

The World's Strangest
Mystery Story!

The PHANTOM of the OPERA

(Published by Arrangement with Universal Pictures)

by
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This story is published by arrangement with Universal Pictures, who have produced it as a tremendous spectacle. Lon Chaney in the role of Erik is the star, Mary Philbin is the young opera singer, Christine; Norman Kerry is Raoul and Arthur Edmund Carewe is the Persian. Five thousand others are in the cast of this picture.

(Continued.)

The Persian now looked at Christine's quiet profile under the lamp. She was reading a tiny book, with gilt edges, like a religious book. There are editions of The Imitation that look like that. The Persian still had in his ears the natural tone in which the other had said, "to please my wife." Very gently, he called her again; but Christine was wrapped up in her book and did not hear him.

Erik returned, mixed the daroga a draft and advised him not to speak to "his wife" again nor to any one, because it might be very dangerous to everybody's health.

Eventually, the Persian fell asleep, like M. de Chagny, and did not wake until he was in his own room, nursed by his faithful Darius, who told him that, on the night before, he was found propped against the door of his flat, where he had been brought by a stranger, who rang the bell before going away.

As soon as the daroga recovered his strength and his wits, he sent to Count Philippe's house to inquire after the viscount's health. The answer was that the young man had not been seen and that Count Philippe was dead. His body was found on the bank of the Opera lake, on the Rue-Scribe side. The Persian remembered the requiem mass which he had heard from behind the wall of the torture-chamber and had no doubt concerning the crime and the criminal. Knowing Erik, as he did, he easily reconstructed the tragedy. Thinking that his brother had run away with Christine Daae, Philippe had dashed in pursuit of him along the Brussels Road, where he knew that everything was prepared for the elopement. Failing to find the pair, he hurried back to the Opera, remembered Raoul's strange confidence about his fantastic rival and learned that the viscount had made every effort to enter the collars of the theatre and that he had disappeared, leaving his hat in the prima donna's dressing room beside an empty pistol-case. And the count, who no longer entertained any doubt of his brother's madness, in his turn darted into that infernal underground maze. This was enough, in the Persian's eyes, to explain the discovery of the Comte de Chagny's corpse on the shore of the lake, where the siren, Erik's siren, kept watch.

The Persian did not hesitate. He determined to inform the police. Now the case was in the hands of an examining-magistrate called Faure, an incredulous, common-place, superficial sort of person, (I write as I think), with a mind utterly unprepared to receive confidence of this kind. M. Faure took down the daroga's depositions and proceeded to treat him as a madman.

Despairing of ever obtaining a hearing, the Persian sat down to write. As the police did not want his evidence, perhaps the press would be glad of it; and he had just written the last line of the narrative I have quoted in the preceding chapters, when Darius announced the visit of a stranger who refused his name, who would not show his face and declared simply that he did not intend to leave the place until he had spoken to the daroga.

The Persian at once felt who his singular visitor was and ordered him to be shown in. The daroga was right. It was the ghost, it was Erik!

He looked extremely weak and learned against the wall, as though he were afraid of falling. Taking off his hat, he revealed a forehead white as wax. The rest of the horrible face was hidden by the mask.

The Persian rose to his feet as Erik entered.

"Murderer of Count Philippe, what have you done with his brother and Christine Daae?"

Erik staggered under this direct attack, kept silent for a moment, dragged himself to a chair and heaved a deep sigh. Then, speaking in short phrases and gasping for breath between the words:

"Daroga, don't talk to me . . . about Comte Philippe. . . . He was dead . . . by the time . . . I left my house . . . he was dead . . . when . . . the siren sang. . . . It was an . . . accident . . . a sad . . . a very sad . . . accident. He fell very awkwardly . . . but simply and naturally . . . into the lake!"

"You lie!" shouted the Persian. Erik bowed his head and said:

"I have not come here . . . to talk about Count Philippe . . . but to tell you that . . . I am going to die."

"Were are Raoul de Chagny and Christine Daae?"

"I am going to die. . . ."

"Raoul de Chagny and Christine Daae?"

"Of love . . . daroga . . . I am dying . . . of love. . . . That is how it is. . . . I loved her still . . . daroga . . . and I am dying of love for her, I . . . I tell you! . . . I you know how beautiful she was . . . when she let me kiss her . . . alive. . . . It was the first time . . . time, daroga, the first time I ever kissed a woman. . . . Yes, alive. . . . I kissed her alive . . . and she looked as beautiful as if she had been dead!"

The Persian shook Erik by the arm: "Will you tell me if she is alive or dead?"

"Why do you shake me like that?" asked Erik, making an effort to speak more connectedly. "I tell you that I am going to die . . . Yes, I kissed her alive."

"And now she is dead?"

"I tell you I kissed her just like that on her forehead . . . and she did not draw back her forehead from my lips! . . . Oh, she is a good girl! . . . As to her being dead, I don't think so; but it has nothing to do with me. . . . No, no, she is not dead! And no one shall touch a hair of her head! She is a good, honest girl, and she saved your life, daroga, at a moment when I would not have given two-pence for your Persian skin. As a matter of fact, nobody bothered about you. Why were you there with that little chap? You would have died as well as he! My word, how she entreated me for her little chap! But I told her that, as she had turned the scorpion, she had, through that very fact, and of her own free will, become engaged to me and that she did not need to have two men engaged to her, which was true enough."

"As for you, you did not exist, you had ceased to exist, I tell you, and you were going to die with the other! . . . Only, mark me, daroga, when you were yelling like the devil, because of the water, Christine came to me with her beautiful blue eyes wide open, and swore to me, as she hoped to be saved, that she consented to be my living wife! . . . Until then, in the depths of her eyes, daroga, I had always seen my dead wife; it was the first time I saw my living wife there. She was sincere, as she hoped to be saved. She would not kill herself. It was a bargain. . . . Half a minute later, all the water was back in the lake; and I had a hard job with you, daroga, for, upon my honor, I thought you were done for! . . . However! . . . There you were! . . . It was understood that I was to take you both up to the surface of the earth. When, at last, I cleared the Louis-Philippe room of you, I came back alone. . . ."

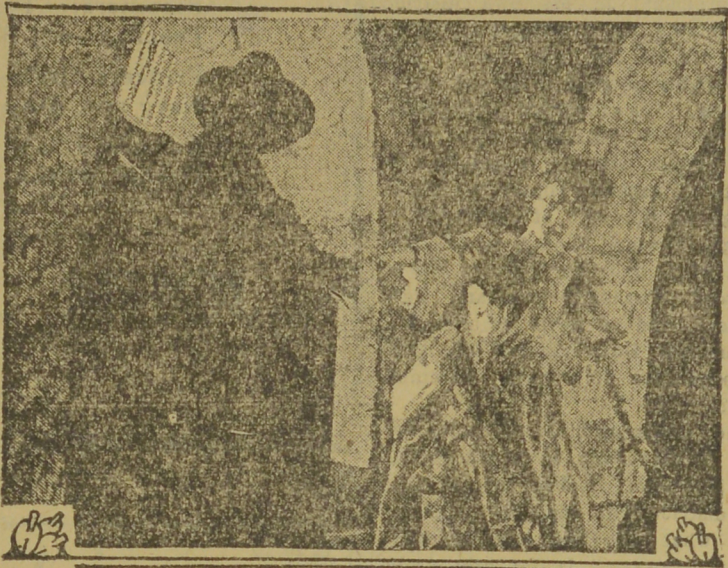
"What have you done with the Viscount de Chagny?" asked the Persian, interrupting him.

"Ah, you see, daroga, I couldn't carry him up like that, at once. . . . He was a hostage. . . . But I could not keep him in the house on the lake either, because of Christine; so I locked him up comfortably, I chained him up nicely—a whiff of the Mazenderan scent had left him as limp as a rag—in the Communists' dungeon, which is in the most deserted and remote part of the Opera, below the fifth cellar, where no one ever comes, and where no one ever hears you. Then I came back to Christine. She was waiting for me. . . ."

Erik rose solemnly. Then he continued, but, as he spoke, he was overcome by all his former emotion and began to tremble like a leaf:

"Yes, she was waiting for me . . . waiting for me erect and alive, a real, living bride . . . as she hoped to be saved. . . . And, when I . . . came forward, more timid than . . . a little child, she did not run away . . . no, no . . . she stayed . . . she waited for me . . . I even believe . . . daroga . . . that she put out her forehead . . . a little . . . oh, not much . . . just a little . . . like a living bride. . . . And . . . I . . . kissed her! . . . I! . . . I! . . . And she did not die! . . . Oh, how good, it is, daroga, to kiss somebody on the forehead! . . . You can't tell! . . . But I! . . . My mother, daroga, my poor, unhappy mother would never . . . let me kiss her. . . . She used to run away . . . and throw me my mask! . . . Nor any other woman . . . ever, ever . . . Ah, you

The Phantom of the Opera
Fictionized by Patrick Kearney from Universal's Screen version of the novel by Gaston Leroux



can understand, my happiness was so great, I cried. And I fell at her feet, crying."

Erik sobbed aloud and the Persian himself could not retain his tears in the presence of that masked man, who, with his shoulders shaking and his hands clutched at his chest, was moaning with pain and love by turns.

"Yes, daroga . . . I felt her tears flow on my forehead . . . on mine, mine! . . . They were soft . . . they were sweet! . . . They trickled under my mask . . . they mingled with my tears in my eyes. . . . they flowed between my lips. . . . Listen, daroga, listen to what I did. . . . I tore off my mask so as not to lose one of her tears . . . and she did not run away! . . . And she did not die! . . . She remained alive, weeping over me, with me. We cried together! I have tasted all the happiness the world can offer!"

And Erik fell into a chair, choking for breath:

"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, which 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 side, 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!—here, on the forehead . . . on my forehead, mine,—don't look, daroga!—and they went off 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 the world: all Christine Daae's pa-

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 dragging 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? . . .

(To be Continued.)

HOW ODD.

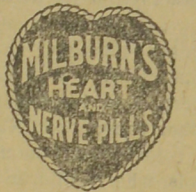
It was little Flossie's first day at school. Her name has been registered and the teacher asked, "Have you any brothers or sisters?" "Yes, ma'am," answered Flossie. "Are you the oldest one of the family?"

"Oh, no ma'am," returned Flossie, "father and mother's both older'n me."

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FASCISTI BAN HANDSHAKING

Rome, Italy, Dec. 14—"How do you do?", handshaking and the tipping of the hat have been officially abolished throughout Italy. From this week on public employes and school children will be obliged to greet their superiors and one another with the "fascist salute"—the upraised right arm, as was the custom in ancient Rome.

Betty—I'd be ashamed to tell whoopers the way you do.
Bobby—Well, let's see you tell them any better.

Hortense—And have you ever met a man who comes up to your ideal?
Marjorie—Oh, no; not by several million dollars, my dear.

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