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THE GITANA.

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

CHAPTER XVIII.—

(Continued).

"Ah, Mademoiselle," cried Lemonnier, "you are right! The son is indeed worthy of his father. And Mr. Philip Le Vaillant is a chip of the old block, a man such as has never been seen before and will never be seen again."

"Oh, that I were rich!" said the dying man to himself once more. "Not one, but two, thousand livres would I give this worthy man, who can so well appreciate my old comrade."

Then he added aloud, addressing the captain: "Did Philip entrust you with nothing else for me but the message I received a fortnight ago?"

"Pardon me, Senor Don José, he bid me place myself and the vessel I command entirely at your service. I was to take my orders solely from you as though you were my owner, and I shall be only too happy to do so. Mr. Le Vaillant also informed me that I would have the honor of conveying you to France, where you are anxiously expected and will be right heartily received."

"My child," said Don José to Annunziata, "leave us together for a minute. I will call you back immediately. Kiss me, child, before you go." The young girl pressed her lips to her father's forehead and left the room.

"Come nearer the bed, captain," said Don José when the door was closed. "No one but you must hear what I have to say."

Lemonnier did as he was told, though not a little surprised at what seemed an unnecessary precaution. Don José continued in a low but perfectly distinct tone:

"Give me your closest attention, for the requests I am about to make to you are as solemn and as sacred as the last words and wishes of a dying man."

The captain bowed, still lost in amazement. "Before the end of the week you will weigh anchor and sail for Havre."

"With you, senor?"

"With my daughter, whom I confide to your Frenchman's honor, and your sailor's loyalty."

"What, senor! Do I understand that you will not accompany your daughter?"

"I shall be already gone," said the old man with a smile.

"To France?"

"No. On a longer journey than that. A journey from which there is no return."

The captain opened his eyes in astonishment. "A journey from which there is no return!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, the journey to the other world. Do you not understand? In two days, mayhap in two hours, but in any case before the time I have fixed for your departure I shall be dead."

"Dead! Impossible!"

"I must beg you, captain, not to speak so. Only two persons in the world know that I am doomed—Philip Le Vaillant and yourself. Be-

fore long a third person will have learnt this terrible secret—my daughter. The rest of the world will only learn it when they hear of my death. But let us drop the subject and return to the request I have to make. Are you married, captain?"

"Yes, senor. And what is more, I too have a daughter."

"In that case I have only one thing to ask of you. Take care of my child as you would of your own."

The captain's eyes filled with tears, and he put out his hand without saying a word. Don José understood the silent promise. In a few moments he continued.

"Philip Le Vaillant, you say, bid you place your vessel at my disposal?"

"Yes, senor."

"Then I will make use of the authority he has conferred upon me by requesting you to take no other passengers besides my daughter. I wish to spare my poor child any painful association. I wish her to forget her grief as soon as possible."

"I will religiously carry out your wishes, senor."

"One exception however, I make."

"In favor of whom?"

"In favor of a young French gentleman, whose name I beg you will not forget; the Che-

valier Tancred de Najac. This gentleman is an officer of the frigate "Thunderer," and he lodges with another Frenchman, one Elol Sandric, on the quay. You will remember all this?"

"Perfectly. Tancred de Najac, Elol Sandric. I never yet found my memory playing me false."

"You will be good enough to let the young gentleman know that a cabin is placed at his disposal, and you will accept no passage-money from him."

"In this as in the rest, senor, your wishes shall be carried out to the letter. But permit me to express my hope that your fears are unfounded."

"I cannot prevent you entertaining such hopes, but I can and do assure you that they are vain. You will, I trust, preserve the most complete silence on what I have told you. The blow will fall soon enough. And now I will have you shown to the room which you will occupy during your stay at Havana. I will not say farewell, for if death allow me time I will see you again. You are an honest man, captain. A dying man's blessing can do you no harm, and mine I give you with all my heart."

Don José called in Annunziata, and Mathurin Lemonnier left the room with a heavy heart.

gazing now at the shining stars, and now at the dark shadows in the garden below. Since the arrival of the "Marsouin" all her sinister forebodings had disappeared, and at this moment he was dreaming of the happiness that awaited her father and herself in the land beyond the sea. Little was she prepared for the cruel blow that was about to fall on her.

"Here I am, father," she returned, going to the bedside. "What do you want me for?"

"I want to tell you something very sad; something which will make your heart bleed, but which it is necessary that you should hear without any delay."

"Oh, my God!" murmured Annunziata. "What are you going to tell me? You frighten me, father. See how I am trembling."

"Courage, child! Do as I have just done. Ask God to give you strength to bear it."

"Father," said the girl, "this preparation is useless; it only frightens me; I picture to myself all kinds of trouble."

"Alas, my poor child, there is no kind of trouble that is impossible, and the truth will far surpass your most fatal presentiment."

Annunziata looked at her father with eyes dilated by terror, but said nothing. The old man went on.

"Take this key. It opens the upper drawer of the great ironwood cabinet in my study. In



"QUIRINO SEIZED MORALES BY THE COLLAR AND DRAGGED HIM FROM THE VOLANTE."

XIX.

LAST MOMENTS.

During the whole of the day following that on which the interview with Captain Lemonnier had taken place, Don José was comparatively easy. His disease seemed to give him a brief respite; his sufferings were less acute, and no new crisis declared itself. Yet with the strange prescience of a dying man, he saw that the end was fast coming on. Nor was he mistaken.

Night had fallen. Two tapers shed a faint light in the large bed-chamber, and gently flickering in the evening breeze that penetrated through the half-opened window, alternately lit up and cast into the shade the pale face of the dying man.

Don José felt his heart beating fiercely, as though it would burst through the walls of the prison of flesh that confined it. Never, until this moment, had the abnormal enlargement of the organ of life made itself so distinctly perceptible. His left hand, pressed against his side rose and fell with the violent pulsations. It became evident that the blood-vessels, swollen beyond endurance, might at any moment burst.

"At last, the time has come!" thought Don José. "God knows I have more courage to meet death than I have to break the news to my child that by to-morrow morning she will be an orphan."

And the old man raised his soul to the Almighty, and prayed for strength to carry him through the fearful ordeal before him.

"Annunziata, my child, come here, I want to speak to you."

The young girl was standing at the window

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