

# Married Life of Helen and Warren

Warren Exposes to Ridicule Helen's Ardent and Mysterious Admirer.

"Sign here!"  
With the stubby pencil Helen signed on the line indicated by the grimy finger.

A florist box! Who could be sending her flowers?

Closing the hall door on the retreating delivery boy, aglow with expectancy, she took the box into the library.

There could be no mistake—the tag said plainly, "Mrs. W. E. Curtis." The writing not familiar, it was probably addressed by the florist's clerk.

It could not be from Warren. He never troubled to send flowers except on her birthday or their wedding anniversary—and not always then.

With feminine indifference, she examined the tag, the box and the gilt-lettered name of the florist for some clue to the sender. No doubt there was a card within, but she wished to prolong the delicious uncertainty.

The florist was a prominent one with several branch stores. This had been sent from the main Fifth avenue shop—but that was uninteresting.

The square box suggested violets, sweet peas or lilies of the valley.

At last with hurried eagerness Helen slipped off the string, raised the lid, disclosing, beneath folds of waxed paper, a great bunch of orchids.

Orchids! Who could have sent so extravagant a gift?

A card envelope lay under the flowers. For several moments she held it unopened, trying to vision the name within.

Then flutteringly she drew out the card.

"Mr. Robert K. Rodman,  
The Carleton Club."

Rodman? Who was Mr. Rodman? The Dalton's dinner—that tall dark man who sat beside her and talked so little. But she had met him only that once.

The card turned over, with heightening color, she read:  
"For Mrs. Curtis,  
"A tribute to her delicate loveliness and charming femininity—so rare in these days of strenuous, assertive women."

The intoxicating glow that comes only from masculine admiration swept over her. That long forgotten thrill she had not known since her marriage.

She was still young and attractive—she could still elicit this! The sense of feminine power, long submerged by Warren's unresponsiveness, now flamed up.

"D'you want that eggplant baked or fried?" demanded Anna from the door.

"Oh!" starting almost guiltily. "Why, either way—no, baked. And bring me a vase—that low, wide one. I think it's on the top pantry shelf."

Carefully Helen took off the lavender silk cord and green tulle that bound the stems, while Pussy Purnew sniffed inquiringly at the feathery fern.

Six large blossoms! At least three dollars apiece. Eighteen dollars! "What d'you call them flowers?" asked the girl when she brought the vase.

"Orchids. The most expensive flower there is," unable to resist the chance to impress the supercilious Anna.

Where should she put them? Where would Warren be more apt to notice them? On the library mantel? No, the dining room table. She wanted him to ask who sent them.

Friday they were dining with the Stevens. Would the orchids be fresh enough to wear? If only they were going somewhere this evening or tomorrow.

She would wear one tonight anyway. Just one, so the rest would stay fresh.

But the old charmouse that had been good enough for a dinner at home seemed suddenly shabby beside the expensive loveliness of the orchid.

It was not quite 6. She would have time to change before Warren came.

Eagerly she slipped into her new chameleon taffeta. The orchid pinned at her waist and her excited flush were radiantly becoming.

"Company tonight?" was Warren's greeting, as he kicked off his overshoes.

"No, dear. Why?"  
"What're you all dolled up for?" Then without waiting for her answer, "Hole in these rubbers. Haven't I got another pair?"  
"No, you lost your sandals," suggestively adjusting the orchid.

Not in the least interested in office files, Helen once more adjusted the dolly under the orchids.

"Goin' to chuck all those old ones. Think I'll move that safe."

"Dear, aren't those lovely?" she blurted out, her patience exhausted. "I thought you'd see them—but you never see anything."

"Don't staring at the exotic patriarchal flowers. 'Where'd you get 'em?'" "Someone sent them to me. Guess who?"

"How should I know?" with unflattering indifference, as he carved into the roast. "Cooked too much again! Can't she ever get it right?"

"Mr. Rodman" flushing with pleasurable self-consciousness.

"Rodman?" pausing to sharpen the knife. "Who the Sam Hill's he?"

"Don't you remember? I sat next to him at the Dalton's dinner."

"That Gloomy Gus? Well, he's got his nerve. What's he sending you flowers for?"

"I'll show you the card that came with them," darting into her room.

With the knife still stropping the steel, Warren glanced down at the card she laid by his plate.

"Of all the fool muck! How long you know him?"

"Why I only met him that once. I can't imagine why he sent me flowers."

"Huh, he didn't seem to be having such a heluva time! You both sat there like a couple of clams."

Another disgusted grunt, as he glowered at the card that still lay by his plate, but he did not again refer to it.

Helen was vaguely disappointed. When would she meet him again?

She would not have admitted that she hoped he would be jealous—but at least he might have shown some interest.

This rare chance to impress him she could not dismiss so easily.

"Dear, aren't orchids very expensive now? What do you think these cost?"

"How in blazes do I know? Haven't bought any. A postcard of the Woolworth building is my limit for a skirt I've only met once. What's the matter? You hipped on eggplant? Had it every night this week?"

"Only last night. They sent two such big ones. She kept one for tonight."

No further reference was made to the orchids, but when they left the table Helen carried them in to the library mantel.

The card she took into her own room. Not knowing what to do with it, she propped it against the bottle of toilet water on her dressing table.

At the Dalton's dinner she had sat on Mr. Rodman's right. Several times she had glanced up to find his dark eyes fixed upon her. Now before the mirror, with a hand glass she studied her left profile.

He was much taller. He had looked down. She tried to get that angle.

Yielding to a swift impulse, she ran to the closet and took out the tulle evening gown worn at the dinner.

Knowing Warren was in the library safely engrossed in the evening paper, she coiled her hair low, as she had worn it that night, and slipped on the gown.

Then again with the hand-mirror she viewed her left profile—trying to see herself as he had seen her. She should always wear her hair that way and never be without a gray-blue gown. The soft quakerish color was most becoming.

Should she thank him for the flowers or ignore them? Or must she write and thank him? How could she write a formal note in answer to so ardent a tribute?

"Delicate loveliness and charming femininity," glancing at the card.

What if he should call her up? Send her more flowers or shower her with attentions? He might. The magazines were full of such stories.

Suddenly from the library came Warren's loud guffaw.

"Ha, ha, Kitten, this's great! Come in here!"

"In a minute, dear," starting to take off the dress. "I can't—just now."

"Come now! This is too good to keep."

"In just a second," her flurried fingers struggling with the hooks.

Before she could get off the betraying room, he strode into her room.

For once she was grateful for his careless oblivion to what she wore. Without even a glance at her bare

neck and arms, he thrust the paper at her.

"Wealthy Clubman Sent to Private Asylum Relatives Secure His Confinement."

Robert K. Rodman has been adjudged incompetent and trustee appointed for his estate. One of his eccentricities has been his mania for sending flowers, with an ardent note or poem, to every woman he meets. Last month his florist bill was over \$1,500. His relatives claim \*\*\*

As Helen read the item, her scorching humiliation crimsoned her face.

"Ha, ha," roared Warren. "Lucky he didn't send 'em C. O. D. Only bird you could get to send you flowers is a nut! What's that he wrote?" spying the card on her dressing-table.

She tried to snatch it from him, but holding it out of her reach, jeeringly he read it aloud.

"No wonder they clapped him in a padded cell. He's batty, all right!"

"Warren, you needn't keep rubbing it in! You're cruel to—"

"Huh, you were so darned cocky and lit up about it! Preening all through dinner. And I bet were in here lamping yourself in that mirror!"

Helen caught her breath. Would he notice her dress? Would he guess all of her silly vanity? But his careless inattention spared her that.

Still without seeing her evening gown, he took up the paper and strode out with a final unrepentant.

"Ha, ha, bats in his belfry! When he started to 'say it with flowers' to you—they put him away. Next Johnny you try to vamp—pick one who isn't ripe for the bug-house!"

(Copyright, 1923.)

Next week—The Episode of the Blue Plate.

If winter underwear, when new, were stitched around each buttonhole twice on the sewing machine, the buttonholes would not stretch until the garment is worn out.

The Seamy Side of Life.  
When stitching seams of any heavy material such as cretonne or canvas, rub the seams with any good hard soap, and the needle will go through the goods very easily without breaking.

If curtains are measured length and width before they are washed, they can be put on the stretches accurately and easily, as the stretches can be put together according to measurement.

When your machine-needle point is broken or the needle is too large, place a piece of sandpaper under the needle, raise the foot and stitch through a few times. It will sharpen the point or reduce the needle to suit your work.

Cornmeal will clean lace that is much soiled. Rub the lace and the meal together between the hands, then shake out well, using white meal for white lace and yellow meal for ecru lace.

A good holder for a pair of scissors is a large safety-pin, pinned to your belt on the left side. Slip your scissors into it.—From the March Designer.

Organdie is used for trimming printed silks that go south. For several seasons organdie has been recognized as a good trimming material even for fabrics heavier than itself.

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