Family Department.

A NEW YEAR.

BY AGNES GIBERNE, AUTHOR OF "TWILIGHT VERSES."

Unknown to me; yet not unknown,
For Christ is there!
And though the veil hangs thick between,
Though of that future nought I ween,
I have no care.

Darksome to me; yet full of light,
For Jesus sees!
And while to His firm Hand I hold,
In every weakness I am bold,
And danger flees.

Fenced round by cloud; yet bright as day
In sunshine clear!
A land unreached by my dim eyes,
But radiant 'neath eternal skies—
Christ always near!

Shrouded from sight! What though it be—
Since I must go,
Must onward step o'er marsh and hill,
By paths of pain and mystery still—
If Jesus know?

He knows it all! He grasps the whole!
His perfect sight
Can fathom all my future way—
Can pierce the densest fogs of day,
The mists of night.

Grief waits ahead. It may be so!
Christ waiteth too!
Whate'er the road, His smile is mine:
His Hand, with touch of power Divine,
Shall bear me through!

The landscape may seem dark to me;
No need for care!
Fogs shall disperse and dimness end,—
As Heavenward still my steps I wend,—
Since He is there?

The *Fireside* for January.

HOME, SWEET HOME

BY MRS WALTON.

CHAPTER XIII.—CHRISTIE'S WORK FOR THE MASTER.

(Continued.)

Mrs. Villiers gladly agreed to go; so Christie knocked at the door at the bottom of the stairs. A young woman opened it, and they went in.

Mrs. White was lying on a bed in the corner of the room, and seemed to be asleep; but presently she opened her eyes, and when she saw Christie her face brightened, and she held out her hands in welcome. She was an old woman now, and had given up taking lodgers several years before.

"Oh, Christie," she said, "I *am* glad to see you; I have been counting the hours till you came."

"Mrs. Villiers has come to see you to-day, Mrs. White."

"Oh! how good of you," said the poor woman; "Christie said you would come some day."

"You have known Christie a long time, have you not?" said Mrs. Villiers.

"Yes," said the old woman, "he came to me first as a little ragged boy, shivering with cold; and I liked the look of him, ma'am, he was so much quieter than some that came here; and I used to give him a crust sometimes, when he looked more starved than usual."

"Yes, Mrs. White," said Christie, "you were often very good to me."

"Oh! not as I should have been, Christie; they were only crusts, I gave you, bits that were left from the men's meals, and not so much of them either; but you've come to me and you've brought me the Bread of Life,—not just bits and leavings, but enough and to spare, as much as I like, and more than enough for all I want."

"Oh, Christie," said Mrs. Villiers, "I am glad to hear this; the dear Lord has been very good to you; your work has not been in vain."

"In vain!" said the old woman; "I should think not! There's many a one, Mrs. Villiers, that will bless God in the house above for what you and your father have done for this lad; and there's no one that will bless him more than I shall. I was as dark as a heathen till Christie came to me, and read to me out of his Bible, and talked to me of Jesus, and put it all so clear to me. And now I know that my sins are forgiven, and very soon the Lord will take me home; and oh! dear, how nice that will be,—

'When in the snowy dress
Of Thy redeemed I stand,
Faultless and stainless,
Faultless and stainless,
Safe in that happy land!'"

"I see that Mrs. White knows your hymn, Christie," said Mrs. Villiers.

"Yes," said Christie, "I taught her it a long time ago, and she is as fond of it as my old master was."

After a little more conversation, Mrs. Villiers took her leave, and Christie continued his round of visits. All that long, sultry afternoon he toiled on, climbing dark staircases, going down into damp cellars, visiting crowded lodging houses; and everywhere, as he went, dropping seeds of the word of life, sweet words from the Book of books, suited to the hearts of those with whom he met.

For in that book Christie found there was a word for every need, and a message for every soul. There was peace for the sin burdened, comfort for the sorrowing, rest for the weary, counsel for the perplexed, and hope for the dying. And Christie always prayed before he went out that God's Holy Spirit would give him the right word for each one whom he went to see. And, as he knocked at the door of a house, he always lifted up his heart in a silent prayer, something like this:

"Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, give me the opportunity of saying something for Thee, and please help me use it, and show me how to say the right word."

And so it was no wonder that God blessed him. It was no wonder that wherever he went Christie not only found opportunities of doing good, but was able to use those opportunities to the best advantage. It was no wonder that when the people were ill they always sent for the young Scripture-reader to read and pray with them. It was no wonder that the little children loved him, or that the poor, tired mothers were glad to sit down for a few minutes to hear him read the words of comfort from the book of life. It was no wonder that all day long Christie found work to do for the Master, and souls waiting to receive the Master's message. He was generally very tired when he went home that night, but he did not mind this. For he never forgot old Treffy's sorrow, a few days before he died, because he had only a week left in which to show his love to his Saviour. And Christie thanked God every day that He had given to him the honor and privilege of working for Him.

Christie lodged in a quiet street not far from Ivy Court. He used to live some way out of the town: for he liked to have a walk after his day's work was done; but he found that the poor people often wanted him for different things in the evening and at other times, and so he removed nearer to them and nearer to his work. And very often they would come to him with their troubles, and sit in his little room pouring out their grief. The young men especially were very glad to come to Christie's lodging to have a talk with him; and once a week Christie had a little prayer meeting there, to which many of them came. And they found it a great help on their way to heaven.

When Christie opened the door of his lodging on the day of which I am writing, he heard a sound which very much surprised him. It was the sound of his old barrel-organ, and it was playing a few notes of "Home, sweet Home." He wondered much who could be turning it, for he had forbidden the landlady's children to touch it, except when he was present to see that no harm came to it. He sometimes smiled to himself at his care over the old organ. It reminded him of the days when he had first played it, with old Treffy standing by him and looking over his shoulder, saying in an axious voice, "Turn her gently, Christie boy; turn her gently."

And now he was almost as careful of it as Treffy himself, and he would not on any account have it injured. And so he hastened upstairs to see who it could be that was turning it this morning. On his way he met his landlady, who said that a gentleman was waiting for him in his parlor, who seemed very anxious to see him, and had been sitting there for some time. And, when Christie opened the door, who should be turning the barrel-organ but his old friend, Mr. Wilton!

They had not met for many years, for Mr. Wilton had settled in another part of England, where he was preaching the same truths as he had once preached in the little mission-room. But he had come to spend a Sunday in the scene of his former labors, and he was very anxious to know how his friend Christie was getting on, and whether he was still working for the Saviour, and still looking forward to "Home, sweet Home."

It was a very affectionate meeting between Mr. Wilton and his young friend. They had much to talk about, not having seen each other for so long.

"So you still have the old organ, Christie," said Mr. Wilton, looking down at the faded silk, which was even more colorless than it had been in Treffy's days.

"Yes, sir," said Christie, "I could never part with it; I promised my old master that I never would, and it was his dying gift to me. And often now when I hear the notes of 'Home, sweet Home,' it takes my thoughts to old Treffy, and I think what a happy time he must have had in 'the city bright,' all these fifteen years."

"Do you remember how you used to want to go there too, Christie?"

"Yes, Mr. Wilton, and I don't want it any the less now; but still I should like to live some years longer, if it is His will. There is so much to do in the world, isn't there, sir? And what I do only seems to me like a drop in the ocean when I look at the hundreds of people there are in these crowded courts; I could almost cry sometimes when I feel how little I can teach them."

"Yes, Christie," said Mr. Wilton, "there is a great deal to do, and we cannot do a tenth part, nor yet a thousanth part, of what there is to do; what we must strive after is, that the dear Master may be able to say of each of us, 'He hath done what he *could*.'"

Then Mr. Wilton and Christie knelt down and prayed that God would give Christie a blessing on his work, and would enable him to lead many of the people, in the courts and lanes of that wretched neighborhood, to come to Jesus, that they might find a home in that city where Treffy was gone before.

CHAPTER XIV.—"HOME, SWEET HOME, AT LAST."

It was Sunday evening, and Christie was once more in the little mission-room; but not now as a poor ragged boy, sitting on the front bench, and in danger in being turned out by the woman who lighted the gas-lamps. She would not dream of turning Christie out now, for the young Scripture-reader was a well-known man in the district. He was always there early, before any of the people arrived, and he used to stand at the door and welcome each one as they came in, helping the old men and women to their seats, and looking out anxiously for those whom he had invited for the first time during the