

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

country, three times a day are brought; seated on the veranda, smoking her cigarette, Matron Concha has careful supervision of her wards.

Then, bearing no hardship save that of seclusion, the two imprisoned beauties pass many a weary day that is only broken by listening to the bells of the little chapel of the village ringing matins, mass and vespers, and distant glimpse of an occasional religious procession with image of the Virgin and lighted candles and playing violin, which tramps the dusty main street; likewise one or two funerals that pass by with brass band playing; their rude biers drawn by white ponies and guided by drivers in stove-pipe hats and followed by crowds of half-drunken natives, who always end their sorrow over the dead by a carouse.

In this soul-crushing monotony Miss Gordon finds all chance of communicating with the man she loves annihilated, all hope of outside aid divorced from her.

For the first month the girl had perchance expected some communication from the English lover of her young sister. For the next two, she had hoped to see her own affianced coming riding up the main street of the little *pueblo*.

But now Good Friday having past and these hopes having at last been put out of her heart with many sighs; quite naturally Señorita Maud commences to look forward with eagerness to the trial to which she and her sister have been brought ostensibly as witnesses but really, she knows, for some ulterior purpose, the very uncertainty of which adds to her anxiety.

In addition Mazie begins to droop. Lightness leaves her step, and Maud at night is driven frantic by her sister's tears, who is sobbing: "He will believe I am unfaithful to him. Jack! My Jack!" To this she adds with almost childish unreason: "Why don't you keep your promise?"

Mazie's anguish spurs Maud to make exertion in the limited field she finds before her; for the sentries at the gate are still vigilant.

With astute diplomacy she tries to make the *alcaldé* her friend when he comes once a week to ask as to her health. She even attempts to beguile the stern dragon who sits on the veranda overlooking her prisoners day

by day, evening by evening. Likewise she has a pleasant smile and kindly word for the sentries that patrol in front of the gate; though she has little chance of this, for Matron Dolgo permits little converse between her charges and any one.

But this fortunately brings Señorita Maud under the notice of the officer commanding the local garrison.

Captain Don Roberto Chaco, *comandante* of the corps of *voluntarios*, garrisoning this district, comes stalking on the scene, ferocious as a military ghost arisen from the sixteenth century.

At the time of Maud's arrival this officer had been across the mountains to the north, even as far as Bayombon in Nueva Viscaya Province, pursuing some Igorrotes and Gaddanes, fierce hill-tribes, who had come down from their fastnesses for plunder, thinking the Spanish troops still have upon their hands the insurgent hoards that have roamed over this province firing many a monastery, burning many a priest and sacking many a church.

Some months after the advent of the young ladies, returning from his duty, which he has done with a heavy and remorseless hand, bringing some half-dozen Igorrote, Gaddane and Negrito prisoners with him, whom he hangs upon some palm trees down the valley as a suggestion to other marauders, Captain Chaco, like the efficient officer that he is, has gone to examining the details of his garrison.

In making his rounds he chances to hear from the sergeant of the guard that the prisoners, for as such Chaco regards them, have been trying bright eyes and kind words upon the soldiers who see they are cut off from the outside world.

Therefore one morning Captain Roberto, always alert for duty, calling for Matron Dolgo to unlock the gate, steps in to the young ladies as they are reading under the shade of the *launan* tree, and remarks in stern military tones: "My prisoners, I hear you attempt conversation with my sentries as they walk their posts at the stockade. But have a heed! I warn you, the next man that turns his head to your pretty voices or bright eyes I shoot before your gate. Will that stop your babbling tongues condemning my gallant fellows, who love all pretty girls as the devil loves

sin, to a firing party? Aho, *caramba!*" he chuckles, "I see it will."

For at this atrocious threat both girls have sprung up shuddering, and Mazie has screamed: "Shoot a man because he turns his head to my voice? You're a murderer!"

"No, Mazie," mutters Maud, laying a hand upon her indignant sister's arm, and knowing abuse is not the best way to turn this martinet from his dread purpose, "Captain Chaco is only an officer inflexible in duty." Then turning to him and forcing herself to calmness, she continues: "Your—your gallant fellows are safe. My sister and myself shall never speak to one of them again."

"*Gracias, Señorita,*" mutters this military Draco, and catching sight of the blue eyes that blaze with an indignation they cannot conceal, he adds half-apologetically: "I thought it best you should know, before any of my poor fellows came to harm."

At this the bright eyes grow softer, the girl murmurs: "Thank you for warning me in time."

And Captain Chaco having doffed his sombrero and strode away, his saber clanking against his high boots with their jingling spurs, Mazie whispers: "How could you be polite to that awful man?"

"Because," answers Maud under her breath, a sudden inspiration coming to her, "if I guess right, this Captain Roberto may be a rock against which Herr Ludenbaum and El Corregidor may dash themselves in vain. From his very disposition he will be as firm a friend as he is stern as an enemy. He is the only power here, strong enough to smack the court in the face if he likes." Here she gives a curious little giggle: "Aha, he has condemned himself to death. See, the inflexible Chaco is turning to get a glance of us."

Then raising up her voice, Maud cries in sweet entreaty: "Just a word with you!" and gathering up her light skirts, she trips towards the military autocrat whose dark eyes for one moment flash as they look upon the graces of this lovely creature, who comes bounding towards him with fairy feet and exquisite ankles glinting in the sunlight, and a face radiant, yet pleading, to make her first petition unto him.

"I—I have a favor to ask you, *caballero,*" murmurs Maud.

"Humph!" the martinet gazes upon her suspiciously.

"Only a *very* little one."

"What is it, *Señorita?*"

"I have finished the first volume of Cervantes' 'Jealous Estremaduran,'" she holds up the book. "I can't leave my prison," her voice is pathetic here. "Could you not ask for me from the *alcaldé* the second part, Don Capitan?"

"*Por Dios,* is that all? I'll do so!"

The disciplinarian strides out of the gate between his saluting sentries, as Maud, gazing after him, cogitates shrewdly: "I'll get him *used* to granting little favors; then, perhaps, some day when I want a greater one, Don Roberto may from very force of habit give me what I pray for."

A moment after the girl rather laughs to herself as their Cerberus, Dolgo, locking the gate after the departing martinet, remarks sharply: "That's a man after my own heart. Hung up six rebels the day he came to town. If he and I had but to deal with you I'd have longer siestas and less fear of you flitting, *Señorita Nose-in-the-air.*"

Chaco is a man of his word!

That evening, as Maud is seated in the garden playing a little accompaniment on the guitar to her voice, she finds him standing beside her, and muttering: "I have brought the book, fair *Señorita.*"

"Oh, how can I thank you?"

"By not stopping your pretty song."

"I am at your service, *Don Capitan,*" and Maud sings to this stern gentleman a siren's ditty which, emphasized by alluring eyes and white fingers straying over the guitar strings, and arms of snow and ivory shoulders that glisten under the moon's soft light through her robe of piña tissue, makes this young lady a Circe to the ferocious soldier as he listens to her sweet voice.

For actuated almost by an instinct, Maud turns upon him the blaze of her charms, the luster of her mind, and bewilders this rough cavalier who having thought of little but duty during the last two years,

now finds it pleasant to bask in the smiles of a bright coquettish face, and imagine himself once more doffing his sombrero upon the Luneta to the ladies of fashion and civilization.

Consequently Don Roberto comes often to see his fair captive, though this is dissented to by the prison matron, who does not care to see her charges speak to anyone, and in consequence keeps guard over their interviews till the rough and ready soldier damns Concha Dolgo with many an awful oath under his black mustachios.

In Chaco, Miss Gordon, to her astonishment, discovers a sincere devotee of the Church as well as true Spanish patriot. His vigor against the insurgents has been such that he has been called at barracks, the little Weyler, his military methods having the same cold, calm remorselessness as those of that Captain-General under whom he had served and whose strong hand had once made all Filipinos shudder, as he afterwards made all Cubans.

Bloodthirsty, indomitable, caring naught for the opinion of the world, and only for the praise of his superior officers, having no friends at home, being native born, though of Spanish race, Chaco has received little promotion, a thing which perhaps embitters him against the powers that be, but has not destroyed a ferocious patriotism which demands the death of all insurgents, high or low.

This phase of his character is gradually revealed to his fair prisoner, as he acquires the habit of strolling during the early evening after guard-mount into the little garden where the Señoritas sit under the eye of Matron Dolgo, who smokes her cigarette upon the balcony of the cottage.

"*Dios mio*," he mutters to Señorita Maud, "when I look at that burnt convent and think how the devils having larded them with cocoanut-oil, hung up Padres Juan, Pablo and Roderigo, and made them part of the burning pile, I, though they lay down their arms, am still the enemy to the death of every rebel scoundrel. *Cruz de Cristo*, amnesty is not proclaimed yet by me!"

"Ay, my fiery captain," suggests the young lady, "but if word came to your superiors it might inter-

fere with the promotion I am told, Don Basilio Augustin, our new Captain-General has promised you."

"But little news passes from here to Manila or even San Isidro," grins the fiery little Spaniard, stroking his mustache. "*None*, if I do not wish it!" he adds, as savage sternness in his voice that makes Maud start. "Dost think a courier could get alive out of that cañon," he points down the valley, "with report that would injure or destroy me. *Dios mio*, I studied war under Weyler."

But perchance noting some hope in his captive's face he mutters: "Of course I bow to the mandate of the Supreme Court and keep my two brilliant witnesses for the coming trial. I am told the judge, Don Ulah Lawbooks—I forget his other name—," laughs the *comandante*, "is coming here with quite a suite of *aguacils*; also El Corregidor, to see that justice is done in the trial that will take place here, the local witnesses being more convenient, for those big tobacco lands that should make you very rich if you get them—which I think you won't."

"But my father, what of him?" asks the girl.

"Ah, Don Silas! I have not heard of him since last year, when, I am sorry to state, your father had a bad name among the officials as being a kind of half rebel. But you are good Church girls and true Spaniards I hope, both of you, Señoritas, though I hear under the displeasure of the court, not being willing witnesses."

"Oh, yes, we obey the laws. Besides women have little else to do except to make men happy," replies Maud, and favors the local military dictator with a glance which might allure St. Anthony himself.

But now from the veranda this moonlight evening comes the stern voice of Matron Dolgo. It says: "My doves, bid *Don Capitan* good-night. It is time for you to retire."

"You see we *obey* the law," murmurs Maud archly, extending a white hand in adieu, and rather happy to note her visitor favors the matron on the balcony with a terrific scowl, and a muttered "*Carrajo!*" under his breath.

Probably she might bring a contest between them now, but she is too proud to whisper to this man who is beginning to think of her with very ardent mind,

that each night she and her sister suffer the indignity of being put under lock and key, so she only murmurs to him: "*Adios, Caballero!*"

"You have given me a pleasant half hour. I kiss your hand, *Señorita*," murmurs the martial Hidalgo. "Likewise yours, *Señorita Inez*." A stiff black briary mustache is pressed upon the delicate fingers held out to him, though his lips linger longest over Maud's.

Bowing, the captain with clanking saber takes his departure, the memory of the white hand he has kissed making him hold up a haughty Spanish nose at the blandishments of some Tagal beauties who look at him from their nipa cottages as the *comandante* passes, and play the guitar and give him entreating glances.

Thus it comes to pass that Captain Chaco has often to superintend personally the mounting of guard over the little cottage and always gets a bright glance and pleasant smile, and sometimes an interview from his charming captive that makes his step light and military air quite jaunty. Gradually into his mind comes a hope that one day this young lady who seems to make sunshine for him, even when he rides under the dark shades of the eternal forests of teak and ironwood and dogon, may give herself to him with all her beauty and her portion of the great tobacco lands that he to himself with Spanish thrift now mutters: "Shall yet be hers!"

Therefore he becomes complacent as far as his duty permits, to this young lady who has got into the habit of asking slight favors, such as his bringing her a little music from the *gubernadorcillo*, who plays the flute, or a book from the scant libraries of the *cura* or the *alcalde*.

But Maud soon has a greater boon to ask of Roberto Chaco, one that has been suggested to her by a very curious incident.

Early one day, the morning breeze blowing fresh down the valley, Mazie, who is lazily killing time embroidering a *panuelo* which is to cover her fair shoulders, suddenly tosses it away and calls: "A kite! Look, Maud, a kite!"

Such is the dead monotony that is crushing their youthful spirits that both young ladies spring up and get excited over a thing every Filipina girl has seen a

thousand times, a Chinaman, at his national pastime, flying one of those kites that represent so ingeniously birds, insects or dragons.

This one is an immense bat some eight feet high, with fiery eyes and black flapping wings, and is flown quite scientifically upon the hillside near them, not much over fifty yards from the line of the stockade which encloses them, the wind blowing in such a way that at times when the bat's wings are extended it almost faces the girls.

As they watch its movements, Maud suddenly clutches her sister's arm, and mutters: "I think I see letters on it!" She looks again; and quickly drags her sister through the matted tangle of wild flowers, vines and shrubbery almost to the stockade, as near as possible to the flying thing that excites them. Here they put sharp young eyes upon the flying bat.

"A— a communication!" Mazie gasps.

"Look! Friends, friends at last!" whispers Maud. For, as the wings of the bat extend themselves before her, she deciphers in rude characters in English, that no one here in all this town can read, save herself and her sister: "ASK FOR A MAID!"

The moment she has read it she commands: "Come away; act as usual; pick up your embroidery. I'll try and read my book lest they suspect."

Sitting at their work in the shade of the *launan* tree, neither of the girls can help turning their eyes surreptitiously upon the kite which has brought the first hint to them, they are not entirely forgotten by the outside world. It is flown for about an hour by a Chinese coolie, and every time its wings expand, the spark of hope burns higher in Maud's breast.

CHAPTER XXIV.

CHACO, THE PATRIOT.

"Ask for a maid?" cogitates Miss Gordon all this day; and turning her bright eyes upon Matron Dolgo, Maud knows she won't get one. Suddenly into her mind flies the thought, "Chaco may grant my request,"