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.

"Responsible. I should say it is. Mr. Mallory is a soldier, but soldiers are such ferocious, destructive people, while conductors save lives, and—if I were only a man I think it would be my greatest ambition to be a conductor—especially on an overland express."

The conductor told the truth when he confessed: "Well, I never heard it put just that way." Then he spoke with a little more pride, hoping to increase the impression he felt he was making: "The main thing, of course, is to get my train through On Time!"

This was a facer. He was going to get his train through On Time just to oblige Marjorie. She stammered:

"I don't suppose the train, by any accident, would be delayed in leaving Ogden?"

"Not if I can help it," the hero averred, to reassure her.

"I wish it would," Marjorie murmured.

The conductor looked at her in surprise: "Why, what's it to you?" She turned her eyes on him at full candle power, and smiled:

"Oh, I just wanted to do a little shopping there."

"Shopping! While the train waits! Excuse me!"

"You see," Marjorie fluttered, "by a sad mistake, my baggage isn't on the train. And I haven't any—any—I really need to buy some—some things very badly. It's awfully embarrassing to be without them."

"I can imagine," the conductor mumbled. "Why don't you and your husband drop off and take the next train?"

"My husb—Mr. Mallory has to be in San Francisco by tomorrow night. He just has to!"

"So have I."

"But to oblige me? To save me from distress—don't you think you could?" Like a sweet little child she twisted one of the brass buttons on his coat sleeve, and wheedled: "Don't you think you might hold the train just a little tiny half hour?"

He was sorry, but he didn't see how he could. Then she took his breath away again, by asking, out of a clear sky: "Are you married?"

He was as awkward as if she had proposed to him, she answered for him: "Oh, but of course you are. The women wouldn't let a big, handsome, noble brave giant like you escape long." He mopped his brow in agony as she went on: "I'm sure you're a very chivalrous man. I'm sure you would give your life to rescue a maiden in distress. Well, here's your chance. Won't you please hold the train?"

She actually had her cheek almost against his shoulder, though she had to poise atiptoe to reach him. Mallory's dismay was changing to a boiling rage, and the conductor was a pitiable combination of Saint Anthony and Tantalus. "I—I'd love to oblige you," he mumbled, "but it would be as much as my job's worth."

"How much is that?" Marjorie asked, and added reassuringly, "If you lost your job I'm sure my father would get you a better one."

"Maybe," said the conductor, "but—I got this one."

Then his rolling eyes caught sight of the supposed husband gesticulating wildly and evidently clearing for action. He warned Marjorie: "Say, your husband is motioning at you."

"Don't mind him," Marjorie urged, "just listen to me. I implore you. I—" Seeing that he was still resisting, she played her last card, and, crying, "Oh, you can't resist my prayers so cruelly," she threw her arms around his neck, sobbing, "Do you want to break my heart?"

Mallory rushed into the scene and the conductor, tearing Marjorie's arms loose, retreated, gasping, "No! and I don't want your husband to break my head."

Mallory dragged Marjorie away, but she shook her little fist at the conductor, crying: "Do you refuse? Do you dare refuse?"

"I've got to," the conductor abjectly insisted.

Marjorie blazed with fury and the siren became a Scylla. "Then I'll see that my father gets you discharged. If you dare to speak to me again, I'll order my husband to throw you off this train. To think of being refused a simple little favor by a mere conductor! of a stupid old emigrant train!! of all things!!!"

Then she hurled herself into a chair and pounded her heels on the floor in a tantrum that paralyzed Mallory. Even the conductor tapped him on the shoulder and said: "You have my sympathy."

CHAPTER XXVII.

The Dog-on Dog Again.

As the conductor left the Mallorys to their own devices, it rushed over him anew what sacrilege had been attempted—a fool bride had asked him to stop the Trans-American of all trains!—to go . . pping of all things!

He stormed into the smoking room to open the safety valve of his wrath, and found the porter just coming out of the buffet cell with a tray, two hollow-stemmed glasses and a bottle swaddled in a napkin.

"Say, Ellsworth, what in —— do you suppose that female back there wants?—wants me to hold the Trans-American while—"

But the porter was in a flurry himself. He was about to serve champagne, and he cut the conductor short:

"'Scuse me, boss, but they's a lovin' couple in the stateroom forward that is in a powerful hurry for this. I can't talk to you now. I'll see you later." And he swaggered off, leaving the door of the buffet open. The conductor paused to close it, glanced in, started, stared, glared, roared: "What's this! Well, I'll be—a dog smuggled in here! I'll break that coon's head. Come out of there, you miserable or'nary hound." He seized the incredulous Snoozleums by the scruff of his neck, growling, "It's you for the baggage car ahead," and dashed out with his prey, just as Mallory, now getting new bearings on Marjorie's character, spoke across the rampart of his Napoleonically folded arms:

"Well, you're a nice one!—making violent love to a conductor before my very eyes. A minute more and I would have—"

She silenced him with a snap: "Don't you speak to me! I hate you! I hate all men. The more I know men the more I like—" this reminded her, and she asked anxiously: "Where is Snoozleums?"

Mallory, impatient at the shift of subject, snapped back: "Oh, I left him in the buffet with the waiter. What I want to know is how you dare to—"

"Was it a colored waiter?"

"Of course. But I'm not speaking of—"

"But suppose he should bite him?"

"Oh, you can't hurt those nigger waiters. I started to say—"

"But I can't have Snoozleums biting colored people. It might not agree with him. Get him at once."

Mallory trembled with suppressed rage like an overloaded boiler, but he gave up and growled: "Oh, Lord, all right. I'll get him when I've finished—"

"Go get him this minute. And bring the poor darling back to his mother."

"His mother! Ye gods!" cried Mallory, wildly. He turned away and dashed into the men's room with a furious: "Where's that damned dog?"

He met the porter just returning. The porter smiled: "He's right in heah, sir," and opened the buffet door. His eyes popped and his jaw sagged: "Why, I lef' him here just a minute ago."

"You left the window open, too," Mallory observed. "Well, I guess he's gone."

The porter was panic-stricken: "Oh, I'm turrible sorry, boss, I wouldn't have lost dat dog for a fortune. If you was to hit me with a axe I wouldn't mind."

To his utter befuddlement, Mallory grinned and winked at him, and murmured: "Oh, that's all right. Don't worry." And actually laid half a dollar in his palm. Leaving the black lids batting over the starting eyes, Mallory pulled his smile into a long face and went back to Marjorie like an undertaker: "My love, prepare yourself for bad news."

Marjorie looked up, startled and apprehensive: "Snoozleums is ill. He did bite the darkey."

"Worse than that—he—he—fell out of the window."

"When!" she shrieked, "in heaven's name—when?"

"He was there just a minute ago, the waiter says."

Marjorie went into instant hysterics, wringing her hands and sobbing: "Oh, my darling, my poor child—stop the train at once!"

She began to pound Mallory's shoulders and shake him frantically. He had never seen her this way either. He was getting his education in advance. He tried to calm her with inexpert words: "How can I stop the train? Now, dearie, he was a nice dog, but after all, he was only a dog."

She rounded on him like a panther: "Only a dog! He was worth a dozen men like you. You find the conductor at once, command him to stop this train—and back up! I don't care if he has to go back ten miles. Run, tell him at once. Now, you run!"

Mallory stared at her as if she had gone mad, but he set out to run somewhere, anywhere. Marjorie paced up and down distractedly, tearing her hair and moaning, "Snoozleums, Snoozleums! My child. My poor child!" At length her wildly roving eyes noted the bell rope. She stared, pondered, nodded her head, clutched at it, could not reach it, jumped for it several times in vain, then seized a chair, swung it into place, stood up in it, gripped the rope and came down on it with all her weight, dropping to the floor and jumping up and down in a frenzied dance. In the distance the engine could be heard faintly whistling, whistling for every pull.

The engineer, far ahead, could not imagine what unheard-of crisis could bring about such mad signals. The fireman yelled:

"I bet that crazy conductor is attacked with an epilettic fit."

But there was no disputing the command. The engine was reversed, the air brakes set, the sand run out and every effort made to pull the iron horse, as it were, back on its haunches.

The grinding, squealing, jolting, shook the train like an earthquake. The shrieking of the whistle froze the blood like a woman's cry of "Murder!" in the night. The women among the passengers echoed the screams. The men turned pale and braced themselves for the shock of collision. Some of them were mumbling prayers. Dr. Temple and Jimmie Wellington, with one idea in their dissimilar souls, dashed from the smoking room to go to their wives.

Ashton and Wedgewood, with no one to care for but themselves, seized windows and tried to fight them open. At last they budged a sash and knelt down to thrust their heads out.

"I don't see a beastly thing ahead," said Wedgewood, "except the heads of other fools."

"We're slowing down though," said Ashton, "she stops! We're safe. Thank God!" And he collapsed into a chair. Wedgewood collapsed into another, gasping: "Whatevah are we safe from, I wondah?"

The train-crew and various passengers descended and ran alongside the train asking questions. Panic gave way to mystery. Even Dr. Temple came back into the smoking room to finish a precious cigar he had been at work on. He was followed by Little Jimmie, who had not quite reached his wife when the stopping of the train put an end to his excuse for chivalry. He was regretfully mumbling:

"It would have been such a good shansh to shave my life's wife—I mean my—I don't know what I mean." He sank into a chair and ordered a drink; then suddenly remembered his vow, and with great heroism, rescinded the order.

Mallory, finding that the train was checked just before he reached the conductor, saw that official's bewildered wrath at the stoppage and had a fearsome intuition that Marjorie had somehow done the deed. He hurried back to the observation room, where he found her charging up and down, still distraught. He paused at a safe distance and said:

"The train has stopped, my dear. Somebody rang the bell."

"I guess somebody did!" Marjorie answered, with a proud toss of the head. "Where's the conductor?"

"He's looking for the fellow that pulled the rope."

"You go tell him to back up—and slowly, too."

"No, thank you!" said Mallory. He was a brave young man, but he was not boarding the conductors of stopped expresses. Already the conductor's voice was heard in the smoking room, where he appeared with the rush and roar of a Bashan bull. "Well!" he bellowed, "which one of you guys pulled that rope?"

"It was nobody here, sir," Dr. Temple meekly explained. The conductor transfixed him with a baleful glare: "I wouldn't believe a gambler on oath. I bet you did it."

"I assure you, sir," Wedgewood interposed, "he didn't touch it. I was heah."

The conductor waved him aside and charged into the observation room, followed by all the passengers in an awe-struck rabble. Here, too, the conductor thundered: "Who pulled that rope? Speak up somebody."

Mallory was about to sacrifice himself to save Marjorie, but she met the conductor's black rage with the withering contempt of a young queen: "I pulled the old rope. Whom did you suppose?"

The conductor almost dropped with apoplexy at finding himself with nobody to vent his immense rage on, but this pink and white slip. "You!" he gulped, "well, what in— Say, in the name of—why, don't you know it's a penitentiary offense to stop a train this way?"

Marjorie tossed her head a little higher, grew a little calmer: "What do I care? I want you to back up."

The conductor was reduced to a wet rag, a feeble echo: "Back up—the train up?"

"Yes, back the train up," Marjorie answered, resolutely, "and go slowly till I tell you to stop."

The conductor stared at her a moment, then whirled on Mallory: "Say, what in hell's the matter with your wife?"

Mallory was saved from the problem of answering by Marjorie's abrupt change from a young Tsarina rebuking a serf, to a terrified mother. She flung out imploring palms and with a gush of tears pleaded: "Won't you please back up? My darling child fell off the train."

The conductor's rage fell away in an instant. "Your child fell off the train!" he gasped. "Good Lord! How old was he?"

With one hand he was groping for the bell cord to give the signal, with the other he opened the door to look back along the track.

"He was two years old," Marjorie sobbed.

"Oh, that's too bad!" the conductor groaned. "What did he look like?"

"He had a pink ribbon round his neck."

"A pink ribbon—oh, the poor little fellow! the poor little fellow!"

"And a long curly tail."

The conductor swung round with a yell: "A curly tail!—your son?"

"My dog!" Marjorie roared back at him.

The conductor's voice cracked weakly as he shrieked: "Your dog! You stopped this train for a fool dog?"

"He wasn't a fool dog," Marjorie retorted, facing him down, "he knows more than you do."

The conductor threw up his hands: "Well, don't you women beat—" He studied Marjorie as if she were some curious freak of nature. Suddenly an idea struck into his daze: "Say, what kind of a dog was it?—a measly little cheese-hound?"

"He was a noble, beautiful soul with wonderful eyes and adorable ears."

The conductor was growing weaker and weaker: "Well, don't worry. I got him. He's in the baggage car."

Marjorie stared at him unbelievingly. The news seemed too gloriously beautiful to be true. "He isn't dead—Snoozleums is not dead!" she cried, "he lives! He lives! You have saved him." And once more she flung herself upon the conductor. He tried to bat her off like a gnat, and Mallory came to his rescue by dragging her away and shoving her into a chair. But she saw only the noble conductor: "Oh, you dear, good, kind angel. Get him at once."

"He stays in the baggage car," the conductor answered, firmly and as he supposed, finally.

"But Snoozleums doesn't like baggage cars," Marjorie smiled. "He won't ride in one."

"He'll ride in this one or I'll wring his neck."

"You fiend in human flesh!" Marjorie shrank away from him in horror, and he found courage to seize the bell rope and yank it viciously with a sardonic: "Please, may I start this train?"

The whistle tooted faintly. The bell began to hammer, the train to creak and writhe and click. The conductor pulled his cap down hard and started forward. Marjorie seized his sleeve: "Oh, I implore you, don't consign that poor sweet child to the horrid baggage car. If you have a human heart in your breast, hear my prayer."

The conductor surrendered unconditionally: "Oh, Lord, all right, all right. I'll lose my job, but if you'll keep quiet, I'll bring him to you." And he slunk out meekly, followed by the passengers, who were shaking their heads in wonderment at this most amazing feat of this most amazing bride.

When they were alone once more, Marjorie, as radiant as April after a storm, turned her sunshiny smile on Mallory:

"Isn't it glorious to have our little Snoozleums alive and well?"

But Mallory was feeling like a March day. He answered with a sleety chill: "You care more for the dog than you do for me."

"Why shouldn't I?" Marjorie answered with wide eyes, "Snoozleums never would have brought me on a wild goose elopement like this. Heaven knows he didn't want to come."

Mallory repeated the indictment: "You love a dog better than you love your husband."

"My what?" Marjorie laughed, then she spoke with lofty condescension: "Harry Mallory, if you're going to be jealous of that dog, I'll never marry you the longest day I live."

"So you'll let a dog come between us?" he demanded.

"I wouldn't give up Snoozleums for a hundred husbands," she retorted.

"I'm glad to know it in time," Mallory said. "You'd better give me back that wedding ring."

Marjorie's heart stopped at this, but her pride was in arms. She drew herself up, slid the ring from her finger, and held it out as if she scorned it: "With pleasure. Good afternoon, Mr. Mallory."

Mallory took it as if it were the merest trifle, bowed and murmured: "Good afternoon, Miss Newton."

He stalked out and she turned her back on him. A casual witness would have said that they were too indifferent to each other even to feel anger. As a matter of romantic fact, each was on fire with love, and aching madly with regret. Each longed for strength to whirl round with outflung arms of reconciliation, and neither could be so brave. And so they parted, each harking back fiercely for one word of recall from the other. But neither spoke, and Marjorie sat staring at nothing through raining eyes, while Mallory strode into the Men's Room as melancholy as Hamlet with Yorick's skull in his hands.

It was their first great quarrel, and they were convinced that the world might as well come to an end.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Woman-Hater's Relapse.

The observation room was as lonely as a deserted battlefield and Marjorie as doleful as a wounded soldier left behind, and perishing of thirst, when the conductor came back with Snoozleums in his arms.

He regarded with contemptuous awe the petty cause of so great an event as the stopping of the Trans-American. He expected to see Marjorie receive the returned prodigal with wild rapture, but she didn't even smile when he said:

"Here's your powder-puff."

She just took Snoozleums on her lap, and, looking up with wet eyes and a sad smile, murmured:

"Thank you very much. You're the nicest conductor I ever met. If you ever want another position, I'll see that my father gets you one."

It was like offering the kaiser a new job, but the conductor swallowed the insult and sought to repay it with irony.

"Thanks. And if you ever want to run this road for a couple of weeks, just let me know."

Marjorie nodded appreciatively and said: "I will. You're very kind."

And that completed the rout of that conductor. He retired in disorder, leaving Marjorie to fondle Snoozleums with a neglectful indifference that would have greatly flattered Mallory, if he could have seen through the partition that divided them.

But he was witnessing with the cynical superiority of an aged and disillusioned man the, to him, childish behavior of Ira Lathrop, an eleventh-hour Orlando.

For just as Mallory moped into the smoking-room at one door, Ira Lathrop swept in at the other, his face rubicund with embarrassment and ecstasy. He had donned an old frock coat with creases like ruts from long exile in his trunk. But he was feeling like an heir apparent; and he startled everybody by his jovial hail:

"Well, boys—er—gentlemen — the drinks are on me. Waiter, take the orders."

Little Jimmie woke with a start, rose hastily to his feet and saluted, saying: "Present! Who said take the orders?"

"I did," said Lathrop, "I'm giving a party. Waiter, take the orders."

"Sarsaparilla," said Dr. Temple, but they howled him down and ordered other things. The porter shook his head sadly: "Nothin' but sof' drinks in Utah, gemmen."

A groan went up from the club-members, and Lathrop groaned loudest of all:

"Well, we've got to drink something. Take the orders. We'll all have sarsaparilla."

Little Jimmie Wellington came to the rescue.

"Don't do anything desperate, gentlemen," he said, with a look of divine philanthropy. "The bar's closed, but Little Jimmie Wellington is here with the life preserver." From his hip-pocket he produced a silver flask that looked to be big enough to carry a regiment through the Alps. It was greeted with a salvo, and Lathrop said to Jimmie: "I apologize for everything I have said—and thought—about you." He turned to the porter: "There ain't any law against giving this way, is there?"

The porter grinned: "Not if you-all bribe the exercise-inspector." And he held out a glass for the bribe, murmuring, "Don't git tired," as it was poured. He set it inside his sanctum and then bustled round with ice-filled glasses and a siphon.

When Little Jimmie offered of the flask to Dr. Temple, the clergyman put out his hand with a politely horrified: "No, thank you."

Lathrop frightened him with a sudden comment: "Look at that gesture! Doc, I'd almost swear you were a parson."

Mallory whirled on him with the eyes of a hawk about to pounce, and "The very idea!" was the best disclaimer Dr. Temple could manage, suddenly finding himself suspected. Ashton put in with, "The only way to disprove it, Doc, is to join us."

The poor old clergyman, too deeply involved in his deception to brave confession now, decided to do and dare all. He stammered, "Er—ah—certainly," and held out his hand for his share of the poison. Little Jimmie winked at the others and almost filled the glass. The innocent doctor bowed his thanks. When the porter reached him and prepared to fill the remainder of the glass from the siphon, the parson waved him aside with a misguided caution:

"No, thanks. I'll not mix them."

Mallory turned away with a sigh: "He takes his straight. He's no parson."

Then they forgot the doctor in curiosity as to Lathrop's sudden spasm of generosity—with Wellington's liquor. Wedgewood voiced the general curiosity when he said:

"What's the old woman-hater up to now?"

"Woman-hater?" laughed Ira. "It's the old story. I'm going to follow Mallory's example—marriage."

"I hope you succeed," said Mallory.

"Wherever did you pick up the bride?" said Wedgewood, mellowing with the long glass in his hand.

"Brides are easy," said Mallory, with surprising cynicism. "Where do you get the parson?"

"Hang the parson," Wedgewood repeated, "Who's the gel?"

"I'll bet I know who she is," Ashton interposed; "it's that nectarine of a damsel who got on at Green River."

"Not the same!" Lathrop roared. "I found my bride blooming here all the while. Girl I used to spark back in Brattleboro, Vt. I've been vowing for years that I'd live and die an old maid. I've kept my head out of the noose all this time—till I struck this train and met up with Anne. We got to talking over old times—waking up old sentiments. She got on my nerves. I got on hers. Finally I said, 'Aw, hell, let's get married. Save price of one stateroom to China anyway.' She says, 'Damned if I don't!'—or words to that effect."

Mallory broke in with feverish interest: "But you said you were going to get married on this train."

"Nothing easier. Here's how!" and he raised his glass, but Mallory hauled it down to demand: "How? that's what I want to know. How are you going to get married on this parsonless express. Have you got a little minister in your suitcase?"

Ira beamed with added pride as he explained:

"Well, you see, when I used to court Anne I had a rival—Charlie Selby by his name was. I thought he cut me out, but he became a clergyman in Utah—Oh, Charlie! I telegraphed him that I was passing through Ogden, and would he come down to the train and marry me to a charming lady. He always wanted to marry Anne. I thought it would be a durned good joke to let him marry her—to me."

"D-did he accept?" Mallory asked, excitedly, "is he coming?"

"He is—he did—here's his telegram," said Ira. "He brings the license and the ring." He passed it over, and as Mallory read it a look of hope spread across his face. But Ira was saying: "We're going to have the wedding obsequies right here in this car. You're all invited. Will you come?"

There was a general yell of acceptance and Ashton began to sing, "There Was I Waiting at the Church." Then he led a sort of Indian war-dance round the next victim of the matrimonial stake. At the end of the hullaballoo all the men charged their glasses, and drained them with an uproarious "How!"

Poor Dr. Temple had taken luxurious delight in the success of his disguise and in the prospect of watching some other clergyman working while he rested. He joined the dance as gaily, if not as gracefully, as any of the rest, and in a final triumph of recklessness, he tossed off a bumper of straight whisky.

Instantly his "How!" changed to "Wow!" and then his throat clamped fast with a terrific spasm that flung the tears from his eyes. He bent and writhed in a silent paroxysm till he was pounded and shaken back to life and water poured down his throat to reopen a passage.

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."

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

"Me a Mormon!"

"Then what do you want with an extra wife? It's against the law—even 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 Snoozleums 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, hook 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?"

Mallory 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."

Continued next week.

Quite the Opposite.

Agent—What are you writing there, your will? Miser—No, I'm writing an order. Jack proposed last night and I told him I'd answer by mail.