

his losses had been so extensive, that it was supposed that the sudden reverse in his fortune, which he had not had courage to declare to his wife, had pressed so heavily upon his mind, that it had led to his premature death.

The loss of her husband had been severely felt by Mrs. Harden; but when the loss of all his property left her entirely dependent for support upon the charity of others, the poor widow lacked fortitude to bear up against the blow. She wept unceasingly—refused all sustenance—and sunk into a stupor, from which the commonplace condolence of friends, who offered no other than verbal assistance, failed to arouse her. The return of her sons from school, and the bitter consciousness of all they had lost by their father's death, served for a time to renew her grief. Their presence, however, was a great comfort; and the manly and affectionate conduct of the elder, in some measure reconciled her to the mournful change.

Robert Harden, although a mere boy of sixteen, immediately comprehended their situation, and saw that something must be done to enable them to provide for the future. He had endeavoured to prepare his mother's mind for the alteration in their circumstances. He tried to convince her that poverty, although an evil, was an evil which, if borne with becoming fortitude, might be subdued, or, at any rate, softened; and that he was able and willing to work for a parent whom he dearly loved. But poor Mrs. Harden was not willing that her fine boys, who had been educated as the sons of gentlemen, should work; and the most severe trial she was called to endure, was seeing them forced to leave their studies, and give up the prospect of honourable advancement, to toil in some menial capacity, to obtain bread.

The mother and son were still locked in each other's arms, when a little round-faced man, in a broad-brimmed hat, with spectacles on his nose, peered into the room, and, seeing the widow and her son in tears, hurried forward, and commenced a conversation in the following abrupt manner:

"Hout woman! wilt thee never cease greeting? I have mair trust in God. I bring thee glad tidings!"

"What is it, Mr. Sylvester?" said Robert, advancing to meet the old Quaker, who shook him cordially by the hand: "Good news could never come at a more acceptable time."

"Can'st thee bear a little hardship, young man, for thy mother's sake?"

"Any thing, my dear sir. I will work for her—beg for her—do any thing, but steal, for her."

"Be not too confident, Robert Harden. Better men than thee have broken God's command-

ments to satisfy the wants of nature. Necessity, Robert Harden, knows no law. Hunger teaches men strange secrets. Albeit I am no advocate for theft; and I like to see thee so forward in spirit to help thy mother. The news I have for thee is simply this: thy uncle William and his family are about to leave Glasgow, and emigrate to the Cape of Good Hope. He and thy father were both engaged in the same speculations, which have proved their ruin. I do not wonder at thy father entering into such vain schemes, for he was a dreamer. But that thy hard, money-getting, worldly-minded, shrewd uncle, should be so deceived, doth surprise me not a little. Well, well, some men grow rich with little pains, and others take as much trouble to make themselves poor. But this has nothing to do with that which I came to tell. Several respectable families have joined themselves to thy uncle's party; and if thee and thy mother and brother art willing to accompany the expedition, and try your fortunes in the strange land, I will, out of respect to thy father's memory, pay the expenses of the voyage. More than this, though willing to befriend thee, I cannot do. I have a family, friend Robert—a large young family—and children must be fed."

"Ah, sir! how can I express my thanks?" cried the eager Robert, warmly grasping the old man's hand, and a prophetic glance into the far-off future flashed upon his mind. "Gladly do I accept your kind offer, and here faithfully promise to repay you any sum of moneys advanced for our benefit, when God shall have blessed my honest endeavours to provide for the wants of my family."

"Softly, softly, friend Robert; many difficulties have to be met and overcome before we can talk of that. Be contented with the present: leave the future to Him, who has promised to provide for the fatherless, and has bade the widow trust in Him. We will talk of remuneration when thou art an independent man, which I one day hope thee to be. Dost thou think that thy mother and brother will be willing to accompany thee?"

Robert turned an enquiring eye upon his mother, and was not a little mortified and surprised to mark the anxious and alarmed manner in which she returned his glance.

"And what in the world should we do at the Cape?"

"As others have done before us, dear mother: learn to work."

"I cannot work, Robert. My constitution is broken: I am growing old and feeble."

"No one thinks of your working. William and I are young and strong. We will work for you —"