

now. We must try and reach Eilean Dubh. You take the sheet, and keep a good lookout. I will steer as you direct.

He complied at once.

And now began a grim struggle with the fierce elements for life. Fiona was too intensely engaged to think of the horror of the situation. Nial, whatever he may have been a moment before, was now a cool, keen cautious sailor, his head close down to the gunwale, his eyes all alert, and scanning the howling waste.

Never was a boat better managed in a storm, and never did one need it more, for louder and louder rose the wind, and darker and darker fell the night. Fortunately they were in a splendid boat. However she might go staggering down with fearful plunge into the awful black gulfs, she sprang again like a sea-bird to the next mountain wave, gliding and sweeping buoyantly upwards as though she delighted in the struggle. As the darkness crept on several islands loomed up near them, between which there lay many a reef and half-submerged rock, over which the heavy breakers crashed and spouted, while fierce and treacherous currents swept round them. Every moment might be their last. But there was nothing for it except to go on. The storm ever increasing in fury was behind them, and the roar of waters was ever getting louder. So on and on they went, plunging, bounding, staggering forward, with heavy seas breaking around them; the coracle creaking and groaning like a creature in pain.

And now rapidly the black outline of Eilean Dubh is seen right before them, and Fiona begins to wonder what chance there is of getting near it without being dashed to pieces on the rocks.

Just then a light flashed forth, and was waded to and fro.

"Steer straight for the light," cried Nial.

Fiona obeyed. They must be getting very near the shore, but the darkness was too intense to see anything clearly. The next minute down came the sail, there was a crash, a grating sound at the bottom of the boat, a seething and rushing of water all around. Fiona fell, knocked down by the shock, and before she could recover herself, Nancy Bell had grasped her, and was dragging her beyond the reach of the waves.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE NEXT MORNING.

Fiona was roused from troubled dreams by a tap at the door.

She started up alarmed. But it was only Nancy Bell, saying in an undertone that she had brought her a cup of tea.

"Where is Mr Nial?" asked Fiona.

"He's oot," replied Nancy in a doleful voice. "He's been awa hant the night."

Fiona rose and drew back the bolt.

She was lying in a rough lean-to, built on to the cottage, to reach which one must pass through the kitchen, where Nancy not only did the cooking, but also slept.

Nial Mor had wanted her to occupy the room prepared for himself at the other end of the cottage, but that she had absolutely refused to do. The lean-to was a poor enough place—more fit for a dog or a cow than a young lady; still it was secure against any sudden assault; and Fiona declared that she would remain in the hut only on condition of passing the night there. The door had a bolt on the inside, and there was a small skylight which could be fastened within. So in this shed Nancy prepared a shake-down of dry bracken and blankets, and there Fiona, removing only her wet outer garments, lay down.

Too alarmed and unhappy to sleep, she tossed about for hours anxiously revolving her position. She heard the storm raging outside, and Nial's monotonous step as he moved restlessly up and down his apartment until past midnight. Then he left the cottage, and, after a time, Fiona fell into a feverish sleep, from which she was awakened in the grey dawn by Nancy's tap at the door.

The cup of hot tea was most refreshing after such a night. Fiona drank it eagerly, fixing her eyes now and then upon the old dame, wondering whether she could be perfectly trusted.

"An' hoo are ye the morn, Miss M'Iver?" asked Nancy returning her gaze with an inscrutable expression. "This is no richt place for ye to bide in, an' I'm thinkin' ye haena sleepit weel."

"No, Nancy, it's been a dreadful night. I think the wind hes gone down a little, has it not?"

"Ay; but there's an awfu' sea on. Ye'll no win aw the day, I'm fear'd. Tak' a bit mair scone, Miss Fiona. They were fresh bakes yestereen, afore ye came. I didna think I wad hae a young leddy here to eat them."

Fiona forced the scone down. Who could tell what might betail her before the day was past?

"That's richt, Miss M'Iver. I'll fetch ye anither cup o' tea."

It was only a matter of making a resolute beginning; in a few minutes she had taken a fairly good breakfast.

"Did you know Mr. Nial was going to bring me here, Nancy?" she asked again turning her dark eyes on the old woman.

"Deed I didna, Miss M'Iver. He was here yesterday morn all by himsel'. He brought some boxes w' wine an' ither things in, an' he telt me he was comin' back by himsel' for a week's shootin'. He said he wadna bring Lachlan McCuaig w' him, as this wasna a richt sort o' place for him to sleep in. Na, na, Miss Fiona, the young laird is the licht o' ma ee. I hae watched an' guarded him syne his mither was drowned. But I wadna hae been any party to this kind o' wark, no, not even to please him."

Fiona was convinced that Nancy was speaking sincerely. She had noticed that from the moment of their reaching Eilean Dubh she had silently adopted an attitude of protection towards herself. Though endeavouring to retain Nial Mor's confidence, she had quietly worked on her behalf. But what would happen if the situation became more strained, or even tragic? Would she resist Nial to protect her?

"Nancy, did you speak to Ronald Campbell about coming here, the night you stayed with his mother?"

"Ay, I did."

"Who else do you think knows?"

"Weel, noo I come to think on't, Miss M'Iver, I hae a suspicion that naebody does. I didna think anything on't at the time, but I mind noo that the laird kept it a kind o' secret about oor comin' here. He brought me to the island himsel', an' naebody but himsel' has been here."

"I'm afraid it's been a deep plot to carry me off, Nancy. I hope I may depend on you to help me to escape away."

"Ay, I'll dae that."

The tears began running down the poor old woman's face; she quite realised the seriousness of the situation.

"Has not Mr. Nial come back since he went out at midnight?"

(To be Continued.)

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## A Custom Worth While

Last March, says Mary E. Fletcher, writing to the "Youth's Companion," I landed in England and remained there until late in July. I visited several pleasant English homes, and, of course, noticed many things to which I was unaccustomed. I do not know that anything struck me more pleasantly than the absence of the "nervous," "all tired to death," "all out of sorts" person. At first I accepted it merely as a welcome fact. Later, I began to cast about for a reason.

My English friends certainly sat down to one more meal a day than I had been accustomed to; they sat longer at the table, and I think the average Englishman consumed more food than the average American does. Still I hesitated, as this did not seem an altogether satisfactory explanation.

Then, of a sudden, what seemed to me to be the true solution of the "nervous" problem flashed upon me, and I was literally foot-sore, but in no wise exhausted.

"It is the walking," I murmured. The more I thought of it, the more I became convinced that it must be the universal English habit of "taking a walk," which contributes so much to the health and well-being of the people.

They seemed to regard the daily walk as much a matter of course as the breakfast. Not a listless, dawdling stroll, but a brisk, business-like, and to the heroic stranger who forebore, from patriotic reasons, to complain, often all too long tramp.

Bits of time, which no definite occupation filled, were eagerly utilized: "Let's go for a walk before dinner!" "We've time to go to the spinney and see the hyacinths before tea," and so on.

My companions made friendly calls at numerous birds' nests—"just to see how the families are getting along," they said. They turned aside to a little pond to show me an immense frog, an ancient acquaintance. They knew every wild flower, and just where to look for new comers. They recognized by name every bird.

"Young England," then, grows up thoroughly imbued with the principle that walking is a duty, a necessity and a pleasure. I believe that this is largely the secret of the national sturdiness and strength, and it might be well for us to take a leaf from the lesson book of the mother country.

God has a place for every one. It is man's work to find the place and fit himself for it.