

can I do? Give me something else to do," and as there really did not appear to be anything else for him to do, we had to let him go. He promised Annie to come back within five years, whether successful or not, and as a parting commission intrusted her to the joint care of Will and myself until he came. I never was blessed with the faculty of making "intimates" as some fellows are, and, after Charlie went West, I soon discovered what a loss the want of it was. The remainder of my college life was remarkable for nothing but general loneliness and slowness.

I found a great many changes here when I came home. Among the rest old Mr. Somers had died, leaving Annie and her mother with nothing but the house they occupied. So Annie had to teach. Poor Annie, what a patient face hers was in those days! I used to wish when I saw her trudging to school every morning that Charlie would find a nugget as large as his head and come home a nabob to stop this teaching. So I waited to see what the next letter would say of his luck, intending to tell him how Annie was left, and advise him to come home unless his prospects there were uncommonly good. I knew Annie would never complain herself; she was just that sort of girl. Hitherto, the California letters had been very hopeful; and if not remarkably lucky, still he was doing as well as the rest, and "would be home a rich man within the five years," so he said. But poor Annie was looking so pale and worn that I determined to propose a shorter sojourn when next I wrote. Not hearing from him at the usual time I wrote again, but received no reply to either of my letters. I confess I was a little uneasy, for while I was at college he had been a very regular correspondent. Then he dropped writing to Will, and some time after Annie told me she had heard nothing for six weeks past the usual time. Of course, I wrote to him immediately, and Will did the same, but we received no answer; in fact, we never heard from him again. And Annie trudged back and forth to school, growing paler, thinner, and more despairing, as the days, weeks, and even months passed over with no tidings

of the missing Charlie; for I had written to others of the party, and tried to inspire Annie with the hope that in time we would hear of him in one way or another.

"It's nouse, Phil," she would say, "all hope seems to have left me. He has been silent too long. I know he has died in some dreadful place alone, or he would at least have left a message."

I ascribed that dismal idea to Annie's weak nerves, for at this time she was nursing a sick mother out of school hours. And yet, I sometimes thought myself, he must be dead; but Will Colfax would never listen to it. "To drop writing to one after another doesn't look much like death," he said. It struck me that it looked like something a good deal worse than that, at least as far as Annie was concerned. That was the first hard thought I ever had of Charlie, and I was provoked with Will for putting it into my head.

Then Annie's mother died. The poor girl was forced to give up teaching for a time. My mother and sisters took her home to nurse her, for she did not look as if she would live a month. Will Colfax begged her to give up her situation entirely, and make her home with his mother; but it was in vain. Nothing could alter her determination to teach as long as she was able. Anything was better than idleness—anything to keep her from thinking, she said. But she never was able. Even when she grew better a walk from the house to the gate seemed to wear her out completely, and she never went up-stairs without sitting down once or twice to rest. Of course, everything was tried; but the one thing that would have saved her we had not to give. And yet we never seemed to think Annie would die; we all had the idea that something would happen to bring back Charlie to us, and instead of a dying girl, the light-hearted Annie of old. This hope was partly strengthened by the reply I got from one of the fellows I had written to. He said Charlie's luck when last he heard of him was something wonderful,—at that time he was in good health and doing splendidly. But then, that was almost a year before. However, I wrote to