

THE DROWNED MARINER.

BY MRS. SEBA SMITH.

[THE following was suggested by the story of an old sailor. "Once," said he, "having fallen overboard, I went down, down, till I reached the bottom of the sea; and there, ranged upon every side, were the dead. Some were face to face; some, side by side; all standing upon their feet, their arms hanging down. As the waters moved over them, they swayed back and forth with the tide. It was an awful sight to behold." The story, for its wildness, and graphic effect, is superior to any poetry.]

A MARINER sat on the shrouds one night,
The wind was piping free,—
Now bright, now dimm'd was the moonlight pale,
And the phosphor gleam'd in the wake of the whale,
As it floundered in the sea,—
The scud was flying athwart the sky,
The gathering winds went whistl'ing by,
And the wave, as it towered, then fell in spray,
Look'd an emerald wall in the moonlight ray.

The mariner swayed and rocked on the mast,
But the tumult pleased him well,—
Down the yawning wave his eye he cast,
And the monsters watched as they hurried past,
Or lightly rose and fell,—
For their broad, damp fins were under the tide,
And they lash'd as they pass'd the vessel's side,

And their filmy eyes, all huge and grim,
Glared fiercely up, and they glared at him.

Now freshens the gale, and the brave ship goes
Like an uncurbed steed along, —
A sheet of flame is the spray she throws,
As her gallant bow the water ploughs,
But the ship is fleet and strong;
The topsail is reef'd, and the sails are furled,
And onward she sweeps o'er the watery world,
And dippeth her spars in the surging flood;
But there cometh no chill to the mariner's blood.

Wildly she rocks, but he swingeth at ease,
And holdeth by the shroud;
And as she careens to the crowding breeze,
The gaping deep the mariner sees,
And the surging heareth loud.
Was that a face, looking up at him,
With its pallid cheek, and its cold eyes dim?
Did it beckon him down? Did it call his name?
Now rolleth the ship the way whence it came.

The mariner look'd, and he saw, with dread,
A face he knew too well;
And the cold eyes glared, the eyes of the dead,
And its long hair out on the wave was spread, —
Was there a tale to tell?
The stout ship rocked with a reeling speed,
And the mariner groaned, as well he need, —
For ever down, as she plunged on her side,
The dead face gleamed from the briny tide.

Bethink thee, mariner, well of the past,
A voice calls loud for thee, —
There's a stifled prayer, the first, the last, —
The plunging ship on her beams is cast, —
Oh, where shall thy burial be ?
Bethink thee of oaths, that were lightly spoken ;
Bethink thee of vows, that were lightly broken ;
Bethink thee of all that is dear to thee —
For thou art alone on the raging sea : —

Alone in the dark, alone on the wave —
To buffet the storm alone —
To struggle aghast at thy watery grave,
To struggle, and feel there is none to save, —
God shield thee, helpless one !
The stout limbs yield, for their strength is past —
The trembling hands on the deep are cast —
The white brow gleams a moment more,
Then slowly sinks, — the struggle is o'er.

Down, down where the storm is hushed to sleep,
Where the sea its dirge shall swell ;
Where the amber drops for thee shall weep,
And the rose-lip'd shell its music keep —
There thou shalt slumber well.
The gem and the pearl lie heap'd at thy side ;
They fell from the neck of the beautiful bride,
From the strong man's hand, from the maiden's brow,
As they slowly sunk to the wave below.