

Conveight, 1917, Harper & Bros CHAPTER I The Valley of Delight

ALL probability your first view of there that the cocheros drive you. Up the Lady? Don Esteban scowled at the meraal your back and the gorge at your right, and certainly of a value sufficient to chapel stands. Once there, you overlook miracle. They were worth 5000 pesos at the fairest sight in all Christendom-"the reliest valley in the world," as Humboldt and fills the soul with ecstasy.

It is larger than it seems at first sight; through it meanders the river, colling and uncoiling, hidden here and there by jungle growths, and seeking final outlet through a cleft in the wall not unlike a crack in the side of a painted bowl. The place seems to have been fashioned as a dwelling for dryads and hamadryads, for gray, but he was of super proportions nixies and pixies and all the fabled spirits its steep slopes and carpeted its level floor with the richest of green brocades. Nowhere is there a clash of color; nowhere does a naked hillside or monstrous jut of rock obtrude to mar its placid beauty: nowhere can you see a crude, disfiguring mark of man's handlwork--there dead, Sebastian." are only fields and bowers, with an occasional thatched roof faded gray by the

Royal paims, most perfect of trees, are scattered everywhere. They stand alone or in stately groves, their lush fronds was jealous and took her to paradise." drooping like gigantic ostrich plumes, their slim trunks as smooth and regular and white as if turned in a giant lathe He stared with resentful eyes at the and then rubbed with pipe-clay. In all beauty round about him. "See! The Cuba, island of bewitching vistas, there Yumuri" Don Esteban flung a long arm is no other Yumuri, and in all the wide outward. "Do you think there is a sight world, perhaps, there is no valley of like that in heaven? And yonder-" He moods and aspects so varying. You should turned to the harbor far below, with its see it at evening, all warm and slum- fleet of sailing ships resting like a flock berous, all gold and green and purple; of gulls upon a sea of quicksilver. Beor at early dawn, when the mists are youd the bay, twenty miles distant, a fading like pale memories of dreams and range of hazy mountains hid the horizon. the tints are delicate; or, again, during a Facing to the south. Esteban looked up tempest, when it is a caldron of whirling the full length of the valley of the San vapors and when the paim trees bend like Juan, clear to the majestic Pan de Matancoryphees, tossing their arms to the gal- gas, a wonderful sight indeed; then his loping hurricane. But whatever the time eyes returned, as they always did, to the of day or the season of the year at which Yumuri, Valley of Delight. "Paradise inyou visit it, the Yumuri will render you deed." he muttered. "I gave her everywordless with delight, and you will vow thing. She gained nothing by dying." that it is the happiest valley men's eyes have ever looked upon.

The Quinta of Esteban Varona

Lady of Montserrate, you will see beyond the cleft through which the river emerges You have lost her, but you have gained another hill, La Cumbre, from which the an heir and a beautiful girl baby who view is almost as wonderful, and your will grow to be another Dona Rosa. I driver may tell you about the splendid grieved as you grieve, once upon a time. homes that used to grace its slopes in the for my woman died in childbirth, too. golden days when Cuba had an aristoc- You remember? But my daughter lives, racy. They were classic Roman villas, and she has brought sunshine into my old such as once lined the Via Appia-little age. That is the purpose of children." palaces, with mosales and marbles and He paused and shifted his weight uncerprecious woods imported from Europe, tainly, digging his stiff black toes into and furnished with the rarest treasures the dirt. After a time he said, slowly: were rich and spent their money layishly. Melancholy reminders of this splen- his smoldering eyes. dor exist even now in the shape of a pillar, an occasional porcelain urn in its and those doctors, you knowplace atop a vine-grown bit of wall. Your cochero may point out a certain grove of orange trees, now little more than a rank tangle, and tell you about the ouints of Don Esteban Varona and its and there was real dignity in his black hidden treasure; about little Esteban and face. Rosa, the twins, and about Schastian, the giant slave, who died in fury, taking with him the secret of the well. The Spanish Main is rich in tales of were most affluent they were least secure, and men were put to strange shifts to sumed a sort of evil personality, not infrequently exercising a dire influence over the lives of those who chanced to fall under their spells. It was as if the money were accursed, for certainly the seekers often came to evil. Of such a character was the Varona treasure. Don Esteban himself was neither better nor worse than other men of his time, and wrung from the toil of slaves and the traffic in their bodies, much of it was clean enough and in time the earth purified it all. Since his acts made so feep an impress and since the treasure he left played so big a part in the destinies of those who came after him, it is well that some account of these matters should be given The story, please remember, is an old one; it has been often told and in the telling and retelling it is but natural extravagance should attach to it; therefore you should make allowance for to the lapse of time. In the main, howparallel to fact.

that quivered in the sunlight like drops miss her for a time and then, I dare say, Esteban reaped a handsome profit from the Hermitage of Montserrate, for it is ons before that other counterpart of Our have heard about his treasure." winding road they take you, with the bay ory, for those gems were of the finest, after an instant's pause. to the crest of a narrow ridge where the recompense the Virgin for any ordinary at this show of ignorance, but he laughed: glimpse of Paradise that bewilders the eye gance, truly! Don Esteban knew the many things than Don Esteban would stances. value of money as well as anybody, and care to have you tell. Come now, don't

he swore now that he would give no more you?" to the Church.

The Faithful Sebastian

He looked up from his unhappy heard about it." musings to find a gigantic barefooted negro standing before him. The slave was middle-aged; his kinky hair was growing and the muscles which showed through of forest and stream. Fairy hands tinted the rents in his cotton garments were as smooth and supple as those of a stripling. His black face was puckcred with grief, as he began:

> "Master, is it true that Dona Rosa-" The fellow choked.

"Yes," Esteban nodded, wearily, "she is

Tears came to Sebastian's eyes and overflowed his cheeks; he stood motionless, striving to voice his sympathy. At

length he said: "She was too good for this world. God

The widowed man cried out, angrily: "Paradise! What is this but paradise?" With a grave thoughtfulness which proved him superior to the ordinary slave, Sebastian replied:

"True! She had all that any woman's Standing there beside the shrine of Our heart could desire, but in return for your goodness she gave you children. those days the Cuban planters "Excellency! Now about the-well-? "Yes. What about it?" Esteban lifted

REX BEA necklace and a crucifix, all of diamonds "Um-m! Possibly. Don Esteban will negroes, the market steadily improved and

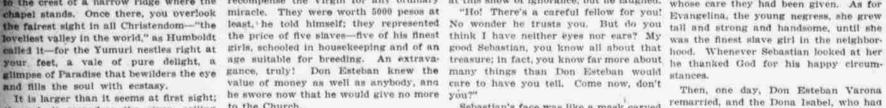
of purest water? Had he not knelt and he will remarry." At the negro's ex- those he had on hand, especially when prayed for his wife's safe delivery and clamation Cueto cried. "So! And why his crop of young girls matured. His then hung his gifts upon the sacred not? Everybody knows how rich he is, sugar plantations prospered, too, and the valley of the Yumuri will be from image, as Loyola had hung up his weat- From Oriente to Pinar del Rio the women Pancho Cueto, who managed them, continued to wonder where the money went. "What treasure"" asked Sebastian, The twins, Esteban and Rosa, developed

into healthy children and became the Cueto's dark eyes gleamed resentfully pride of Sebastian and his daughter, into

whose care they had been given. As for

Sebastian's face was like a mask carved been a famous Habana beauty, came to from ebony. "Of what does this treasure live at the quinta. The daughter of imconsist?" he inquired. "I have never poverished parents, she had heard and thought much about the mysterious treas-"Of gold, of jewels, of silver bars and ure of La Cumbre.

precious ornaments." Cueto's head was There followed a period of feasting and thrust forward, his nostrils were dilated, his teeth gleamed. "Oh, it is somewhere entertainment, of music and merrymakabout, as you very well know! Bah! ing. Spanish officials, prominent civilians Don't deny it. I'm no fool. What be, of Mantanzas and the countryside drove comes of the money from the slave girls, up the hill to welcome Don Esteban's ch? And the sugar crops, too? Does it bride. But before the first fervor of his





CHAPTER II Spanish Gold

THE twins were seven years old when Dona Isabel's schemes bore their first hitter fruit, and the occasion was a pay ticularly uproarlous night when Don Estaban entertained a crowd of his Castilian friends. Little Rosa was awakened at a late hour by the haughter and shouts of her father's guests. She was afraid, for there was something strange about the volces, some quality to them which was foreign to the child's experience. Creep ing into her brother's room, she awaks him, and together they listened.

Don Mario del Castano was singing a song, the words of which were lost, but which brought a yell of approval from his companions. The twins distinguished the voice of Don Pablo Peza, too-Doa Pablo, whose magnificent black beard had so often excited their admiration. Yes, and there was Colonel Mendoza y Linares, doubtless in his splendid uniform. These gentlemen were well and favorably known to the boy and girl, yet Rosa began to whimper, and when Esteban tried to reassure her his own voice was thin and reedy from fright.

In the midst of their agitation they heard some one weeping; there came a rush of feet down the hallway, and the next instant Evangelina flung herself into the room. A summer moon flooded the chamber with radiance and enabled her to see the two small white figures sitting up in the middle of the bed.

Evangelina fell upon her knees before them. "Little master! Little mistress" she sobbed. "You will save me, wen't you? We love each other, ch? See then, what a crime this is! Say that you will save me!" She was beside herself. and her voice was hoarse and cracked from grief. She wrung her hands, she tocked herself from side to side, she kissed the twins' nightgowns, tugging at them convulsively.

The children were frightened, but they managed to quaver: "What has happened? Who has harmed you?"

"Don Pablo Peza," wept the negress. "Your father has sold me to him-lost me at cards. Oh, I shall die! Sebastha won't believe it. He is praying. And Asensio-O God! But what can they

Don Varona's Family

Don Rosa Varona lived barely long enough to learn that she had given birth knew as a grim man, took the blow of his dored the hollow; over the rocky walls that is to be faithful to Don Esteban." adden bereavement as became one of his ran a riot of vines and ferns and orna. He turned and departed, leaying Pancho trong fiber. Leaving the priest upon his mental plants. nees and the doctor busied with the abtes, he strode through the house and at into the sunset, followed by the wails way, of the slave women. From the negro had been well loved and the news of her ming away had spread quickly.

Don Esteban was at heart a selfish man, mt mingled with his grief. What swered, respectfully: of was this? he asked himself. What us a pair of eardrops, a you think?"

"Did the Dona Rosa confide her share crumbled ruin here and there, a lichened of the secret to any one? Those priests

"She died without speaking." "Then it rests between you and me?" "It does, unless you have babbled." "Master," Sebastian drew himself up

"Understand, my whole fortune is there -everything, even to the deeds of patent for the plantations. If I thought there was danger of your betraying me I would

treasure trove, for when the Antilles have your tongue pulled out and your go to buy arms and ammunition for the honeymoon cooled the groom began to eyes torn from their sockets." my old shoulders, and I have been think- that one little gem, one bag of gold, ing- Times are unsettled, Don Esteban, would buy your freedom?" and death comes without warning. You are known to be the richest man in this freedom and the freedom of my girl." province and these government officials are robbers. Suppose-I should be left alone? What then?"

The planter considered for a moment. although part of the money he hid was "They are my countrymen, but a curse treasure? Ha! You're a good hoy, Sebas- wealth. In fact, he tried with malicious on them," he said finally. "Well, when tian, and so I am. I admire you. We're ingenuity to make her believe him a poor my children are old enough to hold their both loyal to our master, ch? But now man. But Isabel was not of the sort to tongues they will have to be told. If I'm about Evangelina." Cueto's face took on be readily deceived. Finding her arts gone you shall be the one to tell them. a craftier expression. "She is a likely and coquetries of no avail, she flew into Now leave me; this is not time to speak girl, and when she grows up she will a rage and a furious quarrel ensuedof such things."

Hidden Treasure

place where most of his time was ordi- promise and-sell her." that a certain glamour, a certain tropical narily spent. Sebastian had dug this well, and with his own hands he had cry and the whites of his eyes showed their value many times and her anger at beautified its surroundings until they through the gloom. "He would never Don Esteban's obstinacy deepened to a some exaggeration, some accretions due were the loveliest on the Varona grounds. sell Evangelina!" The rock for the building of the quinta. Cueto laughed aloud once more. "Of ever, it is well authenticated and runs had been quarried here, and in the center course! He would not dare, ch! I am of the resulting depression, grass-grown only teasing you. But see! You have and flowering now, was the well itself. given yourself away. Everything you Its waters seeped from subterranean cav- tell me proves that you know all about erns and filtered, pure and cool, through that treasure." the porous country rock. Plantain, a twins. Don Esteban, whom people palm, orange and tamarind trees bor- clared, stiffening himself slowly, "and

> It was Sebastian's task to keep this place green, and thither he took his

from force of habit. Through the twilight came Pancho marters came the sound of other and Cueto, the manager, a youngish man, with that way managing to avoid a clash with even louder lamentations, for Dona Rosa a narrow face and bold, close-set eyes. Spying Sebastian, he began:

"So Don Esteban has an helr at last?" The slave rubbed his eyes with the id now, therefore, he felt a sullen, fierce heel of his huge yellow palm and an-

"Yes, Don Pancho. Two little angels, he done to merit such misfortune? a boy and a girl." His gray brows drew in sympathy with the revolution in the as not made rich sifts to the church? together in a painful frown, "Dona Rosa and more on foot to the shrine of was a saint. No doubt there is great with both factions and went on raising instructe with a splendid rejotcing at her coming. Hh? What do slaves and sugar to his own great profit.

Sebastian turned upon his tormentor, a free man save only for the wide iron bracelets and their connecting chain.

"Don Esteban has promised to buy my

"So?" The manager was plainly sur-

Sebastian went as noiselessly as he a business man. Be careful that some

Sebastian uttered a hoarse, animal

"I know but one thing," the slave de-Cueto staring after him meditatively. In the days following the birth of his children and the death of his wife, Don

Esteban Varona, as had been his custom, steered a middle course in politics, in the Spanish officials who ruled the island, or an open break with his Cuban neighbors, who rebelled beneath their wrongs.

This was no easy thing to do, for the rupt and quite ruthless, while most of the Orient. But Esteban dealt diplomatically

like jewels of tragic history, in time as- me tested. You know I am faithful. But, you ever think how fabulous that fortune ury and display, but with singular permaster, this secret is a great burden for must be by this time? Did you ever think sistence she demanded to know all about her husband's financial affairs.

Now Don Esteban was no longer young; age had source him with suspicion and by it, should occasion offer.

when once he saw himself as the victim of a mercenary marriage he turned bitprised. "I didn't know that." After a terly against his wife. Her curiosity he moment be began to laugh. "And yet you sullenly resented, and he unblushingly pretend to know nothing about the denied his possession of any considerable be worth more than you, her father. Don't the first of many. For the lady could forget that Don Esteban is before all else not rest without knowing all there was and his daughter, and even went so far to know about the treasure. Avaricious had come. On his way back to his quar- one doesn't make him so good an offer to her fingertips, she itched to weigh ters he took the path to the well-the for your girl that he will forget his those bags of precious metal and yearned to see those jewels burning upon her

bosom. Her mercenary mind magnified smoldering hatred.

Seeking the Gold

She searched the quinta, of course, whenever she had a chance, but she discovered nothing-with the result that the mystery began to engross her whole thought. She pried into the obscurest corners, she questioned the slaves, she lay awake at night listening to Esteban's breathing in the hope of surprising his secret from his dreams. Naturally such a life was trying to the husband, but as his wife's obsession grew his determination to foll her only strengthened. Outwardly, of course, the pair maintained a show of harmony, for they were proud and they occupied a position of some consequence in the community. But their private relations went from bad to worse. At length a time came when they lived agents of the Crown were uniformly cor- in frank enmity; when Isabel never spoke

to Esteban except in reproach or anger, native-born were either openly or secretly and when Esteban unlocked his lips only to taunt his wife with the fact that she had been thwarted despite her cunning. In most quarters, as time went on, the story of the Varona treasure was forgot-

Owing to the impossibility of importing ten, or at least put down as legendary.

Only Isahel, who, in spite of her hus- fine, dark head. "I'm not blind: I see rebels. No. Don Esteban hides it, and fear that he had made a serious mistake. band's secretiveness, learned much, and what goes on about me. This will make The black man spoke with a simplicity you help him. Come," he cried, disregard- Dona Isabel, he discovered, was both vain Pancho Cueto, who kept his own account a pretty scandal among your friendsprotect their fortunes. Certain hoards, that carried conviction. "You have seen ing Sebastian's murmurs of protest, "did and selfish. Not only did she crave lux- of the annual income from the business, she as black as the pit, and you ----held the matter in serious remembrance. The overseer was a patient man; he

watched with interest the growing discord at the quinta and planned to profit

It was only natural under such conditions that Dona Isabel should learn to dislike her stepchildren-Esteban had told her frankly that they would inherit whatever fortune he possessed. The thought that, after all, she might never share in the treasure for which she had sacrificed her youth and beauty was like to drive the woman mad, and, as may be imagined, she found ways to vent her spite upon the twins. She widened her hatred so as to include old Sebastian as to persecute Evangelina's sweetheart, a slave named Asensio.

It had not taken Dona Isabel long to guess the reason for Sebastian's many privileges, and one of her first efforts had been to win the old man's confidence. It was in vain, however, that she flattered and cajoled, or stormed and threatened; Sebastian withstood her as a towering ceiba withstands the summer heat and the winter hurricane.

His firmness made her vindictive, and so in time she laid a scheme to estrange him from his master.

Dona Isabel was crafty. She began to complain about Evangelina," but it was only after many months that she ventured to suggest to her husband that he sell the girl. Esteban, of course, refused pointblank; he was too fond of Sebastian's daughter, he declared, to think of such a thing."

"So, that is it," sneered Dona Isabel Well, she is young and shapely and handsome, as wenches go. I rather suspected you were fond of her-"

With difficulty Esteban restrained an oath. said, stiffly, "Sebastian has served me -faithfully, and Evangelina plays with my children. She is good to them; she is more of a mother to them than you eiry,

have ever been."

"Woman!" shouted the planter, "you have a sting like a scorpion."

"I won't have that wench in my house. Isabel flared out at him.

Gonded to fury by his wife's senseless accusation, Esteban cried: "Your house?

By what license do you call it yours?" "Am I not married to you?"

"Damnation! Yes-as a leech is marriad to its victim. You suck my blood." "Your blood!" The woman laughed shrilly. "You have no blood; your veins run vinegar. You are a miser." "Miser Miser! 1 grow sick of the word. It is all you find to taunt me with. Confess that you married me for

exclaimed.

frown upon his face. "What is this, my dears?" he inquired, thickly. "Run har" to your beds. This is no place for you." "We love Evangelina," piped the twins. "You must not let Don Pable

"Evangelina ?"

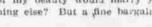
We want her to stay here. * * * sha

compliance with their demands, they spoke imperiously; but they had over seen a frown like this upon their father's face, and at his refusal their voices grew aqueaky with excitement and unextainty.

"We want Evangelina. She belongs to

CONTINUED IN MONDAY'S Evening Sales Wedger

my money," he roared. "Of course, I did! Do you think a woman of my beauty would marry you, for anything else? But a fine bargain I



made! "Vampire!"

"Wife or vampire, I intend-to rule this house, and I refuse to be shamed by a thick-lipped African. Her airs tell her story. She is insolent to ame, but-I sha'n't endure it. She laughs at me, Well, your friends shall haugh at you."

"Silence!" commanded Esteban. "Sell her." "No."

"Sell her, or---'

Esteban and Evangelina

Without waiting to hear her threat Esteban tossed his arms above his head and fied from the room. Flinging himself into the saddle, he spurred down the hill and through the town to the Casino de Espanol, where he spent the night at cards with the Spanish officials. But he

did not sell Evangelina. In the days that followed many simi- Don Esteban directed, finally. lar scenes occurred, and as Esteban's

home life grew more unhappy his dissi- us," they chorused, stubbernly-"You mistake my meaning," he pations increased. He drank and gambled heavily; he brought his friends to the quinta with him, and strove to forget domestic unpleasantness in boisterous rev-

His wife, however, found opportunities "Is that why you dress her like a lady? shough to weary and exasperate him with

do to help me? You alone can save ma You won't let Don Pablo take me away? It would kill me." "Wait!" Esteban scrambled out of bed

and stood beside his dusky nurse and playmate. "Don't cry any more. I'll tell papa that you don't like Don Pablo." Rosa followed. "Yes, come along,

brother," she cried, shrilly, "We'll tell Don Pablo to go home and leave our Evangelina."

"My blessed doves! But will they listen to you?" moaned the slave. "Papa does whatever we ask," they assured her, gravely. "If he should

growl we'll come back and hide you in the big wardrobe where nobody will ever flad you." Then hand in hand, with their long nightgowns lifted to their knees, they pattered out into the hall and down toward the living room, whence came the shouting and the laughter.

An Apparition

Don Mario de Castano, who was facing the door, stopped in the midst of a rb baid song to cry; "God be praised What's this I see?"

The others looked and then burst into merriment, for across the litter of cards and dice and empty glasses they saw & dimpled girl and boy, as like as 100 pens. They were just out of bed; they were peering through the smoke, and blinking like two little owls. Their evb dent embarrassment amused the guests

hugely. "So! You awaken the household with your songs," some one chided Don Maria. "Two cherubs from heaven." another

And a third cried, "A toatt to Estebuil's

beautiful children." But the father lurched forward, 4

have her-if you please."

They nodded. "We love her. * * * She plays with us every day,

belongs to us." Accustomed as they were to prompt

"Go to your rooms, my sweethearth,"

Bah! A likely story!" Isabel tonicd her