

The whale is sheering off to the north; there is less and less chance of our forming any correct estimate.

"Oh, I am sure it was a hundred! Don't you think so, Angus?" says our admiral.

"Well," says the doctor, slowly—pretending to be very anxious about keeping the sails full (when there was no wind)—"you know there is a great difference between 'yacht measurement' and 'registered tonnage.' A vessel of fifty registered tons may become eighty or ninety by yacht measurement. And I have often noticed," continues this graceless young man, who takes no thought how he is bringing contempt on his elders, "that objects seen from the deck of a yacht are naturally subject to 'yacht measurement.' I don't know what the size of that whale may be. Its registered tonnage, I suppose, would be the number of Jonahs it would carry. But I should think that if the apparent 'yacht measurement' was a hundred feet, the whale was probably about twenty feet long."

It was thus he tried to diminish the marvels of the deep. But, however he might crush us otherwise, we were his masters on one point. The Semple heresy case was too deep even for him. What could he make of "the first alternative of the general major?"

And see now, on this beautiful summer evening, we pass between Muick and Eiga, and the sea is like a plain of gold. As we draw near the sombre mass of Rum the sunset deepens, and a strange, lurid mist hangs around this remote and mountainous island rising sheer from the Atlantic. Gloomy and mysterious are the vast peaks of Haleval and Haskeval; we creep under them—favoured by a flood tide—and the silence of the desolate shores seems to spread out from them and to encompass us.

Mary Avon has long ago put away her canvas; she sits and watches; and her soft blue eyes are full of dreaming as she gazes up at those thunder-dark mountains against the rosy haze of the west.

"Haleval and Haskeval?" Angus Sutherland repeats, in reply to his hostess; but he starts all the same, for he has been covertly regarding the dark and wistful eyes of the girl sitting there. Oh, these are Norse names. Scuir na Gilleann, on the other hand, is Gaelic—it is the peak of the young men. Perhaps the Norsemen had the north of the island, and the Celts the south."

Whether they were named by Scandinavian or by Celt, Haleval and Haskeval seemed to overshadow us with their sultry gloom as we slowly glided into the lonely loch lying at their base. We were the only vessel there, and we could make out no sign of life on shore, until the glasses revealed to us one or two half-ruined cottages. The Northern twilight shone in the sky far into the night; but neither that clear metallic glow, nor any radiance from moon, or planet, or stars, seemed to affect the thunder-darkness of Haskeval and Haleval's silent peaks.

There was another tale to tell below; the big saloon all lit up; the white table-cover with its centre-piece of roses, nasturtiums, and ferns; the delayed dinner or supper, or whatever it might be called, all artistically arranged; Angus Sutherland most humbly solicitous that Mary Avon should be comfortably seated, and, in fact, quite usurping the office of the Laird in that respect; and then a sudden sound in the galley, a hissing as of a thousand squibs, telling us that Master Fred had once more, and ineffectually, tried to suppress the treasured gem of the bottle by jamming down the cork. And now the Laird, with his old-fashioned ways, must needs propose a health, which is that of our most sovereign mistress and lady; and this he does with an elaborate and gracious and sonorous courtesy. And surely there is no reason why Mary Avon should not for once break her habit and join in that simple ceremony; especially when it is a real live doctor—and not only a doctor, but an encyclopædia of scientific and all other knowledge—who would fain fill her glass! Angus Sutherland modestly but seriously pleads; and he does not plead in vain; and you would think from his look that she had conferred an extraordinary favour on him. Then we propose a health too—the health of the Four Wives!—and we do not care which of them it is who is coming to-morrow, so long as he or she comes in force. Blow, breezes, blow!—from the Coolins of Skye, or the shores of Coll, or the glens of Arisaig and Moidart—for to-morrow morning we shall shake out once more the white wings of the *White Dove*!"

CHAPTER VIII.

PLOTS AND COUNTER-PLOTS.

Now the Laird has a habit—laudable or not—of lingering over an additional half-cup at breakfast, as an excuse for desultory talk; and thus it is, on this particular morning, while the young people having gone on deck to see the yacht get under way, the Denny-mains has a chance of revealing to us certain secret schemes of his over which he has apparently been brooding. How could we have imagined that all this plotting and planning had been going on beneath the sedate exterior of the Commissioner for the Burgh of Strathgovan?

"She's just a wonderful bit lass!" he says, confidently, to his hostess; "as happy and contented as the day is long; and when she's not singing to herself, her way of speech has a sort of—a sort of music in it that is quite new to me. Yes, I must admit that; I did not know that the southern English tongue was so accurate and pleasant to the ear. Ay, but what will become of her!"

What, indeed! The lady whom he was addressing had often spoken to him of Mary Avon's isolated position in the world.

"It fairly distresses me," continued the good-hearted Laird, "when I think of her condition—not at present, when she has, if I may be allowed to say so, several friends near her who would be glad to do what they could for her; but by and by, when she is becoming older—"

The Laird hesitated. Was it possible, after all, that he was about to hint at the chance of Mary Avon becoming the mistress of the mansion and estate of Denny-mains? Then he made a plunge.

"A young woman in her position should have a husband to protect her, that is what I am sure of. Have ye never thought of it, ma'am?"

"I should like very well to see Mary married," says the other, demurely. "And I know she would make an excellent wife."

"An excellent wife!" exclaims the Laird; and then he adds with a tone approaching to severity, "I tell ye he will be a fortunate man that gets her. Oh, ay; I have watched her. I can keep my eyes open when there is need. Did you hear her asking the captain about his wife and children? I tell you there's human nature in that lass."

There was no need for the Laird to be so pugnacious; we were not contesting the point. However, he resumed—

"I have been thinking," said he, with a little more shyness, "about my nephew. He's a good lad. Well, ye know, ma'am, that I do not approve of young men being brought up in idleness, whatever their prospects must be; and I have no doubt whatever that my nephew Howard is working hard enough—what with the reading of law-books, and attending the courts, and all that—though as yet he has not had much business. But then there is no necessity. I do not think he is a lad of any great ambition, like your friend Mr. Sutherland, who has to fight his way in the world in any case. But Howard—I have been thinking now that if he was to get married and settled, he might give up the business altogether; and, if they were content to live in Scotland, he might look after Denny-mains. It will be his in any case, ye know; he would have the interest of a man looking after his own property. Now, I will tell ye plainly, ma'am, what I have been thinking about this day or two back; if Howard would marry your young lady friend, that would be agreeable to me."

The calm manner in which the Laird announced his scheme showed that it had been well matured. It was a natural, simple, feasible arrangement, by which two persons in whom he took a warm interest would be benefited at once.

"But then, sir," says his hostess, with a smile which she cannot wholly repress, "you know people never do marry to please a third person—at least, very seldom."

"Oh, there can be no forcing," said the Laird with decision. "But I have done a great deal for Howard; may I not expect that he will do something for me?"

"Oh, doubtless, doubtless," says this amiable lady, who has had some experience in matchmaking herself; "but I have generally found that marriages that would be in every way suitable and pleasing to friends, and obviously desirable, are precisely the marriages that never come off. Young people, when they are flung at each other's heads, to use the common phrase, never will be sensible and please their relatives. Now if you were to bring your nephew here, do you think Mary would fall in love with him because she ought! More likely you would find that, out of pure contrariety, she would fall in love with Angus Sutherland, who cannot afford to marry, and whose head is filled with other things."

"I am not sure, I am not sure," said the Laird, musingly. "Howard is a good-looking young fellow, and a capital lad, too. I am not so sure."

"And then, you know," said the other shyly, for she will not plainly say anything to Mary's disparagement; "young men have different tastes in their choice of a wife. He might not have the high opinion of her that you have."

At this the Laird gave a look of surprise, even of resentment.

"Then I'll tell ye what it is, ma'am," said he, almost angrily; "if my nephew had the chance of marrying such a girl, and did not do so, I should consider him—I should consider him *fool*, and say so."

And then he added, sharply—
"And do ye think I would let Denny-mains pass into the hands of a fool?"

Now this kind lady had had no intention of rousing the wrath of the Laird in this manner; and she instantly set about pacifying him. And the Laird was easily pacified. In a minute or two he was laughing good-naturedly at himself for getting into a passion; he said it would not do for one at his time of life to try to play the part of the stern father as they played that in theatre pieces—there was to be no forcing.

"But he's a good lad, ma'am, a good lad," said he, rising as his hostess rose; and he added, significantly, "he is no fool. I assure ye, ma'am; he has plenty of common sense."

When we got on deck again, we find that the *White Dove* is gently gliding out of the lonely Loch Sceresort, with its solitary house among the trees, and its crofters' huts at the base of the sombre hills. And as the light cool breeze

—gratefully cool after the blazing heat of the last day or two—carries us away northward, we see more and more of the awful solitudes of Haleval and Haskeval, that are still thunderous and dark under the hazy sky. Above the great shoulders, and under the purple peaks, we see the far-reaching corries opening up, with here and there a white waterfall just visible in the hollows. There is a sense of escape as we draw away from that overshadowing gloom.

Then we discover that we have a new skipper to-day, *vice* John of Skye, deposed. The fresh hand is Mary Avon, who is at the tiller, and looking exceedingly business-like. She has been promoted to this post by Dr. Sutherland, who stands by; she receives explanations about the procedure of Hector of Hoidart, who is up aloft, lacing the smaller topsail to the mast; she watches the operations of John of Skye and Sandy, who are in the sheets below; and, like a wise and considerate captain, she pretends not to notice Master Fred, who is having a quiet smoke by the windlass. And so, past lonely shores sails the brave vessel—the yawl *White Dove*, Captain Mary Avon, bound for anywhere.

But you must not imagine that the new skipper is allowed to stand by the tiller. Captain though she may be, she has to submit civilly to dictation, in so far as her foot is concerned. Our young Doctor has compelled her to be seated, and he has passed a rope round the tiller that so she can steer from her chair, and from time to time he gives suggestions, which she receives as orders.

"I wish I had been with you when you first sprained your foot," he says.

"Yes," she answers with a humble inquiry in her eyes.

"I would have put it in plaster of Paris," he says, in a matter-of-fact way, "and locked you up in the house for a fortnight; at the end of that time you would not know which ankle was the sprained one."

There was neither "with your leave" nor "by your leave" in this young man's manner when he spoke of that accident. He would have taken possession of her. He would have discarded your bandages and hartsorn, and what not; when it was Mary Avon's foot that was concerned—it was intimated to us—he would have had his own way in spite of all comers.

"I wish I had known," she says, timidly, meaning that it was the treatment she wished she had known.

"There is a more heroic remedy," said he, with a smile; "and that is walking the sprain off. I believe that can be done, but most people would shrink from the pain. Of course, if it were done at all, it would be done by a woman; women can bear pain infinitely better than men."

"Oh, do you think so?" she says, in mild protest. "Oh, I am sure not. Men are so much braver than women, so much stronger."

But this gentle quarrel is suddenly stopped, for some one calls attention to a deer that is calmly browsing on one of the high slopes above that rocky shore, and instantly all glasses are in request. It is a hind, with a beautifully shaped head and slender legs; she takes no notice of the passing craft, but continues her feeding, walking a few steps onward from time to time. In this way she reaches the edge of a gully in the rugged cliffs where there is some brushwood, and probably a stream; into this she sedately descends, and we see her no more.

Then there is another cry; what is this cloud ahead, or waterspout resting on the calm bosom of the sea? Glasses again in request, amid many exclamations, reveal to us that this is a dense cloud of birds; a flock so vast that towards the water it seems black; can it be the dead body of a whale that has collected this world of wings from all the Northern seas? Hurry on, *White Dove*, for the floating cloud with the black base is moving and seething—in fantastic white fumes, as it were—in the loveliness of this summer day. And now, as we draw nearer, we can descry that there is no body of a whale causing that blackness; but only the density of the mass of sea-fowl. And nearer and nearer as we draw, behold! the great gannets swooping down in such numbers that the sea is covered with a mist of water-spouts; and the air is filled with innumerable cries; and we do not know what to make of this bewildering, fluttering, swimming, screaming mass of terns, guillemots, skarts, kittiwakes, razorbills, puffins, and pulls. But they draw away again. The herring-shoal is moving northward. The murmurs of cries becomes more remote, and the seething cloud of the seabirds is slowly dispersing. When the *White Dove* sails up to the spot at which this phenomenon was first seen, there is nothing visible but a scattered assemblage of guillemots—*kurroo! kurroo!* answered by *pe-yoo-it! pe-yoo-it!*—and great gannets—"as big as sheep," says John of Skye—apparently so gorged that they lie on the water within stone's-throw of the yacht, before spreading out their long, snow-white, black-tipped, wings to bear them away over the sea.

And now, as we are altering our course to the west—far away to our right stand the vast Coolins of Skye—we sail along the northern shores of Rum. There is no trace of any habitation visible; nothing but the precipitous cliffs, and the sandy bays, and the outstanding rocks dotted with rows of shining, black skarts. When Mary Avon asks why those sandy bays should be so red, and why a certain ruddy warmth of colour should shine through even the patches of grass, our F.R.S. begins to speak of

powdered basalt rubbed down from the rocks above. He would have her begin another sketch, but she is too proud of her newly acquired knowledge to forsake the tiller.

The wind is now almost dead aft, and we have a good deal of gybing. Other people might think that all this gybing was an evidence of bad steering on the part of our new skipper; but Angus Sutherland—and we cannot contradict an F.R.S.—assures Miss Avon that she is doing remarkably well; and, as he stands by to lay hold of the main sheet when the boom swings over, we are not in much danger of carrying away either port or star-board davits.

"Do you know," says he lightly, "I sometimes think I ought to apply for the post of surgeon on board a man-of-war? That would just suit me—"

"Oh, I hope you will not," she blurts out, quite inadvertently; and thereafter there is a deep flush on her face.

"I should enjoy it immensely, I know," says he, wholly ignorant of her embarrassment, because he is keeping an eye on the sails. "I believe I should have more pleasure in life that way than any other—"

"But you do not live for your own pleasure," says she hastily, perhaps to cover her confusion.

"I have no one else to live for, anyway," says he, with a laugh; and then he corrected himself. "Oh, yes, I have. My father is a sad heretic. He has fallen away from the standards of his faith; he has set up idols—the diplomas and medals I have got from time to time. He has them all arranged in his study, and I have heard that he positively sits down before them and worships them. When I sent him the medal from Vienna—it was only bronze—he returned to me his Greek Testament, that he had interleafed and annotated when he was a student; I believe it was his greatest possession."

"And you would give up all that he expects from you to go away and be a doctor on board a ship?" says Mary Avon, with some proud emphasis. "That would not be my ambition if I were a man, and—and—if I had—if—"

Well, she could not quite say to Brose's face what she thought of his powers and prospects; so she suddenly broke away and said—

"Yes; you would go and do that for your own amusement? And what would the amusement be? Do you think they would let the doctor interfere with the sailing of the ship?"

"Well," said he, laughing, "that is a practical objection. I don't suppose the captain of a man-of-war or even of a merchant vessel would be as accommodating as your John of Skye. Captain John has his compensation when he is relieved; he can go forward, and light his pipe."

"Well, think for *your father's sake*," says Miss Avon, with decision. "you had better put that idea out of your head, once and for all."

Now blow, breezes, blow! What is the great head-land that appears, striking out into the wide Atlantic?

Ahead she goes! the land she knows!
Behold! the snowy shores of Canna!
Ho, ro, clansmen!
A long, strong pull together.
Ho, ro, clansmen!

"Tom Galbraith," the Laird is saying solemnly, to his hostess, "has assured me that Rum is the most picturesque island on the whole of the western coast of Scotland. That is his deliberate opinion. And indeed I would not go so far as to say he was wrong. Arran! They talk about Arran! Just look at those splendid mountains coming sheer down to the sea; and the light of the sun on them! Eh, me, what a sunset there will be this night!"

"Canna?" says Dr. Sutherland, to his interlocutor, who seems very anxious to be instructed. "Oh, I don't know. *Canna* in Gaelic is simply a can; but then *Cana* is a whale; and the island in the distance looks long and flat on the water. Or it may be from *cannach*—that is the moss-cotton; or from *cannach*—that is the sweet-gale. You see, Miss Avon, ignorant people have an ample choice."

Blow! breezes blow! as the yellow light of the afternoon shines over the broad Atlantic. Here are the eastern shores of Canna, high and rugged, and dark with caves; and there the western shores of Rum, the mighty mountains aglow in the evening light. And this remote and solitary little bay, with its green headlands, and its awkward rocks at the mouth, and the one house presiding over it amongst that shining wilderness of shrubs and flowers! Here is fair shelter for the night.

(To be continued.)

LITERARY.

MR. J. B. LIPPINCOTT says that publishers judge of a manuscript novel by its first page—that is, they know whether to read any further or not.

DR. MAGOON, of Philadelphia, has provided a \$6,000 scholarship at Vassar College, of which he is a trustee.

AN edition of Shakespeare in the old spelling, by Furnivall, taken from the quartos and the first folio, will soon be published in London in eight volumes.

A LONDON publisher has managed to make money from an edition of the New Testament, with maps and illustrations, which he sells at two cents a copy.

MR. G. W. WILLIAMS, the coloured representative from Hamilton County in the Ohio Legislature, is writing a history of the coloured race in America.