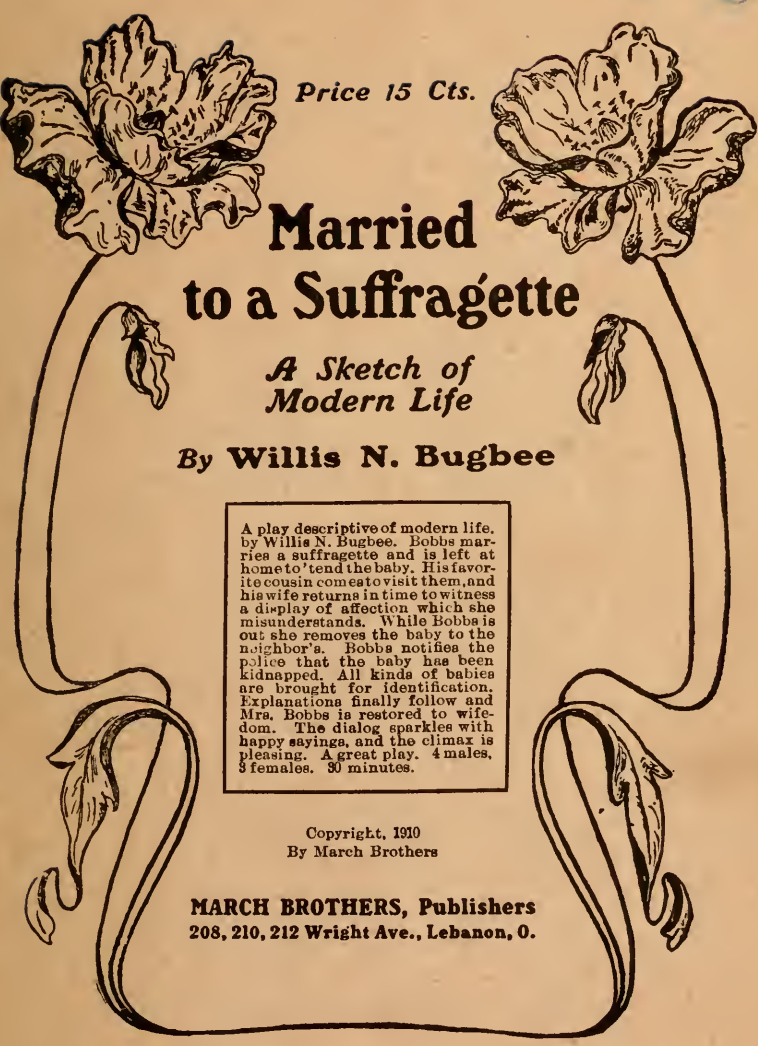


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A play descriptive of modern life, by Willis N. Bugbee. Bobbs marries a suffragette and is left at home to tend the baby. His favorite cousin comes to visit them, and his wife returns in time to witness a display of affection which she misunderstands. While Bobbs is out she removes the baby to the neighbor's. Bobbs notifies the police that the baby has been kidnapped. All kinds of babies are brought for identification. Explanations finally follow and Mrs. Bobbs is restored to wifehood. The dialog sparkles with happy sayings, and the climax is pleasing. A great play. 4 males, 3 females. 30 minutes.

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PROPERTIES.

Two or more chairs ; small table or stand ; small cradle with furnishings ; small baby carriage or go-cart ; four large rag dolls (one black) ; imitation telephone ; suit cases ; old dress skirt, with long rent in it ; needle and thread ; bouquet of roses.

The telephone ring may be made by use of an alarm clock.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. indicates right of stage ; L., left ; C., center ; R. C., right center ; L. C., left center, etc.

The actor is supposed to be facing audience.

Married to a Suffragette

SCENE: A sitting room in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bobbs. Entrances are at R., C. and L. Two or more chairs and small stand are on stage. A cradle is at R. C. The entrance, C., is partially concealed by draperies.

Mr. Bobbs is discovered seated at R. C. rocking cradle.

Mr. Bobbs (adjusting baby's clothing). There, darling, lie still and slumber to your heart's content. Mother'll be back bye and bye—in the sweet bye and bye. Daddy's got to wash the dishes and make the beds and sew up the tear in mamma's gown. (Exit at C. and immediately returns with dress skirt. Examines it.) Great Scott! I wonder how she ever got such a rent in her dress as that? (Holds it up for inspection, then proceeds to sew. A pause in the soliloquy.) There used to be an old saying that ran something like this:

“Man works from sun to sun,

But woman's work is never done.”

I guess the poet didn't refer to me. Things have got badly warped in this household. When we

were first married I was a self-respecting, respectable man of the world, but now, after a year and a half of married life, I have become a household drudge, a man of all work, a dishwasher, a chambermaid, a baby tender, and the good Lord only knows what else, while my better half goes about the town lecturing on politics and organizing women's clubs. Well, that's what comes of marrying a suffragette. By Jove! if I ever have it to do over again—this marrying business—I'll marry anybody else but a reformer—a dressmaker, a milliner, a stenographer; yes, even a scrubwoman. Any one of them would be likely to be at home some of the time. But, after all, what's the use of complaining. There's no way of remedying matters unless—unless I get a divorce. Sometimes I've half a mind to do it, but—there's the baby. (Sews for a moment and rocks baby with foot. Looks toward R. and jumps up.) By Jove! here comes Cousin Madge. (Scurries about removing apron and concealing both apron and dress skirt by throwing them under table.) I haven't seen her since we were married. I'm mighty glad to see her, but—but I'd rather she wouldn't know the true condition of affairs here.

(Madge rushes in R., drops baggage, rushes up to Mr. B. and shakes hands affectionately.)

Madge. Oh, Cousin Hugh!

Mr. B. My dear Cousin Madge.

Madge. Really, I am so glad to see you.

Mr. B. Maybe you think I'm not glad to see you, too.

Madge. Just think! I haven't seen you since you were married, and we used to be so chummy. How are you getting along?

Mr. B. Oh, I am bearing up under it as well as could be expected.

Madge. Bearing up under it? What do you mean? Where is Mrs. Bobbs?

Mr. B. I was simply referring to married life. My wife isn't here just now.

Madge. But, Hugh, I don't understand you. Your wife isn't——

Mr. B. No, she isn't dead—at least, physically.

Madge. Oh, Hugh she isn't (taps forehead) you know?

Mr. B. Crazy? Not as I know of. I haven't seen enough of her lately to know.

Madge. But she hasn't—you don't mean to say you are——

Mr. B. No, we're not divorced yet. It hasn't quite reached that point.

Madge. Then you have separated?

Mr. B. Only temporarily. To tell you the truth, Madge, my wife has become one of these new-fangled reformers—a suffragette. It calls her away from home a great deal of the time—in fact, nearly all of the time.

Madge. Well, I am thankful it is no worse than that. So that leaves you to look after the

house, doesn't it? I had a suspicion when I first came in that—

Mr. B. That I was wearing the petticoats?

Madge. It had all the appearance of bachelor's hall except—except the cradle, of course. Really, I've been so excited that I have entirely overlooked the baby. I must take a peep at the little "tootsy wootsy" now. (Goes to cradle and looks at "baby.") How old is she, Hugh, and what is her name?

Mr. B. Well, *he* is about six months old and *his* name is Hugh McEllery Bobbs.

Madge. Named after you?

Mr. B. He certainly wasn't named before me.

Madge. Isn't he just the dearest little darling of a boy! What color are his eyes, Hugh?

Mr. B. Light blue. He has his mother's eyes, you know.

Madge. But I don't know. You must remember I have never seen your wife. You were married after I went West.

Mr. B. So we were—married in Boston, the home of culture and beans and women's rights.

Madge (admiringly). And such delicate pink cheeks with the daintiest little dimple in each one. (Looks at Mr. B.) But you can't guess how I think he resembles you, Hugh.

Mr. B. Haven't the slightest idea unless it is his nose

Madge. No, it's his mouth. He has such a delicious mouth with lips like ripe, red strawberries.

(Mr. B. turns to audience and exhibits a comical expression of surprise and pleasure.)

Mr. B. Crushed strawberries, Madge?

Madge. No, plump red strawberries, fresh from the vines. It's just the kind of a mouth that one likes to kiss.

(Madge continues to admire the baby; Mr. B. turns to audience with same expression as before.)

Mr. B. I say, don't spread it on so thick, Madge.

Madge. (Turns quickly and looks at Mr. B.) Oh, as far as you are concerned, you have outgrown that stage long ago.

Mr. B. Really. But for heaven's sake, don't wake the baby. You'll find that his mouth resembles both his mother's and mine in more ways than one. He has an extraordinarily strong pair of lungs, too.

Madge. Well, just as soon as he wakes up, I must kiss the precious darling.

Mr. B. No doubt you'll have time enough for that. I shall be glad to let you take care of him as much as you like.

Madge (sits down beside of Mr. B. and prepares to listen). Now do tell me what has happened since I have been away. What has everybody been doing? Who's married and who's dead? I have heard scarcely anything from here since I went away two years ago.

Mr. B. Everything runs along in the same old rut. Deacon Podger goes to church every

Sunday and prays just as sanctimoniously as ever, and then proceeds to do up everybody he can every other day in the week.

Madge. Why, Hugh, you ought to be ashamed of yourself.

Mr. B. It's a fact and everybody knows it. Your Aunt Samantha is wearing the same old shiny black silk dress she's worn since the year one.

Madge. Poor old soul!

Mr. B. Poor? She's rich as a Jew.

Madge. But she thinks she can't afford a better one.

Mr. B. And Josh Puffet comes to see her regularly every fortnight as he's done for the last forty years.

Madge. Sometimes they may surprise us by inviting us to their wedding.

Mr. B. I wonder if 'twill be their golden wedding.

(*Madge* hums portions of chorus of "Put on Your Old Grey Bonnet.")

"And through the field of clover,
We'll drive up to Dover,
On our golden wedding day."

(*Hugh* appears to be thinking.)

Madge. What are you thinking about, Hugh?

Mr. B. Of what we will be doing, my wife and I on our golden wedding day.

Madge. Oh, pshaw! That's too remote. Let's talk of something in the golden present or the dreamy past.

Mr. B. Reminiscences of the happy days when we were kids together? (Nudges her.) Do you remember the time we used to ride the red calf around the barnyard?

Madge. Yes, I was seven then, and so were you. How funny he used to prance about and kick up his heels just like a broncho. (She laughs heartily.)

Mr. B. Hush! Don't wake up the baby.

(She rocks baby and hums to it.)

Mr. B. And do you remember the husking bee down to Squire Hawkins' just after he built the new barn?

Madge. What a broad range of time your thoughts cover seven, seventeen and seventy. Happy childhood, giddy youth and serene old age. Yes, Hugh, I remember that I was the only one who found a red ear that night.

Mr. B. And I was the first to improve the opportunity. Do you know, Madge, you look just as young and sweet to-day as you did then. I wouldn't mind if somehow or other you were to find another red ear.

Madge. Have you forgotten that you are a married man?

Mr. B. Great are the hardships of a married man. But we are cousins—that makes a difference, and you said my lips—

Madge. No; I said the baby's.

Mr. B. That the baby's lips resembled mine and that they were just the kind one likes to— (Suddenly kisses her.) Madge jumps back in

surprise. Mrs. B. enters at rear, just in time to see act. Astonishment and anger should be expressed in her movements and expression. She stands a moment, then conceals herself behind the draperies.

Madge. Why, Hugh, I didn't think you were in earnest.

Mr. B. I must confess that I wasn't until that instant. I acted upon a sudden inspiration.

Madge. What if your wife had happened in and seen you.

Mr. B. Never fear. She is at this moment too deeply absorbed in the organization of the "Society for the Advancement of Women's Rights and the Suppression of Man" to see anything that is going on around home. She will never be the wiser.

Madge. Well, I will forgive you this time as I have done so many times before, but I wouldn't have had your wife see you for anything.

Mr. B. Don't worry. And now that baby is sleeping so soundly I have something to show you. I know you are passionately fond of roses. We have some of the finest ones you ever saw. Come and I will show them to you.

Madge. Will the baby be all right?

Mr. B. Perfectly safe. We will not be gone long. (Exeunt L.)

(Enter Mrs B. very excited.)

Mrs. B. So that's what goes on while I'm away from home, is it? My husband entertains

other women. I'd just like to know who the brazen thing is who comes into my home and holds such loving conversation with my husband. And I actually saw him kiss her. thought I'd never be the wiser, did he? Deeply absorbed in the Society for the Advancement of Women's Rights, am I? Well, I suppose I should have been there this very minute if it hadn't been for the rumpus we had over the election of officers. I didn't know that Miss Purdy and Miss Knowlton could be so mean. I'll never have anything more to do with them or the society either, so there. Everything seems to go wrong, and now my husband has proved false to me. Oh, dear, what shall I do. (Sits down and buries her head in hands and sobs. Finally jumps up with determination.) I know what I'll do. I'll go away. I'll take baby over to Mrs. O'Connor's and leave it. Then I'll come back and get some of my clothes and we'll leave him and Spicerville, too. I can work and earn a living for baby and myself, and I'll beg before I shall ever come back again. (Bends over cradle to take baby). Come, baby, we're going away forever—but no, it wouldn't do to wake him up. I'll just take cradle and all.

(She picks up cradle and leaves stage, R. She is scarcely out of the door before Madge enters L., carrying bunch of roses.)

Madge. My! I haven't seen such pretty flowers this side of California. Hugh seems to take so much pride in them, too. He is just the

same happy-go-lucky boy that he always was, but yet something tells me that he doesn't enjoy himself with his wife as much as he ought. Oh, I'd most forgot—I came in to see if the baby is all right. Turns to R. and looks astonished.) Why, he's gone—cradle and all. Oh, Hugh! Hugh! the baby's gone! She runs out screaming "Hugh! Hugh! the baby's gone." She soon returns followed by Hugh. Both are excited.)

Mr. B. What—what's the matter?

Madge. Can't you see? The baby's gone—cradle and all.

Mr. B. So it is. It's been kidnapped. Run to the door and see if you can see anything of it.

(Madge runs to R. while Mr. B. races about the room frantically.)

Madge (peeping in at the door). There isn't a soul to be seen.

Mr. B. Well, hurry and run down the street and ask everybody you meet if they've seen a kidnapped baby. I'll telephone for the police. (Goes to telephone.) Hello, central! Give me the chief of police. Hello! This is Hugh Bobbs, 64 Summer Street. We've just lost a baby—a baby boy. It's been stolen—kidnapped. We just left the house for a moment and when we returned it was gone.—Why, about six months old, yellow hair, blue eyes, lips like ripe—What? Oh, a light pink dress—Yes, offer a reward of one hundred dollars—anything to find it. Telephone me if you get any trace of it.—What? My number's 2-6-5. Well, hurry up or you'll

be too late. Good-bye. (Hangs up receiver and leaves 'phone.) Now, I'll run over and ask Mrs. Waggles if she's seen anything of it. It is seldom that anything happens without her knowing it. (Exit L.)

(Enter Mrs. B. She looks cautiously about.)

Mrs. B. Gracious! They're out in the garden yet. He seems to be all taken up with that woman whoever she is. Well, when I get some of my things away he can make love to her as much as he pleases. (She steps from stage at C. and soon returns with armful of clothing, hats, etc.) I'll have to come once more and then I'm done. (Exit R.)

(Enter Mr. B. at L.)

Mr. B. That beats me. I haven't any clue yet. When Mrs. Waggles doesn't know what's going on I can tell you it's a pretty mysterious case. She said she thought she saw Susie come into the house a little while ago, but she must have been mistaken. Something must be done. We must find it before Susie gets home. I declare she's coming now.

(Enter Mrs. B.)

Mr. B. Oh, Susie, something dreadful has just happened.

Mrs. B. Yes, I am aware that something has happened.

Mr. B. Then you have heard about it? Madge and I went out to look at the roses for a minute and when we came back—

Mrs. B. What were you doing before you went into the garden, I'd like to know?

Mr. B. Just talking over old times, and when we came back—

Mrs. B. Talking over old times? Then you have known her for some time?

Mr. B. Known who?

Mrs. B. Why, that woman you are so infatuated with—Madge, or whatever her name is.

Mr. B. Of course. I've always known her. Oh, Susie, I was so excited I forgot to tell you that Cousin Madge has come to make us a visit. Haven't you heard me speak of Cousin Madge Huntington? We were children together—just like brother and sister.

Mrs. B. (aside). Have I made a mistake? (Rushes up to him.) Yes, I remember now, and oh, Hugh, I'm so glad.

Mr. B. Glad? This is no time to be glad. Can't you see that the baby is gone?

Mrs. B. I guess it hasn't gone far.

Mr. B. But it really has. When we returned from the garden there wasn't a sign of the baby or the cradle either. It's been kidnapped.

Mrs. B. (extending arms toward him appealingly). Oh, Hugh, forgive me.

Mr. B. Forgive you? For what?

Mrs. B. I am to blame. The baby is at Mrs. O'Connor's.

Mr. B. At Mrs. O'Connor's? What do you mean?

Mrs. B. Listen and I will tell you. We had some trouble at the club and I came home earlier than usual. When I came into the house you were talking so earnestly with your cousin that you did not hear me. I concealed myself for a moment and I saw you—

Mr. B. You saw me kiss Madge? (Laughs.) And you thought I was a wicked, wicked man?

Mrs. B. But I haven't told you the worst of it. Will you promise to forgive me if I tell you?

Mr. B. Forgive you? I'm glad to do anything now that I know the baby is safe.

Mrs. B. Well, I made up my mind to leave you and Spicerville forever. I had taken the baby over to Mrs. O'Connor's until I could get my clothes.

Mr. B. Great Scott! You aren't thinking of doing it now, are you?

Mrs. B. No, now that I have found out who the young woman is. Where is Madge?

Mr. B. She's out looking for baby. I have already telephoned to the police department to make a search. Here's Madge now.

(Enter Madge out of breath.)

Madge. Oh, Hugh, I haven't found it yet, but the police are all out looking for it and everybody's excited. Why, you're laughing—you haven't found it?

Mr. B. Yes, thank God, I have found it.

Madge. Where was it?

Mr. B. Safe and sound at Mrs. O'Connor's.

Madge. How did it ever get there?

Mr. B. Oh, there was a little misunderstanding. My wife—

Mrs. B. Hugh!

Mr. B. By the way, Madge, allow me to present you to my wife. Susie, this is my old-time chum and cousin, Madge Huntington.

Madge and Mrs. B. (embracing). I am so glad to see you.

Mr. B. (aside). It really looks as if they were.

(Enter boy wheeling a go-cart with doll in it.)

Newsboy. Hi, mister, is this your kid? I found it out in front of Smith & Jones' store. There wasn't nobody 'round so I just brought it right along.

Mr. B. No, my boy, that isn't our baby.

Boy. Oh, Gee. Now I got ter wheel dis thing back again. A man said you're goin' to pay a reward for findin' it an' I was 'most sure of gittin' dat hundred dollars.

Mr. B. I'm sorry, but we only want our own baby.

Boy. Dat's jest de way it goes. Times is mighty hard. A feller can't never make no money now-a-days 'thout workin' for it. (Exit R.)

(Enter Pat O'Neil, R.)

Pat. Begorra, misther, I've found yer baby. 'Twas settin' down in the shtrate as continted as a pig on an Irishman's kitchen floor. Jist hand me over thot hundred dollars and I'll be afther lavin' at onct.

Mrs. B. Why, that's Mrs. Wheeler's baby. Whatever will she say?

Pat. Do ye be afther sayin' 'tis not your baby at all, at all?

Mrs. B. Oh, no; that isn't our baby.

Pat. Bedad, thin, yez can carry him home if yez know where it belongs. I'll jist lave him on the front porch. (Exit R.)

Madge. This is becoming quite interesting.

Mr. B. I should say it was becoming serious.

(Enter policeman with a baby on each arm, one black and one white.)

Policeman. Here's a couple of kids. Don't know whether they belong to you or not. One of 'em here's a sort of brunette.

Mrs. B. Oh, Hugh, just think of it!

Mr. B. I'm very thankful to say that neither one of them belongs to me. We have just found our baby.

(Mrs. B. leaves room at C. She removes coat, hat, collar, etc., and is ready to appear as a daintily dressed lady at her next entrance.)

Policeman. You've found it, have you? Then I'll hustle back and inform the chief. You see we're locking everybody up in the station house that we find carrying a baby. The women we took these from was that mad they acted like lunatics. (Exit R.)

Madge. I don't blame them. Just think how those poor mothers must feel to have their babies taken away from them and then have to be locked up besides.

Policeman (putting head in at door). There's a half a dozen more babies headed this way. I'll tell them you've got more than you can attend to already. (Exit.)

Mr. B. It's a mysterv where they all come from. (Telephone bell rings.) I wonder if they're beginning to come by telephone. (Goes to 'phone.) Hello! Yes—what? Is that so? (To Madge.) Where's Susie?

Mrs. B. (entering). Here I am.

Mr. B. Here's more good news. You've been elected president of the Woman's Rights Club.

Mrs. B. Tell them that I won't accept it under any consideration.

Mr. B. (at the telephone). Hello! She says she refuses to accept the office under any consideration whatsoever. Good-bye.

Mrs. B. And what is more, I shall resign as a member of the society tomorrow. I shall devote my time hereafter entirely to my home and my family.

(Enter Mrs. O'Connor, R., with baby.)

Mrs. O'Connor. Thin yez'll be afther wantin' your precious baby. I just brought him over so's to be ready whin the critical toime came. Ye see, I've been through the mill mesilf. Mony's the toime Mike an' mesilf have had little tifts and' 'twould all blow over in a little whoile.

Mrs. B. Thank you, Mrs. O'Connor. You're a good neighbor. (To Madge.) And, Madge, I hope you will make us a good long visit.

Madge. I shall gladly accept your invitation.

Mr. B. And I rejoice that I have not only found my child that was lost, but that I am once more blessed with a loving wife and a pleasant home.

(Mr. B. and Mrs. B. step to front and stand side by side. Madge stands L., and Mrs. O'Connor R.)

Mrs. O'Connor. Hivin bliss the both o' ye and the baby. I do be thinkin' ye'll be afther havin' a second honeymoon. (She places baby in Mrs. B.'s arms.)

(Curtain.)

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