

**PHANTOM,  
A NOVEL**

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Phantom, a novel by Gerhart Hauptmann & Bayard Quincy Morgan

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**GERHART HAUPTMANN & BAYARD QUINCY MORGAN**

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A NOVEL**



# PHANTOM

A NOVEL

BY

GERHART HAUPTMANN

TRANSLATED BY

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# PHANTOM

## I

My wife has furnished for me the tiny corner-room in the front, and I am now sitting in it. Across the way the village brook murmurs under ash and willow. Below me I hear the tinkling bell of the little shop which my wife tends. It does well and supplies our modest demands completely.

But I shall have to undertake something besides. First, I have time to spare, and then I have spiritual cravings. Otherwise I am quite content and feel as happy as a king.

I smoke a pipe. That costs me virtually nothing, for we have cheap tobacco in the shop. Smoking stimulates the fancy. It also quiets. I get by it, for example, the opportunity to feel a state of agreeable leisure and at the same time to set down my thoughts in writing. "Why

don't you write," says my wife, "perhaps it may turn out to be a book, you know."

I just simply write down everything that passes through my mind.

And if I should succeed in making a book, why shouldn't I be able to write a second, a third? Then I should be an author. In the most natural way I should then have found my desired avocation.

This house, which my father-in-law bought six months ago, together with the shop, did once belong to the widow of such a person. Her name was Mrs. Wander. Wander was a schoolmaster who had had to give up his position on account of certain views. After long wanderings he found this asylum, like me, and had a livelihood in it. His life-work, which he may have begun and completed in this very room, is a German dictionary of proverbs in five volumes.

## II

I AM unknown here so far. My wife and her father picked out this little village in the Hirschberg Valley, because they did not wish people to have constant occasion to talk about my "aimless journeys,"<sup>1</sup> but also for the sake of withdrawing me from an environment which at every step must waken recollections in me, and keep them awake.

Just here it occurs to me: am I not on the point of thwarting their intention?

Yes and no.

If I reflect here upon my destiny, seek to gain a comprehensive view of my past, and endeavor to set down veraciously all that seems memorable to me, it is for one thing an attempt to free myself from the spell of my recollections, and something very different from unwillingly falling under their spell once more, which would probably happen in Breslau.

I never wish to see that place again.

Perhaps a man would no longer be able to live after such experiences as mine, if all past

<sup>1</sup>Translator's note. Title of a popular novel by Gerstäcker.



events were not actually unreal. In no case does the past any longer affect us with the power of reality. I must proceed with great calmness, patience, and care, if I would still recall to my mind the details of my great experience. The last are of course the most vivid, whereas all those that precede my entrance into prison are much less clear, although much more important.

### III

I SPENT six years, four months, and twenty-one days in prison. That is a hard fact, which I had rather put down at the outset. It would be more than disagreeable to me to have fraudulently won myself readers by concealing it, if a complete book should some day actually be born of the faded dream of my life. It will then remain a fact, and be it here expressly stated, that the writer has been a convict.

## IV

I SHOULD quite certainly not be writing these lines, indeed quite certainly no longer be living, but for my present wife Marie, née Stark. Stark is a common name. But it is natural to say, as is the fact, that my present wife is not only called Stark [i. e. *strong*], but is so, although in pure externals she is characterized by a gentle and amiable nature. Her father was a bookbinder. If his daughter has been strong, she has also had in him and at all times a strong support.

My father-in-law is eighty. He clerks in the shop below. He is an admirable man.

We have here in the village a strange schoolmaster: a baptized Jew, Dr. Levine. His father was a banker in Berlin and very wealthy. They say that Dr. Levine renounced the greatest part of his fortune in favor of his brothers and sisters. He was state's attorney, and was to be promoted to Attorney-General, when he suddenly resigned and after suitable preparation was appointed here as teacher in the grammar-school. Only thus could he appease his social conscience, as