The Phantom of the Opera by Gaston Leroux The Phantom of the Opera Prologue IN WHICH THE AUTHOR OF THIS SINGULAR WORK INFORMS THE READER HOW HE ACQUIRED THE CERTAINTY THAT THE OPERA GHOST REALLY EXISTED The Opera ghost really existed. He was not, as was long believed, a creature of the imagination of the artists, the superstition of the managers, or a product of the absurd and impressionable brains of the young ladies of the ballet, their mothers, the box-keepers, the cloak-room attendants or the concierge. Yes, he existed in flesh and blood, although he assumed the complete appearance of a real phantom; that is to say, of a spectral shade. When I began to ransack the archives of the National Academy of Music I was at once struck by the surprising coincidences between the phenomena ascribed to the "ghost" and the most extraordinary and fantastic tragedy that ever excited the Paris upper classes; and I soon conceived the idea that this tragedy might reasonably be explained by the phenomena in question. The events do not date more than thirty years back; and it would not be difficult to find at the present day, in the foyer of the ballet, old men of the highest respectability, men upon whose word one could absolutely rely, who would remember as though they happened yesterday the mysterious and dramatic conditions that attended the kidnapping of Christine Daae, the disappearance of the Vicomte de Chagny and the death of his elder brother, Count Philippe, whose body was found on the bank of the lake that exists in the lower cellars of the Opera on the Rue-Scribe side. But none of those witnesses had until that day thought that there was any reason for connecting the more or less legendary figure of the Opera ghost with that terrible story. The truth was slow to enter my mind, puzzled by an inquiry that at every moment was complicated by events which, at first sight, might be looked upon as superhuman; and more than once I was within an ace of abandoning a task in which I was exhausting myself in the hopeless pursuit of a vain image. At last, I received the proof that my presentiments had not deceived me, and I was rewarded for all my efforts on the day when I acquired the certainty that the Opera ghost was more than a mere shade. On that day, I had spent long hours over THE MEMOIRS OF A MANAGER, the lighthearted and frivolous work of the too-skeptical Moncharmin, who, during his term at the Opera, understood nothing of the mysterious behavior of the ghost and who was making all the fun of it that he could at the very moment when he became the first victim of the curious financial operation that went on inside the "magic envelope." I had just left the library in despair, when I met the delightful acting-manager of our National Academy, who stood chatting on a landing with a lively and well-groomed little old man, to whom he introduced me gaily. The acting-manager knew all about my investigations and how eagerly and unsuccessfully I had been trying to discover the whereabouts of the examining magistrate in the famous Chagny case, M. Faure. Nobody knew what had become of him, alive or dead; and here he was back from Canada, where he had spent fifteen years, and the first thing he had done, on his return to Paris at the Opera and ask for a free seat. The little old man was M. Faure himself. We spent a good part of the evening together and he told me the whole Chagny case as he had understood it at the time. He was bound to conclude in favor of the madness of the viscount and the accidental death of the elder brother, for lack of evidence to the contrary; but he was nevertheless persuaded that a terrible tragedy had taken place between the two brothers in connection with Christine Daae. He could not tell me what became of Christine or the viscount. When I mentioned the ghost, he only laughed. He, too, had been told of the curious manifestations that seemed to point to the existence of an abnormal being, residing in one of the most mysterious corners of the Opera, and he knew the story of the envelope; but he had never seen anything in it worthy of his attention as magistrate in charge of the Chagny case, and it was as much as he had done to listen to the evidence of a witness who appeared of his own accord and declared that he had often met the ghost. This witness was none other than the man whom all Paris called the "Persian" and who was well-known to every subscriber to the Opera. The magistrate took him for a visionary. I was immensely interested by this story of the Persian. I wanted, if there were still time, to find this valuable and eccentric witness. My luck began to improve and I discovered him in his little flat in the Rue de Rivoli, where he had lived ever since and where he died five months after my visit. I was at first inclined to be suspicious; but when the Persian had told me, with child-like candor, all that he knew about the ghost and had handed me proofs of the ghost's existence--including the strange correspondence of Christine Daae--to do as I pleased with, I was no longer able to doubt. No, the ghost was not a myth! I have, I know, been told that this correspondence may have been forged from first to last by a man who imagination had certainly been fed on the most seductive tales; but fortunately I have covered some of Christine's writing outside the famous bundle of letters and, on a comparison between the two, all my doubts have been removed. I also went into the past history of the Persian and found that he was an upright man, incapable of inventing a story that might have defeated the ends of justice. This, moreover, was the opinion of the more serious people who, at one time or other, were mixed up in the Chagny connection, case, who were friends of the Chagny family, to whom I showed all my documents and set forth all my inferences. In this I should like to print a few lines which I received from General D----: SIR: I can not urge you too strongly to publish the results of your inquiry. I remember perfectly that, a few weeks before the disappearance of that great singer, Christine Daae, and the tragedy which threw the whole of the Faubourg Saint-Germain into mourning, there was a great deal of talk, in the foyer of the ballet, on the subject of the "ghost;" and I believe that it only ceased to be discussed in consequence of the affair that excited us all so greatly. But, if it be possible--as, after hearing you, I believe--to explain the tragedy throughout, then I beg you sir, to talk to us about the ghost again. Mysterious though the ghost may at first appear, he will be more easily explained than the dismal story in which malevolent people have tried to picture two brothers killing each other who had worshiped each other all their lives. Believe me, etc. Lastly, with my bundle of papers in hand, I once more went over the ghost's vast domain, the huge building which he had made his kingdom. All that my eyes saw, all that my mind perceived, corroborated the Persian's documents precisely; and a wonderful discovery crowned my labors in a very definite fashion. It will be remembered that, later, when digging in the substructure of the Opera, before burying the architecture of the Opera ghost. I made the acting-manager put this proof to the test with his own hand; and that this corroborative proof was that of a victim of the Commune. The wrecks of supreme indifference to me if the papers pretend that the body was that of a victim of the Commune. I will tell where the bodies of those who were massacred, under the Commune, in the cellars of the Opera, were not buried on this side; the siege with all sorts of skeletons can be found in a spot not very far from that immense crypt which was stocked during which I should never have of provisions. I came upon this track just when I was looking for the remains of the Opera ghost, discovered but for the unheard-of chance described above. But we will return to the corpse and what ought to be done with it. For the present, I must conclude this very necessary introduction by thanking M. Mifroid (who was the commissary of police called in for the first investigations after the disappearance of Christine Daae), M. Remy, the late secretary, M. Mercier, the late acting-manager, M. Gabriel, the late chorus-master, and more particularly Mme. la Baronne de Castelot-Barbezac, who was once the "little Meg" of the story (and who is not ashamed of it), the most charming star of our admirable corps de ballet, the eldest daughter of the worthy Mme. Giry, now deceased, who had charge of the ghost's private box. All these were of the greatest assistance to me; and, thanks to them, I shall be able to reproduce those hours of sheer love and terror, in their smallest details, before the reader's eyes. And I should be ungrateful indeed if I omitted, while standing on the threshold of this dreadful and veracious story, to thank the present management of the Opera, which has so kindly assisted me in all my inquiries, and M. Messager in particular, together with M. Gabion, the acting-manager, and that most amiable of men, the architect intrusted with the preservation of the building, who did not hesitate to lend me the works of Charles Garnier, although he was almost sure that I would never return them to him. Lastly, I must pay a public tribute to the generosity of my friend and former collaborator, M. J. Le Croze, who allowed me to dip into his splendid theatrical library and to borrow the rarest editions of books by which he set great store. GASTON LEROUX. Chapter I Is it the Ghost? It was the evening on which MM. Debienne and Poligny, the managers of the Opera, were giving a last gala performance to mark their retirement. Suddenly the dressing-room of La Sorelli, one of the principal dancers, was invaded by half-a-dozen young ladies of the ballet, who had come up from the stage after "dancing" Polyeucte. They rushed in amid great confusion, some giving vent to forced and unnatural laughter, others to cries of terror. Sorelli, who wished to be alone for a moment to "run through" the speech which she was to make to the resigning managers, looked around angrily at the mad and tumultuous crowd. It was little Jammes--the girl with the tip-tilted nose, the forget-me-not eyes, the rose-red cheeks and the lily-white neck and shoulders--who gave the explanation in a trembling voice: "It's the ghost!" And she locked the door. Sorelli's dressing-room was fitted up with official, commonplace elegance. A pier-glass, a sofa, a dressing-table and a cupboard or two provided the necessary furniture. On the walls hung a few engravings, relics of the mother, who had known the glories of the old Opera in the Rue le Peletier; portraits of Vestris, Gardel, Dupont, Bigottini. But the room seemed a palace to the brats of the corps de ballet, who were lodged in common dressing-rooms where they spent their time singing, quarreling, smacking the dressers and hair-dressers and buying one another glasses of cassis, beer, or even rhum, until the call-boy's bell rang. Sorelli was very superstitious. She shuddered when she heard little Jammes speak of the ghost, called her a "silly little fool" and then, as she was the first to believe in ghosts in general, and the Opera ghost in particular, at once asked for details: "Have you seen him?" "As plainly as I see you now!" said little Jammes, whose legs were giving way beneath her, and she dropped with a moan into a chair. Thereupon little Giry--the girl with eyes black as sloes, hair black as ink, a swarthy complexion and a poor little skin stretched over poor little bones--little Giry added: "If that's the ghost, he's very ugly!" "Oh, yes!" cried the chorus of ballet-girls. And they all began to talk together. The ghost had appeared to them in the shape of a gentleman in dress-clothes, who had suddenly stood before them in the passage, without their knowing where he came from. He seemed to have come straight through the wall. "Pooh!" said one of them, who had more or less kept her head. "You see the ghost everywhere!" And it was true. For several months, there had been nothing discussed at the Opera but this ghost in dress-clothes who stalked about the building, from top to bottom, like a shadow, who spoke to nobody, to whom nobody dared speak and who vanished as soon as he was seen, no one knowing how or where. As became a real ghost, he made no noise in walking. People began by laughing and making fun of this specter dressed like a man of fashion or an undertaker; but the ghost legend soon swelled to enormous proportions among the corps de ballet. All the girls pretended to have met this supernatural being more or less often. And those who laughed the loudest were not the most at ease. When he did not show himself, he betrayed his presence or his passing by accident, comic or serious, for which the general superstition held him responsible. Had any one met with a fall, or suffered a practical joke at the hands of one of the other girls, or lost a powderpuff, it was at once the fault of the ghost, of the Opera ghost. After all, who had seen him? You meet so many men in dress-clothes at the Opera who are not ghosts. But this dress-suit had a peculiarity of its own. It covered a skeleton. At least, so the ballet-girls said. And, of course, it had a death's head. Was all this serious? The truth is that the idea of the skeleton came from the description of the ghost given by Joseph Buquet, the chief scene-shifter, who had really seen the ghost. He had run up against the ghost on the little staircase, by the footlights, which leads to "the cellars." He had seen him for a second--for the ghost had fled--and to any one who cared to listen to him he said: "He is extraordinarily thin and his dress-coat hangs on a skeleton frame. His eyes are so deep that you can hardly see the fixed pupils. You just see two big black holes, as in a dead man's skull. His skin, which is stretched across his bones like a drumhead, is not white, but a nasty yellow. His nose is so little worth talking about that you can't see it side-face; and THE ABSENCE of that nose is a horrible thing TO LOOK AT. All the hair he has is three or four long dark locks on his forehead and behind his ears." This chief scene-shifter was a serious, sober, steady man, very slow at imagining things. His words were received with interest and amazement; and soon there were other people to say that they too had met a man in dress-clothes with a death's head on his shoulders. Sensible men who had wind of the story began by saying that Joseph Buquet had been the victim of a joke played by one of his assistants. And then, one after the other, there came a series of incidents so curious and so inexplicable that the very shrewdest people began to feel uneasy. For instance, a fireman is a brave fellow! He fears nothing, least of all fire! Well, the fireman in question, who had gone to make a round of inspection in the cellars and who, it seems, had ventured a little farther than usual, suddenly reappeared on the stage, pale, scared, trembling, with his eyes starting out of his head, and practically fainted in the arms of the proud mother of little Jammes.[1] And why? Because he had seen coming toward him, AT THE LEVEL OF HIS HEAD, BUT WITHOUT A BODY ATTACHED TO IT, A HEAD OF FIRE! And, as I said, a fireman is not afraid of fire. The fireman's name was Pampin. The corps de ballet was flung into consternation. At first sight, this fiery head in no way corresponded with Joseph Buquet's description of the ghost. But the young ladies soon persuaded themselves that the ghost had several heads, which he changed about as he pleased. And, of course, they at once imagined that they were in the greatest danger. Once a fireman did not hesitate to faint, leaders and front-row and back-row girls alike had plenty of excuses for the fright that made them quicken their pace when passing some dark corner or ill-lighted corridor. Sorelli herself, on the day after the adventure of the fireman, placed a horseshoe on the table in front of the stage-door-keeper's box, which every one who entered the Opera otherwise than as a spectator must touch before setting foot on the first tread of the staircase. This horse-shoe was not invented by me--any more than any other part of this story, alas!--and may still be seen on the table in the passage outside the stage-door-keeper's box, when you enter the Opera through the court known as the Cour de l'Administration. To return to the evening in question. "It's the ghost!" little Jammes had cried. An agonizing silence now reigned in the dressing-room. Nothing was heard but the hard breathing of the girls. At last, Jammes, flinging herself upon the farthest corner of the wall, with every mark of real terror on her face, whispered: "Listen!" Everybody seemed to hear a rustling outside the door. There was no sound of footsteps. It was like light silk sliding over the panel. Then it stopped. Sorelli tried to show more pluck than the others. She went up to the door and, in a quavering voice, asked: "Who's there?" But nobody answered. Then feeling all eyes upon her, watching her last movement, she made an effort to show courage, and said very loudly: "Is there any one behind the door?" "Oh, yes, yes! Of course there is!" cried that little dried plum of a Meg Giry, heroically holding Sorelli back by her gauze skirt. "Whatever you do, don't open the door! Oh, Lord, don't open the door!" But Sorelli, armed with a dagger that never left her, turned the key and drew back the door, while the ballet-girls retreated to the inner dressing-room and Meg Giry sighed: "Mother! Mother!" Sorelli looked into the passage bravely. It was empty, a gas-flame, in its glass prison, cast a red and suspicious light into the surrounding darkness, without succeeding in dispelling it. And the dancer slammed the door again, with a deep sigh. "No," she said, "there is no one there." "Still, we saw him!" Jammes declared, returning with timid little steps to her place beside Sorelli. "He must be somewhere prowling about. I shan't go back to dress. We had better all go down to the foyer together, at once, for the 'speech,' and we will come up again together." And the child reverently touched the little coral finger-ring which she wore as a charm against bad luck, while Sorelli, stealthily, with the tip of her pink right thumb-nail, made a St. Andrew's cross on the wooden ring which adorned the fourth finger of her left hand. She said to the little ballet-girls: "Come, children, pull yourselves together! I dare say no one has ever seen the ghost." "Yes, yes, we saw him--we saw him just now!" cried the girls. "He had his death's head and his dress-coat, just as when he appeared to Joseph Buquet!" "And Gabriel saw him too!" said Jammes. "Only yesterday! Yesterday afternoon--in broad day-light----" "Gabriel, the chorus-master?" "Why, yes, didn't you know?" "And he was wearing his dress-clothes, in broad daylight?" "Who? Gabriel?" "Why, no, the ghost!" "Certainly! Gabriel told me so himself. That's what he knew him by. Gabriel was in the stage-manager's office. Suddenly the door opened and the Persian entered. You know the Persian has the evil eye----" "Oh, yes!" answered the little ballet-girls in chorus, warding off ill-luck by pointing their forefinger and little finger at the absent Persian, while their second and third fingers were bent on the palm and held down by the thumb. "And you know how superstitious Gabriel is," continued Jammes. "However, he is always polite. When he meets the Persian, he just puts his hand in his pocket and touches his keys. Well, the moment the Persian appeared in the doorway, Gabriel gave one jump from his chair to the lock of the cupboard, so as to touch iron! In doing so, he tore a whole skirt of his overcoat on a nail. Hurrying to get out of the room, he banged his forehead against a hat-peg and gave himself a huge bump; then, suddenly stepping back, he skinned his arm on the screen, near the piano; he tried to lean on the piano, but the lid fell on his hands and crushed his fingers; he rushed out of the office like a madman, slipped on the staircase and came down the whole of the first flight on his back. I was just passing with mother. We picked him up. He was covered with bruises and his face was all over blood. We were frightened out of our lives, but, all at once, he began to thank Providence that he had got off so cheaply. Then he told us what had frightened him. He had seen the ghost behind the Persian, THE GHOST WITH THE DEATH'S HEAD just like Joseph Buquet's description!" Jammes had told her story ever so quickly, as though the ghost were at her heels, and was quite out of breath at the finish. A silence followed, while Sorelli polished her nails in great excitement. It was broken by little Giry, who said: "Joseph Buquet would do better to hold his tongue." "Why should he hold his tongue?" asked somebody. "That's mother's opinion," replied Meg, lowering her voice and looking all about her as though fearing lest other ears than those present might overhear. "And why is it your mother's opinion?" "Hush! Mother says the ghost doesn't like being talked about." "And why does your mother say so?" "Because--because--nothing--" This reticence exasperated the curiosity of the young ladies, who crowded round little Giry, begging her to explain herself. They were there, side by side, leaning forward simultaneously in one movement of entreaty and fear, communicating their terror to one another, taking a keen pleasure in feeling their blood freeze in their veins. "I swore not to tell!" gasped Meg. But they left her no peace and promised to keep the secret, until Meg, burning to say all she knew, began, with her eyes fixed on the door: "Well, it's because of the private box." "What private box?" "The ghost's box!" "Has the ghost a box? Oh, do tell us, do tell us!" "Not so loud!" said Meg. "It's Box Five, you know, the box on the grand tier, next to the stage-box, on the left." "Oh, nonsense!" "I tell you it is. Mother has charge of it. But you swear you won't say a word?" "Of course, of course." "Well, that's the ghost's box. No one has had it for over a month, except the ghost, and orders have been given at the box-office that it must never be sold." "And does the ghost really come there?" "Yes." "Then somebody does come?" "Why, no! The ghost comes, but there is nobody there." The little ballet-girls exchanged glances. If the ghost came to the box, he must be seen, because he wore a dress-coat and a death's head. This was what they tried to make Meg understand, but she replied: "That's just it! The ghost is not seen. And he has no dress-coat and no head! All that talk about his death's head and his head of fire is nonsense! There's nothing in it. You only hear him when he is in the box. Mother has never seen him, but she has heard him. Mother knows, because she gives him his program." Sorelli interfered. "Giry, child, you're getting at us!" Thereupon little Giry began to cry. "I ought to have held my tongue--if mother ever came to know! But I was quite right, Joseph Buquet had no business to talk of things that don't concern him--it will bring him bad luck--mother was saying so last night----" There was a sound of hurried and heavy footsteps in the passage and a breathless voice cried: "Cecile! Cecile! Are you there?" "It's mother's voice," said Jammes. "What's the matter?" She opened the door. A respectable lady, built on the lines of a Pomeranian grenadier, burst into the dressing-room and dropped groaning into a vacant arm-chair. Her eyes rolled madly in her brick-dust colored face. "How awful!" she said. "How awful!" "What? What?" "Joseph Buquet!" "What about him?" "Joseph Buquet is dead!" The room became filled with exclamations, with astonished outcries, with scared requests for explanations. "Yes, he was found hanging in the third-floor cellar!" "It's the ghost!" little Giry blurted, as though in spite of herself; but she at once corrected herself, with her hands pressed to her mouth: "No, no!--I, didn't say it!--I didn't say it!----" All around her, her panic-stricken companions repeated under their breaths: "Yes--it must be the ghost!" Sorelli was very pale. "I shall never be able to recite my speech," she said. Ma Jammes gave her opinion, while she emptied a glass of liqueur that happened to be standing on a table; the ghost must have something to do with it. The truth is that no one ever knew how Joseph Buquet met his death. The verdict at the inquest was "natural suicide." In his Memoirs of Manager, M. Moncharmin, one of the joint managers who succeeded MM. Debienne and Poligny, describes the incident as follows: "A grievous accident spoiled the little party which MM. Debienne and Poligny gave to celebrate their retirement. I was in the manager's office, when Mercier, the acting-manager, suddenly came darting in. He seemed half mad and told me that the body of a scene-shifter had been found hanging in the third cellar under the stage, between a farm-house and a scene from the Roi de Lahore. I shouted: "'Come and cut him down!' "By the time I had rushed down the staircase and the Jacob's ladder, the man was no longer hanging from his rope!" So this is an event which M. Moncharmin thinks natural. A man hangs at the end of a rope; they go to cut him down; the rope has disappeared. Oh, M. Moncharmin found a very simple explanation! Listen to him: "It was just after the ballet; and leaders and dancing-girls lost no time in taking their precautions against the evil eye." There you are! Picture the corps de ballet scuttling down the Jacob's ladder and dividing the suicide's rope among themselves in less time than it takes to write! When, on the other hand, I think of the exact spot where the body was discovered--the third cellar underneath the stage!--imagine that SOMEBODY must have been interested in seeing that the rope disappeared after it had effected its purpose; and time will show if I am wrong. The horrid news soon spread all over the Opera, where Joseph Buquet was very popular. The dressing-rooms emptied and the ballet-girls, crowding around Sorelli like timid sheep around their shepherdess, made for the foyer through the ill-lit passages and staircases, trotting as fast as their little pink legs could carry them. [1] I have the anecdote, which is quite authentic, from M. Pedro Gailhard himself, the late manager of the Opera. Chapter II The New Margarita On the first landing, Sorelli ran against the Comte de Chagny, who was coming up-stairs. The count, who was generally so calm, seemed greatly excited. "I was just going to you," he said, taking off his hat. "Oh, Sorelli, what an evening! And Christine Daae: what a triumph!" "Impossible!" said Meg Giry. "Six months ago, she used to sing like a CROCK! But do let us get by, my dear count," continues the brat, with a saucy curtsey. "We are going to inquire after a poor man who was found hanging by the neck." Just then the acting-manager came fussing past and stopped when he heard this remark. "What!" he exclaimed roughly. "Have you girls heard already? Well, please forget about it for tonight--and above all don't let M. Debienne and M. Poligny hear; it would upset them too much on their last day." They all went on to the foyer of the ballet, which was already full of people. The Comte de Chagny was right; no gala performance ever equalled this one. All the great composers of the day had conducted their own works in turns. Faure and Krauss had sung; and, on that evening, Christine Daae had revealed her true self, for the first time, to the astonished and enthusiastic audience. Gounod had conducted the Funeral March of a Marionnette; Reyer, his beautiful overture to Siguar; Saint Saens, the Danse Macabre and a Reverie Orientale; Massenet, an unpublished Hungarian march; Guiraud, his Carnaval; Delibes, the Valse Lente from Sylvia and the Pizzicati from Coppelia. Mlle. Krauss had sung the bolero in the Vespri Siciliani; and Mlle. Denise Bloch the drinking song in Lucrezia Borgia. But the real triumph was reserved for Christine Daae, who had begun by singing a few passages from Romeo and Juliet. It was the first time that the young artist sang in this work of Gounod, which had not been transferred to the Opera and which was revived at the Opera Comique after it had been produced at the old Theatre Lyrique by Mme. Carvalho. Those who heard her say that her voice, in these passages, was seraphic; but this was nothing to the superhuman notes that she gave forth in the prison scene and the final trio in FAUST, which she sang in the place of La Carlotta, who was ill. No one had ever heard or seen anything like it. Daae revealed a new Margarita that night, a Margarita of a splendor, a radiance hitherto unsuspected. The whole house went mad, rising to its feet, shouting, cheering, clapping, while Christine sobbed and fainted in the arms of her fellow-singers and had to be carried to her dressing-room. A few subscribers, however, protested. Why had so great a treasure been kept from them all that time? Till then, Christine Daae had played a good Siebel to Carlotta's rather too splendidly material Margarita. And it had needed Carlotta's incomprehensible and inexcusable absence from this gala night for the little Daae, at a moment's warning, to show all that she could do in a part of the program reserved for the Spanish diva! Well, what the subscribers wanted to know was, why had Debienne and Poligny applied to Daae, when Carlotta was taken ill? Did they know of her hidden genius? And, if they knew of it, why had they kept it hidden? And why had she kept it hidden? Oddly enough, she was not known to have a professor of singing at that moment. She had often said she meant to practise alone for the future. The whole thing was a mystery. The Comte de Chagny, standing up in his box, listened to all this frenzy and took part in it by loudly applauding. Philippe Georges Marie Comte de Chagny was just forty-one years of age. He was as a great aristocrat and a good-looking man, above middle height and with attractive features, in spite of his hard forehead and his rather cold eyes. He was exquisitely polite to the women and a little haughty to the men, who did not always forgive him for his successes in society. He had an excellent heart and an irreproachable conscience. On the death of old Count Philibert, he became the head of one of the oldest and most distinguished families in France, whose arms dated back to the fourteenth century. The Chagnys owned a great deal of property; and, when the old count, who was a widower, died, it was no easy task for Philippe to accept the management of so large an estate. His two sisters and his brother, Raoul, would not hear of a division and waived their claim to their shares, leaving themselves entirely in Philippe's hands, as though the right of primogeniture had never ceased to exist. When the two sisters married, on the same day, they received their portion from their brother, not as a thing rightfully belonging to them, but as a dowry for which they thanked him. The Comtesse de Chagny, nee de Moergis de La Martyniere, had died in giving birth to Raoul, who was born twenty years after his elder brother. At the time of the old count's death, Raoul was twelve years of age. Philippe busied himself actively with the youngster's education. He was admirably assisted in this work first by his sisters and afterward by an old aunt, the widow of a naval officer, who lived at Brest and gave young Raoul a taste for the sea. The lad entered the Borda training-ship, finished his course with honors and quitely made his trip round the world. Thanks to powerful influence, he had just been appointed a member of the official expedition on board the Requin, which was to be sent to the Arctic Circle in search of the survivors of the D'Artoi's expedition, of whom nothing had been heard for three years. Meanwhile, he was enjoying a long furlough which would not be over for six months; and already the dowagers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain were pitying the handsome and apparently delicate stripling for the hard work in store for him. The shyness of the sailor-lad--I was almost saying his innocence--was remarkable. He seemed to have but just left the women's apron-strings. As a matter of fact, petted as he was by his two sisters and his old aunt, he had retained from this purely feminine education manners that were almost candid and stamped with a charm that nothing had yet been able to spoil. He was a little over twenty-one years of age and looked eighteen. He had a small, fair mustache, beautiful blue eyes and a complexion like a girl's. Philippe spoiled Raoul. To begin with, he was very proud of him and pleased to foresee a glorious career for his junior in the navy in which one of their ancestors, the famous Chagny de La Roche, had held the rank of admiral. He took advantage of the young man's leave of absence to show him Paris, with all its luxurious and artistic delights. The count considered that, at Raoul's age, it is not good to be too good. Philippe himself had a character that was very well-balanced in work and pleasure alike; his demeanor was always faultless; and he was incapable of setting his brother a bad example. He took him with him wherever he went. He even introduced him to the foyer of the ballet. I know that the count was said to be "on terms" with Sorelli. But it could hardly be reckoned as a crime for this nobleman, a bachelor, with plenty of leisure, especially since his sisters were settled, to come and spend an hour or two after dinner in the company of a dancer, who, though not so very, very witty, had the finest eyes that ever were seen! And, besides, there are places where a true Parisian, when he has the rank of the Comte de Chagny, is bound to show himself; and at that time the foyer of the ballet at the Opera was one of those places. Lastly, Philippe would perhaps not have taken his brother behind the scenes of the Opera if Raoul had not been the first to ask him, repeatedly renewing his request with a gentle obstinacy which the count remembered at a later date. On that evening, Philippe, after applauding the Daae, turned to Raoul and saw that he was quite pale. "Don't you see," said Raoul, "that the woman's fainting?" "You look like fainting yourself," said the count. "What's the matter?" But Raoul had recovered himself and was standing up. "Let's go and see," he said, "she never sang like that before." The count gave his brother a curious smiling glance and seemed quite pleased. They were soon at the door leading from the house to the stage. Numbers of subscribers were slowly making their way through. Raoul tore his gloves without knowing what he was doing and Philippe had much too kind a heart to laugh at him for his impatience. But he now understood why Raoul was absent-minded when spoken to and why he always tried to turn every conversation to the subject of the Opera. They reached the stage and pushed through the crowd of gentlemen, scene-shifters, supers and chorus-girls, Raoul leading the way, feeling that his heart no longer belonged to him, his face set with passion, while Count Philippe followed him with difficulty and continued to smile. At the back of the stage, Raoul had to stop before the inrush of the little troop of ballet-girls who blocked the passage which he was trying to enter. More than one chaffing phrase darted from little made-up lips, to which he did not reply; and at last he was able to pass, and dived into the semi-darkness of a corridor ringing with the name of "Daae! Daae!" The count was surprised to find that Raoul knew the way. He had never taken him to Christine's himself and came to the conclusion that Raoul must have gone to her dressing-room alone while the count stayed talking in the foyer with Sorelli, who often asked him to wait until it was her time to "go on" and sometimes handed him the little gaiters in which she ran down from her dressing-room to preserve the spotlessness of her satin dancing-shoes and her flesh-colored tights. Sorelli had an excuse; she had lost her mother. Postponing his usual visit to Sorelli for a few minutes, the count followed his brother down the passage that led to Daae's dressing-room and saw that it had never been so crammed as on that evening, when the whole house seemed excited by her success and also by her fainting fit. For the girl had not yet come to; and the doctor of the theater had just arrived at the moment when Raoul entered at her heels. Christine, therefore, received the first aid of the one, while opening her eyes in the arms of the other. The count and many more remained crowding in the doorway. "Don't you think, Doctor, that those gentlemen had better clear the room?" asked Raoul coolly. "There's no breathing here." "You're quite right," said the doctor. And he sent every one away, except Raoul and the maid, who looked at Raoul with eyes of the most undisguised astonishment. She had never seen him before and yet dared not question him; and the doctor imagined that the young man was only acting as he did because he had the right to. The viscount, therefore, remained in the room watching Christine as she slowly returned to life, while even the joint managers, Debienne and Poligny, who had come to offer their sympathy and congratulations, found themselves thrust into the passage among the crowd of dandies. The Comte de Chagny, who was one of those standing outside, laughed: "Oh, the rogue, the rogue!" And he added, under his breath: "Those youngsters with their school-girl airs! So he's a Chagny after all!" He turned to go to Sorelli's dressing-room, but met her on the way, with her little troop of trembling ballet-girls, as we have seen. Meanwhile, Christine Daae uttered a deep sigh, which was answered by a groan. She turned her head, saw Raoul and started. She looked at the doctor, on whom she bestowed a smile, then at her maid, then at Raoul again. "Monsieur," she said, in a voice not much above a whisper, "who are you?" "Mademoiselle," replied the young man, kneeling on one knee and pressing a fervent kiss on the diva's hand, "I AM THE LITTLE BOY WHO WENT INTO THE SEA TO RESCUE YOUR SCARF." Christine again looked at the doctor and the maid; and all three began to laugh. Raoul turned very red and stood up. "Mademoiselle," he said, "since you are pleased not to recognize me, I should like to say something to you in private." "I am not ill now," said Christine. "When I am better, do you mind?" And her voice shook. "You have been very good." "Yes, you must go," said the doctor, with his pleasantest smile. "Leave me to attend to mademoiselle." "I feel very restless this evening." The doctor tried to make a short protest, but, perceiving the girl's evident agitation, he thought the best remedy was not to thwart her. And he went away, saying to Raoul, outside: "She is not herself tonight. She is usually so gentle." Then he said good night and Raoul was left alone. The whole of this part of the theater was now deserted. The farewell ceremony was no doubt taking place in the foyer of the ballet. Raoul thought that Daae might go to it and he waited in the silent solitude, even hiding in the favoring shadow of a doorway. He felt a terrible pain at his heart and it was of this that he wanted to speak to Daae without delay. Suddenly the dressing-room door opened and the maid came out by herself, carrying bundles. He stopped her and asked how her mistress was. The woman laughed and said that she was quite well, but that he must not disturb her, for she wished to be left alone. And he passed on. One idea alone filled Raoul's burning brain: of course, Daae wished to be left alone FOR HIM! Had he not told her that he wanted to speak to her privately? Hardly breathing, he went up to the dressing-room and, with his ear to the door to catch her reply, prepared to knock. But his hand dropped. He had heard A MAN'S VOICE in the dressing-room, saying, in a curiously masterful tone: "Christine, you must love me!" And Christine's voice, infinitely sad and trembling, as though accompanied by tears, replied: "How can you talk like that? WHEN I SING ONLY FOR YOU!" Raoul leaned against the panel to ease his pain. His heart, which had seemed gone for ever, returned to his breast and was throbbing loudly. The whole passage echoed with its beating and Raoul's ears were deafened. Surely, if his heart continued to make such a noise, they would hear it inside, they would open the door and the young man would be turned away in disgrace. What a position for a Chagny! To be caught listening behind a door! He took his heart in his two hands to make it stop. The man's voice spoke again: "Are you very tired?" "Oh, to-night I gave you my soul and I am dead!" Christine replied. "Your soul is a beautiful thing, child," replied the grave man's voice, "and I thank you. No emperor ever received so fair a gift. THE ANGELS WEPT TONIGHT." Raoul heard nothing after that. Nevertheless, he did not go away, but, as though he feared lest he should be caught, he returned to his dark corner, determined to wait for the man to leave the room. At one and the same time, he had learned what love meant, and hatred. He knew that he loved. He wanted to know whom he hated. To his great astonishment, the door opened and Christine Daae appeared, wrapped in furs, with her face hidden in a lace veil, alone. She closed the door behind her, but Raoul observed that she did not lock it. She passed him. He did not even follow her with his eyes, for his eyes were fixed on the door, which did not open again. When the passage was once more deserted, he crossed it, opened the door of the dressing-room, went in and shut the door. He found himself in absolute darkness. The gas had been turned out. "There is some one here!" said Raoul, with his back against the closed door, in a quivering voice. "What are you hiding for?" All was darkness and silence. Raoul heard only the sound of his own breathing. He quite failed to see that the indiscretion of his conduct was exceeding all bounds. "You shan't leave this until I let you!" he exclaimed. "If you don't answer, you are a coward! But I'll expose you!" And he struck a match. The blaze lit up the room. There was no one in the room! Raoul, first turning the key in the door, lit the gas-jets. He went into the dressing-closet, opened the cupboards, hunted about, felt the walls with his moist hands. Nothing! "Look here!" he said, aloud. "Am I going mad?" He stood for ten minutes listening to the gas flaring in the silence of the empty room; lover though he was, he did not even think of stealing a ribbon that would have given him the perfume of the woman he loved. He went out, not knowing what he was doing nor where he was going. At a given moment in his wayward progress, an icy draft struck him in the face. He found himself at the bottom of a staircase, down which, behind him, a procession of workmen were carrying a sort of stretcher, covered with a white sheet. "Which is the way out, please?" he asked of one of the men. "Straight in front of you, the door is open. But let us pass." Pointing to the stretcher, he asked mechanically: "What's that?" The workmen answered: "'That' is Joseph Buquet, who was found in the third cellar, hanging between a farm-house and a scene from the ROI DE LAHORE." He took off his hat, fell back to make room for the procession and went out. Chapter III The Mysterious Reason During this time, the farewell ceremony was taking place. I have already said that this magnificent function was being given on the occasion of the retirement of M. Debienne and M. Poligny, who had determined to "die game," as we say nowadays. They had been assisted in the realization of their ideal, though melancholy, program by all that counted in the social and artistic world of Paris. All these people met, after the performance, in the foyer of the ballet,