

CHRISTIE'S CHRISTMAS.

BY PANSY.

CHAPTER V.—Continued.

Dear! dear! what a state of things. Disheartening as it all was, Christie could not help being astonished to see how cross the people were.

"They act exactly as though they thought the roads and the bridges had done it on purpose just to vex them," she told Wells as she obeyed the motion of his hand and brought the baby to the turned seat in front of him. "Do you suppose they really know of somebody who is to blame?"

"Why, no," said Wells thoughtfully, "I presume not; they just fret and say 'it is a pretty business!' and all that sort of thing, because that is the natural way to act when folks are disappointed. Isn't that the way you do when things don't go to suit you?"

Christie's head drooped a little and the pretty pink flush began to come on her cheek. "Once I used to do it to things," she said slowly, with a marked emphasis on the word "things." "I would slam the door when I was cross about something, and I would scold the kitchen fire for not burning, and I would put the wood down on the hearth with a great bang; but once I lost a penny under the carpet and I scolded about that; but that was when I was alone. The minute Mrs. Briggs came in to see mother, or even the market man stopped to see if we wanted anything, I would shut the door gently, and lay the wood on the hearth just as softly as I could, and I worked half an hour once helping Susan Briggs open her desk, and never thought of being cross, because I was ashamed, you know, to have them see me do any other way. Now shouldn't you think these people would feel kind of ashamed to grumble before one another?"

But the only answer that Wells seemed to have ready for this was an absent-minded laugh; he was thinking of one part of Christie's sentence that he wanted to have explained.

"Look here," he said, "you say you used to be cross at things. Do you mean that you've given even that up?"

Christie gravely bowed her head. "I'm most cured of it," she said softly. "I think it is only once in a long while now that I forget. I was so in the habit of it that it was dreadfully hard work. You see this was after I had begun to try to do right; and I thought if I kept pleasant before people, there wouldn't be anything wrong in slamming doors a little—when nobody was there to see—and in scolding the fire because it couldn't have its feelings hurt, you know; but when I found out that it was almost worse to do that than to be cross to people I tried hard to give it up."

"You are talking Greek to me,"



I LOST A PENNY, AND SCOLDED AT THAT.

Wells said good-naturally, but the tone said that he was very much interested, and should really like to understand Greek if he could. "What possible harm could there be in slamming a door, or growling at a fire, so long as nobody heard you? I should say it was a safe and comfortable way of working off ill-humor; I'm sure I wish some of the peppery folks I know would try that fashion. What made you think there was anything bad about it?"

"I didn't find it out myself," Christie said, her eyes drooping again. "You see I got into trouble. I wanted some things that I couldn't have, and I wanted to do some things that I couldn't do, and I thought about them until they made me feel cross half the time. I slammed all the doors I could, and the fire needed scolding every time I went near it, and I"—here there was a little hesitation and the cheeks grew

pinker—"I even got to scolding at the baby when she was most asleep and couldn't hear me; real hateful things I said to her, about being the hardest baby to get to sleep that ever was born and about taking all my time so that I couldn't study, nor knit, nor anything. I never would have said it to her if she had been awake, and I used to kiss her as soon as I had tucked her in the crib, but for all that, I grumbled at her a great deal. At last it got so bad that I knew I was getting to be cross all the time, and I couldn't seem to stop it; and one day I told the minister about it."

"You did!" Wells Burton's exclamation had a good deal of admiration in it; the truth was, he began to think that Christie must be a very brave girl. He told himself that he would rather stop twenty trains of cars than to go to the minister and have a talk about his faults! But Christie believed he thought she was



I HELPED SUSAN BRIGGS OPEN HER DESK.

a simpleton. Nevertheless she meant to tell just the truth.

"Yes, I did," she said steadily. "One day he came to see us, and mother wasn't at home. The baby at Briggs had burnt himself and they sent for mother, and father had gone to the mill, and there wasn't anybody at home, only just baby and me, and I had been real cross to her; I shook her a little speck, not to hurt, you know, but then it was horrid; I felt so ashamed of myself that I cried; and just then the minister came. He asked me right away what was the matter, and that made me cry again, and then, you know, I almost had to tell him. It was something he said that has helped me ever since."

"Do you mind telling me what it was?" Wells Burton's voice was so gentle, that she gave up the fancy that he was making fun of her.

"Why, it was something that I knew all the time, and I've often wondered that I did not think of it for myself. I told him that I had no trouble in being pleasant before people, because I would be so ashamed to have them see me looking cross. And that I kept my words pretty near right, but I couldn't manage my thoughts. And he asked me how I thought I should act if Jesus should come to our house, as he used to, at Mary and Martha's. I told him that I knew then I should act just as well as I could; then he asked me if I did not remember that Jesus had come to our house, and was staying there all the time, and heard all my thoughts, as well as my words? You don't know how it made me feel for a moment; I just felt scared. It seemed to me that I could remember all the times that I had banged the door, and rattled the wood, and Jesus looking at me! What made me most ashamed, was, that I had tried to behave myself before Mrs. Briggs, and the other neighbors, and never minded how I behaved before Jesus. Just as though I thought more of them than I did of him!"

"Humph!" said Wells. "I don't pretend to understand. I don't see how that helped you a bit. Of course if a fellow could realize that Jesus was listening to what he said, it would make a big difference all the time. There are fifty thousand things a fellow says and does that he wouldn't do for the world! But the trouble is you can't realize it. A person that you can see and hear is very different from one that you can't see and hear; now that's the truth, and I don't see how anybody can say it isn't. Do you mean to have me understand that you are as sure of Jesus being near you as you are that I sit on this seat talking to you?"

"I'm just as sure of it," Christie said with a quiet positiveness that went a great way toward