

CHAPTER II

CHRISTIE'S IMPORTANT CHARGE

THE dismal lodging-house had a charm for little Christie now. Night after night he returned there, that he might hear his mother's tune. The landlady began to look upon him as one of her regular household. She sometimes gave him a crust of bread, for she noticed his hungry face each night, as he came to the large lodging-room to sleep.

And every night old Treffy played, and Christie crept upstairs to listen.

One night, however, as he was kneeling at the attic door, the music suddenly ceased, and Christie heard a dull, heavy sound, as if something had fallen on the floor. He waited a minute, but all was quite still; so he cautiously lifted the latch and peeped into the room. There was only a dim light in the attic, for the fire was nearly out, and old Treffy had no candle. But the moonlight, streaming in at the window, showed Christie the form of the old man stretched on the ground, and his poor old barrel-organ laid beside him. Christie crept to his side, and took hold of his hand. It was deadly cold, and Christie thought he was dead. He was just going to call the landlady, when the old man moved, and in a trembling voice asked: