

My mother and sister—how did I labour alternately to save them from expiring! but all my diligence would have been ineffectual had not our captain possessed a humane as well as a liberal heart. Every moment he could spare from the important avocations of his ship, were given to my wretched relations; nor did he fail exhorting me to remember how much depended upon my health and assiduity.

My poor father, my poor mistaken father, was committed to the deep with the most decent ceremony our circumstances could allow; and, from having exhausted our tears, we seemed for a time to have outlived our sorrows: a scarcity of provisions was, however, the next calamity announced to our miserable companions; a calamity that we should never have felt, but from that unaccountable perverseness which governs the species; for, so long as the name of want was unknown, we refused every superfluity of subsistence; yet the instant we were informed, that those superfluities could no longer be supplied, we began to lament the loss of them; and as our minds were more and more awakened by the apprehensions of a famine, so by the natural suspension of our grief we became more and more sensible to the demands of hunger. What extremities we might have been reduced to, it is impossible to say, as the terrors of a storm soon altered our condition.

My mother, overcome by such complicated distress, called us to join with her in some preparatory prayers to our general departure; when, in the midst of the solemn task, the captain broke in upon us, and bad us follow him if we wished to prolong our existence, for that he expected the ship to strike every instant. 'My children (said my mother, in accents that still vibrate on my ear) let me take you to my arms; may heaven behold you with that compassion it has thought fit to deny to me, and though deprived both of paternal and maternal protection, graciously suffer the dawn of prosperity once more to bless you! We part, it is true, never more in this world to be united, but, O preserve your minds from all false, all impious impressions of the deity! because you may conceive this a sad proof that virtue does not lead to happiness. Death, death, my children, is the great teacher on which alone you must rely if you would not fall into dangerous deceptions; he will teach you, that there are rewards beyond the grave adequate to the most partial estimate of your unfortunate mother's merit, notwithstanding she can now only cover her head whilst she conjures you to fly from the dissolution, she is resolved to experience

in that vessel where she unfortunately lost your father.'

Need I mention the effect this speech produced on our hearts? Forgetful of our own danger, we instinctively fell again on our knees by this parent of affection, and declared that her fate should be ours, let it be ever so dreadful.

The generous captain begged we would permit him to be our common friend. 'I cannot desert you, said he, let what will be the consequences; and perhaps I make you no sacrifice, when I resolve not to quit the ship unless you will accompany me: famine has already begun its devastations, the winds and waves have us equally at their mercy, were we to change our situation; and it is more than probable, that if we survived the dangers of the one, we might fall a prey to the horrors of the other. I will, therefore, said he, tell our friends our resolution: so saying, he hastily quitted the cabin, as if fearful that so extraordinary a request as dying with us would not have been granted him.

My mother was not able to support this scene. 'Dispose me as you please (cried she) I can live but a few hours longer, and it is an inexpressible affliction to me to think what tears those few hours will cost you; but I may be wrong; we ought, perhaps, to exchange even one misery for another whilst probability remains. Call back your singular friend, and tell him, I wish to take every step that appears wisest and best to his superior judgment.

My sister revived by this concession, impatiently sought to reap the benefit of it—but on reaching the deck, she beheld the boat already launched, and the sea in such a state as to make it impossible for it to return to the side of the ship for our accommodation. She fainted at the sight, and was conveyed down to us by our guardian angel. So soon as he perceived she was recovering, he entreated her not to regret the departure of the boat. 'It is heavily laden (said he) and my mind tells me will never reach any shore; at least (continued he) we have this advantage, we shall soon know the end of our sufferings; for if the sea was to spare, famine would destroy: whilst, on the contrary, our unhappy friends will seek to prolong their wretched existence by the most horrid means; and which of us could behold the other the sacrifice of hunger? We bent to heaven in thankfulness for the mercies we enjoyed, and only asked a speedy termination of our calamities.

Night now approached, and the sea made its way through numberless avenues; but notwithstanding we had the moment before waited as it were for destruction, we were