

# DOCTOR XAVIER. BY MAX PEMBERTON.

THIS is the third installment of "Dr. Xavier," by Max Pemberton. The story began in the issue of August 7, and will be concluded upon August 28. Following "Dr. Xavier" will appear "Anna the Adventress," by E. Phillips Oppenheim, a story with plenty of action, life and color. As in the case of "Dr. Xavier" "Anna the Adventress" will be published in four installments, thus giving to readers of the Sunday Call a \$1.50 book for 20 cents.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

IT was 12 o'clock when the cavalry rode into the hamlet of Merens, and some quarter of an hour later when Esther herself arrived at the inn door and was at once shown up to a spick-and-span bedroom upon the first floor. The kindness of those into whose hands she had fallen and this refusal to believe that ill-news of her husband was possible had done not a little to restore her strength; and although her wrists were still red where the cords had bound them, and her cheeks had lost their rosy color, her desire to be active caused her to make light of these troubles, and to assure the Comte de Poix that all was well with her. The inn itself stood a picture for the eye—white and clean and conspicuous in a pretty village. A little girl who had once been in England, and was a great celebrity thereby, attended Esther to her room and could not do enough for her.

"It is my Uncle Jose who keeps the inn," she said, delighted at a chance of airing a foreign tongue. "I have been three years in England, miss, in Regent Park. Some day I hope to go there again. The English come to Merens when it is summer time, and I speak to them. It is funny to hear their Spanish, miss; they say, 'Si, si, senorita,' and think it means everything. Have you come from Garvarnie?—no! Oh, but you should see Garvarnie! It is the most beautiful place in the world. And all the English go there. Will you have hot water, miss? Wait, then, and I will run!"

She raced away like a hare, glad to be occupied, and more particularly to tell her friends below that miss was really English. Esther meanwhile laid aside her black mantilla—the robbers' legacy—and when she had bathed her face in clear, cold water and arranged her disordered dress, she opened a folding glass above the washing-stand, and so beheld herself for the first time since she had quitted St. Giron. The change in her appearance both distressed and surprised her. She had not believed it possible that one night could so alter or leave such traces of its events. None would call her beautiful to-day, not even in flattery. The ghastly pallor of her face, and the deep black rings beneath her eyes, recalled in an instant the Esther of seven months ago, the Esther of the garret and of the theater door. Nevertheless she could not at once believe in the truth which the glass disclosed to her, and she said that such a punishment of her imprudence would be greater than she could bear. Was Francisco Xavier but a charlatan after all! The mirror could not lie. Esther buried her face in her hands and would not look in the glass again.

This fit of despondency did not long endure. There are depths of despair which, when fathomed, leave the mind calm and untroubled. Never from the first had Esther wanted a woman's courage, or proved herself unworthy of that self-confidence which is life's surest staff. Reflection told her that no woman could go through what she had gone through and come out unscathed. She was ill, weak, anxious. Let there be good news from St. Giron and the color would come back to her cheeks, and the brightness to her eyes. This she did not doubt; and greatly helped by her own good common sense, she made what toilet she could and went down to the salle a manger. Here a tempting breakfast awaited her. Not in vain had the little Spanish girl spent six months in "Regent Park." Tea was the national drink of England, therefore it must be ready for the English miss, and ready it was, poor yellow stuff, boiling and tasteless. But the bread was spotless; the omelet, the eggs, the mutton, excellent. And to these the Comte de Poix, who sat with her, added words of good cheer. He promised her to wait at Merens until they had the news from the hills.

"It is in my mind," he said, "that the Prince was not in the house when those rogues left it. Possibly he had gone to the nearest post for assistance. If that is so, a few hours should bring him to us. You must really make an effort to get well before he comes, madame. I have a great responsibility, and it is my duty to remember it. Please to drink all the wine in that bottle, and when you have drunk it I will order another to be opened."

He pushed a bottle of white wine to her, joining in her amusement at his proposal. She was a little astonished that he avoided discussing those events of which she knew he was thinking deeply. Here, as upon the highroad, no mention was made of her marriage to the Prince; and yet the omission was so discreet that she could not resent it. The Count displayed the urbanity and the polish of a cosmopolitan. He had been much in England, had raced his horses there, had shot a Yorkshire moor, was a member of half the jockey clubs, and numbered many acquaintances in the social world. Esther could not help wondering what he would say if he knew her story. Her simple life in the old cathedral city, her bitter days of poverty and struggle. But she was quite wise enough to say nothing about them. She encouraged him to talk.

"I know all the cities of Europe," he said, with some pardonable vanity;

"but, really, I would change none of them for this little provincial town of Cadi to which we are going. It has all the advantages of Paris, and is not one-fifth the size. When there is only one playhouse in a city a man does not spend an hour in the morning asking who he shall see at night. Those who are fond of old buildings discover that our cathedral is as old as the Romans. I suppose it is an advantage to have things very old, especially when one is referring to one's female relatives and their fortunes. In Cadi you go to a Roman church at 8 o'clock in the morning and to an English race course at 12. There is 5 o'clock tea at Dumine's, one of the finest restaurants in Europe; and for a fortnight at least in every year Jean de Reszke at the opera afterward. Our women are the prettiest in the south there are so many of them that we do not quarrel. We have a breed of horses which few countries can surpass. If you like riding you will like Cadi. Tell me that you paint, and I will show you Murillo's masterpieces for your models. If you sing there is Felipe Marcla, who will give you the execution of an angel and the abuse of a jockey. Our people are quick in their affections, but changeable. We cry 'Viva' to-night, and hang the man tomorrow. Duels are to be arranged at all hours of the day and night. You can get a man killed for sixpence, and buy the Judge for threepence-halfpenny. Perhaps that is why we are so happy. A careless race, readily victimized by an adventurer—such a people is difficult to govern. It demands many qualities in a ruler—will, firmness, an appeal to its romantic side, singular

at sight if it cannot catch them; a rope is all they get when they are taken. Come, let us forget if we can, and go out into the garden. I will show you the hills above Cadi and we shall see my messenger coming over the pass."

His confidence was infectious and not to be resisted. She went with him to a little garden behind the inn, and there beneath the shadow of a plane tree, coffee was served to them, and they delighted in such a panorama of height and valley and fertile fields as only the Pyrenees can show. In the village below them, hussars were gossiping with the maids or loitering before the windowless shop. The door of a neighboring chapel stood open, and the peasants went in and out, as the musical bells called them. The quiet and repose of it all would have appealed greatly to Esther if her question had been answered; but it was three o'clock before the horseman appeared at the height of the pass, and half-past three when he came clattering up to the inn door.

"The news is good or he would not be in such a hurry," said the Count.

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starting to his feet and striding out. "Do not move. I will lose no time." He went away, and was gone, as she thought, an interminable time. Dis-tressed to the last degree, the victim of an agitation she could not control, Esther rose from her seat and restrained herself with difficulty from following him. She counted the minutes of his absence, and losing reckoning, she started to count them again. The suspense was intolerable. When the Count returned he told her with a laugh that he had not been a full minute away.

"Yes, yes," she cried, entreatingly written in her pleading eyes. "but Arthur, my husband, what has happened?"

"Absolutely nothing, madame! It is just as I thought. The Prince had gone to the station when you were taken from the house. He is perfectly well and approves of what I have done. You are to accompany me to Cadi without delay. He will follow as soon as may be."

She would have said, "Thank God!" but something in the Count's manner alarmed her, and searching his face with her shrewd eyes she told herself that he lied; and so she did not say a word, but turned from him like one who must be alone with her grief.

They found a traveling carriage at Merens and a sturdy team of horses to drag them across the pass. Esther

thought their progress all too leisurely; but the road was steep and winding and the hussars were in no hurry. It was four o'clock when they quitted the village, and half-past five when they crossed the frontier, which divides the kingdom of Cadi from the territory of France. Here had been set up a guard station, and formidable officials regarded the traveler with not a little curiosity, though neither by word nor gesture did they offer her incivility. The country itself was singularly beautiful and less rugged than that about St. Giron. Gentle grassy slopes showed many a picturesque chalet or grazing herd. Cattle bells jingled in the silent glades. The snow peaks were far away like a haze of fantastic cloud beneath an azure sky. Such travelers as they passed spoke of a sturdy race, clean and quick and busy. Anon, the pass carried them into the heart of a forest where giant trees filtered the welcome sunlight and many a knoll and thicket might have borne witness to an English summer.

The Comte de Poix, riding by Esther's carriage, did not fail to point out the natural beauties of the pass nor to dwell upon them patriotically.

"It is a wonderful country," he said, "and I wonder that so few English visit it. Forget me for saying so, but you are not a people of ideas where travel is concerned. You go to the



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Riviera and the strocco kills you, or you hibernate at Biarritz and bewail your gloom. Here in Cadi, you may take winter or summer as you choose, the snow on the heights, the roses in the valleys. There is no climate so severe, none so gentle in the world. Our invalids go five hundred yards up to the hills and laugh at the doctors. Consumption is unknown among us. If a man coughs, he is a curiosity. We are simple, gay, rich, hospitable to strangers, and, as you will gather from my words, exceedingly modest. In another hour you will see the city itself; I hope it will be a surprise to you; I feel convinced it will."

"At least, I hope to find my husband there," she exclaimed, caring little that she interrupted him. "If Cadi puts an end to my anxiety I shall always be grateful to it."

"It can not fail to," he responded slyly.

"No one is anxious in this country. We shall not permit you to be the exception."

She thought it to be an evasive answer, and was greatly harassed by the persistence with which he ignored her own position and the station to which marriage entitled her. That his polished manner concealed something from her she had been sure since she quitted Merens. Yet what it was or what subtle conspiracy prompted his actions was beyond her power to imagine. The Count, meanwhile, had a hundred stories to divert her and, presently breaking off from them when they emerged from the defile, he indicated a house upon the hillside and asked her to regard it particularly.

"As a friend of its owner," he said, "you will be interested in that place. It is very old but very beautiful; the house of a man who has done much for Cadi. I am referring, of course, to the Minister, the Duke of Montalvan."

Esther was greatly interested. The house he indicated stood in a cleft between hills with great woods in tiers behind it and a pretty lake in the hollow of its park. Massive ramparts, flanking towers, the keep and bastion of a castle justified its claim to great antiquity. She wondered if Doctor Xavier were there now. Her sense of isolation was lost when she reflected that she was at the gates of her benefactor's house and that the night might bring him to her.

"I should greatly like to see Doctor Xavier," she said with animation. "It is not a fortnight ago that he left me in Paris. He was very kind to me in England, as I think you know; I lived more than six months in his house. Of course, he would be very surprised to see me. We said good-by like those who will never meet again. Perhaps it was not all so purposeless as it appeared. I have long ceased to think about it—for I can no longer flatter myself that I am the subject of Doctor Xavier's intentions. You would understand that, Count?"

"I can admit nothing," he said cavalierly. "The man who leaves woman out of his calculations is a poor fellow; his political arithmetic cannot be worth much. Let us say that the Duke did not consider Cadi quite as amusing for you as Paris. He would naturally remember that since you say he is your friend."

"I have believed him to be so, Count; a friend to me and to my husband."

It was a direct invitation to him to speak; but the old diplomatist skillfully avoided the dangerous ground. Esther could detect hesitation in every word he spoke.

"Cadi owes the Duke much," he said reflectively, "perhaps her very existence as a nation. If she has been saved from the French, it is Francisco

Xavier who has saved her. I speak of matters with which you cannot be familiar. There must always be one dominating mind in the councils of a government. A minority of my countrymen has found that mind in the person of the Duke de Montalvan. The rest do not think; they are children of the sun, idlers, living to-day. An appeal to their intellect goes for nothing. You must appeal to their heart and sentiment, and the scientific mind fails in this. When the Prince returns, I trust that we shall unite these factions. His absence has been greatly resented; but fortunately for him we have short memories in Cadi. You observe how little I touch upon our merits, madame. At the corner by the Inn yonder I will leave the city to speak for itself. It will not be very long now before you hear the Duke in his own defense."

He spoke as one who would say, "My duty is done"; and when he had reined but an instant to look back at the road they had traversed, as though to assure himself that none followed, he put his horse to the canter and pressed on like one who would overtake the leaders of the troop. The cavalcade had entered a pleasant wood by this time, and many a shady glen caught up the evening light and gave an entrancing vista of grove and thicket and the forest's heart. Beyond this wood, where the trees opened out and disclosed a stately avenue, there stood a crazy inn upon the hillside; and from the plateau before its doors Esther first beheld the spires and roofs of that city wherein she was to suffer so much. The sun was setting now, and it flashed crimson stars from many a window above the towering ramparts and splashed with gold the lazy river at the city's heart. The road itself wound about the hillside like a silver thread upon a field of green. Esther could admit that the scene was a bewitching one, surpassing all that she had imagined of Cadi and its capital. The gentle hills, the bordering forests, the multitude of houses, the spires and turrets upstanding through the century-hum of the busy life revealed to her a world of which she had never dreamed. And in this city she would find the man she loved, would answer those tormenting questions which never ceased to present themselves. Of other ideas she had none. Her own position as the wife of Cadi's Prince must not be remembered, nor would she permit herself to consider it. Esther believed that she was going to her husband and that to-night she would find him. All else must give place to this; her love was predominant.

The Count had left her at the crest of the hill, nor did she see anything further of her escort until the city's gate was reached. The night fell suddenly, as ever in the Pyrenees; a cold wind swept down from the hills; lights began to twinkle in many a homestead, the Angelus rang out from every steeple. As the twilight deepened and shadows fell across the road, Esther became aware that some one had ridden up to her carriage, and when she turned her head, thinking it to be the Count, and wondering that she had not seen him fall back, she perceived, with no little alarm, the white beroussé and the ill-omened face of Yussuf, the Moor. Very surprised to find him in such a place, and, it may be, not a little alarmed, she wrapped her man in more closely about her face and sat back in the carriage to avoid his glance; but he rode up boldly to her side, and bending over from the saddle of a great black horse, he insisted upon being heard.

"It is I, Yussuf, senorita; please to listen."

"What do you want with me?" she cried—"why are you here?"

"Because I am your friend, lady."

"Yes, yes; then what do you wish to say?"

"That your husband must not come to Cadi—I, Yussuf, know it. Keep him away, lady; he must not come—they will kill him."

She sat still, fumbling with the veil about her face. From the first this Moor had been a figure of ill-omen. Why should she pay any attention to such a madman's story? Nevertheless, her heart beat quickly; she felt that she must hear him to the end.

"I do not believe you," she replied with great composure. "What has my husband done?"

"He has married a foreigner, lady; he has broken the law. Do not let him return to his judges. They are bringing you here because they know that he will follow. Keep him out of the trap—they will kill him."

She uttered a low cry and the veil fell from her face. At the same moment the carriage swung up to the city's gates; guards surrounded it; she heard many voices in arguments; saw the lights and the life of the streets beyond the barrier. But the Moor had disappeared in the press of the people. Esther knew not whether he were friend or enemy. The shadows seemed to be closing about her life. She entered her husband's city, and it seemed to her that the gate of some mighty prison closed behind her as she went.

CHAPTER XV.

Arthur of Cadi was too well acquainted with the character of his countrymen to doubt for a moment the meaning of the attack upon St. Giron or what the outcome of it was likely to be. No sooner had Martinez, the steward, informed him that there were horsemen at the gate of the castle and that they were set upon an entry than he named them to the servants of Francisco's Government. None the less, his wit was unable to say precisely what part they had been hired to play; and while he did not fear for his life nor for the life of the woman he loved, he understood the hazard of the game and entered upon it with the courage of his race.

"It would be Alonso de Vic-Dessos and his band," he said, leaping to his feet and listening to the frenzied blows upon the gate. "I had never thought of that, Martinez. What, in God's name, do they want here?"

The steward answered with the quiet cynicism which thirty years of that dangerous servitude had taught him.

"They will tell you when they have blown open the locks, Highness," he said cynically. "Listen to that; they are upon the drawbridge already."

It was at this moment that Arthur ran up hurriedly to Esther's room and made such provision as he could for her safety. A quick thinker, it occurred to him at once that his old enemy, the Duke, had struck this blow with a Spaniard's subtlety and more than a Spaniard's swiftness. Under cover of these hired ruffians, whose complicity could be so lightly purchased, he had veiled an attack which opportunity elsewhere denied to him.

Arthur said at once that his marriage was the key to this open declaration of hostility. That they would, if they could, carry him to Cadi, there to answer his enemies in the city, he never doubted; and it flashed upon him that he must outwit them at any cost, even at the cost, as it would appear, of cowardice and flight. This was in his mind when he commanded Esther to lock her door. If he could but reach the guard at the post upon the summit of the pass, this bandit's crew would get short shrift and the rest would be easy. Thus it came about that, risking all upon a supreme venture, he fled from the house to the stables, and bridling the first horse he found there he leaped upon his back and set him at a gallop for the station on the heights. Such a counterstroke was not within the calculations of Alonso and his fellows. They had posted a man at the stable gate, it is true; but a slash of the whip across his face sent him flying from his saddle and before he could recover himself Arthur was a hundred yards up the pass, and, roused by the outcry, his enemies raced after him in hot pursuit.

An inexpressible tenderness toward little Esther was the first inspiration of this wild ride. Since first he saw her in London, nearly seven months ago, Arthur had found her different from all other women; had been aware of a mutual sympathy which waxed strong with the days and had culminated in complete abandonment to the impulses of a passionate affection. If he had wronged her, love must plead for him. At the worst, he thought, Cadi could refuse to recognize his marriage and leave him his liberty. They would be exiles together, caring nothing for that which they had lost. This reality of a momentous night brought home to him in an instant the deeper responsibilities he had ignored. He began to perceive that he was face to face with an ambitious and a relentless enemy, with one who could stand at nothing which opposed his ambitions and his ends. Arthur knew that he himself possessed none of those gifts which make the subtle statesman or the successful diplomatist. He had only a man's good courage, a birthright to the affection of his people; but these, he said, might yet suffice. A certain joy of that antagonism filled him as he galloped wildly up the pass. He knew that a woman had roused him to effort at last. The old indifferent life was done with; he would remember his manhood for Esther's sake.

We have said that a number of the hillmen followed him upon the pass; but of these several quickly abandoned the pursuit, leaving such glory as was to be got to their more courageous fellows. The perils of the road might, indeed, have deterred men of sterner courage, for it was often but a bridge track above the gorges, a ribbon winding about the higher peaks. One stumbling upon the snow, one false step, and a man would have gone headlong down five thousand feet to an unknown grave in the black abyss below. Arthur, a horseman from his very childhood, cared nothing for the danger. The snow flying from his horse's hoofs, the black shadows, the cries behind him, braced his nerve as to some combat of which the prize was liberty. Yonder, high up above this world of silence and the night, there flashed the lights of that station which was his goal. Let him reach his doors, he said, and Francisco Xavier were answered indeed. He called to his good horse and laughed at the sounds behind him. And yet they were drawing nearer—that thud of hoofs was more clearly to be heard; the race was not won. It had scarcely begun.

He had taken a horse at hazard from the stable, ignorant that the beast was one of those which had drawn the carriage from Poix that day. Already overdriven, the rigors of this road left it so utterly exhausted that its brave gallop degenerated anon into a mere canter and ultimately was little beyond a trot. This alarming truth came to the rider suddenly at the very moment when he was pushed with success and drawing rein because he must, he began to think that the game was with old Xavier after all. There below on the winding road the first of his pursuers emerged from the shadows. Arthur knew not how many followed him from the castle; but he perceived that flight would help him no longer, and saying that he would sell his life dearly, he permitted his horse to walk and so waited for the men.

This relaxation of effort brought with it a clear understanding of his position and a darker side to a mental picture from which he could not turn. His quick survey of height and gorge failed to inspire him with an idea. Upon his left hand the rocks went up sheer to their snowy peaks in the azure above. No eyes could find the bed of the gorge below him. The winding road shut out that flash of the station's lights which so cheered him five minutes ago. He believed that the end must be here and wheeling his horse regardless of the peril, he prepared to meet it. It was a moment of intense suspense, for he was an unarmed man and he believed that many followed him from the house. An intent ear, magnifying the echoes, said that numbers trod the path. He could scarcely believe his eyes when but one man emerged from the shadows and halted prudently. He was but an advance guard, he thought—and yet he was alone. As for the fellow himself, he appeared to be a burly hunter, thick-set and bearded. He carried an old shotgun slung at his waist, showed a belt brimming over with pistols. Stumbling upon his quarry it were difficult to say whether he were the more surprised or afraid.

"Halt there!" he cried with sham bravado; "halt there, or I shall certainly fire!"

Arthur laughed contemptuously, and deliberately taking a cigarette from a little gold case, he lighted it and blew a cloud of smoke on the still night air. The moonlight showed the figures of the two silhouetted against the silvered rock. The silence was intense, a stone falling to the gorge below raised echoes which had the magnitude of thunder.

"Well," cried Arthur at last, "and who the devil are you?"

The man, reining back his horse a little way as though to avoid a face onslaught, was so taken by surprise that he answered truthfully:

"I am Ramon de Vic-Dessos, senor. You must come back to the house with me!"

"What!—to see you hanged. Do you know that if I raise my voice I can bring the guard? Let me give you a little advice, Ramon de Vic-Dessos—

THOMPSON.  
FROM THE MESSENGER  
OF ST. GIRON.