

# THE GITANA

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

XXXIX.—Continued.

Moralès drew back from the letter his sister held out to him as though it had been a rattlesnake on the point of springing at him.

"I!" he repeated three times in three different tones. "I indeed! no, no, no!"

"Do you refuse to do me this service?" asked Carmen.

"Such a service as that! Yes, decidedly I refuse!"

"Why so?"

"Why! By St. James of Compostella, that is a queer question! Because I have no wish to become your accomplice and to help in compromising you in a manner that must inevitably lead to our ruin!"

"So you prefer that I should employ one of the servants who will betray me, as you were saying just now. Do you think that my fortune, and consequently your own, will be more firmly assured by my placing myself at the mercy of a scoundrel lackey who will sell my secret to Oliver for a few pieces of gold?"

Moralès scratched his head meditatively.

"What will the Marquis de Grancey think," he murmured, "at seeing a noble Spanish gentleman, such as Don Guzman Moralès y Tullipano, Oliver Le Vaillant's guest and confidential friend, forget himself so far as to constitute himself the go-between from Oliver's wife to him? It would be an unworthy and an ignoble part to play!"

"Do you consider the part you are playing here, in plundering your benefactor, less ignoble or less unworthy?"

"Hush! my dear sister. In the name of our Lady of Atocha, and of all the saints in Paradise, speak lower. What the deuce! I am steward—I do my work conscientiously."

"And I let you do as you please, therefore you should be grateful enough to help me when I need you."

"You certainly appeal most successfully to my feelings, and before very long I shall be unable to refuse you anything. But first of all I must try once more to open your eyes to the danger you are about to incur. My poor unhappy Carmen, have you never reflected on the disastrous results to which this insane passion of yours must lead?"

"Never."

"Well, there is time yet. Stop before it is too late! Be prudent! Do not give your husband the right to insist on a separation, for a separation would be fatal to you."

"On the contrary," broke in Carmen, "it would be the saving of me!"

Moralès stared in astonishment.

"Yes," insisted his sister, "the saving of me. A separation means happiness for me—happiness and wealth!"

"Wealth!" Moralès re-echoed.

"Yes, wealth. Have you forgotten my dowry of two millions, of which it will be impossible to deprive me?"

"Have you forgotten the other twelve millions that remain with your husband? Two millions! why it is sheer beggary when for the liking one can have fourteen!"

"My husband's fortune will never be mine. He is young and strong."

"What does that prove? Youth and strength are no preservatives against accident. Oliver is a thorough horseman, a good swimmer and extremely fond of hunting—three sources of danger already. He may be thrown from his horse, he may be drowned, or killed while hunting. And I leave out the chance of his being killed in a duel. For aught you know his days may be already numbered."

Carmen's eyes glistened. "You are right, Moralès," she said after a pause; "twelve millions are worth some trouble. Fear nothing, I will take care of myself."

you. So you may be perfectly satisfied. You will win the Marquis's esteem, and will probably return with some more solid marks of his favor."

"Well, your word is enough, little sister," returned Moralès, rubbing his hands expectantly. "You may count on my bringing back in person the Marquis's reply."

XL.

IN WHICH CARMEN AND OLIVER FALL OUT, BUT MORALES AND CARMEN ARE OF ONE MIND.

A month had passed since Moralès had un-

on the wharf where the vessel lay in which he intended to sail.

On the morning of the third day he presented himself in his wife's apartments, much to her surprise.

"My dear Annunziata," he began, "could you spare me a few moments? I want to have a brief but serious conversation with you."

Carmen was not a little disturbed at her husband's words, but she was too good an actress to allow her countenance to betray the trouble she felt, and with a smiling countenance she gave her assent.

"Forgive me," continued Oliver, "if my words reopen an old wound. I would wish to spare you all painful emotion, but unfortunately that is impossible. I want to speak to you about your father."

Carmen trembled.

"I know how you loved that good man," he proceeded; "I know how bitterly you regret him. I too regret him bitterly. Don José and my father were as brothers to one another. Weep without constraint before me, Annunziata, for I can mingle my tears with yours."

Carmen bent her head, not to hide her tears, but to avoid meeting her husband's piercing gaze. A new and vague terror seized upon her. Her husband went on:

"My father owed everything to your father. So also your father owed everything to my father. On neither of the two did the debt of gratitude weigh heavy. You are as well acquainted as I am with my father's last and two-fold promise to Don José Rovero. The first part of this promise related to you only, Annunziata, the last part concerned your father's fortune, which had been shattered by a succession of misfortunes. The first part of the promise has been kept; you are rich and bear an honored name. The time has now come for the acquittal of the second part of the promise. I think, and I believe that you will think with me, that I

can not better prove my love and veneration for the memory of your father than by devoting myself body and mind to setting his affairs right. Instead, therefore, of sending an agent to Havana, I intend going myself."

"What!" cried Carmen, hardly able to conceal her joy. "You are going, Oliver?"

"When I say 'I am going,' I mean of course 'we are going,'" returned Oliver with a smile. "We!" exclaimed Carmen in consternation. "Do you intend taking me, then?"

"Certainly I do. I have no intention of leaving you behind."

"But it can not be!" cried Carmen wildly.

"Why not, pray?"

"The idea of such a long voyage is unbearable. The mere sight of a ship is enough to recall to my mind all the horrors of my last voyage."

"I can perfectly understand that such recollections are painful, yet it seems to me that they should give you confidence since the divine protection was so marvellously extended to you that you alone survived the shipwreck."

"Perhaps you are right, Oliver. But I am



"DE GRANCEY DROPPED HIS SWORD, HEAVED A DEEP SIGH AND FELL DEAD ON THE CARPET."

"And you will have nothing to say to the Marquis?"

"I do not promise that; but I will take all precautions possible, and as the secret is known only to us three, we may be sure that it will be well kept."

"So you insist," asked Moralès with a sigh, "on my undertaking your commission?"

"I do, in our common interest. Our future success renders it necessary, and you know it as well as I."

The Gitano, convinced, but dissatisfied, shrugged his shoulders and took the letter.

"Have you any further commands for me?" he asked.

"One only. Go to the Marquis after night-fall. Of course you will take care to give the letter into his own hands. I have told him what the relations between us are."

"You don't mean to say that you told him that I am your brother?"

"I told him that you are an old friend of my father, that you have known me from my childhood; that you are absolutely devoted to me and that I have the most perfect confidence in

undertaken the errand to the Marquis de Grancey.

One day Oliver, instead of staying at home as had been his custom for some time past, betook himself to his counting-house, in which he had hardly set foot since his father's death. Here he spent the day in examining the books and in drawing up a statement of the condition of his business. He also provided himself with circular notes on the principal houses in Europe and America, issued powers of attorney to some of his nearest friends who were to act for him in his absence, and, in short, made all the necessary preparations for a long and extended voyage.

In the evening he returned to Ingouville. Carmen, whose guilty conscience had tormented her all day, was unable to remark any change in her husband's manner towards her, with the single exception of his contenting himself with taking her hand, instead of kissing it, as was his usual custom.

Two days passed without an incident worthy of notice. Oliver passed the whole of the time