

THIRTY MINUTES OF AGONY.

Yesterday afternoon Mr. Jasper Thumbledirk, who is forty-three years old and unmarried, dashed into our sanctum and evolved a remark, the intensity of which fairly made our blood curdle. And when he completed the remark, which was neither very long nor remarkably complicated, he picked up a dictionary, hurled it at the proof-reader with great asperity, and before that good-natured and greatly-abused angel of the editorial staff could recover from his emotion and load his umbrella Mr. Thumbledirk was gone. He dashed out of the door, missed the stairway, and stepped down the elevator well, falling a distance of three stories, but he was too mad and excited to get hurt, and we heard him rushing away down the alley, yelling and swearing till he was out of sight and hearing. As he is usually a very severe man, of habitual reserve, very particular and guarded in his language, we were amazed not only at his actions, but his words, for which his excited manner afforded not the slightest explanation. During the day, however, we became possessed of certain facts which may give the reader some clue to the causes of this worthy and respectable citizen's violent and disrespectful manner and language.

It appears that about two o'clock in the afternoon Mr. Thumbledirk dropped in at the Union depot, to ask some questions relative to the arrival and departure of trains, and while passing through the ladies' waiting-room, he was accosted by a lady acquaintance who was going east on the T. P. & W, at half-past two. She wished to go up town to make some little purchases, but didn't want to take her baby out in the rain. Would Mr. Thumbledirk please hold it for her until she came back? She wouldn't be gone more than five minutes, and little Ernest was just as good as an angel, and besides he was sound asleep.

Mr. Thumbledirk, with a strange flutter of his feelings, lied, and said he would be only too delighted. Then he took the baby, and the ticket-agent, who has two, knew by the manner in which the man took the baby, and looked anxiously from one end of it to the other to see which end the head was on, that he had never handled a human baby before in all his life, and promptly closed his windows to shut out the trouble that he knew was on the eve of an eruption.

Mr. Thumbledirk is a very tall, dignified man. He was rather annoyed, as the mother disappeared through the door, to observe that all the women in the waiting-room were

intently regarding him with various expressions, curiosity predominating. He sat down and bent his arms at the elbows until they resembled in shape two letter V's, with the baby lying neck and heels in the angle at the elbows, and he looked, and felt that he looked, like the hideous pictures of Moloch, in the old Sunday-school books.

Mr. Thumbledirk felt keenly that he was an object of curiosity and illy-repressed mirth to the women around him. Now, a dignified man does not enjoy being a laughing-stock for anybody, and it is especially humiliating for him to feel that he appears ridiculous in the eyes of women. This feeling is intensified when the man is a bachelor, and knows he is a little awkward and ill at ease in the presence of women, anyhow. So, as he gazed upon the face of the quiet sleeping infant, he made an insane effort to appear perfectly easy, and, to create the impression that he was an old married man and the father of twenty-six children, he disengaged one arm, and chucked the baby under the chin.

About such a chuck as you always feel like giving a boy with a "putty blower" or a "pea shooter." It knocked the little rosebud of a mouth shut so quick and close the baby couldn't catch its breath for three minutes, and Mr. Thumbledirk thought, with a strange, terrible sinking of the heart, that it was just possible he might have overdone the thing. A short young woman in a kilt skirt and a pretty face, sitting directly opposite him, said, "Oh!" in a mild kind of a shriek, and then giggled; a tall, thin woman in a black bombazine dress and a gray shawl, and an angular woman in a calico dress and a sun-bonnet, gasped, "Why?" in a startled duet; a fat woman with a small herd of children and a market-basket shouted "Well!" and then immediately clapped her plump hands over her mouth as though the exclamation had been startled from her, and a tall, raw-boned woman who wore horn spectacles and talked bass, said "The poor lamb!" in such sepulchral tones that everybody else laughed, and Mr. Thumbledirk, who didn't just exactly know whether she meant him or the baby, blushed scarlet, and felt his face grow so hot he could smell his hair. And his soul was filled with such gloomy forebodings that all the future looked dark to him.

The baby opened its blue eyes wider than any man who never owned a baby would have believed it possible, and stared at Mr. Thumbledirk with an expression of alarm, and a general lack of confidence, that boded a distressing want of harmony in all further proceedings. Mr. Thumbledirk, viewing