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"WEBSTER—MAN'S MAN" (Continued from page 6)

"Central America," Neddy Jerome was happy. He was in an expansive mood, for he had, with the assistance of a kindly fate, rounded up the one engineer in all the world whom he needed to take charge of the Colorado Consolidated. So he said:

"Well, Jack, just to celebrate the discovery of your old pal, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll O. K. your voucher for the expense of bringing young Geary back to the U. S. A., and when we find him here, it will be up to you to get a snug berth for him with Colorado Consolidated."

"Neddy," said John Stuart Webster, "by my halldom, I love thee. You're a thoughtful, kindly old stick-in-the-mud."

"No ifs nor buts, I'm your boss," Jerome interrupted, and vaddled away to telephone the head water at his favorite restaurant to reserve a table for two.

Mr. Webster sighed. He disliked exceedingly to disappoint old Neddy, but— He shrank from seeming to think overwell of himself by declining a twenty-five-thousand-dollar-a-year job with the biggest mining company in Colorado, but—

"Rotten luck," he soliloquized. "It runs that way for a while, and then it changes, and gets worse!"

When Jerome returned to his seat, the serious look in Webster's hitherto laughing eyes challenged his immediate attention. "Neddy," said John Stuart Webster gently, "do you remember my crossing my fingers and saying 'King's X' when you came at me with that proposition of yours? It just breaks my heart to have to decline it, but the fact of the matter is, I think you'd better give that job to your brother after all. At any rate, I'm not going to take it."

"I am addressing you... neers' club, in the hope that my letter may reach you there, or perhaps the secretary will know your address and forward it to you. If you are foot loose and still entertain a lingering regard for your old pal, get busy on this mining concession P. D. Q. Time is the essence of the contract, because I am holding on to the thin edge of nothing, and if we have a change of government I may lose even that. I need you, John Stuart Webster, worse than I need salvation. I enclose you a list of equipment required."

"If you receive this letter and can do anything for me, please cable. If you cannot, please cable anyway. Do let me hear from you, Jack, if only to tell me the old entente cordiale still exists. I know now that I was considerable of a heedless pup a few years ago and overlooked my hand quite regularly, but now that I have a good thing I do not know of anybody with whom I care to share it except your own genial self. Please let me hear from you again."

"Affectionately, 'BILLY.' Jerome finished reading this remarkable communication; then with infinite amusement he regarded John Stuart Webster over the tops of his glasses as one who examines a new and interesting species of bug.

"So Billy loves that detestable Sobrante, eh?" he said with abysmal sarcasm. "Jack Webster, listen to a sane man and be guided accordingly. I was in this same little Buenaventura once. I was there for three days, and I wouldn't have been there three minutes if I could have caught a steamer out sooner. Of all the miserable, squalid, worthless, ornery, stinking holes on the face of God's green footstool, Sobrante is the worst—if one may judge it by its capital city. Are you going to chase off to this God-forsaken fever-hole at the behest of a lad scarcely out of his swaddling clothes? Jack Webster, surely you aren't going to throw yourself away—give up the sure thing I offer you—to join Billy Geary in Sobrante and finance a wild-cat prospect without a certificate of title attached. Be reasonable. What did you wire that confounded boy?"

"That I was coming." "Cable him you've changed your mind. We'll send him some money to Sobrante, C. A."

"Dear John: I would address you as 'dear friend John,' did I but possess sufficient courage. In my heart of hearts you are still that, but after three years of silence, due to my stupidity and hardness of heart, it is, perhaps, better to make haste slowly."

"To begin, I should like to be forgiven, on the broad general grounds that I am most slightly sorry for what I went and done! Am I forgiven? I seem to see your friendly old face and hear you answer 'Aye,' and with this load off my chest at last I believe I feel better already."

"Jack, you poor, deluded old piece of white meat, do you think for a moment that I held against your testimony for the operators in Cripple Creek? I thought you believed the charges and that you testified in a firm belief that I was the guilty man, as all of the circumstantial evidence seemed to indicate. I thought this for three long, meagre years, old friend, and I'm sorry. After that, I suppose there isn't any need for me to say more, except that you are an old fool for not saying you were going to spend your money and your time and reputation trying to put my halo back on straight! I doubt if I was worth it, and you knew that; but let it pass, for we have other fish to fry."

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"That's nice of you, old sport, and I thank you kindly. I'll talk to Billy when I arrive in Buenaventura, and if the prospect doesn't look good to me, I'll argue him out of it and we'll come home. Let me go. I might come back. But I must go. I want to see Billy."

"You just said a minute ago you'd turned the forty-year post," Jerome warned him. "And you're now going to lose a year or two more in which you might better be engaged laying up a foundation of independence for your old age. For Heaven's sake, man, don't be a fool."

"Oh, but I will be a fool," John Stuart Webster answered; and possibly, by this time, the reader has begun to understand the potency of his middle name—the Scotch are notoriously pig-headed, and Mr. Webster had just enough oatmeal in his blood to have come by that center fire name honestly. "And you, you poor old horse, you could not possibly understand why, if you lived to be a million years old."

He got up from his chair to the full height of his six-foot-one, and stretched 100 pounds of bone and muscle. "And so I shall go to Sobrante and lose all of this all-important money, shall I?" he jeered. "Then by all the gods of the Open Country, I hope I may. Dad burn you, Neddy, I'm not a Methuselah. I want some fun in life. I want to fight and be broke and go hungry and then make money for the love of making it and spending it, and I want to live a long time yet. I want to see the mirage across the sagebrush and hear it whisper: 'Hither, John Stuart Webster! Hither, you fool, and I'll hornswoggle you again, as in an elder day I hornswoggled you before.'"

Jerome shook his white thatch hopelessly. "I thought you were a great mining engineer, John," he said sadly, "but you're not. You're a poet. You do not seem to care for money."

"Well," Webster retorted humorously, "it isn't exactly what you might term a ruling passion. I like to make it, but there's more fun spending it. I've made \$100,000, and now I want to go blow it—and I'm going to. Do not try to argue with me. I'm a lunatic and I will have my way. If I didn't go tearing off to Sobrante and join forces with Bill Geary, there to play the game, red or black, I'd feel as if I had done something low and mean and small. The boy's appealed to me, and I have made my answer. If I come back alive but broke, you know in your heart you'll give me the best job you have."

"You win," poor Jerome admitted. "Hold the job open 30 days. At the end of that period I'll give you a definite answer, Neddy."

QUESTIONS and Bible Answers

Who shall inherit the earth? —Psalm 37:11 How are the steps of a good man directed? —Psalm 37:23, 24 What promise is given to those who remember the poor? —Psalm 41:1 How should a Christian walk? —Eph. 4:1-2 What will the Heavenly Father give us? —Luke 11:13 When will God answer us? —Isa. 65:24

PETER B. KYNE



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(TO BE CONTINUED)