

CHRISTIE'S
OLD ORGAN

Mrs. O.F. Walton

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CHRISTIE'S OLD ORGAN

OR

“Home, Sweet Home”

Mrs. O.F. Walton

Edited by Joshua Schwisow

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Contents

Introduction	9
CHAPTER 1	
The Old Organ.....	13
CHAPTER 2	
Christie’s Important Charge.....	19
CHAPTER 3	
Only Another Month.....	27
CHAPTER 4	
Mabel’s First Lesson in Organ-Grinding.....	37
CHAPTER 5	
No Sin in the City Bright.....	43
CHAPTER 6	
The Only Way Into “Home, Sweet Home”.....	51
CHAPTER 7	
Little Mabel’s Snowdrops.....	59

CHAPTER 8	
Made Meet for Home	67
CHAPTER 9	
Treffy Enters the City.....	75
CHAPTER 10	
“No Place Like Home”	83
CHAPTER 11	
Alone in the World.....	89
CHAPTER 12	
Christie Well Cared For	95
CHAPTER 13	
Christie’s Work for the Master	101
CHAPTER 14	
“Home, Sweet Home,” at Last.....	111
Appendix 1: “Home, Sweet Home”	117
Appendix 2: “There is a City Bright”	119

Introduction

Since its publication in 1874, *Christie's Old Organ* has become a Christian classic for children. This short book is about an orphan named Christie who, along with old Treffy, finds the pearl of great price. By faith, they are cleansed from their sins by the blood of Jesus Christ and receive an eternal inheritance. There are many poignant scenes in this book, and the reality of death is dealt with honestly throughout the book. Yet throughout the narrative, the reader is pointed back to the eternal hope we have in Christ.

Through the repeated refrain of “Home, Sweet Home” the reader is reminded of our need for an eternal home. This drives a sense of longing in the reader to look beyond the things which are seen, which the Bible says are transitory (2 Cor. 4:18), and to find hope in the eternal things, which are unseen, and are secured for us through the blood of Christ. Mrs. Walton also makes effective use of key biblical passages that are repeated numerous times throughout the narrative including 1 John 1:7 and Psalm 51:7, among others. The narrative drives home the

plain truth of the Word of God: all have sinned, and all need cleansing. The only cleansing that saves us and secures for us an eternal home is the cleansing of Christ's blood.

Christie's Old Organ was written by Mrs. O.F. Walton (Amy Catherine Walton). Amy Walton lived from 1849 to 1939. She was the wife of Octavius Frank Walton, a pastor in the Church of England, and traveled with her husband during the years of his pastoral ministry, spending four years in Jerusalem, followed by years of pastoral ministry in Scotland and England.

This edition of *Christie's Old Organ* contains the original, unabridged text. Additionally, we have added Scripture passages at the beginning of each chapter, which connect to the content of that chapter. Occasionally, we have also added explanatory footnotes for some of the more obscure historical references, and references for the Scripture verses cited in the narrative. Two appendixes at the end of the book include the frequently cited songs "Home, Sweet Home" and "There is a City Bright."

Editor - Joshua Schwisow
January, AD 2025

The Old Organ

For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.
(2 Corinthians 5:1)

“Home, sweet home, there’s no place like home, there’s no place like home,” played the unmusical notes of a barrel-organ¹ in the top room of a lodging-house in a dreary back street. The words certainly did not seem to apply to that dismal abode; there were not many there who knew much of the sweets of home.

It was a very dark, uncomfortable place, and as the lodgers in the lower room turned over on their wretched beds, many of

1. A barrel-organ is a mechanical musical instrument from which predetermined music is produced by turning a handle. These were commonly used by street musicians in the 1800s. They can still be seen in some European cities in the modern day.

which were merely bare wooden benches, it may be that one and another gave a sigh as he thought how far he was from "Home, sweet home."

But the organ played on, though the hour was late, and the dip candle was put out, and the fire was dying away. If you had climbed the crooked staircase, you would have seen an old man sitting alone in his attic, and smiling at his organ as he turned it with a trembling hand.

Old Treffy loved his barrel-organ; it was the one comfort of his life. He was a poor, forlorn old man, without a friend in the world. Every one that he had loved was dead; he had no one to whom he could talk, or to whom he could tell his troubles, and thus he gathered up all the remaining bits and fragments of love in his old heart, faded and withered though they were, and he gave them all to his old organ, which had well-nigh seen as many summers as he had. It was getting very antiquated and old-fashioned now; the red silk in front of it was very soiled and worn, and it could not play any of the new tunes of which the children were so fond. It sometimes struck old Treffy that he and his organ were very much alike—they were getting altogether behind the age; and people looked down upon them and pushed past them, as they hurried along the street. And though old Treffy was very patient, yet he could not help feeling this.

He had felt it very much on the day of which I am writing. It was cold, dismal weather; a cutting east wind had swept round the corners of the streets, and had chilled the old man through and through. His threadbare coat could not keep it out; how could he expect it to do so, when he had worn it so many years he could scarcely count them? His thin, trembling old hands were so benumbed with cold that he could scarcely feel the handle of the organ, and, as he turned it, he made sundry little shakes and quavers in the tune, which were certainly not intended by the maker of the old barrel-organ.

There was not much variety in the tunes old Treffy could

play. There was the “Old Hundredth,”² and “Poor Mary Ann,”³ and “Rule Britannia;”⁴ the only other one was “Home, sweet Home,”⁵ but that was old Treffy’s favorite. He always played it very slowly, to make it last longer, and on this cold day the shakes and the quavers in it sounded most pathetic.

But no one took much notice of old Treffy or his organ. A little crowd of children gathered round him, and asked him for all sorts of new tunes of which he had never even heard the names.

They did not seem to care for “Home, sweet Home,” or the “Old Hundredth,” and soon moved away. Then an old gentleman put his head out of a window, and in a cross voice told him to go on and not disturb a quiet neighborhood with his noise. Old Treffy meekly obeyed, and, battling with the rough east wind, he tried another and a more bustling street; but here a policeman warned him to depart, lest he should crowd up the way.

Poor old Treffy was almost fainting, but he must not give up, for he had not a half-penny in his pocket, and he had come out without breakfast. At length a kind-hearted farmer’s wife, who was passing with a basket on her arm, took pity on the trembling old man, and gave him a penny from her capacious pocket.

Thus, all day long Treffy played on; over and over again his four tunes were sounded forth, but that was the only penny he received that cold day.

At last, as the daylight was fading, he turned homeward. On

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2. “Old Hundredth” is a common tune that came from the *Genevan Psalter* around 1551. It is frequently used for musical settings of Psalm 100 and the Doxology.
 3. “Poor Mary Ann” likely refers to a tune used in English Country dance written around 1784.
 4. “Rule Britannia” is a common British patriotic song which was written in 1740.
 5. “Home, sweet Home” was written by John Howard Payne and set to music composed by Sir Henry Bishop, first produced in London in 1823.

his way he parted with his solitary penny for a cake of bread, and slowly and wearily he dragged himself up the steep stairs to his lonely attic.

Poor old Treffy was in bad spirits this evening. He felt that he and his organ were getting out of date—things of the past. They were growing old together. He could remember the day when it was new. How proud he had been of it! Oh, how he had admired it! The red silk was quite bright, and the tunes were all in fashion. There were not so many organs about then, and people stopped to listen. Not children only, but grown men and women, and Treffy had been a proud man in those days. But a generation had grown up since then, and now Treffy felt that he was a poor, lone old man, very far behind the age, and that his organ was getting too old-fashioned for the present day. Thus, he felt very cast down and dismal, as he raked together the cinders, and tried to make a little blaze in the small fire he had lighted.

But when he had eaten his cake and had taken some tea which he had warmed over again, old Treffy felt rather better, and he turned as usual to his old organ to cheer his fainting spirits. For old Treffy knew nothing of a better Comforter.

The landlady of the house had objected at first to old Treffy's organ; she said it disturbed the lodgers; but on Treffy's offering to pay a penny a week extra for his little attic, on condition of his being able to play whenever he liked, she made no further opposition.

And thus, till late in the night, he turned away, and his face grew brighter, and his heart lighter, as he listened to his four tunes. It was such good company, he said, and the attic was so lonely at night. And there was no one to find fault with the organ there, or to call it old-fashioned. Treffy admired it with all his heart, and felt that at night at least it had justice done to it.

But there was one who was listening to the old organ, and admiring it as much as Treffy, of whom the old man knew nothing. Outside his door, crouching down with his ear against

a large crack, lay a little ragged boy; he had come into the great lodging-room downstairs to sleep, and had laid down on one of the hard benches, when old Treffy's barrel-organ began to play. He had not listened to it much at first, but when the first notes of "Home, sweet Home," had been sounded forth, little Christie had raised his head on his elbow, and listened with all his might. It was almost too much for him; it was a memory of the past. A few months ago, little Christie had a mother, and this was the last tune she sang. It brought it all back to him; the bare, desolate room, the wasted form on the bed, the dear, loving hand which had stroked his face so gently, and the sweet voice had sung that very tune to him. He could hear her, even now: "Home, sweet home, there's no place like home; there's no place like home." How sweetly she had sung it! He remembered it so well. And he remembered what she had said to him just afterwards,

"I'm going home, Christie—going home—home, sweet home; I'm going home, Christie."

And those were the last words she had said to him.

Since then, life had been very dreary to little Christopher. Life without a mother, it hardly *was* life to him. He had never been happy since she had died. He had worked very hard, poor little fellow, to earn his bread, for she had told him to do that. But he had often wished he could go to his mother in "Home, sweet Home." And he wished it more than ever this night, as he heard his mother's tune. He waited for it very patiently, whilst old Treffy was playing the other three which came first, but at length some one closed the door, and the noise inside the lodging-room was so great that he could not distinguish the notes of the longed-for tune.

So Christie crept out quietly in the darkness, and closing the door softly, that no one might notice it, he stole gently upstairs. He knelt down by the door and listened. It was very cold, and the wind swept up the staircase, and made little Christie shiver. Yet still he knelt by the door.

At length the organ stopped; he heard the old man putting it down by the wall, and in a few minutes all was still.

Then Christie crept downstairs again, and lay down once more on his hard bench, and he fell asleep, and dreamt of the mother in the far-off land. And he thought he heard her singing, "Home, sweet Home, I'm home now, Christie; I'm home now, and there's no place like home."

Christie's Important Charge

And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away." (Revelation 21:3-4)

The dismal lodging-house had a charm for little Christie now. Night after night he returned there, so that he might hear his mother's tune. The landlady began to look upon him as one of her regular household. She sometimes gave him a crust of bread, for she noticed his hungry face each night, as he came to the large lodging-room to sleep.

And every night old Treffy played, and Christie crept upstairs to listen.

But one night, as he was kneeling at the attic door, the music

suddenly ceased, and Christie heard a dull, heavy sound, as if something had fallen on the floor. He waited a minute, but all was quite still; so he cautiously lifted the latch, and peeped into the room. There was only a dim light in the attic, for the fire was nearly out, and old Treffy had no candle. But the moonlight, streaming in at the window, showed Christie the form of the old man stretched on the ground, and his poor old barrel-organ laid beside him. Christie crept to his side, and took hold of his hand. It was deadly cold, and Christie thought he was dead. He was just going to call the landlady, when the old man moved, and in a trembling voice asked, "What's the matter, and who's there?"

"It's only me, Master Treffy," said Christie, "it's only me. I was listening to your organ, I was, and I heard you tumble, so I came in. Are you better, Master Treffy?"

The old man raised his head and looked round. Christie helped him to get up and took him to his attic straw bed in the corner of the attic.

"Are you better, Master Treffy?" he asked again.

"Yes, yes," said the old man; "it's only the cold, boy; it's very chilly o' nights now, and I'm a poor lone old man. Good night."

And so, the old man fell asleep, and Christie lay down by his side and slept also.

That was the beginning of a friendship between old Treffy and Christie. They were both alone in the world, both friendless and desolate, and it drew them to each other. Christie was a great comfort to Treffy. He went errands for him, he cleaned the old attic, and he carried the barrel-organ downstairs each morning when Treffy went on his rounds. And, in return, Treffy gave Christie a corner of the attic to sleep in and let him sit over his tiny fire whilst he played his dear old organ. And whenever he came to "Home, sweet Home," Christie thought of his mother, and of what she had said to him before she died.

"Where is 'Home, sweet Home,' Master Treffy?" he asked one night.

Treffy looked round the wretched little attic, with its damp, weather-stained roof, and its rickety rotten floor, and felt that he could not call *it* "Home, sweet Home."

"It's not here, Christie," he said.

"No," said Christie, thoughtfully; "I expect it's a long way from here, Master Treffy."

"Yes," said the old man; "there must be something better somewhere."

"My mother used to talk about heaven," said Christie, doubtfully. "I wonder if that was the home she meant?"

But old Treffy knew very little of heaven; no one had ever told him of the home above. Yet he thought of Christie's words many times that day, as he dragged himself about wearily, with his old organ. He was failing very fast, poor old man; his legs were becoming feeble, and he was almost fainting when he reached the attic. The cold wind had chilled him through and through.

Christie was at home before him, and had lit the fire, and boiled the kettle, and put all ready for old Treffy's comfort. He wondered what was the matter with Treffy that night; he was so quiet and silent, and he never even asked for his old organ after tea, but went to bed as soon as possible.

And the next day he was too weak and feeble to go out; and Christie watched beside him, and got him all he wanted, as tenderly as a woman could have done.

And the next day it was the same, and the day after that, till the attic cupboard grew empty, and all poor old Treffy's pence were gone.

"What are we to do, now, Christie?" he said, pitifully; "I can't go out to-day, my lad, can I?"

"No," said Christie, "you mustn't think of it, Master Treffy. Let me see, what can we do? Shall *I* take the organ out?"

Old Treffy did not answer; a great struggle was going on in his mind. Could he let anyone but himself touch his dear old organ? It would be very hard to see it go out, and have to stay

behind—very hard indeed. But Christie was a careful lad; he would rather trust it with him than with any one else; and he had come to his last piece of money. He must not sit still and starve. Yes, the organ must go; but it would be a great trial to him. He would be so lonely in the dark attic when Christie and the organ were both gone. What a long, tedious day it would be to him!

“Yes, Christie, you may take her tomorrow,” he said at length; “but you must be *very* careful of her, my lad, very careful.”

“All right, Master Treffy,” said Christie, cheerily; “I’ll bring her safe home, you see if I don’t.”

What a day that was in Christie’s life! He was up with the lark, as people say, but there was no lark within many a mile of that dismal street. He was certainly up before the sparrows, and long before the men on the benches in the great lodging-room. He crept out cautiously into the court in the gray morning light, and kneeling by the common pump, he splashed the water upon his face and neck till they lost all feeling with the cold. Then he rubbed his hands till they were as red as cherries, and he was obliged to wrap them up in his ragged coat that he might feel they still belonged to him. And then he stole upstairs again, and lifting the latch of the attic door very gently, lest old Treffy should awake, he combed his rough hair with a broken comb, and arranged his ragged garments to the best possible advantage.

Then Christie was ready; and he longed for the time when old Treffy would awake and give him leave to go. The sparrows were chirping on the eaves now, and the sun was beginning to shine. There were noises in the house, too, and one by one the men in the great lodging-room shook themselves and went out to their work and to their labor until the evening.

Christie watched them crossing the court, and his impatience to be off grew stronger. At length he touched old Treffy’s hand very gently, and the old man said, in a bewildered voice,

“What is it, Christie, boy? what is it?”

"It's morning, Master Treffy," said Christie; "shall you soon be awake?"

The old man turned over in bed, and finally sat up.

"Why, Christie, boy, how nice you look!" said Treffy, admiringly.

Christie drew himself up with considerable importance, and walked up and down the attic, that Treffy might further admire him.

"May I go now, Master Treffy?" he asked.

"Yes, Christie, boy, go if you like," said the old man; "but you'll be very careful of her, won't you, Christie?"

"Yes, Master Treffy," said the boy, "I'll be as careful as you are."

"And you'll not turn her round too fast, Christie," he went on.

"No, Master Treffy," said Christie, "I'll turn her no faster than you do."

"And you mustn't stop and talk to boys in the street, Christie; they're very rude sometimes, are boys, and they always want the new tunes, Christie; but never you heed them. Her tunes are getting old-fashioned, poor old thing; she's something like me. But you mustn't take no notice of the boys, Christie."

"No, Master Treffy," said Christie; "no more than you do."

"There's one tune they're very fond of," said old Treffy, meditatively; "I don't rightly know what it is; they call it 'Marshal Lazy' [Marseillaise], or something of that sort. I reckon it's called after some man in the wars, maybe."¹

"You don't know who he was?" asked Christie.

"No," said old Treffy, "I don't bother my head about it. I expect he was some lazy scoundrel who wouldn't do his duty, and so they made up a song to mock at him. But that's as it may

1. This is a reference to the national anthem of France, titled "La Marseillaise."

be, Christie; I don't know, I'm sure. I expect he wasn't born when my organ was made; I expect not, Christie."

"Well, Master Treffy, I'm ready," said Christy, putting the organ-strap over his neck; "goodbye."

And, with an air of great importance, Christie carefully descended the rickety stairs, and marched triumphantly across the court. A few children who were there gathered round him with admiring eyes, and escorted him down the street.

"Give us a tune, Christie; play away, Christie," they all cried out. But Christie shook his head resolutely, and marched on. He was not sorry when they grew tired of following him and turned back. Now he felt himself a man; and he went on in a most independent manner.

And then he began to play. What a moment that was for him!

He had often turned the handle of the barrel-organ in the lonely old attic, but that was a very different thing to playing it in the street. There had been no one to hear him there except old Treffy, who used to stand by most anxiously, saying, "Turn her gently, Christie; turn her gently." But here there were crowds of people passing by, and sometimes some one stopped for a minute, and then how proud Christie felt! There was no barrel-organ like his, he felt sure. He did not care what the folks said about Marshal Lazy; he was not so good as poor Mary Ann, Christie felt sure; and as for "Home, sweet Home," Christie almost broke down every time he played it. He did *so* love his mother, and he could not help thinking she was singing it still somewhere. He wondered very much where she was, and where "Home, sweet Home," was. He must try to find out somehow.

And thus the day wore away, and Christie's patience was rewarded by quite a little store of pence. How proud he was to spend it on his way home in comforts for old Treffy, and how much he enjoyed giving the old man an account of his day's adventures!

Treffy gave Christie a warm welcome when he opened the attic door; but it would be hard to say whether he was more pleased to see Christie, or to see his dear old barrel-organ. He examined it most carefully and tenderly, but he could not discover that Christie had done any harm to it, and he praised him accordingly.

Then, while Christie was getting tea ready, Treffy played through all his four tunes, dwelling most affectionately and admiringly on "Home, sweet Home."