

The Firebrand.

By S. R. CROCKETT.

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The Making of an Ontlaw.

Ramon Garcia, called El Sarria, lay crouched like a wild beast. And he was a wild beast. Yet he smiled as he blinked into the midnoon heat under his shaggy brows from his den beneath the great rock of limestone that shadowed him.

El Sarria was hunted and there was on his hands the blood of a man-to be more particular, on his left hand. For El Sarria had smitten hard and eager so soon as he had seen Rafael Flores-Rafael, the pretty boy, the cousin of his young wife, between whom and her relatives there was at least cousinly affection. So the neighbors said, all but Manuela, the priest's

So Ramon smote and wiped his Manchegan knife on his yest. In the place under the flap at the left side, where he had often wiped it before. He used the same gesture as when he killed a sheep. In his cave of limestone Ramon was

going over the scene in his own mind. A tiger does that when, after a full meal, he moves the loose skin over his neck twitchyways and yawns with overfed content. And Ramon, even though hunted, did the same. When he married little Dolores Ramon

Garcia had not dreamed that so many things would happen. He was a rich man, as men go; had his house, his garden, his vines, a quintaine of olive trees, was accounted quite a match by eld Manuela, the village go-between, the priest's housekeeper, in whose hands were the hearts of

These things he, Don Ramon Garcia, had possessed (he was called don then), and now-he had his knife and the long, well balanced gun which was placed across the rests in the dryest part of the cavern.

He remembered the day well. He had been home, down by Porta in the Cerdagne, to buy cattle, and returning home more swiftly than he had expected, his cattle folloving after in the herdsman's care, the thought of pretty Dolores making his horses feet go quicker, a song upon his lips, he had approached the village of Sarria de la Plana and the home that was his own and hers.

A swift-falling Spanish twillight it was, he remembered, the sky broadly banded of orange and rose was seen behind the highly-piled houses. From the whiteness of the long frontage, dots and flecks flashed out. Black oblongs of glassless window space splashed the white. Here and there a bint of vivid color flung itself out almost defiantly-a woman's red petticoat drying on a cord, the green slats of a well-to-do window blind. There came to the ears of Ramon Garcia the click of castanets from the semi-dark of widearched doors, and the soft tink-a-tank of lightly-thrummed guitars. He saw a lover or two "eating iron," his hands clasping the bars behind which was the listening ear of his mistress.

And throughout this village were peace and well-accustomed pleasure. Ramon smiled. It was his home.

upon the nights not so long gone by, when he, too, had "eaten iron," and clung a-tiptoe to the window bars of little Dolores who lent him such a shy attention, scuttling off like a mouse at the least stirring within the house where all her kinsfolk

There was none like her, his little Do lores! God had given her to a rough old fellow like him, who had endured the trampling of the threshing floor as the car oxen drove round.

Little Dolores-how all the men had been wild to have her-but she had loved none but Ramon Garcia alone! So said Manuela Durio, the go-between, the priest's housekeeper, and if any did, she knew. Indeed, there was little told at confession that she did not know. Ramon smiled again, a wicked, knowing smile. For if Manuela owned the legitimate 50 years, which qualified her for a place in the presbytery of Sarria de la Plana, her eyes and lips belied her official age. Anyway she kept priest's conscience-and-what was more important, she swore that little Dolores loved Ramon Garcia alone.

"Caballero! Don Ramon!" He started. He had been thinking o the woman at that very moment and there was her voice calling him. He turned about. The broad rose-glow had deepened to the smoky ruby of a Spanish gloaming, as it lingered along the western hilltops. These last shone, in spite of the glowing darkness, of a limpid and translucent turquoise like that of the distant landscape in a Siennese picture.

"Don Ramon! wait-I would speak with

It was indeed the priest's Manuela who called him, and though his heart hasted forward to Dolores, and overleaped boundaries as a dog leaps a wall, still he could not refuse Manuela. Had she not brought them together at the first. "Ah, Manuela, you are kind—there is goo

news up at the house, is there not? No ill has befallen the little one?"

"What has brought you home so soon" cried the woman, a touch of impatient eagerness in her tones; "you will frighten Dolores-if you blunder in upon her all unshaven and travel stained like that. Have you no more sense-when you know-"

"Know what? I know nothing!" Ramon slurred his speech in his eager

"What is there to know?" Manuela laughed-a little strained sound as if she were recovering a shaken equanimity, and she was not yet sure of her ground.

'You-so long married-five, six months is it not so-and yet not to know! But a fool is always a fool, Don Ramon, even if he owns a vineyard and a charming young wife ten times too good for him!"

"Truth of God!" gasped Ramon, with his favorite oath, "but I did not know. I am the father of all donkeys. But what am I to do, tell me, Manuela? I will obey you!" The woman's countenance suddenly

cleared. "No, Don Ramon, we will not call the promised one-the blessed one, a donkeya father? Yes, Don Ramon, but no father of burricos. No, no! There will not be so brave a babe from Navarre to Catalonia as yours and Lola's. But we must go quietly, very quietly. He walks far who begins slowly. He who treads upon eggs does not dance the bolero. You will bide here and talk to the holy father, and I myself will go to the house of Ramon of the Soft Heart and the Lumbering Hoofs, and warn the little one warily. For I know her-yes. Manuela knows her. I am a widow and the outlaw. have borne children-aye, borne them also the grave, and who if not I should know the hearts of young wives that are not

of Sarrin, the Arragonese peasant, glowed softly within him. He looked down into his right arm, driven through from side to thing? It was a blessing all men Manuela's black eyes that hid emotion as side of his white, girlish body. a stone is hidden at the bottom of a nountain tarn. Manuela smiled with thin

always did hor best to earn her wages. Lovers would be lovers, so she argued. God had made it so. Who was she, Manuela, the housekeeper of Padre Mateo of Sarria, to interfere for the prevention of the designs of Providence? And cousins, too-and the young cavalier so gallant, so handsome-and-so generous with money. Had he not even kissed Manuela herwelf one night, when he came coaxing her to contrive something? Who could resist him after that? And what was a hand thrust through the rejas? What kiss if the bars of the grille happened to be broken? A glass that is drunk from, being washed, is as clean as before. And when Ramon Garcia, that great Arragonese oaf, kissed little Dolores, what knew he of pretty Don Rafael de Flores, the alcade's They had been lovers since childhood and there was no harm. 'Twas pity, surely, to part them before the time. Rafael was to marry the rich Donna Felesia, the daughter of the wine grower of Montblanch, who farmed the revenues of the great abbey. He could not marry little Dolores! It was a pity-yes, butshe had a feeling heart, this Manuela, the priest's housekeeper, and the trade had been a paying one since the beginning of

"Padre-Padre Mateo!" she cried, raising her voice to the pitch calculated by long experience to reach the father in his "Come down quickly. Here is Don Ramon to speak with your reverence!"

"Don Ramon-what Don Ramon?" growled a voice from the stairhead, a rich baritone organ, unguented with daily dole of oil and wine, not to speak of well buttered trout in a lordly dish, and with rappee colored red with the umber of Carthagena to give timbre and richness thereto. It was the voice of Don Mateo Balin, most plous and sacerdotal vicar of Christ in the township village of Sarria. "Don Ramon Garcia, most reverend

father!" said Manuela, somewhat impatiently, "if you will tap your snuffbox a little less often you will be all the sooner able to hear what he has to say to you!" "Don Ramon, indeed-! there's advancement," grumbled the priest, good humoredly, descending the statrcase one step at a time. To do this he held his body a little sideways and let himself down as if uncertain of the strength of the presbytery stairs, which were of stone of Martorel

solid as the altar steps of St. Peter. "Good-good!" he thought to himself. 'Manuela wants something of this chucklehead that she goes Don-ing him, and, I wager, battening him with compliments as greasy as an old wife's cookery the first day after Lent." While Don Mateo thus spoke, and, talk-

ing all the time, moved lightly for so gross a man to and fro on his veranda, Manuela with a quick hitch of her muffling mantilla about the lower part of her face, took her way swiftly up the village street.

Ramon had seated himself on a chair at But not as he smiled up among the rocks one corner of the priest's veranda—a deep of the Montblanch on the border lands bescreen of leaves was over them. The and foot as a goose feather that blows on for it, and it chanced that the govern-screen of leaves was over them. The and foot as a goose feather that blows on for it, and it chanced that the govern-screen of leaves was over them. The and foot as a goose feather that blows on for it, and it chanced that the govern-screen of leaves was over them. The and foot as a goose feather that blows on for it, and it chanced that the govern-screen of leaves was over them. The and foot as a goose feather that blows on for it, and it chanced that the govern-screen of leaves was over them. med and bit, but neither the priest nor sweethearts than she could count on the yet Ramon minded them in the least. They vere men of Sarria, bred of the reedfenced villages of the Arragonese border, blooded to the gray-backed, white-bellied province in which Concha needed of the stranger within the wall and through the skin of the proselyte of the gate.

But as the priest boomed his goodnumored gossip in a voice monotonous and soothing as the coo-rooing of a rock pigeon. thing against which Don Ramon's birthright gave him no immunity. It stung and

"Go home, fool!" hissed a voice in his ear as he sat silent and spellbound in the dusk; "go home, shamed one. Your wife is with her lover and Manuela has gone to warn them!"

The good priest hummed on, plaiting and replaiting his fingers and pursing his lips. Through this sacerdotal meditation the hissing whisper lifted itself again. Ramon had not moved. His great hand lay along the stone balustrade. A mosquito was gorging himself at a vein upon the hairy wrist.

"There is a broken bar on the lower window, Ramon, the fool! They are kissing each other thereat and calling sweet names-these two, the cousin whom she loves-Rafael, the pretty boy, and little Dolores, whom you have made your wife-" "God's blood! for this I will have your life!" cried Ramon, so suddenly that the worthy priest tumbled backward before he had even time to cross himself. And Ramon was over the parapet with his long knife bare in his hand. It had gone ill with the traitor if Ramon Garcia had caught

But even as he had arisen, exhaled from the undergrowth like an evil breath, so he vanished into the night, blown away Ramon's rush over the edge of the balony like a fly before a man's hand.

him then.

"I will follow the liar to the world's end!" said Ramon between his teeth. furiously, and he threshed through the angle as an elephant charges through young jungle. But even as he went the words of the

viper fermented in his brain till be went He would go! Yes, he would know. If this thing were false, as ae prayed God, he would kneet and kiss her little white feet. But-that cousin-Rafael de Flores-ah. the rich youth. He remembered once upon time, when he was a young man going o market, driving his father's oxen, seeing Rafael rushing about the orchard playing

with Dolores. They had been together thus for years, more like brother and sister than cousins. Was it not likely? How could it be otherwise? He knew it all now. eyes were opened. Even the devil can speak truth sometimes. He knew a way, a quicker way than Manuela dreamed ofup the edge of the ravine, across by the pine tree which had fallen in the spring rains. He would go and take them together in their infamy. That would be

his homecoming. "You dog of dogs!" In the darkness of the night Ramor saw a window from whose grille, outward at the bottom like as many hoops. one had been slipped cunningly aside.

The face of the speaker was within, his body without. Up rose behind him the great bulk of Ramon Garcia, the vine dresser, the man of means, henceforward to be El Sarria,

"Lola, my dearest-my beloved!"

The Albacete dagger was driven deep between the shoulder blades. The young, lithe body drew itself together convul sively, as a clasp knife opens and shuts She patted his arm softly as she spoke again. There was a spurt of something and the great rough-husked heart of Ramon hot on Ramon's hand that ran slowly down Ramon Garcia was not a man to wait upon know not. But they have yet to take iron spit to him, Jose!" "Heaven's curses in the Venta bad money and worse talk.

shrick came from within the regar of bowed iron.

became El Sarria, the man without a home, without friends, the outlaw of the hills.

CHAPTER IL.

The Man Without a Friend. Yet on the side of Rafael and little Do-

lores Garcia there was something to be said. Ramon, had he known all, need not de Flores, the alcalde's son, have been carried home to the tall house with the court- inaccessible. yard and the one fig tree, a stab under It was true enough that he went to the

house of Ramon to 'eat iron,' to 'pluck the tains of the north, she had found men flexible lips, her easy subtle smile. She turkey, 'to hold the wall,' But-'twas pot saw her way now, and to do her justice she Dolores, the wife of Ramon, who knew of it, but pretty Andalusian Concha, the hand maiden and companion Ramon had given

seemed to touch the honor of his house, fined the lock of his gun. So Rafael de Flores, because he was to interfere with her other loves, took the name of Ramon Garcia's wife in vain with light hearts. This was indeed valorously foolish, but Coucha with her much wisdom ought to have known better. But a woman's experience, such a woman as Concha's, at least, refers exclusively to what a man will do in relation to herself. She never thought what Ramon Garcia have become 'El Sarria,' nor yet need young | might do in the matter of his wife Dolores. Coacha thought that giant cold, stupid,

> With such a man who could do anynot plike, said Concha with a pout. And indeed, from Cadiz by the sea to the mounotherwise-always quite otherwise, this much experienced little Concha.

Meanwhile the hunters closed in on his wife when they were first married. Ramon, the brigand, on the hills above hind his protecting bowlder. For the next Coucha was nicce to the priest's Manuela. Montblach. One cannot kill (or as good hour not a cap-stem was seen, not a twig

He knew of a cleft, deep and secret, the the aword, or with the pistol!" marry Felesia Grammunt and her vine track of an ancient water course, which And after this fashion Ramon Garcia vata and Concha, the Andaluse, because to led from his cave on the Puig, past the Vicencio, just where the track up the good money for the bad, and because of his be known to be Rafael's sweetheart might cliff at the foot of which was perched the Montblanch takes its first spring into the words which carried stings, we challenged erags and precipices of Puymorens.

brother, dearer to his soul than any other, of the building. save little Dolores alone. Luis Fernandez, true.

his trade. He drew a bead on the ex- breviary. posed limb. The piece cracked and with a yell the owner thereof rolled back be-



fingers of both hands, this pleasantly accommodative Concha, and—there was little of the teaching of the happy, guileful mosquitos which took such sore toll alike tion, when for health and change of scene she came to the house of Ramon and Dolores Garcia in the upland village of Sar-

These were the two fairest women in all Sarria-nay, in all that border country suddenly there rose out of the tangle of where, watered by the pure mountain coses and vine leaves behind him an evil streams, fertile Catalonia meets stern and But how much of the produce stuck to the desolate Arragon, and the foothills of the Eastern Pyrenees spurn them both farther from the snows.

Well might her lovers say there was none like her-this Maria de la Concepcion. Christinos, who shall say. It is known a father. Tall as a tower of vented a diminutive for Minerva herself. She had been deceiving him! brought fire and destruction into Sarria. As

abroad. Also the wit of her replies-how she had bidden Pedro Morales (who called himself, like Don Jaime, "el Conquistador") to bring her a passport signed at all his former houses of call; how she had "cast out the sticks" of half the youth of the village, till despised batons strewed the ground like potsherds. And so the fame of little Concha went further afield.

Yet when Rafael, the alcalde's son, came to the door on moonless nights Concha was there. Hers was the full blood, quick running and generous of the south, that loves in mankind a daintiness and effeminacy which they would scorn in their own

when the two lovers whispered together beneath the broad leaves of the fig trees, each dark leaf rimmed with the red of the glowing sky. And Rafael, who was to marry the vine dresser's daughter, and so must not "eat the iron" to please any maid, obeyed the word of Concha, more than all holy writ, and let it be supposed that he went to the Casa Ramon for the sake of his cousin, little Dolores.

For this he paid Manuela to afford him certain opportunities by which he profited. through the cleverness of Concha. For that innocent maid took her mistress into her wonderfully sad, she pleaded. She had a prehension of the hunted. lover, good, generous, eager to wed herbut his family forbade, and if her kind mistress did not afford her the opportunity she would die. Yes, Concha would die. The maids of Andalusia ofttimes died for love. Then the tears ran down her cheeks and little Dolores wept for company, and floor.

because she also was left alone. Thus it chanced that this foolish Rafael. the alcalde's son, marched whistling to his fate. His broad sombrero was cocked to the left and looped on the side His Cordovan gloves were loosely held in his right hand along with his tasseled cane. He had an eye to the pavemented street lest he should defile his lacquered shoes. with their points carved like eagle's beaks. He whistled the jota of Arragon as he went and -he quite forgot Ramon, great good humored giant with whom he had jested and at whom he had laughed. was innocent of all intent against little Lola, his playmate. He would as soon have thought of besieging his sister's balcony, or 'plucking the turkey' under his

But he should not have forgotten that

own mother's window.

to capture Don Carlos or Zumalacarregin of breath into his lungs, like a swimmer had resolved to make an example Ramon, called "El Sarria."

that Ramon possessed-house and farm, vineyard and olive yard, wine presses and tiers of well-carpentered vats with the wine of half a score of vintages maturing Christian Regent Dona Maria Christina. fingers of General Roderiguez, the military governor, and of Senor Amado Gomez, administrator of so much of the province as was at that time in the hands of the Concha Cabezos, who had passed her youth feared that after these gentlemen had been in a basket at her mother's feet in the satisfied there remained not a great deal his fingers hooked in a crack, and lo! the

tobacco manufactories of Seville, and never for the regencial treasure chest at Madrid. Lebanon that looketh toward Damascus, wondered-where little Dolores was, chiefly, well-bosomed, with eyes that promised and and to this he often returned. If he had threatened alternately, repelled and ca- had time that night would be have killed joled all in one measured heave of her her? Sometimes he thought so, and then white throat, Concha of the house of again-well, she was so small, so dainty, so Ramon, called "little" by that Spanish full of all gentle ways and winsomenesses fashion of speech which would have in- and-hell and furies, it was all deceit!

"Ping!" "Ping!" Two rifle bullets sang the wild fire flashes from the east to the close past the brigand's head as he lay west, so the fame of her beauty went in his rocky fastness. He heard them splash against the damp stone behind him and the limestone fell away in flakes. A loose stone rumbled away down and finally leaped clear over the cliff into the mist. El Sarria's cavern lay high up on the slopes of Montblanch, the holy mountain, or rather on an outlying spur of it, called the peak of Basella. Beneath him, as he looked out upon the plain, 3,000 feet below, the mists were heaped into glistening white sierras, on which the sun shone as upor the winter snows of the far-away Pyrenees As the sun grew stronger Ramon knew well that his mountain fastness would be stormed and enveloped in these delusive cloud-continents. They would rise and dis So, many were the rich golden twilights sipate themselves into the faint bluish haze of noonday heat. Already there appeared far down the cleft

called the Devil's gulf, which yawned below the Peak of Basella, certain white jets of spray tossed upwards as from a fountain. which were the forerunners of that coming invasion of mist that would presently shut him out from the world. But not a moment did Ramon waste.

quick as the grasshopper leaps from the flicked forefinger, so swift had been El Sarria's spring for his rifle. His cartouches lay ready to his hand in his belt of untanned confidence—that is, after her kind. It was glanced everywhere with that instant ap-Ping! Ping!

Again the bullets came hissing past him. But Ramon was further back within his cave this time, and they whistled over his head. The chips of brittle limestone fell with a metallic clink on the hard stone

El Sarria saw from whence one at least of his enemies had fired. A little drift of white reek was rising from the mouth of a cavern on the opposite escarpment of the Montblanch. He knew it well, but till now he had thought that but one other person did, his friend, Luis Fernandez, of Sarria. But at the same moment he caught a glimpse of a blue jacket edged with red, round the corner of a gray bowlder, up which the young ivy climbing, green as April grass. The con trast of color helped his sight, as presently it would assist his aim. "The lads of the squadron!" he mur

mured grimly. And then he knew that it had come to the narrow and bitter pas with him. "They have found me out, indeed-how

hickest, rising in hissing spume clouds out to his companion, "but tell them from Jack of the deeps. Then with a long indrawing Mortimer that if they do not cease their before the plunge, he struck out straight for the cave on the face of the Montblanch So, to begin with, it had confiscated all from which the bullets had come.

But ere he reached it the ground, which had been fairly level so far, though strewn with myriads of rocky fragments, chipped off by winter frosts and loosened by spring therein. These were duly appropriated in rains, broke suddenly into a succession of himself, the threat of the Englishman did but when I would have said a good word the name of the government of the Most precipices. There was only one way down, and El Sarria, making as if he would descend by it, sent instead a great boulder bounding and roaring down the pass. Then, without waiting to ascertain the

effect, Ramon plunged suddenly over the overhanging rock, apparently throwing himself into space. He found his feet again on an unseen ledge, tiptoed along it, with rock face split duly in twain, and there was Meantime Ramon lay on his rock ledge and his cleft, as smooth and true as if the mountain had been cut in half, like a bride cake, and moved a little apart. There was the same glad deflance in the

heart of El Sarria, which he had felt long when as a boy he lay hidden in the rambling cellars of the old wine barn while his companions exhausted themselves in loud and unavailing research behind every cask and vat.

The evening darkened apace. Ramos made his way slowly to the bottom of the cleft. There was the wide arroyo beneath hin:, brick-red and hot, a valley of dry bones, crossed here and there by rambling goat tracks, and strewn with boulders of all sizes, from that of a chick-pea to that of a cathedral. It was very still there. An imperial

eagle, serenely adrift across the heavens, let his shadow sail slowly across the wide marled trough of the glen. There could be no fear now. Very cautiously, for now it was life or death, yet with perfect assurance that none

knew of his path of safety, Ramon stole of gentlemen and soldiers will not do wrong onward. He was in the jaws now. He was out. He rushed swiftly for the first huge boulder, his head drawn in between his corner, where he had sat wrapped in his shoulders, his gun held in his left hand, ais knife in his right.

But from the very mouth of the pass six nen sprang after him, and as many more fronted him and turned him as he ran. "Take him alive! A hundred duros

the man who takes El Sarria alive!" He heard the voice of the officer Miquelites. He saw the short sword bayonets dance about him like flames. The uniforms mixed themselves with the rocks It was all strange and wierd as in a dream But only one face he saw crystal clear One man alone barred his way. He dropped leather. His eyes, deep sunken and wild, his gun. He could run better without it. They were too many for that, and it was not needed. He tore his way through a brace of fellows who had closed in upon him, eager for the reward.

But through all the pother he still dashed, full at the man whose face he knew. This time his knife made no mistake. For assuredly no enemy, but a friend, had done this-even Luis Fernandez, the brother of his heart.

And, leaving the wounded strewn among the gray boulders and leaving the turmoil of shouting men Ramon, the hunted, broke away unscathed, and the desolate wilderof Montblanch was like this man's ness heart as he fled down and down with his knife still wet in his hand. He had no time to wipe it and it dripped as he ran For this man had now neither wife nor

CHAPTER III.

"Carai! Caramba! Car-! This bantar will outface us on our own dunghill!"
"Close in there, Pedro!" Take down the

lenge us to fight with the knife, or with

From the kitchen of the venta at San great and famous libbey of Montblanch, to sir, came these and other similar cries. It him to fight, and he fought. That, worthy another and a yet safer held among the was a long and narrowish apartment—the senor, is the beginning of the matter and upper portion merely of a ground-floor the end!" This none knew but his friend and chamber, which occupied the whole length

First in the fray were a round dozen of whose vineyard had neighbored his in the Miquelites, come in from an unsuccessful good days when-when he had a vineyard | chase, and eager to avenge on a stranger He was the groomsman, who even in those the failure and disgrace they had suffered had taken refuge, "because he threatened old days had cared for Dolores with more from one of their own race. Next came a to let daylight into the vitals of the man than a brother's care. The secret of the young butcher or two from the killing hidden passage was safe with him. Ramon yards, each aiready a toreador in his own held this thought to his soul smid the gen- estimation. The rest were chiefly arrieros asked the old Castilian, "you ought to eral wreck. This one friend at least was or carriers, with a stray gypsy from the have borne in mind that for that cause will Meantime yonder was a Miquelite south, dark as a Moor, but every man as a man fight quicker than for his sweetbehind a stone-a clumsy one, withal. He, familiar with the use of his long curved heart." El Sarria, would teach him the elements of sheathknife as a cathedral priest with his "So it is, sener; we deny it not." an-

> long sword was not silent. His Spanish were no more words in the language, was fluent if inelegant, and as it had been turned upon us because we chanced to agree acquired among the majos of Seville and with him, out's with his pocketbook and the mule clippers of Arragon rather than deals round what he calls cartels of defiin more reputable quarters, his speech to ance, as if he dealt a hand at ombre. Then, the critical ear was flavored with a certain after some give-and-take of ill words, as rich allusiveness of personality and virility your honor knows the custom is, he pulls of adjective which made ample amends (in his blade upon us and makes play as you the company in which he found himself) saw. We are poor fellows and know no for any want of grammatical correctness. A knife in his left hand, and in his right

> the long waving sword, bitter and some- couple of Albacete knives before half the times unknown and mysterious words in his town-and be done with it! But this mouth, this youth kept his enemies very stranger was all for duels and seconds and successfully at bay, meeting their blades codes of honor after the mode of Paris." six at a time, and treading and turning so there was a constant disorganization of the opposing ranks, as one and the other sprang back to elude his far-reaching point. "He is of the devil-a devil of devils!"

an old woman, shrinking back farther into the chimney corner and wringing her hands.

ony Toledan steel that ever was forged! agreed?" What do you think o' that for Leith Links? And they wad hae made me either a minister or a cooper's apprentice!"

As he spoke he disarmed one of his chief opponents, who in furious anger snatched the very distinguished country of which the pistol and fired point blank. The shot senor stranger is a native." would indubitably have brought down the young hero of the unequal combat had not a stout, ruddy-faced youth, who had hitherto been leaning idly against the wall, knocked up the owner's arm at the moment the pistol went off.

"Ha, done!" cried the newcomer, in English; "twenty to one is bad enough, hands in his pockets and hears a garlicspecially when that one is a fool. But pistols in a houseplace are a disgrace! Stand back there, will ye?" An with no better weapon than a long-

pronged laborer's fork, snatched from the chimney corner, he sat himself shoulder to shoulder with the young Scot and laid lustily about him. That son of an unkindly soil, instead of being grateful for this interference on his

behalf, seemed at first inclined to resent

"What call ha ye to put your neck in danger for an unkenned man's sake?" he cried. "Couldna ye hae letten me fill thae carles skins as fu' o' holes as a riddle?" "I am not the man to stand and see a countryman in danger!" said the other, while the broad sweeps of his companion's sword and the energetic lunges of his own trident kept the enemy at a respectful dis-

Suddenly a thought struck the Englishman. Without dropping the fork, he rushed to the hearth, where the ollas and pucheros of the entire company bubbled and steamed, he caught the largest of the pots in one hand and threatened to overturn the entire contents among the ashes and debris on the floor.

"I speak their lingo but ill," he cried racket, I will warrant that they shall not have an onion or a sprig of garlic to stink their breaths with this night. And if that does not fear them, nothing will-not purgatory itself!"

The young man communicated this in his own way, and though every man among his assailants was to the full as brave as not fail in its effect. The arrieros and Arragonese horseclippers drew off and consulted, while the Scot who had caused all the disturbance dropped his point to the floor and contented himself with wrapping his cloak more tightly about his defensive arm. He had evidently been some time country, the dark capa and red boing of Navarre and answered the deputation which now came forward, with readiness and composure. Whoever gave in, it would cer-

tainly not be he. That, at least, was the impression given by his attitude. "Certainly, most certainly." he said. "I will be glad to meet any one of you, anywhere. I will stand to my words spoker in any language, on any field of honor, from the carpet of a prime minister to one of your infernal dusty campos, with any weapon from pistol and sword toothpick, with any Spaniard, or Frenchman, mongrel tyke that ever lifted wine-

"Is this the way to speak to gentlemen-I put it to you, caballeros?" cried one of the deputation, a huge rawboned Galliccian, angrily.

The Scot instantly detected the accen of the speaker, and, dismissing him with the gesture one uses to a menial, called "Caballeros, indeed! What needs out: this son of the burden-bearing animal speak of caballeros! Is there any old plexion. The sen of the house of Blair of Castilian here of the rich ancient stock? If so, let him arbitrate between us. I for one will abide by his decision. The sons

to a soldier and a stranger!" Then from the darkest and most distant great striped mantle with the cape drawn close about his head, rose a man of little past the middle years of life, his black beard showing only a few threads of gray, where the tell-tale wisdom tuft

springs from the under lip. "Young sir," he said, courteously, "I am an old Castilian from Valladolid and I will hear your cause of quarrel."

CHAPTER IV.

A Little Combesting "Will the senor state his case?" he said,

bowing to the young man. "I came to this Venta, the proprietor which and all his relations may God confound for liars and thieves! When I entered I paid one week's good straw and barley in coined silver of Mexico. The unshorn villain stole the feed from under my horse's nose as soon as my back was turned and then tonight upon my complaining set his rascal scullions on vilify my country, or at least a country which if not mine is yet no concern of his or theirs. Whereupon I tendered to all the cleaner of them my cartel, offering to fight them with any weapon they might name and in any place-for the honor Scotland and the Presbyterian religion!" Though he had never heard of either of these lost the gray-bearded umpire gravely wagged his head at the stattement of the Scot, nodded in acknowledgment and turned with equal gravity and distinction to the Gallegan as the representative of the opposite faction. He motioned him to pro-

"This man," said the Gallician, speaking in the harsh stuttering whisper affected by these hewers of wood and drawers of water, "this man for these ten days bath given all

his siceve, growing colder as it went. A explanations when he chanced on what Ramon Garcia!" he muttered, as he exam- on his long arm!" "A foreigner to chal- Today he would have cheated Dueno, and we, like true men, took up the cudgels for

the good padrone. "Then, because he would not exchange

"Sir," said the Scot to the old Castilian, "there was no question of money.

None brought my reckening to me-" "No," sighed the landlord from beyond the bottle-encumbered counter where he who carried it to him!"

"But as to the insults to his country."

swered the Gallegan; "yet this fellow, after Meanwhile the tall young man with the abusing the English and their land till there more than how to defend ourselves. And if we fight our custom is to do it with a

"And a very excellent thing, too, sir," lightly that as he lunged this way and that said the old Castilian, smiling at the Scot. "but in their due place, and their place to hardly in the kitchen of the Venta of San Vicentio. Listen to me. My finding is this: You will all shake hands after an apology they cried. "We shall all perish" watted given, and received in the matter of the stranger's country, and since he has paid no reckoning these ten days according to Meanwhile the youth apostrophised his his own statement, the which, I believe, shall defray his count so soon as it shall "My bonny Robin Fleemin'-as guid as be presented to him by the host. Are you

"Agroed" said the Gallegan, holding out his hand to the Scot, "and I regret on behalf of myself and my companions that we ever said aught to the discredit of England,

The Scot shrugged his shoulders in the French manner, but nevertheless held out his hand with some show of heartiness.

"I am no citizen of England. I own no such pock-pudding land, but it will be heavy day when Bollo Blair of Castle Blair in the good shire of Fife sits still with his eating Frenchman abuse the English, with whom his forbears fought so many good frehta!"

"I thank you on behalf of my country for your championship, such as it is," said the stout Englishman, smiling, "things that cut and thrust or go off with a bang are not in my way. But if my knuckles are any good against the bridge of a man's nose, they shall be at your country's service. For the rest, bills of lading and exchanges at thirty days are more in my line."

"Ah," said the young Scot, twirling an almost invisible mustache, "commerce I know little of. I was bred to the profession of arms. My good father taught me the sword and the pistol, according to the practice of the best modern schools. Sergeant McPherson, his orderly, gave me instruction in the saber and bayonet. I was intended for a commission in the Seventyseventh, my father's old regiment, when a pecuniary loss, the result of an unfortunate speculation broke my poor father's heart and sent me out to seek my fortune with no more than Robin Fleming's sword and my right arm!"

"Poor capital to start on!" said the Englishman in his bluff manner, as he examined the article in question, "now you do

The Scot started and laid his hand on his sword hilt. "Sir." he cried, "your avocations do not

permit you to understand how great an insult you offer to a gentleman! "O," said the other, "I don't know at all that you would have suited. Our manager down at Barcelona is a very particular man,

for you, and being the owner's son-" Say no more of the matter. I beg of you," said the Scot, haughtily, "I have not yet been reduced to the necessity of choos-

ing a mercantile career!" "And that is a most fortunate thing for you!" quoth the Englishman with the utmost gravity.

"For me, I care nothing for money," said Rollo Blair. "Eh, what is this-?" He wheeled round quickly in response to a tap upon his arm, and the Englishman looking at him keenly (though apparently intently regarding the opposite wall) saw him turn visibly paler.

The landlord was at Master Rollo Blair's elbow with the reckoning written out upon a 'ong sheet of paper. A couple of serving men, who were probably privy to the extravagant total, stood sniggering and whispering in a neighboring archway. The Gallegan and his companions sat crossing their legs and gossiping watchfully, darting inquisitive glances under their brows at their late adversary, to see how he would bear himself. Only that noble gentleman, the Old Castillian, sipped his chocolate unmoved, and, with the perfection of good manners, stared at the fire.

From red to white and from white back again to a kind of greenish paleness went and came the hues of the young man's com-Blair was manifestly unhappy. He put his hand in one pocket. He clapped another. His purse was not in either.

"Perchance 'tis in your honor's equipage, suggested the landlord wickedly, "shall call your body servant to bring it?" It was a face of bitter chagrin that Rolle Blair of Blair lifted to the Englishman, who had meantime never ceased from his study of a fly upon the wall. He beckoned him a little apart with a look of inimitable

"Sir," he said, "will you buy from me a silver-hilted sword? It was my grandfather's, and he fought well with it at Killiecrankie. It is the sole article of value possess."

Here a kind of sob came into his voles. God knows, I would rather sell my right hand!" he said, brusquely. "How came you to run up such a bill,

having no effects?" said the Englishman coking at him coolly, and taking no notice of the young man's offer of his weapon. which he continued to hold by the scabbard. "I can hardly tell," said the Scot, hanging his head, "but only two nights age there was a young French lord here who outfaced me first at the cards and then at the drinking of wine. So I was compelled

to order in better and better to be upsides with him!" "There is no meaner ambition, especially on an empty purse," said the Englishman, not moving from the angle of wall upon

which he leaned. "Curse me that ever I troubled myself o appeal to a cold-livered Englishman! cried the young man. "I will go to the Castillian over yonder. He looks as if he might have the bowels of a man. At least he will not palm off a gentleman in distrees with moral precepts culled from last week's sermon!"

The Englishman leaped forward and clapped the hotheaded Scot on the shoul-With the other hand he drew a wellfilled wallet, with a mercantile calendar slipped into the band, from his pocket.

(To Be Continued.)