

# The Thirteenth Commandment

By RUPERT HUGHES

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### CHAPTER XIX—Continued.

“What they used to call the decent thing we call indecent. You said yourself that marriage without love was horrible. And it is; it's all quarrel and nagging and deceit. If people are faithful to each other morally they seem to quarrel all the more. Long ago I vowed I'd never marry, and I don't intend to. I don't want to marry you. But I want your life.”

“Mr. Duane! Really, this is outrageous.”

“No, it isn't! Hush and listen, honey—Miss Kip—Daphne—whatever you'll let me call you. I told you I was stark, starving, crazy mad about you. When I think of you looking for



She Was More Afraid of Him Now Than Ever.

work, living in that awful spare room of those awful Chivvies—when I think of you going from place to place at the mercy of such men as you're sure to meet—when I think of you waiting for poor Wimburn to get out of the poorhouse, I want to grab you in my arms and run away with you. It breaks my heart to see you in distress and anxiety; for I want you to have everything beautiful and cheerful in the world. And I can get it all for you. Let me! Let me love you and try to make you happy, won't you?”

He had cowered nearer and he held her fast against the door of the car.

His right hand clung to hers; his left slid down to her waist. He drew her toward him, starting up beseechingly. He laid his cheek against her left side like a child, the big man pleading to the little woman for mercy.

She felt sorry for him and for herself. She regretted that cruelty was her one unmistakable duty. She had no right to be kind, and charity would be a sin. She wrung her hands free from his with slow persuasion and shook her head pityingly.

He accepted the decision with a nod, but before she could escape from his arm she felt that he pressed his lips against her just above her heart. It was as if he had softly driven a nail into it. Tears flamed to her eyelids and fell on his hands as he carried them to his bent brow. He crossed them on the wheel and hid his face in them, groaning.

“Daphne! Daphne!”

She was more afraid of him now than ever. All the splendors he could promise her were nothing to that profusion of his longing.

While she waited in a battle of impulses, he regained self-control with self-contempt, in a general clench of resolution. “I apologize,” he mumbled. “I'm a fool to think that you could love me.”

### CHAPTER XX.

Duane did not speak till miles and miles of black road had run backward beneath their wheels. Then he grumbled, “What a fool I was to dream of such a thing!”

More miles went under before her curiosity led her to say, faintly, “What were you dreaming of?”

He laughed, and did not answer for another while. Then he laughed again.

“Do you really want to know?”

“I think so.”

“Well, you couldn't hate me any more than you do, so I'll tell you. I said to myself that I would never be the slave of any woman.”

“It's not that I'm stingy about my money, not that I wouldn't take the greatest pleasure in pauperizing myself for the woman I loved, but that I want her to take my gifts as gifts, not as a tax or a salary. Some of these women think they are doing a man a tremendous favor by letting him support them. That doesn't get me a little bit. I believe a man does a woman just as much honor as she

does him, and sacrifices a blamed sight more. He gives up his freedom, and if she gives up hers she's only giving up something she doesn't know how to use anyway.”

Daphne had rarely found a man who would talk to her with Duane's frankness, and if there is anything that interests a woman more than another it is to hear womankind analyzed, even satirized. She was eager for more vinegar.

“You won't be shocked and angry?” he asked.

“I don't think so.”

“You don't know how pleasant it is to talk life and love to a woman who doesn't rear up and feel insulted at everything. At first you gave me a couple of how-dare-you's, but they don't count. And if you do hate me a little more, why, so much the better. When I thought you had broken with Wimburn I said to myself, ‘She's the one girl in the world for me. I'm going to ask her to marry me.’ But I was afraid to, for I was afraid of marriage. And then—”

“Well, I'd better not—Yes, I will, I said, ‘She believes that men and women are equal and have equal rights, and she's going to get out and hustle for herself, like a little man. Maybe she could learn to love me well enough to go into a partnership of hearts.’ That's what I said to myself. You mustn't think it's because I don't want to cleave to one woman; it's because I do. But I hate handicaps. Do you see? And now you know what I was dreaming of. What do you think of it?”

The answer to his long oration was complete silence. Duane waited for his answer, and not getting it, laughed harshly: “Well, that's that. The next number on our program will be a ballad entitled ‘I Never Dream but I Bump My Head.’ Go on! Marry Clay Wimburn on nothing a year and live miserably ever’ after.”

She said nothing to this, either. Duane was in a wretched state of bafflement. He put the car to its paces, and it ripped through space at fifty miles an hour. Daphne had a new terror added to the load of her nerves.

The car went bounding up a steep incline toward the swerve of a headland cut in rigid silhouette by the far-reaching searchlight of a car approaching from the other direction. Duane kept well to the outside of the road, but just as he met the other motor and wined in the dazzle of its lamps, a third car trying to pass it on the curve hurtled into the narrow space with a blaze like lightning searing the eyes. There was a yelling and hooting of horns and a sense of disaster.

Daphne bent her head and prayed for life, but without faith. Duane, half-blinded, swung his front wheels off the road and grazed a wall. The rear wheels were not quick enough. The other car smote them, crumpling the mudguard and slicing off the rear lamp.

Daphne was thrown this way and that, and it seemed that her spine must have snapped in a dozen places. When she opened her eyes again the car was standing still. Duane turned to her with terrified questions, and his hands visited her face and her arms and shoulders. He held her hands fast and peered into her eyes while she promised him that she was not dead.

The car that had heaved his did not return, but the other did, offering help from a safe distance till its identity was established. In the light of its lamp Duane got down and examined his own car. Besides the damages in the rear, it had sustained a complete fracture of the front axle, a twisted fender, and a shattered headlight.

The driver of the other car came up and joined the coroner's inquest. He stared at Duane, and cried in the tone of an English aristocrat, “God bless my soul, ain't you Tom Duane?”

Duane, blinking in the light, peered at him and said: “Yop! I can't see you, but the voice would be Wetherell's.”

“Right-o; it's me. Oh, pardon me, you're not alone. Nobody hurt, I hope and pray.”

“No, but we're pretty far from home and country.”

“I see! Hum-m! Pity I couldn't get the number of the swine that hit you. I rather fancy I'll have to give you a lift—what? I was out on a tangaroo hunt, but that will wait—if you don't mind trusting yourself to bad company.”

Duane lowered his voice anxiously. “Is it very bad?”

Wetherell put the mute on his voice. “As good as yours, I'll wager. But let's not go into family history. Come along and we'll take you to the next neutral port. That would be—”

“Yonkers.”

“Oh, yes. I fancy those were the Yonkers we came through a few miles back. Well, come along.”

Duane was embarrassed, but he could do nothing except take Wetherell to his car and introduce him to Daphne. “Miss Kip,” he said, “I've got to present Mr. Wetherell. He wants us to ride with him as far as

Yonkers. We'll get another car there.”

Wetherell came close and said: “Did he say Mrs. Kip? I can't see you, but I hope you are the fascinating Mrs. Kip I met at Newport. Have you forgotten me so soon?”

“I am Miss Kip,” said Daphne.

“Oh, so sorry! I don't mean that, either. But my Mrs. Kip was a siren—Lella was her first name. I called her De-Lella, you see. And she called me Samson. She was a—”

“She is my brother's wife,” said Daphne.

“Oh, you don't tell me!” Wetherell gulped, and his abrupt silence was full of startling implications that alarmed Daphne, angered Duane, and threw Wetherell into confusion.

Duane helped Daphne to alight from the derelict and transferred her to the other car, where Wetherell introduced them to a mass of shadow whose name, “Mrs. Bettany,” meant nothing to Daphne and everything to Duane.

Duane arranged to have a wrecking crew sent out to his roadster, and chartered a touring car and a chauffeur for the trip into New York.

He sat back with Daphne and murmured prayers for forgiveness because of the dangers he had carried her into and for the things he had said. Daphne's nerves had been overworked. She had been rushed from adventure to adventure of soul and body. She had been invited to enter a career of gorgeous sin, and she had been swept along the edge of a fearful disaster.

Mrs. Chivvis met Daphne at the door. Her recent affection had turned again to scorn, and she glowered at Daphne, who crept to her room in hopeless acceptance of the role of adventuress.

Tired as she was she could not sleep. The clangor of the morning called her to the window. A gray day broke on a weary town. The probability of debt and food and new clothes dawned again. Everything was gray before her.

Wisdom whispered her to take Duane at his word and try the great adventure. How could it bring her to worse confusion than she found about her now? And then the morning mail arrived and brought her a large envelope addressed in a strange hand. She opened it and took from it a sheaf of photographs.

Her father's image a dozen times repeated lay before her. The untouched proofs omitted never a line, never a wrinkle. One of the pictures looked straight at her. She recalled that once she had stood back of the photographer and her father had caught her eye and smiled just as the bulb was pressed.

She made him smile like that. What would his expression be when he learned that she had “listened to reason,” ceased to be his daughter, and become Tom Duane's—

She shuddered back from the word and the thought. She forgot both in the joy of reunion with her father. All the philosophies and wisdoms and luxuries were answered by the logic of that smile.

She lifted his pictured lips to hers with filial eagerness and her tears fell ruinously on the proof. She



Tired as She Was, She Could Not Sleep.

was satisfied to be what the Jeweler in Cleveland had called her to Clay Wimburn—“old Wes Kip's girl.”

Suddenly she remembered Wetherell and his messages to Lella. She felt so renewedly virtuous herself that it seemed her duty to go down and rebuke Lella for her apparent pilfering at Newport. She was also curious to see how guilty Lella would receive the news that Wetherell had asked for her.

But she found Bayard at home for luncheon and she was neither mad nor mean enough to confuse Lella before

him. And this was rather for his sake than Lella's.

Lella was just informing Bayard that the butcher had delivered the morning's order no farther than the freight elevator, and instructed his boy to send the meat up only after the money came down.

Bayard had no money and the chargin of his situation was bitter. He snarled at Lella: “Tell the cub to take the meat back and eat it himself. Then I'll go over and butcher the butcher.”

Lella dismissed the boy with a faint-hearted show of indignation. Then she came back and said, “And now we have no meat to eat.”

Bayard was reduced to philosophy, the last resort of the desperate: “Well, the vegetarians say we ought never to eat meat, anyway. We're poor, but, my Lord! we're in grand company. Look at this cartoon of Cesare's in the Sun—Father Knickerbocker turning his pockets inside out and not a penny in them. New York city has to borrow money on short-time notes at high interest to pay its own current bills.”

“Look at Europe. All the countries over there were stumbling along under such debt that they wondered how they could meet the interest on the next pay day. And now they are mortgaging their great-grandsons' property to pay for shooting their sons.”

“It's the old Thirteenth Commandment that we've all been smashing to flinders. And, my God! what a punishment we're all getting! And it's only beginning.”

They sat down to a pitiful meal—meatless, maddish, mirthless—hardly more than the raw turnips and cold water of Colonel Sellers. Lella fetched what victual there was.

After the meal Bayard shrugged into his overcoat and left without kissing his wife or his sister goodby.

Daphne and Lella went out to the kitchen, set the dishes in the pan, and the pan under the faucet. Lella turned on the hot water. Daphne was glad to be at work.

“There's one good thing about a small meal,” she chirped, “it makes less dishes to wash.” Then, with as much trepidation as if she had been the accused instead of the accuser she faltered: “Oh, say, Lella, do you remember a man named Wetherell?”

Lella dropped a plate. She said it was hot. But other plates had been hot.

“Wetherell? Wetherell?” she pondered, aloud, with an unconvincing uncertainty. “I believe I do remember meeting somebody of that name. English, wasn't he?”

“Very.”

“Oh, yes. He was at Newport, I think. Why?”

“Oh, nothing. I met him last night and he thought I was you.”

“How could he? Lella gasped. “We don't look the least alike.”

“It was in the dark.”

“In the dark! Good heavens! Where?”

Already Lella had gained the weather gauge. Daphne had to confess her outing with Duane, the crash of the collision and the return to Yonkers in Wetherell's car. Lella took advantage of the situation to interpolate:

“Good heavens! How could you? You of all people! And with Tom Duane! What would Clay think?”

Daphne knew that she had no right to reproach Lella for having known Wetherell in Newport. She had no right even to suspect that Lella had overstepped any of the bounds of propriety. And still she was not convinced of Lella's innocence. She was merely silenced.

### CHAPTER XXI.

The next day her fears of Wetherell and of Lella were rekindled. She went down to ask Bayard to help her trace Clay. Bayard was out and Lella was on the point of leaving. She was dressed in her killingest frock and hat and generally accoutered for conquest.

“Aren't we grand!” Daphne cried. “You look like a million dollars. Where are you off to?”

“Going for a little spin.”

“Who with?”

Lella hesitated a moment, then answered, with a challenging defiance: “With Mr. Wetherell. Any objection?”

Daphne disapproved and felt afraid; but when Bayard came in unexpectedly early and asked for Lella Daphne lied inevitably and said she did not know where she was.

She tried to be casual about it, but Bayard caught fire at once. He was already in a state of tensity irritability, and Daphne's efforts to reassure him as to Lella's innocence of any guile only angered him the more.

He kept leaning out of the window and staring down into the street. Finally, espying Lella in Wetherell's car when it approached the apartment house, he dashed to the elevator and met the two at the curb.

When Lella got out she was startled to see him standing at her elbow. There was nothing for her to do but make the introductions.

“Oh, it's you, dear!” she fluttered. “I want you to meet Mr. Wetherell. Mr. Wetherell, my husband.”

“Ah, really!” Wetherell exclaimed, trying to conceal his uneasiness. “This is a bit of luck! I've heard so much about you! Your wife does nothing but sing your praises.”

“Won't you come up?” said Bayard ominously.

“Er—thanks—no, not today. I'm a trifle late to an—appointment.”

“Then I'll have a word with you here,” said Bayard. “Run along, Lella; I'll join you in a minute.”

He said it pleasantly, but Lella was terrified. The spectacle of rival bucks locking horns in her dispute is not al-



Had You Heard That Your Country Was at War?

together enjoyable to a civilized doe. Lella went into the vestibule and watched through the glass door, expecting a combat. She could not hear Bayard saying:

“Mr. Wetherell, I'd thank you to pay your attentions elsewhere.”

“What's that?” Wetherell gasped at the abrupt attack.

“Your attentions to Mrs. Kip are very distasteful to me.”

“My dear fellow, I hope you don't imagine for one moment that—Why, your wife is the finest little girl in the world!”

“That's for me to say, not you!”

“My word! this is amazing!”

“It is, indeed. It will be more than that if you come around again. Had you heard that your country was at war?”

“I had.”

“Well, a big, strapping fellow like you ought to be over there fighting for his country instead of looking for trouble here.”

Wetherell's panic at the domestic situation was forgotten in the attack on his patriotism. He drew himself up with an unconsciously military automatism and said, “I fancy I'm doing as much service here as I could do over there.”

“More, perhaps,” Bayard sneered, with contemptuous irony. “But that's your business, not mine. Mrs. Kip is my business and I don't intend to have her subjected to your—your attentions. I'm trying to be neutral, but by—Well, I've warned you. Good day!”

Bayard joined Lella in the vestibule and they went up in the elevator together. She waited till they were in their own apartment before she demanded an account of the conversation.

He told her in a rage and she flew into another. She divided her wrath between Bayard and Daphne. There was enough for both. Daphne tried to escape, but, being cornered, proceeded to fight back, whereupon Lella denounced her to Bayard and told of her ride with Duane.

It was a right good fight and getting well beyond the bounds of discretion when the telephone announced that Clay Wimburn was calling.

Nobody imaginable would have been welcome in that battlefield, but Clay seemed peculiarly ill timed. Bayard went to the telephone and called down:

“Tell him we're out.”

“Yes, sir.”

Evidently the telephone was taken from the hallman's hand, for Clay's voice roared in Bayard's ear:

“I hear you, you old villain. I know you're in, and I'm coming up. It's a matter of life and death. I'm on my way up now.”

It seemed decenter that Lella and Daphne should disappear, since Bayard had said that they were all out. The women retreated to Lella's room as a good coign of audition.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Have Much the Same Thought. A luxury is something we are apt to think our neighbors cannot afford, and our neighbors are apt to think we cannot afford ourselves.

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