



CHAPTER XVI.

BUT, after all, things were not pushed through quite so rapidly as was at first contemplated, and before the farewells were said and the travellers speeded across the ocean to their new home, the dozen met once again beneath the dear old roof of home, to spend the happy Christmas-tide there together.

No one could regret that such was the case. Despite the brightness of the future opening out for each, the tie of brotherhood was too strong for the wrench of parting to be anything but severe, and when small delays had arisen, and Giles had declared it would be far better for Dax not to reach Australia till after the heat of its summer season had passed, no one regretted the decision; and when at Christmas time the house was filled once more to overflowing—for there were the new sisters and the new brother to be accommodated in that elastic mansion now—the whole party