

pealing before he consents. He has a strictly legal right to refuse; further, he can plead his natural concern for his daughter's interests."

"He ought to have more regard for his daughter's honor!" says she, warmly.

"Nonsense! You are talking as if Balfour had gone into a conspiracy to get up a fraudulent settlement. It is no business of hers that the firm failed—"

"I say it is a matter of strict honor and integrity that she should give up this money; and she shall give it up!" says Queen T—, with an indignant look.

"Very well, then; if you are all quite content, there only remains that you should appeal to Lord Willowby."

"Why do you laugh?"

"Lord Willowby thought he would get some money through Balfour marrying his daughter. Now you are asking him to throw away his last chance of ever getting a penny. And you think he will consent."

"His daughter shall make him," said she, confident in the sublime and invincible powers of virtue. Her confidence, in this instance, at least, was not misplaced—so much must be admitted.

CHAPTER L.

A NEW COMPANION.

THE arrival of the new sovereign to take possession of the ceded dominions had been made known to the people at Eagle Creek Ranch; and soon our poor Bell was being made the victim of continual interviews, during which agents, overseers, and lawyers vainly endeavored to get some definite information into her bewildered head. For what was the use of reporting about the last branding of calves, or about the last month's yield of the Belle of St. Joe, or about the probable cost of the new crushing-machines, when the perpetual refrain of her thinking was, "Oh, good people, wouldn't you take the half of it, and let me have my children?"

Fortunately her husband was in no wise bewildered, and it was with not a little curiosity that he went off to inspect the horses and two carriages that had been sent on to Denver for us from the ranch. My lord was pleased to express his approval of these; albeit that one of the vehicles was rather a rude-looking affair. The other, however—doubtless Colonel Sloane's state carriage—was exceedingly smart, and had obviously been polished up for the occasion; while, as regards the horses, these were able to elicit even something more than approval from this accomplished critic. He went back to the hotel highly pleased. He believed he had got some inkling that life at the ranch was not wholly savage. The beautiful polished shafts and the carefully brushed dark-blue cushions had had an effect on his imagination.

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 color returned to her face.

"But what is this, Mr. Von Rosen?" she said, and she endeavored 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 we were about to shock the calm proprieties 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 fervor, "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 can not 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 favor 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 neighbors; but if you were our neighbors, 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 every thing 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,