

"For shame, Daisy!" exclaimed Rose. "This is an awful big house, and we'll have such fun in it. Do be still."

"But she wants to go back home," exclaimed the old nurse, in extenuation of her pet's conduct. "She says the gentleman don't love her."

"Of course he does," declared Rose, decidedly. "Don't you, guardy? He's going to love us awfully. Come, see if he isn't, Daisy."

Thus urged Daisy's sobs lessened and she slid down from her nurse's lap and allowed her sister to drag her toward Jonas, who looked askance at her tear-drenched face and splashed garments, wondering how he was to prove to this watery damsel the depth of his affection for her. But the Misses Hetherington took the matter out of his hands by Rose putting her arms about his neck and kissing him warmly, but decorously, while Daisy climbed upon his knee and smeared his face with her wet one, inquiring:

"Have you got any new playthings for us?"

"No; but I'll get you something very nice," he answered, hurriedly, glad to seize upon this mode of pacification, and looking thoroughly uncomfortable in his unwonted position. "Something very nice," he repeated, almost coaxingly. "And now, hadn't you better go with Mrs. Wilson and see what comfortable rooms she can find you, and what a nice supper? I think she has—ah—jam—and marmalade—and cake—or something nice," feeling, from his ignorance of what was beguiling to the youthful appetite, forced to fall back upon the "something nice."

"Oh, yes," said Daisy, beginning to beam, and tugging at Rose's hand, "I'm hungry."

"Very well. Mrs. Wilson, you will see that the—ah—the Misses Hetherington—are provided with every comfort."

And assuming something of his usual unbending dignity, Jonas Everard bowed the party out of his study, and prepared to shut them out as well. But the nurse lingered, thrust one hand into a capacious pocket, and dragged forth a bulky envelope.

"There! Master said as how I was to give you that, and to tell you that he'd sent his children as legacies to you, and trusted as how you'd be as kind to them as you was once to him," and having delivered her message in a voice broken with tears the faithful woman followed her charges, who were romping through the wide hall in a manner that was awful beyond expression to good Mrs. Wilson.

There was a suspicion of moisture in Jonas Everard's eyes as he closed the door and seated himself at his desk with Owen's letter in his hand. He had loved the boy years ago, when they had been in the same classes at Yale, and he had been Owen's one com-

forter and ally when the small, affectionate, but passionate lad had suffered the pangs of homesickness and aroused the hostility of all his other schoolmates by his hot temper and pride. Then had come separation when they went out into the world, and they had never met since, though a few letters passed between them at intervals of years.

Jonas knew that Owen had not married until he was 35, but was utterly ignorant of his friend's domestic life; while Hetherington knew that Jonas had never married at all, but lived a lonely, secluded, studious life in the old family homestead, but was ignorant of that passage in his friend's life which had transformed him into a recluse and woman-hater.

It was with a heart growing momentarily more tender and eyes more moist that Jonas Everard read how Hetherington dying—the last of his race—bequeathed to the friend who had always held the old, warm place in his affections his two little daughters and the charge of their property.

"You may find them troublesome charges," he wrote, "but for my sake keep them, Everard, the poor little creatures, by a wretched fate made motherless, and now by this incurable disease so soon to be robbed of their only relative. They are prepared to love you, old friend, for I tell them about you daily, and you will find them deeply affectionate."

By the time he came to the end of the letter some real tears dropped from Jonas Everard's eyes, and he was so metamorphosed that he wished he had been more genial to the Misses Hetherington—he even thought he might have offered to kiss them.

"Poor things! And they are Owen's children!" he sighed reproachfully. "Well, they must have some new playthings. That'll make it all right."

He summoned Thomas and gave an order which caused that worthy personage to entertain doubts as to his master's sanity. The toy-shops in the village were to be rifled of their choicest treasures that night, regardless of expense.

"Then the young ladies are to stay here?" ventured Thomas, curiosity for once in his life getting the best of his decorum.

"Of course they are to stay here," snapped Mr. Everard.

Next he summoned Mrs. Wilson and informed her that two or three of the largest and sunniest rooms must be prepared expressly for the use of the Misses Hetherington and their nurse, who were, for the present at least, to reside at the homestead, and that Martha, the nurse, would advise her as to the habits and needs of the children.

"And does he think I'm to be advised by an ignorant nurse-woman, and to stay here and see her hugging and kissing those children, and to have the little impudent minxes racing all over the house?" queried good