

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

By MABEL HERBERT URNER.
The Horrors of the Venetian Dungeons Appeal to Helen's Atavistic Instincts.

"Ready?" Warren, at the door, impatiently tapped his cane.

"In just a minute," Helen gathered up her gloves, her "Guide to Venice," and the postcards she had written before breakfast. "I want to get stamps for these as we go out."

"Hello, you've got a caller! Cheeky beggar!"

An adventurous pigeon had fluttered in through the long window, the sun glittering on its iridescent neck, as it perked its head inquiringly.

"Oh, dear, how tame! Wait, I'll give it some crumbs," taking a roll from the breakfast tray.

Greedily it gobbled the crumbs from the floor, but refused to eat from Helen's hand, shying under the bed.

"Now you haven't time to fool. We want to get started early."

"Should we leave it in here? It might break something on the tray. I'll put some crumbs on the balcony."

The pigeon coaxed out, Helen paused to glance down the Grand canal that reflected the morning brilliancy. Barges, colorfully heaped with fruit and vegetables, glided by the gray palaces, pathetically shabby in the sunlight.

At Warren's irascible call, she turned back into the room, closed the shutters, and hurried after him as he strode down the vaulted corridor.

Helen's postcards stamped and mailed at the office, they started out for St. Marks Square—the lounging center of Venice.

The modest rear entrance of the hotel, in marked contrast to the Grand canal front, opened on a quaint, shopholed street.

With no wheeled vehicles and no sidewalks, the narrow Venetian street, paved evenly across, was filled with leisurely strollers.

"You can enjoy a walk in this burg," approved Warren. "No taxis to dodge."

Crossing a bridge over one of the interesting canals, through another picturesque street, they entered the famous Piazza.

Approaching from the west, the square lay before them in all its festive splendor—the domes of St. Mark at the opposite end and the age darkened palaces on either side.

"The most impressive square in Europe—that's what the guide book calls it."

"They'd sense enough not to plant a statue in the middle," commended Warren, for the spacious piazza was unmarred by monuments.

Though it was not yet 10 o'clock, the tables in front of the cafes were well filled with patrons sipping the inevitable glass of vermouth.

Shop windows, disconcertingly crowded with Venetian lace, beads, jewelry, leather and glass, faced the colonnaded walk continuous on three sides of the square.

"Dear, we must get something here for Carrie," as they strolled along.

"Lot of junk—fixed up for tourists," grumped Warren.

"But some of these laces are lovely. And this hand-tooled leather! How would one of those card cases do for Lawrence? They're only 20 lire."

"Huh, you spout about the greatest Square in Europe, but you're too busy lamping the gim-cracks in the shops to look at it," contemptuously.

"If we could only take home a pair of those tall Venetian goblets!"

"Now, we're not going to load up with a lot of truck that'll break. Hello, here's Quadri's! Supposed to be a rattling good place." Warren always knew about the cafes and restaurants. "Guess it's too early to have a drink."

Suddenly, as the great clock boomed out, a cloud of pigeons filled the air. At the last stroke of 10, some fluttered back to their sculptured, crevices, others to the foot of the tower where several tourists were feeding them.

"Look, dear, that old man's selling corn! Let's get some." As Helen bought two tiny cones filled with corn and peas more pigeons flew down. Tamer than her balcony visitor, one settled on her shoulder.

"Lazy loafers! So fat they can hardly waddle." Warren threw the whole of his cone in one careless handful.

"If they'd only let me stroke them," but even the boldest pigeon feeding from her hand was coyly elusive of further familiarity.

"Come on, can't fool here all morning."

After a glimpse into the vast, dim interior of St. Marks cathedral, they passed on to the Doges' palace.

"How about a gondola ride?" Warren looked out over the lagoon. "You were keen for that last night."

"Not now, dear, it's too sunny—later this afternoon. While we're here, we ought to go through the Doges' palace."

"Now I'm not going to do any art galleries," belligerently.

"We needn't do the art part—but I've always wanted to see the dungeons!"

A hovering guide, who had spotted them as tourists, now approached.

"Would you like to be shown through the palace and the ancient prisons?"

Knowing Warren's aversion to guides, Helen interrupted his curt refusal, eagerly insisting that the prison dungeons were what she most wanted to see.

"Anything but art galleries," was Warren's grouchy consent.

The admission fee paid, they entered the court, and up the imposing giant's staircase, down which, according to the guide, had rolled the bloody head of Marino Faliero after his tragic execution.

On through lofty council chambers, and they crossed the famous Bridge of Sighs.

Looking down at the grim prison walls that rose from the canal, they could see the narrow slit that served for windows. Many of the cells, the guides explained, were below the water. It was these underground

dungeons they were now to explore, adroitly stimulating their interest.

Re-crossing the bridge, he led the way through another marble hall, down a staircase to a curious secret door.

Here he paused to light a lantern, and they wound down deep spiral steps to a heavy iron door that guarded a cave-like corridor.

The lantern flickering in the sensual darkness, they stooped to follow the guide into the first dungeon cell. Cruelly small, it was barely high enough to stand upright.

A stone slab had been the prisoner's bed. There was no window, not even a crevice for light or air.

"How could they live here?" shuddered Helen. "It's like a tomb."

The guide explained that the prisoners were practically buried alive—most of them going insane before death released them.

It was in the next dungeon that Lord Byron had been locked for 24 hours, that he might write more realistically his celebrated poem, "Marino Faliero."

The lantern, held close to the wall, showed the signatures of many prisoners carved in the stone. Only the "Gordon" in Byron's name could be traced, the rest having been cut away by pittering souvenir fields.

Here, also, was the famous inscription which the guide translated, "God Preserve Me From My Friends—From My Enemies I Can Defend Myself."

Even more gruesome was the torture chamber. The walls still held the rusty iron rings by which the unfortunate victims were strung up. Often they were suspended by their feet, released when unconscious only to be revived for further torture.

The guide, sensing Helen's avid interest in the harrowing, expatiated on all the sinister details.

To the stone bench in the corner the prisoner was chained for the "Water Drip" torture. The unceasing drip, drip on the head was the most dreaded of all slow, heinous deaths.

The curious stone posts and fragments of chains were remnants of other instruments of torture, long since removed. One ghastly method was to bind the wretched victim to the floor and leave him to be devoured by the rats, which infested the damp, filthy dungeons.

"Nice, cheerful party," grunted Warren. "Had about enough?" when the guide had exhausted the horrors of that chamber.

"We want to see it all while we're here," insisted Helen, with a feminine fascination for the gruesome.

Another row of cavernous dungeons ended in the execution cell. In the stone wall was the recess for the guillotine, where, during the reign of terror, countless political prisoners had been beheaded.

The lantern, held over the floor beneath, showed the three holes where the blood drained off. Nearby was the trap door, now sealed, through which the headless bodies were dropped at night into the canal below.

"Quick and convenient" was Warren's comment. "Just chuck 'em into the drink. Well, we're about fed up with horrors. Let's dig out of here."

Back through the long corridor to the iron door, up the spiral steps and out from the mouldy darkness into the welcomed light and air.

"Come on, let's breeze over to Quadri's," as they crossed the Piazzetta. "Wonder if they can shake up a dry Martini? Guess we can stand a good stiff drink after that dose of gloom."

"Dear, I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Think of all the famous prisoners that have been in those dungeons! And that awful torture chamber!"

"Huh, wouldn't do to peeve the bosses in those days," shrugged Warren. "Those bloodthirsty old crooks ran their wards with an ax. If you didn't come across with the divvy—the chopping block for yours! Our politicians wouldn't have been in it with that bunch of cutthroats."

"Oh, wait—don't—you'll step on it!" Helen clutched his arm.

"Eh? What struck you now?"

"It's a caterpillar! Give me your cane!"

On the stone pavement, almost under Warren's foot, crawled a furry caterpillar. The cane being too unwieldy, with an ever-adaptible hair-pin Helen lifted the coiling worm and gently placed it in a sheltered crevice.

"Can you beat it?" snorted Warren, contemptuously. "You fairly ate up the line of gory dope that guy handed out. The more he piled on the agony, the better you liked it. Yet you throw a fit if anybody steps on a bug! Huh, you're blamed tender-hearted, you are!"

Next week: "A Sleepless All-Night Trip."

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Paraguay Revolution
Cost \$36,000 Real Cash

Asuncion, Paraguay, Dec. 31.—It cost only \$36,000 real money to stage the recent coup d'etat in Paraguay, which deposed a president, vice president and cabinet; put the republic's entire army and navy on the alert; upset business generally, and placed Paraguay back on the list of republics which decide political arguments by revolution.

The coup was in every sense of the word a "pacific" revolution. Three or four men were killed by troops during the 10 days that the army was in control of the capital, but these deaths were not due to fighting between the factions.

"Suggestion" Birth Control
Tried on Connecticut Cow

Packerville, Conn., Dec. 31.—Birth control by "suggestion" is being practiced here as well as on the W. S. Brown farm at Sheppard Hill.

John Smith intends to have his red and white cow bear him a pure white calf, and will curtain her in snow-white damask to make the trick a sure thing.

White will also be used every few days on the ceiling and walls of her box stall. He will wear white jackets when feeding her, and all her grain and water will be brought in snow-white pails.



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