



The Prodigal Husband

this?" His wife suddenly began fanning herself, searching for breath.

"*This* is my husband!" cried Edith, triumph in her voice, tears in her eyes, as she faced the astonished observers. "Now, what have you to say?"

It was a perfectly natural but not an especially obvious question. The little manager threw up his hands and cried out in a sad mixture of French, English and Helvetian, —

"What? Another husband? Madam, how many more do you propose to inflict us with? We cannot allow it! The management will not permit you to change husbands the instant a new guest arrives in the house. It is not to be heard of — no, no!"

"Are you afraid that the books won't balance?" asked Brock with a joyous grin, a great load off his heart. "Ladies and gentlemen, permit me to introduce Mr. Roxbury Medcroft, my friend and fellow conspirator. He is the husband of this lady, not I. I am to be the husband of *this* lady, thank God."

There was a moment of absolute silence — it may have been stupor. The two audiences faced each other with emotions widely at variance. It was Mrs. Rodney who spoke first.

"Is this true, Edith?" she quavered.

"Yes, yes, yes!" cried Edith, her eyes dancing.

"Then, what are you doing here with a man who is n't your husband?" demanded Mrs. Rodney, suddenly aflame.

"I can explain everything to you later on, Mrs. Rodney," interposed Mrs. Odell-Carney calmly. She had divined at least a portion of the truth, and she was clever enough to put herself on the right side. Edith cast an involuntary