

**THE LAST ROSE  
OF SUMMER**

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The Last Rose of Summer by Rupert Hughes

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**RUPERT HUGHES**

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BY  
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*What Will People Say?*



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## CHAPTER I

AS Mrs. Shillaber often said, the one good thing about her old house was the fact that "you could throw the dining-room into the poller" when you wanted to give parties or funerals or weddings or such things. You had only to fold up the accordeon-pleated doors, push the sofa back against the wall, and lay a rug over the register.

To-night she had thrown the dining-room into the poller and filled both rooms with guests. There were so many guests that they occupied every seat in

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the house, including the up-stairs chairs and a large batch of camp-stools from Mr. Crankshaw's, the undertaker's.

In Carthage it was never a real party or an important funeral unless those perilous old man-traps of Mr. Crankshaw's appeared. They always added a dash of excitement to the dullest evening, for at a critical moment one of them could be depended upon to collapse beneath some guest, depositing him or her in a small but complicated woodpile on the floor.

Less dramatic, but even droller, was the unfailing spectacle of the solemn man who entered a room carrying one of these stools neatly folded, proceeded to a chosen spot, and there attempted vainly to open the thing. This was sure to happen at least once, and it gave an irresistibly light touch even to the funerals. The obstinacy of some of Mr. Crankshaw's camp-stools was so diabolic that it almost implied a perverse

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intelligence. And the one that was not to be solved generally fell to the solemnest man in the company.

To-night at Mrs. Shillaber's the evening might be said to be well under way; fat Mr. Geggat had already splashed through his camp-stool, and Deacon Peavey was now at work on his; a snicker had just sneezed out of the minister's wife (of all people!), and the Deacon himself had breathed an expletive dangerously close to profanity.

The party was held in honor of Mrs. Shillaber's girlhood friend, Birdaline Nickerson (now Mrs. Phineas Duddy). Birdaline and Mrs. Shillaber (then Josie Barlow) had been fierce rivals for the love of Asaph Shillaber. Josie had got him away from Birdaline, and Birdaline had married Phin Duddy for spite, just to show certain people that Birdaline could get married as well as other people and to prove that Phin Duddy was not inconsolable for losing Josie, whom