



RIPON CATHEDRAL. (Page 273.)

"To-morrow! Does not de Englisher remember de Christ day, den?"

"But come to de fire and make warm," put in the Mutterchen, seeing how pale and sad the young man looked.

"And I had forgotten that it would be Christmas Day to-morrow!" Laramoor sank down into the nearest chair and almost groaned aloud.

"Are you then ill, sir?" asked the tender hearted Louise, coming timidly to the stranger's side.

"No, little one, not ill, but I have just received bad news from home—from England. I, too, had a little sister, as fair-haired as you; but she is dead, they write me. I shall never again hear her merry voice."

"His little sister is dead," translated Moritz into German, that the others might better understand. Then they gathered around with sympathy in their faces, and the good Frau brought him a cup of steaming coffee. The little ones stood quietly by while he drank it, even little Hans stopping his play for a while.

Before long Laramoor found himself listening to the account of their voyage from Germany in the early springtime, and how at first all seemed strange to them. Moritz told of their last Christmas, spent with the dear Grandmother Bucher in Dresden, in a large house with beautiful rooms; how the father had made for them, to place beside the Christmas tree, a representation of the manger at Bethlehem, with figures of the shepherd and the sheep upon the plains, and over all a blue covering spangled with stars of silver. Moritz could talk both English and German well, so he spoke often for the others, but presently Louise said, softly:

"The sweetest of all is the carol, '*Christ ist geboren*,' which we sang together as we stood around the tree."

The heart of the young Englishman went out to these kind people in their humble, happy home.

"De Christ-child is everywhere, my Louise," said the Mutterchen; then the little maiden whispered something to her mother, who nodded brightly.

"Sir," said Louise, "we will be glad to have you come to the church to-morrow to hear the children's carols; Moritz, and Paul, and I will sing with the rest. Will you not come?"

Laramoor had not the heart to refuse the eager request; perhaps, too, the angel voice of his own little sister might be even now joining in the songs of Paradise. So Christmas Day found him at the services of the village church, fragrant with the odor of evergreens. How the familiar service, the Common Prayer, carried him back home in his thoughts. Almost he could hear his loved ones repeating the words with him. At the children's service, too, he found himself joining in the carols, many of them well known to him.

"Dear little one," he said to Louise at parting, "it has been sweet to hear you sing. A Merry Christmas to you all!"

And though Santa Claus did not stop long at the Bucher house on the hill that year, he found it bright with the brightness that fills all loving hearts; and the holly berries and running pine with which the children adorned the sitting room gave the place a festive air.

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Again it is Christmas Eve, just one year later; and within Franz Bucher's home are signs of unusual excitement. The children, dressed in holiday attire, are gathered round the sitting-room fire; one corner of the room is curtained off, and here is concealed the wonderful cause of their happiness. A Christmas tree of their very own, and as much as possible like the one they remembered in Germany.

"Was it not kind in the Englisher to think of us, Moritz, now that he is so far away?" said Louise.

"Yes, I hope some day he will come back, or may be I will go to the great city, too, and see him."

Mr. Laramoor was in New York, in a large business house with which his uncle in Liverpool was connected; but in his prosperity he did not forget the friends of his days of adversity. He had sent the Mutterchen a cheque "to help Santa Claus give the children a Christmas tree," and asked that it be as much like the one they told him of as they could make it. So the father and mother had prepared all things for it, and invited some other children to share the feast with them. Soon the curtain was drawn and the beautiful tree was before them. The Mutterchen held up little Bruno that he might better see it. Then they stood