EXCUSE ME!

By RUPERT HUGHES

NOVELIZED FROM THE COMEDY OF THE SAME NAME.

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

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CHAPTER I.

ck of the Taxicab.

woman in the taxicab ntically down the dark to the arm of the young de, as if she were terri- awbreaking, neck-risking evidently some greater her, for she gasped: go a little faster?"

go a little faster?" The alongside howled as he ead and shoulders through in the door.

elf-created taxi-gale swept ft, and the taut chauffeur ear in vain to catch the yllables.

that?" he roared.

u go a little faster?"

dignant charioteer simply ot one barbed glare of re- that passenger. He turned nd growled:

youse went to lose me me

t one instant he turned his e instant was just enough. arded taxicab seized the op- bolted from the track, and it were, its arms drunkenly perfectly respectable lamp- nding strictly to its business curb. There ensued a con- ourth of July. Sparks flew, loded, metals ripped, two pun in air and one wheel, vered at the axle, went reel- n the sidewalk half a block t leaned against a tree and

en or more miracles coincided the passengers from injury. ng man found himself stand- the pavement with the un- door still around his neck. The woman's arms were round his Her head was on his shoulder. reposed there often enough, er before in the street under a st. The chauffeur found him- the road, walking about on all like a bewildered quadruped. ently some overpowering need eed possessed the young wom- even now she did not scream, d not faint, she did not mur- Where am I?" She simply said: at time is it, honey?"

the young man, not realizing befuddled he really was, or how and trembled, fetched out his and held it under the glow of lamppost, which was now bent in a convenient but disreputable de.

quarter to ten, sweetheart. y of time for the train."

ut the minister, honey! What t the minister?"

e consideration of this riddle was rupted by a muffled hubbub of s, whimpers and canine hysterics. ediately the young woman forgot isters, collisions, train-schedules— rything. She showed her first sign panic.

Snoozleums! Get Snoozleums!"

hey groped about in the topsy- vy taxicab, rummaged among a able of suitcases, handbags, um- llas and minor impedimenta, and ed out a small dog-basket with an erted dog inside. Snoozleums was iculous in any position, but as he d tail foremost from the wicker sket, he resembled nothing so much a heap of tangled yarn tumbling t of a work-basket. He was an in- gnant skein, and had much to say fore he consented to snuggle under s mistress' chin.

About this time the chauffeur came rowling into view. He was too deep- shocked to emit any language of e garage. He was too deeply hocked to achieve any comment more rilliant than:

"That mess don't look much like it ver was a taxicab, does it?"

The young man shrugged his shoul- ders, and stared up and down the long street for another. The young woman looked sorrowfully at the wreck, and queried:

"Do you think you can make it go?"

The chauffeur glanced her way, more in pity for her whole sex than in scorn for this one type, as he mum- bled:

"Make it go? It'll take a steam winch a week to unwrap it from that lamppost."

The young man apologized.

"I oughtn't to have yelled at you."

He was evidently a very nice young man. Not to be outdone in courtesy, the chauffeur retorted:

"I hadn't ought to have turned me head."

The young woman thought, "What a nice chauffeur!" but she gasped: "Great heavens, you're hurt!"

"It's nuttin' but a scratch on me t'umb."

"Lend me a clean handkerchief, Harry."

The young man whipped out his re- serve supply, and in a trice it was a bandage on the chauffeur's hand. The chauffeur decided that the young wom- an was even nicer than the young man. But he could not settle on a way te say it. So he said nothing, and grinned sheepishly as he said it.

The young man named Harry was wondering how they were to proceed. He had already studied the region with dismay, when the girl resolved:

"We'll have to take another taxi, Harry."

"Yes, Marjorie, but we can't take it till we get it."

"You might wait here all night wit- out ketchin' a glimp' of one," the chauffeur ventured. "I come this way because you wanted me to take a short cut."

"It's the longest short cut I ever saw," the young man sighed, as he gazed this way and that.

The place of their shipwreck was so deserted that not even a crowd had gathered. The racket of the collision had not brought a single policeman. They were in a dead world of granite warehouses, wholesale stores and fac- tories, all locked and forbidding, and full of silent gloom.

In the daytime this was a big trade artery of Chicago, and all day long it was thunderous with trucks and com- merce. At night it was Pompeii, so utterly abandoned that the night watchmen rarely slept outside, and no footpad found it worth while to set up shop.

The three castaways stared every which way, and every which way was peace. The ghost of a pedestrian or two hurried by in the far distance. A cat or two went furtively in search of warfare or romance. The lamp- posts stretched on and on in both di- rections in two forevers.

In the faraway there was a muf- fled rumble and the faint clang of a bell. Somewhere a street car was bumping along its rails.

"Our only hope," said Harry. "Come along, Marjorie."

He handed the chauffeur five dollars as a poultice to his wounds, tucked the girl under one arm and the dog- basket under the other, and set out, calling back to the chauffeur:

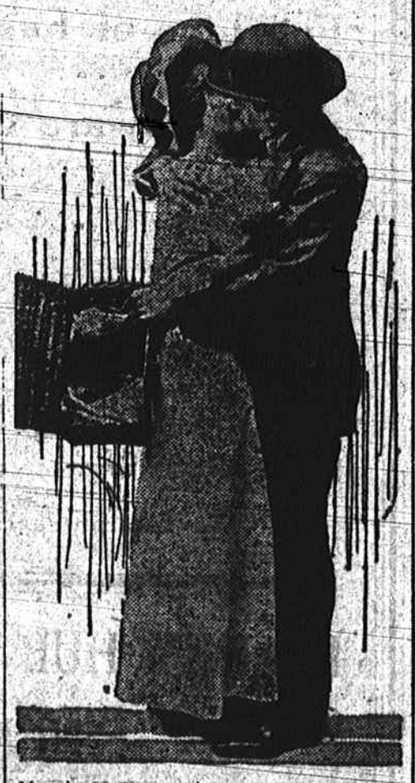
"Good night!"

"Good night!" the girl called back.

"Good night!" the chauffeur echoed. He stood watching them with the ten- der gaze that even a chauffeur may feel for young love hastening to a honeymoon.

He stood beaming so, till their foot- steps died in the silence. Then he turned back to the chaotic remnants of his machine. He worked at it hope- lessly for some time, before he had reason to look within. There he found the handbags and suitcases, um- brellas and other equipment. He ran to the corner to call after the owners. They were as absent of body as they had been absent of mind.

He remembered the street-number



Henry Mallory and Marjorie Newton.

they had given him as their destina- tion. He waited till at last a yawning policeman sauntered that way like a lonely beach patrol, and left him in charge while he went to telephone his garage for a wagon and a wrecking crew.

It was close on midnight before he reached the number his fares had given him. It was a parsonage lean- ing against a church. He rang the bell and finally produced from an up- per window a nightshirt topped by a frowsy head. He explained the situ- ation, and his possession of certain properties belonging to parties un- known except by their first names. The clergyman drowsily murmured:

"Oh, yes. I remember. The young man was Lieutenant Henry Mallory, and he said he would stop here with a young lady, and get married on the way to the train. But they never turned up."

"Lieutenant Mallory, eh? Where could I reach him?"

"He said he was leaving tonight for the Philippines."

"The Philippines! Well, I'll be—"

The minister closed the window just in time.

CHAPTER II.

The Early Birds and the Worm.

In the enormous barn of the rail- road station stood many strings of cars, as if a gigantic young Gulliver stabled his toys there and invisibly amused himself; now whisking this one away, now backing that other in.

Some of the trains were noble equip- ages, fitted to glide across the whole map with cargoes of Lilliputian mil- lionaires and their Lilliputian ladies. Others were humble and shabby linked-up day-coaches and dingy smoking-cars, packed with workers, like ants.

Cars are mere vehicles, but locomo- tives have souls. The express en- gines roll in or stalk out with gran- deur and ease. They are like em- perors. They seem to look with scorn at the suburban engines snorting and grunting and shaking the arched roof with their plebeian choo-choo as they puff from shop to cottage and back.

The trainmen take their cue from the behavior of their locomotives. The conductor of a transcontinental nods to the conductor of a shuttle-train with less cordiality than to a brake- man of his own. The engineers of the limiteds look like senators in overalls. They are far-traveled men, leading a mighty life of adventure. They are pilots of land-ships across land-oceans. They have a right to a certain condescension of manner.

But no one feels or shows so much arrogance as the sleeping car porters. They cannot pronounce "supercili- ous," but they can be it. Their dis- dain for the entire crew of any train that carries merely day-coaches or half-baked chair-cars, is expressed as only a darkey in a uniform can ex- press disdain for poor white trash.

Of all the haughty porters that ever curled a lip, the haughtiest by far was the dusky attendant in the San Francisco sleeper on the Trans-Amer- ican Limited. His was the train of trains in that whole system. His car the car of cars. His passengers the surpassengers of all.

His train stood now waiting to set forth upon a voyage of two thousand miles, a journey across seven imperial states, a journey that should end only at that marge where the continent dips and vanishes under the breakers of the Pacific ocean.

At the head of his car, with his lit- tle box-step waiting for the foot of the first arrival, the porter stood, his head swelling under his cap, his breast swelling beneath his blue blouse, with its brass buttons like reflections of his own eyes. His name was Ellsworth Jefferson, but he was called anything from "Poarr-turr" to "Pawtah," and he usually did not come when he was called.

Tonight he was wondering perhaps what passengers, with what disposi- tions, would fall to his lot. Perhaps he was wondering what his Chicago sweetheart would be doing in the eight days before his return. Per- haps he was wondering what his San Francisco sweetheart had been doing in the five days since he left her, and how she would pass the three days that must intervene before he reached her again.

He had Othello's ebon color. Did he have Othello's green eye?

Whatever his thoughts, he chatted gaily enough with his neighbor and colleague of the Portland sleeper.

Suddenly he stopped in the midst of a soaring chuckle.

"Lordy, man, looky what's a-com- in'!"

The Portland porter turned to gaze.

"I got my fingers crossed."

"I hope you git him."

"I hope I don't."

"He'll work you hard and cuss you out, and he won't give you even a Much Obliged."

"That's right. He ain't got a usher to carry his things. And he's got enough to fill a van."

The oncomer was plainly of Eng- lish origin. It takes all sorts of peo- ple to make up the British Empire, and there is no sort lacking—glorious or pretty, or sour or sweet. But this was the type of English globe-trotter that makes himself as unpopular among foreigners as he is among his own people. He is almost as unen- durable as the Americans abroad who twang their banjo brag through Eu- rope, and berate France and Italy for their innocence of buckwheat cakes.

The two porters regarded Mr. Har- old Wedgewood with dread, as he bore down on them. He was almost lost in the plethora of his own lug- gage. He asked for the San Fran- cisco sleeper, and the Portland porter had to turn away to smother his gur- gling relief.

Ellsworth Jefferson's heart sank. He made a feeble effort at self-pro- tection. The Pullman conductor not being present at the moment, he in- quired:

"Have you got yo' ticket?"

"Of cawse."

"Could I see it?"

"Of cawse not. Too much trouble to fish it out."

The porter was fading. "Do you remember yo' numba?"

"Of cawse. Take these." He began to pile things on the porter like a mountain unloading an avalanche. The porter stumbled as he clambered up the steps, and squeezed through the strait path of the corridor into the slender aisle. He turned again and again to question the invader, but he was motioned and bunted down the car, till he was halted with a "This will do."

The Englishman selected section three for his own. The porter ven- tured: "Are you sho' this is yo' num- ba?"

"Of cawse I'm shaw. How dare you question my—"

"I wasn't questionin' you, boss, I was just astin' you."

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. Every- thing must be placed otherwise; the catch-all here, the portmanteau there, the Gladstone there, the golfsticks there, the greatcoat there, the rain- coat there. The porter was puffing like a donkey-engine, and mutiny was growing in his heart. His last com- mission 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 they anything else?"

"No. You may get down."

The magnificent patronage of this wilted the porter completely. He re- turned to the lower level, and shuf- fled 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 lit- tle 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 meb- be he'd start the train. But the time- table 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 de- spair, 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 "Yas- sah." 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 fel- low travelers. Ira Lathrop was zeal- ous to resent anything short of per- fection, quick and loud of complaint, apparently impossible to please.

In everything else he was the op- posite 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 kneel- ing to an Englishman. But when he had escaped this penance, and ad- vanced 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 yo' num- ba, please?"

The answer was the ticket. The porter screwed up his eyes to read the pencilled scrawl.

"Numba se'm. Heah 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 ve'y well, suh. I reckon the cah 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 in- creased 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 re- veal your own character in what you ask about his. 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 democ- ratic 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 de- termined to waste upon them the ir- reducible minimum of attention.

It would take at least a bridal couple to retsore the balance. But bridal couples in their first bloom rarely fell to the lot of that porter, for what bridal couple wants to lock it- self 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 Fran- cisco?"

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

The Yankee felt called upon to check the foreign usurper.

"Porrterr!"

"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 do, but they're ready letter writers to the Sooperintendent for what you don't do."

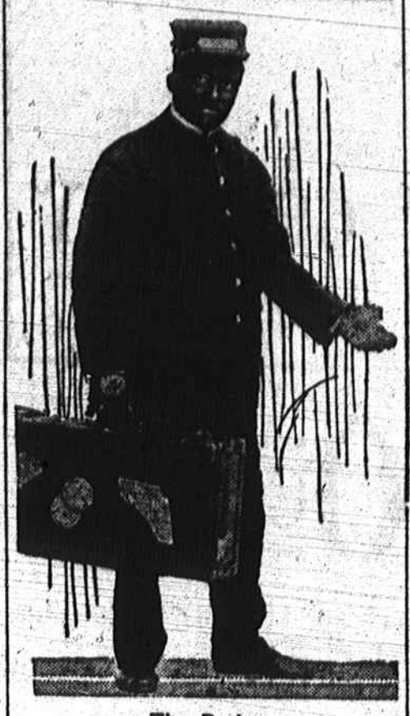
"Pawtah! I say, pawtah!"

"Here, porrterr."

The porter tried to imitate the Irish bird, and be 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,



The Porter.

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 mur- mured to the Yankee, "but I has hopes."

The Englishman's voice was querul- ous again.

"I say, pawtah, open a window, will you? The air is ghastly, absoripping- lutely 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 a Chinese stamp.

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

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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FORECLOSURE SALE.

State of South Carolina,
County of Kershaw.
In the Court of Common Pleas.

T. Edmund Krumbholz, Plaintiff,
Against
William Adams Coulter, Bruce Noel Coulter, Veronica May Coulter, Alcida Hannah Coulter, George V. W. Duryee, as executor of the estate of W. L. Coulter, deceas- ed, and George H. Coulter and Frederick W. Hall, as Executors of the estate of Violet M. Coulter, deceased, Defendants.

Foreclosure Sale.

Under and by virtu of a Decree in the above case made by the Hon. T. H. Spain, Judge Presiding in the Fifth Circuit, of date the 22nd day of March, 1912, I will offer for sale in front of the Court House door in the City of Camden, S. C., during the legal hours of sale on the first Monday in May, 1912, being the 6th day thereof, the follow- ing described property:

All that piece, parcel or tract of land situated in Kershaw County, State of South Carolina on Hobkirk Hill, about one-half mile north of City of Camden, containing one and one-twentieth (1 1-20) acres, according to the plat of Jas. T. Bur- dell, Surveyor, dated April 9, 1904, bounded North by a road which runs East and West separating this parcel from premises of H. Cantey, Esqr., East by the Lancaster and Charleston public road, extension of Broad Street of Camden, South by land of the Country Club, West by premises of N. W. Kerr, convey- ed to W. L. Coulter by deed of H. Cantey, dated April 14, 1904, re- corded in office of Register Mesne Conveyance Kershaw County, Book "I. I. I", page 306, plat thereof in Plat Book No. 1, page 7, together with buildings on said parcel and all furnishings and contents of the said buildings.

Any person desiring to bid at said sale shall first deposit with the said Master the sum of Five Hun- dred (500.00) Dollars in money or certified check, as a pledge to make good his bid in case of ac- ceptance.

Terms of sale cash, purchaser to pay for papers.

L. A. Wittkowsky,
Master for Kershaw County.
March 25, 1912.

BIDS INVITED.

Bids will be received for build- ing the Westville school house at Westville, S. C., up to 2 p. m., Sat- urday, May 4, 1912. Plans and spe- cifications will be on file at the of- fice of the County Superintendent of Education. All bids must be in writing and sent to R. L. Bell, at Westville. The trustees reserve the right to reject any or all bids.

R. L. Bell,
D. G. Fletcher,
W. F. Truesdale,
Trustees School District No. 8.
April 19, 1912.—2tl.

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