

DR. JACK'S WIFE

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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

(Continued.)

"You see, they've got a lot of wax figures in here, probably the noted people of the world. Reckon some one used to run a show, and these are his stock-in-trade. Perhaps it's Julius Caesar I toppled over, and his arm hangs out of the window—or it may be the great and only Bonaparte—think of the honor of shaking hands with such a notable party."

Kirke is inclined to be humorous in spite of his strange surroundings, and the presence of deadly danger. Some men would joke and laugh, if hung up by the thumbs.

"What are you doing in there?" asks Jack.

"Prisoner of war," laconically.

"But when you gave that man the nod you were at large in the garden?"

"Just so, Jack, my boy. They caught me trying to escape soon after, and chucked me into this sweet hole. I've been occupying my time and all my matches in interviewing the various worthies congregated here, and they're beauties, too, I assure you. I shall be haunted all my life by some of their faces. Regular curiosity shop. Just when you came up I was busily engaged at the stone mason trade."

"What?"

"You see the wall is very old, and I find the mortar poor. Already I've dislodged one stone, and another is ready to follow. While I talk I'm working like a beaver."

"Can I help you?" asks Jack eagerly. He admires just such boldness in conception and execution.

"Try to the left of the window. There, you may feel the stones move. Ah! we'll vamoose this ranch in double quick time, bet your life."

Their united work has a speedy result, and hands meet in the opening—hands with a grasp that means more than ordinary friendship. Doctor Jack is naturally curious to know how all this came about, but he asks no further questions. There will be plenty of time for those after they have made good their escape.

As the prisoner has said, the mortar is poor, and offers no resistance, so that they are able to dislodge stone after stone with very little effort.

At length Kirke declares the opening has reached a size that will admit of his passage, and with that he crawls through.

"I tell you I'm glad to be out of that den. It's one of horrors, too, and, if I'd been drinking freely of late, I'd believe I had 'em sure," and the Texan draws a great breath of relief.

Then he cocks his head on one side, and appears to be listening.

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"Don't hear 'em, but they're around."

"What's that?" asks Jack a suspicion flashing across his mind that perhaps his friend has gone crazy.

"Are you armed, old fellow?"

"Of course. See here."

The Texan fondles the weapon eagerly as though he were a miser gloating over his gold.

"I hope they'll discover us now. I'd be tempted to shout and arouse the house, if you only had a mate to this for me."

"Well, I have, but don't do anything rash. Remember we've got a great deal to accomplish yet, and can't afford to be foolish."

"On your request I'll bottle my enthusiasm and remain dumb," replies Kirke, whose spirits have gone up three hundred per cent. since he learned that he could keep the weapon Jack thrust into his hand.

"Tell me, is it in this place?" asks the doctor, "for if so I don't mean to leave in a hurry."

"Outside," is the quick response.

"Then come with me, and I'll show you how I entered."

They move along the face of the building in the direction, as Jack believes, of the spot where he descended. It may not be so easy to get out, but where there's a will there's a way; and these determined men are not the ones to be daunted by obstacles.

Thus far fortune has favored them, but it now frowns. Loud voices are heard in their rear, lights are seen, and the barking of a dog indicates that the excitement means something connected with their flight.

"The goose is cooked—they're coming," says the Texan, calmly, and one could almost declare there is a ring of pleasure in his voice, as though he anticipates a picnic in the encounter.

Indeed, the clamor in their rear has by this time reached such proportions that it is positively alarming. Men shout and swear, and new lights flash upon the scene, until it even looks as though giant fireflies are darting hither and thither through the garden.

"We can defend ourselves, but the time has not yet come. Here is an open door. Let's investigate the house."

The audacity of this plan pleases Kirke Smith. He chuckles over it, even while following Jack into the inky hallway.

"Tit for tat. As they go out we enter in. Eureka! Lead on, Doctor Jack," he mutters, "and I'll follow even to Satan's land."

Jack gropes his way along. It will be a strange thing if they cannot find some door or window opening upon the street, by means of which they may escape.

Let the minions of Colonel Garcia and the English hunt search for them in the garden. Even if the dog shows them the hall where the fugitives have entered, they will not be much worse off, since

they can put their backs against the wall and fight.

Steadily Doctor Jack pushes on—no matter what the confusion outside, he will not risk everything by too much speed—at the same time he is no laggard.

The hall ends, but a door is found which opens at a touch, and they discover a room in which lights abound. It has been occupied by a number of persons, and is evidently a parlor, for piano and pictures can be seen.

Nor is it destitute of human occupancy now; two ladies are seen at a window; they lean out, and very probably look into the garden, were the mad search goes merrily on.

Doctor Jack believes that in one of these ladies he sees the senorita who gave him so much trouble on the preceding night; but there is no need of verifying this suspicion. They may slip through the room unnoticed.

He pinches Kirke's arm to make sure that the Texan realizes the gravity of the situation, and then puts a finger on his lip to indicate silence.

After that the two men start to pass through the room. There is some floor covering under their feet, which helps to conceal the sound of their footsteps. Hence, it is not any noise made by them that attracts attention.

Just when they are in the middle of the room one of the figures in the window turns and the Chilian beauty finds herself face to face with Doctor Jack.

She is taken quite by surprise, and stares, while the American, equal to the emergency, makes a polite salaam.

Then he follows Kirke, who has taken the lead at this moment, leaving the senorita standing rooted to the spot. She will not remain long in this attitude, but turning to the open casement will endeavor to let those below understand that the parties they seek are even then in the house.

(To be Continued.)

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