

"In that weary land!"

"The climate is beautiful!"

"And the wild beasts!"

"Will not harm you, while the hunting of them will form delightful amusement for a leisure hour."

"And the dreadful heat!" cried the reluctant widow, heaping objection upon objection.

"Is not so great as you imagine it to be. I heard a gentleman, who had spent many years at the Cape, tell my master that it was far pleasanter than the hot season in Britain; that the sea breeze, which blows steadily on the shore all day, tempered, and rendered it far from oppressive."—

"Say no more about it, Robert; I cannot consent to go."

"Anne Harden, thee wilt think better of it," said the Quaker, who had been attentively listening to the dialogue between the mother and son. "Robert is willing to sacrifice all for thee; wilt thou do nothing for him in return?"

The widow was struck with the old man's last observation. She looked down, and was silent.

"I have taken thee by surprise. The question I have put to thee requires mature consideration. I will call again tomorrow, for when once thy resolution is taken little time can be lost. By the bye," he continued, with a lively air, "when does the sale take place? This splendid furniture, if it goes off well, will nearly satisfy all the creditors that remain unpaid."

"On Monday, I believe, sir," said Robert, glancing mournfully round the handsomely furnished apartment, which they could no longer call their own. "You, sir, are one of the principal of these creditors; will you grant my dear mother a small favour?"

"Let me hear it, friend?"

"You see that large Italian mirror: it was a present from my grandfather to my mother; it had been many years in his family, and she prizes it very highly; she cannot bear to part with it."

"A useless piece of vanity, friend Robert. Ask something more profitable than the looking-glass."

"My poor mother has set her heart upon it."

"Nonsense, Robert Harden! The brook must serve thee for a mirror. I will not consent to part with this vain toy."

"There will be enough to pay the creditors without it," said Mrs. Harden; "at least so Mr. Munroe informed me. If we are obliged to go to South Africa, it might sell well at Cape Town—perhaps for double its value. It cost, I believe, a hundred guineas."

"Fools and their money are soon parted," returned the Quaker. "Friend Anne, there is more sense in thy last observation than has proceeded out of thy mouth the whole morning. If thee wastest the glass to sell, it is thine; but if it be only with the view of continuing a certain idol worship, which, at thy years, thou shouldst long ere this have lain aside, I should consider it an act of duty to deny thy request. Is there any other article thou wishest reserved for thyself?"

"The drawing-room carpet," said Mrs. Harden. "It was the gift of my dear uncle when I first went house-keeping—now eighteen years ago."

"Humph!" said the Quaker. "It has worn well, and seen good service. A real Turkey. We have no such carpets manufactured now. Well, thee shall have the carpet; but I can grant no more on my own responsibility. If thee wishest to retain all the gifts of thy kindred, we shall have but a poor sale."

"I am contented to part with all the rest," said Mrs. Harden, with a sigh. "Who knows but that this little may be the means of restoring to us the wealth we have lost? I feel something whisper to my heart that we shall have luck with it."

"Be not too sanguine, friend; winds and waves often disappoint our best hopes; hold all things here with a loose hand. Thee hast already experienced the instability of earthly riches. Seek for treasures in Heaven, Anne Harden; treasures of which no hungry creditor can deprive thee."

So saying, the worthy man withdrew, leaving the mother and her two sons to consult over their future plans.

"Perhaps there will be something over for us, mother," said William, who had just joined them, "after all things are sold. You know the sale of the landed property paid most of the heavy debts."

"I am sure there ought to be," returned Mrs. Harden, glancing with an eye in which pride still lingered, around the room. "The furniture is very handsome, and, if it sells for its real value, there must be a large sum to spare. The side-board alone is worth twenty pounds—the sofas as much more—and as to the dining-table, there is not one so handsome in any merchant's house in the city. It ought to sell for forty pounds at least." This was, however, valuing every article at the price it originally cost; for the poor widow, like many other elderly ladies, considered that years greatly increased the value of every thing belonging to them.