

interested in some meditation. At length he said, and there was a hopefulness in his tone,

"Mamma, wasn't papa sick when he struck you?"

"Yes—yes, Freddy. But you must not speak of it again. He didn't mean to strike me."

"I shouldn't think he would strike such a good mamma."

"He won't again, Freddy."

"But will he ever love me again, mamma? Will he ever kiss me again, as he used to?"

"Hush, my child."

"But I won't wake papa up."

"Do tell me if papa will ever love me any more. Oh? I hope he will."

"So he will, Freddy."

There was another silence of some moments, and then the child spoke again, and this time with a simple earnestness that seemed strange for one of his years:

"Mamma, can God hear us when we talk to him?"

"Yes, yes, my child."

"And if I am good, won't he do what I ask him to do?"

"Anything that is really for your good, my son."

"Well, I mean to be good, I will be good always, so that God will help papa. Oh, mamma, if I am always good won't God make papa well, and make him love me once more?"

With one frantic yearning of her soul, the doating mother caught her boy to her bosom and wept. Alfred heard her stifled sobs, noiselessly he raised himself on his elbow and gazed upon her. His own eyes were filled with tears, and marks of intense pain were upon his brow. He saw his child—his noble, generous child—pillowed upon the bosom of his devoted wife, and the picture startled him. When he settled back upon his pillow again, his hands were

clasped, and his lips moved with some silent utterance of the soul. There was at that moment a mighty power within him, and in the depth of his awakened love he took a solemn oath. But he was determined that the oath should not be spoken aloud until his life had in a measure proved its sincerity.

Evening came, and Alfred managed to eat a light supper which his wife had prepared. The night passed away, and when the morning came, two officers came for Alfred Marston.

"For what?" asked the frightened wife, turning pale.

"Only as a witness," was the reply.

When Alfred came down he found that a subpoena had been served, and he must appear at court. The officer could not tell him what the case was. In a short time the young man was ready, and when he reached the court-house he found that on the evening of his last debauch a man had been killed in a row at a drinking-house where he had been present.

Alfred Marston was called upon the stand, but he could tell nothing of what had happened on the occasion alluded to; and he was not a little startled to learn that he had been in company with a gang of the most notorious scoundrels and villains in the city—that he had been seen drinking and playing with them.

"Young man," said the judge, as soon as it was found that Alfred had left the place before the man was killed. "I should hardly suppose that one like you belonged to such company. God grant that I may not see you here again under like circumstances."

Alfred left the court-house, and when he had reached a point where no one could see him, he stopped.