

figure, and a great
ed the holy man;
descending from
e niece.

through in clever
e company paired
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sented me to the
y arm, and away
y which people
ce.

Señhora?" said I,
walked along.
stand?" replied

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eagerly, "How!

years in that

ly. "Tell me,
know there?"
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borhood, — my

a Olares," said

ust at the very
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and trembling,
in tears — was
er of us could
my face to the
and I watched
he threw down
was seated, I

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saw plainly that some painful mystery was struggling within her mind.

"Do not let my uncle recognize you," said she, in a low whisper; "he is not likely to do so, for both his sight and hearing are much impaired."

"But why should I not claim him as an old acquaintance, if not a friend, Señhora, if he be the same Fra Miguel?"

"Hush! be cautious," cried she; "I will tell you all to-morrow, — to-night, if there be a fitting opportunity. Let us talk of something else, or we shall be remarked."

I tried my best to obey her, but I fear my attempt was a poor one; I was able, however, to listen to her with a certain amount of composure, and, while doing so, to remark how much she had improved in grace and beauty since we met. Years had developed the charms which girlhood then but shadowed forth, and in the full and liquid softness of her dark and long-lashed eyes, and the playful delicacy of her mouth, I saw how a consciousness of fascination had served to lend new powers of pleasing.

She spoke to me of her widowhood without any affectation of feeling grieved or sorry. So long as Don Geloso had lived, her existence had been like that of a nun in a cloister; he was too jealous to suffer her to go into the world, and, save at the Court Chapel each morning and evening, she never saw anything of that brilliant society in which her equals were moving. When her uncle was created Bishop of Seville, she removed to that city to visit him, and had never seen her husband after. Such, in few words, was the story of a life, whose monotony would have broken the spirit of any nature less buoyant and elastic than her own. Don Estaban was dead; and of him she spoke with deep and affectionate feeling, betraying besides that her own lot was rendered almost a friendless one by the bereavement.

That same evening, as we walked through the rooms, examining pictures and ancient armor, of which our host was somewhat vain, I learned the secret to which the Señhora had alluded at table, and divesting which of all the embarrassment the revelation occasioned herself, was briefly this: The Fra, who had never, for some reasons of his own, either liked or trusted me, happened to discover some circumstances