

He interrupted her in a way that made further speech not only impossible but quite unnecessary.

"Martha, I tell you it is *you* that makes me love this country. When I thought of the sunlit prairie it was your dear eyes that made it glorious. Your voice is sweeter than the meadowlark's song at sunrise. You are the soul of this country for me — you stand for it all. You are the sunshine, the birdsong, the bracing air, the broad outlook, the miles of golden wheat. Now, tell me, dear, for you haven't told me yet, are you glad to see me back?"

"But what would your mother say?" Martha asked, evading his question. "Arthur, think of the people at home."

He opened his pocket-book and took out a leather case. Springing the lid, he handed it to her, saying: "My mother knows all about you, and she sends you this."

Martha took out the beautiful necklace of pearls and read the tender little note, inside the case. Her eyes filled with happy tears, and looking up into Arthur's smiling face, her last doubt vanished.

A few hours later, when the old clock on the wall, slowly struck the midnight hour, telling them that another Christmas morning had come, they listened to it, hand in hand without a spoken word, but in their hearts was the echo of all the Christmas bells that were ringing around the world.