WEDDING PRESENTS: A COMEDY OF TO-DAY

BY VIRGINIA NILES LEEDS

Scene—A drawing-room in New York.
Characters—Dick and Daisy.
Time—The eve of their wedding.

DICK—That's a very decent array of presents, my dear. We ought not to have to buy any household furnishings for two years to come.

Daisy—Oh, but Dick, most of them are the most useless, senseless things. If one could just choose one's own wedding presents! Isn't it a shame one can't? You only get wedding presents once in a lifetime—that is, you don't get them a second time if you marry again or get divorced, do you? So if people would only let you choose for yourself! Now, look at that bearskin rug Uncle David sent. Did you ever see such a thing? It will be in the way any place we put it and I'm sure some one will break his neck over it with that great head sticking out.

Dick (suggestively)—Why not put it in your mother's room when she comes to visit us?

Daisy (apparently not hearing)—Then that piano lamp from your aunt Caroline. Whoever hears of piano lamps these days? They are as passe as plush lambrequins or painted placques, and I'm sure I don't know where she ever bought it. Why couldn't she have sent a piano while she was about it? What's the use, I'd like to know, of a piano lamp when you haven't a piano? It's like the old story of sending a man ruffles who hasn't a shirt. Your aunt Caroline has barrels of money—wasn't it mean of her to send a piano lamp instead of a piano?

Dick—Couldn't you change it?

Daisy (shaking her head)—No, you see, we're going to change her daughter's—your cousin Madelaine's—asparagus lifter and it wouldn't do to change the whole family's presents. They might get suspicious if they never saw any of their things around. But fancy any one sending an asparagus lifter! The most ridiculous thing! Any Christian asparagus will come up with an ordinary fork and spoon, and I feel sure it must have been some insane silversmith who invented asparagus lifters. They are almost as bad as grape scissors, and that makes me think of Dolly Finders's present—grape scissors—when she knew we wanted a Vernis-Martin cabinet or oil paintings for the drawing-room. So like Dolly never to think of anything but herself, and I shouldn't be surprised if the scissors were some old thing she had around the house and wanted to get rid of.

Dick—It was shabby of Dolly; but never mind, she'll probably marry some day and then we'll get square with her by sending her something she doesn't want—an easel scarf or a framed motto. That's the advantage of wedding presents; you can get back at people with them.

Daisy—Perhaps Dolly will never get married. A girl who tries as hard as she nearly always gets left—then where would we be? I'd like to snip her saucy pug nose with those grape scissors.

Dick—That silver tea set old Muffins sent is all right—looms up nicely, doesn't it?

Daisy—Dick, that's the cruelest blow of all! You remember how pleased I was when it came and what a charming note I dictated for Belle to write? Well, my dear, in examining the tea set bottom upward I discovered that it is silver solder—that means plated, you know—and I was so vexed that I could have cried. If I could recall the note I would do so in a minute. Mean old thing, to send plated wedding presents! I should think he'd be ashamed. I don't suppose you can change plated things, can you?

Dick—You don't mean he did anything so low down? [crossing over]. By Jove! Daisy, you are right, and I have my opinion of that old hunks. But, I say, couldn't we give it away to some one else—to the next one who gets married?

Daisy—Dick! I'd be ashamed to have my card go with anything plated. If we have to give away any of our wedding presents it will have to be the best ones, for I wouldn't let people think I'd send anything cheap.

Dick—I suppose you're right, though it is certainly tough to hand over the good ones and hang on to the plated ware. All we can do is to hope none of our friends will get married.

Daisy—Which they will do, in the most thoughtless fashion—even the least likely ones! I shouldn't be surprised after all if Dolly Flinders—Oh, Dick, whatever in the world are we going to do with these nine fans? Isn't it the most awful thing that ever happened to any one?—who was ever married to have nine fans unloaded on her?

Dick—If we get particularly hard up we might open a fan shop. Nine to begin with wouldn't be bad. Or, have a fan auction. How would I look as auctioneer, Daisy? (Stepping over behind a table on which wedding presents are strewn and beating on it with a fancy berry spoon.) How much am I offered for this handsome fan? Real Cloisonne, warranted not to come out in the wash! Once owned by the Empress Josephine, who used it until she thought it produced a coolness between her and Napoleon. A child can handle it. Come, ladies and gentlemen, make your bids—what is home without a fan?

Daisy—Dick, darling, don't be absurd. Of course, we couldn't sell or auction the fans, but I have a glorious idea. In about a year, when people have forgotten our presents, I will give a luncheon and use the fans as favors. There will be nine covers and each guest will have a different fan at her place. Isn't that a positive inspiration?

Dick—Great head, my dear, only you must be careful not to ask any of the donors of the fans. That would give away your little game.

Daisy—Dick, how clever you are! I never thought of that, do you know, and as likely as not I should have asked the very nine women who gave the fans. Wouldn't that have been the most awful sell? But I tell you what I'll do. I will write the names on slips of paper and put them in each box, then I'll remember, for of course in a year we will forget all about our wedding presents ourselves and who gave them.

Dick—Do you think much of this cut-glass giraffe?

Daisy (gently)—Carafe.

Dick—Oh, is that it? I was under the impression it got its name from the shape of its neck. Well, anyway, what do you think of it? Is it real cut or fake?

Daisy—I'm inclined to think it's fake or domestic cut, which amounts to the same thing. I forgot whether the real kind ought to have a star on the bottom or not. This one has, but until I learn more about the star, I shan't be able to judge. The minister's wife sent it, and wasn't it the meanest thing of her? It came in a box without a name. So we couldn't change it if we wanted to. I think it really the most inconsiderate thing of people to send wedding presents in unmarked boxes! As if you could run all over town inquiring if the thing came from there!

Dick—Not half so mean as putting them in boxes they didn't come in, as Billy Jackson did, and then giving us the mortification of marching into Tiffany's with something that came from Fourteenth street and suavely asking the clerk to change it for a bronze bust. Jove! that's the blackguard trick!

Daisy—It is, indeed, and it was one of your friends who perpetrated it. I hope you will drop Billy Jenkins from your list, and, above all, never bring him home to dinner. I never liked the man, anyway.

Dick—Poor old Billy! He'll get a plated oyster fork from me when he persuades that lank, red haired girl to have him. I know that.

Daisy—Dick, dear, what do you think of books for a wedding present? As if we were children at school! The "Browning's Love Letters"—ugh! as if we needed a leaf out of any one else's book on that subject? I haven't looked into the pages yet, but I venture to say Miss Browning—was it she who was Miss Browning or he that was Mr. Browning? I declare I never can remember—never wrote a letter in her life that could touch that one of yours, you remember it?—beginning:—"My onliest, own one, you know I never can live without thee!"—now that was a letter—but, Dick (very seriously)—

Dick—Yes, my dear?

Daisy—I do hope they will never publish our love letters! Wouldn't it be just awful? Those I wrote you in baby talk were never meant for publication. Oh, promise me, Dick, you will never let any one publish my letters and perhaps have them bound in green and gold and sent to some one else for a wedding present!

Dick—I promise, Daisy. They shall never get them save over my dead body.

Daisy—That's just it, Dick! That's when they would get them! Oh, promise me, on your honor, you won't let them have my letters over your dead body!

Dick—My dear girl, do be reasonable. How can I promise anything over my dead body. But I really don't think you need fear. We'll probably never get quite such big guys as the Brownings and they won't want our letters.

Daisy—Of course we'll change it.

Dick (in surprise)—Change it? What, change this?

Daisy—Certainly; what use would a shaving mug be to me? We'll exchange it for a piece of bureau silver—a hairpin tray or a salve box.

Dick (ruefully)—That would be delightful of course, but I don't see exactly where I'd come in in a hairpin tray or a salve box.

Daisy—Dick, don't be selfish, and on the very eve of our wedding, too!

Dick—Oh, of course not, old girl; but if it's all the same to you I'll keep this mug—I like the pattern. I'll buy you a hairpin tray or a salve box on our first anniversary.

Daisy—Oh, very well if you want to act like that!

Dick—Come now, darling, don't let's get scrapping over our wedding presents. They're a pretty decent lot, taken as a bunch, and I suppose we ought to feel grateful even if no one did send us an automobile or a diamond necklace.

Daisy—Grateful over a lot of things we don't want! I don't see the smallest necessity.

Dick—Yes, but think of the fun we'll have changing them when we come back! That is the real pleasure of wedding presents, as you've said yourself many times.

Daisy (brightening)—Yes, I suppose it is, but we can't change any of those that are marked, and see how many of them are! I put them all together on this table. See, everything here means not changeable, and half the small silver is here.

Dick—By Jove, that is bad! But we could melt it all down some time and get the price of the brick. There are always ways to the ingenious mind, my dear, even in marked wedding presents.

Daisy—But what of marked down ones? Do you see this filigree vase? I saw them reduced to half price at Jonnemeker's last week. This Barham box didn't deceive me. Is there any way out of that?

Dick—Oh, I say, now, who played such a scurvy trick?

Daisy (maliciously)—That old sweetheart of yours, Miss Ketchum, or Miss Catsup, or whatever her name is.

Dick—You don't mean it! After all my kindness to her, too!

Daisy—Yes, I do, and now you see the kind she is! No need of keeping up her acquaintance any longer.

Dick—Poor old Flossie! She used to be more generous.

Daisy—Dick, I wish you wouldn't call that person Flossie—such a ridiculous name for a woman of her age—sounds exactly like a Skye terrier.

Dick (reflectively)—There was a time when she gave silver backed military brushes and gold mounted umbrellas.

Daisy—Well, perhaps if you'd married her instead of me she might be giving them yet. And it isn't too late, Mr. Wellington, if you wish to back out. True, the cards are out, but there are still about twenty hours before our wedding, and if you would like to change your mind and marry your Flossie—

Dick—Daisy, my sweetheart! Why, you're not going to get jealous of a filigree vase, are you.

Daisy—Jealous! I? Why, I never knew the meaning of the word in my life. Don't be ridiculous, Dick. But, all the same, I'd like you to invent a way of disposing of that nasty little marked down gimcrack.

Dick—Well, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll engage to find a way if you'll send back the chafing dish sent by your old beau, the Rev. Davenport.

Daisy—Now, Dick, you are unreasonable. Next to you Mr. Davenport is the most agreeable man in the world, and I thought it very nice indeed of him to send me a wedding present after all that had happened.

Dick—Humph—perhaps so, but all the same I'd just as lief he hadn't. I don't see why old sweethearts should send any thing anyway—

Daisy (interrupting)—Unless it is marked down filigree vases!

Dick—Oh, come, old girl, don't let's have any hard feelings and let bygones be bygones. I'll do away with Flossie's vase if you will keep the reverend's chafing dish out of sight, and we might make a match of it between Flossie and the doctor.

Daisy (positively)—Dr. Davenport will never marry.

Dick—Flossie doesn't seem inclined to, either.

Daisy—Well, Dick, I am sorry to see you so disagreeable, and on the very eve of our wedding, too; but, leaving the vase out, there are 269 real presents in this room and I am sure that ought to satisfy us, and no one could accuse us of anything but appreciation and gratitude. There are people, you know, who find fault with and criticise everything that comes into the house. Thank heaven, we are not that kind!

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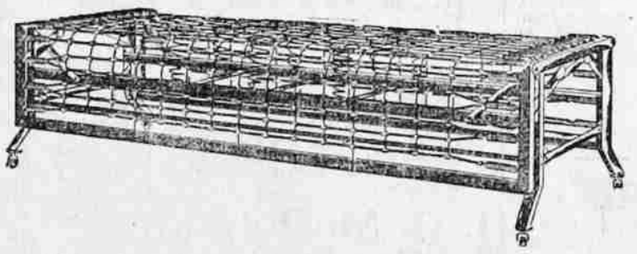

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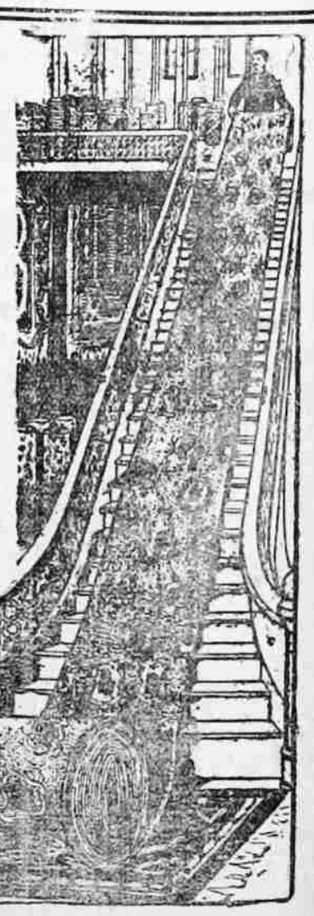

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