

cause one of them takes a trip across the Atlantic? Is that your remedy for married misery, your salt-water cure—thirty guineas return, with three pounds a head for the wine bill?’

‘It was only one of them who wished for a separation,’ says this gentle schemer, with a happy smile, ‘and already she knows a little of what separation is like. Don’t I see it? And the further we go, the more varied things we see, I know that her heart is yearning all the more to go back to its home. She speaks now of New York as if it were continents and continents away. It is not a question of time—and of your thirty guineas; it is a question of long days and nights, and solitary thinking, and strange places and strange people, and the thought of the increasing labour of one’s going back. And just fancy when we have gone away across the wide prairies—oh, I know! You will see the change in her face when we turn toward England again!’

Her companion is not at all carried away by this burst of enthusiasm.

‘Perhaps,’ he observes, ‘you will be good enough to say at what point Mr. Balfour is suddenly to appear, like a fairy in a pantomime, or a circus-rider through a hoop.’

‘I never said he was to appear anywhere,’ is the petulant reply.

‘No; and therefore he is all the more likely to appear. At Niagara? Are we to increase the current with a flood of tears?’

‘I tell you I have neither telegraphed nor written to him,’ she says. ‘I don’t know where he is, and I don’t care.’

‘Then we are determined to have our cure complete?’ ‘Lady Sylvia Balfour before three months of moral scolding: the same after the three months: the recipe forwarded for eighteenpence in postage stamps. Apply to Professor Stickleback, on the top of Box Hill, Surrey.’ There is one thing quite certain—that if you are the means of reconciling these two, they will both of them most cordially hate you for the rest of their life.’

‘I can not help that,’ is the quiet answer. ‘One must do what good one can. It isn’t much at the best.’

We were almost the only occupants of the steamer that left the small pier and proceeded to cut its way through the wind-swept lake. And now, sure enough, these people began to talk about Loch Lomond,

and Killarney, and Windermere, and all sorts of other places, just as if they wished to pander to this poor creature’s nostalgia; it was of no use to remind them that the lake was an American lake, with associations of its own, and these far from uninteresting. Very gloomy, however, was the aspect in which Lake Horicon now presented itself to us; for the clouds seemed to come closer down, and the low and wooded hills became of a heavier purple, and darker still became the water that was dashed in hurrying waves on the sandy and rocky shore. Then we got into the narrows, and were near enough the hills to see where the forest had been on fire, the charred stems of the trees appearing in the distance like so many vine stems washed white. The lake opened out again, and on we steamed, the mountains far ahead of us growing of a still deeper purple, as if a fearful storm were impending over them. Suddenly Lady Sylvia uttered a light cry. She had by accident turned. And, lo! behind us there was a great blaze of sunlight falling on the hills and the water—the lake a sheet of dazzling silver, the islands of a brilliant and sunny green, one keen flash of blue visible among the floating clouds. And it was then, too, we saw an eagle slowly sailing over the russet woods—the only living thing visible in this wilderness of water and forest. The sunlight spread. There were glimmerings of silver in the heavy clouds lying over the region of the Adirondacks. A pale glow crossed from time to time our drying decks. When we landed to undertake the short railway journey between Lake George and Lake Champlain, we found ourselves in hot sunshine.

Lake Champlain, too, was fair and sunny and green, and the waters that the steamer churned were as clear as those of Schaffhausen, while the windy shreds of cloud that floated by the Adirondacks were of the lightest and fleeciast. But there were storms brewing somewhere. As the day waned, we had sudden fits of purple darkness, and dashes of rain went sweeping along the lake. In the evening there was a wild smoke of red in the west behind the pallid hills, and this ruddy glare here and there touched the gay-green waters of the lake with a dusky fire, and made the hull of one boat which we could see in the distance gleam like some crimson stone. As