

fell on certain objects which brought irresistible evidence to her mind—a diadem sparkling in an open jewel-case, and spread out on chairs a white silk dress, a wedding dress, with orange flowers down the hem of the long train.

Like a gale of wind, and without knocking, a woman rushed into the room, thin, with eager, disappointed eyes, in a black dress and a shady black hat, elegantly simple, severe, yet with just a hint of extravagance. She was almost an old maid, but not quite—a governess as might be guessed, very highly educated and of a good but impoverished family.

‘I have it! We have it, dear child!’ she said in French, showing with childish triumph an unopened letter which she had just brought from the *poste-restante*.

And the little princess in bed replied in the same language without the slightest foreign accent:

‘Not really!’

‘Yes, yes, really. Who should it be from, child, but from him? Is this envelope addressed to *Zaideh Hanum*, or is it not? Well, then. Oh, if you have given the same password to others—then indeed!’

‘You know I have not——’

‘Well, then, you see——’

The girl was sitting up in bed, her eyes now very wide open and a faint flush in her cheeks—like a child who has been very unhappy and to whom such a wonderful toy has been given that for the moment all else is forgotten. The toy was the letter; she turned it about in her hands,