

THE SHIPWRECK.

"It will be a very wild night," said Michael Wayne to his wife, as they moved up closer to the comfortable fire.

"A bad night for seamen, poor things!" echoed Mrs. Wayne, and a ready tear forced itself down her cheeks, for her father and brethren had all been sailors, and each had found a grave in the sea.

A terrible gust of wind came at that moment, and beat in one of the windows; another, and the chimney threatened to topple down; and the third seemed to shake the foundations of the cottage in which they lived.

Michael Wayne was a poor man. All his life from his youth he had been a fisherman, barely gaining enough in the short summer and autumn to supply the wants of the long winter and the tardy spring. His food was poor, his clothes were poor, and his was also a poor little cottage; yet Michael was rich in many things. He was rich in a sunny, cheerful temper, which no poverty could fret nor sour; rich in a wife, who was the kindest and pleasantest soul that ever brightened a poor man's home; and rich in one child, whose youth was just opening into manhood, and whose devoted attachment to his parents was the theme of all their neighbours.

On this stormy day the good and affectionate son—the only and dearly beloved—was out on the waves, exposed to the storm of wind and rain, thunder and lightning, and the pitiless hail which came rattling down like a shower of stones. Neither of them could mention Paul's name. Something—they knew not what—kept back the well-beloved name, which before was ever on their lips, until, at a more blinding flash than the rest, and a louder peal, as if the heavens were bursting asunder, Mrs. Wayne uttered the word "Paul!" and sank upon the floor.

Merciful indeed to the poor mother was the deathlike swoon, and Michael thought it almost cruel to awaken her; but he took her in his arms, laid her on the bed, and bathed her cold hands and face with brandy—which he kept in the house as a restorative for those who might be cast on the shore—and poured some of it between her pale lips. She revived, and then begged him to go out if possible and see how the storm was dealing with

human life. There was an interval, perhaps only long enough to gather new force, Michael staid, and he could not bear to leave her, struggling with her fear; but she insisted, and he walked down to the shelving rocks that overhung the beach. Soon other men joined him.

Two or three large vessels were careering onward and still onward to the dangerous shore. Loud cries were heard, above the hoarse murmur of the waves, and the louder din of the storm, while the occasional flashes of lightning revealed ghastly faces and clinging forms, in every attitude of the deepest fear. Michael's heart sank within him. Beyond the shore, at a long distance from the other vessels, a single light burned steadily, like a star, when all other lights were quivering and trembling. He kept his eye upon that one beam, and the next flash showed him the whole of the little schooner from which it proceeded. He knew it instantly. Paul's hand had trimmed that binnacle lamp the very day before he sailed, and remarked upon its peculiar steadiness, owing to a certain wick, which he had himself prepared, as well as to the superior oil which he used.

"If he can but keep her head off shore!" said Michael to himself, and yet aloud.—"What is that?" asked a hoarse voice at his side.

"Is that you, Mr. Washburn?" asked Michael.

"It is, my old friend," answered the gentleman, who was a large shipowner, and whose son was daily expected home in the Cygnet. "Are you expecting any one, Mr. Wayne?" continued Mr. Washburn; "or is it only your usual custom to brave the elements in this way?"

"I always come out in a storm," replied Michael, "but to-night I am expecting trouble for my son, who is out here, I fancy. I believe that to be his schooner yonder, as well as I can see."

"I, too, fear for the Cygnet's safety," said Mr. Washburn. "And yet, perhaps I ought not to expect her so soon. Heaven grant that my Willie may not be near this coast!" And the strong man wept like a child.

"Is he your only son, Mr. Washburn?" asked Michael. "Paul is my only son, sir. If you have other sons, you can hardly think what store we—

that is, his poor mother and myself—set by the lad."

"I had another son, Mr. Wayne," replied Mr. Washburn; "but he went to sea many years ago, when he was but a mere boy, and since then we have never seen nor heard from him. Ah, that was trouble, my old friend! Must I be called again to endure the same?"

"Mr. Washburn, the Almighty will do right by our children," said Michael. "Let us humbly believe that he will, and give them up to his care. He will not lay upon us heavier burdens than we can bear; and yet, oh Mr. Washburn, while I speak my heart tells me that if my Paul is taken from me I shall rebel against His will!"

At this moment a large ship came on, pitching and rolling, with one mast shivered, as if by lightning, and a band of ghastly-looking objects on deck. As she made one fearful lurch, a terrible and prolonged cry came up from her, that seemed to rise far above the fury of the storm or the deep thunder of the waves.

"That must be the Cygnet," said an old sailor beneath the cliff. "She is expected daily, and Mr. Washburn's bright little son is aboard her."

"Mr. Washburn, hold up, sir!" said Wayne. "There is hope yet, Don't give way so, man! Willie will be saved yet!"

Onward drifted the ship, and fast in her wake shot forth the bright light in the binnacle of the little schooner.

"Both our sons!" exclaimed Michael. "God help us, Mr. Washburn!"

On and on they came, now rising with the billows, mountain high, and then settling down into the trough of the sea, until both vessels were directly in front of the rock where the two fathers stood, regardless of the pitiless storm that was drenching them through, and only alive to the danger of their sons. They grasped each other's hands with a grasp that seemed to bring their very hearts and souls into contact. The poor man and the rich man, now poor alike, and bending before Heaven together in the same deep sorrow!

There was a time—it might possibly be ten minutes—but it seemed hours, when the noble ship was groaning, creaking, bending under each successive strain, when suddenly she righted!—Contrary