

ay behind them, Carmen remained in her horse and said to her companions:

"We must separate here. I will take about an hour's lead of you and you must keep that distance between us."

"Very well, madame."  
"You will stop at Saint-Nasaire."  
"At what inn?"

"The *Bréton Armes*."  
"And what shall we do?"  
"Maintain your disguises. Get your meals in the common hall. When you see me going in and out, pretend not to know me. You understand?"

"Perfectly, madame."  
And Carmen galloped ahead.  
At nine o'clock, she dismounted at the hotel of master Le Huédé.

The worthy host received her with all the voluble hospitality for which he was famous. He served the stranger an elaborate breakfast in a private room, and was charmed with his handsome face and elegant manners.

Carmen questioned the inn-keeper on a number of insignificant points and his answers were both ready and diffuse.

She then prepared the way to sound him about his knowledge of Oliver. But the good man was proof against all her trickery. He feigned absolute ignorance in such an honest, simple manner, that Carmen felt altogether disconcerted and finally gave up any further attempt on her fidelity.

Abruptly finishing her breakfast, she took up hat and prepared to go out.

"You wish to see the curiosities of the country," said mine host.

"Precisely."

"Shall I detail some one to accompany you?"

"Thank you. I will get along alone."

"When will you dine?"

"At five."

Carmen stepped downstairs, passed through the hall where she saw her disguised officers, and went forth.

"I mistrust the handsome youth," murmured the inn-keeper. "I fear he is intriguing against master Oliver. At any rate I will follow him."

But he had not the time to do this, for the post just then arrived, with great noise and in a cloud of dust, and stopped in front of his tavern. He had to go forward to meet the new arrival.

This consisted of a tall, lank, ugly personage who, slipping out of his seat, with awkward gesture and motion, exclaimed:

"Caramba! I am used up."

Carmen, on recognizing the individual from a little distance, became as pale as death. She rushed forward to meet her brother, before he had time to speak to the inn-keeper, and seizing Morales by the hand, she said to Le Huédé:

"This gentleman is a relative. I expected him. I will go up with him to my room. Do you need anything, my dear cousin?"

"I am dying of hunger and thirst."

"A second breakfast then," said the Gitana to the host, "and another bottle of your Canary wine."

Morales after taking his valise from the vehicle, followed Carmen upstairs.

When they were alone, the latter said:

"Morales, your presence frightens me. Speak, speak quick. What is it?"

"What is it? Why, we are lost."

"Lost?"

"Yes, without resource or escape."

"Explain yourself. Where is the danger?"

"Tancred de Najac, your first husband, your only lawful husband....."

"Is not dead?"

"He is living. He is in France. He has discovered us. And what is worse, Tancred and Quirino, now reconciled, are working together for our destruction."

Carmen stood a moment as if overwhelmed. Recovering however, she exclaimed:

"It is terrible. But let the danger be ever so great, I will fight to the end."

She would have said more, but the door opened and the inn-keeper entered with Morales' breakfast.

## LVIII.

## THE FAIRIES' GLEN.

"Now, brother," said Carmen forcing herself to be calm, when the inn-keeper had left the room, "tell me your story as briefly as possible. You understand, of course, how necessary it is that I should know all that has happened. So you mean to say that Tancred has risen from the dead and is at Havre with Quirino?"

"He is."

"And you have seen them?"

"I more than saw them. Alas! I was their prisoner, and what is more, had it not been for the extra amount of daring and cleverness it has pleased Heaven to bestow upon me, I should be a prisoner yet."

"Bah!" cried Carmen, shrugging her shoulders, "it is no question of either your daring or cleverness, but of the danger that threatens us. Tancred and Quirino know that you escaped from the wreck of the *Marsouin*, and that is even more than I care that they should know, but they do not know that I too escaped, and that the Gitana Carmen has assumed the name and the place of Annunziata Rovero. They are not aware of this, are they?"

"They know it all," groaned Morales.

"It cannot be. They could be sure of it only after seeing me."

Morales offered no reply, and Carmen continued in an impatient tone:

"Who can have told them the truth? Can it have been you, Morales? Were you mad enough to do such a thing?"

The Gitano replied with a downward motion of the head. Carried off by an irresistible burst of rage Carmen brought her fist down upon the table.

"Coward! wretch! you have lost us!"

Then almost immediately resuming her self-command she proceeded in a calm voice to question her brother.

"But what made you betray us? You must have had a most powerful reason for speaking out?"

"I had a rope round my neck," said Morales piteously. "I did my best to put them off the track, but Tancred scented the lie at once. I had to choose between freedom and the gallows, and I lost heart."

"So in order to save your life you confessed the whole story?"

"Yes."

"Do Tancred and Quirino know that I am in Brittany, and my object in coming here? Do they know where to find me?"

"Alas, yes!"

"In that case they will lose no time in following you."

"That is only too evident. Fortunately I had a few hours' start."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Certain. They would only discover my escape at daybreak. Then they must have lost time in procuring post-horses, while I did not lose a minute. So we have at least time to make our escape."

"Escape!" said Carmen proudly. "Escape! Give up like a coward both my fortune and my revenge. You little know me, Morales, if you think that I intend retreating before the enemy. No, no! I will hold my position at any price, and fight to the last—either for victory or death, and I am sure that I shall succeed. But I do not want to hinder your escape, brother. If you want to be off, go."

"And leave you!" cried Morales, fascinated by his sister's enthusiasm, "never! I remain with you, and trust to you to find a means for extricating me with yourself from this dangerous position."

"So be it. But I insist on one condition. You must pledge yourself to absolute obedience."

"I swear to obey you in every thing. Whatever you tell me to do I will do."

"Good. Finish your meal as quickly as possible, for we must start at once."

"Start again," cried the Gitano in a piteous tone, "whither?"

"For Savenay."

"How are we to travel?"

"In the carriage that brought me here."

"But, my dear sister, I am almost dead. I cannot survive travelling in that infernal machine."

"Morales," said Carmen dryly, "obey me, or leave me."

"I will go," returned Morales in a despairing voice. And to make up for his disappointment he attacked with new vigor the viands before him.

Meanwhile Carmen had given orders to put the horses to at once. The landlord returned almost immediately with the unwelcome news that the horses were completely broken and that it would be impossible for the gentlemen to resume their journey that day.

Carmen was for a moment dismayed at this information, but she soon made up her mind as to the course to be pursued.

"Did you not tell me a little while ago," she asked, "that two peasants had arrived at your inn with a pair of horses that closely resemble my own?"

The landlord had certainly said so; and what was more the two men were still below. At Carmen's request one of them was shown up, and after a little haggling an arrangement was made by which the gentlemen were to have the use of the horses for an indefinite time, the two peasants remaining at the inn till their return.

Half an hour later Morales and Carmen were on the road to Savenay; the former dividing his attention between the precious valise strapped behind him and the relation of his encounter with Tancred and Quirino. On her side the Gitana was dividing her interest between her brother's story and the appearance of the road they were following. It was not however upon the picturesque Breton scenery that she was intent, but upon a bold scheme the detail of which she was industriously evolving in her mind.

Some three miles from Savenay the travelers reached a narrow deep ravine through which a noisy mountain torrent chafed its way over a rocky bed. This ravine was known as the Fairies' Glen. It was spanned by a massive stone bridge, the single arch of which rose to a height of forty feet above the stream, connecting the dangerous zig-zag road on either side. Nor was the passage of the bridge without its dangers, as was testified by the number of black wooden crosses, some old and worm-eaten, others new and freshly painted, erected to the memory of the unfortunate travelers who had found a tomb in the rocky bed below. The sides of the bridge were guarded by a very low parapet and the whole place was plunged, even by day, in a deep gloom produced by the thick foliage of a number of huge oaks that overshadowed it. Altogether it was one of the last spots that one would care to pass either with a restive horse or a careless driver.

On the middle of the bridge Carmen stopped and looked eagerly around her.

"What are you doing?" asked Morales.

"Don't you see that I am looking?"

"Queer taste! There is nothing uglier than this infernal scenery. The mere thought that

I passed this chasm this morning at a gallop gives me the shivers. Fortunately I had the curtains down, and I could not see the danger I was in. Had I known it I should have died of fright. It was a miracle that we did not roll over into that devil's hole there."

"You are right, brother," said Carmen meditatively, "it was almost a miracle. Don't you think," she continued in the same tone, "that a cool and courageous man who wished to get rid of an enemy and knew that his enemy would pass this spot, could bring about his wish with very little trouble, and that the voice of the people, which, we are told, is the voice of God, would ascribe to chance an accident that had been skilfully prepared?"

Morales stared at his sister a moment, and then broke into a hideous laugh.

"Caramba!" he cried. "I understand! Right once more! I flatter myself that I sometimes have good ideas, but I never should have thought of this! What a head-piece you have got. By my soul, Carmen, you are a perfect genius!"

Without acknowledging her brother's praises, Carmen gave the rein to her horse, and galloped up the ascent that led past the old oaks.

Brother and sister arrived at Savenay without exchanging another word, and put up at the inn Carmen had left that morning, and where she had left her carriage and baggage.

As soon as she was shown to her room the Gitana sent for the host, and after assuring herself that travelers bound from Havre to St. Nasaire would be sure to pass that way she engaged all the post-horses belonging to the inn. Then enlisting the landlord's sympathies by confiding to him that she was a Government agent employed in watching the movements of two State criminals who would probably arrive at the inn that night, a piece of deception that was readily believed by the inn-keeper on production of the warrant issued against Oliver Le-Vallant by the civil lieutenant of Havre—she gave orders that all travellers putting up at the inn must be detained under pretence of there being no horses, until such time as she might think fit to let them pursue their journey.

Having given the inn-keeper his instructions she completed her preparations by sending Morales—notwithstanding his protestations of fatigue—to purchase a long, stout piece of rope. This done she allowed her brother to take the rest he so much needed, and retired to her own room, where she changed her clothes for a blue coat, red waistcoat and red pantaloons. Then after putting out the light she threw herself full dressed as she was, on the bed, to watch for the arrival of her victims.

About two in the morning she was startled by a noise in the street, and sitting up, listened eagerly.

## LVIII.

## DEVIL'S WORK.

The noise heard by the Gitana speedily resolved itself into a clattering of horses' hoofs and rolling of wheels, which appeared to stop in front of the inn.

In a moment Carmen was at the window, but it was so dark and the panes were so dirty that she was only able to make out a pair of smoking horses, and a heavy carriage, from which two men heavily muffled were alighting.

In a few moments a knock was heard at the door. Carmen opened and discovered the landlord who had come to announce the arrival of two guests. The two gentlemen, he said, had been very anxious to continue their journey, but according to his instructions he had informed them that no horses were to be had just then. The gentlemen were even then waiting downstairs while supper was being prepared.

Could the landlord describe the new arrivals, Carmen asked.

Yes; both were young. The one a handsome young gentleman of twenty-five or twenty-six, wearing the dress uniform of a naval officer.

The other was evidently a foreigner; a dark bronzed man with long black hair and a decided foreign accent. For that matter, he added, the young gentleman (meaning Carmen) could easily have a look at them through the window which gave on the yard.

Carmen readily embraced this suggestion, without, however, betraying her eagerness. The landlord conducted her into the yard, and peeping through the dim window panes she recognised, with a beating heart, Tancred and Quirino, her own and Morales' bitterest enemies.

Pressing tan gold peices into the innkeeper's hand she bid him observe the strictest silence and saddle her own and her friends' horses and lead them a hundred yards down the street in the direction of St. Nasaire, where he was to wait. An hour later he was to inform the newcomers that horses had been procured, and that they could resume their journey.

Swiftly returning upstairs Carmen made her way to her brother's room. Morales was plunged in a heavy lethargic sleep. Twice she called him, but he made no reply. And last she shook him by the shoulder. With a sudden start he awoke and looked around in bewilderment.

"What is the matter?" he cried excitedly.

"What do you want with me? By all the saints of Estremadura what is going on in this devil's own house?"

"Get up, Morales," Carmen whispered in his ear. "Get up! The hour is come. The enemy is here!"

The Gitano turned pale.

"What?" he murmured, half dead with fright, "Tancred and Quirino?"

"They are here."

The Spaniard's face became perfectly livid, heavy drops of perspiration formed on his forehead, and he could hardly muster strength enough to ejaculate:

"All is lost! Let us get away if there is still time."

"Are you mad, Morales?" returned Carmen sternly. "Or do you forget that we came here on purpose to find those from whom you want to run away? Be a man and I promise you that an hour hence the danger you fear so much will no longer exist."

The Gitano, as we know, had a firm belief in his sister's genius. Her words reassured him. Passing over his shoulder the thong that held his valise he asked what he was to do.

"Take the rope and come downstairs," was Carmen's order.

Softly creeping down the stairs they made their way into the street without meeting any one. The landlord was waiting at the appointed place; the brother and sister mounted their horses, and with a last recommendation from Carmen to the Boniface not to forget to let his two guests have horses an hour afterwards, the two galloped off. It was a bright starlit night and they made their way without any difficulty to their destination. Half an hour after leaving the inn they drew up at the bridge over the Fairies' Glen.

Dismounting they led their horses into the brushwood on one side of the road and securely fastened them to a tree.

"Now to work!" whispered Carmen, and the brother and sister set with a will about the preparations for the devil's work they meditated.

At the exact spot where the zig-zag road made a last and sharp turn before touching the bridge stood two immense oaks, one on each side of the road. To these Morales tied the rope at a height of about two feet above the ground, it thus formed a perfectly taut, but almost imperceptible barrier extending from one side of the highway to the other.

"Are you sure your knots are fast?" Carmen asked.

"I would answer for them with my life," her fellow-conspirator replied. "The suddenness and violence of the shock may break the rope, but the knots will never give."

"Still we must be ready for a mischance," continued Carmen. "We may possibly fail—"

"And then?"

"And then—how many pistols have you in your belt?"

"Four."

"Give me two. And remember, if it is necessary to use them, every shot must tell."

"Very good," returned the Spaniard, handing a pair of pistols to his companion. "If the rope does prove a failure, powder and shot will not."

The two then took up their position on the trunk of a fallen tree, at a point whence they could command the road and the bridge, but where they were hidden from any one who might be passing.

For some time they sat in silence occupied with their own thoughts.

"Listen!" whispered Carmen suddenly, laying her hand on her brother's arm, "I think I hear the noise of wheels."

Morales listened a moment.

"You are right," he said. "They are coming sure enough. If the poor devils want to commend their souls to God they had better be quick about it."

Just then a carriage appeared at the top of the incline. It was drawn by two horses which a postilion was urging on at a tremendous pace. Down the hill it swept like a hurricane to the spot where the conspirators were concealed.

Morales was unable to look upon what he knew must follow. He turned away his head. Carmen, panting with excitement, looked on as if fascinated.

Suddenly the two horses stumbled and fell together. The lantern that hung in front of the carriage disappeared. The carriage itself disappeared. The horses disappeared. A triple cry of agony rose into the clear night. Then followed a strange crashing noise. Then all was quiet except the rushing of the stream beneath.

(To be continued.)

## THE BALL NIGHT.

Quietly opened the library door—so quietly that I should scarcely have noticed it had not my keen ear detected at the same moment the soft rustle of a woman's garment as it swept over the threshold. I guessed at once who it was, and I knew, without a doubt, as soon as she crossed the floor. That step, so velvet, some would have said so "catty" (I did), could belong to no one but my stepmother. I was anxious to know what brought her there, for she was no lover of books, while she had a perfect horror of accounts. I was not kept long in ignorance of her intentions.

"Mr. Hastings," she said, addressing my father, who sat dozing in his old-fashioned arm-chair, "I want you to insist upon Ellen's going to the ball to-night. I have said and done all I could, but she is determined to stay at home. Won't you, for once, use your authority?"

"What do I care whether she goes or stays? What does it matter to anybody? Let the girl enjoy herself in her own way."

"But you ought to care if you don't, Mr. Hastings. I do wish you would take a little more interest in your family affairs, and not leave everything to me to see to."

She spoke in a grieved tone.