Jim the Conqueror

By Peter B. Kyne .

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WNU Service

CHAPTER XI-Continued

-13-"Of course there is. He's ten miles from the border and he can't possibly get there with thirty thousand sheep under two days; when he gets to the river he'll find sixty of my men between him and the farther shore. However, it will entail some loss en route and far heavier losses getting the sheep back on the range again. Bobby, I've got to stop that procession at the first water-hole, scatter Dingle and his men and put my own brave boys in charge. Meanwhile, we'll ride down to that dust cloud and make a reconnaisance."

They did, keeping to the backbone of the western fringe of foothills. An hour of hard riding brought them to the crest of the slate-colored hills. Below them a plain sloped gently into the bluish haze; faintly to them came the continuous bleating of sheep; a dirty gray blur indicated the flock. At its rear and on the flanks, little black dots, that were herders and sheep dogs, urged the weary animals along. Don Jaime counted the largest dots.

"Twenty herders," Roberta heard him remark, half to himself. "Humm-m! It doesn't look as if it would be quite safe to give Bill Dingle his walking papers today. He is not in a mood to accept them." He cased his binoculars, whirled his horse and, without even a look at the girl beside him, started back the way they had come.

"What are you going to do, Jimmy?" she asked anxiously, spurring up alongside of him. "We're going back to the motor-

car, Bobby. I'm going to send Aurelio back to Valle Verde for reinforcements."

"Will there be a fight?" "I think so, Bobby. Dingle has twenty herders. Six, with the dogs, should be ample to maneuver those sheep. So it looks as if he had prepared for trouble, and when men prepare for trouble it's a pretty good sign they will not avoid it."

"I don't want a fight," the girl cried passionately. "You and some of your men may get hurt-killed."

"Quite likely. I have no intention of making this anything but a slaugh-

"Oh, Jimmy, please listen to me. This is not your fight. It's mine and I'd rather lose every head of those awful sheep than have anybody killed Send to Los Algodones for the sheriff and a posse to head Dingle off. This is the sheriff's business, not yours."

"A good plan for weaklings," he replied curtly. "You seem to forget that even members of a sheriff's posse are expendable. Bobby, there's always an open season on thieves, and any citizen, catching a thief red-handed, may help himself to the sport to the limit of his desires and his ammunition. It's always been the custom in this country for men to protect their property from thieves."

"I forbid you to make another move in the protection of my property, Jimmy. I can stand the loss-now. If anything should happen to you I'd never forgive myself."

He smiled across at her benignly. "And if I ever fell so low as to let a



"Twenty Herders," Roberta Heard Him Remark, Half to Himself.

thief escape in daylight I'd never forgive myself, Bobby. I'd lose caste in my own country."

"But those sheep are mine," she cried desperately. "The affair is none f your business. Jimmy-please lis-

ten to me." He glared at her. "I'm ashamed of you. I thought you had courage. You haven't-so now it seems I must tell you something. Those sheep are not yours. They're mine! Don Prudencio had an offer for the lot from a man named Blodgett. The price was right -and Prudy and I decided you should sell. The court agreed-and we sold. Yesterday the buyer decided he had nade a mistake-and sold the sheep to me at a lower price. I didn't intend to tell you about this, of course, but circumstances compel me. What I own I keep-and I'll always fight for ny own. Now is your conscience

Jimmy, I'm afraid-terribly afraid! I have a presentiment you'll be killed." "Would that matter so very much to you?" His hand closed over her arm. "Look at me, Roberta. Would

it matter so very much?" She nodded an affirmative, unable to

trust herself to speak. He said something in Spanish. Roberta suspected it was an oath! "I'm the picture of bad luck," he complained. "I don't want this fight, but I just can't afford to let Dingle get away into Mexico with a quarter of a million dollars' worth of my property. The loss might put me into the hands of a receiver-so, much as I would like to oblige you, Bobby, I must inform you that about sunset h-l's going to pop over yonder."

The tears coursed down her cheeks. She was beyond words now. "Don't fact. feel bad, Bobby," he urged. "We'll open the fight at long range. Ken and I are absolutely deadly up to a thousand yards. Those herders are mostly Mexicans-riff-raff-and at ranges beyond three hundred yards their shooting is sloppy. I know, Bobby. I've been through a dozen brushes with them."

"Oh, Jimmy! Please-please, for mv sake."

He pulled up his horse and glowered at her. "My dear girl," he cried sharply, "you're trying to make a quitter out of me. When a man permits a woman to rob him of his strength he might as well get killed and have his shame over with. Is that understood?"

Roberta nodded miserably. What argument of hers could prevail above this logic? And yet, beneath her cold fear there burned a wild pride that he had made his decision so, and deep down in her rebellious, belligerent heart she knew that, come what might, she would not have it otherwise now.

CHAPTER XII

Cantering where the ground permitted, moving at a fast running walk where it did not, Roberta and Don Jaime reached the waiting truck and motorcar in thirty minutes. Throughout the journey (following her host's announcement of his inflexible purpose to fight Bill Dingle and his herders .before sunset) no word had passed between the two. Don Jaime rode ahead, occasionally looking back to see that all was well with the girl; seemingly, in his eagerness for conflict, he would gladly have dispensed with her society if he could. At least Roberta thus read his thoughts, nor was she far wrong, as his first subsequent words proved.

"Bobby, this job of mine is man's work. Aurelio is going back with the truck, so if you'll dismount we'll load your horse into it. Then, if you will be good enough to take the motorcar and drive it home for me I'll be your debtor."

"No," she answered sharply. "My horse and the motorcar should remain here. I might need the car to carry some wounded men to the doctor in Los Algodones or some dead men to the morgue. When this issue is settled I'll know what to do and I'll not have to be told."

"The objection you raise is a logical one. Have it your own way." He gave Aurelio his orders in Spanish and when the latter had departed with the truck, Don Jaime sat down on the running board of the motorcar and motioned to Roberta to dismount and sit beside him. "Drop your reins. Your horse will tie to the breeze," he suggested, "Let's have a smoke. Soothing to the nerves."

"It probably would be--if you had any," she retorted, and climbed down beside him. "I cannot imagine any man enjoying a roughhouse more than you."

"You're a poor judge of human nature." His tones were dry. "Nobody likes a roughhouse where lethal weapons are used. I'm always very much afraid I'll get killed, and I don't want to die-now. In fact, I never did care very much about dying. Life's fairly sweet and, as you remarked recently, I have a lot of unfinished business to clean up. Mind where you throw your butt, my dear. This range is dryand I don't want a fire. Yes, I could do with a whole lot of letting alone,

Bobby." "Well, I've suggested the sheriff. It's his business to apprehend horse thieves."

He did not answer this. He was thoughtful, blowing smoke rings. "I'll have to teach that below-the-Border gang a lesson," he resumed casually. "They must learn to stay at home. I'm four men shy on a fifty-fifty break in my ruckuses with those animalsfour good men. One of them was Julio's father-and Julio shall have his chance at reprisal this day. This matter is personal, Bobby, and I'm going to get every mother's son of those renegades if I have to follow them to

Mexico City." "You have no right to risk the lives of your poor, ignorant men to save

your property," she flared at him. "I haven't? Why haven't I? They're my men, aren't they? Didn't I inherit them? do I not employ them and house them and feed them and make them happy? Doesn't the doctor come out | Ken Hobart, left alone with Roberta,

look over the ailing ones? Didn't my father and grandfather and greatgrandfather accept them and their troubles? I'm loyal to them, am I not? They know I'd fight to the death for them, and lose every dollar I have in the world before turning them off to face that world-the gringo world they do not understand! Why shouldn't they be loyal to me? In fighting to defend my rights they fight for their own-and besides, we've all been raised together that way and there are some habits we do not care to break. 'Whose salt I eat, his song I sing.' A good slogan, and a very ancient one in

this country." The girl was sensible of a vague uneasiness as he looked her over sternly. She had not pleased him and he did not disdain to make her aware of the

"I'm not a lawyer." he shot out at her suddenly. "What would your friend, Mr. Hackett, do if he were the owner of these sheep?"

"I imagine he'd have some sort of theft insurance on them, so he wouldn't worry if Dingle stole them. He'd leave the worry and the salvage and the prosecution to the insurance company."

"Everything for defense but not a cent for tribute, Bobby. It's all in the point of view. Well, I suppose, now that you're out of the sheep business, Bobby, you'll be going back to Dobbs Ferry in a day or two."

"Well, of course, I would stay over for your funeral, Jimmy." She tried to appear jocular, but her quavering voice betrayed her real feelings.

His brown hand caressed her shoulder: "That's the girl. Act spunky, even if you're not. Nine times out of ten one can fool the enemy with a good bluff."

"You are going to wait here until Aurelio returns with more men and horses? How many men have you sent for?" "Twenty. Caraveo, the riding boss,

will pick the best. That will be five trucks with four horses and their riders to each truck. Don't talk to me now, Roberta. I have to formulate a battle plan." He took out a notebook and pencil

and commenced writing. "Here," he said abruptly, when he had finished, "please hand this to Ken Hobart when he reports here. If nobody returns by vilight, drive the car back to the ranch. You know the way." He stood up, hitched his belt and held out his hand. "Where are you going, Jimmy?"

"I'm going to circle ahead of those sheep and get to the only water-hole they can reach tonight. There's an old branding corral in the valley by that water-hole-one I built myself. I'm going to dig in there and hold that

"Surely you're not going alone?" "Julio will follow at four o'clock. He's dependable. Good-by, Bobby-in case I do not see you again. It's been wonderful to have known you. When you get back to Dobbs Ferry think kindly of Jim Higgins, if he's in the cemetery, and send him an occasional picture post-card if he's not. Your sheep money is in the local bank, Trust old Prudy. He looks like a dusky idol but he's cuter than any fox -and honest. Good-by, my very dear."

He took her hand. It trembled in, his. "Jimmy," she said in a very small voice, "the other night you told me you loved me. Was that a statement of fact or just-ah-hooey?"

"It was a statement of fact. I'll love you as long as I live. Some day, if I live, I suppose I'll marry somebody else, but in the cool of the evening, darling, when the day's work is done and the Higuenes boy and his thoughts are alone together-well, I'll do some thinking. And if Mrs. Higuenes should say, 'James, what are you thinking of? I shall tell her a harmless lie."

"I shall go home tomorrow, Jimmy -provided you come back to Valle

Verde. If not-" "They'll plant me in a hurry and you can go the day after, Bobby." He took her fresh, lovely face in his palms. "Bobby," he said very seriously, "remember me as the man who never made love for fun." And he kissed her on the lips and let her go. Dully, she watched him swing into his saddle and ride away; when he had topped the ridge he pulled up, looked back and waved his hand. Then he

went over the sky-line. About three-thirty Ken Hobart and Julio returned and found Roberta face downward in the grass, sobbing as if her heart must break. When she raised her head at Hobart's touch it occurred to the general manager that it would require more than a little rouge and powder to repair the damage done by those tears.

"Where is the Big Boss?" he demanded in the matter-of-fact tone of one who beholds nothing unusual.

Roberta held out a couple of leaves of paper-Don Jaime's battle plan. Hobart read it. "The boy has some sense after all," he decided. "Who says this is a dull country?" He spoke to Julio.

"Si, senor," murmured Julio, and rode away on Don Jaime's trail!

Roberta commenced to sob. "Oh, | twice a week from Los Algodones to | lit a cigarette, smoked it through in | have time to get to the scene of the silence, lit another, and waited. Then:

"Crying over the old man?" Roberta nodded, and added defensively: "I'm sure anybody would. Don Jaime's so young and so fine, and if he

should get killed-" "Quite so," murmured Mr. Hobart. "However, we have one consolation. He'll have a lot of company on the way up! Well, if that saddle-colored hombre gets his, about all any of us can do is to sing "By-by, Blackbird!" I imagine he'll get killed-somehow."

"In heaven's name, why?" "Well," said Mr. Hobart with exasperating deliberation, "he's madly in love with you, Miss Antrim, but he realizes that's all the good it's going to do him. He realizes you'd never dream of marrying the man who killed your uncle-"

"My uncle was a scoundrel. He employed scoundrels." "Still, he was your uncle. You

know, of course, that with Don Jaime's breed of cat an uncle is a kinsman, no matter what he does. I've felt like



"Act Spunky, Even if You Are Not -Nine Times Out of Ten One Can Fool the Enemy With a Good

telling the boss he was all wrong about you, but then I'm only a hired man, and the hired man who speaks out of his turn to Don Jaime gets fired pretty sudden."

"If you'd only told him!" Roberta walled, "Oh, if you only had!" "Why didn't you tell him yourself?"

he retorted. "You're one of the parties at interest, aren't you?" "There are things no girl can say-

when a man acts as queerly as Don Jaime does, Mr. Hobart. He's so sensitive, so retiring-"

Mr. Hobart choked and to cover his strangled cachinnation coughed violently into his cupped hands. "About as sensitive and retiring as a steer on the peck," he retorted, "but he is proud. If he thought there was the least chance of your refusing him he'd never ask you to marry him in a thousand years."

"Indeed! Is that possible, Mr. Hobart?" Then, it suddenly dawning on her that her conversation with Ken Hobart hitherto could have been covered in five hundred words, she was appalled, not only at his garrulity but at her own. "Isn't this conversation getting a trifle-personal and delicate. Mr. Hobart?" she suggested. "Really, I haven't the slightest idea why I am discussing such an intimate subject with you."

"Well, I have. I want to discuss it." he replied calmly. "When I discover that Don Jaime has ridden away to get killed because life won't mean a thing to him after you're gone-and when I find you ruining your peachesand-cream complexion crying over this greaser-"

"How dare you? He's not a greaser!" "Nobody but a greaser would act the way he does. Well, as I was saying, having discovered the lay of the land, I felt it my Christian duty to interfere and offer some sound ad-

vice." "What do you advise, Mr. Hobart?" "Would you marry this Higuenes hombre if he asked you?" Roberta blushed furiously and hung

"Come," Mr. Hobart urged, "this is serious business. There's a question before the house and it merits an answer. Would you marry the idiot and chuck all your sheep money into the pot with him and help extend his irrigation system and buy about a thousand pure-bred Hereford breeding

"I would, gladly. If I married him I'd be his partner as well as his wife. I could be a good partner." "None better," agreed Mr. Hobart.

Well, if you want him, go get him. He's yours for the asking." "Mr. Hobart! How dare you? No girl asks a man to marry her!"

"That's why we have so many old maids, Miss Antrim. Now, listen to me. If you hop aboard that horse of yours and ride after Julio he'll lead you to that old branding corral where he and Don Jaime are going to dig in and do some fancy shooting. You'll Times,

festivities before they get going, have

and then beat it back here before dark." "Oh, Mr. Hobart, I couldn't! I'd feel

your little pow-wow with Don Jaime,

so brazen. I'd die of shame." "Very well, then, die. Don Jimmy is sure to die, because he doesn't want to live. Of course he'd never let you know that, but right, here in this note he left me he says: 'Adios, amigo. See that Miss Antrim gets to the station all right, and whatever you do, don't plant me in the same cemetery with her uncle.' You can save a human life if you care to. If you do not care to-well, that's your own busi-

Roberta got up, walked to her horse and mounted him. "Thank you a lot, Mr. Hobart," she gulped. "You're a true friend."

"I'm glad I measure up. I'd be out of luck if the boss' wife got sore at, me. Hello, here come Caraveo and the trucks. I must head him off and send him down the road a few miles farther, to save time." He made a flying leap to his horse and galloped away to meet the riding boss.

Just as Roberta disappeared over the sky-line he gave Enrico Caraveo his orders, then without waiting for his five men to follow he galloped swiftly after the girl.

"D-n it," he muttered, "I got so interested fixing things for Don Jimmy I clean forgot that girl wears pants, and a two-gallon hat. Some one of those roughnecks may mistake her for a man!"

CHAPTER XIII

The huge satisfaction felt by Ken Hobart at his interference in other people's business was shattered now, as he thought of Roberta, garbed in riding breeches and flannel shirt and wearing the conventional widebrimmed and high-crowned hat of the country. Riding along the sky-line she could very readily be mistaken for a man-and such mistakes, in the impending circumstances, might reasonably be fatal! It was incumbent upon him, therefore, to catch up with her. to guard her approach to that old branding corral in the valley, to make her take every advantage of the ground, to scout the territory for her.

Also, a new and disturbing thought had occurred to him. What if Dingle had decided to make sure of the water for the sheep by taking possession of the water-hole before Don Jaime could get there? Of course it was unbelievable that the latter would ride boldly up to the water-hole before making a careful reconnaissance, since instinct, the custom of the country, and his army training would indicate that course to him. On the other hand, was Don Jaime's mind completely on the task in hand? Was it not probable that thoughts of a sentimental nature might hull him into indiscretion? Verily, Ken Hobart could take no chances. There was immediate need of haste and he hastened; and as he galloped along the backbone of the ridge he was sickeningly aware that he was not the only one who was hastening.

There was Don Jaime, to begin with, hurrying to get to the waterhole and consolidate his position. He knew the country well and was a hard, fast rider. After him came, on hot hoofs, his reinforcements-the devoted Julio. Duty was duty to Julio -and, as Don Jaime had stated, that youthful retainer had a personal interest in the forthcoming activities. Hurrying to catch Julio, that he might lead her to the water-hole, Roberta was pounding along on her fleet hunter; and after Roberta came Ken Hobart.

"If anything happens to that girl," he told himself, "I'll just keep right on in the general southerly direction and never come back."

The low range swung to the eastand suddenly, in a cup-shaped valley far below, Ken Hobart saw the sheep -saw that they were being driven, not grazed. They were within a mile of the water-hole, and Julio was not in sight. At the foot of the range Roberta, stationary, sat her horse and took stock of the situation, She had lost Julio!

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Killed His Luck

One time I saw a temperamental movie director order his crew of workmen to kill a stray dog who had been hanging around making friends. Never shall I forget the look of bewilderment that came into the log's eyes as his luncheon pals suddenly turned on him with sticks and bludgeons. Incidentally, the director who ordered that dog killed never made another successful picture and steadfly and sickeningly dropped to oblivion. I knew another man who had a fighting bulldog that he forced to fight for gamblers after one of her forelegs had been chewed off. That brute lost his own leg and finally wound up in state's prison. Sounds like a little Rollo story, but it's true. -Harry Carr in the Los Angeles

EDDIE, THE AD MAN

ARRY BICKENKOOP SEZ SINCE HE PUT IN THAT AD ABOUT FRESH LAID FARM EGGS, HIS HENS HAVE BEEN COMPELLED TO LAY TWO EGGS PER DAY EACH, TO KEEP ORDERS FILLED!



@ 1932, Western Newspaper Union.

TOUGH

In the days when the American West was wild and woolly, a heavilyarmed figure strode into a Texas resort, leading a lion on a chain. The stranger shot the three other occupants of the place, kicked the lion into a corner, and then, seizing a bottle of ginger ale, bit off the neck and drained the contents.

"Say, stranger," said the trembling clerk, "I guess you come from a tough spot."

"Tough?" said the visitor, grimly, "I'll say it's tough, all right. It got so bad all of us softles had to quit." -Tit-Bits.

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