

Women and Their Interests

"Their Married Life"

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Helen settled herself in the Pullman and looked casually around. It was so unusual for her to be having a real holiday like this, and she enjoyed traveling more than anything else in the world.

This time she had been persuaded to go to Springfield and go back with him on Sunday, not that Warren had done much persuading, but Helen had persuaded her conscience that Winifred would be perfectly all right with Nora for one night.

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The conductor and porter came by, and Helen relinquished her ticket and her seat check and turned to gaze out of the window. As she did so she happened to glance idly into the glass by her seat and saw a sight that startled her a little.

A plain black traveling bag was in the rack above her, and Helen saw that she had removed her hat, and that her hair, which she had parted simply in the middle and pulled straight back.

Not a very alarming looking person surely, and she was in trouble. If Warren had been there he would not have allowed Helen to interfere, but Helen was impulsive and longed to do so. It was dreadful to be in trouble and have no one to comfort one.

The Woman Sits at Table Beside Her.

"First call for luncheon!" called the porter through the car, and Helen, who was hungry, decided to wait until afterward to speak to the unfortunate woman and have something to eat first. She had to wait until the dining car was filled, so she walked through and found an empty table. A moment later a man and his wife were shown to the seats opposite, and then a woman quietly took the chair next to Helen's.

When she was half through the meal Helen happened to glance at the chair next to her, and saw that it contained the woman in black. She had stopped her crying and was eating her lunch quietly, as though she felt the need of food. Helen glanced at her occasionally through the car, which was surprisingly good, and although she tried her best to eat slowly the little woman at her left was still eating her salad when she was finished with her meal.

"I'm sorry, but I'm afraid I'll have to ask you to let me pass," said Helen finally.

The little woman lifted a pair of sad eyes, and hastily arose, flushing slightly. "I beg your pardon, I had not noticed," she murmured as Helen passed through. Helen resolved to speak to her when she returned to her seat, but she settled herself in her seat, the train stopped at New Haven; they were just about half way there, she reflected. Helen had never been in Springfield, although she had passed through there several times on her way to Boston. She decided that the woman next to her was not getting off at that station and then promptly became engrossed in their way again. They were well on their way again.

before she looked up and saw the little woman in her chair. She was not crying, but was looking out of the window sadly. Helen wondered if she ought to speak to her, and then suddenly deciding, leaned forward and touched her on the arm. A car had forced its way down her cheek as she turned, a look of surprise crossing her face.

"I thought we might talk a little to each other," said Helen, sweetly. "These trips are often very tedious, don't you think so?"

"Yes, are you going far?" the woman said conventionally enough, hastily wiping away the tear.

"Only as far as Springfield, but even that seems like a long trip when one is traveling alone."

"I am going up to Canada," the woman volunteered, and then as Helen said nothing, "on a very sad mission; my father has just died."

"I'm so sorry, perhaps if you told me about it I could be of some help. It often helps to tell another person about a trouble."

The woman smiled at Helen gratefully. "You are kind, but there isn't much to tell. I am a writer, I do special articles for magazines, and I haven't been able to get home very often. You see we live so very far up. My father hasn't been well for some time, but we had no idea his trouble was serious. And then he went so suddenly. If I could have known in time. Why he is a young man, and we shall miss him so."

Again her eyes filled with tears and she turned away from Helen to look out of the window.

Helen felt a little helpless in the presence of a trouble like this. She felt intuitively that telling the trouble to another had already helped the woman's grief.

"You know how sorry I am," she said softly, leaning forward to put her hand on the woman's arm, "but perhaps if we talked about something else. Shall I tell you about my little girl?"

"Have you a child?" said the woman, curiously and with interest. "You look so very young."

Helen laughed merrily. She had caught a glimpse of herself in the glass. The brown suit, with its rich fur against her pink cheeks, was rather pleasant.

"Why, how nice of you to say such a thing! I have a little girl five years old, about as nearly, but it was nice of you to tell me that."

The woman was actually smiling, and a faint color had come into her cheeks.

"I love little children," she said softly. "Tell me about your little girl."

Helen talked gaily about Winifred. She told about the tableaux and Winifred's success in the "Age of Innocence."

"I read about the tableaux in the paper. And so your little girl posed with the others?"

Helen assented, and then began to talk about Joan Richards. The two women were deep in conversation, when the conductor called Hartford and Helen looked up with a start.

"Only Hartford," said the woman looking out of the window, "you have an hour still."

Helen caught a glimpse of the capitol as she glanced out the window, which was proving to be a real adventure. She wondered if she ought to tell Warren. Of course, he would be sure to disapprove.

"Did you say that you were to meet your husband in Springfield?" the woman was saying.

"Yes we are going back to the city to-morrow. This is just a pleasure trip for me."

"How fortunate you are," said the woman, leaning her head back against the chair and looking at Helen enviously. "Why, you have everything—a husband, a baby, and you are just the kind of a woman to have all those things," she finished decisively. "I suppose you don't really know how lucky you are."

Helen could not help thinking of how often she wasn't happy. After all, in the face of another's trouble, how insignificant her little worries seemed. She had thought to cheer the woman up and it was she herself who had received the greater benefit. What a funny world it was after all.

(Another installment in this interesting series will appear on this page soon.)

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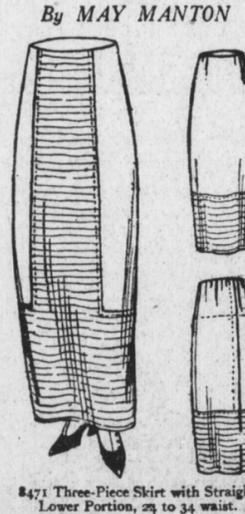
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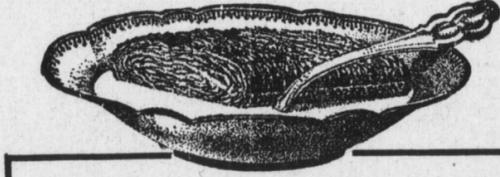


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