

20 SARITA, THE CARLIST

"I do not know. I believe it is. I was instructed to tell you so. That is all."

At that moment the hotel porter arrived, hot and flurried and apologetic for being late. An idea occurred to me then.

"Look here," I said to the porter; "take my things to the hotel, and listen a moment. This gentleman has met me unexpectedly with a message from a Col. Livenza to go to No. 150, Calle de Villanueva. I am going there first, and do not expect to be detained long. If I am there more than an hour I shall need some fresh clothes. Come to that address, therefore, at half-past eleven, bring that portmanteau, and ask for me;" and to impress him with the importance of the matter, I gave him a good tip.

"Now, I am at your disposal," I said to the stranger.

"You are suspicious, senor?" he said, as we stepped into a cab.

"Not a bit of it. But I am an Englishman, you know, an old traveller—and when I come off a journey I can't bear to sit for more than an hour without putting on a clean shirt." I spoke drily, and looked hard at him.

"You are English?" he said, with a lift of the eyebrows. "Some of the English habits are very singular."

"Yes, indeed; some of us have a perfect passion for clean linen—so much so, in fact, that sometimes we actually wash our dirty linen in public."

Not understanding this, he looked as if he thought I was half a lunatic; but what he thought was nothing to me. If there was any nonsense at the bottom of this business, I had arranged that the hotel people