

her tastes, and who ought to have been cherished as the only treasure of my life.

"If they had shut me in dungeons, and fed me with loathsome food, I could have borne it; but I have been a pampered ingrate, fattening on the luxuries which want has purchased!—where, where shall I find an ocean that shall wash me pure from this pollution!"

The shadows of evening were far advanced that day, while the miserable man was still passing the round of his little chamber. Mary had knocked gently at his door many times during the last few hours, and she now knocked again, to say that her younger brother was undressed, going to bed, and wished to bid his papa good night.

Frederick opened the door, and the little cherub sprung into his arms, at the same time, looking anxiously round the apartment, as if he had expected to find his mother.

His father kissed him, and bid him good night, but still he did not seem satisfied to go.

"What does he want?" asked the father.

"He has been accustomed," replied Mary, "to say a little prayer before he went to bed: and as my mother is not here, and he always says it in this room, perhaps you will let him kneel beside you just for a few moments, he will not stay long."

It was a novel situation for such a parent to be placed in; but Frederick almost mechanically seated himself in the old nursery chair, and the child knelt down at his feet, with its little rosy hands folded on his knees, its blue eyes raised, and its golden tresses thrown back from its snow-white temples, over the infant neck and shoulders, which its half-undress had left uncovered.

The prayer of one whose experience has been long in this world, is necessarily clogged with so many interruptions of thought, so many associations and recollections, that it seems at best but a struggle of the soul to make itself heard. But the prayer of a child is like the unsophisticated voice of nature, passing from its pure bosom at once into the skies.

There are few hearts so hardened as to resist the impression made by this innocent and artless appeal; and Frederick Bond was peculiarly disposed, on the night we have described, to be softened into a more than common tenderness. He laid his head upon the shining tresses of his child. He bent his head over him, and his lips alone uttered an involuntary prayer, against which the gates of mercy were not closed.

He slept not the whole of that long night: yet restless, anxious, apprehensive as he was, he was enabled, in the midst of a host of midnight horrors, to abstain from his besetting sin. The next morning he breakfasted with his children around him; and if he did not join them in their humble fare, it was simply because, after many unavailing attempts, he found he had lost the power to do so. This day appeared, if possible, still longer than the night. He could not read. He could not even think to any purpose. He could only feel, and feeling had lately been the bane of his life. His children were all busy with their different occupations. He knew not what to do: but still he was able to abstain.

On the following morning he was so fortunate as to form a scheme with which all the young spirits around him was so elated, that he could not refuse to rejoice in their gladness. He projected an excursion to a neighbouring hill, a dinner in the wood, and a walk home in the cool of the evening. All this, however, was only happiness for others. This brought little satisfaction to him. The third day was one of peculiar trial. The remembrance of Lady Mornford's death came freshly back upon him with the first dawning of the morning, and haunted him through the whole day. Still, however, he resisted, for though he

believed it would be impossible, with his load upon his mind, to support the burden of consciousness through the whole of his future life, yet having already passed three days without his accustomed stimulus, he determined to await the return of his wife, and thus to prove how much his affection for her could enable him to accomplish.

In this manner his life was passed, sometimes hoping, sometimes even praying; but far more frequently sinking into a state of utter despondency and horror, until nearly the expiration of the time his wife expected to be absent. It wanted now but one day to that of her return, and the children rose early with the happy word "to-morrow" perpetually on their lips. Even he himself felt a secret spring of joy, as he walked with them to the little garden which surrounded their cottage, and watched them plucking out the weeds that might otherwise offend their mother's sight, sweeping away the leaves from her favourite walk, and peeping with expectant eyes at fruit, which they hoped would be fully ripened by the hour of her return.

In this manner they were all engaged, when their attention was attracted by the sound of a carriage wheeling down the lane, and round by the corner of the garden, until it stopped at their own cottage door.

"It is my mother. It is herself come a day sooner," was echoed by all the happy voices at once. And so indeed it was. She sprang from the chaise, embraced as many of her children as her arms could contain at once, and, walking up to her husband, looked again and again into his face, for the eye of affection is not easily deceived, and she could not but perceive that some blessed change had taken place.

"Come with me, Frederick, will you?" she said, "and help me to unfasten my trunk."

They went together into the bed-room.—She then bolted the door, and, placing her arm affectionately over his shoulder, said, in a voice of subdued ecstasy, "I have seen Mr. West, and I have welcome tidings to tell you. The good man is on his death-bed. In a few days I might have been too late. We had a long conversation about you. He was surprised and shocked at your suspicions; and bade me assure you, in the most solemn manner, that you had nothing to do whatever with the death of Lady Mornford. "Indeed," said he, "I took care myself that no injury should be done, for when I saw the situation your husband was in, I undertook the operation myself. But the case was worse than we anticipated, and her previous habits—her spirits having been for sometime almost entirely supported by stimulants—would under any circumstances have rendered her recovery doubtful.

"Tell your husband," he added, "he has nothing to fear from the past. It is with the future he has to do. And may God in his mercy strengthen and protect him for the time to come?"

Frederick Bond had listened to this intelligence with clasped hands and eyes upraised. He uttered not a word; but sinking on his knees beside the bed, with his wife pressed close to his bosom, he breathed a solemn vow: that if God would mercifully grant him the power to resist, he would never again transgress his holy law, by touching again that which had been the bane of his life.

This vow, made as it was without presumption, and without self-dependence, he was enabled to keep. He did not, as so many thousands have done, venture to play with the poison he had foresworn, but renounced it wholly and forever.

The effects of this resolution, so far as they are related to temporal affairs, were soon visible in the happiness of his family, in the restoration of his respectability, and in his peace of mind.

For the more lasting effects of that resolution, which