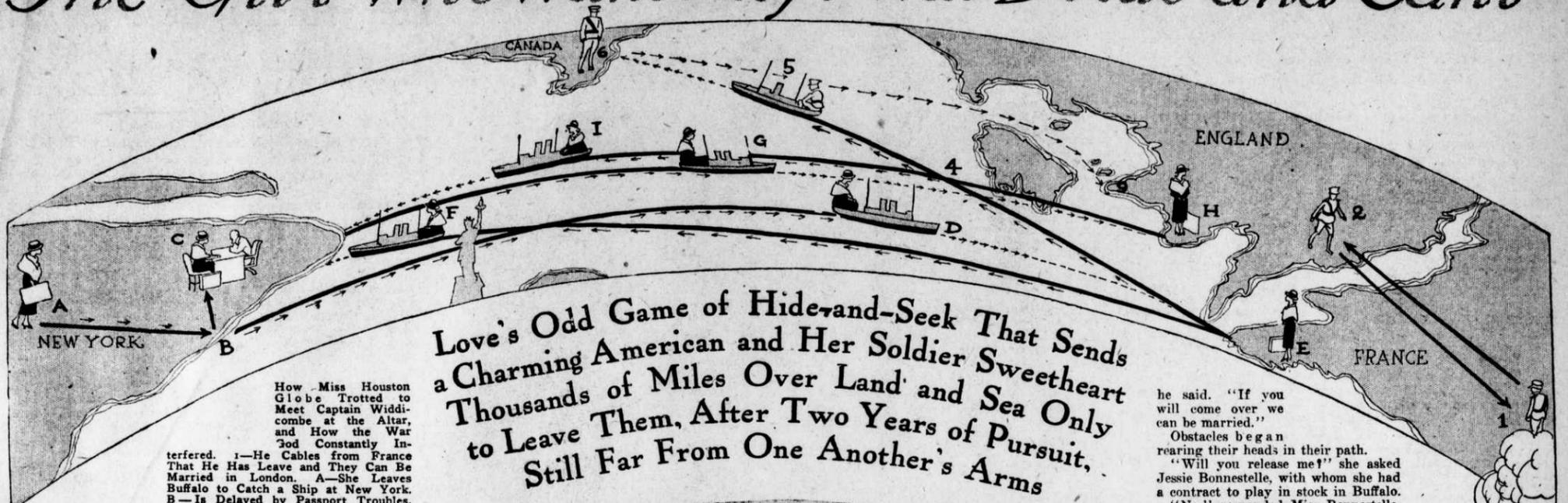


# The Girl Who Wants to be A War Bride and Can't



Love's Odd Game of Hide-and-Seek That Sends a Charming American and Her Soldier Sweetheart to Leave Them, After Two Years of Pursuit, Still Far From One Another's Arms

How Miss Houston Glibly Trotted to Meet Captain Widdicombe at the Altar, and How the War God Constantly Interfered. 1—He Cables from France That He Has Leave and They Can Be Married in London. A—She Leaves Buffalo to Catch a Ship at New York. B—Is Delayed by Passport Troubles. C—A Congressman Fixes That. D—She Sails to France. E—She Arrives Only to Find That He Has Been Ordered Back to England Presently. F—She Sails Home to Find That He Will Be in England Again Presently. G—She Sails Back. H—He Has Been Ordered to Canada, 5, and Their Ships Pass. I—She Sails Back Home Again, Just as, 6, He Is Sailing to Join Her in London. 9—He Reaches London to Find Her in New York.

THE story of the war bride is a common tragedy of the world conflict, but the story of beautiful Jane Houston is a comedy of the times.

For two years Miss Houston and her fiancé, Captain Wallace Widdicombe, of the First London Regiment of Infantry, have been trying to get married, but have failed. Captain Widdicombe may be regarded as having stood for two years on the shores of Europe with arms extended, saying: "O come to me, my love." Miss Houston, as far as in her lay, responded, "I'm coming, darling." But the pair reckoned without military red tape. Every step they took toward each other entangled their feet in its baffling folds.

Miss Houston kept five members of Congress busy getting passports for her. Once she crossed the ocean to meet her captain and be married in London. A storm at sea caused the vessel to be two days late. Her fiancé's leave had expired. He had been ordered again to the front.

Three times they arranged to meet in England to be married. As many times the captain's commanding officer refused him leave of absence.

Miss Houston decided to join the Red Cross, hoping that if she were also at the front an opportunity might come for them to marry. She offered her services to the Red Cross. The offer was declined. When he had gained the next long coveted leave of absence she failed to get a passport.

In Mississippi and Texas, where Miss Houston is well known and profoundly admired, hundreds of friends are saying with sighs: "Poor Janie!" Somewhere in France brother officers are slapping the Englishman's shoulders and saying in French or in English, "Buck up, old man. If you do have to wait until the end of the war that may not be long."

But crouching in the trenches a bronzed Englishman looks rueful. And in her room in a smart Fifth avenue hotel a lovely Southern girl murmurs, "When will this awful war end?" It is significant of the high courage in the souls of both that neither yields to despair. Into the mind of neither ever comes the thought: "Why love on, when we may never again meet in this world?" Their youth, their love, their courage, they believe will win in the end.

Jane Houston is a charming brunette with the gracious manner and soft speech of the South. Her family is an old one, so old that it goes back to the line of the Henrys, kings of England. For by climbing the family tree you will see as one of its topmost branches the name, Anne Boleyn, the ill-fated queen in Henry VIII's large and varied assortment of wives. But the branch from which to begin climbing is not Houston, but Callaway. Miss Houston was, and still is Minnie Isle Callaway.

When her father left Mississippi, transferring his family to a thirty-thousand-acre ranch in Texas, Minnie had no thought of anything more serious than riding bronchos and branding cattle. But the family sojourns in Houston for shopping and theatre going turned her thoughts to higher things, or so she thought. She determined that her sphere was not the thirty-thousand-acre ranch but the few hundred square feet of the stage. Her family differing from her in the matter, she rode off the ranch one day, not to return. At least not until she should be established on the stage.

That came sooner than her doubting family expected. She became a member of Margaret Anglin's company. Presently she joined John Drew's organization. This season she is leading woman for William Faversham in "The Old Country." But if she were asked which was the pleasantest engagement she would instantly answer: "The first," and as surely as she made that answer she would blush.



Another Portrait of Miss Houston, Still Hopeful of Being a War Bride.



Miss Jane Houston, Victim of the Extraordinary Love Chase That May Not Be Over Until the War Is.

For it was on the morning that she met Miss Anglin's company for a rehearsal of "Lady Windermere's Fan" that Destiny entered. She saw it across the stage. To other members of the company it was a personable young man, of English height, English manner, English moustache, even an English walking stick. But to her it was Destiny writ in large letters across the page of her life. "And he recognized my presence," she said to her girl friend. The same girl friend it was to whom she confided when she went home after the first rehearsal. "I've met the finest man I ever knew," Destiny cast Wallace Widdicombe as Lord Dombey, and Jane Houston—the name being borrowed for her from the city nearest papa's ranch—for the role of Lady Plymdale. Both recognized Destiny's handwriting on the wall, but neither mentioned it at first. Not, indeed, for a long time.

Not even on the long walks with which they covered the towns they visited on tour, walks that consumed three and four hours, and that generally brought them to a pretty wayside inn for luncheon or tea. At

every stand this young pair, he with his English love for the open road, she with her Western training for it, strode out to the country. And on these jaunts Cupid walked beside them.

They talked of other themes than Destiny. Of books and plays, of acting and war. When it was apparent that the war should not be a mere slight outbreak, but a bitter and protracted struggle the Englishman said: "I don't have to go, but I think that I should."

The girl who walked beside him grew a shade paler beneath her tan, but turned her great brown eyes upon him and said: "Then you should go."

It is the part of the soldier to fight, not to make love. He did not make the all important declaration until his ship was leaving Sandy Hook behind. Then he sent it back by the pilot. The girl, who was weeping tumultuously, received it with joy. From that moment their plans for, and attempts at, marriage began.

He sailed in the Spring two years ago. Letters and cables arranged for their nuptials. "I have been promised a four-day leave in the Spring,"

he said. "If you will come over we can be married."

Obstacles began rearing their heads in their path.

"Will you release me?" she asked Jessie Bonnestelle, with whom she had a contract to play in stock in Buffalo.

"No," responded Miss Bonnestelle.

"Then I will go over and get married and come right back," said the would-be bride.

When she bought her ticket the clerk asked: "Have you made arrangements about passports?"

"No, I never thought about passports."

"You can't go without one."

"But will there be time? This is Saturday afternoon. I am sailing Tuesday."

"I doubt it, but try." The subway bore her swiftly to the Bowling Green office, but not swiftly enough, for she faced a closed door. On Sunday she told a friend who had a friend who knew a Congressman of New Jersey. The Congressman promised to try. He telephoned and telegraphed, telegraphed and telephoned. An hour before the boat sailed the passport had not arrived.

"But I will go to the dock, anyway. If the passport comes, send it after me," said the determined bride. It arrived on the 11 o'clock mail. The sailing time was 12. A panting messenger followed her to the dock. Ten minutes before the boat sailed it was placed in her hand, and the one messenger boy who had hurried was richer by a smile and a gold piece.

Even the elements conspired against the pair. The first half of the voyage was calm as happy love. The third quarter was lowering. The fourth was tempestuous. Miss Jane Houston "rocked in the cradle of the deep," did not fear the storm, though it was her first crossing. But her heart quailed when the captain said: "We'll be late landing, about two days."

And so they were. A dejected and seasick young American girl landed at Falmouth. It was an ominous telegram that awaited her.

"Detained at camp. Go to Ernest Denny's in London." Ernest Denny, the playwright, and his wife, were friends of both. Miss Houston "made the best of it."

Two hours from London the train was abruptly halted. "Zeppelins are about. All lights must be put out," called the guard.

In darkness the American girl walked about the train. An English girl, a nurse, walked with her. Together they looked at the strange-menacing shapes in the sky. "Like silver fish," they agreed.

They arrived at Paddington station at six in the morning. "I want a taxi," said the girl. "There are no taxis at this time," mumbled the sleepy station attendant. "But there must be. Find me something." The flash of American spirit won. An old-fashioned hansom staggered near in the wake of a rickety horse. Thus the American girl arrived at Mr. Denny's home.

Mrs. Denny clasped her in her arms. "There are seventeen letters and telegrams waiting for you," she said. "They will explain."

They did, all too plainly. The young soldier's leave had been shortened. The four days allowed him had been consumed by his journey and the storm at sea. He had been ordered back.

"Then there is nothing more to be done but go back by the next boat," lamented the would-be bride. And so, after a day of seeing the sights of London, she did.

She opened her engagement in Buffalo. She filled it. But all the while cablegrams and letters were passing between the pair discussing new wedding plans.

More attempts and failures followed. The map above is needed to depict their unsuccessful love chase.

The Red Cross would not accept her services. Her period of training had been too short. More experienced nurses were what were wanted at the front. That she was a girl who wanted to wed the lover somewhere in France was not of great importance to the Red Cross.

This disappointment was not long lived. "I expect to leave in the early Summer," he wrote.

"I will come over as soon as my engagement is finished," she wrote. But she reckoned without the entrance of the United States into the war. It was no longer possible to get passports.

They are still watching and awaiting an opportunity. She has a photograph of him in his uniform which she kisses good-night and places under her pillow. In the breast of the rough coat he wears in the trenches he carries the photograph of a big-eyed, lovely girl, in a worn walking suit.

"It is my mascot and keeps the bullets away," says the Captain. And so they wait, and hope.

Captain Wallace Widdicombe in the Uniform of the Service Whose Exigencies Have Kept Him Travelling So Far and Fast That His Bride-to-Be Has Not as Yet Succeeded in Catching Up with Him.