

Illustrated by M. D. Smith

Seagoin' Cedric

By DOROTHY JEFFERSON

YOUR deal, Cedric, dear."

Editha Purdy pushed a pack of cards across the table and leaned forward on her elbows. Her long, blue eyes were narrowed to slits, her well molded lips curved into a complacent, self-satisfied smile. In her slender fingers she twisted a silver pencil.

It was the fortnightly meeting of the Big Slam Club, and, according to the society reporter who stood in the doorway jotting mysterious hieroglyphics in her yellow notebook, "everybody" was there.

"Everybody," in a fashionable suburb such as Beechwood, can sit comfortably in a 20x30 drawing-room and gather, without overflow, around six card tables. The reporter's notes translated, however, proved that this gathering at Mrs. Rushfield Purdy's was an event of exceptionally great interest.

Mr. and Mrs. Rushfield Purdy, who lived in Beechwood's finest house, on Beechwood's finest street, were announcing the engagement of their daughter Editha to J. Cedric Blossom.

J. Cedric Blossom was the town eligible. His capture and definite surrender meant a good front page story for the Little Bird—the Little Bird being a local paper that fluttered shyly forth on Saturday mornings, carrying choice morsels of gossip to its ever hungry subscribers.

"Everybody" was in on the secret, of course, being present at the announcement party, but the other 5,000 inhabitants of the suburb would hear nothing of Editha Purdy's good fortune until the story was published. And then, as the society reporter knew, and the Purdys feared, and J. Cedric nervously suspected, Beechwood would sit down, draw a long sigh, and make the inevitable comment:

"Well, she got him!"

In some parts of the world J. Cedric might not have been much to get. Editha was forced to wear low heels when she walked with him. She was tall enough so that she could see the spot where his slick black hair was thinning all too plainly, and his diminutive figure measured poorly beside her splendid one. It was necessary for her to stoop a trifle when she looked down into his faded, pinkish eyes that blinked rabbitlike behind his bone-rimmed glasses. She invariably had to remind him to play his cards at the bridge table, and there were persistent rumors that her father had been paying him an exorbitant salary at the bank for years. Nevertheless people were only giving Editha her just due when they said that she had cleverly managed her courtship of this lean, mercenary little bachelor. Men were scarce in Beechwood long before war was declared, and afterward—

J. Cedric was the last hope of every unmarried female in the suburb.

There was something funeral about the Purdy's announcement party.

"My dear," said J. Cedric when the last guest had departed and his fiancée waited for a good night kiss, "this has been the proudest and happiest night of my life. When are we going to be married?"

Editha put her hands on his shoulders and gave him one of her most radiant smiles.

"Just as soon as I can get my trousseau made. You mustn't be impatient, dear."

"I am, though," he warned with an ardor which he neither felt nor wished to feel. "I'm going to rush you like everything. I want to call you my own little wife."

Neither of them laughed. The situa-

tion was too desperately real. Cedric might regret Editha's size and his obligations to her father and his rashly spoken words of love for the rest of his life, but he was too much of a gentleman to make the girl suffer for his mistakes. He meant to go through with it.

"Good night, sweetheart," he whispered. "The wedding must be soon."

"Good night, dearest," she answered. "I'll do my best."

During the weeks that followed the Purdy house writhed in the throes of dressmaking hysterics, and Cedric, having few preparations to make, for his wedding, and no inclination to make those, was left much to his own devices. His prospective father-in-law had confided his intention of paying the bills that his wife's choice incurred. The bridegroom bought a modest new wardrobe, wrote a few farewell letters to his bachelor friends, and sat down to wait for the fatal ceremony.

J. Cedric had not always lived in a snobbish little suburb. He hailed from an Indiana farm tucked snugly away in the sand-dune district. His parents, eastern people who had broken their hearts over their inability to make a fortune in the Hoosier state, had been dead for some years, but the farm was still in the family, the property of Cedric's elder and hermitlike brother.

"I suppose I ought to let the old boy know about the step I'm taking," Cedric decided gloomily as he favored his brother with the first thought he had given him in some time. "I'll write and ask him up to the wedding."

Accordingly he seated himself at his neat mahogany desk and scrawled a note to the distant Thomas Blossom.

Dear Tom: I'm sentenced. Don't worry, old man. She's a wonderful girl, with heaps of gold. Everybody says I'm lucky. Come up for the big show, which takes place the 15th of next month. CEDRIC.

An hour after the letter had been mailed J. Cedric Blossom had forgotten its existence.

"What a wonderful match," said "everybody" over and over again.

"They'll have all that money can buy."

The wedding on the 15th was the chief topic of interest for weeks ahead of time. The Little Bird joyfully announced the names of the bridesmaids while Editha's trousseau was in the making, and orgies of gown fitting began in all the biggest houses in town. Innumerable invitations to showers and luncheons and dinners choked the fashionable mail boxes. Modistes grew rich and florists prospered.

J. Cedric had just completed his toilet for a theater party one evening and was waiting in the door of his apartment for his car to be announced when a heavy, unfamiliar step sounded on the stairs.

"Good evening," said the stranger.

"How are you, Cedric?"

"Very well, thank you," the startled host replied. "Won't you come in?"

The two men stepped inside the door of the apartment and the light shone on the giant's face. Cedric cried out in surprise. "Tom!" he began. "Where did you come from? What ever—"

"I am here at your own invitation. Where's my sister-in-law?"

The brothers stared frankly at each other for some moments in silence.

What Tom saw was an undersized, pale faced weakling of a man, dudishly garbed in conventional evening clothes.

What Cedric saw was a strapping six-foot westerner, his beaming face mounted above a neck that did not fit in its soft, travel-soiled collar.

"I'm—er—delighted to see you again, Tom," Cedric declared guardedly; "and I'm terribly sorry that I must rush off and leave you tonight. I'm scheduled for a theater party."

Editha and her mother were waiting in the reception hall of the Purdy residence when Cedric, followed closely by his big shadow, called for them.

Editha was wrapped in a wine-colored velvet coat, a shaggy white fox wound snugly about her slender throat. Her black hair waved back from her smooth forehead and formed a high psychic knot on top of her head.

"Cedric, dear," she began teasingly, "you're late."

She did not finish her lecture. Her eyes met the steady gaze of the big man

brother administer a hasty, cold-water shave.

"Your dress suit?" he queried vaguely.

"Won't it need pressing?"

"Dress suit? Me in a dress suit? Say, Buddy, don't make me laugh. I never owned one of those contraptions. Heigh, ho! Shall I wear the red tie or the green?"

Cedric surrendered himself to the inevitable.

"Maybe she'll call it off when she sees Tom," he decided, "and if she does—"

He did not relish the idea of becoming the laughing stock of the town, but he yearned strangely for his former freedom.

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who was being introduced to her as her brother-in-law.

It was an uncomfortable evening for everybody but Thomas Blossom. Cedric writhed as only those forced to exhibit peculiar relatives can writhed. Editha's comment that he looked ten years older than the Indiana farmer did not help matters. The girl regretted her tactless

could dislike the straightforward, whole souled boy-man who had come out of his Indiana hermitage to bow before the throne of the girl Cedric was to marry. It was just the bulk of his presence that depressed the dapper Beechwood eligible.

"I wonder if you would take Editha to the Van Hoessen's dance tonight?" he demanded one afternoon when his nerves were more ragged than usual. "I'm all in. These fool entertainments are killing me. I think I'll take a stiff drink and crawl into bed. Editha won't mind my absence if it doesn't keep her home."

Tom struggled to hide his excitement.

"Well, yes," he drawled with a courageous attempt at indifference. "I'll take her, if you feel that I ought to do it."

Editha was wearing black tulle, brightened by a single band of blue iridescents at the waist line. She greeted Tom almost shyly when he brought her his brother's excuses and offered to escort her to the Van Hoessen's ball.

"I can't refuse you in that new dress suit," she laughed, "even though it seems rather heartless to wait away without Cedric. Is he very ill?"

"He will recover."

"Do you know," she said suddenly when they were spinning up the avenue in a dark limousine, "I almost wish there'd be a smash-up or something. You'd make a perfect hero."

Tom's great hand sought hers under cover of the fur robe.

"I hope I'll make a satisfactory brother, little girl," he said softly.

When they passed a street light she saw deep lines at the corners of his firm mouth.

The Van Hoessens' party was a brilliant affair. Editha was passed down a line of middle aged, beauty loving, flirtatious husbands and Tom surrendered him self amply to the stout, overdressed matrons who lionized him as an oddity. He scarcely saw Editha until it was time for them to go home. Then he led her elusively through the last steps of the dance and bundled her into her coat and furs. The limousine seemed a haven of refuge to both.

"You're restless, Tom," the girl told him as they sped homeward. "I believe you soothe my nerves."

The big man smiled.

"Perhaps," he said quietly, "a little Indiana atmosphere clung to me when I boarded the train for the East. We don't have nerves that need soothing—back home."

"Tell me about it," she begged. "Tell me how you live."

Tom was never a fluent talker, but he launched upon a description of the state he loved with enthusiasm.

"And the little farm lies between the dunes," he concluded rather wistfully. "A narrow strip of green between huge piles of gold. I stand on my porch in the evening and look through an uncleared forest of scrub oaks at the red sun dropping into the blue waters of Lake Michigan. It is wonderfully beautiful—and lonely."

Neither spoke again until they had reached the Purdy residence.

"Come in a minute, Tom," said Editha in a queer, choked little voice; "I want to tell you something."

They faced each other in the library. Editha was the first to drop her eyes.

"I—I want to make a confession," she stammered, turning aside and walking to the hearth where a wood fire blazed. "I suppose you'll hate me when you hear it."

She took the sparkling diamond ring off the third finger of her left hand and twisted it nervously as she talked.

"I—I am not going to marry Cedric," she began bluntly. "I don't love him. I never thought I did, but I did not consider love an essential factor in the marriage question. Mother and father approved of him thoroughly and agreed to support us both if he became my husband. Cedric knew that. We—we made a sort of a bargain. He was awfully fair and good, but I don't think he has ever really cared. I think he will be relieved when he hears my decision."

The big man did not speak at once. He saw that Editha was fighting tears.

"Well, little girl," he said finally, "there's only one thing to do."

He came quite close to her and stooped until his lips touched her hair.

"Be true to yourself," he whispered. "Good night and good-by. I'm going back to the dunes."

"Be true to yourself," he whispered gently. "Good night—and good-by. I'm going back to the dunes."

In short, both Editha Purdy and the man she was engaged to marry seemed to have lost their senses overnight. They neither explained nor condoned their actions. They simply faced the world and announced in a calm manner that they had decided to recall their invitations for the ceremony on the 15th. The ceremony would never take place. They would never be married.

A "For Sale" sign appeared in the window of the stucco house with the cane-back furnishings.

It was sunset in Indiana.

A big, tired-faced man with kindly gray eyes stood on the porch of a quaint white cottage and watched the lake, shimmering bright and blue through the scrubby oak trees.

The sound of footsteps on the gravel path woke him from his reverie.

"Editha!" he cried, and then again, "Editha!"

He thought that he must be dreaming. He opened his arms to the girl who came slowly up the path, expecting the vision of her to fade before he could touch it.

Real arms were around him. Real lips were on his own. He had kissed her before he remembered the barrier. Then his manhood accused him, and his eyes filled with a nameless fear.

"Cedric?" he demanded. "You didn't leave him?"

For answer the girl took a note from her handbag. Its scrawled message told the whole story.

Dear Old Tom: When you get this letter I'll be somewhere on the ocean. Funny how I've always loved the water, isn't it? I've longed for the chance to join the navy ever since the war began, but I didn't think they'd take me. They did—yesterday—and I feel like a kid. You ought to see me in my uniform and little white cap. I'll drop ten years overboard. Be good to Editha, old man—she loves you. Affectionately,

SEAGOIN' CEDRIC.

Tom looked long into the clear blue eyes of the girl before him.

"I came to stay," she said softly. "Tell me you're glad, and then walk back to the depot with me. Mother's there—sitting on a barrel—and she loathes barrels!"

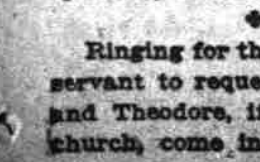
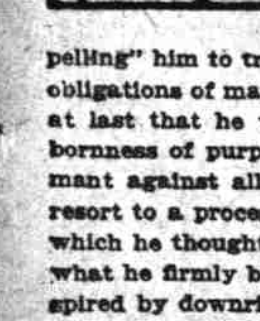
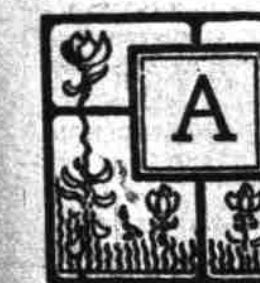
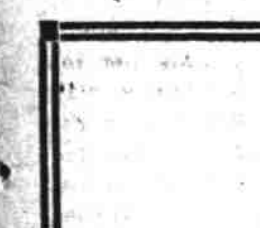
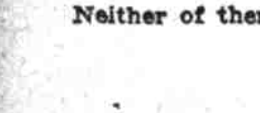
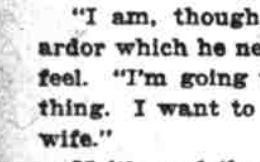
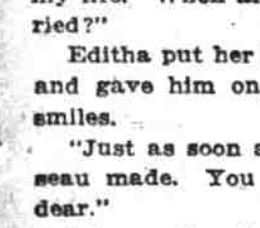
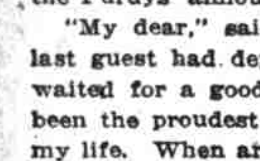
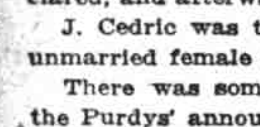
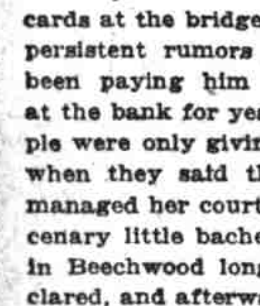
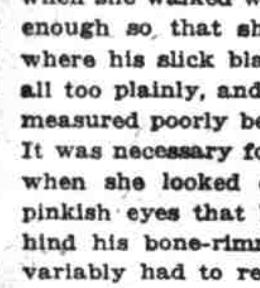
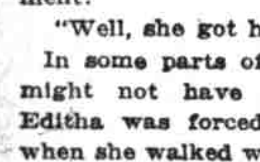
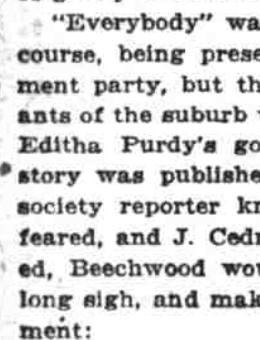
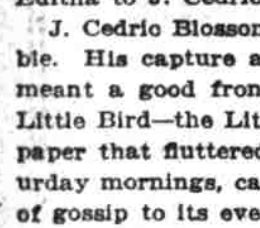
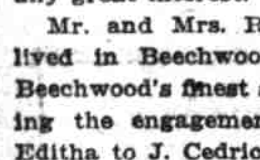
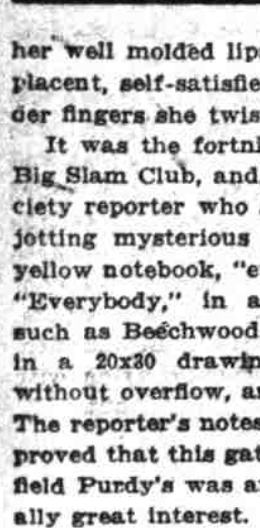
The big man put his arms around Editha and pointed westward.

"The sunset—lan't it wonderful here, little girl?" he whispered.

She smiled.

"Yes—but it isn't lonely."

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Why Marry?

Written by H. L. Gates from the play
By JESSE LYNCH WILLIAMS

AGAINST all the storming, cajoling, threatening protests of her brother, Helen stood unmoved in her decision to give herself to Dr. Hamilton without, as she expressed it, "compelling" him to tie himself down with the obligations of marriage. John, convinced at last that he was dealing with stubbornness of purpose that would be adamant against all persuasion, decided to resort to a process of shaming his sister, which he thought might cause her to see what he firmly believed was an error inspired by downright temporary insanity.

Ringling for the butler, John asked the servant to request that Lucy, the judge and Theodore, if he had returned from church, come into the garden. As the

butler disappeared John turned to Helen, saying angrily:

"When they come out here I'm going to ask them to look into your face and see what manner of woman it is we have raised in this house. If you can bring yourself to do it, make that statement to them. I am wondering if you can do it and look them in the face."

"I can look the world in the face, John, when I speak of my love for the man who loves me—the man I want and the man who wants me. If I were being forced into such a marriage as poor little Jean's I would kill myself. But in the eyes of God, who made love, no matter how I may appear in the eyes of man, who made marriage, I know I am doing right, and I am not ashamed."

Lucy, followed by the judge, appeared on the steps as Helen finished, and over-hearing Helen's closing sentences, realized immediately that Helen had summoned up the courage to tell John that she

had made up her mind to enter into an informal relationship with Dr. Hamilton—a "new woman" relationship. Horrified, Lucy turned to the judge.

"She has told him—actually told him!" she exclaimed.

The judge, realizing the situation at a glance, merely shrugged his shoulders. His eyes seemed to be more amused than dismayed.

John turned upon Lucy fiercely.

"What? Did you know of this fiendish plan of hers? Did she tell you before she told me? Why did you not come to me immediately? Why did you not warn me?"

"She said she wanted to tell you herself. I did not think she would dare do it. I did not speak for I was sure she would lose her courage and the whole thing would be passed over."

John, the judge and Lucy turned to look at Helen—the judge with something of quiet admiration, John with baffled

page coloring his face, Lucy with a glance of reproach, as if she were chagrined not so much at Helen's continued determination to carry out her revolutionary plans but that she should have disappointed her estimate of her courage.

Helen smiled benignly at them.

"It had to be announced," she said almost gayly, "so who could make the announcement better than I, and to whom else would it be more properly made than to my brother, the esteemed and autocratic head of the family?"

Theodore, returning from church, and told by the butler John wanted him in the garden, appeared just in time to overhear Helen's explanation of her "announcement." To him the word, as far as a woman would be concerned, meant but one thing. He beamed upon them all as he came down the steps.

"Announced?" he questioned. "What is announced—something we have been expecting, I'll venture?"

They all turned upon him in a panic. Even Helen did not bargain for a discussion of her "new" idea of the "true partnership of love" with the minister. Lucy hurriedly attempted to smooth over the situation.

"Their engagement, Theodore," she explained; "their engagement, you know."

"Yes, Theodore," said the judge, "John has evidently given his consent at last, as an example to society." He could not forego the pleasure of prodding John in the ribs as he volunteered this amplification of Lucy's subterfuge.

John thought to keep his embarrassment, as head of the family, from Theodore, by agreeing to the general attempt to keep Theodore out of the discussion.

"Of course," he muttered, "have to consent; fine fellow; big future; one of the best fellows in the world."

Theodore went up to Helen and took her hands.

"I am delighted to hear it," he said, unconscious of the pained look that came into Helen's face as she avoided his eyes. "Dr. Hamilton is a very worthy and promising man. He will make an excellent husband. And withal he has a very religious nature. Congratulations, my dear."

Helen rebelled against any deception, even though she would have preferred, for some reason unexplainable to her, to have avoided shocking the amiable pastor.

"Thank you, cousin," she said quite calmly. "He will not make me an excellent husband, because, not wanting a husband, I do not intend to allow him to become one."

Theodore was puzzled. He looked from one to the other.

"Just announced, and now she—ah, I see!"—he was beaming again—"a lover's quarrel already."

The judge enjoyed the situation.