

CHRISTIE AT HOME.

A SEQUEL TO CHRISTIE'S CHRISTMAS.

By Pansy.

CHAPTER VII.—(Continued.)

"That is the Bible, my boy; there has never been a book written half so important as that, and there never will be."

To say that Karl was astonished, will give you a very faint idea of his state of mind; also he was a little bit disappointed. He had expected to hear some wonderful old name to treasure in his mind, and then he had meant to try to get courage to ask a few questions about the book, what made it so wonderful, and how old one had to be before he began to study it, and what it cost; but the Bible! Why, they had one in the house. Of course it was an important book, but then, who would have imagined that he meant the Bible! Wells was not surprised, he was more familiar with ministers than was Karl, and more familiar with the world, he knew what rank the Bible held among Christians. He looked neither surprised nor particularly interested; though his face told as plainly as words that he did not agree with Mr. Keith.

"The question is, how much time do you two boys give to the most important book?"

"Not much," said Wells, laughing a little. "We don't use it in school, and don't get marked for not knowing anything about it, so it has to stand aside."

"I know. Isn't that a strange way for sensible people to manage? Now if I were a teacher, I should try to give a little time each day to the only book that was likely to outlive every other, and had to do with another world, after this one was done with."

Karl opened his eyes wider, and Wells questioned: "Why, you don't suppose the Bible will be taken to heaven, do you?"

Mr. Keith laughed a little. "Well, as to that, I don't know as it would be a very interesting book in heaven. We shall probably not care much more about it than we would for a good guide book about Europe after it had shown us the way there, and we were perfectly familiar with the country and had not the least desire to go from it to any other country. I meant that it was the only book which told us anything about the other world where all our life is to be spent, except the very little bit that we spend on this side. It is strange to be so taken up with the things we are to use here, that we forget all about what we are here for, and forget to get ready for our journey; now isn't it?"

Karl was thinking seriously, and seemed to have no answer; and Wells did not choose to make what might be called an answer, though he spoke: "I don't think the Bible tells very much about heaven. I've often wished it told what the people were doing up there, and how they managed about—well about everything, and whether they knew what was going on here, and what was to be done after everybody had reached there."

"I don't suppose there is special need of having all that told in the Bible; the people who are going there will have eternity in which to learn all about it, and to the people who fail, it could only be an added sorrow; the most that the Bible is engaged in, is to point out the way, and warn of the dangers."

Mr. Keith spoke very gravely, but Wells seemed determined to speculate, so continued: "What do you suppose the people do there, all the time? I am sure I should think it would be sort of stupid to stand around with harps and sing."

"The Bible says that it has not even entered into my heart what we are to do; but I am going there to find out. The question is, are you two boys?"

"I suppose I mean to," answered Karl gravely, seeing that Wells was not going to speak, "but I haven't made any plans, nor

thought about it much; it doesn't seem very real to me, I know a hundred things that I want to do here, but I don't know much about heaven."

"That is just what I am saying is strange; like a boy who was so interested in the flowers and stones which he found on the way to the city, that he would pay no attention which road to take, and forgot all about his having started for the purpose of going to the city. If there was an elegant home waiting for you there, and you might risk the loss of it by delaying and playing with the stones, how long do you suppose you would play?"

"Not long," said Karl, his face grave. "But Wells had found his voice again. "Ah, but sir, we can't die and go to heaven just when we please. It would be wicked to do it even if one wanted to, and a fellow could reach the city just as soon as his feet would carry him."

"That is true; suppose we change the figure. What if the carriage to take Karl to the city and to his wonderful home there, was to pass the south road at the corner, at some hour to-morrow, Karl did not know when, and that was to be his opportunity to go; after that it would be too late; how long do you suppose Karl would loiter on his way to the south road in the morning?"

thing to do, and he could not help wondering what kept people back.

"My boy," said Mr. Keith, turning and looking full at him out of earnest eyes, "why don't you?"

Karl moved uneasily in his seat and laughed a little, and said, "I don't know." "But I do, my boy. It is because you are a slave; so is Wells, here; he thinks he is free, and can do just as he pleases, but Satan has a strong hold on him, and is making him do just the foolish thing about which we have been talking."

"Then we are not to blame," said Wells quickly, following with his keen mind the picture that the minister had drawn.

"Are you not? Suppose an enemy had tied you to that stove in such a manner that the flames would reach you after a while, and I should say: 'I will cut the ropes and set you free if you want me to do so, and will obey my directions in the future. Then I should proceed to give you a list of directions, and you should say: 'Why, they are all good and right and kind, and we shall be the gainers by obeying them, but then we don't want to ask you to free us, and we don't care to follow your orders.' Who would be to blame for your remaining slaves?"

"Wouldn't you be kind of mean, though, not to set us free, whether we asked or not?"

"How could you prove to me that you were anxious to save me, and had done your best, if you should let me stay there and burn?" asked Wells, going back to the figure.

(To be continued.)

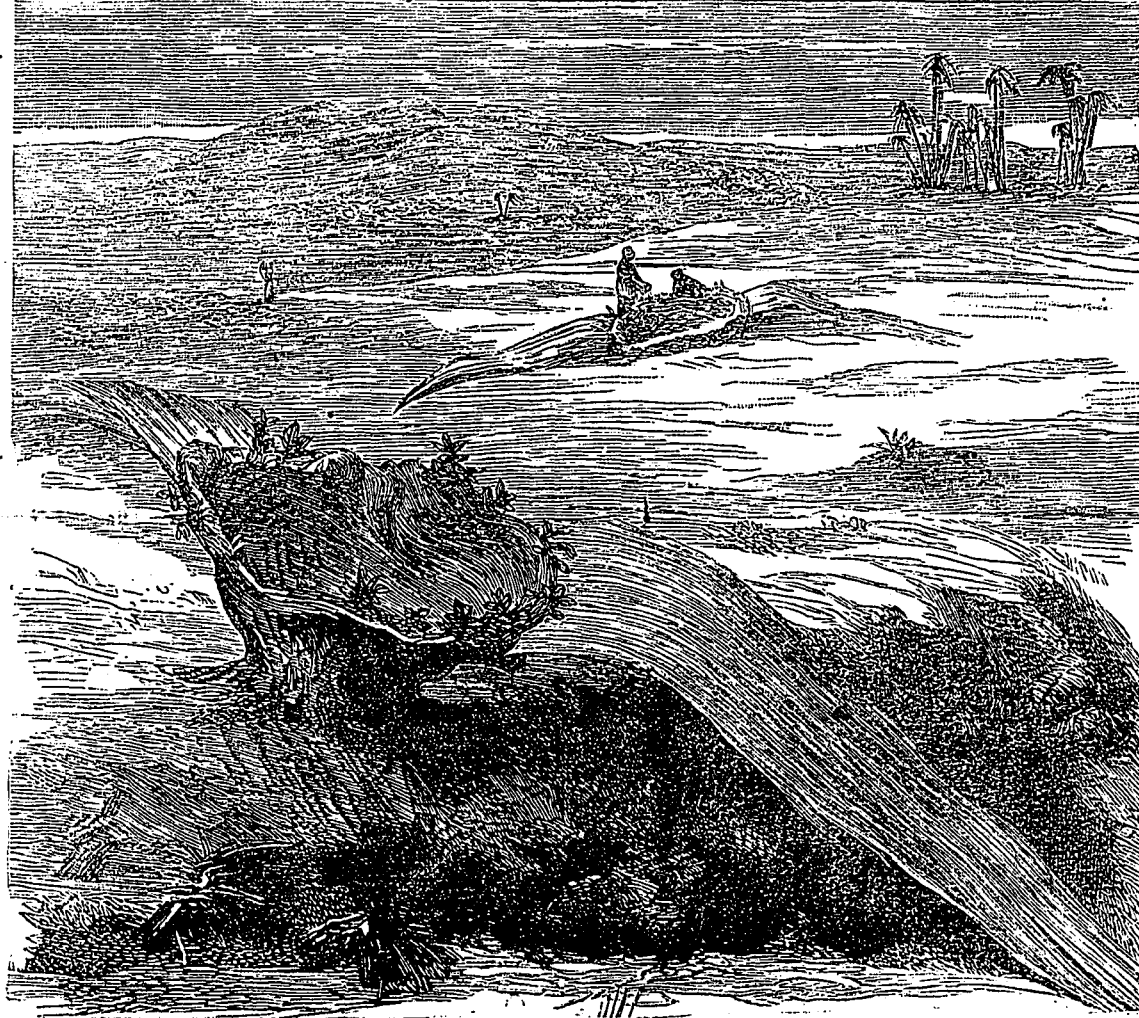
A WONDERFUL TREE.

The plant illustrated in the accompanying engraving is perhaps one of the most extraordinary vegetable productions, in many respects on the face of the globe. Seldom, if ever, has the discovery of a new plant created such an amount of interest in the scientific world as did this. In the year 1860 an Austrian botanist, Dr. Frederic Welwitsch, while making explorations in Southwest Tropical Africa, under the auspices of the Portuguese Government, came upon an elevated sandy plateau about 500 miles south of Cape Negro. Here his attention was at once attracted to a number of curious objects rising from a foot to a foot and a half above the surface of the soil, varying from two to fourteen feet in circumference, and having a flat, somewhat depressed top of a dingy brown color, and appearing more like large stools or small tables than any living plant.

The roots branch just below the stock, penetrate several feet into the ground, and fix themselves so firmly in the hard, sandy parched soil that it was found extremely difficult to dig up a plant with the roots entire. The most peculiar part of this plant is the crown, into the edges of which (at the point of junction with the stock) the leaves are inserted. The outline of this crown is of an irregular oval or oblong form, and its surface (and indeed the whole exterior of the tree) is of a dirty brown color, hard, rugged, and cracked, and has been aptly likened by Dr. Hooker to the crust of an overbaked loaf of bread. It is seldom or never flat, but usually sunken or concave toward the centre. From the edges, toward the centre, the surface is covered with little pits, the marks or scars of fallen flower stalks. The leaves, like all other parts of the plants, are very extraordinary; each plant possesses two only, corresponding in width to the lobes of the crown, and running out right and left to the enormous length of six feet, and one-twentieth of an inch in thickness. These leaves (which are not true leaves, but "seed leaves" or *cotyledons*) are normally entire, although they are seldom seen in that state, as they soon become split to the base into strips. They lie spread out flat on the ground, are of a leathery texture, and of a bright green color, with almost imperceptible parallel veins. They are described as being persistent during the whole life of the plant, which is said to be a hundred years or more.

This fact affords another instance of dissimilarity with other plants; for we know that the first or cotyledonary leaves of most plants drop off as soon as second leaves are produced. The flowers spring from the small pits or scars, before spoken of, upon the crown of the tree, close to the point of insertion of the leaves, and even occasionally below them. The fruit or cone (which is the only part of the plant bearing any general resemblance to the coniferæ, to which it is related) are, when fully grown, about two inches long, with four slightly convex sides, and of a bright red color. Outside of the high scientific interest with which it is invested, this plant has no recognized use. Its leaves, being tough, leathery, and not softly fibrous, are not adapted for cordage, weaving, or any similar purposes. Its tough trunk is of such an uneven, fibrous grain that the saw seems rather to tear than cut it; and besides it is so irregular in its growth as to unfit it for any economic use.

No wonder, then, that the plants have been allowed to grow for centuries unmolested by the natives, and, consequently, up to the time of its discovery hidden from the eye of civilized man.—*Scientific American*.



THE WONDERFUL TREE.

"Not many minutes," said Karl, speaking quickly. "I should clip it at the first streak of daylight; in fact, I don't know but I would go down there to-night."

"I think quite likely you would; and yet here you sit unconcerned; it is morning with you, and the chariot of God may be here at any moment for his children who are ready, to take them home, and you do not get ready to go."

"It seems different," said Karl. "Yes, and it is different," stoutly declared Wells. "There is no corner to go to and wait; if it were that way, we would all go in a minute, but there doesn't seem to be anything to do."

"Yes, there is; your mind can take a journey just as well as your body, you want your mind to go over and stand by the Lord Jesus Christ; you want your soul to say to him: 'I have come to claim my home in heaven that you said you had for me; I have come to be ready to go. Now, what am I to do?' And he would tell you what to do, while you waited. It is simple enough, you see, only you don't choose to do it."

"Why doesn't everybody?" This question was from Karl; it seemed to him all at once such a simple and natural

Of course this bold question came from Wells. Karl looked quickly at him; he thought the question rude; but the minister seemed in no way disturbed by it.

"That depends," he said quietly. "Let us look at it a little more closely; suppose you belonged to me by right. It was your duty to obey me, and you had not done it; instead, you had disgraced me in many ways, and were under sentence of punishment, but I, at great expense, had planned a way for you to escape all punishment; a way which I knew would work if you could be brought to agree to it, and do your part, but which I knew would be worse than useless unless you submitted to the rules laid down; we will suppose that I knew you would get into much worse trouble than being tied to that stove, in case I let you go in any other way than the one which I had planned. Would I be mean then not to do it?"

"That is supposing a great many things," said Wells, and he spoke as though he felt almost cross about it.

"It is not supposing a thing, but what the Bible, if you study it carefully, will show you is true; not the being tied to the stove, of course; we imagined that, but God is very well acquainted with us, and he knows what we will do, as well as what we have done."