

dust that covered us from head to heel had not sufficed to blind us; and now before our eyes we found the end and aim of our journey—the far hamlet of Idaho.

Bell looked round bewildered; she had dreaded this approach to her future home. And Queen T——, anxious above all things that her friends' first impressions should be favorable, cried out, "Oh, Bell, how beautiful, and clean, and bright it is!"

And certainly our first glance at Idaho, after the heat and dust we had come through, was cheering enough. We thought for an instant of Chamounix as we saw the small white houses by the side of the green, rushing stream, and the great mountains rising sheer beyond. There was a cool and pleasant wind rustling through the leaves of the young cotton-wood trees planted in front of the inn. And when we turned to the mountains on the other side of the narrow valley, we found even the lofty pine-woods glowing with color; for the midday sun was pouring down on the undergrowth—now of a golden yellow—so that one could almost believe that these far slopes were covered with buttercups. The coaches had stopped at the inn—the Beebe House, as it is called—and Colonel Sloane's heiress was received with much distinction. They showed her Colonel Sloane's house. It stood on a knoll some distance off; but we could see that it was a cheerful-looking place, with a green painted veranda round the white walls, and a few pines and cotton-woods about. In the mean time we had taken rooms at the inn, and speedily set to work to get some of the dust removed. It was a useful occupation; for no doubt the worry of it tended to allay that nervous excitement among our women-folk, from which Bell, more especially, was obviously suffering. When we all assembled thereafter at our midday meal, she was still somewhat pale. The lieutenant declared that after so much travelling, she must now take a long rest. He would not allow her to go on to Georgetown, for a week at least.

And was there ever in all the world a place more conducive to rest than this distant, silent, sleepy Idaho up here in the lonely mountains? When the coaches had whirled away in the dust toward Georgetown, there was nothing to break the absolute calm but the soft rustling of the small trees; there was not a shred of cloud in the blue sky to bar the glare of the white road with a bit of grateful shadow. After having had a look at Bell's house, we crossed to the other side of the valley, and entered a sort of tributary gorge between the hills which is known as the Soda Creek cañon. Here all vestiges of civilization seemed to end, but for the road that led we knew not whither; and in the strange silence we wandered onward into this new world whose plants, and insects, and animals were all unfamiliar to us, or familiar only as they suggested some similarity to their English relatives. And yet Queen T—— strove to assure Bell that there was nothing wonderful about the place except its extreme silence and a certain sad desolation of beauty. Was not this our identical Michaelmas-daisy, she asked? She was overjoyed when she discovered a real and veritable harebell—a trifle darker in color than our harebell, but a harebell all the same. She made a dart at a cluster of yellow flowers growing up among the rocks, think-

ing they were the mountain-saxifrage; but they turned out to be a composite plant—probably some sort of hawk-weed. Her efforts to reach these flowers had startled a large bird out of the bushes above; and as it darted off, we could see that it was of a dark and luminous blue: she had to confess that he was a stranger. But surely we could not have the heart to regard the merry little chipmunk as a stranger—which of all living creatures is the friendliest, the blithest, the most comical. In this Soda Creek cañon he reigns supreme; every rock and stone and bush seems instinct with life as this Proteus of the animal world scuds away like a mouse, or shoots up the hill-side like a lizard, only, when he has got a short distance, to perch himself up on his hind-legs, and curl up his bushy tail, and eye us demurely as he affects to play with a bit of may-weed. Then we see what the small squirrel-like animal really is—a beautiful little creature with longitudinal bars of golden brown and black along his back; the same bars on his head, by the side of his bright, watchful eyes; the red of a robin's breast on his shoulders; his furry tail, jauntily cocked up behind, of a pale brown. We were never tired of watching the tricks and attitudes of this friendly little chap. We knew quite well that his sudden dart from the lee of some stone was only the pretense of fright; before he had gone a yard he would sit up on his haunches and look at you, and stroke his nose with one of his fore-paws. Sometimes he would not even run away a yard, but sit quietly and watchfully to see us pass. We guessed that there were few stone-throwing boys about the Rocky Mountains.

Behold! the valley at last shows one brief symptom of human life; a wagon drawn by a team of oxen comes down the steep road, and the driver thereof is worth looking at, albeit his straw sombrero shades his handsome and sun-tanned face. He is an ornamental person, this bull-whacker; with the cord tassels of his buckskin jacket just appearing from below the great Spanish cloak of blue cloth that is carelessly thrown round his shoulders. Look at his whip, too—the heavy thongs of it intertwined like serpents; he has no need of bowie-knife or pistol in these wilds while he carries about with him that formidable weapon. The oxen pass on down the valley, the dust subsides; again we are left with the silence, and the warm sunlight, and the aromatic odors of the may-weed, and the cunning antics of our ubiquitous friend the chipmunk.

"There," said the lieutenant, looking up to the vast hill-slopes above, where the scattered pines stood black among the blaze of yellow undergrowth, "that is the beginning of our hunting-country. All the secrets are behind that fringe of wood. You must not imagine, Lady Sylvia, that our life at Idaho is to be only this dullness of walking."

"I can assure you I do not feel it dull at all," she said; "but I am sorry that our party is to be broken up—just when it has been completed. Oh, I wish you could stay with us!" she adds, addressing another member of the party, whose hands are full of wild flowers.

"My dear Lady Sylvia," says this person, with her sweetest smile, "what would you all do if you had not us to take back your messages to England? We are to teach Bell's little girl to say Idaho. And when Christmas comes, we shall

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