DOCTOR JACK.

By St. George Rathborne.

Continued from 1st page.

"Heaven was kind, for a black cloud hid the face of the moon, and my enemies did not see me swim away; but I returned when they had gone, to search for poor Aleck, and only gave up the hunt when the night was well spent.

"I left Constantinople, and have not been there since, but expect to shortly myself. I was heading that way when I learned that you were to be in Madrid, and hence came down here from Barcelona to make the acquaintance of Aleck's sister, and see if she was the kind of girl to join me in an enterprise I have on hand."

"Is this is the true reason of Jack's coming to Madrid, then the fact that the lovely Catalan flower girl would be at the bull-fight cuts only a side issue in it. Men do not always tell all they know.

At his words Avis looks up—tears are in her eyes, but upon her face a look of sudden, startled curiosity. What does he mean? His language is strange indeed. So she puts the question aloud.

"By the merest accident in the world I have learned a certain thing which I have kept from you, lest it cause you sorrow and joy," he says, slowly.

"It is—of Aleck?" she gasps, watching his face eagerly the while, as though she would read the truth there before words can frame an answer.

"Yes. When I came away from Constantinople I believed as firmly as I believed that my brother had been murdered, that he was in all the robber dens of earth, and that I would find him. Imagine my surprise, my pleasure, I learned, upon my arrival here, that my friend had not been robbed, but was held a prisoner by his brother, who, who studied to know how he could, in the vilest revenge could conceive, wreak the man who had dared love his sister, and try to steal the prize."

"Is this Avis Morton presses her hand over her eyes—she suffers horrible torture at the thought of what Aleck must have, or can suspect, but she lifts her eyes now—the time for weeping is past.

When she looks up, that first spasm of anguish over, Doctor Jack is delighted to find that her face has assumed a picture expression such a girl would wield a lover's heart for, one, she

"Tell me, what do you propose?"

"To find out the truth, and if Aleck is alive rescue him if I have to set Constantinople on fire to do it," he answers, quietly, not in a boasting way, but in a way which he means every word he utters.

Avis, impulsive Avis, puts out her hand, and he loses no time in grasping it, nor is he in any hurry to release the little quivering member.

"You have aroused a new hope in my heart, Doctor Jack. Please Heaven it is not doomed to disappoint. Whatever I can do, I do, more even, than I have done upon my doing for Aleck, for he is the only one I have ever had to care for, and the tears seem to choke my voice to tremble.

"Quietly make your preparations and we will start shortly," he adds.

"Without do to be too precipitate, as it might excite suspicion, and our task be made harder."

"What, has he spies even here?"

"I see clear that—he is here himself."

"The man who holds Aleck a prisoner? Oh! I can invent new tortures for him! Oh! the fiend, I long to see him."

"You have done so already."

"Impossible!"

"Talked with him."

"That cannot be. Let me think. Besides the ambassador in England and Abdallah Pasha I have never spoken with a Turk in my life," she cries.

"You have uttered his name—Abdallah Pasha is the man—your brother's jailer."

CHAPTER IX.

There is a certain dramatic force to these words of Jack's, even though he does not raise his voice. Sometimes a whisper is more effective than a shout in startling an audience. Avis is astonished by what she hears—her mind goes back to her meeting with the Pasha in London, and she remembers peculiar looks he gave her, which at the time impressed her as boldness on the part of this Oriental magnate, but which she now believes to have been inspired by the fact that he has recognized in her the sister of the infidel he hates so terribly.

Very quickly he had inquired about the prospect of her visiting Constantinople, which city he called Stamboul, as all natives do. Then again how earnestly he had dilated upon the wonderful beauties of the Eastern city, its magnificent mosques and towering minarets, speaking in a way to inspire a longing in her breast to speedily look upon these sights, and promising to do all in his power to make their stay a pleasant one.

All this had seemed very kind of the Pasha, and perhaps Avis possessed of the natural vanity allotted to womankind, had, if at the door of her vivacity, which possibly the old Turk admired.

Now, a dim suspicion begins to creep through her mind that there may have been a deep, dark method in his actions. Such a man seemed fit for treason, stratagem, and spoils, because he had no music in his soul, and would as soon listen to the croaking of a frog as the sweet notes of a nightingale.

So she mentions her thoughts to Jack, who for some reason seems to see enough in the matter to investigate deeper, and asks her numerous questions concerning what passed between the Pasha and herself at their meeting in the English house.

A dreadful suspicion is hammering at the door for admittance, but he can hardly believe it possible that any man could descend to such depths of infamy, so for the present it is shut out, to arise again later on and mock him with the reality.

They talk for some time longer, principally upon the subject that interests them both. Avis Morton believes it is the hand of Providence that brought about this meeting. After the prodigies of valour which she witnessed Doctor Jack perform at the bull-fight, she does not see how anything could long remain a barrier for such a man, and if any one can help her find and save Aleck he is the person.

Their quiet little tete-a-tete is disturbed—loud voices sound without.

"It is Cousin Larry—what can be the matter?" exclaims Avis, rising hurriedly.

The voices have grown more resolute—two men are quarreling, and while one pours hot Spanish oaths in a heavy bass the other squeals American oaths in a shrill falsetto.

"I beg you to remain seated here while I see to your cousin. He may be annihilated by that bully," and so saying Doctor Jack passes out of the little room.

He sees a peculiar sight—the dude is face to face with a burly fellow, who glowers upon him as though he would only need an invitation to eat him up.

"You are a thief—a scoundrel!" declares Cousin Larry in the bully's teeth.

This is the last straw on the camel's back—the fellow has reached his limit, and with a roar of anger he aims a blow at the head of the dude. Doctor Jack, too late to prevent the conflict, holds his breath, expecting to see Cousin Larry sent flying across the office, but just here he makes a serious mistake.

A quick ducking movement saves the dude, and then springing up he rains a shower of blows upon the face of his antagonist, who, blinded, roars with pain and fright, and, turning, runs off like the coward that he is, followed by Larry, who manages to administer a parting kick.

It has seemed to Jack so like a fight on the Spanish fowl and a little surprised that he almost expects the victor to crow as he comes back again. An odd genius he certainly is, and Jack is glad to know his first estimate of the little man was not far in the wrong.

"It does me proud to see an American stand up like that. Now, what was it all about?" he asks, after stepping out and shaking hands with the victor in the main.

The dandy carefully brushes off a speck of dust he imagines he sees upon his lavender coloured trousers, twists the ends of the ghostly moustache which supports his dignified claim of being a man, and answers in his cool way:—

"The beggah insulted me. He was inquisitive about my cousin's movements, and actually offahed me—Lawrence Edgewater Kennedy, of Fifth avenue, New York—two miserable doubloons if I would induce my Cousin Avis to patronize a hotel in Constantinople that he wepresented. Bah Jove! I couldn't shake him off, and we had twouble, you see."

The trouble seems to sit lightly on the head of Mr. Larry. Jack, on the contrary, looking beyond, sees a certain significance in this affair of the night.

He does not mean to tell Larry that his cousin is so near, for, selfish as the rest of mankind, he hopes to continue the delicious tete-a-tete in the little parlour.

Hence he is glad when Larry walks over to greet an acquaintance, and Jack is about returning to his fair Dulcina, when he happens to follow the dude with his eyes, and immediately receives something of a shock, for he sees Larry earnestly talking with one whom he recognizes as the Pasha.

How long has the Turk been there? Perhaps he saw Doctor Jack come in, send up his card, and go in the parlour to wait, for the American did not look around, being too much engrossed with his thoughts and anticipations of the coming meeting.

It is even possible that the Pasha knew of the appointment, although not present when it was entered into. Then he has also seen Avis come down and join Jack.

Not once does he look toward the letter, but converses fluently with Larry, who seems to have taken a strange liking to him. Jack imagines that the crafty Pasha, believing he could make the New York dude useful, has cultivated his acquaintance, and as Larry's hair is so evenly balanced on either side, a very little flattery is apt to turn his head.

There may trouble come of this yet, but as the skies are still clear, Jack goes back to enjoy a little more of Miss Morton's company. When finally he leaves her, the Pasha is no longer to be seen in the hotel.

One experience with the footpads is quite enough for Senor Jack, and he looks around for a vehicle to take him to the caravansary at which he is located, and which is situated far away from the Puerto del Sol.

A driver sees his action and anticipates his wish, for he brings his closed vehicle close to the pavement, and calls out to know if the senor desires a carriage.

Perhaps Doctor Jack might have hesitated about engaging this fellow had he seen him holding a whispered conversation with the Turkish Pasha a short time before; but being in ignorance of this same thing, he jumps into the vehicle, gives the driver the name of his hotel, and slams the door.

Again he is threading the narrow calle, and around them darkness hangs much of the time. Fortunately for him the American has his wits about him—a suspicion comes first—he observes the route, and then of a certainty discovers that his driver is away off. Undoubtedly the fellow is up to some ugly business—perhaps he knows the Pasha, and is endeavouring to lead the bold American into a trap of some sort.

It takes a wide-awake Yankee to deal with such crafty men. Doctor Jack, when he makes this discovery, does not call upon the driver to halt. They are in a dark part of the narrow street, and the vehicle makes such a noise rattling along that any sound he may cause is drowned.

Without a moment's hesitation he opens the window beside him, over the door, pushes his head and shoulders out, grasps the steel railing around the top of the coach, and begins to draw his whole form out.

None but an athlete could accomplish this, what with the darkness and the moving coach, but Doctor Jack does the job, feels with his foot for the front step, used by the driver, finds it, gives one turn, and with a single motion seats himself beside that worthy, who, never dreaming of the gymnastics going on behind, is tremendously astounded to discover a human body planted beside his own, but who is even more surprised when he feels the cold muzzle of a revolver touch his face, and a voice bellow in his ear above the rattle of steel-shod wheels on the cobblestones;—

"I am your passenger. Your game is up. Turn along the first calle leading to the Del Prado or I'll murder you. No words, but obey," says this terrible voice.

The man shivers—perhaps he fears lest he has picked up a crazy fare—but he obeys orders, and in ten minutes Doctor Jack drops down in front of the little fonda where he has put up, hands the man a peso, gives him a look that makes his hair stand up, and marches into the hotel.

He does not mean to retire yet—there is much thinking to be done ere turning in—and he takes out a cigar to smoke when he discovers the one given him by Don Carlos.

Again that suspicion comes to him. He takes the cigar to his room, where in a simple way he can tell whether it has been drugged. To his surprise the experiment proves the fact beyond a question.

Then he wonders, while smoking one of his own cheroots, what the game is—why should Don Carlos desire to keep him under his roof against his will—for he remembers how earnest both of them were in beseeching him to remain. Robbery seems out of the question, and Jack never dreams that the fact of his having an engagement at eight cuts any figure in the matter.

So he is all at sea, and the more he ponders the less able he is to get at the kernel which he knows lies hidden somewhere inside this hard, flinty outer shell.

Meanwhile time has slipped by. It lacks less than an hour to midnight now. Jack does not smoke furiously as when with Don Carlos, but in a dreamy fashion.

He is seated near the window, for the night air, laden with the perfume of flowers that bloom in the spring time in sunny Spain, seems unusually pleasant.

At this hour it would seem natural that the city should be growing more quiet, for every metropolis Jack has ever known subsides into a more peaceful state as the night wears into the small hours. To his surprise just the contrary seems to be the case. It is much more noisy than at ten o'clock, when he reached the hotel.

Jack becomes interested. He even leans out of the window to see what is up. New lights have sprung into existence—even streets that were neglected before now seem to throb with a pulsating life, and are in a measure illuminated, as though a great unwritten law compels every citizen to have at least one lamp or candle in his window.

The change is amazing—with every passing minute new lights spring up. Down below he sees a moving throng of people. All seem light-hearted, laughter and jest are bandied about, and it is very evident that no serious business brings these crowds abroad.

Music is heard here, there, and everywhere—distant bands thrill the air, and quicken the pulses, groups on the boulevard sing snatches of songs, and more than one sweet-toned mandolin throbs to the fingers of a music-loving Spanish lassie in the courts near by.

Doctor Jack is amazed—he rubs his eyes as though under the belief that he must be dreaming. What does all this mean? Madrid has awakened from her lethargic state—she seems for the time being to outrival Paris in gayety. One thinks of a royal wedding, with the whole city rejoicing, but Jack knows this cannot be.

What then?

The music grows in volume, and even under his eyes the crowds increase. He can see them better now, on account of th light. If Jack has been sleepy before, he was never more wide awake than now. Instead of abating, his interest grows with the excitement.

Looking at his watch he finds that the hour lacks just nine minutes of twelve. Then the idea strikes him that these mercurial people are waiting for midnight, which time will usher in some great holiday.

He begins to grasp the reins, and reach a solution of the mystery. Looking closer than before he realizes two things. The first of these is the fact that there are scores of women upon the streets as well as men, and it is evident that the night walkers have now been reinforced by a stream of respectable senoras and senoritas from the dwellings.

What Doctor Jack notices in the second place is the fact that many of these women wear long cloaks, and their faces are concealed by masks, while even numbers of the men are also masked. He suddenly jumps to his feet with a laugh.

"Bless my soul, I understand it all. At midnight the great carnival begins!"

CHAPTER X.

Once a year Madrid, in common with all Latin cities, arouses from her long sleep, and for three days and nights preceding Lent, engages in the most extravagant orgies.

During this time the people run wild, and seem never to sleep—day and night the streets are jammed with crowds of pleasure seekers, music fills the air with intoxicating sounds, revelry is in progress at every corner, and to look at the light-hearted people one would never dream that they lived over a mine, which is liable to explode at any moment.

Soldiers are as thick as skippers in an old cheese, their bright uniforms adding splendour to the scene, for Spain is a country where the restless populace, dreaming of liberty and license, have to be constantly reminded of the power resting with the royal family—she has been a republic before and will again, with the shining example of France so near at hand.

As Doctor Jack looks the bells of the Spanish capital ring out the hour of midnight. It is a signal long anticipated, since it ushers in the carnival season. More people flock out of the houses—the brilliant promenade below is thronged. In vain the American seeks a face—at the ringing of the bells every countenance is covered, for it is another unwritten law that, from midnight to sunrise or these three nights, no one shall appear upon the streets unmasked—the penalty may be a broken head.

As Jack has never chanced to be in the south of Europe during the carnival time he is greatly interested in the sight, as will be every sojourner in Madrid. Sleep seems out of the question with such a racket in progress even if he did desire to obtain it.

Leaving his room he passes downstairs to see the entertainment at shorter range, not that it is his intention to join in just then, though many foreigners do so, and become mixed up in the brawls that often occur. With all the wickedness that marks the Spanish capital during the gay carnival season at least one good thing can be said—few drunken men are seen. Light wines are the drinks indulged in by the people of Spain rum seldom being used, and whiskey never. They may have copied the absinthe drinkers of Paris to a certain degree, but this serves to stupefy their minds like opium, and not engender street brawls.

Down below Jack finds quite a throng gathered near the doors to watch the merry maskers on the pave without. Everyone seems to own a mask of some sort, and a man stands by selling these for a few pesetas each, so the American invests, intending to saunter down the street and witness the sights.

Once outside he joins in with the throng, and keeps his eyes about him. It is indeed a remarkable sight to look upon the crowds the midnight bells of Madrid have called into review, and Jack photographs them upon his memory for future use.

Along the edges of the sidewalk are many street stands, where is seen the peddler of national drinks or refrescos with his botigo or Oriental jar containing the expressed juice of some fruit, mixed with sugar and water and as harmless as it is agreeable. Others have a nobby little tin or brass tray, upon which are placed glasses for the different horchatas, as the good people of Madrid call these cooling non-spiritous drinks.

Along the walk are rows of orange trees, and upon these coloured lanterns have been placed at intervals and are now lighted up, so that with the yellow gas lens the scene looks like one of enchantment.

Here and there small crowds congregate around some fakir engaged in selling wonderful things, or to watch the astonishing evolutions and hear the weird music that accompany a sidewalk gitano or gipsy dance.

Everywhere reigns an air of mystery—fancy costumes, monks, chevaliers, Oriental warriors, courtly dames, flower girls, and almost every imaginable character we see in our greatest masque balls are to be met with.

Mad revelry abounds—every one appears determined to be as happy and careless as his or her neighbour, so that when the carnival season is over every soul will gladly welcome Lent which seems to be the idea of all this merriment, the old adage holding good, "Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we—mourn."

So Madrid enters upon the fun. The merriment is as a general thing good natured, and free from riot or rudeness. Whatever dark secrets may be working beneath the surface, on top all is apparently innocent enjoyment.

From the balconies of houses fair senoritas, whose guardians are too strict to allow them upon the streets, have enjoyment of their own in watching the procession below.

At times they toss a flower to this courtly knight who has found favour in their eyes, or drop rice down the back of a more than usually hideous gnome who delights in the shudder his awful appearance causes.

Jack is greatly amused by the kaleidoscopic changes around him. Something in his quiet demeanour attracts the very attention he would avoid, and more than one unknown charmer ventures to address him. These may be the most respectable of senoras, for the mystery of mask and domino gives them assurance and license to a certain degree, but Jack pays little or no attention to their laughing words.

Various processions pass him by, and suddenly one comes that gives him a shock. He hears a cocotte standing near him take up the cry that sound down the boulevard. What is it she is calling:—"The hero of the bull fight?"

Presently the excitement increases and a little party arrive, bearing on their shoulders a square platform in which rests a chair, and this is occupied by a masked man, who sits there with folded arms, gravely bowing, at times kissing his hand to the senoritas above, now almost wild with excitement.

Doctor Jack is at first indignant and then he laughs as though amused. This man has been gotten up to imitate himself, and with such success that the platform is fairly covered with flowers tossed upon the he by the hands of Madrid's dark-eyed daughters.

Now they are close by—the American athlete could with one spring gain that platform, and hurl the mock bull-fighter to the ground; but the temptation comes and goes instantly.

"Let him have his fun—unless I am mistaken he will pay for it before morning," he mutters, and there is truth in his words, for, although all the women go wild over the supposed hero of the greatest bull-fight Madrid ever saw, there are many dark scowls cast after the cavalcade by the male portions of the revelers could one but peep beneath their masks—these are the friends of the defeated Pedro Vasquez, who hate the man upon whose head rests the laurels that should have come to their favourite god.

So the cavalcade wends its way down the Del Prado amid a hurricane of shouts and tremendous excitement, heading for the thoroughfare that leads to the grand central plaza, the Puerta del Sol, where the greatest sights are to be witnessed on these gala occasions.

Jack quenches his thirst with some lemonade from a stand near by, and starting a cigar continues his stroll. Other strange sights greet his eyes, and even his cold Northern blood is to a certain degree fired by the music and the gayety around him, so that he can readily perceive how these warm Spanish people give way to the excitement of the carnival.

He smiles grimly when he hears a great racket far down the street, and makes up his mind that the bogus Doctor Jack has already come to grief, the bull-fighter's friends having probably pelted him with oranges, and perhaps dragged him through the street mud.

The mad scene goes on, and fresh actors in it seem to be continually coming and going. Until the midnight bells announce again that the three days of jollity are past, and Lent ushered in, Madrid will be in one continual ferment, day and night pranks will be played and strange scenes enacted, each citizen vieing with his neighbours in producing noise by day and illumination by night, or adding new features to the parade of masks upon the public streets.

Jack stops to witness the feats of an East Indian juggler and sword swallower, who exhibits on the street corner, surrounded by a curious crowd of masked persons. Several flaming swinging lamps smoke round him—the odour of oil is strong, the weird costumes of the audience striking, and the feats of the juggler something out of the ordinary.

An attendant passes a little basket around, and the crowd is disposed to be liberal, judging from the reals and pesetas that jingle within it as he ends his share of the labour. Then the star of the combination begins business.

Jack watches him curiously, and before the man has gone far makes up his mind that this is not the first time he and the juggler have met, although the last time he saw Ben Achmed was upon the dusty street of Delhi in India.

It is a little singular that he should run across the juggler again so far away from Hindostan, and Jack believes he will wait until the performance is over, when he may have a few words with the other.

Leaning against a neighbouring tree he smokes his cigar, which luxury the half mask allows, watching the drifting crowds, the weird actions of the juggler, and listening to the jargon of sounds.

From this state of reverie something finally arouses him. A familiar figure heaves in sight—surely there can be no mistaking that dudish dress even if a half mask does hide the face of Cousin Larry. The New York sport is out to see the sights, and perhaps take a hand in any frolic.

As he is passing by his name is uttered by Jack, to whom the little fellow is soon talking. The athlete thinks more of Larry since the exhibition in the hotel. When again he is a cousin to Avis—that counts for something.

"What! you, Doctor Jack. I thought I saw a fellow of your size riding by on a sedan chair, the women cheering, the men cursing, but made up my mind I was mistaken," says Larry, grasping the outstretched hand eagerly, for he takes quick likings, and, unbeknown to the others witnessed the bull-fight of the afternoon, so that he looks up to the doctor as a hero.

Jack tells him about the impostor and they both laugh. Then the little man grows serious again.

"Do you know, I was on my way to your hotel, Doctor Jack—I believe it is on this dused street, is it not?" he asks.

"That is the building yonder, where the great lantern is hanging—but what brings you here?"

Doctor Jack's curiosity is again aroused—we have seen that he possesses a fair amount of this womanly trait. Why should he not feel a desire to know the cause of Larry's coming when the latter is her cousin? Just now the whole world revolves around Avis Morton—Jack has jumped into a new sphere during the last twelve hours—we shall see in time whether he can play at lover as well as at bull-fighter.

[To be Continued.]

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