

# SQUIRE JOHN

## A TALE OF THE CUBAN WAR

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### CHAPTER XIV.

#### A Mad Chase on a "Wild-Cat Engine."

When they have gained the cab of the locomotive upon which General Toledo has seized for some important government business, Jack and Smithers draw a long breath of relief.

The future looks brighter in comparison with the blackness that so recently hung over it like a funeral pall.

Jack glances over the pile of wood in the tender. Havana is in full view, and as the evening settles down over the Cuban capital many lights are springing into sight, making the picture, with the harbor beyond, and grim Morro Castle guarding its entrance, one that could have but few rivals.

They have rattled over a trestle or bridge, and now plunge among the hills back of the city.

The last light vanishes from view; for the present, at least, good-bye to Havana.

Around them the country is growing wilder. At first occasional houses may be seen, with gardens; then come what appear to be plantations, with mills for pressing the sugar cane.

And now darkness. How suddenly it seems to drop upon them, as though they plunge deeper and deeper into a canyon, when in reality such is not the case!

Already the driver has succeeded in urging his engine over the rails at a rate of speed that must have shocked the officers of the road, could they but see it.

Jack had early found a good hold, and hangs on grimly; ditto Smithers. The general occupies a seat beside the stoker, who is kept busy half the time tossing pine knots into the hungry maw of the fire box. As for Ah Sin, that worthy, after being hustled several times from one side of the cab to the other, feels a sensation akin to the dreadful mal-de-mer of his last voyage, and dropping flat, covers amidst the wood; nor does he care very much whether the pile topple over upon him or the fireman make an effort to utilize him as a convenient stick of timber, such is the desperate condition this nausea brings about. And the speed increases as the steam crawls up in the glass indicator.

All is well so far.

When they spin around a sharp curve it is all Jack can do to hold on. He even imagines the massive machine is about to topple over, and holds his very breath in awe. Smith-



Good-bye to Havana.

ers utters an expressive exclamation, and from Ah Sin comes a shriek.

But they keep the track, and go flying on with the speed of the hurricane.

As they dash along, Jack, who chances to be on that side nearest the Spanish officer, opens a conversation with him.

It is positively necessary that he shout aloud, such is the racket and confusion that accompany the flight of the Alhambra, as the veteran engine is called; but Jack thinks nothing of this when seeking information.

"What place was that?" he asks, as they flash past a small building that has the appearance of a station.

General Toledo tells the name, and at the same time vouchsafes the intelligence that it is about five miles out of the city.

Then about one-quarter of the distance has been passed over. How much have they gained upon the other train?

The soldier seems quite jolly, as though he feels positive they will overtake the train ahead. Perhaps a shade of anxiety might creep over the nature of his dream did he but know all that these three travelers do. Jack, however, does not feel inclined to enlighten him, for since it seems that they may overtake the train in good time, he means to keep his word to Smithers as far as it is possible.

He is already figuring in his mind what his course may be later on, should they succeed in their chase.

What will General Toledo do?

Can it be possible he has had wind of the truth concerning the dynamite plot, and that his design is to prevent the threatened catastrophe?

That is not without the bounds of reason; and yet Jack hardly believes it to be the true nature of his mission.

More than likely he bears secret but important orders to the officer in command of the soldiers regarding some move he is expected to make against the insurgents.

After all, what does it matter so long as their end is assured, and the girls saved?

So he continues to plan ahead, believing that in this way time may be saved.

Fortune seems kind, for although their speed is increased and they fly around dangerous curves, nothing in the shape of disaster has as yet overtaken them.

The general has his watch in his hand, and as they flash by another station he looks at the time, the fire-door being open and the cab flooded with light.

"Six-thirty-nine," Jack hears him say.

That means nine minutes since they left Havana behind.

"How far is this station out?" he questions, anxious to know just the distance they have come.

"Between seven and a half and eight miles, senior," replies General Toledo, with a broad smile, as though the honor of the enterprise rests wholly upon his shoulders.

"Nearly eight miles in nine minutes! Why, it is almost incredible," he exclaims; while Smithers says, hollowly:

"Simply suicide, Senior Jack."

Evidently he has slight hopes of coming out of the adventure alive. No one asks the opinion of poor Ah Sin, who crouches there and beseeches his boss to tide him over this new emergency, so that he may burn many packages of sacred paper in the house of the gods as a penance.

It is a period of intense excitement.

They are reasonably sure that the track is in fairly decent condition, since the special has just passed over it ahead of them. But for this it would be doubly dangerous to advance at such a speed, as a misplaced rail would send them into eternity, and

there are thousands of men among the insurgents desperate enough to resort to such means in order to gain their end.

The country is growing more level now, and they will soon be able to see whether their furious pace has borne fruit.

Another station.

Twelve miles out.

Jack has a chill at the thought that not more than ten or twelve more intervene before the scene of execution will be reached.

"Patience, senior; we turn a curve here, and issue upon a plateau. The next station is then in sight. I believe we will find our train at that point," says the general.

His words fall like music on the heart of Travers, for that usually hopeful individual has begun to despair lest they may, after all, be too



Then they sped around the last curve.

late—lest the awful crash comes to tell them the vengeance of the insurgents has fallen.

Aroused with new hope, he leans out of the cab to look ahead, his heart beating in anxiety, his eyes keenly on the alert.

As long as he lives Jack can never forget the strain of the next thirty seconds. Why, it seems to him as though his very heart has ceased to perform its customary function.

Then they speed around the last curve. The hills are left behind, and the engine dashes out upon the plateau.

Every eye is on the watch, and from several throats ring out shouts that tell of victory.

The train is in sight.

Even the wretched Ah Sin staggers to his feet, and feasts his eyes upon the sight.

"They are going ahead!" exclaims Smithers, as he discovers that the train is certainly in motion.

The experienced engine driver, as he gradually reduces their own mad pace, ventures to contradict this positive assertion.

"No, no—just pulling into the station, seniors," he affirms, eagerly.

"Then we have been hot on their heels."

"What else would you have when we go at such a fine pace? Por Dios! seniors, I give you my word no one ever before went so fast upon the island of Cuba."

The engineer is proud of his work, and well he may be. It is at this time, when success seems assured, that the general remembers.

"Pardon, senior, but you promised to talk over certain matters. If I have been of benefit to you, perhaps you would not object to assisting a certain project which I shall bring to your favorable notice, for I could not think of accepting a dollar myself."

"General, I understand you. There is my card. Hunt me up when you return to Havana—I shall leave my address there—and I shall be well pleased to donate a thousand dollars to any project you may name."

"Senior, I thank you."

"Not at all, general. Besides this,

which is a mere bagatelle, you have placed us under heavy obligations, which we will not forget. Now, you won't fail to hunt me up?"

"Cospita, I should say not, my dear senior," replies the Spaniard, shaking hands effusively.

But all the same, he never does.

By this time a few blasts from the whistle of the wild-cat engine have been answered from the motor that draws the train, proving that those in charge understand there is a good reason why this trailer has been sent out after them.

As the old veteran runs up behind the last car and comes to a stop, those on board leap to the platform.

Smithers looks to Jack for a lead at this stage of the game, and the latter intends to shape his course a good deal upon the result of General Toledo's mission.

He sees the latter immediately met by several gaudily-attired officers. They gather in a knot to discuss certain important matters. If the plans of the rebels to dynamite the special are known, then, of course, that danger is a thing of the past; but if, on the other hand, it is some other business that has brought General Toledo in such hot haste over the rails, it may be necessary for our friends even yet to resort to heroic treatment in order to save the innocent girls.

They have slowly passed the last car.

It is of continental make, and divided into four compartments. Jack notes several facts even while his eyes are keenly on the alert for signs of the girl for whom he labors so hard.

One compartment only has light in it, and this he sees is the carriage occupied by Senior Roblado and his little party; for the curtains are only partly drawn, and as they pass, the head of the don is thrust out, while he asks what station it is.

Jack dares not trust himself to reply, for his poor Spanish might betray him. As it is, he half turns his head in another direction, though it comes doubly hard to do it, since at the moment his eager gaze has fallen upon the enchanting face of Jessie Cameron.

Fortunately a guard standing near catches the query, and believing it addressed to himself, makes answer.

Smithers has also noticed that the other compartments are dark. He even tries the door of one in his investigating way, and finds it locked.

"What do you suppose it means?" queries Jack, who has caught the action.

"There you have me, sir. Hardly possible there are passengers inside who have gone to sleep. I fancy people wouldn't take things so easy on a Cuban railroad just at present, where double danger hovers in the air. But I don't think we want to shut ourselves up in one of these coops. We would be powerless to do anything."

"Just so. We must be where we can work."

"Then I fancy the next car will be apt to suit us better."

(To be continued.)

#### The New Thames Tunnel.

The Ratcliff-Rotherhithe tunnel now being built under the Thames will take five years to construct. Its length will be 6,883 feet, with an external diameter of sixteen feet and two footways four feet eight and one-half inches wide. When it is finished there will be three tunnels under the Thames at London.

#### Encouraged.

"Do you think," she asked the dermatologist, "that you can make my nose beautiful?"

"Well, I may not be able to make it beautiful, but I couldn't help improving it some, even if I were to hit it with a mallet."

#### Equally Divided Wealth.

Prof. William Smart, the political economist, says that if British wealth were divided equally each person would receive \$195.48 a year, or \$2.62 a week.