

PALMS

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AUTHOR OF "COIANA," "FLEMINGS," "TANGLED PATHS," "MAY BROOKS," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER X—CONTINUED.

FABIAN'S GOLDEN SANDS—SHE KNOWS AT LAST.

"One can be in Rome and yet a thousand miles away. My being here is assurance that I have just returned," he said, with inimitable grace, as he bowed his perfumed head over her hand. She accepted the incense of his subtle flattery with such satisfaction that she forgot to press the enigma it implied. A fusillade of talk followed, replete with wit and satire on his part, and she led him into a cabinet to show him some ancient intaglios in pietra-dura, and other rare relics of a past age, recently found by a peasant, who in digging a well on his little farm on the Campagna, suddenly discovered that he had broken through the roof of what had once been a portion of a house. That was the story, common enough to be credible; and Fabian, always enthusiastic about any probable clue to the sites of the old dead-and-buried cities of Latium, listened eagerly, and examined with intense interest the curios which Laodice took out of a case for his inspection. Their date and workmanship proved their high antiquity.

"I suppose they are excavating," he said, replacing the gems; "if so I shall visit the site to-morrow; for those can be all, and I would not lose the opportunity to secure a few if they are to be bought; if not, there are other ways," he said, laughing. "They have not begun yet, but the place is guarded. The Emperor has no time to give to such matters; those detestable Christians allow him no repose day or night," said Laodice. "I wonder the gods don't make short work of them; then one would not be obliged to hear so many disagreeable things."

"It is a wonder," said Fabian, dryly; "but I am reminded, by those rare things thou hast kindly permitted me to examine, of having seen thy Etruscan chain, with its superb ruby, on the neck of my little blind cousin yonder on the Aventine. Why not come and bestow it where its splendor would be appreciated—on me, for instance?"

"His words were careless, but his eyes were looking into hers with an intense directness, which, for an instant, made her heart quail; but for an instant only."

"Because it is so precious I gave it to her, thinking it well suited to one whom the gods have exalted by her wondrous loveliness, and her singular misfortune."

"Thy gift was, then, through her, an offering to the gods? A most pious sentiment, which I cannot sufficiently admire," he replied, with a smile, which to one unacquainted with his might mean either approval or mockery. Laodice understood its true significance but made no sign.

"I hope the beautiful child is well?" she said, in soft, quiet tones.

"Perfectly so; she looks like a young Hebe."

"I hope she wears my keepsake?"

"I did not notice, but I have a vague recollection of her telling me that it had been put away for her until she should be grown up. I believe her father thought the ornament too valuable for a child to wear," he replied, in tones of easy indifference, as he looked away, and bowed to a friend who formed one of a group near the entrance; then he stepped aside, to exchange greetings with another who was passing.

Laodice ground her small, white teeth together, and the angry blood pulsed with great throbs through the arteries of her throat into her head, until her eyes felt as if they would burst from their sockets; she held up her fan of peacock feathers to shade them a moment from the glare of the lamps, and to recover herself.

"To be so belted, after all! Curses light upon her! but I will not be defeated!" she muttered.

"Pardon me!" said Fabian, as he returned; "I had a word to say to a friend, and should have lost my opportunity had I not seized it before he passed. Didst thou observe him? He has the grace and beauty of a woman blended with a most perfect manliness; he is going to be a second Cicero. I was at the Forum yesterday, when he had all Rome to listen to his oratory. It is refreshing to know that his eloquence is not to be a thing of the past. Shall we not look for our friends, who are doubtless ready to assassinate me for thy absence?"

He offered his hand to conduct her back to the superb apartments they had left, which were more crowded than ever. Fabian was assailed on every side by smiles, salutations, and sparkling epigrammatic wit, which he returned with interest; but now their way was blocked, and an elderly matron, whose wrinkled neck and arms were loaded with jewels—whose high, Roman features had grown sharp, and her head gleaming with incipient palsy—laid her hand upon his arm, claiming his instant attention.

"Thou art the very person I have been searching for all through this crowd! I am out of breath," she said laughing; "but having caught thee, I will not let thee slip until I hear what is going on up there at the old palace of Serventus Cestius. Is it true that it soon will be occupied?"

"It is a fact," he answered, smiling lankly in the corners of his eyes.

"Who will occupy it?—tell me, Fabian! I want none of thy jests."

"The commander of the Imperial Legion—Nemesius, and his daughter, I am informed."

"But is it true? Who is thy informant?"

"Nemesius himself," was the brief answer, yet pleasantly said.

"Well, the gods be praised! The man is recovering his senses at last; and, as a final proof of his sanity, will marry, I suppose, some noble Roman

beauty, who will be a mother to that pretty blind girl of his. Say, am I not near the truth?"

How keenly Laodice was listening! "Thou mayest be; but if so, I am all in the dark as to the intentions of Nemesius. It would be a sensible step for one situated as he is. Meanwhile his cousin, the Princess Vivia Cetani, has consented to reside and matrimonize his daughter while she remains in Rome."

"The Princess Vivia!" she screamed; "I thought her grief had made her as gloomy and as immovable as Soracte itself. It was reported that, like the widow of Mausoleus, she had mixed her husband's ashes with water and swallowed them. What an opportunity this visit will give her to shake off the grief which failed to kill her! She used to be a great beauty. Let me know the moment she comes, for I mean to renew my acquaintance with her."

He promised faithfully to do so, adding, urbanely: "She will be most delighted, I am sure."

Laodice had listened with strained ears to the conversation, not missing a word, although one of her lovers was whispering soft speeches to her all the time, and her spirits revived.

"Death only can hallow me now," she thought, while her eyes sparkled, and smiles wreathed her full red lips, and she looked so daintily beautiful that the old Princess, her hand still upon Fabian's arm, said aside, gazing full at her: "She'll ruin her beauty with those Eastern cosmetics; she's not in her first youth, and if it goes now, it is gone forever. I hate to go away from so fine a lost art until I meet thee, my Fabian; but my daughter is making signs over there for me to join her, and the crowding is really less. Farewell!"

She was tall and spare, and sidled through the press of people like a wedge; and Fabian, always amused at the follies of others, laughed softly, and shortly afterwards retired from the scene.

A month later the Princess Vivia came, and the world, the other old Princess with it, called upon her, glad to renew its acquaintance with Nemesius, curious to see the daughter of Nemesius, of whose rare loveliness there had been much talk, and to inspect the magnificent interior of the old palace, the furniture of which, together with some of its finest works of art, had once belonged to the Cæsar, from whom his wife had her descent.

The Princess Vivia, in dark robes that showed a flash of gold here and there, and were lit up with the precious antique jewels she wore in her hair and on her neck and arms, received all with courtesy tempered by sadness; for she would not have them think she had put aside her painful memories. Her long seclusion made her shrink, just as she did, with almost timidly, from this sudden revival of the scenes of her vanished days, until she discovered that all who came were not absolute strangers, but persons whose faces were unforgettably, and who now claimed a renewal of old friendships. There were also others she had never seen before, and with deferential manners and a honeyed social phrases, courted her acquaintance, and impressed her favorably. She was surrounded by splendors which, by comparison, made her old villa on the Alban slopes seem like a barn; and gradually her nervousness disappeared, and she was conscious that her sense of enjoyment was by no means dead, only she must be discreet, and not let this be too apparent.

Claudia's heart did not warm towards the Princess Vivia, neither did its fine instincts rebel. The womanly nature of the Princess had been touched with genuine emotion by the paths of the child's misfortune and her extreme loveliness, and she spared no kindness to win her affection; but, however well-meant her intentions, she failed, because she had none of that magnetism which attracts children. Just as the fragrance of certain flowers attracts bees.

The blind child had Zilla with her; her father was often beside her, and this filled the measure of her sympathy. She was gracious and sweet to every one. Her young friends, who had spent a happy week with her at the villa on the Aventine, came trooping around her to talk it all over, and ask a hundred questions about Grillo and the birds; and she, brave to endure, was apparently happy, even when her nerve was quivering under the oppress, and the confused sounds of unfamiliar voices.

After every one in the patrician circles of Rome had called, invitations were issued by Nemesius to a grand supper (the principal meal of the Roman, corresponding with the late dinner of our times) in honor of the Princess, at which the Emperor signified his intention to be present, as a signal mark of honor to the commander of the Imperial Legion. It was an age of unexampled luxury and splendor, and the magnificence of the feast, the superb toilets and costly jewels of the guests, the softly-breathed strains of entrancing music, the numberless perfumed lamps which shed radiance over the scene, the air laden with the delicate fragrance of flowers, which were twined around the pillars, garlanded along the walls, and grouped among the gold and crystal vessels and ornaments of the tables, may be more easily imagined than depicted.

The central attraction of all, occupying the place which was his by right of his supreme rank, clothed in the purple and crowned with roses, was Valerian Emperor, who deposed himself as a demigod, whose power no mortal might question. Sating his appetite on the richest viands, quaffing the rarest wines, and receiving on every side the incense of adulation, did no provision, dimly foreshadowing the future, thrill his inner consciousness? Where was his diem (The Romans believed in attendant spirit called *dæmons*) that not the faintest whisper reached him at last; Sapor, the Persian? But what warning could make itself heard to the

ears of one "drunk with the blood of the saints"?

The feast was over, and when, at the Emperor's request, Nemesius led his blind daughter, as fair and beautiful as a white lily in her spotless innocence, to Valerian's presence, he fixed his bold eyes upon her, intending to greet her with jest and flattery; but a sudden tremor, that thrilled his veins and paled his purple visage, checked his utterance. Those who observed this thought he was sick from over-eating; however, he quickly recovered, and, without even protracting the child's dimpled hand by a touch, or giving her the honor of an imperial kiss, he said a few confused words (meant to be pleasant) in deep, rumbling tones, which frightened her, then nodded to Nemesius to take her away, swearing by the gods that a mistake had been made in her creation.

Was it a sense of her pure innocence that disturbed Valerian? The near future will tell.

Laodice was among the Princess Vivia's first callers, and, with the worldly tact in which she was a perfect adept, and her graceful, deferential manners, she not only insinuated herself into her favor, but impressed her as being the most beautiful and charming woman she had yet seen in Rome.

"How suitable a choice she would be for Nemesius or Fabian!" was a thought that always recurred to the Princess when under the spell of one of Laodice's charming visits. Like most women, Fabian, in a way, was a match-maker, and she often wondered if she should be able to bring about an object upon which she was really beginning to set her heart.

Under the guise of careless gaiety, delighting every one with his wit and his fascinating ways, Fabian kept a falcon's eye on the movements of Laodice. Claudia was permitted to see her only in the presence of the Princess Vivia, and attended by Zilla, who, standing aloof, observed all that was passing. Nothing could be more winning than her pleasant ways and soft, caressing words to the Princess; but she made no allusion whatever to the invader, and she often wondered if she should be able to bring about an object upon which she was really beginning to set her heart.

After several ceremonious visits, Laodice made the discovery that under her sombre memories of the past in which the widowed Princess draped herself, there lay a strong, womanly curiosity, which her dignity would not allow her to gratify by condescending to ask questions. "Any other woman," thought Laodice, "who had not mourned in seclusion the deepest sorrow that a true woman's heart can know, might gossip, and satisfy her longings to know everything that had been going on in the fashionable Roman world since her absence from it, but in her case it would be incoherent, unless she heard incidentally of all that was going on, that would be quite another thing."

Laodice was enchanted with her discovery, and made her advances skillfully, to be sure of her ground; then, when assured that she was right, she grew bolder, and began by relating with precatory air, and expressions of regret for the erasing, what she had not known, or which one of the oldest and proudest families in Rome had been dis-honored; they had tried to suppress the scandal, but somehow it leaked out, and society was aghast. This was the beginning, and it met with neither rebuff nor actual encouragement from the Princess; only an incisive question now and then, and a keener expression in her eyes, betrayed the interest she felt in the story.

When Laodice rose to take leave, well content with her work, her hand was pressed, and she was invited to come again, not with the usual "good-bye," but as a friend, and at an hour when, by the Princess, could more fully enjoy her society. From sunset to lamp-light she was quite solitary; she was conscious that so much brooding over the past was not good for her, and would Laodice not come and help her to dispel the shadows that cast their gloom over her spirit?

That is what her guest clasped between her hands. The promise was given with secret rapture; Laodice felt more deeply than she could express, she said in her low, sweet tones, the honor of being admitted to a more friendly intimacy with a lady so illustrious and so noble. And they separated, mutually satisfied in having gained an object.

To lose no time in the execution of her plan, Laodice set herself to work to procure reliable intelligence of the events and gossip of Roman society during the past decade, for there were a number of noble old women surviving, whose highest pleasure in life was to find patient listeners to their reminiscences. To certain of these she assiduously devoted herself, and secured a rich fund of information, to be drawn on as needed.

Her visits to the Princess increased in frequency, until not a day passed without their seeing each other. Laodice always came at the last guests were taking leave—and remained. After that no interruption was allowed; if a late visitor chanced to call, he was not admitted, the servants having been instructed that the Princess was on no account to be disturbed at that hour, which was supposed to be devoted to Memory.

In the last and smallest of the superb rooms, and shut off from them by rich silken draperies suspended between the pillars, the Princess Vivia and Laodice held their secret converse. One lofty casement, set in a deep embrasure, opened on an ivy-covered balcony, that extended the entire length of the wing, and commanded a view of far-away mountain heights against the sapphire sky, temples enriched by Grecian art, and in the nearest distance a spacious

plaza, in the centre of which stood a tall, spiral column surmounted by a statue of Horatius. The accessories of this retreat were perfect for the purpose; and so admirably adapted to the purpose for which it was now required, where the peculiar intimacy and confidential intercourse which had sprung up between the Alban Princess and Laodice were like the performance of a secret function of the Bona Dea—furnishing her dignity.

On a certain afternoon, near sunset, they met as usual; the hour was lovely, but neither of them felt its influence. From the high window cornice, pale lilac clusters of wistarias drooped, and green, feathery fringes of the scarlet-stemmed cypress waved gracefully to and fro in the summer breeze; in the fountain in the court, touched by the last glow of the sun, looked like red wine; the column and statue of Horatius stood dark and clear against the rose-tinted sky; bees lingered over their nectar in the white acacia blossoms; and swallows, wild with glee, darted through the air with merry and incessant chirpings—the only sound that accentuated the stillness, save the two low voices that drifted out through the open casement.

Within, a little aside from the casement, in the shadow of the heavy curtain, to avoid a suspicious draught, the Princess reclined, and Laodice, when the intricacies of an affair which, when the Princess was widowed soon after it began, but having retired to her villa, and taken up the role of Artemisia, she had never heard the end of it until now. Having been intimately acquainted with some of the persons concerned, her enjoyment may be imagined.

The light was fading out of the sky when the low, pleasant-toned voice of Laodice ceased; her story was done, and she rose to go; but, before taking leave, inquired after Claudia, adding: "I am full of sympathy for a greater child. I can not think of a more unfortunate than you, and you, and the faces of loved ones veiled, from the eyes by an impenetrable darkness, as in the case of this beautiful and unfortunate little creature?"

"It is most sad. I have not asked many questions, but it is true that she has been always blind," said the Princess. "It may have been spoken of, but everything was so sudden about my coming here, that I do not quite remember."

"She has been blind from her birth, and it has thrown a shadow over the life of Nemesius. It is sad indeed," replied Laodice, turning from an instant moment, where she had stood an instant to inhale the delicious air. "Yet, stranger than all," she added, "the unfortunate child does not comprehend—she does not know she is blind; never having seen, it has been possible to deceive her."

Then she went away, congratulating herself that she had advanced still farther into the good ground of the Princess, little dreaming that her words had been overheard, or by whom.

Claudia had been expecting her father; but, lured by the fragrant air, the silvery cadenzas of the fountain, the drowsy hum of the bees, and the quick, sweet chirp of the fitting swallows, she had stepped from the casement of balcony, to enjoy the sounds which reminded her of her home on the Aventine. She moved along with slow, lingering steps, breathing in all the sweetness; then stood, her face uplifted, her lips parted with a smile, one dimpled hand nestling among the ivy leaves that covered the marble balustrade, her heart filled with a sense of the beauty which she could not see, when suddenly, a voice somewhere near her saying: "She has been blind from her birth, and it has thrown a shadow over the life of Nemesius. . . . The unfortunate child does not comprehend—she does not know she is blind; never having seen, it has been possible to deceive her."

The words came through an open casement, near which, unconsciously to herself, Claudia was standing; they at once arrested and concentrated her attention; she would not have listened voluntarily to words not intended for her ears, but these smote her like blows, and benumbed her power of motion, while her face grew as white as the tall Roman lilies in the vase beside her, for she knew that she was the "unfortunate child" the voice alluded to, and now was made plain to her the mystery which had so long troubled her mind with questions that every one evaded.

"To be blind means darkness—always darkness; but I could bear that, since it has been always so, if it did not grieve thee, my father!" she murmured. Yes; that was the bitter thought which, like a sharp thorn, penetrated the poor little aching heart.

For several minutes Claudia stood there motionless; no other words reached her from within, for the one whose voice she had heard was gone; the music of the fountain and the wild chirping of the swallows were no longer heeded, for every sense was introverted and centered in the thought: "I am blind, and his heart is sore, and his life shadowed by it. I thought the gods were kind, but why have they been so cruel to me?"

TO BE CONTINUED.

Thought for To-day.

There is a danger in our hatred of littleness, of despising those we think odious, and so falling into the most odious littleness of all—self-preference.—Father Dignam, S. J.

SUFFER NO MORE.—There are thousands who live miserable lives because we neglect the faculties and shadows existence with the cloud of depression. One way to dispel the gloom is to take a course of the Vegetable Pills, which are among the best and most efficacious in their action. A trial of them will prove this.

A HERO IN SPITE OF HIMSELF.

Lieut. Lloyd Griscom leaned low over his pony's neck and dug his spurs again into the tough little animal's rump, and he hid until it finally broke into quite a hard gallop and dashed along the narrow trail on one side of the muddy road, while the mud splattered furiously into the face of Lieut. Griscom and the branches whipped long red ridges in his face. It was because of the galloping horses and the splashing mud and the thrashing of the branches that Lieut. Griscom groaned.

"Oh, Lord," he said, "how she'll gey me! I'll look just like that stage lieutenant in 'Shenandoah,' after she's got to ride; I've got to do it, but maybe she'll be gone back to Manila."

With this comforting thought Lieut. Griscom gave another jab with his spur at his pony's flank and ducked his head a little lower down as he recalled he was coming to the dangerous bend of the road where he had been warned to look out for Filipino sharpshooters.

He could not get out of his mind the last conversation he had had with Ethel Kingsley in Manila. He had only been in the army a short time, having come out to the Philippines only a month before, after having secured a commission through family influence. The first evening he had spent in Manila he had met Ethel Kingsley, an army girl all through.

She had been born at an army post, and as she had had the good sense to select a colonel as her father, of course during her early life at the post she had seen the pampered daughter of the regiment and had grown up with more exaggerated ideals of "the service" than a major-general ought to have. She couldn't help laughing a bit at Lieut. Griscom. In fact, the newly-neglected lieutenant felt, soon after, he met the girl, that she regarded as a fine joke on the army.

While she knew well enough how he came to enter the army, she took particular pains to ask him if he were "a graduate." Of course Lieut. Griscom did not know that when anyone in the army asks you if you are "a graduate," the term refers only to the college, and in his deep ignorance he had answered—"Oh, yes, indeed—Daleville College, Daleville, Illinois."

Then the army girl laughed. This annoyed Lieut. Griscom, and he informed her that the students at Daleville had a military company that Congressman Tufts, from that district, had drilled with as much precision as did the cadets at West Point.

This last statement was made so seriously that conversation lagged for a while until Miss Kingsley could recover from a hysterical fit of laughing. She apologized for what she said must seem like rudeness. Lieut. Griscom admitted to himself that it had seemed so to him, but that Lieut. Griscom would be a hero. Lieut. Griscom had grown red at this, but Miss Kingsley went on to say that she was sure of it.

"You see, you've been in the volunteers and you're a C. L.—civil liar, you know—and you can't be a hero, hero. Regulars never can be heroes, Mr. Griscom, don't you know. They just regulars, no matter what they do. But you can't escape being a hero, where or other and suddenly to hear fierce foot-beats at a distance—your ratty rat, ratty rat, ratty rat, ratty rat. Then the horse will stop and you'll be covered with mud and with your face all marked up with briars and the like, and probably a handkerchief around your head, and the blood trickling down over your left ear. And you will stagger up to the general or whoever is commanding, and say: 'General, we are—surrounded—by the ene—'

"In little gasps, you know, like that," and they have killed ten-twenty of our men and will soon kill the rest unless help comes, and I have cut my way out and rode here to ask for reinforcements. Then, don't you know, the general will say, 'Well done, my brave boy—but you are wounded.' And you will try to straighten up, and then suddenly see me, and then you will flush and say, 'No, general, only a scratch, and fall insensible on the stage—no, I mean on the floor—and the supernumeraries—I mean the soldiers—will carry you out. That's the way they do in 'Shenandoah' and all those war plays where they have real heroes."

The new lieutenant had blushed deeply and fled from his tormentor as soon as possible, but the moth cannot stay away from the light, and neither could Lieut. Griscom remain long away from the light in the sweet brown eyes of Ethel Kingsley, who he had met in Manila. Then he had been sent to join his company at Bacoor, some twenty miles south.

A few days after he had gone to Bacoor he was thrown into a transport of joy by finding that Ethel Kingsley was coming down the next day with the colonel's wife for a few hours' visit. The next morning, however, he had been sent out with two companies on a reconnoitering expedition. At 10 o'clock the commander walked into a Filipino ambush and there was hot work. Lieut. Griscom even surprised himself by his coolness and handled his men as easily under fire as though he had been used to that sort of thing all his life. But the Filipino force was large and well-officered and refused to be driven back. Finally, things commenced to look dubious for the little column, and the senior captain had called for a volunteer to make the attempt of riding back down the trail to Bacoor after reinforcements. Griscom at once asked to be given the duty, and a moment later he was riding like a whirlwind through a lot of whizzing, popping bullets on his way back for help. He got safely away and soon he had put several miles between himself and the Filipinos and commenced to think more slowly.

Then he commenced to think of what Ethel Kingsley had said. Sure

enough she would be sitting in the colonel's quarters and hear the hoof-beats of his horse. Well! it wasn't a horse, it was only a pony, but that fact didn't make any essential difference. Anyways he would dash in just as she had prophesied, all covered with mud and his face slashed with red streaks, and gasp, "Sir, we are surrounded." No; he resolved that in any event he would not gasp. Anyways he wasn't wounded.

There was a crack from somewhere across the river. Even as he heard it he felt a pain through his breast. He groaned as his pony dashed on, but not from anguish. "Oh, I'm wounded," he thought; "that bushwhacker got me. Just as she said. O, what a figure I'll cut. What a figure I'll be. What a stage play I'll make." He had to grip his saddle horn sternly to keep from falling.

On and on he went and soon he saw the top of the church at Bacoor. An inspiration seized him as he entered the town. He called to a private soldier that was lounging in front of a fruit stand and borrowed his clean coat, for the front of his own had a deep stain from chin to belt. The soldier helped him from his horse and he bathed his face clean in the pool by the roadside. Then he combed his hair and put wet clay over the hole in his breast to stop the bleeding. Then he put on the clean coat and buttoned it and leaned on the arm of the soldier and walked slowly down the street towards the colonel's house and left his horse tied to a bamboo fence.

"Anyways," said Lieut. Griscom, "there'll be no hoof-beats and no mud and no blood-streaked countenance and no red stain over my left ear."

Around the corner from the colonel's house he bade the soldier leave him to go on alone. The soldier stood staring after him as the lieutenant walked a little uncertainly down the street.

Griscom found it hard work walking up the steps to the colonel's quarters on the second floor. As he reached the landing he was aware that Miss Kingsley was standing in front of him and that she was saying: "Why, Lieut. Griscom, what a disappointment. Is this the heroic sort of entrance that you make? Why, I'm quite disappointed in you. I was all ready to fasten a medal right there on your breast."

She gave the lieutenant a sharp little blow on his chest that almost made him wince. He was also afraid that she had knocked some of the mud from his wound and started it bleeding again.

"What brought you back, Griscom?" asked the colonel. Griscom saluted the latter, assured the colonel's wife that there was no danger of attack, and then told the commanding officer that he would have to see him alone for a moment in regard to some of the guardhouse prisoners. The colonel and Griscom walked downstairs. They feebly sure of an attack, and then Griscom told the story of the attack on the reconnoitering column.

"Griscom," said the colonel, "I'll send two guns and as many companies as I can spare at once, but I'm afraid that there'll be an attack made on the town as soon as we send out a considerable force. You must take twenty men and escort the ladies back to Manila. Look out for an attack. Go as fast as you can, and don't let my wife be alarmed if you can help it. She's nervous, and has just recovered from a long siege of fever, and the effect might be disastrous."

Some of the women were told that some important military moves were to be made which would require the return of the ladies to Bacoor for a time, and they were told to return at once to Manila, and they were bundled off before they fairly had time to tell the colonel good-bye.

Griscom rode at the front of his little column. After a time Miss Kingsley joined him.

"Why are you making us go so fast, Mr. Griscom?" she asked.

"O, these men are needed back at Bacoor, and we must hurry you into Manila as fast as possible, so that we can return."

"Does riding always make you so white, Lieut. Griscom?" asked Miss Kingsley.

"No, why, no," said Griscom. "No, that is, you see—"

Miss Kingsley looked at him sharply. "I am afraid that I do see," she answered, shortly, and reigned her horse back to the side of the colonel's wife. That lady was deeply indignant at the pace Lieut. Griscom was setting, and called to him sharply several times to ride slower.

But Griscom did not turn around. That mud had been shaken out, and he realized that the front of his new coat was hewing a sickly stain. So he merely answered over his shoulder and rode even faster.

Finally a sharp "Halt!" down the road told them that they had arrived safe at one of the outposts of Manila. Griscom briefly told the man on picket to call the officer of the guard, and when that individual arrived he gave the women into his charge.

"You're hurt," said the guard officer, as he placed his finger on the front of Griscom's coat.

"Nothing to speak of," answered Lieut. Griscom, "don't talk so loud. The ladies are nervous, and I don't want them to be alarmed."

He turned about and rode back to his squad and gave the order to march. He heard his name called and looked back over his shoulder. Miss Kingsley was walking toward him.

"Won't you say good-bye to?" she asked.

"Good-bye," he said. "Squad forward, Mr. Griscom." Miss Kingsley's tones were sharp. "I am not used to being spoken to in that manner," she said. "Wait a moment."

She walked up to him and he swung awkwardly from his horse, and tried to keep the animal between himself and the girl, but she would not have it so and she came around to where he was standing.

"Mr. Griscom," she said, "I thought some time you might become a hero. I

did not know it came a hero, it was only a pony, but that fact didn't make any essential difference. Anyways he would dash in just as she had prophesied, all covered with mud and his face slashed with red streaks, and gasp, "Sir, we are surrounded." No; he resolved that in any event he would not gasp. Anyways he wasn't wounded.

There was a crack from somewhere across the river. Even as he heard it he felt a pain through his breast. He groaned as his pony dashed on, but not from anguish. "Oh, I'm wounded," he thought; "that bushwhacker got me. Just as she said. O, what a figure I'll cut. What a figure I'll be. What a stage play I'll make." He had to grip his saddle horn sternly to keep from falling.

On and on he went and soon he saw the top of the church at Bacoor. An inspiration seized him as he entered the town. He called to a private soldier that was lounging in front of a fruit stand and borrowed his clean coat, for the front of his own had a deep stain from chin to belt. The soldier helped him from his horse and he bathed his face clean in the pool by the roadside. Then he combed his hair and put wet clay over the hole in his breast to stop the bleeding. Then he put on the clean coat and buttoned it and leaned on the arm of the soldier and walked slowly down the street towards the colonel's house and left his horse tied to a bamboo fence.

"Anyways," said Lieut. Griscom, "there'll be no hoof-beats and no mud and no blood-streaked countenance and no red stain over my left ear."

Around the corner from the colonel's house he bade the soldier leave him to go on alone. The soldier stood staring after him as the lieutenant walked a little uncertainly down the street.

Griscom found it hard work walking up the steps to the colonel's quarters on the second floor. As he reached the landing he was aware that Miss Kingsley was standing in front of him and that she was saying: "Why, Lieut. Griscom, what a disappointment. Is this the heroic sort of entrance that you make? Why, I'm quite disappointed in you. I was all ready to fasten a medal right there on your breast."

She gave the lieutenant a sharp little blow on his chest that almost made him wince. He was also afraid that she had knocked some of the mud from his wound and started it bleeding again.

"What brought you back, Griscom?" asked the colonel. Griscom saluted the latter, assured the colonel's wife that there was no danger of attack, and then told the commanding officer that he would have to see him alone for a moment in regard to some of the guardhouse prisoners. The colonel and Griscom walked downstairs. They feebly sure of an attack, and then Griscom told the story of the attack on the reconnoitering column.

"Griscom," said the colonel, "I'll send two guns and as many companies as I can spare at once, but I'm afraid that there'll be an attack made on the town as soon as we send out a considerable force. You must take twenty men and escort the ladies back to Manila. Look out for an attack. Go as fast as you can, and don't let my wife be alarmed if you can help it. She's nervous, and has just recovered from a long siege of fever, and the effect might be disastrous."

Some of the women were told that some important military moves were to be made which would require the return of the