

Eli took it reluctantly, and read it aloud as she desired:—

“MY DEAR AUNT JANET,—This is to thank you for all the kindness you have shown me, and to say I can never come back again. Henry Jones has asked me to be his wife, and we are to be married at once, so I cannot come back to you. I am very sorry for your sake, dear aunt, for I know you like to have me with you. But Henry says you must come and stay with us as long as you can when we are settled down. Please explain to Cousin Eli why I can't come back. I suppose he will be very glad.

“Your loving godchild,  
“RUTH.”

“She is never coming back,” quavered the old aunt,—“never, never.”

“You will get strong and go and see her,” said Eli.

She looked wistfully at him, and repeated his words after him, “I shall get strong and go and see her. No, Eli, never again, never again.”

She was silent then, and Eli seeing the doctor in the garden, went down to meet him.

“A few hours,—her life is not worth more,” was the verdict. The doctor went away; he could do naught.

Eli went back to his aunt, and stayed by her side until it was time for his men to be dismissed. He went to the fields then, and returned in about an hour; and went straight to his aunt's room.

She was asleep. The lattice window was wide open; nodding roses bent their heads into the room, as the wind gently swayed them back and forth; and the fragrant petals fell on the polished floor. The sun was setting like a golden ball,—all the room was bright with its glory.

Aunt Janet awoke, and beckoned Eli to her side.

“You have been very good to me,” she said. She put her feeble old hands upon his face, and stroked it fondly.

“When I was young,” she began, as an old story recurred to her wandering mind—“what was it? I forget,—I am getting old, Eli.”

“Ay, surely. Eli laid her tenderly back on the pillow, and closed her eyes and sat beside her, while the bright gleams rested on her face. Then he called the attendants and went away to the fields.

His last near relative was *dead*.

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## PART SECOND.

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Five years passed away. Eli was a rich man. He bought more land, valuable land, and near to a manufacturing town. He was a clever farmer, and everything throve well under his care.

It was September—a glorious harvest time. Eli strode about his fields, pressing every man he could get into his service, paying freely for extraneous help, eager to harvest his splendid grain. As he entered one field where the reapers were busy cutting down the corn, and where some women helped bind it into sheaves, a man called out,

“There's a woman gleaning over there.”

“I'll go and turn her out,” said Eli, and he walked rapidly towards her. Eli wondered at her temerity at stopping to glean as he approached, but she worked on busily, picking up the scattered ears; and a little boy ran beside her—a child of some three years of age. They were both dressed very poorly, though with exquisite cleanliness and neatness. The woman was very thin, and ate the grains of ripened corn with apparent eagerness.

“Hollo,” cried Eli, as he came near, “What business have you gleaning here, while the men are reaping? Don't you know it is against the rules?”

She had not heard him coming. At his speech she gave a low cry; then dropped the sheaf of wheat, and stood trembling before him.