

RAINBOW'S END *A Novel*

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

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CHAPTER XVIII—Continued.

"I have been close to death so long that it means little to me," she confessed. "I have you, and—well, with you at my side I can face the worst."

"Oh, we won't give up until we have to," he assured her. "If I had money it would be a simple proposition to bribe some guard to pass us through the lines, but I have spent all that General Betancourt gave me. He smoothed back Rosa's dark hair and smiled reassuringly at her. "Well, I'll manage somehow; so don't worry your pretty head. I'll find the price, if I have to waylay old Don Mario and rob him. Don't you think I look like a bandit? The very sight of me would terrify that fat rascal."

"To me you are beautiful," breathed the girl. Then she lowered her eyes. "La, la! How I spoil you! I have quite forgotten how to be ladylike. Isabel was right when she called me a bold and forward hussy. Now, then, please turn your face aside, for I wish to think, and so long as you look at me I cannot—I make love to you brazenly. See! Now, then, that is much better. I shall hold your hand, so. When I kiss it you may look at me again, for a moment." Drawing herself closer to O'Reilly, Rosa began thoughtfully: "Before you came I more than once was on the point of appealing to some of my former friends, but they are all Spaniards and we are no longer—slimptico, you understand?"

Rosa paused for his answer.

"Perfectly; I'm in the same fix. Of all the people I used to know there isn't one but would denounce me if I made myself known. Now that I've been fighting with the insurgents, I haven't even gone to the American consul for help—if there is an American consul."

Rosa nodded, then continued, hesitatingly: "I had a vivid dream last night. Perhaps it was a portent. Who knows? It was about that stepmother of mine. You remember how she met her death? I wrote you—"

"Yes, and Esteban also told me."

"It was he who recovered her body from the well. One day, while we were in hiding, away up yonder in the Yumuri, he showed me an old coin—"

"I know," O'Reilly said quickly. "He told me the whole story. He thinks that doubleton is a clue to your father's fortune, but—I can't put much faith in it. In fact, I didn't believe until this moment that there was a doubleton at all."

"Oh, indeed there was! I saw it."

There was a moment of silence during which the lovers were oblivious to all but each other, then Rosa murmured: "How strange! Sometimes your eyes are blue and sometimes gray. Does that mean that your love, too, can change?"

"Certainly not. But come, what about Esteban and that doubleton?"

With an effort the girl brought herself back to earth. "Well, it occurred to me, in the light of that dream last night, that Esteban may have been right. Of course nobody outside of our family credits the old story, and yet my father was considered a very rich man at one time. Pancho Cueto believed in the existence of the treasure, and he was in a position to know."

"True! Perhaps, after all—"

O'Reilly frowned meditatively.

Rosa lifted herself upon her elbow, her eyes sparkling. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if it were true? Just think, O'Reilly, cases of Spanish gold, silver coins in casks, packages of gems. Oh, I've heard Isabel talk about it often enough."

"Don't forget those pearls from the Caribbean, as large as plums," Johnny smiled. "I could never quite swallow that. A pearl the size of a currant would buy our freedom right now."

After a moment he went on, more seriously: "I've a notion to look into that old well this very afternoon. I—I dare say I'm foolish, but—somehow the story doesn't sound so improbable as it did. Perhaps it is worth investigating—" He made up his mind swiftly. "I—I'm off this very instant."

When O'Reilly emerged from the hut he found Jacket industriously at work over a fragment of grindstone which he had somewhere unearthed. The boy looked up at his friend's approach and held out for inspection a long, thin file, which he was slowly shaping into a knife-blade.

"What do you think of that?" he queried proudly. "It may come in handy when we are ready to clear out of this pesthole."

"Where did you get it?"

"Oh, I stole it. I steal everything I can lay my hands on nowadays. One can never tell when he may have a throat to cut, and a file has good steel in it."

"Since you are such an accomplished thief, do you think you could steal something for me?" O'Reilly inquired. "A piece of rope?"

"Rope?" Jacket was puzzled. "Rope is only good for hanging Spaniards. My friend in the fish market has a volandra, and—perhaps I can rob him of a halibut." Laying aside his task, Jacket arose and made off in the direction of the water front. He was back within an hour, and under his shirt he carried a coil of worn but service-

able rope. Without waiting to explain his need for this unusual article, O'Reilly linked arms with the boy and set out to climb La Cumbre. When at last they stood in the unused quarry and Johnnie made known his intention to explore the old well, Jacket regarded him with undisguised amazement.

"What do you expect to find down there?" the latter inquired.

"To tell you the truth, I don't really expect to find anything," the man confessed. "Now that I'm here, I'm beginning to feel silly; nevertheless, I'm going to have a look for the hidden treasure of the Varonas."

"Hidden treasure!" From Jacket's expression it was plain that he feared his friend was mildly mad. Even after O'Reilly had told him something about old Don Esteban's missing riches, he scouted the story. He peeped inquisitively into the dark opening of the well, then he shook his head. "Caramba! What an idea! Was this old man crazy, to throw his money away?"

"He—had more than he knew what to do with, and he wished to save it from the Spaniards," O'Reilly explained lamely.

"Humph! Nobody ever had more money than he wanted." The boy's disgust at such credulity was plain. "This well looks just like any other, only deeper; you'd better look out that you don't break your neck like that foolish old woman, that Donna What's-Her-Name."

O'Reilly did indeed feel that he was making himself ridiculous; nevertheless, he made the rope fast and swung himself down out of the sunlight, leaving Jacket to stand guard over him. Perhaps fifteen minutes later he reappeared, panting from his exertions. He was wet, slimy; his clothes were streaked and stained with mud. Jacket began to laugh shrilly at his appearance.

"Ha! What a big lizard is this! Your beautiful garments are spoiled. And the treasure? Where is it?" The lad was delighted. He bent double with mirth; he slapped his bare legs and stamped his feet in glee.

O'Reilly grinned good-naturedly, and replaced the planks which had covered the orifice, then hid the rope in some nearby bushes. On their way back he endured his young friend's banter absent-mindedly, but as they neared Asensio's house he started Jacket by saying, "Can you manage to find a pickax or a crowbar?"

Jacket's eyes opened; he stopped in the middle of the dusty road. "What did you see down there, compadre? Tell me."

"Nothing much. Just enough to make me want to see more. Do you think you can steal some sort of a tool for me?"

"I can try."

"Please do. And remember, say nothing before Asensio or his wife."

Rosa met O'Reilly just inside the door, and at sight of her he uttered an exclamation of surprise, for during his absence she had removed the stain

O'Reilly's evident surprise and admiration. "Then I'm not so altogether changed?" she asked.

"Why, you haven't changed at all, except to grow more beautiful. Evangelina is right; you are too beautiful to look at. But wait!" He drew her aside and whispered, "I've been down in the well." Some tremor in his voice, some glint in his eyes, caused the girl to seize him eagerly, fiercely. "I may be wrong," he said hurriedly; "there may be nothing in it—and yet I saw something."

"What?"

"Wooden beams, timbers of some sort, behind the stone curbing." It was plain Rosa did not comprehend, so he hurried on. "At first I noticed nothing unusual, except that the bottom of the well is nearly dry—filled up, you know, with debris and stuff that has fallen in from the curbing above, then I saw that although the well is dug through rock, nevertheless it is entirely curbed up with stones laid in mortar. That struck me as queer."

"Yes?"

"I noticed, too, in one place that there was wood behind—as if timbers had been placed there to cover the entrance to a cave. You know this Cuban rock is full of caverns."

Rosa clasped her hands, she began to tremble. "You have found it, O'Reilly. You have!" she whispered.

"No, no, I've found nothing yet. But I've sent Jacket for a pickax or a bar and tonight I'm going to pull down those stones and see what is behind them."

"To night? You must let me go, too. I want to help."

"Very well. But meanwhile you mustn't let your hopes rise too high, for there is every chance that you will be disappointed. And don't mention it to Evangelina. Now, then, I've a few pennies left and I'm going to buy some candles."

Rosa embraced her lover impulsively. "Something tells me it is true! Something tells me you are going to save us all."

Evangelina in the far corner of the hut muttered to her husband: "Such love-birds! They are like parakeets, forever kissing and cooling!"

Jacket returned at dusk, and with him he brought a rusty three-foot iron bar, evidently part of a window grating. The boy was tired, disgusted, and in a vile temper. "A pickax! A crowbar!" he cursed eloquently. "One might as well try to steal a cannon out of San Severino. I'm ready to do anything within reason, but—"

"Why, this will do nicely; it is just what I want," O'Reilly told him.

"Humph! I'm glad to hear it, for that rod was nearly the death of me. I broke my back wrenching at it and the villain who owned the house—may a bad lightning split him!—he ran after me until I nearly expired. If my new knife had been sharp I would have turned and sent him home with it between his ribs. Tomorrow I shall put an edge on it. Believe me, I ran until my lungs burst."

Little food remained in the hut, barely enough for Asensio and the women, and inasmuch as O'Reilly had spent his last centavo for candles he and Jacket were forced to go hungry again. Late that evening, after the wretched prison quarters had grown quiet, the three treasure hunters stole out of their hovel and wound up the hill. In spite of their excitement they went slowly, for none of them had the strength to hurry. Fortunately there were few prowlers within the lines, hunger having robbed the reconcentrados of the spirit to venture forth, and in consequence Spanish vigilance had relaxed; it was now confined to the far-flung girdle of intrenchments which encircled the city. The trio encountered no one.

Leaving Jacket on guard at the crest of the hill, O'Reilly stationed Rosa at the mouth of the well, then lowered himself once more into it. Lighting his candle, he made a careful examination of the place, with the result that Esteban's theory of the missing riches seemed even less improbable than it had earlier in the day. The masonry work, he discovered, had been done with a painstaking thoroughness which spoke of the abundance of slave labor, and time had barely begun to affect it. Here and there a piece of the mortar had loosened and come away, but for the most part it stood as solid as the stones between which it was laid. Shoulder-high to O'Reilly there appeared to be a section of the curbing less smoothly fitted than the rest, and through an interstice in this he detected what seemed to be a damp wooden beam. At this point he brought his iron bar into play.

It was not long before he discovered that his work was cut out for him. The cement was like flint and his blunt makeshift implement was almost useless against it. Ankle-deep in the muddy water, he patiently pecked and pounded and chipped, endeavoring to enlarge the crevice so as to use his bar as a lever. The sweat streamed from him and he became dismayed at his own weakness. He was forced to rest frequently.

Rosa hung over the orifice above, encouraging him, inquiring eagerly as to

his progress. During his frequent breathing spells he could discern her white face dimly illumined by the candle light from below.

After he had worked for an hour or two, he made a report: "It begins to look as if there really was a bulkhead or a door in there."

The girl clapped her hands and laughed with delight. "Do hurry, dear; I'm dying of suspense."

O'Reilly groaned: "That fellow, Sebastian, knew his business. This ceiling means something to him. Oh, if I could only help you!"

"Heavens! If I only had something—anything, to work with!" muttered the American as he fell to with redoubled energy. He no longer tried to conserve his strength, for the treasure seeker's lust beset him. Rosa looked on, wringing her hands and urging him to greater haste.

But the low, thick door was built of some hard, native wood; it was wet and tough and slippery. O'Reilly's blows made no impression upon it, nor upon the heavy hasps and staples with which it was secured in place. The latter were deeply rusted, to be sure, but they withstood his efforts, and he was finally forced to rest, baffled, enraged, half hysterical from weakness and fatigue.

Daylight was at hand once more, but he refused to give up, and worked on stubbornly, furiously, until Rosa, in an agony, besought him to desist.

Johnnie again collapsed on the grass and lay panting while the other two replaced the planks.

"Another hour and I'd have been into it," he declared, huskily.

"You will kill yourself," Jacket told him.

Rosa bent over him with shining eyes and parted lips. "Yes," said she. "Be patient. We will come back, O'Reilly, and tonight we shall be rich."

Colonel Cobo lit a black cigarette, leaned back in his chair, and exhaled two fierce jets of smoke through his nostrils. For a full moment he scowled forbiddingly at the sergeant who had asked to see him.

"What's this you are telling me?" he inquired finally.

The sergeant, a mean-faced, low-browed man, stirred uneasily.

"It is God's truth. There are spirits on La Cumbre, and I wish to see the priest about it."

"Spirits? What kind of spirits?"

The fellow shrugged. "Evil spirits—spirits from hell. The men are buying charms."

"Bah! I took you to be a sensible person."

"You don't believe me? Well, I didn't believe them, when they told me about it. But I saw with my own eyes."

Cobo leaned forward, mildly astonished. Of all his villainous troop, this man was the last one he had credited with imagination of this sort. "What did you see?"

"A ghost, my colonel, nothing else. La Cumbre is no place for an honest Christian."

The colonel burst into a mocking laugh. "An honest Christian! You! Of all my vile ruffians, you are the vilest. Why, you're a thief, a liar, and an assassin! You are lying to me now. Come—the truth for once, before I give you the componte."

"As God is my judge, I'm telling you the truth," protested the soldier. "Flog me if you will—rather the componte than another night in those trenches. You know that old quinta?"

"Where Pancho Cueto made a goat of himself? Perfectly. Do you mean to say that you saw old Esteban Varona walking with his head in his hands?"

"No, but I saw that she-devil who fell in the well and broke her neck."

"Eh? When did you behold this—this marvel?"

"Two nights ago. She was there beside the well and her face shone through the night like a lantern. There was fire upon it. She came and went, like a moth in the lamplight. I tell you I repented of my sins. Some of the men laughed at me when I told them, as they had laughed at the others. But last night two of the doubters went up there."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



"It Begins to Look as if There Really Was a Bulkhead."

ment is like steel, and I'm afraid of breaking my crowbar."

Rosa found a leaf, folded a kiss into it, and dropped it to him. "That will give you strength," she declared.

O'Reilly lost all count of time after a while and he was incredulous when Jacket came to warn him that daylight was less than an hour away. "Why, I haven't started!" he protested. He discovered, much to his surprise, that he was ready to drop from fatigue and that his hands were torn and blistered; when he had climbed the rope to the upper air he fell exhausted in the deep grass. "I—I'm not myself at all," he apologized; "nothing to eat, you know. But the work will go faster now, for I've made a beginning."

"Do you still think—" Rosa hesitated to voice the question which trembled on her lips.

"I'll know for sure tonight." He directed Jacket to replace the planks over the well; then the three of them stole away.

O'Reilly spent most of that day in a profound stupor of exhaustion, while Rosa watched anxiously over him. Jacket, it seemed, had peacefully slumbered on picket duty, so he occupied himself by grinding away at his knife. The last scraps of food disappeared that evening.

When night fell and it came time to return to the top of La Cumbre, O'Reilly asked himself if his strength would prove sufficient for the task in hand. He was spiritless, sore, weak; he ached in every bone and muscle, and it required all his determination to propel himself up the hill. He wondered if he were wise thus to sacrifice his waning energies on a hope so forlorn as this, but by now he had begun to more than half believe in the existence of the Varona treasure and he felt an almost irresistible curiosity to learn what secret, if any, was concealed behind those water-soaked timbers at the bottom of the well. He realized, of course, that every hour he remained here, now that food and money were gone, lessened the chances of escape; but, on the other hand, he reasoned, with equal force, that if he had indeed stumbled upon the missing hoard salvation for all of them was assured. The stake, it seemed to him, was worth the hazard.

Given tempered tools to work with, it would have been no great undertaking to tear down that cemented wall of stones, but armed with nothing except his bare hands and that soft iron bar, O'Reilly spent nearly the whole night at his task. Long before the last rock had yielded, however, he beheld that which caused him to turn a strained face upward to Rosa.

"There's a little door, as sure as you live," he told her.

The girl was beside herself with ex-was a fantastic idea, nevertheless citement. "Yes? What else? What more do you see?"

"Nothing. It appears to be made of solid timbers, and has two huge hand-wrought locks."

"Locks! Then we have found it!" Rosa closed her eyes; she swayed momentarily. "Esteban was right. Locks,



"I'm Going to Have a Look for the Hidden Treasure."

from her face and descended that disfigurement which Evangelina had fitted to her back prior to their departure from the Pan de Matanzas. She stood before him now, straight and slim and graceful—the Rosa of his dreams, only very thin, very fragile. Her poor tatters only enhanced her prettiness, so he thought.

"Rosa, dear! Do you think this is quite safe?" he ventured, doubtfully.

Evangelina, who was bending over her husband, straightened herself and came forward with a smile upon her black face.

"She is beautiful, eh? Too beautiful to look at? What did I tell you?" Rosa was in delightful confusion at

IMPROVED UNIFORM INTERNATIONAL SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

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LESSON FOR AUGUST 25.

CONFESSING CHRIST.

(May be used with missionary applications.)
1. LESSON TEXTS—Luke 12:8-12; Acts 1:1-11.
2. GOLDEN TEXT—Whoever shall confess me before men, him shall the son of man also confess before the angels of God.—Luke 12:8.
3. DEVOTIONAL READING—James 3:1-18.
4. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL—Psalms 145:1-11; Mark 5:19-20; John 1:40-46; Acts 4:13-20; 1 Peter 3:15.

1. Importance of Confessing Christ (Luke 12:8-12).
To confess Christ is not easy; it has never been easy. To do so means exposure to ridicule, contempt and persecution. Regardless of its issue, the true disciple will confess his Lord.
1. Christ will confess before the angels of God those who confess him before men (v. 8). The true disciple will not be ashamed to let all men know that he knows, loves, and serves Christ.
2. Christ will deny before the angels of God those who deny him before men (v. 9). To deny Christ before men may get one a little of human applause, but will surely bring one to loss of heaven and to the sufferings of hell forever.
3. A perilous testimony is unparadiseable (v. 10). This testimony is the expression of a heart utterly perverse, attributing the mighty works of the Holy Spirit as wrought by Christ to the devil (Matt. 12:32; Mark 3:29). The unpardonable sin will only be committed by one whose heart is incurably bad, one whose moral nature is so vile that he fails to discern between God and the devil—a reprobate.
4. Divine aid given in testimony (vv. 11, 12). In the most trying hour the Holy Spirit will teach the disciples what to say, and how to say it.

II.—Qualifications for Confessing Christ (Acts 1:1-11).
Christ remained with the disciples forty days after his resurrection to prepare them for the important business of witnessing for him. He had a five-fold object:

1. To convince the disciples of the absolute certainty of his resurrection (vv. 2, 3). Before the disciples could undertake the great work for which they had been preparing, the question of Christ's resurrection must be settled beyond a doubt. No one can preach the gospel who does not have certainty of conviction touching the resurrection.
2. To instruct the disciples in things pertaining to the kingdom of God (vv. 3, 6, 7). Their unwillingness to hear Christ's instruction (John 16:12, 13) before his passion shut out much valuable information, so the Lord tarries to supply this need. They had a wrong idea as to the kingdom being restored, not as to fact, but as to time. Christ had again and again predicted a coming kingdom in harmony with the united testimony of the prophets of Israel. They understood him aright as to the fact of the kingdom, but the time of its manifestation they failed to grasp. The disciples should be defended against the reproach for having a materialistic conception. The kingdom is still to come; the time of its coming is known only to God.
3. To show the disciples that their business was to witness for Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth (vv. 4, 5, 8). This witnessing was to be done in the power of the spirit, the result of which would be the formation of a new body, the church, called out from the world in the time of the postponement of the kingdom.
4. To show the disciples the scope of their missionary activity (v. 8). This is shown to be as wide as the world itself. They were to begin at home and carry the good news concerning Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. Mission work begins at home and ends with the bounds of the earth.
5. To show the disciples that Christ will here forth operate from heaven. They were to work on the earth, but the source of their power was in heaven. Though he is separated from the disciples it will not be forever, for he will come again. He will come again as the God-man, our mediator. The words of the men in white apparel have a double significance.

(1) To show that Jesus will come again.
(2) To show that in the meantime they should set to work in the discharge of their commission, and not be gazing up into heaven. The Lord's instruction to the disciples was, "Occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13). Those who have an intelligent hope touching the coming of Christ are not sky-gazers, but are dead in earnest witnessing for Christ.

Divine Descent.
The incongruity of the Bible with the age of its birth; its freedom from earthly mixtures; its original, unbroken, solitary greatness; the suddenness with which it broke forth amidst the general gloom; these to me are strong indications of its divine descent; I cannot reconcile them with a human origin.—Channing.

When It Is Hard to Pray.
It is hard for a man to pray according to God's will if he is not living according to it.