

Vice is rather a disease which affects the whole system, and which, though discovered in its interruption of one particular function, can only be effectually subdued by a renovation of the whole. My object, however, is not to speak of your husband as a free agent, or otherwise. My duty is with you, as his wife. You have rendered that duty doubly painful by the spirit in which you have thus day received me; but I must go on, for the occasion is too urgent to admit of delay. I have often feared—can you tell me my fears are unfounded—that a false and unpardonable delicacy was preventing your being that help to your husband which you ought to be in this crisis of his fate. I speak strongly, because I do consider that a crisis has arrived, when he must either impose some violent restraint upon his habits and inclinations, or be irrevocably lost."

Eleanor felt her situation every moment more uneasy—more intolerable. At last she interrupted Mrs. West. "I believe your intentions are good. But, as I told you before, this interference is altogether useless, my husband has given me his word."

"That is all well, but what part have you taken in helping him to keep it?"

"He needs no help of mine. His own resolution is surely sufficient."

"My poor young friend, let me entreat you not to make so fatal a mistake. As you value his interest here and hereafter, let me entreat you to put away this false delicacy, and to speak home to his conscience. Let me entreat you to deal with him as one whose immortal soul is committed to your care. If you saw that his bodily health was suffering under a dangerous malady, how would you endeavour to convince him of his real situation? How would you plead with him in favour of the remedies prescribed; how would you sacrifice your peace, your comfort, nay, even your hold on his affections, if that were needful, to save him from his threatened fate? And is the case less urgent now? Can you, who profess to love him so tenderly, be satisfied to stand still, and see him sinking lower and lower, losing first one hold and then another, until all is lost?"

"Let me implore you," exclaimed Eleanor, "to forbear. It is not—it cannot come to this."

"It has come to this in a thousand cases, that were once as hopeful as your own; and if you do not rouse yourself from this false security, it must come to this in yours. Already there are whisperings to his disadvantage. His character is beginning to suffer. But that is nothing in comparison with his situation in the sight of God. My husband has lately hinted to me the probability of dissolving his connexion with him, unless his habits should be improved. But this is also nothing."

Mrs. West had proceeded thus far, when she saw that Eleanor was beginning to tremble violently, and finding that she had succeeded in her chief object, by rousing her to a full sense of the seriousness and importance of her situation, she spoke less strongly though she still went on to urge upon her the necessity of commencing her new duties, by warning her husband, from that very day. "And first," said she, laying her hand upon Eleanor's arm, and speaking in the tenderest tone of maternal solicitude—"first retire to your chamber, and ask a blessing on the step you are about to take. For without God's blessing you can hope for nothing. Do this, dear Eleanor, and you have every thing to hope. Do this, I entreat you, for he is worth saving."

Eleanor felt her heart softened by this cordial acknowledgment of her husband's worth, and she hastened to her chamber with a sort of a vague intention of putting the advice of Mrs. West in practice. Here, however, she met her husband, all bustle, impatience, and wonder at her long delay. Her maid had spread forth her new dress on the sofa, and she readily excused herself by thinking, that no time was left for the execution of her purpose.

"It is better not to pray at all," she said to herself, "than to do it in a hurried and irreverent manner, and, as for speaking to my husband now, nothing could be more inappropriate. Every thing we know may be lost, by the opportunity not being suited to the act."

By this mode of reasoning, Eleanor succeeded in quieting her conscience for the time; and she was soon elegantly dressed, and seated in Lady Mornford's drawing-room.

It struck her that day, as it might have done some months before, that Lady Mornford was not in her accustomed health and spirits. Her eyes were still bright, and there glowed a spot of crimson on each cheek; but it was not the glow of health, and her figure was evidently much fallen away. Her manner was more gentle, too, as if subdued by some secret cause of trial, while the absent fits in which she often fell, betrayed a wandering

of the mind, to which she had hitherto been a stranger. At the dinner table, however, she roused herself; and though she ate but little she swallowed, apparently unharmed, a quantity of wine that would have startled the abstemious of the present day.

On retiring to the drawing-room, Lady Mornford entered upon a long list of apologies for not visiting her friend more frequently during her illness, and though she wept profusely to hear how severe that illness had been, she laughed the next moment, at the idea of Mrs. West officiating as her chief nurse.

"Poor Eleanor!" said she, "I have pitied you a thousand times, to hear what hands you had fallen into; they must have had a design against your life, when they sent for that woman."

And Eleanor joined in the laugh. She had not the generosity, or rather the justice, to say what Mrs. West had really been to her in her illness. Indeed, she seemed as if the good feelings she had once possessed were all escaping from her, so much had her heart been hardened by the season she had lately passed through, of warnings neglected, and duties unfulfilled.

The visitors who dined that day at Sir James Mornford's were but a small proportion of the evening party. At a late hour the drawing-room was thronged with guests, and music was just begun, when Eleanor, who turned over the leaves for a juvenile performer, overheard the following conversation between Miss Masterman and the mistresses of the house.

"Mr. Bond of course dines here to-day," said the former, holding up a piece of music before her face. "I always like to learn where he has dined, that I may tell the ladies to beware. Do you know, it is said he is actually losing his excellent practice."

"Oh, don't believe it!" replied Lady Mornford, "nothing of the kind, I assure you."

"But Medways, you know, have entirely given him up; and Lady Craven intends to do the same."

"The more foolish they" observed the lady of the house, "the more blind to their own interest. For my part, I would rather employ Mr. Bond in a case of difficulty, than any of the boasted operators of the metropolis. No one can be more attentive, and his skill is beyond all question."

"Yes, if one could be sure he would bring his skill along with him. But the misfortune is, he sometimes comes without it." And the speaker laughed as if she had said a clever and pointed thing.

Eleanor felt her cheek glow with indignation at the commencement of these remarks; but her heart as instantaneously sunk within her, under a secret sense that they were but too true. With painful and determined effort she afterwards roused herself, to make the usual attempts at commonplace conversation; when the whole aspect of the world seemed changed to her, by seeing her husband enter the drawing-room in the full possession of his reason; and while he passed from one group of ladies to another, paying the usual compliments, or making the usual observations which the occasion called for, she followed him with an intense and enraptured gaze, as if she was contemplating the most beautiful object upon earth, for the first time in her life.

"Your husband is unquestionably a handsome man," said Lady Mornford laughing. "But this is no time or place for acting Damon and Deia, so please to take your seat at one of the card-tables, or assist me, if you prefer it; seeing that every one is satisfactorily arranged. Direct your charitable attentions to that part of the room where the good people are all sitting as quiet as Egyptian mummies. Beguile Madame Bertine, that endless talker, into a seat beside the deaf old gentleman, and take care that Miss Masterman has somebody to flirt with. As you love me, make as much noise as you can. Draw out all the politicians, and let them be well pined against one another. Tell some queer stories to those young gals, and if any one in the room attempts a witicism, you must laugh immoderately. By the way, you know the little old maid who lives at No. 3. Every body knows her. She wears green spectacles, and runs about with tracts. Well, she was actually taken up by that tremendous gale yesterday, carried round the corner of the street, and buried into a shop, where the master, believing her to be intoxicated, committed her to the care of the police, green spectacles and all. Now, tell this with all the spirit you can—mimic me well—and be sure you don't leave out the tracts, or the story will lose half its relish with some of your audience."

Eleanor went to her post, as she was desired, but of all the stories in the world, she was least likely to tell one about intoxication. The party, however, were so well provided, each with their own contributions from the stores of the preceding day, that Lady Mornford, finding the desire of her heart accomplished, by