

WEBSTER—MAN'S MAN

By PETER B. KYNE

Author of "Cappy Ricks," "The Valley of the Giants," Etc.

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CHAPTER XIV—Continued.

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 at foot 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' 'divil a soul the wiser save meself."

"Thank you, John. Now that I know the coast is clear and the launch



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

ready, I'll go back to the hotel for Miss Rucy."

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

Half an hour later the sound of hoof beats warned him of the approach 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 steege 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 pulled 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 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 Buenaventura met the open country—out where the brother she could scarcely remember and whom, until a month previous, she had believed dead, would shortly muster his not 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 unlively 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 loaded 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 theillery 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 thief up. There's another—and another."

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. Mauser 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 their 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 abstention 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 straining 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 to score some of the Guard Civil, it occurred suddenly to Don Juan that it would be a brave and virtuous act to cast his lot with the Rucy 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 Rucy 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 Rucy 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,

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 Cafferty's, win, lose or draw, an' may the devil damn me if I fail him afther what he's done for me. Sure, if General Rucy 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 Rucy 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 barrel 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. Cafferty, the latest recruit to the Rucy army," Don Juan answered composedly. "Who did ye think I was? Private secretehry to that divil 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' avier?"

The man who had challenged him—a lank, swarthy individual from the Mexican border—looked him over with twinkling eyes. "You'll do, Cafferty, 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 fall 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 foot 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



"'Enery, They're Comin'."

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, unobtrusively, and with puffing, hissing sounds between his snaggle teeth, until a Sobrantean gentleman (it was Doctor Pacheco) came out of the ware-

house 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; 15 years you've wyted 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 'alt!" she croaked. She had heard the late 'Enery give that command often enough to have acquired the exact inflection necessary to make an impression upon men accustomed to obeying such a command whenever given. Instinctively the column slowed up; some of the Foreign Legion, old coast artillerymen, no doubt, came to a halt with promptness and precision; all stared at Mother Jenks.

"'Ow about 'arf a dozen cases o' good brandy for the wounded?" Mother Jenks suggested. "An' 'ow about a bally old woman for a Red Cross nurse?"

"You're on, ma'am," the foreign leader replied promptly, and translated the old lady's suggestion to Dr. Pacheco, who accepted gracefully and thanked Mother Jenks in purest Castilian. So a detail of six men was told off to carry the six cases of brandy out of El Buen Amigo and load them on the ammunition carts; then Mother Jenks crawled up into the armored truck with the machine gun crew, and the column once more took up its line of rapid march.

The objective of this unsuspected force within the city was, as Ricardo Rucy shrewdly suspected it might be, poorly garrisoned. Usually a force of fully 500 men was stationed at the national arsenal, but the sharp, savage attack from the west, so sudden and unexpected, had thrown Sarros into a panic and left him no time to plan his defense carefully. His first thought had been to send all his available forces to support the troops bearing the brunt of the rebel attack, and it was tremendously important that this should be done very promptly, in view of the lack of information concerning the numerical force of the enemy; consequently he had reduced the arsenal force to 100 men and retained only his favorite troops of the guards and one company of the Fifteenth infantry to protect the palace.

Acting under hastily given telephonic orders, the commanding officer at the cantonment barracks had detailed a few hundred men to fight a rear-guard action while the main army fell back in good order behind a railway embankment which swept in a wide arc around the city and offered an excellent substitute for breastworks. This position had scarcely been attained before the furious advance of the rebels drove in the rear guard, and pending the capture of the arsenal, Ricardo realized his operations were at an impasse. Promptly he dug himself in, and the battle developed into a brisk affair of give and take, involving meager losses to both factions, but an appalling wastage of ammunition.

The arsenal, a large, modern concrete building with tremendously thick walls reinforced by steel, would have offered fairly good resistance to the average field battery. Surrounding it on all four sides was a reinforced concrete wall 30 feet high, with machine gun bastions at each corner and a platform along the wall, inside and 25 feet from the ground, which afforded foot room for infantry which could use the top five feet of the wall for protection while firing over it. There was but one entrance, a heavy, barred steel gate which was always kept locked when it was not necessary to have it opened for ingress or egress. Given warning of an attack and with sufficient time to prepare for it, 100 of the right sort of fighting men could withstand an indefinite siege by a force not provided with artillery heavier than an ordinary field gun. With a full realization of this, therefore, Ricardo and his confederates had designed to accomplish by strategy that which could not be done by the limited forces at their command.

As the column approached the neighborhood of the arsenal, these detachments broke away from the main body and disappeared down side streets, to turn at right angles later and march parallel with the main command. Each of these detachments was accompanied by one unit of the motorcycle mounted machine gun battery with its white crew; two blocks beyond the arsenal square each detachment leader so disposed his men as to offer spirited resistance to any sortie that might be made by the troops from the palace in the hope of driving off the attackers of the arsenal.

Having thus provided for protection during its operations, the main body, nominally under Dr. Pacheco but in reality commanded by the chief of the machine gun company, proceeded to operate. With the utmost assurance

in the world the armored truck rolled down the street to the arsenal entrance, swung in and pointed its impudent nose straight at the iron bars while the hidden chauffeur called loudly and profanely in Spanish upon the sentry to open the gate and let him in—that there was necessity for great hurry, since he had been sent down from the palace by the presidente himself, for machine guns to equip this armored motorcar. The sentry immediately called the officer of the guard, who peered out, observed nothing but the motortruck, which seemed far from dangerous, and without further ado inserted a huge key in the lock and turned the bolt. The sentry swung the double gates ajar, and with a prolonged and raucous toot of its horn the big car loafed in. The sentry closed the gate again, while the officer stepped up to turn the key in the lock. Instead, he died with half a dozen pistol bullets through his body, and the sentry sprawled beside him.

The prolonged toot of the motor-horn had been the signal agreed upon to apprise the detachment waiting in a secluded back street that the truck was inside the arsenal wall. With a yell they swept out of the side street and down on the gate, through which they poured into the arsenal grounds. At sound of the first shot at the gate, the commandante of the garrison, which had been drawn up in a double rank for reveille roll call, realized he was attacked, and that swift measures were necessary. Fortunately for him, his men were standing at attention at the time, preparatory to receiving from him one of those ante-battle exhortations so dear to the Latin soul.

A sharp command, and the little garrison had fixed bayonets; another command, and they were in line of squads; before the autotruck could be swung sideways to permit a machine gun to play on the Sobranteans in close formation, the latter had thrown one a skirmish line and were charging while from the guardhouse window, just inside the gate, a volley, poured into the unprotected rear of the truck following its passage through the gate, did deadly execution. The driver, a bullet through his back, sagged forward into his steel-clad citadel; both machine gun operators were wounded, and the truck was stalled. The situation was desperate.

"I'm a gone goose," mourned Don Juan Cafetero, and he leaped from the shamblers to the ground, with some hazy notion of making his escape through the gate. He was too late. Two men, riding tandem on a motorcycle with a machine gun in the specially constructed side-car, appeared in the entrance and leaped off; almost before Don Juan had time to dodge behind the motortruck to escape possible wild bullets, the machine gun was sweeping the oncoming skirmish line. Don Juan cheered as man after man of the garrison pitched on his face, for the odds were rapidly being evened now, greatly to the pleasure of the men charging through the gate to support the machine gun. Out into the arsenal yard they swept, forcing the machine gun crew to cease firing because of the danger of killing their own men; with a shock bayonet met bayonet in the center of the yard, and the issue was up for prompt and final decision.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

LIVED MANY CENTURIES AGO

Skeleton of Giant Wombat, Recently Found in Tasmania, Believed to Be 20,000 Years Old.

A complete skeleton recently discovered in the Mowbray marsh, on the far outskirts of the wild marshy regions of Northwest Tasmania confirms the existence 20,000 or 30,000 years ago of a giant wombat (one of the pouched animals peculiar to the Antipodes). The discovery was made by Mr. Lovett, a farmer, who was digging a drain into the swamp.

The skeleton lay buried in six feet of decayed vegetable matter resting on sand that was once the bed of a lake. Mr. Scott of the Launceston museum, examined and excavated the skeleton and expressed the opinion that the animal had lived perhaps more than 20,000 years ago, says the London Daily Mail. It is the only specimen yet discovered. In life the animal would be bigger than a rattle, with four elephantine legs and a head very much like a bulldog. Experts believe it to be a smaller species of the gigantic marsupial approaching in size the Brontosaurus (which weighed 80 to 90 tons). It has long, bearlike tusks, and probably lived on herbs and was slow of movement.

The present-day wombat is a burrowing animal from two to three feet long, with a short, thick body, short legs and very little tail.

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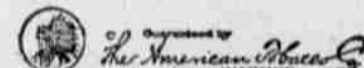
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"Oh, give us a rest!" exclaimed Archimedes when twitted because of his failure to move the world.

