SERIAL STORY

EXCUSE ME!

Novelized from the Comedy of the Same Name

By Rupert Hughes

ILLUSTRATED From Photographs of the Play as Produced By Henry W. Savage

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SYNOPSIS.

Lieut. Harry Mallory is ordered to the Philippines. He and Marjorie Newton decide to elope, but wreck of taxicab prevents their seeing minister on the way to the train. Transcontinental train is taking on passengers. Porter has a lively time with an Englishman and Ira Lathrop, a Yankee business man. The slopers have an exciting time getting to the train. "Little Jimmie" Wellington, bound for Reno to get a divorce, boards train in maudlin condition. Later Mrs. Jimmie appears. She is also bound for Reno with same object. Likewise Mrs. Sammy Whitcomb. Latter blames Mrs. Jimmie for her marital troubles. Classmates of Mallory decorate bridal berth. Her and Mrs. Temple start on a vacation. They decide to cut loose and Temple removes evidence of his calling. Marjorie decides to let Mallory proceed alone, but train starts while they are lost in farewell.

CHAPTER IX.

All Aboard!

The starting of the train surprised the ironical decorators in the last stages of their work. Their smiles died out in a sudden shame, as it came over them that the joke had recoiled on their own heads. They had done their best to carry out the time-honored rite of making a newly married couple as miserable as possible—and the newly married couple had failed to do its share.

The two lieutenants glared at each other in mutual contempt. They had studied much at West Point about ambushes, and how to avoid them. Could Mallory have escaped the pit they had digged for him? They looked at their handiwork in disgust. The cosy-corner effect of white ribbons and orange flowers, gracefully masking the concealed rice-trap, had seemed the wittiest thing ever devised. Now it looked the silliest.

The other passengers were equally downcast. Meanwhile the two lovers in the corridor were kissing goodbyes as if they were hoping to store up honey enough to sustain their hearts for a three years' fast. And the porter was studying them with perplexity.

He was used, however, to waking people out of dreamland, and he began to fear that if he were discovered spying on the lovers, he might suffer. So he coughed discreetly three or four times.

Since the increasing racket of the train made no effect on the two hearts beating as one, the small matter of a cough was as nothing.

Finally the porter was compelled to reach forward and tap Mallory's arm, and stutter:

"'Scuse me, but co-could I git b-by?"

The embrace was untied, and the lovers stared at him with a dazed, where-am-I? look. Marjorie was the first to realize what awakened them. She felt called upon to say something, so she said, as carelessly as if she had not just emerged from a young gentleman's arms:

"Oh, porter, how long before the train starts?"

"Train's done started, Missy."

This simple statement struck the wool from her eyes and the cotton from her ears, and she was wide enough awake when she cried: "Oh, stop it—stop it!"

"That's mo'n I can do, Missy," the porter expostulated.

"Then I'll jump off," Marjorie vowed, making a dash for the door.

But the porter filled the narrow path, and waved her back.

"Vestibule's done locked up—train's going lickety-split." Feeling that he had safely checkmated any rashness, the porter squeezed past the dumbfounded pair, and went to change his blue blouse for the white coat of his chambermaidenly duties. Mallory's first wondering thought was a rapturous feeling that circumstances had forced his dream into a reality. He thrilled with triumph: "You've got to go with me now."

"Yes—I've got to go," Marjorie assented meekly; "then, sublimely, 'It's fate. Kismet!'"

They clutched each other again in a fiercely blissful hug. Marjorie came back to earth with a bump: "Are you really sure there's a minister on board?"

"Pretty sure," said Mallory, sobering a trifle.

"But you said you were sure!"

"Well, when you say you're sure, that means you're not quite sure."

It was not an entirely satisfactory justification, and Marjorie began to quake with alarm: "Suppose there shouldn't be!"

"Oh, then," Mallory answered carelessly, "there's bound to be one to-morrow."

Marjorie realized at once the enormous abyss between them and the morrow, and she gasped: "Tomorrow! And no chaperon! Oh, I'll jump out of the window."

Mallory could prevent that, but when she pleaded, "What shall we do?" he had no solution to offer. Again it was she who received the first inspiration.

"I have it," she beamed.

"Yes, Marjorie?" he assented, dubiously.

"We'll pretend not to be married at all."

He seized the rescuing ladder: "That's it! Not married—just friends."

"I'll we can get married—"

"Yes, and then we can stop being friends."

"My love—my friend!" They embraced in a most unfriendly manner.

An impatient yelp from the neglected dog-basket awoke them.

"Oh, Lord, we've brought Snoozle-ums!"

"Of course we have." She took the dog from the prison, tucked him under her arm, and tried to compose her bridal face into a merely friendly countenance before they entered the car. But she must pause for one more kiss, one more of those bitter-sweet good-byes. And Mallory was nothing loath.

Hudson and Shaw were still glumly perplexed, when the porter returned in his white jacket.

"I bet they missed the train; all this work for nothing," Hudson grumbled. But Shaw, seeing the porter, caught a gleam of hope, and asked anxiously:

"Say, porter, have you seen anything anywhere that looks like a freshly married pair?"

"Well," and the porter rubbed his eyes with the back of his hand as he chuckled, "well, they's a mighty lov-in' couple out thereh in the corridor."

"That them—they—"

Instantly everything was alive and in action. It was as if a bugle had shrilled in a dejected camp.

"Get ready!" Shaw commanded. "Here's rice for everybody."

"Everybody take an old shoe," said Hudson. "You can't miss in this narrow car."

"There's a kazoo for everyone, too," said Shaw, as the outstretched hands were equipped with wedding ammunition. "Do you know the 'Wedding March'?"

"I ought to by this time," said Mrs. Whitcomb.

Right into the tangle of preparation, old Ira Lathrop stalked, on his way back to his seat to get more cigars.

"Have some rice for the bridal couple?" said Ashton, offering him of his own double-handful.

But Lathrop brushed him aside with a romance-hater's growl.

"Watch out for your head, then," cried Hudson, and Lathrop ducked just too late to escape a neck-filling, hair-filling shower. An old shoe took him a clip aboit the ear, and the old woman-hater dropped raging into the same berth where the spinster, Anne Gattle, was trying to dodge the same downpour.

Still there was enough of the shrapnel left to overwhelm the two young "friends," who marched into the aisle, trying to look indifferent and prepared for nothing on earth less than for a wedding charivari.

Mallory should have done better than to entrust his plans to fellows like Hudson and Shaw, whom he had known at West Point for diabolically joyous hazers and practical jokers. Even as he sputtered rice and winced from the impact of flying footgear, he was cursing himself as a double-dyed idiot for asking such men to engage his berth for him. He had a sudden instinct that they had doubtless bedecked his trunk and Marjorie's with white satin furbelows and ludicrous labels. But he could not shelter himself from the white sleet and the black thumps. He could hardly shelter Marjorie, who cowered behind him and shrieked even louder than the romping tormentors.

When the assailants had exhausted the rice and shoes, they charged down the aisle for the privilege of kissing the bride. Mallory was dragged and bunted and shunted here and there, and he had to fight his way back to Marjorie with might and main. He was tugging and striking like a demon, and yelling, "Stop it! stop it!"

Hudson took his punishment with uproarious good nature, laughing:

"Oh, shut up, or we'll kiss you!"

But Shaw was scrubbing his wry lips with a seasick wail of:

"Wow! I think I kissed the dog."

There was, of necessity, some pause for breath, and the combatants draped themselves limply about the seats. Mallory glared at the twin Benedict Arnolds and demanded:

"Are you two things going to San Francisco with me?"

"Don't worry," smiled Hudson, "we're only going as far as Kedzie avenue, just to start the honeymoon properly."

If either of the elopers had been calmer, the solution of the problem would have been simple. Marjorie could get off at this suburban station and drive home from there. But their wits were like pied type, and they were further jumbled, when Shaw broke in with a sudden: "Come, see the little dove-cote we fixed for you."

Before they knew it, they were both haled along the aisle to the white satin atrocity. "Love in a bungalow," said Hudson. "Sit down—make yourselves perfectly at home."

"No—never—oh, oh, oh!" cried Marjorie, darting away and throwing herself into the first empty seat—Ira Lathrop's berth. Mallory followed to console her with caresses and murmurs of, "There's there, don't cry, dearie!"

Hudson and Shaw followed close with mawkish mockery: "Don't cry, dearie."

And now Mrs. Temple intervened. She had enjoyed the initiation ceremony as well as anyone. But when the little bride began to cry, she remembered the pitiful terror and the shame she had undergone as a girl-wife, and she hastened to Marjorie's side, brushing the men away like gnats.

"You poor thing," she comforted. "Come, my child, lean on me, and have a good cry."

Hudson grinned, and put out his own arms: "She can lean on me, if she'd rather."

Mrs. Temple glanced up with indignant rebuke: "Her mother is far away, and she wants a mother's breast to weep on. Here's mine, my dear."

The impudent Shaw tapped his own military chest: "She can use mine."

Infuriated at this bride-baiting, Mallory rose and confronted the two imps with clenched fists: "You're a pretty pair of friends, you are!"

The imperturable Shaw put out a pair of tickets as his only defense: "Here are your tickets, old boy."

And Hudson roared jovially: "We tried to get you a stateroom, but it was gone."

"And here are your baggage checks," laughed Shaw, forcing into his fists a few pasteboards. "We got your trunks on the train ahead, all right. Don't mention it—you're entirely welcome."

It was the porter that brought the first relief from the ordeal.

"If you gemmen is gettin' off at Kedzie avenue, you'd better step smart. We're slowin' up now."

Marjorie was sobbing too audibly to hear, and Mallory swearing too inaudibly to heed the opportunity Kedzie avenue offered. And Hudson was yelling: "Well, good-bye, old boy and old girl. Sorry we can't go all the way." He had the effrontery to try to kiss the bride good-bye, and Shaw was equally bold, but Mallory's fury enabled him to beat them off. He elbowed and shouldered them down the aisle, and sent after them one of his own shoes. But it just missed Shaw's flying coattails.

Mallory stood glaring after the departing traitors. He was glad that they at least were gone, till he realized with a sickening slump in his vitals, that they had not taken with them his awful dilemma. And now the train was once more ticketty-clicking into the night and the west.

CHAPTER X.

Excess Baggage.

Never was a young soldier so stumped by a problem in tactics as Lieutenant Harry Mallory, safely aboard his train, and not daring to leave it, yet hopelessly unaware of how he was to dispose of his lovely but unlabelled baggage.

Hudson and Shaw had erected a white satin temple to Hymen in berth number one, had created such commotion, and departed in such confusion, that there had been no opportunity to proclaim that he and Marjorie were "not married—just friends."

And now the passengers had accepted them as that enormous fund of amusement to any train, a newly wedded pair. To explain the mistake would have been difficult, even among friends. But among strangers—well, perhaps a wiser and a colder brain than Harry Mallory's could have stood there and delivered a brief oration restoring truth to her pedestal. But Mallory was in no condition for such a stoic delivery.

He mopped his brow in agony, lost in a blizzard of bewilderment. He drifted back toward Marjorie, half to protect and half for companionship. He found Mrs. Temple cuddling her close and mothering her as if she were a baby instead of a bride.

"Did the poor child run away and get married?"

Marjorie's frantic "Boo-hoo-hoo" might have meant anything. Mrs. Temple took it for assent, and murmured with glowing reminiscence:

"Just the way Doctor Temple and I did."

She could not see the leaping flash of wild hope that lighted up Mallory's face. She only heard his voice across her shoulder:

"Doctor? Doctor Temple? Is your husband a reverend doctor?"

"A reverend doctor!" the little old lady repeated weakly.

"Yes—a—a preacher?"

The poor old congregation-weary soul was abruptly confronted with the ruination of all the delight in her little escapade with her pulpit-fagged husband. If she had ever dreamed that the girl who was weeping in her arms was weeping from any other fright than the usual fright of young brides, fresh from the preacher's benediction, she would have cast every other consideration aside, and told the truth.

But her husband's last behest before he left her had been to keep their precious pretend-secret. She felt—just then—that a woman's first duty is to obey her husband. Besides, what business was it of this young husband's what her old husband's business was? Before she had fairly begun to debate her duty, almost automatically, with the instantaneous instinct of self-protection, her lips had uttered the denial:

"Oh—he's—just a—plain doctor. There he is now."

Mallory cast one miserable glance down the aisle at Dr. Temple coming back from the smoking room. As the old man paused to stare at the bridal berth, whose preparation he had not seen, he was just enough befuddled by his first cigar for thirty years to look a trifle tipsy. The motion of the train and the rakish tilt of his unwonted crimson tie confirmed the suspicion and annihilated Mallory's new-born hope, that perhaps repentant fate had dropped a parson at their very feet.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

The hardest thing a doctor has to do is to cure a woman who has nothing the matter with him.

Historic Blackguards

By ALBERT PAYSON TERHUNE

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Eric the Red, the Scoundrel Who May Have Caused America's Discovery

ERIC THE RED

A NORSE pirate — fiery of hair and temper; shaggy, gigantic, cruel—committed a murder that led indirectly to America's discovery. Here is the story:

Eric the Red was a Viking, chief of a band of sea robbers and all around ruffians, whom he held in check by a brutality even greater than their own. He was born in Norway about 950 A. D., and was the son of a Jarl, or Earl. In the intervals between his voyages of piracy he ruled a group of barren farms and fed at his table a throng of hard drinking, loud voiced Vikings, who had sworn allegiance to him.

Laws were few in that land, and age of violence. Human life was cheap. Yet Eric committed a murder so revolting as to shock even the hardened Norsemen. To save his own life he was forced to flee from the country.

With his followers he sailed to Iceland. There he established a new home. But his stay was brief. His bloodthirsty yearnings would not conform to any law, and in 984 he fled once more for his life, after a second murder.

Homeless, an outlaw, a price on his head, Eric the Red sought for headquarters far enough from civilization to make a safe abiding place for him. He and his men scoured the northern seas in their serpent-prowed galleys, until at last, after doubling Cape Farewell, they came upon a vast tract of ground covered with high green grass, on which thousands of reindeer were feeding. Here Eric landed and founded a city. He named the country "Greenland." Rumors of its whereabouts had come to him from another Viking.

Nor was Greenland the only strange country of which wandering Vikings had told Eric. These sea robbers in their restless journeys in search of plunder were often swept out of all known routes by storms. More than one survivor of such voyages had spoken of having sighted a great land far to the westward.

Eric was uncertain how long Greenland might prove a safe asylum for him, and he was ever eager to find new haunts for loot and pillage. So he decided to explore this strange westward country and establish a colony there. In the year 1000 A. D., or thereabouts, he bade his son Lief to join in the expedition.

Lief was wellnigh as fiery and brutal as his father, but he had many finer qualities as well. He was high in the service of King Olaf of Norway and was known as "The King's Guardsman." His constant good fortune had also won for him the nickname of "Lief the Lucky." Like the rest of King Olaf's court, he had embraced Christianity, forswearing the heathen Norse gods and forcing his followers to do the same. Eric was furious at his son's conversion. A fierce quarrel arose between the two, but their differences were at last patched up and they made ready for their joint voyage of discovery.

As the Vikings hastened down to the waiting ships Eric rode at their head. His horse, according to the story, stumbled and threw him just as they reached the water's edge. To Eric's superstitious mind this seemed an omen of disaster. He refused to go on the expedition and sent Lief as its commander. This filled the Vikings with joy, for they hated Eric and loved his gallant son.

After a long sail westward Lief came to a gloomy, cloud-wrapped country (probably Newfoundland) and sailed southward, looking for less forbidding shores. He found them. He is supposed to have landed somewhere along the southeastern New England coast. The place seemed a paradise to these men from the bleak north. The soil was rich and verdant. Wild grapes grew everywhere. Lief, because of the multitude of grapes, called the country "Vinland," or "Wineland."

Here he is supposed to have founded a colony before carrying back to Greenland the news of his wonderful discovery. Other Norse colonies are believed to have followed him to New England, but their fate and their very existence is shrouded in doubt.

Jonathan Wild, Founder of the "Thief Trust"

JONATHAN WILD was a thief who never stole, a business man with no legitimate business, a scoundrel who helped the law, and a man of the law who helped scoundrels. He was founder of one of the queerest monopoly on record—a "Thief Trust."

Wild was born in 1682. He was a Birmingham buckle-maker by trade and came to London as a young man to improve his fortune. A life of dissipation quickly landed him in prison for debt. There he stayed four years, becoming acquainted with almost every thief in London and gaining a strong influence over most of them. By the time he had scraped together enough money to buy his freedom he had already outlined his future career. He saw that crooks never really succeed in life. So he decided to stay "technically" honest, and to profit by others' crimes. Renting a low waterside tavern, he made friends with more outcasts and at last had a large enough following to take up the profession he had planned.

Calling to him a number of notorious thieves, Wild made them a little speech. He explained that the new laws had made life hard for robbers. Theft was not only a "hanging offense," but the receivers of stolen goods were so closely watched that they dared not do business. So he suggested an improvement on the old methods. Any one committing a theft was to come at once to Wild and tell all about it. Wild in turn was to get to the person robbed, and, on the latter's promise to ask no questions, was to offer to return the stolen articles—in payment of a substantial reward. This reward he would give to the thief in exchange for the plunder, keeping one-third of the money as his own commission.

It was a simple arrangement. The victim would get back his property by paying a certain sum; the thieves would make more money than by dealing with regular "receivers" or "fences." Wild, with no danger to himself, would reap a tidy commission on every robbery.

From the first his business prospered. He himself stole nothing, nor did he in any way come within reach of the law. A house, for instance, would be robbed of $2,000 worth of valuables. Wild would go to the owner and tell him that for $500 he would find the lost goods. The money was paid and the goods were returned. Wild clearing $200 on the deal. The work was profitable to him and to the thieves alike. By the world at large he was regarded as a shrewd detective, who was singularly fortunate in tracing lost property. Most people were glad enough to get back their belongings without insisting on the thief's arrest. Wild grew rich, bought a big house and was highly respected. He even added smuggling as a "side line" to his business.

He managed to get thieves wholly in his power by hunting up evidence which (should he place it in the hands of the law) would hang them. By holding this threat over their heads, Wild made the great army of crooks give him slavish obedience and deal exclusively with him. It was a regular "Trust." Once in awhile some stubborn rogue would disobey an order or would refuse to dispose of his booty through the trust's agency. Then Wild, as a reputable citizen, would lay his evidence before the police and would help personally in the capture. Sometimes these arrested slaves of his would turn on him. His body, in fact, was covered with wounds, and in one tussle his skull was fractured. But these cases of rebellion were uncommon.

Robbery throve as never before. At last parliament was forced to pass a law making it a felony for any one to take money on pretense of restoring stolen goods unless he should also produce the thief. Wild was rich enough to have retired, but the spirit of graft was too strong for him. Hitherto he had been on the right side of the law. Now he found himself on the wrong side of it. He continued to wring thieves' ill-earned money from them and to betray such as failed to follow his orders. At last, in 1725, he was arrested, tried, convicted and sentenced to be hanged.

As the hangman's cart bore him to Tyburn (London's place of execution) the crowd mobbed him, yelling "Judas!" and cursing the trembling old rascal, leaving little work for the executioner to do when the cart at last reached Tyburn.

A HIDDEN DANGER

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When the kidneys fail, uric acid causes rheumatic attacks, headache, dizziness, gravel, urinary troubles, weak eyes, dropsy or heart disease.

Doan's Kidney Pills help the kidneys fight off uric acid—bringing new strength to weak kidneys and relief from backache and urinary ills.

A Missouri Case

Mrs. H. J. Linsday, 202 Madison St., St. Charles, Mo. says: "I was miserable from backache, pains in my head, dizziness and a sensitiveness in the small of my back. My ordinary housework was a burden. Doan's Kidney Pills corrected these troubles and removed annoyances caused by the kidney secretions. I have much to thank Doan's Kidney Pills for."

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Have Faith in the People.

Let us believe in the great mass of the people—not because they are intellectually clever, not because they are independent thinkers, but because in the long run the safest and sanest safeguards of national character are to be found not in the mental attitude of the few, but in the sound, sane feeling laid down in the fundamental character of the great mass of the nation.—Prof. George E. Vincent.

Almost an Atheist.

Byles—Did you ever come across a more conceited fellow than Bulger? They say he is an atheist, and I believe he is.

Bonter—I wouldn't like to go as far as that; but I do know that he doesn't recognize the existence of a superior being.

Sufficient unto the day is the night that cometh after.

YOU CAN CURE CATARRH

By using Cole's Carbolsalve. It is a most effective remedy. All druggists, 25 and 50c. Adv.

Bad Practice.

Fresh Boarder—Mrs. Simpkins, you would never get employment in a street railway office.

Landlady—Why not?

Fresh Boarder—You exhibit too strong a tendency to cut down the fare.

What She Said.

"How well you look!"

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, indeed. I do. I never saw you looking better in my life."

"I'm so glad to hear you say so. I hope you mean it."

"I really do. Only the other night I was saying to my husband that there are a lot of women I know who aren't half so old as you that don't look nearly so young."—Detroit Free Press.

Different.

Albert J. Beveridge said in Chicago of a corrupt boss:

"He's very virtuous—oh, very virtuous.

"A millionaire once went to him and said:

"'I want to get to the senate. Will you sell me your support?'

"'No, sir!' the boss answered, striking himself upon the chest. 'No, sir! I'm a free-born American citizen and I'll sell my support to no man.'

"'But,' said the millionaire, blandly, as he drew out his checkbook and fountain pen, 'but, if you won't sell me your support, perhaps you'll rent it to me for the term of this campaign?'

"'Now you're talking,' said the boss in a mollified tone."

CASH FOR EXPORT.

Mr. Goets Coyne—Lord De Broke, your new son-in-law, hasn't much of a head for business.

Mr. Dustin Stair—You wouldn't say that if you knew the bargain he drove with me.

CAREFUL DOCTOR

Prescribed Change of Food Instead of Drugs.

It takes considerable courage for a doctor to deliberately prescribe only food for a despairing patient, instead of resorting to the usual list of medicines.

There are some truly scientific physicians among the present generation who recognize and treat conditions as they are and should be treated, regardless of the value to their pockets. Here's an instance:

"Four years ago I was taken with severe gastritis and nothing would stay on my stomach, so that I was on the verge of starvation.

"I heard of a doctor who had a summer cottage near me—a specialist from N. Y.—and as a last hope, sent for him.

"After he examined me carefully he advised me to try a small quantity of Grape-Nuts at first, then as my stomach became stronger to eat more.

"I kept at it and gradually got so I could eat and digest three teaspoonfuls. Then I began to have color in my face, memory became clear, where before everything seemed a blank. My limbs got stronger and I could walk. So I steadily recovered.

"Now after a year on Grape-Nuts I weigh 153 lbs. My people were surprised at the way I grew fleshy and strong on this food." Name given by Postum Co., Battle Creek, Mich. Read the little book, "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs.

"There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest. Adv.