

# THEIR MARRIED LIFE

By MABEL HERBERT URNER

WARREN DERIDES THE "FAKE" AMATEURS IN THE AMATEUR NIGHT CABARET.

"What's all this?" asked Warren, glancing around the restaurant, which was placarded with big black-lettered signs, "Don't Forget Thursday—Amateur Night."

"Why, this is Thursday!" exclaimed Helen. "What do they have amateur nights at cabarets?"

"Seem to have 'em here, and we've struck the night." Then turning to the head waiter, who was standing back of their table, "How about this amateur business? Any good?"

"Yes, sir; you could hardly get a table here Thursday nights during the winter. But it's getting late now—everybody's going to the beaches," and he hurried off to seat a party of four that had just entered.

"Ladies and gentlemen," suddenly announced a brisk young man, who had mounted the raised platform in front of the orchestra, "the first number of our amateur performance this evening is Miss Rose Martin. She is—"

"Singer! Dancer!" called out several of the diners.

"She is some songstress," ended the announcer with a grin, as a young woman, in a rusty black skirt and cheap white shirtwaist, mounted the platform beside him.

In a high nasal voice she began to shrill a popular song. With the second verse everybody was laughing or whistling derisively and shuffling their feet.

"Oh, why doesn't she stop?" murmured Helen. "Can't she see they're making fun of her?"

"That's what she's here for. You don't think she's a real amateur, do you?" sniffed Warren. "She's some cheap vaudevilian trying to sing

through her nose—faking the amateur game."

The man who did the announcing stood back of the girl, with a broad grin and his hands over his ears. Every now and then he would stoop to pick up and put in a plate the small coins the diners threw on the red-carpeted platform. When the girl had ended her song, amid loud whistles and shouts, he gave her the money and bowed her off mockingly.

"But surely she gets paid?" asked Helen. "She wouldn't make such a spectacle of herself for the few dimes on that plate."

Warren shrugged his shoulders. "You can't tell. These poor devils out of a job may be glad to sing for their supper."

"Our next number," announced the man from the platform, "will be Miss Emma Kelly. She is a—"

"pausing in the same way for the response he evidently expected from the diners.

"Singer! Dancer!" again shouted the man at various tables.

"She is a—lady," he finished with the same mocking grin.

"Dear, how silly! Why does he announce them like that?" murmured Helen.

Miss Emma Kelly was a very unattractive looking "lady", with her old black satin gown, rusty shoes and untidy hair, and her voice, while not as nasal, was equally as bad as the first. She received her same share of hoots and jeers and the same sprinkle of nickels and dimes.

It seemed to Helen that she furtively watched the man as he picked them up for fear they would not all

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be deposited in the plate. Even Helen could see that she was not an amateur. There was a certain boldness and indifference in her manner that spoke loudly of the stage.

And she was overdoing the part—she was singing too badly. Her off-keys were too frequent.

"Oh, this is all faked up," muttered Warren in disgust. "There won't be a real amateur here tonight."

"Why not? Why don't they have them?" insisted Helen. "They'd be much more interesting."

Cut and Dried. "Guess they can't get 'em—or can't get enough to depend on. This thing

is all cut and dried. I'll wager that fellow who calls 'em off is a sort of agent who furnished these people for the night. That right?" turning to the waiter, who was now serving their planked steak.

"Yes, sir; that's right. He brings down a whole bunch of 'em every Thursday night."

"But he pays them, doesn't he?" asked Helen. "They get something besides what's thrown at them?"

"I don't know, matam. Some of 'em gets a lot of money on the platform. A girl here last week got a \$5 bill. It's just owing to the crowd we've got and the way she strikes 'em. Would you like some chili sauce with your steak, sir?"

Then came a girl who played on a harmonica, and who, like the singers, plainly faked the "amateur". After this the manager announced recess of 10 minutes. The bored-looking musicians left their instruments and retired to a table back of the platform, where one of the waiters brought them some beer.

The place was filling up now. Two tables had just been put together for a party of eight. The hum of voices, laughter and cigaret smoke—it was a typical New York restaurant scene.

The intermission over, the musicians left their empty beer glasses and came back to their instruments. Again the manager mounted the stage.

He announced a "Miss Tessie Williams" as "some song bird".

The diners were now in a more generous mood, for as "Miss Tessie" sang, her black skirt was pelted with small coins. Suddenly a dollar bill fell at her feet, and she sang more lustily than ever. She was younger than any of the others, and would have been pretty had it not been for the hideous black dress, which evidently all "amateurs" must wear.

Not Shy. But there was no shyness nor timidity in her manner to suggest that this was her first appearance, for when the second dollar bill fell before her, she left the platform and came down singing among the tables, staring boldly at the men and shrilling loudly.

"She'll want to come here again next week, all right," laughed the manager, when he emptied the plate with the two dollar bills and the many small coins into her hands. The girl took it greedily and ran off.

Then a board was placed over the red-carpeted platform, and "Mr. William Murphy", a "clog dancer", was announced.

"Oh, that poor old man!" exclaimed Helen. "Surely he's not going to dance!"

For the man who now came up to shuffle about on the board was white-haired and shabby, and his clog dancing was most pathetic. The diners were in no mood for so aged an entertainer, and Helen saw only three dimes fall on the platform.

"Oh, dear! Do throw him something! I'm sure he doesn't belong to the others. It's too pathetic. Throw him a quarter."

Warren felt in his pocket. "Here's the quarter—do your own throwing. I'm not going to encourage such imbecility."

Helen threw the coin with such bad aim that it fell on the piano, and at first no one seemed to notice it. Her heart sank. He would not get it after all. But a waiter pointed it out to the pianist, and it was finally lodged in the plate at the old man's feet.

The party of eight, who were drinking freely of champagne and who had been tossing coins at all the other singers had not thrown this poor old man a cent.

"Why should they? They came here to be entertained," declared Warren. "not to have their feelings harrowed. This is no place for that old piker. And I'm not so sure that he's not a fake with the rest of them."

Very Hard. At times Warren could be very hard. He was not uncharitable, but he resented any unexpected demand on his sympathies, while Helen was always emotionally sympathetic. Already her imagination was tracing signs of refinement in this old man's face. What had brought him to this?

Then she thought of how difficult it was for an old man to get work. She knew that the bread lines were made up of just such men. It was certainly better to do a shuffling clog dance for a few cents than to stand in line for half a loaf of bread and a cup of coffee.

His dance finished, the old man now took the few coins and shuffled off the platform in a sort of shamefaced way that made Helen feel that at least his act was genuine.

The next number was a pert, uppish, tough-looking youth of about 17, with a striped shirt, a red necktie and a sham diamond pin. With his hands in his pocket he sang in a horrible imitation of Harry Lauder.

"Oh, he's awful," shuddered Helen, as he strutted about with a self-satisfied leer, while the diners showered him with coins.

When this youth had departed with his money, the manager stepped to the front of the platform with a final announcement:

"Ladies and gentlemen, this ends the amateur performance for this evening. I thank you for your attention. We hope to see you all back next Thursday night. We shall have an entirely new set of amateurs to entertain you."

"Amateurs!" scoffed Warren. "Well, he needn't to have announced the new bunch for next week. Shouldn't think anybody here would want to come again. One dose of this ought to be enough."

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