

his hands, and remembered what was to come. He also remembered one who watched for his letters in England, and for whose sake he had taken the risk of attempting to recover Don Manuel's debt, and for the first time he groaned aloud.

"Awake at last?" said Deering. "I didn't sleep well myself. Anything in particular worrying you?"

"I was wondering if they would let me write a letter," said Henderson.

"No," was the answer. "They mean to fix this thing up quietly—I asked them. I wanted to write the senorita. Thank God she's safe, anyway."

Henderson was not particularly interested in the Senorita Beatriz, but he feared the reflection that must come with silence, and asked, "You were there a good many times, Deering? But did it ever strike you that these folks don't understand the game of flirtation as you play it in your country?"

"Flirtation be—devastated!" said Deering, striding across the room. "I've a good few dollars in the Standard Oil, and if my folks don't like it—well, they can do the opposite and be hanged to them. I'm going to marry her when this infernal nigger-hunting's over. That is—" and the speaker clenched his hands as he concluded lamely. "That is—I was going to."

Henderson had small cause for amusement, but he laughed hollowly, and Deering's face twisted into a worthless grin as he commented, "That's better! Under the circumstances one must do something, and laughing's better than—the other thing. Oh, yes, I guess it's childish vanity, but it's not fitting for whitemen to give themselves away before any kind of niggers—eh?"

Henderson could make no further conversation, and shuffling to the window watched the sunrise brighten across the clustering roofs of the old-world Spanish town and the sparkling sea. His eyes swept across it lovingly, while his thoughts sped swifter still to the unlovely British city wherein he had once dreamed of the garish light and colour of the tropics. Then he drew a deep breath, remembering that a gulf deeper and wider than any sea would shortly divide him from one he loved in that shattered land. Deering, who paced up and down, was not communicative during the next hour or two, and it jarred on Henderson to see dusky peasants trooping past into San Sebastian in holiday finery. It was almost a relief when there was a knocking at the door at last, and a man armed with an American rifle stood in the entrance beckoning them.

Henderson, still weak from fever, limped after him and stood blinking stupidly in the fierce sunlight outside, but he straightened himself when Deering would have slipped his arm through his own and took his place between the files of their dusky guard. There was a yell of, "Death to the Americans," and they moved forward down the roaring street. Twenty men with rifles led the way, more came behind with wicked bolo knives, and the guard were hard pressed to push their way through the surging crowd. Henderson glanced at the sea of dark-skinned faces and wondered that he felt little resentment. He knew the dusky people possessed their good qualities, though

they were vindictive, and, after an experience of Spaniards and Americans, had no particular reason to love white men. At one corner there was a stoppage, and a little girl thrust a cluster of fruit upon him. "Pobre Americano. For por la caridad," she lisped in Spanish; then added in a whisper, "Mira—look between them."

Henderson, finding a slip of paper, smuggled it into his pocket, then drew it out and read, "Take heart. Your friends lose no time."

"This is evidently for you, Deering. It is a lady's hand. They will be too late for ever unless they're here in the next few minutes," he said.

Then scarcely daring to hope he glanced at his comrades in misfortune as he dragged himself on. There was a Spaniard who walked moodily with his eyes fixed on the ground, a stolid, high-cheeked Chinaman, and a native of one of the Malayan provinces, who glared at the assembly with venomous disdain. Their quietness braced him, for Henderson, who considered he came of a superior race whose sons have demonstrated through all history that they could meet death lightly, felt he had its prestige to maintain. Perhaps Deering guessed his thoughts, for presently he said, "It would have come easier fighting, but I figure we have just got to make the best of it. Here we are."

They had arrived in the central plaza, and each detail of the scene burned itself into Henderson's brain—the dusty sunlight square swept clear by the ill-armed troops that swung into line, the endless faces behind the glinting weapons, and the group of uniformed officers slouching in most unsoldierly attitudes just outside the porch of the ancient Spanish church. He also noticed how the great cross on one corner towering against the blue, hung an inky shadow athwart the spot where he was signalled to stand, whilst, because the leathern curtain was drawn aside, a drone of chanting came out of the shadowy door.

Then an officer read aloud from a paper, setting forth the prisoners' offences, and when he had finished the chanting ceased and a Spanish priest of some missionary order came forth from the church. The swell of the organ and a stale savour of incense seemed to follow him. The Spaniard bent his head, the Chinaman shuffled a few paces away, while the Malay's lean hand slid wickedly to where his knife had been.

"These niggers aren't quite savages—tell the padre no thanks for me," said Deering. "Say, they're coming for us. Good-bye, partner. As I said, I'm sorry I let you into this. God forgive me."

The farewell was premature, for two soldiers dropped their rifle butts near the comrades' toes, and waved them backwards. Then there was an inarticulate murmur from the crowd, and Henderson saw three figures silhouetted against a glaring white wall—the sombre-clad Spaniard with slouch hat drawn low on his forehead on his knees, the blue-gowned Chinaman squatted on the ground with a look of mildly indignant astonishment upon his yellow face, while the Malay, who called on the God of the Moslem, stood erect with lips drawn back from his reddened teeth in a savage snarl, with a pose that suggested a wild beast about to spring. Facing them stood

a dozen dusky men awkwardly holding good modern rifles.

Somebody called sharply. With a flash of sunlight on the metal the barrels rose, there was an irregular spatter of red sparks, a rolling along hot walls of jarring reports, and a shrill scream rang out. Then a roar of voices went up, and a little, half-naked, bleeding form, swinging a glimmering bolo bounded like a panther out of the filmy smoke.

"What's that?" shouted Deering, quivering with excitement; and Henderson answered in broken gasps, "I rather think it's the Malay getting home. Bravo—oh, bravo! By the Lord he'll cut his way right through to the colonel! No—he's down! I wouldn't look just that way, Deering, if I were you."

The clamour subsided suddenly. There was a patter of running feet, a clanging of steel on stone, and Deering, whose lips twitched, stared at his comrade.

"It's over," said Henderson, thickly. "Even more than I bargained for. Pah! those brutes can't even shoot. Deering, it's our turn now."

A man with a smoking rifle strode in their direction across the plaza, and Henderson turned his eyes resolutely away from what lay at one end of it. Then the soldier halted, and a tumult began as somebody rode a lathered horse madly through the crowd. The officers consulted hurriedly, one shouted orders, and Deering gasped as he said, "Great Heavens!—they've clean forgotten us. What on this green earth is happening?"

The crowd broke up in a panic, the troops went off at a trot, there was a crackle of skirmishers firing, the blast of a volley, and a mad uproar in the hot street which debouched on the plaza, and Deering lunged his wide hat high into the air.

"It's either my boys come for me, or Ransome's Wild West," he shouted. "This place will smell of sulphur presently. Steady. Hold up, partner! We're through with it now."

Henderson, still very weak from fever and shaken by the revulsion of relief, greatly desired to sit down, for the hot walls reeled round him, but Deering held him upright, until, swinging along at a fast double with bayonets twinkling through the dust, white men in tattered uniforms poured file by file into the plaza. Most went through it and vanished, and Deering cheered them as they ran. Then a sun-bronzed officer, perhaps a little more ragged and dusty than the rest, came panting up with a company behind him, and nearly choked for want of breath as he rang Deering's hand.

"It's a mercy we got through in time," he spluttered. "Ransome's half-tamed cattle thieves will keep the niggers on the run. Twenty miles climb over mountains isn't a bad record in this climate—your down-easters, Deering, couldn't have made it. Oh, yes, but I'm forgetting. Here's the—lady who guided us, riding in."

"Good heavens! Is there a woman with you?" said Henderson, still slightly dazed as a white-robed mounted figure followed the last of the running files to enter the plaza.

"That's so," said the newcomer, a trifle drily. "We couldn't well leave her behind us among the niggers, and

she knew the country. I'd mighty hard work, to stop her showing the cattle boys the way in. She seemed kind of anxious about somebody."

Deering said nothing as he strode away, and next moment Henderson saw him standing bareheaded, broad hat in hand, beside a lathered horse, while Beatriz Reina, whose glossy hair was thick with dust, smiled down upon him. Then, because discipline in that regiment was slack, some of the weary men grinned broadly, and some of them cheered.

It was some time before Henderson next saw his comrade, and then he met him at the Commander's quarters in the departed Alcalde's house, where the officers regale themselves upon his provisions, and some of the untamed Westerners experimented with forbidden liquors.

"I've arranged for Miss Reina's safe journey home, and something else," Deering said with a smile. "It's strange how a man can make himself understood when he has to. You have seen me through the beginning, and mighty near the end—you've got to help me out with the sequel. We're to be married in Manila when this inglorious campaign's done. You'll promise, and shake hands on it, partner. Pity more of the rest of us couldn't shake hands, too. Tolerably promising sample of an International Alliance, eh?"

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