

SUNBEAM

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OUT IN THE COLD.

"This is to be a very charming affair, Mrs. Gilbert—quite stylish. I assure you—and I hope you will let Essie and Frank attend."

"Is it to be a pay affair?" asked Essie's and Frank's mother.

"Oh, dear, yes; I am afraid you will be alarmed by the expense of it; each child subscribes ten dollars, or fifteen dollars for two. But" seeing Mrs. Gilbert's look of surprise—"you have no idea of what a costly thing a fancy ball is, even for children. There are the lights, you know, that must be as bright as day; and the flowers for decorations, and the favors, besides the supper."

"Yes, I see," answered Mrs. Gilbert, "and you must excuse me from putting down my children's names; I do not feel able to afford the expense."

"You? Oh, Mrs. Gilbert!" cried the disappointed visitor. "Why, we counted on you. Nobody in our circle of acquaintance is so well able to take part in this affair as you are."

"I do not mean that I have not the money," answered the lady, "but that I do not think it right to spend so much on the mere entertainment of our children, even at this Christmas season, while so many poor little ones are left out in the cold. No, Miss Carrie, do not insist, for



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my mind is quite made up; I am sorry to disappoint you, but neither Essie nor Frank can take part in your fancy ball.

While this visitor was saying good-bye, another was announced: so little Essie, whose face was all in a pucker to cry, had to run back to the library sofa, and stick her little head down there, where the tears could be hid. Frank did not care much;

herself had on a fine dress, coat and cap, and that her fur tippet and muff lay on the sofa beside her. She took her brother's hand, and they sallied out into the street. It was cold, as Christmas weather ought to be, and snowy, as Christmas weather ought to be, too. They hurried along until they came in sight of a great house that looked like a palace; the

he would have liked to go, of course, but there were plenty of things that Frank thought jollier than a ball, and he went back to "Strange Stories of Adventure," after hearing his mother's refusal, without a sigh.

But Essie was keenly disappointed. She had hung upon Miss Carrie's glowing accounts of what it was to be like. She had not for one moment doubted that mamma would say yes; mamma, who was always so ready to give money when people were getting up things.

And what could mother have meant by the little children out in the cold; where were any little children out in the cold? While Essie's brain was working away at this question, Frank came into the room, and she saw with surprise that he was dressed for a party.

"Why, Frank," she cried, "where are you going?"

"To the fancy ball, of course," he answered; "come along."

Then she saw, and wondered how it had happened, that she