

# EXCUSE ME!

## RUPERT HUGHES

NOVELIZED FROM THE COMEDY OF THE SAME NAME.

ILLUSTRATED FROM PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE PLAY AS PRODUCED BY HENRY W. SAVAGE.

(Continued from Last Week)

"Well, if such a woman asks for Mrs. Fosdick—she's my husband's first wife—but of course that doesn't interest you."  
"No—yes'm."  
"If she comes—tell her—tell her—oh, what shall we tell her?"  
The porter rubbed his thick skull: "Lemme see—we might say you—I tell you what we'll tell her: we'll tell her you took the train for New York; and if she runs mighty fast she can just about catch it."  
"Fine, fine." And she rewarded his genius with another coin. "And, porter," he had not budged. "Porter, if a very handsome man with luscious eyes and a soulful smile asks for me."  
"I'll throw him off the train!"  
"Oh, no—no!—that's my husband—my present husband. You may let him in. Now is it all perfectly clear, porter?"  
"Oh, yassum, clear as clear." Thus guaranteed she entered the stateroom, leaving the porter alone with his problem. He tried to work it out in a semiaudible mumble: "Lemme see! If your present husband's absent wife gets on board disguised as a handsome hideous woman I'm to throw him—her—off the train and let her—him—come in—oh, yassum, you may rely on me." He bowed and held out his hand. But she was gone. He shut himself on into the car.

He had hardly left the little space before the stateroom when a handsome man with luscious eyes, but without any smile at all, came slinking along the corridor and tapped cautiously on the door. Silence alone answered him at first, then when he had rapped again, he heard a muffled:  
"Go away, I'm not in."  
He put his lips close and softly called: "Edith!"  
At this Sesame the door opened a trifle, but when he tried to enter, a hand thrust him back and a voice again warned him off. "You mustn't come in."  
"But I'm your husband."  
"That's just why you mustn't come in." The door opened a little wider to give him a view of a down-cast beauty meaning:  
"Oh, Arthur, I'm so afraid."  
"Afraid?" he sniffed. "With your husband here?"  
"That's the trouble, Arthur. What if your former wife should find us together?"  
"But she and I are divorced."  
"In some states, yes—but other states don't acknowledge the divorce. That former wife of yours is a fiend to pursue us this way."  
"She's no worse than your former husband. He's pursuing us, too. My divorce was as good as yours, my dear."  
"Yes, and no better."  
The angels looking on might have judged from the ready tempers of the newly married and not entirely unmarried twain that their new alliance promised to be as exciting as their previous estates. Perhaps the man subtly felt the presence of those eternal eavesdroppers, for he tried to end the love-duel in the corridor with an appealing caress and a tender appeal: "But let's not start our honeymoon with a quarrel."  
His partial wife returned the caress and tried to explain: "I'm not quarreling with you, dear heart, but with the horrid divorce laws. Why, oh, why did we ever interfere with them?"

He made a brave effort with: "We ended two unhappy marriages, Edith, to make one happy one."  
"But I'm so unhappy, Arthur, and so afraid."  
He seemed a trifle afraid himself and his gaze was askance as he urged: "But the train will start soon, Edith—and then we shall be safe."  
Mrs. Fosdick had a genius for inventing unpleasant possibilities. "But what if your former wife or my former husband should have a detective on board?"  
"A detective?—poof!" He snapped his fingers in bravado. "You are with your husband, aren't you?"  
"In Illinois, yes," she admitted, very dolefully. "But when we come to Iowa, I'm a bigamist, and when we come to Nebraska, you're a bigamist, and when we come to Wyoming, we're not married at all."  
It was certainly a tangled web they had woven, but a ray of light shot through it into his bewildered soul. "But we're all right in Utah, come, dearest."  
He took her by the elbow to escort her into their sanctuary, but still she hung back.

"On one condition, Arthur—that you leave me as soon as we cross the Iowa state line, and not come back till we get to Utah. Remember, the Iowa state line!"  
"Oh, all right," he smiled. And seeing the porter, beckoned him close and asked with careless indifference: "Oh, porter, what time do we reach the Iowa state line?"  
"Two fifty-five in the morning, sah."  
"Two fifty-five a. m.," the wretch exclaimed.  
"Two fifty-five a. m., yassah," the porter repeated, and wondered why this excerpt from the timetable should exert such a dramatic effect on the luscious-eyed Fosdick.

He had small time to meditate the puzzle, for the train was about to be launched upon its long voyage. He

went out to the platform, and watched a couple making that way. As their only luggage was a dog-basket he supposed that they were simply come to bid some of his passengers good-bye. No tips were to be expected from such transients, so he allowed them to bid themselves up the steps.

Mallory and his Marjorie had tried to kiss the farewell or farewells half a dozen times, but she could not let him go at the gate. She asked the guard to let her through, and her beauty was brave enough.  
Again and again, she and Mallory paused. He wanted to take her back to the taxicab, but she would not be so dismissed. She must spend the last available second with him.  
"I'll go as far as the steps of the car," he said. When they were arrived there, two porters, a sleeping car conductor and several smoking saunterers profaned the trust. So she whispered that she would come aboard, for the corridor would be a quiet lane for the last rites.  
And now that he had her actually on the train, Mallory's whole soul revolted against letting her go. The vision of her standing on the platform sad-eyed and lorn, while the train swept him off into space was unendurable. He shut his eyes against it, but it glowed inside the lids.

And then temptation whispered him its old "Why not?" While it was working in his soul like a fermenting yeast, he was saying:  
"To think that we should owe all our misfortune to an infernal taxicab's break-down."  
Out of the anguish of her loneliness crept one little complaint:  
"If you had really wanted me, you'd have had two taxicabs."  
"Oh, how can you say that? I had the license bought and the minister waiting."  
"He's waiting yet."  
"And the ring—there's the ring." He fished it out of his waistcoat pocket and held it before her as a golden amulet.

"A lot of good it does now," said Marjorie. "You won't even wait over till the next train."  
"I've told you a thousand times, my love," he protested, desperately. "If I don't catch the transport, I'll be court-martialed. If this train is late, I'm



Rev. Walter Temple.

lost. If you really loved me you'd come along with me."  
Her very eyes gaped at this astounding proposal.  
"Why, Harry Mallory, you know it's impossible."  
Like a sort of benevolent Satan, he laid the ground for his abduction: "You'll leave me, then, to spend three years without you—out among those Manilla women?"  
She shook her head in terror at this vision. "It would be too horrible for words to have you marry one of those mahogany sirens."  
He held out the apple. "Better come along, then."  
"But how can I? We're not married."  
He answered airily: "Oh, I'm sure there's a minister on board."  
"But it would be too awful to be married with all the passengers gawking. No, I couldn't face it. Good-bye, honey."  
She turned away, but he caught her arm: "Don't you love me?"  
"To distraction. I'll wait for you, too."  
"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 Snoozleums!"  
"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:

"All Aboard!"  
The starting of the train surprised the frontal decorators in the last stages of their work. They smiled died out in a sudden shame, as it came over them that the joke had receded 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 when they were discovered ambushes, and how to avoid them. Could Mallory have escaped the pit they had dug for him? They looked at their handiwork in disgust. The coarser effect of white ribbons and orange flowers, gracefully masking the concealed rice-trap, had seemed the wisest thing ever devised. Now it looked the silliest.

The other passengers were equally downcast. Meanwhile the two lovers in the corridor were kissing good-byes 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. He was about to reach forward and tap Mallory's arm, and stutter:  
"Scuse me, but co-could I git 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 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 wavered 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 dumfounded pair, and went to change his blouse for the white coat of his chambermaidly 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 said so," Marjorie assented meekly; "then, so limely, '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 tomorrow."  
Marjorie realized at once the enormous abyss between then 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."  
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And there, entwined in each other's arms, with lips wedged and eyelids clinched, they clung together, forgetting everything past, future or present. Love's anguish made them blind, mute and deaf.

They did not hear the conductor crying his "All Aboard!" down the long wall of the train. They did not hear the far-off knell of the bell. They did not hear the porters banging the vestibules shut. They did not feel the floor sliding out with them.

Aid so the porter found them, engulfed in one embrace, swaying and swaying, and no more aware of the increasing rush of the train than were other passengers on the earth-express are aware of its speed through the ether-routes on its ancient schedule.

The porter stood with his box-step in his hand, and blinked and wondered. And they did not even know they were observed.

CHAPTER IX.  
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CHAPTER X.  
Excess Baggage.  
Never was a younger 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 unshelved baggage.

Hudson and Shaw had erected a white satin temple to Hyman 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 had been difficult, even among friends, but among strangers—well, perhaps a wiser and 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 that.

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 "Hoo-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 preacher."  
The poor old congregation-weary soul was abruptly confronted with the ruination of all the delight in her little escapade with her pupil-tagged husband. If she had ever dreamed that the girl who was weeping in her arms was weeping for any other reason 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 pretense 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.

He sank into the seat opposite Marjorie, who gave him one terrified glance, and burst into fresh sobbing:  
"Oh—oh—hoo-hoo—I'm so unhappy—hap—py."  
Perhaps Mrs. Temple was a little miffed at the couple that had led her astray and opened her own honeymoon with a wanton fib. In any case, the best consolation she could offer Marjorie was a perfunctory pat, and a cynicism:  
"There, dear! You don't know what real unhappiness is yet. Wait till you've been married a while."  
And then she noted a startling lack of completeness in the bride's hand.  
"Why—my dear!—where's your wedding ring?"  
With what he considered great presence of mind, Mallory explained: "It—slipped off—I—I picked it up. I have it here." And he took the little gold band from his waistcoat and tried to jam it on Marjorie's right thumb.  
"Not on the thumb!" Mrs. Temple cried. "Don't you know?"  
"You see, it's my first marriage."  
"You poor boy—this finger!" And Mrs. Temple, raising Marjorie's limp hand, selected the proper digit, and held it forward, while Mallory pressed the fatal circlet home.

And then Mrs. Temple, having completed their installation as man and wife, utterly unforgotten their confusion by her final effort at comfort: "Well, my dears, I'll go back to my seat, and leave you alone with your dear husband."  
"My dear what?" Marjorie mumbled, faintly, and began to sniffle again. Whereupon Mrs. Temple resigned her to Mallory, and consigned her to fate with a consoling platitude:  
"Cheer up, my dear, you'll be all right in the morning."  
Marjorie and Mallory's eyes met in one wild clash, and then both stared into the window, and did not notice that the shades were down.

CHAPTER XI.  
A Chance Encounter.  
While Mrs. Temple was consoing her husband that the agitated couple in the next seat had just come from a wedding-factory, and had got on while he was lost in tobacco land, the people in the seat on the other side of them were engaged in a little drama of their own.

Ira Lathrop, known to all who knew him as a woman-bating snapping-trute, was so busily engaged trying to drag the farthest invading rice grana out of the back of his neck, that he was late in realizing his whereabouts. When he raked his head, he found that he had crowded into a seat with an uncomfortable looking woman, who crowded against the window with old-maidly timidity.

He felt some apology to be necessary, and he snarled: "Disagreeing things, these weddings!" After he heard this, it did not sound entirely felicitous, so he grudgingly ventured: "Excuse me—you married?"  
She denied the soft impeachment so heartily that he softened a little: "You're a sensible woman. I guess you and I are the only sensible people on this train."  
"It seems—so," she giggled. It was the first time her splendorship had been taken as material for a compliment. Something in the girlish giggle and the strangely young smile that swept twenty years from her face and belled the silver lines in close hair, seemed to catch the old bachelor's attention. He stared at her so fiercely that she looked about for a way to escape. Then a curiously anxious, almost a hungry, look softened his leonine jaws into a boyish eagerness, and his growl became a sort of gruff purr:  
"Say, you look something like an old sweetheart—friend-of mine. Were you ever in Brattleboro, Vt.?"  
A flush warmed her cheek, and a sense of humor warmed her prim speech, as she confessed:  
"I came from there originally."  
"So did I," said Ira Lathrop, leaning closer, and beaming like a big sun: "I don't suppose you remember Ira Lathrop?"  
The old maid stared at the bachelor as if she were trying to see the boy she had known, through the mask that time had modeled on his face. And then she was a girl again, and her voice chimed as she cried:  
"Why, Ira!—Mr. Lathrop—is it you?"

She gave him her hand—both her hands, and he smothered them in one big paw and laid the other on her extra warmth, as he nodded his savage head and roared as gentle as a sucking dove:  
"Well, well! Annie—Anne—Miss Gattie! What do you think of that?"  
They gossiped across the chasm of years about people and things, and knew nothing of the excitement so close to them, saw nothing of Chicago slipping back into the distance, with many lights shooting across the windows like hurled torches.

Suddenly a twinge of ancient jealousy shot through the man's heart, recurring to old emotions.  
"So you're not married, Annie. Whatever became of that fellow who used to hang round you all the time?"  
"Charlie Selby?" She blushed at the name, and thrived at the luxury of the meeting jealousy. "Oh, he entered the church. He's a minister out in Ogden, Utah."  
"I always knew he'd never amount to much," was Lathrop's epitaph on his old rival. Then he started with a new twinge: "You bound for Ogden, too?"  
"Oh, no," she smiled, enraptured at the new sensation of making a man anxious, and understanding all in a flash the motives that make coquettes. Then she told him her destination.  
"I'm on my way to China."  
"China!" he exclaimed. "So'm I!"  
She stared at him with a new thought, and gasped: "Oh, Ira—a new you a missionary, too?"  
"Missionary? Hell, no!" he roared. "Excuse me—I'm an importer—Annie, I—I—"

But the sonorous swear reverberated in their ears like a smitten bell, and he blushed for it, but could not recall it.

CHAPTER XII.  
The Needle in the Haystack.  
The almost-married couple sat lorn, in mutual terror and a common paralysis of ingenuity. Marjorie, for lack of anything better to do, was absent-mindedly twisting Snoozleums's ears, while he, that pocket abridgment of a dog, in a well meaning effort to divert her from her evident grief, made a great pretense of ferocity, growling and threatening to bite her fingers off. The new ring attracted his special jealousy. He was growing discouraged at the ill-success of his impersonation of a wolf, and dejected at being so crassly ignored, when he suddenly became, in his turn, a center of interest.

Marjorie was awakened from her trance of inattention by the porter's voice. His plantation voice was ordinarily as thick and sweet as his own New Orleans sorghum, but now it had a bitterness that curdled the blood: "Scuse me, but how did you all get that thesh dog in this heah cah?"  
"Snoozleums is always with me," said Marjorie briskly, as if that settled it, and turned for confirmation to the dog himself, "aren't you, Snoozleums?"  
"Well," the porter drawled, trying to be gracious with his great power, "the rules don't 'low no live stock in the sleepin' cars, 'ceptin' humans."  
Marjorie rewarded his condescension with a blunt: "Snoozleums is more human than you."  
"I 'psume he is," the porter admitted, "but he can't make up berthas. Anyway, the rules says dogs goes with the baggage."  
Marjorie swept rules aside with a defiant: "I don't care. I won't be separated from my Snoozleums."  
She looked to Mallory for support, but he was too sorely troubled with greater anxieties to be capable of any action.

The porter tried persuasion: "You better lemme take him, the conducta is wuss'n' what I am. He 'thow'd a couple of dogs out the window trap befo' last."  
"The brute!"  
"Oh, yassum, he's a regular brute. He just loves to hear 'm splosh when they light."  
Noting the shiver that shook the girl, the porter offered a bit of consolation:  
"Better lemme have the pore little thing up in the baggage cah. He'll be in charge of a lovely baggage-smasher."  
"Are you sure he's a nice man?"

"Oh, yassum, he's deatin on trunks, but he's a natural born angel to dogs."  
"Well, if I must, I must," she sobbed. "Poor little Snoozleums! Can he come back and see me tomorrow?" Marjorie's tears were splashing on the puzzled dog, who nestled close, with foreboding of disaster.  
"I reckon p'haps you'd better visit him."  
"Poor dear little Snoozleums—good night, my little darling. Poor little child—it's the first night he's slept all by his little lonesome, and—"  
The porter was growing desperate. He clapped his hands together impatiently and urged: "I think I hear that conducta comin'."  
The ruse succeeded. Marjorie fairly forced the dog on him. "Quick—hide him—hurry!" she gasped, and sank on the seat completely crushed. "I'll be so lonesome without Snoozleums."  
Mallory felt called upon to remind her of his presence. "I—I'm here, Marjorie." She looked at him just once—at him, the source of all her troubles—buried her head in her arms, and resumed her grief. Mallory stared at her helplessly, then rose and bent over to whisper:  
"I'm going to look through the train."  
"Oh, don't leave me," she pleaded, clinging to him with a dependence that restored his respect.  
"I must find a clergyman," he whispered. "I'll be back the minute I find one, and I'll bring him with me."  
The porter thought he wanted the dog back, and quickened his pace till he reached the corridor, where Mallory overtook him and asked, in an effort at casual indifference, if he had seen anything of a clergyman on board.

"An't seen nothin' that even looks like one," said the porter. Then he hastened ahead to the baggage car with the squirming Snoozleums, while Mallory followed slowly, going from seat to seat and car to car, subjecting all the sales to an inspection that rendered some of them indignant, others of them uneasy.

If dear old Doctor Temple could only have known what Mallory was hunting, he would have snatched off the mask, and thrown aside the secular scribble tie at all costs. But poor Mallory, unable to recognize a clergyman so dyed-in-the-wool as Doctor Temple, sitting in the very next seat—how could he be expected to pick out another in the long and crowded train?

All clergymen look alike when they are in convention assembled, but sprinkled through a crowd they are not so easily distinguished.  
In the sleeping car bound for Portland, Mallory picked one man as a clergyman. He had a lean, ascetic face, solemn eyes, and he was talking to his seat-mate in an oratorical manner. Mallory bent down and tapped the man's shoulder.

The effect was surprising. The man jumped as if he were stabbed, and turned a pale, frightened gaze on Mallory, who murmured:  
"Excuse me, do you happen to be a clergyman?"  
A look of relief stole over the man's features, followed closely by a scowl of wounded vanity.  
"No, damn you, I don't happen to be a parson. I have chosen to be—well, if you had watched the billboards in Chicago during our run, you would not need to ask who I am!"  
Mallory mumbled an apology and hurried on, just overhearing his victim's sigh:  
"Such is fame!"  
He saw two or three other clerical persons in that car, but feared to touch their shoulders. One man in the last seat held him specially, and he hid in the turn of the corridor, in the hope of evading some clue. This man was bent and scholastic of appearance, and wore heavy spectacles and a heavy beard, which Mallory took for a guaranty that he was not another actor. And he was reading what appeared to be printer's proofs. Mallory felt certain that they were a volume of sermons. He lingered timorously in the environs for some time before the man spoke at all to the dreary-looking woman at his side. Then the stranger spoke, and this is what he said and read:  
"I fancy this will make the bigots sit up and take notice, named: 'If there ever was a person, Moses, it is certain, from the writings ascribed to him, that he believed the Egyptian theory of a life after death, and combated it as a heathenish superstition. The Judaic idea of a future existence was undoubtedly acquired from the Assyrians, during the captivity.'"  
He doubtless read much more, but Mallory fled to the next car. There he found a man in a frock coat talking solemnly to another of equal solemnity. The seat next them was unoccupied, and Mallory dropped into it, perking his ears backward for news.

"Was you ever in Molina?" one voice asked.  
"Was I?" the other muttered. "Wasn't I run out of there by one of my audiences. I was givin' hortolric demonstrations, and I had a run-in with one of my horses, and he done me dirt. Right in the midst of one of his cataleptic trances, he got down from the chairs where I had stretched him out and hollered: 'He's a bum faker, gents, and owes me two weeks' pay.' Thank Gawd, there was a back door open!" on a dark alley leadin' to the switch yard. I caught a caboose just as a freight train was pullin' out."  
Mallory could hardly get strength to rise and continue his search. On his way forward he met the conductor, crossing a vestibule between cars. A happy thought occurred to Mallory. He said:  
"Excuse me, but have you any preachers on board?"  
"None so far."  
"Are you sure?"  
"Positive."  
"How can you tell?"  
"Well, if a grown man offers me a half-fare ticket, I guess that's pretty good sign, isn't it?"  
Mallory guessed that it was, and turned back, hopeless and helpless.

(Continued)