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THE GITANA.

[Expressly translated for the FAVORITE from the French of Xavier de Montepin.]

XLVI.

FIVE WORDS AND A HALF AND TWO FIGURES.

On leaving Carmen the civil lieutenant went at once to the court house and related the story he had just heard to the judge whose business it was to act in similar cases. Then the two, accompanied by three police agents and a locksmith, took the road to Ingouville; only, instead of going direct to the house, they turned a side into the narrow lane of which Madame Le Vaillant had spoken. From one of the few inhabitants of the street they obtained the necessary information as to the situation and appearance of the house they desired to examine.

On reaching the spot one of the police agents, in obedience to the order of the civil lieutenant, knocked thrice at the door, and called out in a loud voice: "In the name of the king and of the law, open the door."

There was no reply.

"In any case," said the lieutenant, as he signed to the locksmith to set to work, "we have complied with the forms prescribed by law."

In two minutes the door was open, and the officers of the law eagerly pressed forward. Almost immediately, however, they drew back in alarm. No revolting spectacle met their eyes, but the whole place was filled with the acrid nauseating odor of blood. There could no longer

be any doubt about the matter. A crime had been committed, it was only too evident. After airing the room for some minutes the party entered the second apartment.

The body of George de Grancey stretched on the sofa was the first object that met their gaze. The blood that had escaped from his wound had stained his clothes and formed a great pool on the floor.

"The murder is only too evident," said the civil lieutenant to the judge, as he examined the body; "but I must confess that were it not for Mr. Le Vaillant's flight, which becomes a formidable weapon in our hands, it would be

difficult to convict him, for there is no proof of his having committed the deed."

"But his wife accuses him," remarked the judge.

"Would you condemn a man to death on the simple testimony of a spiteful woman?"

"Certainly not."

"Well, that is how matters stand just now. Madame Le Vaillant wishes to get rid of her

completely absorbed in studying the blood stains on the carpet.

"See!" he cried, pointing to some indistinctly marked footprints—marked in blood—that extended from the body to the door. "Here is another clue. If Oliver Le Vaillant's boots correspond with these marks there can no longer be any doubt of his guilt."

The judge assented, and the civil lieutenant

voice, "that the evidence is complete. The last link has been found, and the murderer will be unable to escape the scaffold, I promise you?" As he handed the fragment of paper to the judge the latter read:

ver Le Vaillant

the 24th of August, 1771.

It was a portion of the declaration written by

Oliver before the duel, and which he had afterwards taken from his adversary's body, and burnt. The paper had dropped from his hands before it was entirely consumed.

"Do you fully understand the great importance of this discovery?" continued the lieutenant impetuously. "Do you see that this is a decisive proof of the murderer's guilt? For what is it necessary for us to prove? Naturally that Le Vaillant was on the spot at the time the murder was committed. This is the murderer's signature. As a mere signature it would be valueless, or nearly so. But look at the date. It was on the evening of the 23rd that the Marquis left his residence never to return. It was on the 24th—and consequently the night before his flight—that Oliver Le Vaillant affixed his signature to this paper, which is stained with the blood of his victim. Therefore Oliver Le Vaillant was in this house when the crime was



"THE EVENTS OF HIS LIFE SINCE HIS MARRIAGE CROWDED IN HIS MIND WITH THE RUSH AND CONFUSION OF THE WHIRLWIND."

husband. Why? I cannot say. But it is plain as daylight that she does. Let us endeavor to find the reason, I have no doubt we shall hit it. And first of all let us go to work systematically, beginning by examining the premises, and taking note of the smallest details. Then we will have the Marquis' remains transferred to his residence. It will be desirable also to send the news of his death to the ministry and to his family."

One of the police agents had taken his place at the toilette table, ready to act as the civil lieutenant's secretary, but the magistrate, instead of dictating the *procès-verbal* which the law required should be drawn out, appeared to be

continued his search. As he knelt on the carpet endeavoring to ascertain the relative positions of the murderer and his victim, he suddenly descried in a remote corner a morsel of paper, which bore evident traces of fire. Picking it up he took it to the window for examination. It proved to be a small triangular portion of a large sheet of paper which had, with the exception of this fragment, been consumed. On it were traced some characters which were still perfectly legible.

As his eye followed the handwriting the civil lieutenant uttered a cry of amazement.

"What is it?" asked the judge eagerly.

"It is this," replied the other in a triumphant

committed; and it was he who committed it!"

The civil judge bent to the higher judgment and perspicacity of his superior. Nothing remained to be done but to draw up the *procès-verbal*, which was written on the spot. The body of the marquis was then placed on an extemporized litter and carried to his residence, where it was to lie in state for some days.

After attending to the funeral preparations, the civil lieutenant returned to Ingouville to keep his promise to Madame Le Vaillant.

He found Carmen reclining in a studied attitude on the sofa. Her face was very pale and her eyes were red and swollen with weeping. The magistrate was completely deceived, and