

SQUIRE JOHN

A TALE OF THE CUBAN WAR

BY ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

Copyright, 1897, by F. Tennyson Neely. Copyright, 1899, by Street and Smith.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

"Velly muchee smashee up," replies the Celestial, with an angelic smile.

"And a gentleman was hurt?"

"Yep, belly sure; he talkee in air," responds Ah Sin, nodding eagerly.

"And they carried him to the hospital?"

"Takee to dead house, all samee," declares the Mongolian, rather flip-pantly; for the heathen Chinese has no heart for anyone outside of Jack.

H'm! Well, that settles it; but I'm hardly able to believe it happened even now. Where's your proof, Ah Sin?"

"How's this?" and the man from the Antipodes holds a small package aloft.

"A packet of letters tied with a string. Where under the sun did you get those, my good man?"

"On street—fall from pocket of Howard, allee samee."

"The deuce you say! Then why—But never mind; I'll take charge of them and see that he gets his property in the morning when I hunt him up at the hospital. At any rate, this is proof enough I wasn't dreaming.

"I wish I could be as sure about his raving. My ghost, eh? Well, I like that—rather cool, to say the least. Haunted by my name, is he? Well, I'm sorry, but I never thought it was so atrocious as that. What else did he say about going on?—had an appointment at twelve that he must fulfil. Rather unfortunate, but he seems more in a condition to keep one in the other world. A fortune at stake, eh? Why, that's something in my own line. Deuced odd we both should have visited the Canongate at midnight on errands involving the filthy lucre! Show him the house with seven gables at the corner. That was where he had the appointment, I reckon. Is there such a house near here? I've a charitable notion to saunter on a little bit and see. It would, perhaps, be doing the poor devil a favor if I dropped in and explained to the good folks just why Howard failed to turn up."

"It wasn't his fault, goodness knows. Wheels will sometimes fly off their base, and give an unexpected twist to a man's fortunes. I've had such



"Why, he's dead—and I'm his ghost!" things happen myself. He said all might be lost unless he got there. That would be a pity if a few minutes of my time can save the day.

"Ah Sin, my boy, do you see that building over yonder—the house of seven gables—the house to which the poor gentleman was driving when his

tire was punctured? Well, I'm going over to sound a tattoo on the door, and let them know why Howard fails to show up."

He gives the knocker several resonant blows, which echo along the quiet street.

Someone is heard advancing on the other side of the door, and a hand fumbles the chain. Evidently the inmates of this queer house with the gables do not put implicit confidence in their neighbors, or else they come from a country where locks are a necessity.

Then the door opens.

The hallway is dimly lighted, and he can just see the figure of a man before him—a man as striking in his general appearance as one would meet in the Quartier Latin of Paris, where art students abound—a man who has long iron grey hair that falls to his shoulders, a snow-white beard, and who wears the conventional black velvet jacket of an artist.

Jack is a little struck by the appearance of this gentleman, who has swung the door back rather hastily, and is observing him with what appears to be a burning gaze, so that for the moment he forgets to speak.

During this brief space of time he feels rather than sees the eyes of the other fastened upon him. Nor is the explanation difficult to seek, if, as he believes, this is the house where Howard had his appointment.

He finds his voice.

"Pardon me, sir; but were you expecting someone?" he asks.

To his surprise the old gentleman immediately puts out his hand; his whole demeanor changes, since he no longer frowns and looks suspicious, but smiles; and Jack, not to be outdone in politeness, meets that palm halfway, believing he can at least hold his own when it comes to a squeeze, if given his favorite grip.

The bells clang out the midnight hour just at this moment, and between the strokes he hears the other say, with what happens to be a foreign accent to his English:

"Welcome, welcome, to my house! You keep the appointment barely to the letter; still, as we say in sunny Spain, Mas vale tarde que nunca, which is, Better late than never. I have waited—we all have waited anxiously. Por Dios! you are here. Again I say, with all my heart, welcome on this happy night, Mr. Jack Travers—ha-ha!"

CHAPTER III.

Hypnotized by a Look.

The young man from the States stands there as if petrified.

Several times during the short address of the elderly and picturesque gentleman with the long silver locks and velvet sack coat he has endeavored to break in, eager to disclose the fact that a mistake has been made, for Jack is not the man to feel at ease in borrowed plumage; but, strange to say, when the other finishes his peroration with the utterance of Jack's name, all desire to thus disclaim any connection with the matter passes away.

He is like a man partly under the influence of ether. He sees things as through a glass, darkly, and yet endeavors to grasp the truth as a drowning man grasps a straw.

A dozen things flash through his mind at once. First comes the thought that by some accident he has stumbled on the house to which his unknown correspondent with whom he had the appointment in the Canongate meant to lead him, but this he speedily dismisses as less plausible than others.

Before his bewildered mind flash

the remarkable things uttered by Howard in his confused state following the smash-up. That is why he does not make any resistance when the Spanish gentleman draws him over the threshold. Curiosity is aroused, and even on the instant there has arisen a desire to discover why they play at battledore and shuttlecock with his name.

Given an active mind and Jack Travers may be expected to soon solve the mystery; but it will take a little time, to gain which, without arousing curiosity, he must carry out his part of the program naturally.

Probably it would be hard to find a man more willing to meet Fortune half-way and dance to her merry tune until the hour for unmasking comes.

He is bold by nature, fearless from constant association with danger,



"Welcome on this happy night, Mr. Jack Travers!"

since familiarity breeds contempt, and not averse at any time to engage in an enterprise the outcome of which piques his curiosity.

"Ha! what you?" suddenly exclaims the elderly gentleman, as he brings the door to, and nails poor Ah Sin in the jam—Ah Sin who, seeing Jack enter, attempts to slip across the threshold, believing it to be his duty to follow where the master leads.

The wretched Celestial is in a way to feel the power of the press, since his captor shows no signs of relenting, when Jack hurries to his relief, and hastily explains that the heathen Chinese is his valet, his shadow, without whose watchful presence he would scarcely dare to breathe; upon hearing which the muscular old gentleman suspends the pressure, and Ah Sin, relieved, though considerably flattened, slips in.

Jack hears voices somewhere near by, and his nerves are tingling with an eagerness to discover the meaning of it all, which desire has been brought into existence by the mere mention of his own name by this remarkable foreign artist.

"Follow me, Senor Jack," says the party in question, as he turns and walks in the direction of the stairs leading aloft.

Jack unconsciously allows a hand to slip round to the pocket where he usually carries a small revolver. For years he has lived among the wild cowboys of the Texan plains or the lawless miners in the Cripple Creek region, where a man's existence often depends on his possessing a shooting iron, and his ability to handle the same in the smallest possible fraction of a second. Old habits are difficult to break away from, and Jack has not yet grown to feel at ease without being "heeled."

As he strides past the parlor door he has a glimpse of several parties in the lighted room, and somehow discovers himself taking an unwarranted interest in the graceful figure of a young lady who chances to have her back toward him.

The faithful, if wondering, Ah Sin follows at his heels, apparently deter-

mined to watch over his beloved master at all costs.

Having surrendered to the conditions by which he has so suddenly been surrounded, Jack fancies himself ready to follow the lead of this dancing will-o'-the-wisp of fortune at least to the very danger line.

They enter a room. A light stands on a table. Jack, giving a hasty glance around, sees nothing more dangerous than a hairbrush on the dresser.

"Allow me to help you off with your outer coat," chatters the other; "no trouble, I assure you. I am so pleased to think our plans have come out so beautifully, and that this night we secure—I a fortune, you a portion of the same with a lovely—Carramba! Senor, your garments—pardon me—do not exactly suit the occasion. But I forget; you have been a long journey on, and there has little time occurred for such things. After all, what does it matter? I doubt very much whether the fact of your wearing a traveling suit will be at all observed by your wife."

Poor Jack feels a cold chill chasing up and down his spinal column. "Pardon me, Senor," he gasps, "but you—er—said something concerning my wife, which I—er—hardly understand."

The good-natured old gentleman in the velvet artist's coat bursts into a laugh, as though he finds the subject very comical, and, of course, Jack, to be accommodating, laughs too, though his merriment might be set down as strained. Ah Sin simply grins while he whisks the hand brush over his master's clothes, but he is making better headway at solving the riddle than Jack gives evidence of doing.

"Of course," chuckles the host, "very foolish on my part, a merry bachelor as yet; but we calculate, Senor Jack, on having you tied in the tightest knot possible before half an hour has gone by."

"The devil you do!" mutters the individual in question, vaguely wondering, now that matters have reached this critical point, whether he had not better kick over the traces, declare his identity, and call the game off.

(To be continued.)

WORDS AND THEIR USES.

About 5,000 Only Are Used by Educated People.

No one can say how many words there are in the English language, because there are so many words of doubtful standing, says the Springfield Republican. The Century dictionary contains about 225,000 words, and the new edition of the Standard dictionary lays claim to over 300,000. Of these many are obsolete, and many others are rarely used. Science has added a vast vocabulary of polysyllables that are scientific formulae rather than real words. They have no place in general literature. The ordinary English vocabulary may be said to contain from 50,000 to 50,000 words, the latter estimate being large. No single writer of literature has used as many as the lower number named.

Shakespeare, whose vocabulary is larger than that of any other English poet, unless it be Browning, used about 15,000 words, while Milton, whose range was narrower, employed only about half that number. The vocabulary of the illiterate has been set as low as 30 words, but this must be exceptional. It's more likely that the "ordinary workingman" uses from 2,000 to 3,000 words, while, of course, he is familiar with several thousand more, which he recognizes in print but does not himself use. The common estimate of the average vocabulary of educated people is from 5,000 to 6,000, but in this case the number of words which are not used is enormously increased. A well-read college graduate should be familiar with perhaps 100,000 words, while in the course of a year he might not use 5,000 of them in his writing or conversation. Shorthand reporters find about 2,500 word signs and contractions ample for representing the words which are commonly used in public speaking.