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Dangers of Dining Out.

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During the dangerous period of her illness, her husband had never left her, except to attend to the claims of his professional duty, but now he was gone again to dine with Sir James Mornford, and Mrs. West, knowing she would be left alone, had brought her work, intending, in pure kindness, to spend the evening with her.

Eleanor would have received this visit with the most cordial welcome, for, in spite of her prejudices, Mrs. West had insensibly stolen upon her affections, but, knowing what she had to anticipate, she felt distressed that eyes so pure should witness the spectacle of her husband's return. Her hope was, however, that the good lady would be gone before that time, and in this confidence she gave herself up to the pleasure she had lately experienced in her society.

Perhaps their mingled with this pleasure a little pique, a little disappointment that she was the only one amongst her many friends who had shown her any real kindness. Lady Mornford had a horror of all fevers, especially of delirium, which kept her entirely away from the house; Miss Masterman wrote often to offer her services, but specified so many days on which she would unavoidably be engaged, that it would have been difficult to find one on which she was likely to be at liberty. Mrs. Stanley had hurried backwards and forwards with a new prescription or receipt each time; while her daughters had made periodical visits, on which occasions they never failed to offer to come again, or to sit up all night, if Mrs. West felt overdone. Yet, somehow or other, all were satisfied to go away after discharging these acts of duty and Mrs. West was equally satisfied to remain, so that, had any one been more persevering in their attentions, they would only have interrupted the order and quiet which were so happily maintained.

The first stage of recovery from illness is seldom a season of enjoyment. The mind partakes of the weakness of the body, and like an untuned instrument, is incapable of any lasting or perfect harmony. It is keenly alive to pleasurable sensations, but they are of a nature so mixed and transient, that involuntary tears are often the only answer we can make, to the united claims of nature and of conscience, calling upon us to rejoice with gratitude and hope.

Eleanor Bond felt all this in its fullest sense. She was but too happy to return to the duties and the pleasures of her little domestic sphere. She was happy to regain her health, her faculties, and all the good gifts with which by nature she had been endowed. She was happy to feel herself beneath a sheltering roof—beside a social hearth—surrounded by comforts, and warmed by the glow and animated by the activity of a new life; instead of being the silent and senseless inhabitant of a solitary grave—closed in—shut down—and beginning to be forgotten. What a contrast these thoughts presented—between what she was, and what she might have been!

Mrs. West was not insensible to the state of Eleanor's feelings; but while she longed for some opportunity of turning these feelings to account, she had too much delicacy to offer her advice, without first perceiving, that way was made for its welcome reception. At last, the conversation happening to turn upon the situation of a poor woman who had recently died of a malady like that from which Eleanor was recovering; she observed with diffidence, that it was a question of great importance, to ask ourselves on such occasions—"For what purpose am I left, when others are called away?"

It was the very question with which Eleanor had been haunted night and day ever since the recovery of her reason. The mention of a subject so intimately connected with her secret meditations, at once drew forth her confidence; and the two friends, so

recently bound together, entered upon a long and earnest conversation on the nature of Christian duty, which had lost none of its interest, when Eleanor suddenly recollected the hour had arrived when it was just possible her husband might return.

The thought came upon her like a thunder-shock. How could she prevail upon this good woman to leave her alone, when she came for the express purpose of cheering her solitude? Yet stay she must not; and therefore Eleanor began to request that Mrs. West would not remain longer than was agreeable on her account, for, happy as she was to have her company, she felt that she must be anxiously expected at home. Mrs. West, however, would listen to no reason for leaving her alone; and her dilemma grew every moment more distressing. She rose from her seat, looked at the time-piece, and again sat down, without being able to rest in any position, or to carry on any connected conversation. All her senses seemed to be turned into that of hearing, and every sound she heard seemed to be a staggering step advancing to the door, or the roll of Sir James Mornford's carriage bringing home her husband.

At last Mrs. West began to fold up her work, for the truth had just flashed across her mind; and, taking a hurried leave of Eleanor, she went quietly home without having betrayed the least suspicion of the real state of affairs in the family she was leaving.

Released from a load so oppressive, Eleanor now felt as if she could bear any thing, provided she might only bear it alone. As her custom had always been on such occasions, she sent all the servants to rest, fastened the street door herself, and then, drawing her chair before the fire, placed her feet upon the fender, and sat watching the glowing embers, until her eyes were glazed with tears.

It was the first time she had been up at a late hour since her illness. She could ill bear the fatigue; but there was to her no alternative, and one weary hour after another passed over, and still he did not come.

At last she heard steps approaching from the distance. They were strange and irregular, yet when they stopped at her door, there were sounds of suppressed laughter, and therefore it might seem that she had nothing to fear. Hastening down into the hall as quickly as her feeble strength enabled her, she succeeded, after many efforts, in drawing back the massive bolt of the door. Her face was pale as death, and either the night air, or something in her own feelings, made her shudder as she looked out in the hope of recognising her husband amongst the strange men who stood upon the steps, and whom, but for the laughter and leering smiles with which they answered her inquiries, she might have mistaken for a band of midnight robbers, so wild and disorderly was their appearance. Yet they were some of what were called the first gentlemen of the town. They all had been dining at Sir James Mornford's, and they seemed to be highly enjoying the frolic, when two of them stepped forward, dragging the senseless form of Frederick Bond between them.

Intending to convey him to his own chamber, they had already ascended the first stairs, when Eleanor, in a firm and decided tone, requested them to stop, and to give themselves no more trouble on her account, or her husband's.

"But you seem to be alone," said the most reasonable of the party. "Where is Saunders?"

"I need no assistance," replied Eleanor, still more firmly. "Good-night, sir." And she closed the door after them, and bolted it, again, with a strength that seemed almost supernatural.

Eleanor had now a difficult task to perform. Her husband was worse than helpless, for every time she succeeded in assisting him to rise from the stairs, he reeled round in a manner which threatened to precipitate both to the bottom. He was not however, so insensible to his real situation as he appeared to be. Amidst the noise and the uproar of the jovial party, he had been the most boisterous, and the most absurd. But the scene was