

element, and who was allowed to order silks, satins, and laces to her heart's content.

Time went on ; Juliet was too busy to be unhappy ; and she was too thorough a woman not to take an interest in the hundred and one details of her wedding preparations. She wrote her orders to tradesmen, her letters to friends, her list of guests—everything, in short, that was necessary to be done—with a sort of dazed, bewildered feeling of unreality running through it all. It was as if she were doing it for some one else, and not for herself. A sort of stagnation was in her heart ; she was not happy, neither was she unhappy ; she was simply very busy, too busy to think ; and, even had she the time, there was throughout a dumb stupor in her mind, as if her feeling, thinking powers were extinct.

This lasted till four days before her wedding, and then an event happened which taught her painfully that her capacity for suffering was as keen as ever.

A box arrived for her. It was no uncommon event, for presents from acquaintances came to her every day now. But when Higgs brought in this particular box, Juliet knew, almost before she looked at the travel-stained direction, that it came from India.

"Take it up to my room, and unfasten it, Higgs," she said calmly to the man, whilst all the time her heart beat painfully.

In a few minutes she went upstairs, and locked her door. The box, with its lid off, was in the middle of the room. She knelt down in front of it ; at the very top lay a note addressed to her in a large well-known handwriting. The envelope, simply directed to "Miss Blair," and without stamp or postmark, seemed to bring him very near to her ; it was as if his hand had only just laid it there. With a miserable hopelessness she opened it and read :—

My dear Juliet,—I send you a few trifles that I have chosen for you with great care, remembering the things you used to admire. Perhaps when this reaches you, you will be Juliet Blair no longer. May every blessing, and every joy that heaven and earth can give, be yours ! In all probability I shall never meet you again, and I dare say I shall not trouble you with many letters ; but I shall often think of you, dear child, oftener perhaps than you would imagine it possible. You have been a little harsh to me, Juliet. I will not blame or reproach you—you were probably full of your new happiness—it was not intentional, I know

—you forgot—but oh, child, you might have written me *one* line—the coldest would have been less cold than your silence.

Yours always,
HUGH FLEMING.

The letter dropped from her fingers.

What did he mean ? how could she have written to him, who had never written to her ? in what had she been harsh to him.

Harsh ! and to *him*, her love, her heart's darling ! how could such a thing have been possible ?

With set white lips, and lines of painful bewilderment on her forehead, she knelt, staring blankly in front of her.

Dimly, vaguely, there dawned upon her the possibility of the existence of some horrible misunderstanding between them ; he had not forgotten her, he still thought of her with affection, and yet he accused her of forgetting, and he reproached her?—for what ?

Was it possible that, in spite of his silence, his coldness, his desertion of her, he loved her even now ?

But of what avail ? was it not too late ? With a low cry of despair she buried her face in her hands. Of what use were all her vague hopes and speculations now—now that it was too late ?

Presently she roused herself to look at the contents of the box ; one after another she drew out richly-chased gold and silver ornaments, gorgeous-coloured cashmeres heavy with embroidery, and rare specimens of old Oriental china. All were lovely and in excellent taste—things, as he had said, that he knew she would like ; yet Juliet turned away from the glittering array with positive disgust ; the spicy odor of the sandal-wood shavings in which they had been packed, and which is so peculiarly Indian, made her turn sick and faint.

Why had he sent them ? why had he written ? Believing herself forgotten and scorned, she had been able to reconcile herself almost cheerfully to the life that was before her. But how was she to bear it, if by some dreadful, incomprehensible mistake, she was to discover that he loved her after all ?

And again she puzzled and pondered, until her head ached with her thoughts, wondering what it was he meant, why he reproached her with silence and with harshness ; to what did he allude ? and she could