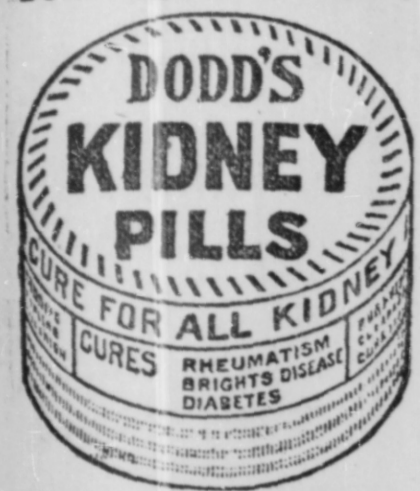


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Author of "Doctor Jack," "Doctor Jack's Wife," "Captain Tom," "Miss Pauline of New York," Etc.

He overlooks the peculiar patronizing air, such as a young woman sometimes assumes toward a boy her junior.

"Lady Ruth, the person you refer to, the thought of whom sent me to save that child, bears what is to me the holiest name on earth—mother."

She draws a quick breath. "Forgive me, I was rude."

"Not at all. My words admitted of just such a meaning as you placed upon them."

"You left her in Chicago, of course," John looks at her steadily.

"Lady Ruth, it may sound strange to you, after what I have said, but my memories of my mother are all confined to the far past, to a period when I was a mere child; but they are none the less precious on that account."

She looks puzzled, as well she may. "Do you mean she is—dead?"

"Heaven forbid, but I have not seen her in all these years. That is one reason I am abroad, Lady Ruth. I have a sacred mission to perform—to find my mother—to seek the solution of a mystery which has embittered my life. Perhaps some time, if we know each other a little better, I may confide a strange and sad story to you."

"Just as you please, doctor," she replies, with deep feeling in her voice, and at this moment the others bustle in.

"You must show yourself on the balcony. The dear people clamor for a sight of you, and I'm really afraid they'll tear the house down soon if you don't appear before them," says Aunt Gwen, with unusual vigor.

"Yes, they unquestionably desire to publicly show their appreciation of your services, and I for one feel proud to be an American this day."

"Philander!"

"Excuse me, my dear, John, my boy, allow me to lead you out."

"One minute, please," says Lady Ruth, who has made a comfortable sling of a long white silk kerchief, which she wore around her neck.

This she insists on securing over John's shoulder.

"That arm must be painful. I know it from my long experience as the reliable assistant of my surgeon uncle. You will be glad to have this."

"But—for such a mere scratch—people will laugh at me," he protests, feebly, though it may be noticed that he makes no effort to deliver himself from the silk sling which she is now tying.

"People laugh at you! A mere scratch! Confound it, boy, there isn't a man living who would go through with what you have today for a

hundred thousand. I know one man a million would not tempt," cries the professor.

"I suppose I must submit," and accompanied by Philander, with the two women bringing up the rear, he passes out upon the balcony, where the colonel of Royal Engineers has remained to be a curious spectator of the scene.

At sight of the hero of the street drama, those in the square before the hotel shout and cheer. They are mostly natives, but men and women feel very strongly drawn toward this young—smooth-faced—American who risked his life to save a child, and that child a Maltese boy.

John bows, and presses his uninjured hand upon his heart, bows again, and retires.

Slowly the crowd disperses. Lady Ruth completely ignores the colonel, but that veteran is not crushed by any means. He watches the capricious maiden with a quizzical light in his eye, which shows that he has not yet lost confidence in the kindness of fate, or his own charms as a beau.

Lionel Blunt's success in life has come from the fact that he has ever been ready to watch his chance and take advantage of every possible opportunity.

So night settles over Malta, over the dreamy, blue Mediterranean, over the singular city of Valetta, where this little company of tourists have been temporarily marooned, and where Doctor Chicago, aided by fate, has been enabled to make his first charge upon the heart of the proud English girl, Lady Ruth.

CHAPTER IV.

It is a night of nights, destined to mark, as with a white stone, the progress of at least two life currents that have until recently flown contentedly on, each in its own individual channel.

Valetta, being a city of the Italian school, makes much ado over the coming of Lent. The people, as if to prepare for six weeks of fasting, indulge in all manner of feasting.

Even the Mohammedans, who are present in no small numbers, join the festivities, for they, too, have a period of fasting, according to the example set by the prophet, and commanded in the Koran.

Hence Valetta is very gay when night comes on; fancy Chinese lanterns hang in the streets, music is heard on every breeze, and laughing, good-natured crowds jostle elbows in a way that would horrify a high-caste Hindoo.

Valetta has long been known as the headquarters of the famous Order of Malta. The representative commanderies of different nations have their inns, each called an albergo, on the principal streets, while the palace of the grand master is three hundred feet on each side, facing four streets, with a large square in front known as the Piazza St. Giorgio.

A small tower on the top known as the Torretta is used as a station from which men-of-war are signalled.

Everywhere can be seen the insignia of this ancient order, the white Maltese cross on a blood-red field, arousing thoughts of men in armor, the crusades, and much that is stirring and romantic in the history of the centuries that are gone.

A student of history would find much to entrance him in this peculiar hill-side city on the British Island of Malta.

Supper is served at the hotel just as night comes on, and John Craig, M.D., has managed to eat in an unconcerned way, talking with his friends and trying to appear unconscious of the fact that two scores of curious eyes are upon him, the incident of the afternoon having spread like wild-fire among the rest of the delayed steamer's passengers who stop at the hotel.

This is the first time the young master of medicine has found himself the center of observation, and he comes through the ordeal very fairly, as Lady Ruth informs him laughingly, when they, by chance, leave the dining-room together.

Another ordeal awaits John. In the parlor he finds the mother of the boy whose life he saved. She cannot talk much English, and John is hardly at home in Arabic or the mixed language used by the Maltese.

When two persons are very much in earnest, they manage to get on, and the poor woman calls down the blessings of Heaven on his head ere she leaves.

"I wish all this were over," he laughs, rejoicing the English girl.

"Make the most of it, doctor," says the colonel, sauntering up with a choice weed between his teeth; "such occasions come rarely and had better be appreciated. Take the advice of an old campaigner, and make hay while the sun shines."

"Oh, I mean to, colonel," replies John, and there is a hidden meaning in his words that causes the officer to look at him steadily and mutter:

"Hang the boy! I really believe he expects to enter the lists against me, Colonel Lionel Blunt, who carries a Victoria Cross and knew what a love affair was before he was born. Well, the end is not yet, and he laughs at the best who laughs last."

All of which is very true, and proves that the colonel of Royal Engineers does not mean to let the opportunity pass.

A few minutes later John and Lady Ruth stand on the piazza of the hotel. The scene is well worth looking at, with its many lights, bright colors, and constantly changing crowds.

She expresses surprise, and seeks an explanation, which fortunately the young doctor is able to give, thanks to certain information he picked up in scanning his guide book.

"In time of peace prepare for war. They seek by a double allowance of gayety to make up for the amount to be lost during Lent," he says.

"Is Mr. Craig here?" asks a voice, and all look at the speaker, who is a quiet appearing man, perhaps a native of England.

"That is my name, sir."

"John Alexander Craig?"

"The same."

"Of Chicago?"

"Well, what can I do for you?" The other has been looking at him steadily.

(To be Continued.)



The men who do daring deeds in battle, are men whose arteries pulsate with the rich, red, vital blood of health. The same is true of the men who win success in the battles of work and business. When a man's liver is sluggish, his digestion impaired, and his stomach weak, his blood soon gets thin and impure. The blood is the stream of life. If it is impure every vital organ in the body is improperly nourished and becomes weak and diseased and fails to perform its proper functions in the economy of life. The victim suffers from loss of appetite and sleep, wind, pain, fulness and swelling of the stomach after meals, bad taste in the mouth, foul breath, imaginary lump of food in the throat, headaches, giddiness, drowsiness, heavy head and costiveness.

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