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The Phantom of the Opera

BY GASTON LEROUX

"Christine! Christine! . . . Why don't you answer? . . . Are you alive? . . ."

Hideous thoughts flashed through Raoul's congested brain. Of course, Erik must have discovered their secret, must have known that Christine had played him false. What a vengeance would be his!

Such were the thoughts that haunted Raoul as he ran to the singer's dressing-room.

"Christine! Christine!"

A tall figure blocked Raoul's way. "Where are you going so fast, M. de Chagny?" asked a voice.

Raoul impatiently raised his eyes and recognized the astrakhan cap of an hour ago. He stopped:

"It's you!" he cried, in a feverish voice. "You, who know Erik's secrets and don't want me to speak of them. Who are you?"

"You know who I am! . . I am the Persian!"

Raoul now remembered that his brother had once shown him that mysterious person, of whom nothing was known except that he was a Persian and that he lived in a little old-fashioned flat in the Rue de Rivoli.

The man with the ebony skin, the eyes of jade and the astrakhan cap bent over Raoul.

"I hope, M. de Chagny," he said, "that you have not betrayed Erik's secret?"

"And why should I hesitate to betray that monster, sir?" Raoul rejoined haughtily, trying to shake off the intruder. "Is he your friend, by any chance?"

"I hope that you said nothing about Erik, sir, because Erik's secret is also Christine Daae's and to talk about one is to talk about the other!"

"Oh, sir," said Raoul, becoming more and more impatient, "you seem to know about many things that interest me; and yet I have no time to listen to you!"

"Once more, M. de Chagny, where are you going so fast?"

"Can you not guess? To Christine Daae's assistance. . . ."

"Then, sir, stay here, for Christine Daae is here!"

"With Erik?"

"With Erik."

"How do you know?"

"I was at the performance and no one in the world but Erik could contrive an abduction like that! . . . Oh," he said, with a deep sigh, "I recognized the monster's touch! . . ."

"You know him then?"

The Persian did not reply, but heaved a fresh sigh.

"Sir," said Raoul, "I do not know what your intentions are, but can you do anything to help me? I mean, to help Christine Daae?"

"I think so, M. de Chagny, and that is why I spoke to you."

"What can you do?"

"Try to take you to her . . . and to him."

And the young man impetuously seized the Persian's hands. They were ice-cold.

"Do you think he is near us?"

"It is quite possible, sir, if he is not, at this moment, with his victim, in the house on the lake."

"Ah, so you know that house too?"

"If he is not there, he may be here, in this wall, in this floor, in this ceiling! . . . Come!"

And the Persian, asking Raoul to deaden the sound of his footsteps, led him down passages which Raoul had never seen before, even at the time when Christine used to take him for walks through that labyrinth.

"If only Darius has come!" said the Persian.

"Who is Darius?"

"Darius? My servant."

They were now in the centre of a real deserted square, an immense apartment ill-lit by a small lamp. The Persian stopped Raoul and, in the softest of whispers, asked:

"What did you say to the commissary?"

"I said that Christine Daae's abductor was the Angel of Music, alias the Opera ghost, and that the real name was . . ."

"Hush! . . . And did he believe you?"

"No."

"He attached no importance to what you said?"

"No."

"He took you for a bit of a madman?"

"Yes."

"So much the better!" sighed the Persian.

And they continued their road. After going up and down several staircases which Raoul had never seen before, the two men found themselves in front of a door which the Persian opened with a master-key. The Persian and Raoul were both, of course, in dress-clothes; but, whereas Raoul had a tall hat, the Persian wore the astrakhan cap which I have already mentioned.

"Sir," said the Persian, "your tall hat will be in your way: you would do well to leave it in the dressing-room."

"What dressing-room?" asked Raoul.

"Christine Daae's."

And the Persian, letting Raoul through the door which he had just opened, showed him the actress' room opposite.

They were at the end of the passage the whole length of which Raoul had been accustomed to traverse before knocking at Christine's door.

"How well you know the Opera, sir!"

"Not so well as 'he' does!" said the Persian modestly.

And he pushed the young man into Christine's dressing-room, which was as Raoul had left it a few minutes earlier.

Closing the door, the Persian went to a very thin partition that separated the dressing-room from a big lumber-room next to it. He listened and then coughed loudly.

There was a sound of some one stirring in the lumber-room; and, a few seconds later, a finger tapped at the door.

"Come in," said the Persian.

A man entered, also wearing an astrakhan cap and dressed in a long overcoat. He bowed and took a richly carved case from under his coat, put it on the dressing-table, bowed once again and went to the door.

The servant glanced down the passage and swiftly disappeared.

The Persian opened the case. It contained a pair of long pistols.

"When Christine Daae was carried off, sir, I sent word to my servant to bring these pistols. I have had them a long time and they can be relied upon."

"Do you mean to fight a duel?" asked the young man.

"It will certainly be a duel which we shall have to fight," said the other, examining the priming of his pistols. "And what a duel!" Handing one of the pistols to Raoul, he added, "In this duel, we shall be two to one; but you must be prepared for everything, for we shall be fighting the most terrible adversary that you can imagine. But you love Christine Daae, do you not?"

"I worship the ground she stands on! But you, sir, who do not love her, tell me why I find you ready to risk your life for her! You must certainly hate Erik!"

"No, sir," said the Persian sadly, "I do not hate him. If I hated him, he would long ago have ceased doing harm."

"I do not understand you. You treat him as a monster, you speak of his crime, he has done you harm and I find in you the same inexplicable pity that drove me to despair when I saw it in Christine!"

The Persian did not reply. He fetched a stool and set it against the wall facing the great mirror that filled the whole of the wall-space opposite. Then he climbed on the stool and, with his nose to the wall-paper, seemed to be looking for something.

"Ah," he said, after a long search, "I have it!"

And, raising his finger above his head, he pressed against a corner in the pattern of the paper. Then he turned around and jumped off the stool:

"In half a minute," he said, "We shall be on his road!" and crossing the whole length of the dressing-room he felt the great mirror.

"Oh, are we going out by the mirror?" asked Raoul. "Like Christine Daae."

"So you knew that Christine Daae went out by that mirror?"

"She did so before my eyes, sir! I was hidden behind the curtain of the inner room and I saw her vanish not by the glass, but in the glass!"

"And what did you do?"

"I thought it was an abberation of my sense, a mad dream. . . ."

"Or some new fancy of the ghost's!" chuckled the Persian. "Ah, M. de Chagny," he continued, still with his hand on the mirror, "would that we had to do with a ghost! We could then leave our pistols in their case. . . Put down your hat, please . . . there . . . and now cover your shirt-front as much as you can with your coat . . as I am doing. . . Bring the lapels forward . . . turn up the collar. . . We must make ourselves as invisible as possible. . . ."

Bearing against the mirror, after a short silence, he said:

"It takes some time to release the counterbalance, when you press on the spring from the inside of the room. It is different when you are behind the wall and can act directly on the counterbalance. Then the mirror turns at once and is moved with incredible rapidity."

"It's not turning! . . . And Christine, sir, Christine?"

The Persian said coldly:

"We shall do all that it is humanly possible to do! . . But he may stop us at the first step! . . . He commands the walls, the doors and the trapdoors. In my country he was known by a name which means the 'trap-door lover.' "

"But why do these walls obey him alone? He did not build them!"

"Yes, sir, that is just what he did!"

Raoul looked at him in amazement; but the Persian made a sign to him to be silent and pointed to the glass. . . . There was a sort of shivering reflection. Their image was troubled as in a rippling sheet of water and then all became stationary again.

"You see, sir, that it is not turning! Let us take another road!"

"To-night there is no other!" declared the Persian, in a singularly mournful voice. "And now, look out! And be ready to fire."

He himself raised his pistol opposite the glass. Raoul imitated his movement. With his free arm, the Persian drew the young man to his chest and, suddenly, the mirror turned, in a blinding daze of cross-lights: it turned like one of those revolving doors which have lately been fixed to the entrances of most restaurants, it turned, carrying Raoul and the Persian with it and suddenly hurling them from the full light into the deepest darkness.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN THE CELLARS OF THE OPERA.

"Your hand high, ready to fire!" repeated Raoul's companion quickly.

The wall, behind them, having completed the circle which it described upon itself, closed again; and the two men stood motionless for a moment, holding their breath.

At last, the Persian decided to make a movement; and Raoul heard him slip to his knees and feel for something in the dark with his groping hands. Suddenly the darkness was made visible by a small dark lantern and Raoul instinctively stepped forward as though to escape the scrutiny of a secret enemy. But he soon perceived that the light belonged to the Persian, whose movements he was closely observing. The little red disk was turned in every direction and Raoul saw that the floor, the walls and the ceiling were all formed of planking. It must have been the ordinary road taken by Erik to reach Christine's dressing room and impose upon her innocence. And Raoul, remembering the Persian's remark, thought that it had been mysteriously constructed by the ghost himself. Later, he learned that Erik had found, all prepared for him, a secret passage, long known to himself alone and contrived at the time of the Paris Commune to allow the jailers to convey their prisoners straight to the dungeons that had been constructed for them in the cellars; for the Federates had occupied the opera-house immediately after the eighteenth of March.

The Persian went on his knees and put his lantern on the ground. He seemed to be working at the floor, and suddenly he turned off his light. Then Raoul heard a faint click and saw a very pale luminous square in the floor of the passage. It was as though a window had opened on the Opera cellars, which were still lit. Raoul no longer saw the Persian, but he suddenly felt him by his side and heard him whisper:

"Follow me and do all that I do."

Raoul turned to the luminous aperture. Then he saw the Persian, who was still on his knees, hang by his hands from the rim of the opening, with his pistol between his teeth, and slide into the cellar below.

When they were below the Persian made a sign to Raoul to stand up. Raoul did so; but, as he did not lift his hand in front of his eyes, ready to fire, the Persian told him to resume that attitude and to continue it, whatever happened.

"But it tires the hand unnecessarily," whispered Raoul. "If I do fire, I shan't be sure of my aim."

"Then shift your pistol to the other hand," said the Persian.

"I can't shoot with my left hand."

"It's not a question of shooting with the right hand or the left; it's a question of holding one of your hands as though you were going to pull the trigger of a pistol with your arm bent. As for the pistol itself, when all is said, you can put that in your pocket!" And he added, "Let this be clearly understood, or I will answer for nothing. It is a matter of life and death. And now, silence and follow me!"

(To be continued.)

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Death Ray for Germs.

An invention of first importance in the fight against germs has been made by Dr. W. D. Coolidge, the authority on X-rays.

He has evolved apparatus by which cathode rays, formerly produced within glass vacuum tubes by the discharge of heavy electric currents, can now be produced in the air in such quantities as to kill bacteria and insects, and has described his method in "Science."

The most striking effects of Dr. Coolidge's invention are obtained on flying things.

"Bacteria," he says, "have been rayed, and an exposure of a tenth of a secoond has been found sufficient to kill even highly desistant bacterial spores.

"Fruit flies, upon being rayed for a small fraction of a second, instantly showed almost complete collapse, and in a few hours were dead."

This may lead to the application of the rays as a powerful germicide and insecticide, but their promiscuous use on higher forms of life would, in the present stage of the development of the apparatus, be dangerous.

With a potential as high as 250,000 volts and a current of several thousandths of an ampere, the rays travel as far as 18in. from the tube and produce a purplish glowing of the air in front of it.

Blood Tests for Health.

The doctor who used to feel his patient's pulse or gaze into a gaping mouth to determine the cause of illness nowadays takes a drop of blood to analyse. The guilt for much of human suffering has been traced to the germs, tiny but deadly, which force their entrance into the human body, and which can only be detected by such analysis.

"Blood tests provide us with the clues to an ever-growing number of ailments," said a doctor to the writer.

"It is being found, for instance, that eye complaints are often due to the absorption of germs which have affected other parts of the body, such as the tonsils. We can often detect them by testing the blood.

"Many cases of illness are due to something taken in from without—usually microscopic germs. More and more of these germs are becoming known to us every day. There is reason to believe that the origins of other diseases which are still unknown may be found in the same cause."

Not Guilty.

Teacher—"Where is the big dipper, Willie?"

"I dunno; I use the fountain."

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INTELLIGENT PARENTHOOD

Am I using all the intelligence with which I am endowed, in bringing up my children- is a question all parents may well ask themselves; and most of us would have to answer in the negative. Often our entire policy is dictated by a prejudice instead of by a well-thought-out plan. Take, for instance, a mother who as a child was very much spoiled. Having reaped the fruit of this upbringing, she decides on no condition to rear her children in the same manner. So, unconsciously, she goes to the other extreme, making her youngsters "toe the mark" in a most inconsiderate and arbitrary manner. Whereas, in her youth, she was allowed to stay up half the night in order to finish an absorbing book, her children are not even permitted to finish the sentence they are reading when the call comes for dinner or bedtime. Surely such discipline is not based upon reason!

When correcting a childish fault do parents always focus their entire intelligence upon the problem? How many punishments would be avoided, if they did! When little Mary, in helping to dry the dishes, breaks a cup, is it not unwise to scold her severely? Won't she acquire a distaste for "helping?" When Dick tells a "lie," is it sensible to punish him without first trying to understand the boy's way of reasoning and making every effort to correct it?

When George, in a fit of anger, throws his toys around, is it intelligent to "throw George around?" Would it not be wiser to let him find out for himself that the only result of his ill temper is broken toys, which his parents are in no hurry to replace?

If little Alice goes traveling and, becoming restless, fingers window latches and shades and baggage, instead of scolding and punishing, wouldn't it be more sensible to provide a picture book or crayons and paper or something to occupy the little maid's attention?

Solving Each Problem.

When parents change a hasty "No" to "Yes" because they can't resist the crying or the teasing or the arguing of their little ones, are they acting intelligently? Aren't they teaching their youngsters just how to break down the parental citadel? A "No" should never be hasty, but should always be dictated by our best judgment, and when once uttered it should stand. How much simpler life is for youngsters reared under such conditions.

When a parent grabs a button hook or a dust cloth or a pail and shovel from little fingers, saying impatiently, "'Do it like this," doing the job himself, is he acting sensibly? Wouldn't the little one learn more quickly by experience than by just "watching," and aren't we also depriving him of the joy of achieving, which is his right? Are we ever acting wisely when we "wait on" children, instead of allowing them to do things for themselves, in so far as they are able?

Again and again we hear parents, in their youngsters' presence, say, "Dickey is obstinate, or sensitive, or mischievous." Aren't the parents imprinting these thoughts on the little ones' minds; and won't the children be very likely to live up to their reputations? Are we acting intelligently when we "label" our children?

Study the Child's Gifts.

Sometimes a mother insists upon her daughter studying music, because she herself has always regretted that she was deprived of this privilege. But if Anna cannot become interested in music, while on the other hand, she shows a marked ability to draw, would it not be more reasonable to allow her to devote her time to art? In like manner, many a parent decides that his child shall go to college, because he has always wished that he had had this advantage in his youth. But if the boy has no interest in scholastic pursuits and wants very much to enter the business field, will he get anything out of a college education, being present in body but not in thought.

We ought all of us to mark our own score cards, at the end of every day, judging ourselves as to whether we have dealt with our parental problems intelligently. During this hour of meditation, we can run back over the events of the day. Perhaps it was too much to expect a two-year-old to sit quietly through a long meal period, while the adults were usurping every minute in what was to them, interesting conversation. Maybe the next time we have company, it would be wiser to give the little girl an earlier luncheon. While in this introspective mood, we can also ponder as to what measures to use to correct John's untidiness and Mary's habit of procrastination.

Child training is not a hit or miss proposition. It is a most important business, which demands constant use of every ounce of intelligence we can call to our aid.—I. M.

Travelling Historic Trails.

When Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote his "General History of the Fur Trade" in 1801, he gave a vivid description of the route followed by the fur traders from Montreal to the then great unknown northwest. Particularly did he describe that portion from Rainy Lake to the mouth of the Saskatchewan river, giving a most interesting running account of the many rapids and portages met with and the country through which he passed.

It is a long stretch of time since Sir Alexander MacKenzie made this trip through almost unknown waters, but the district has not yet lost its fascination for those who crave the freedom of the unconventional and long to face and overcome difficulties and distances by primitive methods. That there is still a strong appeal in the old historic route is evidenced by the number of adventurous spirits looking to the district to satisfy their cravings for something new. The Department of the Interior reports the reinquiries for information. Two letters reached the branch recently from ceipt already this year of a number of widely separated portions of the United States, the writers of which are making plans for canoe trips from Rainy Lake to the Hudson Bay by way of Rainy river, Lake of the Woods, Winnipeg river, Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson river, and, to show the spirit of the age, one of the enquirers was a woman.

The study of Canadian history is in itself wonderfully fascinating, but to be able to travel the routes of the early explorers, to see in reality the many points that made their impress upon the historian, and to live over again the lives of Canada's original trail breakers, is an attraction impossible to discourage. In northwestern Ontario there are yet many lakes the waters of which have never felt the dip of the white man's paddle, and this largely unexplored area will the coming season see many an adventurer paddling his canoe into the white water and packing his outfit over portages in quest of new thrills and new scenes. These men and women are proving to the world that they are the equal of those who opened Canada's original trade routes, and are doing so for pleasure and experience, and without the incentive of profit.

Such a Good Boy!

On the whole he was a good boy, but he had a predilection for games, so altogether it was not so surprising that he should occasionally play truant, from his school.

But, alas, he was always found out, with dire consequencess.

One day, however, he hit on a brilliant idea. Going to a telephone call-box, he called up the teacher.

Assuming a deep, mature voice, he explained that his son would be unable to attend school that day.

"Thank you very much for taking the trouble to "phone," replied the teacher. "Who is that speaking?"

This sudden query staggered the small delinquent.

"Er—this is my father," he faltered lamely.

Minard's Liniment for sore throat.

Just More Work.

"All you have to do," said the film producer to the cinema star, "is to seize the woman in your arms, jump on top of a passing taxi, and jump from there to the fire-escape of the building in the corner."

He paused for breath.

"Then you must climb up to the sixth floor, drag her to the parapet, and, bracing yourself against a chimney, hurl her out into space. She catches a window-ledge in her fall, and——"

" 'Spose I drop her?" hazarded the actor.

"Well, you'll have to pick her up and begin all over again."

A Judicial Blunder.

"Madam," asked the judge of the woman who had just been convicted of speeding, "have you anything to say before sentence is pronounced?"

"Good Lord, your honor!" exclaimed the prisoner's husband in dismay. "Now you've gone and done it!"

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