

delightful as a story-book for the young, and fascinating in the highest degree to the student. The third volume of this series will take up Vision and the Nature of Light, to be followed by Electricity and Magnetism.

Mr. Wilkie Collins has a wonderful power over his reader. He holds him in a firm grasp. There is a fascination about his work which wins him many admirers. He is morbid sometimes, and loves to paint horrors in the brightest pigments, but he is also real and life-like and natural. He is quick to perceive, and though his stories lack frequently that finish and polish which distinguish the writings of George Eliot and William Black, he is much the more popular novelist of the three. He wastes no words in coming to his object. He indulges in no unnecessary verbiage. He is never tiresome nor prolix nor dull. He sketches with a bold pencil and the interest of the reader is awakened at once. Mr. Collins is an admirable story-teller. He writes in the narrative form, and with the air of a man who is relating in the simple language of the conversationalist, an actual occurrence around which a deep mystery hangs. His last story* is an excellent specimen of his art. *The Haunted Hotel* is a vigorous novel. The incidents are powerfully drawn, and intense dramatic effect is seen in every line. There are some spirited bits of character drawing in the book, and a good deal of energy is displayed in some of the descriptive passages. The scene is laid partly in England and partly in Venice. The reader is introduced in the first chapters to a celebrated London physician whose speciality is disease of the mind, and a heavily veiled lady who seeks his professional assistance. The former disappears at an early stage from the scene, and we hear of him no more.

With the lady, however, the case is different. We see her quite often, and it is her career that the author traces with such force and skill. She is the countess Narona. She marries a British peer, Lord Montbarry—a cold, stingy, misanthropic individual, who forsakes his betrothed, Agnes Lockwood, for the dark-browed Countess. The marriage is consummated, and the bride and groom and the lady's brother, the Baron Rivar, leave England for Venice. They rent a mysterious old Palace in the City of gondolas. They live here for a time very unhappily. His Lordship grows moody and sullen. The Countess chafes under the treatment she receives. The Baron is a gambler and spendthrift, and is continually trying to borrow money of his brother-in-law. That gentleman refuses to lend him any, and the result, of course, may be surmised. Lord Montbarry's life is insured for a large amount. He suddenly dies. The case is investigated by medical men and insurance officers, but though there is dark suspicion, nothing is brought forward to sustain it, and the money is paid over to Rivar and his sister who remove at once to the United States. About the time of the death of Lord Montbarry, a courier, Ferrari, disappears mysteriously after sending a cheque for a thousand pounds to his wife. Agnes Lockwood is loved by the brother of the man she loved. He proposes to her, but is rejected. He loses no interest in Agnes, however, and determines to win her heart. A Hotel Company is formed in Venice, and the old Palace is fitted up on a grand scale. The Montbarrys take stock in the concern, and in order to see how the affair is managed, the whole party go to Venice. The plot now deepens in mystery. The Countess appears on the scene. A chamber in the palace is as full of horrors as Master Bluebeard's ancient apartment in the story books. This room is occupied by various mem-

* *The Haunted Hotel: a Mystery of Modern Venice.* By WILKIE COLLINS. Toronto: Rose-Belford Publishing Co.