

DEAN'S
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THE LITTLE BEGGAR.



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THE LITTLE BEGGAR.



It was the morning of a New Year, that had just set in, golden and beautiful. The air was cold, though not piercing.

There was a little girl—a child of poverty, on that New Year's morning—walking in the streets with the gay crowd that swept past her. Her little feet had

grown so numb, encased only in thin shoes, that she could but with difficulty move one before the other. Poor Mary Gray was a little beggar!

Just like the old year was the new year to her. The change of the year brought no change of her condition with it. She was poor, her mother was a widow and an invalid, and the child was a poor beggar!

Little Mary, at times, breathed her hot breath upon her blue and benumbed fingers, and stamped her tiny feet with all the force left in them, and then big tears stood trembling in her large blue eyes for a moment, and rolled slowly down her purple cheeks as if they would freeze to them. She had left her mother in bed, sick, exhausted, and famishing! What wonder that she cried, even though those hot tears only dripped on the cold pavement!

She would have turned back to go home had she not thought again of her poor mother; and she went on, though where to go she knew not.

A little boy—a bright looking fellow—

chanced to pass her as she walked and wept and sobbed. He caught the glitter of those tears in the sunshine, and the sight smote his heart. He stopped suddenly before Mary, and asked the cause of the tears. She could make no reply, her heart was too full.

“Has anybody hurt you?” asked the feeling little fellow, “or have you lost your way?” he inquired.

“No,” answered the child.

“What is the matter, then?” he asked

“Mother is poor and sick, and I am cold and hungry. We have nothing to eat. Our room is quite cold, and there are no coals left. Oh! you do not know all.”

“But I *will*,” replied the manly boy.

“Where do you live?”

“Will you go home with me?” asked Mary, her face brightening.

“Yes, let me go with you,” said he; “show me the way.”

Through street, lane, and alley, she guided him. They reached the door of the hovel. The cold breath of the wind

whistled in the cracks and crevices, as if inviting them in. They entered. A sick woman feebly raised her head from the pillow, and gave her a sweet smile. "Mary have you come?" she faintly said.



"Yes, mother," answered the child, "and I have brought this boy with me. I do not know who he is, but he said he

wanted to come and see where we live. Did I do wrong to bring him, mother?"

"No, my child," said the mother. "If he knows how to pity you from his little heart; but he cannot pity me yet: he is not old enough."

The bright-faced, sunny-hearted boy, gazed in astonishment upon mother and child. The scene was new to him. He wondered if this was what they called poverty. His eyes looked sadly upon the wasting mother, but they glittered with wonder when turned towards Mary. Suddenly they were filled with tears. The want and woe, the desolation, were too much for him. He shuddered at the cold, uncovered floor. He gazed mournfully into the fire-place, and over the naked walls, looking so uninvitingly and cheerless. Putting his hand in his pocket, he grasped the coin that his mother had that very morning given him, and drew it forth. "You may have that," said he, holding it out to the child.

"Oh, you are too good! too generous!" as if she ought not to take it from him.

“Mother will give me another, if I want, said he. “Take it—take it—you shall take it!” and he was instantly gone.

It was a gold coin,—a sovereign!

Mother and child wept together. They looked at the glittering piece. There was bread, and ruel, and clothing, and every comfort in it.

Ah! what a philosopher’s stone was that coin! How it turned everything first into gold and then into happiness! To the widow and her child it emitted brilliant rays, and revealed sweet and welcome visions!

At night, this angel boy returned to the bleak house filled with happiness, and filled with joy; but he was not alone—his mother was with him. Blessed boy! He had passed the whole of New Year’s day in making others happy. And how much happier was he himself! How his little heart warmed and glowed to see that little child uncover the basket he had brought with him, and take out one by one the gifts which were stowed there; and how overjoyed was he to see his mother offer the sick woman work and a new home,

and to see the sick woman suddenly strong and almost well under the influence of kind offices. He wondered if their happiness could be possibly as deep as his own—if their New Year was as bright to them as it was to him. He knew not how any one could be happier than he was at that moment.

Years have rolled away in the silent past. That little girl—Mary Gray—is a lady. Not a lady only in name, but one in deed, in heart, and conduct. She dwells in a suburban cottage, and her husband is wholly devoted to her. The husband is no other than the generous boy who, on the New Year's festival accosted her so tenderly in the street, and went home with her. Her poor mother sleeps quietly in the church-yard; yet she lived to know that God had provided for her child. She died resigned and happy.

