A BACHELOR HUSBAND

By RUBY M. AYRES - Author of "Richard Chatterton," Etc.

Copyright, 1920, by W. J. Watt & Co. MY CHEEKS burn so," she said

M shyly. She had never before been tissed as Feathers had kissed her. Her eyes fell on a photograph of thris as she turned away. Chris at his undsomest and happiest, his eyes meeting hers with the old smiling carelessser, and she felt as if a cold hand had lutched her heart.

Until now she had forgotten Chris! the had forgotten everything. She turned quickly to the man behind

"I am quite ready." She was only arious now to go.

He kissed her again on the dark tairs, very humbly and reverently, and he kept her hand in his as they walked together along the street.

"Is it very late?" she asked once, and "Is it very inte?" she asked once, and he said: "No-only ten; do you think they will have missed you?"
"I locked my door; they will think I am asleep. Greyson will let me in."
"He clenched his teeth in the dark-

had begun. Where was it going to end? He could feel shame like a mantle end? He could be shall like a mantle on his broad shoulders.

He said good-night to her at the end of the street, following her slowly till the was safe indoors. Then he turned

she was sale indeers. Then he turned and walked back to his rooms. His head walked back to his rooms. His head was burning, and he took off his hat to have it to the cool night air. He did not know if he was more happy than be had ever been in his life before, or like the love of his, who had never discovered that he loved March. mutterably wretched. The thought of her kisses made his

and reel, but the shame of his own Hiable weakness was like a searing

the dust at his feet.

such delirium. He had arranged every detail for her, had written them down

up at the stars. "God, it can never be!" he told him- their eyes held one another the reali-self despairingly

down to earth.

It was not of himself he thought at all. He would have gloried in a shame shared with her; but for Marie, little He went up to his rooms with drag-

There was a light shining brough the half-closed door, and he upposed vaguely that he must have left t burning when he went out. He pushed open the door and saw sitting in the chair where so short a time ago he had held Marie in

CHAPTER XXI

ight with my friend last night teel sprang out to gleam and bite.

There was a moment's stience, then went forward. The rictous his veins had quieted and he felt a l tle cold and "Het !!" he said. Chris looked up. tle cold and breathless.

just gone out."
"Yes * * yes * * I went down to the end of the road, that's all." He poured out two whiskies with a hand that shook badly, and pushed one

"Have a drink?" Chris tasted it and made a wry face "Lord That's a strong dose." he add. He added more soda to it, but Feathers drained his at a gulp. "Well, how goes it?" he asked. He

sat down on the other side of the table, so that his face was out of the light. The room to him seemed filled with Marie's presence. It was so real that be wondered Chris did not guess she had been here. Chris stood up, his shoulders against

the mantelshelf.
His handsome eyes met his friend's with haggard pain.
"I've got something to tell you." he said. "I'm telling you because you've always been—been my best friend."

There was a little silence, then: told his story abruptly. days ago, I were golfing with them the day be-

Chris flushed and his eyes wavered. "A damnable incident happened when we were down there—Miss Web-He could not go on.

Feathers nodded.
'I know. Don't trouble to explain.
I could see it in Scotland. She thinks the is in love with you—is that it? and told you so? Mrs. Heriot overheard, or aw, and told * * * your wife * * * Go

Chris looked relieved. That's it, more or less. I swear by you that there was nothing in it on my side at all I've never given the rl a thought, beyond to play golf with Yes, go on!" There was a long si-

"Marie won't believe me--' Chris aid then brokenly. "She won't even have broke et me explain. Miss Webber'r Lrother friendship. ded unexpectedly, and I took her back ayed at an inn in Chester that night Chris and his wife would have been her home is in Chester—and came happy enough now. He seemed to see back as soon as I could the next morn- it all as plainly as if it were a picture back as soon as I could the next morn-ing, and this is what I got * * *!" He dropped back into his chair despair ingly. "She's done with me." he said "She's done with me," he said

Feathers stared at his friend with pride had been up in arms and had gone trained eyes, and after a moment Chris on increasing from that day until to-

"Pil kill that Heriot woman if I ever again." he broke out passion-"I loathe women! They're cruel evils to each other! ant to go and hart Marie Celeste like at? We were getting on better to-other—things would have been all and then that hell-ent must come it and ruin everything His voice was choked and

"She said she hated me-Marie said he meant i too * * My God, you don't know what it was like, to have 5 stand there and listen! I think I sent mad—I know I hart her, but I know what I was doing . . d give my soul to undo the last three the and start again. It's all been fault!" He brought his clenched down on the table with a crash. insensate fool that I am! I

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lieved him to be capable of so much feeling, and it drove home to him with brutal force the terrible tragedy upon the brink of which they now stood.

It was not merely his own happiness, or Marie's that was involved, but that of his friend as well, for Feathers knew Already the lying and subterfuge with unerring instinct that Chris had only spoken the simple truth when he said that he loved his wife. He had been slow to realize it perhaps, but now it had come, Feathers knew him sufficiently well to know that it would be deep and lasting.

He braced himself for the thing which

never discovered that he loved Marie until the fact that he stood in great danger of losing her had been driven home to him.

Half an hour ago Feathers had told He had said that he would take her away tomorrow. He was going to cut her off from everything she had held dear, and make her a nameless outcast! He was prepared to bring his idol down to the was prepared to bring his idol down all the world. Chris was pacing the room

Looking back on the last hour, it seemed impossible he had yielded to such delirium. He had arranged every "That isn't all—it isn't the worst "That is swung round, looking at

detail for her, had written them down to she could not forget, and at this time tomorrow to the stood still in the cool night and looked to the stood still in the cool night There was a poignant silence, and as

above him as the stars, and here he was everything he had heard, in spite of the his roudness trying to bring a star what Marie herself had told him, Chris still trusted him and believed in him.

He tried to find his voice, but it seemed to have deserted him, and as he cast desperately about for words. Chris turned away and flung himself down into a chair, his face buried in his

was up again, pacing the room in a frenzy of impotence.

Feathers watched him for a moment with beaten eyes, then he said jerkily:
"You didn't—didn't care for her
when you were married, Chris? I
thought—wasn't it—just to get the

Chris turned his haggard face.

"To get what money?" he asked vaguely.
Feathers tried to explain.
"I was told—I understood—that the "Hell!!" he said.
Chris dooked up.
"Hello! I thought I'd wait till you you came in as they said you'd only interpreted by then you divided it."

"Good Lord, it was the other way out." he said in a hard voice. "Her about," he said in a hard voice. father was always a crank, and he never forgave her for not being a boythat was why he adopted me. He left every farthing to me-and I knew how proud she was-knew she'd never take proud she was knew she d never take a shilling if she was told the truth about the will, so so I married her to settle it! It seemed the best way out at the time," he added hopelessly. I thought I was being rather clever I know now what a damned

fool I was." Feathers got up slowly and, walking across to Chris, put his hands heavily on his shoulders, looking at him with

lesperate eyes.
"Is that the truth?" he asked hoarsely. "Will you swear that it's the truth?" Chris stared at him in blank amaze-

"What on earth do you mean? ourse it's the truth. Ask Miss hester if you don't believe me-she's "Yes," said Feathers hoarsely. Chris known about it all along. It was she who first suggested keeping it from Marie "Here, I say, what's

before, that's all." He laughed grimly before, that's all." He laughed grimly.
"Aston Knight told me a very different yarn." he broke out with violence after a moment. "He said that the money had been left to your wife, which was why you had married her-and I be-lieved him! My God, what a fool!" Chris was watching him with angry

mystification.
"I don't know what you're driving at." he said shortly. "But I'm much obliged to you for the compliment, I'm sure. Marie hadn't a farthing when I married her—but I settled half of everything on her on our wedding day.'

Feathers turned his white face. "Why didn't you tell her the truth?" he asked with difficulty. "No good ever comes of lying and subterfuge and deceit "" He laughed grimly at his own words! He was a fine one to get up in the pulpit and preach when in another twenty-four hours he would She won't even have broken every code of honor and

It was trembling on his lips to tell lome. I only went because Marie and Aunt Madge both seemed to think I eaght to. I never spoke a dozen words to the wretched girl the whole way; I didn't want to go with her. I sayed at a region of the words to the wretched girl the whole had started all the mischief.

But for him and his blundering,

> He unraveled before his eyes.
>
> Marie had turned against Chris from the moment when she had overheard what he had said to Atkins. All her

> > night, when in her desperation and un happiness she had come to him. "I don't know what it matters about not telling her." Chris said wretchedly. "She told me afterward that she had known all the time, though God alone known the talk her."

knows who told her."
There was a little silence; then: "I did," said Feathers quietly.
"You!" The blood rushed to Chris' face. He swung round and stared at his friend with hot eyes.

"You!" he said again.
"Yes: I was talking to Atkins in the lounge the first night you were I repeated to him what Aston married. Knight had told me—that you had mar-ried your wife for her money and she overheard."

He looked at Chris' incredulous face.
"It's the truth," he said. "I never knew until weeks afterward that she had overheard, until she told me her-self, and even then I believed that I had only repeated what was true."

has saything on earth * * *."

Feathers closed his eyes, and for a chief."

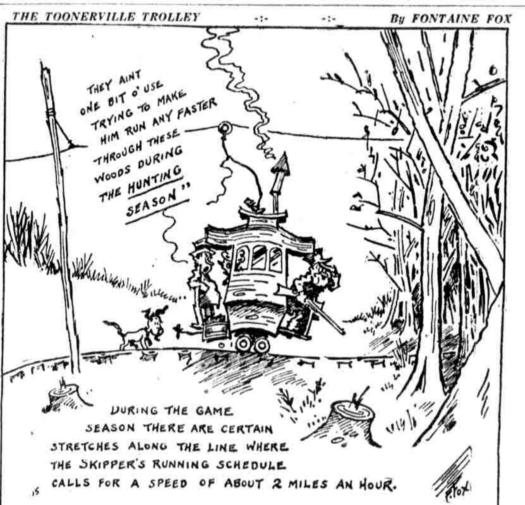
He smiled painfully. "Go on, curse me to all eternity; I deserve it; I've been at the bottom of all the mischief."





The Young Lady Across the Way

says her brother says that nothing benefits a football team like a good setback and she always supposed the quarterback was the most im-



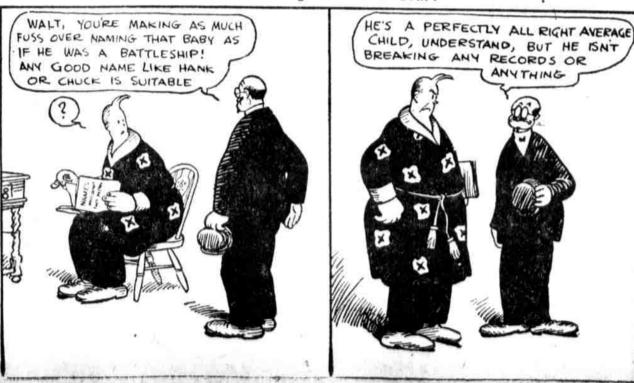
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