

the German, in the concealment of the shrubbery, turn hungry eyes upon each other and laugh in a subdued and hideous merriment.

CHAPTER XXII.

INTO THE LAND SHE DREAMS.

BUT a moment after to these two chuckling conspirators, through the open windows of Gordon's villa, come cries of amazement and alarm.

"They have discovered," whispers El Corregidor. For the sweet voices of their two victims are ringing out over the shrubbery.

Maud is saying: "This is very curious, my maid isn't here."

"No servant in the house," cries Señora Valrigo; "and *Diablo!* some one has smoked all my cigarettes!"

Mazie is calling: "Zima! Zima! Where are you, you lazy little black thing?"

"I must allay their fears," whispers Ludenbaum. "My poor little doves must not be frightened just yet. Arrange with the coachman, he is in our pay!" and the German runs up the stairway.

In the hall he finds Señoritas Maud and Mazie looking for their maids, and Señora Valrigo searching for her cigarettes, which have been smoked for her by kindly Spanish soldiers; though every man of them has been moved from the house which looks almost as it was when the young ladies left it, the few stains upon the hardwood floor that tell the story of their father's death, are not prominent in the dim light, of half-turned down lamps.

As the German enters the flames of these grow brighter under Maud's deft fingers, and she looks in a rather amazed way at Herr Adolph, who says hurriedly: "Señorita Maud I bear a message to you from your father. This gentleman here,"—he brings quickly in from Gordon's sanctum the languid Don Emilio Gonzalo de Monaldo—"is the under-secretary of the Supreme Court of Manila. An order of

that tribunal compelled your father to depart for Nueva Ecija, the same command has been issued to you and your sister. You will find Don Silas awaiting you at the banca which will take you all across the bay to Pampangas from which point he will journey up the river with you. Your father left me here to instruct you to join him within the hour. Justice must be obeyed.

"Order of the Supreme Court of Manila!" cries Maud, angry, astounded and dismayed, though she has no guess of the horror that has taken place before her coming.

"Yes, Señorita Gordon!" remarks the Spanish official. "It is one commanding that you and your sister as witnesses immediately proceed to Nueva Ecija, the court of which, since the rebellion, is practically pacified, will soon be in session. It is official. It must be obeyed." He displays to her a document bearing the seal of Spain.

"Not before I have made my necessary arrangements," answers Maud.

"Oh, I shan't be married if they take me away!" cries Mazie. "Maud, stop them!"

"Certainly," replies her sister; then calls out of the window to their coachman who is now sleepily turning his ponies to take them to the stable: "Wait!"

"Where do you go?" asks Ludenbaum eagerly.

"That is not your business, sir," replies the girl, suspicion having come upon her; for, as she has gazed out she has caught a glimpse of *El Corregidor* whispering to the driver of her carriage.

"I am sorry, Señorita," remarks the under-secretary suavely, "that I officially shall be compelled to request your intentions."

"You can't have them, Señor!"

"You being now under the custody of the court, I must insist on them," replies the languid creature, waving his hand officially.

At this Herr Ludenbaum gives a grin and shrugs his fat shoulders deprecatingly, perfectly willing to leave the matter in the hands of Don Emilio, who is very proud of his position as an official of the potent Supreme Court. In addition the young man has been very well greased with gold for the occasion, and Maud,

having unfortunately wounded his susceptible pride, Don Emilio can now be trusted to do his work lazily but accurately.

"Under custody of the court? You—you mean we are prisoners!"

"Prisoners! *Dios mio*, Maud, prisoners!" cries Mazie rising affrightedly, and flying to her sister.

And the scene, though distressing becomes one Ludenbaum enjoys quite well.

The old Señora Valrigo is smoking her cigarette half drowsily, having found a few more in the case she always carries on her person.

Mazie is half in her sister's arms, one of which is round her, the other extended towards the la-di-da official, whose Spanish eyes have lighted up admiringly at the beautiful contrast the two girls make; one a child by years and education, drooping under the first touch of adversity; the other fitted by trained intellect and dauntless courage to fight her own battle and her sister's, and doing it valiantly, though fettered and crushed by this fact, potent in all Latin countries—that being a woman she is supposed to have no right to take care of herself.

But Maud respects not Latin precedent, and cries: "I will protect you!" Her white bosom is throbbing as if struggling to fight its way out from the laces of the ball robe that drapes her noble figure, giving it under the subdued light of the lamps a statue-like effect; one little foot advanced, two flashing eyes, two cheeks pale as the marble of her sculptured shoulders, two lips that might be those of Venus, but now are haughty as a Juno's. Suddenly, as if in a spasm the lips grow pleading, the eyes alluring, for Miss Gordon perceives the mistake she has made in wounding the official's extremely delicate sensibilities.

With an enchanting smile she says: "Of course, Don Emilio, I acknowledge the power of the august tribunal you represent. As such I place myself in your hands. I'll make all preparations to leave as you direct. As we drive down to the banca, would you kindly stop the carriage for a minute so that I may bid an old friend good-by. You shall be present, honored Señor, at the interview."

"*Cierto*, fair Señorita," the secretary's lips are mur-

muring as he bows before beauty; when suddenly a sharp guttural cough from Ludenbaum recalls this impressionable young gentleman to his duties. Don Emilio hastily looks at some written memoranda, and murmurs: "That, I grieve to say, will be impossible under my instructions."

"You refuse?"

"I must."

Then the Juno-like beauty comes into the girl again; her eyes blaze, her arm is stretched towards him; her haughty voice cries: "Since you have assumed official custody of me, I now command you to take me to the American Consul!"

"By what right?"

"By the right of a citizen of the United States!"

"*Dios mio!* a woman, the child of Spanish mother and naturalized Spanish father, born under the flag of Spain? Impossible!"

"Would you like to see my papers?"

"I do not care to decide what must become a question for the courts. At present my orders are no communication with—"

Here Don Emilio gives a little nervous "*Caramba!*" for the girl has suddenly cried: "Come, Mazie!" and picking up her skirts is half dragging her sister down the front steps of the house.

Taking two languid strides to the portico the under-secretary calls after her: "I command you, in the name of the Supreme Court!" to which Maud gives a little mocking laugh even as she hurries her sister on.

"You will not be able to leave the grounds!" adds Don Emilio. "My aguacils are on watch."

And Mazie looking down the pathway even as she reaches the last step, screams: "Maud, the gates are closed!"

The portals are being locked upon them by men, apparently as the under-secretary describes them.

Loath to suffer the outrage of unequal contest where a woman's struggles would be as naught against the strong arms of relentless men, and fearing, moreover, to be separated from her sister, Maud turns, and with a little sigh, leads Mazie back. Then bowing to the inevitable, in the form of the under-secretary,

she says: "I yield to force, but force only. Remember that. Give me an hour to prepare for my departure, and I go with you."

"But do not regard yourself as a prisoner *de facto* but only *de jure*, my dear young lady," murmurs the secretary with Spanish politeness. "After you have arrived at Nueva Ecija it will be the pleasure of the court to give you every reasonable liberty comporting with the desire to retain so important a witness until after the trial."

But despite Don Emilio's words, Maud Gordon, an hour after this, in the dim light of a day that is just breaking, finds she is a prisoner *de facto*. As she assists Mazie, who is faltering now, into the carriage that awaits them, the suave-voiced under-secretary, with a murmured "Pardon," steps in beside her, and she notices an aguacil seat himself on the box with the driver.

So it comes to pass that, half an hour after this, before Manila is awake this early morning, the two young ladies robed in light piña dresses for traveling in this tropic weather, step onto the deck of a big sailing banca tied up to the Custom-House quay on the Pasig, and find their duenna is not with them. Señora Valrigo is very wary of Spanish justice and has been frightened away.

Maud notices the boat is apparently in government employ, and that two or three aguacils are stationed about the deck of the little vessel, which almost immediately gets under way.

In the little cabin the sisters sit, both in a kind of daze; this blow has come so suddenly upon them that even the elder's elastic intellect feels the shock.

"*Santa María*, what are they going to do with us?" sighs Mazie.

At this Maud suddenly starting up, mutters: "*Madre dolorosa*, our father! What have they done with *him*?" and springs to the deck, to find the boat already off the lighthouse at the mouth of the Pasig, and beyond any attempt to attract attention from the shore.

Even as she looks out over the water, an aguacil comes quickly to her and says: "You will pardon me, *Señorita*, but my orders are no communication with any outside parties."

"Yes, but my father? I was told he would be on board. Where is he?"

"Honored *Señorita*, I don't know the location of your father. If he received order of the Supreme Court to come here, he must be coming. The words of the judge must be obeyed," remarks the constable with Spanish simplicity between puffs of his cigarette.

"*Dios mio*, why are we separated from him?" and the girl turns an agonized glance upon the aguacil, who replies to her deprecatingly: "The orders of the court, *Señorita*! The under-secretary asked me to mention to you that everything for your comfort—"

"Oh yes, I can depend upon you, *Señor*, replies Maud bitterly, "for every pleasure save liberty."

"*Santo Domingo*, yes! I am your humble servant Pepé Sanchez; and my assistants Tomasso and Rincon are always bowing to you," murmurs the man as Maud, hearing a soft cry from the cabin, steps in to give comfort to her sister who is wringing her hands and sobbing: "Jack, *mi querido*. They are stealing me from him!"

But what words can assuage the misery of an expectant bride torn from the arms of coming bridegroom.

So the sisters sit hand in hand and know they are drifting from Manila and feel they are drifting from hope.

Some five hours after this, in the noonday heat, the big banca makes landing at a little trading station in one of the numerous estuaries by which the Rio Grande de Pampanga empties its waters into the northern portion of the Bay of Manila.

A dense tropical jungle surrounds a few bamboo huts which with the stockade and barracks for a small garrison of Spanish soldiers make the village. A few lazy Indians gaze languidly at the big boat as she is moored beside the little landing-place, this kind of craft attracting slight attention from them, as this station is chiefly used for the transfer of cargoes from canoes or lighter draught bancas that come down the river to the larger craft that traverse the waters of the bay. But the insurrection has destroyed trade, and no boats save the banca and a large up-river canoe are at the *embarcadero*.

Here the young ladies are transferred by the atten-

tive aguacil Pepé to the lighter draught craft, that has in its stern a small bamboo cabin thatched with nipa, the forward part of the boat being open and occupied by the Indians who navigate it and a small squad of Spanish soldiers under a sergeant for the protection of the party from any bands of rebels that have wandered from Aguinaldo who is now laying down his arms in Manila and accepting Spanish amnesty.

The girls' luggage, which is not extensive, is transferred also.

Then paddled by its Indian crew the canoe-like banca glides quickly up the current and Maud sees open before her a land that seems novel, after her long absence from it. The great reaches of the stream, whose low banks are covered by the brilliant vegetation of a tropic swamp, spread out before her lighted by a dazzling sun that seems to make each leaf more green, each flower more lustrous, each bright plumed shrieking bird more brilliant.

But the girl gives little heed to this. Her thoughts are centered on one thing: "How shall I best meet my adventure—for the safety of my sister and myself?"

The day runs on; and the canoe having traveled rapidly is now in that great grassy region which in the wet season becomes a swamp and extends from the river to Lake Candava, whose enormous meres covered with myriads of duck and water-fowl attract the Tagal hunters.

Journeying on, they pass a few bancas bound down stream, some ruined villages, and one burnt church, a relic of the late insurrection, and tie up for the night to the palm trees of a little station.

Here the Indian crew having eaten their scanty supper of plantains and rice, the aguacil and the sergeant promptly lock them up in a strong shed, so that they may be certain of their men in the morning, for they have worked them very hard this day under the broiling sun.

Then after a slight meal, for neither of them are very hungry, Maud and Mazie wrapping themselves in mosquito netting to keep off the buzzing pests that make night a purgatory, lie down in the little cabin and try to sleep, though their anxieties prevent much slumber, for Mazie is crying and wringing her hands,

and muttering: "To-morrow was to have been my wedding day. Jack, come to me! Maud, why don't you help me!" her words breaking her sister's heart, who lies gazing over the waters of the silent river to its banks where myriads of fire-flies make the dense foliage of the tropics a fairy garden in which flop lazily about a number of huge bats. Beyond are the great swamps filled with myriads of mosquitoes, each shallow pool alive with leeches, varied now and then with a crocodile or slow wriggling anaconda.

Thinking of this the girl murmurs: "Helpless!" and a crowd of chattering monkeys in a neighboring grove of mangos seem to mock her with their jibes.

Succumbing at last to exhaustion the unhappy girl, is awakened by Mazie shuddering: "*Misericordia*, Maud, we must fly! My wedding morning! My Jack is bereft!"

"Fly?" whispers her sister, starting up and looking over the jungle in its silence. "Impossible! Not yet, Mazie, but still I'll give you to the man I promised. Trust your sister. For God's sake don't make my lot harder than it is!"

With this new day comes another fear upon Maud Gordon. They have taken their breakfast. The crew of snarling Indians have picked up their paddles. Already the mound of the extinct volcano of Arayat which lies to the west of the river is behind them. They are leaving the rice swamps and entering the higher country. The deserted railway to Dagupan that has been half destroyed by the war has been passed.

Noting this the girl turns suddenly to Pepé the aguacil and mutters: "You are not taking us to Isidro."

"No, Señorita."

"Why not? It is the capital of the province."

"My orders."

"Then to Jaen?"

"No, Señorita."

"Then to where?"

"To Carranglan."

"What? Right under the mountains; that little town? The court of the province isn't held there."

"That I do not know. It may be held there, if the judge so decrees."

"*Santos!*" cries the girl, "you are bearing me away from every chance of friendship or of aid. In San Isidro there are some old friends of my father's. In Jaen likewise; but away in the fastnesses of the mountains right under the great Caraballo, where Herr Ludenbaum has his coffee plantation, where I am more alone and helpless than in the middle of the ocean. I pray you not there."

There is a despairing anguish in the girl's voice that touches the aguacil, who murmurs: "Be of good cheer. *Santa Maria*, while under my care no harm shall come to you. Have we not troops to guard you?"

So, Señorita Gordon finds herself paddled up the river beyond Jaen this very night. They tie up at a little village at the foot of some rapids near where the river Baliuag comes down from the great grass terrace that is bounded by the mountain peaks of the Main Caraballo.

The next morning proceeding on their way, the country grows more magnificent in its wildness and its boldness. Long ago they have left the low paddy fields. They are now leaving the sugar cane. They are reaching the pampas where the wild buffalo roam. Beyond them up in the mountain ranges will be found a few scattered coffee plantations and some tobacco fields, though here both plants grow wild, such is their luxuriance.

So poling up dashing rapids and paddling along quiet reaches they make their way to the head of navigation on this stream, where the cliffs covered with ferns and brilliant wild flowers, mixed with bamboo thickets and sometimes cocoanuts and wild bananas, come down to the waters of the river. Here at a little hamlet the aguacil demands from the *tribunal* or local post house, conveyance for the party, which under the law must be accorded to all travelers, but is very quickly supplied to those journeying with military escort.

Then in some ten carts all drawn by slow moving carabaos, the native term for buffalos, they make dusty procession on springless carts which move creakingly over half destroyed and wholly unrepaired roads, gradually climbing to the foothills of the great mountains.

Upon the second day of this jolting, bone-shaking journey, their progress being very tedious, the Igor-

rote boys who drive for them being very dilatory and very surly, Maud, with Mazie seated beside her, finds the two carabaos which draw her cart halted in front of the *tribunal* of Carranglan.

She looks up at the great mountains that rise above her and almost entomb her. Glancing down the valley through which rushes a little mountain torrent, she sees, terrace on terrace below her, patches of great forest trees mingled with a matted jungle of wild coffee bushes, vines, flowers and dwarf bananas, whose sea of green is topped by an occasional buri-palm, till in the far blue distance her eye reaches the great grass lands that in their unexplored haunts are the home of fierce wild buffalo, cousins of the patient beasts that have borne her to this place of despair.

For as such Maud Gordon now regards this quiet mountain *pueblo* of cottages thatched with nipa palm or cogon grass and a few stone houses, the largest being the *Casa Real*, the residence of the *alcaidé*. Just across this little valley on the hillside is the *presidio*, stockaded by posts of teak wood and containing the stone barracks of the local garrison, a company of savage *voluntarios*, some of whom are slouching about the street. In a little vale below the *pueblo* are the ruins of a Dominican monastery. It is surrounded by gardens in which nature has resisted the fire that destroyed but a year ago, from torch applied by the insurgents, the home of monks and friars.

Beyond this Maud sees their old unoccupied plantation house with the great tobacco lands, her mother's dower, the ruin of her family. For first the priests claimed them, and then transferred their claim to the officials of the Spanish Crown.

Some two miles away over a ridge, she can dimly discern the tops of the huts of the coolies of Herr Ludenbaum's plantation. Noting these, the thought of the German brings her danger very near to her. The very grandeur of the nature that is about her, means she is far from aid and succor, in a half barbarous place, where her family were once dominant, but now are friendless.

She looks at the Spanish troops who have dismounted from their carts. She sees coming towards her the *gubernadorcillo*, his black Eton-jacket over his white

shirt worn outside his trousers, a high hat upon his head, a gold-mounted cane in his hand, the sign of his authority. She knows she is a prisoner in the land she dreads!

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE KITE OF THE CHINAMAN.

THE young lady's prognostications are 'unfortunately correct. The *gubernadorcillo*, after a few words with *aguacú* Pepé, steps towards the cart, and though he bows humbly, remarks with an air of authority: "Why do you delay, Señoritas? The *alcaldé* is waiting for you. Let me assist you down so that you may come with me."

So gathering up their piña skirts to keep them from the dust of the huge wheels of the cart, Maud and Mazie descend like two fluttering birds into the snare of the fowler.

In a few moments the girls are in the presence of the *alcaldé-gubernador*, and are rather curtly told by this official that he has orders to keep them very tight till his Honor, Don Ulah Pico, the judge of the province, has time to hold his court.

Then in the course of about half an hour Maud and her sister find themselves quartered in a little stone house with bamboo balcony, of which they occupy, after the invariable custom, the second story. This is reached by bamboo steps and is surrounded by a garden which, though uncultivated, has been made by nature very beautiful. The cocoanut, the banana and feathery bamboos, aided by a big *launan* tree, in which *bato bato* pigeons and cockatoos roost, produce a pleasant shade that is adorned by growing orchids of wondrous colors and made fruitful by some orange trees, limes, tamarinds and mangosteen. All this is perched upon a little hillside that permits the young ladies a view of the dusty main street of the *pueblo* some hundred yards below them.

But its beauties are defaced, to these defenceless ones, by a high stockade of unhewn timber and a gate

of heavy dogon-bars which is secured by a strong chain and padlock with massive clicking key. Besides, poor little Mazie shudders as she sees sentries placed about this stockade and before the gate.

But even this is swept from the maidens' minds after their baggage, which has been searched, is brought up by a couple of Tuingani coolies. With them strides into their apartment a stern-faced matron with body of sturdy, heavy build, and face of sharp eyes and hawk's nose so common among the Basque peasantry.

Though she curtsies to them, the woman says: "Señoritas, by the *alcaldé's* orders you are under my charge. I am to see your pretty tongues wag to no one!" At this the two girls simply looking at her in astonishment, she announces: "I am Concha Dolgo, once under-matron of the Bilibid, now engaged to take good care of you, my doves."

"The *Carcel Publica de Manila*?" cries Maud, her eyes indignant, her face haughty.

"The Bilibid prison!" screams Mazie, her sweet lips fluttering, her dark eyes filling with tears of rage and shame.

"*Cierto!* I have had under me before this other Rebel girls," says the matron grimly, and would perhaps hear some saucy rejoinder from the indignant little beauty, did not Maud, whose American common sense dominates her courage, remark: "Under the *alcaldé's* instructions we are, I presume, your prisoners, but I warn you, Señora, keep your eyes upon us from a distance."

"*Caramba*, that I will!" says the woman half jeeringly, adding in grim significance: "Though I'd take other methods with you, my haughty chicks, were not my instructions to handle you like humming-birds."

So from now on, Concha Dolgo keeps eyes upon her pretty charges. The young ladies are assigned to the two little back rooms of the cottage, from which there is no exit save through the larger front apartment, in which at night Señora Dolgo swings her hammock.

Even as they sit in the garden and try to amuse themselves with some old plays of Lopé de Vega, a "History of the Saints," and a volume of Cervantes' novels that has been sent in to them from the *alcaldé's*, from which place their meals, very good ones for the