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FAMILY SECRETS; OR, THE REFORMED HUSBAND.

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In a small apartment, 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, sat Dr. Frederick Bond, accusing himself, for the thousandth time, of having, through mal-practice, superinduced by his besetting vice of tipping, caused the death of a worthy lady, in whose case he had been recently called to prescribe. 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, 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 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 his wonder, if he had 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 cherishes 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!"

With these words Eleanor departed, and her miserable husband was left, it appeared to him, without one consolation or one hope. Tormented with perpetual restlessness, he went into the little parlor where he was accustomed to breakfast, and he found his eldest daughter seated at her sewing. She started up on seeing him enter, and immediately brought in his breakfast. It was a choice and savoury repast, such as Eleanor always had in preparation for him, whenever he chose to partake of it; and he could not help this morning comparing it with the homely meal he had seen his wife and children eating in the garden some hours before. As soon as his little daughter had placed it on the table, she sat down to her sewing again, and only looked up occasionally to see whether her father wanted any thing she could bring.

Gladly would Frederick Bond have sharpened his appetite this morning, by adding to his coffee the usual portion of brandy, with which he was accustomed to strengthen it, but there seemed to him, in the presence of the quiet little