PARINTHA ANN'S HOME-MADE CHRISTMAS.

Written for the NEWS.

You never would have known that Parintha Ann Wharton was a sensitive girl. She was not pretty, she was a worker, and she was above all a good girl. Further than that neither you nor I would know, unless we were to live in the Wharton family for many weeks.

"It's too bad!" she said to the assembled family, about three weeks before Christmas, "that we can't have our usual Christmas time. But we can't, and so there's an end of it."

"Can't we have a dollar present apiece?" inquired Serena, ruffling her pretty brows as she spoke.

"I don't know yet, I haven't quite made up accounts this month and I am not sure just what I can spare for presents."

"Now don't be too stingy," said the little, slender, narrow-nosed mother. "You must remember that your father always gave me all the money I wanted at Christmas time, if he was a little close at other times. Just you act as if he was here, and don't hold your money too tight."

"I ain't tight, mother, and you know it. But neither father nor you want me to run you all in debt, and I ain't going to do it, if I can help it."

The fact was, that Parintha was the bread-winner of the family, and had been since the father left for his European mission nearly a year ago. She brought in all there was to bring in with her efforts, in training the young ideas of Mapletown, into some kind of accuracy as to shooting at a mental mark. She had not only inherited her father's executive ability, but she was also as wise as he in her refusal to go in debt. So it naturally came about that she carried the purse and dictated the expenditure of the funds.

"I want some money, anyway," said Serena, "and even if you do earn it outright, I think I have a right to spend some of it, as I help to do the housework while you are teaching the school."

"Much help you are," growled eighteen year old Tom.

"That's all right, Serena," replied Parintha Ann, "But neither you nor I can have any more than there is to have, can we now?"

That proposition having been cheerfully assented to, the whole family, consisting of the mother, two oldest daughters, a boy of eighteen and one of ten, with six year old Jenny, proceeded to discuss the situation.

"Now, Tom, you can, if you want to, earn us a tree. And you know Christmas isn't Christmas without a tree. I heard the Wells children say that their father was going up to the canyon to get trees for the grocery, and you can offer to cut their kindlings up for this winter if they will get us a tree. Will you? Well, then let's see what Sammy can do. I want say, now! but I will have a talk with you in private, Sam, and we will see what you can be doing to help the matter along."

And they did talk in private. There were also other private conferences. In fact, the whole family seemed possessed with a desire to confer one with another, and the whispered consultations, with the sundry nods and wise winks, would have given one the idea that state secrets of grave import were being considered and discussed.

It was noticed however, that Serena did no consulting at all and whatever was done by that pretty and somewhat lazy girl, no one was the wiser in that house. Serena expected, I am strongly of the opinion, to get to heaven solely on the strength of a remarkable pink and white skin and a pair of lovely and liquid blue eyes. She had been told so often of her beautiful skin and eyes that she forgot to look at her own narrow nose and her somewhat thin and pale lips which opened upon a pair of yellow and ill-kept teeth.

Serena was as I have intimated, serenely unconscious of anything dear to any of her own beauty and therefore it was with a great degree of satisfaction that she always managed to walk to and from Church by the side of their rather reserved and yet refined and modest young boarder, Brother Martin, the professor of music in their Stake Academy, thus virtually preempting that handsome fellow's attention.

Serena was not averse to using slang; and when she remarked to one of her companions that she had the "slick thing" thus appropriating the society of the youthful professor, accompanying her remark with a distinctly vulgar waving clip of her hand, Serena was unconscious of the fact that there is a tremendous wide sort of a space which comes in between the cup of desire and the lip of certainty.

Be that as it may, the days fairly flew along between the first family consultation and the great holiday. What a Christmas eve that was!

There were great white fleecy clouds sailing over the sky, and instead of old Boreas whistling down the lanes and streets of Mapletown, there was a fallikee stillness in the air, and a pretty hazy sheen of bluish green over the distant mountain tops, while underfoot, there was absolutely not one speck of snow to rest the summer weary eyes upon. One could almost have enjoyed a lawn party instead of huge fires in the grates and piled up blankets upon the beds.

Parintha Ann was up and at work on the tree, at an early hour the morning before Christmas. Much hurried goings to and fro, such whisperings and shutings of the sitting room door in the face of every child who dared to intrude his small presence, would have made the inmates of that house anything but happy, only that it was good, kind sister Rinth who did all the door shuttings and refused all the favors. So the children crept away and stayed away as patiently as they could.

Serena was not any too busy, however, and when Professor Martin came home to his luncheon, she was all "rigged up" as Tom irreverently put it, with a spruce white apron and the loveliest pink cheeks in the world. She waited on the professor with her sweetest manner; would he have more cream for his tea? Or would he like another piece of pie? And when he praised the pie, she remarked jokingly that folks always liked her pie.

"Fear that?" asked Sammy of Tommy, "Serene never made a pie in her life. She just puts the crust in the plate after Rinthie has made it all up, and stuffs in the mincemeat which Rinth has fixed and then she calls 'em her pies. Humpf!" and Tommy looked unutterable disdain of all such doings and sayings.

"There is to be a party on New Year's eve, I suppose you will be there and play?" said Serena sweetly, as she cut the second piece of pie for the young man. "I guess it will be a pretty fine affair. We don't go in many 'parties now, for father is on a mission you know, and we folks are not able to dress so well as we used to do, but folks are kind to us orphans, after all, especially you professor."

The professor went on eating his excellent pie, and very likely that was the reason he said nothing in reply to this palpable hint.

"I do think you have been kind to us professor, and I am sure father will be grateful to you for your taking his girls out whenever you could. Of course Rinth can't get out much, but she is just as good as gold, professor."

The professor drew the lids of his shortsighted eyes closely together, as he surveyed the little maiden through his glasses.

"You are more than welcome to whatever I have done in this respect, Miss Serena, and I hope to add more to that debt of gratitude, if it ought to be dignified by such a name, by taking you all out whenever I can do so."

Serena was highly delighted, and as soon as she could, she ran into the sitting room, and in spite of her sister's remonstrance she rushed up to Parintha and catching her around the waist, she squeezed her until that tired girl cried out.

"But you must let me squeeze you, dearie, for I am so happy. Just think, that dear lovely professor has asked me to go to that grand New Year's ball with him, and I just determined you shall go along. Now, it's no use. You have just got to go, that's all. You shall fix up ma's black silk, and I am going to wear my new pale blue nun's veiling. Oh, isn't he flip!"

Parintha had much ado to get the excited girl out of the room, and when she did, Parintha did a very undignified piece of business; she actually slapped her freckled face on both sides and pulling down her wealth of ugly reddish brown hair, she jerked and pulled it until her head was sore.

"Ugly, stupid, hateful face and red hair! How I hate you at times! How I do hate you!"

She sat for nearly an hour, too unhappy to finish her task. Then, slowly regaining composure she thought out her own repentant thoughts and getting down upon her knees she prayed her simple, earnest prayer.

"Oh God, forgive me that I have lost so much time in giving way to my temper. Forgive me that I hate the body Thou hast given to me, and help me to overcome myself! Help me to make this Christmas a happy one for every one beneath this roof, and let me be Thy loving, dutiful child!"

That was all, for Parintha Ann was a girl of few words. Then she got up and so quickly and faithfully did she work, that by eight o'clock the tree was finished and she had lost a whole hour in silent misery.

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Six o'clock Christmas morning. All is quiet, until a little voice sleepingly yawns and then exclaims, "Merry Christmas, mother!"