

**EXCUSE ME!**  
 BY RUPERT HUGHES  
 NOVELIZED FROM THE  
 COMEDY OF THE SAME  
 NAME. Y Y Y  
 ILLUSTRATED FROM  
 PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
 THE PLAY AS PRODUCED  
 BY HENRY W. SAVAGE.  
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(Continued from Last Week)

The others thought he had merely choked and made no comment other than sympathy. They could not have dreamed that the old "physician" was as ignorant of the taste as of the vigor of pure spirits.

After a riot of handshaking and good wishes, Ira was permitted to escape with his life. Mallory followed him to the vestibule, when he caught him by the sleeve with an anxious: "Excuse me."

"Well, my boy—"

"Your minister—after you get through with him—may I use him?"

"May you—what? Why do you want a minister?"

"To get married."

"What? Good Lord, are you a Mormon?"

"No a Mormon!"

"Then what do you want with an extra wife? It's against the law—ever in Utah."

"You don't understand."

"My boy, one of us is disgracefully drunk."

"Well, I'm not," said Mallory, and then after a fierce inner debate, he decided to take Lathrop into his confidence. The words came hard after so long a duplicity, but at last they were out:

"Mr. Lathrop, I'm not really married to my wife."

"You young scoundrel!"

But his fury changed to pity when he heard the history of Mallory's ill-fated efforts, and he promised not only to lend Mallory his minister at second-hand, but also to keep the whole affair a secret, for Mallory explained his intention of having his own ceremony in the baggage-car, or somewhere out of sight of the other passengers.

Mallory's face was now aglow as the cold embers of hope leaped into sudden blaze. He wrung Lathrop's hand, saying: "Lord love you, you've saved my life—wife—both."

Then he turned and ran to Marjorie with the good news. He had quite forgotten their epoch-making separation. And she was so glad to see him smiling at her again that she forgot it, too. He came tearing into the observation room and took her by the shoulders, whispering: "Oh, Marjorie, Marjorie, I've got him! I've got him!"

"No, I've got him," she said, swinging Snoozeleums into view.

Mallory swung him back out of the way: "I don't mean a poodle, I mean a parson. I've got a parson."

"No! I can't believe it! Where is he?" She began to dance with delight, but she stopped when he explained:

"Well, I haven't got him yet, but I'm going to get one."

"What—again?" she groaned, weary of this old bunco game of hope.

"It's a real live one this time," Mallory insisted. "Mr. Lathrop has ordered a minister and he's going to lend him to me as soon as he's through with him, and we'll be married on this train."

Marjorie was overwhelmed, but she felt it becoming in her to be a trifle coy. So she pouted: "But you won't want me for a bride now. I'm such a fright."

He took the bait, took and all: "I never saw you looking so adorable."

"Honestly? Oh, but it will be glorious to be Mrs. First Lieutenant Mallory."

"Glorious!"

"I must telegraph home—and sign my new name. Won't mamma be pleased?"

"Won't she?" said Mallory, with just a trace of dubiety.

Then Marjorie grew serious with a new idea: "I wonder if mamma and papa have missed me yet?"

Kitty laughed: "After three days' disappearance, I shouldn't be surprised."

"Perhaps they are worrying about me."

"I shouldn't be surprised."

"The poor dears! I'd better write them a telegram at once."

"An excellent idea."

She ran to the desk, found blank forms and then paused with knitted brow: "It will be very hard to say all I've got to say in ten words."

"Hang the expense," Mallory sniffed magnificently, "I'm paying your bills now."

But Marjorie tried to look very matronly: "Send a night letter in the day time! No, indeed, we must begin to economize."

Mallory was touched by this new revelation of her future housewifely thrift. He hugged her hard and reminded her that she could send a day-letter by wire.

"An excellent idea," she said. "Now, don't bother me. You go on and read your paper, read about Mattie. I'll never be jealous of her—him—of anybody—again."

"You shall never have cause for jealousy, my own."

But fate was not finished with the "distinction of the unfortunate pair, and already new trouble was strolling in their direction.

**CHAPTER XXIX.**

**Jealousy Comes Aboard.**

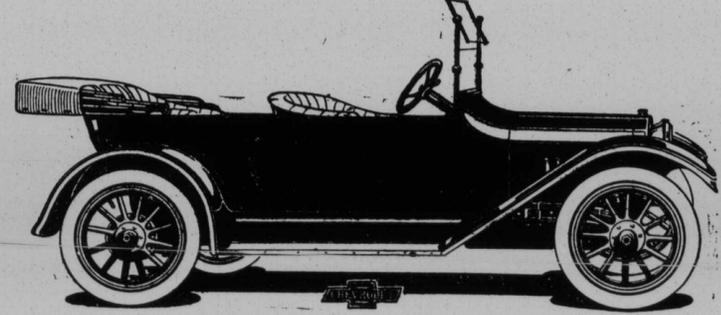
There was an air of domestic peace in the observation room, where Mallory and Marjorie had been left to themselves for some time. But the peace was like the ominous hush that

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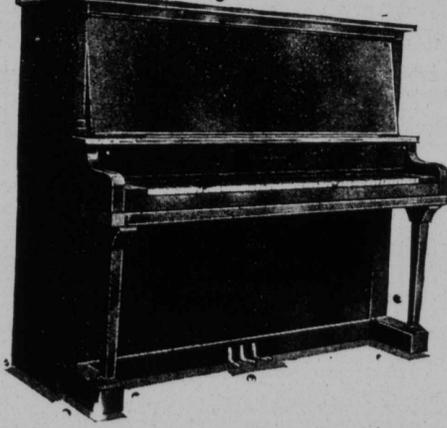
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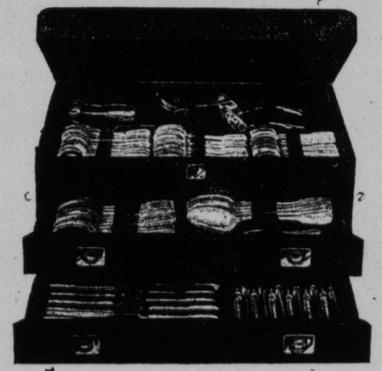
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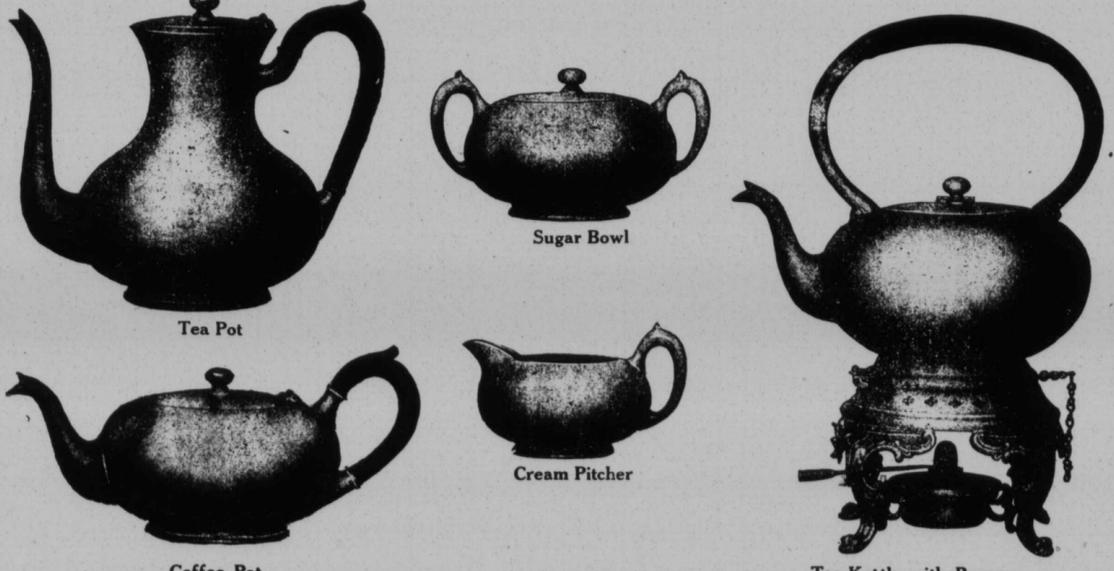
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