

HER AUCTION MANIA.

A Woman Goes on Buying Despite Her Husband's Commands.

By SHIELA ESTHER DUNN.
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"For heaven's sake, Maria, what have you been buying now?"
"That's a picture of Mary, queen of Scots, going to execution."
"Cheerful subject to have always before one, isn't it? Where did you get it?"

"At an auction held at a house down on Chestnut street. The people who live there are selling out their furniture."
"What did you give for it?"
"Oh, I started it at 50 cents, but a man in the crowd ran it up to \$7. I was bound he shouldn't have it."

The husband groaned.
"Don't you like it, dear?"
"Like it? Why, Maria, it's nothing but a chrome. It isn't worth 25 cents. As for me, I would much rather have it out of the house than in it. If you insist on indulging this passion for going to auctions and getting taken in by sharpers who run things up on you we'll go to the poorhouse. Only a week ago you bought a bedstead when you know we have three already in the attic that we have no use for."
"But it cost only \$3. It was dirt cheap."

"Then there's the bookcase you paid \$12 for, and we haven't books enough to fill the cases we have already. And so it goes. Not a week passes but you spend money for some useless article. And all this time I am struggling along to accumulate capital to use in my business. I need \$5,000 now. If I had the amount I could make 100 per cent a year with it. Now, Maria, I've stood this just as long as I'm going to. To permit it to go on would result in ruin for both of us. I am therefore forced, though reluctantly, to say that



"I CAN AFFORD TO GIVE YOU \$3,000."

the next time you bring anything home from an auction I shall insist on a separation."

"Oh, John, how can you talk so?"
"I mean it. Much as I love you, I would rather get on without you than have you bring ruin on us by indulging in a mania which you can control if you will. Come, make an effort. Keep away from these places. They have strolled pigeons in them who are there for no other purpose than to watch for people who corrupt some article, and when they see such they bid against them merely to make them pay a fancy price."

"Well, dear, since you don't like to have me buy things at auction I won't do so any more. I admit that I become excited when I get to bidding and sometimes act foolishly. There, now," giving him a kiss, "say no more about it."

There was peace in the Morrison family for several months—no more dingy pictures, no more broken sets of china, no more bedsteads, lounges, curiosities, bric-a-brac. The husband had often thought of his threat and dreaded being put into a position where he would feel constrained to fulfill it. What would be do with the children without their mother to take care of them? But as time wore on and he saw no evidence of a relapse on the part of his wife he hoped that the bugbear had taken flight.

But as the inebriate will go for months, possibly for years, without a slip to be suddenly carried away by the sight of a glass of wine, so did Mrs. Morrison fall at seeing a red flag. It hung on the outside of a building which it was necessary for her to pass, and she was not able to get by it. She tried to persuade herself that she would merely have a look at the things offered for sale. Going in, she found that there was no auction in progress at the time, merely a sale of remnants of furniture, most of which had been removed to the auctioneer's warehouses. A very gentlemanly person was there, who stepped forward and offered to show the lady what there was to be bought.

She had got safely through every room in the house and was about to take her departure when the man opened a closet in which he seemed surprised to find a lot of china and miscellaneous articles. Mrs. Morrison asked him the price of several, but he did not seem to know what figure to put on them. Indeed, it was evident that the closet had been overlooked. There were three silver cups much tarnished that captured the poor woman's fancy. The salesman said that he knew nothing about what to charge for them, but if she wanted them he would sell them to her for old silver. The lady had two children who did not have silver cups and was tempted to buy two of them. The man made her a ridiculously low price for the lot, and she fell. She bought the three cups for \$5.

When John Morrison went home that evening and saw that his wife despite his warning, his threat, his

had a relapse his heart sank within him. He could not bring himself to do as he had threatened, and he knew that she would ruin him if he did. The next two days were passed in gloom in the Morrison household. The only happy ones in it were the children, each of whom had a silver cup that had been polished by their mother.

But the third day there came a change. While Mr. Morrison was at business a gentleman drove up to his home and asked for the lady who a few days before had bought three silver cups at a rummage sale. Mrs. Morrison received him, and he begged to be allowed to see the cups. On being shown them he looked them over carefully, examining every detail, then astonished the lady by offering her \$2,500 for them.

Mrs. Morrison was so paralyzed that she could not articulate a reply. She was reading just the man would bring the illusion he had created down about her before she could find her tongue, when he added:

"I don't wish to take any advantage of you, madam. I can afford to give you \$3,000."

By this time Mrs. Morrison had acquired sufficient equanimity to hold on to the cups till she could find out what there was in them to command such a price. She told the would be purchaser that she would be obliged to consult her husband about the matter. If he would leave his address she would advise him later.

As soon as the gentleman had departed, which he did reluctantly, without the coveted articles, Mrs. Morrison went out to see if she could find any one to give her an inkling of why she had been offered a fabulous price for three old cups that she had bought for old silver. She called on a silversmith with whom she had traded and asked him if he could put a price on articles that were worth far more than their intrinsic value. He said he could not, but gave her the address of an expert in curios. She found the expert, and he agreed to call upon her and give her an opinion on her cups the next day.

That evening at dinner Mr. Morrison noticed that his wife looked agitated. Moreover, his boy Johnnie complained that his mother had taken away his and his sister's silver cups.

"Why not let the children have them?" said the father. "They are the only ones who can get comfort out of them."
"Knowing, John," said the wife meekly, "that the sight of them brings you pain and makes you irritable, I put them away where you will not see them."

Morrison finished his dinner in silence, then went away to smoke and read his evening paper by himself. Not a word did he address to his wife during the evening and at last went to his own bedroom without giving her the usual kiss.

As for Mrs. Morrison, she was in an internal whirl. She dare not say anything to her husband about the cups till she knew that there was good reason for the remarkable offer she had received for them. She slept but little during the night, being kept awake by the possibility of good fortune and the fear that what had occurred might turn out a castle in the air.

The next morning the husband ate his breakfast in silence and after it had been finished went out without even saying goodby to his wife. Her relapse into the auction mania seemed to have taken away all his domestic happiness. Mrs. Morrison waited eagerly for the expert to call and when he arrived could scarcely contain herself till he had seen the cups. She set them out on a table before him. He took up each one successively, looked into it, outside of it and, turning it up, scrutinized its bottom. Then he examined the ornamentation. All this time Mrs. Morrison was watching him, dreading that he would prick the bubble that had been inflated by the man who had made the remarkable offer.

At last the expert set the cups down on the table and said to himself:
"No, they're not."
"Not what?" gasped the poor woman, suddenly dashed to earth.
"I thought they might belong to the twelfth century, but they don't."
"Well?"
"They belong to the sixteenth. They are chalcies."

"Have they any value?" asked Mrs. Morrison in a trembling voice.
"All you can get—over \$5,000. I'll give you that for them."
Mrs. Morrison fainted and when she came to herself, forgetting that the gentleman was not her husband, threw her arms around his neck.

When he departed he left with her a check for \$5,000 and took the cups. That evening John Morrison came home wearing the same expression as in the morning.
"Dear," said his wife, "are we to be separated?"
He gave no answer.
"If we are," she went on, "if we are I've got the money."
And she waved her check before him.

John Morrison put \$5,000 of the amount into his business, leaving the rest for his wife to use in indulging her auction mania.

Well Placed Generosity.
In 1855 Liszt went on a tour in the French provinces. He arrived at the little town of Le to give a concert, as announced. But the inhabitants appeared to take but little interest in musical matters, for when the musician appeared on the platform he found himself face to face with an audience numbering exactly seven persons. Liszt stepped very calmly to the front, and, bowing respectfully to the array of empty benches, he delivered himself as follows:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I feel extremely flattered by your presence here this evening, but this room is not at all suitable; the air is literally stifling. Will you be good enough to accompany me to my hotel, where I will have the piano conveyed? We shall be quite comfortable there, and I will go through the whole of my program."

The offer was unanimously accepted, and Liszt treated his guests not only to a splendid concert, but an excellent supper into the bargain. Next day, when the illustrious virtuoso appeared to give his second concert the hall was not large enough to contain the crowd which claimed admittance.

RENTING A BRIDAL VEIL.

An Incident of a Fashionable Wedding in New York.

Not long ago one of the wealthiest "charge customers" of a well known department store in New York purchased a \$500 wedding veil for her daughter, which was charged to her account and duly delivered. The wedding was a large one and celebrated at high noon in one of the downtown churches.

It happened that one of the girls from a department store went out for luncheon at this hour and, seeing a fashionable wedding in full swing, slipped into the church with the crowd and into one of the back pews. After the ceremony was over she hurried back to her place behind the counter, too busy with her special sales to even think about it.

The next morning, however, when she read an account of the "magnificent wedding in — church and a detailed description of the wonderful veil worn by the bride, valued at \$500," she laughingly told her numerous friends in that department that she "had been one of the honored guests and had seen that \$500 veil with her own eyes." Just at this thrilling point of her story one of the floor men stepped up to her and said:

"You are wanted at the manager's office, Miss B."

As she entered the office, to her perfect amazement, she beheld the identical bridal veil just under discussion.

"Miss B, can you tell me if you ever saw this veil before?" asked the manager.

"Yes, sir; I saw it yesterday." "Where did you see it?"

She took from her pocket the clipping from the morning newspaper with the account of the great wedding, the costly veil and a picture of the bride. Laying it on the desk, she said:

"This is a picture of the veil." "How did you happen to be at this wedding instead of in your place here in the store?"

"It was my luncheon hour, and I went to the wedding instead of to lunch."

The manager smiled. "Can you positively identify this veil as the one you saw yesterday?"

Miss B. took it up in her hands and, unfolding it, ran her fingers through the mesh and into the tiny folds where the orange blossoms were caught, then with some difficulty picked out three little pieces of rice and handed them to the manager.

She went back to her counter, and the "charge customer," whose accounts ranged in the thousands each year, was rendered a bill for \$300 for the use of a bridal veil worn by her daughter.

A check for the \$300 was immediately sent, and the wealthy "charge customer" still continues to charge.—Chicago Record-Herald.

Antiquated Customs.

There is no court in Europe more tenacious of its etiquette—which was inaugurated several hundreds of years ago—than that of Spain. It is said that King Ferdinand VII, once made a minister resign because he had accidentally touched his hand. One of the quaintest ceremonies is the closing of the royal palace gates at Madrid every night. Electric light has been in use in the palace for quite a long while, but nevertheless every evening at 11 o'clock the officiating gentleman in waiting appears, accompanied by several servants, who carry ancient lanterns, to demand a huge key from a higher official to lock the doors of the palace. This is all the more amusing as the huge key does not fit the modern keyholes. The key is then returned to a third official, and every night gentlemen in waiting have to patrol the corridors of the palace, though sufficient guards are about, to watch over the slumbers of their royal master.

Paul the Tyrant.

Paul I, of Russia, was very deaf and also very tyrannical. One day an aide-de-camp, intending to please him, approached and cried in his ear, "I am glad to see, your majesty, that your hearing is much improved."
"What is that you say?" growled the czar.

Raising his voice, the aide-de-camp said, "I am glad that your majesty's hearing is so much improved."
"Ah, that's it, eh?" chuckled the czar and then added, "Say it once more."

The aide-de-camp repeated the words, whereupon Paul I. thundered: "So you dare to make fun of me, do you? Just wait awhile."

The Diagnosis.

The disastrous results of interference by relatives in the course of courtships was well exemplified in the case of a young Baltimore couple not long ago. They had been engaged for some time when it became generally known that the affair was at an end.

"What was the trouble, Jack?" an intimate friend asked the youth, who, by the way, is a recent medical graduate.

"Well, as it was nothing relating to Nan personally, I don't know why I shouldn't tell you," he replied, with a sigh.

"I suppose it was some outside influence—you seemed to fairly dote on her," the friend commented.

"I did," the dejected lover replied. "She is the sweetest little girl in the world, but terribly fond of her relatives. Her old maid aunt from Kansas came along the other day and announced that she was going to live with us after we were married, and—well she proved an antidote."—Detroit Free Press.

The Work of Time.

"And to think," sighed the man who was trying to find a belt which was long enough to be buckled around him, "that the boys at school used to call me Skinny!"—Chicago Record-Herald.

He Gave It.

The Girl (rather weary, at 11:30 p. m.) "I don't know a thing about baseball. The Beau—Let me explain it to you. The Girl—Very well; give me an illustration of a home run.

DIG TO LIVE, URGES WILSON.

Secretary of Agriculture's Remedy For Food Cost Problem.

NEED OF GREATER PRODUCTION

Cabinet Officer Points Out Importance of Soil Conservation Before Conference at New York Produce Exchange to Consider Problem of Labor and Best Methods of Farming.

James Wilson, secretary of the department of agriculture, who recently addressed the New York Produce Exchange on the food cost problem and its relation to the farm, said that conservation of the soil both east and west would determine future prosperity and promised government aid in any state movement to increase the productivity and improve the condition of the soil.

The exchange had called a conference on this subject and invited the secretary, congressmen and the heads of the various big railroads in the east. As an outcome of the discussion a permanent organization was formed, on which the railroads are represented, to educate the farmers of the state of New York in the best interests of production and of inducing residents in cities to go "back to the farm."

"We cannot afford to buy food from foreign countries," said Mr. Wilson. "We must see to it that our western farms produce enough, not only for home consumption, but also to sell abroad and square up the balance of trade."

"It costs more to get anything done in our country than in most others. Production does not increase as fast as population. Prices go up. It costs more to pay carriers, dealers, manufacturers, all classes. The farmer gets big prices now, but it costs him twice as much to grow things as it did ten years ago."

Cannot Afford to Buy Abroad.
"The fact that population increases faster than food sets us thinking. We cannot afford to buy food from foreign countries. The balance of trade for goods bought and sold since the civil war, independent of farm products, have been heavily against us during that time and have been paid by exports from the farm."

"Most of our people in the east are being fed from the Mississippi valley, and the states from the south draw much from the same source. For the last half century the young people of the farms have been educated to leave them. No teacher until recently taught a scholar the way to make more of his day's work on the farm or how to make the acre respond better, and for a very good reason. The teacher had never learned it himself. Education flows downward from the university regarding everything but agriculture. If applied science along this line is not understood at the fountainhead there will be no stream from which to drink."

"Ignorance permitted the soil to become unproductive. The highest intelligence is required to bring back fertility. Generally speaking, our farms are managed with too little capital or the farm is too large for the means of the operator. Help is dearer than it has been, and it is scarce in all sections of the country. Higher prices for farm products will justify more pay to the farm hand and have a tendency to keep workers on the farm."

"The cheap food of the past has been one of the great advantages the manufacturer has had. He has it no longer. Neglect of the soil will very soon impress itself on all classes."

Soil Conservation Urged.
"Importations of food will bring about a change in our economics, a revolution in our policies, which may be avoided by better farming and a comprehensive view of the situation by those who deal in big things, whether carrying commerce, manufacturing or finance. If the America we know today is to continue with its opportunities for all classes, high prices for every industrial man, education for every child, an easily acquired competence for every frugal, industrious family, we must look to the soil and its power of production. Other nations prosper by commerce and manufacturing, but their working classes are not as comfortable as ours."

"Every state should organize to conserve fertility of its soils. The department of agriculture would gladly cooperate with all of them. This department has corps of scientists that could be made useful in this regard. There is no kind of conservation that compares at all in importance with soil conservation, while all are important. We are late in beginning, but high prices are impelling and insistent from every standpoint."

"Some political economists tell us that boys leave the farm because land values are so high, but land values east of the Alleghenies have gone down because the boys left the farms and returned without capital got possession to grow grain and hay for sale."

The Approaching Comet.
The astronomers now tell us there's a comet in the sky. Which will quite soon be apparent to the nude observant eye. But here's a question we in all humility propose—Will the coming comet leave us come in full or comatose?

Are the scientific telescope comet finders sure?
That the comets of comets will eternally endure?
For if it's just a gamble it is certainly a stake.
This asking our existence on the hazard of a tail.

To pity distress is but human; to relieve it is godlike.—Mann.

BLAKE'S VISIONS.

The Curious Hallucinations of the Post-Painter.

William Blake, the contemporary of Charles Lamb, was a man of visions. Blake dined with prophets and held converse with archangels. A friend of Blake called on the post-painter and found him sitting, pencil in hand, drawing a portrait with all the seeping anxiety of a man who is conscious of having a fastidious sitter. He looked and drew and drew and looked, yet no living soul was visible. "Disturb me not," said Blake in a whisper. "I have some one sitting to me." "Sitting to you?" exclaimed the astonished visitor. "Where is he? I see no one." "But I see him," answered Blake haughtily. "There he is. His name is Lot. You may read of him in the Scriptures. He is sitting for his portrait."

Blake's hallucinations, however, rarely took a malignant form. One of his most beautiful visitors was of a fairly "funeral." "I was walking alone in my garden," he said. "There was a great stillness among the branches and flowers and more than common sweetness in the air. I heard a low and pleasant sound and knew not whence it came. "At last I saw the broad leaf of a flower move, and underneath I saw a procession of creatures of the size and color of green and gray grasshoppers, bearing a body laid out on a rose leaf, which they buried with songs and then disappeared. It was a fairy's funeral."

The Manchus.

The name "Manchuria," to designate the country of the Manchus, is not known to the Chinese, but was invented by French geographers. The Manchus are a tribe of Tartars who gained the ascendancy in China in the seventeenth century. Manchu is Chinese for "pure" and was applied by an ancestor of Shun Chai, the first Manchu emperor of China, to his dynasty and his people.

THE SYMPATHY OF MURIEL.

How a Woman Defeated a Worthy Man.

By LOUISE WINTER.
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Muriel had the fatal gift of sympathy. In her case it was particularly unfortunate, as she happened to be born into a matter of fact, selfish family who never idealized and who found in the misfortunes of others a cause for self gratulation.

Muriel in her childhood burned to relieve the necessities of the poor. Her heart ached at tales of wrongful suffering, but she was handicapped by the lack of charity about her, and she was too young to act in open defiance of her people.

Jim Manning had been a family friend when she was a little girl. He remembered the boxes of candy she

was in the habit of bringing her and the impossible dolls with fuzzy, flaxen hair and staring blue eyes. Jim was not rich in those days, but he seldom came to the house without some trifle for the "kid," and Muriel never forgot him.

His rise to fortune was rapid. In a few years from a plausible, smooth tongued promoter, with a shabby coat buttoned over his shirt to hide deficiencies of toilet, he became a successful manipulator of the stock market and the president of a company which netted him thousands of dollars a year. Jim had prospered, and he had enemies, and among the bitterest were the members of Muriel's family.

The Dimocks never forgave the good luck, as they phrased it, of a friend. They spoke slightly of the great James Douglass Manning, which, however, did not bother the said James, as nowadays their paths never crossed, but Muriel suffered for him. She took his part eloquently at first; then when the usual shaft of ridicule had been launched and her tongue silenced her reproachful eyes continued to protest against the injustice.

"Jim owes you nothing," she would arraign her people in imaginary conversations. "By his pluck, his quick grasp of affairs, he has prospered, while you have remained in a rut."

At sixteen Muriel suddenly developed mentally and physically. Her meagre little frame filled out, the sharp oval of her face rounded, till she no longer resembled the baby owl, all eyes in a bonny setting, to which her eldest brother had long likened her.

She became bolder, less easily silenced in the unequal family arguments; she pursued her little charities in the face of opposition, while her people looked on and wondered. They considered her an alien and admitted among themselves that she was "queer," but as she never attempted to win any of them over to her way of thinking they let her alone and smiled indulgently at what they called her folly.

When Jim Manning's downfall seemed imminent the Dimocks fell on Muriel and branch and tore him to pieces. They gazed in the ruin that hung over him as if they had a personal grudge to avenge, and they declared that they had known all along that this would happen. When Muriel started up in his defense they turned upon her as if they would rend her also. She covered her ears with her hands and fled from the room, her heart beating furiously in a storm of futile anger.

Jim, her idol, tottering on his pedestal, had never seemed so heroic a figure. She read every line the newspapers printed about the scandal in his company. She did not understand the technical terms, but her intelligence grasped that he was charged with fraud, that his creditors were insinuating his money had been made dishonestly and that he was threatened with ruin and disgrace. She read the worst side of the story, for her people patronized the yellow journals, and she pictured him sitting alone, deserted by those who had fawned upon him in his palmy days, and she longed to show him by some tangible sign that she was at least did not believe in his infamy. Waves of sympathy were not powerful enough to fit this case. It

needed action, and Muriel nerved herself to act. She must see him; she must let him know that she understood, that she had faith in his power to silence his detractors, then she could better bear the tyranny in her home.

The morning papers pictured graphically the scene in his office—the outer rooms crowded with a mass of excited men and women clamoring for their money, while alone in his private office sat James Douglass Manning, his head bowed, his whole attitude one of miserable dejection.

Then Muriel could hold out no long

er. She would go to him at once, and perhaps her feeble sympathy might help him to regain the courage he seemed in danger of losing. She dressed herself in her most becoming clothes and slipped out of the house quietly, thus avoiding the questions which otherwise would have tormented her conscience.

James Douglass Manning did not look like a man on the verge of despair as he sat in his office dictating letter after letter and smoking one black cigar after another. He was bothered—yes, he would confess to that—and the shareholders had pestered him with their unreasonable demands for an accounting, but he did not doubt his ability to weather this storm as he had weathered others in his checkered career. He was busy, and he looked up impatiently as his confidential clerk entered with a card.

"I can't see anybody, Jones," he said irritably. He was a big man, massive of frame, massive of feature, with power irradiating from every pore. "It's a lady, sir. She begs you will see her. She's not an investor. She's quite young."

Manning held out his hand for the bit of pasteboard. "Miss Muriel Dimock," he read, then wrinkled his brow thoughtfully. But he had a good memory, and he could look back ten years without effort. "The Dimock kid," he murmured. He remembered how the Dimocks had scoffed at him when he needed help and how he had paid them back when he was on top of the heap. But the kid had known nothing of all this, and he had been fond of the little mouse-like child, with her timid ways and her big, frightened eyes. He paused a moment reflectively. "All right, Jones. Show her in."

Muriel appeared in the doorway, her hands clasped tight beneath her muff, her heart thumping audibly to her ears, her eyes suffused and her pretty mouth trembling.

"Jim," she faltered, then stopped, shocked into silence by the reality. Here was no cowering, broken man, needful of a woman's tender ministrations. Manning's whole personality radiated confidence in himself.

He came forward wonderingly. Could this pretty, dainty girl be the kid whose scrawny appearance had always called forth pity on his part? "Muriel, child, how have you grown?" was all he could manage to get out. She smiled faintly. "It's ten years since you've seen me, Mr. Manning. She could not call him Jim now.

He pulled forward a chair, and she sat down ill at ease. What should she say to him, how explain her errand of mercy?

There had been no frantic crowd in the outer rooms, and she had taken that as a sign that even those whom he was accused of defrauding had deserted him, but when she was ushered into his presence and found him a bigger, mightier Jim even than she remembered her little pretensions melted into thin air.

Manning, however, had tact. He saw that she was embarrassed, and though he had no conception of the cause, he did his best to put her at ease. So well did he succeed that in a few minutes she was chatting frankly with him as she had never done with any one else in her life.

"I can't explain why I came. You wouldn't understand, but I wanted you to know that we remembered you." She used the plural, but he understood, and skillfully he drew from her the whole story. He did not smile when he heard how she had pictured him ruined and despondent, but something stirred in his man's breast, and a wave of tenderness swept over him as he realized the sympathy she would have given had he needed it.

"Blessed little kid!" he murmured, gazing into her shining eyes. "So you thought they'd done for me and you came to weep over the ruin, the only one too. I never knew what a woman's sympathy meant. I've had few dealings with your sex. My mother died when I was born, and I had no sisters. Folks call me a hard man. Perhaps I am, but you've done more for me today than you know. You've shown me what I've been missing all these years, and I can't thank you, child; I can't thank you." His voice broke abruptly, and he closed his eyes a moment. It was a man swift to act when he had once determined upon a course. Muriel had untied her life to him unwittingly, in her dim explanation. He knew her family, and he felt that the girl's best nature was starving for lack of appreciation. Her need was as great as his, and he suddenly saw a way to repay his debt. When he looked up she was standing beside him, a curious warmth glowing in the depths of her dark eyes.

"I'm so glad I've helped you, Jim, but I must not take up too much of your time," she began softly.

He shook his head. "What you've done amounts to nothing unless you are willing to go on helping me all my life, giving me sympathy when I need it and giving me love always," he said firmly. Then he took both of her hands in his and drew her slowly—so that if she wished she could still draw back—to his breast.

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