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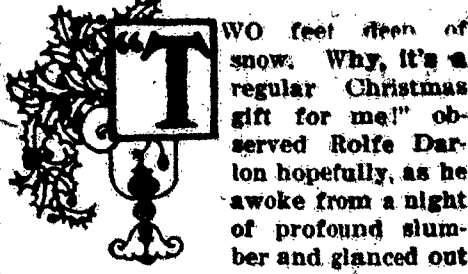
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ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

A Holiday
Romance

By T. B. ALDERSON

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TWO feet deep of snow. Why, it's a regular Christmas gift for me!" observed Rolfe Darlon hopefully, as he awoke from a night of profound slumber and glanced out through the street window of the chill

Meak lodging house where he was one of wanderers who had no other home. As he descended to the well-heated office room of the institution he paid little attention to the lounging crowd of idle and battered men. He paused only to address an old man with a pair of crutches by his side. He slapped him in a friendly, familiar way on the shoulder.

"If I can only get a snow shovel," he observed, "I will see to it that your meals and lodging are well provided for over Christmas."

"Bless you, my friend!" murmured the other gratefully. "You have been very kind to me," and Darlon left him with a genial good-by and started forth for a day of hard, earnest work.

Darlon was passing some cottages adjoining one another when the door of the nearest one was opened and a pleasant faced lady beckoned to him.

"You look as if you were seeking work," she said. "Would you clean off this sidewalk and a path to the coal shed for half a dollar?"

By the end of an hour he had his task completed.

"You must come in and share our lunch, if you will," invited the young lady. Chancing to glance through the window he noticed in the next yard a



Springing Free of the Roof.

young girl battling with the heavy snow with a frail broom.

"She doesn't make much progress," he observed to his hostess. "If you will lend me your shovel I will soon clear a path around the house for her."

He lifted his cap politely, explaining his purpose. Alice Brill, young, frail, grateful, bestowed a winning smile upon the friend in need. She announced frankly that they could not afford to pay for the service offered.

"You needn't worry about that," he declared lightly. "It will make me feel the better for doing a little act of kindness, so near to Christmas."

Darlon regarded Alice Brill with more than ordinary interest. He had heard the girl and her father in the next house discussing their neighbor. It seems that the father of Alice had sold some store property in the town for over four thousand dollars, representing about all he had in the world.

He had hidden it in his bedroom, some one forced open the window and Brill awoke next morning to find his little fortune gone.

Darlon worked sturdily at sidewalk and garden paths and had pretty nearly completed his task when Alice came out on the rear step.

"I wonder if it would be too much to ask you to get the ladder and climb up to the kitchen roof and push off the massed snow there."

Darlon was only too glad to grant the request. He was pushing the last shovel of snow over the eave troughs when he startled Alice, who had come out again to watch the progress of his work, by springing free of the roof, waving a dark object in his hand.

"I found it lodged in the gutter spout, where it must have fallen from the hand of the thief," he announced breathlessly. "It is a pocketbook filled with money."

Just that it was, and Rolfe Darlon, a welcome spectator to the wild delight of the Brills, lingered long in the house, blessed by the gratitude of Mr. Brill and his beautiful daughter. What more natural than that they should invite this cherished guest to Christmas dinner, for a royal one they were sure of now, but Darlon surprised them and congratulated himself in appearing neat, trim and in a new suit, for at the lodging house that evening he found an unexpected letter from his estranged uncle containing a liberal remittance and asking him to return to the home roof and forget that they had ever quarreled.

Merry Christmas, indeed it was for that little group, and when Rolfe Darlon bade Alice Brill good night after a day of rare enjoyment and happiness, he wondered if the ardent hope of his soul might become a reality before another yuletide celebration in his winning of a Christmas bride.

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