

THE MORNING

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THE GITANA.

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

XXXVII.

THE AWAKENING.

A year had passed since the marriage of Carmen and Oliver. We may briefly summarize as follows the events that had taken place during this time.

A few days after the wedding Moralès had, according to his sister's promise, been received in the merchant's household.

Introduced by Carmen as a protégé, almost a friend, of her father's, in whom Don José had placed the most implicit confidence, he was affectionately received by old Le Vaillant. Indeed but for Carmen's timely intervention he would have been immediately installed as cashier and controller of the business, but his sister was too unwilling to allow the millions to which she hoped to succeed to pass through the hands of her brother, of whose rapacity she had had only too convincing proof. So Moralès found himself installed in a non-descript but withal very comfortable position in the establishment at Ingouville. In his capacity half as steward and half as factotum, in which he was treated on a footing of perfect equality by his employers, he set all his stock of ingenuity to work at carrying out a system of petty pilfering, on the proceeds of which he was rapidly growing rich. Philip and Oliver, it is almost needless to say, had too much confidence in him, as one of Don José's most trusted followers, ever to dream of what was going on.

Carmen, on the contrary, had her eyes open and none of her brother's little schemes escaped her vigilance. She was compelled, however, much against her will to say nothing. She was at her brother's mercy and any exposure of his dishonesty would only lead to an exposure of the great fraud in which she had so successfully embarked.

Oliver had hardly awakened from the happiness of his honeymoon, when he was overtaken by a misfortune which was the more cruel in as much as it was unexpected.

One day at table Philip Le Vaillant was suddenly stricken down with apoplexy before his guests, and died without being able to breathe a parting blessing on his son.

Carmen did her best to carry off the part of a sorrowing daughter, but though her tears were both frequent and plentiful she did not this time completely succeed in deceiving her husband. For the first time he was able to penetrate the mask she knew so well how to assume. The thoughts he read in her heart filled him with dismay. Good God, he thought, if she did not love my poor old father, whom on earth is she capable of loving. For the first time, too, he began to entertain a doubt of his wife's love for him. Henceforth he was miserable. He soon came to understand that the tenderness with which he had regarded her during the first few months of their marriage was due merely to the admiration he felt for her beauty; nothing more. Now the dream had passed, and he was fully awake to the bitterness of the remorse it left behind. Remorse, for Oliver asked himself if he had not committed an evil action when he thought he was fulfilling a duty; if he really had had the right to sacrifice his oath to his obedience to the wishes of his father, and if he had not done wrong in giving up Dinorah's confiding love for the doubtful affection of Don José's daughter.

"I indeed owed Annunziata a fortune," he would argue with himself, "but I did not owe her my whole life! I had no right to deceive for her the dear child whose heart I have broken! I have acted like a madman, and my unhappiness is of my own making."

The result of such bitter reflexions as these was only what could have been expected. Oliver's love for Dinorah, which had never entirely expired, blazed up fiercely once more. His heart took to itself wings and flew off to the happy Breton land where his true love lived in retirement.

"Lost to me for ever!" was the burden of his thoughts at this time. "For what have I now to live?"

Carmen, for her part, was no happier than her husband. She was deeply hurt and enraged. She had seen her hopes deceived and her dreams destroyed at the same time that Oliver



"ZEPHYR," RESUMED OLIVER IN A TONE OF SEVERITY, "WHAT DO YOU MEAN?"

had awakened from his dream. Until the time of Philip Le Vaillant's death she had only been indifferent to her husband. Now she positively hated him. And this is how it came about.

The Gitana, as we know, was under the sway of two impetuous, unrestrainable, and irresistible passions: pride and ambition. She had hoped by the aid of the immense fortune of Philip Le Vaillant and his son to satisfy these passions to the full and to drink the cup of pleasure to the dregs. With gold there was nothing beyond her reach. A little, she had determined, should be hers. She and her husband would take up their residence in Paris or at Versailles, and plunge into the vortex of pleasure at the court.

But on the day when Oliver entered into full possession of his princely fortune Carmen found out her mistake. She had far from appreciated her husband's character. He was no man to care for the pleasures of Paris or the dissipation of the court at Versailles. To her rage and

disgust she learned that she was doomed to a tame lifeless existence at Havre.

The disappointment was almost too much for her. She grew listless, pale and thin; took to brooding until her husband remarked the change and asked the cause. She put him off with an excuse.

Finally a reaction came. Her *ennui* disappeared. She had discovered a remedy, the best of remedies for *ennui*—a distraction.

This distraction was no other than a handsome gentleman.

The Marquis George de Grancey, Governor of Havre, was the gentleman in question whose attentions had operated the wonderful change in Carmen's appearance.

A thorough *roué*, like most of the gentlemen at the court of Louis XV, the Marquis had sense enough not to intrude himself on the newly married couple during the honeymoon. He knew full well that too premature and marked attentions would only injure his prospects. He

satisfied himself therefore for some months with frequent visits to the house at Ingouville in order to accustom Madam Le Vaillant to his presence. He also profited by these occasions to study the turn things were only too plainly taking between husband and wife. Thus the coolness that had recently sprung up was fully known to him, and he now only awaited a favorable opportunity to indulge in more marked and unmistakable attentions. The chance he wished for was not far off.

Since the day when he came to understand the altered relations between himself and his wife, Oliver too had become a totally changed man. The presence of Carmen was insupportable to him, and he began to indulge his humor by taking long strolls and excursions into the neighboring country where he would brood for hours together over his unhappiness. These absences, at first few, and far between, became more and more frequent.

The marquis was too clever a man to let such occasions slip. While Oliver was sighing over his lost love he was entertaining Madame Le Vaillant with his pleasant conversation and by no means unacceptable attentions.

In justice to Carmen, however, it must be said that her admirer found this conquest he had set his heart upon a difficult one. She was immensely flattered and pleased at having so great a gentleman at her feet, but she was coquette enough to receive his attentions with assumed indifference.

XXXVIII.

THE KIOSK.

Oliver, on account of his repeated absence from home, did not suspect what was going on.

On the other hand, the whole city bustled itself with the incessant visits of the Governor to Madame Le Vaillant, and the valets of the house gossiped about it among themselves.

This was more than Zephyr, the old servant of Philip, could tolerate. He fancied the honor of the family was compromised and was hurt in his own pride and self-respect.

"This must cease," said he, "or else some day my young master will learn from abroad the rumors that are circulating in his own house and the blow will be too severe for him. I do not want this to happen. I will admonish him myself."

Then, after a moment's reflexion, Zephyr, shaking his head, continued:

"Some people say that the whole truth should not always be told. What if Mr. Oliver were to get angry against me for telling him? Well, if he does, the fault will not be mine and I shall have done my duty."

The same night that Zephyr had formed this resolution, Oliver returned later than usual. He arrived just at the moment that supper was being served up.

As usual he touched with his lips the forehead of Carmen, sat down in face of her, helped her, helped himself, and after exchanging a few insignificant words, plunged again into that reverie which had become the best portion of his existence, as it transported him in spirit to Brittany, beside his Dinorah.

Carmen respected the silence of her husband. She too fell back upon her thoughts and at frequent intervals a sigh escaped her coral lips, while her great black eyes glanced at Oliver with a look of rallery and disdain.

"Poor fool," she often murmured, "incapable of appreciating the treasure which he possesses in me. He abandons me, the wealthy adventurer, the merchant's son, and at my feet I see a gentleman, a great lord, the noblest, the handsomest, the most refined of men. He loves me. He would give his escutcheon for one of my smiles; his soul for one of my kisses. My dream, my useless dream, alas! would be to set upon my brow the marquis' crown. Marquise de Grancey! oh!"

And Carmen's head would droop upon her breast.

After the repast, husband and wife retired to their respective apartments.

Zephyr, holding a torch in his hand, preceded Oliver into his bed-chamber and stood at the door awaiting his orders.