

its foundations. A desolate sense of helplessness came over our heroine as she felt herself a speck between ocean and sky, abandoned to all this elemental fury, a thousand miles from solid land. The water was comparatively smooth, (for the swell had not yet arisen,) and black as night, except where the fierce wind lashed it up into eddies of mist and spray; and, at the bows of the ship, too, that dashed out white clouds of foam far before her into the darkness, as, yet unceasing of her sails, she bounded madly along. The spars were alive with men reefing topsails. The gale increased.

"Lower away men!" roared the officer, through his trumpet; "lower away every thing." And sail after sail was taken in, till with the exception of one or two left to steady her way through the water, the brave ship soon only presented a skeleton of naked spars, to do battle with the blast. The gale still increasing, she threw up immense quantities of water over her bows, drenching every thing on deck, and Susan was obliged again to go below. An enormous billow swept backwards as far as the companion, and filled the cabin with water. Even the spaniel, for the first time, as they all declared, she had ever entered it, rushed into the cabin, trembling and howling to seek the protection of man. The captain was in the spirit room distributing with his own hand an extra allowance of grog to the men.

The first officer quickly followed him.

"Tremendous sea running, Sir; heavy enough to swamp a whale."

"Never mind; carry on yet,—too fine a wind to lose,—making eleven knots I'll warrant her, with all your trough of a sea."

"She can't bear it, Sir," said the officer.

"She must bear it."

The officer stood hesitating at the doorway, and the passengers, who had crowded round, looked at the captain with imploring eyes.

"Aye, carry on, carry on!" said he, distributing more rum to keep up the spirits of his men;

"I'll follow on deck presently."

In a few moments the officer again returned.

"The water makes a clean sweep over her from stem to stern, and if she don't lie to soon, you can't lay her; I never saw such a hell of a sea."

The captain now went on deck. Soon the horrid thunder of water breaking over the decks ceased, and it was understood that she was "laid to," as it is technically called, and driving backwards with the sea.

"In this lies our only safety," said the captain, when he returned,—"rather too long delayed in the present instance; but we are now perfectly snug and comfortable, and you, ladies, as safe as if in your drawing-rooms in Britain;" so saying, he left them, and went to bed.

The ladies, however, were not to be so reassured, and had few thoughts of bed or slumber during that awful night. They remained all together in the cabin, where they were rocked and tossed with the heavings of the vessel as she lay like a log on the sway of the tumultuous billow—to the great peril of their life and limbs, but thinking of nothing save the dread of perishing; till to their great joy a faint streak of morning was discernible in the east.

The officer of the watch awoke the captain and reported the wind considerably abated for the present, but the sky looking very bad, and with an appearance as if the fury of the storm were yet unspent. Orders were given notwithstanding, to put sail on the ship, and that she was to proceed on her course. This being done, the officer came into the cabin where the ladies were, to look at the barometer. It was down very far—never scarcely, had he seen it so low.

"Very low, very low," said he despondingly, "why it has fallen four degrees in the last fifteen minutes. And there it goes—down—down. Why I can actually see it fall!"

At the same moment, the cabin, which had been brightened with the grey morning, grew black as night—a clap like thunder seemed to strike the ship; she reeled over on her side, the pitching ceased—and for a moment, with a frightful motionlessness, she seemed staggering under some oppressive weight that was on the point of overbalancing her strength to destroy her. Then a crash as of a falling mast, and rending cordage and sails, like the rattle of ten thousand muskets over their heads, quenching every other sound in its horrid din.

"Gone! gone!" shrieked some one, while Susan Anstey, with the other passengers, rushed into the middle of the cabin. In sooth it was an awful moment; with apparently inevitable death before them—and none the less awful, that probably they exaggerated their situation—and such a death! In the full enjoyment of youth, health, and life, to pass into this hideous grave—to be lost from the earth in the undiscovered paths of wide ocean—and a weight like the whole universe on their hearts of, no hope! no hope! This lasted but five minutes, but it seemed to Susan, in the after exhaustion in which she found herself, as if an age of suffering had passed over her. One of the passengers who had been on the deck, here came below, and reported the foremast gone, canvass in shreds, and the vessel much disabled, but no immediate danger, as, strange to say, the hurricane had subsided as quickly as it came.

It was one of those tremendous "black squalls," as if all the blasts of heaven had concentrated themselves into one dark receptacle overhead, for the purpose of pouring their hurricane cataract upon some one devoted spot.

"Our foremast and canvass have left us for England, with a fair wind behind them," said the captain, as he cheerily entered the cabin; "but it was certainly a dreadful blast, and more than I have seen during the twenty years of my seamanship—had it lasted five minutes more, I would not have warranted a spar of her remaining."

In a short time, strange to say, the weather became comparatively tranquil, and the passengers laughed and talked as if they had not been a few hours before on the threshold of death, and in the sufferance of those frightful emotions which the near approach of the dread enemy never fails to excite. Such are the strange influences of a sea life, making the spirit of man scarcely less variable than the element on which he dwells.

They had now passed the region of storms, and a few days of fair weather succeeding, in which they partially repaired the damages of the