

wait their return, the two sailors went ashore and, setting out for a distant public-house, remained there drinking till a late hour. There was a bright moon overhead, but the evening was chill and frosty ; and the boy, cold, tired, and half-overcome by sleep, after waiting on till past midnight, shoved off the boat, and, making his way to the vessel, got straightway into his hammock, and fell asleep. Shortly after, the two men came to the shore, much the worse of liquor ; and, failing to make themselves heard by the boy, they stripped off their clothes, and, chilly as the night was, swam aboard. The master and his wife had been for hours snug in their bed, when they were awakened by the screams of the boy ; the drunken men were unmercifully bastinading him with a rope's end apiece ; and the master, hastily rising, had to interfere in his behalf, and, with the air of a man who knew that remonstrance in the circumstances would be of little avail, he sent them both off to their hammocks. Scarcely, however, had he again got into bed, when he was a second time aroused by the cries of the boy, uttered on this occasion in the shrill tones of agony and terror ; and, promptly springing up, now followed by his wife, he found the two sailors again belaboring the boy, and that one of them, in his blind fury, had laid hold of a rope-end, armed, as is common on shipboard, with an iron thimble or ring, and that every blow produced a wound. The poor boy was streaming over with blood. The master, in the extremity of his indignation, lost command of himself. Rushing in, the two men were in a moment dashed against the deck ;—they seemed powerless in his hands as children ; and had not his wife, although very unfit at the time for mingling in a fray, run in and laid hold of him,—a movement which calmed him at once,—it was her serious impression that, unarmed as he was, he would have killed them both upon the spot. There are, I believe, few things more formidable than the unwonted anger of a good-natured man.