

THE MORNING

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THE GITANA.

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

XLIII. (Continued.)

He raised up the lifeless corpse and laid it out on that same couch where an hour before the marquis twined his arms around the waist of Carmen.

He took from the Marquis' pocket his own declaration, which was now useless; he burned it in a candle flame; he left the house, locking the door behind him and throwing the key into the thick bushes, he descended, with great strides, towards Havre.

Reaching the vessel, he hailed the watch.

"Is the captain on board?"

"Yes, sir; he is asleep in the cabin."

"Wake him up and tell him I want to speak to him."

The captain dressed in a hurry and repaired to his superior.

Oliver had a short conference with him. Then, the captain returning on board, gave orders that all should be made ready for sailing with the morning tide.

This was in obedience to the wishes of Oliver who had decided on hastening his departure by twelve hours.

In the meantime Carmen was sleeping profoundly. She was awakened at an early hour by great noises in the adjoining room. On inquiry, she learned that a number of sailors were busy carrying off her trunks and other baggage.

"Why this haste?" thought Carmen.

She arose and dressed rapidly.

As she was completing her toilet, a rap was heard at the door.

"Come in," said she.

Oliver stood on the threshold.

"Ah! it is you. I was precisely going to meet you for the purpose of inquiring why you were ordering my baggage down to the ship so early?"

"I gave the order because, for certain reasons which you will soon learn, I have thought proper to hasten our departure by twelve hours. Instead of the evening tide, we shall take the morning tide."

Carmen was startled by this news and had to lean on a piece of furniture for support.

XLIV.

POISON AND ANTIDOTE.

Oliver pretended not to notice the emotion of his wife.

"After all, my dear Annunziata," said he, "what difference can it make to you when we leave—you have no one to see before your departure."

"Oliver," murmured the young woman, "when you proposed this long voyage yesterday I yielded without resistance."

"You yielded certainly, but not without a little resistance."

"Well, if I asked you a little favor, would you grant it?"

"That depends. I must know what the favor is."

"Something very simple."

"Yes, but what is it?"

"I beg you not to sail till this evening."

"I regret to have to refuse you."

"Why?"

"You will soon know."

"Why not now?"

"Because the time has not come."

Carmen's brow darkened and she changed her tone.

"So it is decided. You will not grant my request?"

"I may not."

"You insist on sailing this morning."

"I insist."

"Very well. I will be ready—"

Oliver smiled.

"I expected this much of you," said he. "I will leave now, but will soon return."

He took Carmen's hand, but it was cold as ice.

He had scarcely closed the door behind him, when the Gitana's face was suddenly inflamed with an expression of anger and hatred.

"Ah!" she muttered, "he is rushing to his own

ruin. I did not desire his death. I will make a last attempt to prevent it. If that fails, I will use my arms and follow out my destiny."

She then resolved to leave her husband's house and take refuge with the Marquis de Grancey.

She lost not a moment.

She flung her jewels in a casket, and took the gold which was left her.

She flung over her shoulders a hood man-

"Madam will pardon me. But I know my duty."

"I forbid you to follow me."

"M. Oliver has ordered it."

"Then you will disobey me?"

"I must obey my master."

"Ah! well,—I see—I am watched. The die is cast and I will be free."

She returned to her chamber, took off her



"THE POISON DROPPED NOISELESSLY INTO OLIVER'S GLASS."

tilla and wrapping herself therein, turned down a hidden staircase. The door was bolted. She uttered a cry of rage.

"Am I a prisoner?"

She rushed back through her apartments and made straightway for the main stairs. In the antechamber, Zephyr was seated on a low stool.

He arose on seeing Carmen.

"Where are you going?" she said.

"I accompany madam."

"It is needless."

mantilla, laid the casket on a table, hid in her corsage the red phial of Morales and waited.

Three quarters of an hour later, Zephyr announced breakfast.

She went into the breakfast room, where Oliver in travelling costume, was expecting her.

Husband and wife took seats face to face.

Zephyr, with napkin on arm, stood behind his master.

"Oliver," said Carmen, "this man disobeyed me a moment ago and answered me with the

greatest insolence. Please, order him from my presence."

Oliver at once said to Zephyr, "Madame Le-Vallant accuses you. Therefore, you must be in the wrong. Retire at once."

"Whom shall I send in my place?"

"No one. I will help madame and help myself."

Carmen was delighted.

Her husband offered her several dishes which she refused.

"I have no appetite this morning," she said. "Accept at least a drop of that Val de Penal which you like so much."

"Yes, I will take a little."

"Hand me your glass."

And he filled her glass nearly full. His own glass he only half filled.

"Thank you," said the young woman, looking around, as if search of something.

"What do you desire?"

"Those almond cakes which we always have with the Spanish wine."

"Oh! there they are on the sideboard."

He rose from his chair and went to get them.

He had scarcely turned his back when Carmen bent forward. She held the red phial in her hand. The poison dropped noiselessly into Oliver's glass.

This was done with the swiftness of lightning and before the young man had reached the sideboard.

When he returned, holding the large platter of cakes in his hand, the Gitana was quietly seated and the phial had disappeared.

Oliver walked slowly; a terrible pallor overspread his face.

He placed the cakes before Carmen, sat down, took up his glass and said:

"This wine has an admirable color—"

"It has, indeed."

Oliver approached the glass to his lips.

The dancing girl fixed upon him a ravenous look.

He lowered his hand.

"My dear Annunziata," said he, "we shall drink to the success of our trip."

"I am willing."

He raised his glass again and said:

"Let us drink at the same time."

His lips touched the wine.

For the third time he stopped:

"Do you know," said he, "the old proverb: If you drink in my glass you will read my thoughts. I want to know your thoughts, to-day. Let us exchange glasses."

The blood ran cold in Carmen's veins.

Oliver took her glass and drained it.

Carmen reeled in her chair.

"Take care, Annunziata," exclaimed Oliver. "At seeing you tremble thus, one might suspect that you poured out poison to me."

"Poison," she cried wildly, "poison....." Do you accuse me?"

"No, I do not. But why do you not drink?"

A sudden thought darted through Carmen's brain.

"I have the antidote of Morales. I am invulnerable."

And raising the glass, she drank it to the last drop.

She looked her husband full in the face, and asked in a firm voice:

"Are you satisfied? Do you still doubt?"

"Oh! unhappy woman. I do not doubt. I have seen the crime and the punishment. The glass over the sideboard revealed your action to me. Go now and meet your lover. I have killed him and—"

At these words, Carmen shrieked and fell rigid on the floor.

Oliver rushed from the room and ordered Zephyr to saddle at once his fleet Arab mare. He then went into his own apartment, girded around his loins a belt full of coin, slipped two pistols into the same and went down into the yard. There his horses waited him. He vaulted lightly into the saddle.

"You are going, master," said Zephyr, handing him the bridle.

"Yes, I am going."

"Alone?"

"As you see."