

The dull rumble of a rapidly approaching carriage diverted his attention to the street below him. Right opposite his humble studio it stopped, before a great silent house whose blinds had been closely drawn ever since Jacques had rented the little attic room. He had often wondered who owned the grim, stately mansion, and many a weird, fantastic tale had been wrought by his fancies with regard to it. Now here was the owner returning after a long sojourn in a distant land, and he again turned his gaze to the carriage. First there came forth a pile of luggage—boxes and parcels—then a parasol, then two ladies. But Jacques saw only one, heard only one sweet voice. He was enchanted. Never in all his life had he seen such beauty as this. There was something angelic, divine, in the face of the woman, and Jacques held his breath with awe while the two ladies passed up the neglected walk and entered the spacious, gloomy, deserted house. Then, of a sudden, all the poverty and loneliness of his life rushed back upon his mind, and, overcome, he bowed his head upon the narrow sill and wept—wept wildly, pitifully, like a child for its dead mother, while the stars began to people the heavens and the moon rose majestically over the tall spires of the cathedral. At length, his soul having exhausted its grief, his sobbing ceased, but there was a heaviness in his heart which he could not cast out. Then, as he sat there, a sudden inspiration struck him like a flash of light from a propitious star. He would write once more, and this should be his masterpiece. She of the angelic face should be his heroine, and with such a character, success would be certain.

All aflame with his new resolve, he turned to his little desk and lighted a candle. Then he drew forth a plain pad and began to write. Late that night the taper burned low and died with a sputter, but he drew forth another and lighted it, laughing softly at his extravagance, and then resumed his work. Nor did he pause until the gray light of morning had begun to tinge the sky. But the middle of the forenoon found him again at work with the same feverish haste as before. He wrote furiously, as though he was afraid he might forget it ere he could put it upon paper. Thus the long day passed. At eventide he paused to eat a meagre supper, and afterward to take a quick glance at the house across the way. How changed it was. Above and below the shades were all drawn back, and borne gently up to him on the night air came the music of a low, sweet, soft voice in