

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE EMPTY HOUSE ON THE CALZADA SAN MIGUEL.

FOR a moment I gaze at her stupefied. "Marry Mazie—at once?" I gasp.

"Yes! Don't you want to?"

"Want to?" The ecstasy in my face answers her. "For what have I been staying around here in a kind of semi-purgatory? WANT TO? I want to as bad as Ruth wanted Boaz!" Then I go on: "But Mazie, what will she say? The Church, I understand, objects to her marrying a heretic."

"Mazie has got to say yes right now if she wants to be your wife!" cries the girl decidedly; next commences to wring her hands and gasp: "Dolt that I was, not to have written my gallant lover of my extremity! Then he would have been here to marry me. But that is too late now," she sighs. "Still there is a chance of happiness for Mazie if she weds you at once," she says as if inspired. "Englishman, you can appeal to the British Consul if the Supreme Court of Manila orders *your wife* to go to Nueva Ecija to give her evidence. Don't let them get her there, that's her danger! far away in the wilds with only Spanish power about her, no way of communication except by horses, buffalo carts and bancas down the river. Cut off! *Dios mio*, cut off! Marry her and keep Mazie in Manila, Jack. That's your chance. Then I will be at least free to fight my own battle and that of my poor besotted father." The girl's eyes fill with tears, but she dashes them away with noble resolution; runs out onto the veranda and in a flash brings Mazie back with her, half dragging my pretty sweetheart, who seems to be in a kind of a dazed horror since her father drove the Spanish judge out of his house, and called her sister "wanton."

"Now, Mazie," says Maud decidedly, "you've got to marry Jack within a week; sooner if possible!"

"Marry Jack within the week?"

"Yes, it is not such an awful fate," I assert savagely.

"But they have told me it will ruin papa."

"Anyway your being a maiden won't save him now, and it's your chance of happiness," cries Maud determinedly; then she says sternly: "I take the direction of you, Mazie, now that my poor father is incapable through his debauchery. I give you to the man you love. I order you to marry him!"

"Has Padre de Laviga put in any word against me?" I whisper angrily; for Mazie has stamped her little foot defiantly at her sister's command.

"No," says my sweetheart in a hesitating voice. "The priest told me always to marry the man I loved and no other. He is good, gentle, a saint. But," here she shudders, "*El Corregidor*."

"This is the only way to save you from him," whispers Maud. "Heavens, how I would fly to Phil Marston's arms if he were here imploring me!" then bursts out for the first time in all this night crying as if her heart would break, and sobbing: "My lost one, whom I have kept from me like an imbecile, thinking to fight my own battle!"

Apparently impressed by her sister's despair, and perchance some subtle caresses I lavish on her and noting my looks which say to her it is *now or never*, Mazie gives a little love cry and falls into my arms, murmuring: "Do what you will with me, Jack, only don't look so sternly at me!" and I, a kind of delicious ecstasy in my brain, place my lips upon the lips I think fondly will be those of my bride within the week.

For Maud has said: "We must make our preparations as rapidly as possible;" then turning to me, she adds: "Don't you let any of your no-religion ideas bar Mazie's way to the altar! If the priest will not marry you without your promising that your children shall be Catholics,"—here my sweetheart gives a little bashful cry—"don't you put in a surly Anglo-Saxon, 'no!' You don't go to any Church here, I notice, Señor Curzon. Let your children be brought up in the religion of your wife, who will teach them to be good, much better than you can. Give up something for her, she surrenders a good deal for you."

Impressed by her words, I mutter: "If it will make Mazie happy, yes."



"Oh thank you, Jack," cries my sweetheart. "If I hadn't married you in the Catholic Church, I should have feared forever the pains of purgatory. I should scarcely have thought I was your wife."

"You *shall* think you are my wife!" I promise, a flush upon my face.

Then Maud whispers: "Thank God! Make your preparations, Señor Jack. My sister must marry you within three days."

"So soon?" is Mazie's bashful cry.

"Yes, I'd make it to-morrow if I could; but we must appear not to be entirely dismayed," continues her sister consideringly. "I shall keep my usual routine of society. To-morrow night Mazie and I and our duenna will go to Señora Valdez' reception; where your affianced shall be blithe as a coming bride, and I—I will be as brave as I can be." Maud speaks in a kind of despair that frightens me. "The evening after, you come up quietly here. By that time I will have obtained the necessary dispensation; and the next morning kind-hearted Padre de Laviga shall make you happy."

"All right," I answer, "anything to marry Mazie. But your father?"

"My father shall give his consent to-morrow morning. When sober he will be penitent and I can twist his dear old heart round my little finger," says Maud confidently. "Now go and make your preparations, Señor Jack. Give your bride one kiss more, and take this from me——" She draws from under the laces and gauzes that guard her bosom a little packet.

"Is it another letter?" gasps Mazie.

"Yes; to the man I love. Something I have written days ago. Give it to Phil Marston, Jack, in case——"

"What do you fear?" I whisper.

"Oh, I don't know what I fear. Everything, anything—now they guess I am going to claim American citizenship."

"Why not go to the American Consul at once?"

"And demand *what?* Protection from the air? I am living in luxury here and apparent happiness. Besides I fear they will attack my papers, in some subtle way. It is unusual for a female to become a member of the body politic of any nation. In addition,

I am the offspring of a Spanish woman, and a father who has renounced his American citizenship to become a subject of Spain. What legal quibbles may they not bring up, since that putty-faced German knows my secret? Papa Ludenbaum!" she bursts out jeeringly: "He who gave me sweetmeats when I was a child, who, when I was too young to know, induced me by my love of this island to become—you know what, Jack," she whispers; then mutters, a kind of terror coming in her voice: "What do his eyes mean to me?" but forcing herself to calmness remarks: "Pha, my fears make me foolish, idiotic! Go away Jack, and make your preparations. Put your bungalow in order, for you have as pretty a bride as ever tripped over the nuptial threshold. But beware you are worthy of the dear one I give you. Remember, the evening after to-morrow. I don't think the necessary dispensation can be obtained before that time."

"Oh, I'll drop in on you and Mazie several times before that," I say half laughingly. "That arrangement will suit me precisely. I have to run down to Cavité to-morrow on important business and must be careful to stand high with Martin, Thompson & Co. now I assume new responsibilities."

So after a little I drive away as merry as a robin who doesn't know he is to be shot upon the morrow.

Quite cheerily also the next morning I come down from Ermita to my office and make my arrangements for my trip to Cavité. This place, recaptured from the Insurgents some few months before, is now getting into business order again. Though the rebellion has practically died out, the roads between Manila and the town near which the Spanish naval arsenal is situated are still somewhat disturbed by roving bands of Rebels; therefore I conclude to take a pleasant sail in an old steam launch that I succeed in chartering for the purpose. It is manned by some Mestizo boatmen, is run by a Spanish engineer, called Diego, and belongs to a Jew named Gugenheim, who has an office not very far from Herr Ludenbaum's place of business.

While making my arrangements for the journey, to my astonishment Ah Khy pops into my private office, something the Chinaman hasn't done for months. Since I assisted in making him a Katipunan, Khy



seems to regard my presence as dangerous to his personal safety.

"What the deuce do you want, Khy, my boy?" I say as affably as I can.

"Only this," he whispers mysteriously to me. "Since this thing has all blown over now and Aguinaldo taken his hush money, I think it is about time to do a little justice to my governor in Hong Kong and smash old Ludy with those receipts for arms."

"You have got them still?" I ask, astonished; for I had supposed the Chinaman had certainly destroyed them.

"Yes," whispers Khy. "Buried in an iron box under a tree in the back yard of our office. They used to keep me awake at night when I had them in the safe." Then he breaks forth into a little chuckle:

"Oh, Josh, won't my dad raise my allowance if I get his German enemy into a pot of trouble. I have fixed how to do it also, subtle as a Thug. But I want your advice about one or two details."

"Well, I can't wait for you now, I've got to go to Cavité, but when I return."

"How long will that be?"

"Only until this evening; back at six o'clock. That's if the launch doesn't break down. The machinery looks rather rickety, though the boat is staunch, and the engineer assures me everything is all right."

"All light! To-morrow morning sure!" remarks the Chinese dandy, and brushing his high hat strolls out of the office.

Detained in Manila by the thousand and one details of routine business, I finally get off about eleven o'clock and enjoy a very pleasant sail over the soft waters of the bay to Cavité, to find the town, bombarded by the Spaniards and looted by the Rebels, is just recovering a little from the destruction of war.

It is some little time before I get through my business with Mr. Young, an Englishman who has a shipyard and some coal docks on Sangléi Point, near the little village of Cañacao.

But about four o'clock I hurry back to my launch, and find to my dismay the engineer reports the machinery has got out of gear.

"How long will it take to put the engine into working order?" I mutter to Diego impatiently.

"Perhaps an hour, Señor."

"Then go to work at once!" I cry, and walk up to take my lunch at Cavité on the Arsenal street in what they call a hotel—though it is not one—being a mixture of road tavern and boarding-house for transients, and not good enough for a mosquito to eat in. The landlord says the Insurrection has ruined him and uses this as an excuse for starving the survivors of it.

An hour afterwards going down again, I find the machinery of the launch is not in order, though very voluble promises are made. Were it not so late I would take a pony and a native guide and try to get to Manila by way of the land, but it is almost dark now, and I know the country is by no means quiet. Rebels are potting and looting wanderers indiscriminately between the outposts of Cavité and the Spanish line of intrenchments at Malate and Ermita.

A few minutes after, my hopes of the launch are again dissipated. The machinery has been fixed, but the boiler is out of order. Sometimes I have since thought all this came about through my friend Ludenbaum.

So I linger on till all chance of boat or steamer or any water conveyance is gone for the day.

With a sigh I find I am compelled to spend the night in Cavité. I give most savage orders to the engineer to get additional help and fix his miserable kettle so that I can surely return in the morning. Then I wander up to the hotel to pass a night in Hades fighting with insects—though despite the annoyance I am very happy, I am one day nearer Mazie.

Then next morning, such are their Spanish methods of delay, the launch is still unprepared. By the afternoon, I have once or twice thought of taking a banca or a boat rowed by hand, not being able to find any steam craft.

But Diego at last cries: "Ready, Señor!"

It is all of two o'clock before I get started on my return trip, and the boat goes very slowly.

Fortunately, however, after many anathemas from Diego at the engines, the coal and everything but himself, we glide alongside the stone landing steps on the



Pasig, and about six o'clock in the evening I find myself in Binondo.

I have been absent from my sweetheart thirty-six hours. Seizing a carromata, I direct the man to drive hurriedly to the bungalow of Don Silas Gordon in the suburb of San Miguel, and am in so great a hurry that I do not place any importance at the fellow growing pale at my order.

God knows what joy is in my soul. I am driving to the arms of my loved one, the girl who will be my bride upon the morrow. My blood courses through my veins in a kind of insane ecstasy. In a few moments Mazie's sweet voice will greet me.

But some three hundred yards from the entrance of Gordon's villa, the man suddenly pulls up and says one of his ponies is too lame to move, though he demands his fare.

Too impatient for the sight of my sweetheart to dispute with the fellow, whose face bears the stoical smile common to the Filipino race, which conceals the stubbornness of an Andalusian mule, I pay him and make the short distance on foot.

As I tramp along the street under the shade of the bamboos and fire-trees, I hear the rattle of the half-crazy vehicle I have come in, and see the man driving off like the wind. For some occult reason his pony has suddenly recovered from its lameness.

My mind is only upon my charming sweetheart. I have been away for two days—in four more minutes Mazie's kisses will be on my lips. I enter the pretty little garden of bamboos and tropical plants, and cry out lustily: "*Oy bata!*" some half a dozen times. No one answers but I think little of this, for native servants will let you call forever.

Impatient for my sweetheart's arms, I run up the big stairway, open the front door—Filipino houses are never locked—step into the magnificent *caida*, and cry out again: "*Oy bata!*" but no boy, nor girl, nor servant of any kind makes their appearance.

I step into the reception-room. The appearance of the place astounds and shocks me. It is growing dark; though the lamps are not lighted, I can note that things have been tossed about in apparently reckless disorder. Maud's banjo is lying broken on the floor.

The New York photographs in her portfolio are strewn about the room.

"What the deuce has happened?" I gaze about. The place seems deserted. "By the God of misery! *I am in an empty house!*"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### "FINE NEWS FOR PHIL MARSTON OF THE U. S. NAVY!"

THEN I call: "Mazie! Mazie! Maud, where are you?" and run into the dining-room.

Here by the light of a kerosene lamp I discover, with his two slippered feet upon a magnificent inlaid table, smoking a *cigarro*, the perfume of which I remember as one of Bully Gordon's finest *Incomparables*, and drinking a bottle of champagne which I remember as Bully Gordon's favorite *Cliquot*, a Spanish gentleman in white linens and official costume, who, rising, says in haughty languor: "Señor, permit me to ask you not to make such a disturbing noise, and to introduce myself as Don Emilio Gonzalo de Monaldo, one of the under-secretaries of the Supreme Court of Manila. What do you wish?"

"I called to see Don Silas Gordon and his family. Where are they?" I ask hastily. "This is his house!"

"Was his house. Senor Gordon is under arrest in the Citadel of Santiago!" He waves his hand towards the Old Town.

"His daughters; are they not here?" My voice is hoarse with astonishment and dismay.

"Certainly not! *This is confiscated property!*"

"My God, are they arrested also?"

"I don't know. I think not. If the Señor will kindly apply to the office of the general-staff in the Old Town, he may learn more."

"Is Gordon executed?" I gasp and support myself by grasping a chair.

"Perhaps, but I think not—not yet." Then the Spanish official says suspiciously: "Your name, sir, and your connection with this suspect."

"Certainly," I answer, for I know boldness is the