The Phantom of the Opera

BY GASTON LEROUX

CHAPTER XIV.—(Cont'd.)

"I am going to hang by my hands from the edge of the stone and let myself drop into his house. You must do exactly the same. Do not be afraid. I will catch you in my arms."

Raoul soon heard a dull sound, evidently produced by the fall of the Persian, and then dropped down.

He felt himself clasped in the Persian's arms.

"Hush!" said the Persian.

And they stood motionless, listening.

The darkness was thick around them, the silence heavy and terrible.

Then the Persian began to make play with the dark lantern again, turning the rays over their heads, looking for the hole through which they had come, and failing to find it:

"Oh!" he said: "The stone has closed of itself!"

And the light of the lantern swept down the wall and over the floor.

The Persian stooped and picked up something, a sort of cord, which he examined for a second and flung away with horror.

"The Punjab lasso!" he murmured.

"What is it?" asked Raoul.

The Persian shivered. "It might very well be the rope by which the man was hanged, and which was looked for so long."

And, suddenly seized with fresh anxiety, he moved the little red disk of his lantern over the walls. In this way, he lit up a curious thing, the trunk of a tree, which seemed still quite alive, with its leaves; and the branches of that tree ran right up the walls and disappeared in the ceiling.

Because of the smallness of the luminous disk, it was difficult at first to make out the appearance of things: they saw a corner of a branch . . . and another leaf . . . and, next to it, nothing at all, nothing but the ray of light that seemed to reflect. . . . Raoul passed his hand over that nothing, over that reflection.

"Hullo!" he said. "The wall is a looking glass!"

"Yes, a looking glass!" said the Persian, in a tone of deep emotion. And, passing the hand that held the pistol over his moist forehead, he added, "We have dropped into the torture-chamber!"

What the Persian knew of this torture-chamber and what there befell him and his companion shall be told in his own words, as set down in a manuscript which he left behind him, and which I copy verbatim.

CHAPTER XV.

IN THE TORTURE CHAMBER.

The Persian's Narrative.

We were in the middle of a little six-cornered room, the sides of which were covered with mirrors from top to bottom. In the corners, we could clearly see the "joins" in the glasses, the segments intended to turn on their gear; yes, I recognized them and I recognized the iron tree in the corner, at the bottom of one of those segments . . . . the iron tree, with its iron branch, for the hanged men.

Suddenly we heard a noise on our left. It sounded at first like a door opening and shutting in the next room; and then there was a dull moan. I clutched M. de Chagny's arm more firmly still; and then we distinctly heard these words:

"You must make your choice! The wedding mass or the requiem mass!"

I recognized the voice of the monster.

There was another moan, followed by a long silence.

I was persuaded by now that the monster was unaware of our presence in his house, for otherwise he would certainly have managed not to let us hear him. He would only have had to close the little invisible window through which the torture-lovers look down into the torture-chamber. Besides, I was certain that, if he had known of our presence, the tortures would have begun at once.

The important thing was not to let him know; and I dreaded nothing so much as the impulsiveness of the Vicomte de Chagny, who wanted to rush through the walls to Christine Daae, whose moans we continued to hear at intervals.

"The requiem mass is not at all gay," Erik's voice resumed, "whereas the wedding mass—you can take my word for it—is magnificent! You must take a resolution and know your own mind! I can't go on living like this, like a mole in a burrow! 'Don Juan Triumphant' is finished; and now I want to live like everybody else and to take her out on Sundays."

Soon the moans that accompanied this sort of love's litany increased. I have never heard anything more despairing; and M. de Chagny and I recognized that this terrible lamentation came from Erik himself.

And we thought only of the possibility of warning Christine Daae of our presence, unknown to the monster. We were unable to leave the torture-chamber now, unless Christine opened the door to us; and it was only on this condition that we could hope to help her, for we did not even know where the door might be.

Suddenly, the silence in the next room was disturbed by the ringing of an electric bell. There was a bound on the other side of the wall and Eric's voice of thunder:

"Somebody ringing! Walk in, please!"

A sinister chuckle.

"Who has come bothering now? Wait for me here. . . . I am going to tell the siren to open the door.'

Steps moved away, a door closed. I had no time to think of the fresh horror that was preparing; I forgot that the monster was only going out perhaps to perpetrate a fresh crime; I understood but one thing: Christine was alone behind the wall!

The Vicomte de Chagny was already calling to her:

"Christine! Christine!"

As we could hear what was said in the next room, there was no reason why my companion should not be heard in his turn. Nevertheless, the viscount had to repeat his cry time after time.

At last, a faint voice reached us.

"I am dreaming!" it said.

"Christine, Christine, it is I, Raoul!"

A silence.

"But answer me, Christine! . . . In heaven's name, if you are alone, answer me!"

Then Christine's voice whispered Raoul's name.

"Yes! Yes! It is I! It is not a dream! . . . Christine, trust me! We are here to save you . . . but be prudent! When you hear the monster, warn us!"

Then Christine gave way to fear. She trembled lest Erik should discover where Raoul was hidden; she told us in a few hurried words that Erik had gone quite mad with love and that he had decided to kill everybody and himself with everybody if she did not consent to become his wife. He had given her till eleven o'clock the next evening for reflection. It was the last respite. She must choose, as he said, between the wedding mass and the requiem.

And Erik had then uttered a phrase which Christine did not quite understand:

"Yes or no! If your answer is no, everybody will be dead and buried!"

But I understand the sentence perfectly, for it corresponded in a terrible manner with my own dreadful thought.

"Can you tell us where Erik is?" I asked.

She replied that he must have left the house.

"Could you make sure?"

"No. I am fastened. I can not stir a limb."

When we heard this, M. de Chagny and I gave a yell of fury. Our safety, the safety of all three of us, depended on the girl's liberty of movement.

"But where are you?" asked Christine. "There are only two doors in my room, the Louis-Phillipe room of which I told you, Raoul; a door through which Erik comes and goes, and another which he has never opened before me and which he has forbidden me ever to go through, because he says it is the most dangerous of the doors, the door of the torture-chamber!"

"Christine, that is where we are!"

"You are in the torture-chamber?"

"Yes, but we can not see the door."

"Oh, if I could only drag myself so far! I would knock at the door and that would tell you where it is."

"Is it a door with a lock to it?" I asked.

"Yes, with a lock."

"Mademoiselle," I said, "it is absolutely necessary that you should open that door to us!"

"But how?" asked the poor girl tearfully.

We heard her straining, trying to free herself from the bonds that held her.

"I know where the key is," she said, in a voice that seemed exhausted by the effort she had made. "But I am fastened so tight. . . Oh, the wretch!"

And she gave a sob.

"Where is the key?" I asked, signing to M. de Chagny not to speak and to leave the business to me, for we had not a moment to lose.

"In the next room, near the organ, with another little bronze key, which he also forbade me to touch. They are both in a little leather bag which he calls the bag of life and death.. . . . Raoul! Raoul! Fly! Everything is mysterious and terrible here, and Eric will soon have gone quite mad, and you are in the torture-chamber! . . . . Go back the way you came. There must be a reason why the room is called by that name!"

"Christine," said the young man, "we will go from here together or die together!"

"We must keep cool," I whispered. "Why has he fastened you, mademoiselle? You can't escape from his house; and he knows it!"

"I tried to commit suicide' The monster went out last night, after carrying me here fainting and half chloroformed. He was going to his banker, so he said! . . . When he returned he found me with my face covered with blood . . . I had tried to kill myself by striking my forehead against the wall."

"Christine!" groaned Raoul; and he began to sob.

"Then he bound me. . . I am not allowed to die until eleven o'clock tomorrow evening."

"Mademoiselle," I declared, "the monster bound you . . . and he shall unbind you. You have only to play the necessary part! Remember that he loves you!"

"Alas!" we heard. "Am I likely to forget it!"

"Remember it and smile to him . . . entreat him . . . tell him that your bonds hurt you."

But Christine Daae said:

"Hush! . . . I hear something in the wall on the lake! . . . It is he! . . . Go away! Go away! Go away!"

"We could not go away, even if we wanted to," I said, as impressively as I could. "We can not leave this! And we are in the torture-chamber!"

"Hush!" whispered Christine again.

Heavy steps sounded slowly behind the wall, then stopped and made the floor creak once more. Next came a tremendous sigh, followed by a cry of horror from Christine, and we heard Erik's voice:

"I beg your pardon for letting you see a face like this! What a state I am in, am I not? It's the other one's fault! Why did he ring? Do I ask people who pass to tell me the time? He will never ask anybody the time again! It is the siren's fault."

Another sigh, deeper, more tremendous still, came from the abysmal depths of a soul.

"Why did you cry out, Christine?"

"Because I am in pain, Erik."

"I thought I had frightened you."

"Erik, unloose my bonds . . Am I not your prisoner?"

"You will try to kill yourself again."

"You have given me till eleven o'clock to-morrow evening, Erik."

The footsteps dragged along the floor again.

"After all, as we are to die together . . . and I am just as eager as you . . . yes, I have had enough of this life, you know. . . . You have only one word to say: 'No!' And it will at once be over with everybody! . . . You are right, you are right; why wait till eleven o'clock to-morrow evening? True, it would have been grander, finer. . . . But that is childish nonsense. . . . We should only think of ourselves in this life, of our own death . . . the rest doesn't matter. . . . . You're looking at me because I am all wet? . . . Oh, my dear, it's raining cats and dogs outside! . . Apart from that, Christine, I think I am subject to hallucinations. . . You know, the man who rang at the siren's door just now—go and look if he's ringing at the bottom of the lake-well, he was rather like. . . There, turn round . . . are you glad? You're free now . . . Oh, my poor Christine, look at your wrists: tell me, have I hurt them? . . That alone deserves death. . . Talking of death, I must sing his requiem!"

Hearing these terrible remarks, I received an awful presentiment . . . . I too had once rung at the monster's door . . . and, without knowing it, must have set some warning current in motion. . . . And I remembered the two arms that had emerged from the inky waters. . . . What poor wretch had strayed to that shore this time? Who was 'the other one,' the one whose requiem we now heard sung?

Erik sang like the god of thunder, sang a Dies Irae that developed us as in a storm. The elements seemed to rage around us. Suddenly, the organ and the voice ceased so suddenly that M. de Chagny sprang back, on the other side of the wall, with emotion. And the voice, changed and transformed, distinctly grated out these metallic syllables:

"What have you done with my bag?"

(To be continued.)

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English Woman Walker, 70, Seeks Pedestrian Laurels.

Miss Gertrude Richards, seventy years old, is challenging the pedestrian record of Edward Payson Weston, the veteran American walker. She recently completed a walking tour of 1,644 miles through Scotland and England.

Bad weather has checked Miss Rickards's tour, but she will resume it next spring. When she sold her country home in 1923 she took up walking to amuses herself.

"I started at Land's End and set out for York at the beginning of my tour, but I went by highways and byways and not by the main roads," Miss Rickards explained. "I went to the south Cornish coast, Exeter, Bath, Gloucester Warwick, Rugby, Oakham, Grantham, Lincoln and Doncaster, studying flora and fauna. In 1924 I went to Inverness, by way of Edinburgh, and this summer I reached John o' Groat's, putting in 186 days of actual walking."

Miss Rickards always lunched on cheese and biscuits while on her tour and had her other meals in inns. She says she never experienced the slightest loneliness, and always knitted or embroidered while she was resting by the roadside at lunch time.

Another Alps Railway.

An electric railway is to be built to the summit of the Zugspitzee, the highest mountain in the Bavarian Alps.

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"Don't you think she's rather two-faced?"

"Yes, but it washes off every night."

Minard's Liniment for sore throat.

Eligible Peer Deserts Society.

London society has lost one of its most eligible young bachelors by the decision of Lord Hobart, only son of the Earl and Countess of Buckinghamshire, to desert England for the great open space sof Australia. This youthful peer, not yet 20, is riding in the bush as a cowboy in Queensland, while London mothers and debutantes with designs on a distinguished title are regretting his defection from Mayfair.

Lord Hobart left Eton a little while ago with the intention of going into business, but a short period in a counting house convinced him he was meant for some other career, so he embarked on a freighter bound for Australia. There he became a cowboy and now looks forward to a career in the cattle business. His family owns thousands of acres of coal land in Fife and had hoped to induce the heir to take up a conventional life in England.

Age of Umbrella.

The umbrella is undoubtedly of high antisuity, appearing in various forms upon the sculptured monuments of Egypt, Assyria, Greece and Rome; and in hot countries it has been used since the dawn of history as a sunshade—a use signified by its name, derived from the atin umbra, a shade.

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ISLAND KINGDOMS FOR SALE IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND

Lundy, in the Bristol Channel, Free From All Taxation, Recently Sold to London Business Man.

The Count of Monte Cristo lived, in the midst of luxuries and wonders, on an island of his own in the Mediterranean. Like Alexander Selkirk he was monarch of all he surveyed, his right there was none to dispute, and since his day every reader of the immortal romance in which his adventures are described have envied him, not indeed his solitary grandeur, but his island kingdom.

It is not given to all of us to become a king in the sense that the King of England or the King of Italy is, but given a sufficiently large bank account, and not very large at that, there is no reason why kingship on a minor scale cannot be attained. A few weeks ago Lundy, in the Bristol Channel, was sold for £16,000 to a London business man who for this mere bagatelle acquired complete sway over an attractive island, with absolute freedom from Imperial taxation or county or municipal rates.

Brownsea Island Castle.

Now the news comes to hand that Brownsea (or Branksea) Island and Castle are in the market, with another opportunity for someone of playing the role of island king. Brownsea Island is situated at the entrance to Poole Harbor in the heart of the beautiful Dorset lakeland. The island itself consists of 500 acres of some of the most beautiful scenery in the south of England, and apart from the Castle would offer many inducements to quit the busy world for a life of quiet communion with nature. But to anyone who is not given to Thoreau's habits there is the Castle, which was built in the time of Henry VIII. as a defense for Poole and to command all shipping going in and out of the harbor. This surveillance was irksome. if we may believe a complaint dated 1581, which placed on record that "the Goovner of Bronkseye doth moleste the inhabitants of the towne, and will not suffer them to passe Northaven Point, but doth threaten them to shoote at them, and violently doth take their money from them, which is not only a great hindranc to poor mn that were woonte to gayne that wayse, but also an infrynginge of our liberties, whereof we think yt very necessarye to be remedyd."

Bought for a Shilling.

Present possession, it goes without saying, does not include the privilege of molesting the sturdy inhabitants of Poole. Since the Civil War the Castle has been used simply as a dwelling house, and a beautiful one it is, fit for any island monarch who may wish to reside there. Given a sufficient figure, and Sir Arthur Wheeler, its present possessor, will vacate his throne immediately and voluntarily go into exile on the mainland of England. In the latter part of the sixteeth century the rental of the whole island stood at 8s.; but you will have to pay more now

If Lundy be unobtainable, and Branksea be too dear, there are other islands round the British coast which offer the opportunity of becoming king at a small price They go begging at sundry intervals, and the auctioneer is ready to knock them down to the highest bidder. Last summer a distinguished novelist, who had lived for some years on the Island of Herm in the Channel Islands, bought an island off the West Coast of Scotland, which had belonged to Lord Leverhulme. A few years ago Lord Strathcona purchased the isles Colonsay and Oronsay in the Hebrides, and at the same time an English general became the owner of one of the lesser Orkneys. Calday Island, off the coast of Pembrokeshire, was formerly in the possession of the Rev. W. Done Bushell, a master at Harrow School.

Probably the smallest amount ever paid for an island off the coast of the United Kingdom was one shilling, in consideration of which sum an islet in Lough Erne, County Fermanagh, was, about 20 years ago, sold by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests. It is hardly possible to become an island king much cheaper than that!

Music Championed by Member of Parliament.

American men of the commercial and political world have given high praise to music—its influence and values. Now comes from London the opinion of a Mmber of Parliament, The Right Honorable J. R. Clynes, and what he believes music can do. He freely expresses himself in the following:

"Music plays a very large part in the lives of most of us. here are, it is true, people who are not influenced by it and take no pleasure in it, but they are a small minority compared with the hosts of those who, generation after generation, are moved in some degree by the appeal of music. Enjoyed as a pleasure, pursued as a hobby, or studdied as an art, it has the interest and the affection of the vast majority of the human race. Among the many forms of music which influence the minds and hearts of men and women and children, the music of the home is perhaps the most valuable and the best loved.

"It will be agreed by all that the home, the life of the home, the spirit of the family, are, above most things else, of crucial importance to the welfare of the State; and if that be so, if the life of the family is the mainspring of the life of the nation, it follows that every influence which can benefit the family life, which can help to unite the members of the family in real companionship, which can give them a common interest, which can make their life together more pleasant by making it more enjoyable—any influence which can do this is an influence of great national value. It draws the family more closely together. It eases the clash of competing individual desires within the family circle. It sests up an interest appealing to all. It does that inestimable good to family life—it increases the family's power to hang together for mutual advantage.

Music is such an influence. Music in the home plays the part of a social reformer. It improves the standard of the mental, the emotional, the spiritual life. When you have got music in the home you have made less room for inferior interests. For one thing, you bring to bear upon the younger members of the family an influence that may be of lifelong benefit to them. Soon enough, and inevitably, valueless and injurious influences will be playing upon them. Give them music—have music played and sung to them—have them taught to sing and play music for themselves—and you will have done something to counteract the danger of unwholesome influences to which they are certain to be exposed."

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World's Best "Stenog."

The Earl of Birkenhead, Secretary of State for India, started out early in life to be a stenographer, but he did not get very far. He made this revelation in an address to the graduating class of a commercial college.

"I thought I would rather be a shorthand reporter than anything in the world and I worked like a beaver," he said. "I was a wonder. I broke all speed records. My teachers had never seen any one who developed such speed. But there was a rude awakening. Nobody else could read my notes, and I couldn't read them myself. So my shorthand ambitions came to a sudden end."

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