

And then, right in the midst of all this turmoil, Lady Sylvia got a telegram from New York. We had just sat down to dinner in the big saloon, at a separate table; and we were a sufficiently staid and decorous party, for Mr. and Mrs. Von Rosen were dressed in black, and the rest of us had donned whatever dark attire we had with us, out of respect to the memory of the lamented Jack Sloane. (One of the executors was to call in on us after dinner; but no matter.) This telegram produced quite a flutter of excitement, and for the moment we forgot all about Texan herds and placer mines. Lady Sylvia became a trifle pale as the telegram was handed to her, and she seemed to read it at one glance; then, despite herself, a smile of pleasure came to her lips, and the colour returned to her face.

"But what is this, Mr. Von Rosen?" she said, and she endeavoured to talk in a matter-of-fact way, as if nothing at all had happened. "My husband speaks of some proposal you have made to him."

"Yes," said the lieutenant, blushing like a guilty school-boy.

He looked at his wife, and both were a trifle embarrassed; but at this moment Lady Sylvia handed the telegram across the table.

"You may read it," she said, indifferently, as if it had conveyed but little news to her. And yet it was a long telegram—to be sent by a man who was not worth sixpence.

*"Hugh Balfour, New York, to Lady Sylvia Balfour, Central Hotel, Denver: Have got your letter: all is right. Shall reach you Saturday. Please tell Von Rosen that, subject to your wishes, I accept proposal with gratitude."*

"Lady Sylvia," said the lieutenant, with his bronzed face as full of triumph as if he himself had brought about the whole business, "will you let me cry 'Hurrah?' Bell, shall I cry 'Hurrah?'" Madame, do you object?"

And he held up the bit of paper for a signal, as if he were about to shock the calm proprietries of Denver.

"May I see the telegram, Lady Sylvia?" said Mrs. Von Rosen, taking no notice of her mad husband.

"Certainly. But please tell me, Mr. Von Rosen, what the proposal is. Why do you wish to cry 'Hurrah?'"

"Ah, yes, you may well ask," said the young man, moderating his fervour, "for I was too soon with my gladness. I will have to persuade you before we can cry any hurrahs. What I was thinking of was this—that you and Mr. Balfour would be a whole year with us, and we should have great amusement; and the shooting that I have heard of since yesterday—oh! I cannot tell you of it. But he says it is all subject to your wishes; now I must begin to persuade you to stay away from England for a whole year, and to give us the pleasure of your society. It is a great favour that my wife and myself we both ask of you; for we shall be lonely out here until we get used to the place and know our neighbours; but if you were our neighbours, that would be very pleasant. And I have been very busy to find out about Eagle Creek—oh no, it is not so bad as you would think; you can have everything from Denver—I do not know about ladies' saddles, but I will ask—and it is the most beautiful and healthy air in the world, Lady Sylvia—"

"My dear Mr. Von Rosen," said Lady Sylvia, interrupting him with a charming smile, "don't seek to persuade me; I was persuaded when I got the message from my husband; for of course I will do whatever he wishes. But if you will let me say so, I don't think this proposal of yours is very wise. It was scarcely fair of you to write to New York and inveigle my husband into it without letting me know. It is very charming, no doubt, and you are very kind; and I have not the least doubt we shall enjoy ourselves very much; but you must remember that my husband and myself have something else to think of now. We can not afford to think only of shooting and riding, and pleasant society. Indeed, I took it for granted that my husband had come out to America to find some profession or occupation; and I am rather surprised that he has accepted your proposal. It was too tempting, I suppose, and I know we shall enjoy ourselves very much—"

Husband and wife had been glancing at each other, as if to inquire which should speak first. It was the lieutenant who took the burden on his shoulders, and certainly he was extremely embarrassed when he began. Fortunately in these Western hotels, you are expected to order your dinner all at once, and it is put on the table at once; and