

Fred. It has been twelve years since I left Chicago and my family. Yes, that's a long time. But I'll say this much, I did not leave my family without means. I gave them all I had. It was enough, too. I used to work at handling ores in a reducer and refinery. Since I left Chicago I've been all through this Western country. I like it, and I'll come back."

"But your children!" I exclaimed.

He looked at me straight and steadily, and said, as if he had asked of himself the implied question and answered it many times: "Maybe they'll ask me to stay, and think they want me there; but it wouldn't do. They'll have their affairs and I'll have mine. No, I'll come back here."

And the old man kept his word, early in March he returned. We knew he meant to stay. There was in his face a look of unalterable decision. Whatever the cause of his long absence and of this final separation from his family, evidently the grievance was irreparable. Immediately he set about gathering supplies to take out to the mines. He went about his work cheerfully, even eagerly; but when all was ready, the last box packed and nailed, he lingered and waited another day, and yet another, and another. What was he waiting for? For the snow to creep a little farther up the mountain side? For buds to swell? For the larks to take up their full spring carol? Perhaps.

It was the last evening he was with us. Mother and I sat at a table reading, and he mused before the fire-place.

"Do you want to see something pretty?" he said, turning and plucking me by the sleeve. He drew from his pocket a photograph and gave it into my hands. It was the picture of a little girl in a white pinafore, a miniature of sweet, trustful childhood. "That's my little granddaughter," he explained

"Isn't she pretty?"

"A regular rose-flower."

"I wonder that you could leave her," I ventured.

"Sure enough, I did come pretty near staying, in spite of all. The little thing seemed to take such a notion to me. She'd sit on my knee by the hour, and put her little arms around me. But the child heart—that's it—she wouldn't always keep that.