

THE GATE OF HAZARD 21

should know of my arrival, and where to look for me ; and my companion understood this. In the rumbling, rattling, brute of a cab the clatter was too great for us to speak, and after one or two inefficient shoutings we gave up the attempt, and I sat wondering what in the world the thing could mean.

I was curious, but not in the least suspicious ; and when we drew up at an important-looking house, I followed my companion into it readily enough. The hall was square and lofty, but ill-lighted, and the broad stairway, up one flight of which he took me, equally gloomy. He ushered me into a room at the back of the house and left me, saying he would tell the Colonel of my arrival.

The room, like the rest of the house, was dimly lighted, and the furniture heavy and shabby, and abominably gloomy and dull. I was weary with my journey, and threw myself into a big chair with a yawn and a wish that the business, whatever it might be, would soon be over. No one came for some minutes, and I lighted a cigarette and had smoked it half through, when my impatience at this discourteous treatment got the better of me, and I resolved to go in search of some means of bringing this Col. Livenza to me. Then I made a disconcerting discovery. The door was locked or bolted on the outside. I looked about for a bell, but there was none. There was, however, another door, and that I found unfastened.

I had now had enough of this kind of Spanish hospitality, and was for getting out of the house without any more nonsense. The second door opened into a room which was quite dark ; but as soon as my eyes had grown accustomed to the darkness, I made out a