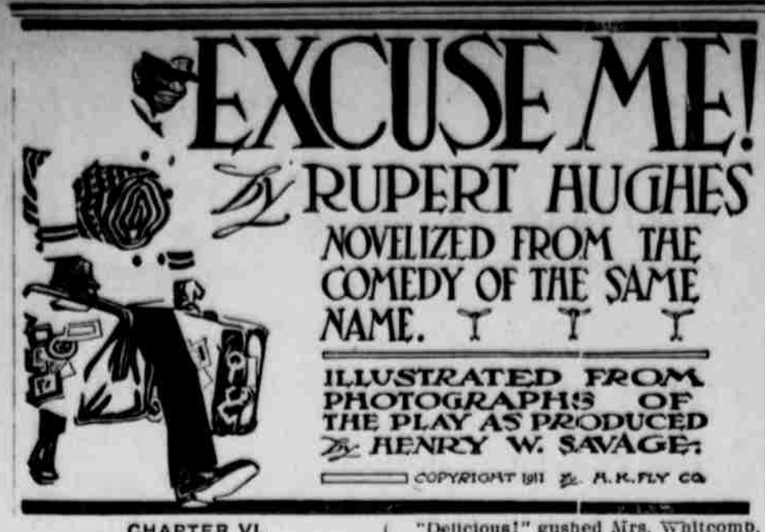

CHAPTER VI.

A Conspiracy in Satin.

The tall man emptied one hand of its suitcase to clasp the hand the newcomer granted him. He held it fast as he exclaimed: "Don't tell me that you are bound for Reno!" She whimpered: "I'm afraid so, Mr. Ashton."

He put down everything to take her other hand, and tuned his voice to condolence: "Why, I thought you and Sam Whitcomb were—"

"Oh, we were until that shameless Mrs. Wellington—"

"Mrs. Wellington? Don't believe I know her."

"I thought everybody had heard of Mrs. Jimmie Wellington."

"Mrs. Jimmie—oh, yes, I've heard of her!" Everybody seemed to have heard of Mrs. Jimmie Wellington.

"What a dance she has led her poor husband!" Mrs. Whitcomb said. "And my poor Sammy fell into her trap, too."

Ashton, zealous comforter, took a wrathful tone: "I always thought your husband was the most unmitigated—" But Mrs. Whitcomb bridled at once. "How dare you criticize Sammy! He's the nicest boy in the world."

Ashton recovered quickly. "That's what I started to say. Will he contest the—divorce?"

"Of course not," she beamed. "The dear fellow would never deny me anything. Sammy offered to get it himself, but I told him he'd better stay in Chicago and stick to business. I shall need such a lot of alimony."

"Too bad he couldn't have come along," Ashton insinuated.

But the irony was wasted, for she sighed: "Yes, I shall miss him terribly. But we feared that if he were with me it might hamper me in getting a divorce on the ground of desertion."

She was trying to look earnest and thoughtful and heartbroken, but the result was hardly plausible, for Mrs. Sammy Whitcomb could not possibly have been really earnest or really thoughtful; and her heart was quite too elastic to break. She proved it instantly, for when she heard behind her the voice of a young man asking her to let him pass, she turned to protest, but seeing that he was a handsome young man, her starch was instantly changed to sugar. And she rewarded his good looks with a smile, as he rewarded hers with another.

Then Ashton intervened like a dog in the manger and dragged her off to her seat, leaving the young man to exclaim:

"Some tamarind, that!"

Another young man behind him growled: "Cut out the tamarinds and get to business. Mallory will be here any minute."

"I hate to think what he'll do to us when he sees what we've done to him."

"Oh, he won't dare to fight in the presence of his little bridey-widey. Do you see the porter in there?"

"Yes, suppose he objects."

"Well, we have the tickets. We'll claim it's our section till Mallory and Mrs. Mallory come."

They moved on into the car, where the porter confronted them. When he saw that they were loaded with bundles of all shapes and sizes, he waved them away with scorn:

"The emigrant sleepa runs only Toosdays and Thuzzdays."

From behind the first mass of packages came a brisk military answer:

"You black hound! About face—forward march! Section number one."

The porter retreated down the aisle, apologizing glibly. "'Scuse me for questioning' you, but you-all's baggage looked kind o' eccentric at first."

The two young men dumped their parcels on the seats and began to unwrap them hastily.

"If Mallory catches us, he'll kill us," said Lieutenant Shaw. Lieutenant Hudson only laughed and drew out a long streamer of white satin ribbon. Its glimmer, and the glimmering eyes of the young man excited Mrs. Whitcomb so much that after a little hesitance she moved forward, followed by the jealous Ashton.

"Oh, what's up?" she ventured. "It looks like something bridal."

"Talk about womanly intuition!" said Lieutenant Hudson, with an ingratiating salaam.

And then they explained to her that their classmate at West Point, being ordered suddenly to the Philippines, had arranged to elope with his beloved Marjorie Newton; had asked them to get the tickets and check the baggage while he stopped at a minister's to "get spliced and hike for Manila by this train."

Having recounted this plan in the full belief that it was even at that moment being carried out successfully, Lieutenant Hudson, with a ghoulish smile, explained:

"Being old friends of the bride and groom, we want to fix their section up in style and make them truly comfortable."

"Delicious!" gushed Mrs. Whitcomb. "But you ought to have some rice and old shoes."

"Here's the rice," said Hudson.

"Here's the old shoes," said Shaw.

"Lovely!" cried Mrs. Whitcomb, but then she grew soberer. "I should think, though, that they—the young couple—would have preferred a stateroom."

"Of course," said Hudson, almost blushing, "but it was taken. This was the best we could do for them."

"That's why we want to make it nice and bride-like," said Shaw. "Perhaps you could help us—a woman's touch—"

"Oh, I'd love to," she glowed, hastening into the section among the young men and the bundles. The unusual stir attracted the porter's suspicions. He came forward with a look of authority:

"'Scuse me, but wha—what's all this?"

"Vanish—get out," said Hudson, poking a coin at him. As he turned to obey, Mrs. Whitcomb checked him with: "Oh, Porter, could you get us a hammer and some nails?"

The porter almost blanched: "Good Lawd, Miss, you ain't allowin' to drive nails in that woodwork, is you?" That woodwork was to him what the altar is to the priest.

But Hudson, resorting to heroic measures, hypnotized him with a two-dollar bill: "Here, take this and see nothing, hear nothing, say nothing." The porter caressed it and chuckled: "I'm blind, deaf and speechless." He turned away, only to come back at once with a timid "'Scuse me!"

"You here yet?" growled Hudson.

Anxiously the porter pleaded: "I just want to ast one question. Is you all fixin' up for a bridal couple?"

"Foolish question, number eight million, forty-three," said Shaw. "Answer, no, we are."

The porter's face glistened like fresh stove polish as he gloated over the prospect. "I tell you, it'll be mahty refreshin' to have a bridal couple on bode! This dog-on Reno train don't carry nothin' much but divorcees. I'm just nachally hongry for a bridal couple."

"Brile coup-hic-le?" came a voice, like an echo that had somehow become intoxicated in transit. It was Little Jimmie Wellington looking for more sympathy. "Whass zis about brile couple?"

"Why, here's Little Buttercup!" sang out young Hudson, looking at him in amazed amusement.

"Did I un'stan' somebody say you're preparing for brile coupl'?"

Lieutenant Shaw grinned. "I don't know what you understood, but that's what we're doing."

Immediately Wellington's great face began to churn and work like a big eddy in a river. Suddenly he was weeping. "Excuse these tears, zhentlemen, but I once—I was once a b-b-bride myself."

"He looks like a whole wedding party," was Ashton's only comment on the copious grief. It was poor Wellington's fate to hunt as vainly for sympathy as Diogenes for honesty. The decorators either ignored him or shunted him aside. They were interested in a strange contrivance of ribbons and a box that Shaw produced.

"That," Hudson explained, "is a little rice trap. We hang that up there and when the bridal couple sit down—biff! a shower of rice all over them. It's bad, eh?"

Everybody agreed that it was a happy thought, and even Jimmie Wellington, like a great baby, bounding from tears to laughter on the instant, was chortling: "A rishe trap? That's abslootly splendid—greates' invensh' modern times. I must stick around and see her when she flops." And then he lurched forward like a too-obliging elephant. "Let me help you."

Mrs. Whitcomb, who had now mounted a step ladder and poised herself as gracefully as possible, shrieked with alarm, as she saw Wellington's bulk rolling toward her frail support.

If Hudson and Shaw had not been football veterans at West Point and had not known just what to do when the center rush comes bucking the line, they could never have blocked that flying wedge. But they checked him and impelled him backward through his own curtains into his own berth.

Finding himself on his back, he decided to remain there. And there he remained, oblivious of the carnival preparations going on just outside his canopy.

CHAPTER VII.

The Masked Minister.

Being an angel must have this great advantage at least, that one may sit in the grandstand overlooking the earth and enjoy the ludicrous blunder of that great blind man's buff we call life.

This night, if any angels were watching Chicago, the Mallory mix-up must have given them a good laugh, or a good cry—according to their natures.

Here were Mallory and Marjorie, still merely engaged, bitterly regretting their inability to get married and to continue their journey together. There in the car were the giggling conspirators preparing a bridal mockery for their sweet confusion.

Then the angels might have nudged one another and said:

"Oh, it's all right now. There goes the minister hurrying to their very car. Mallory has the license in his pocket, and here comes the parson. Hooray!"

And then the angelic cheer must have died out as the one great hurrah of a crowded ball-ground is quenched in air when the home team's vitally needed home run swerves outside the line and drops useless as a stupid foul ball.

In a shabby old hack, were two of the happiest runaways that ever sought a train. They were not miserable like the young couple in the taxicab. They were white-haired both. They had been married for thirty years. Yet this was their real honeymoon, their real elopement.

The little woman in the timid gray bonnet clapped her hands and tittered like a schoolgirl.

"Oh, Walter, I can't believe we're really going to leave Ypsilanti for a while. Oh, but you've earned it after thirty years of being a preacher."

"Hush. Don't let me hear you say the awful word," said the little old man in the little black hat and the close-fitting black bib. "I'm so tired of it, Sally, I don't want anybody on the train to know it."

"They can't help guessing it, with your collar buttoned behind."

And then the amazing minister actually dared to say, "Here's where I change it around." What's more, he actually did it. Actually took off his collar and buttoned it to the front. The old carriage seemed almost to rock with the earthquake of the deed.

"Why, Walter Temple!" his wife exclaimed. "What would they say in Ypsilanti?"

"They'll never know," he answered, defiantly.

"But your bib?" she said.

"I've thought of that, too," he cried, as he whipped it off and stuffed it into a handbag. "Look, what I've bought." And he dangled before her startled eyes a long affair which the sudden light from a passing lamp-post revealed to be nothing less than a flaring red tie.

The old lady touched it to make sure she was not dreaming it. Then, omitting further parley with fate, she snatched it away, put it round his neck, and, since her arms were embracing him, kissed him twice before she knotted the ribbon into a flaming bow. She sat back and regarded the

Mrs. Walter Temple.

vision a moment, then flung her arms round him and hugged him till he gasped:

"Watch out—watch out. Don't crush my cigars."

"Cigars! Cigars!" she echoed, in a daze.

And then the astounding husband produced them in proof.

"Genuine Lillian Russells—five cents straight."

"But I never saw you smoke."

"Haven't taken a puff since I was a young fellow," he grinned, wagging his head. "But now it's my vacation, and I'm going to smoke up."

She squeezed his hand with an earlier ardor: "Now you're the old Walter Temple I used to know."

"Sally," he said, "I've been traveling through life on a half-fare ticket. Now I'm going to have my little fling. And you brace up, too, and be the old mischievous Sally I used to know. Aren't you glad to be away from those sewing circles and gossip-bees, and —"

"Ugh! Don't ever mention them," she shuddered. Then she, too, felt a tinge of recurring springtide. "If you start to smoking, I think I'll take up flirting once more."

He pinched her cheek and laughed. "As the saying is, go as far as you desire and I'll leave the coast clear."

He kept his promise, too, for they were no sooner on the train and snugly bestowed in section five, than he was up and off.

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"To the smoking-room," he swaggered, brandishing a dangerous looking cigar.

"Oh, Walter," she snickered, "I feel like a young runaway."

"You look like one. Be careful not to let anybody know that you're a"—he lowered his voice—"an old preacher's wife."

"I'm as ashamed of it as you are," she whispered. Then he threw her a kiss and a wink. She threw him a kiss and winked too. And he went along the aisle eyeing his cigar gloatingly. As he entered the smoking-room, lighted the weed and blew out a great puff with a sigh of rapture, who could have taken him, with his feet cocked up, and his red tie rakishly askew, for a minister?

And Sally herself was busy disguising herself, loosening up her hair coquettishly, smiling the primness out of the set corners of her mouth and even—let the truth be told at all costs—even passing a pink-powdered puff over her pale cheeks with guilty surreptition.

Thus arrayed she was soon joining the conspirators bedecking the bower for the expected bride and groom. She was the youngest and most mischievous of the lot. She felt herself a bride again, and vowed to protect this timid little wife to come from too much hilarity at the hands of the conspirators.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Mixed Pickle.

Mrs. Whitcomb had almost blushed when she had murmured to Lieutenant Hudson:

"I should think the young couple would have preferred a stateroom."

And Mr. Hudson had flinched a little as he explained:

"Yes, of course. We tried to get it, but it was gone."

It was during the excitement over the decoration of the bridal section, that the stateroom-tenants slipped in unobserved.

First came a fluttering woman whose youthful beauty had a certain hue of experience, saddening and wisering. The porter brought her in from the station-platform, led her to the stateroom's concave door and passed in with her luggage. But she lingered without, a Peri at the gate of Paradise. When the porter returned to bow her in, she shivered and hesitated, and then demanded:

"Oh, porter, are you sure there's nobody else in there?"

The porter chuckled, but humored her panic.

"I ain't seen nobody. Shall I look under the seat?"

To his dismay, she nodded her head violently. He rolled his eyes in wonderment, but returned to the stateroom, made a pretense of examination, and came back with a face full of reassurance. "No'm, they's nobody there. Take a mighty small-size burglar to squeeze unda that bald—er—berth. No'm, nobody there."

"Oh!"

The gasp was so equivocal that he made bold to ask:

"Is you pleased or disappointed?"

The mysterious young woman was too much agitated to rebuke the impudence. She merely sighed: "Oh, porter, I'm so anxious."

"I'm not—now," he muttered, for she handed him a coin.

"Porter, have you seen anybody on board that looks suspicious?"

"Evvabody looks suspicious to me, Missy. But what was you expecting—especial?"

"Oh, porter, have you seen anybody that looks like a detective in disguise?"

"Well, they's one man looks 's if he was disguised as a balloon, but I don't believe he's no slooch-hound."

"Well, if you see anybody that looks like a detective and he asks for Mrs. Fosdick—"

"Mrs. What-dick?"

"Mrs. Fosdick! You tell him I'm not on board." And she gave him another coin.

"Yassum," said the porter, lingering willingly on such fertile soil. "I'll tell him Mrs. Fosdick done give me her word she wasn't on bode."

"Yes!—and if a woman should ask you."

"What kind of a woman?"

"The hideous kind that men call handsome."

"Oh, ain't they hideous, them handsome women?"

"Well, if such a woman asks for Mrs. Fosdick—she's my husband's first wife—but of course that doesn't interest you."

"No'm—yes'm."

"If she comes—tell her—tell her—oh, what shall we tell her?"

The porter rubbed his thick skull: "Lemme see—we might say you—I tell you what we'll tell her: we'll tell her you took the train for New York; and if she runs mighty fast she can just about ketch it."

"Fine, fine!" And she rewarded his genius with another coin. "And, porter." He had not budged. "Porter, if a very handsome man with luscious eyes and a soulful smile asks for me—"

"I'll th'ow him off the train!"

"Oh, no—no!—that's my husband—my present husband You may let him in. Now is it all perfectly clear, porter?"

"Oh, yassum, clear as clear." Thus guaranteed she entered the stateroom, leaving the porter alone with his problem. He tried to work it out in a semi-audible mumble: "Lemme see! If your present husband's absent wife gits on bode disguised as a handsome hideous woman I'm to throw him—her—off the train and let her—him—come in—oh, yassum, you may rely on me." He bowed and held out his hand. But she was gone. He shuffled on into the car.

He had hardly left the little space before the stateroom when a handsome man with luscious eyes, but without any smile at all, came slinking along the corridor and tapped cautiously on the door. Silence alone answered him at first, then when he had rapped again, he heard a muffled:

"Go away. I'm not in."

He put his lips close and softly called: "Edith!"

At this Sesame the door opened a trifle, but when he tried to enter, a hand thrust him back and a voice again warned him off. "You musn't come in."

"But I'm your husband."

"That's just why you musn't come in." The door opened a little wider to give him a view of a down-cast beauty moaning:

"Oh, Arthur, I'm so afraid."

"Afraid?" he sniffed. "With your husband here?"

"That's the trouble, Arthur. What if your former wife should find us together?"

"But she and I are divorced."

"In some states, yes—but other states don't acknowledge the divorce. That former wife of yours is a fiend to pursue us this way."

"She's no worse than your former husband. He's pursuing us, too. My divorce was as good as yours, my dear."

"Yes, and no better."

The angels looking on might have judged from the ready tempers of the newly married and not entirely unmarried twain that their new alliance promised to be as exciting as their previous estates. Perhaps the man subtly felt the presence of those eternal eavesdroppers, for he tried to end the love-duel in the corridor with an appeasing caress and a tender appeal: "But let's not start our honeymoon with a quarrel."

His partial wife returned the caress and tried to explain: "I'm not quarreling with you, dear heart, but with the horrid divorce laws. Why, oh, why did we ever interfere with them?"

He made a brave effort with: "We ended two unhappy marriages, Edith, to make one happy one."

"But I'm so unhappy, Arthur, and so afraid."

He seemed a trifle afraid himself and his gaze was askance as he urged: "But the train will start soon, Edith—and then we shall be safe."

Mrs. Fosdick had a genius for inventing unpleasant possibilities. "But what if your former wife or my former husband should nave a detective on board?"

"A detective?—poof!" He snapped his fingers in bravado. "You are with your husband, aren't you?"

"In Illinois, yes," she admitted, very dolefully. "But when we come to Iowa, I'm a bigamist, and when we come to Nebraska, you're a bigamist, and when we come to Wyoming, we're not married at all."

It was certainly a tangled web they had woven, but a ray of light shot through it into his bewildered soul. "But we're all right in Utah. Come, dearest."

He took her by the elbow to escort her into their sanctuary, but still she hung back.

"On one condition, Arthur—that you leave me as soon as we cross the Iowa state line, and not come back till we get to Utah. Remember, the Iowa state line!"

"Oh, all right," he smiled. And seeing the porter, beckoned him close and asked with careless indifference: "Oh, porter, what time do we reach the Iowa state line?"

"Two fifty-five in the mawning, sah."

"Two fifty-five a. m.?" the wretch exclaimed.

"Two fifty-five a. m., yassah," the porter repeated, and wondered why this excerpt from the time-table should exert such a dramatic effect on the luscious-eyed Fosdick.

He had small time to meditate the puzzle, for the train was about to be launched upon its long voyage. He went out to the platform, and watched a couple making that way. As their only luggage was a dog-basket he sun-

Continued on Page 7

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Methodist Church

Methodist Sunday School, 9:30 a. m. Ira D. Behen, Superintendent. Preaching every Sunday at 11 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. Frank Lewis Pastor. Prayer meeting Wednesday, 7:30 p. m. Epworth League, regular service Sunday 6:45 p. m; business meeting first Tuesday night each month. Miss Margarite Burn, President. Ladies' Aid Society meets first Monday each month Mrs. Forrest Lightfoot, President. Ladies' Missionary Society meets Second Sunday in every month. Mrs. Virgil Babbage, President. Choir practice Friday night 7:30, A. H. Murray, Director.

Presbyterian Church

Presbyterian Sunday School 9:45 a. m.—Conrad Sippel, Superintendent. Preaching every Third Sunday, Rev. Adair, Minister. Prayer meeting Tuesday, 7:30 p. m. Ladies' Aid Society meets Wednesday after Third Sunday every month. Mrs Chas. Satterfield, President.

Catholic Church

First Sunday of each month, Mass, Sermon, and Benediction, 9:00 a. m., other three Sundays at 10:15 a. m. On week days Mass at 7:00 a. m. Catechetical Instruction for the children on Saturdays at 8:30 a. m., and on Sundays at 9:30 a. m. and 2:30 p. m.

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Send Them To Bed With a Kiss

O mothers so weary, discouraged,
Worn out with the cares of the day
You often grow cross and impatient,
Complain of the noise and the play;
For the day brings so many vexations
So many things going amiss;
But, mothers, whatever may vex you
Send the children to bed with a kiss.

The dear little feet wander often,
Perhaps, from the pathway of right
The dear little hands find new mischief
To try you from morning till night;
But think of the desolate mothers
Who'd give all the world for your bliss,
And, as thanks for your infinite blessings,
Send the children to bed with a kiss.

For some day their noise will not vex you,
The silence will hurt you far more;
You will long for the sweet children's voices,
For a sweet, childish face at the door;
And to press a child's face to your bosom,
You'd give all the world for just this;
For the comfort 'twill bring you in sorrow,
Send the children to bed with a kiss.

Florence Jones Hadley.

Contributed by Mrs. Francis Marion Smith.

You judge a man not by what he promises to do, but by what he has done. That is the only true test. Chamberlain's Cough Remedy judged by this standard has no superior. People everywhere speak of it in the highest terms of praise. For sale by all dealers.

Love In The Home

"Don't worry so much about getting nice furniture as about making happiness for your husband, because the finest ornament of a home is love."

That is what a mother wrote to her only daughter, who had gotten married and gone away to another state to reside.

It was wise advice. Some women are wild to have their house beautiful, but they take little pains to have it an abode of affection. They desire velvet carpets, lace curtains, oil paintings, and other costly decorations, but they forget that prisons might have these things and still be prisons, but that where love is, there is heaven. And every home should be heaven on earth. —Ex.