

THE

NE'ER-DO-WELL

A Romance of the Panama Canal

BY

REX BEACH

COPYRIGHT, 1910, 1911, BY HARPER & BROTHERS

handed had snapped to a perpetual grin, curled back as they were intended, his smile lit up the car, and he burst into loud laughter.

Kirk found that the report of his good fortune had spread far and wide. He was halted a score of times for congratulations; operators at the various stations yelled at him and waved their hands; Runnels wired "Hurrah!" at Gatun. A certain respect was in these greetings, too, for he had suddenly become a character.

As yet, however, he had not fully considered what this windfall meant to him. His first thought had been that he could now discharge his debts, go back to New York and clear himself before the law. Yet the more he thought of it the less eager he became to return. Seven thousand five hundred dollars in gold to Kirk Anthony of Panama, collector, was a substantial fortune. To Kirk Anthony of Albany, distributor, it was nothing. Suppose he went home and squared

his account with the police, what would he do then? Nothing, as usual. Here, he was proving that the Anthony breed was self supporting at least. And there was another reason, the weightiest of all. Long before he had reached the end of his run he realized that not 100 times the amount of this capital prize would tempt him to leave Panama before he had seen Chiquita.

Chiquita was beginning to seem like a dream. At times during the past week he had begun to wonder if she were not really a product of his own imagination. His fancy had played upon her so extravagantly that he feared he would not know her if ever they came face to face.

This was most unsatisfactory, and he reproached himself bitterly for the involuntary faithfulness that could allow her image to grow dim. He was almost without hope of seeing her again. And then, with the inconsequence of dreams and sprites, she appeared to him.

It was but a glimpse he had and a tantalizing flash of recognition from her eyes. It happened in the dusk during the confusion that accompanied the arrival of No. 7 at Panama. It lasted only a moment, and he lost sight of her again in the crowd.

But there was no doubt that she had recognized him, and nothing now could prevent him from continuing his search. The trouble was that his present occupation allowed him no opportunity. He was tied to the railroad except at night.

It was perhaps two weeks later that a serious shakeup occurred in the office force, of which no one seemed to know the cause. There was a mad scramble for advancement all along the line, in which Kirk took no part. But unexpectedly Runnels summoned him to his office.

"How would you like an inside position?" said the master of transportation, eyeing him keenly.

"So soon?"

"I said I'd advance you if you made good." He paused an instant, then said deliberately, "When you get the hang of things here you'll have a chance to be my assistant."

Kirk opened his eyes in amazement. "Gee! That's great! But do you think I can get away with it?"

"Not at once. It will take time, of course, and you'll have to work like the devil. Look here, Anthony, I'm partly selfish in this, for I believe you're the sort I'm going to want with me next year. The superintendent has had an offer from a big system in the States, and he's going to quit when his vacation comes. He likes me and he says I'll probably step into his shoes. Do you understand what that means? I'll need double I can count on—fellows who won't double cross me to make a dollar for themselves, or knife me when my back is turned. I've got to have an efficient, noiseless organization. Otherwise we'll all go under, for we'll be into politics up to our necks. I think you're my sort, so if you'll stick to me I'll help you and for every step I take I'll drag you up one."

"It's a go!" The two young men clasped hands heartily. Runnels had

struck the right note. Hence his former desire to prove himself a man. Kirk now felt a strong sense of loyalty to the one who had recognized his worth.

When he told his good news to Mrs. Cortlandt, her surprise was so cleverly simulated that he never dreamed that she had been at great pains to bring this thing about. Not that Runnels was indisposed to act upon his own initiative, but the circumstances that had made his action possible had been due to her. It was hard to profit a man against his will, but she profited by experience and took the line of least resistance.

The young man himself did not inquire too closely into the occasion of his advancement, and Edith Cortlandt was but little in his mind. He was consumed with the thought of Chiquita. He hoped that his new work would allow him more control of his time and perhaps put him in the way of learning her name. He could move in better society now.

CHAPTER XIV.

Garavel and His Daughter.

THESE were busy days for the Cortlandts. They entertained constantly, and the occasions when they dined without from one to a dozen guests became so exceptional as to elicit remark around the hotel. Most of their efforts were devoted to certain Panamanians of the influential class, and in company with one or more of these Cortlandt made frequent trips to the various quarters of the republic, sometimes absenting himself for days at a time.

During these intervals his wife assumed the direction of affairs and continued to entertain or be entertained. Her energy and resource seemed inexhaustible. Soon she became the social dictator of the city, and the most exclusive circles, American and Panamanian alike, allowed her to assume control.

The result was just what had been designed. Tourists and visiting newspaper people spoke glowingly of the amity between the two nations and wondered at the absence of that Spanish prejudice of which they had heard so much. Those who chanced to know the deeper significance of it all and were aware of the smoldering resentment that lay in the Latin mind commented admiringly upon her work and wondered what effect it would have upon the coming election.

No one but the woman herself and her husband really understood the tremendous difficulties of their task or the vital issues at stake. All who

came into contact with her recognized the master mind directing the campaign and, consciously or unconsciously, relegated her husband to the background.

To the Latin intellect this display of power on the part of the woman was a revelation. She knew the effect she produced and made the most of it.

Old Anibal Alvarez was perhaps the last fully to appreciate her. He did, however, learn in time that while he could successfully match his craft against that of the husband, the wife read him unerringly. The result was that he broke with them openly.

When news of this reached the members of the canal commission they were alarmed, and Colonel Jolson felt it necessary to make known their views upon the situation. Accordingly, a few nights later the Cortlandts dined at his handsome residence on the heights above Culebra. After their return to Panama the colonel, in whom was vested the supreme authority over his nation's interests, acknowledged that his acquaintance with diplomacy was as nothing as compared with Edith Cortlandt's.

"She thinks Garavel is the proper man," he said to Colonel Bland.

"Garavel is a banker. He's not a politician."

The chief engineer laughed. "All Spanish-Americans are politicians, colonel. They can't help it."

"Would he accept?"

"It is her business to find out. I had my doubts."

"But could he win? It would be a

community if he had American backing and failed. It would mean disaster."

"Co Mandi has been working carefully, and he has been in all the seven provinces. He admits that it might be done, and she is certain. Of course it will mean a fight—Alvarez won't give up easily—but if Garavel should be the next president it would be a fine thing for both countries."

Over at Panama the Cortlandts were looking for a house to lease. Affairs had reached a point where it seemed advisable to give up their quarters at the Tyrol and enter into closer contact with the life of the Spanish city. Meanwhile they gave a ceremonious little dinner, the one and only guest being Andres Garavel, the banker.

Of all the charming peoples of Central America there are perhaps none more polished and well bred than the upper class Panamanians. Of this agreeable type Senor Garavel was an admirable example, having sprung from the finest Castilian stock, as a name running back through the pages of history to the earliest conquests attested.

The present bearer of the name was of distinguished appearance. He was swarthy of skin, his hair was snow white, and he had stern black eyes of great intelligence. He was courtly and deliberate, evincing a pride that sprang not only from good blood but from good deeds. His poise was that of a man with heavy responsibilities, for Andres Garavel was a careful banker and a rich one. He was widely traveled, well informed and an agreeable talker.

"I am so disappointed that your daughter could not come," Edith told him for the second time. "I'm afraid she objects to our American informality."

"No, no, my dear lady," said their guest. "She admires American customs, as I do. We are progressive—we have traveled. In my home, in my private life, perhaps, I am a Panamanian, but in my business and in my contact with other people I am as they are. It is the same with my daughter. She has had a wide education for a child. She has traveled, she speaks five languages, and yet underneath it all she is a Garavel and hence a Panamanian. She is all I have, and my life is hers."

The meal progressed with only the customary small talk to enliven it, but as soon as the three had adjourned to the Cortlandt suit the host of the evening proceeded to approach the subject in his mind as directly as the circumstances permitted. Through a series of natural transitions the conversation was brought around to politics, and Garavel was adroitly sounded. But he displayed little interest. When at last he consented to show his awareness of the suggestion so constantly held out he spoke with deliberate intention.

"General Alvarez is my respected friend," he said, with a quietness that intensified his meaning, "and I rejoice that he will be the next president of Panama."

"You, of course, know that there is opposition to him?"

"All Panama knows that."

"General Alvarez does not seem to be a friend of the United States. May I speak frankly?"

Garavel inclined his white head without removing his intense, dark eyes from the speaker.

"Don Anibal Alvarez can never be president of Panama."

The banker made no visible movement, yet the effect of this positive declaration was almost like that of a blow. After a pause he said:

"May I tell him you said so?"

"If you wish, but I do not think you will."

The hearer let his eyes flit questioningly to Mrs. Cortlandt's face to find her smiling at him.

"Believe me, dear lady," he said, "I suspected that there were grave reasons for this interview, but as yet I am at sea. I am not a politician, you know. I shall have no voice in our political affairs."

"Of course we know that, Senor Garavel, and of course there are grave reasons why we wished to talk with you. As Stephen has said, General Alvarez cannot be president."

"Malam," he said coldly. "Panama is a republic. The voice of the people is supreme."

"Down in your heart do you really think so?" She was still smiling at him. "No! The United States is supreme."

"Ah! That day will come, perhaps—I have said so. I look forward to it as the best solution, but—"

"The day has come."

"Even so, Alvarez is an honorable man, a strong man and the wealthiest man in our country."

"You are also a rich man, a man of ability," said Cortlandt. "Your name is second to none in all Central America. There is no one better."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the banker, in a strange voice. "If No, no!"

"And why not? Have you never had political aspirations?"

"Of course. All men have dreams. I was secretary of finance under Amador, but the Garavels have never really been public men. Politics have been a curse to our house. My grand-

Dependable Lime and Sulphur Spray at Williams Drug Co.

Wilson is off the job, Smith sells fruit trees and Tripp still sells real estate.

For trade a good wagon, as good as new, either two or four horse, for trade for a good horse. For particulars inquire at this office.

HERCULES CLEANING & PRESSING PARLORS

Under New Management.

G. A. LOCHRIDGE AND MOTHER, PROPS.

Ladies Cleaning, Pressing and Tailoring a Specialty

Agents for the Famous A. E. Anderson Tailoring Company. Spring Samples now on Display See Our Line

Located Corner Monmouth & Rail Road Sts.

Phone 7121

INDEPENDENCE, OREGON.

Pianos

**Knabe, Vose & Sons,
Fisher, Bush & Lane,
Hobart M. Cable, Kohler & Campbell, Andrew Kohler.**

Player Pianos

These are some of the high grade pianos carried by

The Savage Music House

135 North Liberty St. Salem, Or.

We will take your old piano or organ in exchange on new pianos and give you terms to suit.

Independence headquarters
BEAVER HOTEL



THE RED CROSS PHARMACY

Your Penstar Store

has the right face cream to keep your complexion at its best in spite of March winds. The name is Penstar Buttermilk Cerate. It is not a vanishing cream—it restores the natural velvety softness of the skin.

Apply it lightly, massage gently, and wipe off with a soft dry cloth. You will be delighted with Penstar Buttermilk Cerate. Get a large 50 cent jar here today.