

A STORY-BOOK CHRISTMAS EVE.

Alice was chilled and miserable and lonely. She had been sitting all the afternoon in her cold bedroom rather than in the dining-room, where her grandfather took his afternoon nap, for every time she moved or turned a page he bade her be quiet, and this made her so nervous that she made more noise than ever. "I think Christmas is the most miserable time of all the year," she said, wistfully, as she gazed at the gloomy scene without. "I wonder if anyone ever had a Christmas like those one reads about? I'll go out," she said, suddenly turning away from the window; "It can't be colder out than in." There was no one to say her nay. She had freedom if she had nothing else, freedom to amuse herself as long as she did not worry anyone. The house was very still as she crept down, and as gloomy as the world without; there was not a scrap of holly anywhere, no smell of Christmas fare preparing, no Christmas stir and bustle. They all seemed to forget that it was the glad season. "They" meant her grandfather, asleep in the dining-room, and Grace and Ellen, asleep in the kitchen. Mr. Madron's gardens stretched right down to the main road, and in the hedge at the bottom Alice had a favourite perch from whence she could see all the passing there was. Of the very few joys which came into Alice's life, the very greatest of all was the railway, which had been brought there since Mr. Madron had built his house, and passed along close by it. The station was on the opposite side of the road, very near his gate, and formed the chief interest of Alice's life, for, from her look-out in the hedge, she could see the trains and the passengers come and go. As she walked down the garden that afternoon, the distant hoot and roar of an engine reached her ears, and Alice, growing more cheerful at once, hurried along to be in time to see it run into the station and draw up. But to her surprise the engine did not draw up; it whirled by with a rush and a roar that nearly deafened one, and dashed through the station like a mad thing. Before her very eyes was enacted one of the most dreadful sights she was ever called upon to witness, or in flying so swiftly round the curve of the station the guard's van and one car had become uncoupled from the train, and to the horror of those looking on came stumbling and rocking off the rails and across the track until, with a cracking and breaking of glass, mingling with the screams of those within, the car was brought to rest against the platform, while the guard's van, swaying after it, finally tumbled over. Alice could only stand and gaze, horror-filled. The two passengers who had been awaiting the train, the station-master and the porter, rushed to give what help they could. Two of the men went to the guard's van, two to the car, which, being upright, they soon managed to enter, and very soon Alice saw them merge again, one carrying a lady, the other a little boy, fortunately the

only two passengers in it. The lady was apparently unconscious; the little boy, frightened and cut about his face and hands, was crying bitterly. "Mumme, mumme!" he called, piteously. At the sound of that cry Alice ran forward; she felt somehow that she could comfort him. The station-master, who knew her, looked up with relief. "I think it's only a swoon, missie," he said, "but I don't know where to carry her." "She must come to our house," she said, desperately. "I'll run back and tell them and bring help." "Grandfather! Ellen! Grace! Quick!" she shouted. "There's been an accident to the train. Come and help. Oh, grandfather, do let the lady and the little boy come here; she looks like death, and he is crying so!" For once she succeeded in rousing that drowsy household, and before she realized what had happened she was running to the station hand in hand with her grandfather, while Grace and Ellen were bustling round lighting fires and getting beds ready. Very soon Mrs. Vivian and Roger had

putting his little arm on her broad shoulder, kissed her warmly. "Why, you little darling!" cried Grace, delightedly, "A happy Christmas to you, too, sir—leastways, as happy as we can make it." And Alice, hearing her, wondered if Grace would have spoken to her in that way if she had shown her some affection. "I wish I could go to church with you this morning," said Mrs. Vivian, brightly. Oh, yes, I am feeling well enough, and I would love to keep my Christmas with you." "We don't keep Christmas," said Alice, with some embarrassment. "Don't you?" with a sad little smile. "But we can all keep it in our hearts, can't we? And mine is very full of joy and gratitude for our merciful escape." Sure enough, when Alice Mr. Madron got back from church, there in the drawing-room, which Alice had never seen used before, was Mrs. Vivian, looking perhaps a little wan, but very happy, while Roger played on the hearth; and, somehow, all the house looked and felt more festive than it ever had be-

real, so like a dream. "Open them, dear." "Is it—is it really—real!" she gasped. Then, as she untied the pretty ribbons, Alice gave a cry of real delight. "A book! a book!" she cried. "Oh, how lovely!" But when she opened the other and found a box of beautiful chocolates, words quite failed her. She could only go across to Mrs. Vivian, and, flinging her arms about her, kiss her again and again. "Haven't you one for me, little maid?" asked her grandfather, wistfully, and Alice, ashamed of her neglect, kissed him warmly, too. "I—I didn't think you cared, grandfather," she said, shyly; and again she wondered gravely if people liked you to show that you loved them, even if they did not seem to; and she was so lost in thinking out this problem that she did not hear her grandfather speaking to her until he had called her twice. "Little maid," he said, "Alice, I have a little present for you too, only you ran away before I could give it to you," and he laid two new half-crowns in her hand. There was more, much more, than enough to do and think about, to fill up the time to the early Christmas dinner and when presently they went to the dining room another surprise awaited them there, for the usually bare table was bright with holly and red ribbons, and by every plate, and in groups here and there, were gaily-coloured crackers, while pretty little dishes were piled high with sweets. Never had Alice, nor indeed her grandfather, enjoyed so bright and happy a meal in that house, and after dinner they all went back to the drawing-room and talked and played games until the light failed, when they sat by the fire and told tales. "I do think," said Alice, pausing in the merry games with which they finished up the evening, "that this is the most wonderful and lovely Christmas anyone could possibly spend. I shall know now that it can be like story-book Christmases—only better."—Aunt Alison.



Indisposed

been carried to Mr. Madron's house and put to bed, where the doctor soon dressed their cuts and bruises—neither very serious, fortunately—and gave her a soothing draught to help her over the shock. Roger, however, in a very short time, declined to stay in bed any longer, and in spite of his bandaged head and hand, was soon playing merrily with Alice. When Alice awoke the next morning she lay for a moment wondering what it was that was making her feel so happy, and when recollection came back to her she could not bear to linger a moment longer in bed, so anxious was she to hear how both their unexpected guests were. Mrs. Vivian saw her. "Come in, dear," she called, "and let me give you a Christmas kiss. Yes, I have had a beautiful night, and feel ever so much better, thanks to the good care of me you have all taken. A happy Christmas to you, too, Grace," she said, smiling up at her. And Roger, standing up in the bed, said, "Happy Kismass, Gwace," and,

fore. There were actually some bits of holly and ivy in the vases. On the couch where several mysterious-looking parcels, but Alice did not notice these. She ran quickly up to take off her outdoor things, and as quickly ran down again, but to her surprise she found her grandfather there before her, settled quite happily in a big arm-chair by the fire. "Come and sit by me, dear," said Mrs. Vivian, beckoning to her. "There, now, we form a nice little semi-circle, and," she added, "there will be just time before dinner for you to accept these little Christmas gifts I want to offer you. You see," she added, with a laugh as she gathered up the parcels from the sofa, "I was taking some with me, hoping to need them, and I find I do in a way I had not dreamed of. Please accept these as a little keepsake from Roger and me," and she placed in his hands some beautiful silk handkerchiefs, while to Alice she handed two parcels. Alice was speechless; everything seemed so un-

LIKE THE MODEL

A story is told of a beautiful statue that once stood in the market place of an Italian city. It was the statue of a Greek slave girl, and represented her as being beautiful, tidy, and well-dressed. A ragged, uncouth, forlorn street child came across the statue one day in her play. She stopped and admired it. Something in the pure white marble face seemed to touch her. She went home and washed her face and combed her hair. Next day she came before the statue again and gazed at it long and lovingly, as before. It had an inspiration for her again, and she went home and washed and mended her tattered clothes. The statue came to be a favorite place of resort for her, and each time that she gazed on its sculptured loveliness she had a glimpse of a more beautiful life, until she became a transformed child.