RAINBOW'S END

A NOVEL

By REX BEACH

AUTHOR OF

"THE IRON TRAIL" "THE SPOILERS" "HEART OF THE SUNSET" ETC.

COPYRIGHT, BY HARPER AND BROTHERS.

ESTEBAN'S CONNECTION WITH THE INSURRECTOS BRINGS DISASTER UPON HIMSELF AND ROSA.

Synopsis.—Don Esteban Varona, a Cuban planter, hides his wealth—money, jewels and title deeds—in a well on his estate. The hiding place is known only to Sebastian, a slave. Don Esteban's wife dies at the birth of twins, Esteban and Rosa. Don Esteban marries the avaricious Donna Isabel, who tries unsuccessfully to wring the secret of the hidden treasure from Sebastian. Angered at his refusal, she urges Don Esteban to sell Evangelina, Sebastian's daughter. Don Esteban refuses, but in the course of a gambling orgie, he risks Evangelina at cards and loses. Crazed by the loss of his daughter, Sebastian kills Don Esteban and is himself killed. Many years pass and Donna Isabel is unable to find the hidden treasure. Don Mario, rich sugar merchant, seeks to marry Rosa, who has returned from school in the United States. Johnnie O'Reilly, an American, who loves Rosa, wins her promise to wait for him until he can return from New York.

CHAPTER IV—Continued.

—4—

Seating himself on one of the old stone benches, the young man lit a cigarette and composed himself to wait. He sat there for a long time, grumbling inwardly, for the night was damp and he was sleepy; but at last a figure stole out of the gloom and joined him. The newcomer was a ragged negro, dressed in the fashion of the poorer country people.

"Well, Asensio, I thought you'd never come. I'll get a fever from this!" Esteban said irritably.

"It is a long way, Don Esteban, and Evangelina made me wait until dark. I tell you we have to be careful these days."

"What is the news? What did you hear?"

Asensio sighed gratefully as he seated himself. "One hears a great deal, but one never knows what to believe. There is fighting in Santa Clara, and Maceo sweeps westward."

Taking the unaddressed letter from his pocket, Esteban said, "I have another message for Colonel Lopez."

"That Lopez! He's here today and there tomorrow; one can never find him."

"Well, you must find him, and immediately, Asensio. This letter contains important news—so important, in fact"—Esteban laughed lightly—"that if you find yourself in danger from the Spaniards I'd advise you to chew it up and swallow it as quickly as you can."

"I'll remember that," said the negro, "for there's danger enough. Still, I fear these Spaniards less than the guerrilleros; they are everywhere. They call themselves patriots, but they are nothing more than robbers. They—"

Asensio paused abruptly. He seized his companion by the arm and, leaning forward, stared across the level garden into the shadows opposite. Something was moving there, under the trees; the men could see that it was white and formless, and that it pursued an erratic course.

"What's That?" Gasped the Negro.

"What's that?" gasped the negro. He began to tremble violently and his breath became audible. Esteban was compelled to hold him down by main force. "It's old Don Esteban, your father. They say he walks at midnight, carrying his head in his two hands."

Young Varona managed to whisper, with some show of courage: "Hush! Wait! I don't believe in ghosts." Nevertheless, he was on the point of setting Asensio an example of undignified flight when the mysterious object emerged from the shadows into the open moonlight; then he sighed with relief: "Ah-h! Now I see! It is my stepmother. She is asleep."

For a moment or two they watched the progress of the white-robed figure; then Esteban stirred and rose from his seat. "She's too close to that well. There is—" He started forward a pace or two. "They say people who walk at night go mad if they're awakened too suddenly, and yet—"

When the somnambulist's deliberate progress toward the mouth of the well continued he called her name softly. "Donna Isabel!" Then he repeated it louder. "Donna Isabel! Wake up."

The woman seemed to hear and yet not to hear. She turned her head to listen, but continued to walk.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, reassuringly. "It is only Esteban—Donna Isabel! Stop!" Esteban sprang forward, shouting at the top of his voice, for at the sound of her name Isabel had abruptly swerved to her right, a movement which brought her dangerously close to the lip of the well.

"Stop! Go back!" screamed the young man.

Above his warning there came a shriek, shrill and agonized—a wail of such abysmal terror as to shock the night birds and the insects into stillness. Donna Isabel slipped, or stumbled, to her knees, she balanced briefly, clutching at random while the earth and crumbling cement gave way beneath her; then she slid forward and disappeared, almost out from between Esteban's hands. There was a noisy rattle of rock and pebble and a great splash far below; a chuckle of little stones striking the water, then a faint bubbling. Nothing more. The stepson stood in his tracks, sick, blind with horror; he was swaying over the opening when Asensio dragged him back.

Pancho Cueto, being a heavy sleeper, was the last to be aroused by Esteban's outcries. When he had hurriedly slipped into his clothes in response to the pounding on his door, the few servants that the establishment supported had been thoroughly awakened. Cueto thought they must be out of their minds until he learned what had befallen the mistress of the house. Then, being a man of action, he too issued swift orders, with the result that by the time he and Esteban had run to the well a rope and lantern were ready for their use. Before Esteban could form and fit a loop for his shoulders there was sufficient help on hand to lower him into the treacherous abyss.

That was a gruesome task which fell to Esteban, for the well had been long unused, its sides were oozing slime, its waters were stale and black. He was on the point of fainting when he finally climbed out, leaving the negroes to hoist the dripping, inert weight which he had found at the bottom.

Old Sebastian's curse had come true; Donna Isabel had met the fate he had called down upon her that day when he hung exhausted in his chains and when the flies tormented him. The treasure for which the woman had intrigued so tirelessly had been her death. Furthermore, as if in grimmest irony, she had been permitted at the very last to find it. Living, she had searched to no purpose whatsoever; dying, she had almost grasped it in her arms.

Once the first excitement had abated and a messenger had been sent to town, Cueto drew Esteban aside and questioned him.

"A shocking tragedy and most peculiar," said the overseer. "Nothing could amaze me more. Tell me, how did you come to be there at such an hour, eh?"

Esteban saw the malevolent curiosity in Cueto's face and started. "I—That is my affair. Surely you don't think—"

"Come, come! You can trust me." The overseer winked and smiled.

"I had business that took me there," stiffly declared the younger man.

"Exactly! And a profitable business it proved!" Cueto laughed openly now. "Well, I don't mind telling you Donna Isabel's death is no disappointment to anyone. Anybody could see—"

"Stop!" Esteban was turning alternately red and white. "You seem to imply something outrageous."

"Now let us be sensible. I understand you perfectly, my boy. But an officer of the Guardia Civil may arrive at any moment and he will want to know how you came to be with your stepmother when she plunged into that trap. So prepare yourself."

Young Varona was watching his inquisitor now with a faintly speculative frown. When Cueto had finished, Esteban said:

"You would like me to confess to some black iniquity that would make us better friends, eh? Well, it so happens that I was not alone tonight, but that another person saw the poor woman's death and can bear me out in everything I say. No, Pancho, you overreach yourself. Now, then"—Esteban was quick-tempered, and for years he had struggled against an instinctive distrust and dislike of the plantation manager—"remember that I have become the head of this house, and your employer. You will do better to think

"Your Accuser Is None Other Than Pancho Cueto."

of your own affairs than of mine. I intend to have a careful reckoning with you. I think you know I have a good head for figures." Turning his back upon the elder man, he walked away.

Now it did not occur to Cueto really to doubt the boy's innocence, though the circumstances of Donna Isabel's death were suspicious enough to raise a question in any mind; but in view of Esteban's threat he thought it wise to protect himself by setting a backfire.

As he sat on an old stone bench, moodily repicturing the catastrophe as Esteban had described it, his attention fell upon an envelope at his feet. It was sealed; it was unaddressed. Cueto idly broke it open and began to read. Before he had gone far he started; then he cast a furtive glance about. But the place was secluded; he was unobserved. When he finished reading he rose, smiling. He no longer feared Esteban. On the contrary, he rather pitied the young fool; for here between his fingers was that which not only promised to remove the boy from his path forever, but to place in his hands the entire Varona estates.

One afternoon, perhaps a week later, Don Mario de Castano came puffing and blowing up to the quinta, demanding to see Rosa without a moment's delay. With a directness unusual even in him, Don Mario began:

"Rosa, my dear, you and Esteban have been discovered! I was at lunch with the comandante when I learned the truth. Through friendship I prevailed upon him to give you an hour's grace."

"What do you mean, Don Mario?" inquired the girl.

"Come, come!" the planter cried, impatiently. "Don't you see you can trust me? Heaven! The recklessness, the folly of young people! Could you not leave this insurrection to your elders? Or perhaps you thought it a matter of no great importance, an amusing thing—"

"Don Mario!" Rose interrupted. "I don't know what you are talking about."

"You don't, eh?" The caller's wet cheeks grew redder; he blew like a porpoise. "Then call Esteban quickly! There is not a moment to lose." When the brother appeared De Castano blurted out at him accusingly: "Well, sir! A fine fix you've put yourself in. Perhaps you will be interested to learn that Colonel Fernandez has issued orders to arrest you and your sister as agents of the insurrectos."

"What?" Esteban drew back. Rosa turned white as a lily and laid a fluttering hand upon her throat.

"You two will sleep tonight in San Severino," grimly announced the rotund visitor. "You know what that means."

Rosa uttered a smothered cry.

"Colonel Fernandez," Don Mario proceeded, impressively, "did me this favor, knowing me to be a suitor for Rosa's hand. In spite of his duty and the evidence he—"

"Evidence? What evidence?" Esteban asked sharply.

"For one thing, your own letter to Lopez, the rebel, warning him to beware of the trap prepared for him in Santa Clara, and advising him of the government force at Sabanilla. Oh, don't try to deny it! I read it with my own eyes, and it means—death."

Rosa said faintly: "Esteban! I warned you."

Esteban was taken aback, but it was plain that he was not in the least frightened. "They haven't caught me yet," he laughed.

"You say they intend to arrest me also?" Rosa eyed the caller anxiously.

"Exactly!"

"Who accuses her, and of what?" Esteban demanded.

"That also I have discovered through the courtesy of Colonel Fernandez. Your accuser is none other than Pancho Cueto."

"Cueto!"

"Yes; he has denounced both of you as rebels, and the letter is only part of his proof, I believe. Now, then, you can guess why I am here. I am not without influence; I can save Rosa, but for you, Esteban, I fear I can do nothing. You must look out for yourself. Well? What do you say?"

When Esteban saw how pale his sister had grown, he took her in his arms, saying gently: "I'm sorry, dear. It's all my fault." Then to the merchant: "It's very good of you to warn us."

"Ha!" Don Mario fanned himself. "I'm glad you appreciate my efforts. It's a good thing to have the right kind of a friend. I'll marry Rosa within an hour, and I fancy my name will be a sufficient shield—"

Rosa turned to her elderly suitor and made a deep courtesy. "I am unworthy of the honor," said she. "You see, I—I do not love you, Don Mario."

"Love!" exploded the visitor. "God bless you! What has love to do with the matter? Esteban will have to ride for his life in ten minutes and your property will be seized. So you had better make yourself ready to go with me."

But Rosa shook her head.

"Eh? What ails you? What do you expect to do?"

"I shall go with Esteban," said the girl.

This calm announcement seemed to stupefy De Castano. He sat down heavily in the nearest chair, and with his wet handkerchief poised in one pudgy hand he stared fixedly at the speaker. His eyes were round and bulging, the sweat streamed unheeded from his temples. He resembled some queer bloated marine monster just emerged from the sea and momentarily dazzled by the light.

"You— You're mad," he finally gasped. "Esteban, tell her what it means."

But this Esteban could not do, for he himself had not the faintest notion of what was in store for him. War seemed to him a glorious thing; he had been told that the hills were peopled with patriots. He was very young, his heart was ablaze with hatred for the Spaniards and for Pancho Cueto. He longed to risk his life for a free Cuba. Therefore he said: "Rosa shall do as she pleases. If we must be exiles we shall share each other's hardships. It will not be for long."

"Idiot!" stormed the fat man. "Better that you gave her to the sharks below San Severino. There is no law, no safety for women outside of the cities. The island is in anarchy. These patriots you talk about are the blacks, the mulattoes, the—lowest, laziest savages in Cuba."

"Please! Don Mario!" the girl pleaded. "I cannot marry you, for—I love another."

"Eh?"

"I love another. I'm betrothed to O'Reilly, the American—and he's coming back to marry me."

De Castano twisted himself laboriously out of his chair and waddled toward the door. He was purple with rage and mortification. On the threshold he paused to wheeze: "Very well, then. Go! I'm done with both of you. I would have lent you a hand with this rascal Cueto, but now he will fall heir to your entire property. Well, it is a time for bandits! I—I—" Unable to think of a parting speech sufficiently bitter to match his disappointment, Don Mario plunged out into the sunlight, muttering and stammering to himself.

Within an hour the twins were on their way up the Yumuri, toward the home of Asensio and Evangelina; for it was thither that they naturally turned. It was well that they had made haste, for as they rode down into the valley, up the other side of the hill from Matanzas came a squad of the Guardia Civil, and at its head rode Pancho Cueto.

CHAPTER V.

A Cry From the Wilderness.

New York seemed almost like a foreign city to Johnnie O'Reilly when he stepped out into it on the morning after his arrival. For one thing it was bleak and cold: the north wind, hailing direct from Baffin's bay, had teeth, and it bit so cruelly that he was glad when he found shelter in the building which housed the offices of the Carter Importing company. The truth is O'Reilly was not only cold but frightened.

It was not the effect of his report concerning the firm's unprofitable Cuban connections which he feared—Samuel Carter could take calmly the most disturbing financial reverse—it was the blow to his pride at learning that anybody could prefer another girl to his daughter. Johnnie shook his shoulders and stamped his feet, but the chill in his bones refused to go. He went to meet his employer as a man marches to execution.

His heart sank further at the welcome he received, for the importer gave him a veritable embrace; he patted him on the back and inquired three times as to his health. O'Reilly was anything but cold now; he was perspiring profusely, and he felt his collar growing limp. To shatter this old man's eager hopes would be like kicking a child in the face. Carter had never been so enthusiastic, so demonstrative; there was something almost theatrical in his greeting.

"Well, my boy, you made a fizzle of it, didn't you?" The tone was almost complimentary.

"Yes, sir, I'm a bright and shining failure."

"Now, don't 'yes, sir' me. We're friends, aren't we? Good! Understand, I don't blame you in the least—it's that idiotic revolution that spoiled our business. You did splendidly, under the circumstances."

"They have reason enough to revolt—oppression, tyranny, corruption." O'Reilly mumbled the familiar words in a numb paralysis at Mr. Carter's jovial familiarity.

"All Latin countries are corrupt," announced the importer—"always have been and always will be. They thrive under oppression. However, I dare say this uprising won't last long."

Johnnie wondered why the old man didn't get down to cases. "It's more than an uprising, sir," he said. "The rebels have overrun the east end of the island, and when I left Maceo and Gomez were sweeping west."

"Bah! It takes money to run a war."

"They have money," desperately argued O'Reilly. "Marti raised more than a million dollars, and every Cuban cigar maker in the United States gives a part of his wages every week to the cause. The best blood of Cuba is in the fight. Spain is about busted; she can't stand the strain."

"I predict they'll quit fighting as soon as they get hungry. The government is starving them out. However, they've wound up our affairs for the time being, and—" Mr. Carter carefully shifted the position of an inkwell, a calendar and a paper knife—"that brings us to a consideration of your and my affairs, doesn't it? Ahem! You remember our bargain? I was to give you a chance and you were to make good before you—er—planned any—er—matrimonial foolishness with my daughter."

"Yes, sir." O'Reilly felt that the moment had come for his carefully rehearsed speech, but, unhappily, he could not remember how the swan-song started. Mr. Carter, too, was unaccountably silent. Another moment dragged past, then they chorused.

"I have an unpleasant—"

Each broke off at the echo of his own words.

"What's that?" inquired the importer.

"No-nothing. You were saying—"

"I was thinking how lucky it is that you and Elsa waited. Hm-m! Very fortunate." Again Mr. Carter rearranged his desk fittings. "We sometimes differ, Elsa and I, but when she sets her heart on a thing I see that she gets it, even if I think she oughtn't to have it. What's the use of having children if you can't spoil 'em, eh?" He looked up with a sort of resentful challenge, and when his listener appeared to agree with him he sighed with satisfaction. "Early marriages are silly—but she seems to think otherwise. Maybe she's right. Anyhow she's licked me. I'm done. She wants to be married right away, before we go west. That's why I waited to see you at once. You won't object, will you? We men have to take our medicine."

"It's quite out of the question," stammered the unhappy O'Reilly.

"Come, come! It's tough on you, I know, but—" Johnnie had a horrified vision of himself being dragged unwillingly to the altar. "Elsa is going to have what she wants, if I have to break something. If you'll be sensible I'll stand behind you like a father and teach you the business. I'm getting old, and Ethelbert could never learn it. Otherwise—" The old man's jaw set; his eyes began to gleam angrily. "Who is—Ethelbert?" faintly inquired O'Reilly.

"Why, dammit! He's the fellow I've been telling you about. He's not so bad as he sounds; he's really a nice boy—"

"Elsa is in love with another man? Is that what you mean?"

"Good Lord, yes! Don't you understand English? I didn't think you'd take it so hard—I was going to make a place for you here in the office, but of course if— Say! What the deuce ails you?"

Samuel Carter stared with amazement, for the injured victim of his daughter's fickleness had leaped to his feet and was shaking his hand vigorously, meanwhile uttering unintelligible sounds that seemed to signify relief, pleasure, delight—anything except what the old man expected.

O'Reilly, in New York, learns of Rosa's plight. The next installment tells what happened then.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

First American Multimillionaire.

The first American multimillionaire to attain international fame on account of his vast wealth was Stephen Girard. Of the financial dynasties of today only the Astors and Vanderbilts were represented in Girard's time, and the fortune of the distinguished Philadelphian exceeded that of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt or the first John Jacob Astor, Girard was worth $9,000,000 at the time of his death. Much of this money he left to the city of Philadelphia for public purposes, and $2,000,000 were applied to the building of a college for orphans. This institution has supported and educated tens of thousands of orphans and fitted them for their battles with the world. Girard was a free thinker.

In New South Wales there is a mountain from which rock yielding 80 per cent alum has been mined for more than half a century.

WOMAN'S NERVES MADE STRONG

By Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Winona, Minn.—"I suffered for more than a year from nervousness, and was so bad I could not rest at night—would lie awake and get so nervous I would have to get up and walk around and in the morning would be all tired out. I read about Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound and thought I would try it. My nervousness soon left me. I sleep well and feel fine in the morning and able to do my work. I gladly recommend Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound to make weak nerves strong."—Mrs. ALBERT SULTZE, 603 Olmstead St., Winona, Minn.

How often do we hear the expression among women, "I am so nervous, I cannot sleep," or "it seems as though I should fly." Such women should profit by Mrs. Sultze's experience and give this famous root and herb remedy, Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound, a trial.

For forty years it has been overcoming such serious conditions as displacements, inflammation, ulceration, irregularities, periodic pains, backache, dizziness, and nervous prostration of women, and is now considered the standard remedy for such ailments.

Insist on the name with three D's and enjoy freedom from kidney ills. At all druggists.

Clear Your Skin While You Sleep with Cuticura

Soap 25c. Ointment 25c & 50c

REALLY SEEMED ONLY WAY

Smith's Idea Was Bright Enough If the Horse Would Only Do His Part in the Game.

John Smith bought a horse. The first Sunday after the purchase he and his bosom pal harnessed the horse to a trap and went into the country on a fishing trip. At the shore of the lake they unharnessed the horse, and let it loose while they fished.

Presently the sun began to go down, and Smith and pal decided to get ready for the return journey. They caught the horse, and Smith began to harness it. But here they met a difficulty. The horse wouldn't open its mouth for the bit.

They tried every means they could think of, but still the stubborn animal stood with closed mouth, placidly watching them.

At last Smith sat on the ground and began to tell jokes—horrible, moth-eaten jokes, that Adam would have thought chestnuts.

"What on earth are you doing?" asked Smith's pal.

"Trying to get the beast to yawn," said Smith.

Hard Times.

Bird—"You've a very small family, Mrs. Hen." Hen—"Yes; at the price of eggs I can't afford to raise them."

The longest periods in a small boy's life are are those between meals.

ECONOMY TALK is all right—ECONOMY PRACTICE is better. INSTANT POSTUM is an economy drink—absolutely no waste. Besides, it is convenient, saves fuel and sugar, and leaves nothing to be desired in the way of flavor. TRY A CUP!