

BLISS AT AUCTION.

"Come, Courtney, lend me your ears for half an hour for I am in a pickle," exclaimed Fred Sawyer to his friend, "Come up to my quarters, I have something to say to you, and—no joking—I need your advice."

"If you take it it will be for the first time," laughed good-natured Courtney. "Lead on, and don't lose any time in relieving this suspense. I'm not fond of riddles, you know."

"Why, yesterday I dropped into the sales room at a London station. You know, they sell off the uncalled-for luggage at intervals, and a sale was just going on. A number of the boys were there, and we each commenced to bid for a trunk. I selected a rather small one, and—here we are! Come right in, and view the burden of my woes."

He led the way into a pleasant apartment, and pointed to a small leather trunk which stood in the middle of the room.

"Open it, if you want to," he said. "I've had enough of the confounded thing. It's full of woman's stuff, and what do you suppose I can do with it? I haven't an aunt or cousin in the wide world."

"Keep it till you're married, Fred. These seem to be good clothes," said Courtney, peeping into the box and lifting dainty garments with a half reverent touch in spite of his laughing face.

"Humph! The idea of such advice from you! Why, old boy, I shall not marry for ten years—five, anyway—and I'm not going to risk keeping these things here and being taken for a day burglar. Mrs. McGaffrey would find them in spite of everything—small murder in the air, and hunt around for the skull bones. No, I'll dump the trunk in the river; that's what I'll do."

"Pshaw! You're too sensible for that. These things cost money—lots of it, I imagine—and you paid something for them in the bargain. You might sell them to the second-hand—No, I've a better scheme than that. Why not go through the trunk systematically, find out the owner's name and address—there are surely letters or something—write to her, offering the whole thing for a reasonable sum?"

"Do an act of charity, and yet turn an honest penny. Any one would know you are Scotch. But I must go back to the store, and—here, you have all the time there is: suppose you go through it for me? All I ask is that you will keep Mrs. McGaffrey out of it. Fare-dieu!" And off he went.

Courtney laughingly looked the deed, but the smile soon left his face as he proceeded with his task. He wondered if the battered little trunk had been lost in some of the dreadful catastrophes he had heard of; he imagined the owner killed and her body as well as luggage unidentified in the horrible excitement.

They were girlish things—dainty veils and ribbons, gingham, silks and snowy linen. He lingered over a small, worn slipper and felt a thrill akin to that awakened in Cinderella's prince.

"No clew yet," he murmured. "Perhaps there are letters in this box."

Its catch was bent, but he wrenched it open and cut—his own photograph!

He sat down plump in a box of faces and stared. On the other side were his initials, and a date he had been trying for three years to forget, "June 2, 1860."

"Nell Burr's trunk!" he exclaimed. "Oh, my little girl, what has happened you? Maybe some one—No, here are your initials on this belt buckle, and your gloves are No. 6, and this slipper would just fit your dear little foot."

The young man grew excited and rapturous over each article. Presently he lifted a package of letters from one corner.

"My own—and they express the greatest happiness life ever brought me. They are like the leaves that flutter down in the November rain. I wonder why she kept them. How many there are!"

Unfastening the cords, he turned the letters over and found many of the envelopes scribbled upon by a familiar hand. There were items jotted down to be remembered in answering, and scraps of poetry which had not long since reached his eyes, and been ever since cherished in his memory. Upon the last one—for they were all numbered—was written in ink this girlish confession: "Al! Courtney, I love you, but will never marry any one so inconstant."

Resting his head on the empty tray in silence, he exclaimed:

"I was a fool—a consummate fool!—and now, perhaps, she is dead!"

A noise outside aroused him, and in a bewildered way he surveyed the garments strewn on every side, and gazed mournfully at the beautiful hat the box of which he had unconsciously used for a cushion. Fred would be coming in a few minutes. He began repacking the things with ruthless haste, and stowing the letters in his own pockets, was lying lazily on a couch reading the paper when his chum entered.

"Well," he cried, "what mystery did you unearth?"

"No mystery at all," was the deliberate answer; "but the 'stuff,' as you call it, is worth something, and would be a regular gold mine to a girl. I've a notion to buy it from you and present it to my sisters. What will you take?"

"Oh, come! You're just doing that to help me out. I know your benevolent old heart. No, I'll follow your first advice and hunt up the owner. It would be quite romantic, and, besides, you hinted that I might make a shilling or two by it. You found her name and address there, didn't you?"

"Yes," Al reluctantly answered; "I found her name and address, but it is hardly likely you could find her after so many years. You know, they keep luggage a long time before it is sold."

"I'm not sure about that," said Fred. "I've thought about it all the morning, and the idea grows on me. It will be rare fun to try, anyway. What did you say the name was?"

"But no doubt this girl was killed—luggage is seldom lost except by some such accident, and—maybe she's an old woman."

Fred laughed immoderately.

"Just as if that would make an act of charity less meritorious. Old women don't usually wear white lace hats, though. You must have found something precious in there—jewelry or something—which makes you anxious to martyrize yourself. It's mine, however, and I am not anxious to part with it as I was—not till I've looked through it, anyway."

As he turned the key Al remembered that his own photograph was lying in a conspicuous box, and exclaimed:

"Wait until after dinner, then; I'm half starved."

"Perhaps it would be better," was the answer, and they passed out together.

When fairly downstairs Al said he had forgotten his handkerchief, and flew back three steps at a time to get it. Securing the picture and placing it in an inside pocket, he said to himself:

"Surely there's nothing else to give me away. But I must wheedle him out of the trunk."

After dinner Fred "went through" the contents of the trunk, making boyish remarks concerning each article as he threw it aside. Al inwardly winced at these remarks, and could scarcely restrain himself from knocking him over on the spot.

"What makes you so crusty?" queried Fred, suddenly, as one of his choicest jokes was met by a gruff "H'm!" "There's no fun in you, and why you want this stuff beats me. Your sisters would turn up their noses at second-hand clothing, 'it is pretty. But it isn't worth fussing over, so take it along. No doubt it would prove a white elephant on my hands sooner or later."

Not until the trunk was safely in his room could Al breathe freely; even though it was no easy matter to keep it out of his sisters' sight. They both made a pet and confidant of their one brother, and had a fashion of dropping into his room at all hours to tell him of their schemes and woes. He had pushed the trunk under a mahogany table in the corner, the old fashioned cover of which reached almost to the floor.

When he told them he was going away for a little business "trip" they beset him with questions and petitions to be taken with him, finally declaring that they would clean house while he was gone, and "sort out his room."

So behold him, in the dead of night, carrying the "white elephant" up the narrow attic stairs, bumping his head on every rafter and getting cobwebs in his mustache. He covered it with old clothing, pushed a big box in front of it, and then crept downstairs, feeling guilty, as if he had been concealing some crime. At breakfast the girls both talked at once about the burglar who tried to get in, and how they pounded on Al's door and could not get an answer.

At noon he was off, and as the train whirled onward he became possessed with fears. She might not be at Hastings; she might not care for him after these three years; she might even be married or dead.

Arriving at his destination at last, he only stopped to leave his bag at a hotel, and walked rapidly to a familiar house in the suburbs. Ringing the bell, he inquired for Miss Burr in a matter-of-fact way, as if he had seen her the day before. He watched the girl's face as she spoke, and saw no trace of surprise. She simply said:

"Miss Burr may not be able to see you; but come in and I will ask."

Presently he was shown into a small sunny room, where, on a couch, lay the one girl he had ever loved. He meant to explain at once the cause of his foolish going and eager coming, all of which he had named in frank, beautiful sentences; but somehow they forsook him, and he fell back on the common-places. She received him with quiet words of welcome and then said:

"Pardon my position, but I am such an invalid that it is a trial to see fitly."

"An invalid!" he echoed faintly.

"Yes," she answered. "Did you not hear of my accident several months ago? On coming home from a visit I stopped for a day or so in a London hotel. The building caught fire a few hours after I entered it. The horror of the scene is so stamped—branded would be a more appropriate word—on my memory that I cannot bear to talk of it. I lost everything except the ulster which was wrapped about me, and would have lost my life but for the brave fireman who broke my fall. Oh, no; I am not seriously injured," she continued in answer to his half spoken question, "though I have been ill ever since. It was such a shock, you know." By dint of questioning he succeeded in making her say:

"Yes, I lost my trunk. It was left at the station (I expected to go on in a day or two), and the deposit ticket was destroyed with my pocketbook. Railway people are necessarily particular about identifying luggage, and for weeks I was too ill to even remember it. Besides, I had only gone for a short outing, and it held nothing of much value, except some keepsakes that were dear to me."

A deep flush stole over her face at these words; he watched it for a delicious moment, and then gathered her up in his arms, exclaiming:

"I will bring them back, if you will pay the reward I want."

Then—or, rather, after he had tortured her impatience mercilessly—he told her of Fred's "bargain," bought at auction. She begged for it, coaxed, pleaded, all in vain. He declared she could only have the little leather trunk as a wedding present. And a very happy wedding party it was, too—Tit-Bits.

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marry her to-morrow. If you cajole him, he'll try to bully you. I don't see what you can do, upon my soul. It is a cul-de-sac."

The lady, however, was not disposed to be beaten so easily. It was 10 o'clock, and the fiancée might be expected at the first by the express train which reached Threegates at 4:15. She had six hours for meditation, and in six hours an idea might occur to her. The post lay on the table beside her unheeded, and, bearing a devil's tattoo on her dress, she sat staring out at the lawn with puckered brows.

The Baronet, meanwhile, had lounged out to kennels, and presently she uttered an exclamation and dispatched a servant to fetch him.

"Philip," she exclaimed, "I have a notion at last. The Miss—Miss Dornton is, of course, 'impossible.' There can be no question about that. It is only necessary to make Bertie see it."

Philip, who had been amusing himself outside, and did not relish having been brought in so summarily, murmured something to the effect that to "make him see it" was the original difficulty.

"I know all that," said Lady Whichels, impatiently, "but I know also how to do it now. She is, of course, gauche, awkward and as ignorant as she can be. He has seen her with the glamor of the footlights on her, and in the poky little lodgings where she lives. Now he shall see her here! I shall invite her down to stay with us, and ask a lot of people to meet her. Bertie is not brilliant, but he is as sensitive as a girl. When Miss Dornton has committed half a dozen solecisms, and he feels that people are ridiculing her, he will be as anxious to break his engagement off as I am to see it broken."

"By Jove!" said Philip, "you ought to have been a diplomatist, mother."

"It is good, isn't it?" said Lady Whichels, complacently. "I felt there must be a way out, and now I've found it. I think your brother will be rather astonished by my reception of his news this afternoon. Let us have luncheon."

He arrived—the young man who had projected the mesalliance—at the hour expected; he certainly was astonished at his mother's demeanor.

He had looked for remonstrances, tears and threats, and been doggedly prepared for all. Instead of these he was met with smiles and cordiality. Her could not understand it.

"I had heard something of the matter," said the widow. "Well, it is a democratic age, and if you yourself are satisfied nobody has any right to complain. He father was a linen draper, I believe, and her mother is quite a respectable person, who lets, or lives in, lodgings?"

"Er—they are living in apartments, yes," said Bertie. "But—er—she is charming. I am sure you can trust my taste."

"Emphatically I can, and I am not going to be so absurd as to raise any objections, my dear boy. You want to marry Miss Dornton—marry her. You have my full and free consent, and I should like to be introduced to her, too. When shall I see her?"

"I really don't know," stammered the boy; "whenever you like." The question was so entirely unexpected that he was almost speechless.

"Well, the best way will be to ask her down here for two or three weeks. Can she come?"

"It could be arranged—oh, yes! She is at the theatre every night; but I want her to leave the stage, and—oh, yes, she would come as soon as you please."

"Then I will write and ask her for the beginning of next month," said Lady Whichels conclusively. "And now you must tell me all about it, and how nobody ever loved a girl so madly before in all the world."

Lady Whichels dispatched her charming letter to her prospective daughter-in-law on the morrow, and on the day after came the answer, thanking Bertie's mother for her kindness, and gladly accepting the invitation.

She wrote her notes, and a crowd of friends accepted; and so the days went by until a full drawing room sat on tenter hooks one afternoon awaiting Miss Dornton's entrance.

The clock on the mantelsheild had tinkled the hour of four. The dogcart, with Bertie driving, had long gone to the station. Lady Whichels glanced at the baronet and smiled. The baronet pulled his mustache and inwardly reflected that, as his brother was, all this was a trifle rough on him. The company sipping their tea and nibbling petits fours and muffins struggled ineffectually to conceal their curiosity and impatience. Then there was the sound of wheels on the drive, and everybody fixed a pair of eager eyes upon the door.

It opened, and Miss Dornton came in and advanced to be presented to her hostess. Lady Whichels started and the baronet's eyebrows went up. Nothing could have been quieter or in better taste than the manner of the girl who crossed the big room under an ordeal which might have shaken the composure of a society belle of half a dozen seasons. Her costume, too, was perfect, and her words, when spoken, were all that the most fastidious could have desired. Moreover, she was not pretty, but beautiful—the most beautiful girl present. There was no good disguising the fact—it Miss Dornton's first appearance was to be taken as typical of Miss Dornton. Lady Whichels' plot had failed.

That night, when she sat in her dressing room before the fire, talking to her favorite son, the widow came nearer to crying than she had done for years.

"She isn't farouche at all, Philip," she muttered disconsolately; "she is—preposterous as it sounds when I admit it—she is really good style. Where does she get it from—the daughter of a linen draper? It is awful! They imitate our clothes, these people, and our phrases; and now they even manage to acquire our style. Nothing is left to us, nothing."

"She is a very charming girl," said the baronet, "that is the truth. What on earth she saw in Bertie beats me!"

"Philip!"

"I don't see that you have any chance of preventing the marriage now, at any rate," he observed, after a pause. "She won't call me 'Sir Whichels,' or come down to luncheon in gloves, or make herself ridiculous at all, I fancy. You had better put a good face on it, and let Bertie think you were sincere from the beginning. In fact, you'll have to do so—there is nothing else for it."

"Leave me—let me go to bed!" said

Lady Whichels, tartly. "I am too angry to sit up; and to talk about it makes me feel worse. Good night."

But just after Miss Dornton's visit came to a termination she had causes to feel worse still, for something horrible had happened. It began—Where did it begin? It matured in the smoking room one evening; it culminated in Lady Whichels' dressing room at 9 o'clock one ghastly morning when she was half dead with misery and sleep.

For ten days Bertie had been feeling less sure of himself than he had done. Opposition was the breath of life to him, and with the course of true love running smooth, he began to ask himself whether it was true love after all.

In the mean time the baronet's first impression of his brother's fiancée had been more than confirmed, and fickle on the young girls part as it may look, she appeared to find more pleasure in Sir Philip's society than in Bertie's.

Well, one night when the brothers were alone together in the smoking room, the younger man unbosomed himself. He told the baronet that his engagement had been a mistake, and he wished to goodness that he had never blundered into it. Sir Philip, who had been mixing himself a whiskey and potash, dropped the glass, which shivered into fifty pieces in the Abbotsford stove. As a man not given to dropping things, the accident was noteworthy, and suggested that his nerves were not properly under control.

"You'll have treated the girl damned badly," he said, sharply.

"You think that I ought to marry her?"

"I think that you oughtn't to have asked her if you weren't sure of yourself. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to jilt her," said Bertie, sulkily, "that's what I'm going to do—and I don't fancy it will break her heart, either. I don't believe she likes me as much as she did, Philip."

"A good thing for her if she doesn't!" opined the other.

"I dare say. Anyhow, she leaves us to-morrow morning, and I shall write to her room in town, saying I feel that I made a mistake and—and—that it had better end."

"If she wants a check, I dare say my mother—"

"Oh, don't be such a confounded young cad!" exclaimed Philip. "A check!"

"You seem to have a very wonderful opinion of Miss Dornton. I wonder you don't marry her yourself."

"Perhaps I may, if I get the chance of asking her and she will have me," answered the baronet. "When you have written your elegant epistle, let me know. Now I'm going to turn in."

It was on the morning of the next day but one that Sir Philip, who had spent the previous afternoon in London, disturbed his mother's repose in the fashion alluded to. He told her that he was going to be married. Lady Whichels, wrapped in a dressing gown, listened to him with ashen cheeks.

"To Miss Dornton, mother. Bertie has jilted her, and I proposed yesterday. I don't suppose you'll be pleased, but she is the nicest girl I ever met in my life, and I mean to make her 'Lady Whichels.'"

"Bertie has jilted her," gasped the widow. "And you—you—"

"Yes; even I! Last night I scoffed, to-day I fall; perhaps it is a judgement on me. Perhaps it is a judgement on you for plotting her downfall as you did. I certainly should not have had the opportunity of falling in love with her if you hadn't. Anyhow, I worship the ground she walks on and we are engaged."

And what is more he married her, a fact from which an interesting moral may be drawn by ladies who fancy their abilities for diplomacy. The ceposed dowager never forgave him, nor herself, and when she reflects that it was all entirely due to her own brilliant interference, she feels there are certain emotions which language is wholly inadequate to convey.—The Madam.

BUSINESS LIKE ANTS.

They Display Great Intelligence in the Prosecution of Work.

T. T. Lovelace of this city, who recently returned from the intercontinental railway through Central and South America, says one of the most interesting things to be seen in the tropics is the leaf-carrying ants which are found as far south as thirty-five degrees south latitude, which corresponds to the northern part of South Carolina in the United States. "In the south latitude," says Mr. Lovelace, "I found one species entirely black and another with the head, middle segment, and legs of a reddish-brown color, while on Moro Island, nine degrees north latitude, I found one species entirely black and another entirely red. Here were two distinct species apparently, of leaf carriers, and what was more singular was the fact that Moro Island did not afford a single tree or bush for them to work on."

The leaf-carrying ant is peculiar to tropical America. The two species occupy different nests; they are never seen in the same roadways, and they always enter different holes; but these ants are such great burrowers that one could not say positively that the formicaries do not communicate with each other under ground. Their holes do not cross, and there is no communication between the holes above ground. As an experiment, members of one colony were transferred by hand to the path of another. There was no conflict. The strangers merely made haste to get away.

"Both species," continued Mr. Lovelace, "have the same habits, save that the red fellows are the most industrious. The black ones always 'knocked off' work in the heat of the afternoon, while the red ones struggled along all day, although there were fewer workers to be seen in the paths between 12 and 4 o'clock. There being no trees on Moro Island to supply leaves for the ants, they gathered hay instead. A grass that grew close to the earth and produced short seed stalks was just coming in season. The seed heads were just peeping out from their enfolding awes when I was there, and these heads

of seed were the favourite harvest. I saw half-inch ants carrying seed stalks an inch long and of twice the weight of the carrier. They also cut off the grass leaves and carried them in, while moist crumbs of bread and vegetables were cut up and carried also. Very dry crumbs were ignored. I did not see them carry meat of any kind, and when I put a piece of freshly killed grasshopper in their path they refused to notice it. But certain bits of damp rotten wood were carried into the nests as quickly as soft bread.

"A person who came to see what I found of interest in the little workers dropped a flaming wax match among them. They did not seem to see it, for they rushed into the flame as they would have crossed a bit of paper. A number were burned to death, while many of them were crippled before the flame was extinguished. The dead and the crippled remained in the path, perhaps two minutes at a spot five feet from the nest entrance. Then came a gang of workers from the nest who picked up the dead and the crippled and carried them several inches away into the grass at right angles path. The wounded were left unattended, as were the dead. The workers then attacked the extinguished match taper. It was nearly an inch long, and a dozen (by count) took hold of it, pulled it in all directions at once, rolled it and one another over, stood on their heads and crawled under it, while the leaf carriers strained by and over them, apparently heedless of their presence. It was a case of wholly undirected labor, for any two (possibly any one) could have dragged it from the path, but it took the dozen fifteen minutes to tumble it across two inches of the path."

"While in Honduras an American told me that the leaf-cutting ant was to blame for much of the laziness of the natives, who do not try to make gardens or cultivate fruit trees because the ants destroy everything of that kind. However, the American solved the problem of keeping these ants away from his garden by digging a ditch around it and keeping water running through it, an effective barrier."

Pawed His Guttoutine.

The house in Paris of the famous Sanson family, who were from generation to generation for so many years what the French grandiloquently call the Executors of High Works—in plain language, public executioners—is, it is said, about to be demolished. The Sansons have a place in French history, not only because they continued so long to hold their odious office, but because two of their number, a father and a son, held office during the evil days of the Reign of Terror, when they were kept so busily engaged with their guillotine. The last of the Sanson dynasty was dismissed from his post in the reign of Louis Philippe, in 1847, under remarkable circumstances. Although he had inherited a comfortable fortune from his father, the executioner of the Revolution, he got into pecuniary difficulties, and was guilty of pawing his guillotine, surely the most ludicrous pledge ever taken by mortal pawn-broker. An order came from the Procurator-General for the execution of a criminal, and the necessary apparatus was not forthcoming. The prison authorities had perforce to get it out of pawn, and the execution took place. But the last of the Sansons was informed that his services would no longer be required. What became of him afterwards does not appear to be known.

A Diplomatist.

"Say, Jimmie, d'yer ma lick yer?"

"Naw, you bet she didn't."

"Gee! you got off easy."

"Yep, you see she was 'traid I'd holler so loud I'd wake the baby!"

BORN.

Halifax, Dec. 4, to the wife of C. A. Baker of a son.

Truro, Dec. 5, to the wife of J. W. Doune, a son.

Halifax, Dec. 1, to the wife of Matthew Miles, a son.

Truro, Dec. 4, to the wife of W. Campbell, a son.

Halifax, Dec. 4, to the wife of E. A. Barker, a son.

Truro, Dec. 28, to the wife of J. F. Crowell, a son.

MeAdam, Nov. 26, to the wife of C. J. Taber, a son.

Campbell, Dec. 1, to the wife of Thomas West, a son.

Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 29, to the wife of H. B. Olive, a son.

Freemont, Nov. 27, to the wife of Albert Thurber, a son.

Yarmouth, Dec. 3, to the wife of Arthur Cook, a son.

Halifax, Dec. 5, to the wife