

QUIRE JOHN

A TALE OF THE CUBAN WAR

BY ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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CHAPTER XII.—Continued.

However, there is no help for it, and no precaution must be neglected that will conduce to the success of the game.

Her safety first, no matter what may become of his hopes.

That is Jack Travers for you.

Presently he searches for Ah Sin, and gives that humble individual quite a severe shock when he runs across him. The Celestial has been keeping quiet, feasting on the good things placed before him, and awaiting orders.

When he learns what has occurred to call for immediate attention, Ah Sin is at once on the qui vive, and ready to act as best his master sees fit.

At six o'clock Smithers shows up, looking very unlike himself. He would easily pass for one of the native Jehu whips upon the thousand cabs of Havana.

Jack and his man tumble inside—there is a crack of the whip, and away they go.

The crowds delay them a little, but Smithers pushes his horses, and at a quarter-past six they draw near the station.

There is the usual noise of moving trains, for the presence of an hundred thousand Spanish soldiers on the island presses the limited railroad accommodations at times.

Smithers has made all arrangements, and leaving Jack mounted on the box, with Ah Sin near by, he hurries into the station to meet the confederate he has engaged.

Jack sees him two minutes later waving his hand as a signal to come at once. Something is evidently wrong or he would not appear so agitated. With a terrible fear clutching his heart as if with fingers of ice, Travers leaps to the ground and runs. Ah Sin does likewise, and together they reach Smithers.

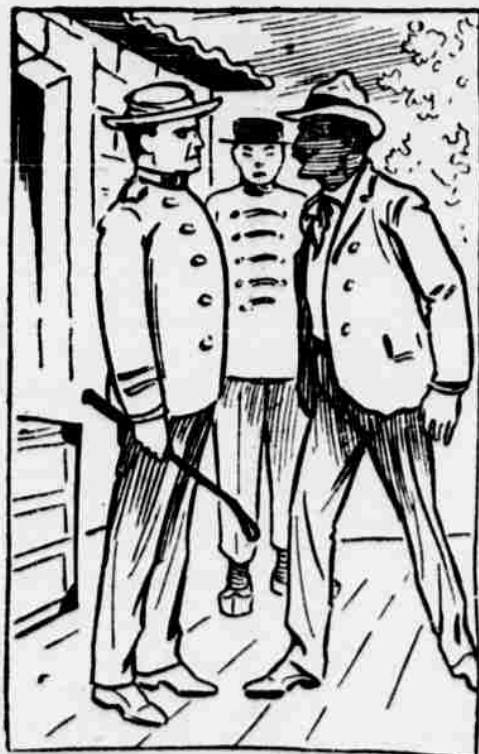
"What is it—the train—" cries Jack.

"Has gone five minutes ago. They changed the time to a quarter past. That was it we saw hauling out as we came up," is the crushing reply.

CHAPTER XIII.

The Man Who Owned the Engine.

Jack stares at the other—he even repeats the words Smithers has used.



"What is it—the train—" cries Jack.

Five minutes too late, and the special train, laden with Spanish soldiers, has gone to destruction.

Before his eyes, as plain as day, he can see the awful wreck, the dead and the dying, and among them, oh,

horrors! the lovely form of his Highland lassie, the girl he loves.

No wonder Jack feels for one brief moment as though paralyzed.

The reaction comes. Instead of a deadly chill, he has a burning sensation pass over his whole frame, and experiences an earnest, furious desire to do something in order to save her from this fearful fate.

Smithers is endeavoring to collect his senses—Smithers, who has, under almost every condition, shown such wonderful nerve, seems broken up by this decree of Fate.

And while he thinks Jack acts.

It is Ah Sin who leads the way. The Celestial never gets rattled no matter what accumulation of disasters overtake them. Jack sees the Chinaman's arm extended, and following the line of his finger he discovers what it is to which Ah Sin would attract his attention.

The railway company's telegraph office.

At sight of it Jack's hopes revive. True, he has sworn not to betray the plot of the rebels, but when the last resort is gone and her life is in peril, he will feel compelled to do so. Better a broken vow than that she suffer.

So he leaps toward the office.

Perhaps nearly, if not quite, sixty seconds have flown since he first received the dire news—sixty precious seconds, during which the doomed train has been shooting on toward the destruction that lies in wait.

His positive intention is to have the telegraph agent wire the conductor in charge of the train, warning him of the awful danger ahead, and having him use extra precautions when approaching the bridge where the dynamite is supposed to lie.

Smithers sees him dash into the office and stifles a groan. Perhaps this is for the rebels whose plan for striking a blow at their hated foes will fall through. At any rate, he does not make the least attempt to hold Jack in check, but awaits results.

When he looks again he discovers Jack dashing out of the telegraph office.

His manner is not that of a confident man who, by a bold stroke, has accomplished what he set out to do.

On the contrary, Jack appears excited—his face is almost as pale as one who has seen a ghost, and he glances sharply from right to left as he runs toward them, after the manner of a man who seeks a remedy for some dreadful malady.

As he draws near where Smithers stands, he can be heard exclaiming aloud, as though to save even the precious seconds of time:

"Wires down—Maceo raided the outskirts of Havana—impossible to reach even the first station—no way of reaching the train—now been gone seven and a half minutes, and already four miles away."

Yes, they can hear the rumble of the train among the hills—it comes very plainly during a cessation of noise about the station, though gradually growing fainter and more distant.

"Can you suggest anything?" cries Jack, endeavoring to cudgel his brains to greater rapidity of action. "Think as you never did before. What can overtake the special, since telegraphing is out of the question?"

Smithers is looking down the tracks, where they gleam in the lights beyond.

"If we had an engine we might do it."

Jack snatches at the idea like a drowning man might clutch at a straw.

"Then we will have an engine if it

takes a thousand—five thousand dollars—all I have in the world. Follow me!" he ejaculates.

Jack has not started off at random—he generally knows what he means to accomplish before setting out to begin.

Some moving object has caught his eye just down the track—something that in this crisis of his existence looks more valuable than the best paying mine in the Cripple Creek region. It is an engine just emerging from a shed, upon a turntable. Smoke is pouring from the large, old-styled stack, black smoke burning resinous pinewood, than which few species of fuel will generate steam more quickly.

It means a possible chance to solve the terrible problem that has been suddenly set before them—it means the case of life and death may yet be decided in favor of continued existence.

Under these conditions, therefore, it can be readily understood with what tremendous satisfaction Jack starts in the direction of this locomotive.

As he advances with such a burst of speed he takes note of several



"It is a case of life and death with us to overtake that special."

things. Everyone connected with the engine seems to be in the utmost haste, and this is the more wonderful when the fact is taken into consideration that in such hot countries as Cuba they do not, as a general thing, use any too much speed in anything undertaken.

He sees the stoker tossing pine knots into the yawning mouth of the fire box, while the engine driver leans part way out of the cab window, his face streaked with grime, but looking anxious in the light of the fire.

Thus bearing down upon the scene, Travers is not long in reaching the place where several stout men stand ready to turn the engine around on the revolving table.

Two men stand beside the trucks, one of them having an official air, and holding a paper in his hand that may be an order.

His companion seems to be an ordinary citizen—a Spaniard, judging from his olive skin and black hair.

Jack instantly surmises that the official is the party who can attend to his wants, and he means to obtain possession of that engine if money can buy it.

"Senor, are you in charge here I have missed the special by a hair's breadth. It is very important that I should overtake it. I would have sent a message, but the wires are down."

The official shoots a quick but expressive glance toward his companion, who moves a little closer, cocking his ears as though he takes an unusual interest in what Jack says.

"Si, senor, the wires are down—that Maceo is always on the move, and he keeps the wires cut so that we in Havana may not know what he is doing. It is very sad," is the consoling remark made by the official.

"But, senor, you did not answer my question—are you in charge here?"

"For the night—yes," is the reply.

"I wish to hire a special."

"A what?" ejaculates the other.

"A special—an engine to overtake the train that left here some minutes ago."

The official throws up both arms.

"Madre de Dios!—another!" he gurgles.

"Senor, it is a case of life and death," Jack breaks out with, huskily, for the men are swinging the iron monster around, and Jack is inwardly swearing he will control the destiny of that engine, come what may.

"Alas! I am sorry!"—with a shrug.

"If money stands in the way, I am prepared to pay you any price."

"That is not it. Alas! I have no engine."

"This one will do, I am sure."

"But—"

"You hesitate when many lives are in peril."

"It is no longer under my control."

"Senor explain."

"This gentleman is Gen. Toledo."

He has also missed the train, but bears authority to overtake it if the means can be had. I have ordered out this engine. It belongs to him since the Government commands. Senor, you must deal with Gen. Toledo."

Jack whirls upon the soldier in civilian attire. "General, as I said before, it is a case of life and death with us to overtake the special. If you have the power to allow such a thing, I beg that we may find a lodgment somewhere on your engine. If a thousand dollars would be of any service to you—"

The other shakes his head.

"We can talk of that later, senor," he smiles.

"You consent?"—in sudden rapture.

"Caramba! there is no one who can prevent me. I own this engine for the hour. And you say it is a case of life and death, senor. I sympathize with you—I offer you a chance to overtake the special, which left fifteen minutes ahead of time."

His manner tells Jack plainly that he has been entirely influenced by the prospect of a heavy pecuniary reward, and not because he has a big heart.

"Then you will allow us to accompany you? A thousand thanks, senor. If you only knew the facts, you would never regret your decision."

Jack feels as though a load of a thousand pounds has been lifted from his heart. There is a fair field and no favor now. It is all he asks at any time.

The engine has been faced down the track, and a man dashes down to change the switch that will run it upon the main line.

"Come, senors, all aboard," sings out General Toledo, as he swings himself up into the cab, quickly followed by Jack and Smithers, while Ah Sin clutches hold even as the engine bursts forward.

(To be continued.)

Followers of Count Tolstoi.

Not long ago the Vienna newspapers were speaking of a Hungarian doctor of philosophy who had become penetrated with Tolstoi's ideas and had apprenticed himself to a Budapest shoemaker, says the New York World. Now a Bulgarian doctor of philosophy, Lubekoff, who has passed his examinations at the University of Sofia "cum laude," and was engaged as professor of Latin, has become a bootblack at a street corner in Sofia. His customers come because they wish to have their boots polished by a doctor.

Lubekoff does not forget that he is a Tolstoist and impresses on his customers the virtue of lowly labor and the happiness which it brings. He has actually succeeded in founding several little colonies of Tolstoists in Sofia.

Sunday School Enrollment.

More than 13,000,000 persons are enrolled in the Sunday Schools of the country. In public schools the enrollment is more than 16,000,000, or only 3,000,000 more.