

CHICAGO POST.

WILLIAM C. MILLER,
Proprietor.

Preserve Success and you shall Command it.

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SACKVILLE, N. B., THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1878.

WHOLE NO. 444.

LITERATURE.

THE HAUNTED HOTEL.

Wilde Collins's New Story.

CONTINUED.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Entering his own room on the upper floor, Henry placed the manuscript on the table, open at the first leaf. His nerves were unquestionably shaken; his hand trembled as he turned the pages; he started at chance noises on the staircase of the hotel.

The scenario, or outline, of the Countess's Play began with formal preface phrases. She presented herself and her work with the easy familiarity of an old friend.

"Allow me, dear Mr. Francis Westwick, to introduce to you the persons in my proposed Play. Behold them, arranged symmetrically in a line."

My Lord. The Baron. The Countess. The Doctor. The Countess. "I don't trouble myself, you see, to invent fictitious family names. My characters are sufficiently distinguished by their social titles, and by the striking contrast which they present one with another."

"The First Act opens—
"No! Before I open the First Act, I must announce, in justice to myself, that this play is entirely the work of my own invention. I scorn to borrow from actual events; and what is more extraordinary still, I have not stolen one of my ideas from the Modern French drama. As the manager of an English theatre, you will naturally refuse to believe this. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters—except the opening of my first act. 'We are at Homburg, in the famous Salon d'Or, at the height of the season. The Countess (exquisitely dressed) is seated at the green table. Strangers of all nations are standing behind the players, venturing their money or only looking on. My Lord is among the strangers. He is struck by the Countess's personal appearance in which beauty and defiance are fantastically mingled; he is the most attractive man behind the Countess's game, and places his money where he sees her deposit her own little stake. She looks round at him, and says 'Don't trust to my colour; I have been unlucky the whole evening. Place your stakes on the other colour, and you may have a chance of winning.' My Lord (a true Englishman) blushes, bows, and obeys. The Countess proves a true prophet. She loses again. My Lord then takes the sum that he has risked."

"The Countess rises from the table. She has no more money, and she offers my Lord the coin."

"Instead of taking it, he politely places his winnings in her hand, and begs her to accept the loan as a favor to himself. The Countess stakes again, and loses again. My Lord smiles superiorly, and presses a second loan on her. From that moment her luck turns. She wins, and wins largely. Her brother, the Baron, trying his fortune in another room, hears of what is going on, and joins my Lord and the Countess."

"Pay attention, if you please, to the Baron. He is delineated as a remarkable and interesting character. This noble person was brought to life with a single minded devotion to the science of experimental chemistry very surprising in a young and handsome man with a brilliant future before him. A profound knowledge of the occult sciences has persuaded the Baron that it is possible to solve the famous problem called the 'Philosopher's Stone.' His own pecuniary resources have long since been exhausted by his costly experiments. His brother, the Baron, allied him with the small fortune at his disposal; reserving only the family jewels, placed in the charge of her banker and friend at Frankfurt. The Countess's fortune also being swallowed up, the Baron has in a fatal moment sought for new supplies at the gaming table. He proves, at starting on his perilous career, to be a favourite of fortune; wins largely, and alas! professes his noble enthusiasm for science by yielding his soul to the all-debasing passion of the gambler."

"At the period of the Play the Baron's good fortune has deserted him. He sees his way to a crowning experiment in the fatal search after the secret of transmuting the baser metals into gold. But how is he to pay the preliminary expenses? Destiny like a mocking echo, answers 'How?'"

"Will his sister's winnings (with my Lord's money) prove large enough to help him? For the result, he gives the Countess his advice how to play. From that disastrous moment the infection of his own adverse fortune spreads to his sister. She loses again and again—loses to the last farthing."

"The amiable and wealthy Lord offers a third loan, but the scrupulous Countess positively refuses to take it. On leaving the table, she presents her brother to my Lord. The gentlemen fall into conversation. My Lord asks leave to pay his respects to the Countess, next morning, at the hotel. The Baron hospitably invites him to breakfast."

My Lord accepts, with a last admiring glance at the Countess which does not escape her brother's observation, and takes his leave for the night."

"Alone with his sister, the Baron speaks out plainly. 'Our affairs,' he says, 'are in a desperate condition. I must find a desperate remedy. Wait for me here while I make inquiries about my Lord. You may have noticed a strong impression on him. If we can turn that impression into money no matter at what sacrifice, the thing must be done.'"

"The Countess now occupies the stage alone, and indulges in a soliloquy which develops her character. 'It is at once a dangerous and attractive character. Immense capacities for good are implanted in her nature, side by side with equally remarkable capacities for evil. It rests with circumstances to develop either the one or the other. Being a person who produces a sensation wherever she goes, this noble lady is naturally made the subject of scandalous reports. To one of these reports (which falsely and abominably points to the Baron as her lover instead of her brother) she now refers with just indignation. She has just expressed her desire to leave Homburg, as the place in which the vile calumny first took its rise, when the Baron returns, overhears her last words, and says to her, 'Yes, leave Homburg by all means; provided you leave in the character of my Lord's betrothed wife!'"

"The Countess is startled and shocked. She protests that she does not reciprocate my Lord's admiration for her. She swears that the length of refusing to see him again. The Baron answers, 'I must positively have command of money. Take your choice, between marrying my Lord's income, in the interest of my grand discovery, or leaving me to sell myself and my title to the first rich woman of low degree who is ready to buy me.'"

"The Countess listens in surprise and dismay. It is possible that the Baron is earnest? He is brutally in earnest. 'The woman who will buy me,' he says, 'is in the next room to us at this moment. She is the wealthy widow of a Jewish usurer. She has the money I want to reach the solution of the great problem. I have only to be that woman's husband, and to make myself master of untold millions of gold. Take five minutes to consider what I have said to you, and tell me on my return which of us is to marry for the money. I want, you or I.'"

"As he turns away, the Countess stops him. 'All the noblest sentiments in her nature are excited to the highest pitch. 'Where is the true woman,' she exclaims, 'who wants time to consider the sacrifice of herself, when the man to whom she is devoted demands it?' She does not wait five minutes—she holds out her hand to him, and says 'Sacrifice me on the altar of your glory! Take as stopping-stones on the way to your triumph, my love, my liberty, and my life!'"

"On this grand situation the curtain falls. Judging by my first act, Mr. Westwick, tell me truly, suppose I had had a weapon in my hand, would I have struck him dead at your feet; and by that rash act, you would have deprived yourself of the insurance money settled on the widow—the very money which is wanted to relieve your brother from the unendurable pecuniary position which he now occupies!'"

"The Countess gravely reminds the Baron that this is no joking matter. After what my Lord has said to her, she has little doubt that he would have struck her down with a single blow, and that if she had had a weapon in her hand, she would have struck him dead at your feet."

"The Baron, listening silently so far, now speaks. 'Permit me to finish the sentence far, he says, 'You would have struck your husband dead at your feet; and by that rash act, you would have deprived yourself of the insurance money settled on the widow—the very money which is wanted to relieve your brother from the unendurable pecuniary position which he now occupies!'"

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they have hired in Venice. He is still bent on solving the problem of the 'Philosopher's Stone.' His laboratory is set up in the walls beneath the palace; so that smells from chemical experiments may not incommode the Countess, in the higher regions of the house. The one obstacle in the way of his grand discovery is, as usual, the want of money. His position at the present time has become truly critical. He owes debts of honor to gentlemen in the own rank of life, which must positively be paid; and he proposes, in his own friendly manner, to borrow the money from my Lord. My Lord positively refuses, in the great terms. The Baron applies to his sister to exercise her conjugal influence. She can only answer that her noble husband (being no longer distractedly in love with her) now appears in his true character, as one of the meanest men living. The sacrifice of the marriage has been made, and has already proved useless."

"Such is the state of affairs at the opening of the second act. The entrance of the Countess suddenly disturbs the Baron's reflections. She is in a state bordering on frenzy. Incoherent expressions of rage burst from her lips; it is some time before she can sufficiently control herself to speak plainly. She has been doubly insulted—first, by a mental person in her employment; secondly, by her husband. Her maid, an Englishwoman, has declared that she will serve the Countess no longer. She will give up her wages, and return at once to England. Being asked her reason for this strange proceeding, she insolently hints that the Countess's service is no service for an honest woman, since the Baron has entered the house. The Countess does, what any lady in her position would do; she indignantly dismisses the wretch on the spot."

"My Lord, hearing his wife's voice raised in anger, leaves the study in which he is accustomed to shut himself up over his books, and asks what this disturbance means. The Countess informs him of the outrageous language and conduct of her maid. My Lord not only declares his entire approval of the woman's conduct; but expresses his own abominable doubts of his wife's fidelity, in language of such horrible brutality that no lady could pollute her lips by repeating it. 'If I had been a man,' the Countess says, 'and if I had had a weapon in my hand, I would have struck him dead at my feet!'"

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calculation or mistake may cause suspicion. The insurance office may fear of it, and may refuse to pay the money. As things are, the Baron risks it, and will not allow his sister to risk it in his place. My Lord himself is the next character who appears. He has repeatedly rung for the Countess, and the bell has not been answered. 'What does this insolent mean?' The Countess (speaking with quiet dignity—why should her infamous husband have the satisfaction of knowing how deeply he has wounded her?) reminds my Lord that the Countess has gone to the post. My Lord asks suspiciously if she has looked at the letter. The Countess informs him coldly that she has no curiosity about his letters. Referring to the cold from which he is suffering, she inquires if he thinks of consulting a medical man. My Lord answers roughly that he is quite old enough to be capable of doctoring himself."

"As he makes this reply, the Countess appears, returning from the post. She has just received a letter, and she goes out again and buys some lemons. He proposes to try hot lemons as a means of inducing perspiration in bed. In that way he has formerly cured colds, and in that way he will cure the cold from which he is suffering now. The Countess obeys in silence. Judging by appearances he goes very reluctantly on this second errand."

"My Lord turns to the Baron (who has thus far taken no part in the conversation) and asks him, in a sneering tone, how much longer he proposes to prolong his stay in Venice. The Baron answers quietly, 'Let us speak plainly to one another, my Lord. If you wish me to leave your house, you have only to say the word, and I go.' My Lord turns to his wife, and asks if she can support the calamity of her brother's absence—laying a grossly insulting emphasis on the word, 'brother.' The Countess preserves her impressive composure; nothing in her betrays the deadly hatred with which she regards the titled ruffian who has insulted her. 'You are master in this house, my Lord,' is all she says."

"My Lord looks at his wife; looks at the Baron—and suddenly alters his tone. Does he perceive in the composure of the Countess and her brother something lurking under the surface, which he is unable to fathom? At least, certain observations for the first time that the man looks ill. His hands tremble as he places the tray on the table. My Lord orders his Courier to follow him, and make the lemonade in the bedroom. The Countess remarks, that the Courier seems hardly capable of obeying his orders. Hearing this, the man admits that he is ill. He, too, is suffering from a cold; he has been kept waiting in a draught at the shop where he bought the lemons; and he is afraid the lemons are bad, and he begs permission to go down for a little while on his bed."

"Feeling her humanity appealed to, the Countess volunteers to make the lemonade herself. My Lord takes the Courier by the arm, leads him out, and whispers these words to him: 'Watch her, and see that she puts nothing into the lemonade; then bring it to me with your own hands; and then, go to bed, if you like.'"

"Without a word more to his wife or to the Baron, my Lord leaves the room."

"The Countess makes the lemonade, and the Courier takes it to his master. Returning on the way to his own room, he is seized by a violent cold, says, so giddy, that he is obliged to support himself by the backs of the chairs as he passes them. The Baron, always considerate to persons of low degree, offers his arm. I am afraid, my poor fellow, he makes a clumsy mistake."

"The Baron walks backward, and forwards in great agitation, talking to himself. The Countess hears fragments of what he is saying. He speaks of my Lord's constitution probably weakened in India—of a cold which my Lord has caught two or three days since—of the remarkable manner in which such slight things as colds sometimes end in serious illness and death."

"He observes that the Countess is listening to him, and asks if she has anything to propose. She is a woman who, with many defects, has the merit of speaking out. 'Is there no such thing as a serious illness?' she asks, 'cooked up in one of those books of yours in the vaults downstairs?'"

"The Baron answers by gravely shaking his head. What is he afraid of?—a possible examination of the body after death? No! he can set any post-mortem examination at defiance. It is the process of administering the poison that he dreads. A man so distinguished as my Lord cannot be taken seriously ill without medical attendance. Where there is a doctor there is a doctor there is always danger of discovery. Then again, there is the Courier, faithful to my Lord as long as my Lord pays him. Even if the Doctor sees nothing suspicious, the Courier may discover something. The poison, to do its work with the necessary secrecy must be repeatedly administered in graduated doses. One trifling mis-

place!"

"She suddenly pauses—considers for a while—and springs to her feet, with a cry of triumphant surprise. The wonderful, the unparalleled idea has crossed her mind like a flash of lightning. Make the two men change names and places; and the deed is done! Where are the obstacles? Remove my Lord (by fair means or foul) from his room, and keep him secretly prisoner in the palace, to live or die as future necessity may determine. Place the Courier in the vacant bed, and call in the doctor to see him—ill, in my Lord's character, and (on the dish) lying under my Lord's name."

"The manuscript dropped from Henry's hands. A sickening sense of horror overpowered him. The question which had occurred to the mind at the close of the First Act of the Play, assumed a new and terrible interest now. As far as the scene of the Countess's soliloquy, the incidents of the Second Act had reflected the events of his late brother's life as faithfully as the incidents of the First Act. Was the mysterious plot, revealed in the lines which he had just read, the offspring of the Countess's morbid imagination? or had she, in this case also, deluded herself with the idea that she was inventing when she was really writing under the influence of her own guilty remembrance of the past? If the latter interpretation were the true one, he had just read the narrative of the contemplated murder of his brother, planned in cold blood by a woman who was that moment inhabiting the same house with him. While, to make the fatality complete, Agnes herself had innocently provided the conspirators with the one man who was fitted to be the perfect agent of their crime."

"Even the bare doubt that it might be so, was more than he could endure. He left his room; resolved to force the truth out of the Countess, or to denounce her before the authorities as a murderer at large."

"Arrived at her door, he was met by a person just leaving the room. The person was the manager. He was hardly recognizable; he looked and spoke like a man in a state of deperation."

"Oh, go, if you like," he said to Henry. "Mark this, sir! I am not a superstitious man; but I do begin to believe that crime carries their own curse with them. This hotel is under a curse. What happens in the morning? I discover a crime committed in the old days of the palace. The light comes, and brings another dreadful event with it—a death; a sudden and shocking death, in the house. Go in, and see for yourself! I shall resign my situation to-morrow. I can't contend with fatalities that pursue me here! Henry entered the room."

"The Countess was stretched on her bed. The doctor on one side and the chambermaid on the other, were standing looking at her. From time to time she drew a heavy stertorous breath, like a person oppressed in sleeping. 'Is she likely to die?' Henry asked."

"She is dead," the doctor answered. "Dead of a rupture of a blood-vessel in the brain. These sounds that you hear are purely mechanical—they may go on for hours."

"Henry looked at the chambermaid. She had little to tell. The Countess had refused to go to bed, and had placed herself at her desk to proceed with her work. Finding it useless to remonstrate with her, the maid had left the room to speak with the manager. In the shortest possible time, the doctor was summoned to the hotel, and found the Countess as now lying. There was this to tell—and no more."

"Looking at the writing-table as he went out, Henry saw the sheet of paper on which the Countess had traced her last lines of writing. The characters were most illegible. Henry could just distinguish the words, 'First Act,' and 'Persons of the Drama.' The lost wretch had been thinking of her Play to the last, and had begun it all over again!"

"TO BE CONTINUED."

"The Terror in Germany."

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Amherst, N. S., Dec. 12, 1878.

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THE CO-PARTNERSHIP BUSINESS which existed between the Subscriber and his late father, THOMAS BAIRD, Esq., is now continued by the Subscriber JOHN MILTON BAIRD, Esq., under the old style of Firm of

THOMAS BAIRD & SONS,
Pursuant to the provision of his father's will.
JOHN MILTON BAIRD.
Sackville, Oct. 22nd, 1877.

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Business Cards.
New Harness Shop.

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Manufacture Harnesses and do general repairing, at moderate rates.
NATHAN G. BULMER.
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S. McDOWELL,
Dorchester, May 15, 1878.

U. S. Piano Co.
\$290.

YOU ask WHY we can sell First-class 7 & 8 Octave Rosewood Pianos for \$290. Our answer is, that it costs less than \$300 to make any \$300 Piano sold through Agents, of whom make 100 per cent. profit. We have no Agents, but sell direct to Families at Factory prices, and warrant every Piano we send our Pianos everywhere for trial, and require no payment unless they are found defective. Send for Illustrated Circular, which gives full particulars, and contains the names of over 1500 Bankers, Merchants and Families that are using our Pianos in every State of the Union. Please state where you saw this notice.

ADDRESS:
U. S. PIANO CO., 810 BROADWAY
New York.
SACKVILLE
Boot and Shoe Store.
JUST RECEIVED:
300 PAIRS
Ladies', Misses' and Children's
Boots, Shoes and Slippers.
PRICES AS FOLLOWS:
Ladies' Size, at 60c, 75c, \$1.15, \$