

DOCTOR JACK.

By ST. GEORGE RATHBORNE,

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

(Continued.)

"We shall see. I have a plan whereby I think it can be done, without committing any official act which could be reported to his government. He might fall into the power of a secret clique that has long defied our most careful scrutiny. They have even held one man for ransom, and received it, too, right here in Paris."

"It seems incredible," gasps Jack—the power of the police has appeared so tremendous to him that he cannot conceive of any men defying their utmost endeavours, and working such a game even in the heart of the French capital.

"Nevertheless it is true. Only lately we discovered that the gang had its headquarters—where do you think?—in the catacomb sewers under the city. We have broken them up, but still factions might and probably do exist. Now, it would not be strange for some of these men to capture Abdallah Pasha, convey him to a hiding-place in the sewers, and hold him there for ransom several days."

Jack grasps the idea instantly, and the look on his face shows his pleasure.

"You will put me into communication with the man who will arrange this?" he cries.

"Immediately. You will find him in the room that door leads to. Tell him just what you want done, and leave the money in his hands to pay his men for their trouble. As for myself, you understand I am to know nothing about the matter. Monsieur Duprez will do all you ask him when you give this sign from me." Here the officer takes Jack's hand, and as he presses it allows one finger to rest on the other's wrist—it is a secret grip, and possesses a significance.

"A thousand thanks—I will never forget your kindness," murmurs the American, rising.

"I have done nothing—you must not even think otherwise. But I admire a brave man always," replies the other.

Doctor Jack comprehends exactly what this is intended to convey—he salutes the prefect, and moves toward the door indicated. Opening this, he finds himself in another room, where a little man, with a face very much like that of the first Napoleon, strides up and down, his hands behind his back. He nods pleasantly to the American, who does not forget to advance and shake hands with him, in order that he may make use of the secret grip, which is warmly returned.

"You know who Abdallah Pasha is, and where he stops in Paris?"—Jack strikes from the shoulder, as is generally his way.

"Yes, Monsieur Evans. The Turk has purchased tickets for the morning train—he means to leave Paris on the nine-twenty," returns the little man with the smooth face.

"The duse! he would steal a march on me. Whatever is done to detain him, then, must be carried out in the next few hours."



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"You speak truly—what is your wish?"

"To have him kept in Paris two days—three if it be possible. That will give us a fair start—he cannot overtake us."

"Have you any plan Monsieur?"

"Yes, and a good one, too, thanks to—" the other frowns warningly, and Jack adds—"the inventive powers of the human brain."

He proceeds to tell Monsieur Duprez about the secret clique that has long baffled the police of Paris, and the other listens quietly, just as if he has not lain awake many a night endeavouring to concoct ways and means of discovering where this gang held forth.

All is soon arranged—Monsieur Duprez is guarded in his promises, but Jack has faith in the man, and knows he will do even more than he says, so he hands over a comfortable roll of bills, and bids the other good-night.

"This way, please—we will not disturb Monsieur le Prefect again—he is probably busy," and the sub-lieutenant opens a door, shows Jack a flight of steps, at the bottom of which is a door, and this, as he opens it, takes him to the street.

All that has happened in the last half hour has seemed like a dream—he looks up at the sombre houses as though he can hardly believe his senses, but not ten yards away is the vehicle that brought him there.

Jack laughs softly to himself at the success of his midnight venture, and walks toward the carriage—he has done his part well, and there is little reason to believe those who have been intrusted with the rest will fail in their mission. Nearly five hours still remain before morning, and great things can be done in that time.

Reaching the vehicle, he finds his man inside fast asleep, but he is soon aroused, and mounts his box, wondering, of course, what the American traveller can have in common with the prefect of the police that he should visit that high functionary at such an hour.

So Jack finally reaches his hotel again, and retires to snatch a few hours' sleep—he expects to be on the road with the morning, and after that rest will be a stranger to him most of the time.

In his portmanteau he has a diminutive clock, which he carries with him always. The alarm he sets for seven, as he desires to get the others up, and everything ready. It was the intention of the Pasha to take the nine-twenty express out of Paris—Jack and his party will board the train early, with a double object in view, the first part of which is the fact that they cannot leave Paris earlier, and then again it will be easy to learn whether the trap has been sprung. If Abdallah Pasha does not show up at the station for that train, Jack is ready to accept the matter as settled that the Turk is at that moment held in duress vile by a remnant of the once famous catacomb clique, who demand for his release a heavy ransom, and will be in no great hurry to collect it, possibly giving him a chance to escape after several days.

Jack throws himself on the bed only partially disrobed, and in three minutes is fast asleep—such is the severe strain that has been of late upon his nervous system that he tosses about considerably, but does not once awaken until the faithful little clock, placed close to his head, rings out its silvery summons.

At the first note of alarm Jack sits up, rubs his eyes, notes the time, for the gas, though turned low, has been kept burning, and then stretching, proceeds to dash some cold water in his face to chase the drowsiness away.

Upon raising the curtain a little later he finds it is broad daylight. The sun has failed to show himself, as clouds hang low, threatening a deluge at any moment.

When Jack has dressed and completed his packing, his next move is to arouse the others.

A few words with Larry is enough to let him know what the game is, and in turn he communicates it to the ladies, who have the room adjoining his, with a door between.

Meanwhile Doctor Jack goes below, and hires a vehicle to take them all to the station in good time for the nine-twenty train east.

Then he waits around until Larry appears, of course inquisitive concerning the reason of this unexpected move, for when they separated on the preceding night there was nothing said about leaving Paris in the morning.

Jack soon tells the story, and is complimented by the duke on his forethought—he does not even smile while Larry speaks, although chuckling inwardly at the queer conceit.

To be continued.

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