

# Little Christian.

(A Christmas Story.)

Translated from the French by Antoinette LeBlanc.

## CHAPTER III.

About six months after this, their wish was granted. George was appointed to the position of surveyor of a large hunting ground near Henneberg, situated in a fertile valley. His life was now peaceful and happy for the work was so much easier than that he had left. Having more spare time, he now devoted a great deal of it to Christian's education, and thus made Agatha's task somewhat lighter. With two such guides, Christian being a naturally intelligent child, made rapid progress in all he undertook to do. George would take him to the Castle park and there give him lessons in Botany; in a short time Christian knew the names of the different trees and plants. Thus he was instructed, and his ideas soon developed. He was passionately fond of reading, and his father could not find books enough to satisfy his craving, but he took care that they would be instructive and beneficial to his soul, as well as his body. He liked to hear about the mysteries and truths of his religion, and had a great devotion to the Divine Infant, whose feast Agatha celebrated with as much fervor as in the days of her childhood.

Christian mixed very little with the village children, and rarely joined in their games; not because he was disagreeable, but he was fond of being at home, and liked nothing better than to go out hunting with the foresters; when not doing this, he would help Agatha in the garden, prepare the ground, gather the fruit, or prune the trees. Thus was he brought up by this humble family, who gained all by the sweat of their brow. He never wanted for anything, and was always dressed with the greatest neatness. The wish to occupy a better position never once entered his mind, and if by chance he showed any signs of being jealous, Agatha would talk to him of our Lord, who, though

poor and humble, was deserving of all adoration. One thing, however, made Agatha feel very sad, this was when he expressed a wish to see new places; he preferred books of travel to any others, when he saw that this would make Agatha feel badly, he would say, "See, I am not going away, but, oh! how grand it must be to travel." Often the child felt that he was not in the position God wished him to occupy. Old Ursala's words, though they had filled him with terror, had nevertheless let him see that there was some mystery about his life, which he would like to solve. However, if he asked anything about it, she would say, "Why do you not believe us, Christian? Have you not all you want; could we have done any more?" "No," Christian would say, and in his heart he would render homage to his dear parents. Each day this wish grew stronger and stronger. At last George said to Sabine, "What will become of our boy; we must try and find an honest trade for him. The other day I asked him what he would like, but he said nothing. I know that he is fond of study, but we have not the means of educating him. I am greatly puzzled about him. We have done all we could do, and will continue to do so." "Father," said Agatha, "time will enlighten us as to what course we had better pursue regarding my brother. As you have just said, you have done all that you could. Let us leave it to God. He in His own good time, will reveal to us what is most useful to Christian."

A year or more had passed over their heads. Still Christian's wish grew stronger, and he felt that he must soon leave the shelter of his home and find some means of educating himself. Often his mother would say, "There is an old proverb which says, 'Remain in thy own country, and content thyself with what thou hast.'" This made such an impression on him, that he at last re-