

The PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

by Gaston Leroux
Author of
THE MYSTERY OF THE YELLOW ROOM
and THE PERFUME OF THE LADY IN BLACK
Illustrations by M. G. Kettner
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SYNOPSIS.

Consternation is caused on the last night that the Opera is managed by Du-henne and Poligny because of the appearance of a ghost, said to have been in evidence on several previous occasions. Christine Daae, a member of the opera company, is called upon to fill a very important part and scores a great success. Count de Chagny and his brother Raoul are among those who applaud the singer. Raoul tries to see Christine in the dressing room, but is unable to do so and later discovers that some one is making love to her. She emerges alone, and upon entering the room he finds it empty. While the farewell ceremony for the retiring managers is going on, the Opera Ghost appears and informs the new managers that Box No. 5 is reserved for him. Box No. 5 is sold with disastrous results. The managers receive a letter from the Opera Ghost calling attention to the error. Christine Daae writes Raoul that she has gone to visit the grave of her father. He goes also, and in the night follows her to the church. Wonderful violin music is heard. Raoul visits a graveyard. Raoul finds next morning almost frozen. Monchamrin and Richard investigate Box No. 5 and decide to see the performance. "Faust," who sings the leading part in "Faust," is warned to give the part to Christine. Carlotta, refusing, loses her voice in the middle of a song and the main chandelier crashes down, killing a woman and wounding many. Raoul searches for Christine, who has disappeared. He sees her at last, but does not speak, and later a note is received from her making an appointment for a masked ball. Raoul meets Christine at the ball. He sees a person in the disguise of Red Death. He hears her conversing with some one whom she calls Erik. Raoul visits Christine and tells her he knows the name of the unseen man whom she calls the Angel of Music. Christine and Raoul become secretly engaged prior to a polar expedition that Raoul is to make. Christine relates a strange adventure with the unseen Erik and promises to run away with Raoul. Erik announces his intention of marrying Christine, which displeases Philippe. In the midst of a performance the stage is enveloped in fire and Christine disappears. No trace of her is found. Monchamrin and Richard behave strangely. Raoul searches madly for the missing singer. The Opera Ghost demands the first installment of his allowance, and when it is left at an appointed place the sum mysteriously disappears. Raoul is in search of Christine. He meets a mysterious person known as the Persian. The Persian plans to aid Raoul in locating Christine and they gain access to a secret chamber. The two find themselves in a passageway which they expect will lead to where Christine has undoubtedly been carried by Erik. The Persian knows Erik to have been one of the contractors who built the Opera.

CHAPTER XXI.—(Continued.)

Although Erik announced to me very solemnly that he had changed and that he had become the most virtuous of men since he was loved for himself—a sentence that, at first, perplexed me most terribly—I could not help shuddering when I thought of the monster. His horrible, unparalleled and repulsive ugliness put him without the pale of humanity; and it often seemed to me that, for this reason, he no longer believed that he had any duty toward the human race. The way in which he spoke of his love-affairs only increased my alarm, for I foresaw the cause of fresh and more hideous tragedies in this event to which he alluded so boastfully.

On the other hand, I soon discovered the curious moral traffic established between the monster and Christine Daae. Hiding in the lumber-room next to the young prima donna's dressing-room, I listened to wonderful musical displays that evidently flung Christine into marvelous ecstasy, but, all the same, I would never have thought that Erik's voice—which was loud as thunder or soft as angels' voices, at will—could have made her forget his ugliness. I understood all when I learned that Christine had not yet seen him! I had occasion to go to the dressing-room and, remembering the lessons he had once given me, I had no difficulty in discovering the trick that made the wall with the mirror swing round and I ascertained the means—of hollow bricks and so on—by which he made his voice carry to Christine as though she heard it close beside her. In this way also I discovered the road that led to the well and the dungeon—the Communists' dungeon—and also the trap-door that enabled Erik to go straight to the cellars below the stage.

A few days later, what was not my amazement to learn by my own eyes and ears that Erik and Christine Daae saw each other and to catch the monster stooping over the little well, in the Communists' road and sprinkling the forehead of Christine Daae, who had fainted. A white horse, the horse out of the Profeta, which had disappeared from the stables under the opera, was standing quietly beside them. I showed myself. It was terrible. I saw sparks fly from those yellow eyes and, before I had time to say a word, I received a blow on the head that stunned me.

When I came to myself, Erik, Christine and the white horse had disappeared. I felt sure that the poor girl was a prisoner in the house on the lake. Without hesitation, I resolved to return to the bank, notwithstanding the attendant danger. For twenty-four hours, I lay in wait for the monster to appear; for I felt that he must go out, driven by the need of obtaining provisions. And, in this connection, I may say, that, when

he went out in the streets or ventured to show himself in public, he wore a pasteboard nose, with a mustache attached to it, instead of his own horrible hole of a nose. This did not quite take away his corpse-like air, but it made him almost, I say almost, endurable to look at.

I therefore watched on the bank of the lake and, weary of long waiting, was beginning to think that he had gone through the other door, the door in the third cellar, when I heard a slight splashing in the dark. I saw the two yellow eyes shining like candles and soon the boat touched shore. Erik jumped out and walked up to me.

"You've been here for twenty-four hours," he said, "and you're annoying me. I tell you, all this will end very badly. And you will have brought it upon yourself; for I have been extraordinarily patient with you. You think you are following me, you great booby, whereas it's I who am following you; and I know all that you know about me, here. I spared you yesterday, in my Communists' road; but I warn you, seriously, don't let me catch you there again! Upon my word, you don't seem able to take a hint!"

He was so furious that I did not think, for the moment, of interrupting him. After puffing and blowing like a walrus, he put his horrible thought into words:

"Yes, you must learn, once and for all—once and for all, I say—to take a hint! I tell you that, with your recklessness—for you have already been twice arrested by the shade in the felt hat, who did not know what you were doing in the cellars, and took you to the managers, who looked upon you as an eccentric Persian interested in stage mechanism and life behind the scenes; I know all about it, I was there, in the office; you know I am everywhere—well, I tell you that, with your recklessness, they will end by wondering what you are after here . . . and they will end by knowing that you are after Erik . . . and then they will be after Erik themselves and they will discover the house on the lake. . . . If they do, it will be a bad lookout for you, old chap, a bad lookout! . . . I won't answer for anything."

Again he puffed and blew like a walrus.



For Twenty-Four Hours I Lay in Wait for the Monster to Appear.

"I won't answer for anything! . . . If Erik's secrets cease to be Erik's secrets, it will be a bad lookout for a goodly number of the human race! That's all I have to tell you, and unless you are a great booby, it ought to be enough for you . . . except that you don't know how to take a hint."

He had sat down on the stern of his boat and was kicking his heels

against the planks, waiting to hear what I had to answer. I simply said: "It's not Erik that I'm after here!" "Who then?"

"You know as well as I do: it's Christine Daae," I answered.

He retorted: "I have every right to see her in my own house. I am loved for my own sake."

"That's not true," I said. "You have carried her off and are keeping her locked up."

"Listen," he said. "Will you promise never to meddle with my affairs again, if I prove to you that I am loved for my own sake?"

"Yes, I promise you," I replied, without hesitation, for I felt convinced that for such a monster the proof was impossible.

"Well, then, it's quite simple. . . Christine Daae shall leave this as she pleases and come back again! Yes, come back again, because she wishes . . . come back of herself, because she loves me for myself!"

"Oh, I doubt if she will come back! . . . But it is your duty to let her go."

"My duty, you great booby! . . . It is my wish . . . my wish to let her go; and she will come back again . . . for she loves me! . . . All this will end in a marriage . . . a marriage at the Madeleine, you great booby! Do you believe me now? When I tell you that my nuptial mass is written . . . wait till you hear the Kyrie. . . ."

"No."

"Very well, you shall see that tonight. Come to the masked ball. Christine and I will go and have a look round. Then you can hide in the lumber-room and you shall see Christine, who will have gone to her dressing-room, delighted to come back by the Communists' road."

And, now, be off, for I must go and do some shopping!"

To my intense astonishment, things happened as he had announced. Christine Daae left the house on the lake and returned to it several times, without, apparently, being forced to do so. It was very difficult for me to clear my mind of Erik. However, I resolved to be extremely prudent, and did not make the mistake of returning to the shore of the lake, or of going by the Communists' road. But the idea of the secret entrance in the third cellar haunted me, and I repeatedly went and waited for hours behind a scene from the Roi de Lahore, which had been left there for some reason or other. At last my patience was rewarded. One day, I saw the monster come toward me, on his knees. I was certain that he could not see me. He passed between the scene behind which I stood and a set piece, went to the wall and pressed on a spring that moved a stone and afforded him an ingress. He passed through this, and the stone closed behind him.

I waited for at least thirty minutes and then pressed the spring in my turn. Everything happened as with Erik. But I was careful not to go through the hole myself, for I knew that Erik was inside. On the other hand, the idea that I might be caught by Erik suddenly made me think of the death of Joseph Buquet. I did not wish to jeopardize the advantages of so great a discovery which might be useful to many people, "to a goodly number of the human race," in Erik's words; and I left the cellars of the opera after carefully replacing the stone.

I continued to be greatly interested in the relations between Erik and Christine Daae, not from any morbid curiosity, but because of the terrible thought which obsessed my mind that Erik was capable of anything, if he once discovered that he was not loved for his own sake, as he imagined. I continued to wander, very cautiously, about the opera and soon learned the truth about the monster's dreary love-affair.

He filled Christine's mind, through the terror with which he inspired her, but the dear child's heart belonged wholly to the Vicomte Raoul de Chagny. While they played about, like an innocent engaged couple, on the upper floors of the opera, to avoid the monster, they little suspected that some one was watching over them. I was prepared to do anything; to kill the monster, if necessary, and explain to the police afterward. But Erik did not show himself; and I felt none the more comfortable for that.

I must explain my whole plan. I thought that the monster, being driven from his house by jealousy, would thus enable me to enter it, without danger, through the passage in the third cellar. It was important, for everybody's sake, that I should know exactly what was inside. One day, tired of waiting for an opportunity, I moved the stone and at once heard an astounding music: the monster was working at his Don Juan Triumphant, with every door in his house wide open. I knew that this was the work of his life. I was careful not to stir and remained prudently in my dark hole.

He stopped playing, for a moment, and began walking about his place, like a madman. And he said aloud, at the top of his voice:

"It must be finished first! Quite finished!"

This speech was not calculated to reassure me and, when the music recommenced, I closed the stone very softly.

On the day of the abduction of Christine Daae, I did not come to the theater until rather late in the evening, trembling lest I should hear bad news. I had spent a horrible day, for, after reading in a morning paper the announcement of a forthcoming marriage between Christine and the Vicomte de Chagny, I wondered whether, after all, I should not do better and denounce the monster, but reason returned to me, and I was persuaded that this action could only precipitate a possible catastrophe.

When my cab set me down before the opera, I was really almost astonished to see it still standing! But I am something of a fatalist, like all good Orientalists, and I entered ready for anything.

Christine Daae's abduction in the Prison Act, which naturally surprised everybody, found me prepared. I was quite certain that she had been juggled away by Erik, that prince of conjurors. And I thought positively that this was the end of Christine and perhaps of everybody, so much so that I thought of advising all these people who were staying on at the theater to make good their escape. I felt, however, that they would be sure to look upon me as mad and I refrained.



The Monster Was Working at His Don Juan Triumphant.

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On the other hand, I resolved to act without further delay, as far as I was concerned. The chances were in my favor that Erik, at that moment, was thinking only of his captive. This was the moment to enter his house through the third cellar; and I resolved to take with me that poor little desperate viscount, who, at the first suggestion, accepted, with an amount of confidence in myself that touched me profoundly. I had sent my servant for my pistols. I gave one to the viscount and advised him to hold himself ready to fire, for, after all, Erik might be waiting for us behind the wall. We were to go by the Communists' road and through the trap-door.

Seeing my pistols, the little viscount asked me if we were going to fight a duel. I said:

"Yes; and what a duel!"

But, of course, I had no time to explain anything to him. The little viscount is a brave fellow, but he knew hardly anything about his adversary; and it was so much the better. My great fear was that he was already somewhere near us, preparing the Punjab lasso. No one knows better than he how to throw the Punjab lasso, for he is the king of stranglers even as he is the prince of conjurors. When he had finished making the little sultana laugh, at the time of the "rosy hours of Mazenderan," she herself used to ask him to amuse her by giving her a thrill. It was then that he introduced the sport of the Punjab lasso.

He had lived in India and acquired an incredible skill in the art of strangulation. He would make them lock him into a courtyard to which they brought a warrior—usually, a man condemned to death—armed with a long pike and broadsword. Erik had only his lasso; and it was always just when the warrior thought that he was going to feel Erik with a tremendous blow that we heard the lasso whistle through the air. With a turn of the wrist, Erik tightened the noose round his adversary's neck and, in this fashion, dragged him before the little sultana and her women, who sat looking from a window and applauding. The little sultana herself learned to wield the Punjab lasso and killed several of her women and even of the friends who visited her. But I prefer to drop this terrible subject of the rosy hours of Mazenderan. I have mentioned it only to explain why, on arriving with the Vicomte de Chagny in the cellars of the opera, I was bound to protect my companion against the ever-threatening danger of death by strangling. My pistols could serve no purpose, for Erik was not likely to show himself; but Erik could always strangle us. I had no time to explain all this to the viscount; besides, there was nothing to be gained by complicating the position. I simply told M. de Chagny to keep his hand at the level of his eyes, with the arm bent, as though waiting for the command to fire. With his victim in this attitude, it is impossible even for the most expert strangler to throw the lasso with advantage. It catches you not only round the neck, but also round the arm or hand. This enables you easily to unloose the lasso, which then becomes harmless.

After, avoiding the commissary of police, a number of door-shutters and the firemen, after meeting the rat-catcher and passing the man in the felt hat unperceived, the viscount and I arrived without obstacle in the third cellar, between the set piece and the scene from the Roi de Lahore. I worked the stone, and we jumped into the house which Erik had built himself in the double case of the foundation-walls of the opera. And this was the easiest thing in the world for him to do, because Erik was one of the chief contractors under Philippe Garnier, the architect of the opera, and continued to work by himself when the works were officially suspended, during the war, the siege of Paris and the Commune.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Trouble Ahead.

"Do you know that the average man drinks enough beer in the course of his life to float a battleship?"

"No. Does he?"

"Statisticians have found that he does."

"I'm sorry."

"Ah, it is good to hear you say that. I hope you will, now that you realize how great this waste is, give up the habit."

"No, I ain't got any idea of doin' that, but I don't see how we're goin' to be able to keep on drinkin' enough to float battleships if they make their blamed old Dreadnoughts much bigger."

The ONLOOKER by WILBUR D. NESBIT The OLD TINTYPE



He gazed on the oldtime picture—The tintype, faded and stained; And over his face crept shadows That showed how his heart was pained. 'Twas only an oldtime picture Of him, in the bygone days That loom now, ever so faintly Through memory's mellowing haze.

He sighed o'er the old, old picture, Dented and scratched and dim; And smiled at the maiden, dimpled, Who sat by the side of him—The maiden, dimpled and happy, Who was pictured there, also; The maiden who held his fingers In the style of the long ago.

'Twas only an oldtime picture, And taken in oldtime style—Each held the hand of the other, And each wore a tintype smile. He frowned at the oldtime picture, The tintype, scratched and depressed. "I wonder," he muttered grimly, "I wonder who has the rest."

An Exigency, Indeed.

«With breathless suspense we watched the bloodhounds take up the trail. To our surprise they crossed one lot and then stopped in front of a tumble-down hut.

"Make 'em go farther than this," urged the representative of the Daily Yeller.

"But this is the end of the trail," protested the owner of the dogs. "I know. But they haven't covered one-third enough territory to make a page illustration."

Modern Enterprise.

"How is this?" inquired the Visiting Potentate. "You have an extra paper on the streets announcing my departure, when I have just arrived."

"Oh," was the satisfied response of the editor of the Daily Yeller, "we issued an extra day before yesterday announcing your arrival."

Smile, Etc.

"Funny about young Spenditt, wasn't it?" said the observing man.

"Was it?" asked the man of an inquiring mind.

"Yes, he lost his money raising Cain in Europe, and then made another fortune raising cane in Louisiana."

The Voice of Experience.

Mother-in-Law—I see where some legislator proposes to tax men for their wives.

New Daughter-in-Law—That would make a tremendous increase in the taxes.

Mother-in-Law—Yes. For a few years.

Merely a Suggestion.

Dr. Dosem—Yes, Miss Wunder, we have carried the practice of vaccination to that point where it is an absolute protection against smallpox.

Miss Wunder—But, doctor, I don't see why they do not vaccinate the smallpox germs and settle the thing for good.

Busy but Not Gaining.

"Well, I be dinged!" observes Mr. Glimmer, looking at the freight cars; "that town takes a heap o' cars, but it hain't growed a bit in ten years."

"What town?" asks Mr. Humtum.

"Capa City. I've seen it painted on every freight car for a long while, an' it always reads 'Capa City 35,000.'"

They Gossip.

"Although Mrs. Whooper and Mrs. Chaffring have been neighbors for a long time, they never lend each other anything."

"Except each other's ears."

Sure Thing.

"There is one man I want to see paddle his own canoe."

"Who is that?"

"The man who thinks it funny to rock the boat."

What He Objected To.

Visiting Chaplain—Ah, my brother, this world is full of trials.

Prisoner—Oh, dry up, guv'nor! Think I dunno that? It isn't the trials I mind; it's the verdicts.—Sketch.