













Special service for the poor.

For the Alabama Baptist.

The Lost Diamonds.—Part 2.

By LUCIE DAYTON PHILLIPS.

For this is what she read on the

scrap of paper:

"I got the rings off yesterday—

the first chance I had; but for H—

I never would have gone into a

business of that kind. I just followed

his directions, and he says it is

ours! Of course I mean to divide

with him, as he not only put me up

to the job, but showed me the way

it ought to be done. There were

only two rings, and—"

The page was torn across just here. It

had been crumpled up and thrown

away for some reason. Col. Raymond

smoothed it out with a careful hand,

and placed it inside a note-book he

carried. "A full confession, you

see," he said; and poor Mrs.

Smithson fancied there was a ring

of triumph in his voice. "I knew I

could ferret the matter out, these

young rogues are not sharp

enough."

"What are you going to do with

him?" she asked in a trembling

voice.

"He'll give up the rings, or go

to jail," he answered shortly. "And

the next day Clyde Tregor will

be behind the bars. They had not

told him how they discovered his

deed, nor had he asked, indeed, he

stunned was the boy by what

had happened. No trace of the

rings had been found; and

anybody imagine who the "H"

was, referred to on the scrap of

paper. "We'll find out all about him

if we keep still for a time; and the

chap can't dispose of the rings in

jail," said the lawyer.

There was a month yet before his

trial would occur. Mrs. Raymond

and her husband had gone to their

own home now, and things in the

Smithson household settled down

much in the old way. It was

the mistress carried a heavy heart

to days, however. "Don't fret,"

Katie, pleaded her husband. "He

will only get a year or two in the

pen, and they may make a straight

man of the fellow. They'll teach

him the consequences of stealing,

at least."

"But I've never believed him

guilty," she contended.

"Not guilty, after his own con-

fession, too, which you read your-

self?"

"There's some strange mistake,

some strange mystery about this

thing, Theodore. Clyde had noth-

ing to do with the disappearance of

Lora's rings. I feel it here," she

went on, pressing her hand to her

heart. And her faith in the orphan

boy's innocence seemed only to

strengthen as the autumn days crept

by. She had paid more than one

visit to his poor little room. How

quiet it was! The white bed made

her think of a child's grave, and

each corner was haunted by a ghost

of the merry lad who once came

and went here in his careless, light-

hearted way. Day lay thick on the

little Bible. She took it up with a

hand that trembled, reading once

more with her tear-dimmed eyes

the faded inscription on its fly leaf:

"To my dear little son,

Clyde,

On his sixth birthday,"

and then the words of the Psalmist

which have comforted many a

stricken heart:

"When my father and my mother

forsake me, then the Lord will

take me up."

Death had robbed the child of his

parents, and so the Lord will take

him up. He was safe in the heav-

enly Father's wise and tender care.

Yet, things went so wrong in the

world. She could not understand

them. More than once she had

envied the simple faith of Clyde's

Christian life. Again two years ago,

The pastor said he had never wit-

nessed a brighter conversion than

his, and as for his daily walk since,

she had often told herself it was

more consistent than her own.

And now to think of him as a thief;

to believe him guilty of stealing!

It was simply impossible. No, she

could not do it. She told him this

when she paid a visit to his cell in

the city jail one morning, not long

before his trial was to come off.

"I am so glad," he said quietly;

"but I feel certain you would know

I didn't take Miss Lora's rings."

"If they could only be found,"

sighed Mrs. Smithson.

"But nobody can prove I took

'em when I didn't," he went on

confidently. "Why, I never so

much as touched 'em, never once in

all my life!"

Mrs. Smithson looked in the

earnest face and candid eyes with a

fresh pang of pain. She knew how

that scrap of paper in Col. Ray-

mond's note-book would tell against

him. Nothing more, indeed, would

be needed to condemn him. If only

she might ask him how—but her

lips were moist. The pastor was

silent and had been so.

"And it hurt me, the people

to think I am a thief!" Mrs.

Lora, he believed, would say.

He could not resist. She closed

his eyes, and he bowed his face

with his hands and wept as if his

heart were broken.

"The night of a diamond,

newly found, a little later

she told her well over her

tears, and left the jail. "And

was always so, careless with

things, dropping them just

anywhere. I should think

of the miserable over the trouble

she caused! You, miserable!"

Young Mrs. Raymond certainly

did not look very well when she

came up to the city with her

husband at the time of Clyde's

trial. She said she had not been

well, and thought a change would

do her good. And, then, there was

some shopping to be done. She

meant to go out at once and get

that over with.

"But I would not go out this

afternoon, Lora," suggested her

sister kindly, moved by her pale

cheeks and heavy eyes. "Put on

your tea-gown and take a good

rest instead. I'll get it out of

your trunk for you."

"I brought only the

household I had made here last

winter, but I've taken a dislike to

the gown, somehow. The truth is,

I had it on that morning I dressed

to go shopping, and lost my rings,

and I've never worn it since."

"Yes, remember—and Clyde—"

"Do you still believe that boy

innocent?" asked Mrs. Raymond

impudently.

"Yes, as innocent as you or I."

"In spite of his own confession,

which you read yourself?"

"Yes, his life and character

speak for him, Lora. There's a

mystery about the thing I can't

unravel, but I know Clyde Tregor

did not take your rings. Theodore

would not let me give bail for the

poor child, because your husband

advised against it, and so I had to

see him go to jail, but never once

have I believed him guilty."

Mrs. Raymond was silent. She

sat listlessly smoothing out the

ribbons and laces that trimmed her

pretty gown, a frown on her face.

Suddenly something rolled from her

shallow pocket and dropped at her

feet. Her rings—her diamond

rings! For an instant both stared

at the glittering jewels in speech-

less surprise. Then Lora Raymond

stooped to pick them up, white to

her lips. Mrs. Smithson burst into

tears.

"Clyde! We must go and tell

him," she sobbed.

"Oh, the poor boy in jail over a

month. "He'll never forgive me—

never," wept Lora, in her re-

morseful grief. But she was wrong

there. Clyde's nature was too

sound and sweet to cherish wrongs,

or harbor resentment.

"I told you I didn't take them,"

she said, more glad than proud, as it

seemed, that his words proved true, and

he said little more than this:

"But this part of a letter; didn't

you write it?" asked the Colonel.

"No, neither had I," he said, but

he had been on the "wrong scent" all

the time, and he such a sharp lawyer,

too. Clyde's pale cheeks flushed.

He looked a little ashamed:

"Why, that's— Well, Henry

Field had had a sort of a scheme

to get a prize offered in a maga-

zine Mrs. Smithson takes. If we

got the ivory rings off the stick in

a quarter, we were to get six new

books, paper-bound, but nice to

read, and maybe part of the prize

money they set up. I'd have given

the thing up but for Henry. He

showed me how to get the rings off

for half the books."

"But who were you writing to,

child?" questioned Mrs. Smithson

kindly.

"Only to my little brother,

Willie, ma'am. He's lonely at the

orphanage since I'm away, you see,

and I sent on for a puzzle for him

to sort amuse him. He's lame,

and weakly besides, Willie is, and

that fond of reading you never

saw."

"We must make this thing up to

the boy, Lora," the lawyer told

his wife the next day. "It might be

worth offering him a year or so in

college." Her dark eyes flashed

with pleasure. "May I tell him

now?" she asked eagerly. But she

was too late. Something had al-

ready occurred that made Clyde's

education, if not the best interests

of his future, assured. Mr. and

Mrs. Smithson had called him

"son," and told him he was to be

legally adopted.

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