

A wild squall from the shore went up behind them, which, in the awful roar of winds and waters, even the rescuers heard. They leaned on their oars with renewed vigor, and advanced a considerable distance in a very short time. The three men in the skiff were coming rapidly before the wind, although they had been obliged to lower their sail. But the rescuers experienced still greater difficulty in rowing against the ever-increasing gale. A deep curtain of darkness drew down over them before they came close to each other,—so much so, that the sudden change almost forced people to rub their eyes in order to see distinctly. Ominous-looking clouds hurried overhead with startling rapidity. Sea-gulls and swallows flew here and there, as if thoroughly alarmed and restless. Finally they had to give up before the gale and went off to some place of safety, known only to themselves. Gray, misty-looking clouds rushed in a direction opposite to the one in which the storm was going, probably carrying rain to the storm centre. The darkness grew more intense, and the water all around took on a like appearance. The waves dashed and slapped continually against the sides of the boats, causing them to rock and plunge fearfully. The spray was always splashing on the faces of the hardy crew.

The two boats came closer and closer. The skiff was in great danger of being upset every moment. Now they were side by side, and were held together by eager hands. One of the distressed crew stepped from his vessel into the boat of the rescuers. But just as he did so, a terrible wave came upon them with a rush. A flash of lightning darted from the clouds, and reflected wickedly on the waves. The boats were separated, and a wave washed over the skiff and capsized it, throwing the two remaining occupants into the waters. Try as they would, the men in the boat could not pick up the others. But these hung on to their own overturned skiff with a will, and were driven gradually towards shore. The waves covered them, the rain pelted them, and the lightning blinded them; but still they clung to the sails for their very lives, and, when close to shore, which was the time of greatest need, they were pulled into a larger boat by their friends. A mighty cry of joy arose from the shore, and many prayers went up to God in thanksgiving. The whole party landed at the dock with some difficulty, and the two half-drowned men were carried home. The long, swashing sound of the sea could still be heard far on the even shore, together with the occasional rolling and rumbling of distant thunder, and the dribbling rain, which characterized the passing storm.