

THE

**Cruel Husband;**

OR,

**Devonshire Tragedy,**

Wherein is related the account of

**MR. J. BARTON, of Topsham,**

Who was put Apprentice to Mr. Long, merchant in Exeter, and afterwards married his master's maid servant privately; but being threatened to be disinherited by his father for the fame, was instigated by the Devil to murder her; which shocking act he committed.

ALSO, A

**Remarkable Dream**

*Of the landlady where they lodged, discovering where the body of his wife was concealed, and his extraordinary penitence and execution.*

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**Cruel Husband;**  
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Devonshire Tragedy.

IN the town of Topsham, four miles from the city of Exeter, in the said county, lived one Mr. John Barton, a gentleman of a considerable fortune; and he had two children, viz. a son and a daughter, on whom he bestowed a suitable education, as became their birth. When his son was of proper age, he put him out apprentice to one Mr. Long, a wine merchant in the city of Exeter, with whom he served out his apprenticeship faithfully and honestly, to the entire satisfaction of his master and parents. However, that he might have a further improvement in his business, it was on all hands agreed that he should serve his master as clerk. During which time he fell in love with his mistress's waiting-maid, and married her privately, without either the knowledge of his parents or master. Soon after this she proved with child, and immediately told her husband of it, who immediately provided her with a lodging, a few miles from Exeter, that it might be kept a secret from all his friends, particularly from his father. But, as bad generally flies swifter than good news, this soon reached his father's ears; for some person having mentioned to his father the habits of intimacy they had been in for some time, (though they could not positively say they were married he, being naturally led into an apprehension of their being married in a short time, sent for his son home, and taxed him about it; but he positively denied it, his father told him, that if he had demeaned himself so much as to marry a humble servant, he would totally disinherit him. He knowing his father to be a resolute man, and punctual to his word, thought it impossible ever to reconcile him to the match, at which the young man began to consider what course to take, that he might not incur his father's displeasure, and by that means be disinherited from a good and extensive estate that he was sole heir to.

He took leave of his father, and rode to Exeter; and, as he rode along, his whole thoughts were how and which way he should extricate himself from his present trouble; one thought following another, so confused him that he could not come to any determination. But Satan, that great deceiver of mankind, who is always ready to take advantage of weak mortals when in distress, infused into him the horrid idea of murdering his innocent wife; which wicked design he was resolutely bent to perform, and accordingly he perpetrated his devilish design in the following manner:

The day after his arrival at Exeter, he wrote a letter to his wife, desiring her to meet him at a certain place on the road side, telling her he would pass that way, on some business for his master, and that he should be glad to see her, to acquaint her of his father's goodness to him in being reconciled to the choice he had made. She received this letter while at breakfast with her landlady; she related to her landlady a horrid dream she had had the preceding night; which was, that, as she was sitting on the ground, a serpent came and bit her by the left breast, and she seemed concerned at it, but the joy of receiving the letter put it out of her mind, and when she had read the letter, she shewed it to her landlady, being proud of his writing so lovingly.

The poor harmless creature and her landlady having finished their breakfast, she got every thing ready to follow her husband's directions, and hastily went (not harbouring the least thought of his wicked design) to the place appointed, where she found him according to his promise in the letter. He arose, and seemed lovingly to meet her.

After having walked and talked together for some considerable time, they arrived at the fatal place. In short he told her that his resolution was there to murder her. Upon hearing of which her countenance immediately changed, and falling on her knees with floods of tears running from her eyes, she begged for God's sake, and for the sake of the innocent babe in her womb, to spare the life of her that solely loved him, and him only, and always far from doing him the least injury; adding, that, though it would be a heart breaking to her, she would retire to some remote corner of the world, where she would hide herself from him and the world forever, and there rear and bring up the innocent offspring of their loves. But he not regarding her piteous moans and prayers to save her life, which was enough to **soften** the hard heart of a savage, far less his, but all had no effect, he villainously knocked her down with a cane he had in his hand, and then cut her throat from ear to ear, almost severing her head from her body, and afterwards dragged her to a pit that was hard by, into which he put her, covering her with stones and earth, after which he returned home.

The next day he sent to her landlady for her things, and to pay what money was due for her board and lodging, and informed her that his father was reconciled to them, and that he had sent her to his father's, there to remain till an opportunity offered to set himself up in business, and provide every thing **necessary** for house-keeping.

In the course of the day the landlady carried the things he wished for to him, and received the money due to her for board and lodging, and returned home. Bed time arriving, the landlady and her husband repaired to take their night's rest, but she was so much troubled, during the whole night, with the most horrid dreams; she was at several times awakened from her sleep by the most frightful visions and spectres breaking in upon her rest, from which, when in the morning she began to reflect on what had passed the preceding night, she concluded all must not be well with Mrs. Barton upon which, while at breakfast, she related to her husband the various dreams she had that night and the apprehensions she lay under; she dreamed that she saw Mrs. Barton all over blood, from which she was sure some uncommon accident had happened to her, but her husband would not harbour the least thought of Mr. Barton's hurting his wife in any degree whatever, being always so fond of her, at least to outward appearance; there was no doubt of his love to her in the eyes of all that knew him; but by the cruel and unrelenting hand of his father, and listening too much to that evil deceiver of mankind, Satan, all love was erased from his breast, and this most horrid and bloody thought succeeded.

There is here to be met with one of the many instances that daily occur of parents bestowing a great and expensive education on their children, and bind their young and unexperienced minds to the selfish wishes of their old and more experienced parents, when it ought to be the study of all parents to promote the welfare of their offspring, and not spurn them from their parental protection, on account of one slip of youth.

However this passed on for a night or two, but still the landlady could not sleep, upon which she acquainted several of her neighbours with her uneasiness, and formed the resolution of going to enquire after Mrs. Barton; but they asked how she would know where to find her, she told them that when Mrs. Barton went to meet her husband, she forgot the letter she had from her husband, appointing her to meet him at a certain place, by which she could at least trace them out so far.

She, her husband, and several of her neighbours went accordingly to the place, which was about two miles from where they lived, and looked about for some time, **but** could see nothing; at last going to the aforesaid pit, and looking about with care, they found a stick, the head of which was bloody, which caused a suspicion that she was murdered there, and, after some time, they found the body, after removing the stones and earth, in the pit, cut and mangled in a most barbarous manner, from which they concluded he must be the murderer, and went directly to Exeter to Merchant Long's, and enquired if Mr. Barton was within,—the servant answered, yes, that he was

in his master's counting-room. The landlady desired to speak with him, for his wife had forgot some things in her room, which she did not see till that morning, and had brought them with her. He accordingly appeared—they shewed him the stick, which proved to be his master's—he confessed the murder of his wife, and the reason why he did it; and said, that he would willingly embrace death, for he should have no enjoyment this side the grave, and hoped that his life would make atonement for hers. He said that he found the terrible effects of a **gulty** conscience, thinking daily and hourly that he heard her blood cry out for vengeance, and that he thought he saw her **alywas** in his sight. He also said, that he had been at Topsham quay three times to take shipping, but had no power to go on board. All which he confessed before Justice Hall, and was committed to goal; and at the next assizes he took his trial, when he had nothing to say in his own defence, and was accordingly condemned.

While under sentence of Death, he behaved in an extraordinary and penitent manner, as behoveth every one in his unhappy circumstances.

He was brought out of the goal in his shroud, with a prayer book in his hand. Being brought to the place where he committed the horrid murder, and after prayers, as is usual, he gave the signal for the executioner to do his office, and calling upon Lord to receive his poor immortal, soul he was launched into Eternity.

The text of an excellent sermon very suitable to the foregoing occasion, from James i. 13, 14, 15.

*Let no man say, when he is tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust is conceived, it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, **bringteh** forth death.*

*FINIS.*

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