MONTES, THE MATADOR.

BY A REMARKABLE MAN.

FIRST ATTEMPT AT STORY-TELLING-

FROM THE 'FORTNIGHTLY REVIEW.'



ES! I'm better, and the doctor tells me I've escaped once more—as if I cared!
. And all through the fever you came every day to see me, so my nices says, and brought me that cool drink that drove the heat away and let me sleep. You thought, I suppose, like the doctor, that I'd escape you, too. Ha! ha! And that you'd never hear old Montes tell what he knows of bull-fighting and you don't. . Or perhaps it ewa kindness; though why you, a foreigner and a heretic, should be kind to me, God knows. . . The doctor says I've mot got much more life in me, and you're going to leave Spain within the week —within the week, you said, didn't you?
. Well, then, I don't mind telling you the story.
. Thirty years sgo I wanted to tell it often enough, but I knew no one I could trust. After that fit passed I said to myself I'd never tell it; but as you're going away, I'll tell it to you, if you swear by the Virgin you'll never tell it to anyone, at least until I'm dead. You'll swear, will you, easily enough? they all will; but as you're going away, it's much the same! Besides, you can do nothing now; no one can do anything; they never could have done anything. Why, they wouldn't believe you if you told it to them, the fools! . . My story will teach you more about bull-fighting than Frascuelo or Mazzantini, or—yes, Lagartijo knows. Weren't there Frascuelos and Mazzantinis in my day? Dozens of them? You could pick one Frascuelo out of jevery thousand labourers if you gave him the training and the practice, and could keep him away from wine and women. But a Montes is not to be found every day, if you searched all Spain for one. . . . What's the good of bragging? I never bragged when I was at work: the thing done talks—louder than words. Yet I think no one has ever done the things I used to do. For I read in a paper once an account of a thing I often did, and the writer said twas incredible. Ha, ha! incredible to the Frascuelos and Mazzantini and the rest, who can kill bulls and are called espadus. Oh, yes! bulls so tired out they can

voice, then sank back in the arm-chair, and for a time was silent.

Let me say a word or two about myself and the circumstances which led me to seek out Montes.

I had been in Spain off and on a good deal, and had taken from the first a great liking to the people and country; and no one can love Spain and the Spaniards without becoming interested in the bull-ring—the sport is so characteristic of the people, and in itself so exciting. In earnest I had set myself to study it, and when I came to know the best bull-fighters—Frascuelo, Mazzantini, and Lagartijo, and heard them talk of their trade, I began to understand what skill and courage, what qualities of eye and hand and heart, this game demands. Through my love of the sport I came to hear of Montes. He had left so great a name that thirty years after he had disappeared from the scene of his triumphs, he was still spoken of not infrequently. He would perhaps have been better remembered had the feats attributed to him been less astounding. It was Frascuelo who told me that Montea was still alive, and living in Montes! I can tell you about Montes! You mean the

attributed to him been less astounding. It was Frascuelo who told me that Montes was still alive, and living in Ronda.

'Montes? I can tell you about Montes! You mean the old cepada who, they say, used to kill the bull in its first rush into the ring—as if any one could do that! I can tell you about him. He must have been clever, for an old aftetomido! know swears no one of us is fit to be in his cuadrilla. Those old fellows are all like that, and I don't believe half they tell about Montes.

'I daresay he was good enough in his day, but there are just as good men now as ever there were.

'When I was in Ronds, four years ago, I went to see Montes. He lives out of the town in a nice little house all alone, with one woman to attend to him, a niece of his, they say. You know he was born in Ronda; but he would not talk to me; he only looked at me and laughed—the little, lame, conceited one!

'You don't believe then, in spite of what they say, that he was better than Lagartijo or Mazzantini, for instance?

'No, I don't. Of course, he must have known more than they do, and that wouldn't be difficult, for neither of them knows much. Mazzantini is a good matador because he's very tall and strong, and that gives him an advantage. For that, too, the women like him, and when he makes a mistake and has to try sgain, he gets forgiven. It wasn't so when I began. There were afternuedos then, and if you made a mistake they began to jeer, and you were soon pelted out of the ring. Now the crowd knows nothing and is no longer content to follow those who do know.

Lagartijo? Oh! he's very quick and daring, and the women and boys like that, too. But he's ignorant; he knows nothing and is no longer content to follow those who do know.

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zantini or Lagartijo, but that's not saying much.

He must have made a lot of money to be able to live on it ever since. And they didn't pay as high then, or even when I began as they do now.

So much I knew about Montes when, in the spring of 183—, I rode from Seville to Ronda, fell in love with the place at first sight, and resolved to stop at Polos' inn for some time. Ronds is built, as it were, upon an island tableland high above the sea-level, and is ringed about by still higher ranges of mountains. It is one of the most peculiar and picturesque places in the world. A river runs almost all round it, and the sheer cliffs fall in many places three or four hundred feet, from the tableland to the water, like a wall. No wonder that the Moors held Ronda after they had lost every other foot of ground in Spain I Taking Ronds as my headquarters, I made almost daily excursions, chiefly on foot, into the surrounding mountains. On one of these I heard again of Montes. A peasant with whom I had been talking and who was showing me a short cut back to the town, suddenly stopped and said, pointing to a little hut perched on the mountain-shoulder in front of us, 'From that house you can see Ronda! That's the house, where Montes, the great matadar, was born,' he added, evidently with some pride. Then and there the conversation with Frascuelo came back to my memory, and I made up my mind to find Montes out and have a talk with him. I went to his house, which lay just outside the town, next day with the alcaded, who introduced me to him and then left us. The first sight of the man interested me. He was short—about five feet three or four in height, of well-knit, muscular frame. He seemed to mee to have Moorish blood in him. His complexion was very dark and tanned; the features clean-cut; the nose sharp and inquisitive; the nostrils astonishingly mobile; the chin and jaws clearly defined and resolute. His hair and thick monstache were snow-white, and this, together with the deep wrinkles on the forehead and around the eyes and

'I may as well begin at the beginning,' Montes went on.
'I was born near here about sixty years ago. You thought
I was older. Don't deny it. I saw the surprise in your
face! But it's true; in fact, I am not yet, I think, quite
sixty. My tather was a peasant with a few acres of land of
his own and a cottage.'
'I know it,' I said. 'I saw it the other day.'

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'Then you may have seen on the farther side of the hill the pasture-ground for cattle which was my father's chief possession. It was good pasture; very good. My mother was of a better class than my father; she was the daughter of the chemist in Ronda; she could read and write, and she did read, I remember, whenever she could get the chance, which wasn't often, with her four children to take care of—three girls and one boy—and the house to look after. We all loved her, she was so gentle; and then she told us wonderful stories; but I think I was her favourite. You see I was the youngest and a boy, and women are like that. My father was hard—at least I thought him so, and feared rather than loved him ; but the girls got on better with him. He never talked to me as he did to them. My mother wanted me to go to school and become a priest. She had taught me to read and write by the time I was six. But my father would not hear of it. "If you had had three boys and one girl," I remember him saying to her once, "you could have done what you liked with this one. But as there is only one boy, he must work and help me." So by the time I was nine I used to go off down to the pasture and watch the buils all day long. For though the herd was a small one—only about twenty head—it required to be constantly watched. The cows were attended to in an enclosure close to the house. It was my task to mind the buils in Spain are seldom approached, and cannut be driven by a man on foot. I see you don't understand. But it's simple enough. My father's bulls were of good stock, savage and strong; they were always taken for the ring, and he got ligh prices for them. He generally managed to sell three morellos on bargatining, no trouble; the money was always ready for that class of

animal. All day long I sat on my pony, or stood near it, minding the buils. If any of them strayed too far, I had too go and get him back again. But in the heat of the day they never moved about much, and that time I turned to account the state of the

more than anybody!"

'After that he let me do as I liked, and the next two years were very happy ones. First came the marriage of my second sister; then the eldest one was married, and they were both good matches. And the bulls sold well, and my father had less to do, as I could attend to the whole herd by myself.

'Those were two good years!
My mother seemed to love me more and more every day, and praised me for doing all the lessons she gave me; and I had more and more time to study as the herd got to know me better and better.

'My only sorrow was that I had never seen the bulls in the ring. But when I found my father was willing to take me, and twas mother who wanted me not to go, I put up with that, too, and said nothing, for I loved her greatly.

Then of a sudden came the sorrow. It was in the late winter, just before my lifteenth