

An enquirer would have been told that the house was tenanted by an old woman, who occupied one of the large grim rooms upstairs, from which she was never able to descend, and who was attended by another woman, more aged, but not so infirm as herself. The imagination of the young was forever invading this somewhat ghostly dwelling-place. Some even invested it with the additional interest of supernatural terrors. But their conjectures fell short of the reality. The papers upon the walls had been hung there at some long-forgotten period, the window-curtains, where there were any, playing idly in the summer breezes, or drearly shutting out wintry-skies, were of a pattern of chintz, long since vanished from shelf or counter. The passages were long and bare, and they ran into out-of-the-way corners and suddenly found themselves confronted by needless stairs, and were bordered by futile cupboards, the doors of which were never so much as opened. Strange windows looked out of walls like staring eyes.

There was a perpetual hush in the place, as though the walls were listening for feet that never came. An impressionable person could scarce have escaped the idea that viewless feet must pass by night up those unused stairs, and that voices whispered to each other in sounds that never definitely reached human ears.

Into this waste, came, one clear May evening, a girl, nineteen years of age, warm with the life of a lovely Spanish American town, glowing with health, youth, beauty and animation. Into this emptiness came, in short, Carmelita.

She was more than beautiful in her travelling, dress of sombre gray, with a bunch of red roses fastened near her throat. Her large, soft eyes beamed with a light that seemed to warm and brighten all that they came in contact with; her lips were smiling, as a happy child smiles, when it finds itself suddenly among flowers.

Is it the sudden entrance from the warm sunlight that chills her, as she passes through the great door, which swings reluctantly open, the first time for more than twenty-five years, to admit her. It had closed upon her young mother, closed in wrath and bitterness, a quarter of a century ago. Since then, no human foot had crossed that threshold. Even the minister, who had come thither to read the burial-service over Elder Johnson, had been admitted by the side-door. The Elder himself had been carried thence by that same side-door, to the grave that was waiting for him on the green hill-side.

Why had the door been unclosed to-day? Was it because the old woman above was urged by the same divine mystery of forgiveness, which had moved her to send for this girl, to throw open heart and door and take in the long banished past? Up the stairs, which creaked at every step, even under the light pressure that now for the first time touched them went Carmelita, up, and into the presence of her grandmother. The old woman from below led her there and would have lingered. A stern wave of the hand bade her go. Grand-parent and grand-child were left alone. The strange old figure upon the bed, shaded by its dingy curtains, looked out upon the lovely young presence that might have been Spring personified. To her it was a spectre, back from the twenty-five years.

"You have come," she said, "you have come at last." "Yes," said Carmelita, "I have come, grandmamma." "Grandmamma!" repeated the old woman, suddenly covering her face with both hands, while the tears began to trickle through them, "grandmamma!"

To her mind, somewhat dulled by the silence of these long years, the word was a cruel shock. It was her own daughter, who had gone away from her and would never, never come back. Carmelita paused a moment, out of respect for this grief,