

sent him a message involving a possible engagement, and she knew the whole affair would resolve itself into some plausible story, which she would either have to accept or else deny, with the certain addition of a coolness or a quarrel.

So the letter lay until she had put off and away her street costume. Then she took it in her hand and sat down by the open window to read the contents. They were short and very much to the point:

“DENASIA, MY DEAR :—You have ceased to love me and I have ceased to love you. You are miserable and I am miserable. We have made a great mistake, and we must do all we can to correct it. When you read this I shall be on my way to England. I advise you to go back to your parents for a year. You may in that time recover your beauty and your voice. It may be well then to go to Italy and give yourself an opportunity to obtain the education I see now you ought to have had at the first. But until that is practicable we are better apart. You will find fifty dollars in the white gloves lying on the dressing-case. I advise you to take a sailing-vessel; a long voyage will do you good and will be much cheaper. It is what I have done. Farewell. “ROLAND.”

She read every word and then glanced at the cradle. The child moved. With the letter in her hand she soothed it and then sat down. Then she began to analyse the specious sentences and to deny the things asserted. “I have not ceased to love. Nothing had power to make me quite miserable if Roland was kind to me. And I am to go home for a year and get back my beauty and my voice. Go home and shame my good father and mother for his sake. Go home a deserted wife, a failure in everything? No; I will not go home. I will sew, I will wash, I will go to service, I will do anything with my hands I can do; but I will not sing. And I will bring up my boy to work at real work, if it is but to make a horseshoe out of a lump of iron! What a foolish woman I have been! What a silly, vain, loving woman! My heart will break! My heart will break! Alone, alone! Sick, helpless, ignorant, alone!”

She closed her eyes and hid her face, and in that darkness gathered together her soul-strength. But she shed no tears. Pale as death, weak and trembling with suppressed emotion, she went softly about the little room putting things in order—doing she scarcely knew what, yet feeling the necessity to be doing something. Thus she came across the white gloves, and she feared to look in them. Her knowledge of Roland led her to think he would not leave fifty dollars behind him. He would take the credit of the gift and leave her to suppose herself robbed by some intruder.

So she looked suspiciously at the bit of white kid and undid it without hope. The money was there. After all, Roland had some pity for her. The sight of the bills subdued her proud restraint. One great pressure was lifted. No one could now interfere if she sent for a doctor for her sick baby. She could at least buy it the medicine that would ease its sufferings. And so far out was the tide of her happiness that from this reflection alone she drew a kind of consolation.