

SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—John Stuart Webster, nining engineer, after cleaning up a for-une in Death Valley, Calif., boards a rain for the East. He befriends a young ady annoyed by a masher, thoroughly rouncing the "pest."

CHAPTER II.—At Denver Webster re-ceives a letter from Billy Geary, his clos-est friend. Geary urges him to come to Sobrante, Central America, to finance and develop a mining claim. He decides

CHAPTER III. - Dolores Ruey, the oung woman Webster befriended, and young woman Webster befriended, and who has made a deep impression on him, as he has on her, is also on the way to

CHAPTER IV .- At Buenaventura, capt. tal of Sobrante, Billy Geary, ill and per-niless, is living on the charity of "Mother Jenks," keeper of a dramshop. She re-ceives a cablegram from Dolores, teiling of her coming.

CHAPTER V.-Dolores' father, Ricardo CHAPTER V.—Dolores' father, Ricardo Ruey, president of Sobrante, had been killed in a revolution led by Sarros, the present executive. Dolores a child of eight, was smuggled out of the country by Motiler Jenks and supported by her in the United States. The old woman, ashamed of her occupation and habits of life, fears to meet Dolores, and sends life, fears to meet Dolores, and sends Geary to the boat to say she has gone to the United States.

CHAPTER VI.

The ancient bromide to the effect that man proposes but God disposes was never better exemplified than in the case of John Stuart Webster, who, having formulated certain daring plans for the morrow and surrendered himself to grateful slumber in his stateroom aboard the Gulf States Limited, awoke on that momentous morn to a distinct apprehension that all was not as it should be with him. His mouth reminded him vaguely of a bird-and-animal store, and riot and insurrection had broken out in the geometric center of his internal economy,

Webster was sufficient of a jack-leg doctor to suspect he was developing a splendid little case of ptomaine polsoning. He decided to go into executive session with the sleeping-car conductor, who wired ahead for a dector to meet the train at the next station. - And when the sawbones came and pawed Jack Webster over, he gravely announced that if the patient had the slightest ambition to vote at the next presidential election, he should leave the train at St. Louis and enter a hospital forthwith. To this heart-breaking program Webster ennot the slightest objection, for when a man is seriously III, he is in much the same position as a politician -to-wit: He is in the hands of his friends.

Har ever, life and the habit of going hard with Webster so frequently that furanately be was trained to the minute, and after three days of heroic battling the doctor awarded Jack the decision. Thereafter they kept Lim in the hospital ten days longer, "feeding him up" as the patient ergressed itat the end of which period Webster, some fifteen pounds lighter and not quite so fast on his feet as formerly. resumed his journey toward New Or-

In the meantime, however, several things had happened. To begin, Dolores Ruey spent two days wondering He was aroused from his critical inwhat had become of her quondam knight of the whiskers-at the end of which period she arrived in New Orleans with the conviction strong upon her that while her hero might be as courageous as a wounded lion when dealing with men, he was the possessor, when dealing with women, of about two per cent less courage than a cottontail rabbit. Being a very human young lady, however, she could not help wondering what had become of the ubiquitous Mr. Webster, although the fact that he had mysteriously disappeared from the train en route to New Orleans did not perturb her one-half so much as it had the disappearce. She had this advantage over that unfortunate man. Whereas be did not know she was bound for Buenaventura, she knew he was: hence, upon arrival in New Orleans she dismissed him from her thoughts. serene in abiding faith that sooner or later her knight would appear, like little Bo-Peep's lost sheep, dragging his tail behind him, so to speak.

Dolores spent a week in New Orleans renewing schoolgirt friendships from her convent days in the quaint old town. This stop-over, together with the one in Denver, not having been taken into consideration by Mr. William Geary when he and Mother Jenks commenced to speculate upon the approximate date of her arrival in Buenaventura, resulted in the premature flight of Mother Jenks to San Mignel de Padua; a fruitless visit on the part of Billy aboard the Cacique, of the United Fruit company's line. followed by a hurry call to Mother Jenks to return to Buenaventura until the arrival of the next steamer.

This time Billy's calculations proved correct, for Dolores did arrive on that steamer. The port doctor; came aboard, partook of his customary the circumstances, not knowing where

drink with the captain, received a bundle of the latest American newspapers and magazines, nosed around, asked a few perfunctory questions,

and gave the vessel pratique. Dolores observed a gasoline launch shoot up to the landing at the foot of the companion-ladder and discharge a well-dressed, youthful white man. As he came up the companion, the purser recognized him.

"Howdy, Bill," he called. "Hello, yourself," Mr. William

Geary replied, and Dolores knew him for an American. "Do you happen to have as a passenger this trip a large, interesting person, by name John Stuart Webster?" added Billy Geary.

"I don't know, Billy. I'll look over the passenger list," and together they moved off toward his office. Dolores followed, drawn by the mention of that magic name Webster, and paused in front of the purser's office to lean over the rall, estensibly to watch the cargadores in their lighters clustering around the great ship, but in reality to learn more of the mysterious Web-

"Blast the luck," Billy Geary growled, "the old sinner isn't here, By the way, do you happen to have a

Miss Dolores Ruey aboard?" Dolores pricked up her little ears What possible interest could this stranger have in her goings or comings?

"You picked a winner this time, Bill," she heard the purser say. "Stateroom sixteen, beat-deck, starboard side. You'll probably find her there, packing to go ashore,"

"Thanks," Rilly replied and stepped out of the purser's office. Dolores turned and faced him.

"I am Miss Ruey," she announced. "I heard you asking for me." Her eyes carried the query she had not put into words: "Who are you, and what do you want?" Billy saw and understood, and on the instant a wave of desolution surged over him,

So this was the vision he had volunteered to meet abourd La Estrellita. and by specious He and hypocritic mien, turn her back from the portals of Buennventura to that dear old United States, which, Billy suddenly recalled with polymant pain, is a sizable country in which a young lady may very readily be lost forever. With the quick eye of youth, he noted that Delores was perfectly wonderful in a white flannel skirt and jacket, white buck boots, white panama hat with a gorgeous puggaree, a mannish little lines collar, and a red four-in-hand tle. From under that white hat peeped a profusion of crinkly brown hair with a stickely reddish tinge to it; her eyes were big and brown and wide apart. with golden flecks in them; their glance mer Bille's hungry gaze simply. directly, and with a curiosity there was no attempt to hide. Her nose was patrician; her beautiful short upper lin revealed the this of two perfeer, milla-white from teeth; she was, Billy Geary told himself, a goddess before whom all low, worthless, ornery fellows like himself should grovel and die happy, if perchance she might be so minded as to walk on their faces!

ventory when the hourl moke again: "You haven't answered my question.

"No," said Billy, "I didn't, Stupid of me, too. However, come to think of it, you didn't ask me any question. You looked it. My name is Geary-William H. Geary, by profession a mining engineer and by nature an ignoration, and I have called to deliver some disappointing news regarding Honrietta Wilkins."

"Is she-" "She is. Very much alive and in excellent health-or rather was, the last time it was my pleasure and privilege to call on the dear lady. But she isn't in Buenswentura now." Mentally Billy asked God to forgive him his blackhearted treachery to this winsome girl. He loathed the task he had planned and foisted upon himself, and nothing but the memory of Mother Janks'

manifold kindnesses to him in a day. thanks to Jack Webster, now happily behind him, could have induced him to go through to the finish.

"Why, where is she?" Dolores queried, and Billy could have wept at the fright in those lovely brown eyes.

He waved his hand sirily. "Quien sabe?" he said. "She left three weeks ago for New Orleans to visit you. I dare say you passed each other on the road-here, here, Miss Rusy, don't

He took a recess of three minutes. while Dolores dabbed her eyes and went through sundry other motions of being brave. Then he proceeded with his nefarious recital.

"When your cablegram arrived. Miss Rucy, naturally Mrs. Wilkins was not here to receive it, and as I was the only person who had her address, the cable agent referred it to me. Under and eyed him disapprovingly, "I'm so

and, as a friend of about two minutes' standing; to warn you away from

Billy's mien, as he voiced this ous that Dolores' curiosity was aroused instantly and rose superior to ber grief. "Why, what's the matter?" she demanded.

Billy loked around, as if fearful of being overheard. He lowered his voice. "We're going to have one grand little first-class revolution," he replied. "It's due to bust almost any night now, and when it does, the red with blood."

Dolores blanched. "Oh, dearle me," revolutions here? You know, Mr. Genry, my poor father was killed in

"Yes, and the same old political gang that shot him is still on deck." Billy warned her. "It would be highly dangerous for a Rucy, man or woman, to show his or her nose around Buenaventura about now, Besides, Miss Ruey, that isn't the worst," he continued for a whole-hearted lad was Billy, who never did anything by halves. "The city is recking with cholera," he declared,

"Cholera!" Dolores' big brown eyes grew bigger with wonder and concern. "How strange the port authorities didn't warn us at New Orleans!"

"Tish! Tush! Fiddlesticks and then some. The fruit company censors everything, Miss Ruey, and the news doesn't get out."

"But the port doctor just said the passengers could go ashore."

"What's a human life to a doctor? Besides, he's on the slush-fund pay roll and does whatever the higherups tell him. You be guided by what I tell you. Miss Ruey, and do not set foot on Sobrantean soil. If you stay aboard La Estrellita, you'll have your nice clean stateroom, your wellcooked meals, your bath, and the attentions of the stewardess. The steamer will be loaded in two days; then you go back to New Orleans, and by the time you arrive there I'll have been in communication by cable with Mother Jenks-I mean-"

"Mother who?" Dolores demanded. "A mere slip of the tongue, Miss Ruey. I was thinking of my landlady. I meant Mrs. Wilkins-'

"I'm so awfully obliged to you, Mr. Genry, You're so kind, I'm sure I'd be a most ungrateful girl not to be guided by you accordingly. You wouldn't risk any friend of yours in this terrible place, would you, Mr.

"Indeed, I would not. By permitting anybody I thought anything of to come to this city, I should feel guilty of murder."

"I'm sure you would, Mr. Geary, Nevertheless, there is one point that is not quite clear in my mlud, and I wish you'd explain-"



You Haven't Answered My Question."

"Command me, Miss Ruey."

"If this is such a frightful place, why are you so anxious, if I may employ such language, to hornswoggle your dearest friend, Mr. John S. Webster, into coming down here? Do you want to kill him and get his moneyor what?"

Billy's face flamed at thought of the embarrassing trap his glib tongue had led him into. He cursed himself for a star-spangled jackass, and while he was engaged in this interesting pastime Dolores spoke again.

"And by the way, which is it? Miss Wilkins or Mrs.? You've called her both, and when I reminded you she was a Miss, you agreed with me, whereas she is nothing of the sort. She's a Mrs. Then you blurted out something about a Mother Jenks, and finally, Mr. Geary, It occurs to me that for a complete stranger you are unduly interested in my welfare. I'm not such a goose as to assimilate your weird tales of death from disease. It occurs to me that if your friend John S. Webster can risk Buenaventura, I cun also."

"You-you know that old tarantula?" Billy gasped. "Why I-I came out to warn him off the grass, too."

Dolores walked a step closer to Billy

sorry I can't believe that statement,"

I could reach you with a cable inform-, she reflied. "It imprens that I was ing you that Mrs. Wilkins was headed standing by the companion-ladder for California to see you, I had no when you came aboard and spoke to other alternative but to let matters the purser; when you asked him if Mr. take their course. I decided you might Webster was abourd, your face was arrive on La Estrellita, so I called to alight with eagerness and anticipation, welcome you to our thriving little city, but when you had reason to believe he was not abound, you looked so terribly disappointed I felt sorry for you.

"I'm going ashore, if it's the last act of my life, and when I get there I'm warning, was so singularly mysteri- going to interview the cable agent; then I'm going to call at the steamship office and scan the passenger list of the last three north-bound steamers, and if I do not find Henrietta Wilkins' name on one of those passenger lists I'm going up to Calle de Concordin No. 19-"

surrender unconditionally." greated Billy. "I'm a list from be ginning to end. I overlooked my hand, streets of San Buenaventura will run I beg of you to believe me, however, when I tell you that I only told you those whoppers because I was in she quavered. "Do they still have honor bound to tell them. Personally, I don't want you to go away-at least, not until I'm ready to go away, too! Miss Ruey, my nose is in the dust. There is a fever in my brain and a misery in my heart-"

"And contrition in your face," she interrupted him laughtingly. "You're forgiven, Mr. Geary - on one condition."

"Name it," he answered. "Tell me everything from beginning to end."

So Billy told her, "I would much rather have been visited with a plugue of boils, like our old friend, the late Job, than have to tell you this, Miss Rucy," he concluded his recital, "Man proposes, but God disposes, and you're here and bound to learn the truth sooner or later. Mother isn't a lady and she knows it, but take it from me, Miss Rhey, she's a grand old piece of work. She's a scout-a ringtailed sport-a regular individual and game as a gander."

"And I mustn't call at El Buen Amigo, Mr. Genry?"

"Perish the thought! Mother must call on you. El Buen Amigo is what you might term a hotel for tropical tramps of the masculine sex. Nearly all of Mother's guests have a past, you know. They're the submerged white tenth of Sobrante.

"Then my benefactor must call to see me here?" Billy nodded. "When will you bring her here?"

Billy reflected that Mother Jenks had been up rather late the night before and that trade in the cantina of El Buen Amigo had been unusually brisk; so since he desired to exhibit the old lady at her best, he concluded it might be well to spar for wind.

"Tomorrow at 10," he declared. Dolores inclined her head. Something told her she had better leave all future details to the amiable William.

"I remember you inquired for your friend, Mr. Webster, when you came aboard the steamer."

"I remember it, too," Billy countered ruefully. "I can't imagine what's become of him. Miss Ruey, did you ever go to meet the only human being in the world and discover that for some mysterious reason he had falled to keep the appointment? Miss Ruey, you'll have to meet old John Stuart the minute he lights in Buenaventura. He's some boy."

"Old John Stuart?" she queried. "How old?"

"Oh, thirty-nine or forty on actual count, but one of the kind that will live to be a thousand and then have to be killed with an axe. He's coming to Sobrante to help me put over a mining deal "

"How interesting, Mr. Geary! No wonder you were disappointed."

The last sentence was a shaft deliberately launched; to Dolores' delight it made a keyhole in Billy Geary's beart.

"Don't get me wrong. Miss Ruey," he hastened to assure her. "I have a good mine, but I'd trade it for a handshake from Jack! The good Lord only published one edition of Jack, and limited the edition to one volume: then the plates were melted for the junk we call the human race. Two weeks ago, when I was sick and penniless and despairing, the possessor of a concession on a fortune, but without a centavo in my pockets to buy a banana, when I was a veritable beachcomber and existing on the charity of Mother Jenks, I managed finally to communicate with old Jack and told him where I was and what I had. There's his answer, Miss Ruey, and I'm not ashamed to say that when I got it I cried like a kid." And Billy

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All persons indebted to said octate till please call and make prompt setlement.

This January 7, 1921.

JOHN C. SIKES, Executor of V. T. Chears, deceased. John C. Sikes Attorney.

markable cablegram, the receipt of which had, for Billy Geary, transformed night into day, purgatory into paradise. Dolores read it.

"No wonder you love him," she declared, and added arthresly: "His wife must simply adore him."

"'He has no wife to bother his life. so he paddles his own canoe," Billy recited. "I don't believe the old sour dough has ever been in love with anything more charming than the goddess of fortune. He's woman-proof."

"About Mrs. Jenks," Dolores continued, abruptly changing the subject. "How nice to reflect that after she had trusted you and believed in you when you were penniless, you were enabled to justify her faith."

"You bet!" Billy declared. "I feel that I can never possibly hope to catch even with the old Samaritan, although I did try to show her how much I appreciated her."

"I dare say you went right out and bought her an impossible hat," Dolores challenged roguishly.

"No, I didn't, for a very sufficient reason. Down here the indies do not wear hats. But I'll tell you what I did buy her, Miss Ruey-and oh, by George, I'm glad now I did it. She'll wear them tomorrow when I bring her to see you. I bought her a new black silk dress and an old-lace collar, and a gold breast pin and a tortolse shell hair comb and hired an open carriage and took her for an evening ride on the Malecon to listen to the band concert.

"Did she like that?"

"She ate it up," Billy declared with conviction. "I think it was her first

adventure in democracy." Billy's pulse was still far from normal when he reached El Buen Amigo, for he was infused with a strange, new-found warmth that burned like malarial fever, but wasn't. He wasted no preliminaries on Mother Jenks, but bluntly acquainted her with the facts in the case.

Mother Jenks eyed him a moment wildly, "Gord's truth!" she gasped; she reached for her favorite elixir, but Billy got the bottle first.

"Nothing doing," he warned this strange publican. "Mother, you're funking it-and what would your sainted 'Enery say to that? Do you want that angel to kiss you and get a whiff of this brandy?"

Mother Jenks' eyes actually popped. "Gor', Willie," she gasped, "aven't Hi told ye she's a lydy! Me kiss the lamb! Hi trust, Mr. Geary, as 'ow I knows my place an' can keep it."

Yes, I know," Billy soothed the frightened old woman, "but the trouble is Miss Dolores doesn't know hersand something tells me if she does, she'll forget it. She'll take you in her arms and kiss you, sure as death and And she did! "My lamb, my lamb,"

sobbed Mother Jenks the next morning, and rested her old cheek, with its rum-begotten hue, close to the rosetinted lyory cheek of her ward, "Me -wot I am-an' to think-

"You're a sweet old dear." Dolores whispered, putting the gray head; and I'm going to call you Mother."

"Mr. William H. Geary," the girl "Mr. William H. Geary," the girl not paid for. Presently he faced remarked that night, "I know now why Webster at the counter, your friend, Mr. Webster, sent that cablegram. I think you're a scout, nounced. "However, I have one berth

For reasons best known to himself Mr. Genry blushed furlously, "I-I'd better go and break the news to Mother," he suggested manely. She held out her hand; and Billy, having been long enough in Sobrante to have acquired the habit, bent his mainrial person over that hand and kissed it. As he went out it occurred to him that had the lobby of the Hotel Mateo been paved with eggs, he must have floated over them like a wraith, so light did be feel within,

CHAPTER VII.

Webster reached New Orleans at the end of the first leg of his journey. to discover that he was one day late to board the Atlanta-a banana boat of the Consolidated Fruit company's line plying regularly between New Orleans and that company's depots at Limon and San Buenaventura-which necessitated a wait of three days for the steamer La Estrellita of the Caribbean Mail line, running to Caracas and way ports.

He decided to visit the ticket office of the Caribbean Mail line immediate ly and avoid the rush in case the travel should be beavy.

The steamship office was in Canal street. The clerk was waiting on two well-dressed and palpably low-bred sons of the tropics, to whom he had just displayed a passenger list which the two were scanning critically, Their interest in it was so obvious that unconsciously Webster peeped over their shoulders (no difficult task for one of his stature) and discovered it to be the passenger list of the steamer La Estrellita. They were conversing together in low tones and Webster, who had spent many years of his life following his profession in Mexico, recognized their speech as the bastard Spanish of the peon.

He sat down in the long wall seat and waited until the pair, having completed their scrutiny of the list, turned to pass out. He glanced at them casually. One was a tail thin man whose bloodshot eyes were inclined to "pop" a little -- Infallible evidence in the Latin-American that he is drinking more hard liquor than is good for him

Ills companion was plainly of the same racial stock, although Webster suspected him of a slight admixture of negro blood. He was short, stocky, and aggressive looking: like his companion, beloweled and possessed of a hin. re-efully cultivated moustache that seemed to consist of about nineteen bairs on one side and twenty on

hunded her John Steurt Webster's re the other. Evidently once upon a time, as the story books have it, he had been shot. Webster suspected a Mauser bullet, fired at long range. It had entered his right cheek, just below the major, ranged downward through his mouth and out through a fold of flabby flesh under his left jowl. It must have been a frightful wound, but it had healed well except at the point of entrance, where it had a tendency to pucker considerably, thus drawing the man's eyelld down on his cheek and giving to that visual organ something of the appearance of a bulldog's.

Webster gazed after them whimsically as he approached the counter,

"I'd hate to wake up some night and find that hombre with the puckered eye leaning over me. By the way," he continued, suddenly apprehensive, "do you get much of that paraqueet travel on your line?"

"About 80 per cent. of it is off color,

Webster pondered the 80-per-cent. probability of being berthed in the same stateroom with one of these people and the prospect was as revolting to him as would be an uninvited negro guest at the dining table of a southern family. He had all a Westerner's hatred for the breed.

"Well. I want a ticket to San Buenaventura," he informed the clerk, "but I don't relish the idea of a Greaser in the same stateroom with me. I wonder if you couldn't manage to fix me with a stateroom all to myself, or at least arrange it so that in the event

of company I'll draw a white man," "I'm sorry, sir, but I cannot guarantee you absolute privacy nor any hind of white man. It's pretty mixed travel to all Central American ports." "How many berths in your first-

class staterooms?" WILLIAM ... Webster smiled brightly. He had found a way out of the difficulty, "Pil

buy 'em both son," he announced. "I cannot sell you an entire stateroom, sir. It's number the orders of the company to sell two berths to one mion. The travel is pretty brisk and it's hardly fair to the public, you know."

"Well, suppose I buy one ticket for myself and the other for-well, for my valet, let us sny. Of course," he added brightly, "I haven't engaged the valet yet and even should I do so I wouldn't be at all surprised if the rascal missed the boat!"

The clerk glanced at him with a slow smile, and pondered, "Well," he said presently. "If you care to buy a ticket for your valet, I'm sure 1 shouldn't worry whether or not he catches the boat. If my records show that the space is sold to two men and the purser collects two tickets, I think you'll be pretty safe from intrusion."

"To the barassed traveler," said Mr. Webster, "a meeting with a gentleman of your penetration is as refreshing as a canteen of cool water in the desc ert. Shoot!" and he produced a handful of gold.

"I will-provided I have one empty cabla," and the clerk turned from the counter to consult his record of berths already sold and others reserved but

"The outlook is voey blue" he an



"The Outlook Is Very Blue."

in No. 34 reserved by a gentleman who was to call for it by two o'clock to-day." He looked at his watch, "It is now a quarter of one. If the reservation isn't claimed promptly at two o'clock I shall cancel it and reserve for you both berths in that room. If you will be good enough to leave me your name and address I will telephone you after that hour. In the meantime, you may make reservation of the other berth in the same stateroom. I feel very confident that the reservation in No. 34 will not be called

"Webster-John S. Webster. You are very kind, indeed. I'm at the St. Charles."

for, Mr.-er-

"Re there at a quarter after two, Mr. Webster, and you will hear from me promptly on the minute," the clerk assured him; whereupon Webster paid for one berth and departed for his hotel with a feeling that the clerk's

report would be favorable. True to his promise, at precisely a parter after two, the ticket clerk elephoned Webster at his hotel that he bere's in No. 34 had been canceled and the entire stateroom was now at his disposal.

Continued on Page Sever