

# Trigleigh Higgs' Remedy

By ULMAN W. ELSEVER

"It has come to a pretty pass," declared Trigleigh Higgs, "when a man has a regiment of tongue-wagging neighbors to dodge, no matter where he goes or what he does!"

"What's the matter, dear?" queried his wife, in commonplace manner.

She was not surprised at her husband's outburst, although she had seen nothing out of the ordinary. She supposed that it was time for her husband to undergo one of his "crusty" periods—times when misty occurrences sprang up in his mind to bother him.

"Of course it's Mrs. Noseley, next door," said Higgs. "I tell you I've stood all I'm going to from that woman!"

"But what has she been doing now?" asked Mrs. Higgs. "You do kick up such a rumpus over trivialities!"

"It's just this: I've discovered that she wants to know my business as well as I know it myself, and that she wants to run it for me. I heard her talking to you last night. You'll admit it's no affair of her's if we have a blanket or padding under our table-cloth, or whether the comfortable on the visitors' bed is genuine goods, or the rug in the parlor a sure-enough Persian weaving. I know she's intelligent—I've heard her say so often enough to have the knowledge impressed on me—but she can't know everything better than everyone else."

Mrs. Trigleigh Higgs smiled. She was accustomed to hear him rip and snort. He had to do it or die, apparently.

Higgs continued: "Did the fact that I spent my summer with you in the Adirondacks camp interfere with her mode of living? Did she imagine I was with you because I distrusted having you there without me? Can't a man spend the summer with his wife, just as he can spend the winter with her, without having his neighbors wonder what's eating him, and talk as though there was a divorce pending?"

"And how does Mrs. Noseley find out what's going on if she doesn't oversee her neighbors' actions? How did she know I had bought you a new outfit of kettles and saucepans? Saw the wagon stop in front of the house, and rubbered. And then, didn't she tell you I had been imposed on?—that the same goods were being sold at Dash's for half a dollar less?—and that fact, too, before you had told her how much I paid for them? You were thoughtless enough to throw the bill slip into the paper barrel outdoors, and she knew it and looked at it. I know!"

"Her rumor that we didn't pay our bills has not made me admire her any the more. Of course, as you are trying to tell me, her suspicions were justified; but she might have made an investigation before spreading that rumor—and if she had asked me," he added fiercely, "I jolly well soon would have sent her warmly on her way!"

"It was the matter of your new clothes-wringer that set her tongue wagging in that connection. I had stopped down town and ordered one sent up. When it came you set it aside. I didn't see it for a month, at which time I noticed that the rubber rolls were split. My talented, eagle-eyed neighbor, Mrs. Noseley, saw the store's man deliver the machine, and she also saw the same man come back in about a month and take it away. As she mysteriously missed seeing the new one returned, she spread the rumor that I bought goods on credit; and as I couldn't come up when the time came, the business houses declared on and took the goods purchased."

Mrs. Higgs smiled again. "It's only a way neighbors have," she remarked, womanlike. "They're all inquisitive."

Trigleigh Higgs sat silently for some moments, and then he portrayed a semblance of wonderful thought.

"Well, Sarah Jane Gumps Higgs," he said slowly, to his wife, "I'm just going to show the estimable lady what a good sort of neighbor I am! I mean to cure her of the habit of prying into my affairs."

There was a knock at the door. Mrs. Noseley's little girl had come to say her mother would like to see Mrs. Higgs a minute.

Mrs. Higgs said to hubby: "I won't be long, dear; I'll just see what she wants," and left him to himself.

Within five minutes Trigleigh Higgs heard Mrs. Noseley say: "But why doesn't he take you to the theater, like another man would? You haven't seen a show for six months week after next. And why does he spend five hours a day at home? What does he do? I often see him at his writing-desk in his library—does he get paid for it?" And she asked many other questions in the quick manner that permits them again to become the topics of conversation at a time when details are possible, when they can be introduced by a remark like: "As I was saying the other day."

Higgs ground his teeth. "I'll fix her! I'll teach her a lesson!" he muttered, and went to his library to straighten out his plans.

The next day he began his campaign of showing Mrs. Noseley what a considerate kind of neighbor a man can be when he tries. He rushed his work of paraphraser for one of the local papers (the work that kept him in his library at the desk for five hours a day), and was done in about an hour, having much material ahead for emergency.

He placed his manuscript in an envelop, and went down to the front door. As he supposed, Mrs. Noseley was on her front porch.

"Good-morning," he said, graciously. "I want to send some writing down town in time to reach the editor before six o'clock. Do you suppose the mail-box will be opened in time for it, or would you advise sending it by messenger?"

"The mail-box is opened every two hours," was the reply; "and the mail man just went up the street. He had a letter for Mrs. Blank, a letter from Cleveland, Ohio. Must be from her sister, who's visiting out that way somewhere. And he left a post-card for Mr. Rayner; there's a bundle at the post-office on which mailage hasn't been paid. I suppose it's another one of those bundles he gets every Wednesday from that Chicago book firm, with sample pages of their books; but I can't imagine why they didn't

put the postage on this time!" "Then you'd advise me to send a messenger?" asked Higgs.

"Well, I don't know. You see, Mrs. Watts used a messenger the other day. I saw her go flying out of the house, and come down to the grocery, where I happened to be, so that she could use the telephone. She tried to telephone her message, you know. But they couldn't hear her plainly at the other end—he did holler so! One should speak naturally when phoning, of course. She wanted to tell her cousins not to come up to dinner, as she would be away from home. But she had to ring for a messenger, and send him. Well, do you know, I saw that boy standing on the corner for more than an hour, with a book in his hand? I took a glance at the book with my opera-glasses, and it was one of these detective thrillers. He didn't get there in time, and Mrs. Watts had to stay at home and feed them on canned goods."

"I'll risk the mail," said Higgs. And he went to the corner and deposited his letter in the box. When he returned he went straight into his house. Soon he sent his boy over to ask Mrs. Noseley to call.

"I want to ask your advice," he said to her, as she came in. "You see, these table napkins are frayed and of no use, and I want to know what you'd do. Would you cut up the table-cloth for napkins, or would you buy new napkins?"

Mrs. Noseley regarded the material keenly. "I bought some napkins real cheap not long ago," she remarked. "It 'ud be a pity to cut up the table-cloth, because as napkins it wouldn't last long. You've had it quite sometime; I remember when you bought it."

"That's why I ask your advice," interjected Higgs. "And while you're here I wish you'd step into the parlor; I want to get your idea of the way my pictures should hang."

Naively, she suggested a mode of arrangement, and embraced the opportunity to glance around. The desk in the library was strewn with papers. Higgs took her arm and led her to that room.

"In the story I'm writing for 'The Bing-Bang Magazine,'" he told her, "I can't get my hero and heroine together. I thought you might suggest some way of doing it."

She did so, after he had elucidated the points of the story—she had read so many books, she said, and her husband's cousin's uncle had been an author.

Trigleigh Higgs rubbed his hands ecstatically when finally he permitted her to leave his house. "The remedy has begun," he said off-handedly to his wife; "but I fear she is too thick-headed to notice it."

"What are you getting at with her?" asked Mrs. Higgs.

"Wait and see."

It was then ten o'clock. Five minutes later T. Higgs took up the second course of his treatment with his neighbor. He despatched his boy to her with a note:

"I'm going to adopt your theory regarding the lovers in 'The Gush of Gustapher,' and shall start immediately. Thought you'd like to know."

That note was the forerunner of a number of others of like character. When anything new developed in the story, Higgs wrote a note and sent his boy with it to Mrs. Noseley. At twelve-ten the note read:

"Am going to stop for lunch now. Understand we have hash made from the roast beef we had yesterday, cranberry-pie, coffee and cheese. We figure on making the hash do for supper also."

Half an hour later Higgs' message to Mrs. Noseley read much after this manner:

"Managed to save a little of the hash. What did you have for lunch? That boiled lamb I saw the butcher take in?"

Fifteen minutes later:

"Have finished the short sketch, and right now am revising it. Thought you'd like to know."

Trigleigh Higgs was in a chuckling mood. And this was increased when his boy told him Mrs. Noseley had threatened to lock the door when she saw him coming again.

"Good!" exclaimed Higgs. "If she does, tuck the notes under the door."

## IN THE MOONLIGHT



O, Youth and Hope and a lover's kiss  
In the sweet summer night,  
In the pale moonlight—  
Life holds no greater bliss!