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The Miser's Christmas.

By Mrs. Georgie Sheldon.

CHAPTER I.

"Hi! Annie! look, look! If I could have that lovely big doll, I believe I never, never should ask for anything again! And see, Ned, there is just the most beautiful set of draughting tools that you have been wishing for; oh! if someone would only give us a pocketful of money just for once!" and the fair little speaker stopped for lack of breath

to go on, and heaved a sigh more expressive than words.

"I was standing be-

"It's only a week to Christmas, Annie; what are you going to do in the way of gifts?" asked her friend, Nellie Hutchins, in a low tone.

"Oh, Nellie, there is so little that I can do, compared with what I wish I could do, that I am almost discouraged," was the regretful response, accompanied by another sigh.

"If you could do what you wished, just for one year, what would that be?" queried her friend, with a curious glance into the earnest, troubled face.

The dark brown eyes lighted at the question, and a flush deepened the tint upon the rounded cheek.

"I will tell you," she said eagerly, "if such a thing could be, I would make everybody in this city happy for that

since he has been sick, and we have no money to spend. All I can do this year will be to try and make Ned and Lillie happy with my little home-made gifts, and help papa and mamma to pass the day as pleasantly as possible. But," she added, after a moment, her face brightening, "I have no right to make myself unhappy over what I cannot help; I ought rather to be thankful, for papa is so much better, and—we all love each other. 'Love is better than gold,' papa says, and he always smiles queerly at mamma when he says it."

"Of course you love each other," said Nellie; "I never saw a happier family."

"But I was thinking," Annie ex-



"His eyes lighted with a greedy look and his lips curled into a wintry, avowed smile as he unfastened the knot and caught the gleam of gold within."

fore a gorgeous shop window, in which everything to tempt the eye and please the taste was displayed, and which it was a pleasure to behold even if one could not become the happy possessor of any of the beauties there displayed.

The quartette was composed of two young misses of perhaps fifteen or sixteen years of age, with two children—one a fair-haired, blue-eyed sprite, who had exclaimed as above; the other a more grave and thoughtful boy, whose longing eyes were fastened wistfully upon the elegant set of draughting tools referred to.

Annie, a womanly miss for her years, echoed the sigh of her little sister as she replied, fondly and regretfully:

"Lillie, dear, if I had a pocketful of money, you may be sure that both your own and Ned's wish should be gratified."

one day; if I could know that for the twenty-four hours of Christmas Day, not a soul of all the multitude was unhappy—was suffering, or hungry, or cold, I think, as Lillie says, I should never wish for anything again as long as I should live. And just think, Nellie, how easily that might be done, if all those who have abundance would give liberally of their hoarded stores."

"Why, Annie! of course I did not mean any wish of such magnitude as that!" returned her friend, in surprise. "I meant what would you like most to do for your friends at home?"

Again, the young girl sighed, while her eyes lingered with loving regret upon the two children who were oblivious to all save the attractions in the shop window.

"It is of no use for me to wish, since it is impossible for me to perform. Papa has lost his situation, you know,

plained, "that there are so many who are so lonely and miserable—who have no one either to love or care for them. That is the saddest of all trouble, I think."

A long-drawn breath, that was almost a groan, greeted the ears of the two friends at this moment, and turning quickly, they saw the bent, poverty-stricken figure of an old man hobbling away.

"There goes one of the objects of your charitable wishes, Annie. Do you suppose he heard what we were saying?" Nellie asked.

"Perhaps he did, poor man. He surely looks as if there was not a soul on earth to care for or love him."

It is evening. The streets are brilliantly lighted; the air is keen, but pure and bracing; the stars are twinkling merrily overhead, content to shine in

their sphere, even the radiant light of the gay crowd tent on the platform of the coming Christmas.

In a wretched lower haunts of shivering, cowering

He is miserable, air, piercing the crevices of his

to shiver, and shiver. His feet

have a hungry, and uncombed, unshorn. His

claws of some are clasped

which his sharp his sunken throat eyes are fixed

expiring ember fore which he

The room save a bed of blanket in on rickety table in

The occupant apartment is a stricken old

sigh had inter of the two you before the gas

now. "No one to one to care for mumbled to h

back and forth the dying fire.

"Love is bet said; 'is it?' is startled way,

went roving a suspicious look one from with

him. This wretch to be strolling that little com

the window. He had c

Lillie's exclamation a "pocketful

marked the drawn sigh; h

thoughtful, but telligent lad,

draughting too he had heard,

generous wish ferer, and ne

gentle Annie. Her earnest

wish that sh one in that gr

twenty-four h her sigh of r

situation during was no money

gifts for the c "But we lov

better than g made him gro

"Love! lov harsh, cracke

ended in alm "What is lo

he said, clasp his moody b

excited feeling "I do not k

he moaned, h he own quest

A dismal wretched plac

an hour, ther arose from

The fire had room was fe

his hands w numb.

He struck remnant of a

ering light m seem more ch

"No one to for me," he n

as he looked realize his de

"Love is be ah! gold is—

Muttering toward the co

bed lay, and floor. He th

knees, threw the heap of

removed a n from the floo

Beneath, so