

ceeded. She had forecast terrors, difficulties, contingencies; and he had in return, so far from carrying on the phantasmagoria, merely assured her in a brief and business-like manner that all would be right.

It was after this that she had found cause of complaint against her sister.

Janet could make Stronachan talk, whatever she said. He had always a reply, a jest, an argument, a something, which necessitated bringing his laughing eyes to bear upon the limpid orbs of his girl cousin; and if Isabella, as she sometimes did, sought to enter into the jest or the argument, it fell flat.

Nevertheless, Miss Greythorpe told herself it was not Stronachan but Janet who was to blame, and assured her cousin Florence that she really did not like to annoy her parents, or she should certainly have pointed out to them that Janet was growing much to free-and-easy in her manner toward young men.

"I suppose it is all *her*," Janet now wept and wailed. "I know by her face yesterday she was up to something, and she has got Papa and Mamma to say I am not to go, because Stronachan always comes to my side when we walk out, and because he would sit by me in the boat last night."

In which conclusion the young diviner was not far wrong. Isabella had not, indeed, outwardly suggested her condemnation, but she had insinuated the idea, and that skillfully. "I really think Janet would be just as well at home," she had told her mother. "She is not a very good sailor—though she declares she is—and there is no need for her to be taken everywhere just because she is allowed to be with us in her holidays. It makes her rather forward, going about this, don't you know?"

And Lady Greythorpe had instantly perceived to what the fowdness referred. She too had been annoyed to perceive her nephew linger behind when Janet had plunged into the wood after blackberries, and finally clamber over the loose, moss-grown wall, and disappear into the woods himself. She had spoken somewhat sharply to Janet, and had not been appeased by Stronachan's offering of a bunch of berries with the bloom on.

When Janet had come down to dinner that evening with a cluster of scarlet rowans at her breast, there had been an uneasy suspicion in the mother's bosom that she had seen a sunburnt hand pluck those very rowans from a mountain ash upon their ramble; and she had noted that Bella had no floral ornament.

It was absurd to suppose that there could be anything real or tangible between the young laird and her chit of seventeen; but there might be some silly sentiment which would hinder sentiment of a more earnest and practical kind on his part.

It would be well to nip this cousinly nonsense in the bud; and the very first opportunity for nipping it, fell out as has been recited above.

It seemed to the luckless Janet that she heard every clock strike and every bell ring that broke the stillness of Oban Bay throughout the long, light summer night which followed. Several times she rose up and went to her little window. Happily she had a room to herself, for Isabella and Florence preferred each other's company; and never had this isolation been more welcome.

Leaning out and drinking in the solemn scene—the motionless vessels, the weird buildings, the deep, still waters shrouded by the still more deeply shadowed heights—poor Janet's eyes burned.

How she did love this spot! How she loved the beautiful Hobrises! How she loved—A leap of the veins, a catch of the breath, a hot blush, and no syllable framed even in the maiden's heart of hearts.

But what a night it was! And what a day it was going to be!

Already the pale light was spreading over the eastern horizon, when for the last time the watcher sought her fevered couch and tried to think no more.

She could not sleep—of course she could not sleep; but she would lie still and—and now, what is this? She is on board the gayly crowding boat. She is on her way to the far famed islets of the west; the ropes of the vessel are loosened, the paddle-wheels have begun to turn when a shout is raised. A name is being called—yelled—shrieked—passed from one to another. Whose name? Her own. Everyone is calling "Janet!" the air is full of "Janet—Janet!"

Janet is found, and, oh, despair! Janet is found too soon. She is not to go, after all, with the departing travellers; she has been sent for to return to land; she is being hurried off the boat, when her foot slips; the gangway has no protecting arms; she falls down—down: Stronachan seizes her—falls after her—they both plunge into the abyss—

"Good gracious, Janet! What a noise you are making! Florence and I could not think what it was. We heard such a scream. I suppose you had the nightmare; but I never heard any one make such a din. Are you awake now? Will you promise not to drop off to sleep on your back again? That is what is at the bottom of it. You are lying on your back. You should never do that!"

"Oh, do be quiet!" groaned Janet.

"Well, shut your eyes and go to sleep quietly then. We are off; but there is no need for you to rise yet. It is six o'clock, and the boat starts in half an hour. Such a glorious morning! Good-by!" And the door closed.

At the first the speaker might have fancied that her advice was to be followed, and that the curly head which pressed the pillow would soon be again wrapped in slumber; but had Isabella waited a few minutes more she would have heard sounds and seen a sight would have altered her opinion.

Janet was sitting up in bed. Her eyes were dry now—dry and hot as live coals. It seemed to her that even in her

sleep she had never lost sight of the dreadful sentence under which she lay, and that the dream from which she had awakened screaming, had been but little worse than the sorrowful reality. Through her open casement she could behold the bright fruition of the dawn's early promise.

It was a day of days

Not a cloud the size of a man's hand flecked the pale blue sky. Not a ripple broke the glistening sheet of glassy sea beneath. A pearly mist just hung over the distance.

In the bay itself every spar and sheet of the innumerable craft collected there was mirrored with a reflection so truthful as to make it uncertain at what point bow and stern touched the water.

In the midst of Nature's stillness, however, every other kind of world was the full swing of activity.

The deck of every steamer, yacht, launch, herring-skow was alive; the thud of oars in their rowlocks resounded from plying open boats; the clang of sharp, brisk, inspiring bells announced the speedy departure of one excursion boat and another on their various routes. Passengers were crowding their gangways. Vehicles were every moment arriving on the pier, and discharging their hurrying freights. It appeared as if every one had suddenly started up with the conviction that it would be a crime to waste such a day on any ordinary occupation, and that there had been a simultaneous awakening to a resolve to cast all aside, and sail away hither and thither over the gleaming water.

Fuller of all and, gayest with bunting was the Staffa boat.

None was so great a favorite. A continued stream poured in upon her deck, as her bell again and again sharply sounded, warning of departure. It was past the stated time; it was ten minutes' quarter of an hour past. There seemed scarce any cessation in the arrivals.

Five minutes to seven o'clock.

"Oh, why does she not go?" cried poor Janet, at last in an agony, and threw herself back upon her pillow, with sobs and tears breaking out afresh.

She only raised herself once again for a long time after that.

This was when the bells ceased, and, holding her breath to listen, she could catch the sound of paddle-wheels, and knew that the boat was loosed from her moorings, and was slowly getting up her steam as she wheeled round into the center of the harbor, in order to obtain a clearer passage through the crowd of vessels at anchor.

Then Janet looked.

In another second or two, full into view came the jauntily decorated prow, and the fullest Staffa boat of the year, teeming from stem to stern with a rainbow-like assemblage of joyous sightseers, fluttering with parasols and telescopes, with crowds overhanging every rail and ledge, and paddle-boxes, cut her way through the glassy water and made for the entrance of the bay.