THE BRADFORD REPORTER.

VOLUME XII. "ENTIRELY BY HIMSELF, AND INDEPENDENT OF DENUNCIATION FROM ANY QUARTER." NUMBER 20.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY, AT TOWANDA, BRADFORD COUNTY, PA., BY E. O'MEARA GOODRICH.

TOWANDA:

Saturday Morning, November 2, 1850.

(From the Dublin University Magazine.)

LADY ALICE DAVENTRY;

OR, THE NIGHT OF CRIME.

Daventry Hall, near the little village of the same name in Cumberland, is the almost regal residence of the Cliffords; yet it does not bear their name, nor, till within the last quarter of a century, had it come into their possession. The tragical event which consigned it to the hands of a distant branch of the Daventry family is now almost forgotten by its occupants, but still lingers in the memory of some of humbler rank, who, in days gone by, were tenants under Sir John Daventry, the last of a long line of baronets of that name. Few men have entered life under happier auspices; one of the oldest baronets in the kingdom, in one sense, but just of age, in the other, possessed of an unencumbered rent roll of £20,000 per annum, he might probably have selected his bride from the fairest of the English aristocracy; but when he was twenty-three, he married the beautiful and poor daughter of an officer residing in his vicinity. It was a love-match on his side—one partly of love, partly of ambition, on hers; their union was not very long, neither was it very happy, and when lady Daventry died, leaving an infant daughter to his care, at the expiration of his year of mourning, he chose as his second wife the wealthy and high-born widow of the country member. This was a *marriage convenance*, and might have perhaps proved a fortunate one, as it secured to Sir John a wife suited to uphold his dignity and the style of his establishment, at the same time conferring on the little Clara the care of a mother, and the society of a play-mate in the person of Charles Mardyn, Lady Daventry's son by her first marriage. But the marriage of convenience did not end more felicitously than the marriage of love,—at the end of six months Sir John found himself a second time a widower. His position was now a somewhat unusual one—at twenty seven he had lost two wives, and was left the sole guardian of two children, neither past the age of infancy; Clara Daventry was but two years old, Charles Mardyn three years her senior. Of these circumstances Sir John made what he conceived the best, provided attendants and governesses for the children, consigned them to the seclusion of the Hall, while he repaired to London, procured a superb establishment, was famed for the skill of his cooks and the goodness of his wines, and for the following eighteen years was an *habitue* of the clubs and courted by the elite of London society; and this, perhaps, being a perfectly blameless course, and inflicting as little of any sort of trouble or annoyance as possible, it must needs excite our surprise if we do not find it producing corresponding fruits. Eighteen years make some changes every where. During these, Clara Daventry had become a woman, and Charles Mardyn, having passed through Eton and Cambridge, had for the last two years emulated his stepfather's style of London life. Mr. Mardyn had left his fortune at the disposal of his widow, whom he had foolishly loved, and Lady Daventry, at her death, divided the Mardyn estates between her husband and son—an unfair distribution, and one Charles was not disposed to pardon He was that combination so often seen—the union of talent to depravity; of such talent as the union admits—talent which is never first-rate, though to the many it appears so; it is only unscrupulous, and consequently he has at its command engines which virtue dares not use. Selfish and profligate, he was that mixture of strong passions and indomitable will, with a certain strength of intellect, a winning manner and noble appearance. Clara possessed none of these external gifts. Low and insignificant looking, her small, pale features, narrow forehead and cunning gray eyes, harmonized with a disposition singularly weak, paltry and manœuvring. Eighteen years had altered Sir John Daventry's appearance less than his mind; he had grown more corpulent, and his features wore a look of sensual indulgence, mingled with the air of authority of one whose will, even in trifles, has never been disputed. But in the indolent voluptuary of forty-five little remained of the good humored, careless man of twenty-seven. Selfishness is an ill-weed, that grows apace; Sir John Daventry handsome, gifted with *l'air distingue* and thoroughly *rep ondu* in society, was a singularly heartless and selfish sensualist. Such changes eighteen years had wrought, when Clara was surprised by a visit from her father. It was more than two years since he had been at the Hall, and the news he brought was little welcome to her. He was about to marry a third time—his destined bride was Lady Alice Mortimer, the daughter of a poor though noble house, and of whose beauty, though now past the first bloom of youth, report had reached even Clara's ears. From Mardyn, too, she had heard of Lady Alice, and had fancied that he was one of her many suitors. Her congratulations on the event were coldly uttered; in truth, Clara had long been accustomed to regard herself as the heiress, and eventually, the mistress of that princely estate where she had passed her childhood; it was the one imaginative dream in a cold, worldly mind.—She did not desire riches to gratify her vanity, or indulge in pleasures. Clara Daventry's temperament was too passionless to covet it for these purposes; but she had accustomed herself to look upon these possessions as her right, and to picture the day when, through their fair extent, its tenants should own her rule. Besides, Mardyn had awoke, if not a feeling of affection, in Clara Daventry's breast, at least a wish to possess him—a wish in which all the sentient part of her nature (and in that cold character there was a good deal that was sensuous) joined. She had perception to know her own want of attractions, and to see that her only hope of winning this gay and brilliant man of fashion was the value her wealth might be of in repairing a fortune his present mode of living was likely to scatter—a hope which, should her father marry, and have a male heir, would fall to the ground. In due time the papers announced the marriage of Sir John Daventry to the Lady Alice Mortimer. They were to spend their honeymoon at Daventry. The evening before the marriage, Charles Mardyn arrived at the Hall; it was some time since he had last been there; it was a singular day to select for leaving London, and Clara noticed a strange alteration in his appearance, negligence of dress, and perturbation of manner unlike his ordinary self-possession, that made her think that, perhaps, he had really loved her destined step-mother. Still, if so, it was strange his coming to the hall. The following evening brought Sir John and Lady Alice Daventry to their home. The Hall had been newly decorated for the occasion, and, in the general confusion and interest, Clara found herself degraded from the consideration she had before received. Now the Hall was to receive a new mistress, one graced with title, and the stamp of fashion. These are offences little minds can hardly be thought to overlook; and as Clara Daventry stood in the spacious hall to welcome her step-mother to her home, and she who was henceforward to take the first place there, the Lady Alice, in her rich traveling costume, stood before her, the contrast was striking—the unattractive, ugly girl, beside the brilliant London beauty—the bitter feelings of envy and resentment that then passed through Clara's mind cast their shade on her after-destiny. During the progress of dinner, Clara noticed the extreme singularity of Mardyn's manner; noticed also the sudden flush of crimson that died Lady Alice's cheek on first beholding him, which was followed by an increased and continued paleness.—There was at their meeting, however, no embarrassment on his part—nothing but the well-bred ease of the man of the world was observable in his congratulations; but during dinner Charles Mardyn's eyes were fixed on Lady Alice with the quiet stealthiness of one calmly seeking to penetrate through a mystery, and, despite her efforts to appear unconcerned, it was evident she felt distressed by his scrutiny. The dinner was soon dispatched; Lady Alice complained of fatigue, and Clara conducted her to the boudoir designed for her private apartment. As she was returning she met Mardyn.

"Is Lady Alice in the boudoir?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, "you do not want her?"

Without answering, he passed on, and, opening the door, Charles Mardyn stood before the Lady Alice Daventry, his step-father's wife.

She was sitting on a low stool, and in a deep reverie, her cheek resting on one of her fairy-like hands. She was indeed a beautiful woman. No longer very young—she was about thirty, but still lovely, and something almost infantine in the arch innocence of expression that lighted a countenance cast in the most delicate mould—she looked, in every feature, the child of rank and fashion; so delicate, so fragile, with those *petites* features, and that soft pink flesh, and pouting coral lips; and, in her very essence, she had all those qualities of a spoiled child of fashion—wayward, violent in temper, capricious, and volatile. She started from her reverie; she had not expected to see Mardyn, and betrayed much emotion at his abrupt entrance; for, as though in an agony of shame, she buried her face in her hands, and turned away her head, yet her attitude was very feminine and attractive, with the glossy ringlets of rich brown hair falling in a shower over the fair soft arms, and the whole so graceful in its defencelessness, and the forbearance it seemed to ask. Yet, whatever Mardyn's purpose might be, it did not seem to turn him from it; the sternness of his countenance increased as he drew a chair, and, sitting down close beside her, waited in silence, gazing at his companion till she should uncover her face. At length, the hands were dropped, and, with an effort at calmness, Lady Alice looked up, but again averted her gaze as she met his.

"When we last met, Lady Alice, it was under different circumstances," he said, sarcastically.—She bowed her head, but made no answer.

"I fear," he continued, in the same tone, "my congratulations may not have seemed warm enough on the happy change in your prospects; they were unfeigned, I assure you." Lady Alice colored.

"These taunts are uncalled for, Mardyn," she replied faintly.

"No; that would be unfair, indeed," he continued, in the same bitter tone, "to Lady Alice Daventry, who has always displayed such considerations for all my feelings."

"You never seemed to care," she rejoined, and the woman's pique betrayed itself in the tone.—"You never tried to prevent it."

"Prevent what?"

She hesitated, and did not reply.

"Fool!" he exclaimed, violently, "did you think that if one word of mine could have stopped your marriage, that word would have been said? Listen, Lady Alice: I loved you once, and the proof that I did is the hate I now bear for you. If I had not loved you, I should now only feel contempt. For a time I believed that you had for me the love you professed. You chose differently; but though that is over, do not think that all is. I have sworn to make you feel some of the misery you caused me. Lady Alice Daventry, do you doubt that that oath shall be kept?"

His violence had terrified her—she was deadly pale, and seemed ready to faint; but a burst of tears relieved her.

"I do not deserve this," she said; "I did love you—I swore it to you, and you doubted me."

"Had I no reason?" he asked.

"None that you did not cause yourself; your unfounded jealousy, your determination to humble me, drove me to the step I took."

The expression of his countenance somewhat changed; he had averted his face so that she could not read its meaning, and over it passed no sign of relenting, but a look more wholly triumphant than it had yet worn. When he turned to Lady Alice it was changed to one of mildness and sorrow.

"You will drive me mad, Alice," he muttered, in a low, deep voice. "May heaven forgive me if I have mistaken you; you told me you loved me."

"I told you the truth," she rejoined, quickly.

"But how soon that love changed," he said, in a half doubting tone, as if willing to be convinced.

"It never changed!" she replied, vehemently. "You doubted—you were jealous, and left me. I never ceased to love you."

"You do not love me now?" he asked.

She was silent; but a low sob sounded through the room, and Charles Mardyn was again at her feet; and, while the marriage-vows had scarce died from her lips, Lady Alice Devantry was exchanging forgiveness with, and listening to protestations of love from the son of the man to whom, a few hours before, she had sworn a wife's fidelity.

It is a scene which needs some explanation; best heard however from Mardyn's lips. A step was heard along the passage, and Mardyn, passing through a side door, repaired to Clara's apartment. He found her engaged on a book. Laying it down, she bestowed on him a look of inquiry as he entered.

"I want to speak to you, Clara," he said.

Fixing her cold gray eyes on his face, she awaited his questions.

"Has not this sudden step of Sir John's surprised you?"

"It has," she said quietly.

"Your prospects are not so sure as they were."

"No, they are changed," she said in the same quiet tone, and impassive countenance.

"And you feel no great love to your new step-mother?"

"I have only seen Lady Alice once," she replied, fidgeting on her seat.

"Well, you will see her oftener now," he observed. "I hope she will make the Hall pleasant to you."

"You have some motive in this conversation," said Clara, calmly. "You may trust me; I do not love Lady Alice sufficiently to betray you."

And now her voice had a tone of bitterness surpassing even Mardyn's; he looked steadily at her; she met and returned his gaze, and that interchange of looks seemed to satisfy both, Mardyn at once began:

"Neither of us have much cause to like Sir John's new bride; she may strip you of a splendid inheritance, and I have still more reason to detest her.—Shortly after my arrival in London, I met Lady Alice Mortimer. I had heard much of her beauty—it seemed to me to surpass all I had heard. I loved her; she seemed all playful simplicity; but I discovered she had come to the age of calculation, and that though many followed and praised her wit and beauty, I was almost the only one who was serious in wishing to marry Lord Mortimer's poor and somewhat *passee* daughter. She loved me, I believe, as well as she could love any one. That was not the love I gave, or asked in return. In brief, I saw through her sheer heartlessness, the first moment I saw her waver between wealth of an old sensualist, and my love. I left her, but with an oath of vengeance; in the pursuit of that revenge it will be your interest to assist. Will you aid me?"

"How can I?" she asked.

"It is not difficult," he replied. "Lady Alice and I have met to-night; she prefers me still. Let her gallant bridegroom only know this, and we have not much to fear."

Clara Daventry paused, and, with clenched hands, and knit brow, ruminated on his words—familiar with the labyrinthine paths of the plotter, she was not long silent.

"I think I see what you mean," she said. "And I suppose you have provided means to accomplish your scheme?"

"They are provided for us. Where could we find materials more made to our hands?—a few insinuations, a conversation overheard, a note opportunely conveyed—these are trifles, but trifles are the levers of human action."

There was no more said then; each saw partly through the insincerity and false hood of the other, yet each knew they agreed in a common subject. These were strange scenes to await a bride, on the first eve in her new home.

Two or three months have passed since these conversations. Sir John Daventry's manner has changed to his bride; he is no longer the lover, but the severe, exacting husband. It may be that he is annoyed at all his long-confirmed bachelor habits being broken in upon, and that, in time, he will become used to the change, and settled down contentedly in his new capacity; but yet something more than this seems to be at the bottom of his discontent. Since a confidential conversation, held over their wine between him and Charles Mardyn, his manner had been unusually captious. Mardyn had, after submitting some time, taken umbrage at a marked insult, and set off for London. On Lady Alice, in especial, her husband spent his fits of ill-humor. With Clara he was more than ever friendly; her position was now the most enviable in that house. But she strove to alleviate her step-mother's discomforts by every attention a daughter could be supposed to show, and these proofs of amiable feeling seemed to touch Sir John, and as the alienation between him and his wife increased, to cement an attachment between Clara and her father.

Lady Alice had lately imparted to her husband a secret that might be supposed calculated to fill him with joyous expectations, and raise hopes of an heir to his vast possessions; but the communication had been received in sullen silence, and seemed almost to increase his savage sternness—treatment which stung Lady Alice to the quick; and when she retired to her room, and wept long and bitterly over this unkind reception of news he had hoped would have restored his fondness, in those tears mingled a feeling of hate and loathing to the author of her grief. Long and dreary did the next four months appear to the beautiful Lady of Daventry, who, accustomed to the flattery and adulation of the London world, could ill endure the exclusion and harsh treatment of the Hall.

At the end of that time, Charles Mardyn again made his appearance; the welcome he received from Sir John was hardly courteous; Clara's manner, too, seemed constrained; but his presence appeared to remove a weight from Lady Alice's mind, and restore her a portion of her former spirits. From the moment of Mardyn's arrival, Sir John Daventry's manner changed to his wife: he abandoned the use of sarcastic language, and avoided all occasions of dispute with her, but assumed an icy calmness of demeanor, the more dangerous, because the more clear-sighted. He now confided his doubts to Clara; he had heard from Mardyn that his wife had, before her marriage, preferred an attachment to him. In this though jestingly alluded to, there was much to work on a jealous and exacting husband. The contrast in age, in manner, and appearance, was too marked, not to allow of the suspicion that his superiority in wealth and position had turned the scale in his favor—a suspicion which, cherished, had grown to be the demon that allowed him no peace of mind, and built up a fabric fraught with wretchedness on this slight foundation. All this period Lady Alice's demeanor to Mardyn was but too well calculated to deepen these suspicions. Now, too had come the time to strike a decisive blow. In this Clara was thought a fitting instrument.

"You are indeed unjust," she said, with a skillful assumption of earnestness; "Lady Alice considers she should be a mother to Charles—they meet often; it is that she may advise him. She thinks he is extravagant—that he spends too much time in London, and wishes to make the country more agreeable to him."

"Yes, Clara, I know she does; she would be glad to keep the fellow always near her."

"You mistake, sir, I assure you; I have been with them when they were together; their language has been affectionate, but as far as the relationship authorizes."

"Our opinions on that head differ, Clara; she has deceived me, and by—she shall suffer for it.—She never told me she had known him; the fellow insulted me by informing me when it was too late. He did not wish to interfere—it was over now—he told me with a sneer."

"He was wounded by her treatment; so wounded, that, except as your wife, and to show you respect, I know he never would have spoken to her. But if your doubts cannot be hushed, they may be satisfactorily dispelled."

"How—tell me!"

"Lady Alice and Charles sit every morning in the library; there are curtained recesses there, in any of which you may conceal yourself, and hear what passes."

"Good—good; but if you hint or breathe to them—"

"I merely point it out," she interrupted "as a proof of my perfect belief in Charles's principle, and Lady Alice's affection for you. If a word passes that militates against that belief, I will renounce it."

A sneer distorted Sir John's features. When not blinded by passion, he saw clearly through character and motives. He had by this discerned Clara's dislike to Lady Alice, and now felt convinced she suggested the scheme as she guessed he would have his suspicions confirmed. He saw thus far but he did not see through a far darker plot—he did not see that, in the deep game they played against him, Charles and Clara were confederates.

That was a pleasant room; without, through bay-ed windows, lay a wide and fertile prospect of sunny landscape; within, it was handsomely and luxuriously furnished. There were books in gorgeous bindings; a range of marble pillars swept its length; stands of flowers, vases of agate and alabaster, were scattered on every side; and after breakfast Mardyn and Lady Alice made it their sitting-room. The morning after the scheme suggested by Clara, they were sitting in earnest converse, Lady Alice, looking pale and care-worn, was weeping convulsively.

"You tell me you must go," she said; "and were it a few months later, I would forsake all and accompany you. But for the sake of my unborn infant, you must leave me. At another time return and you may claim me."

"Dear Alice," he whispered softly, "dear, dear, Alice, why did you not know me sooner? Why did you not love me more, and you would now have been my own, my wife?"

"I was mad," she replied, sadly; "but I have paid the penalty of my sin against you. The last year has been one of utter misery to me. If there is a being on earth I loathe, it is the man I must call my husband; my hatred to him is alone inferior to my love for you. When I think what I sacrificed for him," she continued, passionately, "the bliss of being your wife, resigned to smile myself to a rapid sensualist, a man who was a spendthrift of his passions in youth, and yet asks to be loved, as if the woman most lost to herself could feel love for him."

It was what he wished. Lady Alice had spoken with all the extravagance of woman's exaggeration; her companion smiled; she understood its meaning.

"You despise me," she said, "that I could marry the man of whom I speak thus."

"No," he replied, "but perhaps you judge Sir John harshly. We must own he has some cause for jealousy."

Despite his guarded accent, something smote on Lady Alice's ear in that last sentence. She turned deadly pale—was she deceived? But in a moment the sense of her utter helplessness rushed upon her. If he were false, nothing but destruction lay before her—she desperately closed her eyes on her danger.

"You are too generous," she replied. "If I had known what I sacrificed—"

Poor wretched woman, what fear was in her heart as she strove to utter words of confidence.—He saw her apprehensions, and drawing her to his arms, whispered loving words, and showered burning kisses on her brow. She leant her head on his breast, and her long hair fell over his arm as she lay like a child in his embrace.

A few minutes later the library was empty, when the curtains that shrouded the recess near where the lovers had sat were drawn back, and Sir John Daventry emerged from his concealment. His countenance betrayed little what had passed within; every other feeling was swallowed up in a thirst for revenge—a thirst that would have tasked life itself to accomplish its object—for his suspicions had gone beyond the truth, black, dreadful as was that truth to a husband's ears, and he fancied that his unborn infant owed its origin to Charles Mardyn; when, for that infant's sake, where no other consideration could have restrained her, Lady Alice had endured her woman's wrong, and while confessing her love for Mardyn, refused to listen to his solicitations, or to fly with him, and the reference she had made to this, and which he had overheard, appeared to him but a base design to palm the offspring of her love, to Mardyn as the heir to the wealth and name of Daventry.

It wanted now but a month of Lady Alice's confinement, and even Mardyn and Clara were perplexed and indecisive as to the effect their stratagem had upon Sir John. No word or sign escaped him to betray what passed within—he seemed stricken with sudden age, so stern and hard had his countenance become, so fixed his icy calmness. They knew not the volcanoes that burned beneath their undisturbed surface. A sudden fear fell upon them; they were but wicked—they were not great in wickedness. Much of what they had done appeared to them clumsy and ill-contrived; yet their very fears lest they might be seen, through urged on another attempt, contrived to give confirmation to Sir John's suspicions, should his mind waver.—So great at this time was Mardyn's dread of detection, that he suddenly left the Hall. He knew Sir John's vengence, if once roused, would be desperate, and he feared some attempts on his life. In truth his position was a perilous one, and this lull of fierce elements seemed to forerun some terrible explosion—where the storm might spend its fury was as yet hid in darkness. Happy was it for the Lady Alice Daventry that she knew none of these things, or hers would have been a position of unparalleled wretchedness, as over the plotters, the deceived, and the foredoomed one, glided on the rapid moments that brought them nearer and nearer, till they stood on the threshold of crime and death.

And now through the dark channels of fraud and jealousy, we have come to the eye of that strange and wild page in our story, which long attached a tragic interest to the halls of Daventry, and swept all but the name of that ancient race into obscurity.

On the fifteenth of December, Lady Alice Daventry was confined of a son. All the usual demonstrations of joy was forbidden by Sir John, on the plea of Lady Alice's precarious situation. Her health, weakened, by the events of the past year, had nearly proved unequal to this trial of her married life, and the fifth morning after her illness was the first on which the physician held out confident hopes of her having strength to carry her through. Up to that time the survival of the infant had been a matter of doubt; but on that morning, as though the one slender thread had bound both to existence, fear was laid aside, and calmness reigned through the mansion of Daventry. On that morning too, arrived a letter directed to "the Lady Alice Daventry". A dark shade flitted over Sir John's face as he read the direction, then placing it among his other letters reserved for private perusal, he left the room.

The day wore on, each hour giving increasing strength to Lady Alice and her boy-heir. During its progress, it was noticed, even by the servants, that his countenance wore an expression of ghastly paleness. As he sat alone, after dinner, he drank glass after glass of wine, but they brought no flush to his cheek—wrought no change in his appearance; some mightier spirit seemed to bid defiance to the effects of drink. At a late hour he retired to his room. The physician had previously paid his last visit to the chamber of his patient; she was in a calm sleep and the last doubt as to her condition faded from his mind, as, in a confident tone, he reiterated his assurance to the nurse-tender "that she might lie down and take some rest—that nothing more was to be feared."

The gloom of a December night had closed, dark and and dreary, around the Hall, while, through the darkness, the wind drove the heavy rain against the casements; but undisturbed by the rain and winds, the Lady Alice and her infant lay in a tranquil sleep; doubt and danger had passed—the grave had seemed to yawn toward the mother and child, but the clear color on the transparent cheek, the soft and regular breathing caught through the stillness of the chamber, when the wind had died in the distance, gave assurance to the nurse that all danger was past; and wearied with the watching of the last four nights, she retired to a closet opening from Lady Alice's apartment, and was soon buried in the heavy slumber of exhaustion.

That profound sleep was rudely broken through by wild, loud cries, reaching over the rage of the elements, which had now risen to a storm. The terrified woman staggered to the bedroom, to witness there a fearful change—sudden, not to be accounted for. A night-lamp shed its dim light through the apartment on a scene of horror and mystery. All was silence now—and the Lady Alice stood erect on the floor, half shrouded in the heavy curtains of the bed, and clasping her infant in her arms. By this time the attendants, roused from sleep, had reached the apartment, and assisted in taking the child from the mother's stiff embrace; it had uttered no cry, and when they brought it to the light, the blaze fell on features swollen and lifeless—it was dead in its helplessness—dead by violence, for on its throat were the marks of strong and sudden pressure; but how, by whom, was a horrid mystery. They laid the mother on the bed, and as they did so, a letter fell from her grasp—a wild fit of delirium succeeded, followed by a heavy swoon, from which the physician failed to awaken her—before the night had passed, Lady Alice Daventry had been summoned to her rest. The sole clew to the events of that night was the letter which had fallen from Lady Alice; it the physician had picked up and read, but positively refused to reveal its contents, more than to hint that they betrayed guilt and rendered his wife and child's removal more a blessing than a misfortune to Sir John Daventry. Yet somehow rumors were heard that the letter was in Charles Mardyn's hand; that it had fallen in Sir John's way and revealed him a guilty attachment between Mardyn and his wife; but how it came into her hands, or how productive of such a catastrophe or the destruction of her infant, her frenzy, and death, remain unknown; and one further gleam of light was ever thrown on that dark tragedy. The nurse tender, who had first come to her mistress's assistance, declared that, as she entered the room, she had heard steps in quick retreat along the gallery leading from Lady Alice's room, and a few minutes that, in the dead of night her husband had placed that letter in her hand, and told her he knew her guilt. This was but conjecture—a wild and improbable one, perhaps.

Charles Mardyn came not again to the Hall.—What he and Clara Daventry thought of what had passed, was known only to themselves. A year went on, and Clara and her father lived alone—a year of terror to the former, for from that terrible night her father had become subject to such bursts of savage passion that filled her with alarm for her own safety; these followed by long fits of moody silence, rendered her life, for a year, harrassed and wretched; but then settling into confirmed insanity, released her from his violence. Sir John Daventry was removed to an asylum, and Clara was Mistress of the Hall. Another year passed and she became the wife of Charles Mardyn. It was now the harvest of their labors, and reaped as such harvests must be. The pleasures and amusements of a London life had grown distasteful to Mardyn—they palled on his senses, and he sought change in a residence at the Hall; but here, greater discontent awaited him. The force of conscience allowed them not happiness in a place peopled with such associations. They were childless, they lived in solitary state, unvisited by those of their own rank, who were deterred from making overtures of intimacy by the stories that were whispered affixing discredit to his name; his pride and violent temper were ill fitted to brook this neglect; in disgust, they left Daventry, and went to Mardyn Park, an old seat left him by his mother, on the coast of Dorsetshire. It was wildly situated, and had been long uninhabited; and in this lonely residence the cup of Clara's wretchedness was filled to overflowing. In Mardyn there was now no trace of the man who had once captivated her fancy; prematurely old, soured in temper, he had become brutal and overbearing; for Clara had cast off every semblance of decency, and indifference was now usurped by hate and violence; their childless condition was made a constant source of bitter reproach from her husband. Time brought no alleviation to this state of wretchedness but rather increased their evil passions and mutual abhorrence. They had long and bitterly disputed, one day, after dinner, and each reminded the other of their sins with a vehemence of reproach that, from the lips of any other, must have overwhelmed the guilty pair with shame and terror. Driven from the room by Mardyn's unmanly violence and coarse epithets, Clara reached the drawing-room, and spent some hours struggling with the stings of conscience aroused by Mardyn's taunts. They had heard that morning of Sir John Daventry's death; and the removal of the only being who lived to suffer for their sin had seemed but to add a deeper gloom to their miserable existence—the time was past when any thing could bid them hope. Her past career passed through the guilty woman's mind, and filled her with dread, and a fearful looking out for judgment. She had not noticed how time had fled, till she saw it was long past Mardyn's hour for retiring, and that he had not come up stairs yet. Another hour passed, and then a vague fear seized upon her mind—she felt frightened at being alone, and descended to the parlor. She had brought no light with her, and when she reached the door she paused; all in the house seemed so still she trembled, and turning the lock entered the room. The candles had burnt out, and the faint red glare of the fire alone shone through the darkness; by the dim light she saw that Mardyn was sitting, his arms folded on the table, and his head reclined as if in sleep. She touched him he stirred not, and her hand slipped from his shoulder, fell upon the table and was wet; she saw that a decanter had been overturned, and fancied Mardyn had been drinking, and fallen asleep; she hastened from the room for a candle. As she seized a light burning in the passage, she saw that the hand she had extended was crimsoned with blood. Almost delirious with terror she regained the room. The light from her hand fell on the table—it was covered with a pool of blood, that was slowly falling on the floor. With a wild effort she raised her husband—his head fell on her arm—the throat was severed from ear to ear—the countenance set, and distorted in death.

In that moment the curse of an offended God worked its final vengeance on guilt—Clara Mardyn was a lunatic.

☞ A Correspondent, a wag in his way, says that when a young man, he occupied a chamber separated from that of a married couple by a thin partition. One cold night he heard the rough voice of the husband grumble out:

"Take away your hoofs."

To which the wife replied in a very querulous tone:

Ah! you did not speak so when we were first married—then you use to say to me, "take away your little hoosty, footsy, tortey?"

☞ The best way to get rid of a beggar is to offer him work.