

"The people all think I'm a rich man and that I keep a lot of it with me," slowly repeated the old man, as he settled down into his chair again.

Then there was silence for a few moments, nothing but the draft in the stove and the quiet puffs from the pipes breaking the stillness as Doc Lampard reviewed his professional life—no books, no accounts, hardly ever a dun.

"They all love you, Doc," began James Walker again, "and they don't like to see you living all alone like this."

"They all love me!" sighed the old doctor in reply, and then he relapsed into silence again, gazing at the little coals and sparks dropping, dropping, dropping.

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It was a merry and joyous party gathered in the parlor of the leading hotel of the stage town of Twillingate village. There were Edith and her husband and three sweet girls of six, eight and ten years. Will was there, and David.

"Won't grand-dad have a jolly surprise party?" confidently whispered the eldest girl to her Uncle John.

"We'll all have a jolly party," exclaimed John, with an extra fond hug.

"I've got a surprise party all my own, Edith," broke in Will. "I'm going to be married in January to the sweetest girl in all the West," and before Edith could embrace and kiss her good wishes, David broke in with: "No, you haven't got the sweetest girl—I've got her. Ours is in February."

"Hurrah!" cried John's two boys, "two more aunties," while their mother gently reproved them for their boisterous hilarity.

"Here are the sleighs!" called Edith's husband, poking his head in at the parlor door. He had made arrangements to get away at the last minute after Edith had got the wire the day before from John that they were all on their way east to spend Christmas with grand-dad, and as grand-dad had not answered her letter or come himself in response to her invitation, they had taken the seven o'clock morning express, first despatching a message to him apprising him of their visit. But the telegram had arrived too late for the stage, and there was no one to take it out to Old Doc.

"Now, have we got everything: turkey, chickens, cake, pudding, nuts, candy, oranges, bananas, raisins, grapes, bread, butter, eggs, tea, sugar, salt, pepper, because you know dad has been 'baching' it these three months and will not have much in the way