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The Mahogany Dresser

The Story of the Other Bidder

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Mrs. Ames reread the advertisement with eagerness:

For Sale.—Solid mahogany dresser, French plate mirror, almost new, sacrifice for cash.

Then followed an address in Fourth avenue.

"Tom, dear, that's the very thing we want. Why, I've been looking everywhere for a bargain in dressers for the spare room. Suppose I meet you in town tomorrow and go and see the thing together."

"Couldn't possibly tomorrow, Susan," returned her husband, with decision. "Besides, one can usually buy those things as cheap in the furniture store, and get 'em brand new too."

"But, Tom, one really can get splendid bargains in furniture," persisted Susan tearfully. "Mrs. Smith bought that lovely Sheraton chair for only \$3, and when it was all done over it was like new."

"Hum!" observed Mr. Ames absently as he consulted a memorandum book.

"Tom Ames, I don't believe you heard a word I said!" cried Susan.

"M-m-m-h'm!" mumbled Tom, glancing doubtfully at the penciled figures he was creating in the book. "I've got to go and telephone to Jones. There's some mistake about this contract."

And he hurried from the room, and a minute later his aggrieved wife heard him talking vigorously to his partner.

"I know what I will do!" she declared suddenly. "There's that \$35 that Uncle Bob sent me on my birthday—horrid custom for him to send me a dollar for every year of my life. He ought to forget it—the age, I mean, and not the money. I wish he'd just average it up and call it \$50 instead of sending such a gawdawny reminder that I'm growing older every day."

"I'll take my \$35 and hie me to the Fourth avenue shop and buy that dresser for myself, and if there is any money over I'll buy a rocking chair to go with it. Now, Mr. Tom Ames, just watch your clever wife obtain a bargain!"

Much to Mrs. Ames' surprise, when she arrived in town the next day and reached the Fourth avenue address it proved to be a large second-hand store and auction room. There was quite a crowd of people there, and Susan pushed herself with difficulty to the rear of the shop, for she felt a sudden embarrassment at being an active participant in a real auction. She had accompanied her husband several times on such occasions merely for the amusement of watching the crowds and the bargains they obtained, but there was a fascination about it that appealed to her, and she felt rather gleeful as she clutched the bag containing the \$35 that marked the years of her last birthday.

The auctioneer was a little dark man with bright dark eyes that darted here and there with the same lightning rapidity that his pointing finger flew and his rattling tongue accompanied.

Susan watched with fascinated eyes as one article after another was put up and as promptly, metaphorically, "knocked down" again. Lamps and vases, chairs and tables, a davenport and sundry other articles were disposed of when there came a murmured request from the front of the store for the mahogany dresser.

Susan stiffened to attention. Somebody else wanted that dresser as well as herself. She gripped the money tightly and set her teeth. If \$35 counted for anything she would own it. She had seen it as she entered the store and admired its fine lines and the richness of its dulled surface. It must be a bargain indeed, even if one had to pay \$35 for it.

As the bidding commenced Susan shrank back a little, glad to partly efface herself behind a large teakwood screen. The other bidder was on the outer fringe of the crowd and spoke in little short barks that Susan took a dislike to at once.

"Horrid old thing—I don't believe he wants it at all," she murmured to herself after she had feebly piped "Three dollars!" to be instantly followed by the other bidder yelping "Four!"

"Five!" cried Mrs. Ames.

"Six!" barked the man.

"Seven!"

"Nine!"

"Twelve!" shrieked Mrs. Ames obstinately.

The crowd laughed at the feminine manner of bargaining, but Susan Ames was beyond caring now. Let them laugh if they wanted to. She was bound to have that mahogany dresser,

and she continued her bidding dollar by dollar now and later by fifty cent raises.

When it reached \$20 a man standing next to her ventured a word of advice.

"It isn't worth a cent more, madam," he protested. "It's only veneered—and badly done at that."

Susan only glared indignantly at him and continued her reckless bidding. She was convinced that the other bidder was merely trying to get the dresser away from her, actuated by what strange spirit of malevolence she did not question herself.

This matter of bidding was a highly exciting pastime, but she could not suppress a feeling of regret that it was going—up—up—beyond \$25, skimming the edge of thirty—lapping over to thirty-one, two, thirty-three, thirty-four—

"Thirty-five!" cried Susan Ames tearfully.

"Thirty-six!" yelped the other bidder.

Susan was crushed completely. She was at the end of her resources. She hated the other man, who had the mahogany dresser knocked down to him at the preposterous price of \$36. She shrank back behind the screen and affected to look at some dingy oil paintings, while she furtively wiped her eyes. She heard a little bustle of confusion as the successful bidder went up and paid for the dresser, and she heard the auctioneer's merry gulps as he pocketed the money.

The crowd shifted and changed every little while, and the people who had witnessed Susan's embarrassment had either disappeared or forgotten her. Probably they were quite accustomed to witnessing disappointed purchasers in the auction rooms.

After a while Susan lost her interest in the pastime of auctioneering. Nothing else that attracted her was put up, and so she patted her veil into place before a dim old mirror and departed, still clutching her money.

"Hateful old thing!" She still nurtured resentment toward the successful bidder. "I don't suppose he really wants the dresser, and it's the very thing for the spare room. I'm sure he looks just as mean as he acted. He had a mean voice."

Susan Ames had \$35 in her pocket. It was all her own money to spend as she pleased. Fate had ordained that she should not spend it on the mahogany dresser, and so, because she felt sorry for herself, Susan proceeded to extract some enjoyment from the gloomy day.

She lunched in an expensive place and ordered all the things she knew would make her fat, although she loved them. She bought herself a dream of a waist that was a positive bargain, and if Susan Ames was not an authority on furniture she understood the value of clothes, and we may assume that she really did secure a bargain.

After the dissipation of purchasing the waist, which she really didn't need, Susan felt the necessity for refreshment of some sort and went to a fashionable confectioner's, where she spent an unmentionable sum of money on a tiny ice in a large glass, but she had the inestimable privilege of gazing upon many people whom she read about in the society columns of the Sunday newspapers, only unfortunately she didn't know one from another, and just when she had concluded that a particularly stunning looking man must be none other than the far famed polo player, Dildine Hankley, somebody addressed the gentleman in question as "Smith," and her structure of identity fell.

After the refreshment Susan went to the matinee and nibbled a box of expensive chocolates and wept over the trials of a charmingly gowned heroine.

Then Susan went home.

It was dusk when she reached the suburb where they lived. She felt no uneasiness at the lateness of her return, for Hilda, the maid, was a jewel and dinner would be ready and waiting. Susan had been particular to take the train that her husband usually went home on, but to her surprise he had not appeared.

"Well, Hilda," she said as the smiling maid opened the front door, "I'm afraid Mr. Ames missed the train."

"Oh, no, Missus Ames," smiled Hilda. "Mr. Ames, he can come home."

"Indeed? Where is he?" Susan glanced into parlor and library and found them dark.

"Hi, Susan, come up here!" called her husband's voice from the second floor. "I've got a surprise for you!"

Susan went, a strange premonition assailing her as she slowly mounted the stairs. Perhaps it was a queer little bark in her husband's voice as he called that reminded her of the man in the auction room. That, coupled with a surprise, was ominous.

Tom Ames stood in the doorway of the spare room, which was brilliantly lighted. The offending oak dresser was pushed into the hall, and there between the windows rested the mahogany and brass glory of the auction room.

It was the mahogany dresser.

"Oh, Tom, where did you get it?" Susan's voice was weak and very near to tears.

"Bought it at auction. Had an hour to spare and ran around to that place you read about. I might have got it for \$20, but some fool of a woman bid against me and boosted the price to \$36. Thirty-six bones I paid for it, my dear, and I hope you like it!"

"Oh, Tom!" cried Mrs. Ames, and she flew to his arms and cried and wept at the awful queeriness of things in this world that might be so well ordered if men only confided more in their wives. Of course she didn't say anything about this to Tom, who believed she was weeping with joy, and he was congratulating himself on being one of those husbands who don't mind paying \$36 for an article that is worth only \$20 when the purchase of said article can cause such pure joy in the heart of a little wife.

So the Ameses were very happy over the mahogany dresser even if it wasn't solid mahogany. It was the kind feeling back of it that added to their enjoyment.

Of course Susan never told her husband about her share in the bidding, and that she was the woman who had raised the price on the dresser that her husband was trying to buy for her.

"Yes," Mrs. Ames sighs to her friends, "yes, my dear. I have one secret from my husband that I shall never, never tell!"

And so far she hasn't told.

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GREENLAND'S ICEBERGS.

Their Progress Southward Lasts From February Till August.

Those monsters of menace to navigation, icebergs, are formed from huge pieces broken from the glaciers of the north, which the Arctic currents carry southward until they melt away in the warmer waters of the gulf stream.

The terrible procession begins in February, and not until the end of August is the ice season supposed to be over in the north Atlantic.

Each year brings its regular reports of thrilling sights and collisions and losses in the ice fields from the incoming steamers during the spring and summer months. Certain years stand out as unusually bad ice years, but the general story is much the same. Once, during the month of May, 143 icebergs were sighted off Cape Race in a single day.

One of the largest icebergs on record towered 830 feet above the surface of the sea. As hardly more than one-tenth of the berg is out of water, this would mean a mass of ice 7,000 feet (one and one-third miles) from top to bottom. Its volume was calculated to be about 680,000,000 cubic feet and its weight some 16,000,000 tons!

Icebergs need not be extraordinarily high to be stupendous. Lieutenant Peary reported a berg 12,500 feet long (over two and one-half miles), 11,600 feet wide and 186 feet high. It was estimated to weigh 1,292,398,000 tons. Another measured farther north contained 27,000,000,000 cubic feet of ice and weighed no less than 2,000,000,000 tons.—New York World.

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