

"And you, George, what am I to say to such a rebel as you?"

"I don't care much what you say; I only wish you were going with us, that I might drive you on the sands, and have somebody to take my part when July and Carry are both against me. If you are ill, the sea air will do you far more good than staying here alone. Don't you think so, mamma?"

All this while, little Harry the youngest child, was hanging with his arms around his mother's neck, one moment smothering her with kisses, and the next whispering in her ear the most threatening denunciations, if she would not accompany them to the seashore.

"I hate the new governess," he said; "and I will hate you too, if you will not go."

"Then let me breathe at least, Harry, while I tell you of all the pleasant things you will see."

"I don't care for any of them. I tell you again, I won't go, unless you do; for we never have any fun without you."

In this manner they pleaded with their mother; some of them on her knee, and others hanging round her neck, until her fortitude began to fail, and the warm tears gushed from her eyes; for on this morning, more than any other, she had felt a strange awe come over her, as if her life was indeed suspended by a thread; and it struck her but too forcibly, that perhaps she might never see her children, nor feel the warmth of their affectionate caresses, again.

"See! see!" said the child, as he pointed to her tears, "I am sure she is relenting. Come with us, dear mamma, and we shall all be so happy."

"You will be happy with Miss Lewis, I am sure."

"Happy with Miss Lewis!" exclaimed all in one voice of unanimous contempt; while Harry whispered again in his mother's ear, "She looks so savage, I believe she means to drown us all in the sea; and if she does, what will become of you, without me."

"That is a puzzling question, Harry; but what would you do without me?"

"Oh! I should soon die, that is quite certain; for there would be no body to be kind to us then."

"Not your Papa?"

"Papa is only kind sometimes. There is no body kind always except you."

"Not Susan, your faithful nurse?"

"Oh, Susan, and Jane, and Mary, are all kind when you are in the nursery. It is then we are 'sweet little dears,' and 'angels,' and 'beauties,' and 'loves.' But the moment you are gone, we are a 'pack of little ugly monkeys,' and 'the most disagreeable children in the world.'"

And are you indeed so desolate, thought Lady Mornford, that you have no creature in the world to love you except me?

"Well," said she, musing herself from the reverie these reflections were well calculated to produce, and at the same time shaking off the embraces of her children. "We shall soon meet again. I shall then be in better health, and we shall together be happier than we have been for a long time. Adieu—adieu—the coach is at the door."

She then kissed them all once more, and, rushing into her own room, drew the bolt after her, and buried her head in her shawl, that she might not hear the murmuring of some, and the resistance of others, as the little party were forced into the carriage which waited to convey them away.

And this was all—all that a tender mother had to charge upon the hearts and the consciences of her children, for time, and for eternity.

"I have yet another duty," said Lady Mornford, ringing the bell, and ordering the servant to request Mr. Bond to come up stairs—"I have another duty, and then all will be finished."

"Mr. Bond," said she, holding out her hand as he entered the room, and speaking in a tone more than usually affectionate—"you are the only man amongst all my husband's associates, for whom he cares one straw. You in your turn understand Sir James—his character and disposition; both are peculiar. I am not going to talk to you about the state of my soul, as the Methodists say, or any of those things which Sir James tells me ought to be left to parsons and old women; but I do want to say a word about my poor children. If—if,"—and her lips, which had already assumed the paleness of ashes, quivered as she spoke—"if I should die, Sir James would never take any more thought about them. He would dread to behold any thing that would remind him of me, for, worthless as I am, he loves me beyond all reason; and the fact of his heart being so shut against all the world, only makes him love me the more. Now, what I want to say is

this—Will you—will your wife give some little care, just to see that the servants don't abuse them—that is all. And now, are you ready?"

CHAPTER III.

It was late one winter's evening, when Frederick Bond, after filling his glass for the third time, leaned his arms upon the table, and looked earnestly at his wife, as if anxious to be invited to speak. It was not a scene of convivial enjoyment, as the sparkle of his eye might seem to indicate, but a quiet fire-side scene; yet how different from that, in the midst of which they used to spend their evenings, some five years ago. That figure, too, the pale, thin female, so busily applying her needle, close to the one candle—can that be Eleanor Bond? So haggard—so worn—as if ten years instead of five, with their accumulated cares, had passed over her. And he who looks so animated, and so anxious to talk, how many grades has he descended from the gentleman, since we beheld him last. We have often called him handsome, but few traces of his beauty are discoverable now! His dark hair has grown thin, and straight, and hangs in disordered locks from his partially bald head. His forehead, once so noble, is coarse, and heated, and swollen. His eyes are bloodshot, and the lower lids beginning to droop and inflame. But his mouth is more inflamed than all—wide—loose—and insatiable—it looks as if oceans would not quench its thirst. He has ceased now to put any restraint upon his appetite for stimulus. He fills his glass in the presence of his wife, and talks for hours about the same thing, with the garrulity of a child.

Eleanor has kept her resolution. She has never spoken to him on the subject of that besetting sin, which has told upon her appearance, almost as much as his, though in a widely different manner.

"Come, put down that everlasting stichery," said he to his wife, "and listen to me, for I am going to tell you a long story."

"I can listen better," said Eleanor meekly, "while I am at work.—So pray go on, and let me do the same."

"Put down your work, I say; and listen to me; and don't treat me like a fool either, as you very often do. I say, I will be listened to; and if you don't hear me out, you will repent of it as long as you live; for I must tell some body. I must make a clean breast, as the dying people say. I don't care who I speak to, only you happen to be near, and therefore I will tell you."

Eleanor had put down her work as she was desired, for her curiosity had begun to be awakened; until, seeing her husband refill his glass, she felt assured that the whole was mere pastime—one of those aimless, senseless tricks, which, for want of amusement, he was accustomed to play upon her.

The fact, however, was, he had long been anxious to unburden his mind of a load, which in his sober moments, lay heavy upon it, and often induced him to deepen the draught, by which alone he hoped to drive it from his thoughts. He had tried repeatedly to speak to his wife on this subject; but the effort seemed to require so much stimulus to support it, that before reaching the necessary pitch of resolution, he had too frequently passed beyond the bounds of self-command, and thus his secret was locked within his own bosom.

On this night he was precisely at the stage of intoxication, when conviction of culpability is distinctly felt; and yet felt so entirely without its proper accompaniments of shame and remorse, that the conscientious transgressor will rather disclose than conceal his own errors. It is in this state that some men will even dilate upon their own propensity to intemperance; and while they hold the tempting glass in their own hands, bewail the fatality by which they are kept in bondage.

"You remember," said Frederick Bond to his wife, who was still making some effort to attend, "that unfortunate affair of Lady Mornford's. It is a subject, you know, Eleanor, on which I never could be induced to speak; but it was not because I thought lightly of it. No, no," and he fortified himself with another draught.

"Well, it was all a trick of her's about her husband's consent, kindly meant, poor soul, for she was devotedly fond of Sir James, and this was not the only falsehood she ever told, to spare him pain. Indeed, she was one of those who believe that the sin of a falsehood consists in its tendency to do harm; and having once admitted that a falsehood is allowable, if it can do good, there is no saying to what extent of evil these principles may be carried. Now, my idea is, that every breach of the moral law, which has been laid down for us in the Bible, is equally culpable; and that we have as little power to judge, as we have right to choose