

**LOVE-LETTERS OF A
WORLDLY WOMAN**

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Love-letters of a worldly woman by W. K. Clifford

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W. K. CLIFFORD

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WORLDLY WOMAN

BY

MRS. W. K. CLIFFORD

AUTHOR OF "MRS. KEITH'S CRIME" ETC.

"Wherefore? Heaven's gift takes earth's abatement"

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PREFACE

THESE be three women who loved the world: not meaning (at least two of them) the pomps and vanities, but the round world itself and the people who belong to it. All had the bandage lifted from their eyes, and as they became wise proved how sad a thing is wisdom. The first tried to comfort herself with dreams; and waits hoping that they will find their way into the waking-hours. The second played an eager, restless game, staking all her happiness on it; and perhaps gained most when she had lost it. The third looked up at sorrow, and, seeing a little way beyond, set out on a journey; but she does not know yet where it will end. And the moral is—but morals are depressing even if they are edifying: let us leave them to the Preacher.

L. C.

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A MODERN CORRESPONDENCE

I

SHE.—ON THE DULNESS OF GOODNESS

IT is a long time since we met—long, that is, as we have been in the habit of measuring time lately—nearly a month. Two months and meeting every day, often twice a day, but never missing once; then a little pause, a flagging, a going-to-town, and two days apart—days that were hard to bear for both of us; then a week, and now a fortnight. At first your letters compensated me; now they do not. Are they colder? I do not know. Not in words, perhaps, but they do not send a rush of joy through me as they did a little while since. They seem to come from your intel-

lect, your good-nature, that would not like me to feel neglected, your affectionate disposition, not from your heart. Are you beginning to turn restive, to think things over, to wonder how it was we found the past so sweet that we were content to spend whole days by the river-side, talking the driftless, dreamy talk of happiness, or silently watching the river as it went on, seeking, perhaps, the place which a little later our feet would know—but not together?

I remember your telling me once—was it with dim foreboding of a future that now, perhaps, draws near?—that women took things more seriously than men. They are the foolish women. I am going to be wise—to remember as long as you remember, and forget as soon. I think I am doing so already—if you are. Why should man, who is strong, always get the best of it, and be forgiven so much: and woman, who is weak, get the worst and be forgiven so little? Why should you go and laugh and be merry, and I stay waiting and listening? But this shall not be, for I am not the woman to sit and weep while the world is wide and the days are long, and there are many to—to love me? I do not know: to come and make a sweet pretence of love; and who shall say how

much or how little heart will be in it? It is delightful to be a woman—yes, even in spite of all things; but to be a weak woman, and good with the goodness invented for her by men who will have none of it themselves; no, thank you. It is a sad mistake to take things seriously, especially for women (which sounds like a quotation from Byron, and is almost), but it is a mistake that shall not be mine. Let us keep to the surface of all things, to the to-day in which we live, forgetting the yesterdays, not dreaming of to-morrows. The froth of the waves, the green meadows, and the happy folk walking across them laughing; the whole world as it faces the sky; beneath are only the deep waters, the black earth, the people sorrowing in their houses, the dead sleeping in their graves. What have we who would laugh in common with these? Nothing.

Dear, your letters have grown too critical, too intellectually admiring. You said in one of them last week that you revered me for my goodness. I do not want reverence; it goes to passion's funeral. And I do not want to be good either, for that means a person knowing all her own possibilities and limits. It is only of the base and mean things that one should know one's self utter-