

Rainbow's End *A Novel*

By REX BEACH

Author of "The Iron Trail," "The Spoilers," "Heart of the Sunset," Etc.

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CUETO'S TREACHERY BRINGS NEW PERILS UPON ESTEBAN 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. Crazy 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. Donna Isabel falls to death while walking in her sleep. Esteban's connection with the insurgents is discovered and he and Rosa are compelled to flee. In New York, O'Reilly gets a letter from Rosa telling of her peril and urging him to rescue her. O'Reilly immediately returns to Cuba.

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

O'Reilly read the label. "It's bitter," said he.

"Bitters! And I asked for 'yellow'—a glass of agwa with yellow." Branch's voice shook. "I'm dying of a fever, and this ivory-billed toucan brings me a quart of poison. Bullets!" It was impossible to describe the suggestion of profanity with which the speaker colored this innocuous expletive. "Weak as I am, I shall gnaw his windpipe." He bared his teeth suggestively and raised two talonlike hands.

The waiter was puzzled but not alarmed. He embraced himself as his customer had done, and shuddered; then pointing at the bitter, he nodded encouragingly.

O'Reilly forestalled an outburst by translating his countryman's wants. "Un vaso de agua con hielo," said he, and the attendant was all apologies.

"So you speak the lingo?" marveled Mr. Branch. "Well, I can't get the hang of it. Don't like it. Don't like anything Spanish. He—of a country, isn't it?—where the ice is 'yellow' and the butter is 'meant to kill you,' and does."

O'Reilly laughed. "You've been studying a guide book, 'with complete glossary of Spanish phrases.'"

Mr. Branch nodded listlessly. "I'm supposed to report this insurrection, but the Spaniards won't let me. They edit my stuff to suit themselves. I'm getting tired of the farce."

"Going home?"
"Don't dare." The speaker tapped his concave chest. "Bum lungs. I came down here to shuffle off, and I'm waiting for it to happen. What brings you to Cuba?"

"I'm here for my health, too." The real invalid stared. "I have rheumatism."

"Going to sweat it out, eh? Well, there's nothing to do but sweat!" Branch was racked by a coughing spasm that shook his ready frame—"sweat and cough. Bullets! No mistake about that hospital bark, is there?" When he had regained his breath he said: "See here! I'm going to take a chance with you, for I like your looks. My newspaper work is a bluff; I don't send enough stuff to keep me alive. I came here to cure my lungs, and—I want you to help me do it."

O'Reilly stared at the man in surprise. "How can I help you?" he asked.

"By taking me with you."

"With me? Where?"

"To the insurgents, of course."

The men eyed each other fixedly.

"What makes you think—" O'Reilly began.

"Oh, don't say it! I've got a hunch! I don't know what your game is—probably dynamite: there's a story that the rebels have sent for some American experts to teach them how to use the stuff, and God knows they need instruction! Anyhow, I can't swallow that rheumatism talk. I thought you might give me a lift. Take me along, will you?"

"And how would that benefit your cough?" Johnnie inquired curiously.

Mr. Branch hesitated. "Well, I'll tell you," he said, after a moment. "I'm afraid to die this way, by inches, and hours, I'm scared to death. It seemed impossible that the sick man's cheeks could further blanch, but they became fairly livid, while a beading of moisture appeared upon his upper lip."

"Heaven! You've no idea how it gets on a fellow's nerves to see himself slipping—slipping. I'd like to end it suddenly, like that!" He voiced the last sentence abruptly and snapped his fingers. "Then, too, I'd like to have a thrill before I cash in—taste 'the salt of life,' as somebody expressed it. That's war. It's the biggest game in the world. What do you think of the idea?"

"Not much," O'Reilly said honestly.

"Difference in temperament. I suppose it is a sick fancy, but I've got it. I'm a rotter, coward, but I'll fight if the Cubans will take me."

"Where are the Cubans?"

"Oh, they're out yonder in the hills. I know all 'bout 'em. Come over to

my quarters, and I'll show you a map, if you're interested."

"I am," said O'Reilly, and, rising, he followed his new acquaintance.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Spanish Doubloon.

On the whole, Pancho Cueto's plans had worked smoothly. After denouncing the Varona twins as traitors he had managed to have himself appointed trustee for the crown, for all their properties, consummation for which he had worked from the moment he read that letter of Esteban's on the morning after Donna Isabel's death. That there was a treasure Cueto had never doubted, and, once the place was hid to do with as he chose, he began his search.

Commencing at the lower edge of the grounds, he ripped them up with a series of deep trenches and cross-cuts. It was a task that required the labor of many men for several weeks, and when it was finished there was scarcely a growing thing left upon the place. Only a few of the larger trees remained. Cueto was disappointed at finding nothing, but he was not discouraged. Next he tore down the old slave barracks and the outbuildings, after which he completely wrecked the residence itself. He pulled it apart bit by bit, brick by brick. He even dug up its foundations, but without the reward of so much as a single peseta. Finally, when the villa was but a heap of rubbish and the grounds a scar upon the slope of La Cumbre, he desisted, baffled, incredulous, while all Matanzas laughed at him. Having sacrificed his choicest residence, he retired in chagrin to the plantation of La Joya.

But Cueto was now a man with a grievance. He burned with rage, and his contempt for the boy and girl he had wronged soured into hatred. In time he began to realize also that so long as they lived they would jeopardize his tenure of their property. Public feeling, at present, was high; there was intense bitterness against all rebels; but the war would end some day. What then? Cueto asked himself. Sympathy was ever on the side of the weak and oppressed. There would come a day of reckoning.

As if to swell his discomfiture and strengthen his fears, out from the hills at the head of the Yumuri issued rumors of a little band of guerrilleros, under the leadership of a beardless boy—a band of blacks who were making the upper valley unsafe for Spanish scouting parties.

Cursing the name of Varona, Pancho Cueto armed himself. He did not venture far alone, and, like Donna Isabel before him, he began to have bad dreams at night.

One day a field of Cueto's cane was burned, and his laborers reported seeing Esteban and some negroes riding into the wood. The overseer took horse within the hour and rode pell-mell to Matanzas. In the city at this time was a certain Colonel Cobo, in command of Spanish volunteers, those execrable convict troops from the Isle of Pines whose atrocities had already marked them as wolves rather than men, and to him Pancho went with his story.

"Ah, yes! That Varona boy, I've heard of him," Cobo remarked, when his caller had finished his account. "He has reason to hate you, I dare say, for you robbed him." The colonel smiled disagreeably.

Cueto murmured something to the effect that the law had placed him in his position as trustee for the crown, and should therefore protect him; but Colonel Cobo's respect for the law, it seemed, was slight. In his view there was but one law in the land, the law of force.

"Why do you come to me?" he asked.

"That fellow is a desperado," Pancho declared. "He should be destroyed."

"Bah! The country is overrun with desperados of his kind, and worse. Burning crops is nothing new. I'd make an end of him soon enough, but nearly all of my men are in Cardenas. We have work enough to do."

"I'd make it worth while, if you could put an end to him," Pancho said, hesitatingly. Then, recalling some of those stories about Colonel Cobo, he added, "There are two of them, you know, a boy and a girl."

"Ah, yes! I remember."

"I can direct you to the house of Asensio, where they live."

"Um—!" Cobo was thoughtful. "A girl. How old is she?"

"Eighteen."

"Ugly as an alligator, I'll warrant."

"Ha! The most ravishing creature in all Matanzas. All the men were mad over her."

Colonel Cobo, the guerrilla, licked his full, red lips and ran a strong, square hand over his curly, short-cropped hair. "You say you know where she—where they are living?"

"Ah, perfectly! It's less than a night's ride. There's no one except the boy to reckon with."

"How much is he worth to you?" bluntness inquired the soldier, and Cueto sat down to make the best terms possible.

"Do you think he received my letter?" Rosa asked of her brother one evening as they sat on the board bench by Asensio's door. It was a familiar question to Esteban; he had answered it many times.

"Oh, yes!" he declared. "Lopez' messenger got through to Key West."

"Then why doesn't he come?"

"But, my dear, you must be patient. Think of his difficulties."

This subject always distressed young Varona; therefore he changed it.

"Come! You haven't heard of my good fortune. I captured another fine snake today, a big, sleepy fellow. Believe me, he'll wake up when I set fire to his tail. He'll go like the wind, and with every foot he goes away will go more of Pancho Cueto's profits."

"You intend to burn more of his fields?" absentmindedly inquired the girl. "It seems terrible to destroy our own property."

Esteban broke out excitedly; he could not discuss Pancho Cueto with-

out losing control of himself. "Would you permit that traitor to fatten upon the profits of our plantations? I shall ruin him, as he ruined us."

Rosa shook her dark head sadly. "And we are indeed ruined. Think of our beautiful house; all our beautiful things, too! We used to consider ourselves poor, but—how little we knew of real poverty. There are so many things I want. Have we nothing left?"

"I thought it best to buy those rifles," the brother murmured, dropping his eyes. "It was one chance in a million."

"No doubt it was. It seems those Spaniards will sell their souls."

"Exactly. We can dig food from the earth and pluck it from the trees, but good Mausers don't grow on every bush. Besides, of what use would money be to us when we have no place to spend it?"

"True!" After a moment Rosa mused aloud: "I wonder if Cueto found the treasure? If only we had that—"

"He didn't find it," Esteban declared, positively. "I—hesitated—I think I know why he didn't. I think I know where it is."

"Where is it?" breathlessly inquired the girl.

After a furtive look over his shoulder Esteban whispered, "In the well."

"You're joking!"

"No, no! Think for yourself. It was old Sebastian who dug that well—"

"Yes."

"And he alone shared father's confidence. That sunken garden was all Sebastian's work. No one else was allowed to tend it. Why? I'll tell you. They feared to let anyone else draw the water. Isabel searched for years;

if that treasure had been above ground her sharp nose would have smelled it out, and now Cueto has moved the very earth."

Rosa sat back disappointed. "So that's your theory?"

"It's more than a theory," the boy insisted. "Look at this!" From the pocket of his cotton trousers he produced an odd-looking coin, which he placed in Rosa's hand.

"Why, it's gold! It's a Spanish doubloon," she said. "It's the first one I ever saw. Where did you find it?"

"You'll think I'm crazy when I tell you—sometimes I think so myself. I found it in Isabel's hand when I took her from the well!"

Rosa was stricken speechless.

"She clutched it tightly," Esteban hurried on, "but as I made the rope fast her hand relaxed and I saw it in the lantern light. It was as if—well, as if she gave it to me. I was too badly frightened to think much about it, as you may imagine. It was a horrible place, all slime and foul water; the rocks were slippery. But that coin was in her fingers!"

Rosa managed to say: "Impossible! Then she must have had it when she fell."

"No, no! I saw her hands upstretched, her fingers open, in the moonlight."

"It's uncanny. Perhaps—"

"Yes. Perhaps some unseen hand led her to the place so that we should at last come into our own. Who knows? There's no doubt that father hid his money. He turned his slaves into gold, he bought jewels, precious metal, anything he could hide. Well, perhaps there were old coins in the lot. The water in the well is shallow; Isabel must have groped this piece from the bottom. Some day I shall explore the hole and—we shall see."

Rosa flung her arms rapturously about her brother's neck and kissed him. "Wouldn't it be glorious?" she cried. "Wouldn't it be wonderful, to have fine clothes and good things to eat once more? Good things to eat!" Her lip quivered. "Oh—I'm so hungry."

"Poor little girl!"

"Wait till O'Reilly hears about this," Rosa was all excitement once more. "He'll be glad he came and got me, if he does come."

Esteban caressed her. "He'll come, never fear. I know it. Every time I leave you my heart is in my throat for fear of what may happen in my absence—and yet I can't always be at your side."

"There! You acknowledge that I handicap you. Except for me you would be making a glorious name for yourself."

"Nothing of the sort. More probably I'd be getting myself killed. No! It's better this way. We must be brave and patient and—think of what is waiting for us at the bottom of that well!"

It was indeed a great piece of luck which had enabled Esteban Varona to buy a half-dozen Mausers from a Spanish soldier. Through Asensio's acquaintance he had profited by the dishonesty of an enemy, and, although it had taken all his money to effect the purchase, Esteban considered the sacrifice well worth while. The fire of patriotism burned fiercely in him, as did his hatred of Pancho Cueto, and the four trusty young negroes to whom he had given rifles made, with Asensio and himself, an armed party large enough to be reckoned with. These blacks were excitable fellows, and wretched marksmen, but, on the other hand, each and every one had been raised with a machete at his hip and knew how to use it. After a few preliminary forays under Esteban's leadership they had absorbed a bit of discipline and were beginning to feel a military ardor.

In the Cuban field forces there were many negroes, and few of their fellow patriots fought better, or endured the hardships of guerrilla warfare more cheerfully than they. General Antonio Maceo was of mixed blood, and yet his leadership was characterized not only by rare judgment and ability, but also by an exalted abandon of personal bravery. His several brothers rendered Cuba services scarcely less distinguished, and they were but of a few of many dark-skinned heroes. This struggle for independence was no patrician's war; the best stock of the island fought side by side with field hands.

At dawn of the morning following his talk with Rosa, when the members of his command assembled, Esteban was up and ready. He had made his preparations to destroy Pancho Cueto's fields, and since the road over the hills to La Joya was long he had summoned them early.

"Be careful!" Rosa implored him. "I shall die of suspense."

"It is for you to be careful," he laughed. "Keep a good watch, and conceal yourself at the first alarm. However, I think we have taught these bandits a lesson. As for Cueto, he would run to the jungle if he saw us. He has 'the heart of a mouse.' He kissed his sister affectionately and then rode off at the head of his tattered band."

Rosa waved him a last farewell as he disappeared into the woods, then, to occupy herself, she helped Evangelina with what little housework there was to do, later going with her to the garden patch where the viandas grew.

Evangelina's early devotion to her mistress had not diminished with time; if anything, it had deepened. When emancipation came she would have returned to the service of her beloved twins had it not been for Donna Isabel's refusal to accept her. As it was, she and Asensio had married, and by means of Rosa's surreptitious help they had managed to buy this little piece of land. Rosa had practiced self-denial to make the purchase possible, and her self-sacrifice had borne fruit; that act of childish beneficence had created a refuge for Esteban and herself and had ripened the negro woman's affection into idolatry.

Evangelina's joy at having the girl to herself, where she could daily see her, touch her, serve her, was tempered only by the knowledge of Rosa's unhappiness. She scolded and tyrannized, she mothered and adored the girl to her heart's content; she watched over her like a hawk; she deemed no labor in her service too exacting. It would have gone ill with anyone who offered harm to Rosa, for Evangelina was strong and capable; she had the arms and the hands of a man, and she possessed the smoldering black temper of Sebastian, her father.

Even in peaceful times few people came to this clearing in the woods, far off from the main-traveled roads of the Yumuri, and the day, as usual, passed uneventfully. Evangelina worked, with one eye upon her Rosa, the other watchfully alert for danger. When evening came she prepared their scanty meal, upbraiding Rosa, meanwhile, for her attempts to assist her. Then they sat for an hour or two on the bench outside the door, talking about Juan O'Reilly and the probable hour of his coming.

When Rosa fretted about her brother, the negress reassured her. "Don't be frightened, little dove; he has the makings of a great soldier. Now, then, it is growing cool and the night carries fever. Creep into your bed and dream about that handsome lover of yours."

Rosa obeyed, although reluctantly. "I'll sleep for a while," she compromised, "then I'll come out and take my turn."

Dawn was still a long way off when, true to her promise, Rosa emerged from the hut with an apology for having slept so long. Evangelina protested, though her eyes were heavy and she had been yawning prodigiously for hours. But for once the girl was firm. Having finally prevailed in her determination, she seated herself in the warm place Evangelina had vacated, and, curling her small feet under her, she settled herself, chin in hand, to think of O'Reilly. It was a good time to think, for the jungle was very still and the night like a velvet curtain.

"We had better leave the horses here," Pancho Cueto hesitatingly addressed the dim blur which he knew to be Colonel Cobo. The colonel of volunteers was in a vile temper, what with the long night ride and an error of Cueto's which had considerably lengthened the journey.

"Where is the house?" growled the officer.

"Not far. But the path is rocky and the horses' feet—"

"Yes, yes!" There was a creak of saddle leathers and a groan as the colonel dismounted. "Now, my good Cueto," he threatened, "another of your mistakes and I'll give you something to remember me by."

A curt order brought his men out of their saddles. One of their number was detailed to guard the animals, while the rest fell in behind Cueto and followed him up the trail by the starglow.

Esteban and his followers arrive on the scene in the nick of time. What happened when they encountered Colonel Cobo and his men is told in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Many Will Claim Spitzbergen.

More than 800 years ago, in 1614, James I of England, formally claimed Spitzbergen. The Muscovy company, a British concern, was ordered "to uphold the king's right to Spitzbergen" by an order in council. That claim was allowed to lapse in the same manner in which the Russian claim lapsed, the Britons interested in the country say.

With the end of the war old data will be dug up, with records of comparatively recent times, to bolster the contentions of the various claimants, as Spitzbergen is sure to occupy a prominent place in north European affairs. Uncle Sam is happily out of the matter because of the sale by the Arctic Coal company, although judging by precedent it never was likely that this country would go so far as to desire to exercise suzerainty over the land. Such a course was urged in America in 1912 and 1913.

Brought War Into Home.

The beginning of hostilities between Italy and Austria was the cause of similar activity in the household of Anthony Sokelic, says his wife, formerly Baroness Bianca Alessi, in her divorce complaint, filed at New York.

"He is a Croatian," she alleges, "and I am an Italian baroness. He has been a raving maniac since our respective countries got into war. I'm through."

FRECKLES

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There's no longer the slightest cause of feeling ashamed of your freckles, as Othine—double strength—is guaranteed to remove these homely spots.

Simply get an ounce of Othine—double strength—from your druggist, and apply a little of it at night and morning and you should soon see that even the worst freckles have begun to disappear, while the lighter ones have vanished entirely. It is seldom that more than one ounce is needed to completely clear the skin and give a beautiful clear complexion.

Be sure to ask for the double strength Othine, as this is sold under guarantee of money back if it fails to remove freckles.—Adv.

Time to Retire.

Prospective Employer—Why did you leave your last place?

Chauffeur—The guy I worked for went crazy. Started shingling his house when his car needed new tires.

Next to knowing when to grasp an opportunity, the most important thing to know is when to let go.

THAT CHANGE IN WOMAN'S LIFE

Mrs. Godden Tells How It May Be Passed in Safety and Comfort.

Fremont, O.—"I was passing through the critical period of life, being forty-six years of age and had all the symptoms incident to that change—heat flashes, nervousness, and was in a general run down condition, so it was hard for me to do my work. Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound was recommended to me as the best remedy for my troubles, which it surely proved to be. I feel better and stronger in every way since taking it, and the annoying symptoms have disappeared."

—Mrs. M. GODDEN, 925 Napoleon St., Fremont, Ohio.

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If any complications present themselves write the Pinkham Medicine Co., Lynn, Mass., for suggestions how to overcome them. The result of forty years experience is at your service and your letter held in strict confidence.



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