

pair I had decided on a trip to the Continent, that if possible I might forget her, and here was what seemed to me, a message from her.

I tossed the letter aside and leaning back in my chair allowed myself drift into that realm where dreams and air-castles hold sway. Outside, the wind howled and shrieked, as from a baffled effort, sending little clouds of smoke from the fireplace, while the rain beat steadily against the windows. At intervals a flash of lightning would turn night into day and reveal the old castle, grim and spectre-like.

I felt a delight in the storm. The tumult in my heart seemed to harmonize with this wild, reckless fury, and the higher it arose the more I exulted in the strife of the elements without, and it was with a feeling of regret that I heard the wind dying away.

There was no one near. Even the cat which had slept unmindful of the storm ceased to be company. It was one of those times when solitude is better than a world of sympathy. A sudden gust drove another flurry of smoke into the room, and curling above my head it spread out in fantastic figures against the wall. The storm was only a distant mutter, the blaze gave a last fitful leap, flickered, and died out. Just then the Christmas bells pealed forth their glad tidings of the birth of New Hope for man, and up from the street floated the song of the waits as they sang: "While shepherds watched their flocks by night."

That night I wrote Katharine a letter and was in suspense till an answer came.

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Homeward bound. There was nothing but song and laughter upon the ship all day long; the water never seemed more blue nor sky more clear, but the ship could not sail fast enough for me, and after we last sighted New York it seemed an age before we reached the dock. Then we landed, landed among a crowd of eager watchers, but I saw only one. Later, as we were driving home, Katharine said to me: "How foolish you men are. Did you really believe that I meant all that I told you when we last met?"

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