

IN LIGHTER VEIN

A MIDDY IN MANILA.

[THE number of this magazine for August, 1875, contained an extremely engaging anonymous sketch entitled "A Middy in Manila." The recent visit of the American fleet to Manila has given that sketch a fresh interest; and it is herewith reprinted, with some of the illustrations which the now distinguished Mr. Edwin Abbey made for it at the time of its first publication, after material furnished by the author. We are permitted to say that the author is Mr. Frederick H. Paine, formerly lieutenant U. S. N.—THE EDITOR.]

To sail from winter into summer is very pleasant for those whose home is a man-of-war; and so we found it as we stood down the coast of Formosa, every day bringing us nearer to the Philippines.

We came to anchor, one day, at Tam-Fui, near the southern end of Formosa. The English had just bombarded the place, but we were too late for the fun. We went on shore and visited the ruins of an old Dutch fort, built in sixteen hundred and something, and made of about five hundred million bricks; the Chinamen had built up a whole town from the bricks of one wall. We threw stones at the pigs who reside with the natives, ate some bananas, and returned to the ship disgusted with Formosa. That morning we got under way again, and, after two days' delightful sailing over a summer sea, stood into the charming circular bay of Manila, and came to anchor near the city. No Italian sea and sky are more beautiful than we found here, and the bright Spanish town nestles cozily at the head of the bay, where the little river Pasig empties itself into the sea.

A happy party we were, that day, going ashore in our white jackets and straw hats; four days before we had shivered in flannels and overcoats. We pulled up the river to the landing, and there took carriages,—for nobody ever walks here who can ride,—and drove all through the towns, old and new. Manila was nearly destroyed by an earthquake in 1863, but it has since been all rebuilt. The ruins of the large cathedral are preserved, and when we visited it, the bell-ringer took us up into the tower, where we had a fine view of the town; and there he told us the story of the earthquake. He was standing where we now were, beside the bell, and saw the earth shake and the houses fall; the terrified inhabitants—looking to him at this distance like frightened ants—fled from place to place; then the roof of the cathedral fell upon the worshippers below, and buried many in the ruins. And he alone seemed to be left above the scene of destruction.

No foreigners are allowed to live inside the wall of this fine town; it is purely Spanish, with its convents, cathedrals, and its two-storied houses with overhanging verandas and latticed windows.

We called at a gentleman's house, one day. We

drove through the front door, and stopped at the foot of the stairs. An Indian boy took up our cards; we alighted, and while waiting for the boy I observed that the horses, cows, etc., resided on the ground floor, which is of stone, and that the carriages were also kept there; we then walked up a flight of broad stone steps, and, passing through an opening without doors, found ourselves in the large "sala," a spacious saloon with a dark wood floor polished like a piano top. On entering the room, one must offer his hand to every lady and gentleman without exception; this we did, and repeated some appropriate Spanish sentences (from the tenth lesson in Ollendorf, I think). There were the señor, his accomplished señora, and two flirtatious señoritas; the conversation soon became very brilliant, in one or two cases going as high as the twenty-ninth lesson, and some good things were gotten off from Ahn's "Spanish Reader"; midshipman Veer, who knew nothing whatever in Spanish except that romantic account, familiar to all students, commencing with, "The Island of Cuba is the most beautiful of all the Antilles," went through it with much eloquence, deftly inserting Luzon for Cuba, and Philippines for Antilles; but he brought confusion upon himself, for the subsequent conversation, all addressed to him, was so deep that he arose in despair, remarking that he was off soundings, and we took our leave, shaking hands all round as before. On arriving at the foot of the steps we turned around, *como el costumbre*, and said "*Buenos dias*," to the ladies, who had, also *como el costumbre*, followed us to the head of the stairs.

At five o'clock we started for the Calzada or public drive; hundreds of carriages were going in the same direction; in nearly every one were two or three ladies in evening dress, without cloaks or hats. There were a great many pretty black-eyed señoritas who glanced at us from under their long lashes in such a bewitching way as to give me a sort of electric tingle.

The drive is along the shore of the beautiful bay, and the scene one of life, beauty, and enchantment. On reaching the end of the drive, all the carriages haul off into an open space and stop, and the people gaze at each other and nod in recognition; little naked Philippina-presents dance round,

and offer you a light; the sun goes down in a blaze of green and gold across the bay, the full moon beams forth, silence reigns, and there you sit gazing at the people. Nothing pleases a Spanish girl more, and you can offer her no better compliment than to stare at her; I tried several determined stares on pretty girls, and they endured it with perfect serenity.

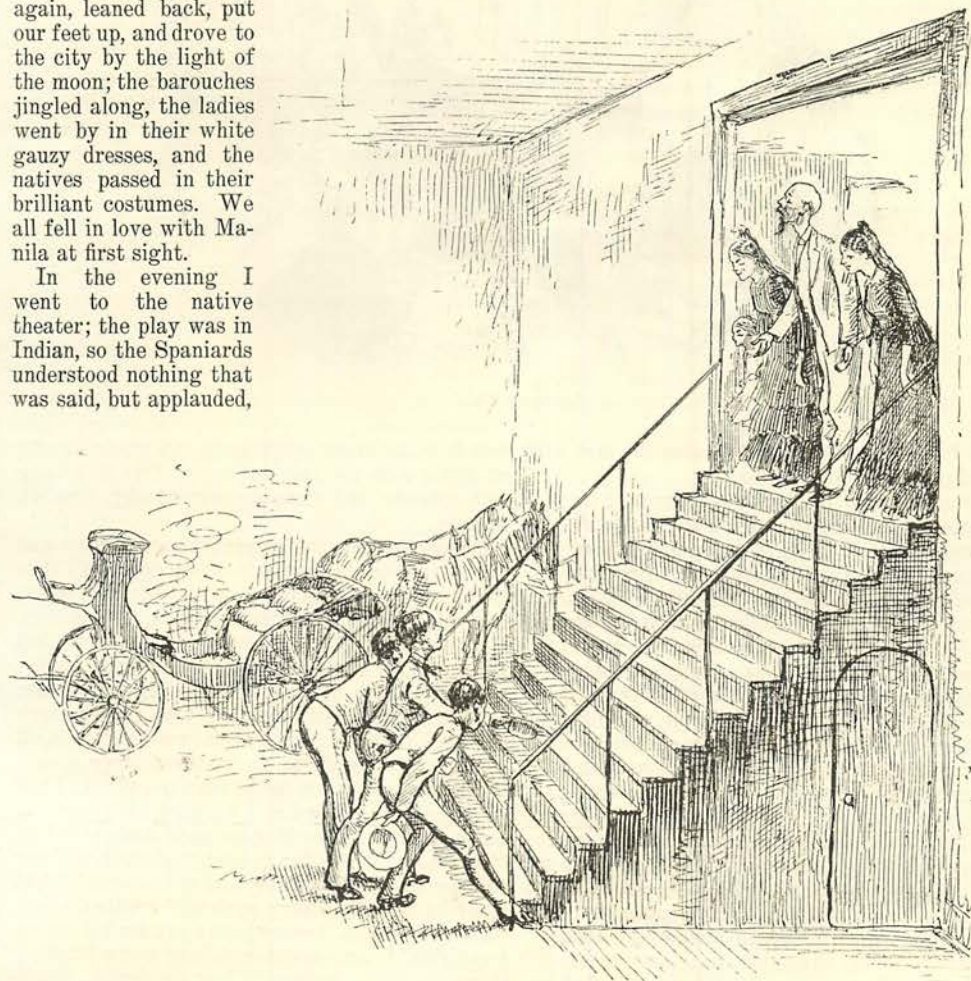
Gradually the carriages start off and drive up and down for an hour, then the band begins to play, and all stop at the Paseo or walk, a broad mall with trees on either side, and lamps, which make it very light even when there is no moon; and moonlight and lamps in the foliage together form a pretty combination. Here all alight and *flâner* back and forth; you watch the graceful undulating step of the Spanish girls, listen to the music, and take your only exercise for the day. Little girls skipped around us and asked us in Spanish to kiss them; it sounded very pretty, and we kissed a few.

The carriages used here are small barouches and victorias, drawn by native ponies. When tired of walking we took to ours again, leaned back, put our feet up, and drove to the city by the light of the moon; the barouches jingled along, the ladies went by in their white gauzy dresses, and the natives passed in their brilliant costumes. We all fell in love with Manila at first sight.

In the evening I went to the native theater; the play was in Indian, so the Spaniards understood nothing that was said, but applauded,

cracked jokes in Spanish, and kept the house in a roar; one comical duke pushed the native orchestra leader down the prompter's trap and led the band himself with his cane. The acting was all high tragedy; whenever the audience wished the performers to fight they would sing out "*Gue-r-r-ra!*" (War), and they would at once set-to. The native Indians are all fond of music, and play by ear entirely; there are nearly forty bands in this place; they play on European instruments, and give you any air you like. The girls play well on the harp; passing along the streets of the native town you may hear the familiar strains of some opera coming out of the windows of a poor little hovel. The native houses are mostly elevated in a queer way on bamboo stilts; the English basement is therefore an open space, in the cool shade of which pigs, fighting-cocks, and cats congregate to enjoy their siesta.

The dress of the Indians in Manila is a pair of modern trousers, a straw hat, and a shirt worn outside; some very wealthy natives wear beautifully worked piña shirts with gold studs, collar,



MAKING CALLS IN MANILA.

etc., worth hundreds of dollars; but always with the flaps outside. What bliss in summer! One could almost wish to be an Indian.

I have spoken only of old Manila inside the wall, with the more exclusive Spanish population. The greater population is outside, in the new town, where reside Europeans other than Spanish, a few Spaniards, and a vast concourse of half and half, Spanish, Chinese, and Indian, as it were—quadrans, octrans, macarons, etc. These are called Mestizos; some are very rich, and move in the best

a sort of walking embrace to slow music; you make a step to the right, rise on your toes, step to the left, rise, swing round, step to the right, rise, and so on; then, when you wish to balance, you wink at some fellow, stop in front of him, and go through the ladies'-chain, then clasp your partner's waist and take the other lady's right hand; the other fellow does the same, and now with the music you sway up to the center, sway back, and revolve in an ecliptic at the same time, after the manner of the planets. After swaying six times



“GUE-R-R-RA!”

Spanish society, and there are also the first and second classes of Mestizo society.

Our second day in Manila we were all invited to a first-class Mestizo ball at the house of the widow Mogeze, given by some gentlemen of the American merchant houses there. Promptly at eight o'clock we drove into the widow's basement; we ascended the stone stairway, and a scene of splendor, brilliant colors, and black eyes burst upon our view. The Mestiza girls were sitting in a row on one side of the room, about forty of them; some decked in gay plumage, yellow, pink, and green being prominent colors, others dressed in somber hues; they were mostly very pretty, with lithe graceful figures, and eyes as black as coal. The gentlemen hovered near the doors of the grand sala, like hawks eying chickens; at the first note of the music they all made a pounce for partners. As I saw that pouncing was the game, I made a dive for a pretty yellow and green, rattled off a sentence from the fifteenth lesson in Ollendorf, “Will you do me the favor to *bailar conmigo?*” and started off on a dance I had never seen before, but which was easy to learn; it was the *Habanera*,

you drop the other lady's hand and gradually sail off again with the step and turn. The girls cling quite closely, and gaze up occasionally, Spanish fashion.

After the dance, we refreshed our partners and ourselves with claret-punch or beef-tea, and I then took up my position among the hawks, who began to circle as the band tuned up their instruments. It was a principle not to engage dances ahead, but to keep off for an even start when the music strikes up. I spotted a bright little girl in white gauze, and, at the first toot, I made a dash for her, neck and neck with four rivals, but beat them, and off we flew to a quick polka, in which they give a lively step, making it faster than the galop. I had never enjoyed a dance as I did that dash over the polished floor. The Mestiza girls understood no English, and it was fun to hear the remarks of our fellows; one flew past me, and called out: “Stand clear of this planetary system!” another cried: “Port your helm, Tommy; don't you see her starry top-lights?” and another fellow came dashing down the room, saying: “Clear the decks! Gangway for silver-heels!” I passed our skipper with

a shout, burst off a waistcoat button, carried away my collar-band, and, as the music stopped, sank exhausted in a chair, and called for bouillon for two. So we kept it up, dance after dance, and the hall resounded with shouts of laughter.

Whenever the couples ran against one another, the girls sang out with a sharp little "Hi!" which was very amusing. They have a great way of kissing one another all the evening, and the fanciest kisses I ever saw; first, both kiss to starboard, and then both to port. The first time I noticed it, a young damsel kissed my partner good-by as she started to dance with me. I was astonished, and said we were not going far, which made them laugh. I found that the girls in contiguous seats kissed good-by before every dance, as if to say: "You will elope this time, sure." When the time for supper came, I fell into the line, and escorted a blooming Philippina to the table. I asked a resident American what I should help her to, and he said, emphatically:

"Ham and turkey! Give her plenty of ham and turkey!"

I gave her a full plate, which she soon despatched, and called for more. Everybody ate ham and turkey. The gentlemen acted as waiters, and afterward sat down together. Spaniards are terrible eaters. And no wonder, on this occasion—for they came to the ball at 8 o'clock, and danced until 5 A. M. We held ourselves in dancing trim by refreshments, and the ladies kept even with us, and deserved great praise.

Next evening, on the Calzada and Paseo, we had a new pleasure in meeting and talking to our black-eyed friends of the ball, and practising our last Spanish lesson with them. When on board ship, we studied Spanish furiously; but as the ship was undergoing repairs, we had a great deal of time on shore.

The following day we gave a ball on board; the spar-deck was curtained in, and decorated with flags, lanterns, and designs. A gentleman on shore issued the invitations to the *Hidalgos* and Americans; no *Mestizas* were invited; we were sorry, but it could not be helped. At nine o'clock a small steamer laden with precious freight came alongside, and all of our officers stood at the gangway to receive the ladies; first came on board the wife



A MESTIZA.

of an American to receive with our skipper, and then the other ladies came over the side one by one; we filed them off, presented them, and ranged them in chairs along the water-ways.

Suddenly there appeared in the gangway a face of such marvelous beauty, and a form of such exquisite proportions, that ten souls had but a single thought, which was to be the first to grasp her hand, and nine hearts beat, as one, quicker than the rest, helped the fair being down the little ladder. By the blessing of good luck I happened to be nearest when this vision appeared, and was the fortunate one who thus proudly conveyed her aft. I did not return to the reception committee that evening, but employed experimental Spanish until I succeeded in engaging her for four dances, and in assuring her of my sudden and violent capture. I attributed my success to the manner in which I wrote her name on the engagement card; we had asked the ladies for dances as they came on board, and had put them down as "Pink tulle



CHOOSING PARTNERS.

puffed, with white mantilla," "Very low neck and green slippers," "Plump, with diagonal yellow and green overskirt," etc.; but I wrote the beauty down as "La mas bonita de todas" (The prettiest of all); which so pleased her that she at once gave me three more dances. Flattery will tell.

After all the ladies were safely landed on deck, the gentlemen came aboard; a native band struck up the music, and the scene became one of animation and brilliancy. The graceful Spanish girls, the navy uniforms, and the chandeliers of bayonets lighting up the many-colored flags, made it seem like fairy-land. During the evening I bestowed the united effort of forty lessons in Ollendorf on "La Bonita," which was as far as I had gone. Oh! but she had "dark, flashing eyes," and lashes that swept her peachy cheek when she would look down. She was born in the province where roses bloom forever. Dancing with her was like floating away on clouds of mist, wafted by the breath of music over undulating prairies of spring flowers!

The ball was an immense success up to about one o'clock. I had danced many times with La Bonita. The ladies had just finished supper, and the men had sat down, when, to our consternation, it began to rain. It never rains here in the winter; it had not rained for two months, and did not for months afterward; but down it came now, pouring through the flat awning, and all along the edges, and slowly and surely moving inboard. The music flickered, and went out with a mournful discord; the merry laughter gasped and expired, and the ladies clustered within the wet boundary which narrowed and narrowed, and drew them together in a little bunch; finally, so small became the dry spot, and so tight was the squeeze, that the silence was broken by shouts of laughter and little screams; the water spattered up, the ladies pressed their petticoats in, and stood on the little toes of their little Spanish slippers. It was a moment of peril. The crisis having now arrived when it was sink or swim, we took the ladies by their hands, and made a rush for the cabin and poop, which were soon stowed chock-a-block with Spanish beauty; even the bath-tub and vegetable box were full of Castilian loveliness. We had no other shelter, as the ward-room was in use as a butler's pantry *pro tem*.

"These are hard lines," I whispered to La Bonita in Spanish down the cabin hatch.

"Will there be no let-up?" she sorrowfully asked, in the liquid language of Castile.

"Small chance" (*chico show*), I mournfully responded.

Suffocation began to set in among them, so we signaled for the small steamer, which soon came alongside; and then up came the dark-eyed beauties

from the submarine cabin; out they crawled from the bath-tub and bin. The deck was afloat, so we rigged sedans with arm-chairs and squilgee handles, and thus carried them in state to the gangway to save their satin slippers and silk open-work.

"Until to-morrow!" whispered La Bonita, as I pressed her hand.

Next day the Manila paper spoke of the ball in glowing terms, and skipped the rainy part.

The next event was the arrival of the English Admiral, to whom the Governor-General gave a review of the troops. There are eleven thousand troops quartered here, and they all turned out. Most of them are Indians, who have an eye for everything military. They were uniformed in white, and marched with a quick, short step, and in excellent line; there were lancers, also, and cavalry, and flying artillery. The officers are Spanish; as they passed the Admiral and Governor-General they saluted by thrusting the sword quickly to the front, and then sweeping the air as if cutting off a daisy-top.

The Captain-General is the big man here; he drives out in state with four horses and postilions. No one else is allowed to drive four horses; as he passes, all raise their hats. In the procession, the bands jingled away at short intervals, and the crowds of Mestizos and Indians assembled beat time involuntarily with their feet. They are born with music in their soles.

We were in the season of the fêtes, Christmas holidays, and the New Year. At dusk, a large procession of the church began; first came a large golden image of the Virgin,

borne on a gorgeously trimmed and illuminated platform, and drawn by little Indians carrying torches. There were other images equally rich, and as each passed the people knelt and removed their hats.

The procession chanted as it moved along; there were little bits of Indian boys, dressed like priests with little false cowls, who toddled along, and looked very funny; then little mites of monks, with long dresses, who also toddled. Then girls with veils walked hand in hand, and little girls with little veils carrying tapers. The houses along the route were illuminated, in a simple and effective way, by tumblers half filled with oil, colored red, blue, and green, and having floating tapers in them. Later in the evening the music and dancing began in the largest houses of that part of the city. As we walked along the bright little streets, señoritas stood in the light of the lanterns to be looked at, and laughed and flirted; they threw at us bits of cotton with flash-powder on it, as they do at carnivals; it would nearly reach us, and make us jump, and then go out, greatly to the amuse-



"WILL THERE BE NO LET-UP?"

ment of the girls. The most brilliant balcony was that presided over by "La Bonita"; they all clapped their hands with glee when they saw us coming; threw their entire stock of flash-cotton at us, scattering us, and then invited us to come up. We gladly accepted, and at once plunged into the dimly lighted stable on the ground floor, found the stone staircase, which we ascended, slid across the slippery floor of the sala, and joined the gay party on the balcony. It was a curious scene; the street below us, thronged with Spaniards and Indians in their fantastic, remarkable costumes; the profusion of shirt on the men, and the confusion of colors on the women; the scores of lights on every house; and the lovely girls on the balconies, with their ever-moving fans. The young ladies of our veranda, proud of the capture they had made of foreign middies, glanced triumphantly at their neighbors, and fanned themselves with renewed energy.

It is fascinating to make love in Spanish; so I found it that evening as I sat in a quiet corner of the balcony with Nita; she looked so bewitching in the pink glow of the tapers! Then the tapers died out and the full moon rose, and I thought she was more lovely still. She told me how she had been once to Spain, to Castile, where her uncle lived, but that she drooped and sighed ever for Manila, where the happy days of her girlhood had been passed. So they brought her back, and now she said she would quit the islands no more. Transplanting was worse than death.

A shade of melancholy stole over me at this, and I told her in earnest but detached Spanish of the beauty of America, the soft southern clime in winter, and the clear balmy air of summer on the northern hills; and, warming with my subject, or encouraged by the gentle pressure of a soft little hand that had accidentally gotten into mine, I went on to state the many charms of that home upon the Hudson, and the welcome that would be given to a handsome Spanish bride. With drooping lashes and a quickly moving fan, Nita softly drew her hand from mine. I glanced idly at the old clock-tower of Manila which stood upon the adjacent corner, and observed that it was time for me to return on board ship, which I accordingly did, and without any superfluous conversation.

Every evening some one section of the city took its turn at the illumination, dancing, and festivity, and thither went all the youth, beauty, and pleasure-seekers of the town and suburbs. The most curious of the entertainments was a ball at the house of a rich Chinaman; there was a peculiar blending of barbarism and civilization in the furniture, table service, and appointments. There were present a large number of Chinese Mestiza ladies, with more or less of the almond-shaped eye, but some of them rather pretty and very fond of dancing the *Habanera*, and of looking with a sort of Hispano-Chinese tenderness out of the corners of their eyes. Their dresses displayed an Indian repugnance to superfluity, a Spanish love of bright colors, and a Chinese peculiarity of "cut bias." The wealthy Celestial received us very graciously, and presented us in Spanish to most

of the ladies present. About fourteen languages were being spoken at the same time in the sala, producing a most remarkable jumble of sounds; and, combined with the inspiring strains of a native band, the view of great Chinese banners and carvings, and the varied costumes of the mixed races, made a wild, weird scene.

I was dancing with a young Mestiza when her mother and three sisters beckoned to us from the staircase to come to them, which we obediently did, and I was asked to escort the party to another ball. Finding myself captured, I surrendered at discretion, and replied that I was in for anything; so, taking Miss Blackeyes on my arm, I went to the van of the convoy, and obeyed signals given from time to time by the Dama who occupied the position of flag-ship in the rear. We crossed the plaza and passed the clock-tower, and I suddenly became aware of the fact that we were about to pass the house of my fair charmer, Nita. "Good Heavens!" thought I. "If Nita sees me with this pretty girl, I am forever dashed from her good graces, and will be the laughing-stock of the mess"; for, of course, I was not discouraged by such a slight *contretemps* as that of the previous evening. I dragged the convoy across the street without signal from the rear, and tried to creep along the shadow of the wall. Horrors! There sat Nita in her favorite corner of the balcony, bathed by the gentle moonlight, leaning on her perfect arm, and looking directly across the street. I kept my eye on her sideways, and, as we came within the sweep of her bright black eye, she started a little, saw my confusion and the fair Mestiza on my arm, and bowed coldly, sending a yet colder chill through my trembling frame. My partner looked at me as if to say, "Who is your friend?" but I assured her it was of no consequence, and we soon after arrived at a very handsome house, through the windows of which came sounds of music, laughter, and soprano voices. We entered the basement, went up the broad stone steps, and met the host at the top. He waved his hand toward the row of forty pretty girls, to whom I gave one general bow, which was supposed to introduce me to every one. They asked me if I would dance a "Beerhenia." I replied that I was sure I could not dance such a thing as that. What was my surprise, then, to see them commencing a regular Virginia reel, "Beerhenia" being simply their pronunciation of Virginia!

The dancing continued, but I could not blot from my mind the vision of Nita leaning on her arm in the corner of that fatal balcony, and I determined to hasten from these scenes of gaiety and seek forgiveness at the hands of the fair Philippina. I therefore left my convoy to the chance of wind and weather, and, heading for the familiar clock-tower, soon found myself again under Nita's balconies. While hesitating at the portal to prepare myself, I was startled at meeting all the family and cousins about to sally forth without hats or wraps into the soft evening air. They had two guitars, a violin, and a flute with them, and invited me to join them in a moonlight canoe trip up the

Pasig. I glanced eagerly at Nita, who gave the slightest nod of approval; so I gladly accepted, and together we all went down toward the river, the ladies humming in chorus a little Spanish air, while one of them picked an accompaniment on her guitar, which was slung from her neck by a ribbon. When we reached the river-bank I hovered near Nita, to lay for a contiguous seat in one of the two long dug-out canoes waiting for us. We were soon distributed, and the Indians at either end shoved off with their paddles, and then headed up the river, keeping abreast in order mutually to enjoy the music. My seat was in the bottom of the boat at Nita's feet, which I considered rather *bien réussi*.

The night was warm and still, the river up which we paddled narrow, and bordered by the luxurious vegetation of the tropics. Sometimes the palm- and banana-trees on either side arched the stream, and through them came the rich moonlight, shining upon the graceful forms of the Spanish girls in our canoes, completing a fascinating scene. Then, to one of those bewitching accompaniments, Nita sang an Andalusian song, aiding its expression by her hand and fan, as only Spanish girls can do. At its close, had she requested me, I would have plunged to the bottom of that silent river. With all the eloquence of my soul (that is, all that my Spanish would allow), I whispered in her listening ear that night, as she, leaning over the boat's side with me, trailed her snowy hand through the phosphorescent water, or looked up at me with her handsome eyes. It was past midnight when we returned from that delicious trip, the memory of which is like some happy dream of impossible delight. As I pressed Nita's warm little hand good-night there was a slight responsive squeeze.

The following day the mail-steamer from Hong-Kong arrived, bringing us orders from the Admiral to join him there at once. This was a bitter disappointment to us; had we been girls, we would have wept on each other's bosom. Not one but was daft about some lovely Castilian, and to be

torn away thus suddenly was torture. We sadly prepared our P. P. C.'s in the Spanish style, by writing "A. O. P. Hong-Kong?" in the corner of our cards, which means "*Algunos órdenes para Hong-Kong?*" or "Any orders for Hong-Kong?" conveying much more meaning than "Pour prendre congé." We went ashore for the last time on the hospitable island of Luzon, and drove through the streets in all directions saying farewell. After leaving the houses, the young ladies would run to the front windows as we drove off, open the lattice a moment, wave their hands, and shout, "Adios!" or, "*¡Hasta la vista!*" and then close the Venetian with a snap. I put off calling on Nita till the last, and when finally I drove past the clock-tower to her house, my sorrow was doubled at finding her, with all her family, in a sort of Jersey wagon, just starting for some place out of town. Of course all opportunities for a tender exchange of sentiment were bowled over by this untoward circumstance. They bade me a cordial good-by, and I was about leaving them in sadness, when I made a sudden determination to have a more affectionate one with Nita, who was sitting in the back seat; so I jumped up behind the wagon, pulled open the curtain, and threw my arms around her. At this supreme moment she was too startled to draw away her lovely face, so I naturally kissed her farewell with all the fervor of a midshipman's soul. Brevet papa-in-law, horrified, started up the team to shake me off, brevet mama-in-law fainted away, and the sisters clasped their hands in hysteric sympathy. At the same time one of our fellows was hanging to me by my foot, vainly endeavoring to drag me away, but I clung to my flying adieu for half a square before I was torn forever from the fairest daughter of Spain.

I suppose I might introduce a little fiction at this point, and say, "My own darling Nita is looking over my shoulder as I write, reminding me of those blissful Manila days," but she is n't, and I have never heard of her since.

