

Rufus' Farewell Hop...

By RUBY DOUGLAS

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Rufus, or, to give him his title coupled with the name bestowed upon him by his sponsors in baptism, Cadet Lieutenant James Woodward Sims, U. S. N., was in love.

That it was an attack of cadet love his classmates emphatically denied. At Annapolis the accepted proverb is "cadet love is akin to calf love," and they could not detect symptoms of the latter malady in Rufus.

The fact that he was in love was evinced when Reardon, his roommate, came suddenly upon the young man in a reverie of which the inside boards of his locker door seemed to be the object.

Reardon coughed and otherwise made his presence known. If Rufus had been caught in the act of sealing the wall he could not have exhibited a more guilty expression. For the first time in their acquaintance Reardon saw the big lieutenant blush like a schoolgirl. His color rivaled the auburn of his hair, from which he derived his sobriquet.

A photograph of a girl hung on the inner side of the locker door. The usual array of athletes, family portraits or footlight favorites was absent. This picture alone adorned the space.

Reardon looked at the picture for a minute. "Studying girlology, Rufus?" he asked to break the awkward silence.

"Looks like it, doesn't it?" Rufus' embarrassment was evident.

"It needs study, old man. A fellow must study it carefully, and even then he often 'flunks' when the test comes."

"This species needs it," admitted Rufus, looking up at the face in the photograph.

"Yes," said Reardon in a slightly interrogative tone. He did not want to seem curious.

"She—it's Bess, you know—writes me that she will be unable to come to the farewell hop. She has a previous engagement, she says."

"Perhaps she has," Reardon suggested by way of consolation, although the idea seemed ludicrous to him. A previous engagement when the Annapolis farewell hop was in question!

"Well, but she couldn't, man—that is, we have talked of it the whole year—and when I was at home on the last leave we—well, Reardon, we sort of fixed things up, you know," confessed Rufus, the deep red dodging through his skin again. "And she said she would be down for the hop and to our graduation. I suppose it's her woman's prerogative to change her mind, but"—Rufus hesitated.

"I understand, old man. It's a bit rough on a fellow. She may explain later." Reardon felt awkward in the role of sympathizer. It was such a foreign element in his relation with Rufus.

"There's one little thread of possibility in some nonsense which has passed between us that might explain matters to me; but, oh, it is such an absurd, such an utterly impossible, reason, that I would not suggest it to her."

Rufus was silent. Should he put into words the foolish little matter which had been weighing upon his mind? Reardon looked at him expectantly.

"You know, Reardon, how we fellows always joke and laugh about the necessity of naval officers marrying money. You realize that on every occasion we give vent to the time worn declaration that we must have a girl with capital. I, like the rest of you, have done it, and—well, Bess was qualified in that direction, though it never occurred to me at the time."

"Recently her father met with reverses—not serious, you understand—but, oh, hang it, don't you see? She might have taken all that nonsense se-

riously," finished Rufus. He did not look up at Reardon.

And Reardon did just the wrong thing at that moment. He laughed. It all seemed so far out of the limits of possibility.

"Forgive me, Rufus," he said, putting out his hand, "but I could not help it. Cheer up. And, I say, Rufus, don't you think perhaps overstudy has affected your head?" he said, significantly indicating his head.

Rufus smiled in spite of himself and grasped his roommate's hand.

"Perhaps," he said, closing the locker door and taking up his cap. "Going to Mrs. Butler's?"

The latter question was quite unnecessary, for Mrs. Butler was the wife of Lieutenant Commander Butler of the Naval academy, and her teas were generally considered the last torments of the first class man, not that they were unpleasant, but they were a duty, a part of their education for the life of a naval officer.

Personally Rufus considered them less of a duty than a pleasure, for he had spent several pleasant hours with the gracious hostess.

As they pulled the old fashioned knocker of the house in Blake row Rufus pulled himself together as if to cast all sentimental thoughts from his mind. If Bess had a "previous engagement" she might keep it.

"Mr. Sims, how do you do? And Mr. Reardon?" said Mrs. Butler from behind the tea table. "Perhaps I was just looking for you."

"We will give ourselves the benefit of the doubt, eh, Rufus?" Reardon said, glancing about the room. Here and there were little groups of cadets.

"Very well. Which of you is at liberty for the farewell hop?" Mrs. Butler laughed with the consciousness of having asked a preposterous question.

Both cadets caught the infectious laugh, but neither spoke for a minute—Reardon because he must say he was engaged and Rufus because he could not quite make up his mind to offer his services for the evening.

"Strange as it may seem, Mrs. Butler, I am not escorting any one and am at your service," Rufus said after a minute. "You have a guest?"

"I will have. She writes me today that she is coming. She is not aware of the fact that the hop is that night, I believe, and I was at a loss for some one to attend to her dance order. Mr. Sims, let me give you another cup of tea to thank you."

Reardon, looking on, thought he detected a twinkle in his hostess' eyes. She was unusually frivolous, he thought; but, then, it was the end of the term.

"You may only thank me by permitting me to escort you as a chaperon," Rufus was nothing if not gallant.

But when Rufus was again in his quarters he felt less pleased over the responsibility he had assumed for the evening. What an effort he would have to make to be even civil to the strange young person.

The chaperon had not yet made her appearance after the introduction. She had been summoned to the telephone or something.

Cadet Lieutenant Sims was doing un-military things with his arms and saying anything but the platitudes he would be expected to utter on first acquaintance with a pretty young woman.

"It's only a little joke of mine, and Mrs. Butler helped me out," Bess was saying in strangely smothered tones. "I knew what fun it would be to see you when you came here for the strange girl and found me. Yes, I'll admit it was the fact of papa's losing a little money that suggested it all. I could not resist it. You had your little joke; I had mine."

"But yours was cruel, wasn't it—just a little, dear? You"—Rufus stopped suddenly, and Bess became interested in a large painting of the lieutenant commander.

"You seem to be getting acquainted very quickly," laughed Mrs. Butler in the doorway. "But our cadets have a reputation in that direction."

A Question of Time.

"Do you take this woman for better or worse?" began the clergyman, but before he could proceed further he was interrupted.

"It's too early to tell yet," answered the groom. "You'll have to give me time, sir."—Boston Post.

There is no law against laughter. You are here on earth and entitled to its sunshine.

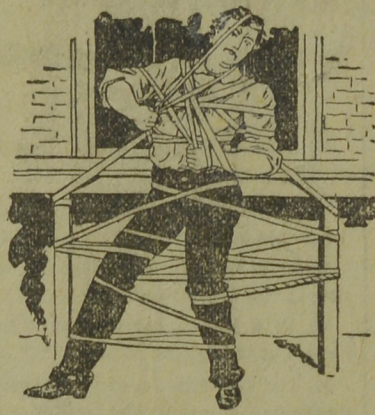
In Society.

Tess—Miss Nuritch talks so much about her mother's social position before she was married.

Jess—Well?

Tess—Did she really have any position in society?

Jess—Oh, lots of them. She never accepted a place as cook except in very swell families.—Brooklyn Eagle.



The man on the stage who does the trick of escaping from firmly tied ropes, submits to the bonds with a smile. He knows he can get out of the ropes that are being knotted. Put the same man in the woods and let Indian captors bind him to a tree for torture and he would struggle to the last against the bonds.

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"Well," replied Mrs. Hadley, "I hope they'll get Mr. Jones, our old plumber, to fix them, and not those new plumbers that have just set up on the corner."

Accounting For It.

"I see," said his colleague, "that there were some questions asked at the trial to which you didn't object."

"Were there?" said the lawyer. "Perhaps I was out of breath."—Puck.

A Novelty to Him.

"Why do you always pick out the homeliest women to talk to?"

"I never saw any before. I come from Cincinnati, you know."—Cincinnati Commercial Tribune.

She Got It.

He (time 11:30 p. m.)—And you will think of me when I am gone?

She (suppressing a yawn)—I'll try to if you ever give me an opportunity.

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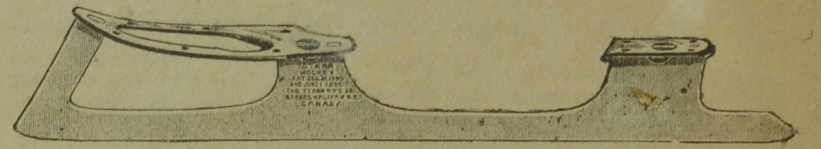
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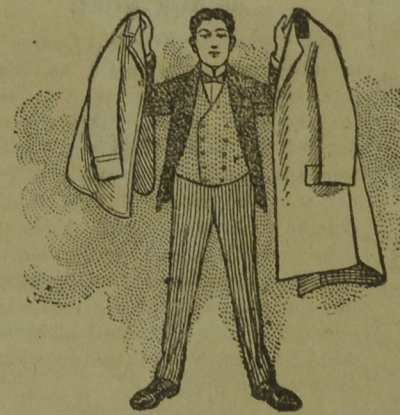
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