

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,"

Therefore this very evening after she has charmed the military martinet's senses, Señorita Maud thinks she may dare to put up her subtle plea. First giving Chaco some little description of the inconveniences that are upon her because she has no servant, the alluring young lady murmurs: "Could I not have some Tagal or Negrita girl to wait upon me and my sister? We have sufficient money to pay the slight dole that will be required."

"A *muchacha*? *Cierto!*" remarks Don Roberto. "Why not?"

But Matron Dolgo interposes an objection, and says: "Under orders of the Supreme Court no attendants or communication whatsoever are to be allowed my charges."

"*Caramba*, the Supreme Court! Would you make our judges barbarians, woman? The young ladies shall have the attendance to which they are accustomed!" mutters the captain.

"Oh, thank you, dear *caballero!*" cries Maud with thankful eyes and grateful voice.

And Chaco thinks her tone means so much, that being a man of quick action, the next morning he brings up some half-dozen native girls, one or two Tagals of lithe limbs, an Ilocos maid, supple and yellow, and three little black Negrita nymphs for her selection.

Looking over these, Maud can scarce repress a cry of joy; draped in a coarse *jusi* chemisette from which her black arms and shoulders peep like carved jet, her short skirt of bright red and green displaying legs and feet of ebony made shiny by cocoanut oil, is little Zima, Mazie's Manila maid, a sly look of warning in the whites of her big eyes.

Struggling with a sudden hope and blessing God that Mazie, whose joy would surely betray her, is still in her room, Miss Gordon after making inquiries from the other girls to veil her motive, remarks: "I choose this one!" and puts her hand on Zima's shoulder as she asks: "What is your name, black child?"

"Zima!" says the girl, who has a quick wit in her minute body! "And what is yours, Señorita?"

"I am your mistress now, Dona Maud," commands Gordon's daughter. "Go up to my chamber! There

you will find my sister, Señorita Mazie, who will instruct you as to your duties. I hope you will be obedient."

"Ah, *caramba!* These Negrita *muchachas* sometimes need training. If the wench is surly, send her down to our quarters. My corporal understands the proper use of the *quirta*," chuckles Chaco grimly.

"*Santos*, I could never do that!" shudders Señorita Gordon, for poor little Zima is trembling at the mention of this stern discipline, and Maud fears the Negrita may in her terror betray their secret.

But Zima has too bright a mind for this mistake, and though her feet are trembling, runs up the bamboo stairs into the house, where, if Matron Dolgo had quick ears enough, she would hear a cry of joy from Señorita Mazie, and even the sound of a kiss greeting this souvenir of former days.

But there is not much of this; the black girl puts an ebony finger upon her red lips and mutters warningly: "*Silencio*, dear mistress!"

Just at present, however, the matron has some other business on her hands.

Maud, even as she is thanking Chaco for his kindness to her, feels a hot sharp breath of anger on her neck. Concha Dolgo with uplifted finger beards the fiery little Spanish captain, saying to his face: "I disagree with you entirely, Don Roberto Chaco. The prisoners under my care shall have no maid to go running through the streets bearing their messages to God knows whom. I forbid it!"

Then Maud for the first time sees in its glory, the demon in this military gentleman she has been playing with. Chaco who is but five feet seven inches high, seems to grow six feet tall. His eyes that were black and flashing now become red as coals of fire. He knocks the ashes from his cigar coolly, and looking at the woman with gaze that seems to petrify her, murmurs: "I, Don Roberto Chaco, *comandante* of this *presidio*, am master here. Disobey me, and I'll shoot you, madam. I swear it, *Cruz de Cristo!* It is my military law. I am responsible for these young ladies' safety—but *not* to you. They shall have twenty Indian wenches to run about for them if I wish. Tell His Honor, the *alcalde*, if he doesn't like what I say,

to come to me. But he'll not come," Chaco grins. "He's been there before!" To this he adds hoarsely: "Remember what I say. To forget Chaco's orders means death. Ask the trees out there!" he points down the ravine to some tall palms over which vultures circle. Then gravely taking the woman with his strong fingers by her hawk's nose, Don Roberto leads her to the bamboo steps and doffing his sombrero ceremoniously, commands: "Into the house, hag!" And in a jiffy, stern Matron Dolgo with bowed head and frightened mien bolts from beneath his Gorgon glance.

Turning, the military autocrat fronts Miss Gordon. Her lovely figure is draped with a white robe of soft piña tissues, that twines about and displays each beauty line, her face radiant with gratitude, her hand extended in graceful recognition of his service. Backed by some big green plantain leaves, surrounded by flowers of brilliant hues, perched above her dainty head a paraquette of rainbow plumage, some orchids of rarest shapes and tints dangling from a tree-fern, floating about her in the soft morning breeze, she makes a picture that might set any man on fire.

Suddenly a sunny smile wipes the scars of battle out of the Spanish soldier's bronzed face. With one quick step he is beside Señorita Gordon. He seizes Maud's white fingers and whispers: "I am so pleased to be of service to you," then mutters sorrowfully: "but I must see you no more. Some day my love," his eyes are flaming now, "might make me forget a soldier's duty. When you are no more a prisoner, send for me and I will wed you."

"O, *Dios!*" gasps the girl at this quick attack.

"You understand me!" he breaks in again, for Maud has drawn back from him shuddering with a terror born of the intensity of this man's passion. "I mean an honest love for you. I'll give you a better name than that of Gordon, who, the *alcaldé* tells me, has been a rebel to my dear Spain! So long as you are my prisoner I dare see you no more, *mi querida, mi alma, niña de mis ojos!* But *mi Belita* after you are free send for Don Roberto Chaco, and he'll make you his *cara esposa, Cruz de Cristo!*"

This outburst of flaming passion has come sudden

and strong as an earthquake! The girl feels upon her hand lips that burn, and her slight waist gets one savage squeeze that almost makes her cry from pain as Don Roberto Chaco striding from her, reaches the gate of the garden. Here he raises his hat, and says: "Remember—I mean what I say, girl.—It is Chaco's oath!"

Gazing after him, Miss Gordon, her fair limbs trembling, meditates that perchance she has dropped from the frying-pan into the fire, in stimulating this electric barbarian's blood with glances that beguile, and words that she knows now have put a hope into him she dares scarce think about.

But Mazie breaks in upon her, giggling: "Quick! Old crabstick Dolgo's out of the way. She's swearing to herself at the back of the house. Now's our chance to hear from Zima."

A second after, in the seclusion of a plantain thicket, the little Negrita girl gives them some news that for a moment turns Señorita Gordon's mind from Chaco's passion.

"My dear mistress," Zima whispers to Mazie, "we followed you from Manila."

"We? Who?" Maud's breath scarce leaves her lips.

"Ata, your Tagal boy, and the Chinese peddler, Ah Khy."

"Ah Khy? Who is he?"

"The son of Hen Chick."

"Oh, I remember. That snappy, vindictive, demon Chinese boy," mutters Maud.

"Yes, the one whose tail I used to play pranks with," whispers Mazie.

But her sister goes on impressively to the Negrita: "You are sure Ah Khy is our friend?"

"Yes, lady, but more the enemy of old Ludenbaum, your German papa, who has journeyed to Isidro with El Corregidor."

"*Santos*, I expected that! Friends and enemies are both here; enemies strong, friends weak. Why did Ata Tonga bring you?"

"So I could talk to you for him. He is known by Captain Chaco as a Katipunán. Ata's life wouldn't be worth a cocoanut were he captured. Look under the trees over which the vultures fly: they show Chaco's

mercy to a rebel Filipino. But I can wander out and can bear words to the Tagal, who has sworn by Cam-bunian to save you. He has made the Chinaman take oath with the head cut off a game fowl, such as these foolish creatures swear by, to save you."

At these words Miss Gordon's face becomes radiant for the first time in three months. Before, her smiles had been forced ones to make a Spanish captain think his presence was not distasteful to her. The brilliance in her eyes is now spontaneous as the light of rising sun. But suddenly her face grows pallid; the Negrita is telling awful news. Fortunately it comes gradually.

To Mazie's half petulant question: "Why did you and all the other servants run away before we returned to the villa that night at San Miguel?" Zima answers: "The soldiers!"

"The soldiers," whispers Maud, "were at my father's house?"

"Yes, I heard the lieutenant speak of seizing Don Silas."

"*Madre mia!*"

"He said your father was to be taken for having harbored the Rebel who made the *Carabineros* revolt!"

"And then!" Maud's hand is on her breast.

"Even as I fled, I heard your father's voice swearing and angry, then sounds of fight and shots of guns."

"Shots?" screams Mazie.

And dread coming on these deserted girls, Maud cries: "*Dios mio*, were he not a prisoner or dead he would, ere this, have been with us, his children!" Then she questions hurriedly: "Do you know more of my father's fate?"

"Yes, but it will make your eyes rain tears like a mountain storm."

"Tears! Don't you see I am crying now. You must tell me. Anything but suspense," implores Mazie.

"Ata Tonga says Don Silas is dead."

"Dead! How does he know?"

"He smelt Don Silas's grave under the gravel walk to your house in San Miguel."

"*Madre dolorosa!* Mazie, our feet have trod upon our father's corpse!" shudders Maud, as with a long sigh her sister droops upon her neck.

But the sharp call of their keeper intrudes upon their grief: "Señoritas, where are you?"

They are turning to the summons, but the Negrita, with hand upon Mazie's arm, says suddenly: "I forgot to tell you. Remember the Chinese pedler. Buy things from him. Listen to his words. Ah Khy is cunning as an old man-monkey."

"Señoritas, answer me!" cries the savage voice of Matron Dolgo from the veranda. "Come in sight of me, my doves, or I'll lock you up all this day—and perhaps longer!" And the two responding to this, the stern-visaged Spanish woman notes a strange sadness in her charges' haughty voices.

Though not daring to wear mourning, as this would indicate they had received communication from the outside world, each sister, upon her white wrist, ties a plain black band, in memory of Bully Gordon, who had always been to them, save on that one evening when filled with liquor, a kindly tiger with claws that were always cushioned by his fireside. The hand that had thrashed mutinous foremast-hands and flogged Cabin-boy Max nigh unto death, had been to them always a gentle and protecting one.

So a day or two passes in sad solitude, Señorita Gordon thanking Heaven that Captain Roberto Chaco keeps away from her; for Maud has seen a spirit in this man that has frightened her at the familiar she has raised up to aid her.

At first she had thought to play a Semiramis role with this military gentleman, and so meet the power of the law by the brute force of the army. But now she knows this man though he may defend her, will for it claim reward. She thinks of Cleopatra, who made Antony throw a world away for her bright eyes, and a Judith, who took Holofernes's head. Then suddenly a spasm of agony comes into her face. "What did these women have to sacrifice to gain their power?" and her hand clutches the photograph of Phil Marston which still lies upon her white bosom.

But the noticeable absence of the only man of whom Concha Dolgo holds an awe, brings new misery to her charges. The matron even jeers Miss Gordon with savage tongue: "Now that your lover, who made you think yourself above the law, comes no more to

listen to your tale of woe, I'll make you sing a different tune, my haughty minx!"

To this Señorita Gordon gives slight heed, till some day or two after she and her sister, being seated in the little garden in the cool of the evening, the setting sun still giving them a pleasant light, are astonished to see their keeper unlock the barred front gate and order the sentry to signal to a passing huckster that she would examine his goods.

With a little gasp, Maud sees it is a Chinese pedler who has made at a distance such wondrous display of bright-colored kerchiefs that the eyes of the severe Spanish woman have been caught by them.

Thinking to deck her austere features she has summoned the huckster; and at the gate, for she permits no further entry, she is examining the goods. The Chinese pedler is jabbering to her in the expressive patois of his nation, and his goods are so beautifully cheap that Concha Dolgo opens her big eyes at his prices and chuckles with Basque parsimony at the bargains she is getting.

"Some earthquake shock has made this coolie a besotted fool," grins the matron. "Does he not know that *jusi* cloth like this is worth twice what he asks for it! And these earrings, true Visaya pearls! By every saint, the dolt is charging no more for them than if they were glass beads to trade with savages."

Then, even as she is bargaining, the matron commands sternly: "Stand back, Señoritas!"

For at this sight both Maud and Mazie have come towards her.

"Can't we look at the pretty things as well as you?" asks the younger girl defiantly. "We have a little money. We can buy piña scarfs as well as you."

"I will buy them for you, my pert dove," says Concha grimly.

"Oh thank you," remarks Maud diplomatically, "and please accept a present of this one from us."

Thus they all get to bargaining, the Chinaman displaying many pretty things at prices which would make Señorita Gordon open her bright eyes did not she divine this jabbering creature is Ah Khy, and guess his reason for the cheapness of his goods.

So, after a little, the matron puts her hand into her pocket where she usually carries her purse.

Not finding it, she raises her voice and cries: "Zima!" and being answered by the Negrita girl from the upper story of the house, she calls: "Find my money! It is in my pouch that is secreted in the lizard's hole in the ceiling in the corner of my room."

To this, after a moment, come shrill cries of alarm and little Zima is yelling: "Señora Dolgo, the pouch is not in the lizard's hole. *Aquí, pronto!* Some one has stolen it. *Ladrones! Thieves!*"

Commanding, "Come with me!" the matron, with feet made quick with parsimonious fear, runs along the gravel path and flies up the bamboo ladder, her face pale with agony at loss of money.

But her charges *don't* follow her!

The Chinaman is whispering hurriedly: "Little Zima sharp as a rat! You sabé me, Ah Khy! come from Ata, the Tagal man. Speak quick! Ata dare not come. Chaco know his face and will hang him up by his feet to die. But we have written evidence which, given to Chaco, who is the cruelest patriot on earth, would get Ludenbaum shot like a dog when he comes here."

"What has Ludenbaum done?" asks the girl sharply.

"Imported and delivered arms to Aguinaldo!" answers the Chinaman. "Dutchy be here in a week, then look out for squalls! If you can use the evidence, which we keep, as it is written and might be taken from you, send Zima to us. She knows where to find us."

To this Maud answers only with a significant nod, fearing their keeper may overhear, though her eyes blaze, for the coolie is winking roguishly and remarking significantly: "We have been looking at Chaco and you in the moonlight from a distance. Which is the masher, which the mashee?"

Fortunately Mazie, filled with a girl's anxiety for her absent lover, stops this by whispering hurriedly: "Do you know aught of the Englishman?" and in her eagerness, breaking into pidgen English, jabbars: "You sabé Jackie Curzon?"

"Yes, me sabé Jackie Curzon," grins Ah Khy. "Him damn fool!"

"Oh, *Dios!*"

"Him chump!"

"*Santissima!*"

"Him your lover!"

"*Mi Madre!*" Mazie hides her blushing head.

"Him was to come with Ata and myself to save you," remarks the Chinaman contemplatively; "but Jack hasn't got much sand. Him run away in English war vessel! Your lover him damn big coward!"

"You lie, you jabbering yellow-faced imp!" cries Mazie savagely, and boxes the Chinaman's ears sharp as the crack of a bamboo umbrella.

Suddenly this is broken in upon by the deep voice of the girl's stern monitress. "Why did you strike the pedler, *Señorita?*"

"Why—why—?" gasps the maiden, staying her vicious hand with a start.

"I insist on knowing. Answer at once!"

"Why—because he was trying to cheat me in the price of this piña handkerchief," cries Mazie desperately. "The saucy rogue asked twenty silver pesos for the stuff when it isn't worth four."

At this Ah Khy grins horribly, but flies into Chinese jabber like an enraged monkey, shaking his fist at the little lady as he gathers up his goods and takes his money with him, for *Señora Dolgo*, having found her purse, has paid him.

As he disappears, the matron locking the gate after him, turns fiery eyes upon her charges. "Why did you not come with me?" she says sharply; then commands: "Into the house! As for that little black devil Zima who said she couldn't find my purse—"

She dashes up the bamboo ladder, and a moment after the girls, as they proceed slowly to the cottage, hear Zima's cries. She is shrieking under Dolgo's strong hand: "*Señora*, mercy! How could I tell which lizard's hole it was? There are ten chameleons in the roof."

"*Dios mio*," gasps Mazie, "the brute is beating Zima!"

But Maud bursts into a jeering laugh, for Zima, escaping from Dolgo's arm, has flown upon the balcony and swung herself far out. Her Negrita toes, expert as a monkey's tail, have clutched a liano dangling from the *launan* tree. Quick as a flash, even as the pur-

suing Concha flies at her, the imp, swinging herself out into space, climbs up by her agile toes to the safety of a high branch, and still hanging head downwards, makes faces like an ape, grimacing at punishment below.

Just here catching Mazie's giggle, for the black girl is performing like a ring-tailed monkey upon the tree, Dolgo turns eyes upon her captives and cries savagely: "Up that bamboo ladder quick, prisoners! I'll have no disobedience. You shall be locked up very tightly for a day or two, my pets."

At this Mazie puts her little nose saucily into the air, and *Señorita Maud* sweeps, a picture of languid but haughty grace, into her room, yet clutches her hands defiantly as she hears bolts drawn and key turned upon her.

But all the time she is thinking of the news the Chinaman has brought. She knows Curzon is no coward, and whispers to herself: "He went on an English warship—for what?" Then her hand flies to her heart as her sweet lips gives answer: "To tell my lover! Phil will be here. I shall see his gallant face again. Phil will save. Philipo, *Dios de mi alma!* My—my sailor boy!"

But suddenly she starts as if electrified, and mutters in frightened voice: "Chaco! I have but to appeal to him and the persecution of my keeper ends. I have but to summon him and Ludenbaum may suffer from this fiery patriot. Summon *him?* *Dios mio*, dare I ever summon him? Chaco would surely demand his price and take it—ay, and take it! *Santissima*, if Phil and Chaco ever meet!"

And growing pale at fear of one, and red at love of the other, for the first time in all these months this girl lets her passion break out into the air, and throws herself, sobbing as if her heart would break, upon the hard wood pallet they call her bed.

"Aha! You don't like being locked up, do you, my sweet one," chuckles Mother Dolgo grimly as she hears this plaint. "Wait till the judge gets hold of you. *Caramba*, he'll pluck the feathers out of your white skin, my pretty dove!"