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

CHAPTER V—Continued.

He begins to reason, to strain his mind in search of all the things he ever heard with relation to a meeting between unarmed men and wild beasts.

The power of the human eye has been held up as an example, and surely here is a chance to try it—the stake, his life.

By this time he becomes cognizant of a certain fact that renders him uneasy; the yellow orbs do not seem as far away as before, and it is evident that they approach gradually nearer.

He can even imagine the great body of the animal, perhaps a tiger from African shores, creeping on its belly, inch by inch shortening the distance between itself and its prey.

John cannot retreat—already he is in a corner, with the wall behind, so that all he can do is to await developments.

Nearer still, until scarcely five feet separate him from the glowing orbs, he can even hear the animal's stentorian breathing.

John prepares for a terrible struggle; he holds his hands out so as to clutch the great beast by the throat as he advances, and his muscles are strained in order to sustain the shock.

Just when he expects to hear the roar of a hunger-stricken beast, he is astonished beyond measure at what occurs.

"Scat! you rascal!" exclaims a voice, and there is heard a great threshing sound, as though some one endeavors to intimidate by the swinging of arms as well as by sound.

"What! is that you, Professor Sharpe?" demands the doctor, amazed, delighted, not because he has a companion in misfortune, but on account of the dissipation of his fears respecting an assault.

In another minute the two are embracing; there is nothing like danger to bring men together and make them like brothers.

There is strength in union, and both of them feel better since the meeting.

Of course their thoughts are wholly bent on escape, and the talk is of this. Sharpe has not been so thoroughly searched as his companion, and soon produces a few matches, with which they proceed to examine their dungeon.

It is a gloomy prospect. The walls are heavy and of stone; there is no opening beyond a mere slit in the corner, through which comes wafts of the sweet air without.

As to the door, it would withstand the assault of giants.



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Hopeless indeed does it all appear and yet little do we poor mortals know what the next minute may bring forth.

While they are seated there, seeking to cheer up each other, it is John's keen ears that detect the presence of some one at the door.

This is not a new event that may be pregnant with hope—on the contrary, it is possible the next downward step in the line of Pauline Pott's revenge.

When the key turns in the lock, both men are on their feet ready to meet whatever may be in store for them.

The door swings open. Instead of a man, they see a woman of Malta. Upon her arm hangs a lantern. She shades her eyes from its glare and looks upon the prisoners.

To say Doctor Chicago is surprised would be putting it feebly; he is amazed at the sight of a woman jailer.

Now she fastens her eyes on his face, he can almost feel her gaze. She advances a step or two.

"Chicago?" she says, inquiringly. John hardly knows what she means. "Answer her," says Sharpe, quickly; "she wants to know if you are from Chicago."

"Yes," returns Craig, nodding. "Name?" "John Craig, M.D."

"It is good. Come." He is thrilled with a new hope. Can this mean escape? or does the clever Pauline play a new game with them?

"Shall we go, Sharpe?" he asks, in a whisper.

"Go—well, I reckon we'd be fools to let such a chance as this slip," returns the little man, instantly.

So they proceed to follow their strange guide, out of the dungeon door and along the narrow passage after her.

Again John suspects, and bends his head close to that of his comrade.

"Professor?"

"Well, I'm wide awake. What is it you want?" returns the other.

"Do you really mean to trust her?"

"She seems friendly enough. We are out of that abominable place—bah! I'd as soon be shut up in the Calcutta Black Hole as there."

"But, Pauline—"

"Well, what of her?" "She is a wonderfully shrewd girl, and this may be only one of her tricks."

"I don't believe it; she had us safe enough before. Besides, John, my dear boy, I seem to have discovered something that has not yet made itself apparent to you."

"Then tell me."

"You noticed how she stared at you and asked your name; why, it didn't matter if a dozen Philander Sharpes were near by."

"Yes, but get down to facts."

"She is repaying her debt."

"To me—she owes me nothing, man."

"You mistake. As you walk, doctor, don't you feel your left arm twinge some?"

"Hang it, yes; but what's that got to do with this Maltese woman with the lantern?"

"Softly—speak in whispers, if you don't want to arouse the house. See she turns and raises her forefinger warningly. Do you mean to say you don't remember her, John?"

"Her face is familiar, but—"

He hesitates, and faces the professor. "I see, you've got it. You saved her child from the death fangs of the mad dog, and a kind Heaven has placed her in a position to return the favor, which she would do, if the most terrible fate hung over her head."

"It seems incredible," muttered the doctor.

Nevertheless it is true; the one chance in ten thousand sometimes comes to pass.

Already has the afternoon's adventure borne fruit in more ways than one; first, it restored him to his former place in the esteem of Lady Ruth, which his refusal to do her foolish errand had lost him, and now it works greater wonders, snatching him from the baleful powers of the actress who, unable to rule, would ruin.

Truly he has no reason to regret that heart affection, that love for humanity which sent him out to snatch the dusky child of Malta from the fangs of the beast.

Now they have reached a door that is heavily barred, proving that their course has been different from the one by means of which they gained the dungeon.

The woman lays down her lantern and takes away the bars. Then she places her hand on John's arm.

"You saved my child, Chicago; I save you."

She smiles, this dusky daughter of Malta, as if greatly pleased at being able to frame her thoughts in English—smiles and nods at the young doctor.

"But you—she may punish you," he says, and she understands, shaking her head.

"She dare not; I am of Malta; also, I shall see her, this proud mistress, no more," which doubtless means that she intends taking French leave as soon as the Americans have gone.

John takes her hand and presses it to his lips; a dusky hand it is, but no cavalier of old ever kissed the slender

member of a lady love with more reverence than he shows.

"Go, it is danger to stay," she says, with something of a look of alarm on her face, as from the interior of the dwelling comes some sort of clamor, which may after all only turn out to be the barking of a dog confined in the court where the fountain plays, but which, at any rate, arouses her fears.

They are only too glad to do so; after being confined in that murky dungeon, the outside air seems peculiarly sweet.

It must be very late, and in this quarter, at least, the noises of the earlier night have passed away.

The only sounds that come plainly to their ears are the booming of the heavy tide on the rocks, and the sweep of the night wind through the cypress trees.

When they turn again, after making an effort to locate themselves, the door in the wall is closed, and the Maltese woman is gone.

There is no cause for them to linger, and they move away.

John Craig has nothing to say. The disappointment has been keen, and he does not yet see a ray of light ahead.

Hope had such a grasp upon his soul, when he started from the hotel, that the fall has been more disastrous.

Not so Philander Sharpe. An evil fortune has kept him pretty quiet a little while now, and he begins to make up for it in part, chirping away at a merry rate as they push their way along the street.

At first Doctor Chicago pays little heed to what he says, but presently certain words catch his ear and tell him that the professor is not merely speaking for oratorical effect or to hear himself talk.

(To be Continued.)

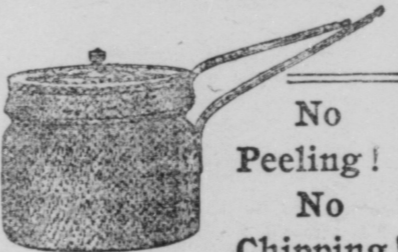


If men would only realize that ill-health robs them not only of life, but of their fortune as well, there would be fewer penniless widows and orphans to drag out cheerless lives. When a man holds a dollar close up to his eyes, it shuts out the light of good judgment, and looks bigger than life or death, or wife or child. The facts are that ill-health very soon puts a stop to a man's money-making powers and turns them into money-losing disabilities.

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