

## THE LITTLE MELODEON.

It was a scene of confusion in the formerly orderly hospitable old mansion. Furniture brought into bare parlors and ranged for marking, carpets rolled up at the sides, men and servants running hither and thither.

Amidst it all was a woman, not young, delicate-looking and careworn, busily engaged in washing the windows and cleaning the elegant woodwork of the best parlor, which alone was left empty.

In spite of her humble occupation, there was an air of refinement about her at variance with it, and her eyes, bright and keen, took in all that was passing.

Just now a look of tender sympathy came into them, as a gentleman, dressed in deep mourning, entered the adjoining room and sank listlessly, with a deep sigh upon one of the lounges.

"Poor young man!" she said softly to herself, and then returned with renewed energy to her work.

At this moment a man came down the big stairway carrying in his arms a little table, it seemed at first, but which proved to be a small musical instrument of a make now out of date.

He set it down near his master, saying, "What price shall be put upon this, sir? It seems to be a queer, old-fashioned sort of a thing!"

The gentleman started as if struck; "What price? No price at all John. That was the first instrument your poor lady ever touched. I cannot sell it; I will give it to some one who would care for it as a memento of Clara, or—"

Here his words were arrested by the appearance of Mrs. Burt at the door, hersubling-brush and towels still in her hands. "Oh, if you please, sir, would you let me have it for my poor lame little lad? He is that crazy for music! and he would care for it and pet it, sir, and keep it safe till you might want it again yourself, sir, some time to come."

"And you are sure he would prefer this to anything else, Mrs. Burt, are you?" said Mr. Charlton. "He might get tired of an old worn-out organ. Perhaps some tools, something he could work with, as boys love to, would amuse him better. He would be quite welcome."

"Oh, indeed, sir, it may seem foolish, but ever since he was so high he has been singing and drumming and trying to makesome sort of a thing to play on. The child would be wild with joy to have a real, nice music-box like that to use."

"But may be, sir," stepping modestly back into her own place of work, "you are wanting to take it so some one who would care for it for your dear lady's sake."

"No, Mrs. Burt," said the young man, sighing again. "After all, I don't believe there is any one who would value it as you and your little boy would. It would be put away and never opened. You shall have it," he added cordially. "John shall take it over to-morrow."

"If I could be allowed to work and pay for the use of it, sir," said Mrs. Burt, joyfully.

"No Mrs. Burt; as I said, I do not want to sell it. Your Jamie shall keep it for me, and perhaps, as you suggested, some day when my Lily is grown, I may claim it for her. She might love it for the mother's sake."

Mrs. Burt went home with a glad heart that night, and she and Jamie had a jubilee over the coming joy. Never was a "Chickering Grand" looked forward to with more eager anticipation, as the mother told her sick child of the little bit of an organ, so small one man could bring it down the stairs easy, yet so sweet and dear to the master, the tears came to his eyes to think of parting with it.

"O mother dear, thank God, I am so glad," said the excited boy clasping his thin hands in ecstasy. "When will it come?"

His mother had to go to her work again the next day, getting the big house in order for the auction, for the master was too sick in heart to live there longer now that his sweet young wife had left it for her heavenly home, and was going abroad for some years. She told Jamie not to fret if the organ did not come till night, and he promised to mind; but how could he help sitting by the window and watching every wagon that passed, till tired out at last, he dropped asleep in his chair, and was awakened by the noise of wheels and—oh, it had

come! Such a little thing, though. In spite of his mother's description, Jamie had widened and lengthened it considerably, and I'm afraid he was just a little disappointed when the man set it down in the corner of the window. But when he opened it and saw the keys, real black and white, and touched the bellows and made it go, Handel himself could not have been happier.

By-and-by his mother came in and brought a pile of music-books, most instructive, with some choice selections from the old masters, which had been left out when the music was sold with the piano, and Mr. Charlton put them together and sent them over. "Who knows," he said, with a smile, "but our little lad may turn out a genius yet?"

He little dreamed of the delight the mere sight of the notes caused to the boy's sensitive soul. Jamie's desire to be able to read them took complete possession of him, and accomplished for him what years of training does in some cases for the more fortunate.

Faithfully and patiently did Jamie try to secure a musical education. He could easily have caught and played the popular airs, but he had other business to attend to, and he had no time or strength to waste in mere play; not at least till he could read that hard music. If his mother had spoken her mind, she would have acknowledged that it was just a little tedious, after her hard day's work was done, to hear that continual thump-drum; but if the word came to her lips, one look at the boy's absorbed face would silence it; for she knew full well that all his comfort would be spoiled if he thought he was spoiling hers.

So she bore it patiently and tried to admire it, and by-and-by, ere long indeed, she was rewarded. Somehow the sounds became sweeter and sweeter, and even the never-ending exercises seemed nice to hear.

Then when Sunday came, Jamie began to pick out and play the psalm-tunes she loved, so sweetly that she said there was no need for the words to be sung; she could hear them just as well from the notes.

Years passed on. Jamie had become strong enough to attend school, and his teachers remarked him as having more than ordinary ability. He seemed instinctively to grasp and retain what was presented to him. His fellow-students said Jamie knew his lessons without studying them.

But this was far from the truth. The secret was, he gave his whole soul to them, and so readily mastered them; perhaps he had more ability to do so than they, but that would have been worth little without the hard work, too.

One day, a lady came to his mother's cottage, wishing to engage her services in doing up fine linen and muslins. The door was open, and as she came up the path, through the little front yard, she was surprised to hear music, and such music! She stepped softly in, and was more surprised still to see the instrument and the player from which it came. Jamie stopped in embarrassment, for he recognized her as the organist of the village church, a large reed-organ, towards which he had often turned longing eyes. She begged him to go on, and praised him so much that he hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. She made him promise to come to her house the next evening and try her organ, offering him music to take home as a motive. With much trembling, Jamie went and played to her and her parents all the evening. The consequence was, a great step in his life was taken.

This lady was about being married and she wished to keep it a profound secret from her friends of the church, and had been troubled about her organ. How could she get off for some weeks without telling the committee, and their getting a supply? She was sure the grand secret would leak out, for the one who would naturally take her place was the young man who was to be her companion. So she was in a fine dilemma. Jamie's proficiency seemed to solve the problem. He should play the organ in church, and nothing be said until the birds had flown!

We may be sure that Jamie and his mother felt greatly excited over this unexpected responsibility. I am pretty sure there was more than one prayer breathed that there might be no mistakes to disturb the worship of God's house!

Certain it is that all went off well, and to

the intense surprise of the choir and congregation, who could hardly believe their senses when they went into their seats and found, instead of Miss Joy, a small pale-faced little cripple they had known only as Mrs. Burt's, the workwoman's boy, presiding at the organ and giving it no uncertain sound.

The committee, after consultation, invited him to retain the place until the organist's return, which he did to their entire satisfaction and that of the people, some of whom ventured to declare that little Jamie played better than she ever did or could. However, the best things come to an end, and so did the honeymoon, and the three blissful Sabbaths of his playing, and then he returned to his seat near the door with his mother, and drummed on the seat while he tried to listen to the sermon. Not long after this Mrs. Burt, who had never been strong, took a severe cold, which settled on her lungs, and prevented her going out as usual to work. Jamie had a little garden and raised some vegetables, and picked up a little here and there by going errands, but the prospect began to look very dark to the poor woman.

"If Jamie was only strong like other boys, she said to herself one day, while waiting for him to come home with a basket of clothes he had gone for, in his home-made cart, for she was going to try and do something at home, "he could be earning a good bit by this time; but oh, what will he ever do when I'm not here to mind him?"

Just now the door flew open, and Jamie, tumbling in the basket with such haste, the clothes fell on to the floor, cried out,—

"O, mother! there has been a big, grand pipe-organ put up in the church in C—, and there is to be a trial this afternoon for organists; can't I go over and hear them?"

Mrs. Burt sadly needed Jamie's help that day, but like the unselfish mother she was, she said, brightly,—

"Certainly, dear; but isn't the walk too much for you?"

"It's only three miles, and I'll be sure to catch a ride, and be back in time to"—but here his eye fell on the soiled clothes and recalled him to his duty.

The light faded out of his face, but he spoke bravely, "I think I better not go, after all, mother; it is quite a ways, and perhaps it isn't worth while. I'll put on the water and get the clothes to soak right away."

"No, darling, not that; we'll fix it another way this time; for I know nothing would keep you home but the fear of my getting tired and maybe sick again. I'll keep still and lie down by-and-by, and when you get home, we'll set to work in the morning. Jamie limped joyfully off, thinking how good his mother was, and wishing, oh so much, that he could help her more. He enjoyed the lovely autumn tint of leaf and shrub, and the balmy air, but all the while fearing his strength would give out before he got a ride. But oh, joy! There comes a cart—a white-covered butcher's cart—and Jamie knows quite well that he may sit down and rest till it comes up, sure of his speedy ride, for the kind-hearted young fellow who drives it is a friend of Jamie's, and always glad to do him a kindness.

So he arrives in town some time before the church is opened, and seats himself upon the grassy mound below the steps, till a man comes and unlocks the door and goes in; Jamie follows with bated breath, and lifts his eyes for his first sight of a real grand organ. Two or three hours pass, mostly rapturous, but not unmingled with dissatisfaction.

At last his soul was stirred within him, as the last contest, a noisy, restless fellow ended with a grand flourish. He could contain himself no longer, but touching the arm of the gentleman with the key in his hand, timidly said, "Please, sir, can't I try it?"

"You, my lad!" said the gentleman, in astonishment, "can you play?"

"A little, sir—that is, I would like to see," stammered the boy trembling in every limb.

"Up with you then," said the gentleman; "but it's getting late, and we have business to attend to, or stay, we might adjourn to the committee-room, and have our talk while this little fellow is trying his hand,"—with a smile aside to his compan-

ions. And so Jamie and his blower were left to themselves.

Seemingly the committee found it hard to decide upon the merits of the respective organists, for it was some time before they appeared again in the orchestra.

The fact was, they had hardly entered the little room before they came out again, attracted by the unexpected melody brought forth by that small hand, and were sitting in mute surprise in the church behind him. As Jamie struck the concluding notes of "Old Hundred," they came up the steps. He felt that he had trespassed upon their patience too long, and slipping hastily from his seat, thanked them for their kindness, and was moving off, when the gentleman with the key in his hand said,—

"Stop, my boy, don't go yet; we would like to hear you longer."

So, flushed and joyous, Jamie went on playing.

"Truly, my boy," said one of them, "you have had excellent teaching."

The boy looked up, bewildered. "Sir, I have had little help but my books and my little melodeon at home."

Something familiar about the boy's eyes struck him; he glanced at the crutch, and light seemed to break in. "Your name my boy?" he asked.

"Jamie Burt, sir."

"And your melodeon belonged to"—

"Mr. Charlton, sir, of Charltonville. It is his now. He only lent it to me till he came home," said Jamie, simply, wondering at the gentleman's emotion.

"And that is all, my child, that little bit of a worn-out organ, and a few old music-books, all the help you have had in bringing you to this place?" touching the organ as he spoke.

"Yes, please sir, and a few weeks of practice on a real big-reed organ in Bedford."

Before many weeks had passed, poor, tired Mrs. Burt and her lame Jamie had moved to Charlton, into a nice little cottage near the church. Jamie went twice a week into the city to take lessons, and he sometimes played the big organ on Sunday.

Mr. Charlton, for it was he, indeed, who had come home from foreign parts, to settle down again in his own village, and had put the organ in the church in memory of the young wife who led the singing there,—Mr. Charlton did, indeed reclaim the little melodeon as his, and had it carefully repaired, and placed in a charming alcove in the library, where it could have a fine rest after its life of usefulness, and put a splendid new organ in its place in Jamie's little parlor.

In a year Jamie became the organist of the church.

Now, young friends, who read this little sketch, true in the main parts, is not the lesson easy to read?

It was not alone the little melodeon, not the musical talent, which brought such good fortune to the boy.

It was, was it not, the two, kindness rewarded by an earnest purpose and hard work?—Mrs. A. H. Brown, in *Youth's Companion*.

THE MOST IGNORANT HINDUS are under the control of superstition connected with the hereditary misbelief, and here is the power of paganism, here is the horror of a false faith. What is this man doing! He lies down in the dust and measures his length; rises to his feet and then measures his length again. He is passing over hundreds of miles in this way. Why is he going through these austerities? In order to shorten the eight million four hundred thousand re-births, to cut off some portion of the long line of transmigrations through which men must go. The theory of the average Hindu is that he must be re-born, and that, if he has pre-eminent merit in this life, he will be born on a higher scale. Every man must go through millions of transmigrations, and eminent merit here will lessen the number of these and so bring Heaven nearer. Austerities of the most horrible kind you see practised at Benares, and you ask why men endure them; and the answer is: "To shorten the eighty-four." The two wheels on which the chariot of Hinduism in the ignorant populations moves are positive belief in transmigration and in caste. Whoever can break these wheels may smite Hinduism into fragments.—Joseph Cook.