

## EXCUSE ME!

Novelized from the Comedy of the Same Name

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

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### SYNOPSIS.

Lieutenant Harry Mallory is ordered to the Philippines. He and Marjorie Newton decide to slope, 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 Tom Lippert, a Yankee businessman. The slopers have an exciting time getting to the train. "Little Jimmie" Wellington, bound for Reno to get a divorce, boards train in mauldin condition. Later Mrs. Jimmie appears. She is also bound for Reno with same object. Likewise Mrs. Sue and Whitcomb. Porter comes to Jimmie for her marital troubles. Classmates of Mallory decorate bridal berth.

### CHAPTER VI.—(Continued).

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-widye. 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 Tuesdays 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 hesitation 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 sober. "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:

"Excuse 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 ask 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 mighty refreshin' to have a bridal couple on bode! This dog-on Reno train don't carry nothin' much but divorcees. I'm just natchally hungry for a bridal couple."

"Brile coup-hicle!" 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 unstan' somebody say you're preparing for brile coup!?"

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 absolutely splendid—greatest inventiveness in 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



Mrs. Walter Temple.

must have given them a good laugh, or a good cry—according to their natures.

There were Mallory and Marjorie, still merely engaged, bitterly regretting their inability to get married and 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 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 prop.

"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-face 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 repetition.

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.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

Honor Utterer of Epigrams.

The Japanese are great admirers of epigrams and apt phrases. Their love of such things is carried so far that when a guest says something unusually brilliant the host or hostess will beg him to write down his remark in large ornamental script. The sentence is then mounted and hung on the wall as a permanent addition to its ornaments, much as we might hang up a text or motto. Naturally the author of a bon mot treated in this way feels himself highly honored to be thus placed on record. But the sentences are selected more for their wisdom than their humor; so that the funny man is not much in evidence.

Was 102 and Didn't Know It.

John Wilson, a naval pensioner who has 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.

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## SPITBALL ARTISTS ATTRACT ATTENTION



Jimmy Lavender of Chicago Cubs.

Chief interest in the National league pennant chase no longer centers about the hurling achievements of Richard Le Marquis, alias Rube Marquard. How the wry-necked, tall and rangy southpaw of the New York Giants carved his niche in the pitching hall of fame by winning 19 straight has been jotted down on history's page, three successive beatings following the establishment of that high-water mark.

Other truly greats have risen to take prominent places in the headline section, notably Larry Cheney, Jimmy Lavender and Marty O'Toole past-masters in the art of spitball pitching. A few years ago the classy exponents of this sort of twirling could be counted on the fingers of one hand. In fact, John J. McGraw, maker of champions, contends there have been only three real spitball marvels—Jack Chesbro, Ed Walsh and Russell Ford. Two other veteran field generals, likewise makers of champions, Frank Chance and Fred Clarke take issue with McGraw on this point.

The Cub leader would add the names of Lavender and Cheney, his present-day slab phenoms, to those of Walsh, Chesbro and Ford. Down Pittsburgh way Clarke hails his \$22,500 find, the sorrel-topped O'Toole, as the one best bet of all time. Spitball heavies are bobbing up with startling regularity and setting a lively pace for the curving wizards who do only upon the ancient and honored round-house delivery, and another season or two will probably find the moistened delivery in general use on all clubs.

McGraw is using Devore in the outfield again.

Buy your world's series tickets early if you're interested.

Ted Easterly certainly is going great guns for the White Sox.

Williams, the Notre Dame youngster, is making good in the Cub outfield.

Hendrix of the Pirates is not only pitching good ball, but he is hitting right along with it.

Jeff Tesreau's first name isn't Jeff.

It's Charles; but that doesn't make any difference in his pitching.

New Yorkers say the attendance at the Polo grounds this season has averaged about 10,000. Not so bad.

Pitcher Walker, a Washington semi-pro player, has been turned loose by the Naps. He couldn't stand the pace.

The Chicago Americans will give Pitcher Harry Smith of the Lincoln Western league club a tryout next spring.