

her entreaties, he consented, as far as words were concerned, to all her plans; but while he sometimes limited his portion for the day, it was only to add a stronger for the night; and while he freely acknowledged that nothing but total abstinence could save him, he continued to indulge himself with that dangerous little, which he said was absolutely necessary to enable him to resist at all.

"I cannot endure the agony of my own thoughts—I cannot exist under the remembrance of what I have done—I cannot look into the horrible future," was his constant remonstrance, whenever the hour or the day arrived, which he had fixed upon as the commencement of his own system of restraint! and when he met again the calm reproving eye of his wife, he would repeat his accustomed assertion, that if she would only prove to him his innocence of one fatal act, he would from that hour become an altered man.

It was in this state of their domestic affairs, that Eleanor one day received a letter from her sister, informing her of the alarming illness of Mr. West. An idea at the same moment flashed across her mind, and she determined to act upon it without delay. She determined to go herself, and, if it was possible obtain an interview with Mr. West, in order to ascertain with certainty whether her husband had really been guilty of the act, which so often afforded a pretext for plunging yet deeper into guilt. Under pretence of visiting her family, she therefore laid her plans before her husband, and it was agreed that she should set out on the following morning.

Among other infirmities that were gradually stealing upon Frederick Bond, he was now losing the refreshment of wholesome sleep. The sleep he purchased was heavy and deep, but it was not of long duration; and his early waking hours were the most wretched of his whole life. On the morning of his wife's projected journey, he awoke as usual, and found her already preparing for her departure from home; but fearing to bring upon himself—not her reproaches, for these he seldom had to fear—but her affectionate appeals to his better feelings, he studiously suppressed all signs of intelligence, and allowed her to proceed in her occupations undisturbed. He had retired to rest the night before in his usual manner, and Eleanor, as her custom was, no sooner saw the bright sun-beams on the window near his bed, than she gently drew the curtain over him, lest they should increase the throbbing headache, with which, under his present circumstances, he always awoke. She then with great caution folded down the bed-clothes that seemed to intercept his breathing, raised the pillow underneath his head, placed beside him a glass of pure water, and, returning to the window, opened it just so far as to admit the fresh morning air, scented with sweet-briar, and all pleasant things that were offering their incense to the rising sun.

After this, the room was silent; and Frederick venturing to open his eyes, discovered that his wife was kneeling in the attitude of prayer, while the expression of her face wore such a look of earnest entreaty, as he never from that moment could forget. It seemed as if the working of her feelings had at last overcome all remembrance of his presence, for she began to speak audibly, and then he found that her soul was labouring with a secret hope, the nature of which he could not ascertain, though of its relation to himself he was left to entertain no doubt. She then prayed earnestly for her children, committing them to the care of their heavenly Father, particularly during her expected absence; and then again, after having risen from the ground, she knelt down, and, bursting into an agony of tears, entreated for the poor prodigal, that he might be brought home to his Father's bosom; that he might be regarded, while yet afar off, and that she and her children might be preserved every day and every hour from saying or doing what might tend to keep him as an alien from his Father's house.

It was impossible for the wretched man, while listening to this prayer, to shut out the burning tears that gushed from his eyes. He had never before been made so fully sensible of his real situation, as it related to his wife and family—he had never before been made so clearly to understand that nothing short of that Power which had been invoked could save him from utter destruction here and hereafter. This conviction seemed to fall upon him at first like a load which he was unable to sustain; and no sooner was he left alone, than he arose, and paced to and fro in his chamber the victim of thoughts and apprehensions too wretched for description.

This apartment was a small room on the ground-floor, opening by an old-fashioned lattice, through a perfect bower of roses and sweet-briar, upon a little orchard-green, where his children were

accustomed to play. Oppressed with the anguish of his mind, he at last threw open the window, and looked out. He had heard young voices speaking in their pleasant tones of innocence and joy, and he now beheld his children, with their mother, seated round a little breakfast-table under one of the old trees which grew near the house.

It was a beautiful picture, but it did not escape his eye, that they were all eating the coarsest bread, served in the humblest manner, though they had every appearance of enjoying their meal as much as if it had been of the most costly description. For a long time he had leaned against the side of the window, and gazed with fixed attention on this scene without the little party being aware that he was a spectator; but no sooner did one of them make the discovery, than it was whispered to the rest, and almost instantaneously something like a shadow fell upon them all. Their cheerfulness subsided, their laughter died away, and the pleasant schemes they had been forming for all that was to be done in their mother's absence, and the promises they were making her, sunk into silence on their lips; while they ate the remainder of their breakfast without a word or a smile.

Frederick Bond shrunk back into his room; he would willingly have shrunk into the centre of the earth.

"Am I so horrible a monster," he exclaimed, "that I cannot look upon my own children without withering their joy?"

As he said this, he caught a glimpse of his figure in the glass; and he wondered, if he had felt any, might well have ceased. His face was sallow, his cheeks had fallen into deep hollows, his eyes were red and glaring, his black hair was matted into separate locks, that seemed as if starting from his head. He was wrapped in a loose dressing-gown, and all his movements were accompanied by a certain degree of muscular distortion; especially his face, which was once handsome, but which had lately been disfigured by convulsive twitches, at which his younger children laughed, while the older ones were afraid.

"No wonder," said he, "they shun and hate me. I envy them the power of escaping from such a monster; but how shall I escape from myself?"

He then swallowed his accustomed morning draught, and before his wife had come to take leave of him, he had begun to feel more the master of himself.

"Frederick," said Eleanor, returning again after she had bid him good-bye, "this is the first time I have left you and the children alone; for their sakes—for mine, may I ask of you one kindness?"

"What is it?"

"Will you abstain—will you endeavour to be your better self, until my return?"

"Impossible! Heaven knows I gladly would, if the power was in me; but you know, Eleanor, it is impossible."

"All things are possible with God, Frederick. Will you not ask him to help you?"

"I dare not."

"Of what are you afraid? Surely there is more to dread in the daily violation of his holy law, than in the simple act which he has himself enjoined—the act of coming to him in simplicity of heart, to ask his pardon for the past, and his aid in resisting temptation for the future."

"But my sins are beyond all hope of pardon."

"They are, while persisted in; not otherwise."

"You forget that I am a murderer."

"I do not forget that you believe yourself to be so. Yet, even for the murderer, there is hope of pardon. Do not, dear Frederick, attempt to measure your culpability by the opinions of men. I have heard you say, yourself, that it is the simple nature of sin, as such, which makes it hateful in the sight of God; and though some sins may be more offensive and injurious to society than others, all are equally forbidden by the divine law. If, therefore, we would in reality take the Bible as our guide, we must believe that the murderer is not more guilty, than the man who appropriates his neighbour's goods; the drunkard, than he who chenshes in the secret of his heart the spirit of envy or revenge."

"Take courage, then, dear Frederick. Some of us are sorely beset with temptations of many kinds. You have one prevailing temptation. Direct, then, all your efforts against this deadly enemy, and when once effectually conquered, it will be conquered for life. Farewell, dear Frederick; if you find yourself lonely when I am gone, remember that God is near you, waiting to be gracious. And now, once more, farewell. Take care of the dear children; and may their heavenly Father bless and protect you all!"