

# The Thirteenth Commandment

By RUPERT HUGHES

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## DAPHNE RESOLVES THAT SHE WILL NO LONGER BE DEPENDENT UPON ANY MAN.

**Synopsis.**—Clay Wimburn, a young New Yorker on a visit to Cleveland, meets pretty Daphne Kip, whose brother is in the same office with Clay in Wall street. After a whirlwind courtship they become engaged. Clay buys an engagement ring on credit and returns to New York. Daphne agrees to an early marriage, and after extracting from her money-worried father what she regards as a sufficient sum of money for the purpose she goes to New York with her mother to buy her trousseau. Daphne's brother, Bayard, has just married and left for Europe with his bride, Leila. Daphne and her mother install themselves in Bayard's flat. Wimburn introduces Daphne and her mother to luxurious New York life. Daphne meets Tom Duane, man-about-town, who seems greatly attracted to her. Daphne accidentally discovers that Clay is penniless, except for his salary. Bayard and his wife return to New York unexpectedly. The three women set out on a shopping excursion and the two younger women buy expensive gowns, having them charged to Bayard.

### CHAPTER VII—Continued.

Leila said nothing, but thought hard. Bayard was silent. Later the door-bell rang and a young sewing girl brought two big boxes from Dutilh's. They were so big that there was no concealing them. Leila made a timid effort to escape with hers, but Bayard was full of a cheerful curiosity:

"What's all that, honey?"

"Oh, it's just a little thing I picked up today at Dutilh's."

"What is it, a scarf or something? Give a fellow a look at it."

He began to untie the knot. Sealed across the cord was an envelope, with a statement. Bayard tore it free. Leila snatched at it. Bayard laughed and dodged her. Leila pursued. It was a ghastly game of tag for her, and Daphne and her mother looked on in guilty dread. Bayard, whooping with laughter, dashed into his room and closed the door, held it fast while Leila pounded and pleaded with him.

His laughter was quenched sharply. There was a silence. He opened the door and walked out, a sickly pallor at his lips, the statement in his hand:

"This can't be right, honey: Bayard Kip to Dutilh, debtor. Peach-blow satin gown—two hundred and seventy-five dollars. The price is ridiculous, and I have no account there."

"He—he insisted on my opening one."

"But I don't want to open any accounts. I pay my bills in thirty days or discount them for cash. I can't pay this in thirty days. Every penny I can see ahead of me is laid out."

"I—I'm sorry," Leila faltered. "You said the times were getting better."

"I thought they were. I hoped they were. But they've gone bad again. Besides, I was trying to cheer you up, to give you a happy honeymoon. And I bought you everything you saw abroad. And it wasn't enough! When will you get enough clothes?"

Leila had stared incredulous at the calamitous result of her tender impulse to beautify herself in his eyes. Then tears came gushing and she ran to her room and locked the door.

Bayard did not follow her. He turned for comfort to his mother and Daphne. He noted the other box. Daphne had not dared to open it. Bayard ripped the envelope from its cord and read:

"Bayard Kip to Dutilh, Dr. Parchment-toned gown, for Miss Daphne Kip, two hundred and seventy-five dollars."

He was parchment-toned himself as he shook the statement at Daphne, and whispered, huskily, "What's this?"

Daphne could not muster any courage. She explained with craven remorse, "I saw a gown that I—I needed there, and I—I— He offered to let it on your account till I could get the money."

Bayard was choked with wrath and a terror greater than hers.

"I go to my office and work like a fiend all day, and I come home to find that my wife and my sister have run me into debt for—five hundred and fifty dollars. And the firm, the big firm I work for, had to extend a note for seven hundred and fifty because we couldn't meet it!"

His mother tried to stem the tide of Bayard's rage, to turn his wrath with a soft answer:

"I guess it's all my fault, honey. The dresses looked so pretty on the girls I urged them to take them. You ought to see how beautiful they are. Go put the dress on, Daphne, and let your brother see how sweet you look in it."

"Sweet! She looks sweet in it! It's beautiful! And that justifies anything. Lord, what did you make 'em out of, these women!"

Mrs. Kip nudged Daphne and whispered, "Go on, put the dress on; let him see you in it."

She spoke with great canniness, but Daphne stared at her with derision, and edged away and spoke in a tone as biting as cold blue vitriol.

"Put it on, mother! Do you think I'd ever wear the thing? I'll send it back tomorrow morning at daybreak. And I'll never take a thing that any man pays for as long as I live."

Bayard stared at her over his shoulder. "You can't take anything that

land, and I am going to get married—but later, much later."

"I hate conundrums," said Mrs. Kip. "Better tell me the answer, for I won't guess. What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to lend a hand," said Daphne. "Do my share. Get a job and earn my board and keep."

"Heaven help us! You've gone crazy!" Mrs. Kip exclaimed. "You get to bed and you'll feel better in the morning. I'll finish my letter."

She added, unbeknownst to Daphne, a postscript as long as the letter, contradicting all she had just written and urging her husband to come East at once and take charge of his unruly daughter. She dropped it in the mail chute, and it fell into a bottomless pit, along with her other hopes.

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Bayard and Leila, however, arrived at the table all smiles, more amorous than ever. Leila wore a triumphant smile, such as Dutilh must have worn the second time she went out walking with her big bear.

It was plain to the anxious eyes of Mrs. Kip and Daphne that Leila had emerged from the quarrel with all the loot and aggravated power.

She had taken advantage of her husband's trust and abused his generosity recklessly, with no more evil motive, indeed, than the wish to beautify herself in his honor, and yet with recklessness.

It was not altogether Leila's fault if the lesson she learned, perhaps unconsciously, from the combat was something like this:

"I ran my husband into debt without consulting him. His listless love woke from its torpor and enchanted me with a first-class demonstration of its energy. He stormed. I wept thrillingly. He apologized, begged to be permitted to bring me some more nice

things. Ergo, when home life grows dull, I can always stir up the fire by buying something we can't afford. When I want anything I must get it. I shall be scolded, then kissed and treated with awe. If I hadn't bought it I wouldn't have had it, nor the bonus that goes with it. If we had not quarreled we should have missed the rapture of 'making up.'"

This is one of the first lessons that certain sorts of husbands teach to certain sorts of wives.

When the man of the house had departed for his office, and the waiter had carried off the breakfast relics, the three women were left alone in a completely feminine conclave. They faced life like three Norns: the old mother, the new wife, and the deferred wife, each from her colga of disadvantage.

The two married women turned on the maid, with common resentment. They were married and dependent and she had her independence. They were Tories and she a Whig. It was their privilege to rail at things as they were, but it was their religion to frown on changing them. Mrs. Kip senior spoke for Mrs. Kip junior.

"Now, Daphne, tell us what is this new foolishness all about?"

Daphne answered, stoutly: "It's not foolishness. It's the first glimmer of sense I've ever had. I'm sick of the idea of always living on the mercy of some man, taking his charity or his extravagance. I've always been a drag on poor daddy, and I was getting ready to shift my weight over to poor Clay's back. But I don't think a woman ought to be dependent on a man. I think she ought to bear her share of the burden."

"As if the home weren't just as much labor as the office."

Leila attacked her from another direction. "For goodness' sake, Daphne, don't lose your head. Don't you imagine for a moment that a husband will be happier and love his wife better because she earns wages. The harder you work for men, the better they like somebody else. The harder a man works for you the better he likes you. Best of all, he loves the woman that tries to break him."

Daphne's answer was a snappy: "I don't believe it! I'd despise a man that felt that way."

The three women wrangled with wise saws and modern instances, and they were in a perilous state of discussion when the telephone rang. Leila answered it and her outcries of indignation alarmed Mrs. Kip and Daphne till they learned the cause.

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Leila came from the telephone in a state of desperation mitigated by the fact that Bayard had asked her to take his mother and Daphne shopping and buy them and herself something worth while as an atonement for his abandonment.

So they set forth again on another onset against the ramparts of beauty. To the silent horror of Daphne and her mother, Leila was persuaded to buy a new coat and a new hat and to pay for them by the convenience of opening two new accounts at the suggestion of two soapy salesmen. Bayard's surrender after his first battle had already accomplished the expected result.

Everything was the very latest thing and yet was marked down. But Daphne priced things now with a new soul. She was thinking in the terms of wages and toil.

She was going to earn fifty thousand a year some day, but she supposed that at first she would earn very little—twenty-five dollars a week, perhaps.

For the first time in her existence she vividly understood how all these fairy tissues were the products of human labor, paid for with wages and to be sold for other wages. Pearls were drops of sweat; perfumes were the sighs of weary men; soft fabrics were the hard spinning of human silkworms.

Bayard was even now racking his brain to accumulate what three women were squandering.

So Daphne meditated as she had never meditated before and might not often meditate again. She refused to buy a thing. Her mother could only explain her mood as a symptom of an illness and advise her to get home to bed. There was something suspicious in the condition of a girl who could look with equanimity of conscience or appetite on such a banquet.

At length fatigue and faintness reminded Mrs. Kip, senior, that she had not eaten and the hour was late. She called for her luncheon and they went together to a tea-room. Here Daphne had another attack of eccentricity; a stubborn determination to go home and send back to Dutilh the wicked gown that she had bought of him on credit.

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