

CHRISTIE'S CHRISTMAS.

BY PANSY.

CHAPTER I.—Continued.

It is time I told you a little more about the Tucker family. They lived away "out West." That is, if you live in New York, or Brooklyn, or Maine, or Boston, or New Haven, or even in Cleveland or Cincinnati, you might call it away "out West," for it was in Kansas.



KARL SWUNG OFF AMONG THE BOUGHS.

The Tuckers went there from New England when Karl was a baby, and had been working away on their bit of a farm ever since. A city had grown up about twenty miles from them, but it had not grown where Mr. Tucker thought it would, when he bought his little farm, and not even a school had come within five miles of them until lately. I am not so very sure that it would have done the Tucker children much good if there had; the truth was, there was such hard work, and so much of it, to feed all the mouths, and clothe the stout little bodies, that both Christie and Karl had had to work hard all day long. You need not suppose that on this account they did not know anything. I fancy they were almost as good scholars as some who go to school year after year. Mr. Tucker had taught them, in the long winter evenings, to cipher, and had studied geography with them on a big old map of the United States, that he had brought with him from New England. And Mrs. Tucker, who, in her New England home, had been the best reader and speller in the whole school, had taught them in both these branches very carefully. And so, though they had not many books to read, what they had were very carefully read, and very well understood.

Uncle Daniel lived in the handsome city that had sprung up twenty miles further east, and he

lived an entirely different life from the Tuckers. He was Mrs. Tucker's youngest brother, was a merchant, and had one of the finest stores in the fine little city, and was what the Western people called a rich man. The Tuckers saw very little of them, for the reason that twenty miles in a country where there are no railways, are not easily gotten over, especially by busy people; and it was not yet quite a year since the branch railway came within a mile of the Tucker's farm. Since then, the country around had begun to hold up its head. A good school had been started, a neat little church had been built, and to the church the Tuckers tramped every Sabbath day. But the school they had not succeeded in getting time to attend.

"By next year," Mr. Tucker had said, "we must try hard for it."

He said it again that very morning, on the road to the depot.

CHAPTER II.

It was very pleasant riding to the depot in the early light of the winter morning. A ride of any sort was a treat to Christie.

There was always so much to do in the little home in the morning, and when evening was closing in, that she could rarely be spared to ride to the station with Karl; so that, really, for the third time in her life, did she expect to gaze on the cars!

"It isn't your first ride after the iron horse, by any means," her father said to her. "More than a thousand miles you rode, and you stood it well, too; were just as good as you could be, and gave mother and me no trouble at all; in fact you seemed to be anxious to amuse Karl, and help him to have a good time. But you were such a little dot I don't suppose you remember anything about it."

"Why, father," said Karl, "she wasn't three years old then! How could she remember it?"

"Well, I don't know; seems to me I remember my mother, and I wasn't quite three years old when she died; but then folks remember mothers, I s'pose, longer than they do anything else. They ought to. Well, Christie, my girl, keep your eyes open to-day, and see what you can learn. My father used to tell me—your old grandfather, you know, who died before you were born—he used to say to me, 'Learn all you can, John, about anything and everything; there is no telling when a chance may pop up for you to use what you thought you never would use.' It's a good rule. I practised on it once when I saw a man making a waggon; I

watched just how he fixed the wheel and the holes for the nails, and everything, and I said, right out loud, 'It isn't any ways likely that I shall ever make a waggon, but then I might as well know how you do it.' And it wasn't a week after that we broke down going across the prairie, your mother and me and two children; and if I hadn't known just how to fix that wheel we would have frozen to death likely enough before we could get anywhere."

"Well," Christie said, laughing a little, "I don't suppose I shall ever make a train of cars, but I'll learn how if I can."

"There's no telling," her father said, "what will come of one day; they are curious things, days are; like enough you may see something to-day that will help you along all your life; and for the matter of that, you might see plenty of things to hinder you all your life; that's what makes such solemn business of living. Only there's one comfort; you can shut your eyes to the evil things, and say: I won't remember one of them; I'll have nothing to do with them. And the good things you can mark and lay away in your mind for future use. Well, here we are, I declare. Old Sam has trotted along pretty fast this morning. Now, my man, you may help Christie out, and get her ticket, and put her on the train all right, and I'll stay here and take care of Sam."

Then did Karl's face glow! But he made a pretence of objection: "Why, father, I can take care of Sam if you want to go."

"No, no, my boy, I can trust you to look after Christie; you'll have plenty of time; they've got a lot of freight to load this morning, and you can go in and find her a seat, and do it all up like a man. Sam and I will tend to each other out here. I'll just set the satchel on the steps there, so you can reach it easy, and then I'll drive around to the shed."

Good, thoughtful father! Putting quietly away his own desire to see his little girl safely launched for her first journey; putting back with resolute hand the vague fear that Karl might not help her properly, or might not get off the train in time, and so harm might come to one or both of them. Well he knew that a whole army of "mights" and "might nots" lay all along life's journey with which to make himself miserable, and there was nothing for it but to seize the doubts with resolute hand and hold them back so that they need

not cripple the young lives under his care. He remembered how, when Karl climbed the tree and swung off in a daring way among the slender-looking boughs, he had to shut his eyes and ask God to take care of the boy, and keep the father from crying out, and so help to make his son a coward. He felt a little bit like that this morning. Only the memory of the apple-tree helped; there were no trees now that Karl couldn't climb. They moved away briskly, that little man and woman; Christie running back once to give father one more kiss, and to assure him that she would certainly be in time for the evening train. And once he called after her, and ran forward to tell her to say to uncle Daniel that he could have a cow in the spring, like the one he wanted last fall. And then he went back to his horse, and the boy and girl entered the depot together. Karl went forward, business written on every line of his manly face as he called for and paid for a ticket, and stood by protectingly while Christie pinned it in the corner of her handkerchief into her pocket. Then he made a little heap of the basket of apples, and the basket of nuts, and the flowered satchel and the shawl, making business-like comments the while.

"You must have the conductor lift off these baskets for you, Christie; they always do that for folks travelling alone. You don't have to give up your ticket, you know; the conductor makes a little hole in it, and then gives it back; he won't take it until you are almost at the city. And Christie, mother said I was to remind you the last thing, not to get off the cars until you saw uncle Daniel, and knocked on the window for him to come for you; mother worried about your getting off alone."



WELLS BURTON SPOKE TO THE LADY.