

The Thirteenth Commandment

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DAPHNE DISCOVERS THAT HER MONEY WILL NOT GO FAR IN BUYING A TROUSSEAU IN NEW YORK.

Synopsis.—Clay Wimburn, a young New Yorker on a visit to Cleveland, meets pretty Daphne Kip, whose brother is in the same boat with Clay in Wall street. After a whirlwind courtship they become engaged.

CHAPTER III—Continued.

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Mr. Gassett smiled. "Not old Wesley Kip's girl?"

"I believe I did hear Miss Kip call her father Wesley."

"Well, I'd like to help Wes out. I suppose I might take a chance. Do you think you can pay for the ring in ninety days?"

"Easily!"

Wimburn would have promised to tear down the world and rebuild it in ninety days.

"I shall have to add a little to the price for the risk and the accommodation."

"Anything you like," said Clay magnificently.

"Call it two hundred dollars."

"Certainly!" One could hardly haggle over an engagement ring.

"I'll ask you to sign a little document."

"With pleasure."

He would have signed an agreement to surrender a pound of his flesh.

Clay hurried out to find Daphne and fasten her on the glittering grye.

He might have taken further alarm from the immense and greedy rapture Daphne revealed at the sight of the petrified dewdrop set in the golden circlet. Women are all misers when it comes to diamonds.

Wimburn noted only the joy the bauble gave to Daphne, and the pretty submissiveness with which she poked out her slender finger and slid it into the fetter. He felt that the kiss of affiance was worth years of hard labor.

It was hard and bitter to rend their cemented hearts in twain, but he had to go at last. She floated him to the station in the little car and waved him through the iron railing. She was unimaginably precious and pitiful as she stood there, and he wanted to blubber when the vestibule was slammed shut and the train slid out of the station like a merciless snake.

He vowed that he would work with the strength of ten and pile up a fortune in the bank for her. But first he must pile up enough to pay for that solitaire.

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Clay wrote Daphne a fat letter every day. He usually sneaked it in among his business correspondence and took great pains that it should never miss the Lake Shore Limited at five-thirty in the afternoon. A special-delivery stamp put the letter in Daphne's hands every next forenoon.

But after the letter had gone he usually remembered that he had omitted to include some message of frighteningly important urgency. So he had to send her every night a night letter, and frequently of mornings he must fire off a day letter. These cost only sixty cents apiece, but often he had to send them in double or triple length.

For occasions where time was yet more unendurable there was the telephone—a pittance of three dollars and twenty-five cents for the first three minutes, and a dollar and five cents for each additional minute or fraction thereof would bring his lips to Daphne's ear.

From the little rubber mouth of the receiver her voice came to him as from a distant star by interplanetary communication. The sense of remoteness was unbearable. She seemed to be dead and wailing across eternity.

Clay Wimburn was in complete distress. His health wavered and his office work suffered till it won rebukes and threats from his chiefs and comment even from Bayard Kip, who never suspected and was never told of Wimburn's infatuation for his sister.

"With lover's logic Wimburn persuaded himself that the only one who could save him from destruction was Daphne. With her married and all, and ensconced in a little nest in New York, he could take up his office tasks with a whole heart. So he began to write, and to telegraph, and to groan across the living wire wilder and wilder cries for help.

Daphne wept back and repaid his longings in kind and suffered heart-rending ecstasies of yearning. And finally she promised frantically to marry him without further delay.

With a desire to economize in pain she broke the double news to her two parents at the same time, telling them both that she was engaged and that she was about to wed.

They were stunned. They had never experienced a suspicion of the acute state of Daphne's heart affairs. It is really astounding how blind parents are to their children's activities and how much can go on under their noses without catching their heavy eyes.

Daphne easily browbeat her father and mother into consenting to her disarray. She sighed:

early marriage. Her father groaned at the thought of the wedding expenses, but consoled himself with a psalm-sight of the Canaan when the last of his dear children should be living at another man's cost.

Mrs. Kip made one stipulation; "I won't let Daphne sneak away to New York and be married by a justice of the peace or a coroner or whoever does such things in New York. She must have a church wedding and a home reception."

Daphne accepted this unanimously, with one amendment.

"I must go to New York to get my trousseau."

"Of course," said Mrs. Kip.

"Of course not!" said Mr. Kip.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Kip.

"The expense is the why not! What's the use of spending a fortune on clothes? The money that goes out for these honeymoons might better be turned into the wedding fund. Lord knows Daphne will need dollars more than she needs duds if she marries that young fellow."

Daphne broke out in a revolt. "Oh, but I'll be glad to be free from this everlasting talk of money, money, money! I hate it. I hate to take it from you. If it weren't for the disgrace I'd bring to you and mamma I wouldn't accept a cent; I'd be married in my old bathrobe. Thank heaven, I'm marrying a man who doesn't hang onto every penny like grim death."

In her own heart she did not realize what a grievous wound she dealt the battered old heart of her father till he sighed:

"I was like him when I was his age. Maybe he'll be like me when he's mine. If I had been more of a miser then I guess I'd be less of one now."

Then Daphne caught the hunted, hounded look behind his spectacles and flung herself in his arms, weeping: "Forgive me, daddy. I'm a little beast to talk to you so. I don't mean it. I'm just excited. I'll get only the simplest things, and some day when Clay and I are rich I'll pay you back a thousandfold."

He patted her and kissed her gawkily, and, manlike, having gained his point, threw it away:

"You get whatever is best and nicest. You're the prettiest girl in Ohio and you're going to have the finest wedding ever seen in Cleveland. And I'll find the money all right, never you fear."

He had just remembered a bit of real estate that had not yet been decorated with a second mortgage. He had bought it secretly with the proceeds of a windfall. That was his double life.

Instead of spending money surreptitiously on dissipations, when he had a bit of luck he sneaked out and invested it in something he could borrow money on in a crisis. The crisis never failed him.

So Daphne wrote to her brother that she was coming to New York to buy a trousseau for her wedding to the dearest boy on earth, whose name she would not tell him till she saw him.

Her letter crossed a letter from Bayard, who began it with his regular apology for his unavoidable delay in writing home.

Dearest Mother, Dad and Sis—Received several sweet letters from you, mother, and meant to answer, but been very busy. These hard times forced us to lay down.

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