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"WEBSTER-MAN'S MAN"

CHAPTER XV.

Throughout the forenoon Webster and Dolores, from the deck of the steamer, watched the city. By ten o'clock the sounds of battle had swelled to a deeper, steadier roar, and refugees arriving brought various and fragmentary stories of the fighting. From this hodge-podge of misinformation, however, Webster decided that Ricardo's troops were forcing the is sue with vim and determination, and since the most furious fighting was now well in toward the heart of the city, it seemed reasonable to presume the struggle was for possession of the arsenal and palace.

At noon the deep diapason of conflict began to slacken; by one o'clock it had dwindled considerably, and at two o'clock Webster, gazing anxiously cityward, observed Leber's launch coming rapidly out from shore. At the wheel stood Don Juan Cafetero; as the launch shot in under the ve sel's side he looked up, searching for Webster's face among the curious throng that lined the rail.

"Who has won?" a voice called, and another, evidently a humorist and a shrewd judge of human nature, re "Why ask foolish questions? The rebels, of course. That fellow's Irish and the Irish are born rebels. Look at the scoundrel. He's black with gun grease and burned powder where he isn'to red with blood. The butcher!"

"Faugh-a-ballagh!" he shricked, "We've got the divils cornered now. Twill be over two hours hince."

Don Juan tied up the launch at the gangway and leaped up the ladder, three steps at a time. "Glory be to God," he panted and hurled himself into Webster's arms. "I was in it! I was. I got back in time to catch up wit' the lads at the warehouse an were the fine, fightin' devils, I'll gamble you. Och, 'twas a grrand bit av a fight-whilst it lasted. They put me in the motor-thruck, loadin' belts wit' ca'tridges as fast as the gunners emptied thim, but faith they couldn't keep me there. I got into the heart av the scrimmage in the yard av the arsenal an' faith 'twas well for that little Decthor Pacheco I did. "Twas wurrk to me likin'. I'd a machete-

"You bloodthirsty scoundrel!" Webster shook the war-mad son of Erin, "I told you not to mix in it, but to hang around on the fringe of the fight. and bring us early news. Suppose you'd been killed? Who would have come for us then? Didn't I tell you we had a dinner engagement in the palace?"

"Me on the fringes av a fight?" sputtered Don Juan, amazed and outraged. "Take shame for yerself, sor. There was niver the likes av me hung around the fringes av a fight, an' well ye know it."

"I'm amazed that you even remembered your instructions," Webster rasped at him.

"Sure our div nicely an' I had nothin' else to do, God bless ye. They were besiegin' the palace whin I left, an' small chance av takin' it for a couple av hours; what fightin' there was on the outside was street shootin'—an' not to me likin'."

"Is it quite safe to bring Miss Ruey ashere. John?"

"Tis safe enough at the Hotel Ma-We have the city for half a mile beyant, in the rear av them-an' they're not fightin' to get to the bay, The guards an' some av the Fifteenth infanthry regimint are in the palace an' the cuartel close by, an' thim that we failed to get in the arsenal have j'ined thim. But the bulk av the Sarros army is thryin' to break t'rough to the south an' west, to get to the hills. D'ye mind the spur thrack that runs in a semi-circle around the city? Well, thin, the rebels are behint the embankmint, takin' it alsy. Have no worry, sor. Whin we've took the palace we'll move on an' dhrive the vagabones from behint up to that railroad embankmint, where Gineral Ruey can bid them the time av day."

Webster turned to Dolores. "Do you wish to go ashore?"

She nodded, her flashing eyes bent in admiration upon the gory, grimy Don Juan Cafetero, for she was half Irish, and in that amazing meeting she knew the outcast for one of her blood. "I think my brother will sleep in his father's old room tonight," she murmured softly. "And I would sleep in mine.

They followed Don Juan down the gangway to the launch and sped back to the city. The door of Leber's ware-

The Oil of the People.—Many oils have come and gone, but Dr. Thomas' Eclectric Oil continues to maintain its position and increase its sphere of usefulness each year. Its sterling qualities have brought it to the front and kept it there, and it can truly be called the oil of the people. Thousands have benefited by it and would use no other preparation.

litter of greasy packing cases, with Leber, quite mys-tified, sitting on a keg of nalls and staring curiously at it all.

Guided by Don Juan Cafetero, Webster and Dolores passed on up the Calle San Rosario. Occasionally a bullet, fired two or three miles to the droned lazily overhead dropped with a sharp metallic sound the corrugated-iron roofs building. At the hotel the proprietor alone was in evidence, seated behind the desk smoking in profound indifference.

In response to Webster's eager inquiries for the latest news from the front, the placid fellow shrugged and murmured: "Quien sabe?" Evidently for him such stirring scenes had long since lost their novelty: the bloom was off the peach, as it were.

Webster went upstairs and helped himself to another automatic and several spare clips of shells which he had left in his trunk. On his return to the lobby, Dolores saw what a very nearsighted person, indeed, would have seen-to wit: that he was pleased to remain in the hotel and with the spirit of adventure strong within him was desirous of progress ing still farther toward the firing, in the hope of eliciting some favorable news as to the progress of the fight. She realized, however, that he would do his duty and remain with her in the hotel; so she said gayly:

"Suppose we walk out a little farther, Caliph. Many of the side streets will be as safe and peaceful as one could desire, and if warfare should develop in our vicinity we can step into some house.'

"I do not like to have you run the slightest risk—" he began, but she pooh-poohed him into silence, him by the arm with a great air of camaraderie, and declared they should go forth to adventure-but cautiously.

Webster glanced at Don Juan. "We can go a half or three quarters av a mile out the Calle San Rosario, sor," the Irishman answered. "After that 'twill not be a pleasant sight for the young leddy—an' there may be some shootin'. Squads av the governmint throops took refuge in the took to snipin'. 'Twill be shlow wurrk roundin' the last av thim up. Even afther the fight is over, there'll be scatterin' shootin' scrapes all av the night long, I'm thinkin'."

"At the slightest danger we'll turn back," Webster announced, and with Don Juan Cafetero scouting the way a block in advance they progressed slowly toward the center of the disturbance. Soon they passed a horse dead in

the middle of the street; a little farther on one of the machine-gun company, a lank Texan, sat on the curb rolling a cigarette with his left hand. He had a bullet through his right shoulder and another through the calf of his leg and had received no first aid attention; the flies were bothering him considerably and he was cursing softly and fluently, like the exmule-skinner he was.

Farther on anoth lay face down in the gutter; for him the fight had ended almost ere it had begun. In the next block half a dozen sandal-footed Sobranteans, in the blue and red-trimmed uniform of the Guardia Civil, lay sprawled in uncouth attitudes, where the first blast of a machine gun had caught them as they rushed out of the police station to repel the advancing mercenaries.

Seeing that the main street of the city would assume even a more grisly aspect the longer they followed it, Don Juan led Webster and Dolores a couple of blocks down a cross street and turned out into the Calle de Hernandez, parallel to the Calle San Rosario. There had been no shooting in this street, apparently; as they proceeded not even a stray bullet whined down the silent calle.

Four blocks from the government palace they found the narrow sidewalks of this quiet street lined with wounded from both sides, with a doctor and half a dozen of Ricardo's hired fighters ministering to them; as they threaded their way between the recumbent figures they came upon Mother Jenks, brandy bottle and glass in hand, "doing her bit."

"Hah! So here you are, my lamb," she greeted Dolores. "Right-o. Just where yer ought to be, Gor' bless yer sweet face. Let these poor misfor-tunate lads see that the sister o' the new president ain't too proud to care for 'em. 'Ere, lass. 'Old up the 'ead o' this young cockerel with the 'ole in 'is neck. 'Ere, lad. Tyke a brace now! 'Ere's some o' your own people, not a lot o' bloomin' yeller bellies, come to put something else in yer neck-some-

think that'll stimulate yer."

The "young cockerel," a blond youth of scarce 20 summers, twisted his head and grinned up at Dolores as she knelt beside him to lift him up. "Here/here, sister," he mumbled, "you'll get that white dress dirty. Never mind me. It's just a flesh wound, only my neck has got stiff and I'm weak from loss of

Mother Jenks winked at Webster as she set a glass of brandy to the strick-

adventurers ups. -o' the white meat, as my sainted 'En-ery used to s'y," she murmured com-

Dolores looked up at Webster, "I'll stay here," she said simply. "I've found a job helping Mother Jenks. You and Don Juan may run along if you wish. I know you're as curious as children."
They were. It would have been im-

possible for any man with red corpus-cles in his blood to harken to the shooting and shouts only three city blocks distant without yearning to see the fight itself.

"I'll return in 15 minutes, at the latest," he promised her, and with wan Cafetero, who had helped his and to a rifle and bayonet from one of the wounded, he turned the corner into the next street which they followed west through a block plentifully sprinkled with the dead of both factions.

Don Juan led the way through an allev in the rear of the Catedral de la Santa Cruz to the dcor of the sacristy; as he placed his hand on the latch three rifle bullets struck around them, showering them with fragments of falling adobe.

"There's a house party in the neighborhood," yelled Don Juan and darted into the church, with Webster at his heels, just in time to escape another



"I'll Stay Here."

fusillade. They walked through the sacristy and passed through a door into the great cathedral, with its high carved, gothic-arched ceiling. Through the thick-closed doors of the main entrance, lost in the dimness of space out in front, the sounds of the battle half a block away seemed very distant,

They passed the altar and Don Juan genuflected and crossed himself reverently. "I'll be afther makin' me confession," he whispered to Webster.

"Wait for me, sor." He leaned his rifle against the altar railing, crossed the church and touched lightly on the shoulder a monk kneeling in prayer before the altar of the Virgin; the latter bent his head while Don Juan whispered; then he rose and both went into the confessional, while Webster found a bench along the wall and waited.

Presently Don Juan came forth, knelt on the red-tiled floor and prayed -something, Webster suspected, he had not done for quite a while. And when he had finished his supplication and procured his rifle, Webster joined him, the monk unbolted the door and from the quiet of the house of God they passed out into the street and the tumult of hell.

"I've been clost to death this day," Don Juan explained, "an' the day is not done. Be the same token, 'tis long since I'd made me last confession; sure, until you picked me out av the mire, sor, 'tis little thought I had for the hereafter."

From their place they could see dozen or more of Ricardo's hired fighters crouched under the shelter of the palace walls across the street. "I think we'll be safer there," Webster cried, as a couple of bullets struck the stone steps at their feet and ricocheted against the cathedral door. "That rifle of yours is making you a marked man, Don Juan."

They ran across the street and joined the men under the palace wall. "What's this?" Don Juan demanded briskly. "Have ye not shmoked thim out yet?",

"Noddings doing," a young German answered. "Der chief has sent word dot we shall not artillery use on der balace. Men all aroundt it we haf, mit a machine gun commanding each gate; most of der poys have chust moved out west in der rear of der government

troops."
"Then." Don Juan declared with con-

speak av, until later. "Der is blenty of chey hunting snip-

ers, mein freund. Der houses here-abouts vos filled mit dem."

"I'll have no cat fights in mine," Don Juan retorted. "Come wit' me, so, an' we'll be in at the death out beyant at the railroad embankment."

"Too late," Webster answered, for on the instant to the west the crackle of rifle and machine gun fire interluded with the staccate barks of a Maxim Vickers broke out, swelling almost immediately to a steady outpouring of sound. "We'll stay here where we're safe for the finals. When General Ruey has cleaned up out there he'll come here to take command."

For half an hour the sounds of a brisk engagement to the west did not slacken; then with disconcerting suddenness the uproar died away fully 50 per cent.

"They're going in with the bayonet and machetes." somebody who knew remarked laconically. "Wait and you'll hear the cheering."

They waited fully ten minutes, but presently, as the firing gradually away, they heard it, faint and indistinguishable at first, but gradually coming nearer. And presently the trapped men in the palace heard it, "Viva Ruey! Viva! Viva Ruey!"

"All over but the shouting," Juan remarked disgustedly. "The lads in the palace will surrindher now. Sure Gineral Ruey was right afther all. For why should he shoot holes in the house he's goin' to live in, an' where, be the same token, he gives a dinner party this night?"

"I'm glad the end is in sight." Webster replied. "We have no interest in this revolution, John, and it isn't up to us to horn in on the play; yet if it went against the Ruey faction, I fear we'd be forced into active service in spite of ourselves. There is such a thing as fighting to save one's skin, you

Don Juan laughed pleasurably. What a shame we missed the row out beyant at the railroad embankmint," be declared.

"I wish you'd kept out of it, Don Juan. What business had you in the fight at the cuartel? Suppose you'd een killed?"

"Small loss!" Don Juan retorted. "I should have mourned you nevertheless, John,"

"Would you that same?" Don Juan's buttermilk eyes lighted with affection and pleasure. "Would it put a pang in the heart of you, sor, to see me stretched?"

"Yes, it would John. You're a wild. impulsive, lunatic, worthless Irishman, but there's a broad vein of pay ore in you, and I want you to live until I can develop it. When Mr. Geary returns to operate the mine, he'll need a foreman he can trust."

"And do you trust me, sor?" "I do indeed, John. By the way, you never gave me your word of honor to cut out red liquor for keeps. Up till today I've had to watch you-and I don't want to do that. It isn't dignified for either of us, and from today on you must be a man or a mouse. you prove yourself a man, I want you in my business; if you prove yourself a mouse, somebody else may have you. How about you John? The cantinas will be open tonight, and fire water will be free to the soldiers of the new republic. Must I watch you tonight?"

Don Juan shook his reckless red "I'll never let a drop of liquor head. cross my lips without your permission, sor," he promised simply. "I am the man and you are the master."

"We'll shake hands on that!" After the western habit of validating all verbal agreements with a hand shake, Webster thrust his hard hand out to his man, who took it in both of his and held it for half a minute. He wanted to speak, but couldn't; he could only bow his head as his eyes clouded with the tears of his appreciation. "Ah, sor," he blurted presently, "I'd die for ye an' welcome the chanst."

A wild yell of alarm broke out in the next block, at the north gate of the palace; there was a sudden flurry of Stop them! Stop them! They're breaking out!"

Without awaiting orders the hired fighters along the wall—some 15 of them—leaped out into the street, forming a skirmish line, just as a troop of cavalry, with drawn sabers, swept around the corner and charged upon the devoted little line. "Sarros must be thryin' to make his get-away," Don Juan Cafetero remarked coolly, and emptied a saddle. "They threw open the big palace gate, 'an the guards are a way for him to the bay." He emptied another saddle.

In the meantime Ricardo's fire eaters had not been idle. The instant the guards turned into the street a deadly magazine fire had been opened on them. They had already suffered heavily winning through the gate and past the besiegers in front of it, but once they turned the corner into the next street they had the fire of but a handful of men to contend with. Nevertheless it was sufficiently deadly. Many of the horses in the front rank went down with their riders, forcing the

carcasses by leaping over them, which some did. Many, however, tripped and stumbled in their wild gallop, spilling their riders.

"Stay by the wall, you madman," Webster ordered. "There'll be enough left to ride down those men in the street and saber them!"

And there were! They died to man, and the sadly depleted troop of guards galloped on, leaving Don Juan and Webster unscathed on the sidewalk, the only two living men unhurg in that shambles.

Not for long, however, did they have the street to themselves. Around the corner of the palace wall a limousine with the curtains drawn, swung on two wheels, skidded, struck the carcass of a horse and turned over, catapulting the chauffeur into the middle of the street.

"Sarros!" shricked Don Juan and ran to the overturned vehicle. It was quite empty.

"Bully boy, Senor Sarros," Webster laughed. "He's turned a pretty trick, hasn't he? Sent his guards out to hack a pathway for an empty limensine! That means he's hoping to draw the watchers from the other gate!"

But Don Juan Cafetero was not listening; he was running at top speed. for the south gate of the palaced grounds—and Webster followed.

As they swung into the street upon which this south gate opened, Webster; saw that it was deserted of all save the dead, for Sarros' clever ruse had worked well and had had the effect of, arousing the curiosity of his enemies as to the cause of the uproar at the north gate, in consequence of which they had all scurried around the block to see what they could see, thus according Sarros the thing he desired most-a fighting chance and a half minute to get through the gate and headed for the steamship landing without interference.

Webster and Don Juan came abreast the high, barred gate in the thick, 20foot masonry wall as the barrier swung back and a man, in civilian clothes, thundered through on a magnificent bay thoroughbred.

"That's him. Shtop the divil!"
reamed Don Juan. "They'll do the screamed Don Juan. "They'll do the decent thing be me if I take him

To Webster, who had acquired the art of snap shooting while killing time in many a lonely camp, the bay charger offered an easy mark. "Hate to down that beautiful animal," he re marked-and pulled away.

The horse leaped into the air and came down stiff-legged; Sarros spurred t cruelly, and the gallant beast strove to gather itself into its stride, staggered and sank to its knees, as with wild Irish yell Don Juan Cafeterd reached the dictator's side.

Sarros drew a revolver, but before he could use it Don Juan tapped him smartly over the head with his rifle barrel, and the man toppled inertly to the ground beside his dying horse.

"More power to ye sor," Don Juan called cheerily and turned to receive

Webster's approval. What he saw nar Webster was standing beside instant. the gate, firing into a dozen of Sarros soldiery who were pouring out of house just across the street, where for an hour they had crouched unseen and unheard by the Ruey men at the gate, They were practically out of ammunition and had merely been awaiting a favorable opportunity to escape before the rebels should enter the city in force and the house-to-house search for snipers should begin. They had been about to emerge and beat a hasty retreat, when Sarros rode out at the gate, and with a rush they followed, gaining the sidewalk in time to be with nesses to the dictator's downfall.

For a moment they had paused, huddled on the sidewalk behind their officer, who, turning to scont the street up and down, beheld John Stuart Webster standing by the gate with an automatic in his hand. At the same in stant Webster's attention had been attracted to the little band on the sides walk; in their leader he recognized no less a personage than his late acquaintance, the fire eating Capt. Jose Benavides. Coincidentally Benavides recognized Webster.

It was an awkward situation. Webster realized the issue was about to be decided, that if he would have it in his favor, he should waste not one split-second before killing the mercurial Benavides as the latter stood staring at him. It was not a question, now, of who should beat the other to the draw, for each had already filled his hand. It was a question, rather, as to who should recover first from his astonishment. If Bena-vides decided to let bygones be bygones and retreat without firing a shot, then Webster was quite willing to permit him to pass unmolested; indeed, such was his aversion to shooting any man, so earnestly did he hope the Sobrantean would consider that discretion was the better part of valor, that he resolved to inculcate that idea in the Hotspur.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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