

CHAPTER III

CARLISTS

A MAN does not knock about the world for nothing, and the one or two ugly corners I had had to turn in my time had taught me the value of thinking quickly and keeping my head in a crisis. I looked from one to the other of the men—there were three of them—and asked in a cool and level tone—

"Is either of you gentlemen Colonel Livenza?"

"I am. Who are you, and what are you doing here?"

"Considering the rather free use you've been making with my name, Ferdinand Carbonnell, and that I was brought here by someone who called himself your messenger—and, if I'm not mistaken, is now standing beside you—and was left in a locked room yonder, that question strikes me as a little superfluous. Anyway, I shall be glad of an explanation," and I pushed on through the door into the lighted room.

The men made way for me, and the moment I had passed shut and locked the door behind me. I affected to take no heed of this act, suggestive though it was, and turned to Colonel Livenza for his explanation.

He was a dark, handsome fellow enough, somewhere about midway in the thirties; a stalwart, upright, military man, with keen dark eyes, and a somewhat fierce