

AT A RUMMAGE SALE

By SYDNEY PHELPS

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Mother looked up from the bundle of old clothes which had just arrived at the parsonage. They represented all that my wealthy Aunt Florence and my cousins could do to help us in our rummage sale.

"I don't believe we have \$10 worth of things all together," she said. A hopeless expression crossed her face as she thought of the needed \$50.

"How hateful all one's rich relations always are!" I burst out. "I believe they sell their things to old clothes men."

"We must do the best we can," said mother patiently. "The poor people who get them will be pleased anyway. I wonder if any one will look in and help us at the sale."

"No one," I answered, with conviction. "Between hockey and"—

"Here worship," mother interrupted, laughing. "If we could only get John Gray to come we would not have standing room."

I did not answer. John Gray was

Just home from the Philippines. As an interesting convalescent and hero he was in great demand among the girls. But, though I had known him from childhood, I refused to add one to the ranks of his adorers, so a coolness had fallen between my old playmate and myself.

"Mrs. Denzil is in the parlor, ma'am," said the maid, and we went in to be cheered by the gayest little lady in the town.

Mrs. Denzil had a husband in the Philippines and appeared to get along very well without him. We would not have willingly spared that brilliant face with its wealth of fair hair, auburn blue eyes and wickedly curved red lips from our midst. It was vain to try to look askance at Mrs. Denzil, her absolute frankness was so disarming.

"You look worried," she said. "What is it?"

"It is only our rummage sale," I said sadly. "The things which have been sent in will bring but a song, yet we know of no other way in which to raise the money."

"Are men's things any use? Why not ask young Gray?"

"I hardly liked to," said mother.

"All right, I will. He must have heaps of things he doesn't want."

Off went Mrs. Denzil, promising to write to John Gray and send us the results of her appeal. Sure enough, a few days later she brought in her dog cart a huge bundle which she opened triumphantly.

"There, I told you I would get something out of him. Shoes—lots of them, brown and black; two suits, very little worn; socks, collars, ties."

"Splendid!" we said. "Did he send them all the way to your house?"

"No; I told him I would call for the bundle this afternoon. It was to be ready in his own special sanctum. He was out, but old Jenkins showed me in. I found a note from him asking if this sort of thing would be of any use and saying that if he wanted anything more Jenkins could get it for me."

Pursued by our grateful thanks, Mrs. Denzil drove off in her usual whirlwind. She promised to come to our sale next day and especially begged to be allowed to act as auctioneer for Gray's things.

Mother and I returned to the examination of the bundle. "Actually, two of his pipes," she said. "How very good of him!"

I said nothing, for just at that moment I had caught sight of something which gave me a sharp stab of pain. Many years ago, when John Gray first went to college, I had worked its coils on a tobacco pouch. There had been something more than mere kindness in our farewell on that occasion. He surely need not have sent the pouch to a rummage sale.

The sale came off the next day. In the midst of a little argument with a stout woman as to the value of a red flannel dressing sack mother said to me:

"Clare, both of the Whites have commented rather nice of them. They have brought another girl with them."

"I looked up and smiled at the three. Just then, to my surprise, the daughter of our bank president appeared, followed closely by a fairly representative gathering of the young ladies of the neighborhood.

"There must be some mistake," I thought. "They must think there is an entertainment to follow."

Just then I heard Mrs. Denzil's voice. "Here I am," she said. "In plenty of time. Hurry up, girls; the auction is going to begin. Can I have a chair put on that table? Thanks. The handle of my riding whip will be the hammer." And, flinging herself with rapture to the part, she began the auction.

The buyers were as wax in her hands.

"Look at these ties," she said in tones of ardent admiration. "College colors, club colors, rainbow colors. Girls, you will never forgive yourselves if you let such a chance as this slip. Six ties, all worn—well worn. Did I hear you say a quarter, Miss Smith? Oh, I hope not. I could not listen to such an offer from you. Fifty cents, Linda. That is better, but not good enough." In the end she extracted an offer of \$1.50 from the bank president's daughter. Never once did she mention the name of the donor of the effects, and the ladies gazed in undisguised amazement at each other's frantic bids.

"This pair of boots," Mrs. Denzil pursued, "was worn in the Philippines." This was entirely untrue, but the spirited bidding ensued, and another girl became their proud possessor at the extravagant price of \$2.50.

At last, to my mingled relief and rage, the little tobacco pouch was held aloft in Mrs. Denzil's grasp. I had decided to buy back again my despised gift if only for the pleasure of seeing it burned.

"A tobacco pouch—look!" said the gay voice. "What memories may surround it?"

"Twenty-five," squeaked Linda White.

"Fifty," I growled.

Mrs. Denzil nearly dropped the pouch in amazement at my intervention.

"One dollar," from the oldest Miss Smyth.

"One twenty-five," I said, my cheeks burning. Through the hush I could hear mother's surprised voice:

"Clare, my dear!"

How long that horrible auction lasted I do not know. I only know that at last at the cost of \$5 which I could ill spare the horrid little pouch became once more my own property. The rest of the scene is a dream to me.

When all the lots were disposed of all the girls quietly withdrew, each eyeing her neighbor with stern distrust.

Mrs. Denzil sat down and laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. "Do you know how I did it?" she asked. "I told each of them—in the strictest confidence—that some trifles belonging to John Gray were going to be sold. They thought they would pick up some little souvenir cheaply, but—and she carefully weighed a purse in her hands—"I don't think they did, exactly."

I turned toward the big fireplace. I would get rid of that pouch at once.

The door flew open, and John Gray burst in. "Oh, I say, Mrs. Denzil, I came rushing down to see whether by mistake one or two little articles had not been put into that bundle of mine."

"Oh, I hope I did nothing wrong," she said lightly. "I only added one or two nondescript things."

"Would you tell me whether two of my pipes were among them?"

"Yes, but they were both quite old ones, I am sure," said Mrs. Denzil.

"Then if you don't mind I will buy them back myself. They were favorites of mine."

Mrs. Denzil looked very thoughtful.

"Miss Mortimer bought one and Miss Rawson the other, but no doubt they would be delighted for you to have them back."

The young man's face was a study. "There was one thing more"—he grew very red and looked across to where I stood rigidly by the fire watching the slow flames struggling with the remnants of their prey—"a little tobacco pouch," he said.

"Very shabby," said the lady firmly; "quite a disgrace to you. That is why I took it."

"But I really want that back again," he urged. "Please tell me who has it."

"You had better ask Clara," she said. "Mrs. Warren and I have to make out our accounts."

She drew mother out into the hall. John Gray strode over to me. I never saw such a slow fire in all my life.

"Do you know where it is, Clara?" he began, and then his eyes fell on the grate. One end of a bit of gray fabric still ornamented with a shield lay among the coal.

"You burned it?" he asked reproachfully. "Why?"

"I could find nothing to say."

"Clare, you could not have thought that I meant to give that to any charity under the sun?"

Still no answer.

He bent over until he could look into my downcast face.

"Clare," he cried, and even in my bewilderment I heard the note of joy in his voice. Then he took me in his arms, and I straightway forgot that there had ever been such a thing as a rummage sale.

PLAYING OFF UNWELCOME GUESTS

"Oh, Billy," said the bride of three months, "your husband came home to dinner. It's all over with us."

"What's the matter with that?"

"The nuptial breakfast?"

"No, the nuptial breakfast?"

"No, the nuptial breakfast?"

"Oh, no, I wish she were the other one—the one who makes long visits and leaves everybody in an uproar."

"That's the one you call the general?"

"Yes, he'd rather fight than eat."

"So would Aunt Tristitia. She's coming to visit us."

"What do you say to playing my uncle as an antidote to your aunt?"

"Splendid! Invite him at once."

And so it was arranged that General Cyrus Smith should visit Mrs. Justice Crow, and the meeting took place on the day of their arrival at dinner. Not a word had been said to the one about the other, and when five minutes before going into the dining room they were introduced they gazed first at each other, then at their hosts.

"Uncle Cyrus," said the nephew, "fill your glass."

"Certainly," said the general. "I drink one glass of wine with every course. Miss Crow, let me fill yours."

"Bill mine? Do you suppose I put such stuff into my mouth? It's poison, poison to the gentleman and the laborer. I hate it and hate every one who sets an example by drinking it."

"Madam," said the general, moving nervously in his chair, "do you mean to say that I must deny myself the privilege of a social glass just because some idiot chooses to make a beast of himself?"

"Uncle," interposed the host, "I neglected to explain that Miss Crow is a lecturer on temperance."

The frate gentleman spooned his soup, growling within himself, but repressing further expression of his feelings in words.

Then Billy told the guests about the wedding, incidentally mentioning that the bride would have none but the Rev. Mr. Stryker to marry them.

"Why didn't you go to a justice of the peace?" growled the general. "If I were married forty times I'd never have one of those persons to do the job. They're a hypocritical, lazy set."

"Sir!" exclaimed Miss Crow. "Are you aware that my father was a minister?"

"Then, madam, if he wanted to improve his vocation he should have become a pirate."

"This is insufferable!"

"Auntie!" from the niece.

"Uncle," interposed the host, again, "I forgot to explain that Miss Crow is very religious."

"H'm!" growled the general, choking back another sally and to show his spleen gulping down three glasses of wine one after another.

"Haven't you got something stronger, boy?" he rasped. "This is baby drink. Let me have some good old rye whisky. The older I grow the more I find there is nothing so valuable as whisky and tobacco."

"The devil's weapons!" hissed Miss Crow.

"They say the devil can quote Scripture," retorted the general.

Miss Crow sat bolt upright, glared and munched her food in silence.

"Uncle Cyrus," said the nephew in order to keep the two enemies in action, "tell Miss Crow about your battles."

"I consider war barbarous and wicked," said the aunt. "A soldier is only another name for murderer."

"That is me, ha, ha!" exclaimed the uncle viciously. "Well, Billy, Miss Crow wouldn't like to hear much about our war, and I wouldn't inflict it on her. I'll just tell one little incident that happened to me in the wilderness. You see, the woods were very thick and the firing very heavy on my men. I was walking up and down in front of the line, crying like a baby."

"Crying?" interrupted the aunt, her curiosity excited in spite of herself. "What in the world were you crying about?"

"Crying because I couldn't make the men fight. What do you suppose?" growled the warrior.

"Oh, I thought you were crying for your sinful work."

"Sinful work, madam! What more sinful?"

"Original, you mean."

The host signaled the wife, and all rose. The ladies retired to the drawing room, and the men smoked.

"How long is that intolerable monster going to stay?" asked the aunt.

"Oh, Aunt Tristitia, I couldn't tell you. Billy says that when he once takes position anywhere it's impossible to get him away."

"That settles it. I go tomorrow. I never met a more ungentlemanlike, brutal, irreverent, drinking, tobacco smoking monster in my life. I didn't know you'd married into such a family."

In the dining room the general asked: "Where did you pick up that old hen, Billy? She's a terror and no mistake."

"She's an aunt of my wife's who makes long visits."

"What! Going to stay with you some time?"

"Can't tell when she'll go, Uncle Cy," "Tilly," said the general after a thoughtful pause, "I'm sorry for you. I'd stay and help you out, but I'd rather be tied up by the thumbs than stand that old woman. I'll go tomorrow."

There was need for manipulation in the morning to prevent one of the guests from knowing that the other was about to depart. The husband took his uncle down town with him to go from there; the wife drove her aunt to the station without mentioning the general's departure.

F. A. MITCHEL.

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United States Land office, Roseburg, Oregon, Feb. 5, 1923.

Notice is hereby given that in compliance with the provisions of the act of Congress of June 3, 1878, entitled "An act for the sale of timber lands in the States of California, Oregon, Nevada, and Washington Territory," as extended to all the Public Land States by act of August 4, 1894.

WILLIAM W. PRIBBLE, of 121 Monroe St., Portland, county of Multa, State of Oregon, has this day filed in this office his sworn statement No. 4403, for the purchase of the SE 1/4 of Sec. 14, Tp. 25 S., R. 12 west, and will offer proof to show that the land sought is more valuable for its timber or stone than for agricultural purposes, and to establish his claim to said land before the Register and Receiver of this office at Roseburg, Oregon, on Wednesday, the 9 day of Dec, 1923.

He names as witnesses: Oscar Edwards, of Oakland, Oregon; George Finley, Gates V. Kump, of Crawfordville, Oregon; E. N. Smith, of Myrtle Point, Oregon.

Any and all persons claiming adversely the above-described lands are requested to file their claims in this office on or before said 9 day of Dec, 1923.

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