

# By Way of Experiment

By NELLIE CRAVEY GILLMORE

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GERALDINE came home from the club woman's luncheon hot and cross, "ready for an argument," quoted of Billy, who figured peradventure as the lady's better half. Mainwaring was sitting, or, rather, sprawling, in one of the multi-fold lounging chairs that made comfortable the spacious veranda, his spik'd feet raised opulently to the flowering banister rail.

Flung over his face as an impromptu guard against pertinacious insects was



MRS. MAINWARING PAUSED AT THE TOP OF THE STEPS.

the latest comic weekly. His hands, long and brown and sinewy, gave combined attestation to the man's artistic temperament and a strong athletic susceptibility. On the floor beside him were some golf paraphernalia, a pitcher of ice water and half a dozen magazines.

Mrs. Mainwaring paused as she reached the top of the steps and regarded her sleeping spouse with a medley of emotions, depicted consecutively, upon her pretty, flushed face. Then a ripple of silent laughter passed over it, rendering her twice as enchanting as anything else could have done.

She tossed her long lace gloves, fan and cream chiffon parasol on a bench and tripped noiselessly up to her husband's chair. Lifting the paper a fraction, she stole a quick, cautious glance into the dark, relaxed features. He stirred vaguely. She waited a moment, then she looked again, and all at once it came to her that Mainwaring was a very handsome man, handsomer even than she had deemed him before he placed the wedding ring upon her finger.

His hair, black and fine and absolutely devoid of wave or crinkle, grew in a determined line high up on the square, bronzed forehead. The lashes, also straight, were somewhat lighter in shade, but so dense as to completely obscure that part of the cheek upon which they fell. Below a slightly prominent but well shaped nose his mouth revealed itself to be easily the best feature. It was neither too large nor too small, too thick nor too thin. It was not stubborn or even obstinate, but in a good natured, liberal way uncompromising to the last degree.

After a few minutes he sat up suddenly and tried to open his eyes, but ten pink tipped fingers checked their upward glance.

"So for once I've caught you napping," Geraldine came round to the front of his chair and stood looking down at him with laughing accusation. Mainwaring squared himself and blinked at the mottle of sunlight on the sycamores. "I'll swear I wasn't asleep," he protested, with a vigorous disregard for veracity. "I just had my eyes shut, that's all."

Geraldine nodded indulgently and sank down in an adjacent chair.

"I didn't know till today," she observed, drawing half a dozen implements of war from her hat, "that I had married a diplomat."

"Many thanks for the civility of the term. It is most becoming in—a diplomat's wife."

"What a nice idea!"

She had crossed her hands at the back of her head in an attitude of deep reflection, and the words came with absent enthusiasm.

Presently her face lighted and she broke into a little amused laugh. "Billy," she said, "you can't guess what is to be our next topic for discussion!"

"What's the answer?"

"Don't be horrid, or—"

"I'll have to give it up."

"Just one guess," she insisted, with an uplifted forefinger.

"Is it the extermination of the auto-

mobile or— or Paul Jones' obituary?" He lighted a cigar with luxurious deliberation.

Geraldine took up his words briskly. "Oh, if you can't—if you don't want to be serious," she flashed, "I—" "Well?" he objected, with a half laugh. "If anything could be more serious—"

"That isn't the point at all," she interrupted, with a little impatient gesture, "and you know it. You are utterly aggravating and ridiculous, Billy!" she declared, with pink cheeks. Little pale gold wisps of hair had been loosened by the drive home in the wind and now blew about her soft, throbbing neck in bewitching restlessness. The fine veins in her temples pulsed with excitement, and her eyes, awhile ago gray, had deepened to black. Her lips, red and moist and vaguely tremulous, lost nothing by their sudden access of gravity as she went on:

"Waiving preliminaries, the subject is just this, 'Is love—romantic love, that is—a possible thing without jealousy?'"

Mainwaring stared at his wife oddly for an instant before he spoke. "Certainly not," he delivered authoritatively. After a second's silence he leaned over and imprisoned one of her hands in both his.

Mrs. Mainwaring pulled away from him impatiently. "I disagree with you," she remarked, with abrupt coldness.

"Oh, it is possible, of course, where no cause exists," he commented, with masculine complacency.

"That point necessitates a definition of the word 'cause.'"

"As a matter of fact, what would be ample and sufficient reason with one person might amount to so much wind with another."

"Jealousy is merely an acknowledgment of superiority in some one else," she submitted positively.

"In which event—a tribute to the delinquent one's good judgment, an essential tribute. I rather think your point of view is somewhat quixotic. There's no accounting for people's tastes, you know. I have seen them walk over pearls and take the stones."

"I don't see—"

"Let me illustrate. I once knew a man whose wife was beautiful and clever and good. He openly abandoned her society for that of another, who was neither attractive, interesting nor in any way good."

"Possibly his wife bored him with her very perfections."

"She did not bore other men."

"And was she jealous?"

"In a proud, silent way I presume she was."

"Did she exert herself to hold her husband's love?"

"Most women who love men do, don't they?"

Geraldine made no response and for several minutes afterward was silent. Presently she suggested, "Perhaps, after all, if she was, as you say, clever, she was not jealous of her husband's attachment."

"Geraldine!"

"Yes?"

"Just suppose now, for instance, that I—that I were—"

"Don't be absurd, Billy. We are not trying to get personal, are we?"

"That is the only way to arrive at correct conclusions."

"Personal applications are biasing," remarked Geraldine, with a sage look.

"They are vital, and they tell."

She laughed deliciously and tossed her head into one of its ravishing poses. "Then I am still determined to disagree with you on the original question," she said. "There is nothing that could make me jealous of you, Billy."

Mainwaring contemplated her with shadowed eyes. "Then I am very much afraid," he returned, in a dejected tone, "that you do not care for me in the right way, the real way."

"On the other hand, my dear, you ought to consider this the very highest compliment I could pay you"—a radi-



"JUST ONE GUESS," SHE INSISTED.

ant smile broke across her face—"the sincerest evidence of my absolute love and trust," she added earnestly.

"But, my dear girl," he protested in a surprised tone, "women like to feel that their husbands are jealously inclined; men like to think that their wives are—'cause' counted out."

Geraldine bridled. "That I consider a most vulgar statement," she flared, "and it does not in the least alter my views, to which I mean to adhere

strictly, whatever comes—or goes."

Mainwaring rose, stretched himself resignedly and stalked to the end of the veranda. When he came back Geraldine had fled. He pondered a moment, during which his face underwent a succession of panoramic changes. Finally he drew from his pocket a small memorandum book and fountain pen. This is what he wrote:

My Dearest Daphne (the name sounded well, he thought)—I am longing ferociously for a sight of your sweet face. Excuse haste and drop me a line by return mail saying when. Ever your own BILLY BOY.

He reread the lines with an inspired expression, then turned the leaf over and scribbled something across the back of it. Afterward he took a careful inventory of surroundings and stooping, placed the paper, face up, on the floor.

Ten minutes later, when Mrs. Mainwaring returned to the porch, her husband had re-ensconced himself in his reclining chair and was snoring lustily.

"Upon my word," she began, with a touch of indignation, when her glance fell upon the paper at her feet. She picked it up with some curiosity, the pupils of her eyes darkening and dilating till they extended almost to the rims of the gray irises as she caught a glimpse of the address in her husband's unmistakable handwriting.

She read the lines through three times, first with naked incredulity, then with rising resentment and finally with deadly deliberation. She paled, flushed and paled again till her lips even looked white.

For several seconds she neither took breath nor moved. Something cold and hard and terrible seemed closing about her throat, choking the very life out of her.

At this juncture Mainwaring came to life suddenly.

"Good gracious!" he cried, jerking himself to a sitting posture. "One would think you had seen a ghost, Geraldine."

"I have seen worse than a ghost," she returned, her voice tense, but controlled.

"Worse than—" His lips twitched as he struggled frantically for poise.

"I have seen—this!" she broke out with sudden passion, one hand, in which lay a crushed bit of paper, extended tragically.

Mainwaring shot up out of his chair and came quickly to her side. "Let



"I HAVE SEEN—THIS" SHE BROKE OUT.

me see it," he said, with quiet insistence, loosening her fingers with suddenly cold, unsteady hands. Smoothing out the paper, he scanned the words with blood burned cheeks.

"Well?"

They looked at each other for one unutterable minute, and silence seemed to suffocate them both till the woman broke it sharply.

"Now tell me everything," she said in a concentrated tone of voice that fought hard to eliminate all trace of weakness.

And then, to the consternation of Geraldine, Mainwaring did a most remarkable thing. He laughed till he had to hold his side, after which he turned and took her fiercely in his arms. "Billy, how—how dare you!"

Mainwaring relaxed his embrace, his lips still smiling. His eyes bore an oddly triumphant look. "Turn the paper over," he commanded, "and see what is written on the other side."

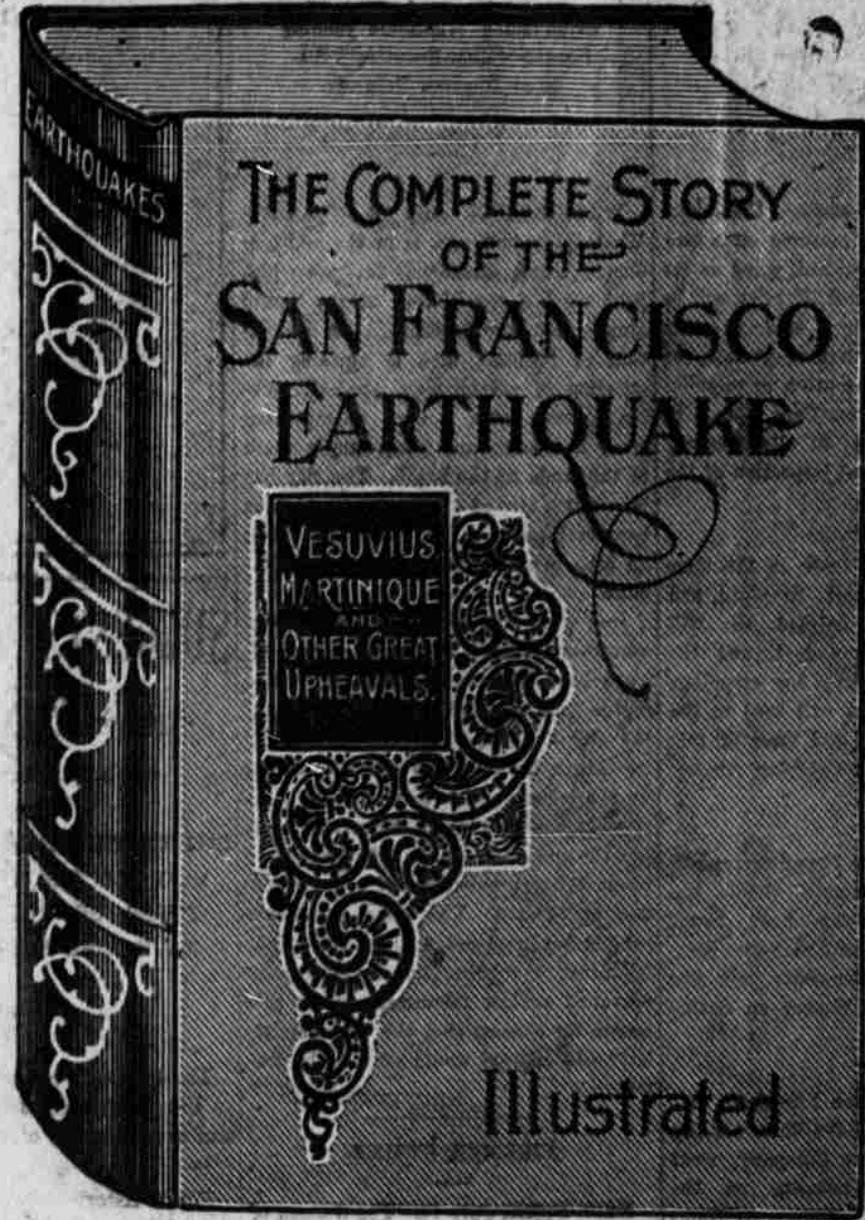
She obeyed meekly. All power of resistance seemed vanished. She read: Dearest Geraldine—This is simply by way of experiment—as a means of proving to you that you are no different from other people. BILLY.

Geraldine turned to him indignantly, compelling his eyes by the rising challenge in her own. "I would not have dreamed," she commenced frigidly, "that—that—" Her voice weakened helplessly, her eyes filled with irresistible tears, and she collapsed limply in his arms.

"Oh, Billy!" she sobbed.

Arabian snuff. Snuff in Arabia is not used as it is with us, although one occasionally sees a snuffer, but the snuff is ordinarily made into a pill of about the size of a robin's egg and is placed between the lower front lip and the teeth. This manner of using snuff is common among the laboring class, and almost every cooly that is met in the street has his lower lip puffed out by a ball of snuff behind it. Arabian snuff is prepared out of the ordinary powdered tobacco, unrefined sugar and potash.

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