

THE STORY OF THE FAMILY CARLIST

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ETC.



"THIS FAR AND NO FURTHER" CRIED THE ABBOT, STERNLY.

Synopsis of Preceding Chapter.

Ramon Garcia, known as El Sarria, having been induced to believe that his wife, Dolores, is unfaithful, seeks refuge in the arms of Rollo Blair, whom he finds presumably kissing Dolores through the window. His estates are confiscated and he is banished to the island of Rollo Blair, come to Spain, and during an interval, is aided by John Mortimer, an Englishman. The latter starts to visit Don Baltasar, abbot of the monastery of Montblanch.

CHAPTER IV.—(Continued.)

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"Swords are not legal tender in the wine business," said the other, smiling, "nor yet when I go home with a knowledge of languages to help sell my wares in my gray cloth. You are welcome as my brother to the loan," he added, "and I promise you I will accept repayment as gladly from you as from him."

"You make the matter easier indeed," said Rollo Blair, recovering his spirits with a bound. "Here, landlord, can you change this gold ounce? Or is the matter too great a one for your petty venturing?"

The young man had been standing a little back, in the shadow of one of the arches, in which were empty managers and the rings of the prie-dieu, but he could not observe the passing of the Englishman's purse from hand to hand.

"Your servant, Senor," said the innkeeper, in Spanish, to the man in the law of Benlloch. "What can I have the honor of ordering for your excellencies' supper?"

"Order yourself out of my sight!" cried the Scot, imperiously. "We are going up to the monastery to dine with my uncle, the abbot."

The padrone of the Venta fell back a couple of steps, and the two young men ceased to grin, and, instead, bowed most obsequiously.

"He is a nephew of the abbot—perhaps (he knows) he is the abbot's son. He is doing out of this night's work, if he tells Don Baltasar all, as he doubtless will."

"This was the whispered comment of one servant in the ear of his master. Said the other:

"Speak him fair, padrone, for the love of God! For if the monks are adverse, we are spent. Our pipe is as good as out. And perchance a yet worse thing may happen."

And he leaned over till his lips almost touched his host's ear.

"My God!" cried the latter, "what a country! Would that I were safe back again in mine own house with green blinds in Roussillon!"

The Englishman and the Scot were now walking amicably arm in arm, and to find front of the inn. The Scot had quite recovered his military demeanor, and again twisted his mustache with an air of indifference, as if he were no longer on the march of Killcrankie. The unused spurs tinkled melodiously.

The landlord stood with his hands dejectedly folded. The young men took not the faintest notice of him, but continued to pace slowly to and fro.

"My noble lords," he said, "I trust that the unfortunate lady who was here this evening will not prevent this house from having your honors' custom in the future, and that you two will say no word of all this to the most Reverend Abbot Don Baltasar."

"Make yourself easy on that score," said the Scot. "As soon as we are round the corner you will forget that such a refuge of feebleness is anywhere exists out of Pandemonium."

Lower still bowed the obsequious padrone, for this was his idea of the way a gentleman should speak to an innkeeper. It showed his quality.

"Shall I order a carriage to convey your honors up to the abbey?" said the landlord, propitiously. "I know a padrone who has a coach-and-six."

whose mess of pottage I would sell my bachelor's birthright."

"You are a good fellow, Blair, gaining with admiration upon his shorter companion, and, as was his wont when excited, relapsing into dialect, 'the shoe has aye pinched the fatter foot w' me, my lad. No to speak o' Peggy Ramsay, I think I have been disappointed by as many as a round dozen o' lasses since I left the Lang Toon o' Kirkcaldy."

"Disappointed?" queried his companion, "who's man? Did you not please the maid?"

"Oh, aye, it was na that," returned the Squire of Pife, taking his companion's arm accidentally. "The lasses, to do justice to their good nature, were mainly willing enough. But the fact is that aye afore the thing gae far enough, I come to words w' some brither or father o' the lass, who broke my heart or ever I left the bonny woods o' Ayr to wander on a foreign shore!"

"Your claim I allow, my dear Sir Blair," cried the Frenchman, "but the eternal concern of the soul comes first, and I have been wicked—wicked—so very wicked. But the holy prior—the abbot—mine uncle, hath shown me the error of my ways."

John Mortimer turned directly round till he faced the speaker.

"Odds—bobs," he cried, "then there is a pair of them. He is this fellow's uncle, too?"

The Frenchman gazed at him amazed for a moment. Then he clasped his hand fiercely on the place where his sword-hilt should have been, crying, "I would have you know, Monsieur, that the word of a Saint Pierre is sacred. I carry in my veins the blood of kings!"

And he grappled fiercely for the missing sword-hilt, but his fingers encountered only the great jeweled cross of gold filigree work, he raised it to his lips with a sudden revulsion of feeling.

"What, still harping on little Dolores?" cried Blair. "I thought little Concha was your last—before she came to me."

"The little Frenchman was beneath the lamps and he looked up at the long, lean Scot with a peculiarly sweet smile.

"Ah, you scoundrel," he said, "but you will learn, yet, you will learn, my friend, that I will teach you, and will show you the way, as he has done me!"

goueness. A great mass of gold set with jewels swung at the young man's breast, and was upheld by links as large as those which sustain a Mayor's badge of office.

"Ah, I have renounced the world, my dear adversary," cried the newcomer, enthusiastically, "as you will also, I am no longer Etienne de Saint Pierre, but Brother Hilario, an unworthy novice of the Convent of the Virgin of Montblanch!"

"But, sir," cried Rollo Blair, "you cannot take up the religious life without some small settlement with me. You are trusted to meet me with the small sword at the Butte of Montblanch—you to fight for the honor of Senorita Concha de Sarria and I to make a hole in your skin for the sweet sake of little Peggy Ramsay, who broke my heart or ever I left the bonny woods o' Ayr to wander on a foreign shore!"

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"Ah, you scoundrel," he said, "but you will learn, yet, you will learn, my friend, that I will teach you, and will show you the way, as he has done me!"

"But how on a hundred pounds can you expect to do so much?" asked the Scot, with an unlooked-for exhibition of native caution.

have your life, Monsieur! Guard yourself!"

"Your Concha," do you say, Master Friar?" cried Blair, "and pray who gave you a right to have Concha on your hands with the possessive adjective before them? Is that included in your monkish articles of association? Is adoration of little Concha set down in black and red in your breviaries? Answer me, that, sir!"

"No matter, Monsieur," retorted the Frenchman, "I was a man before I was a monk. Indeed, in the latter capacity I am not full-fledged yet. And I hold you answerable if in anything you have offended against the lady you have named, or used arts to win her heart from me!"

"I give you my word, I never set eyes on the wench—but from what I hear—"

"Stop there," cried the second novice; "be good enough to settle that question for me. I must go back promptly with the answer about the canon of Zaragoza and the two Bordeaux pigeons!"

The Scot looked at the Frenchman. The Frenchman looked at the Scot.

"Here we have a bud from the rod of Aaron, also the body of Aaron himself; and the robe of Elijah, the prophet, which Elieha did not observe when he picked up the mantle; also the afore-said Elijah and Elieha; the stone on which the angels stood when they preached; the stone on which Holy St. Peter stumbled when he let John return him; the words he said on that occasion, which are not included in Holy Scripture, but were pronounced on a bark-corker's head."

"And the pigeons, Francois!" quoth the latest addition to the Brotherhood of Montblanch.

Rollo Blair kept his gasconading promise. He dined with "his uncle," the abbot, that most wise, learned and Christian prelate, Don Baltasar Varela.

The abbot of Montblanch was glad to see Milord of Castle Blair in the land of the Scots. It was not a Christian country he had been informed.

"Flery as a Scot, indeed! A true proverb! This fellow is the man we want. If so can pay his price. The other—"

Rollo never omitted his friend, and he did so frequently, but one of Abbot Baltasar's eyelids quivered, and the glass was immediately filled again.

And in a moment more the whole church was filled with the clangor of armed men, regular government soldiers, in blue and sword bayonets gilded from behind pillars as eager pursuers rushed this way and that after him, overturning the chairs and frightening the kneeling women.

Straight up the aisle, turning neither to right nor left, rushed the hunted man, his right arm hung useless by his side. His feet were fast, but still in his left hand he held a long knife of which the steel was dimmed with blood.

"Seize him—take the murderer! Hold him!"

Then, shedding to either side a surge of men, as the bow of a swift ship casts a twin wave to right and left, a man with a white scarf and a dagger in his hand rushed up the aisle of the church.

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