

SQUIRE JOHN

A TALE OF THE CUBAN WAR

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CHAPTER XXIII—Continued.

Again he is in the midst of battle. The shouts of frenzied men and the rude concussion of exploding gunpowder make a chaotic confusion. He can see desperate rivals engaged in hand-to-hand conflicts all around him, upon whose olive faces the fierce glow of passion has left its hated mark.

Then appears a milk-white steed, and, mounted on this, the little Cuban beauty with flowing hair, flashing machete, filled with the enthusiasm and patriotism that inspired Joan of Arc in the time of France's peril.

Evidently Lola Montez has returned in as mysterious a way as she left. Remembering the distance and the wretched roads from Havana to the scene of the engagement, Jack is more amazed than ever, and vaguely wonders whether she may not have some marvelous way of flying through the air.

He comes upon her in the garden, sitting upon a rustic bench near the fountain. It is hard to believe this lovely creature and the spirit of battle are one and the same.

She springs up and holds out her hand as he comes near. Even Jack can see the color fly into her cheeks. He would be a fool not to understand that he is more to this warm-blooded daughter of Cuba than other men.

Travers chats and laughs, but feels uneasy. He seeks to analyze the nature of this exotic plant. It gives him pain to believe that she can care for him—not on his own account, since the man hardly exists who could object to being loved by such a charming divinity, but, as usual, he is thinking of the fair flower of Scotland, sweet Jessie Cameron. How may it affect her? Will this Cuban girl hate her when she learns that he is wholly devoted to the one whom a kindly Fortune gave him for his wife? He has known of several instances in Mexico where such jealousy has been the cause of a terrible tragedy.

And so it is Jack's resolve to endeavor, so far as lies within his power, to break this spell, and cause Lola Montez to dislike him, if he can accomplish the same without any loss to his self-respect or his hitherto untarnished honor.

Perhaps the object may best be accomplished by relating to her the strange story of his marriage. Somehow he shrinks from the task, but this only arouses him to the necessity of prompt action if he would stem the tide before it has gone beyond his reach. And having thus resolved, he only awaits a fitting opportunity to carry out his plan.

CHAPTER XXIV.

What Jack Heard by the Fountain.

The best laid plans often go astray, and before Travers can summon his resolution to the sticking point, or find a suitable opening where he might wedge in some reference to his romantic history, Smithers joins them.

One glance tells Jack the other has news for him. Of course it must be in connection with the one around whom all of Jack Travers' plans for the future revolve.

This awakens a keen desire on the young man's part to hear what Smithers has found out. He imagines all manner of evil as hovering about the ward of Roblado, and it is with a peculiarly wolfish sensation he remembers that Spencer is yet in the game.

Smithers, however, shows no desire to talk while the senorita is present, and hence Jack has to curb his impatience as best he may.

The opportunity comes at last. Smithers manages it in some way,

and they are left alone beside the fountain.

"Well?" says Jack, somewhat impatiently; "you have something to tell me. Out with it, my dear fellow."

"There you go again, Senor Jack; but, as usual, you hit the mark. I have something to tell you—something that bears upon your fortunes, and promises to bring the game to a speedy crisis," responds the other, soberly.

"For which Heaven be praised," breathes the younger man, endeavoring to calm his wildly-beating heart; for, cool customer as he has always proven in times of danger, the mere thought of one fair face awakens such a keen interest within him that he becomes almost alarmed. The disease has made rapid progress—it promises to be fatal.

Smithers seats himself upon the rustic bench, and Jack stands with one foot upon the same, leaning his head upon his hand, so that he can watch the agent's face as the soft glow of the Moorish hanging lamp from the enclosed court falls upon it.

"Of course you won't be surprised to hear that Senor Roblado, finding the Fates working against him on all sides, has resolved upon a grand coup de main, whereby several little enterprises in which he is deeply interested may be advantageously advanced.

"Perhaps you do not know that just at present Havana is in a ferment—that the Spaniards are celebrating changes that have recently been made. The city is thronged with newly-arrived troops; for during the summer months thousands will drop with the fever, and there must be enough poor devils to take the places of those who, not being acclimatized, fall ready victims to the awful Yellow Jack.

"This night Havana will go wild as never before. Bonfires will be lighted, torchlight parades seen in many of the streets, and the greatest exhibition of forced gaiety ever known



He comes upon her in the garden.

occur. In a word, you will believe the old Cuban capital has gone mad, and that her citizens have determined to live up to that venerable shibboleth of pleasure seekers, 'Apres nous le deluge.'

"But I must not give way to my feelings. Listen, then, sir, and hear first what is about to occur, and later how those in whom we are so deeply interested are to share in it.

"To-night there will be entertainments of all kinds—every house you will find illuminated; for to refuse to obey the edict that has gone forth would be to draw down the suspicion

of the military authorities, and, under the accursed rule of Spain, that means a file of soldiers in the early dawn under the walls of Morro Castle yonder.

"Among all these gay scenes none will vie with the reception of the Captain General, who, as you well know, has as absolute sway over the island as though he were a king.

"There is no building in the city capable of containing the great throng expected to be present—no palace in which such a reception could be held—and so, as the best thing to be done under the circumstance, the great theater where these bullfights are held is to be utilized. Flags adorn the walls and soldiers will swarm through the aisles and throng the ring where but a few hours previous the toradors met their fierce four-footed antagonists in deadly strife.

"Oh, Senor Jack, everybody of consequence will be at this great entertainment. Senor Roblado and his daughters have decided to go. You will, of course, attend? An invitation is not necessary, since it means homage to the Captain General, and is designed to show the tremendous power of Spain upon the island.

It will be a sight well worth your trouble, Senor Jack; and, what is more to the point, I believe you will, if the Fates continue to smile, be given a chance to win that which is ever uppermost in your thoughts."

"Go on," says Travers, who has not moved all this while, but listens eagerly.

"Enough of the picture; you yourself shall see it before many hours have passed. I said everyone in Havana of consequence would proceed to the grand reception at the Plaza de Toros in order to pay their respects to the Governor. Between you and myself, Senor Jack, there may be some present whose appearance, if known in Havana, would arouse the most intense excitement this city has known since the end of the Ten Years' War."

"You must mean the great Gomez himself," says Travers, quickly.

"Well guessed. He is in the city; it is not the first time since the struggle began. Before now he has had narrow escapes, and we have shivered for fear lest our beloved leader be taken from us, for upon him we have come to pin much of the faith that is in us.

"And now a new uneasiness has come. I do not understand what influenced him, but he had a motive back of it. I am sure. What do you think could bring him to take such risk? Certainly not a spirit of adventure. At any rate, he has determined to visit the reception to-night, and see the Captain General face to face, surrounded by scores of generals and other officers.

"Senor Jack, that was bad enough; but I had known of it, and was also aware that certain precautions had been taken to cover his retreat in case of discovery. There was worse to come—far worse. I have learned it only now, and it must be my duty to see that the terrible game does not succeed. That was where my great luck came in, hovering about the hotel on the Prado. I saw Senor Roblado take aside a man who had called to see him, and, in your service, sir, thought it my duty to overhear their interview. Little did I dream that this was a Heaven-sent opportunity to preserve the Light of Cuba.

"I shall not repeat all I heard. This man was a spy, an accursed renegade Cuban—of whose breed, thank God, we have but few—and who had been bought body and soul with Spanish doubloons.

"He betrayed the secret presence of the great Gomez in Havana, and his daring design, so characteristic of our matchless leader, to see his mortal enemy the Captain General when the latter was surrounded by five thousand soldiers, by his best officers, and the citizens of Havana loyal to the mother country.

"Well, you see, I have the key I know that already has the eager Roblado set the wheels in motion that will close the trap should Gomez try to carry out his plan, and being thus

forewarned, it would appear that I might have no trouble in outwitting these schemers.

"Alas! Senor Jack, you do not know Gomez. He is a rock. When he says a thing all earth and the lower region cannot stop him. And I have heard him swear he would be present and shake hands with the Captain General this night. You see, it is serious."

"Rather," admits Jack, who, though deeply interested in this intelligence, falls as yet to grasp the connection with his fortunes, save that she will attend the reception, and he may possibly see her there.

"Well, you need know nothing further about this matter now. I shall leave you in ten minutes to communi-



"This man was a spy, an accursed renegade Cuban.

cate the startling intelligence to comrades, so that we may decide on a bold plan of action by means of which our beloved but reckless leader may be saved in case he insists on carrying out his design. Before I go it is my desire to let you know that I have discovered even more—that Roblado and your dear friend Spencer, whom I have good reason to hate, have arranged it so that the colonel may marry your widow."

"That is very kind of the dear fellows. Tell me how they mean to manage it," says Jack, sending out successive rings of smoke.

"Meaning your taking off. Oh, that is not a very hard thing to do under Cuban skies, and especially in these times when working hand-in-glove with the military authorities. You will be secretly arrested, charged with complicity in a plot to murder the Captain General. Without a chance to inform your Minister of the trouble, you will be buried in a dungeon of Morro Castle, to be taken out by stealth some dark night and made away with. You shrug your shoulders, sir. Such things have been done many a time in this country, and will be again. In this terrible game of chess, pawns do not count for much, and in their eyes you are a pawn. My advice to you, sir, is to write a letter to the American Consul giving him the facts in the case, and then, should you be seized, we will know how to gain your liberty. Just at present they hardly care to embroil your Uncle Sam in war."

"It shall be done, and I will give it to you to hand to the Minister," says Jack, blandly.

(To be continued.)

Oil from Many Plants.

An experimenter in India has shown oils from fifty-six kinds of common plants, such as the cucumber, tapoca plant, etc. Most of these oils have never been put to use, even if their properties are known, and it is suggested that a wide field for developing new industries is here open.

The Consequence.

"My uncle thought he owned me, body and soul, but I wouldn't have it." "And then?" "Why, he disowned me."