him!" And her beauty and her pleading grace might stay the steps of any man, but a Spaniard whose self-love has been wounded.

Don Amadeo's face is like a Sphinx's, only it has eyes that gleam serpent-like as they gaze upon the girl's father. "Were your rank and station, sir, equal to my own, you should give me the satisfaction of a gentleman," he says through his white teeth.

"Damn you! I'll fight you now right here; with anything from a harpoon to a rifle!" screams Bully Gordon.

But the judge only answers this with a look of Castilian hauteur and moves to the door.

"And I, since my friend has been insulted in this house, will take my leave with him." This comes to me in the voice of El Corregidor who has been looking at this interview with very contented face which he now turns upon Mazie's shrinking loveliness in a kind of gloating way that makes me want to strike him. "My arm, brother of Spain," continues Don Rafaél, stifling another grin of triumph, and offers his support to the judge of the Supreme Court as the two go down the big stairway that leads into the garden.

Then the scene becomes more horrible, for it is that of a woman's despair. The blush leaves Maud's features which become pallid as ice. She gives a gasp of dismay, and striding to her father, whispers: "Tonight I had won. He had given his promise. Tomorrow, you fool, I would have saved you, your family, your estates; you idiot, you besotted dolt!"

"Bah, what's that to my honor as a father."

"You coward to insult me!" cries the girl. "Do you think I would have done aught that would have made my lips unworthy of the man I love; even to save my body from the flames of Hades? Out of my sight!"

To this her father stammers: "Damn it, w—what did he promise you?"

"That you should have asked before; it is nothing now; it is *too late*. He whom I had made friend to you is now your enemy. Don Amadeo who could have destroyed your enemies and mine, is now walking away

on the arm of one of them. Together they will make their plans that will destroy you."

"Then God forgive me!" says the captain in maudlin despair. "My poor abused darling; my petsey witsey; my Belita. Hang it, damn it, that scoundrel Corregidor was always hinting—nagging. I'll—I'll go and get another drink of whisky!" and staggers off leaving me gazing at the statue of a Venus who becomes a Niobe, and sobs: "Oh, the despair of it! I had it all arranged. Oh, the fool!"

"What arranged?" I ask anxiously; for Mazie has gone trembling away and is crying silently out on the veranda.

"Ah, I was meeting these scoundrels with their own weapons. I had made Don Amadeo my friend, I had interested him in an American speculation that I was to conduct with him. You saw the photographs I showed him of great New York. You remember, Jack, that package of pamphlets that came to me only a month ago. You got them for me. You have noticed how Don Amadeo and I examined them evening after evening. *It was a speculation in American securities.*"

"WHAT?"

"*In American stocks,*" she continues.

"In American stocks?" I scream, staggered with astonishment; then jeer derisively. "You would have roped Don Amadeo in Wall Street? By hockey! You would have got him in your power by swiping all the judge's money?"

"No, no!" cries the girl, indignantly. "It was a certain speculation that had been told me by a great banker in New York, the Metropolitan Street Railway."

"The—the Metropolitan Street Railway?" I gasp, "What's that?"

"Yes, in two years the stock will be worth double what it is now. The evenings those plotters thought we were whispering love, I was explaining to Don Amadeo the photographs of New York. When we talked together, it was not romance, it was *simply business*. I was showing the judge the great lines of streets this railway expected to cover with their electric cars. I was telling Don Amadeo of the multitude of people in the American metropolis. He was avar-

icious. He had money, and feared to place it in the declining bonds of his own country. Like most Spanish officials, he wished to invest his stealings far away from the colony he robbed. You know how they all send immense sums of money from this island, likewise from Cuba, and quite often don't invest them in the securities of Madrid. Don Amadeo was to cable through me two hundred thousand dollars gold to-morrow via the Hong Kong Bank to New York to Alfred de Cordova & Co., who were to buy the securities on the assurance of the Hong Kong Bank. This stock the Hong Kong Bank were to hold as trustee for him. The stock is now at par. Some day it will be a hundred and fifty—two hundred, perhaps more."

"You seem cock-sure of your stock speculation," I remark.

"Oh, so you would be, if you had seen the great city. But it wasn't to give fortune to Don Amadeo I was working. That stock once bought, the judge of the Supreme Court of Manila, by his American investment was made almost one of us. He—he could not dare—" here she whispers in my ear—"to have struck an American citizen down. Linked with us, this all-potent judge—our enemies were as nothing; our case in the Supreme Court was won. O God!" the girl sinks down wringing her hands. "He had promised me to-morrow to see the order of the Court which bound poor Mazie and myself as witnesses to this place, should be annuled and canceled. Mazie would have been free to go with you to Hong Kong. I could have gone there and married the man of my heart. Permits could not have been well refused to us. Besides these Spaniards don't do things by halves. Don Amadeo would have smashed the vipers who for those great tobacco lands would ruin my father; and now—now!—now! he is our enemy. His power which would have crushed *them*, will smite *us*!"

Here a new misery comes into her face. She jeers:—"Listen, *Dios mio*, Papa Ludenbaum has come to sympathize with his dear friend, the drunken sea-captain."

And I hear from Don Silas's sanctum the clinking of glasses, and the jovial voice of the German saying:

"*Mein Gott! eckelhaft!* You have my sympathy, my dear old comrade, in all your trouble."

"Yes, another glass of whisky, you old Dutch war-horse," cries Bully Gordon. "Drink to the way I fired the cursed Spanish judge!"

Upon hearing this the young lady sinks down upon a low settee, giving sign of her misery and defeat by nervous twitchings of her delicate hands.

"You think," I venture, "Señorita Maud, that you could have kept your friendship with this amorous yet avaricious Julius Cæsar of the Supreme Court, within the bounds of business?"

Perchance my gaze is doubting. For now she is a mass of despairing loveliness, that would have made even the cold heart of a Roman consul, wearied with the caresses of a hundred Gallic virgins, beat very fast. Somehow in her agitation the masses of her hair have become unbound and float about, making a net of tossing locks, of stray brown curls, through which gleam shoulders of dazzling whiteness, and a bosom that in its throbbings displays the rounded beauties Phidias gave his marbles. Beneath her tossed-about jupe, one little foot and fairy ankle just peeps out to make the picture perfect.

As I speak, Miss Business rises haughtily, and says in a voice of ice: "Why not, Señor? To a child brought up like my sister, in convent seclusion, it might be impossible; for a woman educated in our Spanish fashion is either in a man's arms or out of them. But in America, our sex is taught to meet your sex on a different basis."

"But surely Don Amadeo would have *hoped*?" I remark. Perchance as I look upon her loveliness, my glance is more suggestive than my words.

"He would have hoped forever!" cries the girl indignantly, blushing red as fire. "A woman can put a trocha about herself that no man can step over, though let her beware how she makes the slightest opening in it." Then she gets redder even than before, and stamps her little foot indignantly, and clenches her hand and glares at me, and mutters: "Don't dare doubt that I could have kept Don Amadeo looking at me over my barbed wire fence till all his hair dropped off his old head, and every tooth fell out of his poor

jaws. A little trick the American girl taught me as she traveled about, and took mighty good care of her pretty self, even in the wilds of Kansas, or on flirtatious Fifth Avenue, Señor."

This last is said with a piteous, yet roguish, smile, which dies away into a sickly pallor as her father, half-seas over now, comes staggering in followed by Herr Ludenbaum, who in his German, pathetic way, is sympathizing with him, and saying: "Mein noble fellow; mein Filipino Virginus! Der father who will not hold up his hand to save der daughter is unworthy of such a daughter."

Then both Maud and I give a gasp of dismay. For, made cocky in his cups, old Bully Gordon reveals the secret he has kept so long, so well; and gulps: "Ludy, we've got those damned Spaniards anyway. We've got a thing up our sleeve that will—hic—smash 'em all like a bos'n does a ship's boy. My darter in America—that's what I sent her for—has become a citizeness of the United States. The eagle's wings are over her. She is not like her—hic—poor old expatriated daddy, who like a b—blasted idiot ran away from the bird of freedom—naked to these Spanish officials. When the thing comes up in court, you'll see with the American Consul how my poor, abused spit-fire gal will smash 'em!"

This revealing, Gordon's old friend, the German, looks upon with a ghastly face. His jaw drops; his tongue half hangs out. He gasps in a kind of gurgling beery voice: "*Mein Himmel*, you—you say the Señorita Maud has been made a citizen of the United States? Impossible!"

"By heaven and earth, yes! The State of Kansas! Damn it! Maud's *voted* THERE! What does my sour-kraut boy say to that?" guffaws the drunken sea-dog.

But Maud interposing, cries: "What nonsense! Father, you rave. *Women* vote? It is the drunken babble of a man made insane by wine. *Dios mio!* I am no more a citizen of the United States than I am what my father did me the honor of supposing when he struck down Don Amadeo de Torres."

But even as she speaks, I see the girl clutch with her hand her throbbing bosom, and know she wears constantly on her person the document that she thinks will

perhaps be her ægis at the very last, but which may be destroyed in its power and virility by the machinations of an enemy who now guesses the weapon with which she is armed.

For it is evident Herr Adolph believes that drunken men tell the truth.

In fact the drunken man impresses this upon him by crying: "Don't dare to tell your poor old dad that he lies, Miss Sauce-box! Hang it, if I had brought you up properly, my fine lady, and given you a sound strapping once or twice when you were younger, you would not now have cheeked me in my old age!"

He glares at his beautiful daughter, who answers this with a jeering, nervous laugh, though her face is haughty as a Boadicea's.

Then he breaks out in boozy repetition: "Oh, sharper than a serpent's tooth—hic—you know the rest, old Ludy. Old beer-mug, this vixen drives me to drink. What will you ha-have? Whisky?"

Don Silas's voice dies away as he staggers off to his beloved tippie, while Herr Adolph attempts consolation to the indignant goddess in a kind of unctuous sympathy remarking: "Don't be afraid, mein leedle fraulein, of your drunken father. Old Papa Ludenbaum will soothe him down, won't he, mein leedle dove."

With this he retreats after old Bully, who is now calling wildly: "Come! Don't shirk your tippie, beer-barrel."

The moment we are alone, I whisper savagely, for the blood has been boiling in my veins at this scene: "You—you do not fear any personal violence from your father in his drunken fits?"

"From my dear father, who has always been gentleness itself to me—until this day? Impossible!" mutters the girl. "No, no! I fear only the effect upon our fate. He is becoming wax in that sneaking German's hands."

Then she swings around upon me, her eyes blazing with resolve, looks me in the face, and American business tones dominating her soft Spanish accents, knocks me down with: "Now, JACK, MY BOY, YOU HAVE GOT TO MARRY MAZIE AT ONCE!"