

.....
CARLOTTA
.....

By Eugene Ronald Briggs
(Copyright by W. G. Chapman.)

A narrow street in a wretched tenement quarter, a hand organ lying on the ground, a frightened chattering money beside it, and the apparent owner of the instrument, fierce-visaged and brutal, hammering a shrinking young girl about sixteen with his fists.

Instantly a casual passer-by, a well-dressed young man, became an active participator in the scene. He was athletic as well as handsome. One spring, then a reaching out of a forceful hand and he had wrenched the girl free from the grasp of her inhuman persecutor. That sinewy arm shot out once again. With a shrieking imprecation in Italian the girl's assailant went dashing back across the organ, the monkey springing to one side with a curdling squeal of fright.

"Oh, he will kill me for this!" palpitated the girl.

She was poorly attired, of stunted growth, a typical suggestion of a padrone's slave. She glided forward to seize the hand of Alan Pearce.

"Keep him here till I can get far away, never to return!" she gasped, and pressed her lips in token of deep fervent gratitude on his hand and was away like a sprite. Pearce waited till she had disappeared, a square distant. Then he cast a look of contempt upon the wretched tyrant, who cowered like a beaten dog, and went on his way.

He told Annette Ryther, his fiancée, of the incident that evening. In her gentle, pitying way she wondered what would become of the poor young street beggar. Then, amid bright plans for the future the theme drifted out of their minds.

More than bright were the dreams just now. Pearce held a good position, he had saved up quite a sum of money, and "love" and "home"

were the words that beckoned them to a happy married life.

Pearce lived at a private boarding house. He came down stairs from his room one morning, whistling gayly as was his wont. As he passed the room of the "star boarder" on the second floor, he paused. It stood open and a lively breeze, pouring in at the window, had blown loose letters and papers from a writing desk across the floor and out into the hall.

The star boarder was not a favorite with Pearce, nor with many oth-



Went Dashing Back Across the Organ

ers in the house, unless it was the landlady, who valued him because of his liberal tips to the servants and the extras he allowed he to put on his bill. He was a man of about forty, a bachelor, seemed to have plenty of money and dressed flashily.

He had met Annette several times and made no efforts to conceal the fact that she attracted him. As to Annette, she had conceived a violent dislike for him from the first. Pearce barely tolerated him. The star board-