

Rainbow's End

A NOVEL by REX BEACH

Author of "THE IRON TRAIL," "THE SPOILERS," "HEART OF THE SUNSET," Etc.

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ESTEBAN AND HIS LITTLE BAND ARRIVE JUST IN TIME TO SAVE ROSA FROM HORRIBLE FATE.

Synopsis.—Don Esteban Verona, 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. Pancho Cueto, faithful manager of the Verona estates, is balked in his efforts to find the hidden treasure and betrays Esteban and Rosa, leading Colonel Cobo, notorious Spanish guerilla, to their hiding place.

CHAPTER IX.

—7—

Marauders.

The surprise was easily effected, for Colonel Cobo's men were accomplished in this sort of work. Rosa, crouching upon her bench, heard nothing, saw nothing, until out of the shadows beside her human forms materialized. She screamed once, twice; then a palm closed over her mouth and she began to struggle like a cat.

Evangelina, who had waked at the first outcry, met the marauders as they rushed through the door. There were shouts and curses, loudly belated orders, a great scuffling and pounding of feet upon the dirt floor of the hut, the rickety, bark-covered walls bulged and creaked. Over all sounded the shrieks of the negroes battling in the pitch-black interior like an animal in its lair. Then someone set fire to the thatch; the flames licked up the dead palm leaves to the ridgepole, and the surroundings leaped into view.

Rosa saw a swarthy, thickest man in the uniform of a colonel of volunteers, and behind him Pancho Cueto. Tearing the hand from her lips for a moment, she cried Cueto's name, but he gave no heed. Rosa shrieked his name again; then she heard the officer say:

"Where is the young fellow? I hear nothing but the squeals of that common wench."

Evangelina's cries of rage and defiance ceased, and with them the sounds of combat. From the blazing



She began to struggle like a cat.

hoblo ran two armed men, brushing sparks from their clothing. A third followed, dragging Evangelina by one naked arm.

Rosa felt herself swooning, and she knew nothing of what immediately followed. After a time she felt herself shaken, and heard the colonel addressing her.

"Come, come!" he was saying. "Where is your precious brother and that black fellow?"

Rosa could only stare dully. "It seems we missed them," said Cueto.

"More of your bungling." Cobo broke out at him, wrathfully. "Fool! I've a mind to toss you into that fire." He turned his attention once more to Rosa, and with a jerk that shook her into fuller consciousness repeated: "Where are they? Speak to me."

"Gone!" she gasped. "Gone!" She struggled weakly toward Cueto, imploring him, "Pancho, don't you know me?"

"Well, we've taught him a lesson," said Cueto, grinning apprehensively at Cobo. "We've accomplished something, anyhow, eh?" He nodded at Rosa. "She's all that I told you. Look at her!"

Colonel Cobo took time to scrutinize his prisoner.

"Yes! She's a pretty little spy—quite a prize, truly. Now, then!" His thick lips spread; he spoke to her more gently. "I want you to tell me about that brother of yours, eh? Cueto said I would find him here. Ha! Still frightened, I see. Well, I have a way with women; I dare say you'll be glad to tell me everything by and by." Then, seeing that his men risked a scorching in their search of the hut and were already quarreling over the scanty plunder which it afforded, he turned from Rosa to call them away.

Profiting by his inattention, Rosa wriggled out of his grasp and ran to Evangelina, who lay face down in the dirt, her limbs sprawled loosely. She flung herself upon the prostrate body and cried the black woman's name, but she could awaken no response.

The first pink of dawn was now deepening in the east, and as soon as it had grown light enough to see to travel Colonel Cobo prepared to return to his horses. The roof and walls of the hoblo had fallen away to ashes, its skeleton of poles and its few pieces of crude furniture alone were smoldering when he called his men together and gave the word to go.

"Come, my sweetheart." Cobo addressed himself to the girl. "Leave that carrion for the buzzards."

Rosa looked up to find him leering at her. She brushed the tears from her eyes, crying:

"Go away! In God's name haven't you done harm enough?"

"Oh, but you're going with me." The girl rose; her face was colorless; she was quiver with indignation. "Leave me!" she stormed.

"What have I done to you? Don't—"

"Caramba! A temper. And you have strength, too, as I discovered. Must I bind those pretty hands or—"

Colonel Cobo reached forth, laughing, and encircled her in his powerful arms. Rosa fought him as she had fought at the first moment of desperation, but he lifted her easily and went striding across the field behind his men.

Esteban's party made good time over the hills and into the San Juan, for Asensio knew the country well. Mid-afternoon found them in sight of La Joya. Cueto's cane was thick and high; it was ready for the knife or for the torch. The incendiaries dismounted in the shelter of a wood and removed the bags which they had carried on their saddles. Inside these bags were several snakes, the largest perhaps eight feet in length. To the tail of each the negroes fastened a leather thong, and then to each thong a length of telegraph wire, the end of which had been bent into a loop to hold a bundle of oil-soaked waste. These preliminaries accomplished, they bore the reptiles into the cane fields at widely separated places and lighted the waste.

Soon tongues of flame appeared and the green tops of the cane began to shrivel and to wave as the steady east wind took effect. Smoke billowed upward and was hurried westward before the breeze; in a dozen places the fields burst into flame. From somewhere came a faint shouting, then a shot or two, and finally the ringing of a bell.

Esteban waited until he saw that his work of devastation was well under way, then he led his followers back toward the hills.

In the shelter of a ravine the party took time to eat supper, their first meal since leaving home, and it was after dark when they finished. The negroes, who were thoroughly tired, were for spending the night here, but Esteban, more cautious than they, would not have it so. Accordingly, the men remounted their weary horses, though not without some grumbling, and set out. At length they crossed the summit and worked down toward the Yumort, but it

seemed as if daylight would never come.

Esteban suddenly reined in his horse. "Look!" said he. "Yonder is a light."

"What is Evangelina thinking about?" Asensio muttered.

"But see! It grows brighter." There followed a moment or two during which there was no sound except the breathing of the horses and the creak of saddle leathers as the riders craned their necks to see over the low tree tops before them. Then Esteban cried:

"Come! I'm—afraid it's our house." Fear gripped him, but he managed to say, calmly, "Perhaps there has been an accident."

Asensio, muttering excitedly, was trying to crowd past him; for a few yards the two horses brushed along side by side. The distant point of light had become a glare now; it winked balefully through the openings as the party hurried toward it. But it was still a long way off, and the eastern sky had grown rosy before the dense woods of the hillside gave way to the sparser growth of the low ground.

Esteban turned a sick, white face over his shoulder and jerked out his orders; then he kicked his tired mount into a swifter gallop. It was he who first broke out into the clearing. One glance, and the story was told.

The hut was but a crumbling skeleton of charred poles. Strung out across the little field of malangas, yuccas and sweet potatoes were several hilarious volunteers, their arms filled with loot from the cabin. Behind them strode an officer bearing Rosa struggling against his breast.

Esteban drove his horse headlong through the soft red earth of the garden. His sudden appearance seemed briefly to paralyze the marauders. It was a moment before they could drop their spoils, unsling their rifles, and begin to fire at him, and by that time he had covered half the distance to his sister. A bullet brought his horse down and the boy went flying over its neck. Nothing but the loose loam saved him from injury. As he rose to his feet, breathless and covered with the red dirt, there came a swift thudding of hoofs and Asensio swept past him like a rocket. Esteban caught one glimpse of the negro's face, a feeling vision of white teeth bared to the gums, of distended yellow eyes, of fat, distorted features; then Asensio was fairly upon Colonel Cobo. The colonel, who had dropped his burden, now tried to dodge. Asensio slashed once at him with his long, murderous machete, but the next instant he was engaged with a trooper who had fired almost in his face.

Cobo's men, led by the terrified Pancho Cueto, turned and fled for cover, believing themselves in danger of annihilation. Nor was the colonel himself in any condition to rally them, for Asensio's blade had cloven one full dark cheek to the bone, and the shock and pain had unnerved him.

The field was small, the jungle was close at hand. A moment and the incendiary had vanished into it, all but one, who lay kicking among the broad malanga leaves, and over whom Asensio kept spurring his terrified horse, hacking downward with insane fury.

This was the first hand-to-hand encounter Esteban's men had had, and their swift victory rendered them ferocious. Flinging their guns aside, they went crashing into the brush on the trail of their enemies.

Rosa found herself in her brother's arms, sobbing out the story of the outrage and quivering at every sound of the chase. He was caressing her, and telling her to have no further fears; both of them were fairly hysterical. Evangelina, thanks to her thick skull, was not dead. In the course of time under Rosa's and Esteban's ministrations she regained her senses, and when the other men returned they found her lying sick and dazed, but otherwise quite whole.

Then, there beside the ruins of the hut, was a strange scene of rejoicing. Asensio recovered now from his burst of savagery, was tearful, compassionate; his comrades laughed and chattered and bragged about their prodigious deeds of valor. Over and over they recounted their versions of the encounter, each more fanciful than the other, until it seemed that they must have left the forest filled with corpses.

Esteban was grave. He had heard of Colonel Cobo, and remembering that denim-clad figure out yonder in the trampled garden, he knew that serious consequences would follow. The volunteers were revengeful; their colonel was not the sort of man to forgive a deep humiliation. Doubtless he would put a price upon the heads of all of them, and certainly he would never allow them another encounter upon anywhere like even terms. Then, too, the narrowness of Rosa's escape caused the boy's heart to dissolve with terror.

After a conference with Asensio he decided that they must prepare for flight, and late that afternoon they all set out to seek a safer refuge. Evangelina in tears at leaving her precious

garden plot. Their led horse, one of those Lorenzo had captured, carried a pitifully light burden—only some tools, some pans and kettles, and a roll of charred bedclothes.

Johnnie O'Reilly had no difficulty in locating the residence of Ignacio Alvarado, but to communicate with him was quite another matter, inasmuch as his every step was dogged by that persistent shadow from Nuevitas.

One evening, several days after his arrival, a sudden rain storm drove O'Reilly indoors, and as he ascended to his room he saw that the lamp in the hallway flared and smoked at every gust of wind. It was very dark outside; he reasoned that the streets would be deserted. Hastily securing that book which Alvarado, the dentist, had given him, he took a position close inside his door. When he heard the spy pass and enter the next chamber he stole out into the hall and breathed into the lamp chimney. A moment later he was safely through the window and was working his way down the shed roof, praying that his movements had not been seen and that the tiles were firm. He nimbly scaled the wall, crossed an inclosure, climbed a second wall, and descended into a dark side street. Taking advantage of the dense shadows and the numerous overhanging balconies, he set out at a brisk trot.

A light showed through the barred windows of the Alvarado home, indicating that the family was in. After some fumbling O'Reilly laid hold of the latch; then, without knocking, he opened the front door and stepped in.

His sudden appearance threw the occupants into alarm; a woman cried out sharply; a man whom O'Reilly

came. Then, too, his money was running low.

At last, however, the day arrived when the man with the gray necktie raised his hat and wiped his brow as he passed the Isla de Cuba. Johnnie could scarcely hold himself in his chair. By and by he rose, stretching himself, and snatched after the fellow. For several blocks he kept him in sight; but without receiving any further sign.

Without a glance over his shoulder the man turned into a large, walled inclosure. When Johnnie followed he found himself in one of the old cemeteries. Ahead of him, up a shady avenue bordered with trees, the stranger hurried; then he swerved to his left, and when O'Reilly came to the point where he had disappeared there was nobody in sight. Apprehending that he had made some mistake in the signal, O'Reilly hastened down the walk. Then at last, to his great relief, he heard a sibilant:

"Psst! Psst!"

It came from behind a screen of shrubbery, and there he found the Cuban waiting. The latter began rapidly:

"Our plans are complete. Listen closely. One week from today, at ten o'clock in the morning, you must be in Manin's drug store. Directly across the street you will see two negroes past ten walk out San Rafael street to the edge of the city, where the hospital stands. The negroes will follow you. There is a fort near by—"

"I know."

"It commands the road. You will be challenged if you pass it, so turn in at the hospital. But do not enter the gates, for the negroes will overtake you at that point. They will stop to adjust the saron of the lead horse. That will be your signal; mount him and ride fast. Now, adios and good luck."

With a smile and a quick grip of the hand the messenger walked swiftly away. O'Reilly returned to his hotel.

At last! One week, and this numbing, heartbreaking delay would end; he would be free to take up his quest. But those seven days were more than a week; they were seven eternities. The hours were like lead; O'Reilly could compose his mind to nothing; he was in a fever of impatience.

The day of days dawned at last, and Johnnie was early at Manin's soda fountain, drinking insipid beverages and anxiously watching the street. In due time the negroes appeared, their straw sarons laden with produce which they innocently disposed of. O'Reilly began to consult his watch with such frequency that the druggist joked him.

Manin's banter was interrupted by a bugle call. Down the street came perhaps two hundred mounted troops. They wheeled into San Rafael street at a gallop and disappeared in the direction of the suburbs.

"Now, what does that mean?" murmured the druggist. "Wait here while I go to the roof, where I can see something."

O'Reilly tried to compose himself, meanwhile becoming aware of a growing excitement in the street. Then from the direction of the fort at the end of San Rafael street sounded a faint rattling fusillade, more bugle calls, and finally the thin, distant shouting of men.

"Rebels!" someone cried.

"Dios mio, they are attacking the city!"

"They have audacity, eh?"

The roofs were black with people now. Manin came hurrying down into the store.

"Something has gone wrong," he whispered. "They're fighting out yonder in the woods. There has been some treachery."

"It is ten-fifteen," said O'Reilly. "I must be going."

Manin stared at him. "You don't understand—"

"Those black fellows are getting their horses ready. I'm going."

The druggist tried to force Johnnie into a chair. "Madman!" he panted. "I tell you our friends have been betrayed; they are retreating. Go back to your hotel quickly."

For the first time during their acquaintance Manin heard the good-natured American curse; O'Reilly's blue eyes were blazing; he had let go of himself completely.

"I'm going!" he cried, hoarsely. "All the d—d Spaniards in Cuba won't stop me. Lord! I've waited too long—I should have made a break—"

"Idiot!" stormed the druggist. "You wish to die, eh?"

O'Reilly ripped out another oath and fought off the other's restraining hands.

"Very well, then," cried Manin, "but have some thought of us who have risked our lives for you. Suppose you should escape? How would our troops receive you now? Would they not think you had cunningly arranged this trap?"

A light of reason slowly reappeared in the younger man's eyes.

"No!" Manin pressed his advantage. "You must wait until—" He broke off abruptly and stepped behind his counter, for a man in the uniform of a Spanish lieutenant had entered the store.

The newcomer walked directly to O'Reilly; he was a clean-cut, alert young fellow. After a searching glance around the place he spoke in a voice audible to both men.



Asensio Slashed Once at Him With His Long, Murderous Machete.

Identified as Ignacio Alvarado himself leaped to his feet and faced him, exclaiming:

"Who are you?"

"I'm a friend. Don't be alarmed." Johnnie summoned his most agreeable smile, then he extended the sodden package he had carried beneath his arm. "I come from your brother Tomas. He asked me to hand you this book and to say that he is returning it with his thanks."

"What are you saying? Plainly the speaker did not comprehend; there was nothing but apprehension in his voice.

O'Reilly tore the wet paper from the volume and laid it in Alvarado's hand. "Look at it, please, and you'll understand. I didn't take time to knock, for fear I might be followed."

Alvarado stared first at the book, then at his caller. After a moment he made a sign to his wife, who left the room. Wetting his lips, he inquired, with an effort, "What do you want?"

O'Reilly told him in a few words. Alvarado showed relief; he even smiled. "I see, but—Caramba! You gave me a start. And this book! Ha! Tomas will have his jokes. It is well you took precautions, for I am under surveillance. I'll help you, yes! But you must not come here again. Return to your hotel and— Let me think."

Senor Alvarado frowned in deepest thought; then he said: "I have it! Every morning at half past nine a man wearing a Panama hat and a gray necktie with a large gold pin will pass along the sidewalk across the street from the Isla de Cuba. You will know him. One day, I cannot promise how soon, he will lift his hat thus, and wipe his face. You understand? Good. Follow him. He will give you final directions. You know Manin, the druggist? Well, you can talk to him, and he will keep you posted as to our progress. Now go before someone comes."

O'Reilly wrung the Cuban's hand. Then he stepped out into the night, leaving a pool of water on the clean blue tiles where he had stood.

CHAPTER X.

O'Reilly's Plans Fail.

In the days that followed his call on Ignacio Alvarado, O'Reilly behaved so openly that the secret service agent detailed to watch him relaxed his vigilance. Manifestly this O'Reilly was a harmless person. But the spy did not guess how frantic Johnnie was becoming at the delay, how he inwardly chafed and fretted when two weeks had rolled by and still no signal had

O'Reilly finds himself blocked at every step in his efforts to find Rosa. Finally his hopes receive a crushing blow. Watch for the developments in the next installment.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THIS WEAK, NERVOUS MOTHER

Tells How Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound Restored Her Health.

Philadelphia, Pa.—"I was very weak, always tired, my back ached, and I felt sickly most of the time. I went to a doctor and he said I had nervous indigestion, which added to my weak condition kept me worrying most of the time—and he said if I could not stop that, I could not get well. I heard so much about Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound I bought a box and took it for a week and felt a little better. I kept it up for three months, and I feel fine and can eat anything now without distress or nervousness."—Mrs. J. WORTHLINE, 2342 North Taylor St., Philadelphia, Pa.



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W. N. U., OMAHA, NO. 23-1918.

A mistake once done isn't necessarily down forever.

Always use Red Cross Ball Blue. Delights the laundress. At all good grocers. Adv.

A sponge, unlike a man, swells up when it is made to take water.

They Love Each Other.

"We always pay cash for everything," she said proudly. "We're not obliged to," was her retort.

No Fool Like an Old Fool.

Turtle—Ha, ha! There's that old near sighted Mr. Duck trying to flirt with that decoy.

Toads Were Crafty.

Speaking of laziness, Dan Linus, clerk in superior court, room 4, tells the story of the lazy fisherman.

This fisherman threw a line of shingles tied together into the river, each shingle having a short line with a hook baited with a toad. The fisherman then took a nap on the bank, expecting to wake up to pull in a nice line of fish.

When he woke up he found that all this toad bait, instead of being inside struggling fish, was perched on top of the shingles.—Indianapolis News.

Gilded Chicken Feet.

It may be because of war economies and it may be "something else again," as Aho said to Mawrus, but it is a fact nevertheless that new and unusual fashions are being invaded to furnish military's headgear. At the same time splendid opportunities are offered to earnest nature students. One of the most novel skylarce ornaments seen here is gilded chicken feet. One woman appeared on Broadway the other day in a bonnet trimmed with English walnuts cracked open to show the kernels, while another woman wore a merry widow of single slligator skin garnished with a single gray squirrel. New York women seem to have lots of new millinery thoughts these days.

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