

Dorr. One by one her boarders dropped away like the autumn leaves, all but old Mrs. Clement.

"I believe I'll stay on," she said. "I'm getting too old to move often. Perhaps you'll take winter boarders at reduced rates. Eh?"

"Do you think my terms high?"

"By no means. But when one's purse is low——"

"Yes, I know. Do stay at your own price. I can't spare you."

She had shown such a fondness for the old lady that to refuse her at her own terms would have seemed like turning her mother out of doors; besides, one month would not signify. But she found it hard to make both ends meet, and often went hungry to bed that her mother and Mrs. Clement might enjoy much without there appearing to be "just a pattern." At Christmas, however, came a ray of sunshine for Delia in the shape of a hundred dollar bill from an unknown friend.

"It can't be meant for me," she cried.

"It's directed to Delia Rogerson," said her mother, "and there's nobody else by that name now your aunt Delia is dead."

"We are not sure she's dead," objected Delia.

"Horrors! Don't you know whether your aunt is dead or alive?" asked Mrs. Clement in a shocked tone.

"It isn't our fault. She is rich and lives abroad. I was named after her."

"She ought to do something for you."

"How can she if she's dead? I don't blame her anyway. Her money is her own. Uncle John made it himself and gave it to her."

"But if she should come back to you, having run through it, you'd divide your crust with her, I'll be bound."

"I suppose I should," said Delia.

The winter wore away, and the miracles of spring began in fields and waysides; and Delia's boarders returned with the June roses and dropped away with the falling leaves, and still Mrs. Clement staid on and on. Just now she had been for some weeks in arrears with her reduced board. No money had been forthcoming for some time, and she had grown more feeble daily, needed the luxuries of an invalid and the attentions of a nurse, both of which Delia bestowed upon her without taking thought of the morrow.

"I must hear from my man of business to-morrow, Delia. I'm knee deep in debt to you," she began one night.

"Don't mention it," cried Delia. "I had rather never see a cent of it than have you take it to heart. You're welcome to stay and share pot luck with us, you're such a comfort to mother and me."

"Thank you, my dear. I've grown as fond of you as if you were my own flesh and blood. There, turn down the light, please. Draw the curtain, dear, and put another stick on the fire, please. It grows chilly, doesn't it? You might kiss me just once, if you wouldn't mind. It's a hundred years or so since anyone kissed me."

And the next morning when Delia carried up Mrs. Clement's breakfast, her boarder lay cold and still upon the pillows.

The first shock over, Delia wrote directly to the lawyer of whom she had heard Mrs. Clement speak as having charge of her affairs, begging him to notify that lady's relatives if she had any. In reply Mr. Willis wrote:

"The late Mrs. Clement appears to have no near relatives. Some distant cousins, who, having an abundance of this world's goods, yet served her shabbily when she tested their generosity, as she tried yours, are all that remain of her family. In the meantime I inclose you a copy of her last will and testament to peruse at your leisure."

"What interest does he think I take in Mrs. Clement's will?" thought Delia, but read nevertheless:

"Being of sound mind this 16th day of June, 18—, I, Delia Rogerson Clement, do hereby leave one hundred dollars to each of my cousins; and I bequeath the residue of my property, viz: Thirty thousand dollars invested in the Ingot Mining Co., fifty thousand in United States bonds, twenty thousand in Fortune flannel mills, and my jewels to my beloved niece of my first husband, John Rogerson.

DELIA ROGERSON,
of Croftsborough, Me.

For I was a stranger, and ye took me in; hungry, and ye fed me; sick, and ye ministered unto me."

"Goodness alive!" cried the neighbors, when the facts reached their ears. "What a profitable thing it is to take boarders! Everybody in town will be trying to. Of course Steve Langdon will come home and marry her, if she were forty old maids. You may stick a pin in there."

Delia did not open her house to boarders the next season. She found enough to do in looking after her money and spending it; in replying to letters from indigent people, who seemed to increase alarmingly; in receiving old friends who suddenly found time to remember her existence. And sure enough, among the rest appeared Steve Langdon, and all the village said:

"I told you so."

"It is not my fault that you and I are single yet, Delia," he said.

"And we are too old to think of a change now, Steve."

"Nonsense! It's never too late to mend. I'm not rich, Delia, but I've enough for two and to spare."

"I wouldn't be contented not to drive in my carriage and have servants under me now," laughed Delia.

"Indeed! Then perhaps you have a better match in view? Capt. Seymour asked me, by the way, if I had come to interfere with Squire Jones' interest."

Now, see here, Delia. Have I come all the way from Melbourne on a fool's errand? There I was growing used to my misery and loneliness, when the mail brings me a letter in a strange hand which tells me that my dear love, Delia Rogerson, loves and dreads me still, is poor and alone

and needs me. And the letter is signed by her aunt, Mrs. Clement, who ought to know. I packed my household goods and came——"

"I am glad you did."

"In order that I may congratulate Squire Jones?"

"But I haven't accepted him. In fact—I've refused him—because——"

"Because you will marry your old love, like the lass in the song, Delia." In Croftsborough people are not yet tired of telling how a woman made money taking boarders.

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