

No Business Woman

Or, The Vindication of Solomon Berger's "Help-Meet"

By ED. CAHN

"I'M glad I got this dress to-day," said Esther to Sol as she critically inspected it in the glass. "My, ain't these green shades becomin' to me? And look how well it fits, Sol."

"Jah; any dressmaker what couldn't fit you, you know, Es, is a naturally borned chump. You're a perfec' thirty-eight; but don't get no fatter. For your height you're just right, but two pounds more and you're a fat girl."

"I remember long ago, when I was a kid yet, Popper tells me onct never to marry a fat girl, and I ain't seen no reason to disagree with him yet, Esther."

Mrs. Berger laughed and put down her hand mirror. "In another minute you'll be telling me I eat too much candy."

"That's right; you do; but anyhow, a little good candy never hurt nobody. Go out onct to the hall-rack and look in my overcoat pocket."

Esther flew to obey and returned with a box of candy which she had already opened and was sampling. "Oh, Sol! I was awfully hungry for some. Um! but it's good. I'm going to eat the whole box right this minute, fat or no fat, and then I'll be still a pound within the limit."

"But first, I think I will go take off this dress. I only put it on so that you could see if it fits—I want to be just as swell as any of the rest, even if you ain't a millionaire."

"Whatcha talking about?"

"This. I thought you saw it this morning." Esther handed her husband an engraved invitation and retired to remove her gown. When she returned, Sol was still frowning over it.

"Mrs. Archibald Rumplemeyer requests it the pleasure of—" he read, sarcastically, and flung the invitation into the waste basket. "Seems to me she's in all of a sudden a great hurry for you to come to her bridge parties."

"Oh no, Sol, she's sent me two other invitations. One to a tea and one to her big luncheon. But I sent in my regrets; now this time I'm going."

"That's just like a woman; you gotta new dress and right away you can't rest till you goes and shows it off. If you gotta try to kaljes somebody why don't you go to see Agnes or Minnie or Mrs. Cohen or some of your friends what you care a lot about? You ain't got no use for Mrs. Rumplemeyer to begin with."

"You're right about that and wrong about the jealousy. Where I got two swell dresses, Mrs. Rumplemeyer's maybe got twenty, and I think I'll be the quietest dressed one in the whole bunch; I know I will; and maybe most likely the best dressed. Mrs. Rumplemeyer and her set wear diamonds to breakfast and tararas to luncheon. Those quick rich mushroomers what ain't never heard about their grossvater don't know no better."

"That's what I say, and I'd like to know why you're going to this here bridge afternoon. You can't learn nothing there, and I betcha if they got such a thing as a prize to play for that it ain't worth carrying home—even if you could win it, Esther. I'll get you a box at a matinee and you can take Agnes and the girls to see the show that afternoon."

"No. I'm going to Rumplemeyer's, Sol, thank you just the same."

"I ask you why?"

"OH, I just took a notion I wanted to. Maybe they don't wear chiffon dresses on the street, but anyhow they're smart. Mrs. Rumplemeyer is awfully funny, and if I go I'll have some laughs and hear lots to make me think, Sol. I been staying home too much. I oughta go out more; my brain's getting fuzzy and my thoughts go round and round in a ring—a teeny little ring. I—"

"Donner und Blitz! If you're crazy to go, go ahead, but y'know, Essie, I ain't got no use for them people. Arch Rumplemeyer he is a speculator, and about them people nobody knows nothing, 'specially real estate speculators. Because they live in a five thousand dollar apartment and make a great splurge ain't no sign they got money."

"I hear Arch Rumplemeyer is drumming everybody he can think of to get rid of a lot of land he's got in a small town up the state somewheres. I got an idee it wasn't just because she's stuck on you, Esther, that his wife all of a sudden invites you to this here thing."

"I thought that, too, and I'm going to try to find out. I accepted the invitation and she must have got my note this morning yet, because she telephoned this afternoon to say she was awful glad I was coming."

"Oh, ho!" said Sol; "look out that she don't sell you no gold bricks, that's all I got to say."

A few days later, Esther, beautiful in her new gown of softly draped greens, set off by a large hat with just the hint of pink necessary to complete the picture, sat at her hostess' card-table. An excellent player, amiable, and nothing if not a good listener, she had learned a great deal.

The subject of money was never far from the minds of most of the guests, and they discussed money and

those who had money and ways and means of acquiring and of spending money with a glibness that grated even upon Esther, used as she was to hearing such discussions between Sol and his friends.

Mrs. Switzer was speaking whilst she shuffled the cards. "Now, there is Julia—really she has perfectly phenomenal luck. Why, she bought a hundred shares of that mining stock that went up like an elevator last week; I forget its name; and she sold it just before the drop and made enough to pay all her bridge debts, and she had a fearful lot. Now, every time I try to catch up in that way—well! I just get singed brown! I think those ladies' exchanges ought to be stopped."

"Ladies' exchanges?" asked Esther.

Mrs. Rumplemeyer laughed and coloured ever so little. "Yes, that's the polite name for bucket-shops, Archie says."

"OH well, now," said Mrs. Switzer. "Mr. Rumplemeyer was a real broker; besides, only dealt with men. This is quite different; but still, I'm sure you are glad he is away from Wall Street now altogether; real estate is ever so much safer and better in every way. The courts never ask any questions about land deals," she added, maliciously.

Esther noticed that Mrs. Rumplemeyer's hand trembled as she picked up her cards. "That Mrs. Switzer is a cat," she thought, her tender heart bleeding for her hostess while she came to the rescue, saying, slowly, "I don't know much about business, but I do know that no matter what a man's business, nor what jealous people say, if he is honest he is honest." She smiled innocently. "That sounds kind of mixed, English words I always do mix, but I guess you know what I mean."

Mrs. Rumplemeyer flashed her a grateful look and Mrs. Switzer said: "My dear Mrs. Berger, you ought to go to night school." Then she turned to Mrs. Rumplemeyer. "Has your husband sold all of that land of his yet? Mr. Switzer told me to find out. He said he might take a few lots to help him out."

"It's going fast; Archie said he thought it would be all gone by the end of the week."

"Indeed! Mr. Rumplemeyer must be a wizard to sell all those lots so soon. Why, the town does not amount to anything to begin with, and this property is away off at the edge of it." There was patent disbelief in her voice.

"Just the same it's a good investment and going to be better. If Mr. Switzer really intends to buy now is the time, because the price is going up."

Esther heard a little more about the tract of land which Mr. Rumplemeyer had divided into town lots and was selling so cheaply, and when she left she was possessed by the belief that here was a chance for Sol to make money.

"He will say that they made up all that talk just on purpose to get me to bite," thought Esther. "Maybe they did, but I don't think so; anyhow, I'm going to find out something about that land."

That evening she read and re-read the Rumplemeyer advertisements which glowed in the newspapers, and the next morning called at his office. There, an obliging clerk showed her maps and discoursed upon the superlative merits of the property, pointed out that the numerous red patches denoted lots already disposed of, and drew her attention to the fact that lots were being sold at a terrific pace, that the best ones, of course, invariably went first, and the sooner she acted the better the choice would be.

"Think of it, madam! Four hundred dollars buys a good lot, five hundred a better one, and six hundred a good corner in this A Number One town, which in ten years will be a city! Can you, in justice to yourself, fail to take advantage of this generous offer? Surely, a lady of your high intelligence can plainly see that there is not a better investment within a hundred miles of New York, and that this is the chance of a lifetime!"

"My, what a waist salesman you would make!" said Esther. Please, now, give me a map and one of those little books. My husband he spends the money. I shall speak it to him about this and maybe call again. Oh, no, you don't need it my name and address and to come up to my house. I wouldn't allow you to bother yourself. Thanks for all your trouble, good-morning."

All the way home Esther poured over the alluring literature, and at home she studied and restudied the map, more and more convinced that the thousand dollars Sol had to invest could be put in no safer place.

She remembered the place as a hustling country town surrounded by fertile farming country, and she thought the clerk had been right when he had declared that the natural growth of the town was in the direction of Rumplemeyer's property.

When she approached Sol with the subject he laughed at the idea and made fun of her for being Mrs. Rumplemeyer's easy mark. He declared Knoxville to be dead and absolutely incapable of resurrec-

tion, and he dismissed all the clerk's arguments with two words, "cheap talks."

"Esther, I told you not to go by that bridge party. Crazy them womens are about quick money-making, and you got yourself right away also the fever."

"But Sol, for an investment for the future; I don't expect you to turn around and sell it for a big profit."

"Investments? Vacant land in jay towns what you all the time gotta pay taxes on ain't no good investment. The bank gives us four per cent. and we don't got to pay no taxes. Anyhow, I might need the money for the business."

"Yes, and risk your money. What do you call a good profit on real estate, Sol?"

"Oh, from fifty to seventy-five per cent. is fair, inside of five years, that is."

"Is that all? How about a hundred per cent?"

"With a hundred per cent. anybody has got a right to be satisfied. Sarcasms ain't no use, Esther, I ain't going to monkey with this here business and I don't want to hear no more about it."

"All right, but don't forget I gave you a good chance to make money and you laughed at me," said Esther, almost tearfully.

"Aw, now, Essie! Don't feel hurt. Sure I 'ppreciate it that you want to 'sist me, but you better leave the money-making to me. You're no business woman. What's the matter? Ain't you got all you want? Ain't you got plenty of money?"

"Of course I have—more than I need."

An idea popped into Mrs. Berger's head with the words. Her husband had always been most generous with her in the matter of money and she was naturally economical and a good manager. Ever since her marriage it had been her habit to put any money she had saved into the bank. It was her own little private account and Sol was not aware of it.

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An Election Incident

TWENTY-FIVE years ago, A. F. McIntyre, K.C., who passed away in Ottawa the other day, was one of the most influential Liberals in Eastern Ontario, but shortly after the Laurier Government took office he fell out with his quondam political friends for whose success he had worked so hard. For the past fourteen or fifteen years he has led a rather retired life, quietly pursuing the duties of his profession in Ottawa or Cornwall. A good story was told at the Rideau Club the other day as showing the kindly disposition of Mr. McIntyre. It was during the Provincial elections of 1890, when the Equal Rights agitation was at its height. Down in the counties of Russell or Prescott it was not good policy for a Conservative to talk equal rights or religious teaching in the schools. Andy Broder was the Liberal-Conservative candidate in Russell, and his platform supporters had been warned to be very careful what they said so that the religious susceptibilities of the Roman Catholics would not be aroused. Two youthful Ottawa newspaper men were out in the country helping the genial Andy. The writers reached Osgoode Station one beautiful afternoon in May and found that "Aleck" McIntyre was to address a meeting there that evening in the interests of the Liberal candidate. Mr. Broder was thirty miles away and could not reach the village in time. No motor cars in those days. Accordingly the scribes decided that they would unfurl the Tory banner. On the evening train from Ottawa there arrived a well-known Conservative speaker who had heard of the McIntyre meeting. He was quickly advised of the situation and told to be very careful what he said. The meeting convened. Aleck McIntyre arrived with over one hundred Irish Catholic electors, all of whom were in great fighting form. One of the newspaper men spoke first, McIntyre followed, and then the Conservative orator took the stand. He had not been going more than five minutes when, forgetting all the warnings he had received, he lugged in that electoral chestnut—the "pup" story—by the hair of the head, telling it in its most offensive form. Readers of *The Courier* must know it. Boy selling puppies; offers them as good Liberal puppies. Two weeks later pups still unsold; boy approached same man. "Puppies are good Conservatives." Ah, how do you account for the change in a fortnight? Easy, now their eyes are open. Hooray and loud cheers. But to tell this story in an Irish Catholic community, using the words "Papist" and "Protestant," whirloo! One hundred Irishmen at Osgoode rose fighting mad, at the words "Papist pups" and made one wild rush for the front of the hall. Chairs and benches were overturned in the dash for the platform. McIntyre jumped to his feet, and backed the Tory orator to the wall to protect him. A dozen blows rained over McIntyre's shoulders, but presently the stalwart Liberal succeeded in pacifying his irate friends. There was no more meeting, however. When Andy Broder heard of the incident he said he was curious to learn how many votes he got at that particular poll. "How many, Andy?" he was asked. "Only one," he laughingly replied, "and that the transferred vote of my scrutineer."