

Presently, however, the cockle would rise out of the trough and appear upon the summit of a breaking sea, looking like a large, crouching, sea-gull. On, steadily, the mite of a craft held its way, sometimes heading directly for the reef, again swerving to the right to mount a rampant billow. Smaller, and smaller grew the little figure, till it became a mere white speck away in the driving mist. The fishermen still remained huddled together in the dock ; and as one, with the telescope in his hand, announced that the girl was now within a cable's length of the reef, a great look of shame came into their faces, that not one had shown courage enough to go with her. As for Nancy, in the midst of the ravaging turmoil, she was cool of head and steady of arm, pulling with a sturdy stroke, and constantly turning her face to note the waves to be met with the full front of the skiff. Sometimes the cross wash from a sea would smite the boat upon the quarter, and for a moment expose it to destruction ; but in response to the girl's quick judgment and steady wrist, the bold little prow would be instantly brought again in the face of the tempest. In one continuous storm the spray drove over her, and the skiff was more than half full of water. It was growing dark, and she could barely distinguish the opposite shore. But the danger of the passage was at last over, and her tiny craft was in the shelter of the gloomy reef.

There was a windlass bolted to the rock, with which she drew the skiff beyond the reach of the waves. Nimble then she climbed the reef till she reached the door of the