

Mr. D'Alton foamed at the mouth, and pitched a tumbler into the grate, assailed chairs and tables most wickedly, and then sat down in dudgeon with all mankind.

All we have been describing happened after dinner, when strange to say, Mr. Giffard D'Alton was generally in the worst humor; but to add to his natural irritability, he had that day received an anonymous letter threatening his life and holding "the mirror up to nature."

Everything has an end; and at last Mr. Giffard D'Alton's passion subsided just enough to allow the post-bag a place in his memory. "I may as well open the bag," he thought, and he half started when he saw two letters with the London post-mark lying on the table. He knew one to be from Mr. Meldon. He did not know the handwriting of the other. "Meldon, Meldon!" he cried, "if you have robbed me of my child!—you want my family's money—my money for the Church; but I'll——"

At length Mr. Giffard D'Alton opened the letter.

He perused it greedily, wrapt up, as if he had turned to marble. He drew a heavy sigh at length; and, as he had been standing, he fell upon the old sofa, and the letter lay upon his bosom.

Long, long, perhaps an hour he lay—not thinking—yet filled with thought, a thousand thoughts gathered together—too crowded to be examined, and each obscuring the other. He took up the letter once again. It was as follows:—

"THE GROSVENOR, Sept. 2nd, 1848.

"Dear Sir,—The letter which accompanies this one is from Mr. Leyton Seymour. He has admired my dear friend, Miss D'Alton, from the very first moment he met her. I told you of his immense wealth and respectable connections. He is placing his happiness in your hands, he says; and, as I believe Mr. Seymour says nothing about means, I may say that he wishes every penny of Miss D'Alton's to be settled absolutely upon herself.

"I am, dear sir, very faithfully yours,

"C. MELDON."

"Giffard D'Alton, Esq."

"Settle every penny upon herself!"

he repeated; "every penny! And I am to be left alone!" he half wept—"alone!"

He thought of the anonymous letter of the morning. He thought of how much the love of Amy had been to him a shield of protection. He thought of the gentle ways that soothed him without words and the wise and kindly words that often convinced him, when he would not admit it, and appeased him, he hardly knew why. He then looked around him—and thought of all the light of his life faded, and neither within nor without a single friend! He thought of his son Henry. In that very room Henry and he had had their last interview. From this very spot he had spurned him and sent him to exile and the grave! He thought of the reckless nephew whose character and habits he had half discovered; and he groaned—he groaned, and absolutely went down upon his knees—the letter still in his hand! Yet it was not to pray. It was as if he had seen an avenger and knelt in horror.

"I am accursed! I am accursed!" he said bitterly. "Life is just at an end—and no joy, no hope! I have lost my life for a lie—the lie that—no matter! Lucy! Lucy! Had God left you to me, I had not been so hard—to him. Curse upon it; what can money bring me now? Lucy? Amy? Henry?—an honest good wish—an easy heart? Oh, my curse—"

Mr. Giffard D'Alton was interrupted by a knock, and by the entrance of a servant who desired to know if Mr. Cunneen might come up. At first he was inclined to be "out;" but he changed his mind; and, in a hard voice, said, "let him come."

Cunneen came in with the benedict humility of a man who was nothing and had nothing; but there was that sinister light in the corner of Mr. Cunneen's eye which always signifies a man to be minding his business and doing so successfully. He seated himself on the chair which he always occupied when with Mr. Giffard D'Alton, and, as usual, he placed his palms upon his knees, and he bent down the Iscariot brow of evil omen.

"I heard the news about Miss Amy, sir, and that brought me over."