



WEBSTER - MAN'S MAN

by Peter B. Kyne

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

CHAPTER XVII—Continued.

"He shall have a military funeral," Ricardo promised. "From the cathedral," Webster added. "And take a picture of it for his people. He told me about them. I want them to think he amounted to something, after all. And when you get this two-by-four republic of yours going again, Rick, you might have your congress award Don Juan a thousand dollars for capturing Sarros. Then we can send the money to his old folks."

"But he didn't capture Sarros," Ricardo protested. "The man escaped when the guards cut their way through."

"He didn't. That was a ruse while he beat it out the gate where you found me. I saw Don Juan knock him cold with the butt of his rifle after I'd brought down his horse."

"Do you think he's there yet?" "He may be—provided all this didn't happen the day before yesterday. If I wanted him, I'd go down and look for him, Rick."

"I'll go right away, Jack."

"One minute, then. Send a man around to that little back street where they have the wounded—it's a couple of blocks away from here—to tell Mother Jenks and the young lady with her I'll not be back."

"They're both outside now. They must have gone looking for you, because they found you and Don Juan first and then told me about it."

"Who told you?" "Mother Jenks."

"Oh! Well, run along and get your man."

Ricardo departed on the run, taking the sentry at the door with him and in his haste giving no thought to Mother Jenks and her companion waiting for the doctor's verdict. In the palace grounds he gathered two more men and bade them follow him; leading by twenty yards, he emerged at the gate and paused to look around him.

Some hundred feet down the street from the palace gate Sarros' bay charger lay dead. When Webster's bullet brought the poor beast down, his rider had fallen clear of him, only to fall a victim to the ferocity of Don Juan Cafetero. Later, as Sarros lay stunned and bleeding beside his mount, the stricken animal in its death-struggle had half risen, only to fall again, this time on the extended left leg of his late master; consequently when Sarros recovered consciousness following the thoughtful attentions of his assailant, it was to discover himself a helpless prisoner. The heavy carcass of his horse pinned his foot and part of his leg to the ground, rendering him as helpless and desperate as a trapped animal.

For several minutes now he had been striving frantically to release himself; with his sound right leg pressed against the animal's backbone he tried to gain sufficient purchase to withdraw his left leg from the carcass.

As Ricardo caught sight of Sarros he instinctively realized that this was his mortal enemy; motivating his men to stand back, he approached the struggling man on tiptoe and thoughtfully possessed himself of the dictator's pistol, which lay in back of him, but not out of reach. Just as he did so, Sarros, apparently convinced of the futility of his efforts to free himself, surrendered to fate and commenced rather pitifully to weep with rage and despair.

Ricardo watched him for a few seconds, for there was just sufficient of the blood of his Castilian ancestors still in his veins to render this sorry spectacle rather an enjoyable one to him. Besides, he was 50 per cent Iberian, a race which can hate quite as thoroughly as it can love, and for a time Ricardo even nourished the thought of still further indulging his thirst for revenge by pretending to aid Sarros in his escape! Presently, however, he put the ungenerous thought from him; seeing the dead horse by the tail, he dragged the carcass off his enemy's leg, and while Sarros sat up, tail-up, and commenced to rub the circulation back into the bruised member, Ricardo seated himself on the rump of the dead horse and appraised his prisoner critically.

Sarros glanced up, remembered his manners and very heartily and gracefully thanked his deliverer.

"It is not a matter for which thanks are due me, Sarros," Ricardo replied coldly. "I am Ricardo Luis Ruy, and I have come back to Sobrante to pay my father's debt to you. You will remember having forced the obligation upon me in the cemetery some fifteen years ago."

For perhaps ten horrified seconds Sarros stared at Ricardo; then the dark blood in him came to his defense; his tense pose relaxed; the fright and despair left his swarthy countenance as if erased with a moist sponge, leaving him as calmly stoical and indifferent as a cigarstore Indian. He fumbled in his coat pocket for a gold cigarette case, selected a cigarette, lighted it and blew smoke at Ricardo. The fire was up; he knew it; and with admirable nonchalance he declined to lower his presidential dignity by discussing or considering it. He realized it would delight his captor to know he dreaded to face the smoke and it was not a Sarros practice to give aid and comfort to the enemy, forced to admiration despite himself. Aloud he said: "You know the code of our people, Sarros. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Sarros bowed. "I am at your service," he replied carelessly. "Then at daylight tomorrow morning I shall make settlement," Ricardo beckoned his men to approach. "Take this man and confine him under a double guard in the arsenal," he ordered. "Present my compliments to the officer in charge there and tell him it is my wish that a priest be provided for the prisoner tonight, and that tomorrow morning at six o'clock, a detail of six men and a sergeant escort this man to the cemetery in the rear of the Cathedral de la Cruz. I will meet the detail there and take command of it."

Two of Ricardo's imported fighting men stepped to the prisoner's side, seized him, one by each arm, and lifted him to his feet; supported between them, he limped away to his doom, while his youthful conqueror remained seated on the dead horse, his gaze bent upon the ground, his mind dwelling, not upon his triumph over Sarros but upon the prodigious proportions of the task before him; the rehabilitation of a nation. After a while he rose and strode over toward the gate, where he paused to note the grim evidences of the final stand of Webster and Don Juan Cafetero before passing through the portal.

Ricardo had now, for the first time, an opportunity to look around him; so he halted to realize his home-coming, to thrill with this, the first real view of the home of his boyhood. The spacious lawn surrounding the palace had been plowed and scarred with bursting shrapnel from the field guns captured in the arsenal, although the building itself had been little damaged, not having sustained a direct hit because of Ricardo's stringent orders not to use artillery on the palace unless absolutely necessary to smoke Sarros out. Scattered over the grounds Ricardo counted some twenty odd government soldiers, all wearing that pathetically flat, crumpled appearance which seems inseparable from the bodies of men killed in action. The first shrapnel had probably commenced to drop in the grounds just as a portion of the palace garrison had been marching out to join the troops fighting at the cantonment barracks. Evidently the men had scattered like quail, only to be killed as they ran.

From this grim scene Ricardo raised his eyes to the palace, the castellated towers of which, looming through the tufted palms, were reflecting the setting sun. Over the balustrade of one of the upper balconies the limp body of a Sarros sharpshooter, picked off from the street, drooped grotesquely, his arms hanging downward as if in ironical welcome to the son of Ruy the Beloved. The sight induced in Ricardo a sense of profound sadness; his Irish imagination awoke; to him that mute figure seemed to call upon him for pity, for kindness, for forbearance, for understanding and sympathy. Those outlying arms of the martyred peon symbolized to Ricardo Ruy the spirit of liberty, shackled and helpless, calling upon him for deliverance; they brought to his alert mind a clearer realization of the duty that was his than he had ever had before. He had a great task to perform, a task inaugurated by his father, and which Ricardo could not hope to finish in his lifetime. He must solve the agrarian problem; he must develop the rich natural resources of his country; he must provide free, compulsory education and evolve from the ignorance of the peon an intelligence that would build up that which Sobrante, in common with her sister republics, so wickedly lacked—the great middle class that stands always as a buffer between the aggression and selfishness of the upper class and the helplessness and childlikeness of the lower.

Ricardo bowed his head. "Help me, O Lord," he prayed. "Thou hast given me in Thy wisdom a man's task. Help me that I may not prove unworthy."

Mother Jenks, grown impatient at the lack of news concerning Webster, left Dolores to her grief in the room across the hall and sought the open air, for of late she had been experiencing with recurring frequency a slight feeling of suffocation. She sat down on the broad granite steps, helped herself to a much-needed "bracer" from her brandy flask and was gazing pensively at the scene around her when Ricardo came up the stairs.

"Hello!" Mother Jenks saluted him. "We're 'ave you been, Mr. Bowers?" "I have just returned from capturing Sarros, Mrs. Jenks. He is on his way to the arsenal under guard."

"Glor strike me pink!" the old lady cried. "Ave I lived to see this day!" Her face was wreathed in a happy smile. "I wonder 'ow the beggar feels to 'ave the shoe on the other foot, eh—the 'careless 'ound; I'm 'opin' this General Ruy will 'ave the blighter shot."

"You need have no worry on that score, Mrs. Jenks. I'm General Ruy. Andrew Bowers was just my summer name, as it were."

"Angels guard me! Wot the bloom in! 'er surprise won't we 'ave next. Wot branch of the Ruy tribe do you belong to? Are you a nephew of him that was president before Sarros shot 'im? Antonio Ruy, who was 'arf brother to the president, 'ad a son 'e called Ricardo. Are you 'im, might I ask?"

"I am the son of Ricardo the Beloved," he answered proudly. "Not the lad as was away at school when 'is father was 'executed?" "I am that same lad, Mrs. Jenks. And who are you? You seem to know a deal of my family history."

"I, the old publican replied with equal pride, 'am Mrs. Col. Emory Jenks, who was your father's chief of artillery an' 'ad the 'ostremane honor of dyin' in front of the same wall with 'im. By the way, 'ow's Mr. Webster?" she added, suddenly remembering the subject closest to her heart just then.

"His wounds are trifling. He'll live, Mrs. Jenks."

"Well, that's better than gettin' poked in the eye with a sharp stick," the old dame decided philosophically. "Do you remember 'er little sister, Mrs. Jenks?" Ricardo continued. "She was in the palace when Sarros attacked it; she perished there."

"I believe I 'ave got a slight recollection of the nipper, sir," Mother Jenks answered cautiously. To herself she said: "I s'y, Enrietta, 'ere's a pretty go. E don't know the lamb is livin' an' in the next room! My word, wot a riot w'en 'e meets 'er!"

"I will see you again, Mrs. Jenks. I must have a long talk with you," Ricardo told her, and passed on into the palace; whereupon Mother Jenks once more fervently implored the Almighty

to strike her pink and the iron restraint of a long hand, exciting day being relaxed at last, the good soul bowed her gray head in her arms and wept, moving her body from side to side the while and demanding, of no one in particular, a single legitimate reason why she, a blooming old hag, and not fit to live, should be the recipient of such manifold blessings as this day had brought forth.

In the meantime Ricardo, with his hand on the knob of the door leading to the room where Webster was having his wounds dressed, paused suddenly, his attention caught by the sound of a sob, long-drawn and inexpressibly pathetic. He listened and made up his mind that a woman in the room across the entrance hall was bewailing the death of a loved one who answered to the name of Caliph and John, darling. Further eavesdropping convinced him that Caliph, John, darling, and Mr. John Stuart Webster were one and the same person, and so he tilted his head on one side like a cock robin and considered.

"By Jago, that's most interesting," he decided. "The wounded here has a sweetheart or a wife—and an American, too. She must be a recent acquisition, because all the time we were together on the steamer coming down here he never spoke of either, despite the fact that we got friendly enough for such confidantes. Something funny about this, I'd better sound the old boy before I start passing out words of comfort to that unhappy female."

He passed on into the room. John Stuart Webster had, by this time, been washed and bandaged, and one of the Sarros servants (for the ex-dictator's retinue still occupied the palace) had, at Dr. McCabe's command, prepared a guest chamber upstairs and furnished a night gown of ample proportions to cover Mr. Webster's bebandaged but otherwise naked person. A stretcher had just arrived, and the wounded man was about to be carried upstairs. The

late financial backer of the revolution was looking very pale and dispirited; for once in his life his whimsical, bantering nature was subdued. His eyes were closed, and he did not open them when Ricardo entered.

"Well, I have Sarros," the latter declared. Webster paid not the slightest attention to this announcement. Ricardo bent over him. "Jack, old boy," he queried, "do you know a person of feminine persuasion who calls you Caliph?"

John Stuart Webster's eyes and mouth flew wide open. "What the devil!" he tried to roar. "You haven't been speaking to her, have you? If you have, I'll never forgive you, because you've spoiled my little surprise party."

"No, I haven't been speaking to her, but she's in the next room crying fit to break her heart because she thinks you've been killed."

"You sound're! Aren't you human? Go tell her it's only a couple of punctures, not a blow-out!" He sighed. "Isn't it sweet of her to weep over an old hunk like me?" he added softly. "Bless her tender heart!"

"Who is she?" Ricardo was very curious. "That's none of your business. You wait and I'll tell you. She's the guest I told you I was going to bring to dinner, and that's enough for you to know for the present. Vaya, you idiot, and bring her in here, so I can assure her my head is bloody but unbowed. Doctor, throw that rug over my shanks and make me look pretty. I'm going to receive company."

His glance bent steadily on the door, had it been the least alert, bright watchfulness frequently to be observed in the eyes of a terrier standing expectantly before a rat hole. The instant the door opened and Dolores' tear-stained face appeared, he called to her with the old-time camaraderie, for he had erased from his mind, for the nonce, the memory of the tragedy of poor Don Juan Cafetero and was concerned solely with the task of banishing the tears from those brown eyes and bringing the joy of life back to that sweet face.

"Hello, sweetest," he called weakly. "Little Johnny's been fighting again, and the bad boys gave him an all-fired walloping."

There was a swift rustle of skirts, and she was bending over him, her hot little palms clasping eagerly his pale, rough cheeks. "Oh, my dear, my dear," she whispered, and then her voice choked with the happy tears and she was sobbing on his wounded shoulder. Ricardo stooped to draw her away, but John Stuart bent upon him a look of such frightfulness that he drew back aghast. After all, the past 24 hours had been quite exciting, and Ricardo reflected that John's inanimateness was tired and frightened and probably hadn't eaten anything all day long, so there was ample excuse for her hysteria.

"Come, come, back up," Webster cautioned her, and helped himself to a long whiff of her fragrant hair. "Old man Webster had one leg in the grave, but they've pulled it out again."

Still she sobbed. "Now, listen to me, lady," he commanded with mock severity. "You just stop that. You're wasting your sympathy; and while, of course, I enjoy your sympathy a heap, just pause to reflect on the result if those salt tears should happen to drip into one of my numerous wounds."

"I'm so sorry for you, Caliph," she murmured brokenly. "You poor, harmless boy! I don't see how any one could be so feindish as to hurt you when you were so distinctly a non-combatant."

"Thank you. Let us forget the Hague conference for the present, however. Have you met your brother?" he whispered.

"No, Caliph."

"Ricardo."

"Yes, Jack."

"Come here, Rick, you scheming, unscrupulous, blood-thirsty adventurer. I have a tremendous surprise in store for you. The sweetest girl in the world—and she's right here—"

Ricardo laughingly held up his hand. "Jack, my friend," he interrupted, "you're too weak to make a speech. Don't do it. Besides, you do not have to." He turned and bowed gracefully to Dolores. "I can see for myself she's the sweetest girl in the world, and that she's right here." He held out his hand to her. "Jack thinks he's going to spring a surprise," he continued maddeningly, "quite forgetting that a good soldier never permits himself to be taken by surprise. I know all about his little secret, because I heard you mourning for him when you thought he was dead." Ricardo favored her with a knowing wink. "I am delighted to meet the future Mrs. Webster. I quite understand why you fell in love with him because, you see, I love him myself and so does everybody else."

With typical Castilian courtliness he took her hand, bowed low over it, and kissed it. "I am Ricardo Luis Ruy," he said, anxious to spare his friend the task of further exhausting conversation. "And you are—"

"You're a consummate jackass!" growled Webster. "I'm only a dear old family friend, and Dolores is going to marry Billy Geary. You impetuous idiot! She's your own sister, Dolores Ruy. She, Mark Twain, and I have ample cause for common complaint against the world because the reports of our death have been grossly exaggerated. She didn't perish when your father's administration crumbled. Miss Ruy, this is your brother, Ricardo. Kiss her—oh, Lord, nothing matters any more. He's got me everything up and ruined my party. I wish I were dead."

Ricardo stared from the outraged Webster to his sister and back again.

"Jack Webster," he declared, "you aren't crazy, are you?" "Of course, he is—the old dear," Dolores cried happily. "But I'm not." She stepped up to her brother, and her arms went around his neck. "Oh, Rick," she cried, "I'm your sister. Truly, I am."

"Dolores, my little lost sister, Dolores! Why, I can't believe it!" "Well, you'd better believe it," John Stuart Webster growled feebly. "Of course, you can doubt my word and get away with it, now that I'm flat on my back, but if you dare cast aspersions on that girl's veracity, I'll murder you a month from now."

He closed his eyes, feeling instinctively that he ought not to spy on such a sacred family scene. When, however, the affecting meeting was over and Dolores was ruffling the Websterian foretop while her brother pressed the Websterian hand and tried to say all the things he felt, but couldn't express, John Stuart Webster brought them both back to a realization of present conditions.

"Don't thank me, sir," he typed in pathetic imitation of the small boy of melodrama. "I have only done my duty, and for that I cannot accept this purse of gold, even though my father and mother are starving."

"Oh, Caliph, do be serious," Dolores pleaded. He looked up at her fondly. "Take your brother out to Mother Jenks and prove your case, Miss Ruy," he advised her. "And while you're at it, I certainly hope somebody will remember I'm not accustomed to repeating on a center table. Rick, if you can persuade some citizen to put me to bed, I'd be obliged. I'm dead tired, old horse. I'm—ah—sleepy."

His head rolled weakly to one side, for he had been playing a part and had served himself to finish it gracefully, even in his weakened condition. He sighed, moaned slightly, and slipped into unconsciousness.

CHAPTER XVII.

Throughout the night there was sporadic firing here and there in the city. As the Ruy followers relentlessly hunted down the isolated detachment of government troops which had escaped annihilation and capture in the final rout and fallen back on the city, where, consoled themselves according to their nature and inclination, they indulged in more or less sniping from windows and the roofs of buildings. The practice of taking no prisoners was an old one in Sobrante, and few presidents had done more than Sarros to keep that custom alive; ergo, firm in the conviction that to surrender was tantamount to facing a firing squad at daylight, the majority of these stragglers, with consummate courage, fought to the death.

The capture of Buenaventura was alone sufficient to insure a brief revolution, but the capture of Sarros was ample guarantee that the resistance to the new order of things was already at an end. However, Ricardo Ruy felt that the prompt execution of Sarros would be an added guarantee of peace by effectually discouraging any opposition to the rebel cause in the outlying districts, where a few isolated garrisons still remained in ignorance of the momentous events being enacted in the capital. For the time being, Ricardo was master of life and death in Sobrante, and all of his advisers and supporters agreed with him that a so-called trial of the ex-dictator would be a rather useless affair. His life was forfeit a hundred times for murder and treason, and to be poisonous over his elimination would savor of mockery. Accordingly, at midnight, a priest entered the room in the arsenal where Sarros was confined, and shrived him. Throughout the night the priest remained with him, and when that early morning march to the cemetery commenced he walked beside Sarros, repeating the prayers for the dying.

Upon reaching the cemetery there was a slight wait until a carriage drove up and discharged Ricardo Ruy and Mother Jenks. The sergeant in command of the squad saluted and was briefly ordered to proceed with the matter in hand; whereupon he turned to Sarros, who with the customary sang froid of his kind upon such occasions was calmly smoking and bowed deprecatingly. Sarros actually smiled upon him. "Adios, amigos," he murmured. Then, as an afterthought and probably because he was sufficient of an egotist to desire to appear a martyr, he added heroically: "I die for my country. May God have mercy on my enemies."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

"Have a Tooth?" In the Fiji Islands a polished ivory tambu, or whale's tooth is a symbol of chieftainship, and extremely valuable, as any request backed by an exhibition of a tambu is theoretically bound to be granted. Thus, if a Fijiian headman wishes to marry a neighboring chief's daughter, he sends a messenger first with the precious tambu, supposing him to possess one. Neither the girl nor her father has then any further choice in the matter. The wedding has got to be. These objects, as may well be imagined, are jealously guarded by their fortunate possessors; and any Fijiian, if well enough off, will purchase one from a foreigner for a large sum. The natives never, or at least very rarely, can be induced to sell their tambus. Tactical district commissioners frequently follow the Fijiian custom, and when asking for hospitality on their tours in the interior, send a whale's tooth with their messenger.

The Time.

"Is it admissible at any time for a man to pay attentions to a married woman?" "Certainly, if she is his wife."

Back Lane and Achy? Do you get up mornings tired and achy? Evening find you all "worn out"? Likely your kidneys are to blame. Hurry and worry, lack of rest, and eating too much meat, throw a strain on the kidneys. Your back gives out; you are tired and likely suffer headaches and dizzy spells. Take things easier and help the kidneys with Doan's Kidney Pills. Doan's have brought new strength to thousands. Ask your neighbor!

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