

Married Life of Helen and Warren

A "Candid" Dinner Convinces Warren of the Expediency of Falsehoods.

"This is going to be a 'candid dinner,'" announced Mrs. Stevens when they were settled around the softly lit table in her attractive boudoir during room. "We're going to say what we honestly think."

"Really? always springing something," complained her husband. "Last month it was a 'Poverty' dinner—everybody had to wear their oldest clothes."

"I'm sorry we missed that," regretted Helen. "Mr. Curtis was in Albany."

"Yes, old clothes would have been more in my line," shrugged Warren. "If this is going to be a 'Truth' party, we'll end in an all-around row."

"Our candid comments may not be very candid," chuckled Mr. Stevens. "Now Henry, don't try to make puns. I want you all to take it seriously. I was at a 'Candid' luncheon last week, the monthly meeting of our Woman's club. Twelve of us sat at the table and had a most interesting time."

"Huh, you got 12 women to tell the truth at a luncheon? Must've been a pretty scrappy feed. Why pay 25 bucks for a ringside seat?" grinned Warren. "Did you break up in a general hair-pulling?"

"Certainly not! There was only one woman who had any feeling about it. Now I want you all to read your place cards; and remember—you're not to be offended at any candid remark. We're to say exactly what we think, and to answer every question truthfully."

"I'll be official referee of all fights," announced Warren, glancing at his place card—a seashore scene on "Candid."

"There'll not be any fights," persisted Mrs. Stevens. "Don't you think we can stand the plain truth for one evening?"

"I have me 'does,'" Warren dispatched his morsel of caviar toast. "I'll tell the truth about everything except my age," volunteered Mrs. Dalton. "Don't anybody ask me that."

"Very well, asking ages is barred," decreed Mrs. Stevens. "Anything else you want exempted before we start?"

"Don't ask how I keep my figure," begged Mr. Stevens, who was bulbously stout. "That's one secret I won't reveal."

"Now, don't try to be facetious, Henry. We're not to ask fool questions—that isn't the idea at all. It's more to get a candid expression on worth while things."

"For instance?"

"Well, at that luncheon one woman admitted she never could read Shakespeare and she loathed a Shakespearean play. How many of us would ordinarily have the courage to admit that?"

"Huh, I'll go her one better," Warren crunched a salted almond. "I'd rather hear a hand-organ than go to grand opera."

"Them's my sentiments," agreed Mr. Stevens with conviction. "The idea is not to make startling statements but merely not to pose or exaggerate or say anything for effect—or just to be polite or pleasant."

"Then we'd better say something pleasant while we can," observed Mrs. Dalton. "This soup is delicious. What is it, anyway?"

"Ours. You never get it here. It's from an old Creole recipe I got in New Orleans."

"Oh, yes, we had it at that famous place where they have the noonday breakfast," offered Helen eagerly. "We go there every time we're in New Orleans."

"Huh, you've never been to New Orleans but twice," grumped Warren. "Why say 'every time' to give the impression that it's an annual jaunt?"

Helen reddened and everyone laughed.

"Oh, all women exaggerate," prophesied Mr. Stevens. "Emily piles it on thick. Jerusalem, I'm awkward!" as he spattered the table cloth in carving. "Mrs. Dalton, did that splash on you?"

"Oh, it doesn't matter," brushing at the grease spot on her light gown. "Now, that's a fib—you know it does," reproved Mr. Stevens.

antagonism which increased as the dinner progressed.

Mrs. Dalton was particularly nettled at Mrs. Stevens' frank remark about the unbecoming crimpiness of her permanent wave. She repaid this with several tart thrusts that Helen thought most unnecessary.

"The men still talking golf, the women had naturally drifted to clothes."

"That's what I like about Madame Irene—her things don't go out of style. She designs them for the individual. Now this gown I got last year—I always feel comfortable in it. I like this blouse effect, don't you?"

"Since we're telling the truth, I can't say I do," was Mrs. Dalton's retort.

"Well, you're too stout to wear that type of gown. And to be perfectly frank, I think it's much too youthful."

"Oh, you do?" ejaculated. "Possibly I'd look more youthful if I'd have my face lifted! But I shouldn't care to resort to such desperate methods."

"What do you mean?" sharply. "You're not insinuating—"

"Why, yes, since you've been so frank. Everyone knows you've had your face lifted—and the line between your eyes filled in."

"What if I have? It's much preferable to wrinkles and sagging cheeks—so I'd advise you to have it done. And I might also recommend the operation for a double chin, with an acid glance at Mrs. Stevens' overplump throat."

Helen, keeping a discreet silence, held her breath. What further incriminations would this truthful warfare elicit?

Mrs. Dalton fairly exuded animosity and Mrs. Stevens' face was crimson with volcanic emotions.

"Shall we have the coffee in here?" after a militant silence. "In the front room," decided her husband with emphasis. "And we've had enough of this candid stuff. It's all off when we leave the table. This thing's been carried too far."

"Why I think it has been most enjoyable," insisted Mrs. Stevens. "We've got some very illuminating angles on our friends."

In the front room the atmosphere was equally hostile. The conversation was kept up with an effort. Even Mr. Stevens' unflinching good humor had been taxed by the "candid" dinner.

"Well, I don't want to break up the party," announced Warren, "but I'm going to Philadelphia on that early train, so we'll have to mosey along."

"Yes, we'll have to go too," Mrs. Dalton rose abruptly. "Mrs. Stevens made no effort to delay their departure."

"It was such an interesting idea," effused Mrs. Dalton with acid sarcasm. "I'm sure we all enjoyed it so much."

Outside, Warren declined Mr. Dalton's punctilious offer to take them home in his car.

"No, thanks, we'll walk. A little air'll do us good after that jam-boree."

"Oh, what a ghastly evening!" Helen sighed her relief as they turned homeward through the shadowy, deserted street.

"Why in Sam Hill did Mrs. Stevens spring that fool stunt?" growled Warren. "She might know it'd end in a row."

"Mrs. Dalton is wild. She thought no one knew she'd had her face lifted. But she shouldn't have said that about Mrs. Stevens dressing too youthfully."

"Love, that was a hot one she got in about the double chin. Well, you were foxy. For once you had sense enough to keep your trap shut."

"I tried to, but I was furious at Mrs. Dalton for saying my love of antiques was a pose. Oh, here's my place card!"

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