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HER COUSIN AGATHA

She Was Dashing and Handsome
With Many Moths Fluttering
About Her.

By GEORGE MUNSON.

Sylvia Blaine was happier than she had ever been in all her life before. But when one is nineteen happiness comes easily, especially when one is in love.

Tom Darragh was generally considered the most promising young lawyer in Stapleton. The Darraghs and the Blaines had been members when Stapleton was only a tiny hamlet; old Mr. Darragh had returned to the city of his birth to end his days there, and Tom had gone into a lawyer's office. Now at twenty-seven he had a flourishing business. And he loved Sylvia Blaine.

Sylvia could not believe that it was right for any girl to be as happy as she was. And why should Tom have chosen her when there were so many sweet girls of his acquaintance? If he had ever known her cousin Agatha, for example, she was sure that Tom would never have looked twice at her.

Agatha Blaine was five years older than Sylvia. Although she had been born in Stapleton, she had not lived there much during her checkered existence. She had made an unhappy marriage and was suing the man for a divorce. Agatha was a handsome blonde—"dashing," people called her—with any number of moths fluttering round her. And the worst of it was that Agatha, who could never resist making conquests, was coming to stay with Sylvia's mother.

How could the little country girl retain her influence over Tom when handsome, rich, titled Agatha was there?

"Why, you foolish child," said Tom laughingly, when Sylvia voiced her



Suddenly She Stopped.

fears, "don't you know that I am madly infatuated with you? Bring on your Agatha and watch me."

Sylvia sighed and suffered Tom to kiss the incipient lines of trouble off her pretty forehead. But when Agatha did arrive, a resplendent being in a picture hat, with four trunks and a pedigreed dachshund, she was more than ever convinced that her days of happiness were numbered.

Agatha was so kind that the girl half minded to confess her trouble to her. But Agatha seemed also a little heartless. Sylvia was bound to confess that as she sat with her and her mother and watched the elder lady's eyebrows gradually contract as she listened to their visitor's flippant comment on men and events. But doubtless it was Agatha's unhappy matrimonial experience that was responsible for that.

"Why, my dear auntie," she said to Sylvia's mother, "what funny, old-fashioned ideas you have about men. Any woman can twist any man round her little finger, if she chooses."

"I wonder if she will choose to twist Tom round her little finger," sighed Sylvia to herself, when Agatha congratulated her warmly. Her interest in the engagement seemed almost unnatural, and she insisted upon purchasing a large part of Sylvia's trousseau. She also inquired into the condition of Tom's finances, and when she learned that his home would have to be a very modest one she seemed quite distressed.

"And I have more money than I know what to do with," musingly, "Richard settled \$40,000 on me when we were married, you know."

On the day after her arrival Tom was introduced to her. Sylvia, watching them closely, although she assumed an indifferent manner, felt that her worst fears were confirmed. Within a few minutes after the introduction they were chatting together like old friends.

"Well, I've seen this wonderful Cousin Agatha," said Tom, as they parted, "and she can't hold a candle to you, sweetheart." But Sylvia detected a note of insincerity in his voice, and that night she cried herself to sleep.

The next day Cousin Agatha pleaded a headache when Sylvia broached the proposition of a walk. Sylvia had some shopping to do, and, after a stroll through the woods alone, returned through the village. Suddenly she stopped dead; she felt as though an icy hand had been laid upon her heart, for at a window on the sec-

ond story of some business offices she saw Agatha's hat.

There was no mistaking that hat. There could not possibly have been another like it in Stapleton. And the irony of the situation lay in the fact that the hat was nodding at the window of Tom's office.

There were few people in the street, and nobody noticed Sylvia clinging, with pale face and trembling limbs, to a corner of the building opposite. She could not tear her eyes away from what she saw. And a moment or two later she saw Agatha's filmy lace handkerchief pressed to her eyes, saw Agatha's head bowed upon her hands, and saw Tom's hand patting her cousin's shoulder consolingly.

After awhile Sylvia summoned strength to go home. She did not tell anybody what she had seen. She wrote a little note to Tom that evening.

"I find that I made a mistake," she said. "I thought I loved you, Tom, but I was wrong. Please do not call or write to me, and never ask me to explain."

She knew Tom was too proud not to take her at her word. And the next two weeks were miserable ones, for she herself was too proud to let Agatha know how she was suffering.

"Well, I must say I don't think much of that Sweetheart of yours, Sylvia," said Agatha. "If I were engaged to a young man I should expect him to come to see me every evening. And here it must be a couple of weeks since he has put in an appearance."

Sylvia did not make the retort that was upon the tip of her tongue. That on four separate occasions she had seen Agatha in Tom's office. And when her mother, looking at her searchingly that night, asked her whether anything was wrong between Tom and herself, she denied it miserably and hurried to her room, that she might give way to her tears without restriction.

But everything draws to a close, and the time was come for Agatha to leave. The four trunks were packed, the wonderful hat went into a special box, giving place to a neat travelling hat, and Agatha was waiting for the carriage to come to convey her to the station.

"Sylvia, dear," she said, "there isn't anything wrong between Tom and yourself, is there?"

"N-no," stammered Sylvia brazenly. She would never give her cousin the satisfaction of knowing the harm that she had wrought.

"Because," said Agatha, "I wouldn't have engaged his services if I had reason to believe he was going to be unkind to you."

"Engaged his services, Agatha?" asked Sylvia, bewildered.

"Yes, dear. You know I didn't like my lawyer, Wagstaff, who, between ourselves, hadn't been quite straight with me. So I thought: Here's \$500 worth of law business going begging, and why shouldn't Tom Darragh have it and be able to start housekeeping with a nest egg in the bank? Only, I'm afraid he must think me a dreadful goose, Sylvia. Because, the first time I went to his office I began contrasting him in my mind with Richard, and thinking what a lucky girl you were—and I just broke down and cried. Why—Sylvia!"

For Sylvia was crying, too, and when the cab arrived she had only just begun to explain. She was so remorseful that she did not notice the direction which the cab was taking until it stopped outside Tom's office. And then—

"I can't go in, Agatha. I dare not. I'll write to Tom—"

"Well, now, you just sit still and I'll bring Tom out to you," said Agatha sternly. And when, a minute later, the door opened and Tom came in, Sylvia clung to him, sobbing and repentant.

"O, Tom, what a goose I was. Can you ever forgive me?" she asked.

"On one condition," he answered. "That you marry me next month."

"On one condition," said Sylvia docilely.

"Which is—?"

"That Cousin Agatha shall be bridesmaid."

(Copyright, 1913, by W. G. Chapman.)

Oxygen and Breathing.

That there is less oxygen in the rarefied air of celebrated mountain health resorts than in any room with closed windows, no matter how crowded with persons, was an unchallenged statement made in the Times by the English expert on ventilation, Dr. Leonard Hill. The British Royal Society has just published a prayer supplementary to the report on the Anglo-American Pike's Peak expedition by Miss M. P. Fitzgerald, which concludes with the statement that "arterial blood contains considerably more oxygen at high altitudes than at sea level." The lungs are better ventilated, for one thing, but it is certain, also, that the old theory that the lungs should be plentifully supplied with chemically pure air must be discarded. The little cell-like alveoli at the ends of the lung branches have a special power of extracting oxygen, even while the supply of oxygen in the air is deficient. This secretory power is increased at high altitudes, and the increase does not disappear until a considerable time after descent to sea level.

His Sketch.

A youngster in school was busy drawing. The teacher, to appear interested, approached him and said kindly:

"Well, Johnny, what are you drawing?"

"Why, I was making a picture of you, but it didn't look enough like you, so I put a tail on it and called it a dog."

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