

# Webster —Man's Man

By PETER B. KYNE

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"Cappy Ricks," "The Valley  
of the Giants," etc.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

The following morning Webster informed Dolores fully of his interview with her brother and his confederates the night before, concealing from her only the fact that he was financing the revolution and his reasons for financing it. He was still depressed, and Dolores, observing his mood, forbore to intrude upon it. Accordingly she claimed the prerogative of her sex—a slight headache—and retreated to her room, in the privacy of which she was suddenly very much surprised to find herself weeping softly because John Stuart Webster was unhappy and didn't deserve to be.

It was impossible, however, for Webster long to remain impervious to the note of ridiculousness underlying the forthcoming tragic events. Here was a little 2x4 poverty-stricken hot-bed of ignorance and intrigue calling itself a republic, a little stretch of country no larger than a couple of big western counties, about to indulge in the national pastime of civil war and unable to do it except by grace of an humble citizen of a sister republic!

Five or six thousand ignorant, ill-equipped, ill-drilled semi-brigands calling themselves soldiers, entrusted with the task of enabling one of their number to ride, horse and dog, over 1,000,000 people!

How farcical! No wonder Ricardo, with his northern viewpoint, approached his patriotic task with gayety, almost with contempt. And when Webster recalled that the about-to-be-born provisional government had casually borrowed from him the sum of forty thousand dollars in order to turn the



Informed Dolores Fully of His Interview.

trick—borrowing it, forsooth, in much the same spirit as a commuter boarding his train without the necessary fare hails a neighbor and borrows ten cents—his natural optimism asserted itself and he chuckled as in fancy he heard himself telling the story to Neddy Jerome and being branded a liar for his pains.

"Well, I've had one comfort ever since I first saw that girl," he reflected philosophically. "While I've never been so unhappy in all my life before, or had to tear my soul out by the roots so often, things have been coming my way so fast from other directions that I haven't had much opportunity to dwell on the matter. And for these compensating offsets, good Lord, I thank Thee."

He was John Stuart Webster again when Dolores saw him next; during the succeeding days his mood of cheerfulness and devil-may-care indifference never left him. And throughout that period of marking time Dolores was much in his society, a con-

dition when he told himself was not to his liking but which, nevertheless, he could not obviate without seeming indifferent to her happiness. And to permit his friend's fiancée to languish in loneliness and heart-break did not appear to John Stuart Webster as the part of a true friend or a courtly gentleman—and he remembered that she had once called him that.

They rode together in the cool of the morning; they drove together on the Malecon in the cool of the evening; chaperoned by Don Juan Cafetero and a grinning Sobrantean, they went shark fishing in Leber's launch; they played dominoes together; they discussed, throughout the long, lazy, quiet afternoons, when the remainder of their world retired for the siesta, books, art, men, women, and things.

And not once, throughout two weeks of camaraderie, did the heart-racked Webster forget for a single instant that he was the new friend, destined to become the old friend; never, to the girl's watchful eyes, did he betray the slightest disposition to establish their friendly relations on a closer basis.

Thus did the arrival of The Day find them. Toward sunset they rode out together along the bay shore and noted far out to sea the smear of smoke that marked the approach of La Estrellita—on schedule time.

"You will go aboard her tonight," Webster said very quietly to Dolores. "And you?"

"I shall go aboard with you. I have arranged with Don Juan for him to stay ashore and to come out in Leber's launch with the first reliable news of the conflict. If Ricardo wins the city, he wins the revolution, and you and I will then go ashore—to dine with him in the palace. If he loses the city, he loses the revolution, and we will both do well to remain aboard La Estrellita."

"And in that event, what will become of my brother?"

"I do not know; I forgot to ask him, but if he survives, I imagine he'll have sense enough to know he's whipped and will retreat on San Bruno, fighting a rear guard action, embark aboard the steamer that brought his men there, and escape."

"I'm worried about Mother Jenks." "I have asked Mother Jenks to dine with us at 7:30 this evening, and have ordered a carriage to call for her. When she comes I'll tell her everything; then, if she wishes to stay ashore, let her. She's been through more than one such fracas and doesn't mind them at all, I dare say."

And in this Webster was right. Mother Jenks listened in profound silence, nodding her approval, as Webster related to her the story of the advent in the country of Ricardo Ruy and his plans, but without revealing the identity of Andrew Bowers.

At the conclusion of his recital the old publican merely said: "Gor' blime!"

After a silence she added: "My sainted 'Enery used to s'y the proper holds for a white man in a bally row o' this nature was 40 to 1. Gor', but how my sainted 'Enery would henjoy bein' 'ere this night to 'elp with the guns." She sighed.

"How about a little bottle of wine to drink peace to your sainted Henry and luck to The Cause?" Webster suggested.

"That's wot I calls talkin'." Mother Jenks responded promptly, and Webster, gazing reflectively at the old lady's beard, wondered why she had not been born a man.

Dolores, fearful for her benefactor's safety, urged Mother Jenks to accompany them out aboard La Estrellita, but the old dame indignantly refused, and when pressed for a reason gave it with the utmost frankness: "They'll be tykin' Sarros, an' when they tye 'im they'll back him ag'in the same wall he backed my sainted 'Enery and your father against, my dear. I've a notion that your father's son'll let Mrs. Col. 'Enery Jenks come to the party."

At 10 o'clock Webster accompanied Mother Jenks home in the carriage, which he dismissed at El Buen Amigo—with instructions to return to the hotel while he continued afoot down the Calle San Rosario to the bay, where Leber's huge corrugated-iron warehouse loomed darkly above high water mark. He slipped along in the deep shadow of the warehouse wall and out on the end of the little dock, where he satisfied himself that Leber's launch was at its moorings; then he went back to the warehouse and whistled softly, whereupon a man crawled out from under the structure and approached him. It was Don Juan Cafetero.

"They're all inside," he whispered and laid finger on lip. "They got in half an hour ago, an' devil a soul the wiser save meself."

"Thank you, John. Now that I know the coast is clear and the launch ready, I'll go back to the hotel for Miss Ruy."

"Very well, sor," Don Juan replied, and crawled back under the warehouse.

Half an hour later the sound of

broken of Webster and Dolores in a carriage, and he came forth, loaded in the launch such baggage as they had been enabled to bring, and held the gunwale of the boat while his passengers stepped aboard.

About a half a mile off shore Webster throttled down the motor until the launch barely made steerage way. "It would never do to go aboard the steamer before the fracas started ashore," he explained to Dolores. "That would indicate a guilty knowledge of coming events, and in the event of disaster to the rebel arms it is just possible Senor Sarros might have pull enough, if he hears of our flight six hours in advance of hostilities, to take us off the steamer and ask us to explain. So we'll just cruise



"We'll Just Cruise Slowly Around and Listen."

slowly around and listen; the attack will come just before dawn; then shortly thereafter we can scurry out to the steamer and be welcomed aboard for the sake of the news we bring."

She did not answer, and Webster knew her thoughts were out where the arc lights on the outskirts of Buena-ventura met the open country—out where the brother she could scarcely remember and whom, until a month previously, she had believed dead, would shortly muster his not too numerous followers.

In the darkness Webster could hear the click of her beads as she prayed; on the turtle deck forward Don Juan Cafetero sprawled, thinking perchance of his unlovely past and wondering what effect the events shortly to transpire ashore would have on his future. He wished Webster would relent and offer him a drink some time within the next twenty-four hours. In times of excitement like the present a man needs a drop to brace him up.

Five times the launch slipped lazily down the harbor along the straggling two mile water front; five times it loafed back. The moon, which was in the first quarter, sank. Then to Webster's alert ear there floated across the still waters the sound of a gentle purring—the music of an auto-truck. He set the launch in toward Leber's little dock, and presently they saw the door of Leber's warehouse open. Men with lanterns streamed forth, lighting the way for others who bore between them heavy burdens.

"They're emplacing the machine guns in the motor-truck," he whispered to Dolores. "We will not have to wait long now. It's nearly 4 o'clock."

Again they backed out into the bay until they could see far out over the sleeping city to the hills beyond in the west. Presently along the side of those hills the headlight of a locomotive crept, dropping swiftly down grade until it disappeared in the lowlands.

A half hour passed; then to the south of the city a rocket flared skyward; almost instantly another flared from the west, followed presently by a murmur, scarcely audible, as of a muffled snare drum, punctuated presently by a louder, sharper, insistent puck-puck-puck that, had Webster but known it, was the bark of a Maxim-Vickers rapid-fire gun throwing a stream of shells into the cantonments of the government troops on the fringe of the city.

Webster's pulse quickened. "There goes the tillery to the south, sor," Don Juan called, and even as he spoke, a shell burst gloriously over the government palace, the white walls of which were already looming over the remainder of the city, now faintly visible in the approaching dawn.

"That was to awaken our friend, Sarros," Webster cried. "I'll bet a buffalo nickel that woke the old horse chief up. There's another—and an-

other."

The uproar swelled, the noise gradually drifting around the city from west to south, forming, seemingly, a semicircle of sound. "The government troops are up and doing now," Webster observed, and speeded up his motor. "I think it high time we played the part of frightened refugees. Mouser bullets kill at three miles. Some strays may drop out here in the bay."

He speeded the launch toward La Estrellita, and as the craft scraped in alongside the great steamer's companion landing, her skipper ran down the ladder to greet them and inquire eagerly of the trend of events ashore.

"We left in a hurry the instant it started," Webster explained. "As Americans, we didn't figure we had any interest in that scrap, either way." He handed Dolores out on the landing stage, tossed her baggage after her and followed; Don Juan took the wheel, and the launch slid out and left them there.

At the head of the companion ladder Webster paused and turned for another look at Buenaventura. To the west three great fires now threw a lurid light skyward, mocking an equally lurid light to the east, that marked the approach of daylight. He smiled. "Those are the cantonment barracks burning," he whispered to Dolores. "Ricardo is keeping his word. He's driving the rats back into their own holes."

The weeks of clean living, of abstinence from his wonted daily alcoholic ration, had inspired in Don Juan Cafetero a revival of his all-but defunct interest in life; conversely, in these stirring times, he was sensible of an equally acute interest in Sobrantean politics, for he was Irish; and flabby indeed is that son of the Green Little Isle who, wherever he may be, declines to take a hand in any public argument. For the love of politics, like the love of home, is never dead in the Irish.

It is instinct with them—the heritage, perhaps, of centuries of oppression and suppression, which nurtures rather than stifles the yearning for place and power. Now as Don Juan turned Leber's launch shoreward and kicked the motor wide open, he, too, desisted against the dawn the glare of the burning cantonments west of the city, and at the sight his pulse beat high with the lust of battle, the longing to be in at the death in this struggle, where the hopes and aspirations of those he loved were at stake.

Two months previously a revolution would have been a matter of extreme indifference to Don Juan; he would have reflected that it was merely the outs trying to get in, and that if they succeeded, the sole benefit to the general public would be the privilege of paying the bill. Today, however, in the knowledge that he had an opportunity to fight beside white men and perchance even up some old scores with the Guardia Civil, it occurred suddenly to Don Juan that it would be a brave and virtuous act to cast his lot with the Ruyey forces. He was a being reorganized and rebuilt, and it behooved him to do something to demonstrate his manhood.

Don Juan knew, of course, that should the rebels lose and he be captured, he would be executed; yet this contingency seemed a far-fetched one, in view of the fact that he had John Stuart Webster at his back, ready to finance his escape from the city. Also Don Juan had had an opportunity, in the hills above San Miguel de Padua, for a critical study of Ricardo Ruyey and had come to the conclusion that at last a real man had come to liberate Sobrante; further, Don Juan had had ocular evidence that John Stuart Webster was connected with the revolution, for had he not smuggled Ruyey into the country? It was something to be the right-hand man of the president of a rich little country like Sobrante; it was also something to be as close to that right-hand man as Don Juan was to his master, Webster; consequently self-interest and his sporting code whispered to Don Juan that it behooved him to demonstrate his loyalty with every means at his command, even unto his heart's blood.

"Who knows," he cogitated as the launch bore him swiftly shoreward, "but what I'll acquit meself with honor and get a fine job under the new administration? 'Tis the master's fight, I'm thinkin'; then, be the same token, 'tis John Joseph Cafetero's, win, lose or draw, an' may the devil damn me if I fall him ather what he's done for me. Sure, if General Ruyey wins, a crook as the master's finger will make me jefe politico. An' if he does—hoo-roo! Hoo-ray!"

With his imagination still running riot, Don Juan made the launch fast to the little dock, down which he ran straight for the warehouse, where the Ruyey mercenaries were still congregated, busily wiping the factory grease from the weapons which had just been distributed to them from the packing cases. A sharp voice halted him, he paused, panting, to find himself looking down the long blue bar-

rel of a service pistol.

"Who are you, and what are you doing here?" the man behind the weapon demanded brusquely.

"I'm Private John J. Cafetero, the latest recruit to the Ruyey army," Don Juan answered composedly. "Who did ye think I was? Private secretary to that devil Sarros? Man, dear, lower that gun av yours, for God knows I'm nervous enough as it is. Have ye something ye could give me to fight wit', avic'?"

The man who had challenged him—a lank, swarthy individual from the Mexican border—looked him over with twinkling eyes. "You'll do, Cafetero, old timer," he drawled, "and if you don't, you'll wish you had. There's a man for every rifle just now, but I wouldn't be surprised if there'd be a right smart more rifles than men before a great while. Help yourself to the gun o' the first man that goes down; in the meantime, hop into that there truck and keep the cartridge belt for the machine guns full up. You're just in time."

Without further ado Don Juan climbed into the truck. A little citadel of sheet steel had been built around the driver's seat, with a narrow slit in front through which the latter peered out. The body of the truck had been boxed in with the same material and housed two machine guns, emplaced, and a crew of half a dozen men crouched on the floor engaged in loading the belts. Four motor bicycles, with sturdy, specially-built side cars attached, and a machine gun in each side car, were waiting near by, together with a half-dozen country carts loaded with ammunition cases and drawn by horses.

"How soon do we start?" Don Juan demanded anxiously, as he crowded in beside one of his new-found comrades.

"I believe," this individual replied in the unmistakable accents of an Oxford man, "that the plan is to wait until five o'clock; by that time all the government troops that can be spared from the arsenal and palace will have been dispatched to the fighting now taking place west of the city. Naturally, the government forces aren't anticipating an attack from the rear, and so they will, in all probability, weaken their base. I believe that eases our task; certainly it will save us many men."

Don Juan nodded his entire approval to this shrewd plan of campaign and fell to stuffing cartridges in the web belt, the while he whistled softly, unmusically, and with puffing, hissing sounds between his snaggle teeth, until a Sobrantean gentleman (it was Doctor Pacheco) came out of the warehouse and gave the order to proceed.

They marched along the water front for four blocks and then turned up a side street, which happened to be the Calle de Concordia, thus enabling Mother Jenks, who was peering from the doorway of El Buen Amigo, to see them coming.

"Hah!" she muttered. "'Enery they're comin'. The worm is turnin'."



"'Enery, They're Comin'."

"Enery; 15 years you've wrayed for vengeance, my love, but tody you'll get it."

She waddled out into the street and held up her hand in a gesture as authoritative and imperious as that of a traffic officer. "Batter-ry halt!" she croaked. She had heard the late 'Enery give that command often enough to have acquired the exact inflection.

(Continued on Page Seven)

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