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THE AMERICAN COUNTESS

By ETTA W. PIERCE.

CHAPTER XXIII

In the Park. Ethel Sardinia dismissed her French maid, and alone in her chamber, sat in deep meditation till the hands of her watch pointed to the hour of one. In vain she told herself that the anonymous letter was an error of the printer; that to give it a moment's consideration was gross injustice to the countess. The words still burned in her eyes, and she unlocked the drawer in her toilet table, took out the obnoxious envelope, and yet she was not excused.

Ethel gave a great start, and recoiled from the kneeling figure. "Lawrence Harding! Did he send you to make this scene?" she gasped. "As Heaven hears me, no! He has no knowledge of what I have told you, I am a stranger to him," cried Ethel, with her hands before her face. "Leave me—I can bear no more."

Ah, this brown-faced Frenchwoman was a treasure! Ethel resigned herself to the woman in black, and to her excuses or explanations to invent. Count Stahl's betrothed had been warned. Would she profit by the warning? The woman in black had had to see her by the only method which she dared employ. Would she succeed? Alas! the means had defeated them. Verily, her labor had been in vain.

Used South Carolina as a lawbreaking state. Stevenson of Chesterfield, said that he regretted that a reference to the fact that he had signed the minority report in favor of the bill made it necessary for him to take the floor. "The measure had a personal appeal to me because I have time and time again been maligned by newspapers. This is what influenced me to sign the favorable report. I have been a sufferer from the careless characterization of the press, but I want to have my right by South Carolina. I have borne it in silence. It was beneath my dignity to wrangle with the editors of irresponsible newspapers."

Mr. Stevenson said that a member of the judiciary committee called on him to sign the constitutional provisions of the newspaper bill. He pointed out that the statement to the effect that he had signed the bill to allow any man to reply did not have to be false. The communication must be printed whether the statement was true or false. The newspapers would have to open their columns, no matter how long it might be or whom it came against.

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