**A Ruler of Men**

O. Henry

I walked the streets of the City of Insolence, thirsting for the sight of a stranger face. For the City is a desert of familiar types as thick and alike as the grains in a sand-storm; and you grow to hate them as you do a friend who is always by you, or one of your own kin.

And my desire was granted, for I saw near a corner of Broadway and Twenty-ninth Street, a little flaxen-haired man with a face like a scaly-bark hickory-nut, selling to a fast-gathering crowd a tool that omnigeneously proclaimed itself a can-opener, a screw-driver, a button-hook, a nail-file, a shoe-horn, a watch-guard, a potato-peeler; and an ornament to any gentleman’s key-ring.

And then a stall-fed cop shoved himself through the congregation of customers. The vender, plainly used to having his seasons of trade thus abruptly curtailed, closed his satchel and slipped like a weasel through the opposite segment of the circle. The crowd scurried aimlessly away like ants from a disturbed crumb. The cop, suddenly becoming oblivious of the earth and its inhabitants, stood still, swelling his bulk and putting his club through an intricate drill of twirls. I hurried after Kansas Bill Bowers, and caught him by an arm.

Without his looking at me or slowing his pace, I found a five-dollar bill crumpled neatly into my hand.

“I wouldn’t have thought, Kansas Bill,” I said, “that you’d hold an old friend that cheap.”

Then he turned his head, and the hickory-nut cracked into a wide smile.

“Give back the money,” said he, “or I’ll have the cop after you for false pretenses. I thought you was the cop.”

“I want to talk to you, Bill,” I said. “When did you leave Oklahoma? Where is Reddy McGill now? Why are you selling those impossible contraptions on the street? How did your Big Horn gold-mine pan out? How did you get so badly sunburned? What will you drink?”

“A year ago,” answered Kansas Bill systematically. “Putting up windmills in Arizona. For pin money to buy etceteras with. Salted. Been down in the tropics. Beer.”

We foregathered in a propitious place and became Elijahs while a waiter of dark plumage played the raven to perfection. Reminiscence needs must be had before I could steer Bill into his epic mood.

“Yes,” said he, “I mind the time Timoteo’s rope broke on that cow’s horns while the calf was chasing you. You and that cow! I’d never forget it.”

“The tropics,” said I, “are a broad territory. What part of Cancer of Capricorn have you been honoring with a visit?”

“Down along China or Peru—or maybe the Argentine Confederacy,” said Kansas Bill. “Anyway ‘twas among a great race of people, off-colored but progressive. I was there three months.”

“No doubt you are glad to be back among the truly great race,” I surmised. “Especially among New Yorkers, the most progressive and independent citizens of any country in the world,” I continued, with the fatuity of the provincial who has eaten the Broadway lotus.

“Do you want to start an argument?” asked Bill.

“Can there be one?” I answered.

“Has an Irishman humor, do you think?” asked he.

“I have an hour or two to spare,” said I, looking at the cafe clock.

“Not that the Americans aren’t a great commercial nation,” conceded Bill. “But the fault laid with the people who wrote lies for fiction.”

“What was this Irishman’s name?” I asked.

“Was that last beer cold enough?” said he.

“I see there is talk of further outbreaks among the Russian peasants,” I remarked.

“His name was Barney O’Connor,” said Bill.

Thus, because of our ancient prescience of each other’s trail of thought, we travelled ambiguously to the point where Kansas Bill’s story began:

“I met O’Connor in a boardinghouse on the West Side. He invited me to his hall-room to have a drink, and we became like a dog and a cat that had been raised together. There he sat, a tall, fine, handsome man, with his feet against one wall and his back against the other, looking over a map. On the bed and sticking three feet out of it was a beautiful gold sword with tassels on it and rhinestones in the handle.

“‘What’s this?’ says I (for by that time we were well acquainted). ‘The annual parade in vilification of the ex-snakes of Ireland? And what’s the line of march? Up Broadway to Forty-second; thence east to McCarty’s cafe; thence—’

“‘Sit down on the wash-stand,’ says O’Connor, ‘and listen. And cast no perversions on the sword. ‘Twas me father’s in old Munster. And this map, Bowers, is no diagram of a holiday procession. If ye look again. ye’ll see that it’s the continent known as South America, comprising fourteen green, blue, red, and yellow countries, all crying out from time to time to be liberated from the yoke of the oppressor.’

“‘I know,’ says I to O’Connor. ‘The idea is a literary one. The tencent magazine stole it from “Ridpath’s History of the World from the Sand-stone Period to the Equator.” You’ll find it in every one of ‘em. It’s a continued story of a soldier of fortune, generally named O’Keefe, who gets to be dictator while the Spanish-American populace cries “Cospetto!” and other Italian maledictions. I misdoubt if it’s ever been done. You’re not thinking of trying that, are you, Barney?’ I asks.

“‘Bowers,’ says he, ‘you’re a man of education and courage.’

“How can I deny it?’ says I. ‘Education runs in my family; and I have acquired courage by a hard struggle with life.’

“‘The O’Connors,’ says he, ‘are a warlike race. There is me father’s sword; and here is the map. A life of inaction is not for me. The O’Connors were born to rule. ‘Tis a ruler of men I must be.’

“‘Barney,’ I says to him, ‘why don’t you get on the force and settle down to a quiet life of carnage and corruption instead of roaming off to foreign parts? In what better way can you indulge your desire to subdue and maltreat the oppressed?’

“‘Look again at the map,’ says he, ‘at the country I have the point of me knife on. ‘Tis that one I have selected to aid and overthrow with me father’s sword.’

“‘I see,’ says I. ‘It’s the green one; and that does credit to your patriotism, and it’s the smallest one; and that does credit to your judgment.’

“‘Do ye accuse me of cowardice?’ says Barney, turning pink.

“‘No man,’ says I, ‘who attacks and confiscates a country single-handed could be called a coward. The worst you can be charged with is plagiarism or imitation. If Anthony Hope and Roosevelt let you get away with it, nobody else will have any right to kick.’

“‘I’m not joking,’ says O’Connor. ‘And I’ve got $1,500 cash to work the scheme with. I’ve taken a liking to you. Do you want it, or not?’

“‘I’m not working,’ I told him; ‘but how is it to be? Do I eat during the fomentation of the insurrection, or am I only to be Secretary of War after the country is conquered? Is it to be a pay envelope or only a portfolio?’

“I’ll pay all expenses,’ says O’Connor. “I want a man I can trust. If we succeed you may pick out any appointment you want in the gift of the government.’

“‘All right, then,’ says I. ‘You can get me a bunch of draying contracts and then a quick-action consignment to a seat on the Supreme Court bench so I won’t be in line for the presidency. The kind of cannon they chasten their presidents with in that country hurt too much. You can consider me on the pay-roll.’

“Two weeks afterward O’Connor and me took a steamer for the small, green, doomed country. We were three weeks on the trip. O’Connor said he had his plans all figured out in advance; but being the commanding general, it consorted with his dignity to keep the details concealed from his army and cabinet, commonly known as William T. Bowers. Three dollars a day was the price for which I joined the cause of liberating an undiscovered country from the ills that threatened or sustained it. Every Saturday night on the steamer I stood in line at parade rest, and O’Connor handed ever the twenty-one dollars.

“The town we landed at was named Guayaquerita, so they told me. `Not for me,’ says I. ‘It’ll be little old Hilldale or Tompkinsville or Cherry Tree Corners when I speak of it. It’s a clear case where Spelling Reform ought to butt in and disenvowel it.’

“But the town looked fine from the bay when we sailed in. It was white, with green ruching, and lace ruffles on the skirt when the surf slashed up on the sand. It looked as tropical and dolce far ultra as the pictures of Lake Ronkonkoma in the brochure of the passenger department of the Long Island Railroad.

“We went through the quarantine and custom-house indignities; and then O’Connor leads me to a ‘dobe house on a street called ‘The Avenue of the Dolorous Butterflies of the Individual and Collective Saints.’ Ten feet wide it was, and knee-deep in alfalfa and cigar stumps.

“‘Hooligan Alley,’ says I, rechristening it.

“”Twill be our headquarters,’ says O’Connor. ‘My agent here, Don Fernando Pacheco, secured it for us.’

“So in that house O’Connor and me established the revolutionary centre. In the front room we had ostensible things such as fruit, a guitar, and a table with a conch shell on it. In the back room O’Connor had his desk and a large looking-glass and his sword hid in a roll of straw matting. We slept on hammocks that we hung to hooks in the wall; and took our meals at the Hotel Ingles, a beanery run on the American plan by a German proprietor with Chinese cooking served a la Kansas City lunch counter.

“It seems that O’Connor really did have some sort of system planned out beforehand. He wrote plenty of letters; and every day or two some native gent would stroll round to headquarters and be shut up in the back room for half an hour with O’Connor and the interpreter. I noticed that when they went in they were always smoking eight-inch cigars and at peace with the world; but when they came out they would be folding up a ten-or twenty-dollar bill and cursing the government horribly.

“One evening after we had been in Guaya—in this town of Smellville-by-the-Sea—about a month, and me and O’Connor were sitting outside the door helping along old tempus fugit with rum and ice and limes, I says to him:

“‘If you’ll excuse a patriot that don’t exactly know what he’s patronizing, for the question—what is your scheme for subjugating this country? Do you intend to plunge it into bloodshed, or do you mean to buy its votes peacefully and honorably at the polls?’

“‘Bowers,’ says he, ‘ye’re a fine little man and I intend to make great use of ye after the conflict. But ye do not understand statecraft. Already by now we have a network of strategy clutching with invisible fingers at the throat of the tyrant Calderas. We have agents at work in every town in the republic. The Liberal party is bound to win. On our secret lists we have the names of enough sympathizers to crush the administration forces at a single blow.’

“‘A straw vote,’ says I, ‘only shows which way the hot air blows.’

“‘Who has accomplished this?’ goes on O’Connor. ‘I have. I have directed everything. The time was ripe when we came, so my agents inform me. The people are groaning under burdens of taxes and levies. Who will be their natural leader when they rise? Could it be any one but meself? ‘Twas only yesterday that Zaldas, our representative in the province of Durasnas, tells me that the people, in secret, already call me “El Library Door,” which is the Spanish manner of saying “The Liberator.”’

“‘Was Zaldas that maroon-colored old Aztec with a paper collar on and unbleached domestic shoes?’ I asked.

“‘He was,’ says O’Connor.

“‘I saw him tucking a yellow-back into his vest pocket as he came out,’ says I. ‘It may be,’ says I, ‘that they call you a library door, but they treat you more like the side door of a bank. But let us hope for the worst.’

“‘It has cost money, of course,’ says O’Connor; ‘but we’ll have the country in our hands inside of a month.’

“In the evenings we walked about in the plaza and listened to the band playing and mingled with the populace at its distressing and obnoxious pleasures. There were thirteen vehicles belonging to the upper classes, mostly rockaways and old-style barouches, such as the mayor rides in at the unveiling of the new poorhouse at Milledgeville, Alabama. Round and round the desiccated fountain in the middle of the plaza they drove, and lifted their high silk hats to their friends. The common people walked around in barefooted bunches, puffing stogies that a Pittsburg millionaire wouldn’t have chewed for a dry smoke on Ladies’ Day at his club. And the grandest figure in the whole turnout was Barney O’Connor.

“Six foot two he stood in his Fifth Avenue clothes, with his eagle eye and his black moustache that tickled his ears. He was a born dictator and czar and hero and harrier of the human race. It looked to me that all eyes were turned upon O’Connor, and that every woman there loved him, and every man feared him. Once or twice I looked at him and thought of funnier things that had happened than his winning out in his game; and I began to feel like a Hidalgo de Officio de Grafto de South America myself. And then I would come down again to solid bottom and let my imagination gloat, as usual, upon the twenty-one American dollars due me on Saturday night.

“‘Take note,’ says O’Connor to me as thus we walked, ‘of the mass of the people. Observe their oppressed and melancholy air. Can ye not see that they are ripe for revolt? Do ye not perceive that they are disaffected?’

“‘I do not,’ says I. `Nor disinfected either. I’m beginning to understand these people. When they look unhappy they’re enjoying themselves. When they feel unhappy they go to sleep. They’re not the kind of people to take an interest in revolutions.’

“‘They’ll flock to our standard,’ says O’Connor. ‘Three thousand men in this town alone will spring to arms when the signal is given. I am assured of that. But everything is in secret. There is no chance for us to fail.’

“On Hooligan Alley, as I prefer to call the street our headquarters was on, there was a row of flat ‘dobe houses with red tile roofs, some straw shacks full of Indians and dogs, and one two-story wooden house with balconies a little farther down. That was where General Tumbalo, the comandante and commander of the military forces, lived. Right across the street was a private residence built like a combination bake-oven and folding-bed. One day, O’Connor and me were passing it, single file, on the flange they called a sidewalk, when out of the window flies a big red rose. O’Connor, who is ahead, picks it up, presses it to his fifth rib, and bows to the ground. By Carrambos! that man certainly had the Irish drama chaunceyized. I looked around expecting to see the little boy and girl in white sateen ready to jump on his shoulder while he jolted their spinal columns and ribs together through a breakdown, and sang: `Sleep, Little One, Sleep.’

“As I passed the window I glanced inside and caught a glimpse of a white dress and a pair of big, flashing black eyes and gleaming teeth under a dark lace mantilla.

“When we got back to our house O’Connor began to walk up and down the floor and twist his moustaches.

“`Did ye see her eyes, Bowers?’ he asks me.

“`I did,’ says I, `and I can see more than that. It’s all coming out according to the story-books. I knew there was something missing. ‘Twas the love interest. What is it that comes in Chapter VII to cheer the gallant Irish adventurer? Why, Love, of course—Love that makes the hat go around. At last we have the eyes of midnight hue and the rose flung from the barred window. Now, what comes next? The underground passage— the intercepted letter—the traitor in camp—the hero thrown into a dungeon—the mysterious message from the senorita—then the outburst—the fighting on the plaza—the—’

“‘Don’t be a fool,’ says O’Connor, interrupting. ‘But that’s the only woman in the world for me, Bowers. The O’Connors are as quick to love as they are to fight. I shall wear that rose over me heart when I lead me men into action. For a good battle to be fought there must be some woman to give it power.’

“`Every time,’ I agreed, ‘if you want to have a good lively scrap. There’s only one thing bothering me. In the novels the light-haired friend of the hero always gets killed. Think ‘em all over that you’ve read, and you’ll see that I’m right. I think I’ll step down to the Botica Espanola and lay in a bottle of walnut stain before war is declared.’

“‘How will I find out her name?’ says O’Connor, layin’ his chin in his hand.

“‘Why don’t you go across the street and ask her?’ says I.

“‘Will ye never regard anything in life seriously?’ says O’Connor, looking down at me like a schoolmaster.

“‘Maybe she meant the rose for me,’ I said, whistling the Spanish Fandango.

“For the first time since I’d known O’Connor, he laughed. He got up and roared and clapped his knees, and leaned against the wall till the tiles on the roof clattered to the noise of his lungs. He went into the back room and looked at himself in the glass and began and laughed all over from the beginning again. Then he looked at me and repeated himself. That’s why I asked you if you thought an Irishman had any humor. He’d been doing farce comedy from the day I saw him without knowing it; and the first time he had an idea advanced to him with any intelligence in it he acted like two twelfths of the sextet in a ‘Floradora’ road company.

“The next afternoon he comes in with a triumphant smile and begins to pull something like ticker tape out of his pocket.

“‘Great !’ says I. ‘This is something like home. How is Amalgamated Copper to-day?’

“‘I’ve got her name,’ says O’Connor, and he reads off something like this: ‘Dona Isabel Antonia Inez Lolita Carreras y Buencaminos y Monteleon. She lives with her mother,’ explains O’Connor. ‘Her father was killed in the last revolution. She is sure to be in sympathy with our cause.’

“And sure enough the next day she flung a little bunch of roses clear across the street into our door. O’Connor dived for it and found a piece of paper curled around a stem with a line in Spanish on it. He dragged the interpreter out of his corner and got him busy. The interpreter scratched his head, and gave us as a translation three best bets: ‘Fortune had got a face like the man fighting’; ‘Fortune looks like a brave man’; and ‘Fortune favors the brave.’ We put our money on the last one.

“‘Do ye see?’ says O’Connor. ‘She intends to encourage me sword to save her country.’

“‘It looks to me like an invitation to supper,’ says I.

“So every day this senorita sits behind the barred windows and exhausts a conservatory or two, one posy at a time. And O’Connor walks like a Dominecker rooster and swells his chest and swears to me he will win her by feats of arms and big deeds on the gory field of battle.

“By and by the revolution began to get ripe. One day O’Connor takes me into the back room and tells me all.

“‘Bowers,’ says he, ‘at twelve o’clock one week from to-day the struggle will take place. It has pleased ye to find amusement and diversion in this project because ye have not sense enough to perceive that it is easily accomplished by a man of courage, intelligence, and historical superiority, such as meself. The whole world over,’ says he, ‘the O’Connors have ruled men, women, and nations. To subdue a small and indifferent country like this is a trifle. Ye see what little, barefooted manikins the men of it are. I could lick four of ‘em single-handed.’

“‘No doubt,’ says I. ‘But could you lick six? And suppose they hurled an army of seventeen against you?’

“‘Listen,’ says O’Connor, ‘to what will occur. At noon next Tuesday 25,000 patriots will rise up in the towns of the republic. The government will be absolutely unprepared. The public buildings will be taken, the regular army made prisoners, and the new administration set up. In the capital it will not be so easy on account of most of the army being stationed there. They will occupy the president’s palace and the strongly fortified government buildings and stand a siege. But on the very day of the outbreak a body of our troops will begin a march to the capital from every town as soon as the local victory has been won. The thing is so well planned that it is an impossibility for us to fail. I meself will lead the troops from here. The new president will be Senor Espadas, now Minister of Finance in the present cabinet.’

“‘What do you get?’ I asked.

“”Twill be strange,’ said O’Connor smiling, ‘if I don’t have all the jobs handed to me on a silver salver to pick what I choose. I’ve been the brains of the scheme, and when the fighting opens I guess I won’t be in the rear rank. Who managed it so our troops could get arms smuggled into this country? Didn’t I arrange it with a New York firm before I left there? Our financial agents inform me that 20,000 stands of Winchester rifles have been delivered a month ago at a secret place up coast and distributed among the towns. I tell you, Bowers, the game is already won.’

“Well, that kind of talk kind of shook my disbelief in the infallibility of the serious Irish gentleman soldier of fortune. It certainly seemed that the patriotic grafters had gone about the thing in a business way. I looked upon O’Connor with more respect, and began to figure on what kind of uniform I might wear as Secretary of War.

“Tuesday, the day set for the revolution, came around according to schedule. O’Connor said that a signal had been agreed upon for the uprising. There was an old cannon on the beach near the national warehouse. That had been secretly loaded and promptly at twelve o’clock was to be fired off. Immediately the revolutionists would seize their concealed arms, attack the comandante’s troops in the cuartel, and capture the custom-house and all government property and supplies.

“I was nervous all the morning. And about eleven o’clock O’Connor became infused with the excitement and martial spirit of murder. He geared his father’s sword around him, and walked up and down in the back room like a lion in the Zoo suffering from corns. I smoked a couple of dozen cigars, and decided on yellow stripes down the trouser legs of my uniform.

“At half-past eleven O’Connor asks me to take a short stroll through the streets to see if I could notice any signs of the uprising. I was back in fifteen minutes.

“‘Did you hear anything?’ he asks.

“‘I did,’ says I. ‘At first I thought it was drums. But it wasn’t; it was snoring. Everybody in town’s asleep.’

“O’Connor tears out his watch.

“‘Fools!’ says he. “They’ve set the time right at the siesta hour when everybody takes a nap. But the cannon will wake ‘em up. Everything will be all right, depend upon it.’

“Just at twelve o’clock we heard the sound of a cannon—BOOM!—shaking the whole town.

“O’Connor loosens his sword in its scabbard and jumps for the door. I went as far as the door and stood in it.

“People were sticking their heads out of doors and windows. But there was one grand sight that made the landscape look tame.

“General Tumbalo, the comandante, was rolling down the steps of his residential dugout, waving a five-foot sabre in his hand. He wore his cocked and plumed hat and his dress-parade coat covered with gold braid and buttons. Sky-blue pajamas, one rubber boot, and one red-plush slipper completed his make-up.

“The general had heard the cannon, and he puffed down the sidewalk toward the soldiers’ barracks as fast as his rudely awakened two hundred pounds could travel.

“O’Connor sees him and lets out a battle-cry and draws his father’s sword and rushes across the street and tackle’s the enemy.

“Right there in the street he and the general gave an exhibition of blacksmithing and butchery. Sparks flew from their blades, the general roared, and O’Connor gave the slogan of his race and proclivities.

“Then the general’s sabre broke in two; and he took to his ginger-colored heels crying out, ‘Policios,’ at every jump. O’Connor chased him a block, imbued with the sentiment of manslaughter, and slicing buttons off the general’s coat tails with the paternal weapon. At the corner five barefooted policemen in cotton undershirts and straw fiats climbed over O’Connor and subjugated him according to the municipal statutes.

“They brought him past the late revolutionary headquarters on the way to jail. I stood in the door. A policeman had him by each hand and foot, and they dragged him on his back through the grass like a turtle. Twice they stopped, and the odd policeman took another’s place while he rolled a cigarette. The great soldier of fortune turned his head and looked at me as they passed. I blushed, and lit another cigar. The procession passed on, and at ten minutes past twelve everybody had gone back to sleep again.

“In the afternoon the interpreter came around and smiled as he laid his hand on the big red jar we usually kept ice-water in.

“‘The ice-man didn’t call to-day,’ says I. `What’s the matter with everything, Sancho?’

“`Ah, yes,’ says the liver-colored linguist. `They just tell me in the town. Verree bad act that Senor O’Connor make fight with General Tumbalo. Yes, general Tumbalo great soldier and big mans.’

“`What’ll they do to Mr. O’Connor?’ I asks.

“`I talk little while presently with the Juez de la Paz—what you call Justice-with-the-peace,’ says Sancho. ‘He tell me it verree bad crime that one Senor Americano try kill General Tumbalo. He say they keep Senor O’Connor in jail six months; then have trial and shoot him with guns. Verree sorree.’

“`How about this revolution that was to be pulled off?’ I asks.

“`Oh,’ says this Sancho, `I think too hot weather for revolution. Revolution better in winter-time. Maybe so next winter. Quien sabe?’

“‘But the cannon went off,’ says I. ‘The signal was given.’

“‘That big sound?’ says Sancho, grinning. ‘The boiler in ice factory he blow up—BOOM! Wake everybody up from siesta. Verree sorree. No ice. Mucho hot day.’

“About sunset I went over to the jail, and they let me talk to O’Connor through the bars.

“‘What’s the news, Bowers?’ says he. ‘Have we taken the town? I’ve been expecting a rescue party all the afternoon. I haven’t heard any firing. Has any word been received from the capital?’

“‘Take it easy, Barney,’ says I. ‘I think there’s been a change of plans. There’s something more important to talk about. Have you any money?’

“‘I have not,’ says O’Connor. ‘The last dollar went to pay our hotel bill yesterday. Did our troops capture the custom-house? There ought be plenty of government money there.’

“‘Segregate your mind from battles,’ says I. ‘I’ve been making inquiries. You’re to be shot six months from date for assault and battery. I’m expecting to receive fifty years at hard labor for vagrancy. All they furnish you while you’re a prisoner is water. You depend on your friends for food. I’ll see what I can do.’

“I went away and found a silver Chile dollar in an old vest of O’Connor’s. I took him some fried fish and rice for his supper. In the morning I went down to a lagoon and had a drink of water, and then went back to the jail. O’Connor had a porterhouse steak look in his eye.

“‘Barney,’ says I, `I’ve found a pond full of the finest kind of water. It’s the grandest, sweetest, purest water in the world. Say the word and I’ll go fetch you a bucket of it and you can throw this vile government stuff out the window. I’ll do anything I can for a friend.’

“`Has it come to this?’ says O’Connor, raging up and down his cell. `Am I to be starved to death and then shot? I’ll make those traitors feel the weight of an O’Connor’s hand when I get out of this.’ And then he comes to the bars and speaks softer. `Has nothing been heard from Dona Isabel?’ he asks. `Though every one else in the world fail,’ says he, `I trust those eyes of hers. She will find a way to effect my release. Do ye think ye could communicate with her? One word from her—even a rose would make me sorrow light. But don’t let her know except with the utmost delicacy, Bowers. These high-bred Castilians are sensitive and proud.’

“`Well said, Barney,’ says I. ‘You’ve given me an idea. I’ll report later. Something’s got to be pulled off quick, or we’ll both starve.’

“I walked out and down to Hooligan Alley, and then on the other side of the street. As I went past the window of Dona Isabel Antonia Concha Regalia, out flies the rose as usual and hits me on the ear.

“The door was open, and I took off my hat and walked in. It wasn’t very light; inside, but there she sat in a rocking-chair by the window smoking a black cheroot. And when I got closer I saw that she was about thirty-nine, and had never seen a straight front in her life. I sat down on the arm of her chair, and took the cheroot out of her mouth and stole a kiss.

“‘Hullo, Izzy,’ I says. ‘Excuse my unconventionality, but I feel like I have known you for a month. Whose Izzy is oo?’

“The lady ducked her head under her mantilla, and drew in a long breath. I thought she was going to scream, but with all that intake of air she only came out with: ‘Me likee Americanos.’

“As soon as she said that, I knew that O’Connor and me would be doing things with a knife and fork before the day was over. I drew a chair beside her, and inside of half an hour we were engaged. Then I took my hat and said I must go out for a while.

“‘You come back?’ says Izzy, in alarm.

“‘Me go bring preacher,’ says I. ‘Come back twenty minutes. We marry now. How you likee?’

“‘Marry to-day?’ says Izzy. ‘Good!’

“I went down on the beach to the United States consul’s shack. He was a grizzly man, eighty-two pounds, smoked glasses, five foot eleven, pickled. He was playing chess with an india-rubber man in white clothes.

“‘Excuse me for interrupting,’ says I, `but can you tell me how a man could get married quick?’

“The consul gets up and fingers in a pigeonhole.

“‘I believe I had a license to perform the ceremony myself, a year or two ago,’ he said. ‘I’ll look, and–-‘

“I caught hold of his arm. “‘Don’t look it up,’ says I. ‘Marriage is a lottery anyway. I’m willing to take the risk about the license if you are.’

“The consul went back to Hooligan Alley with me. Izzy called her ma to come in, but the old lady was picking a chicken in the patio and begged to be excused. So we stood up and the consul performed the ceremony.

“That evening Mrs. Bowers cooked a great supper of stewed goat, tamales, baked bananas, fricasseed red peppers and coffee. Afterward I sat in the rocking-chair by the front window, and she sat on the floor plunking at a guitar and happy, as she should be, as Mrs. William T.B.

“All at once I sprang up in a hurry. I’d forgotten all about O’Connor. I asked Izzy to fix up a lot of truck for him to eat.

“‘That big, oogly man,’ said Izzy. ‘But all right—he your friend.’

“I pulled a rose out of a bunch in a jar, and took the grub-basket around to the jail. O’Connor ate like a wolf. Then he wiped his face with a banana peel and said: `Have you heard nothing from Dona Isabel yet?’

“‘Hist!’ says I, slipping the rose between the bars. ‘She sends you this. She bids you take courage. At nightfall two masked men brought it to the ruined chateau in the orange grove. How did you like that goat hash, Barney?’

“O’Connor pressed the rose to his lips. “‘This is more to me than all the food in the world,’ says he. ‘But the supper was fine. Where did you raise it?’

“‘I’ve negotiated a stand-off at a delicatessen but downtown,’ I tells him. ‘Rest easy. If there’s anything to be done I’ll do it.’

“So things went along that way for some weeks. Izzy was a great cook; and if she had had a little more poise of character and smoked a little better brand of tobacco we might have drifted into some sense of responsibility for the honor I had conferred on her. But as time went on I began to hunger for the sight of a real lady standing before me in a street-car. All I was staying in that land of bilk and money for was because I couldn’t get away, and I thought it no more than decent to stay and see O’Connor shot.

“One day our old interpreter drops around and after smoking an hour says that the judge of the peace sent him to request me to call on him. I went to his office in a lemon grove on a hill at the edge of the town; and there I had a surprise. I expected to see one of the usual cinnamon-colored natives in congress gaiters and one of Pizzaro’s cast-off hats. What I saw was an elegant gentleman of a slightly claybank complexion sitting in an upholstered leather chair, sipping a highball and reading Mrs. Humphry Ward. I had smuggled into my brain a few words of Spanish by the help of Izzy, and I began to remark in a rich Andalusian brogue:

“‘Buenas dias, senor. Yo tengo—yo tengo—’

“‘Oh, sit down, Mr. Bowers,’ says he. ‘I spent eight years in your country in colleges and law schools. Let me mix you a highball. Lemon peel, or not?’

“Thus we got along. In about half an hour I was beginning to tell him about the scandal in our family when Aunt Elvira ran away with a Cumberland Presbyterian preacher. Then he says to me:

“‘I sent for you, Mr. Bowers, to let you know that you can have your friend Mr. O’Connor now. Of course we had to make a show of punishing him on account of his attack on General Tumbalo. It is arranged that he shall be released to-morrow night. You and he will be conveyed on board the fruit steamer Voyager, bound for New York, which lies in the harbor. Your passage will be arranged for.’

“‘One moment, judge,’ says I; ‘that revolution—’

“The judge lays back in his chair and howls. “‘Why,’ says he presently, ‘that was all a little joke fixed up by the boys around the court-room, and one or two of our cut-ups, and a few clerks in the stores. The town is bursting its sides with laughing. The boys made themselves up to be conspirators, and they—what you call it?—stick Senor O’Connor for his money. It is very funny.’

“‘It was,’ says I. ‘I saw the joke all along. I’ll take another highball, if your Honor don’t mind.’

“The next evening just at dark a couple of soldiers brought O’Connor down to the beach, where I was waiting under a cocoanut-tree.

“‘Hist!’ says I in his ear: ‘Dona Isabel has arranged our escape. Not a word!’

“They rowed us in a boat out to a little steamer that smelled of table d’hote salad oil and bone phosphate.

“The great, mellow, tropical moon was rising as we steamed away. O’Connor leaned on the taffrail or rear balcony of the ship and gazed silently at Guaya—at Buncoville-on-the-Beach.

“He had the red rose in his hand.

“‘She will wait,’ I heard him say. ‘Eyes like hers never deceive. But I shall see her again. Traitors cannot keep an O’Connor down forever.’

“‘You talk like a sequel,’ says I. ‘But in Volume II please omit the light-haired friend who totes the grub to the hero in his dungeon cell.’

“And thus reminiscing, we came back to New York.”

There was a little silence broken only by the familiar roar of the streets after Kansas Bill Bowers ceased talking.

“Did O’Connor ever go back?” I asked.

“He attained his heart’s desire,” said Bill. “Can you walk two blocks? I’ll show you.”

He led me eastward and down a flight of stairs that was covered by a curious-shaped glowing, pagoda-like structure. Signs and figures on the tiled walls and supporting columns attested that we were in the Grand Central station of the subway. Hundreds of people were on the midway platform.

An uptown express dashed up and halted. It was crowded. There was a rush for it by a still larger crowd.

Towering above every one there a magnificent, broad-shouldered, athletic man leaped into the centre of the struggle. Men and women he seized in either hand and hurled them like manikins toward the open gates of the train.

Now and then some passenger with a shred of soul and self-respect left to him turned to offer remonstrance; but the blue uniform on the towering figure, the fierce and conquering glare of his eye and the ready impact of his ham-like hands glued together the lips that would have spoken complaint.

When the train was full, then he exhibited to all who might observe and admire his irresistible genius as a ruler of men. With his knees, with his elbows, with his shoulders, with his resistless feet he shoved, crushed, slammed, heaved, kicked, flung, pounded the overplus of passengers aboard. Then with the sounds of its wheels drowned by the moans, shrieks, prayers, and curses of its unfortunate crew, the express dashed away.

“That’s him. Ain’t he a wonder?” said Kansas Bill admiringly. “That tropical country wasn’t the place for him. I wish the distinguished traveller, writer, war correspondent, and playright, Richmond Hobson Davis, could see him now. O’Connor ought to be dramatized.”