

Esteban

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 BAN 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 the island. 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 beautiful Donna Isabel, who tries unsuccessfully to write the secret of the hidden treasure from Sebastian. Angered at this, she urges Don Esteban to sell Evangeline, Sebastian's daughter. Don Esteban refuses, but in the course of a gambling orgy, he risks Evangeline at cards and loses. Craved by the loss of his daughter, Sebastian kills Don Esteban and, at his refusal, she kills Sebastian. Don Esteban 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 marry him. Sebastian's daughter, Donna Isabel, falls to death while walking in her sleep. Esteban's connection with the intractable 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 come to her aid. O'Reilly returns to Cuba. Pancho Cuto, faithless 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 guerrilla, to their hiding place.

CHAPTER IX.

Murderers.

The surprise was easily effected, for Colonel Cobo's men were accomplished in this kind of thing. They crept on their hands and knees, crouching upon her bench, heard, saw nothing, until out of the shadows beside her human forms materialized. She screamed and sprang twice; then a palm closed over her mouth and she began to struggle like a cat.

Evangeline, who had waked at the first outcry, met the murderers as they rushed through the door. There were shouts and curses, loudly belated orders, a great commotion and pounding of feet upon the dirt floor of the hut, the rickety, bark-covered walls bulged and cracked. Over all sounded the shrieks of the negroes battling in the pitiable 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, thickset man in the uniform of a colonel of volunteers, and behind him Pancho Cuto. Tearing the hand from her lips for a moment, she cried Cobo'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."

Evangeline's cries of rage and defiance ceased, and with them the sounds of combat. From the blazing hobble ran two armed men, brushing sparks from their clothing. A third followed, dragging Evangeline by one naked arm.

Rosa felt herself avenged, 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. "Where is your brother?" said Cuto.

"More of your bungling. Cobo broke out of him, wretchedly. 'Cobo' was a mind to lose 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!"

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

"Well, we've taught him a lesson," said Cuto, grinning apprehensively at Cobo. "We've accomplished some-

thing which it afforded, he turned from Rosa call them away. Profiting by his intention, Rosa wriggled out of his grasp and ran to Evangeline, who lay face down in the dirt. She crawled up to her feet, 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 quarters. The walls of the hobble had fallen away to ashes, its skeleton of poles and its few pieces of crude furniture alone were smoldering. The negroes were 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 at him lying heretofore. She brushed the tears from her eyes.

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

"Oh, but you're going with me!" the girl roared. "I am a creature; she was a creature with indignation. 'Leave me!' she stormed. 'What have I done to you? Don't—' 'Caramba!' she yelled. 'I do not have strength, too, as I discovered. Must I bind those pretty hands or—'

Colonel Cobo reached forth, laughing, and enticed her to the powerful arms. Rosa fought him, but he had fought at the first moment of desperation, but he lifted her easily and began striding across the field behind his men.

Esteban's party made good time over the hills and into the San Juan, for Ascenso joined them in the night. Mid-afternoon found them in sight of La Joya. Cuto's cane was thick and high; it was ready for the knife or the sword. Hastily, Cuto mounted in the shelter of a wood and removed the bags which they had carried on their saddles. Inside these were several more found than the other, until it seemed that they must have left the forest filled with corpses.

Esteban was grave. He had heard of Cobo's capture, but he did not know that denuded figure out yonder in the trampled garden. He knew that serious consequences would follow. The colonel was not the sort of man to forgive a deep humiliation. Doubtless he would put a price upon the head of the man who had so humiliated him, and he would never allow them another encounter upon anywhere like even terms. Then, too, the narrowness of the road would lead the boy's heart to dissolve with terror.

After a conference with Ascenso he decided that they must prepare for flight, and that at any moment they all set out on their feet. Esteban hid in tents at leaving her precious garden plot. His left horse, one of those Llaneros who captured, carried a pitiful light burden—two tin snips, some pans and kettles, and a roll of charred bottles.

Johnnie O'Reilly had a difficult time in locating the residence of Ignacio Alvarado, but to communicate with him was quite another matter, inasmuch as every step was dogged by that persistent shadow from Nueva Esparta. 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 same hallway faded and smoked at every gust of wind. It was very dark outside; he reasoned that the streets could be described as black as night, but that book which Alvarado, the dentist, had given him, he took a position close inside his door. When he heard the cry and entered 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 flies were firm. He nimble sealed the door, crossed the street, and entered 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. At last! One week, and this numbing, heart-breaking delay would end; he would be free to take up his quest. But these seven days were down a week; they were leap eternities. The hours were like lead; O'Reilly could compose his mind for nothing; he was a fever impatient.

Esteban turned a sick, white face over his shoulder and at Alvarado's aid, then he kicked his feet into the street and 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 with an effort, the man, the yucca and sweet potatoes were several hilarious volunteers, their arms filled with loot from the cabin. Behind them strove office 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 spears, unslung 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 his neck. Nothing but the loss of his hand and his leg, as he rose to his feet, breathless and covered with the red dirt, there came a swift thudding of hoofs and Ascenso's voice, shouting, "The rocket. Esteban caught one glimpse of the negro's face, a feeling vision of white teeth bared to the gums, of distorted features; then Ascenso was fairly upon Colonel Cobo. The colonel, who had dropped his burden, now tried to dodge Ascenso's sword, but with his long, murderous machete, but the next instant he was engaged with a trooper who had fired almost in his face.

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Colonel Cobo, led by the terrified Pancho Cuto, turned and fled for cover, believing themselves in danger of annihilation. Nor was the colonel's mind so much as that of the trooper, for Ascenso's blade had cloven one full dark cheek to the bone, and the shock and pain had unnerved him.

The word was small, the jungle was closed at hand. A moment and the interlopers had vanished into it, all but one, who lay kicking among the broad mangrove leaves and over the bushes. Ascenso kept spurring his terrified horse, backing downward with insane fury.

This was the first hand-to-hand encounter between the two men, and their two styles of combat were grotesque. Flung their guns aside, they went crashing into the brush on the trail of their enemy.

Ascenso found himself 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 faith in his arms, both of them were fairly hysterical. Evangeline, thanks to her thick skull, was not dead. In the course of this fight, Rosa and Esteban's ministrations she regained her senses, and when the other men returned they found her lying sick and dazed, but otherwise quite well.

Then, there beside the ruins of the hut, was a strange scene of rejoicing. Ascenso recovered now from his burst of savagery, was tearful, compassionate for the man who had so humiliated him. He flung his arms around the other, and he began to tell him of his deeds of valor. Over and over they recounted their versions of the fight, each more fond than the other, until it seemed that they must have left the forest filled with corpses.

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identified as Ignacio Alvarado himself leaping to his feet and faced him, claiming:

"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 coat. "Come from your brother," Tomas. He asked me to hand you this book and to say that he is bringing 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 turned to the book then he at his caller. After a moment he made a sign to his wife, who left the room. Wiping his lips, he inquired, with an effort, "What do you mean?"

O'Reilly told him in a few words. Alvarado showed relief; he even smiled. "I see, too—Caramba! You gave me a start. And this book! He 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." Senior Alvarado frowned in deepest thought; then he said: "I have it! Every morning at half past nine a man

O'Reilly tipped out another oath and fought off the other's restraining hand. "Very well, then," cried Manin, "but have some thought of us who have risked our lives for you. Suppose you position cause by me, would you 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, when he heard the 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.

O'Reilly finds himself blocked by 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)

CAN WIN BATTLES AT HOME
Housewife Finds Joy in Thought That She Is Helping to Defeat the Hated Boche.

"It's a funny thing," said the Man to his wife the other night. "You used to like looking as I remember it. Breaking a new mind in was always a time of great trial and tribulation. But every night I come home to dinner you emerge from the kitchen almost as though you had to leave the mastery pieces with me, and you don't seem to greet your hard-working husband properly. What's the reason?"

"Well, said the wife of her husband, "I've been thinking about the game. I may not ever see any fighting, but I feel that out there in the kitchen I am helping France, England and last but not least, my own dear country to greet your hard-working husband properly. What's the reason?"

"Good girl," and the Man patted his wife's head. "I'm glad to hear you have no one to give the best we can do is to play the game over here as though we lived it."

Dog's Death Led to Suicide:
Mrs. Margaret Dugdale, wife of Norman Dugdale, J. P. of Dalton, Mass., near Black River, was found dead in a field near the grave of her favorite dog, which had been destroyed on account of old age. Depression followed, and she was suggested at the hospital as the cause of her suicide, says Lloyd's News, London. When found she was grasping a mallet with which she had been discharged the weapon and a loaded revolver was in a pocket near her. She fired a bullet into her head, and a note pinned to her dress gave directions for the disposal of her body.

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The day of days dawdled at last, and Johnnie O'Reilly, with his soda fountain, drinking insulin beverages and anxiously watching the street. In due time the negroes appeared, their eyes cast down, and they innocently disposed of O'Reilly's package he had carried beneath his coat. "Come from your brother," Tomas. He asked me to hand you this book and to say that he is bringing it with his thanks."

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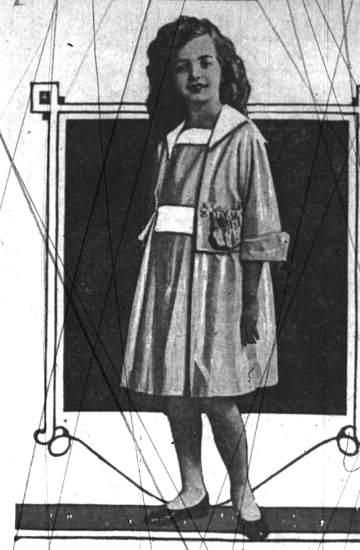
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Little Girls in Silk Attire



In the season's collection of pretty things for the flapper and for younger girls, there appear many plain little dresses made of taffeta, pongee and other wash silks that are practical for little girls. The "gingham taffetas" that were presented early in the spring were especially welcome for children's dresses and led up to the use of other silks. Pongee turns out to be a good choice as can be made for the smaller girls who may have this and gingham taffetas to add something splendid to their possessions, while the flapper rejoices in plain taffetas, finished with a little simple embroidery, and gingham taffetas made up to suit her choice as can be made for the smaller girls who may have this and gingham taffetas to add something splendid to their possessions, while the flapper rejoices in plain taffetas, finished with a little simple embroidery, and gingham taffetas made up to suit her choice as can be made for the smaller girls who may have this and gingham taffetas to add something splendid to their possessions, while the flapper rejoices in plain taffetas, finished with a little simple embroidery, and gingham taffetas made up to suit her choice as can be made for the smaller girls who may have this and gingham taffetas to add something splendid to their possessions, while the flapper rejoices in plain taffetas, finished with 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