

**ONE CHRISTMAS
EVE: AN HISTORICAL
NIGHTMARE**

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One Christmas Eve: An Historical Nightmare by Harriet B. Crook

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HARRIET B. CROOK

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GERTRUDE

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE

AN

HISTORICAL NIGHTMARE

BY

HARRIET B. CROOK

BOSTON

GEO. F. CROOK 30 MUSIC HALL

1890

TO THE
TWO GERTRUDES
AND
RACHEL

These our actors
... were all spirits and
Are melted into air

ONE CHRISTMAS EVE

AN HISTORICAL NIGHTMARE



GERTRUDE! I thought you the personification of amiability, but I find you a perfect *mule!*”

“ Well, Bessie says she won't believe a word of it.”

“ Pshaw! Bessie is a very Thomas, she doubts everything,” said Carrie. “ Well, anyway. Gertrude, *we* want to hear all about it. Don't we, girls?”

A trio of girls answered in chorus, “ Yes!”

Five school girls of the same class had met one warm afternoon, just before the June examinations, to study. One was gently swaying in the hammock, two were gracefully reclining on the smooth green grass, each with their *Caesar* for a pillow; the other two were seated in garden-chairs.

They had been working hard for about twenty minutes, when one of their number began to yawn and declare that

she was "too utterly exhausted to think one thought more." Another threw down her book, and suggested tennis, the third reminded her young hostess of her promise to tell them "all about it."

The emphatic "Yes" had been mentally recorded, and Gertrude had begun her story, when a bright girl, with beautiful red-golden hair and large mischief-loving blue eyes, came waltzing towards the listening group. She was dressed in a deliciously cool tennis-suit, and was beating time to imaginary music with her racquet.

"Say, girls, I want you to come and play tennis; Johnny's promised to come, I'm sure *that* ought to fetch you."

"We can't come yet," said one. "Sit down, Bessie, and be convinced, Gertrude's going to tell us about her marvellous excursion," said another.

"I thank you, but pa' says nuts are bad for my digestion, especially *chestnuts*;" and Miss Bessie, batting an imaginary ball, was soon out of sight.

"And, you know," resumed Gertrude. "Papa had some legal business in London to see after, and mother said she would like to go with him, and spend Christmas with her friends, the Culls, at Honor Oak. Of course you remember I had been out of school a month sick; well

papa one day, just before he started, met Dr. Hazeldine, and they had some talk about your humble servant, and— I went too!

“ Well, we reached London about a week before Christmas; on Christmas Eve mother and I went to the Tower of London. You know, Rachel, I had promised you and Carrie and Mabel that when I returned I would give a full and minute description of Sir Walter Raleigh's prison. No wonder then I was so mad when that tiresome old warder — or as my English girl friends called him, *Beefeater* — shook his head and said he was very sorry, but we couldn't be admitted as it was not in a safe condition. This was a cell on the north side of Queen Elizabeth's Armoury, said to have been one of Sir Walter's prison cells.

“ Of course we saw many things and places that interested us greatly, and, if you like, some day I will tell you about them; but I could not see *that* which I so particularly wished to see, and was, of course, awfully disappointed and provoked. During the day it had been making several efforts to rain, and before we reached home it was certainly a glorious success, — for the effort, but not for us. We were a decided failure as regarded appearances, and when the maid opened the door, she stood staring as though she took us for a sort of patent double-peram-