

THE ST. JOHN EVENING TIMES, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 1904.

Hemming, The Adventurer

BY THEODORE ROBERTS

(Continued.) CHAPTER VIII. Captain Santos Visits His Superior Officer. Hemming got back to the village in time to change and dine with the family. The President's mind was elsewhere than at the table. He would look about the room, starting at the shadows beyond the candlelight, as if seeking something. He pushed the chair past him, and ordered rye whiskey. His kind face showed lines unknown to it a month before. Mrs. Tetsou watched him anxiously. Marion and the commander-in-chief talked together like well-versed comrades, laughing sometimes, but for the most part serious. Marion was paler than of old, but none the less beautiful for that. Her eyes were brighter, with a light that seemed to burn far back in them, steady and tender. Her lips were ever on the verge of smiling. Hemming told her all of his interview with the peasant woman, and part of his interview with Scott. "There will be trouble soon," he said. She begged him not to stir it up until Valentine was well enough to have a finger in it. "You may not think him very clever," she said, "but even you will admit that he shoots straight, and has courage."

"I will admit anything in his favour," replied Hemming, "but as for his shooting, why, thank Heaven, I have never tested it." "Wasn't he very rude to you one day?" she asked. He laughed quietly. "The circumstances warranted it, but he was rude to the wrong person, don't you think?" "No, indeed," she cried, "for no matter how minuscule a quantity your guilt, or how full of fault I had been, it would never have done for him to threaten me with a—" She paused. "Service revolver?" said Hemming, "and one of my own at that." "Fever is a terrible thing," she said, gazing at the red heart of the claret. "My dear sister," said the Englishman, "a man would gladly offer more to win less."

"Then you do not think too badly of me?" she asked. "I think everything that is jolly of both of you," he replied. "I like your friendship," she said, "for though you seem such a good companion, I do not believe you give it lightly." After the coffee and an aimless talk with Tetsou, Hemming looked in at Hicks and found him drinking chicken broth as if he liked it. The invalid was strong enough to manage the spoon himself, but Marion held the bowl. Hemming went up to his own room, turned on the light above his desk, and began to write. He worked steadily until ten o'clock. Then he walked up and down the room for awhile, rolling and smoking cigarettes. The old ambler had him in its clutches. Fernamba, with its heat, its dulness, its love and hate, had faded away. Now he played a bigger game—a game for the world rather than for half a battalion of little brown soldiers. A knock sounded on his door, and before he could answer it, Captain Santos, glorious in his white and gold, stepped into the room. The sight of the Brazilian brought his dreams to the dust. "Damn," he said, under his breath. "Then he waved his subordinate to a seat."

"A drink?" queried Hemming, turning toward the bell. "Not now," said the captain, "but afterward, if you then offer it to me." He swallowed hard, looked down at his polished boots, slotted at the ceiling, and presently at his superior officer's staring eye-glass. From this he seemed to gather courage. "I have disturbed you at your rest, at your private work," he said, with a motion of the hand toward the untidy desk, "but my need is great. I must choose between disloyalty to my brother officers, and disloyalty to you and the President. I have chosen, sir, and I now resign my commission. I will no longer ride and drink and eat with robbers and liars. It is not work for a gentleman." He paused and smiled pathetically. "I will go away. There is nothing else for my father's son to do."

"I heard something of this—no longer ago than to-day," said Hemming. Santos lit a cigar and puffed for awhile in silence. "I winked at it too long," he said, at last, "for I was dreaming of other things. So that I kept my own hands clean I did not care. Then you came, and I watched you. I saw that duty was the great thing, after all—even for a gentleman, might earn his pay decently." Hemming smiled, and polished his eye-glass on the lining of his dinner-jacket. "Thank you, old chap. You have a queer way of putting it, but catch the idea," he said. The captain bowed. "I will go away, and not very far for I would like to be near, to help you in any trouble. Our dear friend Valentine, whom I love as a brother, is not yet strong. The President, whom I honour, is not a fighter, I think. The ladies should go to the coast."

"You are right," said Hemming, "but do not leave us for a day or two. I will consider your resignation. Now for a drink." He rang the bell, and then pulled a chair close to Santos. When Smith had gone from the room, leaving the decanter and soda-water behind him, the two soldiers touched glasses and drank. They were silent. The Brazilian felt better now, and the Englishman was thinking too hard to talk. A gust of wind banged the wooden shutters at the windows. It was followed by a flash of lightning. Then came the rain, pounding and splashing on the roof, and hammering the palms in the garden. "That's sudden," said Hemming. "Things happen suddenly in this country," replied Santos. Hemming leaned back and crossed his legs. "Have you seen Hicks since the fever bowled him?" he asked. "No," replied the captain, "so I have not seen him, but he is my friend and I wish him well. Is it not through our friends, Hemming, that we come by our griefs? It has seemed so to me."

Hemming glanced at him quickly, but said nothing. Santos was a gentleman, and might safely be allowed to make confessions. "When I first came here," continued the captain, "I was poor, and the Brazilian army owed me a whole year's back pay. I had spent much on clothes and on horses, trying hard to live like my father's son. Mr. Tetsou offered me better pay, and a gator uniform. I was willing to play at soldiering, for I saw that some gain might be made from it, outside the pay. My brother officers saw this also, and we talked of it often. Then Miss Tetsou came to Fernamba. I rode out with her to show her the country. I told her of my father, and of how, when they carried him in from the field, they found that the Order of Bolivar had been driven edgewise through his tunic and into his breast by the blow of a bullet. And when I saw the look on her face, my pride grew, but changed in some way, and it seemed to me that the son of that man should have a living and the crushing of the poor to men of less distinction. "Sometimes my heart was bitter within me, and my fingers itched for the feel of Valentine's throat. But I hope I was always polite," Hemming. He got lightly to his feet, and held out his hand. "Sometimes my heart was bitter within me, and my fingers itched for the feel of Valentine's throat. But I hope I was always polite," Hemming. He got lightly to his feet, and held out his hand. "Sometimes my heart was bitter within me, and my fingers itched for the feel of Valentine's throat. But I hope I was always polite," Hemming. He got lightly to his feet, and held out his hand.

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