

widens out. And that small gray thing at the horizon? Can that speck be a mass of masonry a hundred and fifty feet in height, wedged into the lonely rock?

"No, no," says our gentle Queen Titania, with an involuntary shudder, "not for worlds would I climb up that iron ladder, with the sea and the rocks right below me. I should never get half-way up."

"They will put a rope round your waist, if you like," it is pointed out to her.

"When we go out, then," says this coward, "I will see how Mary gets on. If she does not die of fright, I may venture."

"Oh, but I don't think I shall be with you," remarks the young lady, quite simply.

At this there is a general stare.

"I don't know what you mean," says her hostess, with an ominous curtness.

"Why, you know," says the girl, cheerfully—and disengaging one hand to get her hair out of her eyes—"I can't afford to go idling much longer. I must get back to London."

"Don't talk nonsense," says the other woman, angrily. "You may try to stop other people's holidays, if you like; but I am going to look after yours. Holidays! How are you to work, if you don't work now? Will you find many landscapes in Regent street?"

"I have a great many sketches," says Mary Avon, "and I must try to make something out of them, where there is less distraction of amusement. And really, you know, you have so many friends—would you like me to become a fixture—like the mainmast—"

"I would like you to talk a little common sense," is the sharp reply. "You are not going back to London till the *White Dove* is laid up for the winter—that is what I know."

"I am afraid I must ask you to let me off," she says, quite simply and seriously. "Suppose I go up to London next week? Then, if I get on pretty well, I may come back—"

"You may come back!" says the other, with a fine contempt. "Don't try to impose on me. I am an older woman than you. And I have enough provocations and worries from other quarters. I don't want you to begin and bother."

"Is your life so full of trouble?" says the girl, innocently. "What are these fearful provocations?"

"Never mind. You will find out in time. But when you get married, Mary, don't forget to buy a copy of 'Doddridge on Patience.' That should be included in every bridal trousseau."

"Poor thing—is it so awfully ill-used?" replies the steersman, with much compassion.

Here John of Skye comes forward.

"If ye please, mem, I will tek the tiller until we get round the Ross. The rocks are very bad here."

"All right, John," says the young lady; and then, with much cautious clinging to various objects, she goes below, saying that she means to do a little more to a certain slight water-colour sketch of Polterriv. We know why she wants to put some further work on that hasty production. Yesterday the Laird expressed high approval of the sketch. She means him to take it with him to Denny-mains, when she leaves for London.

But this heavy sea; how is the artist getting on with her work amid such pitching and diving? Now that we are round the Ross, the *White Dove* has shifted her course; the wind is more on her beam; the mainsheet has been hauled in; and the noble ship goes ploughing along in splendid style; but how about water-colour drawing!

Suddenly, as the yacht gives a heavy lurch to leeward, an awful sound is heard below. Queen T. clammers down the companion, and holds on by the door of the saloon; the others following and looking over her shoulders. There a fearful scene appears. At the head of the table, in the regal recess usually occupied by the carver and chief president of our banquets, sits Mary Avon, in mute and blank despair. Everything has disappeared from before her. A tumbler rolls backwards and forwards on the floor, empty. A dishevelled bundle of paper, hanging on the edge of a carpet-stool, represents what was once an orderly sketch-book. Tubes, pencils, saucers, sponges—all have gone with the table-cloth. And the artist sits quite hopeless and silent, staring before her like a mannequin in a veil.

"Whatever have you been and done?" calls her hostess.

There is no answer: only that tragic despair.

"It was all bad steering," remarks the Youth. "I knew it would happen as soon as Miss Avon left the helm."

But the Laird, not confining his sympathy to words, presses by his hostess, and, holding hard by the bare table, stuggles along to the scene of the wreck. The others timidly follow. One by one the various subjects are rescued, and placed for safety on the couch on the leeward side of the saloon. Then the automaton in the presidential chair begins to move. She recovers her powers of speech. She says—awaking from her dream—

"Is my head on?"

"And if it is, it is not much use to you," says our hostess, angrily. "Whatever made you have those out in a sea like this! Come up on deck at once, and let Fred get luncheon ready."

The maniac only laughs.

"Luncheon!" she says. "Luncheon in the middle of earthquakes!"

But this sneer at the *White Dove* because

she has no swinging table, is ungenerous. Besides, is not our Friedrich d'or able to battle any pitching with his ingeniously bolstered couch—so that bottles, glasses, plates, and what-not are as safe as they would be in a case in the British Museum? A luncheon party on board the *White Dove*, when there is a heavy Atlantic swell running, is not an imposing ceremony. It would not look well as a coloured lithograph in the illustrated papers. The figures crouching on the low stools to leeward; the narrow cushion bolstered up so that the most enterprising of dishes cannot slide; the table-cloth plaited so as to afford receptacles for knives and spoons; bottles and tumblers plunged into hollows and propped; Master Fred balancing himself behind these stooping figures, bottle in hand, and ready to replenish any cautiously proffered wine-glass. But it serves. And Dr. Sutherland has assured us that, the heavier the sea, the more necessary is luncheon for the weaker vessels, who may be timid about the effect of so much rolling and pitching. When we got on deck again, who is afraid? It is all a question as to what signal may be visible to the white house of Carsaig—shining afar there in the sunlight, among the hanging woods, and under the soft purple of the hills. Behold!—behold!—the flag run up to the top of the pole? Is it a message to us, or only a summons to the "Pioneer"? For now, through the whirl of wind and spray, we can make out the steamer that daily encircles Mull, bringing with it white loaves, and newspapers, and other luxuries of the mainland.

She comes nearer and nearer; the throbbing of the paddles is heard among the rush of the waves; the people crowd to the side of the boat to have a look at the passing yacht; and one well-known figure—standing on the hurricane deck—raises his gilt-brained cap, for we happen to have on board a gentle small creature who is a great friend of his. And she waves her white handkerchief, of course; and you should see what a fluttering of similar tokens there is all along the steamer's decks, and on the paddle-boxes. Farewell!—farewell!—may you have a smooth landing at Staffa, and a pleasant sail down the Sound, in the quiet of the afternoon!

The day wears on, with puffs and squalls coming tearing over from the high cliffs of southern Mull; and still the gallant *White Dove* meets and breasts those rolling waves, and sends the spray flying from her bows. We have passed Loch Bay; Garveloch and the adjacent islands are drawing nearer; soon we shall have to bend our course northward, when we have got by Eilean-straid-eam. And whether it is that Mary Avon is secretly comforting herself with the notion that she will soon see her friends in London again, or whether it is that she is proud of being again promoted to the tiller, she has quite recovered her spirits. We hear our singing-bird once more—though it is difficult, amid the rush and swirl of the waters, to do more than catch chance phrases and refrains. And then she is very merry with the Laird, who is humorously decrying England and the English, and proving to her that it is the Scotch migration to the south that is the very saving of her native country.

"The Lord Chief-Justice of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the President of the Royal Academy—all Scotch, all Scotch," says he.

"But the weak point about the Scotch, sir," says this philosopher in the ulster, who is clinging to the tiller rope, "is their modesty. They are so distrustful of their own merits. And they are always running down their own country."

"Ha! ha!—ho! ho! ho!" roars the Laird. "Verra good! verro good! I owe ye one for that. I owe ye one. Herbert, have ye nothing to say in defence of your native country?"

"You are speaking of Scotland, sir?"

"Aye."

"That is not my native country, you know."

"It was your mother's then."

Somehow, when by some accident—and it but rarely happened—the Laird mentioned Howard Smith's mother, a brief silence fell on him. It lasted but a second or two. Presently he was saying, with much cheerfulness—

"No, no, I am not one of those that would promote any rivalry between Scotland and England. We are one country now. If the Scotch preserve the best leetery English—the most pithy and characteristic forms of the language—the English that is talked in the south is the most generally received throughout the world. I have even gone the length—I'm no ashamed to admit it—of hinting to Tom Galbraith that he should exheebit more in London; the influence of such work as his should not be confined to Edinburgh. And jealous as they may be in the south of the Scotch school, they could not refuse to recognize its excellence—eh? No, no; when Galbraith likes to exheebit in London, ye'll hear a stir, I'm thinking. The jealousy of English artists will have no effect on public opinion. They keep him out o' the Academy—there's many a good artist that has never been within the walls—but the public is the judge. I am told that when his picture of Stonebyres Falls was exheebited in Edinburgh, a dealer came all the way from London to look at it."

"Did he buy it?" asked Miss Avon, gently.

"Buy it!" the Laird said, with a contemptuous laugh. "There are some of us about Glasgow who know better than to let a picture like that get to London. I bought it maself. Ye'll see it when ye come to Denny-mains. Ye have heard of it, no doubt?"

"N—no, I think not," she timidly answers. "No matter—no matter. Ye'll see it when ye come to Denny-mains."

He seemed to take it for granted that she was going to pay a visit to Denny-mains; had he not heard, then, of her intention of at once returning to London?

Once well round into the Frith of Lorn, the wind that had borne us down the Sound of Iona was now right ahead; and our progress was but slow. As the evening wore on, it was proposed that we should run into Loch Speliv for the night. There was no dissentient voice.

The sudden change from the plunging seas without to the quiet waters of this solitary little loch was strange enough. And then, as we slowly beat up against the northerly wind to the head of the loch—a beautiful, quiet, sheltered little cup of a harbour among the hills—we found before us, or rather over us, the splendours of a stormy sunset among the mountains above Glen More. It was a striking spectacle—the vast and silent gloom of the valleys below, which were of a cold and intense green in the shadow; then above, among the great shoulders and peaks of the hills, flashing gleams of golden light, and long swathes of purple cloud touched with scarlet along their edges, and mists of rain that came along with the wind, blotting out here and there those splendid colours. There was an absolute silence in the overshadowed bay—but for the cry of the startled wild fowl. There was no sign of any habitation, except, perhaps, a trace of pale blue smoke rising from behind a mass of trees. Away went the anchor with a short, sharp rattle; we were safe for the night.

We knew, however, what the trace of smoke indicated behind the dark trees. By and by, as soon as the gig had got to the land, there was a procession along the solitary shore—in the wan twilight—and up the rough path—and through the scattered patches of birch and fir. And were you startled, Madam, by the apparition of people who were so inconsiderate as to knock at your door in the middle of dinner, and whose eyes grown accustomed to the shadows of the valleys of Mull, must have looked bewildered enough on meeting the glare of the lamps? And what do you think of a particular pair of eyes—very soft and gentle in their dark lustre—appealing, timid, friendly eyes, that had nevertheless a quiet happiness and humour in them? It was at all events most kind of you to tell the young lady that her notion of throwing up her holiday and setting out for London was mere midsummer madness. How could you—or any one else—guess at the origin of so strange a wish?

CHAPTER XXIV.

BEFORE BREAKFAST.

Who is this that slips through the saloon, while as yet all on board are asleep—no noise, less ascends the companion-way, and then finds herself alone on deck! And all the world around her is asleep too, though the gold and rose of the new day is shining along the eastern heavens. There is not a sound in this silent little loch; the shores and the woods are as still as the far peaks of the mountains, where the mists are touched here and there with a dusky fire.

She is not afraid to be alone in this silent world. There is a bright and contented look on her face. Carefully and quietly, as as not to disturb the people below, she gets a couple of deck stools, and puts down the sketch-book from under her arm, and opens out a certain leather case. But do not think she is going to attack that blaze of colour in the east, with the reflected glare on the water, and the bar of dark land between. She knows better. She has a wholesome fear of chromo-lithographs. She turns rather to those great mountain masses, with their mysteriously moving clouds, and their shoulders touched here and there with a sombre red, and their deep and silent gleams a cold, intense green in shadow. There is more workable material.

And after all there is no ambitious effort to trouble her. It is only a rough jotting of form and colour, for future use. It is a pleasant occupation for this still, cool, beautiful morning; and, perhaps, she is fairly well satisfied with it, for one listening intently might catch snatches of songs and airs—of a somewhat incoherent and inappropriate character. For what have the praises of Bonny Black Bess to do with sunrise in Loch Speliv? Or the sancy Arethusa either? But all the same the work goes quietly and dexterously on—no wild dashes and searchings for theatrical effect, but a patient mosaic of touches precisely reaching their end. She does not want to bewilder the world. She wants to have trustworthy records for her own use. And she seems content with the progress she is making.

"Here's a health to the girls that we loved long ago," this is the last air into which she has wandered—half humming and half whistling—

"Where the Shannon, and Liffey, and Blackwater flow,"

—when she suddenly stops her work to listen. Can any one be up already? The noise is not repeated, and she proceeds with her work.

"Here's a health to old Ireland; may she ne'er be dismayed! Then pale grew the cheeks of the Irish Brigade!"

The clouds are assuming substance now; they are no mere flat washes, but accurately drawn objects that have their fore-shortening like anything else. And if Miss Avon may be vaguely

conscious that had our young Doctor been on board she would not have been left so long alone, that had nothing to do with her work. The mornings on which he used to join her on deck, and chat to her while she painted, seemed far away now. He and she together would see Dunvegan no more.

But who is this who most cautiously comes up the companion, bearing in his hand a cup and saucer?

"Miss Avon," says he, with a bright laugh, "here is the first cup of tea I ever made; are you afraid to try it?"

"Oh, dear me," said she, penitently, "did I make any noise in getting my things below?"

"Well," he says, "I thought I heard you; and I knew what you would be after; and I got up and lit the spirit lamp."

"Oh, it is so very kind of you," she says—for it is really a pretty little attention on the part of one who is not much given to shifting for himself on board.

Then he dives below again and fetches her up some biscuits.

"By Jove," he says, coming closer to the sketch, "that is very good. That is awfully good. Do you mean to say you have done all that this morning?"

"Oh, yes," she says, modestly. "It is only a sketch."

"I think it uncommonly good," he says, staring at it as if he would pierce the paper.

Then there is a brief silence, during which Miss Avon boldly adventures upon this amateur's tea.

"I beg your pardon," he says, after a bit, "it is none of my business, you know—but you don't really mean that you are going back to London?"

"If I am allowed," she answers, with a smile.

"I am sure you will disappoint your friends most awfully," says he, in quite an earnest manner. "I know they had quite made up their minds you were to stay the whole time. It would be very unfair of you. And my uncle; he would break his heart if you were to go."

"They are all very kind to me," was her only answer.

"Look here," he says, with a most friendly anxiety. "If—if—it is only about business—about pictures, I mean—I really beg your pardon for intermeddling—"

"Oh," said she, frankly, "there is no secret about it. In fact, I want everybody to know that I am anxious to sell my pictures. You see, as I have got to earn my own living, shouldn't I begin at once and find out what it is like?"

"But look here," he said eagerly: "if it is a question of selling pictures, you should trust to my uncle. He is among a lot of men in the West of Scotland, rich merchants and people of that sort, who haven't inherited collections of pictures, and whose hobby is to make a collection for themselves. And they have much too good sense to buy spurious old masters, or bad examples for the sake of the name; they prefer good modern art, and I can tell you they are prepared to pay for it, too. And they are not fools, mind you; they know good pictures. You may think my uncle is very prejudiced—he has his favourite artists—and—and believes in Tom Galbraith, don't you know—but I can assure you, you won't find many men who know more about a good landscape than he does; and you would say so if you saw his dining-room at Denny-mains."

"I quite believe that," said she, beginning to put up her materials; she had done her morning's work."

"Well," he says, "you trust to him; there are lots of those Glasgow men who would only be too glad to have the chance—"

"Oh, no, no," she cried, laughing. "I am not going to coerce people into buying my pictures for the sake of friendship. I think your uncle would buy every sketch I have on board the yacht; but I cannot allow my friends to be victimized."

"Oh, victimized!" said he, scornfully. "They ought to be glad to have the chance. And do you mean to go on giving away your work for nothing? That sketch of the little creek we were in—opposite Iona, don't you know—that you gave my uncle is charming. And they tell me you have given that picture of the rocks and sea-birds—where is the place?"

"Oh, do you mean the sketch in the saloon—of Canna?"

"Yes; why, it is one of the finest landscapes I ever saw. And they tell me you gave it to that doctor who was on board!"

"Dr. Sutherland," says she, hastily—and there is a quick colour in her face—"seemed to like it—as a sort of reminiscence, you know—"

"But he should not have accepted a valuable picture," said the Youth, with decision. "No doubt you offered it to him when you saw he admired it. But now—when he must understand that—well, in fact, that circumstances are altered—he will have the good sense to give it you back again."

"Oh, I hope not," she says, with her embarrassment not diminishing. "I—I should not like that! I—I should be vexed."

"A person of good tact and good taste," says this venturesome young man, "would make a joke of it—would insist that you never meant it—and would prefer to buy the picture."

She answers, somewhat shortly—

"I think not. I think Dr. Sutherland has as good taste as any one. He would know that that would vex me very much."

(To be continued.)