



**P**oor Mrs. Midgely sat in her disordered living room in an utterly hopeless attitude.

"Oh, dear," she sighed, "I haven't the heart to tidy the house or even myself. To think of Christmas only three weeks away, and not one gift for the children and no hope of getting any. I am glad they are at school; I can at least have a good cry!"

Just as she was getting out her handkerchief preparatory to enjoying this unusual luxury she heard the postman's step on the porch. Habit forced her to gulp back the tears and go to the door. He handed her several letters, all of which she recognized as bills, with the exception of one, which bore the handwriting of her sister Judith.

"Anne, dear," she wrote, "at last I can visit you, and shall be with you in a few days."

"Oh, dear! Oh, dear! To think of Judith visiting us at a time like this, when we can hardly manage, with the high cost of living, to set the table, let alone having a holiday time!"

Mrs. Midgely indulged in the desired cry, then, realizing there was much to be done, she dried her eyes, and with the relief that the shedding of tears



Became a Great Help to Judith.

gave her, she started in to put the house in order.

"At least we'll be clean," she said to herself, as she made broom and duster fly about.

Some months before this time Henry Midgely had lost his position as bookkeeper on account of the failure of the firm for which he worked. They had had no idea of impending conditions and were almost staggered by the blow. The Midgelys had four growing children and every month had lived up to the salary. Mr. Midgely had just found another position. When Anne wrote home she did not tell her family of their loss, and she bravely set herself the task of making up for the months when debts had accumulated.

Christmas! That was the hard part. Nothing for the children! They had had such jolly times before, with presents for everyone. Now she had more work than ever to do and less time for making presents, even if she had the money with which to buy material.

"I shall have to tell Judith," she said to her husband that night, when they were seated by the lamp and the children were in bed, "how sorry we are that we cannot make her visit a pleasant one."

"It is too bad," said he. "Judith is such a slave to your father, looking after his every whim and never thinking of herself. I wish she had a home of her own. I always planned to give her a really good time whenever she should make that long-deferred visit."

Judith arrived, her face shining with happiness.

"As last I am here! Are you quite well, Anne?"

"Oh, yes, dear." Mrs. Midgely's voice had a strange note in it. Judith looked up quickly.

"You don't look well, Anne. What is the matter?"

Poor Anne let the floodgates of her tears open and told Judith her troubles.

"It's only that we don't want you to have a stupid time, Judith."

"Never mind about me," answered Judith. "I am wildly happy just to be here with you all. But I am glad you told me."

The children were delighted to have their aunt with them. They had often visited the pleasant old white house that had been their mother's home, and it was a happy party that surrounded the dinner table that night. Mrs. Midgely, too, almost forgot to be worried as she smiled at her sister's high spirits.

Next morning after Judith had kissed the four children as they left for school, she turned to her sister and said:

### The Girl and the Tambourine

by Martha Gaiser

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**I**T WAS the Saturday before Christmas. The winter's day was fast disappearing as Tom Danvers and John Harding stepped out of the club and joined the moving holiday crowd. For an hour they had watched it through the window as they smoked and talked, and Tom, while he had been much amused at John's cynical comment had taken it all as a joke, for John was never pessimistic. Now, as they walked down the crowded thoroughfare conversation was difficult, and John was unusually silent. Recalling bits of phrases in their recent conversation, it suddenly occurred to Tom that there had been an unaccustomed tone, even a note of bitterness, underlying the smile and lightly spoken words of his oldest and best friend, whom he felt he knew as he did himself. At the thought he looked sharply and piercingly at him, but the strong, resolute profile bore no trace of the cynicism of the last hour, much less evidence of its cause. It was just imagination, Tom concluded.

As they stood waiting for a cross-town car an observant and clever beggar approached. Tom answered the appeal with a coin.

"Not from me," said John, in a disapproving tone.

"Oh, well, it's Christmas time," said Tom.

"Yes, that's just it, and he knows it and makes capital of it. It is sympathetic or sentimental charity, and I don't approve of it."

"Upon my word, Tom, you are funny this afternoon. What is the matter with you? First you condemn

women, then you denounce this happy holiday crowd as a 'passing show,' and now this poor beggar. It's well you are going to be with me for a while; you need the home influence, and—by Jove! you need a wife! That is the antidote for you, old fellow," he concluded, emphasizing his conviction with a slap on the back.

"No, thank you," was the laughing reply as they stepped aboard the car. It was well filled. Across from the friends sat two good-looking women, evidently mother and daughter. Next to the younger woman sat a sweet-faced Salvation Army girl, with her tambourine in her lap. Her plain dark blue dress was in marked contrast to the fashionable suit and beautiful furs of the ladies beside her. Suddenly the younger of the two turned and spoke to her. She smilingly responded and shook her head, but as the other continued to urge a wistful look came into the Army girl's face as she glanced about the car.

"No, no," they heard her say; "the conductor would not allow me. The rules are very strict," she added in explanation. For a moment or so there was silence, and over the faces of both showed disappointment.

Then suddenly the younger woman, with the color suffusing her lovely face, caught up the tambourine and, depositing a coin in it, started down the car, ignoring the shocked and expostulating "Nancy!" and the detaining hand of her astonished companion. Passing from passenger to passenger, she extended the tambourine, always with a little smile and "It's Christmas, you know," or some little word, until each one felt it a privilege to contribute something. As she turned by the door the conductor stepped forward with, "Please, miss, I want to add something to that, too."

Flushing, she exclaimed, "Oh! thank you so much."

She passed on to her seat and returned to its owner the tambourine, that never before had received contributions so promptly and cheerfully bestowed.

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# Sam Zimmerman

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## Useful Christmas Gifts

'Tis not enough to give one a hearty Merry Xmas greeting, if there is something more needed.

This is an occasion not only of greeting and giving, but as much so of congratulations, of thanks.

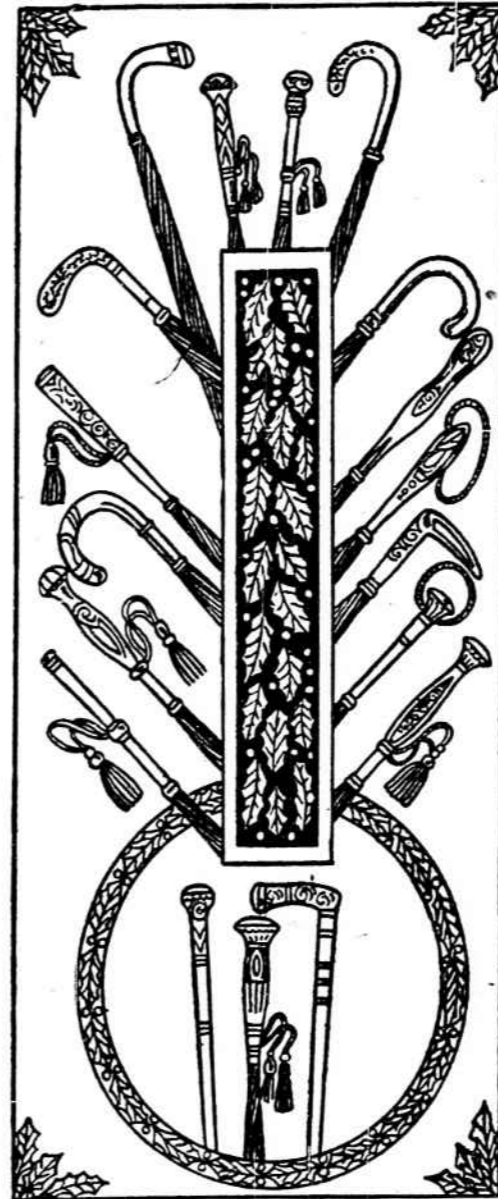
Think seriously, glance back, and then look up.

But "the mill will not grind by the water that is past." What you have had will not help you now.

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