

sitting on a low seat beside the fire, her face covered with her hands; while the tremulous rocking motion of her body showed that she was still brooding over the distresses of the previous night. Her companion, who had thrown herself across the bed, was fast asleep. The stranger seated himself beside the fire, which seemed dying amid its ashes; and, turning sedulously from the light of the window, laid his hand gently on the widow's shoulder. She started, and looked up.

"I have strange news for you," he said. "You have long mourned for your husband and your son; but, though the old man has been dead for years, your son Earnest is still alive, and is now in the harbor of Cromarty. He is lieutenant of the vessel whose guns you must have heard during the night."

The poor woman seemed to have lost all power of reply.

"I am a friend of Earnest's," continued the stranger, "and have come to prepare you for meeting with him. It is now five years since his father and he were blown off to sea by a strong gale from the land. They drove before it for four days, when they were picked up by an armed vessel then cruising in the North Sea, and which soon after sailed for the coast of Spanish America. The poor old man sank under the fatigues he had undergone; though Earnest, better able, from his youth, to endure hardship, was little affected by them. He accompanied us on our Spanish expedition; indeed, he had no choice, for we touched at no British port after meeting with him; and, through good fortune, and what his companions call merit, he has risen to be the second man aboard, and has now brought home with him gold enough from the Spaniards to make his old mother comfortable. He saw your light yester-evening, and steered by it to the roadstead, blessing you all the way.