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RENSSELAER, INDIANA

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 railroad station. They are picked up by a passenger. Porter has a lively time with an Englishman and Ira Lathrop, a Yankee business man.

CHAPTER II. (Continued.)

He resigned himself to the despot, and began to transfer his burdens to the seat. But he did nothing to the satisfaction of the Englishman. Everything must be placed otherwise; the catch-all here, the portmanteau there, the Gladstone there, the golfsticks there, the greatcoat there, the raincoat there. The porter was puffing like a donkey-engine, and mutiny was growing in his heart. His last commission was the hanging up of the bowler hat.

He stood on the arm of the seat to reach the high hook. From here he paused to glare down with an attempt at irony.

"Is there anything else?"

"No. You may get down."

The magnificent patronage of this witted the porter completely. He returned to the lower level, and shuffled along the aisle in a trance. He was quickly recalled by a sharp:

"Pawtah!"

"Yassah!"

"What time does this bally train start?"

"Ten-thutty, sah."

"But it's only ten now."

"Yassah. It'll be ten-thutty a little later."

"Do you mean to tell me that I've got to sit hyah for half an hour—just waitin'?"

The porter essayed another bit of irony:

"Well," he drawled, "I might tell the conducta you're ready. And maybe he'd start the train. But the timetable says ten-thutty."

He watched the effect of his satire, but it fell back unheeded from the granite dome of the Englishman, whose only comment was:

"Oh, never mind. I'll wait."

The porter cast his eyes up in despair, and turned away, once more to be recalled.

"Oh, pawtah!"

"Yassah!"

"I think we'll put on my slippahs."

"Will we?"

"You might hand me that large bag. No, stupid, the othah one. You might open it. No, it's in the othah one. Ah, that's it. You may set it down."

Mr. Wedgewood brought forth a soft cap and a pair of red slippers. The porter made another effort to escape, his thoughts as black as his face. Again the relentless recall:

"Oh, pawtah, I think we'll unbutton my boots."

He was too weak to murmur "Yassah." He simply fell on one knee and got to work.

There was a witness to his helpless rage—a newcomer, the American counterpart of the Englishman in all that makes travel difficult for the fellow travelers. Ira Lathrop was zealous to resent anything short of perfection, quick and loud of complaint, apparently impossible to please.

In everything else he was the opposite of the Englishman. He was burly, middle-aged, rough, careless in attire, careless of speech—as uncouth and savage as one can well be who is plainly a man of means.

It was not enough that a freeborn Afro-American should be caught kneeling to an Englishman. But when he had escaped this penance, and advanced hospitably to the newcomer, he must be greeted with a snarl.

"Say, are you the porter of this car, or that man's nurse?"

"I can't tell yet. What's your number, please?"

The answer was the ticket.

"Numba se'm. Heh she is, boss."

"Right next to a lot of women, I'll bet. Couldn't you put me in the men's end of the car?"

"Not very well, sah. I reckon the car is done sold out."

With a growl of rage, Ira Lathrop slammed into the seat his entire hand baggage, one ancient and rusty valise. The porter gazed upon him with increased depression. The passenger list had opened inauspiciously with two of the worst types of travelers the Anglo-Saxon race has developed.

But their anger was not their worst trait in the porter's eyes. He was, in a limited way, an expert in human character.

When you meet a stranger you reveal your own character in what you ask about him. With some, the first question is, "Who are his people?" With others, "What has he achieved?" With others, "How much is he worth?" Each gauges his cordiality according to his estimate.

The porter was not curious on any

of these points. He showed a democratic indifference to them. His one vital inquiry was:

"How much will he tip?"

His inspection of his first two charges promised small returns. He buttoned up his cordiality, and determined to waste upon them the irreducible minimum of attention.

It would take at least a bridal couple to restore the balance. But bridal couples in their first bloom rarely fell to the lot of that porter, for what bridal couple wants to lock itself in with a crowd of passengers for the first seventy-two hours of wedded bliss?

The porter banished the hope as a vanity. Little he knew how eagerly the young castaways from that wrecked taxicab desired to be a bridal couple, and to catch this train.

But the Englishman was restive again:

"Pawtah! I say, pawtah!"

"Yassah!"

"What time are we due in San Francisco?"

"San Francisco? San Francisco? We are doo that the evenin' of the fo'th day. This bein' Monday, that ought to bring us in about Thuzzday evenin'."

The Yankee felt called upon to check the foreign usurper.

"Porrtor!"

"Yassah!"

"Don't let that fellow monopolize you. He probably won't tip you at all."

The porter grew confidential:

"Oh, I know his kind, sah. They don't tip you for what you do, but they're ready letter writers to the Superintendent for what you don't do."

"Pawtah! I say, pawtah!"

"Here, porrtor."

The porter tried to imitate the Irish bird, and babbled in two places at once. The American had a coin in his hand. The porter caught the gleam of it, and flitted thither. The Yankee growled:

"Don't forget that I'm on the train, and when we get to 'Frisco there may be something more."

The porter had the coin in his hand. Its heft was light. He sighed: "I hope so."

The Englishman was craning his head around owlishly to ask:

"I say, pawtah, does this train ever get wrecked?"

"Well, it hasn't yet," and he murmured to the Yankee, "but I have hopes."

The Englishman's voice was querulous again.

"I say, pawtah, open a window, will you? The air is ghastly, abso-rippingly ghastly."

The Yankee growled:

"No wonder we had the Revolution ary war!"

Then he took from his pocket an envelope addressed to Ira Lathrop & Co., and from the envelope he took a contract, and studied it grimly. The envelope bore Chinese stamp.

The porter, as he struggled with an obstinate window, wondered what sort of passenger fate would send him next.

CHAPTER III.

In Darkest Chicago.

The castaways from the wrecked taxicab hurried along the doleful street. Both of them knew their Chicago, but this part of it was not their Chicago.

They hailed a pedestrian, to ask where the nearest street car line might be, and whither it might run. He answered indistinctly from a discreet distance, as he hastened away. Perhaps he thought their question merely a footpad's introduction to a sandbagging episode. In Chicago at night one never knows.

"As near as I can make out what he said, Marjorie," the lieutenant pondered aloud, "we walk straight ahead till we come to Umptyump street, and there we find a Kararo car that will take us to Blopybiop avenue. I never heard of any such streets, did you?"

"Never," she panted, as she jog-trotted alongside his military pace. "Let's take the first car we meet, and perhaps the conductor can put us off at the street where the minister lives."

"Perhaps." There was not much confidence in that "perhaps."

When they reached the street-carred street, they found two tracks, but nothing occupying them, as far as they could peer either way. A small shopkeeper in a tiny shop proved to be a delicatessen merchant so busily selling foreign horrors to aliens, that they learned nothing from him.

At length, in the far-away, they made out a headlight, and heard the grind and squeal of a car. Lieutenant Mallory waited for it, watch in hand. He boosted Marjorie's elbow aboard and bombarded the conductor with questions. But the conductor had no more heard of their street than they had of his. Their agitation did not disturb his stoic calm, but he invited them to come along to the next crossing, where they could find another car and more learned conductors; or, what promised better, perhaps a cab.

He threw Marjorie into a panic by ordering her to get into Snootzooomus, but the lieutenant bought his soul for a small price, and overlooked the fact that he did not ring up their fares.

The young couple squeezed into a seat, and talked anxiously in sharp whispers.

"Wouldn't it be terrible, Harry, if, just as we got to the minister's, we should find papa there ahead of us, waiting to forbid the bands, or whatever it is? Wouldn't it be just terrible?"

"Yes, it would, honey, but it doesn't seem probable. There are thousands of ministers in Chicago. He could never find ours. Fact is, I

doubt if we find him ourselves."

Her clutch tightened till he would have winced, if he had not been a soldier.

"What do you mean, Harry?"

"Well, in the first place, honey, look what time it is. Hardly more than time to get the train, to say nothing of hunting for that preacher and standing up through a long rigmarole."

"Why, Harry Mallory, are you getting ready to jilt me?"

"Indeed I'm not—not for worlds honey, but I've got to get that train; haven't I?"

"Couldn't you wait over one train—just one tiny little train?"

"My own, own honey love, you know it's impossible! You must remember that I've already waited over three trains while you tried to make up your mind."

"And you must remember, darling, that it's not an easy matter for a girl to decide to sneak away from home and be married secretly, and go all the way out to that hideous Manila with no trousseau and no wedding presents or no anything."

"I know it isn't, and I waited patiently while you got up the courage. But now there are no more trains. I shudder to think of this train being late. We're not due in San Francisco till Thursday evening, and my transport sails at sunrise Friday morning. Oh, Lord, what if I should miss that transport! What if I should!"

"What if we should miss the minister?"

"It begins to look a great deal like it."

"But, Harry, you wouldn't desert me now—abandon me to my fate?"

"Well, it isn't exactly like abandonment, seeing that you could go home to your father and mother in a taxicab."

She stared at him in horror.

"So you don't want me for your wife! You've changed your mind! You're tired of me already! Only an hour together, and you're sick of your bargain! You're anxious to get rid of me! You—"

"Oh, honey, I want you more than anything else on earth, but I'm a soldier, dearie, a mere lieutenant in the regular army, and I'm the slave of the government. I've gone through West Point, and they won't let me resign respectfully and if I did, we'd starve. They wouldn't accept my resignation, but they'd be willing to court-martial me and dismiss me from the service in disgrace. Then you wouldn't want to marry me—and I shouldn't have any way of supporting you if you did. I only know one trade, and that's soldiering."

"Don't call it a trade, beloved, it's the noblest profession in all the world, and you're the noblest soldier that ever was, and in a year or two you'll be the biggest general in the army."

He could not afford to shatter such a devout illusion or quench the light of faith in those beloved and loving eyes. He tacitly admitted his ability

to do his duty.

When she was 50 feet from the pier she dropped her paddle, and in trying to recover it upset the canoe. The next instant the dog had plunged off the pier and was swimming swiftly toward her. As she came up the second time, the animal fastened his teeth in her clothes and in a few moments had her safely on shore.

The dog no longer is homeless.

Dwellers in the vicinity of Mester-macher's home, who in hot weather sleep on their porches, have been visited by the chamois in the morning. He has all the impudence and curiosity of the common goat and is attracted to make his jumps by anything that may excite his interest. In this way he has jumped on every roof that has attracted him save that of Christian Brothers' college, which is some distance away.

Those who have seen him perform are sure that he can leap to the roof of the Third National bank building if he cared to do so, and say that the only jump he has not taken is into a second-story window. They would not be surprised to see him do this at any time.

When the chamois gets going across the back yards he takes fences in his stride and hits the ground but once in each yard. He hurdles coal sheds and stables as if they were a foot

high. He is a wise old goat and takes life easy, except when molested by children, who love to see him perform. He is very fond of salt and will jump anywhere to get it.

He is immense in size, being about three feet six inches at the shoulders, and looks more like an antelope than a goat.

After writing this note Felix Oury, a traveling salesman from Cincinnati, committed suicide by inhaling gas in a hotel at 205 South Halsted street. His body was found by Louis Glick, another roomer. Letters showed Oury lived at 228 South Atkinson street, Cincinnati. He came to Chicago five days ago.

Chicago.—"To My Wife: Here is

\$2 out of the money I have left. I don't

want to live longer without money,

so good-bye. I hate to do it, but I

cannot bear to live longer under these conditions.—Felix."

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