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Lawson Puts Asunder

By M. J. Phillips

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"Let's go to Mr. Grieve," urged a voice outside Edward Lawson's door. It was a very humble door, since he was junior partner in the great law firm of Grieve, Field & Morrison.

"No," replied another voice, which he was sure he recognized, "we'll go in here. Edwy Lawson will know as well as anyone."

Lawson rose precipitately to greet Jean Melbourne, her mother, and Ferdy Van Sluyck. Jean was ravishing, though her eyelids showed evidences of recent tears.

"Oh, Edwy," began Jean, plaintively, "we're in the worst trouble! And we want you to help us out."

Van Sluyck moved stiffly in his chair. Mrs. Melbourne did not seem desolated.

"We've been such sillies," continued the girl, "I can't see why we didn't think—"

"What is it?" Anxiety sharpened Edwy's voice a bit.

"You tell, mother," urged Jean. Mrs. Melbourne smiled. "No, Jean; you must tell him yourself."

"Well, Edwy," began Jean, plaiting her handkerchief. "I have a house party of girls. There are eight of us. And last night we decided to put on a play—impromptu, you know."

"We borrowed a paper-backed novel from the cook, 'A Wild Wedding Morn,' and Nell Chatters assigned the parts. Really, it was funny. We didn't know what any character was going to say, and we had to think up answers on the spur of the moment to keep things going."

"I was the persecuted heroine because I have light hair; persecuted heroines are always blonde. The 'wild wedding morn' was the climax of the third act; so of course we had to have a wedding."

"Ferdy had been up to see papa on business and was going through the hall just as we were setting the stage in the parlor. The girls dragged him in; they said it would be much more realistic to have a man for that scene." She paused and looked at Lawson.

"I see." The young attorney swallowed miserably.

"We had the ceremony, with Ferdy as bridegroom—"

"And now some one has told you



Everybody's delighted

that a mock wedding, properly witnessed, it's binding in this state."

"Why, yes," agreed the girl in surprise.

"I've heard of such cases before."

"What we want to know, Mr. Lawson," asked the complacent Mrs. Melbourne, "is whether the ceremony is really binding."

"I don't know—yet," sighed Edwy. He turned to Jean. "What sort of rigmorale did you go through with?"

"Polly Pearson acted as the minister," replied the girl, "and what she said sounded natural."

Lawson's heart swooped down through limitless depths of despair, like a broken aeroplane. Polly Pearson was the sister of the Episcopal minister and had been witness at a hundred weddings. Doubtless she had the wedding service letter-perfect.

"You made the proper answers, Van Sluyck?" asked the attorney.

"I did," returned that young man.

"It was a very foolish thing to do," remarked Lawson.

Van Sluyck colored hotly. "We are not all lawyers," he retorted, loftily, and Edwy hated him.

"Then it's legal?" queried Jean, anxiously.

"I'm afraid it is; the law is joke-proof. It takes no account of the spirit in which the words of the marriage service are uttered—so long as they are uttered."

Jean was pale. She looked from her mother to Ferdy and back again. "What a bother!" she sighed. "And we'll have to go into court, and all that!"

The complacent Mrs. Melbourne glanced keenly at her daughter for a moment. "Is it such a terrible thing, Jean—the ceremony, I mean? Another—formal one—"

Van Sluyck leaned forward eagerly in his chair. "I don't think it's a calamity, Jean. You know how I feel—how I've always felt."

Jean stole a peep at Edwy Lawson from under her long eyelashes. He was digging vicious holes in his desk blotter.

"I don't know," she sighed. "I couldn't think what to do until I was sure the law called it a—marriage." Mrs. Melbourne rose. She was positively beaming. "Thank you so much,

Mr. Lawson. Mr. Melbourne will send you a check. Come, dear."

Ferdy, caressing an insufferable little mustache, was also beaming. Edwy felt like biting him.

"Mind, I don't say positively this ceremony is binding," he said wick- edly. "I would have to know all the circumstances; and, come to think of it, there is a supreme court decision of 1876 that has a bearing on certain mock marriages. I will look that up and call tonight to let you know," he finished, boldly.

"There's no hurry," began Mrs. Melbourne, quickly.

"Oh, yes there is!" assured Jean, who had been dashing her eyes with her handkerchief. "Do come up, Edwy."

That evening the attorney was striding back and forth like a menagerie exhibit. He and Jean were alone in the cozy back parlor. The light-hearted house party was making merry elsewhere.

Edwy sat down as far as possible from Jean. He did not dare go near; there was a subdued pensiveness about her altogether unaccustomed and charming. He wanted to cuddle and to comfort her, and he hadn't the right, or the money to give him the right.

"Well," he began, as cheerfully as possible, "the '76 decision has nothing to do with your case. The ceremony is legal and binding."

Jean sighed and looked down at her intertwined fingers. "Oh, well," she said, gently, "I don't know that it makes much difference. Everybody's delighted—Ferdy and his mother and my mother—"

"I thought your mother was," remarked Lawson.

"You did?"

"Yes, I did; Van Sluyck hasn't anything but money. He's a catch."

"Why, Edwy!" There was an injured look in her dewy eyes.

"And so are you delighted," he charged, harshly. "He can give you a flock of automobiles, and a forty-room house. Bah, money, money, money! It's the only thing that counts nowadays."

She bridled. "You shouldn't talk so, Mr. Lawson. I have a perfect right to abide by the law."

"You haven't!" Edwy's voice was sharp with misery. "That marriage must be annulled."

"Must be annulled—why?"

"Because I want you myself—and I'm going to have you."

He gathered her hands to his breast, and kissed the pink palms.

Jean swayed toward him. "Oh, Edwy," she whispered, "I was afraid you were never going to say it!"

After a while, some minutes—or maybe hours—later, Jean remarked demurely: "I really don't think an annulment is necessary, Edwy. You see, when Polly asked me if I'd love, honor, and obey Ferdy, I didn't say 'Yes.'"

"You didn't!" cried Edwy excitedly.

"No, never. I wouldn't promise to obey any man."

Affectionate mirthfulness bubbled up in Edwy's eyes. "You little sea lawyer, you! That really does put the whole thing in the catalogue of jokes."

"But," he continued, shrewdly, "why didn't you tell me that in the office this afternoon?"

Her burrowing movement fixed a few more grains of rice powder in the shoulder of his coat. "Because I wanted to tell you—here!" she whispered.

General Invitation.

One morning Miss Lucy Halcomb, the most fastidious housekeeper in Bushby, who was reported to have washed an unfortunate grand-nephew into a decline, opened her front door, having heard strange noises on the piazza.

There stood a tramp, his shoes caked with mud, which he was scraping off with a knife and kicking off by alternate applications of his heels on her door-mat.

"What are you doing?" demanded Miss Lucy, indignantly.

"Doing!" echoed the tramp. "I was starting round to the kitchen to ask the young lady I saw hanging out your clothes if she'd hand me a bite of breakfast. Then I thought I didn't make a very good appearance, and I was about to go on to the next house when I saw this mat with the invitation, 'Please use this Mat,' right on it, so I stepped up here. In about five minutes more I'll look well enough so I can go round to the kitchen."

"Well!" said Miss Lucy. "Well!" and then she closed the door, being unable to think of any appropriate remarks.—Youth's Companion.

Jewels of Indian Princes.

Some of the Indian princes possess jewels which would put those of Abdul Hamid in the shade. At the 1903 durbar the blaze of gems surprised even the Indians themselves. The Maharajah of Darbhanga was wearing a diamond necklace which had cost £90,000, and was considered a bargain at that. Besides a necklace of 18 rows of perfectly matched pearls as large as filberts, the Maharajah of Gwalior sported a sash depending from his left shoulder to his right knee, the material of which was completely hidden by similar stones. Another rajah carried a sword-hilt cut from a single emerald, and in the turban of the Nizam of Hyderabad was the Nizam diamond, which weighs 277 carats, or more than twice as much as the Koh-i-Noor.

Guillotine for Soldier Murderers.

The senate yesterday passed a bill under which soldiers or sailors sentenced to death by a court martial will henceforth be guillotined instead of being shot, except in cases where the offence is one which comes directly under military law. This bill was brought in after the murder some months ago of Mme. Gouin by soldiers, one of whom, Graby, was sentenced to death. His sentence was eventually commuted to one of life imprisonment, it being deemed inadvisable to ask men doing compulsory military service to form a firing party. The chamber of deputies passed the bill.—Petit Parisien.

Lucky Afterthought.

Cinderella had put on the glass slipper.

"To be in fashion," was her mental comment, "the heel ought to be at least two inches higher."

Suddenly reflecting, however, that persons wearing glass slippers mustn't kick, she wisely held her tongue; and all the world is familiar with the rest of the story.

ELKS CAN'T EAT ELK MEAT

When They Tried It in California a Game Warden Made a Raid.

One hundred and twenty Elks gathered at the Elks' lodge at San Rafael the other night to banquet on elk meat, but a game warden descended upon the club, confiscated and bore away the savory, steaming, well-cooked elk meat, and the Elks were forced to dine on beef. It was to be a great celebration in honor of L. F. Douglas and John J. Deane, mighty hunters.

Douglas and Deane had brought back 57 pounds of delicious elk meat from their recent Wyoming elk hunt. Two hundred and fifty invitations were sent, and the cooks converted the delicious meat into savory steaks and roast. The banquet was scheduled for 7 o'clock.

Deputy Game Warden Hunter entered the lodge at 6:30 o'clock, as the Elks were chuckling over the savory odor of the cooked meat which permeated the lodge.

"You may have Elks in your lodge," said Hunter, displaying his badge of office, "but, my sirs, elks is deer, and it is closed season for deer in California, and therefore you cannot eat elk." And forthwith he carted away the banquet food. A makeshift banquet on beef followed, but most of the Elks went home dissatisfied.—San Francisco Chronicle.

DULLS EDGE OF COMPLIMENT

But Amateur Musician Bravely Refrained From Making Explanation to Young Lady.

Every evening for three weeks twin brothers had been practicing for an amateur band concert. One twin, Joseph, played a cornet, and the other, Joel, operated on the violin. Meeting a young woman, Joseph asked her if she would attend the musical feast.

"Yes," she said, "and I think it will be very nice indeed. I've heard you and your brother practicing. That symphony of yours last night on the cornet was exquisite."

Unfortunately the keen edge of this compliment was dulled, because Joseph recalled that he had not played a cornet on the previous night. He had practiced on a trombone, but bravely refrained from making an explanation.

"And there was another piece that caught my fancy," the young lady continued. "It seemed like a Wagnerian extract. Do you also play a saxophone?"

"No, miss," was the amateur's admission.

"I wonder what was the other instrument I heard last night?"

"I can't say positively, but it was about nine o'clock, I think brother Joel was either putting a new string on his violin or tuning the old piano."

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A woman who possesses a charming temper and cordial manners is sure to be popular. Said a witty Boston woman: "I do like to have people behave; as if they were glad to see me, whether they are or not. I think a hostess should speak in a pleased tone, even if she only says, 'My dear Mrs. So-and-So, I am perfectly delighted to see you! Do sit right down on that bent din!'—Harper's Bazar.

Exact Definition.
A gentleman is a gentleman, a party is a man who gets his hair cut on Saturday night.—Topeka Capitalist.