

It was pitchy dark, and well acquainted as all were with the locality, they found it necessary to be very cautious how they proceeded along the edge of the precipice.—When they arrived at the head of the steps that communicated with the beach, they stopped to listen, for nothing could be seen, even when all hid their lanterns beneath their coarse fishers' coats. The rushing of the sea was tremendous; and that, together with the howling of the storm above it, seemed to baffle all attempts to catch again the sound from the vessel that was laboring with the waves. Presently, however, the report of a gun was heard, and very distinctly, so that it could not be far off. A quantity of furze was brought, with some wood, from one of the huts, and set on fire near the end of the point, that those on board might be able to distinguish the place near which they were advancing, that was so very dangerous during the prevalence of a northwesterly gale. In a minute or two the flame rose high, and was blown about by changing gusts of wind, flinging a strong red light on the curling waves beneath.

The signal was observed, for three or four small lights were immediately afterward discovered about four hundred fathoms from the shore, and then as suddenly were lost behind a rising wave.

The fishers hastened down the cliff, and when they arrived at the foot, found the waters washing the lowest steps. A minute elapsed, and again naught but the sound of the sea was heard.

"Arragh!" cried one of the party, whose name was Paul Monk, as the lightning, glancing along the boiling waves, afforded a momentary glimpse of the vessel; "why, then, it's herself, sure enough, and

in a sorry plight, too—her mast gone, and she driving about as if she hadn't a will of her own."

"What'll we do?" said Dennis Meeham; "they're coming fast, the poor souls, and in a few moments will be smashed to pieces."

"If they can only clear the head," observed Michael Quinn, "they may swim in the Galway waters."

"Ye have the rights of it," said Monk; but with this wind I'm thinking they'll not get round the point to-night."

The last remark was too true.—The vessel, which had been struggling against the wind, at last slipped her rudder, and being then free from control, was borne with fearful rapidity along the waves, in the direction of the cliffs. A loud, wild shriek arose on the top of the wind, louder and wilder as they approached the terrible shore, and then all was suddenly still. It was the stillness of dreadful suspense—of dumb terror. The vessel came on and on; the fishermen could distinguish it plainly, its faint light glimmering amid the waters; now borne some distance back by a huge retreating wave, and then forward again, until at last one long and swelling sea hurled her on the top of the broken rocks that lay along the beach. There was an awful crash, another piercing cry, and the vessel parted.

The men ascended the steps, and hastened toward that part of the cliff which overhung the spot where the ill-fated bark had struck. They had provided ropes, and these were thrown over the edge of the rock, while the fishers shouted, and let down their lanterns at the end of cords, in order to direct any of the helpless crew to the only chance of deliverance.