

of my earlier adventures in Texas, and even traced me in my rumbles to the night of my duel with the Ranchero. Hence he drew the somewhat rash and ungenerous conclusion that my character was not so unimpeachable as I affected, and that my veracity was actually open to question! An active correspondence had taken place between Don Geloso and himself about me, in which the former, after great researches, pronounced that no noble family of my name had existed in Old Spain, and that, in plain fact, I was nothing better than an impostor! In this terrible delusion the old gentleman died; but so fearful was he of the bare possibility of injuring one in whose veins flowed the pure blood of Castile that on his death-bed he besought the Bishop to ascertain the fact to a certainty, and not to desist in the investigation till he had traced me to my birth, parentage, and country. Upon this condition he had bequeathed all his fortune to the Church, and not alone all his own wealth, but all Donna Maria's also.

The Bishop's visit to Ireland, therefore, had no other object than to look for my baptismal certificate, — an investigation, I need scarcely say, somewhat difficult and intricate!

Of course, in this confession, the fair Contessa never hesitated to regard me as an injured and calumniated individual; but so assured was she of the Bishop's desire to endow the Church with her wealth that he would have less brooked to discover me a noble of title and rank indisputable, than to find me a poor and ignoble adventurer. "Were he but to recognize you," said she, "*I* should be condemned to a nunnery for life!" and this terror, however little startling to *my* ears, had too much of significance to *her* mind to be undervalued.

Of course my present position, the companionship of the Prince, the foreign orders I wore, were more than sufficient to accredit me to her as anything I pleased to represent myself; but somehow I felt little inclination for that vein of fiction in which so often and so largely I had indulged! For the first time in my life I regarded this flow of invention as a treachery! and, when pressed by her to relate the full story of my life, I limited myself to that period