

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

"Now, just lean back and relax—we're going to have a restful day in the country. You don't know how much good it'll do you," enthused Mrs. Richards.

"Yes, it's an ideal day for it," murmured Helen, as they whirled by groups of farm cottages basking with Sunday languor in the radiant morning.

"By Jingo, we forgot to bring that padlock for the duck house!" Mr. Richards steered sharply to avoid a speeding roadster.

"Ducks? Get any water on your place?" asked Warren.

"We've got everything on that place! A pond, two springs, and a strip of woods that beats any park. Been offered \$5,000 profit since we bought it. But I wouldn't sell it at any price."

"Sell it? I should think we wouldn't sell it," exclaimed Mrs. Richards. "It's exactly what we've always wanted. The most wonderfully built house! And the floors and woodwork—you never saw such woodwork!"

"For the rest of the 40-mile drive, both Mr. and Mrs. Richards kept up a stream of eulogies over the surpassing advantages of their new country home.

"There, right through those trees! That's it!"

"That does look attractive," Helen forced an enthusiastic note at the glimpse of a red-tiled roof.

"This is our ground. It begins at this fence, goes way back beyond those woods—and 400 feet on the road. Now you can see the house!"

As they turned in at the drive, Helen began her murmured "How attractive! What a wonderful place! You were fortunate."

"Wait till you see inside! You've never seen such a well built house. Isn't that a lovely big porch? No, Frank, drive around front—I want them to see that doorway first. There, don't you love those colonial columns?"

When Mr. Richards unlocked the front door and ushered them in, Helen's first impressions were not propitious. The ceilings were low and the rooms rather small, yet she kept up an effusive stream of laudatory comments.

"How attractive! I always like a center hall. Oh, what wonderful rooms!"

"Look at this woodwork—and the floors! They're like this all over the house. He spent over \$5,000 on the floors alone," vaunted Mr. Richards. The place, littered with paint and oil cans, was in the throes of repairs. A carpenter's table and some

kegs of plaster were the only furnishings.

In the drawing room and library, the view, the sunlight, the mantels, the windows, the doorways, even the glass door-knobs, had to be fulsomely admired.

"Isn't this an ideal dining room?" gushed Mrs. Richards. "See how the sun streams in! It's sunny all the year round. And look at these china closets!"

"Yes, them built in," approved Helen. "You won't need much furniture in this room," pleased at varying her adulation by this discerning remark.

"That's what I tell Frank. Did you notice this expensive beamed ceiling?"

"Yes, and what a nice big fireplace," Helen felt she was doing better.

"Err, yes," with evident embarrassment. "But that's not a real fireplace—there isn't any chimney. I suppose they didn't want the dirt."

"It does make a lot of dirt," hastily, to retrieve her unfortunate observation.

"Now, here's my butler's pantry. Lots of shelf room. We're putting in a refrigerator that'll make our own ice. And isn't this a big, beautiful kitchen? It's to be painted white—with blue and white linoleum. We've ordered an electric range—and one of those white enameled cabinets."

"You'll have a wonderful kitchen!" Helen was exhaling her variations of praise.

"Now, let's go down in the cellar," opening a door on a narrow stairway.

Helen forced a rapt admiration over the furnace, the hot water heater, and the bewildering ramifications of pipe that webbed the low ceiling.

While Mr. Richards was proudly explaining to Warren the intricacies of the new heating plant, Helen was enthusing over the "laundry"—a corner of the basement fitted up with porcelain tubs brought down from the kitchen.

"And we can dry the clothes down here when it rains. That's the beauty of a big basement. Be careful, don't get against that paint."

"Hello, many birds-of-prey around here?" Warren poked his cane at a stack of rusty window screens.

"Mosquitoes?" They say we may have a few. Mr. Richards admitted reluctantly, "but not until the end of the summer. Now, we'll go upstairs."

Up two flights of back stairs to the second floor where Helen knew she must again marshal all her laudatory adjectives for the bedrooms and baths.

"Isn't this a lovely big hall? I'm going to have an anting-ette here. Now, this is my room—over the dining room. And I get all this sun!"

"This is a charming room," gushed Helen.

"And here's Frank's room. We've the bath between us—and he has these two great big closets!"

"Yes, you have so much closet room. I envy you that."

"There're seventeen closets in this house," exultantly. "I must show you my linen closet—here in the hall, opening a cupboard of shelves.

The guest's suite came next. When that had been sufficiently admired they were taken up to the third floor.

Helen felt unequal to any more laudations, but she managed a few mumbled tributes to the maids' rooms and bath, the store room in the rear and the proposed den and billiard room in front.

"Don't you think it's an exceptionally well-planned house?" demanded Mrs. Richards of Warren, as he and her husband now joined them.

"It's all right," curtly, rebellious at this forced adulation.

"You ought to get away from the city, Curtis. I tell you it wears on your nerves in time. The place next door's for sale."

"Most places next door are for sale," grinned Warren. "My nerves are pretty fair—and I'm not keen on commuting."

"We've the best train service around New York. Just 10 minutes from the station. I'm at my office in an hour from the time I leave the breakfast table. Now, we'll show you the barn and garage—and our chicken house!"

Out in the yard, for a moment Helen walked ahead with Warren.

"Dear, I don't think it's such a wonderful house," in a cautious whisper. "The rooms are so small—and why are they so crazy about the woodwork?"

"Huh, he's been handing out a lot of bunk about it being so well-built—all by day's work. Looks like cheap speculative building to me."

"Did you notice those bath rooms? The cheapest kind of fixtures!"

"And he wants to land me with the places next door! Wouldn't live in this God-forsaken neck of the woods if they'd give me the whole country!"

"Sh-sh!" Then, as Mrs. Richards approached. "Such an attractive garden!"

"Yes, isn't that a perfect box hedge? Those lilacs'll soon be a mass of bloom. And these Japanese maples are very valuable. A landscape gardener said we couldn't put in the shrubbery on this place for \$5,000!"

The barn, the garage, and the chicken house inspected and unctuously lauded, they were next taken through the orchard. Here, Mr. Richards expatiated on his Wine-sap apples, Bartlett pears and Freestone peaches.

"Now, we'll go on up through the woods. We've got 10 acres of the finest woods anywhere around. The timber alone is worth over \$8,000!"

For the next hour they trudged through marshy thickets, Helen, new tired, hot and flush, thought longingly of a cool restful Sunday at home.

"Now, you can get a good view of the house from here—grounds and all."

"You've a wonderful place," Helen no longer tried to vary her applause.

"And isn't that a good looking garage? We're going to put two rooms and a bath over that for the chauffeur. And right there at the end of the garden I want a little summer house. Won't that be an ideal spot for it?"

"Ideal!" repeated Helen, wiping her mud-caked shoes on a clump of grass.

When, a moment later, Mr. Richards paused to help his wife detach her veil from a thorny bush, Helen managed a whisper.

"Dear, if I have to praise anything else—I'll scream! Do we have to keep this up all day?"

"You bet we do!" grunted Warren, grimly. "And all the way back. That's what they brought us out for. We've got to praise everything from the china egg in the chicken coop to the knocker on the front door!"

"But I have! I've said everything was wonderful, wonderful—until I'm sick of the word."

"And they expect you to keep on. Restful day!" with a snort. "My throat's sore trying to law it on thick enough to suit 'em. They're all alike—once they buy a shack in the country, they think it's the only—"

"Sh-sh, they'll hear you!" Then, with simulated interest, as the Richards joined them, "Where did you say you're going to build that summer house?"

"At the end of the grape arbor," eagerly. "We'll have rustic benches along that walk—and later, just being there we're going to put in a sunken pool! Won't that be attractive?"

And once more Helen wearily forced her adulatory, effusive, over-taxed, "Wonderful!"

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(Next Week—Warren's dominant selfishness.)

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