

DR. JACK'S WIFE

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE

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

(Continued.)

again he walks back to the rendezvous. A dark figure is standing there, and sudden hope springs into his heart that it may be Kirke. To his disappointment it turns out otherwise, and as he glances sharply at the party he sees a native, who looks curiously at him.

"Senior may I ask your name?" says this worthy.

"Doctor Jack Evans," promptly, for he knows no reason that he should withhold it.

"Hospital: it is well, senior."

"You looked for me here?" surprised.

"Si, senior, he told me this place."

"He—ah, at last—you mean Kirke Smith."

"I mean the gentleman who gave me a handful of reals, and who said you would do likewise when you read it."

As he speaks he hands Jack a piece of paper, which the other eagerly seizes. At least it relieves the awful suspense. He will know what has become of Kirke.

The darkness prevents him from seeing what is on the paper, but Jack's shrewdness is capable of surmounting such a barrier, and a match soon relieves the dilemma.

By the aid of this light he scans the paper, evidently a scrap or page torn from a note-book. What he reads is rather ambiguous, but it is a foothold upon which he may climb higher.

He recognizes the "style" of his Texan there, just as though the other stood before him, and this is what he reads:—

"I need help—played the fool for once and lost my grip. Trust this man as far as you dare—but come. It is still safe, but in danger. Make him show you the way. All clear later."

"H'm! all a fog now, at any rate. What under the sun has happened to Kirke?"

Puzzled he turns to interrogate the man who brought the message, but can obtain little satisfaction. The fellow would evidently like to receive his pay and be gone, for it is dangerous having any intercourse with Americans at present.

Doctor Jack has too long a head to permit this. He withholds the pay until what he seeks has been accomplished.

So, rather against his will, the man is forced to turn back and lead the American to the place where he received the note.

Jack keeps a bright lookout for squalls. He has not fully made up his mind as yet whether this fellow can be trusted, and will be governed a good deal by circumstances. At the same time he does not sleep on the way, and his hand keeps in touch with the weapon he carries.

Whatever may have happened to Kirke, it is to be hoped the delay will be of short duration. Jack is thinking of his wife, and the uneasiness she must feel at his absence.

The Chilian guide stops. Not a word is spoken, but Doctor Jack knows they have arrived at their destination. He bends forward to whisper words in the other's ear, and his manner is that of a man having authority.

"Is this the place?"

"Si, senior," comes the muffled reply "Where did you see him?"

"Notice this high wall, senior—here is a grating in it—once the Sisters used to live beyond and walk in the garden, but it has been a private park for some time. An English senior bought it."

"Ah! yes, and you saw this man who gave you the reals and the note—"

"Through the grating, senior, just as darkness was creeping over the hills."

JUSTICE

Is portrayed as a woman, yet her sex might complain that they get scant benefit of her powers. There is little justice, it would seem, in the suffering that many women undergo month after month.

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"That is enough."

A handful of silver goes into the pocket of the eager Chilian.

"You can go, now."

He vanishes in the surrounding gloom like an evil spirit, and Doctor Jack is left face to face with a dilemma and a high stone wall. This must be scaled. If Kirke Smith is on the other side a prisoner, he must be given assistance. Jack confesses that the situation looks very odd to him. He finds it hard to believe that the Texan whirlwind could be caged in this way, and yet positive evidence has been given that this is so.

Speculation may do for another time. Just at present he needs action. His first move is to run his hand over the wall, and find out the nature of the material composing it.

After that he walks along to discover some method of scaling it. The fact that an English senior now owns the place is pregnant with great significance in his eyes—it means that the man who hates him, and who has vowed to wed his widow, is the proprietor.

As he gropes along, he makes a discovery that brings him to a halt. At one point a tree grows near the wall—rather a small one, it is true, but quite large enough to give him hope. This he proceeds to ascend, and in five minutes crouches on top of the wall.

To lower himself is the next task. It would be easy enough if Doctor Jack was in the habit of carrying a rope upon his person. Unfortunately this is foreign to his principles, and he must bridge over the difficulty without such friendly support.

Crawling along the top of the wall he comes at length to a building that frowns upon him with a severe aspect, a house that looks more like a prison than a dwelling. This blocks his farther passage, but it may open a possible way for him to descend.

After a short investigation he is ready to make a move, and swings himself from the wall to a window which has a deep embrasure, and iron rods across its face as though it marks a jail.

From this he is enabled to reach another point below. Thus the agile American descends step by step until he can finally reach the ground by dropping.

Thus far he cannot complain. If the balance of the work is as easily accomplished they will be on their way before long. But where is Kirke—can it be possible the Chilian has deceived him—that this is not the place after all where the other gave him the note? He has not a very high opinion of the class to which his informant belongs. There may be some deep motive that would influence the man to deceive him.

Doctor Jack remembers that in olden times he and Kirke used to have a code of signals. Perhaps the Texan might remember them now. He utters a little flute-like call, which one might easily believe proceeded from some bird in among the branches of a tree.

Eagerly he listens; from the city comes the various noises that are natural—a babel of sounds, for Valparaiso has been doubly aroused by the exciting events of the last hour, and may be compared to a hive of bees into which some reckless boy has thrust a pole.

Not yet discouraged, Jack moves along now and again repeating his signal. Finally he receives an answer. It thrills him through and through. Kirke is not far away, and has at last heard his call.

He again whistles, drawing nearer all the while, the answer becoming more distinct. One thing he has already made certain of, the sound comes from the house itself. He has had a glimpse of a light once or twice, though, generally speaking, the building is wrapped in darkness.

Now he is close enough to speak a name, and to his delight the answer comes.

"Where are you, Kirke?" he asks.

"This way, Jack, old boy," comes the voice.

The other moves along, his arms out stretched in search of the man who answers his signals. Then he strikes something, his hand closes over cold fingers, and he receives a terrible shock, for what he grasps appear to belong to a dead rather than a living being.

CHAPTER XII.

After that one cold shiver Doctor Jack is himself again. He still holds the frozen hand that fails to return his pressure, holds it while he says in a subdued yet steady voice:—

"What does this mean, old man?"

"That I have been a fool, doctor. I wish you could knock some sense into my stupid head with a club—I'd be glad to have you do it only for—that package."

"It's safe yet?" anxiously.

"I believe so, but every minute that we remain here increases the danger of losing it."

"What has happened to your arm, man?"

"Eh? Nothing."

"But your fingers are as cold as ice."

"Are they? I don't see how. Great Scott!" and the Texan can be heard chuckling in the darkness as though dreadfully tickled.

"Speak on, Kirke."

"It must be the dummy's hand you caught."

"Dummy!" casting it from him; "what under the sun are you doing with a dummy?" and Jack's voice is full of surprise.

(To be Continued.)

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