

"Oh God of Heaven, he'll—he'll think I am worse than untrue!"

"*Verdammt!* he'll know you are my wife, and, as is proper, keep away from mein threshold."

"*Santo Dios!* You have stolen from me not only his love but his respect!" shivers the girl, a kind of ague in her limbs. "You have robbed me both of my sister and affianced."

"You can have your sister, and der authority over her in mein house of mein wife."

"No, no!"

"It is your only chance to see your sister. Think what you may save leedle Fraulein Mazie. German governesses are sometimes strong and strict. Frau Smoltz when she drove away looked stern as an executioner," chuckles Adolph, though the face of the girl he mocks would make any man pity Bully Gordon's daughter save ex-Cabin-boy Max who is now avenging the rope's-end.

"Thank you for making my sister's fate depend on me!" cries the girl, a sudden ring in her voice astounding the German. The pleading Southern emotional attitude of his victim seems to change; her form grows erect; her eyes lose their pathos, the tears burn up in them. In a flash they become two stars of blue burnished steel. With Anglo-Saxon decision and American determination, she cries: "*I come!*"

"*Mein Gott, AS MY WIFE?* Adolph's eyes are lighting up with passion. His hands are outstretched to her. Then catching the shrinking of the girl's form and a repugnant horror in her face she cannot veil, his voice grows stern, he mutters: "You come no other way!"

"STILL, I COME!"

"Aha, *Gott, Himmel! Donnerwetter!*" This is a cry of triumph from the Prussian. His face is flaming with a tyrant love. With eager astonishment in his voice he suddenly asks: "Why?"

The girl answers, her cheeks pale as death save where two hectic spots burn like fire: "FOR REVENGE!"

Despite herself the words have slipped from her.

"For revenge?" echoes the Prussian with an astounded guffaw. "*Donner und Blüten for revenge!*"

Oho, dat is a good joke, mein *lieblich!*" Then he chuckles grimly, "Come! Bridegroom Ludenbaum wants you *mein frau*, FOR REVENGE!"

CHAPTER XXVI.

INTO THE LION'S MOUTH.

WITH triumphant bearing, the jovial German turns from her and, running into the court-room, cries in his excited Teutonic way: "*Donnerwetter, Herr Gott, Himmel!* Your Honor, *procuradores*, friends, *mein schatz* accepts the verdict with wifely obedience. You shall drink at my plantation this evening the health of bride and groom. *Verflucht!* she has acknowledged she has done me a cruel wrong eight years ago; but I am magnanimous. I forgive her. I take her to my heart."

Listening to her new-made lord and master, his victim on the veranda mutters these curious words: "God be praised, that demon is making me as remorseless as he is!" She casts one sharp, searching glance at the barracks on the neighboring hillside, and from now on all Latin emotion seems to leave her.

Coming back with his friends Ludenbaum finds a brisk Yankee bride with quick actions and direct but perchance coquettish American speech.

Maud is no more the maiden of the tropics, but the girl of her father's blood and land, as they all stroll out on the veranda, and God of Heaven! congratulate her. The judge kisses her hand and wishes Doña Ludenbaum a happy wedded life; for this sapient old jurist believes he has done a very good thing for the girl, and has no doubt of the genuineness of the certificate of marriage upon which he has ruled.

To his compliments the bride replies quite prettily, and makes a little plea to this great man: "Dear Don Ulah, can I have my marriage lines?"

"*Cierto*, my child!" and the judge orders the clerk to deliver to her the original certificate with Fra Roderigo Anselmo's signature, that official having already made a certified copy of same.

With this accursed thing in her grip, looking at the

spouse His Honor has decreed her, Maud waves her white hand and lightly says: "Adios for a moment, Don Adolph."

"*Mein herz*, you leave me now?" cries Ludenbaum astounded.

"Only for—for a little while. You forget a lady's baggage! It is there at the house," she points her dainty hand, "where I have received the hospitality of the *alcalde*," she courtesies to that official, "for the last three months."

The others are chatting and laughing a little apart from bride and groom. Ludenbaum, who has no wish to let his prey out of his eyes, whispers to her sharply: "You will stay here! From now on I direct the family movements, *mein frau*."

"It's—it's only for a few moments—my—my dresses!" mutters Maud desperately.

"Have been already sent to my house, *mein schatz*," laughs Adolph.

"You—you don't fear I'll—I'll run away from you?" queries the girl, with a miserable attempt at lightness, for this has placed an almost fatal block upon her plans.

"Bah! You have no personal card. Without it, the first village *teniente* would clap you into jail.* Besides," he laughs, "you haven't money enough to hire a buffalo. As your husband I am by law the guardian of your person and estate. So to be very sure, *mein liebes herz*, present thy husband with your purse. I run the family finances."

For one moment Maud's eyes blaze; then a rebellion that would be hopeless not being in her line of defense, she silently passes her purse to her decreed spouse.

"Thanks for your wifely obedience. Now remember our guests!"

And the conversation becomes more general as they wait for the carromatas and buffalo-carts to be brought up, Ludenbaum having insisted they all go with him to his plantation house to his nuptial *fiesta*.

Into this project Maud goes apparently with Yankee energy, inviting *procuradores*, clerks and attorneys, even those who had a hand in her undoing.

* "Every inhabitant of the colony is compelled to carry a personal card, which answers the purpose of a passport."—*Don Pinto de Guimares in Revue des Revues*.

She is like a butterfly flitting over the lights that singe its wings. She laughs when she could break out in her agony and fly at the sapient judge and tear his hair and scream at him: "Accursed!"

Perchance she would grow hysterical, but a little hope comes to her. Ludenbaum, whose presence is ever an agony to her, has left her side and is talking to El Corregidor, whose mule team has just come up to bear him to San Isidro. And on the opposite hill she sees a Chinaman is flying a kite, the same big bat that had spoken to her before.

On its wings all letters have been erased, but its body now bears, as it waves through the air, a gigantic ?. Gazing from this, she sees the being Adolph's mandate had kept her from getting word with—little Zima.

The Negrita girl is sitting with half a dozen indolent natives near the vehicles that are now arriving to take the party to the Plantation Ludenbaum.

With this Maud's eyes fly to the little *presidio* where Chaco is putting his hundred men through evening parade and military exercise. This gives her self-command enough to extend her hand to the salute of Don Rafael Lozado as he murmurs: "Congratulate me, I am happy. *Mi amigo*, Don Adolph has promised me that your sister shall accept my offer of marriage."

"Has he? And Mazie?"

"He has promised the child shall be obedient!"

"Aha! And I?"

"You, of course, will bow to the will of your husband, Doña Ludenbaum."

"I—oh yes—of course—bow to the will of my husband. You—you needn't kiss my hand as if you were grateful," she stammers.

The Spaniard takes his leave and, going to his carriage, is driven off down the mountain road towards far-away San Isidro.

Gazing after him, Maud thinks: "One villain is eliminated from the problem of this night!" Her eyes seek the moving Spanish infantry at the *presidio*. She mutters these curious words: "I wonder if their guns are loaded now with ball cartridge." She looks on little Zima; then cries lightly: "Judge Don Ulah Pico, you shall assist me to my carriage, and shall have the honor of driving with me to my house."

"My carriage, my house?" laughs Ludenbaum, coming nearer to her. "Oh, how happy you make me, my wife!"

"Do I? Come Judge! You—you don't make brides every day!" She holds out an exquisite hand to him.

Seizing this, His Honor conducts the lady, upon whose fair limbs he has just placed the chains of matrimony, to her husband's carriage, a country barouche old and dilapidated, but drawn by a couple of stout ponies, which has just returned from delivering Frau Smoltz and poor little Mazie at the family mansion.

As the judge seats himself beside Maud, her *legal* spouse snarls to himself: "The cunning devil did that to be rid of me for another hour. Just wait *mein leedle mädchen!*"

But Maud is doing even more than Adolph guesses.

As they drive off, at her quick nod Zima, who has been looking for it, jumps up beside the Indian driver of her carriage. So, followed by quite a little string of wagons, in one of which sits Adolph, trying to keep his rage in bounds and laughing with the *alcalde*, Maud schools herself to listen to the judge's platitudes of how lucky a girl she is, and how good a wife she should be to the great merchant prince; Ludenbaum's fortune seeming immense in rural Nueva Ecija.

The ponies prance down the palm-shaded road which, after a little, turns from the mountain stream and crosses the low divide to the entrance of the great cañon in which the plantation house of Don Adolph Ludenbaum is placed, nearly three miles from Carranglan.

Turning up the defile the gorge is deep and flanked by two great precipices whose steep sides are veiled by masses of eternal verdure.

Between these sheer green walls, Maud's ponies tramp under great trees of teak, dogon and ipel, beneath whose shade flourish luxuriant ferns, curious orchids and twining parasites that, growing under the dense foliage of the forest, make a jungle on the ground, beneath a jungle a hundred feet above it in the air.

Beside the unused trail dashes a mountain torrent, which, higher up the defile, falls into the cañon by a series of cascades down a precipice on which grow, moistened by the vapors of the waterfalls, unending wild flowers.

Some half mile from the entrance of the gorge stands the big stone plantation house which has been occupied during this war of insurrection only by a few dependents of the estate. Therefore it is not in proper garb for company.

But still about it there is festivity. For orders have been sent in advance, and a hundred torches, perched upon a hundred palm trees, light up the forest that, spreading here, makes a garden plot of some half hundred acres.

The windows of Ludenbaum's residence are alight, and even from the lower ones, where the servants congregate, comes a ruddy glow into the darkness, which in these cañons falls very quickly. The sun was setting as they left Carranglan, and now the monkeys are howling in the tree-tops, the cry of the wild-cat is heard far up the forest, the fireflies are making the foliage gleam with darting incandescence; it is a tropic night.

As Maud's ponies stop before the steps to the great entrance, the native superintendent of the estate comes to her and greets her as mistress of the mansion; a retinue of Indian boys and girls bow down before her. A moment after the bridegroom, his face inflamed by wine and triumph, and what he calls love, flies to her and cries effusively, perchance for the ears of his guests who are gathering about his festal board upon the big balcony: "Welcome *mein lieblich* to mein home. Behold the festival to greet the coming bride!"

As she steps from the carriage, of a sudden a hundred more torches are lighted up by lithe Indian boys in the cocoonut grove, producing such a blaze that the monkeys run screaming through it, and the parrots fly shrieking through the air.

Then as the master of the house claps his hands, the Carranglan brass band, lithe Mestizo boys most of them, comes marching up playing most sweetly, on their horns, tubas and cornets made from kerosene-cans, some airs that carry Maud back with an awful start to Annapolis cadet hops.

And the girl goes nearly crazy, for the "Washington Post March" is sounding in her ears that she and Phil had often danced to in far-away America.

Then with a shiver Annapolis fades away from her, and, looking into the face of her decreed bridegroom, the

maid knows there is but one thing now that can give her to the arms of him she loves as the same girl who left the kisses of her American betrothed—as Maud Gordon immaculate!

"My sister!" she mutters hoarsely, for Adolph has approached nearer to her, and perchance would proffer bridegroom's caress. "Half an hour with her!

"And then, mein sweet dove?"

"And then half an hour to deck myself to make you proud of me as I do the honors of your house."

"But first one leedle kiss, *mein lieblich*."

"What! Before your guests?" Her eyes flash with rebellion.

"*Donner und blitzen!* You are mein legal wife, why not?"

"Not yet! For God's sake,—not yet!" she whispers, a frantic misery in her voice. "This thing has come upon me in a moment—two hours—two short hours!"

"And den?" he iterates, his eyes aglow. "You remember the terms on which you came here. I suppose I might just as well tell you now," he adds, "dat you can't go way from here. At the entrance of the cañon, mein Indians have instructions you and your sister go not out; and here *I* am master!"

"Of course! I am a Catholic, I know I am yours—till death." Her face has something in it that Herr Adolph doesn't understand, but it is not a blush. Beware the bride who blushes not upon her wedding day.

She runs up the big steps, turns, and forcing herself to kiss her hand to him, remarks: "Your guests are calling for you. The judge suggests that they are hungry."

So turning from his bride, Ludenbaum mutters to himself: "I'll soon stop your pranks, my lady. A very leedle while and you will know your husband's will is law!"

As for the threatened one, she glides into the half-deserted house, gripping as she has gripped all this time, the hand of the Negrita Zima, as if the little black savage was her Rock of Ages.

A moment later an Ilocos girl leads Maud to her room, and says: "Your chamber, Doña Ysabel." The very home-like nature of the place affrights her; her robes are laid ready for her on the mosquito-netted Filipino bed.

"Can I bring you anything?" asks the servant.

"Nothing; my maid is here!"

"Then can I join the dance outside?"

"Yes—of course!"

"*Gracias!* You will make a good mistress. May you be blessed in wedlock." The girl tosses two flowers at the bride and laughs: "Don Adolph's is the next chamber!"

With a gasp Maud sinks down beside the Negrita Zima and whispers, her face pale as death: "You dear little black thing, I have two errands for you, upon which hangs my life, likewise the fate of Mazie, your dear mistress. Will you do them faithfully?"

"By Cambunian, I swear it, yes!"

Then Maud speaks into the black ear two errands, charging Zima to care, secrecy and *speed!* "For on the fleetness of your footsteps, little black thing," she sighs, "my life depends." Then suddenly mutters: "Will the Indian keepers let you, my maid, pass the gate of the cañon?"

"You wish me to go very quick to the Tagal, the Chinaman and the Spanish Captain?"

"Like the wind!"

"Then not by the cañon I go. That is three miles! By the tree-tops, whose upper branches spread over the cañon walls, is but a mile."

"Ah yes, you can climb trees like a monkey!"

"Was I not once a wild Negrita?" whispers the girl. And Maud remembering, blesses God she has this little monkey for her aid.

"Your clothes will hinder you."

"*Diablo,* I wear them not!" laughs the black minx; and Maud watching her, sees the girl speed down the staircase and glide into the shrubbery silent as a snake.

Even as she turns from this, Mazie's arms fly around her. She whispers: "I heard your voice. You have come to save me from that brutal woman."

"*Santos!* What has she done?"

"Nothing *yet,* but threatens *much,* if I don't promise to wed old Don Rafaél."

"Then quick! I want your aid!"

"For what?"

"I would be beautiful to-night."

"Beautiful—for the sake of the wretch to whom they say you have been wedded! *O misericordia,* my sister—you

—you come here as Ludenbaum's wife!" screams the younger girl in a kind of sobbing daze.

"I could come no other way."

"*Diablo!* I despise you; faithless to your lover!"

"God! don't drive me to despair, you foolish thing," cries Maud savagely, and turns her eyes upon her sister, at which the other whispers with white lips: "*Santissima!* your face! What does it mean?"

"Nothing that you can understand, thank God!" whispers the new-made bride, her sweet voice harsh and discordant; then cries excitedly: "Deck me, to win safety for us both!"

As the robe she had worn in the court-room slips from her shoulders, the paper stained by age contrasting with the whiteness of her bosom catches the bride's glances. With a kind of curious fear in her face she carefully inspects by the light of the wax tapers, the certificate of marriage signed by Fra Roderigo Anselmo, straining her eyes as she had never taxed them before.

After a few moments of searching inspection, she gives a start and mutters: "I think I understand how this was done. It is the last nail in this scoundrel's coffin!" And from now on the girl makes her arrangements with a calmness that astounds even herself.

So something like an hour after this, Maud seizes her sister in her arms, shuddering: "Don't come with me, my dear Mazie, I fight our battle alone! Only if"—! Her kisses have a wondrous wistful tenderness and her face has that upon it, which makes Mazie retreat frightened from her.

"Go to the German woman, dear one—keep her engaged. As for me,——" Then some awful emotion chokes her, so that she cannot speak. Perchance it is unavailing rage and hideous shame, for over her neck, shoulders, arms and bosom flies a wave of flaming crimson, that changes suddenly to the pallor of death.

She utters these curious words: "I could have fled perhaps but still would have been called his wife—besides Mazie—this is the only way!"

Sweeping out of the chamber, Maud joins her husband and his guests as they sit at the big table on the veranda; the judge, the *alcalde*, the *procuradores*, and nearly all who have been in the court-room this morning. Rising, they stare, astounded, at the beauty of the bride.

For she is like the queen of night; fairy tissues of piña float about her from which arms, shoulders and bosom gleam like whitest Parian, but vibrate with the elastic graces of a sylph. Her cheeks glow with the fire of nervous excitement, her eyes glint like steel stars, brighter than the wax lights of the feast.

"*Por Dios!*" mutters the judge.

"*Santa Maria!*" whispers the *alcalde*.

"*Donner und Blitzen!*" ejaculates the bridegroom, and his eyes light up with triumph at the beauty of this woman who now must grace his home and do honor to his fireside, the beauty which is his—but perchance has not been decked for him. For once or twice even as she plays with the viands set before her by eager *Ilocos* table boys, and places the wine-glass to her lips, Maud turns her head, listening—as if for another cavalier.

Then they all drink often to the bride and groom, those on the portico of the house in aristocratic foreign wines and vintages, for Ludenbaum has even now in his deserted house the remnants of a generous cellar. Down below, the natives and lower *Mestizos* quaff the bride's health in anisette and the fermented liquor from the cocoanut; and the fête grows very merry.

Suddenly Ludenbaum, springing up, claps his hands and cries from the veranda: "Boys, lead out the girls for the wedding dances!"

With this, the Filipino band, striking up some soft native sensuous melody, the Tagals and Igorrotes of both sexes, with flying hair and yellow limbs shining with cocoanut oil, and *Negritos* black as the shadows of the night, commence to foot first the *jota*, and from this go into the *comitan*, that writhing dance of Malay passion. Each girl, with a glass of water on her head carried with marvelous dexterity from practise of bearing baskets of fruit in similar fashion, plays coyly with the man pursuing her, as together they sing the music of the love ditty called the *balitao*. Then the maidens, throwing coyness to the winds, the dance becomes as passionate as the hula-hula of the Sandwich Islanders.

To view this more closely the guests troop down the stairway to the ground beneath. Maud lingers on the balcony behind them. No sound comes to her strained ears from down the cañon. Her anxious eyes rest upon a little *bohio* native knife used to carve with on the table.

The next second the weapon will be concealed within her robe.

But even as her hand reaches for it, there is a firm grasp upon her arm. Ludenbaum whispers: "Come with me to our guests. *Mein leedle frau* must not forget her hospitality." With dominant manner of lord and master he leads his bride down the stairs and commands: "See that you stay here!"

Thus compelled, Maud stands near the writhing Indian dancers.

After a moment or two, a new idea flies through her brain! She turns eyes blazing with anxiety on each Tagal boy as with lithe limbs they circle about her—but sees not the two faces she seeks—and, sighing, places her hand upon her fluttering heart.

Then hope flies up in her once more; there are some Chinese Mestizos playing their never ending *panguingui*. Attempting unconcern, she strolls over to them, but not one of the gamblers looks up from his cards, no word is whispered to her to make her think Khy has received her message.

"*Ay de mi,*" she moans, "Zima has failed me! I have placed myself in the lion's mouth and they give me no weapons with which to fight! Ata, my faithful one is not here; the Chinese is a coward; the Spanish captain comes not and, God of despair—the guests are going!"

All are bidding the lady of the house adieu, though she strives to restrain them by proffer of wine, refreshments, and almost pleading eyes and words.

But the *alcalde* has whispered: "My cock-fight comes on in an hour, boys!" and combats of chickens are more alluring to Filipino gentlemen than even the hospitality of beauty or pleasures of Bacchus.

Besides, Herr Ludenbaum is heeding the maxim "Speed the parting guest," calling their carriages for them, and, in a jovial manner, half shoving his visitors into the carromatas and buffalo carts.

"You don't come with us, even for an hour?" whispers the judge to his host.

"*Mein Beelzebub,* no!"

The German's eyes turn from the lithe beauty of the native girls to the supreme loveliness of his fairy wife, who in an agony is listening for the noise of men coming up the cañon.

But suddenly the bride breaks out into little screams and struggles; the dancing girls are round her, and, laughing, have seized her in their merry Filipino way, and are unbinding her hair and decking its lovely strands with flowers of happy marriage.

As the noise of the last carriage wheel dies in the distance, Maud stands, a Filipina bride decked for husband's joy after the manner of the Island of Luzon.

The melody of the band floats away down the defile.

Then with cries of joy and shrieks of merriment and happy shouts the dancers fly from her, running down the cañon, for they love cock-fights as well as their betters, and are anxious to see which rooster shall be champion of the *pueblo*.

At their master's gesture the few native servants go sleepily into the house. The expiring lights of the festival are about them. Smoldering torches cast from the trees giant shadows. She strains her ears. No sound comes to them. Face to face, Maud stands alone with this man whom the law this day has called her husband.

"*Mein Gott,* how beautiful you are!" The German's eyes drink in her enchanting figure in all its shrinking graces. The anguish rippling her excited face gives it new beauties; her very fear adds to her loveliness, as she trembles before his ardent glances.

"And now, my darling, German economy," remarks Ludenbaum, in husband's tones, "white satin slippers will soil upon this damp ground. The lights in our apartments burn very cheerfully. Into the house, *mein sueses mädchen!*"

But she breaks out at him, in despairing procrastination: "I—I have several things to speak to you about."

"And so have I, my wife, but they'll do for to-morrow."

"My sister's wrongs won't do for to-morrow!" answers the girl. "That infamous Frau Smoltz has threatened Mazie if she agrees not to marry your friend, the senile Corregidor——"

"Ah, yes, young girls always at first object to older husbands, but at the last bow their heads to them. Eh, mein good wife?" In playful caress he pinches the cheek that grows more pallid even under his fingers.

"But Mazie will never wed Don Rafaél!" cries his victim.

"She'll do what I tell her!"

"She'll not! I came here to save her."

"But lost yourself, *mein leedle frau*." He lights nonchalantly a fresh cigar. This shrinking beauty is so within his hands.

"She loves another!"

"So do you; but that won't help you." His virtuous glance reproves his erring spouse.

"God of Heaven, don't talk to me of him!" cries the bride in agony.

"No, this is the last of the accursed Yankee Marston for both you and me. You are here as my wife, in my house. My will is law, or my strong arm makes it so!" He raised his hand in gesture brutal and significant.

"God of Heaven, why do you hate me so?"

"Hate *you*? I love you! Listen *how* I love you. I hated your father."

"Infamous! He was your companion! But I remember now," whispers the girl. "You made him drunk so that when the Spanish troops came, he, in his liquor fought them, till they killed him. You must have been with him as he died."

"I was. As the accursed sea-bully gasped out his life he told me he had made me the guardian of your sister, and begged my care for you and her. Then I told him who I was. Perhaps you have heard your fader speak of his leedle German cabin-boy Max."

"Max? The thief-boy who stole the plums out of his comrades' duff; the sneak-boy who pilfered the medicine from the dying steward!"

"I am der thief-boy Max!"

"God of mercy!"

"For every blow your brutal fader struck my poor hide, I have sworn a revenge! I got a leedle out of him. The rest I take out of his offspring."

"And you say you love me?"

"*Yah*, it is *mein* revenge! The most cruel thing I can do to you, is to love you like der devil!"

"God of Heaven, you are right!" screams the girl. For he would throw an arm about the fairy waist, and take her to his dastard heart.

His eyes drive her frantic, she looks desperately about, but finds nothing ready to her hand, and pausing desperately on the first step of the stairs, raises her white arm in warning.

"You fool!" he guffaws, "I knew your spirit, and I have taken care the servants left no cutting things about except your glances." Then he goes on in stern and awful commonplace: "You know upon what conditions you came to my home—*our* home. As my wife you will have charge of my household, but I shall take husband's control of you."

"I keep no conditions with you; liar! perjurer! forger!"

"Oho, rebellious, alluring witch! *mein Himmel*, how I'll love you! Afterwards I takes der rebellion from dose saucy lips, *mein lieblich*. Come to thy husband's arms!"

She is screaming in her soul: "Philip! if he should make me unworthy of you!" Her little hand is raised despairingly to strike him, when a panting breath is upon her shoulder. The Negrita girl, nude save a breech-clout, has seized Maud's hand and drawn it behind her back, slipped an envelope into it, and is whispering: "The Chinese evidence! The Spanish captain will be here in a minute!"

With a cry of joy Maud sees Roberto Chaco come dashing up, mounted on a Filipino pony under the great trees, some twenty of his men at double time slouching behind him.

She turns on Ludenbaum and woman's mercy flying into her, speaks like a flash: "Wretch! Dastard! I give you one chance for your life. Announce here that I have never been your bride; that the paper under which you claimed me as your spouse is a lie and a forgery. Sign over to me the guardianship of my sister—and I let you live!"

"*Donnerwetter!*" guffaws the German. "Dis is funny. Give up your beauty that belongs to me by law? Never! *Mein Himmel*, not for the joys of Heaven! You said you came here for revenge, *mein frau*, you shall learn that I, your spouse am your master. I'll crush your tender loveliness till you shriek: 'Husband, forgive me! Brute that you are, I love you! Papa Ludenbaum, I love you!'" His stern hand is on her arm, his breath is on her cheek—his kisses will soon be on her lips.

With a shriek she is from him!

And Chaco is now scarce twenty steps away. She cries: "Spanish patriot soldier, what would you give to have the man who has done more ill to Spain, ay, even than Aguinaldo, in your hands for military justice?"

"My life! *Caramba!* where is the traitor?" and the ferocious captain springs off his pony.

Then breaking into a hoarse laugh, the bride cries jeeringly "CABIN-BOY MAX, COME HERE FOR PUNISHMENT!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

DIVORCE BY COURT-MARTIAL.

BUT Cabin-boy Max doesn't seem to be frightened at these words.

Stiffening a curse at interruption, Herr Ludenbaum stepping to his visitor bows ceremoniously, remarking: "You come rather late for the wedding feast, Herr Captain, to which I suppose my bride has invited you. She is a little nervous and hysterical now, the agitation of the wedding day. But I'll entertain you!" and turning, he speaks with the voice of a man on his own hearthstone: "Maud, go into der house!"

"Not till I've given you military punishment. There's your prisoner, Captain Chaco!" Her white hand points straight at her spouse.

"*Mein Himmel*, Chaco, der poor leedle girl has gone out of her head!" mutters the astonished German.

"Don't fear, I'll keep my senses till I have destroyed you!" cries the bride determinedly. "You have been wedded to me by decree of law. I now claim from you divorce by court-martial! You have publicly proclaimed to the world you are my husband. I shall now by military law make myself your widow!"

"*Mein Gott*, she is insane! We must have a doctor for my hysterical darling. My dear Captain Chaco, you have a surgeon at your barracks?" And Ludenbaum would hold consultation with the officer as to medical advice, for in truth he thinks the girl has gone crazy.

But the crazy one is now speaking words that make her legal spouse open his eyes with a start.

"I can prove to you, Captain Chaco, by written receipts, that this man as agent for the German Trading Company furnished the rebel, Aguinaldo, with modern rifles in great quantities, and rapid-fire guns and fixed

ammunition with which to shoot your brothers down. Without him the rebellion would have been a flash in the pan. Now it has cost the lives of twenty thousand Spanish soldiers."

"I will accept your proofs, Señora Ludenbaum," replies Chaco, bowing before her, his eyes lighting up at the sight of her ecstatic beauty that gleams from a toilet that has been made to charm him. "But," he adds sturdily, "they must be convincing and convicting ones."

"More than papers?"

"Yes. I am a patriot, but an honest patriot. I don't shoot upon doubt!"

"Will you give safe conduct to the men who can explain how they came by them and prove the documents must be true?"

"*Diablo!* Are the men rebel outlaws?"

"Of that you must judge for yourself."

"Humph!" He thinks a minute; then says sharply:

"If they can prove the things you say they can, *Por Dios*, yes! Safe conduct for a day; but no longer."

To this Ludenbaum has listened, not quite believing his ears. He now breaks in severely: "This is rigmarole and bosh. *Verdammt*, it is idiocy! Maud, go into der house! I'll teach you to jabber such nonsense. Captain Chaco, I bid you good evening."

But the Spanish patriot has now got into his head not only the vision of a beauty that he loves, but the thoughts of bloodshed which he adores. He heeds not the man, but simply says to the woman: "Señora Ludenbaum, as commander of this district I accept your offer. I'll call a court-martial, furnish me the proofs."

"You're crazy, fool!" cries the German savagely. "Apparently you don't know who I am. I am trusted by both Captain-Generals, not only by Don Primo de Rivera, but by Don Basilio Augustin, the new one. I am their intimate, their friend."

To this diatribe he gets no answer. The captain simply says: "I have brought some twenty men with me, as your words suggested, Señora Ludenbaum. Sergeant Lopez, Corporal Sanchez and myself will make a drum-head."

A grave sergeant of gloomy and morose appearance and a corporal, agile, active and fierce, step from the ranks, draw up and salute their commanding officer.