

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

Warren, Bored and Irritable, Ignores Helen's Efforts to Divert Him.
"Here, waiter, switch on that fan! Hot as blazes in here," grumbled Warren. "And hustle along that order."

"Yes, sir," hastening to turn on the electric fan nearest their table. "Dear, was it hot in your office today?" Helen laid aside the menu after an anxious appraisal of the piratic prices.

"Hot everywhere," curtly, again engrossed in his paper. Wistfully Helen gazed about the gray and white, linen-swathed restaurant. Other couples were laughing and talking in animated dinner mood. Only she sat silent and neglected with Warren barricaded behind the evening paper.

What could she talk about that would interest him? So far her several attempts at conversation had elicited only monosyllabic grunts. "Dear, how would you like to go out to the Drakes next Sunday? They've been wanting us to come all summer—we've just to let them know."

"Um-um," without looking up. "If you don't want to spend the day—we could leave about 1 and have the afternoon and evening." To this there was no response whatever. Patiently she waited, reading the headlines on the back of his paper until the waiter brought the jellied bouillon.

His attention now focused on the congealed amber broth, Warren consumed it in stolid silence. "Dear, you seem tired. Did you have a hard day?"

"No harder than usual," with a crustiness that precluded further questioning along that line. "It was several months before she ventured on another topic. "Aren't those red geraniums attractive?" admiring the well-kept window boxes. "I've often thought of having some in the dining room—that bay window would take three boxes. Would they have to be made to order? What do you suppose they'd cost?"

Warren's shrug indicated both his ignorance and indifference. A barren, dragging interval, emphasized by the vivacious chatter from nearby tables, spurred Helen to still another effort.

"I met Mrs. Holden in the elevator this morning. They're going up to Cedar Inn for two weeks. Wasn't that where the Sanfords went last summer?"

"Uh-uh," scooping out a large spoonful of the quivering jelly. "I'm sure they won't like it. Mrs. Sanford said they were eaten up with mosquitoes. I wonder why they don't go to the beach again? Wouldn't you think it would be better for the children?"

"Well, I'm not losing any sleep over where they go," as the broth now finished, he reached for the paper.

Discouraged at the pathetic failure of her conversational manoeuvres, Helen broodingly regarded the other diners. What were they all talking about? Why were they all so interested? Was it because they were married? Was that what made the difference?

She thought of that wonderful year before and during their engagement—when dining out together was an event, not a part of the daily routine. Then there had been so much to talk about. Every trivial thing had seemed of vital importance.

Now Warren looked bored to extinction at every subject she broached. It was an effort to get even a grunted response.

Over the entree of broiled mushrooms she tried to think of something in her uneventful day that might arouse a gleam of interest. "Oh, the man came this morning to fix that lock on the bathroom door. He said the spring was broken—it'll be cheaper to put on a bolt. We never lock it from the outside—so won't a bolt do just as well?"

"S'pose so," absently. "It was just then that Helen caught a snatch of the trivial but lively dialogue from the adjoining table. "I did call you up but your wire was busy. Well, that's what central said. About 3. I tried again at half-past but you were out."

It was the old story of "Before and After," reflected Helen bitterly, comparing this couple's absorption with Warren's utter boredom.

Over the roast lamb and asparagus she made another attempt. "Dear, did you read that wireless story in this month's Colmore? About the politician who had a secret station and received messages from—"

"Oh, cut it! Don't rehash any of those Colmore yarns. Tiresome enough when you read 'em first hand."

"Why I thought the last few numbers had been rather good. They've started a new serial by Fullerton. Haven't you seen the announcement? They're advertising it everywhere."

"Same old sex slush," buttering his asparagus. "Evidently that's what the people want," eager to pursue any subject if he would only talk. "They say he gets enormous prices—he's the highest paid of all the magazine writers."

But Warren's glum silence proclaimed his complete indifference to Fullerton's stories or the amount of his income.

Through the salad Helen made no further attempt to divert him. Instead she gave herself up to the blackest brooding.

Were all marriages like this? Was it only a matter of a few years until the boredom stage was reached? Was it the continuous companionship that so soon palled?

Was that why articles on how to hold one's husband filled the women's magazines? Keep young and attractive were the ever-repeated warnings.

But she was young and attractive! The mirrored wall reflected a slim girlish figure in a dainty blue organdy and broad wheat-trimmed hat. She was quite as attractive as the girl at the adjoining table—but they were not married! That was why the man leaned forward with such flattering interest.

Glancing past them, she watched an elderly couple who had just entered. In wooden silence they were waiting to be served. The woman, stout and gray-haired, looked quite

as bored as the man Helen wondered how many years before she, too, would reach that stage.

Perhaps it would be more comfortable then. Anything would be better than this feverish striving to arouse an interest that had ceased to exist.

"Hello, Curtis! You still in town?" "Maxwell! When did you get in?" Warren sprang up to shake hands with a stout man in white flannels.

"Yesterday—just a hurried trip. Going back tonight." "I don't believe you've met Mrs. Curtis," introducing him to Helen. Then cordially, "Sit right down here and have dinner with us."

"Just had dinner in the grill. We're going to the theater—but I've a few moments," taking the vacant chair.

"Well, you certainly struck it hot this trip. Mrs. Maxwell with you?" "No, she's up at our camp on the St. Lawrence."

"Jove, I'd like to have about two weeks up there! Your camp's near Brockville, isn't it? Finest bass fishing in Canada," enthused Warren. "I caught a seven-pounder there one year."

"Yes, Brockville's just five miles below us. They're putting up a big hotel there and we're afraid it's going to bring the mob."

With smoldering resentment Helen watched Warren, now vigorously animated. His bored air had vanished the moment Mr. Maxwell appeared. Here was some one with whom he wanted to talk.

For a full half hour Mr. Maxwell lingered. And when finally with evident reluctance he left them, Warren was still in high good humor.

"That was luck to run into Maxwell. Haven't seen him for over a year." Then briskly, "Feel like a show tonight? How about a roof garden? Here, waiter, let's have the check."

Outside, in the cloying sultry night, he strolled along, still genial. Helen was allowed to bask in the afterglow of Mr. Maxwell's enlivening presence.

She knew she should gratefully accept his changed mood and say nothing, but her resentment urged her to a tactless rebellion.

"Warren, do you consider Mr. Maxwell particularly clever or interesting?" "Maxwell?" surprised. "Why, no. He's a good sort—but he'll never set the world on fire."

"Then you don't especially enjoy his companionship?" recklessly she persisted. "You wouldn't say he was—unusually stimulating?"

"Stimulating?" Maxwell? What're you driving at?" "Just this," tensely. "Until he joined us you sat there glum and silent. I couldn't get a word out of you. When I tried to talk you only answered in grunts. But the minute he came you were all animation."

"What of it?" belligerently. "What're you trying to get at, anyway?" "That I bore you—and other people don't," now flushed and excited. "You say he isn't particularly clever—that makes it worse. It shows that anyone else can interest you. You're only bored when you're alone with me."

"See here, what are you trying to start? Working overtime on some of your damned analyzing, that it? You've got to pick everything to pieces and put it under a microscope."

"It didn't take a microscope to see that you were bored when we were alone. You hadn't a thing to say. If you'd looked around at the other couples! Everyone laughing and talking except us."

"Well, if I've anything to say—I'll say it. If I haven't—I'll keep still," pounding the pavement with his cane. "I don't propose to reel off any Polly-anna chatter when I'm dead tired. And don't you try any of your dissecting stunts on me! Unless you're looking for trouble—cut out the post-mortems!"

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Melon Recipes.

Watermelon Flip—Cut the melon in rounds with a tablespoon, free it from seeds, then set to chill. Make a rich sirup of peach and flavor it with ginger. When cooked cool the sirup. When ready to serve lay a small block of peach ice cream under each piece of melon and pour over the fruit sirup. Serve very cold.

Cantaloupe Ice Cream—Make a rich boiled custard in the usual way and set to cool. When the custard is cold have ready one large cup of whipped cream and the pulp of two cantaloupes chopped fine, add to the custard and freeze in the usual way. Serve in the melon shells.

Deviled Cantaloupe—Chop the pulp of two cantaloupes fine, add one-half cup of crumbs, a large grated onion, pepper, salt, a little sugar, one saltspoon of curry powder, and one finely minced red pepper. Fill buttered remeniks with the mixture, dot generously with butter on top and bake.

Watermelon Kiss Salad—Cut the pulp of the melon in good sized cubes. Have ready a cup of cool spiced sirup and a small cup of stale macaroon or crumbs mixed with one-fourth cup of finely chopped nuts. Dip the chilled melon cubes into the sirup then into the crumbs. Heap in chilled sherbet glasses and cover with mayonnaise, without mustard, that has been lightened with well seasoned whipped cream.

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