

away into a doze, from which he was aroused by a thunder-crash, which shook the massive building to its foundation, and wrung from the watch-dog, Tiger, who kept guard without, a deafening yell.

But to neither of these sounds did the Judge pay the least attention, for, mingled with them, and continuing after both had died away, was that same infant wail, tuned now to a higher, shriller note, as if the little creature were suffering from fear or bodily pain.

"Might as well try to sleep in Bedlam!" exclaimed the exasperated Judge, stepping from his bed a second time, and commencing to dress himself, while his nervousness and irritability increased in proportion as the cries grew louder and more alarming.

Striking a light and frowning wrathfully at the sour, tired-looking visage reflected by the mirror, he descended the stairs and entered the kitchen, where everything was in perfect order, even to the kindlings laid upon the hearth for the morning fire. The cries, too, were fainter there and could scarcely be heard at all, but as he retraced his steps and came again into the lower hall, he heard them distinctly, and also Tiger's howl. Guided by the sound, he kept on his way until he reached the front door, when a thought flashed upon him which rendered him for an instant powerless to act. What if that Maine woman, tired of waiting for an answer to her letter, had taken some other way of accomplishing her purpose? What if he should find a baby on his steps! "But I sha'n't," he said decidedly; "I won't, and if I do, I'll kick it into the street, or something," and emboldened by this resolution he unlocked the door, and shading the lamp with his hand, peered cautiously out into the darkness.

With a cry of delight Tiger sprang forward, nearly upsetting his master, who staggered back a pace or two, and then, recovering himself, advanced again toward the open door.

"There's nothing here," he said, thrusting his head out into the rain, which was dropping fast through the thick vine leaves which overhung the lattice of the portico.

As if to disprove this assertion, the heavens for an instant blazed with light, and showed him where a small white object lay in a willow basket beneath the seat built on either side of the door. He knew it was not Finn, for the tiny fingers which grasped the basket edge were white and pure as wax, while the little dimples about the joints involuntarily carried him back to a time when just such a baby hand as this had patted his bearded cheek or pulled his long black hair.

Perhaps it was the remembrance of that hand, now cold in death, which prompted him to a nearer survey of the contents of the basket, and setting down his lamp, he stooped to draw it forth, while Tiger stood by trembling with joy that his vigils were ended, and that human aid had come at last to the helpless creature he had guarded with the faithfulness peculiar to his race.

It was a fair, round face which met the Judge's view as he removed the flannel blanket, and the bright, pretty eyes which looked up into his were full of tears. But the Judge hardened his heart, and though he did not kick the baby into the rain, he felt strongly tempted so to do, and glancing toward the cornfield not far away, where he fancied the mother might be watching the result, he screamed:

"Come here, you madame, and take the brat away, for I sha'n't touch it, you may depend upon that."

Having thus relieved his mind, he was about to re-enter the house, when, as if divining his intention, Tiger planted his huge form in the doorway and effectually kept him back.

"Be quiet, Tiger, be quiet," said the Judge, stroking his shaggy mane; but Tiger refused to move, until at last, as if seized by a sudden instinct, he darted toward the basket, which he took in his mouth, and carried into the hall.

"It sha'n't be said a brute is more humane than myself," thought the Judge, and leaving the dog and the baby together, he stalked across the yard, and pounding on Rachel's door, bade her come to the house at once.

But a few moments elapsed ere Rachel stood in the hall, her eyes protruding like harvest apples when she saw the basket and the baby it contained. The twelve young Van Brunts sleeping in their three trundle-beds, had enlarged her motherly heart, just as the Judge's lonely condition had shrivelled his, and, kneeling down, she took the wee thing in her arms, called it a "little honey," and then, woman-like, examined its dress, which was of the finest material, and trimmed with costly lace.

"It's none of your low-flung truck," she said. "The edgin' on its slip cost a heap, and its petticoats is all worked with floss."

"Petticoats be hanged!" roared the Judge. "Who cares for worked petticoats? The question is, what are we to do with it?"

"Do with it!" repeated Rachel, hugging it closer to her bosom. "Keep it, in course, 'Pears like it seems mighty nigh to me," and she gave it another squeeze, this time uttering a faint outcry, for a sharp point of