

Vanity - Cases and Crowbars

Proving That Where There's a Will There's Likely to Be a Profit

By ED. CAHN

Sketches by F. Horsman Varley

"WELL, I'll see what a good dinner will do," said Mrs. Sam Posner to herself, as she unlocked the door of her apartment and unpinned her hat. "If I hustle up, I'll have time to make some *kartofel suppe*. Sam likes that, and I'll make a combination salad and give him some *weiner schnitzel*—I have some *Rhinewein* and—Oh, yes, I must have some cheese."

She telephoned to Dinkeldorfer, of the delicatessen, and ordered some of her husband's favourite *schmeir kase* and dill pickles.

"Um; combination salad and dill pickles; that's too much acid for one meal. I'll just give him the pickles, and save the salad for to-morrow—economy is wealth."

She laughed as she tied on her apron and lit the gas. "I guess I'm penny wise and pound foolish, thinking of a fifteen-cent economy and a forty-dollar extravagance. I don't really need a vanity-case, but I want one, and I'm going to have it, just to show that Minnie Kraussmann that she's not the only one. The idea of her hinting that Sam's stingy with me! It might be better for her if Kraussmann didn't buy her every jim-crack he can rake and scrape up the money for. If they keep on the way they are going, they will never have anything, and Kraussmann will still be working for wages when Sam is in business for himself. But anyhow, I'm going to have a vanity-case just to let her know I can have what I want if I want it, and Sam's not stingy."

Mrs. Posner had been calling upon Mrs. Kraussmann that afternoon, and Mrs. Kraussmann's barbed sentences still rang in her ears: "Agnes, I tell you for your own good; you are too easy with Sam. You shouldn't encourage him to save every penny he makes, and go without this and that and the other thing yourself. You won't get any thanks for it. He will expect it of you all the time pretty soon; men always do. After a while you will have to go down on your knees every time you want anything, and a decent thing you won't own and can't get, unless you take a crowbar to his pockets. Yes, a crowbar, that's just what I said, and one big enough to pry clams off a rock with, at that. If you start in wrong with a man, you got to keep on that way, or else change awfully quick. You'll do with less and less, and get old before your time, and stay at home because you ain't got a thing to wear, and pretty soon he'll be going out without you, and maybe some other woman will step in and enjoy what you saved; foolish women mostly die young, usually."

"Don't get angry now, Agnes; remember, I'm talking for your good. You haven't had a new thing since you've been married. Course it's only a year and you had lots of clothes, but it's too long. It's all right for Sam to want to get ahead, but it's a shame for a traveling man like him, what makes all kinds of money like he does, not to spend, if not more, at least as much as Dave does what's got a family and don't make near so much; though I guess they'd both make more if they were working for anybody else but that old tight-wad of a Sol Berger."

Mrs. Kraussmann had emphasized her remarks by displaying a new vanity-case which Agnes, being anxious to change the subject, had greatly admired.

"I'm going to have one, too," she had announced, confidently, but Mrs. Kraussmann smiled skeptically and said:

"This cost forty dollars. Dave was going to buy himself a new overcoat with the money, but it was my birthday and I was just dying for a vanity-case and so he got it for me instead of an overcoat. Dave just can't refuse me anything." And then she added that when one is beginning a domestic revolution it is best to begin with small things.

AGNES'S cheeks burned as she recalled it; she diced the potatoes as if they were Mrs. Kraussmann's oily tongue. In vain she told herself that the Kraussmanns' extravagant manner of living from hand to mouth was not the best way and vanity-cases not essential to her own happiness,

but, nevertheless, she longed for one with a longing not to be denied.

"I must have one, too," she thought, making the sauce for the *schnitzel*.

"I'll . . . There's the dumb-waiter bell! It must be Sam's pickles and cheese. The idea of Minnie saying such things—Mercy! this isn't many dill pickles for ten cents. I'll have to give Dinkeldorfer a good talking to. If I don't watch him all the time he cheats me, even if he has known me ever since I was born. I believe it's a matter of principle with him to cheat everyone he can. I think I'll get a case with a fine chain—Minnie's looks like a bicycle chain. Oh, this soup's going to be good. I wonder if my monogram would look nice on that case. Now I must set the table. Well, anyway, my table-linen is swell. I wonder if Sam will let me have the money; forty dollars seems like an awful lot."

She continued to divide her thoughts between

knees to him," popped into her mind.

"Indeed I won't." She sprang up and seated herself upon the arm of his chair. "Sam, have I cost you very much since we have been married?"

"No; but enough. What's the matter—out of household money?"

"Oh, no; I have plenty for this month, but—"

"What's this—a touch? Say, Agnes, if you have to have a new hat, go ahead and get it; but it mustn't cost over ten dollars. Don't forget we have to make the payment on those lots of ours the first of the month."

"Oh! I had forgotten. Well, that settles it; I'll do without it."

"Nu nu! A hat won't break us if it don't cost more than ten dollars."

"I don't want a hat, Sam. I want a gold vanity-case like Minnie Kraussmann's. She said hers cost forty dollars, and I believe it, for it's perfectly elegant."

"Geh wek! If she said forty, then it maybe cost twenty; but ten is more like it. I'll bet it's only gold filled."

"Oh, no, Sam; it's stamped fourteen-karat; I noticed particularly."

"Sure; they stamp filled goods that way, and even guarantee them for ten and twenty years, like on watch-cases. But, anyhow, Agnes, fourteen karats or fifteen turnips, we ain't spending any money for such foolishness. We are poor people, not millionaires," and Sam shook out his paper as much as to say that the matter was settled forever.

Agnes sat down in her little rocking-chair and picked up her embroidery. She felt ashamed to have asked for such a costly bauble, and resolved to try to put the whole matter out of her mind.

"I don't see what you want one of those ugly things for anyhow; they are no good on earth," said Sam, over the top of his paper.

"They're handy for powder."

"What's the matter with your leather purse?"

"Nothing."

"THE Kraussmanns don't own their furniture; they're still paying installments on it. They owe the doctor and the dentist, and poor old Kraussmann hasn't had a new suit in three years—but Mrs. Kraussmann has a forty-dollar vanity-box. We own everything we've got, and what we've got is good—but you have no vanity-box. But after a while, when we are a little ahead of the game, then you can have your vanities, too."

Agnes smiled. "They'll be out of style by that time."

Sam flung his paper onto the floor. "Out of style! Agnes, you think too much about style since you have been going to see Mrs. Kraussmann so often. Maybe we better do like the Kraussmanns do—throw away with the left hand what we take in with the right. I wish I hadn't started in to buy those lots on Long Island. They take all my spare cash, and I can't buy you vanity-boxes, and you're not satisfied."

"Sam! How foolish you are! I wanted one, and I don't deny it, but it is foolish to put that much into such a thing. We can't do it, and we won't, and that's all there is to it. Let's forget about it."

Sam lit another cigar, entirely mollified. "You know, Agnes, there isn't a thing on earth I wouldn't get you if I could, and some day, if we are careful now, we will be able to have all these things."

He said more to the same effect, but Agnes paid no attention. She had picked up the paper, and her eye had happened to fall on one of the hundreds of small liners. It read:

FOR SALE—Fine piano; bargain to party buying at once. Owner leaving city. Call afternoons. 900 W. 128th St., Hewitt.

Amongst a multitude of other bits of news and gossip, Mrs. Kraussmann had told Agnes that she expected to receive word the next day that her small share of her Uncle Isaac's will had been deposited in the First National Bank, and that the instant it was, she meant to set about buying a piano. Agnes



"Sam, is Tiffany's a good place to buy vanity cases?"
"Meshuggah! What a foolish question! Why?"

the dinner and the vanity-case until they were interrupted by the arrival of Posner himself.

"Anybody coming to-night?" he inquired. "No? That's good. Oi! but I'm tired and home looks good to me. Whatcha got for dinner? Say, I'm going to take off my collar 'n tie 'n vest 'n—"

"Here! here!" If you keep on I'll have to serve your dinner in bed."

"Who is the boss in this house?"

"You think you are."

"No think about it, I am. It's the boss's privilege to kiss the cook."

Sam availed himself of the privilege and then sat down to dinner.

IN spite of her preoccupation Agnes had achieved a veritable masterpiece and Sam ate and ate until he came perilously close to being gorged. Agnes never introduced a disturbing topic at table. To-night she found it hard to adhere to this rule, but she waited until Sam had torn himself away from the cheese, had lit his after-dinner cigar, and was established in his chair with the evening papers, before she opened her mouth to speak of vanity-cases.

"No. I'll wait a little while," she thought, suddenly, and closed it again. When the dishes were washed, Sam's cigar smoked out and digestion well under way, she judged the time to be right, and sat down on the rug at his feet.

She had hardly settled herself when Mrs. Kraussmann's words, "You'll have to go down on your