

A CHRISTMAS "LOST AND FOUND"

(Continued from page 9)

She sat up with the suddenness of a mechanical toy, "Oh! we can have nothing for to-morrow! And there is the rent to pay!"

"I have some money," said the girl, "and we must do the best we can."

"We'll go out and have another look for it. We shall get along somehow. And now, dear, you must 'buck up,' as Jimmy, our office boy says, or you will be 'all in.' Off with the bonnet, and have some good hot tea and toast!"

Mr. Dinglebury had gone out. The talk about the purse left him quite out in the cold. So he had knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and muttering something about "business" and "money," had departed. The twins had been respectful—too much so; and over the tea and toast his wife and Annie discussed little bits of domestic affairs that at any other time would have bored him; but he had listened with a keen interest which surprised him and stirred something strangely within him. He had felt alien there; a cipher at the wrong end of a short but very important row of little figures.

As was not his custom, Mr. Dinglebury had no particular goal. He wanted to get into the cold, fresh air, and think; and he walked slowly toward the shopping district, with his head down, and it was due to this that in a street, just off the leading thoroughfare, his attention was attracted to a small dark object which he kicked from its quilt of sloppy snow.

It's touch as he picked it up, made him start. He peered at it before a shabby little shop, and his first glance told him what his instinct had whispered, that it was his wife's—lost by her, and—wonder of wonders—found by him.

The little shop was a bakery, and Mr. Dinglebury discovered suddenly that he was hungry. He remembered that he had had but little tea. He slipped the purse into a pocket and entered the shop, where there was a little waiting crowd.

After a casual glance, no one paid any attention to him, and he took the bills from the purse and counted them. All the money was there—thirty-three dollars and sixty-eight cents; besides a pencilled list, in Mrs. Dinglebury's clear and delicate hand, of little Christmas gifts.

He dropped the purse into his pocket and squeezed his way out. He wanted air.

He had not had so much money for a very long time. After all, the money was his, he reflected, as he passed down the side street toward the bright lights, his right hand clutching the purse. His hand was very cold, and that reminded him that he really needed gloves. Likewise, his feet were damp. There could be no doubt about it; he certainly needed boots and rubbers, too. He had a right to a part of the money, if not all of it. He was head of the house. And—er—he had not been treated well at home for a long time. He had been ignored, and it was certainly galling to a man of his birth and pride, and all that sort of thing.

A glance into a haberdasher's window reminded him that his stock of neckties was low, especially for Christmas time. Shirts, too, and this window certainly showed some exclusive designs. Mr. Dinglebury sighed, and caressed the little purse. Ah, yes! Ascott's. He remembered Ascott's, an old firm, a small shop, but very exclusive, you know. Mr. Dinglebury had spent quite a bit in Ascott's in his time. But he shuffled on. Perhaps after all, it was an overcoat he needed most.

He came to another shop of men's wear, paused, looked in, and saw Dobson buying a tie as florid as his own nose. Mr. Dinglebury clutched the little purse tighter, and passed on. Somehow or other, he did not want to meet Dobson just then.

But he knew what he wanted. A drink. He hurried, but his furtive glance was caught by the little window of a novelty shop. It was full of inexpensive gifts for Christmas. He took out the purse, and from it the little slip of Christmas gifts and held it close to the window.

"Shaving brush for Tom, and 'Cheerily Smile,' in frame, 25 cents."

This was the shop, then, and his eye discovered the brush with warm approval, except the price, which was one dollar. It was all in the handle, of course. You could get a perfectly good, reliable brush, with a wood handle, for thirty cents. Brushes seemed to haunt the Dinglebury brain on Christmas Eve. Then he searched the window for "Cheerily Smile." He quickly found it, two little verses under glass, in a plain little frame, with a card tucked in one corner marked "25 cents."

Mr. Dinglebury, whose eyes had been failing him of late, peered closer to the glass and read:

"Oh! cheerily smile, and wait awhile,
For soon the storm will be over.
There's a bit of blue in the sky for you,
There's sweetness yet in the clover;
Trust and wait, though a burden great
On thy heavy heart is pressing;
For a hand of love will the cross remove
And leave in its stead a blessing."

Mr. Dinglebury stroked his stubby chin reflectively. He certainly needed a shave for

Christmas. Then he read the verses again. He glanced up and down the long street, walked to a corner and turned into a less frequented thoroughfare. He wanted to think.

It was a quiet street, with fine old stone houses of the first families of the city's early days, and in the centre of the block was a fine old church. The outer doors were ajar, and the stained glass windows showed that the chancel was lighted.

Some one was playing on the big organ there, and Mr. Dinglebury, his face uplifted as the music came faintly to his ears, paused to listen. Without reasoning why, he passed through the heavy doors into the semi-darkness and quiet of the church.

It was empty, save for the organist and the unbidden audience of one. The chancel was bathed in a soft light, radiating from the electric lamps about the organ pipes. The crown of the organist's head was quite bald, but surrounded by a wealth of yellow hair, which caught the light, and seemed to create a halo about his head, which swayed rhythmically as the strong, slender hands swept from the keys to the stops and back again.

Close to the very font where, he remembered with a strange thrill, he had been baptized, Mr. Dinglebury sank into a back seat in the dark, just to listen and think.

And he did listen. How tender and how strong that fluted music was! How like the gentle hand of sympathy upon a tired head it seemed! It made the listener recall his mother's hand, long, long ago, when he was just a little boy, and had run to her and she had laid her firm, cool hand upon his feverish head, and stroked his curls, until, against her knee, he fell asleep. Ah, that was years and years ago! But the music brought it back.

It grew faint and fainter now; but the wonderful tenderness and pathos of it seemed to drift down the dusk and dark of the church, and to whisper like unseen leaves from the great arches. It grew gradually louder again, carrying the listener with it, body and soul, as in a dream when one goes suddenly up! up—and then, as suddenly becomes becalmed in a great and luminous and boundless peace.

Then the organist played in a lower key, another theme,—Mendelssohn's "Consolation." It was a long time since Mr. Dinglebury had heard it, but he remembered it. It was glorious, soul-thrilling, heart-filling and wonderful; and it shook him. Then the organ wept; and a hundred spirits wept, too, up there in the great, shadowy corners. And as they wept, in the darkness of his pilgrim seat, the listener yielded up his soul to the Divine influence of the music and the place; and with his grizzled head against the cool stone of the font, Mr. Dinglebury wept and prayed.

The cool air strengthened him when he reached the street and turned toward home; for suddenly he had felt very weak. He drew the fresh air deep into his lungs, and, as he exhaled, with tilted chin, he looked up, and all the stars were shining.

He walked swiftly home, or, rather, he half walked, half ran. He stumbled a little, and got out of breath; but it was a new step, for he was eager and anxious and glad. There was a lamp, turned low, burning for him as usual on the little table in the narrow hall.

The shabby dining-room was silent, but he heard the voices of his wife and daughter in the kitchen beyond. He took the little lamp in the hall, and stealthily went up the stairs, and found the twins asleep—Silas solemnly, but Thomas Theodore himself again, smiling in his dreams. He stared at them with misty eyes, then crossed the little hall into his wife's room, and the poorness of it made him start. He had never noticed it before. There were two little parcels on the bureau. One was labelled in a big, uneven hand, "For Mother," the other "For Father," and each bore the injunction, in the same hand, "Don't open till morning." Mr. Dinglebury felt that awkward something in his throat again, and stole awkwardly down the stairs, the old boards creaking all the way, as though to announce the coming of a strange, new Santa Claus.

He set the lamp on the table, and turned toward the little dining-room. His wife and Annie were standing there, the first with a white and anxious face, from which a look of fright had not yet fled; for she had thought poor soul, that a strange man had got into the house. And so there had; and they started when they saw his face, for to them it seemed transformed.

He could say nothing—nothing. All the blood had fled from his face, for his heart was beating furiously and awkwardly and shyly, but with an appealing look, he held out his arms. And staring, her own face suddenly transfigured and glorified, little Mrs. Dinglebury ran into the folds of the shabby ulster with a glad cry. It woke the twins and so they came tumbling down to wish everybody a Merry Christmas. For the bells were ringing, and it was the morning on which Christ came to earth.

THOSE MEDDLESOME TIFFS

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girl who is engaged ought to try to realize, early in her new relationship, how dangerous it is to arouse this feeling, and how cruel it is to play with the sincere devotion of her lover, as if it were a subject for trial or experiment. There is no anger quite so bitter and fierce as that associated with love, and it does, in very truth, "work like madness in the brain." The womanly girl, who wishes to keep the freshness of the first affection, will not risk it for the cheap triumph of seeing another irritated or hurt. Only the girl who has a selfishly vain and shallow nature will persist in giving occasion for this kind of quarrel.

Does it sound as if the woman were to be held responsible for the lovers' quarrel? While it must be admitted that some men are constitutionally given to contention, it will be found that most men have a desire for peace at their own firesides, and have a decided horror of "scenes."

The conclusion of the matter is, that, while even the most devoted lovers may find that an occasional difference of opinion will find strong expression, frequent quarrels mean that love cannot survive. It is an ill augury for future happiness, when the lover, who has not yet won his bride, finds that association with her means storm clouds and tempests. There cannot be the homage which every true hearted man wishes to give the woman of his choice, when there are quarrels, which means loss of self control and eventually loss of respect. It is impossible to have many quarrels and to keep the gentler feelings uninjured and unspoiled. There is a beautiful old saying, which is true of love, as of other great emotions, "Toleration is the silken string which threads the pearl chain of all the virtues." Where each learns to regard the feelings and opinion of the other, there is little chance for a quarrel to enter.

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