DOCTOR JACK.

By St. George Rathborne.

Continued from 1st page.

Somehow he likes Avis Morton from the word "go." Her looks and manner charm him, and now her words add to the zest. Here is a girl worth the winning, and lucky the man who may wear the wild rose.

Jack has no fear regarding his reception when he tells her what is on his mind, and yet he does not hurry about it. Feeling so positive on this score, he seems to think he might as well enjoy watching the various shades of emotion play over that expressive face before showing his own trumps.

"We have never met before, Miss Morton, but in a foreign country the lack of an introduction does not stand in the way of people becoming acquainted when they hail from the land of the glorious stars and stripes."

She remains as frigid as the Polar seas, and probably there is no one who can assume this character with more hauteur than the New York girl of society. Jack looks in vain for some sign of relenting. His first attack has not been a very brilliant success.

"What you say may ordinarily be true enough, and at some future time I may be pleased to know you, but at present I am in search of my good friend, Madame Sophie. You will excuse me, Doctor Jack, if—"

"Ah! you know me!" he cries, delighted to hear his name fall from those lips.

She colours a little, then laughs.

"Well, to tell the truth, I heard the gentleman in front call out your name."

"Good gracious! were you there?"

"I travel by the old motto of 'When in Rome do as the Romans do,' and it would never do for me to talk of Spain and say I had not seen a bull-fight. Besides, do you know, I actually enjoyed it a little. Perhaps away back I had Spanish ancestors—who knows?"

Doctor Jack has but one idea in view, and this to keep up the conversation, for although Avis has declared that she must not stand and talk with a stranger, like many of her sex, she does exactly what she declares she will not.

Perhaps this is due in part to the singularly attractive qualities of the American doctor, and the fact that he is a countryman, which goes a great way when abroad.

"Strange how I failed to see you there, when I examined the foreign booth carefully a number of times, looking for—an acquaintance," he slowly utters, coming very near a slip.

"We came in late, Madame Sophie and I, just as the manager was offering two hundred something or other for anyone to conquer that terrible animal. I assure you, Doctor Jack, I felt proud when you accepted the challenge, and declared the fact that you were an American. But I was afraid you were going to your death up to the time you began to play with Taurus, when the truth managed to steal through my brain that you were a master hand. Where did you learn such a game in our country?"

"I was a cowboy in Texas for several years, but it was in Mexico I fought bulls for amusement and profit combined," he replies.

"Ah! yes, you said so in your little speech. I had forgotten—the events that followed confused me. So you have been in Mexico?" looking at him with some admiration, for although she has declared that she ought not to talk with Doctor Jack without some form of introduction, or, at least, the presence of the duenna she continues to do so. Truth to tell, there is a peculiar magnetism about him that draws this girl; he is just such a brave man as she has always declared should be her knight errant if ever she had one.

His gallant work in the arena has put a seal upon her eyes, and she does not see that which she would not.

"I was in Mexico several years in the mines. That is where I made my money. Besides, I have roamed over the whole world. There is probably no country under the sun where I have not hunted wild beasts, no prominent city I have not explored."

"And, I presume, with the usual vigour that characterizes your sex you can boast of a flirtation with a pretty girl of every nation."

Doctor Jack is quite taken with her boldness, but he admires chic, and laughs in reply.

"What would you have, Miss Morton? I have an eye for the beautiful, and admire nature in whatever mood I find it. They tell us woman is the loveliest work of all, and I must be blind, indeed, not to notice what is patent to all men. Besides, I have always been judged something of a connoisseur of a handsome face."

This he says with a meaning look but Avis, quick as thought, turns it aside.

"So I perceive," with a glance beyond him in the direction of Mercedes, "she is certainly one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen."

He turns red, although he does not know why he should, but somehow that clear blue eye seems to confuse him. She evidently believes Mercedes still talking to the Turk, to be his latest love, perhaps his affianced, and he almost shows a ludicrous haste to undeceive her.

"Ah! you mean Mercedes—Senorita Gonzales. I never had the pleasure of an introduction until we met at the bull-fight. Her uncle, Don Carlos, and myself have done some hunting together up in the Pyrenees. Yes she is a lovely creature, but, do you know, I prefer a being of a finer mould. These Spaniards are jealousy condensed, and I should always tremble for my life if wedded to one of them."

"Oh! you would have to give up your flirtations, that would be all," and a killing little look accompanies the speech.

Doctor Jack finds himself upon the defensive, and although the situation is a novel one to him he rather enjoys it. One will accept thrusts from a certain hand in preference to favours from another, and although ten minutes ago Jack had never set eyes on this bright New York girl he is already interested.

He disclaims being a male flirt, and vows that he has pursued the wild game of forest and mountain so earnestly that he has had little time to look after the gentler kind to be found in towns and villages. She changes the subject with an abruptness that declares the danger line to have been nearly reached.

"What possessed you to enter that ring and risk your life to-day?" she asks, her eyes on his face as if reading him through and through.

Doctor Jack had not known this lively girl ten minutes, and yet something warns him to beware. He does not tell her that it was a woman's smile that urged him on, a woman's eyes that caused him to take his life in his hand and spring into the arena. True, Avis Morton can as yet have little interest in him, but he is too shrewd a man to make so bad a break in the start. First appearances go a great way, and he means that this American girl shall have no cause to remember him with disdain.

"I could not take a challenge, that was all. Besides, something of the old spirit seemed to creep over me, and I wondered if I could do the same tricks I used to years ago in Mexico."

This is the exact truth, and yet not all the truth, for the challenge Doctor Jack took up came from the Spanish beauty at his side and not from the master of ceremonies.

"You talk like an aged man! you do not look so very old," she smiles.

"A friend asked me that to-day, enumerating the countries I had hunted in, and all that I had seen for a score of years. I told him my experience made me about seventy, while in actual truth I lacked by several years being half that old. I have been a great traveller—[illegible] Australia, South and [illegible] and with Stanley in [illegible]

Those large blue eyes grow serious—they still rest upon his face unconsciously.

"I have always been passionately fond of travels myself, though it is only the last year, since coming of age, that I could gratify my whim in that respect. Perhaps some time you may tell me of strange things you have seen."

"With pleasure," Doctor Jack cries, eagerly.

"Oh! I forgot, we have not been introduced—we do not know each other," laughing.

"Humbug! I can refer you to a dozen gentlemen in New York, belonging to the first society, from Pierre Lorillard down, who will vouch for me as a gentleman. What more is needed? You have yourself seen that I am a man."

"Forgive me. I only joked. I would rather trust my eyes and own good judgment than have a reference from any New York society man. They may be mistaken, I never am."

Somehow Jack sees something in this to take to himself as a compliment, and he bends his head toward the girl. Her eyes are on the crowd around. It is evident that she is worried over the absence of her friend.

"I wish I could see Madame Sophie. We were to meet by this 'Rebecca at the Well' in case we became separated. The only thing I can imagine is that she has met Larry."

"Larry?" and Doctor Jack unconsciously takes a sudden alarm.

"My cousin, Lawrence. He wrote that he would be in Madrid about this time, and was bound to find us. Larry never gives up an object he has in view. You would not think it, but he is as stubborn as a mule."

Doctor Jack is contemplating her while she glances around, and meditating upon the possibility of this self-same Larry's having ever taken a notion to fall in love with his cousin, and also considering what effect his being as stubborn as a mule would have on Avis, who looks herself as though she possesses a little of the family trait in the shape of firmness.

A low cry from his companion announces that she has made a discovery.

"Why, it's the pasha with whom your friend is talking—Abdallah Pasha."

"Good Heaven! do you know that miserable Turk, Miss Avis?" gasps our Jack—he has a reason for it.

"I met him some time ago at the house of Lady Witherspoon, in London, and found him quite an entertaining talker and educated, too. He seemed quite interested in me, and asked about my plans, being delighted to hear I was coming to his city, Constantinople."

"No doubt. These Turks are good judges of beauty. They generally have a score of wives," dryly answers the American, then adds quickly:—"Perhaps you would like to meet the senorita? I will introduce you if you would care."

"Thank you, Doctor Jack, I will meet her, but for goodness sake say nothing about—you know—our never having met before."

"Believe me, I shall cause them to believe we are old and warm friends," and as he turns away he glories in the blush his words have called upon the New York girl's fair face.

Presently he comes up with Mercedes and the pasha, who still lingers, like a moth about a candle, only to Jack's keen eye the simile loses its flavour because of the suspicion he entertains that it is Mercedes who has been doing all the fluttering up to this minute.

The two girls greet each other warmly, but that is no indication of their real feelings. As a rule the gentler sex are better actors than their male relations, and Doctor Jack looks deeper than the surface to find the truth.

He enjoys standing there and comparing these two types of beauty. It is astonishing how changed his ideas have become since meeting Avis. Previous to that he thought Mercedes the loveliest woman he had ever set eyes on; now her beauty is dimmed, and by a Yankee girl, who makes no pretensions in that line. Doctor Jack awakens to the fact that there is more in expression that mere beauty of contour.

They chat for a few minutes on general subjects. To travellers there is always a host of things of which they can talk. The pasha says little, and devotes that to the ladies, completely ignoring Jack, who watches the Turk out of the corner of his eye, and grates his teeth to see the avaricious manner in which he surveys Avis Morton, as though he would give her weight in gold to convey her to his harem.

Jack's gloomy thoughts are interrupted.

"There she is—naughty Madame Sophie, and as I suspected, dear Larry is with her. How well he looks."

With a sinking of the heart Doctor Jack turns his head to look upon the man whom he has already set down as his most formidable rival.

CHAPTER VI.

Somehow in his mind Jack has pictured Cousin Larry as a good-humoured giant, handsome, and ready to anticipate the every wish of his fair relative. He has known before now of cousins being brought up together like brother and sister, and finally discovering that the world was too small to keep them asunder; and although he has no reason for believing this is a similar case, the notion appears to have entered his head.

There they come, making gestures that they have seen Avis, which she returns eagerly, the crowd separating them. Under such circumstances it is only right that the giant should elbow a passage through for the lady in his charge, but as Jack looks and gapes, he sees it is the latter who throws her weight against the barrier—she is the entering wedge that divides the crowd.

Cousin Larry does not loom up at all. He is concealed behind the ample figure of the madam, but Jack has already sighted him, and an amused smile creeps over his sun-burned face, giving place to the look of concern.

On an acquaintance of fifteen minutes this is getting to be a very serious business with him, but then he has been carrying that photograph around with him, and that might in a measure account for the milk in the cocoanut.

In another minute Madame Sophie rushes up breathless, and hugs Avis with as much enthusiasm as though they had been parted six months or a year.

"You naughty girl! I began to think you had eloped with some one. My heart was in agony until I sighted you. Ah! pasha, is it you? I remember meeting you in London. Permit me to introduce my nephew, Larry."

Larry is a genuine New York dude, small in figure, natty in dress, effeminate in appearance, with his hair parted in the centre, sporting an eye-glass, a heavy cane, and all the well-known paraphednalia of the dude.

Jack is at first inclined to think him a fool, but accustomed to looking beneath the surface, he fancies he sees something there that Larry hides beneath his foppish exterior. Perhaps the stubborn qualities of which Avis has already spoken are not the only good ones he possesses. At any rate, now that his inward fears of Cousin Larry as a rival are set at rest, Jack fancies he may endure the dude, even like him, for her sake.

Naturally Madame Sophie looks toward the others as if desiring an introduction, which Avis readily gives.

"You are the gentleman who upheld the honour of the starry flag to-day. I shake hands with you because I adore a brave man," says the stout matron, warmly, and Jack starts as he hears the identical words that sent him over the barrier into the arena, "but—Avis calls you Doctor Jack. Is that your last name, or have you another?"

"My full name is Jack Evans." While he speaks it the American watches the face of [illegible], and is satisfied at the li[illegible] he gives, proving conclusively that the name is familiar to her. She looks at him with renewed interest, a quick scanning look it is, mixed with a little wonder, but Jack is chatting and laughing with Larry, whose affected drawl and English ways are quite amusing.

The pasha excuses himself, and walks away, but Jack notices that he speaks a low word to Mercedes as he passes, and that lovely woman shrugs her shoulders in a very Frenchy fashion.

It is Jack's desire to learn where the American ladies are stopping, so he puts the question to Madame Sophie, who replies that they have the best rooms at the Fonda Peninsular, near the centre of the city, where its life is daily seen in the grand plaza known as the Puerta del Sol.

Mercedes is plainly uneasy. She looks often upon Cousin Larry, who stands sucking his cane, and saying little beyond "bah Jove!" and evidently the Spanish beauty seems to think he is some new beast on exhibition. Truth to tell, Larry's face is extraordinarily shaped, and shows a lack of human qualities, more resembling the head of a fox, from which reason Jack judges that he possesses some of the cunning of that animal.

As he is Mercedes' cavalier, he must obey her wishes, besides, he can see Avis again, and what he has to say to her will keep, as it is better suited to the privacy of an hotel parlour than the publicity of the museo.

The girl is watching him. She has never once taken her eyes off his face since he mentioned his full name, and there is an eager, wistful look in those blue orbs, as though she longs to ask something and dares not.

Doctor Jack rather enjoys the fact that he has assumed a new importance in her eyes, but he has no desire to play upon the subject, for there are grave memories connected with it, thoughts that stir up every emotion within him, and take him back to scenes in the past that he often wishes he could forget.

"The senorita no doubt desires to find her friends. I must say good-day," he says, speaking to all, but at Madame Sophie, and that worthy dame replies quickly:—

"We shall not call it good-by. You will drop in, and see us again, Doctor Jack? I am quite proud of being a countrywoman of yours after seeing your gallant action to-day. The Fonda Peninsular, remember."

Jack looks toward Avis, who murmurs something to the effect that she too will be glad to see him. He knows it now that she has learned his name, though what magic there may have been in that does not yet appear.

With what seems to be more ceremony than is necessary, he bids each one good-by, shaking hands with Madame Sophie first, then Cousin Larry, and last of all Avis herself.

This is the opportunity he has looked for. The others are laughing because a fat man has become wedged in between two flanks of the crowd, and looks pitifully around as if for assistance. Only the dazzling eyes of Mercedes Gonzales see Doctor Jack press the fair girl's hand, and bending over say something in a low tone that causes her face to light up and a glad look appear in her eyes.

"I shall call upon you this evening at eight, Miss Avis. I have something to tell you, something for your ears alone, connected with one I knew and loved—your brother, Aleck. Shall I be welcome?"

And looking frankly, fearlessly, into his eyes she replies "yes."

Then they separate, each party resuming the tour of the gallery in different directions. Mercedes is quick to note a change in her attendant cavalier. He had been witty and full of life before this meeting, and now he has become preoccupied in mind, so that several times he answers some sally vaguely, as though his thoughts were far away.

This piques the Spanish beauty at once. There is nothing what will offend a woman quicker than to see that for Doctor Jack before, but now a her attractive powers have been overshadowed by a rival.

She may not have cared a great deal great burning passion eats into her soul. She loves—the spontaneous growth of this plant in the heart of a Southern woman of the Latin races is not uncommon. Their passions are deep and sudden, though far from being as lasting as the slower flower growing in more temperate zones.

This bold American has won her admiration to begin with. He has braved death in the arena for her smile. Yes, there are other causes why he should belong to her, and she is not true daughter of Spain if she sits calmly down and allows him to be taken from her by this girl from over the sea. Deep down in her heart there is a tumult raging. It beats like a tempest upon the shore, surging high at times, and yet above are fair skies, smiles, and a placid countenance. You can trust the intelligent girl of the nineteenth century to hide her emotions. She does not go about with her heart on her sleeve, to show how it has been riddled by the numerous flirtations of the past.

At last they meet Don Carlos and the senora. Jack catches a significant glance, which the former exchanges with Mercedes, and once more the suspicion flashes into his brain that the old Spaniard may not be the warm friend he has believed up to now.

Mercedes complains of being weary, so they pass out and enter the carriage, which soon leaves them at the residence of the Spaniard. This is quite a fine house on the Del Prado, where they find every comfort.

The day is declining, and Doctor Jack is invited to dine with them, which he can hardly refuse to do. Besides, he has a great curiosity to fathom that line of mysteries connected with the past. Why was Mercedes disguised as a Catalan peasant girl in the flower mart on the Rambla at Barcelona? Why did she tell him she would be at the bull-fight in Madrid? How came she to assume the character of Sister Agatha, a nun from the cloister of San Pedro, the Benedictine church at Gerona? What was there in common between this wonderfully beautiful woman and the Turkish pasha?

[To be Continued.]

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Given under my hand and the seal of the said Court this eighth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and ninety six,

(L. S.) (Sgd.) SAM THOMSON.

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