

might come and go unquestioned; but now I must describe the height and breadth, the sound of the voice, the length of the nose even, of every outcast that passes by."

He disappeared within another of the seemingly endless range of courts, perhaps to discharge his duty of reporter, and certainly a little later, in company with other employees of the estate, to partake of an ample supper, and recount to Señor Sanchez the administrador, with many variations reflecting greatly on his own wit and the countryman's stupidity, the interview he had held with the traveller from Las Vigas. Any variation in the daily record of a country life is hailed with pleasure, however trifling in itself it may be; and even Doña Feliz, the administrador's grave mother, listened with a smile, and did not disdain to repeat the tale in her visit to her lady, Doña Isabel, which according to her usual custom she made before retiring for the night.

The apartments occupied by the administrador and his family were a part of those which had been appropriated to the use of the proprietors and rulers of this circle of homes within a home, which we have attempted to describe. The staircase by which they were reached rose, indeed, from an inferior court, but they were connected on the second floor by a gallery; and thus the inhabitants of either had immediate access to the other, although the privacy of the ruling family was most rigidly respected; while at the same time its members were saved from the oppression of utter isolation which their separation from the more occupied portions of the building might have entailed. This was now the more necessary, as one by one the gentlemen of the family had, for various reasons or pretexts, gone to the cities of the republic, where they spent the revenues produced by the hacienda in expensive living, and Doña Isabel García de García, — still young, still eminently attractive, though a widow of ten years standing, — was left with her young daughters, not only to represent the family and dispense the hospitality of Tres Hermanos, but to bear the burden of its management.

She was a woman who, perhaps, would scarcely be commiserated in this position. She was not, like most of her countrywomen, soft, indolent, and amiable, a creature who loves rather than commands. A searching gaze into the