

this vast white thing was not motionless ; for in the centre of that semicircle rose a great white column of vapour, softly spreading itself abroad as it ascended into the pale blue sky, and shutting out altogether the dark table-land beyond the high line of the Falls. And as we got out of the vehicle and walked down toward the edge of the precipice, the air around us was filled with a low and murmuring sound, soft, continuous, muffled, and remote ; and now we could catch the downward motion of these falling volumes of water, the friction of the air fraying the surface of the heavy masses into a soft and feathery white. There was nothing here that was awful and bewildering, but a beautiful, graceful spectacle—the white surface of the descending water looking almost lace-like in its texture—that accorded well with the still pale blue of the sky overhead. It was something to gaze on with a placid and sensuous satisfaction, perhaps because the continuous, monotonous murmur of sound was soothing, slumberous, dreamlike.

But Bell's quick eye was not directed solely to this calm and beautiful picture. She saw that Lady Sylvia was disturbed and anxious.

'Had we not better go into the hotel at once?' said she. 'There is no use trying to see Niagara in a minute. It has to be done systematically. And besides, there may be letters waiting for us.'

'Oh yes, certainly,' said Lady Sylvia ; and then she added, seriously, as if her whole thoughts had been centred on the Falls, 'It is a very hopeful thing that we have not been disappointed at the first sight. They say nearly every one is. I dare say it will be some days before we get to understand the grandeur of Niagara.'

'My dear Lady Sylvia,' said one of us, as we were all walking up to the hotel, 'you might spend thirty years here in such weather as this without knowing any thing of the grandeur of Niagara. There is no mysticism possible with a pale blue sky. I will endeavour to expound this matter to you after luncheon—'

'Gott bewahre !' exclaims the German flippantly.

'—And I will show you that the size of any natural object has nothing to do with the effect it produces on the mind. I will show you how, with a proper atmospheric

effect, an artist could make a more impressive picture of an insignificant island off the coast of Mull than he could if he painted Mont Blanc, under blue skies, on a canvas fifty feet square. The poetry of nature is all a question of atmosphere ; failing that you may as well fall back on a drawing-master's notion of the picturesque—a broken mill-wheel and a withered tree. My dear friends—'

'Perhaps you will explain to us, then,' said Bell, not caring how she interrupted this valuable lecture, 'how if we can put grandeur into any thing by waiting till a little mist and gloom gets round it—if there is nothing in size at all—how we were so foolish as to come to Niagara at all? What did we come for?'

'I really don't know.'

'He is only talking nonsense, Bell !' says a sharper voice ; and we reach the hotel.

But there are no letters.

'I thought not,' says Queen T—, cheerfully ; as if news from England was a matter of profound indifference to every one of us. 'But there is no hurry. There is no chance of our missing them, as we shall be here some days.'

'I suppose they will have some English newspapers here?' suggested Lady Sylvia, just as if she had been in Brussels or Cologne.

'I should think not. If there are any, they will be old enough. What do you want with English newspapers, Lady Sylvia?' 'I want to see what has been going on in Parliament,' she answers, without the least flinching.

'What a desperate patriot you are, Lady Sylvia !' says Bell, laughing, as we go up the stairs to our rooms. 'I don't think I ever read a debate in my life—except about Mr. Plimsoll.'

'But your husband is not in Parliament,' returns Lady Sylvia, with blushing courage.

'And where your treasure is there will your heart be,' says Queen T—in a gay and careless fashion ; but she has a gentle hand within her friend's arm ; and then she takes the key to open the door of her room for her, treating her altogether like a spoiled child.

The after-luncheon lecture on the sublime in nature never came off ; for these careless gadabouts, heedless of instruction