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## THE BROKEN MIRROR.

A TRUE TALE.

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### CHAPTER I.

Providence is always true to those who remain true to themselves.

"Dry your tears, dear mother. This violent grief destroys your health, without altering in the smallest degree our present circumstances. Look forward with hope to the future. Better days are in store for us."

"Robert Harden, you speak like a boy perfectly unacquainted with the trials of life," said the widow, in no very gentle voice, for sorrow and disappointment had soured a hitherto even temper, and rendered her peevish and irritable. "What prospect have we of bettering our condition? Who is there amongst all our summer friends who would put themselves to the least inconvenience to help us? Have they not all deserted us in our distress? All—all," and here she buried her face in her handkerchief, and wept afresh.

"There is One, mother, who never deserts His children in distress; who, when the world forsakes them, has promised to hold them up. Trust in Him, and all will be well."

The poor widow looked up into the face of her fine boy, and smiled through her tears:

"Robert, where did you learn this lesson of faith?"

"Of you, mother. Who else taught me to love God, and to trust in His divine providence, but you?"

"Ah, my son! these heavy afflictions have made me forgetful of my duty. In the hour of trial I have forgotten God. Pray for me, Robert. I have often prayed and wept for you. Pray that strength may be given to me, to bear with resignation my present grief."

Her head sunk upon the bosom of the tall lad, whose willing arms fondly encircled her drooping figure, and, after some moments, their tears flowed silently together. Youth, especially virtuous youth, is ever hopeful; and Robert Harden

possessed a mind too active and independent to waste its energies in unavailing regret. He and a brother, two years younger, were the only children of a wealthy merchant in Edinburgh. During their father's lifetime, they had enjoyed all the comforts and luxuries which competence can bestow. Their education had been conducted on a liberal scale; and the boys were just beginning to profit by their advantages, when the head of the family was suddenly called away by death. This was a dreadful blow to his widow and young sons. It was so unlooked for—so unexpected. He had been taken from them, at a moment's warning, in the very prime of life. The affectionate, loving husband—the fond, indulgent father: could any grief equal this? was a question which they often asked themselves, in the first sad days of their melancholy bereavement. The friends and neighbours who called upon Mrs. Harden after the funeral, attempted to console her, by representing to her the independent circumstances in which she had been left. Mr. Harden had been a man of property—she and her children would want for no comfort—there were thousands in worse circumstances—this thought should be enough to console and mitigate her grief. Poor Mrs. Harden loved her husband tenderly, and those worldly considerations had never entered her mind since the dark moment in which she found herself forever deprived of her bosom friend and companion. Could she have derived any satisfaction from these circumstances, she was doomed to undergo a still further trial—a still deeper disappointment.

To the surprise of his friends and family, when they came to look into Mr. Harden's affairs—for he had died without a will—they discovered that he had died a poor man; that when all his creditors were paid, there would be no provision left for his family. He had entered into speculations of a very doubtful nature—whether deceived by himself or others, none could tell—and