

# EXCUSE ME!

## 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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Her appeals seemed always to find the tender spot of this robber's heart, for he hesitated, and called out: "Shall we overlook the parson's wad, podner?"

"Take it, and shut up, you molly-coddle!" was the answer he got, and the vacation funds joined the old gow-gaws.

And now everybody had been robbed but Marjorie. She happened to be at the center of the line, and both men reached her at the same time: "I seen her first," the first one shouted.

"You did not," the other roared. "I tell you I did."

"I tell you I did." They glared threateningly at each other, and their revolvers seemed to meet, like two game cocks, beak to beak.

The porter voiced the general hope, when he sighed: "Oh, Lawd, if they'd only shoot each other."

This brought the rivals to their evil senses, and they swept the line with those terrifying muzzles and that heart-stopping yelp: "Hands up!"

Bill said: "You take the east side of her, and I'll take the west."

"All right." And they began to snatch away her side-combs, the little gold chain at her throat, the jeweled pin that Mallory had given her as the first token of his love.

The young soldier had foreseen this. He had foreseen the wild rage that would unseat his reason when he saw the dirty hands of thieves laid rudely on the sacred body of his beloved. But his soldier-schooling had drilled him to govern his impulses, to play the coward when there was no hope of successful battle, and to strike only when the moment was ripe with perfect opportunity.

He had kept telling himself that when the finger of one of these men touched so much as Marjorie's hem, he would be forced to fling himself on the profane miscreant. And he kept telling himself that the moment he did this, the other man would calmly blow a hole through him, and drop him at Marjorie's feet, while the other passengers shrank away in terror.

He told himself that, while it might be a fine impulse to leap to her defense, it was a fool impulse to leap off a precipice and leave Marjorie alone among strangers, with a dead man and a scandal, as the only rewards for his impulse. He vowed that he would hold himself in check, and let the robbers take everything, leaving him only the name of coward, provided they left him also the power to defend Marjorie better at another time.

And now that he saw the clumsy-handed thugs rifling his sweetheart's jewelry, he felt all that he had foreseen, and his head fought almost in vain against the white fire of his heart. Between them he trembled like a leaf, and the sweat globed on his forehead.

The worst of it was the shivering terror of Marjorie, and the pitiful eyes she turned on him. But he clenched his teeth and waited, thinking fiercely, watching, like a hovering eagle, a chance to swoop.

But the robbers kept glancing this way and that, and one motion would mean death. They themselves were so overwrought with their own ordeal and its immediate conclusion, that they would have killed anybody. Mallory shifted his foot cautiously, and instantly a gun was jabbed into his stomach, with a snarl: "Don't you move!"

"Who's moving?" Mallory answered, with a poor imitation of a careless laugh.

And now the man called Bill had reached Marjorie's right hand. He chortled: "Golly, look at the shiners."

But Jake, who had chosen Marjorie's left hand, roared: "Say, you cheated. All I got is this measly plain gold band."

"Oh, don't take that!" Marjorie gasped, clenching her hand.

Mallory's heart ached at the thought of this final sacrifice. He had the license, and the minister at last—and now the funds were going to carry off the wedding ring. He controlled himself with a desperate effort, and stooped to plead: "Say, old man, don't take that. That's not fair."

"Shut up, both of you," Jake growled, and jabbed him again with the gun.

He gave the ring a jerk, but Marjorie, in the very face of the weapon, would not let go. She struggled and tugged, weeping and imploring: "Oh, don't take that! It's my wedding ring."

"Agh, what do I care!" the ruffian roared, and wrenched her finger so roughly that she gave a little cry of pain.

That broke Mallory's heart. With a sobbing, "Damn you!" he turned himself at the man, with only a bare hand for weapons.

### CHAPTER XL.

#### A Hero in Spite of Himself.

Passion sent Mallory into the unequal fight with two armed and desperate outlaws. But reason had planned the way. He had been studying the robber all the time, as if the villain were a war-map, studying his gestures, his way of turning, and how he held the revolver. He had noted that the man, as he frisked the passengers, did not keep his finger on the trigger, but on the guard.

Marjorie's little battle threw the desperado off his balance a trifle; as he recovered, Mallory struck him, and swept him on over against the back of a seat. At the same instant, Mallory's right hand went like lightning to the trigger guard, and gripped the fingers in a vise of steel, while he drove the man's elbow back against his side. Mallory's left hand meanwhile swung around his enemy's neck, and gave him a spinning fall that sent his left hand out for balance. It fell across the back of the seat, and Mallory pincioned it with elbow and knee before it could escape.

All in the same crowded moment, his left knuckles jolted the man's chin in the air, and so bewildered him that his muscles relaxed enough for Mallory's right fingers to squirm their way to the trigger, and aim the gun at the other robber, and finally to get entire control of it.

The thing had happened in such a flash that the second outlaw could hardly believe his eyes. The shriek of the astounded passengers, and the grunt of Mallory's prisoner, as he crashed backward, woke him to the need for action. He caught his other gun from its holster, and made for a double volley, but there was nothing to aim at. Mallory was crouched in the seat, and almost perfectly covered by a human shield.

Still, from force of habit and foolhardy pluck, Bill aimed at Mallory's right eyebrow, just about Jake's right ear, and shouted his old motto: "Hands up! you!"

"Hands up yourself!" answered Mallory, and his victim, shuddering at the fierce look in his comrade's eyes, gasped: "For God's sake, don't shoot, Bill!"

Even then the fellow stood his ground, and debated the issue, till Mallory threw such ringing determination into one last: "Hands up, or by God, I'll fire!" that he caved in, lifted his fingers from the triggers, turned the guns up, and slowly raised both hands above his head.

A profound "Ah!" of relief soured through the car, and Mallory, still keeping his eye on Bill, got down cautiously from the seat. The moment he released Jake's left hand, it darted to the holster where his second gun was waiting. But before he could clutch the butt of it, Mallory jabbed the muzzle of his own revolver in the man's back, and growled: "Put 'em up!" And the robber's left hand joined the right in air, while Mallory's left hand lifted the revolver.

Mallory stood for a moment, breathing hard and a little incredulous at his own swift, sweet triumph. Then he made an effort to speak as if this sort of thing were quite common with him, as if he overpowered a pair of outlaws every morning before breakfast, but his voice cracked as he said, in a drawing-room tone: "Dr. Temple, would you mind relieving that man of those guns?"

Dr. Temple was so set up by this distinction that he answered: "Not by a—"

"Walter!" Mrs. Temple checked him, before he could utter the beautiful word, and Dr. Temple looked at her almost reproachfully, as he sighed: "Golly, I should like to swear just once more."

Then he reached up and disarmed the man who had taken his wallet and his wife's keepsakes.

American children breathe in this desperate romance with their earliest traditions, and Dr. Temple felt all his boyhood zest surge back with a boy's tremendous rapture in a deed of derring-do. And now nothing could check his swagger, as he said to Mallory: "What shall we do with these dam-nd sinners?"

He felt like apologizing for the clerical relapse into a pulpittism, but Mallory answered briskly: "We'd better take them into the smoking room. They scare the ladies. But first, will the conductor take those bags and distribute the contents to their rightful owners?"

The conductor was proud to act as lieutenant to this lieutenant, and he quickly relieved the robbers of their loot-kits.

Mallory smiled. "Don't give anybody my things," and then he jabbed his robber with one of the revolvers, and commanded: "Forward, march!"

The little triumphal procession moved off, with Bill in the lead, followed by Dr. Temple, looking like a

... followed by Mallory, followed by the porter and as many of the other passengers as could crowd into the smoking room.

The rest went after those opulent feed-bags.

### CHAPTER XLII.

#### Clickety-Clickety-Clickety.

Marjorie, as the supposed wife of the rescuing angel, was permitted first search, and the first thing she hunted for was a certain gold bracelet that was none of hers. She found it and seized it with a prayer of thanks, and concealed it among her own things.

Mrs. Temple gave her a guilty start, by speaking across a barrier: "Mrs. Mallory, your husband is the bravest man on earth."

"Oh, I know he is," Marjorie beamed, and added with a spasm of conscience: "but he isn't my husband!"

Mrs. Temple gasped in horror, but Marjorie dragged her close, and poured out the whole story, while the other passengers recovered their properties with as much joy as if they were all new gifts found on a bush.

Meanwhile, under Mallory's guidance, the porter fastened the outlaws together back to back with the straps of their own feed-bags. The porter was rejoicing that his harvest of tips was not blighted after all.

Mallory completed his bliss, by giving him Dr. Temple's brace of guns, and establishing him as jailer, with a warning: "Now, porter, don't take your eye off 'em."

"Lordy, I won't bat an eyelid."

"If either of these lads coughs, put a hole through both of 'em."

The porter chuckled: "My fingers is just a-tchin' fer them lovin' triggers." Mallory pocketed two of the captured revolvers, lest a need might arise suddenly again. As he hurried down the aisle, he was received with cheers. The passengers gave him an ovation, but he only smiled timidly, and made haste to Marjorie's side.

She regarded him with such idleness that he almost regretted his deed. But this mood soon passed in her excitement, and in a moment she was surreptitiously showing him the bracelet. He became an accessory after the fact, and shared her guilt, for when she groaned with a sudden droop: "She'll get it back!" he grimly answered, "Oh, no she won't!" hoisted the window, and flung the bracelet into a little pool by the side of the track, with a farewell: "Good-bye, trouble!"

As he drew his head in, a side glance showed him that up near the engine a third train-robber held the miserably weary train crew in line. He found the conductor just about to pull the bell-rope, to proceed. The conductor had forgotten all about the rest of the staff. Mallory took him aside, and told him the situation, then turned to Marjorie, said: "Excuse me a minute," and hurried forward. The conductor followed Mallory through the train into the baggage coach.

The first news the third outlaw had of the counter-revolution occurring in the sleeping car was a mysterious bullet that flicked the dust near his heel, and a sonorous shout of "Hands up!" As he whirled in amaze, he saw two revolvers aimed point blank at him from behind a trunk. He hoisted his guns without parley, and the train crew trussed him up in short order.

Mallory ran back to Marjorie, and the conductor followed more slowly, reassuring the passengers in the other cars, and making certain that the train was ready to move on its way.

Mallory went straight to Dr. Temple, with a burning demand: "You dear old fraud, will you marry me?"

Dr. Temple laughed and nodded. Marjorie and Mrs. Temple had been telling him the story of the prolonged elopement, and he was eager to atone for his own deception, by putting an end to their misery.

"Just wait one moment," he said, and as a final proof of affection, he unbuttoned his collar and put it on backwards. Mrs. Temple brought out the discarded bib, and he donned it meekly. The transformation explained many a mystery the old man had enmeshed himself in.

Even at he made ready for the ceremony, the conductor appeared, looked him over, grinned, and reached for the bell-cord, with a cheerful: "All aboard!"

Mallory had a sort of superstitious dread, not entirely unfounded on experience, that if the train got under way again, it would run into some new obstacle to his marriage. He turned to the conductor: "Say, old man, just hold the train till after my wedding, won't you?"

It was not much to ask in return for his services, but the conductor was tired of being second in command. He growled: "Not a minute. We're way behind time."

"You might wait till I'm married," Mallory pleaded.

"Not on your life!" the conductor answered, and he pulled the bell-rope twice; in the distance, the whistle answered twice.

Mallory's temper flared again. He cried: "This train doesn't go another step till I'm married!" He reached up and pulled the bell-rope once; in the distance the whistle sounded once.

This was high treason, and the conductor advanced on him threateningly, as he seized the cord once more. "You touch that rope again, and I'll—"

"Oh, no, you won't," said Mallory, as he whisked a revolver from his right pocket, and aimed it into the

conductor's waist-pocket. The conductor came to attention.

Then Mallory, standing with his right hand on military duty, put out his left hand, and gave the word: "Now, parson."

He smiled still more as he heard Kathleen's voice wailing: "But I can't find my bracelet. Where's my bracelet?"

"Silence! Silence!" Dr. Temple commanded, and then: "John hands, my children."

Marjorie shifted Snoozleums to her left arm, put her right hand into Mallory's, and Dr. Temple, standing between them, began to drone the ritual.

When the old clergyman had done his work, the young husband-at-last graciously rescinded military law, recalled the artillery from the conductor's very midst, and remembering Manila, smiled: "You may fire when ready, conductor."

The conductor's rage had cooled, and he slapped the bridegroom on the back with one hand, as he pulled the cord with the other. The train began to creak and tug and shift. The ding-dong of the bell floated murmurously back as from a lofty steeple, and the clickety-click, click-clickety-click quickened and softened into a pleasant gossip, as the speed grew, and the way was so smooth for the wheels that they seemed to be spinning on balls of velvet.

### THE END.

## CARIBOU IS FASTEST RUNNER

Maine Woodsman Tells of Seeing Greyhound Left Behind by Herd of Four.

In Maine it is contended that the caribou can outrun any other animal. According to the testimony of one woodsman, caribou left behind a greyhound that had been matched against them.

A guide succeeded in starting the dog after some caribou—a herd of four standing like statues on the ice of one of the big ponds in the region along the west branch of the Penobscot.

Now, the caribou trots, instead of running, like most other wild animals. In the present case there had been a plentiful fall of snow, a rain which had formed a thick crust, and then another fall of snow, all of which constituted the very finest surface whereon to hold a race of this description. When the greyhound was loosed its owner confidently expected that it would outrun the caribou.

When the caribou woke up and hit their pace it was a sight to see them. They did not appear to be proceeding with much speed, but as the hound drew up on them they increased their pace. The hound was doing his very best, but made no headway against the caribou at all. The dog stuck to it with courage, but before it was half way across the pond the caribou had reached the other side and disappeared in the woods.

## CANNOT ENDURE THE PIANO

Chinese Servant Gives Notice When Employer's Daughter Gets Old Enough to Practice.

The fascination of an untrammelled life in New York had lured other Chinese servants away from western families who had migrated with their retinue to New York, but John of the banker's family had remained faithful through two years of metropolitan temptations.

At last he gave notice and refused to tell why. Finally the manager of an employment agency offered a solution of John's defection.

"It is because your little girl has got big enough to practice on the piano," he said. "John can't stand that."

"A Chinaman hates a piano. It takes a good deal to upset Chinese nerves, but a piano is capable of completing the job most effectually. Heretofore there has been but little piano playing in your house; now that there is a prospect of several hours of practice every day John clears out."

"We have that trouble with many Chinese servants. There are plenty of western families in New York who would like Chinese help, but as soon as an otherwise willing servant learns that there is a piano in the house he declines the job."

### Thomas' Method.

Theodore Thomas was once asked how he managed to impart such vitality and lightness to his orchestra's playing of the Strauss waltzes. His answer was: "Have you ever noticed that I always beat the first stroke of the rhythm up instead of down? You cannot put the life and continuous motion of the dance into a piece of music if you knock the poor tune down at the beginning of every measure."

### New York's Seal.

The figures on the seal of the city of New York refer to the trades in which the early settlers engaged. The beavers were used as early as 1645, for the trade in beaver skins was an important industry from the colony's beginning. In 1686 the flour trade had become important also, so the windmills and barrels were added to typify that occupation.

### Kisses and Kisses.

In Wolsey's slang, a kiss administered by a man is a "kiss." If the mixed kiss is so short, perky and inconsequential a thing as described, what would be the word for the all-embracing affection?

## AN IDEAL ISLAND

### Romance of Centuries Hangs About Porto Rico

One Hundred Years Before Jamestown Arose From Wilderness the Spaniards Were Living on This Gem of the Indies.

San Juan, Porto Rico.—Quaint and picturesque and heavy with the romance of four centuries as a possession of the superstitious and fiery Spaniard in Porto Rico, to which Edward M. Balster, principal of the Central high school of this city, goes next month as commissioner of education. As the reader is aware, Porto Rico became a colony of the United States at the end of the Spanish-American war, and a wonderful development has taken place in the tropical island the 14 years since.

Porto Rico had been settled a century by Europeans before Jamestown was founded or the Dutch sailed up the Hudson river. The second century had begun before the Pilgrim fathers waded from the Mayflower to the dry Massachusetts shores. Closely associated with its early history are the names of Juan Ponce de Leon, Nicholas de Oando, Diego, Columbus, Drake, Hawkins, Lord Cumberland, Salazar, Sotomayer and others whose struggles with the rebellious Indians, marauding Caribs, pirates and buccaniers in their attacks on the primitive city of San Juan and other more defenseless settlements furnish a story replete with adventure, warfare and romance.

Christopher Columbus touched at Porto Rico on his second famous voyage to the new world. Ponce de Leon, he of the search for the waters of everlasting youth, built the first town upon it and called it San Juan. San Juan became the capital of the island in 1608, and today holds the same position. It is a typical Spanish city.

If the traveler is fortunate he will sail into San Juan bay in the early morning when, against a gorgeous tropical sunrise, the blue of the ocean, the gray and moss covered walls, the white parapets of Casa Blanca and the many tinted dwellings rising terrace like from the bay to the heights overlooking the sea form a riot of colors. On the other side of the harbor vivid green cane fields, interspersed with



Luxuriant Vegetation in Porto Rico.

dark tinted palms, the soft colors of an occasional settlement and the background range upon range of hills still enveloped in the purple shadows of the dawn, complete the beauty of the scene.

The sound of the sunrise gun booms forth from the grim and battle scarred ramparts of old Morro, the impregnable fortress which the cannon balls of many nations have failed to crumble, as the ship approaches the narrow entrance to the land locked harbor. Passing the gray and ancient city wall, its heights crowned by the barracks, Casa Blanca, the residence of the military commander and Santa Catalina palace, now the headquarters of the civil administration and the residence of the governor of the island, in which Mr. Balster will have a home, the vessel threads its way between buoys marking the channel. Across the harbor the quaint fishing village of Palo Seco is seen in a grove of coconuts, and farther along the beach Catano, another small village, the delicately tinted houses from a distance adding to the charm of the picture.

## WOMAN IS CHASED BY MOOSE

Husband Kills Animal, Which, It is Believed, Escaped From the Whitney Preserve.

Pittsfield, Mass.—As Mrs. Lawrence Clement was leaving her house at Becket recently a big bull moose suddenly appeared in the front yard and chased her into the barn. She was so frightened she fell to the barn floor in a faint.

Mr. Clement, who is a constable, was near by and hastened by a back route to the house for his shotgun. He killed the moose as it darted for a thicket.

The moose weighed at least one thousand pounds. Mrs. Clement was under the care of a physician tonight. It is believed the moose is one that escaped from Harry Payne Whitney's preserve, an Otisville moose, last fall.

### ON SAFE GROUND

Whenever, on one of his rare days, Captain Goddy went to the city, he took some young relative with him as a special treat. On one such occasion he told his seventeen-year-old grandson, whom he had with him, that they would "dine at a real restaurant, and get a taste of fancy cooking."

When they were at last seated in the great dining room, the grandson waited impatiently while the captain read the bill of fare completely through without omitting a single article, whether domestic or foreign in title. At last he sighed and handed the card across the table to the boy.

"You choose what you like, sonny," he said, with a sigh. "As for me, I reckon as I've already eat more herrin' than any other man livin', I might as well stow away a little more. It's allays agreed with me so far."

### A True Sport.

"Why do you live with your husband if you quarrel all the time?"

"Well, my suster bet me a box of chocolates we would never celebrate our paper wedding anniversary, and I'm going to win it just to spite her."

—Figande Blaetter.

### TURNING THE TABLES.



The fish are smaller than they were when father pulled the line with vigor.

Somehow our statements don't compare.

Our fish are smaller, stories bigger.

A Wretch, indeed. He sees life through a faulty prism, whose heart is steeped in cynicism.

### An Exaggerated Comparison.

"What makes you think that man is necessarily a great statesman?" asked Senator Borghum.

"Because he is a clever lawyer."

"My dear sir, to assume that a clever lawyer is necessarily a great statesman is the same as taking it for granted that a numismatician is a financier."

### Propriety.

"I do not think, Augustus, that the resort recommended to you is a proper place for me to take our dear Angelina."

"Why not, my dear Matilda?"

"Because I've heard so much talk among the people who have been there of the boats logging the shore."

### Too Lazy.

"Do you believe that a big fish really swallowed Jonah?"

"Certainly; you've either got to believe the literal story or hunt out the deep, hidden significance of it if it's an allegory—and that's too much work. I prefer to take the story just as it is."

### NOT BRAINY.



Fred—the best capital a man can have is brains.

Florence—You can't be accused of making a vulgar display of your wealth.

### No Wonder.

A life upon the rolling deep. He thought would be just fine; His breakfast down he could not keep. So now he hates the helm.

### Fun in a Pullman.

"Were you not scared when the meeked highwayman came through the sleeping car and demanded money at the point of a revolver?"

"Scared? No, I thought it might be a good idea to get up and see what he was carrying."

### Gravely.

"There are the best of the best," said the man.

"There are the best of the best," said the man.