

recognize the noblest profession that a man can devote himself to—when even the poor Scotch universities and the universities all over Europe have always had their medical and scientific chairs. I think it is perfectly disgraceful."

Since when had she become so strenuous an advocate of the endowment of research?

"Why, look at Dr. Sutherland—when he is burning to get on with his own proper work, when his name is beginning to be known all over Europe—he has to fritter away his time in editing a scientific magazine and in those hospital lectures. And that, I suppose, is barely enough to live on. But I know," she says, with decision, "that in spite of everything—I know that before he is five-and-thirty, he will be President of the British Association."

Here, indeed, is a brave career for the Scotch student; cannot one complete the sketch as it roughly exists in the minds of those two women?

At twenty-one, B. M. of Edinburgh.

At twenty-six, F.R.S.

At thirty, Professor of Biology at Oxford; the chair founded through the intercession of the women of Great Britain.

At thirty-five, President of the British Association.

At forty, a baronetcy, for further discoveries in the region of anaesthetics.

At forty-five, consulting physician to half the gouty gentlemen of England, and amassing an immense fortune.

At fifty—

Well, at fifty, is it not time that "the poor Scotch student," now become great and famous and wealthy, should look around for some beautiful princess to share his high estate with him? He has not had time before to think of such matters. But what is this now? Is it that microscopes and test-tubes have dimmed his eyes? Is it that honours and responsibilities have silvered his hair? Or is the drinking deep of the Pactolus stream a deadly poison? There is no beautiful princess awaiting him anywhere. He is alone among his honours. There was once a beautiful princess—beautiful-souled and tender-eyed, if not otherwise too lovely—awaiting him among the western seas; but that time is over and gone many a year ago. The opportunity has passed. Ambition called him away, and he left her; and the last he saw of her was when he bade good-bye to the *White Dove*.

What have we to do with these idle dreams? We are getting within sight of Iona village now; and the sun is shining on the green shores, and on the ruins of the old cathedral, and on that white house just above the corn-field. And as there is no good anchorage about the island, we have to make in for a little creek on the Mull side of the Sound, called Polteriv, or the Bull-hole; and this creek is narrow, tortuous and shallow; and a yacht drawing eight feet of water has to be guided with some circumspection, especially if you go up to the inner harbour above the rocks called the Little Bull. And so we make inquiries of John of Skye, who has not been with us here before. It is even hinted that if he is not quite sure of the channel, we might send the gig over to Iona for John Macdonald, who is an excellent pilot.

"John Macdonald!" exclaims John of Skye, whose professional pride has been wounded. "Will John Macdonald be doing anything more than I was to do myself in the Bull-hole—ay, last year—last year I will tek my own smack out of the Bull-hole at the nose end, and ferry near low water too; and her deep-loaded. Oh, yes, I will be knowing the Bull-hole this many a year."

And John of Skye is as good as his word. Favoured by a flood-tide, we steal gently into the unfrequented creek, behind the great rocks of red granite; and so extraordinarily clear is the water that, standing upright on the deck, we can see the white sand of the bottom, with shoals of young saithe darting this way and that. And then just as we get opposite an opening in the rocks, through which we can descry the northern shores of Iona, and above those the blue peak of the Dutchman, away goes the anchor with a short, quick rush; her head swings round to meet the tide; the *White Dove* is safe from all the winds that blow. Now lower away the gig, boys, and bear us over the blue waters of the Sound!

"I am really afraid to begin," Mary Avon says, as we remonstrated with her for not having touched a colour-tube since we started. "Besides, you know, I scarcely look on it that we have really set out yet. This is only a sort of shaking ourselves into our places; I am only getting accustomed to the ways of our cabin now. I shall scarcely consider that we have started on our real voyaging until—"

Oh, yes, we know very well. Until we have got Angus Sutherland on board. But what she really said was, after slight hesitation:

"—until we set out for the Northern Hebrides."

"Ay, it's a good thing to feel nervous about beginning," says the Laird, as the long sweep of the four oars brings us nearer and nearer to the Iona shores. "I have often heard Tom Galbraith say that to the younger men. He says if a young man is over-confident he'll come to nothing. But there was a good one I once heard Galbraith tell about a young man that was pentin at Tarbert—that a Tarbert on Loch Fyne, Miss Avon. Ay, well, he was pentin away, and he was putting in the young lass of the house as a fisher lass; and he asked her if she could not get a creel to strap on her back—as a background for her head, ye know. Well, says she—"

Here the fierce humour of the story began to bubble up in the Laird's blue-gray eyes. We were all half laughing already. It was impossible to resist the glow of delight on the Laird's face.

"Says she—just as pat at ninepence—says she, 'It's your ain head that wants a creel!'"

The explosion was inevitable. The roar of laughter at this good one was so infectious that a subdued smile played over the rugged features of John of Skye. "It's your ain head that wants a creel." The Laird laughed, and laughed again, until the last desperately suppressed sounds were something like *lee! lee! lee!* Even Mary Avon pretended to understand.

"That was a real good one," says he, obviously overjoyed to have so appreciative an audience, "that I mind of reading in the Dean's 'Reminiscences.' It was about an old leddy in Edinburgh who met in a shop a young officer she had seen before. He was a tall young man, and she eyed him from head to heel, and says she—ha! ha! says she, 'Od, ye're a lang lad; God gie ye grace.' Dry, very dry wasn't it? There was real humour in that—a pawky humour that people in the South cannot understand at all. 'Od,' says she, 'ye're a lang lad; God grant ye grace.' There was a great deal of character in that."

We were sure of it; but still we preferred the Laird's stories about Homesh. We invariably liked best the stories at which the Laird laughed most, whether we quite understood their pawky humour or not.

"Dr. Sutherland has a great many stories about the Highlanders," says Miss Avon, timidly; "they are very amusing."

"As far as I have observed," remarked the Laird—for how could he relish the notion of having a rival anecdote-monger on board?—"as far as I have observed, the Highland character is entirely without humour. Ay, I have heard 'Tom Galbraith say that very often, and he has been everywhere in the Highlands."

"Well, then," says Mary Avon, with a quick warmth of indignation in her face—how rapidly those soft dark eyes could change their expression!—"I hope Mr. Galbraith knows more about painting than he knows about the Highlanders! I thought that anybody who knows anything knows that the Celtic nature is full of imagination, and humour, and pathos, and poetry; and the Saxon—the Saxon!—it is his business, to plod over ploughed fields, and be as dull and commonplace as the other animals he sees there!"

Gracious goodness!—here was a tempest! The Laird was speechless; for, indeed, at this moment we bumped against the sacred shores—that is to say, the landing-slip of Iona—and had to scramble on to the big stones. Then we walked up and past the cottages, and through the potato field, and past the white inn, and so to the hallowed shrine and its graves of the kings. We spent the whole of the afternoon there.

When we got back to the yacht and to dinner, we discovered that a friend had visited us in our absence, and had left of his largesse behind him—nasturtiums and yellow-and-white pansies, and what not—to say nothing of fresh milk and crisp, delightful lettuce. We drank his health.

Was it the fear of some one breaking in on our domestic peace that made that last evening among the Western Islands so lovely to us? We went out in the gig after dinner; the Laird put forth his engine of destruction to encompass the innocent lythe; we heard him humming the "Haughs o' Cromdale" in the distance. The wonderful glory of that evening!—Iona become an intense olive-green against the gold and crimson of the sunset, the warm light shining along the red granite of western Mull. Then the yellow moon rose in the south—into the calm violet-hued vault of the heavens; and there was a golden fire on the ripples and on the wet blades of the oars as we rowed back with laughter and singing.

*Sing tántara! sing tántara!
Sing tántara! sing tántara!
Said he, the Highland army rules
That ere they came to Cromdale!"*

And then, next morning, we were up at five o'clock. If we were going to have a tooth pulled, why not have the little interview over at once? East wind would be waiting for us at Castle Osprey.

Blow, soft westerly breeze, then, and bear us down by Fion-phort, and round the granite Ross—shining all a pale red in the early dawn. And here is Ardalanish Point; and there, as the morning goes by, are the Carsaig arches, and then Loch Buy, and finally the blue Firth of Lorn. Northward, now, and still northward, until, far away, the white house shining amidst the firs, and the flag fluttering in the summer air. Have they desisted us, then? Or is the bunting hoisted in honour of the guests? The pale cheek of Mary Avon tells a tale as she desecrates that far signal; but that is no business of ours. Perhaps it is only of her uncle that she is thinking.

CHAPTER VI.

BROSE.

Behold, now! this beautiful garden of Castle Osprey all ablaze in the sun; the roses, pansies, poppies, and what not bewildering our eyes after the long looking at the blue water; and in the midst of the brilliant paradise—just as we had feared—the snake! He did not scurry away at our approach, as snakes are wont to do, or raise his horrid head and hiss. The fact is,

we found him comfortably seated under a drooping ash, smoking. He rose and explained that he had strolled up from the shore to await our coming. He did not seem to notice that Mary Avon, as she came along, had to walk slowly, and was leaning on the arm of the Laird.

Certainly nature had not been bountiful to this tall, spare person who had now come among us. At first sight he looked almost like an albino—his yellow-white, closely cropped head, a certain raw appearance of the face, as if perpetual east winds had chafed the skin, and weak gray eyes that seemed to fear the light. But the albino look had nothing to do with the pugilist's jaw, and the broken nose, and the general hang-dog scowl about the mouth. For the rest, Mr. Smethurst seemed desirous of making up for those unpleasant features which nature had bestowed upon him by a studied air of self-possession, and by an extreme precision of dress. Alack and welladay! the laudable efforts were of little avail. Nature was too strong for him. The assumption of a languid and indifferent air was not quite in consonance with the ferret gray eyes; the precision of his costume only gave him the look of a well-dressed groom, or a butler gone on the turf. There was not much grateful to the sight about Mr. Frederick Smethurst.

But were we to hate the man for being ugly? Despite his raw face, he might have the white soul of an angel. And in fact we knew absolutely nothing against his private character or private reputation, except that he had been blackballed at a London club in by-gone days; and even of that little circumstance our women folk were not aware. However, there was no doubt at all that a certain coldness—apparent to us who knew her well—characterized the manner of this small lady who now went up and shook hands with him, and declared—unblushingly—that she was so glad he had run up to the Highlands.

"And you know," said she, with that charming politeness which she would show to the arch-fiend himself if he were properly introduced to her—"you know, Mr. Smethurst, that yachting is such an uncertain thing, one never knows when one may get back; but if you could spare a few days to take a run with us, you would see what a capital mariner Mary has become, and I am sure it would be a great pleasure to us."

These were actually her words. She uttered them without the least tremor of hesitation. She looked him straight in the face with those clear, innocent, confiding eyes of hers. How could the man tell that she was wishing him at Jericho?

And it was in silence that we waited to hear our doom pronounced. A yachting trip with this intolérable Jonah on board! The sunlight went out of the day; the blue went out of the sky and the seas; the world was filled with gloom, and chaos, and east wind.

Imagine, then, the sudden joy with which we heard of our deliverance! Surely it was not the raucous voice of Frederick Smethurst, but a sound of summer bells.

"Oh, thank you," he said, in his affectedly indifferent way. "But the fact is, I have run up to see Mary only on a little matter of business, and I must get back at once. Indeed, I purpose leaving by the Dalmatian coach in the afternoon. Thank you very much, though; perhaps some other time I may be more fortunate."

How we had wronged this poor man! We hated him no longer. On the contrary, great grief was expressed over his departure; and he was begged at least to stay that one evening. No doubt he had heard of Dr. Angus Sutherland, who had made such discoveries in the use of anaesthetics? Dr. Sutherland was coming by the afternoon steamer. Would not he stay and meet him at dinner?

Our tears broke out afresh—metaphorically—when East Wind peristed in his intention of departure; but of course compulsion was out of the question. And so we allowed him to go into the house to have that business interview with his niece.

"A poor crayture!" remarked the Laird, confidently, forgetting that he was talking of a friend of ours. "Why does he not speak out like a man, instead of drawing and dawdling? His accent is just insufferable."

"And what business can he have with Mary?" says our sovereign lady, sharply—just as if a man with a raw skin and yellow-white hair must necessarily be a pickpocket. "He was the trustee of that little fortune of hers, I know; but that is all over. She got the money when she came of age. What can he want to see her about now?"

We concerned ourselves not with that. It was enough for us that the snake was about to retreat from our summer paradise of his own free will and pleasure. And Angus Sutherland was coming, and the provisioning of the yacht had to be seen to; for to-morrow—to-morrow we spread our white wings again, and take flight to the far north.

Never was parting guest so warmly speeded. We concealed our tears as the coach rolled away. We waved a hand to him. And then, when it was suggested that the wagonette that had brought Mary Avon down from Castle Osprey might just as well go along to the quay—for the steamer bringing Angus Sutherland would be in shortly—and when we actually did set out in that direction, there was so little on our faces that you could not have told we had been bidding farwell to a valued friend and relative.

Now, if our good-hearted Laird had had a grain of jealousy in his nature, he might well have resented the manner in which these two women spoke of the approaching guest. In their talk the word "he" meant only one person. "He" was sure to come by the steamer. "He" was punctual in his engagements. Would he bring a gun or a rod; or would the sailing be enough amusement for him? What a capital thing it was for him to be able to take an interest in some such out-of-door exercise, as a distraction to the mind! And so forth, and so forth. The Laird heard all this, and his expectations were no doubt, rising and rising. Forgetful of his disappointment on first seeing Mary Avon, he was in all likelihood creating an imaginary figure of Angus Sutherland—and, of course, this marvel of erudition and intellectual power must be a tall, wan, pale person, with the travail of thinking written in lines across the spacious brow. The Laird was not aware that for many a day after we first made the acquaintance of the young Scotch student he was generally referred to in our private conversation as "Brose."

And, indeed, the Laird did stare considerably when he saw—elbowing his way through the crowd, and making for us with a laugh of welcome on the fresh-coloured face—a stout-set, muscular, blue-eyed, sandy-haired, good-humoured-looking, youngish man, who, instead of having anything Celtic about his appearance, might have been taken for the son of a south-country farmer. "Brose" was carrying his own portmanteau, and sturdily shoving his way through the porters who would fain have seized it.

"I am glad to see you, Angus," said our queen-regent, holding out her hand; and there was no ceremonial politeness in that reception—but you should have seen the look in her eyes.

Then he went on to the wagonette.

"How do you do, Miss Avon?" said he, quite timidly, like a school-boy. He scarcely glanced up at her face, which was regarding him with a very pleasant welcome; he seemed relieved when he had to turn and seize his portmanteau again. Knowing that he was rather fond of driving, our mistress and admiral-in-chief offered him the reins, but he declined the honour; Mary Avon was sitting in front. "Oh, no, thank you," said he, quite hastily, and with something uncommonly like a blush. The Laird, if he had been entertaining any feeling of jealousy, must have been reassured. "Brose" was no formidable rival. He spoke very little—he only listened—as we drove away to Castle Osprey. Mary Avon was chatting briskly and cheerfully, and it was to the Laird that she addressed that running fire of nonsense and merry laughter.

But the young doctor was greatly concerned when, on our arrival at Castle Osprey, he saw Mary Avon helped down with much care, and heard the story of the sprain.

"Who bandages your ankle?" said he at once, and without any shyness now.

"I do it, myself," said she, cheerfully. "I can do it well enough."

"Oh, no, you cannot!" said he, abruptly; "a person stooping cannot. The bandage should be as tight and as smooth as the skin of a drum. You must let some one else do that for you."

And he was disposed to resent this walking about in the garden before dinner. What business had she to trifle with such a serious matter as a sprain; and a sprain which was the recall of an older sprain? "Did she wish to be lame for life?" he asked, sharply.

Mary Avon laughed, and said that worse things than that had befallen people. He asked her whether she found any pleasure in voluntary martyrdom. She blushed a little, and turned to the Laird.

The Laird was at this moment laying before us the details of a most gigantic scheme. It appeared that the inhabitants of Strathgovan, not content with a steam fire-engine, were talking about having a public park—actually proposing to have a public park, with beds of flowers, and iron seats; and, to crown all, a gymnasium, where the youths of the neighbourhood might twirl themselves on the gay trapeze to their hearts' content. And where the subscriptions were to come from, and what were the hardest plants for borders, and whether the gymnasium should be furnished with ropes or with chains—these matters were weighing heavily on the mind of our good friend of Denny-mains. Angus Sutherland relapsed into silence, and gazed absently at a tree-fuchsia that stood by.

"It is a beautiful plant, is it not?" said a voice beside him—that of our empress and liege lady.

He started.

"Oh, yes, he said, cheerfully. "I was thinking I should like to live the life of a tree like that, dying in the winter, you know, and being quite impervious to frost and snow and hard weather; and then, as soon as the fine warm spring and summer came round, coming to life again and spreading yourself out to feel all the sunlight and the warm winds. That must be a capital life."

"But do you really think they can feel that? Why, you must believe that those trees and flowers are alive!"

"Does anybody doubt it?" said he, quite simply. "They are certainly alive. Why—"

And here he bethought himself for a moment.

"If I only had a good microscope now," said he, eagerly, "I would show you the life of a