

12 THE DAGONET BALLADS

"I slunk to the filthy alley—

'Twas a cold, raw Christmas eve—

And the bakers' shops were open,

Tempting a man to thieve;

But I clenched my fists together,

Holding my head awry,

So I came to her empty-handed,

And mournfully told her why.

"Then I told her 'the House' was open;

She had heard of the ways of *that*,

For her bloodless cheeks went crimson,

And up in her rags she sat,

Crying, 'Bide the Christmas here, John,

We've never had one apart;

I think I can bear the hunger,—

The other would break my heart.'

"All through that eve I watched her,

Holding her hand in mine,

Praying the Lord, and weeping

Till my lips were salt as brine.

I asked her once if she hungered,

And as she answered 'No,'

The moon shone in at the window

Set in a wreath of snow.