

their sphere, even though unheeded in the radiant thoroughfares below by the gay crowd who pass and repass, intent on the pleasure of providing for the coming Christmas-tide.

In a wretched attic, in one of the lower haunts of the city, there sits a shivering, cowering form.

He is miserably clad, and the frosty air, piercing through the holes and crevices of his mean abode, causes him to shiver, and his teeth to chatter audibly. His features are pinched, and have a hungry look; his hair is long and uncombed, his beard tangled and unshorn. His hands are bony like the claws of some huge bird of prey, and are clasped about his knees, upon which his sharp chin is resting, while his sunken though keen and piercing eyes are fixed absently upon the few expiring embers in the fire-place before which he is sitting.

The room is devoid of furniture, save a bed of straw and a meager blanket in one corner, a stool and rickety table in another.

The occupant of this comfortless apartment is the apparently poverty-stricken old man whose deep-drawn sigh had interrupted the conversation of the two young girls as they stood before the gayly-decorated shop-window.

"No one to care for or love me—no one to care for or love me," he kept mumbling to himself, as he sat rocking back and forth upon the floor before the dying fire.

"Love is better than gold," the child said; "is it? is it?" he muttered in a startled way, while his piercing eyes went roving about the room with a suspicious look, as if he feared some one from without might be observing him.

This wretched object had happened to be strolling along the street just as that little company had stopped before the window.

He had caught the bright-eyed Lillie's exclamation and eager wish for a "pocketful of money." He had marked the wistful tone, the long-drawn sigh; he had noted the grave, thoughtful, but longing look of the intelligent lad, as the much-wished-for draughting tools were pointed out, and he had heard, and been startled, by the generous wishes for the poor, and suffering, and needy, as expressed by the gentle Annie.

Her earnest face haunted him; her wish that she could "make everyone in that great city happy, if but for twenty-four hours," rang in his ears; her sigh of regret "papa had lost his situation during his sickness, and there was no money to buy even a few little gifts for the children," troubled him.

"But we love each other, and love is better than gold," those words had made him groan aloud.

"Love! love! love!" he cried, in harsh, cracked tones, but the words ended in almost a sob.

"What is love? What is happiness?" he said, clasping his bony hands over his moody brow, and shivering with excited feeling.

"I do not know; I have forgotten," he moaned, helplessly, and answering his own question.

A dismal silence hung over the wretched place for the space of half an hour, then the shivering old man arose from his crouching position. The fire had gone entirely out, the room was fearfully cold and dreary, his hands were stiff, his feet were numb.

He struck a match and lighted the remnant of a candle, and its dim, flickering light made the dismal apartment seem more cheerless than before.

"No one to love me—no one to care for me," he moaned, shuddering again, as he looked about him and seemed to realize his desolate condition.

"Love is better than gold, is it? But, ah! gold is—beautiful!"

Muttering thus he groined his way toward the corner where his miserable bed lay, and set his light upon the floor. He then got down upon his knees, threw back the coarse blanket, the heap of straw, and cautiously removed a portion of a loose-board from the floor.

Beneath, so far as the eye could see

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by the uncertain light, there appeared to be nothing but a promiscuous collection of filthy rags.

Lifting out a portion of these, the man drew forth a bag, which seemed heavy even in his eager clutch, and its contents gave out a slight jingling sound.

It was securely tied at the top with a strong string; his fingers trembled with eagerness, his eyes lighted with a greedy look, and his lips curled into a wintry, avaricious smile as he unfashioned the knot and caught the gleam of gold within.

"It is gold! all solid gold! and it is beautiful!" he whispered, gloatingly, as he hugged it to him, dipping his bony fingers into the shining mass, thus making the music he loved best to hear of all the musical sounds on earth.

He toyed with it as a child would play with marbles; he fondled it as he would fondle and caress some beloved pet, and then tying the mouth of the bag once more, he replaced it in its bag of rags. He drew forth another and yet another, which he handled and inspected in the same way. Then from some remote corner he brought to light a package of bills, and bonds, and papers, each of which he carefully examined by the light of the flickering candle, and then returned to their hid-

ing-place, covering them all with rags, and noiselessly replacing the section of board.

His nightly task thus completed, he blew out the flaring candle, and crept, shivering and hungry, into his miserable bed.

"Father, you know that I love Frederick Atherton; you know he's a good, true man, and yet you would destroy the happiness of your only child!"

A young girl of twenty stood pleading there before her father, a harsh, moody-looking man of forty. She was, as she said, his only child, and almost the only bright or beautiful thing his home contained, although he could count his worldly possessions by the thousands. His wife had died a decade of years before, and for ten summers and winters this lovely girl had cheered his life with her love.

Two years before she had pledged herself to a friend of her childhood, a good, true man, as she had said, and whom she loved fondly, devotedly; but who had only his great heart, and two strong, willing hands to give her in return.

The worldly-wise, grasping father had turned coldly from his manly plea. "Go win a fortune for yourself and her—go fill your pockets with gold,

and then I will give her to you," Anthony Minot had grimly replied.

"Sir, love is better than gold; it will take me years perhaps to win a fortune—the best of our lives will have passed ere that, and our love become blighted and withered with the greed of gain," the young lover returned sadly.

But the hard man shook his head.

"No poor man can marry Gertrude Minot," he said, relentlessly, and the faithful lover went away disheartened and miserable.

But the brave, true spirit of the girl broke forth after he had gone, in the words recorded above.

"Happiness!" her father returned, scornfully, "what makes happiness?"

"A true and faithful love," said Gertrude Minot, proudly.

"Love! Talk as much as you choose of the silly sentiment, but love will soon grow cold and die when fed on husks. Let Fred Atherton win a suitable home for you, and then he may take you where he will," was the heartless retort.

"I shall not wait for him to do that," Gertrude replied, firmly, and lifting her serious eyes resolutely to her father's face.

"What do you mean?" he demanded, angrily.

"I mean that I shall take Fred as he is now; and whether the future be one