

DR. JACK'S WIFE

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

Author of "Dr. Jack," "Captain Tom," "Miss Caprice," Etc., Etc.

(Continued.)

Doctor Jack thinks little of this as he leaves the hotel and strikes for the center of the city; he has delved into many a quaint city of Europe, and in his travels has seen so much that is odd and belongs to a past age that with a traveler's experience his philosophy is to take all things as he finds them, and do the best possible.

Once he turns, to wave his handkerchief to the figure in the window of the hotel and receive an answering salute.

"God bless the dear girl," mutters Doctor Jack; "it's a beastly shame that she should be compelled to endure what has come upon us in this war-racked country, but Avis would not allow me to sail alone, and everything depended on my coming. Well, it looks as though the biggest success of my life had attended me, and in a couple of days more we'll take the steamer, sail for California, and put in the winter on our lovely place near Monterey."

"I am more than curious to know what the writer of this note has to say concerning the secret mission that brought me to Chili—the vague hints thrown out do not satisfy me. It may be he has news of importance to communicate, or on the other hand this little business may turn out—a trap. Doctor Jack comes prepared with gold to buy this secret if it is worthy of a price, and with cold lead to meet treachery."

Thus meditating, the American traverses a narrow calle where the draught of sea air causes the lights to flare, and fantastic shadows to creep over the pavements like weird phantoms.

Valparaiso, like all seaport, always has its quota of rough characters, and at this particular time is boiling over with elements succeeding the late war—soldier, adventurers spending the spoils they have picked up, sailors deserting their ships, and numerous rogues from the country flocking to the scene of Balmaceda's overthrow, as though expecting to find the treasure of the late government upon the streets.

Doctor Jack seeks no quarrel, though ever ready to defend himself against all comers. He knows the antipathy that exists in the Chilean mind at present against Americans, and how quick these natives are to spot a Yankee on sight—hence, he pulls the soft hat he wears farther over his eyes as he pushes along the dismal looking calle.

Doctor Jack can talk Spanish fairly well, and if asked a question may even reply in a tone that would cause no suspicion to arise concerning his right to the streets of Valparaiso. Better a little deception of this sort than a silly outbreak that must betray his identity and cause a small riot in the city.

His residence in the country has been such as to make it profitable for him to imitate the natives in the matter of dress and habits as much as possible. The Chileans do not differ greatly from our own methods—the habits of a gentleman are much the same as we see every day, but in a few things they have their own oddities, and these are enough to mark a native in the street from a foreigner, just as we spot an Englishman on Broadway.

The wisdom of Doctor Jack's policy is presently made manifest. At a certain point of the calle two vagabonds, who wear remnants of soldiers' uniforms,

though this does not prove that they have ever marched under the Chilean flag, suddenly confronts the American pedestrian and demand his money.

Their appeal is not one of charity, for the outstretched hand holds something in its grasp that glitters like steel.

Now, Doctor Jack has never been niggardly in his dealings with the needy; his hand and pocket-book are always open to the appeals of want, but there is something in his nature that invariably protests against having the hand of a footpad thrust into his purse and spon upon the contents.

He has had the experience under the moods of various countries, and as a general rule kicked against a man who might. Just so on this night, with a hand that felt like steel.

ance or commit a breach of the peace in the streets of old Valparaiso, he is even more opposed to handing over his valuables to a couple of cowardly vandals who thus waylay him, taking advantage of the fact that at this particular moment no one else seems to be moving along the narrow, ill lighted calle.

Hence, the fellow who addresses the lonely pilgrim from the fonda hardly finishes his demand for the coins of the realm when he is struck by a young cyclone, the revolver sent flying from his hand, and a fist brought against his head with such impetus that he finds himself lying on his back ten feet away, feebly gazing up at the few stars that peep down from the narrow lane of blue sky visible between the flat roofs above.

Doctor Jack does not forget that the impudent footpad he thus chastises has a comrade, and whirling around, he is just in time to seize this fellow's upraised arm, which brandishes aloft an ugly knife.

When those fingers of steel encircle the wrist of the Chilean desperado he feels as though he has slipped his arm by mistake into a vice, which clamps upon it with terrible force, causing a cry of anguish to burst from his lips.

With a few words in Spanish to emphasize the force of his action, the Yankee gives a sudden fling of his arm—it is not unlike the snap of a driver's long whip. At the same moment he releases his clutch, and the footpad is sent across the calle with a force like that attained by a stone hurled in olden times from that primitive war engine, the catapult.

As he strikes the door of a house which chances to be slightly ajar, he goes crashing in, and that lack of positive resistance saves him from a broken head.

The field is clear by this time, and Doctor Jack walks on as composedly as though such little occurrences are everyday matters with him, and count for but little anyway.

"Strange, how many cities I've been in where just such a thing occurred to me—Paris, London, Madrid, Rome, Cairo, yes, and even in far-away Constantinople and Bombay. Well, when a man takes to roaming the streets at night he's almost certain to meet with just such an adventure, be it in Chicago or Santiago, Rio de Janeiro or Buenos Ayres. That's done, and all the injury I've sustained is the fractured skin upon one of my knuckles. Reckon the chap who was the cause of it all feels worse than that after the collision."

Saying which, he wraps his handkerchief carelessly around the hand that bleeds a little, and his thoughts go back to stormy scenes in Madrid some years ago, when he first met the woman he so proudly calls his wife, and in striving to keep his first appointment passed through just such an experience as has befallen him here in Valparaiso.

Then his mind leaves these old scenes, and once more turns to the business on hand—the strange affair that causes him to part from his wife at the fonda and plunges into the amazing depths of the seaport town.

Fortunately Doctor Jack is at home here—he has threaded every one of Valparaiso's calles in the daytime, and knows just where his course lies.

Presently he emerges from the narrow street, to find himself upon one better lighted, where there are many pedestrians of all classes and nations. Here gangs of sailors reel along, shouting their national airs, for under the exciting circumstances the alquazils are prone to wink at any ordinary disturbance of the peace. Valparaiso contains so many rough elements, and is in such a prime condition for a riot that the cautious Intendente, or chief of police, has issued orders to his men to wink at small disorders.

Along this thoroughfare the American strides for some ten minutes—then he stops to look around him, as if a little doubtful.

"Passed the calle, I reckon—anyhow, I don't remember seeing yonder barracks the time I came out of that same street and turned in the quarter I've just come from. Let me go back and see—here's a street, and I honestly believe it's the one—isn't that a name rudely painted on the glass of the blinking street lamp? Wait until it flares up again, poor thing—ah! now we have it, Calle los Angeles. Bless my soul, the street of the angels—well, judging from the looks, I should say their visits in this section are few and far between."

Standing there a minute, he takes a survey of the street; although it does not appear to be a thoroughfare, it is fairly lighted, and he remembers that quite a number of what are called palaces in a South American city can be found in this locality.

(To be Continued.)

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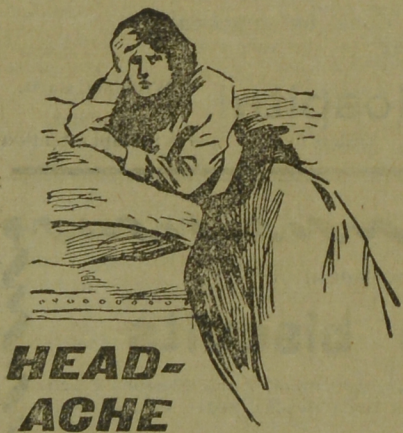
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