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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.

"No—you needn't feel that! For with it all," Geraldine said, earnestly, with a puzzled look into the distance, as if she were formulating the thought, "I never felt more married to Dean. I don't feel the separation half as much, I assure you, in these days, as I did when he first went away! No, don't mistake me, Louis," she interrupted him quickly, as he was about to speak, and made an impatient movement of his head, "I don't think I'll ever forgive Dean. I think he acted as—as only a cad could act. I don't think he deserves any consideration, or deserves his children—"

"Or deserves his wife!" Louis supplied, as she paused.

"No, or deserves his wife," she repeated softly. "But yet, always in my own mind, as Dean Laird's wife," she finished, with a look that had in it something of a child's puzzled sweetness.

"Whom God hath joined together," Louis offered, questioningly.

"Whom God hath joined together!" she echoed. "I'm done with that end of life!"

"I wish it had been different, Geraldine," the man said slowly, looking away from her smiling eyes. "I believe I could have made you happy, my dear. I know we could have had a wonderful home for the girls—"

"I think of it sometimes, and my heart aches so! I know it's no use. Of course, if he were dead—"

"You mustn't wish any one dead!" Geraldine said, with a touch of racial superstition and horror.

"No, I don't," Louis answered, lifelessly. "But I might as well do that," he added, his look upon her, "as hope that you will ever feel yourself free, while he lives."

"Quite as well!" she conceded definitely. "You know there is something said about a woman who chooses another man than her husband, even in thought. I don't even think of it, Louis. I wouldn't dare, my dear," she said, more lightly.

"Position, money, dignified up-bringing for the girls, a big man behind me, a pretty brown car to jump into—"

"Travel—why, even leaving love out of it, isn't that enough to make any woman heart-sick with the way life goes! Why, you and I—out at that ranch—"

"Oh shut up—for God's sake!" he said, his words ruder than his tone, and his big, ungloved hand suddenly across her mouth. "Jerry, may I come see you, when I'm in the city?" he asked, after a silence.

"Oh, I think not!"

"Not take you to lunch, eh?"

"It would be wiser not, Louis. Believe me!"

"Going to tell me where you are working?"

"Why, I can tell you," she considered, her pretty brows wrinkled. "I would really prefer that you should not know! But I can tell you. Only I put myself absolutely at your mercy—at your generosity—if I do. It was an experiment, Louis, and it began with discouragement and heart-sickness enough, God knows. I was ill, I was alone, I was half-starved and depressed—well, I'm trying to forget that; it didn't last. Then everything brightened and I took a little step up. Now, if you began to drift in, to disturb me, to—well, to connect in a word, this old life with that new one—which is usually like playing a part—I'll have to move on! I'm not even using my own name. I'm 'Mollie O'Brien' there. Dean made life hard enough for me, Louis; now don't you complicate it further?"

"Put it that way," he said quickly, even with some hurt and haughtiness.

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TALKING IT OVER

—With Lorna Mood—

The Married Woman's Man Friend.

Now comes the question, shall a married woman have male friends? It is impossible to give an all inclusive answer to such a question, since every woman is a law unto herself. Some women have no capacity for platonic friendship, to them, every man is a possible admirer, his sex is paramount. But there is an ever increasing number of women who crave the education, the exchange of opinions and thoughts with men not because they are men, but because they are more apt to have an enlightened and intelligent philosophy of life than the average woman.

While one woman is keenly interested in her neighbor's life of working and the things she throws in the garbage, and whether or not she has a charge account at the corner grocery; another woman is interested in whether the League of Nations will do away with war, or her pet subject may be literature in the fourteenth century.

Our grandmother when she married, left all political and topical discussion to the man of the house; her sphere lay within the four walls of her home. She had nothing to say to any man except her husband. Her only meeting ground with other women was the ground of sex attraction; therefore, if grandmother had a man friend, there was good reason for grandfather to be worried.

But there is a growing number of women, who through business training and education, have identical interests with men. Shall these women, simply because they are married, forfeit all right to have congenial men friends? Mother Grundy has ceased to hold up horrified hands over women driving cars, wearing trousers, and asking to vote; isn't it about time that the ossified old dame began to realize that the intelligent married woman of to-day is capable of friendship with a man without any danger of precipitating a public scandal? What do my readers think?

Milk Fourteen Cents in Chatham. Chatham, Sept. 4.—Local milk dealers have raised the price of milk two cents per quart, making the price fourteen cents. High wages and increased cost of bottles are given as the reason for the increase.

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