

Pink Tights and Gingham

A Business Adventure of Emma McChesney

By EDNA FERBER

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Some one—probably one of those Frenchmen whose life job it was to make epigrams—once said that there are but two kinds of women: Good women, and bad women. Ever since then problem playwrights have been putting that fiction into the mouths of "big scenes" around it. But don't you believe it. There are four kinds: Good women, bad women, good bad women, and bad good women. And the worst of these is the last. This should be a story of all four kinds, and when it is finished I defy you to discover which it is which.

When the red stuff in the thermometer waxed ambitious, so that fat men stand, bulging-eyed before it and beginning with the ninety mark count up with a horrible satisfaction—ninety-one—ninety-two—ninety-three—ninety-four! by gosh! and the cladders are filtering into your berth, and even the porter is wandering restlessly up and down the aisle like a black out in purgatory and a white duck coat, then the thing to do is to don those mercifully few garments which the laxity of sleeping-car etiquette permits, slip out between the green curtains and fare forth in search of drafts, liquid and atmospheric.

At midnight Emma McChesney, inured as she was to sleepers and all their horrors, found her lower eight unbearable. With the bravery of desperation she groped about for her cinerestown belongings, donned slippers and kimono, waited until the tortured porter's footsteps had squeaked their way to the far end of the car, then sped up the dim aisle toward the back platform. She wrenched open the door, felt the rush of air, drew in a long, grateful, smoke-steam-dust laden lungful of it, felt the breath of it on spine and chest, sneezed, realized that she would be the victim of a summer cold next day, and, knowing, cared not.

"Great, ain't it?" said a voice in the darkness. (Nay, reader. A woman's voice.)

Emma McChesney was of the non-screaming type. But something inside of her suspended action for the fraction of a second. She peered into the darkness.

"I get scared?" inquired the voice. Its owner lurched forward from the corner in which she had been crouching, into the half-light cast by the vestibule night-globe.

Even as men judge one another by a Masonic emblem, an Elk pin, or the band of a clarion, so do women in sleeping-cars weigh each other according to the rules of the Ancient Order of the Kimono. Seven seconds after Emma McChesney first beheld the negligee that stood revealed in the dim light she had its wearer neatly weighed, marked, listed, docketed and placed.

The blonde woman cast upon Emma McChesney an admiring eye.

"Gawd, ain't it hot!" she said, sociably.

"I wonder," mused Emma McChesney, "if that porter could be hypnotized into making some lemonade—a pitcherful, with a lot of ice in it, and the cold sweat breaking out all over the glass?"

"Lemonade!" echoed the other, wonder and amusement in her tone. "Are they still using it?" She leaned against the door, swaying with the motion of the car, and hugging her plump, bare arms.

"Travelin' alone?" she asked.

"Oh, yes," replied Emma McChesney, and decided it was time to go in.

"Lonesome, ain't it, without company? Goin' far?"

"I'm accustomed to it. I travel on business, not pleasure. I'm on the road, representing T. A. Buck's feather-trimmed petticoats!"

"On the road! Sellin' goods! And I thought you was only a kid. It's the way your hair's fixed, I suppose. Say, that must be a hard life for a woman—buttin' into a man's game like that."

"Oh, I suppose any work that takes a woman out into the world—" began Emma McChesney vaguely, her hand on the door-knob.

"Sure," agreed the other. "I ought to know. The hotels and time tables alone are enough to kill. Who do you suppose makes up train schedules? They don't seem to think no respectable train ought to leave anywhere before eleven-fifty p. m., or arrive after six a. m. We played Ottumwa, Ia., last night, and here we are jumpin' to Illinois."

In surprise Emma McChesney turned at the door for another look at the hair, figure, complexion and kimono.

"Oh, you're an actress! Well, if you think mine is a hard life for a woman, why—"

"Me!" said the green-gold blonde, and laughed not prettily. "I ain't a woman, I'm a queen of burlesque."

"Burlesque? You mean one of those—"

Emma McChesney stopped, her usually soft tongue floundering.

"One of those 'men only' troupes? You guessed it. I'm Blanche LeHaye, of the Sam Levin Crackerjack Belles. We get into North Bend at six tomorrow morning, and we play there tomorrow night, Sunday." She took a step forward so that her haggard face and artificially tinted hair were very near Emma McChesney. "Know what I was thinkin' just one second before you come out here?"

"No; what?"

"I was thinkin' what a cinch it would be to just push aside that canvas thing there by the steps and try what the newspaper accounts call 'jumpin' into the night.' Say, if I'd had on my other lawjerlie I'd had done it."

Into Emma McChesney's understanding heart there swept a wave of pity. But she answered lightly: "Is that supposed to be funny?"

The plump blonde yawned. "It depends on your funny bone. Mine's got blundered. I'm the lady that the Irish

lithographs of the Sam Levin Crackerjack Belles company glared at one from the bill-boards.

"That's our paper," explained Blanche LeHaye. "That's me, in the center of the bunch, with the pink reins in my hands, drivin' that four-in-hand of Johnnies. Hot stuff! Just let Dacre try to get it away from me, that's all. I'll show 'em."

She sank back into her corner. Her anger left her with the suddenness characteristic of her type.

"Ain't this heat fierce?" she fretted.

Now, Emma McChesney was a broad-minded woman. The scars that she had received in her ten years' battle with business reminded her to be tender at sight of the wounds of others. But now, as she studied the woman huddled there in the corner, she was conscious of a shuddering disgust of her—of the soiled blouse, of the cheap finery, of the sunken places around the jaw-bone, of the swollen places beneath the eyes, of the thin, carmined lips, of—

Blanche LeHaye opened her eyes suddenly and caught the look on Emma McChesney's face. Caught it, and comprehended it. Her eyes narrowed, and she laughed shortly.

"Oh, I dunno," drawled Blanche LeHaye. "I wouldn't go far as that, kid. Say, when I was your age I didn't plan to be no bum burlesque neither. I was going to be an actress, with a farm on Long Island, like the rest of 'em. Every real actress has got a farm on Long Island. If it's only there in the mind of the press agent. It's a kind of a religion with 'em. I was goin' to build a house on mine that was goin' to be a cross between a California bungalow and the horticultural building at the world's fair. Say, I ain't the worst, kid. There's others outside of my smear, understand, that I wouldn't change places with."

A dozen apologies surged to Emma McChesney's lips just as the driver drew up at the curbing outside the hotel and jumped down to open the door. She found herself hoping that the hotel clerk would not class her with her companion.

At 11 o'clock that morning Emma McChesney unlocked her door and walked down the red-carpeted hotel corridor. She had had two hours of restful sleep. She had bathed, and breakfasted, and donned clean clothes. She had brushed the ciners out of her hair, and maneuvered. She felt as alert, and cool and refreshed as she looked, which speaks well for her comfort.

Halfway down the hall a bedroom door stood open. Emma McChesney glanced in. What she saw made her stop. The next moment she would have hurried on, but the figure within called out to her.

Miss Blanche LeHaye had got into her kimono again. She was slumped in a dejected heap in a chair before the window. There was a tray, with a bottle and some glasses on the table by her side.

"Gawd, ain't it hot!" she whined miserably. "Come on in a minute. I left the door open to catch the breeze, but there ain't any. You look like a peach just off the ice. Got a gent friend in town?"

"No," answered Emma McChesney hurriedly, and turned to go.

"Wait a minute," said Blanche LeHaye, sharply, and rose. She slouched over where Emma McChesney stood and looked up at her sullenly.

"Why?" gasped Emma McChesney,

in the back yard, and fool with the dog, and act like a human being for one day. After you've been on the road for ten years a real Sunday dinner in a real home has got Sherry's flossiest efforts looking like a picnic collation with ants in the pie. You're coming with me, more for my sake than for yours, because the thought of you sitting here, like this, would sour the day for me."

Blanche LeHaye's fingers were picking at the pin which fastened her gown. She smiled, uncertainly.

"What's your game?" she inquired.

"I'll wait for you downstairs," said Emma McChesney, pleasantly. "Do you ever have any luck with caramel loins? Ethel's and mine always curdles."

"Do I?" yelled the queen of burlesque. "I invented it." And she was down on her knees, her fingers fumbling with the lock of her suitcase.

Only an Ethel Morrissey, inured to the weird workings of humanity by years of shrewd skirt and suit buying, could have stood the test of having a Blanche LeHaye thrust upon her, an unexpected guest, and with the woman across the street sitting on her front porch taking it all in.

At the door—"This is Miss Blanche LeHaye of the—er—Simon—"

"Sam Levin Crackerjack Belles," put in Miss LeHaye. "Pleased to meet you."

"Come in," said Miss Ethel Morrissey, without batting an eye. "I just phoned the hotel. Thought you'd gone back on me, Emma, I'm baking a caramel cake. Don't slam the door. This your first visit here, Miss LeHaye? Excuse me for not shaking hands. I'm all flour. Lay your things in there. Ma's spending the day with Aunt Gus at Forest City and I'm the whole work around here. It's got skirts and suits beat a mile. Hof, ain't it? Say, suppose you girls slip off your waists and I'll give you each an all-over apron that's loose and lets the breeze slide around."

Blanche LeHaye, the garrulous, was strangely silent. When she stepped about it in the manner of one who is fearful of waking a sleeper. When she caught the eyes of either of the other women her own glance dropped.

When Ethel Morrissey came in with the blue-and-white gingham aprons Blanche LeHaye hesitated a long minute before picking hers up. Then she held it by both sleeves and looked at it long and curiously. When she looked up again she found the eyes of the other two upon her. She slipped the apron over her head with a nervous little laugh.

"I've been a pair of pink tights so long," she said, "that I guess I've almost forgotten how to be a woman. But once I get this on I'll bet I can come back."

She proved it from the moment that she measured out the first cupful of brown sugar for the caramel icing. She shed her rings, and pinned her hair back from her forehead, and tucked up her sleeves, and as Emma McChesney watched her a resolve grew in her mind.

The cake disposed of—"Give me some potatoes to peel, will you?" said Blanche LeHaye, suddenly. "Give 'em to me in a brown crock, with a chip out of the side. There's certain things always goes hand-in-hand in your mind. You can't think of one without the other. Now, Lillian Russell and

BUILDING "CASTLES IN AIR"

Proceeding That Seems Foolish, If Not Reprehensible, to Some, May Readily Be Explained.

Those who build castles in the air are occasionally spoken of by more matter-of-fact persons with brutal and noisy derision, but oftener with a kind of tender pity which they find, not unjustifiably, far more exasperating. It implies so complete a misunderstanding of the builders' frame of mind. They are supposed to live in a vale of disappointments, but if they be out-and-out workmen with a love of their art they do, in fact, nothing of the kind. Long before one castle has actually fallen, sometimes even before so much as a telltale crack has appeared in the walls, they are planning the foundations of another on a larger and more gorgeous scale. When the crash ultimately comes it is unheard, for the din of cranes and hammers already are hard at work again. We have it on Sam Weller's authority that to take to building houses is "a medical term for being incurable." And very fortunately that is, a fortiori, still more true of castles. It is not, however, this implication of a life made up of disillusionments that is the most difficult to bear. Rather it is the suggestion that those who indulge in day dreams are so besotted as to believe that they will all of them come true. This is at once a slur on their intelligence and on their ability to play their own game properly; it shows that the sympathetic and stupid creatures who make it could never acquire the rudiments of the game if they were to try for a thousand years. As long as the player is trammelled by doubts and wonderings whether anything so beautiful could ever really befall him, he must almost of necessity curb his fancy and turn sadly back from some glorious flight; but, once he has as much as half admitted to himself that he is moving in the realms of fantasy, he can soar away to heights unknown.

Putting altogether on one side the delight that they give in the making, it may well be a question whether any material profit is to be derived from castles in the air.

Is Tobacco a Drug?

An interesting case of splitting hairs has arisen in Ireland in the administration of the national insurance act as to whether tobacco is a drug, a necessity or a luxury, all three views being taken by different authorities, says London Tit-Bits. It appears that the superintending medical officer of the Dublin district recommended that a compulsive patient coming under the provisions of the act be given tobacco for smoking to comfort him in his last days, offering to pay for the weed himself, but the insurance committee decided that the tobacco was necessary to the patient's treatment and sent in the bill to the insurance commissioners. Two weeks later the local authorities received an explanation of their action in charging the government with a shilling's worth of tobacco. Their reply was that tobacco was recognized as a drug in the British codes under the title of nicotine tabacum and that it had been prescribed by a registered practitioner. Thereupon the commissioners consulted learned K. C.'s and they are still wrestling with the subject. Meanwhile the patient is dead, the tobacco has been smoked and the expense of the disputation has already reached a hundred times the cost of the original tin of shag.

His First Thought

A well-known athlete says that on entering a Turkish bath one night he found a stranger struggling in the swimming pool. There was nobody near, and the man was evidently unable to swim, having jumped in probably without ascertaining the depth of the water would be above his head. The athlete swam to the assistance of the struggling man. Grasping him by the hair, he towed him to the side of the tank and assisted him to hang on until he recovered his breath.

What were the first words uttered by the rescued one? Did he stammer out thanks to his human preserver? No. The human mind is a curious affair. As the half-drowned man struggled back to consciousness memories of an old jest seemed to flit through his brain, for he said:

"Lucky for me I wasn't bald-headed!"

No Loafing Allowed

A well-known theatrical manager, more famous, if possible, for the "breaks" he made than for his many successes, attending the rehearsal of one of his plays, noticed that a man in the audience who had to play the trombone was holding the instrument in front of him and doing nothing.

Mr. Stretson at once called him to account.

"Say," said he, "what do you mean by not working along with the other fellows?"

"Why, Mr. Stretson," said the musician, "I can't play; I have 19 bars rest."

"Not on your life!" replied the angry manager. "I don't pay anyone for resting. Either you play when the other fellows do, or you clear out. See?"

Surgery in the Air

Sitting beside a steel beam on the highest section of a new theater under construction a doctor recently chloroformed a structural ironworker, and snapped into place the bones of a dislocated shoulder. When the accident occurred the workman was left helpless, as both arms were disabled, and there was no means of descent except a series of ladders. The doctor removed his hat, coat and vest, and began the dangerous ascent. A workman followed with the doctor's surgical case. After the operation the workman was able to make his way down the ladder and was taken to his home.

Decrease in Hydrophobia

Since the founding of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, there has been a steady decline in the number of cases of hydrophobia, none at all occurring some years.



They Walked With Her to the Front Porch, Making Talk as They Went.

not the life for a woman like you. I can get you a place in our office—not much, perhaps, but something decent—something to start with. If you—"

"For that matter," put in Ethel Morrissey, quickly, "I could get you something right here in our store. I've been there long enough to have some say-so, and if I recommend you they'd start you in the basement at first, and then, if you made good, they'd advance you right along."

Blanche LeHaye stood up and, twisting her arm around at the back, began to unbutton her gingham apron.

"I guess you think I'm a bad one, don't you? Well, maybe I am. But I'm not the worst. I've got a brother. He lives out West, and he's rich, and married, and respectable. You know the way a man can climb out of the mud, while a woman just can wade out of it? Well, that's the way it was with us. His wife's a regular society bug. She wouldn't admit that there was any such truck as me, unless, maybe, the Municipal Protective League, or something, of her town, got to wagging a war against burlesque shows. I hadn't seen Len—that's my brother—in years and years. Then one night in Omaha, I glimpsed him sitting down in the B. H. row. His face just seemed to rise up at me out of the audience. He recognized me, too. Say, men are all alike. What they see in a dingy, half-fed, ignorant bunch like us, I don't know. But the minute a man goes to Cleveland, or Pittsburgh, or somewhere on business he'll hunt up a burlesque show, and what's more, he'll enjoy it. Funny. Well, Len waited for me after the show, and we had a talk. He told me his troubles, and I told him some of mine, and when we got through I wouldn't have swapped with him. His wife's a wonder. She's climbed to the top of the ladder in her town. And she's pretty, and young-looking, and a regular swell. Len says



Rumpled, Shapeless Figure of Miss Blanche LeHaye.

and involuntarily put out her hand, "why—my dear—you've been crying! Is there—"

"No, there ain't. I can bawl, can't I, if I am a bum burlesquer?" She put down the squat little glass she had in her hand and stared resentfully at Emma McChesney's cool, fragrant freshness.

"Say," she demanded suddenly, "whatja mean by lookin' at me the way you did this mornin', h'm? Whatja mean? You got a nerve turnin' up your nose at me, you have. I'll just bet you ain't no better than you might be, neither. What the—"

Swiftly Emma McChesney crossed the room and closed the door. Then she came back to where Blanche LeHaye stood.

"Now listen to me," she said. "You shed that purple kimono of yours and hustle into some clothes and come along with me. I mean it. Whenever I'm anywhere near this town I make a jump and Sunday here. I've a friend here named Morrissey—Ethel Morrissey—and she's the biggest-hearted, most understanding friend that a woman ever had. She's skirt and suit buyer at Barker & Fish's here. I have a standing invitation to spend Sunday at her house. She knows I'm coming. I help get dinner if I feel like it, and wash my hair if I want to, and sit out

MANY MEN WHO STAY YOUNG

But Women, Taken as a Whole, Surpass the Masculine Sex in Warding Off Age.

I noticed an advertisement while riding on a train recently which announced clothing "for young men and men as a very catchy sort of an announcement, and after thinking it over I decided that there were a good many more men who stay young now than there were some years ago.

There was a time when men of fifty and over felt incumbent on themselves to dress and act as though they were old, a writer in the New London Day says. Nowadays, many of those who have passed that milestone in life's pilgrimage refuse to be old as long as they feel young, and they wear clothing that expresses their feelings, and get as much fun out of living as many who started their careers many years later.

Perhaps one reason that some men do not grow old quicker nowadays is the fact that conditions that govern labor are much different than they used to be. There has been a very material shortening up of hours and much greater opportunity is afforded for rest and recreation. Of course some men do not improve their chances as they should, but there is less probability of being prematurely broken down by hard labor than there was when the number of hours that constituted a working day was larger.

When it comes to keeping young, however, the men are not in it with the gentler sex. Grandmothers nowadays dress younger than women of

"Something decent?" Blanche Le-