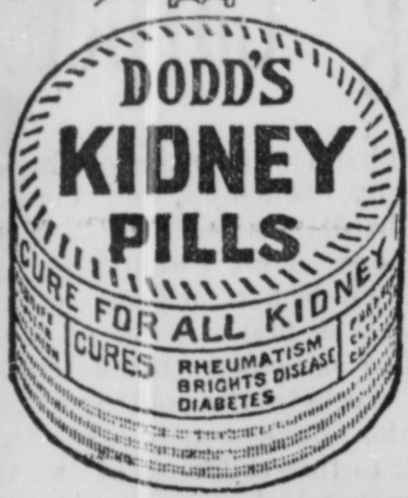


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BY ST. GEORGE RATHBONE

Author of "Doctor Jack," "Doctor Jack's Wife," "Captain Tom," "Miss Pauline of New York," Etc.

CHAPTER I.

A little party of tourists might be seen one lovely day in January, on the hill back of the city of Valetta, on that gem of Mediterranean islands, Great Britain's Malta.

The air is as clear as a bell, and the scene is certainly one to charm the senses, with the blue Mediterranean, dotted with sails, a hazy line far, far away that may be the coast of Africa, the double harbor below, one known as Quarantine, where general trade is done, the other, Great harbor, being devoted to government vessels.

Quaint indeed is the appearance of the Maltese city that rests mostly upon the side of the hill under the fortifications, a second Quebec, as it were.

The streets are, some of them, very steep, the houses, built of limestone, generally three storeys in height, with a flat roof that answers the same purpose as the Spanish or Mexican azotes. Valetta has three city gates, one the Porta Reale, through which our little tourist group came to reach their present position, leads to the country; the Porta Marsamuscetto to the general harbor, where lie craft of all nations, while the government harbor is reached by means of the Marina gate.

Thus they hold to many of the ways of Moorish and Mohammedan countries. The fortifications of limestone are massive—England has a second Gibraltar here.

In general, the Maltese speak a language not unlike the Arabic, though English and Italian are used in trade. They are a swarthy, robust, fearless people, strong in their loves and hates, and the vendetta has been known to exist here just as fiercely as in its native home of Corsica.

Many dress in the costume of the Franks, but the native garb is still worn by the lower classes, and is a picturesque sight, such as we see upon the stage.

It consists of a long bag made of wool, and dyed various colors, making a cap such as is worn by the sailors in stage scenes like the "Pirates of Penzance."

The top part of this is used for a purse, or forms a receptacle for any small articles the wearer desires to carry.

A short, loose pantaloons, to the knee, which leaves the lower leg bare, is confined at the waist by a giraffe or sash of colored cotton or silk. Then there is worn a cotton shirt, with a short, loose vest, or waistcoat, as they were formerly known, covering the same; the latter

often ornamented with rows of silver buttons, quarter dollars, or English shillings.

As to the ladies of Malta, their costume is very odd, and reminds one somewhat of Spain. In part, it consists of a black petticoat, bound round the waist, over a body of some other kind of silk or print which is called the half onella. The upper part, the onella, of the same material, is drawn in to neat gathers for the length of a foot about the center of one of the outer seams. In the seam of one of the remaining divisions is enclosed a piece of whalebone, which is drawn over the head, and forms a perfect arch, leaving the head and neck bare.

As may be expected, it requires much practice to wear such a dress gracefully. Many of the best ladies of Valetta now get their fashions direct from Paris—the world moves.

The little party of tourists have ascended the hill for the purpose of obtaining the glorious view referred to, and at the same time whiling away a few hours of time, for their stay at the Island of Malta has not been of their choosing, a peculiar accident causing the steamer on which they were taking passage to put in here for some necessary repairs.

The tourists are five in number, and a very brief description will give the reader an idea as to their identity, leaving individual peculiarities to be developed as our story progresses.

Probably the one that would attract the attention of a stranger first would be the young lady with the peach-bloom complexion and sunny blue eyes, whose figure is so stylish, and whose rather haughty manner bespeaks proud English blood.

There is another female, whom the young lady calls Aunt Gwen, and as a specimen of a man female she certainly takes the premium, being tall, angular, yet muscular, and with a face that is rather Napoleonic in its cast. A born diplomat, and never so happy as when engaged in a broil or a scene of some sort, they have given this Yankee aunt of Lady Ruth the name of Gwendolin Makepeace. And as she has an appendage somewhere, known as a husband, her final appellation is Sharpe, which somehow suits her best of all.

Aunt Gwen is a character to be watched, and bound to bob up serenely, with the most amazing assurance, at unexpected times.

Then, there is Sharpe, her worse half, a small gentleman over whom she towers, and of whom she is secretly fond of in her way, though she tyrannizes him dreadfully.

Near him may be seen a young American, whom they have somehow dubbed "Doctor Chicago," because he is a medical student hailing from that city, by name John Alexander Craig. Among his friends he is simply Alek. His manner is buoyant, and he looks like an overgrown boy, but his record thus far proves his brain to contain that which will some day cause him to forge ahead.

No one knows why Craig is abroad. That he has some mission besides a tour for health and sight-seeing, several little things have proved.

There is another member of the group, a gentleman of sturdy build, with a handsome face, whose ruddy tint suggests the English officer, even without the flowing whiskers.

Colonel Lionel Blunt has seen much service in India and around Cape Colony. He gained an enviable reputation for deeds of valor, and is disposed to look upon our friend from Chicago as an amiable boy, though after seeing how they rush things out in that western metropolis he may have occasional qualms of fear lest this young doctor finally reach the goal for which both are aiming. That goal, any one can see, is the favor of the bright English girl whom fate has thrown in their way. Perhaps it is not all fate, since Colonel Lionel has recently crossed the States coming from India, and seems to pursue Lady Ruth with singular pertinacity.

Others are present, one a Maltese gentleman, the proprietor of a select club-house, where the garrison officers fence and engage in gymnastics, but Signor Giovanni is not of our party.

There are several commissionaires or guides, at five francs a day, for one cannot move at Malta without being attended, and it is wise to engage one eicerone to keep the rest of his tribe at bay.

Thus on the hill, above the singular Maltese city of Valetta, our story opens. Aunt Gwen is sweeping a field-glass around, and emphasizing her admiration of the picturesque scene with various phrases that would immediately give her away as a Western Yankee.

Lady Ruth, with an admirer on each side, looks a trifle tired, or, it may be, bored.

She may be planning some innocent little scheme, such as girls are wont to indulge in when they have a superfluity of beans, in order to extract some amusement from the situation, even if it come under the head of "cruelty to animals."

Philander Sharpe, with his hands under the tails of his long coat, and his glasses pushed up on his forehead, is a study for a painter.

He was once a professor in a west-

ern college, and with his smooth face, hair roached up from his high forehead, standing collar and general dignified air, is no mean-looking figure, though dwarfed into insignificance by the side of his spouse, the wonderful Aunt Gwen.

The conversation runs upon what lies there before them, and an animated discussion arises as to the possibility of a foreign enemy ever being able to successfully assault this second Gibraltar of the Mediterranean.

Of course, the young American is enthusiastic, and his unbounded faith in the new White Squadron to accomplish anything, while, on the other hand, the British officer, like most of his class, believes that John Bull is invincible on land or wave. Of course, the young man from Chicago disputes the point, and energetically contends that no nation is superior to the Republic, or that any flag can be more desperately defended than "Old Glory."

And right in the midst of the heated discussion Lady Ruth smiles, as though she has suddenly hit upon an idea at last—an idea that offers a solution to the problem that has been perplexing her of late, concerning the courage of these rival admirers.

She turns to the American and smiles sweetly.

"Doctor, you speak of your countrymen being brave; will you prove it?" is what she says.

The young man turns a trifle red.

"I beg your pardon, in speaking of Americans, I did not intend to sound my own praise. Personally, I never claimed more than the average amount of boldness, though I don't know that I was ever called a coward."

His manner is modest, but the young girl with English ideas chooses to look upon his words with suspicion.

"Doctor Chicago must not take va-ter. I have surely understood him to be a regular fire-eater—that all Chicago has rung with his escapades," says the colonel of Royal Engineers, sneeringly.

"Nonsense! But, Lady Ruth, you spoke of my proving something—what can I do for you?"

"Look!"

She extends a shapely arm. Her finger points to a white flower growing out upon the face of the precipice beside them.

"Do you see that flower?" she asks.

"I do," he replies calmly.

"I would like to possess it."

The young man looks down. A fall means instant death, and it would be impossible for even an experienced Alpine traveller to pass along the face of the rock in safety.

(To be Continued.)



The Story Teller.

In eastern countries, in place of our story-writers, they have professional story-tellers. It is their art to interest their listeners with tales of love, and marvelous adventures, and hair-breadth escapes, and magic cures. There's a story of a wonderful medicine that has made thousands of cures that seemed almost magical, which every woman should read or hear. To have heard it or to read it, may save a woman her own life or that of her husband.

The medicine is the discovery of Dr. R. V. Pierce, an eminent and skillful specialist, for thirty years chief consulting physician to the great Invalids' Hotel and Surgical Institute, at Buffalo, N. Y. It is known as Dr. Pierce's Golden Medical Discovery. It makes the appetite hearty, the digestion perfect, the liver active, the blood pure and rich, the nerves steady, the brain clear and the body strong. It is the great blood-maker and flesh-builder. It cures 98 per cent. of all cases of consumption and diseases of the air-passages. It cures nervous diseases and is the best medicine for overworked men and women. A woman may save her husband's life by keeping a bottle in the house, and getting him to resort to it when he feels out-of-sorts. All men are heedless about their health. Medicines stores sell it. Doctor Pierce's reputation is world-wide, and his fellow townsmen, of Buffalo, N. Y., think so highly of him that they made him their representative in Congress, but his great love for his profession caused him to resign that honorable position that he might devote the remainder of his life to the relief and cure of the sick.

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Take up the printed announcements of makers and importers of ready-made clothing, and when they strive to give emphasis to the alleged merits of their clothing they invariably tell how nearly they approach to tailor-made.

Here are some quotations—
"Elegantly tailored"
"Cut and finished equal to ordered work," Equal in quality, fit, and finish to suits made to order, or similar statements.

Then tailor-made clothes are different to imported factory-made, otherwise there would be no need to make comparisons. If tailor-made were not the better clothes they would not be held up as the ideal to which the ready-made strive to reach.

The fact is there is a great deal of difference between a factory-made imported suit and a tailor-made in style and durability.

The man that is indifferent as to the appearance of his clothes when he buys them and when worn a month, may be satisfied with a factory-made, but if he has regard to looks and economy, he will buy tailor-made garments.

For those who are not disposed to give the prices usually paid for clothes made to special order, and are not satisfied with the imported ready-made clothing, we have made, and are daily adding, Suits and Overcoats of superior workmanship that we are selling as low in price as imported makes of inferior quality.

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