THE SHE-DEVIL

MANKIND from Adam have been women's fools,
Women, from Eve, have been the devil's tools.

—LANSDOWNE.

PREFACE

To the prospective purchaser I would say that the original conception of this work was only intended for a private distribution (as a gift) among several hundred intimate friends, who had ofttimes heard me tell the story of Boyce Eric and the beautiful Señora Valdez; but, upon presenting the manuscript to the printer, he graciously told me that in his opinion, the subject-matter, with a little embellishment would be worthy of publication. To this confidence I laughed, for I never entertained any thought of becoming an author—other than of casual short stories; but, after much persuasion, I agreed to make an effort at weaving it into a story of fiction on fact, the result of which effort you now have before you. Remember, however, I do not place it before the (already muchly swindled) reading public as a masterpiece of rhetoric, but as solid, concrete facts; so if you will overlook that lack of wonderful literary construction, finesse, and the easy, careless swing possessed by the scintillating stars of the literary world (with whom I cannot hope to compete) I can assure you a tale of unusual interest—more strange even than fiction.

And another word before proceeding: My somewhat sensational title—The She-Devil—was suggested by a reprimand I received during my college days. I had become embroiled in an escapade (with a very beautiful woman) that nearly ended my college career during my junior year. My old professor, a kindly, fatherly, old gentleman,—but one who stuck like a leech to the ancient canons of deportment,—had me on "the carpet" for a half hour,

and finally pointing his forefinger in my face, concluded with these words—

". . . And always remember, young man, that a beautiful woman, who will so lower the dignity of her sex, by indulging in flirtatious frolics, is nothing more or less than the advance agent of the devil; the panderer, as it were, of the wares of his Satanic Majesty, who soon follows to collect his toll for the crops harvested from the seeds scattered broadcast by these She-Devils in feminine garb."

As the main object of this work is an honest endeavor to portray (by example) the methods by which Flirtation tends to ruin men and women—one with the other—the substance of my professor's reprimand immediately suggested itself as a title.

I would further state that it may interest the sceptical to know that the facts herein recorded are true to life, for the characters had their originals; yes, alas! the originals were my friends. Therefore, if, in the recital of the result of one flirtation, I can teach a simple lesson which may perhaps—some time and somewhere—aid in a way to fortify the reader of this preface against the temptations of these **"She-Devils in feminine garb,"** and **"Vultures in masculine hide"**; whose greatest stock in trade is **FLIRTATION**, then it shall have served the purpose for which it is intended.

M. H. LeB.

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CHAPTER I.

THE INVITATION.

WHILE the entire month of May 18—, was stiflingly hot, and unmitigatedly depressing, the latter half was two weeks of such sultry, torrid, life-sapping weather, that its equal—especially at that time of the year—had never before been experienced in the high mountainous belt that girdles northeastern Pennsylvania. The simmering, suffering populace, unused to such unusual conditions, went around kicking, and impotently seeking with the usual hot-day grouch spread over their countenances, that thing they would not find save in sleep—sweet relief. They were days of indolent contagion; too hot to work; too murky and lifeless to move about; too sultry in the house, in fact, too pesky to do anything, except sleep; but unfortunately, all were not so situated as to avail themselves of that one relief producing element.

At noon on the last day of the month in question, the sun beat down with such intense fury, that the mercury in the thermometer, which for several days

had been doggedly hovering near the three figure mark, had shouldered itself to ninety-seven in the shade, and the thickened humidity—well up into the eighties—made a person feel viscid, and extremely uncomfortable. It was just one of those days we have all experienced sometime or other, when the "old fogies" lounge around in the shade and start in soliloquizing; and who, after a careful resumé of their memories, inform you (as a matter of consolation, I expect) that *"this is the derndist hottest day in May"* they *"have experienced hereabouts since"* such-and-such a year *"when old man"* So-in-So *"and old Mrs."* So-in-So *"were overcame by the heat."*

The sky of this torrid afternoon was one of those perfectly cloudless skies giving one the opportunity of gazing off over the immeasurable space to that far distant, pale-blue, simmering void, to which—in its immensity—the mind of this frail humanity cannot fix even an imaginary limit; but which must undoubtedly impress upon the sense of conception, some vague idea of infinity and eternity. Not a breath of air was adrift; Nature with its sleepy heat seemed to have coddled all animate life into a death-like stillness. Even the soft green leaves still in their abundant youth, and which ordinarily tremble with the stir of the most gentle zephyr, seemed inanimate, and lay languid and motionless on the twigs.

It was one of those days that women, especially,

feel the most, and (if permitted to make the remark) when they wish they were nymphs of old, that they might discard not only the garments designed by the skill and dexterity of the modiste, but also the very skin most graciously furnished by that great modiste—*mother Nature;* and throw themselves into some cool, halcyon dale, by the bubbling waters of some running brook, and sleep and dream away life's golden hours.

It was about three o'clock in the sleepy heat of this afternoon that Jean Eric stood at one of the north windows in the drawing-room of her father's luxurious home on Riverside Drive; one knee resting on the soft cushions of the window seat, and a bared, dimpled elbow indented on the sill. The windows were all open, but screened, and the shades of all—except the one through which she gazed—were closely drawn to keep out the glare of the penetrating afternoon sun.

Off across the wide expanse of delectable, soft green lawn which surrounded the house, was Riverside Drive, the asphalt simmering in the sun like a desert of glittering sand-diamonds; a little farther on a small stretch of green grass, forming a narrow parkway on the river bank, and still farther beyond, with almost indolent tranquillity flowed the old Susquehanna, not a ripple breaking the glossy monotony of its silvery surface; while the sun blazed down upon it with all the glaring intensity of a scorching

day in early August, its calorific rays reflected as in a huge mirror.

On the green carpeted lawn over which Jean gazes listless and spiritless, one lonely bee, void of the characteristic animation of its sect, buzzes in and out among the flower-beds, and a more lonely-looking, huge, black and yellow butterfly, also lazily flits from flower to flower, kissing each one sweetly, then fluttering on again across the expanse of grass to the adjoining yard.

It is conjectural whether Jean wears many articles of dainty lingerie, but the exterior picture shows her attired in a short, loose-flowing, silk dressing-sack, and, from the deep ruffles and the loose ends of a belt string which dangles by her side, it would indicate that her outer garment was a white imported petticoat of some delicate—almost transparent—material, but even that improprietably scant apparel was too hot and unbearable to compete with the prevailing temperature.

Jean had returned but two days previous from Bryn Mawr College, where she had completed, with second honors in her class, a four-year course in literature and languages, of which French, German, and particularly Spanish, had been made a specialty.

While she ordinarily loved her school work, and, perhaps as she gazed out of the window, it was with a deep sense of regret that it was now ended; still, she sighed with a feeling of relief that all study—with the exception of her music—was over.

The music she expected to continue for a year or two longer, to enable her to conquer a peculiar technique, which she had long sought to acquire. But today, the reaction from constant studies and recent examinations, augmented by the wilting humidity of this exceptionally torrid afternoon, made life seem doubly sweet to be home again where she could go around, thank goodness! as loosely and comfortably as she pleased; especially with the freedom of a handsomely appointed home, and a maid, and a butler, and all the other adjuncts of luxury that go to make life worth living. Then, too, now that she *was* home again, she *could do* about as she pleased. The days of catching cat-naps, with one ear continually awaiting the screeching shock of an alarm clock to force her to get up and dress haphazardly, in order to make an early class, were now over. She could sleep until released by the keeper of the mystic realm of dreams. The days of the ever watchful eye of an all-seeing principal, and a yet stricter faculty, to dictate and regulate the hours when to come and go, rise and retire, were also over. Still, it must be creditably said of her that she was not a dilatory or unruly student—on the other hand, assiduous and faithful with her studies and obedient to her teachers. But there was another reason—and a particular one, too—why she was glad school was over. This year had been a lonely one, for at the close of the previous term, Phyllis Wentworth, her very dear

chum and room-mate, had married and migrated to the sunny southland for future abode. Jean and Phyllis had been very close—almost inseparable—friends. They had spent almost every hour of their school days together. Most of their vacations too, had been passed together at Phyllis', or her home, or at some favorite watering place along the Jersey coast. Therefore, it is only natural to presume that now, as vacation time was at hand, these memories of past and pleasant days flashed through her mind as she gazed from the window.

With an effort to suppress an overwhelming sigh, she finally turned from the window and drew down the blind.

"Well, goodness me!" she said irritably, as she meandered aimlessly through the big doors to the library, "I do wish Matilda would hurry with my bath, for I do believe I will suffocate. Gracious, I never felt so exhausted and fagged out in all my life!"

She stood for a few minutes listlessly gazing over the shelves fraught with books, then selecting one by a favorite author, tumbled into a big, comfortable, leather rocker, where she sat for a long time gazing blankly at the frontispiece; then opened the book at random, read a page or two, but finally laid it aside, for even reading was too fatiguing. Trailing laggardly back again into the drawing-room, she sat down at the piano and let her fingers run mechanically over the keys. The score from the

opera "Faust" stood open and inviting, and instantly her eyes caught the lines wherein Marguerite discerns the cask of jewels. Unconsciously she hummed over the words a moment, then played the introduction with the grace, ease and masterful touch of an artist. Finally she commenced singing, and softly and melodiously the words of the beautiful lyric resounded through the spacious drawing-room, draped in its immaculate suit of linen and matting, for the summer.

> "Ah! I laugh, as I pass, to look into a glass;
> Is it truly Marguerite, then?
> Is it you? Tell me....."

A ring at the door bell suddenly snuffed out the remaining words, as she listened with feminine inquisitiveness to hear the bell answered; and then with that most potent of human attributes—curiosity—to hear what was said, or who it might be. Had not her scant negligee prevented, she would have undoubtedly answered the bell herself, for she was in such frame of mind at that moment that she would do most anything to while away a minute or two, it mattered not how menial the duty might be.

In a moment she heard steps in the hallway, and then the door open. . . . It is the mail-man.

"A letter for you, Miss Eric," said the butler, with a respectful bow, handing her a dainty, perfumed envelope, bearing the monogram "P. J. V."

in neat embossed letters, also a delicate violet-colored wax seal, bearing the initial "P."

"Well, a letter from Phyllis!" she smiled to herself, taking the letter from his hand. "Thank goodness, something has happened to break the monotony for a while!" The latter remark was aloud, and the butler supposed she had spoken to him, for he turned, and questioned respectfully:

"Did you address me, Miss Eric?"

"No,—simply talking to myself, 'Friday,' " she smiled mechanically, without even raising her eyes from the envelope.

After the butler had bowed himself from the room, Jean broke the seal, then nestling herself comfortably? (tailor-fashion) on the cushions of the window-seat, drew forth the letter and read:

My own dear Bunkie:

Your awful welcome letter was received, and oh, how happy it makes me to read and re-read it. Your letters, Jean, always make me so very, very happy. They recall the days we spent at dear old Bryn Mawr; needless to add that they were happy ones. But, they are all over now dear; for me, a year ago; for you two days ago. You will see that I am keeping tab on you. Are you glad, Jean, that it is over? or do you regret it? Sometimes I regret it is all over, then, again, I do not, for I am so perfectly happy with Ellsworth. He is so good and kind, and everything is so pleasant here. Perhaps it is the change of climate and environments, that at times make me lonely.

But enough of this dear, for I have something more interesting to tell you. Ellsworth has a dear friend—a Spanish nobleman or something or other, whom we visited while on our honeymoon in Cuba. He is a Major in the Spanish army, and believe me, Jean, he is a dashing, clever fellow. He entertained us lavishly, and many were the tales I told him of you and our school days at B. M.—

of the many tricks you had inveigled me into. I told him that you had studied and spoke Castilian perfectly. He became very much interested, and told Ellsworth and me that he would like to meet you sometime.

In return for his hospitality, we have invited him to visit us and he has accepted, and will arrive on the 27th; therefore, Jean, dear, I would like you to come too. Ellsworth and I have talked it over and if you will come we will give a reception and dance to introduce you both to our Southern friends. Now I just won't hear to you declining. You promised faithfully you would, so, Jean, please, don't disappoint me, for I am going right ahead with arrangements for the reception.

With much love and a hug,

PHYLLIS.

After Jean had read the letter the second time, she dropped it carelessly into her lap, then interlacing her fingers over the back of her head, stretched herself out luxuriously on the linen-covered cushions of the window-seat.

"Well, Phyllis," she mused, "you certainly must have a commission from Paradise to act as one of Cupid's regular auctioneers; for here I am through school only two days and you are trying to marry me off already. And not only that, but here I am fairly sweltering with the heat, and you have the audacity to write from Florida, some fifteen hundred miles nearer the heat factory, inviting me to come and parboil—and all to meet some dashing Spaniard."

For a long time she lay with eyes focused on a design in the ceiling decoration, while her mind's eye reverted in a retrospective survey of geography and history lessons. She remembered how, during

the course of some four hundred years, the little Indian hamlet of Seloy had grown into the now beautiful little city of St. Augustine, with its many magnificent hotels, and its parks and plazas, filled to overflowing with sweeping, stately palms and Spanish bayonets. How the grey-haired, but still egotistic Ponce de Leon, fearing the weight of vanishing years, had landed at this same spot in search of the "Fountain of Youth." Then, too, time without end, had she read how "de Leon" and his faithful comrades had floundered through the sandy swamps, and tramped among the scrub palmetto, dipping here and there into every stream, pool and mudhole; but without success, for the "Fountain of Youth" was but a dream—never realized. Then, too: The history of the French Huguenots; Philip the Second, of Spain; Governor Menendez; Sir Francis Drake; John Davis; Osceola and Coacoochee, and many others, all inseparably linked with St. Augustine, she also knew verbatim.

After a sweet pause, she concluded this beautiful dream of studies, past but pleasant, with the determination that she would accept Phyllis' invitation.

If, while Jean lay dreaming of the golden days to come down in the sunny South—and of the Spanish Major—she could have looked fifteen years into the future, she would have thrown aside this gilded, scented epistle, as though it were a death warrant, or a phial of the rankest poison; but at the present moment no premonition of a future struggle came

to disturb her pleasant reverie, for when God, in His omniscient wisdom conceived this great plan, He elected, no doubt, that time in its flight should settle all things, for His ways are inscrutable, and Fate plays many tricks which end disastrously to many of His children.

The writer of these words has ofttimes thought that it was just such an omission, or error, of not looking into the future, that inspired the author of those most beautiful lines,

"Turn backward, turn backward, O time in your flight;
Make me a boy again—just for tonight."

Perhaps he, too, had failed to scan the horizon of life more thoroughly in his early days or at some crisis of life, and had at last discovered his error, but alas, too late; for the fleetness of the grains through the hour-glass of time made it impossible to start over again and rectify the faults and omissions, and now he must look only for consolation to his song.

Jean was awakened from her reverie by her maid, as she came softly into the room.

"Miss Jean; your bath is ready."

Jean jumped up quickly. "Matilda; what in the world took you so long? Goodness me, I thought you would never come!"

She did not wait for the maid's explanation as to the delay, but raced gayly up the stairs, with light foot and a lighter heart; for Phyllis' letter

and the thoughts of the trip—and of the Spanish Major—were already animating her with a feeling she could not fathom.

When she raced into the cool, spacious bathroom, she found arranged all those dainty requisites which go to make a bath a luxury. The big marble tub was full to overflowing, and many small bubbles of violet water, with which the maid had lavishly charged the bath, still floated on its surface.

"Oh, how cool and refreshing it looks," she murmured in pleasant anticipation.

In a moment the door closed and she was alone. When she had disrobed, she glanced shyly into the long mirror, and for a spell her eyes lingered on the reflection of black eyes and hair; then dropped in pleasing survey of the magnificently developed and exquisitely proportioned body, while her thoughts again drifted to the Spanish Major—*honi soit qui mal y pense*—she was thinking, not of him individually, but of his country, Spain, where the Spanish señoritas, with their dreamy black eyes, black, glossy hair, and magnificent, lithe bodies, dance with the clicking castanets; and unconsciously, she took up the air of "La Paloma," and with herself as audience, went through the graceful whirls, undulations and steps of the *bolero,* as she imagined they executed it. When she had finished, she laughed loudly at her nonsensical behavior, and plunged into the cool, sparkling water.

CHAPTER II.

THE VISIT.

THE bath is completed and Jean is sitting before the large, oval dressing table in her boudoir, while her maid combs a wealth of long, glossy, black hair. Jean raises her eyes to the mirror, which reflects a young woman a few months over seventeen. It is difficult to depict the rare beauty with which this budding flower of womanhood is endowed: first of all, however, note that her features, while classic and almost perfect, are not yet sublimed by that high, majestic expression of older beauties that proclaims their profound knowledge of life; but to overbalance that, note a forehead of the purest and whitest, which surmounts a face perfectly oval and of angelic expression; her eyebrows, black, thick, and so well defined that they seem as though traced in ink of a deepest black and beautifully arched; a fringe of eyelids, so long that they curl slightly, half veiling a pair of the nearest jet black eyes imaginable—large, and of a frank, open expression. The down of early youth graces her fair, full cheeks, the bath having tinted them with a blush-red bloom, like unto a full ripe peach sprinkled with dew. Her small, rosy mouth; her red, moist and

glossy lips, which shine like wet coral; her small teeth, like unto pearls; her nose, straight and delicately chiseled; and her round, dimpled chin, formed in their combined expression an outline of that perfect beauty over which artists rave, but which none are capable of delineating on canvas. Nothing could be more pure, nothing more beautiful than the contour of her neck and shoulders and arms, from which her red, silk kimona has fallen, and which in their dazzling whiteness in the contrast, is like a beauteous lily uplifting the perfumed snow of its spotless chalice on a field of carnage, to which the little dimples, and a little spot of beauty—a brown mole—bewitchingly placed at the nape of her neck, gave a charm the more.

"I am beautiful, I know," she whispers to herself; "my eyes, my hair, my mouth and my figure are all perfect and beautiful; and my ankle is as slender and as beautifully and bounteously rounded as my arms." This latter reflection she accompanied by raising her silk kimona and glancing admiringly at a sweetly rounded, bare, coquetish ankle, and a pretty foot encased in a satin slipper.

"Matilda," she asked, "Am I really and truly as beautiful as my mirror tells me I am, or is it simply that I am overly egotistical?"

The maid's usually immobile visage creased into a broad half smile.

"God bless you, Miss Jean, I don't know what

that word 'egotistical' means, but I do know that you are beautiful—very, *very* beautiful."

Jean laughed heartily at this sycophantic devotion.

"Oh, you dear old soul; you would say I was beautiful even if I were old and wrinkled, drawn and haggard, and had warts, even, on my face."

"No, no, Miss Jean! Oh, that the good Lord in His giving of graces, would change me into a handsome, black-haired, black-eyed man—a young man—that I might love you, and love, and love you!"

"Matilda, what a flatterer you are. But listen, dear: I have something good to tell you. I have just received a letter from Phyllis—Mrs. Vance, now. You remember Phyllis, don't you, dear? Well, she has invited me to visit her in St. Augustine—way down in Florida. If I go, do you want to go along?"

"I want to be with you always, Miss Jean; you know I do."

"Very well. At dinner I shall speak to Dad and Mother; we shall see what they think about it."

That evening Jean told her father and mother of the invitation, omitting however the reference to the visitor at the Vance household, from sunny Havana. They readily consented, in fact urged her to accept it. It would be a change from the ordeal of graduating. Hence, a week later, Jean, accompanied by Matilda, was aboard the "New York and Florida Express," speeding southward as fast as steam and steel could carry them.

* * * * *

"It will only be a little while now, Matilda. We are due in a half-hour," said Jean, as she looked at her watch.

"Will Miss Phyllis—Mrs. Vance," the maid corrected, apologetically, "be at the station to meet you?"

"I suppose so. At least she wrote that she would." Whereupon the maid began packing books and magazines into the grips, as the conductor stuck his head in the door and shouted in a vociferous voice, "St. Augustine! St. Augustine!"

They stepped to the platform, which was remarkably crowded for this season of the year. White folks waiting for friends, and no few colored porters from the various hotels, yelling sonorously, the special attractions of the hostelries by whom they were employed. After they had gotten through the gates into the station proper, Jean looked around hurriedly, but no sign of Phyllis.

"Looks like Mrs. Vance did not come after all," vouched the maid.

Jean did not answer, for she was eagerly searching the faces for the beaming countenance of her old room-mate. She was so engrossed, that a few minutes later she did not notice a young lady, stylishly attired in a suit of white linen, trimmed with pale blue; a big leghorn hat, and a pale blue parasol, approaching her from a side entrance, accompanied by two gentlemen, immaculately betogged in white flannels and wide-brimmed straw hats. She tip-

toed lightly up behind Jean and placed two shapely gloved hands over her eyes.

"Guess who?" she said in a soft, sweet voice.

"Guess! I need not, for Phyllis, I even know your very touch, and moreover, you could never disguise your voice sufficiently to deceive me," answered Jean, as they embraced each other affectionately, exchanging a half dozen or more kisses.

Jean had not yet noticed the two gentlemen who accompanied Phyllis, so she did not hear Ellsworth Vance say, with a broad smile, "Major, wonder if they are going to pass them around?"

"Now dear," said Mrs. Vance, as she turned Jean around to the men, "I want to present my husband. Ellsworth, this is Jean, of whom you have heard so much," then turning to Jean, she said, almost apologetically, "I have talked to him so much about you and our school days, that I expect he is tired of you already."

They all smiled.

"It is a delight, I am sure, Mr. Vance, to make your acquaintance," she said winsomely, as she extended her hand, "one of my greatest regrets in life is that I was in Europe when you stole my roommate, but now that I have come, I hope that you are not wearied of me already. If you are," she continued smilingly, "I shall take the next train, baggage and maid, and hie me back to dear old Pennsylvania, where I *know* they will never grow tired of me."

He took her dainty, gloved hand in his big palm, and gazed with admiration into her frank, black eyes. "Tired of you, no, never. Really, I had already learned to like you a whole heap, but now that I have seen you, I like you a great deal more; and I reckon if you stay with us till we weary of you, it will be your friends in the North who will be the anxious ones."

Mrs. Vance abruptly broke in on this pleasant little compliment:

"Jean, dear, allow me to present our guest and mutual friend, Major Lopez. Major, this is Miss Jean Eric, the sweetest flower the North ever grew, and I hope you . . . I hope we all shall become better and dearer friends."

The Major took the hand she offered, and as she gazed up into his eyes, found that he was staring at her peculiarly, which for the moment caused her cheeks to flush a rosy red.

"I trust you will pardon me, my dear Miss Eric, for staring so rudely, but you are so exceedingly different from the mental picture I had formed of you—derived, of course, from the description conveyed by our mutual friend, Mrs. Vance—that I am simply bewildered, that's all."

Jean shot a searching look first at Phyllis, then back again to the Major, while her lips and forehead creased into an expression of perplexity and wounded pride.

"Well, really: I don't know how I am to construe

your remark, for it is, to say the least, very ambiguous. Is it meant kindly or unkindly?" she asked, looking questioningly up into his eyes again, while her lips seemed to quiver, "Are you disappointed or pleased?"

"No, no," he said slowly, and with marked emphasis, accompanied by a perspicuous half-smile directed at Phyllis, "Far from disappointed, but Mrs. Vance told me that you were . . . well—she said you were a woman nearly forty; not much for looks, but a charming conversationalist, and the possessor of a most fascinating disposition and charming manners; but here, when you arrive, I behold youth in all its delectable buoyancy, possessed with colloquial charms which chafe like the scent of magnolias chafe, and beauty in all its quintessential personification."

"A well turned and righteously placed compliment, and I concur in all that the Major has said," chimed in Mr. Vance, while Phyllis looked on with an admiring smile, and bubbling delight when she saw the perplexed effect her little hoax on her friend from the North had made on their guest from the sunny South.

When the colloquial complications had all disentangled themselves, Jean understood it all, and looking up with two laughing black eyes, said:

"I thank you all; but what flatterers you are here in the South. I am sure I do not quite merit the flattering praises bestowed upon me."

When they reached the street, drawn up along the curb, there stood a large, roomy, purple victoria, the wheels being of the same color and piped in tiny stripes of bright yellow. On the box, holding the reins tightly and stiffly, sat a colored coachman, bedecked in a striking livery of the same hue as the carriage, trimmed with huge brass buttons, which glittered in the sun; a cocked hat, white gloves and patent leather boots.

Attached to the carriage were two prancing, slick, black horses, in tan harness, mounted with polished silver trimmings, their heads bobbing up and down as they waited impatiently for the rein to go.

It was late in the afternoon and the sun was slowly sinking lower and lower into the golden west. The air was delightfully cool and impregnated with the soothing odor of lilacs, jasmine and magnolias.

"I think, dear," said Phyllis, addressing her husband, "we had better drive directly home, and not to the boulevard, for Jean is no doubt tired after the long ride, and I know that a refreshing bath before dinner will be more invigorating than the ozone from the ocean."

"Your word, hereabouts, is the law, my queen," he answered, gently squeezing his wife's arm.

"Jean, you and I shall take the back seat, and the gentlemen will take the front, so that they can face us. In that way, dear," she smiled, "they can admire you the better as we drive home. Your maid

can remain here a few minutes with the footman, and Ellsworth will send a light wagon for them and the baggage."

"Directly home!" ordered Mr. Vance, as he and the Major assisted the ladies into the carriage.

During the next fifteen minutes of general colloquy, punctuated now and then with pleasant smiles and witticisms, Jean had a splendid opportunity of better observing this dashing Spaniard, for whose mutual reception she had traveled some fifteen hundred miles. It was, however, difficult for her to assign a decided character to his countenance. Certain wrinkles on his forehead betokened a man habitually contemplative, and yet the firm mould of his mouth, the haughty and imperious carriage of his head, indicated a man of exceptionally strong personality. An off-hand guess would probably put his age anywhere between twenty-five and thirty-five—hardly the latter, however—perhaps thirty would be a more conservative guess. An oval, clean-shaven face, and a complexion of an amber-colored hue, but with that velvety softness characteristic of his race; black hair and eyes, which she knew were equally as black as her own—if not more so—and with an expression about them that indicated much passion and emotional influence.

After this perspicacious—though apparently unobservant—survey, she appeared evidently satisfied. All that she had pictured when her imagination had

run riot after reading Phyllis' letter, had come true, and she knew that she liked him already.

They had now left St. Augustine proper, and were traveling beyond the suburbs over a beautifully macadamized roadway. During a lull in the conversation, Jean's eyes took in the surrounding scenery as she compared the beautiful landscape with a mental picture along the dear old Susquehanna, upon whose northern banks her own home was situated. The sun was bathing everything in a deep amber glow. The sky, off towards the western horizon, was enwrapped in a cloak of purple, gold and opal, and to the southward over the gulf, the mountains of flaky clouds were rimmed with gold. The hilltops to the south were of a pale filmy mauve; those nearer, of a deep green, while near the tree-tops, the green blended, in its refraction through the leaves, into a deep orange yellow.

Suddenly emerging from a strip of shady timberland where the birds were merrily chirping their evening carols, there arose before her eyes a magnificent sight. Off to the left were hundreds of beautiful shade trees, arranged like stalwart sentinels of the forest; then farther towards the left, within the huge bronze gates, through which they were now passing, there wound a placid stream, whose golden, tranquil surface was flecked with a dozen leisurely skimming, snow-white swans, and farther up beneath the overhanging trees, the crystal-like surface was dotted with hundreds of

ducks and some few dappled geese, as they dived here and there for their evening dessert of water insects. Off to the right, through the avenue of shady elms and fir trees, stretched beautiful lawns, which, mirrored now as they are in the evening glow, looked more like vast stretches of natural green velvet carpet, dotted here and there with rich beds of flowers, forming a pattern as it seems, in this carpet, where every tint and every shade blended in a tissue of splendor. The flowers, as they passed, seemed to be opening their eyes in a sweet good-night to the setting sun.

As they drove farther on, Jean at last discovered the house, set like a pearl within a circle of green turquois, dominating in quiet dignity, the splendor of this beautiful landscape.

"This, Jean, is the "Kreggiebourne," of which you have heard so much. Is it not beautiful?" asked Phyllis.

For a moment of enchantment, Jean gazed over the beautiful panorama unfolded before her eyes, then looked at Phyllis. "Yes, dear, it is glorious. Little wonder you are so happy here. Who would not be? Such a magnificent home, and then," she smiled shyly at Mr. Vance, "such a charming husband."

Mr. Vance acknowledged the compliment with a profuse bow and a pleasant "Thanks to you, Miss Eric."

This estate had passed through the Vance family

for many generations, and was one of the few estates that entirely escaped the ravages of the Civil War. The house had only recently been completely renovated and remodeled, so that it now looked more like a mansion one might see any day in the suburbs of any of our great northern cities, and not at all like the plain, but rich and impressive, homesteads one is accustomed to see in the South. There was not, as far as Jean could detect, any particular or set style of architecture. It juts out here and there with corners, angles, wings and alcoves. The windows, of which there are a great many, are of large and varying dimensions. In the front center, the house is three stories in height; but the wings, on the right and left, while also three stories, are considerably smaller. Running entirely around the front and on either side of the house, there is a wide oval-shaped veranda, the inside of which is covered with a fine mesh netting to keep out the mosquitoes and the many other species of smaller insects, the outer side being covered by a thick, creeping, scented vine, but of a species not within Jean's botanical knowledge.

There are flowers everywhere, in jardinieres, in hanging baskets, in boxes and in tubs and the matting-covered floor is literally scattered with easy, inviting bamboo chairs, hammocks, and several tables. Above the veranda on the third floor, there is still another small porch or loggia, which extends across the main center of the house. This loggia

is a creation, or series of small carved pilasters, surmounted by a knee-high balustrade running around all sides but it is roofless, save the covering of the blue sky.

"All out for the 'Kreggiebourne,'" said Mr. Vance, as he assisted Jean to alight, while Major Lopez took Mrs. Vance's arm.

When they reached the porch, the sun had sunk deeper into the vast woods that crowned the uplands, till it now resembled a huge bird as it hung low in the impurpled heavens, as though lazily looking over the extensive plains with a drowsy, golden smile of farewell, before descending into its humble couch for the night.

Jean turned to gaze once more at the panorama and glory of this typical southern sunset.

"Oh, it is glorious; perfectly grand, dear," she said, as the two girls placed their arms about each other's waists in the old familiar way they were wont to do while strolling over the broad green campus at Bryn Mawr, and stood gazing in silence at the glory of the dying day.

CHAPTER III.

THE KREGGIEBOURNE.

THE girls remained in this silent—almost reverential—obeisance for the few exquisite moments during the evanescence of the golden beams of faded glory, while a beautiful gray twilight folded—almost solemnly, it seemed—down over this beautiful landscape like a mantle of dreams.

Phyllis turned to Jean with a tighter squeeze on her waist.

"I am awful glad, dear, that you like my home and the enchantment of our glorious sunsets. First impressions, you know, Jean, are so delicious, and tend to make or mar the contentment of one's new environments, even though it be but for a short while."

Jean simply smiled, a calm, contented smile, then nodded her head affirmatively.

"Now then, dear," she continued, "your maid will be here in a few minutes, so come, I will show you the house and the apartment which is to be your sanctuary for three months at the very least."

"Three months! Oh, goodness, no! Mother would never hear to that," answered Jean.

"Three months, Jean" repeated Phyllis, "we simply will not hear of you leaving a day sooner."

Without further comment, and with arms still about each other's waists, they entered the spacious hallway, Phyllis guiding her through the various rooms. First to the left into the large, cool library, furnished in deep, soft red, throughout; the walls literally covered with massive shelves, crowded to suffocation with hundreds of volumes. There are many huge, comfortable, red-leather rockers and a massive davenport, also in red. Then on through the portieres into the sitting-room, also large and cosy. This room, like the library, is also furnished in red, but of a much lighter and delicate hue. Returning through the rooms through which they had just passed, and crossing the hallway, they entered the dining-room, which shone resplendent in all the richness and magnificence which only great wealth can bestow.

"Now, dear," said Mrs. Vance, with a wave of her hand, "off there to the eastern wing is the ballroom, but, for the present, I must decline to show you that. I make that reservation, because I want to give you a grand surprise the night of the reception. It is being decorated now, so Jean, bridle your curiosity and please do not urge me to show it to you till that night."

"Oh, everything is so gorgeous, so beautiful, that I can almost imagine the magnificence of that room, and what it will be that night; but dear, I will bridle my curiosity, as you request, and accept the inevitable," she answered, with a resigned smile, but

with her womanly wits already busily conceiving how she could bribe Ellsworth Vance into conducting a surreptitious pilgrimage through the forbidden room, while Phyllis was otherwise engaged.

"And now for your boudoir," as they ascended the broad stairway of marble and Mexican onyx, to the apartments on the third floor.

The rooms assigned for Jean's use are all capacious and exquisitely furnished and situated in the center front of the house facing the small loggia. The suite consists of three rooms and a bath, with an extra room for her maid. Each room faced the front, the windows of the bedroom and sitting-room being on a level with the floor of the loggia, from which can be had a beautiful view—not only of the immediate grounds of the Vance estate—but of the surrounding country for miles around.

"Are you pleased with the assignment, dear?" asked Phyllis, as they completed the tour of inspection.

"Pleased, indeed. They are too cosy, too cute for anything."

"Come out here, Jean," her host requested, as she led the way to the loggia, "here you get a better view. Many, many times Ellsworth and I have sat here, during the evenings when everywhere else was too warm. You will find, that no matter how warm it is, there is always a delightfully cool breeze from the south. And here," as she walked over to the far side of the loggia and waved

her hand in a graceful gesture toward the right, "are Major Lopez's apartments."

"Indeed!" said Jean, with a flush, opening her eyes widely. "Gracious, Phyllis, the proximity is strikingly noticeable, is it not?"

"Why no, you dear child. That never occurred to me. I did think, however, that perhaps after getting better acquainted with each other you might enjoy sitting out here for a chat, for you speak Spanish with the volubility, and with an idiomatic accent equal to his own. He told me that you speak Castilian as though it was your mother tongue."

"Quite complimentary," interjected Jean.

"Then, dearie, you will have no fear of burglars, for he sits out here all hours of the night, smoking his long, black Cuban cigars and enchanting the birds with the sweet music of his mandolin or guitar."

"Sing, too?" questioned Jean, laconically.

"Delightfully! Beautifully! You'll be surprised. By the way, dear," as she placed both hands on Jean's shoulders and looked her straight in the eyes, "you didn't tell me whether you like him or not; do you?"

Jean hesitated, then blushed, then let her eyes wander listlessly over the treetops.

"Really, dear," she smiled, after a few moments' reflection to weigh her words, "I hadn't given it a thought. I don't know whether I do or not. He is

clever looking and a clever talker, but I must know him a little longer before I can say whether I like him or not."

"Why, you dear, dear, silly. I didn't mean do you love him. Gracious, a person must know another longer than an hour before they can love. I meant are you pleased with him? You see, dear, he is a very particular friend of Ellsworth's, and you are my dearest dear, so I just want all to be happy."

"Don't get offended at me, Phyllis dear," she said, putting her arms around her waist and kissing her, "for to that extent, I like him immensely."

* * * * *

The days passed ever so quickly, ever so pleasantly, and many were the evenings—sometimes running into the wee small hours of the morning—that Jean and the Major passed alone on this cosy loggia. Here he told her of his temporary home, pleasures and environments in sunny Cuba, and of his real home in Madrid; which to Jean was all very interesting; for to her, Spain, with its antiquity was only known from geography and history classes of school days, and as the home of that gaunt, country gentleman—that knight-errant of romance—Don Quixote. Then, at other times, he played the guitar, she the mandolin, and both sang little ditties in Castilian, that language effervescing with sweet phrases, idioms and simple words that convey so many exquisite meanings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RECEPTION.

JUNE the tenth, the night of the reception at last arrived. It was six o'clock and they had just finished dinner, which Mrs. Vance decided to have earlier than usual to-night; in order that all might rest awhile before dressing.

For a few delicious minutes they lounged on the veranda, then the ladies retired to their boudoirs to lounge an hour or two longer, while the men remained with their cigars and liquors.

When Jean reached her rooms, she walked out of the misery of a tight corset and clothing, loosed her hair and threw herself comfortably on the davenport. Her maid had gone to dinner, but before going she had lighted the small rose-colored lamp, which is turned low. A soft, gentle breeze blows the soft filmy draperies at the window, bringing with it the sweet odors of the millions of flowers in the grounds below.

Jean, with hands clasped beneath her head, reclined in an attitude of pleased and meditative pleasure. She was thinking of the dance—and of Ignacio.

"I wonder *do* I love him?" she questioned in her mind for the one hundredth time. "It surely *must*

be love; for never before have I experienced such salient emotions; such jumpings of the heart and pulse, when a man comes near." What exercised her most however, was whether *he* loved *her;* was *he* affected with like emotions?

While she lay serenely comfortable, dreaming and pondering over these questions of heart, which in the last few days had begun to annoy her—although the annoyance was pleasing to dream over—she did not observe that time was flying, until her reverie was interrupted by Matilda, who entered softly, drew the shades and turned on the chandelier, flooding the room with light.

"Matilda, surely it is not time to dress already?"

"Yes, Miss Jean; it is after eight-thirty," answered the maid apologetically.

"How time speeds when one is so comfortable and . . happy," she thought, as she arose with a reluctant sigh.

The maid had already laid out all the dainty articles of lingerie and commenced dressing her.

"To-night," thought Jean, "I must look my best —my very sweetest—for this is one night in my life when I am to be lavishly honored. Yes, this dual reception in honor of myself and Ignacio must be a memorable one; and why should it not be? For I *know* I love him, and I *think* he loves me."

She therefore selected the gown which he had admired so much several evenings before at a dinner given in their honor by some few particular

friends of the Vances. It was the creation of a celebrated modiste in Philadelphia, and had been created especially for this trip, and was worthy of a queen.

It is an evening gown, in Empire effect, and of ivory-white satin, covered with chiffon and old point lace. The train is covered with real Irish lace; and the bodice, covered also with lace of like kind, is cut decollette, with just a gold cord across the shoulders, showing off the whiteness and contour of her gleaming shoulders and arms and bosom. Her stately neck rises from the shoulders like a pedestal of ivory, around which she wears a necklace of soft glowing pearls, and at her throat—as beauteous as those throats we are accustomed to see in antique statuary—there hangs a pendant containing one lone, large, black pearl of inestimable value, beauty of form and of Oriental brilliancy—so vivid that an opal could not have rivaled its iridescent changes, and which in its fiery blackness, contrasts with the marble-like whiteness of her skin, and looks for all the world like the proverbial beauty spot of old.

Her black hair, woven into an exquisite coiffure, and which shows the superior dexterity of her maid, is parted in the middle, with low wavelets in front, then flows back gracefully and ends in a thick, graceful knot, which lays on the nape of her full, rounded neck; its utter blackness—like the pearl—showing the wonderful whiteness of her skin.

At last the dressing is complete; all the dainty finishing touches necessary to a woman's toilet have been made, and she is ready for the conquest of a heart.

"Miss Jean," deigned the maid, as she smiled in a satisfied manner, "do look in the mirror. Was ever a picture so beautiful? Lo, for me! I may as well begin to mourn for the hearts that will be crushed to a pulp to-night."

"Yes," thought Jean, as she gazed long and longingly, turning this way and that, to get a better sweep at her train. "What is this new feeling which animates me? I am even dressing to please him, and I do hope he will be pleased."

"Just a moment, dear," said Matilda, as she tucks bewitchingly in Jean's black tresses, one lone cream orchid, which instantly finished this picture of Northern beauty. Once more Jean casts a long, lingering look into the mirror. She sees the luster glowing in her eyes and she is satisfied with herself.

"Now, Matilda, kiss me, and wish me success; for to-night makes or mars my future happiness. You are a dear, *dear* maid, Matilda."

Lightly she descends the stairs with her heart in a flutter, the rustle of unseen silks heralding her coming like would a corps of trumpets.

When she reached the second floor she hesitated at the head of the marble stairway and gazed down over the balustrade at the gay scenes going on in the hallway. The guests were coming in by the ones,

by the twos, fours and the half-dozen. Phyllis and Ellsworth stood receiving them, and after a little shake of the hand, and a word of greeting, directed them on to several more ladies and gentlemen who were assisting them receive. There were the beautiful Southern dames, with their dark faces and raven tresses, sweet, plump, bared shoulders and necks. Then there were the stately, lithe, Southern matrons, in their demure gowns, who think it a sin and a disgrace (and perhaps rightfully, for the propriety of the custom has long been a subject of logomachy) to unbare their shoulders for a gazing assembly. But they all appeared to be a happy crowd, coming as they were to be amused; full of that sweet, rapturous abandon, and freer still from all self-consciousness surrendering themselves to that gay, festive, jovial atmosphere the moment they entered. There were the men with whom Ellsworth Vance did business; there were his lieutenants and managers, their wives and sons and daughters; young and thoughtlessly happy couples who came to partake of the hospitality of the home of one of Florida's grand old Southern families, who had ruthlessly broken the old, timeworn tradition, by taking unto himself a wife from above the "Mason-Dixon" line, and in addition—perhaps it was primarily—to see and be introduced to the beautiful belle of what they termed "the frozen North," and the dashing Castilian from the "Pearl of the Antilles."

After a few minutes Jean came down, and when she reached the foot of the stairs, the very first person with whom she came face to face, and for whom she had been searching—but could not see from the head of the stairs (but whom she desired to see before any others) was Ignacio. She must have his compliments and best wishes first of all—even before she met Phyllis, or any of the guests.

The moment he saw her, he came quickly across the hall. When he reached her side he gazed at her with loving admiration in his eyes, then after a moment he took the hand she offered over the onyx railing. For the age of seconds that he stood before her, he uttered not a sound. His lips seemed to be glued, awed with her exquisite beauty; but his eyes—those windows of the soul—and his illumined countenance, spoke eloquently for his entire being. His face spread deeper with rapturous adoration, sending the blood rushing crimson to Jean's neck and cheeks.

"Jean!" he finally uttered in a low but burning voice, "Oh, Miss Eric! How beautiful! How beautiful you look! How wondrously sweet; and that is the gown I admire so much. I was half hoping you would wear it to-night."

Jean was pleased. She was conscious that her mirror had told her she was beautiful, and now that he was pleased, made her very happy. She bowed to his compliment with a sweet, graceful salutation. "Thank you, Ignacio. I am so glad you admire my

taste, for I tried so hard to dress to-night, that you, of all, should be pleased."

It was a little after nine o'clock and most of the guests had already arrived, disposed of their wraps, and were in the ballroom awaiting the presentation of the honor guests.

Jean and Ignacio had not yet moved from the stairs.

"Jean, have you seen the ballroom?" he asked.

"No; I have not. Does it resemble a fairyland?"

"Indeed it does, that."

"Well! here you are!" said Mrs. Vance, as she came hurrying through the ballroom door. "Come, we are waiting for you two," as she took a position between them and entered the room.

When Jean stepped over the threshold, she uttered a sigh of admiration and a smile leaped into her face, as she gazed hastily at the magnificence of the decorations and extravagant appointments, for it was only then that she realized what a surprise Phyllis had in store for her.

"Oh! What a vision of beauty and splendor!" she said.

The room, which is exceptionally large, occupies the entire eastern wing of the building. The decorations are too profuse to chronicle in their entirety, but some are so exquisitely beautiful that they require mention. The scheme of the ceiling penetrations, for instance, are gold lyres with white swans—the lyres being surmounted alternately by

a masque of the "Sun-God" of the Florida Indian. Then on either end of the room there are huge panels of dancing cupids with roguish faces, clasping in their chiseled fingers clusters of luscious fruits and wines, in welcome to the winsome guests. The whole sitting is in ivory-white and gold, with intertwined garlands and filmy drapery. Off to the left center and most conspicuous is a gilded loggia in which sit the musicians who look down upon the guests and smile at the scene of splendor and beauty, while a constant soft roar of chatter and laughter ascends ceilingward. The windows and doors are all open through which streams that languorous semi-tropical night air, fraught with the fragrance of flowers and trees and shrubbery. All the available space about the windows and walls is banked high with an infinite variety of parasitical plants and vines, mosses and ferns, which entwined and interlaced themselves; here depending in gorgeous, natural festoons of foliage and flowers, then mounting in beautiful spirals, further tangled themselves into an inextricable network which ran and wreathed and trailed along the gilt walls and polished floor, like huge, lithe, floral serpents. In the dead center of the room hung a massive chandelier, from which extends a labyrinth of branches bearing clusters of wee incandescent bulbs spreading brilliant light from its secluded domains in the recesses of the ceiling, giving the resplendency of a fairyland scene to the plump, bared shoulders and arms, and the many

colored gowns, and the scattering of baldheads, which shine and emulate with the glimmer of the polished fronts of the stiff-shirted gentlemen.

When Mrs. Vance and her two guests entered, a sudden hush fell over this galaxy of beauty, as they craned their necks or moved nearer to the front to get a better view.

Mrs. Vance began: "Ladies and gentlemen, my dear friends of St. Augustine: It is, as you must know, impossible—especially at this time—to introduce to you all individually our two honor guests, but I promise to do so before the evening is over. For the present, however, allow me to present my dear friend and schoolmate from my former home in the North—Miss Jean Eric, of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania."

She bowed, first to Jean, then to the assembly. Jean, in turn bowing, first to Mrs. Vance, then to the beaming faces of the happy throng, with a sweet grace, and a simple "thank you," while they, with that true Southern politeness, courtesied low, and as one.

Ellsworth Vance then stepped to Ignacio's side.

"And my friend," he said, "Major Ignacio Lopez, of Havana, Cuba. I trust that we shall all become better friends, and may we all have a delightful evening together."

Then, at a glance from Ellsworth—as though he were some oracle dispensing his occult powers—the orchestra over their heads commenced as if by

magic, and after a moment's libration, the profound silence following the introductions, broke forth into a bedlam of laughter and loud chattering, and the dance is on. Each man takes in his arms his dearest beloved, and away they whirl in a fantastic scene of wild abandoned beauty, with a gliding cadence to the soothing languente invitation of the melodious tones of wood and string and brass. The Vances, too, joined in the dance and were soon lost in this labyrinth of whirling forms, while Jean and Ignacio stood alone at the door gazing on this vision of sensuous beauty, so pleasing to the eye and so soothing to the ear. It all seemed like a dream; to be all one luminous golden haze, amidst which gleamed and sparkled the dazzling and varied colors of the gowns of the charming women, and the prismatic scintillation of costly, magnificent diamonds and pearls which shone like huge drops of sparkling dew.

"Jean, the first is for me, is it not?" he questioned, folding her tenderly into his arms, and they too whirl away to the strains of the dreamy waltz. As they glide in and out, now advancing, now retreating, now intermingling in an undulating garland of breathing beauty, many were the flattering remarks and shy glances passed between the Southern girls and their gallant escorts, in their comment on the sweetness of this fair flower of the Northland, and this dashing cavalier from the sunny isle of the Carribean sea.

As they glide with smooth, lambent sweeps over the waxen floor—for both are graceful dancers—a soft, languorous feeling of contentment gently steals over Jean, like the soft murmur of the zephyrs. The very air seems agog with the enchantment. The music, the soft—almost silent—gliding motion, and the magnetic charm of the proximity of Ignacio, thrills her with a feeling as if a diluted, though sufficiently strong stream of electricity was continually entering her bebuckled slippers and finding egress only when it reached her finger tips or the ends of her soft black hair.

On and on, on and on they float with the buoyancy of air. Jean's eyes are lowered demurely on a beautiful bouquet of American Beauty roses fastened on her bodice, which he had sent to her room with the request that she wear them to-night in token of love, while he whispers in her willing ears those little, seductive, meaningless, nothingness words of love. Those words, which, if set in cold, unsympathetic type, as they are spoken, whispered and sighed, would fill page after page, chapter after chapter of sighs . . . dashes . . . lulls, and whatnot; but which to a heart effervescing with the passions of love, are momentous questions, and which are readily emblazoned on the mind like embossed letters of gold; all of which helps to accentuate this blissful, dreamy feeling now pervading Jean.

As the subtle orchestra continues to pour forth

its delicious melody, like a menagerie of silvery throated canaries, they glide on to the entrance of the conservatory, the doors of which are guarded on either side by massive palms that hold up their heads with that natural majesty which is theirs, and with an almost human pride and consciousness, as though they too were enjoying the dance and the music as much as the dancers themselves.

"Shall we go into the conservatory and rest a while?" asked Ignacio.

Jean looked up into his eyes wistfully. "Yes, dear," she answered, hardly above a whisper.

In his delight his arm unconsciously tightened about her waist and he drew her softly to him, while her heart fluttered rapturously. For a second's instant they remain thus, then as they look deeply and lovingly into each other's eyes, they read that latent message of the "Love-God," and again taking up the music, they waltz into the conservatory.

CHAPTER V.

CUPID'S DOMAIN.

THE human brain with all its versatility had never devised; human hands had never been more dexterously applied; nor had Nature ever furnished more gorgeously of its abundant wealth of grandeur, than were manifest within the glass walls and roof of this conservatory. Nor could Cupid have selected a more fitting place—and at this time a more appropriate moment—in which to dispense its coffers of love; for its creation had been one of Ellsworth Vance's life-long ambitions, and its maintenance one of his most ardent hobbies.

Its beauty and grandeur are almost beyond conception. Here and there were gigantic palms and rubber plants which mingled their broad, green leaves with the lanceolated leaves of a towering magnolia, covered with odorous flowers, purpled without and silvered within, with long wiry stamens of gold darting from their bell-shaped calyces, which pressed against the outer panes and begged—almost piteously—for admission to this realm of semi-tropical glory in all its tropical verdure—a verdure so abundant, so lustrous, so beaming, that, viewed from without, by the splendor of innumerable lights, it flashed with the brilliancy of the emerald.

Here and there were tubs and tubs of every species of the most fragrant flowers known to that beautiful kingdom; tulips, daffodils and hyacinths with their innumerable blends of purples and pinks, dotted here and there with a delicate azure, and crowned with a diadem of the deepest violet.

Chinese lanterns of transparent silk of a pale blue; others of a delicate soft blush-color, peep out here and there, half hidden up amidst the enveloping foliage, casting a soft, soothing light upon the scene. A sweet mysterious light emanating from the commingling of these tints forms a delicious, fantastic gleam, resembling the azure clearness of a fine, serene, tropical night, delicately tinted by the crimson gleams of an aurora borealis—a fit rendezvous for roaming Cupids and Psyches to bill and coo in and for Junos to search for mischievous Jupiters.

Ignacio leads the way to a secluded nook, walled in by a huge palm, behind which stands a small gilded table and a large, comfortable davenport. Slightly fatigued now from the dancing, Jean lies back comfortably on the soft cushions, one shapely bare arm resting on its arm, the other reposing gracefully in her lap, occasionally and unconsciously crushing the folds of a tiny lace handkerchief. Thus they remain for a few exquisite moments in eloquent silence, as his eyes feast on her face, which shone in all the brilliancy of a quiet youthful beauty like the satin-like freshness of a camellia gliding

over a surface of pale crimson, imperceptibly touched by a ray of sun; while her eyes remain lowered to a dainty slipper which bobs temptingly in and out from beneath the silk of her gown.

"Darling, will you have some refreshments? A little wine, dear," he suggested. "It will refreshen you just now."

She nodded assent, and the Major clapped his hands for a servant.

When the sparkling wine had been poured, Ignacio held up the tempting glass.

"Here's to the sweetest flower ever grown in any garden in any land. Jean, I crown you Queen of the dance. Queen of my heart."

"What a flatterer you are, Ignacio," she answered in a voice sweet, gentle and harmoniously modulated, at the same time, however, conscious that her heart leaped with a bound at his sweet words of affection and admiration causing the dazzling white complexion to tinge with a delicate carnation.

They drank of its pleasing essence, then, after another sweet silence—*dolce far niente*—he said:

"Jean, the moon is shining so gloriously tonight. Soft moonlight and tender love harmonize together so wonderfully . . . let us stroll to the Paradise of Bliss," he suggested.

This "Paradise of Bliss" referred to was a small alcove off in the far corner of the conservatory, secluded by the canopy of leaves and flowers, leading out into the garden, wherein sat one large, com-

fortable divan of crimson; the outer balustrade being screened with a verdant curtain of sweet pease and blue and white morning glories. They arose, and arm in arm, strolled to this sanctuary of love, while their voices became involuntarily hushed to gentle whispers.

For a long time they sat in silence, which to Jean seemed like ages, and which was finally broken by Ignacio taking both her hands in his.

"Jean," he commenced, slowly, lowly, sincerely, "I have asked you here tonight to settle, once and for all, a momentous question of my heart. I have waited for to-night so that we should ever remember it. The words I wanted to say. The sweet little speech I wanted to make, I have pondered over and rehearsed night after night. I had it all framed and embellished with those sweet flowers of rhetoric, but now," . . . he waved his hands hopelessly in that enigmatic manner characteristic of the well bred Spaniard, accompanied with an indifferent shrug of the shoulders, . . . "but now, when I have you all alone, away from an envious world, the beautiful eulogy which I had prepared, has deserted me. I am speechless." He hesitated a long time as though searching for words to express his thoughts, but like all men at the moment of proposing, his thoughts were a labyrinth of incoherencies, but he finally began abruptly: "Jean, I never was adept at love making, but I have tried in my own crude way to show you that I love

you. You must have seen it before now. When alone I can think of all that is beautiful to say, but just as soon as I enter the presence of your eyes, it ebbs away like the tides. And it is strange, too," he continued sadly, "for I come from that land where love and romance run riot, and I suppose I can only excuse myself on the plea that never before has a girl animated me with a love like yours. Jean, I cannot tell you of my great love for you with the smooth slippery tongue of the golden orator . . . you would not want me to either . . . would you, dear? . . . but Jean I do love you. It is all my heart has been uttering during the past week, and even though I cannot tell you of it with the volubility and poetry that your gallant and devoted Americans no doubt could, I can at least say it honestly. I love you—I love you —I love you with all my heart and with all my soul. I love you with the best there is of me. There is some irresistible charm about you which I cannot explain, which I don't care to try to explain, which enthralls me. Jean, do you care for me enough to be my wife? Oh! I shall be so good to you. I will cherish you till the end of time. You shall rule as only a Queen could rule, over my household in sunny Cuba. You speak our language perfectly, that will be such an aid to you, dear. Be mine, will you, Jean?"

During this burst of passion, Jean was gazing

wistfully at the full moon through the maze of vines, but she did not answer.

"Jean," he pleaded again, as he fell on his knees before her, taking both her soft, lanuginous hands in his, as he gazed longingly into her eyes, which she now lowered and alternated, first to her hands then to his eyes.

"Will you be my wife, Jean; my flower to water and nurse in the cool mornings, and in the evetide when the golden sun is sinking to rest?"

For a long, long time, she did not answer; did not even raise her eyes from her hands, which seemed to tremble in his.

Then, all of a sudden, she looked up into his eyes, now lustered with the animation and passion of his race, and sparkling brightly in the moonlight; and tempered by the soft light from within, they are crowded with a soft flaming luster, making them divinely brilliant,—handsome.

In the lucency of that last gaze there is that glorious glow of the stars; the pleadings of an anxious heart; the ravishing sweetness that overcomes and which brings rapture in death; and then once again, there creeps through her whole being that same feeling; that same unfathomable, all devouring elixir, which animated her while they danced; filling her with that sweet, headstrong rapture; that mysterious dream, which would not be quieted. With the thought that her silence gave answer to his plea, Ignacio arose, and passionately

clasping her in his strong arms drew her to his breast, while her poor innocent heart beat loudly and impatiently against his. During that second of lucid interval that he held her tightly, she librates in the balance, still undecided. But Ignacio would not be denied. He must have his answer. Closer and closer he draws her to him, tighter and tighter. Her breath flutters in and out. She can feel his breath on her cheeks as he pleads again.

"Jean, my darling . . . your answer. Will you be mine . . . my own sweet flower?"

Her lips are nearer now. Again he begs, "what is it, my own?" this time impatiently.

Her face burned; her heart leaped up within her with an impulse of utter surrender, as she laid her head silently and sweetly on his shoulder.

"Yes," she answered.

The monosyllable, which muffled as it was with her head against his shoulder, in a silence less profound, would have been inaudible; but to his anxious ears, may have been uttered by the blare of ten thousand trumpets. He had heard. It was sufficient. He was now happy.

With her head still nestling on his shoulder he pressed his lips to hers, now burning with the inextinguishable fires of love. With closed eyes she sighed contentedly, as they kissed the love from each other's lip's as the bee kisses honey from the flowers, while the pealing of the orchestra, subdued and mellowed by the distance; and the low, joyous

hum of the voices that proceeded from the gay ball room, died languidly away among the motionless foliage of this fairyland.

Here, then, on this battlefield of love, where the air, light, warm and balmy, is surcharged with the thousand odorous breathings of perfumed plants; where the honeysuckle and the roses, like battalions in brilliant array stand guard for them; where the distant and half audible music of the orchestra soothed every sense into a sweet languid calm, weaving about them an enchantment, irresistible in itself, so what chance have two enamored hearts; two happy romantic lovers, in this secluded corner when pitted against the treacherous weapons of intoxicated love, melody and perfume, which Cupid is wielding to dazzle their senses. It was an uneven battle and Cupid won.

* * * * *

Long after all the guests had departed and the household had said good-night; Jean sat late beneath the rose colored light in her room, writing a long letter to her mother. A vague, sweet contentment pervaded her whole being like the odor of June roses pervades the air. She knew she loved with a passion never before experienced.

In the letter she detailed the reception and its glowing success. Told all about the Vances and their palatial home, and concluded by laying bare the innermost secrets of her love for Ignacio, the dashing Spaniard.

CHAPTER VI.

TOM ERIC.

AFTER Jean's mother had read the letter for the third time through lachrymate eyes, her memory carried her back again to the days of her girlhood, spent also in sunny Florida, where she was born. She could recall vividly a certain night when the moon was just shouldering its bright round rim over the edge of the broad Atlantic, and seemed like some huge, yellowish monster arising from the black depths. She could feel again Tom's arm on hers as they strolled through the garden, with hearts light and gay, when the lilacs were just beginning to bud in the springtime. It was the night he had won her heart and hand.

Jean's mother loved her as only a mother can love an only daughter. It was her greatest ambition to see Jean happily married, and, if her great affection and efforts, could only give Jean happiness, then she should have it.

With these fond memories and tender feelings of motherly love in her heart, she entered the library where her husband sat reading the evening papers.

"Tom, dear," she commenced, slowly, softly, as

she seated herself on the arm of his Morris chair, and put her arm around his neck, for let it be said they had always been lovers—even though married twenty years. "I have a letter from Jean by the afternoon mail.....a dear sweet letter, too."

"That's nice. Is she enjoying her visit, Martha dear?" he asked as he laid the paper across his knees and placed his arm tenderly around her waist, looking up into her eyes over the rim of his glasses.

"Yes; she appears to be happy .... in many ways." This with a faint smile and unconscious sigh, while she looked down longingly into his eyes.

"Why, Martha; there seems to be a tremor in your voice, and *'pon my word,* dear if I don't see a tear fighting to get through. Why, what is the matter sweetheart?"

"Oh, nothing Tom," as she dried the tears from her eyes, "only ..... only, I'm so happy. I have been thinking, since receiving Jean's letter of our sweetheart days down in Florida; of the days when you courted me and stole my heart in Jacksonville only a short way from where the same environments which now surround Jean, then enveloped us."

"Yes, yes, dear. They were sweet, bully days."

"Tom, ... I am sad, and I am happy; still for the life of me I cannot determine which emotion predominates; but I am afraid that we are going to lose our little girl,—our black-eyed darling."

Tom Eric's countenance turned instantly to an

ashen-gray, as he looked staringly into his wife's eyes.

"Why?"

He sort of jerked out of the monosyllable with an effort; with an inward fear that perhaps some accident had befallen Jean, and he waited with tensioned nerves for her reply.

"Well it seems that there is another guest at the Vance home; a Spanish nobleman ..... Major Lopez is his name. He is attached to the Spanish army in Havana, Cuba. She writes that she has fallen in love with him, and requests our consent to invite him to visit us that he might ask for her hand in marriage."

For a second or more his face remained ashen. "What?" he exclaimed with a poignancy that smote, as he threw off his glasses, while his expression—when he was positive he had heard aright—was one of stupefied amazement, which slowly gave way to anger. While it was perfectly obvious that he was making manifest efforts to control himself, and keep his voice to a calmer tone, so as not to hurt his sensitive wife, he continued, sharply, sarcastically. "What! In love with a foreigner and asks my consent to marry him. My heavens, woman, was there ever such brazen effrontery? No Martha, by the Gods no, never, never. What! Marry a Spaniard, when there are hundreds—yes, thousands—of young, eligible, and most worthy Americans to be had here in this grand old land of ours? Does my

daughter have to go to Cuba to get a Spaniard? ..... H'm, no, not so long as my name is Tom Eric. No, no, no, Martha! never shall it be with my consent."

Calming down somewhat from the temper into which he had flown, and placing both hands on his wife's shoulders, looking squarely into her eyes, he continued in an appealing passionate voice. "Listen to me, Martha dear. I harbor no particular enmity against the Castilian race, but I feel this way. I was born in this grand old Keystone state of Pennsylvania, so was my father, so my mother; likewise my grandfather and grandmother, and their fathers and mothers. Now then: if those respected and honored ancestors had the temerity to prefer plain, sound, Americans for husbands and wives, then it shall never be said that a child of Tom Eric's shall go beyond Columbia's shores to marry, at least, never a foreigner. It matters not Martha, who, or what, he might be. He may be good—for some of them *really* are; or he might be otherwise—and the *most* of them are; but this is my motto dear, and I think it is a good one too: 'America for Americans; Spain for Spaniards; France for the French, etc.' I want no Lords, Counts, Dukes, nor Princes in my family. I want no monogram of royalty on my stationery, nor emblazoned on my carriages. I am satisfied with the foot prints, and the span of the wings of that grand old screaming eagle stamped on anything that is

mine. And further, dear....when I looked for a wife, I looked for an American girl, and by the Gods I got her: one of the grandest in the land; one of the sweetest under the Stars and Stripes, or any other national emblem. Martha, dearest; you and I have worked hard for the little we have. If I have been successful in acquiring a goodly portion of this world's good things, I got them for you—with your aid and devotion. You shared the rough sledding and you shall reap the harvest. We have obtained all through honest, legitimate labor, and we shall keep it. Then, too: you were born in these United States of a good old American stock; therefore, at this late date, I object; yes I strenuously object, yes, and further, I decline; absolutely, irrevocably, positively, to tolerate or support royalty on the earnings obtained from—and by —the sweat of the honest brows of good, hard-working, American brain and muscle; and, if my daughter Jean ever marries, then she must marry one from our own soil; from this grand old land of the free, and the home of the brave, with no pomp and display of blazoned coat-of-arms. No sir'ee Martha, by the heaven above me, a thousand times no. Never with my consent shall she marry him; for I forbid it."

"But, Tom, dear. Why fly into this awful rage? Perhaps he doesn't need any of our wealth, and perhaps too, he is not in this class of 'good-for-nothings,' of which I know there are many. Don't

you think," she sobbed solicitously, "that we should wait, and not act so hastily. Remember, Tom, ... it is our daughter's happiness at stake."

"Martha; it matters not to me whether he needs our support or not, in order to support our daughter; for he shall not have it: neither shall he have Jean Eric. Royalty is, or may be all right, and a very nice thing, when confined to its proper sphere; but, Martha, I want to impress upon you that it is *not* the real, genuine, dignified royalty that comes to America to look for a wife—not a wife, a dowry —on the other hand it is usually those 'good-for-nothing' vagabonds; those 'near noblemen' who can adorn a drawing room, smile sweetly at a pretty woman, wag a slippery tongue; but who are an endless void when it comes to practical accomplishments. It is that class who come to peddle with their common doggerel, the titles obtained no doubt from hard working, dignified, honest ancestors. The real worthy nobility confine themselves to their own domains and do not seek these international marriages; no more so than it is *not* the true, genuine, bred-in-the-bone American woman who falls at the lure of the bait; but rather that class overflowing with an abundance of wealth, who see in a titled husband an entrance to the Old-World Courts; gorgeous gowns, and royalties' invitation. Vanity, Martha, nothing but vanity.. And dear, there is still a more cogent reason why he shall not have her. If he should get Jean, he would love her—yes;

love her till the novelty wore off; till he sucks lamia-like, all the wealth he can from our coffers, then he beats her, kicks her, neglects her, and squanders away my hard earned wealth, and his life, in gamble, other women, and rum; then the result ..... what is it? She comes back pleading to her father and mother for protection. No, no, no, dear. There have been too many examples, and Jean Eric shall not be immolated for the personal aggrandizement of a flowery, tarnished title vender; for all distinction it could procure is far too cheap to sacrifice my daughter. The price is too high."

"But, Tom....."

"Needless, Martha, needless to remonstrate," as he waved her aside, "the ultimatum is, no, *most emphatically, no.* I shall go and telegraph her to come home immediately, and instruct her to let her Spanish Major journey back from whence he came."

Mrs. Eric attempted to restrain him from an action for which she well knew he would live to regret but he had gone.

CHAPTER VII.

MEMORANDUM.

PERHAPS I will be criticised by the ever merciless professional critic; even by the unpretentious but diligent reader, for breaking my story in the manner which I do, thereby steering adrift—deviating as it were—from a certain set, and well broken pathway through the thick and tangled forest of fiction. But I am consoled inasmuch that I feel that if a mother who has a daughter just budding into womanhood reads this book, I will at least be pardoned by her for my action; and perhaps even complimented for not placing in print, certain actualities, even though they were true to life.

The thoughts I desire to convey (the apology I would offer) for the omission of the natural sequential chapter to those preceding, is a delicate subject to manipulate. There are however, certain thoughts I desire to convey, to enable me to be faithful to my heroine in relating future action, and I use this memorandum to make myself more thoroughly understood, and also to reduce to a minimum the possibilities of making it obnoxious; for although facts are truths, truth itself ofttimes sounds more harsh and cocophonious to the delicate ear

than absolutely vile and preposterous falsehoods, and I must, even as it is, leave many words unwritten, which—try as I may—will, in their absence—be food to stimulate the imagination; still, what facts I must,—by necessity relate,—I shall chronicle with reticence and discretion, insofar at least, as consistency will permit. I will here remark, however, that a number of my close friends, men and women, to whom I had read my manuscript and sought advice, have already chastised me severely for not continuing the narrative where I stopped at the conclusion of the sixth chapter. These "gentle critics," both married and unmarried; most of whom are matured in years, constant readers, and *all* of whom know the world and its ways, and who for years have kept a finger on its pulse, (particularly on its turbulent sea of fiction) are well qualified to criticise and I took their advice and criticism kindly—as it was meant—but after careful deliberation, I concluded as I now write.

While perhaps the story would have been more appreciated by that certain class of readers who devour with avidity, literature which revels in what is commonly known as the spicy, vulgar, innuendo, underlying and between-the-line character, I should want this book to be a credit to my pen, clean and honorable; a book which I could offer to my own daughter without the slightest prick to my conscience.

As you will observe presently, this story *really*

begins 16 years after the incidents narrated in the preceding chapters. From thereon it is real. Facts were never more facts. History was never chronicled more faithfully than the events that transpired subsequent to the 22nd day of April, 1898, with the exception, of course, that names are changed and a few historical inconsistencies in connection with the formation of the gallant 10th Pennsylvania regiment.

The first six longiloquent chapters are fiction—pure unadulterated imagination—on my part, because no one in the world knew how Jean Eric was wooed and won by that suave, dashing, slippery-tongued knight-errant from the isle of palms and cocoanut groves. None but she and he, with perhaps the possible exception (in a general way) of Mr. and Mrs. Ellsworth Vance; but I have from my own imagination endeavored to picture to you in a readable and pleasant way, the manner in which it has ofttimes appeared to me to have been enacted. I have been aided somewhat in my deductions through my wide knowledge of the Spanish race. I have lived amongst them for years. I know their passions and their weaknesses. I know their soft, cajoling, smooth, "moonlight-and-guitar" combination of making love. I know the language of their eyes, which speaks volumes, even though their lips remain as motionless as though made of marble. Then, too, I knew personally the beautiful character I have named

Jean Eric. I knew her suavity of temperament. I knew her beauty, and I knew how susceptible she was to the admiration of men. I have many, many times, during the past twenty years, tried to imagine this dazzling Major Lopez looking at her beneath a silvery sky, the like of which I have only found in two localities in the world—in southern Florida and in southern Italy—looking at her with those big black, languorous eyes. In my mind's eye I can, even now as I write, see Jean, that sweet, helpless, budding flower, look into the depths of his eyes, and like a bird before the pinny, piercing, hypnotic eyes of a snake, shudder and with happiness, surrender to his pleadings. I can even see the very words take tangible form as they find egress through his dark lashes, like the film of a kaleidoscope on a canvas. I can hear those words of love as he poured them into her ears, and what girl, with the environments with which Jean was surrounded, would have committed herself differently! All this I have laid before you in an abstract way in the first six chapters, omiting the shudder and surrender. If I have pleased you in my supposition, very well; then I am happy; if not, then I have laid before you the circumstances and the environments, and you can apply your own imagination, and in your own way embellish the facts as you will. But after you have made your deductions, the fact remains the same. There could be but one ending which I could have nar-

rated. Still, on the other hand, I *could* have continued my imagination, and eventually brought you face to face with the subsequent facts;—to the period within my personal knowledge—when her father, poor old Tom Eric, universally liked in business and in pleasure; a kind, gentle, ideal husband, and a devoted father, usually cool and reserved in speech, but now writhing with a fury bordering on insanity, ordered Jean and her lover from his home, dishonored and disgraced, with his terrible ultimatum, while Ignacio, with bowed head; Jean's mother weeping her heart away; and Jean, poor thing, as she clung like an ivy to her father's neck, piteously begging and praying, for his forgiveness, even though he was driving her out into the world like a stray mongrel from the kennel.

Never, if I live a century, shall I forget that scene, or forget those awful words which I overheard that night as I sat on my porch, which adjoined the Eric home. It was after eleven o'clock. I was just finishing a cigar before retiring. Suddenly I was startled when I saw the front door open and heard Tom Eric's voice ring out in a raspy, trembling but peremptory tone.

"Go..... Go with that!" as he pointed a finger at a man standing on the porch.

Then I saw Jean throw her arms around her father's neck and plead:

"Dad, Dad, Dad,.....d--d-don't ... oh don't. For God's sake Dad, don't.....D-d-don't you love

your Jean more that this? Don't you care for ....."

Then I saw Tom straighten up his massive frame and tremble as with an ague, his immobile face becoming more rigid as he looked out over her head, into the night, and interrupted further obsecration by loosing her arms from around his neck, and when he next spoke the very words as they found utterance sounded like a death-knell.

"Go! My God! girl, go before my wrath overpowers me, and I kill you. God knows I did love you.....but don't put the curse of murder on my soul. Go! ... You are no longer mine. Henceforth I disown you. Never return, for never again do I want to look upon your face. You have disgraced an honest father and a loving mother."

With an irate wave of his hand he shut the door in her face and she sank in a pitiful, inert heap, on the porch. I was dazed. I could not imagine what the trouble could be, but I remained silent.

"Come, Jean," I heard this stranger say, after Tom had closed the door and extinguished the hall light. "Don't give up altogether, dear. You still have me left. You shall be mine in spite of them."

With sobs that made her frame shake, she answered in a voice broken with hopelessness and despair. "Yes, Ignacio. Thank God I have you. Thank God that through it all you still love me. You must take me away now. You must marry me, or I'll die."

With her head bowed low on his shoulder, and his arm around her waist for support, he led her through the gate and silently up Riverside Drive.

After they had departed, I retired, perplexed and sick at heart. I knew something terrible had happened, but after lying awake for hours trying to solve the mystery of the scene I had just witnessed, I still failed to realize or comprehend that the first act of a terrible drama had just been enacted before my very eyes. I conjectured much, but my reader, I beseech you to do as I did that night. Stay judgment until you have perused this book to the last page. I held judgment until I had learned all. It is true I did not have long to wait, for as is always the case; the ever ready, gloating, pachydermatous scandal-mongers, who augment and hasten to pile scorn and ridicule, (with an aptness, which in itself is sublime) upon a girl who makes mistakes; made no exception in this case. With them, it matters not what she was, it is what she is under the new light of her error; which I say is a gross injustice to any girl; for it matters not, who, or what a woman may be, she is liable to error. A woman is only human, and if, in her moments of passion, she is indiscreet, then she has only traveled the path of thorns, of heart-aches and of conscience pricks, that many hundreds have traveled before her, and that many will travel after her; for *who* among us is impeccable? Yes, much through the agency of man, she will travel this same stony, in-

exorable road until that day when Jupiter's Goddess "Pandora," can retrieve the error her inquisitiveness committed in the house of Epimetheus—when she allowed all but "HOPE" to escape from the iron chest—but I fear that will not be until the end of time.

Far be it from me however, to pose as a Saint, or a Sir Galahad; or even an apostle of such errors of commission; nor am I to be here construed as apologizing for the error of Jean Eric, simply because I had the pleasure of her acquaintanceship. No, not that, for that needs no apology on my part, because since the days of mythology, many *good* women have innocently done wrong in the ways of this man-code world; and Jean Eric was only a woman; a girl rather, pulsating with the fiery blood 'twixt youth and womanhood, and it was not difficult to lead her astray; and I do *most earnestly* insist on this philosophy; that when an honest upright girl *does* error,—be the circumstances what they may—it is wrong to heap scorn upon her head, and smirch her, and kick her down deeper and lower into the degradation of misfortune. Don't sit in the drawing-rooms and around the tea-tables, those "hives and hasheries" of gossiping scandal purveyors, and denounce her; for beware of lightning; the area over which it shoots its bolt is vast, and the least tempting and unsuspecting tree is ofttimes favored with its perfidy. I seem to think that you and I, (on the last day) when we stand before the judg-

ment bar in the hierarchy of God, that we will have more stars in our own crown, if we will open our hearts and show our Christian and charitable spirit by endeavoring to ameliorate conditions by offering a hand to the fallen. But, if unable to offer a helping hand, to at least show clemency by refraining from castigating and scorning, for remember that her heart aches enough, and destiny will end all.

In conclusion I would say this: If the reader be a man or woman, and married, you will understand. If you be a young woman, and unmarried, then it is better that the last chapter of Jean Eric's courtship be not before you, for her confession, made on bended knees, was the most pitiful; and her father's denouncement was the most cruel that could be conceived by the human mind. Therefore, "judge not, that ye be not judged." If I have pleased you with the preceding portrayal, with the subsequent chapter of her father's hard words of denunciation (when he heard her confession) and the heart-breaking pleadings of Jean, and her mother, omitted; then I am satisfied. I knew this whole family. They were noble characters, every one of them, and may God bless them all.

Thanking you, I will now commence my story sixteen years after the night when I sat on my porch and saw, and heard Jean Eric thrown out upon the world, a disgraced and disowned girl; a shattered floral tribute to the malicious gales of this heartless, ethical-bound universe, to a life not

scintillating with the brightness of that life and love, which the world owes every woman; but strangely mingled with a deep pathos—not of the hellishness of any devilish aims and ambitions; but once more to harken to the inner and better self. To expiate. To suffer the penitence of egrimony, and then to abide in the stronger faith of that Divinity and eternity which wills all things; and at last to grovel at the foot of that long and stony mountain termed "Character;" and then to climb, climb, climb, till she reached its glittering summit, where she would at last find forgiveness in the eyes of her father, and reward her with an entrance to God's throne with a cleansed character.

THE AUTHOR.

PART TWO

SIXTEEN YEARS LATER

CHAPTER I.

WAR IS DECLARED.

IT WAS the late afternoon, or early evening rather, of the twenty-second day of April, 1898. The rain was falling in torrents, and although it was mid-spring, the cold piercing air of that little mountain city was as biting as a December wind. The heavy, black clouds which came scurrying in from the dark void to the northward seemed to retain their volume of water until they reached that particular portion of the city, then, accompanied by rolling peals of thunder, deluged all beneath with large ominous drops, which hurled by the violent gusts of an ever increasing wind, tattooed with threatening impetus against the panes; while in the streets the wind swished the rain hither and thither, turning lesser stalwart umbrellas insideout, and making the navigation of pedestrians well nigh impossible—at least extremely disagreeable.

In the offices of Eric, Bell & Howells, Engineers & Contractors, on the second floor of the Keller Building, an imposing brownstone and granite edifice, situated on the north side of Court-House Square, Boyce Eric, the youthful President of the company, aroused by the violence of the storm,

arose from his roll-top desk and opened a window. During the brief moment that he held it open, he observed a sight of motion and unusual commotion going on in the Square below. Already the surrounding office buildings and shop windows were twinkling with myriads of lights which commingled and sparkled with the glittering, dancing rain drops on the smooth reflecting asphalt. The vast square on all sides was an endless stream of multi-type vehicles which jostled here and intermingled there with their cargoes of home-ward shoppers.

The rain pelted atmosphere seemed to be surcharged with some invisible though latent excitement. Men were hurrying along a little faster than they were wont; not, it would seem however, on account of the terrific storm prevailing, but by some incentive out of the ordinary routine. Those who were walking in pairs seemed to have their heads close together under the shelter of an umbrella, which was practically as much use in this rain as a sieve would be; the while talking earnestly and gesticulating wildly.

"What can the excitement be?" thought he, and then above the din of the rain-splash and hoofs and wheels, "SPECIAL EXTRA! SPECIAL EXTRA! ALL ABOUT THE WAR!" he thought he heard rising from the throats of dozens of yellow cloaked, and rain soaked, paper boys, as they flittered here and there, vending with vociferous voices their rainsoaked sheets.

Boyce slammed the window down with a nervous crash, and turned to the book-keeper with a noticeable tremor of excitement in his voice.

"Jim, sure as you are living, there is something new on tap. There is an extra out, and I am positive I heard kids yelling something about war.... ....I wonder," he questioned, "has war been declared at last?"

Boyce, like most every other peaceful, amiable citizen, to whose life war and discord are painful attributes to an existence, had been awaiting breathlessly during the past two months for the final determination and action of the eminent men who represented them in the Congress of the United States.

He looked at the clock. "Twenty minutes after four." He closed his desk, grabbed his rain coat and umbrella and started for the door with long, hurried strides.

"Good-night, Jim," he said as he hustled down stairs for the street.

"EXTRA.....ALL 'BOUT WAR-TIMES," met him on all sides as he almost stumbled over three or four yellow cloaked urchins shivering in their bare feet, as they raced through the hallway, bellowing in regular bedlam.

SPECIAL EXTRA! ... WAR! ... WAR! ..WAR ... WOODFORD GIVEN HIS PASSPORTS. FLEET READY TO SAIL FOR HAVANA! read Boyce in big glaring, almost ominous, black letters, punctuated by exclamation

marks over three inches long, as he eagerly snatched a copy of the *"Evening Plainspeaker"* from the boy who, while making this sale, continued to yell at the top of his voice "ALL ABOUT DA PRESIDENT DECLARIN' WAR!" for the benefit of others now hurrying down the stairs to ascertain the truth of the situation.

When Boyce had received the driest copy the youngster had, he handed him a dime. "Keep the change ..... you poor little devil, you are soaked to the hide, aren't you?"

"Yep—and gee it's cold too, butty....Tanks for da dime," the youngster answered and hustled on.

Boyce stood in the shelter of the doorway beneath the arc light, and fairly devoured the headlines again and again, while the cold black words sent the blood rushing tumultuously through his veins, and the cold chills dancing a jig up and down his spinal column. It had been the same with every man in the country since the day when the battleship "Maine" had been destroyed and when the dark, foreboding, ominous clouds of war were slowly assembling and hovering like huge battalions of buzzards over the not too distant horizon.

Since the hour when the following, ever to be remembered cablegram, was handed to the Secretary of the Navy at Washington:

Havana, Cuba, February 16, 1898.

"Maine blown up in Havana harbor at 9.40 last night and destroyed. Many wounded and doubtless more killed or drowned. . . . . Public opinion should be suspended until further report. SIGSBEE."

there were those importunate, hot-headed,—but whole-souled—patriotic citizens, who would have precipitated a conflict on the instant, and then on the other hand there were the older, and cooler heads, who looked at the grave responsibilities, both immediate and prospective. Many of these cooler heads had seen service in the Civil War and they knew, as Sherman had said, "War is Hell," and they wanted to avert, if possible, the threatening conflict. They pleaded and admonished the most careful and sober judgment before passing sentence, and counselled the most profound and conservative action. But, while even the pessimists counselled "Go Slow," the issuance of a protocol declaring war an hour after the consummation of that terrible catastrophe in Havana harbor, would have commanded the admiration and unanimous approval of the entire American people. Yes, it would have been welcomed by every lover of peace beneath the grand old starry flag.

Immediately after the disaster the usual procedure was followed, as in all cases of casualty or disaster to national vessels of any maritime State. A naval court of inquiry was at once organized, composed of officers well qualified by rank and practical experience to discharge the onerous duty imposed upon them.

After twenty-three days of continuous labor, the finding of the court of inquiry was reached on the 21st of March, and on the 28th was laid by the President, before Congress.

During all these year-long days, the tension on the people of the country became almost unbearable. They were boiling, writhing, condemning, and to appease this importunate populace it was imperative that something must be done. And today it had come at last, and when it had been decided and declared with a practical unanimity by the eminent men in congress, who had deliberated long—but faithfully—it was sustained by a like majority, and with absolute unanimity among the people, who shouted their paeans of congratulation loudly and unreservedly, which showed where their hearts lay in the matter.

"Revenge to the last man" became the slogan on every street corner; in every pool room and cigar store; in every office, and in fact every gathering where there were men present. The women folks likewise became inoculated with the fighting spirit and discussed it with vigor, regardless as to whether it was in the drawing-room, around the festive board, on the street or at business. In every family gathering where there was a father and son, the father who had shouldered his gun in the last war, admonished his son to go. The bodies of the younger element became so permeated, so chock full of that patriotic spirit, and so imbued with that demotic hatred, that nothing short of a miracle could now prevent war. And why not so, for even Divine Providence always seemed to sanction war where

honor was at stake. The honor and glory of the Stars and Stripes which had been grossly insulted, must be maintained at any cost. Who knew what it would cost? and further—who cared? Leave that to destiny. For Destiny determines Destiny. The destiny which results from a duty which must be performed even though perils and anxiety are the prices to be paid; but never dishonor to the flag that has never yet lowered its colors or conceded a foot of ground. Such then were the feelings and emotions that became engendered in the minds of the people during those thrilling days of early '98.

"WAR!...WAR!...WAR!...MADRID GOVERNMENT HANDS OUR MINISTER HIS PASSPORTS!.. DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS SEVERED!... DEWEY ORDERED FROM HONG-KONG TO ENGAGE THE SPANISH FLEET IN MANILA BAY," read the big black headlines on the other side of the page.

Boyce could control no longer the pent up rancorous emotions which he was harboring.

"Hurrah for McKinley! Bully boy, Mac!" he shouted aloud as he jammed the paper deep down into his pocket and buttoned his rain coat up around his neck.

"Down with the Spaniards, the damned dirty scoundrels" he continued in a staid, sinister, almost ferocious voice, every word accentuated with the bitterness which he felt.

This apparent hatred, for hatred it surely must

have been, if expression of speech, and the feeling in which words are expressed are to indicate anything; for the manner in which he had said "down with the damned scoundrels" was sufficient to warrant the conclusion that he harbored a bitter feud against the Spanish race in general.

True it was, too. These feelings to which he had just given virulent, outward manifestation, were prompted by two circumstances in his young life. One on the 16th of February last, and the other back in the days of his youth.

The first, which was one, more of a national than personal bereavement, was instigated and diffused by the patriotism and sympathy he felt for the sending to a premature death and watery grave, two hundred and fifty-three brave American sailors in an atrocious and dastardly manner by these Spaniards while the Maine lay peacefully,—a symbol of friendship and good-will,—in the harbor of the capital of their Pearl of the Antilles.

The second, and chief reason, was a bereavement which touched closer to the roots of the heart, although it was in an abstract way. A bereavement however, of which he had never felt the lancinating pangs, and which was now almost forgotten. This bereavement at the most—to him—was more like a story which he may have heard his governess read from a fairy book of fables, many, many years ago; or a recollection, as it were, of a terrible dream. It was the story of his sister Jean as chronicled in

the preceding chapters. Is it any wonder then that he expressed with such irate poignancy, these deep rooted sentiments of hatred;—for the same Spaniards, who had now insulted his country, had also robbed him of a sister; broken his mother's heart, broken his father's heart,—God bless them both—and sent them also to a premature grave. But, while the act of the robbing him of his father, mother and sister, was not an act to which Spain, as a nation would have to supererogate, still it was one of her subjects, yes one of her officers; and now that the incentive had come to open up again this painful story of the past, which had for years laid dormant, he would take advantage of it, and balance both accounts with the one effort. It was his filial duty, so he felt, to avenge the death of his parents and his stolen, wronged sister, and now that the opportunity had presented itself, he would never forgive himself if he declined to accept it. He did not know that he would make a soldier, but he *did* know that he could die for his country and the love he cherished for his parents.

Now at last was his chance, for in war, and in war only lay his power to avenge without being dragged as a murderer to the court of justice. Only in this conflict lay his golden opportunity to open up the safety valves of his vengeance, for only war possesses that power which passes all chemical solvents and which breaks up the old cohesions and allows the atoms of society to attain its just equili-

brium and take on a new order, and "Yes, by the Gods, I'll go!" he continued, "I'll go or die in the effort, and not until Spain, through her soldiery, shall have given a life for a life, thereby mitigating the poignancy of the past, shall I reach my just equilibrium. Then only shall I rest in peace."

Boyce was now twenty-one years of age, and, insofar as he could ascertain, the facts as already recorded in connection with his sister, had transpired some sixteen years ago; during the days when he was but a tiny, curly-headed youngster, toddling around in jeans and knicker-bockers, with a nurse and governess always at his heels. But today it all came back quickly through the distant currents of time, as he read with a bereaved heart, and an animated patriotism, this declaration of war.

It is true, he could remember his sister only with a child's recollection, for it had all transpired so many years ago; when he was too young to comprehend; but, year after year as he grew older, he had heard a little here and a little there—still never in its entirety—of the romance of pretty Jean Eric and the suave Spaniard.

Goaded on by that perennial hatred which acted like a stimulant on his memory, Boyce recalled now one instance, when at the age of about ten or eleven —he did not remember which—but it was some time after his mother's death; that he had been paying a visit to his aunt, and one evening when he wandered into the parlor where a number of ladies were

present, he had heard them speaking about Jean. He had seen the tears trickle down their cheeks, and while he was, even then, too young to appreciate the facts, he must have thought that it was a sad, sad story. But in later years it had finally died out. The scandal-mongers, with their immaculate doggerel, had closed this chapter of life's book, and all that now remained was the dusty files on the shelves of memory of the older folks. Jean was now forgotten. Sixteen years is such a long, long time: people are forgotten and things die out quickly now-a-days. The last news of her had been received over ten years ago. Since then, not a word. No one knew whether she was dead or alive—still no one cared—except he. She had disappeared after writing that letter ten years ago, as though swallowed up by the earth, but to-night, as he made a retrospective survey over time's chasm, he seemed to realize that it was well for one, Ignacio Lopez, that Boyce Eric was not a man when all this occurred. And further, he seemed to realize stronger than ever, that wherever she might be, far or near, until she should inform him of her whereabouts, he could only reverence her in the slight child memory; that he could only feel for, and communicate with her, through the undying faith in his own soul. But now, if he could only avenge her memory by going to war against the nation, one of the subjects of whom had wronged her, then he would go, and woe be unto him that stood in his pathway.

While all these catenulate thoughts assumed gigantic form and went shooting through his mind with the celerity of a burning meteor through space, he realized that he would be seriously handicapped in his search for her, because all he had to remember her and direct him was one small, meagre picture, which he had accidentally found one day while rummaging through a trunk in the attic, long after his mother had passed away, and which contained some effects dear to Jean's memory. His father—so it was said—had destroyed everything that belonged to Jean while in his fit of rage, the night he turned her away disowned, disgraced.

This one lone likeness was one his mother must have carried around her neck or underneath her bodice, where it would be next to her heart, for she had loved Jean dearly. Many times his aunt had told him how his mother had loved his sister; how she had pleaded and pleaded, but in vain, with his unrelenting father, and had finally died from a broken heart. But even this resemblance was now faded with age and he mourned the fact that now, when he was old enough to know, old enough to sustain impressions and know the anguish of the human soul, he no longer had anything to guide him, no matter how anxious he was to hunt the world over to find her and bring her home to share with him the rights of inheritance. He knew practically nothing of her, only what had come to him second-hand by hearing others talk about her

years ago; but they did not even do that, now. He knew she must have been beautiful, exceptionally beautiful, for he had often heard his aunt say so. "What pink, rosy cheeks and what a wealth of hair—as black as the blackest night"—his aunt used to say; "and those wonderful, big, black eyes!"

Boyce had early been sent away to the University of Lehigh at South Bethlehem, to study engineering, and during the years he had been at college, he had but little opportunity to think much of her. He *did* think of her, though, many times, and seriously, too. Then, eleven months ago, his father had died. After his mother's death, his Dad, too, began to decline, and if the truth be known—if the tablets of his heart could be laid bare—it would have been obvious that he had died from egrimony and remorse. He had always loved his wife, more so—if such a thing is possible—than he did before they married. He felt remorse that the disowning of their daughter had broken his wife's heart, and sent her, while still in the prime of life, to a premature grave. But to his dying hour he showed no outward manifestation that he regretted his act towards Jean. He never spoke of her, nor would he permit anyone else to do so in his presence. His lips, where she was concerned, were forever sealed.

Then, Boyce recalled another occasion, when he was but a slip of a boy. He had returned home from another visit to his aunt and had found his father sitting on the veranda, with his head buried

in his hands in an attitude of dejected melancholy. He remembered that he had gone up to him, and said: "Dad, won't you please tell me about sister Jean? Why does she stay away so long? Where has she gone?" Then he remembered that his father had placed his big hand on his head, and answered, "Boyce, my son, you have no sister. You had one, but, alas.....she is dead." Then, after a moment's reflection, as he looked up into his father's face with wide open boyish eyes, and his father, perhaps not wishing to be untruthful to his boy, continued, "Yes, Boyce.....she is dead. Dead to me, and dead to you. Dead to all of us as far as this world is concerned. Never speak of her again, my son," and then he had patted him on the head affectionately and had given him some money, and said, "run on now, son, and buy ice cream."

When his father had died, Boyce became the sole legatee to the estate, which, while not overwhelmingly large, included the beautiful house and grounds on Riverside Drive, which he had since shared with his uncle and aunt. In addition to the home, there was the controlling interest in the firm of Eric, Bell & Howells Company, of which his father had been senior member and president, which office Boyce now occupied with exceptional ability. It was with this ultimate view that his father had sent him four years to Lehigh, that he might equip himself to perpetuate the name of Eric in the many stupendous undertakings his father had originated. In addition

to the above named assets, there was some minor real estate and some $52,000 in cash.

* * * * *

When Boyce finally stepped out from the doorway, the fury of the elements had subsided somewhat, but the wind continued to blow steadily, chasing the heavy-laden clouds off to the southward. Instead of going home for dinner, he decided to remain in town, for there was bound to be much excitement; so, after telephoning to his aunt, he strolled over to the Sextette Club to dine. When he reached the clubrooms a hundred or more members were already congregated in the smoking-room, effervescing with patriotism and singing with sonorous voices, "Get the Good Old Bugle, Boys," etc., and without more ado, Boyce chimed in with a vigor. The captain of the National Guard company was the ringleader, and incidentally, the cheer leader. They had already made preparations to send a delegation to Washington to request that their services be accepted for the war in event of volunteers being called for.

"How about you, Eric"? shouted Shorty Evans, as soon as he espied Boyce, "Will you enlist?"

"Well, I guess that's me! . . . never had a gun in my hands, but if they will take me, I *do* want to go," answered Boyce.

"Good for you, Eric," said Captain Duncun, who had overheard the remark, "You are the kind of fellows we want. Men that have as much to

sacrifice as you have and who will do it for 'Old Glory', are the men that make patriots and martyrs. That makes thirty-eight recruits outside of the regular company a half hour after war is declared."

That night in that little mountain city, like everywhere else throughout the country, from the Atlantic to the Pacific and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf of Mexico, patriotism reached its acme, which boded evil for Spain and her domains, could this young array of fighting element have shouldered guns then and there.

The very next day, after much useless persuasion on the part of the other members, Boyce settled up his business with the firm, and placed his personal affairs in the hands of his attorney, preparatory to his departure for service for Uncle Sam—preparatory to his departure, it should be said, to avenge a two-fold animosity, as he had indicated by his expression of the evening before, "Damn the dirty scoundrels!"

That morning when he told his uncle and aunt of his intention of enlisting, they reprimanded him severely.

"Why sacrifice all simply to go to war—to get an arm or a leg shot off—perhaps lose your life?" asked his aunt with tears in her eyes.

"Boyce, you are foolish. You will be giving up too much. While I deplore the calamity into which the country has been driven, why not let those go to its aid who have no work—and there are many

out of work just now—or why not let those who have none to love them, or no bright prospects in view?" admonished his uncle. "Why jeopardize your life and sacrifice the business your father worked a lifetime to establish?"

For a minute or two Boyce remained calm, but it was plain to be seen that a storm was brewing within his breast, for his face began to pale and the staid expression changed to one of Sphinx-like harshness; then, after a few minutes more of silence, he began in a calm but positive voice, through which could be discerned streaks of that devouring hatred he harbored, "Sacrifice, you say! What do I sacrifice in comparison with others? What of the two hundred and fifty-three sailors now lying in the hull of that ship at the bottom of Havana harbor? What of my sister Jean? Wasn't she also wronged and stolen by one of these same dirty, low-down scoundrels that sank the Maine? What, too, of those fettered people—the Cubans and Filipinos, who for centuries have been suffering from the incongruous indolence of this degenerate monarchy? What of them, I say? Will not any sacrifices I can make, redeem, or help redeem them from this regime of tyranny and wrong and let them too, participate in the blessings of freedom, of civil and religious liberty, education and honor, which the good God intended for all peoples? And will not their children and children's children for ages yet to come, bless such as I, who constitute

this grand, free-thinking and liberty-loving American Republic, for emancipating them from this bondage of cautelous depredation, and redeeming their country? What, then, are the trivial sacrifices of business and paltry dollars to such gigantic problems as those? No! I shall enlist, and by the gods, before I have returned, I shall have avenged my sister and my country—God bless them both—and the mothers and the fathers, and the sisters and the brothers, of those two hundred and fifty-three poor devils now in that watery grave, will compensate me a thousand-fold in honor and esteem, for any sacrifice of dollars and cents which I may make in their behalf."

After a brief silence, while his breast heaved wildly, he continued, "That, my dear Uncle and Aunt, is why Boyce Eric is going to make these sacrifices. That is why I offer my life. And why should I not? Even if I did not have a personal wrong to right, did not my ancestors shoulder their guns in days gone by when the country called? Shame, Uncle, shame, for attempting to persuade me otherwise."

CHAPTER II.

THE ASSIGNMENT.

AT nine o'clock on the morning of April the twenty-fifth, there had volunteered over seven hundred men. They had flowed into the city like water rushing from the mountain tops to the rivers and on to the ocean. They had come from the plow, the store, the mines and the workshops; from the towns, hamlets and valleys. They swarmed about recruiting stations like bees swarm around the queen-bee in the springtime. From this mass of husky, brawny youth of Young America, there was to be selected but one hundred and fifty—that is, in case they were lucky enough to procure an assignment.

At this hour most of the seven hundred who had volunteered were assembled in the drill room of the armory, and as many more in the office as could conveniently jam themselves within its limited walls, for the Adjutant General of the Army had promised the delegation that he would let them know by ten o'clock whether or not they could be given an assignment. They were chatting like a field of magpies. Where would the first blow be struck? Where was Dewey about now; who had been ordered to proceed from Hong Kong to Manila

and engage the Spanish fleet rendezvoused there? The probable strength of the army that would take the field? and the thousand and one other questions of war time that suggested themselves in rapid succession. Then some one of the crowd called upon Captain Duncun for a speech, something to break the monotony of the wait.

The Captain, after much bantering, acquiesced, and getting on a chair commenced:

"Boys, I thank you for this honor. I am by no means an extemporaneous speaker, but if a few words from me will cheer you up, then I will endeavor to do so. The old Greek, Heraclitities, said many, many years ago that 'War is the Father of all things,' and then not many years ago our own Sherman said 'War is Hell.' Now, I suppose that the 'all things' referred to by the old Greek, and the 'Hell' spoken of by Sherman, reconcile themselves very closely. But, to be more serious: This Republic is not sounding the call to arms to-day because it loves peace less, but because it loves justice more" (roaring applause). "Never in the history of the world did a nation make war with less selfish purpose. The American people, until justice had ceased to be a virtue, sympathized with their noble, whole-souled, kindly President, in the wish that this dreadful cup of bitterness be spared our lips." (Again he was interrupted by sonorous applause and yells of Right! Captain, Right). "The appalling calamity of the Maine, as you are all aware, fell

upon the people of our country with a crushing force, and for a brief time intense excitement prevailed, which we can truthfully say, to the glory of our people, in a community less just and self controlled might have led to hasty acts of blind resentment. This spirit, however, soon gave way to the calmer processes of reason, and to the resolve to investigate the facts and await merited proof before forming a judgment as to the cause, the responsibility; and then, if the facts warranted, the remedy due. This course necessarily recommended itself from the outset to our beloved President, for only in the light of a dispassionately ascertained certainty could he determine the nature and measure of his full duty in the matter. And to-day we have measured and determined that duty. No lust of military glory or territorial aggrandizement inspired our action. We tarried long and late to defer the inevitable. Then, we had been slow and sceptical to believe the oft-repeated stories of mediæval barbarities in Cuba and the Philippines, and our traditional policy was strenuously opposed to intervene in the domestic affairs of another power. A certain spirit of '*noblesse oblige*,' refrained us from striking a weaker foe, even though it be in the cause of justice; but we, after due deliberation, have taken a high resolve in the spirit which permeated our forefathers, that our blood and our treasure should be as water to stop this barbarity and remove forever the foul carcinoma of Spanish oppression and wrong." (The

Captain was interrupted while hurrah after hurrah rang throughout the building.) "And now, boys, that we have so resolved I want to....."

The Captain was again interrupted, but this time by the tinkling of the long distance telephone. Every man who owned a watch snatched for it quickly.

"That's him!" went around the room in one breath like a streak of lightning; then a silence like the grave settled down over the scene, as they listened with suspended expectancy to hear the verdict.

"Hello!" said the Captain, as he nervously picked up the receiver and placed it to his ear.

"Hello!" came the answer, faint but clear. "Is this Captain Duncun?"

"It is, sir."

"Captain, this is General ———, in Washington. It gives me great pleasure to inform you that your company has been given an assignment. Listen carefully now to my orders. You will commence to recruit a full company of one hundred and fifty men, and when the recruiting is completed, forward a copy of the muster roll to this office. There was mailed you this morning written orders for assignment to the Tenth Pennsylvania, and you will prepare to proceed with as little delay as possible to *Camp Hastings.*"

The Captain's face lit up with a broad, happy smile.

"You will," the voice continued, "report immediately, by wire, to the Commanding Officer of the Tenth, who has been advised by telephone of this assignment to his command. You will also take your future instructions from him. . . . Now please repeat this message so that there will be no misunderstanding."

"Just a moment, sir." The Captain turned to the crowd as he held up his hand. "Now, fellows, listen to me. I must repeat the orders I have just received from the Adjutant General of the Army, so please refrain from any demonstration until I have finished."

When he had repeated the message, he continued: "General, I thank you. We all thank you. There are seven hundred here in the armory this minute, and I can express heartfelt gratitude from every mother's son of them. You make us all happy and our company will give an account of itself at the front."

"Good-bye and good luck," answered the General.

"Good-bye, sir," finished Captain Duncun, as he hung up the receiver, and grinning from ear to ear, he again mounted the chair.

"Boys, we are lucky. You have heard the orders. Now, then: Three cheers for the Adjutant General; three cheers for the Tenth; three for our good luck, and three more for our great, grand, glorious country."

They needed no further invitation.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Hurrah!" rang out through this mass, which made the very foundations tremble, and then—such "goings-on;" they hugged each other; slapped each other on the back; shook hands, while some of the more enthusiastic even kissed each other.

"You fellows, report here at the armory at nine to-morrow morning. I will make the necessary arrangements for doctors to do the examining. All will be examined, but all cannot go."

The next morning when this mass of applicants reported in compliance with Captain Duncun's orders of the day before, they found four physicians prepared to proceed with the examination. The Captain had, in the meantime, received orders from the Colonel of the Tenth Regiment to make all necessary arrangements to join the regiment with the least possible delay.

Boyce was the twenty-seventh man called for examination, and it is needless to say that he passed a splendid one, for he was a perfect specimen of manhood. When the full complement of one hundred and fifty had been finally selected and were ready to be sworn into the service of the United States Army, by a Captain of the *regulars* who had been sent from Washington that morning for the purpose, Captain Duncun formed them in the drill room.

"Men," said the Captain from Washington, with that precise, confident, commanding tone of the

model officer of the regular service, "You are now about to take upon yourselves a solemn obligation. You are to be sworn into the service of the United States of America. I would add, however, before swearing you, that a finer body of men never wore the uniform of Uncle Sam. I do not say that egotistically, but as a fact, and twenty-one years' continuous service has given me sufficient experience to judge. In addition, I want to congratulate you in obtaining this early assignment for the front. Think well, however, and be sure, every man of you, from the Captain down, that you want to go; that you *can* go, without leaving in a precarious condition, any member of your family. If any of you are the only support of a mother, or a father, or a wife, I would advise that you remain here and let those who are free and unencumbered, to go. Are you all ready to be sworn?"

Captain Duncun, speaking for the company, answered, "We are."

"Very well; I will swear the officers separately. Captain Charles Duncun."

Captain Duncun stepped out from his position in the center of the company.

"Captain: Hold up your right hand and repeat after me:"

"I, **Charles Duncun**, born in **Hazleton**, State of **Pennsylvania**, age 27 years, 11 months, by occupation a lawyer, do hereby acknowledge to have voluntarily enlisted this 26th day of April, 1898, as an officer in the army of the United States of America, for a period of two years, unless sooner

discharged by proper military authority; and I do also agree to accept from the United States, the bounty, pay, rations and clothing, now existing, or which may be established by law; and I do further solemnly swear, that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America, and that I will serve honestly and faithfully, against all its enemies whosoever, and that I will obey the orders of the President of the United States, and the orders of the officers appointed over me, according to the rules and articles of war.....so help me God."

"Do you swear?"

"I do," the Captain answered.

"You will please sign the oath."

In turn the same oath was then administered to the First Lieutenant, and the Second Lieutenant was then called.

"I am afraid," said Lieutenant Harvey, as he stepped to the front, "that I will have to back out at this late moment.....for I have a wife and child to care for, so it is with reluctance that I relinquish my coveted place to some other."

The entire company was dumfounded, but they finally concluded that it was as noble, and displayed as much bravery on the part of Lieut. Harvey to remain at home and care for his family, as the actual going to the front.

A new second lieutenant must be elected immediately and several names were proposed, mostly those of non-commissioned officers, but among them that of Boyce Eric. After several ballots had been taken, Captain Duncun announced that Private Eric had won out on the last by three votes.

"Come on, boys; let's make it unanimous," said the Captain.

Unanimous it was made, and after happy congratulations, Boyce was sworn as the new Second Lieutenant, after which the enlisted strength was sworn in a body.

After the command had been instructed to keep in readiness for a moment's notice, they were dismissed—the happiest lot of young Americans that ever served for the country.

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CHAPTER III.

THE DEPARTURE.

TO those inhabitants of the country at large, and more especially to those of the county seat of Luzerne County, who retain the keener memory of dates and scenes, and whose bodies harbor still a trace of those vibrant sparks of patriotism of early ninety-eight, they will recall that the morning of May 2nd was a memorable one. A morning never to be forgotten; for it was on that morning that the following bit of news was flashed over the wires, and from the wires printed in the morning papers:

"EXTRA! FOURTH EDITION! 7 A. M.
GLORIOUS VICTORY AT MANILA!
DEWEY ANNIHILATES THE SPANISH
FLEET!"

It was also on that morning that this little mountain city sent forth her quota of warriors. Its best brain and brawn, to do battle in a war, which we know—now that it is over—was not a conflict judged by the ordinary standards of blood and money, of devastation and losses, but which marked an era in our history which was of very great importance. The war was not much to fight, but what

fighting *was done,* was done by men who were there to do or die. It showed the country and the world, the brain and brawn with which the United States is equipped, and which has made and keeps this nation great, and shows to the observing world the Stars and Stripes, floating proudly from ocean to ocean—and beyond.

The day shone forth, bright, clear and salubrious; not a cloud appeared to fleck the sunny warmth of the morning sky; making it a propitious day for a public affair. The entire population was astir bright and early and after a hurried breakfast—if any at all—hastened into the center of the town in order to obtain advantageous positions for they could not afford to miss anything to-day. They must see the soldiers off to the war.

The town, too, presented evidence of a hard night's toil, for the solid red and gray of brick and granite had been transformed to the gayest of holiday attire. Flags, bunting, and long flowing streamers floated from the residences and from the windows of all the stores and public buildings. The stores were closed; mines shut down; and the spring plowing in the surrounding valleys was put aside till the morrow. The day was unanimously declared a holiday, for surely it was an honor, and a pleasure, to be there and say farewell, and wish Godspeed to these gallant fellows who were leaving for foreign shores, to plant the banner of Stars and Stripes—Columbia's emblem of liberty and en-

lightenment—over the bulwarks of ancient tyranny and wrong.

They were called to war to maintain the principles and traditions of their fathers and forefathers; to maintain that honor and renown earned by the good, rich blood of the men who had shouldered their guns and proved their mettle in the wars since 1775; in those days when the father of our country had marshalled those sturdy battalions of hard-working, industrious, devil-may-care patriots—the bone and sinew of the nation and the backbone of the people—before Valley Forge and Yorktown.

They were going on a mission of mercy in behalf of a heroic and struggling people; a mission in behalf of humanity; to the rescue, as it were, of a distressed and downtrodden people, who had been struggling valiantly for centuries against the cruel, barbarous atrocities, oppressions and despotisms of a decaying monarchy.

The thoroughfares leading from the armory to the railway station where they were to embark, were thronged from curb to curb. People came from the country and from the surrounding towns. They came in buckboards; parties came in the old time hay wagons; and in most every other conceivable vehicle. Those near town, who did not live on the route of a trolley car, came afoot; but it mattered not how they arrived, sufficient to say they were all there. The hotel porches and windows

and every available space along the route of parade were gay with color and happy with life and enthusiasm.

The trolley cars soon had to suspend business, for try as they would, it was impossible to penetrate the importunate crowds, even with the feeble assistance offered by the police, who, it may be commendably said, did not insist very strongly, for they too, like everybody else, were anxious to see the boys off, and to shout "God bless you."

Everybody was happy. It was a day when no one cared. A day of noise, of rattle, of music, of colors and glare and blare, a day of patriotism; a day even when those who had grown unduly cynical, and who ordinarily take patriotism as a matter of course, opened up their hearts and joined in a shout and a hurrah for the boys in blue.

The children were there, too, dressed spick-and-span, in the best clothes mother could muster together, for this was a white-ribboned, gala day for them. They were happy and gay, with visions of battle scenes of their school copybooks vividly before them. There were the sweethearts of the boys going away, togged out in their best spring Sunday-go-meeting-clothes, with swollen eyes and aching hearts, which proved that most of the night had been given over to tears and prayers for their dearest beloved, who were going away to-day—perhaps never to return again.

There were also stern-faced fathers, who had

objected at first, perhaps, to their sons going away, but who now stood happy and proud that their boys were among them.

And then, last, and most concerned of all, were the dear old mothers, who, after a night of strained nerves and temporary hysteria, had fought down their yearnings, dried their eyes, and now stood waiting, silently and patiently, for their boy to come along—to throw him a kiss and a last fond look, for after all is said and done, it is *she,* that is the real hero. She is the patriot who must stay at home and ache her heart away. It is *she* who must suffer his defeats without even being able to raise a hand to his aid, except by her prayers; unable to share his victories, except in her offerings of thanks to the Almighty for keeping him safe. It is *she,* whose heart beats louder than any along the curb, as she waits for him to come along. This bone of her bone; this flesh of her flesh; this boy who before and after birth, she had dreamed of as a perfect man; and a warrior, a hero, and whom she had equipped with a clean blood and her most fervent prayers for a man's life. Yes; such is the spirit of our American mothers—such it ever was—and with God's help, such it shall ever be, for such are the mothers we must always have, if the high standard of our nation is to be maintained. The mothers of boys who can shoot, as well as write; who can ride, as well as strut around in a stiff-bosomed shirt and kid gloves on the polished floor of a ball room; and who can

even rough it, if necessary; for the manliest of men, the most whole-hearted and whole-souled and honest of men, are those who were venturesome, rough-and-ready boys, and such are the men who to-day constitute the very anchorage of the American Republic.

In the street in front of the armory everything was excitement, and when his honor, the Mayor, and other dignitaries drove up, the crowds surged back and forth like huge, undulating waves, for now the company, they knew, would soon come.

Within the armory everything was calm, quiet, almost solemn. The men had packed their blanket rolls and swung their haversacks and canteens. They were now ready, and at last the doors were thrown wide amid a mighty cheering from the assembled hosts. First came the Mayor, and then the other high moguls, and then a number of prominent citizens, who took carriages awaiting them, then came the band, and last, the company. The police opened up space sufficient for the command to form and then above the sonorous chatter of the crowd, the stentorian voice of Captain Duncun was heard as he gave the commands.

"Company: Attention! Right—dress! Front! Count Fours! Right shoulder—Arms! Fours right—March!" came the commands. At the command *March!* the band in their immaculate uniforms of white and red, swung around into line, and there arose heavenward that stirring air "The Girl

I Left Behind Me," which, when played under such awe inspiring conditions carries with it such double significance that it almost conglaciates the blood in the veins.

With the first strains of the martial music the gallant procession in their campaign hats, blue flannel shirts, warm blue trousers and hot canvas leggings, came tramp, tramp, tramping through these human lanes, walled on all sides by eager, anxious faces of loved ones, while the chills trotted unbridled up and down their spines, as the band now changed its tune to "Auld Lang Syne."

When the column reached Court House Square, a mighty shout went up, which could have been heard for ten city blocks away. "There they come!" shouted fathers as they lifted their children on to their shoulders, while the women folks climbed up on the benches which line the square, and those who were so unfortunate as not to have secured such positions of vantage, stood on tiptoes or climbed up on old boxes and benches of all kinds and descriptions. On the balconies of the several hotels facing the square, and which had been rented for goodly sums, the crowds cheered lustily and waved flags and handkerchiefs. On and on the procession came, tramp, tramp, tramp, with an easy swing to the rhythm of the martial music, with the heavy cumbersome Springfields tossed jauntily over their broad blue shoulders, as they gazed from right to left through this maze of eager faces.

When their fathers, or mothers, or sisters, or brothers, or sweethearts, at last discovered them in the line, they caught hold of their sleeves and seemed powerless to let go, and many times the men were almost dragged from the ranks. When the rear end of the line of parade had passed, the space vacated was immediately jammed by the people who followed on to the station.

The special train which was to convey them to camp was already waiting and they were immediately hustled aboard to avoid confusion.

Some thoughtful and benevolent mind had conceived a pretty scheme and had a space roped off at the station for the benefit of the relatives nearest and dearest to the men who were departing, for they conceded that *they* were at least entitled to be closer, and unmolested, than the others who had simply attended in order to see the spectacle and to shout good-bye.

After the men had gotten aboard the train and unlimbered the weight from their shoulders, they hung out of the windows, while the relatives stood close to the cars inside the ropes and bid them farewell. Sweet, and lingering farewells they were, too, for at the last moment it was hard to let them go. The mother kissed her boy, while she admonished him to be a "good boy, and always live up, like a man, to her teachings, and in difficulty to always look to God for succor." The father, with an affectionate and hearty grasp of the hand, ad-

monished, "be brave, my lad, and fight like h—l, when necessary; make a name for yourself and your country." Sweethearts did little except boo-hoo and wipe the tears from their eyes, while little brothers and sisters, with tearless eyes and a shake of their handkerchief shouted, "Don't forget a post-card for my album."

At last the time had come for the final good-bye, when the last kiss must be impressed, for the tolling of the bell and the shriek of the locomotive whistle signaled "all-ready."

"Clear the way there!" shouted the raucous voiced station guard, as he waved his hand in signal to the engineer. The engine snorted, and the wheels slipped, as the iron monster slowly found headway, while the crowds cheered and cheered lustily, waving handkerchiefs and hats, and the band started up with "How Can I Bear To Leave You," while tears trickled silently down the cheeks of most every man, woman and child.

CHAPTER IV.

A JOYFUL ORDER.

IT WAS on Tuesday, May the third, that the company arrived at Camp Hastings, situated in the rich, beautiful Conewago valley, where they joined the other companies of the regiment which had already arrived from the counties adjacent to Pittsburg.

On the morning of the 4th, the entire regiment, with Colonel ALEXANDER HAWKINS (now deceased) and Lieutenant-Colonel Barnett, first and second in command, with a complement of 34 officers and 604 enlisted men, held the first regimental review. It was a day long to be remembered, for it was the Wednesday of the great uprising in Madrid, when the Señors Campos and Moret were reported assassinated.

Slowly the Pennsylvania regiments were rolling into camp until the surrounding farms with white tents scattered far and wide had the appearance of a hostile army of invasion.

The intervening days were spent in drills and rifle practice and in various manœuvring, and in perfecting this great raw fighting machine of citizen soldiers. The days were crammed full of hard work, but with all the hardships and inconveniences,

they were very, very happy days. The Tenth had already received orders to proceed to Chickamauga Park, Georgia, for mobilization and transportation with the first expedition to Cuba, and the men were exceedingly happy, for many of the other regiments had not yet received orders to leave the local camp.

On the 14th the first engagement took place on Cuban soil, between the Marines and the Spaniards, and when the troops, lying idle in the camps, heard the reports, they too, were anxious to get to the front and into action. Scenes of breath-taking interest followed quick and thick during those days. On the 16th, when the entire Spanish Cabinet resigned, throwing the Queen Regent's throne deeper into the darkening chaos into which the destroying of the Maine had precipitated it, the hearts of the American soldiers rang loud with joy, for that was a victory more telling than the defeat of arms. Then things began to drag on; the monotony of camp life and the still greater monotony of drill, drill, drill from morning till night finally began to get tedious and unbearable, but the morning of Thursday, the 19th, brought a change.

Who, of the Tenth Pennsylvania, will ever forget that morning?

Recall had just been sounded from the morning drill, and the companies had, but a few minutes before, been dismissed. Lieut. Eric was sitting in his tent writing a letter to his uncle and aunt, deploring the fact that they were still in camp, when an

orderly he knew—who was attached to brigade headquarters—rode by. He pulled up for a moment in front of the lieutenant's tent and saluted.

"Hello, Tom," said Boyce, "What's new..... anything?"

"Good morning, Lieutenant!.....You bet. There is something new going on up at headquarters."

"Go on with you," said Boyce, smiling and waving him away good humoredly, as it got to be a joke to ask the question, "Is there anything new?" but the face of the orderly became half serious as he replied:

"No, without kidding, Boyce, there is something on the docket. They have just received a telegram from Washington. Couldn't find out what it said, but anyhow, the old man's face (the Colonel) is smiling from ear to ear . . . maybe the Tenth moves pretty soon!"

"Ah, no, Tom," Boyce answered dejectedly; "No such good luck. Why the war will be over before the Tenth gets out of this camp!"

"Oh, no it won't, either, and don't fool yourself on that. Watch out for something shortly," he said, as he proceeded on his way, and Boyce continued with his letter.

The orderly had been gone but a few moments when officers' call was sounded from regimental headquarters of the Tenth. Boyce dropped his writing, buckled on his sword, and hustled for the

Adjutant's office. When all the officers had assembled and formed in a semi-circle, the colonel came out, smiling broadly, and holding in his hand a telegram which caused great curiosity—promised even greater vicissitudes—and finally turned out to be the sensation of the camp. Slowly and deliberately the colonel put on his nose glasses and then commenced reading:

"Washington, D. C., May 19, 1898.

Orders for the 10th Pennsylvania to proceed to Chickamauga, revoked. Proceed forthwith to San Francisco, to form part of the expedition to the Philippines. Equipment will be perfected enroute. Delay means missing the Transport."

The Colonel looked up, his eyes snapping the fire of delight, but the faces he beheld were staid and uncertain, for this great news had taken them so suddenly that it required a moment to get their bearings; then, after a moment they lined up before him, their faces brightened as they had never been before, and their hearts started with leaps as they shook his hand warmly and showered their congratulations.

" Now, gentlemen," he said, "Call out your companies and break the good news to the men, and prepare to leave camp to-night. No leaves to be granted later than noon."

The news spread like wildfire throughout the camp, and in a few minutes the first sergeants of the Tenth were yelling for their companies to "Fall in." When this grand piece of news had been published

they jumped around like madmen, slapping each other on the backs and congratulating each other with that whole-hearted earnestness, like only soldiers can. Telegrams and letters were hurriedly dispatched to friends with a last good-bye.

At eight o'clock that night they broke camp, and the entire encampment, with all the regimental bands massed as one, escorted them to the railway station, and at nine twenty-seven, amid the blare of martial music and the cheering of over ten thousand loyal sons of dear old Pennsylvania—who were unfortunately still doomed to future camp life—the gallant Tenth proceeded on the first longest journey ever undertaken by any troops of the United States.

All along the route they were met by the multitudes, who cheered them on their way rejoicing. At every station throughout the country where a stop was made, the train was literally showered with flowers and garlands. Boxes containing good things to eat—and drink—and the proverbial "housewife" were distributed for their comfort. The trip through to San Francisco was one long triumphant journey. Nothing was too good for the soldier.

They arrived in that city by the Golden Gate on the following Thursday, the 26th, and were cheered and cheered to the echo, until they went into camp on the old Richmond race-track, down in the "Bay District."

CHAPTER V.

BEFORE MANILA'S WALLS.

SUNDAY morning, July 17th, was ushered in by a terrific thunderstorm, accompanied by violent flashes of lightning; and when the warriors of this second expedition, awakened as they were, by the ear splitting pealing of the thunder, and hurried to the main deck, Corregidor Island was in sight off the port bow, and joy filled their hearts to overflowing.

The goal at last, was near at hand, after thirty-one long days of sea-life, and a welcome sight it was too. For thirty-one days had the *Zealandia, Colon* and *Senator* unceasingly pushed their big black noses through the alternating turbulent and tranquil waters of the broad Pacific. For thirty-one long days had a vigilant watch been maintained, and for the same number of long days had the regiments drilled and practiced the manual of arms, and dreamed of what they would do, when once they reached their destination; when they would see and feel, with stern reality, the pictures of war, of strife and charge, of death and the grave. When they would experience the realities that flash only through the smoke and blackness of battle; when the bugle calls forth, and rifles crack, and swords

flash. For thirty-one days they had expected a Spanish flotilla to crowd down upon them like a lion leaps on a defenseless lamb, and annihilate them, and their escort, from the face of the waters. But like all the Spanish fleets, except the one Dewey put the quietus on in Manila Bay, and the other which Sampson and Schley, treated with the same remedy,—they were mere phantom fleets.

When they had commenced the last leg of their voyage—Guam to the Philippines—the voyage had commenced to grow monotonous, for it matters not how devoted men may be to a certain task, it becomes monotonous when repeated without cessation day in and day out. They were now tired of drill, drill, drill every day, and craved for the time when they could illustrate to their demonstrators, that the time spent in their instruction, was time well spent.

The rainy season had been on now for over a month, and as they plowed their way slowly through the channel north of Corregidor Island, the rain fell in such gushing torrents, that it was utterly impossible to see half a ship's length ahead.

Mess call sounded deep below on the troop deck, but not many answered it this morning, for the excitement, and the expectation of getting a first glimpse of Manila, was more tempting than the diet of bacon and beans, which in itself, was too,—like the voyage,—becoming very, very monotonous, and somewhat tasteless.

On they pushed, now at half speed, while the huge sirens screamed at intervals of a half a minute, sending forth their warnings to other shipping, which might be in the immediate proximity.

When eight bells was striking, they were well up into the bay, but still nothing was visible but the pouring rain and its splash on the glaucous waters of the bay, while, here and there, a monstrous man-eating shark would flop lazily about, or a school of porpoises, or a squealing sea-gull with its wings dripping with water, would swish across their bow.

Every soul on the ships, who were not detained below on guard, or some other necessary duty, was on the upper deck, regardless of the rain which penetrated the awnings as though the canvas was paper, and which soaked them to the hide. Around the railings, on the mast-guys, on the forecastle-head, and on the steam wenches, they swarmed like bees, humming, and preparing for the summer's harvest. They chatted like a cage of magpies, while many sang odes dedicated to the Spaniards which some ingenious mind had composed enroute, to help break the monotony of the trip.

All of a sudden, through the sombre translucent gloam, there loomed up before them some dark gray objects, and when, after a few moments, the storm had abated somewhat, and the sun broke faintly through the fast flying clouds, revealing a better view of their surroundings, some fellow shouted "The Fleet!" which was a signal for those

not already at the railings to fall over each other in getting there.

There before them, water-gray and stealthy, the gallant ships who had on May 1st electrified the world with their glorious victory, lay anchored in two long, impressive columns, and, through the avenue formed between them the three arriving transports sailed, while all dipped colors as they passed, amid waving of hats and hands, by the jackies while the soldiers shouted and cheered lustily across the intervening space on either side.

It was a gallant sight, and the soldiers were proud to look at these brave fellows, whose valor and bravery had added another glaring wreath of laurels to the many which have already adorned the American navy since the days of the gallant Farragut.

The sight of these boys who had fought first, and then calmly ate breakfast, as though the battle had been a mere exercise to temper their appetites, and not the destruction of an entire fleet of war ships, aroused the fighting blood of these yet unseasoned troops, and started anew their cravings for action—their cravings to finish that great work commenced by Dewey and his host.

At half speed, the three transports journeyed on like some victorious emperor, with his valiant army, passing in review before his thousands of applauding constituents, who had turned out to give a royal and loyal home-coming.

"Hurrah! Manila at last!" they shouted, as the city's low white buildings and high church spires, and the low flat marshy shore line, with the breakers beating against the walls of the Luneta, and the rain-soaked Spanish flags floating limply from dozens of halyards, sprang into view.

It was exactly nine o'clock when the anchor of the *Zealandia* dropped with a clanking of chains and a dull thump, when it struck the water's edge, and at last the long voyage was over, which was signaled by the shout of joy from four thousand anxious throats which ascended skyward. "Ha! Manila at last! The capital of an Archipelago of down trodden people!"

A few minutes after the anchor had been cast, the little trim, wasp-like launches from all the war ships began to gather about the gang ways of the transports, like so many vultures gathering about a deserted carcass. After a consultation between the commanders of the troops and the Captains of the fleet, with Admiral Dewey as Chairman, preparations were hurriedly perfected to land the troops as speedily as possible.

The first question however, to be answered by the fleet commander, was: "Has Manila surrendered yet?"

"No! Manila has not surrendered, and there is no time to be wasted," was the answer. And it may be said here, with all solemnity and sincerity, that no time was wasted. Even before the men had

opportunity to unlimber, yes, even before they could regain their equilibrium and get their sea-legs accustomed to the stride of walking on a quiet, level deck, they were provided with ten days' emergency rations, one hundred rounds of ammunition for their belts, and a hundred additional rounds to carry in their haversacks, and shoved ashore, with orders to proceed at once to the firing line and relieve the muchly overworked regiments, who had preceded them on the first expedition, and who had held unrelentlessly, against a far superior number, the trenches which surround Manila from the bay shore eastward beyond Malate.

The boys of the 10th, like the comrade regiments on the other two ships, took the orders joyfully, for they were anxious to obtain the excitement of real, ungarnished warfare, and although none of them had ever heard a hostile gun crack, nor the bizz of a hostile bullet going past their ear; and while most were raw recruits with not even a little National Guard experience, they started at the command "March;" with an alacrious, firm, brisk stride, as though they were already tried-and-true veterans of many battles.

That is the one noble and glorious feature in the makeup of the American citizen soldier. It matters little, whether he has experience or not, he will carry out his orders to the letter, with that dogged, do-by-God-or-die determination, which will not recognize failure. Such was the case with these

men; for it mattered little whether they had experience or not, they knew by instinct, how to fight; and fight like demons, too. They had just been taken from scenes of social frivolities to the scenes of the grim realities of war, and now that they were at last actually on the scene, the devil help the enemy.

Such at least were the feelings that filled the heart of Boyce Eric. At last he was in a position where he could avenge his sister Jean. At last he was in a position where he could do his part toward avenging the brave men of the battleship "Maine," so the orders could not come any too quick for him.

They soon learned that the Spaniards still held the walled city of Manila, and also a line of trenches extending from below Tondo, Santa Cruz, Quiapo, San Miguel and Santa Anna to the northward of the Pasig river, and also beyond Tangue, the Ermita and around to Malate on the south. They hung, like grim death onto these trenches, and also to the hope, that the much preached of, and promised fleet from Madrid, would come to their rescue before the Americans could mobilize sufficient troops to wrench the city from their grasp.

The 10th was therefore hurried on a "double-time" hike from the anchorage near Parañque, to the trenches which lay parallel with those of the enemy, stretching from the bay shore to some considerable distance beyond Malate, and which were

at present being held by the Californians and the Oregons.

The country, off to the north of Tondo, Sampolac, Trozo and Quiapo, and on the extreme north towards Malolos, was being held by the insurgents under Aguinaldo, who was operating in conjunction with the Americans, by whom he had been furnished guns and ammunition from the fleet.

During the first week after the Pennsylvanians, and the comrade regiments, had settled down to the siege of Manila, there had been nothing but hard work; formation and preparation of trenches, and building up of earthworks, with an occasional shot now and then, as some of the enemy's spies, or some of their own, attempted to pass the lines. The orders were emphatic, to hold fire unless absolutely attacked: until the plans were perfected for the capture of the city. The officers and the men were anxious to go ahead and engage them, but they cautioned, and admonished not to become impatient, for there would be much to do before Manila fell. For fourteen days and nights these blue shirted lines, stood facing the Spaniards, and digging trenches and building earthworks. The rain fell incessantly, day and night, but in the face of it all, the men would grit their teeth, then dig and dig and walk their guard duty, always soaked to the skin; freezing at night, and burning up in the day time, for there was no protection, except the meagre shelter tents. The trenches were out in the open

marshes, and when the sun would burst through the clouds for a few minutes with its violent intensity, the trenches became well nigh unbearable. But they stood it for days with that true Yankee grit without outward manifestation, but at last, the strain and suspense, was beginning to tell, and occasionally, when a Spanish bullet would come bizzing along plowing up the earth near them, and at times ripping through a target of human flesh, it was only under penalty of the most drastic punishment, that they were restrained from jumping over the trenches and storming the enemy.

Boyce Eric, especially was more anxious than the rest, and as he would walk up and down behind the men of his company, now lying flat on their stomachs, or now cease digging for a moment to wring the water from their clothing,—to be immediately resoaked;—he was tempted many, many times, to assume the responsibility, and issue himself, the order to charge. Or when he saw a Spanish officer riding along his lines, he would curse him under his breath.

"Hell!" he would say. "How long must we wait for something to do beside lie idly in these mud holes? How long are we to wallow around in these trenches exposed to the hazards of the enemy's bullets, and the fury of these damnable elements?"

Many times during those days of inactivity, this thought had shot through his mind: "Now that I am face to face with them, how many of the dirty

scoundrels must I kill, when we do get into action? How many must I kill to avenge the memory of Jean Eric? What was her life worth? How many must I kill to avenge the two hundred and fifty-three poor devils of the Maine?" Then after more silent reflection, he would shrug his big, broad shoulders, with the sangfroid of a pirate gloating over his enemy, and answer the question in his own mind thus: "As many as I can,—by God! . . . yes, as many as I can. All I can kill in a full day's action won't repay for the love of that sister."

And he did not have long to wait for the opportunity to carry out this resolution, for on the night of July 31st it came.

It was Sunday night, and a night that will never be forgotten by any of the boys who composed the regiments of the first and second expeditions to the Philippines; for amid a blinding rain, and while the fulmination of cannon was punctuated by the ear splitting claps of thunder, and the flashes of lightning which rent the Heavens, they received their first introduction to the horrors of actual warfare, and what an awful introduction it was too, to these unseasoned recruits, who had never heard a bullet as it swished by on its mission of death.

All Sunday afternoon, the sentries had observed some rather unusual activity going on within the Spanish lines. They seemed to be shifting positions, but the shift seemed to be a retreat towards Manila proper. A scouting party of the Utah bat-

tery, who had been sent out early in the morning to make a careful reconnaissance, returned with the report that block-houses Nos. 12 and 13, along the Singalon road, had been evacuated, but they had been unable to ascertain the disposition of these troops, who must have numbered at the very least eight hundred or a thousand, but, from what they could see, it seemed that the general movement was towards the thick bamboo copse and swamps, farther back to the north and west, which offered an excellent position for an ambuscade.

Orders had been dispatched to all regimental commanders to keep their men on the alert; to sleep on their arms, and to strengthen the outposts that had already been established, and to add several more at vital points. A watchful eye was to be kept, especially on the Spanish trenches to the eastward and any unusual demonstration to be immediately reported to the brigade commander.

By nine o'clock all the outposts now reinforced to twice their usual strength, had been posted and admonished to keep a sharp watch, but not to fire.

While it was true that the men, and perhaps even the subordinate officers, could not understand why the outposts were being doubled, and still orders promulgated not permitting them to commence firing unless absolutely attacked; the commanding generals knew what they were about. They alone knew the number and strength of the enemy; they alone knew that their troops, while a brave lot of

men, were not capable of engaging in a decided action, against such great odds. They rather desired,—unless absolutely forced to accept the inevitable,—to hold back, and not precipitate the final assault until the third expedition, which was now due at any time, had arrived; and then, with the additional several regiments which were coming, they would be better fortified to take a decided stand. And further: it was not only the greater numbers of the Spaniards, that the commanding generals feared most, but it was because it was difficult to determine just how the Americans stood with Aguinaldo and his insurgent army. While it was true that the insurgents had so far proved loyal, and had been furnished with many guns and much ammunition by Dewey, in order to co-operate against Spain; but suppose with their treacherous methods they should, at the last minute, change their minds and turn on *us* instead. It would put the few thousand Americans in a position so hazardous that the general in command did not wish to anticipate it. But on this Sunday night when they *were* forced to accept the inevitable, the trenches were occupied by seven companies of the 10th Pennsylvania; Battery "K" of the 3rd U. S. Artillery; Battery "A" of the Utah Artillery; and a battalion of the 23rd United States Infantry. The 10th held the extreme right of the trenches, east of the fort along the bamboo thicket.

It was a little after 10 o'clock when the corporal

in charge of outpost No. 3, which was located directly in front of the center of the position occupied by the Tenth, hurried in and reported hearing commands of the Spanish officers, which proved conclusively that they anticipated an attack, otherwise, with the drenching rain, which was falling in torrents, they would undoubtedly remain under cover.

When this fact had been reported to the regimental commander, he in turn reported to the brigade commander, who ordered that two companies of the Tenth be sent 300 yards in advance of the main trench, with instructions to dig a trench parallel with the main one in order to repel an attack, and in case the enemy did attack, to hold that trench until driven too hard, when they were to fall back to the position held by the main body.

Lieut. Eric's company was one of the two selected, and if ever a body of men were assigned to a hazardous task, this was one of the worst possible. It was pitch dark, which made it necessary to feel their way in everything they did, for it was utterly impossible in that inky blackness to see a yard ahead. With slow, cautious, muffled steps they advanced the required distance without invoking the wrath of the enemy. The rain, which had been falling all day long with but little let up, now came down in torrents, but regardless of it all, they dug and dug and dug till the bayonets piercing the graveled ground became as sharp as razors. They had gotten

down to knee depth, and the sentry on the nearest outpost had, but a few moments before reported "eleven o'clock, and all's well!" when suddenly out of the stillness of the night there came a crashing volley across the marshes, and the rifles, which they could see spitting their vehement fire through the darkness and rain, showered a perfect hail of deadly missiles into their ranks. The two companies flopped, like turtles, to their bellies, flat on the ground, while the bullets from the Mausers whistled and hummed like bees around them, and if ever there were anxious moments, if ever there was a hell on earth, it was there.

"Attention, men!" said their company commander, "Lie flat and keep your heads and bodies as close to the ground as possible! Fix your bayonets and watch the flash of their guns, and when the command is given to fire, shoot low!"

From the range of the enemy's fire and the number of flashes when their guns would belch forth, it seemed that they had deployed about 3000 men along their front, with heavy masses on the left flank. The corporal of the outpost nearest the center, reported a slow crawling advance.

"Stand by your outpost until they make it too hot for you. Return the fire, shoot low, then if you must retreat, come back quietly without firing, so as not to give our position away!" were his orders.

After an orderly had been dispatched to the main

trench to direct that no firing be done there until the two companies were forced back, thereby preventing a cross fire and cut them off, they prepared for the anticipated attack. Ah, how their nerves did tingle, and how their eyes did try to pierce that inky darkness. Crack, crack, zip, zip, zip, zip, zip, came the crackle of the scattered volleys from the slowly advancing lines, which were being answered by the steady, death dealing volleys of the outposts, who were fighting now like very demons. When the enemy had at last drawn fire from the outposts, they opened fire with their batteries. Then suddenly a bugle, sharp and piercing, rang out above the rattle of musketry and thunder, and they charged.

"Now's the time men!.....At last, your chance has come! Steady now, they are coming! . . . Steady now, men, steady! Remember when you shoot, shoot low! . . . Now steady, . . . wait for the command, don't get excited! . . . Steady now boys, keep your nerve, they are shooting high! Steady! . . . Now; by the Gods . . . Are you ready? . . . Ready! Aim! . . . Fire!" said the company commander, and 300 fiery mouths opened and belched forth, pouring showers of lead and steel, which seemed to stagger their line and check the onward rush. The men fired at will, and as fast as they could reload, and what body of men, no matter how brave, could stand before that withering fusillade?

Then suddenly there came a perfect hell of demonized shouting and firing on the right flank. "Hell's fire! Watch out Duncun!" shouted Boyce, "They are flanking us on our right!"

"Have your company take care of that flank movement, Eric, and let the other take care of the center. Retreat if necessary!" ordered his captain who had taken temporary command of the two companies. After Boyce had given the necessary commands to turn the fire to the flank, he shouted at the top of his voice. "Now boys! . . . Now is your chance to show what Pennsylvania can do! Remember the Maine!" as they poured volley after volley, steady, and with deadly effect, into the enemy's lines. For perhaps eight minutes the two companies stood the attack of this heavy mass, and after two men had been killed, and twenty wounded, they slowly retreated to the main trench, which was only reached after a desperate fight, and which at one time brought them within twenty feet of the Spaniards.

When they reached the main trench, the whole command received orders to engage the enemy, and fire by companies at the discretion of company commanders. "Break their center. Three companies of the 10th Pennsylvania deploy to the right and take care of any flank movement!" were the orders of the commander-in-chief. And again Boyce's company was lucky enough to get into the thickest of it, but still not a hair trembled, nor was there an

atom of fear in his body, for there was hardly a moment during these frenzied attacks when he thought of himself. While his innate instinct for self-preservation was predominant, he had implicit faith and confidence in his dexterous use of the revolver and sword he held in either hand, and the extra revolver in his holster. Jean, though, was foremost in his mind at the present time. At last she was being avenged.

The three companies designated climbed out of the trenches and with a wild yelling and cheering, which in itself put the fear of God in the enemy's hearts, and which could be heard a mile away, they charged; and in the face of a raking fire at will, the Spanish flank movement was driven back, while the other companies broke—for the second time—their center. During a lull of perhaps three minutes, the enemy remassed, and then again they charged, this time on both flanks, but a second time they were driven back with great losses to their lines. They then retreated to the thick underbrush about Malate, still maintaining, however, their massed formation, and kept up an incessant cross fire on the trenches to which the Americans had again retreated, until reinforcements could arrive.

The 1st Colorado was the first to come to their assistance, with the Nebraskans close at their heels, and they were hurried on a double-time to a position on the extreme right to assist the 10th to repulse the mass on that flank. After the lines were

thus reconstructed, and additional ammunition supplied, orders were passed quietly from man to man to prepare for a final charge, for that deadly cross fire which was harassing their front must be silenced. Bayonets which were already fixed were examined to be sure they were secure, for they were to be used now for the first time to pierce human flesh, and the sharpness they had acquired in digging trenches made them prime for the purpose.

"In the charge, companies will fire at will! . . . Ready! Charge!" came the laconic orders, and hardly before the words were out of the commander's mouth, the men had climbed out of the trenches and away they went like a tribe of Indians.

It was quite evident that the Spaniards had not anticipated this initiative on our part, for before they could swing into position to repel the attack, the Nebraska regiment and the 10th, who had already borne the blunt of the attacks, were upon them, pouring in a raking fire, while the 23d regulars and the batteries of the regular and Utah artillery peppered unmercifully their center.

The fight was at its height; the men were yelling with raucous voices and firing as quickly as they could, while now and then the crackle of the rifles was punctuated by the groan of a brave fellow who had been hit. Suddenly as Boyce was exchanging the revolver which he held in his hand, and which had become too hot to handle, for the extra one he had

in his holster, a Mauser ball came zipping along and grazed his left arm, which, while only a mere scratch—luckily enough—infuriated him like red infuriates a bull. His company was at present engaged in trying to dislodge the enemy from a trench which they held with dogged obstinacy. "Come on, fellows!" he shouted. "We must root them out of there!" as he leaped forward and with a half dozen strides reached the trench, and now, when the Spaniards saw this daring and nerve, they ceased firing and began climbing out of the trench to escape, but alas for them, they had tarried too long, for Boyce and his followers were already upon them. In one grand leap the Americans cleared the trench and got between them and the avenue of escape. Boyce held his long heavy Colt in one hand and his heavy razor-like war sabre in the other, and as a Spaniard climbed up out of the trench, he would fire, and shout with a vicious yell, "Down, down, you dirty scoundrel! . . . Take that!" Crack went his revolver and down went his man. "One!" he shouted with fanatical glee. Crack it went again. "Two!" he laughed fiendishly. "Three! Four!" and so on he shouted till his revolver was empty, when he brought his sword down with Herculean drives on their heads, and every time his revolver answered to the pull of the trigger, and every time he swung his sword, his aim was good, for even though it was pitch dark, a groan and a dull thud answered his efforts. "Ha, ha! . . . Eleven, I

am positive of!" he shouted at last like a crazy man.

For three terrible hours this battle had waged, and it was certain that, had it been daylight, the Spaniards would have been driven from their suburban stronghold to the very walled gates of old Manila.

When the bugles had at last signaled "Cease firing," and they returned in triumphant glee to the trenches, the roll was called, but alas! the roll-call was answered forever by many of the boys; for the result showed that twenty-six brave lads had laid down their lives, and eighty-seven more had been terribly mangled in this, their introduction to the sad realities of war. Six killed and twenty-six wounded was the report of the commanding officer of the gallant 10th Pennsylvania.

CHAPTER VI.

MANILA FALLS.

THE third expedition—consisting of five regiments—at last arrived, and with the troops thus strongly reinforced, the lines around Manila were, day by day, drawn tighter and tighter. There were constant skirmishes, but the Spanish stronghold persistently declined to surrender. On August the thirteenth, at seven o'clock in the morning, Admiral Dewey sent an officer, under a flag of truce, with a letter advising the Captain-General in command of the Spanish forces that if Manila was not surrendered, and his flag hauled down within an hour, he would bombard the city and take it by force. And that day, let it be said, was one of the wildest the inhabitants of Manila ever experienced. The news flashed throughout the city like a prairie fire. When the Spanish General announced to the already crazed people that he did not intend to surrender, and that he and his troops were prepared for any demonstration on the part of the Americans, stores were immediately closed, shutters and doors bolted tightly, and the streets became deserted. All the foreigners were advised to seek shelter wherever they could find it.

Aside, however, from the chaos that prevailed in the city, and the fact that the taking of Manila did

not require very strenuous efforts on the part of the Americans, there were, however, several melodramatic elements associated with its fall; for, notwithstanding the fact that the Spanish General declined to surrender peremptorily, and while his forces made a somewhat showy resistance against the American advance flanks, it was not difficult to foresee that surrender would result after a display by the land forces sufficient to satisfy Spanish honor.

When Dewey had received the negative reply, orders were issued that the land troops would *not* attack the trenches, but to quietly advance after the bombardment had ceased. At the last moment, however, this programme was changed, and orders issued that the land batteries would open fire simultaneously with the fleet, and the advance upon the trenches would be commenced as soon thereafter as it was considered practicable.

There were nine battalions of the 1st Brigade under General MacArthur in the fighting line, with three battalions held in reserve, while eight battalions under General Greene were in the trenches across Calle Real and on the shore of the bay, with three more battalions forming the reserve.

Everything was quiet along the lines, and every man that was in a position to do so, craned his neck above the breastworks to see when the fleet would start. It was shortly after eight o'clock when they were rewarded with as grand a sight as ever man's

eyes beheld, for with the flags mastheaded, the fleet got under way, and at ten minutes after eight the Olympia, followed closely by the Raleigh and the Petrel, came on in battle formation, while the little Callao and the Barcola crept in close along the shore.

A perfect stillness pervaded the air, and held every man on both sides in heart-breaking suspense; one side in that utter tranquil suspense of seeing his flag advancing in glorious triumph, while the other side, with that poignant subconsciousness which smites, when they saw their flag, to which they were yet loyal, sulking in the shadow of its downfall. Not a man spoke as the great ships, already cleared for action, advanced in a terrific rain.

At nine forty-five there came a puff and a roar, and then a cloud of smoke, which shone green and white against the gray background of the stormy sky which was hovering far out over the bay, and which completely hid the Olympia, while a shell, screaming like an attacking eagle, came tearing across two miles of turbulent waters and burst near the fort at Malate, while the other ships opened a terrific fire on the trenches towards the shore end. In the heavy rain it was impossible for the gunners to get the proper range, and the first half dozen shells fell short of their mark; but finally, when they did obtain the exact range, the fort was soon made untenable, while the four batteries of artillery

drove the Spaniards from the swamps and bamboo copse off to the north and east of the fort.

While the Spanish batteries about Fort Santiago, and those stationed along the Luneta, answered feebly, their infantry and field artillery replied with much spirit.

Anxiously the boys of the 10th waited for the advance to begin, and soon the orders came. All along the American line the volleys rang out clear and true. After three or four volleys had been fired, six companies of the California regiment, unable to hold themselves longer, leaped over the breastworks, and, followed quickly by the others, they made a determined dash into the swamps, permeating the Spanish lines with the horror of those blood-congealing yells they had heard to their sorrow on the night of the thirty-first, all the while firing as they advanced, now in squads, now in sections and then in companies and battalions. From behind trees and hedges, and at other times, when the firing became too hot, lying flat on their bellies to reload, and then, with another wild yell they pushed on. This nerve and daring was too much for the Spaniards, and they broke.

"There they go, fellows! . . . they're beating it now!" shouted some one. That was a signal for the troops along the bay front, and at eleven o'clock they tore down upon the fort, annihilating those of the enemy who in the stampede had not escaped, dragged down the Spanish flag and hoisted

the Stars and Stripes; and then the whole line came rushing like an avalanche down Malate, through the streets and yards and over fences, through the Ermita and on down Calle Real, down which the Spaniards were flying like the wind, never turning once to fire. On they came, until the 10th Pennsylvania and the Californians rushed on to the open Luneta.

At this moment there was a sudden cheering off across the Paco district towards Tanque, and then came the Spaniards rushing pell-mell in full retreat, followed by the yelling insurgents under Aguinaldo. The Americans formed quickly behind the benches, walls and hedges along the Luneta and opened a pernicious fire upon the broken and demoralized lines. In less than five minutes the white flag was hoisted and Manila was at last ours. Several officers of the Spanish army were seen advancing from the walled city under a flag of truce, bearing a letter from the Captain-General desiring to know the terms of surrender. "Unconditional, now!" was the laconic and peremptory reply.

Arms were then stacked on the Luneta, and at three o'clock General Merritt entered the walled city amidst glorious triumph, while the dazzling banner of "Bright Stars and Broad Stripes" was hoisted to the pole and the bands played "The Star-Spangled Banner."

* * * * *

Boyce Eric stole silently away from his comrades and walked along the bay front a little ways, then,

facing out over the waters of Manila Bay, he stood in silent meditation, trying to co-ordinate his thoughts; then, solemnly removing his tattered campaign hat, he gazed off over distance's chasm to the sky that was then hovering over the little mountain city in Pennsylvania. "Jean! Jean!" he murmured softly, solemnly. "Listen to my soul as it expatiates in the skies with my message. Oh, that I could write it to you! but alas, it is useless to look for a messenger to carry it to you; for, Jean, I am afraid that you have passed that Styx, the road to which no mortal messenger has access! But Jean, wherever you are—whether living or dead—you have this day been avenged. My every thought, dear, was of you! I am rewarded! Yea, I am satiated! With a full, clear conscience that my duty is done, well done, I can now rest in peace; and may the good God, in His infinite mercy, bless and rest forever the souls of the poor devils who had to pay the penalty!"

CHAPTER VII.

AN HONOR CONFERRED.

IT IS not the intention to chronicle in these pages all the varied experiences, hairbreadth escapes and extremely thrilling adventures of Boyce Eric's sojourn in the Philippine Islands, from the day Manila fell to the days when it became necessary to fight southward over this same ground against Aguinaldo and his insurgents, all of which, however, would furnish data sufficient to write a book worth reading. But it is rather the intention to narrate from the day when an honor was conferred upon him by the supreme authority of the archipelago, and which eventually led up to the day that subsequently turned out to be the most momentous of his life, and which changed his whole career from that time forth; to the day when the intrigues of a flirtation stepped in, which ended in a misery for which few people in the world have little, if any, sympathy.

* * * * *

The United States Military Governor of the new civil regime being formulated throughout the archipelago during 1899, having been advised personally, and in many reports, of the exceptional ability as a civil engineer of Lieutenant Boyce Eric, of the 10th

Pennsylvania Infantry—but now on detached duty as assistant to the chief engineer officer of the Division of the Philippines—dispatched his aide-de-camp to inform Lieutenant Eric that the Governor desired his immediate presence at headquarters.

When the aide arrived Boyce was busily engaged in completing a drawing of Fort Santiago for the Division Commander. He hurried through with the work, and then in turn hurried to the Governor's office, and when he had been ushered into the presence of his dignity (an honor, by the way), the Governor was astonished at the youthfulness of this officer, who, after but a year and a half of military service, bore a reputation to be envied by many a decorated veteran.

"Lieutenant," began the Governor, "you have been most highly recommended to me by your Division Commander, not only personally, but in many reports to these headquarters, as an exceptionally efficient officer, and I am also informed that you are a graduate of the University of Lehigh as an engineer."

With unconscious pride Boyce acknowledged that he had that honor. The Governor-General must have had great faith in the recommendations received, for he proceeded without further preliminaries, as though Boyce was an old adviser in matters of grave importance.

"Mr. Eric," he commenced, in a low, precise, convincing voice, "it is with great satisfaction that the

United States authorities, in due consonance with former promises, see fit to establish a civil government in these islands, by which the municipalities of the towns and cities are to be established and governed in the future. The laws, codes, edicts, etc., which have been recently promulgated, and of which you have no doubt received a copy, have been inspired not only by a genuinely liberal spirit, but with the principles of autonomous government. It is to be self-educating; it is calculated to urge the inhabitants of these islands in the path of true progress if, of course, they show by inclination to be desirous to understand their duties as free citizens, and make legitimate those of their privileges we propose to extend. For the first time, Mr. Eric, in the history of the Philippines, the people are to exercise the right of suffrage in the election of municipal officers . . . a right only slightly restricted by conditions which have been imposed for the purpose of rewarding, as well as encouraging, the people in their just and natural aspirations to become educated and worthy to enjoy all the benefits of civilization.

"But, Mr. Eric, the great and most difficult problem facing me in the consummation of this gigantic undertaking is to find proper men to assist—men who possess professional ability—for it is only natural that for some time to come we Americans must lead the way and teach our inexperienced constituents. I am informed by your Division Commander

that your regiment will be shortly ordered to the United States for muster out, as the regulars are rapidly arriving to relieve them, and I have sent for you to invite you to remain in the islands—for a time, at least—and accept an appointment with this new government. I had in mind your appointment as consulting engineer, or head of the Provincial Supervisors, which would be a position similar to that as assistant to the chief engineer officer of the military division, which you now hold, but with considerable more remuneration attached. There will be much to do for a good engineer officer. The roads and bridges throughout the archipelago are in the last stages of dilapidation, and it is a chance of a lifetime to make a name—a reputation . . ."

The General ceased speaking while he answered the telephone at his elbow; then, after a few moments, looked up. "What do you think about it, Lieutenant?"

To Boyce the honor conferred was extremely tempting, and his brilliant mind already saw the great possibilities in this rich, undeveloped country; still, he felt as though he had about as much of the islands as he cared for. The purpose for which he had come had been completed, and now he wanted to return home. He wanted to go home with his regiment. To come marching up the street—the main one, of course—a hero, while the bands played "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" and "There'll be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-night"

—to see the old town dressed once more in its gala attire, and to see the beautiful sweethearts, loving mothers, proud fathers and sisters and brothers blush and wave their handkerchiefs the same as they had done when he had marched away. And then, too, he wanted to get back to his business again.

But the Governor must have his reply—his answer. A plea for time to consider the proposition was granted.

The next day, however, Boyce called to inform the Governor that, after due and considerate deliberation, he considered it a duty which he owed his country to offer his services, and that he would accept the honor conferred for a period of one year, if that would be satisfactory to his Honor.

"Thank you, Mr. Eric! You are to be congratulated"—the Governor extended his hand warmly—"both on your patriotic spirit and also on your display of good judgment."

* * * * *

The Governor being cognizant of the great underlying and undeveloped wealth of gold, magnetite and sulphur, and the abundant forests of mahogany and many other valuable hardwoods centered in the provinces of Pangasinan, La Union, Pampanga, Zambales and Vizcaya, appointed Boyce supervising engineer over that vast territory, with headquarters at Lingayen, the capital of Pangasinan Province, a town with a population of some 19,000 inhabitants.

Other than the American troops, there were few Americans in Lingayen, but those which were there, augmented by the families of the subordinate native officials of the municipality, formed a very select and exclusive colony.

Boyce made his home with the American postmaster and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Maxwell Thebaut, a charming young couple, natives of Atlanta, Georgia, and whose beautiful home, with its wide expanse of tropical gardens, was situated on the very edge of the Lingayen Gulf, and which was rented from a former general of the Spanish army.

When Boyce had received this important appointment, he entered into his new duties with that push and vigor characteristic of Americans. He worked hard and long, day after day. Old bridges were rebuilt and new ones erected. The streets of the principal towns were surveyed and macadamized. Beautiful and attractive parks replaced the cold, open, barren native plazas, and in all the provinces over which he had supervision the municipal conditions were rescued from the lethargy into which they had fallen during the centuries of Spanish regime of absolute neglect, and brought to a high standard of efficiency.

* * * * *

The year which Boyce had agreed to remain in the islands was now fast nearing a close. One day, when returning from an inspection of some work in Dagupan, he found a letter from the Governor,

advising that he would arrive on the transport "Ingalls" on a tour of inspection. When the Governor had arrived and carefully inspected the work, he was loud in his commendation of the magnificent results which Boyce had achieved.

During that afternoon, when he found an opportune moment, he informed the Governor that his year was nearly completed, but his "Dignity" would not now hear to him leaving. He expostulated with him thus: "Mr. Eric, I shall miss you very, very much if you should leave me now. Why not remain to complete this great work which you have commenced? Why do you desire to go?" For the moment Boyce could think of no ready reply, and the Governor continued: "Is it the salary? If so, that will readily be adjusted . . . as a matter of fact, I have already recommended to the commission that your salary be increased to five thousand dollars."

After Boyce had recovered from the flattering remarks of the Governor, he replied:

"No, Mr. Governor, it is not a question of salary, but I just want to go home."

"Listen, Mr. Eric. If you are tired working and discontented, why not take a vacation for a month or two? Go to Manila and look around again. The city has been improved a hundredfold since you left it. And then, too, the annual fair begins next month, which will last for a month. Take it in, and then, if you feel so inclined, take a jaunt over to Hong-Kong. You will get some of the pure

ozone from the ocean into your system; that cool, invigorating and rejuvenating air; it will make you feel like a new man. Just one more year—it won't be long going by."

With this adulation the Governor again won him over, and before the "Ingalls" sailed for Manila it was agreed that Boyce would take a two months' vacation and then come back with renewed vigor and finish the great work which he had commenced.

That night Boyce wrote long and late, to a number of old friends who had served with him in the trenches around Manila, and who were now affiliated with the government in various capacities. He advised them that he anticipated a vacation to Manila to take in the *fiesta,* and suggested that they all join and have a glorious reunion of the fighting 10th.

In due time answers were received and the itinerary elaborated.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VACATION.

IT WAS a little after five o'clock. The dazzling effulgence of the great golden sun had already brushed away the morning mists, and was just commencing to stream through the windows as it rose in all its glorious majesty from its couch far off over the blue-crested Zambales, on one of those serene, cool, delightfully exhilarating Philippine mornings, flooding the world with the radiance and glory of its presence.

It was one of those calm tropical mornings in December, when nature, with glorious tranquillity capriciously scatters in her own way her golden secrets to inspire, tempt and intoxicate the senses. One of those mornings which words are inadequate to describe, but which will be readily recognized by those who have lived part of their lives beneath a tropic sky.

Not a soul on the whole island of Luzon welcomed this particular sunrise more than did Boyce, as he gleefully, and with light foot and lighter heart, bounced out of bed; for this to him was the day of all days—the day he had been waiting for so long. The day when the promised vacation commenced. The day when he could lay aside, for a

time at least, the cares and worries of business. The day when he started for Manila, the metropolis of the archipelago, for a rousing good time.

He stood before the window a few exquisite moments, drinking in the sweet sunshine and cool, refreshing air, as he gazed calmly over nature's wondrous works.

"Golly!" he finally said, "nature is surely in love with itself this morning!"

As he gazed silently off over yonder fields and meadows towards the Zambales, lying majestically beyond the small stretch of the corner of Lingayen Gulf, he saw windows opening and the natives already moving about.

Whole nests of hamlets on the rising uplands were just awakening as from a dreamless sleep to a new life of joyous activity.

Even the little silver-throated birds in the treetops seemed to thrill sweeter carols of praise than he had ever noticed before. Oh, how happy he felt just now! His whole being was charged with a tranquillity never before experienced; for he stood well in the estimation of his superiors, and to-day he was going to start on a little recreation trip, and then come back once again to these rolling uplands and finish the great work he had commenced, evidences of which met his gaze on every side.

As the god of light rose higher and higher in heaven's dome, the old spire on Lingayen's lone church and convent and its dilapidated, rusty, vine-

covered walls, caught up the flying sunbeams, and, twisting them into the millions of gorgeous hue of the rainbow, threw them broadcast, with golden welcome, over all the land. Gentle breezes, fraught with the rich spices of that ever-mystic East, filled the rude sails of the hundreds of little fishing smacks just starting to the banks for the daily catch.

The silvery ripples danced and pranced like so many diamonds over the edge of the gulf where stood the picturesque and cosy home of the Thebauts, and where Boyce now stood gazing from the window.

After a little he stretched himself luxuriously and said aloud, as though addressing the perpetual panorama of nature unfolded before his eyes:

"Oh, I am so happy! I feel so good and contented now! . . . What a propitious morning this is to start on a vacation!"

You will hear women say—and at times, perhaps, truthfully—that men are more vain and conceited than the fair sex; to which, of course, men reply, "Absurd—how very, very absurd!" Still, some ten minutes after Boyce Eric had paid respectful homage to the rising sun and nature's wondrous works, he stood before his mirror, and, from the expression on his face, it is fair to presume that he would *not* have considered it absurd had the mirror said, "Boyce Eric, you are really a big, handsome fellow!"

He gazed silently a moment or two at the reflec-

tion of five feet eleven inches of robust, muscular, athletic avoirdupois; his features of classical regularity, chestnut brown wavy hair, deep, lustrous gray eyes, and the pink which the cold shower had painted in his sun-browned cheeks, and which would have won the envy of most debutantes, had they seen this natural healthy color; and from the gratified expression which slowly spread over his countenance, he was evidently satisfied with himself.

Call it egotism if you will, but for any conceit that might be circulating through his young veins we will pardon him, for withal he was a big, brave, boyish man; a gentle and jovial fellow, highly respected by all, and a lion in the little circle of society in Lingayen. But while he was young, there was intermingled in that boyish and good-natured make-up a certain reserve and dignity which seemed to suit the gravity and sweetness of his voice and his temperament. There is that unnamable but ever-apparent something about the whole boy which it was impossible to see while he stood in the trenches, and which now seems to have a mesmeric charm that can be easily felt and, as a whole, he is a fellow to whom Americans in this land fitted for anything —except white men—could look up at with a joyous pride and say, "There is a specimen of the magnificent American manhood of which America and Americans are justly proud."

After admiring himself for a moment or two

more, he then, for the second time within the last half hour, addressed his reflection in the mirror:

"I suppose, Boyce, after all, you *are* a pretty good-looking chap! People say so, anyway; still, people sometimes tell fibs—but my mirror, . . . never. I suppose you will cause some stir when you arrive in Manila and meet some of those fair señoritas. Ah, but maybe, Boyce—you won't be lucky enough. Oh, well . . . !"

He did not finish what he had intended, but started in dressing, and after he had finished he sat on the bed wondering whether he had packed everything essential for a two months' trip, when a rap came to the door.

"Come right in!" he said.

Max and Mrs. Thebaut entered with a pleasant "Good-morning, Boyce!"

"Good-morning!" he answered pleasantly. "Have a chair."

"All through packing?" inquired Mrs. Thebaut.

"Well, really, my dear, I don't know whether I am or not. I was just sitting here trying to think whether or not I have packed everything I shall need. It is usually the case—at least I find it so—that after a person has started on a trip, they finally discover that the most important articles they wanted to take have been forgotten. Like the old woman," he laughed, "when the fire broke out, instead of grabbing her money and jewels, she grabbed the worthless old parrot and ran."

"Well, now . . . let me see if I can help you to think of something you may have forgotten," said Mrs. Thebaut, as she bent over the two grips and tried to figure out what a man would need on a two months' trip.

The two men looked on while she arranged things more neatly and artistically and put on the finishing touches. Those odds and ends, don't you know, which only a feminine hand can add, and which make the slipshod, haphazard packing of the ordinary man look like the work of a novice. When she had finished, Boyce strapped them up.

"Well, that's done, thank the good Lord, and . . . you too, Mrs.," smiled Boyce.

"Now . . . how about your money? Got that safe and sound? For that is an essential that absolutely cannot be forgotten," said Max.

Boyce looked quickly up from the grips with a smile.

"Well, you can just bet your life, Max, old boy, that I have the money!" as he drew from his pocket a long morocco wallet (a gift, by the way, from Max) and proceeded to count the allotment for the vacation.

"There is one hundred!" as he laid down on the bed a crisp new hundred-dollar bill. "And there are . . six fifties . . . and one, two, three, f-four, five twenties; and . . . twelve tens, and a lone fiver—six hundred and twenty-five. Think that will be sufficient to burn up Manila and Hong-

Kong for two months, considering I go a little easy?" he questioned as he looked up.

"Well, Boyce," answered Max, "If you are asking my opinion, I would say that it is about four hundred too much." He laughed and continued, "You know money is the root of all evil, especially for young fellows."

For a few minutes these three joked and laughed, first at one thing then another, but mostly at the expense of Boyce and his trip; then suddenly Max asked:

"Boyce, there is another thing I would like to suggest, and blamed if it didn't nearly slip my mind . . ."

"Yes," said Boyce, all attention.

". . . did you put your revolver in your grip?"

Boyce looked up sharply, quizzically, to ascertain whether his questioner was serious or not, and for a moment he did not answer, but after another brief moment asked:

"What are you doing? . . . Kidding me, Max? Why, no; certainly not. The idea! Now, what the deuce do you suppose I would want with a revolver when going on a holiday jaunt to a city where there are enough police and soldiers to inhabitate a young city in itself? "

"Well, now, listen, and I'll give you my reasons why," resumed Max, assuming a serious attitude, the while pointing a warning finger at Boyce. "Remember, young fellow . . . you are going to a

mighty gay city when you are going to Manila. I might say, if Mrs. Thebaut will forgive the French, a damned wicked city, and you know it as well as I. You also know that this is going to be a month of festivities, when you will come in contact with people from all over the globe. A city where all the crooks in the Occident especially have congregated this month for the sole and express purpose of picking pockets and fleecing all the poor innocent lambs who might venture within their fold." He hesitated a second or two, then continued with a smile: "Now, Boyce, far be it from me to consider you a weakling or a coward, but take a fool's advice and take your revolver along. It is not very heavy and will take up but little room, and while, as you say, you probably will not need it, still it will do no harm to have it with you. You will feel far safer, for in might there is fight . . . and in a fight you'll be right."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Mrs. Thebaut. "Boyce, you just must take it along after that speech. Did you observe the rhythm in that poem of prose? Really, Max, you have missed your vocation, for it appears to me you should be on the vaudeville stage rather than in the postal service of Uncle Sam."

After all had a jolly good laugh at her remarks, she too became serious all of a sudden.

"While I feel that my pessimistic husband is a little too serious about your welfare, and places far too much stress on the revolver question, yet he is

my lord and master, and really, Mr. Eric, I must agree with him. Do take it along."

While Boyce was conscious that the advice was offered in all sincerity, he could not see the necessity of firearms as they seemed to see it. While he was young in age, he, however, considered himself the rich possessor of the old man's habit of taking things as they came and adapting his conduct to any circumstance which might arise.

He had been educated in a university and had traveled much the last few years, and had daily come in contact with all manner of people, and then he had been a soldier, and he knew that he was always cool, deliberate, determined, having much faith in his own ability to take care of himself; and, to make him more bigoted, that faith had never yet been disappointed. But in order to satisfy them he acquiesced with his best grace, unstrapped his grip and tucked the revolver neatly into the corner, with but little thought to its subsequent need, but with a full knowledge that if needed, it would stand him well, for he knew he could trust it to do its duty. He fairly loved that mass of blued steel, if a man can possibly love anything mechanical, and it had served him faithfully through a year and a half of soldier life; and more, it had a greater fascination than that, for it was the implement with which he had avenged Jean.

At last, after everything was completed, this trio, light-hearted and gay, sat down to a dainty

breakfast, but Boyce did not eat much. Despite the protestations of the Thebauts, he could not eat more. He was too excited, and reminded one more of a youth going to a circus than a man going on a vacation. He could already imagine himself behind a pair of dazzling black Australian ponies, spinning up and down the Luneta along the bay front, or lounging in the cafe of the Hotel Oriente, mingling with that gay, care-free crowd, or at the La Pas Theater, or the Alhambra, or a dozen other places dear to his heart in this city, where the happiest days of his life had been spent.

When it came time to go, Max and Mrs. Thebaut drove with him to Dagupan—some eight miles distant—where he got the train on the only railroad at that time in the archipelago.

After many handshakes and good-byes, the train speeded (?) on its way, and Dagupan slowly faded in the distance, neither of these three ever dreaming that this morning would be the last they would ever see of each other—for life is so uncertain—and that ere another twenty-four hours had slowly ticked into oblivion, the ways of the world would separate their various walks of life; for the pendulum of life swings violently and very uncertain, and fate plays many unexplainable tricks on this frail humanity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE HOTEL HUNT.

WHEN the train arrived at San Fernando, an intermediate station along the route, the fellows who were to accompany Boyce on the trip were there, and a happier crowd could not be found the world over, and of course it is needless to add here that they surely had one grand reunion.

Train service during those days not being noted for its celerity of motion, they arrived at Manila about four hours late that afternoon, a tired and dust-ridden, though happy crowd.

The *fiesta* had started two days previous, and the streets were a congested mass of happy humanity, cosmopolitan in aspect, amidst a profusion of decorations. American, Spanish, French, German, Japanese and Chinese flags fluttered from the windows, and Chinese lanterns hung here and there in vast profusion. After much fussing and hustling in the hot, stuffy station of the Manila and Dagupan Railway Company, also after a lot of good American jocundity had been spent and not any too little swearing at the snail-like progress of getting their baggage through the routine of sleepy, indolent officials, this happy-go-lucky bunch of young

American sports hailed several *carramattos* and directed that they be driven post-haste to the Hotel Oriente.

"Si, Señor, Yo sabe!" (yes, sir, I understand) answered the cochero, as he started lashing and kicking his pony, headed for the hotel, some five blocks away, but which, on account of the people, who had overflowed the narrow pavements and flooded the streets, required three-quarters of an hour to negotiate.

Finally arriving at the hotel, the corridors of which were congested with charming women and a sprinkling of men, mostly officers of the army and navy in their gorgeous uniforms, and here and there a member of the diplomatic corps of some foreign country, they pushed their way through to the office.

Fred Sutcliffe was the first of the party to reach the register, and as he dropped two heavy suitcases to the floor said, with a sigh of relief, as he mopped the perspiration from his forehead:

"Great Cæsar! I'm mighty glad that's over!" then, going to the register, he took up the pen to register, addressing the clerk at the same time:

"Rooms for six of us, please."

The clerk smiled sadly, and threw up his hands dejectedly, with that characteristic nonchalance of the Spaniard, as he said, slowly: "Jammed to the doors, sir, jammed! I am very, very sorry, but it is impossible to accommodate you."

"The devil you say!" ejaculated Sutcliffe, deject-

edly. "In a place the size of this, you are unable to find room to tuck away six of us?"

"Ah, sir, we regret much more than you that the house is not twice as large, for even then we could have rented every apartment."

By this time the rest of the fellows had pushed and jammed their way through the crowded corridor, and now reached the register. When told the existing conditions which confronted them, disappointment was no name for their feelings.

"I suppose," said Sutcliffe, "we have overlooked the most important factor of our trip by not securing hotel accommodations in advance. Why the deuce didn't you think of that, Eric?"

"Can't do anything at all, you say?" questioned Boyce of the clerk, disregarding Sutcliffe's question.

"Nothing—absolutely nothing, sir. I'm sorry, except . . . just a moment, please," requested the clerk, as he turned to the room clerk.

"Domingo, how about No. 8, right corridor, first floor? . . . still empty?"

After turning over the pages of a large, cumbersome book which lay open before him, he replied, "Still unoccupied."

"Now," said the clerk, apologetically, addressing Boyce, "I have a small room, but it will only accommodate one of you, . . . but that's all there is to offer."

"Nope! . . . Nothing doing!" answered Boyce.

"Must get in together. Thank you just the same!" Then turning to the others, "Guess, fellows, we will have to do the next best thing—effigiate and hustle."

It was only natural, of course, that they should want to get domiciled together, so as to keep the party intact, so they started on a hotel hunt. After scouring hotels for over an hour without the least semblance of success, they finally adjourned to a near-by bar and held a meeting of indignation, where it was decided, after due deliberation, that it was a case of get in wherever possible, at least for the night, and probably they could get fixed up better by the morrow. With the usual American custom, they closed their deliberations with a drink, and then, with a "So long; see you to-morrow," they departed.

Boyce had in mind the conversation with the clerk in the Oriente, so, after they had parted, with a hope that room No. 8 was still unoccupied, he yelled at a *carramatto* driver half asleep in the warmth of the afternoon sun:

"Hey there, you goo-goo! Occupado?"

"No, Señor," he yawned lazily.

"Well, then, drive me to the Hotel Oriente," as he jumped in, "and beat it for all you're worth!"

When he had again gotten through the crowded corridor to the office, the clerk remembered him.

"How are you, sir? Back again, I see!" he said with a sympathizing smile.

"Yep, back again. . . . Say, how about that little room . . . No. 8, I think you said. Is it still empty?"

"Domingo! Look at No. 8, right corridor, first floor . . . Is it still unoccupied?"

Again he glanced over the pages of his big book.

"Still empty," he answered, and Boyce's face lit up.

"Now," smiled the clerk, "This room I have reference to is small, but it has a private bath, and if you are alone . . . ?"

Boyce saw the inference and nodded his head affirmatively.

". . . it will be fine, and while, as I say, even though it is small, it is one of the most artistically furnished, and one of the most desirable rooms in the house, but it is only a corner in the wall, and as most people have their wives with them, it is almost impossible to rent it, for while it is of sufficient size for one, it is most too small for two—especially for any length of time."

"That's sufficient," answered Boyce. "Let's see the room."

The clerk tapped a bell, which was answered by a cute, dapper Filipino gillie, togged out in a neat uniform.

"Show the gentleman to room No. 8, right corridor, first floor," directed the clerk.

When Boyce stepped inside the door he found it to be one of the most delightful little apartments

imaginable. True, as the clerk had said, it was small, but so clean and airy, and so artistically furnished, and then it was on the fashionable floor, surrounded by the most select and high-priced apartments.

A cursory glance satisfied him.

"Now, young fellow," he said, addressing the bell-boy, as he held temptingly between his fingers a shiny half dollar, to which the boy's eyes seemed to be immediately glued, "You tell the boss that the Señor will take this room . . . and give him this," as he handed the boy his card. . . . "And this," he continued, handing him the half dollar, . . . "is for you . . . and say! I'm liable to show you the running mate of that half dollar if you get real busy, 'pronto,' and fill up that bath tub in there, and then bring me a pitcher of ice water."

The boy started to obey.

"But listen, kid! Before you obey the order I have just given you, or the order of any one else, just chase yourself down as fast as you can to the bar and bring me a high-ball; make the whisky Scotch—Black and White . . . I will fill the tub myself while you are gone."

After the boy had departed to carry out the wishes of the "generous Señor," as he called Boyce, while he hustled down the stairs two at a time, Boyce in the meantime got off his muchly soiled traveling suit of khaki.

After a refreshing bath and the more refreshing drink of palatable Scotch, he stretched himself on the immaculate bed to unlimber his weary limbs.

As he lay puffing rings of cigarette smoke ceiling-ward, he mused to himself:

"Boyce, you sure are a lucky dog to have landed a room like this. I wonder how the other fellows have made out."

His revery was interrupted by the joyous, welcome sounds of the dinner gong as it resounded through the corridors.

"You bet your life that sounds good to me!" he said as he started in to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER X.

THE FLIRTATION.

HIS toilet—consisting of Tuxedo suit and the necessary adjuncts of the well-dressed man bent on making a first impression—completed, and with the pink carnation which the little bell-boy had brought up from the bar for the "generous Señor" tucked in his lapel, Boyce glanced in the mirror again, gave his hair another smoothing, sort of half-smiled, made a half-grimace at his reflection, then, lighting a cigarette, started down for the dining-room.

He had pulled the door to, and as he stood rummaging through his pockets in search of the key, he casually glanced up then down the long corridor. Just as he looked in the latter direction, a door, several above his own, but on the opposite side, opened and a lady stepped out.

In the first hurried glance he observed, first, that she was attired in a beautiful dinner gown, her graceful movements attended by the rustle of unseen silks; secondly, that she was exquisitely beautiful both in face and figure. He saw a broad, low forehead, a pair of dazzling black eyes, full of vivacity and expression, shaded by long, curling silk lashes, a straight, dainty nose, a small and

gracefully shaped mouth and exquisitely curved lips, tempting as a rosebud, a round, strong, dimpled chin, shoulders and neck as firm and clear as the finest marble, and from the color of her dazzling complexion, like the tinged glow of magnolia blossoms when the light shines through them, he decided she must be of Castilian blood.

Like steel is attracted by the magnet, likewise were his eyes immediately drawn to hers, and for the moment the search for the key ceased. She glanced towards him for an instant in quick survey, but observing the audacious stare—for stare it truly was and a wild, bold one too—she hastily turned her head in the opposite direction, while she knitted her brows and a frown swept over her forehead—a trick, by the way, that pretty women should not cultivate, for it breeds wrinkles.

Boyce being young, exceptionally good-looking and perhaps foolish, and now that he had forsaken his natural reserve while on this holiday jaunt, determined that no beautiful women should pass him unnoticed if it lay in his power to flirt with them; for since his college days he was bigoted enough to imagine that all—or most all—women would not object to a little flirtation with a clever-looking fellow.

In this he was, perhaps, likewise foolish: for although it is the exception to the rule, not all women can be approached or inveigled into a flirtation so complaisantly. Still, withal, if we call him

foolish in his bigoted ideas, then we are all foolish; for to flirt with a pretty woman is human nature—"male nature," at least. Perhaps, to some, that statement may be absonant, but to a large degree it is true, and to prove its veracity, observe closely along the following lines, for it is always apparent. This "flirt-bug," parasite, germ or whatever appellation is most befitting to its species, has an intangible, incombatable, though urbane manner of creeping into the system, and once it starts marauding through the blood, the result is at once efficacious. To illustrate, let us choose an ordinary, single admissible instance. Take a man as an example, and no limit is placed on age nor no exception made whether he be a benedict or bachelor. Watch his deportment on the public highway, and you will observe that he will seldom see a beautiful woman go by without casting longing glances. In the first instinctive glance at her beautiful face, well-rounded figure and rich attire he recognizes beauty; no harm in that, of course not, for all the world admires beauty; but after she has passed, will he continue on about his own business? Will he hold his head erect, with eyes before him? Yes, he will . . . not. Instead, he will invariably turn around the second time and gaze after her. In this, the second glance, he will assign her position or character definitely in his mind. Perhaps these glances will not be the longing looks of regretful admiration or greed of possession, but they are looks which most

all men feel, but which none can explain or adduce reasons. Then, too, watch him in the public elevator. Let a beautiful and exceptionally nice-dressed girl step in. In a moment the flirt-bug makes itself manifest. He brushes back his hair, adjusts his cravat, and, if he possesses a diamond or some other expensive jewel, he makes its presence as conspicuous as possible; and why, pray? Simply because the flirt-bug knows that a display of wealth entices beauty.

Watch him in business. A new stenographer makes her debut into the office; she is very beautiful, both in face and dress. Immediately every man in the office assumes the air of "president of the firm" and is ready to bow to her every whim. The "boss" himself, who usually gets to the office any time between nine and noon, suddenly changes his office hours and comes punctually on the dot of nine, spruced up to kill, and with more correspondence to dictate in one day than he ever had in a whole week before. Watch him in the Pullman car, the ballroom, theater, at the seashore; it is all the same —and why? Why, because it is the flirt-bug wielding its scepter. Effect, effect—egotism, egotism. It is merely and ever the echo of the world's voice; for the language of the flirt is familiar to all ages and to all peoples.

He may be devoted to a loving wife at home waiting his coming, or he may have his club or other inviting environments; but all the world loves a

beautiful and stylishly dressed woman, and just as sure as she appears on any scene, all eyes turn to her like the motion of steel to its attrachent. So it has been since that longing look in the Garden of Eden, so it will continue until the prophecy assured in the Book of Revelation shall have ended all.

With all these thoughts rapidly shooting through his mind, Boyce stood at his door looking at this beautiful woman's back, which she had so ungraciously turned upon him.

He coughed several times to inform her that he would not be offended if she would oblige him with a smile. He cleared his throat with a gentle "Ahem!" But it did not have the desired effect. Then he tried again, this time more emphatically, "Ahem! . . . Ahem! . . . Ahem!" but with the same unefficacious results.

Thoroughly exasperated, he purposely dropped his bunch of keys to the floor. He did everything conceivable to attract her attention, but without avail, for flirt she would not; that was quite evident.

He had been persistent, but after all efforts had failed, and although sadly disappointed—for such he really was, to think that his good looks and splendid physique, of which he was justly proud, had made so little impression on this beautiful stranger—he was diplomat enough to know that the next best thing to do would be to attend to his own business, overlook the slight, no matter how painful, and go to dinner. So, without further ceremony,

he locked his door and walked slowly down the corridor, with a sly, confident feeling that she would come along shortly and overtake him, for there was no other way for her to reach the dining-room.

He thought that perhaps on closer inspection she might capitulate to his charms and condescend to at least smile.

He had figured wrongly, however, for he had only gone a short distance when he heard a soft, mellifluous voice exclaim:

"Señor! . . . Señor!"

He turned, although not knowing whether it was to him the salutation was directed, but still, he would have turned at the slightest pretense, if for nothing else than to get a last look at this beautiful woman.

"It must have been she who spoke," he thought to himself, as there was none other in view, and as there were no other gentlemen in the corridor, he concluded that it must be to no other than himself, so he hurried to her side.

"Did you call, madame?" he questioned respectfully.

She bent her head in a slight but graceful salutation, then looked up with a demure smile and answered, apologetically:

"Your gracious pardon, Señor, for so addressing you, but . . . but may I thank you to assist me in locking my door? For some reason the key will not turn." She smiled again, demurely, and con-

tinued, "I don't know what has come over it all at once."

Boyce, all attention, looked squarely into a pair of the most beautiful black eyes he had ever seen, and a close observer could have detected the color rush up his neck and over his cheeks as he grinned broadly.

"It is the greatest pleasure possible, I assure you, to be of the humblest service to such a sweet and charming Señorita!"

"Again I must beg your gracious pardon, Señor. The appellation is misplaced,.....*Señora,* please, —*Señora Valdez,*" she corrected, with that charming, indescribable grace that belongs only to the blue-blood, urbane Castilian.

As Boyce immediately turned to lock the door, she did not detect the start and look of disappointment which momentarily contracted his features on learning that she was married; however, he turned the key in the lock, which, by the way, seemed to turn easily enough.

Removing the key, he handed it to her with a smile and a bow charged with that easy, loose American grace, and said:

"It is done! It was a pleasure, I assure you, to be of such trifling assistance."

A coquettish glance, accompanied by an alluring smile, was his reward, though she seemed to hesitate, as though framing her words before thanking him, while she stared blankly down the corridor.

Then, again turning her bewitchingly glorious eyes to his, she said, sweetly:

"Who, pray, am I to thank for this kindness?"

For the time being, Boyce did not care to reveal his name; not that it had become a force of habit, or that he was ashamed of it, nor that he was deliberately mendacious, but for the reason that several times during his college life he had become seriously complicated with strange women, and in this case, while different from all others, he did not care to make an exception, so he hurriedly decided on the fictitious name which he invariably used under such circumstances; and then, with a profound obeisance and a broad smile he answered:

"Stanley Bateman, of Iloilo, Island of Panay, at your service, fair Señora Valdez. I just arrived," he continued, "for a month's vacation to attend the festivities. Life has become so monotonous, so absolutely unbearable in Iloilo, that I just had to get to dear old Manila once again. The flame has . . ." Here he punctuated, for effect, with a frown first, then a smile, as he continued with his fib: "The flame has, and always will, I suppose, to the end of the world, attract the innocent moth to the flare and glimmer of the bright and . . . and dangerous flame."

Her forehead creased into a frown of surprise.

"So!" she said, half-sardonically, half-amusingly, "you consider yourself a poor little innocent, helpless moth, and . . . I suppose I am to assume,

from the tenor of your remarks, that you consider Manila the cruel, monstrous flame." She smiled, hesitated, and then continued with what Boyce took as a little humorous sarcasm: "Really, Mr. Bateman, it is truly a shame, a sin! that you, so poor, so small and so frail a moth—as your appearance would indicate you to be—should become the unhappy victim of such a really harmless flame."

"Yes, it is singular," he remarked, as he arched his brows and shrugged his broad shoulders, after the enigmatical Spanish fashion. "Still, more mysterious things than that are recorded in the biography of the world."

At this moment their colloquy was rudely interrupted by the dinner gong ringing for the last time, and it was with reluctance that Boyce was compelled to end this delightful little impromptu corridor tete-a-tete, so unceremoniously entered into. "That is the last call for dinner, Señor Bateman," she said with a grin, "and if the inner man—that hungry creature—is to be respected, then the outer man must obey his summons; that gong is his cue. Come! You may have the pleasure of my company to the door of the dining-room if you so elect." This with an inviting smile.

As they strolled leisurely and in eloquent silence down the long corridor, Boyce was cudgeling his brain for some excuse whereby he might continue this pleasant acquaintance which he had so unconventionally acquired.

"Señora Valdez," he ventured, unable to think of any other words with which to begin his plea, "I am sure it is a pleasure and an honor to have made your acquaintance, even if it was in such a rude, unconventional way; and, if not seemingly impertinent on my part, I would humbly beg the pleasure of seeing you again. I should also like to have the delightful pleasure of making the acquaintance of Señor Valdez when he arrives."

They had reached the head of the stairs, when she stopped abruptly. For a few minutes she gazed down the steps, her finger on her chin, while she cogitated; then, suddenly raising her eyes to his, she said, in a voice in which he thought he detected a touch of something which would resemble pathos —or sadness. Like one speaks when they regret their inability to accede to a request, but which they would love to grant; and which regret Boyce expected her to express when she would answer.

"My husband, Señor Bateman, is attached to the Spanish Legation at Pekin, China, and I regret to say that, unfortunately for the Señor, his duties at the last moment prevented his accompanying me to enjoy the festivities, but, as we had made all arrangements prior to the exigencies which necessitated his detention, he would insist on me coming, and thought perhaps he could follow in a week—or two."

Suddenly a new light danced into Boyce's eyes as he endeavored to conceal his surprise .... per-

haps it would be more appropriate to say "his delight."

"Oh, I see!" said he, as he thought to himself, "ah; that puts a different light on the picture," then continued, in a feigned sympathetic voice. "If you are alone, and no doubt a stranger in the city, is there any good reason why we should not—both being strangers—appoint ourselves a committee of two and designate it as the 'Entertainment Committee,'—to entertain each other?"

He laughed boyishly, for he thought he had discovered some weak point in the "defense of the enemy" and continued without giving her an opportunity to reply. "It's a capital idea!" he began, by placing the index finger of his right hand on the thumb of his left, in order to emphasize the points as he went along. "Now, there are three cardinal—or should I say fundamental—requisites assigned to a committee on entertainment; first, .. the invitation;—secondly, ... the acceptance; and lastly, ... the consummation: albeit—I, Stanley Bateman, of Iloilo, Island of Panay, as a member, and in behalf of this committee duly constituted, and by virtue of the power in me invested, do invite Señora Valdez to drive with me this evening on the Luneta—or attend the theatre, or, that not being agreeable, may I ask in behalf of the committee, that that honorable, and dignified body, may have the pleasure of calling and arranging a programme for our mutual entertainment?"

She smiled faintly at his dexterous manner of putting the question, but the smile soon gave way to a more staid, serious expression, while her eyes searched his with careful scrunity.

"Well, Señor Bateman! You Americans are assuredly shrewd connoisseurs in the diplomacy of women.....".

"Especially, in the amenities of diplomacy, where a woman's heart is at stake," finished Boyce.

She smiled, then continued. "How can a woman —a poor, frail, weak woman, eschew such argument.....such logic as you are advancing?"

Again she thought a moment, then looked up quizzically, as she asked in a somewhat serious tone:

"Now Señor, on your word of honor, do you think it would be proper for me, a married woman, to have such a young ..... and charming American calling to see me—especially during my husband's absence?"

The question was well put, pointed, and meant much—a deeper significance than the cold words conveyed, and it was obvious that it annoyed our modern Romeo for a moment. But, safe in the knowledge that her husband was many miles removed from the seat of hostilities,—if hostilities there were to be,—he replied with a smile in which he desired to convey innocence, but which really concealed a covetous delight.

"All is fair in love and war, sweet Señora, and it will, I think be perfectly proper for me to call, even

though your no doubt devoted husband is not present. Really, I do not see how he could consistently and conscientiously blame you for so little as that ..... such a trifle. Then I am sure,—yes, I am positive, that it is not fair to even presume, that such a broad-minded husband, as Señor Valdez must be, could expect such a young and beautiful wife to cloister herself, solitary and alone, in a city gay with festivities. You must have something more exciting; something more exhilarating than your crocheting, or a harp, or a parrot or a phonograph —even though all the records be in the voice of the Señor. And pray, remember ... the call of course, is to be under the auspices of the 'Committee on Entertainment!' "

Again the Señora was confronted with an argument, the cogency of which was difficult to combat, but she hesitated a long time before replying. She lowered her dancing black eyes to the dainty patent leather slipper which tapped unceasingly and uneasily on the carpet, while the color now in turn fleeted from her rounded neck to her cheeks, blending the natural brunette tint of her velvety skin into a delicate, deep, old rose; and then hurried on as it were to her hair, in whose raven tresses it was lost.

Boyce observing that his remark elicited no reply, and that she was thinking deeply; and knowing that in the world of women, "he that hesitates is lost," and being further cognizant that with hesitating women, you must strike while the iron is yet

hot, and actually put in their mouth the answers to the questions they are unable to decide, he urged without giving her much time to decide:

"Does the Committee on Entertainment, call?"

She sighed, bit her under lip as though aggravated with herself, while the color in her cheeks took on a deeper and more beautiful hue, which made her so strikingly beautiful, that Boyce was tempted to take her in his arms, then and there, and kiss his answer from her ruby lips as a bee kisses the sweet, delicious juice from the ivy buds.

Finally, and without raising her eyes from the carpet, she answered with a sweet suavity:

"Señor, I cannot see how I can refuse. I cannot see what excuse I can offer, to decline, except it be that I am another's wife, still I cannot see that there would be any infidelity in driving with a gentlemen, but.....well," resignedly, "I will leave it to your discretion—for you to decide. If you think it perfectly proper, and you promise faithfully that you will not think less, or badly of me, for allowing you, ...and you will not regret calling, then come to my apartments at ten this evening, and join me in a cup of tea, and we can then talk over the business of the 'Entertainment Committee.' "

Boyce beamed over with happiness. He felt like turning a somersault there in the corridor. His ecstasy was boundless. Think of it; an invitation to visit her apartments and take tea with her. He

felt that he was already madly in love with this beautiful, vivacious woman, and then, the fact that she was another man's wife, and that man hundreds of miles away, put a touch of romance; a touch of daring; a touch of "playing-with-fire" to it, that would otherwise be absent, for after all the greatest charm to a purloined love, is the impediments that surround it!—its mysteries and dangers —for deprive it of those elements and nothing remains except the guilty lover and the infidelity of the wife. But such it is the world over. So swings the pendulum of flesh and blood. Human nature assiduously clamors after that which we cannot legitimately have; that which we cannot possess; that which belongs to another, or that which is beyond our reach. Golden apples may lay unsolicited at our feet and we pick them up or let them lay, only as a matter of fact—as though it was our just portion of the world's graces. But, see that same apple rolling away, and someone else trying to catch it; then we will break our necks, yes, risk our lives even —commit murder, if necessary; in a vain attempt to get it, while, when it lay uncoveted at our feet, we did not care for it. It is always the impossible we are in search of. We are not satisfied with ours and that which is within our grasp, but like the "baby-and-the-moon" we want that which is unattainable. No words could better emphasize these thoughts than the evolution of the butterfly. Did you ever watch the chrysalis in the wintertime

as it hangs ungainly beneath the eaves, or on a limb of the old cherry tree in the yard. Who wants that? No one. We do not even give a thought as to what it contains. But look: in the springtime when it matures and bursts, and there goes the large, beautiful, black and yellow troilus in all its radiant glory. Ah, how you watch it flutter uncertainly in the summer breezes; its eyes unaccustomed to the bright light. It is grand, beautiful; the transformation is mysterious, and now you want it, but like the apple—which you did not want till it was going, or gone—it has fluttered away, and you scratch your arms, blister your hands and sprain your ankles trying to catch it. But such is the manner in which that Omnipotent Power in Its infinite wisdom of the great plan of the universe has elected to keep our bodies and minds in action. We crave and pursue until we are satiated; then we clamor and begin all over again.

But oh, how happy this woman made Boyce by her invitation. His innate wisdom told him perhaps, that he was doing wrong in trying to persuade her into believing she was doing nothing wrong. He knew that he was trespassing on forbidden ground. But no, he would capture the chrysalis ere it was too late.

"I will be there at ten sharp," he said as they strolled to the dining room, "and I won't think any the less of you either, nor will my conscience prick me for suggesting anything wrong."

After a moment of silence he asked.

"May I dine with you Señora?"

She looked up, and he saw the question in her eyes.

"By that I mean," he hastened to correct, "may I ask you to dine with me?"

"I think not!" she answered, "Not this evening. It would probably cause comment. Undoubtedly every one about the hotel knows you have just arrived, for a new face, and such a handsome one, attracts attention ..... tomorrow evening."

They parted at the dining room door with a smile as they both said simultaneously, "To-night, —at ten!"

She was seated at her regular table, while this big, handsome, careless, but faultlessly dressed American was ushered to another, directly across the room.

At the table to which Boyce was assigned, there were already seated, three distinguished looking gentlemen and as he took his seat, he overheard the eldest of this trio—a Frenchman by appearance —but who spoke with a fluent Spanish tongue, say, "Look, boys! There is the Señora!"

"Ah; yes!" exclaimed the other on his right. *"Caramba!* Does she not look charming this evening? Look at the color in those cheeks just now, as it contrasts with the sombre black of her gown—and see! she looks this way with a half a smile; see how her eyes sparkle!"

They turned to each other to see whether it could be to one of them, then looked at Boyce, who never, even by a flash of his eyes indicated that it was to him the smile was directed,—though he had seen it nevertheless.

"Oh, I would give my all, if she would only condescend to favor me with a smile and her friendship," said the first of the three, "But!" he continued regretfully, and with a resigned sigh, "she is so distant, so strange, and seems to treat all alike."

Throughout the entire meal, from soup to cigarettes, these three continued with their paeans of admiration and wishes for a love--an acquaintanceship, which Boyce had won in half an hour. Not yet her love, it is true: but the paving of the path of roses to that beautiful shrine.

Of course these three were not cognizant of the fact that Boyce and the Señora knew each other, nor did they suspect that the smile was for him. Regardless however, they continued, not knowing, therefore not caring.

"Isn't it strange?" Boyce thought to himself, "She apparently does not mingle with her own race, and, from the remarks of these three admirers, she evidently ignores other nationalities, so why under the name of the sun, should a Spaniard, of all people in the world, take to an American? We licked them, and took Cuba from them. That beautiful 'Pearl of the Antilles' they all loved so well. Then we trounced them good, here in the

Philippines, and I would naturally think that they would harbor a grudge and a hatred towards Americans in general."

Then too, he seemed to forget; for where was that animosity of his, now so conspicuously absent. That hatred he had given vent to the night he had read the declaration of war between the two countries. That love of a sister who had been driven from home and parents through one of her race, and the three hundred and more sailors still entombed in the hulk of the ill fated Maine. Then too, Boyce: "Consistency, O thou recherche jewel:" Where art thou now? Are you not, in this fit of agonism, alienating the affections of this woman in the same devious manner a Spaniard did Jean?

If Boyce thought of these things it must have been with this thought: "Oh, it is different with oneself. Different when the pangs of love sink deep into our flesh."

During the entire meal the Señora was the cynosure of all the male eyes and the envy of the ladies. Boyce sat excited and happy in the thought that while this beautiful woman was creating so much attention, and while many were seeking her friendship and her love, he had an appointment with her in her own apartments.

Then he soliloquized with himself. "Gee: she even called me a big handsome fellow . . . a careless American . . . . even called me her ideal."

Dinner over, which he had prolonged intentionally until the Señora had left the room, he mean-

dered around to the billiard room for a few minutes, then went to his room, where he sat around some time, thinking and planning for the evening. How good fate was to him. He was so happy and in such a convivial spirit; so effervescing with joy, that he had to do something to take his mind from these pleasant thoughts, for if he continued in them, the evening would seem like a month till ten o'clock came around.

He changed his evening suit for one of immaculate flannels, with white shoes, white soft silk shirt, white tie, and panama hat, and as he glanced in the mirror he agreed that his appearance was quite becoming.

In transferring the contents of his pockets to the suit he now wore, and when he came to the wallet which contained his money, the thought occurred to him, that it would probably be unwise to carry all the money he had with him, around Manila, for no doubt, as Max had said, the pick-pockets would be floating around all over—even in the fashionable hotel corridors, so he counted out $25, which he put in his pocket and replaced the other $600 in the wallet, and laid it on the top of the clothes in the suit case which sat on the small table by the bureau. He then locked his door and went down stairs, his head whirling with the emotions inspired by this strange beautiful woman, and the animal instinct in him bubbling over with that evanescent happiness, that goes—so it is said—with the stealing of another's wife.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EPITAPH.

WHEN BOYCE reached the foyer of the hotel, he was so bubbling over with happiness, that he absolutely did not know what to do with himself to pass away the hours between now and the time he should call on the Señora. He lighted a cigar however, and then meandered leisurely to the piazza where he stood for a few minutes gazing at the sky. The air was delightfully cool, and although the evening was yet young, the full moon, round and large, was already rising slowly over Binondo church spire, as it hung like a huge yellow ball on the grayish walls of the sky away off beyond the distant Morong hills. A twinkling star which shone with unusual brightness out to the northward, seemed to wink now and then, and looked as though it too was conscious of his happiness, and wanted to congratulate him.

Carriages were constantly whirling up and down both sides of Binondo Square, some stopping at the hotel to unload their cargoes of beautifully gowned women and handsome men, while others hurried past to other scenes of happiness and pleasure. No doubt the sight of these carriages, and the beautiful moonlit evening, made Boyce feel like driving

too, for he knocked the ashes from his cigar and going to the desk, ordered a turnout. A few minutes later a beautiful, and cozy, rubber tired victoria, to which was attached a pair of prancing, high-strung, jet black Australian ponies, pulled up under the *porte-cochere* and the liveried cochero handed a card to the uniformed attendant who called out: "Señor Eric!"

Boyce jumped in, and after giving direction to be driven to the Luneta—Manila's little sea-side "keep-off-the-grass,"—he settled back comfortably to enjoy his cigar and the sights of this wonderful old city.

It was the time of day when Manila revels in its sweetest and happiest garb. The 6th Regiment band was playing some devilish sweet medley, and as he drove to an advantageous anchorage next to the sparkling, phosphoric waters of the bay, he could hear the multitude applauding for an encore.

The rich and stately carriages of the old time Spanish residents, and those of the beautiful American women, the wives and daughters of officers and soldiers pranced by. The beautiful Spanish dames and damsels, invisible at other hours, drove leisurely over the beautiful macadamized avenues, or strolled happy and gay over the delectable walks of grass as they gazed at the simple, yet stunning toilets of the American belles; for with all the Castilian disdain they might look,—and possibly feel—towards Uncle Sam's soldiers, it gave place to the

liveliest interest and curiosity when the wives and daughters of his soldiers appeared upon the scene. But just now everybody seemed to be happy. The whole scene,—even the very atmosphere—seems impregnated with the poetry and sweetness of life's beauty and happiness. The music of the waves, as they come rolling in through the Corregidor gateway from the broad, calm, peaceful Pacific, not to be outdone, sing in obligato to the enchanting themes of wood and wind and brass.

After awhile, tiring of the music—strange it was too, for he loved music—he directed the cochero to drive on, for just now his mind was in such an exuberant state of love, that he must have action and constant change of scenery. He could not content himself by remaining still; and then too, he had started out primarily to find the boys from San Fernando. He directed the cochero to drive down the Malecon, that beautiful driveway which skirts the bay from the Luneta to the mouth of the Pasig river, lined on either side with its majestic sentinels of royal palms. Turning at the "Anda" monument, he returned over the same route, and then driving over the old heavy, iron-bound, picturesque drawbridge which spans the deep, wide, romantic moat, he entered through the Puenta de Isabell II.

As he passed through this old gate, and on underneath the ancient, moss and vine covered wall, which for centuries had stood the test of the ele-

ments, and the storms of revolution without end, and which was now lighted by one lonely, sickly looking incandescent lamp, he gazed alternately to the right and left into the deep, dark, ill-smelling recesses of the dungeons which open on either side. As love, and the beautiful Señora were uppermost in his mind, he thought of the many tales of love and romance, these gray grim walls would tell if the stones could speak. Of the romances to which these dungeons must be inseparably linked with the feudal history of by-gone days. Of the days when the knight-errants shone in all their monarchial splendor, of the days when they buckled on their breastplates and blades of glittering steel, and stood on these same walls and fought and bled for their Señoritas fair.

Passing on the cochero hastened past the Governor General's headquarters and finally pulled up at the hotel De France.

Boyce alighted and going to the register, scanned it carefully, then, as he mentioned the names of the boys of his party, inquired whether any were domiciled there. Being informed they were not, he thanked the clerk and re-entered the carriage.

"Hotel English!" he directed.

Here he was likewise disappointed.

The hotel Delmonico, and several others prominent in the city, he visited in turn, but with the same fruitless results, for nowhere were they to be found.

He had been driving around for over an hour now, so he concluded that he had better suspend the search for the evening, for he did not care to tarry too long and be late for his engagement with the Señora, who, at the present time, was occupying more space per square inch in his mind, than all the inhabitants of San Fernando combined.

As he passed by the hotel Metropole on his way back to the Oriente, he heard the laughter and talking of the gay throngs on their rounds of festive jollification. From the balconies came the sweet melodious strains of an orchestra playing some dizzy waltz creation, brand new from the States. This was too much temptation for Boyce. He could not pass it by. He argued with himself thus: "Just a minute or two Boyce, old boy; a cold glass of beer will be refreshing, and then you might meet the boys here." So he alighted and after giving instructions to the cochero to remain until he returned, he strolled leisurely through the long marble paved vestibule, and on to the door of the bar. He hesitated a moment,—some one is singing a serenade to the American soldiers buried in the Philippines.

"Who can it be?" he thought, as he craned his neck....."Ah, yes; it is *Lou Dodge* singing his favorite creation." He listened attentively, and softly these words fell on his ears:

"In this far-off tropic island, girt 'round by the eastern seas,
Where the fronded palm and mango, are swept by the scented breeze;

Our boys in their blankets coffined, sleep well in their silent graves,
Where the long, curved bay, till Judgment Day, shall sound with its mournful waves.
Oh, sad were our hearts that morning, when they brought them off the field;
The servers who—God willed it—the utmost tithe must yield.
And we mourn for the men, our comrades, who foreign graves have found,
And who have made, of this savage shore, God's well beloved ground.

Oh, they were young and hopeful, and mothers or wives were theirs;
Oh, they were tenderly followed by yearnings and dreams and prayers.
Oh, but they thrilled in their glory, midst cheers they marched away,
To the fields of the dead, and a narrow bed, by the shores of the murmuring bay.
Oh, they had hoped to triumph o'er sickness, and death and fear,
They meant to serve that they might deserve, returning the lusty cheer;
They dreamed of many a fireside scene, when the strife should long be o'er,
But Alas! they lie 'neath the tropic sky,—asleep—God's spoils of war.

I dream of a far off rustic town, where a hill climbs up to the sky;
Of a dusty road where an eager boy from school comes tramping by;
I see on a grass-grown, silent street, a cottage with rustic gate,
Where a mother stands with her work in her hands, her boys return to await.
But alas, alas! I see again, the mother with eyes grown dim—
The "boys" are coming home from war, and her boy, ah, what of him?
And the evening falls and the cricket calls, through the shadows still and gray;
But the boy that is gone, sleeps on and on, by the far off beaten bay."

About the bar was gathered a convivial mass of happy-go-lucky fellows of all nationalities; Americans, however, being in the majority. After the applause had subsided, Boyce gazed around casually; spoke to Dodge and complimented him on the beautiful song; bowed "hello" to a number of other acquaintances, and then, after a glass of beer, he started into the billiard rooms; thinking he might accidentally come across the fellows there, for he knew they were fiends after the rubber-tipped cues and the elusive ivories. As he passed a huge rubber plant, which artistically screened off a cozy nook and table, he heard a voice say, "Damned if that don't look like Eric going there now!"

"Oh, ho!" thought Boyce, "that voice can positively belong to none other than Fritz Sutcliffe." With a "pardon for interrupting!" he gazed around the plant, to ascertain whether his surmise was correct, and behold, there sat the entire delegation from San Fernando.

Vociferous felicitations flew thick and fast for a few minutes. They drank to the health of one another, and for the second time that day, they were rejoicing in another jovial reunion, this one however, being under more fascinating environments than the hot, stuffy compartment, of a Manila & Dagupan Railway train.

"Where did you get located, Eric?" questioned Sutcliffe.

"The Oriente!" this slowly, and with a marked

air of importance, for Boyce justly considered himself exceptionally fortunate in having landed quarters at that noted hostelry; for within its walls was the Mecca for the elite of the archipelago, and on its register could be found the names of the crescendo of social life in Manila.

"What!" exclaimed the crowd in unison, with wide open eyes, "The Oriente! Oh, you lucky dog!"

"Too true, too true, comrades! Lucky it surely was! I'll buy another drink on my luck. Waiter! .....Take the gentlemen's order!"

They whiled away a few minutes more in general colloquy, when George Derk spoke up.

"Suppose fellows; seeing that we are all together again .....suppose I bank a little game of ....!"

"..... poker,—you might know!" chimed in Charley Williams.

"Well, I'll join you for just a little while!" said Boyce, "But not long. I have an appointment with—a lady."

"What!" ejaculated the bunch again in one voice, "Already?"

"Already!" nodded Boyce.

"Well it certainly did not take you long to get acquainted! Who might this fair fairy be? Black, —or white?" questioned Doc Powers.

"Nuff's the word! Remember you gossips; there are some things, that are one's own business, but, ..."

"Oh! Go to h.....l!" interrupted Claude Larson, and Boyce continued with a smile.

".....but, rest assured, she is a beauty,—and a W H I T E beauty, too!" He spelled out the word "white" so as to impress it more forcibly on Power's mind.

"American, or Spanish?" they asked.

"Well *noises,* remember that curiosity is the most fatal thing in life, but, if you really must know;—Spanish,—and," he held up his hand suggesting silence, as he continued in a somewhat lower voice, "and another man's wife; am I not a villainous villain?"

The remarks and looks of exultation suddenly changed to apprehension.

"Go slow, go slow on that tack, Boyce!" spoke up Sutcliffe, "Go slow, fellow, and keep a sharp eye on the danger signals, for that class of reefs is destructive to the staunchest of vessels."

They all laughed heartily.

When Doc Powers could be heard, he moved his chair a little closer to Boyce.

"Now listen, Eric, old chap! You will excuse me I hope, if I philosophize—or parablize, but listen to an allegory—it may help your case. At home, in Clinton, Iowa, there is a beautiful cemetery which reposes sweetly in the golden sunshine on the hillside; and, in this cemetery there is a grave; and, at the head of that grave, there stands an imposing marble shaft, erected by the man responsible for

the other man's coming into his 'six-by-six-by-four' lot, of the world's legacy. This imposing marble statue bears this simple epitaph.....*'BEWARE!'* Now the person to whom these six letters of epitaph are dedicated was a man,—brilliant and handsome; but alas! young and credulous. He had devoured the pages, wherein old Bill Shakespeare, tells in pretty, poetic measures, the story of 'Venus and Adonis'—which he stole, (so they say) from a dead Greek Ananias. Well! This young and credulous man wept and moaned for 'Venus' and wished that he had been in the wood, near by, to put his arms around her neck, and sooth and comfort her, and accept with open arms,—what 'Adonis' had rejected ....."

"How sad! How sad! It's a wonder old 'Shake' didn't think of the same thing himself, and change the lines," interrupted Sutcliffe.

"Damn you Fritz! Shut up!" said the others, now muchly interested in the yarn.

"..... Well! The story goes," continued Powers, "one day this youthful youth, met a fair 'Venus' in the park about town. She told him how her 'Adonis' was always out to his club drinking and gambling, which he seemed to appreciate more than her beauty and colloquial charms. Then she invited him to her home. Unsuspecting, and with the first yearnings of an awakened love in his heart and which required some object to fill the void, he accepted that which this 'Venus's Adonis'...had

rejected ..... Then suddenly the door opens with a hushed softness! ..... The husband enters, —half intoxicated ..... There is a struggle in the dimly lighted room! ..... The flash of a revolver! ..... Then the sequel!.....the epitaph! So *'BEWARE'* Boyce of epitaphs!"

When this jeremiad and its mental picture of cold, but impressive symbolic reference, was completed, laughing and light-hearted, they adjourned to the beautiful palm garden attached to the hotel, and sat down to a quiet little game of "twenty-five and fifty."

Time hurried on in its flight, while they drank Scotch highballs; juggled red, white and blue chips, and shuffled cards. The play went round and round. Boyce seemed to be getting the worst of the luck, but chance loves her true gamester and in him she had a faithful servant. He played on and on, drinking and drinking; absolutely forgetful of all time or place as is ever the way in that omnivorous, cursed game of chance.

"Damn the luck! What must you do to win?" said he as Sutcliffe beat his three queens with a small heart flush.

"Boyce!" he said as he gathered in the chips won on the hand, "Hope, old boy, you have better luck with your queen this evening!"

Then, and then only, it dawned suddenly upon him—the appointment with the beautiful Señora.

A hurried look at his watch, accompanied by "Great Gods!" under his breath. "It is twenty minutes to twelve." He was thunderstruck. "What a damn fool I am!" he said to himself. "But just like an amateur gambler, never know when to stop.

"Here I have lost $17 in this damn game! That is nothing though; but I have also probably lost the new born acquaintance of the prettiest woman I have ever seen. Then, too! I have drank more than I should have—to call on a lady. Bad enough, I admit, at any time, but absolutely unpardonable to call on a lady." His face was flushed, and his brain must have been somewhat clouded, but something seemed to urge him on—to go to the hotel—and if the Señora had not retired; make his apologies and ask her forgiveness. While he had no idea of remaining after presenting his card, he would try at least to make an engagement for some future time when he swore his deportment—prior to the appointed time—would be exemplary.

Claude Larson rudely awoke him from this lethargy into which he had fallen in his musings over the Señora.

"Five gentlemen up—one man shy! Come on Eric! Come up with your ante. What's the matter: drunk or asleep?"

"Neither! ..... Here!" he retorted irritably, as he tossed in his two remaining blue chips. "Let's play a jack-pot for this, then I must go, for I am several hours overdue already."

This pot, like most of the others, went across the table. He arose, said "Good-night, see you tomorrow," hurried out and jumped into the victoria.

"Donde?" asked the cochero.

"Oriente! And drive like hell!" he shouted.

Obeying the order to the letter—as all the cocheros in the employ of the Oriente were instructed to do—he dashed off at a break-neck clip; so much so, that when they wheeled from the Escolta into Plaza Cervantes, he almost stripped the wheels from a victoria going in the opposite direction. When they pulled up to the curb in front of the hotel, Boyce hurriedly signed the "chit" and dismissed the carriage, with a tip of two pesos, and rushed pell-mell for the elevator.

CHAPTER XII.

THE COMMITTEE CALLS.

HE looked at his watch. "God! five to twelve!" he muttered between tightly compressed teeth.

Up the corridor a flood of light was shining brightly from an open door and from its location, he judged that that must be the Señora's apartments.

"I suppose she has not yet retired," he thought, as he timidly made his way to the open door, wiping the perspiration from his forehead as he went; while his heart thumped like a trip-hammer, and his brain spun round.

When he reached the open door he stood to one side and rapped gently, then waited ..... no response. He rapped again ..... still no answer. Finally, as he rapped the third time, a beautiful vision appeared before his alcohol dimmed sight; bedecked in a tidy white cap and a small dainty apron.

He stared at her for a second, "Blamed if that looks like her," he thought. "Probably this is the wrong apartment?"

"Is this Señora Valdez's apartment, please?" he asked. She smiled, then answered, "Yes, Señor; your card please!"

She disappeared for a few moments after receiving his card, then returning showed him into the parlor—or reception room.

The magnificence of the place at once appealed to his artistic taste, for it was spacious and scrumptious in its appointments. One of those large, airy old fashioned rooms; a mixture of the Orient and Mediaeval; with high ceiling, and beautifully polished floors of hard wood. The walls being covered with rich tapestries, and on the floor, here and there, magnificent rugs. The two windows are open, through which float long tendrils of ivy, and a huge ylang-ylang bush—somewhere near—throws its incense about the room. There are flowers everywhere: in bowls; in jardinieres; in vases—the very air is surcharged with their sweet perfume. Between the windows stands a beautiful American "baby-grand" piano of bird's-eye maple, on which stands a mammoth vase, in which is loosely, but artistically arranged, a huge bunch of yellow and white chrysanthemums.

While richness of appointment predominates this whole room, it is not however, garnished with those unnecessary embellishments which make some rooms seem ostentatiously overloaded, and which dazzle the eye with an exaggerated and gaudy opulence; but the decorator had dexterously ceased at that happy medium which appeals to the sense with delectable sweetness, making it one of the most inviting rooms possible to conceive.

"It's a downright, dirty, rotten shame!" thought Boyce, as he gazed at the small oval tea-table which adorned the center of the room, laid with a cover of snowy damask, and adorned with glittering silver and dainty frail china; and about whose heavily carved legs there reclined gracefully and peacefully a silver tub containing two bottles of champagne, "After all this preparation, to have disappointed her; and all over a damned old game of cards."

As he sat quietly on the divan, the silken curtains on the left parted, and the Señora entered. Boyce jumped quickly to his feet, and bowed in humble reverence when he gazed on this picture, in which beauty itself was excelled; for no artist in his rarest dreams, could have delineated or fixed upon his canvas, those exquisitely moulded arms and hands and shoulders and classic features; nor never a poet could sing with justice, those glowing charms; for never did artist or poet dream of contours of such sculptural richness. She was attired in a tea-gown of the flimsiest black silk, which flows closely about the graceful curves, but which allows such perfect freedom and ease of movement, that the slightest movement of her shoulders and body evinces the graceful, facile indulations of a cat. It is cut decidedly decollette, the black contrasting strikingly with the whiteness of her arms and shoulders, so magnificently rounded, and her neck with its swan-like grace.

"Oh, what a form!" thought he. "So lithe; so

willowy; so gracefully formed and so voluptuously rounded. Was there ever a figure to match it?" for she seemed to be actually moulded into the gown. Her every move has a fascination about it that harmonizes charmingly with a grace and symmetry, whose almost imperceptible swaying convey a richness and significance which no words can compass.

Around her neck she wears a necklace of soothing pearls, from which hangs a pendant of diamonds, reaching down below her snowy white throat.

When Boyce had entered this room his brain was somewhat clouded, but just now it was doubly so. He did not know whether he was actually awake or simply dreaming all this. He feared that he would awake and find bleak surroundings where exquisite beauty was now reigning so gloriously. Not a word had been spoken as yet, each apparently waiting for the other to begin.

She walked across the room and stood before him, assuming a pose which Boyce wished he might behold forever. The disappointment had fired her Eastern blood, and in the cold, imperious look she cast at him she commanded attention. Her bosom rose and fell quickly, and her breath came short and fast; it was obvious she was very angry. While Boyce was cognizant that something was going to happen, and although he could not anticipate just what, yet he was conscious of a ravishing suspense of expectancy.

After posing before him for fully two long minutes in an attitude of hauteur, during which silence reigned eloquent and supreme, she finally commenced, in a low, determined, anger-trembling, sardonic voice: "Well, this is certainly not a very auspicious hour for a gentleman to be calling on a lady; and were it not that I wanted to give you a piece of my mind, I would have declined to see you —not only now, but at any future time."

His chin sank on his breast like a whipped boy. "All you say it too true, Señora Valdez; still, all I can do is to beg, most humbly, your gracious pardon, and then be allowed to explain."

It was all he could do or say. It would be too much to ask her forgiveness for such an unpardonable breach of etiquette.

She pointed to the divan with a gesture of contempt.

"Sit there and explain your reasons, then, for disappointing me!"

Boyce seated himself uneasily on the edge of the divan, erect, silent, submissive; then, after a brief silence, he commenced. He told her of his search for his friends; how he had subsequently found them at the Metropole; of the poker game; what he had drank; and how, while she was the one most uppermost in his mind all evening, he had forgotten with the excitement of the game. He told her all, not omitting a single detail, from the moment he

had left her at the dining-room door to the present moment.

As he related these facts, one moment her eyes would search his with a stare that was cold, imperious and enigmatic, and then altering to a look that was gracious, kind and forgiving; yet withal, her eyes shone with an ambiguous sparkle, and he was not sure whether she was accepting or rejecting his explanation. However, she listened attentively, and when he had concluded said, with a tantalizing smile, accompanied by a toss of her beautiful head:

"Really, Señor Bateman, I can't be cross with you; still I don't know why. But I just cannot—that is all. When I received your card a few moments ago, I was seething with anger. I was even guilty of swearing at you. I had intended giving you a sharp piece of my tongue, then dismissing you . . . but now—you see, it deserts me; my resolutions crumble into dust like castles in air. But I cannot help this feminine weakness. You are so repentive. I don't think you meant to disappoint me. Then, again, you are so young, so robust, so manly. You are my ideal of an American; my ideal of manhood; my strong, bold, courteous cavalier . . . and really," she smiled, "I don't think I could care a very great deal for a man who harbored the whole range of human virtues without the accompanying faults and vices."

"Thank you!" he broke in with a curtsey; "won't you forgive me, Señora?"

Disregarding the interruption, she resumed, without answering him directly:

"And then, Señor, I am lonely in this gay city; oh, so very lonely; the days, and above all the nights, are so long and lonely . . . now that you are here, stay a little while and join me in a cup of tea, for you see," as she waved her hand towards the table, "it has been prepared for several hours, waiting patiently for none but you."

How sweet those words sounded to Boyce! They made him so happy, so extremely happy! Now he had hopes that she might forgive him absolutely.

The hour was now getting rather late, and people passing in the corridor on the way to their apartments would naturally look in, as the door was still open, and the bright light from an old-fashioned prism chandelier, shining out, was a special attraction. The Señora noticed this as well as he, so Boyce volunteered:

"Any objection to my closing the door?"

"I suppose not. Not so long as my maid is here," she answered with a sweet smile.

After he had closed the door, the Señora called: "Annette! Annette!"

The maid who had previously taken his card answered to the summons.

"You may draw the blinds and then prepare the luncheon."

After the maid had departed to attend to the in-

structions just received, the Señora addressed Boyce:

"Señor Bateman, will you be so kind?..... may I thank you to make a light in that banquet lamp on the tea table, and then turn out the chandelier?"

"Ask me to jump out the window, Señora, and I'll do it without a murmur," he replied amusingly, as he lighted the huge lamp and turned out the chandelier.

"Thank you.....you are a jewel!"

His heart jumped with a start, as he asked: "If you think I am a jewel, my dear Señora, and if you desire to prove to my entire satisfaction that you have absolutely forgiven me, I will ask you to prove it in but one way; will you do it?"

"Anything; willingly!"

With this assurance, he walked over to the piano, lighted the small lamp on either side, then, recrossing the room to where she sat, took both her hands in his, as he smiled longingly into her eyes. "Allow me," he said, putting his arm in hers and leading her to the piano bench. "Now forgive me in your song."

With Boyce standing admiringly by her side, the Señora played and sang a beautiful Spanish castanet, into which she poured all the delicious transports of Eros of old, and when she had concluded, her rosy lips and small white teeth parted in laughter. "Silly, wasn't it?" she deigned.

Everything was so still, and the soft, mellow light showing round added perhaps to the seductive, mesmeric charm about the Señora, as her charming fingers strayed lambently over the keys, inoculating them with a tenderness and passion sublime; a passion that seemed to flow through the ivories like some elixir—some nectar—extracted from some unknown well in some enchanted world, and comes forth in gathering and receding waves of sound, calling forth a hushed and low theme of enchanting melody and delicious harmony as an accompaniment to their conversation.

When she had completed the second score and looked dreamingly up into his eyes, awaiting his applause, Boyce was conscious that this woman—whom he did not know existed yesterday—possessed a strange, irresistible influence over him.

"Oh, I cannot applaud, Señora. I cannot tell you why, or how I feel. There is some inexplainable; some languid, unfathomable charm about you—in your face; some fiery softness in your eyes; some deep pathos; some inward harmony; some deep consanguinity; some disunderstandable propinquity of the soul; some secret sympathy, which agitates within me some peculiar emotion—not only of delight—but more as though our very souls were intermingled with some vinculum deeper than common friendship. It almost renders me speechless ..... but the music, it is sweet, beautiful—yes divine. Do play on, please do."

This time the Señora without even opening her lips, except in a faint smile, uttered a new language in itself more grasping, more captivating than the pure Castilian she sang. When she had acquiesced a third time with a sweet pathetic love song, Boyce bent over and laid his hands on hers which still lingered on the keys. He looked long and seriously into her eyes, and his lips were forming a question, which however, remained unuttered. To his mind there was something about this woman which he could not fathom, but yet, which did not seem to ring true; as though her soul was sealed with some great calamity, which she tried to mask with smiles, but which—when her soul enraptured in the song—poured forth its innermost emotions, seemed to open unconsciously the pages of memories now locked with the seal of time. Whatever the question was he anticipated asking, he changed it to a subject of the present.

"Perhaps I am rude Señora for being so inquisitive; but pray, what is that perfume you use? It has that sweet delicate fragrance of the rose."

She looked up, her eyes beaming. "Yes, it does resemble the rose somewhat, but it is an essence of the 'ylang-ylang'," as she waved her handkerchief mischievously in his face, "isn't it sweet though? Annette keeps my clothing fairly buried in it all the time."

This beautiful little love scene was unreasonably interrupted by the maid.

"Madame!"

"Yes, Annette," answered the Señora, without turning round.

"Luncheon is served."

Boyce escorted her to the table, standing at her back—much like a waiter would—until she had arranged her gown and gotten seated, then lifting bodily the chair and its fair occupant, moved them to the table.

It was now her turn to look at him admiringly.

"How strong you are. Your tall powerful physique reminds me of the gallant cavaliers of the beautiful days of romance—but, alas! now lacking."

"Yes: I thank good American corn beef and cabbage for that," was his jocular rejoinder, as he took his place opposite her.

The dainty maid in snowy apron and cap moved deftly here and there about the table, now serving dainty cakes; now luscious fruits; now a tasteful blend of real formosa, and many other delicatessen; and the enticing flirtation hurried on.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TOASTS.

THEY chatted and chatted. The maid had served tea the second time, when the Señora addressed her, softly—yet commandingly:

"Annette, it is getting late. You may retire now. I will not need you any further this evening. In case I do, I shall ring!" this with a knowing, coquettish glance toward Boyce, which he understood and approved with a tantalizing sigh, and a nod in the affirmative.

After the maid had said good-night, the Señora nestled back comfortably in her easy chair.

"Help yourself to a cigarette, Señor Bateman. May I light one for you?" she questioned sweetly, solicitiously.

He smiled assent, while she lighted a cigarette, took a whiff or two, gracefully, then handing it to him with a smile, "you will enjoy it much better now that I have kissed it. Let me see; what is that you Americans say?" she said, gazing thoughtfully for a few seconds at the head of a big tiger rug before the piano ..... "oh, yes! 'Lips that touch liquor, shall never touch mine'—is that not the correct phrase, Señor Bateman?" Her melli-

fluous voice pealed forth in sweet laughter, but Boyce looked askance.

"Am I to deduct from the innuendo, 'Lips that touch cigarettes, shall never touch yours?'—that being the case, I throw it to the four winds," as he started for the window.

"No, no, you silly goose!" she said quickly catching him by the hand, "for did I not kiss it with my lips? Do not throw it away, for I like to see a man smoke them occasionally; they always seem to enjoy them so much; then too, I enjoy the rich flavor of the Egyptian weed."

After a brief silence during which Boyce blew smoke-rings ceilingward, she continued.

"Now—about to-morrow. What has the entertainment committee to offer? Remember Señor Bateman; it is under the auspices of that committee that you are here to-night."

"Well! What *shall* we do to-morrow? Where shall we go?" questioned Boyce.

"Oh, I thought you would have that all arranged. Go anywhere; do anything under the sun! I can hardly wait for the morrow to come—for the excitement to commence. For one thing, I want you to take me to the San Lazaro track. The first meet, you know, takes place to-morrow out there, and I am simply foolish about horse racing. Have you any favorites in the races?"

So intent was our young, credulous lover on pleasing this bewitching woman, and doing what

all men do the world over—when placed as he was now—viz: making a great big bluff; and by the promptings of that overwhelming agency of egotism—making a great big mistake; but assuming a nonchalant attitude, he replied. "Yes, there are a number of horses I know very well—one in particular—a horse named 'Pronto', owned by a friend of mine in Iloilo. He is entered in two races tomorrow, and, if the first is a handicap—which I have every reason to believe it is—and he gets the rail, I will play him to the limit."

As a matter of fact however, let it be writ, Boyce did not know a horse in the races; and more, he did not even know there were races the next day, for he hadn't had time as yet to get his bearings. His main object just now was to hide his ignorance, and lead her to believe him an exceptionally wealthy young sport, and a shrewd judge of horse flesh, so he exerted all his efforts in that direction.

"You say you expect to bet the limit on this horse 'Pronto;' may I ask what you consider the limit in this case?"

"Oh!" with a flourishing air of indifference, as though money flowed into his coffers, like the morning dew tips the grass blades, "it all depends of course on the booking; but I should say about $3000 would be a conservative figure to chance!"

"Three thousand dollars!" she drolled, with a soughing intake of breath, her big black eyes opening in amazement, "that's an awful lot of mon-

ey to risk on one race. If you feel so confident would you advise me to take a little bet on that race, and then share with you the excitement as our horse whirls around the track. Goodness, I can see him already as he leaps at the crack of the pistol, with his muscles standing out in knots like whip-cords; I can already picture in my mind the little jockey in a striped suit, bend high over his neck and urge him on—'Bend to it old fellow!' I can imagine I hear him say, 'Now you are passing the quarter, Pronto, and five more still leading you!' 'Come on boy, that's the good fellow; refuse to eat their dust!' Then I can see Pronto respond with a leap that overtakes two of the five, as they round the half-mile post. Then look! they go by the three-quarter like the wind, with one more still leading. Then I can hear the little jockey again implore, 'Now Pronto, old fellow! We're on the stretch! There is a good one still a length ahead, we must get him!' Then the swish of the short whip, and Pronto leaps into the very air, enwrapped in a cloud of dust; while the spectators go mad with excitement ..... Then look! I see them coming the last hundred yards like the wind, the little jockey begging, 'Pronto, come on now, go, go, go, go,' and then, in one grand leap, Pronto goes under the wire and wins by a breath. Oh, it is simply grand, Señor!" she said, her voice all aquiver, and the little points of silver in her eyes flashing with excitement.

Her excitement proved conclusively to Boyce that

his impressions were fast taking root, so with greater confidence, he continued with his loquacious gasconade.

"I do not say it egotistically Señora; but there are a number of horses I am going to win on to-morrow!" as he itemized and explained the various races he intended to bet on. These horses however, were all favorites which did not exist. Phantom horses as it were; but to hear his grandiloquent talk, she must have concluded him a millionaire, as the opinion generally prevails throughout the Orient, that all Americans are rich. Perhaps they have every reason for so believing, from the lavish —and at times—very indiscriminate manner in which they spend money. Still, had Boyce counted all the money he said he was going to bet on these make-believe horses, he would have been amazed, for it amounted to over $10,000, while it will be remembered that upon leaving Lingayen, his wallet contained but $625. Still all he told her was plausible—logical, at least; and she was apparently convinced that he was wealthy in worldly goods as well as looks and physique.

"Let us hope," said she, "that our bets come safely home, and what a glorious time we shall have—you and I."

"Amen!" chimed Boyce, with a smile.

"Let us drink a toast to our good luck, what say you? I told Annette to have some wine here, but

I suppose she has forgotten it!" as she looked around the table.

"Ah, no! Annette, you have a magnificent memory! Here it is Señora on my side," as he smacked his lips in pleasant anticipation, and drew up a frosted bottle from the silver tub.

She started to rise. "I will call for Annette to come and uncork it."

"No, no; please do not disturb her. She is now in the realm of dreams. Poor dear, let her dream on. Two is company Señora, but three is ....."

"Is what?" she asked.

"..... a board of directors. I will open it myself. Heavens, woman! Am I not an able bodied man? Well let us hope so anyway! Able at least to open a bottle of wine!"

In a twinkling he had cut the wire with the dexterity of a professional, and when the cork's exuberance had been mollified by his hand laid upon it, he poured the sparkling, golden press of the delicious grape, which fizzes in a frothy seething foam, as it bubbled up and down the hollow handle of the glass.

They click their glasses together in affectionate salutation, then the Señora held up her glass.

"Here's to you, Señor Stanley Bateman, and your good luck to-morrow!"

"Thank you, Señora!"

The Señora leaned half over the table, and still

holding up her glass, asked in a half reproachful tone.

"Stanley; why do you persist in calling me Señora, all the time? It sounds so harsh—so cold! Suppose, ... suppose you call me by my Christian name—Amanda!" she said sweetly as the blushes fleeted in and out her cheeks.

Boyce held up his glass. "Then here's to you, my sweet Amanda, while we are alone; and here's to you, *Señora Valdez!*" he emphasized the Señora Valdez, "when in public.....I drink to your perpetual happiness!" When he had concluded he looked down sadly into the depths of the glass, then said. "And here's to your gallant husband, Señor Valdez!"

A scarlet blush swept over her countenance as she held up her glass again, absolutely disregarding the reference to her absent husband.

"And again! Here's to you, my dear—my broad shouldered American, and success to all your desires and wishes, be what they will! In love and in war, and I will help, aid and assist you all I can."

Her eyes suddenly sparkled with vivacity, her cheeks blended into a carnation red; the animation of her gestures, of her speech, gave new attraction to her ravishing beauty.

Boyce thought seriously for a moment. The very words she had just uttered staggered him. What possibilities? what significance was there attached to the words she had just uttered?

"I will drink heartily to that!" he answered fervently, looking questioningly over the rim of his upheld glass.

There followed a brief silence—*dolce far niente*—then Boyce questioned, as he held up the bottle.

"A little more, my own sweet darling?"

"No Stanley, dear—sufficient! I am not much on wine; it goes to my head and feet simultaneously. Help yourself, though!" she smiled.

Boyce refilled his glass, and tossed it off with the gusto of a connoisseur.

* * * * *

They talked incessantly and laughed gleefully. Whatever may have been the thoughts uppermost in their individual minds, or the subjects deepest at their hearts; whatever hopes, desires, fears, secrets or intrigues may be nestled in this sanctuary; they were happy and contented now—at least he was. His ship of love, driven by the winds of vanity, was now sailing smoothly over balmy waters, for she had not only forgiven him, but had practically given him liberty and possession over her.

But Boyce, beware! Let not the beautiful, mellifluous eloquence of that slippery tongue; nor the effulgency of her exquisite beauty illaqueate you; for remember: One man was tempted by a woman in the beginning, and we have all suffered ever since.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HYPOTHETICAL QUESTION.

BOYCE looked at his watch, and found with deep regret that it was twelve minutes past two o'clock. He had tried to ascertain the time while the Señora had her head turned slightly away, but she turned just as he was putting the watch back into his pocket.

"Well; now that you are worried about the time, would indicate, I suppose, that you are tiring of your company?" she questioned with a displeased pout.

"No, no!" he said holding up his hand, "far be it, my fair Amanda! When I looked at the time it was with the deepest regret that time was flying; that it would be soon time for this exquisite pleasure to end; for I don't suppose that you want to be kept up all night listening to the giddy chatter of a giddier Romeo, who thought—for propriety sake—that he ought to take the initiative in suggesting the hour. However, if my hostess—*my charming hostess,*" he emphasized nicely, "desires me to remain; it will only make it so much sweeter for me to acquiesce without further invitation."

When Boyce had concluded, he arose and made her a polite curtsey, which she in turn accepted with a smile.

"Oh, don't be in a hurry, for really, it is nothing for people in Manila—especially since you Americans came here—to sit around on the piazzas, balconies and in their apartments, playing cards—even the piano—till all hours of the morning. But,—" she continued with a tantalizing smile, which broadened into a laugh, ".... as my guest is getting tired of me, I will serve another cup of tea—do it myself, mind you—it will make it so much sweeter, don't you think, Stanley?" she questioned sweetly, "....and then, my dear *Chico,* you shall run away to your little bed, and I to mine; enjoy a good sleep, with pleasant dreams, and then I want to see you bright and early in the morning, sweet, charming and refreshed; with those darling red cheeks ....." She stopped abruptly and remained silent a second or two, as she lowered her eyes in that bewitching manner or hers; bit her lower lip, sighed, and whispered under her breath—(but which Boyce overheard)— ".....oh, they do look so sweet and inviting," then continued aloud as though she had not punctuated with those sweet signs of affection, "..... and then, I want you to take me for a drive on the Luneta, ...before breakfast, remember Stanley—and then we shall come back here or go to the Delmonico for breakfast, and then to the races. Now won't that be real nice?"

If Boyce was writing this himself, he could not explain how very, very sweet; how exquisitely charming; how naive and how queenly she looked

as she stood holding the silver urn, and giving him these pleasant instructions for the morrow. He stood admiring her for a moment in silence, as his eyes feasted on that beautiful form, and then spurred on by that unknown power, he walked over to the table where she stood, laid a hand on each bare, round, soft shoulder and looked searchingly into her fascinating eyes, while a languid smile lit up his features. He did not speak for fully a minute, but presently, with a perceptible quiver in his voice, he commenced, soft and low.

"My sweet Amanda. I want to propound for your analysis, a hypothetical question. Will you answer if I do?"

"You know I will, Stanley," she answered, setting the tea urn on the table, and putting her face temptingly close to his.

With this tempting assurance, it was as much as he could do, to restrain himself from kissing her, thereby laying himself liable to contempt of the "make-believe" court, he was now about to open.

Without further preliminaries, he began abruptly.

"Amanda!—You are a man!"

"Stanley!—I am *not* a man!" she interrupted.

"Oh, I mean a 'make-believe' man."

"Worse still!" she interrupted a second time with a half smile, "If I can't be a real, big, broad-shouldered fellow like you—I sha'n't be any!"

"Oh, well—suppose I call you an expert then. It will be more appropriate." He smiled.

"And what kind, pray?" she asked, as the devilment fairly danced in her eyes.

It was obvious that if she continued these interruptions, Boyce would surely be chastised by the court.

"Mrs.—Mr. Expert!" he said finally and peremptorily. "This is neither time nor place for facetiousness or levity;—hold up your right hand and be sworn!"

She accordingly held up her hand.

"Repeat after me, please," he said, while she nodded affirmatively.

"I swear .. that I will give my answers .. to the questions ... about to be propounded ... to the best of my knowledge and belief ... so help me .. Christopher Columbus."

When the oath had been administered, they both laughed foolishly, then Boyce suddenly straightened up as he asked sternly,

"Do you swear?"

"I—do—swear!" she repeated slowly, distinctly, laconically, with the sincerity and dignity of a model professional court expert.

"Now then, Mr. Expert," he began, stepping back from her a few paces—"Picture in your mind, an exceptionally inviting room; yes, an exquisitely beautiful room, in the center of which is standing a young man and a young woman—both apparently happy. The woman is charmingly gowned; her eyes are amorously dark and fiery, and her lips invite .. yes, almost command that they be kissed.

The light is turned low, diffusing a soft rosy mellow light. The hour is late, .. say two o'clock .. that bewitching hour so serenely seductive to love making, and which adds an inexpressibly mesmeric charm to the daintiness of the surroundings. The man in question, a great, big, boyish man, but a whole-souled, good hearted, affectionate sort of a cuss; is deeply in love with this beautiful woman. He wants to put his arms around her waist, and kiss her, and tell her how very, very much he loves her; how very, *very* much he cares tor her, but ....."

He hesitated, looked down at the floor a moment, then raising his eyes sharply to hers, he continued.

"..... but, alas, ... she is another's wife, who is far away. Then, suppose this man, cognizant of these facts, *should* put his arm around her waist, and kiss her, and tell her how very, very much he loved her; would you .. or would you not .. consider his act a crime? and if a crime, whether or not it would be pardonable under the plea of 'dementia de love' or some other conglomeration of words, to which you experts are adapted, and .. as an honest expert..would.....?"

"Do you mean to insinuate, sir?" she interrupted with assumed indignation, "that any expert is dishonest, when testifying in a court of justice?"

Boyce remained stern, and disregarding the interruption, continued.

"..... as an honest expert, .. ever keeping in

mind your vows and obligations .. what penalty would you inflict, should you find him guilty?"

After Boyce had gotten that out of his system, he sighed, and then folding his arms, anxiously awaited the verdict.

Even though the Señora saw the significance, and the adroit humor in the question from its inception, she now assumed an attitude of staid seriousness, as she alternately raised and lowered her eyes from floor to ceiling, the while tapping gently on the side of the silver urn. She cogitated for a few seconds longer, which to him, seemed like so many hours, then looking up suddenly, pretending to be all seriousness, while she tried to suppress a smile which flickered about the corners of her mouth, in itself radiant with nature rich and sweet in all its oriental colors; she gave her answer, in a low, but stoic voice, while she still fought hard to keep from laughing outright.

"Mr. District Attorney!" she said, when she could finally control her voice,—"Is that the functionary you are supposed to represent, Stanley?" she questioned, her face for a moment blending into a broad grin, while her eyes sparkled with a flare of sweet coquettish caprice.

"It matters not. The question fits equally the prosecution and defense," was his answer, as he waited anxiously.

"Well .." she resumed with a provoking smile which displayed her dazzling white teeth, "as this

is a court of 'make-believe,' this then is my answer. ..... Every point considered—the perpetrator of such an unpardonable crime, should,—in my opinion,—be severely punished."

When Boyce heard this he trembled; for, while he wanted to kiss her in the worst way; still,—even considering the fact that he was young and frivolous—he had some scruples; and he knew that it was with another man's wife he was trifling, and as a rule—(though not always the case)—men do not possess two kinds of courage; the moral and the physical. We know that in the battle of Manila, our hero possessed the physical courage, but now that he is to the test—has he the moral? Has he the will power to refrain from doing wrong, when he knows in his heart and soul that it is wrong. Ah, yes! If the world possessed more men and women who would hesitate; who would study a moment and expostulate with themselves when they reach the point where Boyce Eric is this moment; how much happier would the world be; how many more lives would enjoy that sweetness and peace to which we are all heirs, and to which we all have a just and equal right. When she said the man must be punished who would do, what he, as the principal in the hypothesis had proposed, he decided on the instant. "I shall not! By heavens, no!" In this he was resolute and would have remained faithful to his vow had not the Señora continued:

".....If that man consummated the act as

embodied in the hypothesis, then I would fine him .... let me see;—I would fine him one hundred sweet kisses. But if he did not; if he allowed such a golden opportunity to escape him,—when perhaps *even the woman* in question wants him to kiss her and tell her how much he really loves her ... then I should remand him forever, and amen, to some lonely desert island in the Frigid Zone,..... where he properly belongs,—and not, in this land of milk and honey; sunshine and beauty, of flesh and blood. For alas—he is not human."

As the sun brushes away the morning mists with one sweep of its golden rays, so went his resolutions of a moment before. He started forward as though to take her in his arms, but she quickly stepped back a few feet, holding up her hand warningly.

"Don't you dare try it! If you do, I shall be obliged to seek the protection of his honor, the judge. Remember Stanley that was only 'make-believe.' "

Boyce could retain himself no longer, for love will assert itself, and with a sudden impulse, he clasped her soft, beautiful yielding body in his strong arms, while a feeling of vague ecstasy crept over him when he felt her heart beating against his own. From her eyes there came one splendid flash before the lids slowly fell over them in a voluptuous languor, and a smile played mischievously about the corners of her mouth as their lips met

in a long passionate kiss .. their first kiss. How delicious it was too. Oh, what ecstatic bliss.

He held her from him a moment as he admired this queen of his heart, for never in all his wildest dreams of fancy, had he ever imagined a creature half so beautiful; then taking her in his arms again, kissed her white throat where the gown leaves it bare.

When they had, a few moments later, recovered from this exquisite embrace, she opened her eyes and looked up into his, now burning with the fury of an inextinguished love, as she asked sweetly: "Like me better now, dear?"

In reply, he simply bit his lips and sighed.

She seemed to understand.

"Well now Stanley, dear—I am forgetting about the tea. The hour is getting rather late,—and we are alone."

She picked up the urn and moved to the door, where she stood a moment, threw him a kiss, then parting the heavy chenille curtains, vanished into the room beyond.

* * * * *

Ere now, our big handsome American's brain was slowly becoming more clear from the frequent libations of the evening with the boys at the Metropole, but now; while sober from the effects of the fermented beverage, his mind was slowly becoming perplexed in a state of chaotic intoxication with the love of this beautiful, vivacious woman. It was

foolish of him, he knew. He also knew it was unwise to let the heart run away with the head; to allow himself to believe that she could possibly love him in so short a time; still, the instinct of the heart is ofttimes surer than the instinct of the mind. With him it was love on first sight, so why not the same with her. She had called him her ideal. She had looked at him with love in her eyes many times this evening. She had kissed him with that passion, possessed only by that type of woman whose veins are charged and lighted with that sparkling, devouring sensuality and fire of the tropics. "Ah, yes," he thought "to be loved by a woman like this; so grand, so ingenious; so beautiful; was enough to raise a man from earth to the Golden shores of Paradise." It would be to accomplish his wildest dreams and the most extravagant hopes he could have conceived. "Strange isn't it?" he mused. "How fate was so kind to me; strange too—how we met; and stranger still, how a simple service of locking a door has ripened into true love. How infinitely happy a trifle can make us."

After she had departed, he walked up and down the room with his hands jammed deep into his pockets, meditating, meditating, meditating. "What the deuce shall I do?" he asked himself, "it is now two-thirty." Again he began to pace, and the more he walked the more he thought. He was so desperately infatuated with this woman; so absolutely

shackled and held by every indomitable instinct to remain in her proximity, that he did not want to leave her presence, even till morning.

The words of her toast—

"Here's to you, my dear—my broad-shouldered American, and success to all your desires and wishes be what they will. In love and in war, I will help, aid and assist you all I can!" kept constantly shooting through his mind. "I wonder," he thought, "ought . . . . . ?"

* * * * * * * *

He gazed at every picture in the room, also every ornament; for he knew that every object was closely associated with her whom he loved. A third and fourth, a fifth and sixth time had he walked around scrutinizing everything in detail, but still the Señora did not return. He walked at last over to the writing desk, on which stood a colored photograph of her, encased in a massive silver frame. He picked it up and gazed at it closely for a long time as he mused: "The eyes have a wistful look about them; the mouth is smiling, and the whole face bears the impress of love and devotion; above all—honesty. How can a countenance such as that, be other than the reflection of a noble mind?"

Perhaps for a moment it also flashed through his mind, "How can a woman as sweet as she, so deceive her husband?" but if such a thought did enter his brain, it passed as quickly as it came, for he picked up the picture and kissed the face amorously.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BOUDOIR.

THE suspense was becoming awful. This was the fifth time he looked at his watch. "God; she has been gone now fifteen minutes; surely it doesn't require all that time to brew a cup of tea."

Twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five minutes slowly ticked into oblivion with that snail-like, monotonous attitude which time assumes when watched; but not a sound from within.

"What the devil has become of that omnivorous flame, to which I am the helpless, fluttering moth? Oh, for the power to look beyond those silken curtains!"

Curiosity being conceded the most potent of human attributes; his was now being stretched to its utmost limit, and after thirty-five minutes of suspense the tension on his nerves was becoming unbearable—almost desperate.

"Perhaps something has happened? Perhaps she is ill? Perhaps she has fainted?"

One after another these things suggested themselves in rapid succession, then, unable to retain his composure longer, he determined to hazard a look into that unknown land beyond the curtains.

With a disposition like his—impulse meant action; so stepping softly to the door, thinking humorously that he would surprise the "lioness in her lair," he boldly spread wide the curtains and made two lengthy strides within.

"Oh .. oh!" he exclaimed, as he caught his breath, and staggered back a step or two.

Sight of sights. Here was her boudoir; her sanctum sanctorum; but of all the creations! Verily, he believed that peep into paradise could not have surpassed it.

The room, which is exceptionally large; is a square in shape, except that one end juts out in a semi-circle, with three high, broad seated windows, hung with filmy lace, over which are artistically draped silk curtains of a pale misty green. Between the two windows, towards the left of the room, stands a low, oddly shaped, and more oddly carved, dressing table with a large oval mirror, and strewn with all the knick-knacks dear to a woman's boudoir. The furniture is of massive carved oak, and daintily matches the frieze and mantel on which stand some magnificent pieces exemplifying the dexterity of Japanese and Chinese craftmanship in the carving of ivory. The walls are painted with a pattern of white lilacs, interwoven with huge, long-legged Japanese storks, and all on a background of pale green. Like the parlor—or the drawing room, the floor is of polished hardwood, covered here and there with beautiful rugs of skin, and Turkish

designs in textiles. Arranged promiscuously about the room are bamboo rockers, the backs of which are interlaced with ribbons of pink and pale green. A luxuriant Turkish couch, which stands across one corner, is literally banked with silk cushions of many fascinating designs and colors, over which are carelessly strewn, many articles of silk lingerie.

Standing directly in front of the third window there is a table, on which stands a massive bronze lamp, the light of which is turned low, showing a light green shade, bearing delicate designs in butterflies and storks. Several books lay scattered around, and on one corner stands a huge cut-glass bowl, profusely crowded with pink roses and carnations, with a lonely yellow chrysanthemum, here and there.

To complete this scene of exquisite comfort and grandeur, which to Boyce, as he spread the curtains, resembled more a fairy scene from the Arabian Nights, stands a huge cumbersome old-fashioned bed; the posts being heavy and handsomely carved, and clouded over as it were, with a canopy of silk of a darkish green hue, which blends charmingly with the walls and other appointments. The green counterpane has been carefully folded and laid over the foot-piece, and there, on the immaculate covers, the Señora reclines, in an attitude of calm, tranquil indolence; her head nestled in downy pillows.

She is reading, as she gracefully puffs at a tiny gold-tipped cigarette, and appears thoroughly comfortable—both physically and mentally.

Her garments consist of a night gown of the daintiest Indian mull, a creation and profusion of ruffles and laces and ribbons. The gown is cut low and wedge shaped at the throat, and is sleeveless, displaying her beautifully rounded arms, throat and bosom, so largely and beautifully moulded. Her hair which is undone, lays helter-skelter over the pillows, and her bare feet and ankles, which show beneath the gown, are as firm and tapering, and as bounteous as nature could mould them. It is vain to attempt to describe the impression this scene produced, for while I may continue to catalogue and describe, from a critic standpoint, every object in this room, every feature of this woman's face, every color, every hue, every contour of her exquisite body; yet when the description is complete your mind could not, even then, comprehend the beauty; for there is some absolutely fascinating something, which even in reality, could not be explained. It is a vivid spectacle that only the memory retains; it is like a sweet perfume, whose redolence is forever retained by the nostrils: suffice to say however, that a vague emotion crept over Boyce. A feeling which *he* even, did not care to analyze. He was only conscious of the thrilling sensation the sight caused.

When he had parted the curtains, the Señora dropped to her lap, the book she was reading, and

looked up in amazement, rising on her right elbow at the same time.

"Oh, Stanley! Stanley! Pardon me, Stanley!" she said as though surprised to see him.

"How very, very absent minded of me. I had entirely forgotten all about you being out there; the wine must have made me forgetful; but you will forgive me,—won't you, dearest?" she questioned solicitiously, with wide open eyes and a reproachful smile, as the color fairly danced in her face.

What to say, Boyce knew not. Surely it was no pleasant compliment to be of so little consequence that he could be entirely forgotten in so short a time. His vanity was sorely wounded to the core. Still—even though thusly humiliated—as he continued to stare at her; a feeling of rich voluptuous calm came over him. A feeling like the soothing fumes of wine. Her magnetic charm, as she reclined with such ease and grace, had an effect on him, verging on intoxication.

Perceiving that he was contemplating her in silence, she blushed a deep carnation, cast down her eyes; then raising them in charming confusion said: "Stanley, dear. Please don't stare at me that way! .... Come!" she continued with an inexpressibly mischievous smile, as she arranged her gown more closely about her, to cover up the nakedness of her shoulders and ankles; at the same time indicating a place beside her on the bed, "Sit here and let me explain."

To his ears, the request was full of music; tender, pleasing, and yet, commanding. It was so irresistible, that had the obeying led to that place described so vividly by the renowned Dante, he would have willingly migrated; for women drive men to do strange things, which at times make them seem ridiculous, but for which they are to be pardoned; for while it is true that the human soul is infinite, the mind has its limitations.

"Thank you," was all he said, as he acquiesced; but his eyes shone with a strange, strange light.

When he had seated himself beside her, she took both his hands in hers. "Stanley, you will pardon my ill manners, my very rude conduct. I do not know what ever possessed me to forget you. But I know that you will forgive me, won't you dearest? Oh, you must. . . . I know you will," she said compassionately, "for I will be so *good* to you, so *sweet* to you, so *nice* to you!"

Meditatively and slowly, as though ashamed to acknowledge his weakness so complaisantly, he answered. "Darling! I am ready, yes, willing to forgive you much greater offenses; forgive you as only a man *must always* forgive the woman who baffles him; whose whims and ways are as complex and fluctuating as the winds of the seas; whose moods sway between the softness of the cooing dove and the indifference of the devil and whose eyes shine with the glow of the stars, and whose voice has the profundity of the ocean."

"Then you must surely love me, Stanley."

"Love you! Love you! Do I love you? Why do you ask? Can you not see it bubbling through every pore of my body? Can't you hear it as it shouts through my eyes? Love you! Love you! Yes, Amanda! I love you by all that is good within me! I love you by all that is holy! I love you with a madness that knows no goal; I have loved you from the first moment that I saw you in the corridor!"

She squeezed his hands tightly. "And I love you too, my true ideal! My big, gentle, broad-shouldered, naughty *Americano!* I love you with a passion that is blind, furious, mad, unresisting; with a passion that will sacrifice husband, home—and all for you," she answered in a voice trembling with a passion that would be spent, as she put her arms around his neck and holding up a luscious, tempting mouth, with teeth like pearls, "kiss me, Stanley, kiss me," she cried, "take me, darling, for I am yours."

Boyce had resolved and resolved, but his resolutions were like so much dust driven onward by this mighty cataclysm of passion. He could not withstand this temptation longer without being absolutely enslaved, and bending over her, he clasped her soft, quivering, relaxing, velutinous body in his strong arms. Her head sank slowly down into the soft pillows and their lips met again, as they smothered each other with long, passionate kisses; her

breasts rising and falling against him like restless billows.

Oh, this bliss! Never, *never,* was a man so happy! In this embrace the world is forgotten. Paradise is opened.

Kiss after kiss, he showered on those cherry lips, then removing them for a second, he asked: "Will you sacrifice all—now?"

Her response was a long, deep sigh and "yes" uttered deep down in her golden throat, and their lips pressed each other again.

While they kissed this time, the Señora's lips suddenly began to quiver; with a dread it would seem, at the thought of what she was *doing;* or perhaps, *going* to do. Or, perhaps a sudden thought of her husband; of her infidelity to her marriage vows passed through her mind. Perhaps it was of the wrong she was doing. Perhaps she thought this must stop; this temptation must go no farther. But look! Slowly her right hand which had been laying across his shoulder, suddenly drops down beside her; it fingers nervously beneath the mattress. A cold shudder creeps over her.

While they still extract the honey from each others lips, Boyce feels something pressing steadily and tighter against his left side, just under the heart. Unconsciously—even without removing his lips from hers—he puts his left hand down to remove the cause; thinking, perhaps—if he thought

at all—that a pencil or something had gotten crosswise in his pocket.

As his hand dropped to his side, the Señora, with the quickness and subtleness of a steel spring, jerked her head aside, at the same time rising on her elbow, as she pressed heavily with something in her right hand against his side, and fairly hissed in his ear.

"Don't move or I'll shoot!"

The action was so sudden, that it was fully a half a minute before Boyce realized that she was pressing the muzzle of a heavy revolver to his heart.

Instantly her face underwent a sombrous transfiguration that was hellish to look upon. It was evil incarnated in all its hideous infamy.

"Stand up!" she hissed again.

Boyce hesitated a moment, trying to assemble his thoughts, then arose to a sitting posture, but he did not—even then—realize the seriousness of the situation.

"Stand up! Do you want me to shoot? you fool!" as she pushed his almost limp form from her.

"Hold up your hands!"

With a feeling of numbness in his brain, he stood up, and raised both hands above his head; the action being more androides-like, than human.

She smiled, but not a smile like her others; it was one of those despicable, sinister smiles of the cruel, heartless women of the world. In her beautiful

eyes, which now snapped fire, there lurked a look of sneering coolness; not like a human being; more like a demon.

At first Boyce was stunned. The suddenness of it all seemed to hebetate his intellectual faculties, and from his actions, it was evident that for a moment he thought it a hoax; some strenuous whim of hers to chase the blood prancing through his veins. But when he regained his senses a moment later, he smiled sadly like a frightened child. He started to speak, but his lips moved several times before sounds came.

"Say, Amanda; that damned thing is loaded! Put it down from my head; it is dangerous! . . . Do you know dear," he said, "Dick Mansfield would have given much for the ability to reproduce that expression you have on your face this moment." This, with an effort at simulating a lightness and good humor, he was far from feeling.

For fully a minute she stared at him in silence, her eyes burning into his like red hot brands. Then laughing fiendishly, as though she thought the situation humorous, she resumed with contemptuous scorn.

"Now Stanley, you poor fool! It will become my painful task to relieve you of your money and valuables. And remember, please, let there be no scene; or I shall be forced to shoot you like I would a cur in the street. And I hate excitement!"

Boyce was trembling perceptibly as he started to

lower his hands. The delicate, numbed, interwoven, perplexed intricacies of thought were now slowly regaining their normal proportions, and he calmly and fully realized that this was no idle jest, but a sad reality.

"Keep up your hands!" she demanded, seeing his effort to lower them, as she slipped out of bed, still keeping the revolver pointed at his head.

"Why do you tremble?" she questioned sneeringly, "ah, a valorous soldier, you," she continued, with a contemptuous curl of her lips. "You poor, simple fool; you *will* make love to a beautiful woman, of whom you know nothing, will you? You *will* constuprate the sacredness of the boudoir of another man's wife, with your forced words of love which are blasphemy on the very sacredness that the word implies? But you giddy Americans, with your inflated vanity are all alike ! You see a beautiful picture; a pretty house; a pretty horse or a pretty dog; you want it immediately, and you buy it. You use every device conceivable, whether it be legitimate or otherwise! God favored you fools with more wealth than brains. Then through the same covetous eyes you behold a beautiful woman, and you are struck with her dazzling beauty, just as you are with the beautiful picture. You see the radiant halo about her like the radiance of a blazing whirlwind, and to you it instantly spells temptation. Then like she were the picture, the horse, the house or the dog, you want her too, and to secure

her your attitude assumes a sort of careless, licensed impunity; unscrupulous; imperious; but they can't all be bought with your opulence of glittering gold! Look at these ruby lips of mine now! You tried to buy them; look at these immaculate shoulders and arms and bosom; you tried to buy them with your salacious intent. How do you like them now? Remember Stanley—remember, I asked you in the corridor if you would regret calling to see me."

Boyce, now staring like a mad man, remained silent, but shook his head regretfully, while he fastened his eyes with Sphinx-like steadfastness on her now sombre countenance, as though he sought to discern some clue to her next move, while all the ardent follies of his happiness and devouring love for her, retraced themselves on the tablet of his memory like flaming brands.

With a *sangfroid* that bit into his brain like a sharp tool bites into soft iron, she continued in her well modulated, but sarcastic voice.

"Stanley, it may be of some consolation, if I told you that you are not the only bird I have caught in a cage like this, so beautifully lined . . .," she waved her hand about the room impressively, ". . . and, am I not a most voluptuous and luscious decoy?"

Without waiting for any response which he might care to make, she resumed in that same mocking strain, accompanied by a look charged with sensual electricity which sank to the furthermost depths of

his soul. "Why boy; I have stranded *real* men, just like this! *Worldly* men; men who *thought* they knew. I have cast upon them the charm of my magnetic glances, until—to their dazzled senses—my very being seemed like a flame of *sorcery,* from which seemed to emanate, all the evil spirits; the magic; the enchantment; the witchcraft and the power of all the elements the word implies; drawing them ever nearer and nearer, little by little, into its blazing grasp, around which they buzzed like a moth about a candle. Buzzed until their wings were so scorched—so charred, they were unable to flee. Then seeing them lost; suffering every torment of a tantalized craving, I amused myself in prolonging their delirium by tossing them into the shoals and quicksands of the ocean of temptations, by letting them hold me in their arms and kiss the honey from my lips and then . . .," she snapped her fingers and tossed her head with a nonchalant jerk, to accentuate her meaning, ". . . and then, ruin— oblivion; but with all," this with some show of compassion, "I have never before tempted one so young, so inexperienced with women of the world, as you. I am sorry for deceiving you, really I am; but Stanley, it is necessary."

Boyce deigned no reply, for he could not even think. This ironical bluntness; this nerve; this admitted debauchery; this hell-born audacity, staggered him.

"Señora; I see that I am trapped. I know, now,

that you are serious. I am unarmed, however, so if you will kindly permit, I should like to lower my arms, because this is very tiresome, and then you can fleece me just as well with them down, as up."

"Very well; I suppose you *are* entitled to some consideration, but remember, no demonstration; not a word, nor any attempt to attack me, for I warn you in advance—so help me God!—that a suspicious movement on your part will indicate that you are reckless and want to die. Still, I do not want the bother of your dead body on my hands; it would be rather embarrassing—inconvenient—at least." With that she stepped closer to him and placed the revolver nearer his head, as she continued satirically: "It further behooves you to obey without resistance, because; suppose I should call the manager of this hotel, and he find you in my boudoir at this hour and especially with me attired in nothing but my night robe; what do you suppose he would say?"

She answered her own interrogation with an enigmatic shrug of her pretty shoulders, then continued: "Moreover, who shall gainsay, or confute me, when I should say that you had forced your way in here and that I had discovered you robbing me; or suppose I should claim an attempted assault; what would be the result? Why Bilibid (the municipal prison) is yawning for you even now!"

It was unnecessary for her to proceed further, for to Boyce it was obvious that he was truly in a delicate position. True, as she said; the very hour,

and her attire (while he was in his street clothes), would in itself negative any explanation he could make; even though it be the truth; for she would make a false and malicious charge, and then the onus of the situation would be upon him, and how could he combat it? He could already see the flaring, ignominous headlines in the papers, and hear his name a common topic on the tongues of the scandal-mongers. It meant ruin—irretrievable ruin.

"Or, suppose," she continued, after a moment's pause, "suppose my husband should come walking in here just now?"

A double sense of shame and fear crowded over him.

"Your husband! W-w-why, why I thought he was in Pekin?" he stuttered, each word in its utterance marking a crescendo of alarm, as he saw a vision of a marble monument, bearing the one lone word of epitaph, **BEWARE.**

"Yes! my husband, do you hear," she emphasized with a sarcastic smirk, ignoring absolutely his remark, ". . . the Señor Valdez! Ha, ha, ha," she laughed, "really I don't know whether he is in Pekin or not. I don't know where Señor Valdez might be. I don't know any one in the world answering to that appellation—unless he be some nomadic *will-o'-the-wisp*. . . . I have no husband. Señora Valdez is *not* my name; it was fictitious for the flirtation."

Boyce's eyes opened in stupefied amazement.

"Then this husband; the events of this whole evening, were but a mere subterfuge? After all, your *real* reasons, and object, from the very beginning, was to lure me to this? Your professed love for me was only a bait—gracefully turned phrases—used politely, promiscuously, to define a coarser deception. I have simply been made the victim of the animal magnetism of a she-beast?"

"*Caramba!*" she answered with a toss of her pretty head. "We are losing much valuable time. Shall I call the manager and swear you attempted to assault me, or will you condescend to permit me to continue unmolested?" She hesitated for him to form a decision, then resumed with a sneer, "I repeat what I have just said—about *Bilibid!* Do you comprehend?"

Again he looked into the drum of the revolver, and it only required a cursory glance to assure him that every chamber was fully loaded. He thought he could see death itself gesturing at him in its dark barrel. Having been a soldier, he knew the deadly power of that loaded weapon. He also knew that a cocked revolver in the hand of a woman desperately engaged in such a daring holdup—and that weapon pointed directly at his head—placed him in a very precarious position, for the least move on his part might cause the slightest pressure on the trigger, and the . . . well; it was very unpleasant to contemplate. He consoled himself, however, with the thought that he was lucky. He al-

ways felt that he was born under a lucky star. Fortunate it was that he had put the bulk of the money in the suit case before going out to see the fellows; for she would have had that, too. That surely was an act of Providence. Then the fellows in the poker game had relieved him of most of the $25 which he had taken along. He was half jubilant in the knowledge that she would, after all, get little for her trouble—small remuneration, even for the loss of sleep.

While all these things were rushing madly through his brain, the Señora was eyeing him quizically. "Well, suppose you turn out your pockets, my handsome Stanley!" she demanded sarcastically.

Without further hesitation, he turned them out; throwing the contents on the bed, while the semblance of a smile—sickly though it was—lurked around the corners of his mouth. From all the pockets he extracted not more than $6 in bills and some small change. "That's my wealth," he said, looking her square in the eyes, while an affected smile spread over his countenance.

"All of it?" she asked, obviously vexed, and with an impatience bordering on nervousness.

"All of it." This with an air of affected indifference, which he did not feel.

She looked in wild surprise; but seemed to be checking her temper from asserting itself, at least for the time being; for, notwithstanding her appar-

ent disappointment, she was too much of a diplomat to show it on such an occasion.

"The diamond in your shirt!"

Boyce obeyed.

"Those two rings!"

Again he obeyed without comment.

"The watch!" she continued with that same calloused monotone. The other articles of jewelry he had departed with willingly to be rid of the whole affair, but when she demanded the watch, the tears began to well up in his eyes, and with a tremor in his voice, he began appealingly, "Señora, you have lured me here. You are robbing me. I have given you all except the watch. I think a heap of it. It was a gift from father and mother on my eighteenth birthday. Both are dead and gone now, but I feel as though mother is looking down here at this moment, deploring the predicament into which her son has been cajoled by a cruel, heartless woman. See Amanda," as he opened the case, "her picture is here. Do please, let me keep it, for I love it; I adore it; I beg you, do not take that."

Another fiendish smile was the reward of his obsecration, as she waved him aside.

"The watch! I don't care to see the picture; you may keep that if you elect, but I *must* have the watch."

As Boyce brushed aside a tear from his cheek, he looked up again, imploringly, with a flicker of hope that the sentiment attached to the gift, might cause

her to relent and allow him to keep it; but, as she indicated no action in that direction, he began in a disheartening voice:

"You are cruel, Amanda. Very, very cruel. You do not even respect the dead in your diabolical hold-up; but mark me, woman!" his voice raised gradually in a pathetic inprecation, as his paroxysms of anger, mingled with despair, momentarily augmented, "You will pay for this some day! Why the very angels will curse you; the very spirits in the air, and the dead of the sea will rise up to help curse you through the fiery gates of perdition. Yes; the very devil and his deities in the infernal hell, will ostracise you; for even the devil—in all his iniquity—must surely respect a decent disciple! Why you have no more feeling, no more sentiment, no more respect, in that sensuous body of yours, than has a cold, creepy, bloodless snake!"

Her lips curled again, sneeringly—satirically.

"Well; is there no more money?"

Boyce shook his head negatively.

"Where is the rest of that money?" she demanded slowly, but positively, as her eyes flared brighter.

"Haven't any more."

"You haven't any more?" she screamed with a sibilant grating of her teeth, and coming so close to him that he could feel her hot breath on his cheeks.

Here is where his ostentatious gasconade of earlier in the evening stood him in bad stead, for she

immediately hissed with all the sarcasm in her versatile vocabulary.

"No more! No more you say! Why, where is that $3000 you were going to bet on 'Pronto,' where is that $2000 you were going to bet on that *other* favorite from Iloilo; and the many more thousands you were going to bet on as many more favorites? Where is all that, please?"

"Yes," he thought, "where is it? Lies will come back like boomerangs. Oh, curse you!" he said unhis breath, while he parried for time to form a reply. She had him cornered now, but he found it incumbent on him to say something. "I intended to pay all bets by check—in case I lost," he finally said, with some degree of satisfaction.

"By check! Oh, yes, I see! Strange, isn't it that I never thought of that? Really I forgot. And I suppose, you intend to pay your hotel bill, your cigar and cigarette bills; your carriage hire—even the tips to waiters and bell boys—and the money you lost in the poker game, by check also?"

This sarcasm cut him to the quick, but not knowing anything else he could say, he nodded his head in tacit reply.

"Why you miserable cur! You chicken-hearted sport! You unsophisticated fool!" she burst forth with vehement emphasis, "why stand there and lie to me so deliberately? Hand out that money immediately, or I'll blow your brains out!"

The very manhood in him would not tolerate

longer this scurrilous ridicule; everything that was masculine in him; all the strength, that till now had laid dormant, was slowly raising up within him. He must challenge, and flashing with temper, he pointed his finger in her face with a wild gesture; his countenance dark, foreboding, defiant; his breast heaving wildly, as he stretched his five feet eleven inches to its utmost height, and putting every ounce of energy within him, into his speech, he retorted: "Listen to me woman! You have me covered with a loaded revolver. You, the woman I loved so passionately a few minutes ago, now a malignant, nauseous, insensate viper! You are holding me up and fleecing me with as little compunction as a child would maul a kitten! You have me here like a defenseless bird, unable to fly, and driven to corner by a savage cat. If it remains, it will be pawed and scratched to death, and if it attempts to hop away, its bones will be snapped and stripped by your efferous, merciless jaws of needle-like teeth. You toy with me like a terrier toys with a mouse. You know that I am at your mercy! You know there is no way for me to escape this damnable imbroglio; that there is no earthly use to argue or expostulate with you. You know that it would be but a fool's effort, to attempt to snatch at that loaded weapon; but, by the gods woman! I warn you! Repeat again those words you have just ejaculated, and even though hell gets me in the next moment; I will choke you to death! You miserable hussy; yes,

choke you to death, even though I die in the attempt. I will....."

"Be as calm as a lamb," she completed, and prevented further outburst on his part, by placing the cold steel of the revolver against his forehead.

"Silence! hand over that watch!" she again demanded, accentuating her speech with a positiveness that *would* be obeyed.

What could he do? What could any man do in like position? The boldness of her language; the fire in her eyes; the provoking liberty of her manner, sufficiently revealed that she was desperate, that she would not be denied; so there being nothing to do but submit to the inevitable, he reluctantly laid the watch with the other things, after first extracting from the case the picture of his mother, which he kissed affectionately and put in his pocket.

He was brave enough—surely big and strong enough—he knew, to grapple with her and overpower her—at least knock the revolver from her hand—but, suppose she detected such a move, the slightest pressure on the trigger, and . . . well, his name would be recorded with those departed; so he decided that just as long as she kept that revolver pointed at his head, and her finger on the trigger, just so long all his strength and bravery went for naught. Better be fleeced, and still live; than to take the chance and have her fire; for he felt, now that she had gone this far, she would stop at nothing to attain her devilish ends. The trap had been

neatly, yes, gracefully laid. He had stepped into it of his own volition, so why not take it philosophically, and make the best of a bad adventure, and let the experience be a lesson for the future. Still he thought, "There is my own revolver in my room, only a few steps down the corridor. How near, but alas; how far away."

How true and forceful the words of Max Thebaut now rang in his ears: *"Remember Boyce. You are going to a mighty wicked city. A city where all the crooks in the Occident have gathered this month; for the express purpose of fleecing all the poor lambs who might venture within their fold. . . ."*

"Ah, yes," he thought, as the words seemed to echo with cacophonious reality thoughout the room. The old saying: "Verily and indeed; it is the unexpected that always happens." Who would have ever dreamed that he, Boyce Eric, would be getting fleeced, and then, too, on the very first night in the city? Such a thing was the most remote that he could have possibly conceived. The part that stung the most, however, was that it should be perpetrated by the fairest woman he had ever seen.

Now Boyce; where is your habit—now made so conspicuous by its absence; your old man's habit of adapting yourself to any circumstance which might arise? Where now is that sagacious, cool, clear, calculating brain, that never tired over the intricacies of geometry or engineering problems? that

never puzzled or perplexed brain, that was always capable of settling all things in the most common sense and practical manner? Why not extricate yourself from this damnable vortex into which you have stepped? Not only these, but thousands of other thoughts, shot with marvelous celerity through his mind, which, in their speed, seemed to freeze his very brain into icy apathy.

While he stood for these few seconds, enwrapped in these reflections, she was eyeing him sharply, as though cogitating on her next move, and for which he did not have long to wait. Far removed from her thoughts was the idea of permitting such a young and inexperienced opponent—in worldly ways—to checkmate her in this game; in which all his pawns and pieces—except the knight, which was at the mercy of the queen—was already removed from the board.

"Have you given me all the money and valuables you have on your person?"

"All," was his laconic reply.

"You positively haven't anything more?"

"Hell's fire! aren't you satisfied yet?"

Pressing the revolver tightly against his forehead, she searched his pockets. They were all empty. Stepping back from him a pace, she said in an enigmatic, though determined voice:

"Perhaps . . . Have you the remainder in your room?"

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

IF the Señora—when she asked the question which closed the preceding chapter—entertained any doubts, as to whether or not, he had any money in his room; these doubts were immediately dispersed a moment after she concluded; for he gave a start—unconsciously, no doubt—on his part; but which did not escape the astute scrutiny of this fair burglar, whose brilliant and perspicacious eyes now lit up with a dawning gleam of understanding, as she read his mind with the exactness of a physiognomist.

She had put the question at the psychological moment; at the time when he least expected it—if he expected it at all. But withal had he possessed—even in a minor degree—those stoic idiosyncrasies of the sagacious gambler, whose countenance remains rigid and indifferent at all times (thereby concealing from his opponent the character of cards he holds); then the subsequent events might have been altered. As it was, however, his mind was not difficult to discern, for when he discovered the course of events, his blood started with an ebullition like the reflux of an ebb-tide, which flushed his face instantly with a fiery crimson.

"Great Gods," he exclaimed under his breath, as his large shapely hands clinched till the nails sank into the white palms, as though grasping some unfeelable, yet seemingly tangible substance, "this woman *must not* enter my room, for all the money I have with me is there, and while it is not much—nothing near the amount she anticipates—still it is my all."

If at any time during the last half hour, he was tempted to yell at the top of his voice, it was now; thinking probably, that after all was said and done, she would not shoot, and he would wake the hotel by his cries. But, was his life worth the chance, that was the question. He knew, or at least he felt in his heart and soul, that a woman of her character and calibre, would not be denied.

Without more ado, she threw over her shoulders a kimona of scarlet damask, gorgeously flowered and figured with deep yellow, and with the free hand, awkwardly tied the cord of gold about her waist, and then with an audacity that staggered him, said:

"We shall now determine whether you have the residue of those thousands in your room. Open your mouth, my sweet birdie."

With face gray-white and eyes that fairly bulged from out their sockets with a wildness that bordered on frenzy, he obeyed, and when he had opened his mouth she placed the barrel into it.

"Bite on that cold steel!" she said softly, as

though placing a dulcet cream between his teeth, "and beware of the power it contains. Remember Stanley, dear; we are now going on a perilous journey, so, under no circumstance are you to utter a sound, nor make an effort to escape, for I warn you, my finger is on the trigger—pressing firmly—and your life shall be the penalty if you disobey. I am desperate, so have a care."

After a second or two of intermission, she continued, "Come, my fair prisoner!" as she led him to the door, turned the latch and looked up and down the corridor.

At this hour all the guests had long since retired, and the corridor was in darkness, except for a small night lamp away up towards the rear of the building, and another, a door or two below his room.

"Now dear, walk quickly!" she urged, but without the least trace of anxiety in her voice.

* * * * *

After entering his room and locking the door, she removed the revolver from his mouth with a deep sigh. Not, however, a sigh of anxiety; but more like that languid gladsomeness that permeates the body on the successful completion of some hazardous task.

"My!" she exclaimed, "what a pretty little room you have here. May I look around?" she continued smilingly.

Boyce did not answer.

"Thank you," she said, as though he had extend-

ed a very cordial invitation. "You are very kind. I always did love to ramble in a bachelor's quarters —especially those of such a nice, congenial bachelor. These bachelor quarters are so very different from those of a woman—aren't they Stanley? Always so topsy turvy. I expect it is the contrast that catches a woman's eye, don't you think so, dear?"

Still he did not answer.

"How very uncongenial you are, dear, why you haven't answered one question."

And still he deigned no reply. He could not, for his tongue seemed to be glued to the roof of his mouth. Of all the cool, daring nerve; of all the hellish audacity that man ever met, this was the acme.

"By the suffering cats," he thought, "Oh; if I could only tear out that slippery villainous tongue by its very roots." No, not even *that* would be sweet enough revenge for this half hour experience he was now going through.

As she gazed casually about the room, always keeping a sharp lookout for any suspicious move on his part; her eyes finally lit on the suit case sitting on the small table alongside the bureau. When she discovered it she looked up sharply into his eyes and asked:

"It is there?"

Now, when it was too late, his countenance remained rigid, and from it she discerned no enlightenment; but, as it was the only place where he

could possibly have anything, she walked over, raised the lid, and there lay the wallet. A smile of satisfaction lit up her wolfish-like visage, as she fairly gloated over the anticipated wealth.

"I knew you lied to me Stanley; I just knew you did."

While Boyce at this moment was never more desperate in all his life, still a half sickly smile slowly crept into his eyes. A smile at the thought of what she would say when she discovered but $600 instead of several thousand. The smile faded, however, as quickly as it came, when he realized that his money was going, and no way to prevent it.

"Hell's fire!" he uttered under his breath, "What in the devil am I to do? Am I going to stand here and let this human snake take all I have and make no effort to retain it?"

"Señora," he began in a voice filled with resigned hopelessness, "do not take it all. Leave me a few dollars anyway—enough at least with which to get back home."

When she saw his discomfiture, she laughed fiendishly, outright in his face, and placing the wallet in the bosom of her night dress, where she had already put the diamond and watch and money while in her room, she answered:

"How very, very selfish you are, Stanley. Why you even begrudge me that which you told me you did not possess. So—as you had nothing, I have taken nothing. Isn't that logical? Anyway dear,

you can get home on that *check book* that you were going to play the races on," she said with ironical sarcasm, then stepping to his side, commanded.

"Sit down there," pointing to the bed.

After he had seated himself submissively on the side of the bed, she added, "suppose you lie down! it will be more comfortable."

There being no alternative, he again obeyed with an abject sigh. Then while she pressed the revolver to his heart, she seated herself beside him.

"Señor Bateman," she began with a mocking smile, "I desire to propound for your analysis—for your compliance rather—a request, and take heed, for it is no *'make-believe.'* Repeat after me: 'I, Stanley Bateman . . . do swear on my honor as a gentleman . . . that I will remain quiet . . . for the next half hour. That I will not raise an alarm . . . nor will I attempt . . . to force open the door of this room. . . . So help me God!"

Boyce followed her word for word, till he came to the last four, then stopped, and remained silent.

"So help me God!" she repeated.

He looked at her defiantly, but did not answer.

"Do you swear to that? speak, fool, speak!"

"It's blasphemy, you miserable demirep; it's blasphemy."

"Do you swear to that?" she asked again, her lips twitching and eyes flaring.

His lips curled in bitter contempt, as he retorted

defiantly, "No, you mocking burlesquer, no, a thousand times no! My answer must be your desire, so why waste my breath?"

"I shall give you one more chance. *Do you swear?"* she flashed with sardonic irony, yet positive in her intent, which she accentuated by pressing the muzzle tightly against his heart.

There was no denying that demand, for a burglar, once in possession of his loot will take desperate chances to carry it off.

"Damn you! yes, I swear!"

"Then repeat after me: 'So help me God.'"

"So help me God!" he repeated, in a low voice with all the solemnity the words implied.

She laughed. "I knew you would Stanley. A gentleman would not do otherwise, and a *gentleman* always keeps his word."

He grunted disdainfully, sarcastically. "Yes, especially when forced to at the point of that thing you hold in your hand."

"Oh, but I know you will, dearie. I know you *must;* because your life shall be the penalty, if you do not. If not to-night, then later. And further; there is no way that you can alleviate the poignancy of the situation. You cannot say anything, for who would believe anything you might say. Not a soul has seen this 'affaire d'amour' . . . none have seen me with you, except my maid, and she will say whatever I tell her to. I must have ten minutes to get to my rooms, and instruct Annette, then, then

. . . . . ." she laughed, "do as you like. My character is beyond reproach in this hotel. Everyone knows me. And further; should you report the matter to the management, they would consider you insane, but Stanley, I will not annoy you longer, for it is getting awful late, and late hours are destructive to both morals and beauty. I suppose too, dear, that you are wearied of me ere now? I guess I will not have the pleasure of your company tomorrow, so let this be our seal to the oath, and at the same time, our farewell. The acquaintance, dear, has been short—but sweet," she concluded with double significance, as she leaned over and kissed him square on the mouth.

The damnable contrast between her action, her words and the position he was in, made him shiver with an excruciating pain, for of all the grotesque courtesy, this was mockery sublime.

By this time Boyce was desperate. Any chance now that she had all he possessed. This resolution meant immediate action, if he would save himself; for he was cognizant that what she had just said was the truth. Who would believe any such yarn that he might tell? It would be ridiculous, incredible, preposterous. Should he complain he would be the laughing stock of the hotel and the city; a public joke for all to snigger at.

"No, by God, no! I must expose her while she is here where the evidence means conviction."

The Señora, her nerves tingling with the satisfac-

tion of possession, stepped slowly backward to the door. She stood for a second facing Boyce, while she endeavored to unlock it with one hand behind her, while the other held the revolver pointed at him. Apparently she could not unfasten it in that way, so she turned to unlock it.

This was the chance he had been waiting for, and in that second that she had turned, something whispered in his ear, "There, Boyce! There is your opportunity; the forlorn hope of succor!"

CHAPTER XVII.

THE MURDER.

IT only took the fraction of a second, and his guardian angel must have been hovering near, for he felt his revolver in the exact position where Mrs. Thebaut had put it that morning; and he grasped it like a wild beast does its prey.

In the meanwhile the Señora had gotten the door unlocked and held it open a few inches, as she turned and started to speak. "Good . . ."

It is presumable that she had intended to say "good-night or good-bye," but the last syllable remained unuttered, for he sprang at her like an enraged tiger and before she could escape or raise her revolver he had a madman's grip on her hair, and pushed her body closely against hers, thereby pinning to her side, the arm which held the revolver. Slamming the door shut with his foot, he savagely bent her back over his left arm and pushed his revolver into her face. In the excitement, and the revolver being a heavy army Colt, he struck her (accidentally though it was) lower lip and teeth with the end of the barrel, splitting it with a gash fully half an inch long, and dislocating two of the pearly teeth from their positions. He held her close-

ly and tightly to his body while he wrenched from her hand the weapon she held, and after putting it in his hip pocket, put his face down close to hers, at the same time pushing the barrel deep into the soft flesh beneath her chin, while he hissed madly, "*Adhuc sub judice lis est!* Now you cur, you heinous monster! Ah, you fair Amanda; now, suppose I should call the manager of this hotel, and he find *you* in *my* room at this hour of the morning, and with nothing on but your night gown; *what* do you suppose he would say? Moreso, when I informed him that it was a liaison—pure and simple. Now," he laughed with fiendish bitterness, "shall I call your husband? Strange, isn't it, you lying pup? Strange isn't it how fate turns tricks? The wheel goes round and round and round. Now you lose—now you win! At last it is my turn to cash."

In the meanwhile she was trembling like a sheaf of wheat in a windstorm as she lay back in his arms in a semi-faint, while the blood from the gash in her lip fairly flowed over her chin and down over the beautiful white throat and shoulders.

"Oh, heavens, Stanley, don't, don't, don't shoot me, don't shoot me!" she cried as her left hand tried to remove his revolver from her throat.

Boyce remained silently staring into her face with a wild, wild look.

"For God's sake man don't murder me! Oh, take that thing from my throat, you are cho-cho-choking me . . . to . . . death," she stuttered,

her face almost purple, "oh, Stanley, if you only, only knew. I will give everything back. I will be your slave. I will do anything—everything."

"How very magnanimous you are now; how meek!" he said in a low, strange voice, as he held her tighter in that grip of steel. While he was desperate to extreme, his countenance at this moment, bore a resemblance more like a madman in a strange coma, than a normal man writhing in anger.

She opened her eyes suddenly, but closed them again as quickly, for she too, saw that strange, vacant, uncertain stare.

"Señor," she begged, as the tears in huge drops rolled down her cheeks, "Please let me stand; what have you done? I am choking!" at the same time drawing her lower lip—which was already swollen to twice its normal proportion—under her upper. When she felt the wound, she gave a horrible scream; a cry which would have ordinarily wrung compassion from the heart of the most calloused, most brutal of men, and, which would have ordinarily touched his sympathy; but not now. Her deception had driven all sense of pity and feeling from his very soul, as he glared furiously and unsympathetically at her swollen mouth, and the stains of blood which marred the attraction of her beautiful, poetic features; but still he did not speak, nor move.

Again she appealed, "Please Señor, please, please! In God's holy name I ask, stop this blood. God,

man, have you no feeling? I will bleed to death; I was not this cruel!"

There was in that humble supplication, a deep, sympathetic, indescribable; yes, almost heart-rending pathos, and suddenly he seemed to come to his senses, and for a moment the absorbed, vacant expression changed—but the change was to a sombre scorn.

"Stop the blood did you say? Stop hell, you voluptuous, luscious decoy! Stop the blood, eh? Stop hell, do you hear me; stop hell! Away you accursed demon, away!" he shouted, as he threw her to the floor with a sickening thud, and then stood over her while he glared down for a few moments, as she lay moaning.

He turned suddenly and walked slowly to the bureau, picked up a cigarette and lighted it with as calm and deliberate *sangfroid* as though sampling a new brand of tobacco.

He took a puff or two as he gazed, half pitiful, half disdainfully at this helpless, blood-covered heap of soft, beautiful humanity prostrate on the floor.

"Sad . . . sad," he said, addressing the tip of the burnt match head, and shaking his head regretfully.

For several minutes he continued to gaze at her in silence, then she startled him when she careened from her side full on the broad of her back, and opened her eyes with an appeal of despair.

"Stanley, Stanley, Stanley, . . . mercy . . .

quarters. For God's sake, Stanley, quarters, I am choking, choking!"

By this time he seemed more calm, and, as he always had a big, open heart, bearing malice towards no man, it seemed obvious that her humble supplications had a merciful effect upon him. Perhaps she also thought that his calmer assuasive countenance, meant mitigation of further punishment, or ridicule on his part, and, while it would be nice to say here, that it did; still, it must be regretfully chronicled that she was forced to change her views, for while he looked at her, his temper was becoming more irritated and fermented and swelling up within him like a mighty tide, and try as he would to fight it back, it would find egress. Then suddenly, like a bolt from a clear sky, the storm burst forth.

"Curse you!" He breathed rather than spoke the words, as he threw the cigarette aside with a wicked, spasmodic jerk; then kneeling down beside her he caught hold of each of her shoulders which he clutched till the very bones under his powerful grip seemed to crush, and looking into her closed eyes with a stare of an infuriated wolf, and urged on by that mysterious something, which starts his blood seething and foaming so that he can hear the rushing pulsations of his own heart—even the rushing of the blood through the veins, making his brain reel, and dragging it down to the level of the blood-thirsty animal; he crouched down over her,

with a sibilant, gurgling sound for all the world like a cat, when cornered by a mischievous dog, crouches back on its hind legs and hisses its warning to "keep off."

With his mouth near hers, he began: "Woman, an hour ago, I loved you, loved you with a passion that became a raging, blazing demon within me; a passion, the like of which makes *great* men fools—lest a poor, simple, innocent clodpoll like me. You decoyed me here simply to rob me, which purpose you covered with the sacred cloak of love! You lured me here, you consummate trickster, with a love which assumed a sovereignty over my very soul; a love that shone clearly with its commanding dominance; with a passion that enslaved me; with its power to ordain, and for which I would have been fool enough to sacrifice all. You seduced me here with a beauty that was irresistible and which commanded me to fall at your feet and worship you; which so predominated my mind, that it left reason without a coherent thought—even the physical power to resist. You enticed me into your sanctum of wanton luxury and shame with unsaid promises, whose radiant sweetness and devouring anticipation would have penetrated the sacred cloth, the gaunt cheeks and the cold body of a saint—let alone a silly fool like me. . . ." He hesitated a moment, his breath coming faster and faster, his face twitching, lips protruded, then catching hold of her hair, he resumed with bitter vengeance, knock-

ing her head on the floor. "I must have been mad! Do you hear me—open your damnable black eyes and look, you hypocrite! I must have been bereft of reason . . . mad, mad, mad; for had I been sane, I would not have listened to your honeyed words of temptation. I would not have harkened to your lies and protestations of love. When you had me in your power, I pleaded with you; yes, I implored on the memory of my dead mother; I begged in utter humiliation, with about as much effect on your wicked mind as a snowball would have on a blazing hell; and now—you she devil—you mendacious cur, you lie here groveling at my feet and plead for mercy, quarters; plead for a mercy that was foreign to your very soul a few minutes ago. Ah, yes, every dog gets a turn at the bone—*a beau jeu, beau retour,*" he finished with a maniacal shriek, and grasping her by the throat continued to shout, "Get up you sorceress! Get up, you nefarious snake! Stop the blood, did you say? Rejoice instead that you still live to hear me, for with a temper like mine. It is strange that I have not already choked you to death!"

This burst of temper subsided, however, as rapidly as it came, and letting go of her throat, her head fell back to the floor with a dull knock, which seemed to awake what little sympathy was left in him for he seemed to recoil from the hard words he had spoken. After a moment of hesitation to collect his thoughts, he continued in a soft, tender voice.

"Amanda. You don't deserve any sympathy from me, and it is hard to give you any, for your vile deception has driven most everything, but hatred, and revenge from my very soul, for contempt quickly routs pity in such a deception, but I have been a soldier, and although my heart has been calloused by warfare against this barbarous race of yours, I will not harm you. After all is said and done, you are a woman."

When she heard those words she opened her eyes and cast at him a look of unspeakable gratitude.

The better part of him was now making manifest his nobility of heart, for he picked her up gently and carried her to his bed where he laid her down with as much care as he would a sleeping child.

With a tender hand he arranged her gown about her limbs which had become exposed to the knees in carrying her, but now when he gazed at the delicate tapering firm calf and ankle, they had no longer the effect on his mind which they had when he had first stepped into the privacy of her boudoir. No, everything was different—now. Gently he brushed her disheveled hair back from her face and then soaking a sponge, he carefully washed her lip, which now ceased to bleed so freely. After he had cleansed the wound, he examined it minutely, and on close examination, found that it was not so serious as it had appeared while she lay on the floor covered with blood. He then saturated a cloth with

listerine and sat down on the bed beside her, while he held it to her mouth.

Most all this time her eyes remained closed, but occasionally she would open them wide and look up at him with those same languid stares that he knew so well. Then she would sigh deeply, and close them again, while big tears would trickle down her cheeks, bathing them as it were, with the passion of repentance.

After Boyce had thoroughly cleansed and disinfected the wound, he closed it together as best he could, then cutting a small strip of flesh-colored sticking-plaster from a piece he had in his card case, he covered it. When he had completed this case of crude surgery, he again rinsed out the sponge and cleansed the blood from her neck and shoulders.

By this time she had recovered from the shock, and was resting comfortably. She looked up again with that same languorous love-light in her eyes, but he was now far removed from the spell she had over him, for alas, it was done. His passion had subsided, burned itself out. He had learned a deep, never-to-be-forgotten lesson; a lesson which he could never forget if he lived till the end of time.

When he had finished washing her neck and shoulders, he sat down again beside her on the edge of the bed, and looked at her for a moment, compassionately, sorrowfully; as he would an ene-

my whom he had wounded, and from whose eyes the tide of life was slowly ebbing.

"Amanda," he began in a low, mellow, sincere voice, "I want to talk to you a little while, then you may go. I would like to see you profit by this experience. You are a beautiful woman; far more beautiful than any I have ever seen. Far too beautiful, and too cultured to be masquerading under the guise of an ordinary burglar, confidence woman, aristocratic burglar, or whatever appellation is most befitting. It is not your station in life. A woman may do these things, and they are alright if they succeed; but then on the other hand they are fatal if badly directed. Put away, I beg of you, those honeyed words of hypocrisy, and try to live up to that high standard of womanhood of which I know you are capable. Take courage from this failure; there needs but a womanly effort; an opening of the soul for the better and nobler things of life; a higher motive; a means of directing your thoughts in other channels. Try to find, and then try to love some good man, and finally, in the enlightenment of that bliss, will your mind become filled with sweet consolations and reverent memories of the heartbroken fellow who is sitting on the bed beside you, and whom this night you tried your utmost to ruin. Put away, Amanda, this talent for trickery and deceit for it is dangerous, very, *very* dangerous. Ten minutes ago, you were so near that great divide, that to me—even now—it seems

like a miracle that I did not kill you, for I have a violent temper. But, thank God, it is over now. Go to your apartments and rest. Have some well needed sleep. This has been a wonderful night, full of sweetness—yea, and full of despair. There has been enough action crowded into the past few hours to suffice an ordinary life-time; yes, Amanda, enough to conjure with for all time. I shall never forget it; never, never, never; and I sincerely hope and trust for your own sweet sake, that you never will either. I am very, very sorry that I should have caused the mishap to your lip, but believe me, it was purely accidental. I sort of lost my temper in the excitement. But, it is doing nicely now. Tomorrow go to a doctor and have it properly attended to. You can give some fictitious excuse as to its cause. No one need know of this affair. Tomorrow I shall leave the hotel. I shall go back from whence I came, for I could not enjoy the festivities now."

When he had concluded she took hold of his hand, as she tried to see his face, which he now held buried in his hands, while big hot tears flowed unrestrained down his cheeks.

"You are very, very kind, Stanley. How you have changed. I know that I don't deserve this, but I regret it too. Don't be angry with me Stanley,—please, please don't. Let us start over again. Let us be sincere. All will be different now. Let me love you dear, for your own sweet sake."

He shook his head negatively, and with firm set teeth and lips, lifted her to her feet, and then sat down again on the edge of the bed with his face again buried in his hands. He sat down to think; —to conjure with his thoughts.

"Good-night, Stanley," she said in a very soft, very low, very pensive voice.

"Good-night, Amanda," he answered without raising his head "Good-night, and . . . good-bye."

Without speaking again she hurried to the door.

During these last minutes of momentous struggles, fits of temper and passion, Boyce had entirely forgotten that the Señora still had in her possession, his wallet and other valuables. It is conjectural whether or not it had also been forgotten by her in the last few minutes of excitement, but suddenly it dawned on him—just as she was going through the door.

"Señora! Señora!" he called, as he jumped from from the bed and started for the door, but she continued on through, shutting it after her.

"Strange," he thought, "surely, she must have heard, for the door was still open?"

When he reached the door and looked out, she was racing toward her door as fast as her legs would carry her.

"Señora!. . . . . .Amanda!" he called, but she did not even turn around.

"Surely she heard that! . . . . . By the Gods! Is it possible that she heard, but has again turned

criminal? Amanda!" he called once more, then started after her, as she desperately tried,—but in vain,—to open her door, but she did not heed him, as she whispered under her breath, "Heavens, caught again; the latch is down!"

Boyce had now reached her side and stood looking down at her with wild, questioning eyes, while she turned upon him with a swift searching contumelious stare.

"Amanda," he asked tremblingly, with a tinge of reproach in his voice, "Did you hear me call to you?"

She did not answer for a second, but the sombre look of cold, haughty, majestical indifference she shot at him, confirmed the thoughts he had hoped were not true, then answered "Yes."

The brevity, and suggested defiance of the monosyllable took his breath for a second.

"Then it is true. You are caught red handed again?" he shouted as his face hardened into an expression of frigid hauteur, "Why you thankless shedevil" he began, each word receiving stronger and deeper emphasis till the five culminated into an expression of utter hatred, "After the way I treated you. After the kindness I have shown. After your very life sentence had been signed and sealed and about to be executed, I pardoned you. After your honor ..... no, no, not honor; I don't mean that —for alas, you have no honor; but after your reputation—if you have any—had been protected

while you were in my room, in nothing but a night-gown and a flimsy kimona; when I could have, by word, brought witnesses and declared a liaison; maculated your womanhood, and stigmatized it by casting it into the maelstrom of public ignominy, you would still fleece me. Oh, you ungrateful pup, why didn't I shoot you or expose you in the beginning and have it over with? Ah, as much as I should like to, I will not *now* contaminate my hands in touching you in order to choke you to death; but come, my pretty birdie, no mercy, no quarters this time; once more you shall grovel at my feet—exposed you shall be."

When he had concluded, he drew from his pocket the revolver, then quickly wrapping her long hair about his left hand, he dragged her back into his room and shut the door.

He unloosened her hair and stepped back from her at arm's length, then pointing the cocked revolver at her forehead, held out his left hand to take the articles as she would hand them out, while he insisted. "Come, be quick now; hand out those things of mine, you obnoxious reptile, or I'll blow out your brains with as little compunction as I would a cur in the street."

She obeyed without a word. She knew it was now useless to offer any resistance, so with her right hand she reached deep down into the bosom of her night gown. The first thing she drew forth was the few dollars in paper. These she trans-

ferred to her left hand and then reached into her bosom again. In the meantime Boyce, instead of keeping his eyes on hers, was naturally watching her bosom, to see what would come out next. His attention being thus momentarily diverted, and the criminal instinct in her being cognizant that he was more absorbed in regaining his valuables than in keeping a sharp eye on the trickster with whom he was dealing, she suddenly struck the weapon—which must have been slightly relaxed in his eagerness to get back all his things—and it flew across the room, while she turned like a tiger, opened the door and fled, still having in her bosom, the diamond, watch and wallet.

It all happened like a flash; in less time than it can be told. The revolver being cocked, when it struck the floor, discharged itself with a resounding report, which caused all the guests in the house to jump from their beds in alarm and rush to the corridors; for the crack of a revolver in a crowded hotel at an early hour in the morning is no common occurrence.

The nerve and daringness of her act staggered him for a second's instant. The very act, which he had anticipated doing earlier in the evening—but which he had feared to do—had now been consummated by a frail woman. For the shortest fraction of time, he remained silent and motionless; his usually alert, but now slower assimulating brain trying to catch up with her nimble adroitness, and

then he recovered the revolver; this time fully determined to kill on the instant.

When he reached the door, she was already nearing the head of the stairs, but instead of running after her, he stood at the door trying to shoot her down; but the knock the weapon had received in its contact with the casement on the floor, must have deranged some of the mechanism, and the hammer—(which was up) would not respond to the trigger. There he stood like a fool; like a statue; like an idiot, trying to fire a weapon which would not respond. Why he did not run after her, is something which the writer cannot explain, unless it was that he was dazed by her last desperate attempt to steal.

All along the corridor, in their night clothes, were running and screaming, a perfect bedlam of cursing and excited men, and yelling, hysterical women; while a man who could have reached her in a dozen strides, stood coolly trying to shoot her down.

"Man, don't shoot, don't shoot!" exclaimed some.

"Get out of the way, or that fool will kill you!" shouted others.

They were calling and imploring him from all directions, but none dared go near him, for the look in his face was sinister and menacing. In like manner they might have saved their breath too, for he heeded nothing; he cared for nothing, as he cursed at the top of his voice.

She had now reached the head of the stairs; in

fact, had made the first step down, when he screamed imploringly: "Hell! Why don't you go off?"

His aim was cool, steady, true and directly at the back of her head. He gave the trigger a last pull, and . . . see! it flashes a puff of flame, then cracks.

"Hallelujah! Hurrah! True as an arrow, good, good!" he shouted with fanatical glee, as he saw her throw up her arms and stagger backward. Then he knew that the trusted revolver which had never yet failed him, had not failed him at this time. "Ah, I am proud of you, proud of you," he said caressing the blue steel, "You have done your duty, and another Spaniard is our reward." Then he rushed to her and when he reached her side, a dozen or more men and women were already kneeling beside her excited and shouting, "Get a doctor, for God's sake hurry!"

"Get the police, a doctor can do no good now!"

"Get the man who did the shooting!"

Thus the voices rang out thick and fast, but none dared to approach that staring maniac with a smoking revolver in his hand.

"Stand aside, stand aside, or by the Gods out go your brains too!" he yelled at them as he pushed them hither and thither. "She is mine to shoot, she has robbed me, she has fleeced me. The vile unscrupulous snake; when I gave her a chance to make good, she took advantage of me the second time."

He said more, but all cannot—with decency—be recorded; but the guests of that hotel, and there were many who were within hearing of his voice, will never forget the words to their dying day. He must have been temporarily insane,—mad.

The bullet, which had struck fair in the back of her head, had found egress through her forehead, where it had torn an awful gash, as it speeded on its mission of destruction.

For a moment he gazed at this terrible sight in a sort of a coma, then bending down over her with strange set face, and trembling lips, he ripped open her night dress clean to the waist, snatched his stolen belongings, and then with that fiendish, bestial desire for revenge, he hissed maniacally, "Hell gets a worthy one this night." Then placing the cold steel close against her exposed left breast just over the heart, he fired, as he yelled with delirious delight, while his heart throbbed faster and faster in its mad beats.

"Take that! . . . And that! . . . And that!" he shouted at the top of his voice, maddened and infuriated by the excessive thirst for vengeance, which he sought to satiate.

One!—two!—three! Three times the revolver cracked with piercing reports, and then it clicked twice, for the fourth and fifth cartridges had been fired; one in the walls of his room, and the other had pierced her head, and three bullets entered the already lifeless body.

With the report of the last shot still ringing in his ears, and the increasing churme of the guests, he gazed again into the distorted face of the inert mass on the floor, then it suddenly flashed through his dazed brain, what he had done.

"Merciful God!" he cried, as he turned and rushed down the stairs—three at a time—his white coat and hands and face, bespattered with blood, while a hundred men and women stood aside to let him pass, then gazed in wild-eyed, spellbound, helpless amazement, at the horrible sight.

Guests were still running, wondering at the repeated shooting, among them a beautiful young girl.

"What is all the shooting?" she asked of the dazed crowd.

"A crazy man has shot a woman," some one answered.

"Dios!" she exclaimed, "poor woman," as she bent over and looked more closely, with a shudder, into the disfigured face, and a look of horror leaped into her eyes.

"Oh, Señora, Señora! It is my mistress, Señora ——." With the name unuttered she fell back in a dead faint.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE ESCAPE.

WHEN Boyce reached the pavement outside, he hesitated a moment, his mind only grasping in a vague way the full realization of what he had done—the terrible crime he had committed.

When the last shot had resounded throughout the corridor upstairs and the last bullet sped into her body, he knew that he had done something terrible; but, now, as he gazed in wild-eyed amazement; first at the still smoking revolver which he held in his hand, and then at his ensanguined clothing, the full realization struck his dazed brain with a dull resounding thud. Objects began to tremble in his sight; he felt as if recovering from a spell of intoxication.

"God! What have I done? What shall I do? Oh heavens, where shall I go?" he asked himself.

In that sudden leap of realization, his imagination could already picture himself being hounded by the officers of the law; searching for him who had served his country so faithfully, and who would now be hunted to the four corners of the earth like a fox chased by relentless hounds, who are never satiated until their master's bullet has pierced its frail body, or else driven to its hole in the earth. It was

therefore imperative that he must do something; go somewhere, and that, too, quickly; so he hurriedly glanced up and down the square, trying to decide which way to run.

At this hour noisy Manila was fast asleep and everything was still, save the soft morning breezes blowing in from the bay, which sang queer little tunes in the net-work of wires and foliage overhead, punctuated now and then by the shrill scream of a river-craft, and the occasional low chirp of an early bird here and there among the trees. The pale weak shadows, cast from the fast dropping moon in the western skies, lay long across the pavements in distorted figures. In the eastern skies, off over Bilibid prison, that gauzy blue of the tropical morning was already beginning to shade into a purer azure. Boyce saw all, but still he did not see; he thought but he did not think; a jumbled sort of wistfulness seemed knocking behind his forehead—a jumble of incoherencies in place of thought. Suddenly the chimes of a church off to the southward pealed three o'clock, which seemed to rouse him to a sort of mechanical action and turning to the left, he hurried to the long, narrow park which forms the center of Binondo square and running along the fence, sheltered by the shrubbery, he continued until he reached Binondo church; then cutting diagonally across the plaza into San Fernando street, he hurried on over the Binondo bridge. When he reached the far side, he turned to the left along the

canal, in the black surface of which flickered and danced the wan light of the few street lamps, and from which opened a labyrinth of narrow streets and alleys. On he went with mechanical heedfulness, not knowing where to turn next, or where to go, but hide he must; that was the one predominating thought. Then suddenly the thought occurred to him that the machiavelian and tight mouthed Chinaman would shield the very devil from his own angels for a handful of gold.

While he ran, he stuck the revolver, the wallet and diamond into his shirt front, and taking off the bloody coat, rolled it into a ball with the stained side turned in; then sticking it under his arm he hurried faster and faster. Perhaps he would have thrown the coat into the canal, but that would show his tracks and he must leave none; he must move as though traveling on water.

He now ceased running, but kept on a quick walk, so as not to incite suspicion if seen. For a dozen or more streets he continued along the canal, then turning sharply to the right entered a little street, the width of which he could have spanned in one leap, and where the sooty houses so overhung, that the eaves almost touched one another. A street which contained the greatest variety of rancid odors, and the largest mosquitoes imaginable, and with its filth of filthier orientals, and so thick with the still clinging opium smoke, that it was hardly possible to catch a glimpse of the beautiful star-lit heaven.

As it was now after three o'clock, some of the more energetic Chinamen were already afoot preparing for another long day of wearisome toil and greedy gain.

Boyce had never been in this Chinatown before, except on the first night of the occupation of Manila, when he had taken a detail through some parts of it searching for contraband which had been reported; and so he did not know where it was possible to find a place to hide. As he hurried along, looking from right to left, a faint light shining through a crack in the shutter of one of the huts suddenly attracted his attention, and up to it he went and peeked in, revealing a dingy room, in which several bowls filled with oil and containing floating wicks burned weirdly; but after a moment he turned away evidently not pleased with the looks of what he saw; for if ever his brain must be clear, discreet and cautious; and if he must have a sagacious Chinaman to aid him, he must not now err in his judgment, else he would be in the cruel jaws of the law before sunrise.

On he went, crossing and recrossing this gully of a street, from which led dark and filthy alleys to flights of steps darker and more filthy, and which, while raw and uninviting now, must during the daytime be still more hideous, when the mud-colored, and nearly nude Chinamen and Filipinos blink and grin, jabber and smoke in the dirty corners; and where their native *inamoratas,* also well nigh nude,

with their brown, scabby legs, cocoanut-oil-soaked hair, and beetle-nut-stained teeth and lips, lubbered over the uneven cobbles, and where the absolutely naked children—half Chinaman, and half anything—rolled and fought and bawled and laughed and scratched in the filth and stagnant pools underfoot; and where flea-eaten curs—dogs that snap and snarl and scratch until they are one mass of lousy sores,—ferret in the garbage cans.

"Thank God!" he sighed with sepulchral despair, "These horrible sights are absent just now." Were they not, he would have been tempted to return and give himself up as a murderer, or else end it all by jumping into the dark, limous waters of the Pasig.

As he continued to search eagerly to the right and left, undetermined, and unable to foresee where it would all end, but conscious that he must soon get in somewhere or he would be caught redhanded; for an American, dressed as he was most certainly out of place in this vile locality, and more especially so at this hour of the morning; even the most illiterate Chinaman would know that.

The street at this point, made a sharp bend to the right, so he crossed over to where two shutters were partly open and from which shone a dim ray of light. Stepping on his tip-toes as noiselessly as possible, he peered in. "Ha! An opium joint," he said half aloud, while his spirits raised with a half-joyous feeling.

This place apparently appealed to him, for he

knew that an opium merchant, carrying on an illegitimate industry would stop at nothing, and would sell his very soul for far less than that for which "Faust" sold his.

Opening the door easily as possible, so as not to attract the attention of the inmates, he entered cautiously. The room, which was a small, low, narrow affair, was so overloaded with fumes of the weed that he scarce could see. After a few moments when he got his bearings, he observed a long, low couch-like arrangement on which were stretched a dozen or more Chinamen and Filipinos, each mated affectionately with a woman—either European or Filipino. These women were of variable ages, but all were far too young to be enveloped in the degrading atmosphere of this hell-hole, but their insipid, and opium-stunned countenances already reflected that fearful type of precocious depravity from reckless dissipation. But they were all fast asleep, "Thank God for that," he thought, as they lay there rolled, twined and intertwined in knots, nearly nude, all of them, with their long clumsy dope pipes clutched in their long bony fingers; their hard expressionless mouths wide open, and the long slanting eyes of the Chinese rolled back till nothing save the muddish yellows were visible. It is hard to limn it vividly, for it is lighted only by the dull flicker of the oil lamps used to cook this damnable vile poison. It is a picture so frightfully replete in its hideous-

ness, that his mind recoiled affrighted, and his heart went sore before the horrible sight. He, that gallant officer of the American army; he, that honor graduate at Lehigh, driven to such a hellish rendezvous. Yes, even these low degenerates now huddled inertly before him in all their depravity, were evidently happier in their life of one long vista of unnatural dreams than he. "Still," he thought, with a hopeless shudder, "if their smoke-induced dreams were pleasant, the expressions on their dark saffron faces did not indicate it."

"Poor devils," he groaned half aloud as he gazed around the walls of this hell of poisoned drugs; while within the walls of his own body there blazed a still greater hell, caused by the allurement of a beautiful woman. Ah, how sublime, how ridiculous were the contrasts, and yet, the dire results were prime to each other, for both are hell enticements of the most violent type.

While it requires many items of type, and many more minutes to convey to the reader, the hellishness of this scene, Boyce Eric saw it all in one hurried glance of a few seconds' duration.

After a moment's observation, he looked around for someone alive; someone not under the influence of this brain-sapping drug.

In the far corner of the den, behind a lattice-work of wood, sat the evident proprietor. A sneaky, fat, oily looking devil, whose countenance bore an intimate resemblance to both the rat and the monkey:

the broad flat nose with dilated nostrils, and the high cheek bones of the monkey; and the receding chin and small, piercing, black eyes of the rat gave his yellow features an inimitable expression of acuteness, trickery and cunning, and who was at that moment assiduously employed carefully weighing out the next pipe full of hop for his victims when they would wake still unsatisfied.

He is abundantly endowed with big, coarse, yellow teeth; and his nails, long, pointed and curved, resembled more the talons of a vulture, than the nails of a human being. His bronzed, mud-yellow body, is nude from the waist up.

The wood-work behind which he sat, was black from years of opium smoke, and the rock-cobbled floor was dank and foul smelling.

Boyce gazed for a long, long minute at this cunning visage from which the very hell beamed forth, and whose eyes seemed to glow like phosphorus fire-flies on the bay; and appeared to glare on the cobbled floor in the midst of the darkness which the feeble opium-cooking lamp scarcely dissipated, and Boyce knew instantly—yes, positively—on first sight, that this yellow oriental would sell his very soul for the mere tingle of gold.

The Chinaman raised his eyes sharply when he discovered his visitor.

"Ah hee.....Melican man! Hee..... hee! Smokee oplium? he inquired solicitiously, as

he proffered a long, black, dope-pipe, which showed years of constant use.

Boyce did not answer, but instead, made his way through the conglomeration of legs of the prostrate victims, which entwined each other as they lolled about in their dreams; to the box like stall, behind which the speaker sat, as cool and collected as though it was an ordinary occurrence for such a wayfarer as Boyce to wander into his den at this hour.

Instead of going up to the little hole in the lattice-work, Boyce stepped quickly around to the door through which he entered, pulling out his empty revolver as he went. When he reached the Chinaman's side, he pointed it at his head, at the same time grasping him roughly by the arm.

"Speak American?"

"No speakee Inglis," answered the Chinaman with a frightened look.

"Speak Tagalog, then?" questioned Boyce.

"Yes; speakee." He answered—in that language.

"Well listen then to what I tell you," Boyce commenced, speaking in the tongue indicated. "I just had a bad fight with a gambler at Pasay Country Club—poker game. I killed him—understand, I killed him, and I want you to hide me in this damned hovel of yours till you can smuggle me out on a ship bound for anywhere beyond Corregidor. Do you understand?"

The alarmed Chinaman nodded his head to indicate that he did.

"Now," continued Boyce, "not a soul saw me enter here, and you know your business if the police come around."

With the last words, he dug down deeply into his shirt front and drew forth the diamond, thinking, that he could better afford to dispense with it than the ready cash in the wallet.

He held it up temptingly to the staring eyes of the celestial, as he suggested.

"Pretty nice, eh? Now this is yours..... look at it; is it not a beauty? This is yours I say, if you get me out of Manila Bay safely. What do you say? Is it a bargain?"

After less than a moment's hesitation, during which the Chinaman did not speak, but kept his eyes glued upon the brilliant, dazzling gem, now held before his squinting eyes, over which he fairly gloated; Boyce continued, in a determined voice, "No, by God.....It is not *is it a bargain?* for it must be one, even if I must kill you, too, . . . do you hear me,—*kill you, too,* you yellow devil."

The Chinaman had already decided.

"Yes, yes, I know," he said, "Me hide you; but no big ship for two weeks;" he hesitated a minute or two to think, then continued, "I got brother, 'Sing Fat,' he got junk, loaded copra,—he go Singapore three days. Likee go that?"

"I'll go on anything. I will leave that to you to decide. Now where are you going to hide me?...

Come on, speak quick, .. where? or the police will be upon me."

"Me get diamond now?" questioned this cunning scoundrel, wanting to be sure of the bribe, before carrying out his half of the contract, thinking that perhaps the diamond would be better in his possession in case the police should track him here.

Boyce thought awhile, considering whether it would be well to give or hold on to the stone, until he was safe aboard the junk, but this he decided quickly, and with this thought:

"Damn it. It is only a chance. It is my only hope, and as long as the yellow devil is willing to take a chance of getting his neck in a noose for being a feodary to the act, he is at least entitled to the benefit of the doubt, so I will trust him not to betray me."

"Yes ... here it is," as he handed over the stone, "and now for the hiding place."

The wily Chink took it in his taloned fingers and while he rolled it about from one hand to the other, a broad smile suffused his yellow, heinous features, for this was the biggest bribe he had ever received, and had Boyce been diplomat enough, he could have obtained the self same protection for the third of the intrinsic value of this three carat diamond.

After a few moments, when the Chinaman had stored it safely away in the chamois belt which hung around his loose, greasy trousers, he hobbled lamely to the opposite side of the hut, and spread open

a thick heavy curtain, which covered a sort of a cupboard, containing a half dozen or more shelves. He removed a number of miscellaneous decoy articles from the lower shelves and then removed the lower three; then reaching to one side, shoved a bolt, and a small door opened, through which he entered, leading Boyce into a small cavernous cell-like room; a mere hole or dugout in the wall. It was inky dark, and when the Chinaman had silently closed the door he struck a match, revealing a close dark dungeon, which smelled musty and prevalent with the dry sickening odor of opium. Evidently this was his hiding hole, where perhaps, in addition to the dope, he had often ensconced other murderers, such as Boyce; for it was so situated, and so dexterously concealed that the officers of the law would never think of looking there.

Off to one side stood a small wooden bench, with some dirty rags rolled together for a pillow.

"You hide here," said the Chinaman, "me fix everything. Me talkee 'Sing Fat.' "

Boyce, utterly exhausted now, his brain surcharged to overflowing with the reaction from the recent events which was just beginning to set in and devour him; did not offer any remark.

The Chinaman noting that his remark elicited no reply, he asked solicitiously, "Smokee oplium?"

"No!"

The monosyllable was uttered harshly—imperiously; and the Chinaman not desiring to irritate

his generous visitor, turned without further comment and departed, closing the door after him. After a few moments Boyce heard the shelves being replaced. At last he was alone, and thank God, safe, at least for the present.

He sogged down limp, weary and heartsore on the hard damp board. His head now began to ache, and reeling with a feeling of dejection and lassitude, he heaved a long drawn out sigh, and laid down and tried to sleep.

Since the moment he had fired those fatal shots, now over an hour ago, his sensibilities had been clouded and incoherent, but now that he was alone, he was thus enabled to arrange and co-ordinate his thoughts from the chaos into which they had been so ruthlessly driven.

"Oh, God, how my head aches!" he cried with a desperate, maddened misery, as he stretched himself out full length, with his head clasped between his hands. "Oh; if I could only sleep away these terrible, terrible thoughts. Oh, what a cruel God, our God must be, to allow a poor innocent fool like me to be enticed into a living hell like this. What have I ever done? Who have I ever harmed, or wronged, that I should be subjected to such cruel, unjust punishment? Oh, if I could only go free this moment to preach to the credulous youngsters the world over, and tell them of these fair faces and beautiful forms; of these she-devils; the bona fide advance agents of the devil himself, who lure men

on to such damnation. 'Oh, what fools we mortals be.' What cursed paths these damnable passions lead us into," he cried in his misery, while the arteries of his temples beat violently, and his brain swam round.

But try as he would, the ghost of the Señora haunted him and would not be exorcised, for sleep would not come to relieve him.

Hour after hour dragged slowly on as he lay there in the dark, while the visions of that treacherous woman shot by his eyes with the vividity of a kaleidoscope and the celerity of the wind. Again and again he could hear ringing in his ears, her cry, and the vision of her throwing out her arms, and then the distorted face in all its hideous transfiguration in the agonies of death, and oh, that terrible gash in her forehead; and in utmost horror, he would pinch his eyes shut tighter. But strive as he would, argue as he would, they would persist, and again he cried in his anguish.

"Oh, God; what sweet relief death would bring at this moment. If it is such now, what, oh, what agony has the drear hereafter in store for me?"

Then he would reason with himself; but the fact that she had tempted him, and that it was only in a fit of dementia that he had killed her, did not lesson the poignancy of the tragedy. This temporary dementia would not excuse him from its dire responsibilities. True though it was; while this hold-up of hers had been one of the most daring and vicious that man could have been cajoled into, still,

after all was said and done, he was guilty,—he had taken a life, and try as he would he could not salve over the burns of everlasting retribution, with the plea of enticement, or balm them over with the plea of indiscretion.

"Shall I go back and give myself up?" he asked himself, and the very thought when it suggested itself, sent terrifying shivers through his body.

"No," his inner self answered, "No; not now! Too late; ..... alas, too late. Flee man, flee for your life! for even withal, life is mighty sweet."

"So be it," he decided. He could not go back now. At last the fatal point had suggested itself and had been speedily decided.

"You *must* be guilty, or you would not have run away from the scene. That is *prima facie* evidence in itself," the cold merciless judge would say.

"Yes ... yes!" the thought echoed throughout the dark dungeon. Guilty he was. No, he would not go back now. In rushing from the scene of his own cruel act, he had crossed that Rubicon from which there was no retreat; except to put his neck in a cold, hairy, hemp noose. No, he must go on, and not shirk—he must go on, God knows whither, but go he must. The deed was done, and, while he knew that he could perhaps escape the laws of the land for the present, yet he was conscious that he could not escape that omnipotent law; that all seeing eye which punishes more cruelly than earthly laws, for there is an awful sanctity enshrines the welfare of the soul; and if God, in His inexorable

and all-powerful vengeance, had willed that Boyce in his own person, should be required to expiate the crimes of *all* men, he could have devised no more frightful punishment and anguish of the soul, than that that shall be his lot; for woe! woe! woe unto you Boyce Eric, for behold there will come the day, when you too must pass that clicking turnstile, by which stands the grim guardian of the departed. Alas; all must pass that Styx of eternity's shores, from whose bourne none ere return; and where all alike, stripped of all else,—save truth —shall answer for the acts of life; then abide by the verdict of that "All-Wise," who shall decide whether your act was right or wrong, and if wrong —pardonable; and if unpardonable, punishment dispensed accordingly—though it is writ—"with justice and equity." It is the last tribunal before whose shrine we all shall kneel to answer; the rich, the poor, the high and the lowly—all. While in this realm of flesh and blood, we must abide by the laws which govern and guide; they define the right and wrong here on earth; but before that last great court in the hierarchy of our Maker, all is all—forever and ever; from it there is no appeal. We shall be heard—it is writ—then sent on our way rejoicing, wearing a crown,—perhaps, not a diadem of scintillating jewels;—but a crown nevertheless, or else we shall hear "away unfaithful servant! Away to him you served most, and best!" But we hope that God, at length will take pity on his protracted tortures, and at last call him to His shrine and grant

him to taste the ineffable delights of His infinite mercy.

Time went on and on, still Boyce could not rest. His eyes were heavy and his heart was torn asunder by these terrible thoughts which would not quell; thoughts and visions so odious that words are inadequate to express. Not for a moment could he rid his mind of them.

At last it was night again, and he was suddenly startled by the door opening quietly and the Chinaman entered with food.

"No: nothing to eat," answered Boyce, when the Chinaman proffered food, "something to sleep, something to sleep! Oh, God, for a few hours of sleep!"

"Smokee oplium," he suggested, "He makee lots sleep."

Yes, only too well did Boyce know the sleep producing elements of the drug, but he feared the results of the commencing; still it was imperative that something must be done to rid his mind—at least for a little time—of these omnivorous thoughts and visions. Things could not go on like this, else he would go insane.

"Yes: bring the stuff!" he directed harshly, after a moment's hesitation, while his throat froze almost, at the very dread of this poison, which had driven so many souls to the potter's field. The Chinaman smiled; the same old smile which had so often crossed his rugged face at the manifestations of the hungry victims, and departed.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE OPIUM DREAM.

SOME ten minutes later when the Chinaman returned with a large, well cooked pill, Boyce the poor devil, with his storm tossed brain slowly sinking from the pinnacle of reason to a chaos of madness, clutched for it like a drowning man snatches at a twig in the current; though his action in doing so was more mechanical than human.

The Chinaman, with grinning countenance, very accommodatingly and magnanimously explained how to smoke the long stemmed pipe, and then left him to his misery or pleasure, not caring which it might be.

One .. two ... three .... four, long, deep sucks, he made through the long bent stem, and finally—without a second's warning—the drug had wrought its miracle. All his fears, thoughts, and visions of the Señora, and of his crime; all his remorse vanished as if by magic; like clouds of mist fade silently, and vanish before the warmth of the rising sun. Away he floated through space of roseate seas where music and tranquillity ineffable reigned supreme in all its peace and splendor, with naught but beautiful, golden feathered birds to fleck the wealth of summer sun. In the vast, immeasurable space

through which he speeds, the air is one great, grand, soft and soothing commingling of the verdant odors that are exhaled from the wild woodland flowers of the fields, bathed in the sparkling, crystalized morning dew. Around him there seems to gather a gentle, soothing sound, like that of the night breezes playing among the foliage; or of a sleepy brook as it softly murmurs, ever and anon, over its bed of moss and many stones. Myriads of birds with myriads of colors in their feathery wings, warble the most melodious strains, intermingled with infantine voices of angelic purity, chanting strange and unknown words. On and on, he floats; up and up, ever higher, ever faster through ethereal spheres to heights immeasurable, while a feeling of moral health; of a softness and sweetness and repose utterly undefinable gradually seizes on him. It is an expansion of the heart; a rapture of the mind; the radiancy of the soul, of which the most intense and intoxicating physical feeling can utterly impart no idea. Again he was directing his subordinate engineers on the work about Lingayen; now again he was sitting calmly out on the vèranda in the cool evenings, with Mrs. Thebaut in the center, and Max and himself on either side, while they smoked and gazed off over Lingayen gulf, watching the last rays of the sun as it hovers over the Zambales weaving the heaven with gleams of softened gold before settling to rest for the night; and then watching the magnificent afterglow as it twists and tangles the milky clouds into most lavish and gorgeous fan-

tasies; first ranking companies, then huge, perfectly aligned battalions; then regiments; then into mammoth armies; suddenly changing, they assume glittering oceans, on whose scintillating surface shows millions of ships of commerce, of war and pleasure; its waves sparkling with trillions of diamonds and sapphires and rubies and pearls; then again it changes into mountains of mists, and the diamonds and sapphires are but myriads of peeping stars come to watch over the night guard, when nature shall have hushed herself and all animate life into sweet repose. Then again he is in Wilkes-Barre shooting the rapids of the old Susquehanna in his light, self-built canoe; then again he is enlisting; the war has just broken out, and the wild scenes of camp and of strife at arms are re-enacted; or again he is romping leisurely over the broad green campus, or climbing the mountain side at Lehigh; watching the great pale moon slowly creep up and up, bigger and yellower in the azure void, silvering the crests of the millions of lofty trees which sigh and wave in the night breeze.

The vision was one long, glorious vista of the pleasures of his youth, not marred for even a second by the horrible thought of this heinous murder.

Ah, Boyce; if it ever could be thus in life's mad chase. But no. God moulded man to reap what he sows. The punishment of your crime is not yet complete. You have suffered, but you have not yet expiated, and fate still pursues the high task of des-

tined retribution; and at last,—after some two hours—of this ineffable happiness he rudely awoke and returned from this realm of vistas to again face the sad, mad, stern realities of flesh and blood. He opened his eyes and alas, the beauteous scenes that had suddenly engendered, likewise suddenly vanished, and he was still in this dungeon, whose lurid, inky blackness and quietude was as solemn as the grave.

His head now ached worse than before, while large beads of perspiration stood on his forehead as though he had taken an overdose of some powerful hidrotic; and again came marching on, with that same dull callous monotone, like millions of slow creeping reptiles, those perennial visions of the Señora. He could almost hear the requiem chant over his grave, but, what was he to do? for if he did *not* smoke the opium to drive them away, he would surely die from their torment, and if he *did* smoke it, he would die from its effects, so in reckless abandon he called for another pill, and again he is lost in that mystic realm of false dreams.

Days went on and on, and nothing but the dreaded drug was his only hope. He kept constantly under its influence. Then one day the Chinaman came again.

"All ready, Señor Melican," he said.

Boyce, reeling, unsteady, numb—for the great amount of opium his system had absorbed seemed to be already obstunding his mind—staggered to

his feet, then crawled, rather than walked to the door.

The outer room was empty now, except for one other, who his keeper informed him was "Sing Fat," his brother. In the center of the room stood a large oval shaped basket made of hemp and wicker with stout band-iron hoops about it, and into this he was doubled, then copra packed tightly about him, with a narrow space for breathing and a bottle filled with water near his mouth, which he could uncork and place to his lips with a slight movement of the wrist, for in this basket he would have to remain until the junk had passed out of Philippine waters.

Boyce did not know the hour, for in such a state of mind as he was now laboring under, time loses all proportions. He did not know whether it was morning, noon or night, still he did not care, for his eyes were blinded like a bat's, which has been routed from its cavernous shelter in mid-day.

As a matter of fact however, it was a little after half-past four in the morning.

After a lot of gabbering and gesticulating on the part of the coolie burden bearers, "Sing Fat," and the proprietor of the den; he felt himself lifted onto the undulating sticks on the coolie's shoulders and away he went, bounce, bounce, bounce, over the cobbled streets, for the river front, supposedly one of the many thousands of baskets of copra consigned to some feodary in Singapore.

When he arrived at the wharf he was lowered to the ground while the custom officials marked the

baskets and took the weight and finally he was dumped into the hold of the junk.

* * * * *

On a beautiful star-lit evening, some two weeks after the events just chronicled, Boyce stood abaft of a vessel in the harbor of Singapore, bound for South America.

He was now disguised so that you would hardly recognize him. He had supplied himself with a goodly quantity of opium, for in that only, could he find rest.

With his strength shattered; his arrogance brought to naught, his egotism and vain-glory battered to a pulp; his profession scattered to dust, his voice sank into an incoherent murmur, as he tried with all his might to suppress a moan of anguish, but which would find egress.

Then with a heroic effort at equanimity, he straightened up his already bent shoulders, and gazed hopelessly out on the sparkling star-mirrored waters.

"Ah! Whither, Boyce,—and to what? What shall the future be? But; what's the use of clamoring? Why plead against fate,—destiny?"

The propeller slowly began to churn the phosphoric waters into millions of grim fantasies, the great ship glided on, and he set out on his long voyage over the turbulent waters of life; to the land of .. where? From this land expatriated; a drifter, to expatiate hither and yon; haunted by the law, and the clamorings of a life he had extinguished.

CHAPTER XX.

MANILA.

SINCE that eventful morning when Commodore George Dewey and his gallant host in Manila Bay, electrified the world, and forced the eyes of all nations upon the United States of America, as one of the greatest Powers, the Philippine Islands have been constantly, and copiously written and talked about. At times, by celebrated writers in the world of literature—men of ability and learning—who considered these new possessions worthy of their pen, and ambitious to record simple impressions; and then at times by writers who were pessimistic, prejudiced and illiterate and who have written and ridiculed most misguidingly. In fact, so much has been written and said—*pro and con*—that it seems almost impossible to record impressions and scenes, but which appear to have been already told, time over and again. Nevertheless, it matters not what has been said or written derogatory to that land of ancient churches, picturesque valleys, tropical foliage; or of the dhobe itch, the low standard of morals, the filth, or whatnot; the Philippine Islands as a whole, comprise an archipelago of interest and pure delight. It is a land where everyday is summer and where the whistling blizzards

from the northland of China and Siberia, shimmer to gentle zephyrs of the tropics bidding a genial welcome to all, to fragrant groves of cocoanut-palms, and fields bedecked with bloom and verdure, and a land where the blue-brown mountains hold silent converse with the tropical sun and stars, and in silent acquiescence behold this world of eternal greatness. Where the ragged rocks on its many exposed shores, stand majestic and bold as they rear their august heads and frowning battlements towards the sky in utter defiance to the beating waves of three oceans which surround them. While it is a land continually effervescing with nature's beauties, it is also a land ineffably and inseparately linked with the feudal history of those good old days of Latin romance, now gone by.

The pessimists may say what they will, but this archipelago, with its rich lowlands and valleys; luxuriant forests; stupendous gorges and waterfalls; wide sweeping fields of hemp and rice; magnificent sunsets; happy, careless days; cool bungalows; and every scene, whether of tropical beauty or sublime grandeur, has a fascination about it that makes it almost irresistible; and the writer's hope is that that archipelago may live long, grow strong and prosper, but that in its growth and prosperity it ever remember in its gratitude, the fertile brains, good riches and many noble lives lost by the United States of America—its emancipator.

Manila, the capital, especially has many charms

which are distinctly its own, but they are made difficult to describe, for the features are so varied, so ridiculous—so sublime—in the contrast. While this is not a history of the Philippines, it is desirable, yes, as a matter of fact, it is only fair to the reader that some idea of exactness should be formed of this city in which this terrible drama which had brought into play so many different passions, found its inception and odd culmination, therefore, in passing, we shall tarry a moment for a cursory glimpse of Manila.

To begin with, it is a city where even the very atmosphere lifts the weight from the safety valve of life, and where pleasure and passion predominate and hold sway over the soil. A city where the natives set aside the Sabbath as a gala day for cock-fighting and horse-racing. A city of fashionable clubs, and bare legs; crooked streets and magnificent promenades; sumptuous and imposing mansions and dilapidated bamboo shacks; a city of millionaires and paupers; a city of health, and then—the entire catalogue of diseases. It is the city beautiful and the city most unbeautiful;—the city ancient, and the city modern.

On the *Escolta,* its main artery of business, you find the manners and customs of the entire world,—where the sublime and the ridiculous rub elbows and walk shoulder to shoulder.

It is a city of some 122,000 inhabitants, and was founded in 1571, on the south bank of the Pasig

river, at its junction with the Pacific ocean. The city is so divided north and south of the river, that it forms two separate cities, but those districts north of the river—while really the business city, are simply suburbs of Manila proper—which is the walled city. Manila proper, is a fortified city, and is encircled by a huge wall, with bastions and bulwarks, and a wide moat,—where it does not face on the river. This moat is so arranged, that in the olden times of revolution, the waters of the bay could be let in, thus isolating the city from hostile attacks.

The huge wall is broken by six wide gates—three to the north, fronting on the river, called Almacenes, Santo Domingo, and Isabel II; and then there are three on the land side, namely: Parian, Real and Santa Lucia. In the fall of Manila, the Spaniards had defended these gates, especially on the land side by bastions.

The Real gate formerly enfiladed the Plaza Mayor and the palace of the Governor, but since the taking of the city by the English in 1762, it has been placed in front of the college of San José, where it is now situated, and public entrance is made through the gate of Parián.

At the extreme northwest of the city is the royal fort of Santiago. This fort is a citadel defending the entrance to the river and the northwest angle of the city, and which is now used by the United States as headquarters for its military establishment.

On the east of this fort and at a short distance from it, on the same side of the river, is the bastion Tenerias; next in the same direction is the gate of Almácenes; and then more to the east is the battery of the military hospital. Not far from this, and on the same line, is the gate Santo Domingo, then the gate of Isabel II, and lastily the bastion of San Gabriel, which terminates the line of fortifications along the river. Joined to the last mentioned bastion on the exterior side is the Plaza Nueva. Leading south from the gate Parián is a beautiful paved highway which opens into the wide driveway, Bayumbayan, which skirts the wall to the bay. South of the bastion Diablo is the postern of Recoletos and just beyond the bastion of San Andrés.

The streets of the walled city are fairly straight and as a rule well paved, and illuminated. Prominent among its buildings are the Governor's Palace, called the Ayuntamiento, the New Seminary, Palace of Santa Potenciana, The Royal Court of Chancery, The Military Hospital, with rooms for a thousand beds; The School of Arts and Trades, The School of Agrictulture and Navigation, The Royal College and Pontifical University of Santa Tomás, which is spacious, well constructed, and possesses a notable physical laboratory; The Municipal Atheneum, in charge of the Jesuits, also equipped with a physical laboratory, natural history museum, and well equipped apparatus for astronomical observations. One of the land marks is the old cathedral

erected in 1578 by Pope Gregory XIII, and then there is the convent of San Augustin, with its beautiful church; the church and convent of the Recollects of San Francisco, whose buildings cover immense space; there is also the spacious hospital of San Juan de Dios.

Within the walled city reside, generally speaking, the authorities of the archipelago, who had the same mission and the same hierarchy as those of Cuba.

The real nucleus of the population and its business, as stated before, are in the suburbs. These comprise the districts—wards rather—called Binondo, Ermita, Malate, San José del Trozo, Santa Cruz, Quiapo, San Miguel, Sampaloc, San Francisco de Dialo and Tondo. The neighborhoods of these suburbs are delightfully picturesque, with the small rivers, lagoons, creeks, islands, quarries, and little hamlets. Good, substantial and picturesque bridges facilitate communications between the old and new Manila.

The Binondo ward is the most mercantile of the archipelago. Here are the central administration of revenues and monopolies, general tobacco warehouses, and the administration of finances of the province of Manila. Its streets are crooked and narrow, but the houses tastefully and solidly built.

On the breakwater of the jetty extending out into the bay on the north bank of the Pasig is a light-house, and the steamers which ply between the provinces of Cavite, Batangas, Bulacan and

Pampanga, close in here along the river for loading and unloading.

North of Binondo, and separated by a small canal, spanned by several bridges, is the ward Tondo, extending to the west of the bay, on flat sandy ground. The houses are constructed of bamboo and nipa, a species of palm with feathery leaves. The streets here are narrow and there is a handsome church, several theatres, and a large market place. Northeast of Binondo is the ward Santa Cruz, with excellent buildings, a flower market, several theatres, Bilibid—the prison—the leper hospital under the Franciscans and a cemetery for Chinese or *Sangley* infidels.

Northeast of Manila proper and at the extremity of the suburb of Santa Cruz, is the ward Quiapo, with good houses and well aligned streets, and a large market place. There are the tribunal of the natives—an elegant and solid structure; a well-built "V" shaped suspension bridge over the Pasig, measuring some 350 feet by 22 feet wide; the magnificent market of the Quinta, and the spacious and pretty San Sebastian street, with elegant buildings and convenient cool porticos, and at the end of this street is the huge steel sanctuary of San Sebastian under the Augustin Recollects.

In the ward San Miguel, which is situated to the eastward on the north bank of the river, which is connected with Quiapo by several bridges, are the very best buildings in the city. Along the river are

many beautiful villas, the last one being the Malacamang, the residence of the supreme authority of the archipelago. It consists of an elegant palace, divided into two parts, and surrounded by beautiful gardens redolent with the perfume of the many tropical flowers and shrubbery.

In the center of the river near the Malacamang, is an island called San Andrés, on which is located a convalescent hospital, spacious, and with excellent hygienic conditions; the San José poor-house and the insane asylum.

Along the beautiful Bayumbayan drive is the botanical gardens, to which—since the American occupation—has been added a Zoo.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE SILENT TENEMENT.

TO the hurried and only superficial description of Manila as recorded in the preceding chapter, could be added, if space permitted, the embellishment of the frame in which Manila is set—the *Orient*—with its mystical, mighty and magnificent enchantments. Yes, all these, and a wealth of more superlative expletives, but which, even if recorded in their entirety, would still fail to suggest little more than a pale shadow of that magic east, which is older than tradition.

You have already observed that in some respects Manila is modern, while in others it is very ancient. In its modern aspect, however, there are no gigantic buildings like those of our great American cities, or those of China nearby—constant earthquakes preventing—but if you will step into this luxurious victoria and drive with me out "Calle Nozaleta" (where the author formerly lived) and stop in Paco district, at the intersection of "Calle Nozaleta and Marcelino," I will show you an imposing and awe-inspiring tenement house, the like of which there is not a duplicate in the world, and which shelters more than 2400 souls. It was here that the last act of this terrible tragedy, in which Boyce Eric was the unhappy actor, was enacted.

As you sit in your comfortable victoria and peer through the bars of the huge, double iron gate, which alone breaks the monotony of the solid, grim, moss-covered walls, you will observe a semi-circled structure five miniature stories in height. You will also see spreading out in the foreground, between the gates and the building proper, a broad court, where the grass is ever green, well kept and inviting; where the birds twitter merrily and unmolested, their sweet carols in the tops of many magnificent trees which skirt the edge of the court. But hand the janitor of this tenement your permit and enter the gates, and you will see what is possibly the most interesting building in the world.

As you enter, off to the left you see a tiny chapel, to which there are five long, stone steps leading up to its oaken double door. If there are any windows in this chapel, you are unable to see them, for the building is entirely covered with a thick creeping vine, which obscures even the crude stones of which it is constructed.

Sit down now in the shade of that great towering elm, and I will tell you the history of this place.

First, you will observe that while the court and the building itself is large and spacious, your attention will be momentarily drawn to the rooms occupied by the tenants, which are all tiny, dark and poorly ventilated. The dwellers are invariably the dependents of friends or relatives, who have no further use for them, and, who have apparently less

love and remembrance, for they have put them aside. These humble tenants go on, day in and day out, retired, unsociable, secluded as it were, from the world's busy ways and means.

If you are fortunate enough to get a glance at the register of this place and check off the names of the tenants of years gone by, you will find that within these aged walls are former society belles—señoritas and señoras—whose names were once powerful factors in the favors dispensed in Manila's "four hundred;" but who now, broken down with the weight of years, have been brought here to spend the remainder of their days, forgotten, forsaken by that same gay social world.

You may enter this court and rap at the doors of these rooms, but they will not open them to receive you. It is truly and verily a strange, strange, weird place.

It is, as you will observe, surrounded with a quietude that becomes calloused with monotony. You do not hear the merry chatter and prattle of children (but there are many of them here) romping on the cool inviting grass; nor the tinkling of guitars or the rattle of the castanets in the evetide when everything is cool, and still and tranquil. The silent monotony is sometimes broken by wagons and carriages which bring new tenants—they come and they go—come and go. When a new lessee is sent here by relatives or friends who have no further use for them, they never wander out again. It is truly

remarkable how they can confine themselves to the limits of these cold, grim, ivy covered walls. It would seem that they care not to mingle again with the busy world. They are content to be let alone in their solitude, and let the unrelentless, cruel, meaningless universe go on with its dizzy whirl; its meaningless nothing; its continuous chase and hustle and bustle for the almighty and ever potent dollar; for empty vanity and vain glory. They care not, just so long as those who have relegated them to this abode, send monthly the small pittance for the rent of their small apartments.

Philanthropic folks who would aid them; sympathetic folks who would sympathize with them; and at times—like you and I—curious folks visit this strange place, but none receive a glad welcome. The reception to the philanthropic, the sympathetic and the sightseer is alike to one and all—cold and unfriendly. They care not for their eleemosynary assistance; they want not their sympathy and they hide their faces from the curious.

Yes, even the very grand stately old trees which have stood sentry and furnished shade and a place for the birds to sing to them for many, many years; and the dear sweet little flowers and even the very grass, moans and sighs, because they too are weary and unhappy for being so utterly unappreciated.

But, why don't these silent roomers come out from their stuffy and foul smelling rooms in the cool mornings or delightful moonlit evenings and partake

of their share of nature's beautiful environments which surround them? Why doesn't that old gray haired man in room No. 17, who spent his life wielding a sceptre which commanded earth and heaven, fame and fortune? Why doesn't he come out now and look towards the land where he once reigned supreme in his realm? But no, he too, shuts himself away in oblivion, and cares not;—but still; after all—why should he? His fortune has vanished likewise his power to command, so why bother?

Years and years, centuries and centuries go on, still this place remains the same; monotonous and melancholy. There is no laughter; no music; no nothing—save silence. Still it is wonderful, too, that they never complain. They are apparently happy with their lot, else they would.

Even the Sunday morning church bells do not thrill within them, for the poor creatures have lost all sentiment of religion, yet they never here utter a sacrilegious or impious word. They care not for the flash of the lightning, nor do they mind the fulmination of the thunder; the rumbling of the earthquake, or the swish of the typhoon. They are all alike, imperious to rain or shine; smiles or tears. They are dead. This great, gray structure is a graveyard. A peculiar graveyard though it is, and is called in Manila, the "Paco Cemetery."

CHAPTER XXII.

SENORA VALDEZ.

THE moon is silently creeping over the walls of the old city of Manila; rising as it seems, from within the bastions of Fort Santiago, as it spreads a silvery, yellowish transfixion over the death-like quietude of Paco Cemetery.

In the far-off, across the Pasig, ten o'clock rang out, clear and crystal-like, from the clock on the Church of the Recollects.

The band is still playing sweetly on the Luneta pavilion as of yore. Manila is the same old Manila to-day that it was six years ago, only perhaps a little more Americanized; and with a clanking trolley car bell, which was absent in the years gone by.

Look! Slowly, but with a dolorous groan, the little gate piercing the rear wall of this lonely, melancholy place opens, and a man who had once been tall, but now stoop shouldered, and bearing an attitude of the tacit submission to broken health and spirits, creeps through on his hands and knees. He pauses for a few minutes, still on his knees, and with ears alert, listens.

"Yes," he sighs, "everything is quiet."

His eyes stare wildly around in the translucent moonlit scene. His expression is stern and his

countenance has undergone a miraculous transfiguration and is now drawn and haggard. If you look closely—although it is hard to believe—you will see that it is Boyce Eric who steals into this dreary place, and who, like the occupants of this silent tenement, is now alone, and long forgotten. Broken in health and in spirits, the once magnificent physique now stands out in the yellowish light of the moon, more like the osseous shade of a skeleton, than that of a human silhouette.

Satisfied that all is still, he creeps within the gate and cautiously draws it to. When the gate has been closed, he sighs, then slowly feels his way along the wall till he comes to the vaults wherein are the dead of ages past. He stands upright and gazes at the inscriptions, but he shakes his head sadly, for alas, it is too dark to enable him to decipher the lines. Then he feels for the letters—but no use.

"It was here they must have buried her—but where?" he mourned in a cold, raspy voice.

Once more he endeavors to find the grave that must be hers, but finally in despair he creeps, keeping close to the ground, to the little chapel, and sits down on the lowest step, in the shadow of the wall.

For a long, long while, he does not speak, but presently the silence is broken by a long drawn, mournful, pathetic sigh.

"Six years ago to-night. Six years ago....and oh God, what terrible years they have been."

Yes, it is exactly six years to the day, when in

that hotel not over a dozen city blocks away, he had committed that awful murder. The lines in his face, and the wild haggard look in his eyes are sufficient proof that they have been six long, long years of suffering and wandering aimlessly over the globe; of daring and adventure; of the temptings of a death that would not come. His head is now bowed between his hands; he is absorbed in thought. His crime has brought him back, as murder always will bring back—once more in their lives—the guilty, to the scene where their atrocious deeds were committed. But how it has brought him back. What a despicable figure of despair; what a pitiful creature now awaits the ravings of a weakening mind; the shattered, brilliant mind of a half dozen years ago. The mind that took the honors in his graduating class; the mind that the Governor had selected for the most important and gigantic feats of engineering in the Philippines. Ah yes; it is truly a sin, that the world was robbed of such a mind; that such a brain should have been made to suffer and pay such a penalty through the enticement of a woman.

How long Boyce sat there is a matter of conjecture, but now the moon has crept higher and higher, until it looks like a silver bell as it hangs majestically in the vast blue vault overhead, while now and then a fleecy veil of clouds flecks across its face, dimming for a moment, its wonderful brilliancy.

His dirty, ragged clothing and his unkempt beard of six months, present a sight difficult to portray—

difficult for the mind to conceive, in comparison with the stalwart *debonair* youth in his immaculate flannels of six years ago to-night.

Suddenly his head raises with a jerk, as though awakened from his thoughts. It would seem that he is trying to rid his mind of them, for slowly he passes his bony, scrawny hand across his face with a puzzled gesture—puzzled as it appears obvious, by the infinite, incurable distress now raking his very soul. Then suddenly with a mad dejected stare he gazes at the heap of grim bones—"loved ones, no doubt," he thought; who have long since been forgotten by friends, who failed to pay the mite to keep them under cover, and which are now ruthlessly scattered to the fury of the elements.

"Oh God!" he cries out, "I am sick, yes sick of it all," and the very stillness encompassed by the grim walls, took up the echo, adding and adding to its cocophony, as a stone gathers substance in its flight down a steep precipice.

"Oh; if I could only still the overpowering clamorings of this conscience! But it will not be stilled. Six years have I evaded the law; but from this conscience I cannot escape. When oh, God, will it all end?....when, oh when? I have suffered enough —oh, how I have suffered. I have prayed for death; yes, I have implored and invited it,....but it will not come. All there is left is———" He ceased while his head sank lower and he pressed it harder, ".....no, no, I can't do that. I cannot c-c.....

. . . ." he seemed unable to utter the word, for he dreaded its very suggestion when it entered his mind. "No, no, no. Not that, not that. I shot her, yes—I shot her, yes—I shot her; but was it all my fault? She tempted me . . . . . yes tempted me as man was never tempted before; then she robbed me, insulted me, scoffed at me, jeered at me . . . . . made a fool of me. I forgave her, but for . . . . . Oh, my God, I implore you that if, as my Bible teaches me, you are a just ruler of the world—of your children, of which I am a tortured one, . . . tell me, tell me, ... Am I to be condemned to an everlasting hell, and torment, for an act committed in a frenzy of temptation and passion? Oh, God,—if there really is a God—if there is to be a hereafter, if there is to be a reckoning, save me, oh, save me, from self annihilation . . . . . for an hour, yes, yes, an hour. Could any man . . . . . ."

"Stanley! Stanley!" came a soft soothing voice from somewhere in the night.

Boyce staggered to his feet, motionless, perplexed and wondering; his eyes almost bulging from their sockets, then a trembling fear suddenly gushed through him, as he stared wildly to the right and left; first at the ground, then along the top of the walls, but while he could not see anyone, or anything; yet he was positive he had heard a voice call the fictitious name he had used that night, and which he had never used since. Ah, what torments and what untold anguish he could have averted, had he

used his own name on that awful night. Just now, if he had any coherent thoughts at all, they must have been of the supernatural; for even—notwithstanding the human seeming speech and sound of the voice that had called—there was no one in sight.

After a few minutes, he seemed to brace himself for the worst, and bringing his mind back out of the seeming realm of the incredible and trembling with fear; he crouched back farther in the darkness and sat down, in the angle formed between the steps and the building, his body shivering with a strange, creepy cold. Interlacing his fingers so tightly that the nails pierced the skin, he placed them between his shaking knees as he looked appealingly towards the clear moon-lit sky.

"Did I hear a voice?" he questioned, as though addressing individually every star in the firmament. ..... "Answer me, Oh, answer me, ye multitude of infinite eyes! Did I hear a voice? Did I, did I, or am I at last going insane? Ah, yes! I knew I could not hold out much longer."

His head sank again to his knees; he is speaking again, but in a lower and uncertain voice.

"Oh, merciful heaven ..... be merciful to me a sinner. Keep me, Oh, God, sane for an hour,—a half hour. Grant this humble supplication. Don't, oh, Father, don't drive me mad until I can pray," he cried as the large tears rolled down his sunburned haggard cheeks; and even while he spoke, his face, while already blanched and haggard, now became doubly so, with the untold agony of these terrible

inward omnivorous dreads of a fast flying intellect.

"Stanley!" again came that strange mysterious voice from that unknown oblivion.

He crouched closer and tighter against the stone steps and the ground with an impotent snarl-like sound; for the combined fear of insanity and the sense of the supernatural seemed to permeate this dreadful silence.

"Stanley Bateman!" it came once more.

He groaned again, as he twisted his head and looked up appealingly toward the door of the little chapel—not that he expected to see any one or anything there, for his mind was now reduced to such a vague state that he could no longer determine from which direction came the voice that called his name,—but more because it was the house of God, and from which, in its nearness, he hoped and prayed, there would come some omnipotent power —some miraculous power—to rid his over-taxed brain of its perplexities and anguish; its very proximity appealed to him more sympathizingly than that far distant myriad of stars.

Then presently as he looked up, the heavy oaken door seemed to partly open and in it stood a vision, about whose seraphic head there seemed to be gathering, like waves of mist, a lustrous halo—it was the form of Señora Valdez.

For a moment her keen steadfast eyes seemed to search his, half inquiringly, half compassionately; as she looked in that weary troubled face, and when Boyce's now uncertain gaze met that sight—and

those eyes, which seemed to pierce him through—he muttered something inarticulate; a sort of a sibilant, gurgling sound, like unto a wild beast after being wounded; and when it can no longer protect itself, but lies looking up at its captor, with wide flashing eyes of defiance, but yet, with muscles that will no longer obey the will; he fell limpid and doubled in a heap.

"Stanley," the voice said, softly and tenderly.

Again he looked up, raising his arm at the same time above his head, as though expecting; or at least to ward off a blow.

"Am I mad? Mad, mad, oh, am I mad? ..... Am I? Oh, speak to me, speak to me, you piercing eyes, if you are real, and not a phantasm! Speak! Speak, for God's sake, speak; don't keep me in this terrifying suspense!" he cried as he cowered down deeper to the earth.

"You remember me Stanley? ..... You remember Señora Valdez, —Amanda?"

He looked again, this time the fear for an instant leaving him, as he spoke aloud, communing enigmatically with himself.

"It surely is a human voice; but still the form wears a shroud?" and again he shook his head sorrowfully, as he continued uncertainly, "I am plumb mad ... I am stone blind .... else that is an apparition! Of the three, I do not know which it is, still, just as sure as I am a breathing mortal, that voice is human, and that shroud is white; I pinch myself, and ... I feel it. I can see her bared arms

and neck and bosom again, as real as on that awful night; Oh, so wonderfully rounded; her jet black hair glimmering in the moonlight, and the same glorious, lustrous, majestic, piercing eyes."

The slightest suspicion of a blush, and a faint half-smile suffuses her almost pellucid face and neck and dark eyes, as she hears him talk thus uncertainly to himself.

Her flowing shroud, which is open to the center of her breast, and lowered over her left shoulder, reveals the scars from the wounds near the heart, which he had in his vengeance inflicted.

"Strange though?" he thought, "The terrible gash in her forehead, and the one in her lip, which had ever remained fixed and which had been forever staring at him, in his dreams and waking hours through these six long lurid, miserable years, have now disappeared; and her forehead is as pure and white as though made of alabaster, and her mouth just as tempting as on that fateful night when he had kissed the honey from those ruby lips."

For an instant Boyce wondered at her sudden appearance in this weird abode of death; then raising to a kneeling posture, he held out his arms toward her in humble supplication of despair and wailed piteously; his marcid countenance illuminated as it is by the moon, is one never, never to be forgotten.

"Yes, yes, Señora ..... I remember!" ..... he hesitated a moment choking almost, with emotion, then continued. "Have, you come again to tempt me? ..... or have you, too, come to join

these hovering spirits to help curse me through the damnable gates of perdition, on whose very threshold it seems I have been standing for the past six years, ready—yea, almost willing—to be pushed through? But Amanda, for God's sake Amanda, do not. Please do not tempt me further. God only knows, I have suffered enough already."

"Stanley, have no fear. I have come to end your suffering. I have come to cleanse you of that terrible night. I have come to atone for that error. It was all my fault. I take all the responsibility for your future accounting at the pearly gates beyond Jordan's river; but, when you have heard .. .... when you have heard all—you will forgive me too."

She paused, and after a brief time he looked up as though he expected her to continue, but in his look there is something wild, confusedly vague,—yes, beseechingly.

"Amanda, I have nothing to forgive, but if my forgiving you, will liberate me from this devouring fleshy prison; this thorn of egrimony; then God knows, I forgive! and if your forgiving me, will give me a little cessation from this suffering which I have endured,—I don't know how—for six years; if it will edulcorate for a moment, the horrible past and give me a brief last dreaming space to forget for an hour, this terrible inevitable doom, ... then for God's sake Amanda, forgive me, do, do, forgive!"

She stood regarding him sorrowfully for a few moments, with a look of peculiar pensiveness and abstraction, her long, black curling, silken lashes giving a pathetic drowsiness to her glorious eyes, then opening the door wider, she came slowly down the steps, as she whispered in a voice, far more tender and soothing than the peals of a silvery bell, muffled though it may be, with rose leaves.

"Come, let me tell you all. 'Tis a long, long, sad story, then I must be gone; for now that I have seen you again, I can rest in peace."

Taking him tenderly by the arm, she led him to the heap of cold staring bones, near the north wall, while the chills shot through his body, weakened and withered.

"Sit there!" as she indicated a place near the wall.

"This, Stanley, is the remains of those that were even begrudged the small pittance to keep them under cover from the fury of the elements. See ....." as she pointed to the extreme outer edge of the heap of scattered skulls, and legs, trunks and arms, "..... see yonder that skull with the remnants of black shiny hair matted and clinging to it. Most of the wonderful luster and gloss has left it, and you would hardly recognize it, but that skull is mine. Ah, yes, what a sad, sad story it could tell; what joys and what pleasures, what hardships, what heartaches and what suffering; even poverty, and alas,—and most of all—what disappointments. See

Stanley, those empty hollow sockets. They were once filled with eyes which had the glow of the very stars; the perfidy of the lightning. Eyes that simply bubbled over with life and happiness and joy, and in whose very depths men became as clay, to be moulded as I would. See the lower jaw and teeth are gone, which makes the skull look more cold, raw and gruesome. They are scattered somewhere in the heap. Wherever though they might be, they formed a mouth and two cherry lips which could have been kissed away in life, had I so wished. That hair clinging to it is now faded and withered and dead; the gloss lacks luster, but it was once a greater charm than gold or emeralds or rubies. It could have woven nets and webs and intrigues around the hearts of men and made them fight or drink themselves to death or to madness; yes, even to commit murder. Thus it was on that fatal night when I met you Stanley. That has been six years ago to-night. Every year since that bullet crashed through my brain, I have turned over in my grave, and then wandered out here expecting to find you. I knew you would come. I knew you *must* come. But how long I have waited? Oh, very long, ... so long ..... so long!"

During the time the Señora was speaking, Boyce with his head at times buried in his hands, moaned and moaned and shook his head. Yes, only too well did he know these things. He had had one night of this enchantment .. he knew.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE SENORA'S CONFESSION.

"LISTEN, STANLEY," she began in her sweet, harmonious voice. "Perhaps even this confession will not justify me in your estimation, but still it may probably cause you to think my life less culpable than it appeared that night on which we last met, for I swear, Stanley, it is God's naked truth. I was born in a little city in the United States—in Pennsylvania, the daughter of a methodical, and moderately wealthy father; and of one of the dearest, sweetest mothers that ever breathed a breath of life. There was but one other child in the family, a little curly-headed boy four years of age. When I was seventeen, a sweet girl friend of mine who had been my college chum, married and went to Florida to reside. She invited me to visit her, and while there I met Ignacio—Ignacio Lopez. He was then a Major in the Spanish army; a dashing, black-eyed cavalier who by birth and position belonged to the best and highest society in Havana where he was then stationed. He was gay, brave, and witty; an elegant companion and a chivalrous lover. The women adored him because he was young and handsome, gallant and magnificent on all occasions where a man could be

so with women of good society. With me it was likewise. I fell in love with him. Our hosts gave a grand reception in our honor and after the very first dance, we wandered into the conservatory; a glass of wine, and then, little by little—even before I realized it—with his passionate and dexterous pleadings, he finally wove around me the web of his eastern fascination, until twixt words of love; intoxicating music; inflamed looks; silence, and the bewildering enchantment of that summer's night,—all of which seemed to conspire to disturb my reason,—I was ready for any sacrifice he might propose. Being young, and possessed with an over abundancy of the buoyancy and passion of youth; totally ignorant of the deceit and wiles of a worldly man and worldly manners, I fell an easy victim to the false scent of his flattery, and yielded to the blind promptings of passion, which indiscretion marred forever my entire life.

"The time at last arrived when I was compelled to reveal the secret of my indiscretion to my mother. I almost fainted. It was so hard to tell her. So hard to test the confidence of a motherly love, for she loved me dearly.

"When my father, who, too, had always loved me dearly, heard my confession, he arose in a fit of rage and writhing anger, and without further ceremony or explanation, I was disowned—disgraced, and thrown out into the world with Ignacio. But I thought I loved him; yes at that time I knew

I loved him better than I loved life. God knows I did. He married me, and we went to Cuba to live. Cuba to me had only been the scene of some romantic novel which I had read, or perhaps the sweet memory of geography lessons; but I was happy then, and forgot for the time being, some of the remorse I felt in being disowned by my father. I became a leader in the social circles of Havana; the very highest and most select circles; for my beauty, and Ignacio's rank gave me a social prestige envied by all the native women. This lasted a few short months, but I was so happy and contented to be with him. The very earth seemed to revolve for the special benefit of me and my Ignacio. Then, the baby came. Oh, Stanley, it was such a darling, little, soft, pink creature, into whose black glittering eyes the angels had kissed life and light; and for a short time all the birds in those mystic isles of the sunny Caribbean, sang one long, sweet, rapturous love song. As Ignacio and I used to sit on the veranda of our beautiful villa in the star-lit evenings, while I held that dear form of soft humanity in my arms, we imagined that the sun, the moon, yes, the very stars grew brighter and more beautiful and entrancing each evening. Ah, yes, we were so happy, so very, very happy then. We named him Ignacio, and how we planned for his future. How he was to be a great soldier and fight down the stigma with which he was enwrapped.

"After another few months of this ineffable hap-

piness there came a change. Ignacio was ordered here for duty. He kissed me good-bye; I was to remain in Havana until he had gone and arranged for my coming. Days, weeks and months rolled slowly by, but no word from Ignacio. At last I felt that I was deserted even by him whom I loved most, and for whom I had sacrificed all others. My heart was sore,—almost broken. Then I wrote and wrote to my father and my mother, asking them to forgive me. I wanted to bring my boy home and have him blessed, and the sin of his mother forgiven; but no ..... no answer ever came. My mother loved me more than life, and she would have taken me and my baby back with open arms, but my father —it is hard to say Stanley—but God bless him; he would not relent,—he refused. He wrote to the American consul to whom I had written for intercedence, and told him he had no daughter. 'Go out into the world and suffer for your sin,' he had said the night he thrust me out. Oh, Stanley, how I have prayed and prayed, but my prayers were only answered when death came that night at your hands. God knows Stanley I have suffered; suffered such pangs that no woman was ever called upon to suffer before. It was hard,—yes cruel. Then finally a letter came from Ignacio, but it was cold; so unlike the love he had made to me.....Then I came here to Manila. Ignacio was a social aid to the Governor, which brought him into daily contact with the Governor's family, among whom was a

beautiful daughter, a magnificent specimen of Castilian womanhood. Old veterans of the Spanish Army who had been decorated for bravery in the many revolutions, and young soldiers, yet undecorated were continually begging at her feet, bowing to every whim, and craving for a nod of recognition and a glimpse of her favors, and, while it was long before I knew the truth, my Ignacio was also a captive. Then one day a letter came. He had not been home for nearly a week. The letter was dated at Hong-Kong, and was the most cruel I could have received; worse even than the denunciations of my father. In it he told me that he was tired of his *American* wife; that he no longer loved me, but that he loved the charming Señorita— 'one of my own race,' he said; and when the papers flashed the news that she and Ignacio Lopez had fled the country, then the truth had come. His power of persuasion over her—like myself—had caused an indiscretion. Ah, Stanley, there are some vile, yes, contemptible men in the world and what immeasurable influence these men wield over a young girl whose innocent heart is subjected to the magic of a first-love. Then came the war, and with it the sun went out of my beautiful home in the Ermita. My angel baby, God saw fit to take away from me as He had with Ignacio. I was alone, forgotten, and a second time cast out on the turbulent waters of life —but this time without a rudder to guide my leaky ship. It was hard Stanley; it was hard to forget,

for while a woman will risk her peace and honor for a man; she will rarely ever forgive him for having placed her in a ridiculous or humiliating position, but withal I forgave, and wondered on, trying to be loyal to the memories of past love and joy, on the little money Ignacio had left for me, and then at last, I moved the remaining property, which I had not sold, to the hotel Oriente—that which you saw in my rooms that night. . . . . Then you came. That night Stanley, I was desperate—desperate. The lease for my apartments would soon expire, and I had not the means to renew it. My pride would not permit me to divulge my situation. Then my heart longed to get home once more. Back again to America, that land of the free and the home of the brave. I was exiled here in a foreign land, with nothing but my knowledge of the language to assist me. Then I saw you soldiers in your blue and khaki ..... you Americans. It gave me new heart and new courage; but it also started again the cravings for home and country. I saw again my father and my mother, and my dear little curly-headed brother, who must then be a man; probably one among these thousands of blue clad warriors of the Stars and Stripes. That night you killed me Stanley all I wanted was enough to take me home again to plead. I felt that I had suffered for my sin,—yes, expiated. That night I met you in the corridor your face looked so kind and sympathetic, and when I invited you to my apartments, it

was with the intention of telling you my story, and asking you to aid me. But again my heart failed me. My pride would not permit. Then the devil conceived in my mind the idea of robbing you. I had intended getting you intoxicated first; I thought it would be easier; something tempted me and urged me on—but ah, how it ended—so terrible—but it was God's will. I could have procured sufficient money to take me home for I had admirers by the score. I could have tempted them with those now hollowed eyes, and those ruby lips, but no; I was honorable. I wanted to face my father with the light and honor of respect in my eyes, for I knew that his would pierce me through and through, and discover any dishonor. I was older now; no longer the slip of a girl; no longer subjected to those temptings, for I had suffered the pain of one love. I was like many, many women in this cruel world who are traveling over life's hills and plains; in those quiet gardens of happiness and love; and yet so close to the grim, dangerous chasms of temptation. They stand on the very edge of the precipice, poise, tremble, falter and fall; then after years and years of labor in wearing it down, they begin all over again—heartsore it is true, but wiser in the ways of the world and stronger in their conviction that divine Providence knows naught of that myth termed love; that fable, only found in novels.

"That night when I ran to my door—after you had been so good and kind to me; I saw home again

looking at me with its tempting lawns, and the dear old Susquehanna in the foreground. But, I had failed to set the latch, it was the fatal mistake—then the end. Oh, Señor, Señor, forgive me, forgive me. There has been many details omitted in this confession, but you now know, that like yourself, I am too, an American. As American to American in this land—fit for anything, but white men—I ask you to forgive me, for I forgive you all. My heart has been torn asunder with its cries for your suffering. You no doubt have a father and a mother, somewhere in that grand, grand country .... Go to them now! You are forgiven, so forever rest in peace! Go, Go!" as she pointed to the west, "Good-bye, Stanley, now and forever."

TWENTY-FOURTH AND LAST CHAPTER

WHEN she had finished the story just told, her eyes seemed to glow darker and darker; and with this glow there seemed to come a calm expression of tenderness and forgiveness. She remained motionless during a brief interval, while the entranced unearthly beauty of her face underwent a gradual transfixion; the soft mystic light slowly died away as she retreated a step or two.

While she had been speaking, it is difficult to determine whether Boyce heard or not. To his ears the voice must have sounded low and faint; like the voice of one who speaks unconsciously in sleep; or like a voice a long, long ways off; or perhaps like listening to an unknown language, of which he did not know the first letter. Still, he must have heard for he suddenly shivered, convulsively and with a wild effort he shook himself from the enveloping stupor, and seemed to understand.

"Sad, sad,—'tis sad. Your story is a sad one, Amanda! Had I but known that night .... had I but known! Oh, why did you not tell me?"

For a few seconds he remained silent, then resumed. "But you say you are an American? In-

credible woman—incredible! I would have known. Can you speak English? If so, tell me your name. Can I carry any message for you? for I am going home—yes, home—now that I am forgiven."

"No. There is no message," she answered in a low, soft voice, but now speaking in the English tongue; and when Boyce looked up astonished at hearing his mother tongue, he saw two big tears swimming in her eyes, but he remained motionless and in almost reverential awe, as she continued.

"No one cares for me, ... they would not remember ..... they would not remember poor Jean."

Something in that instant seemed to pierce his heart like a sword stab, and he attempted to rise, but after getting to a half standing posture, he sank down again.

"Jean!" he ejaculated. "Is your name Jean? Jean what, may I ask? I once had a sister by that name."

"My name ..... my ..... name is ..... Jean Eric."

For a moment upon hearing this name, he remained dumb, immovable, petrified. With waning eyes, his teeth compressed, and hands clenched till the nails pierced the flesh, he felt his reason at last tottering. Objects trembled in his sight. "What! What do you say?" he shouted at the top of his

voice, as he leaped with almost supernatural strength to his feet, for the name drove a wedge-like dart into the innermost recesses of his soul.

"What do you say? You ... you, you don't mean to say that you are Jean Eric.....?" He had to hesitate for a moment for his emotions were choking him. "If you are Jean Eric, don't you know me? Oh, God, oh, God! Oh, ... keep me sane for only a few moments; grant me a reprieve for a few minutes then I will be ready! Keep me sane till I know.....!"

With his already weakened legs unable to support his body, he fell to his hands and knees, and they also no longer able to support him, he fell flat on his face, then rolled and tossed on the dew covered grass, alternately laughing insanely, and crying, "God, God .. oh, God!"

He was now beginning to see it all; to understand,—to realize the truth, but now, seemingly unconscious of the presence of this woman standing near him, he cried:

"Oh. father! Oh, mother! Oh, cruel, cruel heaven! Oh, yon crushing hell! Oh, blasphemous arrogance, ... impossible, impossible! 'Tis mockery which is slowly and insidiously spreading its damnable sores over my very mind! 'Tis mockery sublime,—cursed—cursed mockery! No, by the Gods no—I won't believe it. It is a dream; I am crazy!" he shouted and moaned, as he again staggered to his

feet, reeling 'twixt weakness and emotion; these weird utterances being accompanied by a still more weird transfiguration of countenance. A dark fiery glory burned in his eyes and in the stern frowning wonder and defiance of his expression and jerking features and attitude, there was something grand; yet terribly menacing—supernaturally sublime.

"Jean .. Jean ... Jean ..... Jean! Don't —don't you know, don't you understand? Jean see, I am your curly-haired brother; I am Boyce,..... Boyce, don't you hear me! Ha, ha, ha," his maniacal convulsive laughter rang out, resounding through the vaults of the dead. "My name is not *Stanley Bateman.* It was a fictitious name that night!"

He pulled at his hair, bit himself and snarled like a mad man, while the night air echoed in discordant horror with his ceaseless lamentations.

"Oh! even God must have pity on me now. I have murdered my own sister. Instead of Boyce Eric, the avenger, I am Boyce Eric, the sororicide. Oh, Jean, my Jean, I have loved you so. Jean—Jean, God knows I did not know. Had I but known it was you. Darling sister, I had never heard your story. I was so young when it all happened, and then when I grew older they would never tell me about you. But, oh, Jean, I have avenged you. I came here and fought to make up for your life. Fought, yes, like the very devil on the brink of his fiery furnace,—yes, a cold dozen suffered at my

hands for you, and now, after thinking you dead, I am your murderer! Oh, Jean, come kiss me, kiss me. I have kissed you so often ..... oh, so often in my dreams, ... come kiss me now darling sister, while I am yet sane, for I cannot hold out much longer. Come, Jean, I beg but one, and then say that you forgive ..... Forgive."

He rushed towards her, but she rapidly drew away. Quickly up the chapel steps backwards she went, as she grew fainter and fainter, a smile lighting up her countenance with a halo of purity and glory and contentment. When she reached the door, she hesitated and holding out her arms appealingly, said:

"Come, Boyce! ..... I knew it was you the moment that first shot rushed through my brain, and in that instant, when my soul had flown through the infinite void, to the last bar of judgment, I read my title clear! Come now, be reunited in that great beyond, where mercy is dispensed by flowing angels, and where all is forgiven! I will wait for you there," pointing toward the sky. "Look, Boyce, look, quick! My skull takes form ... it glows with the fire of eternal life! ..... Come brother, come .....!" A mist covered round, and she vanished into the darkness of the oaken door of the chapel.

When she had disappeared, his head sank on his chest and he turned and looked toward the skull to

which she had pointed. "Glory, glory, oh, glory," he shouted amazed .. for the skull now lit up with flaming eyes and the features changed to that of a sublime face around which was a wonderful circle of light, encompassed by the vivid hideousness of the surrounding bones, then a veil-like mist began to creep slowly over his eyes and the vision disappeared.

For a second he stood reeling, then fell headlong, his head striking the ground with a dull thud, while he tore madly at his hair, and laughed with delirium; then crying "Jean, Jean," rises again and when he does, his hair has turned snow white.

"I knew I couldn't last much longer! Ha! Mad, mad, crazy! It is no dream, no, no, I am mad, ...yes ..... Jean, Jean, how long can this anguish last? How long can this tortured brain and bleeding heart hold out? Oh, my God! .....Jean, Jean! Come out, come out, look at me again!" Then, reeling round and round in a dizzy whirl, accompanied by savage yells in a voice which pierced the silence with terrible resonance, he fell backward, again measuring his length on the ground; with legs and arms twisted in acute agony, his haggard face hideously distorted into an expression of terror and alarm. After a few minutes his prostrate form disentangled itself and he sat up, now calmed somewhat, while he stared blankly before him into the pile of bones.

Look! slowly his hand moves to his hip pocket, then the moonlight sparkles on the blue steel of a revolver. He looks toward Heaven, though unable to see the stars, as he cries in wailing and agonizing appeals: "Oh, good, gracious Lord; the God that was, that is, that shall ever be; God of all lands and men; God of my father; God of my dear mother; God of my Jean. I cannot go on any further. It is over now. Mother is with you; father is with you; so is my poor Jean....." again choking with emotion, he rolled over and over, moaning inarticulately and again biting viciously his arms and hands with a fiendishness suggesting a wild animal. Then dragging himself to a sitting posture, he calmy laid the revolver in his lap, interlaced his fingers and raised his eyes to the star-lit firmament—which he no longer saw—though he strove wildly to pierce the thickened mist which hung round his eyes like the translucent whiteness of an ocean fog. He bent his head in deep prayer.

"Our Father, who art in Heaven. Forgive me. Forgive me. Forgive me. Take my weary soul and anoint me with the wings of peace; bless me I pray; bless this wretched body with the completion of celestial enjoyment. Re-unite us forever, I humbly beseech Thee, in that Kingdom beyond the sea, where there are no trials—no tribulations—no temptations—no wandering—no torments—no anguish. A....." He tried to add "Amen" to this, his

last prayer, but his voice broke, as though the wrath and malison of the Almighty was already denying him. A sudden light passed over his agonized countenance. Silently he held up the revolver and looked at it a few minutes disdainfully, then began reproachfully. "Ah, you ..... you were my comrade. I have loved you almost as though you were human; you it was who avenged my Jean—then you killed her .... you were cruel .. cruel." With a deep sigh, he kissed the cold steel affectionately, and pressed it tightly to his heart. A sharp, clear report breaks out on the stillness of the night, then another—followed with the quickness of a lightning dart.

With what strength that remained in his weakened body after receiving the mortal wounds, he leaped to his feet and threw the revolver into the heap of bones. "There," he cried in a voice impregnated with both happiness and despair, "there is that which avenged you, then lost you! Light up your eyes, now, oh, Jean! Light up and show me the way, for I am coming. Light up, light up your eyes if you are *my* Jean!"

At that moment, as though the spirits sought to gratify his last earthly request, a vision of Jean, as she appeared in the picture he had always carried around his neck, arose in sublime glory in the midst of the heap of bones; and though the jaws of death snapped tighter and tighter, and the blood

gushed from the wounds in his side, he laughed fiendishly and tried to stagger to her side. "'Tis her, 'tis her," he cried, "Yes, yes; now I know ....Ah, wait Jean, ... wait, wait dear ..... I am com ... com ... ing. Com...." A rush of blood to his throat choked back further utterance. With a last desperate painful effort, he tried his uttermost to drag himself to the vision, but the weakened, trembling limbs would no longer answer to the will. "J e a n !" he called pitifully, while his emaciated face, now covered with death's icy sweat, jerked itself into a still more hideous transfiguration. For a second longer he clutched wildly, madly, desperately at his heart; then the arms voluntarily extended, and falling heavily to the ground, face downward, he passed the Rubicon of life.

Alas, Boyce Eric had expiated;—given his life for his crime. Whether his act was right or wrong, we will leave to be decided by them, whose business it is to criticise. But, be the verdict what it may; thus poorly, (though faithfully,) chronicled is his past. His future we shall now turn over to his Maker. Both are mute and inexorable in their mercy, for it is writ: "What ye sow, that also shall ye reap." But, may the good Lord, the granter of all graces, grant him at last a taste of the ineffable delights of His infinite mercy, and finally re-unite then peacefully once more; father, mother, sister

and brother, in that great unknown, beyond Jordan's shore, where it is also writ:

"I am the door; by me, if any man enter in, he shall be saved."

THE END.

The Editor's Note:

When I first concluded the reading of Mr. LeBurke's manuscript—The She-Devil—I was curious to have explained the very peculiar ending. There were some things I was unable to reconcile; the most striking, for instance, being the reappearance—in tangible form and with the power of speech—of Senora Valdez, who, at the conclusion of the book, had been dead for the past six years.

I therefore made an appointment with the Author, and it may be of interest to the reader to hear his explanation, which was briefly, as follows:

"The facts as narrated in the concluding chapter have been somewhat distorted, and were conceived as written with a view to adding strength and dramatic effect. The stated relationship, however, of Jean and Boyce Eric, is a fact, as is also her death at his hands in the manner chronicled.

"Eric, a fugitive from justice from the night of the murder, to the night of his death; had, in some unknown manner learned the facts, and in a letter written in Japan, and dated two weeks before his body was found on the outskirts of Manila pierced by three bullet wounds, he stated that his mind could no longer bear the strain. That the end was near. 'Visions of that terrible night,' he wrote, 'hang to me with the tenacity of a bull-dog. I can't shake them off. I can feel my mind tottering. Jean seems to be calling always. I can no longer eat nor sleep.'

"You will see, therefore, that his mind was constantly charged with just such hallucinations as I endeavored to depict in the last chapter. This was, indeed, a truly sad affair. Through the cruel vicissitudes of fate, the last five years of his life was a hell on earth. But after all he was only one of the many law-hunted, heartsore, anchorless and rudderless, physically-wrecked derelicts who wanter over the globe, and at last, as a suicide, he passed through that mystic channel into the serene harbor of eternity—mystical eternity, where all learning and sentiment and faith decrees we shall all meet again."