

The Married Life of Helen and Warren

By MABEL
HERBERT URNER

Originator of "Their Married Life." Author of "The Journal of a Neglected Wife," "The Woman Alone," Etc.

WARREN'S VIEWS ON A SECOND MARRIAGE ARE
EMPHATIC AND BRUTALLY FRANK

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"Dear, I almost dread meeting her. I know I'll be prejudiced."

"Why?" demanded Warren crisply, as they strolled on through the less quiet of a Sunday afternoon. "Everybody says she's a mighty fine woman."

"But it's been here a year! They might have waited a little longer."

"What for? If he's lonely and why should he wait? Just to satisfy a few cackling old women?"

"Oh, I know," conceded Helen, "but I can't help but—"

"Now see here, we're calling on the new Mrs. Dawson—get those ideas out of your head. Dawson was mighty good to his first wife, and his marrying again is nobody's business but his own. Hold up, isn't this the house?"

It was a four-story brownstone, with a square bay window, a stone balustrade and an air of substantial dignity.

They were ushered into the long, high-ceilinged front parlor with its center chandelier, marble mantel and heavy black walnut furniture.

The last time they had been in that room was at the funeral. The coffin had stood in the back parlor, just beyond the folding doors. Helen could see it now—the lustrous black cloth, the silver handles, and the white flowers banded from the foot.

"It seems good to see you people again," was Mr. Dawson's cordial greeting. "Come upstairs and meet Irene. We have her sitting room up there now."

They followed him up the curved stairway to the large front room which had always been the guest room. Now it was wholly transformed.

With very evident pride, Mr. Dawson introduced the slender, girlish woman who came forward to meet them.

Her unexpected youth stabbed Helen with swift resentment. Mrs. Dawson had been almost forty and inclined to stoutness.

"A very attractive room," Warren was saying to relieve an embarrassing pause. "They don't build them this size any more."

"Yes, we think it's more cheerful than downstairs," her voice was pleasantly low. "It's so hard to do anything with those long front parlors. They're so stiff and formal—don't you think?"

"They are rather hopeless," admitted Helen, who was taking a long look at the room. The room had been entirely done over and refurnished. Window seat, low bookcases, easy chairs, some gaily blooming geraniums and a bowl of cut flowers made it a very cheerful, livable place.

"Would you like to see the other rooms?" suggested Mrs. Dawson, when her husband and Warren had settled themselves with cigars.

She led the way through the hall into their bedroom. Helen caught her breath at the transformation. White and old rose was the color scheme. Twin beds of ivory enamel with rose-satin comforters, a dressing table aglitter with silver, the rug, the hangings, even the lounging robe and slippers, were part of the atmosphere of luxurious comfort.

There was nothing to suggest the dark, plain room with its heavy oak bedstead set and asseverated flowered carpet which had seemed all sufficient to the late Mrs. Dawson.

"I'm glad you like it," at Helen's murmured admiration. "It was so dark with those north windows—I had to do something to lighten it. I touched a switch at the door that lit up the lace-shaded lamps."

"Oh, how lovely! I didn't know you had electricity."

"We've just put it in. You can't do anything with gas. This is Mr. Dawson's room," opening a connecting door. "His den, where he can throw things and be comfortably untidy."

It was a cheerful, manly room, in warm reds and browns. On a magazine-strewn table stood a shaded reading lamp, and beside it an easy leather chair. A moose head and some mounted horns, souvenirs of his hunting trips, were on the wall.

Over the mantel were the only things that Helen had so far recognized—an early portrait of the former Mrs. Dawson, and one of their only child, Robert.

"Yes, that is Mr. Dawson's little boy," flushing slightly, as she saw Helen's glance rest on the picture. "Didn't you ever see him?"

"Oh, yes, often. It's only been about three years since he died. He was—"

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try. He was sailing a toy boat. They never knew just how it happened—only the nurse was with him."

Helen felt her tense interest and unspoken questions, but she shrank from discussing the child. As they turned back into the bedroom, Mrs. Dawson paused by the window, nervously pulling at the shade cord.

"Those portraits were in this room, but I couldn't bear that—so I hung them in there. Perhaps I shouldn't speak of it, it may seem very selfish—but I want so much to hang the one of Mrs. Dawson down in the back parlor with the other family portraits. I can't bear to ask Mr. Dawson, but you're known to me so long—do you think it would hurt him?"

"Oh, I don't know," faltered Helen in embarrassed surprise.

"It fairly haunts me—I can't bear to go in that room. She must have been very beautiful."

"That was painted when they were first married," urged Helen. "She didn't look like that."

"Oh, she didn't?" turning eagerly, "Was she—much different?"

The picture of Mrs. Dawson as Helen knew her was very different from this idealized portrait of her youth. She knew that a frank description would ease this young bride's jealousy, but she could not give it.

"Forgive me—I shouldn't have asked. But you can't know how hard it is. I feel always that I've only a second place—that she was first. He's everything to me, there was never anyone else in my life—but there has been in his. I can't forget that."

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She had transformed the house. Lavishly she had spent time and money to obliterate the atmosphere of this old woman. In these rooms there was nothing left as a reminder—except the portrait, and that had now become a rankling obsession.

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"She's making him comfortable all right. She's worked a great stunt; on that second floor—used to be a gloomy old tomb."

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"Well, if it gets on her nerves—why shouldn't she? No sense in either of them brooding over the past."

With clutching depression Helen thought of her own picture in the bedroom. It was not a portrait, only a silver-framed photograph of Warren's childhood, but it had stood there ever since they were married.

"Then you think if a man marries again—that it's right to put out of sight everything that recalls the first wife?"

"I think a lot of this sentimentality is all rot. The first wife had a clear field—why should the second one be loaded with a batch of cold-storage memories?"

"Cold-storage memories! Warren, is that all it would mean?" She caught back the words.

"Eh? What's that? Oh, getting personal, are you? Well, don't worry. I'm so sure that I'd take another chance. It's a mighty big compliment the first wife when a man has the right to marry again—just remember

try. He was sailing a toy boat. They never knew just how it happened—only the nurse was with him."

Helen felt her tense interest and unspoken questions, but she shrank from discussing the child. As they turned back into the bedroom, Mrs. Dawson paused by the window, nervously pulling at the shade cord.

"Those portraits were in this room, but I couldn't bear that—so I hung them in there. Perhaps I shouldn't speak of it, it may seem very selfish—but I want so much to hang the one of Mrs. Dawson down in the back parlor with the other family portraits. I can't bear to ask Mr. Dawson, but you're known to me so long—do you think it would hurt him?"

"Oh, I don't know," faltered Helen in embarrassed surprise.

"It fairly haunts me—I can't bear to go in that room. She must have been very beautiful."

"That was painted when they were first married," urged Helen. "She didn't look like that."

"Oh, she didn't?" turning eagerly, "Was she—much different?"

The picture of Mrs. Dawson as Helen knew her was very different from this idealized portrait of her youth. She knew that a frank description would ease this young bride's jealousy, but she could not give it.

"Forgive me—I shouldn't have asked. But you can't know how hard it is. I feel always that I've only a second place—that she was first. He's everything to me, there was never anyone else in my life—but there has been in his. I can't forget that."

Helen was conscious of a curious feeling, almost of satisfaction. Instead of the proud, insolent security in her husband's love that she had expected in this young and attractive woman, there was uncertainty and doubt, a brooding jealousy of a past that she could never share.

She had transformed the house. Lavishly she had spent time and money to obliterate the atmosphere of this old woman. In these rooms there was nothing left as a reminder—except the portrait, and that had now become a rankling obsession.

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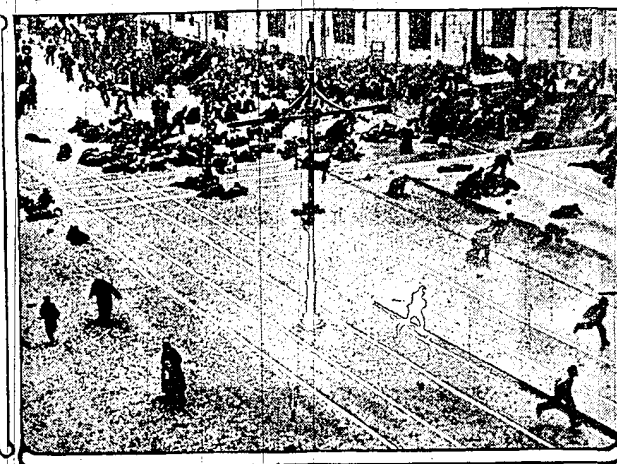
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MACHINE GUNS MOW DOWN COUNTER-REVOLUTIONISTS IN RUSSIA



Extraordinary photograph just received from Russia showing the terrible scene in the Nevsky Prospect, Petrograd, during the attempted counter-revolution last July. Machine guns mounted on the public library, the building in the background, were turned on the crowd with deadly effect. The throngs are rushing in all directions and the killed and wounded litter the street.