

lower, now louder; and the fearful thunderings of the waves, as they raged among the pointed crags, were mingled with the hoarse roll of the storm along the beach. The old man sat beside the fire, fronting the widow and her companion, with his head reclined nearly as low as his knee, and his hands covering his face. There was no attempt at conversation. He seemed to shudder every time the blast yelled along the roof; and, as a fiercer gust burst open the door, there was a half-muttered ejaculation.

"Heaven itsel' hae mercy on them! for what can man do in a night like this?"

"It is black as pitch," exclaimed Helen, who had risen to draw the bolt; "an' the drift flies sae thick, that it feels to the hand like a solid snaw wreath. An' oh, how it lightens!"

"Heaven itsel' hae mercy on them!" again ejaculated the old man. "My two boys," said he, addressing the widow, "are at the far Frith; an' how can an open boat live in a night like this?"

There seemed something magical in the communication, — something that awakened all the sympathies of the poor bereaved woman; and she felt she could forgive him every unkindness.

"Wae's me!" she exclaimed; "it was in such a night as this, an' scarcely sae wild, that my Earnest perished."

The old man groaned and wrung his hands.

In one of the pauses of the hurricane there was a gun heard from the sea, and shortly after a second. "Some puir vessel in distress," said the widow; "but, alas! where can succor come frae in sae terrible a night? There is help only in Ane. Wae's me! would we no better light up a blaze on the floor, an', dearest Helen, draw off the cover frae the window? My puir Earnest has told me that my