

A CHRISTMAS LARCENY.

How Little Sarah Gank Was Tempted by a Doll and a Rubber Horse.

She Says She Did Not Mean to Steal, but Only Wanted to Handle the Pretty Things.

Sarah Never Had a Christmas and Her Prospects Are Very Dismal This Year.

"Indeed, I didn't mean to do it, miss! Indeed, indeed, I didn't!"

This was the greeting little Sarah Gank gave the woman reporter of THE WORLD when the latter called to see her yesterday and got her story of how she came to take the doll and other toys from Ridley's Grand street establishment the other evening.

And it is only fair to say, by the way, that Floor-Walker Cutts at Ridley's, in protecting the interests of the establishment against the numerous petty depredations that occur at this season, is as considerate and humane as possible when the offenders are of tender years. But, of course, shoplifting is very wrong, and the offenders, whatever their years, have to be impressed with that fact. Nobody can look into little

children's hearts and see their motives, so little Sarah, whether she meant to do wrong or not, was arrested. But here is her pathetic story:

She lives with her father and stepmother in a small back room on the fifth floor of the tenement at No. 380 Grand street. She is a bright, pretty child, with short curly hair and big, dark eyes—the latter reddened and swollen by much crying.

SARAH AS A "LITTLE MOTHER."
When the writer called upon her she was acting as a "little mother"—that is, taking care of the smaller children while her mother was away. She held a baby in her arms as she opened the door. Another sat in state on the table, surrounded by empty pepper boxes and kindred toys, while a

child clung to 'her skirts' and gazed upon the caller with visible alarm and apprehension.

Sarah's life has evidently not been a pleasant one since she succumbed to the temptations of the toy counter and took unto herself a book, a doll and a small rubber horse. But there are extenuating circumstances in her case, as there are in many cases we are inclined to judge hastily—and those were what the writer wanted to hear.



"WE LOOKED IN THE WINDOWS AT ALL THE PRETTY THINGS."

The majority of us can have little realization of the temptations which assail these poorest of the toment-bred children at this season of the year, when they see all about them the beautiful playthings and trinkets which they may not even hope to touch. The brilliant Christmas trees, the

dolls, the tiny stoves and houses and dishes are all designed for other children.

A TOUCH OF CHRISTMAS ENY.

Grand street is daily lined with picture-equally ragged little tots, who flatten their small noses against the panes and gaze for hours at the attractions within. There must be in their childish hearts some sense of injustice. They cannot understand yet why they are excluded from all these things, and why the mirth and joy of Christmas seem to penetrate every place but their dreary homes.

Some of them work the problem out to their own satisfaction and help themselves to the toys which no one will give them. It is with this class of little offenders that Sarah Gank is now classed.

The small alleged sinner was arrested by Policeman Hunter shortly before 6 o'clock on Saturday evening and taken to the station. The next morning she was brought up before Justice Duffy, who, when he learned that she was but twelve years of age, read her a moral lecture and allowed her to depart in peace.

SHE NEVER HAD A CHRISTMAS.

The child stoutly maintains that she meant no theft and merely wanted to handle and prize the pretty things. She came from an obscure point in Germany less than a year ago, and this has been her first experience of a Christmas in America, or indeed anywhere, and she never saw before such a dazzling array of toys as in our large stores.

She told her little story in her own way, choking up occasionally and breaking down entirely once or twice when a sense of her position overcame her. The name of the child she mentions as her companion is known to the writer, but is not mentioned in full because it would do no good now.

"I'd been in all day, mindin' my little brother and sister," began Sarah, weeping. "I most always go to Saturday

school, but didn't go that day, 'cause the teacher was sick. Mamma was away, an' I had to wait till she came back to go out an' play. When she came back I had to do some



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more things, an' it was most 5 o'clock when Fannie—came an' called for me to go out. I went.

"I hadn't seen any of the stores or the toys, or the pretty things, 'cause I'm always in school or mindin' my little brother and sister, an' I lived in Germany till after last Christmas, an' I never saw a Christmas before."

"Fannie an' I went out on the street an'

we walked along, an' we stopped to look in the windows first. I never saw so many pretty things before, an' I didn't know it was wrong to look at 'em, so we stopped, an'

Here Sarah paused to wipe her eyes on the baby's dress. The small toddler at her side, thought something was amiss and proceeded to cry loudly. Since her arrest the culprit is firmly convinced that it was wrong even to look at the toys through the windows, as her remarks will indicate.

When she had quieted the children she resumed:

"We stopped lots of times an' looked an' looked an' looked in the windows an' saw things. An' then we went along till we came to that store, an' we went in there. There were lots of people there—just crowds—an' we almost got stepped on. But we went to the place where they have all the things for little girls an' boys, an' Fannie she looked at the picture books an' I looked at the dolls. They had hair on them—real curls, like mine—an' they had dresses an' shoes an' blue eyes. There was one there—oh, my! such a lovely doll! It had blue eyes, too, an' when you held it up by the feet they would shut—I mean the eyes would shut—an' she had curls like gold color an' a-a-a-h a pretty dress!"

TO HOLD THE DOLL, SHE SAID.

"I jus' looked an' looked at that doll, an' then my hands felt like they wanted to take her in them just a minute so I could hold her. I lifted her up, an' a lady standing there looked at me cross an' I put her down again. But I couldn't go away—I staid there an' looked at her."

"An' by and by Fannie came to where I was, an' she had a nice book in her hand, an' she said: 'This book is mine; hold it for me.' An' I held it for her in my arm. Then she said: 'Come over here,' and we went where the other things were."

THE RUBBER HORSE TOO MUCH FOR HER.

"There were rubber things—dolls an' cats an' cows. An' there was a little horse, an' I liked that, too, an' I took it in my hand, but I wasn't going to take it away. I jus' picked it up an' walked over to another place to ask how much it was, an' a lady then told a man about me, an' he sent for a policeman right off. An' the lady said: 'I've had my eye on that child,' an' she didn't have any eye on me, but she was looking at me all the time."

HER COMPANION RAN AWAY.

"When Fannie saw them lookin' at me she

ran, an' she ran home an' staid there. I had the rubber horse in my hand, an' I had the book on my arm that Fannie had given me, an' they took them both away an' the policeman came an' took me off. An' I felt just awful, 'cause I wasn't taking those things at all, an' I was going to lay the horse down again just like I had the doll. I thought the book was Fannie's."

SO THEY TOOK HER TO THE STATION.

"The policeman took me up to Twenty-third street, an' I had to stay all night, 'cause they wasn't any one to let me out. There was lots of more children, but I felt just awful, an' I cried an' cried. I didn't know it was wrong for little girls to look at the things an' to take them up in their hands like I did. I cried all night, an' the next day was Sunday an' they took me to the Judge. I guess it was, an' my mother was there with another woman."

TOLD TO GO HOME AND BE A GOOD GIRL.

"They talked to me an' told me it was wicked to look at things and take things up in my hands like I did an' I said I didn't know that. And the Judge said I was a little girl an' could go home with my mother and be good. No, ma'am, I ain't never going to touch things any more, an' I'm going to be a good girl. But I didn't know I was being a bad girl when I went in to see all the pretty things. Everybody looked so happy, an' lots of little girls were looking at things, but their mothers was with them, so I know it was right for them to look. I didn't get any Christmas presents, so I thought I could just see the things other little girls got."

THE MORAL IN SARAH UNDERSTANDS IT.

There is a pathos in this to those who can read between the lines. The little girl did not know she was talking to a reporter. She told her story simply and naturally, but it was plainly seen that for her the experience had cost her big money—A. A. I never even look at the toys intended for younger children.