

and half-imbecile grandmother were living.

Richard, too, returned to college, and from that time not a word had passed between the father and the son concerning the offending Hetty until now, when Richard wrote that she was dead, together with her grandmother—that news of her illness had been forwarded to him, and immediately after leaving college, in July, he had hastened to New Hampshire, and stayed by her until she died.

"You can curse me for it if you choose," he said, "but it will not make the matter better. I loved Hetty Kirby while living, I love her memory now that she is dead; and in that little grave beneath the hill I have buried my heart forever."

The letter closed by saying that Richard would possibly be home that night, and he asked that the carriage might be in waiting at the depot.

The news of Hetty's death kept the judge silent for a moment, while his heart gave one great throb as he thought of the fair-haired, blue-eyed girl, who had so often ministered to his comfort.

"Poor thing, she's in heaven, I'm sure," he said; "and if I was ever harsh to her, it's too late to help it now. I always liked her well enough, but I did not like her making love to Richard. He'll get over it, too, even if he does talk about his heart being buried in her grave. Stuff and nonsense! Just as if a boy of twenty knows where his heart is. Needn't tell me. He'll come to his senses after he's been home a spell, and that reminds me that I must send the carriage for him. Here Ruth," he continued, as he saw a servant passing in the hall, "tell Joe not to put out the horses, or if he has, to harness up again. Richard is coming home, and he must meet him at the station."

Ruth departed with the message and the Judge again took up the letter in which a child had been offered for his adoption. Very closely he scrutinized the handwriting, but it was not a familiar one to him. He had never seen it before, and, tearing the paper in pieces, he scattered them upon the floor.

The storm by this time had partially subsided, and he heard the carriage wheels grinding into the gravel as Joe drove from the house. Half an hour went by, and then the carriage returned again; but Richard was not in it, and the father sat down alone to the supper kept in waiting for his son. It was a peculiarity of the Judge to retire precisely at nine o'clock; neither friend nor foe could keep him up beyond that hour, he said; and on this evening, as on all others,

the lights disappeared from his room just as the nine o'clock bell was heard in the distance. But the Judge was nervous to-night. The thunder which at intervals continued to roar, made him restless, and ten o'clock found him even more wakeful than he had been an hour before.

"What the plague ails me?" he exclaimed, tossing uneasily from side to side, "and what the dence can that be? Rachel's baby as I live! What is she doing with it here? If there's anything I detest, it is a baby's squall. Just hear that, will you?" and raising himself upon his elbow he listened intently to what was indisputably an infant wail, rising even above the storm, for it had commenced raining again, and the thunder at times was fearfully loud.

"Screech away," said the Judge, as a cry, sharper and more prolonged, fell upon his ear; "screech away till you split your throat; but I'll know why a Christian man, who hates children, must be driven distracted in his own house," and stepping into the hall, he called out at the top of his voice, "Ho, Rachel!" but no Rachel made her appearance; and a little further investigation sufficed to show that she had retired to the cottage in the back yard, which, in accordance with a Southern custom, the Judge, who was a Virginian, had built for herself and her husband. Rachel was also a native of Virginia, but for many years she had lived at Beechwood, where she was now the presiding genius—and the one servant whom the Judge trusted above all others. But she had one great fault, at which her master chafed terribly; she had nearly as many children as the fabled woman who lived in a shoe. Indeed there seemed to be no end to the little darkies who daily sunned themselves upon the velvety sward in front of their cabin door, and were nightly stowed away in three wide trundle-beds, which Rachel brought forth from unheard-of hiding-places, and made up near her own. If there was one thing in the world more than another which the Judge professed to hate, it was children, and when Rachel innocently asked him to name her *twelfth*, he answered wrathfully:

"A dozen—the old Harry!—call it FINIS—and let it be so—do you hear?"

"Yes, marster," was the submissive answer, and so Finis, or *Finn*, for short, was the name given to the child, which the Judge fancied was so disturbing him, as, leaning over the banister, he called to Rachel, "to stop that noise, and carry Finn back where he belonged."

"She has carried him back, I do believe," he said to himself, as he heard how still it was below, and retiring to his room, he tried to sleep, and succeeding so far as to fall