

Webster—Man's Man

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CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"If you'd cared to play a gentleman's game, you blighter, you might 'ave lived for your bally country." Mother Jenks reminded him in English. "Wonder if the beggar'll wilt or will 'e go through smilin' like my sainted 'Enery on the syme spot."

She need not have worried. It requires a strong man to be dictator of a roman candle republic for 15 years, and whatever his sins of omission or commission, Sarros did not lack animal courage. Alone and unattended he limped away among the graves to the wall on the other side of the cemetery and placed his back against it, negligently, in the attitude of a devil-may-care fellow without a worry in life. The sergeant waited respectfully until Sarros had finished his cigarette; when he tossed it away and straightened to attention, the sergeant knew he was ready to die. At his command there was a sudden rattle of bolts as the cartridges slid from the magazines into the breeches; there followed a momentary halt, another command; the squad was aiming when Ricardo Rucy called sharply:

"Sergeant, do not give the order to fire."

The rifles were lowered and the men gazed wonderingly at Ricardo. "He's too brave," Ricardo complained. "D—him, I can't kill him as I would a mad dog. I've got to give him a chance."

The sergeant raised his brows expressively. Ah, the ley fuga, that popular form of execution where the prisoner is given a running chance, and the firing squad practices wing shooting. If the prisoner manages, miraculously, to escape, he is not pursued!

A doubt, however, crossed the sergeant's mind. "But my general," he expostulated, "Senior Sarros cannot accept the ley fuga. He is very lame. That is not giving him the chance your Excellency desires he should have."

"I wasn't thinking of that," Ricardo replied. "I was thinking I'm killing him without a fair trial for the reason that he's so infernally ripe for the gallows that a trial would have been a joke. Nevertheless, I am really killing him because he killed my father—and that is scarcely fair. My father was a gentleman. Sergeant, is your pistol loaded?"

"Yes, General."

"Give it to Senior Sarros."

As the sergeant started forward to comply Ricardo drew his own service revolver and then motioned Mother Jenks and the firing squad to stand aside while he crossed to the center of the cemetery. "Sarros," he called, "I am going to let God decide which one of us shall live. When the sergeant gives the command to fire, I shall open fire on you, and you are free to do the same to me. Sergeant, if he kills me and escapes unhurt, my orders are to escort him to the bay in my carriage and put him safely aboard the steamer."

Mother Jenks sat down on a tombstone. "Gard's truth!" she gasped, "but there's a rare plucked 'un. Aloud she croaked: "Don't be a bally ass, sir."

"Silence!" he commanded. The sergeant handed Sarros the revolver. "You heard what I said?" Ricardo called.

Sarros bowed gravely. "You understand your orders, Sergeant?"

"Yes, General."

"Very well. Proceed. If this prisoner fires before you give the word, have your squad riddle him."

The sergeant backed away and gazed owlishly from the prisoner to his captor. "Ready!" he called. Both revolvers came up. "Fire!" he shouted, and the two shots were discharged simultaneously. Ricardo's cap flew off his head, but he remained standing, while Sarros staggered back against the wall and there recovering himself gamely, fired again. He scored a clean miss, and Ricardo's gun barked three times; Sarros sprawled on his face, rose to his knees, raised his pistol halfway, fired into the sky and slid forward on his face. Ricardo stood beside the body until the sergeant approached and stood to attention, his attitude saying:

"It is over. What next, General?"

"Take the squad back to the arsenal, Sergeant," Ricardo ordered him coolly, and walked back to recover his uniform cap. He was smiling as he ran his finger through a gaping hole in the upper half of the crown.

"Well, Mrs. Jenks," he announced when he rejoined the old lady, "that was better than executing him with a firing squad. I gave him a square deal. Now his friends can never say that I murdered him."

He extended his hand to help Mother Jenks to her feet. She stood erect and felt again that queer swelling of the heart, the old feeling of suffocation.

"Steady, lass!" she mumbled. "Old on to me, sir. It's my bally haneurism. Gor—I'm—chokin'—"

He caught her in his arms as she lurched toward him. Her face was purple, and in her eyes there was a queer fierce light that went out suddenly, leaving them dull and glazed. When she commenced to sag in his

arms, he eased her gently to the ground and laid her on her back in the grass.

"The nipper's safe, 'Enery," he heard her murmur. "I've raised 'er a ldy, s'elp me—she's back where—you found 'er—'Enery—"

She quivered, and the light came creeping back into her eyes before it faded forever. "Comin', 'Enery—darlin'," she whispered; and then the soul of Mother Jenks, who had a code and lived up to it (which is more than the majority of us do), had departed upon the ultimate journey. Ricardo gazed down on the hard old mouth, softened now by a little half-smile of mingled yearning and gladness: "What a wonderful soul you had," he murmured, and kissed her.

In the end she slept in the niche in the wall of the Cathedral de la Vera Cruz, beside her sainted 'Enery.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Three days passed. Don Juan Cafetero had been buried with all the pomp and circumstance of a national hero; Mother Jenks, too, had gone to her appointed resting place, and El Buen Amigo had been closed forever. Ricardo had issued a proclamation announcing himself provisional president of Sobrante; a convention of revolutionary leaders had been held, and a provisional cabinet selected. A day for the national elections had been named; the wreckage of the brief revolution had been cleared away, and the wheels of government were once more revolving freely and noiselessly. And while all of this had been going on, John Stuart Webster had lain on his back, staring at the palace ceiling and absolutely forbidden to receive visitors. He was still engaged in this mild form of gymnastics on the third day when the door of his room opened and Dolores looked in on him.

"Good evening, Caliph," she called. "Aren't you dead yet?"

It was exactly the tone she should have adopted to get the best results, for Webster had been mentally and physically ill since she had seen him last, and needed some such pleasantry as this to lift him out of his gloomy mood. He grinned at her boyishly.

"No, I'm not dead. On the contrary, I'm feeling real chirpy. Won't you come in and visit for a while, Miss Rucy?"

"Well, since you've invited me, I shall accept." Entering, she stood beside his bed and took the hand he extended toward her. "This is the first opportunity I've had, Miss Rucy, he began, "to apologize for the shock I gave you the other day. I should have come back to you as I promised, instead of getting into a fight and scaring you half to death. I hope you'll forgive me, because I'm paying for my fun now—with interest."

"Very well, Caliph. I'll forgive you on one condition."

"Who am I to resist having a condition imposed upon me? Name your terms. I shall obey."

"I'm weary of being called Miss Rucy. I want to be Dolores—to you."

"By the toe nails of Moses," he reflected, "there is no escape. She's determined to rock the boat." Aloud he said: "All right, Dolores. I guess Bill won't mind."

"Billy hasn't a word to say about it," she retorted, regarding him with that calm, impersonal, yet vitally interested look that always drove him frantic with the desire for her.

"Well, of course, I understand that," he countered. "Naturally, since Bill is only a man, you'll have to manage him and he'll have to take orders."

"Caliph, you're a singularly persistent man, once you get an idea into your head. Please understand me, once for all; Billy Geary is a dear, and it's a mystery to me why every girl in the world isn't perfectly crazy about him, but every rule has its exceptions—and Billy and I are just good friends. I'd like to know where you got the idea we're engaged to be married."

"Why—why—well, aren't you?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, you—er—you ought to be. I expected—that is, I planned—I mean Bill told me and—and—and—er—it never occurred to me you could possibly have the—er—crust—to refuse him. Of course, you're going to marry him when he asks you?"

"Of course I am not."

"Ah-h-h-h!" John Stuart Webster gazed at her in frank amazement. "Not going to marry Bill Geary!" he cried, highly scandalized.

"I know you think I ought to, and I suppose it will appear quite incomprehensible to you when I do not."

"Why Dolores, my dear girl! This is most amazing. Didn't Bill ask you to marry him before he left?"

"Yes, he did me that honor, and I declined him."

"You what?"

She smiled at him so maternally that his hand itched to drag her down to him and kiss her curving lips.

"Do you mind telling me just why you took this extraordinary attitude?"

"You have no right to ask, but I'll tell you. I refused Billy because I didn't love him enough—that way. What's more, I never could."

He rolled his head to one side and softly, very softly, whistled two bars of "The Spanish Cavalier" through his

teeth. He was properly thunder-struck—so much so, in fact, that for a moment he actually forgot her presence while he pondered this most incredible state of affairs.

"I see it all now. It's as clear as mud," he announced finally. "You refused poor old Bill and broke his heart, and so he went away and hasn't had the courage to write me since. I'm afraid Bill and I both regarded this fight as practically won—all over but the wedding march, as one might put it. I might as well confess I hustled the boy down from the mine just so you two could get married and light out on your honeymoon. I figured Bill could kill two birds with one stone—have his honeymoon and get rid of his malaria, and return here in three or four months to relieve me, after I had the mine in operation. Poor boy. That was a frightful song-and-dance you gave him."

"I suspected you were the match-maker in this case. I must say I think you're old enough to know better, Caliph John."

"You did, eh? Well, what made you think so?"

She chuckled. "Oh, you're very obvious—to a woman."

"I forgot that you reveal the past and foretell the future."

"You are really very clumsy, Caliph. You should never try to direct the destiny of any woman."

"I'm on the sick list," he pleaded, "and it isn't sporting of you to discuss me. You're healthy—so let us discuss you. Dolores, do you figure Bill's case to be absolutely hopeless?"

"Absolutely, Caliph."

"Hum-m-m!"

Again Webster had recourse to meditation, seeing which, Dolores walked to the pier glass in the corner, satisfied herself that her coiffure was just so and returned to his side, singing softly a little song that had floated over the transom of Webster's room door into the hall one night:

A Spanish cavalier
Went out to rope a steer,
Along with his paper cigar-r-rol
"Caramba!" said he,
"Manana you will be
Mucho bueno carne por molo!"

He turned his head and looked up at her suddenly, searchingly. "Is there anybody else in Bill's way?" he demanded. "I admit it's none of my business, but—"

"Yes, Caliph, there is some one else."

"I thought so." This rather viciously. "I'm willing to gamble 100 to 1, sight unseen, that whoever he is, he isn't half the man Bill is."

"That," she replied coldly, "is a matter of personal opinion."

"And Bill's clock is fixed for keeps?"

"Yes, Caliph. And he never had a chance from the start."

"Why not?"

"Well, I met the other man first, Caliph."

"Oh! This you mind telling me what this other man does for a living?"

"He's a mining man, like Billy."

"All right! Has the son of a horse thief got a mine like Billy's? That's something to consider, Dolores."

"He has a mine fully as good as Billy's. Like Billy, he owns a half interest in it, too."

"Hum-m-m! How long have you known him?"

"Not very long."

"Be sure you're right—then go ahead," John Stuart Webster warned her. "Don't marry in haste and repent at leisure, Dolores. Know your man before you let him buy the wedding ring. There's a heap of difference, my dear, between sentiment and sentimentality."

"I'm sure of my man, Caliph."

He was silent again, thinking rapidly. "Well, of course," he began again presently, "while there was the slightest possibility of Bill winning you, I would have died before saying that which I am about to say to you now, Dolores, because Bill is my friend, and I'd never double cross him. With reference to this other man, however, I have no such code to consider. I'm pretty well convinced I'm out of the running, but I'll give that a race if it's the last act of my life. He's a stranger to me, and he isn't on the job to protect his claim, so why shouldn't I stake it if I can? But are you quite certain you aren't making a grave mistake in refusing Billy? He's quite a boy, my dear. I know him from suit to suspenders, and he'd be awfully good to you. He's kind and gentle and considerate, and he's not a molly-coddle, either."

"I can't help it, Caliph. Please don't talk about him any more. I know somebody who is kinder and nobler and gentler." She ceased abruptly, fearful of breaking down her reserve and saying too much.

"Well, if Bill's case is hopeless"—his hand came groping for hers, while he held her with his searching, wistful glance—"I wonder what mine looks like. That is, Dolores, I—"

"Yes, John?"

"I've played fair with my friend," he whispered eagerly. "I'm not going to ask you to marry me, but I want to tell you that to me you're such a very wonderful woman I can't help loving you with my whole heart and soul."

"I have suspected this, John," she replied gravely.

"I suppose so. I'm such an obvious old fool. I've had my dream, and I've put it behind me, but I—I just want you to know I love you; so long as I live, I shall want to serve you. When you're married to this other man, and things do not break just right for you both—if I have something he wants, in order to make you happy, I want you to know it's yours to give to him. I—I—guess that's all, Dolores."

"Thank you, John. Would you like to know this man I'm going to marry?"

"Yes, I think I'd like to congratulate the scoundrel."

"Then I'll introduce you to him, John. I first met him on a train in Death valley, California. He was a shaggy old dear, all whiskers and rags, but his whiskers couldn't hide his smile, and his rags couldn't hide his manhood, and when he thrashed a drummer because the man annoyed me, I just couldn't help falling in love with him. Even when he fibbed to me and disputed my assertion that we had met before—"

"Good land of love—and the calves get loose!" he almost shouted as he held up his one sound arm to her. "My dear, my dear—"

"Oh, sweetheart," she whispered laying her hot cheek against his, "it's taken you so long to say it, but I love you all the more for the dear thoughts that made you hesitate."

He was silent a few moments, digesting his amazement, speechless with the great happiness that was his—and then Dolores was kissing the back of the hand of that helpless, bandaged arm lying across his breast. He had a tightening in his throat, for he had not expected love; and that sweet, benignant, humble little kiss spelled adoration and eternal surrender; when she looked at him again the mists of joy were in his eyes.

"Dear old Caliph John!" she cried. "He's never had a woman to understand his funny ways and appreciate them and take care of him, has he?" She patted his cheek. "And bless his simple old heart, he would rather give up his love than be false to his friend. Yes, indeed, Johnny Webster respects 'No Shooting' signs when he sees them, but he tells his friends and pretends to be very stupid when he really isn't. So you wouldn't be false to Billy—eh, dear? I'm glad to know that because the man who cannot be false to his friend can never be false to his wife."

WANTS OWN FARM

Why One Youth Seeks the Land of Opportunity.

Beckoning Hands of Independence and Wealth Stretch Out From Western Canada to Those Who Have Faith and Courage.

Strolling around the exhibit room of the Canadian government office in St. Paul, studying the grain, and picking up an odd piece or two of literature describing farming and its results in Western Canada, a dapper, well-built, strapping six-footer said to the manager, "I've been having a grand whirl of living for the past few years. I used to work on my uncle's farm in Iowa. I heard of the big fat pay envelopes that the city chaps were getting every week. I went to the city, and I began getting them, too. I had all the excitement they would bring—theaters, dinners, swell clothes and taxis. I surely saw a lot of that life that in days gone by I had anxiously gazed upon and secretly wanted to try."

"But I'm driven to earth now. I'm still working, but the pay envelope is thinner. Not working steadily, you know, and I sort of miss those silk-shirt times. I went to Western Canada once, and I think I'll make another trip."

"I was up there five years ago. I want money, and lots of it; I want to be my own boss, but I haven't much coin to start with. I want to get into that class that don't have to worry about a 'buck' or so. I know fellows out there in Canada who went there, a few years ago, got a quarter section—some homesteaded and some bought on easy payments—and they are well off today. A number of the boys from my own state paid for their lands from a single crop. I may not be as successful as they were, but I want to try."

He wanted to talk, and the manager was a good listener. He continued: "I want to have my own home, and raise my own cattle; I want hogs and poultry, and milk and eggs to sell. Can I get a market?"

"He was assured that he could, and that he could get a decent-sized crop to thrash every fall."

"You know," he said, "if the farmers on five-hundred-dollar-an-acre land can make money, my reasoning leads me to believe that I can grow as many dollars an acre from that cheaper land in Western Canada."

This period of semi-unrest is causing more thinking and planning for the future than probably at any time in the past. The desire for personal and financial independence is growing. To secure this, the first real source of wealth is the land itself. That is the solution. During the era of high prices, doubtless there was some inflation of land values. So the new man—the young man wishing to make a start on a farm—was confronted with the problem of the land he wanted having gone beyond his limited capital. He must seek elsewhere. Two decades ago, and less, good farming land could be bought in Canada at four dollars an acre, but as the demand increased and its productivity was proven, prices advanced. There has been no undue inflation, though, and prices today are very reasonable. Some day, when the country is settled, land will bring a much higher price in Western Canada. Today land prices range for improved, \$18 to \$25 an acre; improved, at \$30 up.

The productive value is almost beyond estimate. The reports of those who have been farming these lands, making money and enjoying every personal freedom, are available and can be secured on application.

It is apparent that this last big available farming area of Western Canada will tend, to no small extent, to dispel some of the unrest that is so prevalent today among the younger men, who have had a taste of better things and who intend to have them in the future.—Advertisement.

The Division.
Knecker—"Info what classes is the population divided?" Bocker—"Office holders and office scolders."

ASPIRIN

Name "Bayer" on Genuine



Beware! Unless you see the name "Bayer" on package or on tablets you are not getting genuine Aspirin prescribed by physicians for twenty-one years and proved safe by millions. Take Aspirin only as told in the Bayer package for Colds, Headache, Neuralgia, Rheumatism, Earache, Toothache, Lumbago, and for Pain. Handy tin boxes of twelve Bayer Tablets of Aspirin cost few cents. Druggists also sell larger packages. Aspirin is the trade mark of Bayer Manufacture of Monoaceticacidester of Salicylicacid. —Adv.

He who is wedded to art should have a model wife.



"I Always Meant to Marry You."

me; and \$10,000 would have lasted me for pin money a long time."

"Well, you and Neddy have both lost out. Better send the old pelican a cable and wake him out of his day dream."

"I sent the cable yesterday, John dear."

"Extraordinary woman!"

"I've just received an answer. Neddy has spent nearly \$50 telling me by cable what a fine man you are and how thankful I ought to be to the good Lord for permitting you to marry me."

"Dolores, you are perfectly amazing. I only proposed to you a minute ago."

"I know you did, slow-poke, but that is not your fault. You would have proposed to me yesterday, only I thought best not to disturb you until you were a little stronger. This evening, however, I made up my mind to settle the matter, and so I—"

"But suppose I hadn't proposed to you, after all?"

"Then, John, I should have proposed to you, I fear."

"But you were running an awful risk, sending that telegram to Neddy Jerome."

She took one large red ear in each little hand and shook his head lovingly. "Silly," she whispered, "don't be a goose. I knew you loved me; I would have known it, even if Neddy Jerome hadn't told me so. So I played a safe game all the way through, and oh, dear Caliph John, I'm so happy I could cry."

"God bless my mildewed soul," John Stuart Webster murmured helplessly. The entire matter was quite beyond his comprehension!

[THE END.]

Where Do Poets Compose?
But do poets ever write in gardens? Swift, who was by way of being a poet, built himself a garden seat at Moor park when he served Sir William Temple, but I don't know that he wrote poetry there. Rather, it was a place for reading. Pope, in his prosperous days, wrote at Twickenham, with the sound of his artificial waterfall in his ears, and he walked to take the air in his grotto along the Thames. But do poets really wander beneath the moon to think their verses? Do they compose "on summer eve by haunted stream"? I doubt whether Gray conceived his "Elegy" in an actual graveyard. I smell oil. One need not see the thing described upon the very moment. Shelley wrote of mountains, the awful range of Caucasus, but his eye at the time looked on sunny Italy. Ibsen wrote of the north when living in the south. When Bunyan wrote of the delectable mountains he was snug inside a jail.—Charles S. Brooks in the Century Magazine.