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WHOLE NO. 442.

## LITERATURE.

### THE HAUNTED HOTEL.

WILLIE COLLINS'S NEW STORY.  
CONTINUED.

The shock of the discovery held Agnes speechless and helpless. Her first conscious action when she was in some degree mistress of herself again was to lean over the bed and look closer at the woman who had so incomprehensibly stolen into her room in the dead of night. One glance was enough to startle back with a cry of amazement. The person in the chair was no other than the widow of the dead Montbarry—the woman who had warned her that they were to meet again, and that the place might be in Venice!

Her courage returned to her, stung into action by the natural presence of indignation which the presence of the Countess provoked. "Wake up!" she called out. "How dare you come here? How did you get in? Leave the room or I will call for help!"

She raised her voice at the last words. It produced no effect. Leaning farther over the bed she boldly took the Countess by the shoulder and shook her. Not even this effort succeeded in rousing the sleeping woman. She still lay back in the chair, possessed by a torpor like the torpor of death—insensible to sound, insensible to touch. Was she really sleeping? Or had she fainted?

Agnes looked closer at her. She had not fainted. Her breathing was audible, rising and falling and deep, heavy, gasping. At intervals she ground her teeth savagely. Beads of perspiration stood thickly on her forehead. Her clenched hands rose and fell slowly from time to time on her lap. Was she asleep, or was she dream? or was she spiritually conscious of something hidden in the room?

The doubt involved in that last question was unendurable. Agnes determined to rouse the servants who kept watch in the hotel at night. The bell-handle was fixed to the wall on the side of the bed by which the table stood.

She raised herself from the crouching position which she had assumed, in looking close at the Countess, and, turning towards the other side of the bed, stretched out her hand to the bell. At the same instant she stopped and looked upward. Her hand fell helplessly at her side. She shuddered, and sank back on the pillow.

What had she seen?

She had seen another intruder in her room.

Midway between her face and the ceiling there hovered a human head—severed at the neck, like a head struck from the body by the guillotine.

Nothing visible, nothing audible, had given her warning of its appearance. Silently and suddenly, the head had taken its place above her.

No supernatural change had passed over the room, or was perceptible in it now. The dimly lighted figure in the chair, the broad window opposite foot of the bed, with the black night beyond it; the candle burning on the table—these, and all other objects in the room, remained unaltered. One object more, unutterably terrible, had been added to the rest. That was the only change—no more, no less.

By the yellow candle light she saw the head distinctly, hovering in mid-air above her. She looked at it steadily, spellbound by the terror that held her.

The flesh of the face was gone. The shriveled skin was darkened in hue, like the skin of an Egyptian mummy—except at the neck. There it was of a lighter color; there it showed spots and splashes of the hue of that brown spot on the ceiling, which the child's fanciful terror had distorted into the likeness of a spot of blood. Thin remains of a discolored mustache and whiskers, hanging over the upper lip, and over the hollow where the cheeks had once been, made the head just recognizable as the head of a man. Over all the features death and time had done their obliterating work. The eyelids were closed. The hair on the skull, discolored like the hair on the face, had been burnt away in places. The bluish lips, parted in a fixed grin, showed the double row of teeth. By slow degrees the hovering head (perfectly still when she first saw it) began to descend towards Agnes as she lay beneath. By slow degrees, that strange doubly-blended odor, which the Commissioners had discovered in the vaults of the old palace—which had sickened Francis Westwick in the bed-chamber of the new hotel—spread its fatal exhalations over the room. Downward and downward the hideous apparition made its slow progress, until it stopped close over Agnes—stopped, and turned slowly so that the face of it confronted the upturned face of the woman in the chair.

After that there was a pause. Then, a momentary animation disturbed the rigid repose of the dead face.

The closed eyelids opened slowly. The eyes revealed themselves, bright with the glossy film of death, and fixed their dreadful look on the woman in the chair.

Agnes saw that look; saw the re-living woman rise, as if in obedience

to some dread command—and saw the dead face of the woman in the chair.

Her next conscious impression was of the sunlight pouring in at the window; of the friendly presence of Lady Montbarry at the bedside, and the children's wondering faces peeping in at the door.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"You have some influence over Agnes. Try what you can do, Henry, to make her take a sensible view of the matter. There is really nothing to make a fuss about. My wife's maid knocked at her door early in the morning, with the customary cup of tea. Getting no answer she went round to the dressing-room found the door on that side unlocked, and discovered Agnes on the bed in a fainting fit. With my wife's help they brought her to herself again, and she told the extraordinary story which I have just repeated to you. You must have seen for yourself that she has been over-fatigued, poor thing, by our long railway journeys; her nerves are out of order, and she is just the person to be terrified by a dream. She obstinately refuses, however, to accept this rational view. Don't suppose that I have been severe with her! All that a man can do to humor her I have done. I have written to the Countess (in her assumed name) offering to restore the room to her. She writes back, positively declining to return to it. I have accordingly arranged 'no as not to have the thing known in the hotel) to occupy the room for one or two nights, and to leave Agnes to recover her spirits under my wife's care. Is there anything more that I can do? Whatever question Agnes has asked of me I have answered to the best of my ability; she knows all that you told me about Francis and the Countess last night. But try as I may I can't quiet her mind. I have given up the attempt to reason with her. I have left her in the drawing room. Go, like a good fellow, and try what you can do to compose her."

In those words Lord Montbarry stated the case to his brother who stood at the door. Henry made no remark; he went straight to the drawing-room.

He found Agnes walking rapidly backwards and forwards, flushed and excited. "If you come here to say what your brother has been saying to me," she broke out, before he could speak, "spare yourself the trouble. I don't want common sense—I want a true friend who will believe in me."

"I am that friend, Agnes," Henry answered quietly, "and you know it."

"You really believe that I am not deluded by a dream?"

"I know that you are not deluded—in one particular, at least."

"In what particular?"

"In what you have said of the Countess. I do not believe that you are so much in love with her. Why do I only hear this morning that the Countess and Mrs. James are one and the same person?" she asked, distrustfully. "Why was I not told of it last night?"

"I felt forced that you had accepted the exchange of rooms before I reached Venice," Henry replied. "I felt strongly tempted to tell you even then, but your sleeping arrangements for the night were all made; I should only have inconvenienced and alarmed you. I waited till the morning, after hearing from my brother that you had yourself seen to your security from any intrusion. How that intrusion was accomplished it is impossible to say. I can only declare that the Countess's presence by your bedside last night was no dream of yours. On her own authority I can testify that it was a reality."

"On her own authority?" Agnes repeated, eagerly. "Have you seen her this morning?"

"I have seen her not ten minutes since."

"What was she doing?"

"She was busily engaged in writing. I could not even get her to look at me until I thought of mentioning your name."

"She remembered me, of course."

"She remembered you with some difficulty. Finding that she wouldn't answer me on any other terms, I questioned her as if I had come direct from you. Then she spoke. She not only admitted that she had the same superstitious motive for placing you in that room which she had acknowledged to Francis—she even owned that she had been by your bedside, watching through the night, to see if you were 'as she said.' I must get on with my play."

"What she saw or dreamed while she was in your room last night is at present impossible to discover; but, judging by my brother's account of her, as well as by what I remember of her myself, some recent influence has been at work which has produced a marked change in this wretched woman for the worse. Her mind is in certain respects unquestionably deranged. One proof of it is that she spoke to me of the Baron as if he were still a living man. When Francis saw her she declared that the Baron was dead, which is the truth. The United States Consul at Milan showed us the announcement of the death in an

American newspaper. So far as I can see, each of us has seen the Countess in a different light. I am sure she seems to be entirely absorbed in one absurd idea—the idea of writing a play for Francis to bring out at his theatre. He admits that he has been deceived in this, and that she might get money in this way. I think she did wrong. Don't you agree with me?"

Without heeding the question Agnes rose abruptly from her chair.

"Do me one more kindness, Henry," she said. "Take me to the Countess at once."

Henry hesitated. "Are you composed enough to see her, after the shock you that you have suffered?" he asked.

She trembled, the flush died away and left it deadly pale. But she held to her resolution. "You have heard of what I saw last night," she said, faintly.

"Don't unnecessarily agitate yourself. I must speak. My mind is full of horrible questions about it. I know I can't identify it; and yet I ask myself over and over again in whose likeness it did appear. Was it the likeness of Ferrari? or was it—"

She stopped, shuddering. "The Countess knew—I must see the Countess!" she resumed vehemently.

"Whether my courage fails me or not I must make the attempt. Take me to her before I have time to feel afraid of it!"

Henry looked at her anxiously. "If you are really sure of your own resolution," he said, "I agree with you—the sooner you see her the better. You remember how strangely she talked of your influence over her when she forced her way into your room in London?"

"I remember it perfectly. Why do you ask?"

"For this reason: In the present state of her mind I doubt if she will be much longer capable of realizing her wild idea of you as the avenging angel who is to bring her to a reckoning for her evil deeds. It may be well to try what your influence can do while she is still capable of feeling it."

He waited to hear what Agnes would say. She took his arm and led him in silence to the door.

They ascended to the second floor and after knocking entered the Countess's room.

She was still busily engaged in writing. When she looked up from the paper and saw Agnes a vacant expression of doubt was on her face. "What is the matter?" she asked. "After a few moments she lost her memories and associations appeared to drop slowly from her mind. The pen dropped from her hand. Haggard and trembling she looked closer at Agnes and recognized her at last. "Has the time come when I am ready?" she said, in low, awe-struck tones. "Give me a little respite; I haven't done my writing yet."

She dropped on her knees and held out her hands entreatingly. Agnes was far from having recovered from the shock she had received in the night; her nerves were far from being equal to the strain that was being laid upon them. She was so startled by the change in the Countess that she was at a loss with what to do next. Henry was obliged to speak to her. "Put the question while you have the chance," he said, lowering his voice. "See! the vacant look is coming over her face again."

Agnes tried to rally her courage. "You were in my room last night," she began. Before she could add a word more, the Countess lifted her hands and wrung them above her head, with a low moan of horror. Agnes shrank back, and turned as if to leave the room. Henry stopped her and whispered to her to try again. She obeyed him with an effort. "I slept last night in the room that you gave up to me," she resumed. "I saw—"

The Countess suddenly rose to her feet. "No more of that," she cried. "Oh, Jean Maria! do you think I want to tell you what I saw? Do you think I don't know what it means for me and for you? Think for yourself, Miss. Examine your own mind. Are you well assured that the day of reckoning has not come at last? Are you ready to follow me back, through the crimes of the past, to the secrets of the dead?"

She turned again to the writing table without waiting to be answered. Her eyes flashed; she looked like her own self once more as she spoke. It was only for a moment. The old ardor and impetuosity were nearly worn out. Her head sank, and she sighed heavily as she unlocked a desk that stood on the table. Opening a drawer in the desk she took out a leaf of vellum, covered with faded writing. Some ragged ends of silken thread were still attached to the leaf, as if it had been attached to a book.

"Can you read Italian?" she asked, as she handed the leaf over to Agnes. Agnes answered silently by an inclination of her head.

"The leaf," the Countess proceeded, "once belonged to a book in the old library of the palace while this building was still a palace. By whom it was torn out you have no need to know. For what purpose it was torn out you may discover for yourself if you will. Read it first—at the fifth line from the top of the page."

Agnes felt the serious necessity of composing herself. "Give me time to sit upon," she said to Henry, "and I will do my best." He placed himself behind her chair, so that he could look over her shoulder and help her to understand the writing on the leaf.

Rendered into English it ran as follows:

"I have now completed my literary survey of the first floor of the palace. At the desire of my noble patron, the lord of this glorious edifice, I have ascended to the second floor and continue my catalogue or description of the pictures, decorations and other treasures of art therein contained. I will begin with the corner room at the western extremity of the palace, called the room of the Caryatides, from the statues which support the mantelpiece. This work is of comparatively recent execution; it dates from the eighteenth century only, and reveals the corrupt taste of the period in every part of it. Still, from the statue which is attached to the mantelpiece. It conceals a very cleverly constructed hiding place between the floor of the room and the ceiling of the room beneath, which was made during the last evil days of the Inquisition in Venice, and which is reported to have saved an ancestor of my gracious lord, pursued by that terrible tribunal. The machinery of this curious place of concealment has been kept in good order by the present lord as a species of curiosity. He has condensed the head inward as if you were passing it against the wall behind. By doing this you set in motion the machinery hidden in the wall which turns the hearthstone on a pivot and discloses the hollow place below. There is room enough in it for a man to lie at full length. The method of closing the early again is equally simple. Place both your hands on the temple of the figure; pull as if you were pulling it towards you—and the hearthstone will revolve into its proper position again."

"You need read no further," said the Countess. "Be careful to remember what you have read."

She put back the page of vellum in her writing desk, looked it and led the way to the door.

"Come," she said, "and see what the mantelpiece has called 'the beginning of the end.'"

Agnes was barely able to rise from her chair; she trembled from head to foot. Henry gave her his arm to support her. "Fear nothing, I shall be with you," he whispered. The Countess proceeded along the northwest corridor and stopped at the door numbered Thirty-eight. This was the room which had been Baron Rivar's in the old days of the palace; the room situated immediately over the bedchamber in which Agnes had passed the night. For the last two days it had been empty. The absence of luggage when they opened the door showed that it had not yet been let.

"You see," said the Countess, as she pointed to the carved figure at the mantelpiece, "that is what to do. Have I deserved that you should temper justice with mercy?" she went on, in lower tones. "Give me a few hours more to myself. The Baron wants money—I do go on with my play."

Henry stepped forward, and imitated the action of writing with his right hand as she pronounced the last words. The effort of concentrating her weakened mind on other and less familiar topics than the constant time and money, and the knowledge of the still unfinished play had evidently exhausted her poor reserve of strength. When her request had been granted, she expressed no expressions of gratitude to Agnes; she only said, "Feel no fear, Miss, of my attempting to escape you. Where you are, there I must be till the end comes."

Her eyes wandered around the room with a low weary and stupefied look. She returned to her writing with slow and feeble steps, like the steps of an old woman.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Henry and Agnes were left alone in the room of the Caryatides.

The person who had written the description of the palace—probably a poor author or artist—had correctly pointed out the defects of the mantelpiece. Bad taste, exhibiting itself on the most costly and splendid scale, was visible in every part of the work. It was nevertheless greatly admired by the ignorant travellers of all classes partly on account of its imposing size, and partly on account of variously colored marbles which the sculptor had contrived to introduce into his design. Photographs of the mantelpieces were exhibited in the public rooms, and found a ready sale among the English and American visitors to the hotel.

Henry led Agnes to the figure on the left as they stood facing the empty fireplace. "Shall I try the experiment," he asked, "or will you?" She abruptly drew her arm away from him and turned to the door. "I can't even look at it," she said. "That merciless marble face frightens me."

Henry put his hand on the forehead of the figure. "What is there to alarm you, my dear, in this conventionally classical face?" he asked jestingly. Before he could press the head inward, Agnes hurriedly opened the door. "Wait till I get out of the room," she cried. "The bare idea of what you may find there horrifies me!" She looked back into the room as she crossed the threshold. "I won't leave you altogether," she said; "I will wait outside."

"She closed the door. Left by himself, Henry lifted his hand once more to the marble forehead of the silent statue.

For the second time he was checked on the point of setting the machinery of the hiding-place in motion. On this occasion the interruption came from an outbreak of friendly voices in the corridor. A woman's voice exclaimed, "Dearest Agnes, how glad I am to see you again!" A man's voice followed, offering to introduce some friend to Miss Lockwood. A third voice (which Henry recognized as the voice of the hotel manager) became audible next, directing the housekeeper to show the ladies and gentlemen the vacant apartments at the other end of the corridor. "If more accommodation is wanted," the manager went on, "I have a charming room to let here." He opened the door as he spoke and found himself face to face with Henry Westwick.

"This is indeed an agreeable surprise, sir," said the manager cheerfully. "You are admiring our famous chimney-piece, I see. May I ask you, Mr. Westwick, how you find yourself in the hotel this time? Have the supernatural influences affected your appetite again?"

"The supernatural influences have spared me this time," Henry replied. "Perhaps you may yet find that they have affected some other member of the family." He spoke very gravely, restoring the familiar tone in which the manager had referred to his previous visit to the hotel. "Have you just returned?" he asked by way of changing the topic.

"Just this minute, sir. I had the honor of travelling in the same train with friends of yours who have arrived at the hotel—Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Barville and their travelling companions. Miss Lockwood is with them looking at the rooms. They will be here before long if they find it convenient to have an extra room at their disposal."

This announcement decided Henry on exploring the hiding-place before the interruption took place. It had crossed his mind when Agnes left him that he ought perhaps to have a witness in the not very probable event of some alarming discovery taking place. The two familiar manager, suspecting nothing, was there at his disposal. He turned again to the Caryatides figure, maliciously resolving to make the manager his witness for sale.

"I am delighted to hear that our friends have arrived at last," he said. "Before I shake hands with them let me ask you a question about this queer work of art here. I see many photographs of it downstairs. Are they for sale?"

"Certainly, Mr. Westwick."

"Do you think the chimney-piece is as solid as it looks?" he went on. "When you came in I was wondering whether this figure here had not been loosened from the wall behind it." He laid his hand on the marble forehead for the third time. "To my eye it looks a little out of the perpendicular. I almost fancied I could jog the head just now when I touched it." He pressed the head inward as he spoke these words.

A sound of jarring iron was instantly audible behind the wall. The solid hearthstone in front of the fireplace turned slowly at the feet of the two men, and disclosed a dark cavity below. At the same instant the strange and sickening combination of odors, hitherto associated with the vaults of the old palace and with the bedchamber beneath, now floated up from the open recess and filled the room.

The manager started. "Good God, Mr. Westwick," he exclaimed, "what does this mean?"

Remembering, not only what his brother Francis had felt in the room beneath but what the experience of Agnes had been on the previous night, Henry was determined to be on his guard. "I am as much surprised as you are," was his only reply. "Wait for me one moment, sir," said the manager. "I must stop the ladies and gentlemen outside from coming in."

He hurried away—not forgetting to close the door after him. Henry once opened a window and waited there, breathing the purer air. Vague apprehensions of the next discovery to come filled his mind. He was now doubly resolved not to stir a step in the investigation without a witness.

The manager returned with a watertight in his hand, which he lighted as soon as he entered the room.

"We need fear no interruption now," he said. "Be so kind, Mr. Westwick, as to hold the light. It is my business to find out what this extraordinary discovery means."

Henry held the taper. Looking into the cavity, by the dim and flickering light, they both detected a dark object at the bottom of it. "Can you reach that thing," the manager remarked, "if I lie down and put my hand into the hole?"

"Might I ask you, sir, to hand me my gloves? I don't know what I may be going to take hold of."

He stretched himself as full length on the floor and passed his right hand into the cavity. "I can't say what I have got hold of," he said. "But I have got it."

Half raising himself he drew his hand out.

The next instant he started to his feet with a shriek of terror. A human head dropped from his nerveless grasp on the floor and rolled to Henry's feet. It was the hideous head that Agnes had seen hovering above her in the vision of the night!

TO BE CONTINUED.

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THE Subscriber has opened a Harness Shop opposite the Lawrence House where he intends to  
**Manufacture Harnesses**  
and do general repairing, at moderate rates.  
**NATHAN G. BULMER.**  
Sackville, Sept. 9th, 1877.

**NOTICE.**  
AN OFFICE, in connection with the Picture Bank and the Union Bank of Charlottetown, has been opened in  
**ESTABROOK'S BUILDING**  
(Opposite Brunswick House) Sackville, for the transaction of a  
**General Banking Business.**  
Bills of Exchange bought and sold. Drafts issued on St. John, Halifax, Montreal, Charlottetown, Pictou, Boston, New York, and on London, U. S. Current Accounts opened, and sums of \$5 and upwards taken on deposit, for which interest will be allowed at a rate to be agreed upon. Collections made on favorable terms.  
**W. C. COGSWELL,**  
Agent.  
July 29

**Special Notice!**  
IN order to meet the demands of our numerous customers, we beg to announce that, we have added to our extensive  
**Slipper and Larrigan Factory**  
the necessary Machinery for the Manufacture of Men's, Women's, Misses', and Children's  
**Boots & Shoes,**  
In all the Leading Styles.  
By continuing, as in the past, to use best quality of material, we hope to merit a liberal share of public patronage in our new branch of business, as well as a continuance of public favor in our old business.

**VINCENT & McFATE,**  
240 Union St., St. John, N. B.

**Wilson, Gilmour Co.,**  
204 UNION ST.,  
Capt. McLean's Brick Building,  
ST. JOHN, N. B.

**Marbled Mantles and Grates,**  
**PORTABLE RANGES,**  
**STOVES.**  
Tinware, etc., etc.,  
**REFRIGERATORS,**  
**GRANITE IRON WARE**  
July 19  
**W. G. & CO.**

**CARD!**  
THE Subscriber hereby begs leave to return thanks to the inhabitants of Dorchester and vicinity for their liberal patronage in the past, and hopes to merit a continuance of the same.  
He has imported direct from England an assortment of  
**Gent's Boot Tops**  
of the best quality, and has secured the services of first-class mechanics, and is prepared to attend to all orders in his line with neatness, durability and despatch in our new branch of business, as well as a continuance of public favor in our old business.

**Ladies' and Children's Wear**  
suitable for the summer trade, which will be sold at prices to suit the times.  
**S. McDOWELL,**  
Dorchester, May 18, 1878.

**Paper Bags, printed and unprinted, for sale at this Office, very cheap.**