

THE WATCH-MEETING

Aunt Jane dropped her knitting and rested her head against the patchwork cover of the high-backed chair. Like a great wall of shelter and defense, we felt around us the deep stillness of a midwinter night in the country. The last traveler had gone his homeward way over the pike hours ago, and in the quiet room we could hear now and then those faint noises made by shrinking timbers, as if the old house groaned in the icy clutch of the December cold, and, louder and clearer than by day, the voice of the clock ticking away the last hours of the old year.

What is there in the flight of years to sadden the heart? Our little times and seasons are but fragments of eternity, and eternity is ours. The sunset on which we gaze with melancholy eyes is a sunrise on the other side of the world, and the vanishing days can take from us nothing that may not be restored by some day yet unborn. Eternity! Immortality! If mortal mind could but fathom the depth of these ideas, they would be as wells of peace in which all trouble, all regret, would be forever drowned. But as Aunt Jane and I sat alone by her deserted hearth we saw the shadows of the night deepening while the fire burned low, and in our hearts we felt another and a darker