

"Your Honour was aye a hard man!" cried the widow.

"When you saw there was no money in that trick," continued the Laird unheeding, "you became yourself again; and sold the only-son-of-his-mother to the skipper of an Amber-muth whalin' brig; poor daft lad," said the Laird, "about as fitted for ship-life as his mother for heaven."

"It was Simon ran away to sea!" cried the mother.

"It was his mother poured scalding water over him to make him," said he. "Luckily I found out, and bought him back; and the lad came back on your hands, and you beat him for it; and when I heard of it," said the Laird, "and the whole story, I was for ejecting you neck-and-crop. And I would have, but my wife came and begged me—begged me," said the blind Laird, "to give you one more chance—'for my sake, Master,' said she; and said she'd take the lad into the house, and see what she could make of him herself."

"God bless Missie!" cried the widow, and began to snuffle.

"Within a week of that," said the Laird, "your best friend in this world passed over."

"God bless Missie!" cried the widow, and drew her hand across her eyes.

"I'd ruled this parish forty years by fear," said the Laird. "She ruled it for one year by love. I hadn't a friend in the parish when she came. She hadn't an enemy when she left."

"That she had not!" cried the widow, whimpering. "God bless Missie!"

"I didn't think this people could love," said the Laird. "I believe they loved her."

"We did so," cried the widow. "God bless our Missie."

"On the day I bore her home," continued the Laird, "every living soul in this parish and for miles round—man, woman, and unweaned child—followed her."

"We did," sobbed the widow, "we did."

"Except yourself," said the Laird.