

RECOLLECTIONS OF A SEWING-MACHINE.

BY ALICIA, AUTHORESS OF "THE CRUCIBLE," "WILLING HEARTS AND WILLING HANDS," &c.

(Continued.)

CHAPTER V.

Christmas morning dawned clear and cold, and as the sun shone out nature sparkled in her snowy robe, like some princess arrayed in diamond bedecked garments.

He was a strange fellow, this new master of mine, and yet I liked him. He came out of his room shouting "A merry Christmas!" to his canary, and when his slight breakfast was over gave Dickey his, and a lump of white sugar as a Christmas treat; then he busied himself, arranging his books, "making it look like Christmas," as he explained to Dick, all the while whistling softly, "Hark! the herald angels sing," the bird accompanying with his sweetest trills.

Mr. Reginald seemed that morning to have made his toilet a little more elaborate than I had yet seen it, and when he drew on his gloves, put a prayer-book in his pocket and went off, I concluded he had gone to church.

About one he returned and ate his lonely and not very tempting Christmas dinner. He had a happy look, and as he stood leaning against the mantle-piece, he sang, soft and low, a little song I have never forgotten. I never saw it set to music, and I don't think Reginald Leigh ever did.

"She came to the village church,
And sat by a pillar alone;
And once, but once, she lifted her eyes,
And suddenly, sweetly, strangely blushed,
To find they were met by my own;
And suddenly, sweetly my heart beat stronger
And thicker, until I heard no longer
The snowy-banded dilettante,
Delicate-handed priest intone!"

He had not forgotten *her* then, if he had forgotten me; but fears on that score were

soon ended. A knock came at the door, and he came to me, and taking me up said, softly:

"Now, little machine, be a comfort to your mistress; save her many a weary hour, many a sad headache, if you can."

Then addressing me, he delivered me into the hands of a boy who stood waiting, and bade him leave me for Miss Merton, at 82 William street.

The journey was a long and wearisome one, and I thought if Miss Merton lived at the West end, Reginald Leigh's abode must surely be at the extreme East; but on looking about me, as my bearer entered a garden gate, I concluded the two houses must be at the north and south poles, for the house we were approaching had anything but an aristocratic air.

It was a low rough-cast cottage, with a wide verandah surrounding it, and in front a little garden enclosed by an unpretentious white wooden fence; the cold glittering snow covered grass and flower, which might make the little cottage outwardly pretty in summer days, and yet the home was not without an appearance of comfort; some bright-hued flowers bloomed in pots on the low broad window seats, and through the window the glow of firelight shone warm and bright. All this I saw as I was being borne from the gate to the house, where the vibrations of a loud-toned knocker soon brought some one to the door. It was a dark-eyed girl, very young and very pretty, who answered the summons; she looked down doubtfully at the rosy-cheeked boy, as he held me up to her.

"For Miss Merton," he said, and before the young lady had time to make any enquiries he was off, and the sound of his quick footsteps had died away ere the