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The Phantom of the Opera

BY GASTON LEROUX

CHAPTER XIX.—(Cont'd.)

"Ah, I am not going to die yet . . . presently I shall . . . but let me cry! . . . Listen, daroga . . . listen to this . . . While I was at her feet . . . I heard her say, 'Poor, unhappy Erik!' . . . And she took my hand! . . . . I had become no more, you know, than a poor dog ready to die for her. . . . I mean it, daroga! . . . I held in my hand a ring, a plain gold ring which I had given her . . . which she had lost . . . a wedding-ring, you know. . . . I slipped it into her little hand and said, 'There! . . . Take it! . . . Take it for you . . . and him! . . . It shall be my wedding-present . . . a present from your poor, unhappy Erik. . . . I know you love the boy . . . . don't cry any more!' . . . She asked me, in a very soft voice, what I meant. . . . Then I made her understand that, where she was concerned, I was only a poor dog, ready to die for her . . . but that she could marry the young man when she pleased, because she had cried with me and mingled her tears with mine!"

Erik's emotion was so great that he had to tell the Persian not to look at him, for he was choking and must take off his mask. The daroga went to the window and opened it. His heart was full of pity, but he took care to keep his eyes fixed on the trees in the Tuileries gardens, lest he should see the monster's face.

"I went and released the young man," Erik continued, "and told him to come with me to Christine. . . . They kissed before me in the Louis-Philippe room. . . . Christine had my ring. . . . I made Christine swear to come back, one night, when I was dead, crossing the lake from the Rue-Scribe sire, and bury me in the greatest secrecy with the gold ring, which she was to wear until that moment. . . I told her where she would find my body and what to do with it. . . Then Christine kissed me, for the first time, herself, here, on the forehead—don't look, daroga!—and they went on together. . . . Christine had stopped crying. . . I alone cried. . . . Daroga, daroga, if Christine keeps her promise, she will come back soon!"

The monster resumed his mask and collected his strength to leave the daroga. He told him that, when he felt his end to be very near at hand, he would send him, in gratitude for the kindness which the Persian had once shown him, that which he held dearest in te world: all Christine Daae's papers, which she had written for Raoul's benefit and left with Erik, together with a few objects belonging to her, such as a pair of gloves, a shoe-buckle and two pocket handkerchiefs. In reply to the Persian's questions, Erik told him that the two young people, as soon as they found themselves free, had resolved to go and look for a priest in some lonely spot where they could hide their happiness and that, with this object in view, they had started from "the northern railway station of the world." Lastly, Erik relied on the Persian, as soon as he received the promised relics and papers, to inform the young couple of his death and to advertise it in the Epoque.

That was all. The Persian saw Erik to the door of his flat, and Darius helped him down to the street. A cab was waiting for him. Erik stepped in; and the Persian, who had gone back to the window, heard him say to the driver:

"Go to the Opera."

And the cab drove off into the night.

The Persian had seen the poor, unfortunate Erik for the last time. Three weeks later, the Epoque published this advertisement:

"Erik is dead."

EPILOGUE.

I have now told the singular, but veracious story of the Opera ghost. As I declared on the first page of this work, it is no longer possible to deny that Erik really lived. There are today so many proofs of his existence within the reach of everybody that we can follow Erik's actions logically through the whole tragedy of the Chagnys.

There is no need to repeat here how greatly the case excited the capital. The kidnapping of the artist, the death of the Comte de Chagny under such exceptional conditions, the disappearance of his brother, the drugging of the gasman at the Opera and of his two assistants: what tragedies, what passions, what crimes had surrounded the idyll of Raoul and the sweet and charming Christine! . . . . What had become of that wonderful, mysterious artist of whom the world was never, never to hear again? . . .

"She was represented as the victim of a rivalry between the two brothers; and nobody suspected what had really happened, nobody understood that, as Raoul and Christine had both disappeared, both had withdrawn far from the world to enjoy a happiness which they would not have cared to make public after the inexplicable death of Count Philippe. . . . They took the train one day from "the northern railway station of the world."

If the reader will visit the Opera one morning and ask leave to stroll where he pleases, without being accompanied by a stupid guide, let him go to Box Five and knock with his fist or stick on the enormous column that separates this from the stage-box. He will find that the column sounds hollow. After that do not be astonished by the suggestion that it was occupied by the voice of the ghost; there is room inside the column for two men. If you are surprised that, when the various incidents occurred, no one turned round to look at the column, you must remember that it presented the appearance of solid marble, and that the voice contained in it seemed rather to come from the opposite side, for, as we have seen, the ghost was an expert ventriloquist.

According to the Persian's account, Erik was born in a small town not far from Rouen. He was the son of a master-mason. He ran away at an early age from his father's house, where his ugliness was a subject of horror and terror to his parents. For a time he frequented the fairs, where a showman exhibited him as "the living corpse." He seems to have crossed the whole of Europe, from fair to fair, and to have completed his strange education as an artist and magician at the very fountain-head of art and magic, among the Gypsies. A period of Erik's life remained quite obscure. He was seen at the fair of Nijni-Novgorod, where he displayed himself in all his hideous glory. He already sang as nobody on the earth had ever sung before; he practiced ventriloquism and gave displays of legerdemain so extraordinary that the caravans returning to Asia talked about it during the whole length of their journey. In this way, his reputation penetrated the walls of the palace at Mazenderan, where the little sultana, the favorite of the Shah-in-Shah, was boring herself to death. A dealer in furs, returning to Samarkand from Nijni-Novgorod, told of the marvels which he had seen performed in Erik's tent. The trader was summoned to the palace and the daroga of Mazenderan was told to question him. Next the daroga was instructed to go and find Erik. He brought him to Persia, where for some months Erik's will was law. He was guilty of not a few horrors, for he seemed not to know the difference between good and evil. He took part calmly in a number of political assassinations; and he turned his diabolical inventive powers against the Emir of Afghanistan, who was at war with the Persian empire. The Shah took a liking to him.

This was the time of the rosy hours of Mazenderan, of which the daroga's narrative has given us a glimpse. Erik had very original ideas of the subject of architecture and thought out a palace much as a conjuror contrives a trick-casket. The Shah ordered him to construct an edifice of this kind. Erik did so; and the building appears to have been so ingenious that His Majesty was able to move about in it unseen and to disappear without a possibility of the trick's being discovered. When the Shah-in-Shah found himself the possessor of this gem, he ordered Erik's yellow eyes to be put out. But he reflected that, even when blind, Erik would still be able to build so remarkable a house for another sovereign; and also that, as long as Erik was alive, some one would know the secret of the wonderful palace. Erik's death was decided upon, together with that of all the laborers who had worked under his orders. The execution of this abominable decree devolved upon the daroga of Mazenderan. Erik had shown him some slight services and procured him many a hearty laugh. He saved Erik by providing him with the means of escape, but nearly paid with his head for his generous indulgence.

Fortunately for the daroga, a corpse half-eaten by the birds of prey, was found on the shore of the Caspian Sea, and was taken for Erik's body, because the daroga's friends had dressed the remains in clothing that belonged to Erik. The daroga was let off with the loss of the imperial favor, the confiscation of his property and an order of perpetual banishment.

As for Erik, he went to Asia Minor and thence to Constantinople, where he entered the Sultan's employment. In explanation of the services which he was able to render a monarch haunted by perpetual terrors, I need only say that it was Erik who constructed all the famous trap-doors and secret chambers and mysterious strong-boxes which were found at Yildiz-Kiosk after the last Turkish revolution.

Of course, he had to leave the Sultan's services for the same reasons that made him fly from Persia; he knew too much. Then, tired of his adventurous, formidable and monstrous life, he longed to be some one, "like everybody else." And he became a contractor, like any ordinary contractor, building ordinary houses with ordinary bricks. He tendered for part of the foundations in the Opera. His estimate was accepted. When he found himself in the cellars of the enormous playhouse, his artistic, fantastic, wizard nature resumed the upper hand. Besides, was he not as ugly as ever? He dreamed of creating for his own use a dwelling unknown to the rest of the earth, where he could hide from men's eyes for all time.

The reader knows and guesses the rest. It is all in keeping with this incredible and yet veracious story. Poor, unhappy Erik! Shall we pity him? Shall we curse him? He asked only to be "some one," like everybody else. But he was too ugly! And he had to hide his genius or use it to play tricks with, when, with an ordinary face, he would have been one of the most distinguished of mankind! He had a heart that could have held the empire of the world; and, in the end, he had to content himself with a cellar. Ah, yes, we must needs pity the Opera ghost.

I have prayed over his mortal remains, that God might show him mercy, nothwithstanding his crimes. Yes, I am sure, quite sure that I prayed beside his body, the other day, when they took it from the spot where they were burying the phonographic records. It was his skeleton. I did not recognize it by the ugliness of the head, for all men are ugly when they have been dead as long as that, but by the plain gold ring which he wore and which Christine Daae had certainly slipped on his finger, when she came to bury him in accordance with her promise.

The skeleton was lying near the little well, in the place where the Angel of Music first held Christine Daae fainting in his trembling arms, on the night when he carried her down to the cellars of the opera-house.

And, now, what do they mean to do with that skeleton? Surely they will not bury it in the common grave! . . . I say that the place of the skeleton of the Opera ghost is in the archives of the National Academy of Music. It is no ordinary skeleton.

(The End.)

Minard's Liniment for dandruff.

Three Riddles Solved.

Why do we use the expression "apple pie order" when we mean that things are exactly in their right places? asks "The Dearborn Independent," which proceeds to answer the question:

Because every Saturday a certain Puritan dame, Hepzibah Merton, made a practice of baking two or three dozen opple pies which were to last her family through the week She labelled each according to the day of the week on which it was to be used, and the pantry, thus arranged, was said to be in apple pie order

Why is an unmarried woman called a spinster?

Because women were prohibited from marrying in olden days until they spun a full set of bed furnishings and thus, until marriage they spent much time at the spinning wheel and were, therefore, "spinsters"

Why do clergymen habitually wear black?

Because when Martin Luther, in 1524, laid aside the habit of a monk and adopted the style of dress prevailing at the time, the Elector of Saxony used to sent to him from time to time pieces of black cloth, that color then being fashionable at the court. Luther's disciples thought because he wore black, it became them to do so, and thus it came about that the clergy generally grew to regard it as the only proper color for them to wear.

Discoverer of Germs.

The discovery that germs cause disease was made by Louis Pasteur 50 years ago.

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Protecting Source of Natives' Food Supply.

The protection of the game supply of the Northwest Territories has been given special consideration by the Dominion Government during recent years. Particular attention has been directed to the caribou, on which the natives, Indians and Eskimos, who are the wards of the Government, depend for food, clothing, and other necessities. The valuable wild life is protected for the natives by means of preserves (in which all whites are prohibited from hunting) and by bounties for the destruction of wolves. The preserves, five in number, aggregating 241,800 square miles, have been set aside by the Department of the Interior and are administered by its North West Territories and Yukon Branch.

During recent years further steps have been taken to suppress the wolf menace by outfitting wolfing expeditions and sending them into those parts of the north country in which wolves are known to congregate, particularly to the east of Great Slave lake, where a heavy toll of the caribou is taken during the spring and fall migrations.

During the season of 1922-23 a party of three, operating in this region, secured 135 wolves. The success of this experiment was most gratifying and in July, 1924, a party of four, with provisions for a year, was sent to the Great Slave Lake area. This expedition returned to Fort Smith in July, 1925, after an eventful trip with a bag of 186 wolves and 2 wolverines.

The great destruction to game wrought by wolves in the Northwest Territories may be better realized when it is remembered that the average number of caribou killed in a year by a wolf is estimated at sixty, and that in addition they cause heavy loss to trappers by destroying the pelts of fur-bearing animals caught on the trap lines. From the above figures it will be seen that considerable saving has been effected in wild life by this feature of the Government's game protective activities in the Northwest.

Gradually man's knowledge of diseases is becoming more and more complete, his control over them more effective, and with each year of peace will come greater knowledge and efficiency along these lines.

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Minard's Liniment for sore throat.

Recent London Observations.

The real difference among men is between those who are prepared to give more than they get and those who want to get more than they give.—Stanley Baldwin.

To be appreciated by the populace reflects no discredit upon a composer. —Alexander Brent-Smith.

Though debt is a quarrelsome topic, the settlements at Washington have paved the way for friendly and practical solutions in Europe.—The Observer.

We must show the man who swings a hammer all day long, just how, and why he is serving God with every stroke.—P. T. R. Kirk.

As surely as contending nations, victor and vanquished, lose by war, so surely do employers and employees lose by industrial strife.—W. A. Appleton.

There are always three sides to every dispute—yours, mine, and the correct one.—G. W. Paton.

Where Dogs Taste Good.

The Igorots of the Philippine Islands are excessively fond of dog meat. In the large towns they have dog markets every Sunday. To this market the country people bring their dogs and sell them just as farmers of other nationalities bring cattle and such things to market.

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Because the Pants Are Worn.

Mail us the vest, or pants, or a sample. We submit sample and price of new pants to match, for your approval.

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Chained.

I want to see the slendor spars
Dark against the moon;
I want to feel the deck's plunge
And hear the wind's rune.

My coulter cuts the stubbled sod . . .
(I heard a gull cry
Flying toward the open sea)
I am a captive, I.

Chained by sordid circumstance
To furrow out this lea,
When I would go in a swift ship

The Artist.

An artist then is one, who by means of some instrument, such as a picture, transmits emotion to a responsive person or, at least, evokes some aesthetic feeling in him, though the wish to transmit such enotion need not be present. And a work of art is the vehicle of this transmission. — Percy Moore Turner, in "The Appreciation of Painting."

Cleaned for the first time for forty years, a carpet in the drawing-room of the Premier's house, 10 Downing St., was found to be a priceless Persian carpet. It had been unrecognizable through layers of London dirt.

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