

CHAPTER IV

SARITA CASTELAR

THE rapid kaleidoscopic change in the situation, and the surprising means by which it had all been brought about, were so profoundly astonishing that for a time I was at a loss for words to thank the wonderful girl who had come to my rescue.

The palpitating actuality of imminent danger; the vehemence of Corpola's wild, fanatical passion; the tension as I stood in the dark room waiting for the moment to strike; the exertions of the two desperate struggles which followed, and then the sudden transition to the perfect assurance of safety which followed the intervention of Sarita Castelar, were succeeded by some minutes of reaction. I could not instantly reconcile myself to a return to the atmosphere of everyday commonplace.

The mere utterance of an ordinary formula of thanks seemed so inadequate to the occasion that I sat still and silent as we dashed through the now nearly-deserted streets, thinking over the whole mystery and wondering what could possibly be the clue.

Before I had collected my wits the carriage drew up with a jerk at the hotel.

"I have not thanked you," I said, feebly.

"You can do that another time if you think thanks are necessary. We shall be at home to-morrow after-