

Webster —Man's Man

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"Cappy Ricks," "The Valley
of the Giants," etc.

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—John Stuart Webster, mining engineer, after cleaning up a **fatigue** in Death Valley, Calif., boards a train for the East. He befriends a young lady annoyed by a masher, thoroughly trouncing the "pest."

CHAPTER II.—At Denver, Webster receives a letter from Billy Geary, his close friend, Geary urges him to come to **Santa Fe**, Central America, to mine and develop a mining claim. He decides to go.

CHAPTER III.—Dolores, Ruey, the young woman Webster befriended, and who has made a deep impression on him, as he has on her, is still on the way to **Sebrante**.

CHAPTER IV.—At **Buenaventura**, capital of **Sobrante**, Billy Geary, ill and pale, is living on the charity of "Mother Jenks," keeper of a drapshop. She receives a telegram from Dolores, telling of her coming.

CHAPTER V.—Dolores' father, Ricardo Ruey, president of **Sobrante**, had been killed and replaced by **San Rosario**, the present executive. Dolores, a child of eight, was snatched out of the country by Mother 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 Geary to the boat to say she has gone to the United States.

CHAPTER VI.—Webster, on his way to **Sobrante**, is taken ill on the train, and is in a hospital at New Orleans two weeks. Geary bungles his mission. Dolores easily sees through his story. She greets Mother Jenks as her friend and benefactor. Geary falls desperately in love with the girl.

CHAPTER VII.—At New Orleans, while waiting for the steamer to **Buenaventura**, Webster saves the life of a young man who is attacked by two assassins. The youth leaves Webster without disclosing his identity.

CHAPTER VIII.—On the steamer Webster finds his stateroom occupied by a stranger who declares his intention of being his guest to **Buenaventura**. At first angered, Webster and the stranger, after a somewhat forcible argument, reach an amicable agreement. Webster recognises him as the youth whose life he had saved the day before, though the other does not know Webster.

CHAPTER IX.—Arriving at **Sobrante**, Geary welcomes Webster and is instrumental in helping his friend's "quest" ashore. The latter is known to Webster as "the son of the revolution" at **Mother Jenks'**. Webster gets the idea that Geary and Dolores are in love, and with the intention of giving Geary every chance he smugly contracts the girl's statement that they have met before.

CHAPTER X.—Webster receives a warning conveyed by Don Juan Cafetero, who is the Captain of the **Cafferty**, a ship of good qualities fallen through circumstances in **Buenaventura**, that there is a plot to assassinate him. Webster makes a firm friend of Cafferty. Later, the American is insulted by a **Sobrante** army officer and publicly rebukes him. A challenge to a duel is accepted under such stern conditions that the **Sobrante**s withdraw it.

CHAPTER XI.—Webster secretly visits Andrew Boyer, at **Mother Jenks'**. He learns that "Boyer" is Ricardo Ruey, son of the assassinated president, brother of Dolores' twin, he believes dead, and that he is responsible for contemplated next morning's massacre of the rebels, of whom she has no knowledge, is in the country, protecting the overthrow of President **San Rosario**. Very much in love with the girl, but believing that her affection has been bestowed on Geary, Webster leaves to investigate the man whom he has come to find.

CHAPTER XII.—Webster, as per Geary's orders, decides to put the whole **Sobrante** into the water. He sends Billy Geary to the United States to purchase the necessary equipment, advising him to marry Dolores in **Buenaventura** before he leaves. Knowing that unless Geary can get **Sarros** to believe his wife will be available, Webster agrees to let the **Sobrante** return to **Buenaventura**, he is authorized to find Dolores still there and Geary on his way to the United States.

CHAPTER XIII.—Dolores tells Webster that Billy Geary had asked her to marry him and that she had refused. Amused, but still not understanding the situation, he accepts the explanation. He then explains to Dolores how her brother has laid his plans for the overthrow of **San Rosario**. Webster and Ricardo have a final understanding.

CHAPTER XIV.—The morning of the revolution Webster, with Dolores aboard the American steamer **Estrella**, which she can never be far from. As an American citizen he believes it his duty to take part in the conflict. Cafferty, after being in the ship, if it returns to the ship to tell Webster of the progress of the revolution, which promises an early victory for the forces of **Buenaventura**.

CHAPTER XV.

Throughout the forenoon Webster and Dolores, from the deck of the steamer, watched the city. By ten o'clock the sounds of battle had swelled to a deeper, louder roar, and refugees arriving brought various and fragmentary stories of the fighting. From this hedge-podge of misinformation, however, Webster decided that Ricardo's troops were forcing the issue with vim and determination, and since the most furious fighting was now well in toward the heart of the city, it seemed reasonable to presume the struggle was for possession of the **President** and **palace**.

At noon the deep diapason of conflict began to slacken; by one o'clock it had dwindled considerably, and at two o'clock Webster, gazing anxiously cityward, observed Leber's launch coming rapidly out from shore. At the wheel stood Don Juan Cafetero; as the launch shot in under the vessel's side he looked up, searching for Webster's face among the curious throng that lined the rail.

"Who has won?" a voice called, and

another, evidently a humorist and a shrewd judge of human nature, replied: "Why ask foolish questions? The rebels, of course. That fellow's Irish and the Irish are born rebels. Look at the scoundrel. He's black with gun grease and burned powder where he isn't red with blood. The butcher!"

"Fingal-hallagh!" he shrieked. "We've got the devils cornered now. 'Twill be over two hours hence."

Don Juan tied up the launch at the gangway and leaped up the ladder, three steps at a time. "Glory be to God," he panted and flung himself into Webster's arms. "I was in it. I was. I got back in time to catch up with the lads at the warehouse an' they were the fine, fightin' devils, I'll gamble you. Och, 'twas a grand hit av a fight—whilst it lasted. Then they put me in the muck-thruik, leadin' the bolts wit' cartridges as fast as the cumpers emptied them, but feah they couldn't keep me therew. I got into the heat av the serjeants in the yard av the arsenal an' faith 'twas well for that little Doctor Pachano I did. Twas wark to me likin'. I'd a mache-

"You bloodthirsty scoundrel!" Webster shook the war-mad son of Erin off him, told you not to mix in it, but to hang around the fringe of the fight, and bring us early news. Suppose you'll be killed? Who would have come for us then? Didn't I tell you we had a dinner engagement in the parlour?"

"Me in the fringes av a fight?" sputtered Don Juan, amazed and outraged. "Take shame for yourself, son. There was never the likes av me hung about the fringes av a fight, not well ye know it."

"I'm amazed that you even remember your instructions," Webster rasped at him.

"Sure, our division had cleaned up nicely an' I had nothing else to do, God bless ye. They were losin' the police when I left, an' small chance av takin' it for a couple av hours; what fightin' there was on the outside was street shootin'—an' not to the likin."

"Is it quite safe to bring Miss Ruey ashore, John?"

"It's safe enough at the Hotel Mariano. We have the city for half a mile beyond, in the rear av them—all they're not fightin' to set in the bay. The guards are somwy the Fifteenth Infantry regulars in the palace an' the garage close by, an' thin that we failed to get in the arsenal have blood them. But the bulk av the San Rosario army is thryin' to break through to the south an' west, to set to the hills. Dya mind the stone church that runs in a semi-circle round the city? Well, thin, the rebels are holdin' the embankment, takin' it easy. Have no worry, son. While you've took the palace we'll move on an' drive the vagabones from behind up to that railroad embankment, where General Ruey can bid them the time av day."

Webster turned to Dolores. "Do you wish to go ashore?"

She nodded, her flushed eyes bent in admiration upon the gory, grimy Don Juan Cafetero, for she was half Irish and in that sombre meeting she knew the officer for one of her blood. "I think my brother will sleep in his fortress and room tonight," she murmured softly. "And I would sleep in peace."

They followed Don Juan down the gangway to the launch and sped back to the city. The door of Leber's warhouse stood wide open; within was a litter of crazy rage and broken packing cases, with Leber, quite mystified, sitting on a keg of nails and staring curiously at it all.

Guided by Don Juan Cafetero, Webster and Dolores passed on up the Calle San Rosario. Dimly, dimly a bullet, fired two or three miles to the west, droned lists overhead or dropped with a sharp metallic sound on the corrugated-iron roofs of a building. At the hotel the proprietor stood in evidence, seated behind the desk smoking in profound indifference.

In response to Webster's eager inquiries for the latest news from the front, the plump fellow shrugged and intimated, "Quien sabe?" Evidently for him such stirring scenes had long since lost their novelty; the bloom was off the peach, as it were.

Webster soon upstairs and helped himself to another cigarette and several spare cups of coffee which he had left in his trunk. On his return to the lobby Dolores saw what a very nonchalant person indeed, would have been—to wit that he was not pleased to remain in the hotel and with the spirit of adventure strong within him was desirous of progressing still further toward the firing, in the hope of eliciting some favorable news as to the progress of the fight. She realized however that he would do his duty and remain with her in the hotel so she said gaily:

"Suppose we walk out a little farther, Caliph. Many of the side streets will be as safe and peaceful as one could desire, and if warfare should develop in our vicinity we can step in to some house."

"I do not like to have you run the slightest risk—" he began, but she pushed him into silence, took him by the arm with a great air of comradery, and declared they should go forth to adventure—but cautiously.

Webster glanced at Don Juan. "We can go a half or three quarters av a mile out the Calle San Rosario, sor," the Irishman answered. "After that 'twill not be a pleasant sight for the young feller—an' there may be some shootin'." Squads av the government troops took refuge in the houses an' took to snipin'. 'Twill be show wark comin' the last av them up. Even

after the fight is over, there'll be scatterin' shootin' scrapes at the night long, I'm thinkin'."

"At the slightest danger we'll turn back," Webster announced, and with Don Juan Cafetero scouting the way a block in advance they progressed slowly toward the center of the disturbance.

Soon they passed a horse dead in the middle of the street; a little farther on one of the machine-gun company, a lank Texan, sat on the curb rolling a cigarette with his left hand. He had a bullet through his right shoulder and another through the calf of his leg and had received no first aid attention; the flies were bothching him considerably and he was cursing softly and steadily, like the ex-convict he was.

Farther on another white invader lay face down in the gutter; for him the fight had ended almost ere it had begun. In the next block half a dozen sandaled-footed **Sobrantes**, in the heat av the serjeants and red-trimmed uniform of the **Guadalquivir**, lay sprawled in uncouth attitudes where the first blast of a machine gun had caught them as they rushed out of the police station to repel the advancing mercenaries.

Seeing that the main street of the city would assume even a more grisly aspect the longer they followed it, Don Juan led Webster and Dolores down a cross street and turned out into the Calle de Hernandez, parallel to the Calle San Rosario. There had been no shooting in this street, apparently; as they proceeded not even a stray bullet whined down the silent calle.

Four blocks from the government palace they found the narrow sidewalks of this quiet street lined with wounded from both sides, with a doctor and half a dozen of Ricardo's hired fighters ministering to them; as they threaded their way between the recumbent figures they came upon Mother Jenks, brandy bottle and glass in hand, shouting her bit."

"Huh! So here you are, my lamb," she greeted Dolores. "Righto. Just where yer ought to be, Gor blimey yer sweet face. Let these poor unfortunate lads see that the sister of the new president ain't too proud to care for 'em. Ere, lass, 'Old up the 'end or this young cockeral with the 'ole in its neck. 'Ere, lad. Take a hance now! 'Ere's somm o' your own people, not a lot o' blueblint yellin' belligs, come to tell something else in yer neck—some think that'll stimulate yer."

The "young cockeral," a blond youth of scarce 20 summers, twisted his head and grimaced up at Dolores as she knelt beside him to lift him up. "Here, here, sister," he mumbled, "you'll get that white dress dirty. Never mind me. It's just a flesh wound, only my neck has got stiff and I'm weak from loss of blood."

Mother Jenks winked at Webster as she set a glass of brandy to the stricken adventurer's lips. "Give me a bit o' the white meat, as my saluted 'Ere' used to say," she murmured complacently.

Dolores looked up at Webster. "You stay here," she said simply. "I've found a job helping Mother Jenks. You and Don Juan may run along if you wish. I know you're as curious as children."

They were. It would have been impossible for any man with red corpuscles in his blood to harpoon the shooting and shouting only three city blocks distant without yearning to see the fight itself.

"I'll return in 15 minutes, at the latest," he promised her, and with Don Juan Cafetero, who had helped himself to a different bayonet from one of the wounded, he turned the corner into the next street which they followed west through a block plentifully sprinkled with the dead of both factions.

Don Juan led the way through an alley in the rear of the **Catedral de la Santa Cruz** to the door of the sacristy; as he placed his hand on the latch three rifle bullets struck around them, showering them with fragments of falling adobe.

"There's a house-part in the neighborhood," yelled Don Juan and darted into the church, with Webster at his heels, just in time to escape another

bullet, fired from one of the wounded, he turned the corner into the next street which they followed west through a block plentifully sprinkled with the dead of both factions.

"I wish you'd kept out of it, Don Juan. What business had you in the fight at the church? Suppose you'd been killed?"

"Small loss," Don Juan retorted.

"I should have mourned you nevertheless, John."

"Would you that same?" Don Juan's buttoned-up eyes lighted with affection and pleasure. "Would it put a pang in the heart of you, sor, to see me stretched?"

"Yes, it would, John. You're a wild, impulsive, bumptious, worthless Irishman, but there's a broad vein of pay ore in you, and I want you to live until I can develop it. When Mr. Geary returns to the mine he'll need a foreman who can trust you."

"And do you trust me, sor?"

"I do indeed, John. By the way, you never gave me your word of honor to eat out red liquor for keeps. Up till today I've had to watch you—and I don't want to do that. It isn't dignified for either of us, and from today on you must be a man or a mouse. If you prove yourself a man, I want you in my business; if you prove yourself a mouse, somebody else may have you. How about you, John? The cantinas will be open tonight, and fire water will be free to the soldiers of the new republic. Must I watch you tonight?"

Don Juan shook his reckless red head. "I'll never let a drop of liquor cross my lips without your permission, sor," he promised simply. "I am the man and you are the master."

"We'll shake hands on that!" After the western habit of validating all verbal agreements with a hand shake, Webster thrust his hand out to his man, who took it in both of his and held it for half a minute. He wanted to speak, but couldn't; he could only hold his head as his eyes clouded with the tears of his appreciation. "Ah, sor," he blurted presently, "I'd die for ye an' welcome the chant."

A wild yell of alarm broke out in the next block, at the north gate of the palace; there was a sudden fury of rifle fire and cries of "Here they come! Stop them! Stop them! They're breaking out!"

Without awaiting orders the hired fighters along the wall—some 15 of them—leaped out into the street, forming a skirmish line, just as a troop of cavalry, with drawn sabers, swept around the corner and charged upon the devoted little line. "Sorrows must be thruin' to make his get-away," Don Juan Cafetero remarked coolly, and emptied a saddle. "They throw open the big palace gate, 'n the guards are cleanin' a way for him to the bay." He emptied another saddle.

In the meantime Ricardo's fire吃了 had not been idle. The instant the guards turned into the street a deadly magazine fire had been opened on them. They had already suffered heavily winning through the gate and past the besiegers in front of it, but once they turned the corner into the next street they had the fire of but a handful of men to contend with. Nevertheless it was sufficiently deadly. Many of the horses in the front rank went down with their riders, forcing the maddened animals behind to clear their carcasses by leaping over them, which some did. Many, however, tripped and stumbled in their wild gallop, spilling their riders.

"Stay by the wall, you madman," Webster ordered. "There'll be enough left to ride down those men in the street and saber them!"

And there were! They died to a man, and the sadly depleted troop of guards galloped on, leaving Don Juan and Webster unscathed on the sidewalk, the only two living men unharmed in that shambles.

Not for long, however, did they have the street to themselves. Around the corner of the palace wall a limousine, with the curtains drawn, swung on two wheels, skidded, struck the carcass of a horse and turned over, catapulting the chauffeur into the middle of the street.

"Sorros," shrieked Don Juan and ran to the overturned vehicle. It was quite empty.

"Bully boy, Senior Sorros," Webster laughed. "He's turned a pretty trick, hasn't he? Sent his guards out to hook a pathway for an empty limousine! That means he's hoping to draw the watchers from the other gate."

But Don Juan Cafetero was not so tenacious; he was running at top speed for the south gate of the palace grounds—and Webster followed.

As they swung into the street upon which this south gate opened, Webster saw that it was deserted of all save the dead, for Sorros' clever ruse had worked well and had had the effect of arousing the curiosity of his enemies to the cause of the uprising at the north gate, in consequence of which they had all scurried around the block to see what they could see, thus according Sarros' "sorrows" the thing he desired most—a fighting chance and a half-minute to get through the gate and headed for the steamship landing without interference.

Weber and Don Juan came abreast the high, narrated gate in the thick, 20-foot masonry wall as the harrier screeched back and a man, in civilian clothes, thundered through on a magnificent bay thoroughbred.

"That's him. Shlop the devil!" screamed Don Juan. "They'll do the decent thing for me if I take him alive."

To Webster, who had acquired the art of snap shooting while killing time in many a lonely camp, the bay charger offered an easy mark. "Hate to do that to a beautiful animal," he remarked—and pulled away.

The horse leaped into the air and came down stiff-legged; Sorros spurred it terribly, and the gallant beast strove to gather itself into its stride, staggered and sank to its knees, as with a wild Irish yell Don Juan Cafetero reached the dictator's side.

Sorros drew a revolver, but before he could use it Don Juan tapped him smartly over the head with his rifle barrel