

DOCTOR JACK.

By St. George Rathborne.
Continued from 1st page.

"You have seen enough of me, senior, to understand that when I go into a thing I let nothing hold me back. This applies to everything. I undertake, from sight-seeing to a flirtation with a pretty girl. So I soon saw all I wanted of the old city, and the afternoon came when I was almost tempted to take the train down the coast for Madrid."

"What prevented me? Well, in the first place, I set my eyes on a girl, and received a shock from her eyes that riddled my heart like a housewife's sieve. So I made up my mind to spend the night in Barcelona."

"There were things to be seen there after dark, and my guide had laid out a programme, which the evening from the fortress towering high above the city was to usher in. It was a gala time there, in fact, I knew you people of Spain, like those of Italy, have seven holidays a week. Soldiers' gay uniforms were everywhere, together with the fancy costumes of the natives."

"Many a beautiful senorita caught my eye as she showered flowers upon me from a balcony, and black scowls were cast upon me by some of my countrymen, jealous, no doubt, of my luck with the girls."

"My guide was one Francisco Marti. He started—perhaps he is known to you. I had found him a bright and useful fellow during the day, and can see him in my mind's eye now—swart, agile, dressed in a coloured cotton shirt, pants tight as a drum, and held by a crimson sash and gaiters and sandals, with a red cloth Phrygian cap above."

"I would give his weight in silver to have that same Francisco Marti in a room alone with me for ten minutes—but you shall see. We had arranged to learn how the Barcelona fandango compared with the Parisian Malle, and my guide took me to the gipsy quarter, where the southern dance, he declared, could be seen as nowhere else in all Barcelona. So, as I said before, when the sunset gun had been fired, we started out upon our circuit."

"I thought his actions strange, but believed he had simply been drinking a little too much of your native liquor. Truth to tell, the fellow had been so astonishingly smart, I forgot his little shortcomings. We watched the gipsy dance, and when it became too warm for my American blood I stepped out."

"Francisco declared he had another sight for me, and led me along a gloomy street that ran into the Calle Huan Pablo. Here I was attacked by a clique of rascals, to make a long story short, and I realized that my guide had sold me to a lot of bandits. Luckily I am always armed, and my long experience with danger has taught me the art of self-defence. I gave them more than they bargained for, and laid several of them bleeding on the ground, receiving return a tremendous blow from the flat of a machete on the head that would have cut me to the chin had the edge been turned properly."

"Then a cry was raised that the alcazalis, or police, were coming, and my assailants fled. I thought I would follow, for I felt that I had a desire to lay hands on that villain of Francisco, but my head began to swim, I clutched at a railing for support, and crashed against the door of a house."

"My senses must have left me immediately, for I knew no more until I opened my eyes in a chamber. I found a woman dressed in sombre black attending me. She did not look like I had regained my senses, and I lay there some minutes observing her. You can imagine my surprise when I declare that the face of the nun was the face of the peasant girl who sold me the flowers in the market on the wonderful Rambla."

"Then I thought to let her know I was in a sensible state again, at which she hastily dropped her heavy veil, as if I desired that I should not see her countenance. I was not badly hurt, only stunned, and while my head swam, could get upon my feet, though somewhat unsteady, and stepped in order to feel those white hands bathe my brow again with eau de Cologne."

"All she would tell me was that she was Sister Agatha, of the convent of the Benedictine church of San Pedro, at Gerona, and happened to be visiting this house at the hour I fell at the door in a senseless condition. I knew better—the face I had seen had colour in it, which a nun's never has, because they shut themselves away from the health-giving sun. Naturally I have puzzled over several questions since that hour—who is the beautiful flower girl of the Rambla in Barcelona, what interest does she take in me, for I am convinced I saw her somewhere, and why should she be going about disguised as a nun? When I find an opportunity to reveal these things I will explain to you, as I am convinced that there is a mystery somewhere."

"During the brief recital of this little adventure in the ancient Spanish city, Jack's companion has listened eagerly, almost breathlessly—indeed, it is evident that he feels more than an ordinary interest in the narrative. The mention of Jack's discovery concerning the identity of the nun with the Catalan peasant girl in the flower market caused a light to appear in Don Carlos's eyes, but his natural craftiness enables him to speedily smother this, and when he speaks it is in a very ordinary way."

"Quite a little adventure, senior—almost equal to the one you told me about in Quito, Peru, where you saved a girl from a beast that had escaped from a cage—am I right?"

"Just so. I bear the marks of the jaguar's teeth on my left arm still—see here," and drawing up his sleeve he holds out the arm to the Spaniard, who goes into raptures at its wonderfully powerful structure, and examines with deep interest several long-healed wounds, as regularly as a crole as the teeth of a wounded tiger could make them."

"You have a powerful physique, senior Evans. I've never met a man, but one, like you."

"And he?"

"You shall see him to-day. He is the matador who is to finish this terrible bull—Pedro Vasquez. All Madrid loves him because he has as yet never been killed before a mad toro, but I venture to predict Pedro will have his hands full to-day. But your friend is a deceiver. When dressed you look like an ordinary gentleman, with a desire to take life easy, and yet, as I know, these muscles are like springs of steel, and lightning is not quicker than your movements when once you have decided what to do."

"Jack pushes his cap from him, and proceeds to roll a cigar from him, and leaves in the old adage that 'when in Rome do as the Romans do,' and in Spain the cigar is everywhere—the people live on tobacco, and Jack, who writes very neatly, 'one might reasonably look for the spontaneous growth of the cigar plant in a Spanish grave did he not prefer to be hermetically sealed up above the ground.'"

Don Carlos Castella follows suit, and the two arise from the table, already out upon the street can be heard the excitement that heralds in the day of the great fight. The two have been known in the past, but the management have spent money lavishly to make this affair the most notable of the decade. Pedro has been pouring into Madrid for a week. Jack Evans has found the five principal hotels near the Puerta del Sol, or central plaza, and has been obliged to seek quarters farther away, but money will do almost anything in this world, and he has had no reason to feel sorry because of his being crowded out."

The two strange friends saunter out side to view the scene. Banners are flying, and the bustle and noise make the American think the occasion is that of the glorious Fourth represents to his native countrymen."

Every one seems in his best clothes, the streets present an animated appearance, and men and women all

head in one direction, where lies the monster pavilion, the arena of many a bloody battle between Taurus and his tormentors in the past.

Jack is surprised at the tremendous interest the populace of Madrid takes in the affair. It is equal to the greatest championship game of baseball he ever saw, and he is almost sure the capacity of the pavilion is greater, and even those who do not go on their holiday attire.

"They will be late, Don Carlos. If half this mob finds an entrance there will not be standing room in an hour," and the American plucks his hat coolly takes something out of his pockets, which he holds aloft.

"These are the best seats to be had. Each is a bolita de sombra. Depend upon it, senior, we will witness this affair in comfort from the shade. I have a friend among the directors. You will sit next my niece at the tournament, and there has a chance to make her acquaintance."

"Your niece at this bloody business," exclaims the American, and then adds: "Oh I forgot, it is your national game. Of course foreigners cannot understand such things. I, one, fall to see how a young lady likes to look upon the scene."

"It is in the blood, I suppose, senior," mutters Don Carlos, "you shall hear my niece cry 'Viva toro' when the bull charges a cowardly chulo over the fence, and if by rare good luck the beast tosses a wretched banderillero with his gay darts among the audience, those little hands will clap, and her voice—a sweeter one never sang."

"Ave Maria!" will cry bravo to the toro, yet I know Mercedes has a tender heart. I have seen her cry over a wounded bird, and sit up all night with a sick woman. Yes, it runs in the blood, senior. We have had bull-fights in Spain for centuries, and always shall. But we might as well go to save ourselves being crushed in the crowd."

They join in the throng that heads in the direction of the Plaza del Toro, and finally sight the walls of the great pavilion. Jack Evans looks upon the stirring scene with the gay colouring. Somehow his usual debonaire air is absent, a look that one might even term concern gathers upon his face as he turns to his companion, and remarks, quietly:

"You may laugh at me, Don Carlos, but I have a strange feeling—a premonition that this day is to be a red letter one in my career, and I cannot explain it do not ask me, but wait and see if I am right."

CHAPTER II.

The crowd is tremendous, but they avoid the worst of it, for there is a separate door or gate arranged in the interest of those who hold tickets for the shade. Once inside they find their way to the reserved seats, and Jack has time to look around him.

He sees an immense amphitheatre, circular in shape, with the arena in the centre. Around this the seats arise in successive tiers. The place will seat perhaps fifteen thousand, and to-day there will be standing room only, for the battle is to be a royal one.

Around the arena is a small wall of boards for the hunted chulos to leap over, for rivalry. The arena is so protected the spectators in case the maddened animal should plunge over this; just a little way beyond is a sturdy barrier as high as a man's head.

Music sounds upon the air, and a military band dashes off some popular airs that make the pulse beat quicker. The one who is a gay and like a gathering in our land, where men dress in black or gray. Here the natives appear in gaudy colours, men will as women, and the effect of this, added to by the uniforms of hundreds of soldiers, is to form a scene which for gay holiday appearance we never saw off the coast. When the music ceases, and it is time to arrive at one hour—this same fierce audience that has shouted itself hoarse in his honour many a time will turn and rend him by the sword—the plaudits of the multitude have been Pedro's staff of life, and they will be his doom.

Jack sees a remarkably clever figure that challenges his admiration, for he is not the man to disparage a rival, and yet there is a certain amount of admiration in the crowd. The matador does not like it—it is a trait characteristic of the Spanish character, and can never be eradicated.

Somewhat to the surprise of the American, Pedro Vasquez walks over to the fence, vaults it with the ease of an accomplished gymnast, and then stands directly beneath the Turkish pasha, who leans over the railing, and enters into a warm conversation with the matador.

Many eyes are turned upon them as the captain-general still fumbles in his pockets for the missing key of the toril, growing as red in the face as a turkey cock. It is evident that the Turk and Pedro have met before. Imagine Jack's surprise when the pasha, deliberately points directly at him, and the bull-fighter, following the Turk's outstretched finger, looks him straight in the eyes. The American feels the blood mount into his face as he sees a sneer upon the countenance of the Oriental magnate, and realizes he has been pointed out to the bull-fighter. Then he grows cool again—he is too old a campaigner to allow a little thing like this to upset his nerves in any way.

All the same, he keeps up a tremendous amount of talking, and wonders if it is the stare he gave the pasha that has made an enemy out of him. What he is saying to the matador—who does he point out to the American at all—Vasquez publicly challenges him to a duel in the arena?

Such wild thoughts as these flit through his mind, and he is exceedingly brief space of time, and he has come to no conclusion with regard to the matter when the impatient buzz of the audience changes to a roar of satisfaction, for the captain-general has at last found the obstinate key, and tossed it to the aquilal.

As the noise subsides, and every spectator settles back as comfortably as the limited space will allow, the blast of a trumpet is heard, which is the signal for the entrance of the toro, the hero of the hour.

Out comes a red bull with a rush. The sudden change from the gloom of the toril to the sunlight causes him to stand still for a minute. Around him are waving the flags of the various streaming banners, and a sea of expectant faces—wild music fills the air—no wonder Taurus is amazed. When he recovers, and is himself again.

A daring chulo flaunts a red flag in front of the bull, and bellowing with rage the brute tears at the ground with his ugly short horns, throws the dirt aloft, and the bull, who has been, and finally rushes at his tormentors.

Then a picador jabs him with his lance in the flank, and draws the first blood. The scene in the arena at this moment is exciting, and very picturesque, for the bull-fighters all wear richly embroidered vests, knee breeches, gaudy sashes, with silk stockings and slippers, and the picadors, who have their legs encased in sheet-iron in order to secure them as well as possible from the horns of the bull. Around wheels the red bull, and in vain the picador like a flash. In vain are bright coloured cloaks flaunted before his eyes; the old fellow knows what he wants, and means to get there in a hurry.

The horseman realizes his danger and tries his best to avoid it, but his steed, who is a noble animal, and that lowered head, and does not obey the bridle, simply rearing in his mad flight.

This suits old toro exactly, and he strikes the horse with terrific force, hurling steed and rider against the fence. A wild shout arises. The bull is in the arena, and he is now, but soon the tide of public opinion will change against the four-footed hero of the hour.

So he enters into conversation with the senorita. To his surprise and gratification she speaks fair English with a peculiarity of accent now and then that charms him. Eagerly she discusses each theme he advances, and almost before he knows it Jack is admitting to himself that Mercedes is a brilliant scholar.

Now and then Don Carlos joins in with some remark, and finally speaks of Jack having among his multitudes of sports enjoyed participating in a Mexican bull-fight. The ladies are interested at once, and Mercedes, perceiving thoughtlessly, declares that the bull in Mexico are not what they are in Spain, where they are bred for the purpose. Jack flushes a little under the thrust, but quietly says: "The bulls we use out there are running wild on the prairies—great fierce brutes, full of fire, and ready to charge Satan himself. I shall be better able to judge of the respective merits of the different breeds after I see your game here."

Then the conversation turns to the people present, and Jack notices that his companion seems to be interested in the members of the Turkish embassy, for her glance wanders that way. A dim suspicion enters Jack's mind that there may be a reason for the scorn of the rascals, but before he has time to fully turn this idea over in his mind something occurs.

There is a grand burst of music, followed by a volley from thousands of throats, kerchiefs are waved, and hands clapped, while the eyes of the immense audience are fastened upon the sword-drawn arena, empty no longer.

A number of gaudily attired men have appeared in the court—some mounted and others on foot—all nimble looking fellows, who seem capable of choosing instantly between the horns and the board fence. A number of them bear the scars of previous battles, and the barrier was destroyed in the confusion. The chulos are the fellows who irritate the bull, and divert his attention from the danger. They are in the ring, and the public expects them to do this, and they are doing it, and he is exceeding nimble at mounting the fence it takes the short horns in up the body of the bull, and the matador, who is to finish the scene with a brilliant stroke from his sword. He is the hero of the hour, while the mol has shouted itself hoarse up to this time in laughter.

The scene is a gay and like a death-like silence always falls over the whole amphitheatre as the bold matador awaits the mad charge of the furious brute.

All are present in a line, facing the high functionary, who represents the government, the captain-general of the province. To him they must make the challenge, and a proper interchange of civilities will take place after which the official searches in his pockets for the key of the toril, where the bulls are kept, and which he is now expected to give to the attending aquilal, who will at the proper time let the first bull out.

While the captain-general is thus engaged, and fifteen thousand anxious eyes wait the result, the matador gluts their appetites, that singular American, Doctor Jack, spends his time in scrutinizing the famous matador whose name, if not as illustrious as those of his old-time predecessors, still has a magic charm about it with the populace, whose idol he has been up to this hour.

The reason of this lies in the fact that as yet Pedro Vasquez has never met his match in the arena—no bull has avoided this fatal thrust. When that time comes—and it is liable to arrive at any hour—this same fierce audience that has shouted itself hoarse in his honour many a time will turn and rend him by the sword—the plaudits of the multitude have been Pedro's staff of life, and they will be his doom.

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Fortunately the bull stops to tear up the ground with his bloody horns and the dismounted picador clambers over the barrier with a speed that is ludicrous, to say the least. His steed has received the coup de grace, and the rider soon appears mounted afresh, but less daring than before.

Meanwhile the fun goes on, and one can easily discover that it is rare sport to the great majority of those present. Many a foreign lady would faint at the sight of a horse dismounted by those terrible horns, or a chulo trampled among the spectators, perhaps half killed, but the people have been educated up to these things and even the most refined ladies seem to enjoy them.

Each occurrence of this nature is greeted with a storm of applause. Why not, when they have come for just this same thing?

The red bull has begun well, but he does not keep it up. The picadors are mounted on better horses than ordinary, and have little trouble in avoiding their enemy, while the footmen take care to sidle him.

How mean it all seems. The bull is the only brave creature in the arena—all the rest run the moment he faces his eye on them, some leaping the barrier at the slightest provocation. Jack's sympathies are with the toro, but he knows well the brave animal is doomed.

Finally the bull, seeing how his enemies fly before him, takes up his station in the middle of the arena, and with lowered head awaits a new attack. His flanks are covered with bloody foam, for he has been wounded several times as well as ripping up a couple of horses himself.

The enemy rather. Taurus waits in cunning, sullen humour until they are close upon him, then he makes an awful rush for a chulo to the left. Alarmed, the man flies for the barrier, he seems to know nothing of the proper instant, but thinks his only chance to escape is in reaching the barrier first. It is a fatal blunder for the wretched chulo.

Jack realizes it, and yet, strange to say, does not feel much sympathy for the coward, who could only flaunt a red flag, and then run if the bull winked at him.

The friendly fence is almost within reach when the toro catches up with his victim. There is a cloud of dust, a yell, and the form of a man is seen whirling through the air, and among the half crazed spectators, perhaps dead, surely with broken ribs.

How the shouts ring out. Such a loss as that is well worth the price of the ticket. The bull is a hero, his tormentors jackals.

In the whirl of excitement Jack suddenly remembers that he is sitting next to a lady. He hears her clasp matador—why does she point out to the American at all—Vasquez publicly challenges him to a duel in the arena?

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A number of gaudily attired men have appeared in the court—some mounted and others on foot—all nimble looking fellows, who seem capable of choosing instantly between the horns and the board fence. A number of them bear the scars of previous battles, and the barrier was destroyed in the confusion. The chulos are the fellows who irritate the bull, and divert his attention from the danger. They are in the ring, and the public expects them to do this, and they are doing it, and he is exceeding nimble at mounting the fence it takes the short horns in up the body of the bull, and the matador, who is to finish the scene with a brilliant stroke from his sword. He is the hero of the hour, while the mol has shouted itself hoarse up to this time in laughter.

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