

THE GLIMPSE

BOOK I

CHAPTER I

THE CONCERT

I PASSED from the street between two lackeys who might have been the lackeys of Marie Antoinette into the curtained and velvety calm of those vast suites which a merchant designed in order to flatter the lust of eyes like mine. Plush on the wide silent floors, Indian-red tapestry on the walls, and through each draped doorway confusing and spacious vistas. The woodwork, the bronze fittings, the crystal stalactites, the molded plaster—all showed curious, elaborate craftsmanship. Hundreds of artisans in soiled smocks must have labored for months with dirty, offensive hands to produce that sedate splendor. But they were all gone, all hurried out of sight; and of the underworld only a gloved servility in immaculate heels had been retained. In spite of yourself you had the illusion that some powerful wand must have waved the