

eve came, a beautiful moonlight, sparkling night, with the merry jingle of sleighbells, in the air, but no letter had yet come.

Mr. and Mrs. Perkins and Bud had driven in to Millford to attend the concert given by the Sunday-school, but Martha stayed at home. When they were gone, and she sat alone in the quiet house, a great restlessness seized her. She tried to read and then to sew, but her mind, in spite of her, would go back to happier days. It was not often that Martha allowed herself to indulge in self-pity; but to-night, as she looked squarely into the future and saw it stretching away before her, barren and gray, it seemed hard to keep back the tears. It was not like Martha to give way to her emotions; perhaps it was the Christmas *feel* in the air that gripped her heart with new tenderness.

She finished making the pudding for the Christmas dinner, and put the last coat of icing on the Christmas cake, and then forced herself to dress another doll for one of the neighbour's children. Sometimes the tears dimmed her eyes, but she wiped them away bravely.

Suddenly a loud knock sounded on the door. Martha sprang up in some confusion, and hastily tried to hide the traces of her tears, but before she was ready to open the door it opened from without and Arthur stood smiling before her.

"Oh, Arthur!" she cried, her face glowing with the love she could not hide. "I was just thinking that you had stopped writing to me."

"Well, I have, too," he laughed; "letters are not