

## CHRISTIE AT HOME.

A SEQUEL TO CHRISTIE'S CHRISTMAS.

CHAPTER VIII.—(Continued.)

By Pansy.

Mrs. Tucker had in the meantime gone back to her cake, and was now ready to transfer it to the buttered tin which stood waiting to receive it.

The letter was almost finished; there remained only a few words about Baby, how he was growing, how sweet he looked in his new hat, and how he had sent her a picture of his own dear self to wear around her neck, and wanted her to come to the city as soon as ever she could, and have hers taken for Baby to wear. Then came the wonderful closing sentence: "If you will write me a line to let me know when you will come, Baby and I will meet you at the depot with the carriage, then we will have a very happy day together. And I do hope that many brother of yours will come along to help you, for if you have as many people to care for as you did on your last journey, I am sure you will need help."

"And she never says what it is she has sent!" Mrs. Tucker said when the last word had been read.

"No, ma'am, she doesn't. I think it must be a bird, for what else is there to make a sound that I could take comfort with?"

"I know one thing with which I could take comfort," said Mrs. Tucker with a little sigh, "and it makes a sound, too."

"Mother, what is it?"

"It is a sewing machine, child. I could sew a seam on that in five minutes, which takes me almost an hour, now. But never mind, one of these days you children will get me one, I dare say."

And Karl, though he said not a word, went and looked out of the window, and laid it aside in his heart, that as soon as ever he could, perhaps even before he bought the Geography, he was going to get a sewing machine for his mother.

For the rest of that day, the cake which came out of the oven a golden brown, and did neither fall nor crack, did for all that sink in importance before that wonderful mystery which was to come, and was to be in a box; because the letter had talked about what was in the "smaller box." It took no fortune-teller to assert that of course there must be a larger box in which "it" was to come. The bird theory rather lost ground, because how could a bird travel in a box? It would die; but it certainly was not likely to be a sewing machine, for besides being a very expensive present, it was one not likely to be chosen for a little girl.

Mr. Tucker had a theory which he told his wife had better not be mentioned to Christie, for fear it was not correct and she would be disappointed; but Mrs. Tucker argued that Christie was a very womanly little girl not likely to be greatly disappointed about anything that could not be helped, and that she liked to know about things. So the father brought forward his views.

"I can tell you what it might be, my girl, though, mind, I don't say it is. Did you ever hear of such a thing as an accordion?"

No, Christie never did, but her bright eyes said she was all ready to be told of it.

Then it was brought to light that Mr. Tucker when he was a young man had boarded with a woman whose daughter had an accordion. "It is something like that old fire-bellows of your grandfather's," he explained. "You take hold of it on each side and pull it out and back again, and out and back, like this;" and he folded a piece of paper which lay on the floor and illustrated the method of working the accordion.

"But what is it for?" questioned puzzled Christie.

"Why, it makes music; you learn how to play it, you know; it has keys to it, and you learn which ones to touch, and play tunes."

"Real tunes, such as folks can sing?"

"I guess you can! Why, Elizabeth used to sit by the hour playing for us, and we would sing; real sweet music it was, too."

"Oh, my!" said Christie, and her eyes seemed almost as large as the little saucers she was drying.

"But they were pretty expensive things," said the mother warningly, mindful of the wistful light in her child's great eyes.

"Yes," said Father Tucker quickly.

"Oh, I didn't say I thought this was one."

It was something that would

make sounds, and nice ones, too. But it is not likely to be anything of that kind."

"Of course not," said Christie. "But, father, how much do you think one would cost?"

"Well," said Mr. Tucker, reflectively, "I remember how much that one cost, as well as if it were bought yesterday. I remember there being a good deal of talk about it; there might have been cheaper ones, but that cost twenty dollars."

"Oh, my!" said Christie again.

## CHAPTER IX.

It was the next day at noon, or a trifle before, that the boxes arrived. The same good-natured men who had loaded down the parlor with furniture, appeared again, and one of them told Karl with a laugh, "he reckoned he must have found out by this time that Miss Christie Tucker lived here for sure, as she seemed to have a good many things coming to her, off and on."

But Karl was so amazed at the size of one of the boxes, that he had no answer ready for this hint at his former bewilderment. He stood dumb with astonishment, while the two men and the two helpers that they had brought with them, tugged and groaned and with the greatest difficulty lifted their burden.

"I don't know whether it is a meetin'-house or a new schoolhouse," declared one, "but it seems to me it is rather heavy for either."

The Tucker family were all at home, and had as much as they could do to keep out of the way of the men, and to wonder what the thing could be, and where it was to go, and whether, after all, there wasn't some mistake.

Don't expect me to go over in detail, all the excitements of the hours that followed. Mother Tucker said afterwards, that she was sure she should go crazy if she had another day like it in her life; and it might have a bad effect on her to hear all about it.

All I can tell you about it is, that after much trial and much delay, and much running to the far lot for helpers, the thing was stood up and unpacked, and when it first showed its shining surface, Christie gave a queer little squeal and clasped her hands, and grew white even to her lips. "I thought as true as the world that ridiculous child was going to faint!" Her mother said, when she told off the strange doings to her friend the next day, fanning herself with her apron at the thought of it, though the day was cold. "I did really, and she don't know anything about such a thing, either. I never fainted in my life, and I don't mean she shall, if I can help it. But she turned that white, that I just reached out and snatched her, and it's my opinion if I hadn't, she would have tumbled right down in a heap! It seems she had some kind of a notion how a piano would look. She has drea ned about one, and talked about one, and asked me questions enough, until she had got an idea, and she knew the thing by hearing and imagination. She knew it was a piano the minute her father took the last covering off. But she had had no more idea of ever seeing one in our parlor, than she had of seeing a star there, not a bit more. Karl, now, isn't of that sort. He was excited enough, but at the same time he was quiet about it, and did not seem so dreadfully astonished."

"I really don't know what to make of that boy. He seems to have such queer ideas about things. 'I meant you should have one, some time,' he said to Christie, 'but I did not think it could be brought about so soon.' Christie does all the imagining, and she is first-rate at it, and Karl always seemed to stick to facts. But then, he has such extraordinary things that he calls facts come into his head! 'When you get your sewing machine, mother,' he said to me one day, 'will it sew overhand, do you think?' Now, I expect to have a sewing machine about as much as Christie expected a piano, and no more, and I told him so, and says he: 'That may be, but there's the piano setting there, you see, and the machine will come, you see if it don't.'"

The visitor knit twice around her stocking before she answered; then she pushed her spectacles up on her forehead, and said: "Well now, Mrs. Tucker, I shouldn't wonder if it would, and if that boy would get it for you one of these days. I do say that you are blessed in your children if ever a woman was."

So now the secret is out, and you know it was actually a piano that was set up in the Tucker parlor.

I took this way of telling you, because I really could not explain what Christie felt, or even what she said, though she said little enough.

In fact, her mother who was a little frightened about her, told her that she acted like a goose. The white look on her face lasted until her father called her to put her hand on the keys; and when she touched the gleaming things, thereby bringing forth such sounds as she had dreamed of in her little music-loving heart, but never heard, she looked up into her father's face, and the blood rolled up in great waves to the roots of her hair, and then what did she do but cry.



Of course Nettie cried immediately and loudly. Tears on Christie's face were something unusual, and not to be borne without a protest. I don't know that it is any wonder that the startled mother said at this point:

"Why, Christie, what does make you act so like a little goose?"

But Father Tucker put his great protecting arms around her and said: "Never mind, mother, she is kind of upset, and it ain't to be wondered at. Pianos don't grow on every potato lot, and our little girl never even saw one before, and this thing is hers, you know, and it is kind of too much."

(To be Continued.)

## REATRE'S BROTHER NED.

Reatre Bronson sat in the large arm-chair in her brother Ned's room. She was arranging birthday cards, Easter cards, and Christmas greetings on a screen which she wished to finish before her brother Ned came home at night. Reatre was very fond and proud of Ned, and Ned had always seemed to be fond of her; but lately she had fancied that he didn't love her as well as he used to. He was not at home as much as he had formerly been. Although the loving sister disliked to harbor a thought against Ned, yet somehow she could not but admit to herself, as she sat alone that morning, that Ned was going wrong. Ned wasn't confidential with her any more, and he spoke slightly so often of religion and good people. Indeed he had not been to church with her for over a month. And Ned seemed to have chosen a set of companions who were known in Reatre's little world as fast young men. She felt a great responsibility about Ned, as the dear mother before she went home to her Father's house had said to her: "Reatre, my child, do all you can to influence Ned to be good; there are a great many temptations in the outside world, and boys need to be hedged about with good home influences." She knew that her mother's last prayer was for Ned.

Reatre's father was a thorough business man; a money-making man. He was necessarily away from home a great portion of the time. He provided liberally for his two children, of whom he was very fond; but his mind was so pre-occupied with his business that he seldom looked into matters pertaining to their daily lives.

Reatre watched at the parlor window to see Ned coming up the street, but she waited a long, long time. It was an hour later than he usually came, and still another hour passed, and another. The evening meal was standing on the table untasted, for Reatre always waited for Ned. She began to grow very anxious; sad forebodings of some accident or evil to Ned filled her heart. She could not eat, and when it came bed-time, and Ned had not come, she could not go to sleep. But just after midnight she heard Ned's night-key in the latch, and she ran into the hall to give him her usual cheery welcome. But Ned pushed her away, and said quite harshly, "What are you up at this time of the night for, Reatre?"

"I sat up for you, Ned. I was afraid something had happened to you, and you know father is away, and I'd no one to send to look after you."

"You may just as well understand now, Reatre Bronson, that I am old enough to look after myself, and don't want any girl interfering with my comings and goings."

Ned had never spoken so before, and the tears filled Reatre's eyes as he passed by her

and went upstairs to his room. A dreadful suspicion filled the sister's heart that Ned had been drinking; she was sure of it as she followed him up the stairs. "Oh, dear," she thought to herself, "If mamma could only have been spared to look after Ned. He would never speak so to her, she was always so kind, so tender toward him."

Reatre was a Christian; she believed in the living presence of the Lord, and when she went to her room she poured out her overburdened heart, and amid sobs and tears prayed that Ned might be turned from the wrong way into the right.

Ned Bronson was on very dangerous ground. He had taken the first steps on a downward path, and the first steps are those that tell. He was in bad company. His companions were those who influenced him in the wrong direction. They had false ideas of manhood, and sooner or later they would find that vices draw blanks, as surely as virtues draw prizes. The loss of purity, the loss of simplicity, the loss of honesty, are real losses. No one can gain by a vicious act; the loss is lasting. It is parting with a part of our soul.

Weeks passed by, and Ned was going more and more wrong. Reatre felt almost powerless to save him. She thought sometimes she would go and talk the matter over with the good pastor, who had baptized Ned when he was lying in his mother's arms. But that would be exposing Ned's faults; she felt that she could not speak a word of Ned's bad ways except to the Father in heaven. While Ned was going his own way, his sister was praying for him at home.

One evening, when Reatre had almost lost her faith that the Lord would save Ned, she heard the latch-key in the door. It was quite early for him to come home. She went into the hall to meet him, and as soon as he had taken off his overcoat, he put his arm around her, and without a word drew her into the sitting-room. "My dear, sweet sister!" he said, as he placed her in the chair in front of the open fire.

"Why Ned, dear, what has happened?" she exclaimed, for Ned looked so differently from what he had of late.

"I'll tell you," he said, taking her hand in his. "I've had a strange experience, Reatre. I haven't been doing right for some time, as you know. And to-night I went with some young men to a saloon to play billiards. I knew when I went I ought not to go, but I seemed to be bound to ruin myself. Somehow I couldn't say no. I knew when I got there I should be tempted to drink. I knew, too, that the influences around me would pull me down, instead of elevate me toward what was pure and good. As I stepped toward the door I heard a woman's voice singing—

My faith looks up to Thee,  
Thou Lamb of Calvary,  
Saviour divine,  
Now hear me while I pray,  
Take all my guilt away,  
O let me from this day,  
Be wholly Thine.

It was mamma's hymn—you know she used to sing it so often. I'd forgotten it, but it sounded like her voice, and I can't tell you how I felt. It seemed as if mamma's hand was on my shoulder. It was so real to me, that I stopped and said, 'I can't go with you to-night, boys,' and I rushed away and came home. Oh, how mamma would have felt if she had known her boy would go so far wrong."

The remembrance of a mother's love and prayers and kindly admonitions filled the hearts of the two motherless children, and they mingled their tears together.

"With God's help, dear Reatre, I am going to live a better life. If I could only go back and retrace my steps now."

"We can never go back, dear Ned, but your experience will enable you to help others who are beginning to yield to temptation." "I wonder if my prayers did help dear Ned," thought Reatre, after she went to her room. "I know God heard dear mamma's prayers for us, and that He is watching over her motherless children. It was so pleasant to have Ned in the pew with her on Sunday, and to have him speak a word for Jesus, and what he could do for poor sinners, when he went to the young people's meeting, Monday evenings. 'As long as I live,' thought Reatre, "I will carry all my cares, and troubles, and wants right to Jesus, for He always hears and answers prayers. Dear mamma used to say that very often our prayers are answered in such different ways from what we plan or expect."—New York Evangelist.