

RAINBOW'S END

By REX BEACH

Author of "The Spoilers," "The Barrier," "Heart of the Sunset"

A novel of love, hidden treasure and rebellion in beautiful, mysterious Cuba during the exciting days of the revolt against Spain.

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CHAPTER XIV (Continued)

"Yes, and an unusual woman. She has contributed liberally to our cause. Very well, but I've only one suit of clothes, and it looks as if I'd slept in it." "Oh, bother the clothes!" laughed the physician. "I've given most of mine to my destitute countrymen. Don't expect too much to eat, either; every extra dollar, you know, goes the same way as my extra trousers. It will be a sort of patriotic poverty party." Come at seven, please."

"Dining out, eh? Lucky devil!" said Leslie Branch when he had learned of his companion's invitation. "And to meet a philanthropic old lady! Good! Maybe she'll offer to adopt you. Who knows?"

"I wish you'd offer to lend me a clean shirt."

Brothers in Poverty

"I'll do it," readily agreed the other. "I'll stake you to my last one. But keep it clean! Have a care for the cuffs—a little inadvertency with the soup may ruin my prospects for a job. You understand, don't you, that our next meal after this one may depend upon this shirt's prosperous appearance?" Branch dove into his bag and emerged with a stiffly laundered shirt done up in a Cuban newspaper. He unwrapped the garment and gazed fondly upon it, murmuring, "Tis a pretty thing, is it not?" His exertions had brought on a violent coughing spell, which left him weak and gasping; but when he had regained his breath he went on in the same key: "Again I solemnly warn you that this spotless bosom is our bulwark against poverty. One stain may cut down my space rates; editors are an infernally cautious lot. Fortunately they want facts about the war in Cuba, and I'm full of 'em. I've fought in the trenches and heard the song of grape and canister—"

"Grapefruit and canned goods, you mean," O'Reilly grinned.

"Well, I shall write with both in mind. The hope of one will stir memories of the other. And who is there to dispute me? At least I shall try to thrill my readers with imaginary combats."

O'Reilly eyed the speaker with appreciation. On the way north he had learned to know Leslie Branch and to like him, for he had discovered that the man possessed a rare and pleasing peculiarity of disposition. Ordinarily Branch was bitter, irritable, pessimistic; but when his luck was worst and his fortunes lowest he brightened up. It seemed that he reacted naturally, automatically, against misfortune. Certainly his and O'Reilly's plight upon leaving Cuba had been sufficiently unpleasant for they were almost penniless, and the invalid, moreover, knew that he was facing a probably fatal climate; nevertheless, once they were at sea, he had ceased his grumblings, and had surprised his traveling companion by assuming a genuinely cheerful mien. Even yet O'Reilly was not over his amazement; he could not make up his mind whether the man was animated by desperate courage or merely by hopeless resignation. But whatever the truth, the effect of this typical perversity had been most agreeable. And when Leslie cheerfully volunteered to share the proceeds of his newspaper work during their stay in New York, thus enabling his friend to seize the first chance of returning to Cuba, Johnnie's affection for him was cemented. But Branch's very cheerfulness worried him; it seemed to betoken that the fellow was sicker than he would confess.

Miss Evans

That evening O'Reilly anticipated his dinner engagement by a few moments in order to have a word alone with Alvarado.

"I've seen Enriquez," he told the doctor, "but he won't promise to send me through. He says the Junta is besieged by fellows who want to fight for Cuba—and of course I don't. When I appealed

in Rosa's name he told me, truthfully enough, I dare say, that there are thousands of Cuban women as badly in need of succor as she. He says this is no time for private considerations."

"Quite so," the doctor agreed. "We hear frightful stories about this new concentration policy. I—can't believe them."

"Oh, I guess they are true; it is the more reason why I must get back at once," O'Reilly said earnestly.

"This lady who is coming here tonight has influence with Enriquez. You remember I told you that she has concentrated liberally. She might help you."

"I'll explore her to put in a word for me. What is she?"

that he was momentarily at a loss. Johnnie found himself looking into a pair of frank gray eyes, and felt his hand seized by a firm, almost masculine grasp. Miss Evans, according to his first dazzling impression, was about the most fetching creature he had ever seen and about the last person by whom any young man could be bored. If she kept cats they must be pedigreed Persian cats, and well worth keeping, Johnnie decided. The girl—and she was a girl—had brought into the room an electric vitality, a breeziness hard to describe. Her eyes were humorous and intelligent; her teeth, which she seemed always ready to show in a friendly, generous smile, were strong and white and sparkling. Altogether she was such a vision of health, unaffected and smartly gotten-up young womanhood that O'Reilly could only stammer his acknowledgment of the introduction, inwardly berating himself for his awkwardness. He was aware of Alvarado's amusement, and this added to his embarrassment.

Miss Evans interrupted breezily: "It wasn't any sacrifice at all. That's the worst of it. The saline I bought was really for my conscience, if you must know. I squander altogether too much on myself." Then, turning to O'Reilly, "I love extravagance, don't you?"

Norine Makes a Hit

"Dear!" It's my one unconquerable vice," he told her. He thought grimly of the four dollars in his pocket which represented his and Leslie Branch's total wealth, but it seemed to him that he was called upon to agree with anything Miss Evans might choose to say.

O'Reilly liked this girl. He had liked her the instant she favored him with her friendly smile, and so, trusting fatuously to his masculine powers of observation, he tried to analyze her. He could not guess her age, for an expensive ladies' tailor can baffle the most discriminating eye. Certainly, however, she was not too old—he had an idea that she would tell him her exact age if he asked

fortunate condition of affairs which had played the mischief with his own personal fortunes; he had not allowed himself to be very deeply affected by the rights or the wrongs of either party. But Norine Evans took a much deeper and broader view of the matter. She was genuinely moved by the gallant struggle of the Cuban people, and when the dinner was over she exploded a surprise which left both men speechless.

"This settles it with me," she announced. "I'm going down there."

Alvarado stared at her for a moment. "My dear—" he began.

But she warned him: "Don't argue with me. You know I detest arguments. I've been thinking about it for some time, and—"

"It is quite impossible," the doctor declared, firmly; and O'Reilly agreed.

"Of course, you could go to Havana," said the latter, "but you wouldn't be allowed to see anything."

"I'm going right to the Insurrectos with you."

"With me?" O'Reilly could not conceal his lack of enthusiasm. "I don't know that the Junta will take me."

"They will if I ask them."

Alvarado inquired, "What ever put such a ridiculous idea into your head?"

The girl laughed. "It's the only kind of ideas I have. But there are ten thousand reasons why I want to go. In the first place, I fairly itch to give pills. You say the rebels have no hospitals, no nurses—"

The Junta

"We do the best we can, with our equipment."

"Well, I'll supply better equipment, and I'll handle it myself. I'm in earnest. You shan't stop me."

O'Reilly was uncomfortably aware of the speaker's determination; protests had no effect upon her; her clear cheeks had flushed, her eyes were dancing. Evidently here was a girl who did very much as she chose.

"You don't realize what you are saying," he told her, gravely. "You'd have to go as a filibuster, on some decrepit, unseaworthy freighter loaded to the guards and crowded with men of all sorts. It's dangerous business, running the Spanish blockade. If captured you would be treated just like the rest of us."

"Lovely! We'd land in small boats some dark night. Maybe we'd have a fight."

"And if you got through, what then? Life in a bark hut, with nothing to eat, bugs! Snakes! Hardships!"

"That decides me. I eat too much—Doctor Alvarado tells me I do. I adore nuts, and I don't seriously object to insects."

The physician stirred uneasily. "It's utterly absurd," he expostulated. "Some women might do it, but you're not the sort. You are—pardon me—a most attractive young person. You'd be thrown among rough men."

"Mr. O'Reilly will look out for me. But for that matter I can take care of myself. Oh, it's of no use trying to discourage me. I always have my own way; I'm completely spoiled."

"Your family will never consent," O'Reilly ventured; whereupon Miss Evans laughed.

"I haven't such a thing. I'm alone and unencumbered. No girl was ever so fortunate. But wait—I'll settle this whole thing in a minute." She quitted the table, ran to Alvarado's telephone, and called a number.

"She's after Enriquez," growled the physician. "He's weak; he can't refuse her anything."

"I don't want a woman on my hands," O'Reilly whispered, fiercely. "Suppose she got sick? Good Lord! I'd have to nurse her." He wiped a sudden moisture from his brow.

"Oh, she won't get sick. She'll probably nurse you—and all the other men. You'll like it, too, and you will all fall in love with her—everybody does—and start fighting among yourselves. There! She has Enriquez. Listen."

Johnnie shivered apprehensively at the directness with which Miss Evans put her request. "You understand, I want to go and see for myself," she was saying. "If you need medicines, I'll give them—bushels of the nastiest stuff I can buy. I'll organize a field hospital. . . . Oh, very well, call it a bribe, if you like. Anyhow, I've fully determined to go, and Mr. O'Reilly has volunteered to take care of me. He's charmed with the idea."

Miss Evans giggled. "That means you'll have to take him along, too."

There followed a pause during which the two men exchanged dismayed glances.

She Persists

"She doesn't seem to care what she says," O'Reilly murmured. "But—I'll put a flea in Enriquez's ear."

"Put in it with care, please." There was another wait. "Now read it to me. . . . Good!" Miss Evans fairly purred over the telephone. "Send it to me by messenger right away, that's a dear. I'm at Doctor Alvarado's house, and he's beside himself with joy. Thanks, awfully. You're so nice." A moment, and she was back in the dining-room facing her two friends—a picture of triumph. "You have nothing more to say about it," she gloated. "The Provisional Government of Cuba, through its New York representative, extends to Miss Norine Evans an invitation to visit its temporary headquarters in the Sierra de—something-or-other, and deems it an honor to have her as its guest so long as she wishes to remain there. It requests that all military and civil officers afford her every safety and convenience within her power." That's virtually what Mr. Enriquez read to me. In fifteen minutes it will be here in black and white. Now then, let's celebrate."

She executed a dance step, proudest around the room, then plumped herself down into her chair. She rattled her cup and saucer noisily, crying, "Fill them up, Doctor Gloom. Let's drink to Cuba Libre."

Johnnie managed to smile as he raised his demi-tasse. "Here's to my success as a chaperon," said he. "I'm disliked by the Spaniards, and now the Cubans will hate me. I can see happy days ahead."

CHAPTER XV

FILIBUSTERS

LESLIE BRANCH was asleep when O'Reilly returned to their room, but he awoke sufficiently to listen to the latter's breathless account of the dinner party.

"I'm rattled," Johnnie confessed. "Why that girl just bounced right into the middle of everything, and—and I can't bounce her out again."

"You say she's young, and pretty, and—rich?" Leslie was incredulous.

"Yes! All of that."

"Um! Doctor Alvarado must mix a good cocktail."

"Why?"

"Because you're drunk and delirious. They don't come that way, my boy. When they're rich they're old and ugly."

"I tell you this girl is young and—stunning."

"Of course she is," Branch agreed, soothingly. "Now, go to sleep and don't think any more about her, there's a good boy! Everything will be all right in the morning. Perhaps it never happened; perhaps you didn't meet any woman at all!" The speaker yawned and turned over.

"Don't be an ass," Johnnie cried, impatiently. "What are we going to do with a woman on our hands?"

"We? Don't divide her with me. What are you going to do? The truth is plain, this Miss Evans is in love with you and you don't know it. She sees in you her soul mate. Well, if you don't want her, I want her. I'll eat her medicine. I'll even—martyr the poor old soul, if she's rich."

(CONTINUED MONDAY)

Altogether, Miss Evans was such a vision of healthy, unaffected and smartly gotten-up young womanhood that O'Reilly could only stammer his acknowledgment of the introduction.

"The doctor has told me all about you," Miss Evans addressed Johnnie over her shoulder as she laid off her furs and a stylish little turban hat. "I'm dying to hear what happened on your trip."

"So am I," confessed Alvarado. "You know, Mr. O'Reilly has seen my brothers."

Laying Plans

"You men must go right ahead and talk as if I weren't here. I won't interrupt. Except with a few vivas or carambas or—What are some other lady-like Spanish exclamations?"

"There aren't very many," Johnnie acknowledged. "I always try to swear in English."

Alvarado placed an affectionate hand upon Miss Evans's shoulder. "O'Reilly, this girl has done more for Cuba than any of us. She has spent a small fortune for medical supplies," said he.

"Those poor men must live on quinine," the girl exclaimed. "Any one who can bear to take the stuff ought to have all he wants. I've a perfect passion for giving pills."

"Oh, you may joke about it. All the same, if others would make the same sacrifice—"

her. While he could not call her beautiful, she was something immensely better—she was alive, human, interesting, and interested. The fact that she did not take her "mission" over-seriously proved that she was also sensible beyond most women. Yes, that was it! Norine Evans was a perfectly sensible, unspoiled young person, who showed the admirable effects of clean living and clean thinking coupled with a normal, sturdy constitution. O'Reilly told himself that here was a girl who could pour tea, nurse a sick man or throw a baseball.

The Decision

And she was as good as her promise. She did not interrupt when, during dinner, Alvarado led Johnnie to talk about his latest experience in Cuba, but, on the contrary, her unflinching interest induced O'Reilly to address his talk more often to her than to the doctor. He soon discovered that she understood the Cuban situation as well as or better than he, and that her sympathies were keen. When she did speak it was to ask intelligent questions, some of which, by the way, it taxed O'Reilly's wits to answer satisfactorily. Heretofore, Johnnie had looked upon the war primarily as an un-

fortunate condition of affairs which had played the mischief with his own personal fortunes; he had not allowed himself to be very deeply affected by the rights or the wrongs of either party. But Norine Evans took a much deeper and broader view of the matter. She was genuinely moved by the gallant struggle of the Cuban people, and when the dinner was over she exploded a surprise which left both men speechless.

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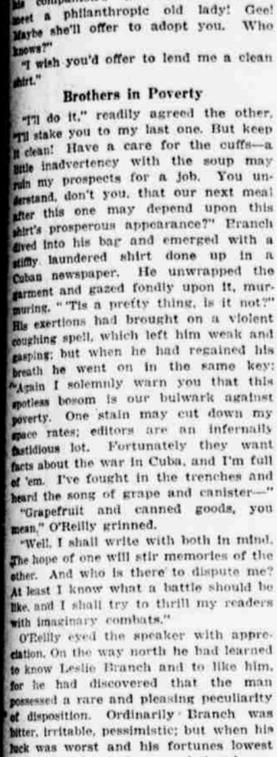
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 A British official photograph showing one of the subterranean refuge used to accommodate about seventy children and their caretakers, who remain safe from the raids upon the city.