DOCTOR JACK.

By St. George Rathborne.

Continued from 1st page.

Jack is left in even a more disturbed state of mind than before. He does not know how to tell what [illegible] with do. The spirit that [illegible] may be for good or evil. She has said she will simply leave him to his fate, but who can guess what a woman of her electric nature, once goaded to love, may not attempt?

He can hardly understand what it is that caused him to put aside the temptation—any man would be flattered by the love of such a royally beautiful woman, and yet Jack has been able to resist the subtle charm. What is the talisman that has saved him?

Almost unconsciously he puts his hand into his pocket, and draws something out, upon which he gazes long and earnestly. It is the portrait of Avis Morton, and since he has met the original, Jack finds a new charm in the picture.

"Yes, it was Avis who kept me from yielding myself a captive to her Circassian charms, I know, or no reason. Such a wife would never do for Jack Strang. I want one who will be the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow, such a girl as Avis Morton, for instance, and please Heaven, if I can convince her of that same thing after we have done our level best to save Alech, she shall take me for what I am worth, old nomad that I am."

Thus he mutters to himself, and pecks the dump counterfeit resemblance of Avis to his lips after the fashion of all foolish lovers. Had Mercedes witnessed the action she would have been possessed with a mad desire to tear the photograph to bits, and perhaps scratch his eyes out in the bargain, for who can account for the vagaries of a woman who has stooped to conquer and been repulsed?

Sleep is not to be thought of—the plot thickens, and morning is near at hand—the time of action, when they shall make a move, and open up the enemy's masked battery if they have one.

As Doctor Jack walks to the window and glances out, he sees a faint light in the east that tells him the night is spent and dawn at hand. He watches it grow broader slowly but surely, while the magic lights of the carousing city become pale under the influence of the dawning day. The cohorts of darkness seem to gather for a last final effort in the rear of the great buildings, which are in a line with Jack's vision, but steadily advance the battalions of the sun, the skirmishers are already entering the city, and before their invincible onset the last remnant of the king of darkness' forces are sent flying in rout.

As the day opens—the sun begins to make his appearance—masks vanish from the streets, and something of life begins, although little unnecessary work will be done in Madrid during the festival time.

Jack bethinks himself of breakfast, and goes down to see about it. He knows the value of a few silver reals, whatever place, and thus avoids much of the friction that most travellers meet with in a Spanish fonda. Hence his meal, simple as it is, consisting of eggs, toast, and tea, is soon ready, and he does it justice.

All the while his thoughts are flying to other scenes—he wonders whether Larry has carried out his instructions to the letter, and if the ladies are ready to depart. Much depends on this being carried out thoroughly, and there are so many chances of something happening to throw a wheel out of gear, that the American is not a little worried.

His anxiety causes him to finally leave the table. Consulting his timepiece he finds it a quarter to eight. Then he hurries out and is lucky enough to engage a vehicle. From the man he learns all about distances, then has his portmanteau brought down.

"To the Fonda Peninsular in hot haste," he says to the driver, and the horses, having already been heavily paid with the prospect of more ahead, does not let his animals sleep on the way.

Many heads are thrust out of windows—the good people of Madrid believe every fresh rush or bustle on the street nowadays announces the coming of some new spectacle, and they are determined to keep well posted.

So the hotel is soon reached—there is beginning to be a show of life around it, as the American leaps from his carriage and enters. Another moment and he has cornered the proper functionary who serves as a clerk, and of whom he asks whether Miss Morton has gone.

The other leisurely surveys him, and begins to talk in a rambling way about finding out; but Jack knows what that means—an interminable wait—precious minutes lost, and nothing gained when the servant finally returns. Time is too valuable to be allowed to slip so easily. He knows that this party is like the rest, and the pinch of a few reals will make him awaken. Speedily they pass from his own hand into the itching palm of the clerk, and the effect on that party is quite surprising. He becomes aroused at once like a man who must now think for himself, makes a grand, heroic effort, and then glows with triumph, just as the excited pullet cackles after laying her first egg, Jack thinks.

"Si, senor, the lady has gone. I assisted her into a carriage not ten minutes ago, and the trunk, too. Por Dios, it was heavy," he rattles on, for he has learned to speak very fair English from coming in contact with so many foreigners at the hotel.

This is good news to Jack—he does not regret the investment of the few reals.

"The lady was not alone?" he asks.

"Vaga! no, her aunt accompanied her."

"No gentleman?"

"Only the pasha," carelessly.

"What!" almost howls Doctor Jack, who comes very near scaring the clerk out of a year's growth.

"The Turkish pasha—he was very attentive to Senorita Morton, and always asking whether she was in or not."

"Think again, man—did the pasha accompany the ladies, or was it Miss Morton's cousin, the strange dandy, Larry Kennedy?" and Jack fairly holds his breath in suspense.

"Caramba! what am I thinking about? My thoughts are wool-gathering. It was the little man who ordered the vehicle. We thought they were going sight-seeing, but at the last down came the trunk, the account was settled, and they were off. Quite a sudden flitting. I trust, senor, they did not leave you in the lurch?"

Jack pays no attention to the question, but pounds away at his subject:

"Why did you say at first the pasha accompanied them—what put it into your mind?"

"I will tell you—it was easy enough to get them mixed, senor. Just after they had gone, the Turkish general comes to me and asks about the ladies—he unconsciously jingles more reals in his pocket, which Jack readily understands have passed into his possession from the hand of the Turk—and when I inform him of their departure with the trunk he is greatly excited, settles his account, engages a vehicle without regard to its cost, and is off carissima, like a house afire."

"I see. Well, I cannot let all my friends leave me in the lurch this way, so I will follow suit."

Jack puts the words into practice, and in another minute is once more seated in his vehicle en route for the railway station. There is just good time to reach it easily, and he is not at all worried, but leaning back, smokes his cigar in contentment.

When about half way there he suddenly sits up straight, and looks out of the window. There has been an accident—a crowd has gathered. He sees that a wheel has broken down—something [illegible] wheel to come off, and the vehicle lies there on one side, leaning downward, the bare axle touching the ground.

[illegible] not an uncommon [illegible] in Madrid, where [illegible] roadway wrench a vehicle [illegible] attention is diverted toward a certain little man who rages up and down, endeavoring to stir the driver into action with alternate threats and promises of heavy pay, but neither of which appear to do much good, as the man seems prostrated with his trouble.

Jack knows this figure—it is Larry. Good heavens! the broken vehicle is the one they were in. Where are the ladies—are they hurt—how can the station be reached in time?

These things fly through Jack's brain, and his first move is to stop his own vehicle. Then he dismounts, and at sight of him Larry utters a war-whoop, and would throw his arms around the neck of Doctor Jack did not that worthy prevent it.

"Where are the ladies?" he demands.

"Here, doctor," and they make a brave showing, seated upon the trunk near by.

"Are you hurt?" he asks, anxiously, approaching them, but his words are meant for Avis only.

"Not at all, but a trifle alarmed—it came so suddenly, you see," replies the girl.

"Well, we must not miss that train. In a pinch, my vehicle will hold us all. Let us get the trunk up quickly, Larry. Not a minute to waste."

Jack's driver professes to be horror-stricken at the load he is to take, but the promise of several golden doubloons cause him to show more alacrity—the ordinary Spanish Jehu will risk even his neck for such royal pay, and think little of his vehicle.

So the trunk is taken up, the ladies placed inside, and Larry squeezes among them. Jack is about to clamber on top among the trunks, but they will not hear of it—the ladies insist, and nothing loth, he crowds in, though to do so he is compelled to have the proud New York girl sit upon his lap.

Stranger things than this often occur to travellers on the Continent, and Avis laughs heartily at the situation, while they bowl along, lurching this way and that, sometimes threatening to be toppled over. She blushes beautifully when she catches Jack's eye, which has a twinkle in it, for do you know, the sly fellow is chuckling to himself at the thought of how this ludicrous situation would strike the eye of Mercedes could she but see it.

It is impossible for Jack to even glance at his watch in order to note how time is passing—he is on tenter-hooks, so to speak, until the vehicle drives up to the station.

Then he finds they are in ample time for the train. He takes it upon himself to oversee all matters, pays the driver, buys four first-class tickets for Paris, looks after the luggage, and last, but not least, secures a compartment to themselves. Such is the magic power of money on the Continent—in fact, the same applies all over the civilized world.

They are all feeling particularly joyful over the success of their game. No one but Jack is aware of the fact that the pasha knows of their hurried departure from Madrid.

Doctor Jack walks up and down outside on the platform, under the pretense of smoking a cigar, although the ladies hate, gives him the privilege of doing so inside—an opportunity which Larry does not scruple to improve by using up an unlimited number of horrid cigarettes.

In reality Doctor Jack is looking for familiar faces—he wonders if the pasha will come, but looks in vain for the red fez among the crowd. If the Turk has arrived before them, he is all this while in one of the other carriages. Jack, as he walks up and down, glances sharply into each compartment, but fails to see the man he looks for. A number of shades are down over the windows, and it is as likely as not the pasha may be in one of these compartments.

Besides, Jack keeps his eyes open—there are other enemies to think about, without taking the pasha into consideration, and if any of them are about he wants to know it. In his mind he also thinks of Mercedes, and glances curiously at a number of ladies, but all of them are strangers. One attracts more than a passing glance—he cannot see her face, for the rebosa hides it, but her carriage is stately and her form indicates youth and health.

He suspects that it is Mercedes, but would make certain, so he enters into an agreement with a man who seems to be a porter—there is a hasty exchange of silver—the man grasps the situation, picks up a box, and in passing the lady manages that a corner shall catch in her long vail, which is instantly dislodged. Jack chuckles at the success of his little game, even though disappointed at seeing the indignant face of a stranger, who looks after the clumsy porter with daggers in her black eyes, and proceeds to rearrange her rebosa.

A bell sounds—the guard cries "all aboard" in his Spanish way, and Jack, tossing his cigar aside, enters the carriage. Then the door is locked, but as the American has bought the guard, body and soul, he will be on hand as soon as the train stops at a station to see what is needed.

Then they begin to leave Madrid behind. No one is particularly sorry to do this, for the Spanish capital has little to charm the modern tourist like gay Paris, and as the road from the first generally leads to the second, every emotion can be summed up in anticipation.

Our friends are very comfortable, but Larry is the only merry one of the four. Avis is thinking of what lies in the near future. Will they find Aleck and manage to save him? As she looks in the direction of Doctor Jack, somehow a feeling of great peace comes upon her—his face seems so strong and masterful, that she believes nothing can be impossible with such a man. It will be readily perceived by even the dullest reader that the effect of their singular meeting is having full sway, and that Avis is just as deep in the mud as Doctor Jack is in the mire.

As for that worthy, he appears to be glancing over the pages of a magazine, but his thoughts are not on it. Now and again he looks over the top of the pamphlet at the fair face near the window. He is pondering upon many things, and the chief of these is the game which he is expected soon to manipulate.

Will they succeed? If not, the result must mean disaster to them both, for Abdallah Pasha is just the man to have a terrible revenge.

Doctor Jack knows the danger—he has assumed it without a single fear, for he also guesses the stake he is playing for—Avis.

If he succeeds she must be his. As he feasts his eyes upon her from time to time, he makes up his mind that she is just the girl a man might go through fire and water for. The train proceeds in jerks—at times their speed is so rapid that it almost makes them dizzy—the car swings from side to side, and they have to hold on to their seats. Then again they creep along at a snail's pace. Larry laughs, and again frets and fumes, declaring that if the door were only open he would get out and help push the train along.

Their course is almost due northwest until the city of Zaragoza is reached, which at this rate will not be until near evening. Then they head north-east, finally north, crossing the border by keeping close to the Bay of Biscay, at Bayonne, when they will be in France, with the dawn of a new day, wind and weather permitting, after which a run of a few hours will take them to Paris.

So the morning passes with various delays—this fast Paris express is a "terror," indeed, and makes poorer progress than any train in America.

They have all learned to be philosophical, and take things as they come. The time passes, and about noon, at a station called by the guard Calatayod, a huge hamper is put in the carriage.

"Dinner?" cries Madame Sophie, eagerly, and yet fearfully, for so many deceptions have been put upon her in Spain that she fears lest this may be some extra cushions, or rugs to keep them warm during the night.

Larry relieves her suspense by tossing back the lid of the hamper, disclosing the best dinner money can buy in Spain, and all neatly packed.

"They ought to have a good run of custom on this road if they supply meals like that," declares the elder lady, her eager eyes taking in the contents of the basket.

Larry looks up, meets the gaze of Avis, sees an interrogation point in her eyes, and with a grin jerks his thumb back over his shoulder in the direction of Doctor Jack, just now deeply engaged in taking a nap, for, poor fellow, he has not had a wink of sleep the preceding night.

Avis understands—this thoughtful man is the good genius whom they must thank for such forethought—he has telegraphed ahead that the dinner be ready, and given the guard money to pay for everything—that guard, by the way, must imagine he has an American prince aboard, judging from the prodigal way he throws his gold and silver around.

So the young girl feels more than ever tender toward the hero of the arena—somehow it seems to her she has known him for years—he was Aleck's friend, and now her champion.

He seems to be resting uneasily—the cushion has partly fallen from under his head, and bending down Avis tries to rearrange it. In so doing a lurch of the train causes her hand to touch his face—his eyes open—she blushes as he quickly and deftly catches her hand, and presses it to his lips—thank heaven! the others are so busy arranging dinner on the table that they do not see this.

Larry, seizing a tin pan, beats a tatto upon it in lieu of a gong, and this brings Jack to his feet with ludicrous haste—love must take a back seat now, since appetite reigns.

They have great fun over the dinner, as there chance to be several dishes which none of them understand, so that their tasting and comments on these are ridiculous. On the whole the dinner is good, and they enjoy it with remarkable unanimity.

The others cannot but notice that Doctor Jack is unusually quiet. Avis inquires if he has a headache, and is not satisfied when he says no, for she understands that there is some worry on the other's mind.

In this she is right—Jack foresees trouble of some sort ahead. He has learned that Don Carlos is on the train, which fact is in itself suggestive, for the Don would not be making this journey only for his presence aboard.

Then he is also sure the pasha must be near at hand. If these two unite their forces, trouble may come. The train has to pass through a lonely section of country during the night run, and makes so many stops that it would not be difficult for a resolute body of Carlists to capture the whole expedition.

When the meal is done they chat for a while and look at the scenery. They are now getting into the valley of the river Ebro—vineyards and orange groves are to be seen, although the latter are not plentiful this far north in Spain, the main crop being gathered in the region of Seville, in the southern province of Andalusia, and along the warm coast of the Mediterranean, the upper portion of the peninsula being often bleak and cold in the winter season.

It is half-past three when the train enters the city of Zaragoza, on the Ebro. Here quite a long stop is made—their course for the next six hours will be up the valley of the Ebro, and they may expect to see much more of Spanish thrift and industry than has as yet greeted their vision.

Again Jack goes out to stretch his legs and smoke a cigar, in which former act the dude imitates him. Presently Larry sees some fruit, and rushes off to buy. Jack hopes he will not be left behind, and is determined that nothing shall take him from the vicinity of the car.

There are many people at the station, and he eyes them with careless indifference. As he stands thus he feels a hand touch his arm.

"Senor Jack," says a low, hesitating voice—he recognized it instantly, for he can never forget that velvet-like tone—wheels without delay, and then and there receives a powerful shock.

CHAPTER XV.

The person who has touched him is a boy—his face shows traces of grime, and altogether, with his ordinary garments, he is one upon whom a person would hardly bestow a second glance.

It is that face, however, upon which the American fastens his eyes—the voice has already given him a clew, and he finds no difficulty in recognizing—Mercedes.

He has seen her as flower girl and nun—now he discovers her as a peasant boy. His admiration for her boldness and qualities as an actress are unbounded, and yet he would not like one he loved to be engaged in such a business.

Mercedes understands that he has recognized her—even a faint blush appears beneath the grime.

"Senor Jack, do not judge me before you know why I am here—why I sacrificed my beautiful hair and assumed this hateful disguise. It was to warn you—to save you."

Her words are low—they thrill Jack, and tell him one thing he is glad to know—that her good angel has triumphed.

"Warn me of what?" he asks, eagerly, for although despising danger for himself, he cannot forget who is in that carriage.

"A new danger awaits you. The train is to be attacked by a few Carlist friends of Don Carlos when it stops at a small station. I believe it is on the other side of Logrono. If you would avoid trouble, you had better wait over here for the morning train, or at least stop at Logrono."

Jack ponders—it is his desire to get out of the country as soon as possible but he does not want to make a mistake.

"When are we due at Logrono?" he asks.

"I do not know—there is the guard."

"Come with me, we will enquire."

This brings them near the train—Mercedes is irresistibly drawn to look up at the window, and a hot wave sweeps over her face as she sees the American girl eyeing her. Unconsciously she draws herself up haughtily in a manner very unnatural to the pleasant character she assumes—it is a terrible torture for the proud woman to be thus scrutinized by her rival—she in a lowly disguise, while Avis looks so fresh and pretty in her neat travelling dress.

Mercedes holds her breath—she feels dizzy, and a whirl of contending emotions rush through her mind. At sight of her rival's cold stare her blood has seemed like molten lava—she feels the position she has placed herself in keenly, and a desire for revenge comes to her. Then her eyes fall on the face of Doctor Jack—his calm gray eyes give her life and she is her own true self again, though she feels that during the last minute she has passed through the fiery furnace.

Jack learns that they reach the town at about half-past ten, and believes this is a good time to leave the train. So he makes up his mind to go on. It is unfortunate, but not being able to foresee future events he does not know the chances he takes.

Mercedes speaks a few more words, and turns away, for she feels the eyes of Avis upon her all the time, and it makes her very uncomfortable. Jack sees her enter a compartment near by. He does not know what to think of her action, but, like a sensible man, judges it from the motive, which he knows is a noble one.

Their time is up—the signal cries are being given, and as yet Larry has not turned up. He will be left—all are anxious concerning the little dude, and crowd the windows—the guard has left the door of the compartment open, and as the train begins to pull out Larry is seen running with all the speed his little legs are capable of, his arms full of the fruit he has bought.

Luckily the watchful guard sees him, and on the alert to please his liberal patron, he signals to the trainmaster so that presently Larry climbs into the carriage, exhausted, out of breath, but triumphantly holding aloft his packages of fine fruit.

"'Pon 'onah, now," he declares, as soon as he can find breath, "it wasn't my fault, ye see. I would have been back in good time, but d'ye know a beastly fellah began to accuse me of running away with his sister or his aunt, or somebody in petticoats, caught me by the arm, and declared it his intention to awest me. I heard the guard cwy 'all aboard,' but, hang the luck—pawdon the expwession, ladies but a fellah gets worked up, you know—this chap wouldn't let go, so I just twopped my packages, sailed into the bloody peasan, tumbled him over among the owanges, and then snatching up my bundles made a bee line for the twain, which I came vewy near missing, bah Jove!"

That was the story—a very simple one, and with just enough of the ludicrous about it to create a general laugh. Doctor Jack, however, sees deeper into the game than any of the others, and taking advantage of the first opportunity he tells Larry so.

"The whole affair was a set up job," he declares.

"What!" cries the dude.

"That man had lost no wife, or sister, or grandmother. He simply lied."

"With what object in view, pray?"

"To detain you in Zaragoza while the rest of us went on," replies Jack.

"To wob me?"

"It might have come to that, although I am not sure. The main object was to separate you and I."

"The duse! What for?"

"Simply that Avis might have one the less protector when the attack on the train is made."

"Attack on the twain!" gasps Larry.

"Certainly. I have learned that after we leave Logrono, at a certain small station where the train stops to give the locomotive a drink, a band of Carlists mean to attack us. Their object you can readily guess—it is to take our lives, for you are also accounted a traitor to the cause, since you are hand in glove with me."

This information astounds the New York dude, but does not frighten him. It seems a pity that such indomitable spirit should have been placed by a freak of nature in such an insignificant little body.

"Well, the first part of their scheme has been a failure—we can outwit them, I rather guess, and if not, then we'll fight."

"Bravo! Larry, old boy. Newer fear but that two such cronies as you and I will fall upon them hip and thigh if the occasion arises. But I hope to avoid it by leaving the train at Logrono, and waiting over until to-morrow. By the way, are you armed, Larry?"

The dude nods.

"I've got a revolvah in my hip pocket, and was accounted the crack shot of the Bon Ton Rifle Club in New York," he makes reply.

"Better and better. I myself am no mean marksman, and I have a handy six-shooter in my portmanteau, which, as you see, the guard has placed under the seat there. We will not worry over the matter, old fellow. Let us go to the ladies—they look this way, as though wondering what we are plotting about."

Soon they are all eating fruit and chatting as merrily as though not the slightest shadow hung over them. But Jack speedily becomes aware of a certain fact—it causes him additional worry. Avis has turned as cold as an icicle toward him. When she chats with the rest she is as merry as of yore, but if he asks her a question she answers in the shortest way possible.

Even the others notice her manner—how can they help it—and wisely decide that a chance should be given these two to make up, for already they look upon Jack and Avis as lovers.

As for Doctor Jack, he is puzzled over the action of the girl. He knows no reason for it, and is about to set the thing down as some peculiarity in her disposition—his experiences in the past have warned him that truth lies in that old refrain of the poets:—

"Oh! woman, in our hour of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please.
And variable as the shade
By the light, quivering aspen made—
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel, thou."

[To be Continued.]

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All persons having claims against the estate of William Copping late of Chatham, deceased, are required to file the same duly attested with the undersigned, and all persons indebted to the said estate are required to make immediate payment to

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