

In the Realm of Women--Some Interesting Features



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The Luck of Geraldine Laird

BY KATHLEEN NORRIS.

Author of "The Story of Julia Page," "Heart of Rachel," "Josselyn's Wife," "Sisters," etc.

Well, she would see, he told himself grimly, tiring himself at last, and reaching home at almost five o'clock. The Clements had gone, and the little girls had disappeared somewhere about the grounds, but there were callers. He could hear their loud voices and raucous laughter from the dismal parlor.

A look of refined pain crossed Dean's sensitive face, and he went quietly upstairs. Geraldine, whisking into his room half an hour later to close windows, was surprised to find him reading in a chair by the sunny bay which was streaming with sunset light. She told him about the Clem's troubles and the street improvement assessment that meant no new car for the Clements this spring.

"It may or may not interest you to know that Miss Bond thinks I have written a great play," Dean said icily after a while.

"His tone made her instantly resentful. "I don't see why you didn't say so! I don't see why I have to draw it out of you by degrees," she protested. And as he did not answer, she added a little stiffly, "I'm very glad, of course."

Still no answer. Geraldine felt her heart sink; she was vaguely conscious of a wish that she might have the courage to quarrel with him, in the old vigorous way—the old way that had ended with tears and forgiveness, and laughter, so many times. But somehow there was a coldness between them now—a self-control—a general inclination to avoid, rather than healthily to meet, the issue.

"He doesn't love me any more!" she thought, going leaden-hearted into her own room and standing at the bare window to look out into the softening and deepening twilight. She had said it a hundred times before of late; to-night she began to wonder what happened when a man and woman stopped loving each other and yet were man and wife. "I'll never let him leave me, and I'll never give him a divorce," Geraldine said to herself, "so he might as well get over his nonsense and come to his senses at once. I hate all this politeness and weariness and silence—I'd rather he would drag me about by the hair!"

And she resolved that at the slightest provocation she would school herself to fly out at Dean in the old way. But even while she so decided, looking down the shabby avenue to the gate, she knew that when she was in actual contact with his coldness, when his articulate reluctance was really opposed to her stammered incoherencies, she would slip from his presence with this wretched sense of being snubbed and whipped and silenced again.

She did not realize that Kennedy Bond's interest in his work had opened a new world to Dean, had set him thinking, however vaguely, of the road he might find that would lead him away from all the unutterably stupid and tedious facts of his present life. But she felt a new force in his mood tonight, felt that it was an active rather than a negative protest and the thought filled her with uneasiness.

"If I've really lost him," Geraldine said to herself, with a little flutter of fear at her heart, is it too late to do something now to hold him?" And with a nervous anxiety to dispel the cloud of the moment, she walked to his door again.

"Dean, do you want to go up to the club?"

"No, thanks!"

"I think—from what Harry Kent said when he telephoned—that the Waites have Miss Bond there," Geraldine submitted uncertainly.

"I know they have."

Silence. While she stood hesitating Janey danced in.

"Grammies says will you please come down to supper, and it's half past five, because Lizzie wants to go to her cousin's wedding at seven," sang Janey.

"Heavens—time to eat again!" Geraldine protested. But Dean, who was unromantically hungry, got up and began to brush his hair violently with his military brushes. He followed his

wife and daughter down stairs in time to meet the departing callers, and gave them a dark look. An informal Sunday supper at the outrageous hour of half past five was had enough, without having these idle, gossiping women as witnesses to it.

"Joe Barron feels awfully bad about the boys turning down that offer," Mrs. Hanna, obviously casting about, in her amiable old way, for some remark of general interest to add to her greeting, said confidentially, "I'll tell you how it is, Mr. Laird. The house really needs so much done, do you see? And they've just got so much to invest and no more—"

Dean looked at her with an opaque eye, while the women of his family exchanged horrified glances.

"Were we to dine?" he asked his wife, in a tone so cold and so deliberate that Mrs. Hanna made no further social effort, but hurried away after her daughters, wondering in her easy soul if she had said an unfortunate thing.

When she was gone, Dean looked from his wife to her mother.

"Do I understand that Barron did make an offer for this house, Geraldine?" he asked.

"Through Clem—yes, Dean, yes!" she answered, hurriedly and guiltily. "You knew of it?" he asked, measuredly.

"—yes, I knew of it. Clem told me on condition that—" she paused. "I thought all along that you should be told," she added.

"When was this, if I may ask?"

"About—oh, two weeks ago."

"You've known it for two weeks?"

"Well—yes."

"Come, lovey, we'll go in to supper," Mrs. Fitzpatrick said hastily to Janey. Dean and his wife remained looking steadily at each other.

A full minute passed. Then the man turned to the hatrack, and took from it his big coat, his hat, and stick.

"Where are you going?" Geraldine asked, with a quick jump at her heart.

He did not answer, but stepped to the door.

"Dean! Aren't you going to have supper?"

"No answer. He opened the door, glanced at her briefly through narrowed lids.

"Listen, Dean!" Geraldine said, in a rapid but cautious whisper, "you shan't walk out of the house like this, simply because you weren't told of Barron's offer. I told Clem—I told George—Dean," Geraldine interrupted herself passionately, as she showed no evidence of having heard her.

"If you walk out of this house tonight, without discussing this matter like a reasonable human being, as I ask you to do, you needn't come back! I'm sorry and I've said I'm sorry—and that ends it—and as the boys wouldn't have accepted that figure anyway—now, Dean, listen—I'm serious! You—"

"Good-night," he said, with brief distaste. He closed the door behind him and was gone.

Geraldine, after staring blankly after him for a second, drew a long breath, nodded her head slowly, and turned back into the bare hall. She was more angry than frightened or surprised. Dean had done this, or almost this, before.

It was distressing, of course, and humiliating, and annoying, but these scenes were part of married life, and one must simply endure them, that was all.

She went slowly into the dining-room, where her mother and the children were commencing a delicious supper. Lizzie had made Dean's favorite batter-bread, and had opened a bottle of the sour, black, pickled walnuts he liked. Geraldine sighed.

"Gone," she said, with a shrug.

"I thought he would," her mother answered. "Well, he'll get a good dinner somewhere, and come in about nine o'clock feeling better!"

"He then he didn't have any yunch," observed Deanie.

"Ah, well, that accounts for it, then!" Mrs. Fitzpatrick said comfortably. The meal proceeded in harmony.

(To be continued.)

TALKING IT OVER

—With LORNA MOON—

Falling in Love With Plain Jane

There has come back from the war a man with eyes that see, and a heart that understands.

When he marched away to war the Dimpled Doll kissed him goodbye, and cried a little as she did it, (she is the type that can cry without getting a red nose). Her sister, Plain Jane, didn't cry at all, not then. (Plain Jane gets blotchy when she cries.)

The Dimpled Doll dried her tears on the shoulder of a handsome sailor fifteen minutes after the train pulled out. There were dozens of men ready to love a Dimpled Doll.

If Plain Jane cried over the man who went to war we know nothing about it; but we do know that she knitted socks and begged and bribed the Dimpled Doll to send him an occasional note in answer to his long and frequent letters. And we know also, that when the Dimpled Doll took his picture from the frame to make room for a dashing lieutenant, Plain Jane picked it up and took it to her room.

The man who went to war came home unexpectedly; came home covered with glory, his heart bent on marrying the Dimpled Doll. He wanted to surprise her and to kiss the exclamations of astonishment off her lips. But the Dimpled Doll has gone to a dance, and he found Plain Jane at home; somehow he found himself telling her all that he had done, and thought, out there during the two years of his absence. He found himself wondering why he had never noticed the sweet expression of Plain Jane's eyes before. He was just a little sorry when the Dimpled Doll came in and claimed his attention—she was very pretty, more dimpled and doll-like than ever, he thought, but it didn't thrill him at all; he wanted to look in Plain Jane's eyes.

He wanted to hold Plain Jane's hands and he wanted—oh he desperately wanted to know the size of the third finger on her right hand.

A man should devote at least half an hour to minding his own business and the remainder in letting others alone.



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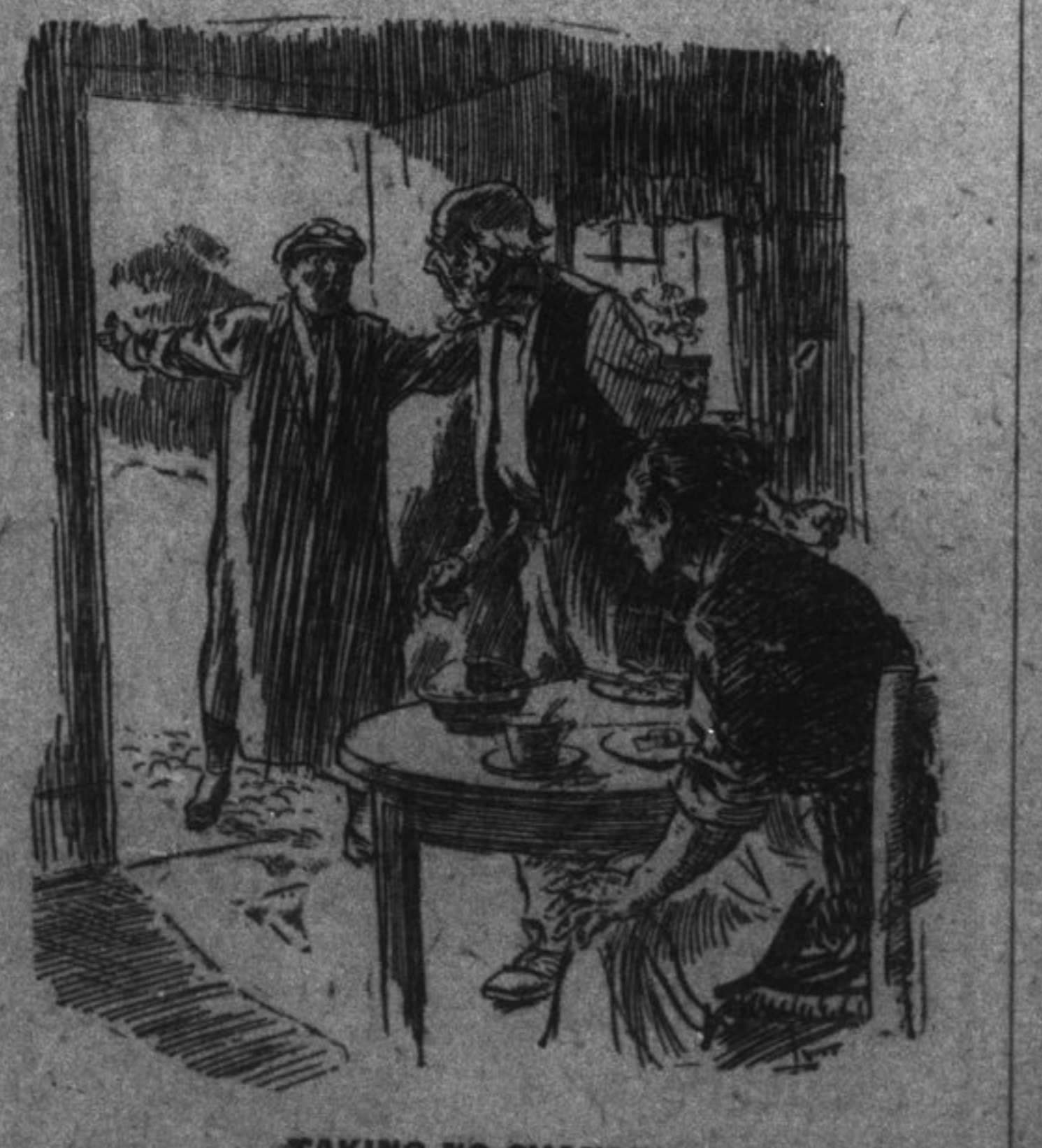
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