

leave to run down to Manila, and en route walked into Martin, Thompson & Co.'s offices here, thinking they might have letters from you in the Philippines. I have not heard from Miss Gordon for two months, and she always wrote to me once a week. I'm—I'm afraid something's happened to her." His firm lip trembles beneath his long drooping mustache. "You left Manila about that time?" he asks.

"Yes," I say.

"Maud, when you saw her last, was well?" His voice is very anxious.

"Perfectly well when I—I left her."

"You have of course heard of her, by her sister's letters since you left?" he goes on eagerly.

"Not—not a word."

Here my face speaks to him, and he cries out: "Good Lord! What is it you're afraid to tell me?"

For answer I hand him the little note that Maud charged me to give her sailor-boy, the last night on which I saw her.

This he tears open hastily, though I can see, reverently, and runs his eyes in a kind of gloating ecstasy over the handwriting of his beloved—for the first few lines—then his brow becomes gloomy and his eyes surprised. After he has read every word of it he thinks deeply for a minute, and passes his hand over his forehead in a troubled kind of way. Then he turns to me and says, pulling his mustache nervously: "I don't entirely understand this. This letter seems to be written by—by my darling with a premonition of some—some misfortune coming to her. It seems to me," the poor fellow's lip is quivering now, "a—a kind of farewell."

"Yes," I break in. "Won't you take a chair?"

My voice startles him; he looks at me a moment; then mutters: "You—you have something more to tell me. Worse than this?"

"The very worst!"

"Good God, my darling is dead!" And this stalwart young fellow's breast begins to pant, and his face grow ghastly under its coating of typhoon tan.

But I break in: "Maud Gordon," I can't bring myself to give the accursed German's name to the loved one of the poor fellow. "is alive, I believe."

"Thank God!" His voice grows commanding; he says: "Out with it! The greatest kindness you can do me is to tell me what you say is the worst news I can have from my affianced."

"Do you read Spanish?" I ask.

"Yes. My—my sweetheart taught it to me. Great Heaven, man, get under way!"

"Then read this," I falter; and hand him the clipping from *El Diario de Manila*, and watch Phil Marston in his agony.

As he reads the marriage notice the stalwart frame of the young ensign begins to tremble. His eyes become bloodshot, and a kind of horror gets into them. Then he grips a chair with one hand, and reads the thing again, though each sentence of the *Cura's* certificate must be a kris thrust in his heart.

But the thing over, a sudden flush flies into his face, he says to me, a confidence in his voice that makes me love him too: "I'll believe that damned lie about the truest girl on earth when this world turns upside down!"

Ye Gods, how Maud Gordon would have adored her jack-tar boy could she have seen the glorious faith in her, this lover shows, as he cries: "THAT'S A YARN FOR THE MARINES!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE DATE BOOK OF THE CHINAMAN.

THEN after pacing the room about as if it were his quarter-deck, Mr. Marston says sharply: "You know more about this than I; tell me all about it. But remember that I no more believe what is in that newspaper than I believe in—in the Flying Dutchman."

"Very well," I say, "let me give you some whisky."

"No, nothing to blur my brain—only your news, which will require a cool head to analyze and a—a strong heart to bear," he adds with a sigh.

So I tell him the story of Herr Max Ludenbaum and his affianced, and incidentally, of course, my own hapless love affair.

To this Phil Marston listens without questions or interruptions, save once or twice when I mention his sweetheart's despairing struggle, tears come into his eyes, his big breast throbs, his strong hands clench themselves.

As I finish, he asks quick as a torpedo-catcher: "Is that *all* you know?"

"Yes!"

"Then we'll try and know *more*. Two or three times in your yarn you've mentioned a Chinaman, Hen Chick. Is he in Hong Kong?"

"Yes," I answer. "I had intended to question him myself as soon as I was strong enough to get about."

"Can't you get under way now?"

I spring up with a vigor in my emaciated frame that astounds the sailor. As I have told the story of his sweetheart to the young American, my sweetheart's wrongs have got into my head, and put into my limbs a supposititious strength.

"Heave ahead!" mutters the young sailor. "I want to know what took place between my affianced when she was a child and this Ludenbaum, who seems to have had a fatherly interest in her until he replaced it by a more ardent affection. I want to know about Ludenbaum," he says slowly and grimly. "He's the man I'm gunning for."

With that I astound the young officer by belying my appearance, running to the door, and ordering my house boy to get two 'rikshas.

"That's right!" cries Marston. "Fire up your boilers, old man. We've got to sail in company. Our fates are linked by our girls. Maud would defend her young sister till she dies. Mazie lost to you will mean Maud lost to me, lost to herself. But by the blessing of God, this shall not be! Let's get at the Chinaman. Besides this merchant's son, Khy, the Chinese exquisite," he grins a little here despite the misery in his voice, "has, with Oriental subtlety, according to your story, suggested a pitfall in Nueva Ecija for the enemy of his father. He was going there with that pointer-nosed Katipunan to bring about Ludenbaum's destruction. Perhaps we'll get news of the Yale-Mongolian-rounder from his Confucian

daddy;" and the sailor-lover breaks into a kind of miserable, jeering laugh which does not impose upon me.

I can see he is fighting to keep himself from thinking of the strait of his sweetheart, though once he smites his hands together, and mutters: "If Maud had told me. Every letter she wrote me must have been a self-sacrificing falsehood. But by Heaven, I must not think of her!" His voice loses the elasticity of youth and becomes harsh and grating as he breaks out: "I must only think of the man who *dares* to call himself her husband."

By this time we are at my door. He springs into the 'riksha and cries to the coolie: "Full steam ahead, almond eyes!" and tosses him a silver dollar.

In ten minutes we are in *Tai-ping-shan*, and see "Hen Chick & Co." in Roman letters above a number of Chinese hieroglyphics, which I suppose mean the same thing.

Twenty seconds after the twin accountant of the one in the Rosario bazar, stops clicking the buttons on his *abacus*, and remarks to my inquiries: "You want to see Hen Chick?"

"Yes, immediately."

"Your name?"

I give it, and he retires into an inner room.

Half a minute after the accountant comes out, bows humbly, and says: "Hen Chick want to see you *quick!*"

So the young naval officer and myself walk in to be received with that affable Chinese hospitality which generally astonishes and impresses Europeans.

A dignified, gray-tailed Chinaman, his eyes sharp as a ferret's, shaded by Bismarckian spectacles, robed in a long flowing silken gown, beneath which are seen white Chinese shoes with padded soles, greets us and remarks blandly, yet knowingly: "Mr. Marston, Yankee sailor, me sabé you. Mr. Jack Curzon, English merchant, me sabé you *belly* much. Me tink you come soon. Lee Sam!" he claps his hands, "Cigars and wine!" At his bidding the named refreshments are offered us.

"No champagne," whispers Marston: then asks hurriedly: "Why did you think we'd come?"

"Don't hurry the old man," I whisper. "Drink his champagne, smoke his cigars. You won't get your information a bit quicker by refusing the hospitality Hen Chick means with his whole heart."

Thus instructed, the young American grabs a cheroot, puts it into his mouth wrong end first, lights it in a hurried way, and tosses off a glass of champagne like a streak of lightning.

"Good!" laughs the Chinaman, "More wine for Melican officer!"

The wine disappears as if it were water, and Marston whispers to me: "Tell him to heave ahead."

And Hen Chick does heave ahead!

"You come to flind 'bout old Bully Gordon and him daughters? You sabé Gordon's daughters?" he murmurs placidly.

"Sabé Gordon's daughters?" breaks out the ensign. "You bet we do!"

"Daughters not much count," remarks the Chinaman musingly, and would go on into a philosophical discussion of the worthlessness of woman from the Chinese standpoint, but I suddenly ask him: "You sabé Ludenbaum?"

At this Hen Chick's face, which had been an unreadable Eastern face, lights up with a devilish, though monkey-like ferocity. He mutters: "Me sabé Ludenbaum!" then gazes at me and adds, with Oriental cunning: "You hate Ludenbaum, too. So does that Yankee man there. That Yankee man bites him cigar in two whenever I say Ludenbaum."

At this the ensign, with a miserable laugh, tosses his third cheroot away as Hen Chick goes on: "You sabé Ah Khy? Ah Khy is cunning as a one-eyed dragon, and lucky as the dynasty of Shang. Ah Khy, all same as Melican man. He go away after Ludenbaum!"

"Then you think," breaks in the American, "Khy will sink the damn German?"

"Sure as the tax-gatherer always collects taxes; sure as—"

But Chinese similes are suddenly interrupted by Marston. "Now," he says, "I want to know what relation Ludenbaum bore to the skipper Bully Gordon, and what do you know of the life of a young

lady you tried to aid; how it is connected with that infamous German. Do you know anything of this? Do you read Spanish?" And he shows Hen Chick the clipping from the *Diario de Manila*, which I translate to him.

At this the Chinaman's eyes grow very curious. He says to the impatient naval officer: "Young man of the fiery voice and dragon eye, I did warn the young woman called Maud, the daughter of Gordon not to go to Manila, but I only warned her because I knew Ludenbaum wanted her to go to Manila. And what him wanted me no want. I only sure Ludenbaum hate Bully Gordon like opium-smuggler hate custom-house men. This I know when I was in Nueva Ecija—you sabé Neuva Ecija!—starting tobacco factory of which the Spanish *gubernador* and *alcalde* robbed me. You sabé Spanish *gubernador*?"

"But this notice of marriage," I ask, "do you think it is true?"

"Huh! Anyting be true in Philippines. But you sabé *date*!" He taps the Spanish newspaper clipping; then calls: "Ah Yek!" claps his hands and whispers something to an old clerk who comes from the outer office, and the two jabber together in Chinese till Marston whispers to me: "Why don't he come to business?"

But just here the Chinaman does come to business in a way that astounds us.

The old clerk brings in an ancient and worn Chinese account book. Turning the leaves of this over, Hen Chick apparently calculates, points to the hieroglyphics on the page and remarks: "You sabé him? Him *date*! Just same as Melican man's *date*, fourteenth of September eighteen hundred ninety. You sabé that *date*, Ludenbaum and me—we flends then—you sabé flends?"

"Yes, I sabé flends!" mutters Marston. "Heave ahead, please," and tosses his fifth cheroot away.

"That, before Ludenbaum stole my cash by Chinese law," mutters Hen Chick. "Then I think the German's breath was sweet as burning punk. On that day—you sabé, Ludenbaum go partners with me at my store in Jaen—You sabé Jaen! The whole day we talk bout it—talk like mandarins at war council. We begin at

sunrise, we talk till moonlight. So Ludenbaum that day," he taps paper, "could marry no girl in Carranglan."

"Then Ludenbaum couldn't have married Maud the day of your partnership?" bursts out Phil Marston.

"No! You sabé, no?" cries Hen Chick excitedly. "You sabé Gordon girl, him beautiful as Palace of Yuen? She libe on father's plantation Carranglan, up in mountains, thirty miles far from Jaen, where Ludenbaum and me talk all day till night."

"Good Lord, this certificate is a lie!" I mutter.

"Lying as custom-house bill of goods!" cries Hen Chick. Then his face grows quizzical, and he chuckles to himself: "Ludenbaum—you sabé Ludenbaum—him heap deep rascal, cruel as Dynasty of Chow! Spanish priest—you sabé Spanish priest, Roderigo Anselmo? Rebels burn him up a year ago. Know that because my store on Rosario subscribed—you sabé subscribed—for Masses for him soul in Manila Cathedral."

"Don't you think, if Ludenbaum is so infernally deep he may get away with your son Khy?" mutters the young American officer.

"Khy take him chances. Me make Khy cut off rooster's head and swear—you sabé swear?—to finish my enemy Ludenbaum, or no come back. Me tell him: 'No more money! You not smart 'nough for Ludenbaum, you not smart 'nough for me!' Tell him: 'Me want Ludenbaum dead.' You sabé Ludenbaum? the German man what calls up old law of China to make me pay debts of my fool brother in Canton, who gamble in tea, silk, opium. How you like to pay your blother's debts? Good many Melicans no like pay their own debts. You sabé Khy—you sabé Ludenbaum—you sabé me—you sabé Maud Gordon. You sabé him, Ludenbaum heap no good. You look out for him. Him tell him married to gal. How you like that? He tell her him wife. How you like that, eh? You Melican man good to fight; you Englishman good to fight; you fight for gals! Chinaman know too much to fight for gals. But you fight for gals. You highbinders, you kill Ludenbaum, if Khy no fix him; then come here, you sabé? Me give you ten thousand taels—you sabé taels?" And the Chinaman going into a paroxysm of Celestial rage, tries to bribe us to murder.

But it doesn't need his money to put the hearts of fiends in either Phil Marston or me.

We are no sooner on the street than the young American rubs his hand to his brow in a dazed kind of way, and whispers: "Nor married to her!—but claiming, by Heaven, the rights of husband over my darling! What does that mean? If Ludenbaum should attempt to enforce them it would be—My God!"

But I grab him by the shoulder and say: "Get into the 'riksha. Come to the Club. We will discuss it there." For the young fellow's face is ghastly pale, his eyes have a half-insane fire in them. He is thinking of his sweetheart struggling to protect her young beauty from infamy at the hands of a putative husband.

Suddenly the American by a mighty effort grows calm—an awful calm. Into his eyes comes that steely glow that means death, and I know when Phil Marston looks into the fat face of Herr Adolph Max Ludenbaum, the Emperor of Germany will have one less vassal to bend the knee and call him Kaiser.

"What are you going to do?" I ask.

"What *must* I do? Get within hail of my darling so that I can succor her. That's the first thing to do. I'll have passage for Manila within the hour. Wait for me at the English Club. Before I sail I want your advice, it's your sweetheart as well as mine."

The young fellow springing into his 'riksha, calls "The American Consul's office!" and drives down to the Praya to see Rounseville Wildman who represents the commercial interests of the United States.

About thirty minutes after this, Marston breaks in upon me at the English Club.

"Well?" I say eagerly.

"Not well! I asked Wildman, the quickest ship to Manila. He looked at me astounded and muttered: 'What, going on your own hook?' 'Yes,' I replied, 'and in a devil of a hurry!' Then Mr. Wildman hinted to me it wouldn't be good policy for an officer of the United States Navy to visit at this time the Philippines. I suppose it's their diplomatic way of trying to avoid entanglements between us and Spain, on which this Cuban question is straining our hawsers. The Consul didn't say much to me, being very busy, even excited I thought. He was using our cipher

cable code. Looking over his tablegrams he handed me a wire that's broken my heart."

"What is it?"

"This! An order from my commanding officer canceling my leave of absence, and directing me to wait in Hong Kong and join the *Petrel* when she gets here." With this the young man goes on, anguish in his determined voice: "But I must go to her! I must—" he throws up his hands, and pressing them to his forehead, moans—"give up my career! By Heaven, that's what it means! It's my ambition or my persecuted sweetheart's safety! It's my career as a sailor or Maud; and I wouldn't be worth my salt if I didn't choose Maud! Go I must! See me write my death warrant as an officer of Uncle Sam. See me sail no more under the flag of my dear country."

Jove! how Maud Gordon would love her sailor boy—as he makes sacrifice for her; the perspiration of agony on his brow and writes the fatal words that will take him forever from the service that he loves only second to the girl whose cries for succor come to him from far Luzon!

But even as he signs it, I hear excited exclamations in the next room, and Bob Robertson, one of the officers of the cable company, strolls in and says: "Hello, Curzon, glad to see you about once more, old man. You've heard the news, I suppose? It will interest your friend there." He glances towards the American uniform.

"What news?"

"This! It's just been cabled from Washington that in time of peace, at dead of night, the American battleship *Maine* was blown up in the harbor of Havana."

"Blown up!" cries Marston, his pen stopping in the middle of his name. "I had a friend on board. Does it mention George P. Blow?"

"Saved, I believe," whispers Robertson. "The details have not come to hand, but three hundred or more American seamen were blown to death in their hammocks."

"By what?"

"By an outside torpedo, supposed to be fired by Spanish treachery."

"By Spanish treachery!" cries the young American

officer, and tearing up his half-signed resignation, tosses it away. Then he whispers to me: "By Heaven, now I know what Wildman meant when he said 'on my own hook.' Now I know what this telegraphic order means. It means, by the God of battles, that the Asiatic squadron will go with me to Manila! By the Lord, my shipmates'll fire to avenge the *Maine*, but I'll fire to avenge, what'll make me shoot as straight as any man in the fleet!"

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE VENGEANCE OF A NATION.

So it comes to pass in the ensuing days that I and Phil Marston, like two fiends upon the shore, go to watching for the arrival of the American squadron and signs of coming fight; watching with an awful vengeful eagerness that makes us wonder why America lingers so long in seeking a Spanish expiation that to us seems righteous as the punishment of Sodom and Gomorrah.

During this time I write for further advices from Manila, but Budlong's letters always say: "no news from Nueva Ecija, no tidings of Ludenbaum or the daughters of the dead Gordon"—making a horrible uncertainty that seems to put a relentless cruel spirit into me and the young American officer.

Marston grows gaunt from very rage, writhing impotently as he mutters: "Good God, Maud will think me recreant! My loved one will cry out, I have deserted her in her extremity."

As for me, each coming day adds to my strength and savageness. I am in nearly my normal health, though mentally racked by a strange mixture of anxiety and ferocity when the Ensign, who has been watching on Signal Hill, runs down to our office and whispers "By Jove, the *Olympia's* dropping anchor!"

And I, looking out on Hong Kong Roads, see a great big white protected cruiser flying the flag of Commodore George Dewey, commanding the U. S. Asiatic squadron.