

# The Firebrand.

By S. R. CROCKETT.

### Synopsis of Preceding Chapters.

Ramon Garcia, known as El Sarria, having been induced to believe that his wife, Dolores, is unfaithful, stabs a village carpenter, Blas Flores, whom he finds presuming himself Dolores through the window of a house in the town of Aranda. At the same time a young girl, Estrella, is kidnapped by a man from Spain, and during an inn quarrel is aided by John Mortimer, an Englishman. The two start to visit the little daughter of the monastery of Montblanch. Blas and Mortimer are entertained lavishly by the abbess, and meet Estrella, who is a French girl who is studying for holy orders. These two men, with the help of Dolores, are followed by the monks, who have found protection at the monastery. The abbess is commissioned by the abbot to capture the two men and bring them to the monastery. The monks of the monastery, who are interested in the church, endeavor to capture the two men. The monks of the monastery, who are interested in the church, endeavor to capture the two men. The monks of the monastery, who are interested in the church, endeavor to capture the two men.

### CHAPTER XL—(Continued.)

And the girl stood before him almost ere his voice had ceased to echo along the corridors. Silent she waited his pleasure. For this time she had no more love for her than she had when she had called her, but Colonel Rollo Blair, the chief of the expedition of which she was an insignificant part.

"You are armed?" he queried, as she followed him within the door, and her quick eyes took in the details of his dress.

"The girl nodded a little resentfully. Surely it was a superfluous question. In an Andalusian maiden, whose lover's life is in danger every hour, always goes armed.

"Then," said Rollo, firmly, "you will accompany this gentleman to the residence of the queen regent. You will permit him ten minutes' private conversation with her majesty in your presence. You will then accompany him back. During his absence he is not to lay his hand upon any weapon, have any personal contact with the queen or open any arms, or make any use of arms. Also, he is to return with you as soon as you inform him that the time allotted is at an end. Here is my watch."

"And if the senator should refuse to comply with any of these demands?" suggested Concha.

"He will not refuse," answered Rollo, "but if the thing should happen, why, you have full discretion. You understand?"

Concha nodded, and her lips, ordinarily so sweet and yielding, firmed themselves with determination. She understood. So did Munoz.

"You do not need to say more," she said, clearly, "I am an Andalusian!"

Rollo turned to Munoz.

"You have heard," he said, "treachery deny you no good name. My wife, Dolores, is unfaithful to me. I have the irremediable consolation of your companionship. Be good enough to accompany this young lady, sir. In ten minutes I shall expect your return with a favorable answer. Permit them to pass, don't you?"

But the consent of Rollo Blair, Maria Christina, and the queen regent, was without moving and Rollo's brow darkened ominously, while the sergeant began to look hopeful. Neither was in the mood to put up calmly with any refusal or hesitation.

"I am quite willing—nay, even anxious to oblige you," said Munoz. "I would gladly undertake the commission, but—"

He stopped as if searching for words, still, however, rubbing his chin.

"But what?" thundered Rollo. The blood of the fighting Blairs was rising.

"Well, to put the matter plainly, I have never appeared before her majesty in this condition before. You would not have me go as I am?"

"In what condition?" cried the Scot in great astonishment.

"Unshaven and with my hair untrimmed. That idiot there, waiting at the trembling valet) split the water just when you came in."

"Nay," laughed Rollo, much relieved that there was to be no shedding of blood, "indeed you must forgive him for that. El Sarria is entirely blameless. And on this occasion I trust that her most Catholic majesty will pardon the informality of your appearance. You can point out to her as the ambassador of others who were somewhat overzealous in persuading you. I am sure that my two friends here will share with me the full weight of responsibility of your unshaven chin."

"That I shall not fail to represent to her majesty," said the duke, bowing imperturbably.

And without any further objections he went out, followed by Concha. And that young woman with all that weight of responsibility, swelling in pride under the crossed folds of her rebozo, did not vouchsafe even so much as a glance at Rollo, but passed her commanding officer with eyes like those of a rear-rank man on parade, fixed immovably on the broad back of Senator Munoz, as if he were the only one alone, however, she moved up alongside, fingering her pistol butt significantly. For this little Concha was quite resolved to use her discretion to the utmost, should any treachery be intended—aye, or even the appearance of it.

During the absence the remaining quarter in the chamber of Don Fernando Munoz held their ground without a word of mutual converse. Rollo stared out of the window and listened to the slamming of doors and the far-away murmur of voices in the direction of the royal apartments.

In a straining glance, acute, almost to breaking point, they waited. Yet something of the epic's argument came to them even at that distance—a shrill woman's voice vehemently debating, then a bass mutter of masculine argument, a quick stamp, distinctly feminine, upon the floor, then the slamming of a door and on the back of that the sound of returning footsteps.

"The queen refuses to receive you, I am sorry to inform you, gentlemen," said the duke. "That I did my best, this woman will bear me witness. But having had no opportunity of private conference with her

majesty I was unable (as, indeed, I anticipated), to effect anything to the purpose."

Rollo turned to Concha without wasting words on his former ambassador.

"Return to the queen's chamber," he said, "and inform her majesty that we will wait her pleasure here for another ten minutes. And if by the end of that time we are not honored by a visit from her majesty, we shall most reluctantly and with all respect be compelled to show Senator Fernando Munoz, whose presence we hold as a hostage for her majesty's compliance in the affair we have undertaken. We can waste no more time."

Concha's lips became more rigid than ever. They looked as if they never would, should or could be kissed. Just herself, passing sentence upon the partner of great Jose's latest transgression, could not have appeared more inflexibly stern.

But she only saluted, turned on her heel like a drill sergeant, and marched out by the side door.

In these trying circumstances the duke of Rianzales showed an unexpected and wholly admirable calm. He leaned against the mantelpiece, glanced once at the orrumbra timepiece with the address of a Paris maker below the winding holes and fell again to regarding his watch with the same interest as before. He was not a man who regarded him with eyes which seemed to apologize for such unprecedented circumstances.

"There would have been time to shave me, even yet, had I only had you with me," he said, "and only for the shaving water."

Then, as if relinquishing hope, he sighed again and fell listlessly regarding himself in the mirror.

The sergeant muttered to himself once or twice, as if some fine point of important fact which he desired to remember.

"All dandies are not cowards!" was what he was saying.

### CHAPTER XLV.

Rollo Uses a Little Persuasion.

Five, six, seven, eight of the ten slow minutes passed away and beyond a glance at the clock and a more absorbing interest in the furze on his chin Senator Munoz did not move. The seconds hand upon the clock on the mantel shelf was crawling round like a whirlwind into the next minute with vast apparent deliberation when a noise was heard from the direction of the queen's apartments.

There was a rapid gabble of tongues, a scurry of footsteps, the hissing rustle of skirts along narrow passages, and a voice which exclaimed more and more shrilly: "The murderers! The cowards! Surely they will never dare! Have they forgotten that I am queen?"

And with these words Maria Christina of Spain burst like a whirlwind into the room. Her long black hair streamed down her back. Her little daughter followed, a comb still in the hand with which she had been struggling to take the place of Dona Maria, who, as before related, had gone to visit her relatives.

After these two Concha followed, in appearance calm and placid as the windless Mediterranean on a day of winter.

Upon his mistress's entrance the duke turned himself upon one knee. The rest of the company followed suit, and the queen, near, according to their several abilities, but the queen regent did not heed them. She flew instantly to her husband and raised him in her arms.

"Fernando!" she cried, "what is this I hear? Did they threaten to kill you if I do not consent to their demands? Well, here I am. Let them slay me instead. What have you to say to me, gentlemen and cowards? What I have to say to you is that I hope you may not live to repent having used such compulsion with a woman and a queen!"

But she again very low and was about to speak when the queen interrupted her.

"And as for this husky," she cried, turning upon Concha, "if I had my way she should be indicted for witchcraft and burnt alive at the stake, as in the good times of the holy office! Yet you, Fernando, for whom I daily risk my life, you defended her, you defended her to my very face!"

"Beloved and most honored," said the duke, soothingly, "I did but suggest that it would be better to convert the girl—to make a good Christian of her."

"Yes—yes," cried the queen, stamping her foot, "did you not add that in that case you would like to have her confessed?"

"Certainly I did not, most gracious queen," answered her husband, soothingly. "You mistake my meaning. All that I said was no more than that which might be anxious to obtain the office of father confessor, being, as it were, eager to take the credit for the restoration of so notable a penitent."

But Rollo had small patience with the bickering of royal lovers at such a time. "I must crave your majesty's strict and instant attention," he said, suddenly dropping all ceremony. "I will only detain you for a moment, if, as I anticipate, I receive your consent to what I have the honor of proposing to you."

At once the jealous woman froze into a queen and fronted the young man with a haughty stare.

"Your majesty," he began, "I do not dwell upon their services of the past night. They are known to you. Had it not been for my friends here, it is probable that your party would at this moment have been left alone. Now, the day is passing and you are no safer than you were last night. It is necessary, therefore, that you put yourself unreservedly under the escort and protection of myself and friends. We must accompany you to the residence of the queen regent."

"Never!" cried Maria Christina, fiercely. "Am I, the queen regent of Spain, to be thus badgered and commanded? I have never suffered it since I left my father's house at Naples! A boy and a foreigner shall not be the first. My royal guards will accompany me to the residence of the queen regent, and I will be clear and as clear as the sun for you—you shall all be safe in prison cells, where, for your insolence you ought to be lying this moment!"

"Then," said Rollo, gravely, "I only regret that I am obliged to use the only means at my disposal to reveal his position as an officer of the Carlist armies, but a fortunate remembrance of some words dropped by the Abbot of Montblanch instantly gave him his cue.

"I act," he said, calmly, "under the immediate direction of the holy father himself—at whose feet, in the Vatican at Rome, you shall one day kneel to ask pardon for your sins."

This unexpected reply seemed to agitate the queen regent, who, though forced to liberate herself a party out of the men of liberal opinions in her realm, was at heart

like all the Bourbons, a convinced and even bigoted religious. But Munoz, who had hitherto been silent, stopped and whispered something in her ear.

"How am I to be convinced of that?" she cried, turning on him fiercely. "I will not believe it, even from you!"

"I regret," said Rollo, "that your highness must be compelled to believe it. Pray do me the honor of following my argument. The holy father judges it necessary for the peace of the realm, and you own soul's profit, that you should be placed in a situation where you may be able to act more in accordance with what he knows to be your secret desires for the welfare of the church, of which he is God's vice regent on earth."

"You have been very brave," he whispered. "I should have failed but for you!"

Concha blushed hot with a swift pleasure, but on this occasion her usual readiness of speech seemed to have deserted her, and she stood silent, like a tongue-tied maid, gazing for the first time in her life of her own praise.

Before either could speak again the sergeant was back to report that La Giraldilla had had dinner ready for the party.

"You must not expect much," he said; "there is little available for the pot, which may, with safety, be cooked."

But, indeed, in such weather there was not of anything better than the little that the sergeant had, together with the abundant pasacho, for the first of which he had found the materials in the store chamber and barnyard of the deserted farm house.

The sergeant's hurriedly prepared lunch

### CHAPTER XLVI.

It is our intention to place you and her in a place of safety."

"To steal us—to kidnap us, you mean?" cried the queen, with the utmost indignation.

"Your majesty," continued Rollo, "I am not disputing about words. Our actions of last night will best explain our intentions of this morning. But, with respect to this gentleman," he turned to Senator Munoz as he spoke, "I have no directions either to permit or compel him to accompany us. Yet, since we must act with the greatest speed and secrecy, it is clearly impossible to leave him behind. I am compelled, therefore, to put an alternative before you, which having had an opportunity to remark the duke's courage, I am pleased to declare. If your majesty will consent to accompany us at once and without parley Don Fernando may do so also. But if not, since we have not force sufficient to deal with additional prisoners on such a journey, it will be my unhappy duty to order the gentleman's instant execution."

A shriek from the queen punctuated the close of this speech—one of the longest that Rollo had ever made. But the queen, hardly yet believing in the reality of their threats, still held out. As for Munoz, he said no word until Rollo abruptly ordered him to kneel and prepare for death.

"In that case," said the ex-guardsman, "permit me to put on a decent coat. A man ought not to die in a dressing gown. It is not soldierly!"

Rollo bade the valet bring his master what he wanted and presently the duke of Rianzales, in his best uniform, found himself in a position to die with credit and self-respect.

But so unsuspecting was the nerve and resolution of the queen that it was only when the duke had been hidden kneeling down between the halves of a French window which opened upon a balcony that Christina, flinging dignity finally to the winds, fell upon his neck and cried to her captors, "Take what you will, but do not with me what you will. Only preserve to me my beloved Fernando."

In less than an hour the whole party was on its way. The queen regent was mounted on a white mule which had been brought from the pastures above El Mar. Behind came Rollo's donkey, with a basket chair strapped upon its back for the little princess, who was in high glee, holding Concha's hand and singing for gladness to be done with La Granja. The sergeant and El Sarria walked one on each side of Senator Munoz, who, by suggestion of Rollo, had assumed a coat and decorative waistcoat in which he had proposed to make his exit from life.

In addition to the queen's mule and the donkey, the sergeant led a horse which was presently to be mounted by Munoz, so soon, that is, as the rest of the party should regain the feet they had left behind at the deserted farmhouse of La Serrita. Concha, that time it was judged most safe that the queen's consort should walk between Ramon Garcia and the sergeant. Rollo, with a wandering eye toward Concha and the queen, walked and talked with Etienne and John Mortimer, whom of late the joint commissions of love and war had compelled him somewhat to neglect.

But these good fellows bore no malice, though certainly Etienne grew a little red when Rollo, with the frankness that distinguished his every word and action, launched into enthusiastic praise of the nobility, courage, fidelity and every other virtue characteristic of a Serrita. Concha, in addition to which she is very pretty," added Etienne significantly.

Rollo stopped with the semi-indignant air of a horse pulled up short in full career. But in a moment he had recovered himself.

"Yes," he said, doggedly, "she is very pretty."

"Not that you are a man to care for beauty—you never were," persisted Etienne, with a side look at Mortimer. "You have always said so yourself, you know."

"No, I never did care," Rollo agreed, a little hastily. "But yonder is the farmhouse, I wonder if we shall find our horses as we left them?"

Here Etienne laughed sardonically for no reason at all.

"I am in hopes that they will be fed and refreshed," continued Rollo, impudently; "we must let them have a feed of corn, too, before they start."

La Giraldilla, who had been leading the queen's white mule, at that moment gave up her post to Concha and fell back in order to whisper something to the sergeant.

"Ah," said he aloud, as soon as he had listened to her, "that is well thought on. It falls out well. La Giraldilla and I have a little business of our own to attend to, which may occupy us a few minutes. With your leave, colonel, we will go on ahead and arrange matters for the queen's return. From what La Giraldilla tells me, it may be as well to avoid entering the house."

So the queen regent, with Concha in attendance and the little Isabel riding demurely alongside on her diminutive donkey,

delighting in the unexpected excursion, found that a large barn and granary, cool airy and with a roof of stone arch like the walls of a fortress, had been prepared for them. The horses of the party had been fed and watered. Cloaks had been unstrapped and laid on piles of straw for the ladies to rest upon—that is, for her majesty and Queen Maria Christina—Concha being one of the comely and little Isabel dancing everywhere after her as her inseparable slave. So constant was the companionship of these two that it was with the utmost difficulty and after several failures that Rollo managed to exchange a word with his sweethearts.

"You have been very brave," he whispered. "I should have failed but for you!"

Concha blushed hot with a swift pleasure, but on this occasion her usual readiness of speech seemed to have deserted her, and she stood silent, like a tongue-tied maid, gazing for the first time in her life of her own praise.

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### CHAPTER XLVII.

A Snare Not Spread in Vain.

The town of Aranda lay to the left, perched high above them, on the slopes of the Sierra de Moncayo. Rollo looked past the crumbling gray turrets of the little town, and over the juniper-and-thyme covered foothills to the red peaks of the Sierra. From the point at which they stood Moncayo fronted them like a lion surprised at the mouth of his lair, that raises his head haughtily to view the rash intruder on his sacred retreat.

The lower slopes of the mountains were tawny yellow like the lion's mane, but from the point at which the scant mane of rock plants ceased Moncayo arose red as blood in the level rays of the setting sun.

"There—there," thought Rollo, "I have it almost in hand now. Beyond that far-extending flank lies Vera and the headquarters of General Elio!"

They were riding easily, debouching singly and in single file out of the doles with which the country was cut up. The sergeants and Rollo were leading, when as they issued out upon the open country, all suddenly they heard themselves called upon peremptorily to halt, at the peril of their lives.

"When here, here? Ah, our certified Englishman! And in his companions—whom?"

The speaker was a dark-haired man of active figure and low stature, whose eyes twinkled in his head. He was dressed in the full uniform of a Serrita. About him rode a brilliant staff, and from behind every rock and out of every deep gully-cleft peered the muzzle of a rifle with just one black eye peering from under the white Basque boina or the red one of Navarre.

And for the third time Rollo Blair, out upon his adventures, had come face to face with General Don Ramon Cabrera of Tortosa.

Yet it was with glad relief in his heart that Rollo instantly rode up to Cabrera and, having saluted, thus began his report: "I have the honor, general, to report that I have brought forward a Serrita, about whom the queen regent of Spain, and her daughter, the young Queen Isabel, to place themselves under my protection. I am proceeding with them to the headquarters of General Elio, according to my instructions,

and if it be at all convenient I should be glad of an additional escort that I may be able to bring them safely within the lines of Vera."

The brow of General Cabrera had been darkening during this speech and at the close he burst out with an oath.

"I know no such person as the queen regent of Spain. I have heard of a certain light-o-love calling herself Maria Christina, widow of the late King Fernando the Seventh. And if this be indeed the lady and her brat, we of the true opinion owe you, Don Rollo, a debt of gratitude which shall not be easily repaid, for she and hers have troubled the peace of this country much and long. Of which now, by San Nicholas, there shall be an end."

As he spoke he ran his eyes along the line to where Munoz rode behind his mistress.

"And the tall gentleman with the polished whiskers? Who may he be?" he cried, a yet more angry glare glittering in his eyes.

"That, General Cabrera," said Rollo quietly, "is his excellency the duke of Rianzales."

"At last, estanco keeper!" cried Cabrera, riding forward as if to strike Munoz on the face. "I, Ramon Cabrera of Tortosa, have waited a long time for this pleasure. Munoz did not answer in words, but as before preserved his imperturbable demeanor. His half contemptuous dignity of bearing, which had irritated even Rollo, seemed to have the power of exciting Cabrera to the point of fury.

"Colonel," he cried, "I relieve you of

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your charge. You have done well. I am the equal in rank of General Elio, and there is no need that you should convey this party to his camp. I will assume the full charge, and responsibility. By the holy St. Vincent, I promise them twenty for one when they slew my mother in the square of the Barbican. But I knew not from how evil a vine-stock I should gather my second vintage. A poor commandant's wife from a petty Valentin fort was the best I could do for them at the time. But now—the mother of Ramon Cabrera shall be atoned for in such a fashion as shall make the world sit dumb!"

While Cabrera was speaking Ramon grew slowly chill and then ice-cold with horror.

"Sir," he said, his voice suddenly hoarse and broken, "surely you do not realize what you are saying. These ladies are under my protection. They have committed themselves to my care under the most sacred and absolute pledges that their lives would be respected. The same is the case with regard to Senator Munoz. It is absolutely necessary that I should place them under the care of General Elio as the personal representative of the king!"

"I have already told you, sir," cried Cabrera, furiously, "that I am of equal rank with any Elio or other general in the armies of Don Carlos. Have not I done more than any other? Was it not I who carried my command to the gates of Madrid? Aye, and had I been left to myself I should have succeeded in cutting off the head of the hydra which he called Mendizabal. Now, however, I am absolutely independent, owing authority to no man, save to the king alone. It is mine to give or to withhold, to punish or to pardon. Therefore I, General Ramon Cabrera, having sworn publicly to avenge my mother, when, where and how I can, solemnly declare that as a further retaliation I will spare these three prisoners tomorrow at sunrise, even as Noguera, the representative of this woman who calls herself queen regent of Spain, shot down my innocent mother for the sole crime of giving birth

to an unworthy son! Take them away! I will hear no more!"

Thus in a moment was Rollo toppled from that highest pinnacle of happiness, for such to a young man is the hope of immediate success. He cursed the hour that he had entered the bloodthirsty land of Spain. He cursed his visit to the abbey of Montblanch and the day on which he accepted a commission from men without honor or humanity. He was indeed almost a broken man. He was indeed almost a broken man. He was indeed almost a broken man.

The royal party had been disposed in a small house, a mere summer residence of some of the bourgeois folk of Aranda and there, by an unexpected act of grace and honor or humanity, he was indeed almost a broken man. He was indeed almost a broken man. He was indeed almost a broken man.

Deprived of La Giraldilla and judging that Rollo was in no mood to be spoken with Concha (Cabrera took refuge in the society of El Sarria. That stalwart man of few words, though in the days of her light-headedness quite careless of her wife, and indeed unconscious of them, was now so strongly attached to her. He loved the girl for the sake of her devotion to Dolores as well as because of the secret preference which all grave and silent men have for the winsome and shy.)

"This butcher of Tortosa," she said in a low voice to Ramon Garcia, "will surely never do the thing he threatens. Not even a devil out of hell could slay in cold blood the queen regent only, but also the innocent little maid who never did any man a wrong!"

El Sarria looked keenly about him for possible likeliness. Concha and he sat at some distance above the camp and El Sarria was idly employed in breaking off pieces of shaly rock and trying to hit a certain pigeon of white quartz which made a prominent target a few yards beneath them.

"I think he will," said Ramon Garcia, slowly. "Cabrera is a sullen dog at all times and the very devil in his cups. Besides, who am I to blame him—is there not the matter of his mother? Had it not been Dolores—well, I would have shot him a dozen royal families!"

"The thing will break our Rollo's heart if it cannot be prevented," sighed Concha. "For he hath taken it in his head that the queen and her husband trusted themselves to his word of honor."

Ramon Garcia shook his head sadly.

"Aye, 'tis his sacred thing, that honor of his," he said, "and he will not let it go. El Sarria has little cause to complain, for had it not been for that same honor of Don Rollo's, Dolores Garcia might at this moment have been in the hands of Luis Fernandez!"

"Aye, or dead!" said Concha, "she would never have lived in the clutches of the evil-hearted! I know her better. But, Don Ramon, what can we, who owe him so much, do for our Don Rollo?"

"Why—what is there to do?" said Ramon, with a lift of his eyebrows, "here in the camp of Cabrera we are watched, followed, suspected. Do you see that fellow of black and the smartly set obtus? He is a miller's son from near Victoria in Alava. Well, he hath been set to watch that none of us leaves the camp unattended. I will wager that if you and were to wander out fifty yards farther, yonder lad would be after us in a trice!"

"Ah," said Concha in a brown study. "Yes—he is not at all a bad-looking boy, and thinks excessively well of himself—like some others I could mention. Now, El Sarria, can you tell me in which direction lies Vera, the headquarters of General Elio?"

"That can I," said El Sarria, forgetting his caution. And he was about to turn him about and point it out with his hand when Concha stopped him.

"The miller's son is craning his neck to look," she whispered, "do not point. Turn about slowly, and the third stone you throw let it be in the direction of Vera!"

El Sarria did as he was bid, and after the third he continued to project stones Vera-ward, explaining as he did so: "Up yonder reddish cliff the road goes, a bound path, a mere goat's slide, but it is the direct road. There is open ground to the very foot of the ascent. I have ridden there. I have ridden there. God forgive me, on another man's beast!"

Concha's eyes, surveying the landscape,

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lighted continually upon the handsome young Victorian in the red boina, lifted again sharply and sought the ground. At this El Sarria sighed and decided mentally that with the exception of his Dolores no woman was to be trusted. If not at heart a rake, she was by nature a flirt. And so he was about to leave Concha to her own devices and seek Rollo, when Concha suddenly spoke.

"Don Ramon," she said, "shall we walk a few hundred yards up the mountain away from the camp and see if we are really being watched?"

El Sarria smiled grimly to himself and rose. The stratagem was really, he thought, too transparent, and his impression was strengthened when Concha presently added: "I will not ask you to remain if you would rather go back. Then we will see whom they are most suspicious of, you or I. A girl may often steal a horse when a man dares not look over the wall!"

In the best of all worlds, it was incontestable, but El Sarria only smiled the more grimly. After all, Dolores was the only woman upon whose fidelity one would be justified in wagering the last whit of a good cigarillo. And as if reminded of a duty El Sarria rolled a beauty as he dragged one huge foot after another slowly up the hill in the rear of Concha, who, her love-locks spraying in the breeze, her basquina held coquettishly in one hand, and the prettiest toss of the head for the benefit of any whom it might concern, went leaping upward like a young roe.

El Sarria was sitting below quite unconscious of this display. His head was sunk in his hand. Deep melancholy brooded in his heart. He rocked to and fro as if in pain. Looking down from the mountain side Ramon Garcia pitied him.

"Ah, poor innocent young man," he thought, "dear! he believes at the heart of this girl is all his own. But all men are fools—a butterfly is always a butterfly and an Andalusian an Andalusian to the day of her death."

Then turning his thoughts backward, he remembered the many who had taken their turn with mandolin and guitar at the rear of Concha's window when he and Dolores lived outside the village of Sarria, and he (ah, thrice fool!) had taken it into his thick head to be jealous.

Well, after all, this was none of his business, he thanked the saints. He was not responsible for the vagaries of pretty young women. But with the corner of an eye more accustomed to the sun glinting on rifle barrels than to the flashing eyes of beauty, El Sarria could make out that the Victorian with the red boina was following them, his gun over his shoulder, trying, not with conspicuous success, to assume the sauntering air of a man who is having a little better to do, goes for a stroll in the summer evening.

"'Tis the first time that ever I saw a soldier off duty take his musket for a walk!" growled El Sarria, "and why on the Sierra de Moncayo does the fellow trick himself with muskets at no time could I have thought of it!"

Concha looked back over her shoulder, presumably at El Sarria, though why the maiden's glance was so sprightly and her lips so provokingly pouted is a question hard enough to be propounded for the doctorate thesis at Salamanca. For Ramon Garcia was watching her, and he was having a little better to do, goes for a stroll in the summer evening.

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