

“ Now, ere you sleep,  
 See that your polish'd arms be primed with care,  
 And draw the night-bolt : ruffians are abroad,  
 And the first 'larum of the cock's shrill throat  
 May prove a trumpet summoning your ear  
 To horrid sounds of hostile feet within.  
 Even daylight has its dangers ; and the walk  
 Through pathless wastes and woods, unconscious once  
 Of other tenants than melodious birds  
 Or harmless flocks, is hazardous and bold.”

But a gradual improvement took place, especially in the larger towns. The great increase of newspapers, which recorded every act of violence and outrage as it occurred, and set the whole country on its guard,—that quickening of the postal arrangements which soon overtook and distanced the culprit in his escape,—the admirable organization of the police effected by the act of Sir Robert Peel,—above all, the outlet furnished through the discovery of Botany Bay, and its appropriation as a penal colony for the criminals of the country,—had all their effect in producing a favourable change ; and, while a great increase took place in the list of minor offences,—a consequence of the growth of what are known as the lapsed classes,—crimes of blacker dye, perpetrated by professional felons, became considerably more rare and less atrocious than in an earlier time. During the first two decades of the present century a few terrible cases occurred. The Williams' murders of 1812, and the general panic they occasioned, must be remembered by some of our older readers ; and such as belong to a later generation may find their startling effects reproduced in some degree by the vigorous pen of De Quincey, in his grim but singularly powerful essay, “ Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts.” The murder by the M'Keans, also permanently recorded by the same graphic writer, belongs to a somewhat later period, and is marked by similar circumstances of atrocity. We do not refer to the Burke and Bishop murders, which may be considered