

tions of the adulteress and would-be murderess of the popular novel. It is probable that many women would have committed Lady Audley's crime, and have risked her punishment, if they could have insured her attractiveness, and have claimed her success.

But the book did harm in another way. It made novel-writing easy to the meanest capacity, if only sufficiently unscrupulous as to the means of success. No fertility of conception, no poetry of language, no quaintness of humor, no aptness in depicting character, no quiet pathos, no tender love for the aspects of outward nature, was needed for this sort of novel writing. All that was required for the reward of popularity was the power of conceiving an attractive woman and a hidden crime, and the trick of coupling the innocent fairness of an angel with the dark imagination of a devil. The only necessary skill was that which could suggest a plausible motive for a murder, and a clever scheme for effecting and concealing it. In its tendency to create a morbid sympathy with crime, and a diseased appetite for descriptions of criminals, this book was a dangerous guest in any house.

III.

There is, unfortunately for this class of writers, a limit to the interest that can be taken in crime, even when committed by pretty women. A certain monotony, even in murder, is distressingly inevitable. The Criminal Court reports themselves are not altogether inexhaustible in the variety of their romance. Yet the popular taste, excited by the highly-spiced diet that had been placed before it, could not be contented without such stimulants. However fascinating the hero or heroine might be, the public were

comparatively indifferent to them if they did not come up to the mark in the quality and the quantity of their hidden wickedness. Yet the situation seemed to suggest its own remedy. The Fifth Commandment being exhausted, and the public palate having palled on the repetition of its breach, the eye naturally wandered up the table to the one that followed. And so sprang up a new phase of the "Sensational Novel," in which the ingenuity of the writer was expended in travelling as closely as possible along the edge of the Sixth Commandment, instead of actually breaking the Fifth. In this case, the great art appears to consist in contrasting a certain surface appearance of innocence and simplicity with the most ingenious and refined expression of sensuality and immodesty—in veiling the real nature of these things, by making them appear the natural result of truth, and impulsiveness, and unconventionality. We will take as a type of this sort of novel under its least objectionable form, a work that has passed through two or three editions, been re-published in a cheap form, and reviewed with approbation in a long article in the N. Y. Herald.

"In the Gloaming" has one thing at least that is not in common with Lady Audley's Secret. It is very well written. There is force of description, and smartness of dialogue, and power of delineating character, and gleams and glimpses here and there of true and deep pathos. Much of the praise bestowed upon it by the Herald and reviews, was fairly and honestly its due. There is internal evidence, (though the detestable flippancy and coarseness of thought in many passages almost render it incredible), that the writer is a woman and one who, in some